

**A Sociolinguistic Survey of the Werizoid Dialect Chain**

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## **Contents**

0. Introduction
  1. Survey Approach
  2. Methods Used
  3. Manner of Data Gathering
  4. Data Analysis
  5. Survey Findings
    - 5.1 Lexicostatistics/Phonostatistics
    - 5.2 Sociolinguistics
  6. Discussion
- References

## 0. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In the Administrative Region of Gamo Gofa in southwest Ethiopia there is a cluster of dialects spoken on both sides of the Woito River, north of the Sagan River. These speech varieties are collectively referred to in the literature as Werizoid (Bender 1971:187; Black 1976).

There has not been much written about these so-called Werize dialects, the most recent being that of Amborn et al. (1980) in which a dialect chain is described that includes Tsamaha, Gawwada, Gollango, and Gobeze—though questions remain concerning names and relationships.

The object of this survey was, through primarily a lexicostatistic/phonostatistic approach, to further clarify those relationships as well as the external relationships of that “chain” with the larger language groups to the northeast (Gidole) and southeast (Konso).

These languages and dialects are all classified as Oromoid Lowland East-Cushitic members of the Afro-Asiatic Superfamily of languages (Grimes 1988). The “Werizoid” members are further subclassified under the Konsoid group by some (*ibid.*) (fig. a), while Bender (1976) places the Werizoid group under the Oromoid Lowland East-Cushitic classification but distinct from the Konsoid grouping (fig. b).

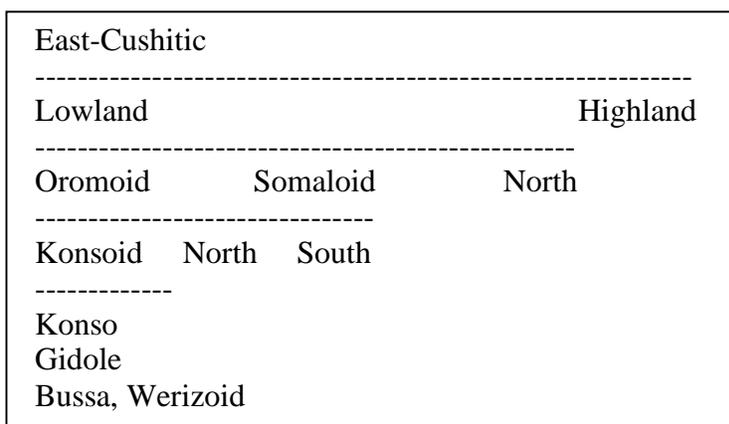


Figure a

<sup>1</sup>“A Sociolinguistic Survey of the Werizoid Chain” was originally printed as an S.L.L.E. Linguistic Report No. 3, December 1992.

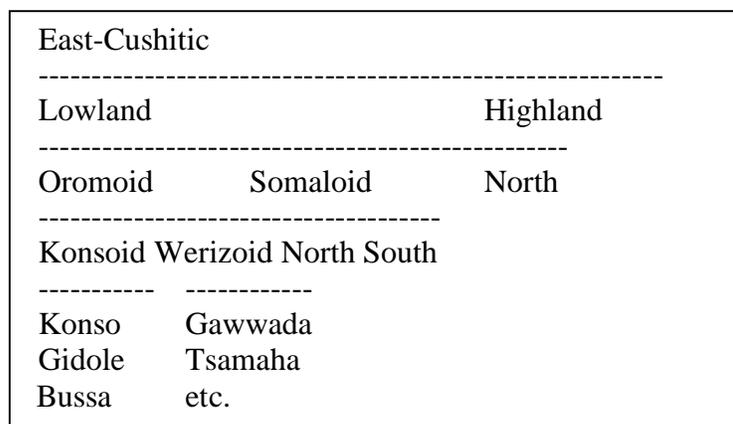


Figure b

Black (1976), however, believes that the “Werizoid” group constitutes a single language representing a third division of East-Cushitic (cf. fig. c), while Amborn et al. (1980) seem to straddle the fence by placing the Werizoid (“Dullay” in his terminology, after an alternate name for the Woito River) halfway in and halfway out of the Oromoid classification (fig. d).

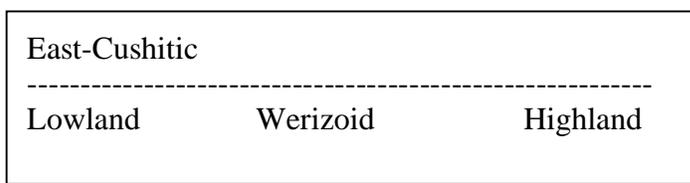


Figure c

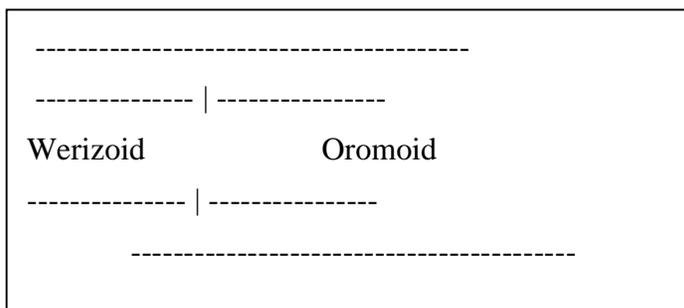


Figure d

## 1. Survey Approach

A “rapid appraisal” (Bergman 1991) of the speech varieties inside the Gidole/Tsamaha/Konso “triangle” was conducted in order to (1) study lexical and phonological variation between the speech forms located therein, and (2) to evaluate patterns of language attitudes and language use among the speech communities.

## 2. Methods Used

In order to study variation between the dialects, word lists were collected in relevant areas. Word lists taken by other researchers were taken into consideration as well. A lexicostatistical and phonostatistical comparison was made of these lists using the WORDSURV

computer program (Wimbish 1989). For lexicostatistics, “apparent cognate” assignments were made based upon the inspection method and subsequently revised, if necessary, based upon an evaluation of the “strength indices” generated by WORDSURV. For phonostatistics, phonetic degrees of differences (PDD) were assigned to phoneme correspondences based upon the following criteria:

*“For consonants, one PDD was counted for differences in voicing and/or nasalization, stop/ fricative/ continuant, articulator, point of articulation, air mechanism, and +/- diacritic(s). These six points of reference resulted in a maximum of five PDD for “/consonant/ => /0 consonant/”, if the consonant “dropping out” was voiced, four otherwise. Consonant length was analyzed as a suprasegmental feature with one PDD.*

*The PDD for vowels were determined by how many “steps” it took to get from one to another on the IPA vowel chart. One PDD was given for a difference in roundedness. This resulted in a possible seven PDD difference; however, based upon the consonant model, there was only a possible maximum of five PDD for vowels “dropping out” or otherwise not occurring from one speech form to another. As with the consonants, length was analyzed as a suprasegmental with one PDD.”<sup>2</sup>*

A sociolinguistic questionnaire (SLQ) was administered at every test point, and informal discussions were entered into with various other people as appropriate. Included in the SLQ were questions for school administrators and teachers, as well as some specifically for local government officials.

### **3. Manner of Data Gathering**

The survey began at Arba Minch on June 27, 1992 with informal discussions that day and the next with people familiar with the area and language groups in question. On June 26 a meeting was held with local officials, and we decided that Ato Gallo, a translator in a Konso language project, should accompany me in order to act as translator, since I know no Amharic. The Konso word list was taken from Ato Gallo before we set out. We left the following day (June 30) for Gidole, where we met with regional church and government officials; both were very cooperative, helpful, and quite instrumental in the success of the subsequent field work. We were able to travel to Gebale, south of Gidole, the following day. We conducted our research and then traveled to Ela Mashille<sup>3</sup> (July 2), Dugumbano<sup>4</sup> (July 4), Worase-Harse (July 6), Gobeze (July 8), Lokte (July 9), Gawwada (July 11), and Woito (July 12). We went to Konso on July 14, and I returned to Arba Minch the following day.

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<sup>2</sup>Stress and pitch, while most of the time written down on the elicitation form (and transferred into WORDSURV), could not be reliably ascertained in every instance. Many of the other researcher’s lists, moreover, did not have these markings. Differences in stress and pitch, therefore, were counted as having zero PDD.

<sup>3</sup>Lower (or “Kola”) Mashille.

<sup>4</sup>Upper (or “Dega”) Mashille.

#### 4. Data Analysis

The results of lexicostatistical analysis are presented in the following matrix<sup>5</sup>; each word list is represented by the name or an abbreviation, as given in the following key.<sup>6,7,8,9</sup>

##### KEY

(Names of the Werizoid Word lists)

Woraze-Harse, Woraze-Ha.

Werize(F)

Harse(A)

Gobeze(A)

Gobeze

Gobeze(F)

Gollango(A)

Gorrose(A)

Gawwada(A)

Gawwada-Dalpena(A), Gawwada-Da.(A)

Gawwada(F)

Gawwada-Dalpena, Gawwada-Da.

Gawwada-Katato, Gawwada-Ka.

Tsamaha(A)

Tsamaha

Lower Mashille, Lower Ma.

Konso

Gidole-Gebale, Gidole-Ge.

Upper Mashille, Upper Ma.

<sup>5</sup>The following word lists were given a greater reliability value within WORDSURV, in view of the greater expertise of the investigators eliciting them: Werize(F), Harse(A), Gobeze(A), Gobeze(F), Gollango(A), Gawwada(A), Gawwada-Dalpena(A), Gawwada(F), Gawwada-Dalpena(B). The Tsamaha data from Amborn was excepted from this treatment, given the team's own reservations about their data—which were born out here.

<sup>6</sup>By Fleming, in Bender, 1971.

<sup>7</sup>Word lists tagged (A) come from Amborn et al., Op. cit.

<sup>8</sup>From Sim, R. J. 1976. Unpublished manuscript.

<sup>9</sup>From Black, 1976. Op. cit.

**Woraze-Harse**

85\*4 Werize(F)

80\*3 83\*4 Harse(A)

79\*4 83\*5 95\*2 Gobeze(A)

78\*4 84\*5 84\*4 82\*4 Gobeze

82\*5 82\*4 84\*4 88\*4 86\*5 Gobeze(F)

68\*4 79\*5 80\*3 87\*3 81\*4 82\*5 Gollango

67\*17 80\*19 73\*15 89\*10 86\*15 80\*19 75\*14 Gorrose(A)

77\*6 84\*6 82\*4 85\*4 81\*6 84\*6 91\*3 Gawwada(A)

66\*5 77\*6 76\*4 82\*4 73\*5 82\*5 88\*3 Gaww.-Da.(A)

81\*5 81\*4 84\*4 88\*4 89\*4 89\*4 88\*4 Gawwada(F)

70\*5 79\*5 73\*4 76\*4 78\*5 83\*4 84\*3 Gawwada-Da.

62\*4 71\*6 64\*4 66\*4 72\*5 73\*6 70\*4 Gawwada-Ka.

73\*8 76\*10 71\*8 78\*7 80\*8 72\*10 84\*6 Tsamaha(A)

57\*4 71\*6 59\*4 61\*5 61\*6 75\*6 62\*4 Tsamaha

31\*6 30\*10 34\*6 36\*6 33\*8 29\*10 36\*6 Konso

36\*5 34\*10 35\*6 38\*6 34\*7 29\*10 36\*6 Lower Ma.

31\*6 32\*10 34\*6 34\*6 30\*8 30\*10 33\*6 Gidole-Ge.

37\*5 36\*10 38\*6 39\*6 37\*7 34\*10 38\*6 Upper Ma.

Gorrose(A)						
100*0	Gawwada(A)					
90*9	84*5	Gawwada-Da.(A)				
80*19	93*4	85*5	Gawwada(F)			
75*16	80*5	92*2	88*4	Gawwada-Da.		
83*12	81*5	69*5	78*6	71*5	Gawwada-Ka.	
100*0	85*7	80*7	83*8	73*9	80*7	Tsamaha(A)
73*16	72*6	60*6	74*6	61*6	63*4	80*7 Tsamaha
25*26	40*9	41*7	30*10	35*7	37*5	32*12 Konso
50*21	41*9	43*7	33*10	36*7	38*5	37*12 Lower Ma.
42*23	38*9	38*7	32*10	36*7	33*6	33*12 Gidole-Ge.
42*23	41*9	43*7	35*10	34*7	36*5	36*12 Upper Ma.

Tsamaha				
32*6	Konso			
32*6	64*4	Lower Ma.		
29*6	55*4	73*4	Gidole-Ge.	
32*6	63*4	78*3	68*4	Upper Ma.

The previous figures are based upon the shared word counts which will be given in the following charts (pages 9 and 10). Note that in these charts the asterisk (\*) stands for plus/minus (+/-).

A few comments are in order. Given the lack of data for Gorrose, it is not possible to do anything with it here. As for Amborn's Tsamaha data, he himself questions its validity, and so do I for reasons I will discuss later. All Tsamaha comparisons, therefore, will be made using data gathered during the present survey. Since I have not been able to confidently locate "Gawwada-Dalpena", and since I am not sure that both "Gawwada-Dalpena" word lists came from the same "Gawwada-Dalpena", I do not combine them. In a similar vein, since there is no precise location for "Gobeze", and since I do not know where in "Gobeze-land" the "Gobeze" word lists were taken, I do not consolidate them. And finally, although the Gawwada lists are not compared against themselves, they are compared separately in computations with the other lists; Harse(A) and Gobeze(A) received similar treatment, since, as I will explain later, I consider them to represent the same speech community (as, indeed, their numbers would suggest).

So the speech communities represented by the previous lists may be grouped around their group mean<sup>10</sup> as follows (the first language in each of these lists serves as point of reference):

Gollango Gawwada-Da.(A) Gobeze(F) Gobeze(A) Gawwada(A) Gawwada(F)  
Gawwada-Da.: 87\*4

Gawwada(A) Gollango Gobeze(F) Gobeze(A) Werize(F) Gawwada-Da.(A): 86\*5

Gawwada(F) Gobeze(F) Gollango Gobeze Gobeze(A) Harse(A) Werize(F)  
Woraze-Ha. Gawwada-Da.(A) Gawwada-Da.: 86\*4

Gawwada-Da.(A) Gollango Gobeze(A) Gobeze(F) Gawwada(A) Gawwada(F):  
84\*4

Gobeze(F) Gawwada(F) Gawwada-Da. Gawwada-Da.(A) Gawwada(A) Gollango  
Gobeze Gobeze(A) Harse(A) Werize(F) Woraze-Ha.: 84\*5

Gobeze Gawwada(F) Werize(F) Harse(A) Gobeze(A) Gobeze(F) Gollango  
Gawwada(A): 84\*5

Gawwada-Da. Gawwada(F) Gawwada(A) Gollango Gobeze(F) Werize(F): 83\*4

Harse(A)/Gobeze(A) Gawwada(F) Woraze-Ha. Werize(F) Gobeze Gobeze(F)  
Gollango Gawwada(A) Gawwada-Da.(A): 83\*4

Werize(F) Woraze-Ha. Harse(A) Gobeze(A) Gobeze Gobeze(F) Gollango  
Gawwada(A) Gawwada-Da.(A) Gawwada(F) Gawwada-Da.: 82\*5

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<sup>10</sup>Let it be noted here that there is no statistical difference at the .10 level between the lists within groups or between the groups themselves. Any significant differences occurred on the "lower end" of our comparisons (e.g., between Konso, Gidole-Gebale, and the others) and need not concern us here.

Woraze-Harse									
68	Werize(F)								
180	63	Harse(A)							
147	54	162	Gobeze(A)						
125	61	116	100	Gobeze					
65	65	63	56	62	Gobeze(F)				
152	59	156	141	108	61	Gollango			
8	4	8	8	6	4	9	Gorroze(A)		
61	38	63	56	54	38	68	8	Gawwada(A)	
97	47	101	92	80	49	11	59	51	Gaww.-Da.(A)
65	65	64	57	65	70	66	4	42	Gawwada(F)
98	61	91	81	87	63	102	6	47	Gaww.-Da.
188	56	143	122	113	57	156	10	64	Gaww.-Ka.
44	22	39	39	39	21	49	8	29	Tsamaha(A)
168	54	130	114	97	56	135	8	57	Tsamaha
93	24	77	67	52	23	79	3	32	Konso
108	27	79	70	55	23	79	6	33	Lower Ma.
94	25	75	62	48	23	74	5	31	Gidole-Ge.
111	28	85	73	58	26	83	5	32	Upper Ma.

Gawwada-Da.(A)									
52	Gawwada(F)								
104	68	Gawwada-Da.							
102	62	100	Gawwada-Ka.						
32	24	24	47	Tsamaha(A)					
87	56	84	187	45	Tsamaha				
60	24	49	110	19	96	Konso			
62	26	50	114	22	96	192	Lower Ma.		
55	25	50	98	20	85	166	219	Gidole-Ge.	
62	27	47	10	21	96	188	232	203	Upper Ma.

The results of the phonostatistical analysis are presented in the following averages group by group: (A) number of phoneme correspondences per lexical item, (B) number of phoneme correspondences per lexical item that are different, (C) the number of PDDs per phoneme noncorrespondence, and (D) the average number of PDDs per lexical item; in each case the standard deviation is presented in parentheses below the mean. If we consider the sum of any significant differences within a group, taken as a percentage of the standard deviation, we have a relative measure of overall variability within that group; this figure is presented below as (H).

Gollango Gawwada-Da.(A) Gobeze(F) Gobeze(A) Gawwada(A) Gawwada(F) Gawwada-Da. (A) 6.5 (1.5) (B) 2.1 (.76) (C) 2.9 (.22) (D) 5.9 (2.2) (H) .69
Gawwada(A) Gollango Gobeze(F) Gobeze(A) Werize(F) Gawwada-Da.(A) (A) 5.9 (.24) (B) 2.2 (.99) (C) 3.0 (.26) (D) 6.5 (.29) (H) .17
Gawwada(F) Gobeze(F) Gollango Gobeze Gobeze(A) Harse(A) Werize(F) Woraze- Ha. Gawwada-Da.(A) Gawwada-Da. (A) 6.2 (.22) (B) 3.4 (.31) (C) 2.9 (.20) (D) 9.7 (1.1) (H) 1.1
Gawwada-Da.(A) Gollango Gobeze(A) Gobeze(F) Gawwada(A) Gawwada(F) (A) 6.0 (.19) (B) 2.2 (.96) (C) 2.9 (.18) (D) 6.4 (3.0) (H) 0
Gobeze(F) Gawwada(F) Gawwada-Da. Gawwada-Da.(A) Gawwada(A) Gollango Gobeze Gobeze(A) Harse(A) Werize(F) Woraze-Ha. (A) 6.2 (.22) (B) 3.3 (.36) (C) 3.3 (.26) (D) 10.9 (1.1) (H) .79
Gobeze Gawwada(F) Werize(F) Harse(A) Gobeze(A) Gobeze(F) Gollango Gawwada(A) (A) 6.5 (.20) (B) 3.4 (.22) (C) 3.2 (.20) (D) 10.9 (1.0) (H) 1.2
Gawwada-Da. Gawwada(F) Gawwada(A) Gollango Gobeze(F) Werize(F) (A) 6.2 (.17) (B) 2.8 (.92) (C) 3.0 (.21) (D) 8.1 (2.4) (H) 0
Harse(A)/Gobeze(A) Gawwada(F) Woraze-Harse Werize(F) Gobeze Gobeze(F) Gollango Gawwada(A) Gawwada-Da.(A) (A) 6.3 (.22) (B) 2.7 (.69) (C) 3.0 (.20) (D) 8.3 (2.2) (H) .01
Werize(F) Woraze-Ha. Harse(A) Gobeze(A) Gobeze Gobeze(F) Gollango Gawwada(A) Gawwada-Da.(A) Gawwada(F) Gawwada-Da. (A) 6.5 (.20) (B) 3.4 (.30) (C) 2.7 (.31) (D) 9.1 (.93) (H) 1.6

## 5. Survey Findings

### 5.1 Lexicostatistics / Phonostatistics

Based on lexicostatistics, it would seem that Gobeze (abbreviated as “o” in the survey data base) is at or near the center of the Werize dialect chain, given that more dialects (that is to say, speech forms represented by the various word lists) cluster around it than any other. At a slightly higher<sup>11</sup> apparent cognate percentage the center moves further south to Gawwada (“G, 7” in the data base) and Gollango (5), though fewer dialects cluster around them. The larger (and the same) geographical areas are covered by both Gobeze (o) and Gawwada (G).

When we look at the phonostatistics, although the lowest intragroup variation scores occur at Gawwada-Dalpena (b and 8), almost just as homogenous is the considerably larger

<sup>11</sup> But, again, not significantly different at the .10 level of confidence.

grouping centered around Harse/Gobeze (3/4). When we weigh this in the balance, the “center” of this chain would seem to be more towards Gobeze than Gawwada.

## 5.2 Sociolinguistics

Throughout the survey area there appeared to be vigorous use of the vernacular in the home and at the market; and with the exception of Gawwada, people could not envision a day when their language would not be used. There is reported to be a more or less “mutual” intelligibility amongst all the dialects in the area.

No one knew where their people came from (except for those in Gawwada-Town), saying only that they’ve always been there as long as anyone could remember. There is little movement in or out of the region except during times of drought, in which case there is usually only temporary displacement. The people’s attitude towards the language of any immigrants is neutral. Where information was available, it was clear that interest in school was low, and this was reflected in declining attendance figures and even school closures due to lack of students. As farming is so important (the people are primarily agriculturalists, but do keep some cattle), the students are seen as being more useful in the field than in the classroom. There is no apparent benefit in going to school. There are no jobs for the children afterwards, and those who go to school are seen as no better off because of it. For example, in the greater Worase area only one student is reported to have ever gone as high as ninth grade—and he is now doing the same agricultural work right alongside the unschooled. Other factors reported as mitigating against the parents sending their children to school were fears of tax increases based upon school attendance, as well as a fear on the part of the students themselves of national military service which, I was told, is somehow based upon school attendance.

In summary, there were very many reasons for the parents not sending their children to school, while there was not one apparent reason for doing so. For those who do go to school, they are faced with the situation that, in most cases, the teachers come from outside the area and thus do not know the local language; they must therefore deal with their pupils in Amharic only—to the disadvantage of those whose proficiency in Amharic is poor. There was not much support for the use of the vernacular in the classroom, however, as the parents would rather have the emphasis placed on what they see as the more useful languages of wider communication (LWC). Worase was an exception in that they felt that the children would benefit by a greater use of the vernacular in the classroom. With the exception of Gawwada Town, the schools I visited were composed of one homogenous language group. In Gawwada town proper, not much interest was shown for development of the vernacular. The people were said to be from many different areas and thus to know a number of the LWCs including Amharic, Oromignia, Konsignia, as well as most all of the local languages. Virtually everywhere else, however, the people generally expressed a desire for the development of their language (although not necessarily in the school) and said that they would buy books in it, would go to classes to learn to read and write it, etc.

Population figures were exceedingly difficult to come by, and of doubtful validity at best. The best guess by local officials and residents is that there are about 10,000 people in Gidole town, about 5,000 in Gobeze, 900 in Dugumbano, 10,000 in Worase, 5,000 in Gawwada (1,500 in the town proper, 3,500 elsewhere). The population of the whole area from Gawwada to Mashille is estimated at 30,000. About 50% of the population is said to be under 15 years of age. These population figures are in line with other estimates, with the exception of Gobeze and Harse. Both Grimes (1989) and Amborn et al. (1980) talk about 22,000 people in each group, albeit with question marks after their figures. Although there were very few records left after the revolution of 1991, and the local people were not able to give adequate guesstimates, it is

inconceivable to me that 44,000 people inhabit the area. At best there might be 22,000 there between them.

Part way between Gobeze and Harse the people call their area Worase, or Worase-Harse. They are essentially the same as those at Gobeze—same language, same culture. Black (Bender 1976:222) points out that Worase and Gobeze represent northern and southern varieties, respectively, of the speech of the Werizoid peoples. I wanted to take word lists from both Worase and Harse, and we were taken to a Worase village which was far removed from Gobeze. It was there that we found that the Worase and Harse are considered to be one and the same. I decided therefore to just take one word list and SLQ interview and call it “Worase-Harse.” I feel that perhaps Amborn’s “Harse” data comes from the Gobeze side of Worase, whereas I would place mine on the Worase side of Harse. Since that was as far west as we were able to go, I feel that my data is more representative of the dialect whereas Amborn’s is most likely a Gobeze variant.

A curious opinion was expressed by the people in the Worase-Harse area that the Tsamaha lived just over the hill from them. They were said to speak the same language, and were only different in that they wore no clothes—leading me to suspect a classic case of sociolinguistic disassociation! Similar feelings were expressed further south towards Gobeze, in that they said the Tsamaha inhabited Dikinte. The people were very wary, if not fearful, of the Tsamaha, and as a consequence we could not find anyone who would dare take us to Kaba or Dikinte in order that we might investigate those claims that the Tsamaha live there. The belief that the Tsamaha live east of the Woito was less strongly held the further south we went until finally those from Gawwada said that the Tsamaha rarely if ever cross the Woito. I was unable to find anyone in Gawwada town that knew Tsamaignia, which would be consistent with them not mixing to any great extent. I could as well find few if any people at Woito that knew Gawwadignia. We did find out later from those south of Gawwada town as well as from others west of the Woito River that the Tsamaha do cross the Woito, but not to any great extent. They have rather good relations with those at Karkarte, and go there to find wives. They will also cross just over the Woito to plant some gardens after the rainy season when the waters recede. Otherwise, we were told, the Tsamaha do not cross the Woito River—and certainly not as far north as Kaba or even Dikinte—and in fact are often hostile to those from the other side of the Woito.

This brings me to Amborn’s Tsamaha data mentioned previously. Although they qualify their data as of questionable validity, I would go further and say that it is most likely not representative of the Tsamaha dialect. First of all, it is just too close to those dialects on the eastern side of the Woito. Although in Das Dullay (1980), Amborn places the Tsamaha definitely on the western side of the Woito River, I was unable to ascertain just exactly where and from whom the data was taken. Given the numbers, I suspect that one of those reputed to live on the eastern side of the Woito gave the data, which I am not at all sure is really a Tsamaha—or is at least not a representative Tsamaha but a marginal one. In any event, it is hazardous at best to draw any conclusions from Amborn’s Tsamaha data, given its anomalous character. When you look at the totality of the Werize data, there is a variance of 4.5%—whereas there is a significantly different (at the .10 level) variance of 7.8% with Amborn’s Tsamaha data. Given this high variance, Amborn’s data is not significantly different from any other of the Werize dialects, which I find incredible. It was on this basis that I chose to use my Tsamaha data over Amborn’s.

Concerning the Tsamaha, they do seem to be a distantly related Werize dialect. As may be seen in the following chart, they cluster weakly with a few key dialects, with whom they are relatively homogenous phonetically.

Tsamaha Gobeze(F) Werize(F)  
Gawwada(A) Gawwada(F): 73\*6

Tsamaha Gobeze(F) Werize(F)  
Gawwada(A) Gawwada(F)

(A) 6.0

(.16)

(B) 3.8

(.35)

(C) 3.0

(.13)

(D) 11.5

(1.5)

Concerning Konso, Gidole, etc., I feel it is fairly clear that we are dealing with distinctly different speech forms from the Werize. Nothing more needs be said here to belabor the obvious. Thus, in view of all of the aforementioned, I feel that the Werize dialects ought to be classified<sup>12</sup> more along the lines of Bender or Black, as you wish, rather than as Grimes has classified them.

## 6. Discussion

It seems fairly clear that the “Werizoid” dialect chain is centered north of Gawwada towards Gobeze, though further research nearer to the eastern side of the Woito River (in Kaba, Dikinte, and Karkarte) may give reason to place this central point elsewhere. In addition to further research nearer the Woito River, intelligibility testing ought to make for an interesting follow-up. Just about everywhere I went (southwest of Mashille, in any event) the people claimed to be able to understand everyone else’s dialect with a greater or lesser facility. I was unable to determine if this intelligibility was due to an inherent similarity between speech forms or if it was simply a matter of bilingualism acquired from contact. By doing recorded text testing and examining the variance, one ought to be able to tell by the distribution of intelligibility scores whether or not what intelligibility there is is inherent or acquired. Another matter for investigation is just how many Werize people there are. In many places I was told that the population was declining because of disease. I had no problem believing that since the people didn’t look to be in the best of health—but perhaps this was just due to it being the rainy season. In any event, illness just may account for a great part of the disparity between the old and “newer” estimates of population.

Related to the apparent decline in the human population is the poor state of health of many of their cattle. I was told of a great need of veterinary medicine, as many of their cows (at least) were dying. What makes matters worse is that I was told that they often eat the dead cattle, not being able just to simply absorb the loss—their cattle representing such an important part of their personal wealth. Needless to say, such practices are hardly conducive to good community health.

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<sup>12</sup>Please refer to the introduction.

Concerning the need for vernacular literature, interest was expressed by some people, who avowed that they would promote its development and use. Again, Gawwada town proper would be a possible exception to this generality. The people could be well served by the translation of community health related matters dealing with personal health and hygiene, veterinary medicine, etc. Given the low rate of literacy and/or interest in becoming literate, it would seem that the people would be most readily “reached” through a nonprint media such as cassette recordings, while an ongoing evaluation could be made as to the feasibility of developing written material and an associated vernacular literacy campaign.

If one were to proceed with development of the vernacular, dialect intelligibility testing ought to be undertaken in order to select a reference dialect suitable to most of those concerned. The choice would seem to be between those dialects centered around Gawwada and Gobeze. Population figures seem to favor Gobeze, and so do local attitudes towards development of the vernacular. The homogenous makeup of most of the local schools, moreover, would be conducive to the use of the vernacular in the early grades as a bridge to the preferred LWC. And as discussed previously, lexicostatistic/phonostatistic considerations seem as well to favor the dialect centered at Gobeze

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