

‘GENDER INFLECTIONS ON NOUNS AND PRONOUNS IN KAFI-NOONOO’**Honelgn Abebe**

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ABSTRACT: *The proper use of affixes in a language plays a major role in order to have effective use of the language. The purpose of this paper was to explore the main features and use of gender inflections of Kafi-noonoo (Kafa language) nouns and pronouns. The qualitative method was mainly used. This paper also used key informants and relevant materials with his personal intuition (experience) of the language to gather the data. The overall results indicated clearly observable patterns and features. In the findings, the gender distinction between masculine and feminine of common/ collective nouns were explored with the help of collected reflective data. The gender inflections of the language has regular pattern as shown from the listed data. That is, in this data, ‘o’ indicates masculine gender and ‘e/i’ indicates feminine gender in Kafi-noonoo. Especially, third person singular nouns and pronouns are used to distinguish the gender of nouns and pronouns. This generalization was indicated both in biological and linguistic (Grammatical) genders. The study was accomplished with the implications for future investigations.*

Keywords: gender, inflection, affix, noun, inherent, linguistic, pattern, feature, input, output, parsing, formula

Introduction

A language is the key means of communication to share information. A language has its own features regarding structure and use. We need to know the nature and pattern of that language before we use it in order to have effective communication. This paper tried to show the main features and patterns of gender markers of common/ collective nouns and pronouns in Kafi-noonoo. Kafi-noonoo is the language spoken in Kafa administrative zone by the Kafa people. Kafi-noonoo is one of the Omotic languages of the Omotic phylum, which is a part of the Afro-

Asiatic groups (Theil, 2005:1; Honelgn, 2009). Kafi-noonoo is the language used in offices and schools of Kafa administrative zone, southern nations, nationalities and regional state of Ethiopia (Honelgn, 2009; Taye, 2012). Kafa, alternatively called Kefa is the place where Kafi-noonoo is spoken (Bekele, 2004).

Statement of the problem

This paper focused on the exploration of gender inflections of common/ collective nouns and pronouns in Kafi-noonoo to identify the structural and functional features of gender markers of nouns and pronouns of the language with the exploration of morphological parsing. As far as the examiner's understanding is concerned, this thematic area was thought-out as a gap to study so as to explore with clear and reflective examples. This is important to explore clearly the gender markers in Kafi-noonoo nouns and pronouns. This will also help as an input for further research.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this paper was to identify and explore the main features and patterns of gender markers of common/ collective nouns and pronouns in Kafi-noonoo.

Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study tried to:

- ❖ examine the gender inflections of Kafi-noonoo common/ collective nouns and pronouns;
- ❖ investigate their structural patterns of the gender inflections of Kafi-noonoo common/ collective nouns and pronouns;
- ❖ identify the main features of the gender inflections in Kafi-noonoo common/ collective nouns and pronouns.

Research Methodology

Qualitative-descriptive research method was employed to explore the data. Both primary and secondary sources were used to collect the appropriate data. The primary data gathered from the elicitation of three native informants. Besides, the investigator was used his intuitive knowledge as a complement. In addition, he also used different relevant texts and materials.

Review of Literature

Noun is a part of speech that assigns to each of its subjects, bodies or things as a common or proper quality (Malmkjaer, 2004). Taye (2012) and other scholars also said that gender markers are inflected on nominals of Kafi-noonoo.

Gender is a grammatical and biological classification of nouns and pronouns into masculine, feminine and neuter depending on whether they are categorized as male, female or without sex respectively (Payne, 1997; Katamba, 1993). It consists in a division of different classes for a purpose of agreement; particularly the common classes are system based on sex (masculine, feminine and neuter) or animacy with variants of human or non human (Anderson,1985; Malmkjaer, 2004; Payne, 1997; Katamba, 1993).

Inflection: Blake, 2004 and many other scholars agree that an inflection is the addition of certain affix(es) to the base of a word to obtain certain linguistic forms which enter into grammatically relations and carryout certain functions.

Inflection of the noun is the addition of certain affixes to the noun (Blake, 2004; Malmkjaer, 2004). In Kafi-noonoo, inflections are used to carryout grammatical functions such as gender, number, determiners and case (Tadesse, 2007; Taye, 2012). However, this paper is focusing on the reflection of gender inflections on common/ collective nouns and pronouns of Kafi-noonoo.

Regarding Kafi-noonoo, here are some works done.

Fleming, H.C (1976) in Bender et al (1976), **Non-Semitic Languages**, said the dialectical

variations came from geographical variation and this brought lexical meaning differences. He also treated the verb morphology and the process of nominalization, adjectivization, some gender distinctions and independent pronouns in the language.

The study of Theil (2005), **Kafa Phonology**, gave general description about the distribution of vowels and consonants, minimal pairs and allophones of them. Similarly, he strengthened these points in Theil (2007).

Minwyelet Getahun's (1984) '**The Noun Phrase of Kafa**' studied the noun phrase grammatical use of Kafa language; and he focused on the treatment of noun phrase within the framework of simple sentences in the language.

The paper of Nega Ararso (1984), **the verb morphology of Kefa**, studied the morphemes, the structure of morphemes and the function of morphemes of Kafa verbs.

The senior essay of Aberash Tibebu (1985), **The Verb Phrase in Kefa**, also limits to the analysis of the verb phrase in simple declarative active sentences of the language.

Dawit Bekele's (2004) thesis, **Code-switching between Amharic and Kafi-noonoo**, studies Inter-Sentential and Intra-Sentential code-switching in terms of their frequency of occurrence.

The study of Honelign in 2008/9 entitled, "Issues in the Use of Kafi-noonoo as a Medium of Instruction (KMI): The Case of Kafa Zone Primary Schools.", was limited to the investigation of the implementation of Kafi-noonoo in Kafa zone. He observed the infrastructural adequacy of educational facilities, training and recruitment of teachers, community members' participation in school activities and related problems facing in implementation of KMI, and measures to be taken and supports needed for implementation of the KMI policy.

Taye (2012) studied the case system of Kafi-noonoo in general. He focused on marking of core and peripheral arguments. Besides, he described genitive case marking and other cases in different constructions like noun phrases, pronominals and passive forms. In addition, he raised arguments in agent or subject position and arguments in object position.

Teferi (2012) studied the language variation between the Manjo and the Gomero social groups of the Kafa people in his MA thesis. He identified the way and trend of living, linguistic variation, social stratification and social interaction between the two groups.

This paper tried to show both biological and linguistic (grammatical) gender of common/collective nouns and pronouns in Kafi-noonoo since it needs to strengthen the study by representative evidences. In Kafi-noonoo, there are two commonly used gender markers, masculine and feminine which are attributed arbitrarily for inanimate nouns and biologically for animate nouns. Therefore, this paper tried to distinguish and reflect this reality lexically or by looking the suffixes attached to nouns and/or pronouns. The distinction between masculine and feminine in common/collective nouns and pronouns is explored in the result and discussion part.

Results and Discussion

Gender use in the common/collective nouns

Common or collective nouns and pronouns serve us to call people or things. In Kafi-noonoo, common/collective nouns can be expressed by gender to indicate inherent and/or grammatical (size) gender. Examples are given below.

Masculine	Gloss	Feminine	Gloss
bushoo	boy	Bushee	Girl
asho	human being (male)	Ashe	human being (female)
manoo	brother	Manee	sister
mit'o	wood (big in size)	mit'e	wood (small in size)
shikko	knife (big)	Shikke	knife (small)
kullaaroo	cat (male)	kullaaroo	cat (female)
bago	sheep (male)	Bage	sheep (female)

Inflections /-o/ and /-e/ on words such as 'mit'o' (wood) and 'shikko' (knife) indicate grammatical gender. But these inflections on the other words in the above table indicate biological (inherent) gender.

We can put these data in the input and output of morphological parser as follows.

Input	Morphological parsed output
bush <u>oo</u>	bush +N + M
bushe <u>e</u>	bush +N + F
ash <u>o</u>	ash +N + M
ashe <u>e</u>	ash +N + F
man <u>oo</u>	man +N + M
manee <u>e</u>	man +N + F
mit'o	Mit' +N + M
mit'e	Mit' +N + F
shikk <u>o</u>	shikk +N + M
shikke <u>e</u>	shikk +N + F
kullaar <u>oo</u>	kullaar +N + M
kullaaree	kullaar +N + F
bag <u>o</u>	bag +N + M
bage <u>e</u>	bag +N + F

In this table, the results which are symbolized by /+N + F/ indicate the feminine gender. Conversely, the results which are symbolized by /+N + M/ indicate masculine gender. This indication strengthens what we have discussed above that /-o/ is the inflection of masculine gender, and /-e/ is the inflection of feminine gender.

Where: M(+M) = masculine

F(+F) = feminine

S = singular

^ = morpheme boundary

= word boundary

Ms = masculine Singular

Fs = feminine singular

P = person

:= separates

Gender indicated by demonstrative and possessive pronouns

Pronoun is a part of speech that can substitute the proper name of people or thing (Malmkjær 2004:247). In Kafi-noonoo, 3rd person singular pronouns are used to distinguish masculine and feminine genders. Let us see them in two ways.

Gender indicated by demonstrative pronoun(s)

Demonstrative pronouns are pronouns that point out the location or direction. The following examples are the known demonstrative pronouns in Kafi-noonoo.

Masculine	Gloss	feminine	gloss
ar <u>oo</u> (long vowel, /-o/)	he, that (3ms)	ar <u>ee</u> (long /-e/)	she, that (3fs)
ur <u>o</u>	he, that man (3ms)	ur <u>e</u>	she, that woman (3fs)

Here also /-o/ is masculine marker; whereas /-e/ is feminine marker.

This can be patted in the morphological parsing as follows.

Input	Morphological parsed out put
ar <u>oo</u> (long vowel, /-o/)	ar + N + M
ar <u>e</u>	ar + N + F
ur <u>o</u>	ur + N + M
ur <u>e</u>	ur + N + F

Gender using possessive pronouns

Possessive pronouns are pronouns that indicate the owner of something. In Kafi-noonoo, possessive pronouns take masculine and feminine markers.

masculine	Gloss	Feminine	gloss
bich <u>o</u>	his (his 3ms)	biche/i	hers (her 3fs)

Here also /-o/ shows masculine whereas /-e/ shows us feminine gender. However, /-i/ also interchangeably used as feminine marker sometimes.

Note that the Kafi-noonoo gender inflections of noun are portmanteau. Portmanteau is a single marker which has more than one meaning (Jurafsky and Martin, 2000:71). Because, they are added to noun stems to indicate the gender as well as to make meaningful word that can be categorized under a noun.

The following table shows us the input and out of morphological parsing.

Input	Morphological parsed out
bich <u>o</u>	bich +N +M
biche/ <u>i</u>	bich +N +F

Also here /-o/ is a masculine marker and /-e (-i)/ is feminine marker. The discussion informed us Kafi-noonoo has similar style, from an inflectional stand point of view. Gender is indicated by /-o/ (masculine) and /-e(-i)/ (feminine). Therefore, we can generalize this concept using the following formula as a rule.

$$\varepsilon \longrightarrow \text{o} / \wedge - \#$$

$$\varepsilon \longrightarrow \text{e} / \text{i} / \wedge - \#$$

Generally, as the writer has checked, the Kafi-noonoo gender inflections of nouns and pronouns are /-o/ and /-e(-i)/. That is /-o/ is masculine marker; whereas /-e (-i)/ is feminine marker. So, we can say that the language has regular inflections (suffixes)” for gender.

This generalization serves for both biological and linguistic (Grammatical) genders. In the linguistic gender, diminutive and small things considered as a feminine, and big things considered as a masculine.

Conclusion

In this paper, gender inflections of Kafi-noonoo nouns were explored. The findings of the discussion explored that the inflection /-o/ is the masculine marker; whereas, /-e/ (where, /-i/ is interchangeably used sometimes) is the feminine marker. This implied that this language has the regular inflections of gender markers in Kafi-noonoo nouns as the features and patterns of these gender markers shown us. This generalization serves for both biological and linguistic (grammatical) genders.

The pattern of these gender inflections is clear and suitable to use the language. In addition to this, this common feature of inflection helps the learners to understand the pattern easily.

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