



PRINT ISSN: 2519-9781

ONLINE ISSN: 2710-1320

Factors Contributing to the Decline of the Somali Language

Zahra Abdullahi Haji Mohamed

Lecturer, of English Language at Mogadishu University, Somalia

Email: sahroclaahi10@gmail.com

DOI: 10.70457/MUJ00102

Abstract

This study investigates the complex factors driving the decline of the Somali language, focusing on the significant impact of globalization on Somali society, particularly in terms of language, culture, and identity. The rise of international languages, the dominance of global media, and the digital divide have all contributed to the marginalization of the Somali language, leading to a decline in its status and use. Additionally, Westernization has eroded traditional Somali cultural practices, while displacement and migration have disrupted the intergenerational transmission of language and culture. The study emphasizes the importance of quality education in preserving the Somali language and highlights the need for a multifaceted approach, including promoting Somali language media, enhancing language education, and addressing

the digital divide, to foster sustainable development, preserve Somali cultural heritage, and promote equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Keywords: **Factors, Somali Language, Decline**

Introduction

Language is a vital component of a community's cultural identity since it facilitates knowledge transfer, communication, and social cohesiveness. Nonetheless, the prospect of extinction and deterioration faces many languages worldwide. The Somali language, which is spoken by the Somali people in the Horn of Africa and by diaspora communities around the world, is one such language that has been significantly declining. Concerns over the loss of cultural heritage and identity, as well as possible repercussions for social cohesion and development, are raised by the Somali language's decline. Since 1972, Somali has been the official language of Somalia, having achieved official status through standardization.

Somali is a language of the Eastern Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic family. Yemen, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and ethnic Somalia all speak the Somali language (New York University, 2012). An Afro-Asian language family member, Somali is classified as belonging to the Cushitic branch. Since 1900, language descriptions have been passed down, making Somali the Cushitic language with the most documentation (Wolfger, 2001).

Since 1969, Somali has held the status of the nation's official language, and since 1972, it has been formally transcribed. How did things stand in terms of language before 1969? Somali is mostly an oral language, although despite this, it has a rich history. Verbal art's importance in Somali society, particularly among the nomads, is one sign. The significance of oral poetry in Somali society has not diminished; it is a rich legacy encompassing various poetic genres that are derived from distinct metrical patterns and themes (Puglielli, 2014). As a result, there was a common oral language spoken throughout the

nation that coexisted with minority languages, regional variants, and other dialects. We might see the diversity of the north-central areas as the common language; as an illustration of its unique status, radio broadcasting has been conducted in these regions since 1945.

Arabic was the only language used for writing for a long time, mostly for religious reasons. Italian was the language spoken in the center and south of Somalia during the colonial era, and English was the language learned in the north. These languages evolved into administrative and instruction languages in the 1950s and were used as such until 1972, when they gained independence. Between 1920 and 1950, attempts had been made to transcribe Somali using Arabic characters, Latin, or Osmanian; formal adoption of the Latin alphabet for transcription did not occur until 1972, following a protracted discussion (Puglielli, 2014). Up until 1972, this language had mainly been used for communication in daily life. Suddenly, however, it was required to adjust to new circumstances and usage contexts as well as meet demands imposed by formal, distinct, and new communicative contexts that were outside the conventional spheres of Somali culture.

Within the Afroasiatic family, the Somali languages and dialects are members of the Eastern Cushitic sub-branch. They have similarities with languages like Omo-Tana spoken in northeastern Kenya, Galla-Sidamo in southern Ethiopia, and Saho-Afar spoken in the northeastern section of the Horn. Over twenty groupings of Somali languages and dialects have been roughly classified by historical linguists. Af-Mahaa, with dialectical variations, is the language spoken by the inhabitants of northern, and central Somalia. Af-Maay is the primary language spoken in the southern regions, while other languages. Arabic loanwords are widely used in both commerce and religion. Until 1972, when a modified Roman script was chosen for Af-Mahaa, Arabic, English, and Italian remained official

languages in the old Somali Democratic Republic, as none of the Somali languages possessed a script. English and Italian models are used extensively to shape technical terminology (Mukhtar, 2013).

The introduction of a national orthography by the Siad Barre government in 1972 brought with it two immeasurable benefits: firstly, all Somalis speak the same language; secondly, there is a dialect within the language that is used for wider communication across all Somali-speaking territories and transcends all regional differences. This kind of dialect, which Andrzejewski (1971) and Andrzejewski and Lewis (1964) referred to as a common or standard Somali, was most likely spoken in this manner long before colonial powers arrived, having grown because of interactions between various Somali communities. Despite its widespread use, until 1972 Somali society maintained a distinction between spoken and written languages: all verbal communication took place in Somali, while written communication took place in foreign languages. Arabic was the primary written language used in communication before the arrival of the colonial powers, and it remained so throughout the colonial divisions. However, Arabic eventually faced formidable competition from English and Italian, particularly following World War II when these two languages were widely used to introduce secular education (Andrzejewski, 1979).

Somalia is quite homogeneous linguistically, in contrast to most other African nations. In Somalia. In addition to being the primary language spoken by all Somalis in Somalia, Somali is also the native tongue of those who identify as Somali and who live in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti. For instance, 40% of people speak Somali in Djibouti (Country of Origin Information Centre, 2011). The Somali language has a long history and a vibrant oral tradition that is closely linked to cultural norms and beliefs. Its decline, however, has been caused by a confluence of

external and internal factors. The influence of historical occurrences, including colonization and the post-colonial era that followed, is one important component. The Somali language was neglected throughout the colonial era by the imposition of foreign languages and educational institutions, which resulted in a declining role in formal education and public administration. A further factor contributing to the demise of the Somali language is political instability. According to Labahn (see Labahn, 1983, p. 268), a nation's uniform language culture allows for more effective planning of its political, economic, and social processes (Wolfger, 2001).

The Horn of Africa is home to Somali speakers. It is prevalent in Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, Ethiopia, and, since 1991, the de facto independent (but not internationally recognized) Republic of Somaliland. The colonial past is responsible for the current border issue and the division of Somali speakers among five countries. The Somali-speaking regions were split into five divisions during the infamous Congo Conference of 1884–1885, namely British East Africa (Kenya), British Somaliland (Somaliland), Italian Somaliland (Somalia), French Somaliland (Djibouti), and Abyssinia (Ethiopia) (Somaliland, 1991).

The Republic of Somalia was created in 1960 through the union of English and Italian colonial territory. Although over 97% of Somali people were literate, English, Italian, and Arabic were the official languages of the new nation. This is due in part to the lack of a standardized script for Somali until that point, which is absurd for a language that is officially recognized and used in government, education, and the media. A new language policy went into effect in 1972. Thomas Labahn describes the implementation of the language policy in four phases. The first phase lasts until the end of the Second World War, while the second phase is characterized by a new "sense of state" and

seamlessly passes over into the third phase of independence. In the third phase, a Somali national idea is formed. When the military came to power in 1969, the fourth phase began, in which Somali national sentiment expanded (Wolfger, 2001).

Before 1972, linguists created a standard orthography, or script, which Somalis should adopt going forward. Muuse Xaaji Ismaaciil Galaal and Shire Jaamac Axmed were two of these linguists who studied Somali overseas. Axmed dealt with philological research in the United States, whereas Galaal dealt with phonology in London. The Latin alphabet was thought to be the most appropriate since it best replicates phonemes and, for instance, more accurately represents Somali vowels than Arabic does. The first thing that strikes us about the Somali typeface is that, in contrast to most European languages, "c" and "x" are rendered differently (like *ɿ* and *ɦ*, respectively), and these vowels are doubled to indicate the length of the vowels (Wolfger, 2001).

Problem Statement

The Somali language is thriving, with widespread use and transmission across all age groups within the Somali community. It is deeply embedded in the cultural identity, traditions, and daily lives of the Somali people, serving as a unifying force and a means of preserving and sharing their rich heritage. The Somali language is supported by robust educational policies, media representation, and government initiatives, ensuring its continued use and development in various domains, such as education, administration, and the arts. Somali speakers are proud of their language and actively pass it on to the younger generations, maintaining its vitality and relevance in an increasingly globalized world.

There is a noticeable decline in the use and preservation of the Somali language. Despite millions of people in Somalia and the Horn of Africa

still using Somali as their first language, there are patterns indicating a decrease in the language's overall vitality, proficiency, and usage. This decline can be attributed to a combination of socio-cultural, educational, technological, and linguistic factors, such as the influence of dominant languages, the impact of globalization, changes in language attitudes, and the challenges posed by urbanization and migration. As a result, the transmission of the Somali language to younger generations is facing significant challenges, and the cultural heritage associated with the language is at risk of being eroded.

The decline of the Somali language poses serious threats to the cultural identity, traditions, and knowledge of the Somali people. Without concerted efforts to revitalize and preserve the language, its gradual disappearance could lead to the loss of a vital component of the Somali cultural legacy.

To address this issue, the proposed research study aims to:

1. Identify the key factors contributing to the decline of the Somali language, including historical, political, social, and linguistic influences.
2. Examine the impact of language shift and language attitudes, especially among the younger generation, on the use and transmission of the Somali language.
3. Explore the challenges and barriers faced by Somali language speakers in maintaining and passing on the language to future generations.
4. Recommend strategies and policies that could help in the revitalization and sustainable preservation of the Somali language,

such as strengthening language education, increasing media representation, and promoting positive language attitudes.

Significance of the study

This comprehensive study on the decline of the Somali language is significant in its potential to provide a deep understanding of the complex socio-cultural, educational, and linguistic factors shaping the use and preservation of this vital component of Somali cultural identity. The insights gained will inform the development of targeted policies, programs, and initiatives to revitalize and safeguard the Somali language, ensuring its continued vitality and transmission to future generations. The findings will be invaluable for policymakers, educators, and language advocates working to promote linguistic diversity and preserve the cultural heritage associated with the Somali language. Moreover, this research will contribute to the broader academic discourse on language decline and revitalization, offering a case study that can provide lessons and insights for other endangered or declining language communities. Ultimately, the successful implementation of the proposed strategies and recommendations can help to secure the future of the Somali language, empowering the Somali people to maintain their cultural identity and pass on their linguistic heritage to generations to come.

Research Questions:

1. What are the historical, political, and social factors that have led to the decline of the Somali language?
2. How have urbanization, migration, and the influence of other languages (such as English, Arabic, and other local languages) affected the use and transmission of the Somali language?

3. What are the language attitudes and perceptions of Somali speakers, especially the younger generation, towards their native language?
4. What are the challenges faced by Somali language speakers in maintaining and passing on the language to their children and future generations?
5. What policies, programs, and initiatives have been implemented (or could be implemented) to revitalize and preserve the Somali language, and how effective have they been?
6. What are the potential strategies and best practices that could be adopted to promote the use and sustainability of the Somali language in various domains, such as education, media, and public services?

Literature Review

"Language decline" refers to the progressive weakening or degradation of a language over time, leading to a decrease in the number of speakers and decreased use of the language in different communities. A variety of factors, such as changes in the social, political, economic, or cultural domains, may contribute to language decline. Language shift can be caused by a number of factors, including colonization, globalization, or laws governing language use, which cause speakers to abandon their original tongue in favor of a dominant one. The erosion of language can have a significant negative impact on intergenerational knowledge transfer, language variety, and cultural legacy maintenance.

The gradual decrease in the quantity, impact, and utilization of Somali language speakers is referred to as the "Somali language decline". Several reasons contribute to this loss, including historical events, colonization, political upheaval, civil wars, large-scale migrations, urbanization, globalization, and the influence of dominant languages.

Among the steps being taken to stop this decrease are language revitalization initiatives, campaigns to raise public awareness of the need of conserving Somali language and culture, and the support of bilingual education. To ensure the survival and vitality of the Somali language, however, ongoing efforts are required as there are still many challenges to be addressed. In this section of the literature review, pertinent literature is critically reviewed and analyzed to help readers comprehend the study's theoretical foundation. In relation to the current study, the researcher provides the following major theories:

Globalization and Media Influence

Globalization is a crucial phenomenon that is expanding and growing many different types of global contacts very quickly. Today, the concept of globalization is widely recognized to refer to a process of contacts and change in social, political, cultural, religious, demographic, environmental, and military spheres. Somalia adopted the name that is presently known as the Republic of Somalia after gaining independence in the 1960s. Globalization has undoubtedly had an impact on Somalian culture since the colonial era and has continued to do so even after independence. Numerous facets of society are impacted by globalization, both positively and negatively (Song & Kim, 2022).

The impact of globalization and media on the Somali language has been enormous. Somalis' linguistic preferences have changed as a result of the expansion of widely used international languages like English, especially among the younger generation. Global media's accessibility, frequently in languages other than Somali, has impacted language and cultural preferences. Global media outlets further marginalize Somali language by operating mostly in major global languages. In addition to the practice of code-switching and language borrowing, these factors

have also led to a decline in the status and use of Somali. Nonetheless, activities like supporting Somali language media and pushing for its inclusion in school are part of the efforts being made to encourage the usage and preservation of Somali.

An essential component of the globalization process is the use of media and information technology. The contemporary communication technologies and mass media are essential to the functioning of globalization. Political, economic, and cultural progress are increasingly viewed as being dependent on access to media, telecommunications, and digital services. But many people throughout the world do not have access to energy, and those who are cut off from electrical grids run the risk of becoming stigmatized. The "digital divide" occurs both inside and across nations, frequently intersecting with other differences including gender, age, ethnicity, and income (Buckingham et al., 2020).

Globalization is the integration of people, companies, and governments worldwide. It has both beneficial and negative effects on Somalia. Globalization is not just a global process, but also a corporate expansion strategy. It transcends previous boundaries, transmitting ideas, knowledge, and behaviors. The impacts of globalization on Somalia are complex, presenting both opportunities and challenges. Understanding these nuances is crucial for the country's sustainable development.

(Diesow et al., 2024). Somali traditional cultural practices and values may be lost as a result of the influence of commercial culture and international media. Global cultural manifestations may pose a threat to local languages, practices, and identities.

The dominance of English and other colonial languages over indigenous African languages is a widely criticized phenomenon, with scholars highlighting the social and communicative implications of this

linguistic hierarchy. African academics often engage in critical discussions surrounding the superior status of foreign languages compared to local languages within these cultures. (Eno et al., 2016). Language holds significant power as a means of communication and a vessel for cultural and ideological influences. As Saussure noted, "Thought is a vague, uncharted nebula without language." When individuals learn or use a dominant language, they become more susceptible to the cultural and ideological beliefs embedded within that language.

The dominance of imported, official languages persists in Somalia, maintaining high status and use in prestigious domains, as Bamgbose noted. While the civil war has been a significant challenge, it has also brought about social changes, including within the country's language environment. In some cases, the war may have had unexpected benefits for certain ethnic and linguistic communities. (Eno et al., 2016).

The digital age has significantly transformed communication, with social media and technology leading to the use of shorter, more concise language, including abbreviations, acronyms, and increased reliance on visual elements like images and emoticons. This shift raises concerns about the potential deterioration of language skills and communication abilities (Natsir et al., 2023).

Culture and Identity

Language, culture, and identity have a complex, dynamic relationship. Language shapes cultural practices and attitudes, while cultural elements affect linguistic expression and identity formation. Preserving linguistic and cultural diversity is crucial to fostering tolerance, understanding, and a rich human experience. Identity and language are deeply intertwined, as the way individuals use language can

validate or undermine their cultural belonging and sense of self. Language is a means through which people convey their cultural background, affiliations, and identity (Hassan, 2017).

Culture is a system of value orientation that helps resolve social issues through shared symbols. A community's culture reflects the identity of its people, who may share language, religion, and common ancestry, despite local lifestyle variations. Culture can also be viewed as a commodity encompassing various aspects of human interaction and development over time (Song & Kim, 2022).

Somalia's cultural traditions have been established through interactions with neighboring regions over time, resulting in an amalgamation of influences. This is reflected in the country's unique cuisine and the Somali people's skills in memorization, poetry, and storytelling, earning them reputations as a "Nation of Poets" and "Nation of Bards." While there is a perception of Somalia as a homogeneous community, the reality is that the Somali people are composed of diverse ethnic groups, each with their own unique cultural practices within a multi-ethnic societal framework

(Eno, 2008). Globalization has had a detrimental impact on Somali culture. There is a trend of Westernization, with the official Somali language being replaced by international languages like English and Arabic. Young people have adopted Western fashion, hairstyles, and celebration of holidays like Valentine's Day and New Year's, causing traditional Somali culture to rapidly disappear. The National Independence Day remains the sole celebration that continues to be observed in Somalia (Song & Kim, 2022).

The Somali language is a crucial component of Somali culture, encapsulating traditions, values, and historical narratives. As the

language declines, Somali communities risk becoming disconnected from their cultural heritage and identity. Reversing this trend through language revitalization efforts and promoting the value of Somali language and culture is essential for preserving Somali identity.

Linguistic Features and Standardization

The process of standardizing a language for its linguistic forms, social roles, and communication purposes is known as standardization. Standardization is the process by which a language gains acceptance. To reach a process' destination, it often requires a few well-thought-out, methodical phases and procedures (Ramlan, 2018). The world is home to a vast array of languages, each with their own unique set of characteristics. Linguistics is essentially the study of languages. It is divided into four branches: phonetics, which is the study of speech sounds and how they are produced; morphology, which is the study of word forms; syntax, which is the study of how words and phrases are combined to form sentences in a language; semantics, which is the study of meaning in language; and pragmatics, which is the study of how language is used to convey meaning in specific contexts, particularly when the words used may seem to indicate something different (Ramlan, 2018).

A standard language is a common national language used across distinct dialects. It is often the primary written language and can be developed from one or more original dialects. While dialects may not have formal written forms, the standard language is used for official and educational purposes, making those who speak dialects effectively bilingual (Country of Origin Information Centre, 2011). An analysis of Somali writing and speech reveals a diverse linguistic landscape. The Somali language belongs to the Cushitic subfamily of Afroasiatic,

distinct from other language families studied. Additionally, the status and history of literacy vary significantly, from languages with few speakers and short written traditions, to global languages like English, to Somali which has a relatively new but diverse range of spoken and written registers (Biber & Hared, 1992).

Discussions around language standardization are crucial, as they reveal the inherent biases towards certain language varieties being perceived as more "correct" or superior. All language variants are equally capable of being grammatical, yet standardized forms are often elevated as the "real" or accurate language. This normalized discourse can encourage prejudice, both intentional and unintentional, and must be taken seriously to avoid perpetuating harmful biases about linguistic correctness."(Curzan et al., 2023).

Somali is a language with three main mutually intelligible dialect groups: Northern (Af-Maxaa), Benaadir (Af-Benaadir), and Maay (Af-Maay). As with all languages, Somali has evolved over time, leading to linguistic variety. Af-Mahaa is the most widely spoken dialect and the basis for Standard Somali, while Af-Maay and Af-Benaadir are spoken in other regions of Somalia. Globally, Somali has around 13 million speakers and belongs to the East Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asian language family quoted by (Stadtherr, 2011).

Language standardization is a political process, where those in power typically codify the dialect of the prominent group as the standard. This can create a stigma around "dialects," which are sometimes viewed as less prestigious than the standard variety. To avoid this, linguists may prefer the term "language variety" over "dialect." (Stadtherr, 2011).

Standardizing the Somali language was a lengthy process, taking an estimated 25 years. This was due to the presence of distinct regional

lingua francas - Af-Benaadir, Af-Maxaa, and Af-Maay - across Somalia, with fear of societal upheaval hindering standardization efforts. However, the lack of a standardized Somali created challenges, such as government organizations needing to hire personnel fluent in other languages like Arabic, Italian, and English (Stadtherr, 2011). While Somali has a standardized form, it consists of a range of dialects and expressions, leading to different understandings of what is considered "correct" Somali. According to Dr. Orwin, using this standard Somali as a reference point is not useful, as it has primarily been associated with specific media outlets and not widely used by the Somali population (Country of Origin Information Centre, 2011).

Language Change and Borrowing

Somali has been impacted by its colonial past and the dominance of European languages in media, administration, and education, leading to linguistic change and borrowing that has contributed to the decline of the Somali language. This has marginalized and reduced the use of Somali in certain domains. Increased exposure to other languages due to globalization and technology has resulted in more loanwords and foreign linguistic structures. While language evolution and borrowing are natural processes that can enhance a language, it is crucial to consider the sociopolitical circumstances, linguistic policies, and socioeconomic status of Somali speakers when analyzing the language's decline. Preserving and revitalizing Somali will require concerted efforts in education, media, and cultural initiatives. Language borrowing is a normal outcome of cultural exchange between language communities (Abdi & Fitrawati, 2018).

When the Somali language was transcribed and became the national language in 1972, it was extensively used as the medium of instruction

and administration. The way in which all this was realized became a model for imitation and emulation by other countries on the African continent. But after the collapse of the Somali state, this language, which had gained such an important role for Somalis, lost most of its prestige (Bowerman, 2006). Prior to 1972, Italian and English were the official languages used in Somalia for teaching and administration, respectively, reflecting the country's colonial past. This led to the erosion of the value placed on Somali's oral tradition and mother tongue, especially among the urban population. However, in 1972, Somali was established as the official state language, and a nationwide literacy initiative resulted in Somali becoming the dominant language in government and education. This has allowed the entire Somali population to access their national heritage and strengthen their cultural identity through their mother tongue (Bowerman, 2006).

The collapse of the Somali state in 1991 and the subsequent civil war have severely damaged the development of the Somali language. Within the country, schools now primarily teach in Arabic or English, and English has become the dominant language in administration. Furthermore, foreign or hybrid names are commonly used for schools, hotels, and other entities, while Somalis often use English for numbers, dates, and times. Among the Somali diaspora, many children do not speak Somali fluently, and adults frequently mix Somali with English, even in formal settings. The names of Somali media outlets are in English, and some Somalis prefer to communicate in English rather than their mother tongue. These trends demonstrate a declining status of the Somali language, both domestically and globally, as Somalis increasingly favor foreign languages over their native tongue ." (Bowerman, 2006).

Language loyalty is demonstrated by a desire to maintain one's cultural identity and adhere to associated practices through the use of a

particular language. This commitment to preserving a language persists even in the face of adversity, as language maintenance strategies are employed to keep the language alive. Language loyalty and persistence are intertwined, with the goal of ensuring the continued use of the language that is central to one's cultural identity (Mansuur, 2015). The Somali language is deeply intertwined with a fundamental sense of identity, both on a national and individual level. A shared common language is a core element of community cohesion. If Somalis were to neglect or abandon their language, they would effectively be losing a vital part of their identity. The Somali language is the primary force that keeps the Somali community united and connected. Maintaining the Somali language is therefore essential for preserving the collective identity and social fabric of the Somali people (Mansuur, 2015).

Language changes are influenced by various factors, including social, cultural, political, and technological developments. Political forces, such as invasion and migration, can drive linguistic changes through imperfect language acquisition. Additionally, political discourse directly impacts language evolution. The rapid advancement of technology has also accelerated language changes, making it challenging for linguists to keep up with new terms and idioms. Language change is a gradual process, but the internet has significantly sped up these transformations. Social developments are a key driver of language changes, which can have unique implications as society evolves. Differences in wealth, power, and social status within a community can also lead a language to borrow from another to reference unfamiliar concepts and objects (Mantiri, 2015).

Throughout its history, the Somali language has incorporated loanwords from various languages, including Arabic, Italian, and English. Arabic terms have significantly influenced legal, educational, and religious contexts due to Islam's impact on Somali society. During

the colonial era, Italian words entered the lexicon, particularly in administrative and educational domains. Currently, English loanwords are prevalent in fields like science, technology, and popular culture. Bilingual Somali speakers frequently engage in code-switching, using multiple languages for identity expression and to fill lexical gaps. Linguistic challenges stemming from colonialism, migration, technology, and the educational system have contributed to substitutions and dilutions within the Somali language. Despite these obstacles, Somali remains the primary language for the majority of the population, and efforts are underway to maintain and advance the language.

Intergenerational Transmission

Intergenerational transmission refers to the process of passing down information, values, behaviors, customs, and other cultural components from one generation to the next within a family or group. It involves elders, such as parents and grandparents, imparting knowledge and expertise to younger generations, including children and grandchildren. This perpetuation of cultural, social, and familial traditions is crucial for the development of personal identities and societal norms. Intergenerational transmission can occur through oral communication, storytelling, observation, participation in cultural events, and formal education. Within Somali-speaking communities, the intergenerational transmission of the Somali language involves passing down linguistic proficiency and cultural identity, traditionally through oral means. However, modern challenges like urbanization, migration, and globalization have impacted the transmission and use of the Somali language cited by (Omar, 2016).

The cultures, languages, and general ways of life that the younger generation was raised in these receiving nations differ significantly from

the cultures, languages, and general ways of life that the parents of the Somali immigrants brought with them from Somalia. In addition to the USA and Australia, these cultural, linguistic, and general lifestyle disparities led to a great deal of miscommunication between Somali parents and their children in other nations where Somalis sought safety and refuge (Omar, 2016).

Somali families have traditionally consisted of extended members, including parents, children, grandparents, uncles, and aunts, often living in close proximity or under one roof. However, the Somali family structure was profoundly impacted by the 1991 civil war and the subsequent displacement. Many Somali families were separated, with spouses and children ending up in distant nations, while grandparents remained behind. Even when reunited in a new country, family members often arrived at different times, with grandparents typically arriving later. This disruption forced Somali families to adapt, with mothers frequently assuming increased caregiving and provider responsibilities. As a result, younger generations who have never visited their ancestral regions have less awareness of dialectal differences and clan/tribal affiliations compared to the first generation. Yet, there is a sincere desire within the community to overcome these barriers and maintain connections. Somali oral culture is rich, with the tradition of spoken word poetry serving as a means of storytelling (Abdullahi & Wei, 2021).

In diasporic communities, intergenerational changes are common, as different generations adapt to the customs and languages of their new home countries at varying rates, leading to tensions and internal diversity. Language loss can occur both at the individual and community levels. The first generation of immigrants, initially monolingual in their minority language, often initiates the process of community language loss. The second generation typically grows up bilingual, while the third

generation learns English first and retains some knowledge of the original tongue. By the fourth generation, individuals often become monolingual in the majority language (Ikar, 2018).

Without a doubt, language is a crucial instrument for parents and children to transmit culture (McKay & Weinstein-Shr, 1993). Particularly first-generation immigrants have a wealth of knowledge to impart to their offspring regarding their native nations, customs, and incredible voyages to the United States. The legacies of these immigrants disappear along with the languages of these stories. Without a common language between elders and youngsters, these stories cannot be passed down or recalled (Ikar, 2018).

Access to Quality Education

A major factor in the loss or survival of the Somali language is access to high-quality education. Positive effects on language retention can be achieved through literacy development, bilingual education programs, supportive language policies, strong language instruction, and a curriculum that values cultural identity. Students are more likely to become proficient and stick with the Somali language when schooling values and supports it.

Dual language education (DLE), in which two languages are utilized as the medium of instruction (MOI) in educational systems, is practiced in the majority of nations worldwide. One nation where two languages are taught as MOI at various educational levels is Somalia. Somalia has DLE practices and policies as a result (Richter et al., n.d.).

People often think in their mother tongue or first language, making it crucial for learning and generating new ideas. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that a person's language shapes their ideas and actions. When key concepts are not present in a child's language, it

becomes challenging for them to understand certain realities, as Johnson and Christensen (2008) have noted. As a result, teachers prefer to conduct instruction in students' native languages, as this supports their cognitive development and learning (Osman, n.d.). In 1972, the Somali government adopted an official orthography for the Somali language after much debate among linguists. A major point of contention was the choice between Arabic and Latin scripts. To coordinate the use of the new writing system, the government launched urban and rural literacy campaigns in 1973 and 1974, respectively. The primary goals of these campaigns were to provide school access for Somalis and support an education-based national development initiative called "School for Development (Osman, n.d.).

Mother-language instruction, using the learners' native tongue as the medium of teaching or as a subject itself, is considered a crucial component of quality education, especially for young children. (Khadka, 2018).

The survival of the Somali language and cultural identity is seriously threatened by the predominance of foreign languages, such English, in Somalia's school system. The standing and application of Somali inside the educational system may progressively be compromised by the growing use of these non-native languages as the main language of teaching. The deep societal ramifications of the Somali language's decline are noteworthy. The cultural identity and legacy of the Somali people are fundamentally based on their language. A gap between the educational experience and the cultural reality of Somali students may result from the school system's marginalization of this local tongue in favor of foreign languages.

Furthermore, the erosion of the Somali language in the classroom has the potential to exacerbate generational divides. As new generations become less fluent in their mother tongue compared to their elders, the transmission of cultural information, traditions, and values between generations is becoming increasingly arduous. To ensure equitable access to high-quality education for Somali children, it is imperative to address this deterioration of linguistic identity. Preserving the cultural and linguistic foundations of the Somali education system can be achieved by bolstering the use of the Somali language in curricula, teaching methods, and instructional materials. Doing so can therefore provide all Somali learners with a more welcoming, relevant, and empowered learning environment.

Conclusion

Globalization has significantly impacted Somali society, affecting language, culture, and identity. The rise of international languages, especially English, and the dominance of global media has marginalized the Somali language, leading to its decline in status and use. Code-switching, language borrowing, and the prevalence of English in prestigious domains have further eroded Somali.

Media and information technology are vital for political, economic, and cultural progress, but the digital divide exacerbates existing inequalities. Cultural identity in Somalia has been affected by Westernization, with traditional practices and celebrations rapidly disappearing.

The relationship between language, culture, and identity is intricate. The dominance of foreign languages undermines local

languages and cultures, leading to social and communicative implications. The process of language change and borrowing, influenced by colonial history and globalization, has added to the decline of Somali.

Intergenerational transmission of language and culture has been disrupted by displacement and migration, impacting the traditional extended family structure. Maintaining Somali language and cultural identity in the diaspora presents challenges, with younger generations often more fluent in the languages of their new countries.

Access to quality education is crucial for the survival of the Somali language. Literacy development, bilingual education programs, supportive language policies, and culturally relevant curricula can aid language retention. The predominance of foreign languages in Somalia's education system threatens the status and use of Somali, exacerbating generational divides and cultural disconnection.

Recommendations

1. Promote Somali Language Media:

- Encourage the creation and support of media outlets that use the Somali language. This includes television, radio, and online platforms that can reach a wide audience, particularly the younger generation.

2. Enhance Language Education:

- Implement bilingual education programs that prioritize Somali alongside international languages. Ensure that Somali is taught as a primary language in schools and

integrated into the curriculum to strengthen language skills and cultural knowledge among students.

3. Cultural Preservation Initiatives:

- Support initiatives that celebrate and preserve Somali cultural practices, such as storytelling, poetry, and traditional arts. This can include community events, cultural festivals, and the incorporation of these elements into educational programs.

4. Address the Digital Divide:

- Improve access to digital technologies and media for all Somalis, particularly in rural areas. This can help bridge the gap between different socio-economic groups and provide more equitable opportunities for learning and cultural engagement.

5. Language Standardization and Policy:

- Continue efforts to standardize the Somali language and promote its use in official and educational contexts. Develop language policies that support the use of Somali in government, administration, and public services.

6. Support for Somali Diaspora:

- Encourage the Somali diaspora to maintain their linguistic and cultural ties to Somalia. This can include community programs, language classes, and cultural events that foster a sense of belonging and identity among Somali immigrants and their descendants.

7. Intergenerational Transmission:

- Facilitate intergenerational transmission of the Somali language and culture through family-centered initiatives. Encourage elders to share their knowledge and stories with younger generations, both within Somalia and in the diaspora.

8. Research and Documentation:

- Invest in research and documentation of Somali language and culture. This can involve linguistic studies, the creation of dictionaries, and the recording of oral histories and cultural practices.

References

- 54_S.J. HOBEN - *Language issues and education in Somalia.pdf*. (n.d.).
- Abdi, S., & Fitrawati, F. (2018). Sound and Semantic Change in Language Borrowing : the Case of Minangkabau Word Borrowed Into Indonesia. *E-Journal of English Language and Literature*, 7(1). <http://ejournal.unp.ac.id/index.php/ell/article/view/9913>
- Abdullahi, S. B., & Wei, L. (2021). Living with diversity and change: Intergenerational differences in language and identity in the Somali community in Britain. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2021(269), 15–45. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2020-0007>
- Andrzejewski, B. W. (1979). Language Reform in Somalia and the Modernization of Somali Vocabulary. In *Northeast African Studies* (Vol. 1, Issue 3, pp. 59–71). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43660021>
- Biber, D., & Hared, M. (1992). Dimensions of register variation in Somali. *Language Variation and Change*, 4(1), 41–75. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S095439450000065X>
- Bowerman, S. (2006). Language Loyalty. In *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics* (pp. 539–541). <https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/01288-8>
- Buckingham, D., Sefton-Green, J., Allison, A., & Iwabuchi, K. (2020). Pikachu's Global Adventure. In *Pikachu's Global Adventure*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822385813>
- Country of Origin Information Centre. (2011). *Report Somalia : dialects Language situation and*. 1–23.
- Curzan, A., M.queen, R., Vaneyk, K., & Weissler, R. E. (2023). Language Standardization & Linguistic Subordination. *Daedalus*, 152(3), 18–35. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_02015
- Diesow, A. M., Abdi, O., & Qasaye, M. (2024). *Globalization Impact on Somalia , Looking Positive and Negative*. March. <https://doi.org/10.21275/SR22928013053>
- Eno, M. A. (2008). *The Bantu-Jareer Somalis : unearthing apartheid in the Horn of Africa*.

- Eno, M. A., Eno, O. A., & Dammak, A. (2016). From linguistic imperialism to language domination: “linguicism” and ethno-linguistic politics in somalia. *Journal of Somali Studies*, 3(1–2), 9–52. <https://doi.org/10.10520/EJC194856>
- Hassan, A. (2017). “Where Did You Leave the Somali Language?” *Language Usage and Identity of Somali Males in America*. http://repository.stcloudstate.edu/engl_etds/106
- Ikar, A. (2018). *Somali-English bilingualism: Somali parents’ beliefs and strategies for raising bilingual children*. http://repository.stcloudstate.edu/engl_etds/137
- K Dayanand, A. (2020). Hypothesis Types and Research. *International Journal of Nursing Science Practice and Research*, 4(2), 78–80.
- Khadka, B. K. (2018). Mother Tongue Education: A Quest of Quality and Access in Education. *Journal of NELTA Surkhet*, 5, 65–74. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jns.v5i0.19489>
- Mansuur, C. C. (2015). Language loyalty. The case of Somali language. *Afrikas Horn. Horn of Africa Journal*, 1–7. <https://wardheernews.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/The-case-of-Somali-language-By-Abdalla-Manur.pdf>
- Mantiri, O. (2015). Factors Affecting Language Change. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, October. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2566128>
- Mukhtar, M. H. (2013). Multilingual Somalia. *SGMOIK-Bulletin*, 37, 16–21. <https://doi.org/10.12685/bul.37.2013.960>
- Natsir, N., Aliah, N., Zulkhaeriyah, Z., Amiruddin, A., & Esmianti, F. (2023). the Impact of Language Changes Caused By Technology and Social Media. *Language Literacy: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching*, 7(1), 115–124. <https://doi.org/10.30743/ll.v7i1.7021>
- New York University. (2012). *Somalia Language & Culture*. 1–19. https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/xr1/Language_n_Cultural_Awareness/SomaliaLanguageCultureUpdate.pdf
- Omar, Y. S. (2016). *Intergenerational Conflict in the Somali Diaspora: The Perspectives of Young Somali Men in Australia and USA*. 1, 77–104.
- Osman, S. (n.d.). *The Importance of Mother Tongue as Language of Instruction in Light of African Experiences*. 25–44.

- Puglielli, A. (2014). The somali language lexical project: Aims and methods. *Discrimination through Language in Africa?: Perspectives on the Namibian Experience*, 123–137. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110906677.123>
- Ramlan. (2018). Language Standardization in General. *Budapest International Research And Critics Institute (BIRCI-Journal): Humanities And Social Sciences*, I(February), 27–33. <file:///D:/Users/mtc/Downloads/4-7-4-PB.pdf>
- Richter, L. E., Carlos, A., & Beber, D. M. (n.d.). No 主観的健康感を中心とした在宅高齢者における健康関連指標に関する共分散構造分析Title. 14–64.
- Somaliland, F. (1991). 8 - Somali : some information Aim : To provide a brief overview of one of the languages spoken by large numbers of. 1–2.
- Song, S., & Kim, D. (2022). The Effects of Globalization on Korea. *Korea Observer*, 53(1), 135–159. <https://doi.org/10.29152/KOIKS.2022.53.1.135>
- Stadtherr, A. (2011). *Cornerstone : A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University , Mankato Reading Comprehension in the Secondary Classroom*.
- Wolfger, T. M. (2001). *The development of the national language of Somalia Through which processes did Somali develop into it ? 1*. 90–111.