

Some comparative issues in Dime

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1. Introduction

The Dime people and their Language

- ❖ Dime is an endangered South Omotic language. According to my informants, “Dime” was originally the name of the person, who first settled the Dime people in the Us’a area.”
- ❖ Currently, Dime is the name of the language, the land and the people who speak the language. The Dime people live in six villages: Gero, Us’a, Gerfa, Genc’ire, Gec’a and Irk’a. All these villages are located on the mountains of Gerfa, Woyede, Vingi, Bampre, Gulo, Irk’a and Galc’ic’ (Mulugeta 2008).

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Dime is an endangered language belongs to the Omotic language family. Fleming (1990:494) states, the self-name is dim-aaf (Dime- mouth) or dim-ko-af (Dime-Gen-Mouth). According to 1994 census the Dime constitute a population of 5,462 people.

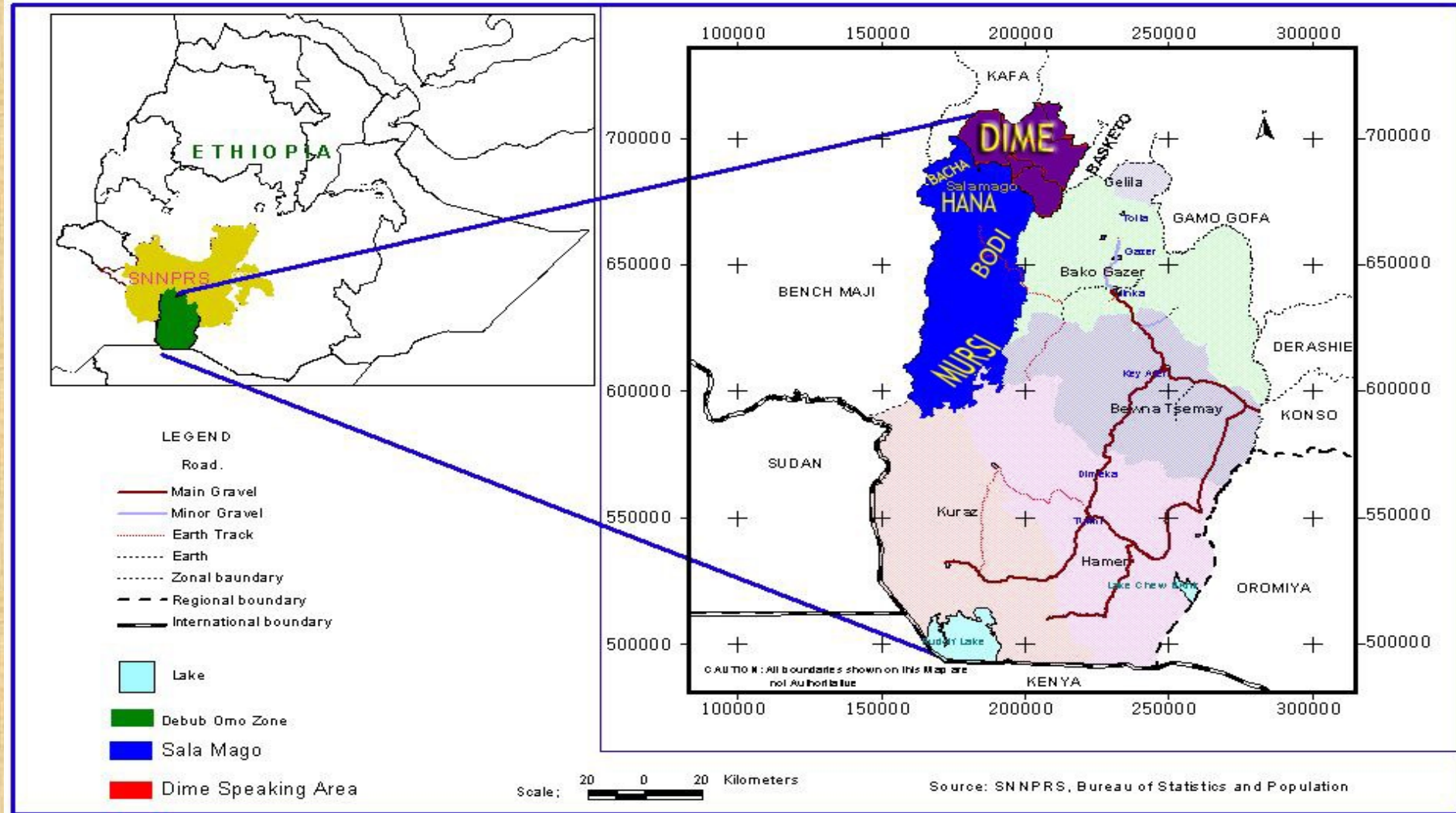
Surprisingly, the 2007 National Census reports that the population of Dime is 895.

Other communities in the surrounding Dime:

- ❖ *Tsara* to the north (across the river Omo),
- ❖ *Basketto* to the north-east and east,
- ❖ *Aari* to the southeast,
- ❖ *Mursi* and some *Surma* to the south-west,
- ❖ *Bodi (Me'en)* to the west (Mulugeta, 2016).

The Dime communities are very peaceful communities.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF DIME SPEAKING AREA



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- ❖ Among the Dime six villages, only the people of the villages of Us'a and Gero are accustomed to using oxen for farming during the recent period, while the rest only use hoes for their traditional farming activities.
- ❖ They are settled farmers raising crops.
- ❖ Their products include:
Maize, sorghum, teff (*Eragrostis abyssinica*), potato, inset, and coffee. They also keep bees and domestic animals(Mulugeta 2008).

CONTI---



DIME



AARI



BODI

Cont---

- ❖ Dime people are declining through time due to diseases, hunger and war according to Fleming (1990).
- ❖ The other factor is bilingualism. Except a few numbers of monolingual Dime speaker most of them speaks one or more neighboring languages next to their mother tongue. According to the current situation in Dime the conflict between the body people due to cattle resource is continuing.
- ❖ Other factors such as the needs of further education of the younger community increased the migration of the student to the city areas.

2. Previous works

The major researches done on Dime are Fleming (1990) and Mulugeta Seyoum (2014c, 2013b, 2012, 2011, 2010a, 2009a-b, 2008a-d, 2007a-b, 2005, 1997). Fleming (1997) dealt with a survey of Dime grammar. Mulugeta (2008) focused on extensive descriptions of phonology, morphology, syntax. Moreover, Tri-lingual Dictionary of Dime was compiled. Further, Dime Orthography is developed Based on Ethiopic Script (Mulugeta Seyoum. 2022.,, 2015).

Mulugeta (2015)

Mulugeta Seyoum
A Grammar of Dime



**Dime – Amharic – English
Dictionary**



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ተ.ቁ	አይ ፒ ኤ	መግለጫ	ተናባቢ ድምጾች		አናባቢ ድምጾች አ ኡ ኢ አ ኤ(ኤ)፤ እ(ኧ) ኦ (ኦ፤)					
1.	p	Voiceless bilabial stop	ፐ	ፐ	ፑ	ፒ	ፓ	ፔ	ፕ	ፖ
2.	b	Voiced bilabial stop	ብ	በ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ
3	ፊ	Voiced bilabial implosive	፳	፳	፳	፳	፳	፳	፳	፳
4.	፳	Voiced dental implosive	፳	፳	፳	፳	፳	፳	፳	፳
5.	m	Voiced bilabial nasal	ም	መ	መ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ
6.	f	Voiceless labial fricative	ፍ	ፈ	ፈ	ፈ	ፋ	ፈ	ፍ	ፎ
7.	w	Bilabial semi- vowel	ወ	ወ	ወ	ዊ	ዋ	ዌ	ወ	ዐ
8.	t	Voiceless dental stop	ት	ተ	ቱ	ቲ	ታ	ቱ	ት	ቶ
9.	d	Voiced dental stop	ድ	ደ	ዱ	ዲ	ዳ	ዴ	ድ	ዶ
10.	s	Ejective fricative	ኦ	ኦ	ኦ	ኦ	ኦ	ኦ	ኦ	ኦ

3. Some Controversial issues among the Omotic languages

We can categorized the major controversial issues as follows:

1. Fleming (1976) classified Omotic as an independent sub-family under the Afro-asiatic phylum;
2. Lamberti (1991 and 1993) insists on the separation of the Aroid group from west Cushitic as a separate branch of Cushitic.
3. The Aroid or South Omotic languages belong to Nilo-Saharan (Zaborski (2004), Moges (2007, Bender (2000, 2003)).

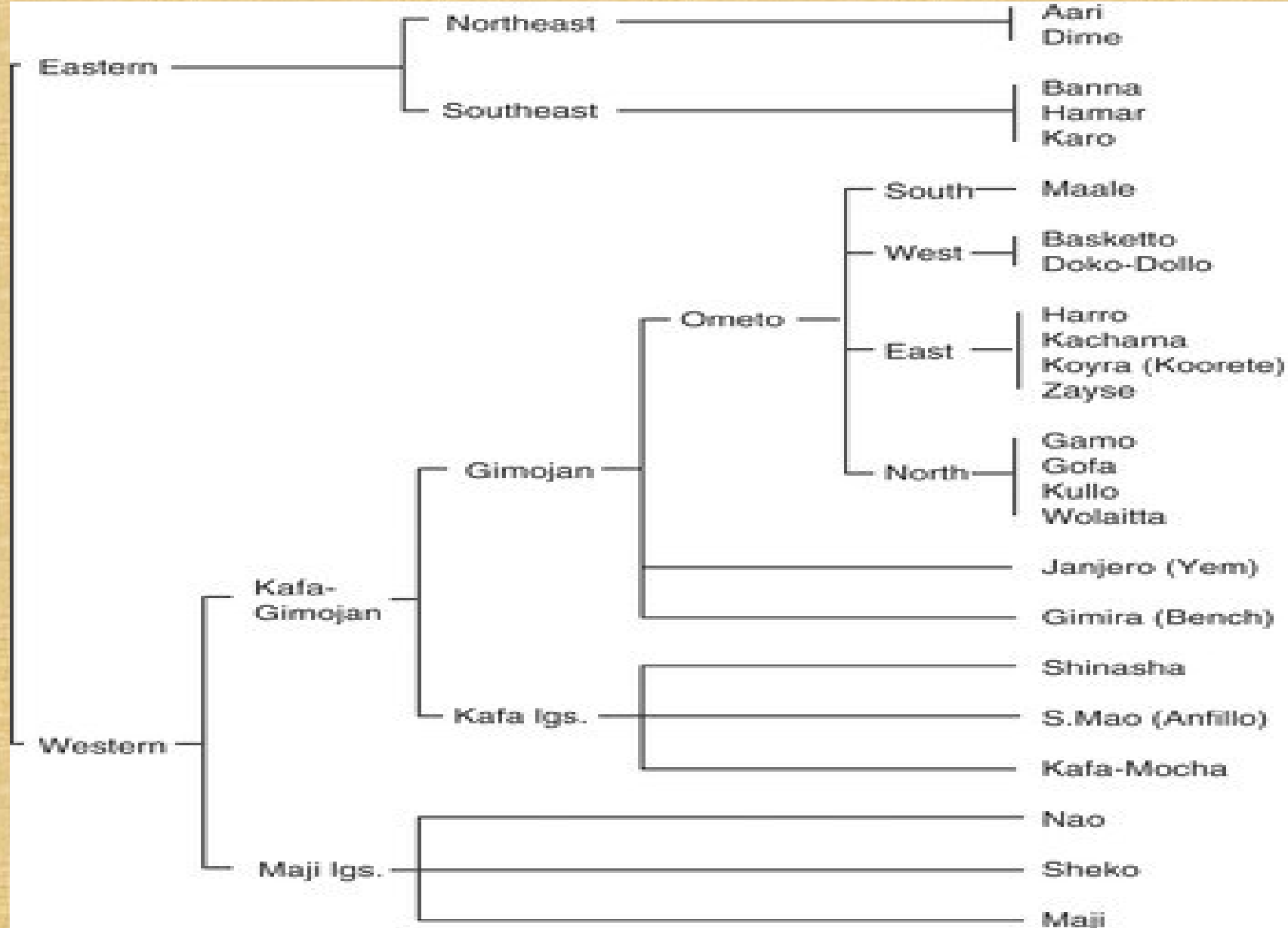
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Hirut(2022:2) pointed out that the main controversies around Omotic as follows:

1. Divided opinions on the place of Omotic within Afro-Asiatic; Whether Omotic as a separate language family within Afro-Asiatic or part of Cushitic
2. Whether Omotic is more closely affiliated to Chadic
3. Whether Omotic is a branch of Afroasiatic or part of another super phylum like Nilo-Sharan or even Indo European
4. Whether Omotic, especially the South Omotic branch (Ari, Hamar, Dime...) is part of Omotic or rather part of Nilosaharn
5. Issues are also raised at a lower level, for instance, Ometo internal classifications

Azeb (2017:815) has made many linguistics study on the Omotic languages spoken in the country and identified the name of each languages including their alternative names: Aari, Anfilo, Basketo, Bench(Benchnon), Boro(shinasha), Ch'aara(Tsatatsa), Dime, Dizi (Maji), Gamo, Ganza, Gofa, Hamar, Haro(Gidich), Hozo-sezo), kafa, Koorete (Kore,Koyra, Amaro), kullo (Dawro), M³le-Ganta, Maale, Malo, Mocha(shekacho), Nay(Nao), Oyda, Sheko, Wolaitta(Welamo),Yemsa (Janjaro, Yem), Zayse and Zargulla.

The Omotic language classification based on Fleming (1976) is presented below:



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- ❖ Azeb (2018) mentioned that most of these languages are spoken in a contiguous area in the Southern Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS).
- ❖ Nowadays, the Southern Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State split to four different regional states such as Sidama regional state, Central Ethiopia regional state (Gurage, hadia, kembeta, tembaro silit'e, halaba), Southwest Ethiopia regional state (kefa, sheka, bench maji, dawro konta), Southern Ethiopia Regional states (wolita, gamo, gofa, basketo and south Omo).
- ❖ Azeb (2012) further described Omotic languages Outside of these state namely Yemsa in Oromiya, Shinasha in Amhara Regional state, Hozo-Sezo and Northern Mao in the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State.

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Hirut (2022:3) further discussed that there are disputes and different opinions are reflected with in the Omotic languages. For instance, the classification of South Omotic also called Aroid (Ari, Dime), is highly disputed as it shows distinct features not shared with the rest of Omotic. Rather, it resembles those in the Nilosahran superfamily as suggested by different linguists. For instance, Cerulli (1942:272) pointed out that Hamar, Dime, and their kinds were Nilotico.

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Dime reflects a few unusual features compared to related languages (Bender, 2000:160). Bender (1988) does not include /ɓ, ɗ, ɛ, ɔ/ among the frequent sounds of the Omotic group. The presence of these sounds in the Dime language makes it somewhat different from the rest of the Omotic group.

The presence of these sounds in the Dime language makes it somewhat different from the rest of the Omotic group. These segments appear in some Omotic languages only phonetically (cf. Wedekind (1990:73), for instance, the segments (ɓ, ɗ) are found phonetically in Yemsa. Ford, (1990:430) reports that the segments (ɓ, ɗ) are found phonetically in Aari. However, Melkench (2011) argues the existence of these two (ɓ, ɗ) sounds in Ari.

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Azeb(2018:818) exhaustively described the phonemic inventory of the Omotic languages and identified most of the differences based on language specific features. In her description she discusses that the segments η , x , X , y and \mathfrak{x} in Dime, are absent in other Omotic languages (Mulugeta, 2008, Azeb, 2018).

Azeb further describes morphological and syntactical features of the languages argues that some languages are reported to have aspect, e.g. Benchnon, Dime, Maale and Sheko. Others are analyzed as tense-marking languages, e.g. Koorete, Wolaitta and Zargulla.

4.2 Some comparative issues in Dime

In this study we discuss the Consonant and vowel phonemes of Dime comparing to other Omotic Languages. The consonants are presented from the manner of articulations perspectives. Thus, the plosives, fricatives, affricates, ejectives, implosives, nasals, approximants are discussed below:

Plosives

In Omotic languages the common plosive sounds are p, b, t, d, k, g, ʔ which are occurred across the languages. However, there is one peculiar sound for Ari language (i.e., q). Moreover, Anfillo (S Mao) missed in its plosive series the glottal sound /ʔ/ which is its specific features.

Fricatives

In Dime segments x, X, ɣ and ɤ, which are reported in Mulugeta Seyoum (2008)

Among these, the / ɣ, ɣ/ reported in Aari but not exist in other Omotic languages.

In Omotic /s, z, ʃ, h/ are commonly found in Dime and other Omotic languages except kaafi noono that missed the /ʃ/ sound

Affricates

Affricate sounds /ts, tʃ, dʒ/ are common sounds in south Omotic languages such as Ari, Dime Hamar, karo, Maale.

/ts/ is occurred almost in all languages except a few languages such as Wolita , Yem, Anfillo, kafinoono, and Nayi.

Affricate sound /tʃ/ is occurred almost all Omotic languages except in Shinasha(Boro). Furthermore, The retroflexed affricate sound /tʂ/ is occurred in Sheko and Dizi, whiles the retroflexed affricate sound / cɕ/ is occurred in Benchnoon.

Ejectives

The ejective sounds / p', t', s', tʃ', k'/ are found in most of Omotic languages.

The ejective sound /t'/ is found in most Omotic languages it is absent only in Karo, Maale, Basketo, Haro, Koorete, Gamo, Gofa, and Dawro.

Similarly, the ejective sounds s', absent in Basketo, Gamo, Gofa, Benchnoon, Shinasha, Anfillo, Nayi and sheko,

The ejective sounds /tʃ'/ and /k'/ are absent in Gamo, anfillo, nayi and in Hamar, respectively.

Implosives

The alveolar implosive sound /ɗ/ is a common sound in Omotic and found in most of them. It is absent in a few Omotic languages such as in Benchnoon, anfillo, kafinoono, Nayi.

The bilabial implosive sound /ɓ/ is rarely found in Omotic. I didn't come across this sound in Dime but it is found in other south Omotic languages such as Hamar and karo.

Nasals

In Omotic the Nasala sounds / m, n/ are commonly found in all Omotic Languages. The velarized sound /ŋ/ is found in some Omotics languages such as in Dime, Hamar, Karo, wolita, yem, anfillo, nayi and Dizi. The palatalized nasal sounds /ɲ/ is also rare found in Omotic. It is found only in Hamar, karo, Gamo. Gofa, wolita, yem, and Nayi.

Approximants

The approximant sounds / w, y, l, r/ are common sounds in all Omotic Languages except in Kafinoono and Benchenoon. Specially, in benchnoon the approximants sound /w/ is absent and the remaining sounds / y, l, r/ are existed.

4.2.2 Vowel phonemes in Omotic

- ❖ Bender (1988:125) suggests that across Omotic languages a five vowel system is Strongly supported. However, in Dime there are five basic vowels and two half open and two central vowels. Among these, each of the basic five vowels has a long counterparts. Dime has a nine vowels system (Mulugeta 2008).
- ❖ Azeb (2018:818) discussed that most Omotic is a ten-vowel system comprising i, u, e, o and a plus corresponding long vowels ii, uu, ee, oo and aa is common and it is reconstructed for Proto-Omotic in Bender (2003). However, Moges (2015) suggest that the south Omotic languages are supported ten-vowel systems (a, e, i, o, u, ɨ, ɪ, ε, ɔ, ʌ)

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The front vowels / e, i/ are common sounds in all omotics languages. Moreover, in a few languages such as in Dime, Hamar, Karo, and Zayse the front lax sound / ε/ is existed.

The central sounds are not common in Omotic languages. However, there are some languages who have central sounds such as / ɨ , ə, ʌ / . For instance, the central sounds / ɨ , ə/ are exists in Aari, Dime Furthermore, the other central sound/ʌ/ is found in Hamar and Karo but not exist in other Omotic languages.

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There are the back sounds / u, o, a, ɔ / are found in Dime. Specially, the back vowels / u, o, a/ are common sounds in all Omotic languages. The other lax back vowel /ɔ/ is found only in four Omotics languages in Aari, Dime, Hamar and Karo.

The Dime language contains nine vowel phonemes /e, i, u, o, a, ɔ, ɪ, ə, ɛ) (Mulugeta 2008), contrast to many Omtic languages that occurs five vowel /e, i, u, o, a,) system as we discussed above.

No	Language	Phonemic inventory				
		Consonants	Velar and uvular (Specific features)	Vowels	Author	Moges (2015)
1	Dime	P, b, p', m, w, f, t, d, t', dʒ, s, z, s', ts, n, l, r, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, tʃ', dʒ, ɣ, k, g, k', x, ɣ, ŋ, χ, ʁ, ʔ, h	χ, ʁ, χ, ʁ,	a, e, i, o, u, ɨ, ə, ε, ɔ.	Mulugeta (2008) PhD thesis	a, e, i, o, u, ɨ, ɪ, ε, ɔ, ʌ
2	Ari	P, b, p', m, w, f, t, d, t', dʒ, s, z, s', ts, n, l, r, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, tʃ', dʒ, ɣ, k, g, k', q, x, ʁ, ʔ, h	q, x, ʁ	a, e, i, o, u, ɨ, ə, and ɔ. Length is phonemic	Melkenneh (2011) MA Thesis	a, e, i, o, u, ɨ, ɪ, ε, ɔ, ʌ
3	Hamer	p, t, k, ʔ, b, d, g, s'/t', tʃ', q', ʁ, dʒ, ɣ, f, s, z, ts, ʃ, χ, h, tʃ, dʒ m, n, ŋ, ɲ, r, l, w, j	χ	ɪ, u, a, e, o, ε, ɔ, ʌ	Moges Yigezu and Binyam Sisay Mendisu publication: 2015	a, e, i, o, u, ɨ, ɪ, ε, ɔ, ʌ
4	Karo	P, b, ʁ, m, w, t, d, dʒ s, s', z, ts, ts', n, l, ʃ, tʃ, tʃ', dʒ, ɲ, ɣ, k, g, k', ŋ, ʔ, h		a, o, e, ɪ, ʊ, ɪ, u, ɔ, ʌ, ε	Alemgena Belete	a, e, i, o, u, ɨ, ɪ, ε, ɔ, ʌ

4.3 Some comparative issues on morphology and syntax

Hayward (1989:30) points out that all the modern Omotic languages abandoned grammatical gender, however, Dime has grammatical gender.

Moreover, it is theoretically and comparatively interesting that demonstratives in Dime are formed by combining proximity indicating morphemes **si-** ‘proximal’ and **saʔ-** ‘distal’ with the third person subject pronouns. For instance, **nuʔ** ‘he’, **naʔ** ‘she’ resulting in **sinuʔ** ‘this (M)’, **sinaʔ** ‘this (F)’, **sanu** ‘that(M)’, **sanaʔ** ‘that(F)’, **sʔ-két** ‘these’, **sa-két** ‘those’.

sʔ-nuʔ	‘this here, (visible)’
sʔay-sʔnuʔ	‘this, at higher altitude compared to the speaker’
ʔoy-sʔnuʔ	‘this, (near and visible)’
say-sʔnuʔ	‘that, (further away, visible)’
say-sikeʔt	‘those, (further away, visible)’
sʔuy-sʔ-nuʔ	‘that, (furthest away out of reach and/or invisible)’
sʔu-sʔuy-sʔ-nuʔ	‘that, (furthest away, out of reach and/or invisible)’

Cont---

- We observe in Dime demonstratives that the language uses prefixes (i.e. considering the independent subject pronouns as bases for the derivation of the demonstratives). This also applies to the proximal and distal morphemes *si-* and *sa-*. No further prefix forms are attested in this language.
- In Omotic in general, prefixation is not a common phenomenon. This may be peculiar to Dime in the demonstrative paradigm.

Concluding remarks and recommendations

- ❖ The velar and uvular fricative sounds such as /x, ɣ, ʁ, ʁ̥/ are specific features of Dime. In Dime these sounds are occurred in any position of the word.
- ❖ Dime has additional affricates such as /ts/ which is the feature of northern Omotic and also missed the implosive sound /ɓ/ which is considered a proto aroid sounds (Moges, 2013).
- ❖ Furthermore, in Omotic across the language five vowel system is reported. However, Dime contrasted to these argument nine vowel system is identified (Mulugeta, 2008) and Ten-vowel systems (Moges (2007,2015)).

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- ❖ Dime has grammatical gender, which is abandoned in other Omotic languages.
- ❖ In addition, Dime adjectives constitute a separate word class. They are characterized by gender agreement whereas nouns and verbs are not marked for gender.
- ❖ However, Most Omotic languages make a two-way (masculine and feminine) gender distinction in nouns, pronouns, on modifying categories such as demonstratives and, in some languages, on verbs Azeb (2018).
- ❖ There is a Uniquely Adjectival Morpheme **-id** for plural agreement. Thus, the masculine and feminine gender distinction and plural agreements is a unique feature of adjectives compared to nouns and verbs in the language.

Cont---

- ❖ Some feature of Dime prefix is also peculiar to Dime which is not attested in other Omotic languages.
- ❖ Dime demonstratives represent a rare pattern in the family. Omotic languages are head-final. Word order is Subject-Object-Verb in all of them. Nominal modifiers are followed by noun and main verb, which is always final.
- ❖ Dime word order of nouns and noun modifiers is not restricted contrasted to some other Omotic languages. Word-order is also not restricted to verbal sentences that verbs and adverbs alternate their order without changing meanings.

Challenges

Challenges

1. The specific linguistic feature of Dime which differed from other Omotic groups leads to its original relation to the other Nilotic and Surmaic languages (Mulugeta, 2008, Moges, 2015).
2. Some strong relations to Omotic languages for instance
 - ❖ Cultural, agricultural and linguistic similarities (Ari, Dizi, Tsratsa), etc
 - ❖ Addis and Abera (2013:20) stated that “In case of Dime, it is clear that they were neighbors and even two clans of Dime have blood relationship with Tsratsa.” In their research the Iron work of Dime which has been used for a century is also practiced and known in Tsratsa as well (2013:23). Some scholars tried to refer the Dime as ‘Dime of Tsratsa’ to indicate those Dime who live with tsarata.(2013:23) from Siebett, 2002:3):
3. In Tsratsa zero copula, tenseless, past and future, negative and interrogative copula constructions are employed. It is similar to Dime. The copula *deen* also similar.

Perspectives

Descriptive linguist, sociolinguist, anthropological linguist, historical linguist, psycholinguist together should bring the future perspectives of Dime

I recommend that further, comparative studies in Ethiopian languages in general and in Omotic languages in particular is vital important.

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