

Homework 6

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1 Subject person marking

In Amharic, subject person marking differs in each tense.

1.1 Past positive, negative

In the past tense, there are different affixes depending on whether the verb root ends in a consonant or a vowel. Example (1) lists the different forms for a verb ending in a consonant.

- (1) *mezemir* ‘to sing’
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <i>zemer-ku</i> ¹ ‘I sang’ | <i>al-zemer-ku-m</i> ‘I didn’t sing’ |
| <i>zemer-k</i> ‘You (m) sang’ | <i>al-zemer-k-im</i> ‘You (m) didn’t sing’ |
| <i>zemer-sh</i> ‘You (f) sang’ | <i>al-zemer-sh-im</i> ‘You (f) didn’t sing’ |
| <i>zemer-e</i> ‘He sang’ | <i>al-zemer-e-m</i> ‘He didn’t sing’ |
| <i>zemer-ech</i> ‘She sang’ | <i>al-zemer-ech-im</i> ‘She didn’t sing’ |
| <i>zemer-en</i> ‘We sang’ | <i>al-zemer-en-im</i> ‘We didn’t sing’ |
| <i>zemer-achu</i> ‘You (pl) sang’ | <i>al-zemer-achu-m</i> ‘You (pl) didn’t sing’ |
| <i>zemer-u</i> ‘They sang’ | <i>al-zemer-u-m</i> ‘They didn’t sing’ |

By contrast, (2) shows the forms for a verb root ending in a vowel.

- (2) *mesrat* ‘to work’
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>sera-w</i> ‘I worked’ | <i>al-sera-w-m</i> ‘I didn’t work’ |
| <i>sera-h</i> ‘You (m) worked’ | <i>al-sera-h-im</i> ‘You (m) didn’t work’ |
| <i>sera-sh</i> ‘You (f) worked’ | <i>al-sera-sh-im</i> ‘You (f) didn’t work’ |
| <i>sera</i> ‘He worked’ | <i>al-sera-m</i> ‘He didn’t work’ |
| <i>sera-ch</i> ‘She worked’ | <i>al-sera-ch-im</i> ‘She didn’t work’ |
| <i>sera-n</i> ‘We worked’ | <i>al-sera-n-im</i> ‘We didn’t work’ |
| <i>sera-chu</i> ‘You (pl) worked’ | <i>al-sera-chu-m</i> ‘You (pl) didn’t work’ |
| <i>ser-u</i> ‘They worked’ | <i>al-ser-u-m</i> ‘They didn’t work’ |

For both types of verbs, the past negative is formed with the *al-* prefix and the *-im* suffix. All V-final forms preserve the final root vowel with the exception of the third-person plural form *seru*. In this form, the final vowel is dropped and replaced with the *-u* suffix; otherwise, it would be indistinguishable from the 3SM form. These two paradigms are summarized in table 1.

¹Arsema was unsure if this form was correct, and also provided *zemerkuwin*

Table 1: Past subject affixes

form	C-final	V-final
1S	- <i>ku</i>	- <i>w</i>
2SM	- <i>k</i>	- <i>h</i>
2SF	- <i>sh</i>	- <i>sh</i>
3SM	- <i>e</i>	- \emptyset
3SF	- <i>ech</i>	- <i>ch</i>
1P	- <i>en</i>	- <i>n</i>
2P	- <i>achu</i>	- <i>chu</i>
3P	- <i>u</i>	- <i>u</i>

1.2 Present/future positive, negative

In the present tense, there are several different forms for the positive and negative. Each form requires a prefix and a suffix, which is summarized in table 2. The different forms of *merot* are shown in (3).

- (3) *merot* ‘to run’
- | | |
|--|---|
| <i>iné i-rot’-al-ew</i> ‘I run’ | <i>iné al-rot’-im</i> ‘I don’t run’ |
| <i>ante ti-rot’-al-eh</i> ‘You (m) run’ | <i>ante at-rot’-im</i> ‘You (m) don’t run’ |
| <i>anchí ti-roch’-al-esh</i> ‘You (f) run’ | <i>anchí at-roch’-im</i> ‘You (f) don’t run’ |
| <i>isu yí-rot’-al-e</i> ‘He run’ | <i>isu ay-rot’-im</i> ‘He doesn’t run’ |
| <i>iswa ti-rot’-al-ech</i> ‘She run’ | <i>iswa at-rot’-im</i> ‘She doesn’t run’ |
| <i>inya in-rot’-al-en</i> ‘We run’ | <i>inya an-rot’-im</i> ‘We don’t run’ |
| <i>inante ti-rot’-al-achu</i> ‘You (pl) run’ | <i>inante at-rot’-um</i> ‘You (pl) don’t run’ |
| <i>inesu yí-rot’-al-u</i> ‘They run’ | <i>inesu ay-rot’-um</i> ‘They don’t run’ |

In the positive forms, *-al* occurs after the verb root and may represent the present tense. The four different prefixes separate the forms into four different groups, as shown in table 2. This grouping seems arbitrary; it puts all 2nd person forms in one group along with the 3rd person feminine (group 2), while other third person forms are grouped (group 3) and first person forms are not grouped (groups 1 and 4).

Table 2: Present/future affixes

form	positive	negative	group
1S	<i>i- -al-ew</i>	<i>al- -im</i>	1 (<i>i-/al-</i>)
2SM	<i>ti- -al-eh</i>	<i>at- -im</i>	2 (<i>ti-/at-</i>)
2SF	<i>ti- -al-esh</i>	<i>at- -im</i> + palatalization	2 (<i>ti-/at-</i>)
3SM	<i>yí- -al-e</i>	<i>ay- -im</i>	3 (<i>yí-/ay-</i>)
3SF	<i>ti- -al-ech</i>	<i>at- -im</i>	2 (<i>ti-/at-</i>)
1P	<i>in- -al-en</i>	<i>an- -im</i>	4 (<i>in-/an-</i>)
2P	<i>ti- -al-achu</i>	<i>at- -um</i>	2 (<i>ti-/at-</i>)
3P	<i>yí- -al-u</i>	<i>ay- -um</i>	3 (<i>yí-/ay-</i>)

These sentences may then be glossed like in (4) and (5), where G1 represents the group 1 prefix.

(4) *iné i-rot'-al-ew*
 I G1.PRES-run-PRES-1S
 'I run'

(5) *ante ti-rot'-al-eh*
 2SM G2.PRES-run-PRES-2SM
 'You run'

The negative forms of each have a prefix that changes depending on which group the form is in, and the person marker is dropped. Each of these prefixes may be a variation of the *al-* prefix, which is found in the past tense, and just like the past tense, each form has the *-im* suffix for negation. The prefixes represent the group of the person marking, the present tense, and negation, as shown in (6) and (7).

(6) *iné al-rot'-im*
 I G1.PRES.NEG-run-NEG
 'I don't run'

(7) *ante at-rot'-im*
 2SM G2.PRES.NEG-run-NEG
 'You don't run'

2 Object person marking in transitive verbs

In transitive verbs, the direct object is marked by a verbal suffix which occurs after the subject suffix (listed in table 2). In this way, the verb agrees with both the subject and the direct object. (8) shows the paradigm for the verb *mak'if* ‘to hug.’

- (8) *mak'if* ‘to hug’
- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| <i>ak'if-e-ny</i> | ‘He hugged me’ |
| <i>ak'if-e-h</i> | ‘He hugged you (m)’ |
| <i>ak'if-e-sh</i> | ‘He hugged you (f)’ |
| <i>ak'if-e-w</i> | ‘He hugged him’ |
| <i>ak'if-at</i> | ‘He hugged her’ |
| <i>ak'if-e-n</i> | ‘He hugged us’ |
| <i>ak'if-achu</i> | ‘He hugged you (pl)’ |
| <i>ak'if-achew</i> | ‘He hugged them’ |

There are several phonological processes that change the surface forms of the affixes. For example, in (9), the third-person masculine singular subject is dropped when the object affix begins with a vowel. Additionally, in (10), the affix occurs with an initial *w* which does not occur in other forms. This *w* may be inserted after consonants in the 3SF, 2P, and 3P forms, but this is blocked by the underlying *-e* in (9).

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| (9) <i>ak'if-∅-at</i> | (10) <i>ak'if-ach-wat</i> |
| hug-3SM.SUBJ-3SF.OBJ | hug-2P.SUBJ-3SF.OBJ |
| ‘He hugged her’ | ‘You (pl) hugged her’ |

These forms are summarized in table 3.

Table 3: Subject and object suffixes

form	object
1S	<i>-ny</i>
2SM	<i>-h</i>
2SF	<i>-sh</i>
3SM	<i>-t, -w</i>
3SF	<i>-(w)at</i>
1P	<i>-en</i>
2P	<i>-(w)achu</i>
3P	<i>-(w)achew</i>

Additionally, we have evidence that suggests that indirect objects work similarly. In these examples, the direct object comes before the verb, and the indirect object occurs as a verbal suffix. The verb agrees with the subject and the indirect object in (11).

- (11) *mest'et* 'to give'
- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>mets'af set'-ech-iny</i> | 'She gave me a book' |
| <i>mets'af set'-ech-ih</i> | 'She gave you (m) a book' |
| <i>mets'af set'-ech-ish</i> | 'She gave you (f) a book' |
| <i>mets'af set'-ech-u</i> | 'She gave him a book' |
| <i>mets'af set'-ech-at</i> | 'She gave her a book' |
| <i>mets'af set'-ech-in</i> | 'She gave us a book' |
| <i>mets'af set'-ech-achu</i> | 'She gave you (pl) a book' |
| <i>mets'af set'-ech-achew</i> | 'She gave them a book' |

In several of these forms, *i* is inserted before the object prefix. This is common throughout the language, and we would expect *i* to be inserted as the default vowel.