MINORITY LANGUAGE EDUCATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF THE ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

by

Nega Worku Debele

MEd (Leeds University), BEd (Addis Abeba University),
BA (Asmara University)

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Education at the University of Adelaide, December 1995.
# Table of Contents

**Preliminary**
- Table of Contents ........................................ iv
- Abstract ................................................. vii
- Declaration ............................................... viii
- Acknowledgments ......................................... ix
- List of Tables ........................................... x
- List of Figures ........................................... xi
- List of Maps ............................................... xii
- List of Plates ............................................ xiii
- List of Appendices ........................................ xiv
- List of Abbreviations ...................................... xvii
  A Glossary of Amharic Terms Which Appear in the Text .......... xvii

**PART I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK and METHODOLOGY** — 1-24

Chapter 1. Introduction ............................................. 3
- 1.1 Theoretical Framework .................................... 5
  - 1.2 Application of Cultural Systems Analysis to Ethiopians in Australia ........................................ 13
  - 1.3 Research Methods ...................................... 16
  - 1.4 Profile of Respondents ................................ 22

**PART II: AN OVERVIEW OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION** — 25-143

Chapter 2. Minority Language and Education:
  - A Critical Review ........................................ 26-68
    - 2.1 Language Contact Situations .......................... 27
    - 2.2 Orientations in Minority Language Education:
      The Supporters' Perspective ............................. 40
      The Skeptics' Perspective .............................. 54
    - 2.4 Paradigms for Minority Language Education .......... 61

Chapter 3. Languages in Australia ..................................... 69-99
- 3.1 Australia's Linguistic History ........................... 70
- 3.2 Australian National Policy on Languages ................ 78
- 3.3 South Australian State Policy on Languages ............ 91
Chapter 4. Community Language Education:
The School Exemplars-----------------------------------100-143

   Introductory Note-----------------------------------101
   4.1 Vietnamese------------------------------------103
   4.2 Italian----------------------------------------118
   4.3 Arabic-----------------------------------------132
   4.4 Ethiopian (Amharic)-----------------------------139

PART III THE COMMUNITY BASED STUDY:
THE CASE of ETHIOPIAN-AUSTRALIANS-------------------144-179

Chapter 5. An Investigation of Ethiopians in
South Australia------------------------------------------145
   5.1 Brief History of Ethiopia: Migration and Settlement
   in Australia-----------------------------------------146
   5.2 Integration with the Australian Society----------163
   5.3 Classifying Respondents into Value Clusters----177

Chapter 6. The Ethiopian Ideological System-----------180-215
   6.1 The Question of identity------------------------181
   6.2 Idealistical and Realistic Attitudes-------------190
   6.3 Tendencies: Language Shift, Erosion, Revitalization
   and Maintenance-------------------------------------199
   6.4 Amharas’ Heritage and Tradition----------------203
   6.5 The Issue of Visibility--------------------------205
   6.6 Future Intended Residence------------------------209
   6.7 Attitudes to Various Aspects of Culture---------212

Chapter 7. The Ethiopian Religious System-----------216-237
   7.1 Systems of Religious Values----------------------217
   7.2 Religious Composition of Ethiopians in Ethiopia
   and South Australia----------------------------------227
   7.3 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church in South Australia--229
   7.4 Religion, Identity and Maintenance of
   Ethiopian Traditions---------------------------------232
Chapter 8. The Ethiopian Social System ———————————— 238-266
  8.1 Systems of Social Values ———————————— 239
  8.2 Marital Status and the Attraction of Ethiopian Family Life ———————————— 244
  8.3 Types of Marriages and Marriage Intentions ——— 250
  8.4 The Neighbourhood ———————————— 254
  8.5 Related Ethiopian Aspects of Culture ———— 261
  8.6 Other Social Organisations ———— 266

Chapter 9. The Ethiopian Linguistic System ———— 269-317
  9.1 Language Background of Respondents ———— 270
  9.2 Home Domain Usage of Amharic ———— 281
  9.3 Why Amharic School? ———— 287
  9.4 Language and Neighbourhood ———— 295
  9.5 Language Mastery ———— 296
  9.6 Analysis of Languages Transaction by Linguistic Inventory System ———— 301
  9.7 Australian Schools in the Eyes of Ethiopian Australians ———— 305

Chapter 10 Clusters of Cultural Values: A Typology ———— 318-343
  10.1 Examples of Respondents in the Value Clusters ———— 319
  10.2 Mobility of Individuals among Value Clusters ———— 331

PART IV CONCLUSIONS ———— 344-351

PART V REFERENCES AND APPENDICES ———— 352-426
Abstract

This thesis endeavoured to examine different views on language education which are pertinent to the teaching of minority languages in schools with special reference to the cultural adaptation of the Ethiopian community in South Australia.

The research methodology was based on multiple triangulation approach. The implementation of language policies as they relate to the teaching of community languages in the schools was studied by means of interviews and non-participant classroom observation techniques. The research participants consisted of school principals, both teachers and students of Languages Other Than English (LOTE) and English as a Second Language (ESL). The community language classes under investigation were Vietnamese and Italian, which were part of regular school programs, and Arabic and Amharic (Ethiopian) which were taught in the context of language education carried out in part-time ethnic schools. The investigation of the Amharic language school formed the nucleus for a holistic study of the Ethiopian community in South Australia.

The Ethiopian community, which represents one of the most recent immigrant groups, was studied by the adoption of humanistic sociological approach. Data were collected by using oral memoirs, in-depth interviews and participant observation techniques. The data from the Ethiopian community were analysed in terms of a theoretical framework which consisted of ideological, social, religious and linguistic systems of cultural values. This led to the identification of three value clusters (Ethiopian Monocultural, Bicultural and Anglo-Assimilado) that were used to classify the respondents on the basis of their value activation.

One of the main findings of the investigation on Ethiopian community is the ability of its members to retain the Ethiopian cultural values while showing a high degree of adaptation to the Australian way of living, mainly through their success in learning English. This tenacity of Ethiopian cultural retention is partly a reflection of the relative recency of the arrival of most of its members in South Australia. It was also found to rest in the historically grounded valuation and high esteem in which Ethiopians regard their culture and their desire to perpetuate it, while thoroughly integrating into the Australian society. The thesis throws light on the way Australian values were adopted and modified or, at times, rejected by the participants. The research has also identified individuals moving across Ethiopian/Australian ethnicity continuum either towards majority culture or towards Ethiopian culture. Among Ethiopian values Amharic language could be viewed as a core of culture not only for Amharas themselves but also for most members of other Ethiopian ethnic groups in South Australia.