Article

Gender Marking in Tsaratsa

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Abstract

This study is mainly focussed on the description of Gender marking in Tsaratsa. The purpose of the research is to describe and to document the endangered language Tsaratsa. All the data is collected form native speakers of Tsaratsa in Dechawereda. Tsaratsa distinguishes masculine and feminine. The gender marker occurs in various modifying categories: in nominal modifiers, pronominal, main or relative verbs and nouns. In this case, Tsaratsa indicates gender distinction inverbs. It has also gender-sensitive nominal affixes such as definiteness. There are lexical and morphological gender representations of animate and inanimate nouns. In Tsaratsa, gender is usually expressed by using distinctive lexical items. That means there are lexically assigned gender that express type of gender in a language. Morphological gender marking can be employed in different categories of words. In Tsaratsa, definiteness is not overtly marked; rather, definiteness is indicated through the use of either feminine or masculine gender marker. That means distinction of definiteness is recognized during gender marking. For male nouns, definiteness is expressed through the masculine marker **-azi** or **bi** or the feminine marker **-ena**. Adjectives take **bi** for masculine definite and **-ena** for definite feminine. In the process of definite marking, plural nouns are not marked for gender but plurals are marked by **-endi** for both genders. Inanimate nouns the expression of smallness or fewness feature presented by the female marker.

1   Introduction

Ethiopia is the homeland of remarkable varieties of communities and languages. The Oromo, Amhara, and Tigreans make up more than three-fourths of the population, but there are more than 86 different ethnic groups with their own distinct languages within Ethiopia. One of the language sub families from the

Afro-asiatic phylum in the country which have a number of different languages is called Omotic. Tsaratsa belongs to the Omotic language family and is spoken in Kafa Zone. The majority of the Tsaratsa (alternatively written as Ciara, C'ara and Tsara) people live in Kafa zone of the SNNPR, Ethiopia. The Kafa, Na'o and Me'enit people call them Charicho, Tsara or Gimira and Tom, respectively. However, the Chara people call themselves as 'Tsaratsa' (Addisalem and Abera 2013: 13). According to my informant, Kero the people as well as the language is called Tsaratsa. Thus, the name 'Tsaratsa' is used in the current study. The specific residence of the Tsaratsa linguistic community is the extreme southern and south western of Kafa Zone, on both sides of the Omo River in Geba Amesha, Buna Anta and Kumba villages. Tsaratsa contains six kebeles. These are Angella, Shashi, Shallo, Bunanta, Meshsha, Gabaja, Dadina, and Kumba. The first two Angella and Shashi are neighbors of the Kafa speaker. The other four Bunanta, Meshsha, Gabaja, Dadina, and Kumba are neighbors of Me'enit people. The neutral and influential dialect is assumed to be Shallo which is spoken at the middle of Tsaratsa people. Tsaratsa is an Omotic language which is the least known and studied languages among the three languages spoken in Kafa zone.

The inspiration for the current study comes from my current research of Tsaratsa Language and culture in Kafa zone. Akililu (2002: 4) estimated the population of Tsaratsa to be 7000. According to the 2007 census the population of the Tsaratsa people is estimated to be 13,214 of which 13,087 are native speakers of the language. Different researchers likeHaaland (2004: 75-86) described the Iron production of the Tsaratsa people in the area. As Todd (1978: 313) pointed out, the two clans of Tsaratsa Cobints and Lassinits migrated to Dime. According to Mulugeta (2012:2) Dime has 30 clans among them Cobints and Lassinits are the two clans found in Dime. There is no evidence whether these clans actually came from Tsaratsa or elsewhere. Furthermore, Addisalem and Abera (2013: 20) stated: "In case of Dime, it is clear that they were neighbours and even two clans of Dime have blood relationship with Tsaratsa." In their research the Iron work of Dime which has been used for a century is also practiced and known in Tsaratsa people as well (2013: 23). Some scholars regard the Dime as 'Dime of Tsaratsa" to indicate those Dimes who live with Tsaratsa. The Dime and Tsaratsa communities are neighbours as cited in Addisalem and Abera (2013: 23) from Siebett (2002: 3):

The Tsaratsa people produce *coffee, inset,* and crops like *maize, teff* and also animals such as *cattle, goat, sheep, donkey* and others.The majority of the people are Orthodox Christians and they also practice traditional belief.

According to Addisalem and Abera (2013: 15), it is difficult to trace the origin of the people. This is because there is no written document except some oral information handed down from elders. The people are known forthe production of local iron. It is the resource of their varieties of equipment that the people use for their daily life activities. The Tsratasa people claim that they have lived in ChochaTsaratsa since time immoral. The Tsaratsa people have positive attitude towards their language as opposed to Nayi (cf. Aklilu Yilma and Siebert 2002). Though Tsaratsa is not assigned to any formal context such as school, mass media, and office, the language is safer than Nayi both in number and in function. The common question usually raised by the Tsaratsa people is all about infrastructure, social institutions (education, health center, sanitary water etc.) but not the question of language development activities as other ethnic groups do (Yohannes and Abel 2014).

2 Conceptual framework and methodology of the study

In the study, Basic Linguistic Theory (Dixon 1997; Dryer 2006) is used to analyze and describe the data. It is a framework particularly used for grammatical description of entire languages. Dryer (2006) points out that the theory is a descriptive theory concerned with 'what languages are like' and the primary goal of this theory is descriptive, without any intended theoretical significance like concerns about 'why languages are the way they are'. He further claims that its goal is, 'to describe a set of facts, without any particular theoretical implications'. Thus, in this study a simple descriptive theory is employed.

3 Previous works in Tsaratsa

Tsaratsa is one of the least known and studied languages among the three languages spoken in Kafa zone. The language is not employed for medium of instruction. It has no orthography (writing system) except an hour radio broadcasting from Bonga Community Radioper day. Aklilu conducted some linguistics and sociolinguistics study on Tsaratsa. Among these studies sociolinguistic survey report on the Tsaratsa language of Ethiopia (Aklilu and Siebert 2002) can be mentioned. Moreover, Aklilu made some phonological and morphological descriptions of Tsaratsa (Aklilu 1995). He also did some comparative works on Tsaratsa, Dime, Melo and Nay (Aklilu 2002; Aklilu and Siebert 1995). Tsegaye and Wubalem (2016) described a sketch grammar of Chara.

It is a good effort to document the language; however, it lacks careful description and analysis which contains 37 pages of rough description and 10 pages of word glosses. The word transcription, description and the analysis contain a number of errors (see, Tsegaye and Wubalem (2016: 5-36)).

4   The Gender system in Tsaratsa

The Gender markers occur in various modifying categories: in nominal modifiers, pronominal, main or relative verbs and on the nouns. In this case, Tsaratsa indicates gender distinction on verbs; It has also gender-sensitive nominal affixes such as definiteness. In short there are lexical and morphological gender representations of animate and inanimate nouns in the language.

4.1   Lexical Gender marking

In Tsaratsa (Aklilu 2002: 8) gender is usually expressed by using distinctive lexical items. That means there are lexically assigned words that express gender. Consider examples below:

1a.   **ʔadna**   'male'
1b.   **maʃna**   'female
2a.   **gutila**   'boy'
2b.   **baara**   'girl'

Similarly, in Dime like **goštu** 'man' and **ʔámze** 'woman' are lexically assigned words that express gender (Mulugeta 2008: 43).

4.2   Morphological gender marking

Morphological gender marking can be employed in different categories of words. These can be used in adjectives, pronouns, nouns and verbs. There are also inherent feminine and masculine genders marking.

4.2.1   Gender marking in adjectives

a)   **karte   genn-ana   woo-n**
        black old-F   come-PF
        'The old black woman comes'

b)   **karte   genn-abi   woo-n**
        black   old-M   come-PF
        'The old black man comes'

c)   **karte   genn-endi   woo-n**
        black   old-PL   come-PF
        'The old black people come'

As can be seen in the above examples, gender is marked morphologically. For instance, in example (a) the feminine gender marker **-ana** is suffixed to the adjectives as in **genna** 'old woman'. Moreover, the masculine gender marker **-abi** is suffixed to the same adjectives as in **gen-abi** 'old man'. When the plural nouns or adjectives appear gender is not marked but rather plural marker **-endi** is suffixed.

4.2.2   Gender Marking in pronouns

In this sections we discus gender marking in Tsaratsa personal pronouns and demonstrative pronouns as in (4.2.2.1 and 4.2.2.2) below.

4.2.2.1   Personal pronouns

In Tsaratsa, the subject and object personal pronouns are marking gender in different ways. The subject pronouns are marking gender morphologically, while the object pronouns are marking with super segmental features, tone.

	SubjectPro.	Object Pro.
a)	**ʔizi** 'he'	**ʔizí** 'him'
b)	**ʔiza** 'she'	**ʔizi** 'her'

As in examples in (a) and (b) above, the 3rd person feminine and masculine pronouns are identified by morphological suffixes. The masculine personal subject pronouns are marked by the suffixe **-i**, while the feminine personal subject pronouns is marked by the suffix **-a**. This kind of representation is also shown in other Omotic languages such as Wolaita, Dime etc. For instance, the 3rd person singular pronoun is represented as **ʔí** 'he' and **ʔá** 'she'. In Dime the third person singular pronouns is represented as **nu** 'he' **na** 'she'. However, interestingly in this case the objective personal pronoun has no morphological gender distinction but rather gender is distinct by tone. The masculine gender is marked by high tone while the feminine is marked by low tone.

4.2.2.2 Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstratives in Tsratsa indicate proximity and distance. For instance in proximal demonstratives either masculine or feminine gender markers are suffixed. For instance, in example (a) the feminine marker is suffixed to both in demonstrative pronoun **ʔaa** 'this' and the noun **maʃna**.

a) **ʔaa-na maʃna-na**

this-F   woman-DEF(F)   [1]

'this woman'

b) **ʔays-i ʔadnaʔn-azi**

this-M man-DEF(M)   [2]

'this man'

Distal demonstrative pronouns such as seek 'that' use masculine, feminine and plural suffixes as demonstrated in example (c-e) below.

c) **seek-na maʃna-na wooyʃa**

that-F   woman-F   come

'That woman come'

d) **seek-abi nazi   wooyʃ**

that-M   man-M   come

'That man come'

e) **seek-endi   wood-os**

that-PL   come-COTN[3]

'Those are coming'

4.2.3 Gender marking in Nouns

In Tsaratsa Nouns are marked for gender. It is marked in the form of suffix as shown below:

　　boosa 'goat'

a) 　　**boosa** 'a goat'

b) 　　**boos-ena** 'the goat' (F)

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[1] The suffix **-na** is a definite feminine marker. Indefinite nouns are not marked for gender.

[2] The suffix -**azi** is a definite masculine marker.

[3] The suffix -**endi** is a plural marker. Plural nouns do not mark gender distinction. The suffix **-os** express continuous action.

c)   **boos-azi** 'the goat' (M)

d)   **boos-endi** 'the goats' (PL)

Similarly, nouns are marked for gender in Ari (Fekede 2011: 38). Thus, in Ari and Tsaratsa nouns are similarly marking for gender. However, in Tsaratsa it is marked in the form of suffix, while in Ari it occurs in the form of prefix as shown below:

a)   **aŋ-dɛrt**

        M-goat

        'goat-male'

b)   **maa-dɛrt**

        F-goat

        'goat –female'

In Contrast to this, in other Omotic language such as in Dime, nouns are not marked for gender. However, the 3rd person feminine pronoun **ná** is used to indicate the feminine gender (Mulugeta 2011: 174-175)

4.2.4   Gender marking in number and definiteness

In Tsaratsa, non definite nouns do not express gender distinction. In the language, definiteness is not overtly marked; rather definiteness is indicated through the use of either feminine or masculine gender marker. That means distinction of definiteness is recognized during gender marking. For male nouns definiteness is expressed through the masculine marker **-azi** or **bi** or the feminine marker **-ena**. Adjectives use **bi** for definite masculine and **ena** for definite feminine. In the process of definite marking plural nouns are not marked for gender but plurals are marked by **-endi** for both gender. Similarly, if a noun is plural the suffix **-id** is used for both genderin Dime (Mulugeta2011: 173). Consider the following examples how the gender, number and definiteness are marked in Tsaratsa.

a.   **boosena** 'the goat' (F)

b.   **boosazi** 'the goat' (M)

c.   **boosendi** 'the goats'

d.   **kurena** 'the donkey' (F)

e.   **kurazi** 'the donkey' (M)

f.   **kurendi** 'the donkeys'

4.2.5 Gender marking and verb agreement

In Tsaratsa, gender is marked in both main clause, relative clause, and negation construction as shown below:

a)   **gutil-azi**   **soolla** **maa-n**
       boy-DEF   enjera eat-PF
       'The boy ate enjera'

b)   **na-na**   **soolla** **maa-n-na**
       girl-DEF   enjera eat-PF-F
       'The girl ate enjera'

c)   **ʔiza** **ʔas'a** **ʔuʃ-kay-a**
       she   water   drink-NEG-F
       'She doesn't drink water'

d)   **ʔizi**   **ʔas'a** **ʔuʃ-kay**
       he   water   drink-NEG
       'He doesn't drink water'

On the other hand, in Dime gender is not marked in nouns while it is marked in relative clauseand modifiers (Mulugeta 2008) as shown below:

a)   **báy-im**   **its-éb-is**   **óštu**   **č'ək'k'-ob**
       food-ACC   eat-M-DEF   men   small-M
       'One (M) who eats food is small'

b)   **báy-im**   **íts-end-is**   **ámze**   **č'ək'k'-ind**
       food-ACC   eat-F-DEF   woman   small-F
       'One (F) who eats food is small'

c)   **tuuchi giččó-nd**   **níts**
       tuuchi big-F   child
       'Tuuchi is a big girl'

From the typological perspective, gender is generally semantically motivated in most Omotic languages: in nouns referring to entities that make sex distinction, gender is assigned according to their inherent gender (Mulugeta 2008; Hellenthal 2010).

4.2.6 Gender marking in inanimate nouns

Gender marking (i.e, either masculine or feminine gender) is obligatorily in Tsaratsa when the definite nouns are made definite. Thus, definite marker is gender sensitive in Tsaratsa. In Tsaratsa, Dime and Aari inanimate nouns are marked for feminine and masculine gender based on their size.

Most inanimate nouns are masculine by default. However, sometimes inanimate nouns may take feminine marker in order to express smallness of the referent. As opposed to the Tsaratsa and Dime Languages, in Kara inanimate nouns may take feminine marker in order to express bigness, largeness and betterments of the referent (Alemgena 2017). We could see a similar situation in Hamer. In Hamer, feminine gender is used to indicate large and major things rather than small and unimportant ones, while masculine gender is used to indicate small and minor things (Lydall 1988: 78). Gender marking is obligatorily in Tsaratsa when the definite nouns made definite marker. Thus, in Tsartsa the smaller size assigned feminine gender while bigger size assigned to masculine gender. The feminine gender uses to express small or few.

a)   **gong-ena** 'the small plate' (F)
b)   **gong-azi** 'the big plate' (M)
c)   **k'or-ena** 'the small gourd' (F)
d)   **k'oran-azi** 'the big gourd' (M)
e)   **ʔas'eana** 'little/few water' (F)

Similarly in Dime and Aari the feminine gender marker is used to express small, few and partitive as in Mulugeta (2011) and Fekede (2011). In contrast it expresses bigness in Karo as in Alemseged (2017).

a)   **lale**   **tʃ'əkk'u-b**
          stone   big-M
          'a big stone' (M)

b)   **lale**   **tʃ'əkk'i-nd**
          stone   few-F
          'a piece of stone' (F) (Mulugeta 2011: 169)

In the above example (b) in Dime the feminine marker used to express small, few and partitive. Similarly, In Ari in the examples below (b) the feminine marker is used to express small.

a)　　　　**eej-si-n** 'the big house'(M)

b)　　　　**aji-ta-n utaχe** 'the sun rose' (F) (Fekede 2011: 38-39)

In contrast to the above Dime and Ari examples, in Karo the feminine marker is used to express bigness as in example (a) below.

a)　　　　**ko-no oono-no** 'this house (big house)' (F)

b)　　　　**ka-a oono-a** 'this house (small house)' (M) (Alemseged 2017: 60)

4.2.7　Inherent masculine gender marking

The nouns **yeeri** 'God' (M) is masculine by default without using any morpheme or gender marker. Moreover, the noun **ʔoyazi** 'the sun'(M) is used only masculine gender. In Chara, such kinds of nouns are never used feminine gender.

a)　　　　**yeeri** 'God'

b)　　　　**dada** 'thunder'

c)　　　　**ʔaya** 'death'

d)　　　　**ʔamta** 'dark'

e)　　　　**boobza** 'day'

f)　　　　**duuta** 'morning'

For instance, from the above Tsratsa examples **daadnazi**, 'the thunder', **boobzazi** 'the day', **duutazi** 'the morning' etc. use the masculine gender marker **-azi**. However, any of the above nouns never employed the feminine marker. For instance, **duutena** 'the morning' (F) or **boobzena** 'day' (F) are totally wrong construction in the language.

Contrast to Tsaratsa, the feminine gender noun in Dime never used masculine gender as in shown example a, and b below:

a.　　　　**ʔirfí　　múlmúl-índ**
　　　　　moon　　round-F
　　　　　'moon (she) is round'

b.　　　　**ʔiyy-ís　　gìcc-ónd**
　　　　　sun-DEF　　big-F
　　　　　'the sun (she) is big'

We observed that both the 'moon' and the 'sun' in Dime are feminine by adjectival concord. No ambiguity is observed as informants reject the construction when the modifier is marked by a masculine gender.

> ***ʔirfí   múlmúl-ub**
> moon   round-M
> 'moon is round'

> ***ʔíyy-ís   giccó-b**
> sun–DEF   big-M
> 'the sun (he) is big' (see, Mulugeta 2008:89)

5   Conclusions

As we discussed so far, noun phrase and pronominal gender agreement is semantic in Tsaratsa. Moreover, non-sex-specific nouns have masculine gender agreement by default. Semantic gender agreement correlates also with sex, size and membership of a partitive construction. The gender system in Tsaratsa distinguishes masculine and feminine/ diminutive which is a common phenomenon in most Omotic languages. In Tsaratsa, definiteness is not overtly marked; rather it is indicated through the use of either feminine or masculine gender marker. That means distinction of definiteness is recognized during gender marking. For male nouns definiteness is expressed through the masculine marker **-azi** or **bi** or the feminine marker **-ena**. Adjectives use **bi** for masculine definite and **ena** for definite feminine. In the process of definite marking, plural nouns are not marked for gender but plurals are marked by **-endi** for both gender.

From the typological perspective, gender is generally semantically motivated in most Omotic languages. That is to say, gender is assigned according to their inherent gender in nouns referring to entities that make sex distinction. In Tsaratsa, gender is assigned according to their inherent gender. That means there are lexically assigned gender. It can be either masculine or feminine gender distinction. Moreover, most inanimate nouns are masculine by default. However, sometimes inanimate nouns may take feminine marker in order to express smallness of the referent. Finally, in Tsaratsa there is inherent masculine gender marking. These kinds of nouns are not using feminine gender marker. They represent masculine gender either using morpheme of without using any morpheme. For instance, the nouns **yeeri** 'God' (M) is masculine by default

without using any morpheme or gender marker. Moreover, the noun **ʔoyazi** 'the sun' (M) is used only masculine gender **-azi**. Thus, in Tsaratsa masculine is a default gender, while feminine gender expresses small or little/few entities inanimate nouns. Finally, we can conclude that there are lexical and morphological gender representations of animate and inanimate nouns in the language.

NB. Abbreviations used in this paper

ACC	Accusative	M	Male
CONT	Continuous	NEG	Negative
DEF	Definite	PF	Perfective
F	Female	PL	Plural

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