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Linguistic landscape and language attitude: A case study on Jimma town's linguistic landscape inscribers' attitude for Afan Oromo

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The purpose of this paper was to investigate Jimma town's linguistic landscape inscribers' attitude for Afan Oromo (Oromo Language) and its effects on Afan Oromo writings in Linguistic landscape of the town. The study was based on structured interviews and discussions made with linguistic landscape inscribers of Jimma town. To this end, it sought to find answers for two questions, that is, 'What is Jimma town's linguistic landscape inscribers' attitude for Afan Oromo?' and 'How does Jimma town's linguistic landscape inscribers' attitude for Afan Oromo affect Afan Oromo writings in linguistic landscape of the town?' Accordingly, it was found out that most of the inscribers held negative attitude for the language because of their preconceived misconceptions. Consequently, they carelessly inscribed Afan Oromo based on other peoples' assistances. They also did not care about the accuracy of the information they inscribed because they believed that the purpose of inscribing in Afan Oromo was to fulfill the formality of the regional government's language policy. So, to prevent further linguistic problems that may perpetuate as a result of this sort of attitude, language awareness raising program and language trainings need to be undertaken in Jimma town by the regional language planning body and the language community.

Key words: Qubee, Afan Oromo, linguistic landscape, language attitude.

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic landscape according to Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25) is "The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs and public signs on government buildings.....of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration." Linguistic landscape is regulated by authorities through their language policy. For instance, in the Canadian province of Quebec, the boundaries of linguistic territories were marked through the regulation of language use on public signs (Landry and Bourhis, 1997). In the study of sociolinguistics, linguistic landscape plays two roles, that is, it marks language boundaries between neighboring linguistic communities, and it gives information about the sociolinguistic composition of an area. Furthermore, linguistic landscape is an important sociolinguistic factor which shows the exuberance of competing linguistic groups in multilingual settings (Bourhis, 1997).

Language attitude is an essential part of ethno-linguistic competition. Though they have common grounds, various scholars define attitude in a slightly different ways. For instance according to Sarnoff (1970: 279) attitude is "a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects." In comparison with other scholars definitions this definition simplifies the essence of attitude. For example, according to Gardner (1985), attitude is a complex topic as it involves individuals beliefs, emotional reactions and behaviour towards objects. Furthermore, according to Bouchard and Giles (1982: 132), attitudes are created from our experiences and direct our responses to everything related to an object and situations associated with it. Gardner (1985: 39), states that language attitude is divided into two: attitude for learning languages and attitude for language community. Language attitudes result from the social issues linked with language. As Appel and Muysken (1987: 16) put,

languages are not objective instruments for conveying only meaning as they attach with the identities of groups. This linkage results in individuals social evaluation and attitudes towards languages. Holmes (1992) also argues that in a society, cultural institutions such as language are affected by the various attitudes different ethnic groups have for each other as a result of their differences. For instance, Ethiopia Afan Oromo has undergone a century's linguistic stigmatization resulting from the negative attitude held for its speakers.

From the 19th to the 20th century, Afan Oromo was threatened by the Amharic speaking ruling elites who had imposed a policy called *Amharization* in the name of political unity. As a result of this policy, the use of Afan Oromo was banned in any form of public communication (Mekuria 1994: 91). *Amharization* which lasted for a century promoted no other language and culture but Amharic and Amharas culture. Following Baxter (1978: 285), Robichaux (2005) argues that *Amharization* was not simply a nation-building tool as it involved cruel and racist intentions of oppressing the Oromo language and identity which ended in creating strong ethnic boundaries between the Oromo and the Amhara.

As a result of the afore-mentioned policy, the Amharas had arrogantly been referring to both the Oromo and their language with derogatory names, *Galla* and *Galligna* respectively. However, the people call themselves Oromo and their language Afan Oromo (literally Oromo Language) and currently these terms are officially used denoting the people and their language. Afan Oromo belongs to the Lowland East Cushitic sub-family of the Afro-asiatic super-phylum (Gragg, 1982; Griefenow-Mewis, 2001; Kebede, 2005). Speakers of Afan Oromo live in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Afan Oromo is spoken in an area which extends from Wallo, Northern Ethiopia to Mkilifi, Northern Kenya and from Wollega, Western Ethiopia to Harar, Eastern Ethiopia (Gragg, 1982).

The total number of Afan Oromo speakers in Ethiopia is 25,363,756, which accounts for about 34% of the whole population of Ethiopia (CSA, 2007). According to Gragg (1976), the major dialects of Afan Oromo are: Borana, Guji (Southern), Arsi-Bale (South Eastern), Hararge (Eastern), Bati, Rayya (Northern), Tulama (central), and Macha (Western). In the mid-nineteenth century, the Roman/Latin script was used by European explorers and missionaries to write Afan Oromo. According to Pankhurst (1976), these Europeans used the Latin alphabet in gathering and recording some words from Oromos sold to slavery.

In the late 19th century, a freed slave from Oromo land, *Hiikaa* or *Abbaa Gammachiis* (later named Onesimos Nesib by Swedish missionaries who bought him his freedom), used the Sabeen script in preparing (the Oromo reader) *The Galla Spelling Book* (1894) and religious writings like the Afan Oromo Bible (1899). As to why he chose this script, Digga (1973) and Nordfelt

(1947) hold the view that Onesimos found the Ethiopic characters more expressive. Yet, Mekuria (1995) claims that Onesimos used the Geez script for practical reasons, and not for its cultural and linguistic conveniences. For him, Onesimos' statement that it would take a very long time to get the chance of providing Oromos with books written with the Latin alphabet rather shows Onesimos' implication of the contempt that the then Ethiopian authorities had towards Oromos and their language.

To emphasize the difficulty the Ethiopian script caused to Afan Oromo learning, Tilahun (1986) mentions an account of Cerulli (1922: 15) who faced difficulty reading Onesimos (1894) *The Galla Spelling Book* and expressed his challenges as follows, "... reading this small book is very like deciphering a secret writing, and it is evident why, for twenty-five years after its publication, its substance remained unknown..."

During the reign of Haile Sellassie I, a ban was placed on Afan Oromo from the mid 1940s to 1974. Despite the ban, however, in the 1950s, an Oromo nobleman named Sheik Bakri Sapalo devised a writing system for Afan Oromo based on the Arabic syllabary. He is believed to have done this on observing the ineffectiveness of the Ethiopic script for writing Afan Oromo (Tilahun, 1986). Sheik Bakri's Afan Oromo script had 300 symbols derived from 28 basic consonantal forms-fifty more characters than the Ethiopic script used by Onesimos. Aware of the repercussions teaching it in public could bring about, Bakri taught it secretly to his students in his home village. Not surprisingly, no sooner than the authorities had heard this and stopped him than he fled the country to Somalia where he died in exile (Tilahun, 1986).

In the early 1970s, though only in the areas under its control, the Oromo Liberation Front began to use today's Afan Oromo orthography, the adapted Latin script, as its official alphabet. During this same time, the Ethiopic script adapted by Onesimos and the Latin script adapted by the Oromo Liberation Front were suggested for writing Afan Oromo. Although, the ban was lifted following the taking power of the Dergue regime, and the use of the Ethiopic script to write Afan Oromo was allowed, the teaching of the language at any level in the school system remained illegal. Yet, it was serving as the language of journalism to some extent. For example, the commencement of the publication of *Bariisaa* in September 1975, an Afan Oromo newspaper prepared with the Sabeen script, falls within this period. The orthography currently used to write Afan Oromo, which is known as *Qubee Afaan Oromoo* (*Qubee* for short), had been adapted from the Latin script after the fall of Mengistu Hailemariam's regime in 1991.

Today, in Ethiopia Afan Oromo is the official language of Oromia Region. It is used as a medium of instruction in schools (Grade 1 to 8) and in the regions teachers training colleges. In addition, from grade 9 to 12 it is taught as a subject and it is given in Ethiopian school leaving examination. Moreover, in different Ethiopian

universities it is taught as a major course. At Addis Ababa, Haramaya and Wollega Universities, it is taught as a major course at Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts levels. At Jimma, Mada Walabu, Ambo, and Dila Universities, it is offered as a major course at Bachelor of Arts level. There are three newspapers printed in Afan Oromo. They are *Bariisaa* „dawn *Kallacha* „fore head and *Oromyyaa*. There are also services in Afan Oromo on Radio Ethiopia and Radio Fana and Oromia Television.

Furthermore, in the linguistic landscape of Oromia region Afan Oromo appears followed by Amharic and English languages. However, Afan Oromo writings in the linguistic landscape of the region are full of orthographic and translation errors. Pertinent to this, no extensive research has been carried out yet. In fact, the only work that we may find regarding this problem is Amanuel and Samuels (2011) work entitled „A Look into Afan Oromo Spelling Errors and Faulty Translations on billboards with special attention to Jimma town. Though this research clearly shows the nature of the linguistic and orthographic problems of the writings, it does not investigate the source(s) of the problems because of the inscribers unwillingness to discuss this issue. Hence, this research sought to complement the previous research. Accordingly, it intended to answer two questions. Namely, „What were Jimma towns linguistic landscape inscribers attitudes for Afan Oromo? And „Is there any causal relationship between the inscribers attitudes and the orthographic and linguistic errors observed in the linguistic landscape of Jimma town?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The two widely known theoretical approaches in language attitude research are the behaviorist and the mentalist approaches. According to the behaviorist approach attitudes are enclosed in the responses people make to social situations. This approach is easy as there are no reports or indirect inferences involved in it. It is all about observing, tabulating, and analyzing an overt language behavior (Fasold, 1984: 147-148). In contrast, according to the mentalist viewpoint, attitudes are internal, mental state, creating some kinds of behaviour. In this approach questionnaire /interview and the matched guise technique are the two mainly used methods for exploring language attitudes (Fasold, 1984). This research was carried out based on the behaviorist approach.

So far, there are two methods in finding out peoples language attitudes that is, direct or indirect. The direct method requires informants to respond to a questionnaire or interview questions that solicit their views about language. For instance, Gals (1979) research engaged the direct method to study attitudes of Austrians about German and Hungarian languages. On the other hand, the indirect method tries to clandestinely investigate language attitudes of informants without their consciousness. As an example of this method, Fasold (1984) mentions Fishmans (1971) work which involved the commitment measure to examine the impact of language on persuasion.

In this research the direct method was employed to solicit Jimma towns linguistic landscape inscribers attitude for Afan Oromo. To obtain the data for this research, structured interviews/discussions were held with five of the people who do inscriptions in linguistic landscape for living. Before getting down to the data

collection much negotiation has taken place between the researcher and the subjects. The negotiation basically was concerned with the issues of their personal security. The inscribers were worried that their responses to the interview questions and discussions for this research may affect them negatively as people in town may politicize the issue. Therefore, the researcher promised them to keep every bite of information they provide confidential and that they will remain anonymous to ease their fear. In addition, based on their demand, they were also promised that all the tape-recorded discussions would be destroyed after used for the production of a research report.

Since the main purpose of this research was to investigate the correlation between the inscribers attitudes for Afan Oromo and the productions of the erroneous writings in the linguistic landscape of Jimma unraveled by Amanuel and Samuels (2011) research, the interview/discussion questions were prepared with the guidance of these spelling and translation errors.

The interview questions which were prepared in Amharic language solicited the informants levels of education, their first language, their training in Afan Oromo writing, their role in linguistic landscape inscription that is, whether they simply copy an already prepared writings or whether they write them on their own, and their beliefs about the difference between Afan Oromo and English alphabets. Furthermore, the interview questions contained enquiries about their attitude for Afan Oromo. These set of questions discerned whether the inscribers like or dislike Afan Oromo, what language they like best and why, and what they feel about the errors they committed on the linguistic landscape.

All the interview questions were read out to the informants one by one while tape-recording. To match the informants with their replies to the various questions, each of the five informants were coded with numbers 1 to 5. Each of them responded to the questions in turns. Except in the cases of questions about the informants personal information, at the end of all the informants replies to a question the researcher asked if any of them wanted to add supplementary information to the question addressed. In this case, the researcher had been taking reminding notes chronologically linking the informants codes with the new information they provided.

RESULTS

The inscribers' competence in Afan Oromo and their levels of education

Among the five linguistic landscape inscribers of Jimma town only one speaks Afan Oromo as a mother tongue while the other four were mother tongue speakers of Amharic. Out of the four, one of them speaks Afan Oromo with difficulty while the other three do not speak at all. None of the five inscribers have taken any form of training on how to read and write Afan Oromo. In fact, four of the Amharic speakers do not have any clue as to how to read and write it while the Afan Oromo speaker is a self-taught reader with insufficient Afan Oromo writing skill.

All of them being dropouts, the five inscribers level of education ranges from grade six to eight (one was grade six, two were grade seven, and the remaining two were grade eight). Among them, none was in school when *Qubee*, Afan Oromo alphabet was introduced in 1992 and the latest time any of them attended school was 1990. In addition, none of them has taken any form of training in writing art that qualifies them to be an

inscriber. However, they have beautiful handwritings as a result of which they have taken up the inscribing job as a means of living.

The inscribers' perception about Afan Oromo and English alphabets

Based on Amanuel and Samuels (2011) findings which indicate representations of Afan Oromo sounds by English alphabets in the inscriptions they made in Jimma town, the inscribers were asked to explain what they thought about the difference between *Qubee*, Afan Oromo alphabet and the English Alphabet. Regarding this, basically their reports have one thing in common- *Qubee* is the same as English alphabet and with a basic knowledge of English alphabet one can write it. The inscribers also thought that English Alphabet differs from *Qubee* only by the doubling of characters involved in the later.

The inscribers' experiences regarding the use of Qubee /Afan Oromo alphabet

Regarding how they inscribed in Afan Oromo, all of the inscribers shared common experiences. As they reported, sometimes they inscribed with the verbal assistance of anybody who claimed to know Afan Oromo and found to be around them by the time they inscribed and sometimes they simply inscribed what was written and provided to them by their clients. In both cases they totally relied on what they were provided as they did not have the required Afan Oromo linguistic skills to verify the accuracy of the spelling and the semantic information of the phrases or words they were provided.

As further discussion with the inscribers revealed, in spite of the fact that they knew some fluent writers and speakers of Afan Oromo in town and in spite of the fact that they also knew the possibility of relying on the assistance of those people for correction, they did not consider this possibility. As they believed, the purpose of inscribing in linguistic landscape in Afan Oromo was only to fulfill the regional governments language policy which requires the use of the language in the linguistic landscape of Oromia. Regarding this, observe the following response to the questions, "Did you know any fluent writers and speakers of Afan Oromo in Jimma town?" and "did you ask those people to help you check for the correctness and accuracy of the Afan Oromo spelling and meanings of words in your inscriptions?"

"Well, I know people who can read, write and speak Oromigna [Afan Oromo] very well. If I asked, they could have helped me too. However, I did not want to do this because I thought the purpose [of inscribing in Afan Oromo] was only to fulfill the region's [Oromia's]

language formality." As far as this purpose is served, I do not worry about the incorrectness of Qubee [Afan Oromo alphabet]. After all to get accurate information people can read Amharic which appears after the Qubee version. (Response of one of the Amharic mother tongue speakers).

Regarding this, the other four inscribers were asked if they have the same or different view and they reported that they all share similar view except a few additional information from the mother tongue speaker of Afan Oromo.

"In fact it is because of the government's enforcement that we are writing on linguistic landscape of this town in Afan Oromo and I think to fulfill this, what we have been doing suffices. For your information, nobody has ever complained regarding the incorrectness of what any of us inscribed. In addition, nobody has also been misled or as a result of our incorrect spellings, nobody has ever been seen having any problem of distinguishing one specific hotel or shop from another. Do you even think that people read what we inscribe? Then why do we worry about verifications of spelling correctness or accuracy of meaning?"

As both of the aforementioned responses show, the inscribers lack feedback from the society and they believed that people more utilize the information inscribed in Amharic than the ones in Afan Oromo or none of them.

The inscribers' and their clients' deliberate actions in making spelling errors

The inscribers responses to the question "have you ever deliberately leave out characters when you inscribed in Afan Oromo?" indicated that deliberate actions were also involved in making the spelling errors. For example, one of the inscribers remembers an instance where as a result of insufficient space on the linguistic landscape, he left out some vowels from what his client had given him to inscribe. Similarly, two of them also reported that there were times when their clients pushed them to mix English words with Afan Oromo to avoid shortages of spaces on the small sized boards they provided.

The inscribers' language preferences

To find out the inscribers language preferences which may be one of the underlying causes for the spelling and translation errors on the linguistic landscape, the inscribers were asked, "From Afan Oromo, Amharic, and English, which language(s) do you prefer to be used on linguistic landscape of the region or the country?"

Regarding this, the inscriber whose mother tongue is Afan Oromo reported that he preferred Afan Oromo and English while the other four reported that they preferred and English. As can be seen from these responses, English was preferred over Amharic or Afan Oromo. To investigate the drives behind the inscribers' language choices which favor a foreign language over the two endogenous languages, they were asked to discuss their motives.

Consequently, the four mother tongue speakers of Amharic reported that they do not prefer Afan Oromo for various reasons. For instance, they argued that Afan Oromo threatened the national unity of Ethiopia; it did not use the unique Amharic alphabet which symbolizes our country, it discriminated Ethiopians and it created racism. On the other hand, the inscriber whose mother tongue is Afan Oromo reported that he preferred English over Amharic because of the Amharic speakers' disrespect for the speakers of other Ethiopian languages.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, one may argue that the root causes of the errors are the inscribers' lack of formal training in Afan Oromo, their unfounded beliefs about the purpose of using Afan Oromo in linguistic landscape, and the lack of feedback from the language community. However, based on the four Amharic speaking inscribers direct responses regarding their attitude to Afan Oromo, I would rather argue that all the other factors discussed in this study are the result of the four inscribers negative attitudes for Afan Oromo and the Afan Oromo speaking inscribers contributory negligence. The two factors have resulted in the productions of erroneous Afan Oromo writings in linguistic landscape of Jimma town. Though it suffices to discuss the problem only from the angle of attitude as it explains everything, I rather chose to first discuss misconceptions about *Qubee*/Afan Oromo alphabet and the number of Afan Oromo speakers in Jimma zone because it may inform other Ethiopians who unintentionally confuse *Qubee*/Afan Oromo alphabet with the Latin alphabet or believe that Amharic is used throughout Oromia without difficulty. So, all the other issues presented under the result section would be dealt with at last.

To start with, the inscribers believed that *Qubee*/Afan Oromo alphabet is the same as English alphabet and it is also possible to write the former with the basic knowledge of the later. Yet, the two alphabets whose source is the Latin script greatly vary from each other just like the familial relation of the two languages. Accordingly, compared to other alphabetic languages English has more difficult alphabetic system and its phoneme-grapheme is not equivalent with that of Afan Oromo. For example, in English the sound /sh/ is represented by at least twelve various characters that is, sh in shin, ti in

nation, ci in special, ssi in mission, si in expansion, ss in tissue, ch in machine, s in sugar, sci in conscience, ce in ocean, sch in schmooze, and sc in crescendo. Consequently, reading in English is difficult and it takes long time to learn it (Seymour et al., 2003). In contrast, there is one to one correspondence between Afan Oromo sounds and its letters. In Afan Oromo there are 33 phonics/characters that represent 33 different sounds of the language (Tilahun, 1992). As a result, for instance the same sound /sh/ which is represented by various characters in English is represented only by one digraph, sh in Afan Oromo. Furthermore, since words are written as spoken, unlike English Afan Oromo does not involve complex spelling conventions. Regarding this, Seymour et al. (2003) argue that the average English-speaking child takes nearly three times longer to learn the basics of reading and writing than users of other alphabetic writing systems. Consequently, to become just moderately competent spellers of English, learners of the language have to memorize at least 3700 words with some unpredictable spellings (Bell, 2004). In contrast, despite the fact that there is no research finding that shows how long it takes an Afan Oromo learner to become a moderately competent reader and writer in this language, based on its simpler and fewer spelling conventions, one may argue that learning to read and write Afan Oromo would not require as much effort and time as in the case of English. Hence, the inscribers belief regarding the similarity between Afan Oromo alphabet vis-à-vis that of English is a sheer misconception. Thus, it is impossible to depend on the spelling rules of English to write Afan Oromo.

Moreover, as this study revealed, the Amharic speaking inscribers also believed that it does not matter if the information they inscribed in Afan Oromo turns out to be incorrect/inaccurate because to obtain accurate information people can refer to the Amharic version of the inscription. Apart from the communication barrier its end product creates to Afan Oromo speakers, this belief has two implications. Firstly, it undermines the symbolic function of Afan Oromo. Secondly, it overstates the communicative function of Amharic in Jimma.

To start with, in addition to its various functions language serves as a symbol of ethnic identity. In this regard, I think no other instance substantiates this reality more than the case of Afan Oromo and its speakers. As Robichaux (2005) argues, *Oromummaa* or *Oromoness* is an ethnic identity which is symbolized by the language, the culture and the religion of the Oromo. In the past the Amhara ruling elites have ignored this reality and tried to erode this identity in the name of national unity. As a result, the Oromo has made an armed political struggle which has resulted in the recognition of its ethnic identity and the right to use and develop its symbolizing elements like the language, the culture, and the religion in 1991.

Therefore, disregarding the communicative function of Afan Oromo like in the case of the inscribers under discussion is considered as undermining the symbolic

function of the language and ignoring one of the causes for which many of the language speakers have lost their lives. As Abraham (1989) states, "whatever people are ready to die for that is their identity so it deserves some respect."

Regarding how the inscribers belief overstates the communicative function of Amharic, according to Aklilu (2002), Oromo was the largest ethnic group reported in Jimma zone with 81.57% of the population and Afan Oromo was spoken by 85.96% of the population. In contrast, Amhara accounted for 4.95% population and Amharic language was spoken by 7.86% of the population. In fact, this research finding cited herein neither shows the percentage of Oromos who are bilingual in Amharic and nor the percentage of the population that can read and write one or both languages. However, based on the percentage of the people who speak each of the two languages, one may argue that the assumption is tenuous as the percentage of Afan Oromo speakers is over ten times greater than that of the Amharic speakers. Logically, the quality/accuracy of information to be provided through one language is not determined by the number its speakers or the presence of another language to be used along with it. Once a language is made to serve an official purpose it has to provide the most accurate information its structure allows regardless of the number of its users and the presence of (an) other language(s) used along with it. Yet, the purpose of showing the proportion of people who speak each of the two languages in this discussion is only to contend the inscribers belief that implies that Amharic is smoothly used in Jimma by majority of the population.

Aside from the inscribers misconception about the alphabet of Afan Oromo, the study established that the Amharic speaking inscribers have a negative attitude for Afan Oromo because as they believe, it created an ethnic distances between the Oromo and the non-Oromo as a result of which the countrys [Ethiopia's] unity has been threatened. On the other hand, the Afan Oromo speaking inscriber has a negative attitude for Amharic because he believed that its speakers disrespect the other ethnic groups of Ethiopia. Generally, these phenomena are the results of the pre 1991 *Amharization policy* of the ruling elites of Ethiopia which had been suppressing all the countrys languages but Amharic in the name of national unity (Mekuria, 1995). The overt intention of *Amharization*, which still manifests as for instance in the responses of the Amharic speaking inscribers was to create national unity. However, as some scholars like Baxter (1978), Abraham (1989), Mekuria (1995), and Robichaux (2005) contend, *Amharization* had cruel covert intentions like showing the Amharic speakers supremacy over the other language speakers by destroying their ethnic identities and cultural values. This intention had created dissatisfaction among the non Amhara ethnic groups and lead to ethnic hatred among the two groups. The Afan

Oromo speakers justification for developing negative attitude for Amharic discussed herein is the reflection of this reality.

So far, the inscribers linguistic and non-linguistic misconceptions regarding Afan Oromo which arguably are the results of language attitude and contributed to the production of erroneous writings in linguistic landscape of Jimma town have been dealt with. We have also seen the nature and implications of those misconceptions. Next, we would see the inscribers attitude for Afan Oromo which may be considered as a cause of the misconception discussed already.

Holmes (1992) argues that cultural institutions such as language are affected by the attitudes different ethnic groups hold for each other based on their differences. As can be observed from the findings of this study the two groups of inscribers hold negative attitude for each others languages. This phenomenon is a result of the past ruling elites self-centered political actions or the outcomes of those actions. Particularly, most of the Amharic speaking inscribers justifications for holding negative attitude for Afan Oromo appear to be groundless, unproductive, and hypothetical political ideology. Though, challenging the ideological sources of these justifications is not the primary objective of this study, the author thinks leaving them unexplained would be considered as contributing for their perpetuation. So, each of them will be discussed below.

Among the inscribers justifications for holding negative attitude, the first is the choice of Latin alphabet over the Ethiopic script for Afan Oromo. As the inscribers believe this action has resulted from a mere ethnic antagonism. However, this justification is weak because the major reason for the decision was rather based on scientific grounds. Regarding this, Tilahun (1992) argues that the decision to adapt Latin script instead of the Amharic syllabary was made based on linguistic, pedagogical, and practical issues. We would see each of these justifications in detail as presented by Tilahun (1992).

As Tilahun argues, linguistically, the major drawback of the Ethiopic syllabary was that it could not accommodate the structure of the language. Unlike in Amharic and other languages for which the script is used, consonant and vowel length are phonemic in Afan Oromo and the Ethiopic script has no means of indicating these because it was especially adapted to writing non-Cushitic languages. Further, it was believed to slow down the speed of the writer since it cannot be written cursively. It was also thought adapting its roughly 250 characters to Afan Oromo rather unmanageable. After all, the Latin alphabet is believed by most linguists to be "the most highly developed and the most convenient system of writing...readily adaptable to almost any language" (Tilahun, 1992). Pedagogically, it was believed that recognizing and memorizing the 33 signs of the adapted Latin alphabet is much easier than a syllabary of 250 (Tilahun, 1992).

Regarding the practical reasons, there was the argument that learning the Afan Oromo alphabet makes easier the transition to the English script, that is, a child familiar with *Qubee* can learn the English symbols in a relatively short period of time. The other practical reason was that Afan Oromo alphabet could be readily adapted to computer technology than the Ethiopic syllabary which was rather alien to the rest of the world (Tilahun, 1992). Therefore, in spite of the historically created unfavorable language attitude which may be one of the various factors that influenced the decision, the scientific reasons earlier discussed are more than enough to convince one that the choice of Latin alphabet instead of the Amharic syllabary for Afan Oromo was not merely based on the ethnic grudge between the Oromo and the Amhara.

Secondly, the Amharic speaking inscribers justification for holding negative attitude for Afan Oromo was motivated by the pre 1991 political belief which claimed that national unity could only be attained through linguistic or cultural homogeneity. Driven by this hypothetical political theory, the inscribers argued that the use of Afan Oromo as an official language creates ethnic discrimination and threatens the national unity of Ethiopia. However, based on the current linguistic and political reality of the world one may argue that national unity is neither guaranteed by linguistic homogeneity nor is it threatened by multilingualism.

For example, look at the current case of Somalia, a country which is linguistically homogenous but politically divided or the case of Switzerland, a linguistically heterogenous country which uses all of its five languages as official languages but still politically stable. Therefore, using Afan Oromo as an official language cannot threaten the countrys national unity. In fact, what may threaten the national unity of Ethiopia is rather the act of suppressing the linguistic human rights of various ethnic groups of the country in the name of national unity.

To sum up, as we have seen in this study, Jimma towns linguistic landscape inscribers exhibited linguistic deficiencies in Afan Oromo and socio-political awareness regarding the historical phenomenon which lead to the occurrence of the current multilingual language policy of Ethiopia. As a result of the later case the Amharic speaking inscribers clung to the past political beliefs and hold negative attitude for Afan Oromo.

So, the Amharic speaking inscribers' negative attitude for Afan Oromo has adversely affected Afan Oromo writings in the linguistic landscape of the town. Furthermore, the Afan Oromo speaking inscribers contributory negligence has also contributed to the matter. The actions of all the five inscribers are not justifiable from the angle of professional ethics and correlate with the production of the erroneous Afan Oromo writings in linguistic landscape of Jimma town. As the inscribers' responses indicate the lack of feedbacks from the language community and the regional governments language planning unit can be taken as

contributing factors to the problem.

Conclusions

The intention of this paper was to find out the correlation between Jimma towns linguistic landscape inscribers attitude for Afan Oromo and the production of erroneous Afan Oromo writings in Linguistic landscape of the town. To this end, the study intended to answers two questions. Namely, „What were Jimma towns linguistic landscape inscribers attitudes for Afan Oromo?. And „Is there any causal relationship between the inscribers attitudes and the orthographic and linguistic errors observed in the linguistic landscape of Jimma town?. The study was carried out based on the behaviorist approach. To this end, the direct method of data collection was employed to solicit Jimma towns linguistic landscape inscribers attitude for Afan Oromo. Structured interview was held with five of the people who do inscriptions in linguistic landscape of the town.

As this study showed, due to their negative attitude for Afan Oromo the four Amharic speaking inscribers did not seek training in the language, they were negligent about the accuracy of Afan Oromo writings, and they held wrong assumption about the use of Afan Oromo in linguistic landscape. Hence, there is a causal relationship between the Amharic speaking inscribers attitude for Afan Oromo and the orthographic and linguistic errors of the language in the linguistic landscape of Jimma town. On the other hand, the Afan Oromo speaking inscriber who shared most of the four inscribers views and experiences regarding the spelling conventions of the language and the purpose of using it in linguistic landscape of the town has negligently contributed to the problem.

The Amharic speaking linguistic landscape inscribers negative attitude for Afan Oromo has originated from the past political activities in Ethiopia which tried to erode the cultural institutions like the language of the non-Amhara ethnic groups in the name of political unity. As a result of *Amharization* policy, the use of Afan Oromo as a form of written language was prohibited in Ethiopia (Mekuria, 1995). According to Baxter (1978: 285) cited in Robichaux (2005), the real cause for the imposition of *Amharization* policy was the Amharas intention to show the dominance of their culture and their fear of the Oromos disregard to their political power. Jimma towns Amharic speaking linguistic landscape inscribers attitude for Afan Oromo and its consequent effects revealed through spelling and translation errors mirror these past political activities.

Today, the *Amharization* policy is not in place and the constitution of the country which was drafted following the end of this policy also safeguards the linguistic rights of all ethnic groups of Ethiopia. However, we still see the perpetuation of language stigmatizations as a result of

the past tenuous political belief which still some regarded as a means of political unity. Actually as some scholars like Abraham (1989) and Mekuria (1995) argue, the past one-language one-nation policy of the Amhara yielded nothing more than discontent and interethnic conflicts. Therefore, the author propose that language awareness raising program be undertaken in Jimma town in particular and throughout Oromia at large to prevent further linguistic problems that may perpetuate as a result of this sort of negative language attitude. In this regard, much is expected from Oromia culture and information office which assumes the responsibility of planning and standardizing Afan Oromo. As the inscribers' justifications for some of their malicious/slack actions imply neither the language community nor the regional language planning body has taken any action to alter the course of the negative attitude held for Afan Oromo or to regulate the whole issue of the town's linguistic landscape. This phenomenon has encouraged the inscribers to become careless as in the case of the Afan Oromo inscriber or to disregard the functions of the language based on unproductive political attitude as in the case of the Amharic speaking inscribers. So, both the language community and the regional language planning body who share the accountability for the occurrence of the linguistic problem under discussion need to create a mutual understanding between Afan Oromo speakers and the other ethnic groups in the vicinity by organizing language awareness creating conferences and providing language trainings.

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