

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Critical Analysis of the Diacritic /ʔ/ in Afan Oromo

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Abstract

This study argues on Qubee hudhaa³ [kʰube: huɖa:] in use, in Afan Oromo. While in linguistics, /ʔ/ is originally called a diacritic; this symbol currently is called 'qubee'. It seems that the symbol has been named in such a way that it represents a glottal sound in the language though it may not actually represent a speech sound than being diacritics. However, the assumption in the mind of the linguists who formulated the orthographic representation of this sound for Afan Oromo, and which is accepted and is being used by the user of the language particularly in writing system is the symbol /ʔ/, which is expected to represent the glottal sound /ʔ/, which is used in International Phonetic Alphabet, specifically while transcription. Considering this confusion, the researchers attempt to critically expose its usage to the research community for discussion. The data are elicited by the researchers as they are native speakers of the language. There are also secondary sources for the data. It is believed to be better, at least by the researchers, to argue on alternative use of /ʔ/ instead of /ʔ/ because /ʔ/ can possibly represent Afan Oromo consonant. More explicitly, the recommendation is to leave the finding of this study for scientific community and public discourse to discuss on it and to decide the better one. Therefore, the researchers believe that /ʔ/ sound should be used instead of /ʔ/ since the latter cannot be a speech sound in Afan Oromo than serving as a diacritic.

Key words: Afan Oromo/Alphabet/ Diacritics/ Qube hudha/

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³ Glottal stop consonant /ʔ/

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The Oromo people live over a huge area stretching from Somalia through north eastern Ethiopia to Kenya, and the majority of them live in Ethiopia (Campbell & King, 2013). Afan Oromo is the modern term being used in Ethiopia for the language spoken by the Oromo. In the 19th and most of the 20th century, it was usually referred to by its speakers as Afáan Oromóo⁴ ‘literally, mouth of the Oromo’ or as Afáan Órmáa ‘mouth of the people’ or ‘language of the Orma’ (Banti, 2008).

Afan Oromo is the trade language of Ethiopia and is used as a Lingua Franca in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. Now, it is used in regional government administration, national commercial enterprises and mass media (newspaper, television, radio). For Afan Oromo achieved the status of literary language of Ethiopia in 1992, it is being used as the medium of instruction in grades 1-8 and is taught in both secondary schools and in institutions of higher education in Oromia Region.

At present, the language is spoken in the areas extending from eastern Tigray in the northern part of Ethiopia to the south of Malindi in the southern Kenya and from Wollega in western to Hararge in eastern Ethiopia. The language is said to have six major dialects, and almost all of the varieties are being used in written materials and the mass media because the language does not have a standard form or variety (Mekonnen, 2002, Amanuel and Samuel 2012).

In any language of the world, there are sounds. These sounds are represented by symbols. All sound symbols of a language are found in IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet). The IPA plays a remarkable role in the creation of writing system of the languages. This has contributed significant roles among many societies and initiated so many scientific studies in language and in different disciplines.

The glottal stop represented by the symbol [ʔ] occurs when the space between the vocal cords (the glottis) is closed completely (very briefly), then released. In Afan Oromo this sound is produced without active use of the tongue and parts of the mouth. It is the sound [h⁵] which occurs at the beginning of *homa* ‘nothing’ and *haaraa* ‘new’ in Afan Oromo and for most speakers of English language as the first sound in *who* and *whose*. This sound is usually described as a voiceless glottal. The glottal is space between the vocal cords in the larynx. When the glottis is open, as in the production of other voiceless sounds, and there is no manipulation on the air passing out of that represented by [h].

Writing systems as a set of visible or tactile signs are used to represent units of language in a systematic way. This simple explanation encompasses a large spectrum of writing systems with vastly different stylistic and structural characteristics spanning across the many regions of the globe. Writing provides a way of extending human memory by imprinting information into media less fickle than the human brain.

⁴ Literally mouth of Oromo

⁵ [h] is voiceless fricative glottal consonant and not geminated consonant found in Afaan Oromo.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The writing system of Afan Oromo is designed in a simple way as a modification of Latin writing system. Most letters in English language are also found in Afan Oromo but have different names and phonetic representations. Modification or/and use of letters are the basic characteristics of languages of the world⁶.

Gradually, the Latin alphabet became increasingly standardized. Writing direction settled on left-to-right toward the 5th or 4th century (BC), and letter shapes became more or less the same in Latium. And by Rome's Republican period (3rd century BC), the Latin alphabet has evolved to the "modern" form:

Archaic A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P Q R S T V X
Classical A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P Q R S T V X
Translit. a b c d e f g h i k l m n o p q r s t u x
Phonetic [a] [b] [k] [d] [e] [f] [g] [h] [i,y] [k] [l] [m] [n] [o] [p] [k^w] [r] [s] [t] [u,w] [ks]⁷

The letters **Y** and **Z** were added to write Greeks loan words during the early Imperial period (1st century BC). With these two additions, the Latin alphabet at the late antiquity was nearly identical to most Western European alphabets. During the middle ages, new letters were created by slightly modifying an existing letter. The letter **I** was used for both [i] and [y], and **J** was created to represent the [y] semi-vowel. Similarly, **V** doubles as [u] and [w], and **U** were created to denote [u] while **V** stood for [v] only. Still later, the letter **W** was created in Germanic-speaking regions from doubling **U** to represent the [v] sound (while the letter **V** shifted to represent [f]). This doubling trick is also found in other places such as Spanish where the letter **Ñ** originated from the **NN**⁸.

As stated above, this glottal stop sound can come at the beginning of words in Afan Oromo. According to a book published by Oromia Culture and Tourism Office Caasluga Afaan Oromoo (1995), this sound is suggested as it always occurs at the beginning of the following words: *eelee*, *aara* and *ooluu*. In the book, these words are written as *'eelee*, *'aara* and *'ooluu*. The problem here is in Afan Oromo writing system, this glottal stop is only observed when it occurs between vowels and as a consonant cluster, which in turn may cause inconsistency. For instance, none of the users of this writing system uses this glottal sound as a diacritic at the beginning of words which still can also indicate another problem. Hence, nothing has been done before on Afan Oromo diacritic to narrow this gap. In addition, this study is a baseline which attempts to answer the following basic questions:

1. How is the use of diacritics as '*qubee hudhaa*' seen in Afan Oromo?
2. Can diacritics be a letter or speech sound in Afan Oromo?

⁶ Tilahun Gamta. 1993

⁷ <http://www.ancientscripts.com/ws.html>

⁸ <http://www.ancientscripts.com/ws.html>

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective is to argue on the usage of diacritics /ʔ/ as letter (Qubee) in Afan Oromo. This goal has the following specific objectives:

1. Providing points why diacritics /ʔ/ should be reconsidered to be used as 'Qubee hudhaa' in Afan Oromo.
2. Showing whether diacritics can be a letter or speech sound in Afan Oromo

2. Conceptual Framework

Researchers may develop theories from unbiased analysis of verbal interview and review of the most relevant research, which can serve as a framework for interpreting the new data. Although this study is devoted mainly to the diacritic, as far as the researchers' knowledge is concerned, it is very tough to get theory on diacritics. However, it is necessary to encapsulate the study in some conceptual framework of historical linguistics.

According to Akmajian (2001), the inherent flexibility of human language, along with its complexity and the creativity with which it is used, causes it to be extremely variable and to change over time. The other point in touch with Akmajian is that, in considering the history and development of particular languages, one of the most fascinating questions and indeed, a question that has intrigued scholars throughout the ages concerns the origin and evolution of language in human in general.

One idea concerning the origin of human language is that humans began to mimic the sounds of nature and used these sounds as referents for the sources of the sound. This theory is sometimes disparagingly referred to as the "bow-bow" theory.

Gradually, languages start to have its own writing system. According to Jindal (1998), the Greeks evolved a formal terminology for the description of the Greek language that was subsequently adapted in Latin and has continued to be used in grammar. In Roman times, it was the study of Latin as classical language which received attention and grammatical description was based on Latin texts.

According, Donatues (400AD) and Priscian (500AD) quoted in Jindal (1998), described that Latin on the basis of classical literature had made etymological and morphological studies in which they reconciled the analogist/anomalist oppositions.

To sum up, Akmajian (2001, p.321) tried to explicitly show the usage of /ʔ/ as a letter in comparative analysis of three different languages; these languages are Scots Gaelic, Algonquian and English. The examples are *haʔlawiwi*, *na hu-uile* and everywhere Algonquian, Scots Gaelic and English respectively. This clearly shows that different conceptual frameworks support the use of /ʔ/ as a letter in a particular language. Scots Gaelic is a Celtic language of Western Europe, whereas, Algonquian is a native American language of the northeastern United State.

3. Review of Related Literature

Many scholarly works have so far been dedicated to the study of the various aspects of Oromo history, culture, literature, belief and folklore. However, these scholars have never touched upon the diacritics found in Afan Oromo. Therefore, it is possible to say this research is baseline research. The history of writing system of Afan Oromo was stated by Abraham, Degen and Xiaoxia (2014) as follow:

The writing of Oromo language was with either the Ge'ez script or the Latin alphabet until the 1970s. Then some organizations began using the Latin alphabet as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) was the one who chose first. Soon later the language faced other political and social challenges. Because under the Mengistu's regime (between 1974 and 1991) the writing of Afan Oromo in any script had been banned officially, though limited usage of the Ge'ez script was allowed. After decades of struggling for formalizing the writing system of the language, OLF convened a meeting of over 1,000 Oromo intellectuals to decide which alphabet to use to write in Afan Oromo, in the Parliament Building at Arat Kilo, Finfinnee, on 3rd of November 1991. Anyhow, after many hours of debate, they decided unanimously to adopt the Latin alphabet.

The above quotation briefly revises the historical development of Afan Oromo writing system. But currently the issue which triggered us to conduct research on 'hudha' is that initially we conducted a research entitle with "Linguistic Analysis of Moribund Oromo Lexicons: Bale Oromo in Focus." In the course of our study, we collected the moribund Oromo lexicons; we faced challenges to write 'hudha' // 'letter' for moribund lexicon with 'hudhaa sound' to preserve for the next generation. And, that research showed us almost half of Oromo Moribund lexicons are lexicons with 'hudha '. Moreover, the research outcome indicated that Oromo is losing some lexicons because of linguistic factors, in addition to non linguistic factors.

There have been remarkable studies on the linguistics of Afan Oromo since long ago, especially since EPRDF⁹ controlled the country, Ethiopia. A great number of researches is being conducted in different research institutes of the country and outside the country. This research includes the different aspects of the language such as phonetic, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and some literary genres. Yet, due to historical factors, for example, political influence of past regimes before EPRDF, intensive and deep scientific study have not been carried out on the language. These insufficient scientific studies and other factors have their negative impacts on the development of the language which in turn may hurt the basic theories for the language learning and teaching in educational institutes such as universities and schools at different levels.

The impacts of the above factors are not neutral. The issues of such gaps are being at least the talk of many intellects of the language speakers. Among the many

⁹ Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front

issues some are: the Afan Oromo is not exhaustively studied, the language is not yet standardized, the morphology is hardly analyzed well, and the sound systems are also not theorized well.

Moreover, the debate and complain on the quality of the reference materials written by different authors at different times, the quality of the teaching materials at all educational levels are being the common talk of Oromo educationalist and linguists formally and mostly informally. Although curricula are designed by experts and some references are written by linguists, some gaps exist in the standard of the scientific analysis (theory generation) of the language. Generally, many studies on the language hardly fulfill the intensive and depth research on all aspects of Afan Oromo.

The above points indicate that unless these trends are immediately diverted towards identifying the gaps, and the advanced linguistic study of the language is initiated, the impact may hamper the language development and can impoverish the knowledge of the language learners and teachers.

Therefore, such gaps have triggered the researchers to work on some aspect (the sound system) of the Oromo language to help indicate those confusions and even to lay bases for further studies on the language. These may create awareness for academicians in educational institutions and others researchers, too.

In the writing system of a certain language, the alphabets are taken from IPA as it is or with some modification. For instance, in Afan Oromo alphabets like /b/, /p/, /t/, /d/ and the like are taken as it is from IPA. Whereas, alphabets like /sh/, /dh/, /ch/ is /ʃ/, /dʒ/, /tʃ/ respectively and basically are derived from IPA with some modification. In any language of the world to overcome the problem of alphabet, it is possible to combine two letters or/and inventing new letter. Therefore, it is possible to take /ʔ/ as it is to represent the glottal sound in Afan Oromo. In most Oromo literature you may read the language has thirty-one alphabets.

A a	B b	C c	CH ch	D d	DH dh	E e	F f	G g	H h	I i
[a]	[b]	[ç]	[ʃ]	[d]	[dʒ]	[e]	[f]	[g]	[h]	[i]
J j	K k	L l	M m	N n	NY ny	O o	P p	PH ph	Q q	R r
[ɕ]	[k]	[l]	[m]	[n]	[ɲ]	[o]	[p]	[pʰ]	[kʰ]	[r]
S s	SH sh	T t	U u	V v	W w	X x	Y y	Z z		
[s]	[ʃ]	[t]	[u]	[v]	[w]	[x]	[j]	[z]		10

However, Afan Oromo has about thirty-two alphabets. These are called 'qube' which were derived from the Latin letters. These symbols were preferred to be better representing sounds in Afan Oromo. These letters include five vowels, the twenty-two single 'qube' and five 'qubee' 'dachaa' to mean double symbols (see page 10). Afan Oromo, like other languages, has five non-pulmonic consonants among which four consonants are ejectives and one is implosive. These speech sounds are believed to represent the spoken mode of the language. The speech sound is the smallest unit of Oromo Language which is the bases for the language. As this sound system of the language is one aspect of the language and is valuable for its native speakers, this part

¹⁰ <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/oromo.htm>

must be scientifically analyzed to theorize, to learn and to teach, to develop and to sustain it. The pulmonic glottal /ʔ/ consonant was not indicated in any Afan Oromo alphabet written before.

Tilahun (1993) on his part introduced this glottal consonant /ʔ/ as question mark (?). In his study, the reasons for choosing Latin script for developing an Afan Oromo Alphabet specifically while discussing pedagogic reasons are as follows:

These 37 characters (or 52 if the capital letters are considered) are important and this can be learned in less than a month. In fact, only 32 symbols (minus the 5 double vowels) a, b, c, ch, d 'dh, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, ny, o, p, ph, q, r, s, sh, t, u, v, w, x, y, z, and /ʔ/ need to be recognized and memorized for learning Oromo; these signs and the sounds they represent even make easier the task of learning Oromo language.

It may take a non-Oromo a little longer because producing the sounds-especially those not found in his/her language-takes time¹¹.

According to Samuel and Wolde (2015), non-pulmonic consonant is a consonant that is produced above the larynx (or the air is not come from the lung). In Afan Oromo, most non pulmonic consonants are ejective sounds. These are ph (p'), x (t'), c (tʃ'), q (k') and the other implosive one is dh (d). Unlike Afan Oromo, most of the Ethiopian languages do not have the implosive non-pulmonic consonant dh (d).

As is stated in the preceding paragraphs, when this language got the legal right to be learnt and taught in the education institutes, it began being studied; of course, it is normal, with all its limitations in the linguistic analysis almost at all levels. Although a good deal of linguistic analysis on the language has been achieved, there are yet some aspects which are not exhaustively studied. Among those many aspects, some sound symbol is the one for our case to deal with in this research paper.

The concept of diacritic is a mark, as is put above, through or below a letter; it is used to indicate a sound which is different from that is indicated by the letter without the diacritic. It is a sign, such as an accent or cedilla which, when written above or below a letter, indicates a difference in pronunciation from the same letter when unmarked or differently marked. In addition, a mark near or through an orthographic or phonetic character or combination of characters indicate a phonetic value different from that given the unmarked or otherwise marked element. The main use of diacritical marks in the Latin script is to change the sound-values of the letters to which they are added. Examples from English are the diacritics in *naïve* and *Noël*, which show that the vowel with the diaeresis mark is pronounced separately from the preceding vowel; the acute and grave accents, which can indicate that a final vowel is to be pronounced, as in *saké* and poetic *breathed*, and the cedilla under the "c" in the borrowed French word *façade*, which shows it is pronounced /s/ rather than /k/. In other Latin alphabets, they may distinguish between homonyms, such as the French *là* ("there") versus *la* ("the"), which are both pronounced /la/. In Gaelic type, a dot over a consonant indicates lenition of the consonant in question¹².

It is now relevant to discuss the present use of /ʔ/ as if it were to represent /ʔ/. In Afan Oromo, there are two glottal sounds: glottal stop and voiceless sound /ʔ/ and glottal fricative and voiceless sound /h/. For example, look how /ʔ/ has been used in the following words: *taa'anii*, *du'aa*, *re'eetti*, and *bu'uuraa*, etc. In such words and different

¹¹ Tilahun Gemta 1993 page 37

¹² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diacritic>

texts, one may find usage of different characters like the one that is traditionally said to be *hudhaa* by first designers of Afan Oromo alphabet. Normally, in this language, the glottal, fricative and voiceless sound /h/ is represented by H letter. However, the glottal, stop and voiceless sound /ʔ/ has no regular letter in the language.

The word '*hudhaa*' in Afan Oromo is represented by inconsistent diacritic marker like /'/, /˘/, /'˘/ and /'˘˘/; the representation is manifested in the following examples: *kaa'anii*, 'they put down', *du'aa*, 'they died', *re'éetti*, 'the goat' and *bu'uuraa* 'basic'. But it is assumed to be used for indicating some transitional pause between vowels. On the contrary, when it indicates a sound in the word position, naming it as a '*hudhaa*' to mean pause doesn't seem to be logical. It may be called diacritic rather than being a letter because diacritic markers are not letters. Because diacritic means a mark placed over, under or through a letter in some languages, to show that the letter should be pronounced differently from the same letter without the mark. Therefore, in Afan Oromo 'Qubee *hudhaa*', which is represented by /'/, has no 'qubee' (sound symbol representative). Therefore, it is not possible to call *hudhaa* (') as a 'qube'. In the case of Amharic language this glottal sound has its own letter: አ (ጎጎ) ኡ (ጎሀ) ኢ (ጎደ) ኣ (ጎጎ) ኤ (ጎጎ) ኦ (ጎጎ). The name of this letter is identified as 'aynu ፀ(ጎ)' in the language.

For instance, if we take /t/ and /d/ English sound, both are alveolar sounds. But, if we take the /t̥/ and /d̥/ both are dental sound because of diacritic marker under the sounds. In addition, the voiced sounds /n/ and /d/ become voiceless as /n̥/ /d̥/ because of diacritic marker.

4. Materials and Methods

As every research needs appropriate methods, this research applies the method that is appropriate for text and content analysis. The data are elicited by researchers since the researchers are native speaker of the language. The researchers, who are the native speakers of the language, tried to list some lexicons in which '*hudhaa*' sound appears. More lexicons with '*hudhaa*' sound can be found on different manuscripts like: newspaper, regional constitution, Holy Bible and websites.

To achieve the objective of this research, the researchers had focus group discussion with language experts and linguist. This method helped the researchers to get a general direction of the research content from the target informants. It helped them to get useful information and large data which is helpful to understand more the research problem in depth. The FGD also helped the researchers to triangulate and crosscheck the reliability of the data and to get new information regarding the diacritics and glottal sound found in Afan Oromo from their own perspectives.

Document analysis was used as a part of this study to supplement other data found through FGD. The documents are news papers written in Afan Oromo, report of education sectors found at different level, some textbooks and reference books written in Afan Oromo.

Accordingly, the researchers critically analyzed Tilahun Gemta's work. Similarly, nonlinguistic works are examined for instance: Abraham, Degen and Xiaoxia 2014. These samples were taken randomly from texts where '*hudhaa*' is expected to be found, since it is available in almost any texts. Finally, the data are analyzed through narrative approach.

5. Results and Discussions

The characteristics or feature of 'qubee hudhaa'¹³ are: Consonant, pulmonic consonant and glottal sound. Like any Afan Oromo consonant, 'hudhaa' is being used in many of Afan Oromo texts, although 'hudhaa' itself is considered being a letter in Afan Oromo. Anyhow, the position in words where this 'hudhaa' always stands as consonant cluster: two different consonants occur one after the other.

It is possible to support this argument by citing some examples in Afan Oromo words. Balʔaa¹⁴, qalʔaa¹⁵, harʔa¹⁶ and the like. Hudhaa /ʔ/ is used instead of this /ʔ/ in the clustered positions. Moreover, in some words with long vowels other 'hudhaa' can be observed being used. The following can be some samples for such cases. Hudha /ʔ/ is seen being used between two short vowels, between short and long or long and short or between long and long vowels and, between similar or dissimilar vowels. The following data are collected from different text and reference books, fictions, journals, Bible, constitution, dissertations, thesis, essays, and other written materials in Afaan Oromo.

Between two short vowels:

ba'aa [baʔa:] (load), sa'a [saʔa] (cow), fe'e [feʔe] (need, load, v.), sakatta'a [sakat:aʔa] (survey),

Nuti har'a **ba'a** keenya hin beeknu.
[nuti harʔa baʔa ke:ɲa hin be:knu]
'We don't know whether we escape'.

Baacaa **sa'a** bite.
[ba: tʃa:n saʔa bite]
'Bacha bought a cow'.
Gaariin Ijoollee **fe'e**.
[ga:ri: idʒol:e feʔe]
'Gari loaded children'.

¹³ A glottal stop, voiceless consonant found in Afaan Oromo/ʔ/ is called Qubee Hudha. Some of Afaan Oromo consonants called Qubee Dachaa for instance, non-pulmonic implosive consonant/dʔ/, non-pulmonic ejective consonants /tʔ/, /kʔ/, /pʔ/ and /tʃʔ/.

¹⁴ Balʔaa means Wide

¹⁵ Qalʔaa means Thin

¹⁶ Harʔa means Today

Between short and long vowels:

re'ee [reʔe:] (goat), ga'aa [gaʔa:] (sufficient), ba'aa [baʔa:] (load, burden,N.) bu'uura [buʔu:ra] (base,N.) danda'aa [dandaʔa:] (capable, adj.)

Nyaanni har'aa **ga'aa** miti.

[ɲa:n:I harʔa: gaʔa: miti]

'A meal for today is not sufficient.'

Between long and short vowels:

taa'e [ta:ʔe] (sat, v.) kaa'e [ka:ʔe] (put,v.), moo'e [mo:ʔe] (won, v.)

Dhirsii meeshaa waraanaa bakka niitiin hin beekne **kaa'e**.

[dʒirsi: me:ʃa: wara:na: bak:a ni:ti:n hin be:kne ka:ʔe]

'The husband puts his swear where his wife doesn't see.'

Between long and long vowels:

taa'aa [ta:ʔo:], oo'aa [ʔo:ʔa:], xaa'oo [t'a:ʔo:], waa'ee [wa:ʔe:]

Xaa'oon hammayyaa kun lafa sum'eessuu danda'a.

[t'a:ʔo:n ham:ay:a kun lafa sumʔe:s:u: dandaʔa]

'This chemical fertilizer can poison the soil.'

Other common usage of 'qubee hudhaa' is in words with clustered consonants. For instance, bal'aa (wide, adj.), qal'a (thin, adj.), har'a (today, adv.), sum'ii (poison, N.) etc. This can be shown in a sentence.

Oroomiyaan lafa bosona **bal'aa** qabdi.

[ʔoro:mija:n lafa bosona balʔa: k'abdi]

'Oromia has a **wide** area of forest land'.

Wahelli kiyya **har'a** dhufe.

[wahel:I kij:a harʔa dufa]

'My friend has come **today**.'

There are also other examples in some real usage in daily words, sentences, and texts, which can show the use of 'qubee hudhaa'. These examples are taken from text and reference books, fictions, journals, Bible, constitution, dissertations, thesis, essays, and other many written materials.

Therefore, the sound at the position of 'qubee hudhaa' seems to share the characteristics of Afan Oromo consonants. But without critical analysis, it has become common practice to use apostrophe, right-quote, acute accent, left- quote and the like as 'qubee hudhaa' (when hudhaa cannot be called qubee).

There has been common usage of 'qubee hudhaa' where between vowels and in clustered consonants where of course that position indicates a consonant sound in Afan Oromo speech sounds. But as is mentioned in the above paragraphs, // is not a sound but a diacritic, which is a symbol to show the pronunciation in a language.

An alternative symbol, letter, speech sound /ʔ/ can be suggested, as shown in the above argument, to be used instead of // in the following manner: daa'ima [da:ʔima]

(child), ka'uumsa [kaʔu:msa] (initial), daala'cha [da:latʃa] (grey), ka'iitii [kaʔi:ti:] (ways to begin), xaa'oo t'a:ʔo:] (fertilizer), si'aa'ina [siʔa:ʔi:na] (motivation). Alternative sound for the above word lists can be: daaʔima [da:ʔima], kaʔuumsa [kaʔu:msa], kaʔiitii [kaʔi:ti:], xaaʔoo [t'a:ʔo:], siʔaaʔina [siʔa:ʔi:na], etc.

The usage of /ʔ/ as a letter is not new and first in Angloquian; *haʔlawiwi* means everywhere. Algonquian is a native American language of the northeastern United States (Akmajian, 2001, p. 321).

The disadvantage of the letter we recommend /ʔ/ for this glottal 'hudhaa' sound is not easily assessable on computer keyboard. It is obvious that computer technology was developed mostly in the English-speaking countries, so data formats, keyboard layouts, etc. were developed with a bias favoring English (a language with an alphabet without diacritical marks); efforts have been made to handle them now days. For our recommendation of /ʔ/, it is possible get the letter from micro soft office; firstly, open micro soft word; secondly insert button and click on it; thirdly, go to the right side of your computer and click on symbol, and finally, search for /ʔ/ in more symbols.

Depending on the keyboard layout, which differs amongst countries, it is more or less easy to enter letters with diacritics on computers and typewriters. But as a linguist, the researchers do not recommend language experts to create letters for any language following computer technology as a guide. Since tomorrow is uncertain, the native speakers of this language may create the 6th or more generation of computer. Following computer technology as a guide for letter creation can lead to a total loss of wisdom, thought, knowledge, asset, value, notion and the like of the language. Easily availability of a letter on a standardized keyboard is taken as criteria for choosing an orthography as some scholars argue (Abraham, Degen & Liu, 2014).

Based on the finding of this study, the researchers suggest the following Afan Oromo alphabet to writers to use the thirty second Afan Oromo alphabet since the sound is found in the language. These symbols were preferred to be better representing sounds in the language. These letters include five vowels (a, e i, o, u), the twenty two single qube (b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z and ʔ) and five 'qubee 'dachaa' (ch, dh, ny ph, sh) to mean double symbols. In addition, Afan Oromo, like other languages, has five non-pulmonic¹⁷ consonants, and among these, one consonant is ejectives (ph) and one is implosive (dh).

¹⁷ Consonants produced above the Larynx.

Table 1: Afaan Oromo Letters with its Phonetic Representation

Afaan Oromo Letters	A a	B b	C c	CH ch	D d	DH dh	E e	F f	G g	H h	I i
Phonetic Representation	[a]	[b]	[tʃ]	[tʃ]	[d]	[d]	[e]	[f]	[g]	[h]	[i]
Afaan Oromo Letters	J J	K k	L l	M m	N n	NY ny	O o	P p	PH ph	Q q	R r
Phonetic Representation	[dʒ]	[k]	[l]	[m]	[n]	[ɲ]	[o]	[p]	[pʰ]	[kʰ]	[r]
Afaan Oromo Letters	S s	SH sh	T t	U u	V v	W w	X x	Y y	Z z	ʔ ʔ	
Phonetic Representation	[s]	[ʃ]	[t]	[u]	[v]	[w]	[tʰ]	[j]	[z]	[ʔ]	

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, /ʔ/, which is being used in Afaan Oromo as a 'qubee *hudhaa*' [k'ube: huda:] -where, of course, a pause can be observed- and is not found in Afaan Oromo sound system [Afaan Oromo alphabetical list], and not yet found in IPA [as a representation of sound]. Therefore, although it may be considered conventionally, at least among Oromo speech community, as a symbol to represent a sound in Afaan Oromo; it is not logical to use it as a letter in the language. This symbol is not consistently used sometimes as /' /, / ' /, / ' / or / ' / . Moreover, there is no any scientific evidence to call it 'qube ' (Afaan Oromo language alphabet) when it is not a letter except being a diacritic; diacritics cannot be specifically given to this language when it is internationally conventional one. It is believed to be better, at least by this paper writers, to argue on alternative use /ʔ/ instead of /' /, because /ʔ/ can possibly represent an Oromo consonant. /ʔ/ is used as a letter in other language for instance, in Angloquian *haʔlawiwi* which means everywhere. More explicitly, our recommendation is just to leave the finding of this study for public discourse; let the community discuss on it to decide the better one. The concerned body like curriculum designers together with different Oromo linguists and others should revise the use of /' / as representing Afaan Oromo sound system and prepare forum on how to use /ʔ/ instead of /' /.

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