
Gender and Number in Mosittacha¹

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Abstract

This paper discusses the gender and number systems and their interaction. The findings of the study show that Mosittacha is a language with two nominal genders masculine and feminine. Nouns also mark two number categories, singular and plural. Regarding the interaction between gender and number, there are nouns which in the singular fall into two gender categories, masculine (m.) and feminine (f.). Such nouns have plural forms in which gender is not distinguished. There are also masculine and feminine nouns which have no plural counterparts. Still, there are a small number of nouns which lack the usual plural suffixes, which take plural verb agreement when they function as a clause subject and which refer to a single entity. This small group of exceptional nouns should be idiosyncratically marked as plural in the lexicon.

Keywords: gender, number, agreement, affix, interaction

1. Introduction

Mosittacha is an East Cushitic language spoken by the people calling themselves Mosiye. They live in Diraashe district in Segen Area Peoples' Zone within the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The population of Mosiye is estimated to be 19,628 (Central Statistical Authority 2008). They live in three areas: Buusa k'ila, Buusa Baasso and Naalo. They are surrounded by Diraasha to the south, Zargulla to the north, Zayse to the north-east and Ale to the west.

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The language has two varieties: north and west varieties (Wondwosen 2000, 2015). The northern variety is spoken in Buusa Baasso and Buusa K'iila and the western variety is spoken in Naalo. The present paper is based on the northern variety. It is the result of my field trip to Diraashe district in 2012 to study the grammar of Mosittacha. The data was obtained from the following seven language consultants: Gezachew Desalegn (age 50), Kebebew Kehone (age 42), Onta Osha (age 48), Amero Arek'a (age 48), Satenaw Sambeto (age 50), Megersa Mamula (age 48) and Wodenesh Kebede (age 39) who are native speakers of the language. The techniques used for data collection were elicitation, interview and group discussion. Elicitation is used to draw structured data from consultants. The collected data were organized and analyzed in the light of descriptive linguistics approach.

The paper is divided into five sections. The second section deals with the gender system, the third section presents the number system, the fourth section discusses the interaction between gender and number and the final section gives a concluding remarks.

2. Gender System

Mosittacha is a language with two nominal genders. That is, masculine and feminine genders. In the language, each noun belongs to either a masculine or a feminine gender. Nouns in Mosittacha are not overtly marked for gender. The gender of a noun is largely learned from an overtly expressed agreement element between the noun in the subject position and the verb of the same clause. This is because in Mosittacha a predicate agrees in gender with a subject but not with an object. A gender agreement inflectional morpheme occurs on a predicate of a clause if and only if a subject is not focused. But, however, if a subject of a clause is focused the inflectional morpheme that shows gender on a predicate does not occur³. Moreover, modifiers agree in gender with a head noun in a noun phrase. Distinguishing

³ For a detailed discussion (see Wondwosen 2015:44)

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gender on the basis of agreement evidence is a generally used phenomenon (see Dixon 1982: 159-164). The following are illustrative examples:

1. (a) herro-tʃa kija
dog-NFS⁴ exist
Literally ‘dog exists.’
‘THERE IS a dog.’
- (b) hupa-tʃa kiʃa
tortoise-NFS exist
Literally ‘tortoise exists.’
‘THERE IS a tortoise.’

As can be observed in example (1a), the form *kija* co-occurs with *herrotʃa* ‘dog’. The same form can also co-occur with the nouns such as *lemmetʃa* ‘father’, *ʃimmatʃa* ‘boy’, *kaaratʃa* ‘brother’, *haajpatʃa* ‘husband’. Hence, the form *kija* is a masculine agreement form (m) and the nouns which co-occur with *kija* are of masculine gender. Similarly, in (1b) forms like *kiʃa* co-occur not only with the noun *hupatʃa* ‘tortoise’ but also it can co-occur with nouns such as *ʃinkotʃa* ‘mother’, *ʃalawtʃa* ‘sister’, *ʃinantʃa* ‘girl’, *hefatʃa* ‘wife’. Therefore, the form *kiʃa* is said to be a feminine agreement form (f) and the nouns which requires this form are said to be of feminine gender. Regarding gender agreement in other predicate types consider the following examples.

2. (a) herro-tʃa he-toj-e
dog-NFS FOC-die-PRF
‘A dog DIED’

⁴ In Mosittacha a subject NP occurs in two case forms: in non-focalized subject (NFS) case form when a non-subject constituent is focused and in the absolutive case form when a subject is focused (for the details see Wondwosen, 2015)

- (b) hupa-tfa he-toj-tf-e
 tortoise-NFS FOC-die-F-PRF
 ‘A tortoise DIED’

Masculine gender is not overtly marked in (2a). It is represented by a zero morpheme (\emptyset). This is noticeable from the predicate *hetoje* ‘died’. In this predicate there is no overt suffix that shows masculine gender. Whereas in (2b) the subject *hupatfa* ‘tortoise’ is of feminine gender following that the predicate *hetoje* ‘died’ suffix the feminine gender marker *-tf* to agree with the subject and becomes *hetojtfe*.

Attributive adjectives agree in gender with the head noun in a noun phrase as the following examples illustrate.

3. (a) herro-tfa kaane
 dog-NFS big
 ‘a big dog’
- (b) hupa-tfa kaane-tfa
 tortoise –NFS big-F
 ‘a big tortoise’

In (3a) *herrotfa* is the head noun and *kaane* ‘big’ is the modifying adjective. In this example there is no overt gender marker attached on the attributive adjective as the head noun is of masculine gender. In such cases the gender marker is a zero morpheme (\emptyset). In (3b) the head noun *hupatfa* ‘tortoise’ is of a feminine gender and following that the modifying attributive adjective changed from *kaane* to *kaanetfa* to agree with the feminine head noun in gender. Therefore, the suffix *-tfa* in attributive adjective is a feminine gender agreement marker.

Now let us consider the gender agreement in predicative adjective. The following are examples with such structures.

4. (a) herro-tʃa he-ka-kaane
dog- NFS FOC-M- big
'A dog IS BIG.'
- (b) hupa-tʃa he-ʃa-kaane
tortoise -NFS FOC-F- big
'A tortoise IS BIG.'

In (4a) the subject is *herrotʃa* 'dog' and this subject is of a masculine gender. Following that the predicative adjective *kaane* 'big' takes the masculine agreement prefix *ka-* to agree with the masculine subject *herrotʃa*. Similarly, in (4b) the subject is *hupatʃa* 'tortoise' and it is of a feminine gender. The predicative adjective *kaane* 'big' takes the feminine agreement prefix *ʃa-* to agree in gender with the feminine subject *hupatʃa*.

In a similar manner genitive constructions can also distinguish the two genders as shown in examples (5).

5. (a) herro-tʃa he-ka-hajji
dog-NFS FOC-M- his.SG
'HIS dog'
- (b) hupa-tʃa he-ʃa-hajji
tortoise-NFS FOC-F-his.SG
'HIS tortoise'

The examples in (5) are possessive genitive constructions. The possessed nouns are *herrotʃa* 'dog' and *hupatʃa* 'tortoise', and the possessor is a third person masculine singular (he). In (5a) the possessive definitive form *hajji* 'his' takes the prefix *ka-* masculine marker to agree with the masculine possessed noun *herrotʃa*. Similarly, in (5b) the possessive definitive form *hajji* 'his' takes the prefix *ʃa-* feminine marker to agree with the feminine possessed noun *hupatʃa* 'tortoise'.

As it is apparent from the foregoing data that the three agreement elements presented verbs, adjectives and genitive constructions have three distinct forms. Verbs have two ways. That is, verbs like exist have different forms for the two genders: *kija* for masculine gender and *kifa* for feminine gender. Other predicates like *toj-* ‘die’ have zero morpheme (\emptyset) for masculine and the suffix *-tfa* for feminine subjects. Attributive adjective uses zero morpheme (\emptyset) for masculine gender and the suffix *-tfa* for feminine gender. Both predicative adjectives and possessive genitives use the prefixes *ka-* for a masculine gender and *fa-* for a feminine gender. Although, these forms are phonologically dissimilar, they have the labels (m) and (f).

Mosittacha has a grammatical gender, similar cases have been observed in closely related languages Konso (Ongaye, 2013) and Diraytata (Hayward, 1981 and Wondwosen, 2006) as can be learned from the following examples.

6. (a) *miirkotfa* (f) ‘bull’
(b) *kamanatfa* (m) ‘cow’

In (6a) the referent *miirkotfa* ‘bull’ is biologically male but it has a feminine gender grammatically. Similarly, the referent *kamanatfa* ‘cow’ is biologically female but its gender is masculine. This clearly shows that in Mosittacha the nouns in (6) may not be classified by any correlation with natural sex distinction.

In some cases gender is marked in Mosittacha lexically (see Wondwosen 2015: 56). Still in some other cases genders of animate nouns are marked by means of using gender distinguishing attributes (see Wondwosen 2015: 56, foot note 1).

3. Number System

The number marking system in Cushitic languages is complicated. Regarding the complicated nature of the morphology of number marking in

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Cushitic languages (see, Andrzejewski (1960), Amborn et al (1980), Parker and Hayward (1985) and Zaborski (1986), The number of a noun in Mosittacha can be learned either from the agreement element between a noun in the subject function and the predicate of the clause or from some overt morphological markers. The number system consists of two types: singular and plural forms. In what follows we shall take up each.

3.1 Singular Form

The singular form is used to refer to either an individual or a class of referent. This form is not morphologically marked. Consider the examples in table 1.

	Nouns	Gloss
a	k'ililajtʃa(m)	'a velvet monkey'
b	hellemmatʃa (f)	'an ewe'
c	ɕaantʃa (f)	'a calabash'
d	ɕahhetʃa (m)	'a stone'
e	karmatʃa (m)	'a lion'
f	herrotʃa (m)	'a dog'
g	hupatʃa (f)	'a tortoise'

Table 1. Singular nouns

The nouns in table 1 are all singular in the sense that in each case they refer either to an individual member or the class of referent. Consider the following sentential examples.

7. (a) k'ililaajtʃ-etʃa he-toj-e
 monkey-NFS FOC-die-PRF
 '(A) monkey died.'

(b) hellemmatʃ-etʃa he-toj-tʃ-e
 ewe- NFS FOC-die-3FS-PRF
 '(An) ewe died.'

In (7a) the subject noun *k'ililajtfa* 'monkey' is a singular masculine noun and the verb is in a singular masculine agreement form. In (7b) the subject noun *helemmatfa* 'ewe' is a singular feminine noun and the verb is also in a feminine singular agreement form.

3.2 Plural Form

The plural form is used to refer to a plurality of individual members or units. In this category, there are three types of nouns. The first type refers to nouns that have a plural suffix. The second type refers to nouns which require plural agreement on the verb when function as a clause subject and that lack a plural suffix. The third type refers to nouns which make plural in an exceptional ways. In what follows we shall take up each.

3.2.1 Type one nouns

Type one nouns have overt plural markers. There are in general four plural number encoding strategies in Mosittacha (Wondwosen, 2015). They are stated as follows:

- by suffixing the morpheme *-adifa*
- by suffixing the morpheme *-wwe*
- by geminating the final consonant
- by suffixing the morpheme *-jja*

In what follows we shall take up each of the plural markers.

3.2.1.1 Plural markers *-adifa*

This marker derives the majority of Mosittacha plural nouns. It is suffixed to both masculine and feminine nouns to derive the corresponding plural forms. Consider the examples in table 2.

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	Gloss	Singular	Plural
a	'knife'	pillawa (m)	pillawadfa
b	'year'	para (m)	paradfa
c	'iron'	siihla (m)	siihladfa
d	'snake'	maaka (m)	maakadfa
e	'back of body'	pata (m)	patadfa
f	'month'	leeho (m)	leehadfa
g	'wild animal'	pinantʃa (m)	pinantʃadfa
h	'girl'	?inantʃa (f)	?inantʃadfa
i	'jackal'	kaʔaltʃa (f)	kaʔaltʃadfa
j	'beehive'	kaakura (f)	kaakuradfa
k	'sister'	?alawtʃa (f)	?alawtʃadfa
l	'tapeworm'	koosotʃa (f)	koosotʃadfa
m	'tortoise'	hupatʃa (f)	hupatʃadfa
n	'calabash'	daantʃa (f)	daantʃadfa
o	'hyena'	?orajtʃa (f)	?orajtʃadfa

Table 2. Plural marker -adfa

In the above table, the examples (a-g) are masculine nouns and (h-o) are feminine nouns. From these examples we can learn that the plural formative *-adfa* can be added to both masculine and feminine nouns to derive the plural form. Similar kinds of plural suffix *-adfa* exist in Konso (Ongaye 2013: 81), whereas in Diraytata the suffix *-ada* is used (see Hayward 1981:130, Wondwosen 2006: 67). Moreover, when the plural formative morpheme *adfa*⁵ is attached to the base noun the final vowel of the base noun is deleted.

⁵ There are exceptional cases, if we consider for example *meetʃa* 'child' and *diirtʃa* 'male' these nouns form plural in somewhat different way. *meetʃa* + *adfa* → *meeradfa* 'children' the final CV part of the root truncated, the consonant /r/ is added and the plural marker *-adfa* is attached. Similarly, *diirtʃa* + *adfa* → *diiradfa* 'males' the final CV of the root is truncated and the plural marker *-adfa* is attached.

3.2.1.2 Plural maker –*wwe*

The second way of encoding plural in Mosittacha is by suffixing the plural morpheme –*wwe*. This morpheme encodes plural from feminine nouns. The same form is used in Diraytata (see Hayward 1981:131) and Konso (see Ongaye 2013: 81) closely related languages to Mosittacha. The following are examples.

	Gloss	Singular	Plural
a	‘belt’	salapaatʃa (f)	salapaatʃawwe
b	‘anklet’	luula (f)	luulawwe
c	‘louse’	ʔikkira (f)	ʔikkirawwe
d	‘cloth’	ʔuwwa (f)	ʔuwwawwe
e	‘bracelet’	tapala (f)	tapalawwe
f	‘frog’	koʔanna (f)	koʔannawwe
g	‘thorn’	kudʔa (f)	kudʔawwe
h	‘flea’	filla (f)	fillawwe

Table 3. Plural maker –*wwe*

In table 3 the plural morpheme –*wwe* is suffixed to the base form. Moreover, the plural suffix –*wwe* is suffixed into a feminine noun only.

3.2.1.3 Geminating the final consonant

This group consists of plural formed by doubling stem final consonant. The following are examples.

	Gloss	Singular	Plural
a	‘leather’	k’oola (m)	k’oola
b	‘rope’	sura (m)	surra
c	‘forest’	mura (m)	murra
d	‘house’	mana (m)	manna

Table 4. Doubling the final consonant⁶

⁶Only one exception is encountered in which doubling of final consonant was found as plural formative for feminine noun as in *hittina* (f) + plural → *hittinna* ‘roots’

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As can be observed from the examples in table 4 geminating of stem final consonants are applicable to masculine gender. In such cases, the final consonant of a singular noun is doubled to form the corresponding plural form. Similar kinds of plural formatives can also be used in closely related languages Diraytata (Hayward 1981: 132, Wondwosen 2006: 69) and Konso (Ongaye 2013: 84).

3.2.1.4 Plural marker-jja

There are a small number of nouns in Mosittacha which derive plural by suffixing the plural encoding morpheme *-jja*. This can be observed in table 5 below.

	Gloss	Singular	Plural
a	'baboon'	k'ililajtʃa (m)	k'ililajja
b	'deaf man'	ɖahhajtʃa (m)	ɖahhajja
c	'mad person'	jarajtʃa (m)	jarajja
d	'stick'	halitʃa (m)	halijja
e	'finger'	kupalitʃa (m)	kupalijja

Table 5. Plural marker-jja

From the examples in table 5 we learn that the singular forms of the noun terminate in *-jtʃa* and also all nouns have masculine gender. When the plural marking morpheme *-jja* is attached to a singular noun the final *-jtʃa* or *-tʃa* of a singular noun is deleted.

3.2.2 Type two nouns

This type is sub-divided into two. The first sub-type refers to nouns which require plural verb form when function as subject of a clause and which have singulative derivatives. The second sub-type refers to nouns which require plural agreement form of a predicate when function as clause subject and which have no singulative derivative.

3.2.2.1 Plural nouns with singulative derivatives

As it is already mentioned above the plural nouns in this group have singulative derivatives. This is noticeable from table 6 below.

	Plural form	Singulative	Gloss
a	hampiro	hampiritʃʃi (m)	‘birds’
b	k’umaatʃʃa	k’umaatʃʃitʃʃi (m)	‘fingers’
c	hirri፩a	hirri፩itʃʃi (m)	‘eyelashes’
d	karpina	karpinitʃʃi (m)	‘ribs’
e	hiska	hiskitʃʃi (m)	‘stars’
f	k’ojjra	k’ojjritʃʃi (m)	‘timber’
g	?iilla	?iillitʃʃi (m)	‘teeth’

Table 6. Plural with singulative derivatives

All the nouns in table 6 are plural which have a singulative derivative. The singulative formative is the suffix *-itʃʃi*. Moreover, all the nouns are of masculine gender. The nouns in this group are conceivable as “collective nouns” and hence the singulative form denotes a particular member only. In the derivation of a singulative form from the plural base noun the final vowel of the base noun is deleted. Consider the following sentential examples.

8. (a) hampiro-tʃa he-toj-n-e
 bird.PL-NFS FOC-die-PL-PRF
 ‘Birds DIED.’

(b) hampir-itʃʃi-tʃa he-toj-e
 bird.SINGU-NFS FOC-die-PRF
 ‘A particular bird DEID.’

The singulatives are treated as part of the singular form because all the singulative forms have a singular masculine agreement forms just as singular nouns which take either a singular masculine agreement or a

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singular feminine agreement form discussed in (3.1). Moreover, there are no singulative reference forms that can take a plural agreement form.

3.2.2.2 Plural nouns without singulative derivatives

This sub-type subsume a small number of nouns whose basic (citation) form require plural verb agreement forms, even though they are not marked as plural forms and have no singulative derivatives. I have listed all the attested ones in the table below.

	Plural noun	Gloss
a	paatʃ'a	'sickles'
b	siitta	'tails'
c	soʔo	'meat'
d	ʃira	'livers'
e	mora	'curds'
g	kopile	'shields'
h	mus'uro	'hearts'
j	tʃeemo	'eyebrow'
k	ʔaanno	'milk'
l	koohino	'lungs'
m	ɗusʔe	'kidneys'
n	laapa	'ears'
o	ɗiika	'blood'
p	hiiɓɓa	'lips'

Table 7. Nouns only in plural form

The nouns in table (7) refer to individual referents which require plural agreement on the verb when they function as clause subject. Consider the examples in (9) below.

9. (a) siitta-tʃa kijan
tails-NFS exist
Literally 'tails exist'
'THERE ARE tails'

- (b) paatf'e -tfa kijan
 sickles -NFS exist
 Literally 'sickles exist'
 'THERE ARE sickles.'
- * (c) siitta-tfa kija
 tails-NFS exists
- * (d) paatf'e-tfa kija
 sickles-NFS exists
- * (e) siitta-tfa kifa
 tails-NFS exists
- * (f) paatf'e-tfa kifa
 Sickles-NFS exist

Examples (9a,b) are well-formed (grammatical) and examples (9c-f) are ill-formed (ungrammatical). The question which arises from this situation is why is it that (9a,b) but not (9c-f) are grammatical? Can this be explained in principled way? The reason for the grammaticality of (9a,b) is because of the fact that in (9a) for example, the subject noun phrase *siittatfa* 'tails' requires a predicate with a plural agreement form *kijan*. Similarly, in (9b) the subject *paatf'etfa* 'sickles' requires a verb with plural agreement form *kijan*. Hence, the example in (9a,b) are well-formed (grammatical) as the subject and verb agreement requirement is satisfied. When we come to the example in (9c-f) all the sentences are ill-formed (ungrammatical), as the agreement requirement is not satisfied. This is because the subjects in (9c-f) require plural verb agreement and the verbs in (9c-f) are in a singular agreement forms. That is to say, the verb *kija* is a masculine singular agreement form and the verb *kifa* is a feminine singular agreement form as shown in example (1). Such verbs require a singular masculine or feminine subjects but not a non-singular subject. However, the subjects *siittatfa* and *paatf'afa* require plural agreement on a verb and such subjects do not go with *kija* and *kifa*. This means that the subjects and the verbs do not agree in

number. That is why the examples in (9c-f) are ill-formed (ungrammatical). These examples illustrate that, although the nouns like *siittatfa* and *paatf'etfa* refer to an individual referent, they require plural agreement on a verb when they function as a clause subject.

To classify the nouns in table 7 the labels such as ‘collective’, ‘non-count’ are not helpful because such notions only apply to some of the nouns of the group⁷. However, the presence of such kinds of nouns is not unique to Mosittacha, similar kinds of nouns have been reported for Diraytata (Hayward, 1981) and for Bayso (Corbett and Hayward, 1987). The question is how to account for the nouns which do not have plural suffix and which require plural agreement on a verb when they function as a clause subject? We shall address this question in section 4.

3.2.3 Exceptional plural marking

These are singular nouns that form their plural form in an exceptional way. The following are illustrative examples.

	Gloss	Singular	Plural
a	‘leg’	luʃa (m)	luhha
b	‘man’	nama (m)	orra
c	‘kid’	peʔatʃa(m)	peʔa
d	‘she-goat’	tʃaltʃetʃa (f)	tʃalalle

Table 8. Exceptional plural marking

As can be observed from the examples in table 8 it seems hardly possible to explain the derivation of the plural form from the corresponding singular form. Such nouns have idiosyncratic plural forms.

⁷ These nouns contain semantically varied entities such as names of body parts. To explicitly understand the nature of this group further study is recommended.

4. The interaction between gender and number

The interaction between gender and number is a complex matter in Cushitic languages. Regarding the complexity of the relationship between gender and number see (Heine (1982), Bliese (1967), Hayward (1979, 1984). In Mosittacha there are a large number of nouns which distinguish the two genders (m) and (f) in their singular form but which have plural forms in which gender is not distinguished. There are also masculine and feminine nouns which do not have plural form. Still there are nouns whose basic (citation) forms are non-singular, which lack the usual plural suffixes and which require plural verb agreements when they function as clause subject. In the remainder of this section we shall address the intriguing features of the interaction of the two grammatical categories.

4.1 Masculine and feminine nouns which do not show gender in plural

There are many nouns which distinguish masculine gender (m) and feminine gender (f) in their singular form. However, such nouns do not show gender in their plural agreement form. Consider table 9 below.

	Gloss	Singular	Plural
a	'ankle'	luula (f)	luulawwe
b	'louse'	?ikkira (f)	?ikkirawwe
c	'leather'	k'oola (m)	k'oola
d	'house'	mana (m)	mana
e	'baboon'	k'ilijtʃa (m)	k'ililajja
f	'deaf man'	dahhajʃa (m)	dahhajja
g	'knife'	pillawa (m)	pillawadɗa
h	'year'	para (m)	paradɗa
i	'beehive'	kaakura (f)	kaakuradɗa
j	'girl'	?inantʃa (f)	?inantʃadɗa

Table 9. Singular nouns with gender

The plural formative *-wwe* derives plural nouns from feminine singular nouns. Similarly, the plural formatives: *-jja* and geminating the final

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consonant derive plural nouns from masculine singular nouns. Moreover, the plural formative *-adda* derives plural nouns from both masculine and feminine singular nouns.

4.2 Nouns without plural forms

There are masculine and feminine singular nouns which do not have plural counterparts. Consider the table below:

	Singular	Gloss
a	pulk'anta (f)	'dust'
b	?iilta (f)	'eye'
c	k'urt'umetʃa (f)	'fish'
d	pooranatʃa (f)	'darkness'
e	?urrafeta (f)	'cloud'
f	?alk'uk'a (m)	'beans'
g	porrotʃa (m)	'barely'
h	kaapotʃa (m)	'wheat'
i	kappa (m)	'mouth'
j	sookitta (m)	'salt'
k	kopolita (m)	'thumb'

Table 10. Nouns without plural form

The examples in table 10 are nouns which distinguish masculine gender (m) and feminine gender (f) in their singular forms. Such nouns do not have plural forms. As it can be learned from these examples many of them can be labeled as 'collective' or 'mass' nouns, but such a label may not be applicable to the whole members of the set.

4.3 Plural nouns without plural suffix

There are nouns whose basic (citation) forms do not have singular form, which lack the usual plural suffixes but which require plural verb forms when they function as a clause subject. For the sake of exposition the examples in table (7) are repeated here as table (11) below.

	Noun	Gloss
a	paatf'a	'sickles'
b	soʔo	'meat'
c	siitta	'tails'
d	ʃira	'livers'
e	mora	'curds'
g	kopile	'shields'
h	mus'uro	'hearts'
j	tʃeemo	'eyebrow'
k	ʔaanno	'milk'
l	koohino	'lungs'
m	ɗusʔe	'kidneys'
n	lappa	'ears'
o	ɗiika	'blood'
p	hiiḅḅa	'lips'

Table 11. Plural nouns without plural suffix

Now we shall attempt to answer the question raised on page 14. The question was about the nouns (in table 11) which refer to an individual referent but require plural agreement when they function as clause subject. The question focuses on the value of plural agreement form. To be more specific, the issue is whether the plural agreement form is a value of gender or number.

Regarding the value of plural agreement form there is a hot debate among descriptive linguists working on Cushitic languages. Currently, there are two competing views regarding this form. The first view considers plural agreement form as a value of gender but not number. This position is held by linguists such as Andrzejewski (1960), Bliese (1967), Hayward (1979, 1981), Maus (2008), Tsegaye et al (2013), and Ongaye (2013).

Maus (2008) argues that the consideration of plural agreement as values of gender can be clearly seen if we consider the agreement in adjectives in Iraqw. The following are illustrative examples.

10. (a) fa'a ka heer
 food.F is.F insufficient:F(:S.R.)
 "The food is insufficient."
 (b) tluway ku heer
 rain.M is.M insufficient:M(:S.R.)
 "The rain is insufficient."
 (c) hajso ki ququmaar
 tail.P is.P short:P(:S.R.)
 "The tail is short."
 (d) hajsee ka ququmat
 tails.F is.Fs hort:F:M.R.
 "The tails are short."
 (e) daaqay ku ququmat
 boys.M is.M short:M:M.R.
 "The boys are short."
 (f) na'ii ki ququmat
 children.P is.P short:P:M.R.
 "The children are short."
 (Maus, 2008:157)

In the above examples, the gender agreement system has low tone for feminine gender (10a,d) and plural gender (10c,f) head nouns, and high tone for masculine gender (10b,e) regardless of number. The number marking on the other hand has the basic form of adjective for singular reference (10a-c) and the multiple references can be represented by t and vowel shortening (10d-f). The independent gender and number relationship is summarized as follows:

Value for adjectives when plural agreement value of gender	
Gender	Number
P	s.r
F	s.r
M	s.r
P	m.r
F	m.r
M	m.r

Table 12. Value for Adjectives when plural agreement (Maus 2008: 156)

Based on the above presented data, Maus (2008) argues that Cushitic languages like Iraqw the plural agreement form should be treated as a plural gender. Hence, such languages have a three-value gender agreement system (i.e. masculine gender (m), feminine gender (f) and plural gender (p)).

The second view, on the other hand, considers nouns that take plural agreement form when they refer to singular reference as a value of number but not a value of gender. This position is held by linguists such as Corbett and Hayward (1987, 1988) and Corbett (1991, 2000, 2005 and 2006). If we consider Corbett and Hayward (1987) they argue that there is no need of introducing a third gender class for nouns taking plural agreement when referring to single entities. The following are examples from Bayso.

Noun	Gloss
ilkoo	‘tooth, teeth’
saé	‘cattle’
kalajaa	‘kidney(s)’
lukkaa	‘foot, feet, leg(s)’
iloo	‘eye(s)’
keferoo	‘sandl(s)’
moo	‘hips, lumber region’
eenoo	‘milk’
ogorroo	‘hair’
soo	‘meat’
udú	‘faces’

Table 13- Nouns taking plural agreement for unit reference Corbett and Hayward (1987: 9)

For the eleven nouns in table 13, they claim that rather than positing plural gender such nouns should be lexically specified in the lexicon as taking plural agreement. The specification of such nouns can be considered as similar to pluralia tantum nouns. As a result of this they rejected the idea of a plural gender for Bayso like languages.

Now let us consider Mosittacha in light of the above mentioned views in order to figure out which view is appropriate to handle the case of the

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fourteen attested nouns (in table 11) which refer to individual referent but take plural agreement. In the light of this, then let us consider the adjectives in (11) below.

11. (a) *siitta-tʃi-ni he-ka- hu-humaʔa*
tail/tails-NFS-DEF FOC-M-PL- short
'The tails ARE SHORT'

(b) *kopile-tʃi-ni he-ka-pa-palʔa*
shield/shields-NFS-DEF FOC-M-PL-wide
'The shields ARE WIDE.'

(c) *ʃira-tʃi-ni he-ka- tʃi-tʃinaʔa*
liver/livers-NFS-DEF FOC-M-PL-small
'The livers ARE SMALL.'

* (d) *siitta-tʃi-ni he-ka- humaʔa*
tail/tails-NFS-DEF FOC-M- short.SG

* (e) *kopile-tʃi-ni he-ka- palʔa*
shield/shields-NFS-DEF FOC-M- wide.SG

* (f) *ʃira-tʃi-ni he-ka-tʃinaʔa*
liver/livers-NFS-DEF FOC-M-small.SG

Examples (11 a-c) are grammatical and (11 d-f) are ungrammatical. In (11a) for example, the subject *sittatʃini* 'the tails' is followed by the predicative adjective *hekahuhumaʔa*. If we examine the internal structure of the predicate adjective *hekahuhumaʔa*, we can learn that the prefix *he-* is a focus marker, *ka-* is a masculine gender marker, *hu-* is a plural marker⁸ and

⁸Number in adjective is expressed by reduplicating the initial CV of the base, see Wondwosen, 2015:77)

huma?a ‘short’ is the base form. Similarly, in (11b) the subject *kopiletfini* ‘the shields’ is followed by the predicate adjective *hekapapal?a*. This predicate adjective can be morphologically decomposed as *he-* focus marker, *ka-* masculine gender marker, *pa-* plural number marker and the base adjective *pal?a* ‘wide’. By the same token, in (11c) the subject *firatfini* ‘the livers’ is followed by the predicate adjective *hekatfitfina?a*. This predicate adjective is composed of the prefix *he-* focus marker, *ka-* masculine marker, *tfi-* plural marker and the adjective *tfina?a* ‘small’. The sentences in (11a-c) are grammatical.

Now let us consider the example in (11d-f). If for example we consider (11d), the subject *süttatfini* ‘the tails’ is followed by the predicate adjective *hekahuma?a* which can be broken down into *he-* focus marker, *ka-* masculine marker and the adjective *huma?a* ‘short’. In (11e) the subject *kopiletfini* ‘the shields’ is followed by the predicate adjective *hekapal?a* which can further be decomposed in to: *he-* focus marker, *ka-* masculine marker and the adjective *pal?a* ‘wide’. Similarly, in (11f) the subject *firatfini* ‘the livers’ is followed by the predicate adjective *hekatfina?a* which can be further subdivided in to: *he-* focus marker, *ka-* masculine marker and the adjective *tfina?a* ‘small’. However, the examples in (11d-f) are ungrammatical. The ungrammaticality of these sentences can be accounted for in terms lack of agreement between the subject noun phrases and the corresponding predicate adjectives in number. That is, the subjects in (11d-f) are non-singular subjects and such subjects require a plural predicate adjective form but not the singular form. When we consider the predicate adjectives in (11d-f), they are in the singular form. Hence, the non-singular subjects in (11d-f) do not agree with the singular predicative adjective forms. As a result, the sentences in (11d-f) are ungrammatical as the number agreement is not satisfied.

Coming back to the examples in (11a-c), all the predicate adjectives agree with the corresponding subjects in number by reduplicating the initial CV-

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of the adjectives by so doing the number requirement is satisfied and the sentences are grammatical.

From the foregoing data we can learn that in Mosittacha the gender and number agreements are separate on adjectives. In (4) and (11) gender agreement is expressed by the morphemes: *fa-* for feminine and *ka-* for masculine gender. The number agreement, as shown in (11), is expressed by reduplicating the initial CV- of the adjective. The following table summarizes the gender – number relationship on adjectives.

Gender	Number	
	Singular	Plural
masculine	ka-	ka-
feminine	fa-	ka-

Table 14. Agreement on adjectives

A close examination of table 14 shows that, the adjectival agreement forms are *fa-* and *ka-*. *fa-* agreement form occurs with a feminine noun when it refers to singular entity. Thus, *fa-* is a feminine gender agreement form. Similarly, *ka-* agreement form occurs not only with a masculine noun with singular reference but it also occurs with a noun of either gender when it refers to plural reference. Thus, the plural agreement form is identical to the masculine singular agreement form.

Now let us see whether possessive structures strengthen this idea or not. As shown in examples (5) when the possessed noun is of a masculine gender as in (5a) the possessive definitive form prefix *ka-* (a masculine singular agreement form) to agree with the a singular masculine possessed noun *herrotfa* ‘dog’. Similarly if the possessed noun is of a feminine gender as in (5b), the possessive definitive form prefix the feminine marker *fa-* to agree with the feminine singular possessed noun *hupatfa* ‘tortoise’. For plural possessed nouns consider the examples in (12).

12. (a) *herr-adfa* he-ka-hijja
 dog-PL FOC-M- his.PL
 ‘HIS dogs’
- (b) *hupatf-adfa* he-ka-hijja
 tortoise-PL FOC-M- his.PL
 ‘HIS tortoise’

In (12a) the possessed noun *herradfa* ‘dogs’ is a plural noun and following that the possessive definitive form is changed from *hajji* ‘his.SG’ in (5a) to *hijja* ‘his.PL’ and prefix the gender marker *ka-*. Similarly in (12b), the possessed noun *hupatsadda* ‘tortoises’ is followed by the possessive definitive form *hijja* ‘his. PL’ and prefix *ka-*. Considering the examples in (5) and (12) we can summarize agreement in possessive definitive in the table below.

Gender	Number	
	Singular	Plural
masculine	ka-	ka-
feminine	fa-	ka-

Table 15. Gender and number agreement in possessive definitive

In table (15), the possessive definitive agreement form *fa-* occurs with a feminine noun referring to a singular reference. Whereas *ka-* occurs with the masculine nouns referring to singular entity and also with nouns of either genders referring to plural entities. Here, too the plural form is identical to the masculine singular form.

From the discussion we have made so far on gender and number agreement on adjectives and possessives, in both cases the gender marker for a feminine singular is *fa-* for masculine singular and also for nouns of either gender referring to plural references is *ka-*. This clearly shows that the plural agreement is a value of number but not a value of gender in Mosittacha. This is because both the adjective and the genitive structures

confirm that the gender system consists of masculine and feminine genders and plural nouns have masculine gender. Therefore, Mosittacha has two gender systems: masculine and feminine and also two number systems singular and plural.

5. Conclusion

So far the gender and number systems and their interaction in Mosittacha, have been considered. In the course of the discussion it is shown that Mosittacha is a language with two nominal genders; masculine and feminine. In the language, each noun belongs to either a masculine or feminine gender. Nouns in Mosittacha are not overtly marked for gender. The gender of nouns is largely learned from an overtly expressed agreement element between the noun in the subject position and the verb of the same clause or from the agreement element within a noun phrase. The verbs, adjectives and genitive constructions have three distinct forms. Verbs have two ways. That is verbs like exist have different forms for the two genders: *kija* for masculine gender and *kifa* for feminine gender. Other verbs like *toj-* 'die' have zero morpheme (\emptyset) for masculine and the suffix *-tʃ-* for feminine subjects. Attributive adjective uses zero morpheme (\emptyset) for masculine gender and the suffix *-tʃa* for feminine gender. Both predicative adjective and possessive genitives use the prefixes *ka-* for masculine gender and *ʃa-* for feminine gender.

The number of a noun in Mosittacha can be learned either from the agreement element between a noun in the subject function and the predicate of the clause or from some overt morphological markers. The number system consists of two forms singular and plural forms. The singular form is not morphologically marked on a noun. The plural form, on the other hand, is of three types. The first type refers to nouns that have a plural suffix. The second type refers to nouns whose referent is plural and lacks a plural suffix. The third type refers to nouns which make plural in an exceptional way.

Regarding the interaction between gender and number, there are nouns which in the singular fall into two gender categories, masculine (m.) and feminine (f.) that have plural forms in which gender is not distinguished. Moreover, there are masculine and feminine nouns which have no plural counterparts. There are nouns which lack the usual plural suffixes and which require plural verbs when they function as a clause subject. Concerning these nouns which appear only in the plural agreement forms following Corbett and Hayward (1987), I argue that the plural agreement is a value of number but not gender and hence, the nouns should be considered as exceptional nouns that can be idiosyncratically marked as plural in the lexicon.

Abbreviations:

F or f	Feminine
FOC	Focus
M or m	Masculine
NFS	Non-focalized subject
NP	Noun phrase
PRF	Perfect
PL	Plural
SINGU	Singulativ

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