

SOMALI LANGUAGE AND THE MEDIA

With the development of the Internet, Somali has become a language with a vast number of websites, and it is certainly the language with the largest number of sites in the Horn of Africa and in East Africa in general.

One of the reasons for this development is the Somali diaspora, a consequence of the civil war which started in 1990. Somalis, who dispersed throughout the world and across the five continents, use the Internet and access the various sites. These sites are not only used for news regarding internal events, i.e. to provide information about what is happening all over the country in real time, but also for international news, i.e. events taking place in other parts of the world. In other words they serve the function of newspapers.

The various sites are named after some of the regions of Somalia – such as Hiraan, Mudug etc. – or the name of a town – such as Baidoa, Hargaysa, Merca, Jamaame, Janaale, Diinsoor – or even the name of a district of the capital city, such as Dayniile, Boondheere etc. Among these different names are also the names of towns that are in Ethiopia and Kenya but where the majority of the inhabitants are from Somalia. Therefore Somali is now spoken, more than ever before, in the bordering countries of Kenya, Ethiopia and Jibuuti.

Research was undertaken following a strict alphabetical order. It eventually uncovered sites with names which started with every letter of the alphabet, although we have limited our consultation here to those beginning with the first eleven letters. If Islamic sites, commercial sites and those dedicated to sport and other specific fields are added to these, we have a total of 300 websites.

There are very few sites that publicise the name of the clan they belong to (though some examples are Ogadeen, Muddulood, Midgaan, Madhibaan and Gabooye). Generally, however, it is not difficult to detect the clan allegiance of a website, as this can easily be deduced by the names present on the site itself.

In the main menu of the various sites we often find not only the daily news, but also literary events relating to poems, tales and novels. General sites, named after the towns in the centre or the north of the country (that we can presume are run by the people of those places), often present new poems written by young literary talents. Those where literary topics are particularly well covered are Aftahan, Doollo, Golkhaatumo, Gabooye and Dulmane.

As an example, let us consider the site named **Doollo** where we can find:

- A great amount of material that would correspond to more than 200 pages if transcribed. In this site there are 30 poems written by Sayid Max'd Cabduule Xasan who is unanimously considered the greatest poet in the Somali tradition. These poems can be used for a comparative study with the two collections of the poet's poems published by two Somali publishers.
- An article on the different options that were taken into consideration for the writing of Somali before the decision was made to adopt Latin characters.
- A rich collection of other poems and proverbs.
- Several poetic chains such as *Deelleey*, *Guba*, *Rayad*, *Haameey*, etc.
- An article on the role of broadcasting in the development of the Somali Language.
- Plants and birds in Somalia.

The literacy campaign of 1973-74.

In the site named **Golkhaatumo** we find a large collection of materials:

- Women's names in Somali.
- A collection of written and recited poems (that can also be heard).
- A collection of poems from the *Guba* chain.
- A collection of proverbs.
- Articles on Somali history; for example on the Darwiish and the Somalis who opposed them, with a discussion on which of the two groups was in error.
- A poem *Aniga iyo Qabiil* (2003) in which the poet and the clans debate; each asserts that the other is responsible for the Somali crisis and the tragedy which has beset the population since 1991. In fact when the poet uses the term '*aniga*', he refers to any Somali who practices tribalism and thinks his clan is superior to all others, either in terms of power or prestige. In this poem tribalism is considered to be a major cause in the demise of the Republic and of the lack of unity between Somalis.

If we visit sites like **Waagacusub**, **Jilibweyn** and **Aayatiin** we notice that we also find news and chronicles of events that have caused consternation in the population:

- A boy who prevents his mother from getting married again (Mogadishu chronicle).
- The weakening of the paternal role in the Somali diaspora.
- A 124-year-old Saudi-Arabian man who went on his 95th pilgrimage to Mecca this year (and other similar articles).

If we visit the **Aftahan** (*Eloquence*) site we find that it is particularly rich in poems, short stories, proverbs and children's tales. Titles in the latter category include:

- The cat and the rat
- Cigaal and the enemy
- Omar and a hyena
- A silly man and a thief
- The hyena and the jackal

In the **Goobjoog** and **Jilibweyn** sites we find two rather strange articles, with political connotations. The first article, entitled 'The meeting of the animals from Somalia', is about a meeting held at Buurta Fiiqdeher. The participants are delegates of all the species, vertebrates and invertebrates. After long and tiring discussion, a final agreement is reached. The text is fairly long and it clearly refers to the various, unproductive conferences held by Somalis who have not succeeded in reaching a reasonable agreement for a civil solution to the present situation.

The second article – in **Jilibweyn** – is entitled 'The brain and the body'. This relates how the different organs of the body do not want to depend on the brain any longer, but when the brain stops governing them they are unable to carry out their proper functions. The metaphor implies that for the country to survive, the various clans cannot do without a central government.

There is a group of sites that are clearly run by people who are traditionally considered low-caste: **Midgaan.com**, **Madhibaan.com**, **Gaboyee.com**, **Tumaal.com**, **Dulmane.com** and **Somalisix.com**. The subdivision of people into castes was part of Somali tradition and in fact there were various word pairs of contrasting items to distinguish people considered noble from those considered low-caste. Here are some examples:

- *Jileec* and *Jareer* (soft haired vs hard haired).
- *Bilis* and *Bidood* (noble vs slave).
- *Tumaallo* and *Talaammiin* (member of a group of craftsmen vs a non-member of it).

Nowadays, however, there is non longer any reason for these distinctions to exist; there is no longer any difference between different groups of Somalis.

All these sites, and in particular **Dulmane** (the oppressed one) and **Midgaan**, have articles in which the injustice borne by these groups in the past is criticised. The author of an article entitled 'Quursigu ma qiil buu leeyahay?' ('Does discrimi-

nation have any justification or legal basis?') asks himself if the discrimination carried out against them in the past had any kind of justification or if it had any kind of legal basis.

Among the various sites we discovered at least thirty Islamic sites containing much religious material, the translation of the holy book, The Quran, the life of the prophet, translations of various books etc. We also found sites relative to specific professions in addition to commercial sites (see Appendix for list).

As for poems written in recent years, their themes not only concern the Somali situation (the war, the lack of a central government), but poets are also inspired by other events. For example, one poem is in defence of Mohammed on the occasion of when a Danish cartoonist drew a picture of the prophet with a bomb in his turban, while in the poem 'The world disorder' the writer lists the arrogant behaviour of the one remaining world power (the USA), displaying a certain nostalgia for the time when URSS also had some authority.

As a conclusion to our description of Somali websites on the Internet, it is natural to ask oneself why there are so many. Why can't the various Somali communities in North America or in Europe get together and create a smaller number of sites each run by more than one group? Indeed, what would sociologists say about this situation? What they would certainly say is that Somalis lack one of the basic concepts of democracy, i.e. the concept of *representativeness*.

From a linguistic point of view we might consider this phenomenon in a rather positive light; in fact everyday the abundant use of the Internet produces much language material which is very useful for the study of the language. This is particularly true if one considers that Somali has only been officially transcribed since 1972 and so in a relatively short time the language has been exposed to 'changes' that other languages have been absorbing for centuries. This will necessarily have certain consequences.

Limited space has determined our need to make choices regarding the sites to take into consideration. Our choice has

not been determined by political or ethnic preferences; as linguists we consider all the sites as an important sources for our studies and research into the Somali language. It is our belief that Somalis, even now that they appear to be so distant from one another, are, given their cultural and linguistic homogeneity, just one people.

APPENDIX

Radio stations broadcasting in Somali

BBC (Somali Section). - VOA (Somali Section)

1. Radio HornAfrik. (Mogadiscio, Merca, B.Weyn, Dusamareeb, Baidoa, Kisimayo) 2. Radio Mogadiscio (Voice of people). 3. Capital voice (Mogadiscio). 4. Shabelle Radio (Mogadiscio). 5. Simba Radio. (Mogadiscio). 6. Soomaali weyn Radio. (Mog.). 7. Banaadir Radio. (Mogadiscio). 8. Radio Voice of peace. (Mogadiscio). 9. Radio Qur'anka Karim. (Mogadiscio). 10. Radio Hargaysa. 11. Radio Gaalkacyo. (Puntland). 12. Radio Codka Nabadda. (Puntland). 13. SBC: Radio. (Puntland). 14. Xurmo Radio. (Puntland) 15. Danjir Radio (Puntland). 16. Radio Garowe. (Puntland). 17. Radio Laascaanood. 18. Radio Maandeeq. 19. Radio Warsan (Baidoa). 20. Radio Kisimaayo. 21. Radio Gedo. 22. Radio Hormuud. 23. Radio Ogaal. 24. Sagal Radio. 25. Radio Xoriya. 26. Radio Daljir. 27. Radio Jigjiga (Somali Galbeed, Ethiopia). 28. Radio Midnimo. 29. Radio Dalmar. 30. Radio Sanaag. 31. Radio Buuhoodle. 32. Sahan Radio. 33. Radio Dawan Press. 34. Somaliland Radio. 35. Radio Horyaal. 36. Radio Fana (S. Galbeed, Ethiopia). 37. Radio Waaheen. 38. Radio Waaberi. 39. Radio Widhwidh. 40. Radio Free Somalia. 41. Radio Golis. 42. Radio Nugaal. 43. Somali Radio (Canada). 44. SBC. Radio (Austral). 45. Somali Swiss Radio. (Switzerland). 46. Somali Radio (USA). 47. S. Radio (Sweden). 48. Radio Copenhagen (Denmark). 49. Radio Minnesota (USA).

Internet Sites in Somali

A

1. Alldalka.com. 2. Awdaltribune.com. 3. Albakriyool.com. 4. AmiinArts.com. 5. Allwaddani.com. 6. Alldarwiish.com. 7. Allgedo.com. 8. Allsanag.com. 9. Allsomali.com. 10. Alfaghi studio.com. 11. Allbanaadir.com. 12. Allpuntland.com. 13. Allnugaal.com. 14. AllMudug.com. AllWamo.com. 15. Alljubbaland.com. 16. AllCeeldheed.com. 17. Awdalnews.com. 18. Aftahan.com. 19. Aayaha.com. 20. Ababshe.com. 22. Amsas.com. 23.

Agabso.com. 24. Afdheer.com. 25. Aayatiin.com. 26. Arlaadi.online. 27. Aflax.com. 28. Afgoy.com. 29. Abudwaq.com. 30. Allwariye.com. 31. Arlaadi.net. 32. Axadle.com. 33. Abaaqarow.com. 34. Afrikada Bari.com. 35. Allsomaliforum.com. 36. A.n.c.i.s.(Assoc. naz. comunità Italosomala). 37. Ainanshe.net.

B

1. B.B.C. (Somali language section). 2. banadircity.com. 3. Bakaaraha.com. 4. Baafin.com. 5. Banaadiri.com. 6. Barawepost.com. 7. Balcad.com. 8. Biyokulule.com. 9. Burtinle.com. 10. Bulsho.com. 11. Buurhakaba.com. 12. Banooda.com. 13. Billajo.com. 14. Bulshoweyn.com. 15. Bartamaha.com. 16. Bulugley.com. 17. Baidoa.com. 18. Beerlula.com. 19. Balligubadle.com. 20. Bataale.com. 21. Burco.Online. 22. Bocale.com. 23. Baargaal.com. 24. Beerdhiga.com. 25. Bishaaro.com. 26. Boorama.com. 27. Bosaasotime.com. 28. Baardheere.com. 29. Ballanballe.com. 30. Barbaarin.com. 31. Buukiburde.com. 32. Buulaay.com. 33. Boondheere.com.

C

1. Calanka.com. 2. Calayaale.com. 3. Cakaara.com. 4. Carmooyin.com. 5. Cawslafil.com. 6. Cadaado.com. 7. Cadayga.com. 8. Ceelbuur.Online. 9. Ceelwaaq.com. 10. Ceel Cadde.com. 11. Caynaba.com. 12. Codka soomaaliyeed.com. 13. Cagaaran.com. 14. Codka soomaali galbeed.com. 15. Codka Waamo

D

1. Dalka.com. 2. Dayniile. 3. Deeyoo.com. 4. Doollo.com. 5. Diilhore.com. 6. Dayax.Net. 7. Dulmane.com. 8. Dadkayga.com. 9. Dalka.net. 10. Danjire.com. 11. Dalmar.com. 12. Dangedo.com. 13. Danwawaag.com. 14. Dooy.net. 15. Dahaar.com. 16. Diinsoor.com. 17. Dawanpress.com. 18. Dayniile.one.com. 19. Daylipuntland.com. 20. Dadnimo.com. 21. Dawladda.com. 22. Dhagaxtuur.com. 23. Dhabad.com. 24. Dhanaane.com. 25. Dugsi.com.

G

1. Godey news.com. 2. Gandarshe.com. 3. Galgaduud.com. 4. Geedoole.com. 5. Gedo.Net. 6. Gedo.web. 7. goobjoog.com. 8. gedo homepage. 9. Goldogob site. 10. Guurso.com. 11. Geeska Aafrika.com. 12. gabiley.com. 13. Golis news.com. 14. Guuleyso.com. 15. gedo region.com. 16. Gubta.com. 17. Garowe.Online. 18. Goljano.com. 19. Gabooye.com. 20. Golkhaatumo.com. 21. Ganacsiga.com. 22. Gaashaamo.com. 23. Gobannimo.com. 24. Guulane.com.

H

1. Hobyo.net. 2. Homeland.com. 3. Hiiraan.center.com. 4. Hiiraan.com. 5. Halgan.Net. 6. Hadhwanaag news.com. 7. Horn Afrik.com. 8. Harardheere.com. 9. Horyaal.com. 10. Horseed.com. 11. Hamaray.com. 12. Horowo.Online. 13. Huriwaa.com. 14. Heegan.com. 15. Hillaac.com. 16. Haatuf.com. 17. Heemaal.com. 18. Hormood.com. 19. Hoyga suugaanta.com.

20. Himilo.online. 21. Hayaan.com. 22. Hurda.com. 23. Hiiraan.online. 24. Hargaysa.news.com. 25. Hubaal.com.

J

1. Jowhar.com. 2. Jarbooley.com. 3. Jigjiga.com. 4. Jannaale.com. 5. Jamaame.com. 6. Jiimo.com. 7. Jamhuuriya.com. 8. Jubbaland.net. 9. Jubbaland.Online. 10. Jirac.com. 11. Jidraadin.com. 12. Jasiira.com. 13. Jilibweyn.com. 14. Jawil.com

M

1. Midnimo.com. 2. Midgaan.com. 3. Muddulood.com. 4. Marka Caddey.com. 5. Marka.Caddey.com. 6. Morgabey.com. 7. Mudug.Online. 8. Maandeeq.com. 9. Mareeg.com. 10. Medicalsom.com. 11. Muqdisho Time.com. 12. Mudug.Online. 13. Magaalo.com. 14. Maanta.com. 15. Magantaqhir.com. 16. Maktabad.com. 17. Muslim women.com. 18. Maayland.com. 19. Manaas.com. 20. Maaneed.com. 21. Maandeeq news.com

Q

1. Qandala.com. 2. Qorahey.com. 3. Qaamuus.com. 4. Qarannimo.com. 5. Qalaafe.com. 6. Qurbo jaceel.com. 7. Qabridahare.com. 8. Quruxleey.mag.com. 9. qow.Net. 10. Qalin.com. 11. Qabyo.com. 12. Qaran Express.com.

S

1. S.community.com. 2. Sonnanews.com. 3. Soomaali jaceel.com. 4. Somalia.Online. 5. Somali six.com. 6. Soomaaliweyn.com. 7. Somali.Watch.org.. 8. Somaliland.org. 9. Somalitribune.com. 10. Somali talk.com. 11. Somali link.com. 12. Suxufi.com. 13. Somali news.com. 14. Somfreemedia.com. 15. Somali UK.com. 16. Somali.net. 17. Somali inter.com. 18. Somali wide.com. 19. Somali home.com. 20. Somalivic.web. 21. Somaliland talk.com. 22. Somali VOA.com. 23. Simbanews.com. 24. Seylac.com. 25. Somali root.com. 26. Soomaali doon.com. 27. Saaxil.com. 28. somaswiss.com. 29. Somali Today.com. 30. Saafi Studio.com. 31. Somali site.com. 32. Somali Bantu.com. 33. Somali life.com. 34. Samaddoon.com. 35. somali cartoon.network. 36. Somali tube.com. 37. Solamusuc.com. 38. Somali starpage.com. 39. Suxufiya.com. 40. Safka_hore.com. 41. Somaalida xorta.com. 42. Soomaalinnimo.com.

W

1. Waamo.net. 2. Waayaha.com. 3. Waxgarad.com. 4. Warshiikh.com. 5. Wax wayn. com. 6. Waagacusub.com. 7. Widhwidh.com. 8. Wardheer news.com. 9. Waaberi news.com. 10. Warjire.Online. 11. Warsan Time.com. 12. Waxqabad.com. 13. Wargays.com. 14. Waddanka.com. 15. webi shabeele.com. 16. Waajid.com

Islamic Sites

1. Duruus.com. 2. Qorane.com. 3. Maktabada.com. 4. Aflax.com. 5. Ataqwa.com. 6. Boqolsoon.com. 7. Khalid mosque.com. 8. Risaala.com. 9. Somali sunnah.com. 10. Qur an.com. 11. Waano.com. 12. Waaniye.com. 13. Wacdi.com. 14. tawfiiq.com. 15. Somali qur an.com. 16. Masjid Shaafici.com. 17. Masjid Abubakar.com. 18. Runta.com. 19. Qaadisiya.com. 20. Ansaar.com. 21. Mucjiso.com. 22. hanuun.com. 23. Masjid Faaruuq.com. 24. Ikhwaan.com. 25. Hilinka toosan.com. 26. Kulmiye.com. 27. Islamic way.com. 28. Dulmidiid.com. 29. Alxaq.com. 30. Almujaahid.com. 31. Addacwa.com. 32. Al-tawxiid.com.

Sports Sites

1. Bilaajo.com. 2. Boondheere.com. 3. Cayaaraha.com. 4. Eurosom_sports.com. 5. Deeyoo.com. 6. Garoonka.com. 7. Ilamos.com. 8. Kubadda.com. 9. Somsports.com. 10. Somali Olympic.com. 11. Somali_Youth.com. 12. Somalilandsports.com. 13. Togdheersports.com. 14. Xiddigaha.com. 15. Somali sports and culture.com. 16. Ceelbournet_Sprts. 17. Apanews.com.