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Pluricentric features of spoken Somali that resist the standardization of written Somali

Jama Musse Jama

Abstract

A native Somali speaker who says *aaddo* for sister is recognized as a Djiboutian Somali, since the word is used only in Djibouti. Other words used for sister have distinctive territorial usage following the national boundaries of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somaliland, Somalia, and the north-eastern regions of Kenya. *Huunno* for sister is used in the Somali Regional State in Ethiopia and the western regions of Somaliland. *Walaal* is used in Somaliland, while *walaalle/waalle* is used towards the border with eastern Federal Somalia. *Baayo* is used east-central regions of Federal Somalia, and *abbaayo/abbaaye* is used from Banaadir up to the border with Kenya. Hence, geographical variations for the meaning sister include *Aaddo*, *Huunno*, *Walaal*, *Walaalle*, *Waalle*, *Baayo*, *Abbaayo*, and *Abbaaye*. This paper aims to determine how much this regional variation of the spoken language persists in the written form. It does so by examining the meaning sister within the seven million tagged words of the Somali Corpus. The countries in which the authors grew up will then be taken into account to assess to what extent an author's origin influences the word they use for sister in their writings, and the fictional characters in the stories and their origins will be commented.

Keywords: pluricentric language, Somali, concordance, corpus.

Introduction

Pluricentricity refers to multiple centres in a language communities from which language norms spread. Such languages are spoken in at least two countries where they have official status and develop specific linguistic and pragmatic features unique to each national variety. The concept of

pluricentric languages was introduced in the second half of the 20th century by Heinz (1967) and further defined by Clyne (1991) to describe languages with multiple interacting centres, each contributing a national or regional variety with its own set of norms (Crystal, 2003). Currently, there are 43 languages identified as pluricentric, including English, Spanish, Portuguese, Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu (Crystal, 2003). In pluricentric languages, one variety is typically considered the 'dominant' variety (Clyne, 1991; Muhr, 2012), while the 'non-dominant' varieties have fewer speakers, less political, economic, and linguistic influence, and lower prestige. Somali is spoken by at least 26 million people living in the Republic of Somaliland, the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Republic of Djibouti, the Republic of Kenya, and by a significant number of speakers in the diaspora (Banti, 2022), and it is approximately the 9th largest language in Africa after Arabic, Swahili, Hausa, Oromo, Yoruba, Igbo, Fula and Amharic (Nilsson, 2017). A distinctive regional variation is observed at different levels of the language, including phonology, orthography, morphology, syntax, and lexicon. In this paper, we will explore the regional variations of the Somali words used for the meaning sister across different regional varieties.¹ We will examine whether these regional differences in the spoken language are also reflected in written texts by analysing the Somali corpus database and other two publicly available corpora.² Section two will assess whether Somali meets the classical definition of

¹ We limit to use the Somali language in the sense of Northern Somali, Banaadiri dialects and Ashraf dialects leaving out of this analysis Af Maay (nowadays considered as separate language), Jiiddu and other members of the Somali cluster (for more classification of the Somali, see Banti, 2013).

² Somali Corpus is explained in detail in section 3 of this paper. The second corpus is the Somali Web Corpus, developed by the NLP Centre at Brno University in the Czech Republic, in collaboration with the Universities of Oslo and Addis Ababa. The third corpus is *Bangiga Af Soomaaliga*, part of the Swedish Language Bank of the University of Gothenburg.

pluricentricity. Section three will introduce the Somali Corpus. Section four will present data extracted from the corpus regarding the meaning sister followed by statistical analysis of frequency of the different words and how this relates to the regional backgrounds of the authors and, in case of fictional works, the regional backgrounds of the characters. The paper concludes with the confirmation of the central hypothesis, and indicates further research on the subject.

Is Somali Pluricentric?

According to the criteria for pluricentric languages as proposed by Clyne (1991) and further developed by Muhr (2012), Somali is to be considered pluricentric because (1) it is spoken in five different nations or self-governing entities that serve as 'interacting centres' and norm-setting centres; (2) at least three of these countries have Somali as the official language of government and medium of instruction; and (3) there are linguistic differences between the national varieties, including variations in vocabulary and pronunciation. This is demonstrated in this paper's exploration of different words used to convey the same meaning in different countries or regional areas. Regional variation of the Somali language, frequently discussed in the literature (see, for example, Zorc & Osman, 1993) supports our conclusion that Somali is a pluricentric language. As to the dominant variant versus non-dominant variants as defined by Clyne (1991) and Muhr (2012), things have slightly changed since the 1970s when Somali gained its official orthography, and a good quantity of literature has been produced. In the early years of extensive written production in Somali (1970-1980), the variant known as Northern Somali gained prominence in written literature, primarily in school textbooks, due to politically driven language unification efforts and the influence of the leading scholarly elite of the Somali Republic at that time. The decade of instability in 1980-1990, led to the disintegration of the Somali Republic, and the re-birth of Somaliland as a separate political entity, along with the rise of the Ethiopian multi-lingual ethnic federation. The last three

decades (1990-the present) then reshaped at least three centres where the norms of the Somali language are shaped. Although dominant in the 1970s Northern Somali has since diminished, and there are currently two Dominant Variants of the Somali language, which are the variety of Hargeysa, the capital of the Republic of Somaliland and the variety of Mogadishu, the capital of the Federal Republic of Somalia and one Non-Dominant Variant, which is that of Jigjiga, the capital of the regional Somali state in Ethiopia. Djibouti's contribution to these new developments on norms is so far limited to the production of the largest monolingual dictionary in 2013 (see Aadan Xasan, 2013), and it has a significant impact on enriching the lexicon: many words used only in Djibouti were entered in the dictionary for the first time with this publication and are today well documented in written form. Despite of this apparent pluricentricity of the Somali language, very little systematic work has been done on the regional variation within the standard language, based on systematic investigation of larger amounts of texts from the different regions as highlighted by Nilsson, 2017. In the past, the dialectic variation of the Somali language has been studied (see for example Lamberti (1986, 1988), Mohamed D. Abdullahi (2010), Abdirachid M Ismail (2011), and the variation in the standard of the 70's and 80's has been investigated by Mohamed F Hared (1992), while variation in the modern standard is discussed in, e.g., Banti (2011, 2024), Banti & Abdirachid M Ismail (2015) and others.

For the causes of existence and the current features of the pluricentricity of Somali, the only works this author is aware of are by Nilsson (2017, 2018). It is on modern regional variations in Somali where in these two contributions the pluricentricity of the language is observed through the comparison of schoolbooks produced for Somaliland, Somalia, and Ethiopia students. In Nilsson (2017) an overview of the different regions where Somali is spoken is provided, with a background on the standardization of the language as medium of instruction; and the textbooks for elementary schools in sciences and Somali language subjects are compared. Regional standards promoted

by the different states in the schoolbooks are found in phonology, grammatical categories, syntax, lexicon, and orthography. In Nilsson (2018) the work has been consolidated and expanded, also using the corpora available for the Somali language. The author concludes with the existence of two equally strong, dominant, and written varieties of Somali respectively in Somalia and Somaliland, firmly based on the common heritage of the 1970s and 1980s, but today quite divergent, and a third non-dominant written variety in Ethiopia. In this paper, we want to focus on lexical variations of the spoken language, taking as an example the meaning sister in Somali, and assess to what extent an author's origin and fictional characters in the stories and 'their origins', influence the use of variants in Somali prose writing.

Somali Corpus

The Somali Corpus was created to meet the demand for IT resources for the Somali language and other Low Resource Languages. Many resource development efforts in this field primarily concentrate on well-documented languages that have a long history of writing and a significant number of speakers. However, languages with more recent histories of writing encounter the obstacle of needing more data for statistical investigations, and for modules training in Natural Language Processing. The Redsea Cultural Foundation's Somali Corpus, in collaboration with the University of Naples 'L'Orientale', has made significant progress in constructing a stable and productive corpus. The first edition of the corpus, containing 3 million words with tagging and grammatical annotations, was released online in 2016. Since then, the corpus has grown to almost 7 million tagged words, allowing for new corpus-based research opportunities (Jama Musse, 2016).

The corpus development involved using both printed materials and authentic orally documented Somali language materials. The system is based on 10 sub-corpora and has reached a stage where it is multi-functional and rich in data, thus contributing to the digitization of Somali and supporting

language research. The corpus has also expanded to include the Saho language, ensuring structural compatibility with similar language families. As of September 2022, the Saho sub-corpus had approximately 500,000 annotated and tagged words (Jama Musse, 2022) and in October 2024 one million words (see also Ahmedsaad Mohammad Omer, to appear). An extension of the Somali Language and Literature Corpus procedures and structures is currently being developed to collect, index, annotate, and create a one-entry point search and retrieval system for the Omo-Tana language family (Rendille, Bayso, Daasanach, Arbore, Elmolo, Maay, and Boni) (see Jama Musse and Tirsit Yetbarek, 2024). Furthermore, the Somali Corpus has benefited various other projects, particularly in enhancing the linguistic lexicon (Piccini et. al, 2023, 2024).

In this paper, the frequencies and concordances derived from the Somali Corpus and the two other above-mentioned publicly available corpora are utilized for a comparative analysis of the geographic variation of the synonyms in Somali for the meaning sister.

The word sister in Somali

In this section, we will explore how the word 'sister', *sorella* in Italian, and *أخت* or *شقيقة* in Arabic are expressed in Somali in three bilingual dictionaries (Italian-Somali, Arabic-Somali, and English-Somali). We will examine the number of Somali synonyms provided for this meaning in each dictionary. Additionally, we will analyse the presence and number of synonyms for the meaning sister in different Somali monolingual dictionaries. There are five major existing monolingual dictionaries: Yaasiin C Keenadiid (1976) published in Mogadishu, Saalax Xaashi Carab (2004) and Axmed Xasan Axmed (2013) published in Djibouti, Khaalid Cali-Guul Warsame (2008) published in Nairobi (and Dragør) and Puglielli and Cabdalla C Mansuur (2012) published in Rome. There is also an abridged version of this last dictionary with the title of *Qaamuus dugsiyeedka* (eds Cabdalla C Mansuur and Puglielli, 2022) for schools but in this context the synonyms for the meaning sister

are the same of the 2012 full edition of the same authors. Most of these dictionaries are personal or institutional research efforts rather than national initiatives guided by education policy and are not, therefore, endorsed by the national authorities of the Somali-speaking countries in which they were published. Similar cases apply to bilingual dictionaries. To clarify, Khaalid Cali-Guul Warsame developed his work in Denmark as a member of the Diaspora and published the work in Nairobi only for practical printing reasons, therefore the work cannot be linked directly to the Somali-speaking society in Kenya. Other renowned historical dictionaries, such as Larajasse (1897), Kirk (1905) and da Palermo (1915) were not considered because, with the limited lexicon they have, they list only one word (walaal) for the meaning sister.

The reference dictionaries are as follows:

- ESD'93: Zorc and Osman (1993) - English-Somali bilingual dictionary, includes index.
- ISD'98: Puglielli (1998) - Italian-Somali bilingual dictionary.
- ASD'MS: Cabdirisaaq Maxamed Cilmi (manuscript) - Arabic-Somali bilingual dictionary. No date of publication.
- SID'85: Agostini, Puglielli and Ciise M Siyaad (1985) - Somali-Italian bilingual dictionary.
- QS'76: Yaasiin C. Keenadiid (1976), Mogadishu.
- QS'04: Saalax Xaashi Carab (2004), Djibouti.
- QS'08: Khaalid Cali-Guul Warsame (2008), Dragør/Nairobi.
- QS'12: Puglielli and Cabdalla C Mansuur (ed) (2012), Rome.
- QS'13: Aadan Xasan Aadan (2013), Djibouti.

Below are the findings from each dictionary:

- ESD'93: In Zorc and Osman's bilingual dictionary, for the meaning sister, the entries walaal, abbaaye (in a religious sense) and abbaayo, as well duumadhawr as being "(-ta) n-f-cmp sister-in-law, wife's younger sister (who in traditional law may replace the wife if she dies)". This dictionary does not include the words aaddo, huunno, baayo, abbaay,

walaalle, and waalle.

- ISD'98: In Puglielli's Italian-Somali dictionary, the entry for *sorella* (sister) is translated as "A. n. f. (gen., relig.) Walaal, abbaaye; è come una s. per me walaal oo kale bay ii tahay. B. agg. (organizzazione, nave) Bahwadaag, mataan". The entry does not mention *aaddo*, *huunno*, *baayo*, *walaalle*, and *waalle*.
- ASD'MS: In Cabdirisaaq Maxamed Cilmi's Arabic-Somali dictionary, the words *أخت* and *شقيقة* are both translated as *walaal*. No other synonyms are provided, and the words *aaddo*, *huunno*, *baayo*, *abbaay*, *abbaayo*, *abbaaye*, *walaalle*, and *waalle* are not mentioned.
- SID'85: Agostini et al.'s Somali-Italian dictionary lists *walaal*, *abbaay*, *abbaaye*, and *abbaayo* as synonyms each of which has the same meaning as the Italian word *sorella*. The dictionary also provides sense of religious variant of the meaning for the Somali entry *abbaay* (i.e. 'n. f. vr. di *abbaaye*' and the word and *abbaaye* as 'n. f. (-yayaal, m. o f.) - *Sorella* (anche in senso affettivo o religioso), vr. *abbaay*, *abbaayo*.) This dictionary does not mention *aaddo*, *huunno*, *baayo*, *walaalle*, and *waalle*. It however introduces the entry *duumadhawr* (literally meaning someone who is waiting the death of another to get heredity) as younger sister of the wife (see also ESD'93).
- QS'76: In Yaasiin's monolingual dictionary (Mogadishu-Firenze, 1976), the word *walaal* is given as the lexeme expressing the meaning in question, with no synonyms provided. The dictionary does not mention *aaddo*, *abbaay*, *abbaaye*, *abbaayo*, *baayo*, *baaye*, *huunno*, *waalle*, or *walaalle*. The dictionary mentions also *duumadhawr* in line with ESD'93 and SID'85.
- QS'04: In Saalax Xaashi Carab's (Djibouti, 2004) monolingual dictionary, the word *walaal* (for the meaning sister) has the synonyms of *aaddo*, *huunno*, *baayo*, and *wadey*. It's worth noting that the word *wadey* is included as a synonym for *walaal*, but its lexical entry defines it as friend rather than sister. *Abbaayo* is also mentioned as a synonym for *walaal*,

but waalle and walaalle are not mentioned. The dictionary mentions also duumadhawr in line with ESD'93, SID'85 and QS'76.

- QS'08: In Khaalid Cali-Guul Warsame's (Dragør/Nairobi, 2008) dictionary, the words aaddo, abbaaye, and walaal are presented as synonyms with the meaning sister. Interestingly, huunno and aaddo are also listed as synonyms for eeddo 'aunt from the father's side: sister of the father'. For Khaalid Cali-Guul Warsame, therefore, huunno means aunt. The dictionary includes the entry duumaldhawr, but with definition different from ESD'93, SID'85 and QS'76 (i.e. "Duumaldhawr-ka: Gabar sugeysa in la dumaalo oo ninki[ii] walaalki guursadi[o]." literally 'Girl waiting to be married by her dead husband's brother').
- QS'12: The monolingual dictionary Puglielli and Cabdalla C Mansuur (eds.) (Rome, 2012) has the following lexical entries for the meaning sister: walaal, abbaay, abbaaye, abbaayo. However, aaddo, baayo, baaye, huunno, waalle, and walaalle are not included. The dictionary introduces the term siisto as an equivalent of the meaning sister, which was the term used for female activists of the Somali Youth League during the fight against the colonialists. It might come from a phonitically Somalized version of sister. It also introduces duumadhawr with a definition close to ESD'93, SID'85 and QS'76 adding information (i.e. " m.dh 1. Gabar yar, oo aan weli qaan gaarin oo xigsiisan loo siiyay nin walaasheed ka dhimatay." literally meaning 'a young under-age girl, given to the dead older sister's husband'). The information on the age is added.
- QS'13: In Aadan Xasan Aadan's (ed) (Djibouti, 2013) dictionary, the terms aaddo, abbaay, walaaley, huunno, baaye, walaal, and abbaaye are listed as synonyms with the meaning sister. The words waalle and walaalle are not

included in this dictionary.

The following table summarizes data from the dictionaries:

	aaddo	abbaay	abbaaye	abbaayo	baayo	baaye	huunno	waalle	walaal	walaalle
ESD'93	-	-	x	x	-	-	-	-	x	-
ISD'98	-	-	x	x	-	-	-	-	x	-
ASD'MS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-
SID'85	-	x	x	x	-	-	-	-	x	-
QS'76	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-
QS'04	x	-	-	-	x	-	x	-	x	-
QS'08	x*	-	x	-	-	-	x*	-	x	-
QS'12	-	x	x	x	-	x	x	-	x	-
QS'13	x	x	x	-	-	x	x	-	x	-

Table 1. The presence of meaning sister in the main dictionaries.

This section shows that the word *walaal* is present in all dictionaries, and the dictionary with the largest number of synonyms for the meaning sister is Aadan Xasan Aadan (2013). *Walaalle* is not present in any dictionary. Only dictionaries published in Djibouti or written by a Djibouti national listed the word *aaddo*, except for QS'08, where the word is present but with a different meaning ('aunt' instead of 'sister'). After *walaal*, the second most common lexical entry is *abbaayo*. Finally, two dictionaries (QS'04 and QS'13) introduce two new words (*wadey*

and siisto, respectively) as synonyms for the meaning sister, while ESD'93, SID'85, QS'76, and QS'12 introduce duumodhowr or duumaldhowr as a particular meaning of sister.

Corpus-based frequencies

In this section, we examine data extracted from the Somali Corpus. For each Somali word meaning sister, a search is conducted against the main dictionary³ of the corpus. If the word is listed in the dictionary, then synonyms of the entry are presented. The search is extended to the corpus database if the word is not listed as a lexical entry. Examples of concordances are provided for less frequent words to show ways in which a word is used to express something of the geographical origin of a particular usage. This highlights the way the author is aware of the different usages in different regions and thus the pluricentricity of the language. To conduct a more comparative study, the words are also searched against other public domain corpora of the Somali language. As mentioned above, the three main online free Somali corpora used as references are KAF = Jama Musse Jama, Somali Corpus (Kaydka Af Soomaaliga); SWC = NLP Centre, Brno University, Czech Republic, in collaboration with Oslo & Addis Ababa Universities; Somali Web Corpus; and BAF = Bangiga Af Soomaaliga, at the Swedish Language Bank, University of Gothenburg. The following table summarizes the

³ Usually, a corpus does not have a dictionary of its own. The Somali corpus uses a developmentally proprietary structure in which there is a main monolingual dictionary, and for each root word, in addition to parts of speech and other linguistic descriptions, the central dictionary contains several definitions from different monolingual dictionaries, the synonyms, as well as the relationship with all inflected forms of the root word. There are words in the corpus because they appear in an indexed document context, even though not necessarily defined in any dictionary that has ever been published.

frequencies of the words in the three different corpora.⁴

	aaddo	abbaay	abbaay	abbaay	baayo	baaye	huunn	waalle	walaal	walaall
KAF	2*	9	7	7	2	3	29	2	3180***	4
SWC	- *	5**	1	6	13	2	5	2	2700***	1
BAF	- *	12**	34	170	11	35	49	-	1867***	23

Table 2: The presence of meaning sister in the main corpora.

Similarly, as seen in the dictionaries, walaal is the dominant variant, followed by abbaayo, and huunno is confirmed as third in the most frequently used variants within the corpuses. This shows pluricentricity indirectly given the geographical specificity of the words, though further research is needed to specify where each of the synonyms, as present in the corpus, is used. However, in the next paragraphs, we will discuss on some selected cases for the purpose.

An example of this is Maxamed Daahir Afrax's Maana-Faay (1981), in which the word walaal is generally used. However, other words are also used to mean sister according to the character who is speaking:

... *isla markiina ku orodday markay aqootay, "Weey Sahra, ii warran abbaaye!"*

⁴ (*) The word *aaddo* is present in more occurrences, but as the third feminine singular form of the negative/subordinate present tense of the verb *aad*.

(**) The word *abbaay* is present elsewhere in the corpus but with the meaning of the name *Abbaay*, a river in the Somali State of Ethiopia.

(***) The word *walaal* is present both as sister and brother in this count.

... she run towards (Sahra) as soon as she recognized her, and said, "Hi Sahro, how are you, sister!"⁵

The author deliberately uses the word *abbaaye* to indirectly identify the region where Maana-Faay - the main fiction character - hails from. In the same conversation, when Sahro, her friend who comes from a different region, asks Maan-Faay something, she uses the variant *Walaalle*.

... *"Laakiin walaalle, diyaar uma ahi in aan noqdo daba dhilifka imberyaaliistuhu ugu adeegto dibindaabyaynta dadyowga!"*

... "But my sister, I am not ready to be the spy (or persecutor) of the imperialist who serves his master to punish the people!"

The author once more changes the use of the word *walaalo*, when Cabdinaasir, a male character, hailing from yet another different region, asks Sahro to join him in a dance:

... *Markaasuu u baddelay, ee intuu gacanta qabtay ku yiri, "Soo istaag huunno, showr baan kuu qabaaye".*

... Then he changed [the discourse], and while taking her hand, said "Stand up, sister, I have a private conversation to have with you".

Notice, also, that the author uses the variants *Sahra* and *Sahro* for the name of the female character, according to who is speaking among his fictional characters. These variants also reflect usage in different regions of the Somali-speaking countries.

Similarly, Ibraahin Yuusuf Axmed "Hawd", who otherwise writes *walaalo*, in his novel *Aanadii Negeeye* (2007) usually uses *abbaayo* when the character called Layla speaks because she was born and grew up in Hodan quarter of Mogadishu city, which

⁵ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of quotations from Somali to English were made by the author of this paper and have not been published elsewhere.

is one of the richest quarters where typical people of Mogadishu reside. In the following, she is addressing Deeqa and Raage:

“Maya abbaayo, aniga ayaa sii soconaya ee iswaraysta, ninkan maalin walba waanu wada joognaaye”

“No, sister, I am the one who is leaving, you talk to each other, this man and I are together every day”.

Ali Jimale Ahmed, in Gaso, Ganuun and Gasiin uses a mixture of walaal, abbaay, and abbaayo according to the speaker in the conversation. While he frequently uses the word walaal, such as in “... *Mahad badan, walaal. Laakin ma garan waxa aad ula jeeddo doogsi.*” (... Thank you, sister. But I did not understand what you mean by doogsi), when his fictional characters speak in the novel, he uses different words. In the following examples he uses abbaayo and in the second example below he uses abbaay in order to differentiate the two speakers of the story (note in the second the use of “xaa tiri” [what you say] rather than “maxaad tiri” [what you say] which is typical abbreviation from waxaa to xaa used in the people of Mogadishu):

“Yaa Shillal ka daba hadli kara. Abbaayo, mar labaad, mahadsanid”.

“Who can speak after Shillal!. Sister, thank you, again”.

“Maandhaay, xaa dhacay? Aaway hooyo iyo Jabaq iyo abbaay?”

“What happened my daughter? Where are mum and Jabaq and sister?”

We finally present here the concordance of the words meaning sister which are less frequently used, namely *aaddo*, *baayo*, *baaye*, *huunno*, *waalle*, and *walaalle* from the Somali Corpus. In each table, we report the type of the line-text as indicated in the corpus, numbered in progressive way, and we provide a literal translation below the table.

#	Type	Concordances: searched word 'aaddo' from Somali Corpus		
3.1	Prose	... macno leh in	<i>Aaddo</i>	<i>iyu Huuno oo la macne</i>

		<i>labada erey ee</i>		<i>ah ...</i>
3.2	Poetry		<i>aaddooy</i>	<i>huunnoy yaa!</i>

Table 3: concordance of the word aaddo (source: Somali Corpus).

In the first example (3.1), the line is drawn from a prose text, and directly translates to '... it is interesting that the two words Aaddo and Huuno, which convey the same meaning as ...'. In the second example (3.2), the line is taken from a recognized song, and literally means 'oh! Aaddo+vocative, my sister'. It is interesting to observe that the only poetry piece using the word aaddo for sister is a traditional song from Djibouti, one more time indicating how the aaddo variant is strictly linked to Djibouti and Western regions of Somaliland.

#	Type	Concordances: searched word <i>abbaay</i> from Somali Corpus		
4.1	Prose	<i>... cawada yaa ii</i> <i>islaan eh</i>	<i>Abbaay</i>	<i>hadda saan wax yeelaa</i> ...
4.2	Prose	<i>Maana maxaa ku</i> <i>daaray,</i>	<i>abbaay</i>	<i>ma jirran tahay?</i>
4.3	Prose		<i>Abbaay</i>	<i>nacnacii aawayna?</i>
4.4	Prose	<i>hadalkii beddeshay</i> <i>bey tiri, iih</i>	<i>abbaay</i>	<i>ani jeceel-jeceel iyo nin-</i> <i>nin ...</i>

Table 4: concordance of the word abbaay (source: Somali Corpus).

In this case, all the lines are drawn from a prose text, and the first example (4.1) directly translates to '... who helps me tonight, sister, what I can do?'. In the second example (4.2), the line literally means 'Maano!, what is wrong with you sister? are you mad?'. In the third example (4.3), the line means 'Sister, where are the sweets?', and finally (4.4) means '... she shifted the conversation, and said, oh! sister, I have no interest in dating

and men stuff...'.

#	Type	Concordances: searched word <i>abbaaye</i> from Somali Corpus		
5.1	Prose	... Alla hoogey	<i>Abbaaye</i>	<i>meedey?</i>
5.2	Prose	<i>Kaalay</i>	<i>abbaaye</i>	<i>wax yar baan kuu waydiinaaye?</i>
5.3	Prose	<i>Sahra, ii warran</i>	<i>abbaaye</i>	<i>?</i>
5.4	Prose	<i>Khadiija,</i>	<i>Abbaaye</i>	<i>warka noo dhiibhee ...</i>

Table 5: concordance of the word *abbaaye* (source: Somali Corpus).

(5.1) '... Oh my god, where is sister?'. (5.2) 'Come sister, I am asking you a little'. (5.3) 'Sahra, how are you sister'. (5.4) 'Khadiija, sister, tell us the news...'.

#	Type	Concordances: searched word <i>abbaayo</i> from Somali Corpus		
6.1	Prose	<i>Maya</i>	<i>abbaayo</i>	<i>aniga ayaa sii soconaya e is waraysta</i>
6.2	Prose		<i>Abbaayo</i>	<i>mar labaad mahadsanid.</i>
6.3	Prose	<i>ayuu aw Sheekoole yiri</i>	<i>Abbaay</i>	<i>Kabto Kabaabyo ayaa tiri...</i>

Table 6: concordance of the word *abbaayo* (source: Somali Corpus).

(6.1) 'No, sister, I am the one who is leaving, talk to each other'. (6.2) 'Sister, thank you again'. (6.3) 'Said Mr Sheekoole, sister Kabto Kabaabyo said...'.

#	Type	Concordances: searched word <i>huunno</i> from Somali Corpus		
7.1	Prose	<i>Degmo waa</i>	<i>huunno</i>	<i>iska warran Liqdaar</i>

		<i>Liqdaar</i>		
7.2	Prose		<i>Huunno</i>	<i>waxa la yidhi shaqaale ayaad qaadanaysaan</i>
7.3	Prose		<i>Huunno</i>	<i>naagaa i waalay!</i>
7.4	Prose	<i>Istaag</i>	<i>huunno</i>	<i>showr baan kuu qabaaye</i>

Table 7: concordance of the word huunno (source: Somali Corpus).

(7.1) 'Degmo, here is Liqdaar. Huunno How are you, Liqdaar'. (7.2) 'Sister, I was told you are employing people'. (7.3) 'Sister, women made me mad!'. (7.4) 'Stand up sister, I need to talk to you in private'.

#	Type	Concordances: searched word <i>huunno</i> from Somali Corpus		
8.1	Prose	<i>Indhadeeq, Alla</i>	<i>wallaale</i>	<i>in wax la sheega heegaa ma fiicna</i>
8.2	Prose	<i>Maya</i>	<i>wallaale</i>	<i>Maana ma joogto</i>
8.3	Prose	<i>Mahadsanid</i>	<i>wallaale</i>	<i>ka warran ciddii?</i>
8.4	Prose	<i>Laakiin</i>	<i>wallaale</i>	<i>diyaar uma ahi inaan noqdo...</i>

Table 8: concordance of the word wallaale (source: Somali Corpus).

(8.1) 'Indhadeeq, for God, sister, gossiping is not a good thing'. (8.2) 'No, sister, Maano is not here'. (8.3) 'Thank you, sister, I am not ready for that'.

Conclusions

In this paper, we reiterated the clearly growing pluri-centricity of the Somali language with two major dominant variants led by the institutional development of language in

Hargeysa (Somaliland) and Mogadishu (Somalia), with a non-dominant variant being developed in Jigjiga (Ethiopia). We used as a case study the meaning sister and the 10 words corresponding to sister and how they are used in different regions (aaddo, abbaay, abbaaye, abbaayo, baayo, baaye, huunno, waalle, walaal, and walaalle). We observed how 9 monolingual and bilingual dictionaries listed these words and found out that walaalle is the only variant that no dictionary listed as a lexical entry (0/9), although some authors used the word in their texts, as testified by the different corpora in which the word was found. We also noted that all the dictionaries listed as a lexical entry the word walaal (9/9), and the second most frequently used word is abbaayo (6/9). This is also confirmed from the corpora where after walaal (first), abbaayo (second), the third position is for huunno. From the corpus frequencies, we observed that authors of fiction, like the case of Mohamed Daahir Afrax (1981), Ibraahin Yuusuf Axmed "Hawd" (2007), and Ali Jimale Ahmed (2018), or poets composing Djibouti songs choose their variant to link the fiction characters to the region they come from.

There are other words that can function in a similar way to the term 'sister', like the word 'cat'. In different regions of Somali speaking territories, a female cat may be referred to as bisad, mukulaal, basho, dinnad, yaanyuur, yaaw, or dummad, among other variations. The paper suggests that further analysis using different words and incorporating major new bilingual dictionaries (such as Somali-Dutch and Somali-Swedish) could reveal the Somali diaspora as a new source of non-dominant variant within the pluricentric nature of the Somali language.

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