Discursive Strategies of 'Oromara': A Critical Discourse Analysis of Abiy Ahmed's Political Rhetoric

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Abstract

This article analyzes the political rhetoric Abiy Ahmed used to advocate integration between the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups, recasting it as "Oromara." Its objectives are: identifying the rhetorical devices and discursive strategies used in the integration of the Oromara, examining how integration of the groups is discursively constructed, describing the message characteristics of the interview texts, and explaining how political rhetoric, power and ideology are linked to play advocacy role for further reinforcing the integration of the groups. To attain these objectives, the interview Abiy had with Amhara television journalist on 13 November, 2017 was selected using purposive sampling. The interview data was changed into written forms using line based transcription system, and analyzed thematically. Fairclough's (1992) model of discourse analysis was used in the analysis. The findings show that rhetorical devices (simile, repetition, parallelism and analogy, metaphor and metonymy) are employed in the text. The macro-discursive strategies used in the interview include accommodative, normalization, constructive and genericizing. The interview text communicated both negative (hostility, revenge, detestation, distrust, conflict and retaliation) and positive (integration, trust, forgiveness, peace and adoration) messages. The negative descriptors portray unity of the groups as a threat for political system designed for the last 27 years, whereas the positive descriptors indicate that discourse of the Oromara is a key to bring systemic change in the country. The binary descriptors explain the divide and rule system constructed by the monopolized political power on the one hand, and the power of integration to topple the system on the other.

Keywords: political rhetoric, rhetorical device, discursive strategy, critical discourse analysis

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Introduction

This article analyzes the political rhetoric Abiy Ahmed used in the interview he had with Amhara television in response to the political instability in Ethiopia. Rhetoric, the use of language for persuasive purpose, is central to any political activity. A good rhetorical skill enables political leaders construct persuasive arguments and produce evidence for their arguments (Chilton, 2004; Zaleska, 2012 and Condor, Tileaga & Billig, 2013). Bayram (2010) argues that the success of a political struggle over power is determined by the rhetorical skills of the politicians involved in a situation. Higgins and Walker (2012) state that rhetorical skill portrays a speaker's credibility and an audience's desire by presenting specific details of facts that appeal to hopes of the audience. Browning and Hartelius (2018) argue that rhetorical skill constitute and construct social connections and divisions. This inevitably depends on the why and how political leaders use language in their rhetoric. Chilton (2004) as well as Wodak and Chilton (2005) write that politicians use argumentative language to perform political activities and to give political decision that benefit people. According to Bayram (2010) politicians use language to gain, to exercise and to sustain political power.

The language political leaders use include metaphor, irony, repetition, analogy, metonymy, etc. This is to steer and control people's thoughts and beliefs in a given political context (Gee, 2011 & Al-faki, 2014). Political discourse analysts see these elements as rhetorical devices that realize the discourse strategies employed in a political talk to construct, mitigate, and perpetuate, etc. the domestic and national identity[1] of a given society (Van Leeuwen, 2008 & Wodak, et al., 2009). According to Van Dijk (2004), Browning and Hartelius (2018) and Bayram (2010), the use of language in politics is a powerful weapon to get into a political ideology and power which delineate social connections and divisions. Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA unmasks the ideology and power embedded in the rhetoric of political leaders. It advocates change through disclosing the disempowering strategies used by the powerful group in a given context (Fairclough, 1992; Wodak, 2001; Van Dijk, 2004; Gee, 2005). This article uses CDA to explain the discursive advocacy Abiy used to integrate the Oromo and the Amhara ethnic groups as a counter-discourse for the disuniting strategy the

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[1] What "national identity" stands for is controversial. Mostly it is assumed that it involves certain fundamental features that include the occupying common historic territory/homeland, having common myth and historical memories, sharing common mass public culture, exercising common legal rights and duties for all members and a common economy with territorial mobility for members (Malesevic, 2006 & Smith, 1999).

ruling party the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic front (EPRDF) used to employ[2] against the people.

Statement of the problem and objectives

The political rhetoric of the past and the present Ethiopian rulers is mostly entangled with the unitary and pluralistic strategies used in the attempt to address unity and difference of the ethnic groups in the country respectively. The imperial (1930-1974) and the socialist (1974-1991) political systems were characterized by assimilative rhetoric that imposed the "One size fits all" ideology on the ethnic groups of the country. For instance, the systems allowed only one language to publicize chronicles and legitimize state power with the assumption of bringing national unity through one language. The use of more than one language is considered as a threat for national unity and a hindrance for development. This raised ethnic identity questions which the systems failed to address (Keller & Smith, 2005; Bassi & Gemechu, 2008; Yosef, 2016).

The federal system of Ethiopia (since 1991) has attempted to change the unitary political discourse to pluralistic discourses having the intention to promote diversities. In the first few years of the transition period, following the coming to power of EPRDF, the system had promoted multi-party system. However, not long after the transition period, EPRDF systemically changed its political rhetoric, violated the human and democratic rights of citizens, and forced some opposition parties to withdraw (Smith, 2007 & Bach, 2014). Vaughan and Tronvoll (2003, p. 19) state that "A decade after EPRDF came to power, human right violation occurs throughout the country." Keller and Smith (2005) and Bach (2013) disclose that EPRDF violated the constitutional rights of the citizen by quickly changing the holding together federation to the putting together pattern to impose federalism from the top down to the people. In this case, Ethiopia became much more like a centralized unitary state with power residing at the center. To maintain this power, EPRDF preferred to use political rhetoric of divide and rule that created distrust among the ethnic groups in Ethiopia (Aalen, 2002; Keller, 2003).

The Oromo and the Amhara, the two big ethnic groups in Ethiopia, were mainly targeted by the systemic distrust of EPRDF. The groups were systemically forced to be hostile to each other emphasizing the wrongdoing of the past and deemphasizing the good ones. They have also been economically, socially and

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[2] See Siraw (2015) and Abbink (2011) for further details of the discussions of divide and rule strategy EPRDF.

politically disempowered by the system. This escalated people's grievance and resulted in revolutionary mass protest in Oromia and Amhara Regional States against the front for the political, economic and social injustices prevailing in the country. In response to this grievance, and partly to cool down the protest on the other hand, EPRDF took the initiative to reform itself. As part of the national reform, a good number of officials from OPDO[3] and ANDM[4] have been substituted by other members of the parties. Those who came to be outspoken and visible came up with the idea of coalition making between ethnic groups. As part of the coalition making, they had peace conference that targeted integration of the two ethnic groups using the label Oromara. It was held in Bahir Dar, the seat of the Amhara regional administration, on 12 November 2017 with the intention of combating the corrupted political system.

Abiy Ahmed, who was one of the new OPDO officials to participate in the peace conference, had an interview with the Amhara television on 13 November, 2017[5]. The purpose of the interview was to advocate Oromara, and through that, to find solution to the political and economic instability of the country. The political rhetoric he used in the interview for advocacy counteracts the discourses that created discordant relations between the two people.

The main objectives of this article are to: identify the rhetorical devices and discursive strategies Abiy employed to advocate integration of Oromara; examine how Abiy discursively constructed to bring unity; describe the messages of the interview; and explain the nexus between representation, power and ideology to advocate integration of Oromara.

Political rhetoric and rhetorical devices

As an area of inquiry in the social sciences and humanities, political rhetoric is seen as a strategy used to construct persuasive arguments in political disputes. The strategy helps politicians to produce evidence and persuade people to accept a given political ideology (Condor, Tileaga and Billig, 2013; Zaleska, 2012). Van Dijk (2006) states that political ideology frames the rhetoric political leaders employ to influence people. It guides the overall political practices, fundamental norms and values of a party. According to Heywood (2017), political ideology is a

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[3] OPDO - Oromo People Democratic Organization
[4] ANDM- Amhara National Democratic Movement
[5] The interview is available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCxqbFRYtWU

weapon used by politicians in their rhetoric to devalue their rivals' sets of ideas or belief system.

In politics, rhetoric is conceived as the hub of winning public attentions to achieve certain goals. Kane and Patapan (2010) present rhetoric as the center of public discussion, debate and grassroots political action. Williams, Young and Launer (2012) also present that rhetoric is an act of dealing with the dynamic relationships among speaker, text, audience, and situation. Williams et al. (2012) argue that in any political rhetoric, there are a rhetor, audience and purpose which in the Aristotelian term are called 'rhetorical triangle'. Rhetor's ability determines his/her success when communicating purposes to audience. According to Crick (2014, p. viii), "…a rhetor's persuasive skill determines to impact the behaviors of other people with respect to some goal or interest that functions in response to an exigency." Bayram (2010) also states that rhetorical skill enables politicians put certain political, economic and social ideas into practice through decision making, agenda setting and resource controlling.

Rhetorical skills appeal to authority, reasoning and emotion. Appeal to authority portrays speaker's credibility and trustworthiness with his/her audience. Appeal to reasoning clarifies the main idea and specific details of facts and statistics that the speakers use to back up their intentions. Appeal to emotions addresses values, desires, and hopes of the audience that the speakers or writers intended to communicate (Hartelius & Browning, 2018; Holt & MacPherson, 2010).

Rhetorical devices are linguistic means of persuading people to take specified political actions and realize the discursive practices and strategies used in a given communicative context (Zaleska, 2012 & Kwon, et al., 2013). Bradford (1997) puts rhetorical devices as art of speaking. According to Otieno (2015, p. 80), rhetorical devices are "Set of formal devices that should be used to achieve the desired persuasive or rhetorical effects." This shows that rhetorical devices are productive and alternative ways of using language to describe, construct, maintain and change circumstances in which people live.

The rhetorical devices often used in political rhetoric include metaphor, analogy, simile, metonym, synecdoche, paradox and euphemism (Mailloux, 1989; Sharon & Hawhee, 2004; Van Dijk, 2006; Kwon et al., 2013). Metaphor constructs realities by comparing things implicitly. Analogy compares two things in which the more complex one is explained in terms of the simpler one. Unlike metaphor and analogy, simil compares two things explicitly using '…like…, and…as…'(Robert, 2010). Metonymy and synecdoche substitute a person and an event with a place, users of an object with the object itself, and a group with the

period they lived, etc. (Wodak et al., 2009 & Blackledge, 2005). Paradox presents conflicting ideas that seem impossible to bring them together, and euphemism makes offensive social realities inoffensive (Van Dijk 1997; Kwon et al., 2013). Zubair (2007) and Cameron (1999) stress that everyday discursive practices are interspersed with these rhetorical devices. As one of the everyday practices, political rhetoric is rich in rhetorical devices that impact people to accept or reject a given political ideology. The analysis made on rhetorical devices used by celebrity politicians show that winning opponents and maximizing supporters are highly dependent on one's use of rhetorical devices.

Wang (2010) analyzed Obama's presidential speech which won favorite response from the American people. Wang applied CDA to uncover the ideologies and the power relationships embodied in Obama's rhetorical devices. Analyzing the political rhetoric of selected African leaders, Al-faki (2014) disclosed that the leaders employed manipulative metaphor, repetition, parallelism, inclusive pronoun and analogy against their opponents to stay on power. Williams et al. (2012) also analyzed the rhetorical devices Putin used in his inaugural speech. The analysis portrayed that rhetorical devices enabled him to tie democratization to prosperity, freedom and unity. Bayram (2010) identified the linguistic devices used in the discourse of political debates of President Erdogan of Turkey on the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2009.

Discursive strategy

In most literature, discursive strategy is perceived as a more or less intentional plan designed to achieve certain goals (Kwon, et al., 2013; Vaara et. al., 2010; Wodak et al., 2009). A strategy is designed in accordance with the macro- and micro socio- political functions and ideologies that a given context demands. For instance, the strategies leaders design to use in a hegemonic socio-political context is beset by inequalities. In a liberal political context leaders design and use strategies that provide individuals and groups equal opportunity to participate in the social, economic and political practices (Van Dijk, 2009; Wodak, 1996; Wodak et al., 2009).

Wodak et al. (2009) identified constructive, justifying, destructive, etc. strategies used in the discursive construction of Austrian national identity. In the opinion of these authors, constructive strategy attempts to establish certain national mark by promoting unification. Justifying strategy also aims at conserving the status quo by legitimizing past actions and events based on the common self-perception of dominant group in Austria. Both strategies are used to keep national unity and restore threatened similarity of the Austrian people. Destructive strategy

aims at dismantling parts of the national identity. Blackledge (2005) indicates that often in politics, destructive strategy is used by the dominant group to systematically dismantle parts of the existing norms and show formal change without bringing a new model to substitute the older one.

Wodak and Reisgl (2001) discussed discursive strategies such as predication, perspectivation, and argumentation. They note that predication strategy replaces members of an out-group with the objects they use, the place where they live, the types of occupation they have, etc. Perspectivation helps participants to position their point of views in their descriptions, narrations or quotations of relevant events or utterances. Argumentative strategy enables participants to compare and contrast views, and select the one that is relevant to their context (Wodak et al., 2009; Blacklege, 2005).

In a more specific sense, Wodak (2011) identified encouraging, directing, modulating, etc. strategies used by leaders of a given institution in her country. Encouraging strategy enables the leaders to engage members of their team contribute to achieve institutional goals. Leaders direct their team members to contribute to their institutional decision making. Similarly, modulating strategy of the leaders enables team members to actively participate in the decisions expected to be made for the success of their institutional goals. Therefore, discursive strategy can produce and can be produced by ideology of the participants embedded in texts and contexts of a given sociopolitical milieu.

According to Fairclough (1995); Van Dijk, (1998) and Jorgenson and Phillips (2002), ideology creates discriminatory discursive political context from which power emanates for the actors. It also contributes to establish, maintain and change social relations of power, domination and exploitation (Van Dijk, 2006; Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). Gee (2008, p. 28) sees ideology as "An upside-down version of reality." Van Daijk (1998) puts ideology as the system of misguiding or misleading beliefs. These writers present ideology negatively.

Ideologically-oriented texts sustain claimed and stipulated perspectives of social groups with reference to relations of power (Fairclough, 1992; Van Dijk, 1997). As the power of any discourse, participants can be seen as power in discourse, and power behind discourse. Power in discourse is seen as a place where relations of power are actually exercised and enacted based on the status of the discourse participants. Usually, powerful participants are expected to use dominant discourses that influence the powerless group (Van Dijk, 1998; Popova, 2012). Power beyond discourse focuses on how orders of discourse are shaped and constituted by relations of power. It can be seen in the way that the non-discursive practices influence, and are influenced by discursive practices (Fairclough, 1995

and Weiss & Wodak, 2005). A difference in power results in inequality between groups (Van Dijk, 1997). Uncovering such an obscured ideology and power inequality that frame the discursive strategies used in a given milieu is the tenet of CDA.

Kirvalidze (2016) states that political rhetoric is ideologically (re)charged. This can be analyzed from the political, linguistic, psychological and individual-hermeneutic points of view. The political point of view of rhetoric examines the logical nature of political discourse. The linguistic point of view analyzes textual aspect of discourse that politicians use to influence their audience. The psychological point of view reveals the discursive strategies employed in the political discourse analysis. Finally, the individual hermeneutic point of view exposes the speaker's personal attitude towards the target political situation. This article analyzes Abiy Ahmed's political rhetoric from the linguistics, the psychological and individual hermeneutic points of view to examine the rhetorical devices and the discursive strategies he used in connection with the Oromara movement.

Methodology

Qualitative methodology, which is constructivist in orientation (Creswell, 2007; Doreinyi, 2007), is used to frame the data collected and analyzed in this study. Within this methodological frame, Fairclough's (1992) three dimensional analytical model (description, interpretation and explanation) and Wodak's (2001) discourse-historical model were employed to capture the intentions Abiy tries to address as well as to incorporate the historical information used and the contemporary problems disclosed to inspire people for the planned commonality between the Oromo and the Amhara.

The data source is the interview Abiy had with the Amhara television on the 13th of November, 2017. The interview data was obtained using a purposive sampling technique, and retrieved on 12 April, 2018 from the Amhara television YouTube. The rationale for selecting this video clip arises from understanding the richness of the interview with rhetorical devices, the deviated discursive strategies it contains, and the reformative nature of the rhetorical devices and the discursive strategies used in the interview to find solution for the political and economic instability in Ethiopia.

The retrieved video data was transcribed following Chafe's (2001) and Gee's (2005) line-based transcription method which focuses on the general features of the spoken text. It allows analysts to put the data in clausal or sentential form. The data was translated from Afan Oromo into the English language,

thematically categorized, described and explained under the themes identified in connection with the objectives of the study.

Data analysis

This section analyzes the rhetorical devices and the discursive strategies Abiy employed in the interview in connection with the idea of Oromara. The analysis begins with describing the rhetorical devices used in the interview. This is made to identify the messages communicated through the devices in connection with the sociopolitical contexts of Ethiopia. Descriptions of the devices are amalgamated with their contexts of production, consumption and distribution for interpretation to examine the evolution of the contemporary circumstances of the divisive Ethiopian politics. This enables the researcher to examine how Abiy framed and constructed his argument, and how the rhetorical devices and strategies he employed presented convincing arguments that could appeal to the feelings of the target audience. Based on the interpretations made on the text and context situations, explanation is given to unmask the ideology and the power relationship embedded in the text and the context of political rhetoric.

Discursive strategies and rhetorical devices used in the interview

Discursive strategies that are realized through various rhetorical devices are identified from the interview Abiy had with Amhara television. The macro-discursive strategies include *accommodative, normalizing, constructive* and *genericizing.* These strategies contain micro-strategies. Analysis of each of the strategy begins with description of the rhetorical devices used in the specific data taken from the interview text.

Accommodative strategy

Abiy used accommodative strategy as opposed to the non-accommodative one utilized by his predecessors in his political rhetoric. Apparently, he employed the strategy to increase the size of his supporters and reduce his opponents. In addition, Abiy used accommodative strategy to counteract the secessionist discourse that the Oromos are accused of. Hence, the strategy is additive and at the same time, subtractive. This macro-strategy is accomplished through micro-strategies such as *coalition making, associating* and *rationalizing*. In what follows, these strategies are examined after describing the rhetorical devices utilized to realize them.

Coalition making

Coalition making is the micro-strategy that was planned to make alliance with ethnic groups other than the Oromo. The intension at the time seemed to involve the groups in the movement named '*Qeerroo*'. As observed from the data, the reform seeking politicians from OPDO and the ANDM agreed to prepare forum at which they can freely express their opinions regarding the Oromo-Amhara relation. The plan was systematically handled by regional government officials of the two groups. It was successfully accomplished, and the officials got a chance to exchange their plans to stand together and challenge the corrupted and abusive governance system.

The regional government officials of the Oromo and the Amhara Regional States started intra- and inter-regional peace conferences without the intrusion of the federal government. One of the quasi political gestures OPDO made to get alliance with the Amhara politicians and people was weeding water hyacinth (known locally as emboch) on Lake Tana[6]. As the Federal Government failed to take action in time, Abiy (long before he became premiere) led two hundred young people from the Oromia Region and went to Bair Dar to assist the cleaning activity.

The youths who went to the region to clean the lake chanted the slogan '*Harri Xaanaa keenyaa!*' 'ጣና ሐይቅ የኛ ነዉ!' 'Tana Lake is ours!' and '*Hara maan hara keenya hinballeessu*' 'እምበጭ ሐይቃችንን አያጠፋም' '*Water hyacinth should not be allowed to dry the lake*'. These words mean many things. One is inclusion. The possessive pronoun *'keenyaa'*, ('የኛ' or 'ours') used in the expression shows fraternity between the two ethnic groups. The expression overtly announced that only their confluence can resolve the political crises that the country has been facing. Water hyacinth is the metaphorical representation of the apparent discord between the two groups and clearing the water hyacinth was supposed to portray the differences behind.

The other discursive practice used by Abiy and his colleagues was to initiate peacemaking conference, which was held in Bahir Dar involving community elders, religious leaders and officials from both groups. The objective of the conference was to bridge the gap between the two ethnic groups. The attendants from both sides reached the understanding that the major cause for the political and

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[6] The encroachment of the weed on Lake Tana, which is the largest fresh water body in the country and is very much intertwined with the daily life of the Amhara people as it is the main source of recreation, tourism and fishery for the community, has made both the people and the government of the Amhara regional state very much worried.

economic crises in Ethiopia to this day is somehow related to lack of unity between the two major groups. The effort was soon publicized through social media. Then the portmanteau አሮማራ "Oromara" reverberated.

The alliance epitomized by the label Oromara was mainly employed to counteract the attitude that the two ethnic groups have always been at loggerheads. It has been public knowledge that the TPLF-led EPRDF was busy in labeling the Amhara as chauvinists and the Oromo to be narrow nationalists – a propaganda that presumed any collaborative effort between the two ethnic groups as a threat to the political system that established itself on the policy of divide and rule.

Associating strategy

Association is one of the strategies Abiy used in the interview to articulate the symbiotic relation between the Oromo and the Amhara ethnic groups. Abiy likened the interdependence between the groups using the expression ሠርገኛ ጤፍ (*sergegna teff*) 'mixed white and red teff'[7]. The following extract is taken from the interview text.

(1)

(1)	የኦሮሞና የአማራ ሕዝብ እንደ– ሠርገኛ ጤፍ ነው	The Oromo and the Amhara are like mixed white and red teff.
(2)	ሠርገኛ ጤፍን በወንፈት አትለየውም	You cannot separate mixed white and red teff using a sieve.
(3)	ሠርገኛ ጤፍ አብሮ ይፈጨል	Mixed red and white teff is grounded together.
(4)	ሠርገኛ ጤፍ አብሮ ይቦካል	Red and white mixed teff is kneaded together.
(5)	ሠርገኛ ጤፍ አብሮ ይጋገራል	Mixed red and white teff is baked as injera together.
(6)	ሠርገኛ ጤፍ አብሮ ይበላል	Mixed red and white teff is eaten together.
(7)	ይህ ሕዝብ እንደዚሁ ነው	This people is like this…

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[7] Teff, one of the main crops produced in Ethiopia, has different colors: 'ቀይ' 'red', 'ነጭ' 'white' and 'ሠርገኛ' 'mixed red and white teff'. Farmers store red and white teff separately so that their identities can easily be maintained. However, it is difficult to separate if the red and white teff are mixed.

(8)	አንዱ ካንዱ እንዳይለይ ሆኖ የተዋደዱ ናቸው	They are allied to the extent that they are inseparables.

The designation *sergegna teff* by which the relationship between the Oromo and the Amhara is expressed has been a popular trope employed to depict organic unity. Abiy has used further rhetorical devices surrounding the trope. One is a simile 'እንደ ሠርገኛ ጤፍ' (literally "like *sergegna teff*"). The prefix እንደ- 'like' attached to the noun phrase must have enabled the conveners as well as those who had a chance to come across the message of strong bond between the Oromo and Amhara people have.

Another rhetorical device used in the extract is repetition. Abiy intentionally repeated the phrase *sergegna teff* and the word 'አብረው' 'together' at the beginning of lines 2-6 of the extract to render more emphasis to the bondage between the groups. This anaphora - repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, sentences (Robert, 2010), makes the idea more coherent to help the audience understand the intended mutual interdependence between the Oromo and the Amhara from the given contextual clue. Most of the sentences containing the phrase and the word repeated in the lines are simple and affirmative. The sentences are presented in a similar form that provides a certain pattern, and produced congenial regularity of the lines in the extract. They show what happens to the blend when people consume it to magnify the existing shared experiences between the groups.

Abiy intentionally used the adjective 'ሠርገኛ' (*sergegna*) to represent the inextricably entangled identities of the Oromo and the Amhara people. Using rhetorical devices such as alliteration - "the recurrence of initial consonant sounds" (Albashir & Alfaki, 2015, p. 30), and assonance - repetition of words that contain the same vowel sounds (Robert, 2010), Abiy magnifies the inseparable nature of the ethnic groups. Both rhetorical devices are realized in the expressions represented with the lines (3-6). The syntactic structures of the expressions are parallel. According to Maadia (1985) and Kayam (2014), politicians use parallel expressions in their speech to absorb the intended messages more effectively and retain and transmit them, and clarify the relationship between the messages. Using the analogy of the inseparable nature of *sergegna teff*, Abiy described the interdependence and the interconnection in marriage, religion, culture, etc. between the two groups. Such facts of the symbioses among the groups have been silenced over the years for political consumption.

There has been a widespread assumption that the TPLF-led EPRDF considers unity of the Oromo and the Amhara as a potential threat of its power. If

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the group comes together, they might get the opportunity to question the malpractices and power abuse of the politicians. The impetus to consider unity of the Oromo and the Amhara ethnic groups as a threat has thus arisen from such interest in power monopoly. The illocutionary function of the use of the phrase 'እንደ ሠርገኛ ጤፍ (*ende sergegna teff*, which literally means "as is the case with the *segegna teff*"), then, seems to activate and restore the mutual interdependence of the groups which has been assumed to be severe.

Rationalizing strategy

Rationalizing strategy legitimizes values by referring to the instrumental accounts of the widely accepted practices or beliefs within a particular sociopolitical context. Vaara et al. (2006) points out that rationalizing is a means to legitimize certain practices by giving explanation and justification. Abiy rationalizes the practices and values of *medemer* taking exemplary figures and situations from the past experiences of the Oromo and the Amhara, where they had a successful victory in their shared history. Consider the following extract.

(2)

(9) ኦሮሞና አማራ በታሪክ ዘመናቸው አብሮ በመኖር በመደመር አብሮነት ጉልበት እንደሆነ ጥሩ ማሳያ የነበረ ሕዝብ ነው	In their history, the Oromo and the Amhara were exemplary for the power that togetherness has.
(11) በፋሲል ቤተ-መንግስት ግንባታ ስንወስድ የሱስንዮስ ልጅ የሆኑት አቶ ፋሲል ከኦሮሞ ቤተሰብ ጋር የደም መጋራት አለበት	Fasil, the son of Susenios, who built the Fasil Palace has blood relation with the Oromo.
(12) ሕዝቡ ቤተ-መንግስቱን በመገንባት ብቻ ሳይሆን በርካታ የወሎ የሱልጣን ምጋሳ ወታደሮች ጥበቃ እንዳደረጉለት ይነገራል	Other than the participation of the populace in the construction of the palace, the adopted Sultan soldiers of Wallo were guarding it.
(19) የሕዝብ መደመር፤ የሕዝብ አንድ መሆን በአድዋ ድልም ራስን የመከላከል ዘመቻ በማድረግ ማሸነፍ ቻለዋል	People's unity and alliance enabled us to get glorious victory at the battle of Adowa.

The extract began by representing the Oromo and the Amhara ethnic groups with the word 'ሕዝብ' 'people' (one people). The word is repeatedly used in (9, 12 and 19) to render emphasis on the integration of the groups. The other repeatedly used word is ' መደመር (literally summation) (9 and 19). This word is synonymous

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to the phrase '*አንድ መሆን*' 'becoming one' (19). Thus, the history of the Oromo and the Amhara is conceived as a history of unity and oneness. The extract alluded to events in King Fasil's castle in the 17ᵗʰ century and the Battle of Adowa (at the end of the 19ᵗʰ century) as success stories which helped the two people wield unity. Abiy also underlined that the Oromo had active role in the construction of the castle and later on in its protection.

Constructive strategy

As one of the macro-strategies identified from Abiy's political rhetoric, constructive strategy promotes unity and solidarity. The strategy capitalizes on constructing national identity of a nation without devaluing the regional identities of the people (Wodak, et al., 2009). The constructive strategy Abiy used includes *unifying, neutralizing* and *(de)emphasizing* micro-strategies. In what follows, the micro-strategies and the rhetorical devices that realize them will be described using the extracts taken from the interview texts.

Unifying strategy

Unifying is one of the strategies identified from the interview Abiy had with the Amhara television. Unifying brings people together and integrates them for a common goal. Wishing the unity of ethnic groups in Ethiopia, Abiy generated the philosophy of መደመር (*medemer*, roughly put synergy). With this ideology, he promises to substitute the divide and rule system with unity, detestation with adoration, and retaliation with forgiveness. The use of words opposite in meaning is one of the alternative ways he employed to communicate the meanings. Consider the following extract.

(4)

(22)	ስንደመር፤ አንድ ስንሆን ማንኛውንም ቸግር ለማሽነፍ ብቃት እንዳለን፤ ስንበተን፤ ስንለያይ ደግሞ በዚያው ልክ የምንጠቃና የምንጠፋ እንሆናለን	We get the capacity to solve any problem when we come together and unite; we will be victimized and we will disappear when dispersed and separated.
(23)	የሁለቱ ሕዝቦች ታሪክ በመደመር ውስጥ፤ በመዋሃድ ውስጥ፤ ሃይልና ብቃት የሚፍጥር ስለሆነ	The history of the two people has the ability to create power and efficiency through unity and synergy.

(39)	ታሪክ አጥፊም አልሚም ነገር የያዘነውና በአብዛኛው የጎላ ጎን ግን ልማት ነው	History has both harmful and useful aspects, and it is the later that is notable.
(40)	አንድነት ነው	What needs to be capitalized on is unity.
(41)	ሰላም ነው	It is peace.

The philosophy behind 'መደመር' can have both sociological and numerical orientations. Sociologically, the whole is greater than the agglomeration of its parts (Islam, et al., 2006; Dasgupta, et al., 1999). The numerical orientation behind using the word *medemer* may depict that the collective whole can be equal to the sum of its parts (Kubovy & Berg, 2008). In this view, it is inevitable that the parts lose their identities in the process of becoming the whole. Hence, the *medemer* scheme can be complimentary to 'andinet' (unity) rhetoric of the imperial and socialist regimes of Ethhiopia. Abiy used the word 'መዋሃድ' (*mewahad*) 'getting unified' (23) as a synonym fore the word medemer. This seems to promise the nostalgic sense of one- language, one- nation motto which delegitimizes cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversities in the country.

The ideology of *medemer* is also a counter-discourse to the so-called 'secessionist' sentiment ascribed to the Oromo elites as well as to the divide and rule strategy of EPRDF. *Medemer* therefore seems to promise strong national identity that ascertains economic, political and social equalities of the mass as opposed to the current system which protects the interest of few individuals at the top political position.

Neutralizing strategy

From the perspective of discursive psychology, naturalization is the strategy of remaining calm to look for the solutions to potential problems before they create further damage to people. Meesters (2016, p. 16) writes that "Neutralization allows defusing a situation and regaining control of situation without engaging in conflict and without fighting with others. With neutralization, there is no perceived 'winner' or 'loser'." Abiy's discourse of synergy seems to have attempted at balancing the political situation in Ethiopia by counteracting the discursive mal practices of the former EPRDF officials. He appears to believe that these neutralizing techniques arose from untrue and unscrupulous discursive practices of the officials. The next extract demonstrates this fact.

(5)

(42)	ቀና ልቦና᎒ የተከፈተ ልቦና ያለው ዜጋ ሊያስብ የሚችለው ታላቁ ድል᎒ ታላቅም ትግል ያለው ፍቅር ውስጥ ነው	A positive and an open hearted person must know that the biggest challenge and the biggest victory lie in love.
(44)	ራስን ማሽነፍ ጠብን በሰላም᎒ ጥላቻን በፍቅርና ቂም በቀልን በይቅርታ ለመመከት ቁምና መያዝ ነው	In humility peace prevails over wrangle, love over hatred, forgiveness over vengeance
(50)	አሁን ያለው የኢትዮጵያ ፖለቲካም ያለውን መልካም ነገር የሚደምር ሳይሆን ያለችንን ጥላቻ ያለችንን ትንሽ ጥፋት የሚያገላና የበለጠ ቸግር ለመፍጠር የሚታትር ሆኗ ይታያል	The existing political situation of Ethiopia, instead of summing the positive side of our history, has busied itself magnifying whatever minute problems we have and throw us to worse and worse situations.

This extract shows that valuing other people starts from humility and self-restraint. The phrases *ቀና ልቦና* (*qena lebona*) 'positive thinking', *የተከፈተ ልቦና* (*yetekefete lebona*) open-heartedness and *ራስን ማሽነፍ* (*rasen mashenef*) humility (42 & 44) are employed to demonstrate the control one has to have on his/her own emotions and let reason preside over.

Using these expressions, Abiy wishes the EPRDF officials and the people of Ethiopia to behave positively and become open minded. He used a paradoxical saying the biggest challenge and the biggest victory lies in love. Abiy considers love, peace, and forgiveness as powerful devices to overcome detestation, conflict and cruelty. He sermons: In humility peace prevails over wrangle, love over hatred, forgiveness over vengeance.

(De)emphasizing strategy
The use of (de)emphasizing strategy in political rhetoric is purpose driven. A leader may apply this strategy based on his/her prioritized goals. The goals may be solidarity and unity (Wodak, et al., 2009). As reflected in the interview texts, Abiy envisioned that deemphasizing the bad past and emphasizing the good past enables the Oromo and the Amhara ethnic groups to avoid revenge driven situations of the past to make their unity stronger for the betterment of their future.

(6)

(29)	ታሪክ የምናነሳበት ዋናው ምክንያት ከዚያ ጠባያ የተሻለ ነገር መሥራትና የታሪክ ጠባሳ ድግግሞሽ እንዳይፈጠር ለማድረግ ነዉ	The main reason for looking back at history ought to be to make things better and to avoid vicious cycles of inflicting injuries [on each other].
(31)	በኛ ሕዝብ መሃከል አልፎ አልፎ የሚታዩ የታሪክ ጠባሳዎች ነበሩ	We have wounds in history.
(39)	ታሪክ አጥፊም አልሚም ነገር የያዘ ነዉ	History contains destructive and constructive things.
(48)	ታሪክ ለነገ ድልድይ የምንሰራበት ሲሆን ጠቃሚ ነዉ	History is useful if and only if it could serve as a bridge for tomorrow.
(49)	ታሪክ ዛሬን የሚያበላሽ ከሆነ ግን አደገኛ ነገር ነዉ	History would be dangerous if it destroys today.

The word ታሪክ (*tarik*, taken to be equivalent to the term 'history') is used in all lines of the extract. The repetition aims at rectifying historical injustice. Abiy began with recognizing the presence of both the destructive and the constructive aspects of the history of the two people. He named the destructive aspect as 'የታሪክ ጠባሳ' (*yetarik tebasa*), literally put 'historical scar', reiterated in (29) and (31). What is mainly emphasized in the extract is that ultimately history should not be something we fight over but to draw lessons from it so that similar mistakes may not be repeated. Abiy argues that history is constructive if people learn from their experiences (bad or good) and to make things better. It is damaging if people use it for fighting it out for what has happened – real or perceived.

Genericizing strategy
Genericizing strategy refers to overall ideas or issues. It enables oneself to think beyond existing turmoil. It also leads someone to beyond being swamped by trivial, superficial things and focus on root causes.
(7)

(70)	ልመና፣ ጦርነት፣ ግጭት ከዕውቀት መደኸየት ጋር በቀጥታ ይያያዛል	Mental poverty is causally connected to destitution, war and conflict.
(71)	ላጋጠሙን ችግሮች መፍትሄ	To get solution for our problem, we must

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ለማግኘት የቻግሩን ምንጮ ወደታች ማየት ነው	dig into its causes.
(72) የቻግርን ምንጮ ወደታች ማየት ነው	We should focus on the causes and not on the symptoms.
(73) የቻግሩን ምንጮ ወደታች ማየት ያልቻለ ማህበረሰብ አያሽንፍም	A society that fails to see the fundaments wouldn't move an inch.

Abiy is here trying to point out that the problems the country has been facing is rather systemic and calls for fundamental solutions.

Representation, Power and Ideology in the Oromara Integration

The discussions made so far on the rhetorical devices and discursive strategies Abiy used in the interview revealed that representations, power and ideology are closely linked to each other to discursively advocate Oromara. The discussions disclosed the negative discursive representations EPRDF produced and used to sever relations between the two people. It is discussed that the TPLF-led EPRDF created hostility between the ethnic groups to hang onto political power. Political ideologies are largely reproduced by political rhetoric that constitute and (de)legitimized groups' similarities and differences (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2011 & Van Dijk, 2006).

Following Althusser (1971), it is learnt that power relations, by their very character, are always asymmetrical and negotiated through discursive representations. Therefore, in our case here, it is argued that the study of the interview text is the study of its rhetoric, ideologies, and the ways through which they constitute or naturalize the existing asymmetrical power relations between the politicians and the people. The rhetorical devices and discursive strategies analyzed in this article aim at restoring the interdependency between the two groups. This was presented in the extract in binary oppositions. The binary oppositions include *hostility* vs. *friendship, retaliation* vs. *forgiveness, detestation* vs. *adoration, distrust* vs. *trust*, *and conflict* vs. *peace*. These negative and positive paired descriptors theoretically represent the reductionist and integrationist view points respectively (Burton, 2005 & Povova, 2012).

Concluding remarks

The interview texts analyzed above disclosed the systemic division made against the Oromo and the Amhara ethnic groups and the counter-discourses needed to be used to restore their unity. Analysis of the rhetorical devices such as simile, alliteration, assonance, repetition, paradox, analogy, parallelism and metaphor used in the interview texts revealed both negative messages employed in the past, and the positive messages conveyed for integration of the groups. The negative messages communicated through the devices include hostility, revenge, detestation, distrust, conflict, retaliation, narrow nationalism and chauvinism. The positive messages used to alter the hostile situations created between the groups include integration, unity, trust, love, forgiveness, peace, and solidarity. These negative and positive descriptors aimed at encouraging the groups learn from the malpractices of the past to make their future better.

The discursive strategies employed to integrate the Oromo and the Amhara people include accommodative, constructive, and genericizing. Accommodative strategy is used to call upon collaborative efforts of the groups to find solution for the sociopolitical and economic problems in Ethiopia. This strategy is used to challenge the divisive political situation in the country. To back up the strategy, creating more and more convergence between the Oromo and the Amhara was associated with the inseparable nature of *sergegna teff*. This simile was continually employed to reinforce the needed partnership. The constructive strategy employed also attracted people's attention to national unity showing them how to change their claims and blames, deemphasizing the supposed injuries made in the past while emphasizing the good accomplishments.

The analysis of the devices and the strategies used in the interview exposed that the Oromo and the Amhara people have been divided and disempowered as a result. The analysis also disclosed that the interview presented ኢትዮጵያዊነት 'being Ethiopian' as the planned national identity in which nations, nationalities and people of Ethiopia will come together to build and be benefited equally from the sociopolitical system of the country. This was seemingly designed to neutralize the divisive discourse in place for some time. The analysis also envisaged the promising future of the Oromo and the Amhara ethnic groups if they come together in order to build the country.

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