

NOTES ON SOOMAALI VOCATIVES AND POLITE IMPERATIVES*

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Based on a small corpus of mother's speech to a 0;5½ month old child, I describe variation in the feminine vocative suffix, vocatives on possessed NPs, vocative usage between kin (kin terms) which is dictated by the "elder" relative and the sequence "imperative + *dee*". Some BT (Baby Talk) lexical items are analyzed.

0. Introduction

This progress report presents four grammatical observations made during analysis of the speech of Sahra Hassan Habbane to her 0;5½ month-old daughter, as well as listing some Baby Talk (BT) items provided by Sahra. In the case of feminine vocatives (1.1.) I wish to amplify the remarks in Puglielli (1981), while in sections 1.2., 1.3. and 2., I describe features not previously mentioned in such standard Soomaali reference works as Kirk (1905), Bell (1953) and Panza (1974).

1. Vocatives

I will show that the category vocative is wider than previously observed, in that (a) there is variety in feminine vocative endings, (b) that vocatives of possessed nouns are possible and (c) that terms of address between family members are determined by the sex and role of the "elder" speaker.

1.1. Feminine Vocatives. Until recently, descriptions of the vocative cited only the masculine form, *-ow* (cf. Bell 1953: 16; Kirk 1905:79). Since Soomaali has both masculine and feminine nouns, it is not surprising that there is more to report: Puglielli (1981:5) explains that there is a feminine suffix, *-ey*:¹ (1) *Maryam-ey* 'oh Maryam' cf, *Maxamad-ow* 'oh Mohammed' Note, however, that the lexicalized vocative for calling a woman from afar, *naahoy*, is the word for 'woman', *naag*, plus the vowel o plus the palatal glide (Panza 1974), and not the form

**naah-ey* to be expected if there is an exceptionless feminine vocative suffix.

The *-ey* feminine ending in the vocative does not occur with proper names among the Northern Soomaali speakers I consulted. The following *a*-final names simply add a glide in the vocative:

(2) *Hawa-y*; *Hasna-y*; *Habiba-y* 'oh H...'

More confusing cases are those which may take the glide as in (2) or the ending *-oy* :

(3) *Sahra-y/Sahr-oy* 'oh S...'

Aamina-y/Aamin-oy 'oh A...'

None of the speakers consulted ever volunteered a woman's name in the vocative with *-ey*, so that example (1) applies to Southern speakers, not to those whose speech is reported here.

Further complicating matters are those women's names which end in *-o* . Unlike the names in (1) - (3), these names are not Arabic borrowings:

(4) *Hibo-y*; *Cawo-y* 'oh H...'; 'oh C...'

The behavior of the name Halima and a word for 'mother', *umma*, both Arabic loans, is even more divergent:

(5) *Halim-ow*; *umm-ow* 'oh H...'; 'oh mother'

Here the masculine suffix appears with a woman's name and a word for mother!² An alternative vocative for Halima is *Halim-oy* . Unlike the names in (3) there is no (a)y/oy variation here, for in both cases an o is found in the vocative.

For those Northern speakers consulted, then, one may most easily characterize the feminine vocative ending as an indeterminate and optional vowel plus a palatal glide, where the vowel is optional because it merges with the final vowel of most women's names: (V)y. As for the examples in (5), perhaps the bilabial nasal (m) is conditioning the appearance of the back vowel, or perhaps there is a semantic principle triggering the use of the masculine suffix--more work needs to be done to find out what is involved.

1.1.1.

The above-suggested revision of the fem-

inine vocative shape has the following parallel with the masculine suffix. While the back vowel + velar glide shape is evident enough when a name ends in a consonant, note the glide which creeps in when the name ends in a vowel:

- (6) *Maxamad-ow* 'oh M...'
Axmad-ow 'oh A...'
Cali-(y)ow 'oh A...'
Warfaa-(y)ow 'oh W...'

That is, I suggest that, at least for Northern speakers, the masculine vocative ending is really: optional front glide + o + back glide, or *(y)ow*.

1.2. "Oh my X". The gender distinctions found in nouns apply in possessive suffixation as well (Puglielli 1981:52-53):

- (7) *sacad-dayda* *cashar-kayga*
 watch-my/fem lesson-my/masc
 'my watch' 'my lesson'

Possessed nouns may be inflected for previous reference (Panza 1974: Chapter 11):

- (8) *gabadh-(d)ayd-u* *caana-hayg -ii*
 girl -my/f. -emph. milk -my/m.-def/rel
 'my own (little) girl' '(namely) my milk'

To this description of the behaviour of possessed nouns must be added a further modification which the transcript of Sahra's speech to her infant daughter reveals: a vocative use of nouns possessed in the first person singular. This allows one to say such things as 'oh my (little) girl' and 'oh my son':

- (9) *gabadh-(d)ayd-iey* *inan-kayg-iow*
 girl -my/f -voc/f son -my/m-voc/m

Here the vocalic onset of the vocative suffix resembles the palatal glide found before the masculine vocative with such vowel-final names as Cali (cf. (6) above). There is now a high front vowel preceding both the masculine and the feminine vocative suffixes. It may be that this vowel *-i-* is necessary in such polysyllabic forms, or perhaps such possessed NPs take the def-

inite suffix discussed by Panza (1974) and seen in the second example in (8) above, between the possessive suffix and the vocative. On the other hand, further questioning revealed that vocatives of possessed NPs are possible for both first person plural forms as well: note that these, too, have a high front vowel preceding the canonical vocatives:

keenii

(10)	<i>inan-keen-iow</i>	<i>inan-kaayég-iow</i>	<i>inán-teen-iey</i>
	son -lpp -voc/m	son -lpp -voc/m	daughter
	incl	excl.	-lpp -voc/f
			incl
	'oh our son'	'oh our son'	'oh our daughter'
		(not your son)	

It is not possible to decide on this small amount of data whether the shape of the vocative suffix in (10) is conservative in Somali, and the glide in (6) correspondingly a relic, or whether such possessed NPs are simply definite enough to merit the *-ii* of example (8), a definite/relative marker.

The appearance of these possessed nouns in the vocative in the corpus of 'motherese' marks the importance of attending to women's speech, as the situation of speaking to a child involves discourse features perhaps not so readily encountered with male informants. This use of first person possessed vocatives surely falls within the BT characteristic of "replacement of second person pronouns by other forms of address" (Ferguson 1977:218).

1.3. Kin terms of address. In his description of Baby Talk as a simplified register Ferguson reports that special terms for close kin are often found (Ferguson 1977:220). While the following terms are indeed special terms of address, it is their reciprocal use which is their unique feature, for they are not specific to BT. In Soomaali, the sex of the child is irrelevant in determining the kin term it uses, and the terms used to it in kin-child conversation. It is the elder's³ position which dictates the term both will use, viz a mother will address all her children, male and female alike, as *hooyo* 'mother'. This usage will be followed all their lives long: at age 45 a

son may be addressed, in speech as well as in letter-writing, as 'mother' by his mother. The child uses the same term in calling to its mother. Similarly, a father will address all his children, sons as well as daughters, as *abbe* 'father', and they will use the same term in speaking to him. Likewise, a niece or nephew addresses a paternal uncle as *ádeer* and the uncle calls to his nieces and nephews with the same term, 'paternal uncle'. The same pattern applies in the case of the vocative used between a maternal uncle and his nieces and nephews: the term *ábti* 'maternal uncle' is employed. Cousins will address each other as 'son/daughter of my (mat/pat) uncle': e.g. *cína ádeer* 'son of my paternal uncle'. Affines, too, are distinguished in the Soomaali culture, where the terms *séedi/seedi* 'brother/sister in law' are used between relatives by marriage.

These vocatives have no special vocative ending (though I haven't investigated the possibility of stress alternation, cf. footnote 1), but should be reported as part of the description of the conditions of vocative use in Soomaali. This use of reciprocal terms of kinship based on the "elder" relative is found in other languages with similar cultural emphasis on the difference between what are lumped together in English as 'uncles', e.g. the neighboring, related East Cushitic language Oromo (B.Y. Nuur, p.c.) and the not-so-nearby, unrelated Persian and Armenian (G. Mardirussian, p.c.). This type of kin term usage is not noted for the Bantu languages in East Africa, nor is it found in the neighboring, very distantly related Amharic. Ferguson (1956) describes an identical use of kin terms in Arabic baby talk.

2. Imperative + dee

I have a range of speaker reactions to the construction "imperative + *dee*", a hortatory imperative which occurs often in the text, viz *hó dee* 'take it' and *cún dee* 'eat it'. The first consultant to hear the tape found *dee* impossible to translate, but suggested several other situations in which it would be used, e.g. *amus dee* 'let me speak (you others have had your turn)', and *tag dee* 'just go away'. Next, one speaker repeat-

edly denied the existence of the construction. A third termed it "rude", offering in its stead a permutation of *dee* placed *before* the verb: the Oogadeen (Western Soomaali) construction *hadee* + imperative, as in *hadee kaaley* 'come on'. Another person assured me that "imperative + *dee*" is indeed a Soomaali usage, and that *dee* is an "auxiliary".

If it does indeed have auxiliary status, I have been unable to fathom the lexical meaning of *dee* beyond the sense of politeness it conveys (for some!). Furthermore, the suggestion that it can be placed before the verb is confusing: SOV languages tend to place their auxiliaries after the verb and this language is no exception. Puglielli (1981:37) notes that a post-verbal aux takes either an *-a* or an *-ay* ending, and *dee* could be pushed into that framework--but how to explain its pre-verbal use, and the equation of *hadee* with it?

There is one more point to be made about this construction: a noun may be inserted between the two terms:

- (11) *cun cunta-da dee*; *xidho dee*; *xidho kaba -haa dee*
 eat food -the x wear x wear shoes-your/m x
 'eat the food' 'wear it' 'wear your shoes'

where it is suggested that the action specified is what is expected.

At the very least, there now appears to be a way to mark politeness which bears further (discourse) analysis.

3. BT Forms

Ferguson (1977) lists many simplification relations of BT forms to Adult Standard (AS) lexical items. Phonologically, such relations of simplification may involve sound substitution or avoidance (*mafaʔa* < AS *maqa* 'sheep, lamb') or reduplication (*nunú* 'baby, kid' < AS *únug* 'son'). BT words may be lexically conservative (*ham* 'num num', cf. AS *cún* 'eat!') but cf. reconstructed **aḥam* 'eat' for the Sam languages, which Soomaali belongs to within Lowland East Cushitic [Heine 1978,

On another level, the expressive side of BT is found in such terms as

ish	'bad' (AS: xun)	baɸ	'pow' ('hit, beat, splash')
uf	'stink'	ax	'ow, ouchie!' (used as a
khuukh [χu·χ]	'boo!'		cautionary: 'don't touch it')
sss	'shh!'		

While I mentioned 'lambie' above as an instance of sound substitution, it is, like English 'baaaa', an onomatopoetic animal name.

One hortative to encourage children in their efforts to walk is daadáh , which may have no lexical equivalent elsewhere, unless it is found areally in the Horn of Africa. Finally, there is always a BT term for 'good' and for 'sweet': daadáx and macán . Ferguson suggests that SOV languages tend to have BT expressions such as the French faire dodo, that is, the use of a verb such as make or do with nouns to cover a lot of lexical ground. I have been unsuccessful in attempts to elicit expressions such as 'go sleepy-by', 'make peepee/poopoo' or 'do pat-a-cake' in Soomaali: perhaps they will emerge in future tapings.

4. Conclusion

The proper perspective on the tapes of speech to Cawo at 5 1/2 months will emerge from the comparison of that corpus to the speech of (a) women talking to women, (b) mothers speaking to children old enough to comprehend and even to respond, and (c) the speech of women to men. I have not yet completed analyzing this extended corpus, so that BT features of Soomaali cannot be said to have been correctly analyzed in Arvanites [1982]. This paper extracts some general facts about the language from that corpus, and presents those not previously analyzed in the literature.

NOTES

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¹Puglielli (1981:5 and 39, fn. 5), where a type of stress alternation in some vocatives is described which does not concern us here.

²The indigenous word for mother is *hooyo* ; see section 1.3. for a discussion of vocative discourse usage of this and other kinship terms.

³I have emphasized the term elder elsewhere in this paper because readers familiar with large families will be aware that an aunt or uncle is often of an age with, if not actually younger than, her or his nieces and nephews when a family is spaced over twenty years or more. I wonder if this usage applies even then, or whether a joking usage does not replace it.

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