

Homework 4

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1 Possession

There are two different strategies for possession in Amharic, both of which are used for alienable and inalienable possession.

1.1 Suffixes

Possession is marked with noun suffixes. Second and third person singular suffixes distinguish between male and female, but the plural forms are not gendered.

- (1) *doro-é* ‘my chicken’
doro-i ‘your (m) chicken’
doro-ish ‘your (f) chicken’
doro-u ‘his chicken’
doro-wa ‘her chicken’

The second person masculine suffix also occurs as *-ih*.

- (2) *ij-ih* ‘your (m) hand’

All plural suffixes begin with *ach-*. These suffixes may be further analyzable as *-ach-in*, *-ach-un*, and *-ach-ew*.

- (3) *doro-achin* ‘our chicken’
doro-achun ‘your (pl) chicken’
doro-achew ‘their chicken’

1.2 Contrast forms

Additionally, Amharic has several contrast forms for possession. These forms place the stress on the possessor and convey a meaning like ‘MY hand.’ Each of these can also be expressed with a suffix form as in the previous section.

Table 1: Contrast forms			
<i>yené ij</i>	‘my hand’	<i>ij-é</i>	‘my hand’
<i>yante ij</i>	‘your (m) hand’	<i>ij-ih</i>	‘your (m) hand’
<i>yanchí ij</i>	‘your (f) hand’	<i>ij-ish</i>	‘your (f) hand’
<i>yesu ij</i>	‘his hand’	<i>ij-u</i>	‘his hand’
<i>yeswa ij</i>	‘her hand’	<i>ij-wa</i>	‘her hand’
<i>yenya ij-och</i>	‘our hands’	<i>ij-och-achin</i>	‘our hands’
⁻¹	-	<i>ij-och-achun</i>	‘your (pl) hands’
<i>yenesu ij-och</i>	‘their hands’	<i>ij-och-achew</i>	‘their hands’

Possessive forms like ‘Rachel’s hand’ are constructed similarly. As shown in (5), these constructions do not work with the suffix forms in the previous section.

- (4) *je Rachel ij* ‘Rachel’s hand’
- (5) **Rachel ijwa* ‘Rachel’s hand’
- (6) *je Abe ij* ‘Abe’s hand’

We can see in (4) and (6) that these forms are the same for male and female.

2 Pronouns

Subject pronouns have the following forms in Amharic:

Table 2: Subject pronouns

<i>iné</i>	I
<i>ante</i>	you (m)
<i>anchí</i>	you (f)
<i>isu</i>	he
<i>iswa</i>	she
<i>inya</i>	we
<i>inante</i>	you (pl)
<i>inesu</i>	they

These pronouns only occur as the subjects of sentences, and they occur before objects and verbs. This provides some evidence that suggests that Amharic is an SOV language.

- (7) *iné rejim neny*
I tall be\1S
‘I am tall.’
- (8) *ante rejim neh*
you-M tall be\2MS
‘You (m) are tall’
- (9) *anchí rejim nesh*
you-F tall be\2FS
‘You (f) are tall’
- (10) *isu rejim new*
he tall be\3MS
‘He is tall’
- (11) *iswa rejim nat*
she tall be\3FS
‘She is tall’

¹There was no example of a contrast form for the second person plural (you all).

- (12) *inya rejim nen*
 we tall be\1P
 ‘We are tall’
- (13) *inant rejim nachu*
 you\P tall be\2P
 ‘You (pl) are tall’
- (14) *inesu rejim nachew*
 they tall be\3P
 ‘They are tall’

Additionally, the language has demonstrative pronouns (like ‘this’ and ‘that’). These pronouns appear to be grammatically masculine; in (15), we see that the verb *new* ‘to be’ is in the masculine form, even though *wef* ‘bird’ is grammatically feminine.

- (15) *ihé k’ey wef new*
 this red bird be\3MS
 ‘This is a red bird’²
- (16) *inezí k’ey wef-och nachew*
 these red bird-P be\3P
 ‘These birds are red’
- (17) *yachí wef tinishíyé nat*
 that bird small be\3FS
 ‘That bird is small’

There is evidence of possessive pronouns, but we only see a single example in the data.

- (18) *yené* ‘mine’

²In these glosses, 3FS means third person feminine singular, 3PL means third person plural, etc.