

Linguistic Analysis of Moribund Lexicons of Bale Oromoo Speech Community, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Linguistic theories generally regard human languages as consisting of two parts: a lexicon, essentially a catalogue of a language's words (its word stock); and a grammar, a system of rules which allow for the combination of those words into meaningful sentences. In linguistics, a lexicon is a language's inventory of lexemes. The article attempts to identify some moribund lexicons of Bale Oromoo speech community. First, these lexicons are gathered through an interview and elicitation from some informants selected from the Zone as a sample. These language items are translated into relatively equivalent Afaan Oromoo language. In order to create the wider communication, the lexicons are again translated into English language. And the lexicons are then analyzed linguistically (phonemic transcription, glossing and syllabification). For instance, in the lexicon of Afaan Oromoo 'quluuwwaan' /k'ulu:wa:n/ 'traditional coffee cups' the bound morpheme /-wwaan/ is number indicator in the target language (plural marker in particular). Moreover, the lexicons are used in a sentence to make the meaning clearer. Further explanations are made by putting these lexicons in the context in which they are potentially used. Finally, the recommendations are forwarded.

Key words: Moribund, Lexicon, Bale Oromoo

Introduction

Although different literatures had written on the derivation of the word Oromoo and the origin of Oromoo people, Mindaye (2005) cited in Alemayehu, (2012) had reported two traditional assumptions. While the first assumption suggests that the name was derived from the founding father of the group, and the second argues that the name indicates the separation of the group from Cushitic people whom they had live with and still share some linguistic features. This traditions emphasizes that the name was derived from the word 'oroma'e', which in Oromoo language is to mean 'became alien,' and finally

became the name of the group that formed their own social entity.

Oromoo is asserted to be the father of two tribes called Borena and Barentu, and the cradle land of these tribes is considered to be Maddawalaabu, which is found in the present Bale Zone of Ethiopia. Maddawalaabu is considered to be the nation's spiritual centre and place of pilgrimage (Mekuria, 1996; Assefa, 1993; Mohammed, 1990, as cited in Alemayehu, 2012). As the origin of the word 'Oromoo' has different suggestion, so is the term 'Oromoo language'. The phrases used for the term have been: Oromoo language, Oromiffa, or Oromic, and yet some call it Afaan Oromoo (Bender, 1976).

Afaan Oromoo and Oromoo are more accepted now as the language and the community (society) respectively. The Oromoo people are found in the North West, South East and central part of Ethiopia and consist of various groups which for centuries exclusively made up a confederation. The groups in turn, were divided in to sub groups, the sub-groups into clans, and the clans into lineages. Among the major regional groups are the Borana, Guji, Arsi, *Tulama*, Afran Qallo, Macha, Karrayu and Wallo. The genealogy of the Oromoo starts from Horro, Oromo, Borana, Guracha, Nagewo, Odda, Wallabu and Rayya which is subdivided into Maccaa and Tulama according to The History of Oromoo to 16th century cited in Samuel Leykun (2012).

Literature is a linguistically documented facts and ideas through which people preserve their deeds and worldviews from one generation to the other (Owamoyala, 1993). Tilahun Gemta (1993) had in his study stated that the language is among the Cushitic language family, which is widely spoken in East Africa and the third largest next to Arab, and Kiswahili (Tesfaye Tolesa, 2012). A large section of Ethiopian people speak Afaan Oromoo which accounts for between 40-50% of the country (Keller, 1995). Regardless of some political, economical and cultural factors, there are some natural conditions in which a language or some aspects of it may be endangered. For instance, Amharic may not be an extremely endangered language, but

in our daily life we can observe that some Amharic expressions are getting influenced by English language, where some expressions are losing their originality. Just to cite some example here: /wänbärün wusäd/ to mean 'take a chair'. In these examples /wänbär/ means chair, and /wusäd/ means take, /jawär wusäd/ 'take a shower'. But the Amharic original expression for take a chair is 'k'uc bäl' to mean sit down. Therefore, the speaker of Amharic uses the syntactic structure of English, which is an indication that some syntactic structure of Amharic is getting endangered in some aspects.

There may be occasions when words no longer have any use due to absence of referents, among the many possible reasons, at least in everyday's use. This may result in the extinction of the word. In the same analogy, Afaan Oromoo must have gone through such encounters, where some endangered aspects of the language are being observed. Furthermore some indigenous knowledge dies away with some words in their speech community. Afaan Oromo is one of the major languages spoken in Ethiopia. Therefore, this article is believed to be a good beginning for the application of linguistic analysis of some moribund Oromoo lexicon in Bale Zone, Ethiopia.

Statement of the problem

It is believed that language carries knowledge, wisdom, assets, norm, thought and values that its speech community accumulated through

times. Though this accumulated knowledge has many aspects, some of them can be: The knowledge of how to live together peacefully, how to produce, value of tolerance, coexistence, acceptance of each other, etc which are all embedded in a language and transmitted through generations. However, a given language is endangered due to reasons such as “globalization”, “modernization”, and language colonization. All those human knowledge dies away with the language. As a result, the speech community may encounter identity problems, lack of effectively understanding of their environment to search solution to the social and natural problems. Their belief, value disappears and may be forced to search for other groups which will in turn cause conflict for their own right. This may in most cases result in a continuous war which hinders the development of the country as whole.

Although Oromoo nation is one of the largest ethnic nations in Ethiopia, the attention given to study their language particularly from historical aspect remains minimal. The Policy of marginalization was also exercised for the purpose of building a country of one language, religion and culture (Tesfaye Tolessa 2012). Regardless of significant number of its speakers in the country, it has passed through challenges in different regimes and at different times in Ethiopia. According to the History of Oromoo, by the Oromia culture and tourism bureau

(2006), before the EPRDF government, for the reason that Oromoo people didn't get any ethnic rights the language had not any recognition and chance of being used by its speakers. The political bodies as well as the religious institutions hardly allow the usage. The schools, courts and any national occasions didn't entertain the language in any way. The arts like music, literature of any form was not appreciated officially which of course gradually resulted in deterioration of the language and its development.

It is on this assumption that this study attempts to analyze and document some endangered Oromoo lexicon spoken in Bale Zone. Therefore, the concern of this study is to search for some endangered Oromoo lexicons in Bale Zone, Ethiopia, and linguistically analyze their features so as to make these linguistic items preserved. It is also help to show its linguistic description for further study of the language. In this regard nothing has been done before; this work is baseline for the target language and community.

In the course of the study, the researchers try to answer the following research questions:

- Why a certain lexicon becomes endangered?
- What are the main linguistic and non linguistic causes for the extinction of a lexicon?
- What are the social, cultural, psychological, and economical significance of these

moribund lexicons for a target community?

- How can we preserve the authenticity of *Oromoo endangered lexicons* in light of contemporary linguistic contamination?

Objectives

- Identify basic moribund Oromoo lexicons which are almost not being used by the Bale Oromoo speech community of Bale Zone.
- Identify the different features (tense, plurality, gender, person markers) of moribund lexicons.
- Indicate techniques to revitalize and use these moribund lexicons in the syllabus, in reference materials so that wider community can use it.
- State the knowledge, value these lexicons had.

Methodology

The Study Area

The study is carried on in Bale Zone, on Oromoo speech community. Bale zone comprises about 18 districts, with the population of 1,000,000

according to 2007 census. Except in some high land towns who speak Amharic Language, almost all speak Afaan Oromoo as their native language.

Bale is located in the Southeastern part of Ethiopia. The capital city of the Zone is Robe, which is found 430km away from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. Bale is home to different climatic conditions which in turn results in different vegetation types. This again makes the zone a home to different wild animals. The landscape and the soil type create a favorable condition for the production of different crops. The people are engaged in different economic activities and have diverse cultural values. The highlanders are mostly farmers and the lowlanders are predominantly pastoralists. Islamic religion has the largest followers in the zone followed closely by the Orthodox Christianity with a fewer number of Protestants, in addition, the people experience an integrated social life and rituals that are built around the language; Afaan Oromoo

the informants are mostly illiterate and elderly. The elicitation fits this research as it helps the informants to understand the required lexicons in the contexts of linguistic practices. Moreover, data collection focuses on language performance and meanings of these moribund Oromoo lexicons.

A convenient time and place was agreed upon and the prepared interview was presented to the selected informants. The entire response of the language consultants was audio recorded. The recorded lexicons were then categorized, transcribed analyzed and translated into English. The moribund Oromoo lexicons of the zone were then translated into a more communicable alternative word of Oromoo language by both the language consultants and the researchers.

Techniques of analysis

The analysis contains linguistic interpretation in general and lexicography in particular. Which means on the top giving equivalent meaning for the moribund lexicon, phonemic transcription, syllabification and glossing has been assessed. In this study different symbol has been used. For instance < >for orthographic writing of the target language, / / for phonemic transcription, () for

syllabification. Language documentation is characterized, Woodbury (2011) puts as, 'The creation, annotation, preservation, and dissemination of transparent records of a language'. This need has been created in response that many world languages are alarmingly endangered. A number of endangered languages are at the verge of extinct. It is gradually becoming aggravated more than ever. In Africa too especially many languages of minority are disappearing. these moribund lexicons will be listed, transcribed, described (phonemically, syllabically) and further meanings given. The discussion includes the analysis of lexicon morphology. These lexicons are listed, translated into possible Afaan Oromoo language and again translated into English language for the benefit of reaching a wider audience.

Results and Interpretation

Moribund Lexicons of Bale Oromoo Speech Community

The word lists of moribund lexicons with phonemic transcription and syllabification are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Afaan Oromoo Moribund Lexicons.

| No. | Moribund Lexicons | Phonemic Transcription | Syllabification |
|-----|-------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. | bullukoo | /bul:ko:/ | bul – lu - koo |
| 2. | quluu | /k'ulu:/ | qu - luu |
| 3. | kofoo | /kofo:/ | ko - foo |
| 4. | qorsoo | /k'orso:/ | qor - soo |
| 5. | mansa | /mansa/ | man - sa |
| 6. | qiixiri | /k'i:t'iri/ | qii – xi - ri |
| 7. | siibbaatti | /si:b:a:t:i/ | sib – baat - ti |
| 8. | dubbuuksuu | /dub:u:ksu:/ | dub – buuk - suu |
| 9. | omadala | /ʔomadala/ | o - ma – da- la |
| 10. | gooranaa | /go:rāna:/ | goo - ra - naa |

Afaan Oromoo

1. <Bullukoo> /bul:ko:/

Ramaddi: maqaa

(Plural *noun* bul – luk – koo - wwaan)

Hiika: huccuu halkani, uffata halkanii

Galuumsa:

Kan irraa hojjetamu: Bullukkoon jirbii irraa hojjetama.

Ummanni Oromoo halkan bullukko uffata ture; amma garuu gara awusaa kan jedhamutti fayyadamuu jalqabe.

English

Word class: noun

Meaning: traditional blanket

Context:

Oromoo people use to wear 'bullukoo' in the night.

'Bullukoo' is made from cotton. It is a thick night clothes which Oromoo people wear to keep warmth during the night. It was also given as a gift to father and mother in laws, at wedding ceremonies. But it is no longer commonly made because it is currently replaced by a blanket. The above lexicons reveals that, the segment /-wwaan/ is a number (plural) indicator *bullukoo* and

bullukkoowwaan are traditional blanket and traditional blankets respectively. In addition, the lexicon *blulukkoowwaan* has four syllables.

Afaan Oromoo

2. <Quluu> /k'ulu:/

Ramaddii: maqaa

(Plural *noun* qu - luu - wwaan)

Hiika: meeshaa buna ittiin dhugan

Galuumsa:

Fayyidaan quluu guddadha. Quluun bunni akka hin qorrine taasifti.

'Quluun' biqiltu buqqee jedhamu irraa tolfama.

English

Word class: noun

Meaning: traditional coffee cup

Context:

'Qulu' is among the many important traditional household which the society use at home. It keeps the served coffee hot for a relatively longer time. 'Qulu' is made from a plant called 'buqqe' which looks like a pumpkin. Although the plant can have different shapes, 'qulu' which is used to make coffee cup has a wider bottom and top and narrow in the middle. This shape allows the user to

hold it in the middle. The user can even take coffee in it and goes out while looking after cows. According to the lexicon the segment /-wwaan/ is number (plural) indicator. And *qu - luu* has two syllables and *qu - luu - wwaan* has three syllables. Therefore, *quluu* and *quluuwwaan* are coffee cup and coffee cups respectively.

Afaan Oromoo

3. <kofoo> /kofo:/

Ramaddii: maqaa

(Plural noun ko - foo - wwaan)

Hiika: surre, uffaata **Dhiri mudhiidhaa gaditti uffaatu**

Context:

Kofoon isaa ni miidhaaga.

Surreen kofoo jedhamu kun dur kan dhiirri uffatu. Bocinni isaa immoo jilbaa olitti kan baayye bal'atuu fi jilbaa olitti immoo kan baayye dhiphatuudha. Yemmuu offatanii fi yemmuu baafatan luka irraa bahuuf heddu nama rakka.

English:

Word class: noun

Meaning: traditional trouser

Context:

He has a trouser.

This kind of traditional trouser is made usually from tetron, nylon etc. what makes it different is its style. It is very wide above the knee and very narrow below knee. It is called kofo in Afaan Oromoo. 'Kofoo' is homemade trouser. It is made from cotton and/or any other type of cloth which Oromoo people used to wear while participating on different occasions like assembly, 'jarsumma' i.e. traditional conflict resolution. The above data manifest that the segment

/-wwaan/ is number (plural) indicator.

Afaan Oromoo

4. <Qorsoo> /k'orso:/

Ramaddii: maqaa

(Plural noun qor - soo)

Hiika: Akaayii/ akaawii/ ansoosoo

Galuumsa:

Qorsoo nyaachun ni jaladha.

Akaayiin Boqqoollo/Baqeela/ qaamadi/garbu/Atara irraa qophaa'u ta'u danda'a. akaayyiin yemmuu bunni dhugamu nyaatama. Dabree dabree immoo yeroo farsoon dhugamus ni nyaatama. Akayyiin akka cireetti kan laakkayamus waan ta'eef ganama ganama ni nyaatama.

English:

Word class: noun

Meaning: roasted cereal

Context:

I used to eat 'qorsoo' when I was a child.

'Qorsoo' is a kind of food prepared at home from roasted maize, roasted sorghum and/or any cereal. It is common while drinking coffee. In the word 'qorsoo' zero morphemes is number (plural) marker. This is why in the above analysis of the lexicon /k'orso:/ become /k'orso:/ to reveal singular and plural respectively. Therefore, Afaan Oromoo has zero morphemes. /ø/ or {}.

Afaan Oromoo

5. <Mansa> /mansa/

(Adjective man - sa - e) /man - sa - ʔe/

a. Afaan Oromoo: Dhooqqee wal qabate.

laafti har'a garmalee dhoqqaa'era

b. English: muddy

- Muddy/foggy day.

The above lexicon reveals that, *mansa* means mud. With this lexicon the segment /ʔe/ is an adjective indicator. The /*mansa*/ become /*mansaʔe*/ which means noun and adjective respectively. Therefore, in Afaan Oromoo the segment /ʔe/ can change the noun to adjective.

Afaan Oromoo

6. <Qiiixira> /k'i:t'iri/

Ramaddii: maqaa

(Plural noun qii - xi - ri - wwaan)

Hiika: hidhaa midhani (keessatu garbu yookin qamaadii)

Galuumsa:

Qixira xiqqoo yoo hidhan nama jalaa hin bittinaa'u. qixiraan kan sirritti hidhamu yoo midhaan jiidhaa ta'e. xaafiin qixiraan hidhamuu hin danada'u. qamadii, garbuu, ayisaa kkf garuu qixiraan ni hidhamu.

English

Word class: noun

Meaning: tied sorghum, barley, wheat oats, etc

Context:

Qiiixira is a tied sorghum/barley, wheat. Oromoo people used to tie different cereals while harvesting. Qiiixiri helps to facilitate their work (harvesting). The above lexicon shows the segment /-wwaan/ is number (plural) indicator.

Afaan Oromoo

7. <Siibbaatti> /si:b:a:ti/

Ramaddii: maqaa

(Plural noun sib - baat - ti - wwaan)

Hiika: Marashaa ykn babatee

Galuumsa:

Meeshaan kun lafa qotuuf gargaru. Inis siibbaatti jabaa qaba. Siibbatti kunsibilaa irraa hojjetama. mala aadaatiins ni hojjetama. yoo dulloome, ibiddaan sirritti hoo'e rukutuudhaan irra deeb'amee haarawooma.

Siibbattii

English:

Word class: noun

Meaning: is a large farming instrument which is used to turn over soil so that the soil gets soft and weeds are dug up.

Context:

He has strong siibbaatti.

'Siibbaatti' is a heavy farming tool with a sharp blade or series of blade for breaking up soil and making furrows. The lexicon *siibbaatti* become *siibbaattiiwwaan* which means plow and plows respectively. Accordingly the segment /-wwaan/ is number (plural) indicator.

Afaan Oromoo

8. <Dubbuuksuu>

Ramaddii: xumurtuu

Hiika: bishaan hubboo kessaa waraabuu

Galuumsa:

Kuulaniin bishaan keessaa abooreedhaan dubbuuksite.

Jechi dubbuksuu jedhu dur dur sirritti hoji irra oolaa ture. Kunis bishaan

hubboo keessa mana keessa jiru achumaa achitti nama dhuguuf waraabanii kennuu jechudha. Dubbuuksuun lagaa waraabuu kan jedhuuf hin oolu.

English

Dubbuuksu (serving water from a jar)

Word class: verb

Meaning: serving water from a jar.

Context:

My mother used to serve me water from a jar when I was a boy thinking that I may break some other household.

‘Dubbuuksuu’ is only used for serving water to somebody who temporarily needs to drink. It doesn’t express fetching water from a river or some other sources rather than from a jar in a house. Anyhow it is not commonly in a regular use in the language nowadays.

Afaan Oromoo

9. <Omadala> /ʔomadala/

Ramaddii: maqibsa

(Adjective ʔo - ma - da - la) /ʔo - ma - dal - tu/

Hiika: furdaa

Galuumsa:

Tufaan sochii qaamaa waan hin taasifneef baayyee furdaadha.

English

Fat

Word class: adjective

Meaning: the presence of excess fat in a person or animal

Context:

Goshu is very fat. He eats fatty food. He also doesn’t exercise. As a result he is almost unable to walk.

‘Omadala’ means fat. According to the above data, the segment /-tu/ is gender (feminine) indicator. *Omadala* and *omadaltu* are fat and she is fat respectively. Also, *omadala* means he is fat.

Afaan Oromoo

10. <Goorannaa> /go:rana:/

Ramaddii: maqaa

(Noun goo - ra - naa) /go:rana/

Hiika: mana hoolaa fi re’een itti galtu.

Galuumsa:

Toleshiin gooranaa hoolotaa ganama ganama ni haxoofte. Namoonni baadiyyaa jiraatan hoolotaa fi re’oota waan horsiisaniif, eddoon isaan bulchan immoo goorannaa keessa. Yeroo baayyee loon kuunii fi hoolonni re’oonni bakka tokko hin bulan.

English

Word class: noun

Meaning: Goorannaa means an independent area in the house for goats or sheep to pass night.

Context:

Tayech cleans gooranaa every morning.

Gooranaa is a small room for goat and sheep. Oromoo people prepare separate room for goat and sheep. Goat and sheep donot share same pen with cow and ox. Rather a separate

space is prepared for them. Gooranaa or gooranoo and gooranowwaan are small room for goat and goats respectively. Like most of the above lexicons the bound morpheme /-wwaan/ is a plural marker in Afaan Oromoo.

Table 2 (a) reveals that, like most Ethiopian languages, Afaan Oromoo has pulmonic and non-pulmonic consonants. Pulmonic consonant is the consonant which is produced by the air come from the lung. Whereas, non-

pulmonic consonant is a consonant that produced above the larynx (or the air is not come from the lung). In Afaan Oromoo most non pulmonic consonants are ejective sounds. These are ph (p'), x (t'), c (tʃ), and q (k') and the other is implosive one dh (ɗ). Unlike Afaan Oromoo, most of the Ethiopian languages do not have the implosive non-pulmonic consonant dh (ɗ). The rest of the consonants are pulmonic consonant. See table 2:

Table 2: Phoneme Chart of Afaan Oromoo Consonants

| | | Bilabial/ labiodentals | Alveolar/ Retroflex | Palato-alveolar/palatal | Velar | Glottal |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------|---------|
| Stops and Affricates | Voiceless | (p) | t | Ch / tʃ/ | k | 'ʔ/ |
| | Voiced | b | d | j / dʒ/ | g / g/ | |
| | Ejective | ph (p') | x (t') | c / tʃ'/ | q / k'/ | |
| | Implosive | | dh / d/ | | | |
| Fricatives | Voiceless | F | s | sh /ʃ/ | | h |
| | Voiced | (v) | (z) | | | |
| Nasals | | m | n | ny /ŋ/ | | |
| Approximants | | w | l | y /j/ | | |
| Rhotic | | | r | | | |

Table 3 indicates that, there are five short and five long vowels making a total of ten vowels in Afaan Oromo. Out of these ten vowels, six of the vowels are back vowels (three short and long back). The Afaan Oromoo back vowels are divided in to three; Close - back /u/ or /u:/, Mid - back /o/ or /o:/ and Open - back /aa/ or /a:/. Moreover, /i/, /i/, ii /i:/ are Close - front, /e/ or /e:/ are Mid - front. Afaan Oromoo has one Open - central vowel that is /a/.

Table 3. Afaan Oromoo Vowels

| | Front | Center | Back |
|--------------|----------------|--------|------------|
| Close | i /ɪ/, ii /i:/ | | u, uu /u:/ |
| Mid | e, ee /e:/ | | o, oo /o:/ |
| Open | | a | aa /a:/ |

According to the above lexicons, all the lexicons are now moribund. Losing the lexicons means creating a cornerstone for extinction of core vocabularies of Oromoo language. . The consequence will be the lost of knowledge, thought, values, asset, norm, and wisdom of the people. Because, language is the paradigm of its speaker or it is world outlook for its speakers. Oromoo speech community understands this universe through its language lexicon where language idiosyncrasies and irregularities are stored.

Conclusion

The study results identified many Oromoo lexicons that have been endangered at Bale zone. These endangered lexicons have taken away with it much Oromoo indigenous knowledge. The people's history, culture and values have disappeared with them. These moribund lexicons have not been passed over properly to the next generation. The community's stored treasures have died away without being analyzed by researchers like linguists, anthropologists, historians, and philosophers. It is timely to begin making linguistic analysis and documenting some representative moribund Bale Oromoo moribund lexicons. These moribund lexicons of Bale Oromoo should be revitalized so that they can be potentially used for classroom lessons, and some terminologies adopted in institution and organizations. Relevant measures

by all concerned and stakeholders should step up awareness creation on the dangers of losing our culture.

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