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## **Exploring factors that affect the Standardization of Wolaita language: the Case of Wolaita Zone in SNNPR, Ethiopia**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The objective of this study was to investigate factors that affect the standardization of Wolaita language in Wolaita Zone, SNNPR Ethiopia. The subjects of the study were sixteen purposely selected elders from Humbo wereda and Sodo zuriya wereda, two weredas culture, tourism and government communication and education experts as well as one wereda civil service experts. In addition, Wolaita Sodo university scholars, Wolaita zone Culture, tourism and government communication affairs office experts and Wolaita zone education office experts were involved. The data were collected by using two instruments: focus group discussion from elders and interview from two wereda office experts and all zone level offices experts. Qualitative data analysis method was employed to obtain results. Thus, the findings of the study confirmed that there were many factors that affected the standardization of Wolaita language. The main factors were past political conditions, poor attitude of the society, alphabetic shifts, dialectic variations and unnecessary coinage of words and lack of sufficient written manuscripts and because of these Wolaita language was not standardized. Exceeding the sovereignty of the people, developing the identity, culture and language of the indigenous people and establishing common understanding and rapport among the people were found to be some of the importances of standardizing Wolaita language beyond factors. Establishing awareness creation forum with the people, transmitting the messages to the audiences using Fana radio air time, publishing different brochures and strengthening Wolaita language as a medium of instruction in different school levels and working consistently to standardize and develop Wolaita language were some of the possible ways of standardizing Wolaita language. Thus, it was recommended that the stake holders like Wolaita zone culture, tourism*

*and government communication offices and the entire society should work consistently and in collaboration to standardize Wolaita language. Wolaita zone government should establish forums with the societies and other stakeholders and then discuss around tables with them in how to standardize Wolaita language. Furthermore, it is better establishing consistent language symposium forum to share various useful experiences about the standardization of Wolaita language.*

*Key Words: Alphabet, Attitude, Dialect, Indigenous, Manuscript, Standardization*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the popular imagination the history of standard languages is intricately connected to the activities of individuals and institutions. Indeed, the popular linguistic Pantheon is filled with the names of the “standardizers” who set out to regulate and codify their native language, and standardization is at least in part seen as the direct consequence and result of the rational, goal-oriented actions carried out by these individual and collective social actors. Not only is it necessary to carefully consider the various and sometimes con-citing motivations of these actors. It is also possible that standardization especially if it is not carried out with the active participation of speakers and close attention to their needs and interests might actually accelerate the gradual disappearance of the complex spoken language ecologies which keep unstandardized languages alive (Bradley and Bradley 2002). The existence of persistent historical commonalities between standard languages has been a central motivation for the construction of cross-linguistic models and the general interest in a comparative, synthetic approach to the study of language standardization. Standardization is often employed as a “default strategy” to increase the functional value of a language by providing it with a clear linguistic identity. Language standardization “is not a universal” and the languages of many speech communities do not exist in a standardized form. According to Haugen (1972), contact between speech and written language would eventually lead to the emergence of new spoken norms that are an amalgamation of speech and writing. A language that is not standardized and related to practices which sustain that standardization is in danger of continuing to be treated as outside of the realms of reason, as also are its speakers. Furthermore, there are processes in operation that oblige the speakers of a minority language to address the issue of 'language modernization' or to sit back and see space of activity being ceded to the dominant language, thereby promoting the further minoritisation of their own language

An understanding of standardization as a special type of language contact was also outlined by Haugen (1972: 247), who commented on the complex sociolinguistic interactions between the formal, written standard norm and the spoken language. Language standardization was essentially a tool where by the boundaries of a fragile state could be consolidated and integrated against external and internal threat. Furthermore, there are processes in operation that oblige the speakers of a minority language to address the issue of 'language modernization or to sit back and see space of activity being ceded to the dominant language, there by promoting the further minoritisation of their own language.

The main emphasize of the study was factors affecting the standardization of Wolaita Language which is a North Omotic language of the Ometo group spoken in the Wolayita Zone and some other parts of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region of Ethiopia. It is the native language of the Welayta people. The rationale for studying this was the researcher's observation of how the native speakers and native writers of Wolaytata people use the language. In his observation the researcher found that many native speakers were not using homogeneous language both in writing and speaking. Within the same context of a particular sentence or phrase the term of the language is used differently. And, this was because the language was not standardized.

Standardizing Wolaita language is important for its development. In line with this, a few efforts were made to standardize the language, but due to different factors the language was not standardized. Lack of uniformity in the usage of vocabulary and the coinage of new words differently by various researchers are hindering the process of standardization and are affecting communication in local languages, particularly in Wolaita language negatively as noted by (Mekonen 2002). Dialectic variations, pidgin, using different vocabularies to indicate similar things, shortage of due attention by concerned stake holders, lack of understanding the importance of standardizing the language properly and past political conditions which hinder Wolita language to use in medium of instruction and the attitude of the society are some of factors that affect homogeneity of the language. The use of Saba letters for many years in Ethiopia in the past time also affects the standardization of Wolaita language. Because of these and other related problems the activities to standardize Wolaita language was not successful. To reach a common use of language we need to develop a curriculum for a more coherent linguistic and terminological use (Pozzo, 754).

There are few local researchers which dealt with standardization of local languages. For example, Mekonen (2002) which describes Lexical Standardization in Oromo language and Temesgen (2001) as cited by Mekonen (2002) have also dealt with the Issues of Standardizing the Oromo Language. However, this research mostly emphasize on factors that affect standardization of local languages, especially on Wolaita language. Thus, it attempts to answer the following research questions.

### **1.2. Research Questions**

1. What are the factors that affect the homogeneity of Wolaita language?
2. What are attempts made by concerned stakeholders to standardize Wolaita language?
3. What are the importances of standardizing Wolaita language beyond the factors?
4. What are the possible ways of standardizing Wolaita language?

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The main objective of the study was to explore factors that affected the standardization of Wolaita language. The specific objectives were:

1. To investigate factors that affect homogeneity of Wolaita language.
2. To examine efforts made by concerned stakeholders to standardize Wolaita language.
3. To probe the importance of standardizing Wolaita language beyond the factors.
4. To indicate possible directions for standardizing Wolaita language.

## **1.4. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.4.1. Definition of language standardization**

According to Milroy (1999: 27) standardization hinders “linguistic change, but it doesn't prevent it totally.” In other words, standardization reduces language change and variation by proposing a standard form and creates uniformity of language use. Several scholars have discussed the meaning and the process of standardization. Standardization refers to the process by which a language is codified or one variety of a language becomes widely accepted throughout the speech community of that language as a supra dialectal norm (Ferguson, 1968: 31; Wardhough, 1992: 30).

To reveal from this standardization is treated as a process which helps to create a standard variety of a language. In line with this, Milroy (1999:173) has pointed out that “standardization is best treated as a process,” because of the fact that “all languages (except dead languages) vary and are in a constant state of change.”

Ferguson (1961) defines a standard as a single, widely accepted norm, used with only minor modifications or variation for all purposes of language use. He explicitly distinguishes between this general notion of "standard" and the degree of native literacy ("writing) in a speech community. The maximum degree of native literacy is manifested with in a speech community when original scientific research is published regularly, while at the top of the standardization scale we find communities in which there is minimal variation of form in both the spoken and the written language. Following Ferguson's definition, standardization should thus be regarded as the process of language unification in a given community, affecting written as well as oral communication. Ray (1963) is not as strict with respect to the possibility of a co-existence of varieties or different vernaculars within the speech community, alongside the "standard". The standard itself, however, is considered to be a language variety the use of which is unified in writing, grammar and the lexicon.

#### **1.4.2. The process of language standardization**

The process of standardization involves different steps. Haugen (1966: 252) as cited by Mekonen (2009) has identified four of them. They are norm selection, codification, elaboration and implementation. Likewise, standardization is expressed as the process of selection or determination, codification, elaboration, modernization or expansion, and implementation or acceptance (Crystal, 1987:364; Hudson, 1992: 32-33; Trudgill, 1999:117; Agar, 1996:22; Leitner, 1997:196).

Norm selection or determination refers to the decisions that have to be taken to select a language or varieties of language for particular purpose (cf. section 2:0).Codification deals with the process of acquiring publicly recognized and fixed forms (cf.section 3:0). Elaboration or expansion or modernization refers to the introduction and expansion of modern vocabulary items to develop the functional adequacy of a language (cf section 4:0). Lastly, implementation or acceptance is defined as the process of implementing the proposed standard form into practice.

The processes of standardization can be viewed from two approaches. They are descriptive and prescriptive. Descriptive refers to an approach which tries to describe the facts of linguistic usage whereas prescriptive refers to an approach which attempts to lay down rules of correctness as to how language should be used (Crystal 1987: 111and305) as cited bu Mekonen (2002). According to Tauli (1974:63) the descriptive approach includes giving persuasive information or advice to language users concerning the selection and the use of the

standard form or variety. From implementation point of view the prescriptive approach is more decisive than the descriptive in standardization. Thus, both approaches are considered in this study with more emphasis on prescriptive than on descriptive ones. For Stewart (1968:534) standardization is classified into formal and informal types. According to him formal standardization is a process through which a language is deliberately standardized whereas informal standardization is a process in which the speech community of a language unconsciously standardizes a language.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. The research design**

The core concentration of this study was to investigate factors that affect standardization of Wolaita Language. Thus, in order to get pertinent information, the researcher used descriptive research design. Because it was quite fitting to search various factors affecting the standardization of Wolaita Language and the nature of the research by itself also allowed using this approach.

### **2.2. Description of the research place**

The research was conducted in Wolaita Zone which is one of thirteen zones found in SNNPR, Ethiopia. It has twelve Woredas and three city administrations. Among these, two Woredas i.e Humbo, Sodo Zuriya and Selected sectors in Wolaita zone level administration offices and Wolaita Sodo University were purposively selected. The reason for selecting these Woredas, Wolaita Sodo University and zone level administration offices was the researchers' belief to obtain ample information from these settings.

According to the regional statistical abstract of 2007, the average population density of Wolaita is 385 per square kilometers. The major economic activities of Wolaita are mixed agriculture and trade. The Zonal city of Wolaita i.e Sodo is located 330kms from Addis Ababa through Hossana and 160kms from the Regional Capital Hawassa.

### **2.3. Research Population**

The research was conducted in the areas where local language/Wolaita language/ is used as a medium of instruction. The research was carried out in Wolaita Zone SNNPR, Ethiopia. The estimated sample populations for this study were two Woredas i.e Humbo and Sodo Zuriya. In addition to this, some selected zonal level administrative sectors and Wolaita Sodo university were involved in the research. From two Woredas 16 local elders were selected using purposive sampling. This was mainly because of helping researcher to find rich data. The offices selected from two Woredas were culture, tourism and government

communication affairs office as well as education offices and one wereda civil service office. Among zonal level administrative offices, Wolaita zone culture, tourism and government communication office, Wolaita zone education bureau and these were information rich areas and so that they helped researcher to find relevant data. From Wolaita Sodo University, only language department in social science faculty was selected deliberately so as to get rich data. From each Woredas, 2 culture and tourism office experts and 2 education office experts and two civil service experts were intentionally selected only from one wereda. Thus, the total number of the experts participated in research from two weredas office were 10. Thus, from the two Woredas totally 10 experts and 16 elders were selected and so that the total population from the weredas was 26(16+10). From the offices under the zonal administrative level 2 experts in each office were selected purposively to have rich data. Thus, the total populations were 6(2x3). Among Wolaita Sodo University, 4 scholars were selected purposively so as to get relevant information about Wolaita language standardization. Therefore, the total populations of the study were 36.

#### **2.4. Sample size and Sampling Technique**

Based on the research topics and objectives, the sample of the study was decided. The total population of the study was 36. In order to get this sample, the researcher used purposive sampling techniques for all population. The reason for using purposive sampling technique was to participate the research subjects who could provide rich information to the study. In each Woredas, 8 local elders by the guidance of proposed culture and tourism office experts were selected purposively for better information. Thus, totally 16(8x2) elders were selected. From each Woredas, 2 culture and tourism office experts and 2 education office experts and only from one wereda 2 civil service experts were purposively selected. Thus, the total number of the experts participated in research from two Woredas office were 10 (4+4+2). From the offices under the zonal administration level 2 experts in each office were selected using purposive sampling technique to have rich data. From Wolaita zone culture and tourism office 2, from Wolaita zone government communication office 2, from Wolaita zone education office 2 and the total number was 6. From Wolaita Sodo University, 4 scholars were selected using purposive sampling technique for pertinent data. Therefore, the total number of research sample was 36. All research participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques. This was because of having prosperous and relevant information from them.

#### **2.5. Tools for Data Collection**

Two instruments were used to collect data. These were interview and focus group discussion.

### **2.5.1. Interview**

As Patton (1990) pointed out, an interview allows researcher to extract inner thoughts and behaviors of the research participants that may not be directly examined. Thus, semi structure interview were selected for this study. This type of interview was chosen because it allows the researcher to encourage the interviewees to probe more ideas. An interview question was prepared and conducted to two woredas culture and tourism office experts, two woredas education office experts and Wolaita Sodo University language scholars, Wolaita zone education office, Wolaita zone culture and tourism office and Wolaita zone government communication affairs. The reason for participating these experts in interview was that their number was easily manageable. Moreover, their number in each Weredas and zone office was not sufficient for focus group discussion which needs 8-10 participants. The number of University scholars was also optimum for interview. In order to get relevant data and for the research subjects to understand easily, all the interview questions were translated from English language to Amharic language. Thus, the respondents were asked using Amharic and their response was also given by this language and then carefully translated to English. In line with this, all interview questions were conducted face to face with the participants. Based on the objective of the study, the researcher offered clear orientation for the respondents. The purpose of orientation was to initiate respondents to provide relevant information for the researcher. The orientation was about how to familiarize the research subjects with the interview questions. All the interview responses were recorded in note book.

### **2.5.2 Focus Group discussion**

The focus group is a qualitative method of assessment, encouraging a free flow of ideas. Focus group is also structured, guided discussions that have as their sole purpose are the gathering of data for scientific purposes (Merton et al, 1956). The reason for using focus group discussion was that it is important to gain more ideas from the respondents. It was also a good way to gather together people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest. All focus group discussion were prepared and translated to Wolaita language and Amharic language for easy understanding. The researcher participated local elders who were totally 16 in number from two Weredas in focus group discussion. Thus, focus group discussion was conducted in face to face contact with the research subjects. Before conducting it, the researcher provided clear orientation for the selected local elders

based on the purpose of the study using Wolaita language and Amharic language. The focus group discussion was also made by Wolaita language and Amharic language and then translated to English. The intention of the orientation was to familiarize the research subjects with the prepared focus group discussion points. All the responses provided by the local elders were carefully written in note book.

### **2.5.3 Data Analysis**

The data were carefully gathered using the two tools and analyzed qualitatively in the form of narration. This was because the data were gathered qualitatively by using interview and focus group discussion which need textual analysis. Therefore, the data gathered by using these two tools were analyzed qualitatively. During analysis priority were given to interview data then to focus group discussion. The data gathered using these tools were analyzed in the form of text. After that the result of data gathered by using the two tools were triangulated to provide final findings.

## **3. RESULTS and DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, the data gathered by using the two tools were presented, discussed and analyzed in the form of a text. In general, it included discussion of the results obtained from the research subjects through interview and discussion of information found from focus group discussion.

### **3.1 Factors that affect the homogeneity of Woliata language**

Lack of uniformity in the usage of vocabulary and the coinage of new words differently by various researchers are hindering the process of standardization and are affecting communication in local languages, particularly in Wolaita language negatively as noted by (Mekonen 2002). Thus, factors like past political conditios, attitude of the society ingeneral, dialectic variations, coinage of new words and others were thoroughly discussed and analyzed under this research questions. Thus, concerning various factors the data were gathered using both focus group discussion and interview are analyzed jointly to obtain final findings regarding factors that affect the standardization of Wolaita language. Under this reserah questions we could see various factors.

#### **3.1.1. Factors related to past political conditions**

Acording the result of focus discussion, almost all of the respondents participated from two weredas replied that the past time political conditions affected the standardization of Wolaita language. The respondents stressfully explained the time of the Absyniya government

expansion to unify Ethiopia. Related to their response, these past political conditions hampered the standardization of Wolaita language by preventing the native speakers not to speak and write in their indigenous language as well as defending them not to use their language in medium of instruction. According to the research subjects, it also affected the standardization of Wolaita language by oppressing the people who speak in their indigenous language. Thus, the people afraid for the repression of the political system at that time and started to practice the new language and culture as well as imitating the identity of others and losing their own native identity. Hence, in this ways it influenced the standardization of Wolaita language.

The data collected from the interview respondents from different weredas and Zone administration level sectors, wereda civil service sectors as well as Wolaita sodo university language scholars were not different from the result of focus group discussion. All of them said that the past political conditions affected the homogeneity of Wolaita Language. They also responded as it affected the standardization of Wolaita language in different ways. In this regard, all of them said the following.

*Without any doubt the past political condition affected the standardization of Wolaita language. It affected the the standardization of Wolaita language in not accepting the equality of the people, by not allowing the people to use its language in medium of instruction and preventing them not to use it in writing and speaking as well as not allowing people to use it as working language in different government sectors. people were forced to use Amharic language in their daily life as well as in medium of instruction and because of this the language was mixed and this still made many native speakers use blended Wolaita language rather than indigenous language( AP )*

As can be seen from the above interview, participants from different government sectors in weredas and zone level sectors and university scholars were agreed that the past political conditions affected the standardization of Wolaita language. They said that it affected the standardization of Wolaita language by not allowing the people to use their language in medium of instruction, preventing them not to speak and write in their own language and all these caused the native speakers to blend when speaking their native language with that of the dominant languages like Amharic.

Thus, based on the results from the focus group discussion and the interview, it is possible to assume that the past political conditions affected the standardization of Wolaita language in different ways like preventing native speakers from using their language in medium of instruction and in government sectors, preventing them not to write and speak in their own

language and forcing them to use only Amharic language in all places instead of Wolaita language and these finally resulted in blending the indigenous language with that of other languages like Amharic and affected standardization.

### 3.1.2. Factors Related to Attitude

As can be seen from the result of focus group discussion, all of the participants replied that the attitude of the society affected the standardization of Wolaita language. They replied that almost many of the native speakers do not believe that their language is equal with that of other languages. They do not value their language equally with that of other languages like Amharic and English. According to the respondents, many native speakers are proud of speaking in Amharic and English rather than Wolaita language. Even some of those who speak in Wolaita language do not use pure language. When speaking native language, they mix with other languages. The focus group result also proved that many of the native speakers, particularly in city areas do not pronounce words correctly. Native speakers do not properly understand that Wolaita language is their identity.

Similarly, the data gathered from the interview almost proved that the attitude of the society affected the standardization of Wolaita language. With regard to this, some of the respondents said as follows:

*Currently, the attitude of the people, especially the youths are more inclined to Amharic language and English language rather than their Wolaita language. They do not carefully understand that their language is their identity. However, since language is the identity of the people it is possible to change the attitude of the people (P1, P4, & P6)*

*With regard to language standardization the attitude of the people is very difficult. Because they think that speaking in Wolaita language takes them nowhere. They consider as Wolaita language is restricted only to the Wolaita zone. Thus, all concerned body should work on attitudes of the people. Many of them consider speaking in Wolaita language as backwardness and speaking in Amharic as civilization. They assume that speaking in Amharic and other languages as modernization (P5, P7 & P9)*

*Not entertaining the beneficiaries in using Wolaita language when they come to the office i.e. using Amharic language in many government sectors, writing and presenting reports in Amharic and leading forums in Amharic language were factors that affected the standardization of Wolaita language (P2, P3, P8 & P10)*

From the above interview data, we can understand that the attitudinal problem affects the standardization of the language in different ways. Many of the people are not confidently proud in their native language. They rush to develop and standardize others language rather than their own language. They also do not understand that their language is their identity.

People do not consider equal value for their language when compared with other dominant languages like Amharic. All government sectors in Wolaita zone do not use their native language in different offices. They use Amharic as official language of Wolaita zone.

Thus, based on the results from focus group discussions and the interviews, it is possible to conclude that the attitude of the people affected the standardization of Wolaita language because people are not proud of their language and their identity. Hence, they subjugated themselves to others language, identity and culture rather than their own. The use of indigenous language promotes culture and identity of the people (Alidou et al 2006).

### **3.1.3. Factors related to dialects and an necessary coinage of words**

A dialect is regarded as a geographical variety of a language, spoken in a certain area, and being different in some linguistic items from other geographical varieties of the same language. It also refers to a variation of a language that is characteristic of the users of that language. Hatch and Brown (1995:175) define coinage as a process when a new word is needed but there are no appropriate borrowed word and native word to express it.

The result of focus group discussion also indicated that using dialects in different areas of Wolaita zone, the unnecessary coinage of indigenous language and pidgin affected the standardization of Wolaita language. According to all participants, dialects affect language standardization as they seem normal language and societies use them in line with their areas. In relation to the data, to express the same thing people use various vocabularies and this affect the standardization of the language. The focus group discussion result also specified that using dialect affects standardization of the language since it is difficult to identify it from the normal language. As they responded the unnecessary coinage of Wolaita language causes the people to hesitate their indigenous language and practice newly invented word. Thus, the gap between the indigenous language and the practices of the the new coinage causes the unstandardization of Wolaita language.

Except two respondents, all the interview participants replied that using dialects, unnecessary coinage of words and pidgin affected the standardization of Wolaita language. The exceptional two tried to debate that Wolaita language coinages are important to develop the language and its standardization. However, their response is ingested by the majority number.

In relation to this five of the respondents answered the following:

*In different areas there are many words which have different dialect, but with the*

*Same meaning and this challenge the standardization of Wolaita language by making Speakers to use different words to express similar thing. All of Wolaita language Journalists, WLL department in Wolaita sodo universities, Arbaminch TTC, culture and tourism office as well as schools from primary up to secondary level were not using similar words to express one thing. Some individuals coin Wolaita language without identifying whether it is coined or not. This by itself confuses native speakers as the coined word is difficult for them to understand easily (P6, P7, P11, P12 & P13)*

As shown by the above reflections, one can see that coinage of Wolaita language and using dialects affected the standardization of Wolaita language. All of Wolaita Zone government sector offices, schools, colleges, universities and Fana broadcasting Corporation (FBC) are using different vocabularies and phrases to indicate similar things.

Therefore, based on data collected by focus group discussion and the interview, one can generalize that using dialects, unnecessary coinage of words affect the standardization of Wolaita language. For instance, Wolaita language dialects affect the standardization by making indigenous speakers use different vocabularies and phrases to indicate one similar thing or issue. In all weredas of Wolaita zone unnecessary coinages of the words also affect standardization as it confuses and hesitates the people. Besides, it is difficult and takes time for the speakers to practice and internalize the newly invented words and phrases. Thus, in this way it affects standardization of Wolaita language.

#### **3.1.4. Factors related to alphabetic shifts**

All of the focus group discussion participants replied that using Saba letters for many years and then shifting to Latin alphabets affected standardization of Wolaita language. They said that if permanent alphabet was used throughout Wolaita Zone beginning from many years ago, there was no shifting of letters from Saba to Latin. When people were using Saba letters, it was very difficult for them to write stressed and unstressed words freely. Because for both stressed and unstressed words, there was only single writing system and that system limited the free usage of words. According to the respondents, the gap between forgetting Saba letters used for many years and then shifting to practice the newly invented Latin alphabets affected the standardization of Wolaita language. But we do not deny that Latin is the best alphabet to write Wolaita language.

The data gathered from interview also assured that alphabetic shifting from Saba letter to Latin alphabet affected the standardization of Wolaita language. Pertaining to this they said as follows:

*Yes, it affects. Because there is a big gap between Latin alphabets and Saba letters. It is very difficult to practice Latin alphabet for those who spent many years in writing and*

*reading in Saba letters. Thus, since they have no sufficient knowledge of Latin alphabets they can not use it properly to standardize the language (P11, P15&P20)*

*Writing in Saba letters for many years and after that shifting to Latin alphabets caused a big problem in standardization of Wolaita language because many Wolaita native speakers are not interested to read and write in Latin alphabets and this by it self caused unstandardized Wolaita language writing and speaking system as well as many people are not volunteer to use Latin alphabe in general (P2, P3, P17&P19).*

One can understand two things from the above interview reflections: firstly since all Wolaita people spent many years in reading and writing in Saba letters and then shifting to Latin alphabets affected the standardization of Wolaita language. Secondly, many Wolaita language native speakers have no sufficient knowledge of Latin alphabets.

Therefore, based on above focus group discussion and interview results it possible to conclude that the shifting of alphabetic letters from Saba letters to Latin alphabets affected the standardization of Wolaita language.

### **3.1.5. Factors related to written manuscripts**

All participants in focus group discussion said that one of the main factors of standardizing Wolaita language is lack of sufficient written manuscripts. According to their response, for the past many years there was no written manuscript in Wolita language. Their data also disclosed that no research was conducted for the past many years regarding Wolaita language in general and specifically on standardization of Wolaita language and this also affected the standardization of Wolaita language. The respondents did not deny that some manuscripts and researches are written beginning from very near past years and currently.

The interview respondents also confirmed that shortage of written materials and shortage of conducting research caused problem on standardization of Wolaita language. In relation to this, they responded as follows:

*Lack of written manuscript and conductng research at the very begining affected the standardization of Wolaita language in many ways. Firstly, it was very difficult to get evidence about Wolaita language and its writing system. Secondly, it was challenging to get recogination from world wide about the language and thirdly it was difficult to internalize the language in the heart of the people fourthly it made difficult to use the language in medium of instruction and finally it became challenging to develop litratures and folklore (P2, P6, and P16 and P20).*

From the above interview reflection we can understand that lack of written materials and shortage of conducting research for the past many yerars affected the standardization of

Wolaita language. In relations to the data it became difficult to introduce the language in worldwide and in country and we can also see that it was very difficult to develop the literatures and folklores of Wolaita language.

Thus, based on the the results of focus group discussion and interview data we can assume that lack of written manuscripts and conducting research in Wolaita language affected the standardization of Wolaita language.

### **3.2 Efforts made by concerned stakeholders to standardize Wolaita language**

The results of focus group discussion implied that the stake holders from different government sectors of Wolaita Zone did not make successful effort to standardize Wolaita language. They simply tried their best but they did not achieve to standardize the language. Thus, according to the respondents all stake holders of Wolaita zone government sectors did not contribute effective effort to standardize Wolaita language. The respondents did not deny that some efforts made by some government sectors like Wolaita zone culture-tourism and government communication office, but according to them the effort was not effective and consistent. According to the data, their effort did not bring tangible reform in standardization of Wolaita language.

Many of the participants who engaged in interview also assured that stake holders in Wolaita Zone did not accomplish successful efforts to standardize Wolaita language. In contrast few of them said that the stake holders performed successful efforts to homogenize Wolaita Language. Thus, let us see some of their responses:

*Some stake holders in Wolaita zones tried to standardize Wolaita language. But the effort was not effective because even the office workers themselves are not using standardized Wolaita language. They blend their indigenous language with Amharic and other languages (P17, p18&p19).*

*All concerned bodies in different sectors of Wolaita Zone did not perform tangible effort to standardize Wolaita language. Those sectors like Wolaita zone culture, tourism and government communication office are even using Amharic as their office Language. They simply tried to mobilize people to standardize Wolaita language only during the cultural celebration of Wolaita people i.e Gifata and then they forget it. No one works up to the end to achieve the goal i.e standardization. (p10, p12, p13, p14 and p16).*

In contrary to this, two of the research subjects said the following:

*Wolaita Zone culture and tourism office performed successful efforts to standardize Wolaita language. For example, in 2017 Zone tourism office in collaboration with Fana Broad Casting Corporation FM 99.9 radio transmission centre and other intellectuals from Wolaita Sodo University and Wolaita zone education office organize a panel discussion forum regarding the standardization of Wolaita language. They also established language*

*symposium forum. Besides to these, using some selected technical terms, a technical dictionary was published (P5&P20).*

It is possible to sense three core points from the above four interview reflections. The first one is that the stake holders in Wolaita zone did not perform due effort standardize Wolaita language. The second one is that even few efforts made by stake holders were not effective. It does not bring any change in standardization of Wolaita language. The third one is that even the efforts they tried to standardize Wolaita language is simply seasonal, not regular. They do it in some seasons and forget after that. The last one is that Wolaita zone culture and tourism office to gather with other sectors accomplished tangible effort to standardize Wolaita language. From the above interview responses we can also see that majority of the respondents replied as no successful effort were made to standardize the language.

Therefore, based on the whole results of the above focus group discussion and interview one can conclude that many stake holders did not perform effective effort to standardize Wolaita language and this could be one of the factors that affect the standardization of Wolaita language. Therefore, to homogenize Wolaita language very practical, consistent and concrete effort should be made by all concerned bodies.

### **3.3. The importance of standardizing Wolaita language beyond the factors**

Majority of focus group discussion results proved that standardizing Wolaita language is very important. They said that standardizing Wolaita language helps Wolaita people in many ways. As to them it is essential for establishing standardized writing and speaking of Wolaita language as well as improving the literature of Wolaita language in general. Besides to these, they said that it is essential to develop the culture and identity of Wolaita people. According to the respondents, the language will get recognition in all over the world as well as the attitude of the people will improve.

The data found from the interview indicated that standardizing Wolaita language beyond the factors is significant in many ways. The participants mentioned many importances as follows:

*Standardizing Wolaita language exceeds the sovereignty of the people both nationally and internationally. It develops the identity, language and culture of Wolaita people. It also enhances the researching level of Wolaita language. Standardization helps for smooth communication. It also helps to avoid the blending of Wolaita language and enhances the confidences of the speakers. Standardization is essential to establish common rapport, unity and understanding among the indigenous speakers to develop the language. The speakers will also feel equality in their language in every where (AP).*

From the above interview responses, we can understand that standardizing Wolaita language has many importances. According to the data, it is essential to exceed the sovereignty of the people and it helps to develop the identity, culture and language of the indigenous people. According to the respondents, it helps to establish common understanding and rapport among the people to enhance the language and so on.

Thus, from the results of focus group discussion and interview data, it is possible to conclude that there are many importances of standardizing Wolaita language beyond the factors like developing language, culture and identity of the indigenous people.

### **3.4 Possible Ways of standardizing Wolaita language**

According to the data collected by using focus group discussion, there are many possible ways of standardizing Wolaita language. The respondents said that training is one of the best ways of standardizing Wolaita language. They replied that providing training in both Wolaita language skills and attitude plays a great role in standardizing Wolaita language. Training also helps them to speak and write in standardized Wolaita language. Another way of standardizing Wolaita language is establishing forums with the societies and other concerned stakeholders and then discussing around tables in how to standardize Wolaita language. In addition, selecting very useful vocabularies and publishing them in dictionaries was also found to be possible ways of standardizing Wolaita language. The respondents confirmed that naming Wolaita Language Day is very important to mobilize the people and create awareness among the society to emphasize on standardization of Wolaita language. In line with this, in that day all people are told to speak only in pure Wolaita language. Finally the focus group discussion participants told that there should be regular law to use Wolaita language as an administrative or working language in all government sectors of Wolaita zone.

The data gathered from the interview directly or indirectly supported the views raised by focus group discussion participants. Hence, the interview participants put their outlook as follows:

*To standardize Wolaita language, awareness creation forum should be established by concerned bodies to discuss with the people. Transmitting the message to the audiences about the importance of standardizing Wolaita language by using Fana radio air time is important to ensure language standardization. Publishing different brochures in Wolaita language and then dispatching them among the people is also a good way for language standardization. Furthermore, strengthening Wolaita language as a medium of*

*instruction in different primary, secondary schools, colleges and universities is essential for language standardization (P3, P6&P9).*

*All stake holders should work consistently for the language development and standardization. The problem is looking Wolaita language issue as a seasonal issue rather than working regularly. It is well if Wolaita zone government should make consistent efforts to mobilize the people in different churches and kebeles, in religious institutions, in different working sectors and all schools to standardize the language (P5, P7, P8&p10).*

*The scholars of Wolaita language in collaboration with other stakeholders should select some technical words and bring similar meaning for them and dispatch it to the people. It is a good way of introducing any new standard words through radio, newspaper and brochure to be accessible to the people. As to me avoiding blending when speaking and writing Wolaita language, considering the language as their identity and even providing court decisions in Wolaita language are the good ways of standardizing Wolaita language(P1,P2,P11,P13).*

*In order to standardize Wolaita language, we should fight new cultures and make all Wolaita people to thoroughly know their own indigenous culture, language and their identity. Besides to this, it is good to work on attitude of the people and change them. Establishing consistent language symposium forum and making discussion with the people about the standardization of the language is better ways to standardize (P12, P15, and P16).*

From the above interview reflections, we can understand six key points: firstly, awareness creation forum is important for language standardization. Secondly, transmitting the messages to the audiences using Fana radio air time is important for language standardization. Publishing different brochures and strengthening Wolaita language as a medium of instruction in different levels is also important for the homogeneity of the language. Thirdly, all stake holders should work consistently for the language development and standardization. Fourthly, Wolaita zone government should make consistent efforts to mobilize the people in different institutions like churches to homogenize the language. Fifthly, selecting some technical words and bringing similar meaning for them and dispatch it to the people is important for the language standardization. Six, providing court decisions in Wolaita language and fighting against new cultures and make all Wolaita people to thoroughly know their culture, language and their identity is a good ways of standardizing Wolaita people.

According to the above focus group discussion and interview results one can assume that establishing awareness creation forum, transmitting the messages to the audiences using Fana radio air time, publishing different brochures and strengthening Wolaita language as a medium of instruction in different school levels and working consistently to standardize and develop Wolaita language are some of the possible ways of standardizing Wolaita language.

### 3.5 Conclusions

Based on the above findings, the following conclusions were made.

- Based on the entire study, it is possible to generalize that Wolaita language was not standardized due to factors like past political influences. In addition, the efforts made by few stakeholders was not effective in general; it did nothing on language standardization.
- Past political influences, poor attitude of the indigenous people, dialectic variations and unnecessary coinage of words, alphabetic shifts and lack of written manuscripts and research are found to be some of the factors that affected the standardization of Wolaita language.
- The findings of the study disclosed that many stakeholders did not perform effective effort to standardize Wolaita language and this could be one of the factors that affected the standardization of Wolaita language.
- Exceeding the sovereignty of the people, helping to develop the identity, culture and language of the indigenous people, establishing common understanding and rapport among the people to enhance the language, establishing standardized writing and speaking system were found to be some of the importances of standardizing Wolaita language beyond the factors.
- Providing training to the society and other concerned bodies on how to standardize Wolaita language, establishing awareness creation forum with the people, selecting very useful vocabularies and publishing them in dictionaries, naming Language Day in entire Wolaita zone, launching regular laws to use Wolaita language as administrative language, transmitting the messages to the audiences using Fana radio air time, Publishing different brochures and

strengthening Wolaita language as a medium of instruction are found to be some of the possible ways of standardizing Wolaita language.

- Making consistent efforts to mobilize the people in different institutions like churches, selecting some technical words and bringing similar meaning for them and dispatching it to the people were also found to be the possible ways of standardizing Wolaita language.

### **3. 6 Recommendations**

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations were made.

- ❖ It was found that Wolaita language was not standardized. Thus, In order to standardize Wolaita language, the concerned stake holders like Wolaita zone culture, tourism and government communication offices, Wolaita zone education office, Wolaita Sodo university, Wolaita Sodo Fana radio broadcasting corporation, primary and secondary schools, the whole wereda's culture- tourism and government communication offices, all Wereda's education offices and the entire society should work consistently and in collaboration.
- ❖ Training should be provided to some selected individuals from the societies, to various government sector employees of Wolaita zone, to teachers of primary and secondary schools, to wereda education experts and to Fana broad casting corporation employees on how to use standardized Wolaita language.
- ❖ Wolaita zone government should establish forums with the societies and other concerned stakeholders and then discuss around tables with them in how to standardize Wolaita language. Furthermore, it is better establishing consistent language symposium forum to share various useful experiences about the standardization of Wolaita language. Selecting technical vocabularies and publishing them in dictionaries is also better way to standardize Wolaita language. Besides, using un recommended dialects and un necessary coinage of words should be avoided.
- ❖ Wolaita Zone government in collaboration with other stake holders should name Mother Tongue Day (Wolaita Language Day) to mobilize the people and create awareness among the society to emphasize on standardization of Wolaita language. In

addition, Wolaita Zone government should set regular law to use Wolaita language as an administrative or working language in all government sectors of Wolaita zone.

- ❖ Further research should be made on language standardization because it is believed that research is essential to solve problems related to language standardization

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AP: All participants

P1: Participant one

P2: Participant one

P3: Participant three

P4: Participant four

P5: Participant five

P6: Participant six

P7: Participant seven

P8: Participant eight

P9: Participant nine

P10: Participant ten

P11: participant eleven

P12: Participant twelve

P13: Participant thirteen

P14: participant fourteen

P15: Participant fifteen

P16: Participant sixteen

P17: Participant seventeen

P18: Participant eighteen

P19: Participan naghteen

P20: Participant twenty

SNNPR: Southern Nations and Nationalities and Peoples Republic

LP: Language Planning

LS: Language Standardization

### **Pendix-I**

#### **Interview questions for selected Woredas culture and tourism and education office experts and civil service office experts**

The main objective of this study is exploring factors that that affect the standardization of Wolaita language. In line with this, the purpose of this interview is to gather relevant data for the research project. Therefore, dear respondents, please help me in providing only the correct information.

#### **Thank you for your co-operation**

1. Would you tell me some of factors that affect the standardization of Wolaita Language?
2. How do you see the attitude of Wolaita society in standardizing Wolaita language?
3. Do you think that the past political condition affected standardization of Wolaita language? If yes, how?
4. Is there any attempts made by any stake holders to standardize Wolaita language? If yes what are the attempts?
5. In your opinion, what is the importance of standardizing Wolaita language?
6. Do you suggest any possible ways to standardize Wolaita language?
7. What would you know about the current activities of standardizing Wolaita language?
8. Is there any contribution made by your office to homogenize Wolaita language? If yes, what are they?
9. Is there any language symposium made regarding the standardization of Wolaita language? if yes, what it contributed to homogenize Wolaita language?
10. Do you think that the dialectic variation of Wolaita language impede its standardization? If so, how?

11. Do you think that after using Saba letters for many years and then turning to use Latin letters influence standardization of Wolaita language? If so, How?
12. Do you think that Wolaita language standardization promotes the identity of the people? If yes how?
13. How do you relate Wolaita language and its standardization?
14. Do you think that unstandardization of Wolaita language impeded the development of Wolaita culture? If yes, how?
15. Do you think that all Wolaita language speakers use the same vocabulary to specify one thing? If yes/no why?

## **Appendix-II**

### **Interview questions for Wolaita zone education office, Wolaita zone culture and tourism office, Wolaita zone government communication affairs and Wolaita Sodo University scholars.**

The main objective of this study is exploring factors that affect the standardization of Wolaita language. In line with this, the purpose of this interview is to gather relevant data for the research project. Therefore, dear respondents, please help me in providing only the correct information.

#### **Thank you for your co-operation**

1. Would you tell me some of the factors that affect the standardization of Wolaita Language?
2. How do you see the attitude of Wolaita society in standardizing Wolaita language?
3. Do you think that the past political condition affected standardization of Wolaita language? If yes, how?
4. Is there any attempts made by any stake holders to standardize Wolaita language? If yes what are the attempts?
5. In your opinion, what are the benefits of standardizing Wolaita language?
6. Do you suggest any possible ways to standardize Wolaita language?
7. What would you know about the current activities of standardizing Wolaita language?
8. Is there any contribution made by your office to homogenize Wolaita language? If yes, what are they?
9. Is there any language symposium made regarding the standardization of Wolaita language?if yes, what it contributed to homogenize Wolaita language?
10. Do you think that the dialectic variation of Wolaita language impede its standardization? If so, how?

11. Do you think that after using Saba letters for many years and then turning to use Latin letters influence standardization of Wolaita language? If so, How?
12. Do you think that Wolaita language standardization promotes the identity of the people? If yes how?
13. How do you relate Wolaita language and its standardization?
14. Do you think that unstandardization of Wolaita language impeded the development of Wolaita culture? If yes, how
15. Do you think that all Wolaita language speakers use the same vocabulary to specify one thing? If no why?

### **Apendix -III**

#### **Wolaita Soddo University, College of Social Science and Humanities**

#### **Focus group discussion points for purposively selected two Woredas elders**

The main objective of this study is exploring factors that affect the standardization of Wolaita language. In line with this, the purpose of focus group discussion is to gather relevant data for the research project. Therefore, dear respondents, please help me in providing only the correct information by choosing one of the answers

#### **Thank you for your co-operation**

1. Would you tell me factors that affect the standardization of Wolaita language?
2. In what ways does the past political condition affect the standardization of Wolaita Language?
3. What are attitudinal factors that affect the standardization of Wolaita language?
4. Is there any successful efforts made by concerned bodies like Wolaita zone culture and tourism office and other offices to standardize Wolaita language?
5. Could you mention the importances of standardizing Wolaita language?
6. In your opinion, what are the possible ways to standardize Wolaita language?
7. What activities are currently being done to standardize Wolaita Language?
8. Would you tell me offices that contributed successful effort to homogenize Wolaita language?
9. How do the dialectic variations of Wolaita language affect the standardization of it?
10. Do you think that the shift from Saba letter to Latin affect the standardization of Wolaita Language? How?

11. How does the standardization of Wolaita language promote the identity of the people?
12. How does unstandardization of Wolaita language impede the culture of the people?