

**Language change and language shift: the challenging factors to linguistic diversity:  
the case of Zay**

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*Africa is considered to be the right spot for investigating the diversity of languages. For a long period of time, it was believed that almost all African countries experienced a multilingual situation in which different cultures, traditions, as well as religions were adopted and expressed at different levels. However, the continuous influence of foregoing languages, which has been further strengthened by globalization, strongly is challenging the persistence of this type of linguistic diversity in Africa.*

*It is well known that most African languages undergo language change and language shift in the majority of cases triggered by language contact. Although, it is natural that languages are always in a competitive nature, the intensity of language shift and change has posed a serious concern to sociolinguists. Language change and language shift are greatly influencing the language profile of Ethiopia, which in-turn brings about language death. Zay, which is spoken by a limited number of people on the islands of Lake Zway presents an interesting case for the discussion of this issue. Data has been gathered from different age groups of native speakers of the language and presented to describe the situation of language change and shift. About fifty native speakers of the language from three different age groups were considered. The research finding indicates that, the language has undergone a continuous change and the majority of the speakers have shifted to the neighboring dominant languages where most of them became monolingual in the dominant languages. Therefore, currently the language can be described as an endangered language for the fact that its transmission to the next generation has ceased. The paper further attempts to make some generalizations about the impact of language change and language shift on minority Ethiopian languages with particular emphasis on Zay.*