The Language of Ethiopian Federalism: Language Policy, Group Identity and Individual Rights

Mengistu Arefaine[1]

Ethiopia is a home of diverse groups of people. Recently language has become one among the key manifestations of group identity. Despite its linguistic diversity, the modern state of Ethiopia was dominated by one language, Amharic, which was the language of the ruling class. After many years of unsuccessful homogenization and assimilation processes that provoked destructive and long civil wars, Ethiopia in 1995 adopted a federal system of government with nine constituent units mainly identified based on language. The Ethiopian federalism is claimed to be designed to accommodate diversity. The federal system has so far maintained the unity of the country intact while endeavoring to accommodate the diverse groups. However, from the language perspective, there is a huge gap between the constitutionally-guaranteed right of every language group (nation, nationality and people) to self-determination including secession and the reality on the ground in that there are language groups which are not able to use their languages for education and self administration purposes even at the lower level of government. How are the grievances of the historically dominated language groups addressed in the new federal system? Is the current Ethiopian language policy the right approach for dealing with linguistic diversity? How can group identities be preserved without violating individual rights? While dealing with the above questions, the main purpose of this article is to analyze the role language and language policies play in maintaining group identities and their implication on individual rights. Having this objective in mind, this article analyzes how Ethiopian federalism addresses language use at the federal, state and local levels. In doing so, this article draws some lessons from the experiences of other federations with similar challenges related to linguistic diversity.

Keywords*: Language, Group Identity, Federalism, Self-determination, Language Policy, Ethiopia*

Introduction

Ethiopia, which is a home to more than 80 linguistic groups, experienced a long and devastating civil war that ended in 1991. Since then, the country has followed a new system of governance that aims at addressing the causes of the conflict. The kind of governance that best accommodates the diverse groups of the country is believed to be a federal type of governance. For this reason, Ethiopia adopted a federal constitution in 1995. Ethiopian federalism aspires to address the basic diversity-related challenges of the country such as those related to linguistic, cultural, historical and geographical diversities. Ethiopian federalism, therefore, is diversity-oriented[1].

One of the main elements of Ethiopian federalism is the strong emphasis it gives to the rights of groups (nations, nationalities and peoples, as they are so-called in the Ethiopian Federal Constitution) to self-determination, including secession. In the Ethiopian context, language, in addition to other dimensions of diversity, is a major marker of group identity. There are as many ethnic or national groups in the country as the number of languages. However, language identity does not necessarily overlap with other group identities. For this reason, language can be a dividing or uniting element. Even if language can be seen as a dividing line between various groups, other elements (religion or culture) may cut across linguistic identities. For example, people professing the same religion may be divided by the language they speak. In the Ethiopian context, language is the dominant element of marker of group identity. This does not, however, mean that other identities, like religion, geography and culture do not have relevance. Currently, religious militancy and conflicts are emerging as new challenges to the Ethiopian state[2]. In Ethiopia, religious cleavages do not exist in their own defined geographic area but linguistic identity is clearly expressed in a given territory. It is worth mentioning an old but still relevant statement of Carl Friedrich who, emphasizing the importance of language dimension in group identity, stated: "Whatever the name, language is at the heart of culturally distinct groups, and has usually precipitated the struggle for autonomy."[3] Even if there is a similarity between language and religion in their degree of influence on people professing the same religion or speaking the same language,

---

1 See, for example, the preamble to the Constitution of Ethiopia which begins with the phrase "We the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia." "All Sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia" (Art.8.1); "States shall be delimited on the basis of settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the people concerned" (Art.45 (2); and Art.39 of the Federal Constitution which incorporates the basic rights of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia to self-determination, including secession. See also Andreas Eshete (2004), PP.142-172, Fasil Nahum (1997), PP.51-55, Kidane Mengisteab (1997), PP 111-132, and Will Kymlicka (2006), PP.54-58.

2 See Medhane Tadesse (2004), PP.271-282

3 Carl J. Friedrich (1975), P.231.

conflicts arising out of language politics often prove difficult to resolve using the same means as resolving religious conflicts[4]. The usual conflict resolution mechanism of separating church and state is not possible in the case of language conflicts, as language is "closely linked with most of the professional and bureaucratic employment opportunities, with the result that conflicts over language frequently involve high personal stakes in terms of career prospects for the group concerned ..."[5] Thus, in addition to a means of communication, language also plays pivotal role as a means of inclusion in or exclusion from political power and tangible economic benefits to the groups concerned.

The significant role of language in Ethiopian politics can be seen from the power of ethnicity as a dominant organizing element of the liberation movements during the past civil war. While liberation movements that were organized along ethnic (linguistic) lines succeeded in mobilizing mass support and defeating the military regime, other liberation movements that were organized on ideological or other bases did not survive long[6]. A good example is the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front which championed Tigrayan nationalism in mobilizing mass support for its cause[7]. The Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party, on the other hand, tried to mobilize people along ideological lines and the party failed to get enough support of the people to fight the then military regime. At this time the main challenge was abolishing the different kinds of oppression imposed on diverse groups[8] (nations and nationalities) by the authoritarian state and securing their equality. The role of language in creating or reinforcing group identity has been recognized by the Federal Constitution of Ethiopia which defines ethnic groups (nations, nationalities and peoples) as a group of people who have, among others, "mutual intelligibility of language ... and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory"[9] The linguistic groups in Ethiopia are supposed to be major beneficiaries of the group rights as enshrined in the Ethiopian Federal Constitution. Group rights, according to the Federal Constitution, can be exercised on a personal or territorial basis. The two pillars of federalism, shared-rule (representation to the institutions of the central government) and self-rule (self-governing rights at the lower or communal level), are exercised by various

---

4 Kenneth D. McRae (1983), P.22.

5 Ibid.

6 John Young (1996, 1997 and 1999); Kiflu Tadesse (1993 and 1998); Gebru Tareke (1996). See also Alemante G.Selassie (2003), P.63.

7 See Christophe van der Becken (2009), P.241 and John Young (1997), Chapter 3.

8 The term group is used in this article in similar meaning to nation, nationality, or people.

9 Art.39 (5), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia

groups according to their linguistic identities. However, there is a gap between the constitutional principles and practice concerning the right of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia to use their languages in order to further exercise other related rights. If language plays a significant role in the creation and shaping of group identity, what is its implication for the rights of individuals?

The purpose of this article is first to assess the challenges facing Ethiopian federalism with regard to the use of language, not only as a means of communication but also as an expression of group identity and the realization of the rights of individuals. Following the assessment of the constitutional principles on language use and their implementation in practice, experiences of other countries with similar challenges, particularly the Swiss experience, will then be discussed. Finally, recommendations on the possible solutions of addressing the growing challenges will be forwarded. As Ethiopian federalism is intended to be a response to the challenges of diversity, it is still supposed to dynamically respond to and resolve any unresolved and growing challenges that evolve over time. Language diversity and choice of working languages at both levels of government are some of the issues that need to be addressed prudently. Language issues touch almost all aspects of Ethiopian federalism. Despite its linguistic diversity, Ethiopia has adopted only one language (Amharic) as the working language of the federal government[10]. It is the main argument of this article that more languages should be adopted as official languages at the federal level and in the diverse regional states. While Amharic would continue to be the main vehicle of communication all over the country, it is worthwhile to gradually add other major languages to the list of official languages at the federal level.

Language/Language Policy and Group Identity

Language in some developed and relatively homogenous societies may be viewed only as a medium of communication. But in ethnically diverse and developing countries with history of unhealthy inter-group power relations, domination, and conflict, language is not merely the medium of communication, it serves also as a manifestation of group identity[11]. The history and culture of a language group or people are preserved[12] and transferred from one generation to the other through language. If language were the basis for inclusion and exclusion in the political system of a given country, language would be the main mobilizing factor as a reaction to the already discriminatory po

---

[10] See Art.5 (1), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia.

[11] See Alemante G. Selassie (1992), P.40. "Language is one of the fundamental markers of people's identity, and so people view any denigration in the public status of their mother-tongue as an assault on their identity" (Will Kymlicka, 2001, P. 217).

[12] See Thomas Fleiner (2007), P.2

litical system[13]. This reinforces group allegiance according to language identity because language then becomes a means of expression of group identity with great symbolic importance[14]. Language has "an intrinsically valuable dimension for its speakers beyond the extraneous ends to which it can be put. It is itself a human creation or accomplishment, participation in which is an end in itself." [15]

When we examine Ethiopian politics and the relationship of linguistic groups, it has been marked by the domination of one language group over the others. Language played a significant role in identifying individuals as belonging to certain groups and, therefore, it was a basis for either being privileged or discriminated against in previous regimes. Despite the diverse nature of Ethiopian society, previous modern state regimes intentionally promoted a policy of maintaining unity through forceful religious, cultural, and linguistic assimilation. Through the Amhara military conquests of the non-Amhara language groups, the use of Amharic language spread and became the "language of the imperial administration" and an "instrument of government policy, as part of an attempt to unify the country."[16] The spread of Amharic was also facilitated by missionaries that came to the country to preach their religion. There was a law in Ethiopia concerning the activities of the missionaries which allowed them to work in the "areas where the Ethiopian Orthodox church is not well established. Since these areas are largely inhabited by people whose first language is not Amharic, the missionaries bring Amharic to people who might otherwise not have an opportunity to learn it."[17] At this time, Amharic was promoted as the *lingua franca* of the country by excluding or even prohibiting the use of other languages of the country[18]. "Proficiency in the official language was a requirement for a state employment and a *sine qua non* for social mobility; then the process of assimilation promoted by the imperial state came to be known as 'Amharisation'" [19]of the non-Amhara language groups. As mentioned above, the missionaries were also

---

13 During the Haile Selassie and the Derg regimes, Amharic speakers were privileged to get high profile government jobs.

14 Kenneth D. McRae (1983), P.22.

15 Denise G. Réaume (2007), P.283.

16 Robert L. Cooper (1976), P.292.

17 Robert L. Cooper (1976a), P.189.

18 For example, during the Ethio-Eritrean federation, the official languages of the state of Eritrea were Tigrigna and Amharic [see Art.38 (1) of the Eritrean Constitution of 1952]. However, the Emperor Haile Selassie replaced them with Amharic and finally abolishing even the federation itself.

19 John Markakis (2011), P.13. See also Aklilu Abraham (2006), P.88 and Mohammed Dejen Assen (2010), P 143.

agents of the Amharization process[20]. Instead of using one's mother tongue, it was compulsory for every child not only to learn Amharic, but also to learn in the Amharic language all subjects in the primary school. Furthermore, proficiency in the Amharic language was obligatory for entry to the then few universities of the country, at least during the early years, even though instruction at the university level was in English[21]. This shows the active promotion of the Amaharic language as an instrument of homogenization of the heterogeneous Ethiopian society. The Ethiopian Revised Constitution of 1955 made Amharic the official language and the Orthodox Church the established church of the Ethiopian Empire[22]. According to this constitution, the Emperor was to profess this same religion and his name was to be mentioned in all religious services[23]. Thus, as the Amhara were politically the dominant group, they tried to shape an Ethiopian "nation-state" in their own image in all aspects. The more the non-Amhara groups were alienated and forced to assimilate, the stronger became their group allegiances. The intensification of group domination was accompanied by mobilization and tough resistance to the central government in particular and the state in general.[24]

The military regime that overthrew the emperor in 1974 and ruled the country until 1991 introduced some reforms including language rights, and consequently about 15 languages were used in the campaign which the military regime waged to eradicate illiteracy in the country. Moreover, the 1987 Constitution of the *Derg*[25] (the Amharic word for Committee or Council) declared that all nationalities were equal, regional autonomy was guaranteed and equality of languages of nationalities was ensured. But the same constitution makes Amharaic the only working language of the unitary state[26]. While the *Derg* regime made other efforts to address identity issues, it did not do much to bring about genuine reform to resolve the longstanding questions of equality of nations and nationalities or diverse linguistic groups. In fact, the *Derg* regime "contributed to the perpetuation of Amharic language domi

---

20 Robert L. Cooper (1976), P.296.

21 John Markakis (2011), P.126.

22 Art.125 of the 1955 Revised Constitution of Ethiopia.

23 Art.126 of the 1955 Revised Constitution of Ethiopia. For detailed discussion of the dominance of the Amhara in all aspects of life in the modern state of Ethiopia, see Donald Levine's world, Wax and Gold (1965).

24 See John Markakis (2011), Chapters 8 and 9.

25 The short name for the Military regime that ruled Ethiopia from 1974-1987.

26 See Arts. 2 and 116 The 1987 Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

nance" throughout the country[27]. The demand of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (NNP) of the country for equality was met rather by violent suppression. This led to the multiplication of liberation movements of various groups either to reform the state or (if that would not be possible) to secede.

The downfall of the military regime in 1991 presented a new opportunity to re-build the Ethiopian state. Contrary to previous governance approaches, the new federal system aspires to rectify 'historically unjust relationships' [28] and promote the unity of the country through a constitutional recognition and democratic accommodation of diversity. To realize this aspiration, the federal constitution not only puts sovereign power in the NNP but also guarantees them the unconditional right to self-determination, including secession[29]. According to this new federal approach, Ethiopia is divided into 9 federating (regional) states with extensive competences[30]. The fact that language played an important role in the creation or preservation of group identities is demonstrated in the names of five out of the nine states, which bear the name of the dominant language groups in the respective regional states: The state of Tigray (Tigrigna), the state of Amhara (Amharic), the state of Afar (Afar), the state of Somali (Somali), the state of Oromo (Oromo language) and the state of Harari[31] (Harari). However, owing to population movement and the mixed nature of the society, no regional state is homogeneous in terms of ethnic composition. Peoples from diverse language groups live in each regional state of the federation[32].

The language policy of the federation is stated in Article 5 of the Federal Constitution. Three principles are given under this article: *first*, all Ethiopian languages enjoy state recognition, *second*, from all the languages of the country only Amharic is singled out as a working language of the federal government, and *third*, the regional states have the competence to determine their working languages(s). Furthermore, the constitution guarantees each group "the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history."[33] Because of the fact that-

---

27 Lahra Smith (2008), P.220; see also Christphe van der Becken (2009), P.239.

28 Preamble to the Federal Constitution of Ethiopia

29 Art.39 (1), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia.

30 Arts.46, 47 and 52, Ethiopian Federal Constitution

31 Even though the Harari people are not majority in this state, they were given , for historical reasons, a full-fledged federating state of their own. The Oromo language is also another official language in the state of Harari.

32 See Christophe Van der Beken (2008), P.131.

33 Art.39 (2), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia.

Amharic has been declared to be the only working language of the federal government and its institutions, many non-Amharic speakers have raised their concerns that this language continues its dominant position at the expense of other languages that had been suppressed during the previous authoritarian regimes[34]. In the constitution, however, Amharic is not denoted as either the national or official language of Ethiopia. The Federal Constitution merely states that Amharic is the *working* language of the federal government. Even if there were no confusion as to the dominant position of Amharic at the federal level, its constitutional status, when labeled merely as the 'working' language of the federal government, is still open to interpretations. But from the reading of Article 106 of the Federal Constitution, the official status of Amharic is undisputed. Article 106 of the Constitution provides that the Amharic version of the Federal Constitution has a final legal authority over the English version.

Language and the Rights of NNP to Representation and to Local Self-government

As it was not practicable that each group (nation, nationality or people) in Ethiopia could establish its own federating state, it has become unavoidable that there are linguistic minorities within all federating states. It is important to examine how the language rights of such minority groups within the federating states are protected both in principle and practice. Even if all minority groups or nationalities do not have a state of their own, the constitution guarantees that they are sovereign and may express their sovereignty both through their duly elected representatives (who speak their languages) and through their direct democratic participation (at the local level and which each group is supposed to exercise using its own language)[35]. In both cases, when expressing sovereignty (direct and indirect democracy), language plays an important role as an instrument of communication and a manifestation of group identity. The groups can use their own language as the constitution guarantees each NNP "the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language."[36] In both pillars of federalism, representation and self-rule, the nationalities are constitutionally guaranteed to use their own languages.

Language and the Right to Representation at both Levels of Government
Each nationality or language group in Ethiopia has a constitutionally-guaranteed

---

34 See Lahra Smith (2005), P.260.

35 Art.8, Federal Constitution of Ethiopia.

36 Art. 39 (2-3), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia.

right to equitable representation both at the regional state and federal government[37]. The regions have the constitutional power to decide their working languages and so far all federating states[38], have adopted official unilingualism despite the existence of multi-lingual groups in their respective regions. So what does representation at both levels of government bring to the diverse linguistic groups as far as language use is concerned? As Amharic is the only working language of the federal government and at least 4 of the 9 federating states, it is logical that the representatives of each group within these regional states should understand the Amharic language in order to be able to work in the institutions at the states and federal levels. Even in those federating states whose working language is not Amharic, the representatives to the state level have to understand Amharic and the language of their respective state. The representatives are, therefore, obliged to understand at least three languages – their mother tongue, the working language of their state, and Amharic – in order to represent their respective groups and work in the institutions of each federating state and the federal government[39]. This is because of the fact that some of the members of the state institutions are also members of the federal institutions, e.g., most of the members of the House of Federation are also members of the government of states (and in some cases they are even members of the lower levels of government), and the language of communication between the federating states and the federal government is Amharic. Sessions of the federal parliament are translated from the language of the speaker. But working in other institutions of the federal government (the federal administration and judiciary) is unthinkable without knowledge of the Amharic language.

The equality of language groups in the use of their languages and preservation of their group identity can be ensured in general through the two pillars of federalism, shared-rule and self-rule, provided that they are properly institutionalized. When we consider the shared-rule aspect of federalism, it guarantees the representation of the language groups in the institutions of the federal government such that whenever decisions are made with regard to *inter alia* language issues, the representatives are supposed to ensure that the constitutional rights of each and every group to use its own language are maintained. But to play that role and make shared-rule effective, the representatives of the diverse language groups should be genuine representatives of their respective communities. A genuine representative, for the purpose of this paper, is one who is attached

---

37 Art. 39 (3), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia.

38 With the exception of Harari (where Harari and Oromo language are the working languages).

39 See Lahra Smith (2005), P.289.

to, identifies him/herself with and acts in the best interests of those he/she represents[40]. This kind of representation is also influenced, among others, by the modalities of election (direct or indirect) of the representative person as well as by the powers and decision-making procedures of the representative institution. The House of Federation is composed of all nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia and it has the power, inter alia, to interpret the Federal Constitution, decide on the right to secession, settle inter-state disputes and determine on subsidies provided to the states by the federal government. Representation of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (NNP) to this House is in proportion to the size of population, except each group (regardless of its size) is guaranteed a minimum representation by one. Proportional representation of NNP to this House does not guarantee equality of powers in the decisions making process[41]. The concern is not only in the proportionality of representation but also in the mode of election of the representatives. Even if the constitution provides for direct and indirect ways of electing the representatives to the House of Federation[42], the representatives are usually elected indirectly by the regional governments and the decision-making procedure of the House is based on a simple majority vote. This permanently minimizes the role of the small language groups in the decisions making processes of this House.

The modes of representation of language groups at the state level should be similar to that of representation at the federal level so that the language groups should be able to protect their rights through a proper and fair representation at both levels of government. All the federating states, with the exception of the SNNP[43], have unicameral legislatures that represent all the peoples of the states regardless of their ethnic divisions. While this may not be a serious problem in the less diverse states, it is necessary that the relatively diverse states adopt a bicameral legislature where the people as a whole and the diverse groups are equally represented with equal legislative powers.

Language and the Right to Self-government at the Local Level
The self-rule aspect of federalism has been reflected in the Ethiopian constitu

---

40 For detail treatment of the concept of political representation, see Iris Marion Young (2000), Melissa O. Williams (1998), Jane Mansbridge (1999), and Hanna F. Pitkin (1967).

41 The current composition of the House of Federation is as follows: South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (64), Oromia Regional State (24), Amhara Regional State (24), Tigray Regional State (7), Somali Regional State (5), Benshangul-Gumuz Regional State (5), Gambella Regional State (4), Afar Regional State (2) and Harari Regional State (1). http://www.hofethiopia.gov.et/web/guest/fourth-season-member

42 See Art.61 (3), Ethiopian Federal Constitution.

43 The SNNP Regional State has a bicameral parliament.

tion and has a significant role in the protection of the rights of language groups to use and develop their languages. The most extreme option to guarantee one's language is to become an independent state. This right is guaranteed unconditionally by the Federal Constitution of Ethiopia. But where this is not necessary or possible for many reasons, the more moderate way to exercise this right to self-determination is through the self-governing right of the respective language groups under a federal system of government.

A minority language group concentrated in a defined territory has a more realistic possibility of protecting itself against domination by other languages than a language group whose speakers are dispersed all over the country. According to Laponce, in order to protect a minority language through group rights rather than through 'ineffective individual rights,' 'territorial rights' of the respective groups are necessary[44]. This territorial right will give the minority language group the opportunity to use its own language, "not over the whole of the territory, but only in the regions or districts where the minority language exists in sufficient concentration."[45] One of the reasons people demand the right to self-rule is to be able to administer their affairs autonomously, including the right to use their own language. So the use of one's language is inseparable from the right to self-government. That means if the right to self-determination is fully guaranteed, each self-governing group should be able to use its language for all its activities at least at the local level.

One of the fundamental constitutional rights of each language group (nation, nationality and people) is to "a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits,"[46] which could only be meaningful when it is exercised in one's own language. Thus, the right to self-government implies the right to administration in one's own language. This right to self-determination can be realized if a language group can use its mother tongue to educate its children at least in the primary education and to run local administration autonomously in its language.

While recognizing the right of each nation, nationality and people of the country to self-government, the Ethiopian Federal Constitution also obliges each federal state to establish a system of administration at the state level that best advances self-government. Practice shows that almost all of the regional states are organized further in two or three levels of self-government (*zone, woreda* and *keble*). The minority language groups can at least constitute a *zone* or *woreda* in order to administer their own affairs autonomously. This division of the re

---

44 J.A. Laponce (1987), P.156.

45 J.A. Laponce (1987), P.161.

46 Art.39 (3), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia

gions into multi-level government is consistent with the principles of the federal constitution which assures each nation, nationality and people of the country the right to a self-rule or self-government. The federal constitution states that each nation, nationality and people within the regional states (that have already been established) has the right to establish its own state at any time according to the procedures provided in the constitutional[47]. As language is the dominant dimension of identity in the definition[48] of NNP of Ethiopia, each linguistic group that believes in a common identity and "inhabits an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory" has a constitutional right to establish its own federal state whenever it deems it necessary to better realize its rights. According to the principles of the federal constitution, it is possible to say that there are potentially as many federal states as the number of language groups in Ethiopia. After all, the constitutional provision with the names of the federal states is not an exhaustive list[49]. Once established, the potential new federal states would be members of the federation with equal rights and powers as those regional states that have already been established[50].

The revised constitutions of the regional states incorporated more rights of the diverse language groups[51]. In some cases, the nationalities within the regional states are organized in a special government structure between the regional and the *woreda* levels with some special powers[52]. Despite the efforts to create self-governing units for the diverse language groups, not all language groups are able to exercise the right to territorial self-government[53]. In general, there still

---

47 Art.46 (2) (3), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia.

48 *Art.39 (5), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia.*

49 Art. 46 (1) of the Federal Constitution provides: "Member States of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia are the following: 1) The State of Tigray, 2) The State of Afar, 3) The State of Amhara, 4) The State of Oromia, 5) The State of Somalia, 6) The State of Benshangu/Gumuz, 7) The State of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, 8) The State of the Gambella Peoples, 9) The State of the Harari People"

50 Art.52 (4), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia.

51 See, for example, the 2001 constitution of the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (Arts.45, 80-114).

52 The governmental structures differ from one regional state to the other. For example, in the Amhara Regional State, there are nationality administration and special *woreda* administration structures whereas in the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State where there are about 56 language groups, the territorial administrations which are meant to accommodate language groups are called *zones* or special *woredas* with the same competences. The latter regional state is divided into 13 *zones* and 8 special *woredas* (http://www.snnprs.gov.et/about.html)

53 Christophe van der Becken (2008), P.156.

is a gap between the constitutionally-guaranteed right of each language group to self-determination and the fact that there are still language groups which are not even able to use their language for at least primary education and local ad ministration purposes. For this reason, it can be said that there are challenges facing the realization of the constitutional right of minority language groups at the regional level[54]. One of the possible reasons is that not all languages are developed and standardized to be used as such. The assimilation process imposed by the previous authoritarian regimes forced many Ethiopian minority language groups to set aside their language and assimilate to the dominant language, Amharic, as a matter of necessity. However, under the Ethiopian federal system, this reality does not have to be simply accepted. Consistent with the constitutional principle of rectifying the historically unjust relationships that prevailed among the diverse groups in the country, the government made deliberate efforts to support the small groups to standardize, use and develop their languages[55]. The noble principles of equal state recognition of all languages (and therefore groups) regardless of the size of their population, as incorporated in the Federal Constitution, could be realized step-by-step by an effective support from the government. This is because without the use of one's language, the right to self-rule cannot be fully realized. Kymlicka argued that territorial language communities "are the primary forums for the democratic participation in the modern world."[56] This is so, according to the author, because "... democracy within national/linguistic units is more genuinely participatory than at higher level that cut across language lines."[57] To discuss issues that affect their interests, members of the language group should understand each other through the channel of a common language. The reason, Kymlicka argues, is that "democratic politics is politics in the vernacular"[58] and "the more political debate is conducted in the vernacular, the more participatory it will be."[59]

With regard to self-governing rights of small language groups at the local level, lessons can be drawn from the Swiss experience. Although Switzerland is

---

54 Lahra Smith (2005), P.164.

55 The Federal Constitution obliges the government to "promote and support the People's self-rule at all levels" (Art.88) and to "provide special assistance to Nations, Nationalities and Peoples least advantaged in economic and social development" (Art.89).

56 Will Kymlicka (2001), P.213.

57 Ibid

58 Ibid

59 Will Kymlicka (2001), P.214.

a multi-lingual country and four languages are recognized as national languages, most of the cantons are unilingual. Even in the bilingual cantons (Fribourg, Bern and Valais) and trilingual canton (Graubünden) the indigenous "languages are grouped geographically, so that the social and political organizations may be as unilingual as possible."[60]

There is no official record of how many languages are spoken in Ethiopia and who can claim the right of equal state recognition as guaranteed by the constitution. In relation to equal recognition of the languages by the state, the constitution simply states "all Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition" without making a reference to the names or lists of the existing languages. This means the equality of languages, according to the constitution, potentially includes the equality of many unknown languages. Does the equality of all languages imply the equality of all nations, nationalities and peoples of the country whose identity, among others, is marked by language? Except the express provision which states that "all Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition,"[61] the Federal Constitution does not expressly mention the equality of NNP of the country. But there is no doubt that the value of equality of the NNP of the country is an integral part of the constitution[62]. Nevertheless, the equality of federal states (note that each language group is a potential federal state) is an indirect equality of the language groups that satisfy the definitional elements provided under Article 39 (5) of the Federal Constitution[63].

Multi-lingualism, Choice of Official Languages and Provision of Services
The Working Language at the Federal Level

---

60 J.A. Laponce (1987), P.146.

61 Art.5 (1), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia.

62 The preamble to the Federal Constitution: "Firmly convinced that the fulfillment of this objective requires full respect of individual and people's fundamental freedoms and rights, to live together on the basis of equality and without any sexual, religious or cultural discrimination." (Emphasis added). Art.3 (2) "The national emblem on the flag shall reflect the hope of the Nations, Nationalities, Peoples as well as religious communities of Ethiopia to live together in equality and unity." (Emphasis added). Art.62 (4): "It shall promote the equality of the Peoples of Ethiopia enshrined in the Constitution and promote and consolidate their unity based on their mutual consent." (Emphasis added). Art.88 (2): "Government shall respect the identity of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples. Accordingly Government shall have the duty to strengthen ties of equality, unity and fraternity among them." (Emphasis added). Furthermore, according to Art.47 (2) and 39 (1) every Nation, Nationality and People of Ethiopia is equally entitled to the right of self-determination including secession and to establish its own state at any time.

63 "A 'Nation, Nationality or People' for the purpose of this Constitution, is a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory."

The decision to make one or more languages official should take into account many factors related, in general, to the number of the population of the language groups and the practicability of using the selected language(s). In a multi-lingual society, the decision to make only one language an official or a working language may not necessarily be acceptable by all language groups. "Those whose languages are not official spend years learning others' languages and may still communicate with difficulty, compete unequally for employment and participa tion, and suffer from minority or peripheral status." [64] However, it is not also feasible to make official the language of every group in a country where more than 80 language groups exist. It is a common practice in multi-lingual and federal countries for some major languages to be adopted as official languages of the whole country, whereas other languages would have official status at the federal states level. Despite being the home of rich linguistic diversity and its claim to have adopted federalism to accommodate diversity, Ethiopia has opted for only one *de facto* official language while English language is the only language of instruction from high school through university. Even if historically Amharic has been dominant and has maintained undisputed status of official language, its continued use by the non-Amharic speakers is not, however, undisputed. From the way Amharic spread in Ethiopia, as already pointed out above, it is not surprising if this language is still seen by some of its users as an instrument of domination and suppression[65].

When we see the experience of the Republic of South Africa, which emerged out of a long history of apartheid rule and adopted a quasi-federal governmental system, it has an exemplary experience, at least in principle, in adopting multiple official languages of the country. South Africa, like Ethiopia, is linguistically diverse and more than 80 languages are believed to be spoken in the country[66]. According to the constitution of 1996, 11 languages are recognized as official languages[67]. These official languages "enjoy parity of esteem" and are treated equitably[68]. However, some claim that there is a gap between the language policy of official multi-lingualism and the practice of English monolingualism in all spheres of South African public life[69].

64 Jonathan Pool (1991), P.495.

65 See Aberra Degefa (2009), PP.102-114.

66 See Victor N. Webb (2002), P.62.

67 Art.6 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

68 Art. 6 (4) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

69 Jon Orman (2008), P.94.

The new African nation, the Republic of South Sudan, has adopted official monoligualism even if more than 60 language groups exist in the country and English and Arabic are widely spoken languages. The current language policy of South Sudan is incorporated under Article 6 of the Transitional Constitution, which states that English shall be the official working language of the whole country and language of instruction at all levels of education. All indigenous languages of the country are declared to be "national languages and shall be respected, developed and promoted." [70] However, during the interim period, there was a different language policy at least in three aspects. First, Arabic and English were "official working languages of the national government and the languages of instruction for higher education." [71] Second, lower levels of government (lower than state level) had the right to adopt, in addition to Arabic and English, "any other national languages as an additional national official working language"[72] Third, Arabic and English could also be used at any level of government or level of education without any discrimination.[73] With the change from interim to transitional constitution, there is a clear change in the language policy. According to the Transitional Constitution, in addition to completely abandoning the use of Arabic, lower levels of government cannot use other languages than English either as working languages or languages of instruction. The possible challenge of such a policy is that most of the civil servants are well versed in Arabic from previous experience of working in Khartoum and now they cannot use it as officially as a working language. Most of the illiterate people in South Sudan speak Arabic and they find it difficult to communicate with English language. For this reason Arabic could serve as a supplementary link or common language.

Belgium is a trilingual country where three languages Dutch, French and German "enjoy equality which is guaranteed by a series of language laws," even if it not clearly provided in the constitution as such[74]. Although the language groups in Belgium are not as many as in Ethiopia, the fact that all the three languages are recognized as official languages is instructive. Another good example of accommodation of language diversity is the case of Switzerland, a country which has a record of successful accommodation of all kinds of diversity through its consensus-based democratic culture. Four languages (German,

70 Art.6(1), Transitional Constitution of South Sudan

71 Art 6(2), Interim Constitution of South Sudan

72 Art. 6(5), Interim Constitution of South Sudan

73 Art. 6(3), Interim Constitution of South Sudan

74 Ludo Beheydt (1995), P. 48.

French, Italian and Romansh) are recognized by the Swiss Federal Constitution as national languages of the country[75]. But while the first three languages are official languages of the confederation on equal terms, the fourth one (Romansh) is the official language of the confederation for the purpose of communicating with people who speak Romansh[76].

The Canadian Constitutional Act of 1982 provides that "English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and government of Canada."[77] This official bilingualism allows citizens to interact with government officials and get public services in either language throughout the country[78]. Different from the above bilingual or multi-lingual federations, for examples, India has adopted only one official language. The Indian Constitution provides that "the official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script."[79] With respect to the states, the Indian constitution provides that a state may "adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State or Hindi as the Language or Languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State."[80] The constitution provides also that the English language should, where it was used before the adoption of the constitution, continue to be used for official purposes within the respective states until the states determine their languages. India does not seem to offer a good example of giving official status to multiple of languages at the federal level. Currently, India has a "three-language formula whereby Hindi was given the status of the national language with the proviso that English will be indefinitely retained as the link language and the states will have one or more official languages."[81] Nigeria is a linguistically very diverse country where more than 400 languages exist[82]; but English is the only official language at the federal level[83]. This is not surprising given the fact that linguistic

75 Art.4, Swiss Federal Constitution

76 Art.70 (1), Swiss Federal Constitution

77 Art. 16(1), Constitutional Act, 1982.

78 See Idil Boran (2001), P.244.

79 Art.342 (1), Indian Constitution.

80 Art.345, Indian Constitution

81 Subrata K. Mitra (2001), P.56.

82 Emmanuel Aito (2005), P.18.

83 Art. 55 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution provides: The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English, and in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made there-

diversity does not have expression in the Nigerian Federal Constitution[84].

Except Nigeria and India, most of the multi-national federal or quasi-federal countries have adopted two or more languages as their official languages at the federal level. This is instructive to Ethiopia to adopt some more official/working languages taking objective criteria for selection. Some suggest Ethiopia should adopt English as the sole official language instead of Amharic for political (neutral language), economic (global language), and academic (easy access to scientific works) reasons[85]. However, rather than adopting a foreign language in a country with no history of colonialism and where the majority of the population are illiterate rural peasants, it is advisable to adopt domestic languages as official or working languages while maintaining the status of English language as the language of instruction. Giving official status to some of the major Ethiopian languages would strengthen national unity and weaken centrifugal feelings and secessionist tendencies, as well as promote inter-group trust and enhance the legitimacy of what is widely seen as a monolingual central government. Positive feelings among the major groups towards the central government are crucial to the maturity and stability of the federation.

It is simply not true that other Ethiopian languages cannot be adopted as official languages because they lack standardization or are inconvenient to use. Tigrigna, for example, is a standardized language on its own and is one of the official languages of neighboring Eritrea. The Somali language is not different from the standardized language of neighboring Somalia. The Oromo language is also widely used by a relative majority of the Ethiopian population and the sheer number of speakers should alone warrant its use as an additional official language at the federal level. A weak argument, or perhaps a lame excuse, against using multiple official languages is that national unity would be compromised[86]. But this fear is not well-founded, as seen in the multiple examples of other countries that have adopted two or more official languages and whose national unity is not endangered. Unity does not necessarily presuppose official unilingualism. If we were to take the size of the population speaking a language as one of the criteria that may be considered, two or more languages can be adopted as official or working languages of the Ethiopian federal government and its institutions. What makes the Swiss policy of official multi-lingualism relatively less challenging is that all the official languages of the cantons are also official languages

fore."

---

84 The Nigerian constitution of 1999 merely states "Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state" (Art.2) does not make any reference to ethnic or linguistic diversity.
85 Alemseged Abbay (2013).

86 See Yared Legesse (2009), PP.212-216.

of the federal government. The federal government communicates with the cantons depending on the language or languages (out of the four) adopted as official in that respective canton. With respect to the Romansh language, spoken by a far small number of people than the other three languages, it is the official language of the federation only in communicating with the Romansh people. If we apply this model of using languages to Ethiopia, then in addition to Amharic at least the Oromo language, Tigrigna and Somali languages should be adopted as working or official languages of the Ethiopian federal government as far as communication between the federal government and the regional states of Oromia, Tigray and Somali is concerned. These groups are also the ones that manifested strong ethno-nationalist-based mobilization in the last century.

The adoption of multiple official languages would definitely generate extra costs and inconveniences. This is because accommodation of diversity is in general costly, but the political cost of the failure to do so is more costly. The adoption of multiple official languages in Ethiopia would, of course, imply at least enacting the federal laws and amending the Federal Constitution to grant equal legal authority to multiple official languages. Then all multiple official languages of the country would have equal opportunity to get expression in, for example, the mass media and other communication systems of the federal government. In general, the institutions of the common government and their activities should reflect and be reflected in the multiple official languages as much as possible. In a multi-lingual country like Ethiopia it is equally important that all the products of and activities by the federal government which have high symbolic relevance, for example, passports, bank notes, coinages, postage stamps and some other elements, should be expressive of the diversity of the country.

Working Languages of the States
The choice of official or working languages is also an issue at the states' level. The Ethiopian Federal Constitution guarantees the states the right to decide on their own working languages[87]. Accordingly, the nine regional states of Ethiopia have adopted their working languages in their respective constitutions. Except the regional state of Harari (where Harari and Oromo language are adopted as the working languages), all other regional states have opted for official unilingualism despite the existence of multi-lingual communities in their territories. In addition to its special status as a working language of the federal government, Amharic is the working language of the states of Amhara, Gambella, Benshangul-Gumuz and the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP).

---

87 Art.5 (3), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia there is no uniformity of scripts. The states have adopted not only different working languages but also different scripts. So at the regional level, Ethiopia has become both a multi-lingual and multi-script federation[88]. There are obviously practical reasons why most of the states of Ethiopia have adopted Amharic as their working language. One possible reason is that Amharic has been the *lingua franca* of the country for many generations and the languages of most of the nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia have not been developed and standardized for use at least at the moment. Another possible reason is extreme linguistic diversity and inconvenience to adopt one or more working language(s) out of the multiple languages in the regions[89]. However, the above mentioned regional states, with the exception of the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), are not highly diverse as such. Even in this state, if we were to take the population size of speakers of the language groups into account, then other languages of the region could be adopted as working languages(s) in addition to Amharic.

If languages cannot be used by their speakers for official business, then constitutional rights would have less meaning than intended. Even if the constitution does not oblige any language group of the country to use a particular language, no one would take more responsibility than the speakers of the respective languages either for the decline or the development of the languages in question. What the Federal Constitution protects against is forceful assimilation of language groups by another dominant language, but it does not prohibit voluntary assimilation. It is obvious that if languages are not used both in private and in public, their relevance and continuity will decrease with time. In the Ethiopian context, past blame could be attributed to the assimilation policies of the authoritarian regimes, yet perhaps at present most of the blame for failure to use a particular language should, as far as the lower levels of government are concerned, be put on the speakers of the language in question, provided that the principles enshrined in the Federal Constitution are respected at the state level[90].

Adoption of one or two working languages at the state level would mean public services could be provided in the main languages of those states. This affects the language groups whose language is not adopted as working language

[88] Latin script is adopted by many of the Cushitic language groups, while the indigenous script, Geez, is adopted by the Semitic language groups.

[89] In the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State alone there are about 56 languages. About 5 indigenous languages are spoken in each of the regional states of Gambella and Benshangul-Gumuz.

[90] In connection with the causes for the decline of languages, Bernhard Spolsky stated: "Whatever blames may reasonably be attached to language policies and social, economic and religious and political forces, it seems that the loss of linguistic diversity results less from linguistic genocide than from linguistic suicide."(Bernard Spolsky (2004), P.216).

of the state where they live, in much the same way as at the federal level. In this case it would be very important for such groups to use their mother tongue at least for the purposes of local administration and primary education. We will see in the later section that there are continuing efforts in Ethiopia, although at present inadequate to provide primary education in the mother tongues of the diverse language communities.

The South African constitution gives the provinces the right to decide on their official languages. But the constitution obliges them to use at least two official languages. The constitution provides: "The national government and provincial governments may use any particular official languages for the purposes of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned; but the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages."[91] The constitutional obligation on the use of languages is also imposed on the South African municipalities that they "must take into account the language usage and preferences of their residents." [92]

While guaranteeing the freedom to use any language at the federal level[93], the Swiss Federal Constitution authorizes the cantons to determine their official languages[94]. However, the cantons are not completely free to decide on the language issues. The constitution also provides for some conditions to be taken into account by each canton when deciding on its official language(s). The Federal Constitution states: "In order to preserve harmony between linguistic communities, the Cantons shall respect the traditional territorial distribution of languages and take account of indigenous linguistic minorities."[95] As a result of these constitutional provisions, the prevailing language regimes in Switzerland are the so-called principle of territoriality (*Territorialitätsprinzip*) and principle of personality (*Personalitätsprinzip*).[96] "The principle of territoriality means that the rules of language to be applied in a given situation will depend solely

---

91 Art.6 (3)(a), Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

92 Art. 6 (3)(b), Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

93 Art.18, Swiss Federal Constitution

94 Art.70 (2), Swiss Federal Constitution

95 Ibid.

96 Carol L. Schmid (2001), P.140.

on the territory in question"[97] and this assures linguistic (group) autonomy while restricting individual freedom to use ones' mother tongue[98]. Accordingly, each canton or community which is once established as such, remains a melting pot of other languages or immigrants that may reside in its territory. According to the principle of territoriality, "any canton or linguistic area is deemed to have the right to preserve and defend its own distinctive linguistic character against all outside forces tending to alter or endanger it." [99] The linguistic groups in this case are allowed to maintain the homogeneity of their language area[100]. Individuals who live in such a canton or linguistic area with different mother tongues should use, i.e. assimilate to, the local language and enroll their children in the local schools[101]. According to the territoriality principle "Anyone wanting to make her or his home within a given territory must adapt to the language of the place." [102] The territoriality principle is seen as the "primary security of the smaller and the primary foundation for Swiss linguistic peace." [103] This principle is confirmed by case laws of the Swiss Federal Supreme Court[104].

The principle of personality, on the other hand, states that the rules of linguistic communication will depend on the "linguistic status of the person or persons concerned." [105] In the Swiss context this principle governs the relationship between the federal government and the individuals in the whole territory of Switzerland. In this case the federal government is obliged to communicate with an individual according to the choice of her/his language as long as it is one of the four languages of the country (German, French, Italian and Romansh)[106].

---

97 Kenneth D. McRae (1973), P.33.For a detailed discussion on the principle of territoriality and principle of personality, see chapters 4 and 5 of Dagmar Richter's book Sprachenordnung und Minderheitenschutz im Schweizerischen Bundesstaat: Relativität des Sprachenrechts und Sicherung des Sprachenfriedens(2005).

98 Carol L. Schmid (2001), P.140. See also Daniel Thürer and Thomas Burri (2006), P.270.

99 Kenneth D. McRae (1983), P.122.

100 Dagmar Richter (2005), P.221.

101 Kenneth D. McRae (1983), P.122. See also decision of the Swiss Federal Supreme Court (Bundesgerichtsentscheide, BGE) 122 I P.241.

102 Denis G. Réaume (2007), P.277.

103 Ibid.

104 See decisions of the Federal Supreme Court, BGE 91 I (1965, the case of Association de l'EcoleFrançaise) and BGE 138 IP.123 (2011).

105 Kenneth D. McRae (1973), P.33.

106 Carol L. Schmid (2001), P.140.See also Dagmar Richter (2005), PP.145-207.

In connection with the constitutional guarantee of language rights in the Swiss constitution, it is stated that all the guarantees on the use of the four national languages serve not only to ensure citizens' right to use any of the four national languages, but this constitutional guarantee also plays the role of promoting the identification of Swiss citizens with the state[107]. That means people from different language groups feel represented when their languages are spoken at all levels of the state.

Indigenous Language Groups vs. Individuals: The Case of Benshangul-Gumuz
In the Ethiopian political context, the preservation of the identity of language groups has importance for the continued protection of the rights of the individual members of the group. When the language of the group is used, for example, in both education and administration at least in the territory the language group inhabits, the individual member will develop a trust in the political system that its right within the whole federation would be protected. When it is seen from this perspective, the preservation of language group identity would have a complementary effect on the right of the individual members of the language group. However, when seen from the perspective of other individuals (who belong to other language groups and who live in the territory of a different language group), the restrictive territorial use of a language has a constraining effect in that the individuals must use the language of the local community where they live. In Switzerland, for example, the rights of individuals, who live in but do not belong to a territorially defined (indigenous) language group, are also heavily restricted when it comes to the public use of their own languages, be it in education or administration. This is a problem much more for the immigrants than for the Swiss indigenous citizens. Ethiopia, unlike Switzerland, does not have the problem of immigrants. However, movement of persons (for many reasons) between states results in the concentration of individuals in territories inhabited by a different language group. This situation has become the sources of conflicts between rights of the indigenous groups and the rights of individuals (internal migrants).

As already mentioned, at the regional level there are two kinds of individuals: those belonging to the indigenous language groups and those perceived as internal migrants. Again the individuals that live outside their territory of origin (the settlers) have different history of migration. Some of them moved long time ago (in the 19th century)[108] with the expansion of the Ethiopian state towards the south east and south west, but others were forcefully resettled by the military

107 Regula Kägi-Diener (2008), P.97.
108 See John Markakis (2011), Chapter 4.

regime (in the mid-1980s)[109] and recently many people moved from one place to another as laborers in the new development projects (construction of dams and agro-industries)[110]. This trend is continuing and the indigenous groups at the receiving end feel threatened by the great number of people who, in some cases, are the same size as the indigenous groups and there is tension between the indigenous groups and the individual settlers or the workers in various big projects. This raises the question: what is the right of the new settlers as individuals in relation to the individuals belonging to the indigenous groups? Let us see this issue in terms of language use.

A very important case in point is the Benshangul-Gumuz state where large amount of internal migrants live and work in different government institutions. In the Benshagul-Gumuz state there are five indigenous groups[111] but almost half of the population of this regional state is composed of the so-called high-landers (they are mainly from the Amharas, Oromos and Tigrayans) who came to the region as settlers in different occasions. There was a conflict in 2000 between the highlanders and the indigenous groups in relation to the right of the settlers to be elected and their lack of knowledge of indigenous languages. The indigenous people opposed the election of the settlers for the reason that the latter do not understand one of the indigenous languages, a condition stipulated by the Ethiopian law with regard to election. Knowledge of the language of the respective state is a requirement for candidacy for election.[112] The case was referred to the House of Federation, the sole interpreter of the Federal Constitution. Then the House of Federation decided the case in favor of the settlers because of the fact that the working language of the state of Benshangul-Gumuz is Amharic rather than any of the five indigenous languages spoken in the state[113].

The right of each and every language group to establish a federating state of its own is, as already mentioned, guaranteed by the Federal Constitution of Ethiopia[114]. Through the establishment of a federating state, a group aspires to

---

109 For details of the Ethiopian 1984-85 famine and the consequent resettlement programme of the Derg, see Robert D. Kaplan (1988) and Jason W. Clay and Bonnie B. Holcomb (1986).

110 See, for example, William Davison (2011)'s report to www.businessreport.com on the construction of new sugar plants

111 The five indigenous language groups are Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha, Komo and Mao.

112 See Art.45 (1)(b) of Ethiopian Election Law which provides: "Any person shall be eligible for candidature, where he ... is versed in the working language of the Regional State or the area of his intended candidature."

113 For detail see Journal of Constitutional Decisions (2008); Lahra Smith (2005), PP.289-301 and Assefa Fiseha (2010), PP.243-247.

114 Art.47(2), Federal Constitution of Ethiopia

further promote self-government and the right to self-government can be meaningful only if it is practiced in the language of the respective group. Because of the historical suppression of languages in Ethiopia, many language groups (including those constituting the Benshangul-Gumuz state) were not able to develop their languages. For this reason, such groups decided to use the same dominant language, Amharic, as a working language of their state. The decision to adopt Amharic as the working language of the state seems to have been made out of necessity and is for a transitional period until the region develops, standardizes and begins to use its own language(s), at least in addition to Amharic.

As internal migrants live in different regions, there is a growing challenge of reconciliation between the rights of such migrants with the rights of the indigenous language groups. In other federations like Switzerland which has more or less similar challenges, the language policy, as discussed above, is that the territorially concentrated language groups can defend their languages by obliging internal migrants or foreigners to learn the indigenous languages. That means public services are provided in the language of the indigenous group. However, individuals can communicate with the federal government in any of the four of ficial languages of Switzerland. This principle intends to guarantee the maintenance of stability among the language groups and it also protects the minority languages that are under threat of decline or even extinction.

If the same principle would apply in the Ethiopian context, the language groups (with their own state or a self-governing nation, nationality or people) could oblige individuals from other language groups to learn and apply the language of the state or self-governing nationality for all administration purposes. If they fail to do so, it is possible that they would slowly be dominated and outnumbered by individuals from other language groups and their language would cease to exist and their identity could be compromised. And if this process happens involuntarily, it can be considered as suppression and extinction of group identity rather than federal recognition and accommodation as professed in the Ethiopian Federal Constitution. When we come to the Benshangul-Gumuz case, while it would be fair and constitutional to require the settlers or internal migrants to speak one of the official languages of the state, it is not proper to expect the internal migrants to speak the local languages while the state itself failed to adopt any of the five indigenous languages as its working language. As Amharic is adopted as a working language of the state of Benshangul-Gumuz, those internal migrants should be allowed to stand for election if they have knowledge of Amharic language. But if the state of Benshangul-Gumuz had adopted two or three of the indigenous languages as working/official languages, it would be proper to make knowledge of one of these indigenous languages as one of the

requirements for candidates to stand for election.

This case is related to the issue of representation in general and the conflicts between group rights and individual rights in particular. As language is the dominant marker of identity of the groups (NNP) in Ethiopia, representatives of such groups should at least be able to speak the language of such groups, as the representative and the represented should be able to communicate in a common language. So the decision that the internal migrants in Benshangul-Gumuz can stand for election without the knowledge of the local languages is valid as long as Benshangul-Gumuz state continues to use Amharic as its working language. According to the territoriality principle and also according to the rights given to language groups by the Ethiopian Federal Constitution, territorially concentrated and self-governing language groups have the right to use and develop their language and they cannot do so if they are not able to protect their languages from external domination within their respective territory.

According to the territoriality principle (which aims at protecting minority language groups), the people who move from one region or local community to another must adapt to the language of the host society (or the indigenous language group) for the provisions of public services. The rights associated to territory can only be exercised when the people are in their own territory. This is on the assumption that each language group has its own territory it has inhabited for a long period of time - where it can enjoy the right to self-government in its own language. This takes us to the question of how long a group of people (language group) should live in a territory in order to be considered indigenous and claim group right in the territory it inhabits. This issue requires an independent research of its own. What can be said at this juncture, without dealing with the criteria of making distinction between the indigenous and internal migrants, is that the non-territorial rights can be enjoyed by individuals as individuals regardless of such distinctions and without reference to where an individual lives. But the territory-related rights (like self-governing rights and getting public services in one's language) do not move from one region to the other with the the individual. Such rights need a fixed territory to be exercised. Otherwise, there would not be stability in the whole federation if the boundaries of the language groups change flexibly from time to time. It is in the first place to maintain stability and to protect smaller language groups in their own territory from being dominated by internal population movement or immigrants that the territoriality principle is guaranteed in Switzerland, as discussed above.

However, such arguments are challenged by the population movements

from one Ethiopian state to the other. In response to such challenges there is a need to balance the rights of the indigenous language groups with the rights of individuals (from different language groups) who leave their territories of origin at different occasions, particularly those who moved from one region to the other in large mass by government decisions either in the resettlement programmes or as laborers in the new big investment projects. In such cases, we can find two kinds of individual settlers: those who live dispersed and those who live in group in a confined territory within a regional state. Depending on the way individuals live they can have different opportunities and challenges. While the individual settlers who live dispersed will be forced to understand the language of the regional state they live in to get public services and exercise their political rights, the individual settlers who live in group in a confined territory can claim certain limited rights either as a language group if they belong to the same language group or as special groups if they belong to diverse language groups (like the settlers in Benshangul-Gumuz) but can understand each other in a common language. On the one hand, it is proper to allow individual settlers who live in group in a confined territory (for example, close to an area of their employment) to run their day to day activities (e.g. primary education and municipal/local administration) in the language all individuals understand, even if it is different from the working language of the state where they found themselves. On the other hand, such individuals need to understand the working language of the state where they live if, for example, they want to stand for election in the state parliament and in order to get certain public services from that state government. If their population size justifies for representation to the House of Peoples' Representatives (the federal legislative body), it is proper to guarantee them representation even in this House. However, it is questionable if such individuals can be represented to the House of Federation (which is representative of the NNP of the country). Such individuals have their own territory-based mother tongue group (NNP) and they can be represented there only once as groups according to the number of their population size. Thus, this right can only be exercised within their territory of origin[115].

While maintaining the constitutionally guaranteed rights of the indigenous language groups to develop their language and exercise autonomous administration, it is crucial at the same time to respect the fundamental and constitutionally guaranteed right of individuals to choose their residence and to pursue

---

115 "Each Nation, Nationality and People shall be represented in the House of the Federation by at least one member. Each Nation or Nationality shall be represented by one additional representative for each one million of its population."(Sub-article 2 of (Art.61).

a livelihood of their choice anywhere within the territory of the country[116]. The right to elect and be elected both at the state and federal levels, to choose the language of primary education and self-administration of such individuals are issues that will remain as some of the continuing challenges to the Ethiopian federalism. These issues will require in-depth researches of their own.

Multi-lingualism in Education and Mass Media
Education
Based on the accommodative principles adopted as of 1991 that each group has the right to use and develop its own language; Ethiopia adopted Education and Training Policy in 1994. According to this policy, primary education shall be conducted in the language of each language community. This is done because of the "pedagogical advantage of the child" when learning in mother tongue and also to implement the "rights of nationalities to promote the use of their lan guages." [117] Amharic is supposed to be taught country-wide as a subject in prima- ry and secondary education and English is taught as a subject in primary educa- tion and it becomes a medium of instruction in secondary and higher education. "Students can choose and learn at least one nationality language and one foreign language for cultural and international relations."[118] At the lower level of govern- ment, the basic rights of individuals to learn in their mother tongue is, in principle, guaranteed. But the right to use one's language for education is limited by many factors, for example, lack of experts, unavailability of developed materials for use in primary education and also the fact that many minority languages do not have a writing system yet. For this reason, many of the small language groups with such difficulties are forced to use Amharic as a medium of instruction even for primary education. This challenge requires both levels of government to provide the necessary support to such language groups to develop their languages so that they, in the near future, would be able to use their languages at least for primary education. The right of each and every NNP of the country to use one's language cannot be realized by merely guaranteeing this right at a constitutional level. This kind of right does not simply require the state to stay neutral but rather to active- ly assist the historically disadvantaged language groups to develop and use their languages. It is very critical in the life of the child to use his/her mother tongue in the primary education and this has been recognized long ago by a UNESCO committee of experts when considering the importance of language in education:

---

116 See Articles 32 and 41, Federal Constitution of Ethiopia

117 Section 3.5.1 of the 1994 Education and Training Policy of the government

118 Section 3.5.6 of the 1994 Education and Training Policy of the government

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through unfamiliar linguistic medium.[119]

Following this statement the recommendation of the UNESCO committee of experts was that "the use of the mother tongue be extended to as late a stage in education as possible." [120] In connection with the importance of mother tongue, at least, in primary education, Bamgbose states: "The use of a language other than the child's first language as a medium of instruction, particularly in early primary education is a case of language exclusion, since it ignores the language the child brings to school, which he or she is already fairly proficient in. It then becomes an up-hill task for the child to overcome the difficulties of a new content presented in a foreign medium."[121] For this reason, many international instruments, in addition to the right to education, have formulated the right of minority groups to use their own language[122]. While education is a human right and is very essential to realize other human rights (like the right to freedom of expression), it is equally important for language groups to educate their children in their mother tongue and, therefore, language remains an important element for a language group as a means of preserving and developing its unique identity and promoting its self-governing rights. Taking this fact into account, the Federal Government of Ethiopia and the governments of the federating states should actively support the minority language groups who are not able to use their languages for educating their children at least at the primary school level.

In Switzerland education is the competency of the cantons, subject to some constitutional principles. The language of instruction is according to the principle of territoriality. That means the language of the respective municipality or community will be the language of instruction. Individuals (from different language areas) living in a certain municipality have to send their children to primary schools in the language of that municipality. The main purpose of the

119 UNESCO (1953), P.11.
120 UNESCO (1953), P.48.

121 Ayo Bamgbose (2000), P.12.

122 See Art. 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Art.27 Convention on Civil and Political Rights; Art.30 Convention on the Rights of the Child and Art.5 (c) UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education. "The right of persons belonging to national minorities to maintain their identity can only be fully realized if they acquire a proper knowledge of their mother tongue during the educational process." Paragraph 1, The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities (1996).

territoriality principle is already mentioned above and its application varies from one canton to another[123]. But the main purpose is generally to protect the territorially located indigenous language groups from being dominated by foreign languages or immigrants from other linguistic areas. The federal government provides subsidies to the disadvantaged regions and language groups. Particularly the cantons with more language groups get more financial support in order to enable them to cover the costs of developing textbooks and training teachers[124]. The Swiss Federal Government has enacted a new law which governs details on the use of languages[125]. This law, based on the Federal Constitution, governs the use of the official languages by the federal authorities and the languages of com munication between the individuals and the federal authorities. Furthermore, it regulates the financial support of the federal government to the cantons with more language communities, particularly the cantons of Ticino and Graubünden where Italian and Rätoromanisch languages (the two minority languages) are spoken respectively[126]. This financial support should enable these cantons to fulfill the special tasks related to the maintenance of the minority languages.

The constitution of the Republic of South Africa obliges the state to "take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of" the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of the people[127]. Out of the more than 1500 mother tongues in India, only 122 languages are recorded languages and out of these only 26 are used as media of instruction at the primary education[128]. This means millions of children in India do not get primary education in their mother tongue.

In order to tackle the challenges of the use of languages by each and every language group in Ethiopia at least in the primary education, it is necessary to enact a comprehensive law on the use of languages which would, among others, list the languages that exist in the country and include the policies and the obligations of both levels of government with regard to the use of such languages in education and other various public and private institutions. It is a big challenge to find a balance between the desire to promote unity through common language(s) and the necessity to preserve group identity by guaranteeing each

123 See Kenneth D. McRae (1983), P.148.

124 Kenneth D. McRae (1983), P.149.

125 Bundesgesetz über die Landessprachen und die Verständigung zwischen den Sprachgemeinschaften(S prachengesetz, SpG) vom 2007. [Swiss Federal Law on Languages of 2007]

126 Art.1, Swiss Federal Law on Languages of 2007.

127 Art.6 (2), Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

128 Dhir Jhngran (2009), P.266.

language group the right to use its language, be it in education or other aspects of life. After all, finding a balance of conflicting interests is one important purpose for adopting federalism but this needs a continuous effort and cannot be achieved overnight. However, it has to be clear from the outset that the individual members of the language groups, whose language is not official (working) language at the federal or even at the state level, have both the right and the obligation. While they have the right to use their own language for the activities at the community level, they also have the obligation to learn the languages of their respective regional states and the working language(s) of the federal institutions so that their political or economic participation both at the state and federal levels would be strengthened.

This means each and every Ethiopian should learn at least three or four languages depending on how many languages are going to be added to Amharic as working languages of the federal government for the future. One needs to learn the working languages of the state where s/he lives, the working language(s) of the federal government in addition to his/her mother tongue and English which is the medium of instruction as of secondary school. If the working languages in some of the federating states and the working languages of the federal government are the same, like the current status of Amharic, people who live in such states will have the privilege to learn either only two or three instead of four languages. However, people living in such states should be willing to learn other working languages of the federal government (once some more working languages are adopted) than their mother tongue or the working language of their state. What is different in the Swiss case is that the three (plus one) official languages of the country are also official languages in different cantons. For example, the mother tongue of a Swiss citizen at the community level is also the official language (or one of the official languages) of both the canton where the individual resides and the federation. Because of the limited number of languages that are officially recognized in Switzerland, the official language at the municipality level is also one of the official languages of Switzerland.

As already mentioned, a common language should not necessarily mean only one language. Multiple languages can be adopted as common languages. The Swiss experience is instructive in this respect that at least the three out of the four indigenous languages of the country are recognized as official languages of the whole federation. So the desire to promote national unity or integration is not and should not necessarily be seen as mutually exclusive with the necessity of preserving group identity. They can rather reinforce each other.

Some minority nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia do not have developed languages that can be used for education and written communication pur

poses. Languages of such groups were sustained only orally and each affected group should be enabled to develop a standardized written language to use it for mother tongue primary education and for wider communication among its members. Even if the constitution declares that all Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition, a mere recognition does not guarantee the equality of the historically disadvantaged languages. In relation to this issue, Boran states: "If inequality between linguistic groups occurs in society (that is if the groups are unequally positioned in relation to each other), then accordingly equal status will work in favour of the already advantaged group and reinforce the existing relational inequalities."[129] That means the right to use one's language requires active assistance from the government. Both levels of government are supposed to do their best to support the minority language groups in Ethiopia to develop their languages. It is not only guaranteeing equal state recognition and continuing using the already developed languages but also providing support to the disadvantaged languages that make the constitutional right to use one's language meaningful and effective.

Mass Media
Depending on the fair and proper use of the languages of a given society, the mass media plays significant role in developing and preserving the identities of language groups. In general the mass media is used to entertain, inform and educate the people in their languages. When we take, for example, the radio and television services, they are the main effective channels of communication that can reach both the literate and illiterate people. Because of the importance of these media, it is imperative to improve their use both at the federal and regional levels. At the federal level, the radio and television programmes should be transmitted in the would-be major multiple official languages of the country.

As mentioned above, if inequality between linguistic groups occurs in society (i.e. if the language groups are unequally positioned in relation to each other), then according equal status will work in favour of the already advantaged group and reinforce the existing relational inequalities.

At the regional level, radio and television programmes should be transmitted in the official languages adopted by the respective regions. Furthermore, the minorities within the regions should be able to have access to their own mass media (at least a Frequency Modulation radio) and get the necessary support from the federal and state governments to run this medium of communication. If the various local communities are not able to have their own radio or TV stations, they should be able to broadcast some programmes of their own in the f

129 See Idil Boran (2001), P.250

ederal or state media.

The Ethiopian Broadcasting Service Proclamation provides for public, commercial and community broadcasting services. The "community broadcasting service shall", among others, "promote and develop the language, culture and artistic value of the community." [130] The community broadcasting services is also obliged to carry out activities based on the needs of the people concerning development, education and good governance[131]. Similarly, the public broadcasting service is supposed to inform, educate and entertain the public[132]. The respective roles of the broadcasting services can be effectively conducted if they are transmitted in the language of the community where such broadcasting services are carried out. When we see the Swiss experience, broadcasting services are carried out in the three official languages. The Swiss law on radio and television provides that there should be at least one radio and one television programme at the federal level which are transmitted in the three official languages all over the country with the same content[133]. While taking into account the interest of the Romansch language community in radio and television programmes, the law guarantees them at least one radio programme[134]. Television programme in Romansch language is broadcast on other Swiss television channels[135].

In addition to the Ethiopian radio and television agency which operates at the federal level, each regional state has its own mass media agency which runs radio and television services[136]. Currently, most of regional states provide radio services at the regional and community levels. But the television services of the regional states, with the exception of the Oromia Regional State, are transmitted through the Ethiopian television channel[137]. The national radio and television programmes (as media of the federation) are transmitted only in the Amharic language. This is a reversal when compared with the past radio and television services provided in various languages. Even during the Derg regime, national radio programmes were transmitted, in addition to Amharic, in other major Ethi

---

130 Art.16(4) (b) Ethiopian Broadcasting Service Proclamation (Proclamation No.533/2007)

131 Ethiopian Broadcasting Service Proclamation (Proclamation No.533/2007), Art.16(4) (a)

132 Ibid., Art.16(2) (b)

133 See Bundesgesetz über Radio und Fernsehen (RTVG) vom 24. März 2006 (Swiss Federal Law on Radio and Television), Arts. 24 and 30
134 Ibid., Arts.24 (2)

135 http://www.srgssr.ch/en/television/?type=author

136 See http://www.eba.gov.et/web/data/Broadcast/main.htm

137 See http://www.allcomtv.com/tv-oromiyaa

opian languages, like the Oromo language, Tigrigna, Somali and Afar.

Even if it is not yet widespread in local communities of Ethiopia, the Internet service can also be effectively used by the local people to communicate with the outside world and share experiences with regard to education, culture and other aspects of their life. It can be used to regularly inform the citizens on, for example, health, corruption and other administration related issues in their mother tongue. But given the level of development of the regions and the limited availability of the Internet in rural areas, this is only possible in the long run.

The print media, radio, TV and other electronic media should be used to preserve the existence (through the exercise of its rights) of the respective language groups and at the same time to promote the national integration/unity. So, the media used through the respective language groups should be able to play double roles at the same time: the role of preservation of group identity and promotion of national integration or national unity. These roles can be effectively played if each group uses its own language not only to develop its history but also to understand the history of other Ethiopian language groups who must share the same country under the umbrella of federalism.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations
This article assessed the role of language and language policies in the preservation of group identities and their implication on the rights of individuals under the federal system of Ethiopia. Based on these assessments, the following conclusions and recommendations can be made.

Language is a dominant marker of group identity in Ethiopia. It is true that people often have multiple identities based on gender, class, religion, civil society etc. Yet in reaction to the homogenization policy of the state, ethno-nationalist based mobilization mainly based on language took a politically more visible form compared to other forms of mobilization. The boundary lines between the various nations, nationalities and peoples (NNP) of Ethiopia are marked mainly by language. In the current Ethiopian political context language is both a means and an end to the preservation of group identities. For this reason, the constitutional principles guaranteeing the right to self-determination of these NNP of the country cannot be fully realized without guaranteeing each group to use its own language at least for local administration and (primary) education. The legacy of the assimilation policies of the previous authoritarian regimes should be rectified in order to promote the rights of language groups to preserve their identities. It is, therefore, necessary to adopt clear language policies at the federal and regional levels of government which protect group identities without negative implication on the exercise of individual rights. The language policies need to take into

account the fact that at the moment there is a huge gap between the constitutionally guaranteed unconditional right of every NNP to self-determination including secession and the reality that there are some language groups (nationalities or peoples) that are not able to use their languages even at the lowest level. So the language policies at both levels of government should be designed to narrow down such a gap on the use of languages.

The policy at the federal level of using only Amharic as a working language of the federal government and its institutions should be reassessed and the use of some more languages as working languages should be considered. Even if the idea of adopting multi-lingualism at the federal level may not be popular among the speakers of the dominant language by providing many excuses, at least the Oromo language, Tigrigna and Somali should be adopted, in addition to Amharic, as working languages of the federal government. However, if making such additional languages working languages of the whole federation creates difficulties, they can be at least working languages of the federal government in dealing with the states using these languages. This is similar to the Swiss language policy on the Romansch language which is the official langue in communication between the Romansch people and the federal government. Taking into account the number of population speaking these languages and their level of development, adopting them as working languages at the federal level would be fair and consistent with the principles of the Federal Constitution.

Similarly, at the state level, accommodative language policies should be adopted. At least in the states of Benshangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Harari (which has already adopted official bilingualism), and SNNP two or more languages should be adopted as working languages. In all or in some of these states, Amharic can continue as a link language in addition to the languages of the indigenous groups in the respective regions.

The equality of all language groups is questionable if some groups get public services at all levels of government in their mother tongue while others get such services in other languages bearing all the costs of translation by themselves. For the latter group, it is a double burden: they are not able to develop their language and they are also forced to pay extra prices for the translation of materials produced in the working/official languages. For this reason, while making all necessary and possible efforts to provide public services and primary education at least at the local level in the language of the respective groups, the federal and state governments should bear the costs of translation of judicial processes and the materials they produce to the minority languages.

The Ethiopian states are given the competence to decide on their working languages. However, entirely leaving the power to decide on the use of languag

es to the states may conflict with the constitutionally guaranteed right of each language group (within the states) to speak, write and develop its own language. In order to protect the rights of language groups, there is a need to adopt a comprehensive law on the use of languages based on the principles of the Federal Constitution. It would also be recommendable to establish a centre for protection and promotion of languages of the minority groups which would work at the central level but having braches in the states. This centre should engage in recording all the existing minority languages and follow up on the challenges with regard to the protection and preservation of such languages at the regional levels.

It is only if there is a fair language policy both at the federal and regional levels that the rights of all language groups can be duly recognized, accommodated and balanced with the rights of individuals according to the spirit of the Federal Constitution. This is possible only if the language of Ethiopian federalism is the languages of Ethiopian nations, nationalities and peoples realized in the spirit of rectifying the past injustices and promoting national unity in line with the equality of all language groups.

Bibliography

Aberra Degefa. (2009). Principles Guiding the Choice of Working Languages in Multi-lingual Societies: Some reflections on the Language Policy of Ethiopia. In Tsegaye Regassa (ed.). Issues of Federalism in Ethiopia: Towards an Inventory, Ethiopian Constitutional Law Series. Vol.2, 69-114, Faculty of Law, Addis Ababa University.

Aito, Emmanuel. (2005). National and Official Languages in Nigeria: Reflections on Linguistic Interference and the Impact of Language Policy and Politics on Minority Languages. In Cohen, James et. al. (eds.). ISB4: Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism. Somerville: Cascadilla Press, 18-38.

Aklilu Abraham. (2006). Ethnicity and Dilemmas of State Making: Ethnic Federalism and Institutional Reforms in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1/2 (Summer/Fall 2005-2006), pp. 77-119.

Alemante G. Selassie. (1992). Ethnic Identity and Constitutional Design for Africa. *Stanford Journal of International Law*, Vol.29.

_____(2003). Ethnic Federalism: Its Promise and Pitfalls for Africa. *Yale Journal of International Law*, Vol.28, No. 51.

Alemseged Abbay. (2013). Is Multilingualism a Problematic Paradigm in Ethiopia?, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Volume 19, Issue 2, 233-249.

Andreas Eshete. (2004). Ethnic Federalism: New Frontiers in Ethiopian Poli

tics. A paper presented at the first National Conference on Federalism, Conflict and Peace-building. Ministry of Federal Affairs (Ethiopia), Addis Ababa.

Assefa Fiseha. (2010). *Federalism and Accommodation of Diversities: The Experience of Ethiopia*. (3rd Revised Edition). Nijmegen: Wolf Legal Publishers.

Bamgbose, Ayo. (2000). *Language and Exclusion: The Consequences of Language Policies in Africa*. Munster: LIT Verlag.

Beheydt, Ludo. (1995). The Linguistic Situation in the New Belgium. In Wrighte Sue (ed.). *Language in Contact and Conflict: Contrasting Experiences in the Netherlands and Belgium*. Frankfurt Lodge: Clevedon.

Beken, Christophe van der. (2008). Ethiopia: Constitutional Protection of Ethnic Minorities at the Regional Level. In Brems, Eva and Van der Beker (eds.). *Federalism and the Protection of Human Rights in Ethiopia* (Berlin: LIT Verlag GmbH & Co.)

_____ (2009). Ethiopian Constitutions and the Accommodation of Ethnic Diversity: The Limits of the Territorial Approach. In Tsegaye Regassa (ed.). Issues of Federalism in Ethiopia: Towards an Inventory, Ethiopian Constitutional Law Series, Vol.2, 217-300, Faculty of Law, Addis Ababa University.

Bender, M. Lionel. (1985, Fall). Ethiopian Language Policy 1974-1981, *Anthropological Linguistics*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 273-279.

Biaggini, Giovanni. (2004), Federalism, Sub-national Constitutional Arrangements, and the Protection of Minorities in Switzerland. In Alan Tarr et al (eds.). *Federalism, Sub-national Constitutions, and Minority Rights*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.

Boran, Idil. (2001). Autonomy as a Remedy for Language Conflict: Negotiating Territoriality and Identity. Language Problems & Language Planning Vol. 25, No.3, 237–257.

Clay, Jason W. and Holcomb, Bonnie B. (1986). *Politics and the Ethiopian Famine: 1984-1985* Cambridge: Cultural Survival, Inc.

Cooper, Robert L. (1976). *The Spread of Amharic. In Bender M.L. et al (eds.). Language in Ethiopi*a. London: Oxford University Press.

_____ (1976a), Government Language Policy. In Bender M.L. et al (eds.). *Language in Ethiopia*. London: Oxford University Press.

Davison, William. (2011). Ethiopia Building 10 New Sugar Plants to Become Leading Exporter. Report to www.businessreport.com on September 13, 2011. http://www. businessweek.com/news/2011-09-13/ethiopia-building-10-new-sugar-plants-to-become-leading-exporter.html

Fasil Nahum. (1997). *Constitution for a Nation of Nations: The Ethiopian Pros*

pect. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Printing Press,

Fleiner, Thomas. (2007). Sprachenfreiheit. http://www.thomasfleiner.ch/files/ categories/ Intensivkurs/ Sprachenfreiheitok.pdf Accessed: 07.05.2013

Friedrich, Carl J. (1975). The Politics of Language and Corporate Federalism. In Savard, Jean-Guy and Vigneault, Richard. Multilingual Political systems: Problems and Solutions Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval.

Gebru Tareke. (1996). *Ethiopia: Power & Protest: Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century.* Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press.

Jhngran, Dhir. (2009). Hundreds of Home Languages in the Country and Many in most Classrooms: Coping with Diversity in Primary Education in India. In Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove et al (eds.). *Social Justice Through Multilingual Education.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Journal of Constitutional Decisions. (2008). Vol.1, No.1, Published by the Ethiopian House of Federation (This journal incorporates the main constitutional decisions passed by the same House of Federations).

Kägi-Diener, Regula. (2008). Commentary to Art.4 of the Swiss Constitution. In Bernhard Erenzeller et al (eds.). *Das Schweizerisches Bundesverfassung, Kommentar 2.* Auflage. Zürich: Schultess.

Kaplan, Robert D. (1986). *Surrender or Starve: Travels in Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea.* New York: Vintage Books, A Divison of Randum House, Inc.

Kidane Mengisteab. (1997). New Approaches to State Building in Africa: The Case of Ethiopia's Ethnic- Based Federalism. *African Studies Review.* Vol. 40, Issue 3, 111-132.

Kiflu Tadesse. (1993). The Generation, The History of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party: Part I, from the early beginnings to 1975. Silver Spring: Independent Publishers.

_____ (1998). *The Generation, The History of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party: Part II, Ethiopia, Transformation and Conflict.* Lanham: University Press of America.

Kymlicka, Will. (2001). *Political in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

_____ (2006). Emerging Western Models of Multination Federalism: Are They Relevant for Africa? In David Turton (ed.). *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective.* Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.

Laponce, J. L. (1987). *Language and Their Territories.* Translated from French by Anthony Martin Sperry. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Levine N. Donald. (1965). *Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Mansbridge, Jane. (1999). Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Repre-

sent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'. *The Journal of Politics*. Vol. 61, 628-57.

Markakis, John. (2011). *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers*. Suffolk: James Currey.

McRae, Kenneth. (1973). The Principles of Territoriality and the Principle of Personality in Multilingual States. A paper prepared for the Ninth World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Montreal, August 19-25.

Medhane Tadesse. (2004). Religion, Peace and the Future of Ethiopia. A paper presented at The First National Conference on Federalism, Conflict and Peace-building and published by the Ministry of Federal Affairs (Ethiopia), Addis Ababa.

Mitra, Subrata K. Language and Federalism: The Multiethnic Challenge. *International Social Science Journal*. Vol.53, Issue 167, 51-60.

Mohammed Dejen Assen. (2010). The Use of Mother Tongue in Education: The Case of Afaan Oromo in Oromo Nationality Zone of Amhara National Regional State. In Alemu Habtu (ed.). Ethiopian Federalism: Principles, Processes and Practice. 5th International Conference on Federalism, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Orman, Jon. (2008). *Language policy and Nation-building in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Vienna: Springer Science+Business Media.

Pitkin, Hanna F. (1967). *The Concept of Representation*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Pool, Jonathan. (1991). The Official Language Problem. *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 85, No. 2 (Jun., 1991), 495-514

Réaume, Denis G. (2007). Beyond Personality: The Territorial and Personal Principles of Language Policy Reconsidered. In Will Kymlicka and Alan Patten. (eds.). *Language Rights and Political Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Richter, Dagmar. (2005). *Sprachenordnung und Minderheitenschutz im Schweizerischen Bundesstaat: Relativität des Sprachenrechts und Sicherung des Sprachenfriedens*. Berlin: Springer.

Smith, Lahra. (2005). Voting for a Nationality: Ethnic Identity, Political Institutions and Citizenship in Ethiopia. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.

_____ (2008). The Politics of Contemporary Language Policy in Ethiopia. *Journal of Developing Societies,* Vol 24(2): 207-243.

Spolsky, Bernard. (2004). *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thürer, Daniel and Burri, Thomas. (2006). Zum Sprachenrecht der Schweiz. In Pan, Christoph and Pfeil, Beate Sibylle (eds.). *Zur Entstehung des modernen Minderheitenschutzes in Europa, Handbuch der europäischen*

Volksgruppen. Vienna: Springer-Verlag.

UNESCO. (1953). The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, Paris.

Webb, Victor N. (2002). *Languages in South Africa: The Role of Language in National Transformation, Reconstruction and Development.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Williams, Melissa O. (1998). *Voice, Trust and Memory: Marginalized Groups and the Failings of Liberal Representation.* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.

Yared Legesse. (2009). Linguistic regimes in Multinational federations: The Ethiopian Experience in a Comparative Perspective. In Tsegaye Regassa (ed.). Issues of Federalism in Ethiopia: Towards an Inventory, Ethiopian Constitutional Law Series. Vol.2, 161-216. Faculty of Law, Addis Ababa University.

Young, Iris Marion. (2000). *Inclusion and Democracy.* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Young, John. (1996). Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia. *Review of African Political Economy.* Vol. 23, Issue 70.

_____ (1997). *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front,* 1975-1991. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____ (1999). Along Ethiopia's Western Frontier: Gambella and Benishangul in Transition. *The Journal of Modern African Studies.* Vol. 37/2