Article

Notes on Noun inflections in Tsaratsa

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Abstract

Tsaratsa is a language that belongs to the Omotic language family and is spoken in Kafa Zone. This study is mainly focused on the description of noun inflections in Tsaratsa. The purpose of the research is to describe and document the endangered language Tsaratsa. All the data has been collected during my fieldwork trip in the area using informants, who are native speakers of the language living in Decha district. A qualitative research approach is employed. In the description and analysis of noun-inflectional morphemes of the language, number, gender, definiteness and case markers of Tsaratsa are treated. In the language definiteness is not separately marked rather it is indicated through the use of masculine, feminine or plural suffixes. In Tsaratsa the singular number is unmarked while the plural number is marked by **-endi**. Moreover, the feminine and masculine genders are marked by the suffixes **-ena** and **-azi,** respectively. Furthermore, concerning the inflectional morphemes of case marking, Tsaratsa is a Nominative-Accusative language typologically and nouns are morphologically inflected for different grammatical categories. Interestingly, Tsaratsa nouns are not inflected for locative case. The locative case is expressed through different lexical forms. Thus, nouns in Tsaratsa are morphologically inflected for nominative, accusative, dative, genitive/possessive, ablative, instrumental, and reflexive cases by the morphemes, **-i, -s**, **-ri, -ri, -k'ay**, **-en**, and **-iri**, respectively. In this article each of the nominal inflections is discussed and analyzed with specific examples. The noun modifier order related to inflectional morphemes will also be treated. Some relevant comparative issues may also be discussed in the related languages.

1   Introduction

Ethiopia is a homeland of multilingual and multicultural societies. The Tsaratsa community is one of the 56 communities that are found in the Southwest Ethiopia regional state. Speakers of Tsaratsa live in the Kafa Zone, where three ethnic groups are found: Kafa, Tsaratsa and Na'o. The majority of the Tsaratsa people live in Decha district. The Decha district is found 767 km from the country's capital city, Addis Ababa; 517 km from the regional state's capital city Hawassa, and 70 km from the zonal capital. Bonga Some of the Tsaratsa people live in the South Omo Zone, in Geba Amesha, Buna Anta and Kumba villages on both sides of the Omo River. There are eight kebeles (i.e. the lowest administrative units in Amharic) in Tsaratsa spoken area. These are Angella, Shashi, Shallo, Bunanta, Mesha Gabaza, Dadina, and Kumba. The Angella and Shashi kebeles are neighbors of areas where Kafa is spoken. The other four kebeles, Bunanta, Mesha Gabaza, Dadina, and Kumba are neighbor of Me'enit people. The neutral and influential dialect is the Shallo dialect spoken in the middle of the Tsaratsa people's living area. The 2007 Ethiopian census estimates the number of Tsaratsa people to be 13,214 of which 13,087 are native speakers of the language. Tsaratsa people cultivate coffee, ensete, and crops like maize and teff. They also keep cattle, goats, sheep and donkeys. The majority of the people are Orthodox Christians and they also practice traditional belief.

This study is mainly focused on the description of noun inflections in Tsaratsa. The purpose of the research is to analyze inflection in nouns and to describe and document the endangered language Tsaratsa. All the data have been collected during my fieldwork trip in the area using informants, who are native speakers of the language living in Decha district. In the description and analysis of noun-inflectional morphemes of the language, number, gender, definiteness and case marker of Tsaratsa are treated.

2   Previous Work on Tsaratsa

Tsaratsa is one of the least known and studied languages among the three languages spoken in Kefa zone. The language is not employed in schools. It has no orthography (writing system). There is an hour's radio broadcasting from Bonga community radio per day. Aklilu has conducted some linguistic and sociolinguistic studies on Tsaratsa. Among these studies a sociolinguistic survey report on the Tsaratsa language of Ethiopia (Aklilu and Ralph Siebert 2002) can be mentioned. Moreover, he has made a phonological and morphological description of Tsaratsa (Aklilu 1995). He has also

made some comparative works on Tsaratsa, Dime, Melo and Nay (Aklilu 2002; Aklilu and Ralph Siebert 1995)

Some interesting points discussed by researchers are that Dime and Tsaratsa languages are related in terms of genealogical relation and geographical area. Addis and Abera (2013: 18) have shown that Tsaratsa is composed of three major clans namely Tsaratsa, Bacha and Dime based on their data from informants. However, they explained that the informants themselves were unable to trace back the genealogy of Tsaratsa and Dime except by listing only their names as sub-clans under Tsaratsa. Thus, it needs further investigation. Further, Addis and Abera (2013: 20) stated that "In case of Dime, it is clear that they were neighbors and two clans of Dime even 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 as well (Addis and Abera 2013: 23). Some scholars tried to refer to the Dime as 'Dime of Tsaratsa' to indicate those Dime who live with Tsaratsa. The Dime and Tsaratsa are living as neighbors to each other as cited by Addis and Abera (2013: 23) from Siebett (2002: 3). Moreover, the south Nationalities council (2006 E.C) has made research on the three communities that are living in Kafa Zone. The research is mainly focused on the common values of Tsaratsa, Nao and Kafi-noono. Furthermore, the research on the Ethno-history of the Tsaratsa people has been conducted by the SNNPR Bureau of Culture and Tourism (2013). In this study, nomenclature and origin of the people, kinship terms and the early history of the Tsaratsa community, cultural administration of the Tsaratsa people, traditional religion, rituals, marriage, sociocultural and economic organization of the Tsaratsa people have been treated. Recently, Mulugeta Seyoum (2018, 2020) described the gender marking and the case marking of Tsaratsa, respectively. Among these research works on Tsaratsa, Aklilu (1995), Mulugeta (2018, 2020) and Tsegaye and Wubalem (2016) are somewhat related to my current study.

The current study focuses on noun inflections of Tsaratsa and treats the inflectional morphemes of number, gender, definiteness and cases. In this study number, gender and definiteness markers are treated in addition to Mulugeta's previous works on case marking (Mulugeta Seyoum 2021). Aklilu's (1995) study was done 29 years ago. There are also some similar and different analyze between his previous work and the current study concerning noun inflections. In the current study commutative case and locative are treated which are not discussed in the previous study. Tsegaye and Wubalem (2016) have sketched a grammar of Tsaratsa. It is a good effort to document the language, however it lacks careful transcription,

description and analysis. Tsegaye and Wubalem (2016: 9) described the definite marker of Tsaratsa as the morpheme **-be**, which is suffixed to the verb stem. This description has a problem. In Tsaratsa **-be** is not a definite marker but rather it is a copula marker. The following is an example: **ʔiza nuu-ri ʔiina be** 'She is our relative.' When the copula marker follows verbal tense marker **-n** or **-os** it marks perfective or past aspects as shown below: (a) **ʔizi soolla maan-be** 'He has eaten enjera.' (b) **ʔizi soolla maaʔos-be** 'He was eating enjera.'

Moreover, Tsegaye and Wubalem (2016: 10) claim in chapter three example 7 that the morpheme **-be** is a plural marker following the noun keta 'house' as shown below:

handi	**ʔontse**	**keta-be**
these	beautiful	house-PL

'These beautiful houses'

In the above example the morpheme **-be** is a copula marker rather than a plural marker.

3 Methodology and conceptual framework

The major method employed in this study is fieldwork in the language area. Interview or consultation of native speakers was carried out using prepared questions based on research experience. A descriptive-linguistic framework is employed (Dixon 2009; Dryer 2006). The collected data are analyzed using qualitative data analysis. The researcher has studied Tsaratsa for the last three years. This has given an opportunity to contact the people and observe their linguistic, social and cultural activities.

4 Nominal inflections in Tsaratsa

Noun inflection is a process of nominal word formation in which a word is to express different grammatical categories such as, number, gender, definiteness and case. An inflectional morpheme expresses grammatical categories with affixation such as prefix, suffix, infix, and others (i.e., crucifix, transfix). In Tsaratsa noun inflections are expressed through suffixation. In Tsaratsa almost all nouns end in vowels. There are a few words that end in consonants as we have discussed. Therefore, we can categorize Tsaratsa nouns into vowel-final (V-final) and consonant-final (C-final) nouns.

Nouns that end in vowels consist of root and terminal vowel. The terminal vowel that frequently ends nouns is **-a.** For instance, the following nouns all end with **-a**: **baʹlaʹ** 'forehead' **deemaʹ** 'eyebrow' **woyaʹ** 'ear' **kaʹnaʹ** 'dog' **noonaʹ** 'mouth' **boʹta** 'bone marrow' **booda** 'heart' **soʹma** 'brain' **tʃʼiʃa** 'bile' **ʃomba** 'liver'. In rare cases the

terminal vowel **-i** also occurs in some nominals as shown below: **ʔeki** 'edge' **gorti** 'middle' **berti** 'point' **ʔizi** 'he' **furri** 'bright'. A few nouns that end in consonants are shown below: **ts'adus** 'pain' **ʔelʔnats** 'wisdom' **fatʃus** 'cold weather'.

4.1   Inflections in number

The category of number is an overt category in Tsaratsa. Singular and plural are morphologically distinguished in the language. Singular is morphologically unmarked while plural is marked by the suffix **-endi**. Generally, **-endi** is suffixed to the noun base, the plural marker **-endi** is definite by default, and there is no overt morphological definite or gender marker in plural nouns.

Examples:
1a.	**naʔa**	'child'
1b.	**naʔ-endi**	'children'
2a.	**keeta**	'house'
2b.	**keet-endi**	'houses'
3a.	**mayta**	'garment'
3b.	**mayt-endi**	'clothes'
4a.	**mantsa**	'ox'
4b.	**mants-endi**	'oxen'

As can be seen in the above examples, during suffixation deletion of terminal vowel occurs.

4.2   Noun inflections in definite nouns

The term 'definite' is used to refer to a specific, identifiable entity (or class of entities); it is usually contrasted with 'indefinite' (Crystal 2003). Indefinite reference is not morphologically marked in Tsaratsa. Definiteness is expressed on nouns with a masculine marker **-azi** or **-bi,** the feminine marker **-ena**, or gender-neutral plural suffix. Adjectives take **-bi** for masculine definite and ena for definite feminine. Examples:

dorsa 'sheep'
a.	**dorsa**	'a sheep'
b.	**dors-ena**	'the sheep (F)'
c.	**dors-aazi**	'the sheep (M)'
d.	**dors-endi**	'the sheep (PL)'

As can be seen in the above examples during suffixation the terminal vowel is affected. When terminal /a/ is followed by /e/ the terminal **-a** is deleted. If /a/ is suffixed to terminal /a/ a long vowel results. Adjective examples:

karta 'black'

a**.** **karta**   'a black one'

b. **karta-bi**   'the black one (M)'

c. **kart-ena**   'the black one (F)'

Gender and plural marking always implies definiteness. Aklilu (1995: 39) demonstrated that **-eendi** is the plural suffix in both noun and adjectives. However, he missed the definiteness of the nouns or the adjectives in the specific examples below:

		SG	PL
a)	'ox'	**mansa**	**manseendi**
b)	'white'	**dala**	**daleendi**

4.3   Noun inflection in Gender marking

In the present section we examine gender marking in nouns. The gender system in Tsaratsa distinguishes masculine and feminine. The markers occur on various nouns and modifying categories such as nominal modifiers, pronominal, and relative verbs and the nouns. Thus, the language shows morphological as well as lexical means of distinguishing gender (Mulugeta Seyoum 2018). Morphological gender distinction in Tsaratsa is presented below:

1a.	**boosa**	'goat'
1b.	**boos-ena**	'female goat'
1c.	**boos-aazi**	'male goat'
2a.	**kura**	'donkey'
2b.	**kur-ena**	'female donkey'
2c.	**kur-aazi**	'male donkey'

Aklilu (1995: 38) discusses masculine nouns marked by the suffix **-i** and feminine nouns marked by the suffix **-a**. He demonstrates using the following examples:

a) **geʃ-a**   'younger sister'

b) **geʃ-i**   'younger brother'

In my data the meaning difference is due to tone differences for instance, **geʃa´** 'younger sister' and **geʃa** 'younger brother'

a) **ʔizi**   'he'   **ʔi-s**   'him'   **ʔiziri**   'for him'
b) **ʔiza**   'she'   **ʔi´-s**   'her'   **ʔi´ziri**   'for her'

On the other hand, lexical distinction of sex is demonstrated below:

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

With inanimate nouns gender is based on the referent's size. Smaller size is assigned feminine gender while bigger size is assigned masculine gender. Consider the following examples:

Table 1: Gender Marking in Tsaratsa

No.	Form Gender	Gloss
1	**ʔoy-azi (M)**	'the sun (M)'
2	**mits-azi (M)**	'the tree (M)
3	**mits-ena (F)**	'the tree (F)'
4	**mutn-azi (M)**	'the mountain'
5	**gong-ena (F)**	'small plate'
6	**gong-azi (M)**	'big plate'
7	**k'or-ena (F)**	'small gourd'
8	**k'orr-azi (M)**	'big gourd'
9	**ʃutʃ-azi (M)**	'big stone'
10	**ʃutʃ-ena (F)**	'small stone'

In related languages too sometimes, inanimate nouns may take a feminine marker in order to express smallness of the referent. As opposed to the Tsaratsa and Dime languages, in Kara and Hamer inanimate nouns may take a feminine marker in order to express a bigger or better referent (Alemgena 2017; Lydall 1988: 78), in Tsaratsa the smaller size is assigned feminine gender while bigger size is assigned masculine gender. The feminine gender expresses small, few and partitive.

Dime:

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

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

Aari:

    a)   **eej-si-n**   'the big house (M)'

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

In Karo the feminine marker expresses 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)

4.4   Noun inflections in case marking

    Case shows the function of nouns or pronouns in relation to other words in a sentence. Tsaratsa is a Nominative-Accusative language typologically. Tsaratsa nouns are morphologically inflected for different grammatical categories with cases also marked on certain modifiers of the noun such as adjectives and determiners. Tsaratsa nouns or pronouns are inflected for cases other than locative case. The Tsaratsa case marking system, nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, ablative, instrumental and reflexive, is demonstrated in the table below:

Table 2: Summary of Case marking in Tsaratsa

Person	Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive	Ablative	Instrumental	Reflexive
1S	**taan-i**	**taa-s**	**taa-ri**	**taare-ri**	**taar-k'ay**	**taar-en**	**tataar-iri**
2S	**neen-i**	**nee-s**	**nee-ri**	**neere-ri**	**neer-k'ay**	**neer-en**	**neneer-iri**
3MS	**ʔizi**	**ʔi'-s**	**ʔi'zi'-ri**	**ʔize-ri**	**ʔizi-k'ay**	**ʔi'zi'ren / ʔi'z-en**	**ʔiziʔiz-iri**
3FS	**ʔiza**	**ʔi-s**	**ʔizi-ri**	**ʔize-ri**	**ʔizi-k'ay**	**ʔizir-en / ʔiz-en**	**ʔizaʔiz-iri**
1PL	**nuun-i**	**nuu-s**	**nuu-ri**	**nuure-ri**	**nuur-k'ay**	**nuur-en**	**nunuur-iri**
2PL	**ɣint-i**	**ɣint-s**	**ɣint-ri**	**ɣente-ri**	**ɣinti-k'ay**	**ɣenter-en**	**ɣint-iri**
3PL	**ʔitsend-i**	**ʔit-s-**	**ʔitsi-ri**	**ʔite-ri**	**ʔitsi-k'ay**	**ʔits-en / ʔitsr-en**	**ʔits-iri**

The following are sentential examples of the above case system.

a) **Ker-i**   **t'ili-s**   **maa-n**
Kero-NOM   enjera-ACC   eat-PF
'Kero ate enjera.'

b) **Ker-i**   **naʔa-naaz-iri**   **mayta**   **k'ooʃ-en**
Kero-NOM   child-M-DAT   clothes   buy-PF
'Kero bought his child clothes (M).'

c) **ʔiz-e**   **taya**   **k'oyna-be**
her-GEN   leg   short-COP
'Her leg is short.'

d) **ʔiza**   **jimi-k'ay**   **woo-n**
She   jima-ABL   come-PF
'She came from Jimma.'

e) **ʔiza**   **naʔana-s**   **kats-en**   **gas'-en**
She   child-ACC   stick-INS   hit-PF
'She hit a child with a stick.'

Nouns are not inflected for locative case in Tsaratsa. The locative case is expressed through different lexical forms as demonstrated in the table below:

No.	Noun	Locative word	Gloss
1	**ʃuure**	**tatṇ**	'on a table'
2	**ʃuure**	**ʃeen**	'inside a table'
3	**ʃuure**	**siin**	'in front of a table'
4	**ʃuure**	**wootṇ**	'behind a table'
5	**ʃuure**	**gibi**	'near to a table'
6	**ʃuure**	**ʔobṃ**	'outside of a table'

5   Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study we treated the Tsaratsa noun inflections. The research is mainly focused on the description of noun inflections in Tsaratsa. The purpose of the research is to analyze inflection in nouns and to describe and document the endangered language Tsaratsa. All the data has been collected during my fieldwork trip in the area using informants, who are native speakers of the language living in Decha district. The Tsaratsa community is one of the 56 communities that are found in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS).

Speakers of Tsaratsa live in the Kafa Zone, where three ethnic groups are found: Kafa, Tsaratsa and Na'o.

In the description and analysis of noun-inflectional morphemes of the language, number, gender, definiteness and case in Tsaratsa have been treated. Some research works related with the current study are Aklilu (1995), Mulugeta (2018, 2020) and Tsegaye and Wubalem (2016). In the current study number and definiteness markers are treated in addition to Mulugeta's previous works concerning noun inflections. Aklilu's (1995) study was done 29 years ago. There are some similar and different analyses between his previous work and the current study concerning noun inflections. In the current study commutative case and locative cases are treated, which are not discussed in the previous study. Noun inflection is treated in detail with examples and explanation of each process.

In Tsaratsa the gender, number and definiteness marking system is as follows. Definiteness is indicated through the use of either feminine or masculine gender markers or the plural suffix **-endi**. Generally, **-endi** is suffixed to the noun base, the plural marker **-endi** is definite by default and there is no gender marking in plural nouns. Hence marking of gender and plurality are mutually exclusive and both imply definiteness.

Inanimate nouns take feminine or masculine gender based on their size. The smaller size is assigned feminine gender while bigger size is assigned masculine gender, as opposed to other Omotic languages such as Karo and Hamer.

Tsaratsa is a Nominative-Accusative language typologically. Tsaratsa nouns are morphologically inflected for different grammatical categories. The inflected cases found in Tsaratsa are nominative, accusative, dative, ablative, instrumental, genitive, and reflexive. Locative case is not inflected but is expressed through different lexical forms. Aklilu Yilma (2002: 10) provides two examples of vocative case but in this study such kinds of vocative case marker are not attested. My informant never shows the existence of a vocative marker in the language. This needs further data and investigation.

Abbreviations

1PL	first person plural
1S	first person singular
2PL	second person plural
2S	second person singular
3FS	third person feminine singular
3MS	third person masculine singular
3PL	third person plural
ABL	ablative
ACC	accusative
COP	copula
DAT	dative
F	female
GEN	genitive
INS	instrumental
M	male
NOM	nominative
PF	perfective
PL	plural

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