

Lidia Zatulokina
28.08.1998
Bachelor Degree of Moscow State Institute of International Relations (2020)
lidiazatulokina@gmail.com
Russian Federation
Moscow

Abstract

The Amharic Language: History of Its Use in Ethiopia and Peculiarities of Ethiopia's Language Policy

Ethiopia is a multiethnic state which unites not less than 80 peoples speaking more than 70 different languages. According to the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution, while all the languages «enjoy equal state recognition», Amharic is officially recognized as the working language of the Federal Government.

The aim of the study is to analyze the position of Amharic in Ethiopian society over the years, to examine its role as the native language as well as the lingua franca in comparison with the role that English has gradually gained in the country, to point out the key elements of the Ethiopian language policy since Emperor Menelik II.

Amharic gained its national importance mostly due to a single language policy during the imperial period of its history. Since the beginning of the Derg Regime, some efforts have been made to provide the other ethnic groups with the right for the free use of their languages. This policy has become especially active since the fall of the Derg in 1991. As a result, nowadays there is a strong tendency in the country towards bilingualism and multilingualism (not counting English), with Amharic being the component. This phenomenon is observed mostly in the regions where Amharic is not the native language for most of the population.

Examining the position of Amharic in Ethiopia, that of English should not be overlooked. Official meetings with different countries' representatives and correspondence are held in English. Over the last two decades, there has even appeared a phenomenon of «guramayle» - the English-Amharic mixed language. Less attention is paid to the correct use of Amharic grammar.

It is hoped that the study will provide the panelists with a comprehensive picture of the history of the Amharic language and its use in Ethiopia and key tendencies in the development of the status of Amharic compared to English and other indigenous languages of the country.