University of Verona
School of Humanities
Department of Linguistics

Summary of Major Activities Accomplished in 2016-2019
Academic Years

By: Tekabe Legesse Feleke

December 10, 2019
Verona, Italy
1 Introduction

This report presents the summary of main activities performed in the last three academic years, from 2016-2019, as requirements for the completion of PhD degree in linguistics. The activities are classified into three broad categories based on the academic years in which they were accomplished: first academic year, second academic year and third academic year. The activities performed within each academic year are further classified into two: activities performed at University of Verona and international activities. The activities were supposed to supplement the PhD project that examined the linguistic distance and mutual intelligibility among selected South Ethiosemitic languages: Chaha, Endegagn, Ezha, Gumer, Gura, Inor, Mesqan, Kistane, Muher and Silt’e.

2 First Academic Year (2016/2017)

This section presents activities accomplished during the first academic years, from October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017.

2.1 Activities at University of Verona

On the first academic year, the primary activity was identifying references that are pivotal to the PhD project. It was within this academic year that the majority of the relevant references were identified. The draft of the first four chapters of the dissertation was also written within this academic year. Besides, I wrote an article on 'Amharic Word Stress’ with Professor Birgit Alber as a co-author. The article has been sent to the Journal of African Languages and Linguistics, and it is on the process of publication. I also attended the majority of training and workshops organized by the School of Humanity and the Department of Linguistics.

Besides identifying the references, the required data gathering tools were designed within this academic year. Word Categorization test and perceptual distance test were designed to measure mutual intelligibility and perceptual distance among the selected languages respectively. A
questionnaire was also prepared to gather information about the participants’ linguistic and social background. Moreover, through reading, I taught myself how to use Gabmap to compute the Levenshtein distance, to classify the languages, to apply different classification validation techniques and to create dialect maps. I also learned how to use Splits Tree to perform Neighbour-net representation and to create personal corpus using AntConc software.

Other activities accomplished during this academic year include conducting a preliminary classification analysis on selected Ethiosemitic languages using data reported in previous studies, and preparing action plan for the field trip. In general, within the first academic year, sources that are relevant to the PhD thesis were identified and many of them were reviewed. Besides, tests that are needed to collect data were designed and the detailed action plan was prepared for the fieldwork.

2.2 International Activities

On the second half of the first academic year, I presented one of my previous articles on 'European Chapter of Association for Computational Linguistics (EACL 2017)' which was held in Valencia, Spain on April 2017. The full article was also published on the proceedings and it is currently available online.

3 Second Academic Year (2017/2018)

This section presents the major activities accomplished within the second academic year, from October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018.

3.1 Activities at University of Verona

One of the major activities performed during this academic year was presenting the proposal of the PhD project on the seminar organized by professor Stefan Rabanus on October 6, 2017, ‘Measuring Linguistic Distance - Classifying Languages’. Moreover, I attended all courses of
the Winter School which was organized by the Department of Linguistics, and the seminars and workshops organized by the School of Humanities. Furthermore, I attended the 'Longitudinal Data Analysis Winter School. I also wrote an article on ‘Innovations in Amharic tense and aspect’ with professor Dahl Eystein as a co-author. Another major activity was traveling to Ethiopia for a fieldwork. The fieldwork aimed at gathering data, consulting references at Addis Ababa University, attending seminars at Addis Ababa University, presenting the PhD project to the linguistic community at Addis Ababa University and sharing experience with other PhD students who were working on Ethiopian languages. All the these objectives were achieved during the fieldwork. After the field work, the majority of the time was spent on organizing and analyzing data and writing preliminary results.

3.2 International Activities

During this academic year, I presented the preliminary results of my project on the 'International Conference on Dialectology and Geolinguistics’ which was held at Vilnius, Lithuania. On the same academic year, the abstract of my project was accepted for oral presentation by 'International Conference on Ethiopian Studies’ which was held at Mekelle University, Ethiopia. Moreover, the same abstract was accepted for oral presentation by 'International Workshop on Afro-asiatic Languages' (California State University, USA). Nevertheless, I was not able to give speech on the later workshop due to visa-related problems. Besides, I attended a seminar on ‘Language Variation’ which was held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

4 Third Academic year (2018/2019)

This section presents activities which were accomplished during the third and the last academic year, from October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019.
4.1 Activities at University of Verona

During this academic year, I spent much of the time on writing, revising and editing the PhD project. I managed to write all the chapters of the dissertation within the deadline specified by the University. Furthermore, I visited Milan Public Library twice to consult some references that were not available online and on the catalogues of the libraries in Verona. Besides, I actively participated on tutoring MA linguistics students. I gave talks on ‘Oral presentation skills’ and ‘Academic Writing skills’. I also attended some School seminars and workshops and all the lectures delivered on the Winter School Verona. I eventually finalized writing the PhD dissertation in accordance with the academic timetable of the University.

4.2 International Activities

On the beginning of this academic year, I presented my project on ‘International Conference on Ethiopian Studies’ which was held at Mekelle University. I further discussed the core points of the project with some of the experts of Ethiosemitic languages. Then, I was awarded the School Mobility Fund and moved to the University of Groningen for a short-term research stay. During the stay, I worked under the supervision of professor Charlotte Gooskens. I took this opportunity to talk to Professor Welbert Heeringa and professor Martijn Weiling. At the same time, I developed an article on ‘Mapping the Dimensions of linguistic distance’ with professor Charlotte Gooskens as a co-author and the article was sent for publication. To add more, I attended a couple of seminars. During my stay in Groningen, I spent the majority of the time on writing the result parts of the dissertation. Later on June 2019, I attended ‘Historical Sociolinguistics Summer School’ in Lesbos, Greece. I also presented my dissertation on the School. Moreover, I competed for Summer School Mobility Fund for a summer school organized by the South African University of Cape Town and manged to get the fund. However, I could not attend it since the schedule overlapped with the summer school which was held at Lesbos, Greece.

During this academic year, I ambitiously sent the abstract of my project to several international conferences and it was accepted by many of them for oral present ion. ’High Desert Lin-
‘North Central Linguistic Society Conference’ (USA), ‘Western Conference on Linguistics’ (USA), ‘A Workshop at Atlantic Provinces Linguistic Association’ (Canada), ‘Southwest Popular/American Culture Conference’ (USA), ‘Southeastern Conference on Linguistics’ (USA), ‘Patterns of Language Contact within and across phylogenies’ (Germany), ‘The International Conference for Graduate students on Diverse Approaches to Linguistics’ (University of Jerusalem, Israel), ‘The University of Texas Arlington Student Conference in Linguistics (UTASCILT)’ (USA), ‘International Conference on Historical Linguistics (ICHL)’ (Cambera, Australia), ‘50th Annual Conference on African Linguistics’ (University of British Colombia, Canada), ‘Language, Literature and Culture Conference’ (USA), and ‘47th Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Conference on Afro-asiatic Linguistics (NACAL 47)’ (in Paris, France) are some of the international conferences that accepted my abstracts for oral presentation. Nonetheless, I did not attend almost all of them for financial reasons.

To add more, I have got a three month mobility fund at LLACAN Research Center, Paris. Currently, I am working in the Center under the supervision of professor Ronny Meyer. During my stay, I attend seminars, presented my project on November 22, 2019 and finalized my stay on the end of December, right after submitting the final version of my dissertation.

5 Summary

The time spent during these academic years can be ordered as follow. Much of the time was spent on writing the PhD dissertation. The second large portion of the time was allotted for attending schools and seminars. Attending international conferences take the third position. Publications received relatively less attention. Nonetheless, two articles have been sent to the journals. Completing the publications of these articles will be the next primary activity.