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Revisiting Gamo: Linguists' classification versus self identification of the community

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This study attempts to contribute to our knowledge about Gamo, a member of the North Omoto subgroup, which is one of the four subgroups that constitute the Omoto group of the Omotic language family (Fleming, 1976; Bender, 2000). This paper characterizes some of the issues in the research of language and identity. It will attempt to employ the complementary perspectives of sameness and difference between Gamo, its sisters in the North Omoto sub-branch and its dialects. North Omoto comprises of several related languages and dialects of which Gamo is one. The exact relationship amongst the Omoto languages is not well known. Not equally well known is the relationship Gamo has with its sisters and daughters. The study tries to address issues concerning with misrepresentation of the Gamo language by the existing classification in one hand and what the self perception of the Gamo community likes on the other hand. This study aimed at examining linguistic facts and the Gamo speakers' own understandings of their identities. To this end, the study has used linguistic, anthropological and sociolinguists attempt to characterize membership of Gamo based on linguistic facts and members' self ethno-linguistic identification¹.

Key words: Gamo, North Omoto, Wolaitta, Omotic languages, identity, mutual intelligibility.

INTRODUCTION

The Gamo people inhabit a fairly extensive territory of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region, about 500 km south west of Addis Ababa, bounded by Lakes Abaya and Chamo in the East, and by the lands of the Zayse in the South, the Wolaitta in the North, the Gofa and the Male in the west. They inhabit various *woredas* of the Gofa Zone, namely, Arbaminch-Zuria, Chench, Bonke, Kucha, Kemba, Zala, Boredda, Mirab-Abaya, Dita and Dara Malo. According to the Central Statistics Authority (CSA) abstracts of population and housing census of 1994, the total number of speakers of the Gamo language is 719,874.

The term used to refer to the Gamo people has been

changing over the years. Before 1974, the Gamo people were referred as 'Gamu', which in Amharic translates as 'they stink' and therefore highly pejorative. During the rule of the Derg (194-1991), following the declaration of the equality of nations, nationalities and ethnic groups, the name 'Gamu' was replaced by 'Gaammo' which means 'lion' in the same language. There was a feeling among the people who proposed this name that being called after 'lion' will create positive external perception and enhance the self-perception of the people themselves. However, it seems that even this name has not gotten full approval by the entire community. Critics of the name 'Gaammo' argued that the word invokes ideas of a

wild beast and of wildness, not something that a people should want to be associated with. The name Gamo is widely used both as a name of the people and of the language cluster, a collective name to which all the Gamo dialects belong. In fact, the people call themselves Gamo and they refer to their language as Gamotstso, literally means "the Gamo language or in a more broad sense, ways of doing things of the Gamo people (Wondimu, 2010:3).

As it will be presented in the next section, unlike its place in the existing classification, Gamo is not just a dialect. It is a rubric representing a group that comprises a diversified dialect continuum. In most cases, each dialect has its own name associated to the place name whereby the speakers inhabit such as Dorze, Ochollo, Daac'e, Ganta, K'uc'a, Boreda, Kemba, Bonke, etc.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS, MATERIALS AND METHODS

The notion of 'identity' has been examined from many often overlapping viewpoints. Though numerous valuable insights are to be gained from different approaches, it is a widely acceptable assumption that language itself is the most salient and useful tool available in attempting to understand and analyze the construction of identities. Among the many symbolic resources available for the cultural production of identity, language is the most flexible and pervasive (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005: 369).

It is important to attend closely to speakers' own understandings of their identities. Although identity work frequently involves obscuring differences among those with a common identity, it may also serve to manufacture or underscore differences between in-group members and those outside the group. The perception of shared identity often requires as its foil a sense of alterity, of an "other" who can be positioned against those socially constituted as the same. Indeed, many studies of language and identity in linguistic anthropology report the most vigorous formation of socially significant identities in contexts of perceived heterogeneity rather than of perceived homogeneity (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005).

This study refers to recent theoretical work in linguistic anthropology that creates the conditions for achieving this goal by foregrounding the complex social and political meanings with which language becomes endowed in specific contexts. The approach model provides a more systematic and precise method for investigating how identity is constructed through a variety of symbolic resources, and especially language (Morgan, 1994; Kroskrity, 2000).

This study employed a combination of different methods to contribute to our knowledge about Gamo. Some dimensions of identity associated to the linguistic community, and its position in the North Omoto sub-branch of the Omotic language family will be examined. It demonstrates that unlike its position in the current classification, Gamo may not be considered as a sub-group or dialect within Wolaitta, another member of the North Omoto sub-branch. Gamo should rather be recognized as an independent language outside Wolaitta. In fact, it should better be recognized as a group comprising multiple dialectal members of its own. To that end, the study first present a literature review on the classification of Gamo. Comparative method has also been employed to investigate the phonological, grammatical and lexical variation among the linguistic varieties considered to be the dialects of Gamo. Comparative method which is a technique not only for reconstructing aspects of a proto language but also to establish relationship between languages and sorting out problems of sub-

grouping, was also employed. It is known that the result of comparative method is both a demonstration of relatedness as well as reconstruction (Hoenigswald, 1960:19; Nichols, 1996:41). The study also takes into account an overview of cognate counts and mutual intelligibility tests among the major member of the North Omoto sub-branch, namely, Wolaitta, Gofa and Dawuro. Information about Gamo's own understandings of their identities in relation to what are considered as dialects of Gamo and other members of North Omoto sub-branch, as revealed through the ethnographic data will be presented.

The data used in the study were collected from primary sources during subsequent fieldworks carried out in Arbaminch and the nearby localities of Gamo in 1998, 1999, 2004 and 2011.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study. First, the literature review on the position of Gamo within the North Omoto subgroup will be addressed. Then, description of the dialect variation within Gamo will be presented with evidence from phonological, grammatical and sociolinguistic data. It will show that Gamo is not a homogenous linguistic variety but it is a group with multiple dialects of its own. Next to that, notes on the self ethno-linguistic identity of the Gamo people will be presented. Finally, the situation with mutual intelligibility between Gamo and other members of North Omoto, namely Wolaitta, Dawuro and Gofa will be discussed.

Gamo and its representation in the Omotic language family

The consideration of Omotic as an independent language family is a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of the classification of Ethiopian languages. There are still lots of inquires and puzzles remaining unexplained concerning membership of different languages and dialects within the various sub-groups of the Omotic language family. The Omoto group that comprises a big cluster of languages and dialects is not also clearly defined and well known to establish a clear relationship among its members. The main scholarly work that accounts for classification of the Omotic languages is Fleming (1976) and Bender (1976, 2000, 2003). Researches on individual Ethiopian languages take the exiting classification as their basis.

The consideration of Gamo as a dialect of Wolaitta

Considering Gamo as a dialect of Wolaitta is a general account taken by the existing classification (Bender, 1976; Fleming, 1976; Bender, 2000). Bender (1976:14) considers Gamo (and few other members like Dawuro, Konta and Dorze) as a dialect of Wolaitta¹. The

¹ The names Wolamo, Kullo and Gemu are used in the literature produced before the name changes (the current name is substituted for the old name).

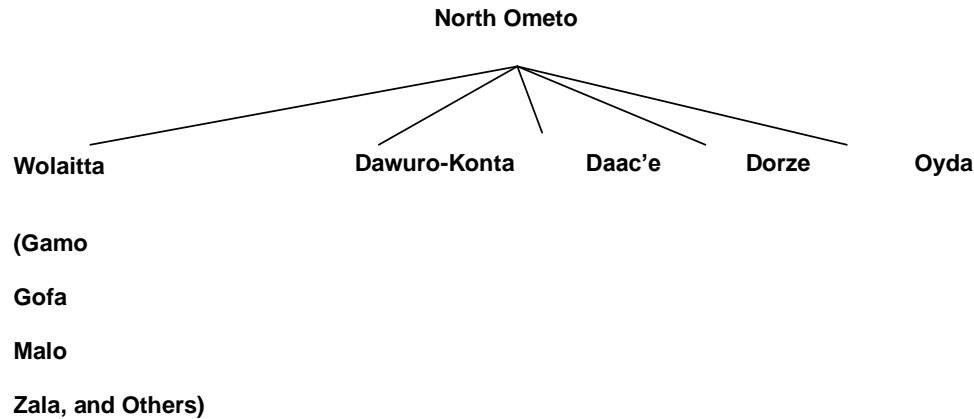


Figure 1. Internal classification of North Ometo.

classification that considers Wolaitta as an “extensive dialect cluster”, subsumes Gamo and others (Dawuro, Konta, and Dorze)”, under it. The study recognizes the high level of relationship that exists among the members of the subgroup. However, it does not provide the basis for assuming Wolaitta to take up a higher node in the family tree and subsume Gamo and others under it. It neither justifies the reasons for mother-daughter kind of relationship established between Wolaitta and Gamo (also the others) respectively.

Similarly, the Omotic language family tree that was introduced by Bender and Fleming (1976: 47), assumes the same relationship between Wolaitta and Gamo (also the others) and presents the internal classification of North Ometo as shown in Figure 1.

As presented in Figure 1, while Dawuro and Oyda are treated as sisters to Wolaitta, members like Gamo, Gofa, Malo, Zala are introduced as dialect variants of Wolaitta. This classification reduces the status of Gamo to be a dialect of Wolaitta, another member of the sub-group. Like Wolaitta, Gamo, Dawuro, Oyda, Gofa and Malo, are equally independent sister linguistic variants that need to be treated directly under the North Ometo sub-branch. Though they share significant amount of linguistic data, their ethno-linguistic identity strongly does not suggest for Wolaitta to be a subsuming cluster covering Gamo and the others. In his later publication, Bender (2000:7) seems to retain his earlier standpoint to use Wolaitta as a cluster that represents “Wolaitta proper”, Gamo and some other members of the North Ometo sub-group. However, the rationale for extending the name Wolaitta to cover the whole group that contains Gamo and many others is not clear.

The dialects of Gamo and their positions in the classification

In addition to considering Gamo as a dialect of Wolaitta,

the existing classification mistreats the dialects of Gamo. In this regard, as shown in Figure 1, three problems are noted.

1) Some dialects such as Zala and Malo are considered as sisters to Gamo. Information gathered from the field indicates that all Zala, Malo and Dorze are rather dialects of Gamo, sharing not only lots of common linguistic features but the same ethno-linguistic group name, “Gamo”. Their respective names are only place names where each is spoken.

2) In the existing classification, as displayed above, Daace and Dorze, which are referring to the various dialects of Gamo have not only been considered as separate languages but also assigned a higher position than Gamo is having in the family tree. They are mistreated as direct decedents of the North Ometo sub group along with Wolaitta, Dawuro, and Oyda, whereas Gamo itself is introduced as a dialect variant within Wolaitta. In the case of Daace, the term is a self name of a group of Gamo people who have created a distinct identity after winning a war with others in the vicinity. Ditta and Bonke who occupy the central part of the Gamo highlands believe that they are Daace (Gaga, 2010:20).

3) Besides, some prominent members of Gamo such as Ganta, K’uc’a, Ochollo, etc, which exhibit a great linguistic difference are not even mentioned at all in the classification.

In what follows, notes on the ethno-linguistic identity of the Gamo people and the linguistic features that distinguish the dialects of Gamo from each other will be presented consecutively.

Notes on ethno-linguistic identity of Gamos

The notion of ‘identity’ has been examined from many often overlapping viewpoints. Though numerous valuable

insights are to be gained from different approaches, it is a widely acceptable assumption that language itself is the most salient and useful tool available in attempting to understand and analyze the construction of identities. Arguing for the importance of examining identity from a linguistic perspective, Bucholtz and Hall (2004:369) states that "Among the many symbolic resources available for the cultural production of identity, language is the most flexible and pervasive". In this study ethnic identity is conceived as "the sameness of a person or thing at all times in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else" (Simpson and Weiner, 1989: 620)

The interviews carried out in this study confirm that, members of Gamo do not perceive themselves as Wolaitta. They rather demonstrate that they do not belong to the Wolaitta ethno-linguistic group, and their language is not Wolaitta. This attitude of distinctiveness from Wolaitta has been witnessed in the process of implementing 'Mother Tongue Education' in the administrative zone, which is a place where Wolaitta, Gamo, Dawuro and Gofa are spoken². It was suggested by the administration to use the Wolaitta language as a medium of instruction for primary education throughout the zone. However, members of Gamo have completely rejected the idea of using Wolaitta as the language of instruction in the primary education within their locality. They were loud to protest that Wolaitta cannot be considered as their children's mother tongue. The people were open and clear in indicating that they are not Wolaitta and their language is not Wolaitta but they are Gamo and the two are distinct. Following the complaint, a corrective measure was taken, to keep Wolaitta only for the Wolaitta district and introduce Gamo in the Gamo area as a language of instruction. Other languages/dialects were also allowed to be used in their respective areas. In fact, in the transition between the use of Wolaitta and Gamo, another attempt was made to use a hybrid of all the four languages in the zone as a medium of instruction that can serve commonly for all. It is believed that the idea of forming a composite language of medium of instruction was partly to impose a homogeneity identity among the members of the different groups basically for political reasons. That idea, however did not succeed as it was rejected. Finally each group including Gamo was allowed to learn in its own language. This indicates that Gamos perceive themselves and their language distinct from those of Wolaitta and, in fact, from Wolaitta, Gofa and Dawuro.

The situation is different when it comes to the various

²People in the area assume that the reason for choosing Wolaitta is because Wolaitta has developed into a relatively literary language, the language was selected to serve as a medium of instruction for students of Gamo as well. The language, in fact, was used for Bible translation and served as a medium of instruction in the Adults' Literacy Program set up earlier during the Derg regime. Besides, the presence of more educate people from Wolaitta is assumed to be the reason.

groups that are considered as dialect variants of Gamo. It is attested that, in most of the cases, speakers of the various dialects of Gamo confirm a double ethno-linguistic identity. Most members of each dialect of Gamo identify themselves firstly as belonging to Gamo and then to their respective distinctive ethnic community, that is as Dorze, Ochollo, Dac'e, Ganta, etc. One can say that, the Gamo people demonstrate a dual self-identity and they recognize their Gamo identity in addition to their respective small ethno-linguistic group identity. They use both the local dialectal identity that refers to their respective vicinity and the broader categorization, which is Gamo. The Daace people say "I am Daace but then I am Gamo; the Dorze people say I am 'Dorze' but then I am 'Gamo', etc. This is, however, not always true with all members in all groups. As identity construction is a dynamic process, there are new developments whereby some members of Gamo, tend to refute their Gamo identity to highlight their smaller group identity mainly for political reason. Recently, for instance, a politically oriented proposal has been witnessed claiming that Dorze, one of the Gamo dialects, should be considered as a separate ethnic group outside Gamo (Quancho Vol. 2, May 2005 (Ethiopian Calendar)/www.ethiobiznet.com). The link between language and identity is often so strong that dialect features are sometimes used as a boundary among the dialects that can create the possibility for individuals to be both in their own group and out of the others' groups (Tabouret-Keller, 2000: 322).

Some notes on the linguistic variation within Gamo

The Gamo language has different regional dialects. In fact, one can say that Gamo is a dialect continuum that varies across the different areas it is used. Particularly Gamo used in Ochollo, Ganta, K'uc'a, Boreda and Dorze show noticeable differences from Gamo used elsewhere in the vicinity. In certain circumstances the variation can cause miscommunication. An instance where this is encountered is in the use of Gamo as a medium of instruction. Communication problems and misunderstandings often take place due to the dialect difference of teachers and students and the language used in the text book. As stated in Hirut (2007:221), the

... it is often difficult for them to understand a lesson because the teacher's speech is alien to them. Students also complain that their teachers evaluate them incorrectly, simply because they fail to understand the Gamo variety used by the students. Interviews with school principals also indicate that students believe teachers often evaluate their exam papers incorrectly because they do not understand the students' dialect... There were also several instances in which a word used by a teacher appears to be taboo in

students' dialect, and vice versa... Once a teacher from an area known as Ganta, a divergent dialect of Gamo, used however, understood by the students as a taboo expression meaning: "He had sex". As a result, the students started laughing and looking at the teacher with great bewilderment... felt uncomfortable and embarrassed... in another instance, a teacher used the word *goyna* which means 'tail' in his dialect, but refers to a penis in some of the student's dialects.

This section presents instances of the phonetic, phonological, grammatical and lexical features that function as dialect markers among the dialects of Gamo. The data referred in this study come from Ochollo, Ganta, K'uc'a, Boreda, Kemba, Bonke and Dorze.

Phonetic and phonological variations

The common phonetic and phonological differences in the dialects of Gamo are the points of discussion below.

1. The alveolar constants such as /t/, /d/, /ts/, /dz/, /s/ and /z/ have dental point of articulation in the Dorze and Ochollo dialects. This is clearly noted in the fieldwork.
2. In its phonemic inventory, the K'uc'a dialect appears different from the rest for it lacks two phonemes /ts/, and /s'/. In contrast, the K'uc'a Gamo has /t'/ which is not found in the others. K'uc'a replaces /tt/ in place of /ts /. The following words show the /t'/-/s'/ and /tt/-/ts/ correspondences found in K'uc'a against the others.

Ochollo	Dorze	Boreda	K'uc'a	
s'ugunt ^s	s'ugunt ^s	s'ugunt ^s	t'uguntta	'nail'
		u		
Dants	dants	Dantsi	t'antta	'breast'
mek'et ^s	mek'et ^s	mek'et ^s i	mek'etta	'bone'
ket ^s	ket ^s	ket ^s a	ketta	'house'

As indicated above, k'uc'a uses the phoneme /s'/ where the others use /t'/. It is also shown that /tt'/ of Ochollo, Dorze, Boreda corresponds to /tt/ in K'uc'a.

3. It is also attested that a word-initial alveolar ejective t' in K'uc'a corresponds to the alveolar implosive **D** in other dialects such as Bonke, Kemba and Dita. Comparative reading of the following cognates establishes the point:

K'uc'a	Other dialects	Gloss
t'ale	Dale	'medicine'
t'iilee	Diille	'flour'
t'isko	Disko	'sleep'

4. There is also a correspondence in which r of K'uc'a occurs as **D** inter-vocally elsewhere as shown as follows.

K'uc'a	Other dialects	Gloss
mero	meDo	'appearance'
wora	woDa	'trophy'
gara	gada	'low land'
sire	side	'nose'

Another phonological distinction among the Gamo dialects is the situation of terminal vowels of nouns, specially, vowels that occur following the sibilant constants, namely, **ts**, **s** or **c**. In Dorze and Ochollo terminal vowels which occur following the mentioned sibilants can be optionally deleted while that is not the case in the others, as illustrated as follows.

Bonke	Dorze	Ochollo	K'uc'a	Gloss
mitst ^{si}	Mits	Mit ^s	mitta	'tree/wood'
Miizi	Miiz	Miiz	miiziya	'cow'
s'ugunt ^{Su}	s'ugunt ^S		t'uguntta	'nail'
		s'ugunt ^S		
apuntsu	Apunt ^S	Apunt ^S	apuntta	'tear'
dorse	Dors	Dors	dorsa	'sheep'
keet ^{Se}	Keet ^S	Keet ^S	keetta	'house'

z of the K'uc'a dialect corresponds to the respective affricate constant, that is, **dz**, elsewhere as shown with the following cognates.

K'uc'a	Other dialects	Gloss
heezza	heedzda	'three'
donza	dondza	'adult'
wonza	wondza	'udder'

Notes on grammatical variation

This section presents some of the grammatical variations exhibited in the regional dialects of Gamo. The definite marking element in Gamo has different forms across its different dialects. In the Bonke and Ochollo varieties, the element **-za** is used as a definite marker, whereas in Dorze, the element **-čel-e** is used for the same function. In Kamba and Kuc'a definiteness is expressed by using suffix **-a**.

Dorze	Ochollo	and	Kamba	and	Gloss
	Bonke		Kuc'a		
bori-če	bora-za		bora-a		'the ox'
kani-če	kana-za		kana-a		'the dog'
šooš-e	šooša-za		šooša-a		'the snake'

Another point of grammatical marking distinction is past tense marking of verbs. The element used to mark past tense is **-r** in Dorze and Ochollo but **-d** in the others (See

the illustration as follows).

woDi-r-es	'he killed'	<i>Ochollo</i>
woDi-r-es	'he killed'	<i>Dorze</i>
woDi-d-es	'he killed'	<i>Others</i>

The phonemic forms of the agreement markers of verbs show certain variation across the dialects. Compare the paradigms for the imperfective/present tense forms of the verb *m* 'eat' in Ochollo, Dorze, Kemba, Kuc'a, Bonke, Doko and Dita

<i>Ochollo</i>	<i>Dorze</i>	<i>Kemba, K'uč'a</i>	<i>Bonke, Doko, Dita</i>	
m-ayiss	m-ayis	m-ayis	m-ayis	'I eat'
m-aassa	m-aasa	m-aasa	m-aasa	'You eat'
m-aassu	m-aazu	m-aysu	m-aysu	'She eats'
m-eess	m-ees	m-ees	m-ees	'He eats'
m-ooss	m-oos	m-oos	m-oos	'We eat'
m-eeta	m-eta	m-eeta	m-eeta	'You eat'
m-iza	m-iza	m-oosona	m-eettes	'They eat'

Gamo versus other members of the North Omoto sub-group: External perceptions and mutual intelligibility

This section examines the relationship between Gamo and other members of the North Omoto group, particularly Wolaitta, Dawuro, Gofa and Gamo. They share a great deal of linguistic elements and even considered as a single linguistic identity by external perception. The issue that whether members of the North Omoto, particularly Wolaitta, Gamo, Gofa and Dawuro, are mutually intelligible dialects or separate languages has been a subject of debate among the speakers, policy makers and the local administration. The case has been brought up especially during the implementation of mother tongue education in the region. In 1992, in the process of implementing mother tongue education, the four speech varieties have been considered as a single linguistic unit. Consequently, Wolaitta, a language that has a relatively developed history as a written language, was proposed to serve as a medium of instruction for all in the area where Gamo, Gofa and Dawuro are spoken. Thus, teaching materials were prepared in Wolaitta language and distributed to the elementary schools in the entire zone. That approach, however, did not work as planned because it encountered a huge rejection and protest from the non-Wolaittas who claimed that they do not understand Wolaitta and it is not their language.

As a result, the Wolaitta language was left only to Wolaittas and a different solution was sought, still within the ambition of a single language and script for all. Finally the local government came up with a new idea of creating a composite written language named DAGOGA. DAGOGA is an acronymic term made up of initial letters of the names of the three major languages: Dawuro, Gofa and Gamo. Shortly afterwards, even before evaluating the effectiveness of DAGOGA as a mother tongue, the composite language was made to include Wolaitta, thus becoming WOGAGODA. School texts and other learning aids were subsequently produced in WOGAGODA. However, this new composite faced widespread opposition for not being nobody's mother tongue. WOGAGODA was criticized as a retrogressive step, taking people away from an established form of their own language and diluting their languages with elements from alien variants. After consecutive protests, the local government dropped the use of WOGAGODA as a language of education and decided that the Wolaitta, Gamo Gofa and Dawuro groups should use their respective dialects as internal media in their respective communities (Hirut, 2007:219). Then after, every group has been given the opportunity to use its own respective mother tongue as a medium of instruction in primary education.

Gamo is mutually intelligible with the other speech varieties under the North Omoto sub-group, namely, Wolaitta, Gofa and Dawuro. According to a mutual intelligibility test made by the Ethiopian Language Academy (1980:15), Gamo speakers understand 95% of Gofa texts; 93% of Wolaitta and 89% of Dawuro. There is a general consent on the definition of intelligibility in the glossary of linguistic terms. It is defined as the degree to which a spoken message can be understood (Lingualink, compiled from Richards et al., 1985:144; Blair, 1990:24).

On the other hand, a cognate count made among Gamo, Wolaitta, Dawuro and Gofa shows similar results. Gamo shares 83% of its basic vocabularies with Wolaitta and 79% of its basic vocabularies with Dawuro and 84% of its basic vocabularies with Gofa both studies demonstrate that Gamo shares more with Gofa and Wolaitta than it does with Dawuro. It was also noted that the four languages/dialects even though they share a large number of basic vocabularies; there is notable semantic incompatibility that the cognate words across the dialects have developed through time. Besides, they show significant variation in their phonological and grammatical systems (Bender 2000, Hirut 2004, 2005).

Attitudes of Gamos regarding how well they understand Wolaitta, Dawuro and Gofa have been examined by the author. It was attested that nearly all of the Gamo respondents (96%) indicated that they understand Wolaitta partly but not fully. Only 4% of the respondents replied that they understand Wolaitta fully. No one was found saying that he/she can never understand the dialect under question. Concerning their intelligibility with

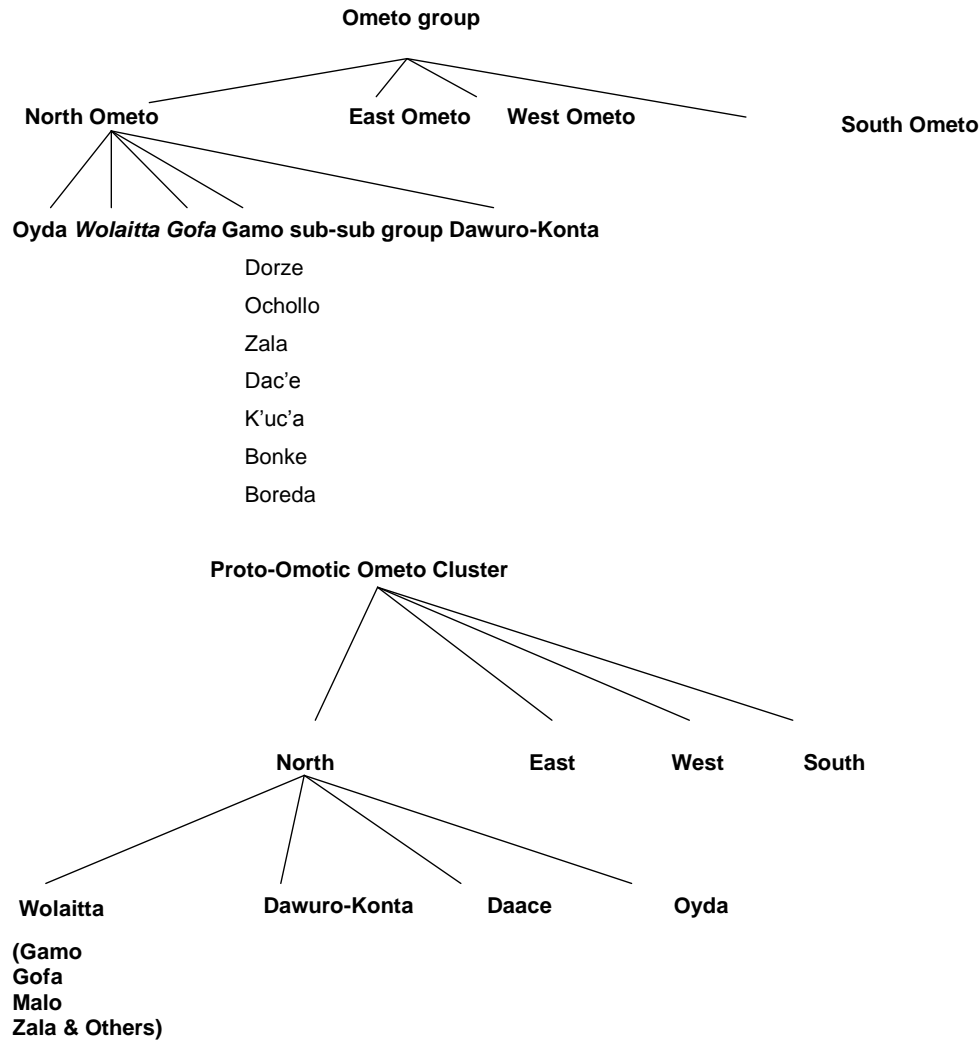


Figure 2. Omotic Language Family tree adopted from Fleming (1976) and Bender (1976:47).

speakers of Gofa, only a little more than half of the Gamo respondents (55%) think that they understand Gofa moderately. The others, less than half (45%) respondents indicate that they do not understand Gofa at all. No Gamo respondent said that he/she understands Gofa fully. In the contrary, except very few respondents that counts about 4%, all the Gamo respondents pointed out that they do not understand Dawuro at all. The remaining 4% of replied that they understand Dawuro only to a certain extent. No one is encountered replying that he/she understands Dawuro fully. Accordingly, the Gamos believe that they understand Wolaitta better than they understand Gofa to a certain degree but they find it difficult to understand Dawuro. They believe they understand Wolaitta and Gofa better than they understand Dawuro.

Intelligibility among the four members is in general regarded as lower than it actually is. This is due to the

fact that intelligibility is not only about linguistic relationships between variants but also about social relationships and attitudes since it is the people and not the varieties who understand or do not understand one another. Research on mutual intelligibility indicate that attitude towards a language have a link with mutual intelligibility and abilities to decode it. Language attitudes might be influenced by stereotypes about a language variety and speakers among the other things (Romaine, 1994: 14, Schüppert and Gooskens, 2011:119).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion presented earlier, the following conclusive remarks are drawn:

- 1) Both the linguistic as well as sociolinguistic facts

indicate that Gamo cannot be subsumed as a dialect of Wolaitta. The two can be considered as sisters that have emerged from one origin. The consideration of categorizing Gamo under Wolaitta has no ground and should be reconsidered. Gamo can rather be considered as a sister to members of the North Omoto such as Wolaitta, Dawuro, Gofa, Oyda. Despite significant the significant linguistic similarities that Gamo and Wolaitta share, members of the two groups do not perceive themselves as heterogeneous groups rather than one homogenous group. Though, the mutual intelligibility findings show high level of relatedness, each group identifies itself and its language distinctly from the other. This situation could be explained by extra-linguistic factors such as linguistic experience and language attitude. This however needs an in-depth- future study.

2) Gamo should not be considered as a dialect nor as a language but, considering its large internal diversity, it would be better to recognize it as a group nomenclature encompassing multiple dialects such as Dorze, Ochollo, Ganta, K'uc'a, Daace etc., each having its own name, which in most cases associated to a place name. In most of the cases, speakers of the various dialects of Gamo primarily identify themselves as Gamo and then identify themselves in association to their ethnic minority group such as Dorze, Ochollo, Ganta, etc., and they identify themselves as Gamo. It is also attested that some people primarily identify themselves as Dorze, Ochollo, etc. and secondly as Gamo. The reasons for this variation in self-identity require a further in-depth investigation.

3) The dialects of Gamo such as Dorze, Ochollo, Ganta, K'uc'a are highly mutually intelligible but still exhibiting noticeable linguistic variation in their lexical, phonological and grammatical structures. Ganta diverges a bit from the others but still recognizes the Gamo identity. The comparison of linguistic and sociolinguistic data from these language varieties indicate that they are closely related to each other, than they are to other members of Omoto such as Wolaitta, Gofa, Dawuro, etc. This assumption needs to be further confirmed through further data. A further study is required on the linguistic features and degree of shared grammatical and lexical similarities of the Gamo dialects.

4) In the exiting classification of Omotic language family, Zala, Daac'e, and Dorze have hitherto been regarded either as direct descendants of the North Omoto branch or treated as sisters of Gamo (Figure 2). This needs a revisit to re-classify them rather as dialect variants of Gamo.

Also, taking into consideration all the above facts, the following reclassification of the North Omoto sub-group is suggested. It will be very useful to read this reclassification in comparison to the 1976 classification by Fleming.

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