

『On-site Education of Practical Languages for Area Studies』

2007/08 Academic Year (First Semester) Report

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### Theme of the Study

Understanding if there are environmental and contextual/social variations in language use in Sidama, and documenting them was the aim of my exploratory study. Accordingly, Sidama living south and south east were found to have a significantly different dialect from those who live in the north, the east and western Sidama. Darra, a clan and location name in the south, exhibited the most visible difference. Also from the north-east-west, the Yanasse, a clan and territory name, showed the highest variation. Contextually, differences of expressions were seen between religious and secular social spaces. Certain expressions that are considered acceptable and normal in everyday life were found to be conveying an offence in religious or dispute settlements scenes that involve elders.

### Features of the Language

The Sidama language is a Cushitic language closely related to Haadiyya, kembata, Gedeo and Burgi, which together constitute the High land East Cushitic language branch. There are about 3.7 million mother tongue speakers of the language. Sidama is a recently codified language. It is only since 1990's Sidama language became a working and teaching language in Sidama land. The syntax of language is SOV and it has five vowels.



A Focus Group Discussion on Dialects



In Wonsho Area

### **Contents of the Course**

The contents of course included class-room based instruction of methods to understanding dialectal differences in language. It also had an on-site learning aspect where the student researcher carried out field work among speakers of language who live in different geographical location. Also, observing how people under different contexts communicate differently was part of the fieldwork. To this end, comparison between use of expressions in everyday life and those contexts that involve people of higher/lower status; secular/religious atmosphere, ritual/normal purposes was made. Based on the preliminary assessment, it was learnt that the Haddicho ( despised, potter's group) a different dialect from that of the 'pure' cast ( the Yemerecho); ordinary people communicate to spiritual/religious leaders with caution, like avoiding some expressions and introducing substitute words; and also a group of terminologies specifically used only for ritual purposes was identified. After collection and documentation of the observed difference, categorization was made with the help of a linguist.



Learning how Darra Dialect is different



Discussion with an elder on language usage

### **Overall Impression of the course**

Knowledge of a certain language is important, but it's to be supported by understanding the different sensibilities in the language. Exploring, and getting to understand how language is used differently in different contexts has been an eye opening experience for me. I believe the ITP program support has opened-up a new window of curiosity that I plan to carry on with enthusiasm.

### **Self-assessment of the extent of achievement**

My own assessment of the experience is that it has added significantly to my understanding of Sidama language, custom and more importantly Sidama religion.