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Full Length Research Paper

Indigenous language shift in Siltie: Causes, effects and directions for revitalization

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The purpose of this study is to investigate the major factors that facilitated indigenous language shift in Siltie (a Semitic language; primarily spoken in south-western Ethiopia), their effects on Siltie's overall identity and the future directions to reverse the situation (revitalize the language). The subjects used for the current study were 10 elders for an interview selected by purposive sampling and 500 people selected by availability sampling from five selected districts or woredas of Siltie Zone for filling questionnaire and 50 of them selected purposively for focused group discussion (FGD; a sample of selected informants in group for collecting data in major themes of the study). The descriptive survey research design was used to conduct this study by using both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. The result indicated that there were various factors that facilitated the indigenous language shift in Siltie: political, social, economic and attitudinal ones that highly threatened the overall identities (history, culture, heritage and indigenous wisdom) of Siltie people. Based on these findings, therefore, different projects of revitalization are recommended for the revitalization of Siltie language: awareness training on the use of Siltie language, development of a (creative) writing culture, establishment of school-based language revitalization project, planning of family-based language revitalization project and establishment of series, deep and multifaceted training and research projects that involve linguists and language experts.

Key words: Heritage language, language shift, Siltie identity, language revitalization.

INTRODUCITON

The Siltie people are one of the ancient Semitic speaking peoples of Ethiopia. They have a very strong Islamic tradition; subsequently Islam provides the central backbone of the Siltie identity (Hussien, 2010). The Siltie people live in South-West part of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), in an area which stretches for about 60 kms along both sides of Addis Ababa – Hosanna road, starting from a point about 140 kms from Addis Ababa. The Siltie zonal administration is located at Worabe Town, approximately 172 kms south of Addis Ababa, on the road to Hosanna and 155kms from the regional capital Hawassa.

Siltie people have preserved its indigenous language and linguistic identity for many centuries. However, this long and trans-generational linguistic identity preservation journey has passed through various tough challenges in different political times. According to the oral stories of Siltie elders, indigenous language of Siltie has been used as a prominent means of communication for its speakers without any significant language pressure from other languages until the time of conquest of Siltie by Shawa government in 1888; hence the language of Siltie has been in a declined use in its linguistic landscape. As Siltie elders elaborate in their oral stories, the indigenous language of Siltie has been used side-by-side with the dominant language of Ethiopia (Amharic).

According to Fishman (1989) and Thomason (2001), when two or more languages are in contact situation, there will be three alternatives that can occur. First, the languages may be maintained without any change. Second, there may be change or shift in some forms of the languages such as lexicon, phonetics, phonology and morphology. Third, one of the languages may dominate the other and become prominent with the expense of the dominated one which leads to the decline in use of the dominated language by its speech community. Scholars like Paulston et al. (2010) and Fishamn (1999) call such the situation as language shift which refers to changes in language use. Language shift does not necessarily mean the complete loss of a language. It also means the decreased use of a language in the overall domains of the speech community such as in courts, in religious institutions, in research centers and in political institutions, in schools and in market places.

In sociological perspective of speaking, language is a carrier of values, beliefs, customs and norms. This implies that language and culture mutually shape each other (Gudykunst and Schmidt, 1988; Fishamn, 1999; Hall, 1990). Fishamn (1999: 4) holds that "Although language has rarely been equated with the totality of one's identity, it has, in certain historical, regional and disciplinary contexts, been accorded priority within that totality". This is perhaps due to the fact that language shapes our cultural orientation to a large extent, since culture is transmitted through language and language is the main tool for the internalization of culture by the individual. When there is more than one language (as a contact to each other) in the same society, it should be expected that the languages affect the growth of each other within that speech community. There may be severe pressure from the dominant language to the dominated one. As a result, such the domination leads the dominated community to lose its social, linguistic and cultural identity by the process of language shift (Fishamn, 2001).

As indicated above, Siltie language is a typical example of being in a contact situation with Amharic language for long time in Ethiopian history. Therefore, this descriptive survey was attempted to investigate the major factors that facilitated indigenous language shift in Siltie, their effects on overall identities of Siltie people and then to find out directions to revitalize the language.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. This design is the one that attempts to examine a phenomenon that is occurring at a specific place and time (Creswell, 2012). It is also used to describe the conditions, practices and structures that are going on or trends that are evident in a given social environment (Martler and Charles, 2005). Thus, the researcher used this design to explore the existing shift of Siltie language, its causes and the effects it has on the overall identity of Siltie people.

The relevant data of this study were collected from selected informants of Siltie. Siltie is among 56 Nations and Nationalities in Southern Ethiopia commonly known by its very strong Islamic tradition and hospitability of people from other parts of the world (Hussien, 2010). According to the Siltie Zonal Finance and Economic Development Department, the total population of Siltie is more than 1.2 million. The zone has eight districts or Woredas and one city administration (Worabie). The major economic activities of Siltie are mixed agriculture and trade. The Zonal city of Siltie (Worabie) is located 173kms from Addis Ababa and 155kms from the Regional capital (Hawassa).

Three tools of data collection are used: questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion. From these three tools, an interview was used to collect data from elders, a questionnaire was used to collect data from common group of people in Siltie and FGD was used to collect data from mixed groups of people (both elders and common groups).

For this study, the researcher used purposive sampling for selecting elders for interview and to be participant in FGD availability sampling for selecting other individuals for collecting data through questionnaire and to be part in FGD. For collecting data through questionnaire, 500 individuals were selected from five (5) Woredas of Siltie Zone and for interview 10 elders having deep knowledge of Siltie language; culture and heritage were selected from the same 5 Woredas. With the inclusion of two elders (selected for interview), ten individuals were selected in each Woreda (the total of 50) for collecting data through FGD.

The data collected are analyzed using eclectic (both quantitative and qualitative) method of data analysis. The entire data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using quantitative method of data analysis using frequency counting and percentage those by the interview and FGD are analyzed in a qualitative approach. Then, the discussion is presented in a systematic approach of describing, analyzing and interpreting the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background information of the respondents

As can be seen in the Table 1, 500 respondents were drawn from 5 sample Woredas of Siltie Zone (Sankura, Lampuro, Dalocha, Silti and Hulibarag). All the selected respondents were from different backgrounds in their sex, age and occupation. With regard to sex, respondents were selected from both males and females. The respondents were also selected from different age

Table 1. General background information of the respondents.

Name of Woreda	Sex		Age				Occupation					Sub-total
Background information of the respondents	Male	Female	16-25	26-35	36-45	46 and above	Farmers	Teachers	Office workers	NGO workers	Unemployed	
Sankura	76	24	30	26	24	20	34	18	18	05	25	100
Lampuro	80	20	28	30	26	16	36	12	22	04	26	100
Dalocha	68	32	24	27	30	19	38	11	26	03	22	100
Siltii	77	23	25	30	20	25	30	16	23	08	23	100
Hulibarag	64	36	25	27	23	25	36	14	29	05	16	100
Total												500

*The number of respondents in each Woreda has been taken on the basis of their availability during data collection except elders.

groups: 16-25, 26-35, 36-45 and 46 and above. In reference to occupation, the respondents were selected from farmers, teachers, office workers, NGO workers and from unemployed individuals. This implies that adequate attention was given in selecting individuals from all walks of life for providing real information for the study.

Factors that facilitated the indigenous language Shift in Siltie

Based on the actual data interpreted below, there are various factors that caused the indigenous language shift in Siltie. As it is indicated in the literature (Fishman, 1999; Crystal, 2003; Rice, 2006), at this time, in the world, majority of the indigenous languages (except few) are under serious threat of language shift because of different factors: political, social, economic and attitudinal. As it can be inferred from data gathered and interpreted below, the case of Siltie language is not different. Hence, in this part of the study, the roles of the factors that facilitated the shift of Siltie language are dealt with.

As can be seen in Table 2, majority of the respondents (76%) replied that there are two languages (Siltie language and Amharic) most frequently used as tools of communication in Siltie. However, these two languages coexist in Siltie; majority of bilingual/ML Silties (93%) prefer to use Amharic to communicate native people in Siltie in different contexts. In other words, there has been continuous heritage language shift in Siltie (as 92% of the respondents responded to it). As discussed and agreed by all FGD members, the overall dominance of Amharic language in Siltie is due to political, social, economic and attitudinal factors that are briefly discussed below.

Political factors

Political factors have played a significant role in upward

and down ward movements of Siltie language. Even, according to the results of FGD and face-to-face interview, the majority of language shift problems are associated with political factors and policies pursued by different successive regimes in various political times of Ethiopia. In almost all sessions, the FGD reported that Siltie language decline and growth has passed through different distinct political periods. This was prevalent from 1888 onwards. As typical example of decline, Emperor Minellik of Shawa conquered Siltie and merged it into the central government in 1888. In the then time, the Siltie people were forced to use Amharic for their official purposes.

As reported by one of the interviewed elder, the next two successive regimes of Emperor Menellik also continued similar language policy that highly degraded the indigenous languages of Ethiopia in general and Siltie in particular which promoted the indigenous language shift in Siltie. Confirming this idea, the FGD members reported that Silties were not only forced to use Amharic in their speech community they also were forced to be fused to the Gurage linguistic and ethnic landscape that highly threatened the growth and upward movement of Siltie language.

Contrary to those three successive regimes, as one of the elders responded in face-to-face interview, Siltie language had seen in a very safe and stable growth particularly in oral aspect of the language even though it was not in written form before 1888.During this time, as the elder added, Siltie people used their language without any foreign interference, confidently and efficiently in all their daily activities. They used their language in places of traditional conflict resolution, mourning and wedding ceremonies and in almost all private and public spheres of life.

At this time (before 1888), in addition to using their language for collective ceremonies and private dealings, Siltie used it for the vast oral-traditional literary resources

Table 2. Questionnaire responses on the factors that facilitated indigenous language shift in Siltie.

S/N	Items	Yes f(%)	No f(%)	One f(%)	Two f(%)	Three f(%)	Four f(%)	>Four f(%)	Amh f(%)	Siltie
1	How many languages do you think are frequently used as tools of communication in Siltie?			20(4)	380(76)	75(20)	25(15)	0(0)		
2	Which language do you prefer to use to communicate native speakers of Siltie who are bilingual/multilingual (ML) in language use?								464(93)	36(7)
3	Do you think there has been indigenous language shift in Siltie?	46(92)	40(8)							

f=frequency; %=percentage Amh=Amharic; *Percentage for each item in Table 2 was calculated and rounded off to the nearest whole number.

(with particular emphasis to oral literature) like telling different types of tales (folktales, fairy tales and riddles), narrating oral short stories and even teaching their children this folk wisdom so as to transfer the full content of their language to the next generation. Such the oral-traditional literary resources are language aspects that helped the language to be strengthened and developed (as replied by the FGD members) in the same period. However, in this period, Siltie language growth could not be regarded as in full length or in full scale. With regard to this, one of the elders in the interview responded that "in this time only the oral part of Siltie language had been used by the people visa-à-viz, the writing and documenting aspects of the language were not."

In general, the period before 1888 can be taken as relatively safe and conducive for Siltie language as the language was free from political pressure and language domination so that Silties used their language confidently and extensively in spheres of their daily life (as responded by the FGD members). This, therefore, shows that the extent of language use and utilization by the Siltie people was safe and stable even though the growth was not supported by education and technological materials.

On the other hand, from 1991 onwards is considered as a new chapter in the development of Siltie language according to the FGD result. This time emerged when Siltie language was at the verge of serious endangerment. A new political wind has blown for the revival of not only Siltie language but for all the indigenous languages of Ethiopia. Indigenous languages of Ethiopia have massively got the policy support which they did not enjoy before. As Bourhis (1977) noted, language and politics are interrelated and the function between them can positively or negatively affect each other based on the type of relationship.

From 1991 onwards, a new education policy along with a new language policy was designed to enable indigenous Ethiopian languages giving them the opportunity as being media of instruction for elementary and primary level of schools. As reported by all sessions of FGD, Siltie language has enjoyed the opportunity of being a medium of instruction at elementary schools. Consequently Siltie children have got the opportunity of learning their indigenous language in schools. However, as one of the interviewed elders reported, these activities have not brought Siltie language into a complete revival given the long stay and deep-rooted repression that stayed for decades upon Siltie language and people. Therefore, it needs rethinking and planning for effective development of Siltie language now-onwards having this conducive political landscape for cultivating Siltie language and making it grow to its full length.

Social factors

According to FGD participants, the other reason for the potential Siltie language shift is social network. One example for this is particularly the marriage network of Siltie and non-speakers of the language. The marriage between Siltie and other ethnic groups have become wide spread (even though marriage relationship with other ethnic groups is not bad by itself), which has high influence on their offspring in terms of language acquisition.

The other social factor for language in Siltie is the Mosque (the building or place in which Muslims preach) and the church services that are delivered in two dominant languages: Arabic and Amharic. As majority of Silties are Muslims having Mosque in Arabic erodes the growth landscape of Siltie language. Even, according to elders FGD discussion result and interview responses, Silties sometimes call their language "Islamigna" (as very greatest number of Silties is Islam). This does not clearly indicate the indigenous language of Siltie ('Siltigna;' the Amharic name of Siltie language). As it was clearly observed by the researcher during field work and

indicated by the elders, Arabic is frequently used by the Silties for Mosque services. Similarly, in churches Christian Silties use Amharic frequently for their church services rather than their indigenous language (Siltigna) that highly affected the promotion and growth of Siltie language.

The third social factor that facilitated Siltie language shift is the loosened use of mother tongue education in Siltie. According to Edwards (1992), mother tongue education is one of the major ways to foster the growth of the language and a principal tool to withstand the language shift problem of heritage languages. Thus, as indicated by FGD, Siltie language has been medium of instruction, but there is an observable gap in the effective usage of Siltie in the arena of education. As the elders argued, the teachers and their students at different levels are not encouraged to use Siltie when they are running their teaching-learning process in a mother tongue. Hence the growth of Siltie language is distracted and exposed children to massive language shift phenomena. This in turn highly eroded the confidence of younger Silties of effectively utilizing their language.

Economic factors

People of Siltie have been traveling in large number to different parts of the country and other parts of the world for running business (for business transaction) (as reported by FGD and interviewed elders). Such travels created a strong language contact on Siltie native individuals by exposing them to different Ethiopian languages and other international ones; which is taken as a factor for heritage language shift in Siltie. Historically, Silties have a strong coffee trade relationship with Sidama people (Hussien, 2010) and geographical proximity with Hadiya people, which have impact on their heritage language growth; according to FGD result.

On the other hand, Silties also travel for education, for medication and for recreation to different parts of the world. Again, many non-Siltie language speakers come in a great number to Siltie for various reasons like business purposes, tour, education, etc.; this also opened door of opportunity for Amharic and other languages to be learnt and used by indigenous Silties. According to Fishamn (1991), when languages are in contact, there is always a chance to put pressure on the relatively less dominant language; hence takes the attention of people to be taken away by the dominating one (language shift).

Attitudinal factors

According to the discussion results of FGD, the over worked and long stayed systemic action by the three successive governments of Ethiopia (from 1888-1991), significant number of Siltie people do not feel fully confident to use their indigenous language. It had not been an easy work to root out the problem from the minds of the public given the long stayed psychological problem which was internalized by the hearts and minds of the people. During the field data collection, one of the most striking points the researcher observed was that when people discuss on some issues be it in cafeteria, school or shopping, they prefer the Amharic language over the Siltie language while all of them have knowledge of Siltie language. Even when they start speaking in Siltie, they quickly switch to Amharic. They could not stay for length of two to three minutes expressing their ideas in pure Siltie.

Most interviewed elders and FGD participants stressed the fact that most of Siltie people especially the younger ones do not speak Siltie language so frequently and proficiently without mixing it with Amharic or English as they face difficulty expressing their ideas in pure Siltie. Even the range of the problem goes up to rural community. As reported by one of the interviewed elders, in rural communities, Silties include Amharic vocabulary and phrases in between their conversation thinking that they express their ideas better in Amharic. The same thing goes on to naming culture. Over 80% of the respondents in the questionnaire and almost all elders in the interview responded that Silties do not name their children using names having Siltie meaning. They name their children using religious names from the Quran (Mohammed, Ahmed, Kedir, Hussien…). According to FGD result, Silties think that naming their children in Siltie does not make their children happy. Even in FGD the researcher found elders whose names changed latter to Mohammed, Ahmed or Kedir to make its meaning in harmony to names in the Quran.

With the same issue of attitude, during the field data collection, the researcher asked some of Siltie youths to describe themselves in Siltie language for three minutes. 99.9% of them failed to do so. All of them quickly shifted to the Amharic language. The researcher asked them the reason. Almost all of them replied that it is easier for them to express their ideas in Amharic. This in general shows that the attitude of Siltie public has been diverted away to a greater extent from using their language and its linguistic resources to Amharic.

Impacts of indigenous language shift on overall identities of Siltie people

Table 3 clearly indicates that 95% (78% very limited and 17% limited) of the respondents replied that the current use status of Siltie language (by its native speakers) is limited. On the other hand, majority of the respondents (83%) responded that they do not speak Siltie language fluently without adding any word from Amharic language. They stated that whenever they intend to speak in their

Table 3. Questionnaire responses on the impacts of indigenous language shift on the overall identities of Siltie.

S/N	Items	Yes f(%)	No f(%)	VL f(%)	L f%	WU f%	VWU	Pos	Neg	IC	H	SH	IW
1	How do you judge the current use status of the Siltie language by its native speakers in different institutions (schools, courts, markets….)?	-	-	390(78	86(17)	24(5)	0(0)	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Do you speak the Siltie language fluently without adding any word from the Amharic language?	83(17)	417(83)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	How do you judge the feelings of indigenous bilingual/ML Siltie individuals when you communicate them in pure Siltie language?	-	-	-	-	-	-	136(27)	364(73)	-	-	-	-
4	Do you think there is the age difference by the frequent and fluent use of Siltie language by its indigenous and bilingual/multilingual individuals?	475(95)	25(5)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	Have you ever read any creatively written materials or books (novels, short stories, poems, dramas… except school books) in Siltie language?	45(9)	455(91)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	What do you think are endangered due to the continuous shift of indigenous Siltie people from using their heritage language to Amharic/others?	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	475(95)	485(97)	490(98)	495(99)

f=frequency; %=percentage; VL=Very limited; L= Limited; WU=Widely used; VWU=Very widely used; Pos=Positive; Neg=Negative; IC=Indigenous culture; H=Heritage; SH=Siltie's history; IW=Indigenous wisdom; *Percentage for each item in Table 3 was calculated and rounded off to the nearest whole number.

heritage language, Amharic intrudes the use of Siltie words and expressions. The remaining 17% responded that they use pure and fluent Siltie language when they communicate people who are able to use the language. Fortunately, these (17% respondents) are old people as majority of the respondents (95%) replied that there is the age difference by the frequent and fluent use of the Siltie language by its indigenous and bilingual/multilingual individuals. Thus old people use the Siltie language frequently and fluently; whereas, the younger ones use it rarely and without fluency.

Similar to respondents of the questionnaire, almost all of the FGD members agreed that Siltie language is very limited in use (by its native speakers) in different contexts of daily communication and they also come into consensus that older speakers are by far better than the younger ones in Siltie fluency. Many of the elders interviewed confirmed the same argument. In support of this argument, Austin and Sallabank (2011) state that because of the endangerment of a heritage language, there

comes the difference of fluency by its users (fluent speakers, semi-speakers, terminal speakers, 'rememberers', ghost speakers, neo-speakers and last speakers) due to psychological, social and/or economic factors. With regard to attitudes of native Siltie people in using their heritage language, large number of respondents (73%) responded that bilingual/ML Silties show negative feeling when you speak them in pure Siltie because their incapability to express their ideas in pure Siltie. According to these respondents, majority of bilingual Silties prefer to use their 2nd language (Amharic) for different kinds of interactions. 27% of the total respondents responded that people's reaction towards using pure Siltie language in its appropriate context is positive. However, the FGD members agreed that majority of bilingual/ML Silties have negative attitude towards using their heritage language in different contexts. As to these respondents and almost all of the interviewed elders, bilingual/ML Silties always attempt to intermingle large amount of Amharic words than using pure Siltie even in small-sized at home communication. Regarding this, Crystal (2003) argues that if the attitude of people towards their aboriginal language is negative, the use of that language shrinks time-after-time and finally dies at the end taking every humanistic element with it.

455 out of 500 (91%) of the respondents responded that they haven't read any creatively written materials or books (novels, short stories, poems, dramas… except school books) in Siltie language. This may be because of severe lack of creatively written materials in Siltie language as majority of its population shifted to the other coexisting dominant language, particularly; Amharic; hence the growth and intergenerational transfer of the language has been highly affected. Similar idea is forwarded by almost all of FGD members and responded by ten of elders who responded the interview. Confirming the importance of writing culture (especially creative writing) for language development, Reyhner, Clair, and Yazzie (1999) state that:

"Writing is a base for language revitalization as it offers a sequence for presenting new language materials, moving from easier to harder forms, and can also be the basis for communication. When writing in the language is included in the revitalization program, the speakers of the language can move from speaking to reading and writing, reinforcing concepts with writing" (85-86).

In connection to the negative attitude towards the use of Siltie language by its native speakers and lack of writing culture in the language, more than 95% of the respondents in the questionnaire(in all cases) responded that the indigenous culture, heritage, history and wisdom of the people become endangered. As to respondents of FGD members and interview results by elders, the overall identity of Siltie people becomes threatened due to the

continuous shift of Siltie people from using their heritage language to Amharic. Supporting the idea of language shift as threat to the overall indigenous identity of a people, Fishman (1999: 4) suggests that "losing one's heritage language is similar to losing self". This indicates that heritage language represents every aspect of identity for its speech community as Crystal (2003: 39) confirms "Language is the primary index, or symbol, or register of identity. It is the emblem of its speakers," and with the death of an indigenous language, everything about that society becomes forgotten (Steiner, 1967).

Generally speaking, the overall results of the respondents demonstrated that the continuous shift of Siltie people from using its heritage language highly affected Siltie's indigenous culture, history, heritage and wisdom as well as the continuous growth of the language.

Reversing indigenous language shift in Siltie: Revitalization

As clearly portrayed in Table 4, 95% of the respondents replied that there are certain ways that we can reverse the situation of indigenous language shift in Siltie. The remaining 5% responded no, but the focused group discussion (FGD), the interview questions result and the open-ended parts of the questionnaire confirmed that there are many ways that we can reverse the continuous heritage language shift in Siltie. As almost all of the FGD members and interviewed elders strongly suggested that the revitalization of Siltie language can be realized through five major categories of projects.

According to the respondents, first, it needs awareness training for the young generation of Siltie people in the use of their heritage language. Many of the interviewed elders and FGD members reflected that the young generation of Siltie have negative attitude towards the use of their heritage language because of lack of awareness that a heritage language is a means of expressing self. In this regard, Stephen Greymorning cited in Reyhner et al. (1999) argue that we cannot think in our own way without our heritage language. Thus, Siltie language can be revitalized by giving awareness training on the use of Siltie language to the younger generation of Siltie people.

The second revitalization project recommended by the respondents is development of a writing culture and beginning to use Siltie as the language of writing. One of the interviewed elders illustrated saying "There should be a culture adapted for producing different written materials in Siltie language and a proactive action that should continue producing materials like dictionaries, reference books, novels, short stories, fictions, poems, dramas, etc" (Personal Interview). Another interviewed elder who has more than 5 years of experience in teaching Siltie language and currently who works as a language expert in Siltie zone suggested that Siltie language is totally poor

Table 4. Questionnaire responses on the ways of reversing the indigenous language shift in Siltie: revitalization.

N<u>o</u>	Items	Yes f (%)	No f (%)	WPS f (%)	Govn't f (%)	NGOs f (%)
1	Do you think there are certain ways that we can use to reverse the situation of indigenous language shift in Siltie?	475 (95)	25 (5)			
2	Who do you think are the concerned bodies that can take the share of revitalizing Siltie language at the current situation?			460 (92)	430 (86)	425 (85)

F=frequency; %=percentage; WPS=The whole public of Siltie; Govn't=Government at different levels; NGOs=Local and International non- governmental organizations; *Percentage for each item in Table 4 was calculated and rounded off to the nearest whole number.

in written materials, especially in creatively-written literary genres (novels, fictions, short stories, poems, dramas) that impeded the growth of the language. He sadly worries saying, "*I haven't read even a single creatively-written material in Siltie language!, which highly eroded the development of Siltie language*" (Personal Interview). In favor of the role of developing a writing culture in language revitalization, scholars suggest that writing in a heritage language is a key tool for the complex development of indigenous languages (Hinton, 1994; Moseley, 2007). Therefore, the concerned bodies at local, national and international levels should take their proper responsibilities for developing writing culture Siltie language.

The third way of language revitalization recommended by the respondents, particularly by the two of educated elders in the interview session and by many of FGD members in focused group discussion is establishing school-based language revitalization project. The concept of school-based language revitalization project refers to making schools as key partners of language revitalization effort. As to Serafin and McCarty (2005), the school-based language revitalization project has great impact on indigenous language development by giving opportunity to provide comprehensible input from the heritage language to the large number of potential language learners who are obliged to be present in the schools for a large portion of the day, thus it creates fertile ground to teach an entire generation of future speakers. Furthermore, this type of project gives school-children the opportunity to be taught in their heritage tongue while they are still at the stage of life where language learning takes place most quickly and easily (Austin and Sallabank, 2011). This implies that the mother tongue education which has already been started in Siltie should continue and help Siltie children learn their heritage language properly.

Fourthly, majority of the respondents in the open-ended parts of the questionnaire replied that there should be a planning of family-based language revitalization project, particularly at the urban areas of Siltie Zone. This idea is strongly supported by the majority of FGD members as well as by almost all of elders responded the interview session. In this regard, the ultimate goal of language revitalization project would be to regain Siltie as a language of daily communication within its speech community. For this to happen, the heritage language must go beyond being a school language or a camp language and must be a language of family communication (Austin and Sallabank, 2011). Confirming similar argument, Littlebear (1996) suggests that families should play their expected role for reversing the influence of dominant language on their heritage one. Thus, Siltie parents in collaboration with the concerned government bodies should promote the continuous use of their heritage language ignoring or reducing the overall interruption of Amharic language to take the linguistic landscape of Siltie.

Lastly, majority of respondents in the questionnaire suggested that it needs the establishment of series, deep and multifaceted training and research projects that involve linguists and language experts to make them play extremely larger roles in the process of Siltie language revitalization. Similar project has been recommended by majority of FGD members and by the three of elders in the interview session. One of the elders interviewed pointed out that there are hundred-thousands of people who are so much poor in Siltie writing, speaking and reading (the so called partial users of Siltie language) that needs training. Another respondent of interview (elder) suggested that despite the fact Siltie had been a known language in history; it has not got significant opportunity to be researched. Regarding the roles and responsibilities of linguists in language revitalization project, Austin (2010b) and Rice (2006) argue that linguists have great responsibilities (in the communities where they work) on the issues of language maintenance and revitalization.

Generally speaking, the revitalization projects mentioned by the respondents are not only what have been discussed above. However, for the sake of making this research report brief and concise, the researcher discussed only five of them. The respondents also indicated that the concerned bodies that can take the

share of revitalizing of the Siltie language at the current situation. For instance, as clearly indicated in Table 4, the respondents of questionnaire (almost more than 85% in all cases) replied that the whole public of Siltie, government at different levels (zonal, regional and national levels) as well as NGOs working on indigenous languages' planning and development (at local, national or international scope) should take their share of carrying out the revitalization project of Siltie language. More particularly, the results of interview and FGD confirmed that the active involvement of overall speech communities of Siltie is a key to the effective implementation of the revitalization project. Confirming this, Grenoble and Whaley (2006) suggest that the overall success of any heritage language revitalization project depends on the motivation of the future speakers and the community which supports them.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussions of the current study, the following conclusions have been reached: Political landscape in different historical periods of Ethiopia especially from 1888 to 1991 opened an extremely vast opportunity for the language shift in Siltie. It is concluded that the time after 1991, till the present time, has been a great opportunity for the growth of Siltie language because of favorable policy environment for revival of the language despite lack of effective utilization of the language. Apart from political factors, economic, social and attitudinal factors have greatly contributed to the current language shift in Siltie. It is concluded that majority of bilingual/ML and young Silties have negative attitude towards using pure Siltie language for their daily communication as they are in difficulty to fully express themselves in Siltie. It is identified that there is limited creative writing culture in Siltie language; hence it has sever lack of creatively written materials or literary genres like novels, short stories, poems and dramas. It is also concluded that the continuous shift of Siltie people from using their heritage language highly affected the overall identities of the people: indigenous culture, history, heritage and traditional ecological wisdom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussions and conclusions made above, the following recommendations are given:

1. It needs awareness training for the young generation of Siltie in the use of heritage language for daily communication.
2. There should be development of creative writing culture and beginning to use Siltie as the language of writing.
3. Concerned bodies should establish school-based language revitalization project for the revival of Siltie language.
4. There should be a planning of family-based language revitalization project, particularly at the urban areas of Siltie Zone.
5. It needs the establishment of series, deep and multifaceted training and research projects that involve linguists and language experts to make them play extremely larger roles in the process of language revitalization in Siltie.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflicts of interests.

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