**Effects of dialect, gender and context on vowel durations in Oromo**

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Abstract

An acoustic study of vowels of Cushitic languages has not been conducted though their vowels seem to exhibit durational variations due to phonetic and phonological reasons. Oromo is one of the Cushitic languages which has the largest number of speakers. We investigate effects of regional dialect, gender, and phonetic context on vowel durations of Oromo. Sixty-four speakers (F= 32, M= 32) from five dialect areas of the language produced vowel data in different contexts. An acoustic analysis of the data shows that durations of the vowels significantly vary across dialects, with the longest durations in the Southern Eastern dialect and the shortest durations in the Northern dialect. Gender has no significant effect on durations of vowels but both long and short vowels have significantly longer durations when followed by voiced singletons than voiceless, and when followed by voiced singletons than voiced geminates. Collectively, longer vowels are two times longer than the short ones and this difference is significantly affected by dialect and context but not by gender. It is concluded that dialectal background of speakers and phonetic context are key factors determining durations of Oromo vowels.