

## Language Attitudes and Language Use among Linguistically Diverse Young Urban People in Sheger City

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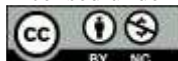
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**Abstract:** The diverse languages of the host community and the metropolitan city are often hostile and possibly influence one another's usage. This study was intended to explore if and how language attitudes could influence language usage among linguistically diverse first language (L1) users. The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design that involved a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches that included questionnaires, interviews, and secondary sources. Data were collected from 151 young urban students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS and descriptive tools, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The results revealed that the language attitudes of both Amharic and Afan Oromo L1 users were more convergent and less divergent psychologically; however, they were more divergent linguistically in formal domains. The neutrality towards Afan Oromo usage meant the participants were psychologically ambivalent and linguistically divergent, whereas the neutrality towards Amharic was psychologically ambivalent and linguistically convergent. Moreover, Amharic was primarily perceived as a language used for communication purposes, whereas Afan Oromo is a language of identity marker among respective L1 users. This phenomenon may be attributed to the limited usage of Afan Oromo as a lingua franca among second-language learners. Thus, the results have policy implications to reduce the divisiveness of languages and nurture positive attitudes toward one's and others' linguistic behavior. A bilingual language policy in major urban areas that may serve the needs of the communities surrounding those areas and a multilingual language policy at the country level were suggested.

**Keywords:** Convergent; Divergent; Diverse L1 users; Host community; Language attitudes; Language use

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## 1. Introduction

An attitude may have different definitions in different disciplines and contexts. It is a key term in the field of social psychology (McKenzie, 2010); which tends to be discipline-specific as its notion is not confined to linguistics or language studies (Baker, 1992). On the other hand, language ideology has recently become a central concept in sociology and sociolinguistics than in social psychology, where it is thought to help understand languages in particular multilingual contexts and more broadly, where there is language variation and language change (Ager, 2001; McKenzie, 2010). However, attitude is a more inclusive concept than perception which refers to general evaluations people have, and serves several vital functions, like directing choices and actions and giving them a sense of identity and belonging (Brinol, Petty and Stavraki, 2019).

A language attitude is a psychosocial language behavior, in which children and youths adopt language/s from their families and peers as they grow up (Holmes and Wilson, 2022). Moreover, the authors thought that sometimes we may perceive according to our ideologies. Though our perceptions are not always objective or neutral, they can be influenced by our ideologies. However, the concept of language attitude objectively refers to the ways in which individuals and social groups perceive and judge various linguistic phenomena, including language varieties, dialects, accents, and both their native and foreign languages (Schoel *et al.*, 2013) based on any reasons or standards.

Language attitude is strongly linked to language use and linguistic identity (Sukamto, Nicolau, Rani and Sugiyanta, 2021). It affects how individuals choose to use a language or variety in various contexts and is closely tied to lingo-cultural identity (Heyyi and Mekonnen, 2023). Hereafter, to reduce the ambiguity of using the three words: attitudes, perceptions and ideologies in this work, the researchers preferred to use 'language attitudes' as an umbrella to describe both psychological and ideological linguistic behavior among linguistically and culturally diverse groups.

Language attitudes may have a significant impact on the choice of language, which in turn affects how languages are used, ultimately shaping one's lingo-cultural identity. Even though the patterns of language use and attitudes toward languages are two distinct dimensions, language use can influence the development of group identity and the group identity significantly impacts the patterns of language attitudes and usage within that group (Fishman, 1999). Furthermore, language attitudes are complex and highly sensitive to social and political policy changes, and they can have a significant impact in areas, such as education (Edwards, 2017).

The study of language attitudes sheds light on how people behave toward others, affecting not only actual language use but also the principles of standards and ideologies (Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2021) towards a given language. However, Fishman (1999) argued that language attitude is not the same as behavior because we cannot observe it like other behaviors that can be performed and easily measured. On the other hand, Giles, Gasiorek and Soliz (2016) considered language behavior in terms of divergent and convergent, accommodative, non-accommodative, avoidant and more principles. Because attitudes have also been defined to include three main components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Garrett, 2010), it has been shown that they are part of linguistic behavior and can also serve as a factor influencing other related linguistic behaviors. Baker (1992) also emphasized the importance of attitudes in studying minority and majority languages.

Linguistic groups and individuals may have convergent or divergent attitudes toward their own and other people's language use. Similarly, communication, language use, and language preferences can be linguistically convergent but psychologically divergent, or both psychologically and linguistically divergent (Giles *et al.*, 2016). To explore linguistic behavior that either accommodates or avoids certain situations (Hernandez, 2014), the communication accommodation theory (CAT) is a predictive multidisciplinary construct that describes how individuals and groups adjust their language use and preferences in various contexts. Language attitudes could be well defined by explicit (direct) and implicit (matched-guise) methods (Garrett, 2010; Bichani, 2015). In addition, convergent (and divergent) behaviors are the focus of the CAT to examine the adaptations and describe language use,

language attitudes, and perceptions based on the notions of accommodative and non-accommodative linguistic behaviors.

The majority of people in the world are bilingual or multilingual, and as a result, they frequently have the choice of which language to speak, when and how to speak it, and have *strong opinions* about such variations (Giles *et al.*, 2016). This does not imply that monolinguals have definitely fewer opinions of both their language and those of others than bi/multilingual. As a result, in multilingual environments, there has undoubtedly been convergence and divergence of linguistic behavior practices among diverse linguistic groups, particularly among youths. The code used by speakers reflects how they want others to perceive them and others (Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2021). Also, the *theory of othering*, introduced by (Spivak, 1985: 2) explores the concept of "*self (Europe) and its others*," highlighting the process of stigmatizing and segregating those who are considered different from the majority, which has recently been flourishing and expanding in modern society's urban areas (Powell and Menendian, 2016) where complex lingo-cultural diversity is increasing. Hence, CAT and othering theory have been used to define language use and language attitudes and to manage divergent linguistic groups in urban areas.

Moreover, as insiders, the researchers have observed differences in language attitudes and language use choices between Finfinne and the host/indigenous community residing in the Sheger city. Also, the researchers' academic background and interests in sociolinguistics, sociology, and language education enabled them to initiate this study with the inspiration to contribute to the field of sociolinguistics in general and to explore language attitudes among urban youths. Furthermore, scholars continue to debate whether negative and or positive attitudes can truly influence individuals' and linguistic groups' actual language use choices.

Within the study area, significant differences in language use in formal domains have been observed between the Afan Oromo and Amharic linguistic groups (Heyyi and Mekonnen, 2023). On the other hand, this study was inspired by the desire to learn more about the relationship between language attitudes and patterns of language use choices among various/diverse linguistic groups in multilingual urban areas, particularly in the Sheger city. There is no doubt that the target groups in the study area were not included in such a comparative study.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate how young urban students perceive the use of their own and other languages, as well as whether or not these attitudes can affect how Afan Oromo and Amharic are used as first languages.

## **2. Research Methods**

### **2.1. The Study Area**

The establishment of the Oromia Special Zone Surrounding Finfinne (OSZSF) first took place in 2008 (Figure 1), incorporating and integrating former Shoa zones that surrounded Finfinne city (ORSC, [Oromia Regional State Constitution], 2008). The names 'Finfinne' and 'Shaggar' (Sheger) were originally used by the hosting community before the city was officially named 'Addis Ababa' in 1886 by Menelek II and Queen Taitu (Pankhurst, 1961; Tufa, 2008). Furthermore, the city played a pivotal role in centralizing the state in Finfinne and establishing links with the provinces (Yates, 2020).

The Finfinne city and its neighboring suburbs may serve as a reflection of collective identity, which encompasses linguistic and cultural heritage and accommodates various and divergent interests. In recent times, the Finfinne sub-province has emerged as a hub of socioeconomic and political potential. However, it has also turned into a primary area for conflicts that stem from the contrasting interests in linguistic and cultural identity between the national capital and the indigenous community. The intricate nature of this dynamic can be comprehended by examining the internal, external, and expanding scopes of a geo-linguistic circle (Figure 1) with centripetal and centrifugal lingo-cultural identity forces.

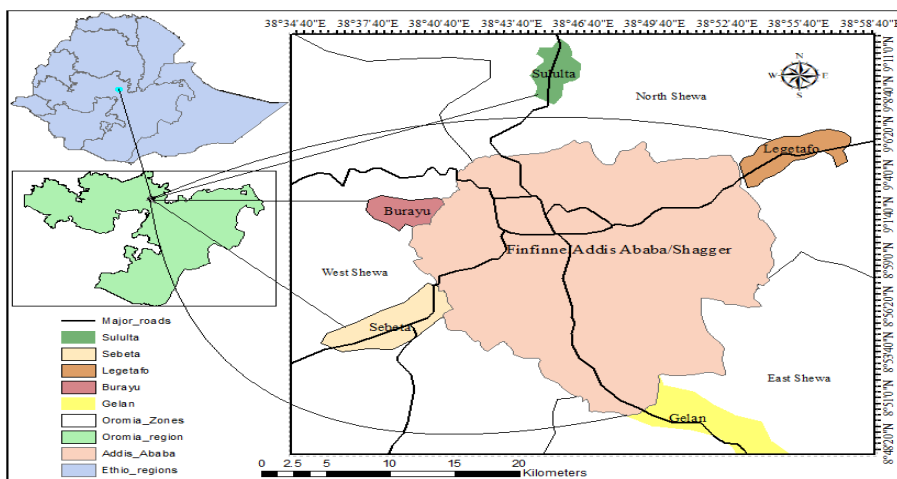


Figure 1: Finfinne and its catchment areas  
 Source: The Ethio-GIS-2018, accessed on March 2, 2022

One can identify circles of Amharic predominance starting from the core of Finfinne and extending outward to encompass Oromia, Somali, Tigray, Afar, and Southern regions. This expansion could potentially create dualist positions among individuals and linguistic groups with diverse first-language backgrounds; if it could not be friendly managed. Moreover, the linguistic divergences between urban and rural communities may have a greater impact on the language attitudes, usages, and preferences within the study area and beyond among linguistically varied groups.

**2.2. Research Design and Approach**

In this study, a descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted, which involved more quantitative and less qualitative design elements. The sample population consisted of young urban students, selected from 14 preparatory schools located in Burayu, Gelan, Legatefo, Sebeta, and Sululta sub-cities and/or towns. The total population of the sample was 3,731, which can be considered moderate in size and finite.

The determination of sample size was carried out using a step-by-step approach (Cochran, 1977; SCMI [Statistics Canada, Minister of Industry], 2010; Creswell, 2018), employing a precise statistical formula designed for finite populations. To ensure sufficient accuracy, an estimate with a margin of error of ±.10 at a 90% precision level and 95% confidence interval is considered appropriate for the entire area, encompassing populations of different sizes, including finite, moderate, and small-sized populations, when the response rate exceeds 65%. It is worth noting that different areas can have different levels of precision. For example, a national survey requires a ±3% margin of error, provincial estimates require ±5%, and sub-provincial estimates require a margin of error of ±10% (SCMI, 2010: 171–164). In this particular case, strata were generated among the sub-provincial areas of five sub-cities surrounding Finfinne, with a ±10% margin of error.

When dealing with sociolinguistic data, it is typically more consistent, thereby requiring a smaller sample size when compared to other types of surveys and social science variables (Milroy and Gordon, 2008). Nevertheless, in this study, the sample size was determined by taking into account an initial estimate of the proportion P = 0.5 and an expected response rate (R) of 65% when z=1.96. Consequently, the final sample size 'n' was calculated using the stratified formula,

$$n = \frac{z^2 p (1-p)}{R e^2}$$

and the outcome reflects a conventional sample size, ensuring accuracy and reliability (see Heyyi and Mekonnen, 2023). Therefore, the required sample size for this study was determined to be n = 148+3, which was distributed proportionally across the five towns and selected randomly within each

stratum. The three participants who took part in the research were volunteers, and it is worth noting that statisticians sometimes recommend including additional participants, typically around 2% of the total sample size. In this case, 2% of the initial sample size was added on 148 and  $n= 151$ . Despite the initial expectation of a 65% response rate, the recorded response rate turned out to be 100%. Furthermore, the overall Cronbach's Alpha for internal consistency reliability of the language attitude survey questionnaire was .86, based on 9 items and a total sample size of 151.

Moreover, there are three primary methods that researchers have employed to gather data on attitudes toward language/s (Gratte, 2010): societal treatment, direct measures, and indirect measures. Sociolinguists can infer attitudes by observing how language is used in the public domain and gathering government educational documents that provide hints using societal treatment techniques (Holmes and Wilson, 2022). A direct measure is undertaken through questionnaires and interviews while indirect methods refer to the matched-guise technique (Garret, 2010). Since the sample size for this survey was relatively large, the researcher decided to use mainly the direct technique to collect the data. However, some questions were designed to measure both implicit and explicit attitudes; though the explicit type of attitudes was intended to be investigated.

Then, the primary data were randomly and proportionally collected from the participants through questionnaires and interviews. Besides, secondary sources were consulted for secondary data. Thus, the quantitative data were analyzed and compared using SPSS and descriptive tools like charts and Likert measures. Qualitative data were also thematically analyzed by identifying common recurring themes and topics.

### 3. Results

In this section, the collected data of explicit and implicit attitudes through the interests of the participants, and their language preferences using the direct method in terms of sociolinguistic profiles were presented and discussed. The majority of people in the world speak two or more languages, which has led to divergent or convergent linguistic behavior practices among diverse linguistic groups. Language attitudes and patterns of language use choice were defined using the communication accommodation theory and the othering theory, as highlighted in the discussion section.

#### 3.1. Interests to Improve Language Proficiency

The survey of participants' interests in improving proficiency in particular languages could measure both implicit and explicit language attitudes. Hence, participants' attitudes towards diverse language usages were measured using the interests presented in Figure 2.

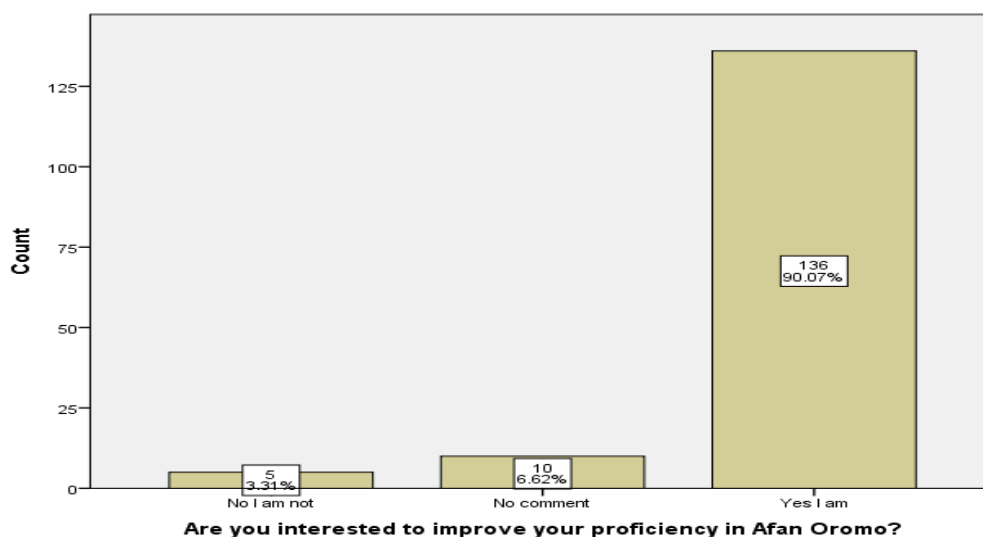


Figure 2: Interests to improve proficiency in Afan Oromo

As Figure 2 indicated, about 90.07% of the participants were interested to improve their proficiency in Afan Oromo, whereas about 6.62% responded that they had no comment. About 3.31% suggested that they were not interested to improve their proficiency in Afan Oromo.

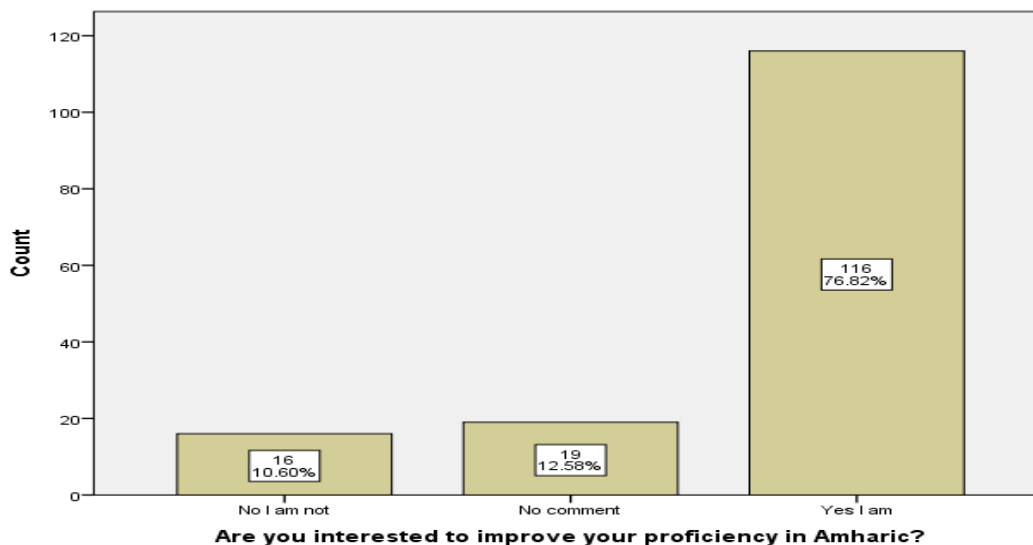


Figure 3: Interests to improve proficiency in Amharic

Similarly, about 76.82% of the participants were interested in improving their proficiency in Amharic. About 12.58% said they had no comment and 10.60% replied that they were not interested in improving their proficiency in Amharic (Figure 3).

Furthermore, according to a quantitative survey and interview data, 98.01% of the participants had an interest in improving their proficiency in English. Additionally, English was preferred over local languages though its usage was lower than Amharic but equivalent to Afan Oromo. Together, this also may indicate that English was the most neutral and important language among the participants that could be considered by sociolinguists and language policy designers.

Similarly, it was observed that the language of choice in private schools was Amharic, while Afan Oromo was the predominant language in state/public schools and not used in private school environments. However, Amharic was sometimes used among certain groups of students and teachers in state/public schools.

### 3.2. Language Preferences

The participants' language preference data revealed that Amharic held the top position (50.99%), closely followed by Afan Oromo (39.07%). A small percentage of participants (4.64%) preferred both Afan Oromo and Amharic, while 3.31% favored Amharic and Afan Oromo. Lastly, a minority (1.99%) of participants opted for other languages. These language preferences were explored among the participants in Finfinne and Sheger, as illustrated in Figure 4. These further could imply that negative language attitudes and controversial social relationships have been observed among the speakers of Afan Oromo and Amharic who could not prefer both languages but their own respective L1s in the same urban areas.

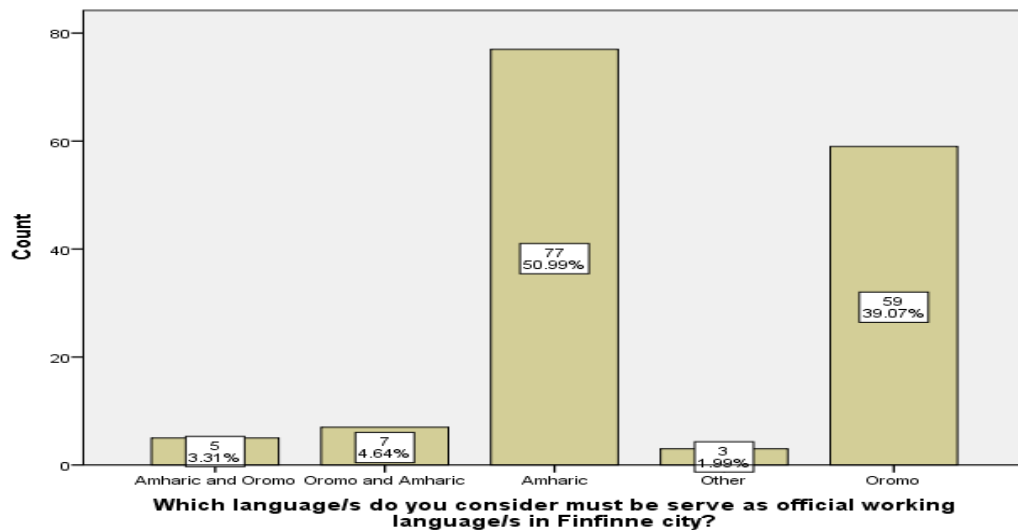


Figure 4: Language choice/preference in Finfinne

Under this section, this qualitative survey was attempting to support the quantitative survey. As part of the survey, the participants were instructed to outline and elaborate on any situations where they felt discomfort while using their mother tongues. Furthermore, they were asked to identify their language of choice and explain the reasons behind its potential usefulness in their future endeavors. Hence, individuals who were native speakers of Afan Oromo and Amharic have reported occasional discomfort when communicating in their mother tongues, particularly during periods of political instability. However, they have consistently demonstrated a stronger affinity towards their own respective L1s. Moreover, Afan Oromo and Amharic L1 users provided the reasons behind their language preferences. They pointed out that Afan Oromo was integral to their sense of identity, while Amharic served as a language of extensive communication for L1s users, respectively.

### 3.3. Language Attitudes

As the survey data indicate, among a total of 151 participants four (1 female and 3 males) were feeling insecure; when they were hearing someone speaking Afan Oromo. However, no one was feeling insecure when someone was speaking Amharic. 71 participants (about n=35 females and n=36 males) liked it when they heard someone speaking either Afan Oromo or Amharic. Nevertheless, about 7 participants (2 females and 5 males) disliked when they were hearing someone speaking Amharic.

Moreover, the language attitudes of the participants may be influenced by their parents' linguistic profile backgrounds. Thus, parents like fathers', mothers', and participants' first languages and their attitudes towards their languages and others were identified in Table 1.

Table 1. Linguistic profiles vs. language attitudes

Mother's L1	Father's L1	Participant's L1		Afan Oromo	Amharic	English	Gurage cluster	Tigrigna	Other		
Amharic	Amharic	Amharic; n=31	M	3.48	3.68	3.52	3.35	3.29	3.21		
		Afan Oromo; n=1	M	4.00	2.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	2.00		
		Others; n=2	M	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.03	3.00		
	Afan Oromo	Amharic; n=12	M	3.42	3.83	3.75	3.36	3.43	3.20		
		Afan Oromo; n=2	M	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.50		
		Others; n=1	M	1.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	1.00	1.00		
		Gurage cluster	M	3.00	3.67	3.33	3.33	3.00	3.00		
	Afan Oromo	Amharic	Amharic; n=1	M	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	
			Others; n=1	M	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.17	3.06	3.00	
		Afan Oromo	Amharic; n=9	M	3.33	3.74	3.44	3.00	2.89	3.15	
Afan Oromo; n=4			M	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50		
Gurage cluster		Afan Oromo	Amharic; n=7	M	3.86	3.71	3.86	3.14	3.14	3.17	
			Afan Oromo; n=66	M	3.89	3.52	3.89	3.03	2.85	3.18	
		Gurage cluster	Amharic; n=1	M	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	
			Gurage cluster; n=1	M	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.06	3.17	
		Tigrigna	Amharic	Amharic; n=1	M	3.67	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00
				Gurage cluster	M	3.33	4.00	3.67	3.67	3.33	3.33
Gurage cluster	Amharic; n=1		M	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00		
	Tigrigna; n=2		M	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.08	3.50	3.09		
Total	Amharic; n=69		M	3.44	3.72	3.58	3.29	3.23	3.18		
	Afan Oromo; n=74		M	3.91	3.54	3.90	3.07	2.92	3.20		
	Gurage cluster; n=1		M	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.06	3.17		
	Tigrigna; n=2		M	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.08	3.50	3.09		
Total	Others; n=5	M	3.40	3.80	4.00	2.67	2.62	2.63			
	Total	M	3.67	3.63	3.75	3.17	3.06	3.17			
		N	151	151	151	151	151	151			
		SD	.634	.598	.553	.640	.781	.650			

Note: 4=I like it; 3=neutral; 2=I dislike it; 1= I feel insecure; n= number of participants

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the participants' attitudes also varied depending on the mother tongue of their parents. When the parents' first language (L1) was Amharic, the participants displayed relatively positive attitudes towards Amharic, Afan Oromo, and other languages (n=31). However, if the participants' mothers' L1 was Amharic, their fathers' L1 was Afan Oromo, and their own L1 was Amharic, the participants showed a relatively more positive attitude towards Amharic and relatively less positive attitude towards Afan Oromo (n=12) compared to participants from Amharic monolingual families (n=31). Similarly, participants from Afan Oromo monolingual families (n=66) exhibited more positive attitudes towards Amharic than participants from Amharic monolingual families showed towards Afan Oromo. In general, monolingual participants tend to exhibit higher levels of positivity compared to participants who have parents with multiple languages.

Nevertheless, the interview data from key informants of Amharic L1 users indicated; that the language is perceived as merely a language of wide communication to keep unity, while Afan Oromo symbolizes identity and is used to signify identity by those who speak it in the study area (see also Heyyi and Mekonnen, 2023). This could be a natural phenomenon when L2 speakers and the number of L2 learners are not significant in the formal language learning domain like private schools. Hence,



language may be used to distinguish between diverse linguistic groups or individuals rather than to maintain unity among diversity if it is not learned and used as a lingua franca.

### 3.4. Language Attitudes and Code Use-choices

Figures 5 and 6 presented the nexus between the language attitudes of the participants towards the particular language and their daily uses or code switches to it.

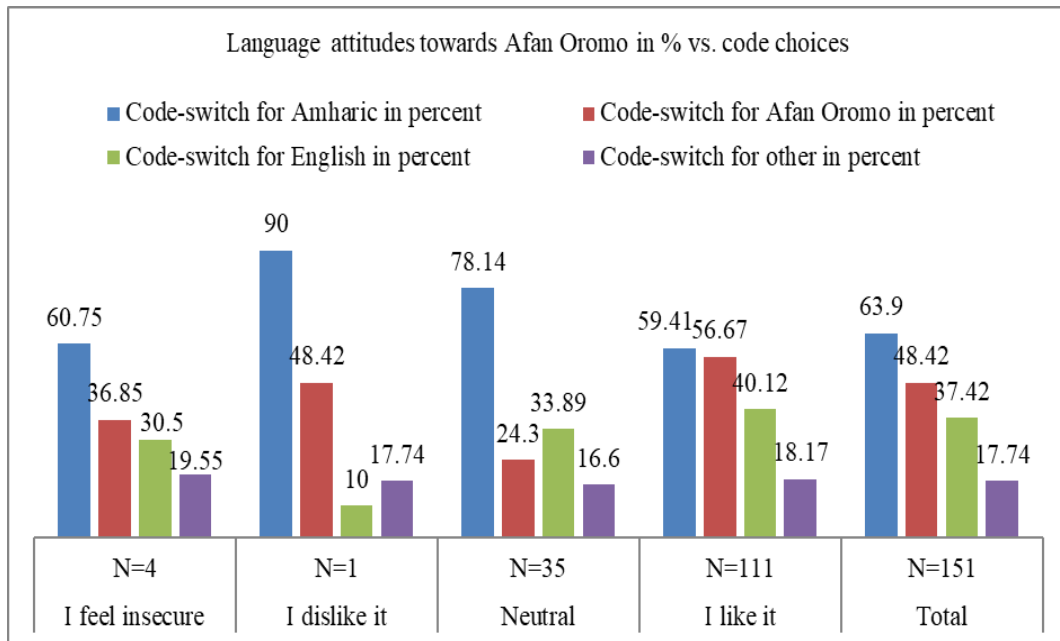


Figure 5: Attitudes towards Afan Oromo and its usages

Note: N=number of the participants

As the data in Figure 5 indicated, about n=4 participants felt insecure when someone was speaking Afan Oromo and they switched more to Amharic (60.75%) and less to Afan Oromo (36.85%). The neutrality towards Afan Oromo usage was psychologically ambivalent and linguistically divergent. However, those who had a positive attitude towards Afan Oromo were relatively using both Afan Oromo and Amharic equivalently about (59.41%) and (56.67%), respectively. Here the participants were both psychologically and linguistically convergent.

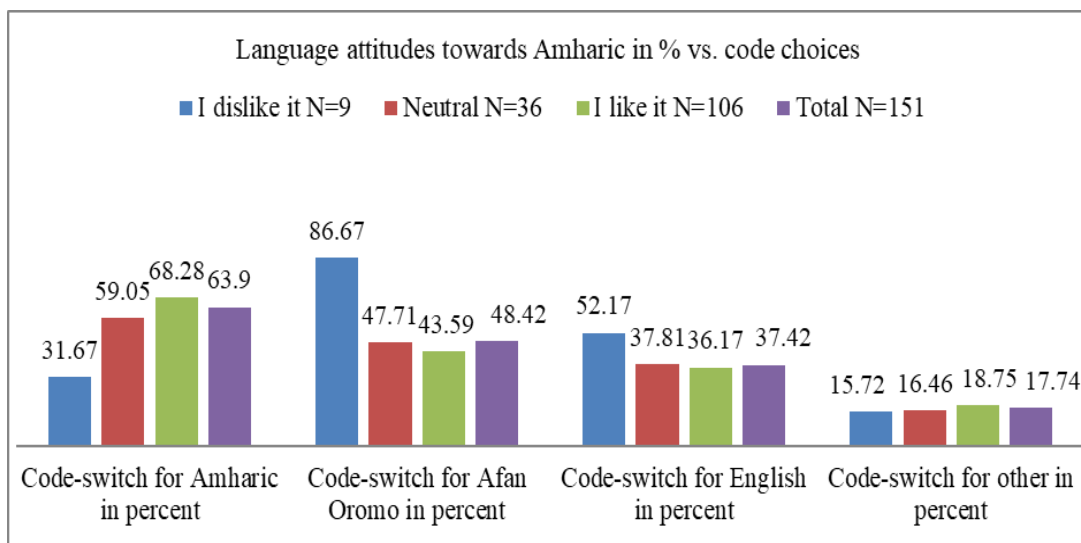


Figure 6: Attitudes towards Amharic and its usages

Note: N=number of the participants

In Figure 6, there was not anyone who felt insecure when hearing someone speaking Amharic. Nevertheless, about 9 participants disliked it when they heard Amharic spoken by someone and they switched less to Amharic (31.67%) and more to Afan Oromo (86.67%). They were both psychologically and linguistically divergent. Hence, negative attitudes toward a particular language decrease the frequency of language use; while a positive attitude increases it. Again the likeness and neutrality towards Amharic were impacting the usage of Afan Oromo and supporting the use of Amharic. The neutrality towards Amharic could be defined as the 36 participants were psychologically ambivalent and linguistically convergent. However, neutrality towards Afan Oromo did not lead to the usage of the language significantly (see Table 1) and the participants were psychologically ambivalent and linguistically divergent.

Moreover, school corridors, entrances, and playgrounds were surveyed twice in each of the 14 schools, revealing a significant *preference* for Amharic, especially in private schools (Heyyi and Mekonnen, 2023). Undoubtedly, as different linguistic groups *converge* in a common space or communication hub within the research area, there is a noticeable usage of Amharic as a lingua franca, accompanied by a decline in the usage of Afan Oromo and other Ethiopian languages.

#### 4. Discussions

Attitudinal studies are important for researchers and policymakers as they allow them to detect several lingo-cultural preferences and attitudes in the multilingual context (Perez-Milans and Tollefson, 2018). Exploring the interests of diverse linguistic groups to improve language proficiency in particular languages is reasonably an implicit attitude practice. Also, the direct experiences of the opinions and feelings that the participants had toward other language speakers have been explored in Table 1.

Language choices and preferences in Finfinne and Sheger Cities were identified among the participants based on their respective linguistic profiles. Accordingly, language preferences between Afan Oromo and Amharic L1 users were diverging among themselves rather than choosing both languages together in the same urban areas (Figure 4). However, even though there were some differences in attitudes among Afan Oromo and Amharic L1 users towards others' language usage; a large number of the participants relatively had positive attitudes towards it and even wanted to learn the language to use where and when it is needed (Figures 2 and 3).

Nevertheless, the two L1 users were divergent, when they chose language to use in formal domains. Thus, the linguistic behaviors of both Amharic and Afan Oromo L1 users were more convergent and less divergent psychologically, but more divergent linguistically. Yet, reactions to interviews from the participants of Amharic L1 users indicated that it was perceived as a language of wide communication to preserve unity, whereas Afan Oromo usage was perceived as an identity marker; for their respective L1 users as the Danish language was used for identification, whereas German was used for content communication (Thomas, 2007).

Similarly, in the study conducted by Batibo (2005), it was confirmed that language can serve as a unifying force, but it can also be used to create divisions. This is evident in instances where certain language groups within a nation aspire to become independent regions or countries from the mainstream, such as Quebec in Canada and Bangladesh in India (Spolsky, 2019). On the other hand, in urban areas of Ethiopia, if languages were not being acquired by second language learners, they would continue as divisive languages, leading to a naturally fragmented social environment (see also Heyyi and Mekonnen, 2023).

Mainly, patterns of language choices and attitudes of the participants were inversely related to the distance between divergent Afan Oromo and Amharic L1 users. This may help to extract the principle, that even though the group may have positive attitudes, and yet have distance between their distinctive languages, however; their language use choices and preferences were sometimes synchronized with *positiveness and weak ties* among the linguistic groups (Fishman, 1999; Holmes

and Wilson, 2022). This study also indicated that Amharic L1 users were psychologically convergent but *linguistically* divergent towards Afan Oromo, whereas Afan Oromo L1 users were *both psychologically and linguistically* convergent towards Amharic. This could be defined by the linguistic accommodative and non-accommodative behaviors of the participants among different ethnolinguistic social groups from the view of the communication accommodation theory (Giles *et al.*, (2016). This could further reveal the existence of *othering practices and attitudes* (Powell and Menendian, 2016); among the participants with peripheral and urban interests as they sometimes feel uncomfortable using their L1s in both Finfinne and Sheger.

Furthermore, the data in Figures 5 and 6 and Table 1 indicated that the neutral attitudes towards Afan Oromo usage were psychologically ambivalent and linguistically divergent; whereas the neutrality towards Amharic was psychologically ambivalent and linguistically convergent.

The study of language attitudes and language use within or among groups of speakers could testify to irregularities that exist (Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2021) in sociolinguistic profiles. For instance, when the participants shifted to Amharic from Afan Oromo monolingual parents, they had *better attitudes towards* both Afan Oromo and Amharic. In contrast, when the fathers and mothers of the participants were linguistically diverse; their children would be *psychologically divergent* toward their own and others' languages (Giles *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, the attitudes of the participants were more consistent and positive between them if the mothers' and fathers' L1 users were analogous. Hence, it can be concluded that when the families of L1 users were *linguistically diverse*, the attitudes of their children tended to have a negative attitude; whereas children of families with the same L1 users have *positive attitudes* towards their own and one's language.

In addition, English was a neutral language that dissociated from issues of ethnicity in Singapore (Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2021). Similarly, Rampton (2017) argued that an ethnically mixed youth, class, and neighborhood community helps to *overcome race stratification* and contributes to *a new sense of unity* as the intricate processes of language sharing and exchange are practiced among diverse groups. However, the observation of Benti (2002), cited in David Shinn, the former USA ambassador to Ethiopia, confirmed that challenges of the government of Ethiopia have been rising from mixed ethnolinguistic stocks and divergent urban interests in Finfinne and its surroundings. These urban lingo-cultural interests are different from those of rural people as the two-faced divergent Amharic-based and Afan Oromo-based identities were formed (Pausewang, 2005) in urban and rural provinces, respectively.

However, the research suggested that despite various influential factors like urbanization and its expansion attempting to disconnect language from ethnicity and identity, they remain intertwined (Heyyi and Mekonnen, 2023) and languages may serve as an identity marker. Even the languages of minorities could be maintained based on ethnolinguistic groups. The process that involves diverse language contacts in urban areas gradually leads to language change/shift, conflicts, divergences, and the emergence of dual positions towards language attitudes and usages among linguistically and culturally divergent groups from the indigenous and metropolitan perspectives. The absence of an incredibly integrated bilingual urban language policy allows these dynamics to persist.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Almost all the participants from Afan Oromo and Amharic L1 users confirmed that they had positive attitudes towards their own and one's language to improve proficiency in it. However, it was explored that in the formal language use/learning domain, their linguistic behavior was divergent between the two L1 users; which could lead to argumentative language attitudes and ambivalent perceptions towards its usage. Thus, the linguistic attitudes of both Afan Oromo and Amharic L1 users were mainly psychologically convergent, however; linguistically divergent in the formal language use domains. Also, the neutrality towards Afan Oromo usage meant the participants were psychologically ambivalent and linguistically divergent; whereas the neutrality towards Amharic was psychologically ambivalent and linguistically convergent.

Generally, in the study area, Amharic was commonly considered as a language used for communication purposes, while Afan Oromo served for both communication purposes and reflected identity. English, on the other hand, was seen as a neutral language by the youth. Besides, it is confirmed that English is their common interest. Similarly, higher interests in improving language proficiency in both Afan Oromo and Amharic were also positive. These all inferred a policy implication that could maintain incredible bonds of trust between the psychologically conformed but linguistically varied groups. Bilingual urban language policy can foster linguistic inclusivity among the host and metropolitan communities. This could reduce the level of growing symmetry and nurture greater opportunities for integration and accommodation both within the study area and beyond.

### **Data availability**

The main body of the article contains the necessary data to support the findings of this study. If required, the corresponding author can provide this data upon request.

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### **Conflict of interest**

We have no conflict of interest to declare.

### **Notes**

- A. Oromia Special Zone Surrounding Finfinne (OSZSF): A suburb of Finfinne or Addis Ababa. It is under the Addis Ababa leading plan with its conurbation process towards the hosting community.
- B. The hosting community is an indigenous community with Oromo language L1 users who live in and surrounding the national capital of Ethiopia.
- C. Sometimes Amharic and Oromo language L1 users revealed conflict of interests; from using different orthographies/alphabets even using and preferring both languages in Oromia regional state particularly in the major urban areas like Finfinne.

### **D. Terminological definition**

Addis Ababa, Finfinne and Shaggar (Sheger) were the names given to Ethiopia's national capital city. As a result, it is difficult for the researchers to choose just one of the names because the area and its names have become politicized due to divergent Amharic and Afan Oromo meanings, which may be related to divergent identity politics. Hence, the current name of the capital city in the Ethiopian Constitution is "Addis Ababa", but it is "Finfinne" in the Oromia Regional State Proclamation and the Region also formed the "Oromia Special Zone Surrounding Finfinne" (OSZSF) in 2008. It is important to highlight that those officials and community members in the Oromia region use the name "Finfinne" in formal and official contexts, even though the city administration of Addis Ababa prefers the name "Addis Ababa." Hence, the author/s has chosen to refer to the city as "Finfinne" in this paper, given that the study was conducted from the standpoint of the Oromia region.

### **E. The study area name**

The Oromia Regional State Government broadcasted the establishment of a brand-new megacity in January 2023. The Regional Government made this bold move by merging various cities, towns, districts, and villages within the Oromia Special Zone Surrounding Finfinne (OSZSF). The announcement was made through both regional and national government media channels, emphasizing its conventional political system. Specifically, six towns on the outskirts of the Ethiopian

capital, Finfinne/Addis Ababa, came together to form the "Sheger City." These towns, namely Burayu, Gelan, Lega Tafo, Lega Dadi, Sebeta, and Sululta, now function as a unified megacity under a single mayoral administration. They have been renamed as sub-cities of Sheger City. The administrative bodies of Sheger City and its six sub-cities (towns) have already started the process of revising their official names in Afan Oromo, Amharic, and English. The new official name in English, like "Sheger City Administration, Burayu Sub-City" for Burayu, has been made public. Consequently, the study area can now be referred to as the Sheger Sub-cities surrounding Finfinne/Addis Ababa (SSSF/AA) or simply "Sheger City" through the main five outlets, instead of using the previous term, Oromia Special Zone Surrounding Finfinne (OSZSF). It's worth noting that the establishment of Sheger City does not affect the study's findings, except for the name changes (Heyyi and Mekonnen, 2023).

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