Some Aspects of Definite Marker in Dime[*]

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1   Introduction

Dime is an endangered language. It belongs to the Omotic language family according to the classification of Fleming (1976)[1]. It is the least documented language comparing to some other Ethiopian Languages. Fleming (1990), Mulugeta (2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011) and Tsuge (2008:207-215) are a few mentioned works have been done on Dime. Dime is the name of the language, the land and the people who speak the language. The majority of Dime people speak one or two languages next to their mother tongue, especially those living along the border with the Basketo, Aari, and Bodi. However, as opposed to these multilingual groups there are also monolingual groups in Dime which are found in the middle of the Gerfa area. According to a 1994 census the Dime constitute a population of 5,462 people.

From the typological perspective definiteness can be expressed in different ways, for instance, definite article can be a separate word distinct from demonstrative words. Some languages also used to mark definiteness by demonstrative words. In other languages definite marker can be an affix on nouns. There are also languages that have indefinite marker but not definite marker. Further more, there are also languages neither an indefinite or definite marker.

[1] As Bender (1990) states, the Omotic language family is the least known and the least studied language family from the Afro-asiatic phylum. Its classification is still problematic. Fleming (1976) classified it as an independent sub-family under the Afro-asiatic phylum; some scholars object Fleming's classification and consider Omotic as part of Cushitic and use labels such as West Cushitic and "Sidama".

In Dime indefinite is not morphologically marked while the definite is overtly marked by the morpheme **–is**. Definite is overtly marked in many Omotic languages such as Aari, Anfillo, Basketo, Gamo, Gofa, and Dizi. For instance in Ari definiteness is morphologically marked by (-n/na), (-hn) and (-ən) as in (1b and 2b) below:

1a.	**qoli**	'a sheep'	
1b.	**qoli-n/na**	'the sheep' (PL)	
2a.	**duuti**	'a leg'	
2b.	**duuti-n/na**	'the legs'	(Melkeneh, 2011:41-42).

2   Indefinite and definite paradigms in Dime

As it is demonstrated the examples below in Dime indefinite is not morphologically marked while the definite is overtly marked by the morpheme **–is**.

	Indefinite (singular)		**Definite (plural)**	
5.	**ʔéhé**	'a house'	**ʔéh-ís**	'the house'
6.	**níts**	'a child'	**níts-is**	'the child'
7.	**ʔiyyí**	'a person'	**ʔiyy-ís**	'the person'
8.	**yerí**	'a donkey'	**yer-ís**	'the donkey'
9.	**goštú**	'a male one'	**gošt-ís**	'the male one'
10.	**ʔámzi**	'a woman'	**ʔámz-is**	'the woman'

Similarly, indefiniteness is not morphologically marked in Ari as Melkeneh (2011) pointed out. Ari is one of the south Omotic languages and it is related to Dime.

2.1   Definiteness and number

The morphology of Definiteness in Dime is appeared following the suffixes in the noun and the noun modifiers. The definite marker **–is** occurred following the plural marker **–af** as shown below.

	Indefinite (plural)		**Definite (plural)**	
11.	**ʔéh-âf**	'houses'	**ʔéh-âf-is**	'the houses'
12.	**níts-af**	'Childs'	**níts-af-is**	'the Childs'
13.	**ʔiyy-âf**	'persons'	**ʔiyy-âf-is**	'the persons'

14.	**yer-âf**	'donkeys'	**yer-âf-is**	'the donkeys'
15.	**gošt-âf**	'males'	**gošt-âf-is**	'the males'
16.	**ʔámz-af**	'women'	**ʔámz-af-is**	'the women'

Similarly, the ordinal numerals are formed by suffixing the morpheme **–sub** to the cardinal numerals and followed by the definite marker **–is**:

17.	**wókkil-sub**	'first'	**wókkil-sub-is**	'the first'
18.	**k'əstin-sub**	'second'	**k'əstin-sub-is**	'the second'
19.	**mə́kkim-sub**	'third'	**mə́kkim-sub-is**	'the third'
20.	**wut-sub**	'fourth'	**wut-sub-is**	'the fourth'
21.	**šiň-šub**	'fifth'	**šiň-šub-is**	'the fifth'
22.	**woíd-sub**	'twentieth'	**woíd-sub-is**	'the twentieth'

2.2 Definiteness and case

The interaction between definiteness and case is discussed under this section. As we discussed so far about the order of definite marker in Dime it is occurred following the other suffixes such as the plural and ordinal numeral marker. In this specific example concerning the order of definite marker related to case marker it occurs preceding the accusative marker.

2.2.1 Definiteness and accusative case

As can be demonstrated in the following examples (23-28) the accusative marker is suffixed to noun following the definite marker. When the definite and the accusative marker appears in the noun in sequence, always the accusative marker preceded by the definite marker, while the definite marker followed by the accusative marker.

	Unmarked nominative		**Accusative**	
23.	**ʔéh-ís**	'the house'	**ʔéh-ís-im**	'the house'
24	**níts-is**	'the child'	**níts-is-im**	'the child'
25.	**ʔiyy-ís**	'the person'	**ʔiyy-ís-im**	'the person'
26.	**yer-ís**	'the donkey'	**yer-ís-im**	'the donkey'
27.	**gošt-ís**	'the male one'	**gošt-ís-im**	'the male one'
28.	**ʔámz-is**	'the woman'	**ʔámz-is-im**	'the woman'

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Sentential example:

29.   **ʔaté**   **guur-af-is-im**   **deis-i-t**
      1S.SUBJ   corocodile-PL-DEF-ACC   kill-PF-1
      'I killed the crocodiles'

Definiteness marker can be also marked both on the head noun and its modifier in Dime. Example.

30.   **šiftaye**   **zit-ís**   **s'án-ub-is-im**   **šin-i-n**
      Shiftaye   ox-DEF   black-M-DEF-ACC   buy-PF-3
      'Shiftay bought the black ox'

Similarly, in related Omotic languages such as Ari in the presence of a modifier element in a noun phrase, the definite marker is suffixed either to the modifier or to the noun and suffixed both on a noun and on a modifier (Melkeneh, 2011:42).

2.2.2   Definiteness and dative Case

The second complement representing the recipient or goal noun is marked by the dative. In the dative construction the definite is marked proceeding to dative marker. Thus, the definite marker **–is** followed by the dative marker **–in** as in (31-32).

31.   **šiftaye**   **zim-ís-in**   **gím-i-n**
      shiftaye   chief-DEF-DAT   answer-PF-3
      'Shiftay answer to the chief '

32a. **šiftaye**   **zim-ís-in-ik**   **gím-i-n**
      shiftaye   chief-DEF-DAT-too   answer-PF-3
      'Shiftay answered to the chief too'

32b. **šiftaye**   **zim-af-ís-in-ik**   **gím-i-n**
      shiftaye   chief-PL-DEF-DAT-too   answer-PF-3
      'Shiftay answered to the chiefs too'

2.2.3 Definiteness and, instrumental and ablative cases.

As we discuss so far in the previous section the definite marker immediately suffixed to noun preceding the other morphemes. Similarly, as it is demonstrated in example (33- 35), the definite marker is suffixed to noun preceding the instrumental and ablative case marker.

33. **ʔaté ʔáʁ-im tíbz-is-ká k'árs'-í-t**
    1S.SUBJ   tree-ACC   axe-DEF-INST   cut-PF-1
    'I cut a tree with the axe'

34. **dim-ko ʔámze ʔed-is-se-de**
    dime-GEN   woman mountain-DEF-LOC-ABL
    yicꞁ-á ʔád-i-n
    descend-CNV1   come-PF-3
    'A Dime woman came down from the top of the mountain'

35. **náʁ-is ʔed-is-ó-de ʔád-i-n**
    water-DEF   mountain-DEF-LOC-ABL   come-PF-3
    'The water came from inside the mountain.'

2.3 Definiteness and demonstratives

Definiteness is optional when the noun is modified by demonstratives. For instance, if somebody asks by saying, "Who touched this gourd?" the response can be either with or without the definite marker on the head noun, (36a) and (36b) respectively.

36a. **si-nú ʔiyyí yíd-i-n məng-ís-m**
    this(M)   person touch-PF-3   gourd-DEF-ACC
    'This man touched the gourd'

When accusative is marked on a definite noun the definite marker always precedes the case marker. Definiteness marker can be also marked both on the head noun and its modifier based on the order of the noun phrase.

36b. **si-nú ʔiyy-ís yíd-i-n məng-ís-m**
    this (M)   man-DEF   touch-PF-3   gourd-DEF-ACC
    'This man touched the gourd'

2.4 Definiteness and Adjectives

Adjectives share a number of features with nouns in that they are marked for number, definiteness, and case. For instance, adjective and nouns both may take the accusative marker **–im** and the definite marker **–is**. The main distinction between adjectives and nouns is that adjectives are marked for gender while nouns are not. Fleming (1990:528) states: "Dime adjectives behave like themselves for the most part, taking some number and gender suffixes which are largely confined to adjectives." Consider the following examples.

37. **ʔámzi   gúdúm-ind-is**
    woman   tall-F-DEF
    'the tall woman'

38. **goštú giččó-b   li-líŋt'-ub-is**
    man   big-M   RDP-beautiful-M-DEF
    'the big handsome man'

39. **gošt-iś   giččó-b   li-líŋt'-ub-is**
    man-DEF   big-M   RDP-beautiful-M-DEF
    'the big handsome man'

40. **k'ə́stin-íd-is gúdúm-id   zim-áf**
    two-PL-DEF tall-PL   chief-PL
    'The two tall chiefs'

41. **k'ə́stin-íd-is gúdúm-id   zim-áf-is**
    two-PL-DEF tall-PL   chief-PL-DEF
    'The two tall chiefs'

2.5 Definiteness and modifier nouns

Nouns can modify nouns. These modifiers do not use the gender suffix to modify nouns. The modifiers without adjectival suffix are nouns. The definiteness of the noun is marked on the noun modifiers in example (42a) and (42b), while it is suffixed to the noun nits 'calf/child' in example (43a) and (43b) instead of suffixed to the head noun. In Dime the independent words **ʔatsé** 'old male', **gəšín** 'old female', **ʔót** 'cow', and **zit** 'ox' are used to express the sex of the head noun as shown below:

42a. **kɛ́né ʔats-iś dey-í-n**
dog male-DEF die-PF-3
'The male dog died.'

42b. **kɛ́né gəšín-is dey-í-n**
dog female-DEF die-PF-3
'The female dog died.'

43a. **ʔót-níts-is dey-í-n**
cow-child-DEF die-PF-3
'The female calf died.'

43b. **zit-níts-is dey-í-n**
ox-child-DEF die-PF-3
'The male calf died.'

It is also possible to indicate the gender of the child by using a female or male noun as a modifier. Otherwise suffixing a gender marker to directly to a noun leads to ungrammatical as shown below:

44a. **gošt níts–is** 'the male child (M)' *nits-ub
male child-DEF

44b. **ʔámzi níts-is** 'the female child' *nits-ind
woman child-DEF

The word order is flexible when the modifier is an adjective.

45. **ʔámzi s'án-ind-is láχt'-éé-n**
woman black-F-DEF die-IPF-3
'The black woman will die.'

46. **s'án-ind ʔámz-is láχt'-éé-n**
black-F-DEF woman die-IPF-3
'The black woman will die.'

47. **s'án-ind-is ʔámz-is láχt'-éé-n**
black-F-DEF woman-DEF die-IPF-3
'The black woman will die.'

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2.6 Definiteness and Relative clauses

The relative verb form is represented by the morpheme **–ub** (M), **-ind** (F) or **–id** (PL). In contrast to the accusative and other marker, the relative marker is suffixed to verb preceding to the definite and other marker as in examples (48-53) below:

48. **də́r-is-im**   **wúdúr-is-in**   **šin-i-d**
goat-DEF-ACC   girl-DEF-DAT   buy-PF-F:RELT

    Ɂámz-af-is   **láχt'-i-n**[2]
woman-DEF   die-PF-3

    'The women who bought the goat for the girl died.'

49. **bay-im**   **Ɂist-éé-b-is**   **goštú**   **č'ək'k'-ub**
food-ACC   eat-IPF-M:RELT-DEF   man   small-M

    'The man who eats food is small.'

50. **bay-im**   **Ɂist-éé -d-is]**   **gošt-áf**
food-ACC   eat-IPF-PL:RELT-DEF   man-PL

    č' ək'k'-ub
small-M

    'The men who eat food are small.'

51. **bay-im**   **Ɂíst-éé-nd-is**   **Ɂámze**   **č' ək'k'-ind**
food-ACC   eat-IPF-F:RELT-DEF   woman   small-F

    'The woman who eats food is small'

52. **bay-im**   **Ɂist-éé-d-is**   **Ɂámz-af**
food-ACC   eat-IPF-PL:RELT -DEF   woman-PL

    č'ək'k'-ub
small-M

    'The women who eat food are small'

53. **wókkil-ub**   **Ɂéh-ím**   **k'ay-déé-b-is**
one-M   house-ACC   want-IPF-M:RELT-DEF

    Ɂád-i-n
come-PF-3

    'The one who wants the house came'

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[2] **laχt'i** 'die' is used only for human beings. For other animals **deyi** 'die' is used.

With the exception of the inclusive marker **–k**, case markers tend to occur at the final position of the noun phrase. The inclusive occurs after the accusative case marker as in example (54).

54.　**šiftaye**　　　**zim-áf-is-im-k**　　　**deis-i-n**
　　　shiftaye　　　chief-PL-DEF-ACC-too　　kill-PF-3
　　　'Shiftay killed the chiefs too.

The definite marker **–is** may optionally be changed to **–iz** when following voiced consonants. Example (55b).

55a.　**[ʔéh-ís]**　　　'the house'
55b.　**[ʔámz-ìz]**　　'the woman'

In nominal clause the definite marker can be suffixed to either the noun as in (56) or on the modifier as in (57) or in both noun and modifiers as in (58).

56.　**zób-is**　　　**wolk'á-b**　　**kúfó-b-éé**
　　　lion-DEF　　　strong-M　　　beast-M-COP
　　　'The lion is a strong animal.'

57.　**zób**　　　　**wolk'a-b-is**　**kúfó-b**　　　**dán**
　　　lion-PL-DEF　strong-M　　　beast-M　　　COP
　　　'The lion is a strong animals'

58.　**zób-is**　　　**wolk'á-b-is**　　　**kúfó-b**　　　**dán**
　　　lion-DEF　　　strong-M-DEF　　　beast-M　　　COP
　　　'The lion is the strong animal'

An interesting point that is important to mention here is that the morpheme **–is** seems to be portmanteau morpheme which represents two or more morphemes in Dime. For instance, the morpheme **–is** can be used as plural addressee, -causative marker and definite marker (as we discussed so far in the previous sections). For example in (59b) it represents plural addressee, while it represents the causative as in (60).

59a.　**ʔás**　**ʔoχt**
　　　how　spend night
　　　'Good morning (singular addressee)'

59b.	**ʔás	ʔoχt-is**
	how	spend night-PL.ADR
	'Good morning (pl. addressee)'
60.	**ʔind-is	níts-is-im	dʒíš-im	šin-is-i-n**
	mother-DEF	child-DEF-ACC	milk-ACC	buy-CAUS-PF-3
	'The mother got the child to buy milk.'

In the above example, **ʔind-is** 'the mother' is the causer subject, **níts-is-im** 'the child' is the causee and **dʒíš-im** 'milk' is the affected entity. Both the causee and the affected entity are marked by the accusative case. The verb is morphologically marked by the causative suffix.

3   Conclusions

Indefinite reference is not morphologically marked in Dime, while Definiteness is morphologically marked by the morpheme *–is*. Definite is overtly marked in many Omotic languages such as Aari, Anfillo, Basketo, Gamo, Gofa, and Dizi.

Moreover, the morpheme **–is** seems to be portmanteau morpheme which represents two or more morphemes in Dime. The definite, the plural addressee and causative marker are represented by **–is** in Dime. Definiteness marker can be marked either one or both on the head noun and its modifier. Definiteness is optional when the noun is modified by demonstratives. It can be occurred either with or without the definite marker. Moreover, the definite marker **–is** may optionally be changed to **–iz** when following voiced consonants. Generally, definiteness is marked following gender and plural marker, while it precedes the accusative, possessive, locative, markers. When accusative is marked on a definite noun the definite marker always precedes the case marker. In Most cases in Ethiopian languages, direct object case affixes are differential according to the definite-indefinite distinction but this does not seem to be the case in Dime.

N.B. Abbreviations used in this paper.

1S	first person singular	ABL	ablative
2S	second person singular	INST	instrumental
3MS	third person masculine singular	PL	plural
3FS	third person feminine singular	SUBJ	subject
1PL	first person plural	OBJ	object
2Pl	second person plural	NOM	nominative
3PL	third person plural	ABS	absolutive
IPF	imperfective	PF	perfective
DAT	dative	DEF	definite
ACC	accusative	RELT	relative
GEN	genitive	M	male and F female
LOC	locative	COP	Copula
CNV1	Con-verb 1	RDP	reduplication

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