

**NORHED Project Title: Linguistics Capacity Building: Tools for the Inclusive  
Development of Ethiopia**

**Brief Report on the First Research Workshop**

Adaama Ras Hotel, Adaama, 25–July 2014

## **1 ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:**

Binyam Sisay, Ronny Meyer and Andargachew Deneke

## **2 PARTICIPANTS:**

Andargachew Deneke (Sign Language)	Milkesa Chembesa (PhD candidate)
Baye Yimam (Semitic)	Moges Yigezu (Omotic)
Binyam Sisay (Omotic)	Nigussie Meshesha (Sociolinguistics)
Hirut Woldemariam (Omotic)	Pawlos Kassu (Sign Language)
Derib Ado (Language Technology)	Ronny Meyer (Semitic)
Emebet Bekele (PhD candidate)	Samrawit Bekele (PhD candidate)
Feda Negesse (Language Technology)	Shimelis Mazengia (Cushitic)
Fekede Menuta (Semitic)	Solomon Getahun (PhD candidate)
John Koang (PhD candidate)	Tsehay Abza (PhD candidate)
Melkeneh Seid (PhD candidate)	Zealelem Leyew (Cushitic)

## **3 PROGRAM**

### *3.1 Friday, 25 July 2014: Field research reports*

The scheduled program was delayed due to problems with public transportation to Adaama. Registration and opening speech started at 10.30 am, the regular program at 11 am. Next the all members of the working groups on Sign language, Language Technology, Cushitic, Omotic, and Semitic presented a summary of their field stay, namely:

1. Andargachew and Pawlos about fieldwork on Ethiopian sign language
2. Derib and Feda (Language Technology) about fieldwork on Oromo
3. Moges and Binyam (Omotic) about fieldwork on Hamar
4. Shimelis and Zelealem (Cushitic) about fieldwork on Hadiyya
5. Baye (Semitic) about fieldwork on Amharic
6. Ronny (Semitic) about fieldwork on Muher
7. Fekede (Semitic) about fieldwork on Gumar

During all field stay sessions, audio and video materials were recorded, which later should serve as input for the preparation of oral corpora. The details are found in the attached field reports. The Language Technology group (Derib and Feda) also decided to do work on a language, Oromo, in order to prepare a spoken dialect corpus of this language. Nigussie (Sociolinguistics) was not able to conduct fieldwork so far due to his high administrative workload but intends to do during the vacation until September 2014.

### *3.2 Saturday, 26 July 2014: Presentation of PhD concept notes*

Staff members in the rank of Lecturer (MA degree) at AAU and HU who want to qualify for a PhD through the capacity building component of the Norhed program presented their concepts for general evaluation. The candidates had 15-20 minutes for their presentation, which were followed by comments and questions by the other participants. The following presentations were given:

1. Melkeneh Seid (AAU) “Verb morphology of Aari (Omotic)”
  - Main comments included: need for elaboration of differences between the current project and his previous on Aari as well as Daniel Abera’s work on Aari, need for description of dialect variation and how it is represented in morphology, use of Basic Linguistic Theory as conceptual framework should be reconsidered
2. John Koang (AAU) “Nuer grammar – A study in dialectal variation”
  - Main comments included: objective is still too vague and needs specification, reason for focusing on dialectal variation is unclear, need for identifying the gaps in the description of the Nuer language
3. Samrawit Bekele (AAU) “Comparing linguistics landscape of Ethiopian urban and rural areas: The cases of Hawassa and Adaama”
  - Main comments included: rural component unclear as Hawassa and Adaama are both towns, objectives of research still too vague, theoretical framework and methodology needs more elaboration
4. Solomon Getahun (HU) “Language contact in Wolkite town: A study in constraints, paths, and change”
  - Main comments included: distinction between language internal vs. contact-induced change appears difficult as most language spoken in Wolkite belong to the same family (Semitic), theoretical framework and methodology should be revised
5. Tsehay Abza (HU) “Morphosyntax of Inor”
  - Main comments included: objective still too vague (what is subsumed under morphosyntax), necessity of a formal framework for this research was questioned, possible overlap with ongoing PhD on Inor grammar was mentioned
6. Andargachew Deneke (AAU) “Phonological aspects of Ethiopian sign language”
  - Main comments included: given the current variation in ESL the dialect to be studied should be clearly identified, need for elaboration whether sign

language is phoneme-based or word-based, need for elaboration of the methodology for studying sign language vis-à-vis spoken language

7. Pawlos Kassu (AAU) “Aspects of Ethiopian sign language verb morphology”
  - Main comments included: what is meant by ‘native speaker’ of ESL, methodology for the analysis of verb morphology needs elaboration, reason for focusing exclusively on verb morphology unclear
8. Emebet Bekele (HU) “Linguistics diversity, ethnic identity, and the problem of language development among the South Ethio-Semitic Gurage languages”
  - Main comments included: methodology unclear (methods to be mixed should be clearly explained; sampling should be clarified), operationalization of “ethnic identity” not clear, what is meant by lingua franca in the region, distinctiveness of the current study vis-à-vis previous studies not given
9. Milkesa Chembesa (HU) “Conflict mediation discourse in family dispute resolution in Boraana Oromo”
  - Main comments included: methodology unclear (how to record disputes for discourse analysis), does the Gada system in Boraana differ from that in other Oromo groups, why focus on Boraana, distinctiveness of current research from previous works on this topic needs to be elaborated

The presentation ended with a general discussion regarding the preparation of the concept papers and the issues addressed.

### *3.3 Sunday, 27 July 2014: Activity reports and project administration*

Each working group on Sign language, Language Technology, Cushitic, Omotic, Semitic, and Sociolinguistics reported about the accomplishment according to their respective activity plan, such as workshop, field research, and publications, and challenges faced (see detailed group activity reports).

After the reports, a general discussion regarding the project’s progress and administration took place. It was mentioned that the overall activities done in the project were good. Given the fact that the budget was released so late, it was a very successful work period. The networking workshop in Hawassa was successful as well as the training workshops organized by the working groups. But still a project assistant has to be hired. It is also difficult to include Fikre from Mekelle University into the project activities because NORHED has no formal agreement with Mekelle University. Accordingly, Addis Ababa University is not able to release any funding for Fikre.

Baye suggested dealing seriously with the challenges during the implementation of the activities in order to prevent them in the future.

Nigussie commented on some of the challenges faced by each group related to the financial system of AAU. He also mentioned to use the released budget fully and in time because otherwise it might have a negative impact in the future.

Fekede also commented on the activities. He said that most of the planned activities are accomplished but still there are challenges not solved yet. He raised a question about the recording materials from the field. Sometimes the recorded texts are not continuous and have gaps. Should these texts be edited? What possibilities for publishing these data do exist?

Finally, Hirut raised the issues of project leadership. She explained that it was a pleasure to be a project leader for her. However, it is difficult for her to continue as a project leader due to her time-consuming duties as vice president of the AAU. For the sake of a successful continuation of the project, she prefers to handover the project leadership to somebody else but still wants to participate in the project as a member. Following that, Fekede suggested Binyam to take over the leadership because he has already assisted in the organization of the overall project activities and their implementations. Zelealem and Shimelis supported the nomination of Binyam as project leader. Then all the participants unanimously agreed on the nomination of Binyam as project leader.

Finally, Binyam accepted the responsibility and thanked all participants for their support given to the project. Hirut, then, mentioned that she would notify the NORHED management about the change in leadership.

The workshop end on the 27th of July.