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ANALYSIS OF MORPHOPHONEMIC PATTERNS OF *GUJII*
DIALECT: AN INSIGHT FROM OPTIMALITY THEORY,
SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND PSYCHOLINGUISTICS IN THE
DETERMINATION OF PECULIARITIES OF THE DIALECT

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ABSTRACT

The Gujii dialect which is one of southern dialects of Afaan Oromoo is highly characterized by assimilation patterns. This assimilation is dictated by some linguistic and non-linguistic factors and it has impact on the communication held between Gujii dialect speakers and school text version speakers. Therefore, this paper presents the analysis of Gujii morphophonemic patterns in comparison to school version of Afaan Oromoo using some insights from Optimality Theory, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. Besides, it explores psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic constraints

that possibly caused peculiar morphophonemic assimilations in Gujii dialect. From the analysis, it is found out that assimilation pattern in Gujii dialect is highly observed in inflection morphemes of verbs as well as of some nouns and adverbs. Similarly, patterns such as using ‘hudhaa’/ stop velar sound / at the end of plural compound nouns, negative markers/ using [hin-] as a prefix together with [-u] as a suffix/, and some greeting phrases are other peculiar patterns observed in Gujii dialect. The peculiarity of these morphophonemic patterns is determined by psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic factors. Moreover, this peculiarity is linguistically justifiable by Optimality Theory and they are made primarily for ease of communication. Because of these peculiarities, the Gujii dialect speakers face several problems when they are required to speak or read the school version of Afaan Oromoo.

Key Words: Gujii, morphophonemic patterns, dialect, assimilation, Afaan Oromoo

INTRODUCTION

The Oromo is the largest nation in the horn of Africa and “Afaan Oromoo, a highly developed spoken language, is at the top of the list of the distinct and separate 1000 or so languages used in Africa. It is classified as one of the Cushitic (Kushitic) languages spoken in the Ethiopian Empire, Somalia, the Sudan, Tanzania, and Kenya” (Tilahun, 1993, p. 36). It is the fourth largest language in Africa next to Hausa, Arabic and Kiswahili. Though it has large number of speakers, Afaan Oromo has not gotten the chance to develop to its fullest stage because of destructive ruling system targeted towards Oromo by almost all past rulers of the empire, Ethiopia.

It has recently been introduced in to educational arena as medium of instruction, at least in Oromiya region, after the downfall of Dergue regime. Since then, so many studies have been conducted on it and it is on the way of development though it has not yet been standardized. Until now, only Mecca-Tulama (central and western) dialect has been chanced to be used most; as a result, considered as ‘standardized’ or used in school textbook (which we prefer to call the *school version*) that is considered as standardized Afaan Oromo if not formally but informally. This is not withstanding selection of vocabulary and some original concepts from all dialects particularly from the Boran and Gujii. The studies which have been conducted on Afaan Oromo have focused on this dialect (Mecca-Tulama) in most cases.

The morphophonemic patterns have been studied and analyzed by the researchers of Afaan Oromo are of this privileged dialect (Mecca-Tulama) and fortunate enough. The Afaan Oromo dialects are mutually intelligible and the morphophonemics observed in school version dialect (especially of the privileged Mecca-Tulama dialect), almost all is also observed in other dialect, say, Gujii dialect. This is one of the important psycho- socio-linguistic strings binding Oromo together—keeping Oromoo unity in diversity. However, the morphophonemics emphasized in the

latter one are most of the time, both by researchers and speakers of the former one considered as back warded or very difficult to listener or speaker.

According to Oromo Tourism and Culture Bureau under the title *Caasluga Afaan Oromoo* (1998) *volume I*, morphophonemics (i.e., deletion, reduplication, metathesis, epenthesis, assimilation etc.) occur because of the relationship between morphemes and phonemes for example when they come together, they bring a change to the stem of the words.

In short, the peculiar features and processes of the Gujii dialect, such as morphophonemic patterns of assimilation, deletion, metathesis, cluster reduction, etc. need to be investigated and explained in order to prevent and intervene with language related problems that school children in general and learners with special needs in particular would face. As a result, this dialect is likely to be marginalized in the process of Afaan Oromoo standardization. Besides, this had entailed psychosocial crises on Gujii school children.

The Gujii dialect is one of the southern varieties (dialects) of Afaan Oromoo which has its own peculiarities. One such peculiarity is evident in processes and features of phonological rules and rule-exceptions that characterize morphophonemic patterns of the Gujii dialect. The Gujii is identified by, among other things, its dialect. In this regard, Widdowson (2007) stated, "We discover our identity when we acquire language during childhood" (p. 3).

The Gujii dialect of Afaan Oromoo, which is also in continuum with other geographically contiguous varieties, such as Boran and Arsii dialects, is recognized for its being the carrier of original Oromoo values and rich vocabulary items. Despite this fact, the Gujii dialect has not almost been researched and there is scarce literature that explains its unique features and its contributions to the development of Afaan Oromoo and original Oromoo values at large. Hence, this article aimed at the analysis of morphophonemic patterns of Gujii dialect in order to identify the peculiar patterns of the dialect and to investigate the reasons behind these peculiarities.

Above all, the aim of this paper is to identify peculiar morphophonemic processes as well as to alleviate school related problems that speakers in general and school children in particular would experience due to these peculiarities. To this end, the paper (1) presented the peculiar features of morphophonemic patterns of the Gujii dialects; (2) explained morphophonemic inventory of the peculiar assimilations; (3) explored the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic constraints that possibly caused peculiar morphophonemic assimilations.

METHODS OF THE STUDY

The units of analysis constitute morphophonemic patterns in the utterances of the respondents by using narrative means. In line with the mixed research methods,

the peculiar morphophonemic patterns particularly assimilation patterns were analyzed according to the phonological rules they obey. While doing that, the elements of these peculiar assimilations were qualitatively summarized and explained in relation to the phonemic inventory of the dialect.

The analysis is made by using Optimality Theory (OT). OT is a linguistic theory introduced in 1990s by Alan Prince and Paul Smolensky, primarily to solve phonological problems though it was also used later on to deal with some syntactic problems. According to these authors, there are two types of constraints: markedness and faithfulness. For example, in Afaan Oromoo, if we consider the word ‘*qabne*’ and its variant in Gujii dialect ‘*qanne*’ which have the same stem ‘*qab-*’ (to catch); according to markedness constraint point of view ‘*qabne*’ can be uttered as ‘*qanne*’ and faithfulness constraint allows only ‘*qabne*’—the one which is considered as the standard variant. Therefore, OT is used as a major theory for the analysis and explanation of Gujii morphophonemic patterns in relation to the school text version of Afaan Oromoo.

Besides, the application of the salient insights from psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and that of defining features of a nation as a linguistic community and beyond, would lay the theoretical basis of this article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ANALYSIS OF GUJII- DIALECT MORPHOPHONEMIC PATTERNS

Morphology, particularly, derivation is concerned with formation of lexical items while inflection takes care of functions of words (verbs) by modifying them according to tense, person, number, gender and the like. The Gujii dialect is one dialect of Afaan Oromoo and it characterized by morphophonemic patterns such as deletion, epenthesis, metathesis, duplication, and assimilation of Afaan Oromoo. These patterns modify words according to tense, person, number, gender and etc.

The main morphophonemic pattern that highly contributes to the uniqueness of Gujii dialect is assimilation process. Morphophonemic assimilation is a process that occurs in relation to sounds, part of words, and word forms. To take an example, /b/ in *qabne* is pronounced as [qamne] to be in harmony with the nasal feature in /n/ coming next to it. The harmony is with regard to manner of articulation to nasalize /b/ with /n/. In the Gujii case, since phoneme /m/ changes itself to /n/ in similar environments, *qabne* would be *qanne* rather than nasally harmonized /qamne/. To explain it further, let us consider this: when verb *deemuu* inflected by addition of {-te}, the phoneme /m/, will be altered into /n/ thus making the inflected word *deente* instead of faithfully keeping the /m/ in the root verb.

In Gujii, the markedness constraint, that is, changing /m/ to /n/ as in /deente/ is stronger than faithfulness that intends to keep /m/ in to place / *deemte*/. What must be

noticed here is the changing of /m/ into /n/ in the anticipation of coming {-te} thus harmonizing /m/ and {-te} by point of articulation {/m/=>/n/+te}. Here, it seems that the change of *gabne* into *qanne* signifies the application, even overgeneralization, of this rule: (*deemuu*=>*deemte*=> *deente*). Then, *gabne* [*qamne*] =>*qanne*). In addition to these let us consider the following table.

Table 1: Comparison of morphophonemics of assimilation of Gujii dialect with the dissimilated school version Afaan Oromoo

Word root	Morphophonemic changes in Afaan Oromo school version	Morphophonemic changes in Gujii dialect	Inflecting for negative
<i>Beekuu</i>	<i>Barattuun deebii beekte</i>	<i>Barattuun deebii beette.</i>	<i>hinbeenne</i>
	<i>Atis deebii beekte</i>	<i>Atille deebii beette.</i>	<i>hinbeenne</i>
	<i>Isinis deebii beektan</i>	<i>Isinille deebii beettan.</i>	<i>hinbeenne</i>
	<i>Nuutis deebii beekne</i>	<i>Nuutille/ nulle deebii beenne.</i>	‘’
<i>Deemuu</i>	<i>Barattuun deemte</i>	<i>Barattuun deente.</i>	hindeenne
	<i>Atis deemte</i>	<i>Atille deente.</i>	‘’
	<i>Isinis deemtan</i>	<i>Isinille deentan.</i>	‘’
	<i>Nuutis deemne</i>	<i>Nuutille/nulle deenne.</i>	‘’
<i>Rafuu</i>	<i>Adurreen sireerra rafte</i>	<i>Aaddurreen sireerra ratte.</i>	hinranne
	<i>Atis sireerre rafte</i>	<i>Atille sireerre ratte.</i>	‘’
	<i>Isinis sireerra raftan</i>	<i>Isinille sireerra rattan.</i>	‘’
	<i>Nuutis sireerra rafne</i>	<i>Nuutille sireerra ranne.</i>	‘’
<i>Obaasuu</i>	<i>Ishiin biqiltuu bishaan obaaste/-fte).</i>	<i>Isiin biqiltuu bisaan obaatte/ obaachan.</i>	Hinobaanne/hinobaanye
	<i>Atis biqiltuu bishaan obaaste</i>	<i>Atille biqiltuu bisaan obaatte/ obaache.</i>	‘’
	<i>Isinis biqiltuu bishaan obaadtan</i>	<i>Isinille biqiltuu bisaan obaattan/obaachan.</i>	‘’
	<i>Nuutis biqiltuu bishaan obaasne</i>	<i>Nuutille biqiltuu bisaan obaanne/ obaanye.</i>	‘’
<i>Muguu</i>	<i>Boontun mugde</i>	<i>Boontun mudde.</i>	hinmunne
	<i>Atis mugde</i>	<i>Atille mudde.</i>	‘’
	<i>Isinis mugdan</i>	<i>Isinille muddan.</i>	‘’
	<i>Nuutis mugne.</i>	<i>Nuutille/nulle munne.</i>	‘’
<i>Dhaquu</i>	<i>Harmee gabaa dhaqxe</i>	<i>Harmee gabayaa dhaxxe.</i>	hindhandhe
	<i>Atis gabaa dhaqxe</i>	<i>Atille gabayaa dhaxxe.</i>	‘’
	<i>Isinis gabaa dhaqxa</i>	<i>Isinille gabayaa dhaxxa.</i>	‘’

	<i>Nuutis gabaa dhaqne</i>	<i>Nuutille gabayaa dhandhe.</i>	‘’
<i>Qabuu</i>	<i>Barattuun kubbaa qabde</i>	<i>Barattuun kubbaa qadde.</i>	hinqanne
	<i>Atis kubbaa qabde.</i>	<i>Atille kubbaa qadde.</i>	‘’
	<i>Isinis kubbaa qabdan</i>	<i>Isinille kubbaa qaddan.</i>	‘’
	<i>Nuutis kubbaa qabne</i>	<i>Nuutille kubbaa qanne.</i>	‘’

In the position of *qabuu*, *rafuu*, *deemuu*- *nuuti qanne*, *ranne*, *deenne*; most phonemes in the root word final are assimilated to inflectional morpheme /n/ with regard to second person plural and with others as shown in the above table.

Similarly, if we consider *dhaquu* as in *Nuti dhaqne*= *Nuuti dhandhe* (in *Gujii context*), /n/ and /dh/ are alveolar in point of articulation but /n/ and /dh/ exchanged their places by metathesis, still for easy for articulation. For *Gujii* speaker, ‘*dhaqne*’ is difficult to articulate; but *dhandhe* is easier.

In short, geminating, that is, doubling of the inflectional consonants (morphemes) compensates for the loss of final consonant phoneme in the root verbs. Although assimilation, rather elimination, of phonemes like /b/ in *gubuu* and /f/ in *rafuu*, into inflectional consonant phoneme, is peculiar to the *Gujii* dialect, some other consonant phonemes (when root verbs are inflected) do follow this pattern of assimilation even in other dialects and in textbook version of *Afaan Oromoo* as well. For instance, in verbs: *baasuu*, *haquu*, and *bocuu* (See the following table for more explanation).

Table 2: Comparison of morphophonemic/ inflectional patterns of *Gujii* Dialect with school version of *Afaan Oromoo* (when phonemes, -s, -q, -c) are inflectional from verb final with words like:

Word root	Morphophonemic in School Version of <i>Afaan Oromoo</i>	Morphophonemic Changes in <i>Gujii</i> Dialect	Notes
<i>baasuu</i>	<i>Nuuti harka baasne/ baafne</i>	<i>Nuuti harka baanne/ baanye</i>	Variants, <i>facaasuu</i> , <i>facaanne</i>
	<i>Isheen harka baste/ baafte</i>	<i>Isiin harka baache</i>	
	<i>Atis harka baaste/ baafte</i>	<i>Atilleen harka baache</i>	
	<i>Isinis harka baastan/ baaftan</i>	<i>Isinilleen harka baachan</i>	
<i>haquu</i>	<i>Nuuti haqne.</i>	<i>Nuuti handhe.</i>	
	<i>Isheen haqxe.</i>	<i>Isiilleen haxxe.</i>	
	<i>Atis haqxe.</i>	<i>Atilleen haaxxe.</i>	
	<i>Isinis haqخان.</i>	<i>Isinilleen haxخان.</i>	
<i>bocuu</i>	<i>Nuuti bocne.</i>	<i>Nuuti bony'e.</i>	

	<i>Isheen bocce.</i>	<i>Isiilleen bocce.</i>	
	<i>Atis bocce.</i>	<i>Atilleen bocce.</i>	
	<i>Isinis boccan.</i>	<i>Isinilleen boccan.</i>	

On the basis of what have been discussed above, we would like to analyze the above table using different phonological processes such as assimilation, structural adjustment, etc. For instance, from the root verb *beek-* morphemes such as *beekte/ beette*, *beektan/ beettan* and *beekne/ beenne* are formed/ inflected through different phonological processes. The morphemes written in bold are variations in Gujii dialect. Besides assimilation process on inflecting morpheme [-ne], other phonological processes are applied when the root *beek-* inflected by addition of {-te, -tan and -ne}, the phoneme /k/, is altered into /t/ and geminates / t/ thus making the inflected word *beette*, *beettan* like *beenne* or *qanne* above consecutively instead of keeping the /k/ in the root verb. What must be noticed here is the changing of /k/ into /t and n/ in the anticipation of coming {-te -tan, - ne} thus harmonizing /k/ and {-te, -tan and -ne} by place of articulation, particularly fronting/ alviolarization process in which velar sound changes into alveolar sound {/k/=>/t, n/+te/tan and -ne}.

From Optimality Theory point of view, the dissimilated combination of phonemes/kt/ as in words *beekte*, *beektan* and *beekne* and the assimilated combination of phonemes /tt/ and /nn/ as in words *beette*, *beettan* and *beenne* are possible combinations with strong tendencies not to violate markedness constraints. The linguistic term for the first combination (*beekte*, *beektan*, *beekne*) is faithfulness constraint and for the latter one (*beette*, *beettan* and *beenne*) is markedness constraint. Since violating markedness constraint causes worse difficulties than violating faithfulness constraint, the analysis indicates that most of assimilations in Gujii are psycholinguistically based process. The assimilation, rather, loss of sounds such as /b/ in *qabne* into *qanne*, occurs for certain psycholinguistic reasons such as the ease of articulation, speed and time economy. Therefore, there is a need for Gujii dialect speakers to be psycholinguistically treated and smoothly acquire not to violate faithfulness.

Finally, the summary of analysis of Gujii assimilated verbs is presented in table 3 below:

Table 3: Summary of analysis of Gujii assimilated verbs

Root verb	Inflection by gender and plural markers	Assimilated combination (Gujii dialect)	Sounds altered to bring harmony between morphemes	Phonological processes involved
<i>Deem-</i>	<i>-te, -tan, -ne</i>	<i>deente, deentan, deenne</i>	<i>m→n (to agree with t by point of articulation)</i>	Total assimilation, ephenthese
<i>Raf-</i>	<i>-te, -tan, -ne</i>	<i>ratte, rattan, ranne</i>	<i>f→t/n</i>	Total assimilation, ephenthese
<i>Obaas-</i>	<i>-te, -tan, -ne</i>	<i>obaatte, obaattan obaanne</i>	<i>s→t/n (by manner articulation)</i>	Total assimilation, ephenthese
<i>Mug-</i>	<i>-de, -dan, -ne</i>	<i>mudde, muddan munne</i>	<i>g→d/n</i>	Total assimilation, ephenthese
<i>Dhaq-</i>	<i>-xe, -xan, -ne</i>	<i>dhaxxe, dhaxxan, dhandhe</i>	<i>q→x/dh</i>	Total assimilation, ephenthese
<i>Beek-</i>	<i>-te, -tan, -ne</i>	<i>beette, beettan, beenne</i>	<i>k→t/n</i>	Total assimilation, ephenthese
<i>Qab-</i>	<i>-de, -dan, -ne</i>	<i>qadde, qaddan, qanne</i>	<i>b→n/d</i>	Total assimilation, ephenthese

As has been shown in table 3, the change of some phonemes to other phonemes in Gujii dialect is not groundless arbitrary elimination or insertion of phonemes rather it has justifiable linguistic base such as the morpho-phonological processes indicated in tables 1-3 as well as because of psycholinguistic reasons.

Even though faithfulness constraint is considered as an accepted and correct pattern introduced into school textbooks, there are strong linguistic justifications for violating faithfulness constraints and not violating markedness constraints, therefore, they should not be considered as wrong patterns. Therefore, in Gujii context, these constraints are violable to the extent it does not bring a change to basic meaning of a word. This justifies the mutual intelligibility of Oromoo dialects no matter how their surface/superficial aspects differ. Other strings that keep interactions intact include communicative contexts.

Beside this analysis, teachers, who are not from Oromoo speech community and those who are from the speech community, are provided with the table on the comparison of morphophonemic patterns of Gujii dialect and school text version.

This was made to see if the difference between Gujii dialect and school version has impact on schooling system. Almost all of the teachers do not recognize the difference in the morphophonemic patterns. As a result, some of them left the blank

spaces as they were and others wrote the same school version textbook patterns in the questionnaire.

Similarly, very few teachers from the speech community were unable to recognize the difference. Therefore, it could be inferred that since the teachers do not recognize the difference, they do not attempt to solve the problem students, who acquired the assimilated utterances of the Gujii dialect, face. During the interview, we had with the teachers, we raised the matter with them and they responded that they are puzzled and not sure about what to do about the problem and therefore could not devise ways of supporting students to smoothly acquire the school version of Afaan Oromoo while proudly using their dialect as is deemed necessary.

In addition to above mentioned analysis, the following are some peculiarity observed in Gujii dialect. The harmonization of phonemes through assimilation that observed in Gujii dialect is highly noticeable in verbs. However, it is sometimes observed in nouns and greeting phrases.

Table 4: Use of *hudha* /' / or stop sound at the end of compound nouns

S/N	Gujii dialect	School version of Afaan Oromoo
1	<i>Abbaa Gada'aa</i>	<i>Abbaa gadaa</i>
2	<i>Guyyee Rooba'aa</i>	<i>guyee roobaa</i>
3	<i>Mana jabbi'ii</i>	<i>Mana jabbii</i>
4	<i>Gooree hoole'ee</i>	<i>Gooree hoolee</i>
5	<i>Aanan sare'ee</i>	<i>Aanan saree</i>
6	<i>Woyaa ijoolle'ee</i>	<i>Woyaa ijoollee</i>
7	<i>Surree dubarti'ii</i>	<i>Surree dubartii</i>
8	<i>Mana sheekka'aa</i>	<i>mana sheekkaa</i>
9	<i>Mana buuyyo'oo</i>	<i>Mana buuyyoo</i>
10	<i>Bolaalee dhiiraa</i>	<i>bolaalee dhiiraa</i>
11	<i>Gimoo manaa</i>	<i>gimoo manaa</i>
12	<i>Abbaa worraa</i>	<i>abbaa woraa</i>

In Gujii dialect, the stop /' / sound is added to compound nouns that end with long vowels (look at the lists 1-9); however, those compound nouns that end with short vowel sounds do not take /' / sound rather they are elongated (see table 4 above).

Table 5: Negative Marker and the Case of /hin/ and /-u/

Gujii dialect	School version of Afaan Oromoo
1. <i>Hindande'u</i>	<i>hin danade'u</i>
2. <i>hindande'a</i>	<i>ni danda'a</i>
3. <i>hindhufa</i>	<i>ni dhufa</i>
4. <i>hindhufu</i>	<i>hin dhufu</i>
5. <i>hinka'a</i>	<i>ni ka'a</i>
6. <i>hinka'u</i>	<i>hin ka'u</i>

[hin] or [in] is used as both negative and positive markers in a number of Oromo dialects. For example, Wollagga, Borana and may be others. In Wollagga, it depends on intonation: *Indeemu* (he won't go or they will go). In school text version of Afaan Oromoo, the recent agreement is that /hin/ is negative marker. That is not true or well-established in Gujii dialect rather /-u/ is a negative marker as is indicated in the above examples/ patterns.

In school text version of Afaan Oromoo, /hin/ and /-u/ are used together to indicate negative ideas and /ni/ and /-a/ are used together to indicate positive ideas/structures. In Gujii dialect, /hin/ is used with /-a/ and with /-u/ to mark positive and negative respectively. This supports the fact that the negative marker in Gujii dialect is not only /hin/ but both /hin/ as prefix and /-u/ as a suffix. This is one aspect in Gujii dialect which creates misunderstanding which often results in a serious problem. For instance, in Dogo Junior School in 1993, when I was in grade 7, my classmates and I were playing volley ball with our teachers; after the first tournament, the teacher ordered me, "Ayyelee, barsiisaa haaraa kanaaf bayiif kubbaa haa taphatuu" and I responded "hinbaya". Immediately, I heard the teacher saying "Gurbaa maal ta'uu feete? Kashalabee!" and he was running to my direction to force me to leave the field as if I had said "No!". I got confused by his reaction to my answer. Even after I left the field, he warned that I would never enter that field while he was around. Though I thought for a long period on the event, I failed to trace what was wrong with my response. I had not gone to that field again. The event had always disturbed me until I clearly understood, while in the university that the problem was with the marker / hin-/ that made my response negative.

GREETING PHRASES

1. *jaba'a bulee? (the same as jaba'atti bulee?)*
2. *jabaattee bultee?*
3. *Abbaa Boru'uu olkaatee?*
4. *Abbaa Dure'ee jabbattee kaatee?*

5. *babaarro 'o bulee?* (the same as *babaro 'otti bulee?*)
6. *jabaattee kaatee?*

Even though verbs inflected with plural markers to show respect, that is, honorific formula in school texts of Afaan Oromoo(for example, *nagaa bultanii*, *fayyaa jirtuu* etc. *bultanii* and *jirtuu* are basically plural verbs and used with plural subjects ; however, in this greeting they also indicate respect with singular subjects) , such structure does not exist in Gujii dialect rather the respect indicated in other different ways as it has been shown above, that is, by using words like *olkaatee?* *Abbaa ebeluu* (*ebelu* indicates a son or daughter), *babaro 'oo*, etc.

Table 6: Assimilation/ Geminaton of Nouns and Adjectives

S/N	School version	Gujii dialect
1	<i>marga</i>	<i>marra, magariuu, magra, marra... marga</i> as a metathesis of <i>magra</i> from <i>magare</i> . The cluster is possible: <i>balfe, mirge, marqe, harka</i> .
2	<i>abdi</i>	<i>addii</i>
3	<i>kolfa</i>	<i>kolla</i>
4	<i>mirga</i>	<i>midda</i> (It seems assimilations, but should be treated as different from <i>mirga</i>).

In short, neither ‘*r*’ or ‘*g*’ is an inflectional morpheme. Assimilation of phonemes in verbs is discussed in the previous section and the above are assimilations of phonemes in nouns and adjectives, including this one, there are other peculiar lexical cases that are observed in Gujii dialect which we left for further study investigation: “*une*” for “*dhuge*”, “*ila*” for “*ija*” etc.

Inflection processes involve assimilations in Oromoo language in general and in *Gujii* dialect in particular. When a consonant sound assimilates in a neighboring consonant, usually one next to it, it may consolidate itself into that phoneme which is just next to it. This means the two sounds (phonemes) harmonize themselves, usually by becoming not only the same but geminated phoneme in respect to the point and/or manner of articulation of the inflectional phoneme. In most cases assimilation rules, such as that being dealt with in the Gujii dialect stem from articulatory processes (Fromkin, 2007, p. 246). Simply put, assimilation rules in languages reflect coarticulation - the spreading of phonetic features either in the anticipation or in the perseveration (the “hanging on”) of articulatory processes. Examples of these two processes are 1) in the anticipation of inflectional phonemes: *rafuu--- raf-+ -te=ratte*. 2) In preservation of the phoneme before inflectional consonant: a) *galuu—gal-+-ne=galle* b) *muruu—mur-+-ne=murre* c) (unique) *banuu= ban-+-ne= banne* (N.B /n/ in both the verb *ban-* and in the inflectional phoneme [-*ne*] are the same thus, resulting

in geminated [*banne*]. This as shown in ‘c’ and ‘b’ above are true for all Oromoo dialects.

To put it in a nutshell, the function of phonological rules, including rule exceptions, is to provide the phonetic information necessary for the pronunciation of utterances (Fromkin, 2007, p. 255). Finally,

Language is the most human property we have and, together with other historical disciplines, the study of language change and/or variations can fundamentally contribute to our understanding of our past history as well as our present conditions as human beings endowed with language (Fromkin, 2007, p.85).

DETERMINANTS OF THE PECULIARITY OF GUJII DIALECT

Depending on the analysis presented above, the main reasons behind the peculiarity of Gujii dialect can be summarized as follow from the viewpoints of sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics theories in addition to the above indicated linguistic justification by OT.

First, from sociolinguistic point of view, geographical location can be considered as one factor. To be precise, the Gujii are separated from other Oromo groups except Arsi and Boran rather they are surrounded by other non-Oromo ethnic groups. Even with Arsi and Boran they have no strong relationship (e.g., through trade transport access, urbanization etc.) and most of the time they practice their independent way of life. Thus, this can be one major factor for the divergence of this dialect from other dialects, particularly the western and central dialects. Though Afaan Oromoo is on the process of standardization, Gujii dialect is probably the most peculiar one interms of unique morphophonemic patterns other than any parameters.

As far as social contact is concerned, the Gujii have no strong social bondage with other Oromo groups because of geographical distance, hence, they have not shared different social activities such as trade, marriage, religious rituals, etc. Therefore, sociolinguistics wise, as the contact of the Gujii with other Oromo groups has not been as strong as it I these days, the Gujii dialect appeared so odd to people who recently started to interact with the Gujii community for different business purposes for government and non-government.

Second, depending on the morpohphonemic characteristics of Gujii dialect which is highly characterized by assimilation process, there are some psycholinguistic justifications. For instance, the assimilation, rather loss, of sounds such as /b/ in *qabne* into *qanne*, occurs for certain psycholinguistic reasons such as the ease of articulation, speed and time economy (Fitzpatrick et al, 2000, p.157).

Generally, the insight we got from Optimality theory indicates that the peculiarity of the Gujii dialect has linguistic base and not baseless as being perceived by those who fail to appreciate, such diversity, within unity. However, when students are abruptly asked to read or speak these dissimilated school textbook version, what psychological implications does it have for them?

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, we have forwarded the following conclusions: The Gujii morphophonemic pattern which, found to be not in line with the way school version of Afaan Oromoo, is written, read and spoken is highly dominated by assimilation pattern especially observed in inflection of verbs as well as of some nouns and adjectives. In addition to this, patterns such as using hudhaa / velar stop sound/ at the end of plural compound nouns, negative markers (using [hin-] as a prefix together with[-u] as a suffix), and greeting phrases make the dialect different from school text version of Afaan Oromoo. This made the Gujii dialect unique from other Oromoo dialects and appeared a cause for many problems happened during communication between Gujii dialect speakers and other Oromoo dialect speakers. However, other patterns such as epentheses, metathesis, and reduplication are not unique and problematic as those patterns mentioned above.

There are linguistic reasons and may be evolutionary causes behind the peculiarity of Gujii dialect viz psycholinguistic needs for the ease of articulation, time economy and speed of speech. Similarly, geographical distance and weak social contact of Gujii society with other groups highly contributed to the peculiarity of Gujii dialect. Upon that, it's being only a spoken language for centuries may have influenced processes of inflection towards over- assimilation, compared to other dialects of Afaan Oromo. Moreover, OT indicates that the peculiarity of the Gujii morphophonemic patterns is linguistically justifiable and the assimilation and even the elimination of some sounds/ clusters are made for ease of communication not haphazard and unreasonable as it is perceived so. It is also for some physiological reasons as well.

Most of the teachers, who are not from the Gujii society, have no clear idea about the peculiarity of Gujii dialect, hence, they do not try to help students to read /speak words in which phonemes were written in dissimilated way as in the school textbook version of Afaan Oromoo. Above all, the absence of help from schooling system in general and from teachers in particular made the challenges students face at school and in the community, even worse.

All in all, the study indicates that the peculiar characteristics of Gujii dialect morphophonemic patterns and the difference between it and school version of Afaan Oromoo, affected teachers from Gujii areas, teachers from other parts of Oromiya, students from Gujii society as well as their relationships with students in different academic institutions; their relationships with their teachers, families, and their

community at large. This, on another, has negative effect on the unity of different Oromoo group.

Good counseling and linguistic support systems are needed from the school system in order to prevent and/ or solve the psychological and social crises that children from Gujii society in particular and from other Oromo groups, whose dialect uniquely deviates from school text version, could face.

Afaan Oromoo school texts need modification so as to make them comprehensive, including other dialects as much as possible. In a nut shell, the process of standardizing Afaan Oromoo should not be hasty one so that speakers of all variants have a say as stakeholders. To that end, more comprehensive and in-depth research is recommended for less researched variants such as the southern dialects of which *Gujii* is one.

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