_____

Contact Languages Counteracting Language Planning Policies:
A New Lingua Franca in the Oromia Region (Ethiopia)

Renato Tomei
University for Foreigners of Perugia, Italy

Abstract

In the current situation of civil and ethnic conflict in Ethiopia, language planning policies are a crucial issue. This article provides an account of an unprecedented phenomenon that impacts the linguistic scenario of Ethiopia and counteracts linguistic policies and trends: the use of Jamaican speech-forms (JSF) as lingua franca within different ethnic groups in the country. The article expands on previous research conducted by the author in the specific region of Oromia. The analysis covers dramatic years of conflicts and uprising in the area, where an international community of Rastafarians have introduced JSF and influenced cross-cultural behaviors, language, and identity. The survey addresses the process of language acquisition and choice of JSF and its decisive role in the identity formation of young adults in Ethiopia. The selected data, from transcriptions and video-recording, cover a span of six years, and show how the minority community, using JSF as vehicular language, has impacted on hegemonic multilingual and multicultural communities (not only Oromo, but also Amhara and Tigrayan). The study also has a claim to an innovative perspective on the dynamics of linguistic contact and the predominant role of prestige formation in linguistic choice dynamics, but also in cultural approaches and social behaviors. The specificity of the linguistic context features a highly organized hierarchical situation of translanguaging. The selected corpus instantiates examples of adjusting techniques and accommodation in conversations that empower 'youth speech'. JSF, used as lingua franca, represent an unpredictable phenomenon seemingly counteracting central regional hegemonies through linguistic practices, exo-normative behaviors and trans-cultural affiliations (religious, social, educational) that are also 'centrifugal' from major varieties of world English (VEAW).

1. Introduction. Political Background

In October 2016, the government of Ethiopia declared a state of emergency in response to an internal situation of violence and widespread protests. The unrest began in the regional state of Oromia, in the south of the country, over issues of land rights, but it suddenly turned into a claim for political, social and economic rights (BBC, Aljazeera, 09.10.2016). The Oromo are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, constituting almost 35% of the country's population, while the ruling coalition, in power for over 20 years, is mainly controlled by the Tigrayan ethnic group, which represents 6% of the country's population (Central Statistical Agency, 2008). The circumstances have tremendously impacted the stability and the security of the country, which has always been the most politically stable in the area of the Horn of Africa. While the government accuses foreign-based political forces and local groups of rebels of starting and instigating the violence, the Oromo dissidents denounce the use of heavy measures undertaken by the government to repress the protest, such as arbitrary arrests, political and diplomatic restrictions, curfews, and social media blocks (Aljazeera 02.10.2016).

Although economic and socio-political issues related to these events have been widely investigated and exposed through the international media, little attention has been paid to the linguistic implications.[1] By observing the dynamics of the conflict, it can be concluded that it has also been ignited by underlying linguistic policies and disputes.

2. The linguistic arena: language planning policies

To claim political rights implies the use of language as a means of political expression. Only a year before the recent Oromo unrest, legal controversies, also based on linguistic rights, started a state of social and political instability. A case in point is the 'land grabbing' in Shashemane, in the Oromo region: the local population decided to take back their lands now owned by foreigners, or Ethiopians of different ethnic groups, confiscating their houses, properties and companies. This involved also many Rastafarian repatriates. Some of these cases were taken to court or submitted to the local authority of the Shemghelennà, a council of elders, issuing binding decisions on behalf of the local legal institutions. In both cases, the foreign claimants accused Oromo defendants in front of Oromo judges, concomitant with a debate between Oromo lawyers. Furthermore, according to the legislation of Oromia, Afaan Oromo is the

---

[1] News reporting and the choice of language is also crucial: online reporting at the very outburst of violence was available on the web through the mediation of English, in turn mediated through reporting in Amharic from institutional sources, representing only a partial and incomplete perspective, if not a manipulated one.

language used for written documentation and spoken communication between the representatives of the parties and the legal institutions. In such a biased situation, it is to be noted that there was little chance of winning the case and it resulted indeed in the forced option of the foreign owners leaving their houses and their properties.

In this instance, the issue of legal communication and the use of a shared judicial procedure and common jurisdiction in a common language is dramatically relevant. Linguistic interpretation of land rights and its formulation in 'plain' language is a focal point in the international debate regarding property rights and acquisitional claims, in particular for what concerns the implementation of constitutional property law at regional level.

In terms of linguistic rights, within the discourse of multilingualism, the 1994 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia maintained and recognized Amharic as the one and only official working language, but promoted equal treatment of all the languages of the country.[2] Article 5 of the Constitution reads: 'All Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition', and that 'Amharic shall be the working language of the Federal Government' (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 1995).

The Amharic language is the medium of educational instruction, institutional affairs and conventional communication all over Ethiopia, since the reign of Emperor Tewdoros IV in 1855. (Ullendorf, 1973; Bender, Cooper and Ferguson, 1972; Pankhurst, 1966). Menelik II extended the use of the Amharic language beyond the frame of national unity, to the people of the newly conquered areas, and Haile Selassie I granted Amharic the status of 'official language of the Empire' in the 1955 Constitution (art.125).

The implementation of Amharic as the common language of Ethiopia can be analysed under two different perspectives: the preservation of national and political unity, and the imposition of the official lingua franca upon the conquered populations, such as in the Oromo-speaking areas of southern Ethiopia, focus of the present article (Darwah, 1975; Donham and James, 1980).

Starting from 1550, for nearly two centuries, Ethiopia faced migratory waves and attacks on the nomadic population of Oromo (horse-mounted warriors), penetrating from the southern bordering lands of Kenya. This community of warriors introduced their language in the area: Afaan-Oromo (also known as Oromifa, Oromic or Orominya). The language is also spoken in some northern areas of Kenya, but there are authors who place the origins of Afaan Oromo in an Ethiopian area called 'Meda Welabu' (Hassan, 1990; Baxter, Hultin and Triulzi, 1996).

Today, Afaan Oromo is the official language of Oromia, one of the eleven regional states of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia and, according to the last

---

[2] The people of Ethiopia are ethnically and linguistically one of the most diverse in the world, and besides Amharic there are over 80 languages currently spoken (Negash 1990).

official census (2007)**,** the most widely spoken regional language, with almost 25 million speakers, followed by Amharic and Somali:

FIRST LANGUAGE	SPEAKERS	%
Afaan-Oromo	24,929,268	33,80
Amharic	21,631,370	29,33
Somali	4,609,274	6,25

Table 1: First Languages of Ethiopia (Census 2007).

Although stemming from the common Afro-Asiatic group, Afaan Oromo is a Cushitic language and differs from Amharic which is Ethio-Semitic. It differs from Amharic also in its written form, since a scripted adaptation of Latin, called Qubee, has been adopted since 1991, after different scripts had been used to give Afaan-Oromo a written form.

In a study on language and youth ethnicity, Roger Hewitt observed how the same notions of 'youth' and 'ethnicity' attract 'identity', in terms of belonging (internal, related to the self), external membership, and group affiliation, which he termed 'social registration' (Hewitt, 1992). The model seems to be replicated, although historically differentiated and localized, with the current state of identity and youth language in Ethiopia, where fierce inter-ethnic struggles and violent opposition have been unleashed in the last decade, and language and linguistic policies have been used to reinforce identity and ethnicity.

The example set by the recent Oromo civil and political protest has already been followed by further unrests in other areas of the country, as in the case of the Gondar protests. During the protests, Oromo and Amhara nationalists have displayed signs of inter-group solidarity in the face of what they believe to be a common enemy, the ruling party TPLF (Aljazeera, 11.01.2017).

Similarly, fostered by the spirit of ethnic nationalism, linguistic policies aimed at the exclusive promotion of regional languages, as in the case of Oromia, could be enforced also by other regional states of Ethiopia. A direct consequence of this could be a rejection of the idea and the practice of Amharic as lingua franca at a federal level.

A further critical issue is the role played by the English language in this scenario. English has been taught in Ethiopia since the establishment of the first educational institutions (Tekeste, 1990). Since that time, it has consistently spread, especially during the last decades. The English language is being used throughout the country in the media, the press, and digital communication i.e. websites, blogs, etc. (Ambatechew, 1995; Eshetie, 2000).

English in Ethiopia has a particular status and is not perceived as the language of 'colonizers' and imperial subjection to Western hegemony. Its status has, on the contrary, been that of 'liberation', underlying intellectual resistance and social emancipation, counteracting the Italian Fascist invasion and the military

occupation of Ethiopia (e.g. the activity of Sylvia Pankhurst, and the movement for Abyssinia). Ethiopia is the one nation in the Horn of Africa (and most probably in the world), where the colonial agenda was not enacted as a tool of hegemonic subjection with the subsequent destruction of its composite multi-cultural identity through colonization and assimilative policies. This may be partly accounted for also by the fact that Ethiopia was already an empire in modern times, with a prominent role in the League of Nations.

Previous research conducted by the author in Ethiopia focuses on the specific area of Shashamane, in the heart of Oromia regional state. This rural town in the south of the country (250 Km. from Addis Ababa) features the presence of a large number of 'foreigners' that have chosen it as their home, answering the call of the Emperor Haile Selassie I. In 1948, the Emperor donated 500 acres of His personal possessions to the members of the African Diaspora scattered around the world and to those who voluntarily decided to support Ethiopia in its fight for the liberation from fascism during the Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-1941). Starting from the 1950s, Shashamene has become one of the main destinations for Black people of the Diaspora, among most notably but not exclusively, the Rastafarian community, wishing to repatriate back to Africa - this phenomenon has been called the Repatriation movement.[3] Even though the first settlers came from the Caribbean, today there are members of the community repatriating from all over the world, making Shashamane the most multicultural area of the country.

Clearly, being Jamaican Speech Forms (JSF)[4] used as lingua franca and shared by both Jamaicans and non-Jamaicans of this community (Tomei 2005), the first encounter Ethiopians had with JSF was due to the contact with the members of the Rastafarian/Repatriation movement.

Another important element to be considered is the influence of music, more specifically Reggae and Dancehall. These are the most popular genres of music in Jamaica, different in many aspects but both using JSF as vehicular language. Reggae/Dancehall DJ talk is a domain of specialized technical discourse hybridized by lexico-syntactic items borrowed from JSF (Blommaert 2010). DJ talk is aired and broadcast, and occurs simultaneously in the rituals of interaction and/or web-connection with audience-listeners' response (Cooper, 2004; Alleyne, 2012).

---

[3] *Rastafari* is a faith developed in the first half of the 20th century, based on the divinity of Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, crowned in Addis Ababa in 1930. According to the Rastafarian philosophy, Ethiopia represents the New Gerusalem, and one of the main practical aims of the movement is the Repatriation to Shashamane, place elected by the Emperor for the return of 'his children'. For a more detailed description of the features and the theological aspects of the Rastafari faith see Bonacci 2008.

[4] Jamaican Speech Forms (JSF) is used as an umbrella-term, including the different varieties of language in use in Jamaica: from the recognized Jamaican Standard English to the Patwa and the more specific Rasta and Reggae/Dancehall varieties.

3. Methodology and Research design

It is beyond the scope of this article to investigate and to describe the reasons for the spread of JSF within the various Ethiopian ethnic groups. Rather, the focus here is on the use of language and its socio-political implications, in particular when compared with multilingualism and linguistic policies enforcing nationalism and 'preservation' of local identities.

The present research expands a previous study on the acquisition and use of JSF in the community of Shashamane, the result of over six years' worth of investigation conducted in both Jamaica and Africa. In his 'JSF in Ethiopia: The Emergence of a New Linguistic Scenario in Shashamane', I showed how the local linguistic scenario is undergoing a process of change under the influence of JSF by Ethiopians. Indeed, a new variety of language is emerging due to the contact between JSF and the local languages: the Jamarigna or Jamharic (Jamaican + Amharic, locally called Amarigna) (Tomei 2005).

While in the previous study I investigated the phenomenon of the spread of JSF in a rural context, this research extends the area of enquiry to other regional states of Ethiopia (Tigray, SNNPR), and to the capital Addis Ababa. Here, due to the extremely fast development, linguistic hybridity and creativity are defining new frontiers of study.

In line with most recent trends of 'metrolinguistics' (Smakman and Heinrich 2015; 2017), 'translanguaging' (García and Wei 2014)[5], and sociolinguistic globalization (Blommaert 2010), the present research focuses on how language choice and identity are changing the dynamics of day-to-day rituals and linguistic practices, influenced by imitative prestige models and patterns of behavioural norms and beliefs. These modern concepts and theories highlight the role of speaker's agency and consciousness, as well as creativity, more than the less recent code-switching and mixing paradigm the author has used in his previous research.[6]

This article features recent data, recordings, and transcriptions on the use of JSF by three subjects selected purposively with different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, and based in three different settings:

Shashamane, West Arsi Zone, Oromia Region – (estimated population: 130.000)

---

[5] The term *Translanguaging* comes from the Welsh *trawsieithu,* and it was coined by C.Williams (1994-1996). The concept of translanguaging, which has been addressed and defined by several scholars, refers to complex linguistic practices in plurilingual contexts. More recent studies focus on its dynamics and features in our highly technological globalized world (García and Wei 2014).

[6] See also the recent development of AYUL (African Urban Youth Languages), an emerging field of study challenging the traditional approach to the varieties of World English (Ebongue and Hurst 2017, Nassenstein and Hollington 2015).

_____

The official language in Shashamane is Afaan Oromo, but several ethnic groups (with their respective languages) are settled in the area. The presence of JSF, mainly due to the settlement of the Rastafarian/Repatriated community, is detectable in a variety of settings and domains, from the school, where the process of acquisition begins, to the streets, the ideal space for spontaneous talk and interactions.

Hawassa, capital of the SNNPR, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (estimated population: 250.000)

In Hawassa, the first language is Sidamo, an Afro-Asiatic language spoken in several areas of southern Ethiopia. Hawassa is an extremely multicultural city: it is the regional capital, home to one of the largest Universities in the country (Hawassa University), and major tourist and business destination. The presence of JSF is consequently due to national and international mobility of students, business people, tourists, and Rastafarians.

Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia (estimated population: over 5 million)

Here, all Ethiopian ethnic groups and languages are represented. In addition, there is the largest number of international organizations, institutions, embassies and offices in Africa, with many employers permanently based in Addis Ababa. Consequently, the linguistic scenario is extremely complex, featuring the coexistence of a multiplicity of languages, contact languages and dialects. However, Amharic is the official language of institutions, education, and communication.

In Addis Ababa, the exposure to JSF is mainly related to two factors: the presence of numerous Jamaicans/Rastafarians (permanent members of the repatriated community or temporary visitors), and the popularity of Reggae/Dancehall music, promoted through radio, television, and live performances and events organized in the many music clubs of the capital.

The main source for the generation of data is represented by direct observation and recording of language choice and use, with a particular focus on the presence of JSF in juvenile slangs.

The heterogeneity of the settings identified for the investigation of the linguistic phenomenon clearly requires a methodological flexibility in data gathering, which will result in a combination of different methods, techniques, and integrated textual typologies:

a.   Interviews and focus group: structured/semi/non-structured, multiple sampling, dialogue, monologue, storytelling and accounts;
b.   Video-recording, digital recording: use of descriptive notes for para-linguistic and extra-linguistic elements;
c.   Questionnaires and tests: combined techniques, multiple-choice, etc;
d.   Note-taking and journals: tagging and labelling where needed to complete audio-visuals;
e.   Ephemera and private communication: correspondence, sketches, emails,

Skype conversations, SMS, WhatsApp and phone calls (fragments, segments, etc.).

Concerning the field-work methodology, the author has followed the participant observation approach, where observation is seen as a way to collect data in 'naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002).[7]

Each of the described settings has provided an approximate number of 10 general informants, and 3 key-informants purposefully elicited (presence of JSF, willingness to participate in the study, being interviewed and audio- or video-recorded).

Subject 1 – ethnic group: Amhara; language: Amharic

The first subject was born and raised in the capital Addis Ababa by Amhara parents. He is 24 years old, and works in several local clubs as a Reggae and Dancehall disc-jockey (DJ). Consequently, in his case, the primary source of contact with JSF is music.

Subject 2 – ethnic group: Oromo; language: Afaan Oromo

The second subject was born and raised in Shashamane, in the Oromia regional state, from Oromo parents. He is 17 years old, and he is a student at the local school, established by the Jamaican Rastafarian Development Community, a local organization formed by the original members of the repatriated community.

Subject 3 – ethnic group: Tigray; language: Tigrinya

The third subject was born in Axum, Tigray, and raised in various regions of the country (Tigray, Benishangul-Gumuz, SNNPR). He is 24 years old and works in a restaurant in Hawassa, the capital of the SNNPR regional state.

In his case, the contact with JSF takes place through two different channels: music, like Subject1, and tourism. Axum is an extremely popular tourist destination, and this provided Subject3 an opportunity to work as a tour guide. A further consequence of his role as tour guide is that he has been exposed to many different languages.[8] He reports that many of the tourists he remembers were

---

[7] More specifically, considering the prior cultural and linguistic competencies of the author, the model of moderate participation has been adopted in order to maintain the necessary neutral position of an objective observer, as defined by J.P. Spradley (1980). As he points out: 'Moderate participation occurs when the ethnographer seeks to maintain a balance between being an insider and an outsider, between participation and observation.'

[8] Before specific regulations were imposed to control the tourist-guide system, many locals used to provide tour services, especially children and students. The fees, as well as the quality of the services provided, were very low, but they could offer the visitors unconventional tours and unexpected experiences. In many cases, these young tour

Rastafarians visiting their Promised land.[9] Notwithstanding their different origins (the US, the Caribbean, Europe, America, Australia or the rest of Africa), these visitors used JSF as a lingua franca.

The survey relies on an integrated model of conventions for conversation analysis, taking into account multiple elements directly related to the influence of the Jamaican 'way of communicating', in particular: presence of JSF, translanguaging, particular gestural and proxemic activities (Tomei, 2015). Regarding the intricate and challenging issue of transcription techniques, I adopted the method developed by the Jamaican Language Unit (Di Jamiekan Langwij Yuunit) of the University of the West Indies, using the model proposed by Frederic Cassidy in 1961. In Ou Fi Rait Jamiekan - Writing Jamaican the Jamaican Way (2009), the research team lead by Devonish made a first attempt to 'represent the sounds of the language as faithfully as possible, without relying on the spelling conventions of English. It is an approach to spelling Jamaican which treats it as a language in its own right rather than as a form of English' (Jamaican Language Unit, 2009).[10]

This method, called 'The Cassidy-JLU Writing System', adopts a one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds as shown by the examples in the following table.

Ex.	Cassidy-JLU Writing System	Standard English
1	Skuul	School
2	Tiicha	Teacher
3	Siks	Six
4	Kwiol	Creole
5	Piis	Peace
6	Kyaahn	Can't
7	Tuu	Two
8	Taim	Time
9	Lou	Low
10	Ruol	Role

guides had no training: self-education was the standard practice, in particular in the linguistic field.

[9] Axum is the place where, according to the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition, the Ark of the Covenant (containing the Tables with the Ten Commandments) has been brought by Menelik I, son of King Solomon of Jerusalem. This element reinforces the Rastafarian conception of Ethiopia as the Promised Land, the place chosen by God to establish his earthly throne. (Phillipson, 1998; Hay-Stuart and Grierson, 1999).

[10] The Unit based at the University of the West Indies, Kingston has launched important projects based on transcriptions of oral sources. The use of audio-visual translation from Jamaican to English, and from English to Jamaican has been successfully implemented by the Unit in the important project based on the translation of the King James Bible into Jamaican. The Bible was successfully launched in book form in 2012 (*Di Jamiekan Nyuu Testament/The Jamaican New Testament).*

| 11 | Niem | Name |

Table 2: Examples of Cassidy-JLU Writing System with equivalents in Standard English.

As shown by the table:
The letter /c/ does not exist: it is replaced by /k/ch/s/, respectively in example n. 1, 2 and 5.
The letter /x/ is not used: it is replaced by /ks/, as in example n. 3.
The letter /q/ is not used: the form /qu/ is replaced by /kw/, as in example n. 4.
In addition to the vowels /a/e/i/o/u/, three 'long vowels' (/ii/aa/uu) and four 'double vowels' (/ai/ou/uo/ie) are used, respectively in examples 5, 6, 7 and 8, 9, 10, 11.
The form /hn/ is often adopted as a vocal suffix indicating the nasalization of the vowel, as in example 6.

4. Data presentation and discussion

For the data analysis, I took into account markers operating at morpho-syntactical level, at discourse level (oral interactions, group conversations), and at intertextual level (use of jargon, media-derived language).
More specifically, the use of language by the three subjects was addressed and analyzed through the identification of significant markers as follows:
Grammar (nouns, pronouns, verbs, negations) and pronunciation (metathesis, substitutions);
Cultural features (interjections and expressions, Rastafarian/Reggae usage)
Lexis (affixation and suffixation, 1st person conceptualization, forms of greetings and address).

a. Grammar and pronunciation
As Frederic Cassidy has said: 'the most striking differences between the folk speech of Jamaica and the educated speech are not in the sounds, still less in the vocabulary – they are in the grammar, the functional patterns into which the words fall' (Cassidy, 1961).
Furthermore, there are several items in the corpus featuring constant translanguaging. Here only a small sample of pertinent data from the corpus can be presented to illustrate the issue.
The presented extracts feature first a literal or semantic transcription, then a pragmatic rendering into SE (glo%).

Extract n.1 – Subject 1

_____

Languages: @1 Amharic, @2 Standard English, @3 Jamaican speech forms
June 2011 – Interview in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

*ME: Can you give me an example of what Jamharic is?
@2

*SUB2:   Nachral! wi lov **Jamharic**, yu no? **ca it a di** best mix
@3

    Wi seh **'yow, wha a gwaan**@3 **ante?**@1**'** or **'Irie**@3 **nou?**@1**'**

%glo: Natural! We love Jamharic, you know? Because it is the
best mix

    We say 'Ehy, what's going on, you? or 'Are you alright?'

Extract n.2 – Subject 2
Languages: @3 Jamaican speech forms
July 2015- Interview in Shashamane, Ethiopia

*SUB1:   Yahman, **uen mi baan piipl dem did seh mi** luk laik
Selassie-I@3

    I don't know why@2 **bot a dat dem seh** @3

%glo: Yes, when I was born people said I look like
Selassie

    I don't know why but they say so.

Extract n.3 – Subject 3
Languages: @2 Standard English, @3 Jamaican speech forms
February 2017 – Phone conversation (from Hawassa, Ethiopia)

*ME: Breda @3, where are you going to live now?@2

*SUB3:   **Mi nah no** man! @3 I don't even have a house now!@2
    **Yu donno seh, mi a go make it wid da likkle moni
mi av**@3

    Just pray for me@2

%glo: I don't know man I don't even have a house
now!

    You don't know, I will make it with the little money I
have

    Just pray for me

*ME: What about your family? @2

*SUB3:   **Chru, chru..bot dem chrang man!**@3

%glo: True, true..but they (are) strong man!

The following distinctive elements of Jamaican Creole can be observed in the extracts provided above:

copula (/A/ copula: Ex1: 'it a di best' - No copula: Ex2:'mi baan'; Ex3: 'dem chrang');

nouns/pronouns (Ex2: 'mi baan', 'mi laik'; Ex3: 'mi nah no');

verbs (Past: Ex2: 'dem did seh' – Future: Ex3: 'mi a go make it');
phoneme substitution (Ex3: 'likkle').

There is also a recurrent use of exclamations and exclamatory remarks: these abound in the Jamaican lexicon which is rich in strings of utterances (Patrick, 1999). Jamaican culture-specific utterances are also interspersed with repetitive occurrences (Ex1: 'nachral'; Ex2: 'yahman'; Ex3: 'chru, chru').

With reference to translanguaging, in extract n.1 we can observe the presence of Jamarigna, or Jamharic, a new speech form previously described by the author (Tomei 2005): 'Irie nou?' = Irie (JSF) and Nou (Amharic).

b. Specific cultural features

The contact between Ethiopians and Jamaicans (mainly members of the Rastafari movement) has also fostered the acquisition of extra-linguistic features, providing an unprecedented opportunity to investigate the cultural contamination and exchange taking place between a group of Africans in the Diaspora and local Africans on the Continent.

Extract n.4 – Subject 1
Languages: @2 Standard English, @3 Jamaican speech forms
December 2016 – Text message sent from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
*SUB1:   Greetings Ras!@3 Here many problems@2 still iman fi resist@3
      and keep out of trouble@2. Iman know we go prevail@3
      good over evil@2 mi seh!@3
%glo: Greetings! Here many problems, still **I have to resist**
      And keep out of trouble. I know **we will prevail**
      Good over evil I say!

Extract n.5 – Subject 2
Languages: @3 Jamaican speech forms
May 2011 – Interview in Shashamane
*SUB1:   All di Jamiekan piipl dem…dem a Iithiopian, dem African, yu siit? @3
      Bicas a di wait piipl, dem a sliev dem an put dem ina ailan still, yu no? @3
      So yu donno she, wi a uan blod! @3
%glo: All the **Jamaican people, they are Ethiopian, they are African**, you see it?
                      Because the white people enslaved them and put them in an island still, you know?
                      So you don't know say, **we are one blood**!

Extract n.6 – Subject 3
Languages: @1 Amharic, @2 Standard English, @3 Jamaican speech forms
June 2015 – Conversation in Hawassa, Ethiopia

_____

*SUB1:   Dem affi overstand all a wi a African@3 and unity is our strength@2

         Without this, there is no future my brother@2 gabbah?@1

%glo: They have to understand **all of us are Africans, and that unity is our strength**

         Without this, there is no future my brother, do you understand?

The 4th, 5th and 6th selected extracts, above, highlight the effects of cultural transmission and recontextualization. One of the key principles of the Rastafari faith movement is Pan-Africanism, a concept which finds new definitions and meanings when its seed is transplanted into the soil of the only unconquered country of Africa (Ex.5: 'Jamaican people are African', 'we are one blood'; Ex.6: 'all of us are Africans', 'unity is our strength').

Furthermore, spiritual and religious references are a constant element of their linguistic practice (Ex1: 'we will prevail, good over evil' – here the reference is to the Book of Revelation. The Lion of Judah prevails, opens the seven seals, and testifies the victory of good over evil).

Greetings and salutations follow the ritual of Rastafarian greetings and blessings (Ex1: 'greetings Ras'). Such acquired formulas used at the beginning of conversations and as rituals of conclusions are accompanied by codified gestures and expressions (Pollard, 2003).

5. Conclusion

On the basis of the data gathered during field research, the present article provides an account of an unprecedented phenomenon, impacting the linguistic scenario of Ethiopia and counteracting linguistic policies and trends: the use of JSF as a lingua franca within different ethnic groups in the country.

The recent Oromo civil and political unrest has been used as a platform to voice discontent over government repression of all the ethnic groups in Ethiopia, paving the way for the upsurge of ethnic nationalism among them. The possible political scenario, exacerbating ethnic diversities, could produce a general disengagement from the national language Amharic, in favour of more unrestrictive linguistic policies based on the exclusion of Amharic as a common lingua franca.

In contrast with this ethnic-based approach of current linguistic policies, the spontaneous acquisition of JSF in Ethiopia defines new perspectives in the national scenario. In this context, JSF seem to represent a common code, shared by the youth across different ethnic groups, regional states and political parties, and is now assuming the role of supra-regional lingua franca.

The presence and the spread of JSF in the area under scrutiny was unplanned, as it is perceived as an educationally non-existent language within the framework

of language policies in education, domestic and international communication, and juxtaposed to the use of international English. This suggests that, despite careful language planning, the community of speakers ultimately defines the development and use of language.

The phenomenon under scrutiny is well beyond the spread of Jamaican dancehall jargon and DJ-talk, reinforced by youth emulation and perceived prestige of rebellious and transgressive behaviour. It is a phenomenon localized in space and time, with unpredictable developments under the flow of shifting power dynamics, and well aligns with recent studies on the varieties of English language, further demonstrating the existence of a polycentric system and the decline of the idea of English as one language (Crystal 1997, 2003).

The spread and the role of JSF in different areas of the world may call for a refinement of the concept of English Linguistic Imperialism as defined by Phillipson (1992). Combining the theory of 'hegemonic centre', derived from the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, to that of the the role of the English language on a global scale, Phillipson concludes that "A working definition of English linguistic imperialism is that the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages. Here structural refers broadly to material properties (for example, institutions, financial allocations) and cultural to immaterial or ideological properties (for example, attitudes, pedagogic principles)." (Phillipson, 1992: 47).

The fact that JSF is influencing the linguistic scenario of Ethiopia, with particular reference to youth-talk or juvenile jargon, argues against the usual dynamics of language and power, centre and periphery. It shows how immaterial and ideological properties produced by one of the many centres (in this case the Caribbean) can reverberate and spread, designing new and different linguistic horizons.

References

Alleyne, M. 2012. *The Encyclopedia of Reggae. The Golden Age of Roots Reggae*. New York: Sterling.

Ambatachew, M. 1996. "Mother tongue, national language or international language? The case of Ethiopia". Paper presented at the *International Seminar on Language and Education in Africa,* Cape Town. July 15-109.

Baxter, P., J. Hultin and A. Triulzi, eds. 1996. *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*. Uppsala: Uppsala University Press.

Bender, L. M., D. Bowen, R. Cooper and C. Ferguson, eds. 1976. *Language in Ethiopia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Blommaert, J. 2010. *The Sociolinguistics of Globalisation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bonacci, G. 2008. *Exodus! L'histoire du retour des Rastafariens en Éthiopie.* Paris: Scali.

Cassidy, F. 2007 (1961). *Jamaica Talk: Three Hundred Years of the English Language in Jamaica.* Kingston: Universities of the West Indies Press.

Central Statistical Agency. 2008. *Population size of Regions by Nations/Nationalities (ethnic group) and Place of Residence: 2007. Census 2007.* Addis Ababa: Central Statistical Agency.

Cooper, C. 2004. *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large.* London: Palgrave.

Crystal, D. 1997, 2003. *English as a Global Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Darkwah, K. 1975. *Shewa, Menelik and the Ethiopian Empire.* London: Heineman.

DeWalt, K. M., and DeWalt, B. R. 2002. *Participant observation: a guide for fieldworkers. Walnut Creek.* CA: AltaMira Press.

Donham, D. and W. James, eds. 1980. *Working Papers on Society and History in Imperial Ethiopia: The Southern Periphery.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eshetie, A. 2010. "Language policies and the role of English in Ethiopia". Paper presented at the *Conference IATEFL BESIG.* Bielefeld, 20.11.2010.

Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. 1995. *Proclamation of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Proclamation* n. 1, 1995.

Fishman, J. 1989. *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistics Perspectives.* Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.

García, O. and Wei L. 2014. *Translanguaging Language, Bilingualism and Education.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ebongue A. E. and Hurst E. 2017. *Sociolinguistics in African Contexts: Perspectives and Challenges.* Berlin: Springer.

Hassan, M. 1990. *The Oromo of Ethiopia. A History 1570-1860.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hay-Munro, S. and R. Grierson, 1999. *The Quest for the Ark of the Covenant.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Hewitt, R. 1992. "Language, Youth and the Destabilization of Ethnicity". In: Palmgren, C., K. Lougren and G. Bolin, (eds.), *Ethnicity in Youth Culture.* Stockholm: Youth culture at Stockholm University.

(The) Jamaican Language Unit/Di Jamiekan Langwij Yuunit. 2009. *Ou Fi Rait Jamiekan - Writing Jamaican the Jamaican Way.* Kingston: Arawak Publications.

Nassenstein, N. and Hollington A. (eds.). 2015. *Youth Language Practices in Africa and Beyond.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Negash, T. 1990. *The Crisis of Ethiopian Education: Some Implications for Nation Building. Reports Education (29).* Uppsala: Uppsala University Press.

Pankhurst, R. 1966, *State and Land in Ethiopian History.* Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie University.

Patrick, P. 1999. *Urban Jamaican Creole. Variation in the Mesolect, VEAW (17).*

Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Patrick, P. 2003. "Creole, Community, Identity". In C. Mair, ed. 2003. *The Politics of English as a World Language.* Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.

Phillipson, D. 1998. *Ancient Ethiopia: Aksum. Its antecedents and successors.* London: British Museum Press.

Phillipson, R. 1992. *Linguistic Imperialism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pollard, V. 2003. "Sound and Power: The language of the Rastafari". In S. Makoni, G. Smitherman, A. Ball and A. Spears, (eds). 2003. Black Linguistics. *Language, Society, and Politics in Africa and the Americas.* London: Routledge. pp. 60-79.

Smakman, D. and Patrick Heinrich (eds.). 2015. *Globalising Sociolinguistics: Challenging and Expanding Theory.* Abingdon, U.K./New York: Routledge.

Spradley, J. P. 1980. *Participant Observation.* Orlando, Florida: Harcourt College Publishers.

Tomei, R. 2015. *Jamaican Speech Forms in Ethiopia: the emergence of a new linguistic scenario in Shashamane.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Ullendorff, E. 1973. *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wierzbicka, A. 1992. "The semantics of interjection", *Journal of Pragmatics* 18: 159-192.

Sitography

http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/01/ethiopia-ethnic-nationalism-gondar-protests-170102081805528.html

http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/ethiopia-declares-state-emergency-protests-161009110506730.html

http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/ethiopia-killed-oromia-festival-stampede-161002100716026.html

http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37600225

http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36940906

http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35749065

http://www.ghanaweb.tv/ethiopian-broadcasting-corporation-ebc-tv-live/