



Mekelle University

College of Social Sciences and Languages

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

**The Semantics of Gender and Number in Tigrinya: A Descriptive
Analysis of Nouns, Adjectives and Verbs Based on Data on
Southern Zone of Tigray**

BY

Tesfay Teka Endallew

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Zone of Tigray

By
Tsfay Teka Endallew
Advisor
Esayas Tajebe (PhD)

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all sources of materials used for the thesis have duly been acknowledged.

Name: Tesfay Teka

Place: Department of Foreign Languages & Literature


Date of Submission: _____

Signature: _____

Mekelle University
College of Social Sciences & Languages
Department of Foreign Languages & Literature

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Tesfay Teka, entitled: The Semantics of Gender and Number in Tigrinya: A Descriptive Analysis of Nouns, Adjectives and Verbs in Southern Zone of Tigray submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts (MA) Degree in Linguistics complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Examiner Niquss Weldezgu Mehari Signature  Date 11/14/2025

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Abstract

This study presents a descriptive semantic analysis of gender and number in the Southern Tigray dialect of Tigrinya. Challenging the standard masculine-feminine binary, this study identified a functionally tripartite gender system: Masculine, Feminine, and a strong tendency to semantically active Neuter category. The collected data in the dialect indicated that Neuter gender denoted collectives, generic human concepts, and young animals, representing an unmarked or collective state.

The analysis, based on fieldwork and native-speaker intuition, revealed that gender assignment is strongly semantically motivated. Specific semantic fields, including liquids and abstract nouns, are predominantly masculine, while concepts linked to beauty and hope are consistently feminine. For other categories like wild animals, gender is assigned metaphorically.

The number system also shows significant complexity, extending beyond the binary singular-plural Semitic patterns with a productive dual, reduplication, and compounding. Plural forms can even carry sociolinguistic meaning, expressing attitudes like respect or scorn. Agreement patterns show neutralization in certain grammatical contexts such as pluralization of adjectives, and first- and third-person imperfective verbs. Ultimately, the findings demonstrate that the gender and number systems in the dialect are non-arbitrary, being deeply embedded in the cultural worldview of its speakers, contributing to both Tigrinya dialectology and linguistic typology.

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Abbreviations and Symbols

/	Alternative Expression
//	Phonemic Transcription
+	Plus
1	First Person
2	Second Person
3	Third Person
Acc	Accusative
Dem	Demonstratives
DM	Distributive Morphology
DP	Determiner Phrase
E.g.	Example
ES	Ethiopian Semitic
f	Feminine
FT	future tense
Gen.	Genitive
Imp	Imperfective
m	Masculine
N	Noun
ne	Neuter
Nom.	Nominative
NP	Noun Phrase
NumP	Number Phrase

Per	Perfective
pl	Plural
Pos.	Possessive
RD	Rayan Dialect
STD	Southern Tigray Dialect
sg	Singular

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background

1.1.1. The Tigray People

The Tigrayans (ተገሩ) are ethnic groups native to the Tigray Region in northern Ethiopia. They speak Tigrinya, a Semitic language, and are predominantly Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, with additional Muslims, Catholics and Protestants. In the Tigray region of Ethiopia, the population is estimated to be around 7 million people, with the majority speaking Tigrinya. This would mean approximately 5-6 million Tigrinya speakers in Ethiopia (Central Statistical Agency (CSA) of Ethiopia, 2007).

While the population before war was increased to be over 7 million, the genocidal war has led to a serious humanitarian crisis, making any current population figure an estimate that reflects tremendous human loss and suffering. They have a rich and ancient cultural heritage, with Tigray being home to some of the oldest civilizations and kingdoms in the region, such as the Aksumite Empire (Kogan, 2015; Tesfay, 2020; Zeradawit, 2016; Hailu, 2017).

In addition, as of recent estimates, the population of Eritrea is approximately 3.6 million people. A significant ratio of this population, particularly the Tigrinya ethnic group, speaks Tigrinya as their first language. Estimates suggest that around 50-60% of Eritreans speak Tigrinya, which would be roughly 1.8 to 2.2 million people (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2023).

Combining the populations from both Ethiopia and Eritrea, the total number of Tigrinya speakers is estimated to be around 7 to 8 million people (Ethnologue, 2023).

In addition to this, there are also millions of Tigrinya speakers throughout the world.

1.1.2. The Rayya People

According to the Census conducted by CSA of Ethiopia (2007), Southern Zone of Tigray has a total population of 1,006,504, of whom 497,280 are men and 509,224 women; 125,787 or 12.5% are urban inhabitants. Two largest ethnic groups reported in the Southern Zone were Tigrayan (95.36%) and Amhara (2.7%); all other ethnic groups made up 1.94% of the population. The document found in the Agency states that Tigrinya is spoken as a first language by 92.49% of the population the zone, Amharic by 5.58% and ximtingna (Agew) by 1.01%; the

remaining 0.92% speak all other primary languages reported. In addition, the then figure shows that 92.15% of the population were Orthodox Christians, and 7.79% were Muslim.

1.1.3. The Tigrinya Language: Distribution of the Language

Tigrinya is one of the Ethio-Semitic languages, a sub-family of South Semitic languages within the Afro-Asiatic language family, which also includes closely related languages like Ge'ez, an ancient language that serves as the liturgical language of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches, as well as to other modern Ethio - Semitic languages such as Amharic and Tigre and more distantly related to Arabic and Hebrew. Ethio - Semitic languages are primarily spoken in the Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia and Eritrea. Tigrinya is spoken in Tigray region of Ethiopia. Additionally, it is widely spoken in Eritrea, where it serves as one of the two main languages (alongside Arabic) and holds official status and by diaspora communities worldwide (Jason, 2011). It is the most widely spoken language in Eritrea and the fourth most spoken language in Ethiopia after Amharic, Oromo, and Somali.

1.1.4. Overview of the Tigrinya Language

The history of the Tigrinya language goes back to ancient times, rooted in the Semitic languages of the region. Tigrinya has been influenced by various civilizations and cultures that are common in the Horn of Africa, contributing to its linguistic richness. The language developed alongside the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires in the area, such as the Aksumite empire, which played a significant role in the spread of Christianity and the adoption of the Ge'ez script in the region (Zeradawit, 2016; Hailu, 2017).

Over the centuries, Tigrinya has emanated through interactions with other languages, particularly with Ge'ez, Amharic, Arabic, and other Cushitic languages spoken in the region. This linguistic diversity has contributed to the unique vocabulary, grammar, and phonetics of Tigrinya. The language has also been impacted by colonialism and modernization, adapting to changing social and political landscapes in Eritrea and Ethiopia (Zeradawit, 2016; Dillmann, 2005).

Today, Tigrinya continues to progress as both a spoken and written language. It is a medium of education, literature, and media, with newspapers, books, televisions and radio broadcasts in Tigrinya playing a key role in preserving and promoting the language. The global diaspora of Tigrinya speakers has also contributed to its continued growth through digital platforms and community organizations (Esayas, 2003; Abrham, 2016; Jason, 2019).

For a map of the area of speakers, see Map 1.

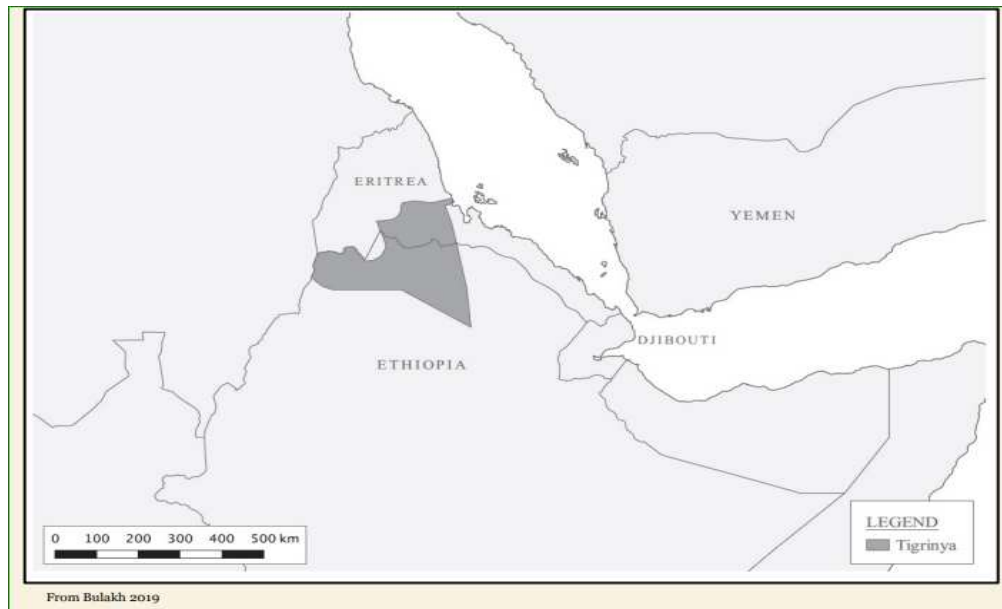


Figure 1: Areas where Tigrinya speakers found.

Source: Meyer, 2016 (as cited in Maria Bulakh page 176).

1.1.5. Overview of the Rayya Tigrinya Dialect

Like other Semitic languages, the Rayya Tigrinya dialect has A complex and comprehensive cultural, historical and grammatical structure.

Even though it is hardly possible to find studies on the dialects of Tigrinya in Tigray (Dagneu, 2019: 5) in general, studies have been taking place focusing on Southern Tigrinya dialect. Niguss (2011) discussed the whole detailed grammar of the dialect showing the Southern Zone dialect has complex and comprehensive structure like other Semitic languages. In addition, others such as Dagneu (2019) on Discourse Markers of the dialect, Mohammed (1983) on its phonology, Kibrom (2013) on the Culture and History of the Rayya people and Abrham (2012) on the progress of language shift are some of the writers that wrote on the dialect's variations.

In general, all the above sources show that the Southern Tigrinya dialect has some phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic variations from the quasi- standard Tigrinya.

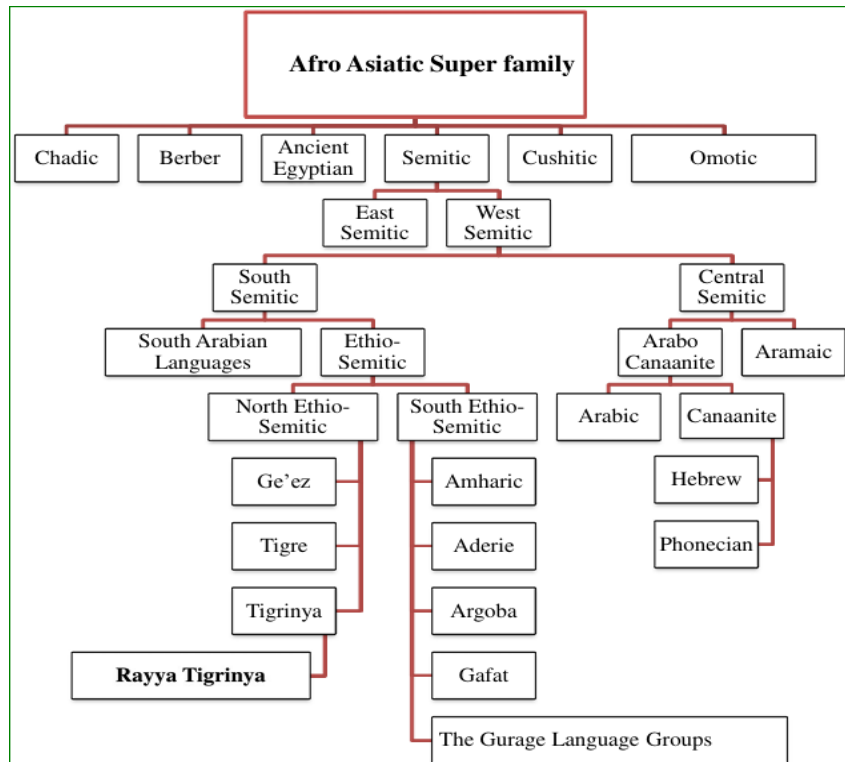


Figure 2: Rayya Tigrinya within the Semitic Family (as indicated in Niguss, 2011)

1.2. Statement of the Problem

According to studies such as (Fabri et al., 2014), Tigrinya is known for its complex morphological structures, including its gender and number system. Writers such as Awet et al. (2021) noted that Tigrinya is a “low resource” language and is notable in terms of the absence of comprehensive and free data. Furthermore, they wrote that it is characterized as one of the most semantically and syntactically complex languages in the world to be studied, similar to other Semitic languages.

In Tigrinya, gender system applies to both animate and inanimate nouns, with masculine and feminine distinctions often assigned according to semantic or arbitrary rules (Mason, 1996; Meyer, 2006). Even if many works say this, if there are rules for gender assignment of the language, there is no arbitrariness. So, this gap was one of the study areas in this thesis. As a result, the data collected from Southern Zone indicated not only masculine and feminine genders in the dialect, but also a strong tendency to neuter gender is observed functional especially when the nouns and adjectives do not inherently carry a gender distinction or when referring to inanimate objects and generic or bases that are not specifically gendered.

When we see the number system in the language, particularly the distinction between singular and plural forms, involves both suffixation and internal vowel changes. The interaction of gender and number in nouns, adjectives, and verbs, as well as their influence on agreement patterns in Tigrinya, was a rich area for linguistic investigation.

To the best of my reading, existing literatures Leslau (1939; 1969), Tesfay (2002; 2021), Kebede (2009), mostly focus on broader aspects of the Tigrinya language, such as its phonology morphology or syntax. They did not focus more on the semantics of gender and number assignment and how they semantically interact within the language's grammar. As a result, there was a gap in the literature when it comes to the semantics of gender assignment and understanding of how these features interact and are used by speakers, especially by students, in different contexts. This gap was particularly significant in understanding how gender and number systems affect agreement patterns across sentence structures, and how they are acquired and processed by speakers.

1.2.1. Research Questions

1. What semantic characteristics are used to distinguish the gender assignment systems in Southern Tigray dialect?
2. What semantic characteristics are used to distinguish between singular and plural forms in Southern Tigray dialect?
3. Are there particular patterns or limitations when both gender and number interact in Southern Tigray dialect?
4. What is the relationship between the nominal gender/number and the verb morphology in terms of agreement in the dialect?

1.3. Objectives

1.3.1. General Objective

The primary objective of this study is to find the semantic features of gender and number system in the Tigrinya language of Southern Zone dialect. The research aims to analyze the semantic relationship, and interactions of gender and number system in nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and verbs, and how these categories influence grammatical agreement within the dialect.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- describe the semantic features of gender system in Southern Tigray Tigrinya dialect;
- analyze the semantics of number system in the dialect;
- examine the interaction between gender and number system in the dialect and
- investigate the influence of gender and number on verb agreement in the Southern Tigray dialect.

1.4. Significance

Studying gender and number system in Tigrinya in general, and particularly in Southern Zone of Tigray, is important to understand the linguistic behaviors and sociocultural attachments of the language and gives additional input to it. Tigrinya, as a Semitic language with a rich and unique morphological system Yemane (2018), COLING (2012) has a known case for examining how grammatical features such as gender and number are marked and interacted. Therefore, this research could contribute to the understanding of Tigrinya in general and STD in particular as a linguistically rich language Teklay & Birhanu (2019: P. 31) and show the relationship between gender and number.

An examination of the interaction of gender and number within the variation of southern zone dialect adds knowledge to the understanding of gender and number systems in Tigrinya and Semitic languages in general. In addition, understanding these semantic features enhances for preparing educational materials and methods for teaching Tigrinya, especially in writing or preparing Tigrinya text books for early grades in Tigray schools.

Moreover, the findings of this research have important contribution to promote the cultural preservation of the Tigrinya-speaking community. That is, as one of the official languages of Tigray, Tigrinya plays a crucial role in the cultural identity and daily communication of millions of people. Understanding of its semantic structure of gender and number system, could enhance language preservation efforts and support educational programs within the region. It is also important to provide a foundation for future studies in both theoretical and applied linguistics.

Therefore, this thesis investigates the semantics mechanisms of gender and number system in Southern Zone dialect, examining their semantic patterns and interaction with each other. Because there is detailed analysis of these features, this study could not only contribute to the academic understanding of Tigrinya but also enhance the documentation of Tigrinya language for further studies.

1.5. Delimitation/ Scope

This study is limited on the semantic features of gender and number system in Southern Zone dialect Tigrinya. The study explored how gender and number are marked semantically in some grammatical features, namely, nouns, adjectives, and verbs and slightly in some pronouns of the dialect. Additionally, the study examined how gender and number system affect agreement patterns within the dialect.

The scope of this research includes:

- **linguistic Categories:** The study covered semantic features of gender and number system in nouns, adjectives, pronouns and verbs. Special attention was given to semantic gender assignment system in the dialect and the interaction of gender and number in these categories and how they contribute to agreement patterns in Tigrinya grammar.
- **Geographic and Dialectal Focus:** Although Tigrinya is spoken in Tigray, Eritrea and all over the world by diaspora, this research primarily focused on Southern zone of Tigray. Variations in gender and number marking across different socio-lects and social groups in the zone were assessed.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literatures

2.1. The Semitic Language Family

According to Zygmunt & Erin (2012), the Semitic languages are one of the world's oldest and most influential language families. They are primarily divided into East Semitic, Central Semitic, and South Semitic branches.

East Semitic: This includes the extinct languages of Akkadian and Babylonian, historically spoken in Mesopotamia.

Central Semitic: This branch includes Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic, which have played major roles in the cultural and religious history of the Middle East.

South Semitic: This group is subdivided into South Arabian and Ethiopic languages. Tigrinya, along with languages like Tigre and Amharic, belongs to the Ethiopic sub-group of the South Semitic branch.

2.2. Gender and Number in Semitic Languages

The expressions of gender and number differ from one society to another because the total meaning does not depend on the linguistic meaning only, but is associated with the cultural and social meaning (Hussein, 2021). According to Hussein (2021), many written works mention that Semitic languages, (like Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, Amharic, Ge'ez, etc.), gender and number are fundamental grammatical categories that profoundly affect nouns, adjectives, verbs, pronouns, and even some particles.

2.2.1. Gender

Gender is a fundamental grammatical category across the Semitic language family, influencing nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, and particles through agreement (Watson, 2005).

According to Hetzron (1997), most Semitic languages exhibit a system of two grammatical genders: Masculine and Feminine.

Lipinski (2001) also added that the masculine gender is typically the unmarked default. He explained nouns are assumed masculine unless marked otherwise or belonging to a semantic category typically associated with femininity. Other writers such as Tesfay (2021) and Moscati, et

al. (1964) describe that the primary and ancient feminine markers in Semitic languages are the suffixes /-t/ and /-at/.

But, Hetzron (1997) also found that many nouns such as female humans and animals (mother, sister, cow - though specific words exist), body parts typically occurring in pairs (hand, eye, ear - though this is not absolute), names of cities, countries, and some natural phenomena (earth, sun in many Semitic languages are without overt gender markers).

Some other writers such as Lipinski (2010) added that there are also Some modern spoken dialects of Semitic languages use Neutralization and Retention processes of gender assignment.

2.2.2. Number

According to Huehnergard, & Pat-El, (Eds.) (2013), Semitic languages have three number systems. Those are;

- Singular numbers that denote one entity and can indicate the base form of the nouns, adjectives and verbs.
- Dual Numbers that denote precisely two entities and they are highly characteristic features of Semitic languages, though their usage and vitality vary significantly across languages and time periods; And
- Plural Numbers that indicate three or more entities. They exhibit the most complex and diverse morphology in the languages.

2.2.2.1. Plural Formation Strategies in Semitic Languages

Linguists such as Huehnergard & Pat-El (2013) and Lipinski (2001) divided Semitic number formation strategies mainly in to two ways.

- Sound (External) Plurals are formed by adding suffixes to the singular stem. Generally, it is more common with human nouns, adjectives, participles, and pronouns. External plurals can be formed in the form of masculine Sound Plurals which typically marked with suffixes like -u/ -an and feminine Sound Plurals which are typically marked with suffixes like -at, aton/-atin, ot, -an/-ata and -at.
- Broken (Internal) Plurals are formed by changing the internal vowel pattern (ablaut) of the singular noun. Extremely productive, especially for non-human nouns, but also many

human nouns. This is a defining feature of Semitic morphology. (Huehnergard, 2004; Weninger, 2011).

- **Feminine Plural for Collective/Abstract:** Sometimes the feminine sound plural (-at) is used with singular masculine nouns to denote collectives, abstracts, or instances (e.g., Arabic ʔasmaʔ names < ism name; Hebrew mələkūt "kingdom < mələk king).
- According to Corbett (2000), Semitic languages are primarily marked by suffixes and the markers are often restricted to nouns denoting things that naturally come in pairs (body parts, clothing items, periods of time) or can be counted as two. Its use is generally more limited than singular or plural.
- **Mixed System:** Hebrew, Aramaic (various dialects), Akkadian, Gəʿəz use both sound and broken plurals, though the balance shifted over time (e.g., later Aramaic favors sound plurals more than earlier stages; Modern Hebrew has many broken patterns but also productive sound suffixes).

2.2.3. Verb Agreement

Verbs exhibit full number (and gender) agreement with their subject via prefixes, suffixes, and sometimes internal vowel changes (especially in the perfective/conjugated forms). Dual subject agreement is preserved where the nominal dual exists (Classical Arabic) (Lipiński, 2001).

Gender agreement is strict and permeates the sentence:

Adjectives: Must match the noun's gender, number and state.

Verbs: Finite verbs in the past tense (and sometimes present) agree in gender (and number) with their subject.

Pronouns: Independent, suffixed, and demonstrative pronouns distinguish gender (especially 2nd & 3rd person singular, often 3rd plural).

Particles: Some particles (e.g., Arabic /-inna/ and its sisters) cause gender agreement in their subject/ predicate (Hetzron, 1997).

According to Lipiński, the system of gender, number, and intricate agreement is a fundamental and defining characteristic of Semitic grammar, creating a tightly woven syntactic structure where morphological features consistently align across sentence constituents. The persistence of the dual,

the complexity of broken plurals, and the rules of agreement (especially with broken plurals and the potential for defective verb agreement) are particularly noteworthy features of these languages.

2.2.4. Gender and Number Interaction in Semitic Languages

In languages with "broken plurals" (Arabic, Modern South Arabian, some Ethio-Semitic languages), the plural form itself often carries inherent gender, frequently feminine singular, regardless of the singular noun's gender. Agreement follows the plural form's gender.

Arabic: kitāb (m. sg.) "book" -> kutub (m. pl.). But agreement can sometimes show feminine singular patterns for collectives.

Mehri: bayt (m. sg.) "house" -> bet (f. pl.) "houses" -> Verbs/adjectives agree with it as feminine singular (Hetzron, 1997).

2.3. Gender and Number in Tigrinya

As Pirkola & Järvelin (2001) wrote, Tigrinya is a highly inflected language and has a complex typology. It exhibits the root and pattern morphological system. The Tigrinya root is a sequence of consonants and it represents the basic form for word formation. Tigrinya makes use of prefixing, suffixing and internal changes to form inflectional and derivational word forms. Tigrinya Nouns are inflected for gender, number, case and definiteness. Like other Semitic languages, Tigrinya has rich verb morphology. Tigrinya verbs show different morphosyntactic features based on the arrangement of consonant -vowel patterns.

In addition, many writers such as Tesfay (2018) and Yonnas (2011) mentioned that Tigrinya uses suffixes and prefixes attached to roots for representing grammatical information. As in other Semitic languages, morphology is based on tri-consonant roots, from which nouns, adjectives, and verbs are formed by vowel insertion along with prefixation and suffixation.

2.3.1. Gender

Maria Bulakh (p. 184) says like other Semitic languages, Tigrinya has two genders: masculine and feminine genders in nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and verbs. According to the writer, the language has 3 core features:

- Binary System: Tigrinya employs a strict masculine-feminine gender distinction. Masculine is unmarked. Feminine is often unmarked on primary nouns, but is regularly expressed by the reflex of the common Semitic feminine marker - t (- ti after consonants)

in agent nouns and some adjectives. In **adjectives** with the pattern C1 əC2 (C2) iC3, the feminine is usually formed by means of **apophony**. With some animate nouns, gender is determined by the biological sex, and other animate nouns can refer to either male or female objects and condition gender agreement, respectively.

- **Semitic Basis:** In Tigrinya, gender is inherent to nouns and dictates agreement across adjectives, verbs, pronouns, and numerals.
- **Animacy Factor:** Gender assignment is primarily semantic for animates (based on biological sex) and grammatical for inanimates.

According to Tesfay (2020), Tigrinya nominal/adjectival morphology provides us with the evidence that gender/number morphology has interpretive content which concurs to fixing the denotation of the noun. He explained that the syncretism of feminine and plural morphology cannot be captured in terms of traditional descriptive categories, strengthening the conclusion that different properties must be involved. Generally, he divided gender inflection in to five categories. For some nouns, genders can be assigned by adding determiners and adjectives. In addition, gender inflectional endings directly combined with nominal stem. Third, there are also Tigrinya nouns specialized for animate male or female. Moreover, sexed animals can require gender tied to their references. According to him, feminine gender can also introduce a diminutive or evaluative (size or affect) meaning which overrides gender distinctions.

2.3.2. Number

Tigrinya numbers must agree in gender with the noun they modify. Masculine nouns trigger masculine number forms, feminine nouns trigger feminine forms (Tesfay, 2016).

According to Tesfay (2016), Tigrinya plurals have different forms for number. The analysis of Tigrinya nominals in terms of the grammatical category for number, singular and plural, recognizes the division of plural forms in to sound (suffixing) and broken plurals.

2.3.2.1. Plurals of Tigrinya and their Relationship

According to Tesfay (2015) and Leslau (1941), there are 3 key features which are relevant to plural formation in Tigrinya.

- **Gender:** Tigrinya nouns are inherently masculine or feminine. Feminine singular nouns often end in **-ት (-ti)**, **-እ (-i)**, or **-ቲ (-t)**.

- Definiteness: Plurals interact with the definite suffix **-ኡ (-u)** for masculine and **-አ (-a)** for feminine.
- Broken vs. Sound Plurals: Like other Semitic languages, Tigrinya uses both internal vowel changes ("broken" plurals) and suffixation ("sound" plurals).

2.3.3. Tigrinya Plural Formation Strategies

Tesfay (2015) and Bulakh (p.189) discussed that pluralization in Tigrinya language involves predictable patterns, though exceptions exist. The primary strategies are:

- Apophony (Internal Vowel Change - "Broken Plurals"): The most common and productive method, especially for masculine nouns. Involves vowel lengthening, shortening, or quality shift in the stem.

Patterns: One of the peculiar features shared by Tigrinya with Geez and Tigre within Ethio- Semitic is the employment of the so- called internal or “broken” plural: marking of the plural by a special pattern combined with the consonants of the singular form.

- Suffixation (Sound Plurals) : Primarily used for feminine nouns, loanwords, and some masculine nouns.

Leslau (1941) put common Tigrinya suffixes as follows:

-ታት /-tat/: Most productive for feminine nouns ending in **-ቲ (-ti)** or **-ኡ (-i)**. Eg. /məkina/ = məkinatat; /ʔadə/ = /ʔadətət/;

-አት/-at: (e.g., ዳል /gʷal/ ‘daughter’ → ዳላት /gʷalaʔ → ‘dɪghɛrs; ዓዲ /ʕaddi/ ‘village’ → ዓዲት /ʕaddat/ → ‘villages’).

-አት /-ʔat/: Used for some feminine nouns and loanwords (e.g., ቤተ-ክርስቲያን /bətə-kiristijan/ ‘church’ → ቤተ-ክርስቲያናት /bətə-kiristijanət/ → ‘churches’; /səb/ → ‘human’ = /səbat/ → ‘people’.

-ት /-t/: Less common, often with nouns ending in vowels (e.g., ሓው /haw/ → ‘brother’ → አሕዋት /ʔaħwat/ → ‘brothers.

Relationship: Suffixation is strongly associated with feminine gender (Zealelem, 2003).

2.3.4. Relationship to Semantics

Collectivity: Apophony plurals often imply a collective or natural group (e.g., ሰባት /səbat/ → ‘men as a group’).

Individuality/Unit: Suffixed plurals (especially **-ታት /-tat/**) can sometimes imply individuation more strongly, though this is nuanced (Tesfay, 2015).

2.3.5. Other Relationships

Loanwords: Tend to adopt the suffix **-ታት /-tat/** and **አት/-at/** (e.g., /təlevɪdʒn/ = /təlevdʒn-at/; /parti/ ‘party’ →/ parti-tat/

Dialect Variation: Plural forms can vary regionally in Tigray (Negash, 2015).

2.4. Gender and Number in Rayya Tigrinya Dialect

The Southern Tigray (Rayyan) dialect is spoken primarily in the southern part of the Tigray region of Ethiopia. It is one of the major dialect groups of Tigrinya, alongside other dialects. The Rayyan dialect is known for several phonetic and morphological peculiarities that distinguish it from the Standard Tigrinya (Niguss, 2021: 2-3).

So far, there are many works that have been written on the Southern Tigray (Rayyan) dialect about different language aspects. Among these are:

- Abraham (2012) who studied about the language shift from the Rayya dialect to the mainstream media Tigrinya.
- Alganesh (2019) who studied on gender based linguistic varieties by comparing between male and female Tigrinya speakers of Rayya and Agame.
- Dagnew (2019) studied on discourse markers on Rayya Tigrinya that is about documentation and linguistic analysis of discourse markers in general.
- Mohammed (1983) who studied about the phonology of Southern Tigray (Rayya) dialect, describing its consonant and vowel phonemes (as cited in Niguss, 2011). However, his work did not address gender and number in general, nor the semantic classification of gender and number in the dialect.
- Niguss (2011), who authored *A Grammar of Rayya Tigrinya*, providing a comprehensive description of the dialect's grammar, including the morphology of gender and number in nouns, adjectives, and verbs.

As long as I read, Niguss's (2011) study is the most organized document on the Southern Tigray (Rayyan) dialect in terms of its grammar. However, while this document describes the gender and

number of nouns, adjectives, and verbs within the broader morphological context, it does not address the semantic gender assignment system. It does not classify word classes according to their semantic, cultural, and metaphoric uses of gender within the society. Therefore, the main aim of this thesis is to incorporate semantics into the function of gender assignment systems, moving beyond purely morphological analysis, and to minimize the arbitrariness of assigning word classes as solely masculine or feminine in the dialect.

2.4.1. Gender

2.4.1.1. Gender in Rayya Tigrinya Dialect Nouns

According to Niguss (2011), gender in Rayya Tigrinya (RT) can be described in many ways.

- A few masculine nouns are marked by /-t/ to show feminine gender.

E.g. /haw/ ‘brother’ /hafti/ ‘sister’
 /nigus/ ‘king’ /nigisti/ ‘queen’

- Inherent masculine nouns that indicate ethnicity can be changed in to feminine by the suffix /-t/.

E.g. /tigrəwaj/ ‘Tigraian-m’ /tigrəwəjti/ ‘Tigraian-f’

- Many nouns can be assigned either masculine or feminine lexically.

E.g. /wədi/ ‘boy, son’ /g^wal/ ‘girl, daughter’
 /biʁraj/ ‘ox’ /laħmi/ ‘cow’

2.4.1.2. Gender in Rayya Tigrinya Dialect Adjectives

Similar to nouns, adjectives in the Southern Tigray Dialect (STD) are gender-specific. According to Niguss (2011), some adjectives show morphological distinctions in gender in their singular forms, while others do not.

- For adjectives that do not show gender distinction morphologically, their gender can be distinguished by the nouns they modify (Niguss, 2011: 116).

E.g. /libbam siwʔaj/ ‘a wise man’
 /libbam səwəjti/ ‘a wise woman’

- Adjectives that have distinct masculine and feminine forms are often morphologically marked by the vowels /-i-/ (masculine) and /-a-/ (feminine).

E.g. /s'əllim/ 'black-m' /s'əllam/ 'black-f'
 /xabbid/ 'heavy-m' /xabbad/ 'heavy-f'

Lexically masculine adjectives can also be marked for feminine gender by adding the suffix /-t/ (Niguss, 2011).

In general, although nouns and adjectives in the aforementioned studies are assigned masculine or feminine gender based on their morphological structures, these gender assignment systems do not semantically classify word classes into different subgroups. They did not touch a semantic system that assigns masculine, feminine, or a strong neuter-like gender.

Consequently, this thesis identified this gap in the semantic gender assignment systems of the dialect and aims to group nouns and adjectives semantically, culturally, and metaphorically to assign gender.

2.4.2. Number

2.4.2.1. Pluralization Strategies in Nouns of STD(RT)

Nouns in Southern Tigray dialect (RT) follow different pluralization strategies (Dagneu, 2019: 51-54). According to him, nouns in the Rayyan dialect can be pluralized by:

- adding the suffix /-at/ and its variants;
- adding the suffix /-ti/;
- adding the prefix /ʔa-/ and internal modification of stem;
- internal modification of the stem alone and
- partial reduplication.

Besides, Niguss (2011: 84) generalized pluralization systems of RT in to two ways of plural formation strategies, namely, suffixation and broken plurals or external and internal plurals similar to standard Tigrinya.

2.4.2.2. Pluralization Strategies in Adjectives of STD (RT)

In *A Grammar of Rayya Tigrinya*, Niguss (2011: 119) states that adjectives in RT can be pluralized by adding different plural markers. According to him, the common adjectival plural markers in RT are the suffixes /-at/, /-tat/, /-t/, /-o/, and /jan/.

Dagnew (2019: 54) also notes that plural forms of adjectives in RT can be marked by the suffix /-ti/.

Generally, similar to the gender assignment systems, the aforementioned literatures mainly focused on the morphology of the number system of the dialect. The discussions mainly concern the two pluralization forms—external and internal (i.e., suffixation and internal vowel or stem change). They did not mainly focus on the semantics and sociolinguistic number assignment systems such as:

- dual numbers
- reduplication
- compounding
- prestige
- scorn and
- the semantic interaction of gender and number in the dialect.

Therefore, this thesis aimed at filling the above gaps.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive linguistic approach to investigate the semantics of gender and number in the Southern Tigray dialect of Tigrinya. A descriptive approach is appropriate for capturing the systematic structures and semantic patterns of the dialect, particularly when focusing on under documented dialects. The study is primarily qualitative, with some quantitative descriptions where necessary (e.g., frequency of pluralization patterns, agreement forms, etc.).

3.2. Study Area and Dialect

The thesis focused on the Southern Zone of the Tigray Region, Ethiopia, where a specific dialect of Tigrinya is spoken. This dialect was selected because its semantic assignment of gender and number is less studied in prior studies and its potential to reveal semantic variations from the standard Tigrinya forms documented in previous literatures.

3.3. Data Sources

The data for this study were drawn from multiple sources to ensure richness and reliability:

Native speakers: Primary data were collected through elicitation sessions with native speakers of the Southern Tigray dialect. Participants included adults of both sexes and various age groups to account for intra-dialectal variation. Informants are selected from 4 Districts (Weredas); from the highlands and lowlands of Southern Zone: 3 males and 2 females totally 5 participants were selected from Maichew Town and three of them are language teachers. 1 male and 1 female participant were selected from Endamekhoni village. Both of them are elders in order the exact dialect is extracted from them. In addition, 2 male participants from Alamata, 1 from Ofla and 2 from Raya Azebo districts were selected and asked to cover all areas of the zone. Moreover, 3 Educators and language experts but native speakers of the dialect who have formal knowledge of Tigrinya grammar and the dialect were included in the study in order to bring deep ideas and contribute intensive view point about the dialect. Totally 15 participants were involved in the study.

Researcher's intuition: The researcher, as a native speaker of Tigrinya and the dialect, contributed informed judgments on acceptability, semantic nuances, and naturalness of forms.

3.4. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three main techniques:

- **Fieldwork and elicitation:** Structured and semi-structured elicitation sessions were conducted to collect words of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and agreement patterns illustrating gender and number. Different elicitation questions were prepared by English and Tigrinya languages in order the informants answer the questions and describe their ideas freely by their own language. All the interviews and speeches were recorded by electronic recorder for latter classification and glossing.
- **Interviews with educators:** Participants were asked questions based on the collected words and recorded speech from fieldwork and other methods to check the interaction and agreement of gender and number, gender assignment principles, and number marking strategies.
- **Text and speech analysis:** Spontaneous speech from singers and other events and ceremonies, documentaries prepared by the dialect and written texts were analyzed to cross-check patterns observed in elicitation.

All the recorded and collected data were differentiated, grouped and transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), and each word was glossed morpheme-by-morpheme to ensure clarity in semantic analysis of gender and number.

3.5. Data Analysis

The analysis focused on semantic assignment of gender and number systems in Southern Tigray Tigrinya. Specifically:

- **Gender analysis:** Nouns were classified as masculine, feminine, or neuter based on their, semantic properties, the relation and interaction of gender and number within the words, agreement patterns and usage in discourse. Rules for semantic gender assignment were identified by grouping words in their semantic properties.
- **Number analysis:** Singular, plural, and dual forms were examined, including common Semitic strategies (suffixation, internal plurals) and additional strategies identified in this dialect, such as reduplication, noun compounding and other semantic and metaphoric properties.

- Agreement analysis: Subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement patterns of gender and number were analyzed to determine the interaction between gender and number in verbal and nominal morphology.

Data were organized into tables and illustrative examples for clarity, with qualitative interpretation of semantic principles and rules.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research practices. Oral informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and their contributions were used only for academic purposes. The study also respected cultural norms and sought local guidance to ensure sensitivity in fieldwork interaction.

3.7. Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in the theoretical and analytical principles of semantics, drawing on key linguistic models that explain how gender and number function and interact within a language system. The conceptual framework integrates insights from typological, formal, and cognitive-functional linguistic theories to provide a comprehensive approach to understanding gender and number in the Southern Tigray dialect of Tigrinya.

At its core, the study conceptualizes gender and number as interrelated grammatical categories that influence agreement patterns in nouns, adjectives, and verbs. Following Corbett (1991; 2000), gender is treated as a system of noun classification determined by both semantic meaning (biological sex, size, or animacy, metaphoric) and morphosyntactic agreement (how other words in a phrase change to match the noun). Number, on the other hand, is seen as a morphological and syntactic feature distinguishing singular, plural, and collective entities (Harley & Ritter, 2002; Harbour, 2014).

These two categories do not function independently. Their interaction—for example, how plural nouns influence gender marking or how gender affects verb agreement—is central to the grammar of Tigrinya. The study adopts the Syntactic Feature Theory from Generative Grammar, which posits that both gender and number features are represented hierarchically within the noun phrase (NumP and nP). These features probe and agree with other elements in the sentence to produce coherent morphological patterns. Additionally, Prototype Theory of Zubin & Köpcke (1986) supports the semantic aspect of gender assignment, suggesting that gender distinctions originally

reflect natural categories like male vs. female and later extend metaphorically to non-human nouns based on perceived characteristics.

In the context of Southern Tigray Tigrinya, this framework helps explain the presence of a three-gender system—masculine, feminine, and neuter—where semantic motivation (e.g., size, function, metaphor, or natural sex) and formal agreement mechanisms work together. The framework also accounts for the diverse pluralization strategies observed in this dialect, including suffixation, internal vowel change, reduplication, and compounding, all of which are influenced by both meaning and structure.

Thus, the conceptual framework connects four main dimensions:

Semantic Basis: Gender and number are semantically motivated categories reflecting conceptual distinctions such as animacy, size, and collectivity.

Morphological Realization: These features are expressed through affixation, internal vowel alternation, or reduplication in nouns, adjectives, verbs and determiners.

Syntactic Interaction: Gender and number drive agreement relationships within noun phrases and between subjects and verbs.

Dialectal Variation: The Southern Tigray dialect exhibits unique morphosyntactic behavior that enriches our understanding of cross-dialectal variation in Tigrinya.

By combining semantic theories, morphological analysis, and syntactic models, this framework provides a holistic basis for analyzing how gender and number systems function and interact in Southern Tigray Tigrinya. It not only explains the linguistic phenomena under study but also situates the findings within broader Afro-Asiatic and universal grammatical theories.

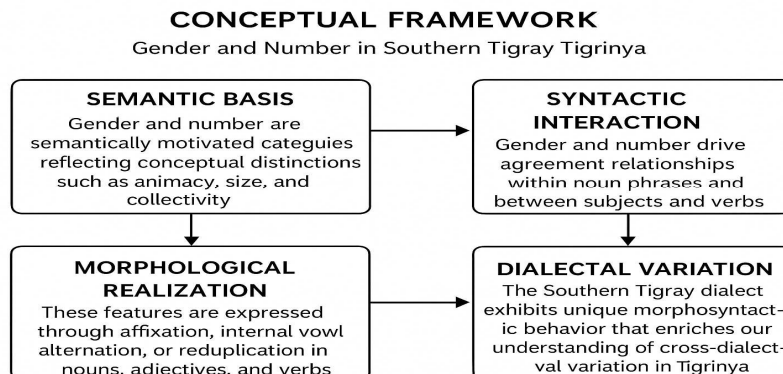


Figure 3: Gender and Number in Southern Tigray Tigrinya

Chapter Four

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

4.1. The Semantic Analysis of Gender in Rayya Tigrinya Dialect

According to Kramer (2015)), in Tigrinya, gender marking is almost exclusively based on actual sex for animate nouns. Inanimate objects are typically neutral or take on gender based on metaphorical association or semantics and cultural associations.

The collected data from field work and conducted interviews show that many natural genders except bases and group nouns in Tigrinya classified into Masculine and Feminine. This distinction manifests across almost all parts of speech. But many animal nouns and some human collective and common nouns are naturally **neuter** or they cannot be distinguished by male or female at their singular word level. The data collected from field work and other methods are delivered below for analysis.

4.1.1. Semantic Gender Analysis of Nouns

4.1.1.1. Nouns that have 3 Gender Assignment Systems

The names of people's relation, kinship, family relations in humans and domestic animals have three- gender assignment system in the Southern Tigray dialect.

Table 1: Nouns that describe people, kinship and domestic animals

No	Masculine	Gloss	Fem- nine	Gloss	Neuter	Gloss
1	/siwʔaj/	'man-m'	/səwəjtɪ/	'woman-f'	/səw/	'person-ne'
2	/wəddi/	'male-m'	/gʷal/	'female-f'	/x'əlʕa/	'child-ne'
3	/ʔabbə/	'father-m'	/ʔaddə/	'mother-f'	/wələddi/	'parents-ne'
4	/haw/	'brother-m'	/hafti/	'sister-f'	/dək'i/	'children-ne'
5	/abbogəwəw/	'elder-m'	/diwərtə/	'elder-f'	/ʕiməgilə/	'elder/arbiter-ne'
6	/ʔajjajə/	'father-m'	/ʔaddəjə/	'mother-f'	/wələddi/	'parents-ne'
8	/hint'aj/	'infant-m'	/hint'it/	'infant-f'	/hintə/	'infant-ne'
9	/ham/	'father in-law- m'	/hamat/	'mother in-law- f'	/ʕaddihiman/	'husband's or 'wife's par- ents-ne'
10	/nəxraj/	'bridegroom- m'	/mirʕat/	'bride-f'	/gəbban/	'male/female ex-friend-ne'
11	/digləj/	'sheep-m'	/digijə/	'young sheep- f'	/laʕva/	'sheep-ne'
12	/bəʕraj/	'ox-m'	/lahmi/	'cow-f'	/ʔat'ʕa/	'calf- ne'
13	/wurt'ət'ə/	'goat- m'	/ʕarhi/	'young goat-f'	/gilgel/	'goat-ne'
14	/təfin/	'bull-m'	/haləjta/	'young cow-f'	/murax/	'calf-ne'
15	/kəkənəj/	'cock-m'	/dərhə/	'hen-f'	/tʃ'atʃ'ot/	'chicken-ne'

The data shows a three-gender system: Masculine, Feminine, and Neuter.

According to table one, a detailed semantic gender analysis of these nouns reveals several key principles at work: biological sex, social roles, collectivity, and neutral default for the Neuter gender.

The primary function of M/F in the table indicates individuals with specific functions; Neuter groups them or speaks of them in the abstract.

[1] For example; the neuter noun *səb* is the group or general form of *sivaj* and *səvəjti*. And the other human neuter nouns in the table show such behavior.

Other nouns in the table show that for kin words like */wələdi/* = ‘parents’ and */ʕaddihiman/* = ‘in-laws’, the neuter creates a collective social unit. So, the dialect uses neuter gender not as biological sex but it uses to express strong social relationships.

The pattern for animals shows that similar to people but with a stronger emphasis on economic utility and herd management. In domestic animals of the dialect, most neuter genders are young or infant animals. This shows that most domestic animals consider the animal as a type or a collective resource, not as a specific, gendered individual.

[2] Example: */laʕva/*, */gilgəl/*, */ʔtʕa/*, */mərəx/* and */tʃʔatʃʔot/* are new born animals which are considered as neuter. They are considered as young animal types not their sex.

In general, the three-gender system in this Tigrinya dialect is not a simple biological male/female classification. Instead, it actively participates in structuring social reality: it distinguishes individuals from the group, specific roles from collective units, and marked states (gendered adult) from unmarked states (child, species, ex-relationship). The "neuter" is thus more accurately understood as a general or collective gender, a default category that the language uses to bundle together what the culture perceives as non-specific or collective entities.

4.1.1.2. Nouns that have Two Gender system(M/F)

Table 2: Nouns of wild animals (Masculine Vs Feminine)

No	Masculine	Gloss	Feminine	Gloss
1	/ʕassa/	'fish-m'	/t'ink'uraʕ/	'frog- f'
2	/tiχ ^w an/	'bedbug-m'	/dabbə/	'pigon-f'
3	/x'untʃ'i/	'flea-m'	/ʕuf/	'bird-f'
3	/təvən/	'snake-m'	/x'ux'ah/	'grouse-f'
4	/k'ora/	'crow-m'	ʕuf-ləjti	'bat-f'
5	/goma/	'vulture-m'	/ʃila/	'eagle-f'
6	--	--	/zagra/	'quail-f'
7	/ziṽʔi/	'hayena-m'	/xərja/	'fox-f'
8	/ħarmaz/	'elephant-m'	/mantilə/	'rabbit-f'
9	/nəvri/	'tiger-m'	/səʃa/	'antelope-f'

Table 2 shows unlike domestic animals, wild animals have only two genders that is masculine and feminine. In the data, the masculine gender is strongly associated with animals perceived as pests, unclean, or threatening and large and fierce wild animals are assigned masculine gender, while more neutral or positively viewed animals are feminine.

[3] Examples: Masculine (Negative/Pest)

/tiχ^wan/ = 'bedbug', /x'untʃ'i/ = 'flea': Unambiguously negative household pests.

/təvən/ = 'snake': Often feared and associated with danger.

/k'ora/ = 'crow': Sometimes viewed as an omen or a nuisance.

/goma/ = 'vulture': A scavenger, often associated with death and decay.

/ziṽʔi/ = 'hayena' : It is dangerous and fierce.

/ħarmaz/ = 'elephant' : Is powerful

/nəvri/ = 'tiger' : dangerous and powerful.

/ʕassa/ = 'fish' : it is connected with its size and with the size of water where it lives in it.

[4] Feminine (Neutral/Positive)

/ʕuf/ = 'bird'): Generally neutral or positive.

/dabbə/ = 'pigeon/dove': Often a symbol of peace.

/ʕuf-ləjti/ = 'bat': its gender may come from its root word /ʕuf/.

/x'ux'ah/ = 'grouse': it is an eatable bird, useful.

/t'ink'uraʃ/ = 'frog' : harmless or neutral.

Table 3: Nouns that describe body parts

No	Masculine	Gloss	Feminine	Gloss
1	/siga/	'flesh-m'	/nəʋsi/	'soul-f'
2	/rəʃa/	'corpse-m'	/mintinfas/	'soul-f'
3	/riʔsi/	'head-m'	/roħ/	'soul-f'
4	/ʔaf /	'mouth-m'	/hammut/	'bile-f'
5	/fintʃa/	'nose-m'	/s'əlam/ /xavdi/	'liver-f'
6	/ʔid/	'hand-m'	/xulalit/	'kidney-f'
7	/ʔigri/	'leg-m'	/məħhas/	'tongue-f'
8	/ʃaʒni/	'eye -m'	/libi/	'heart-f'
9	/gəs'i/	'face-m'		
10	/ʔizni/	'ear-m'		

Hetzron (1997) mentioned that in Semitic languages, parts of human body such as hand, eye, ear, are assigned as feminine if they are standalone without gender markers.

On the contrary, in Southern Tigray dialect, as we can see from the data in table 4, the concrete, external, and structurally defining human body parts, if they become as word level without gender markers are assigned as masculine even if they are in their singular form.

According to the information found in the data, In Southern Tigray dialect, body parts that are external, structurally integral, and purely physical are mostly assigned to the masculine gender.

The concept of /siga/ = 'flesh, body -m' vs. /nəʋsi/ = 'soul -f'

The /siga/ = 'flesh-m' is the tangible, physical container or the hardware in humans. It is masculine, emphasizing its materiality and mortality. The /nəʋsi/ = 'soul-f' is the intangible life force, consciousness, and personality that inhabits the body. Its feminine gender associates it with the inner, invisible, and animating principle of life. A similar pairing is /rəʃa/ = 'corpse - m' vs. /mintinfas/ = 'soul - f', where the corpse is the empty, inanimate masculine shell from which the feminine soul has differentiated.

[5] Examples

e.g. /ʃas'm-u gəfiħ jiʔ-u/

'skeleton-m' 'wide-m' 'is-m'

'His bone is wide.'

/ʔiti rəʃa ɧəlifu/

‘the-m’ ‘dead body-m’ ‘passed’

‘The body passed.’

/mintinfas-xa ti- -ɧləf/

‘soul - your-m’ ‘ti- feminine marker pass’

‘May God take your soul.’

Table 4: Collective nouns that are names of people, domestic and wild animals

No	Masculine	Gloss	Feminine	Gloss
1	/sərawit/	‘army-m’	/ʔahadu/	‘branch of army-f’
2	/hizvi/	‘people-m’	/maɧbər/	‘association-f’
3	/ɧibrətəsəb/	‘community-m’	/gudʒilə/	‘group of people-f’
4	/maɧbərəsəb/	‘society-m’	/ʔidir/	‘local association-f’
5	/ʃijal/	‘family-m’	/x’əlʃa-səbəjti/	‘family-f’
6	/ʃislə/	‘flock of wild animals-m’	/bəgiʃə-t’əli/	‘collection of sheep and goats-f’
7	/tj’ifra/	‘swarm of wild animals-m’	/ʔargo-bəx’li/	‘collection of donkeys, horses and mules- f’
8	/ʔarə/	‘wild animals-m’	/wərk’i/	‘cattle-f’

The gender assignment in this system is not based on biological sex but on a profound semantic opposition between Order vs. Chaos, and the Domestic vs. the Wild. The masculine gender is consistently associated with large-scale, abstract, often untamed or generalized collectives. In contrast, the feminine gender is associated with smaller-scale, concrete, organized, and domesticated collectives.

[6] According to table 4, the collective nouns of people, domestic and wild animals show three semantic properties on gender assignment systems.

- **The Macro/Micro Distinction:** Across both categories, there is a consistent pattern of masculine for macro-level collectives and feminine for micro-level ones. The army (M) contains branches (F); society (M) contains local associations (F); the category of wild animals (M) contrasts with specific types of domestic herds (F).
- **Abstract (M) vs. Concrete (F):** Masculine nouns often refer to more abstract concepts (society, people, community), while feminine nouns are more tangible and action-oriented (a group, an association, a herd of cattle).

- Cultural overview: Femininity is semantically associated with organization within chaos, domestication, nurture, and the practical management of life. It brings order to the raw materials of the world, whether social (forming groups) or natural (domesticating animals). Masculinity is associated with the potent, overarching, and undifferentiated source—be it the body politic, the wild forces of nature, or the abstract lineage.

4.1.1.3. Nouns that have only Masculine Gender

Table 5: Noun classifications that have only masculine gender

Food Items		Liquids		Religious words		Abstract Nouns	
Masculine	Gloss	Masculine	Gloss	Masculine	Gloss	Masculine	Gloss
/gəggə/	‘food-m’	/məj/	‘water-m’	/ʔamlak/	‘God-m’	/həjli/	‘power-m’
/s’əvhi/	‘sausage-m’	/zinav/	‘rain-m’	/ʔabəjzigi/	‘God/rain-m’	/silt’an/	‘authority-m’
/t’ajta/	‘Injera’-m’	/bahri/	‘sea-m’	/səjt’an/	‘devil-m’	/s’əlmət/	‘darkness-m’
/ʔixli/	‘food item-m’	/dəmm/	‘blood-m’	/bətəxsjan/	‘church-m’	/birhan/	‘bright-m’
/gətətə/	‘bean-m’	/zəjti/	‘oil-m’	/məʔak/	‘andʒəl-m’	/həzən/	‘sadness-m’
/t’af/	‘t’af-m’	/lamba/	‘fuel-m’	/məsgid/	‘mosque-m’	/həgəs/	‘happiness-m’
/təxli/	‘plant-m’	/s’im ^w ax’/	‘juice-m’	/k’idasə/	‘eucharist-m’	/nifas/	‘wind-m’
/x’əst’ə/	‘swiss chard-m’	/səwwa/	‘siwa’-m’	/biʔal/	‘holiday-m’	/ʔijjaha/	‘information-m’
/məfilla/	‘sorghum-m’	/s’əva/	‘milk-m’	/s’əʔət/	‘prayer-m’	/ləwt’i/	‘change-m’

According to table 5 the most striking and consistent pattern in the above data is that nouns denoting food items, particularly staple foods and grains, are mostly assigned masculine gender. This pattern is robust and applies to both native Tigrinya words and loanwords.

Table 5 also shows that the consistent assignment of the masculine gender to liquids. All the listed liquids in the list are marked as masculine. They are classified as:

[7] Natural Elements: /məj/ = ‘water’, /zinav/ = ‘rain’, /bahri/ = ‘sea’.

Edible Liquids: /zəjti/ = ‘oil’, /s’əva/ = ‘milk’, /riʔuʔə/ = ‘yoghurt’, /məx’/ = ‘soup’.

Bodily Fluids: /dəmm/ = ‘blood’.

Processed/Modern Liquids: /lamba/ = ‘fuel’, /s’im^wax’/ = ‘juice’.

Cultural Items: /səwwa/ = ‘siwa, a traditional drink’.

Linguistic Implication: This pattern strongly suggests that for the semantic class of liquids, Masculine is the default or unmarked gender in the Southern Tigray dialect. Classifying them as masculine may reflect a perception of their active, potent, and encompassing power.

The data also reveals that all the religious words found in the table are assigned as masculine gender in the dialect. This demonstrates that the masculine gender is the default or unmarked gender for the semantic field of religion in the dialect. In the religious domain, the masculine gender is a grammatical marker of metaphysical potency, supreme agency, and sanctity. It creates a coherent grammatical class for concepts that hold the highest cultural and spiritual significance.

Semantically, the most striking and definitive evidence from column 4 of the above data is that abstract nouns in Southern Tigray dialect, specifically those describing concepts, ideas, states, and conditions, show a very strong tendency to be masculine. In this sample of abstract nouns, other evidences during the field work and personal intuition, the tendency is absolute. This points to a powerful systemic rule or default gender assignment for this semantic category.

4.1.1.3. Nouns that have only Feminine Gender

Table 6: Nouns that indicate light and heat, productivity, beauty and art

Light and Heat		Productivity, beauty and art	
Feminine	Gloss	Feminine	Gloss
/s'əhaj/	'sun-f'	/midri/	'earth-f'
/wərhi/	'moon-f'	/ʕaləm/	'life/earth-f'
/litʃi/	'electric light-f'	/hək'k'i/	'truth-f'
/ʔambul/	'light bulb-f'	/t'ibəb/	'art-f'
/fanus/	'lantern-f'	/fire/	'berry-f'
/kuraz/	'kerosene' lamp-f'	/ʔəm/ /s'ilal/	'tree with 'shade-f'
/məbrahti/	'electric light-f'	/tiʕgisti/	'petiance-f'
/hawwi/	'fire-m'	/gənət/	'paradise-f'

In the column one of table 6, the data presents a near-perfect dichotomy. A single, powerful, and dangerous natural element—'fire' = /hawwi/ is assigned the masculine gender. In contrast, all other nouns, which are sources of controlled, useful, or celestial light and heat, are assigned the feminine gender. This clear division strongly supports the proposed semantic principles of fierceness for masculinity and beauty/productivity for femininity.

Unlike the sun or a lamp, a wild fire is not productive in a controlled, domestic sense; it is a primal force. Its power is not harnessed for a specific, gentle purpose but exists as a potent, sometimes terrifying, energy.

The Feminine Principle: A Dual Concept of Beauty and Productivity

[8] - Beauty and Order

/s'əḥaj/ = 'sun-m' is the ultimate source of life, light, and warmth. Its gender can be attributed to both beauty (its majestic, life-giving presence) and productivity (it enables agriculture and defines the daily cycle).

/wərḥi/ = 'moon-f' is consistently associated with beauty, cycles, and gentle illumination across cultures. Its light is soft, not harsh or destructive, and it guides the night. This is a classic assignment based on beauty and a nurturing, cyclical presence.

[9] - Productive and Domestic Utility

/litʃi/ = 'electric light-f.sg', /ʔambul/ = 'light bulb-f.sg', /fanus/ = 'lantern-f.sg', /kuraz/ = 'kerosene lamp-f.sg', /məbrahti/ = 'electric light-f.sg':

In terms of productivity, these objects are tools that extend to the productive day, allowing for work, study, and social interaction by avoiding dark. They are enablers of human activity and domestic order.

Beauty: Their light is functional but can also create a beautiful, welcoming atmosphere in a home.

Generally, the data from column one of table 6 provides exceptionally strong evidence for the proposed analysis. The single masculine noun, /hawwi/ = 'fire', perfectly embodies the principle of fierceness. The numerous feminine nouns, encompassing celestial bodies and human-made tools, collectively embody the dual principles of "beauty" (the sun and moon) and "productivity" (all the lamps and lights). This clear semantic division shows that gender in this dialect is not arbitrary but is a living system that encodes deep-seated cultural perceptions of the world.

Column two of table 6 also shows that all the words are assigned as feminine gender to concepts associated with productivity, hope, and fundamental positive abstractions. This suggests a cultural schema where the feminine principle is intrinsically linked to creation, sustenance, truth, and ultimate salvation or reward in the dialect.

In conclusion, column two of table 6 reveals that in Southern Tigray Tigrinya, the concepts that form the bedrock of a productive life and a hopeful outlook—from the very earth underfoot to the promise of paradise—are grammatically and symbolically feminine. This linguistic pattern paints a picture of a culture that deeply associates the feminine with the origin, sustenance, and ultimate fulfillment of life. The data provides a powerful testament to how language encodes a people's deepest understanding of the world.

In conclusion, from the above data analysis, gender assignment of nouns in Southern Tigray dialect can be divided in to four main categories.

- Nouns that indicate kinship and human relationship, family relationships, and domestic animals have 2 gender assignment systems (masculine, feminine and neuter gender).
- Nouns that describe human body parts, Nature and places, almost all of collective nouns and wild animals have 2 gender assignment systems (masculine versus feminine).
- Nouns that describe liquids, most religion related words, all food items and abstract nouns are assigned as masculine gender.
- Most nouns that give light and heat, that show productivity and hope and beauty and art are assigned as feminine gender.

4.1.2. Semantic Gender Analysis in Adjectives

4.1.2.1. Adjectives that have 3 gender system

Table 7: Adjectives that have 3 gender system

No	Masculine	Gloss	Feminine	Gloss	Neuter	Gloss
1	/s'ibux'/	'good-m'	/s'ibux'ti/	'good-f'	/s'ibox'at/	'good-ne.pl'
2	/ʒawujji/	'big-m'	/ʒabbaj/	'big-f'	/ʒabbəjti/	'big-ne.pl'
3	/nəwih/	'tall-m'	/nəwah/	'tall-f'	/nəwahti/	'tall-ne.pl'
4	/x'ajih/	'red-m'	/x'ajah/	'red-f'	/x'ajahti/	'red-ne.pl'
5	/s'əllim/	'black-m'	/s'əllam/	'black-f'	/s'əlləmti/	'black-ne.pl'
6	/dimux'/	'bright-m'	/dimox'ti/	'bright-f'	/dimox'at/	'bright-ne.pl'
8	/ruħruħ/	'kind-m'	/ruħruħti/	'kind-f'	/rəħrəħat/	'kind-ne.pl'
9	/səlamawi/	'peacefull-m'	/səlamawit/	'peacefull-f'	/səlamawjan/	'peacefull-ne.pl'
10	/nifroj/	'resent-m'	/nifrojti/	'resent-f'	/nifrojat/	'resent-ne.pl'
11	/ʔitjəp'jawwi/	'Ethiopian-m'	/ʔitjəp'jawit/	'Ethiopian-f'	/ʔitjəp'jawjan/	'Ethiopian-ne.pl'
12	/ʔafrikawi/	'African-m'	/ʔafrikawit/	'African-f'	/ʔafrikawjan/	'African-ne.pl'
13	/ʔirəbətaj/	'Erob-m'	/ʔirəbətəjti/	'Erob-f'	/ʔirəbətət/	'Erob-ne.pl'
14	/tigrəwaj/	'Tigraian-m'	/tigrəwaj/	'Tigraian-f'	/təgarə/	'Tigraian-ne.pl'
15	/ʔamharaj/	'Amhara-m'	/ʔamharətəjti/	'Amhara-f'	/ʔamharu/	'Amhara-ne.pl'

Table 7 shows that most kinds of adjectives have 3 gender system i.e. masculine, feminine and neuter. According to the above table, when adjectives are changed in to plurals, their gender is neutralized. There is no specific masculine or feminine gender in plural adjectives their gender is differentiated by adding other modifiers or determiners.

[10] Examples-

a) /nəwəḥti wədat/

‘tall-m.pl boys’

‘Tall boys(m.pl)’

b) /nəwəḥti g^walat/

‘tall-f.pl girls’

‘Tall girls (f.pl)’

Therefore, the gender of plural adjectives can be determined by the they describe.

4.1.2.2. Adjectives that have 2 gender system

Table 8: Adjectives that have masculine versus feminine gender system

Masculine versus Feminine			
Masculine	Gloss	feminine	Gloss
/ḥatʃ ^h inəʔaj/	‘sliver-m’	/ḥatʃ ^h inəwəjti/	‘sliver-f’
/ʕinq ^h əwaj/	‘blue-m’	/ʕinq ^h əwəjti/	‘blue-f’
/ʕambərəwaj/	‘spotty-m’	/ʕambərəwəjti/	‘spotty-f’
/x ^h əs ^h ləwaj/	‘green-m’	/x ^h əs ^h ləwəjti/	‘green-f’

Table 8 shows some color adjectives in the Southern Tigray dialect have only masculine and feminine genders. Because they do not have plural forms, they simply have not neuter gender.

4.1.2.3. Adjectives that have only neuter gender

Many color and personality or behavior adjectives in Southern Tigray dialect are only described by neuter gender.

Color adjectives such as /x^həs^hal/ = ‘green’, /bitʃ^htʃ^hɑ/ = ‘yellow’, /ḥarʔi-ḥint^hə/ = ‘yellow’, /s^hɑfda/ = ‘white’, /t^hərə/ = ‘spotty’, etc. and personality and behavior adjectives such as /s^hɑfram/ = ‘diligent’, /t^hivəvəna/ = ‘wise’, /ləwah/ = ‘humble’, /tʃ^həqɑqɑ/ = ‘cruel’, /dəfar/ = ‘courteous’, /ləgas/ = ‘generous’, /hasas/ = ‘fool’ and /libam/ = ‘attent’ etc. have only neuter gender. They cannot be expressed by masculine or feminine gender unless they are accompanied by other determiners.

[10] E.g. 1) /ʔiti bitʃ^htʃ^hɑ xidan/

‘the-m.sg’ ‘yellow-m’ ‘cloth-m’

‘The yellow cloth(m)’

2) /ʔita bitʃʔa xidan/

‘the-f.sg’ ‘yellow-f’ ‘cloth-f’

‘The yellow cloth(f)’

The neuter forms in personality and behavior adjectives are used to describe a person's character in a general way. When we say someone is /s’ɑʃram/ = ‘diligent’ or /t’ivəvəɾa/ = ‘wise’, we are describing their inherent nature without specifying their sex.

[11] E.g. 1) /ʔisa s’ɑʃram jiʔa/

‘She-pro. Diligent(f)- is’

‘She is diligent.’

2) /ʔiso s’ɑʃram jiʔo/

‘He-pro. Diligent(m)- is’

‘He is diligent.’

4.1.3. Semantic Gender Analysis in Rayya Tigrinya Dialect Verbs

Many writers (Tesfay (2015), Kogan & Korotkova (2010), Leslau (1941) and others) describe that verbs in Tigrinya agree with the subject in person, gender, and number. This agreement is primarily encoded through prefixes on the imperfective (present/future) stem and suffixes on the perfective (past) stem. But most of them, they did not discuss semantic overview of verb agreement and dialect focused agreement with gender. Here is semantic analysis of verbs (Southern Zone dialect).

4.1.3.1. Analysis of Perfective Verbs (RD)

Table 9: Tigrinya main verbs in the Rayan dialect (perfective tense)

No	Tigrinya (RD) main verbs			
	Masculine	Gloss	Feminine	Gloss
1	/wədiʔo/	‘finish-3m.per’	/wədiʔa/	‘finish-3f.per’
2	/ʔagnijə/	‘find-3m.per’	/ʔagnija/	‘find-3f.per’
3	/gəwro/	‘act-3m.per’	/gəvra/	‘act-3f.per’
4	/ʃadigo/	‘buy-3m.per’	/ʃadiga/	‘buy-3f.per’
5	/ʃəworo/	‘break-3m.per’	/ʃəvra/	‘break-3f.per’
6	/mətʃʔitʃʔo/	‘sour-3m.per’	/mətʃʔitʃʔa/	‘sour-3f.per’
7	/mənkiro/	‘try-3m.per’	/mənkiɾa/	‘try-3f.per’
8	/s’əlilxa/	‘cover-2m.per’	/s’əlilxi/	‘cover-2f.per’
9	/t’əjix’xa/	‘ask-m.per’	/t’əjix’xi/	‘ask-3f.per’
10	/s’əx’s’ix’xa/	‘Paint-2m.per’	/s’əx’s’ix’xi/	‘cover-2f.per’

The primary semantic role of gender marking in the Rayan dialect's perfective verbs, according to the data found in table 9, is agreement with the subject. The verb morphology does not change the core lexical meaning of the verb itself (e.g., 'to buy' remains 'to buy', etc.) but it is obligatorily inflected to match the natural or grammatical gender of the subject of the clause. This agreement is a fundamental grammatical feature of the dialect, which is similar to the standard Tigrinya. The data also reveals a clear morphophonological pattern where gender is primarily marked by a change in the final vowel of the verb stem.

Semantic Analysis:

- Subject-Verb Agreement

The most fundamental semantic interaction visible in this table is indexical agreement. The verb form changes not because the action itself is masculine or feminine, but to grammatically concord with the gender of the subject who performs the action.

[12] Examples:

/wədiʔ-ʊ/ = 'He finished' vs. */wədiʔ-ɑ/* = 'She finished'

/ʁadig-ʊ/ = 'He bought' vs. */ʁadig-ɑ/* = 'She bought'

The semantic roles (Agent, Patient) and the lexical aspect of the verb (e.g., telic finish, buy vs. activity act) remain constant. The gender marker is a purely grammatical feature that points to a property of the subject.

- Interaction with Verb Stem Morphology (Ablaut)

Beyond suffixation, the data shows that gender agreement can sometimes trigger or co-occur with internal changes to the verb root, a process known as ablaut or stem apophony.

[13] Examples:

/gəwɪ-ʊ/ = 'he acted' vs. */gəvɪ-ɑ/* = 'she acted'

/ʃəwɪ-ʊ/ = 'he broke' vs. */ʃəvɪ-ɑ/* = 'she broke'

Here, the gender distinction is not only marked by the final vowel but also by a change in the stem: */-w/* → */-v/* and the loss of the vowel */-ʊ/* in the feminine form of break. This differs from standard Tigrinya.

- Lack of Inherent Lexical Gender in Verbs

A critical semantic point is that the verbs themselves have no inherent gender. The verb *ṣadig-* (to buy) is neutral. It only becomes "masculine" or "feminine" through agreement with its subject. This is demonstrable because the same root can be used with both masculine and feminine suffixes depending on the context.

4.1.3.2. Gender in Tigrinya (RD) main verbs (Imperfective tense)

Table 10: Gender analysis in Tigrinya (RD) imperfective main verbs

No	Masculine	Gloss	Feminine	Gloss
1	/jisṣir/	'win-1m. Imp'	/jisṣir/	'win-1f. Im'
2	/jihliw/	'keep-1m. Imp'	/jihliw/	'keep-1f. Imp'
3	/kiṣtʃid/	'mow-1m. FT'	/kiṣtʃid/	'mow-1f. FT'
4	/kixəd/	'go-1m. FT'	/kixəd/	'go-1m. FT'
5	/tiʃikʷɑṣ/	'hide-2mImp'	/tiʃikəṣi/	'hide-2f. Imp'
6	/taʃikin/	'ambush-2m. Imp'	/taʃikini/	'ambush-2fImp'
7	/tinifrij/	'umbrage-2m. Imp'	/tinifriji/	'umbrage-2f. Imp'
8	/tix'alax'əl/	'wait- 2m. Imp'	/tiqalax'əli/	'wait- 2f. Imp'
9	/jinʔid/	'patronize-3m. Imp'	/tinʔid/	'patronize-3f. Imp'
10	/jadiritʃ/	'ambush-3m. Imp'	/tadiritʃ/	'ambush-3f. Imp'
11	/jinədiʔ/	'dowry-3m. Imp'	/tinədiʔ/	'dowry-3f. Imp'

- Semantic Analysis

The semantic role of gender in this dialect's imperfective conjugation, based on table 10, is not to alter the lexical meaning of the verb itself but to index the gender of the subject like the perfective verbs. The primary semantic function is agreement and participant tracking.

[14] In the first-Person Singular verbs of the dialect, semantic neutralization of gender occurs and it is similar to third person singular.

/jisṣir/ = 'I-m. win' vs. /jisṣir/ = 'I-f. win'

/jihliw/ = 'I-m. keep' vs. /jihliw/ = 'I-f. keep'

/kiṣtʃid/ = 'I-m. will mow' vs. /kiṣtʃid/ = 'I-f. will mow'

Semantic Constancy of the Verb Root: Crucially, across all persons and genders, the core semantic meaning of the verb root remains unchanged. /sṣir/ always means 'win', /xəd/ always means 'go', etc. The gender markings are part of the inflectional system, not the lexical semantics. They provide information about the participant, not the action.

4.1.4. Semantic Gender Analysis in Determiners

4.1.4.1. Demonstratives

These determiners point to something specific, often in relation to the speaker in space or time. Like English, Tigrinya makes a two-way distinction between near and far demonstrative pronouns and adjectives. Besides singular and plural, as in English, Tigrinya also distinguishes masculine and feminine gender.

Table 11: Gender in Demonstratives of Southern Zone dialect

Gender	Near		Far	
	Word	Gloss	Word	Gloss
Masculine	/ʔizow/	‘this-m. Article(definite)’	/ʔitow/	‘that-m. Article’
	/ʔizi/	‘this-m. Adj.’	/ʔiti/	‘the/that-m. Adj.’
Feminine	/ʔizaw/	‘this-f. Article(definite)’	/ʔitaw/	‘that- Article(definite)’
	/ʔiza/	‘this-f. Adj.’	/ʔita/	‘that-f. Adj.’

Semantic Analysis of the Core Features:

According to the table, there are three semantic features in the Southern zone dialect demonstratives.

- [15] The first feature is gender distinction, between masculine and feminine. The morphology makes clear this distinction;

Masculine Markers: -ow (article), -i (adjective)

Feminine Markers: -aw (article), -a (adjective)

- [16] The second feature is the deictic distinction (Proximal vs. Distal). This shows nearness or farness to the speaker in physical space, time, or psychological relevance.

Proximal (Near): /ʔiz-/

Distal (Far): /ʔit-/

[17] The third feature found in the demonstratives of the dialect is The Syntactic-Functional Distinction (Adverb vs. Adjective).

Definite Article Form: -ow (m.), -aw (f.) – e.g. /ʔiz-ow/, /ʔit-ow-m/ and /ʔiz-aw/, /ʔit-aw-f/

Adjectival Form: -i (m.), -a (f.)—e.g. /ʔiz-i/, /ʔit-i-m/ and /ʔz-a/, /ʔit-a-f/

The demonstrative system of the Southern Tigray dialect, as presented, is a semantically sophisticated and grammatically tight system. It efficiently bundles the core semantic features of Gender, Spatial Deixis, and Syntactic Function into a single, morphologically complex word. The analysis reveals a language that obligatorily frames every act of reference through a gendered lens, firmly anchored to the speaker's perspective, while making fine-grained distinctions about how that reference is syntactically structured. This table provides a perfect example of how form and meaning are intricately woven together in natural language grammar.

4.2. The Semantic Analysis of Number in Rayya Tigrinya Dialect

According to literatures, the Tigrinya language has a rich and complex system of plural formation. Unlike English, which mostly just adds **-s** or **-es**, Tigrinya employs a variety of strategies, often involving internal changes to the noun itself (a feature common in Semitic languages) and by adding affixes.

4.2.1. Plural Formation Strategies in Rayya Tigrinya Dialect

4.2.1.1. Pluralization of Nouns

According to Bulakh, 2023. pp. 182-183, one of the peculiar features shared by Tigrinya with Geez and Tigre within Ethio- Semitic is the employment of the so- called internal or “broken” plural: marking of the plural by a special pattern combined with the consonants of the singular form. The writer listed 4 internal plural forms that begin by “ʔa-”. Those are :ʔaC₁C₂aC₃ (/ʔaʔman/ - ‘stones’), ʔaC₂C₃iC₄ti (/ʔabx’ilti/ - ‘mules’), ʔaC₁aC₂iC₃ (/ʔanahib/ - ‘bees’) and ʔaC₁aC₂iC₃ti ‘mules’.

But the data collected from informants shows that there are also other internal plural formations in Southern Tigray dialect nouns.

[18] - ʔaC₁C₂aC₃VC₄ = /ʔamraxut/ = ‘calves’

- ʔaC₁VC₂iC₃C₄i = /ʔax’us’ilti/ = ‘leaves’

Noun pluralization in Tigrinya is complex and often unpredictable, employing several strategies. There is no single "step-by-step" process, but rather a set of common patterns (Bulakh, 2023). According to the writer (pp.182-184) and others, Tigrinya language uses two ways of plural formation i.e. suffixation and broken plurals. However, as the data collected from the field work and other sources indicate, there are also other plural formation systems in the dialect.

A) There are nouns that are naturally plural.

- [19] E.g.
- a. /səv/ — ‘whole human beings’
 - b. /hizvi/ — ‘population- many people in one group’
 - c. /sərawit/ — ‘army- many soldiers in a particular area’
 - d. /kəfti/ — ‘cattle’
 - e. /t’irit/ ---- ‘domestic animals’
 - f. /wərk’i/— ‘cattle’
 - g. /gənzəv/— ‘cattle’
 - h. /ʔas’abiʕti/— ‘fingers’
 - i. /ʕijal/ --- ‘family’

B) In Southern Tigrinya dialect, nouns that indicate dual numbers are always two in meaning. They are written in their base form but their meaning is ‘two.’

Table 12: Dual number structure in Southern Tigray dialect

No	Words	Gloss
1	/ʔizni/	‘ears-m. dual’
2	/ʕajni/	‘eyes-m. dual’
3	/ʔid/	‘hands-m. dual’
4	/ʔigri/	‘legs-m. dual’
5	/xələlit/	‘kidneys-f. dual’
6	/s’imdi/	‘pair-m. dual’
7	/xiltiŋa/	‘second wife-f. dual’
8	/saʔni/	‘shoes-pair of shoes-m. dual’

The primary semantic function of the dual number, cross-linguistically, is to denote a natural or inherent pair. It is not merely "two of" something, but "a pair of" something where the two parts

are conceptually linked to form a single, cohesive unit. This is distinct from using the numeral two with a plural noun, which would imply two separate, countable items.

The data from Southern Tigray Tigrinya in table 12 strongly supports this core function and reveals its nuanced applications.

The words in the table can be grouped into several semantic categories such as inherent Body Parts (e.g. /ʔizni/ = ‘ears’, /ʕajni/ = ‘eyes’; complementary pairs (e.g. /saʔni/ = ‘shoes-- a pair of shoes’; Social and Relational Pairs (e.g. /xiltiɲa/ = ‘second wife’).

Interaction with Gender

The table clearly shows that the dual number interacts with both masculine and feminine genders, and the form of the dual suffix changes accordingly.

Masculine Dual: Typically marked with -i (e.g., /ʔizn -/ > /ʔizni/, /ʕajn -/ > /ʕajni/. The base form often loses its final vowel.

Feminine Dual: Marked with -it (e.g., /xɔlɔl -/ > /xɔlɔlit/, /xiltiɲ -/ > /xiltiɲa/

Crucially, the choice of gender is lexical and not determined by the semantic category. Both inherent body parts and the abstract "pair" can be masculine, while other body parts and social roles can be feminine.

When we add the specific singular number (one-f.sg) before the Southern zone Tigrinya dual numbers, their gender is changed from masculine to feminine. But, /s'imdi/ is always masculine-plural and we can add one in its masculine gender when we want to describe single pair. On the contrary, /xiltiɲa/ is always in the feminine gender.

- [20] Example-
- a. /ħanti + ʔizni/ = /ħanti ʔizni/ ‘one ear-f.sg’
 - b. /ħanti + ʕajni/ = /ħanti ʕajni/ ‘one eye-f.sg’

In conclusion, the dual number in this dialect is not just a counter but a powerful cognitive tool. It provides a window into how speakers conceptually group the world, seeing inherent pairs not only in their own bodies but also in their possessions, social structures, and very ideas.

C) Tigrinya nouns, especially Southern Tigray dialect, can also be changed in to plurals by reduplication of the nouns.

- [21] E.g. a. /təxla-məxli/ = ‘vegetables’

- b. /x'os'la-məs'li/ = 'foliage'
- c. /t'irə-mirə/ = 'meal'
- d. /firə-mirə/ = 'fruits'
- e. /ħatʃ'in-mətʃ'in/ = 'metals'

As we can see the above plurals, they are changed in to their plurals by repeating the first nouns by making some internal changes.

D) Tigrinya noun plurals (Rayan dialect) can also be formed by joining two singular nouns together.

- [22] E.g.
- a. /bəgiʃo-t'əli/ = 'herds of goats and sheep'
 - b. /ʔargə-bəx'li/ = 'herds of donkeys and mules'
 - c. /ʔargə-fərəs/ = 'herds of donkeys and horses'
 - d. /ʃatərə-gətətə/ = 'meal'
 - e. /x'əlfə-səbəjti/ = 'family'

E) In Southern zone of Tigray, there are some special plural formations.

Intimate friends of young males and females are called each other by plurals to show their friendliness by saying “ጸልናይ” — /g^wualinaj/ for females and “ወድናይ” — /wədinaj/ for males.

- [23] E.g. a) /ʔat-um wədinaj/ = 'you-m.pl my friend-m.sg (to indicate intimate friendship)'. /wədinaj/ can be said by male or female to male friends.

b) /ʔat-in g^wualinaj/ = 'you-f.pl my friend-f.sg (to show intimate friendship)'. /g^wualinaj/ can be said by males or females to female friends. Single elder people can be called by plurals to respect them.

- [24] E.g.
- a) /ʔajə ħagos məs'iam/
 - 'father-m Hagos- m.sg came-m.pl(prestige)'
 - b. /ʔadə ləmləm məs'ian/
 - 'mother-f Lemlem-f.sg came-f.pl(prestige)'

F) Young friends are also called each other with opposite gender.

G) During dispute, someone can insult to his or her enemy to show his or her scorn.

[25] E.g. /siʋʔɑj xɔjnixi -ləj/
 ‘man-m.sg become-f.sg -ləj’-f.pos’

H) If there are the combination of male and female nouns in humans, the gender is masculine.

[26] a. ‘one man + one woman’ = /ʔisatəm’-3m.pl/
 b. ‘many men + one woman’ = /ʔisatom-3m.pl/
 c. ‘one man + many women’ = /ʔsatəm’-3m.pl/

I) Many Tigrinya nouns cannot be changed into plurals.

Table 13: Nouns that cannot be changed in to plurals

No	Word	Gloss	No	Word	Gloss
1	/zəjti/	‘oil-m.sg’	8	/raʔij/	‘vision-m.sg’
2	/səwɑ/	‘siwa’-m.sg’	9	/sələm/	‘peace-m.sg’
3	/s’əva/	‘milk-m.sg’	10	/s’ət’ia/	‘calm-m.sg’
4	/lamba/	‘kerosine-m.sg’	11	/fix’ri/	‘love-m.sg’
5	/zinav/	‘rain-m.sg’	12	/s’ilʔi/	‘antagonism-m.sg’
6	/s’əlimat/	‘darkness-m.sg’	13	/firhi/	‘fear-m.sg’
7	/silt’an/	‘authority-m.sg’	14	/bərəd/	‘snow-m.sg’

Nouns that cannot be pluralized are typically non-count or mass nouns. Across languages, these nouns refer to entities that are conceptualized as a homogeneous, unbounded mass rather than discrete, separable units. (Huddleston, R., & Pullum, G. K. (2002). The data from Southern Tigray Tigrinya strongly aligns with this universal linguistic principle. The semantic categories below group these nouns based on the shared qualities that make them non-countable.

According to the data, it is true that all nouns in this list are marked as masculine singular (m.sg). This suggests that in Southern Tigray Tigrinya, the default grammatical class for non-count nouns may be the masculine singular. This is a significant typological feature. The language uses gender not just for biological sex but also to mark this fundamental count/mass distinction for a large class of nouns.

In conclusion, the semantic analysis of these non-pluralizable nouns in the Southern Tigray Tigrinya dialect reveals a clear and logical pattern. The nouns cluster into coherent categories—Substances, Natural Phenomena, Abstract States/Emotions, and Abstract Concepts—that are universally prone to being treated as mass nouns across human languages. They all refer to

unbounded, homogeneous, or abstract referents that are not easily conceptualized as individual, countable units.

4.2.1.2. Pluralization of Adjectives

According to literatures (Kogan & Bulakh (2023); Leslau (1941) and Tesfay (2020)), adjectives must agree in number and gender with the nouns they modify. The process is more regular than for nouns and primarily uses suffixation. But some adjectives form their plurals by internal vowel change or internal plurals and some are formed by compound words which are naturally plural.

- [27] E.g. 1) a. /s'ɑfda/ = /s'əfadu/ = C1aC2aC3-u = 'white-ne.pl'
 b. /niʔfətəj/ = /ʔanaʔftu/ = ʔaC1aC2C2C2-U = 'small-ne.pl'
- 2) a. /məfat/ = 'many-m.pl'
 b. /guwʔə/ = 'many-m.pl'
 c. /ħanʃəxa-ʃinə/ = 'enormous-m.pl'
 d. /miʃatə-guwʔə/ = 'huge in number-m.pl'

Table 14: pluralization of appearance and Size adjectives

No	Singular	Gloss	Plurals	Gloss
1	/s'ibux'/	'good- m.sg'	/s'ibux'at/	'good-m.pl'
2	/s'ibux'ti/	'good-f.sg'	/s'ibux'at/	'good-f.pl'
3	/ʃawujji/	'big-m.sg'	/ʃabəjti/	'big-m.pl'
4	/ʃabbaj/	'big-f.sg'	/ʃabəjti/	'big-f.pl'
5	/rəgʷid/	'thick-m.sg'	/rəgədti/	'thick-m.pl'
6	/əgʷad/	'thick-f.sg'	/rəgədti/	'thick-f.pl'
7	/ħatʃ'tʃir/	'short-m.sg'	/ħatʃ'tʃərti/	'short-m.pl'
8	/ħatʃ'tʃar/	'short-f.sg'	/ħatʃ'tʃərti/	'short-f.pl'
9	/nəwih/	'tall- m.sg'	/nəwəhti/	'tall-m.pl'
10	/nəwəh/	'tall-f.sg'	/nəwəhti/	'tall-f.pl'
11	/x'at'in/	'thin- m.sg'	/x'at'ənti/	'thin-m.pl'
12	/x'at'an/	'thin-f.sg'	/x'at'ənti/	'thin-f.pl'
13	/buzuħ/	'many-m.sg'	/buzuħat/	'many- m.pl'
14	/ħanʃəxaʃinə/	'enormous-m.pl'	/ħanʃəxaʃinə/	'enormous-m.pl'
15	/niʔfətəj/	'small-ne.sg'	/ʔanaʔftu/	'small-ne.pl'
16	/himax'/	'ugly-ne.sg'	/himax'at/	'ugly-ne.pl'

The most striking semantic feature in this data is the prioritization of gender distinction in the singular versus its neutralization in the plural.

- Singular Forms: The dialect makes a strong semantic distinction between masculine and feminine in the singular. For almost every adjective, there are two distinct singular forms (e.g., /ʕawujji-m.sg/ vs. /ʕabbaj-f.sg/; /hatʃˈtʃir-m.sg/ vs. /hatʃˈtʃar-f.sg/). This reflects a world view where the property of an object is semantically linked to its gender.
- Plural Forms: This gender distinction is almost entirely neutralized in the plural. There is only one plural form that serves for both masculine and feminine referents (e.g., /ʕabəjti/ is used for both ‘big-m.pl’ and ‘big-f.pl’)

Semantically, the key interaction is Gender (in Singular) vs. Number (in Plural). Gender is a critical classifier for individual entities, but this distinction collapses when referring to a collective.

As we see from the table, the pluralization strategy reveals sub-classes of adjectives:

[28] Dimensional Adjectives- (‘big’, ‘tall’, ‘thin’): Use the -ti plural with stem modification.

Evaluative/Quantitative Adjectives- (‘good’, ‘ugly’, ‘many’): Use the -at plural.

Highly Frequent/Idiomatic Adjectives- (‘small’): Can become suppletive.

Extreme Property Adjectives- (‘enormous’): Can be inherently plural.

The neuter gender operates outside the m./f. opposition and follows its own, sometimes highly irregular, pluralization rules.

In general, the Southern Tigray Tigrinya dialect, as shown in this data, uses its number and gender system not just for grammatical agreement, but to semantically categorize properties themselves, distinguishing between measurable dimensions, subjective evaluations, and inherent qualities in a highly structured way.

4.2.1.3. Number in Determiners

Table 15: Number in Demonstratives of Southern Tigray dialect

Number	Gender	Near		Far	
		Word	Gloss	Word	Gloss
Singular	Masculine	/ʔizow/	‘this-m.sg. Article(definite)’	/ʔitow/	‘that-m.sg. Article(definite)’
		/ʔizi/	‘this-m.sg. Adj.’	/ʔiti/	‘the/that-m.sg. Adj.’
	Feminine	/ʔizaw/	‘this-f.sg. Article(definite)’	/ʔitaw/	‘that-f.sg.’
		/ʔiza/	‘this-f.sg. Adj.’	/ʔita/	‘that-f.sg. Adj.’
Plural	Masculine	/ʔizatəmɔ/	‘those-m.pl. Article’	/ʔitatəmɔ/	‘these- m.pl. Article’
		/ʔizəmɔ/	‘those-m.sg. Prestige’	ʔitəmɔ	these-m.sg. Art. Prestige
		/ʔizəm/	‘those-m.pl. Adj.’	ʔitəm	these-m.pl. Adj.
		/ʔizitat/	‘this and others similar to this-m.pl. Dem’	ʔizitat	That and around it-m.pl
	Feminine	/ʔizatənɔ/	‘those-f.pl, Article’	ʔitatənɔ	these-f.pl. Art.
		/ʔizənɔ/	‘those-f.pl. prestige’	ʔitənɔ	these-f.sg. Art.prestige
		/ʔizən/	‘those-f.pl. Adj.’	ʔitən	these-f.pl. Adj.

Semantically, number according to the data, is beyond a simple singular/plural distinction. It interacts with distance and syntactic function to create specific meanings.

[29] Core Number Distinctions:

- a) Singular: Refers to a single, countable entity.

/ʔizow/, /ʔitow/: ‘this/that [specific male referent]’

/ʔizaw/, /ʔitaw/: ‘this/that [specific female referent]’

b) Plural: Refers to multiple, countable entities.

/ʔizatəmʊ/, /ʔitatəmʊ/: ‘these/those [specific male referents]’

/ʔizatənʊ/, /ʔitatənʊ/: ‘these/those [specific female referents]’

[30] The Associative or Inclusive Plural /ʔizitat/ and /ʔititat/:

Form: This is a unique and semantically rich form, distinct from the standard plurals.

Semantics:

/ʔizitat/ (Proximal): "This and others similar to this." This form does not just point to a pre-existing group. It constructs a group by starting with a focal point ("this") and then *associating* other, similar entities with it. It has a semantic component of exemplification and categorization.

/ʔititat/ (Distal): ‘That and around it.’ This form has a stronger spatial or contextual associative meaning. It points to a focal entity and includes its immediate environment or things conceptually around it. The semantics here are of proximity to a reference point rather than similarity.

Significance: The existence of this separate plural form reveals that the language makes a fine-grained semantic distinction between a simple plurality (‘these books’) and a plurality built around a central, exemplary, or locational anchor (‘this book and others like it’, ‘that house and the area around it’).

[31] The Prestige/Register Distinction in the Plural

/ʔizəmʊ/ vs. /ʔizatəmʊ/ (Near Masc.); /ʔizənʊ/ vs. /ʔizatənʊ/ (Near Fem.)

Semantic Analysis: Both forms are semantically plural. The difference is not in number but in register or formality.

The forms with the infix /-at-/ /ʔizatəmʊ/, /ʔitatənʊ/ appear to be the standard, neutral plural articles.

The forms without /-at-/ /ʔizəmʊ/, /ʔitənʊ/ are marked as prestige. They are used in formal speech, writing, for elders and religion leaders. This indicates that the choice of a plural demonstrative can carry social-semantic weight.

[32] Interaction of Number with Gender

Gender is a pervasive grammatical feature in Tigrinya, and it interacts seamlessly with number:

In the Singular: Gender is an obligatory and clear semantic feature. we must choose between masculine /-ow/, /-i/ and feminine /-aw/, /-a/ forms. This agreement semantically classifies the noun being referred to.

In the Plural: The gender distinction is maintained, which is semantically significant. The masculine plural suffixes /-om/, /-om/ and feminine plural suffixes /-on/, /-on/ indicate that the group itself is composed of primarily male or female entities, or that the noun class itself is masculine or feminine. This is a richer semantic system than in English, where "these" or "those" is gender-neutral.

4.3. Semantic Analysis of Agreement Patterns on Gender and Number in Rayya Tigrinya Dialect

Kogan, L. (1997) explained that Tigrinya agreement system is a sophisticated interaction between syntax and semantics.

Agreement is a phenomenon of changing word forms in a sentence to match specific grammatical properties of another word. In Tigrinya, agreement is primarily manifested between the Subject and the Verb, and within the Noun Phrase (between a noun and its modifiers).

The most common properties involved in agreement are: Gender, number and Person. In the agreement process, gender and number must agree:

Adjectives must agree with the nouns they modify.

Verbs must agree with subjects and objects and

The genders and numbers of nouns must agree with adjectives and verbs that come to give complete meanings.

4.3.1. Gender Agreement in Rayya Tigrinya Dialect

Most writers about Tigrinya morphology conclude that it has two grammatical genders: masculine and feminine. But there are a lot of Tigrinya words that do not have masculine or feminine gender at word level unless they are described by other descriptors. If they come with other word classes, their gender is clearly specified. According to Bulakh (2019), the masculine in Tigrinya is generally the unmarked or default gender, while the feminine is often marked. This statement is not always true.

[33] e.g. 1) a. /wədi/ – ‘male’--- unmarked

- b. /gwual/ – ‘female’ ----unmarked
- 2) a. /məs’iʔ-u/ ‘come - m.sg’ = marked
- b. /məs’iʔ-a/ ‘come -f.sg’ = marked

4.3.1.1. Gender Agreement in Nouns

4.3.1.1.1. Masculine Nouns

Many masculine nouns end in a consonant.

4.3.1.1.2. Feminine Nouns

Many feminine nouns marked with specific suffixes. The most common feminine suffixes are -ti (-ቲ), /-at/(-አት) and /-t/(-ት).

- [34] a. /gwual-at/ — ‘women-f.pl’
- b. /səvəj-ti/ — ‘woman-f.sg’
- c. /kəf-ti/ -- ‘cattle-f.pl’

4.3.1.2. Gender Agreement in Adjectives

Adjectives must agree in gender with the noun they modify. The feminine form of an adjective is typically created by adding the suffix -ti(-ቲ) and /-t/(-ት) to the masculine form.

Table 16: Feminine gender adjectives that are formed from masculine.

No	Masculine Adj.	Gloss	Feminine Adj.	Gloss
1	/səlamawi/	‘peace-full-m.sg’	/səlamawit/	‘peace-full-f.sg’
2	/ruħruh/	‘kind-m.sg’	/ruħruhti/	‘kind-f.sg’
3	/x’ut’uʃ/	‘sad-m.sg’	/x’ut’uʃti/	‘sad-f.sg’
4	/x’əs’ləwəj/	‘green-m.sg’	/x’s’ləwəjti/	‘green-f.sg’
5	/ʔitjəp’ijawi/	‘Ethiopian-m.sg’	/ʔitjəp’jawit/	‘Ethiopian-f.sg’
6	/wərk’awi/	‘golden-m.sg’	/wərk’awit/	‘golden-f.sg’
8	/dimux’/	‘bright-m.sg’	/dimux’ti/	‘bright-f.sg’
9	/s’ibux’/	‘good-m.sg’	/s’ibux’ti/	‘good-f.sg’

4.3.1.3. Gender Agreement in Verbs

Verbs agree with their subject in gender and number. The gender distinction is most clearly visible in the 3rd person singular and plural forms of the perfective (past) tense.

4.3.1.3.1. Perfective (Past) Tense Examples

[35] e.g. a. /səv məjt-u/

‘person-ne die -u-3m.sg’

The noun /səv/ can be either male or female. But the verb is masculine. Therefore, Tigrinya (RD) uses masculine gender verb for neutral gender nouns.

a. /ħadə sɪvʔɑj məjt-u/

‘one-m.sg man die -u’ (masculine singular marker in past tense).

b. /ħanti səvəjti məjt-ɑ/

‘one-f.sg woman -ɑ’ (feminine singular marker in the past)

In the above sentences ((b and c)), the determiners, nouns and verbs are agreed to the masculine and feminine genders. ‘-u’ and ‘-ɑ’ are masculine and feminine markers respectively.

4.3.2. Number Agreement

According to Kogan (1997), Tigrinya has two numbers: singular and plural. The plural is marked through a variety of means, making it one of the more complex aspects of the language. In addition, Tigrinya has dual number which are semantically understood. These are listed in the previous chapter four of this thesis.

4.3.2.1. Plural Formation in Nouns

As it is mentioned in chapter four, singular southern Tigray dialect nouns can be pluralized by different mechanisms.

1. Internal pluralization (broken plurals)
2. Affixation
3. Naturally plural nouns
4. Dual plurals
5. Reduplication
6. Joining two singular nouns together
7. Friendship(intimacy)

8. Prestige

4.3.2.2. Number Agreement in RD Adjectives

Adjectives must agree with the noun they modify in number. Plural adjectives are formed in various ways, often showing the complexity of noun plurals.

4.3.2.2.1. Pluralization of adjectives by adding suffixes (Southern Tigray Dialect)

- [36] a. /-at/ = /wədi-m.sg/ = /wəd-at'-m.pl/
b. /-ti/ = /x'ajaḥ-f.sg/ = /x'ajaḥ-ti-f.pl/ - the masculine /x'ajiḥ-m.sg/ is neutralized in to feminine form during pluralization.
c. /-u/ = /niʔift-əj'-ne.sg/ = /ʔanaʔft-u- ne.pl/; (/əj/ is deleted and /-u/ is added).

4.3.2.2.2. With Internal Change

- [37] a. /hasas-ne.m.sg/ = /ʔahsus -m.pl/
b. /s'afda-ne.sg/ = /s'afadu-ne.pl/

4.3.2.3. Number Agreement in Verbs

Verbs agree with their subject in number. This should be combined with gender agreement.

- [38] e.g. a. /ʔit-om ʔawuʃ-ur xəjd-om/
'these -m.pl oxen-m.pl go-3past m.pl'
'These oxen went.'
b. /ʔi-ti viʃraj xəjd -u/
'the-m xo-m go - 3past m.sg'
'The ox went.'
c. /ʔi-ta laḥmi xəjd -a/
'the-f.sg cow-f.sg go - 3 past f.sg'
'The cow went.'

4.4. Combined Gender and Number Agreement in Sentences

Verbs can agree in person, number, and perhaps other properties with their subjects (or sometimes other NPs as well). Evidently, the principles which assign such properties to the agreeing words must be based on structures larger than the word, since it is only within larger (typically phrasal) domains that the relation of agreement is defined. (Anderson, 1995: p.574).

In Tigrinya language, verbs conjugate for tense, aspect, (and most importantly for this topic) the person, gender, and number of the subject. The verb must agree with the subject noun in gender and number.

[39] e.g. 1) /ʔi-ti x'ɔʎa ʃəgə məs'haf ʔanbibu/

To see the agreement of gender and number in nouns, adjectives and verbs, in the above Tigrinya (Rayan dialect) sentence, we must breakdown it in to parts.

- /ʔi-ti x'ɔʎa/ ('the-m.sg boy-3m.sg')
- /ʃawjji ('big-m.sg' = the masculine singular adjective is agreeing with the masculine singular noun /ʔi-ti x'ɔʎa/)
- /ʃəgə məs'haf/ ('good book = m. sg' noun and m.sg adjective that agrees with the subject phrase in gender and number)

/ʔanbibu/ ('he read = 3m.sg' verb that is agreeing with the 3m.sg subject – /x'ɔʎa/).

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Summary

This dialect shows a complex and often semantically motivated system for gender and number that goes beyond the typical masculine-feminine binary described for Official Tigrinya.

Three-Gender System:

According to the data collected from different sources, unlike the common masculine/feminine binary gender system, Southern Tigray Tigrinya has **a strong tendency** to have a three-gender system: Masculine, Feminine, and Neuter.

Function of Neuter Gender: The Neuter is not a default but a semantically active category.

- For humans and animals, it often serves as the generic, collective, or foundational root from which masculine and feminine forms are derived. e.g., /səv/ ('person – Neuter') is the root for /siʊʔɑj/ ('man - Masc.') and /səvəjti/ ('woman - Fem.').
- For inanimate objects, it acts as the unmarked class, especially for tools and objects (e.g., /wənbər/ - 'chair', /məs'hɑf/ - 'book').
- It can also carry evaluative meaning related to size or quality in adjectives (e.g., /niʔustəj/ - 'small', /hɪmɑx'/ - 'ugly').

Unique and Culturally Specific Semantic Assignment of Gender:

- The assignment of grammatical gender is heavily influenced by semantic principles that reflect cultural perceptions, often neutralizing purely morphological cues.

Body Parts: A clear philosophical dichotomy is encoded:

- Masculine: External, structural, and physical parts (e.g., /riʔsi/ - 'head', /ʔid/ - 'hand', /sigɑ/ - 'flesh').
- Feminine: Internal organs and, crucially, abstract concepts of life and spirit (e.g., /libbi/ - 'heart', /nəvsi/, /rəh/ - 'soul').

Natural Features and Places: Gender is assigned based on a "life-source hierarchy":

- Feminine: Entities that are nurturing, containing, or foundational to community life (e.g., /midiri/ - 'land', /kətəma/ - 'city').
- Masculine: Specific topographical features, functional structures, or harsh environments (e.g., /dəguʕa/ - 'highland', /ʕaddi/ - 'house', /bərəxa/ - 'desert').

Objects and Concepts:

Light Sources: A near-perfect semantic split exists:

- Masculine: /hawwi/ = 'fire' - representing fierce, uncontrolled power.
- Feminine: All other light sources (e.g., /s'əħaj/ - 'sun', /wərħi/ - 'moon', /litʃti/ - 'electric light') - representing beauty, order, and productivity.

Abstract Concepts: There is a strong tendency for abstract nouns (emotions, ideas, states) to be default masculine, even those with suffixes typically feminine in other contexts (e.g., /ħuʃət/ - 'lie', /gils'inət/ - 'clarity').

Wild vs. Domestic Animals:

Domestic Animals: Use the three-gender system (M/F/Neuter), with Neuter as the generic term (e.g., /ʔarrgi/ - 'donkey'). Suppletion (complete root change) is common for important animals (e.g., /diɣləj/ 'Masc. sheep' vs. /bəggiʕ/ 'Neuter sheep').

Wild Animals: Operate on a strict M/F binary. Gender assignment is often lexicalized and semantically opaque, linked to perceived traits like power/fierceness (Masc.) or other non-biological associations.

Religion: The entire religious domain is default masculine (e.g., /ʔamlak/ - 'God', /s'əloʔ/ - 'prayer'), overriding other potential semantic or phonological cues.

Complex and Unique Plural Formation Strategies

The dialect employs a wider array of pluralization strategies than typically documented.

- Dual Number: The dialect has a productive dual number, marked primarily by the suffix /-i/, for naturally paired items (e.g., /ʔizni/ - 'ears', /ʕajni/ - 'eyes', /saʔni/ - 'pair of shoes'). This extends to social concepts (e.g., /xiltijə/ - 'second wife').
- Non-Concatenative Plurals beyond "Broken" Forms: Beyond standard internal ("broken") plurals, the dialect uses:

Reduplication: E.g., /təxlɑ-məxli/ ‘vegetables’, /ħatʃin-mətʃin/ ‘metals.’

Compounding: E.g., /bəgiʃə-t’əli/ ‘herds of goats and sheep’, /x’əlfɑ-səwəjt/ ‘family’, /ʃatərə-gətətə/ ‘cereals’, etc...

Semantically-Driven Plural Agreement:

Prestige Plural: A distinct plural form is used for elders and respected figures as a mark of respect (e.g., /ʔɑjə hɑgəs məs’iəm/ - ‘Father Hagos came-m. Prestige.sg’).

Intimacy Plural: Young friends use plural forms for each other to show friendliness (e.g., /wədinɑj/ for a male friend).

Gender Neutralization in Plurals: For many adjectives, the M/F distinction is neutralized in the plural, prioritizing the collective identity over individual gender.

Unique Morphological Markers in Verbs and Determiners

Verbs (Perfective Tense): Gender is marked by distinct suffixes: /-o/ for 3rd person masculine singular and /-ɑ/ for 3rd person feminine singular. Some verbs also exhibit consonant mutation in the feminine (e.g., /gəwro/ Masc. Vs /gəvra/ Fem. – ‘to act’).

Demonstratives: The system is highly complex, marking distance, gender, number, and syntactic function (article vs. adjective). A unique feature is the /-tat/ suffix, which creates a collective/distributive meaning (e.g., /ʔizitɑt/ - ‘this and others like it’).

In general, the Southern Tigray dialect distinguishes itself through a more elaborate three-gender system where the Neuter plays a crucial semantic role. Its most defining characteristic is the profound semantic motivation behind gender assignment, linking grammar to cultural concepts of life, power, and utility. Furthermore, it possesses a richer inventory of number-related features, including a productive dual and plural formation through reduplication and compounding, as long as I know, which are not widely reported in standard grammars. These features make its morphosyntactic system uniquely complex and culturally embedded.

5.2. Conclusion

This study has provided a detailed descriptive analysis of the semantic features of gender and number in the Southern Tigray dialect of Tigrinya. The investigation, focused on nouns, adjectives, and verbs, reveals a grammatical system that is both complex and deeply semantically motivated.

The primary finding is the operation of a three-gender system—Masculine, Feminine, and a strong tendency of Neuter—in this dialect. The collected data shows contrary to the typical M/F binary described in many Tigrinya literatures, the Neuter gender in Southern Tigray Tigrinya functions as a semantically active category. It serves as the generic or collective root for animates (e.g., /səv/ 'person' from which /sivʔaj/ 'man' and /səvəjti/ 'woman' are derived) and as the default, unmarked gender for many inanimate objects and tools. Furthermore, its grammatical gender assignment is not arbitrary but is governed by a coherent set of semantic principles. These principles reflect a cultural worldview where:

- Masculinity is associated with external structure, physicality, fierceness (e.g., /hawwi/ 'fire'), power, authority, and the domain of religion.
- Femininity is linked to interiority, life-giving essence (e.g., /nəvsi/ 'the soul', /midiri/ 'the earth'), nurturing containers, beauty, productivity, and concepts of ultimate hope (e.g., /gənət/ 'paradise').

Semantic categories such as liquids and staple foods show a strong tendency towards default masculine assignment.

In terms of number, the dialect exhibits a richer inventory of pluralization strategies than commonly documented. Beyond the standard Semitic strategies of suffixation ("sound" plurals) and internal vowel change ("broken" plurals), the dialect productively employs:

- A productive dual number, marked by the suffix -i, for naturally paired items (e.g., /ʔizni/ 'ears').
- Reduplication (e.g., /təxla-məxli/ 'vegetables') and compounding (e.g., /begiʕə-t'əli/ 'herds of sheep and goats') to form plurals.
- Sociolinguistically conditioned plurals, used to express respect (prestige plural) or intimacy.

The interaction of gender and number in agreement patterns is systematic. Verbs in the perfective tense mark gender through distinct suffixes (/ə/ for masculine, /a/ for feminine), sometimes accompanied by stem mutation. In the imperfective, gender is marked prefixally in the 3rd person and suffixally in the 2nd person, while it is neutralized in the 1st person. Adjectives agree with nouns in gender and number, with a frequent neutralization of the M/F distinction in the plural,

prioritizing the collective identity. The demonstrative system is highly intricate, packing information about distance, gender, number, and syntactic function into a single word.

In summary, this thesis concludes that the Southern Tigray dialect of Tigrinya possesses a uniquely complex and semantically grounded grammatical system for gender and number. Its tripartite gender classification and diverse pluralization strategies are not merely morphological phenomena but are intrinsically linked to the cultural and perceptual logic of its speakers. This research not only fills a significant gap in the documentation of Tigrinya dialectology but also contributes to understanding of how semantic principles can underpin and animate grammatical structure.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for future research, educational practice, and language policy:

A. For Language Documentation and Preservation:

- Document the Three-Gender System: Prioritize the comprehensive documentation of the Neuter gender's semantic roles (as generic, collective, and evaluative) in the Southern Tigray dialect.
- Create a Dialect-Specific Lexicon: Develop a dedicated dictionary or digital corpus for the Southern Tigray dialect that captures its unique pluralization strategies (reduplication, compounding, dual number) and semantically motivated gender assignments, especially for nouns related to nature, objects, and abstract concepts.

B. For Future Linguistic Research:

- Conduct Deeper Semantic Field Studies: Encourage further research into specific semantic domains (e.g., religious lexicon, modern loanwords) to refine the principles of gender assignment and explore potential ongoing language change in the dialect.
- Expand Research to Other Dialects: Undertake comparative studies between the Southern Tigray dialect and other Tigrinya dialects on gender and number to map the geographic distribution of its unique features, particularly the robust Neuter gender and diverse pluralization strategies.

C. Documentation: Continued documentation dialect efforts are recommended to preserve its linguistic heritage, especially in its sociolinguistic context (e.g., variations across age and gender groups, etc.).

By adopting these recommendations, future work can build upon this thesis to advance the academic understanding, practical teaching, and digital preservation of the Tigrinya language.

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Appendixes

Appendix i: Field work questions that can be given to purposely selected participants

Mekelle University, College of Social Sciences & Languages
Department of Foreign Languages & Literature

The Morphosyntax and Semantics of Gender and Number in Tigrinya: A Descriptive Analysis of Nouns, Adjectives and Verbs in Southern Zone of Tigray

Fieldwork questions that can be given to purposely selected participants in Southern Tigray, which has dialectical variations, to collect data for testing the interaction of gender and number systems mainly focused on nouns, adjectives and verbs

There are 30 questions that include both production (eliciting forms) and intuitions. Based on the research topic, the questions are mainly focused on:

Nouns – to get full information and identify gender (masculine, feminine or neuter), number (plural formation) and how gender and number trigger agreement.

Adjectives – to explore agreement patterns with nouns and examine the affixes and internal vowel changes for indicating gender and number.

Verbs – to examine subject or object agreement by gender or number and tense interactions.

In addition, the questions are structured in to 4 sections.

Section I. Noun Basics- that ask about gender assignment and plural types.

Section II. Adjective agreement across gender and number

Section III. Verbal agreement that examines subject or object agreement and tense effects. And

Section IV. Exceptions and dialect notes that focus on Southern zone of Tigray.

Informant Selection

Informants are selected from 4 Districts (Weredas); from the highlands and low lands of Southern Zone:

Maichew Town = 5 informants

Endamekhoni = 2 informants

Alamata = 2 informants

Raya Azebo = 2 informants and

Ofla = 1

Especially selected scholars = 3 informants

Total 15 people are selected.

Questions

Here are 30 targeted fieldwork questions designed to elicit data on gender and number systems in Tigrinya nouns, adjectives, and verbs, specifically for the Southern Zone of Tigray Region:

I. Nouns (Gender and number marking)

1. Basic Noun Elicitation: Please tell me the words (for—at least 50 animate and inanimate common nouns, abstract nouns, collective nouns, countable and uncountable nouns).
2. Plural Formation: How do you make the plurals of the words you just gave me in question 1? Can you show me the pattern (affixes, internal vowel changes, etc.)?
3. Gender Identification: Are the words (nouns elicited in Q1 considered masculine, feminine or neuter, according to your culture and intuition?
4. Plural Formation Patterns: What sound or part of the mentioned words change when you make singular nouns plural? (e.g., does it add -at, -ot, change the vowel, or something else?)
5. Irregular Plurals: Are there any common words where the plural looks very different from the singular? (e.g., like 'ፈረስ/ኣፍራስ' and asking 50 words). Can you give examples?"

6. Gender Assignment Consistency: Are there any nouns objects, animals and plants whose gender changes depending on the speaker or context? (e.g., words for animals where sex isn't specified, or certain objects traditionally assigned one gender but perceived differently now?)
7. Abstract Nouns: How do you form the plural of words like 'idea', 'problem', or 'love' in Tigrinya? Do they have genders and numbers? (Asking the gender and number of about 50 abstract Tigrinya nouns).
8. Loan words: How do you make words borrowed from other languages (like Arabic, Amharic, English - e.g., 'radio', 'car', 'Television', and other loan words) plural? Do they get assigned a gender? How?
9. Agreement with Mixed Groups: If there is one man and one woman, how do you say 'They came'? If there are ten women and one man, how do you say they came? (Asking such questions by giving different Tigrinya words of animals, plants and human names)
10. Collective Nouns: How do you talk about groups like 'people', 'cattle', 'family', herd, flock, bunch, etc.? Do they take singular or plural agreement? Masculine or feminine? (Asking by giving many Tigrinya collective nouns and examining agreement with semantically plural nouns)
11. Diminutives/Augmentatives: How would you make a word like 'house' or 'dog' (animate and inanimate nouns) sound small/cute (diminutive) or large (augmentative)? Does this change the gender? Does it change how the plural is formed?

II. Adjectives (Agreement with Nouns)

12. Basic Adjective Agreement: If there is '[singular masculine noun, e.g., ስብአይ (sib'ay - man)]' and if we want to say he is 'small', how do we say 'small man'? (Note: ንእሽተይ ሓፂ?) If it's a '[singular feminine noun, e.g., ሰበኛት (säbäyti - woman)]', how do we say 'small woman'? (Giving many Tigrinya animate and inanimate nouns and different adjectives to check agreement of nouns and adjectives).
13. Plural Nouns - adjectives Agreement: How do you say 'small' for a group of '[plural masculine noun, e.g., men]'? And for a group of '[plural feminine noun, e.g., women]'? (Giving many Tigrinya animate and inanimate nouns and different adjectives to check plural nouns - adjectives agreement).

14. Agreement Patterns: When the noun is plural, does the adjective change in the same way the noun does, or differently? (Asking many Tigrinya nouns and adjectives to check plural agreement)
15. Position & Agreement: Can the adjective come before or after the noun? Does the agreement marking change depending on the position?
16. Multiple Adjectives: If you describe a noun with two adjectives (e.g., 'the big red house'), do both adjectives change for gender and number?
17. Adjective as Predicate: How do you say 'The house is big'? vs. The houses are big? (Focusing on how the adjectives might change and asking many adjectives to the informants).
18. Invariant Adjectives: Are there any descriptive words that don't change at all, regardless of whether the noun is masculine/feminine or singular/plural?

III. Verbs (Subject/Object Agreement for Gender & Number)

19. Basic Subject Agreement (Present): How do you say '[singular masculine subject, e.g., The boy] eats'? vs. [singular feminine subject, e.g., The girl] eats? vs. [plural masculine subject, e.g., The boys] eat? vs. [plural feminine subject, e.g., The girls eat]? (Asking the question by giving many(different) Tigrinya verbs)
20. Past Tense Agreement: Repeating Q19, but for yesterday: '[The boy] ate', '[The girl] ate', etc.
21. Future Tense Agreement (Definite): Repeating Q19, but for tomorrow: '[The boy] will eat', etc.
22. Object Agreement: How do you say '[singular masculine subject, e.g., My son] sees; [singular masculine object, e.g., the boy]'? vs. My son sees [singular feminine object, e.g., the girl]'? vs. My son sees [plural masculine object, e.g., the boys]'? vs. My son sees [plural feminine object, e.g., the girls]'? (Asking different Tigrinya verbs to the informants).
23. Object Agreement (Indefinite): Does the verb change if the object is 'something' or 'someone' indefinite (e.g., 'The man sees something') compared to a definite object?
24. Compound Subjects: How do you say '[Masculine noun] and [feminine noun] eat'? Does the verb agreement use masculine plural, feminine plural, or something else? (Asking different Tigrinya nouns and verbs to the informants).
25. Impersonal/3rd Plural Subjects: How do you say 'They say...' (referring to people in general)? Does it have a specific gender/number marking?

26. Agreement with Quantified Nouns: How do you say 'Many boys run'? vs. Many girls run? (Does "many" affect the verb agreement compared to just "boys run"/"girls run"?).

IV. Exceptions, validation and Southern Zone Specifics

27. Regional Variations: Are there any ways of making plurals or marking gender on adjectives/verbs that you think are specific to how people speak here in the Southern Zone, compared to other parts of Tigray?

28. Idiomatic Exceptions: Can you think of any common phrases or expressions where the gender or number agreement seems unusual or doesn't follow the usual rules?

29. Influence of Other Languages: Do words or ways of speaking from Amharic or other neighboring languages (e.g., Afar, Agew) ever influence how people here form plurals or use 'he/she/they'?

30. Naturalistic Elicitation: Could you tell me a short story about a family (mother, father, children) going to market or working on their farm? Describe what they did, what they saw, what they bought.

Appendix ii: Collected Tigrinya nouns, adjective and verbs field work and other documents by word classes

Here are words that are collected from field work, different medias and documented materials. The words are classified in to their word classes in order to know or analyze gender and number markers from them.

I. Classification of Nouns

A. Common Noun

1. People & Family

No.	Words	Translation	Gloss	Plurals	Translation	Gloss
1	ሰብ	/səb/	person- NEU.PL.	ሰባት	/səbat/	persons- NEU.PL.
2	ቆልዓ	/k'olɣa/	boy- NEU.SG.	ቆልዑ	/x'olɣu/	boys- NUE.PL.
3	ህፃን	/his'an/	child- NEU.SG.	ህፃናት	/ʔis'anat/	children- NEU.PL.
4	ሰብኣይ	/səbɔaj/	man- M.SG.	ኣሸኡን	/ʔaʃiʔun/	men- M.PL.
5	ሰብይቲ	/səbəjti/	woman- F.SG.	ኣንእስቲ	/ʔanʔisti/	women- F.PL.
6	ወዳ	/wədi/	boy- M.SG.	ወዳት	/wədat/	boys- M.PL.
7	ጓል	/g'al/	girl- F.SG.	ጓላት	/g'alat/	girls- F.PL.
8	ኣቦ	/ʔabo/	father- M.SG.	ኣቦታት	/ʔabətat/	fathers- M.PL.
9	ኣዶ	/ʔadə/	mother- F.SG.	ኣዶታት	/ʔadətat/	mothers- F.PL.
10	ኣው	/haw/	brother- M.SG.	ኣሕዋት	/ʔahwat/	brothers- NEU.PL.
11	ኣፍቲ	/hafti/	sister- F.SG.	ኣሕዋት	/ʔahwat/	sisters- NEU.PL.
12	ኣየ/ኣየየ	/ʔajə/	Mister-M.SG	-	-	--
13	ኣደ/ኣደየ	/ʔadə/	Mistress-F.SG	-	-	-

2. Body Parts

No.	Words	Translation	Gloss	Plurals	Translation	Gloss
1	ርእሲ	/rəʔsi/	head- M.SG.	ኣራእሲ	/ʔaraʔis/	heads- M.PL.
2	ዓይኒ	/ʔajni/	eye- M. DUAL	ኣዕንቲ	/ʔaʕənti/	eyes- M.PL.
3	ኣፍ	/ʔaf/	mouth- M.SG.	ኣፍ	/ʔaf/	mouth-M.SG.
4	ኣፍንጫ	/ʔafintʃa/	nose(pair)- M.SG	ኣፍንጫታት	/ʔafintʃat/	noses- M.PL.
5	ኣድ	/ʔid /	hand(s)-M. Dual	ኣእዳው	/ʔaʔdaw/	hands- NEU.PL.
6	ኣፃብዕቲ	/ʔas'abəʕti/	Finger(s)-	ኣፃብዕቲ	/ʔas'abəʕti/	finger(s)-M.PL.
7	ፅፍሪ	/s'ifri/	Nail(s)- M.SG?	ኣፅፋር	/ʔas'far/	nails. M PL.
8	እግሪ	/ʔigri/	Leg(s)- M. Dual	ኣእጋር	/ʔaʔgar/	legs- M.PL.
9	ጭሕሚ	/tʃ'ihmi/	Beard- M.PL	ጭሕሚ	/tʃ'ihmi/	beard- M.SG.

10	እዝኒ/	/ʔizni/	ears- M.Dual	አእዝን	/ʔaʔzan/	ears- NEU.PL.
11	ጨጉሪ	/s'əq ^w uri/	hair- M.PL.	ጨጉሪ	/s'ig ^w ri/	hair-M.SG.
12	ልቢ	/libi/	heart- F.SG.	ልብታት	/libitat/	hearts-F.PL.
13	ኸላሊት	/xulalit/	kidney- F.SG.	ኸላሊት	/xulalit/	kidney-F.SG.
14	ሐምት	/hammut/	bile- F.SG.	ሐምት	/hammut/	bile-F.SG.

3. Animals

No.	Words	Translation	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Translation
1	እንሰሳ	/ʔinsəsə/	animal(s)- NE.SG.	እንሰሳት	/ʔinsisat/	animals- F.PL.
2	አርጊ	/ʔarrgi/	donkey- NE.SG.	አእዳግ	/ʔaədug/	donkeys- F.PL.
3	ኸልቪ	/xalvi/	dog- M.SG.	አኸልፍቲ	/ʔaxlifti/	dogs- M.PL.
4	ደሞ	/dimmu/	cat- NE.SG.	ደማሞ	/dəmamu/	cats- F.PL.
5	ፈረስ	/fərəs/	horse- N.SG.	አፍራስ	/ʔafras/	horses- F.PL.
6	ቦቕሊ	/bəx'li/	mule- F.SG.	አቦቕሊቲ	/ʔabx'lti/	mules- F.PL.
7	ላሐሚ	/laħmi/	cow- F.SG.	ከፍቲ	/kəfti/	cows- F.PL.
8	ሙራኽ	/murax/	calf- NE. SG.	አምራኸት	/ʔamraxut/	calves- F.PL.
9	ብዕራይ	/bəʃraj/	ox- M.SG.	አውዑር	/ʔawuʃur/	oxen- M.PL.
10	ተፍን	/təfin/	bull- M.SG.	አታፍን	/ʔatafin/	bulls- M.PL.
11	ባግዕ	/bəggiʃ/	sheep- NE.SG.	አቫግዕ	/ʔabagiʃ/	sheep- F.PL.
12	ጠሊ	/t'əli/	goat- NE.SG.	አጣሊ	/ʔat'ali/	goats- F.PL.
13	ደርሆ	/dərhə/	hen- F.SG.	ደራሆ	/dərahu/	hens- F.PL.

14	ዑፍ	/ʃuf/	bird- F.SG.	አዕዋፍ	/ʒaʃwaf/	birds- F.PL.
15	ዓሳ	/ʃassa/	fish- M.SG/PL.	ዓሳታት	/ʃasatat/	Fish- M.PL.
16	አንበሳ	/ʒanbəsə/	lion- M.SG.	አናብስ	/ʒanabis/	lions-M.PL.
17	ዋዕሮ	/waʃrə/	lioness- F.SG.	ዋዕሮታት	/waʃrətət/	lionesses- F.PL.
18	ኑቭሪ	/nəvri/	tiger- M.SG.	አናቭር	/ʒanavir/	tigers- M.PL.
19	ዝቭኢ	/zivʕi/	hayena- M.SG.	አዛቭኢ	/ʒazaviə/	hayenas- M.PL.
20	ሓርማዝ	/harmaz/	elephant- M.SG.	ሓራምዝ	/haramz/	elephants- M.PL.
21	ኾርያ	/xərja/	fox- F.SG.	ኾያሩ	/xəjaru/	foxes- F.PL.
22	ተቭን	/təvən/	snake- M.SG.	አትቫን	/ʒatvan/	snakes- M.PL.
23	ግመል	/giməl/	camel- NE.SG.	አግማል	/ʒəgmal/	camels- M.PL.

4. Food & Drinks

No.	Word	Translation	Gloss	Plurals	Translation	Gloss
1	ምግቢ	/migvi/	food- M.SG.	ምግቢታት	/migvitat/	food items-M.PL
2	አምበሻ	/himbəʃa/	Bread-M.SG	አናቭሻ	/hanaviʃ/	loaves of bread- M.PL
3	አኸሊ	/ʒixli/	ceareal-M.PL.	አእኸል	/ʒaʔxal/	Ceareals- M.PL.
4	ፍረ	/firə/	fruit- M.SG.	ፍረታት/	/firətət/	Fruits- M.PL
5	ሳዕሪ	/saʃri/	Grass-M.PL.			
8	ወይኒ	/wəjni/	wine- M.			

9	ፀቫ	/s'əva/	milk- M.	--		--
10	ማይ	/maj/	water- M.	ማያት/	/majat/	Rivers- M.PL
11	ዘይቲ	/zəjti/	oil- M.	--		--
12	ላምባ	/lamba/	fuel- M.	--		--
13	ዝናቭ	/zinav/	rain- M.	--		--
14	ሰዋ	/səwwa/	'siwa'-M	--	--	--

5. Nature & Places

	Word	Transla- tion	Gloss	Plurals		Translation
1	መይዳ	/məjda/	field- M.SG.	መይዳታት	/məjdatat/	fields- M.PL.
2	ቆላ	/x'əla/	lowland- M.SG.	ቆላታት	/x'əlatat/	lowlands- M.PL.
3	ደጉዓ	/dəguʕa/	highland- M.SG.	ደጉዓታት	/dəguʕatat/	highlands- M.PL.
4	ባሕሪ	/bahri/	sea- M.SG.	ባሕርታት	/bahritat/	seas- M.PL.
5	ዓዲ	/ʕadi/	house- NE.SG.	ዓዳት	/ʕadat/	houses- NEU.PL.
6	ዓዲ	/ʕadi/	living area- M.SG.	ዓድታት	/ʕaditat/	living areas- M.PL.
6	በረኻ	/bərəxa/	desert- M.SG.	በረኻታት	/bərəxatat/	deserts- M.PL.
7	መንገዲ	/məngədi/	road- M.SG.	መንገድታት	/məngəditat/	roads- M.PL.

8	ከረን	/kəɾən/	mountain- NEU.SG.	አከራን	/ʔakran/	mountains- M.PL.
9	ገረብ	/gəɾəv/	river- M.SG.	ገረብገረብ	/gəɾəvəgəɾəv/	rivers- M.PL.
10	መሬት	/məɾət/	land- F.SG.	መሬት	/məɾət/	land- F.SG.
11	ምድሪ	/midiri/	land- F.SG.	ምድሪ	/midiri/	land- F.SG.
12	ከተማ	/kətəma/	city- F.SG.	ከተማታት	/kətəmatat/	cities- F.PL.
13	ቐበት	/x'ufət/	village- F.SG.	ቐበታት	/x'ufətət/	vilages- F.PL.
14	መንደር	/məŋədɪ/	village- F.SG.	መንደራት	/məndərat/	Vilages-F.PL.
15	ቆፅሊ	/x'əs'li/	leaf-M.SG.	አቆፅሊ፣ ቆፅሊ መፅሊ	/ʔx'us'ilti, x'əs'ləməs'li/	leaves-M.PL.
16	ሱር	/sur/	root- M.SG.	ሰራውር፣ ሱራ-ሱር	/səɾawur/, surasur/	roots- M.PL.
17	ጉንዲ	/gundi/	stem- M.SG.	አጉናድ	/ʔagunad/	stems- M.PL.
18	ጨንፈር	/tʃ'əfər/	branch- NEU.SG.	ጨናፍር	/tʃ'ənafɪr/	branches- M.PL.

6. Objects & Tools

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	ወንበር	/wənbər/	chair- NE.SG.	ወናብር	/wənbɪr/	chairs- NEU.PL.
2	መፅሐፍ	/məs'haf/	book- NE.SG.	መፃሕፍቲ	/məs'ahifti/	books- NEU.PL.

3	ቆርሽ	/x'urʃi/	money-NE.SG.	አቆራሽ	/ʔax'uraʃ/	money-NEU.PL.
4	ካራ	/kara/	knife-NE.SG.	ካራሩ	/kararu/	knives-NEU.PL.
5	እምኒ	/ʔimni/	stone-NE.SG.	አእማን	/ʔaʔman/	stones-NEU.PL.
6	ማሕረሻ	/maħrəʃa/	plow-NE.SG.	ማሕረሻታት	/maħrəʃatat/	plows-NEU.PL.
7	ሐጭን	/ħatʃ'in/	metal-M.SG.	ሐጭውን(ሐጭን መጭን)	/ħatʃ'awin/	metals-NEU.PL.
8	አይኖ	/ʔajno/	Pot-M.SG.	አዖኑ	/ʔajanu/	Pots- NEU.PL.
9	ሕንሰራ	/ħinsira/	Pot- NE.SG.	ሐናስር(ሕንሰራታት)	/ħanasir.ħinsiratat/	Pots-NEU.PL.

7. Time

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	ሰዓት	/səʃat/	watch- F.SG.	ሰዓታት	/səʃatat/	waches- F.PL.
2	ሰዓት	/səʃat/	hour- M.SG.	ሰዓታት	/səʃatat/	hours- M.PL.
2	መዓልቲ	/məʃalti/	date- F.SG.	መዓልታት	/məʃaltat/	dates- <u>M.PL</u>
3	ሰሙን.	/səmun/	week- NE.SG.	ሰሙናት	/səmunat/	weeks- NEU.PL
4	ወርሐ.	/wərħi/	month- M.SG.	አዋርሕ	/ʔawariħ/	months- M.PL.
5	ዓመት	/ʃamət/	year- M.SG.	ዓመታት	/ʃamətat/	years- M.PL.

Clothing

No	Words	Transcript-ion	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	ሸሚዝ	/ʃəmiz/	shirt- NEU.SG.	ሸሚዛት	/ʃəmizat/	shirts- NEU.PL.
2	ቻሚሽ	/x'amiʃ/	dress- NEU.SG.	ቻሚሻት	/x'amiʃat/	dresses- NEU.PL.
3	ቆቢዕ	/x'ɔ'biʃ/	cape- NEU.SG.	ቆቢዕ	/x'ɔ'biʃ/	cape- NEU.SG.
4	ጫማ	/tʃ'ama/	shoes- NEU.DUAL.	ጫማሙ	/tʃ'amamu/	shoes- NEU.PL.
5	ሱረ	/sure/	trouthers- NEU.SG.	ሱረታት	/surətat/	trouthers- NEU.PL.
6	ካልሲ	/kalsi/	socks- NEU.DUAL.	ካልሲታት	/kalsitat/	

8. Religion

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	አምላክ	/ʔamlak/	God- M.SG	አምላክቲ	/ʔamalixti/	Gods- M.PL.
2	መልአክ	/məlʔak/	angel-M.SG.	መላእክቲ	/məlaʔkiti/	angels- M.PL
3	ሰይጣን	/səj'ɪŋ/	devil- M.SG.	ሰይጥን	/səjat'in/	devils- M.PL.
4	ቡተክርስቲያን	/bətəxsɪjan/	Church- M.SG.	ኣብያተክርስቲያን	/ʔabja-təkɪristɪjan/	churches- M.PL
5	ቤተክርስቲያን	/betəkɪristɪjan/	Spir- itual(heaven)- F.SG.	ቤተክርስቲያን	/betəkɪristɪjan/	Spir- itual(heaven)- F.SG.
5	መስጊድ	/məsgid/	Mosque- M.SG.	መሳጊድ	/məsgid/	Mosques- M.PL.
6	ቅዳስ	/k'i'dɪsə/	Eucharist- M.SG.	ቅዳስ	/k'idasə/	Eucharist- M.SG.

7	ብዓል	/biʕal/	Holiday- M.SG.	ብዓላት	/bəʕalat/	holydays- M.PL.
8	ፀሎት	/s'ələt/	Prayer- M.SG.	ፀሎት	/s'ələt/	prayer- M.SG.

9. Other Common Nouns

1. ስራሕ
2. ትምህርቲ
3. ተምሃራይ
4. መምህር
5. ሓረስታይ
6. ወተሃደር
7. ሓኪም
8. ዶክተር
9. ፖሊስ

B. Abstract Nouns

1. Concepts & Ideas

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals		Transcription
1	ሐቂ	/ħak'i/	truth-F.SG.	ሐቅት/ M.PL.	ʕak'itat/=	truths
2	ሐሸት	/ħuʃət/	lie- M.SG.	ሐሸት/ M.PL.	ʕuʃətət/	lies
3	ሐይሊ	/ħajli/	power- M.SG.	ሐይልታት / M.PL.	/ʕajlitat	powers
4	ስልጣን	/silt'an/	authority- M.SG.	ስልጣን/ M.SG.	silt'an/=	authority
5	ኸብሪ	/xibri/	honor- M.SG.	ኸብርታት/ M.PL.	xibritat/=	honors
6	ሐርነት	/ħarinət/	freedom- M.SG.	ሐርነታት/ M.PL.	ʕarinətət/=	freedoms
7	ስርዓት	/sirʕat/	system- M.SG.	ስርዓታት/ M.PL.	sirʕatət/=	systems

8	ራእይ	/raʔij/	vision- M.SG.	ራእይ/ M.PL.	raʔij/=	visions
9	ዝኸሪ	/zixri/	memory- M.SG.	ዝኸርታት/	zixritat/=	Memories- M.PL.
10	ምሽጥር	/mɨʃt'ir/	mystery- M.SG.	ምሽጥራት/	mɨʃt'irat/=	Mysteries- M.PL.

2. States & Conditions

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	ሰላም	/səlam/	peace- M.SG.	ሰላም	/səlam/	peace- M.SG.
2	ብርሃን	/birhan/	light- M.SG.	ብርሃን	/birhan/	light-M.SG.
3	ፀልማት	/s'əlmɑ	darkness- M.SG.	ፀልማት	/s'əlmɑ	darkness- M.SG.
4	ግልፅነት	/gils'i	clarity- M.SG.	ግልፅነት	/gils'inət/	clarity- M.SG.
5	ፀጥታ	/s'ət'itɑ/	silence- M.SG.	ፀጥታ	/s'ət'itɑ/	silence- M.SG.
6	ራብሻ	/rabʃɑ/	disturbance- M.SG.	ራብሻታት	/rabʃatat/	disturbances- M.PL.
7	ህውከት	/hiwkət/	disturbance- M.SG.	ህውከታት	/hiwkətət/	disturbances- M.PL.
8	ርግኣት	/rigʔat/	stability- M.SG.	ርግኣት	/rigʔat/	stability- M.SG.
9	ጭንቀት	/tʃ'ink'ət/	anxiety- M.SG.	ጭንቀት	/tʃ'ink'ət/	anxiety- M.SG.

3. Emotions & Feelings

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	ፍቅር	/fix'ri/	love- M.SG.	ፍቅር	/fix'ri/	love- M.SG.
2	ፅልኢ	/s'ilʔi/	hate- M.SG.	ፅልኢ	/s'ilʔi/	hate-M.SG.
3	ሓገሥ	/hagos/	happiness- M.SG.	ሓገሥ	/hagos/	happiness- M.SG.

4	ሐዘን	/hazən/	sadness- M.SG.	ሐዘን	/hazən/	sadness- M.SG.
5	ፍርሐ	/firhi/	fear- M.SG.	ፍርሐ	/firhi/	fear- M.SG.
6	ትብዓት	/tibʕat/	courage- M.SG.	ትብዓት	/tibʕat/	courage- M.SG.
7	ቁጥፀ	/x'uʔiʕə/	anger- M.SG.	ቁጥፀ	/x'uʔiʕə/	anger- M.SG.
8	ንዴት	/nidet/	anger- M.SG.	ንዴት	/nidet/	anger- M.SG.
9	ለውጢ	/ləwt'i/	change- M.SG.	ለውጥታት	/ləwt'itat/	changes-M.PL.
10	ኸርዓት	/xurʕat/	pride- M.SG.	ኸርዓት	/xurʕat/	pride- M.SG.
11	ትዕግስቲ	/tiʕgisti/	patience- M.SG.	ትዕግስቲ	/tiʕgisti/	patience- M.SG.

4. Moral & Ethical Concepts

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	ፍትሐ	/fithi/	justice- M.SG.	ፍትሐ	/fithi/	justice- M.SG.
2	ብልሐት	/bilhat/	smartness- M.SG.	ብልሐታት	/bilhatat/	smartness- M.PL.
3	ጥበብ	/t'ibəb/	wisdom- F.SG.	ጥበባት	/t'ibəbat/	wisdoms- F.PL.
4	ሐጥያት	/hat'jat/	sin- M.SG.	ሐጥያታት	/hat'jatat/	sin- M.PL.
5	ዕድቂ	/s'idx'i/	righteousness- M.SG.	ዕድቂ	/s'idk'i/	righteousness- M.SG.
6	ሐሾት	/hiʕot/	lie- M.SG.	ሐሾታት	/hiʕotat/	lies- M.PL.
7	ታሪክ	/tarik/	history- M.SG.	ታሪካት	/tarikat/	histories- M.PL.

8	ርእሰ-ሐሳብ	/riʔsəħasab/	opinion- M.SG.	ርእሰ-ሐሳባት	/riʔsəħasabat/	opinions- M.PL.
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5. States & Conditions

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	ሰላም	/səlam/	peace- F.SG.	ሰላም	/səlam/	peace- F.SG.
2	ኩነት	/kunət/	situation- M.SG.	ኩነታት	/kunətat/	situations- M.SG.
3	ተስፋ	/təsfə/	hope- M.SG.	ተስፋታት	/təsfatat/	hopes- M.PL.
4	ምክንያት	/mixnjət/	reason- M.SG.	ምክንያታት	/mixnjatat/	reasons- M.PL.
5	ሐይሊ	/ħajli/	power- M.SG.	ሐይሊታት	/ħajli/	power- M.SG.
6	ድሌት	/dilet/	need- M.SG.	ድሌታት	/diletat/	needs- M.SG.
7	ነፃነት	/nəs'ɑ'ɛʔ/	freedom- M.SG.	ነፃነት	/nəs'ɑ'ɛʔ/	freedoms- M.SG.

6. Philosophical & Intellectual Concepts

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Gloss	Transcription
1	እምነት	/ʔimnət/	faith-M.SG.	እምነታት	/ʔimnətat/	fath-M.PL.
2	ክህደት	/kihðət/	hypocrisy-M.SG.	ክህደታት	/kihðətat/	hypocrisy-M.SG.
3	ሐሳብ	/ħasab/	idea-M.SG.	ሐሳባት	/ħasabat/	ideas-M.PL.
4	ስነ-ልቦና	/sinəlibəna/	psychology-M.SG.	ስነ-ልቦና	/sinə li'bonä/	psychology-M.SG.
5	ሐበሬታ	/ħabəreta/	information-M.SG.	ሐበሬታታት	/ħabəretatat/	information-m.pl.
6	ስነ-ጥበብ	/si'ɛʔ'ibəb/	art-M.SG.	ስነጥበባት	/sinət'ibəbat/	arts-M.PL.

7. Time & Existence

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	ዘመን	/zəmən/	time-M.SG.	ዘሺናት	/zəvənət/	centuries-M.PL.
2	ወቅቲ	/wəx'ti/	season-M.SG.	ወቅትታት	/wəx'titat/	seasons-M.PL.
3	መወዳእታ	/məwədəʔta/	end-M.SG.	መወዳእታ	/məwədəʔta/	end-M.SG.
4	መጀመርታ	/mədʒəmərta/	beginning-M.SG.	መጀመርታ	/mədʒəmərta/	beginning-M.SG.
5	መፃኢ	/məs'ɑʔi/	future-M.SG.	መፃኢ	/məs'ɑʔi/	future-M.SG.
6	ቻደም	/x'adəm/	formerly-M.SG.	ቻደም	/x'adəm/	past-M.SG.
7	ሂወት	/hiwət/	life-F.SG.	ሂወት	/hiwət/	life-F.SG.
8	ሞት	/mət/	death-M.SG.	ሞት	/mət/	death-M.SG.
9	ዕድል	/ʕidil/	chance-M.SG.	ዕድላት	/ʕidilat/	chances-M.PL.

Collective Nouns

Collective Nouns for People

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	ሰራዊት	/sərawit/	army-M.SG.	ሰራዊት	/sərawit/	army-M.SG.
2	መንግስቲ	/məngisti/	government-M.SG.	መንግስታት	/məngistat/	governments-M.PL.
3	ህዝቢ	/hizbi/	people-M.SG.	ህዝብታት	/hizbitat/	people-M.PL.
4	ጉጅለ	/gudzilə/	group-M.SG.	ጉጅላታት	/gudzilətat/	groups-M.PL.

5	ማህበረሰብ	/mahbərəsəb/	society-M.SG.	ማህበረሰባት	/mahbərəsəbat/	societies-M.PL.
8	ህብረተሰብ	/hibrətəsəb/	community-m.sg	ህብረተሰብ	/hibrətəsəb/	communities-M.PL.
7	ማህበር	/mahbər/	association-m.sg	ማህበራት	/mahbərət/	associations-M.PL.
8	ሐንሸኝ ዕነ	/hanʃəxəʃinə/	enormous-M.SG.	ሐንሸኝ - ዕነ	/hanʃəxəʃinə/	enormous-M.PL.

2. Collective Nouns for Animals

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	ዕስለ	/ʃislə/	Flock -M.SG.	ዕስለታት	/ʃislətət/	herds-M.PL.
2	ጭፍራ	/tʃʼifra/	swarm-M.SG	ጭፍራታት	/tʃʼifratət/	hwarms-M.PL.
3	ወርቂ	/wərqi/	cattle-F.PL	ወርቂ	/wərqi/	cattle-F.PL
4	ገንዘብ	/gənzəb/	cattle-F.PL	ገንዘብ	/gənzəb/	cattle-F.PL
5	ከፍቲ	/kəfti/	cattle-F.PL	ከፍቲ	/kəfti/	cattle-F.PL
6	አራዊት	/ʔarawit/	wild-M.SG.	አራዊት	/ʔarawit/	<u>wild</u> -M.SG
7	በግዖ-ጠሊ	/bəgiʃətʼəli/	collection of sheep and goats-F.PL.	በግዖ-ጠሊ	bəgiʃətʼəli/	Group of sheep and goats-F.PL.
8	አርጎ-በቕሊ	/ʔadgobəxʼli/	Collection of donkeys, horses and mules- F.PL.	አርጎ-በቕሊ	/ʔadgobəxʼli/	Collection of donkeys, horses and mules- F.PL

3. Collective Nouns for Objects

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
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1	ቆፅሪ	/x'us'ri/	collection of numbers-M.SG	ቆፅርታት	/x'us'ritat/	numbers-M.PL
2	ፆር	/s'or/	bundle of-M.SG.	ፆር	/s'or/	bundle of-M.SG
3	ኩንኪ	/kunhi/	cluster of searials-M.SG.	ኩንኪ	/kunhi/	cluster of searials-M.SG.
4	ኸምሪ	/xumri/	bundle of-M.SG.	ኸምሪ	/xumri/	bundle of-M.SG.
5	ፅምዲ	/s'imdi/	pair-M.SG.	ፅምዲ	/s'imdi/	pair-M.SG.

4. Collective Nouns for Plants & Nature

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals	Transcription	Gloss
1	አትክፊት	/ʔatxilti/	all vegetables-M. S&PL.	አትክፊታት	/ʔatxilti/	Vegetables-M.PL.
2	ዱር	/du:r/	forest-M.SG.	ዱር	/du:r/	Forests-M.PL.
3	ቆጥቆጥ	/x'ut'x'wat'/	grove (small trees)	ቆጥቆጥ	/x'ut'x'wat'/	Grove-M.PL
4	ዘርአ	/zərʔi/	field crops	አዘርአቲ	/ʔazriʔti/	field crops-M.PL (different types)
5	ፅፅዋት	/ʕis'wat/	vegetation	ፅፅዋት	/ʕis'wat/	vegetation

II. Classification of Adjectives

A. Descriptive Adjectives-

1. Appearance & Size Adjectives

No	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals		
				Words	Transcription	Gloss
1	ፅቡቅሰገ	/s'ibux'/	good- M.SG	ፅቡቆች	/s'ibux'at/	good-M.PL.
2	ፅቡቆቲ	/s'ibux'ti/	good-F.SG.	ፅቡቆች	/s'ibux'at/	good-F.PL.
3	ዓጢይ	/ʕawuij/	big-M.SG	ዓጢይቲ	/ʕabəjti/	big-M.PL.

4	ዓባይ	/ʃabaj/	big-F.SG.	ዓባይቲ	/ʃabəjti/	big-F.PL.
5	ረጉድ	/rəgʷid/	thick-M.SG.	ረጎድቲ	/rəgəɔditi/	thick-M.PL.
6	ረጓድ	/rəgʷad/	thick-F.SG.	ረጎድቲ	/rəgəɔditi/	thick-F.PL.
7	ሐጭር	/hatʃʷir/	short-M.SG.	ሐጨርቲ	/hatʃʷerti/	short-M.PL.
8	ሐጭር	/hatʃʷar/	short-F.SG.	ሐጨርቲ	/hatʃʷerti/	short-F.PL.
9	ነዊሕ	/newih/	tall- M.SG.	ነዋሕቲ	/nəwaʃti/	tall-M.PL.
10	ነዋሕ	/newaʃ/	tall-F.SG.	ነዋሕቲ	/nəwaʃti/	tall-F.PL.
11	ቻጢን	xʰatʰin/	thin- M.SG.	ቻጠንቲ	/xʰatʰənti/	thin-M.PL.
12	ቻጣን	/xʰatʰan/	thin-F.SG.	ቻጠንቲ	/xʰatʰənti/	thin-F.PL.
13	ንኡሽተይ	/niʃtuʃtəj/	small-NEU.SG.	ኣናእሽቲ	/ʔanaʃʃtu/	small-NEU.PL.
14	ሕማቕ	/himaxʰ/	ugly-NEU.SG.	ሕማቕቲ	/himaxʰat/	ugly-NEU.PL.

2. Color Adjectives

No.	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals		
				Words	Transcription	Gloss
1	ቻይሕ	/xʰajih/	red-M.SG.	ቻይሕቲ	/xʰajaʃti/	red-M.PL.
2	ቻይሕ	/xʰajaʃ/	red-F.SG.	ቻይሕቲ	/xʰajaʃti/	red-F.PL.
3	ፀለም	/sʰəlim/	black-M.SG.	ፀለምቲ	/sʰələmti/	black-M.PL.
4	ፀለም	/sʰəlam/	black-F.SG.	ፀለምቲ	/sʰələmti/	black-F.PL.
3	ሰማያዊ	/səmajawi/	blue-M.SG.	ሰማያውያን	/səmajawjan/	blue-M.PL.
4	ሰማያዊት	/səmajawit/	blue-F.SG.	ሰማያውያት	/səmajawjat/	blue-F.PL.
5	ወርቃዊ	/wərqawi/	golden-M.SG.	ወርቃዊ	/wərqawi/	golden-M.PL.
6	ወርቃዊት	/wərqawit/	golden-F.SG.	ወርቃዊት	/wərqawit/	golden-F.PL.
7	ድሙቕ	/dimuxʰ/	bright-M.SG.	ድሙቕቲ	/dimuxʰat/	bright-M.PL.
8	ድሙቕቲ	/dimuxʰti/	bright-F.SG.	ድሙቕቲ	/dimuxʰat/	bright-F.PL.
9	ቆልለዊ	/xʰəsʰləwaj/	green-M.SG.	ቆልለዎት	/xʰəsʰləwaj/	green-M.PL.
10	ቆልለዊቲ	/xʰəsʰləwəjti/	green-F.SG.	ቆልለዎት	/xʰəsʰləwəjti/	green-F.PL.
11	ቆገል	/xʰəsʰal/	green-NEU.SG.	ቆገላት	/xʰəsʰalat/	green-NEU.PL.
12	ብጫ	/bitʃa/	yellow-NEU.SG.	ብጫታት	/bitʃatat/	yellow-NEU.PL.
13	ገዕዳ	/sʰaʃda/	white-NEU.SG.	ፀዓዳ	/sʰəʃadu/	white-NEU.SG.

3. Personality & Behavior Adjectives

No.	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals		
				Words	Transcription	Gloss
1	ገዕራም	/sʰaʃram/	diligent-Ne.sg.	ገዕራማት	/sʰaʃramat/	diligent-NE.PL.
2	ጥሽሽኛ	/tʰivəvəna/	wise-NE.SG.	ጥሽሽኛታት	/tʰivəvənaʔaʃ/	wise-NE.PL.
3	ለዋህ	/ləwah/	humble-Ne.sg.	ለዋህት	/ləwahat/	humble-NE.PL.
4	ጨካን	/tʃəʔaʔaʔ/	cruel-NE.SG.	ጨካናት	/tʃəʔaʔaʔaʃ/	cruel-NE.PL.
5	ደፋር	/dəfar/	courageous-NE.sg.	ደፋራት	/dəfarat/	courageous-NE.PL.
6	ፈራሕ	/fərah/	cowardly-ne.sg.	ፈራሐት	/fərahat/	cowardly-NE.PL.
7	ለጋስ	/ləgas/	generous-ne.sg.	ለጋሳት	/ləgasat/	generous-NE.PL.
8	ሃሳስ	/hasas/	fool-NE.SG.	ሃሳሳት	/hasasat/	fool-NE.PL.
9	ልባም	/libam/	wise-NE.SG.	ልባማት	/libamat/	wise-NE.PL.
10	ናሕሩሕ	/ruhruh/	kind-M.SG.	ናሕሩሐት	/ruhruhat/	kind-M.PL.
11	ናሕሩሐቲ	/ruhruhti/	kind-F.SG.	ናሕሩሐት	/ruhruhat/	kind-F.PL.
12	ሰላማዊ	/səlamawi/	peaceful-M.SG.	ሰላማውያን	/səlamawjan/	peaceful-M.PL.
13	ሰላማዊት	/səlamawit/	Peaceful-F.SG.	ሰላማውያት	/səlamawjat/	peaceful-F.pl.
14	ቼጠዕ	/xʰutʰuʔ/	Sad-M.SG.	ቼጠዓት	/xʰutʰuʔat/	sad-M.PL.
15	ቼጥዕቲ	/xʰutʰiʔti/	Sad-F.SG.	ቼጠዓት	/xʰutʰuʔat/	sad-F.PL.

4. Emotions & Feelings

No.	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals		
				Words	Transcription	Gloss
1	ሕገሰ	/higus/	happy-M.SG	ሕገሳት	/higusat/	happy-M.PL.
2	ሕገሰቲ	/higusti/	happy-F.SG.	ሕገሳት	/higusat/	happy-F.PL.
3	ሕዙን	/hizun/	sorrowful-.M.SG.	ሕዙናት	/hizunat/	sorrowful-M.PL.
4	ሕዙንቲ	/hizunti/	sorrowful-F.SG.	ሕዙናት	/hizunat/	sorrowful-F.PL.
5	ዕጉሰ	/ʕigus/	patient-M.SG.	ዕጉሳት	/ʕigusat/	patient-M.PL.
6	ዕጉሰቲ	/ʕigusti/	patient-F.SG.	ዕጉሳት	/ʕigusat/	patient-F.PL.

5. Adjectives of Physical States

No.	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals		
				Words	Transcription	Gloss
1	ሕመም	/ʕimum/	sick-M.SG	ሕመማት	/ʕimumat/	sick-M.PL.
2	ሕመምቲ	/ʕimumti/	sick-F.SG.	ሕመማት	/ʕimumat/	sick-F.pl
3	ጥዑይ	/t'isuj/	healthy-M.SG.	ጥዑያት	/t'isujat/	healthy-M.PL.
4	ጥዑይቲ	/t'isujti/	healthy-F.SG	ጥዑያት	/t'isujat/	healthy-F.PL.
5	ዕቡቕ	/s'ibux'/	good-M.SG.	ዕቡቃት	/s'ibux'at/	good-M.PL
6	ዕቡቕቲ	/s'ibux'ti/	good-F.SG.	ዕቡቃት	/s'ibux'at/	good-F.PL.
7	ደኸም	/dixum/	weak-M.SG.	ደኸማት	/dixumat/	weak-M.PL
8	ደኸምቲ	/dixumti/	weak-F.SG.	ደኸማት	/dixumat/	weak-F.PL.
9	ዕሩይ	/s'iruj/	clean-M.SG.	ዕሩያት	/s'irujat/	clean-M.PL.
10	ዕሩይቲ	/s'irujti/	clean-F.SG.	ዕሩያት	/s'irujat/	clean-F.PL.
10	ምሉእ	/miluʔ/	full-M.SG.	ምሉእት	/miluʔat/	full-M.PL.
11	ምሉእቲ	/miluʔti/	full-F.SG.	ምሉእት	/miluʔat/	full-F.PL.
12	ፀገው	/s'igub/	satisfied-M.SG.	ፀገዋት	/s'iguwat/	satisfied-M.PL.
13	ፀገውቲ	/s'igubti/	Satisfied-F.SG.	ፀገዋት	/s'iguwat/	satisfied-F.PL.
14	ርሐው	/riʕuw/	hungry-M.SG.	ርሐዓት	riʕuvat/	hungry-M.PL.
15	ርሐውቲ	/riʕuwti/	hungry-F.SG.	ርሐዓት	/riʕuvat/	hungry-F.PL.
16	ሓደስ	/ʕadisi/	new-M.SG	ሓደሰቲ	/ʕadesti/	new-M.PL.
17	ሓዳስ	/ʕadas/	new-F.SG.	ሓደሰቲ	/ʕadesti/	new-F.PL.
18	ሓያል	/ʕajal/	powerful-NE.SG.	ሓያላት	/ʕajalat/	powerfull-Ne.PL.
19	አረጊት	/ʕarəgit/	old- NE.SG.	አረጓጉቲ	/ʕarəgʷaguti/	Powerful-Ne.PL
20	ንደሎ	/gədələ/	deficiency-Ne.sg.	ንደሎታት	/gədələtat/	Deficiency-Ne.PL
21	ረሳክ	/rəsas/	dirty-Ne.SG.	ረሳካት	/rəsasat/	Dirty-Ne.PL.
22	መኻን	/məxan/	Infertile-Ne.SG.	መኻናት	/məxanat/	Infertile-Ne.PL.

6. Food and Taste

No.	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals		
				Words	Transcription	Gloss
1	ጥዑም	/t'isum/	sweet-M.SG.	ጥዑማት	/t'isumat/	sweet-M.PL
2	ጥዑምቲ	Tiisumti/	sweet-F.SG.	ጥዑማት	/t'isumat/	sweet-F.PL.
3	መረር	/məriri/	bitter-M.SG.	መረርቲ	/mərər̄ti/	bitter-M.PL.
4	መረር	/mərari/	bitter-F.SG	መረርቲ	/mərər̄ti	bitter-F.PL.
5	ምቁር	/məq'ur/	charming-M.SG.	ምቁራት	/miqurat/	charming-M.PL.
6	ምቁርቲ	/məq'urti/	charming-F.SG.	ምቁራት	/miqurat/	charming-F.PL.

7. Time Adjectives

No.	Words	Transcription	Gloss	Plurals
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				Words	Transcription	Gloss
1	ቅዱም	/x'idum/	Ancient- M.SG.	-		
2	ድሁር	/diʕur/	Latter-M.SG	-		
3	ሕሉፍ	/ʕiluf/	Past-M.SG.	-		
4	ሀሉው	/hiluw/	Present-M.SG.	-		
5	መፃእ	/məʕ'ɑʔi/	Future-M.SG	-		

8. Quantitative Adjectives

1. Basic Quantity Words

ቆርቫይ/ቆሩብ	– few	ፍርቂ
ብዙሕ	– many/much	ስዕ
ንእሽተይ	– little (amount)	ርብዓ
እኹል	– enough	ድትወሰነ
		– certain/som

ምሉእ – whole/complete

2. Numbers & Amounts

1. ሓደ – one
2. ኛልተ – two
3. ሰለስተ – three
4. ኣርባዕተ – four
5. ሓምሽተ – five
6. ሽዱሽተ – six
7. ሸውዓተ – seven
8. ሸምንተ/ – eight
9. ትሽዓንተ/ – nine
10. ዓሰርተ/ – ten

3. Comparatives & Superlatives

1. ድበለፀ – more
2. ድልዓለ – higher (quantity)
3. ድንኣሰ – less
4. ድትወሰኽ – additional
5. ኻልእ – another

4. Approximate Quantities

1. ደርጋ – almost
2. ብግምት – approximate
3. ደይጠቸሙ – a bit
4. ንእሽተይ – handful
5. ብዙሐት – plenty
6. ድትፋላለየ – diverse
7. ድትሓዋሽለ – scattered

B. Demonstrative Adjectives

1. እዚ/እዛ
 2. እዞም/እዞን
 3. እቲ/እታ
 4. እቶም/እተን
 5. ሃምዚ/ሃምዛ-- like this,
 6. ሃምዞም/ሃምዞን-- like those
- ሃምኡ/ሃምኡ-- like that

C. Possessive Adjectives

1. -ይ -- My
2. -ኸ -- Your (m.)
3. -ኸሊ -- Your (f.)
4. -ኡ -- His
5. -አ -- Her
6. -ና -- Our
7. -ኹም -- Your (pl.)
8. -አም -- Their

D. Interrogative Adjectives

7. አየን? – Which? / What?
8. አይት
9. አይ

10. አዮም

11. ታ? – What? (general)

3. VERBS

3.1. Action Verbs

1. ምግባር /migvar/ – to do
2. ምብላዕ /miblas/ – to eat
3. ምስታይ /mistay/ – to drink
4. ምንባር /minvar/ – to sit
5. ምቅራዕ /mɨx'uras'/ – to cut
6. ምውጻእ /mɨwʂ'aʔ/ – to go out
7. ምግባእ /migvaʔ/ – to come
8. ምውራድ /mɨwrad/ – to descend
9. ምድያብ /midjav/ – to climb
10. ምጉያይ /migujaj/ – to run
11. ምንቅስቃሴ /mɨnk'isx'as/ – to move
12. ምዝላል /mɨzlaal/ – to jump
13. ምሸባር /mɨʂvar/ – to break
14. ምስራሕ /mɨsrah/ – to work
15. ምስጻብ /mɨʂs'av/ – to wash
16. ምፅሐፍ /mɨʂ'haf/ – to write
17. ምንባብ /minbab/ – to read
18. ምዝራብ /mɨzrav/ – to speak
19. ምምልካት /mɨmɨxat/ – to point
20. ምህራስ /mɨhras/ – to sleep
21. ምንዳቅ /mindax'/ – to build
22. ምስሐብ (mɨshav/ – to pull
23. ምቅባል /mɨx'bal/ – to accept
24. ምስሳብ (mɨʂsav) – to think
25. ምሸካዕ /mɨʂkʷas/ – to hide

26. ምግናይ /mignaj/ – to find
27. ምቹግር /mɪx'us'ar/ – to count
28. ምዕዳግ /midag/ – to buy
29. ምሸጥ (mɪʃa'tɪ/ – to sell
30. ምድብራይ (midvraj/ – to throw
31. ምብራር /mibrar/ – to fly
32. ምሕማስ /miħmas/ – to swim
33. ምልዓል /milʕal/ – to raise
34. ምጥያቅ /mit'jjax'/ – to ask
35. ሙፍታይ /muftaj/ – to love
36. ምዕላእ /miʃ'laʔ/ – to hate

3.2. Stative Verbs

1. እንሆ /ʔiniho/ – to exist, be present
2. ይኩ /jiʔʔu/ – to be (is)
3. ይኣ /jiʔʔa/ – to be (feminine)
4. ለ /lə/ – to also be
5. እንሆኹ /ʔinihəxu/ – I am/exist
6. የለይ /yələj/ – there is not
7. ደስ ይብል /dəs yibil/ – to be pleased
8. ፀምኣ /s'əmʔə/ – to be thirsty
9. ረኣቕ /rəħax'/ – to be far
10. ቅረቨ /x'ərəbə/ – to be near
11. ፈርሐ /fəriħu/ – to be afraid
12. ምርሩ /məriɾu/ – to be bitter
13. ፀልሙ /s'əlimu/ – to be black
14. ሙልኩ /məliʔu/ – to be full (of something)
15. ነውሐ /nəwiħu/ – to be long
16. ሐጭሩ /ħatʃ'iru/ – to be short
17. ከቢድ (käbid) – to be heavy
18. ቻጥኑ /sx'at'inu/ – to be thin

19. ፈጉዳ /fəgudə/ – to be fat

20. ፀብብ /s'əbibə/ – to be narrow