

NORM SELECTION AND STANDARDISATION IN GAMO

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ABSTRACT

This research deals with norm selection practices and the accompanying challenges in the standardisation process of Gamo Omotic North Omoto language. The language has recently developed a written form which mainly serves as a medium of instruction. In attempting to explore the construction of written norms, this research has applied concepts that focus on how the use of a language affects a society (Labov 1970: 30, cited in Wardhaugh 2006:16) and what social conditions inspire the legitimisation and construction of a standard norm (Bourdieu 1991). A linguistic approach (Byron 1978:398) has been used to trace the norm selection practices in written Gamo. The data has come from written documents, interviews and focus group discussions. This analysis of the salient issues uncovers the underlying problems of the standardisation process (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997:88). The results demonstrated that the standard norm is based on the Northern dialects of Gamo, especially the Dače dialect. By assessing the current trends of standardisation and the social views towards it, this research argues for a 'dialect democracy approach' where norms of various dialects are unified and a neutral standard is established (Msimang 1998).

[1] INTRODUCTION

Language standardisation as a process of variation reduction (Deumert 2004: 3) is not only a linguistic issue but also a social concern. The process applies limited variations to the linguistic habitus of a speech community without taking into account the age, gender, geography, ethnicity etc., differences they exhibit. In the history of many languages, such uniformity of use is maintained via various social conditions. Linguistic studies are, therefore, capable of revealing the social conditions that underlie the standardisation and legitimisation of languages (Bourdieu 1991:61). Accordingly, this research scrutinises the practices and social foundations of norm selection in Gamo. It further investigates social views towards the process and tries to locate areas for improvement.

Gamo is spoken by 1,044,589 people, (CSA 2008: 135), who have settled in the South Western part of Ethiopia. It comes under the Afroasiatic, North Omotic,

Gonga-Benoyem, North Ometo group in the genetic classification of Ethiopian languages (Fleming 1976). Gamo has a written form that mainly serves as a medium of instruction in schools. The language has undergone series of developments from being a dialect of written languages to becoming an autonomous school variety. It encompasses around 42 dialects that, depending on their intelligibility level and geographical location, are grouped into South Gamo and North Gamo varieties (Wondimu 2010:182). South Gamo cluster comprises the Ganta, Garbansa, Mele, Balta, Shara, Kole, etc., dialects and North Gamo includes the Dače, K²uča, Ochollo, Dorze, etc., varieties (Hirut 2005, 2013b, Wondimu 2010). These dialects exhibit substantial variation. Phonologically, K²uča differs in its use of /t/ and /z/ whereas the others use /ts/ and /dz/ sounds respectively. A substantial morphological variation has also been demonstrated among the two groups. In Northern dialects, for instance, plurality is marked using (-ta), but (-ede) is used in Southern varieties, as in *ifata/ itjede* (brothers), *borata/ majdede* (oxen). On the other hand, the average lexical items shared between the two groups falls to 65% (Wondimu 2010:66), so making them less intelligible. The variations in the dialects are immense, with the Northern groups coming under the North Ometo cluster and the Southern dialects sharing features of East Ometo (see Hirut 2013b, Wondimu 2010, Jordan 2009 for further grammatical relations among the dialects).

[2] CONTEXTUALIZING LANGUAGE STANDARDISATION

Language standardisation, as a major component of language planning, draws on concepts from the field of macro-sociolinguistics or the sociology of language. As Coulmas (1998:1) has put it, apart from its micro-level focus:

‘Macro-sociolinguistics studies what societies do with their languages, that is, attitudes and attachments that account for the functional distribution of speech forms in society, language shift, maintenance, and replacement, the delimitation and interaction of speech communities.’

The sociology of language (Wardhaugh 2006: 13) considers language as an entity that functions in a social context, and so language planning aims to allocate the functions that a language plays in society. Labov (1970: 30), cited in Wardhaugh (2006: 16), has also stated that the questions and problems of language standardisation are major concepts in this field. These questions and problems can be studied at macro/national or micro level, where the development of a particular language is investigated (Baldauf 2006:154).

Language standardisation is the process of norm selection and codification

of a newly written language (Wardhaugh 2006: 33). In Haugen's (1966a), cited in Wardhaugh 2006: 34) framework, standardisation begins with norm selection. It refers to the selection of grammar and usage to place a non standard language in wider communication settings. Those norms may be selected from a single dialect (mono-centric), or they can involve features of many dialects (polycentric) (Msimang 1998: 165). Commonly, dialects spoken by politically, economically or numerically dominant groups gain prominence over the less dominant ones. These prominent forms are then published in books, dictionaries and literature and are inculcated in the next generation mainly through the education system (Bourdieu 1991: 48). In many practices, codification constructs a hierarchy of dialects (Ferguson 1968:31) and users, by granting legitimacy to some uses and depicting others as illegitimate (Shohamy 2006: 31). In such a way, the construction of a standard language envisages the normalising of individuals' linguistic habitus, by evaluating their productions (written and spoken) against the "legitimate" uses (Bourdieu 1991: 48).

For the standardisation to be neutral, a more inclusive method called 'dialect democracy approach', which involves various dialects of a language, can be adopted (Msimang 1998: 165). Language exists within an ecosystem that constitutes dialects and speakers and their culture. It follows that all dialects and speakers deserve an equal chance of inclusion in the standard. Active participation by the target society in the process is a fundamental factor for the acceptance of the standard norm, which should emanate from and go in line with the needs and practices of the society (Deumert and Vandebussche 2003:464). This avoids disparity between standardisation and public interest. Spolsky (2007: 2) has mentioned that as a social phenomenon, language policy relies on the 'consensual behaviours and beliefs of individual members of the speech community'. If the development fails to achieve this and a standard is simply imposed, it remains alien to the intended users and its implementation faces serious social resistance (Lane 2014: 3).

The notion of language standardisation is multi faceted, but this research focuses on the development of written standard in Gamo. If indigenous languages are promoted to serve in various social domains, they need to develop a standard variety by which every social member abides. In practice, users implement language in a variety of ways in their spoken habitus and this cannot be avoided or controlled. It is equally important to select the essential elements of these varieties in order to portray the language in writing. In this context, orthography development and text book preparation that empower the language to function in mother tongue education (Spolsky 2004: 46) and other social domains (Garvin 1993:39) become pivotal tasks. With regard to this, Kaplan

and Baldauf (1997:41) have written that to literate speakers of non standard languages, standardisation of orthography is fundamental. The standard establishes the foundations for common understanding among diverse societies (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 66) and maintains the language by addressing users at various time and locations. Elkarteia (2010:14 &15) also states:

‘... and that it is very difficult for a language to survive unless it is used in education, cultural transmission, mass media and the public administration. ... But in order to be able to teach or give information in one’s own language, it must be possible to write it, and to write it in a common code accepted and shared by its speakers.’

The major challenge in the standardisation of multidialectal languages is making decisions on the intelligibility of dialects and social acceptance. For instance, the idea of harmonising the Nguni and Sotho language clusters of South Africa did not work, mainly due to 'lack of support from the population at large and due to the great resistance shown to it', irrespective of the grounds for rejection (Orman 2008: 9). Likewise, the challenge in Gamo is immense because its dialects are not thoroughly studied and described, so little is known about them. Furthermore, conditions that would permit selection of one form over the others are not set by anybody (Gebreyohannis 2000: II & III).

[3] BRIEF HISTORY OF WRITTEN GAMO

Gamo has been a spoken language for many years. Its written history began when a composite written language was constructed from North Omoto clusters which included Wolaitta, Gamo, Gofa and Dawuro. With the advent of mother tongue education in the country, a common Latin based orthography was designed for the Wolaitta, Gamo, Gofa and Dawuro languages in 1993. At that time, the four varieties were thought to be forms of one language, and Wolaitta, due to its existing written history, was selected to serve as the medium of instruction in the four areas. However, members of the Gamo society whose language was thus relegated rejected the attempt, and so the idea was shot down before its implementation (Hirut 2013a:376).

The officials immediately wanted to establish a more inclusive language that could serve the whole society across the four areas. They came up with the idea of harmonising the languages by having words of each variety represented. However, when writers started preparing text books, the Wolaittas changed their minds and preferred to continue using the books previously prepared in Wolaitta. This created a potential opportunity for Wolaitta to maintain its writ-

ten system ahead of the other varieties. The rest were merged into one form and the development of Gamo progressed very steadily as a result.

Text books were written by amalgamating the three languages into a form called DaGaGo, which stands for Dawuro, Gamo and Gofa, in 1995. This time written Gamo first appeared as a standardised text material for learning. This action was not, once again, what the society wanted for mother tongue education, and so it did not take long before the whole society opposed the amalgamation of the languages.

The situation became worse, however, when Wolaitta was absurdly added to DaGaGo and WoGaGoDa, another written language composed of Wolaitta, Gamo, Gofa and Dawuro varieties, was formed in 1998. It seems that the officials did not learn any lessons from DaGaGo. The social implications of merging the languages were ignored, and text books were printed in WoGaGoDa and distributed across the whole area which administratively included Wolaitta, Gamo, Gofa and Dawuro. This decision caused a more serious dispute than had DaGaGo. Speakers from every corner of Wolaitta, Gamo, Gofa and Dawuro objected to the government's propensity to consider them speakers of homogeneous varieties and to impose a standard (Hirut 2007). They felt that the action amounted to a linguistic, ethnic and cultural coercion. This situation necessitated the revision of decisions regarding language matters in the area and WoGaGoDa was abandoned once again in 2000.

The examples of DaGaGo and WoGaGoDa point to the fact that any attempt of standardisation without the active participation of the society concerned and 'the voice from below,' (Linn 2010), quoted in (Røyneland 2013), results in failure of the whole system (Spolsky 2004: 31- 37). In both cases, the endeavour was to create a harmonised standard that could serve as a linguistic basis to politically and administratively unite society. Since the languages exhibit considerable lexical, semantic and grammatical differences and speakers regard themselves as ethno-linguistically and historically independent (Hirut 2005, 2013a: 376), the effort to use language as a method to gain political virtues did not work in either case. These sociolinguistic situations required change in the organisational policy of the region, and in 2000 the former Semen Omo Zone was restructured into three administrative zones that include Wolaitta Zone, Gamo Gofa Zone and Dawuro Zone. This paved the way to use, develop and promote each language in the respective areas. Consequently, since then, Gamo has been used as an autonomous language of instruction in the locality.

[4] THE CHALLENGES OF NORM SELECTION IN GAMO

Questions of inclusion and exclusion of norms make the selection phase of mul-

tidialectal language standardisation extremely challenging. In exploring the challenges in Gamo, data were gathered from documents, interviews and focus group discussions. Due to its young written history, Gamo lacks a fully standard dialect. Its codification in books, dictionaries and literature, is also not extensive. Text books are the main printed documents where the standard is implemented. As Sebba (2007:47) puts it, text books are the most regulated materials in implementing a fixed form. A few other publications, including Gebreyohannis (2000), Wondimu (2015) and Hayward and Eshetu (2014), are written through individual endeavours.

The documents used in this study were, therefore, text books, Wondimu (2015) and Gebreyohannis (2000). The text books and Gebreyohannis (2000) were published by the zonal administration, so they help to explore the top down standardisation practices. On the other hand, as I discussed with the author, Wondimu (2015) was written in the norm applied in the text books, since it was prepared for use as a learning aid. Stories and folktales were then extracted from five text books and from Wondimu (2015) respectively. From these, 329 main words were selected and their codification was identified from Gebreyohannis (2000).

The prevalence of these words in five Gamo dialects: namely *Dače*, *K'uča*, *Ochollo*, *Dorze* and *Ganta* was investigated. Words used in each dialect were counted to assess the selection of norms from each of them. Similarly, interview and focus group discussion data sets were extracted from the corpus of speakers' views towards the standardisation process. The corpus data included interviews conducted with 16 volunteer informants, and five focus group sessions with 26 Gamo speakers. The participants were officials, language developers, text book writers/ editors, teachers and students. The students were taken from Arbaminch Teachers' College, ("ATC"). In the interests of preserving informants' privacy, anonymised names were used in the analysis.

The word count analysis added to interviews and discussions, as noted by Deumert and Vanendenbussche (2003:458 & 465), helps to explore the traditional 'from above ' standardisation practice, variation reduction and dialect convergence and divergence, and discloses the salient problems of the process (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997:88). Since the norm selection policy of written Gamo is not explicitly stated in writing, a thorough study about contemporary practices would succumb to the implicit policy of standardisation. With regard to this, Spolsky (2001: 153) has stated:

... language policy exists even where it has not been made explicit or established by authority. Many countries and institutions and social groups do not have formal or written language policies,

so that the nature of their language policy must be derived from a study of their language practice or beliefs.

A consistent written norm that writers can apply in Gamo is desirable (Hirut 2007). The lack of a standard norm limited people's access to publication in the language. Both publishers and writers were unsure as to which variety they could publish, since it was neither defined by law nor established by preceding writers. Getachew (Jan 15), writer and editor of text books in Gamo, noted: 'there was no former literature that you can quote or you can use as a reference... there was no base to refer to convince people that this variety is more preferable to the other variety.'

The absence of clarity on norms resulted in inconsistently written materials. Writers took norms which, they thought, were spoken by the majority of the community, but many other forms were overlooked. The following table reveals that most of the words in the texts were taken from the Northern dialects.

| Dialects | Sampled text books | Wondimu (2015) | Total | Gebreyohanis (2000) ¹ |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------|
| Ꭰ, Ꭱ, Ꭲ, Ꭳ | 92 | 45 | 137 | 16 |
| Ꭰ, Ꭲ, Ꭳ | 27 | 4 | 31 | 1 |
| Ꭰ, Ꭱ, Ꭲ | 4 | 6 | 10 | - |
| Ꭰ, Ꭱ, Ꭳ | 2 | - | 2 | - |
| Ꭰ, Ꭲ, Ꭳ, Ꭴ | 3 | 6 | 9 | - |
| Ꭰ, Ꭱ, Ꭲ, Ꭳ, Ꭴ | - | 1 | 1 | - |
| Ꭰ, Ꭱ | 3 | 15 | 18 | 1 |
| Ꭰ, Ꭲ | - | 2 | 2 | - |
| Ꭲ, Ꭳ | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Ꭰ | 4 | 3 | 7 | - |
| Ꭱ | 8 | 8 | 16 | 1 |
| Ꭲ | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| Ꭴ | 1 | 1 | 2 | 14 |
| Common in all | 45 | 46 | 91 | 34 |
| Total | 191 | 138 | 329 | |

TABLE 1: Number of words taken from texts and the dialects they represent
Note: Ꭰ = Ꭰače, Ꭱ=Ꭱ'uča, Ꭲ = Ꭲchollo, Ꭳ= Ꭳorze, Ꭴ= Ꭴanta.

[1] A dictionary where the meaning texts' words could be looked up

As can be seen from Table 1, most of the words (137) in the texts were the ones commonly used in North Gamo varieties of Ḍače, K'uča, Ochollo and Dorze. Sixteen of these words were found in Gebreyohanis (2000). These dialects, as has been mentioned by Wondimu (2010:65), share a lot of their lexical items, and so it is no wonder that they have many words in common here too. On the other hand, Ganta has different words to these groups. The following words, from the texts, show the variation:

| | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| (1) Ganta | Ḍače, K'uča, Ochollo, Dorze | English |
| dosakosine | dosses | loves |
| attase | attenna | will happen |
| ketati | guuridi | early |
| ellusi | eson | quickly |
| bizzo | issino | one |

The first two pairs, *dossakosine/ dosses* and *attase/attenna* have a common root, but the last three are entirely different in both groups.

The texts also used 31 words from Ḍače, Ochollo and Dorze and only one of these was found in Gebreyohanis (2000). K'uča and Ganta have different representations for these. K'uča mainly differs in using /t/ where the rest use /ts/, as in words such as *loytstsi/ loyttidi (well)*, *mitstsi/ mitta (wood)*, *sintstsa/ sinta (face)*. In earlier times, these variations were not so exaggerated. For instance, Gamo words listed in Alemayehu's (2002) survey of Ometo dialects were written interchangeably in /ts/ as in *haytstsa (ear)* or in /t/, as in *maata (grass)*. But in present times, some K'uča speakers have become more sensitive to pronunciation and have been demanding text books published in their variety.

It can also be seen from Table 1 that ten words were shared among Ḍače, K'uča and Ochollo, eighteen between Ḍače and K'uča and the other nine among Ḍače, Ochollo, Dorze and Ganta. Two were from Ochollo and Dorze. Text books used two words from Ḍače, K'uča and Dorze and Wondimu (2015) used two words of Ḍače and Ochollo and one from Ḍače, K'uča, Ochollo and Ganta. From these, two words were available in Gebreyohanis (2000).

Since Ḍače, K'uča, Ochollo and Dorze are lexically proximate dialects, if a writer uses a word from K'uča or Ochollo, there is the possibility of finding the same word in the other dialects too. Conversely, Ganta is different and its words are not used comparatively in the texts. Due to the fact that the five dialects are daughters of one language, they have considerable number of words in common (91).

While looking at words specific to each dialect, one could find sixteen from K'uča, seven Ḍače, and two Ganta words. One Ochollo word was used in the text

books. A list of fourteen Ganta words, mostly ones not shown in the texts but parallel to the ones used in the other varieties, and one K'uča word prevailed in Gebreyohannis (2000). Although the dictionary contains Ganta words, it decried half of them as 'colloquial' expressions. This kind of commentary, in Bourdieu's (1991:48) term 'a sign of exclusion,' misshapes the attitude constructed towards those words and impedes their use in public and private arenas (Locher and Strassler 2008: 6). As Shohamy (2006: 31) has also put it, this type of standardisation discriminates against some language forms as being illegitimate and others as being legitimate usages.

On the surface, it seems impossible to trace a single dialect that provides the basis for the written norms in Gamo. However, in principle, Dače was implicitly used as a major source of words. This can be calculated from the number of words used in each dialect, including the shared ones, from Table 1.

| | | | | | | |
|-----|-----------|------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| (2) | Dialects | Dače | Ochollo | K'uča | Dorze | Ganta |
| | Frequency | 308 | 284 | 273 | 272 | 103 |

As can be noted, Dače had 308 words and Ochollo was represented by 284. K'uča and Dorze had a nearly equal number of words respectively, 273 and 272. On the other hand, Ganta had only 103 words, most of which are shared amongst all the dialects (see Table 1). Dače, thus, had the greatest representation, since it shares many words with the others.

Those words which Dače shares with others were written adhering to its grammar. To illustrate, K'uča uses the alveolar stop /t/ in places where Dače and others use the alveolar affricate /ts/, and texts applied the latter in the words as in *mittsa* (*tree*), *haatsta* (*water*), *suntsa* (*name*), etc. Similarly, the perfective aspect marker in Dače and Ganta is -d-,s in K'uča and -r- in Ochollo and Dorze. In the texts -d- is mainly used, as in the words *ootsides* (*worked*), *ojitjfidēs* (*asked*), *gides* (*said*), etc. Ganta also has -d- in its past marker, but differs from Dače in its lexis and other morphological constructions (Hirut 2013b). Therefore, writers have preferred Dače, not Ganta, in their application.

[5] THE DEVELOPMENT OF DAČE AS A STANDARD NORM

It has been determined that Dače is the main source of words in written Gamo. It was noticed during field work that informants associated Gamo with Dače, even though they did not explicitly state that the written dialect is Dače. In classrooms, every teacher is expected to write in the way that Gamo is written in text books. Dače is also used as an alternative name to Gamo in some websites, such as SILE. It is also a language of intra dialect communication and most public speeches. Further, every publication in Gamo undergoes an evaluation of

its compatibility to the legitimate norms at the Office of Culture and Tourism in the town of Arbaminch. The analogy of Gamo to Dače and the need to use it as a base to establish standard Gamo is not set out in any legal document, but instead grew out of social conditions pertaining to coincidence and demographic factors.

Dače was first used when text books were prepared in DaGaGo (see section 3). During that time, each variety had a representative who participated in the amalgamation process. The delegate from Gamo, who was coincidentally a Dače speaker, used his own dialect when Gamo was mixed with the others. Following this process, the zonal administrations passed a decision that each of the substrate languages should be used in official written and spoken transactions, and accordingly, Dače was approved for use in office communications in areas where Gamo was spoken. The trend of using Dače in writing has persisted informally with present writers, even after Gamo has become an autonomous language of Gamo society, without any formal selection or survey of social consent or expert resolution. So, it can be argued that the language of the elite, who had the access necessary to put their variety into writing, is now maintained as the norm for written Gamo.

The other factor that accounted for norm selection is the number of speakers. Gamos reside in nine districts/woredas, sub administrations of Gamo Gofa zone, where they speak various dialects, whose names coincide in most cases with the names of districts. As can be seen from Table 2, Dače has wide coverage across Gamo areas.

| Districts | Population | Dialects |
|-----------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| K'uča | 149,287 | K'uča |
| Boreda | 67,960 | K'uca |
| Merab Abaya | 74,967 | K'ogota |
| Arbaminč Zuriya | 164, 529 | Dače, Ganta, Ochollo, Shara |
| Čentja | 111,686 | K'ogota, Dooko, Dorze |
| Ditta | 83,987 | Dače |
| Daramalo | 81,625 | Dače |
| Kamba | 155,979 | Dače, Balta |
| Bonke | 159,089 | Dače, Mele, Garbansa, Kole, Zargulla |
| Total | 1,049,109 | 13 |

TABLE 2: Population of Gamo districts and some dialects spoken there. Source of population census: CSA (2008:13).

As can be seen from Table 2, in Arbamič zuria, which is populated by 164,529

people, Dače, Ganta, Ochollo and Shara dialects are spoken. Bonke district, with 159,089 residents, is occupied by Dače, Mele, Garbansa, Kole and Zargulla speakers. It can also be seen that the K'uča variety has an estimated total of 217, 247 speakers in K'uča and Boroda districts, whereas Dače is spoken by a total of 165,612 inhabitants in Ditta and Daramalo and it coexists with Balta in Kamba (155,979 residents). In Čentfa, home to 111,686 people, K'ogota, Dooko and Dorze are spoken. K'ogota is also used in Merab Abaya by 74,967 people.

Geographically, Arbaminč Zuriya, Kemba and Bonke are South Gamo areas, while the rest are located to the North of Gamo. According to the sociolinguistic data, Dače is widely distributed across Gamo districts. It is spoken in five of the nine districts, whereas K'uča and K'ogota are spoken in only two areas. The other dialects are limited to one district. It is also noticeable that Dače exists not only in the Northern part but also in Southern parts, where Ganta, Balta, Garbansa, Mele, Kole and Zargulla varieties are also spoken. According to Wondimu (2010), Dače spread to these areas after a group of Gamo community called Dačes conquered those places during civil war among Gamo local kings long ago. Thus, it is possible to deduce that the majority of the population in Gamo can speak, or at least understand, Dače.

Due to the above numeric factor, writers have adhered to Dače in writing text books and other materials. Regarding this, Moges (Jan 2013), an official in the education sector, noted that 'we took the widely spoken dialect that enables Gamo society to communicate with each other easily'. In addition, other participants who were in favour of the selection policy mentioned that the chosen dialect has many more speakers than others. The legitimacy of this norm is, therefore, currently consolidated not only in schools, but also in Arbaminch Teachers' College where the Gamo department has been set up.

[6] OTHER VARIETIES IN THE TEXT BOOKS

Text book writers tried to handle the challenge of lexical discrepancy in Gamo by providing Amharic, English and Gamo words as an option in brackets next to the prominent norm. Until the standard variety has been gradually inculcated in the users, using brackets can be a means to establish clarity of messages conveyed. Without a defined system, this mechanism, nonetheless, has pedagogical and social repercussions.

The following table and discussion show that alternative words of Gamo, Amharic and English are used arbitrarily in the text books analysed so far.

| Text books | Number of pages | Varieties | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | | Gamo | Amharic | English | Total |
| Gamo Language Grade 1 (2012) | 120 | 8 | 1 | - | 9 |
| Gamo Language Grade 2 (2003) | 62 | 9 | 4 | - | 13 |
| Gamo Language Grade 3 (2012) | 48 | 31 | 2 | - | 33 |
| Mathematics Grade 3(2010) | 140 | 84 | 14 | 12 | 110 |
| Gamo Language Grade 10 (2010) | 87 | 64 | 13 | 7 | 84 |
| Total | 457 | 199 | 34 | 19 | 249 |

TABLE 3: Alternative words in the text books and the languages they are resourced from.

As can be seen from Table 3, a Grade 3 Mathematics text book contained the highest number of words (110) given with alternatives. Among the alternatives, 14 were Amharic and 12 were English words. The rest (84) were from Gamo. The Grade 10 text book had 84 words which 13 were Amharic, 7 English and 64 Gamo words. 33 words (2 Amharic and 31 English) appeared in the Grade 3 Gamo text book. Comparative to its size (48 pages), the number of alternative words are also high in this text book. The number of alternatives decreased in Grade 2 with 13 (4 Amharic, 9 Gamo) words and in Grade 1 with 9 (1 Amharic and 8 Gamo) words. In most cases, the alternatives did not appear every time once they had been used next to the main words.

Most of the main words and the alternatives of Gamo were from dialects of the same sub group. Words that come under this group include the following:

| (3) Main words (Gamo) | Alternatives (Gamo) | English |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| hajttsa | bonččo | leaf |
| Kandon | hanotan | like this |
| wok'u | aapun | how much |
| majo | aφala | cloth |
| oosantfja | ugga | working bees |
| asa mačča | indo | someone's wife, woman |
| ero | akeeko | Know, comprehend |

In Gamo, speakers use widely varied words. Due to this, the writers put alternatives for clarity whenever they found a concept represented differently across the dialects. For instance, both *wok'u* and *appun* mean *how much*. Speakers of these dialects are equally competent in both forms. Though the words can be used interchangeably, placing one in parenthesis next to the other adds a burden to learners. This indicates that decisions limiting the number of words in the written norm are not in place.

An insignificant number of Ganta words were available as main words. Those found in the text books include:

| | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| (4) | Main words (Ganta) | Alternatives (North Gamo) | English |
| | tajbettoosona | k'oodettoosona | counted |
| | jessaso | de?izaso | living place |

Most participants in this study were against the use of Ganta varieties in the main position, and the Northern forms as subordinates. Bekele (Nov 2015), a student at ATC, said, 'If theirs is written first, we can't be able to know it. Ours is known by everyone. It is fine if theirs is in bracket.' This implies the domination of the majority usages in the construction of the standard norm, while the minority usages are deprived of equal status in the process.

The other sources of alternative words were the Amharic and English languages. Amharic is widely used in private, official and market communications in Gamo. It is spoken as a second language by many Gamos. English is also the medium of instruction in secondary and college classes and given as a subject from lower and upper primary grades onwards. The following are Amharic main words, for which Gamo equivalents were offered as subordinates.

| | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|------------------------|---------|
| (5) | Main words (Amharic) | Alternatives (Gamo) | English |
| | et'ara | k'aadara | fate |
| | kiilote | hiilla | skill |
| | makiina | kaame | car |
| | qffaganaw | ličanaw | To pack |

Amharic words were given though the intended meaning could be conveyed in the target language. For instance, the word *k'aadara* autonomously refers to *fate*, so the need to use *et'ara* is less. *Hillata* means *skills* and the Amharic translation *kiiloteta*, which means *kihilot*, is not necessary.

Some Amharic words were used in brackets next to Gamo expressions:

| (6) | Main words (Gamo) | Alternatives (Amharic) | English |
|-----|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| | mara | ičči | pupa |
| | pajjatetsta | t'ena | health |
| | kawojo | nigiisttenibe | Queen bee |
| | mole ojk'etsan | asa asigaariwootf | fishers |
| | ak'izaasata | | |

By comparison to the former groups, the target words used as main forms, with the Amharic ones as subordinates, are very few. Generally, using Amharic words as an alternative, when Gamo words can describe a concept on their own, hampers the development of Gamo as a written language.

Similarly, English alternatives were given to Gamo words. Unlike the Amharic words, the English options were included when the Gamo words were either newly created words or with extended meanings, such as the following ones:

| (7) | Main words (Gamo) | Alternatives (English) | English |
|-----|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| | k'awosa | grammeere | grammar |
| | issikootstsamatsta | koomijuniitij | community |
| | kaara | topic | topic |
| | bilat'aafo | poetry | poetry |
| | siitaadata | direct speetf | direct speech |
| | čoo?u giidi | arbitrary | arbitrary |
| | zaaribejo | irevijine | revision |
| | ajftek'oppa | Topic sentence | topic sentence |
| | k'aalafik'o | dikiifineere | dictionary |

All of the above Gamo words are used to introduce new concepts to the language. Therefore, this researcher believes that offering English terms in such situations, pending Gamo words becoming well established, enhances learners' understanding of the new terms. Nonetheless, publications that come afterwards should maintain the new words so that uniformity and lexical elaboration can be achieved.

All in all, except for the case with English words, the technique followed to use other varieties as a resource does not promote indigenous language development. The way in which Amharic words are used hinders indigenous knowledge development and discourages the construction of concepts in the

mother tongue. The layout of the text books also becomes less attractive to learners, since the text is frequently disrupted by parenthesis during reading. It further implies the dominant role which Amharic plays in the written domain in the area.

[7] CONCLUSION

Research has identified that the norms of written Gamo were selected from the Northern varieties. By contrast, only a negligible number of Ganta words were used in the materials (see Table 1). While Gamo is a multidialectal language, selection of words from a single dialect area shows the prevalence of dialect reduction and convergence in the standardisation process (Deumert 2004:3). The selection aspires to build social unity among the ethnic groups. This, however, is best achieved by including diverse forms than by illuminating diversity in the language. There is a general consensus that individuals easily participate in a system that works in a language in which they are competent (Orman 2008: 156). However, the way standard Gamo is constructed is a great challenge to children who speak dialects overlooked in the selection like Ganta. Given the limited access they have to the legitimate school language, which culminates in their having inadequate competence in it, as compared to other fellow students who acquire it at home, their achievement in schools obviously declines (Bourdieu 1991:259).

It can also be remarked that, in Gamo, written norms are not formally chosen, and selection policies are not explicit. Issues of mediating dialect variation in writing are not clear and the lack of an overt policy has led to each person write in whatever way they felt. This can be attributed to a high degree of dialect diversity and lack of commitment on the part of the administration, linguists and researchers. If Gamo is implemented in education and other social spheres, an organised and well-planned standardisation that includes voices from grass root level will be required (Fishman 1972:26). While emphasising the need for a well planned standardisation, Getachew (Jan 2015) said, 'students were doing better in subjects that were taught in Gamo than Amharic or English subjects, especially in the lower grade level. But if it had been well planned and standardised, the result could have been better.'

A planned standardisation which takes account of social needs and practices, reflects the diversity of the language by accommodating distinct features of dialects, and with which all Gamo speakers can identify themselves, can be achieved using a dialect democracy approach (Msimang 1998:167). Handling issues of diversity maintains a 'standardised representation of the language' (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 41). Writers abide by the standard when they realise

that their own dialectal features are accommodated, and the whole society benefits fairly from the social and economic virtues of a neutral standard. Melaku (Nov 2015), a student in ATC believed: 'If a person writes in one of the dialects, it is only that person who benefits from it. Students who come from various places do not get any advantage.' Norms of each dialect gain valuable place in the standard. To achieve this end, thorough dialect studies play a vital role. Some studies (Hirut 2005, 2013a, 2013 b, Wondimu 2010, Jordan 2009) in fact contribute a great amount to our present understanding of diversity in Gamo.

Based on those studies and the empirical data presented here, it can be said that the Northern dialects have a common unified standard. However, this does not mean that they are completely homogenous. Some of them, such as K'uča, Ochollo and Dorze, have features peculiar to each of them (Wondimu 2010). Though participants believed in the concept of solidarity among Gamos, they did state that significant characters of their dialects were not given attention in the standardisation. As Lane (2014: 3) has mentioned, societies whose forms of language are excluded from the standard feel that they are alienated from the group to which they used to belong. Selam (Nov 2015) from ATC, who speaks the Ochollo variety, sadly expressed the repercussions of excluding her dialectical form from the written norm as follows:

'Since I came to this campus, only those of us who came from Lante speak Ochollo. It is neither written in the books nor spoken by others. We use their variety (the written dialect)² when we speak with them. It is not available in books. If I sometimes speak my variety, they don't understand it. So, I translate what I said to them. Even the teachers do not use it. Our identity is Gamo and we speak Gamo, but they often said, are you speaking Gamo? what is this? So, I don't speak my variety with them. I communicate here in their dialect and when I go back I speak Ochollo.'

This extract indicates the need to include other dialects so that all speakers can develop a sense of belongingness to the standard, and everyone can grasp the heterogeneous nature of Gamo. If the written norm now serves as a means of intragroup communication, it is clear that it soon becomes the prestigious form and displaces the other varieties, even from the spoken domain.

On the other hand, Ganta remains divergent from the written norm and shares only a few of the words employed in the texts. One Ganta participant

[2] My explanation

mentioned that before he went to school, he spoke only Ganta, and learnt the written variety in schools. This imposes an obligatory situation for Ganta to be preserved for domestic use and to be perceived as a language spoken in a limited geographical area and for a presupposed limited time period. As Elkarte (2010: 14 & 15) emphasises, the survival of a language is highly dependent on its role in the society. Hence, unless these divergent varieties are promoted, used for wider communication and valued in schools, their survival remains at risk.

Though participants of the study emphasised the need to accommodate features of other dialects in the written norm, they did not agree on independently including Ganta words in the standard. They mentioned that Ganta covers a small area and that the major part of society does not comprehend it. They have strong conviction on putting Ganta in brackets next to Dače. This foreshadows the marginalised social position being given to Ganta dialect.

Since standardisation is a gradual process (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997:66), these compelling goals of the society oblige it to set short and long term plans for Gamo. As a short term goal, maintaining the role of Dače as a base, features of various dialects should be allowed into the standard. On the other hand, due to its lexical and grammatical divergence from the other dialects (Hirut 2013b) and the stance of most participants, Ganta cannot be entirely mixed with the others. Its words can be represented in the written norm pending the development of its own writing system. This makes the standard impartial and closer to every student's spoken repertoire. Students and teachers also deserve the freedom to trans-language between their dialect and the standard so that they can utilise their potential and effort for a better result. Through time, the Northern forms can be harmonised and standardised in their own right and the Southern forms can establish their own written norm as well. Since these geographically categorised dialects are daughters of one language, Gamo, they can share a common orthography and newly created words.

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