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1. Introduction

This paper is the result of preliminary investigations into the sociolinguistics of written language use in the public space within a multilingual urban community in contemporary Ethiopia.[1] Its primary research focus is, in traditional terms, referred to as "language visibility", a notion which, in more recent sociolinguistic discourse, has been re-termed "linguistic landscape".

1.1 "Linguistic landscape"

The study of linguistic landscape is considered a fairly recent subfield of (applied) sociolinguistics which deals, first and most of all, with the visibility of written language in public space. The fashionable term is attributed to Landry and Bourhis:

> The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration. The linguistic landscape of a territory can serve two basic functions: an informational function and a symbolic function. (Landry – Bourhis 1997: 25)

In multilingual contexts the linguistic landscape, in its symbolic dimension, relates to issues of power distribution.

> […] the linguistic landscape reflects the relative power and status of the different languages in a specific sociolinguistic context. In this sense it is the product of a specific situation and it can be considered

[1] An earlier version of the paper was originally prepared for presentation on the occasion of the Inauguration of the Oromo Research Center at the *School of Humanities & Law* at *Adama Science & Technology University* (ASTU) on June 5, 2012. It had received some limited local distribution at the occasion. An up-dated version was distributed from end of December 2012 as No 2 of the newly established *Working Papers in Oromo Studies*, put out by the Oromo Research Center at ASTU in order to stimulate local research activities.

> as an additional source of information about the sociolinguistic context along with censuses, surveys or interviews. The majority language of a language community is more likely to be used more often in place names or commercial signs while the minority language or languages will not be as common […] On the other hand, the linguistic landscape contributes to the construction of the sociolinguistic context because people process the visual information that comes to them, and the language in which signs are written can certainly influence their perception of the status of the different languages and even affect their own linguistic behaviour. The linguistic landscape or parts of the linguistic landscape can have an influence on language use. (Cenoz – Gorter 2006: 67)

Therefore, the notion of linguistic landscape is of prime relevance for multilingual Africa, for at least the following reasons:

(1) most African countries and societies are highly multilingual in terms of *territorial*, *institutional*, *individual* and *sociocultural* multilingualism (cf. Wolff in press [a]; 2011b: 315ff.);
(2) the linguistic landscape in Africa tends to reflect the characteristic "polyglossic" situation: The *official* (mostly foreign/imported, often ex-colonial; incl. Arabic) languages tend to be highly visible in public space, whereas the indigenous African languages, even the so-called *national* languages (if such are officially recognized), tend to be largely absent from public space. Notable exceptions are widely Kiswahili-speaking Tanzania and Kenya and Ethiopia, albeit for entirely different reasons;
(3) therefore, language visibility in the public space carries a highly symbolic value (in addition to the informational value) in African multilingual societies with, at times, dramatic political implications;
(4) further, as pointed out by Cenoz and Gorter (2006: 67), it "reflects the relative power and status of the different languages in a specific sociolinguistic context", and according to the same authors;
(5) it "contributes to the construction of the sociolinguistic context" because the perception of the status of the language(s) in which signs are written can certainly "influence linguistic behaviour": the linguistic landscape can have an influence on language use with effect on language empowerment or disempowerment.

1.2 Language visibility and "language legitimisation"

Language visibility in the public sphere, i.e. the use of one or more languages on public sign-boards or publicly accessible commercial or private notices

mainly for commercial advertising, is intimately linked to overt and covert language policies which are in place; it may also be indicative of the implementation or non-implementation of existing language policies. Given the symbolic value of features of the linguistic landscape in terms of the overall sociolinguistic context and in relation to power structures, language visibility is linked to the issue of "language legitimisation". Language legitimisation, as the term shall be used here, refers to *de jure* or *de facto* positive or negative attitudes towards a particular language or languages in a given locality. "Locality" could be construed in administrative or any other terms and would refer to a polity of sorts on different levels of political and public activities such as Federal State, Regional State, Province, District, Town, Village, Local Market, University Campus, etc.[2]

(1) A "*de jure* attitude" would reflect the existence of an overt language policy based on legislation or decree. The particular language policy could be either in favour of or against the use of a particular language or languages in legally defined domains of usage.
(2) A "*de facto* attitude" reflects absence of *de jure* regulations. Therefore, it rests on established common patterns of preferences of language choice, or the factual discouragement of language choice and usage. Shared *de facto* language attitudes, positive or negative, often reflect the past history of a polity or speech community, including strong feelings concerning "empowerment" or "disempowerment" with regard to certain languages and, by implication, the speakers of these languages and their sociocultural and ethnolinguistic identities. Where existing language policies are neither implemented nor enforced, and/or when they are perceived by a wider public as being absent, *de facto* attitudes tend to take over the public space which, in certain cases, may counter-act and violate relevant legislation in the polity.

This theoretical approach to language policy (and, by implication: language planning in general) is akin to that of Tollefson (1991: 16) according to whom

> language policy and planning mean the institutionalisation of language as a basis for distinctions among social groups (classes). That is, language policy is one mechanism for locating language within social

[2] In the case of Ethiopia, potential local domains of language policies and politics would reflect the strong hierarchical structure downwards from Federation to Regional State/ Chartered City, to Zone (including Nationality or Special Zones)/Sub-City, to *wäräda* (or Special *wäräda*) and, finally, *qäbäle* at the lowest level. "Special/Nationality Zone" and "Special *wäräda*" are administrative units which are predominantly populated by one indigenous ethnolinguistic group assuming administrative autonomy (cf. BEKALE SEYUM 2012: 384); these in particular constitute "hot spots" for localised language politics.

> structure so that language determines who has access to political power and economic resources. Language policy is one mechanism by which dominant groups establish hegemony in language use.

Language visibility in public space, therefore, intimately links up with language legitimisation in its various appearances – in particular under the regime of hegemonial languages:

- a language is "legitimised" simply by its visibility in public space;
- a language can be "delegitimised" when its visibility is severely restricted or even banned, or if it has never been allowed to be visible in the first place;
- a language which, in a previous historical or political period, enjoyed legitimisation through public visibility but was subsequently restricted in official use or visibility, may be "relegitimised" by its re-appearance in public space.

The Adaama case study as presented in this paper will make reference to all of these instances: legitimisation, de-legitimisation, and re-legitimisation of languages.

1.3 The all-African background and the special case of Ethiopia

Such theoretical approach to language use and language visibility is deeply rooted within general social theory. It is particularly relevant in multilingual societies in which multilingualism is associated with instances of "polyglossia" (cf. below for explication of the term). This is the situation, first of all, in most parts of Africa but also elsewhere in "developing" and "emerging" countries which often have a history of past colonial domination.

Given the particular political, cultural, and linguistic developments in Ethiopia since its claimed beginnings in the Aksumite period some 2000 years ago, present-day Ethiopian languages have undergone quite different historical developments with regard to their relations to powerful groups of society, not the least in association with Christianity and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. In a nutshell: a few of the Ethio-Semitic languages (Gəᶜəz, Amharic, Təgrəññа) were early "empowered" by their affinities to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the emerging hegemony of post-Aksumite centres of political and military power (eventually becoming associated with the mythologised so-called Solomonic dynasty), which was accompanied by a geographic southward expansion and geopolitical shift towards Central Ethiopia, particularly to the area referred to as Šäwa (Shoa). Other Ethio-Semitic and non-Ethio-Semitic languages came under the hegemonial dominance of largely Amharic speaking rulership which effectively discouraged their development in terms of status and emerging parallel cultures of writing. This situation

prevailed, *grosso modo*, until 1991.[3] Therefore, the Amharic language, for instance, together with Təgrəññа, prides itself on many centuries of writing culture in the Gəᶜəz-based *fidäl* syllabary, while other languages still struggle with the beginnings of standardisation based on fairly recent, and in the case of most non-Ethio-Semitic languages, Latin script-based orthographies. This development by "natural process" (Bamgbose 1987: 22f.) puts Amharic (and Təgrəññа, for that matter) closer to the situation of most of the Standard languages in Europe, while the vast majority of the more than 80 Ethiopian languages is just about to emerge from purely oral to literacy-based patterns of use. This, again, puts these Ethiopian languages closer to the situation of most indigenous languages on the African continent which, however and different from the situation in Ethiopia, have suffered from negative impact of colonial rule and domination. Given the described lack of developmental equilibrium among Ethiopian languages, the arguments proposed by Ayo Bamgbose (1987: 22f.) *mutatis mutandis* also hold for the Ethiopian situation:

> First, mainly as a result of the colonial experience, African languages have been downgraded in status, and it will take extraordinary efforts to liberate them from years of marginalisation and restore them into their rightful position locally, regionally, and nationally. Second, language development by natural process may take centuries to achieve, and Africa simply cannot afford to wait for that length of time. Third, the problem posed by the adoption of imported languages [such as English in Ethiopia – H.E.W.] will continue to be aggravated until African languages can play an enhanced or complementary role in the domains currently monopolised by imported [or other – H.E.W.] dominant languages.

This makes issues of language policy and their implementation such an urgent task for applied African sociolinguistics, and needs the sensitisation of

[3] This hegemonial dominance which has characterised more recent periods of Ethiopian history has strong impact on present "attitudes" of speakers of mainly non-Ethio-Semitic languages (cf. McNab 1989). Under the last Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase I, a strong Amharicisation policy was implemented which fostered language hegemony (Smith 2008: 219). Note that, while some authors and people concerned still see the role of Amharic in Ethiopia as that of an instrument and a symbol of hegemonial dominance and power, others will recognize it as a language of national unity and national identity, the latter including the use of the Amharic writing system for all Ethiopian languages as a strong symbol of Ethiopian national identity. Both fervently defended positions prevail in the country at large and account for opposing quarters among Ethiopian intellectuals, including university lecturers, students, and members of the ruling "elites" and potential "counter-elites".

not only politicians and decision makers, but also the general public, to the inherent potentials of language policies, both positive and negative. Theoretically and empirically based sound and adequate language policies and their implementation will most likely speed up modernisation and development; poorly researched and inadequate language policies on the other hand, will severely retard any progress with regard to sociocultural modernisation and economic development. As this is true for most parts of Africa, it is also true for Ethiopia.

Therefore, sociolinguistic research into language visibility has far reaching applications and implications in terms of legitimate – or illegitimate – use of various languages in the public space. It evokes constitutional and human rights dimensions, touches on socio-psychological sentiments of affected population segments and, not the least, could be indicative of hidden agendas of powerful sections of society (cf. reference to elites and "counter-elites" by du Plessis [in press] below). In this way, research into language visibility is linked to the sociolinguistic axiom that in multilingual contexts, language choice and language use in public never has instrumental or utilitarian values only, but always carries symbolic values in terms of indicating relations of power between the affected languages (and, by implication, their speakers). Such power hierarchies between different languages are referred to as "polyglossia" (for instance, in Wolff 2011a; in press [a]). Polyglossia, defined as power hierarchy between different languages, is the sociological sister to multilingualism, the latter defined as (i) simply indicating the presence of several languages on a given territory (*territorial multilingualism*), (ii) referring to existing *institutional multilingualism* ruled by language policies, and (iii) *individual multilingualism* and culturally entrenched *social multilingualism* of identifiable speech communities. As such, polyglossia is a constitutive feature of African sociolinguistic reality (cf. Wolff 2000; 2011a; 2011b; in press [a]). Neither Ethiopia as a whole, nor Oromiyya Regional State within Ethiopia, are exceptions to this reality.

As Theodorus du Plessis points out in relation to a case study in South Africa, and according to Grin and Vaillancourt (1999: 18–19 as quoted by du Plessis [in press]), "language legitimisation is a vital element in successful language promotion efforts, in that '[…] positive attitudes are a *sine qua non* condition of language revitalisation'".[4] In their quote, Grin and Vaillancourt (1999) refer to language legitimisation with regard to minority languages. The issue, however, is of equal importance with regard to languages like

[4] The present paper has been inspired, a fact which the principal author wishes to duly acknowledge, by Theodorus DU PLESSIS' (in press) contribution to a reader on African multilingualism (ALTMAYER – WOLFF in press).

Afan Oromo in Ethiopia, which can by no means be considered minority languages, but have, nevertheless, suffered historically from marginalisation on the part of national authorities.[5] By numbers of L1 and L2 speakers and in terms of implied ethnolinguistic identities, Afan Oromo is on eye-level with the hitherto dominant Amharic language which is also more widely used as almost nationwide *lingua franca* (L2) in Ethiopia, for details cf. Lewis (2009). Comparable to cases of "established" minority languages (Edwards 2004: 173–181) like, for instance, Irish in Ireland or Welsh in Wales, cases of language relegitimisation can also be observed with formerly disadvantaged "majority" languages, such as, for instance, the major Bantu languages (isi-)Zulu, (isi-)Xhosa, and (Se-)Sotho in South Africa, and also with the Cushitic language Afan Oromo in Ethiopia. Again, Grin and Vaillancourt (1999: 18) consider the provision of (minority-)language visibility to be "a powerful tool of language relegitimisation", and this would apply particularly after previous periods of marginalisation. The term "relegitimisation" with application to Afan Oromo must be construed with regard to the past history of marginalisation of this and other languages in pre-1991 Ethiopia, which has seen a dramatic revision under the 1995 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution since then.[6] It is in this sense of language relegitimisation that the present study addresses the case of Afan Oromo and its visibility, particularly in the Oromiyya Regional State of the

[5] This, by the way, constitutes a parallel situation between Afan Oromo in Ethiopia, and Sesotho in the Free State of South Africa which DU PLESSIS (in press) refers to, together with the quite different case of Afrikaans in the same state. Sesotho, previous to the new South African Constitution of 1996 and together with all the other indigenous African languages in the country, has a long history of marginalisation by discriminatory "colonial" language politics and, later, under a racist "apartheid" regime. Afan Oromo, before the new Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia of 1995 and like most of the Ethiopian languages to the notable exception of Amharic (and the liturgical language Gəʿəz of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church), was marginalised during the imperial period (until the ousting of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase I in 1974) and under the socialist *Provisional Military Administrative Council* (*Därg*) regime (1974–1991), the fact notwithstanding that during the so-called National Literacy Campaign after 1979, the *Därg* regime allowed 15 Ethiopian languages, including Amharic and Afan Oromo to be used for educational purposes, albeit restricted to non-formal education (MEYER – RICHTER 2003: 34).

[6] Note, however, that later in this paper we will also be speaking about "relegitimisation" of Amharic as a factual language of instruction, instead of or in addition to the official language of instruction for higher education, namely English. This factual use can be observed on Adama Science & Technology University (ASTU) campus as, most likely, on all university campuses across the country.

FDRE, with a focus on the city of Adaama and within this city on the campus of ASTU.[7]

Opposed to the concept of "language legitimisation" or "relegitimisation", as du Plessis (in press) points out, is the concept of "language delegitimisation" which

> […] would refer to the process of diminishing the legitimacy of an institutionalised or otherwise recognised language within society. It coincides with the need of 'counter-elites' to establish themselves and to assert language power (Baker & Jones 1998: 209) through what Bucholtz & Hall (2006: 382–383) refer to as a specific pair of tactics of intersubjectivity, namely authorisation and illegitimisation (or delegitimisation). The establishment of new forms of legitimacy and the disempowerment of former or opposing elites are strong motives behind the use of such tactics.

Thus and obviously, language visibility, insofar as it is intrinsically related to issues of language legitimisation also in terms of language empowerment and disempowerment, can easily turn out to be a matter of highly political and possibly juridical, often constitutional concern in multilingual and multiethnic contexts. However, this is by no means only an African or an Ethiopian affair. Language visibility issues create highly controversial political discussions also outside Africa, for instance in Europe. Illustrative cases can actually be found in all countries which encompass officially recognized linguistic minorities. Nationwide linguistic homogeneity is a myth rather than a sociolinguistic reality practically everywhere on our planet – the fact notwithstanding that "national states" in Europe, many of them tainted with a colonial past, cherish the mythology of being linguistically and, by implication, culturally and possibly ethnically homogeneous.

[7] *Oromiyya* is by far the geographically largest and most populated state within the federation. By its size alone, the political situation in Oromia tends to have a strong impact on the political stability of Ethiopia as a whole. Like other states within post-1991 Ethiopia and legalised by the 1995 Constitution, the state's borders were carved out by observing criteria of majority ethnolinguistic composition and geographic contiguity of territories (cf. FDRE Constitution: *Article* 46: *States* of *the Federation, Article* 46, 2: *States shall be delimited on the basis of the settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the people concerned*). Adaama, also formerly known by its Amharic name Nazret ~ Nazareth, is probably Ethiopia's second largest city with an estimated number of 228,623 inhabitants (this number is projected from the 1994 census for July 2006 by the National Statistics Section B-Population: *http://www.csa.gov.et/surveys/…* accessed May 20, 2012). Adaama is the location of a university which recently changed its name from *Adama University* (*AU*) to *Adama Science & Technology University* (*ASTU*).

Let us continue to follow du Plessis' (in press) lines of theoretical argument a bit further, before we turn to a detailed discussion of the Afan Oromo case:

> Language visibility refers to the visibility of language in the public space. It is a concept closely associated with the study of the linguistic landscape, a research field made prominent by Landry and Bourhis (1997). The linguistic landscape fulfils a double function. It obviously serves as an informational marker; but more importantly, it also serves as a symbolic marker that communicates the relative power and status of linguistic communities present in an area (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006: 8; Shohamy 2006: 112).

As such, road and traffic signs and other public information, but also commercial advertising and private information serve a double function: They serve, on the surface of things and first of all as an *instrumental* or *utilitarian* function. In bi- or multilingual polities and at second sight they have an obvious *symbolic* function, if only *pro forma*. In established bi- or multilingual countries, multilingual road signs, besides addressing the needs of speakers who are monolingual in any of the languages used, serve the sociopsychological symbolism of official recognition of multilingualism (cf. also Reh 2004; Ben-Rafael et al. 2006). Thus, visibility of multilingualism in the public sphere, i.e.

> […] the bilingualisation of existing monolingual public signs becomes a prominent feature of the linguistic landscape. The featuring of bilingual (or multilingual) road and traffic signs can thus be directly related to language policy requirements (Shohamy 2006: 115); in other words, the erection of such signs may be regarded as the consequence of a top-down approach to public signs. However, it may also result from the activity of bottom-up forces, as illustrated in Reh (2004) and Ben-Rafael et al. (2006). (du Plessis in press).

Therefore, du Plessis justifiably (ibid., quoting Grin – Vaillancourt 1999: 28) points out that

> the absence of minority language visibility, or authorities' refusal to increase such visibility, is difficult to defend on human rights grounds; it may also be interpreted as a clear sign that *they are not genuinely committed to the promotion of the language in question* [own emphasis].

We will refer to this conclusion when we discuss the conspicuous absence of Afan Oromo visibility on the campus of ASTU which is located in the city of Adaama within the Oromiyya Regional State of Ethiopia.

2. The constitutional foundations of language use in Ethiopia[8]

Ethiopia is, by common reference and based on "Western" concepts, a highly multilingual and multiethnic "national state" which comprises, depending on the sources consulted, more than 70 or 80 ethnolinguistic units. Obviously, the post-1991 FDRE pays particular attention to this fact by reflecting issues of common language, among other features, in its Constitution. Sensitised by its past history of linguistic dominance of one of the indigenous Ethiopian languages as the one and only "official" language for government and education, namely Amharic (for details cf. Meyer – Richter 2003; Bekale Seyum 2012) in addition to English as language of higher education, the FDRE based on its Constitution of 1995, refrains from using sociolinguistically non-trivial notions such as "official language" or "national language". Rather, if at all the Constitution (1995, in Article 5) needs to identify a particular language for official language functions, it resorts pragmatically to the neutral designation "*working language*".

Article 5: *Languages*

1. *All Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition.*
2. *Amharic shall be the working language of the Federal Government.*
3. *Members of the Federation may by law determine their respective working languages.*

Since the authors of the 1995 Constitution refrain from using potentially derogative terms for referring to the various ethnolinguistic units which make up the multilingual and multiethnic population of Ethiopia, they reserve for these the idiosyncratic collective reference "Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples" (cf., for instance, Article 39).

Article 39: *Rights of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples*

1. *Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession.*
2. *Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history.*
5. *A "Nation, Nationality or People" for the purpose of this Constitution, is a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common*

[8] For the following section, the principal author wishes to acknowledge the valuable input provided by his colleague Lubo Teferi Kerorsa, the former Head of the Department of Law (School of Humanities & Law) at Adama Science & Technology University.

or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory.

Given this particular usage of the terms "nation" and "nationalities", the term "national language" as it is commonly yet ambiguously used throughout Africa and the world, can no longer be used for languages which are widely used as *linguae francae* (L2) within Ethiopia (such as Amharic and Afan Oromo, most of all) without being misconstrued.[9] These observations, however, have not yet had sufficient impact on for instance linguists and sociolinguists who, like many Ethiopians themselves, still think in terms of "official" or "national" or "national official" languages when speaking about the Ethiopian situation, and particularly when speaking about Amharic.[10] Clearly, by implication, in terms of the 1995 Constitution of the FDRE, all indigenous Ethiopian languages can or must be considered "national languages", the total of which symbolically represent Ethiopia's multilingual national identity. Accordingly, "the Constitutional Assembly […] placed the former hegemonic language Amharic on an equal footing with all the other Ethiopian languages" (Bekale Seyum 2012: 265, 267).

[9] The term "national language" is far from being non-ambiguous. In some countries, for instance in the Constitution of the Republic of Niger, *langues nationales* refers to all ten African languages which are considered autochthone to the territory of the country. Other usages restrict the term "national language" to languages which, as such, would be able to symbolise "national unity and identity". In this vein, the term *national language*(*s*) is purposefully avoided in the post-apartheid South African Constitution, because none of the eleven official languages, including nine indigenous African languages of the Bantu sub-family, are considered to represent, as such, the "national unity and identity" of the so-called *Rainbow Nation*. Other authors, again, maintain a distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* national languages, the former being those that are labelled as such in the Constitution of a country (cf. Niger), the latter term being used to label *linguae francae* with a fairly wide distribution over a national territory which, in the case of Ethiopia, would apply to both Amharic and Afan Oromo. The term *lingua franca* refers to a language of inter-ethnic and inter-language communication which has a wider distribution within a region, a state, or a federation as a whole. Such languages are also referred to as "second languages" (L2) as opposed to "mother tongues" or "first languages" (L1). In contexts like Ethiopia, a language like English would correctly have to be referred to as "foreign" or "third language" (L3).

[10] Note, for instance, that the Ethnologue (Lewis 2009), a recognized and otherwise highly reliable database for the languages of the world, lists for Ethiopia the three languages Amharic, English, and Təgrəñña as "national or official languages". Similarly, Heugh et al. (2007) likewise speak of Amharic as the "national language" (and English as the "international language") in Ethiopia. For many Ethiopian intellectuals the expression of "Amharic as the national language of Ethiopia" has a distinct smack of continued hegemonial dominance and is, therefore, rejected.

In keeping with the regulations on the federal level, the Oromiyya Regional State, in its Revised Constitution (2001/2006), has legislated in a similar manner. On the State level, it is stated, first of all, that

> *Afaan Oromo shall be the working language of the Regional State; it shall be written in the Latin alphabet*. (Article 5)[11]

In its Constitution, the Oromiyya Regional State who owes its demarcations, size, and official designation to its majority ethnolinguistic group, i.e. the Oromo people, pays special attention to the "*national rights of the Oromo People*" (Article 39). In particular, Article 39, 1 expresses the Oromo Nation's

> […] *right to maintain and get respected their national identity, to preserve and promote their history and heritage, to speak, develop and make use, in any other manner, of their own language and to express their culture*.

Sub-Article 6 of Article 39 identifies the ethnolinguistic group "Oromo" in the following terms:

> […] *the expression 'the people of the Oromo Nation' shall be construed as meaning those people who speak the Oromo language, who believe in their common Oromo identity, who share a large measure of a common culture as Oromo's and who predominantly inhabit in a contiguous territory of the Regional State*.

[11] Given the dominance patterns prevailing in much of the more recent history of Ethiopia after Emperor Mənilək II (1844–1913), the often so-called founder of modern Ethiopia in its present national borders, and his later successor Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase I (1892–1975), the choice of writing systems is by no means a trivial matter. Imposing the Semitic Gəʿəz-based *fidäl* syllabary on non-Semitic, in particular Cushitic languages, not the least with regard to the language of the Oromo, has long been perceived as a further instance of linguistic and cultural imperialism by the "Amhara" who tend to be identified as a politically dominant ethnolinguistic group, and who *grosso modo* also became associated with imperial feudalism and the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia. The socialist *Därg* regime (1974–91) did little to destroy that impression. Note, however, that in sociolinguistic and historical terms it would be grossly oversimplifying the complex history of modern Ethiopia, if one were to identify "speakers of Amharic" in a straight forward manner with a purportedly fairly homogeneous "ethnic" group called Amhara. More likely and in keeping with more recent Ethiopian history, Amharic is no longer and much less an "ethnic" language in the narrow sense, but rather ought to be accepted as having grown into a "sociolect" irrespective of ethnic origins and original L1 of a social class of people who were associated with the imperial court and the feudalistic structure of the Ethiopian Empire (before 1974), and not the least with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The State, further, explicitly recognizes "*the Federal state standards on education training and experience required for any public position*" (Article 47, 2.e). In accordance with Article 5 which states that "*Afaan Oromo*" shall be the *working language* of the State, Article 113 identifies the Oromo language version as the final legal authority for the State's Constitution.[12]

[12] Unfortunately, the Oromo language still suffers from insufficiencies and under-acceptance regarding its standardisation. In addition to the internationalised designation Afan Oromo there appear to be two (semi-)standardised self-designations for the language:

(1) *Afaan Oromoo* (indicating two instances of long vowel occurrence); this is the form used, for instance, by the *Qajeelcha Qormaata Afaan Oromootiin* "Department of Research concerning Afaan Oromoo" of the *Biiroo Aadaafi Turizimii Oromiyaatti* "Bureau of Culture and Tourism in Oromiya" for its journal *Wiirtuu – Barruulee Qormaata Waaltina Afaan Oromoo* "Centre – Journal of Research of Standardization of Afaan Oromoo".

(2) *Afaan Oromo* (with only one indication of vowel length); this is the form used, for instance, in the Constitution of the Oromiyya Regional State in which Afan Oromo is the prescribed *working language*.

The authors are not aware of any clear judgment on the "correctly standardised" form of this language name, i.e. whether to write *Oromo*(*o*) with a final short or long *o*(*o*). Insecurity derives from the observations that (a) this particular instance of vowel length can be associated with regional variants (long in western varieties, short in central and southern varieties), (b) according to Sileshi Berhanu, that contrastive vowel length plays no role here: since for *Oromo*(*o*) there is no phonological contrast involved, the vowel may be written short due to a *de facto* "economic principle". It is unclear whether such "economic principle" is generally accepted and in line with the *Qubee* standard orthography. Quite characteristic for such situations of not yet fully established standardisation, speakers tend to resort to their individual perceptions of phonetic realisations as a guiding principle, the more so in the absence of freely available "tools" for reference to unambiguous phonology-based "standard forms". In general, indicating correct vowel length would appear to be the by far most common problem of writing "Standard Oromo" in the established *Qubee* orthography.

Note that another designation for the language is *Oromiffaa ~ Oromiffa* with the same insecurity about how to write the final vowel. The competing names *Oromiffaa* and *Afaan Oromoo*, in addition to slight differences in meaning, also have more or less strong attitudinal implications. While *Oromiffaa* best translates as "Oromo (language)" and is part of a long tradition of marking peoples' languages by adding the suffix *-iffaa* (cf. *Amariffaa* "Amharic", *Germaniffaa* "German", *Ingiliffaa* "English"), *Afaan Oromoo* literally means "language of the Oromo (people)" and is formed on the older model of examples like *Afaan Arsii* "language of the Arsi (a subgroup within the 'Oromo Nation')". Some speakers, however, now tend to associate the designation *Oromiffaa* with pre-democratic periods of Ethiopian history (i.e. before 1991), so *Afaan Oromoo* would appear to symbolise the quasi ethnicisation of post-1991 Ethiopia which gives paramount recognition to the major ethnolinguistic groups in the country.

To summarize: There is a lot of uncertainty virulent in Ethiopia as to how the stipulations of the new Constitutions, both on Federal and State level, affect everyday practices on the ground in the management of the country's territorial multilingualism, and how this should feed into adequate solutions for problems of institutional multilingualism, i.e. specific language policies and their implementation for public institutions which render public services, such as public information and education. This uncertainty is expressed in a very recent comprehensive account of "Language Diversity and the Challenges of Government Language Planning in Ethiopia" in a Ph.D. dissertation by Bekale Seyum who states, in view of the important post-1991 developments and under the new 1995 FDRE Constitution, that

> [W]e are not sure if the transformations undergoing in the different regional states are consistent with the federal constitutional and policy provisions in respect to language. (Bekale Seyum 2012: 15)

This was also the tenor of frequent and partly heated discussions with and among colleagues when the principal author presented capacity-building lectures to senior staff members at ASTU. Quite obviously, legislation on federal and regional state levels are partly in conflict, and the affected people have, at present, no legal guidelines as to how to deal with such conflicts of legal norms.

3. Language visibility in Adaama city (excluding ASTU campus)

Compared to much of Africa as witnessed by the principal author, Ethiopia on the whole, including Oromiyya Regional State and the city of Adaama, stands out in a remarkable way as one of the few African countries with an exorbitantly high visibility of indigenous African languages in the public sphere. This is, of course and not the least, a result of the fact that writing has a rather long tradition in Ethiopia, reaching back many centuries. This uniquely long writing tradition in some of the Ethiosemitic languages is evidently being carried over to other languages within Ethiopia with a lesser tradition of writing, as is the case with Afan Oromo.[13]

It would be natural to find Afan Oromo, both as the *working language* of the Oromiyya Regional State and the mother tongue (L1) of the vast majority of its people (87,8 % according to Lewis 2009), figuring largely in terms of

[13] Currently, Latin script-based *Qubee* orthography is utilised which was formally adopted in 1991. Since that year, the number of publications in Afan Oromo has grown rapidly. BEKALE SEYUM (2012: 188) mentions the formation of an Oromiyya language standardisation committee (*Kore Waaltiiina Afaan Oromoo*) under the auspices of the *Bureau of Culture and Tourism* which would appear to be on the way to being upgraded to a kind of Afan Oromo Language Academy.

visibility in Adaama which is the Regional State's biggest city. This is not equally obvious for Amharic, which is neither a *working language* of the Regional State, nor is it the language of a larger majority of mother tongue speakers (only 7.22 % according to Lewis 2009). Because of its *lingua franca* (L2) function, however, Amharic makes up for 11% of the speakers of the Oromiyya Regional State. Further, outside its geographic area of origin and majority L1 population, Amharic is predominantly a language of urban settlements, a fact which is obviously related to its *lingua franca* function.

Consequently, Adaama as a major urban centre of the country can indeed be expected to show an unproportionally high degree of Amharic visibility in the public space. Meyer and Richter (2003: 114), based on the 1995/96 census, offer revealing figures for Adaama: Even though only 26.23 % claimed Oromo "ethnic" origin, only 44.42 % were "ethnic" Amhara, as many as 71.18 % speak Amharic as their first language (L1), and only 13.96 % speak Afan Oromo as their L1.[14] Why, at the same time, English shows such high visibility, almost comparable to that of both Afan Oromo and Amharic, is a question that we will address further below.

Language visibility in Adaama city is highly marked by five characteristic features:

1. multilingualism in general: So far, four languages have been identified to be in use, namely *Afan Oromo*, *Amharic*, *English*, and *Arabic*; out of these, only two can be considered indigenous to Ethiopia, namely *Afan Oromo* and *Amharic*, while both *English* and *Arabic* need to be considered as imported "foreign" languages;
2. tokens of visible multilingualism in particular: up to three languages are being used per sign-board in public space, usually *Afan Oromo*, *Amharic*, and *English*; at least two instances of *Afan Oromo*, *Amharic*, and *Arabic* have also been observed;

[14] MEYER – RICHTER (2003: 113f.), based on the CSA Population and Housing Census (1995/96), offer the following figures for the two major ethnic and mother tongue (MT)-speaker communities in Adaama (Nazret) city (note, however, that for July 2006, the CSA has projected the 1994 census to yield almost double the number of inhabitants of Adaama city, namely 228,623; this remarkable population growth does not necessarily have a major effect on the following percentages): Population total 127,842; Amhara 56,788 = 44.42 % (MT 91,002 = 71,18 %), Oromo 33,535 = 26.23 % (MT 17,849 = 13.96 %). Speakers of various languages of the Gurage group would follow with figures just over or about 7 % (ethnic) and 4 % (MT). These figures imply remarkable numbers and percentages of people with non-Amharic ethnic background who are no longer speakers of their original MT but, obviously, have shifted to Amharic as the prevailing and formerly dominant *lingua franca* particularly in urban environments; this would also include considerable numbers of ethnic Oromo.

3. a conspicuous conformity: the sequence of languages on multilingual sign-boards tends to follow a rigid pattern; the most frequent and therefore preferred order is *Afan Oromo–Amharic–English*; different orders occur, but are fairly rare;
4. preference of trilingualism: trilingual signs occur most widely, bilingual and monolingual signs occur to a significantly lesser extent than trilingual ones (no systematic counts nor statistical evaluation have so far been conducted);
5. instable standardisation and poor orthography: violations of *Qubee* Standard Orthography and the syntactic rules of *Afan Oromo* are very frequent, misspellings of *English* words are fairly common.[15]

The use of Afan Oromo in the public sphere in Adaama city could be linked to the relevant Regional State's Constitution which states that Afan Oromo is the "*working language of the Regional State*" (Article 5). Whether this implies that all information in the public sphere in Oromiyya State must be (also) in Afan Oromo may be left to members of the legal professions to decide. Bi- or monolingual sign-boards which do not include Afan Oromo, however, do occur. In constitutional terms, the use of Amharic would only be licensed by the fact that it is the *working language* of the Federal Government, which, however, should have no effect on its use on commercial and

[15] These five generalisations are based on several months of unsystematic observations by the principal author who, admittedly, is not at ease with reading nor speaking Amharic, so possible inconsistencies in the writing of Amharic would not have been noticed; this is also true for the rare occurrence of Arabic (I am indebted to my colleagues Ronny Meyer and Mohammed Ahmed for assistance with regard to these languages). The observed inconsistencies in writing Afan Oromo and English, however, have been noted and may be made the object of study in another paper. Note that one of the co-authors, Sileshi Berhanu, has conducted a systematic study of Afan Oromo orthography used on sign-boards in the public space in Adaama city, prior to the writing of this paper, with a group of 58 students at the Department of Afan Oromo at ASTU. Analysing a total of 810 sign-boards with Afan Oromo inscriptions along 13 street sides in Adaama city, the discomforting result was that 72 % of the signs contained violations of the *Qubee* orthography. In some cases the misspellings completely distorted the intended message of the sign. – Clearly, the frequent misspellings indicate "under-acceptance" of Afan Oromo Standard Orthography (*Qubee*) combined with ignorance/lack of awareness on the part of the language users (particularly the painters and printers), if not overt resistance to *Qubee* on ideological-political grounds (which is sometimes openly declared). As for English, poor knowledge is explainable from the fact that English is not entrenched in the daily routines of ordinary people but remains, throughout Ethiopia, a "foreign language" imposed on a population of practically 100 % non-native speakers. In most cases of misspelling there are strong indications that the English transcriptions were based on "hearing" rather than on following English standard orthography, i.e. the oral taking preference over the literal.

private sign-boards. The use of English would not be licensed by reference to any legal document that the authors are aware of other than being the only legal medium of instruction (MoI) in higher education – a legal provision which would not apply to the public sphere in general. In principle, all Ethiopian languages which have not been mentioned, would be acceptable in public space under the overall rule of the FDRE Constitution, Article 5,1 (*All Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition*). Note, however, that including Arabic in this provision as one of the "Ethiopian languages" would be hard to swallow for most linguists and sociolinguists (cf., also, Lewis 2009, where Sudanese Spoken Arabic is mentioned as an "immigrant language" to Ethiopia). Clearly, however, the prominent place of Amharic in the public sphere is linked to the fact that it is the major and almost nation-wide *lingua franca* in Ethiopia and that the majority of inhabitants of Adaama speak Amharic as their first language. English and Arabic, as it would appear, serve little, if any, instrumental function; their motivation would appear to rest in the symbolic dimension of language use and visibility in terms of religious identification (Arabic = Islam) and lifestyle (English = modernisation and globalisation).

The examples used in this presentation have been randomly selected from a larger set of photographs taken by the principal author much prior to the writing of this paper. The photos were taken in an unsystematic fashion between October 2011 and May 2012, albeit in view of their probable use for a sociolinguistic study. The following examples are based on photographs. For technical reasons, the photographs cannot be reproduced for publication in this journal, so the texts visible on the photographs have been copied into the examples below for purposes of easier printing. They represent the various types of tri-, bi-, and monolingual sign-boards found in the public space in Adaama city.

(1) Trilingual Type using Afan Oromo–Amharic–English

Text of a very simple sign-board indicating the near location of an internet café

Kaaffee Intarneetii Beest
ቤስት ኢንተርኒት ካፌ
Best Internet Cafe
Broad Band Service

Note 1 on Afan Oromo: Here, we are dealing with direct lexical transfer (triple *insertion*) from the source language English (*best, internet, cafe*) into Afan Oromo by use of a phonetically based semi-orthographic *transcription*. There is no attempt of a *translation* from English into Afan Oromo. The transfer of lexical material (*borrowing*), however, observes the rules of Afan

Oromo syntax, leading to a regular apparently "reversed word order" between Afan Oromo and English: 1 – 2 – 3 → 3 – 2 – 1. Note, further, that not all of the English text is rendered in the other two languages, as is quite often the case on the studied sign-boards.

Afan Oromo interlinearisation:	**kaaffee**	**intarneetii**	**beest**
	cafe	internet	best
Meaning (in English):	best internet cafe		

Note 2 on Amharic: Here, we are also dealing with direct lexical transfer (triple *insertion*) from the source language English (*best, internet, cafe*) into Amharic by use of a *transliteration* of the English source material into the Amharic script.[16] There is no attempt of a *translation* English-Amharic.

Note 3 on Amharic: Note the instable orthographic rendering of the vowel of the last syllable of English "internet" in Amharic, cf. example (8) below, which might have been influenced by the interference of graphic **ee** in Afan Oromo in confusion with its English sound value [**i**:].

Amharic transliteration:	**best**	**ʾintärnit**	**kafe**
	best	internet	cafe
Meaning (in English):	best internet cafe		

(2) Trilingual Type using Afan Oromo–Amharic–English (Sub-type 2)

Text on a colourful sign-board, one among many, which advertise the presence of a whole range of different shops in a shopping gallery along the main street of Adaama city

Meeshaale Adaa Gurguruu Maatii
ማቲ የባህል ዕቃዎች
Mati Souvenir Shop

Note 1 on Afan Oromo: Here, we are dealing with *translation* in terms of the use of lexical and syntactic equivalents in Afan Oromo to match the words and constructions of the obvious source language English. The translation, however, is faulty in several ways (cf. note 2).

[16] A note on the terminology and conventions used in this paper: *Transliteration* refers to the 1:1 rendering of symbols of one type of script into another, irrespective of phonetic or phonological considerations. *Transcription* refers to the rendering of actually occurring speech sounds into any kind of script with possibly different targets: the transcription may be *phonetic* (i.e. closely representing the pronunciation of sounds), phonological (i.e. representing in a 1:1 fashion the distinctive phonemes of the language), or *orthographic* (i.e. conforming to the established spelling rules of the Standard Language).

Note 2 on Afan Oromo:[17] (a) Orthography. The Afan Oromo text contains obvious deviations in spelling from a perceived "standard" in terms of indicating vowel length correctly (incorrect: *meeshaale adaa*; correct: *meeshaalee aadaa*). (b) Syntax. The "translation" shows violations of rules of Afan Oromo syntax which, by changing the meaning of the intended "message", gives experienced speakers of the language a good laugh.

Afan Oromo interlinearisation:

***meeshaa-lee**	**aadaa**	**gurguruu**	**Maatii**
*goods-PLURAL	culture.GENITIVE	to.sell	Maatii

Meaning (in English): *souvenirs to sell Maatii

Note 3 on Afan Oromo: Co-authors Sileshi Berhanu and Getinet Fulea, both native speakers of Afan Oromo, consider the intended "message" ridiculously distorted in terms of both lexical composition and syntax. Their preferred version of the "message" would be *Suuqii meeshaalee aadaa Maatii*, by using the word *suuqii* (of ultimately Arabic origin, meaning "bazaar, market") for English "shop" rather than the infinitive of the verb *gurguruu* "to sell, selling". Note also their placement of the noun *suuqii* in initial position in order to allow for the translational reading "Shop (of) goods (of) culture (of) *Maatii*'s" – instead of retaining the semantically ridiculous construction … *gurguruu Maatii* which would translate into English as "… selling Maatii" (i.e. indicating that it was Maatii who was sold, rather than identifying Maatii as the owner of the shop which sells "cultural

[17] Afan Oromo cannot yet be considered to be comprehensively standardised, despite the activities and regular publication of the journal *Wiirtuu* (so far, nine volumes have appeared until the year 2009, allowing for an average two years to produce one volume; the latest vol. 9, for instance, comprises 226 pp. and all but one article are written in Afan Oromo). There appears to be no unanimously accepted solitary reference work for what would rightfully be called "Standard Oromo" (with regard to orthography, phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, professional and vocational terminology, etc.). As it would appear, no decision has been taken to base "Standard Oromo" on any existing variety of the language (MEKONNEN HUNDE [2002] identifies 8 major varieties of Afan Oromo: *Borena, Guji, Arsi-Bale, Hararge, Karrayu, Wello, Raya, Meča*, *Tulama*, while the Ethnologue [LEWIS 2009] speaks of 3 linguistic units within the Oromo "macrolanguage": *Borana-Arsi-Guji*, *Eastern Oromo*, and *Western Central Oromo*). Rather, a somewhat artificial "composite" or "hybrid" pandialectal standard is targeted (GIRMA MAMMO 2001). Conscientious speakers of the language appear to have strong feelings about the "right" and "wrong" spellings of words in Afan Oromo, in particular with regard to the distinctions of vowel length which, in linguistic terms, is contrastive (*phonemic*) by being able to change the meaning of a word or morpheme. Heavy inconsistencies tend to be found, most of all, with loan words recently borrowed into Afan Oromo from English.

goods" = "souvenirs"). Thus, their preferred "correct" version of the message would be as follows (multiple genitive construction):

Afan Oromo interlinearisation:

suuqii	**meeshaa-lee**	**aadaa**	**Maatii**
shop	goods-PLURAL.GENITIVE	culture.GENITIVE	Maatii.GENITIVE

Meaning (in English): Maatii's shop of souvenirs (lit. "cultural goods")

Note 4 on Amharic: The Amharic "translation" works by using neither a noun to mean "shop" nor a verb meaning "to sell"; it simply creates a nominal compound (including a possessive construction to render "souvenirs" by "goods-of culture").

Amharic transliteration:	**Mati**	**yä-bahəl**	**ʿəqa-woč**
	Maatii	POSSESSIVE-culture	goods-PLURAL

Meaning (in English): Maatii souvenirs (lit. "goods of culture")

The following example of a trilingual sign-board involves Arabic, next to Afan Oromo and Amharic. Clearly, the text in all three languages constitutes translations; the name of the "Holy Qurʾan", however, is taken over from the Arabic original and is transcribed into both Afan Oromo and Amharic.

(3) Trilingual type using Afan Oromo–Amharic–Arabic

Text on a coloured sign-board carrying a school logo and spanning the wide entrance to a school compound which would appear to be run by the Muslim community in Adaama

Qudduus Qurʾaan sad[arkaa] 1ffaa mana barnoota ummataa

ቅዱስ ቁርአን 1ኛ ደረጃ የሕዝብ ት/ቤት

مدرسة قدوس قرأن الإبتدية الاهلية ــ اداما

Note 1 on Arabic: Visibility of Arabic is rare in Adaama city; so far only two prominent tokens of usage of Arabic in the public space have been observed, both in close neighbourhood of each other (cf. example 6) and connected to marking the presence of the apparently somewhat minoritarian Muslim community. (Adaama city is dominated by Christian churches not only of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but also Catholic, and a large number of Protestant churches of various denominations.)

Note 2 on Afan Oromo and Amharic: Both languages use the combination of "house" and "education" to render the English equivalent of "school", and "1st level" to give the equivalent of "primary (school)".

Note 3 on Arabic: Different from the Afan Oromo and Amharic versions, the Arabic version adds the name of the city: Adaama.

Afan Oromo interlinearisation:

Qudduus Qurʾaan sad[arkaa] 1ffaa mana barnoota ummataa
Holy Qurʾan level 1st house education community.GENITIVE

Meaning (in English): "Holy Qurʾan" Community Primary School

Amharic transliteration and interlinearisation:

Qəddus Qurʾan 1ñña däräğa yä-həzb tə[mhərt] bet
Holy Qurʾan 1st level POSSESSIVE-community education house

Meaning (in English): "Holy Qurʾan" Community Primary School

Arabic transliteration:

madrasah Quddus Qurʔaan al-ibtidaaʔiyyah al-ahliyah Adaama
school Holy Qurʾan ARTICLE-primary ARTICLE-community Adaama

Meaning (in English): "Holy Qurʾan" Community Primary School Adaama

The following examples illustrate the different tokens of bilingual sign-boards found in Adaama city. The bilingual signs each use two out of the following four languages: Afan Oromo, Amharic, Arabic, English.

(4) Bilingual Type using Afan Oromo–Amharic

Text on a public sign-board pointing into the direction and to the existence of a bookshop which is run by one of the many Christian churches in Ethiopia

Wallddaa Amantoota Wangeelaa Makaana Yesuusii
Itiyoopiyaat Mana Kuusaa Macaafe Yemissaach Dimtsii
የኢትዮጵያ ወንጌላዊት ቤተክርስቲያን መካነ ኢየሱስ
የምስራች ድምፅ መጻሕፍት መደብር

Note on Afan Oromo: Here, we are dealing most likely with a translation from the Amharic source into Afan Oromo which, however, is faulty in terms of "standard" orthography and lexicon (by using *dəmś* of Amharic origin rather than the Afan Oromo word *sagalee* in the rendering of the expression "good news" in the Christian sense of "gospel" from originally Ancient Greek *euangelion* "good news" which also appears as a loanword for "Evangelical" in the text). Also, one gets the impression that the "translator" was generally insecure about Afan Oromo spelling conventions and, therefore, resorted to "hyper-corrective" forms (e.g. **wallddaa* instead of simply *waldaa* "church", but overlooking the fact that in Afan Oromo glottalised /p'/ in the name for "Ethiopia" should be spelled with a "ph": *Itiyoophiyaa*; further, the name of the country should be carrying a suffix *-tti* rather than simply *-t*). Also, word order/syntax does not correspond to "expected" Afan Oromo structures.

Afan Oromo interlinearisation (words with deviations from "standard" underlined):

***wallddaa amant-oota wangeelaa Makaana Yeesuusii**
church believer-PLURAL gospel.GENITIVE Mekana Yesus.GENITIVE
Itiyoopiyaa-t mana kuusaa macaafe yemissaach dimtsii
Ethiopia-in house store.GENITIVE book "Good News"

Afan Oromo interlinearisation (corrected to "standard"):

mana kuusaa macaafa sagalee missiraachoo waldaa amant-oota
housestore.GENITIVE book "Good News".GENITIVE church believer-PLURAL
wangeelaa Makaana Yasuus Itiyoophiyaa
gospel.GENITIVE Mekana Yesus Ethiopia.GENITIVE

Meaning (in English):
"Good News" Bookshop of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekana Yesus

Amharic transliteration:

yä-ʾityoṗəya wängelawit betäkrəstiyan mäkanä ʾiyäsus
POSSESSIVE-Ethiopia evangelical church Mekane Yesus
yäməssrač dəmṣ mäṣahəft mädäbər
"Good News" bookshop

Meaning (in English):
Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus' "Good News" Bookshop

(5) Bilingual Sub-type using Afan Oromo–English

Text on a very colourful and illustrated sign-board indicating the location of an IT-shop with access to the internet and further services

Intarnetii Web
Web Internet
Internet Service
Photo Copy
Laminating
Binding
Scanning
Typing services
Software Gallery

Note 1 on Afan Oromo (compare with example 1): Here, we are dealing again with direct lexical transfer by double *insertion* from source language English into Afan Oromo which is written in phonetically based phonemic

semi-orthographic transcription and, however, when observing the rules of Afan Oromo syntax, leads again to a regular apparently "reversed word order" between Afan Oromo and English: 1 – 2 → 2 – 1.

Note 2 on Afan Oromo: There is, again, instable orthography being used for Afan Oromo regarding vowel length, cf. *Intarneetii* (1) – *Intarnetii* (5).

Note 3: There is an asymmetrical informational load found quite often in public advertisement (in the domain of electronics/digital equipment): minimal content in Afan Oromo (or Amharic) is opposed to maximal content in English.

(6) Bilingual Sub-type using Arabic–Amharic[18]

Text on the sign-board found over the entrance of a huge store house which is said to belong to the Muslim community in Adaama

ماشأ الله الله وكيل
ማሻ አላህ አላህ ወኪል

Note 1 on Arabic: This particular sub-type is very rare in Adaama city, so far only two tokens of the usage of Arabic have been observed.

Note 2 on Amharic: The Amharic "version" is not a *translation* but a direct *transliteration* from the Arabic source to Amharic (cf. also example 8).

Arabic transliteration: **maʃ ʔal(l)ah ʔal(l)ah wakīl**

Amharic transliteration: **maš ʾal(l)ah ʾal(l)ah wäkil**

Meaning (in English): May GOD take care of you – GOD the guardian

One of the most common bilingual sub-types is the one using Amharic–English. Quite often again, not all the information which is given in English is repeated in the Amharic version.

(7) Bilingual Sub-type using Amharic–English

Text on a sign-board advertising the location of one of the very frequent "Juice Bars" in Adaama city

የተለያዩ ሼክ ጁ·ሶች
Italy Juice & Burger
Fresh Juice

[18] The original sign-board uses a slightly different Arabic writing style. The rendering in example (6) represents the virtual Arabic keyboard used for preparing this presentation.

Note on Amharic: Example (7) shows a kind of shortened "free" rather than "1:1" translation from obviously the English source by (a) missing out on the renderings of "*Italy*", "*& Burger*", "*fresh*", and by inserting the English loan "shake" which is not present in the English source, in combination with the English loan **ǧus** "juice".

Amharic transliteration and interlinearisation:

yä-täläyayyu	**šek**	**ǧus-oč**
POSSESSIVE-variety	shake	juice-PLURAL

Meaning (in English): Selection of juice-shakes

(8) Bilingual Sub-type using Amharic–English

Text on a sign-board indicating the presence of an IT-shop and internet café

Future Tech Computer
ብሮድ ባንድ ኢንተርኔት ካፌ
Broadband Internet Cafe
Software Gallery
Computer Maintenance

Note 1 on Amharic: Example (8), on first sight, would appear to show a "deviant" order from the apparent rule of "Amharic before English", by what looks like the incorporation of the Amharic text within the English text. This, however, is not the case. The Amharic text simply anticipates the following English line "Broadband Internet Cafe", but not as a *translation* into Amharic but rather as a *transliteration* from English to Amharic, again as in example (5) above. However, instead of assuming transliteration, one could also argue the case for triple *insertion* of the English terms *broadband*, *internet*, and *cafe*.

Note 2 on Amharic: Note the instable orthography of "internet" as compared to example (2).

Amharic transliteration:	**brod**	**band**	**ʾintärnet**	**kafe**
	broad	band	internet	cafe

Meaning (in English): Broadband internet cafe

(9) Bilingual Sub-type using English–Amharic

Text on a sign-board carrying colourful illustrations of female hairdressing and advertising the location of a female hairdresser's

Debe New Stayle
ደቤ ኒው ስታይል

Note on English: Example (9) shows one of the cases in which the English is faulty. Writing **stayle* incorrectly instead of the correct *style* points towards a phonetic-based assumption about the spelling rather than factual knowledge of English orthography or familiarity with English vocabulary.[19] Again, we are dealing with *transliteration* and not *translation* (alternatively: *double insertion* of English "new" and "style"). Example (9), further, represents one of the cases in which the "default" order of languages is violated according to which the Ethiopian languages are supposed to precede English: here, English precedes the Ethiopian language.

Incorrect English:	***Debe**	**New**	**Stayle**
Correct English:	**Debe**	New	**Style**
Amharic transliteration:	**Däbe**	**niw**	**stayl**

On several occasions in the city of Adaama, we find monolingual sign-boards, mostly in Amharic, and to only very little extent in English. Monolingual sign-boards in Afan Oromo are also rare. So far, we have not come across a monolingual sign-board in Arabic within the city of Adaama.[20]

(10) Monolingual Sub-type using Afan Oromo only

Text on a sign-board carrying a huge picture of a young and beautiful pair of lovers; addressing HIV/AIDS prevention

Waaʾee dhibee saal-qunnamtii ifatti mariʾachuu fi yaalumsa gochuun jaalallee keessan wajjin jireenya fayyaalessa taʾe waliin gaggeessaa!!

Note on Afan Oromo: This monolingual sign-board carrying a lot of text is written, as it would appear, in "perfect" Standard Afan Oromo without any noticeable shortcomings. One has, however, to note that in contradiction to *allegro* speech and to the treatment in available grammatical descriptions and the practices of the Standardisation Department of Afan Oromo, the clitic (or suffix) *-fi* (rendering prepositional meanings and the idea of conjunctive/associative comparable to "and, with" in English) tends to be writ-

[19] Writing English (and, most likely, also Afan Oromo) based on "ears" rather than on "eyes" provides the most plausible explanation of spelling errors. Another striking example would be the indication "**Lerner**" (rather than "**Learner**") found on at least one driving-school vehicle, a bus which the principal author used to meet regularly on his way to university campus.

[20] Monolingual sign-boards in Arabic do occur in Oromiyya Regional State in any case outside Adaama city. The principal author has on several occasions passed such a sign-board, with a remarkable amount of text, along the road south of Mojo following the Rift Valley towards the Kenyan border. The sign-board stood just outside the compound of a Mosque.

ten as a separate word, probably based on the model of coordinating conjunctions like "and" in English (and in other European languages).[21]

Afan Oromo interlinearisation:

Waaʾee	**dhibee**	**saal-qunnamtii**	**ifa-tti**
about	disease	sexual-intercourse.GENITIVE	clear-LOCATIVE

mariʾachuu	**fi**	**yaalumsa**	**gochuu-n**
to.discuss	and	treatment	to.make-INSTRUMENTAL

jaalal-lee	**keessan**	**wajjin**	**jireenya**	**fayyaa-lessa**
lover-PLURAL	yours.PLURAL	with	life	healthy-ADJECTIVE

taʾe	**waliin**	**gag-geess-aa**
to.be.PAST	together	INTENSIVE-to.accompany-IMPERATIV.PLURAL

Meaning (in English):
By freely discussing sexually transmitted disease and treatment, enjoy a healthy life together with your lovers!!

(11) Monolingual Sub-type using Amharic only

Text on illustrated and coloured sign-board publicising the services of a tailor-shop

አቤ
ልብስ
የማስተካከል
ሥራና
ስፌት

Amharic transliteration:

ʾab(b)e	**ləbs**	**yä-mastäkakäl**	**śəra-nna**	**səfet**
Ab(b)e	clothes	POSSESSIVE-adjusting	work-CONNECTIVE	sewing

Meaning (in English):
Ab(b)e clothes adjustment work and sewing ("Ab(b)e tailor")

(12) Monolingual Sub-type using Amharic only

Text found written on the flanks of a heavy-duty vehicle tyre standing upright on a pile of worn tyres, indicating nearby tyre-repair services

አውቶማቲክ ጎሚስታ

[21] The conjoined or isolated writing of postpositional morphemes (clitics, suffixes) is a problematic issue in Afan Oromo standardisation. On most if not all signs in the public space in Adaama city, *fi* (corresponding to English "and") is written as a separate word. Oromo linguists and also the standardisation department producing *Wiirtuu* cling to the conjoined writing convention as a clitic or suffix.

Amharic transliteration: **awtomatik** **gom(m)ista**
automatic tyre-repair

Meaning (in English): Automatic (< English) tyre-repair (< Italian *gommista*)

(13) Monolingual Sub-type using Amharic only

This text was written across the gate to a compound which offers places to sleep

ሠላም መኝታ

Amharic transliteration and interlinearisation: **Sälam** **mäññəta**
Salaam bedroom

Meaning (in English): Salam('s) bedroom

(14) Monolingual Sub-type using English only

The following are examples of the rather few monolingual English sign-boards found in Adaama city

Iveco Service

Save the Children
Adama Sub-office

4. Language visibility on ASTU campus (Adaama city)

4.1 Ethiopia's language policy concerning higher education

Higher education in Ethiopia, i.e. education offered at high school (grades 9–12) and university level, falls under the responsibility of the Federal Government as regulated by the Higher Education Proclamation (2009). In terms of language use, Article 20, 1 of this Higher Education Proclamation clearly states that

> *The medium of instruction in any institution, except possibly in language studies other than the English language, shall be English*.

Just as the FDRE Constitution (1995) itself says nothing about the language(s) used for instruction and leaves this to the Higher Education Proclamation, the Higher Education Proclamation itself says nothing about the *working language* of institutions of higher learning outside the classroom. According to Lubo Teferi Kerorsa (2012), therefore, by implicational reference to the FDRE Constitution,

> […] the working language of any Ethiopian educational institutions falls under it. As a result, educational institutions of the federal government are obliged to use only Amharic as their working language. Therefore, it is through Amharic language that public higher educational institutions make communications with any legal person within Ethiopia.
>
> On the other hand, the working language of all educational institutions of any regional state are required to use the language that the regional state in which they are located determines as its working language.

Clearly, therefore, English is, with certain exceptions regarding "*language studies other than the English language*" and "*for students with complete hearing impairment*" as regulated by the Higher Education Proclamation (2009, Article 20, 1–3), the only language of instruction in "*any institution*" of higher education.[22] In sociolinguistic typology, therefore, English in Ethiopia must be considered a *special purpose language* for use as MoI in classrooms and lecture halls for higher education purposes.[23]

On the other hand, regarding the *working language* of institutions of higher learning, i.e. the language through which "public higher educational institutions make communications with any legal person within Ethiopia" (Lubo Teferi Kerorsa 2012), Amharic must be used as the *working language* of the Federal Government. This, however, invokes a potential conflict on university campuses between the *working language* of the Federal Government and the *working language* of the Regional State in which a university campus is located. Restricting the working language on campuses to only Amharic would, therefore, create a *de facto* linguistic extra-territoriality for

[22] Note that by this regulation it is covered that practically all teaching in the Department of Afan Oromo is done through the Oromo language. During the period of three semesters (2011–2013) where the principal author taught at this department, he was the only one using English as the exclusive medium of instruction. However and under a pedagogical pilot project, he was always accompanied by one or two team-teaching colleagues from the Afan Oromo department who were present in class for two reasons: (a) in order to allow bilingual "triadic" communication (cf. WOLFF in press [a]) involving Afan Oromo for discussions between the teachers and the students, and (b) for capacity-building purposes of the Ethiopian teachers themselves.

[23] Clearly English does not, in any serious manner, function as *lingua franca* of sorts in Ethiopia, despite the fact that many educated Ethiopians are able to use it as a foreign language, and can at times be observed to obviously enjoy talking to each other in English, or at least code-switch, in public. This linguistic behaviour is linked to the symbolic value that English has acquired in Ethiopia as a *lifestyle* language symbolising "modernity" and "global civilisation".

university campuses which, to the best of our knowledge, has no *de jure* justification by neither constitutional documents (federal and state levels) nor by the Higher Education Proclamation (2009). It is the contention of the authors that, in order to avoid unnecessary conflict, the "language that the regional state in which they are located determines as its working language" (Lubo Teferi Kerorsa 2012) could and should also be allowed on university campuses as part of a feasible multilingual option.

4.2 Visible institutional bilingualism on ASTU campus

In terms of language visibility, therefore, ASTU campus would appear to be located extra-territorially with regard to Oromiyya Regional State. On ASTU campus, language visibility is restricted to mono- and bilingual signs in two languages only: Amharic and English. The *working language* of the relevant Regional State in which ASTU is located, namely Afan Oromo, is practically absent from the public sphere on campus.[24]

This goes as far as also encompassing the Department of Afan Oromo in which the language of teaching is predominantly, if not exclusively, Afan Oromo, in accordance with federal legislation on higher education (Art. 20, 1, *Higher Education Proclamation*, 2009). The exception being the officially recognized label for the awarded degree, which also has an Afan Oromo version. Note, however and quite characteristically so, until the day of writing the name of the degree is misspelled on the university's official website:

> *The degree for graduates of the department shall be named as 'Digrii Baachilarii Aartii Afann Oromoofi Og-Barruumiin'* ("*Bachelor of Arts-Degree in Afan Oromo and Literature*").
>
> (We notice that, since the launching of the website, a silly typing error had gone unnoticed: instead of "*Afann*" it should, of course, read "*Afaan*".)

The following examples of texts represent the various types of bi- and monolingual sign-boards found in the public space on ASTU campus. Note once more, that federal legislation rules for the "language of instruction" to be English for all higher education. The following and other public signs on

[24] This sweeping statement needs to acknowledge one "exception" of highly marginal significance which, as can be assumed, reflects an initiative of the former German Founding Rector of ASTU (then "AU"), Prof. Herbert Eichele who has been known to be in favour of empowering Afan Oromo in this university. Hardly noticeable, curbs along the campus main road in one instance carry a derelict welcome expression in Afan Oromo, English, and Amharic. The Afan Oromo message reads ***BAGA NAGAAN DHUFTAN V A*** "Welcome to AU".

ASTU campus, however, have nothing to do with higher education "instruction", but deal with general public information made available for public use in the public space on campus. In the theoretical framework of this paper we can, therefore, say that the use of English for public information within a federal institution (e.g. universities) in a way "de-legitimises" the exclusive use (by Constitution) of Amharic as the *working language* of the Federal Government. At the same time, it "re-legitimises" English as language of all educational matters, even beyond its officially proclaimed function as *special purpose language* for higher Education, in terms of its functionality as a second working language within a federal institution. This use, however, is neither legitimised by the Constitution (1995) nor by the Proclamation on Higher Education (2009).

(15) Bilingual Sub-type using English–Amharic on ASTU campus

The text reflects the continued use of the founding name of the University which since then has been renamed "Adama Science and Technology University (ASTU)". It is found over the official entrance to the administrative main building and the offices of the President (formerly: Rector)

ADAMA UNIVERSITY (AU)	አዳማ ዩኒቨርሲቲ (አዩ)

Note on Amharic: In example (15) we are dealing again with straightforward *transliteration* of the Afan Oromo + English combination "*Adaama* University".

Amharic transliteration: **ʾadama yunivärsiti (ʾa yu)**

English translation: Adama University (AU)

(16) Bilingual Sub-type using Amharic–English on ASTU campus

Text found on a post box along campus main road

ፖስታ POST

Note on Amharic: Example (16) displays a simple case of *translation* whereby the Amharic word is obviously a loan from Italian.

Amharic transliteration: **posta** (< Italian *posta*)

English translation: Mail ("Post [box, office]")

(17) Bilingual Sub-type using Amharic–English on ASTU campus

Text found on an official traffic sign along campus main road

ቁም
STOP

Note on Amharic: Example (17) offers a straightforward *translation* English–Amharic.

Amharic transliteration: **qum**

English translation: Stop

(18) Bilingual Sub-type using Amharic–English on ASTU campus

Text found on a sign-board along campus main road giving directions to the *School of Pedagogic and Vocational Teachers Education*

ፔዳጎጂና ቮኬሽናል ቲቸር
ኤዱኬሽን ት/ቤት
School of Pedagogic and
Vocational Teachers Education

Note on Amharic: Example (18) provides a case of intra-phrase *code-switching* (rather than straightforward *transliterations*) by using the Amharic connective morpheme *-nna* to link English loans (quadruple *insertion*) "pedagogy", "vocational", "teacher", and "education", and by resorting again to Amharic to express the idea of "school" (albeit in an abbreviated form: *t/bet* is abbreviated from [*təmhərt bet*], lit. "education house" meaning "school").

Amharic transliteration and interlinearisation:

pedagoği-nna	**vokešənal tičär**	**ʾedukešən**	**tə[mhərt] bet**
pedagogy-CONNECTIVE	vocational teacher	education	education house

English translation: Pedagogy and vocational teacher education school

(19) Bilingual Sub-type using English–Amharic on ASTU campus

Text found on a sign-board along campus main road giving directions to the *Continuing & Distance Education Institute*

CONTINUING &
DISTANCE
EDUCATION
INSTITUTE
የተከታታይና ርቀት
ትምህርት ተቋም

Note on Amharic: Example (19) provides us with a full-fledged translation Amharic-English; there are no instances of borrowing (and/or transliteration) from English into Amharic.

Amharic transliteration and interlinearisation:

yä-tä-kätattay-ənna	**rəqät**	**təmhərt**	**täqʷam**
POSSESSIVE-ITERATIVE-continue-CONNECTIVE	distance	education	institution

English translation: Institute of continuing and distant education

The following examples of texts represent types of monolingual sign-boards found in the public space on ASTU campus. Note, once more, that federal legislation rules for the exclusive use of Amharic as language of communication within federal institutions such as universities. The use of English for the same purposes is, by implication, ruled out. Nevertheless, ASTU campus abounds with monolingual (and bilingual) sign-boards in English.

(20) Monolingual Sub-type using Amharic only

Text found on a fairly huge banner which was temporarily hung up along campus main road, drawing attention to the need of keeping the campus clean

የግቢያችንን ንጽህና በአግባቡ
መጠበቅ ለዩኒቨርሲቲው
ማኅበረሰብ ጤንነት ወሳኝ ነው

Note on Amharic: The banner in example (20) which was still carrying the outdated AU logo and the clear message "to keep the campus clean" would obviously have been missed by, for instance, expatriate staff (including the President and his wife being from South Korea, several Deans, German and South Korean, and a fair number of lecturers from Asia and Europe) who are not competent in Amharic.

Amharic transliteration and interlinearisation:

yä-gəbiy-ačč̣ənə-n		**nəṣəhənna**
POSSSIVE-campus-1POSSESSIVE.PLURAL-ACCUSATIVE		cleanliness
bä-ʾägbab-u		**mä-ṭ̣äbbäq**
by-proper-way-DEFINITE.MASCULINE		INFINITIVE-keep
lä-yunivärsiti-w		**mahəbärä-säb**
for-university-DEFINITE.MASCULINE		community
ṭ̣enənnät	**wässañ**	**näw**
health	vital	to.be.3SGM

English translation: Keeping our campus duly clean is vital so as to secure the health of the University community

Finally, the following examples illustrate the kind of general information for which English is used on campus (which is covered by neither the Constitution nor the Proclamation on Higher Education).

(21) Monolingual Sub-type using English only

Texts found in and on buildings and on office doors on campus, and on sign-posts along campus main road

Fundamental Objective of Adama University
1. Adama University (AU) shall become a model technical University for Ethiopia.
2. Emphasising economic development & University-enterprise cooperation according to the German Paradigm.
3. Adama University shall become a model University for excellence in teaching, learning & applied research.
4. Adama University shall be attractive in international university partnerships & network.
5. Adama University shall be the centre of vocational teacher education in Ethiopia.

School of Humanities & Law	School of Natural Sciences

Afan Oromo Department

4.3 Sociolinguistic analysis and summary of the situation on ASTU campus

When members of the ASTU academic community are asked about their perception of the public visibility of languages on campus, they offer spontaneous "explanations" which rest on explicit or implicit reference to the following three observations:

– higher education is under federal legislation,
– the working language on the federal level of government is Amharic,
– English must be used in higher education.

As sporadic evidence gathered in an *ad hoc* fashion suggests, the fact that Afan Oromo is not used on campus is hardly ever noticed, and it is not, as a rule, spontaneously commented upon. The three "reasons" which are generally associated with the use of Amharic and English in the public sphere on campus by juridical laypersons, however, deserve some closer scrutiny.

Ad 1: As a matter of fact, the FDRE Constitution itself says nothing about language use in education, other than endowing the Federal Government with the power to "*establish and implement national standards and basic policy criteria for* […] *education, science and technology* […]" (Article 51, 3). Hence derives the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Education

for all higher education in Ethiopia. However, this article provides no explicit basis for

(a) enforcing the *working language of the Federal Government*, which is Amharic, for general and *lingua franca* use on any University community. One could argue that University communities are not, *per se*, part of the Federal Government and, therefore, are not legally forced to use the *working language of the Federal Government* in its internal and public dealings. One could further argue that the idea of having a *working language* is to facilitate communication and not to block it, and that, therefore, in multilingual environments as University campuses tend to be, as many languages as are needed for public communication ought to be made use of; thus: language policies, whether overt or covert, should be "inclusive" rather than "exclusive".

(b) excluding the *working language* of a Regional State from being used in the public sphere on a university campus located in the particular Regional State. One could argue that, if language use is not excluded by law, multilingual options are feasible under the legal provisions in place anyway (cf. reference below to the subsidiarity principle codified in Article 52, 1).

Ad 2: The FDRE Constitution (1995, Article 52, 1) adheres to the subsidiarity principle by stating that

> *all powers not given expressly to the Federal Government alone, or concurrently to the Federal Government and the States*[,] *are reserved to the States*.

Therefore, any Regional State has, among others, the power to

> […] *enact and enforce laws on the State civil service and their condition of work; in the implementation of this responsibility it shall ensure that educational*; [sic] *training and experience requirements for any job, title or position approximate national standards*. (Article 52, 2.f)

One could argue once again, that the approximation of *national standards* for *educational training and experience requirements* on the State level does not enforce the *working language of the Federal Government* on University campuses across Ethiopia, nor does it exclude the use of the constitutionally identified *working language* of any Regional State on campus. Again, multilingual options which would involve both the working language of the Federal Government and that of the Regional State in which a university is located, would be feasible and covered by the prevailing jurisdiction.

Ad 3: One has to take notice of the fact that the relevant Proclamation (No. 650/2009 Higher Education Proclamation) in its Article 20 only regulates the "language of instruction".

Article 20: *Language of Instruction*

1. *The medium of instruction in any institution, except possibly in language studies other than the English language, shall be English.*
2. *Notwithstanding the provisions of sub-article (1) of this Article, short-term trainings and preparation of teachers for primary schools and grades may be given in any appropriate languages.*
5. *Education for students with complete hearing impairment shall be given in or supplemented by appropriate sign language.*

Article 20 does not automatically regulate the use of language for general information of the relevant public, i.e. students, teachers, administrators, and occasional visitors, outside the classroom; here the more general stipulations of the FDRE Constitution (1995) apply, i.e. regarding Amharic as the *working language* of the Federal Government and observing that "*All Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition*" (Article 5).

To summarize: from the point of view of empirical sociolinguistic research the question may be raised whether or not the patterns of public language use and visibility on university campuses, for instance of ASTU, are the only patterns which conform to federal and regional state legislation. The final answer to this question can only be provided by members of the legal trade. A sociolinguistic perspective, however, would, first of all, acknowledge the worldwide fact that, in order to keep peace and mutual respect in multilingual context, language use must be "negotiated" among the stakeholders rather than "be ruled" by law (and, thereby, create conflicts rather than avoid conflicts). The factual banning of Afan Oromo from the public sphere on ASTU campus could, therefore, be viewed as a marked instance, in terms of the theoretical framework for this paper, of "delegitimisation" of the working language of the Oromiyya Regional State, namely Afan Oromo. (This empirically based sociolinguistic observation makes no claims about any overt or covert language policy considerations that may have, or may not have, played a role in the coming about of the observed situation on ASTU campus.) In any case, language visibility on ASTU campus stands in sharp contrast to language visibility in all other parts of Adaama city, as this paper hopes to have clearly shown.

5. Conclusion

With the aim of contributing to the study of multilingualism and polyglossia in Africa in general, and in Ethiopia in particular, this paper has looked at the sociolinguistic situation in Adaama city and on ASTU campus. By way of conclusion, the findings of our preliminary research on the "linguistic landscape", i.e. language visibility, in Adaama can be summarized as follows.

The public space in Adaama city outside ASTU campus is dominated, in terms of visibility and perception by Afan Oromo almost on a par with Amharic. A certain predominance of Afan Oromo, for instance as the topmost (and, therefore, "first") language on multilingual sign-boards, can be explained by the overall ethnolinguistic setup of the Regional State and legislation on its *working language*. The almost parallel distributional frequency of Amharic can be attributed to its function and distribution as the major and almost nation-wide *lingua franca* and the majority of inhabitants of Adaama city, even though it is not legally justified by any available document. Amharic usually follows Afan Oromo as a "second" language on multilingual sign-boards. Occasionally, the size of the graphic symbols for Amharic (*fidäl* syllabary) is considerably larger than that of the Roman Script letters used for Afan Oromo. This would appear to signal instances of political opposition to the language legislation currently in place in Ethiopia which is still widely spread among Amharic speakers who reject the post-1991 partial delegimisation of Amharic in favour of other ("local", "regional") *working languages* of governments in the Regional States of the FDRE. The communicative function of English in the public space, usually in "third" place on sign-boards, remains odd and highly doubtful: Adaama cannot pride itself on being an attraction for international tourism that depends on the use of a "global" language for communication purposes with mainly "global" customers. Also, English plays no role whatsoever as a kind of *lingua franca* among Ethiopians. The widespread appearance of English on public sign-boards probably is linked to its symbolic value in terms of a somewhat mystifying reference to "modernity" and "global" civilisation and economy. In short: English is, more a less, a *lifestyle language* with purely symbolic value. The use of the fourth language, Arabic, is restricted to rare occurrences of symbolising the presence of a Muslim community in the city.

With regard to the campus of ASTU within Adaama city and its location in the Oromiyya Regional State, we notice the following situation. In linguistic terms, ASTU behaves as if it was extra-territorial by factually disallowing any visibility of Afan Oromo or any other language besides English and Amharic. One could indeed say that in Adaama city and beyond, the world off-campus speaks, reads and writes Afan Oromo, in addition to other languages, while ASTU campus defines itself as a bilingual Amharic-English island in a sea of Afan Oromo (namely the Oromiyya Regional State with 83,5 % of its population speaking Afan Oromo).

In more specific terms, current patterns of visible language use in Adaama city, including ASTU campus, have serious constitutional implications and societal repercussions. In terms of "language attitudes", we are

prompted to speak of "legitimised", "delegitimised", and "relegitimised" use of the languages.

1. In terms of our chosen theoretical framework of language legitimisation through language visibility, our findings suggest that, by complete absence in the public sphere on ASTU campus, **Afan Oromo** is *delegitimised* in the eyes of the general public, contrary to its elevated role and function and *de jure* status as the *working language* of the Oromiyya Regional State in which ASTU campus is located.
2. Further, **English** finds itself in a *semi-legitimised* position insofar as it is associated with higher education in general, but actually should be restricted, by federal legislation, to the function of *special purpose language* as medium of instruction. This would not require English to be the medium of administration and public information across campus.[25]
3. The use of **Amharic** in the public sphere on campus can serve two functions, namely symbolic and instrumental. First of all, its symbolic value is, as the *working language* of Federal Government, to underscore federal responsibility for higher education across the country. Its instrumental value lies in the fact that it is the most widely spoken *lingua franca* in Ethiopia, and as such it is also a "courtesy" language for staff and students who are not fluent or even illiterate in Afan Oromo and English. While the use of Amharic on campus in the public sphere appears to be well founded, its frequent instrumental use in classrooms and lecture halls for teaching purposes is, legally speaking, not legitimate and must be considered a case of clandestine *relegitimisation* for educational purposes albeit, as it would appear, tolerated by government.[26] It would even need to be considered illegal since it violates Article 20, 1 of the relevant Higher Education Proclamation (2009) which obligatorily pre-

[25] If, on the other hand, English was, by implication, to be considered the "global" language of higher education, science and technology (and thereby a symbol of "modernisation"), and in view of expatriate staff working on university campuses who may not be fluent in neither Amharic nor Afan Oromo, then English would find its place as a voluntary additional "courtesy" language on bi- or trilingual sign-boards – in addition to Amharic and possibly Afan Oromo, as far as ASTU campus was concerned.

[26] Non-systematic observation and informal interviews with teaching colleagues reveal that much of classroom interaction happens in Amharic (and not in English!). This is not surprising in view of the fact that the proficiency in English among Ethiopian students (and in part also among their teachers) remains fairly restricted and is, as a rule, not up to the required standards which are needed for tertiary education. On the other hand, it was one of the salient "punch lines" so-to-speak of the 1995 Constitution to replace Amharic as the ubiquitous and dominant language of education nationwide with other Ethiopian languages (plus English for Higher Education).

scribes the use of English as medium of instruction in *any institution* of higher learning. (Note that, from a pedagogical point of view, the use of Amharic and other Ethiopian languages would be well motivated, irrespective of legal provisions to the contrary.)

4. To the juridically untrained observer, therefore, the factual symbolic *delegitimisation* of Afan Oromo on ASTU campus, together with the factual *relegitimisation* of Amharic as a medium of instruction, has a smack of unconstitutionality both with regard to the Constitution of the FDRE and that of the Oromiyya Regional State, in addition to possibly violating the relevant prescription of the Federal Government's Higher Education Proclamation (2009).[27] This aspect, however, reaches far beyond the expertise of sociolinguists, it would deserve to be dealt with by experts on constitutional law, among others.

Apart from possible legal implications, the authors share a sociolinguistic concern with regard to the impending full standardisation of Afan Oromo. Current practice on ASTU campus, namely the factual banning of Afan Oromo (and other languages spoken by students and staff belonging to different *Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples* from Oromiyya or any other part of the FDRE) from visibility in the public sphere, and by law limiting its use to the teaching of Afan Oromo (or any other Ethiopian language) itself, not only touches on Article 5.1 of the FDRE Constitution which states that

All Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition.

Much closer to the heart of sociolinguists (and language activists, for that matter) is the fact that, for instance, depriving Afan Oromo on ASTU campus of its symbolic visibility, would appear to conflict with Article 39, 2

[27] This paper is not at all concerned with issues of adequate choice of medium of instruction in higher education, despite clear indications that the mandatory choice of English, and English only, is counter-productive in the Ethiopian context. The authors foresee much better overall results in academic performance for both the lecturers and the students, if multilingual options would be explored and used in Ethiopian universities. The factual use of Amharic instead of English in university lecture halls and classrooms, even though not legitimised under federal law including practices on ASTU campus, provides supportive evidence that "English only" misses the desired outcomes. This is also confirmed from bilingual English–Afan Oromo classroom experience in the Department of Afan Oromo. Whereas the principal author was teaching through English, he was assisted by one or two team-teaching colleagues (Mamo Mengesha, Getinet Fulea) who allowed for the usage of Afan Oromo when English comprehension was low or no longer possible on the side of the students. This issue, however, is the topic of yet another paper (WOLFF in press [a]). For a very recent and detailed Africa-wide expert treatment of the issue, including a contribution by the principal author, cf. OUANE – GLANZ (2011).

(*Rights of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples*); see § 2 further above. Here, the *right to speak, to write and to develop its own language* would appear to be disrespected in view of two established sociolinguistic facts:

(1) factually banning a language from visible appearance in prestigious public domains, such as academic life on a University campus, constitutes an act of "delegitimisation" in view of constitutional stipulations such as prevail in Ethiopia;
(2) it, further, blocks its "development" and necessary "intellectualisation" and "empowerment" by factually disallowing it to be used in most prestigious domains like exactly that of higher education. Such use would precisely be a necessary prerequisite for the development and intellectualisation of any formerly disempowered language.

The same issue is raised again in Article 39, 1 of the Oromiyya Regional State constitution (see § 2 above).

As already noted, the "*right to … develop and make use … of their own language*" is severely restricted by the delegitimisation of Afan Oromo through banning its visibility on a University campus, the more so in the light of feasible alternative multilingual options.

And finally, as pointed out by Lubo Teferi Kerorsa (2012), it is

> the use of nationality language for establishing a system that enables creation of science and technology culture in each nationality [which] is also provided as one of the science and technology policy directives and strategies by the federal government (Science and Technology Policy of 1993, Directives Art. 6 and Strategies Art. 11).

Here we can also make reference to the *Education and Training Policy* (ETP 1994; Article 3.5) which recognizes the promotion of nationality languages, particularly for primary education and presupposes "*necessary preparation*" that depends to no little extent on the above mentioned use of nationality languages in the prestigious domains of higher education, and, therefore, relates to the provisions of the ETP:

Article 3.5: *Education and Languages*

3.5.1 *Cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages.*
3.5.2 *Making the necessary preparation, nations and nationalities can either learn in their own language or can choose from among thoses selected on the basis of national and countrywide distribution.*

When we link our empirically based observations to the wider theoretical concept introduced at the beginning of this paper, we are reminded of the words of du Plessis (in press) that "decreased language visibility in the public space can become an important measure in the process of delegitimating a particular language". We are inclined to further follow the insights of Grin and Vaillancourt (1999: 28) already quoted further above, namely that

> the absence of […] language visibility, or authorities' refusal to increase such visibility, is difficult to defend on human rights grounds; it may also be interpreted as a clear sign that *they are not genuinely committed to the promotion of the language in question*' [own emphasis].

In a nutshell, therefore: the inherited rivalry, if only in symbolic terms, between the two major languages in Ethiopia, namely Amharic on the one hand, and Afan Oromo on the other, can be measured in the degrees of visibility of these languages across the different domains of the public sphere in Adaama city, which is the focal region of our present research. While the public, commercial, and private sectors of the public space off-campus are clearly dominated by a kind of *equilibrium of visibility* between Afan Oromo and Amharic with slight dominance of Afan Oromo (as a rule, the "first" language placed on top of multilingual public signs, even though, at times, in conspicuously smaller letters than Amharic), the on-campus situation clearly favours Amharic over Afan Oromo to the extent of negating the latter's existence in the academic domain of the public space by zero visibility. This can hardly be purely accidental, but is more likely the expression of an attempt, conscious or unconscious, to delegitimise Afan Oromo (and simultaneously allow, and if only covertly, the relegitimisation of Amharic as a medium of instruction in higher education) in this prestigious domain of language use. This has a double negative and sustainable effect, namely

– on the prospects of developing Afan Oromo to become a standard language, at least on equal level with Amharic, and
– in maintaining, if not fuelling rather than de-escalating or abolishing, the inherited conflict between the two languages, Amharic and Afan Oromo, in terms of "power".

As much as language policy can be used as a means of creating conflicts between groups of speakers of languages as has been a fact in Ethiopia's past history, it can also be used to create peace and mutual respect among competing groups of speakers of languages in today's constitutionally favoured multilingualism. The negative effects of the presently prevailing situation, namely perpetuation of a conflict-laden covert policy and thereby the discouragement

of Afan Oromo's further "development/intellectualisation" in terms of comprehensive standardisation, remain to be deplored, irrespective of any legal and human rights implications that have been tentatively sketched out in this paper.

In terms of applicable recommendations, therefore, and with a focus on Afan Oromo, the paper suggests that *trilingual options* should be considered for communication in the public sphere on ASTU campus, as they can already be observed in the public space off-campus in Adaama city. Potential conflicts relating vaguely to human rights considerations and possibly unclear or even conflicting constitutional or other legal regulations in place, can be easily avoided or managed, in multilingual and multiethnic polities, by openly negotiating patterns of language use in co-operative ways in order to ensure peaceful relations between various stakeholders. On ASTU campus, all three languages – Amharic, Afan Oromo, and English – would serve vital and important instrumental functions, and all three carry their own strong symbolic values. In a truly democratic and tolerant community of scholars and students and their supporting staff on campus, there should be room for the peaceful coexistence of all three languages.

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Summary

With a focus on the city of Adaama (formerly: Nazret), the biggest urban agglomeration in Oromia Regional State, the paper addresses the "linguistic landscape" which is indicative of the overall sociolinguistic situation of a polity. Language use in the public space has not only practical-instrumental, but also historical, political, juridical, and most of all psycho-sociological dimensions, the latter relating to the symbolic value of written language use. The paper deals with multilingual graphic representations on public commercial and private sign-boards, advertisements, and notices in Adaama city, with an additional focus on the situation on the campus of Adama Science and Technology University. Under the chosen theoretical framework, it analyses language visibility in terms of language *legitimisation*, both in terms of peoples' *attitudes* and based on official documents regarding language status and language use in present-day Ethiopia, such as the *Education and Training Policy* (1994), the *Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia* (1995), the *Revised Constitution of Oromia Regional State* (2001/2006), and the *Higher Education Proclamation* (2009).

The primary focus of the paper is on the status, functions, and representations of Afan Oromo, including a review of the major historico-political changes affecting this language from *Imperial* Ethiopa (before 1974), the *Därg* period (until 1991), and under the new Constitution of the *FDRE* (since 1995). The paper also deals with linguistic and graphic issues concerning the "orthographic" representations of the four languages used: *Afan Oromo, Amharic, Arabic,* and *English*, involving three different graphic systems: *Fidäl* (*Abugida*), *Arabic,* and *Roman*.