

THE INFLUENCE OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY ON THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE OROMO LANGUAGE IN ETHIOPIA

by

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## DECLARATION

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I declare that *THE INFLUENCE OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OROMO LANGUAGE IN ETHIOPIA* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

*Temesgen Negassa Sibisu*

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November 2015

**Dedicated to the memory of Onesimos Nesib and Aster Ganno, who played a major role in the maintenance and development of the Oromo language.**

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) in the development of the Oromo language. The main aim of the study is to provide an account of the contribution of this particular church to the maintenance and development of Oromo, which is spoken by the largest speech community in Ethiopia. The study draws on theoretical and methodological frameworks from the field of language planning and development. The main source of data was interviews and focus group discussions conducted with church leaders at different organisational levels and other members of the church community. In addition, documents found in the church archives were analysed. The findings indicate that a number of church activities have contributed to the maintenance and development of the language. These activities include translation and transliteration work of the Bible and other religious literature, literacy and educational programmes, media work as well as use of Oromo in the liturgy and church services. This study also examined the obstacles that hindered the development of Oromo. The main obstacle was the conflict within the EECMY that arose in 1995 over the use of the language. The study unearths the roots of the controversy through a brief historical examination of the church's attempts to develop the language, despite opposition from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and earlier regimes, which proscribed the use of the vernacular languages in Ethiopia. Thereafter it focuses on the internal conflict after the change to a democratic government when the situation in Ethiopia became more favourable towards use of vernacular languages. It identifies the causes of the conflict, the way in which it was resolved and the effects which it had on the development of the language. Recommendations are made for further research and some suggestions are given regarding ways to promote the future development of the Oromo language.

**Key words:** dominant language, Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Evangelical Christianity, language conflict, language development, language maintenance, language planning, language policy, language politics, language rights, language shift, minority language, Oromo, sociolinguistics, vernacular.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

BSE	Bible Society of Ethiopia
CES	Central Ethiopia Synod
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CO	Central Office
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
EC	Executive Committee
EOC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church
FEBA	Federation of Balkan American Association
FOCUS	Fellowship of Oromo Christian University Students
GA	General Assembly
GBS	Gospel Broadcasting Service
IBS	International Bible Society
JFLP	Joint Functional Literacy Project
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
RVOG	Radio Voice of the Gospel
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
TWR	Trans World Radio
UBS	United Bible Societies
YDCS	Yemisratch Dimts Communication Services
YDLC	Yemissrach Dimts Literacy Campaign

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with the contribution of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) to the development of the Oromo language. It investigates the role that this church has played in the course of the development of this particular language and the obstacles encountered in this activity. This opening chapter of the dissertation deals with introductory issues. First of all, it gives some general background by providing an overview of the people, languages, history and religion of Ethiopia. This is followed by the statement of the problem, rationale for the study as well as research objectives and questions, which guide the investigation.

### **1.1. The land and the people**

Ethiopia is an ancient country found in the eastern part of Africa covering an area of 1,127,127 square km. It is situated between countries such as Sudan in the west, Eritrea in the north, Djibouti in the east, Somalia in the south east and Kenya in the south. The weather conditions of the country are different in different areas. According to Bender et al (1976:4), it is “hot and dry in the desert and semi-desert areas, hot and humid in the forests of the south-west and moderated by altitude in the central highlands, i.e. sunny and warm in the daytime with cool nights most of the year.”

The population of the country is nearly 80 million according to the 2007 Population and Housing Census report of the Ethiopian Statistics Agency. Furthermore, it is a country with a multitude of people and languages. The people inhabiting this country fall into different geographical categories as far as their genealogy is concerned. Bender et al (1976:5) describe the people of Ethiopia as consisting of five different groups, two (Pygmoid and Mongoloid) of which have already disappeared. The remaining three are Buhmanoid, Negroid and Caucasoid. The

Caucasoid people are said to be sub-categorized into two major types in such a way that one sub-group is represented by the Beja, who now live in Eritrea, in the north and the other by the Oromo language in many parts of Ethiopia as well as in Kenya. Those called Negroid are the Nilotic people living mainly in the valleys of Ethiopia and almost all of them have a darker skin than the other Ethiopians. The 2007 Population and Housing Census conducted by the Ethiopian Statistics Agency indicates the population of the major ethnic groups (which have more than a million members) as shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1:** Distribution of the population of major ethnic groups of Ethiopia (adapted from Central Statistics Agency 2007 Population and Housing Census).

No.	Ethnic group	Number	Percent
1	Oromo	25,488,344	34.5
2	Amhara	19,867,817	30.1
3	Somali	4,581,793	6.2
4	Tigre	4,483,776	6.1
5	Sidama	2,966,377	4.0
6	Gurage	1,867,350	2.5
7	Welaita	1,707,074	2.3
8	Hadiya	1,284,366	1.7
9	Afar	1,276,372	1.7
10	Gamo	1,107,163	1.5

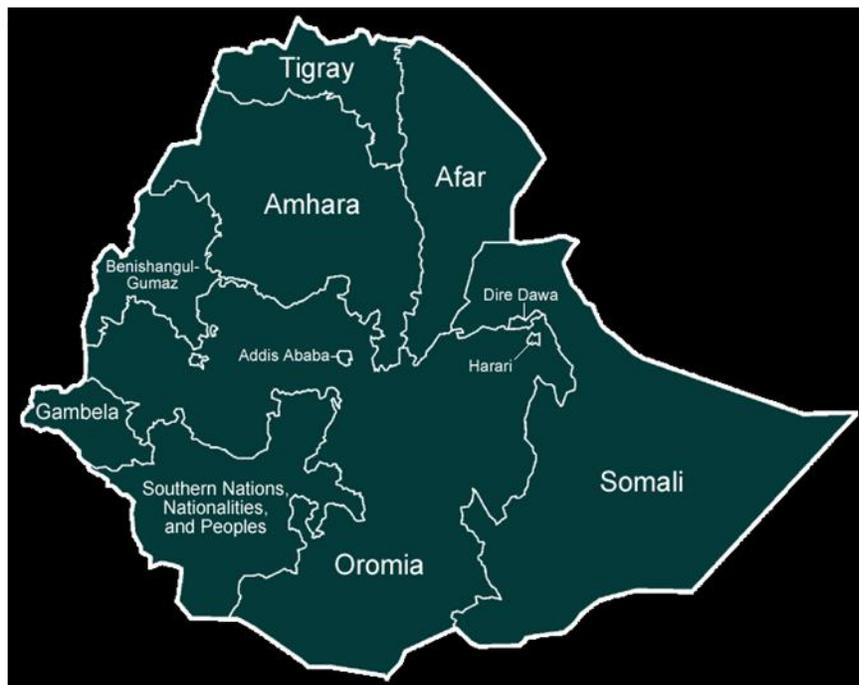
At present, the country is administratively structured into nine regions on the basis of the linguistic make-up of the population, and this is shown in Figure 1.1.

The majority of the Ethiopian people are dependent on agriculture while there are few who get their livelihoods by other means, such as pastoralism and industrial services. However, agriculture is by far the greatest majority constituting almost 85% of the population.

As far as administration and government are concerned, Ethiopia has a unique history among African countries. Unlike many other African countries which had been colonized by Europeans, Ethiopia has been free from such colonization. Van Aswegen (2008:9) notes that Ethiopia is one

of the two countries which have never been under foreign rule during the time of the scramble for Africa (see also Appleyard & Orwin, 2008:268). Eide (2000:15) reports that whereas most of the other parts of Africa were colonized by foreign (European) powers, in Ethiopia the rulers belong to an indigenous group. Ethiopia was ruled by various kings and feudal lords at different times in different parts of the country before it was established in its present form. A feudal monarchy had ruled the country until it was overthrown by the mass revolution of 1974, when the communist military junta took over the power of the government. This military government in turn was replaced by the government led by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front in 1991.

**Figure 1.1:** Map of Ethiopia showing its constituent regions (Source: SIL)



### 1.1.1 The Abyssinian people and their dominance

The history of this country began in the northern part of the present day Ethiopia with the establishment of the Axumite Kingdom (Barnes & van Aswegen 2008:432). Later on it expanded in different directions, and the leadership transferred to different kings from different parts of the country, especially at the centre. They were people who had come from south-western Arabia

and established their kingdom at Axum, in the present day Tigray Region of Ethiopia, at the beginning. Among the invading people of that time were found the Agazi (speakers of Ge'ez) and Habeshat (from which the name Abyssinia was later derived). Bender et al (1976:8) contend that this name, Abyssinia, is interchangeably used with Ethiopia. In fact, this particular name referred to the then Ethiopia which included only the northern Semitic people. The present day southern, western and eastern people were not part of the Abyssinia. Cooper (1989:21) reports that the Axumite Kingdom became very significant around the fourth century, at the time when Christianity was introduced to the area.

The different kings who came to power at various times and in various parts of the country tried their best to 'unite' different people under their rule to create the present day Ethiopia. According to Van Aswegen (2008:11), this unifying and modernizing effort of the country was to create a good image internationally. Amongst the different kings, Tewodros II (1885-1868) was the one who played the first major role in trying to bring the different peoples of present day Ethiopia under his rule, but he could not fully succeed due to various reasons. Bender et al (1976:9) report that:

basically, according to one interpretation, it seems that Tewodros was a politically inept reformer ahead of his time; he united Ethiopia for the first time in centuries and instituted many useful innovations, but because he lacked a steadfast character and was never fully accepted by the people at large, he failed to lay the foundations of a lasting union, and all his efforts crumbled at Meqdala in 1868.

Later on the country started to be ruled under kings claiming to be descendants of the Solomonic Dynasty of Judea by the virtue of an Abyssinian Queen, Sheba, who visited King Solomon and conceived a child named Minilik from him. Minilik later on became king of Ethiopia claiming such descendance. Thus, King Minilik II (1889-1910) was the first to fulfil what Tewodros had anticipated by subjugating all the peoples of the centre, the east, the south and the west under the present day Ethiopia (Bender et al 1976:10). According to Eide (2000:1), it was towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that many of the people in the present day Ethiopia were subjugated, and became part of the country. Van Aswegen (2008:11) also points out that Minilik II was the king who brought his capital to the centre of the country (from the north) and named it *Addis Ababa*

(new flower). Previously the place was called *Finfinne* by the Oromo people residing the place. The name Addis Ababa (Amharic toponym) was given by the conquerors.

Those people who were subjugated under the northern Abyssinians lost their identities and were forced to accept the culture from the northern Abyssinians. This kind of power relationship was said to be the act of unification and modernization from the side of the subjugators, whereas most of the subjugated groups consider it to be colonization of one black by another. According to Braukamper (cited in Eide, 2000:18) the degree of oppression was considered to be such that “its degree of oppression apparently surpassed European imperialism in Northeast Africa”.

The last king of Ethiopia, Haile Sellassie I (1930-1974), continued with the policies and government system of Minilik II until he was overthrown in 1974 by the military. In general, the feudal system of Ethiopia was the one in which the Amhara supremacy was reflected most. Eide (2000:16) claims by quoting Levine, that the Amhara in Ethiopia were identified by their dominance: “any serious account of contemporary Ethiopia must begin with the fact of Amhara dominance.” This is due to the fact that the later kings (Tewodros II, Minilik II and Haile Sellassie I) were all Amharas, and promoted Amhara supremacy over the rest of the people.

The military junta (commonly known as *Derg*, ‘group’) ruled the country from 1974 to 1991 and espoused the Marxist-Leninist ideology of communism following Russia and other countries in the then eastern socialist camp. This government started its rule under the principle of equality of all people of the country. Van Aswegen (2008:19) points out that the Derg had a credo of equality, self-reliance, national unity, centralized economy, and the abolition of feudal lords. With regard to equality of the different nationalities and ethnic groups of the country, the policy statement of the government issued on April 21, 1976 (as quoted in Eide, 2000:105) says the following: “No nationality will dominate another one since the history, culture, language and religion of each nationality will have equal recognition in accordance with the spirit of socialism.”

The military government nationalized the rural and urban land to make it accessible to the users, and proclaimed a national campaign in which all university and high school students of the time

participated in order to implement this land reform system, and to conduct a literacy programme (see § 4.2.3). Cooper (1989:25) reports that the campaign was conducted to teach the rural people basic literacy, to participate in different development activities and teach the people of the country the principles of scientific socialism. However, the *Derg* followed the policies of the former regimes concerning the cultures and the languages of the people of the eastern, southern and western parts of the country despite its avowed policy of equality. For instance, Van Aswegen (2008:25) observes that:

in spite of the Derg's policy of linguistic pluralism, Amharic remained the national language and the language of wider communication. Amharic remained the only language in the educational system, along with English, for secondary and higher education (see also Cooper, 1989:22-23).

After having ruled the country for 17 years, this regime was also overthrown by an alliance of the Eritrean Liberation Front and the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front in 1991.

The present government of Ethiopia based its structure on the basis of nationality and culture of the people and recognises the plurality of cultures and languages of the people. Accordingly, the country is divided into nine administrative regions on the basis of the cultural and linguistic make-up of the communities (see Fig.1.1 above for the detail). Every nation, nationality and ethnic group is given an internal administration of its own, and given freedom to develop and use its own culture and language. Article 39 number 2 of the Constitution of 1995 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia states that all the people of the country have the right to speak, to write and develop their languages and to promote their cultures and to preserve their history without any restriction.

### **1.1.2 The Oromo people**

The Oromo people are found among the people formerly subjugated by King Minilik II in the so called process of unifying the country. Cooper (1989:22) contends that the Oromo people are the largest among these subjugated groups (see Table 1.1). The Ethio-Semitic people used to refer to

these people by the name Galla, which is considered as pejorative these days. Bender, Eteffa and Stinson (1976:130) say that the name 'Galla' means 'emigrants', and was used not only for the Oromos but also for all the non-Christian people found surrounding the then Ethiopian Empire. Nowadays, the name by which this group is officially known is Oromo, and the language is Afaan Oromoo (or simply Oromo). Concerning their distribution in Ethiopia and Kenya and their numbers in Ethiopia, Eide (2000:42-43) has the following to say:

The Oromo are spread over a wide geographical area, mainly in the east, south and west of Ethiopia with a branch in the Wollo region in the north. Oromo are also found in northern Kenya. Among the people of Africa they hold a special position in that they are among the most expansive societies on record. The Oromo are one of the most numerous peoples in Africa, and by far the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia.

According to Aren (1978:29) even the existence of these people was not known to the foreign world until the middle of the seventeenth century. Hirpo (1999:2) also supports this view by saying that although Oromo is a big nation in the Horn of Africa, for a long time, it was not known to most of the foreign world.

The Oromo people are categorized genealogically as members of the Cushitic group of people. These Cushites are said to have migrated from southern Arabia to the eastern part of Africa. Aren (1978:29) adds that:

[t]he great Oromo migrants had gained impetus early in the 1520's at the same time as the Kingdom of Portugal was initiating her Ethiopian adventure. Not unlike the Germanic tribes of Europe in their assaults on more civilized kingdoms, it was said, the warlike Oromo peoples surged in successive waves into the mainland of Christian Ethiopia.

Aren (1978:30) goes on to say that during the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Afars and Somalis were pushing the Oromo south-wards. Accordingly, they occupied areas little by little. Since 1522, they have been moving forward through the north-western part of Kenya where they started in 1522. A part of this community, known as Bararetta, remained in Kenya around the Tana River. Many of them occupied the present day Ethiopia and spread out to the centre (Shoa), the east (Hararge,

Bale & Arsi), the north (Wollo), the south (Borena) and the west (wellega, Jimma and Ilu Abbabor).

Before coming under the rule of the northern Abyssinians, the Oromo people had had their own socio-political system known as the *Gada* system. In this system all things concerning the lives of the community such as politics, economy, religion, culture, etc. are embedded. It is a system in which all the community members are categorized into different age groups who play different social, political, cultural and economic roles. Aren (1978:32) notes that:

the individual fulfilled his obligations to the tribe in the context of his age group by assuming new functions every eight years until his cycle terminated and his sons were called upon to begin their forty-year service. The system was democratic, since it provided for a new group of officials being elected and coming into power every eight years while preventing powerful individuals from establishing themselves as permanent rulers.

In the *Gada* system there were the positions, such as *Abbaa Bokkuu* (the overall ruler), *Abbaa Gadaa* (religious leader), *Abbaa Duulaa* (military leader), in which power was shared among the community members according to their age levels. This system was eradicated as the political system and religion of the northern Abyssinians were introduced into Oromia. Aren (1978:32) maintains that this eroding process of the Abyssinians became aggravated when Orthodox Christianity and the Amhara culture were introduced to the Oromo society. This introduction of both the religion and culture as two sides of a coin replaced the religious and social system of the Oromos. Actually, before the introduction of the Orthodox Christianity, some parts of Oromia had already introduced Islam.

Under the present government, the Oromo community has a relatively greater level of autonomy. Administratively, *Naannoo Oromiyaa* (Oromia Region) is one of the nine regional states found in the country (see Figure 1.1 above) where the Constitution of the country has granted them the opportunity to develop and use their language and to preserve their culture and history. Accordingly, Oromo has become the official language and language of education in the Oromo Region.

## 1.2 The languages of Ethiopia

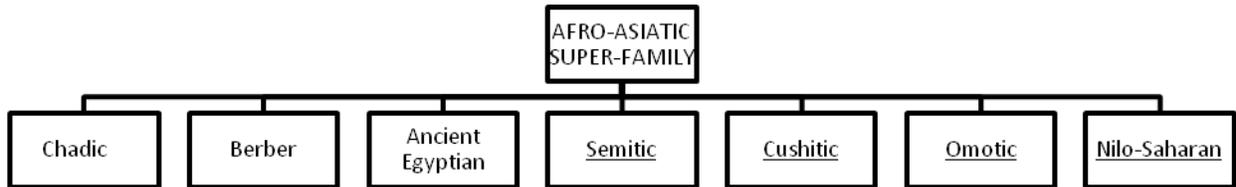
It is generally known that more than eighty languages are spoken with a variety of dialects in Ethiopia (Cooper 1976:292; Van Aswegen 2008:29; Woldemariam, 2007:212). While some of these indigenous languages are spoken by millions of people like Oromo, there are some which are spoken only by thousands of people. All the languages spoken in the country belong to the Afro-asiatic language family and are sub-classified into four sub-families, namely Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic and Nilo-Saharan. The following table shows the percentage of speakers of the different language families in the country.

From the information given in Table 1.2 it is evident that most of the population of the country speak the Ethio-Semitic and Cushitic languages, whereas the speakers of the Omotic and Nilo-Saharan language families are few compared to the former two families. The Omotic family used to be considered as part of the Cushitic family, but later on it was classified as a different family on its own because of its peculiar characteristics (Fleming & Bender, 1976:35-36). The Nilo-Saharan languages are mostly spoken in the plateaus and valleys found in Ethiopia as well as between Ethiopia and Sudan. Due to their relative importance in the country (which is based on the number of speakers), tree diagrams (see Figure 1.2) of the two families (Semitic and Cushitic) are shown with the language families that are found in Ethiopia underlined. Figure 1.3 is a map presenting the distribution of the languages in Ethiopia.

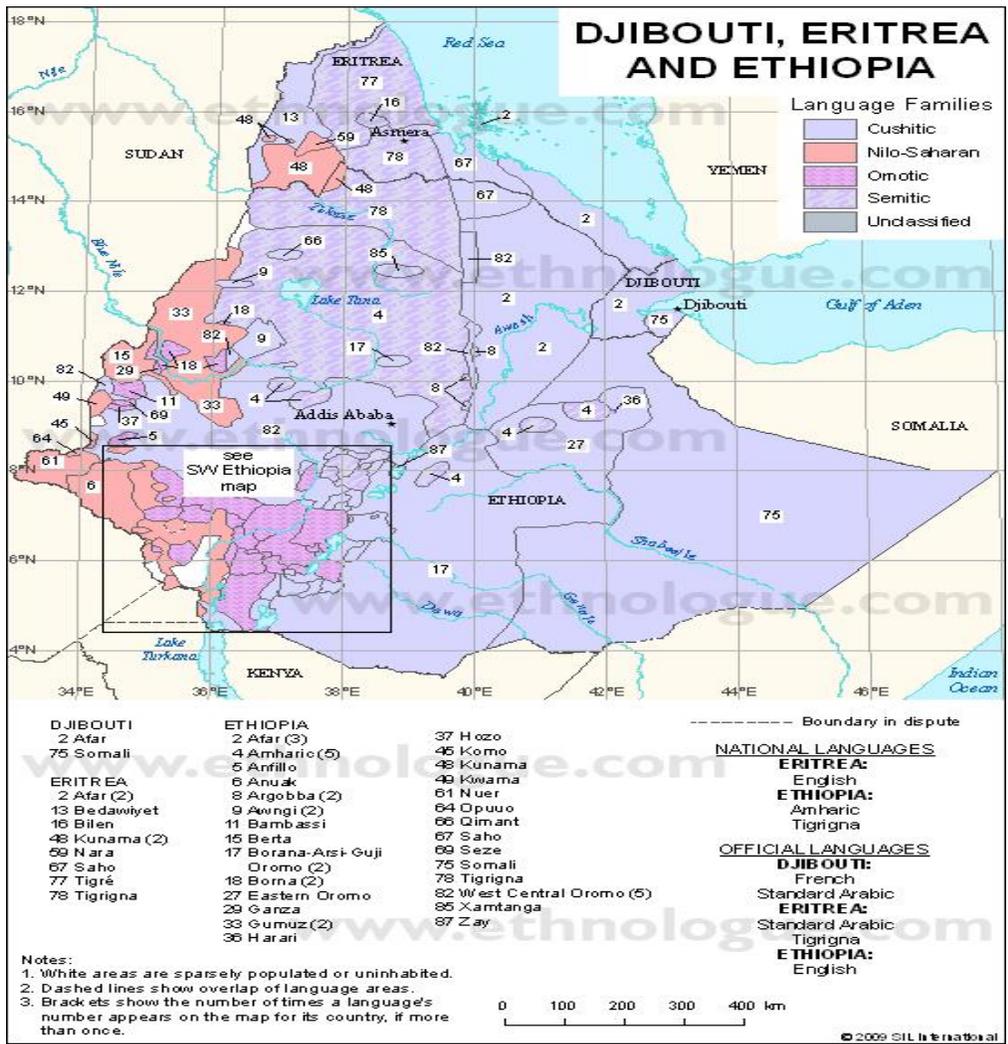
**Table 1.2:** Distribution of speakers of the different language families in Ethiopia (Source: Van Aswegen, 2008).

No.	Language family	Percentage of total population
1	Ethio-Semitic	45
2	Cushitic	44
3	Omotic	7
4	Nilo-Saharan	4

**Figure 1.2:** Language families within the super-family of Afro-Asiatic (adapted from Bender et al, 1976).



**Figure 1.3:** A map of Ethiopia showing the languages spoken.



### 1.2.1 The Semitic languages

The Semitic family of languages is believed to be spoken by the descendants of Shem, one of the sons of Noah. Hetzron and Bender (1976:23) state that this is the best known and best-studied family among the different language groups found in Ethiopia. There is an abundance of literature found concerning the culture, languages and history of the Semitic-speaking people. These authors further argue that languages are grouped under this family on the basis of their common origin rather than their structural similarities.

Two of the Ethio-Semitic languages are discussed below because of their special place in the history of the country, and they may have a bearing on the current study. These are the classical language, Ge'ez, and the dominant language in the country for many centuries, Amharic.

Ge'ez was the first language to be used in Ethiopia as an official language. According to Bender, Fulas and Cowley (1976:99), this language was brought from South-west Arabia by the Semitic people and used in the Axumite Empire as an oral language. Gerard (1981:7) also reports that the people who came from south-western Arabia were known as Habashat (later on became Abyssinian) and Agazi who spoke the language Ge'ez. The descendants of this group controlled the present day Eritrea and Northern Tigray by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. making Axum the capital. The Axumites were said to have introduced the Sabeian language (Ge'ez) and script from that time onwards. Ge'ez had its 'golden age' starting from 1270 under the rule of King Yekuno Amlak (1270-1285), and lasted for about 250 years together with Amhara supremacy in the area. Gerard (1981:8) maintains that original Ethiopian literature came into existence during the reign of Amda Tseyon (1314-1344), which included writings on both religious and secular issues. After the fall of the Axumite Empire, Ge'ez ceased to be used as an oral language and became a literary language only. As an oral language, it was replaced by other Ethio-Semitic languages such as Amharic and Tigrinya, although these languages are not descendants of Ge'ez. Hetzron and Bender (1976:25) contend that the ancestor for the modern Ethio-semitic languages is not Ge'ez, but that "Giiz and the modern languages had a common ancestor shared by all of them." Gerard (1981:8) reports after this language ceased to be used as a spoken language, it continued to have the status of a language of liturgy, administration and culture, similar to the status Latin

enjoyed in Western Europe. For example, Gerard (1981:16) claims that “to the common people it was as unintelligible as Church Latin was to Catholic congregations of the same period.” Furthermore, this language remained a language of liturgy and worship within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), mostly on its own, and also alongside Amharic, and nowadays to some extent other vernaculars as well.

Since the reign of Tewodros II, Amharic was promoted to an official status as part of the plan of the King for unification of the country. According to Gerard (1981:16),

the main agents of this portentous change were King Tewodros II and the European, mainly Protestant, missionaries... One of the two trends that thus converged towards the establishment of Amharic as a literary language was Tewodros’s determination to gain popular support, by-passing the feudal lords and the clergy in order to reach the common people, who could be read to in the latter language.

Thus, Amharic expanded southward in the Empire together with the rule of the northern Abyssinians. According to Cooper (1976:290), Minilik II expanded his rule towards the beginning of the twentieth century to areas which had been ruled by different feudal lords and other traditional leaders. These included areas inhabited by the Oromos and Somalis. Hence, concurrently with the expansion of the Empire, Amharic spread to the areas annexed under the rule of the northerners (Cooper, 1976:290).

Amharic has been the dominant language in Ethiopia for quite a long period of time because of the position of those who spoke it as their native language. Cooper (1976:289) reports that:

[w]ith the ‘Restoration’ of the Solomonic dynasty in 1270, the centre of Abyssinian power had moved southward to the Amhara region, and for most of the time since then the Amharas have been the politically dominant force in Ethiopia. Their language became known as the language of the king (see also Woldemariam, 2007:12).

As discussed above, Ethiopia has had unique characteristics of politics when viewed in relation to the other African countries in that it has never been colonized by foreign European powers

(see § 1.1). Therefore, Ethiopia has never had an exoglossic official language in its history. Amharic played the role of official language and lingua franca that an exoglossic language often plays in African countries.

Under the present more democratic leadership, Amharic serves as an official language of the federal government and as a lingua franca, especially in the bigger cities and towns among people belonging to different ethnic groups. Thus, it has still not lost its dominance over the other languages of the country except that it is not the official language of some regional states.

Thus, it is because of this dominant position of Amharic for more than 100 years that Oromo (and other minority languages in the southern part of the country) have remained at the level of vernaculars. The royal constitution of 1955 declared in its Article 125 that Amharic is the official language of the country. The change in the government system that came into existence in 1991 brought about a change which has enabled the proscribed languages to be developed and used in different fields of life including the church (see also Constitution of 1995, Article 39.2 cited above, § 1.1.1). The situation is very conducive for all nations, nationalities and people to develop and use their vernacular languages in all spheres of life including church services.

### **1.2.2 The Cushitic languages**

The Cushitic super-family of languages is the largest group of languages spoken in Ethiopia. According to Fleming and Bender (1976:35),

most of the languages spoken in Ethiopia belong to the Cushitic or Omotic families, with a smaller number being Semitic. There are over forty Cushitic and Omotic languages, some with numerous dialects, within the confines of the Empire. A few Cushitic languages are also found outside Ethiopia, mainly to the south, but nearly all Cushitic-speakers are Ethiopians.

The Cushitic super-family is sub-classified into Beja (in the north, now Eritrea), Central Cushitic (Agew, found in the north-west), East Cushitic (found in many places such as Somalia, Kenya and many parts of Ethiopia) and South Cushitic (in Tanzania and coastal Kenya). The following

tree diagram (Figure 1.4) shows the classification of the Cushitic family of languages with the spoken languages underlined).

**Figure 1.4:** Tree diagram showing the Cushitic family of languages (Source: Bender et al, 1976: 14; those languages spoken in Ethiopia are underlined)

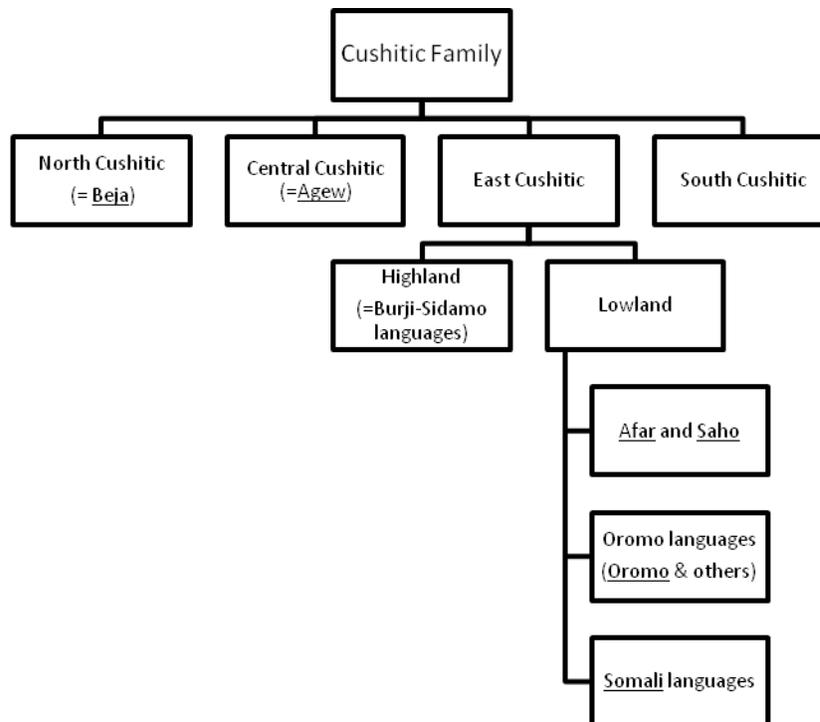
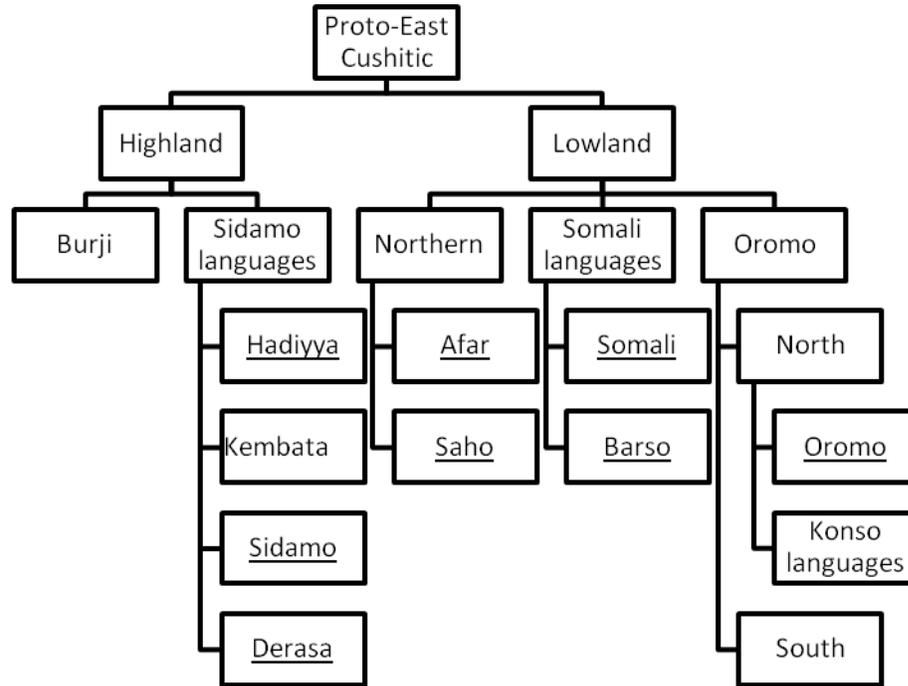


Figure 1.5 sets out in more detail the Eastern Cushitic family of languages in which Oromo. The underlined are languages spoken in Ethiopia.

**Figure 1.5:** East Cushitic Family Tree (adapted from Fleming & Bender, 1976:43)



### 1.2.3 The Oromo language

As observed in the diagram (Figure 1.5), Oromo, which is the subject of the present study, belongs to the Cushitic language family. Within the Cushitic family, it is grouped under the eastern Cushitic, a family that consists of more than 70 languages (Ali & Zaborski, 1990:97). This language used be to known by the pejorative name *Galla* by the Abyssinian elites, but its official name given by the speech community and by which it is known today is *Afaan Oromoo* (or simply *Oromo*) (Ali & Zaborski, 1990:ix; Stroomer, 1995:2). This language is spoken over a vast area both in Ethiopia and in Kenya as well as some part of Somalia. Regarding its number of speakers and area it covers, Oromo is the fourth largest language after Arabic, Hausa and Swahili (Ali & Zaborski, 1990: ix).

Oromo is divided into several dialects. While many of these dialects are spoken in Ethiopia, there are some which are spoken in Kenya as well as Somalia. The dialects which are spoken specifically in Ethiopia include *Mecha* (western), *Tulema* (central), *Wello* and *Raya* (northern),

*Arsi, Guji and Borana* (southern) and *Harar* (eastern) and *Bale* (south eastern) (Bender, Eteffa and Stinson, 1976:131; see also Stroomer, 1995:4). Furthermore, while the *Gabra* dialect is spoken in a cross-border area between Ethiopia and Kenya, *Orma* and *Waataa* dialects are spoken specifically in Kenya, the first across the Tana river as well as in southern Somalia and the latter “along the Kenyan coast south of Orma” (Avanzati & Gutman, 2013). Stroomer (1995:2-3) adds *Borana* spoken in Kenya, the eastern part, *Sakuye*, southern part, *Garre* or *Gurre*, north-eastern part and *Munyo*, close to the *Orma* dialect (see also Ali & Zaborski, 1990:ix). These dialects of the language are classified mostly on the basis of geographical distribution as the Oromo people are scattered over a large area of Ethiopia and some parts of Kenya and Somalia as well (Stroomer, 1995:1).

All the dialects of the language are known to be mutually intelligible. Bender, Eteffa and Stinson (1976:131) contend that:

the question can fairly be asked as to whether the Galla of Ethiopia is really one language with well-marked dialect differences, or several languages. ... But, on the grounds of mutual intelligibility and basic vocabulary, it seems fair to maintain that Ethiopian Galla is one language (see also Cooper, 1989:22; Ali & Zaborski, 1990:97; Stroomer, 1995:4).

Besides being used by quite a large number of native speakers, this language is also used, to some extent, as a lingua franca in the southern and western parts of the country among speakers of other languages (Stroomer, 1995:1).

For a long time, this language had been kept at the level of proscribed vernacular like many other minority languages of the country because of the language policy of the past regimes in Ethiopia. Describing the Ethiopian language situation of the past, Cooper (1989:24) reports that from the more than 80 languages of the country, only Amharic and Tigrinya had been used in written form until recently. Now, following the change of government in 1991 in Ethiopia, Oromo has been given legal status of being used as a regional official language of Oromia, one of the nine regions of the country. Thus, it is being used for office use, in courts of law, at primary schools in *Naannoo Oromiyaa* (Oromia Region) as a medium of instruction, at universities, and offered

as a field of study at Addis Ababa University and some other regional universities up to master’s degree level. Now the Latin script has been chosen as the official orthography of this language, and much is being done towards its development especially by the *Biiraa Aadaa fi Tuuriisimii Oromiyaa* (Oromia Cultures and Tourism Bureau) as well as *Biiraa Barnoota Oromiyaa* (Oromia Education Bureau). The Oromo Language Department at Addis Ababa University is also involved in preparing teaching material in order to teach the language both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

### 1.3 Christianity in Ethiopia and among the Oromo

Some people say that Ethiopia is ‘the land of Christianity’ although not everyone accepts this assertion as there are a significant number of Muslims and followers of other traditional religions (This assertion is mostly heard from the northern Orthodox Christians of Ethiopia). The truth, however, is that there are various Christian denominations and many Christians in the country. According to the Population and Housing Census of the Ethiopian Statistics Agency 2007 report, the distribution of the population for the different religions is as shown in Table 1.3:

**Table 1.3:** Number of people following different religions in Ethiopia (Source: Ethiopian Statistics Agency 2007 Population and Housing Census report)

No.	Name of Religion	Number of followers	Percent of the total population
1	Orthodox Christianity	32,138,126	43.5
2	Protestant Christianity	13,746,787	18.6
3	Catholic Christianity	536,827	0.7
4	Islam	25,045,550	33.9
5	Traditional religions	1,957,944	2.6
6	Others	471,861	0.6

#### 1.3.1 Orthodox Christianity

History tells us that Christianity was first introduced into Ethiopia during the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Gerard (1981:7) reports that “[d]uring the first half of the fourth century A.D., King Ezana (320-

340) was converted to Christianity by an Alexandrian monk named Frumentius.” This created a long-lasting relationship between Ethiopia and Alexandria to the extent that the right was given to the Alexandrian Church to nominate a patriarch for the EOC until very recently. The EOC then accepted what is called the Menophysite doctrine which proclaims that Christ is the incarnated divine nature to be adored, and that a denial of this is considered to be a sin. According to Gerard (1981:7-8), Ethiopia shares a dogmatic and authoritarian church-society relationship tradition with the Byzantine and other Middle Eastern Christian cultures. Later on (in the 5<sup>th</sup> century), monks were said to have come from Greece to continue the Christianization of the country. Apart from these relationships, Ethiopian Christianity was said to remain closed to the outside world for a long period. Aren (1978:33) notes that:

though an Ethiopian embassy of thirty people is reported to have visited Avignon in France and Rome in Italy in 1306, most of Ethiopian history was shrouded in darkness to the Western world till 1440, when a group of Ethiopian delegates joined delegates of other Orthodox churches at the Council of Florence in Italy.

According to Gibbon (1998:12, cited in Van Aswegen, 2008:10), this closedness lasted for about one thousand years, and was known as ‘a period of sleeping’ for the country. This closedness was due to the fact that the country was surrounded by mainly Muslim states. Later on, the Portuguese became interested in Ethiopia as a route to India for the spice trade, and this helped in establishing a religious relationship between Ethiopia and Portugal.

In the meantime, because of the attack from the Muslim Ahmed Ibin Ibrahim al-Ghazi (1506-1543) known in Ethiopia as Ahmed Gagn, the Portuguese came in with assistance to the Christian Ethiopia. Ahmed Gagn (he was named ‘Gagn’ because he was left-handed, and *gragne* is an Amharic word for a left-handed person) was from the present day Eastern part of Ethiopia, Harer, where Islam was the predominant religion at the time. He launched a war against the Christian Abyssinians because of the favourable situation existing at the time throughout the whole of the horn of Africa. According to Aren (1978:33), “in 1516 the Ottoman conquest of Egypt upset the balance of political power on the Red Sea and revived *jihad*, the sacred war against the infidels.” Thus, Gerard (1981:12-13) contends that this time (1529)

coincided with the Turks reaching Vienna. Ethiopia rebelled against Ahmed Gragh with the assistance received from the Portuguese. According to Aren (1978:33), the victory gained with the assistance of the Portuguese strengthened the friendship between the Ethiopian government and the Church of Rome for about a century. This brought about the introduction of the Catholic faith into the country, which the Orthodox Church did not like. Van Aswegen (2008:12) even reports that Susneyos (1607-1632), the king of Ethiopia at the time, used force to convert the people of the country to the Catholic faith. However, this king was not so successful in that his conversion to Catholicism and his attempt to force his subjects to be converted led to a civil war. Gerard (1981:14) maintains that this influence of the Jesuits threatened the religious and political unity of the country at the time, and that “King Sartsa Dengel ... was killed by his Coptic vassals after his conversion to western Christianity, and one of his successors, Susenyos ... was forced to abdicate after his unsuccessful attempt to turn Catholicism into the official religion of the country.”

The Jesuits were short-lived in the country, and the Orthodox Christianity was revived under King Fasil (1632-1667), the son of Susneyos, and he returned the Christianity to that of Alexandria. Thus, the EOC is the first church to be known and most favoured in Ethiopia especially by the past regimes. In Bender et al (1976:1), it is stated that “to the surprise of most outsiders, Ethiopia traditionally has been and today still is dominated politically and culturally by a Christian ruling class- but with a unique form of Christianity not quite like that of any other nation or people”. The Ethiopian Orthodox Christians have unique characteristics in their worship in that Judaic practices lost elsewhere are reflected in their worship, their regular official fasts, and adoration of different saints, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, and many other festival practices.

According to different sources (e.g. Bonacci, 2000:593; Eide, 2000:15), this church is said to have been closely interlinked with the state during the past regimes. Eide (2000:15) points out that the emperor himself played a great role in the activities of the church such as proclaiming the doctrine that his subjects would follow. Gerard (1981:11) also maintains that “the king himself was a prolific producer of devotional compilations and treatises.” Thus, together with the Amharization of the country, the EOC could be expanded to many parts of today’s Ethiopia. Van

Aswegen (2008:12) reports that in the process of subjugating the other southern and western parts of today's Ethiopia under the Abyssinian rule, the EOC has played a very significant role by giving a religious and ideological guidance. This linkage between the government and the EOC remained until the popular revolution of 1974 in Ethiopia, which brought into power the atheist communist group of military leaders.

This church is still strongly functioning in many parts of the country though in some cases a decrease in membership is observed due to the conversion of some of its members to evangelical Christianity. According to Eide (2000:89), this decrease in the number of believers seems to be due to the fact that "adherence to the EOC was, in general, to a large degree superficial since most people's contact with it was limited to baptism and burials, and they failed really to comprehend the basic aspects of Christianity". Thus, the number of EOC members is seen to decrease from time to time whereas that of the evangelical churches is growing at present.

### **1.3.2 Evangelical Christianity**

Evangelical Christianity has a history of little more than one hundred years in Ethiopia. In order to enter into Ethiopia, the evangelical missionaries made great sacrifices. The EOC, being hand in glove with the feudal governments, resisted the entrance of the evangelical missionaries to the land (Trimingham, 1950:2 cited in Filippini, 2000:606. Pankhurst (1976:310) maintains that influence of the Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia limited the success of European missionaries, coupled also with Islamic movements in the country, unlike the other parts of Africa. Rulers of the land, such as King Tewodros II and Yohannes IV, had followed brutal policies against evangelical Christianity. According to Aren (1978:211), for example,

the Emperor Yohannes initiated a religious policy that became a conspicuous feature of his rule. Having defeated the Egyptian invaders and secured ascendancy over his most powerful feudal chiefs, he set about making Ethiopia one in religion in order to preserve her political unity.

This became a great obstacle for many years for missionaries who wanted to enter into the country.

Until they had the opportunity to enter into the land, the missionaries had to wait at the Port of Massawa. Aren (1978:211) reports, for example, that the Swedish mission had to patiently wait on the coast for a long time trying to send different evangelical envoys at different times particularly to the Oromo areas. They also conducted an educational programme while they were at the port for the different people such as liberated slaves that they found at the port (see § 4.2.3). From there, they sent some Bibles (already translated into Amharic) into the country. This was mainly done through merchants who came to Massawa from the centre of the country.

However, little by little they succeeded in entering into some parts of the country. For example, after the death of King Tewodros II, Minilik II was said to have a more liberal policy towards different denominations, and this encouraged Catholic missionaries to begin a venture in southwestern Ethiopia. According to Aren (1978:128), a leader of the Capuchins (Guglielmo Massaja, 1809-1889) had a favour both from the King and the monks of the EOC. The Lazarist missionaries were also said to be favoured and served under the Tigrean King, Yohannes IV, while he was fighting the Egyptians. The last king of Ethiopia, Haile Sellasie I, also gave conditional permission for evangelistic work to missionaries in his decree of 1944. The conditions included that the missionaries should give other social services besides their evangelistic work, that they evangelize only areas which had not been reached by the EOC and work on developing Amharic to the level of a national language (Dilebo, 2001:7).

The original idea of the missionaries in Ethiopia was not to introduce a new denomination, but it was to spiritually strengthen the EOC. This was however very difficult. Aren (1978:123) notes that the evangelization of the Orthodox Christians began through the distribution of the religious literature and conducting different Bible studies. He says that their eventual goal was also to reach the Muslims in Ethiopia through the converted Orthodox Christians.

According to Birri (2011:2), the first organized evangelical mission to enter into Ethiopia was the Church Missionary Society (CMS) under the leadership of Samuel Gobat in 1829. The

principal aim of this mission was to disseminate the Bible translated into Amharic in order to give a deep understanding of the scriptures to the EOC believers, with the hope of bringing a revival within the EOC. Aren (1978:71) reports that this mission was allowed entrance into the country because it offered to help the king with educational and medical services. However, the adherents of the EOC could not accept this idea of reforming their church and even started persecuting those who had accepted this idea. Thus, the CMS was banned and expelled from the country in 1842.

The European and American missionaries were especially interested in evangelizing the Oromo people from the very beginning due to their size and strategic place in the Horn of Africa (see § 1.1.2). Aren (1978:123) notes that “[F]rom the very beginning an outreach to ‘Galla’ formed an integral part of the missionary vision,” whereas Smidt (2000:634) notes that there was a great conviction in Germany that the Oromo were considered to be people to be reached out to in order to evangelize the rest of the Eastern part of Africa. Aren (1978:105-106) quotes Louis Harms, a German, who said the following about the Oromo people in 1851: “The Galla country south of Abyssinia in East Africa has become so extremely important to me during the past weeks that I believe there is no country more promising than this in all Africa.” Accordingly, Harms organized a mission, trained evangelists and made several attempts to reach the Oromo area, but he could not succeed at all for almost fifty years (Aren, 1978:108-114).

The first missionary to reach the Oromo people was a German missionary named Johan Ludwig Krapf (Aren 1978:72). However, the obstacles were numerous. Krapf was permitted to accompany the king (Sahile-Sillase) on his military expedition to the Oromo land (see § 4.3.1). However, his request to proceed into the inner part of Oromia was not accepted by the king.

Another mission interested in reaching the Oromo area was the Swedish Evangelical Mission. According to Bulcha (1995:37);

the aim of the Swedish Evangelical Mission when it arrived in 1865 in Northeast Africa was to convert the Oromo people to Christianity. However, as the way to the Oromo country was

closed in the north by Abyssinian kings and warlords, the Swedish missionaries stayed at Massawa waiting for the opportunity to penetrate the interior and reach the Oromo country.

After many sacrificial attempts, they finally succeeded little by little through emperors who had an interest of modernizing their country. At the beginning of his rule, Minilik II had a liberal policy, which enabled missionaries to enter into the south western part of the country, even though there was resistance from the EOC adherents. Some Ethiopians who had been exposed to the faith through the missionaries in Port Massawa volunteered to participate in the mission and helped them penetrate into the country. Niguse Tashu was such a person who devoted himself for this purpose. He was educated at the port by the missionaries, and persuaded other merchants to join him. Aren (1978:234) notes that “all the time that Niguse was a student at Lundahl’s school he invited all Amarinya [Amharic]-speaking people whom he happened to meet in the streets of Massawa, both traders and scholars, to attend the worship services of the mission.” He later on participated in a missionary expedition to one of the Oromo areas in Ethiopia, Jimma. Other Ethiopians who were converted and later on participated in the mission work were freed slaves such as Onesimos Nessib (an Oromo). He was captured as a slave at his young age, sold to many masters until he was freed by Swedish missionaries who took him and educated him first at Massawa and later on, at a higher level, in Sweden as an evangelist. Bulcha (1995:37) maintains that Onesimos was the first student at the school opened at Massawa by the missionaries. He then came back and participated in the mission work to the Oromo land (see § 4.2.1). Still others were reformed EOC adherents who participated and brought success to the mission endeavour. Qeshi Gebre-Ewostateos Ze-Michael (1865-1905) was an Orthodox priest from Hamassen, Tigray, who became an evangelical Christian and later on a missionary. Aren (1978:375) reports that this man was a “founder of Evangelical Christianity in Wollaga.”

Of the many evangelical churches in Ethiopia today, the EECMY, which is the focus of this study, is the oldest, and has played very significant role in the development of Oromo in the country. It has been participating in integrated rural and urban development activities in the country such as construction of water wells, roads, irrigations, hospitals and schools together with its work of evangelization.

The establishment of this church has been fraught with difficulties. After many of the attempts of the European missionaries had failed, the Ethiopians who had been evangelized from among the Ethiopian Orthodox adherents succeeded in reaching an area called Bojjii in the then Wellega Region, where they were allowed by the local governor to begin their evangelical work together with education of the people. According to Aren (1978:371), “when success was attained in Wollaga just before the close of the nineteenth century, it once more became obvious that indigenous missionaries were best suited for evangelizing enterprises in Ethiopia.” Birri (2011:4) reports that it was Gebre-Ewostateos Zamichael and Daniel Debela (a converted Oromo) with their families who first travelled from Eritrea to Boji (Wellega) taking their New Testament translated into Oromo.

Another reason for success in Wellega was that the Region was ruled by the chiefs from the area who had just been converted to the Orthodox Christianity without really understanding what the faith was all about. This was due to the loyalty of the chiefs to King Minilik II. Thus, it was in 1898 that the foundation was laid at Bojjii for the EECMY. It was, however, fifty years later, in 1959, that the EECMY was recognized officially with a membership of about 20,000 (Eide, 2000:249). Aren (1999:536) notes that this became possible through the coordinated efforts of local and international dedicated evangelists.

This church as well as other evangelical churches faced persecution once more during the communist era (1974-91). It is well known that this was an atheist regime as it followed the ideology of Marxism Leninism, which was a materialist ideology. For example, Van Aswegen (2008:21) notes that the *Derg* started attacking evangelical churches in southern Ethiopia starting from 1975 saying that they were ‘foreign’. Accordingly, many church buildings and church properties were confiscated, and leaders and ministers of many evangelical churches were imprisoned for following and propagating imperialist ideology. Eide (2000:128-129) describes the confiscation of the EECMY owned Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG) on 12 March 1977,

as a heavy blow to the EECMY and marked the end of a 14-year story of radio communication of great importance to the many churches in Africa, the Middle East and

Asia.... The language used in the statement was interesting: the radio was connected to ‘imperialist and reactionary forces.’

The question may arise why the *Derg* did not attack the EOC like the evangelical churches because of the *Derg*'s atheist philosophy. Eide (2000:145) gives an answer to this question saying that the *Derg* did this as both the EOC and *Derg* favoured Amhara supremacy over all the other societies of the country whereas the evangelical churches were treating all ethnic groups equally. After the overthrow of the military government, the country gained religious freedom, and the EECMY started running its services free from government interference.

This church is well-organized and serving in many parts of the country now. According to EECMY 2013 statistics, the membership has now grown to more than six million, and it has a well-established administrative structure. Its central office is in Addis Ababa, the capital, and there are units (known as synods) in the other regions of the country. There are now 21 synods and 6,451 congregations. The EECMY Constitution and Bylaws (1991:10) indicate that the highest decision-making body of the church is the General Assembly (GA) with representatives coming from all the units. There is a Council, an Executive Board and the Church Management Committee which execute at different levels the decisions and policies issued by the GA. It has also different functional departments such as the Department of Mission and Theology, the Department of Development and Social Service Commission, and the Department of Administration and Finance.

The EECMY is now actively functioning in almost all parts of the country under the motto of *hullantanaawwii agalgilot* “Wholistic service”, with the aim of serving people physically and spiritually. The church has contributed significantly towards the development of the country during the past 50 years in the areas of construction, education, health, etc. On the other hand, it has faced a lot of obstacles, particularly during the time of the communist regime (1974-1991) (Eide, 2000). It is these contributions towards language development and the obstacles to these endeavours that are the concern of the present study.

## 1.4 Statement of the problem

As can be seen from the background given above, Ethiopia is a country with a multitude of languages. In the past, only one language was given prominence over the other languages, and only few were favoured for different purposes, including worship in the churches. The earlier regimes favoured a policy of a unitary state with one language and one religion, Orthodox Christianity. When the Evangelical missionaries arrived in the country, this situation started to change. In their effort to evangelize the Oromo people and other people of southern Ethiopia, the Evangelical missionaries have done much to develop and make use of the vernacular languages of the country. However, there have been obstacles to both in developing and using the languages.

In 1991 a democratic government changed the language policy of Ethiopia, according it gave language rights to all ethnolinguistic groups. This meant that all languages were given the freedom to be developed. While, on the one hand, because of the current language policy, there is a relative freedom now to use one's language in different spheres of life, on the other hand, it is evident that the legacy of the old dispensation still lives on. Old attitudes towards language development have not died out. A conflict arose in the EECMY between the supporters of the status quo and those who wanted to embrace the new opportunities to develop the Oromo language. Thus, it is the concern of this study to investigate the role of the church in the development of Oromo, and to also establish why conflict has become a hindrance to the development of the language, as well as the cause and effect of language conflict in the church. The main question to be answered is whether or not this church has played the roles it could have played, and what lies behind this conflict in the use of language in the EECMY. Consequently, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What contribution did the church make to the development of the language in the past?
2. What activities of the church have contributed towards the current development of Oromo?
3. What is the church doing under the current favourable situation of the country as far as the development of Oromo is concerned?

4. What are the prevailing views and attitudes in the EECMY towards the development and use of Oromo?
5. Why is there a conflict over the use of Oromo in the EECMY today even though language equality is the official position of the government and the church in Ethiopia?
6. What are the consequences of the conflict for the development of Oromo?
7. What role can the EECMY play in developing Oromo in the future?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Throughout the history of Africa, missionaries and churches have played a significant role in the development of indigenous languages. Although different, in certain ways, Ethiopia is no exception to this trend. The languages of Ethiopia were ignored until the Evangelical missionaries arrived in the country. They played a significant role in translating the Bible into various vernaculars, in particular, Oromo. The EECMY, which grew out of the Evangelical mission, played the most significant role in codifying and developing the language, even though it was proscribed by the government and opposed by the Orthodox Church. Since the acceptance of the equality of all indigenous languages in Ethiopia, the EECMY has played a significant role in the current development of the language, despite the conflict which arose within the church regarding the use of Oromo (see Chapter 4).

This study is important in that it examines the role of the EECMY, which has been and still is one of the major players in the development of Oromo, which is one of the major languages in Ethiopia. There is a gap in the literature on the development of Ethiopian languages, which needs to be filled. This is an important study in the field of language development that needs to be done because it gives a comprehensive overview of the development of Oromo, both from a historical perspective and from the perspective of current developments. The study can contribute both on a theoretical and a practical level. It contributes towards our understanding of the theory of language development and at the same time the insights gained from this study could be useful in dealing with the practical aspects of developing vernacular languages in Ethiopia.

The study may also throw some light on the theoretical development of the emerging Sociology of Language and Religion as a field of study. Exponents of this theory propose that much needs to be done concerning the interplay between language and religion in different parts of the world, because what has been done so far is just a start. Omoniyi (2006:339) contends that “[s]till they are mere tokens because in reality they represent only a small fraction of all the contexts that may together define the sociology of language and religion interface globally.” There is also a call for further research in the area of this Sociology of Language and Religion as much remains to be done as it is just an emerging field of study. Omoniyi (2006:339) continues to say that:

[t]here are still whole areas of potential research interest waiting to be opened up. For instance, there are issues of interest in the negotiation of the relationship between state language policy and language practices of faith schools especially in multiethnic and multireligious societies and liberal democracies as well as in theocratic states.

Hence, this research can make a contribution to the emerging theory of the Sociology of Language and Religion. The case of Ethiopia is unique in that both the dominant and the dominated languages are indigenous, unlike in the other countries of Africa where exoglossic official languages become dominant over the countries’ languages.

From a practical perspective, it is hoped that this study will help government officials in their language planning activities. This study could create an awareness of the role that the church has played and can still play in the development of the languages of Ethiopia.

Much can also be learned from the language conflict within the EECMY. It is clear that traditional attitudes towards language status die hard. For centuries under the hegemony of the Amharas, the vernaculars, such as Oromo, were proscribed, because the view of the state was that one language would unite the nation. When the democratic government introduced equality and freedom for all languages, it was hard for many people to accept this. From the perspective of language development, it is clear that introducing new approaches is always fraught with difficulties and is usually met with resistance. Much can be learned about the way in which to plan the development of languages from the type of research reported in this article.

## **1.6 Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to examine the role that the EECMY has played in the course of developing the Oromo language and the problems encountered in this endeavour. The following specific objectives were formulated for this study:

1. To evaluate the contribution the church has made to the development of the language in the past.
2. To identify the current activities of the church which have contributed towards the development of Oromo under the new favourable situation of the country.
3. To identify the prevailing views and attitudes in the EECMY towards the development and use of Oromo.
4. To identify the reasons for the conflict over the use of Oromo in the EECMY.
5. To identify the consequences of the conflict for the development of Oromo.

## **1.7 Overview of thesis**

The next chapter presents a survey of the theoretical literature, relevant to this study. It establishes the theoretical framework within the field of language planning and development, focusing specifically on language development issues in Africa. A particular focus of this chapter is the role that Christianity has played in language development, which is reviewed from the beginning of Christianity up to the current situation in Ethiopia. Language conflict and politics is another related issue which is explored in this chapter.

Chapter 3 is concerned with the research design and methodology of the study. This chapter deals with issues such as sampling, data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4 analyses the historical contribution of Evangelical Christianity to the development of Oromo. It examines the role of the missionaries and the church during the earlier regimes, which proscribed the use of vernacular languages in Ethiopia.

Chapter 5 gives a detailed analysis of the data collected on the role played by the EECMY in the development of the Oromo language after 1991. It examines the contribution of the EECMY towards the development of Oromo and the obstacles that had to be overcome. A detailed account of the conflict that arose within the EECMY after 1995 regarding the use of Oromo is presented.

Chapter 6 presents a summary and discussion of the important findings of the study. Conclusions are formulated and recommendations for future research are made. Finally, some suggestions are given regarding the role that the EECMY could play in the future development of the language.

## CHAPTER 2

# LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews theoretical literature related to the topic of language development, which is the concern of the present study. Accordingly, it begins by discussing the concept of language planning, which encompasses language development. Thus, the theoretical definition, goals, components, orientations, different levels and aspects of language planning are overviewed.

The chapter then explores language development in depth. It examines the purpose and necessity of language development, and the activities relating to language development. These activities include graphisation, standardisation, modernisation and renovation. After viewing these issues from a global perspective, the chapter focuses specifically on language development issues in Africa and in Ethiopia.

A particular focus of this chapter is the role that Christianity has played in language development. This is reviewed from the beginning of Christianity up to the current situation. There is a strong focus on Africa and Ethiopia.

Language conflict and politics is another related issue which is explored in this chapter.

### 2.2 Language planning and development

#### 2.2.1 Definition of language planning

It is difficult to find a clear-cut or water-tight definition of language planning that has universal acceptance (Alisjahbana, 1971:179; Cooper, 1989:29). Thus, language planning is defined differently by different scholars depending on their perspective. Wardhaugh (1986:357) gives a comprehensive definition of language planning, maintaining that language planning is a

deliberate intervention in the functioning of a language or a language variety especially in areas of language change, diffusion and erosion. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997:3) expand this definition of language planning, which they define as “a body of ideas, laws and regulations (language policy), change rules, beliefs, and practices intended to achieve a planned change (or stop change from happening) in the language use in one or more communities.”

Eastman (1983: ix) refers to language planning as an emerging branch of sociolinguistics. In fact, it was only in the 1960s that language planning came to be known as a field of study within sociolinguistics (see also Rubin & Jernudd, 1971:218). It had previously been called by various names (language engineering, glottopolitics, language development, language policy and language management) before it became known as language planning. Cooper (1989:29) reports that the term language planning was introduced into the literature by Haugen (1965) who also attributes the use of the term to Uriel Weinreich (1957).

### **2.2.2 Goals of language planning**

Most scholars (Alisjahbana, 1971:179; Eastman, 1983:27) maintain that language planning is done with a certain purpose in mind, but view the goals of language planning in different ways. Eastman (1983:27) maintains that language planning is mainly done to solve certain linguistic problems that arise at different levels of the social structure of a given society. Other scholars (e.g. Jahr, 1993:1; Rubin, 1971:218) maintain that language planning deals with linguistic problems that arise due to language contact. Thus, in such cases of linguistic conflict, decisions need to be given about what language or variety of language to use for what purpose. Language planning involves decision-making by a body that has authority to make such decisions. This means that when linguistic problems arise especially in multilingual societies, their governments take certain decisions on how to deal with the problems (see § 2.9 below). This conscious or deliberate activity of the government is also known as language engineering. Eastman (1983:4) states that these authorities who undertake language planning have moral obligations when they conduct the planning.

According to Cooper (1989:88), language planning is decision-making in such a way that three elements of decision-making (an individual, an organization, and a public arena) are involved. This is known as the alternative model of language planning, and favours different bodies taking part in the decision of language planning. Accordingly, Cooper (1989:88-97) identifies the following aspects of the decision-making process: the maker and the content of the decision (who makes what decisions), the purpose of the decision (why the decision is made), the manner of the decision (how it is made), the conditions under which the decision is made, and the result of the decision. According to Haugen (1971:281-288), referring to earlier scholars, Punya Sloka Ray (1963) and Valter Taul (1968), language is regarded as an instrument of communication and, like any other instrument, it should be planned in order to serve the communication activity in a good way.

Much has been said about the goals of language planning, viewing them from different perspectives. According to Eastman (1983:28), for example, there are five language planning goals: language purification, language revival, language reform, language standardization and lexical modernization. Ager (2001, cited in Makanda, 2009:33) also identifies seven motivating factors for language planning, which fall into the political and the social arenas. The political goals relate to issues of identity, insecurity, ideology and image, whereas the social one comprises issues such as inequality and integration or economic instrumentality as language planning goals. Homberger (1989) is also quoted in Makanda (2009:34) as having identified 16 such language planning goals that include:

officialisation, nationalisation, status standardization, vernacularization, revival, spread, maintenance, and interlingual communication as goals with regard to language status planning and purification, reform, corpus standardization, lexical modernization, terminology unification, stylistics, simplification, auxiliary code standardization and graphization.

Rabin (1971:277-279) classifies these language planning goals into extra-linguistic aims, semi-linguistic aims and linguistic aims. The extra-linguistic aims are said to be the area of interest of sociologists and political scientists, and they are mostly related to language education. They are also further sub-classified into horizontal, vertical and diachronic blocks. Semi-linguistic aims

are sub-classified into writing, spelling and pronunciation issues, and are concerned mainly with a planned language change. Linguistic aims are related to vocabulary, structure and style which normative linguists and literary practitioners are concerned with.

### **2.2.3 Components of language planning**

Different components of language planning have been identified, of which fact finding, policy formulation, codification, elaboration, implementation, feedback, evaluation and cultivation are the most common ones (Crystal, 1997:366; Kotey & Houssivian, 1977:85-86; Rubin, 1971:218-221).

Haugen (1987:59-64) identifies four steps in the language planning process, namely selection of a norm, codification of the norm, implementation and elaboration of the norm (see also May, 2012:159). Regarding the first one (selection of a norm), Haugen (1987:59-60) states that it is concerned with the choice of one code among competing (or conflicting) varieties in order to solve the competition problem. This kind of choice is done by the community through its leaders (although there is a possibility that individuals can also be involved). Haugen (1987:60) specifically argues that "it is a form of policy planning, which establishes that a given language norm, be it a single item or a whole language, shall enjoy (or lose) a given status in a society" (see § 2.2.6 for status planning). The second step (codification) is a practical activity done mainly by language practitioners. Haugen (1987:60) notes that this activity will result in having an established orthography, a grammar, and a dictionary. This is the act of language development (see § 2.2.6 and § 2.3 below). The third step (implementation) refers to activities in which the selected and coded language (or variety) is put into usage by different parts of the society. Elaboration (the fourth step) is generally about modernizing the vocabulary of the language in order to use it to communicate modern ideas of science and technology (see § 2.3). Haugen's (1987:64) model of the planning is set out in Table 2.1 below:

**Table 2.1:** A revised Model of Language Planning (Source: Haugen, 1987:64)

Level	Form	Function
Society (status planning)	1. Selection (decision procedures) a. Identification of problem b. Allocation of norms	3. Implementation (educational spread) a. Correction procedures b. Evaluation
Language (Corpus planning)	2. Codification (standardization procedures) a. Graphization b. Grammatication c. Lexication	4. Elaboration (functional development) a. Terminological modernization b. Stylistic development

### 2.2.4 Language planning orientations

Language planning is seen also from an orientation point view. Orientation is a preconceived belief or attitude about the language or the languages of a country and their uses in a society. Thus, the orientation that the planners have toward a language determines the strategy they use for the planning. Accordingly, Ruiz (1984:16, cited in Makanda, 2009:35) identifies three language planning orientations: language as a problem, language as a right and language as a resource.

Language is seen as a problem, especially when the planners have the aim of nation building under the domination of one language over the other languages in multilingual settings. In this case, the planners take the existence of various languages within a community as an obstacle to their unifying strategy, and their planning focuses on solving this problem by promoting one dominant language and suppressing the others. Cooper (1989:34-35) argues that:

[I]anguage planning is typically carried out for the attainment of nonlinguistic ends such as consumer protection, scientific exchange, national integration, political control, economic development, the creation of new elites or the maintenance of old ones, the pacification or cooption of minority groups, and mass mobilization of national or political movements.

Kymlicka and Patten (2003:13) call language planning which favours one language at the expense of others as a 'Nation building approach to language policy'. This kind of language planning tries to promote and diffuse one language and discourage the use of others. According to Coulombe (1995:100), the main advantage of this type of policy is that it can encourage all the communities within a nation to have a unified attitude towards nation-building. Its main disadvantage is that it may sometimes ignore a community that is large in number and has institutional complexity, as some communities might have a special place in a given polity because of historical reasons. In such cases, the community has its own societal culture, so that individual members of the community can gain various advantages, by using their language. However, May (2012:19) argues that if these communities are denied their linguistic rights, these may lead to the danger of "secessionist pressures and the potential fragmentation of nation-states."

Considering language issues as a right, that all human languages should be seen equally, goes in harmony with the other issues of human rights. Makanda (2009:35) discusses this issue in relation to the declaration by the United Nations, that a language is a right to its speakers (see also McDuling, 2014:93). According to May (2012:2), the issue of language rights has become a norm in recent years to alleviate the problem of language shift and death. Thus, this orientation is concerned with individual as well as group rights as related to emotions, beliefs, convictions and values they have concerning their language.

These individual rights include using of the language concerned at home and in the market places, in the different communication channels (telephone, letters, etc.), for cultural as well as religious purposes, and through interpretations at courts of law, etc. Such rights are, on the one hand, considered to be negative rights as they indicate the non-interference of the government in the use by the individuals of their languages. May (2012:3) reports that there is an argument against any interference in the communities' choice of the language they want to use. On the other hand, government's interference by contributing to the development of the languages is called a positive language right. Kymlicka and Patten (2003:8) refer to this as 'rights of tolerance' and 'rights of promotion' (see also McDuling, 2014:93). As far as the public use is

concerned, these scholars suggest that there are two approaches: (a) the ‘norm-and-accommodation’ approach, whereby one majority language is used in public spheres, and (b) the approach of choosing certain languages to have equal status as co-official languages. Thus, in such cases the planning gives all speakers equal opportunities to develop and use their languages, although mostly it is by themselves without the assistance of the government. According to this belief, the expenses of language planning should always be covered by the speech community itself, but Coulombe (1995:93) argues that this kind of policy is not acceptable, as it does not help the maintenance and development of minority languages. May (2012:161) also reports that the proponents of linguistic human rights (LHR) argue that minority languages should be granted the rights which the majority languages have. He indicates that if a language gets institutionalised support, its vitality increases. According to McDuling (2014:93) such rights which “should be granted when minorities want to cultivate their language and tradition” are called acquiescent rights. May (2012:9-11) argues that minority languages should be transformed from being a means of identity to having an instrumental value.

The third approach that sees language as a resource equates all languages of a country with the resources the country has, and which need to be maintained. Ngcobo (2011:3) argues that the maintenance and death of a language depends upon its being used or not being used. McDuling (2014:93) also warns that when parents believe that there is no value in using their mother tongue, they do not transmit it to their children, and this results in the loss of the language (see also May, 2012:1). Accordingly, the planners’ endeavour in this case is to find ways in which all the languages are given an opportunity of developing so as to be used in different spheres. This is consistent with Kymlicka and Patten’s (2003:13) Language Maintenance and Diversity Approach, which is said to have saved many of the languages and identities of the speakers of different languages in the world from dying out. May (2012:3) argues that the case of preserving languages is seen parallel to the preservation of the other focus of biodiversity, and names this ‘language ecology’.

### **2.2.5 Levels of language planning**

Language planning can also be viewed at macro and micro levels. This is related to who does the planning and for what purpose the planning is done. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997:4) maintain that in macro level planning, different formal bodies are involved, whereas micro level planning is becoming the work of applied linguists. Micro level planning is also what individual speakers do in order to maintain and use their language. For example, Nahir (1998:33) argues that the revival of Hebrew was based on “micro language planning, in which the potential speakers constitute ‘micro-language planning agents’ who operate in ‘language planning cells’”. Macro language planning is also seen as part of the overall development planning of the national resources of a nation, whereas to preserve a certain language or variety, such activities like those of religious organizations are considered as micro planning. Thus, macro language planning is conducted by governmental institutions, whereas micro planning is conducted by non-government institutions, or even individual speakers.

This distinction may be observed also from the point of view of who benefits from the language planning activity. This means that the targets (beneficiaries) of language planning are also different. Cooper (1989:36) argues that the target of language planning is not necessarily at societal or state level, but can be at a smaller level such as ethnic group, religious group, or occupational group and the like. Accordingly, micro planning goes down to the multilingual families who need to decide which language to use in their homes. Thus, some planning is done top-down by the governments, whereas other planning is done bottom-up by the individual members of the community.

### **2.2.6 Aspects of language planning**

Some scholars (e.g. Kloss, as cited in Cooper, 1989:31; Wardhaugh, 1986:357) divide language planning into two types: status planning and corpus planning, while others (e.g. Pator, 1986, as cited in Cooper, 1989:33) add acquisition planning as the third type. The first one, as its name indicates, is concerned with the status that a language has in the community in which it is used. Makanda (2009:28) notes that this kind of language planning indicates a central position that a

given language occupies. It is done to change the function that a language or its variety gives and the rights of those who use it (see also Wardhaugh, 1986:357). This status of a language is usually seen in relation to other languages which are used in the same setting. Such decisions as the use of different languages for official, educational, etc. purposes are considered to be the work of status planning.

There are criteria used in measuring the status of a given language (or languages of a given polity). Kloss (1968) and Stewart (1968) (both cited in Taddese, 1985:1-9) identify, in slightly different ways, four common criteria which are used in measuring the status of a given language. These criteria are the origin, degree of standardization, juridical status and vitality of the language. Cooper (1989:99-119) contends that the ten language functions listed by Stewart (1968) are well-documented targets of status planning. These language functions include: official, provincial, wider communication, international, capital, group, educational, school subject, literary and religious; and adds two more functions: the mass media and work. Cooper (1989:120) concludes that “[s]tatus planning ... is usually invoked when changes in the functional allocation of a community’s language are seen as desirable.”

Corpus planning is an attempt to develop a given language or a variety of it for a better use. It involves orthography development, providing new sources of vocabulary, dictionaries, and different forms of literature. According to Makanda (2009:27), corpus planning is the issue of creating new forms, modifying the already existing forms, or choosing from among the existing alternative forms. It is also possible to plan changes to the language in such a way that it is used in different sectors (Wardhaugh, 1986:357). One of these sectors is the religious sector. According to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997:11),

[I]anguage planning is also important in the religious sector. For example, because Protestant churches take as a matter of faith the belief that personal access to the gospels is an important element in the achievement of personal salvation, they have both facilitated the spread of languages like English through the dissemination of the gospels and accelerated the orthographic development of indigenous languages through the translation of the gospels into a wide variety of languages.

While status planning is normally done by government, corpus planning is the duty of linguists, who have much work to do in the process of graphization, standardization and modernization of languages. Makanda (2009:27) elaborates this idea by stating that corpus language planning is done by language experts who deal with the technical issue of language, whereas the decision concerning the function of a language is made politically.

The third type of language planning is acquisition planning. This planning is defined by Cooper (1989:157) as activities done by a concerned body to help in the process of learning and teaching of a given language. It is planning that enables a language to be acquired by as many people as possible, so that it can be used for variety of functions. Thus, this planning aims at increasing the number of speakers, writers, listeners, and readers of a given language. Concerning the mechanism of getting the language acquired, Makanda (2009:30) maintains the possibility of using either an incentive method or a coercion method.

These different types of planning are not mutually exclusive, as they are used together in most cases. As the status of a language is elevated, at the same time, its development is also done, so that it fits to that particular level to which it is promoted. In addition, the development of one language may affect its own status or the status of other co-occurring languages. For instance, the growth of English in China is said to be at the expense of the dialects of Chinese and other official languages in China (Chew, 2006:217). Thus, corpus and status planning are very much interrelated and inseparable. Likewise, acquisition planning also goes hand in hand with the overall issue of language planning, as it follows both status planning and corpus planning. Hence, the changes introduced to the languages in order to fit into usage within a given level are disseminated to the concerned society through educational means (acquisition planning). This shows that the status and development level that a language has contributed to its being learned, accepted and the plans implemented (see § 2.2.3).

### **2.3 Language development**

From the above discussion it can easily be seen that language development is the corpus planning part of language planning (§ 2.2.6). Ngcobo (2011:1-2) confirms this by stating that

corpus planning is concerned with the development of the body of a language. Although it seems that the development of the language comes after its status has been determined, the development might naturally also lead to a change in the status of the language. However, according to Ngcobo (2011:2), for the effectiveness of the development and use of a given language, both status and corpus planning should be harmonious. Therefore, status planning and corpus planning generally cannot be seen apart from one another. They are closely inter-related and can be seen as two sides of the same coin (see § 2.2.6).

In general, it is not enough to plan a language, because without development efforts the planning will not be fruitful. For example, Kamwangamalu (2006:92-93) asserts that the development stage of the African languages in South Africa is one of the major problems facing implementation of the plans made to promote and use the 11 official languages of the country. Kamwangamalu (2006:92) further notes that “there is now a tendency especially in urban black families to encourage the use of English in all spheres of social life including religion”.

Some scholars (Nekvapil & Nedula; Spolsky, both cited in Ngcobo, 2011) refer to the development aspect of language planning as language management. They consider language as a means of communication, consisting of three aspects: language practices, language attitudes and language intervention. A distinction is made also between simple language management and organized language management. Simple language management refers to measures that individuals may take to correct their linguistic behaviours, whereas the organized language management is concerned with measures taken by organized institutions or language specialists on language behaviours. Ngcobo (2011:3) argues that whereas only the organized language management theory has been emphasized so far, there is a necessity that both the simple and the organized ones are integrated, because the one is based upon the other language management aspect.

When considering language development, two questions need to be answered. What is language development? What is done in order to develop a given language? These questions are answered in different ways by different scholars. Fasold (1984:248) describes it as the process of selection and promotion of variants within a language. Ferguson (1968, as cited in Fasold, 1984:248),

identifies three aspects of language development which include: (1) graphisation; (2) standardisation; and (3) modernisation. Cooper (1989:125-154) adds renovation as a fourth aspect.

These different aspects of development are concerned with different activities that are carried out on the language or language variety to be developed. The first one (graphisation, also called codification) is concerned with creating an orthography to use the language in written form. Cooper (1989:126) maintains that this activity involves “thousands of persons, particularly Christian missionaries, who are probably the most active practitioners of this craft today.” In reducing a given language to writing, the practitioners have the options of either borrowing an already existing writing system or inventing a new one for that particular language. In the latter case, there is still a choice to be made between syllabary, ideogram or alphabet (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997:40). According to Cooper (1989:126), there are psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic criteria which the practitioners of graphising a given language should follow. Psycholinguistic criteria are concerned with technical considerations of easy readability, writing, transferability, and printability, whereas the sociolinguistic criteria are the issues of the attitude of the community towards the chosen writing system. Cooper (1989:128) points out that the attitudinal factor is more decisive in the acceptance or rejection of a chosen writing system than the psychological factors. In this case different sectors of a society may have different attitudes towards a given writing system, and this may create a problem for the designer of the orthography. Thus, different social or religious groups choose different orthographies depending upon their attitudes and traditions. Cooper (1989:128) gives the example of the European Jews who wrote Judezmo, a Romance language, and Yiddish, a Germanic language, in Hebrew script which “had little to do with the technical adequacy of Hebrew to represent those languages”. He also notes that Muslims, the Roman Catholic Church and other religious groups have had an influence upon the choice of orthography. Accordingly, the Muslims have used the Arabic script for other languages in different non-Arab countries; the Roman Catholic Slavic Christians used the Latin script, whereas the Orthodox Christian Slavs used the Cyrillic script. The clear indication of the primacy of attitude over technical considerations is seen in that different sub-groups use different scripts for the same language.

Standardisation is concerned with the activity undertaken to give a language a common variety so that all the users can communicate in that particular language without any difficulty. Therefore, it is seen as an essential part of language development. According to Romaine (1994:87), a standard language is “a highly codified variety of a language, which has been developed and elaborated for use across a broad range of functions.” Cooper (1989:125) also defines standardization as the act of developing a norm that goes beyond regional and social dialects, so that those who use the language or the language variety share a common expectation or understanding. Cooper (1989:132) points out that standardisation of a language also helps in uniting the speech community. Accordingly, it is used by both national movement groups and colonizers. On the other hand, in sub-Saharan Africa, they were the European colonizers who took the initiative of standardising African languages. Cooper (1989:143) reports that they either used one dialect among the competing ones or used the composite of the dialects in harmonising the African languages. This was said to have contributed to their administrative and missionary activities.

Various steps have been identified in the process of language standardisation. Rubin (cited in Cooper, 1989:144) identifies six steps in the process of language standardisation: isolation of a norm, evaluation of the norm, prescription of the norm, acceptance, use and maintenance of the use. The first three of these steps are said to exist together as prescription of the norm, but for the prescribed norm to be effective, the latter three are inevitable. Thus, in the process of standardisation, codification, written rules for the norms prescribed, are essential components, although that is not always the case. Cooper (1989:145) contends that “the existence of written dictionaries, grammars, spellers, and style manuals is usually taken as an essential feature of the standardization of written languages.”

The codified norm also needs to be accepted by the users in order to be effective. According to Cooper (1989:134), the acceptance of a standard form is motivated by both behavioural and attitudinal factors, but the attitudinal factor is more decisive than the behavioural one. The users of the standard norm should be convinced that there are a wide range of areas where the codified norm would be used in a proper way.

The third aspect of language development is modernisation, which is concerned with enabling the language to be used for modern science and technology, and probably religious activities (Gregersen, 1977:210). Cooper (1989:149) maintains that a language's functional and topical extension into new areas necessitates the expansion of its resources, in order to satisfy the new demands (see also Wardhaugh, 1987:14). Different mechanisms can be applied in the course of modernising the vocabulary of a language among which Cooper (1989:150-51) identifies the following: choosing between already existing terms and coining new ones for the new concept; building a term from local sources or borrowing from foreign sources; giving a new meaning to an existing term or creating another term related to the existing one. In all of these cases, different decisions need to be made by the planners. For instance, when borrowing and/or loan translation is used from another language, decisions have to be made about the source language as well as how to indigenise the borrowed word in its spelling, pronunciation, and word structure.

To the three areas of language development discussed above (graphisation, standardisation and modernisation), Cooper (1989:154) adds another component, 'renovation', which is concerned with "an effort to change an already developed code, whether in the name of efficiency, aesthetics, or national or political ideology." Thus, for each of the language development aspects discussed above, Cooper (1989:154) argues that there are renovations such as re-graphisation and re-standardisation, where the renovation uses new forms for communicative functions. Renovation is made not for new communicative functions as in the case of the other development issues above, but it is about using the language in a new form for the functions it has been giving. Cooper (1989:154) contends that this use of new forms for old functions "contribute[s] to the non-linguistic goals which motivated the linguistic renovation, whether the legitimation of new elites, the discrediting of old ones, the mobilization of political support, or the raising of consciousness."

Depending on their level of development, languages are classified into different categories. Kloss and Stewart, 1968 (as reported by Taddese, 1985:4) have used different terminologies to deal with these different categories. Kloss and Stewart (1968) have used different criteria in identifying and specifying respectively the different language types within this dimension.

Stewart (1968) is reported to have used as basic criteria four attributes which include: standardization, autonomy, historicity and vitality, whereas Kloss (1968) has considered stages of development as the most significant criteria. Accordingly, Kloss (1968, cited in Taddese, 1985) categorises languages along this line into:

1. Large group mature standard language
2. Small group mature standard language
3. Archaic standard language
4. Young standard language
5. Unstandardised alphabetized language
6. Pre-literate language.

## **2.4 Overview of development of African languages**

Most of the languages of Africa are in the process of development, and there are various problems relating to their development. As most of Africa was under Europeans' colonial rule for many years, it was mostly the languages of the colonizers that had been developed and used for various purposes such as office use and education. Some of the African languages were even facing the problem of extinction rather than developing. Barnes (2005:1) maintains that fifty percent of the languages of the world are moving towards the verge of extinction and will no longer exist by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. May (2012:2) reports that this trend is termed as 'linguistic genocide', and gives different figures to show the global situation of such language death. African languages form a large proportion of these endangered languages. This is due to globalization and the legacy of colonialism.

Numerous examples of this shift amongst African languages towards exoglossic languages can be cited. For example, Osadolo and Finlayson (2007:196) report that the standard form of the Edo language was under threat of being replaced by the English language. The speakers of Edo preferred to use English because it was associated with social prestige. Osadolo and Finlayson (2007:199) elaborate this argument in the following way:

Given the prominent social, national and global position of English, most Edo-speaking parents believe that for their children to remain competitive socially, nationally and globally, it is imperative they receive their education in English. This may be the reason Edo-speaking parents speak English to their children, but often use Edo to converse with each other.

Van Huyssteen (2003:3) observes, in the case of South Africa, that while 11 of the languages are chosen for official purposes, only two of them (Afrikaans and English) have reached the status of full development and standardisation (see § 2.3 above). Ngcobo (2011:4) notes that what has mostly been done for the other languages is a micro level planning and development in which missionaries and individual language experts were involved, the former in Bible translation and the latter in writing grammar books of particular languages. Thus, there is no question that these languages need to be developed if they are to be used officially as designed in the language policies of South Africa.

However, there is often opposition to the development of the African languages from different sectors of the society on the grounds of economy, politics, etc. Simpson (2008:3) notes that even Africans themselves are often not happy about being educated in their native languages, as they consider being educated in European exoglossic languages is a way towards better living conditions. Other scholars (Whitely 1971:145, in relation to Swahili in Tanzania; Simpson 2008:14; Van Huyssteen, 2003:4) hold that it is because of the prestige that the European languages have and the opportunities afforded to those who have a good knowledge that Africans prefer to use these languages. Simpson (2008:14) notes that such Africans are not in favour of development and use of the African languages.

Ngcobo (2011:1) notes that those who object to the development of African languages give various reasons for their objection, one of which is that the standardization and use of vernaculars may affect the unity of the country. In this regard, Jernudd and Das Gupta (1971:208) contend that governments usually plan the use of one common language from among the many found in their territories as a means of uniting the different speech communities, although this may have a negative consequence in the long run. These are those governments which consider multilingualism as a problem (see § 2.2.4). The linguistic pluralism in Tanzania

is said to be the difficulty encountered in developing and using the various vernaculars spoken in the country. Whitely (1971:142-143) contends that this forced the early administrators of the country to develop and use only Swahili at the expense of the other vernaculars of the country.

Economy is also mentioned as one factor against the development of African languages. Barnes and Funnell (2005:42) report that there is a belief that “the pluralistic language approach can be very expensive and most African states have economic constraints, which means, *inter alia*, that they cannot produce adequate numbers of language textbooks in all the vernacular languages” (see also Bokamba, 1995:18; Simpson, 2008:3-5). Thus, many of the spoken African languages could not be introduced in the written form of their languages. For example, it is known that only 15 out of the many languages of Kenya have been written by missionaries who translated the Bible and conducted literacy programmes and other Non-Governmental Organisations. Thus, according to Schroeder (2004:377), the limitation in the number of languages developed is due to a lack of funds.

Other reasons have also been put forward for opposing the development of African languages. Wardhaugh (1987:33) argues that the opponents of the development of minority languages claim that there are deficiencies in these languages, while Coulombe (1995:104) contends that such people object to bilingualism because of fear of losing their supremacy, if the languages which they do not speak are developed, and therefore concludes that this kind of argument shows a negative attitude to multiculturalism and the idea of unity within diversity. This is consistent with the disadvantage of the Language Maintenance and Diversity Approach discussed above (see § 2.2.5). Barnes and Funnell (2005:42) argue that a negative consequence of this attitude is that Africa is kept at a level of underdevelopment, as the languages need to be used in different domains to help in the development of the continent. Batibo (2005:49, cited in McDuling, 2014: 94-95) argues that African languages may be seen as “a source of considerable value”, and should be regarded as other resources of the continent in the same ways as minerals and wildlife, because they “have linguistic features that are rare or unique among languages in the world.” He further contends that these languages have made a considerable contribution to the development of the continent enabling the community to participate in national development activities (see § 2.2.4 and § 2.7).

## 2.5 Language development in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian language situation is different from the rest of Africa, because Ethiopia was not colonized at the time of the scramble for Africa. According to Appleyard and Orwin (2008:268), as Ethiopia was colonized only for a very short time (1935-1941) by Italian colonialists, it is one of the few African countries which has never undergone serious colonization (see also Van Aswegen, 2008:9). The reality in Ethiopia was that one group within the country was superior to the rest of the groups (see § 1.1). Different linguistic groups were brought together under one rule, as in the other African countries, but the difference is that the subjugators were not Europeans, but Africans (Cooper, 1989:21). Accordingly, the language of the rulers, Amharic, had also a higher prestige, and most of the other vernaculars were proscribed. For example, Cooper (1989:21) states that Amharic was the language which the king ruled by, promoted and expected his successors to rule by and promote (see also Simpson, 2008:271). Simpson (2008:274) reports that Emperor Haile Sellassie I was the first to put the policy of Amharic only in writing, whereas the rulers before him had always practiced linguistic imperialism, which was tantamount to a concealed policy of colonisation.

It was during the communist regime (1974-1991) that 15 languages of the country (including Oromo) were officially recognised. During this time, primers were published for these languages in the Sabeian script, and mass education was publically allowed in the vernaculars for the first time (see § 4.2.3). Cooper (1989:26) argues that this was, however, also not more than lip service in that it was “a gesture which need not be accompanied by any real grant of power.”

It was in this linguistic context where one language had dominance and others were dominated that Taddese (1985:7-8) categorized the Ethiopian languages into the following five types according to their developmental status, using as a foundation the categories identified by Stewart and Kloss (1968) (see § 2.3):

1. A mature standard language (Sm)
2. An adolescent standard language (Sa)
3. A young standard language (Sy)
4. An alphabetised vernacular language (Val)

## 5. A preliterate vernacular language (Vpr)

Taddese (1985:10) identified seven major languages out of the eighty or more spoken in the country on the basis of their numerical strength. The major languages are: Amharic, Hadiyya, Oromo, Sidama, Somali, Tigrigna and Wolayita. Concerning their level of development, Taddese (1985:10) observes that:

[a] careful observation of the variables (other variables such as Function, Strength, and Class are also used) in the typology will affirm that except Amharic and Tigrinya, which have reached the level of Standard along the developmental stage dimension, all the rest of the languages are recently alphabetized vernaculars.

Abera (1995:71) also notes that the linguistic profile of the country has changed with the change in administration of the country since 1991, but he does not indicate the change in the development stages of the various languages. He just mentions that the number of major and minor languages has increased, probably due to the favourable situations laid down by the present government concerning the use of vernacular languages as media of administration and instruction, and as school subjects (see Constitution, 1995, Article 39.2). Consequently, many of the languages of the country have currently been reduced to writing and are used for different social, economic and political functions.

When we look at the sociolinguistic situation of Oromo, we see a better picture now than ever before. Although it was one of the major languages of the country (with the largest number of speakers), it had remained at the level of a proscribed vernacular for so long a time (during the feudal and the communist regimes) (Ali & Zaborski, 1990:97).

Although the written policy of the communist government (1974-1991) was in favour of the vernacular languages like Oromo, not much was done to develop the language practically (Aswegen, 2008:25). For example, it was during this time that primers were prepared in Oromo using the Sabeen script for a literacy programme (Cooper, 1989:21). However, even the literacy programme was not successful due to three factors. The first one is the use of the Sabeen script

which had a number of drawbacks. For instance, this script does not have ways of representing vowel length and consonant gemination as well as the glottal stop which are productive in the language (Gamta, 1993:37). Secondly, the fact that the language did not have any other instrumental value at the time prevented the speech community from having a positive attitude towards being educated in the language. The third factor was that the dialect variation was not given any attention in the preparation of the primer (Sibilu, 2001:1). In general, as the communist regime also followed a unitary system of government, its linguistic and cultural policies were simply lip service to the principle of diversity.

With the change of the government to a more democratic one in 1991, the language has gained some prestige. As this government followed a policy of linguistic tolerance, Oromo was given the status of a regional official language in the Oromia Region (see § 1.1). All the administrative work of the region including the court of law are conducted in the language, except for federal organizations such as the bank, telecommunications and electric power offices, which use the official language of the federal government, Amharic. Furthermore, Oromo is used as a language of instruction in the primary schools and as a subject of education at all levels up to the preparatory level. At Addis Ababa University and other universities found in Oromia region, Oromo has become a field of study up to a Master's degree level (Sibilu, 2001:1) (see also § 1.2.3). Furthermore, the Roman script was adapted for the language (Gamta, 1993:37; Sibilu, 2001:1).

But what is the relationship between language development and Christianity in Ethiopia? Does Christianity have any influence upon the development of a language? Why is it necessary to study language in relation to Christianity? This will be the concern of the next sections.

## **2.6 Role played by Christianity in the development of languages**

The focus of the present research is on the contribution of the EECMY to the Oromo language development in Ethiopia. It is, therefore, important to examine the historical and existing trends in the study of the role played by religion in general, and Christianity in particular in the development of languages.

Christianity was first propagated through the medium of Hebrew and Greek, and because of this, these languages were considered to be 'holier' than the other languages by the society of the time. The Bible was first written in these two languages, while some scholars also add Aramaic as a third language (Bernard, 1989:20; Martin, 1989:6).

Hebrew in which the Old Testament was first written is a Semitic language spoken by the Jews (Beegle, 1960:34). Freedman (1992:204-5) reports that the literature of antiquity calls this language "the holy tongue" and the "tongue of the sages".

The fact that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew has contributed significantly towards the survival and development of the language. In relation to its later revival also, Nahir (1998:337) argues that this biblical tradition was one of the reasons for the revival, as the Jews were obliged to attend synagogue services and study the scriptures in Hebrew. Cooper (1989:12) confirms this assertion by contending that one area where the language survived between its abandonment as an everyday spoken language and its revival was in the synagogue service.

Greek is the language in which the New Testament was written for the first time. According to Blackwelder (1958:18), although there had been a belief that the New Testament was written in a special kind of Greek, it has now been accepted by philologists that the Greek of the New Testament was the common one in use of that time, known as Koine. This was the lingua franca used in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. According to Bernard (1989:21), it was commonly used by speakers of languages such as Latin and Aramaic throughout the Roman Empire. The

fact that this variety of the language was used for writing the New Testament helped it to be developed side by side with the literary Greek.

Aramaic is another language that is mentioned in relation to the beginning of Christianity. This language is related to Hebrew and was the language of communication of the Israelites in the last century BC and the first century AD. Furthermore, the founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ, spoke the Aramaic language and, accordingly, the Christian faith was originally disseminated through this language. It is also said that this name, Aramaic, was mentioned for the first time in the Bible, while it was previously called by different names such as Chaldean and Syrian (Greenspahn, 1999:1).

Latin is another language worth mentioning in relation to Christianity. Latin was most favoured at the beginning of Christianity because of the power its speakers had at the time. However, its role in Christian writings is said to be only marginal at the beginning. Even the Roman Christians used the Greek texts for quite a long time, although Latin began to be used in Christian discussions at the end of the second century. Before it became the official church language, it had been seen in different uses in Christianity. Freedman (1992:221) observes that Latin was one of the three different languages in which a title was hung above Jesus' head on the cross (John 19:20), and that there are many loanwords from it in the Greek New Testament. The first use of Latin in Christianity was in the Roman province of Africa, which had become a colony in 146 B.C. The first Latin translation of sections of the Bible in North Africa was in Old Latin, in order to help the Latin-speaking Christians.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the whole of Europe fell into what is known as the Dark Ages (6<sup>th</sup> century AD). During this time Latin fell into disuse in terms of the general population of the former Roman Empire and underwent various changes leading to the development of the vernacular languages, later known as the Romance languages (French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian). Latin itself, however, was preserved by the church and was used as a liturgical language and the language of written texts. It remained also the primary written language in Europe in the Middle Ages (11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries).

The church played a major role in preserving the language, particularly as the Bible was translated by St Jerome into Latin. The first complete Latin Bible was the one translated by St. Jerome (382-420 AD). This version of the Bible came to a leading position all over Europe for more than one thousand years and was later on given the name 'vulgate' (meaning 'common') in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, despite there being some serious opposition from those who favoured the Old Latin translation. According to Bernard (1989:24), the Latin Vulgate became the standard Bible for Christians all over Europe until the time of the Reformation. Beegle (1960:18-19) notes that Latin was even proclaimed "as the language of divine revelation, relegating Greek to a subordinate position." With the appearance of the printing press, the Latin vulgate was the first Bible to be published (Reumann, 1961:7). This has played a significant role in making this language one of the internationally accepted and developed languages. If it had not been used in the Catholic Church, it might not have had the influence which it has had on scientific language and in other spheres.

During the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation, the Bible was then translated into the various vernacular languages and Latin in the Protestant Church no longer held its elevated status. However, the tradition of using Latin for scientific texts continued through the Renaissance Period and even to this day terminology has been influence by this tradition.

The attempt at translating the Word of God and reaching the different nationalities in their native languages helped in the founding of Linguistic science too. Bloomfield (1933) maintains that it is due to explorers visiting different communities, and missionaries studying and codifying languages of the various communities, that scholars became aware of the fact that different languages of the world have different structures. The missionaries who went to the different parts of the world realized the need to study and know the languages of the communities which they were evangelizing in order to preach the gospel to them. In the course of studying and using the languages, they realised the need to describe the grammars of the languages and reduce them to writing, especially for the purpose of translating religious literature into the languages. Cooper (1989:117) contends that "[m]issionaries have been responsible for reducing to writing hundreds of vernacular languages throughout the world and have been among the first to carry out systematic linguistic analyses of many local languages." When they started doing this, it became

evident that the structures of the languages of Africa, Asia and Latin America were different from those of the Indo-European languages with which they had been familiar. The structures of these languages were found to be different from the structures of Greek and Latin and the biblical language in particular. Glassman (1981:69) notes that:

[t]he best known (such as Latin, English, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish and Swedish, to name a few), belonged to the Indo-European family of languages. In spite of their variety there was a certain underlying similarity that made it comparatively easy to bridge the gap between the biblical languages and the languages being translated into.

But that was not the case with the other languages far away from the Indo-European family of languages. The grammar of such languages could not be based on that of Greek and Latin. It was even difficult to mould English grammar on the basis of that of Greek and Latin. Herndon (1970:7) observes that this was the case because English did not descend directly from Latin, but from old Germanic dialects. Thus, this was among the factors that contributed to the foundation of the modern linguistic science, which presupposes that every language has a structure of its own which is different from all other languages, and needs to be studied in its own right. Sanneh (1992:105) is of the opinion that missionaries' translation work, which took into account minor linguistic differences, contributed to the origin of modern linguistic science. According to Glassman (1981:69), this enabled the science of linguistics to come into existence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Obstacles to the endeavours of the missionaries to study and develop the different vernaculars arose at times. The translation of the Bible encountered opposition at various stages in history. Reumann (1961:8) reports that the church changed its attitude towards translation in what he calls the second half of the Dark Ages, by opposing Bible translation into vernacular languages. Glassman (1981:13-22) notes that such opponents of the translation of the Bible into different tongues give different reasons for their opposition. In the first place, it was due to the fact that the first languages of the Bible were considered to be holier than the vernaculars. Throughout history, different languages have been specifically tied up with different religions and considered to be inseparable. Many scholars (Crystal, 1997:389; Joseph, 2006:166; Pandharipande,

2006:146) maintain that languages such as Hebrew for Judaism, Sanskrit for Hinduism, Arabic/Persian for Islam, Pali/Hybrid Sanskrit for Buddhism, Ardhamagadhi for Jains, Latin for Catholic Christianity, and Ge'ez (Ethiopic) for Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia are associated with specific religions. Thus, a strong bond was created between the particular religions and languages. As far as Christianity is concerned, Salmon (1981:84) states that the languages associated with the scriptures were mainly Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, while later on such languages as Ge'ez of Ethiopia were added. It was believed that these languages were specifically created to disseminate Christianity, and trying to use other languages was considered to be against the will of God. Thus, it was believed that the people should be satisfied with the use of the original languages. Glassman (1981:13-16) calls this dogma of believing in the use of the original language of the Bible, and opposition to translation into other languages “an antipathy” (see also Fabian, 1998:34) [This is hostility towards translation of the word of God into the different vernaculars]. Pedantry is another reason given for the opposition against vernacular Bible translation. This belief is concerned with the fact that some people have pride in being able to read in a foreign or archaic tongue. Glassman (1981:18-22) mentions the issues related to what a good translation is as another problem to be considered. There were some who believed that it was not appropriate to translate the Bible, as the original writing was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Fabian (1998:21-22) notes that there was a fear of corruption of the original meaning if the Word of God was translated from the original languages to the vernaculars. Still another reason given by Fabian (1998:22) for the opposition of the translation of the Bible into the vernaculars was that the reading of the Bible should be limited to the elites, and that “[t]he popular concern was to let the *Bible* remain in the languages of Hebrew, Greek and Latin.”

Another source of opposition to the translation of the Word of God was seen in colonial Africa, with the fear that it might awaken the colonial people to become self-conscious. Sanneh (1992:96) is of the opinion that “[i]n much of francophone and lusophone Africa, for example, vernacular scriptural translation was discouraged, largely because the authorities suspected it of fomenting the nationalism they were attempting to suppress.” Thus, such oppositions might have affected the development of many languages of the world, as it is known that the translation of the Bible supports in the development of the vernacular languages. Translation into the vernaculars can lead to national awareness and political aspirations.

However, many believed from the beginning that the translation of the Word of God into the different languages of the different communities was necessary so that they could hear the Word in their respective languages, especially as the uneducated parts of the community had difficulty in understanding the Bible in these original languages. According to Glassman (1981:18), if the scriptures had not been translated, it would be very difficult for the majority of the believers to have access to them. It can therefore be argued that this translation work has contributed considerably towards the maintenance and development of such languages. Different missionaries have taken part in such attempts. According to Sanneh (1992:98),

one of the most ambitious attempts to adopt the vernacular during this early period was that of two ninth-century Byzantine missionaries in Moravia. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius were both committed champions of the vernacular. They invented the Slavonic alphabet which became known as Cyrillic and was later adopted by the entire Eastern Orthodox Church, including that of Russia.

In more recent times, different mission bodies became interested and devoted themselves to linguistic work among the communities they wanted to evangelize. For instance, Pasch (2008:77) states that the CMS from England established a foundation in 1828 with the purpose of conducting intensive linguistic research on African languages. Yorke (2004:153-4) also mentions some other mission societies such as the Anglican Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Roman Catholic Association that were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The United Bible Societies (UBS) was established in 1946 in order to assist Bible translation work in Africa and elsewhere. According to information accessed from the website of the UBS,

[t]he United Bible Societies is made up of 146 Bible Societies operating in over 200 countries and territories. Together, they are the biggest translator, publisher and distributor of the Bible in the world. They are also active in areas such as literacy training, HIV and AIDS prevention and disaster relief. Bible Societies work with all Christian Churches and many international non-governmental organizations.

Currently the UBS is devoted to the Bible translation work in 200 countries of the world. Wycliffe Bible Translators is another faith-based organization devoted to “translating and delivering scripture to people around the world in a language and form they understand best” ([www.wycliffe.org](http://www.wycliffe.org)). This organization is named after the well-known translator of the Bible into English from the Latin vulgate. Furthermore, at present, this organization is undertaking translation and language development work in 131 countries around the world.

Another faith-based organization devoted to Bible translation and language development is the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). This was founded in 1934. In its publication of March 2012 on its website (SIL), the institute reports that “SIL is a faith-based non-profit organization committed to serving language communities worldwide as they build capacity for sustainable language development, primarily through research, translation, training and materials development.” SIL reports that it is engaged in a linguistic investigation of 2,590 languages having 1.7 billion speakers in about 100 countries.

Summing up Bible translation projects all over the world, Yorke (2004:156) gives the following figures:

By any count, Bible translation is big business. For one thing, the Bible is still the most translated book, and remains the biggest seller of all time (though not necessarily the most read). Current data, for example, suggest that parts of the Bible have been translated into more than 2,200 languages worldwide and that, every day, increasing numbers of people are gaining access to this icon through the Internet and other innovative forms of media such as CD-ROMs, audio and video.

Many of the established European languages owe some of their development to Bible translation. One of these languages is English. As far as Bible translation into English is concerned, several successful and unsuccessful attempts have been made. The attempt to translate the Word of God into English encountered opposition from the very beginning. Bible translators like John Wycliffe and Tyndale faced considerable opposition and persecution, but they could lay foundations for Bible translation into English. Later on other translations were made, which contributed towards the development of the English language. Sanneh (1992:104) contends that:

in addition to capturing the spark of a people's wisdom and making the beauties of Scripture accessible to them, the English Bible had an extraordinary impact on the language itself. As the literary critic Henry Bradley pointed out, words such as "beautiful" did not exist in English literature until Tyndale used them (220), A. T. Robinson adds that "the Christian spirit put a new flavour into this vernacular and lifted it to a new elevation and dignity of style that unify and glorify the language" (cited in *Influence* 9). And Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch contends that none of the great English writers escaped the influence of the English Bible, which, he says: has cadences homely and sublime, yet so harmonizes them that the voice is always one. Simple men—holy and humble men of heart like Izaak Walton and Bunyan—have their lips touched and speak to the homelier tongue.

The German language is another European language to benefit from Bible translation. Although there had been translations into the German language before him, Martin Luther's translation into German was the most widely accepted and influential version. According to Reumann (1961:15-16), the versions before Luther had had different faults due to reasons such as their being translated from the Latin vulgate rather than the original languages of the Bible (Greek and Hebrew), the use of poor German, their being adapted to the teachings of the church of the time, and the belief that considered the Bible just as a book of law.

Luther began his translation in 1521 and finished the New Testament in 1522 from the Greek version of Erasmus' publication of 1519. The Old Testament was translated and published in different stages in such a way that it was finalized in 1532. Luther's translation is said to have been done in forceful, idiomatic German. Fabian (1998:34) reports that Martin Luther attempted to make the translation of the Bible into the German language in such a way that it reflects the German culture. Thus, it was so well accepted that "five thousand copies were sold in the first two months, two hundred thousand within a dozen years" (Reumann, 1961:16). Therefore, this translation has had a great influence on modern development of German, particularly in he elaboration phase.

## **2.7 Christianity and language development in Africa**

It was through the linguistic studies conducted by the European missionaries that many of the languages of Africa became known. Van den Bersselaar (1997:273) reports that the recognition of the existence of many of the ethnic groups in the African continent can be ascribed to the work of the missionaries, as the missionaries were among the first Europeans to visit the continent and study the culture and language of the people. These studies conducted on African languages enabled the early missionaries to recognize the “richness, inner beauty, precision and unbelievable diversity” of these languages (Pawlikova-Vilhanova, 2011:284). Accordingly, this enabled the foreigners to recognize them as distinct groups.

Sanneh (1992:99) notes that this emphasis of the missionaries on vernacular study helped the Africans to be socially and culturally self-aware (see also Simpson, 2008:3). In this regard, Ghanaian nationalism is considered to be a result of the translation of the Bible into the Akan language. In some cases, this happened without the conscious intention, or even against the wishes of the missionaries. Hauser-Renner (2009:68) points out that “Basel Mission policy and practice exhibited the strange paradox of trying to foster ethnic identities (‘nations’) by the production of linguistic communities, even while making appeals against ethnic nationalist thought.” It was also known that in this recognition of ethnic identity language played an important role. Hauser-Renner (2009:69) reports that the missionaries recognized the need to study the folk literature of a given African community in order to trace its history.

Wang (2002:65-66) is another author who maintains that religion plays a significant role in reinforcing ethnic consciousness and assisting in language retention, as it makes the people aware of their dignity within the community where they used to be seen as of a lower status. On the basis of a study of the relationship between ethnic religious identity and ethnic language retention, this scholar concludes that immigrants who were affiliated to their home churches retained their languages better than those who were converted to the churches of the host country, although all were equally exposed to the languages of the host. Fishman (cited in McDuling, 2014:49) shows that church services in languages other than English were initiated in

the United States by immigrants “who felt it necessary and desirable to utilise and preserve their non-English language and traditions in church related activities”.

Pawlikova-Vilhanova (2011:267) also points out that Christianity introduced the people of Africa to written literature. In many parts of Africa, the missionaries began their work by learning the local languages and reducing them to writing in order to translate the Word of God into them, before they started their evangelization activities. This in turn helped in the development of the African languages. For instance, Levi (2009:381) claims that preparation of dictionaries, alphabets and grammars in the local languages were the preconditions before starting evangelization in the local languages of Africa, although in some cases evangelization and linguistic work were done concurrently (see also Dowuona, 1969:2; Simpson, 2008:3).

Therefore, the missionaries embarked upon the issue of language development from the very beginning of their involvement in Africa. They began their work by learning, studying and codifying the local languages, and translating the Bible and other religious books into the local languages. Levi (2009:381) recognizes that knowledge of the language of the people to be evangelized is very important before embarking upon the activity of evangelization. Thus, the missionary becomes ready for the service after mastering the language of the people (see also Fabian, 1998:32; Imberg, 2010:60). Some missionary organizations have even been known to set conditions for the missionaries requiring them to know the African language of the area where they serve. For instance, Jeater (2001, cited in Mavesera, 2009:67), reports that:

some missionary boards went to extents of setting conditions for missionaries as a way of encouraging them to master African languages. ... American Mission Board (AMB) insisted that missionaries and their wives would not vote in elections until they passed examinations in vernacular.

The first Catholic missionaries to the different African countries also had such a policy of learning and using the languages of the people in their evangelization endeavours. According to Pawlikova-Vilhanova (2011:276), the policy formulated by Lavigerie stated that the missionaries should use the local languages except during their recreation times. The implementation of such

a policy by the White Fathers as early as the 1870s helped them to master and use the African languages in their evangelization activities. Topan (2008:254) quotes a British missionary in Zanzibar, Bishop Edward Steere, as having advised the learning of Swahili for those missionaries who wanted to come to Tanzania. Pawlikova-Vilhanova (2011:278) mentions the example of Auguste-Armand-Aimé Achte (1861-1905) who had mastered languages such as Arabic in North Africa, Swahili, Luganda, Runyoro-Rutoro and Kiziba, into which he could later on translate catechisms, gospel readings, hymns and prayer books. This study of African languages enabled the missionaries also to become linguistic scholars whose work helped the later missionary work in Africa. It enabled them to prepare grammars, dictionaries, reading materials, and catechisms in the African languages (Whitely, 1971:149). Their work laid the foundations for the later studies of the languages of Africa (see § 2.6). For instance, Peires (2011:59) reports that the missionary linguist, Rev J.W. Appleyard, was the first person to have divided the 'Kafir family' of languages into 'Kafir,-the Zulu,-and the Fingoe'. "The 'Kafir' branch (known as Nguni today), according to Appleyard, consisted of the languages spoken by the amaXhosa, abaThembu and the amaMpondo. By contrast, the 'Fingoe branch,' consisted of languages spoken by the amaMfengu, amaBhaca, amaSwazi and others."

There were different factors that motivated the missionaries to learn and study the African languages. In the first place, they needed to use the local languages in order to evangelize the communities successfully, because the native language of the people is their heart language (Levi, 2009:364; 380). Secondly, the issue of equality of languages was the question of the day back in the home countries of the missionaries. According to Van den Bersselaar (1997:275), 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe was characterized by the recognition of the role of language as a symbol of national identity. Thus, at the time when missionary activities began in Africa, Europeans were identifying with their national languages. Furthermore, it was at this time that ethno-linguists were categorizing the people of the world according to the languages they spoke. Thus, they needed to study and identify the African languages. Pugach (2004:844) reports that towards the beginning of the twentieth century, "German missionaries to South West Africa ... were paying ever closer attention to the 'race' question, which became a lecture topic at the twelfth Gennan mission conference in Bremen in 1909." At this conference each ethnic group was recognised to be unique and as human as any other, therefore deserving special attention. Therefore, it was

suggested in this conference that it was the responsibility of the missionaries to protect the native cultures from foreign encroachment. This contribution of the missionaries to the non-European languages and to some extent European language dialects is sometimes called ‘renaissance linguistics’ (Levi, 2009:380).

North African languages such as Coptic, Arabic and Ge’ez were among the vehicles of Christianity at the beginning of the Christian era. This tradition has continued throughout history, in order to help the speakers of African languages to get the Word of God in their languages. The Egyptian Coptic language was one of the languages which became very important as a vehicle of the Christian heritage among African languages towards the beginning of Christian history. Freedman (1992:180) claims that:

Coptic is important to students of the Christian Bible in two principal respects. First, Coptic manuscripts preserve many noncanonical early Christian books that survive in no other language, or survive imperfectly apart from Coptic. Such books are precious remains of the diverse literary tradition out of which the Bible was formed, providing valuable information about the intellectual and social milieu of early Christianity. ... Second, since the LXX and the NT were being translated into Coptic during the 3<sup>d</sup> century C.E., the Coptic version is based on Gk mss which are significantly older than the vast majority of extant witnesses. The Coptic evidence has yet to be applied systematically to the textual criticism of the Greek Bible.

The standardized alphabet of this language is also ascribed to the Christian translators of the Bible. Freedman (1992:181) contends that when the missionaries reached the Egyptian people who did not know the Greek language, they were forced to use the Egyptian Coptic language in order to win them over to Christianity. Thus, their translation of the Bible into this language helped in the standardization of the alphabet of the language. Sanneh (1992:97) also shows the contribution of the work of Christianity towards the development of this language by quoting Kenneth Scott Latourette, as follows:

In Egypt it was the successful effort to provide the masses of the population with a literature in the speech of everyday life which halted the exclusive use of the alien Greek for the

written page and which stimulated the development to an alphabet which could be quickly and easily learned by the multitude in place of the ancient hieroglyphics which could be the property only of the few. Through this medium Coptic Christian literature came into being, largely the work of monks.

However, Wurthwein (1979:96) notes that Coptic had many dialects, and that there was the possibility of having many quite different versions of the Bible, led to all these dialects having different writing systems of their own. Accordingly, Wurthwein (1979: 96) contends that:

[t]here are several dialects of Coptic, so that there are many quite different versions grouped together in BH under the term Coptic. The earliest was undoubtedly the Sahidic version of Upper Egypt, translated from the Greek about the middle of the third century A.D., and probably undertaken at the official request of the church. This was followed by Akhmimic, which was based upon the Sahidic, and later in the fourth century by the Bohairic (Lower Egyptian), which was translated from the Greek independently of the Sahidic.

One major area where missionaries have contributed to the development of African languages is through education. Whitely (1971:145) claims that “there is a positive correlation between missions and education generally.” Simpson (2008:3) also contends that the colonialists educated their subjects to the level where the African knew the language of the colonialists. They then left the rest of the responsibility of educating Africans to the missionaries, who in turn linked education in the local vernaculars with their spread of Christianity. It is known, for example, that the missionaries were giving a quality education in South Africa to the Black people without any racial discrimination before the time of Apartheid (Mesthrie, 2008:320-321). Thus, these activities of the missionaries resulted in the development of many African languages, some of which were used as lingua francas (see also Bokamba, 1995:16). For example, Levi (2009:380) notes that education was the most important part of the secular work which went hand in hand with evangelism with the Portuguese missionaries working in Africa.

The missionaries have been introducing the people of Africa to literacy in their mother tongue since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when they introduced the Roman script to the languages of Africa (Pasch, 2008:65; 75). For instance, Batibo (1995:59) contends that the Roman Catholic

Church used Kiswahili as a medium of instruction in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Tanzania, while the evangelical denominations preferred to use the other ethnic languages which helped them to gain more acceptance (see also Whitely, 1971:145). They tried to educate the people in their vernaculars so that the people would be able to read their Bible. Hand in hand with evangelism, their activities were mostly accompanied by opening of schools; and, they especially encouraged vernacular education which helped in the development of the languages (Kritzinger, 1995, cited in Masubelele, 2007:72). The CMS from Great Britain was among the well-known missions that promoted literacy among the African communities. According to Pawlikona-Vilhanova (2011:282), “[t]o Alexander Mackay, and other CMS missionaries, literacy was a key to Christian conversion and ability to read a Gospel not only a requirement for baptism but also a way to a personal revelation of Biblical Truth.” Accordingly, literacy came to be associated with Christianity to the extent that in some cases one’s becoming a Christian (for example, through baptism) would not be confirmed until the person had become literate. Thus, the foundation of modern education in many African countries today was laid by the missionaries.

It was thus the missionaries who have reduced most of the African languages to writing, in order to educate the African people in their vernaculars and to translate the Bible into the vernacular languages of the continent (Levi, 2009:380; Pawlikova-Vilhanova, 2011:267). Dewees (1977:129, cited in Pasch, 2008:77) reports that the number of languages graphized for the missionary work exceeds the number of languages graphized by any other group or institution. Thus, materials that were first published in many of the African languages were Christian literature (Pawlkova-Vilhanova, 2011:267).

In the course of reducing the vernaculars to written languages, there was the issue of script. Wardhaugh (1987:10) points out that one influence of religion on language is especially manifested in that the Roman script has spread to different languages of the world together with Christianity. Thus, it was the missionaries who introduced the Roman script to African languages. Pasch (2008:66) reports that they used a modified form of this script. Before the introduction of the Roman script by the missionaries, different scripts were being used in Africa. For example, Pasch (2008:66) reports that Greek and Punic scripts were used in Northern Africa. However, later on they were replaced by the Arabic script. Later, the Roman script replaced the

former scripts in the West, North, and East Africa, after it was introduced by the Christian missionaries and colonialists. Imberg (2010:53; 61) gives the example of Dr Johann Ludwig Krapf as the first European missionary to introduce the Roman script to Swahili, which used to be written in Arabic script before that. According to Pawlikova-Bilhanova (2011:280), Mackay was also one of the missionaries who transformed writing in Swahili and Luganda from the Arabic to the Roman script. Thus, according to Pasch (2008:99):

Roman script, at present the most important writing system on the African continent, was the first writing system that was introduced from abroad with the aim of disseminating it over the entire continent. It should be the medium for graphizing local languages, alphabetize [sic] the population, and make them literate in their mother tongues.

The other area where missionaries have contributed to the development of African languages is in the standardization process of the indigenous languages. Ansre (1971, cited in Cooper, 1989:143) maintains that European missionaries were among those who played a major role in the standardization of the languages of sub-Saharan Africa in particular. This was necessary because one of the problems that the missionaries encountered as they began to translate the Bible into the local languages of Africa was the differences existing between the dialects of the same language (Fabian, 1998:32). For instance, Togarasei (2009:53) reports that the missionaries who went to Zimbabwe realized that there was no point (both financially and missiologically) in translating the Bible into the different dialects of the Shona language, and opted for choosing a common variety. Thus, the missionaries created one written variety from among the different dialects that the people of the area spoke. van den Bersellaar (1997:273) elaborates on this assertion, saying that:

[a] number of these dialects are amalgamated into one language, while a sharp, and rather arbitrary, boundary was drawn which distinguished missionary chiManyika from the other dialects. Similar processes have been described for other African languages such as Shona, Tsonga and Venda in southern Africa, and Yoruba in Nigeria.

Fabian (1998:78) reports that the missionaries used different systems for harmonizing the use of the dialects. Among these systems were found the choice of the variety spoken around their

station, using the lingua francas (as in the case of Kikongo, Kiswahili and Sango), and the creation of a composite standard dialect by merging forms of the different dialects (as in the case of Shona, Kalenjin, and Luhya). For example, Jewsiewicki (1988, cited in Van den Bersselaar, 1997:273) contends that the missionaries in the Belgian Congo unified the different languages of migrants from different regions into one standard language. As far as Swahili in Tanzania is concerned, Topan (2008:254-255) notes that the choice among the dialects of the language was one of their main concerns in translating the Bible. Hence, while the first missionaries tried to use the KiUngua dialect which had a large vocabulary adopted from Arabic, later on others rejected this dialect, associating it with Islam, and the translation was made into a ‘Bantuized’ dialect. This dialect later on became very popular, and, as a result, it even became necessary to know the Swahili language to be part of the civil service.

However, in some cases there is a complaint that Africans were not involved in this process of standardising their own languages. For instance, Mavesera (2009:69) claims that there is a controversy over the standardisation of Shona in Zimbabwe in that the native speakers were not involved. According to Bokamba (1995:16), as the motive of the missionaries to develop the African languages was to use the languages in evangelism and to a certain extent, education, they did not involve Africans in the development process of the languages.

Another aspect of corpus planning in which the missionaries were involved is in the area of vocabulary development. Legère (2009:393-394) reports in this regard that the missionaries played a significant role in collecting vocabularies of Eastern African languages which were later on published in the form of small dictionaries. He mentions that Johann Ludwig Krapf (1810-1881), from the CMS, published a vocabulary of six East African languages in 1850. These languages include Swahili, Nyika, Kamba (spoken in today’s Kenya) and Yao (spoken in South Tanzania, north-western Mozambique, and Malawi) as well as Oromo, which is the concern of the present study. Another important missionary from the CMS mentioned by Legère (2009:394) to have collected and published lexicographic items of 48 languages of Eastern Africa was Joseph Thomas Last (1850-1933). Legère (2009:396) reports the contribution of this missionary in the following way:

Last's most important publication is the *Polyglotta Africana Orientalis*. Despite its shortcomings, which are mainly due to Last's lack of linguistic training, the state of the art in 1885 with regard to linguistic studies and methods, as well as the pioneering character of his work on hitherto mostly undescribed languages, the book is a valuable contribution to the documentation of mainly Bantu languages. In those days, many languages covered in the book were merely known by hearsay, if at all. Accordingly, often for the first time, Last supplied basic linguistic information about the vocabulary of languages spoken in the interior of Tanzania. In addition, the publication gives a solid account of the linguistic situation the author encountered or had been told about.

Levi (2009:382) also notes that compilation of a dictionary was part of the work of the Jesuit missionaries, whereby they made an inventory of lexical items followed by a translation of each work into Latin and/or Portuguese.

Missionaries were also the first to introduce print media in African languages. They did this for the purpose of evangelization and for the promotion of literacy in African languages. In this regard, Moropa (2010:135-136) gives examples of newspapers such as *Ikhwezi (Morning Star)* 1844, *Indaba (News)* 1862 and *Isigidimi samaXhosa (Kafir Express)* 1870, which appeared with mostly religious messages in the Xhosa language of South Africa. Furthermore, Topan (2008:256) reports that missionaries prepared newspapers in Swahili in Tanzania, which contributed towards the spread and consolidation of the language.

Thus, the introduction of Christianity into Africa necessitated the translation of the scriptures into the languages of Africa, and this in turn has led to the study and development of these languages. The missionaries learned, studied and reduced the languages of Africa to writing, and standardized them for translation and teaching purposes. These activities have played a significant role in maintaining and developing these languages. Role of the missionaries' work on language development is seen in many other ways also. Van den Bersselaar (1997:274) summarizes the contribution of the missionaries to language development in the following way:

First, missionaries created a written dialect-based on one or more vernacular(s)-into which they translated the Bible. Its creation led to the use of this language for education in mission

schools and later also in government schools. The Bible dialect consequently became the accepted standard language of the ethnic group and acquired the function of one of its prime identity markers.

This work of the missionaries later on had an influence on the secular sphere. An example of this is the work of standardizing the Shona orthography which had been begun by the missionaries, and was later on taken over by the government, and a standardizing committee in which the missionaries were also involved. Togarasei (2009:54) reports that the missionaries played a significant role in this process of orthography development assisting the government by playing a leading role in the language committees. Topan (2008:255) also contends that the government and missionaries worked together in Tanzania in enforcing the policy that required the knowledge of Swahili to be compulsory for the civil service. The missionaries were said also to have cooperated with the government of the country in studying the language and publishing material in it.

Accordingly, the Bible has been and is being translated into many of the languages of Africa. With regard to this issue of Bible translation in Africa, *World Annual Report* 184/185 (1997, cited in Yorke, 2004:156) reports the following:

In Africa alone, there are some 2,000 languages (about one-third of the world's total!) with only some 613 having some portion of the Bible or other (including pamphlets and/or selections of various biblical themes). Of these 613 or so languages, 230 have a portion of the Bible, with 250 possessing a New Testament and only about 150 having a complete Bible. Essentially, it means that only 25 per cent of the languages in Africa have either a New Testament or a complete Bible. In addition, there is an additional 15 per cent where translation work is in progress. In 1997, for example, the publishing projects that were underway in Africa as a whole numbered 392 in 207 languages across 39 countries.

In order to facilitate the work of the missionaries in developing the African languages, different missionary societies have been established (Ward and Stanley 1999, cited in Yorke, 2004:153-154). Among these are found the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (1701), the CMS (1790), the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804) and the Roman

Catholic Association for the Propagation of the Faith (1822). In addition to this, local Bible societies have also been established to assist different international Bible societies. For instance, Hermanson (2001:110) reports that the Bible Society of South Africa was established in 1965.

## **2.8 Christianity and language development in Ethiopia**

As in many other countries of the world in general and Africa in particular, Christianity and language development issues are highly interrelated in Ethiopia. Literacy in Ethiopia attributes its origin to Christianity. Gerard (1981:8) notes that literature played a role in the development of local Ge'ez through the Greek-speaking Monophysite monks who were evangelizing the land in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (although Christianity had already been introduced during the fourth century by Alexandrian monks). He reports that “they were responsible for completing the adaptation of the old Axumite script in such a way as to permit transcription of vowel sounds although rudimentary forms of this vocalized alphabet had already appeared on inscriptions dating from the reign of Ezana [320-340]” (see § 1.2.1). The Ge'ez that was used before this time did not have vowel notations. This script introduced and used by these monks then has been used for Ge'ez and the other vernaculars of Ethiopia ever since. Baumgardt and Bounfour (2000, cited in Pasch, 2008:67) report that written literature in the Sabeian script has a history of 15 centuries in Ethiopia, and that Ge'ez, Amharic, Tigrinya, and Oromo were written in this script.

Thus, Ethiopian languages have benefited considerably from the work of Christianity. The EOC in particular has played a major role in developing the Ge'ez and Amharic languages through its services (Merahi, 1999). As Amharic had served as an instrument for the subjugating Amhara rulers of the past (until 1991), the EOC has played a major role in promoting Amharic to become a dominant language in the country. It supported the subjugating governments of Abyssinia by influencing the communities of the western, southern and eastern Ethiopia to give up their languages and adopt Amharic. Eide (2000:87) notes that “[f]or centuries Orthodox Christianity has played a most important role in amalgamating diverse ethnic groups into an Amhara core”. For instance, it forced the subjugated groups (such as the Oromos) to adopt Amharic names at baptism. The EOC was instrumental in elevating the status of Amharic as well as Ge'ez at the

expense of the other vernaculars, because the spread of the Orthodox faith and the Amharic language went hand in hand (Appleyard & Orwin, 2008:272).

Merahi (1999) affirms that the EOC has contributed to Ethiopian civilization and Ethiopian language development in various respects. He shows that the church has developed a unique script, its own unique way of writing. He claims that this script is unique in its content and form. This script is said to have been introduced from South Arabia (Bender, Head & Cowley, 1976:120; Pasch, 2008:71) (see § 1.2.1). According to Pasch (2008:71), the writing system of Ge'ez was changed from left-orientation to right orientation as a result of influence from Greek. Another influence of Greek was seen also in the organization of the letters of Ge'ez, which was brought in line with that of Greek.

During the last feudal and communist regimes (until 1991) which were striving for unity of the nation under one language and one religion, the Sabeian script was imposed upon the other vernaculars of the country, whenever the communities tried to alphabetize their languages (see § 2.9 concerning this conflict). In this case also, the EOC played a remarkable role.

Merahi (1999) claims that the EOC played a significant role in preserving Ge'ez. This was the official language of the Abyssinian Empire before the incorporation of the peoples of the current eastern, southern and western Ethiopia (see § 1.2.1). Bender, Cowley and Fulas (1976:99) report that up to the thirteenth century this language had served as a spoken language. Amharic began to replace Ge'ez during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Gerard (1981:12) contends that “Ge'ez literature began to wane in the sixteenth century, when Ethiopia was affected by the tremendous Turkish expansion that was led in Europe, to the annexation of the whole Balkan peninsula to the Ottoman empire” (see § 1.2.1). Despite the fact that Ge'ez was replaced by these other languages, it has been preserved and used in the EOC until today, even though most of the clergy who use it do not have enough knowledge of it. They just study and chant the words they do not understand, in most cases. Accordingly, it is by virtue of its being used in EOC as a language of liturgy that the language has survived. According to Appleyard and Orwin (2008:273), the fact that this language was used widely by the EOC enabled it to be a popular written language in Ethiopia up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It is also claimed that the 13<sup>th</sup> century was a golden age for Ge'ez, because it was time when a large number of religious books and other resources were translated from Arabic and Greek into it (Merahi, 1999:128). Gerard (1981:8) reports that this golden age of Ge'ez began in 1270, during the reign of King Yekuno Amlak (1270-1285). After the decline of the Axumite Kingdom, especially during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, other materials such as the Chronicles of the Kings, the *Kibre Negest* (Glory of the Kings), were written in Ge'ez (as well as in Amharic). According to Ullendorf (1968:75), the *Kibre Negest* is a book that “combines history, allegory and symbolism in its re-creation of the story of the Queen of Sheba, King Solomon and their son, Menilik I of Ethiopia”. Gerard (1981:8) also contends that this was one of the earliest original writing in the country. Other religious literature such as *Gadla Sama'etat* (Act of the Martyrs or the apostles)', *Fekkare Iyasus* (Explication of Jesus), *Mashafa Berhan* (Book of Light), *Mashafa Milad* (Book of Nativity), *Arganona Maryam Dengel* (Organ of the Virgin Mary), *Egziabeher nagasa* (God has reigned), amongst others were also written during this golden age of Ge'ez. Thus, Gerard (1981:10) observes that many of the writings in Ethiopian languages during and after the fourteenth century were of a religious nature and are mainly translations. While many of the translations into Ge'ez were from Greek, some were from Arabic due to the influence of the Egyptian Coptic Church. According to Gerard (1981:14), “[b]ecause of the Ethiopian Church’s association with Alexandria, sources used during the Axumite period had been Greek; for the same reason, Christian literature in Arabic became the main source for Ethiopian *literati* after the Arab conquest of Egypt.” Gerard (1981:14) believes that European influence was also there to some extent through the work of Portuguese traders such as Francesco Alvarez. Wurthwein (1979:98) reports that the translations into the Ethiopic language were made from a variety of sources which included Syriac, Hebrew and Greek. Later revisions were also made to these original translations particularly due to the influence from Arabic.

Thus, it was during the Axumite period (5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) that there were many literary achievements. One of these was the translation of the whole Bible into Ge'ez. Ullendorf (1968:31-32) maintains that although there is no agreement about the translation of the Bible into Ge'ez, the books of the Old Testament could be translated from Hebrew to Ge'ez during the reign of the Queen of Sheba. However, Pasch (2008:71) reports that the Bible was translated

from Greek into Ge'ez; and Gerard (1981:8) notes that this was by the end of the seventh century. Besides this, other translations were made into Ge'ez, which include the Book of Enoch, the original of which is said to be available only in Ge'ez in Ethiopia, and the work known as Qerlos, which is a collection of Christological writings (Ullendorf, 1968:74). According to Pankhurst (1976:311), the British and Foreign Bible Society in London first began printing material in Ge'ez in 1810 and later in Amharic. The first material it produced in Ge'ez and then in Amharic was said to be the Psalter. As to the whole Bible, Wurthwein (1979:98) reports that first the Gospels (in 1824), then the whole of the New Testament (in 1829), and finally the completed Bible were published in 1840 (see also Ullendorf, 1968:65-66).

In the discussion of the EOC contribution to Ge'ez literature, one has to consider also the case of *qine* (Ge'ez riddles). This is a poetic literature in which the user communicates a more complex issue in a concise and figurative manner, whereby the same expression has double meanings, known as *sam* (wax) and *warq* (gold). The *sam* is the surface meaning of the expression, whereas the *warq* refers to the underlying meaning. Thus, this poetic literature is very commonly used by the clergy of the EOC in their communication of religious messages. It is considered also as a sign of wisdom on the part of the user of the *qine* and the interpreter that religious as well as secular messages are delivered and understood in this subtle way. Accordingly, it was after having learned the Ge'ez *qine* literature that one could be assigned as a priest for the ecclesiastical service, as this was considered to be opening the mind of the person to decipher deep religious messages.

As far as Amharic is concerned, at the beginning the EOC is said to have begun producing religious literature in it in response to the Catholic missionaries' effort to produce ecclesiastical material in the language, which could not continue after the Catholics were expelled from the country. During the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuits, who brought Catholicism to Ethiopia, started using the vernacular of the time (Amharic) in their religious services. Gerard (1981:15) reports that these Jesuit missionaries learned and used Amharic for their missionary purposes, and that this forced the Coptic clergy to start using Amharic by the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, by rendering some devotional works into it, which had mostly been in Ge'ez before that time. Appleyard and Orwin (2008:273) contend that the Jesuits' use of

Amharic for religious purposes was the first application of vernacular languages for religious purposes in the country. Later on, when the Jesuits were expelled, the use of Amharic also stopped until Tewodros II came into power in the middle of the nineteenth century (Cooper, 1976:290). According to Amare (2006:97-98), this is because of the fact that Amharic was regarded by the EOC of the time as an unholy language for writing holy books. It was even said that there was a disagreement between the Emperor (Tewodros II) and the Patriarch, because the former favoured the Bible in Amharic and the latter favoured only the one in Ge'ez. According to Pankhurst (1976:311), the Patriarch did not even want to touch the Amharic version of the Bible, considering the language to be profane.

The translation of the Bible into Amharic was done as a means to bring a revival to Orthodox Christianity. According to Filippini (2000:608), at the beginning the missionaries wanted to reform the Orthodox Church itself rather than creating new denominations. They believed that this would be possible by translating the Bible into Amharic. Another reason for the use of Amharic translations was that Ge'ez was not understood by the common people, and in order to bring the faith to the common people, they needed the Word of God in the vernacular.

Later on, under the leadership of Tewodros II (1856-1868), the use of Amharic became more widespread than before in the church. Gerard (1981:16) points out that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century religious literature in Ge'ez was translated into Amharic due to the pressure from King Tewodros II and the Protestant missionaries. Tewodros admitted the western missionaries into his territory in order to gain assistance from western governments. This is said to have contributed to the development of Amharic literature, in that even those who had been against the use of Amharic before that time started using it. Furthermore, the king who succeeded Tewodros II from Tigray (Yohannes IV, 1871-1889) also continued with this tradition.

It is also after this time that European influence started to be seen significantly in writings in Ethiopia. Accordingly, religious literature such as Heinrich Barth's Bible stories and Charles William Isenberg's 'History of God's Kingdom from the Creation of the World to Our Day' and the like were translated into Amharic and published.

It is only recently that Ethiopia has had its own printing press, which was established by missionaries. Before the establishment of the printing press in Ethiopia, the Amharic literature was printed in St. Chrischona Mission Printing Press in Switzerland. Gerard (1981:18) reports that it was only in 1895 that a printing press was established by the Swedish Evangelical Mission in Imkullu, Eritrea. This printing press was later on transferred to Asmara, which had become the Italian's centre of administration. After the World War I, other printing presses were established at Asmara and Dire Dawa by the Catholic Mission.

The EOC aided the development of literacy by opening schools from the earliest times. Amare (2006:81) has the following to say in this regard:

In the Christian highlands of Ethiopia, the [Ethiopian Orthodox] Church constituted the main guardian of traditional culture and provided the only schools in the land for many centuries. Not only did it preserve its ancient tradition with tenacity and convey it to future generations but it also secured remarkable continuity that has lasted to the present day (See also Pankhurst, 1976:305).

At the time, the EOC played a very significant role in the area of education even representing the government in that it assumed the responsibility of the Ministry of Education for the educational system of the country (Mehari, 1999:10; Wondmagegnehu & Motovu, 1970:128). Dagne (1976:339) notes that with the expansion of the Empire the churches and monasteries founded in the south and south-west of Ethiopia served as centres of education in addition to the religious services they were rendering. The EOC educated people at different levels. The first level of church education was said to be *nibab bet* "reading school", where students learnt to read religious books, practically all of which were in Ge'ez (Dagne, 1976:340). After this level of learning, they would continue with others which gave them more instruction particularly in religious matters.

With regard to Ge'ez, however, it is also said that the students were finding it difficult to understand what they were reading, because this language was not used outside the church circle. Furthermore, the literacy in Ge'ez was only for those who were serving around the church,

which did not encourage literacy for the laity, equating it with some form of witchcraft. This means that education was not highly regarded at the time, and this negatively affected the spread of education (Amare, 2006:95-96). Accordingly, although Ge'ez was regarded as a holy language and had great prestige, particularly within this church, the limitation in its use to the church liturgy and the fact that education was not encouraged at the time slowed down the spread of education.

However, the use of Ge'ez continued even after Amharic began serving as a language of everyday communication (Amare, 2006:97). Thus, we see that although the church had helped in the maintenance and development of this classical language, the work of EOC at the beginning did not help mass literacy. Filippini (2000:607) maintains that:

[a]lthough the EOC was seen as an instrument of cultural penetration and colonization of the south-western regions, at the same time it was also considered by Haile Sellassie and by certain young sections of the government as backward and unable to promote the development of the Ethiopian countryside.

Unlike the EOC schools, the mission schools favoured a large portion of society and introduced modernity (Filippini, 2000:628). Until the introduction of evangelical Christianity, Ge'ez and Amharic were the only favoured languages in the country, and Oromo and the other vernacular languages of the country were under proscription. There was no tolerance at all towards their maintenance and development. According to Cooper (1989:24), except Amharic and Tigrigna, none of the other vernaculars of the country was used for publications. The evangelical missionaries were allowed to work in the country provided that they would disseminate the Amhara language and culture in the non-Amharic speaking areas, as these were the areas they were allowed to evangelize (Cooper 1989:24). The Imperial decree of 1944 restricts the missionaries to use only Amharic in their evangelization. Although they fulfilled this purpose of disseminating the dominant language, in most cases, the evangelical missionaries sided with the masses and worked unofficially on developing and using the vernaculars. Eide (2000:74) contends that the work of the evangelical missionaries was quite opposite to that of the EOC ministers in this regard. The evangelicals learned, studied and reduced the vernaculars to writing,

and started using them in their evangelization activities, although the system of the time was against such activities. Thus, the evangelical missionaries were the first to put Oromo into writing. According to Eide (2000:51), the translation by Onesimos Nasib was for many years the only literature available in Oromo. Bulcha (1995:42) also witnesses in the following manner that Onesimos was the creator of Oromo literature:

The work that Onesimos and his language team had accomplished at Geleb can, without doubt, be seen as the first and so far the only significant step towards creating an Oromo literature. These men and women ... toiled in a foreign land to make *afaan Oromoo* [Oromo language] a written language with the hope of returning one day to their native land and spread literacy among their people.

Hence, Evangelical Christianity has helped considerably in the maintenance and development of the vernacular languages like Oromo. Even before the EECMY was established as an institution, the pioneer evangelists had been using the languages of the communities they were evangelizing in the religious and social services they were rendering. The evangelists were accepted in Wellega, western Ethiopia, in the early days, due to the fact that they carried the Bible translated into Oromo with them and started using that. The language that had been proscribed for public use up to that time was used in writing and in public places for the first time in the church. Another instance of this use of vernacular languages was mentioned by Launhardt (2004:38), that Eritreans who migrated from Asmara to Addis Ababa, the capital, in the 1920s found the church to be the only place where they could use their mother tongue. The Gamo people residing around Intoto in Addis Ababa were also attracted to Christianity, as they were given the chance of worshipping in their mother tongue, again in the 1920s. This tradition of using the vernacular languages continued also after the EECMY was nationally constituted in 1959. This tradition has helped in the development of Oromo, which is the concern of this study.

To sum up, Ethiopia is a country into which Christianity was introduced during the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The coming of Christianity played a major role in the development of the languages of the country. The EOC was the first officially established church in the country, and it has played a role that supported the development of two languages of the country, namely Ge'ez and Amharic. However, it worked against the development of the other vernaculars siding with the

regimes of the past, which were aspiring to unite the country under the umbrella of one language and one religion (Filippini, 2000:607). Evangelical Christianity was later on introduced and played a major role in the development of the other vernaculars of the country, which is the subject of the present study focusing on the development of Oromo, through the work of the EECMY.

## **2.9 Language conflict and its management**

One of the issues to be addressed in the present study is language conflict in the church context. Thus, in this section we briefly look at language conflict and conflict management strategies as a background to the language conflict situation in the church, which will be examined in chapter 5.

As conflict is inevitable in all human activities, the church cannot be free from it. From the very beginning of Christianity, different conflicts have arisen internally and externally in the church. The external conflicts were mainly those conflicts which came to the church from its persecutors who wanted to close down churches, imprison and kill the church leaders. In other cases, conflicts arose within the church itself among the leaders, the ministers or the believing community of the church. This started from the inception of the church in the early days of Christianity. The first case is seen in the Bible in Acts 6:1, where disagreements arose among the first Christians on the distribution of gifts. These kinds of conflicts have continued up to the present in the church in different countries in different ways. According to Palmer (1990:11-13), different issues are involved in the conflict arising within the church. These include: substantive issues such as those which arise over values, beliefs and traditions; those which arise over purposes and goals; those which arise over programmes and methods; those which arise over facts as well as those which arise over leadership; and emotional issues such as lack of acceptance, recognition, or appreciation and unfair treatment.

Different language conflicts have been recorded throughout history in different regions of the world. Kymlicka and Patten (2003:4-8) identify three different language conflict situations. The first of these was in Eastern Europe, where the communist minority language rights remained on paper, and as monolingualism later on became the norm, this led to serious conflict. The second

category identified by these scholars was the regional languages of Western Europe, where there was tension between the dominant and dominated language groups. Examples given for this category include: the situation in Belgium, Spain, Canada, Italy and Switzerland. The third category observed in conflict was the conflict between the native populations and the immigrant population in different countries of the world, such as the USA. As the immigrants are in most cases expected to abandon their native languages, and learn the languages of the host countries, this leads to a conflict to maintain their mother tongue by the immigrants, whereas the natives often demand full integration of the immigrants (Costantakos, 1982:137; Smolicz, 1985:24, both cited in McDuling, 2014:91). Kloss, (1971:260, cited in McDuling, 2014:91) is of the opinion that the immigrants have linguistic rights to maintain and use their language. Kymlicka and Patten (2003:6) contend that “[s]ince immigrant language shift is no longer seen as inevitable, many commentators argue that stronger state policies are needed to encourage or compel language shift.” Regarding such state policies to protect the speakers of minority languages from shifting to dominant languages, Kloss (1971:260–261, cited in McDuling, 2014:93) is of the opinion that such policies are becoming international consensus; and gives example of the United Nations declaration of February 21 as Mother Tongue Day and the case of South African recognition of 11 official languages. Still another recent area where linguistic conflict has been observed by Kymlicka and Patten (2003:6) is the European Union, as linguistic diversity has hindered “building a stronger sense of European citizenship.” One of the strongest proponents of the alternative multilingual view is Tove Skuttnab-Kangas who has tirelessly put forward arguments supporting linguistic diversity and the need to establish linguistic rights for minority language speakers in order to prevent and alleviate language conflict (Phillipson & Skuttnab-Kangas 1995; Skuttnab-Kangas 1996; 1997; 1998, 1999a; 1999b; 1999c; 1999d; Skuttnab-Kangas & Phillipson 1997). In the work of these scholars, the issue of language conflict is strongly linked to the issue of language rights (see also May 2012).

In Africa, as elsewhere, different language conflict situations arose at different times. Anchimbe (2006:94) contends that there was resistance to the languages of the colonizers, when they were imposed upon the native Africans. For instance, different sectors of the society protested against an imposed exoglossic language in Ghana. Batibo (2005:49, cited in McDuling, 2014:95) argues that the use of such imposed colonial languages in Africa entails the extinction of these African

languages in the long-run, “as many of the speakers of the African languages are shifting to the colonial or dominant languages which are regarded as socially and economically more attractive” (see also § 2.4).

The other source of conflict is the choice of one language as official or national language among the many existing in the countries of Africa. Anchimbe (2006:94) reports that this has become “a source of discord for the new nations, which were in search of common and solid identity, strong enough to counter the sad and traumatic memories of colonisation.” The problem of inability to choose one language or language variety for common use after independence is known to have different causes among which Simpson (2008:4-5) mentions two. On the one hand, many of the African countries often did not have a language that is known by the majority of the population. On the other hand, even if there is a majority language known by many, there was a fear that this majority language may swallow the other languages. Even in areas where there is one common language, like in Somalia, there is lack of agreement on which dialect to use as a common variety.

Different measures have been taken for the different language conflicts that arose in African countries. In cases where the choice of one language among the many became a problem, the governments of some countries tried to solve this problem by using international (exoglossic) languages, believing that as they were not related to any one ethnic group, they would then be viewed as ‘neutral.’ Anchimbe (2006:95), for instance, gives examples of Cameroon which chose French-English bilingualism, Tanzania which chose English and Swahili, Nigeria which chose English, Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa (the latter three as secondary languages), and Mozambique which chose Portuguese. This scholar maintains that this kind of solution excludes the native languages of Africa from any national functions, and might not be a lasting solution to the problem (see also Simpson, 2008:19). It also affects the development of the languages of Africa (see § 2.4).

According to Simpson (2008:18-22), however, there were some African countries who opted for resolutions other than using the ex-colonial exoglossic languages. Those who saw multilingualism as a problem tried to promote one indigenous language at the expense of the

other vernaculars (see also § 2.2.4). While Tanzania tried to use Swahili as an official and national language and succeeded to some extent, Ethiopia's promotion and use of Amharic language was not successful. Simpson (2008:18) contends that:

since the Marxist revolution of 1974 and ensuing moves towards greater tolerance of other languages, there has been a regrowth of regional languages such as Tigrinya and Oromo, indicating that the long-established, high instrumental value of Amharic within Ethiopia has not been sufficient to eliminate strong loyalties to other ethnic identities.

Another attempted solution is the recognition of national multilingualism. Simpson (2008:20) notes that some countries of Africa recognized various languages (including European former colonial languages) as performing different common functions. Examples given to such an option include: Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia and South Africa. In South Africa, however, although 11 languages have been recognized to have equal status, in practice, there is a tendency for English dominance (see § 2.4).

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined concepts of language planning and development and the relationship between them. The fact that religion, especially Christianity, plays an important role in language development and the fact that language and Christianity have been intimately related to one another from the beginning of history was also one of the prime considerations of this chapter.

It was seen that language planning is defined in various ways by different scholars, but the general agreement is that language planning is an intervention in the functioning of a language to guide its use for a certain purpose. Language planning is done for different purposes, among which solving linguistic disputes in a given country is the major one. Various other purposes of language planning were identified by different scholars. Furthermore, different types of language planning are conducted for different purposes, and the type of language planning depends on the orientation behind it, which may view language either as a problem, as a right or as a resource.

The acceptance and implementation of the planning are also highly influenced by the orientation of the society towards the language(s) of the country. Language planning can be viewed at micro and macro levels, which is related to the issue of who does the planning and for whom it is done.

Three aspects of language planning were explored in the chapter: status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning. Language development, which is the main concern of the present study, is closely related to or synonymous with corpus planning, as it is concerned with the work done to enable the language to be used for particular purpose(s). This development of a language includes activities such as graphization, standardization, modernization and renovation. Graphization is mainly the work of language practitioners who develop the writing system of the language. However, the choice of a particular orthography may be a political decision. Standardization of a language is mainly concerned with having a common variety for the language by either choosing one among the competing varieties or harmonizing them. Modernization is concerned with the issue of creating terms for modern usage, such as in science and technology, as well as, in some instances, for church services. The last component of language development, added by Cooper (1989), is renovation, and this entails regraphization or restandardization. Thus, these activities develop the language to the required capacity, so that it can be used to fulfil the purposes for which it is needed.

The topic of the relationship between language development and Christianity was examined from a historical perspective in this chapter. Christianity has played a significant role throughout history in the development of languages. It has even contributed to the emergence of Linguistic science and the development of the languages to which the religious materials have been translated.

African languages in particular have benefited considerably from the work of Christianity. Thus, it was largely the coming of missionaries that led to the development of the languages of Africa. The languages of Ethiopia are also not an exception. In Ethiopia, the dominant religion, the EOC, developed two languages, namely Ge'ez and Amharic, whereas evangelical Christianity contributed mainly to the development of the other vernaculars.

Different conflicts have arisen in the course of language development throughout history. This chapter has specifically examined the different types of conflict that have arisen in the church in relation to language planning both internationally and in Africa.

Generally, this issue of the relationship between language and religion is seen to be a complex one, to the extent of needing to be addressed in the language policy and planning of a country. It is in the policy and language planning activities of the country that the churches may need to be involved, and thereby, contribute to the development of the languages of the country and in solving language conflicts arising in the community and in the church. This issue will be addressed in Chapters 5 and 6 in more detail.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the design and methodology of the research used in this study. The population studied, the sample taken and the procedures used to gather data from the sample and ways of analyzing them are discussed. Furthermore, instruments used for data collection are presented and discussed. Finally, ethical issues are addressed.

The terms design and method are used to express different meanings in some literature whereas others use them interchangeably. This research follows the meaning that Hofstee (2005) gives to research design which refers to the means and procedures used in the research process to arrive at some conclusion, whereas research method is concerned with the specific techniques employed in conducting the research. According to Hofstee (2005:108),

the word ‘method’ is used to mean your specific way of testing/probing your thesis statement (in other words, your methodology-how you apply one or more research designs to your problems)” and research design is “the way you choose to design your study, i.e. how you went about coming to a conclusion about your thesis (see also Kothari, 2004:7-8).

Thus, it is with this understanding that the two terms were used in this research.

#### 3.2 Research objectives

The research design selected for this study follows from the research objectives given in § 1.6:

1. To evaluate the contribution the church made to the development of the language in the past.

2. To identify the current activities of the church which have contributed towards the development of Oromo under the new favourable situation of the country.
3. To identify the prevailing views and attitudes in the EECMY towards the development and use of Oromo.
4. To identify the reasons for the conflict over the use of Oromo in the EECMY.
5. To identify the consequences of the conflict for the development of Oromo.

### **3.3 Research design**

This study used a qualitative research design in order to explore and describe the role of evangelical Christianity in the development of Oromo. According to Dornyei (2007:32), qualitative studies describe social behaviours as they are, and are conducted in a natural setting without any manipulations by the researcher. Dornyei (2007:32) further notes that “[q]ualitative research is concerned with the subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and thus the explicit goal of research is to explore the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (see also Given, 2008: xxix). Thus, as they are the feelings and opinions as well as experiences of the leaders and members of the church concerning the contribution of evangelical Christianity to the development of Oromo is what this study is mainly concerned with, the qualitative design was preferred. Thus, it was decided that the objectives of this research, could best be achieved through the application and use of a qualitative research design.

Thus, in order to get a full insight into the role which evangelical Christianity played in Oromo language development, a qualitative survey-based research design was chosen for this study. This design enabled the researcher to gather the necessary data to investigate the contribution of evangelical Christianity to development of Oromo. Through the use of a qualitative survey, the researcher was able to extract data that provided this study with valuable information.

Furthermore, the qualitative research design enabled the researcher to participate within the community as well as to objectively observe the behaviour of community members in order to extract the necessary information which would answer to the objectives of the study. Corbin and Strauss (2008:13) claim that through qualitative research, researchers can have access to

something they are interested in which they may not come across by any other means. Dornyei (2007:32) calls this issue an ‘inside perspective’ and that it is very important in qualitative research design.

A historical research design is also employed to some extent to trace the contributions of Christianity towards the development of the language from its inception to its current state. Hofstee (2005:126) confirms that this design can be used in addition to other designs to give supporting ideas or background information to current developments. Accordingly, this research design was used in this study in addition to the other design discussed above.

### **3.4 Sampling techniques**

The potential population for this study consisted mainly of the speakers of Oromo who are members of the EECMY, whereas speakers of other languages (especially the dominant language) were also included to provide views from a different perspective. As the population of the church is very large, there was a need to select a sample that best represents this population. The literature on research methods (e.g. Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:78) that indicates a qualitative study can employ non-probability sampling techniques in order to generate detailed data from those participants who have enough experience of the issue under investigation. Thus, sample participants were chosen from Oromo speakers who are members of the EECMY as well as a few speakers of the dominant language. According to Johnstone (2000:92), “sampling techniques are ways to make sure you are not just describing a few people and assuming without evidence that what is true for them is true for everyone in the group you are studying.” Participants for this study were chosen from the CO of the EECMY, EECMY congregations from the capital, Addis Ababa, the church units and joint programmes found in Addis Ababa city and Oromia Region.

In this study, different non-probability sampling techniques have been applied for different reasons. The main sampling technique was purposive, whereby church leaders and intellectuals as well as community representatives who it was believed could give factual and reliable data were selected from among the speakers of the language in this Christian denomination to provide data. These were those people who had rich experience in the church through leadership as well

as membership, and those who had experienced the conflict around language in the church in one way or another (see § 4.2). Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:187) describe this sampling technique to be “comprised of people based on a particular attribute, and are often designed to arbitrarily include equal representation of groups that may not be equally represented in society” (see also Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 79). This was done by following Johnston’s (2000:89) advice who maintains that it is necessary to carefully decide whom to use as a sample when one is engaged in sociolinguistic studies. Dornyei (2007:113) also supports this view by stating that in a qualitative study sampling is mainly applied in order to get rich and varied insights into the issue under investigation, which is only possible by using people with such experiences, by the means of purposive sampling. This is why this sampling technique is mainly used in this study.

A choice of participants was strategically made based on their varied attitudes and belief systems. In this regard, Ritchie and Lewis (2003:79) contend that all aspects of the issue should be addressed and that a variety must be secured in the selection of the sample. It is well known that some groups in the church have favoured an Amharic-only attitude whereas others believed that all languages must be used for worship and other religious purposes, depending on the needs and abilities of the faith community. Thus, samples were selected from both groups in order to get views from both perspectives. This is what Dornyei (2007:116) calls ‘maximum variation sampling.’ In line with Ritchie and Lewis (2003:80), using participants from different attitude groups helps in minimizing the bias of the researcher. Hence, this maximum variation of the data has helped the researcher to attain data from groups within society with different attitudes.

Furthermore, a snowball or chain sampling technique was applied where the chosen individuals pointed to other potential interviewees who could provide additional insights into the phenomenon of the church and language development. Again these are people who have been involved in the leadership of the church as well as evangelical ministry.

In other cases also, what is known as theoretical sampling, where previous discoveries lead to additional sampling, has been used for this study. Corbin and Strauss (2008:143) have defined this method as:

[a] method of data collection based on concepts/themes derived from data. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to collect data from places, people, and events that will maximize opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions, uncover variations, and identify relationships between concepts.

The impetus for the use of theoretical sampling was generated by the information extracted from individuals and a given setting which prompted the need to investigate other settings. For example, after having discovered that the Bible was translated into different dialects of Oromo, the researcher had to locate those who participated in the translation work to obtain further information from them. Corbin and Strauss (2008:145) maintain again that theoretical sampling is done on the basis of previous collection and analysis of data. They state that “[t]heoretical sampling is based on the premise that data collection and analysis go hand in hand”. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003:80), such sampling process continues until the researcher reaches the point of saturation.

There were cases also where what Dornyei (2007:117) calls ‘within-case sampling’ was used. This sampling method is employed by deciding on issues to be emphasized with different informants or in different settings after having chosen the participants. Dornyei (2007:117) points out that “we have to make regular decisions about when and how to collect data from a particular respondent, what aspects of the case to direct our attention to and which activities, locations or events to focus on.” Accordingly, in this study, while there were some issues that were common to all participants such as the contribution of the church to language development, some individuals or church institutions are more concerned with some aspects of language development (for example, translation work, mass media issues, literacy and education, etc.), and with such people and at such settings the different specialization areas were given emphasis.

### **3.5 Sample size and selection**

Ritchie and Lewis (2003:83) contend that the size of the sample in qualitative studies is relatively small as an in-depth investigation is conducted on the chosen sample. Dornyei (2007:115) also states that the number of participants in a qualitative study is small in such a way

that it provides data that enable the researcher to obtain the data he/she requires for the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, 30 participants were chosen for the interviews and five groups were chosen for the focus group discussion from among the speakers of the language and from other languages, especially Amharic. The participants in both the interview and the focus group discussions consisted of leaders, other church ministers and community representatives with different opinions about the use of language in the church. The number of participants increased continuously both for the interview and the focus group discussion until the researcher believed that the point of saturation (or redundancy) had been reached. According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 188), “the size of a qualitative sample is considered sufficient when the criterion of redundancy is met.” Hence, it is when the data he had gave him the confidence that the research questions had been answered and no more new data were elicited, that the researcher realized that he had reached the point of saturation.

The researcher obtained data mainly from the following well-known church fathers and other current leaders and members through semi-structured interviews:

1. Rev. Dr. Tasgara Hirpo, who now lives in Germany, but regularly visits Ethiopia. He had served the church in different capacities including teaching at Mekane Yesus Seminary, serving as president of the first EECMY-Western Synod, working on the second translation and the later transliteration of the Bible into Oromo; and is now engaged in producing religious and cultural literature in Oromo on his own.
2. The former General Secretary of EECMY, Rev. Dr. Magarsa Guta, who also had served in different capacities in the church as Executive Secretary of the Western Synod, President of CES, instructor at Mekane Yesus Seminary and General Secretary of EECMY until he retired in 2010.
3. The other major informant from the EECMY was Rev. Dr. Debela Birri, who had also served as a pastor of a congregation, a teacher and a principal at Mekane Yesus Seminary and a director of the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology before he retired in 2011. These three people are now on pension but continue serving the church on their own.
4. Other church leaders and ministers at the CO and in units (Western Synod, Birbir Dilla Synod, Gimbi-Jorgo Synod, Central Synod, Illubabor Bethel Synod, South

Ethiopia Synod and Central Ethiopia Synod) as well as the church joint programmes (Mekane Yesus Seminary and YDCS) have also been interviewed, but most of these did not want that their names are mentioned in this report. Accordingly, codes are given to represent them in using information obtained from them.

5. Different congregations were visited, and believers were also interviewed and observations made. Document analyses were also conducted at some of these places.
6. The researcher organised three focus group discussions in Addis Ababa (at the EECMY-CO, at YDCS and Mekane Yesus Seminary) for leaders and intellectuals in the church and other two focus group discussions at the units (one at Western Synod and another at Birbir Dilla Synod) in which again leaders and ministers of the church took part.
7. Some informants were interviewed and documents were analysed from the EOC, especially, EOC intellectuals working both in the church Central Office and in Addis Ababa University. Material which could be accessed through these informants and found in the library of Addis Ababa University and Mekane Yesus Seminary were also examined.
8. The majority of the participants were also Oromo speakers whereas some speakers of the dominant language, Amharic, were also interviewed in order to get variations of data. Speakers of other minority languages were also included. A section head of the 'Translation and Literacy Service' of the EECMY, who is also from one of the minority ethnic groups in the southern part of Ethiopia as well as others leading and working in special offices relevant to this research such as YDCS, Aster Ganno Literature Society and JFLP were interviewed. These helped as experts and leaders engaged in the work related to language development, representatives of the community as well as church members.

### **3.6 Research instruments**

The research instruments used in this study were multifaceted following the suggestion made by Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:242), who maintain that using a variety of instruments helps in fulfilling the wish of answering the research questions satisfactorily. Thus, in order to get rich

and varied data, the researcher used a variety of tools such as interviews, focus group discussions, document analyses and personal observations. This was done in the belief that information about the contribution of the EECMY to the development of Oromo, (the types of the development as well as the causes and effects of the obstacles to the language development efforts of the church such as conflict over language use in the church) could best be obtained in these varied ways. Corbin and Strauss (2008:27) emphasize the importance of such triangulation of instruments for the sake of cross-checking and adding more data to that previously collected by use of one or more tools. Some of these instruments have been used more intensively than others. Some instruments were used to confirm or cross-check the information gathered through other means. Each of these instruments is presented in the following sub-sections.

### **3.6.1 Interviews**

The interview process is the main data collection instrument that was employed in this research following Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:224), who maintain that interviewing is one of the most common research instruments in qualitative research undertaking. Semi-structured interviews were used in order to gather in-depth data that help to answer the research questions. Semi-structured interview questions allowed the respondents to give a detailed response, on the one hand, and enabled the researcher on the other hand to probe further on the basis of responses of the respondents whenever necessary. A semi-structured interview was used as it is the best compromise between the structured interview and the unstructured interview processes. Both the structured and unstructured interview processes have their own limitations (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006:95). On the one hand, the structured interview does not allow the researcher to be context dependent, that is, it does not allow flexibility to probe issues raised in the context of the interview as questions have already been set. On the other hand, the fully unstructured interview process can be difficult to control as it allows the interviewees to digress from the issue (Wray and Bloomer, 1998:162). Dornyei (2007:123) also supports this view by claiming that “although there is a set of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format is open-ended and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner.” Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:225) also maintain that this type of interview helps to minimize the bias of the researcher while preparing the structured interview. This researcher preferred this

semi-structured interview process as he had had some insights about the issues to be investigated by the virtue of his being part of the situation under investigation. Dornyei (2007:123) notes that this type of interview is mainly used:

when the researcher has a good enough overview of the phenomenon or domain in question and is able to develop broad questions about the topic in advance but does not want to use ready-made response categories that would limit the depth and breadth of the respondent's story.

Prior to the interview, questions were prepared and pretested to ensure that the main issues under scrutiny were considered. Thus, in order to capture all areas of the investigation, interview guide questions were carefully set and conducted concerning issues of language development that the researcher wanted to investigate. The questions set were so general in order to enable the respondents to give their rich and deep experiences concerning the matter, and as to help the researcher also to raise probing questions as needs arise. The questions were also used in a pilot study whereby they were tested on a selected group of respondents in the church. On the basis of the responses elicited, they were modified and put to use.

Furthermore, not all questions were applied to all respondents. In some cases, the respondents specialized in certain aspect of the church work such as mass media, literacy work or literature production. In such cases, questions that were only pertinent to such groups were asked to get in-depth information on those specific areas of the church services (see § 3.4).

The researcher managed to maintain control of the interview process which kept the participants from digressing. However, the researcher did not forget that he had to stay neutral in most of the cases. They were given full freedom to speak from their hearts as much as possible. The rapport which most of the participants had already had with the researcher also contributed a lot to this freedom because of common membership of one speech community and/or denomination.

In order to secure acquiring of the in-depth information, the interview was conducted more than once, following Polkinhorne (2005, cited in Dornyei, 2007:122) who maintains that “one-shot

interviews are rarely able to produce the full and rich descriptions necessary for worthwhile findings”.

Data that were collected during the interview process were recorded and confirmed by participants. This information that was provided by the participants was then transcribed and translated immediately. Dorneyi (2007:126) claims in this regard that:

there is general agreement in the literature that if we want to use the content of a semi-structured or unstructured interview as research data, we need to record it-taking notes is simply not enough as we are unlikely to be able to catch all the details of the nuances of personal meaning; furthermore, notetaking also disrupts the interviewing process.

Many of the interviews were conducted in the local languages which were later translated into English.

### **3.6.2 Focus group discussions**

Focus group discussions were also used in this study because it was believed that this could generate additional data to those that were collected through interviews. It was believed that when people are together in a discussion, more ideas might come to them as another participant in the group gives his/her opinion about the issue. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:235) state that focus group discussion has an advantage in that it opens up an opportunity for the different groups to interact with one another. In this case, the researcher was just a mediator, and they were the participants who were giving their own free opinions. To facilitate the discourse within the focus groups, the researcher introduced an issue and provided each with a chance to air their views. Accordingly, five focus groups representing different areas of the Christian community of the church were used.

Here the focus was more on the subject matter than on the individual speaker as everyone in the group had to share his/her experience. This is in line with the view of Wray and Bloomer (1998:166) who claim that to know that every participant is engaged in discussing a similar

issue, such a focus is so important. The researcher does not have any means of probing every participant's understanding of the matter. Thus, the participants give their ideas freely without any interference from the researcher while the researcher focuses on ideas that every participant puts forward.

The disadvantage of focus group discussion is the danger of being dominated by outspoken members of the group. This was not a problem in this research since the community has its own discourse culture where everyone has a turn to contribute whatever he/she feels. In addition, the focus group discussions were organized with people of similar status together in order to avoid any member from feeling inferior or superior to the others.

Similar procedures were carried out in recording data from the focus group discussions as in the interviews. Transcriptions of focus group discussions were made immediately after the focus group sessions. These transcriptions were shown to the group members to ensure the validity of the data collected.

### **3.6.3 Observation**

The researcher was able to observe the behaviour of members of the society regarding their language use in the church. This technique enabled the researcher to obtain additional data which the interviewees might have been reluctant to provide due to sensitivity or other factors, as Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:238) claim:

Sometimes, such as when researching socially undesirable, traumatic, or highly ego-involved behavior, people are not accurate reporters of their own experience, and their reports are subject to selective perceptions and filtering. In such a situation the researcher might opt for direct observation.

The case of what Dornyei (2007:127-128) calls 'social desirability' was of much importance. He points out that such people do not feel comfortable due to the social conventions or norms that might be violated. Accordingly, in some cases some members of the church were not happy to

talk about some faults in the church, fearing that it was not normal to expose the faults of their religious leaders. Thus, observation and document analyses were used to fill this gap. Sapsford and Jupp (2006: 59) point out other advantages of observation such as obtaining direct information rather than through the intermediary of another participant who has experienced the matter under investigation. The researcher is able to see what the research participants may not be able to see.

Observations need to be seen in relation to what has been gained from participants through interviews and focus group discussions. Johnstone (2000:23) notes that it is difficult to rely upon observations alone as they might be “influenced by feelings and expectations, by unconscious “theories”... about what usually happens or what is about to happen.” Thus, this issue was also taken care of by cross-checking information gained during the observations with that gained through other means.

Furthermore, as an additional source of information, the researcher drew from his personal experience in the church. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:238) call this a full immersion. The researcher is a member and an employee of the same church he focused on in the study. He has been a member in the church since his childhood and has worked for the past seventeen years as an instructor in the higher educational institution of the church. While the danger of preconception might arise, the researcher consciously tried to avoid this as much as possible. Hence, although the main issue was based on the behaviour observed and collected by using other means, the researcher’s use of his own experience has helped in the understanding and inter-correlating the data.

Other observations were overtly made whereby the subjects observed were made aware of the purpose for the observation. The researcher visited different congregation programmes as a participant worshipper, and observed their use of Oromo as well as the occurrence of code-switching and shifting in their use of languages in the church services. Furthermore, he observed the use of language in different church offices. Johnstone (2000:41) argues in this regard that “surreptitious recording raises ethical as well as legal questions.” However, the process of observation was conducted in an ethical manner, because nothing was recorded that harms the

individual rights of those observed as the focus was on things observed in the community rather than individuals.

#### **3.6.4 Document analysis**

Document analysis was also used as a technique of data collection for this research. As the church concerned has had some policies and decisions pertaining to language usage, documents relating to this matter were studied. In this regard, both published and unpublished documents were used. Some of the documents such as articles regarding language issue in the constitutions of the church and those of the country were published whereas the other policy decisions, deliberations and correspondences were unpublished.

Most of these documents were administrative records. Thus, among the documents were found different recordings pertaining to the church decisions on language use for church services. One of these was minutes of meetings of the church leaders at the different levels of the church structure. As observed at the outset of this study (§ 1.3.2), the church has different decision-making bodies such as the GA, Council, EC/Board and Management Committee at the top level. There is the same structure in the units called synods and work areas. Below the synods also there are parishes and congregations as well as outreach or preaching places. All these conduct regular and extraordinary meetings in which they also discuss and resolve issues related to language use. Thus, minutes of such meetings which were relevant to the language case were investigated and analysed as data contributing to the study.. Such writings have given a good amount of data in addition to materials collected through other means.

Relevant correspondence was also analysed. In other words those letters, e-mails and memoranda relevant to language issues were analysed. In addition, there were also proposals and reports relating to language issues in the church.

In general, data for this study were gathered using a variety of instruments for the sake of triangulation, and this has helped the researcher to gain a variety of information. However, from

among the instruments, the interview was the main one, and the others were used as supplementary sources and for cross-checking the interview data.

### **3.7 Data analysis procedures**

Analytical methods are defined by Johnstone (2000:93) as a way “to refine and interpret the observations and notes made, the texts and tape recordings collected, the pictures and films taken, and the information absorbed in the process of participant observation.” Accordingly, in this section we shall look at the data analysis procedures followed in this study.

Sapsford and Jupp (2006:168) maintain that data collected by different means are analysed following different steps such as, transcribing them and coding them. The data collected by the different data collection instruments discussed above (§ 3.6) were also analysed after being transcribed and coded according to concepts that emerged from the data. As mentioned previously, the data were collected by using an audio and video recorders and field notes which were translated into English and transcribed. Dornyei (2007:223) also points out that data transcription is the first step in the process of data analysis. The transcription was done manually.

The ideas that the researcher had got from the first interviews and other data collection techniques enabled him to prepare other probing questions and to modify the guiding questions already prepared as well as to alter his focus of observation and document analysis. Regarding this, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2002:190-91) state that “data analysis should occur after the first data are collected, and the initial analysis should determine the focus and strategies used in subsequent data collection. ... In this manner, the results drive the methods.” Thus, together with data collection, the analysis was also conducted to direct the data collection process. Dornyei (2007:221) also points out that qualitative study is done in an iterative way, so that the analysis and interpretation of the previously collected data direct subsequent work. In the present study, responses given to the first time interviews and focus group discussions guided the researcher to focus on certain areas of language development and usage, and prepare questions and conduct observations and document analyses in those areas. Dornyei (2007:221) also states that there is a

possibility of focusing one's attention in the collection of data on the basis of the previous data collection and analysis.

Furthermore, the grounded theory approach, as highlighted by Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:192), was used in the data analysis. In this approach themes were first identified and categorized so as to lead to formulation of a theoretical hypothesis "about the pattern or theme that is emerging." To verify or refute this hypothesis, the balance of the data were investigated until verification point was reached. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:192) further claim that:

[f]urther analysis seeks to specify *what* is occurring, *when* it is occurring, under what conditions it occurs (*where*), *how* certain processes relate to or yield its occurrence, *who* is the agent and/or recipient of this occurrence, and *why* this phenomenon is occurring (that is, what function does it serve for the people involved?)

Denzin and Lincoln (2000:782) also support this idea by stating that the interrelationship between the different themes is in a form of a 'theoretical model.' They maintain that "[m]odels are sets of abstract constructs and the relationships among them." They further elaborate that this approach helps the researcher to deeply understand how the data give meaning through such an iterative process. Thus, the researcher tried to arrive at the similarities and differences between the different categories identified through this process. The coding and analyzing system for the study followed the different levels as pointed out in Dornyei (2007:237-8), who states that:

[c]oding in qualitative research is a multi-level procedure, and grounded theory describes a logical, three-level system: first we break up the data into chunks and assign conceptual categories to the data segments ('open coding'). Second, we identify interrelationships between these categories ('axial coding'). Third, we explain these relationships at a higher level of abstraction ('selective coding') (see also Sapsford and Jupp, 2006:170-171).

This procedure is very useful in that it shows the step by step analysis of the data until the final conclusion is reached. The researcher looked at the transcribed data for themes that constantly repeated themselves in the different interview and focus group discussion transcripts as well as in notes from observations and document analyses. These were categorized accordingly on the

basis of the concepts they represented. Corbin and Strauss (2008:66) also note that coding is transforming the data collected into a conceptual level. They further state that:

it involves interacting with data (analysis) using techniques such as asking questions about the data, making comparisons between data, and so on, and in doing so, deriving concepts to stand for those data, then developing those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions.

Accordingly, this researcher followed this approach and categorised the data into different conceptual codes that emerged out of the analysis.

After the coding process, some memos were also written in order to get sense out of the concepts that emerged. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008:117) memos are written in order to represent the product of our analysis. They are the conceptual representations of the data coded. Finally, explanations were given for the relationships between the different categories of the data.

Thus, it was when each of the categories identified were thoroughly investigated, without the emergence of anything new that the researcher was satisfied to have fully dealt with that particular category. Corbin and Strauss (2008:148-149) elucidate this in such a way that the researcher can secure reaching the saturation level when the researcher has fully identified all the categories or themes in relation to their properties and conditions. This researcher used this mechanism to gain a detailed understanding of Oromo language development in the church and the different factors that have been adversely affecting this development.

In general, the process of iteration between data collection and analysis helped the researcher to get a detailed insight into the matter of Oromo development in the church as well as the obstacles encountered in the development of the language.

### **3.8 Ethical issues**

The question of ethics follows both the universal ethical considerations and ethical standards set by UNISA. This is in line with what Sapsford and Jupp (2006:292) claim as, “nationally and internationally there is a growing concern about providing guidelines and codes of conduct for the practice of research involving human subjects in the health, behavioural and social sciences”.

In this study, due attention was given to secure an underlying trust from participants through different methods. Particularly as the study deals with a sensitive issue of language conflict as an obstacle to language development in the church context, the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were maintained as required. Participants had been clearly informed about this as well as the aim of the study and its contribution to the church work and the country at large. They had also been informed that the information they would provide would be transcribed and presented to them before utilization for approval. In addition, they had been made aware prior to the data collection process about the freedom they would have to refrain from participation at any stage of the study. The researcher secured this through informed consent as well as informal consent as necessary as is suggested by Johnstone (2000:42.) The church leadership was made to give its informed consent following the guideline provided by UNISA. Formal as well as informal consent were secured from every individual and group that participated in the study. Accordingly, some volunteered that their names could be mentioned in the study, whereas others preferred to be anonymous. Thus, for the latter, codes were used as references in the presentation of the data instead of their names.

The research was conducted with full consent between the researcher and the participants. All the participants knew that the research was not only on them but that it was with them and for them (see Johnstone, 2000:50) because it was aimed at showing the speech community as well as the church community the contribution that the church has made in the development of the language, which, if continued well, can help considerably in developing the Oromo language efficiently. They understand that this is to the advantage of all, and that is why they were encouraging the study.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the research design and methodology was presented. The design, methods of sampling, data collection and analysis were discussed in detail.

The design of the research is said to be mainly qualitative as the issue investigated was related to human behaviour of language use in the church context which led to the development of the Oromo language as well as the obstacles that were encountered. In addition, in order to have a historical perspective of the matter, historical design was also employed to some extent.

The various types of non-probability sampling and the instruments used in this study were set out. The researcher explained the various instruments that were used during the process of data collection. The use of these instruments followed the process of triangulation of instruments such as interview, focus group discussions, observation and document analysis, and this helped the researcher to obtain a variety of material for the study. Ideas were recorded, transcribed and translated as preparation for an analysis.

Thus, the data was analysed by coding according to the themes that emerged from the data at different levels after which they were taken to a higher level of abstraction to arrive at some theoretical formulations. The data collection and analysis were made simultaneously as one was used as an input to the other.

In general, various methods of sampling, data collection and analysis were used in order to secure also validity and reliability, following Johnson (2000:6-62) who maintains that triangulation is one of the mechanisms of securing validity and reliability.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF EECMY IN OROMO LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents an historical analysis of the data collected for the study. The aim is to evaluate the contribution of the EECMY to Oromo development from a historical perspective. The focus of this analysis is mainly on two Ethiopian regimes; the feudal and the communist, before 1991, when there was no tolerance in the country on the part of the government for the use of vernacular languages such as Oromo.

As explained in Chapter 3, the instruments used in the collection of data for this study included interviews, focus group discussion, participatory observation and document analysis (see § 3.6). Originally, this chapter was intended to be an analysis of historical documents found in the church. However, this could not be fully materialized because of two main reasons. The first one is that in an oral society, such as Ethiopia, the culture of keeping records was not well developed in the church or in the society, in general when Evangelical Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia. Secondly, due to the nationalization of most of the church properties during the communist regime, even those documents which the church had kept were lost or destroyed. Accordingly, few documents could be traced and used, whereas the rest of the information was collected from interviews and focus group discussions. While these document analyses were made at the church CO and units, the interviews were conducted with former and current church leaders, long time church members and intellectuals. Most of the interviewees were from the EECMY, because the study focused mainly on this church. However, some informants were also used from the EOC as this was the first Christian denomination in the country and the dominant one, as it was favoured by the governments of the country during these historical periods. Published sources were also consulted in order to supplement the author sources from which data was collected.

## **4.2 Church activities that have contributed to the Oromo language development**

The EECMY, the first evangelical church in the country, has contributed majorly towards the development of all the Ethiopian languages in general and Oromo in particular. From the very beginning, the policy of this church was quite opposite to that of the EOC in that it started using the vernaculars of the country in its services. The EECMY did this under persecution from the EOC, which was supported by the regime of the time, and was against the use of vernaculars for ecclesiastical purposes as we shall see in the next chapter (see § 5.4). Furthermore, the regime favoured only the use of the dominant language (Amharic) in all spheres of life including the church. The historical contributions made by the EECMY to the development of Oromo is set out in the following sections.

### **4.2.1 Translation work**

All the informants in this study agree that the main contribution of the EECMY to the maintenance and development of Oromo is through the translation work of the Bible and other religious literature into this language. Although the policy of the government at that time favoured only the language of the ruling class, Amharic and Ge'ez, the evangelical missionaries began their work by translating the Bible and other religious literature into the vernaculars of the country, especially Oromo. The interviews conducted with Rev. Dr. Debela Birri, Rev. Dr. Tasgara Hirpo, Rev. Dr. Magarsa Guta and the focus group discussions in Addis Ababa indicated that the policy of those days favoured only one religious denomination (EOC), and that this hindered the missionaries from penetrating into the communities they wanted to evangelize, especially the Oromo people. Therefore, the missionaries used this as an opportunity to concentrate on the translation of the Bible into the vernaculars, especially Oromo.

According to Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.), Bible translation is the first written literature that ever appeared in Oromo and reached the Oromo people. Different people (both native and foreign) have attempted to translate the Bible into Oromo. Some of these translations could not

reach the society for use due to different factors whereas Onesimos Nesib's translation was the first one to reach the community and be used.

One of the first attempts of translation of the Bible into Oromo was that of an Oromo known as Rufo. Regarding this particular translation, Smidt (2000:635) reports that "one generation before Onesimos, who became known as the first Oromo Bible translator, important parts of the Bible had already been translated into the Oromo language by another former Oromo slave, Rufo... or Rafa." This scholar further points out that a few copies of this work of Rufo still exist consisting of the New Testament in full, Genesis, Exodus as well as the book of Psalms. These books were printed at the St. Chrischona Pilgrims Mission's Printing Press in Basle (Switzerland) between 1870 and 1877. As this translation of the Bible was not widely used among the Oromo Christian society, what contribution it has made to the development of the language is not known. Smidt (2000:645) finally concludes that this was the first Oromo literature to be printed in the Sabeen Script. Apart from this information from Smidt (2000), this researcher could not locate any copies of this translation by Rufo. No one else the researcher knows can provide further information.

The first well recognized attempt to translate the Bible into Oromo was by Johann Ludwig Krapf, a missionary member of the CMS, who came to Ethiopia in the 1840s during the rule of King Sahile Sillase (1813-1847). Hirpo (1999:4) reports that Krapf was the first missionary to come to the Oromo area. Krapf lived with the King, and accompanied him in his invasion of the Oromo territory. He then learned Oromo from the Oromos whom he came across during this journey. Diga (1999:30) also reports that Krapf first tried to make a linguistic study of Oromo. His main contribution was the production of the Oromo vocabulary (see § 2.7) and a description of "Elements of the Oromo Language", after which he embarked upon the translation of the Bible. He began this activity by translating the Gospels of Mathew and John, and later on added the books of Genesis and the Epistles to the Romans in the form of manuscripts. In 1876 he managed to have the translation of the New Testament into Oromo published. However, this translation did not reach the community, and remained unused because of the order of the day, as well as the translator's very limited knowledge of the language.

Other very little known attempts have also been made to translate the Bible into Oromo with the assistance of different missionary societies. For example, Diga (1999:30-31) reports that with the help of the British and Foreign Bible societies which worked in Ethiopia until 1913 under the CMS and Swedish Mission, different translations were attempted by different translators. Accordingly, the Gospel of Mathew was translated in 1886 by an Oromo freed from slavery, Hailu from Harer (in Ethiopia); R.M. Ormerod and Thomas Wakefield translated the Book of Jonah in 1878, John in 1889, and Mathew in 1904. The Gospel of St. Mark was translated in 1893 by students at Lovedale Missionary Institute in South Africa. No trace of any of these translations could be found by the researcher.

Onesimos's first publication in 1899 was the first Bible in Oromo to reach the Oromo people, and is regarded as the first Bible translation in the history of the EECMY (Mr. Gallo Aylate, pers. comm.). Diga (1999:31) reports that:

Onesimos Nesib, though he was not the first person to translate or write literature in the Oromo tongue, writing an extensive religious literature and devoting over thirteen years to the translation of the Bible became the leading figure in the history of the Oromo literature and resolved many of the problems encountered at the time.

Rev. Dr. Biri, Rev. Dr. Hirpo and Rev. Dr. Guta (interview) and different sources all show that Onesimos was an Oromo who was enslaved in childhood, and was sold to many masters after which he was liberated by Swedish missionaries (especially with the help of a missionary called Werner Munzinger). This missionary educated Onesimos at Massawa, the Ethiopian port, as well as in Sweden. Accordingly, he learned different languages including English, Swedish, German and Arabic. He was known to be a talented student (Aren, 1978; Hirpo, 1999; Diga, 1999). He was the first Oromo to be baptized in the history of evangelical Christianity. Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.) personally recognizes the day of Onesimos's baptism, which was an Easter Day of 1872, as the day of the birth of the EECMY as well as the Oromo literature. In his book *Abba Gammachis* Hirpo (1999:19) reports that "none among the Oromo people was baptized before Onesimos; none had learned to read and write the Oromo language in the Sabeian script before him, and none had learned to read and write any European languages in the Latin script before

him.” The meaning of his new name (Onesimos Nesib) was ‘a valuable freed slave,’ and Hirpo (1999:19) argues that the work of Onesimos has revealed this usefulness which was also predicted in his original name (his original name was *Hiikaa Awaajii*, but this was changed to Onesimos Nesib through time in the course of his enslavement and conversion to Christianity).

Onesimos’s first attempt of coming back to evangelise his people was not successful. After he came back from his studies in Sweden, he made different trials to enter into the Oromo territory, and reach the Oromo people with the gospel message. However, he could not succeed because of the politics of the time. The government of the country at that time, in collaboration with the EOC, prohibited Evangelicals to enter into the country. Accordingly, he had to settle in Eritrea where he started teaching the freed Oromos like himself and embarked on the translation work (Rev. Dr. Hirpo, interview).

It was then that he began translating the Bible into Oromo. Aren (1999:287) maintains that creating an Oromo literature is an important part of the work of Onesimos. He translated the Bible and other religious materials into Oromo in collaboration with Aster Ganno (an Oromo girl freed from slavery), when they were living in Emkullu, Eritrea. There were other liberated Oromo slaves also who participated in the translation work together with Onesimos and Aster Ganno. Bulcha (1995:41) named this team “the Oromo Language Team.” He reports also that this team consisted of 15 to 20 members. Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.) even reported that this team was composed of representatives from different dialect groups of the Oromo language such as Wello (northern), Shoa (central), Limmuu (western), and Jimmaa (south western). However, observation of the language of this Oromo Bible does not reflect the different dialects. It is based on the western Oromo dialect (see § 5.3.1 and 6.3.3). This team collected about 15,000 words which would help in the later translation work of the Bible. The complete Bible which they had translated was published in Chrischona, Switzerland, in 1899. The first translation, *Kakuu Haaraa* (New Testament), was published at Emkulluu, Eritrea in 1893. The work on the *Kakuu Moofaa* (Old Testament) was completed in 1897, taken to the printing press in Chrischona and the printing of the whole Bible, *Macaafa Qulqulluu Afaan Oromoo* (The Holy Bible in Oromo) was completed on 10 June, 1899 (Aren, 1978: 385; Hirpo, 1999:46. Aren (1999:287) reports that this task had taken Onesimos seventeen years of dedicated work before the whole Bible was published in Oromo.

Concerning the translation work of Onesimos, his knowledge of the language may be questioned as he had left the Oromo area at a young age. Different sources show that he left his village when he was only four years old. According to Aren (1978:383), “[a]part from difficulties that he shared with all Bible translators, he was often hesitant as to idiom and adequate vocabulary because of his long separation from people speaking pure Oromo.” However, Onesimos said at the time that he first mastered the language before embarking upon the translation work (see also Diga, 1999:26). He was assisted also by the Oromo Language Team engaged on the linguistic work for the preparation and translation of the ecclesiastical materials. Diga (1999:27) notes that especially one of the members of the Team, Aster Ganno, “particularly portrayed as the ‘muse’ of the Team because she had a very good memory of all the necessary Oromo words and their derivations plus a very strong will to work.” Aren (1978:383-384) contends that Onesimos made use of her better knowledge of the language. He thus concludes that this translation of the Bible “rightfully bore the name of Onesimos Nesib, but it is evident that much credit for the final structure of the language ought to go to his young female assistant.”

It was also known that the translation of Onesimos was based on the Amharic version of the Bible. This was reported by Onesimos himself (as quoted in Diga, 1999:37) saying that he basically used Amharic and consulted the Bible in Swedish for accuracy as he did not know the original languages of the Bible (Hebrew and Greek). However, Rev. Bonga (pers.comm.) reported that Onesimos used the Septuagint as a source for his translation. According to Aren (1978:385), although Onesimos knew that European scholars would criticize him for not using the original languages of the Bible, he had the confidence that his translation contained pure and idiomatic Oromo expressions.

As to his proficiency in Amharic also, there are different speculations. Some say that he had learnt it from his masters when he was enslaved in his childhood, while others believe that he was helped by an Orthodox priest who was his friend. Still others contend that he was helped by his team members who were fluent in both Amharic and Oromo (Rev. Dr. Biri, Rev. Dr. Hirpo and Rev. Dr. Guta as informants).

These informants (especially Rev. Dr. Hirpo) stated that although he was advised to revise or use as a basis the translation of Krapf, at least for the New Testament, Onesimos refused to do so as the language used by Krapf was problematic because of his limited knowledge of it. For example, he said that Krapf's translation was full of borrowed words and expressions from both Amharic and Arabic. Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.) also stated that Krapf could not differentiate between short and long vowels as well as plain and geminated consonants, which are productive in Oromo. While these were mainly problems of the Sabeian script used at the time, his limited knowledge of Oromo prohibited Krapf from using it in an understandable way, unlike Onesimos.

It was not only the Bible that was translated into Oromo by Onesimos and his team, but also other religious as well as secular materials were also translated and/or prepared and published. For example, Hirpo (1999:37) reports that *Katee Kismoos* (the Book of Small Catechism), in Oromo, was the first to be translated into Oromo by Onesimos, though it was printed in 1899 together with the whole Bible. This is said to be very useful as everyone has to study it before becoming a communicant member of the EECMY. He also mentioned that the hymnbook translated from Swedish was printed in 1887 at Imkullu Press under the title *Galata Waaqayyo Gooftaa Macaa* (Praise to God, the Lord of all). This hymnbook consisted of 100 songs, and it was translated from Swedish to Oromo. Hirpo (1999:44) further reports that "a missionary called Martin Nordfeldt revised [this hymnbook] and left out those hymns that were without tunes and added some more new hymns that had tunes and had it printed for the second time." This hymnbook also contained the liturgy in Oromo, and was very useful for church services. Rev. Yonas Yigezu, director of Gospel Ministry Department of EECMY, and Rev. Bonga (pers. comm.) claim that the liturgy in Oromo was the first of its kind to be used in the history of the EECMY. Swedish missionaries and local evangelists used this book for the first time in 1919 under the title *Macaafa Sirna Sagadaa* (Liturgy Book). This consisted of the liturgy that would be used for normal Sunday worship. Later on it was improved by Onesimos and Aster in 1924 adding such things as a liturgy to be used for marriage, funeral, baptism, and other ceremonies (Rev. Bonga, interview). Other religious books Aster and Onesimos translated and had published in Chrischona, Switzerland, include: Dr. Barth's 'Bible Stories' under the title *Si'a lama oduu shantamii lama* (Fifty two stories twice) and a book entitled *Garaan namaa mana Waaqayyoo*

*yookiis iddoo bultii Seexanaa* (Human heart, God's dwelling place or Satan's?) (Hirpo, 1999:37-38; 2011:3).

Besides translating the Bible and other religious materials such as liturgy books and Catechism into Oromo, these pioneer ministers collected also different oral literature of the Oromo society. Especially Aster Ganno collected different cultural songs and prepared them in writing. Aren (1978:384) reports that she listed down 500 riddles, fables, proverbs, parables, cradle-songs and ballads from her memory. The first work of Aster Ganno was "The Galla Spelling Book" which was published in 1894 at Imkullu, Eritrea.

The community of Wellega had got no other written material even in Amharic before the arrival of the evangelical missionaries. The EOC priests had never encouraged literacy in the Oromo community. Diga (1999:63) claims that:

the many Orthodox priests who often came from Gojjam never seems [sic] to have brought books for distribution among the people. Surprisingly enough, Amharic Bibles were brought to the region, first by the evangelists who settled at Bodji and later, on a larger scale, along the Oromo Bibles, by Onesimos as the leading representative of the evangelicals.

Thus, the coming of the Evangelicals to this part of the country enabled the community to become acquainted with a written literature for the first time. The translation of the Bible into Oromo 117 years ago by Onesimos Nesib is the first of its kind that reached the community. This opened the way for the other vernacular languages of the country also (FGD- 001; Mr. Aylate, informant).

Although the language of the translation of Onesimos was accepted and used by the speech community in most cases, some improvements were necessitated and made later on by other scholars. This was done after the original work had served for 76 years, i.e. in 1975. According to Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.) another better translation was necessitated due to the fact that there were some problems in Onesimos' translation of the Bible such as contracting words together; and this had to some extent hampered understanding. Bulcha (1995:46) also agrees with this view saying that "Onesimos's tendency to collapse two or more words to one is ... [a]

problem that obstructs fluent reading.” Rev. Bonga (pers. comm.) also commented that in some cases the words used and the structure of sentences were problematic for fluent reading and understanding. When Bible schools were established and evangelists were trained, they started to question some points in the first translation. Both missionaries and local evangelists especially working in the Bible schools shared this idea. Then, discussions were conducted and decisions were passed by the concerned bodies to revise the translation. Thus, a project was designed and a new translation work was begun in order to alleviate this problem.

This time the translation work was conducted by a team of experts. This team consisted of both missionaries and local evangelists, such as ‘Rev. Manfred Zach, Mr. Teophilos Qana’aa, Rev. Gobbu Bonga and Rev. Tasgara Hirphoo’ (Hirpo, 1999:61). Other missionaries such as Dr. Loren F. Bliese and local evangelists such as Rev. Jabessa Mogassa were also added later on (Rev. Bonga, pers. comm.). As all of the team members had been teachers at Bible schools before they embarked on the translation work, they knew the problems in the first translation of Onesimos.

This work was originally begun in the former Western Synod of the EECMY in 1975 under the follow-up of Rev. Dr. Hirpo, who was a president of the Western Synod at that time. Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.) reported that after it was transferred to Addis Ababa, the capital, this new translation work was being conducted under unfavourable conditions because of the persecution during the communist era (1974-1991). Later on, as Rev. Dr. Hirpo went to Germany in 1983, his part of the work continued there. The other members of the team continued their work in Ethiopia, as they were given a space in the BSE (Rev. Dr. Birri, Rev. Dr. Guta, Rev. Bonga and Rev. Dr. Hirpo, interview).

The new translation was based mainly on English Bibles such as the Revised Standard Version, New International Version, New English Bible, Good News Bible and Jerusalem Bible, but later on it was being checked against the original languages (Hebrew and Greek). From among the team members, Rev. Zach (a missionary) who was said to have a good knowledge of these original languages of the Bible, helped considerably. According to Rev. Bonga (pers. comm.), the new translation was conducted in the following manner:

1. All the team members were given the same chapter of the Bible to translate on their own.
2. They brought their work together and consolidated it after a thorough discussion.
3. Rev. Zach studied the consolidated portion, and edited it in line with the source languages (Hebrew and Greek), and finalized that particular chapter.

After they had finished the translation of the whole Bible, it was distributed to the different EECMY synods which used the Oromo Bible and the Bible schools they had at the time for comments. After they had given their comments, the translation work was finalized and published. Rev. Bonga (pers. comm.) reported that the East African director of the UBS also finally checked the work against the criteria that the UBS had set up for translations. The whole work was completed in 1984, and the new version was published by the BSE under a name *Macaafa Qulqulluu Afaan Oromo, Hiikaa Haaraa* (The Holy Bible in Oromo, New Translation).

Rev. Bonga (pers. comm.) argues that the new translation was much better than the original translation. It used a clearer language than the original translation. For example, words were written this time clearly and distinctly. The structure of the sentences was also clearer. Speakers of different dialects were consulted and reported that they understood it better than the first translation of Onesimos. Also, some addenda such as the following were added:

1. *Namoota beekamoo* (well-known individuals in the Bible)
2. *Aadaa sabni Isra'el itti jiraachaa ture* (the culture of Israelites)
3. *Seenaa saba Israel* (the history of Israelites)
4. *Mootummaa Roomaa* (the Roman Empire)
5. *Hiikaa sagalee* (glossary)
6. Different maps.

Thus, the EECMY has done much from the beginning of its ministry through dedicated individuals towards the translation of materials into Oromo.

More than anything else, the translation of the Bible and other religious material helped in the maintenance and development of the language. In FGD-002, it was said that according to the Germans, Martin Luther has given them back their language with the Bible, and that Oromos can also say that the translation of Onesimos has given them back their language. It was further pointed out in this focus group discussion that the translation of the Bible into Oromo has played a great role in the history of the country in that it marked the transition from oral culture to literature culture. Many of the informants to this study (for example, Rev. Dr. Guta; FGD 1 & 2; etc.) also believe that had it not been for the translation of the Bible and other ecclesiastical material, Oromo would not exist today. Rev. Dr. Guta said in this interview that “the introduction of Christianity was a timely action by God to maintain the language and culture of our people.” Furthermore, Mr. Briant from SIL (pers. comm.) believes that the activities of people like Onesimos who codified the languages of the country to writing and have translated the Bible and other religious material demonstrate the interest of the church in language development.

#### **4.2.2 Language use for worship**

Most of the informants involved in this study believed that it was not only the translation of religious material that promoted the development of Oromo. The fact that the translation of the Bible and other religious literature went hand in hand with using the language in different religious activities also enhanced the maintenance and development of the language. Rev. Dr. Guta (pers. comm.) reported that the use of the language for religious purposes immediately followed the translation of the Bible and other religious material into the language. Until the introduction of evangelical Christianity, the use of vernacular languages other than Ge’ez and Amharic had been unthinkable in both the religious and the secular domain. For example, Cooper (1989:24) contends that “[g]overnment courts of law were conducted in Amharic, even in non-Amhara areas, and even where both judges and litigants spoke a language other than Amharic as their first language.” Thus, Oromo chiefs who did not know any Amharic always had with them someone who translated what they spoke in Oromo into Amharic to the Oromo people they were ruling. Neither the chief nor the community knew Amharic, but the translator was translating into Amharic for no other reason than for the prestige of Amharic (FGD-002). In the

other public affairs also, only these dominant languages were used, and this was also expected in the religious domains. In the religious spheres, first Ge'ez, and then Amharic were considered the only "holy" languages to be used for worship purposes even in the areas where the community knew only the vernaculars. But the community did not understand them, and the faith did not have an impact on the spiritual lives of the people.

Hence, the Evangelicals started to preach the Word of God in the vernacular languages, which encouraged the communities to use their own languages, although the policy of the government did not allow this. The policy of the time even forced the evangelical missionaries to learn and use Amharic for their missionary activities (Imperial Decree No. 3, 1944). Cooper (1989:24) notes that as they were allowed to evangelize only in areas which had not been reached by the EOC, the evangelical missionaries were expected also to popularize the use of Amharic among the speakers of the other vernacular languages such as Oromo. The aim of this was to popularize the use of Amharic all over the country at the expense of the other vernaculars.

After entering the country, the foreign missionaries reacted to this prevailing situation of the time in different ways. Rev. Dr. Guta (pers. comm.) compared the first two missions to the Oromo people (the Swedish and German missions). The Swedish missionaries tried to abide by the policy of the government of the time. Thus, they themselves learned and used Amharic and helped the local evangelists to learn and preach the Gospel in Amharic so that it was translated into the people's language, Oromo, as the people of the rural areas understood no Amharic. Accordingly, an Oromo would preach to Oromos in Amharic and another Oromo would translate it into Oromo, similar to the law court we saw above.

On the other hand, there were other missionaries who from the outset were dedicated to evangelizing the people in the vernacular, Oromo. Although there was pressure from the government of the time and the EOC to use only Amharic and Amharic was an instrument for employment and promotion in life, people were happy to use their own language, because they were encouraged by the missionaries especially those from Germany. EECMY-WS-001 (interview) said that it was mainly the German missionaries who developed Oromo, as they studied and used it fully, unlike the Swedish missionaries who used Amharic in order to abide by

the rules and regulations of the government. Interviewee EECMY-CS-Fincha'a-001 gave a reason for this while the Germans concentrated on the Oromo area, the Swedish missionaries worked with different ethnic groups. That may be why they favoured Amharic. Thus, the German missionaries were at the forefront in making use of Oromo. Mr. Tewofilos Wakweya (pers. comm.) maintained that the role that these missionaries played then has helped significantly in the existence of the language today. Gobena (2010:209) also appreciates the work of the German missionaries indicating that “[t]he German Hermannsburg Mission came with a commitment of valuing local language for the penetration of the Gospel into the life of the people.”

American missionaries who first came to the Sayo area in Wellega are also appreciated by the people of the area for evangelizing the community of the area in Oromo. In the FGD-001, it was reported that it was not only at school or church that people were encouraged to use their language, but also when they went to the mission clinic (FGD-002).

Furthermore, local evangelists started evangelizing the people in their vernacular, Oromo. Gebre Ewostatewos was a Tigre from Hamassen, Eritrea, who learned and used Oromo in his teaching of the Bible. Aren (1978:398) maintains that Gebre Ewostatewos “had learnt Oromo from Onesimos and had learnt it so well that he could use it for teaching the Christian faith, though he made it a rule to speak Amarinya [Amharic] in [EOC] for the sake of his colleagues from Gojjam, while Daniel interpreted in Oromo for the benefit of the people” (Gojjam is one of the 14 administrative regions known as *Kifle-hager* (counties) by that time and it was dominated by the Amharic speaking population). Thus, together with the ruling Amharic speakers, priests were sent from this area to the non-Amharic speaking areas to convert the community to the faith of the EOC.

When he first came to Wellega to work as a secretary to the local chief, Onesimos read a verse in Oromo from the Bible and sung a hymn in Oromo, which impressed *Fitawurari* Dibaba Bakare, Governor of Boji, that God could speak the language. After he assumed his position as a secretary of the chief, Gebre Ewostatewos began teaching the people of the area, including the chief and his family, in Oromo. Onesimos Nesib, who translated the Bible into Oromo also later

joined him and did the same. Others also followed their footsteps in using the language, and this contributed considerably to the people's acceptance of Christianity (EECMY-WS-001, interview).

It was known also that some synods used to work in Oromo. For example, in the EEECMY-WS-001 interview, it was known that the Western Synod used to write many of its documents in Oromo using the Sabeian script except for the Synod minutes which went up to the EECMY-CO. However, no trace of such documents could be found in the Synod archive or anywhere else.

Thus, the fact that the church began to use Oromo in public places of worship has helped the maintenance and development of the language as this was the first of its kind and the only place where the language was publically used. Prior to that, the language had been limited only to informal domains. Accordingly, tangible differences could be observed where Evangelical Christianity had reached regarding the use of the mother tongue today. In places which Evangelical Christianity reached from the very beginning, as people were encouraged to use their vernacular languages in the church and outside, they have not shifted to the dominant language, whereas in the areas where there was only the EOC, this church encouraged the use of the dominant language, and a degree of language shift can be observed today. Thus, when they use their vernacular now, a considerable amount of code switching from Oromo to Amharic can be observed in these areas whereas relatively pure Oromo is used in the evangelized areas. According to Mr. Didi (pers. comm.), Evangelical Christianity helped to maintain the Oromo language.

Thus, the public use of Oromo by the EECMY for the first time helped in the maintenance and development of the language. It encouraged the speech community to make use of its own language which it used to be ashamed of previously due to proscription by the government of that time. The fact that the foreign missionaries used their language encouraged the community, and they continued using the language everywhere. For example, students who came to the universities from the evangelized areas were seen to use their language publically while the others were ashamed to do so and used the dominant language even to discuss social matters.

### 4.2.3 Formal education and literacy

During the last days of imperial rule, education was not well-disseminated among the Oromos mainly because of the language used. It was essentially in the hands of the EOC, and the EOC was working to establish and sustain the supremacy of Amharic over the other vernaculars of the country, following the policy of the government of the time. The policy of the imperial regimes favoured education given in Amharic language even among the children of the society that did not know Amharic at all. Interviewee EECMY-WS-001 reported that during the feudal era only Amharic was officially recognized as a school language. The church was being obliged to teach in Amharic even in areas where other languages were spoken by the people. Bulcha (1997:336-338) also points out that the fact that Amharic was being used from the very first day of schooling by the Oromo children, the degrading approach of the teachers as well as the teasing of their Amhara classmates had frustrated the Oromo children, and forced them to drop out from schools:

In the 1960's, it was reported that 83 per cent of the children who started school dropped out before they reached sixth grade. ... The attrition rate remained very high for decades. ... The imposition of Amharic as the only medium of instruction resulted not only in high rates of school drop-outs but also made it difficult for the non-Amhara subjects to acquire basic literacy.

Cooper (1989:23) also reports that besides the fact that Amharic was the only medium of instruction all over the country even in the areas where no one knew it, prior knowledge of how to read and write in Amharic through exposure at the EOC traditional schools was being required for admission to the modern public schools. This also hindered the children of non-Amharic language speakers, such as the Oromo children, from joining formal schools because many of them did not have any exposure to the EOC traditional schools. Cooper (1989:23), therefore, concludes that “the requirement that initial schooling be conducted via Amharic made it more difficult for the non-Amhara majority to acquire a modern education.” This benefited only the Amharic speakers while it harmed all the others.

It was mainly with the coming of the evangelical missionaries that modern education began in the country. Filippini (2000:613) reports that while the formal education being conducted by the Amharas, supported by the EOC, was dedicated to spreading the Amhara culture and language, the missionary schools came with modern ideas which enhanced social change of the community.

However, Sjoström and Sjoström (n.d.:259-60) maintain that the literacy campaign of the EECMY was not sufficient to bring about a change in the oppressive political system of the time.

The missionaries and the church have conducted different literacy campaigns and educational programmes in the vernacular languages using any opportunities they could get in order to help the community to be able to read their Bible and other material. The pioneer missionaries opened schools as part of their evangelization activities (FGD- 001). For example, Onesimos ran a school in Eritrea when he could not penetrate into the heart of the country for evangelization. Aren (1978:302) reports that “when he came back from Shoa in the spring of 1886, his Oromo Hymnbook was just ready and he put it to use in his teaching at the girls’ school.” This hymnbook had the alphabet of the language also in its initial pages, and this was what he used to teach at that time. It was thanks to the Swedish missionaries who could not enter into the country that such school for boys and girls were opened at the Port of Massawa (Hirpo, 2011:1). The students in the schools were also those Oromos who had been liberated from slavery. Hirpo (ibid.) reports that Onesimos happily taught the freed girls, and concludes that “this was the first act of teaching the Oromos in their language and in a foreign land.”

Even the evangelical missionaries were later on allowed to enter into the country in order to educate the community. It was Emperor Haile Sillasié I (1930-1974) who gave them permission for the first time to enter into the country. Filippini (2000:608) reports that the Protestant missionaries were accepted not to conduct evangelical activities, but it was for rendering secular services to the communities of the country. Filippini (2000:610) further notes that Emperor Haile Sillasié I had a decision to accept missionaries under the condition that the local governors accepted them and they would be dedicated to social services such as education. Although Emperor Haile Sillasié’s intention was literacy in Amharic, the missionaries used the local

vernacular instead of Amharic in their teaching of the pupils except in areas where they were forced to use only the dominant language and could not exercise their own interests. For example, EECMY-WS-001 reported that the Swedish Mission School at Najo, western Ethiopia, started teaching in Oromo at the beginning.

There are other good examples of this activity of teaching in the vernacular Oromo. When he first went to Najo, Wellega, Onesimos began his work by opening a school. After providing him with a piece of land together with a house to live in, the chief of the area, Kumsa Moroda, built a school and gave Onesimos his own children and slaves to be educated (Aren, 1978:419; Diga, 1999:64). Furthermore, he ordered his subjects also to send their children to Onesimos's school. Bulcha (1995:48) reports that he had 20 students four months after his arrival and 68 students after a year. Aren (1999:288) further reports that "before long the school at Najo had 168 pupils divided into three classes and the prospect of a fruitful work appeared bright." This school was said to be opened long before any other public school was opened in the country. Similar schools were opened at the same time also wherever there were evangelical missionaries. Hirpo (1999:5) reports that such schools were opened at the beginning in places like Najo, Boojjii Karkaroo, Aallee Hambaltoo, Siiban, Sadii-Sayyoo, Naqamtee and Ammayyaa, all of them in Wellega, Western Ethiopia, using the material they had brought from Eritrea. Aren (1999:302) also reports that the school at Naqamte, Wellega, was opened in February 1925 with three grades and teaching Christianity, reading and writing Amharic and Oromo. Rev. Dr. Birri (pers. comm.) reported that when the American missionaries came to Sayyo (Wellega) in 1919, they began their work by teaching in Oromo. When they heard this, all the other chiefs were said to demand education by coming to Onesimos. Bulcha (1995:19) gives different reasons for the popularity of these schools:

Primarily both the Oromo leaders and the people showed a remarkable eagerness to get modern education. Secondly, Oromo literature and Evangelical Christianity were seen as convenient means to counteract the influence of the Amhara culture and language that the Coptic priests, who came to this part of Oromo land following the conquest were trying to impose on them with force.

Furthermore, the little education that the EOC priests had been giving was in the classic language, Ge'ez, and the people did not understand the language. Because of inability to understand the Ge'ez language, even the liturgy in Ge'ez was not appreciated among the Oromo speakers at that time. Aren (1978:397) reports that the chief of Boji, Fitawrari Dibaba Bakare, was “unable to appreciate fully its liturgical service, since all the texts and chants were in Ge'ez; readings in Oromo would be more to his taste.”

Thus, it became evident later on that wherever there were church buildings, there were also schools for the children of the areas. This opening of elementary schools together with church planting also helped in the development of the language. The children of the believers were to be educated in their mother tongue, mainly so that they could read and understand their Bible. This helped the language to become a language of literature (FGD-001). Diga (1999:49) comments that these materials were very important to the Oromo people of the area at the time:

The books of Onesimos were the first eye-openers for the Oromo in Wallaga. They were almost always the first books to be possessed. They were read aloud in all places where people were gathered together. Those who could not read listened. They were the basis of the earliest educational flowering in Wallaga.

In general, the EECMY has contributed significantly in education and literacy work, both for enabling the community to read their Bible as well as to become a literate society. They introduced education in the vernaculars and opened modern schools in the country. This contributed greatly towards the maintenance and development of the language.

#### **4.2.4. Use of Oromo in the mass media**

The language that was proscribed by the governments of the past was first used in the mass media by the church. While Oromo is one of the major languages spoken in Ethiopia, it was not given any place in the mass media by the rulers of the Empire until very recently. Cooper (1989:24) reports that “there was a token degree of radio broadcasting in other languages but the lion's share was in Amharic.” However, Oromo was not among these languages used in the mass

media then. According to Bulcha (1997:341), while four languages spoken by the smaller number of speakers (Afar, Somali, Tigre and Tigrinya) began to be used by the public radio in the 1960's, Oromo was not given any consideration. The main reason given for the proscription, was the fear that Oromo, having more speakers than Amharic, would compete with the dominant language. However, the church began to use this language together with Amharic in the mass media.

One means that the EECMY used to reach the community with the gospel message was through the mass media service. Accordingly, the church established as one of its joint programmes the Yemsratch Dimts (Voice of Good News) Communication Services (YDCS). This institution is responsible for the media services of the church (FGD- 002; EECMY-YDCS-001). The establishment of this ministry was in line with the church's motto of 'wholistic ministry' (see § 1.3.2). The establishment of YDCS was said to be as an ecumenical enterprise within which the EECMY had a principal role (Sjostrom and Sjostrom, n.d:234). This communication ministry consisted of different sections that include: radio broadcasting ministry, audiovisual communications, publication of literature and literacy work.

Thus, Oromo has also been used in the different mass media at different times for ecclesiastical as well as social purposes. In the policy of the church concerning Broadcasting Ministry, it is stated that due to the limitations of resources, the broadcasting languages are only Amharic and Oromo. Thus, it is here that Oromo was used alongside the dominant language for the first time in the media. This has now developed to the print and modern electronic media. In this section, we shall try to see the beginning of the activities of the church through these media services and the place of Oromo in the media services of the church.

#### **4.2.4.1 Broadcasting**

The use of radio programme for religious purposes in Ethiopia has a long history especially when compared to the use of the language in the public media. It goes back to the year 1959 when the LWF and Near East Christian Council (NECC) launched a joint venture to proclaim the gospel to the Eastern African countries. The Missouri Synod in the USA also later on joined this

ecumenical partnership. Its aim was to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ using the radio programme. According to Wolde-Semaiat (2008:8),

[f]rom its very inception, the evangelical radio project was designed to cater to the needs of local churches by serving and facilitating the functions of program production and audience relations, with full responsibility over the standard of content and quality, which made local churches, in effect, the senior partner.

The name Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG) was given to this programme with the main objective of “Proclaiming Christ to His world” through radio communication from a strategic and suitable location (Wolde-Semaiat, 2008:9). However, Launhardt (2004:132) reports that an agreement was reached to divide the programme into social programmes such as education, health care, development, music and daily news which would take 70% of the time and religious programmes which would take only 30% of the time. He further notes that this radio programme was launched in 1959 by the virtue of the franchise provided by the Emperor (Haile Sillasie I) to the LWF, and it was due to this involvement of the King that the majority of the programmes had to concentrate on social and development issues.

According to FGD-002, the formation of this radio programme was said to have helped the EECMY to make use of multimedia in its proclamation of the gospel and its other social services. The YDCS studio was one of the contributors of programmes to this radio service. It used to contribute ecclesiastical and social programmes. EECMY Policy for Broadcasting Ministry (EECMY n.d:1) states that “the launching of the RVOG, the International Lutheran Broadcasting Ministry, had greatly reinforced the EECMY effort toward the utilization of multimedia approach in her ministry.”

During the communist era in Ethiopia (1975-1991), this radio programme was nationalized by the government, and it was given the name Radio Voice of the Revolution. While the reason given openly for nationalizing the radio programme was that the government wanted to have powerful transmission power, the main reason (hidden) behind this was that the government was against religion as it followed the philosophy of scientific communism (Launhardt 2004:244).

Later on, after so many negotiations, RVOG could resume its service in 1978 from the Seychelles over the Far East Broadcasting Association's station. While many of the programmes of Yemisrach Dimts Mass Media Programme had to stop when the studio was nationalized, some programmes could continue under the EECMY CO leadership, especially through print media.

FGD-002 clearly stated that at the beginning, when the programme was being transmitted from Ethiopia before the nationalization, it had started broadcasting in seventeen different African languages where only one, Amharic, was used from Ethiopia. However, later on, after it had restarted the programme from the Seychelles it began to transmit its programmes in Amharic and Oromo. This was after the establishment of the Gospel Broadcasting Service (GBS) in 1979. The Amharic programme was sponsored by Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and the Oromo programme was sponsored by Christian Mission Fellowship. The distribution of the programmes was said to be equal for the two languages, Amharic and Oromo. The policy mentioned above recognizes this saying that "the allocation of the number of programs for each language shall not have significant difference." According to FGD-001, this is where Oromo was given equal status with Amharic for the first time, probably the only time this has happened up to the present, as Amharic is still dominant as a lingua franca and the sole official language of the country, except in some regions. To lead the programmes broadcast in the local languages (Amharic and Oromo), a local Management Committee was organized in July 1984 (Wolde-Semaiat, 2008:17).

The establishment of the GBS was materialised by a decision of Nordic Radio Evangelistic Association (NOREA) and Swedish Agencies with the main objective of proclaiming "the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the largest number of Ethiopians speaking the country's major languages and reinforcing the faith, witness and service of all Christians, without regard to any church affiliation" (Wolde-Semaiat, 2008:18). This could be done after it had been resolved that NOREA and the Swedish agencies recommend the establishment of the GBS to their respective boards (Wolde-Semaiat, 2008:20). Thus, GBS was created as a continuation of the RVOG with one main objective of rendering a radio ministry to the uneducated Ethiopian people speaking the major languages. This time, its programme was transmitted from Nairobi, Kenya (Wolde-Semaiat, 2008:23).

Later on other sponsors were added to the former ones to run additional programmes in the Ethiopian languages. Accordingly, Christian Mission Fellowship was said to sponsor four weekly half-hour programmes known as “Joy Programme”. Thus, Oromo was amongst the languages chosen for the radio transmission in line with the objective of reaching the vast majority of the Ethiopian population. Furthermore, an additional programme was opened in the Borena dialect of Oromo using a freelancer. This programme was conducted only for half an hour per week due to the lack of a full-time programme producer.

In general, radio is meant for listening, and it is mainly targeted at those who are not literate. It is an irreplaceable tool for such people. Thus, any radio programme in Oromo has a great value to the Oromo population that is not literate. However, even those who can read and write did not get enough written material, and radio was useful for them too. Furthermore, the radio programme created another opportunity for these people. The written literature consumes their time as they need to take time to sit and read what is written. The radio programme, however, does not require a special time. It is possible to listen while performing their regular tasks. Radio is also in a sense private and anyone can listen to it privately wherever they are. Thus, because of these advantages, the community made use of it, and developed its language through the use of the radio medium (Mr. Didi, pers. comm.).

#### **4.2.4.2 Print media**

Publication of Oromo literature began with Evangelical Christianity. Onesimos and his team were the first to lay this foundation (see § 4.2.1). Various contributions have been made by individuals and different church institutions since then.

According to leaders and experts in the Print Media Section of YDCS (Mr. Abebe Kebede and Mr. Derese Biru, pers. comm.), YDCS is one of the church joint programmes which is responsible for disseminating the gospel message to the communities of the country using both electronic and print media. As far as the printed literature is concerned, it is known that it existed long before the establishment of the EECMY in 1959. When the church was established in 1959, the Print Media Section of the YDCS was also established having its own purposes and

mandates. It was given the name “Yemisrach Dimts Literature Section” by the collaboration of the EECMY and Missionary societies in Ethiopia (Swedish Evangelical Mission, Swedish Lutheran Mission, Norwegian Lutheran Mission, German Hermansburg Mission, and the American Lutheran Mission). Wolde-Semaiat (2008:50) reports that this office became part of the YDCS after the establishment of the RVOG in order to “produce Amharic programs broadcast over the RVOG to the local audience.” Ofga (2011:64-65) also maintains that one of the seven factors for the rapid development of the EECMY is the church literature work.

Both Mr. Biru and Mr. Kebede (pers. comm.) claim that since its establishment, this section has done much work. It has produced and distributed literacy material prepared by Jaleta Jafero and others. It has also been writing, translating and editing different manuscripts, printing and reprinting different books, booklets, tracts, periodicals, etc. It used to have also a magazine of its own known as *Yemisrach Dimts* (the voice of good news) which contained different articles on religious and social issues. According to Launhardt (2004:132), “this magazine, printing devotional articles and articles of general interest, was intended to serve as a tie between the congregations of the EECMY.”

FGD-002 reported that there were some audio documents which were being transcribed. For example, a cassette ministry was set up when the communist regime nationalized the radio programme. Different tracts were also prepared and distributed in Oromo some years back for the purpose of evangelisation.

Thus, both the broadcasting and print media of the church used Oromo before this language was given any place in the public media. Accordingly, this has contributed considerably to the maintenance and development of the language.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter the historical data collected from different sources through different means were analysed. The past activities of the church, such as translation work, different ecclesiastical services, literacy and education programmes, as well as the mass media, were analysed.

As far as the translation of the Bible and other religious literature is concerned, different people made attempts towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Onesimos was the first successful translator of the Bible into Oromo. In his translation of the Bible and other material, Onesimos was greatly assisted by Aster Ganno and other group members. Onesimos and his team translated other religious and secular literature as well as preparing new materials in Oromo. This translation of Onesimos was the first to be used by the Oromo people, as it introduced the language and the people to written literature for the first time. Another translation was also made later on.

The public use of the language was also introduced by the church, and this has contributed to the maintenance and development of the language. Before the introduction of Evangelical Christianity to the Oromo area, Oromo was limited to informal home use. However, the translation of the religious materials and the use of this material publically awakened the speech community to see that its language has a value like any other language. They were encouraged to make use of it, which helped in the maintenance and development of the language.

From the time of its inception, the EECMY has opened schools and conducted different literacy programmes in line with its mission statement. The church opened schools wherever it started with evangelism, and most of these schools were conducted in the vernacular of the areas such as Oromo.

The church has had broadcasting and print media from the beginning of its service. Thanks to the EECMY Oromo was used in the media for the first time. In the radio ministry the language has achieved an equal status with Amharic. The print media of the church also contributed significantly to the development of written literature in the language.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CURRENT CONTRIBUTIONS OF EECMY TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OROMO LANGUAGE**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter is an analysis of data which were collected via different means. These data are concerned with the current contribution of the EECMY to the maintenance and development of Oromo. The main source of the data collected was through interviews conducted with former and current church leaders at different organisational levels, church ministers and the faith community in general. The interviews and focus group discussions were conducted at the church Central Office (CO), EECMY joint programmes and units. Furthermore, the documents found at these different locations within the church, and personal observations of the researcher at these places were also used (for the method of data collection, see § 3.4, 3.5 & 3.6).

The chapter will report on what the EECMY is currently doing towards developing and using vernacular languages in general and Oromo in particular and the different obstacles to this endeavour of the church. It also considers the different activities of the EECMY that have contributed to the development of the Oromo language, such as translation and transliteration work, literacy and education, language use for worship and other ecclesiastical purposes as well as media work. These are believed to be activities that have contributed considerably towards the maintenance and development of Oromo.

Under the current more favourable dispensation, the languages of the country are being afforded due attention by the present democratic government, even to the extent of basing its administrative structure along that of ethnolinguistic lines. Currently, the country has been structured into nine administrative regions, mainly on the basis of its ethnic and linguistic make-up. These regions are named after the communities residing in them, or according to the language they speak (Afar, Amhara, Beni-Shangul-Gumuz, Gambela, Harari, Oromia, Somali, South Peoples Nations and Nationalities, Tigray). In areas where different linguistic groups are

combined (such as in the southern part of Ethiopia), each linguistic group has its own administrative zone or district, called *woreda* in Amharic (see also §1.1). Thus, the church has the opportunity to participate more freely than ever before in the language development task. Thus, in optimising this greater opportunity, the EECMY is doing a great deal to develop and use Oromo. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the EECMY had been promoting the use of vernacular languages since the very beginning of its ministry in 1898. This work of the church has particularly benefitted Oromo, which had been proscribed before the introduction of evangelical Christianity to the country. This tradition has continued, using the relatively improved situation in the country, even though there are some obstacles to the endeavour of the church to use Oromo.

We begin the analysis of the current church activities by looking at the formulation of the policy regarding the use of vernacular languages. This policy was formulated in 1995 in order to guide the use of language by the church for its religious and social functions. We then look at the different activities of the church that have contributed towards the maintenance and development of the language. Despite the different efforts of the church in developing and using Oromo, however, we see that language politics in the church, among other things, has affected the development of the language in particular. This conflict, which divided the church for over a decade, originally arose in some congregations in the capital, Addis Ababa, over the use of Oromo. We shall look at the background, the causes and effects of such conflict, and its current status. There is also a brief overview of other obstacles to the development of the language at the end of this chapter.

## **5.2 EECMY language policy**

The EECMY has had a clear position regarding language use from the very beginning of its ministry. Even before the EECMY was established as an institution, pioneer evangelists were using the languages of the communities they were evangelizing in both religious and social contexts. This tradition of using the vernacular languages continued after the church was nationally constituted in 1959 (Rev. Dr. Magarsa Guta, pers. comm.). Initially, there was no

formal policy, but in 1995 it had to formulate a written policy which was intended to be implemented at all levels of its structure.

According to Guta (1999:1), this policy decision was necessitated for two reasons. First, the church serves various nations, nationalities and peoples ecclesiastically and socially. Second, the church believes that the languages and cultures of all communities should be equally respected, “without the superiority of the one and the inferiority of the other” (Guta, 1999:1). According to this policy, the church recognizes the diversity of the communities within its territory of service as well as their unity within God. At the 93<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the EC of the church this policy decision was issued as follows (as cited in Guta, 1999:1-2):

1. As the aim of the EECMY is to reach out to people with the Gospel in their own languages and cultural environments, facilitating the services to those who demand to be served in their own situations became necessary. Therefore;

1.1 In [the] case of congregations comprising different nations and nationalities, the regular Sunday morning worship services and the administration of the Holy Sacraments should be conducted in a common language for all the members.

1.2 The concerned EECMY synods, presbyteries and work areas, in consultation with their respective congregations, should facilitate the opening of services for those who demand them to be in their own languages.

2. Along with teaching and building awareness about the theological distinction between sacramental and spiritual social services, marriage and similar other Christian rituals should be conducted in the language the persons concerned may demand harmonizing it with the customs and traditions of the EECMY.

According to Rev. Dr. Guta (pers. comm.), this policy decision was endorsed by the 4<sup>th</sup> Council of the church, and a report was given to the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (GA), where it was again approved. In addition to the policy formulated, the 101<sup>st</sup> meeting of the EC also approved and resolved to put guidelines in place for the use of language and scriptures in this church. The general aim of the guidelines was to facilitate favourable situations for the dissemination of the gospel message and to enable the proclamation of the Word of God all over the country. Furthermore, priority was given in the guidelines to translation work for those communities that

do not have the Bible in their languages as well as on how to decide on the languages into which to translate the whole Bible. These guidelines were written in Amharic and attached as an appendix to the minutes of the 101<sup>st</sup> meeting of the EC of the EECMY, in which some salient parts of the guideline have been extracted and translated into English (refer to Appendix A).

The 103<sup>rd</sup> EC also gave an explanation of this policy decision, saying that this decision had biblical, theological and historical bases. Furthermore, it is emphasised in this document that there should be no restriction of any kind on the members' use of any language of their preference at any place for the religious services. Guta (1999:2) puts it in this way: "In this case we should realize that languages play a great role in Ethiopian cities and towns with accumulation of nations and nationalities. It is highly advantageous if vernaculars are utilized in circumstances of convenience and relevance."

The EECMY had the conviction that the historical foundation of the early church was connected to the use of various languages at the same time. Acts 2:1-42 is cited in Guta (1999:3) to support multilingualism, maintaining that God was interested in the use of various languages from the very beginning of Christianity. It is also pointed out that people from fifteen different language groups came together in Jerusalem to worship together and each of them heard the Word of God in their respective languages. It is thus with this biblical basis that the church had such a conviction from the very beginning, that it should support multilingualism.

Furthermore, the language policy of the present Ethiopian government is conducive to promoting and developing the vernacular languages of the country (EFDR Constitution, 1995). It is from this basis that the church worked on the development and use of Oromo, although there have also been some obstacles to overcome. The contributions of the EECMY and the obstacles encountered will be presented in the sections below.

### **5.3 Current church activities which have contributed to the development of the language**

As the time is now more favourable to the development of minority languages than any other time in the history of the country (and the church), the EECMY is promoting and extending its use of Oromo and other vernaculars. Most of these activities are continuations of those previously begun, but there are new initiatives, because of the opportunities that the different speech communities of the country are enjoying now.

#### **5.3.1 Translation and transliteration work**

In this section, an overview is given of the translation and transliteration work in Oromo that has been done since 1991, the time when the change from a unitary to a pluralistic system took place in Ethiopia.

The BSE is currently responsible for the translation of the Bible into the different vernaculars of the country. According to Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.), the policy of the UBS has the principle of reaching all people with the gospel in their own languages (see also § 2.5). As a member of UBS, the BSE follows its principles. Different sources (Ofga 2011:69-70; a lecture by SIL expert at Mekane Yesus Seminary, 23 February 2010; interview with Mr. Briant, SIL, 23 January 2012) show that currently the BSE is engaged in the translation work of 30 languages of the country, and that the whole Bible has been translated into eight languages of the 85 languages spoken in Ethiopia; the New Testament has been translated into 24 and the Old Testament is being translated into 18 languages by different bodies engaged in this task.

The EECMY also has offices particularly dedicated to the work of translation of religious material. Interviews were conducted with Mr. Gallo Aylate and Mr. Solomon Haile (EECMY Language Development and Bible Translation Coordinator, and Translation and Literacy Office Manager respectively). The EECMY opened a special office in 2008, working particularly on translation and literacy, under the name ‘Translation and Language Development Ministry’. Before that, translation activities were coordinated by a committee supported by representatives of partner missions. This office is also engaged in the translation of the Bible into different

languages in collaboration with the BSE and SIL. The Bible Society consults the translators and the Linguistic Institute conducts linguistic studies of the languages.

For example, recently translations have been and are still being made into the different dialects of Oromo. These include the eastern (Harer), the southern (both Guji and Borena) and the south-eastern (Arsi-Bale) Oromo dialects. Mr. Tesfaye Bekama, Guji dialect Bible translator, (pers. comm.) told the researcher that this translation was done in order to facilitate the understanding of the Bible. This was because the speakers of these dialects, especially those who are not well educated and not exposed to the western dialect, in which the original Oromo translation was done, could not easily understand this dialect. Only the educated people could read and understand it, because of their exposure to this dialect through readings of different materials written in the dialect. Mr. Aylate (pers. comm.), EECMY Language Development and Bible Translation Coordinator, also stated the fact that the western Oromo dialect has developed better than the other dialects because the original Oromo translation of the Bible by Onesimos Nesib was in this dialect (see § 4.2.1). This has also encouraged the speakers of the other dialects to have their own translation, so that their dialects may also develop in the same way.

Before these translations were done in Ethiopia, there had been an attempt to translate the Bible into the Borena (southern) dialect in Kenya, as this was a cross-border dialect, spoken both in Ethiopia and Kenya. However, this translation was not understood by the speakers of the Borena dialect in Ethiopia, particularly because of the many words borrowed from Swahili in the Kenyan dialect (Mr. Bekama, Mr. Aylate and Mr. Haile, pers. comm.).

According to Mr. Bekama (pers. comm.), an attempt was made initially to produce one common version for the Borena, Guji and Arsi-Bale dialects, as they are more adjacent to one another than to the western dialect. This work, the result of collaboration between the BSE and the SIL, brought together representatives from these different dialects to create one common harmonized variety, but they could not agree in some cases. Later on, the Word for the World Organization which works in training local people for Bible translation, joined with the two organizations. A person recruited and trained in the techniques of dialect survey conducted an investigation into intelligibility among these dialects, and concluded that the degree of mutual intelligibility was

not high enough to justify producing a common translation. Quite a number of differences were said to be found in suffixes and words, and it was impossible to prepare one common variety for the three of them. Simultaneously, another project was launched with the aim of producing one common Bible translation for these three dialects, but there was no coordination between the two projects. It only came to light when the result of the dialect survey by the Word for the World was presented. Accordingly, another coordinated project was launched to prepare short material in a harmonized variety for the three dialects to test whether the different dialect speakers would understand this harmonized variety. Then, the book of Ruth was translated and distributed. It also brought to light that there was a problem regarding mutual intelligibility among the different dialects (Mr. Bekama, pers. comm.).

Thus, the attempt to produce one common translation for the three dialects did not materialize. Accordingly, representatives from the EECMY, BSE, the Word for the World, the Ethiopian Kale Hiwot Church and SIL came together, and reached a decision that different translations would be made for the different dialects mentioned above. The sponsorship of the activity was shared among these different groups. Subsequently, responsibility for the translation into the Guji dialect was given to the Word for the World and the Ethiopian Kale Hiwot Church. The Arsi-Bale dialect translation was given to the BSE and EECMY, and the Borena dialect translation was given to the SIL and BSE. The New Testament translations were completed for the Borena, Guji and Arsi dialects in 2007. Thirty thousand copies of these translations have been distributed, and are now in use. Work on the Old Testament translation for these dialects and the Arsi-Bale dialect New Testament translation are currently underway (Mr. Bekama and Mr. Aylate, pers. comm.).

Mr. Bekama, Mr. Aylate, and Mr. Briant (pers. comm.) also reported that translation into a standard Oromo has been started. Accordingly, the first trial has already been published, namely *Kitaaba Qulqulluu Hiikkaa Walta'aa Haaraya Kakuu Haaraya* (The New Standard Bible Translation, New Testament) translated by the Bible League: *God's Word in Action*, in collaboration with the International Bible Society (IBS). It was published under copyright of the IBS in 2008. As it is just a first trial, this version is not yet on sale. In the introduction to this version of the Bible (p. vi), it is noted that this version is an attempt to harmonize the four major

dialects of Oromo (western, southern, eastern and central). Furthermore, it is stated that for ease of understanding wherever there are different words for the same thing or concept, they have given the equivalents in the various dialects in footnotes. For this purpose, they have drawn on the different dialect versions of the Bible which already exist. They also state that they followed the criteria of accuracy, clarity, fidelity, liveliness, naturalness, readability and dignity in the translation of this standard version (p. viii). It is also mentioned in the introduction to this version that the Old Testament work is underway. Some informants (inter alia, Rev. Dr. Hirpo and Rev. Dr. Biri), however, complained that no one has seen any attempt to use this standard version, and when and how it would be put into use is not yet known, as each congregation is making use of its own dialect version. Even in common ceremonies, where believers and ministers come together from different dialects, preachers as well as singers are seen to be using their own dialect versions of the Bible and singing in their dialects (researcher's personal observation). However, Mr. Briant (pers. comm.) believes that the present generation that is being educated and is using standard Oromo will be able to use the standard version of the Bible without any difficulty.

A transliteration of the original Oromo Bible work has also been published recently. Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.) reported that the overthrow of the communist government and the coming into power of the democratic government in 1991 made the transliteration of the Oromo Bible and other religious literature into the Roman script, which by then had officially been chosen for Oromo, possible. Immediately after the overthrow of the communist government, Rev. Dr. Hirpo came to Ethiopia from Germany, and proposed in a meeting of the church EC that the revised version of the Oromo Bible be transliterated into the Roman script. He had prepared an idea on how the Roman script could be used effectively in the transliteration. This idea was accepted by the concerned bodies of the church, and the transliteration work was conducted in Germany. They first transliterated the New Testament and Psalms in 1995, and imported about 60,000 copies into Ethiopia. Then they did the same for the whole Bible on the basis of the New Testament version. The whole transliterated Bible was put into use in 2000 on the occasion of the centennial celebration of the Bible reaching the Oromo people. The first 100,000 copies were published and were distributed immediately. Another 102,000 copies were published out of which 100,000 copies were sent to Ethiopia and 2,000 copies were divided between Europe and

America in 2007. Many Oromos are currently making use of these books and appreciate the script although some (especially the elderly people) have difficulty with the use of the Roman script, because they are used to the Sabaeen script. In addition to this, other religious material such as the liturgy, catechism, and hymn books have also been transliterated into the Roman script and new material is also being prepared in it (Rev. Dr. Hirpo, pers. comm.).

There are many other translation activities by organizations and individuals working within this church. Among these organizations Aster Ganno Literature Society and YDCS can be mentioned. The Aster Ganno Literature Society was established in memory of one of the forerunners of Oromo literature in the church, Aster Ganno, in 1999 by the former Western Synod. According to information gathered from this Literature Society office (interview with the leaders and document survey), the aim of this Literature Society is to reach the Oromo people with material prepared on religious and social issues, such as family life and gender issues. Accordingly, this Literature Society has produced, both in translation and original writing, various religious books and other material in the language.

As we have seen earlier (§ 4.2.4), YDCS is one of the joint programmes of the EECMY which is dedicated to reaching the community with religious and social messages through the radio and different print media. Thus, it is engaged in translating different works on religious and social issues into Oromo for transmission on the radio, although publications are nowadays said to be scarce in the print media section (Mr. Abebe Kebede, Mr. Derese Biru, pers. com. and FGD-002).

This section has given an overview of what the church has done and is doing through dedicated individuals and the institutions it has established for the translation and transliteration of materials into Oromo. On the one hand, under the present more favourable conditions, it is making a substantial contribution to the maintenance and development of the language. On the other hand, some question why the church Literacy and Translation office is not engaged in work on Oromo and the issue of dialect translation as it affects the harmonisation of the language and the unity of the speech community (e.g. EECMY-WS-001, Rev. Emanu, interview). However, it

should be born in mind also that the church's motive is more for reaching the speech community with the gospel than the development of the language per se.

### **5.3.2 Language use for worship and other religious functions**

Under the current favourable circumstances, the use of Oromo for religious functions could expand even to the areas that were unthinkable earlier. This current use of the language for religious functions is the concern of this section.

The missionaries coming to Ethiopia currently learn the local languages in an institution established by the church for this purpose. This church institution that gives training in local languages to partner missionaries is the Mekane Yesus Joint Language School. Amharic and Oromo are the languages which are taught to the missionaries at this school. According to Mrs. Berit Ostby and Mr. Mulugeta Demisie, leaders of the Mekane Yesus Joint Language School (pers. comm.), this school runs under the joint board formed by eight different mission organisations and under the auspices of the EECMY. Its purpose is to enable the missionaries to use the two local languages. This school teaches not only the language, but also the cultures of the country so that the missionaries can be more effective. As the school belongs to the EECMY, the students are exposed to the context of this church, and this contributes to the development of the language.

The use of Oromo in worship services and sermons has continued even in the areas where only Amharic or mostly translation from Amharic had been used earlier. This has now spread to the major towns and even to foreign countries wherever there are Oromos. To take one example, nowadays there are more than ten congregations which are worshipping solely in Oromo in Addis Ababa, the capital, itself, where it was unthinkable in the past, because of the proscription of vernacular languages. In other many congregations of the city, they have special times of worship in Oromo, different from the time for the Amharic service. This means that both Amharic and Oromo have their dedicated times during services. This is in line with the policy of the church stated above (§ 5.2) (Rev. Dr. Guta, Rev. Dr. Biri, Rev. Eman, pers. comm.).

This use of Oromo in worship in Addis Ababa first began in 1993 with a few individuals meeting in a chapel on the compound of Luis Harms Hostel, Gullele. Sadi (1996:1) has named this programme Oromo Christian Worship, established “to help the Oromo Christians so that they could hear the Word of God in their own language (Oromo) and to worship Him in their own cultural setting.” What initiated this programme? Many people who speak Oromo have come to live in Addis Ababa for different reasons. These people have learned the dominant language, Amharic, and can use it for different purposes, including church services. However, when their relatives who typically live in the rural areas came to visit them or even stay with them, they did not understand any Amharic. Rev. Dr. Sadi (pers. comm.) said that they made an assessment in different congregations, and found out that these Christians who had come from the rural areas and did not know Amharic were numbered in the hundreds. These people had faith and they came to the church, but no one gave them any attention for a long time. Sadi (1996:2) argues that this was because of the political situation of the time, which did not have any tolerance for vernacular usages. Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.) gives a typical example of a woman who was robbed by thieves as she was coming to church for worship. This woman wanted to report this case, but she could not do it due to the language problem.

Hence, in order to deal with such a problem, a few people came together in the hall at the Luis Harms Hostel compound to worship in Oromo. Informants (Rev. Dr. Guta, Rev. Dr. Biri and Rev. Dr. Hirpo) reported that this fellowship grew over time to the extent that the place they were using was not big enough to accommodate the congregants, as Oromos from all over the city came to join in. Later on, this was established as a fully-fledged congregation under the name EECMY- Finfinne Oromo Congregation. Sadi (1996:6) reports on this development saying that:

[t]he programme became very attractive to many Oromo people, young and old, men and women, Christians and non-Christians. It identified them, not only as Oromo people, but also as people of God-hearing the Word of God in their own language, singing their own music in their own tune, praising their Lord in their own cultural expression, enjoying the good and healthy atmosphere of the fellowship, and participating in all the activities of worship.

He further notes that the membership of this congregation which was between 50 and 75 at the beginning grew to 100 over three months, to 300 over six months and more than 500 after six months. Because it was supported by friends locally and from abroad, this congregation could establish different outreach areas in different parts of the city which again later on became independent congregations. The EECMY Furi, Boolee Biiftuu, Kattaa, etc. congregations were begun as outreach places by the Finfinne Oromo congregation. Outreach areas were also established outside Addis Ababa, some of which have again become congregations (Rev. Dr. Biri, Rev. Dr. Guta and Rev. Dr. Sadi, pers. comm.). These informants further asserted that nowadays all these congregations are worshipping solely in Oromo, as the members are all Oromo speakers.

There are other congregations also where Oromo is used side by side with the main language of the city, Amharic. In some congregations where Amharic is the main language of worship, but where there are a significant number of Oromos, the programme is given in Oromo in addition to the Amharic programme. In such places, worship is conducted in both languages in different shifts. However, in some cases problems are still experienced as we shall see later on (§ 5.4.1).

The congregations worshipping in Oromo in and around Addis Ababa have started joining up and forming parishes, so that they can reach the other unreached Oromo areas with the gospel in their language. The idea of bringing together congregations worshipping in Oromo also emerged in the EECMY-Finfinne Oromo congregation. There was a suggestion to form their own synod, but later on it was agreed to form parishes first and later become part of the existing Synod (CES). Different committees were established to work on the legal aspects of incorporating these newly formed parishes after consulting the leaders of the CES and getting the go ahead. Four parishes have been proposed, into which fourteen congregations, all worshipping in Oromo, would be incorporated. According to Rev. Dr. Guta, (pers. comm.), one parish which fulfilled the requirements was officially established on 12 July 2014 under the name *Sabakaa Ifaa* 'Ifaa Parish', while others are struggling to meet the criteria required to get established.

Furthermore, in areas where it was not possible earlier to use Oromo, it is nowadays being used solely, or in addition to some other language. While Addis Ababa, the capital, is one such a case,

in the Oromia Special Zone of Amhara Regional State, Kamise, the EECMY congregation is using Oromo in addition to Amharic (this is a zone which is geographically and administratively categorized under the Amhara Regional Government. Because the community are Oromos, it has its own special administration using both Amharic and Oromo as languages of administration; see § 5.1). In Kamise Congregation, it was observed (by the researcher) that both languages were used equally in worship programmes as well as for announcements. When the preacher knows both languages, he/she uses both of the languages equally, and if he/she does not know them, someone who knows both Amharic and Oromo translates or summarizes the sermon in Oromo or Amharic. Choirs sing in both languages and announcements are given in both languages. This is an area where many of the Oromos have shifted to using Amharic, but the church has started working to make use of Oromo in order to encourage the Oromo community. Now the public offices are also using both languages (Amharic and Oromo) as this zone is administratively under the Amhara Regional Government, but it is an autonomous administrative zone for Oromos.

Following the example of the EECMY, changes are taking place in other evangelical churches, which were previously using Amharic, even at places where the congregations comprised Oromo speakers only. The members of other denominations have been influenced by the language policy and practices of the EECMY, and challenged their leaders to follow the EECMY example. The leaders have accepted this as it meets the need of the people. Accordingly, many are beginning to use Oromo, even in Addis Ababa. The EOC has also started translating and using some material in Oromo, at least for use in the rural areas (Rev. Dr. Biri, Rev. Dr. Guta, Kesis Merahi, pers. comm.). This change is not limited to the local context. Internationally, there are now programmes in Oromo in America, Europe, Australia, Africa, etc. wherever there are Oromos. Even religious programmes are broadcast today in Oromo on Elshadai International TV Network from different locations in the world (Elshaddai TV Website). And this has been a tremendous contribution towards the development of the language.

Interdenominational fellowships have also been established on the basis of worshipping in Oromo. Two are very significant among such fellowships. The first one is the Fellowship of Oromo Christian University Students (FOCUS). According to Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.) this

fellowship was initiated by the EECMY-Finfinne Oromo Congregation. Membership of the fellowship is based upon ability to use Oromo. The purpose of this fellowship is to help students coming to the universities from the rural areas to maintain their faith and to attract others who are not in the faith. Leaders of FOCUS at different levels (Mr. Elias Benti and Mr. Belay Abdissa from the Central Office; student Debela from Jimma University FOCUS branch; student Motumma Lamessa from Ambo University, interview) have listed other additional purposes for this fellowship. These leaders believe that the main purpose is not only evangelization, but also specifically evangelization in the mother tongue. The students have other chances of being evangelized, but not in their mother tongue. They understand it better when it is in their mother tongue. Student Motumma from Ambo University (pers. comm.) reported that Oromo students who have ability to serve in the church could not do so because of the language barrier. They even have difficulty in saying the Lord's Prayer in Amharic, because they practiced it in Oromo back at home. The students coming from Oromia Region these days do not understand Amharic well, as they are mainly educated in Oromo at schools (see § 6.3.6).

The second purpose of FOCUS is that it helps the students to maintain their identity when they are separated from their home language and culture during their university education. It also helps to unify the Oromo students coming from different parts of the Oromia Region and from different denominations, besides developing the language. The interview with the leaders of FOCUS revealed that even non-Christian Oromo university students support it because it uses Oromo. A case in point reported by Mr. Benti (pers. comm.) at Wachamo University (Hosana), southern Ethiopia is that a Muslim Oromo student quarrelled with a student from another ethnic group who tried to tear up an announcement of FOCUS, because the announcement was in Oromo. In addition, many Oromo university students were attracted to evangelical Christianity because their language was being used. According to student Motumma (pers. comm.), if FOCUS were not there to give them the necessary spiritual input in their language, many of the previously converted ones would backslide due to the change in the environment, as well as because of the use of the language they did not understand well.

By using Oromo in all its religious activities, FOCUS has gained considerable influence that may help in the development of the language. The fact that the language is used in all their activities

has encouraged those who used not to speak their language in certain domains to be interested in using their own language. Mr. Benti (pers. comm.) reported that FOCUS members persuaded the leadership of Wellega University Oromo Language Department to use Oromo in all its correspondence, whereas before it was in Amharic. Furthermore, through the Art Ministry of FOCUS, students are encouraged to produce different literary writings (dramas, poems, films, etc.), and many students are participating in these activities. Student Debela (pers. comm.) from Jimma University told the researcher that they were preparing songs under the title *Nu taasisi* ‘Make us’ in CDs, DVDs and cassettes to disseminate to the community. Mr. Benti and Mr. Abdissa (pers. comm.) reported that even after graduating from the universities, some students have continued producing literature in Oromo. Leaders at the CO of FOCUS further reported that they have an annual bulletin and certificates they prepare in Oromo for all graduating members.

Another interdenominational Oromo language-based religious fellowship is *Ilaamee* (*ilaamee* is a common Oromo word used in conversations to get the attention of the communication partner; literally it means: “Here you are.”) Although this fellowship is also interdenominational, it is limited to the use of Oromo. It is where all denominations, including previously isolated ones, interested in worshipping in Oromo are organized together to work on the dissemination of the gospel. According to Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.), this fellowship has the objective of contextualizing Christianity in the Oromo culture. While only 17% of the Oromo people are evangelical Christians, it is believed that a greater number of Oromos could be reached if this method of contextualization were used. Furthermore, while the Oromos of the western part of the country accepted evangelical Christianity because of the language used, the whole of the Oromo area could have been Christianised if the gospel had originally been introduced and if the culture of the community had been considered. However, the missionaries considered the culture to be sinful, which kept many Oromos away. For example, polygamy, preparing and drinking local beer, etc. were forbidden by the missionaries who considered these practices to be sinful. Rather than teaching, they tried to enforce moral laws. There was a case where those who were not accepted into the church because of these different things, formed a Saint Michael EOC congregation and persecuted the evangelical church (Rev. Dr. Birri, pers. comm.).

When this idea of coming together was initiated, there were some denominations who did not agree to it, but now many of them have been convinced of its necessity, and have become part of the fellowship. Even the CO leaders of the different evangelical denominations who were not comfortable about such issues at the beginning had to accept and allow it as they recognised the need of the general community. This is a great change, and shows the attractive power of using the mother tongue. The use of the language is now recognized as the only way to evangelize the people, as the community is now fully aware of the importance of its language. This is contributing considerably to the development of both the language and the gospel ministry (Rev. Dr. Biri, pers. comm.).

The researcher personally observed that the Oromo EECMY congregations and individual Christians have also begun contextualizing their worship in the Oromo culture which had not happened in the past. Previously, the melodies of songs, the religious dancing, the clothing of pastors and choirs were all foreign styles, following the missionaries who had brought Christianity to the Oromo areas. However, now singers have started clothing themselves according to the local culture, and using the melodies and dancing styles of the Oromo culture. Some congregations have started arranging special choir festivals in which the melodies, dancing styles and clothing are completely according to the Oromo culture. In the Finfinne Oromo Congregation, they have a yearly conference where lectures on Christianity and culture are also given. All these are done in order to encourage the community to use its language and culture in worship. This has all happened since the establishment of *Ilaamee*.

Thus, the fact that the church is using Oromo in worship in the capital and even in foreign countries has attracted many people to the faith, besides encouraging them to use their language. This language used to be thought of as backward language in the secular sphere and unholy in the religious sphere. At least there are very few at present who are ashamed of using Oromo in the church.

### 5.3.3 Literacy and education

The church is still working on literacy and formal education in some way. It has now a special office particularly working on literacy, which was opened in 2008 (see § 5.3.1). With regard to the literacy issue, Mr. Aylate (pers. comm.) believes that the church is committed to enabling the community to read their Bibles and other material in their respective languages. Hence, it conducts community based literacy programmes. While the opening of this office shows the concern of the church for literacy work, it concentrates, however, on other languages and does not do anything towards Oromo per se.

In addition, there is a literacy project specifically designed within the church structure for Oromo. The pilot phase of this project began in 1997 under the name Joint Functional Literacy Project (JFLP). According to information elicited from the office of the JFLP and different informants (Mr. Ambacha, Rev. Dr. Hirpo, Rev. Dr. Debela), some church units have organized themselves and launched this literacy programme in Oromo; and this is functioning in most of the Oromo-speaking regions of the church. This literacy project was launched following the choice of the Roman script after 1991 for writing in Oromo. It was designed originally by the cooperation of four synods of the EECMY found in the western part of Ethiopia. These were EECMY Central Synod, Western Synod, Western Wellega Bethel Synod, and Ilubabour Bethel Synod. Later on the other synods (South Ethiopia Synod and Wabe-Batu Synod) found at the south and south eastern parts of Ethiopia joined, recognizing the need of literacy for their communities. It is only the CES whose CO is located in Addis Ababa, the capital, which did not join, although it works mostly among the Oromos (Mr. Fufa Ambacha, former Project Manager, pers. comm.). The reason why the CES did not join this literacy project will become clear later on when we discuss church politics concerning the use of Oromo in Addis Ababa, the capital (see § 5.4.1).

The original objective of the project was to enable the community which could only read and write the Sabaean script to also read and write in the Roman script. This was necessary because the younger generation learns and uses the Roman script at schools, whereas the older generation knows only the Sabaean script. The Bible and other ecclesiastical material are now in the Roman

script, as we saw above (§ 5.3.1). In addition, a great majority of Oromos still do not know how to read and write at all. The project was said to be functional, as it was aimed at educating the community to enable them to acquire life skills. In the background of the tentative implementation plan of the pilot phase of this project (EECMY six synods participating in JFLP, n.d.:1), it is stated that:

[t]he JFLP is a joint venture by the four synods... to undertake a literacy programme to enable the Oromo people in the area of these synods to read and write in Oromo, provide them with appropriate literature (both spiritual and secular) for education and awareness building, facilitate the possibility of practicing what they learnt to improve their spiritual life and the standard of living, with the motto “*Learning for life*”.

The long-term plan of this project was to have a self-supporting printing press. In the memorandum of understanding among the six participating EECMY synods (EECMY six Synods participating in JFLP, 1995), the primary objectives of the project are listed as follows:

1. To enable the Oromo people to read and write in their own language in the *Qubee* [Roman] Alphabet.
2. Provide the Oromo people with appropriate literature for educational and awareness building and facilitate the possibility of practicing what they learnt to improve their standard of living.
3. Establish a viable network for the production and distribution of teaching materials and other literature in Oromo.
4. Establish a self-supporting publishing enterprise for the production and distribution of Oromo Christian literature and other Oromo literature which is compatible with the EECMY ethical standards.

As far as the project activities are concerned, it is stated again in the memorandum of understanding that the contents of the programme include: reading and writing, awareness building, Christian literature, health education, natural resources conservation, agricultural production and other small scale income generating activities.

According to information obtained from Mr. Fufa Ambacha, former Project Manager, the pilot phase of this project began its activity in 1997. The LWF gave assistance in drawing up its plan and organizational set-up. The organizational set-up of the project as an autonomous body is such that it had EC and its own Board, known as Joint Temporary Implementation Board. It also had an Executive Officer, a General Manager, who was accountable to the Board. It started working with its headquarters at Central Synod, Nekemte, Wellega, and a coordination office at each synod centre. Later on the headquarters were moved to the capital, Addis Ababa, as Addis Ababa was found to be a centre for those who joined from the southern and south-eastern parts as well as the founders from the western part of the country.

The JFLP began its work in two ways at that time: by producing literacy materials and post literacy materials in the Roman script, on the one hand, and by training literacy teachers at the various synods so that they embark on the literacy teaching, on the other hand. Accordingly, all the member synods started conducting literacy programmes. Actually, the literacy training was a later development, as originally the focus of JFLP was just to have a printing enterprise and producing literacy materials. It was due to the request from the community that the literacy training aspect was included without a prior planning. Accordingly, it was reported that the work of this pilot phase was uncontrollable and less effective than the transitional phase and the main phase programmes introduced later (Mr. Ambacha, pers. comm.).

Regarding the pilot phase of the project, quite a lot was achieved despite various testing problems. In the project document reporting on the main phase (EECMY six participating synods in JFLP, 2004:4), it was stated that 84,000 individuals were able to read and write in the newly introduced alphabet of the language. Regarding the production of literacy materials, it was reported that 106,000 copies were printed under 15 titles, and most of them distributed to the relevant synods.

On the basis of the lessons learned from the pilot phase, a transition phase of two years (2003 and 2004) was launched by an agreement between the project office and the LWF with more emphasis on the literacy work. This phase was said to be more effective, and the achievements

were very encouraging. The following achievements were reported (EECMY six participating synods in JFLP, 2004:4-5):

1. More than 90,000 individuals became literate in the catchment areas.
2. The member church units could use the project activities in their routine activities.
3. It created awareness and enhanced community participation in basic literacy.
4. It strengthened the relationship between the communities and the church, creating a positive outlook on the church work.
5. It contributed to producing written material: a total of 112,000 copies were published under different titles. Many Oromo writers were encouraged to produce written literature.
6. The transition phase enhanced the shaping and development of the main phase, towards focusing on community literacy work and the dissemination of written materials.

Finishing the pilot phase and the transition phase, the main phase of this project was launched in 2005 and was to continue up to 2007 with the overall goal of empowering the communities with regard to reading, writing, and arithmetic skills and exposing them to written information, as stated in the project document, main phase. The following objectives were also stated in the project document of the main phase (EECMY six participating synods in JFLP, 2004:6):

1. To empower the Oromo-speaking people in the focus areas with the basic skills of *reading*, *writing*, and *arithmetic*, in their own mother tongue.
2. To expose them to written information by way of producing *functional* written materials.
3. To provide appropriate literature.

According to this project document, the activities of the main phase were also said to include production of basic literacy and daily life-oriented reading materials, and literature production in cooperation with the implementing church units conducting mass literacy development in 88 selected teaching centres in the member church units.

In this phase an organizational set-up was worked out. The phasing out strategy of the project was planned to gradually hand over to the community who were using it after having trained the trainers of the literacy teachers. This time it was planned to hire 88 temporary literacy teachers for six months every year for a total of three years. The beneficiaries of the project were also said to be the members of rural communities between the ages of 15 and 54, women and girls who

had not had education opportunities, urban communities who were illiterate in the Roman script, church ministers, as well as the public at large. The organizational structure was also changed: there was a Council constituted from representatives from all the member church units with the Project Manager as an ex-officio member. There was also an Executive Board that was composed of professionals who would oversee the day-to-day activities of the project together with the Manager. The accountability to the church was also maintained through the Development and Social Service Commission of the Church and the units.

The following achievements were reported (EECMY six participating synods in JFLP, 2007:3) for the main phase:

1. Units made literacy work as one of their basic services to the communities
2. Communities built teaching centres, organized their own home and village prayer centres
3. The training (orientation) and incentive payment to literacy teachers (facilitators) produced fruit
4. The demand for more teaching centres is increasing.

It was reported that of the planned annual 10,500 persons, 8,000 were enrolled in the literacy classes during a half year period. Seeing its advantages to the communities, the leaders of the communities at different levels started supporting the project. For example, the congregation buildings were used as literacy centres and the government education offices took part professionally in the campaign.

It was reported from the office that in order to support its transfer to the community, the Japanese Embassy in Ethiopia donated funds for construction of some centres in different places. As indicated in the project implementation report (EECMY six participating synods in JFLP, n.d.: 2), the purpose of this donation was to have 12 functional literacy centres. These could serve as a model for other areas to make the literacy work sustainable, and they could be used as training centres for the adults. In the implementation report of this project (EECMY six participating synods in JFLP, n.d.:1), it is stated that 12 buildings were constructed, and instructors were also assigned to three of them and the rest would have them soon.

In general, the EECMY has contributed a considerable amount towards education and literacy work, both by enabling the community to read their Bible as well as assisting them to become a literate society. The literacy campaigns the church conducted have motivated many people to continue with their formal education. It was reported, for example, that some of the literacy centres of the JFLP were transformed into formal schools (Mr. Ambacha, pers. comm.). This literacy work of the church has had an impact on the government, which is also educating Oromo children in their mother tongue. The church still has excellent schools at different levels which are serving the community. This endeavour to enable the community to read and write has without doubt played a significant role in the development of Oromo.

#### **5.3.4 Broadcasting**

The media service of the church, which was started together with the church's evangelization work and has been serving coordinated by the EECMY-YDCS, is still serving in both the broadcasting and print media. The church is still making use of these media in order to disseminate the Good News of the Bible in the different languages of Ethiopia, including Oromo.

As we saw in the previous chapter (§ 4.2.4.1), the broadcasting media of the church had been operating in the different languages, coming from different centres under different names. The radio programme which broadcast from the Seychelles during the communist era in Ethiopia was later taken to Kenya from where it also started to broadcast in Oromo under the name Gospel Broadcasting Service (GBS). As we saw earlier (§ 4.2.4.1), this was because of the persecution of Christians by the atheist government of the time.

According to Wolde-Semaiat (2008:44), it was after the overthrow of the communist regime in Ethiopia that the EECMY started to work with GBS. It did not officially become part of GBS during the communist era, because of the fear that it might have a negative effect on its other activities. It was only during the GBS meeting of 31 January–1 February 1992 that delegates participated for the first time in the cooperation of the radio ministry for Ethiopian languages, since the time of the revolution in the country. This became possible as the result of greater religious freedom under the current government. From this time on, the EECMY became part of

the radio ministry programme on the basis of which an audience relations office could be opened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This relative freedom enabled the transfer of the programme into the country. Wolde-Semaiat (2008:45) reports that transfer of the programmes from Nairobi to Addis Ababa took place in 1998. There were thirty programmes in Amharic and Oromo focusing on social issues in which the EECMY was actively involved (Wolde-Semaiat, 2008:29). Later on still, the EECMY-YDCS started producing an additional four half-hour programmes per week both in Amharic and Oromo having equal shares of time through funding from the Norwegian Church Aid. However, time allocated to Amharic and Oromo was reduced later in order to share it among other languages. These languages include: Kambata, Hadiyya, Sidama and Afar. This indicates that the freedom introduced under the current government enabled the other minority languages also to come on to the scene (FGD-002).

Now this radio programme is being transmitted from the Trans World Radio (TWR) stations under the administration of TWR office in the Republic of South Africa. This transmission from the foreign land became necessary as it is not possible in Ethiopia. Being a secular government, the current Ethiopian government does not allow the church to have its own mass media locally (interview conducted at YDCS-001 & 002). Thus, as of 1995, arrangement of a lease was made with Radio South Africa by the TWR to make the transmission from there, using a powerful transmitter of 500 KW and a full backup instrument. Radio South Africa in Johannesburg is more powerful than the previous stations, and that is why it was chosen by the partners (Wolde-Semaiat, 2008:30).

A committee was established to facilitate the work of the radio programme in the Ethiopian languages. This committee was known as the Ethiopian Languages Coordinating Committee, and “was responsible for harmonizing the interrelated activities of programme production by GBS and programme transmission by the radio stations such as TWR and FEBA” (Wolde-Semaiat, 2008:41).

According to Mr. Didi, an expert in YDCS (pers. comm.), the programmes transmitted through YDCS attract a large number of listeners. They write back about what they have heard. When they write, they write in Oromo, which is an indication of the importance of these programmes.

According to the statistics of 2011 observed at the Audience Relations Office of YDCS, Oromo is the second most listened to language programme next to Amharic, the former getting a feedback from 1,333 listeners (22%) and the latter from 1,958 listeners (33%). The majority of the responses to the Oromo programmes (74%) come in letters written in Oromo, whereas the remainder are through e-mails, telephone calls and face-to-face communications.

In addition to the radio programme of the EECMY-YDCS, a television programme known as Elshadai Television Network has also been established, in which religious programmes are being transmitted in different Ethiopian languages, especially Amharic, Oromo and Tigrinya. Programmes on this TV network are transmitted from the USA, UK, Ethiopia and the Republic of South Africa (see also § 5.3.2).

In general, radio is an irreplaceable tool, meant for a listening audience, and it is mainly targeted at those who cannot read. Thus, any radio programme in Oromo is of great value to the Oromo population that is not literate. Furthermore, the radio programme has created another opportunity for the people. The written literature takes time to read whereas the radio programme does not require a special time. It is possible for people to listen while performing their regular tasks. Thus, the community makes good use of it, it plays an important role in the maintenance and development of their language (FGD-002).

### **5.3.5 Print media**

In addition to what the church did previously when the situation was not favourable, nowadays the church is doing many things in terms of the print media which may contribute to the development of Oromo. For example, the YDCS has begun preparing and distributing calendars with daily devotion verses from the Bible in Oromo (Mr. Kebede and Mr. Biru, YDCS, pers. comm.).

However, some informants (inter alia, Mr. Didi, Rev. Dr. Hirpo & FGD-002) feel that the print media is not as effective as the electronic media as far as Oromo and other vernaculars are concerned. Most of the church publications are in Amharic, and only a few are in Oromo. The

leader and professionals in this section indicate that this activity of publishing in the vernacular languages is given to the church units within which the different languages are used, and that this section of the YDCS is mandated only to give technical assistance.

In summary, on the one hand, such activities of the church like translation work, language use for worship, literacy and formal education programmes and the media are significant ones that have contributed and are still contributing to the development of Oromo (as well as other vernaculars). On the other hand, there have been different obstacles towards the church's endeavour to develop this language, amongst which the language conflict recently seen in the church is one significant incident of this obstacle. This will be the concern of the next section.

## **5.4 Obstacles to the development of Oromo in the Church**

Although the EECMY as an institution has contributed immensely to the development of Oromo (as well as other vernaculars), there have also been various obstacles to this endeavour. In the past, most of the obstacles were external. There have, however, especially more recently, been some internal obstacles. In this section, we will try to look at some of these obstacles beginning with the main one, which has currently arisen in the church and even disturbed the church's core function. This conflict arose in the church after 1991.

### **5.4.1 Language conflict and politics**

As most of the informants in this study concurred, among the different factors that have contributed negatively to the development of Oromo through the work of the EECMY, conflict over the use of the language is one of the more significant, especially the conflict that arose recently in Addis Ababa among some congregations. This was a serious problem that has slowed down the development of the language as well as the work of the church as a whole.

#### **5.4.2 Background to the conflict**

Many informants in this study asserted that language conflict and politics in the church context has been the main obstacle to the development of Oromo throughout history. The good beginnings could not bear as much fruit as they ought to have regarding language development because of this. It even disturbed the main objective of the church, evangelism.

One of the bases of this kind of conflict is the view that one language is “holier” or more sacred than the others. It is well known that since the origin of Christianity some languages have been considered to be better fitting for the dissemination of the gospel. Mr. Wakweya (pers. comm.) informed the researcher that different religions have different traditions, such as the predilection for the use of Latin in the Catholic Church, which continued from the Middle Ages right up until recent times (see § 2.6). Such languages have often been considered to be “holier” than the other languages, and this has also been the case in Ethiopia. For example, at first when Amharic was used for the EOC service, many (including the Patriarch) objected to it, favouring only Ge’ez (see § 2.8). They believed that Ge’ez was the only “holy” language, and that all the services of the church should be conducted in it. Later on, after Amharic was accepted in the church and in the public domain, the use of other languages was proscribed in the belief that only Amharic should be used for church services, considering it to be “holier” than the other vernacular languages of the country (EECMY-Tigray 002, interview).

As was seen in the background to this study (§ 1.3), the history of evangelical Christianity in Ethiopia was also dogged by such a conflict which originally began concurrently with the introduction of evangelical Christianity in Boji, Wellega in 1898. It was confirmed also through interview BDS-ONS-002 that there was a conflict between evangelicals and the EOC ministers on the use of the vernacular (Oromo). The first people who went down to Wellega with the gospel took with them the Bible and hymn books translated into Oromo. According to Mr. Ambacha (pers. comm.), it was especially due to the fact that Gebre Ewostatewos sang a hymn and read a verse in Oromo to Fitawrari Dibaba Bakare, the Chief of the area, that the evangelist was allowed to evangelise in that particular area. This indicates that the use of the vernacular language played a significant role in the introduction of evangelical Christianity in the area.

According to BDS-ONS-002 (interview), before that time there had been only Orthodox Christianity in the area and the clergy who served in the EOC were those who had come from the Amharic speaking areas. These clergy used Amharic when working among the Oromos, although the community did not know this language. Accordingly, the EOC clergy were not happy when the evangelicals started using Oromo (see § 3.5). Thus, the use of Oromo encountered resistance from those who had been using the dominant language (Amharic) for worship among the Oromo speaking community. In Dembi Dollo, western Wellega, a school established by the American missionaries which started to teach through the medium of Oromo was closed down in 1922 by an order from Abune Mathewos (the EOC Bishop), simply because of using the language in the school compound. The EOC clergy denounced the evangelists to the rulers on different pretexts. Sometimes they said that the evangelists used the language for ecclesiastical work. For example, Zewde (2002:49) witnesses that “[t]he Orthodox clergy found [Onesimos] a dangerous rival for the allegiance of the local population, the more so as he was preaching in the vernacular.” According to Aren (1978:424) also, although Onesimos was advised to use Amharic so as not to give any kind of pretext for his accusers from the EOC, he did not listen to this advice and continued to use his native language.

These leaders and ministers of the EOC did this for different reasons. One of these reasons was that they wanted to make a follow-up of what the evangelists were teaching, and this might have been difficult, because they did not understand Oromo. In interview BDS-002, it was asserted that while the speakers of the other languages had learned Amharic, the speakers of Amharic had not learned any other language, and that is why they were not happy when languages other than Amharic were used (see also Cederqvist, cited in Hirpo, 1999:83). They had the view that speaking Oromo might discredit them. In addition, the fact that the community was interested in following the evangelists mainly because they used the language that the community understood might have created envy. This created in them also a fear of finally losing all their followers to evangelical Christianity (see quotation from Zewde, 2002:49 above; Aren, 1978:424).

Onesimos Nesib, who started by teaching his people in this language when he first came to Nejo, Wellega, was the first victim to be imprisoned (Zewde, 2002:49). Bulcha (1997:98) notes that Onesimos became the target of such persecution, because he was found to be a challenge to the

official one religion, one king and one language policy, because access of literature by the community brought about self-awareness and rejection of the one religion, one king and one language policy (see § 1.2.1). Accordingly, even Onesimos's evangelical co-workers betrayed him. Bulcha (1995:51) puts this as follows: "When persecution and hatred were intensified against Onesimos and his co-workers, his Abyssinian Evangelical co-workers began to consult with each other secretly." He further reports that they burned the Oromo Bibles in their hands, and Onesimos himself was quoted as having said that the books they burned were the ones these non-Oromos had used to learn Oromo. Thus, the non-Oromo evangelists co-operated with EOC priests who were against Onesimos' use of Oromo. Although they were one in faith with Onesimos, they betrayed him when it came to the question of language.

According to various informants (FGD 001 & 002, BDS 001 & 002, etc.), the main cause of this obstacle in the development and use of the vernacular languages in the church services was the policies of past regimes (see § 2.8). From the very beginning of Christianity, the policy of the Ethiopian governments was against the use of vernacular languages except Amharic for the church as well as secular services. Articles 13 and 14 of the 1944 Imperial Decree No. 3 state that Amharic was the only language of instruction, and that the missionaries had to learn and make use of it except for ordinary communications. Because of such a policy, there was even a difference of opinion among the first missionaries. On the one hand, the Swedish missionaries started their services by using Amharic, following the government policy. On the other hand, the German missionaries learned and used Oromo for evangelisation. Later on, this tradition of the German missionaries was adopted in the rural areas by the EECMY, although it was against the policy of the government of the time. Rev. Dr. Guta, former General Secretary of EECMY (pers. comm.), considered this move as "swimming against the stream".

In other places also, the use of Oromo was discouraged in different ways. In some cases, it was considered as supporting the political movement of the liberation fronts (EECMY-WS-001, interview), who were not on good terms with the government of the time. The distribution of the Bible in Oromo was also prohibited in some cases. In particular, during the reign of Emperor Haile Sillase I, the Bible in Oromo was smuggled into the Oromo areas, because it was not allowed officially (FGD-001, Rev. Dr. Biri, pers. comm.). Rev. Dr. Birri (pers. comm.) reported

that the Chief Administrator of Wellega Region in 1943, Mekonnen Desta, ordered the Bible books in Oromo in his territory to be collected and burned. Due to such obstacles, the use of the language for worship was limited to the rural areas where the population spoke only Oromo. There were some places in the rural areas also where sermons were translated from Amharic into Oromo despite the fact that there was no one who spoke Amharic. The situation continued for so long a time in this way as the government policy proscribed the vernaculars.

#### **5.4.3 Language conflict in Addis Ababa**

The situation in the country has become more favourable to the vernacular languages since 1991, with the change of government. The new government has issued a policy which considers all languages to be equal (see § 1.2.1). It has encouraged all ethnolinguistic groups of the country to develop and use their languages in all spheres of life, which actually includes the church service (EFDR Constitution, 1995).

Informants to this study (inter alia, Rev. Dr. Guta, Rev. Dr. Biri, Rev. Dr. Hirpo and others) remembered that this favourable policy encouraged the Oromo speakers living in the capital, Addis Ababa, to raise the question of using their language for church services. The Oromo community in Addis Ababa had actually wanted to do this before that, but they could not openly raise the question due to fear of the politics of the time.

Initially, an Oromo programme was begun on Sunday afternoons in Gullele Lui Harms Hostel Chapel by some members of the Gullele Bethel EECMY Congregation (see § 5.3.2). Sadi (1996:1) reports that the worship in Oromo “came into existence in 1993 to help the Oromo Christians so that they could hear the Word of God in their own language (Oromo) and to worship Him in their own cultural setting.” At the same time another programme was started by some Oromos worshipping at Intoto EECMY Congregation in the residence of an individual (Mr. Kerissa, pers. comm.). Moreover, it was reported that the Intoto group joined the Gullele group once a month to worship together.

Thus, later on these Oromos worshipping in these two congregations in Addis Ababa made a request to their respective congregation leaders to be given a time and a place to worship in their language. They made this request in the congregations because the places where they had started worshipping in their language were neither convenient nor large enough as the number of people had increased over time (see § 5.3.2). They also said that this request was not to replace Amharic with Oromo, but to be given additional time for the Oromo programme (Rev. Dr. Biri, pers. comm.). The Oromo members of both congregations wrote many letters of request first to the congregation leaders and then to the higher bodies, but did not get favourable answers, especially at the congregation and synod levels (five different letters written to the church at different levels are on record). As they did not get favourable responses from the leaders of both the congregations and the relevant synod, this created a great turmoil within the EECMY for more than a decade (for the summary of the whole story, see Appendix B). The consequence of this conflict also became very serious later on (see § 5.4.6).

According to the informants (inter alia, Rev. Dr. Biri & Rev. Dr. Guta), those who requested this opportunity of worshipping in their language, in addition to the common language, Amharic, gave various reasons for their request. Their first reason was that some elderly people (parents) had come for different reasons from the rural areas. Sadi (1996:2) reports that the changes brought about in the lives of the people of Ethiopia by the communist government had forced many to migrate to the city in search of livelihood. Most of these people were Christians and members of the EECMY. When they were in the rural areas, they were using only their vernacular and did not understand Amharic. They therefore did not have another opportunity to participate in worship unless it was in their mother tongue, Oromo (see § 5.3.2). As these people did not know a word of Amharic, they had to sit and listen to worship in a language they did not know. They simply followed the actions of others standing up and sitting down without knowing why this happened, and no one cared for these people. Because of this, many Oromos were concerned. They believed that this case should have been considered by the leaders of the congregations in Addis Ababa, because these people needed to worship and the only chance they had was to worship in their mother tongue (Rev. Dr. Biri, pers. comm.). These informants reported also that the Gamo people had been given permission to worship in their mother tongue as early as the 1920s, and the Oromos requested a similar consideration. Launhardt (2004:213)

reports that the Gamo case had been facilitated by an initiative taken by an Oromo Christian, Nagari Sima, saying that “ Nagari Sima, an evangelical Christian from Sayo in Wollega, felt obliged to bring the assurance of God’s love to these despised people” in their native language after he himself had learned to speak their language.

The second reason given was that even the educated Oromos who could understand Amharic believed that they can worship heartily when the whole service was in their mother tongue. The EECMY has clearly shown this in the guidelines it prepared for the use of language and scriptures (see § 5.2). Strauss (1998:10) also argues that “[i]t is not enough that people understand a language. For the Christian faith to be truly authentic in their own culture, they must be reading their Bibles, talking about spiritual truth, and worshipping God in their mother tongue. Otherwise, their Christianity will always be touched with foreignness.” This scholar further argues that the faith is much more meaningful to them in their native languages than when people hear it in the second language. All do not understand Amharic also with the native fluency to serve and be served in it. In FGD-001, it was stated that “even if we hear and use English, Amharic, etc. for us Oromos the language we understand best is Oromo, and it is in the language we understand best that we want to hear the Word of God”.

The third reason given is that the Oromos living in the capital wanted their children to have the chance to practice using their language. One way for this, they believed, was through the use of the language in the church (FGD-001).

This request to be given time and place to worship in Oromo was repeated several times, but it did not bring any positive response. Hence, it was presented at higher levels of the church leadership structure. Finally, it had to go to the level of the EECMY-EC which passed the 93<sup>rd</sup> EC meeting policy decision we saw above (§ 5.2). This policy decision was still not accepted by both the concerned congregations and the synod leadership of the time. It was reported that when the Intoto Congregation leaders summoned their congregation Assembly on 5 December 1997 to discuss the policy decision of the 93<sup>rd</sup> EC meeting of the EECMY, they rejected it, and resolved not to implement it. Actually the Oromo group maintain that it was under the influence of the leaders of the Congregation that such a decision was passed, and that it was unprocedural to

discuss and pass resolutions by vote on such higher body decisions. This was stated in a letter written to the President of the EECMY on 7 December 1997, by the representative of the Oromo group. The official refusal of the two congregations and the acceptance of their refusal by the CES were recorded in the minutes of the 78<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EC of the CES. These minutes also show that the synod EC did not want to interfere in the decision of the two congregations and implement the policy decision of the higher body.

The leaders of the two congregations as well as CES of the time also gave their own reasons for their refusal of the request as well as their opposition to the policy decision of the EC of the EECMY, and these are summarized as follows. The main reason they gave was to keep the unity of the church through the use of a common language. They believed that using only one language, especially in places like Addis Ababa, where everyone can speak the dominant language, maintains the unity of believers. Besides information elicited from different informants (including Mr. Wakweya, Rev. Dr. Biri, Rev. Dr. Guta), this is reflected in the minutes of the 78<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EC of the CES. They indicated that it had been resolved in Gullele Bethel Congregation of the EECMY that it was difficult to accept the policy decision of the church, because it divided the believers into the different nationalities, and harmed the unity of the believers. Their letter of 21 October 1998 also puts forward the view that an acceptance of this request would “disturb the unity of believers.” Accordingly, some still believe that Amharic has strengthened the unity of believers for many years (Mr. Wakweya, pers. comm.). Commenting on this type of situation, Abate (1998:3) argues that when people worshipping in one congregation belong to different nationalities, they have to use a common language that all of them can understand. He further advised that the question to be asked should not be about the different languages, but about the language which may help everyone to worship and pray together. This matter had been mentioned before in the issue of Newsletter known as *Andinet* (Unity) of 27 December 1933 (cited in Birri, 1998:3), where it was stated that the fact that the missionaries evangelized the different ethno-linguistic groups in their vernaculars is an obstacle to the unity of the country.

The second reason given for refusing the request was related to economy. In the EECMY-Bethel Congregation decision reported to the 78<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EC of the CES, it was stated that “from

lack of ability there is no way of allocating time for the different groups to worship in their languages as there are not less than 10 such groups worshipping in the congregation.” Thus, as the churches in Addis Ababa were ethnically heterogeneous, they felt that giving a positive answer to one nationality (Oromo) might give a precedent for others to also come up with similar requests, and this could be beyond the capacity of the congregations. In the case of the EECMY-Intoto Congregation also, the decision passed indicates that it is impossible to accept the request for worshipping in the mother tongue, because the congregation is composed of believers belonging to different ethnolinguistic groups. In general, their argument was that allowing worship programmes in different vernaculars would be beyond the economic capacity of the congregations.

In addition, as this question is related to the freedom given by the present government for all communities of the country to develop and use their cultures and languages in all spheres of life, the opponents of the request complained that it was bringing external politics into the church. They believed that the church should be free from politics. In their letter of 21 October 1998, the opponents of the church language policy wrote that this demand had been forwarded by “a few extreme Oromo nationalists.” Thus, they even said that a political organization was behind the request to worship in Oromo in Addis Ababa (FGD- 002). The then President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Dr. Negasso Gidada, in his proposal for reconciliation between the two parties, shared this conviction. Dr. Gidada stated in the proposal that those who were behind the request to worship in Oromo had a political motive, though he also believed that the request was in line with the constitution of the country (see § 5.4.10).

According to some informants of this study (BDS-ONS-003, Rev. Dr. Hirpo, Rev. Dr. Biri, Rev. Dr. Guta, Rev. Emanu and others), the proponents of this issue also gave a response to their opponents concerning the issue of unity. This group believed that unity of believers does not rest upon human factors. It is the cross of Christ that unites believers. All churches of the world use various languages, but they are spiritually united. Thus, this can be about unity within diversity. According to Rev. Dr. Guta (pers. comm.), if the use of one language united all the Christians of the world, Hebrew would be used all over the world. Thus, the denial of the use of Oromo is equated with the hatred and neglect that those people have for the Oromo community. The then

President of the EECMY, Rev. Yadesa Daba, wrote in his letter of 12 April 1998 to the Norwegian Lutheran Mission Resident Representative, Rev. Arne Solberg, that “it is very difficult to understand the cause for the misunderstanding except the hatred that some people have for other people’s language” (see Appendix C). He also believed that this request was justified by the precedent of the Gamo (from Southern Ethiopia) who had been given a programme in their language long before the question was raised by the Oromo group, and it had created no problem. It was reported in FGD-001 that the Gulelle Bethel Congregation was said to have actually begun in Oromo, but later on adopted Amharic, because of the political domination of the time. This was forgotten when the church language policy was equated with bringing politics into the church. Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.) said that the denial of the use of Oromo for the church service is against the policy of the government, against the scripture, against the international declaration of human rights and against the constitution of our country. Therefore, the issues of unity and economy were rejected and considered to be just a pretext for a political agenda, and could not be valid reasons for rejection.

Thus, both parties were trying to substantiate their arguments in different ways, even using the constitution of the church as their basis. In this regard, Bakke (2010: 85) notes that the leaders of the mother church believed that their congregations should accept any directive that comes from the higher body, whereas the opposing group believed that they had the autonomy in such cases to decide on language use. The decision of the 78<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EC of the CES seems to be in line with this issue of autonomy. The Faction Group believed that it was the church officers and “their allies” who took this measure without giving the necessary respect to the structure of the church and the constitution (see letter of 21 October 1998, Appendix D).

#### **5.4.4 Incidents in the conflict**

A number of incidents have been reported throughout the time of the conflict. Some of these are described below in order to indicate the magnitude and intensity of the conflict. While the question of being allocated a portion of time to worship in Oromo was being debated in the EECMY-Intoto Congregation, a couple who were members of the congregation arranged to conduct their marriage ceremony in Oromo, as the parents of both the bride and the bridegroom

had come from the rural area. When they heard about it (one day ahead of the marriage ceremony), the Administration of the congregation withdrew the permission to conduct the ceremony in the congregation, unless they changed the language. However, everything was ready from the side of the couple by that time. The leadership of the congregation wanted the liturgy and the sermon to be in Amharic, while the hymns could be sung in Oromo. The couple and their best men, however, wanted that the whole service conducted in Oromo (Mr. Abera Degefa, the bridegroom, pers. comm.). Accordingly, both parties had prepared different priests to lead the ceremony. The congregation leaders prepared one who would conduct the ceremony in Amharic, whereas the couple prepared one who would conduct it in Oromo. They both chose the same preacher, but he had different instructions from different parties (to do it in Amharic by the leaders and to do it in Oromo by the couple).

The leadership of the congregation gave the reason that another marriage ceremony that had been conducted three weeks before this one by the President of the EECMY (Rev. Yadessa Daba) and the Pastor of the Intoto Congregation (Rev. Balina Sarka) in Oromo had created a problem as the members of the congregation questioned the use of Oromo. However, the couple believed that this would not create a problem because this congregation had had another experience of a service being conducted in another vernacular, Gamo, a couple of years before this incident and it had never created any problem (this was recorded in the minutes of nine round meetings conducted by representatives of church officers, CES officers and EECMY-Intoto Congregation leaders per the order given by the 91<sup>st</sup> meeting of the EC of the EECMY to investigate the matter of disagreement on the wedding ceremony of Mr. Abera Degefa and Mrs. Tatu Degefa, from church archives).

This led to a quarrel within the congregation. Without having reached any agreement, the couple came with their families and guests to the church compound, and discovered that the Administration had locked the entrance. However, one supporter of the couple who had a key to one of the entrances opened it. Nothing that the leadership of the congregation had done to cancel the ceremony (including putting off the lights) succeeded, as the party that favoured the use of Oromo had the upper hand, so the ceremony was conducted in Oromo on that occasion. This aggravated the disagreement between the two parties (Mr. Karissa, pers. comm.).

There was also another similar incident in another EECMY congregation in Addis Ababa (Mekanissa-EECMY Congregation). Here a couple conducted their marriage ceremony by using an interpreter who translated the ceremony from Amharic to Oromo, without prior knowledge of the congregation leaders. At that time both the supporting and opposing parties of the church language policy decision were using the Mekane Yesus Seminary Chapel, as their congregation building was under construction. The next morning after the ceremony, the opposing group carried all the property of the congregation to the unfinished building so as not to use the building in which Oromo had been used. This created a division between members of EECMY-Mekanissa Congregation. This indicates the magnitude of the hatred that existed between the believers along linguistic lines (Mr. Daka Benti and Mrs. Azeb Benti, pers. comm.).

Other unpleasant events were also observed at different congregations as a result of this disagreement over the use of Oromo. In the first place, many of the EECMY congregations in Addis Ababa (Gullele Bethel, Intoto, Ura'el, Mekanissa, Tilliku Akaki, Kotebe, Gerji, Burayu and Kirkos) and some congregations from outside Addis Ababa were divided along the line of supporting and opposing the policy decision of the church. Those who opposed the policy decision of the church detached themselves from the church and formed their own faction church (Addis Ababa and Surrounding Mekane Yesus Church) in 2001, and established their own structure (see § 5.4.6). At this time, those who supported the policy decision of the church allowed the Oromo groups to worship in their language, whereas those who split off the main church were worshipping solely in Amharic. While they were separated, in some cases the opposing groups remained in the congregation buildings retaining the property of the EECMY (these include: Gullele Bethel, Intoto, Ura'el and Mekanissa EECMY congregations), whereas the groups that supported the church's decision had to go somewhere else without access to any property of the church. The reason for this was that the leaders of the congregations were mostly those from the opposing faction group. Accordingly, the supporters of the policy decision were forced to use joint church facilities for worship. The Intoto EECMY Congregation members had to use the CES compound; Mekanissa Congregation members had to use the Mekane Yesus Seminary Chapel; the EECMY Gullele Bethel Congregation members had to use EECMY-Bethel Mekane Yesus School Compound, and the EECMY Ura'el Congregation members had to use the EECMY Headquarters Compound. Some of the supporters of the policy decision of the

EC of the EECMY (Kotebe, Burayu, Kirkos, Tilliku Akaki and Gerji EECMY congregations) remained in the congregation buildings and continued owning the property. In such cases the leadership of the congregations at the time accepted the policy decision, and it was the faction group that had to look for a place to worship during the separation period. There was also one congregation (Warku-Sefer) which totally went against the policy decision of the EC of the EECMY. EECMY-Addis Ababa Mekane Yesus Congregation did not take any side, saying that it was the mother congregation in the city (this congregation was the first to be established in Addis Ababa). It just remained neutral (many informants question what it means to be neutral in such a case). No question was raised concerning the use of Oromo in this congregation, and it continued by using only Amharic as before. In some EECMY congregations in Addis Ababa (e.g. Nefas Silk, Faransaay, etc.), they were not divided, although there was a difference in attitude towards the policy of using Oromo. They remained together tolerating their differences concerning their attitudes towards the language policy of the EECMY, the Oromos worshipping in their language creating their own opportunities outside the congregation (see § 5.4.10 for later developments in the Nefas Silk-EECMY Congregation). Thus, there was no division in the latter congregations, and there was no problem regarding a place of worship. However, in both of the former cases, the party that had to go out experienced quite a lot of problems in finding a convenient place of worship (Rev. Emana, interview, as well as personal observation by the researcher).

Other incidents in the quarrel were seen in different congregational compounds. In one instance, the then President of the EECMY, Rev. Yadesa Daba, together with other church officers, went to the EECMY-Gullele Bethel Congregation to explain the decision of the church leadership about the use of Oromo in the two congregations in Addis Ababa. When he stood up in the pulpit, the leaders of the congregation derided him by snatching the microphone out of his hands and not allowing him to speak (personal file note of 22 February 1998 by the then General Secretary of the Church, Rev. Magarsa Guta). The congregants were dismissed by the Chairperson of the Elders' Committee and the Pastor leading the liturgy, even before the ceremony was over, and the church officers were put out of the congregation compound by force. A letter written to Addis Ababa Region Police Commission by the church President, Rev.

Yadessa Daba, on 15 February 1990 describes this incident as being contradictory to the constitution of the church.

Letters of accusation were also written by both parties. For example, a letter was written to nine partner mission agencies on 18 November 1998 and signed by eight congregation leaders in and around Addis Ababa who opposed the language policy of the EECMY on the subject of “An update on the circular issued on 21 October 1998, unmasking the illegal and unchristian strategies of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY).” This letter maintains that some illegal and unchristian strategies were being followed by the leaders of the EECMY. These included campaigns to discredit the CES and Co-ordinating Committee and attempts of incentives to win support from Moslems as a strategic alliance. Especially in the latter case, the letter emphasizes that Moslem Oromos were invited to the 100<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary of the Bible translation into Oromo, while “many committed Christians including Oromo leaders were not invited because of their attitude and stand towards ethnicity”.

In the statement of the 103<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the EC regarding the policy decision of the church, it was indicated that different letters had been distributed unprocedurally to the church units and partners of the church. It was mentioned that there was one letter, among those written by the Intoto Congregation on 27 May 1998 to the partner agencies, which was full of insulting and degrading expressions regarding the church leaders. It was also stated that the negative content of this letter had degraded the real existence of the church and the church decision making bodies, and warned against such an act thereafter.

Another letter was also written by a concerned group who supported the faction group to the German mission in Addis Ababa accusing two missionaries from the mission of supporting the church leadership in their policy decision concerning language use. The church leadership responded to this on 20 November 1998, expressing regret about such a defaming letter against its partners. Many other letters were also written to public offices (to the extent of copying some to the office of the Prime Minister of the country), partners inside and outside, to the church units and to one another by both parties.

There were also incidents of praying against one another, rebuking what they regarded as the “Oromo Spirit”. The use of the Oromo language was considered by some of the faction group to be guided by a “spirit” (Mr. Rikitu, pers. comm.).

The imprisonment of some congregation elders took place, and the members of the faction group ascribed this to being engineered by the EECMY CO and the CES Provisional Administration, according to a letter written on 28 March 2000, by the Provisional Coordinating Committee of the EECMY-CES (see Appendix E).

#### **5.4.5 Causes of the conflict**

While both parties gave implicitly or explicitly their own reasons for supporting or rejecting the use of Oromo for the purposes of worshipping in the capital (§ 5.4.3), informants in the present study also gave their own opinions regarding the causes of the conflict.

According to Rev. Emanu and CES-002, (pers. comm.), the main cause of this problem is a difference of belief or attitude: some believed that allowing worship in Oromo would divide the believing community, while others saw no problem in worshipping in any language. Some (for example CES-002) believe that this difference in attitude emerges from differences in the understanding of the matter. The way the leaders and those who requested the use of the language in congregations in Addis Ababa understood the matter and the way those who became against the issue understood it were different. This informant emphasizes that those who had not understood the matter well opposed the policy decision. Mr. Aylate (pers. comm.) also believes that it may be those who were ignorant of what the church had been doing from the beginning concerning language development who opposed the policy. They did not realize that the pioneers of evangelical Christianity had supported the vernacular languages from the beginning.

According to Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.), the opponents of the language policy of the church were influenced by the tradition of their fathers. They had accepted uncritically the belief in one language, one king, one religion propagated by former regimes in Ethiopia (see § 5.4.2). They did not consider the fact that while there is one country, there are more than 80 languages and

many cannot even use Amharic. The Oromo people number at least 35 million and they should not be ignored (see Table 1.1).

Another reason mentioned for the conflict is a leadership problem at different levels of the church structure (congregation, synod and the whole church.) According to Rev. Emana (pers. comm.), this is because not enough was done at the different levels to alleviate this problem. Nothing was done to accommodate the change introduced by the current government of the country concerning the use of different languages for different purposes. The leaders should have understood and prepared the believing community for such a change to enter into the church. The society was not prepared for the change to come, as it takes time to adapt to something new. CES-002 (pers. comm.) believed that it is not easy to break away with a long standing tradition. It is little by little that the community adapts to any change. Thus, the community should have been informed and educated concerning this matter. Church leaders during the communist era in Ethiopia were trying their best to guide the faith community on how to live by adapting themselves to the order of the day (according to the principle of ‘Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God’ in Mathew 22:21). The leaders during the conflict, however, did not prepare the congregations for the major changes that were to come after 1991. Mr. Aylate (pers. comm.) contends that there were no places in the church structures to raise the awareness of the believers regarding language use. The issue of literacy, scripture use in the vernaculars and Bible translation issues should have been part of the work of the church in all its structures.

According to information from MYS-002 (interview), the real problem is that the leadership of the EECMY did not know how to deal with the consequences when they decided to dissolve the CES leadership, which had not volunteered to abide by the policy decisions of the church. There was a problem of lack of foresight. For example, the Vice President of the church at the time, Mr. Mesfin Lisanu, warned the church officers in the letter he wrote to the church President, Rev. Yadessa Daba, on 12 October 1991 to be cautious about the legal consequences of the decision of the 94<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EC of the EECMY, at which the leadership of the Synod was dissolved (see § 5.4.6 about this consequence). Some of the informants in this study also believe that the EC did not realize what the outcome of the conflict would be. They did not foresee what

would happen later on. At the beginning things were seen simplistically. This made the problem more deeply rooted and created a lot of difficulty. Thus, it was believed that while the people followed the leaders, the leaders could not be the role models they were expected to be (CES-002, pers. comm.). The leaders did not play the right role in that they did not follow the proper channel of command. When they wanted the language policy to be implemented, they should have gone step-by-step through it, using persuasive arguments rather than enforcing the decision upon the congregations at grassroots. If they had first convinced the synod level leaders as well as some influential believers, these in turn could have convinced the leaders of the congregations, who again in turn could have convinced the congregation members. In this way the policy could have been implemented without any problems. CES-002 (interview) complained that the policy to be implemented was simply presented in an oral form. The leadership did not prepare in print and distribute the policy decision so that the community could study it before implementation. They should have been asked for feedback. This would have been an act of discipleship. They should have listened to the community. This shows that there was a lack of transparency at all levels. Thus, the problem was largely a matter of approach. Bakke (2010: 84) underscores this view:

the issue that initiated the conflict should never have been allowed to play such a role. It should not be a matter of debate and dissension that all believers, as far as possible, had the right to worship in their own language. My conviction is that the language issue released a more basic problem, the understanding of authority and decision making on different levels of the Church.

This idea is consistent with the proposal of the faction church as a precondition for the reconciliation concerning policy issuance and implementation (letter of 21 October 1998). In this proposal it was emphasized that every policy should be deliberated upon at the different levels of the church structure before it is put into effect. The then President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Dr. Gidada, shared this belief in his proposal for a reconciliation (letter of 27 June 1992; see also § 5.4.10).

However, the church leaders of the time in their explanation of the decisions of the 103<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the EC reported that the EC and the church officers had been following up the implementation

of the matter carefully and patiently. They said that the implementation had not been imposed. They had exercised patience and tolerance and tried to get agreement. As to the issue of transparency, they argued that they had prepared and conducted different workshops and seminars to explain the matter. For example, a statement of the symposium on “Church, culture and ethnicity in present Ethiopia” conducted from 1 to 6 September 1997 was issued in October 1997 after the 101<sup>st</sup> EC meeting (Appendix F).

The opinion of some respondents was that the motive behind this conflict goes beyond the question of language use (MYS-002, Mr. Aylate, pers. comm.). According to this belief, some want to quench their thirst for power by using the question of language as a camouflage. According to FGD-001, those who created the conflict over the question of language were those who were running for a position. They used the issue of only one language of worship as a pretext to gain power. It is politics camouflaged in religion. They diverted the purpose of the church.

This belief is substantiated by the fact that other differences have also been used to stir up conflict situation to gain power, even among the speakers of the same language. From the level of congregations up to the church CO, there are conflicts over power and use of resources. Such conflicts arise among members of different ethnic groups, among people coming from different regions of the country, different areas of a given church unit and the like. Sometimes there are conflicts between different age groups, between newcomers to the church and older believers and many others. EECMY- CS-Finca’aa-001 (interview) commented that power comes with psychological satisfaction and popularity. In former times, people used to come to the call for God’s work fearfully as the work requires humility, but nowadays many want to have a position of power because of the benefits linked to it, such as better salaries, allowances, overseas travels and the like. In FGD-001 also, it was pointed out that conflicts are mostly seen during elections for different positions. When people come to positions in these conflicting ways, they do not perform the task that is entrusted to them properly. Most of their time is devoted to securing their positions.

According to Rev. Dr. Guta (pers. comm.), this use of the language issue as a pretext to gain other benefits has a historical basis. Historically, the western Oromos were the first to accept evangelical Christianity in Ethiopia (see § 1.3.2). Together with Christianity, modern education also came to the area, and many people had the chance of better education than in the other areas of the country. This was said to result in many western Oromos assuming leadership positions and getting employment opportunities within the EECMY, especially the CO (see also § 5.4.8). Hence, the church members from the other nationalities (speakers of the Amharic language and other languages of southern Ethiopia) have felt that proportional sharing of power was lacking in the church. Accordingly, they used this question of language use, raised by the Oromos in two congregations to struggle against the Oromos in general, and those in the leadership positions of the church in particular. Thus, the belief is that the source of conflict in most cases is over leadership positions, because the best benefits are tied up with the top most positions. To substantiate this argument, they point out that the first president of the faction church was a person who had led the main church as a president for two terms, and competed immediately before the formation of the faction church but did not get the necessary vote (Rev. Dr. Guta, pers. comm.; see also § 5.4.6 about the formation of this faction church).

A letter recently written (n.d.) and signed by nine units of the EECMY from the southern part of the country can also be taken as another justification for this argument (this letter is said to be recent because it mentions an election conducted in the 8<sup>th</sup> Council of the church which took place in July 2012). This letter was addressed to the President of the church, and complains that in the election of top leaders of the church, focus has been only on one particular area of the country, and that this had frustrated those members of the church from the other parts of the country, to the extent of becoming a threat to the unity of the church. It was also requested in the letter that the constitution of the church be amended in such a way that the article about election incorporates a provision that the elections take place considering representation of believers from the different parts of the country.

Furthermore, it was reported that three congregations in Addis Ababa (EECMY-Faransaay Congregation, Lideta Congregation and Nefas Silk Congregation) fought along the basis of ethnic lines (Oromos and non-Oromos, although there were still some Oromos who sided with

the opposition) over the sharing of power in the congregations after an attempted reconciliation had been made concerning language conflict (see § 5.4.10 below for one of these cases, Nefas Silk Congregation). Hence, there are conflicts over sharing of power at every level of the church structure (Rev. Emana, pers. comm.).

Even some Oromos and speakers of the other minority languages have sided with the dominant group in opposing the use of the vernacular languages in the church (see § 5.4.7). These were people who said that Christians are free from anything worldly, such as belonging to any one nationality or linguistic group and are free from politics. People give different reasons for this negative attitude towards the use of Oromo. In some cases the reasons given for Oromo speakers and speakers of the other vernaculars are different. According to Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.), the first reason for Oromos to deny the use of their own language is fear of being attacked by the government for favouring one's language. Especially, those who speak the languages other than Oromo were intimidating the Oromos by identifying them with some liberation fronts not on good terms with the government at that time. The second reason given is that some Oromos are ashamed of using their own language, considering it as backward. Regarding the other minority language speakers also some other reasons were given by the informants. The first reason is that they sought social status by siding with the dominant ethnolinguistic group. They believed that they had become superior to the Oromos together with the Amharas. It is seen often as modern, educated or politically correct to use the dominant language. The other reason is that they could not free themselves from the former belief that Amharic is "holier" than the other languages. This is more psychological, because this belief has controlled their minds. There are even some minority language speakers who never even pray privately in their own languages. Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.) believed that they were even worse in their hatred of the use of Oromo than the Amharas. The belief that Amharic was the symbol of civilization made them ashamed of their own languages, and they did not want to hear any other languages in the church except Amharic. Still another reason is the fear of being swallowed up in the church by the Oromo people and of losing their positions when the Oromos get their rights.

#### **5.4.6 Effects of the conflict**

The refusal of the two congregations supported by the CES to support the language policy decision of the EC of the EECMY resulted in serious actions which have affected the life of the church for years to come. Many EECMY congregation leaders in Addis Ababa also supported the position of these two congregations together with the synod leadership. Some congregations from outside Addis Ababa have also refused to support the language policy decision. This forced the EC of the EECMY to dissolve the administrative leadership of CES, and replace it with a Provisional Administration at its 104<sup>th</sup> meeting. A letter written by the EECMY President on 6 October 1991 to nine leaders of the Synod communicates this decision. Accordingly, the opposing congregations and the CES leaders established their own faction church under the name of Addis Ababa and Surrounding Mekane Yesus Church, with a license from the relevant government office (see Appendix G). Thus, the church was split into two (The Ehtiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Addis Ababa and Surrounding Mekane Yesus Church), and this situation continued for 15 years until the recent reconciliation (see § 5.4.10).

Informants have evaluated the effects of this conflict over the use of Oromo in congregations in Addis Ababa differently. These effects can be seen from both positive and negative perspectives. Although the conflict started to suppress Oromo, it also had some positive effects according to these informants. According to FGD-001 as well as Rev. Emana (pers. comm.), the positive effects include the awakening of many Oromos regarding the necessity of using their language, the establishment of various Oromo congregations in Addis Ababa, and the gospel reaching many places in Oromo areas around Addis Ababa in Oromo. Some Oromos had sided with those favouring the use of only Amharic in the belief that the use of one language may maintain the unity of the church. They changed their minds, however, when they came to realize that the issue of so-called unity was a guise for hatred, domination and jealousy. They were thus convinced that unity is not unity of language, but of spirit. They began to see that the question of using one's language for worship is a valid issue.

Furthermore, many congregations which principally worship in Oromo were established in and around Addis Ababa. The Finfinne Oromo Congregation which was started as a result of the

conflict later established different places for outreach and these developed into Oromo congregations, such as Furi, Biiftuu-Boolee, Sulultaa, Kattaa and Kombee EECMY congregations (see § 5.3.2).

Different forums also began to emerge based upon the right to worship in one's own language. FOCUS and *Ilaamee* are well-known forums of this type. Members of these fellowships came together from different denominations, most of which had not been using Oromo earlier. They are fellowships that were established with the awareness (created as the result of the conflict) that, unlike before, many Oromos now had the opportunity of worshipping God in their native language (see § 5.3.2).

According to EECMY-CS-Finca'aa-001 (interview), the other church denominations which had not been using any other language except Amharic earlier have now started using Oromo. This is because they realized the necessity of serving in one's own language rather than using one dominant language which many people do not understand well. This change in attitude is now even evident in the EOC, which formerly had been working against the use of any other language except Ge'ez and Amharic (see § 5.4.2). Other evangelical churches which used Amharic only have also started using Oromo in the rural areas and even in Addis Ababa (BDS-ONS-00, interview). These changes are mainly due to growing awareness amongst the speech communities of the need to challenge their leaders to use their mother tongue for the purpose of worship. For example, FOCUS members in different higher educational institutions have influenced the leaders of their denominations to start using Oromo in their worship services. As we have seen above (§ 5.3.2), this case has even brought together the different denominations to work together in disseminating the Good News of the Bible in Oromo. Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.) noted also that such changes are not limited to the local situation. These days there are programmes in Oromo, in Ethiopia and internationally, wherever there are significant numbers of Oromos, whether they are in America, Europe, Australia or Africa.

Furthermore, the EECMY has taken some measures to deal with this problem of language in general and Oromo in particular. While it had previously been promoting the use of the vernacular languages of the country for church use according to the tradition laid down by the

pioneer missionaries (which was an unwritten policy), the EECMY has now drawn up a written policy decision in order to deal with this problem legally. The fact that the church has established a Translation and Literacy Office can be considered as one of the results of this conflict. It has also set up a Peace Office which is responsible for peace and reconciliation in the church and the community at large (FGD-001).

On the other hand, the negative effects of the language conflict in the church were in some ways more serious than the positive effects, as this conflict lasted for about 15 years. In general, it was a time of great crisis for the church materially, spiritually and psychologically (FGD-001, MYS-002, CES-002, interview). Mr. Aylate (pers. comm.) believes that the scar of the conflict is still wide open. In the first place, it created hatred and bitterness among the Christian brothers and sisters along ethnic lines. It is said to have even created disharmony in families in some cases, where the husband and the wife held different views. One supported one group (or view) whereas the other supported the other group. They could not live a peaceful family life because of this language conflict.

Mr. Wakweya (pers. comm.) reported that the conflict also resulted in the slowing down of the holistic service of the church (see § 1.3.2). The church became weakened with regard to exercising its gifts of evangelization and development work, as it became fragmented. It decreased the concern of the church for society. It had a negative impact on the image of the church. The community could not give the church the respect it used to give, as it was disturbed by a conflict within itself instead of being a symbol of love and peace. The unity in Christ was put under suspicion as everyone was engaged in a battle over the language issue. Ofga (2011:13) describes this as the time of turmoil and crisis, when the church faced a great wave of disunity. The confidential issues of the family of God were broadcast everywhere. Disagreements which should have been resolved peacefully were exposed everywhere to the extent of church members taking one another to the courts of law. Backstabbing by immature souls also occurred due to this conflict (CES-002, interview).

Furthermore, this conflict resulted in wastage of resources in trying to deal with the language issue in peaceful and legal ways. This was because many workshops, seminars and discussion

forums were conducted to discuss the matter, and of all these required resources. For example, to study the case of the quarrel regarding the use of language for the wedding ceremony at EECMY-Intoto Congregation (§ 5.4.4), a body delegated from the EECMY-CO, the CES, and the congregation met more than nine times, but it did not bear any fruit. Furthermore, a committee established by the 79<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EC of the CES in order to investigate and come up with peaceful means for resolving the conflict over language use met fifteen times to look into the matter. In addition, a team consisting of representatives of the church officers (the President and one member), Peace and Mediation Team members and some members of the Provisional Coordinating Committee of the faction church also met six times besides the meetings that the Peace and Mediation Team conducted independently. Finally, as all these and other efforts did not bear fruit, the matter had to be taken to court and both sides incurred expenses. The fact that the believers who previously worshipped together in one place now had to go to different places was also a waste of resources. Church properties and resources were also said to be misused. Needy children and other communities who had predominantly been helped by the congregations could not be helped during that time. This was because the faction group left with the property of the church while not having any formal and legal relationship with the church (Rev. Emana, Rev. Dr. Guta, Rev. Dr. Biri, pers. comm.).

In general, these informants believe that the conflict not only slowed down the development of Oromo, but also harmed the church's holistic service. Had this conflict not been created, the church service could have significantly developed the language due to the favourable conditions of the time. However, much energy and other resources which could have been utilized for the development of the language had to be used for dealing with the conflict. The overall service of the church was affected negatively.

#### **5.4.7 Participants in the conflict**

Different bodies from inside and outside the church and the country were involved in different ways in this conflict. Some supported the request for using Oromo in Addis Ababa and the church language policy regarding this. Others believed that the request was not genuine and that only one common language should be used in the capital for the church services. There were also

others who just opted to take a neutral position without supporting one or the other group in the conflict (Rev. Dr. Guta, pers. comm.).

It was not only the speakers of the dominant language that opposed the policy decision of the church concerning the use of Oromo in Addis Ababa (see § 5.4.5). According to Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.), there were also many Oromos even among the leadership of both congregations and CES who opposed the use of their own language in the church. These are Oromos who do not have a positive attitude towards their own language. There are some Oromos who even communicate socially in general conversations using the dominant language, because they are ashamed of their own language. Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.) believed that these Oromos want to get acceptance from other groups, and that is why they do this. Some describe them as self-denying people ignoring their own language, in favour of another. All this is said to be a result of the situation they had been in before the present regime. Cooper (1989:22) reports that “[m]any Oromos have become Amharicized by adopting the practices of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, changing their names, and speaking Amharic as their principal language.” Bulcha (1997:339) also argues that such people were in an identity crisis, because they were neither accepted by the rulers as their equals, nor were they accepted by the members of their ethnolinguistic group. He states, “[i]f not socially, psychologically many of the Amharized Oromos remained marginalized individuals in the sense that they were poised on the edge of two distinct societies without being fully part of either.” As we have seen above (§ 5.4.3), most of such people were more concerned about the unity of the church than the use of their language. Many of them also considered this as bringing politics to the church, while the church should be free from it. There were some Oromos who afterwards realized this fact and even changed their positions (FGD- 001 & 002; Rev. Dr. Hirpo; Rev. Dr. Biri; Rev. Dr. Guta, interview).

Informants (inter alia, Rev. Dr. Hirpo, Rev. Dr. Biri & Rev. Dr. Guta) reported that when the matter was debated some of the opponents of Oromo being used in church services in Addis Ababa were themselves members of the communities whose languages had been under suppression by the ruling class. According to these informants, such people sided with the former rulers to try to stop the use of Oromo in the church. Thus, even when the policy was being

formulated, it was mostly these members of the other minority groups who were bitterly opposing it (FGD – 001; Rev. Hirpo, pers. comm.).

According to Rev. Dr. Guta (pers. comm.), mission organizations also participated in this conflict in different ways. As a whole, they were trying to create reconciliation between the two groups, but this was not possible for quite a long time. They had different intentions when they were seeking reconciliation, depending upon their attitudes towards the issue of language use in the Addis Ababa EECMY congregations. Accordingly, those which first supported development and usage of the language still accepted and upheld the policy decision of the church. For example, the Evangelical Lutheran Mission, from Germany, was the first among these partners. From the very beginning, this mission indicated in the letter it wrote to the church that its alignment was only to the mother church, and it did not have any relationship with the faction church, except in the case of reconciliation. Representatives of this mission were approaching and advising the church leadership on how to settle the matter peacefully. This mission was specifically established for reaching the Oromo people, and had contributed considerably to the development and use of Oromo in church services and teaching and enlightening this community. Gobena (2010:209) contends that this mission “came with a commitment of valuing local language for the penetration of the Gospel into the life of the people.” In a letter written by a ‘concerned group’, from the faction group, on 3 November 1998 to the German mission in Addis Ababa, and even copied to the German Embassy Internal Security, Immigration and Refugees Office, the faction group complained that two of the representatives of the mission in Ethiopia had gone out of their way to support the church leaders in their policy decision (see Appendix H). However, there were some individual members working for this mission who were supporting the faction group. According to Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.), these individuals were those who had not worked in Oromo areas, and they had not had any relationship with the Oromos and their language. Some other mission organizations or individual representatives of the missions, however, joined the opposition group in order to oppose the use of Oromo in the church service in congregations in Addis Ababa. The Swedish and Finnish Lutheran missions were found among these. They supported the faction group in organizing itself as a separate church, by donating money for capacity building. They also warned the leaders of the mother church that they would cut their relationship and stop any kind of support if they did not change

their decisions concerning the language. These missions were trying to influence other missions to side with them and work against the policy of the church. Rev. Dr. Guta, former General Secretary of EECMY, (pers. comm.) said that externally this was the greatest problem in this conflict. The reason given for their support of the faction group might be that the leaders of the faction group put forward their case to the representatives of these missions very well, whereas the mother church did not do that equally well. For example, the President of the church, with one synod president, was summoned to Sweden to explain this matter in May 1999.

There were also other missions who remained neutral, and promised to give their support only when they were asked for it. They believed that this was an internal church issue, and they should not interfere. A good example of such partners which showed their neutrality was the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (see its letter of 09.03.2001; Appendix I).

Thus, it is quite difficult to categorize the supporters and the opponents of the language policy of the church, as they were found in all groups. It was often a matter of personal conviction. In some cases, some individuals or groups just changed their positions later on, when they understood the matter better.

#### **5.4.8 Lack of attention from the church leadership**

Although the former church fathers (and mothers) had promoted the use of Oromo, to a certain extent (see § 4.2 and § 5.3), the current leadership is not doing enough despite the more favourable conditions (FGD-001). The foreign missionaries and the local evangelists had made considerable sacrifices in enabling this language to be used in the church at the time of language proscription in the country. At that time, the policy of the government did not have tolerance for the use of the vernacular languages such as Oromo. Furthermore, the EOC clergy were collaborating with the rulers in working against the use of Oromo. The speech community itself did not have the awareness it has now about its language rights. Generally, it was such a hard time in which to develop the language. Thus, the efforts of the fathers could be described as “swimming against the stream” (Rev. Dr. Guta, pers. comm.). Ofgaa (2012:8), reports that the former pioneer evangelists have left a legacy to the present generation by living a life worthy of

their calling, made the cross of Christ the centre of their lives, being motivated by burden and passion for the lost ones, by risking their lives for defending the truth and their doctrine, etc. He suggests that the stewards of the present generation should also leave such a legacy to the future generation (see § also 4.2.1 and 4.2.3).

The current situation, however, is very different from early days when evangelical Christianity was being established in Ethiopia. In the first place, the language policy of the country is more conducive to developing and using one's language in all walks of life, including church services (EFDR Constitution, 1995). Moreover, as the majority of the leaders of the EECMY as well as the members are Oromos, they have an opportunity to influence the situation (FGD-001 & 002). Among the six presidents and six general secretaries who have led the EECMY, only two presidents and two general secretaries were non-Oromos. Amongst the secretaries, Rev. Gudina Tumsa (1966–1979) was persecuted during the communist era for not cooperating with the oppressive leadership of the communist government (Launhardt, 2004:248-9). Currently, the President, the General Secretary, directors of the Gospel Ministry Department and Development and Social Services Commission are all Oromos. It is obvious that in the General Assembly, the Council, the Executive Board and the Management Committee the great majority are Oromos (personal observation of the researcher). Ofga (2011:69) also reports that more than half of the synods of the EECMY are found in Oromia Region, which actually shows that the great majority of the members of this church are also Oromos. This is mainly due to the width of the Region and the size of the Oromo population when compared with all other ethnolinguistic groups (see Table 1.1). The fact that Oromos were the first to accept evangelical Christianity in the country is also another reason for this (Rev. Dr. Guta, pers. comm.). Because this is the case, the leadership is criticized by many (Rev. Dr. Hirpo, Mr. Didi, etc., pers. comm.) for not giving enough attention to the case of the development of Oromo, and that it is rather individual church members who are doing more than the church leadership for the development of the language. The following are among the areas where the leaders are said to be failing.

#### 5.4.9 Follow-up on good beginnings

From the beginning of the evangelical church in Ethiopia, there have been attempts to develop Oromo, and if these good beginnings had been followed-up, the development of Oromo (other languages also) could have been much greater than what it is at present. For example, the first evangelists began studies on the grammar of the language and collected oral literature of the language. This work has not continued today as expected.

Aster Ganno and Onesimos Nesib produced a spelling book which they could use in their translation work and other writings. They also collected and published Oromo folk tales in their book *The Galla Spelling Book* (see § 4.2.1). Other missionaries (especially foreigners) have also written grammatical descriptions of the language. Thus, not much has been accomplished since then even under the current favourable conditions. Some even consider it to be a sin to deal with such things as folklore. Pioneers like Onesimos seem to have understood the value of fostering cultural studies together with their evangelization at the beginning (Mr. Didi, pers. comm.).

A proposal and a resolution passed to establish a Cultural and Linguistic Centre within the Mekane Yesus Seminary has not been implemented, because of a lack of attention from the church leadership. In 1975, it was resolved in the EC meeting of the EECMY that such a centre would be established within the Seminary, the highest educational institution of the Church. Guta (2011:108) reports that this idea was in line with the purpose of the Seminary which stipulates within its Constitution, Article III Section 4, “[t]he proclamation of the Gospel in such a way that it becomes meaningful to the Ethiopian citizen in his (her) cultural setting.” Rev. Gudina Tumsa, General Secretary of the Church from 1966 to 1979, and Dr. Olave Saverås, then Associate General Secretary of the EECMY, brought up this point as a recommendation in their “The Moratorium Debate and the EECMY” (this was the original name of the Church). In this Moratorium it was said that “cultural and linguistic studies of the peoples of Ethiopia should be fostered (for example by Mekane Yesus Seminary)” (cited in Guta, 2011:137-138). Thus, the purpose for establishing such a centre was said to conduct studies on the cultural and linguistic heritage of the country, so that the gospel message would be contextualized in the Ethiopian cultures as much as possible (Rev. Dr. Biri, pers. comm.). The Board of the Seminary looked

into the proposal and accepted that such an institution should be established within the Seminary, and endorsed this for further consideration. After some delay, the EC formally established the centre in January 1979. Accordingly, some materials were collected and put in a special place within the Mekane Yesus Seminary library designated for this purpose. However, “consistent follow up has not been made to develop the Department to the desired capacity” (Guta, 2011:110), and it remained at the level of just a thought and a resolution. According to Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.), the LWF has once given an amount of money for this purpose, but the money was used for publishing some books in Amharic (by Meseret Sibhat Leab & Eshetu Abate). He further noted that except for raising and resolving the establishment of such an institution, it was not given an office and responsible personnel for a follow-up. Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.) argued that if this idea had materialized, the development of Oromo would have benefitted considerably.

Another initiative which could have benefitted the development of this language was the Linguistic Institute in memory of Onesimos Nesib and Aster Ganno. It was established in conjunction with the Centennial Celebration of the Bible reaching the Oromo people in 1999. It was mentioned in Biratu and Ambacha (n.d.: 2) that “establishing a missiology and linguistics promoting institute in memory of Onesimos Nesib and Aster Ganno” was one of the issues deliberated upon by the Centennial Celebration Coordinating Committee in its nine important meetings. The idea was to have such an institute in which linguistic presentations and panel discussions on the language would be held every two years, and the proceedings be published. Accordingly, the first symposium was conducted at Naqamte (Wellega) coinciding with the Centennial Celebration, 7-9 January 1999, and the second one after two years, in January 2001 in Addis Ababa. In these two linguistic and missiology seminars, different studies relevant to Oromo and missiology were presented. For example, the following six papers were presented in the first institute, all of them in the English language:

1. *Onesimos Nasib, his life and work*, by Manfred Zach
2. *The Missiological Strategy of Niguse Tashu, Gebre Ewostateos Ze-Mickael, and Onesimos Nesib in Reaching the Oromo with the Gospel*, by Agne Nordlander
3. *The Contribution of Onesimos Nesib and Aster Gano to the Development of Oromo Literature: An overview*, by Kebede Hordofa Janko

4. *Louis Harms' Religious Experience and His Strategy to Reach the Oromo People*, by Dr. Hartwig Harms
5. *The Early Interaction between Presbyterian (Bethel) and Lutheran (Mekane Yesus) Movements in Wallaga*, by Debela Birri (Th. D)
6. *GOD HAS A PLAN FOR HIS PEOPLE 100 years anniversary of the Gospel to the Oromo*, by Oyvind M. Eide.

This symposium was held only twice, and the proceedings could not be published because of a lack of follow-up. This is another example of lack of attention from the church leadership to the development of this language and others.

JFLP, which was established to promote literacy in Oromo so that people could read their Bible in the Roman script, is also another good beginning which is not functioning as planned. The idea was to establish a printing press for Oromo publications (see § 5.3.3). According to Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.), and as observed by this researcher also, everything has been stacked in an office of the EECMY CO. There is no distribution of materials according to the original plan. The JFLP has been put under the Development and Social Services Commission of the EECMY, whereas there is another Literacy and Translation Office under the Gospel Ministry Department doing similar work. Both of these offices are meant to enable the church community to read their Bible, though JFLP focuses on one language (Oromo) and the other office under the Gospel Ministry Department focuses mainly on the other minority languages of the country. If the church leadership had given sufficient attention to the issue, many resources could have been shared between the two, as they are under the same church and working for the same purpose (Mr. Ambacha, pers. comm.).

Concerning the mass media service also, the current leadership is criticized for not effectively working like the former leaders (FGD-002). During the time of Rev. Tumsa (1966–1979), within a short period of time, the number of hymns in Oromo grew from two to fifty, because he was encouraging different people to produce songs in Oromo. This has declined now as a result of the leadership's apathy. Others have started working towards the development of the language; but the YDCS, the only media service of the church, has neglected this noble activity (Mr. Didi,

pers. comm.). For example, Mr. Biru (YDCS, pers. comm.) reported that a question was raised by the participants in the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the General Assembly of the EECMY as to why there were no church publications in the vernacular languages at this time, when such usage is very common in other areas. The President of the church responded that this could be done at the level of church units. The print media section of the YDCS reports that this tradition is being followed now (see also § 5.3.5). However, many people believe that while the radio programme of the church is using the different languages of the country, it is not fair to push the print media (literature) work to the church units. In the EECMY Policy for Broadcasting Ministry (n.d.:1), it was pointed out that one medium is used in such a way that it reinforces the other, but this is not being seen as far as print media (literature work) is concerned. As the centre is also serving all the population groups in the nation, it needs to consider the development and use of these languages as well. It does not seem to be enough to give technical support alone when the units need its assistance. There are also some who question what the work of this section should be as it does not work on developing the literature of the different languages of the country (Mr. Didi, pers. comm.).

According to FGD-002, formerly there were regular publications in Oromo. These publications which used to be produced and distributed by the YDCS are no longer being produced because of lack of attention. This has discouraged people from producing materials in Oromo. Because of this there is a lack of literature in the church. The fact that literature is scarce in the language has negatively influenced the development of the language. The church literature work in general is said to be very weak. Had there been enough literature, Oromo would have had a better opportunity of developing. According to information from FGD-002, some even question whether YDCS is living up to its mandate of disseminating the mission of the church, when they see lack of concern for Oromo and other vernaculars.

Another area where the church leaders have fallen short is that they have not encouraged education in Oromo in Addis Ababa, the capital, despite the willingness of the government to support it. As mentioned above, this is the time when the government of the country is encouraging the development and usage of the various languages of the country. In most cases the children of many Oromos living in Addis Ababa do not have the chance of using their

parents' language in the educational context, as Amharic is the dominant language in the city. It is only at home and around the church that the children have the chance of being exposed to their parents' language (see § 5.4.3). Thus, the government has planned that Oromo community schools are opened in Addis Ababa, and has asked the EECMY to run two of these schools. However, the church leadership is not taking sufficient advantage of this opportunity to maintain and develop the language, as they have not yet managed to establish any schools (researcher's personal observation).

Today's intellectuals and leaders in the church are criticized for being preoccupied with their personal interests, ignoring their responsibilities regarding language development (FGD-001 & 002). While the current General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Berhanu Ofgaa (2012), appreciates the legacy left behind by the earlier church fathers and mothers, and even extends a call for leaving a similar legacy for the future generation, he does not say anything regarding what should be done practically regarding cultural and linguistic development of the Ethiopian languages, the one main concern of the earlier pioneers.

#### **5.4.10 The reconciliation case**

The conflict over the use of Oromo in Addis Ababa which had divided the church into two and affected so much of its services dragged on for 15 years until it was resolved by reconciliation. During those years quite a number of attempts at reconciliation were made by different bodies. The church conducted various workshops, seminars and other consultations at different levels to create awareness about the policy it had formulated, although some still say that enough was not done (Rev. Dr. Biri; CES-002; Mr. Aylate, interview). Furthermore, different church partners, for example, the Ethiopian Evangelical Churches Fellowship and other sister churches tried their best to bring the conflict to an end. Partners from abroad also tried to intervene in different ways. Different well-known persons and organizations in Ethiopia also tried to resolve the conflict between the two parties by reconciliation. Among the latter, the then President of the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic, Dr. Negasso Gidada, did much to arbitrate between the two parties. Besides information collected from informants on this matter, the letter Dr. Gidada wrote on 27 June 1992, in which he presented a proposal for the reconciliation is good evidence of this

(what others have done in this case is also documented to a large extent and are found in the church archives in the form of letters, minutes, proposals, etc.). However, none of these attempts were successful as the faction church (Addis Ababa and the surrounding Mekane Yesus) kept putting forward different preconditions, which were not consistent with the constitution of the church. These included issues such as becoming a sister church, having their own synod under the umbrella of the mother church and taking ownership of the property of the church. The faction group also complained that it was the mother church that was not accepting the arbitration.

The church had been openly receiving the requests for reconciliation, but there were differences between the leaders of the two groups. As the church of Christ, there is no way to say, “no” to reconciliation, according to Rev. Emana (pers. comm.). A letter written by the church President to congregation elders, pastors, evangelists, ministers and all believers on 13 June 2000 with the title, “A second time peace and reconciliation call from the EECMY” is a good example for this. The President of the church, Rev. Iteffa Gobena, confirmed this at the reconciliation ceremony that the 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the EECMY resolved not to close the door at any cost. This commitment of the church leadership to reconciliation was expressed also in the letters written by the church President to the Minister of the Ethiopian Federal Republic Government Ministry of Justice on 23 June 2000 and 8 July 2000. The then President of the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic, Dr. Gidada, also expressed his appreciation for the cooperation of the EECMY leaders regarding reconciliation in his letter of 27 June 1992. Finally, the church leadership had to go to court concerning its name and the property that had been taken by the faction church. The court decided that they should return the property to the mother church and that they could not operate under the name of the EECMY.

Before this court decision was implemented, reconciliation was attempted once more, arbitrated by the former members and leaders of the EECMY, who were then living in the United States of America (Rev. Dr. Biri; Rev. Dr. Guta; Rev. Emana, pers. comm.). These persons had been involved in the issue one way or another. Some of them were supporters of the language policy whereas others were among those who had been opposing it. They included the former President of the CES when the conflict began (he has now become the General Secretary of the EECMY

after the reconciliation), the first President of the Addis Ababa and Surrounding Mekane Yesus Church, and others such as Rev. Dr. Eshetu Abate, who had been writing against the church language policy. From the side of the supporters of the policy, the President (Rev. Yadesa Daba) and other members of the mother church during the conflict were included. These people came to realize their mistakes, and decided to consider negotiation. They gave themselves the name “Ministers of Reconciliation and Unity (MRU)”, and they agreed to come to Ethiopia and talk to leaders of both churches. Accordingly, they came to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and convinced the leaders of the two churches to reconcile. Then they conducted a meeting in Addis Ababa Mekane Yesus Congregation in 2010, and both parties accepted a reconciliation programme this time. Thus, both sides repented in front of leaders of congregations in Addis Ababa, CES leaders and church leaders, and it was decided that the two sides be reunited. Accordingly, a neutral body was established to work on this reunification issue. This body prepared conditions of the reunification, and facilitated the reunification in congregations where there had been division during the conflict. The main condition for the reconciliation was respecting the church language policy and other rules and regulations as stipulated in the church constitution (Rev. Emanu, pers. comm.).

Subsequently, some objected that those arbitrators who came from abroad and involved in the reconciliation were themselves those who needed to be reconciled, and that they should not have been arbitrators, suspecting their neutrality. The letter written by the nine congregations also puts forward this point of view. They contend that the church leaders should have been suspicious of these people and the reason they agreed to this issue of reconciliation only after the court decision.

However, there are some who appreciated that the reconciliation could be facilitated by former members of the church itself, while local and international partners could not do it (e.g. Rev. Dr. Guta, pers. comm.). Ofga (2011:127) also reports that this was brought about miraculously by the Lord that the believers could come together after 15 years to wash the feet of one another to show forgiveness and reunite. Rev. Dr. Magarsa Guta, former General Secretary of EECMY (pers. comm.), also agrees with this idea saying that God miraculously solved this problem.

Many people also criticize the current leadership of the EECMY concerning the reconciliation made between the faction church and the mother EECMY for other reasons. No one is against the reconciliation, but people are not happy about the way the reconciliation was implemented, about the timing, and about the effects of the reconciliation, mainly because of what has been happening following the reconciliation. Thus, although the reconciliation is something that everyone supports, the procedure followed in the reconciliation was flawed (Rev. Emana, pers. comm.).

One reason why people criticize the leaders about the reconciliation is that it should have involved the grassroots community before reaching agreement. Some say that it was a reconciliation made between leaders without consulting members at grassroots level, who had suffered from the division of the church. Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.) argued that the problem basically started because of Oromo programme at Gullele in the Chapel of Luis Harms Hostel and the case at Intoto. These people were still worshipping under persecution when this so-called reconciliation took place, but no one consulted the grassroots congregations, especially the Finfinne Oromo Congregation. Nine congregations also complained in a letter (n.d.) they wrote to the EECMY-CES President that the promise to involve them in any kind of reconciliation had not been kept when the final reconciliation was implemented. According to this letter, the reconciliation would have had a solid foundation if the believers at grassroots level had been consulted first and had come to an understanding with one another. Thus, there are some informants who said that the reconciliation seems to be superficial and fake.

Rev. Emana (pers. comm.) believed that the timing of the reconciliation is another source of criticism. The background problems of the conflict which forced the church to go to court were the name and property of the EECMY. When the case was heard, this reconciliation had been attempted in different ways, but it was not accepted by the faction group. Now they submitted to the negotiation so as not to lose the properties after the court of law had decided that they should return all the properties and change the name of the church. The option they had was either to remain as they were returning the property of the church and to change their name, or to come back to the mother church (Rev. Dr. Biri, pers. comm.). Hence, the leaders should have taken over the property of the church according to the decision of the court of law, and then gone on to

reconciliation later on. Another advantage of this for the church would have been that when the property was returned through the decision of the court, a certain body would have been assigned to get back the property, and make an inventory of it. However, because the reconciliation came in between, the case of the property was not mentioned again. Both parties simply came together. Thus, no one has an inventory of the property now. In the letter written by the nine congregations mentioned above, this issue of the property not having an inventory was also mentioned. However, the position of the church leaders in this regard is reflected in the letter dated 13 June 2000, where it is clearly stated that the EECMY values the believers whom the Lord died for and redeemed more than any property. That might be why the church leadership hurried into the reconciliation, disregarding the court decision about the property. Rev. Dr. Guta (pers. comm.) also added that the fact that those from the United States came with a broken heart and with repentance admitting all their wrong doings of the past, and that this convinced the church leadership to disregard the court decision and go to reconciliation without any preconditions. Furthermore, if this had not been done and if the court decision had been implemented first, they would not have come back to the mother church. Thus, he believed that the church leadership handled the matter wisely.

Still others are sceptical about the reconciliation because of some of the consequences seen now in some congregations after the reconciliation. What has been seen after the reconciliation? According to Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.), on the one hand, peace and unity is restored, as the congregations have been reunified, and are more or less worshipping together, in some cases in a language of their preference. The policy of the church is now upheld in principle in that it is possible for people to worship in their languages in many places, if there is such a request. They are now worshipping in their languages, and different programmes are run in Oromo in places where it had not been possible before. Earlier they were denied permission to conduct Sunday worship programmes in Oromo, but now this has been allowed: children, youth and women have programmes in their language. Furthermore, the former Addis Ababa and Surrounding Mekane Yesus Church does not exist. Rev. Dr. Guta (pers. comm.) believed that the image of the church which had been spoiled due to this conflict has been restored now, and the church has a good relationship with the government and its other local and international partners.

On the other hand, that there is reconciliation does not mean everything has become normal overnight (Rev. Emanu, pers. comm.). Thus, there are still some serious problems even after the reconciliation, and this causes people to criticize the leaders about the timing of the reconciliation. For example, some of the reunified congregations have not yet implemented the policy decision, although this was a precondition for the reunification (Rev. Dr. Biri, pers. comm.). For example, in Mekanissa-EECMY Congregation, the question of using Oromo has still been suppressed, although the majority of the members are Oromos. For instance, this researcher observed in an overnight programme to celebrate the Eve of Easter of 2013 (which is done every year) that not even one Oromo hymn was sung during the whole night programme, while the majority of participants on the programme were Oromos and the constitution of the EECMY gives the Oromos the full right to use their own language, which they are still denied in this EECMY Congregation.

Moreover, in some congregations although the Sunday worship programme has been granted, it is not possible to widen the service to different programmes for youth, women, etc. In Intoto EECMY Congregation, for example, the Oromo members are suffering because they are not allowed to conduct different programmes such as youth and women's services, which they exercised until the time of the reunification. They were allowed only the liturgy and the sermon in Oromo, while other programmes are denied. The choir is not allowed to practice and present its songs in Oromo; children cannot have their programmes in Oromo, etc. FOCUS members of Addis Ababa University previously conducted their programme in this congregation, but after the reconciliation, they have been denied their rights (Mr. Kerisa, pers. comm.). Thus, there is still a controversy going on between the two united groups (those who came back from the faction church and those who were in the mother church) in the EECMY-Intoto Congregation, and their hearts are not together as they ought to be. Their case is said even to have gone once more to the government office for restitution of their rights. The Oromo group who were denied their rights of language use as before were forced to go to the government once more. The leadership of the EECMY-CO has also tried to intervene, but members criticize them again for favouring those who oppose the use of Oromo for different programmes (Mr. Kerissa, pers. comm.). This matter of disagreement between the two groups was intensified recently as the employment of three workers from the Oromo group (the Pastor and two evangelists) was

terminated by the leaders. The conflict in this congregation is still not solved, and the government administration is now intervening in order to solve it legally and constitutionally.

In the EECMY-Gullele Bethel Congregation, which is one of the victims of the previous conflict, was reunified after many trials. The party that favours the use of Oromo according to the policy of the church is still in the minority, because many of the members of this congregation remained in the Finfinne Oromo Congregation, as they had not been given any place in the reconciliation process. Thus, the minority group does not have enough say in the running of the congregation. The assumption was that all of the members who had been worshipping there would come back after reunification. However, as these members had not been consulted and were peacefully and comfortably conducting their worship services in the Finfinne Oromo Congregation, they did not want to go back to the reunified church (Rev. Dr. Biri, pers. comm.).

In some congregations also although the worship in Oromo programme has been granted, it does not take place in the main congregation hall. This programme is seen as an appendix and is held in a separate room from the main congregation hall. One of these (the EECMY-Lideta Congregation) was reported to have even closed the room in which the Oromos used to worship in their language (Rev. Eman, pers. comm.). Still in other places there are limited resources so that the programme does not run well. Generally, both programmes are run by the same committees, and partiality is seen in the work of these committees in assigning programme times. They do not want the programme in Oromo to be expanded to the same degree as the Amharic one. In these committees the number of members of Oromo-speaking people or those who favour the policy decision is minimal. This number is deliberately kept low.

According to Evangelist Kiflu Kitla (pers. comm.), the EECMY-Nefas Silk Congregation, which had been conducting programmes in both languages in different shifts, has recently faced difficulties regarding the election of elders. This congregation was not part of the problem during the time of the conflict (see § 5.4.4). At the beginning, the Oromo speakers had a worship programme in the residence of an individual member of the congregation. They did not bring up the question of using Oromo in the congregation for the sake of peacefully worshipping together with the others. After having worshipped there for some time, this group prepared a

Thanksgiving Day to which many members of the congregation were invited. This helped this programme to become known and as a result the number of participants grew over time, so that the individual's house was not big enough to hold those who came for worship. Accordingly, the request was made to the congregation leaders and a time and place were given. There was no problem at that time because of two factors. First, most of the ministers of the congregation were Oromos. Second, the Chairperson of the Elders' Committee of the congregation had a positive attitude towards the policy of the church, unlike in some other places. However, recently after the reconciliation took place between the others who had had problems in worshipping together, a problem arose in this congregation when electing elders. Before the recent election, the majority of the members of Elders' Committee were Oromos, actually because the majority of the members of the congregation were also Oromos. When another election took place a majority of Oromos were elected, and dissention arose after the election because of this. The other members of the congregation did not want to be under such a leadership unless there was a mixture of Oromos and other ethnic groups. The leadership of the CES therefore had to intervene and formed a temporary administration for the congregation. This temporary administration decided that the two groups (Oromos and non-Oromos) should form different congregations, as they could not worship together peacefully. Accordingly, the former single congregation is now divided into two along ethnic lines (Oromo Congregation and Non-Oromo Congregation). They divided the property of the former one congregation and separated. In this case, Evangelist Kiflu and Dr. Kanno (pers. comm.) felt that this problem has resulted because of the shortcomings of the current leadership. They should have explained the essence of the issues in the reconciliation process and convinced such congregations to fully implement the policy decisions, rather than siding with the opponents of the use of the vernacular and splitting the congregation.

The other consequence of the reconciliation is the establishment of a new synod by the former faction group in Addis Ababa. The conflict was first begun within the CES. According to Rev. Dr. Biri (pers. comm.), as a precondition for this reconciliation, the faction church asked to establish its own synod rather than coming back to the former CES, from which it had separated itself. The reason they gave was that when they were functioning separately, both had developed different rules, regulations and traditions, and they did not want to bring these different traditions

together (Rev. Emana, pers. comm.). People objected to this precondition because it indicates that they did not really come back wholeheartedly.

On the basis of a proposal by the President of the EECMY to form this separate synod in Addis Ababa, the 18<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the EECMY gave a directive that this matter be treated in accordance with the constitution of the church. Although the constitution does not allow the formation of such a synod, a special commission was established by the church leadership for the formation of the synod. The Commission established has now formed the synod for those congregations which had been under the umbrella of the Addis Ababa and Surrounding Mekane Yesus Church. Thus, the current church leadership is criticized for accepting this synod formation, because it is harmful to those who were under persecution (FGD-001). It is also against the constitution of the church in that the request to establish a new synod should have come from congregations. In this case it is only the group that had detached itself from the mother church because of the language policy issue that had raised this issue as a precondition for reconciliation, and the church leadership accepted it. The question should have been raised by the congregations that have reunified (Rev. Dr. Biri, pers. comm.). Rev. Dr. Hirpo (pers. comm.) is of the opinion that those who want a separate synod have not understood the essence of reconciliation when they revert to past actions after having come together, cried to one another about their sins and washed each other's feet. Reconciliation is regretting the past deeds and repenting; and being determined not to repeat mistakes of the past. If what was being done before the reconciliation is repeated afterwards, then the reconciliation is not from the heart.

In summary, the leaders of the church are criticized by different people in different ways about this reconciliation. They are criticized for accepting the reconciliation that did not secure the rights which they have under the constitution of the country and the policy of the church, as some groups that had been under persecution during the division are concerned. Informants said that the party that had suffered the persecution at the time of the division, being under the umbrella of the mother church, was made once more to go back to the party which had separated itself from the mother church, while it should have been the other way around. At least, it should have been like two churches coming together rather than one going to the other. These

informants believed that if they were united in a congregation, there should not be any reason for not to being united in the synod.

#### **5.4.11 On implementing church policies**

As we have seen above (§ 5.2), the church has formulated a policy for language use in the different services it renders to the community. However, the leadership are experiencing difficulties in implementing this policy. They are being perceived as once more compromising the policy issues and suppressing the use of the language in some cases (refer to § 5.4.10).

One such incident is apparent at Mekane Yesus Seminary (researcher's observation). The Oromo students of Mekane Yesus Seminary have their own fellowship (a branch of FOCUS) in which they worship together once a week in the Chapel of Mekane Yesus Seminary in their own language (see § 5.3.2). In addition to this, there is another fellowship in which all the Seminary community come together and worship again once a week in Amharic. Some speakers of the other languages believe that the Oromo fellowship has harmed the whole community fellowship, because the Oromo speakers mostly go to their own fellowship and not to the one for the whole community. They consider the Oromo fellowship to be an obstacle to the unity of the Seminary community in general and the student body in particular. In one meeting, in which the Seminary Management Committee, the Seminary Board and the Church Management Committee participated, this case was discussed. Then, the top leaders of the Church (the President and the Treasurer) immediately gave a directive to the Seminary Management Committee to close down the Oromo fellowship programme. They said that they passed such a decision for the sake of maintaining the identity of the Seminary as a unified body. However, the Seminary leadership refused to accept such a directive, because it was against the constitution of the country. The Principal of the Seminary said that the other groups should also be encouraged to worship God in their respective languages, rather than opposing those who worshipped in their language. There were other participants in the meeting who said that that issue was just a symptom of a disease, and that the disease should be treated rather than that symptom. Thus, while it is the policy of the church and the government of the country that anyone can use his/her language of preference in

all activities, the church leadership gave such a directive to pacify the group that is resisting the use of Oromo for the purpose of worship, considering it as an obstacle to unity.

Another instance of this is the situation currently prevailing in the EECMY-Intoto Congregation (Rev. Emana, Mr. Kerissa, pers. comm.). In this congregation, after the groups had been combined following the reconciliation agreement, those who were under persecution were not allowed to conduct all the programmes which they used to conduct before the reconciliation, such as the youth and women's programmes (see § 5.4.10). This was because the leadership of the combined congregation was not in favour of the policy of Oromo language use, despite the church policy as well as the memorandum of agreement. This matter was brought to the attention of the leadership of the church, and the President and the Treasurer were delegated to arbitrate in the matter. Unfortunately, the delegates of the church were siding with the opponents of the policy, rather than convincing those who were against the policy of the church. Thus, this disagreement within this congregation could not be resolved, and they are once more in a deadlock conflict, although they worship within the same congregation. The leaders of the church CO do not seem to be able to help those workers of the congregation whose employment has been terminated. Thus, the government body had to intervene, and even ordered the church leadership to give attention to this problem, and solve it in line with the church policy (Mr. Legese, Rev. Emana and Mr. Kerisa, pers. comm.).

According to the personal observations of the researcher, still another problem with the church leadership is that there is not enough follow-up on the implementation of the policy decisions (see § 5.2). There is still some resistance to implementing the policy and its guidelines in different areas of the church structure. Although there is some use of the language (actually other vernaculars as well), still there is no sense of wholeheartedly working for the development of the language as far as the church leadership is concerned. Issues mentioned in the policy, such as training the community are ignored. In congregation buildings and believers' houses in many places we still see verses of the Bible written and displayed in the Sabaeen script, even sometimes in Amharic. For example, in the EECMY-Nejjoo Congregation found on the compound of the first mission school founded by EECMY, we see in the middle of the altar of the church a verse in Amharic, which probably very few believers in the congregation

understand. Similar things are observed in other congregations in the rural areas, where the majority of the community nowadays understand only Oromo and can read and write the Roman script. At Western Synod (the first synod in the history of the EECMY) a verse from the Bible written and hung on the wall in the Sabaeen script was observed in the branch office of JFLP. This is an office which is established to educate the community and enable them to read and write in the Roman script (see § 5.3.3). This practice is purely against the guideline which the church has set (that the church should encourage the reading of the languages by putting up verses in the local languages), (see § 5.2.). Another instance of the use of Sabaeen script was observed in the hymns prepared in Oromo for the 19<sup>th</sup> General Assembly meeting of the EECMY held from 27 January to 2 February 2013. In the booklet of hymns prepared for the General Assembly, Oromo part where 11 choruses are listed was prepared in the Sabaeen script.

The willingness of the church leadership to accept the precondition of forming a synod of their own for the previous faction group is against the constitution of the church. The constitution allows a synod to be formed on the request of the congregations or parishes constituting the would be synod (see § 5.4.10). However, in the case of the synod formed at Addis Ababa level, it was requested by this faction group as a precondition to the reconciliation, and the church leadership accepted it, despite the fact that many of the congregations are not willing to be part of this newly formed synod. The current church leadership is criticized for even pushing some congregations into being part of this synod against their will. For instance, outreach places which are requesting to be transformed into a congregation are facing pressure from the CO to work under the new former faction group synod while the constitution gives them the right to be guided by the synod under which they have been working.

In general, the current leadership is criticized for not doing enough in working for the development of Oromo and other vernaculars. The fact that it did not give enough attention to following-up the good beginnings of the past leaders, the timing and conditions of the reconciliation concerning Oromo use in Addis Ababa, and implementing the policies it had established has put the leadership under such criticism. While the language case is amongst the issues that need attention, the current church leadership is criticized for giving priority to less important things and ignoring this one.

## 5.5 Other obstacles

Besides the above mentioned obstacles to the development and use of Oromo (§ 5.4.8), the informants in this study have noticed that there are other obstacles which need consideration. These obstacles arise due to different factors, and unless they are alleviated, they could hinder the development of the language (Rev. Dr. Guta, Rev. Dr. Hirpo, etc., FGD-001, pers. comm.).

The fact that communities with different linguistic backgrounds live together in parts of Ethiopia has necessitated the use of Amharic as a lingua franca. As it is economically not viable and practically difficult to use many languages, using the lingua franca in the church services is still encouraged in many cases (EECMY-WS-001, interview).

The use of the Sabaean script for writing Oromo in the past was another obstacle to developing Oromo (FGD-001). If there had been the possibility of using the Roman script when the Bible was first translated, the development of the language could have advanced further. Even nowadays, although the public uses the Roman script in reading and writing Oromo, it is still seen that some church leaders and members are not comfortable with this script (see § 5.4.11). There are still some elderly people who cannot read the Roman script, whereas the young generation can only read the Roman script, because that is the script they learn at school. Although the church has been trying through JFLP to help the Christian community become literate in this script, the use of the Sabaean script cannot still be avoided in the church. Thus, it is observed in the EECMY today that two scripts are used side by side although only one, the Roman script, is officially used (researcher's personal observation).

Code-switching and shifting can also be seen as another problem in the process of the development of Oromo in the church. According to FGD-003, many of the users of this language in the church (actually in other secular domains as well) are seen when they codeswitch either to Amharic or English. Such things are sometimes seen in single words. For example, in *wanti kun xuruu dha* 'This is a good thing', the word *xuruu* 'good' is used from Amharic while the Oromo word *gaarii* is available. There are many such words commonly used in Oromo from both English and Amharic. The following are some examples: *inni waannaan* for *inni olaanaan* 'the

main thing ‘, *raa’iyyi* for *mul’ata* ‘revelation’, *siddatii* for *ari’atama* ‘persecution’, etc. (researcher’s personal observation). In other cases also the switching may be part of the sentence or the full sentence. For example, in an Oromo television programme (*TV Labsii Ifaa*) broadcast by Miju Broadcasting on Elshadai International TV Network, the regular preacher, Rev. Dr. Gemechis Desta, is heard using Oromo and English almost equally.

While such issues are due to the prior exposure of the speakers to these languages and that Oromo was rarely used especially in formal situations, there are other factors also that force them to shift from Oromo to the other languages. One main reason may be that it is sometimes difficult to find terms or expressions in Oromo for some concepts, and words need to be borrowed from the other languages (Rev. Dr. Biri, pers. comm.). In some cases although terms have been coined for some of such concepts, they are not generally known. For example, the word *barreessuu* is used now for ‘writing’ but as many do not know this, and use the Amharic *tsaafuu* or *caafuu*. For telephoning, a word *bilbiluu* has been coined, but people are heard to use the Amharic *dawwaluu*. In the other cases people simply shift from Oromo to especially English believing probably that they make things clearer, while in reality there are some who do not understand the Amharic/English words, expressions or sentences (Rev. Dr. Guta, Mr. Terefe, pers. comm.). It seems sometimes that they want to show that they are educated persons by using the more dominant languages. In the interview conducted with EECMY-WS-002, it was learned that some, especially the youth, view code-switching as a sign of being modern.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings as elicited from different sources concerning the current contribution of the EECMY to the development of Oromo. We have seen that this improved contribution of the church towards the maintenance and development of the language is largely due to the greater tolerance to vernacular languages by the government of the country at present. Unlike the past regimes of Ethiopia (the feudal and the communist), where vernacular languages had been proscribed, the present government has proclaimed the equality of all languages and cultures (EFDR Constitution, 1995). Following the change in the government system of the country, the EECMY has formulated a language policy for its ecclesiastical and social services.

Accordingly, despite some obstacles, much has been done by the church and its ministers in order to develop and use Oromo.

The chapter reported on church activities such as translation and transliteration of the Bible and other religious material which have contributed to the development of the language. This activity has gone now to the extent of translating the Bible into the different Oromo dialects. Following the introduction of the Roman script for the language by the present government, much existing ecclesiastical material has been transliterated in this script.

Oromo is used more extensively nowadays than before in the EECMY services and its use has been extended from the rural areas to the towns and cities of the country, and even beyond Ethiopia. Furthermore, many of the other denominations which had never used Oromo in their services before have now started using it, because the Oromo society has become aware of its language rights. Different Christian fellowships have also been established specifically on the basis of their use of Oromo in their services. Thus, Oromo is being used widely in different services of the church, and this has enhanced the development of the language.

The EECMY is conducting literacy programmes in order to help the community to learn to read and write in the Roman script chosen for the language. Although JFLP is not functioning as originally planned due to lack of attention from the church leadership, it has made a reasonable contribution to the development of the language, in that it has produced material on different religious and social issues in the language and taught many Oromos to read and write their language.

Besides these, the mass media which had started operating earlier under the unfavourable conditions of the past are now using the language and other vernaculars more extensively. The electronic media is especially active in doing much to make use of the different vernacular languages, including Oromo. The print media is also functioning well, especially thanks to organizations established for this purpose, such as Aster Ganno Literature Society and JFLP. The services rendered to the community through the media and print materials contribute substantially towards the development of the language.

However, different obstacles have been seen in the church, which have hindered its endeavours to develop the language. Predominant among these is the conflict over the use of Oromo in the church. This conflict has its roots in the conflict which began concurrently with the beginning of evangelical activities in the Oromo area, especially Wellega, when the EOC clergy opposed the evangelicals for using Oromo in their services. This later became an internal conflict in the present time to the extent of harming the holistic ministry of the church on top of retarding the development of the language.

The current conflict started when Oromos in Addis Ababa, the capital, requested the use of their language in their services, in response to a policy decision concerning language use passed by the EECMY. Different causes and effects of this language conflict in the church as elicited from the informants of this study were discussed in this chapter. Both parties put forward their own reasons for the conflict which were also considered from the perspective of more neutral informants, who also gave their own opinions on possible causes. Both positive and negative effects of the conflict were observed. On the positive side, for example, it was reported that different congregations were established in different places to worship solely in Oromo due to the awareness created among the speech community regarding its language rights. On the negative side, it was pointed out that Christian brothers and sisters were divided along linguistic attitude lines. This language conflict was finally brought to an end by reconciliation arbitrated by former church members who now live in the USA. The situation has not been fully resolved however as there are some problem areas.

Some other obstacles which have slowed down the development of the language through the church services have been reported. One of these is the leaders' lack of commitment to the development of the language. Other things such as the use of Amharic as the official language and lingua franca in many cases, the use the Sabaeen script to write Oromo and code-switching have also played a negative role in the development of the language.

In general, this is the time when the church can cooperate with the government in working harder to develop and use the vernacular languages of the country such as Oromo, as the government has now made significant efforts to develop and use the formerly proscribed languages. The

church has many opportunities to involve itself in this development of the language in line with its other social services, particularly as it has the motto of holistic ministry. On the one hand, the church has tried to be committed to this issue by inter alia opening an office of Translation and Literacy under its Gospel Ministry Department and the literacy project (JFLP) under its Development and Social Services Commission. On the other hand, the 15-year conflict over the implementation of the language policy has been a huge obstacle to the development of the language.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the discussions in the previous chapters are summarized and conclusions are drawn. It opens with a brief summary of each chapter. Thereafter, the findings of the thesis are discussed, relating them to their contributions to language planning and development as well as the role played by Christianity. Finally, the limitations of the study and the implications of these to future study areas will be pointed out. Recommendations are also given to encourage the church and others concerned to apply the findings of this study effectively

#### 6.2 Summary

The first chapter sketched the general background and provided a statement of the problem as well as the significance and objectives of the study. In the background section, a profile of the Ethiopian people and languages in general and the Oromo people and languages in particular was given. Furthermore, an overview of Christianity in Ethiopia in general and among the Oromo people in particular was presented. In addition to the background information, the study's motivation, aim, research questions and significance of the study were set out.

Chapter 2 is a review of theoretical literature related to language planning in general and language development in particular. This literature was appraised in order to place the findings of the present research within these theoretical contexts. This chapter also gave an overview of the literature on the development of African and Ethiopian languages.

A historical overview of the relationship between Christianity and language development was also presented in this chapter. The contribution to the development of the languages was discussed. In relation to this, the contributions of the work of missionaries and Evangelical Christianity to the development of African languages in general and Ethiopian languages in

particular was also reviewed in some detail. The chapter concluded with a review of the literature on language conflict and politics. Different language conflict situations across the world and in Africa in particular were examined.

The third chapter of this study dealt with research design and methodology. Different sampling techniques such as purposive sampling, maximum variation sampling, snowball or chain sampling, theoretical sampling and within-case-sampling were employed in order to get a variety of data from the target population. It was also noted that triangulation of research methods such as focus group discussions, participant observation and document analysis was employed in addition to interviews which were the major instrument of data collection.

In Chapter 4 a historical overview of the contribution of the EECMY to the development of Oromo was presented. The information was gathered from different published and unpublished sources such as interviews and focus group discussions. The work of the Church relating to the translation of the Bible and other ecclesiastical literature, education and literacy programmes, language use in its worship, the media and other activities was examined.

The translation work by the church was one of the main historical contributors to the maintenance and development of this language. The first missionaries, Onesimos Nesib in particular, who attempted to come to the Oromo area started by working on the translation of the Bible into Oromo. While Onesimos' version of the Bible was accepted and used by the community for a long time, later on it was felt that a better translation was needed. This work was conducted by a team of experts consisting of missionaries and local theologians, and was completed in 1975.

The study showed that the other historical contribution of the EECMY to the Oromo language development is its usage for different public religious services. Before the introduction of Christianity to the Oromo area, Oromo had been discouraged and even proscribed from public use. Only Amharic was favoured. However, the church began to encourage the use of Oromo and other vernaculars in its religious activities. As this encouraged the community to use its language

in other public places also, it made an important contribution to the maintenance and development of Oromo.

The formal education through the medium of Oromo conducted by the EECMY was another significant contribution made by the Church. The evangelical missionaries encouraged the use of Oromo in education, and even introduced modern education to Ethiopia, in contrast to the EOC which had been giving a traditional type of church education before that. This initiative to educate the community in its vernacular began when the missionaries had to limit their activity to the border areas, not being able to enter into the country.

In Chapter 5, data collected regarding the contribution of the EECMY to Oromo development were analysed and presented. This was, however, different from the previous chapter that focused on the current contribution of the church to the development of the language. Chapter 4 was concerned with the historical contribution focusing on the feudal and the communist regimes, which favoured only one language and one religion, whereas Chapter 5 was concerned with the activities of the church during the current democratic system, since 1991, where all languages have been given equal status. In this chapter, the church's commitment to develop the vernacular languages of the country was examined. The activities of the church which are contributing to the development of Oromo in line with the church and government language policies and obstacles encountered in this endeavour to develop the language were presented. As in the historical analyses, such work as translation and transliteration of religious literature, use of the language for religious and social activities of the church, education and literacy as well as mass media were discussed in detail.

It was noted that the translation work that was begun when Evangelical Christianity first appeared in the country has continued in a more effective way because of the current opportunities in the country. These days other bodies which are engaged in translation and language development work collaborating with the church. Thus, in collaboration with different denominations and secular bodies which are interested in language development matters and different denominations, the EECMY has conducted translation work on different dialects of Oromo. Another recent development is that the Bible and other ecclesiastical literature have been

transliterated into the Roman alphabet, which is now the official script of the language. As the current democratic government has secured the freedom of choice for the speech community, the Roman alphabet has been chosen, and it became possible to transliterate the religious material into this script. Furthermore, this chapter described different institutions in the church which have recently been established specifically to work on translating literature of religious and social issues into Oromo. The significant ones among these are the Aster Ganno Literature Society, JFLP and YDCS print media section.

Another contribution of the church to the development of Oromo, described in this chapter, is its use in different religious as well as social services of the church. Although the EECMY was using Oromo and other vernaculars of the country in the early days, even the days of language proscription, it has continued to use the language more vigorously, even in the areas where it had not been attempted earlier because of the political system of that time. There is now a more extended use of the language in worship services and sermons. In areas such as Addis Ababa, the capital, where it had not been the case before, the language is now being widely used. Other denominations, including the EOC, which had not been using any other language except Amharic, have now begun to use it. This is believed to be the influence of the work of the EECMY on the other denominations.

The chapter also reported on the EECMY's work on literacy and education which contributed to the development of Oromo. The church has now established a translation and literacy office in order to deal with literacy in the vernaculars so that the communities are enabled to read their Bible and other literature. Church units working among the Oromo society have organized themselves to launch a project known as the JFLP, with the aim of enabling the Oromo society to become literate, especially in the newly chosen alphabet. The role that EECMY has played in developing Oromo through the electronic and print media was also discussed in this chapter.

Another significant issue raised in Chapter 5 was the obstacles hindering the EECMY's endeavour to developing Oromo. The obstacles facing the church were identified as both external and internal. As far as language development is concerned, language conflict and politics was found to be the most significant obstacle. Even after the national language policy had made the

situation in Ethiopia very conducive for the development of the vernaculars of the country (EFDR Constitution, 1995), a serious conflict arose in Addis Ababa over the use of Oromo church services. This conflict divided the EECMY into two parts for almost 15 years. During the time of the conflict and division of the church, various serious incidents were observed. Various causes were cited by the informants of the study also for this language conflict in the church. These included (i) different attitudes towards the use of language for different functions, (ii) trying to maintain the status quo in the Church, (iii) the church leadership's failure to handle the problem wisely, (iv) competition over control of resources and the like. Some informants even suggested that the causes of the conflict were only in part linguistic, in that people were trying to quench their thirst for power in the church by using the language issue as a camouflage. This is due to the fact that so many benefits were related to the positions in the church.

Different effects of the conflict were also identified and discussed in the chapter. These were the actions taken by the EC of the church to deal with the problem, and the faction group forming its own church. Some effects were categorized by the informants as positive and others as negative. The positive effects include the fact that many Oromos were awakened to their language and started to use it more than before in the church and other social domains. Various Oromo congregations were established in Addis Ababa and its surroundings which had not been there earlier. Other language based associations were also formed by the speech community. These included youth forums and other fellowships which specifically began to use Oromo for religious functions and the like. However, the study indicated that the negative effects seriously affected the unity of the church for more than a decade. As every resource was geared towards dealing with the problem, the development of Oromo was slowed down.

Different groups participated in the conflict in different ways depending upon their orientations and convictions. Some were in favour while others were against the use of Oromo for church services in Addis Ababa. Still others were neutral. It also appeared that some Oromos and speakers of the other minority languages sided, knowingly or unknowingly, with those who opposed the use of the language. The main reason given by these people for choosing only one language (Amharic) was that they thought it would foster the unity of the church community. Those who supported the use of Oromo in the church in Addis Ababa refuted this idea of unity,

saying that unity is by spirit, and a unified language is irrelevant. Mission organizations partnering with the church in all its activities also participated in the conflict in different ways.

Another obstacle which appeared to have affected the church's effort to develop the language was lack of attention from the current church leadership, despite the favourable conditions available in the country. Comparing the current leaders with the former leaders, some informants in this study criticized the current leadership for not having contributed enough towards the development of Oromo and other vernaculars.

Other minor obstacles were also identified and discussed in this chapter. These included: the fact that Amharic is still the only official language in federal offices, the tradition of using the Sabeen script for writing Oromo, as well as code-switching. These things, in addition to the ones mentioned above, have contributed negatively to the church's effort to develop and use Oromo for its services.

### **6.3 Significance of the main findings**

The main aim of the present study is to evaluate the role that the EECMY has played in the course of the development of Oromo and obstacles hindering the effort of the church in this activity. The study tried to answer questions such as whether the church has played the role expected from it with regard to the maintenance and development of Oromo, and why conflicts exist in the church over the use of the language at this time, when equality of languages is provided in the Constitution.

In the following section, we will look at both status planning and corpus planning within the context of language planning and development.

#### **6.3.1 Status planning**

Status planning of a language is concerned with the decisions about the function that a given language has in relation to other languages. Wardaugh (1986:35-6) contends that it "changes the

function of a language or a variety of a language and the rights of those who use it.” The functional classification of languages by Stewart (1968) is taken as the point of departure when the question of status planning is raised (Cooper, 1989:99). These functions include official, provincial, wider communication, international, capital, group, educational, school subject, literary and religious (see § 2.2.6).

Oromo had been kept at the status of a proscribed vernacular for a long time, until the introduction of Evangelical Christianity to the country. This was due to the fact that the ideology of the ruling body was unitary and favoured the use of only one language. Except for local usages for informal purposes, the vernacular languages had never been used for any public affairs. For instance, Cooper (1989:24) reports that except for Amharic and Tigrinya, writing in the other Ethiopian languages was not allowed during the feudal era. Oromo was among those proscribed, although it was spoken by the largest population group. However, the missionaries aligned themselves more with these despised groups and elevated the status of their languages so that they could be used in the domains of religion and education. This tradition has been followed since then in the church activities, which later on has also been adopted by the government. Thus, it is possible to see that the government system had a unitary policy of elevating the status of only one language and suppressing the others, whereas the church was the forerunner of the current democratic system which views all languages equally. Multilingualism was seen as a problem by the government, while the Evangelicals saw language as a right (see § 2.2.4)

Hence, with the introduction of Evangelical Christianity, the status of Oromo came to the level of a written language for the first time, used publically as a religious language and then a language of of education (see § 4.2 and 5.3). Oromo has now become the official language of the *Mootummaa Naannoo Oromia* (Oromia Regional Government), as well as a medium of instruction for education and school subjects in the region (see § 1.2.2.).

In general, we see from the discussion above that the work of EECMY through the missionaries, local evangelists and the church as an institution contributed considerably towards the elevation of the language. This shows the church’s involvement in the status planning of the languages of

the country, even when there was no linguistic tolerance by the government. Churches' involvement in language planning depends on their "language-religion ideology (LRI)" (cf. Woods, 2006:201). It is argued that different denominations believe differently on how to speak about God, and accordingly plan language differently. Some believe that He should be communicated to in a special way, by using special language (or language variety), whereas others believe that everyone is related to God individually, and should use his/her own suitable way of communicating with Him, thus using his/her language of preference (see § 2.6). In Ethiopia, the EOC seems to have the former attitude of using only one special language, first Ge'ez and then Amharic. However, this church aligned itself with the conviction of the governments of the day, who had a policy of forming a nation state under one language and one religion. This shows that its move was not only religious but also political. The EOC chose one language, not only for approaching God in a special way using a special language, but its main aim was to form one country under one language and one religion. This would also give it supremacy in the country over any competing denominations. Thus, the church was used as an instrument to disseminate the interest of the ruling class together with the faith (see § 1.3.1). On the contrary, the EECMY has had the attitude of reaching all communities in their language of preference from the very beginning of its ministry. Thus, we see that evangelistic activities through EECMY have played the role of raising the status of Oromo (as well as other vernaculars) to the level of public use. The policy of the EECMY (both unwritten and written) encourages all to worship God in the language of their preference, without any restriction whatsoever (see § 5.2). What is more, the language planning effort of the EECMY is consistent with Wardaugh's (1986) view of linguistic pluralism, as it allows the use of a diversity of languages and even different varieties of the same language for the service of the church

This democratic attitude of the church has finally influenced the current government which accepts all the languages of the country equally (see § 6.2). What originally began with the church was later on implemented by the government. This means that the church laid the foundation on which the government could build, and the Government gave the church the opportunity to expand the work it had begun in the status planning of the language.

### **6.3.2 Corpus planning**

Corpus planning is the developmental aspect of language planning, and takes place when a language or a variety of language is modified so that it fulfils the functions for which it is meant. According to Wardaugh (1986:357), “Corpus planning seeks to develop a variety of a language or a language, usually to standardize it, that is, to provide it with the means for serving every possible language function in society.” Thus, the form of a language is influenced by both linguistic and non-linguistic goals. The linguistic goals are concerned with the alteration of the structure of the language or variety concerned so that it can provide the function for which it is meant. Non-linguistic goals are those which do not affect the form of the language, but which are related to matters such as alienating from or identifying oneself with one group or another (see § 2.2.6). Is the Oromo language planning in the church related to one or both of these? This is what we shall try to address in this section.

The corpus planning endeavours of the EECMY are those we saw in the previous chapters (4 and 5) as the contribution of the church to the development of Oromo. This included graphization, standardization, modernization and renovation (Cooper, 1989:125.) In each of these language development spheres, the results of this research indicate that the church cooperated with other bodies interested in this language development effort, such as the government.

### **6.3.3 Graphization**

One major area of language development is graphization, i.e. developing a suitable writing system or orthography for a language (see § 2.3). The work of the EECMY has helped Oromo in this regard by enabling it to have its own writing system for the first time. It is by virtue of the fact that evangelical Christianity came to the Oromo speaking community, and the Bible was translated into Oromo that the language has acquired its own writing system. Those who first translated the Bible and other ecclesiastical material had to establish the writing system for the language (see § 4.2.1 & 5.3.1).

Thus, the idea of creating an orthography for the language began with the translation work of the Bible. The first of these was Krapf, who had tried to make use of the Roman script to write in Oromo, but his idea was not accepted by the rulers of the time, who prescribed the Sabean script for all the languages of the country. The final decision regarding the choice of orthography is the mandate of the government. Thus, he had to use the Sabean script, although it was not suitable for writing Oromo. The Sabean orthography was problematic, even for Amharic, because it did not have any way of showing the difference between short and long vowels as well as simple and geminated consonants. It also has no way of showing the glottal stop (‘), which is very productive in Oromo (see Gamta, 1993:36-37). The original intention of Onesimos was to use the Roman orthography in his Bible translation, but he was also forced to use the Sabean Script because of the order of the day (Diga, 1999:28). When compared to Krapf, however, Onesimos used the script in a better readable way, as he was native and helped by another native speaker of Oromo, Aster Ganno, as well as other team members. Bulcha (1995:44) reports that “Onesimos used the Ge’ez orthography to transcribe *afaan Oromoo* [Oromo language]. Although Onesimos was not a trained linguist he was innovative in his adaptation of the Ge’ez syllabary to Oromo writing.” In spite of this, however, not all problems could be solved in Onesimos’ translation.

In this corpus planning endeavour of the church, the process of borrowing was followed. While the possibility of alphabetizing a language is either by borrowing from an already existing writing system or by innovating a new one (see § 2.3), what the evangelists did at the time was borrowing from an already existing orthography. They originally intended to borrow the Roman script that was suitable for Oromo, but this could not be done because of the order of the day. Thus, they were forced to borrow the Sabean script which was being used for the Ethio-Semitic languages. This Sabean script is syllabary. The original borrowing for Oromo was partially modified in that the symbols meant for Amharic were used as they were. They included those symbols which represented the sounds which Oromo did not have. On the other hand, a symbol for the dental implosive ‘ǧ’ /dh/ was added as this was a very productive sound in Oromo, but did not exist in Amharic and other Semitic languages.

The Roman script which had been said to be better suited to the language but prohibited by the former regimes was adopted immediately after the present democratic government took power.

The policy of this new government allows all linguistic groups to choose a language, variety or alphabet of one's preference (EFDR Constitution, 1995). Accordingly, the Roman alphabet was chosen immediately for Oromo, actually this time by the political leaders (especially Oromo political parties which had seats in the then Transitional Government Parliament). This was again a political decision. The church also adopted this script, started transliterating the Bible and other ecclesiastical material and used it for office purposes, especially in its functions within the Oromia Region as it is now an official script for the language. The Bible and other religious literature transliterated into the Roman script are being used by the people today (see § 5.3.1). This transliteration was necessary because the Roman script is now the official script of the language which is used in all communications in the language. Beside this, the Bible translation in the Sabeian script is not free from the problems of the script as we mentioned above.

The adoption of this new orthography can also be considered as renovation, the concept introduced by Cooper (1989: 154) to define such activities as modifying the already existing form of the language for a certain purpose (see § 2.3). In this case, Oromo had been written for about 100 years in the Sabeian script, and when opportunity arose, it had to be changed to the Roman orthography. Thus, this is an act of renovation of the writing system for the language (see Appendix J).

If it had not been for the language policy of the government from the earlier days of Christianity, the Roman orthography more suitable for the language could have been used from the beginning and Oromo could have developed more rapidly. The original plan of the EECMY and earlier trial of the Roman script possibly influenced the current political authorities who accepted it as part of their language policy. If it had not been planned earlier by the EECMY, it might not have been accepted so easily now. This is consistent with Fishman's (2006:15) view that religious usage is more powerful an influence on the secular than the latter on the former.

The adoption of different writing systems at different times for Oromo can be attributed to both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. As far as the Sabeian script is concerned, it was prescribed by the feudal and the communist governments of the country specifically for a non-linguistic political reason. As this was the time when they were bringing together all the communities

under the rule of the Abyssinians within one religion, culture and language, the fact that the orthography was uniform was thought to help the communities to identify themselves with the Abyssinians. Bulcha (1997:97) maintains that the measure taken by the feudal monarchy of Ethiopia to suppress the ethnic consciousness of the communities of the present day Ethiopia was through linguistic assimilation.

Gamta (1993:36-37) gives the linguistic reasons for choosing the Roman alphabet for writing Oromo as difficulty of learning the many characters (about 250) of the Sabean syllabary. He further comments that “the Sabean syllabary not only fails to indicate vowel length and gemination, but also slows down a writer's speed since each symbol, which cannot be written cursively, must be printed.” This was clearly a linguistic reason.

On the other hand, the foreign missionaries such as Krapf were more familiar with the Roman script from their European background, and that might have made it easier for them to learn and make use of the language. Gamta (1993:37) reports that a European named Ceruli equated the reading of Oromo in the Sabean script with “deciphering a secret writing.” The same could be claimed for Onesimos who spent most of his educated life in Europe. We saw above (§ 2.3) that Africans educated in Europe even prefer to use European languages to their own languages. In addition, this was the time when the Oromo territory and people were forced to be under the rule of the northern Abyssinians who also used the Sabean orthography for writing their languages, and prescribed this for the other languages, if they were to be written. Bulcha (1995:42-43) reports that when Onesimos and his team came back home from their studies, they saw that their land and people had been conquered by the Amharas of the north. “The conquerors were in the process of imposing their own language, Amharic, and their version of Christianity on the Oromo.” Cooper (1989: 22-23) also reports that Oromo is the largest of the conquered groups, and that they had been suffering under “a corrupt and inefficient administration, to the extent that the central authority exerted control at all, and the benefits they received, such as schools and health care, were relatively sparse.” Thus, their preference for the Roman orthography could also be seen as resistance to this conquest, and this was a non-linguistic goal. Both of these missionaries and others who came after them had to adapt the Sabean script for writing Oromo in order to fulfil their main goal of evangelization, as this was the option they were left with.

Different linguistic and non-linguistic reasons can also be given in the current dispensation for the choice of writing Oromo in the Roman orthography. Besides the linguistic, pedagogic and practical reasons for choosing this script (Gamta, 1993:36-38), it is possible to see another reason. This is resistance and separating the speech community psychologically from the domination of the Amharas so that they could also free their language and culture from the rulers. This is consistent with Cooper's (1989:129) view, that the minority groups design their own system differently from that of the ruling class. It is also in line with Fishman's (2006:15) claim that historical and political backgrounds might influence linguistic repertoire. The history of the domination under which the people and their language had been suffering might have influenced the Oromo political parties and the community to liberate itself by using this opportunity.

In general, the EECMY contributed considerably in helping Oromo have its own writing system for the first time, although not in the orthography of its preference. As the choice of a particular writing system for a given language of a country is to a large extent the mandate of the government of that country, the evangelists' wish to reduce the language to writing using the Roman alphabet from the beginning did not materialize. However, finally the church could carry out its original plans to use the Roman script in writing Oromo.

#### **6.3.4 Standardization**

Standardization is another aspect of corpus planning (concerned with language development); which creates a common variety for a given language or a common language for different linguistic groups living and working together. Rubin (1972 as cited in Cooper, 1989:132), maintains that this happens at all levels of communication, and that it involves "some degree of shared expectations and shared understanding" among the users of the language or the languages concerned. According to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997:4), the motivation for the standardization of languages is mainly political for the purposes of unifying the communities that speak different languages or language varieties, while other reasons such as economic, social or a combination of any of these are also included (see § 2.3).

Similar to other planning activities, different parts of the community take part in standardization of a language in diverse ways, among which are the elite. Cooper (1989:135) maintains that the elite of the society impose the language variety which they favour as a standard upon the speech community, the government as well as the church. Other agents of standardization have been identified as colonizers and missionaries. For example, Cooper (1989:143) gives examples of western Europeans who have been the agents of standardization in sub-Saharan Africa (see also § 2.7). These teachers selected and standardized one of the varieties spoken within one language or combined the varieties. From this we understand that the church has also played a role in contributing to the standardization effort of a language or a variety of a language.

When we view Oromo from the perspective of standardization, not much has been done formally except the recent activities of the Oromia Regional Government. Because the language has been kept at the level of a proscribed vernacular for a long time, no one has formally mentioned its standardization. Accordingly, even in the areas where it was being used, standardization of the language was not considered. What the church had been doing in developing and making use of the language did not specifically take its standardization into account. The Church and its ministers did not give much attention to the harmonization of the dialects, but they used the dialect which they came across. The first evangelists who reduced the language to writing and translated the Bible used the specific language variety which they were familiar with, or which they were exposed to. The native evangelists also used their own dialect, which was the western one.

The church has laid the ground for the standardization of the language but the formal and officially recognised standardization process is incomplete. Thus, some of the things the church has been doing in developing and using the language might have contributed indirectly towards the standardization of the language. The first step in language standardization is selection of the norm. This refers to the choice of one variety among the competing varieties. From this perspective, Oromo has a variety of dialects which are mutually intelligible (Bender, Eteffa and Stinson, 1976:131; Cooper, 1989:22). These dialects include: Mecha (western), Tulema (central),

Wello and Raya (northern), Arsi, Guji and Borena (southern) and Harar (eastern) and Bale (south eastern).

As the Bible, which has now been in use for more than one hundred years, was first translated into the western dialect, as evangelism was begun in this area of the country, this variety had been in use until the Oromia Regional Government established a committee responsible for standardizing Oromo. The Oromia Regional Government Culture and Tourism Bureau established a *KoreeWaaltinaa* (Standardization Committee) in 1993 for this language, and has been trying to harmonize the dialects of Oromo. Before this time, many of the grammar studies, dictionaries and vocabulary development had concentrated on the western dialect of the language, and developed it better than the other varieties. Even when the language began to be used on the public media and for other functions, this western variety became dominant because of the influence of the church. The relatively informal selection of this variety of the language helped it to be developed and become “standard” when compared with the other varieties. This is mainly the work of the EECMY, as in many other countries of Africa.

On the other hand, what the *KoreeWaaltinaa* is doing currently as far as selection of the code is concerned is different from the activities of the church. The committee is trying to harmonise all the dialects of the language, though the dialect which is already better developed may predominate.

The second step in the process of standardization is codification of the form, which is concerned with graphization of the language concerned and production of literature in the selected variety. As we saw above, it is the work of the church that reduced the language to writing for the first time, and that literatures have been produced in the variety selected (see § 5.3.1). Thus, this creation of orthography and publication of literature have contributed significantly to the standardization of the selected dialect of Oromo.

Regarding the third step, which is an extension of the second one, the use of the selected norm in the different activities of the church, and later on in the secular world has been reported in detail (see § 5.3.2).

The fourth step is concerned with acceptability of the variety chosen. When we view the Oromo language in this light, we see partial acceptance. The Bible and other ecclesiastical materials translated into one of the dialects had been used for quite a long time without any difficulty among the church community. Furthermore, this variety was used also in the literacy campaigns during the feudal and the communist eras in the country. The media during the communist era (radio and newspaper in Oromo) used this variety in their broadcast. Other elite have also made use of this variety in their writings in Oromo. Later on, however, it appears in different cases that this one variety was not fully accepted. The first one is when the *KoreeWaalinaa* was established and started working on the different dialects. If the former code selected had had full acceptance, the Committee could have continued with the selected one rather than engaging in something new. In the second place, the fact that there are translations of the Bible into different Oromo dialects indicates that this already chosen dialect had not been accepted fully. If these different dialect speakers had accepted the variety in which the Bible had been written, they would not have embarked upon this dialect translation. From this we understand that the first acceptance and usage of this variety was due to two reasons. Firstly, the original evangelists worked in the west and education was mainly disseminated among the Oromos of the west. Secondly, until the coming into power of the present government in 1991, there were no opportunities for raising the issue of standardization. Thus, while Van den Bersselaar (1997:274) claims that the dialect of the Bible becomes standard for the language (see § 2.7), we see that this is not really the case with regards to Oromo.

However, what is being done currently by the EECMY is not in favour of harmonizing the dialects of Oromo although dialect harmonization could have a great deal to contribute to the unity of the speech community (see § 2.3). In the past, the church did not bring the dialects together. In the radio broadcast of the church by the YDCS, the Borena dialect of Oromo was considered as a separate language under the name 'Borena', and it had a separate programme from the other Oromo programme. This has continued to the present in that the weekly schedule of the YDCS radio programme shows the Borena programme separately from the other Oromo programmes. It did not even mention that this was a dialect of Oromo. This is in line with the former regimes, who gave different names to the different Oromo groups and to their varieties of

the language, depending on the variety they spoke, so that these communities do not feel that they belonged to the same speech community. Furthermore, even now while the Oromia Regional Government has established a Standardizing Committee to work on the harmonization of the dialects, the church is making different translations of the Bible for the different dialects (§ 5.3.1). Thus, the planning of the government and that of the church do not match in this case. While the government plans are for harmonization by using a common variety for all dialects, the church is translating different variants of the Bible for the different dialects. This planning of the church has facilitated the dissemination of the Gospel to the different dialect speakers in a better way, but it may have the effect of keeping the dialects apart.

Has the church done this for technical or socio-political reasons? It is possible to claim both. On the one hand, the purpose of the church is to reach the community with the Good News of the Bible in such a way that the different dialect speakers understand it best. But, on the other hand, linguistic studies show that the different dialects of Oromo are mutually intelligible, thus understanding one another across the different dialects is possible, especially for the adjacent dialects (Cooper, 1989:22). Bender, Eteffa and Stinson (1976:131) have also observed the following:

The question can fairly be asked as to whether the [Oromo] of Ethiopia is really one language with well-marked dialect differences, or several languages. Most observers ... report that [Oromos] from one area may have difficulty in adjusting to the dialect of a different area, but that the adjustment does take place, requiring a few weeks or at most a few months. Mecha [western dialect] is sufficiently different from Borena [southern dialect] to cause some serious gaps in understanding at first, and Eastern is difficult for all other [Oromo] speakers (and vice versa). But, on the grounds of mutual intelligibility and basic vocabulary, it seems fair to maintain that Ethiopian [Oromo] is one language.

Accordingly, it is more a question of the attitude of the community and/or the language planners that might have led to these different dialect translations. These planners argue that they are obeying the request of the speech community in translating the Bible into the dialects. If they had been convinced about the necessity of harmonizing the varieties, they could have convinced the community on the issue. This might have been preferable to having different varieties for the

same purpose, because the faith community listen to and follow their leaders. This is a complex socio-political issue.

The other issue is that of economy. Is it more practical to translate into the different dialects, or into a standard variety, and then help the community to understand that? Even when the translation is made into the dialect, it is necessary to train the community to read and understand the material. That is why JFLP is necessitated, especially for the elderly who need to be familiarized with the Roman alphabet, as they were previously accustomed to the Sabeian one. The young generation that are at school learn the harmonized variety, and they are being exposed to one system (local) in the church and another system (harmonized variety) at school. At the same time even for the elderly in secular activities such as the law court and other public offices, the harmonized variety is being used, at least in writing. Thus, it can be seen that the conflicting attitudes have dominated this activity. Furthermore, a harmonized variety of the Bible is being produced in the same manner by the International Bible Society (see § 5.3.1). If this idea had been there from the beginning, different varieties would not have been necessitated. The expenses incurred in having two approaches (the different versions for each dialect and then another as standard for all dialects) could have been better used to train the speakers of the dialects to use this standard variety. This shows that the work among the planners was not coordinated.

What is behind this attitude? Firstly, the past regimes had used the system of divide-and-rule in order to minimize the number of the Oromo people and their unity. To keep them separated, they called them by their local names such as *Wellega* (to the western), *Shoa* (to the centre), *Qottuu* ‘farmer’ (to the Eastern) and *Arsi*, *Borena* and *Guji* (to the southern), etc. Besides keeping the different Oromo varieties apart for about 100 years, psychologically the people were made to consider themselves as distinct people from each another. While the regimes were trying to keep the unity of the country under one language, Amharic, they were deliberately separating the speakers of different dialects of Oromo. Accordingly, that feeling is still reflected, when they request their own varieties of the Bible, and it is ironically the result of the assimilationist policy of the past regimes.

Secondly, those who supported the translation of the Bible into different Oromo dialects for evangelization recruited certain individuals from among the dialect speakers, gave them some training and assigned them to study the mutual intelligibility among the different dialects, especially the ones that are adjacent to each other. They concluded that there was not sufficient mutual intelligibility to ignore the differences. Whether they had enough linguistic training or whether they were led more by ideology and attitude or language behaviour is still a question for which there is no clear answer. However, different translations for each dialect became a means of getting employment for these people. Thus, motivation for dialect translation may in some cases be for personal gain rather than valid reasons.

Thirdly, there is possibly the issue of sanctity. The western dialect into which the Bible was originally translated might have been considered as sanctified or co-sanctified (to use Fishman's, 2006 term) with the other languages into which the Bible had already been translated (see § 2.6). According to Fishman (2006:17), "[a] byproduct of all of the forgoing characteristics of long-standing vernacular translations ... is their acquisition of sanctity of their own." Thus, the speakers of these dialects might believe to have equal sanctification or co-sanctification of their dialects when the Word of God is translated into their varieties.

In general, the church activities regarding the issue of standardizing Oromo are more driven by attitudes of both the speakers of the language as well as that of the language planners, whereas that of the government is mainly motivated by political ideology. The government's planning of language standardization is to keeping the unity of the different dialect speakers under one standard Oromo variety.

### **6.3.5 Modernization**

Modernization, according to Cooper (1989:149), entails elevating a language to the position where it can be used to communicate modern ideas (see § 2.3). Modernity then is a relative issue. When the first Christian missionaries translated the Bible into Oromo, obtaining appropriate terms for their translation was a form of modernizing the language. The need today is to create terms to be used in modern science and technology. Especially at present, when the language is

used for different purposes such as teaching and public office, the necessity of modernization has become more important than ever. Yimam (1994:62) contends that:

[t]he new role of the language as a medium of instruction and its use in official communication within the Oromo locality, calls for a concerted *effort* towards further *standardization* and *modernization*, such as popularizing the writing system through the media and coining a host of lexical terms for both technical and popular usage.

The church's activity has reflected this act of modernization at different levels. The first evangelists started using the language which had been limited to informal local functions for many more functions including translating the Bible, using it for worship purposes, teaching it and using it as well as for broadcasting, but suddenly they faced the need for terms to satisfy these needs. Accordingly, they had to adopt different mechanisms to enable the language to be used for the needs of the time. One of the mechanisms was elaborating the use of terms already in existence, especially in the traditional religion of the Oromo people. Bulcha (1995:44) reports that "Onesimos drew intelligently upon the religious culture and oral literature of the Oromo in his translation of the Bible. He did not hesitate to use directly *Waaqa* and many other Oromo religious concepts and notions in his works." Moreover, such words as *waaqa* 'God', *sagada* 'prayer' and *amantii* 'faith' are among those which were brought into the Bible from the traditional religions of the Oromo people. For example, the word *kakuu* which is used to stand for 'testament' was originally used to mean 'oath', and now its meaning is extended to include the testament of the scriptures. Other words such as *tajaajila* 'service/ministry' have been adopted by extending the meaning. Thus, semantic extension has been used both in the church and the secular fields. Yimam (1994: 66) gives the following examples of Oromo where the meaning has been extended:

<i>Fuula</i>	(face)	extended to 'page'
<i>Ardii</i>	(earth)	extended to 'world'
<i>Diina</i>	(enemy)	extended to 'anti-'

In the EECMY usage, other examples can be given:

<i>Hafuura</i>	(breath)	extended to 'spirit'
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<i>Gumii</i>	(group)	extended to ‘assembly’
<i>Cuuphuu</i>	(soak)	extended to ‘baptism’
<i>Raajii</i>	(miracle)	extended to ‘prophecy/prophet
<i>Mul’ata</i>	(scene)	extended to ‘vision/revelation’
<i>Qulqulluu</i>	(clean)	extended to ‘holy/righteous’

Many such words which began in the church service have now been extended to other secular uses as well.

The other mechanism was borrowing. In some cases, when words could not be found in the language to encompass the new usage, words were borrowed from languages with which the language had contact at the time. For example, as Oromo was not a written language before the translation of the Bible, there were no terms for the concepts such as ‘writing’, ‘book’, etc. Thus, words for such concepts and objects had to be borrowed from Amharic. When the term *matshaf* ‘book’ was borrowed, for example, Oromo did not have the sound /ts/ and had to use its own /č/ sound which is phonetically close to it, and the pronunciation was also adjusted to the Oromo system as *mač’aafa*. ‘Writing’, which is *matsaaf* in Amharic is used in Oromo with the form *č’aaf-*. This is consistent with Cooper (1989:151), who maintains that the adopted or borrowed word should fit into the system of the language which borrows it. In the same way, the Holy Bible, which was translated into Amharic as *matshaf qiddus*, became *mač’aafa qulqulluu* in Oromo. These therefore can be seen as coinages on the basis of both a loan from the neighbouring Amharic *mač’aafa* and a combination with an existing Oromo word whose meaning was extended (*qulqulluu* ‘holy’ from ‘clean’). This indicates that there was a use of combining existing words to fulfil this need for getting terms for the new usage. Words were and are also being borrowed from other languages such as Arabic and English. Words such as *chaartera* ‘charter’, *ministeera* ‘minister’, *komiishina* ‘commission’, *ispoortii* ‘sport’, etc, have been borrowed from English, and modified into the word structure of Oromo. Words from Arabic also come to Oromo mainly through the intermediary of Amharic: *kamisa* ‘Thursday’ and *kitaaba* ‘book’ (Yimam, 1994:63-64).

The other mechanism used in developing Oromo vocabulary is loan translation, mainly from German and Amharic as the following examples show (Yimam, 1994:64).

<i>Beekumsa afaanii</i>	Linguistics	<i>unterschreiben</i> (German)
<i>Qabata qabbanaa'aa</i>	refrigerator	<i>kuhlschrank</i> (German)
<i>Mana qorichaa</i>	pharmacy	<i>madhanit bet</i> (Amharic)
<i>Mana murtii</i>	court	<i>fird bet</i> (Amharic)

There are other loan translations (especially proper nouns) which were directly adopted from the Bible in Amharic, and in some cases these were adapted to the phonetic system of Oromo (for example, *Yesuus*, 'Jesus' from *Iyesuus*, *Yohaannis* 'John' from *Yohaannis*, *Phaawuloos* 'Paul' from *Phaawulos*, *Maaramii* 'Mary' from *Maariyaam*, *Ibroota* 'Hebrews' from *ibraawiyyaan*, etc.

In this process of modernization of Oromo, the government has followed what the church had been doing in most cases, but there are some deviations. For example, what the church had been borrowing from the adjacent language, Amharic, the government borrowed from Arabic. Words such as *kitaaba* 'book' (Arabic) instead of *macaafa* (Amharic) are examples. Why is there a difference? As we saw in the dialect harmonization case above (6.3.4), the main purpose of the church is to use the language instrumentally. As Amharic is more adjacent to Oromo, and many Oromos know more Amharic than probably any other language, the Church borrowed intensively from Amharic, hoping that the transfer might be easier. However, the elite in the Government (the politicians) are more driven by attitude (or politics). They might be more motivated by the need to make the language 'free' from remnants of the dispensation (in which Amharic was the dominant language). The other reason for using Arabic might be that Arabic has been extensively borrowed in the eastern dialect of Oromo through the influence of Islam. This claim is substantiated by the fact that in many other cases words become common usage whenever available in one of the dialects. Words such as *tajaajila* 'service', *baadiyyaa* 'countryside', *magaalaa* 'town', etc. are drawn from dialects of the language (not in the western dialect). The Church, however, does not seem to be open to terms from an Islamic background. For example, the Arabic word *kitaaba* 'book' may have the connotation to Islamic books, and they may not be at ease using it to refer to the Bible, although little by little this attitude is

changing, for example the Standard Version of Oromo Bible is given the name *Kitaaba Qulqulluu Hiikaa Walta'aa Haaraya* (The New Standard Bible Translation) (see also § 5.3.1).

Thus, the church's activities to prepare Oromo for its ecclesiastical functions are concerned with corpus planning (language development), whereby the form of the language is altered in such a way that it fits the particular need of evangelization. In this case the Church has contributed much, but the motivations of the Church and the Government are different. They see language development from different perspectives. In most cases, the Church's interest is to reach the community effectively with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and it sees a language from an instrumental point of view. However, the fact that the church is more interested in the instrumentality of the language sometimes contradicts the Government's attempt to harmonize the different varieties of the language, which might affect the unity of the speech community. Furthermore, some individuals in the church might also influence the planning with their own interests in mind.

### **6.3.6 Acquisition planning**

Cooper (1989:157) defines acquisition planning as “organized efforts to promote the learning of a language” (see also § 2.3), and this is where the Church could be said to have done much, as far as Oromo is concerned. As we saw above (§ 4.2.3 and 5.3.3), it is the Church that first planned and implemented instructions in Oromo. When they started their missionary work, the evangelical pioneers combined it with the teaching of the written language. Even before entering into the Oromo areas, evangelists like Onesimos were teaching Oromos they could find on the border in their own language. Thereafter they began their evangelistic activities in Wellega together with opening schools and teaching in the vernacular (Oromo). After the Church was nationally constituted, it also conducted different literacy campaigns and helped the community to learn in its language. The YDCS literacy campaign and JFLP could be mentioned as good examples of this. Thus, these are activities of the Church which have popularized the use of Oromo to maintain and develop it.

What were the motives behind the acquisition planning of the Church as far as Oromo is concerned? As we have discussed in the previous sections, the main motive was using the language of the community as a means to evangelize, and help the community to read and understand its Bible. However, besides this, there were secondary motivations which included the maintenance of the language, creating self-awareness within the speech community about its language and culture and the like.

The fact that literacy was introduced to the community might have had a significant effect on maintaining Oromo. Kamwangamalu (2006:86), maintains that education plays a major role in maintaining language “provided that it is taught through the medium of indigenous language rather than through the medium of an already powerful language.” Before the introduction of evangelical Christianity in Ethiopia, a strong attempt was made to cause the community to abandon its own language, and acquire the dominant language of the rulers. Because speakers of other languages could not become fluent in Amharic in a short time, they were ridiculed by their Amharic speaking teachers, which hindered their academic achievement, and forced many children to drop out of schools, limiting their educational opportunities (see § 4.2.3). A similar case is reported in Schmid (2001:96) in the case of immigrants in the United States of America: limited proficiency in the English language was one of the factors for low achievement and high dropout rates as far as Hispanic students were concerned. Schmid (2001:96) argues further that “[r]ather than closely examining the educational environment for many limited-English-proficient students, it is too easy to blame victims for their inability to speak English.” This kind of discrimination which deprives the dominated group of educational opportunities is politically motivated. Apart from wanting to evangelize the Oromo people, the Church’s acquisition planning was also motivated by the desire to preserve the language which was under the threat of becoming extinct. In addition, the motive of the local evangelists such as Onesimos was to create a sense of pride in the speech community, so they became interested in using their language besides being able to read their Bible. Eide (2000:12) contends that as the result of the translation of the Bible into their languages and the communities of the peripheries of Ethiopia such as the Oromo getting education, they “gained a sense of worth and a pride in their cultural identity” (see also Bulcha, 1995:43, 51 & Aren, 1999:287).

The question may arise also as to how much this acquisition planning (other planning as well) has been effective and accepted. Cooper (1989:159) identifies three types of mechanisms used to attain the goals of language acquisition: “those designed primarily to create or to improve the opportunity to learn, those designed primarily to create or improve the incentive to learn, and those designed to create or improve both opportunity and incentive simultaneously.” This has been more or less tried in the Oromo case from the beginning until the present. People like Onesimos were not only teaching, but they were also opening places where the community could practice what it had learned, the translated Bible and other religious material also being used for such purposes. Later on, different mass media started working in the language, and these might have helped. Today, the centres being established by JFLP can be said to create such opportunities that enhance acquisition planning, although they are very few.

As far as creation and improvement of incentives is concerned, there are two sides to this. On the one hand, the fact that the community can now use the language everywhere in the Church and in *Mootummaa Naannoo Oromiyaa* (Oromia Regional Government) different offices helps in the attainment of the acquisition planning. Oromo is used in the different public offices of the Oromia Region, as a medium of instruction and a school subject at elementary schools in Oromia. It is even used in one Department in Addis Ababa University and some other Oromia Region universities, and these are incentives. Oromo can also be used in any court of law, in the Parliament, etc. while the Government is responsible for providing interpreters for those who do not understand Amharic (see § 1.2.2) In the Oromia Regional Government also, ability to read and write in the language is a requirement for employment, which can be seen as another incentive.

On the other hand, at earlier times, the acquisition planning was obstructed because the language was not used outside the Church circle. There was even a proscription to the extent of being punished at schools for speaking in Oromo (see § 5.4). Now also, we observe that children are made to learn in their native language in elementary schools and learn it as a subject in the high schools in the Oromia Region. This, as well as their unfavourable attitude towards Amharic, has decreased their ability in the only official language of the Federal Government which is used as a lingua franca among the speakers of the different languages of the Country. As a matter of fact

also, most of the students of Ethiopia now have a lack of fluency in English, which is the medium of instruction both at high school and higher educational institutions. English is mostly a classroom language in Ethiopia, although it is introduced at an early stage. This and many other factors hinder the students from understanding and using the language fluently. Accordingly, college and university instructors are sometimes obliged to use local languages (especially the lingua franca, Amharic) to make things clearer to their students. In such cases, students from Oromo speaking areas are losing out, as they do not understand Amharic. When these students are assigned to universities outside Oromia, they find it very difficult to adapt to the areas linguistically. This has a negative impact on the acquisition planning for Oromo. This is because neither enough acquisition planning of the lingua franca has been made, nor has Oromo become a co-equal official language to be used in federal places, such as public and private higher educational institutions. This shows that more incentives are required in order to make the acquisition planning more acceptable.

Thus, the Church language acquisition planning has attained its goals to some degree and increased the opportunities and incentives to learn Oromo. Nevertheless, some instances exist where there are failures due to the fact that these incentives are not there in all cases.

#### **6.4 Language maintenance and shift**

It seems appropriate to add a note on language maintenance and shift, as the findings of this study clearly indicate that the work of the EECMY has contributed considerably towards the maintenance of Oromo, while the situation before the beginning of evangelical Christianity was working in favour of language shift.

Language maintenance and shift are seen in socio-linguistic literature as two complementary phenomena. The first one refers to the continuation of a language or language variety without being influenced and replaced by other competing languages used alongside it (see Batibo, 2005:102, cited in McDuling, 2014:41). The second refers to the situation under which a given language or variety's continuity is threatened by interference from another more powerful language used alongside it (see Barnes & Van Aswegen, 2008, cited in McDuling, 2014:40). The

church is often among institutions contributing to such maintenance (Fishman, 1966, cited in McDuling, 2014:48).

When we view Oromo from this theoretical perspective, it can be said that it was threatened, until very recently, as it lost many of its speakers to Amharic, the dominant language spoken alongside it. Thus, many of the factors mentioned above contributed to the shift of the language, especially during the feudal and the communist regimes (until 1991). As the language had limited instrumentality and prestige, the native speakers were motivated to learn and use the dominant language, Amharic. Accordingly, there are many Oromos today who cannot speak their own language at all. From a socio-economic perspective, knowing and using the dominant language helped to raise their social status and create employment opportunities. In many places of the country, especially urban areas, simple jobs such as security, gardening, and the like required knowledge of Amharic. The educational system of the time also encouraged the knowledge of Amharic because no other language was allowed on the school compounds, even in Oromo areas. Use of Oromo was punished in schools in order to discourage the use of the vernacular. In general, these and other factors were forcing the speech community to shift to the dominant language, which could ultimately have led to the death of Oromo.

However, different factors have contributed to its maintenance. One of these is the introduction of Christianity to the area, as we saw in Chapters 4 and 5. Different authors have indicated that religion in general and Evangelical Christianity in particular has played a pivotal role in language maintenance. According to Fishman (2006:17-18),

[t]o the extent that a variety is religiously encumbered, its associated religious institutions and their designated officers and local representatives and personnel can provide valuable intellectual, cultural and fiscal protection on behalf of organized and ideologized language maintenance for threatened religious varieties and their tradition-related functions.

Thus, the fact that the Bible, as well as other ecclesiastical literature, was translated into Oromo, and that the services were given in it helped towards its maintenance. As we saw above (§ 4.2.1), the Bible and other religious material were the first written literature in the language. The fact

that the language is written plays a significant role in its maintenance as writing gives the language greater prestige, so that people feel more encouraged to identify themselves with it and use it. Thus, the fact that the translated literature was taken to the community and began to be used was a significant contribution to the maintenance of the language. In addition, the educated Oromos such as Onesimos were also teaching and using Oromo, while the community was expecting them to use the dominant language. This was the sign of being modern and educated at the time, and it was only someone who was uneducated that would use the vernacular (Oromo) publically. However, the fact that educated evangelists used the vernacular in their teachings and worship services gave the community some confidence to use their own language freely. Thus, while many of the factors were against the maintenance of the language, and were encouraging a shift, it was mainly Evangelical Christianity through EECMY which slowed down this shift. In the areas where Evangelical Christianity had not reached earlier, quite a great degree of shift is seen today.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the number of Oromo language speakers might have contributed considerably towards its maintenance. Numerically, the Oromo population is the largest single group in the Country (see Table 1.1).

## **6.5 Interface between Christianity and language development**

It has been shown in this study that Oromo and Evangelical Christianity have both influenced each other. On the one hand, the use of Oromo has helped in the dissemination of evangelical Christianity in the Oromo speaking area. On the other hand, its use for ecclesiastical purposes has helped considerably in the maintenance and development of the language. This is an indication of the interface between these two social phenomena: Christianity and language.

On the one hand, the fact that Oromo was used in the dissemination of the faith is among the factors that helped in the inception of the EECMY in Ethiopia. Before the Bible was translated, evangelical Christianity was blocked from entering the Country (see § 4.2.2). This was the foundation for the EECMY, as it was from this that the faith expanded and finally resulted in the establishment of the EECMY. The community were also attracted to the faith when it came in

their language. What they used to hear before that was in a foreign language, which they never understood (see § 5.4.3).

On the other hand, as we saw above (§ 4.2 and § 5.3), the fact that the Word of God was translated into Oromo, and that this language was used in the Christian services, has also contributed to its maintenance and development (see § 2.7). Christian literature was the first to be produced in the language, and it was through Christianity that for the first time the language came to be written. Besides this, the evangelical missionaries compiled dictionaries and other material which helped in both the corpus and status planning of the language. The language education conducted through literacy programmes and formal education and the mass media services of the Church also contributed considerably towards the maintenance and development of this language.

Thus, the use of the language helped in the acceptance of the faith among the Oromo society and later on, its use in the faith also helped in the development of the language. It can therefore be said that there is a great interconnection between Christianity and language development. They influence one another mutually.

## **6.6 Language conflict and politics**

This study has examined the language conflict in the EECMY, which was one of the main obstacles to the development of Oromo (§ 5.4.1). This kind of conflict has existed in different forms throughout the life of the Church. Towards the beginning of Evangelical Christianity in Ethiopia and then after, was the feudal and communist regimes, there had been a policy of language proscription, and there was strong resistance when the evangelists tried to use Oromo for church services. Even today, when the policy of the Government is favourable to its use, remnants of the past attitudes have become obstacles to its development.

The work of the EECMY has been conducted in conflict throughout the years, mainly due to the language used in its services. Evangelical Christianity began its service in Ethiopia at the time when the northern Abyssinians were occupying the southern and western peoples. The Imperial

leadership was trying to replace the languages and the cultures of the dominated groups with its own, and in doing this was supported by the EOC. The fact that evangelical missionaries tried to evangelize these people in the vernaculars challenged the EOC clergies and leaders as well as the feudal monarchy of the time. Thus, they started fighting against the evangelical missionaries with all possible means. Some of the missionaries (such as Swedish missionaries) were prepared to abide by the regulations of the monarchy, using the dominant language in their evangelization work among the Oromo people. However, the German and American missionaries tried their best to use Oromo, even against the decree of the monarchy (see § 4.2.2). It is difficult to account for this difference among the missionaries in their use of language. However, when we see their situation later (for example, their involvement in the conflict which arose in the congregations in Addis Ababa), we may conclude that it is a matter of approach: one being highly influenced by the Imperial leadership and the other entering directly into the society without having much influence. Thus, the approach they had influenced them to follow different interest groups, though their main aim was the same: evangelizing the people.

The policy of the rulers of that time was to spread their language and culture together with Orthodox Christianity. It is even said that the missionaries were allowed to serve in areas where the EOC ministers had not entered, in order to spread Amharic as the EOC had been doing (see § 2.8). However, many of them did not obey this ruling body. The EOC, being the state religion, played a significant role in disseminating Amhara culture and language. This Church had a high status, even to the extent of collaborating with the Government in order to resist the introduction of other faiths, as well as suppressing the vernaculars of the societies so as to form a nation-state under one language and one religion. Thus, in this situation, the EOC was found ranked highly whereas evangelical Christianity, as well as traditional religions, was regarded as a lower rank, in terms of Hurisa's (2009:19-20) "ranked– unranked" dichotomy between conflicting ethnic groups. In such a situation, the ranked ethnic or religious group is advantaged socio-economically and politically, whereas the unranked one is disadvantaged. As far as ethnicity and linguistic grouping is concerned, in former times the conflict over the use of Oromo occurred between ranked and unranked ethnic groups. This was because at that time the Amharic speaking group was ranked, whereas the Oromo speaking group was unranked, due to the domination of the time. However, at present, there is no such ranking in principle, as all ethnic groups and

languages are constitutionally given equal rights (see Constitution, 1995). The conflict of this time is between unranked equal groups, though it can be said to exist between those who struggle to maintain the status quo and those who are for change. Even the fact that the conflict is not between one ethnic group and another (others) shows that it is more of a conflict of attitude (favouring only one language by some and variety of languages by others in the Church). It could be said to be conservatives vs. progressives.

Hence, two conflicting theories of Linguistic Human Rights were seen at the former time. On the one hand, the Imperial leadership was in the state of nation-building, and was trying to apply the system of linguistic assimilation. They were trying to enforce their language (Amharic) upon the peoples of the south and the west at the cost of the vernaculars of these subjugated people. One of the ways in which the Government attempted to unify Ethiopia was by promoting one official language, Amharic. A similar approach was followed in the United States of America for quite a long time. According to Schmid (2001:159), although English was not promoted in quite the same way in the USA, “[i]n the late twentieth century, the English language has taken its place as a symbol of what it means to be an American.” Schmid (2001:166) continues to argue that speaking Standard English makes a person a true citizen of America. The same sentiment was reflected in Ethiopia in the past, as a good Ethiopian was one who could speak Amharic fluently (see § 4.2.3 & 6.3.6). The difference between the USA and Ethiopia is that while the dominant language in America was that of the majority group, in the case of Ethiopia, the vernacular of the majority of speakers (Oromo) was dominated (see Table 1.1). In addition, the minority immigrant languages were dominated in the USA, whereas the indigenous language of the majority was dominated in Ethiopia.

The language proscription in Ethiopia was such that the subjugated communities were discouraged directly and indirectly from using their languages. The direct influences included putting penalties on school children if they used their own native languages at school, and being prevented from using the languages in any public areas, such as courts of law. For example, the members of these speech communities were obliged to hire an interpreter at the law court whenever they had cases (see § 4.2.2). The indirect influences were, ridiculing them when they tried to speak their vernacular languages, as well as when they spoke the dominant language and

made errors in pronunciation or grammar (see § 4.2.3). These acts discouraged the communities from using their own languages and forced them to struggle to adopt the language of the subjugators, and acquiring native fluency. This later on led to losing their own language. In this case of assimilation, the EOC had a considerable influence, and later on some missionaries also participated in aiding this process (see § 2.8).

On the other hand, the other missionaries were trying to apply promotion-oriented rights, “rights that individuals have to the use of a particular language in public institutions” (Kymlicka & Patten, 2003: 8). They were trying to develop the languages and encourage the communities to use their vernaculars, at least for worship purposes (see § 4.2.2). They could do this using the relative freedom they had in the Church and this has helped considerably in the maintenance and development of the language. However, in areas where the EOC leaders and clergy came across such attempts of the missionaries, it became a great issue of disagreement and conflict, to the extent of taking the evangelists to court and leading to imprisonment (see § 5.4.2). Thus, the promotion-oriented rights of the missionaries could not bear as much fruit as they could have, although it helped in the maintenance and development of the language.

During the Communist era there was theoretically some freedom to develop and use one’s language in all spheres of life, but this was not seen much in practice (see § 1.1.1). As far as the Church was concerned, it was itself under persecution as the Government was atheist. This government seemed to persecute all religions equally at the beginning of its rule. However, later on it started aligning with the EOC, because the EOC could help the government in the domination of the different ethnic groups of the Country under the Amhara leadership (Cooper, 1989: 21). The Bible in general and the one in Oromo was prohibited in particular.

Later on, with the change of the system of government from an imperial to a democratic one in 1991, the situation for Oromo and other vernaculars improved (see Constitution, 1995). Accordingly, much has been done by the government to promote the vernaculars, even though Amharic is still the sole official language of the Federal Government.

This conflict between the two groups (the assimilationist and the promotion-oriented) has continued throughout the years, and even manifested itself in the Church after the system of the government had been changed. Thus, in the church context where attempts had been made to develop and use Oromo, a conflict arose in Addis Ababa. Because a body could not officially oppose the use of Oromo in the other public areas as it is the constitutional policy of the government, it could, however, use the church as a hiding place to reveal its opposition to the government policy of linguistic freedom. Hence, it has been observed that during both regimes the church has had relative freedom to go against the constitution of the government. In former times it promoted the dominated vernaculars which were proscribed by the system, while in the present system some sections of the church hindered the promotion of the vernaculars that have been promoted by the Government.

The policy of the EECMY is in line with the norm-and-accommodation theory of Kymlicka and Patten (2003), according to which the common language (*lingua franca*) should be used for common worship. Speakers of the other languages can use their own in addition to the common one whenever they want to worship alone. This is consistent also with the policy of the Government, because the Government also uses Amharic for federal issues which encompass all the speech communities and regional languages for regional administration.

However, when compared with the policy of the Government, we see one important difference between the status of Oromo and other vernaculars in the Church. In institutions such as the House of Representatives (the Parliament) everyone can speak in his/her language of preference as interpretations and translations are facilitated for those who do not understand the language. Kymlicka and Patten (2003) claim that it is when the different languages have official status that such usage exists, where “a person is free to exercise her official language rights in a minority language even if she is fluent in the majority language.” However, the case of Ethiopia is different. The languages which have not been given equal official status at the level of the Federal Government could be used in the Parliament and law courts of the Federal Government. This lies somewhere between Kymlicka and Patten’s (2003) official status and norm-and-accommodation status. Actually, it is very much nearer to the official language status, as it helps

the speakers have pride in their identity in addition to facilitating communication. We may call this the public usage right of the vernaculars.

However, this is not the case in the Church. In big meetings such as the General Assembly of the EECMY, members who come from the remotest areas do not understand Amharic in which the meetings are conducted. There is no provision for rights of public use of their own language for such people. Had there been any promotion rights given to such languages at the national Church level, all participants could equally contribute to the meeting deliberations. Now except for voting by show of hands, being guided by other members who know both languages, the participation of such people is very minimal. In some of the higher leadership offices of the Church the researcher observed that communications are restricted to Amharic even among Oromos. As it is the case that the faith becomes more meaningful to the people when it is in their native languages, Kymlicka and Patten (2003:7) argue also that the same is true for politics. Hence, the meetings of the EECMY would be truly participative if all (and particularly the Oromos who are the great majority in the EECMY) could have the opportunity of using their native languages at least through public usage rights.

What are the reasons for the language controversies in the Church throughout history? Is it really an issue of language or does it have more subtle causes? Different answers could be given to these questions. In the first place, we can see linguistic reasons. The speakers of the vernaculars like Oromo feel comfortable when they can communicate in all domains (including the Word of God) in their native language; because that is the language they understand most. That is why the chief of Bojji marvelled when he first heard the Word of God in his language, Oromo (see § 4.2.2, 5.4.3 & 6.5). Today also many Oromos in Addis Ababa and other non-Oromo speaking areas know the common language, but they are happier when they get the Word in their language. There are also those who do not understand Oromo, but who live with and want to worship together with them in a common language. That is why they raise the issue of unity of believers. This case even convinced some Oromos and made them align themselves with those who oppose the use of Oromo, especially in the capital. In the former cases also, the EOC clergy wanted to know what kind of Christianity the evangelists were teaching, but they could not do

that as they did not understand Oromo. Thus, for a follow-up, they did not want the services to be in Oromo. These are some of the linguistic reasons.

Other reasons are non-linguistic. In the first place, we see a struggle between maintaining the status quo of the past and exercising one's rights in the Church. At present while the situation is much better in Ethiopia, the Oromos want to exercise in the Church the rights they have acquired elsewhere, whereas those who had been dominating others hide behind the pretext of unity in the Church to sustain the status quo. In this regard, Woods (2006:202) points out that:

an ethnic community which places a high value on transmission of the community language through the generations may view the church as being another vehicle for language maintenance. Such a community may have difficulties in a denomination which prioritises the transmission of faith over the transmission of language, where the two are in opposition.

Now there is no Amharic-only policy in the secular spheres, but the Church wants to sustain this at least in the capital under the umbrella of the unity of believers. Schmid (2001:8) contends that "heightened sense of nationalism and patriotism" are among factors contributing to language conflict, and quotes both Fishman (1989) and Chomsky (1979:19) who argue that language is one of the important variables in a struggle between dominant and dominated groups. This is exactly what we see in Ethiopia. Some try to claim that talking about using different languages in the same congregation (or raising the question of using one's language) is politics. Ideally, politics should not penetrate the Church, but what is being done to avoid the use of one's language, which is part of human rights, is itself politics. In fact, it is seldom possible to separate politics and religion (see Wolf, 2006:42). Giving reasons such as unity of believers and avoiding politics they want to maintain their previous supremacy in the Church (see § 2.3)

The power struggle is another non-linguistic cause of language conflict in the Church. As we have said above, there are many who use this issue of language for their hidden agenda of a power struggle (see § 5.4.5). As the Church leadership positions (like anywhere else in developing countries) give opportunities to control and govern the limited resources, people fight over the positions utilizing every opportunity. Thus, when the issue of language arose, both

parties wanted to make use of this to achieve the leadership positions or bring someone they favour in to the positions, or for those who were already in the positions to retain them. Those who formulated and tried to implement the policy of language use per the request of the communities wanted to align themselves with those who made the request. This was done by answering their questions positively and following the constitutions of the Church and the country. However, as we saw above (§ 5.4.8), they do not strongly push for the implementation of the policy so as not to totally miss support from the other group. Alternatively, others are trying to use this opportunity to replace the existing leadership which they consider as favouring only one group (the Oromos) and harming others that do not belong to that ethnolinguistic group. This is typically seen from the actions of individuals who sometimes side with one or the other group, looking at the balance of power (for example, after the court decision.) Many of those who were at the forefront of the conflict over the language issue in Addis Ababa later fled to the United States of America. This might indicate that their main question was more economic than religious. It is clear that language conflict arises not only due to linguistic reasons, but also due to political and economic reasons.

When we observe Christian Oromos from the perspective of this conflict, we see different effects. There were some Oromos who sided with the opponents of the use of the language in congregations in Addis Ababa for the reason of maintaining unity. These included people in the leadership positions and the common believers. Some of these people did this so as not to lose their relationship with those whom they had been working with, or possibly to show that they are indifferent to the issues of ethnicity and language, and that they value their faith more. There are well-known international preachers and singers who are Oromos by birth who never use their own native language. They seem to have accepted the fact that one language at the expense of another (their own) unites the Christians of Ethiopia.

One of the positive outcomes of the conflict over language in the Church was that it united the members of the evangelical churches who speak Oromo. This agrees with Schmid's (2001:125-6) assertion that linguistic conflict creates a sense of unity within a community and who also gives a tangible example: "In Switzerland, conflict contributed to the process of nation formation. Resistance to foreign powers creates nations by transforming a vague sense of ethnic difference

into a crystallized sense of national identity.” In the same manner, Oromos in and around Addis Ababa were united to form their own groups of worship separate from the other ethnic and national groups, even from different denominations. Thus, while we can say that the conflict awakened many to view the importance of their own language in worship, there are few individuals who sacrifice their national identity for their pride in another language or for their ‘faith’.

Conflicts are inevitable and sometimes desirable for the proper functioning of any organization or institution. Kanno (2010:7) argues that the way conflicts are handled makes conflicts either constructive or destructive. Thus, as the internal conflict in the Church over language use was one between Christians, many attempts were made from the beginning to solve the conflict by reconciliation. However, as this could not be achieved, the application of different conflict resolution styles was necessitated at different times as a response to the process. Throughout the conflict in the Church, in most cases both parties were assertive enough, i.e. they were trying to satisfy their own needs. It was seen that both sides were trying to emphasize their own positions and win the other party to their side. The mother Church and those who supported it were trying to persuade the other party to abide by the policy decision the Church had passed. The other party, however, was trying to convince the church leadership to change its position, and waive the decision to using Oromo in the congregations in Addis Ababa. That is why the church leadership dissolved the Synod that had refused to accept its decisions, which was an instance of the use of power to implement one’s decisions. On the other hand, the faction group became assertive enough to form its own faction church under the same name as the mother Church (see § 5.4.6). Both parties were at loggerheads and in disunity over the use of the language.

Finally, however, the matter came to an end through more collaborative and accommodating ways. After the matter was resolved through the court in favour of giving back the mother church its name and properties which had been taken by the faction group, the reconciliation process was started once more. This time both parties agreed to the negotiation which was collaborative, especially on the part of the mother Church as it ignored the court decision which favoured it, and entered once more into the reconciliation process. According to the decision of the court of law, the main Church had the right to get back both its name and property. The other party was

required either to find other facilities and a new name or be reconciled to the mother Church. However, the mother Church ignored all these, and volunteered for negotiation while it was the winning party, ignoring its rights in order to accommodate the interests of the other party (see § 5.4.10). Kanno (2010:33) contends that “accommodating skills include the ability to sacrifice, the ability to be selfless, the ability to obey orders, and the ability to yield.” Thus, it was this accommodation of the Church leadership that brought the reunification of the two parties, which had been apart for about 14 years.

While this kind of style is said to be used in disputes of little importance, the issue to which the EECMY leadership applied this style was a very serious one, as it had divided the Church into two parts for more than a decade. It is believed that an overuse of such a style might lead to negative outcomes like anarchy. Palmer (1990:27) contends that the party that gives in its rights by favouring the rights of others finally starts to think of itself as less important than the other party, and carries an unnecessarily heavy load. Thus, the use of this style by the church leaders led to the victims of the conflict not exercising the justice they had got from the court of law. The harmony for which the leaders were said to have sacrificed their justice seems not to have been properly secured, as still there are quarrels in some congregations, and the believers in Addis Ababa are separated into two synods. Some, like the EECMY-Nefas Silk Congregation, are still being divided along ethnic lines (see § 5.4.10). However, the church leadership gave in to avoid this kind of division. Kanno (2010:33) contends again that “people who overuse the accommodating style exhibit a lack of desire to change and usually demonstrate anxiety over future uncertainties.” The other reason why some people prefer this kind of style is to secure good relations with the conflicting party in order to gain some advantage. This seems to be the case in the reconciliation, as those in power then might have wanted some credit from the members and leaders of the faction group, as well as some partners, by sacrificing the rights of the victims. Thus, it shows that the faction group has fulfilled its desires, whereas the body that had remained loyal to the church policy has lost its rights as a result of the conflict resolution mechanism followed. The leaders might have gained popularity with the other party and those who favour that party, but this was at the expense of the rights of those who had raised the question. Furthermore, the effects experienced at present in some places show that there is a

degree of anarchy, because the reconciliation has not brought the desired unity everywhere (see § 5.4.10).

From the above discussion, we may deduce that the leaders' role is vital in dealing with conflicts, while the common people generally follow them. As peace-making Christians, they gave preference to resolving the conflict by reconciliation. It could be questioned whether this is true peace, however, as it has disadvantaged those who had been under persecution during the time of the separation. Thus, the act of the leaders not to change the situation, even after the decision of the court, was harmful to sections of the community of the Church, though not to the leaders. Thus, such a move might be considered as preserving of the leaders at the expense of the church community. Rather than bringing together the two parties as two equals, it subordinated those who had been under the umbrella of the mother Church to those who had separated themselves from the mother Church. The former faction group have now established their own Synod and assumed important positions in the church leadership, under which some of those formerly under the main Church are also ruled. The conflict has not yet been properly resolved.

## **6.7 Recommendations for future research**

The following topics are recommended for further research:

1. The contribution of the EOC to the development of the vernacular languages of Ethiopia.
2. The contribution of evangelical churches, other than EECMY, to the development of the vernaculars of Ethiopia.
3. The contribution of formal education and the mass media service to the maintenance and development of Oromo.
4. The challenge of Bible translation into the different Oromo dialects.
5. The role of pioneer Oromo evangelists in the development and maintenance of the Oromo language.
6. The current and future implementation of the Church language policy.

In general, these are areas which are related to the present study in one way or another, but have not been seen studies in depth.

## **6.8 General recommendations**

This study has shown that the work of the EECMY has fostered linguistic tolerance in the country. Had it not been for the introduction of Evangelical Christianity to the land, Oromo and other vernaculars of the country might have not been in the position in which they are today. There would have been possibilities of large scale language shift and even language death. At this time, however, the secular system (the political system of the country) is very favourable for development and use of the languages of the country. Thus, it is recommended that the Church which originally introduced this democratic system of using the languages of the communities for its services should utilize this favourable situation, and raise the level of its language development work. In order to implement this, the following recommendations are given on the basis of the findings of the present study.

1. The Church should coordinate all work related to language development under the control of one office, in order to strengthen its activities with resources. There should be a strongly coordinated programme rather than weak and scattered activities. For example, rather than having different offices for Literacy and Language Development work and the JFLP, it seems wiser to bring together both under one office.
2. Previous good projects on language development should be revisited. As seen in § 5.4.9 above, there were many good activities begun in the Church which have now been discontinued or weakened due to lack of attention by the church leadership.
3. The Church can follow the democratic provisions in the law to secure public language use rights when there are big gatherings where some of the participants of the meeting do not understand the lingua franca in which the meetings are conducted, provision should be made for interpreters to be appointed.
4. The Church leadership needs to follow-up on the implementation of its policy. It should, for example, evaluate from time to time how many of the policy decisions of the Church concerning language use are being implemented at the grassroots level.

- Furthermore, recommendations and suggestions given by experts concerning language conflict should be implemented. A language commission could be set up in the Church to relegate complaints and suggestions as well as policy implementations.
5. It seems to be advisable that just for the sake of peaceful co-existence, the church leadership should not try to by-pass some problems. Problems have to be dealt with at their roots. Cases and concerns about people's language rights should be viewed as part of the mission of the Church and taken seriously.
  6. The Church community can be informed regarding the democratic Government and the Church language policy regarding language rights (Constitution, 1995 & Church policy, § 5.2).

## **6.9 Concluding statement**

The main aim of this study was to investigate the role of the EECMY in the development of Oromo. A number of research questions were posed in order to guide the course of the investigation (see § 1.2).

The findings of the study clearly show that the Church has contributed significantly towards the maintenance and development of Oromo. The Church's translation work, use of the language for its religious and social services, education and literacy work and mass media followed mostly from the main evangelistic work of the Church. In some cases, however, evangelists, in addition to their goal of evangelism interests, also pursued the goal of language development as these two were seen to be complementary.

The pioneer evangelists did the work of developing Oromo at a time when language proscription was being practiced in the country. They were persecuted for using the language in their services. If they had not done that, even the real existence of the language might have been in question today and certainly a greater language shift would have taken place. A number of scholars (such as Dzialtuvia, 2006:79-85; Fishman, 2006:14-24; Kamwangamalu, 2006:86-96; Salami, 2006:97-120 and Wang, 2002:65) maintain that the work of Christian churches and

missionaries has a great bearing on the maintenance of languages and the identities of the speakers, and this is certainly true in the work of the EECMY.

Currently, however, situations have been changed to where language tolerance is exercised by the government of the country. The church was free to contribute much more than the former pioneers who operated under persecution by the governments of the time. However, although the church has a democratic language policy which is consistent with the policy of the country, it has not been able to implement it effectively. It has become evident in the study that the current leadership and ministers are not as committed as the pioneers were. This time, it is rather individual church members and former leaders who are contributing towards the development of the language.

Thus, while the government and the church policy are conducive to the development of the vernacular languages of the country including Oromo, hesitation and opposition to the implementation of the policy have slowed down their development. The church leadership is criticized for not doing as much as possible under the prevailing favourable conditions. These 15 years of conflict that the church experienced have revealed that the different attitudes and beliefs as well as interests that the church leaders and believers have are among the causes for the language conflict arising in the church. These issues have still not been fully resolved and need to be addressed.

As to the future prospects of the development of Oromo, the study indicates that there is a possibility of strengthened usage of the language which may enhance its development. Besides the institutions of the church which work on the development of the language (such as Aster Ganno Literature Society and JFLP), unions are being formed in the church and outside the church to use the language to influence the unreached Oromos. The parishes being formed by congregations in Addis Ababa and the surrounding areas, FOCUS and *Ilaamee* are good examples for these unions. In congregations where the Oromos could not freely use their languages, they have also started their own Oromo congregations where they can worship in Oromo solely. If this trend continues, it is possible that the church structure may follow that of

the government accord the full language rights to minority languages, which would strengthen the development of these languages.

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## APPENDIX A

### Why the guidelines became necessary

1. The people who do not understand Amharic or any of the generally used languages may be more effectively evangelized if they get the Gospel in their mother tongue.
2. When the sermon is conducted through translation from Amharic to the mother tongue, the listeners do not understand it as well as when it is in one language, and translation errors may occur.
3. People may find it difficult to read the Bible translated into their languages. They were trained in reading Amharic and the sound systems of languages are different. Thus, they need time to make the transfer.
4. Since the first language is the heart language of the people, they understand the Word of God better when it is preached to them in their first language.

### Main points of the guideline

1. Within congregations where only one language is used:
  - 1.1 The language of the area should be used for worship purposes. If the Old Testament has not been translated into the language of the area, translation should be carefully conducted, but sermons should be given from the New Testament, whose translation is available.
  - 1.2 Members should use the language of the area for Bible studies, family prayers and personal studies.
  - 1.3 People should use scriptures translated into the language of the area. The following activities should be done in order to implement this:
    - Training should be given so that people know how to read well in their own languages.
    - Reader groups should be established to increase the number of people who can read the scriptures loudly and clearly in the congregations.
    - Different readers and mechanisms should be prepared in which people are made to

practice reading.

- Material such as hymn books, Bible stories, teaching materials and liturgy book should be prepared.
- The Bible should be recorded so that those who cannot read them can hear them in their languages.
- The training in the local Bible schools should be given in the local languages.
- Bible verses should be posted in the local languages on the walls of the congregation buildings.

2. In areas where the majority speak one language:

2.1 Translators should be prepared for the minority groups.

2.2 After scripture reading, it should be secured that it has also been read in the minority language.

2.3 The gist of the sermon should be given in the minority language.

3. In congregations where various languages are spoken:

3.1 The worship language should be the one that is used in the area generally; but there should be regulations that enable people to use their own languages. This shall be done through the following actions:

- Enabling people to pray in their languages openly and encouraging hymns in the various languages.
- Reading verses of the Bible in different languages so that people can hear them in their own languages.
- Preparing Bible studies in the different languages.
- If at least one-third of the population of the congregation speak one language, giving special time for worship in their language.

3.2 Making the different groups use their languages for Bible studies, family prayers and personal studies.

4. In areas where Bible translation projects are just underway:

4.1 Unless there are various languages spoken in the area, the language of worship should be the one generally used.

4.2 People should be encouraged to write hymns in their own languages.

4.3 The Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments, Creed and Luther's Small Catechisms should be translated and used until the Bible translation work is completed.

4.4 Awareness should be created among the believing community concerning the current

translation.

- 4.5 Members should be updated on progress of the translation project and convinced that it is their project.
  - 4.6 The believers should be encouraged to comment on parts of the Bible translated and put them to use.
  - 4.7 The parts translated should be used for trial in the worshipping programmes and Bible studies.
  - 4.8 People should be taught to read and write so that they are prepared for the reading of the scriptures.
  - 4.9 On special occasions, fliers should be distributed for reading in the language of the area.
  - 4.10 Some of the readings of Sundays should be translated and used by the translation group, if possible.
  - 4.11 A committee should work as a bridge between the translation team, the congregation and the `Synod.
  - 4.12 Other denominations in the area should be encouraged to participate in the translation project.
  - 4.13 The translators should be encouraged to participate in all the activities of the congregation.
5. In areas where translation work has not yet begun:
- Worship, sermons and teaching should be in the language of the area, but the Bible reading should be in the language of general communication. The use of the language of the area should be encouraged.
  - Speakers of the language should be consulted on how to translate some key terms used in the Bible.
  - Until the translated scriptures are put into use for trial, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, Creed, the Small Catechism, etc. should be translated and used during worship and teaching.
  - Some Bible verses should be translated and posted just for trial.
  - Members should be encouraged to write hymns in their own language.

For example, there are many Oromos and speakers of other vernaculars from the southern Ethiopia who are heard using some Amharic words and expressions with odd meanings (such as [baarrikeny] (slaughter me) to say [baarkeny](bless me); [iradaw](slaughter him) to say [irdaaw] (help him), etc. because of the difference in the structure of Amharic on the one hand, and these languages, on the other hand (the Oromo case is personal observation and the southern languages is from Mr. Aylate, pers. comm.). Originally, this kind of mispronunciation used to be equated with lack of knowledge, and the speakers were teased by the Amharas and even sometimes by their speech community members. Bulcha (1997:337-338) notes that:

[m]any Amharic teachers chose to ridicule children whenever they made grammatical errors or mispronounced Amharic words. Sometimes classmates joined the teacher in laughing at the ‘erring’ child. It was in these circumstances that such pejorative concepts [in Amharic] as *tabtaaabaa Galla* (‘the stammering/inarticulate Galla’) and *gamad aaf Galla* (‘mute Galla’) were coined by the Amhara to apply to those who spoke incorrect Amharic.

A similar case is expected when the Oromos make such mistakes as we saw above in the church. Thus, these people say that in order to serve and be served without any difficulty, they need to use their language wherever they are. The fact that they originally started being served and serving in their native language while they were at the countryside also has influenced them to prefer their native language to the dominant language of the capital. This is reflected in the letter written in Amharic language to the EECMY officers by Oromo representatives of the Intoto EECMY Congregation on May 23, 1986 (Appendix IX).

## APPENDIX

### B

February 22, 1998

#### FILE NOTE

The EECMY Officers paid a visit to the Gulele Bethel Congregation on February 22, 1998 in order to address members of the Congregation regarding the implementation of EC-102-798 "n.3", i.e. rendering spiritual serves in the Oromo Language. The followings are the highlights from the visitation programme.

1. Four members of the Officers, (Rev. Yadesa Daba, Ato Mesfen Lessanu, Ato Hunduma Gagne, Rev. Willi Kalmbach and the General Secretary, Rev. Megersa Guta), arrived at Gulele Bethel Mekane Yesus Compound at 8:a.m. and were received by Ato Asfaw Shuba and Ato Negatu Abera, former President and V/President respectively.
2. Rev. Yadesa Daba read from 1Pet. 1:22 and offered prayer. He went on and informed the two former elders that the Church Officers have come to Gulele Bethel Congregation to address members of the Congregation regarding the implementation of EC-102-7-98 "n" since the elders of the congregation did not want to cooperate with the Church Officers in implementing the decision of the Executive Committee. He went on and stated that the Officers have decided that the elders be removed from responsibility as of February 18, 1998.
3. Ato Asfaw Shuba strongly replied that the Officers cannot address members of the Congregation.
4. Rev. Yadesa reiterated his point in saying that the Church Officers must address members of the congregation in order to explain and clarify issues related to the implementation of the decision of the 102<sup>nd</sup> EC (EC-102-7-98 "n") . Thus, the Officers entered the Congregation building to attend the worship service and eventually to address members of the Congregation. While waiting for the service to start Rev. Yadesa went to Pastor Ayalew Tesema, Pastor of the Congregation and leader of the Liturgy for the day to tell him to include in the announcement list of the day that the Church Officers are here and that they want to address members of the Congregation.
5. The regular worship service started at 9 a.m. . The announcement was skipped for reasons not known. After the delivery of the sermon and while the Choir group was singing Rev. Megersa went to pastor Ayalew to remind him that Rev. Yadessa would like to speak to the Congregation. Rev. Ayalew replied that he cannot give permission unless the elders do so.
6. After the Choir had finished singing Rev. Yadessa went to the front and held the microphone to address the Congregation.. A certain Ato Ayalew Yimam came forward and snatched the microphone from the hand of Rev. Yadessa and the turmoil thus started. The Congregation stood up in despair. Some other members joined Ato Ayalew Yimam and surrounded Rev. Yadesa. Ato Asfaw Shuba and Rev. Ayalew Tessema told the members to go home

- Rev. Yadessa and the other members of the Church Officers took their seats for a while and walked out of the building and eventually the compound with sorrow
7. The Officers came to the Central Office and deliberated on what to do next. It was decided to take legal action in consultation with the EECMY Legal Advisor.

  
Megersa Guta (Rev.)  
General Secretary, EECMY

# APPENDIX C



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**The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus**  
**Central Office**

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Central Ethiopia Synod  
 Central Synod  
 Illubabor Bethel Synod  
 Kafa & Gambella Bethel Presbyteries  
 Northern Ethiopia Area Work

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South Central Synod  
 South Ethiopia Synod  
 South West Synod  
 Western Synod  
 Western Wollega Bethel Synod

April 12, 1998

Rev. Arne Solberg  
 P.O. Box 5540  
 NLM, Resident Representative  
 April 12, 1998  
 Addis Ababa

Ref. No. 616:27N/49373  
 Date

Dear friends

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your letter dated April 6, 1998 concerning the recent development between the EECMY Church Officers, Entoto and Gulele Bethel Mekane Yesus Congregations in connection with the Executive Committee's decision that other languages may be used in addition and/or beside the Amharic Language when requested by members of our congregations from any nation and nationalities. According to the decision of the Executive Committee the program should not affect the regular Sunday morning services at all. As you can imagine it is very difficult to understand the cause for the misunderstanding except the hatred that some people have for other people's language. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus believes that all people are equal regardless of their ethnic background. Therefore their language, culture and identity should be respected and accepted. All people, nations and nationalities should accept and respect each other and live together with peace and harmony.

It is with this understanding and view that we have tried and are trying to approach the matter in peaceful way. Despite our utmost effort to settle the matter in peace and good understanding, we have faced with fierce resistance from the elders of the congregations. Therefore, the question is what to do with the decision of the Church. We as Church Officers, have to follow the decision of the Executive Committee and implement it. The Church Officers or the people in the Central Office here do not have any other intention to disturb the work of the congregations at all. We hope that God will give to all of us good understanding, tolerance and respect towards one another as Christian brothers and sisters.

Thanking you again for your concern and support.

Sincerely yours,

Yadesa Daba (Rev.)  
 President, EECMY



cc: Mr. Gupnar Oseng  
 NLM Mission secretary  
 Central Ethiopia Synod  
 Entoto Mekane Yesus  
 Gulele Bethel Mekane Yesus  
 Church Officers

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P. O. Box 2087  
 Tel. (251-1) 55 37 22, 55 32 80  
 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Fax (251-1) 55 29 66  
 Telex No. 21528 ECMY-E

Bank Account: CBE Aratkilo Branch C/A No 673

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"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Tit. 2:11 (KJV)

## APPENDIX D

Date: 21 October, 1998

We, leaders of the congregations in and around Addis Ababa of the Central Ethiopia Synod, (CES) Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) here below describe and expose the unconstitutional and illegal action taken against the Central Ethiopia Synod. We request all addressees or recipients of this petition, to appreciate the adverse impact of the illegal action on the Church's evangelisation program, confidence in church leadership, and unity or solidarity of believers of the EECMY. The petitioners request all individuals and organizations of influence to do everything in their powers to contribute to the establishment of a peaceful solution to the crisis of far reaching consequences building up in the EECMY due to the leadership's commitment to advance the interests of one single ethnic group and its lack of foresight of the implications of its acts.

### **Source of Conflict: Use of Oromigna language in the Congregations**

The issue of Oromigna language surfaced in January 1993 when a few extreme Oromo nationalists came up with a demand for a Sunday church services to be conducted in Oromigna Language. The two Congregations, Entoto and Bethel, which were requested to open services in Oromigna did not fully respond positively because of a host of clearly documented implications. The Oromo petitioners, without involving the CES, took up matters to the officers of the Church who, without investigating the issues involved took sides and fully supported the demands of the Oromo group. This summarizes the genesis of the crisis in the EECMY.

### **Efforts made to resolve the problem**

1. The Elders of the two Congregations held series of meetings with the Oromo group with a view to reaching a solution. All meetings failed to resolve the problem through discussions.
2. The Church officers held series of meetings with the CES officers and Elders of the two Congregations, but no solution could be found because the church leaders were in favor of the Oromo group and made open statements that favored the promotion of Oromigna language.
3. Many Executive Committees meetings of CES were held and, with no exception, all the decisions endorsed and upheld the position of the two congregations. The CES

Executive Committee meetings declared that as Addis Ababa is a city of Multi-Ethnic Society, Church services be held in a medium of communication understood by the majority of the believers. As the commission of the Church is to preach the Gospel of Christ in the language the people understand, the CES, is conducting different services in their own language for those who can not easily communicate with the working language of the Addis Ababa Administration. The CES decided that Christian love “. . . is not self-seeking” (1Corn. 13:4), hence, for the few extreme Oromo nationalists who clearly communicate the working language of the Addis Ababa Region, but claim to be better satisfied by worshipping with their Oromigna language, the CES promised to accept the worshipers in Oromigna from different Congregations at Addis Ababa and different cities, at the Lewis Hermes Hostel as one Sister Congregation and support them in all its capacities, rather than opening Oromigna services out of Christian love by force at each Congregations and disturb the unity of believers. All these decisions were rejected by the Church Officers.

4. At the 93<sup>rd</sup> Executive Committee of the EECMY, the church officers, in total disregard for the recommendations of the CES Executive Committee, alleged that both CES and the two congregations were disobedient to higher church hierarchies. Without even putting it to a vote, imposed on the two congregations to start Oromigna church services. The CES was mandated to ensure the implementation of the policy decision. The Congregations protested saying that the decision was in violation of the autonomy of the congregations. The decision also violated the Constitution of the EECMY, CES and Congregations. An ultimatum was given to both CES and the two congregations to implement the policy decision.
5. At the 102<sup>nd</sup> Executive Committee of the EECMY, the Church officers tried to have resolution passed to dissolve the CES for failing to force the two congregations to implement its decision. Instead, the meeting took a harsh measure in violation of the EECMY constitution and placed the two congregations under the Church officers or Central Office thereby abolishing the relationship between the CES and the Congregations and strictly instructed the CES to force the two congregations to implement the decision. This again was in categorical violation of the constitutions of the EECMY, CES and the Congregations. The Church Officers used all possible means to force the Congregations to implement the decision. They even closed their bank accounts paralyzed their operations and harassed them left and right, but the intended result was not achieved.
6. In the next EECMY Executive Committee meeting, the church officers reported the difficulties they faced in forcing the two Congregations implement the decision. When the meeting realized that the Church Officers failed to implement the decision by force, the meeting returned back the administration and accountability of the two Congregations under the CES and gave a final warning to the CES to implement the decision and report the implementation to the next EECMY Executive Committee meeting. The meeting further forewarned the CES that the Synod will be dissolved if the decision is not implemented.
7. The Executive Committee of the CES met in August 1998 and discussed the old issue which had now become the special interest of the Church Officers and their allies who fan the fire for their own interior motives. After a day's long

deliberation, the CES Executive appointed a Committee of seven members to look into this matter in the hope of bringing peaceful solution to the problem.

8. The CES Committee worked very hard and held 15 meetings and prayer sessions including whole night prayer. The Committee held meetings with all concerned bodies and produced a voluminous report. The following are its major recommendations.

- The Oromos worshipping at Louis Hermes Hostel, where services are held in Oromigna be given recognition by the CES and be established as a Congregation. The Oromos in Addis Ababa wishing to join the services may also do so.
- There must be no policy decision that should force Congregations to start services in Oromigna in violation of the Constitutions of EECMY, CES and the Congregations. The autonomy of the individual Congregations should be respected. Love and mutual respect should prevail in the church and not hatred and disunity.
- If there are members of the Congregations from any ethnic groups who do not at all hear and understand Amharic, the medium of Church services, special programs be organized for them in the languages they can hear and understand.

The above recommendations were submitted by the Committee at the CES Executive meeting held on 29 August 1998. The recommendations were endorsed by the CES Executive committee meeting. The meeting requested CES to submit the same to the Church Officers for presentation to the 104<sup>th</sup> EECMY Executive Committee meeting to be held from 5 - 13 October 1998.

9. The 104<sup>th</sup> EECMY Executive Committee which met from 5 - 13 October 1998, without giving due attention to the efforts made by the CES Committee, the Executive church officers, supported by their allies, started condemning the CES for failing to enforce its earlier policy decision. Despite oppositions from other members, without putting the matter to vote, the Chair and the allies declared the dissolution of the CES and illegally removed the Officers and workers of the CES who have been appointed by the CES Assembly according to the Constitutions. The Church Officers have now appointed a Provisional Committee to replace the CES Officers duly elected by the representatives of 180 Congregations. The church officers also functionally closed the CES who is responsible for the Gospel work in more than 180 Congregations within and outside Addis Ababa, by closing its bank accounts.

### **Flagrant and Arbitrary Decisions/Action.**

We are conscious of the fact that arbitrary and dictatorial actions under the cover of decision making bodies are inevitable when the leadership becomes insensitive and immune to the voice of the subordinates. The principles of democracy are trampled down. The Constitutions which are in place to establish the rule of law are thrown overboard to attain selfish motives and objectives. Cries for free and fair

decisions by the masses are given deaf ear by the leadership who enjoyed life of luxury at the expense of the down-trodden who pay from their meager income for their upkeep.

The leadership of EECMY are oblivious of democratic principles and consequently they failed to uphold rule of law in the church structure.

- a. Democracy requires and the constitution of EECMY provides that the power to remove elected bodies is vested in the electorate or constituency. In categorical violation of constitutional provisions, the EECMY Executive Committee removed CES officers, elected by the representatives of the Congregations. The Church Officers have caused this flagrant violation of the EECMY constitution and that of CES and the Congregations. Furthermore, according to the EECMY constitution, synods are only created and dissolved by the General Assembly of the Church. The EECMY Executive Committee is not mandated to create and dissolve synods. In direct violation of this constitutional provision, the Executive Committee pressed by the Church Officers and their allies, has taken this illegal action and removed the CES officers. The body established to replace the duly elected CES officers cannot legally represent the membership of the CES.
- b. Under the EECMY Constitution higher bodies of the Church can only interfere in the affairs of the synod and Congregation under only one condition, that is issues related to doctrine (Art. 2 of the constitution). In this case the issue is not related to doctrine. The issue is medium of communication at the Congregation level. Therefore, the action taken is illegal and unconstitutional. The action taken is null and void.
- c. The church exists to fulfill the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ (Math. 28 : 18 - 20) and not to advance the interests of certain ethnic groups no matter how much the top leadership sympathizes with that particular ethnic group and its concerns. The Church leadership that fails to see and treat all ethnic groups with impartiality and integrity loses the confidence of its constituencies. Christians are purchased with the blood of Jesus "from every tribe, and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5 : 9). The Church leadership that fails to appreciate this is unworthy of the position and mandate given to it. A partial shepherd is bound to lose some or all of its flock to the enemy. Therefore, impartiality and fairness are the hallmarks of any leadership in particular that of the church. The Congregations in and around Addis Ababa are not only disappointed but cannot see our leaders eye to eye when it comes to respecting constitutional rights and making free and fair decisions.

We appeal to all Christian and humanitarian organizations committed to fulfilling the Great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ and upholding peace, justice and human rights to influence the current EECMY leadership to reverse its decision and restore the principles democratic management requires in the Church. Until this is done we will all continue to resist oppression, violation of human rights and violation of

constitutional rights in the EECMY in general and in the CES in particular. We, however, do this with love and humility.

Pray without ceasing (1Tess. 5:17)

Ato Asfaw Shuba

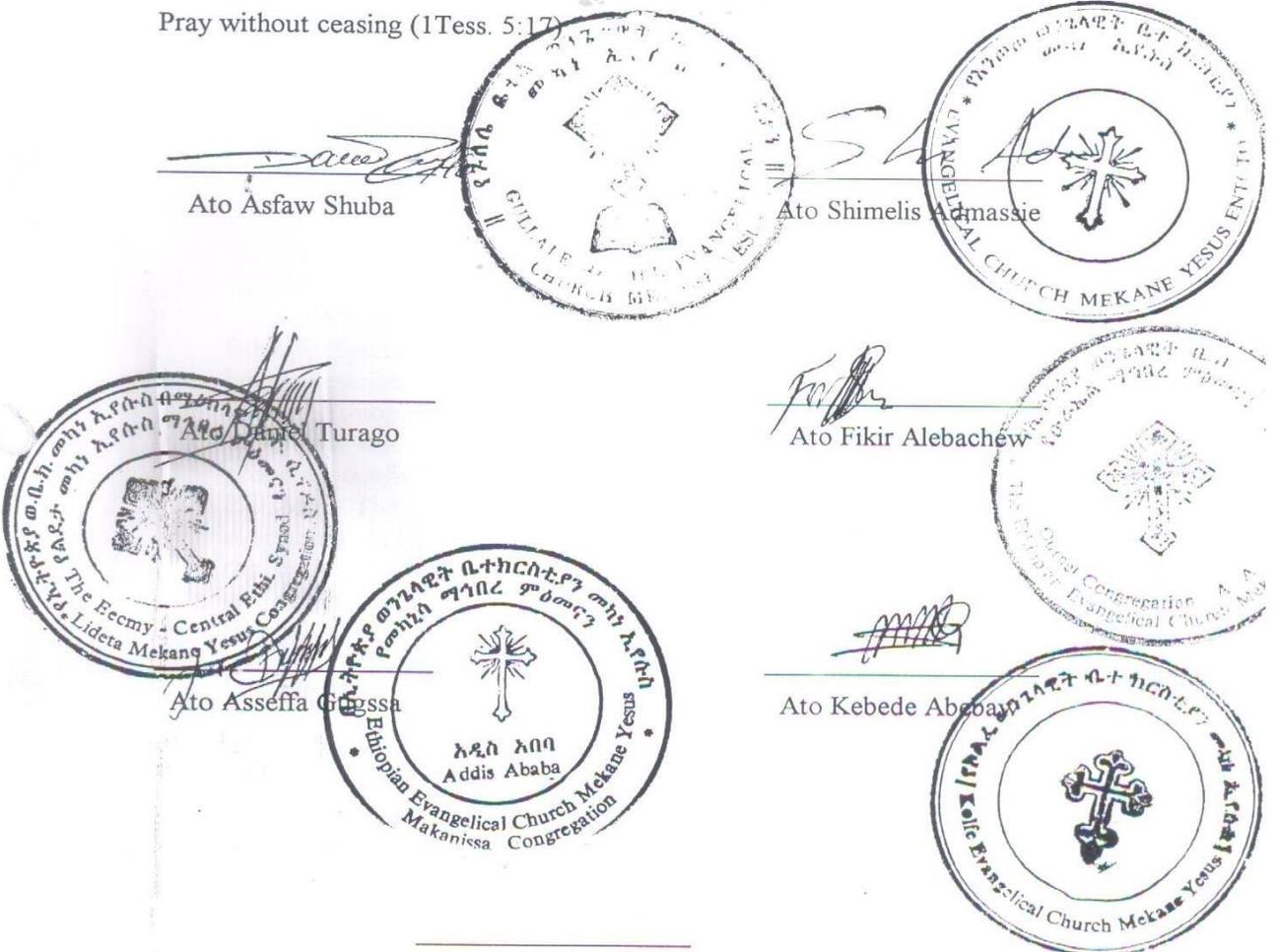
Ato Shimelis Admassie

Ato Daniel Turago

Ato Fikir Alebachew

Ato Asseffa Gugssa

Ato Kebede Abeba



Rev. Sheleme Kerorsa

*CES Congregation leaders in and around Addis Ababa Provisional Coordinating Committee.*

## APPENDIX E

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To EECMY c/o President Rev. Yadessa Daba & Sister Yeshimebet Gemeda.

To PCC c/o Ato Shimelis Adrnassie, Ato Asfaw Shuba, Ato Kebebew Daka & Ato Aklog Molla

Copy: The EECMY Partners

Letter concerning the present situation in the reconciliation process within the EECMY

A Memorandum of understanding of the reconciliation process in the EECMY/CES was arrived upon in a meeting in Addis Abeba February 5<sup>th</sup> 2000 and accepted in principle.

Meetings were scheduled to discuss further follow up of the Memorandum, and it was also communicated to the facilitators that it would be appreciated to add some more items to the Memorandum. New meetings were held on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and on March 13<sup>th</sup>, but consensus on new items was not reached.

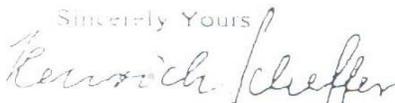
In our understanding, however, the Memorandum of February 5<sup>th</sup> contains the main items for further deliberations in the process. All items in the conflict are naturally inter-linked with those in the Memorandum, and will thus come to the forum of discussion in due time.

We recommend that

- \* the reconciliation progress continues in official forms,
- \* each side constitutes a full quorum of delegates with a letter of authorisation,
- \* that neutral facilitators for the forthcoming reconciliation process be chosen,
- \* that the reconciliation process in the divided congregations within CES is started before a Synod Convention is called together,
- \* that it be considered to call the Executive Committee for an extraordinary meeting.

We, who have represented the Partners of the EECMY in the reconciliation process, are sorry to state that we have not been able to bring the reconciliation process to a conclusion, but we trust that the concerned sides in the conflict will commit themselves to continue their strive for peace, forgiving and reconciliation.

Sincerely Yours



Rev. dr. Henrich Scheffer



Mrs. Ruth Normark



Rev. Osvald Hindenes

## APPENDIX F

አገሪ 1.

### EECMY SYMPOSIUM ON "CHURCH, CULTURE AND ETHNICITY IN PRESENT ETHIOPIA"

September 1-6 1997

#### STATEMENT FROM THE EECMY 101st Executive Committee TO EECMY SYNODS, PRESBYTERIES AND WORK AREAS

- (1) A Symposium on Church, Culture and Ethnicity was held at the Mekane Yesus Seminary from September 1-6, 1997. Having reviewed the report from the EECMY 42<sup>nd</sup> Evangelism and Theology Commission, the 101<sup>st</sup> EC has made the following Statement.
- (2) The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, emphasizes 'Unity in diversity' as she believes that God has equally created peoples with different cultures and ethnicity. This implies that as the people of God we are expected to maintain our identity within unity as His creation. We need to acknowledge the different cultures and ethnic identities as God given gifts.
- (3) As Jesus Christ Our Lord has reconciled us to God the father and each other, we as Christians are one body. Therefore, we have to look at each other with love and respect by accepting each other with a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness. We need to ask for the forgiveness for all our shortcomings in the past.
- (4) We do believe that authentic coexistence begins within a family which is one body, irrespective of which ethnic group the couple belongs to. Such a co-existence spirit should extend to the neighbors, communities and the society at large. This means that there should be tolerance and understanding of different cultures and ethnic identities.
- (5) We also believe that justice for all should be upheld. This should be done in the spirit of brotherhood and sister-hood with fairness without imposing ones language, culture and ethnic superiority on others. Fairness should apply in the holding of positions and responsibilities in the church structure.
- (6) In order to bring about constructive influence of the church on the life of the society and the decisions of those in the position of authority, church members need to participate in the activities of their communities and the society at large. In the same way, the church by maintaining her neutrality should play a prophetic role and make her voice heard against injustice, oppression and any form of discrimination against language, culture and ethnic group. She has, above all, to uphold the unity of her members within the existing diversities.
- (7) Finally, we commit to share the outcome of this symposium with our units and constituencies for the sake of our unity in diversity and for the glory of God.

October 1997, 101<sup>st</sup> Executive Committee.

**APPENDIX G**

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FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Certificate

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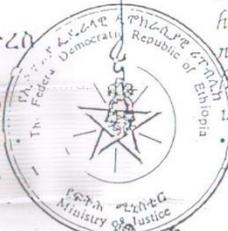
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THIS IS TO CERTIFY that all provisions of the Civil Code of Ethiopia of 1960 and the Associations Registration regulations, Legal Notice No. 321 of 1966, have been complied with and ACCORDINGLY this CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION

is hereby issued to the ADDIS ABABA AND SURROUNDING EVANGELICAL CHURCH MAKANE YESUS subject to particulars and conditions attached herewith. This CERTIFICATE, bearing the number 618 is issued as of the date hereinafter mentioned. This Certificate is valid until JANUARY 17, 2002

Addis Ababa JANUARY 17, 2001

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*[Signature]*  
 Atwork Güley  
 Association's Registration Office

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## APPENDIX H

November 3, 1998

German Mission  
Addis Ababa

Dear Brothers in Christ,

Concerned group at the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), would like to respectfully draw your attention to a complex church constitutional problem. As a big national evangelical church, we have organizational hierarchies set up in a federal system whereby each level is governed by constitutions of its own enjoying a high degree of autonomy. The three levels we presently have are Congregations of believers, Synods and Central Church Office.

In the present case a constitutional issue cropped up when the Executive Committee of the EECMY removed the officers of the Central Ethiopia Synod (CES) which oversees 180 Congregations. This action is illegal and unconstitutional because the Executive Committee has not been mandated to take such a major action. The action was taken under a flimsy reason accusing the Synod of refusing to implement a policy decision which required the Synod to introduce Oromigna language in two Congregations, namely Entoto and Bethel. These Congregations refused to fully implement the policy decision because of a wide range of negative and far reaching implications. The Synod did everything in its power to bring peaceful solution to the problem, but its efforts were thrown overboard.

Over 10 Congregations in and around Addis Ababa protested against the decision of the Executive Committee claiming that the action was illegal and null and void. The Oromigna language wrangling has been with EECMY since 1994 and efforts made over the last five years are unable to bring about a peaceful solution. The recent action taken by the EECMY Executive Committee brought about protests from Congregations and other Synods because democratically elected Synod Officers by the representatives of over 180 Congregations were arbitrarily removed and replaced by a hand picked Provisional Committee.

The purpose of this letter is to first acknowledge the important role the German Evangelical Churches had played in establishing the EECMY many years ago. Even today, EECMY is getting considerable support from the German Churches and nationals. The German Churches and missionaries have particularly made immense contributions to the evangelization and social development programs of the Western part of Ethiopia. We are all appreciative and thankful to Germany.

It is to be regretted that two of your nationals involved in the EECMY are unable to maintain their equilibrium in the crisis developed over Oromigna language. One of them, Rev. Kalamba Willi, in fact, is one of the Church Officers and has gone out of his way to give overt and covert support thereby undermining the prevalence of rule of law and promoting arbitrariness and unconstitutional practices in the present crisis which is rocking the very foundation of EECMY. We request that Rev. Kalamba Willi keep his hands off from the domestic and internal church affairs which are about

to take political dimensions. As Christians and law abiding citizens fighting arbitrary and unconstitutional actions, we have decided to bring this matter to your attention. The unprecedented deep crisis in the EECMY is likely to have far reaching implications and, therefore, church workers like Rev, Willi should be out of the internal church politics. This, we advise, will be in his best interest.

Another German who, time and again, interferes with the internal affairs of our Churches is Rev, Yohannis Launhurt. Presently, he is the Chief- "advisor" of the Church Officers who try to promote the supremacy of one language over other languages in church services. We also advise that, in his best interest, he refrain from delving into our domestic Church affairs. We are not discrediting the past contributions of these people, but we now protest vehemently their taking sides in this sensitive issue of medium of communication in the Congregations. We resist arbitrariness and unconstitutional practices favoring one ethnic group over other ethnic groups. As committed Christians we realize that this practice is unspiritual and unbiblical. Believers in the church are purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ from "every tribe and language and people and nation"

We apologize for taking your precious time, but we could not help it because the survival of EECMY will partially depend on your timely intervention in this matter. We look forward to your prompt intervention and feedback.

Thank you in advance for your understanding.

From Concerned group within EECMY

cc: German Embassy  
Internal Security, Immigration and Refugees Office

Encl. write up highlighting the genesis of the problem and subsequent actions taken.



worship God together (positive aspect). We believe that there is a possibility to develop practices which both pay due respect to the needs of individuals and specific cultures as well as to the need to maintain the historical relationship between Christians with different origins.

2. In the course of time we have seen that the so-called "language conflict" is "more than" a language conflict. Several issues are at stake:  
The understanding of the church is not the same among the conflicting bodies. While one group emphasizes the need for a church which accepts the guidelines of the church and its executive committee, the other group accentuates the rights and obligations of each congregations and synods in what they consider internal affairs. We cannot neglect the fact that there is a tension between units, levels, ethnic groups, congregations and individuals in the church today. If this fact is ignored, or if appropriate action is not taken, we believe that the Addis Ababa case might spread to any unit of the EECMY and increased tension and split will be created.

As these two issues seem interrelated they make the overall picture complex.

The NLM will recommend the following:

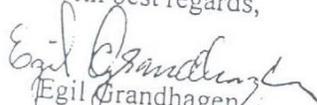
1. That the church leadership gets involved in new peaceful negotiations with the newly registered church.
2. That the church works towards a church structure which secures:
  - a fair distribution of power between different ethnic groups and units.
  - a closer relationship between means and ends in church strategizing, administration, economy, decision making, etc.
  - a clearer distinction between general policy making on the central level and the government of internal matters on local level.

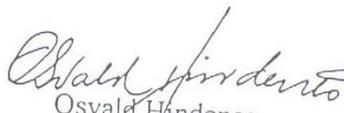
The NLM will on its part continue to act in accordance with the agreement of cooperation and with reference to the on-going discussions on partnership with the EECMY. Any official correspondence with the church will be made through the Central Office or through its approved units. However, since the newly registered church has earned an official status and recognition by the Ethiopian government, we might not be able to totally reject to respond to communication initiated by this church. Although we consider the EECMY our key partner in Ethiopia, the new church includes members that share a common history.

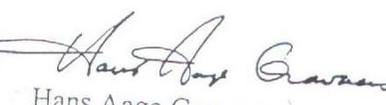
So far, we have not received an invitation to the installation service for the church president, Rev. Iteffea Gobena, and the church officers. However, our office in Addis Ababa has received a letter of invitation to the constitutional convention of the newly registered church. If an invitation from the EECMY arrives, we will of course make sure that our Country Representative represents us. Mr. Hans Birkeland will come to Ethiopia on Sunday morning (March 11) in order to attend several workshops among the southern units, and he might be able to be with you as well. Although we will not pay the same attention to the constitutional convention of the newly registered church, we might, as a sign of solidarity and to avoid taking part in a severe conflict, wish to have one of our missionaries represent the NLM on that occasion.

09.03.01

With best regards,

  
Egil Grandhagen  
General Secretary

  
Osvald Hindenes  
Mission Dept. Leader

  
Hans Aage Gravaas  
Mission Secretary

- Cc. NLM, Addis Ababa
- CMCR Secretary
- DLM
- FLOM
- SIK
- SEM
- SCES
- SS
- SEAW
- SES
- SWS

## APPENDIX J

The following are basic symbols (adapted from Yimam, 1994:62) that represent the orthography of Oromo in the Roman orthography:

a for the sound [a]	i for the sound [i]	q for the sound [k']
b for the sound [ba]	j for the sound [ja]	r for the sound [ra]
c for the sound [c'a]	k for the sound [ka]	s for the sound [sa]
d for the sound [da]	l for the sound [la]	t for the sound [ta]
e for the sound [e]	m for the sound [ma]	u for the sound [u]
f for the sound [f]	n for the sound [na]	w for the sound [wa]
g for the sound [g]	o for the sound [o]	x for the sound [t']
h for the sound [ha]	p for the sound [pa]	y for the sound [ya]
		z for the sound [za]
		‘ for glottal stop

In this orthography, the length of vowels and gemination of consonants are shown by doubling the letters. The following are some examples:

<i>Gama</i> ‘side’	<i>gaama</i> ‘a horse/mule neck’
<i>aduu</i> ‘sun’	<i>aaduu</i> ‘moan’
<i>dhabuu</i> ‘lacking’	<i>dhaabuu</i> ‘planting’
<i>gubaa</i> ‘hot’	<i>gubbaa</i> ‘up’
<i>bitaa</i> ‘left’	<i>bittaa</i> ‘buying’
<i>jaaraa</i> ‘old’	<i>jaarraa</i> ‘century’