Ethiosemitic Inflectional Morphology

Lecture 04
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The Ethiosemitic Language Family

The Ethiosemitic languages are distributed Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan

North Ethiosemitic

Ge'ez (†) - Horn of Africa

Tigre - Eritrea, 1.05M

Tigrinya - Eritrea and Ethiopia, 9.85M

South Ethiosemitic

Amharic - Ethiopia, 32M

Argobba - Central Ethiopia, 44K

Gafat (†) - Western Ethiopia

Gurage languages - Central Ethiopia, 2M
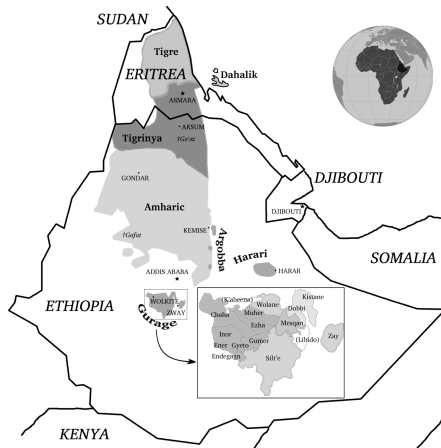
Harari - Eastern Ethiopia, 26K

Figure: Distribution of Ethiosemitic languages

Ethiosemitic Inflectional Morphology

Amharic and Tigrinya have a number of inflectional morphological features in common:

Nominal

Φ-features
Number
Gender
Case/Differential Object Marking

Verbal

Root internal TAM
Subj/Obj/Appl suffixes
Negation

Pronominal Φ-Features : Independent pronouns in both languages inflect for person, number, and gender, while also having honorific forms

Subjective personal pronouns	Objective personal pronouns	Agreement
ንሱ (ንኡሱ)	**ንሳኡ (ንኣሱ)**	3MSg
niss-u	niʕaʔ-u (niʔaʔ-u)	
ንሳ	**ንሳኣ (ንኣሳ)**	3SgF
niss-a	niʕaʔ-a (niʔaʔ-a)	
ንሶም	**ንሳኦም (ንኣኦም)**	3MH
niss-om	niʕaʔ-om (niʔaʔ-om)	
ንሰን	**ንሳኣን (ንኣኣን)**	3FH
niss-än	niʕaʔ-än (niʔaʔ-än)	
ንሳቶም	**ንሳኣቶም (ንኣኣቶም)**	3MPl
nissa-tom	niʕaʕa-tom (niʔaʔa-tom)	
ንሳተን	**ንሳኣተን (ንኣኣተን)**	3FPl
nissa-tän	niʕaʔ-tän (niʔaʔ-tän)	
ንስኻ	**ንዓኻ (ንኣኻ)**	2MSg
nissi-ḵa	niʕa-ḵa (niʔa-ḵa)	
ንስኺ	**ንዓኺ (ንኣኺ)**	2FSg
nissi-ḵi	niʕa-ḵi (niʔa-ḵi)	
ንስኹም	**ንዓኹም (ንኣኦም)**	2M[Pl/H]
nissi-ḵum	niʕa-ḵum (niʔa-ḵum)	
ንስኽን	**ንዓኽን (ንኣኽን)**	2F[Pl/H]
nissi-ḵin	niʕa-ḵin (niʔa-ḵin)	
ንስኻትኩም	**ንዓኻትኩም (ንኣኻትኩም)**	2MPl
nissi-ḵatkum	niʕa-ḵatkum (niʔa-ḵatkum)	
ንስኻትክን	**ንዓኻትክን (ንኣኻትክን)**	2FPl
nissi-ḵatkin	niʕa-ḵatkin (niʔa-ḵatkin)	
ኣነ	**ንዓይ (ንኣይ)**	1Sg
ʔan-ä	niʕa-yi (niʔa-yi)	
ንሕና	**ንዓና (ንኣና)**	1Pl
niḥ-na	niʕa-na (niʔa-na)	

Figure: Tigrinya independent pronouns

	Singular	Plural
3m	*əssu*	*ənnässu*
3 f.	*əsswa*	-
3h	*əssaččäw*	-
2m	*antä*	*ənnantä*
2 f.	*anči*	-
2h	*əsswo*	-
1	*əne*	*əñña*

Figure: Amharic independent pronouns

Nominal Inflectional Morphology

Determiner Φ-Features : Determiners in both languages inflect for number and gender, while encoding a 2-way deixis system

Agr.	Det/Dist	Dist pronoun	Det/Prox	Prox pronoun
3MSg	እቲ ʔit-i	እቲ ʔit-i	እዚ ʔiz-i	እዚ ʔiz-i
3FSg	እታ ʔit-a	እታ -ʔiti-ʔa	እዛ ʔiz-a	እዚኣ ʔizi-ʔa
3MH	እቶም ʔit-om	እቶኦም ʔiti-ʔom	እዞም ʔiz-om	እዚኦም ʔizi-ʔom
3FH	እተን ʔit-än	እተኣን ʔiti-ʔän	እዘን ʔiz-än	እዚኣን ʔizi-ʔän
3MPl	እቶም ʔit-om	እቶኣቶም ʔiti-ʔatom	እዞም ʔiz-om	እዚኣቶም ʔizi-ʔatom
3FPl	እተን ʔit-än	እተኣተን ʔiti-ʔatän	እዘን ʔiz-än	እዚኣተን ʔizi-ʔatän

Figure: Tigrinya determiners

	PROXIMAL		*DISTAL*	
	FREE	*BOUND*	*FREE*	*BOUND*
MSG	*jəh*	*-zzih*	*ja*	*-zzija*
FSG	*jəʧʧ(i)*	*-zziʧʧ*	*jaʧʧ(i)*	*-zzijaʧʧ*
PL	*ʔənnäzzih*	*-nnäzzi*	*ʔənnäzzija*	*-nnäzzija*

Figure: Amharic determiners

Short form determiners in Tigrinya serve to indicate definiteness; definite-marking in Amharic is significantly more complex (Kramer 2009)

Long form determiners in Tigrinya follow the noun in cases of double determination and can serve as demonstrative pronouns

Both languages have bound forms that plausibly arise via morphological processes

Neither language has indefinite determiners but uses the word for "one" to mark specificity

Nominal Inflectional Morphology

Number: Both languages have multiple strategies for marking number on nouns

Internal derivation of the plural: ħarmaz 'elephant' → ħaramɨz 'elephants' (*Tigrinya*)

Suffixal derivation of the plural is more common:

(1) *Tigrinya suffixal plural*

a. ሰብ > ሰባት
   säb > säb-at
   person.Sg > person-Pl

b. ሕጻን > ሕጻናት
   ħiṣan > ħiṣan-at
   baby.Sg > baby-Pl

c. ኣዶ > ኣዶታት
   ʔaddä > ʔaddä-tat
   mother.Sg > mother-Pl

d. ኣቦ > ኣቦታት
   ʔabbo > ʔabbo-tat
   father.Sg > father-Pl

GENDER	SG INDF	SG DEF	PL INDF	PL DEF	GLOSS
M	*bet*	*bet-u*	*bet-otʃtʃ*	*bet-otʃtʃ-u*	'house'
F	*wäf*	*wäf-wa*	*wäf-otʃtʃ*	*wäf-otʃtʃ-u*	'bird'
M	*säw*	*säwijje-w*	*säw-otʃtʃ*	*säw-otʃtʃ-u*	'man'
F	*set*	*setijjo-wa*	*set- otʃtʃ*	*set-otʃtʃ-u*	'woman'

Figure: Amharic suffixal plural

Gender : Both languages distinguish grammatically between two genders (i.e., noun classes): masculine/feminine

The default gender in both languages is masculine

Gender assignment in both languages is generally arbitrary, with only a few animate nouns having predetermined gender (i.e., wədi "boy", gʷal "girl"; *Tigrinya*)

Gender is often unmarked, being an inherent property of nouns

Nouns that refer to entities in Tigrinya (and possibly in Amharic) can be treated as grammaticality masculine or feminine

In certain contexts gender can have a pragmatic function:

    masculine : unexpectedly or undesirably large size; pejorative (Tigrinya)

    feminine : unexpectedly small size; diminutive

Adjectival Agreement : Adjectives in both languages generally agree with the noun they modify in person and number

(2) nɨfuʕ wədi
     clever.M boy.M
     'a clever boy'
     (*Tigrinya*)

(3) nɨfɨ–ti gʷal
     clever-F girl.F
     'a clever girl'
     (*Tigrinya*)

Some suffixes, including the plural, are distributed across all/several nominal elements in a phrase and, in Tigrinya, overwrite other suffixes

(4) nɨfɨʕ–at səb–at
     clever.P person.P
     'clever people'
     (*Tigrinya*)

(5) ʕabəj–ti məts'ħaf–ti
     big.P   book.P
     'big books'
     (*Tigrinya*)

Plural nouns with masculine singular agreement (on D, A, V) in Tigrinya can give rise to collective readings

Case/Differential Object Marking : Both languages display nominative/accusative alignment and mark the object of verbs

(6) jonas <u>n</u>-ət-a   məts'ħaf
Yonas DOM-that-FS book
gəziʔ-∅-wa
PRF.buy-S3MS-O3FS
'Yonas bought the book.'
(*Tigrinya*)

(7) ləmma wɨʃʃa-w-<u>ɨn</u> j-aj-al
Lemma dog-DEF-ACC S3MS-see-AUX.S3MS
'Lemma sees the dog.'
(*Amharic*)

Both languages display the phenomenon of Differential Object Marking (DOM; Bossong 1991)

(8) jonas məts'ħaf gəziʔ-u
Yonas book PRF.buy-S3MS
'Yonas bought a book.'
(*Tigrinya*)

(9) ləmma wɨʃʃa j-aj-al
Lemma dog S3MS-see-AUX.S3MS
'Lemma sees a dog.'
(*Amharic*)

The relevant dimension for DOM in both languages is definiteness/specificity (Aissen 2003)

(10) *Definiteness scale*
Pronoun $>$ Name $>$ Definite $>$ Indefinite Specific $>$ Indefinite Nonspecific

Ethiosemitic Inflectional Morphology

Amharic and Tigrinya have a number of inflectional morphological features in common:

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Φ-features
Number
Gender
Case/Differential Object Marking

Verbal

Root internal TAM
Subj/Obj/Appl suffixes
Negation

Tense-Aspect-Mood : TAM is indicated via vowel templates and gemination

	Perfective		Imperfective	
Agr. Values	PerfH	PerfS	Imperf	Jussive
3MSg	säbär-ä	säbir-u	yi-säbbir-ø	yi-sibär-ø
3FSg	säbär-ät	säbir-a	ti-säbbir-ø	ti-sibär-ø
3MPl	säbär-u	säbir-om	ti-säbir-u	yi-sibär-u
3FPl	säbär-a	säbirr-än	yi-säbir-a	yi-sibär-a
2MSg	säbär-ka	säbir-ka	ti-säbbir-ø	sibär-ø
2FSg	säbär-ki	säbir-ki	ti-säbir-i	sibär-i
2MPl	säbär-kum	säbir-kum	ti-säbir-u	sibär-u
2FPl	säbär-kin	säbir-kin	ti-säbir-a	sibär-a
1Sg	säbär-ku	säbir-ä	ʔi-säbbir-ø	ʔi-sibär-ø
1Pl	säbär-na	säbir-na	ni-säbbir-ø	ni-sibär-ø

Figure: Tigrinya TAM pattern

	PERFECTIVE	IMPERFECTIVE	JUSSIVE	CONVERB
3sm	säbbär-ä	yi-säbr-	yi-sbär	säbro (<*säbrä-u)
3sf	säbbär-äčč	tə-säbr-	tə-sbär	säbr-a (<*säbrä-a)
2sm	säbbär-k	tə-säbr-	(t-) səbär	säbrä-h
2sf	säbbär-š	tə-säbr-i-	(t-) səbär-i	säbrä-š
1s	säbbär-kʷ	ə-säbr- (-l-säbr)	lə-sbär	säbərre (<*säbrä-^{GEM}e)
3P (= 2/3H)	säbbär-u	yi-säbr-u-	yi-sbär-u	säbrä-w
2P	säbbär-ačč uh	tə-säbr-u-	(t-) səbäru	säbračč uh (<*säbrä-ačč uh)
1P	säbbär-ən	ənnə-säbr-	ənnə-sbär	säbrä-n

Figure: Amharic TAM pattern

Subject agreement in the imperfect is prefixing in the way typical of Semitic

The converb / simple perfect / gerund form can appear with auxiliaries

Verbal Inflectional Morphology

Verbal Classes : TAM inflection may vary on the basis of several verb classes

PERSON	GENDER	A (non-geminating)		B (geminating)		C (a forms)		4 CONSONANT	
		s	p	s	p	s	p	s	p
3	m	səbər-ə	səbər-u(ta)	bəddəl-ə	bəddəl-u(ta)	barəx-ə	barəx-u(ta)	məskər-ə	məskər-u(ta)
	f	səbər-ət	səbər-a(ta)	bəddəl-ət	bəddəl-a(ta)	barəx-ət	barəx-a(ta)	məskər-ət	məskər-a(ta)
2	m	səbər-ka	səbər-((k)at)kum	bəddəl-ka	bəddəl-((k)at)kum	barəx-ka	barəx-((k)at)kum	məskər-ka	məskər-((k)at)kum
	f	səbər-ki	səbər-((k)at)kɨn	bəddəl-ki	bəddəl-((k)at)kɨn	barəx-ki	barəx-((k)at)kɨn	məskər-ki	məskər-((k)at)kɨn
1	c	səbər-ku	səbər-na(-ta)	bəddəl-ku	bəddəl-na(-ta)	barəx-ku	barəx-na(-ta)	məskər-ku	məskər-na(-ta)

Figure: Perfective verb form of Tigrinya verb classes

Verbal Inflectional Morphology

Verbal Agreement : Verbs are conjugated on the basis of their subject, direct objects, or applied objects

	PERFECTIVE	IMPERFECTIVE	JUSSIVE	CONVERB
3SM	*säbbär-ä*	*yi-säbr-*	*yi-sbär*	*säbro* (<*säbrä-u)
3SF	*säbbär-äčč*	*tə-säbr-*	*tə-sbär*	*säbr-a* (<*säbrä-a)
2SM	*säbbär-k*	*tə-säbr-*	*(t-) səbär*	*säbrä-h*
2SF	*säbbär-š*	*tə-säbr-i-*	*(t-) səbär-i*	*säbrä-š*
1S	*säbbär-kʷ*	*ə-säbr-* (-l-säbr)	*lə-sbär*	*säbərre* (<*säbrä-ᴳᴱᴹe)
3P (= 2/3H)	*säbbär-u*	*yi-säbr-u-*	*yi-sbär-u*	*säbrä-w*
2P	*säbbär-aččuh*	*tə-säbr-u-*	*(t-) səbäru*	*säbraččuh* (<*säbrä-aččuh)
1P	*säbbär-ən*	*ənnə-säbr-*	*ənnə-sbär*	*säbrä-n*

Figure: Amharic subject marking pattern

	OBJECT MARKER	APPLICATIVE *-ll*	APPLICATIVE *-bb*
3SM	*gäddälä-w*	*gäddälä-llät*	*gäddälä-bbät*
3SF	*gäddäl(ä)-at*	*gäddälä-ll-at*	*gäddälä-bb-at*
2SM	*gäddälä-h*	*gäddälä-ll-əh*	*gäddälä-bb-əh*
2SF	*gäddälä-š*	*gäddälä-ll-aš*	*gäddälä-bb-aš*
1S	*gäddälä-ññ*	*gäddälä-ll-əññ*	*gäddälä-bb-əññ*
3P	*gäddäl(ä)-aččäw*	*gäddälä-ll-aččäw*	*gäddälä-bb-aččäw*
2P	*gäddäl(ä)-aččuh*	*gäddälä-ll-aččuh*	*gäddälä-bb-aččuh*
1P	*gäddälä-n*	*gäddälä-ll-ən*	*gäddälä-bb-ən*
	'he killed him, etc.'	'he killed for him, etc.'	'he killed to his detriment, etc.'

Figure: Amharic object and applicative marking pattern

Verbal Agreement : Verbs are conjugated on the basis of their subject, direct objects, or applied objects

Agr. Values	Perfective		Imperfective	
	PerfH	PerfS	Imperf	Jussive
3MSg	säbär-ä	säbir-u	yɨ-säbbir-ø	yɨ-sɨbär-ø
3FSg	säbär-ät	säbir-a	tɨ-säbbir-ø	tɨ-sɨbär-ø
3MPl	säbär-u	säbir-om	yɨ-säbir-u	yɨ-sɨbär-u
3FPl	säbär-a	säbirr-än	yɨ-säbir-a	yɨ-sɨbär-a
2MSg	säbär-ka	säbir-ka	tɨ-säbbir-ø	sɨbär-ø
2FSg	säbär-ki	säbir-ki	tɨ-säbir-i	sɨbär-i
2MPl	säbär-kum	säbir-kum	tɨ-säbir-u	sɨbär-u
2FPl	säbär-kin	säbir-kin	tɨ-säbir-a	sɨbär-a
1Sg	säbär-ku	säbir-ä	ʔɨ-säbbir-ø	ʔɨ-sɨbär-ø
1Pl	säbär-na	säbir-na	nɨ-säbbir-ø	nɨ-sɨbär-ø

Figure: Tigrinya subject marking pattern

Verbal Agreement : Verbs are conjugated on the basis of their subject, direct objects, or applied objects

| *gäzíʔ-* 'bought' | | Object | | | | | | | | | |
Subject		3MSg	3FSg	3MPl	3FPl	2MSg	2FSg	2MPl	2FPl	1Sg	1Pl
3MSg	u	wo	wa	wom	wän	ka	ki	kum	kin	ni	na
3FSg	a	to	ta	tom	tän	tka	tki	tkum	tkin	tni	tna
3MPl	om	wo	wa	wom	wän	ḵa	ḵi	ḵum	ḵim	ni	na
3FPl	än	ʔo	ʔa	wom	ʔän	ḵa	ḵa	ḵum	ḵin	ni	na
2MSg	ka	yo	ya	yom	yän	-	-	-	-	ni	na
2FSg	ki/ɨ	yo	ya	yom	yän	-	-	-	-	ni	na
2MPl	kum	wo	wa	wom	wän	-	-	-	-	ni	na
2FPl	kin	ʔo	ʔa	ʔom	ʔän	-	-	-	-	ʔ/a-ni	ʔ/a-na
1Sg	ä	yo	ya	yom	yän	ka	ki	kum	kin	-	-
1Pl	na	yo	ya	yom	yän	ka	ki	kum	kin	-	-

Figure: Tigrinya object marking pattern

| *gäzíʔ-* 'bought' | | Object | | | | | | | | | |
Subject		3MSg	3FSg	3MPl	3FPl	2MSg	2FSg	2MPl	2FPl	1Sg	1Pl
3MSg	u	lu	la	lom	län	lka	lki	lkum	lkin	läy	lna
3FSg	a	ti-lu	ti-la	ti-lom	ti-län	ti-lka	ti-lki	tilkum	ti-lkin	ti-läy	ti-lna
3MPl	om	lu	la	lom	län	i-lḵa	i-lḵi	i-lḵum	i-lḵim	läy	lna
3FPl	än	a-lu	a-la	a-lom	a-län	a-lka	a-lka	a-lkum	a-lḵin	a-läy	a-lna
2MSg	ka	lu	la	lom	län	-	-	-	-	läy	lna
2FSg	ki/ɨ	lu	la	lom	län	-	-	-	-	läy	lna
2MPl	kum	lu	la	lom	län	-	-	-	-	läy	lna
2FPl	kin	a-lu	a-la	a-lom	a-län	-	-	-	-	a-läy	a-lna
1Sg	ä	lu	la	lom	län	lka	lki	lkum	lkin	-	-
1Pl	na	lu	la	lom	län	lka	lki	lkum	lkin	-	-

Figure: Tigrinya applicative marking pattern

Verbal Inflectional Morphology

Suffix Ordering : Verbal agreement suffixes have ordering and (co)occurrence constraints

Subject markers appear on all verbal elements and closest to the stem; object marking appears only on the verb

(11) ʔɨt-i   səbaj n-ət-a   dəbdabe ts'ɨħif-u-wa   ʔal-o(*-wa)
      that- MS man   DOM-that-FS letter   GER.write-S3MS-O3MS AUX-S3MS(-O3MS)
      'The man has written the letter.'   (*Tigrinya*)

Direct object marking and applied object marking are in complementary distribution

(12) ʔɨt-i   səbaj n-ət-a   gʷal gənzəb səriq-u-<u>wa</u>
      that-MS man   DOM-that-FS girl money GER.steal-S3MS-O3FS
      'The man robbed the girl of money.'

(13) ʔɨt-i   səbaj n-ət-a   gʷal gənzəb səriq-u-<u>la</u>
      that-MS man   DOM-that-FS girl money GER.steal-S3MS-O3FS
      'The man stole money from the woman.'

Verbal Inflectional Morphology

Negation : Sentential negation in both languages uses a circumfix on the highest verbal element

(14) Ɂaj-səbir-u-n
NEG-PRF.break-S3MS-NEG
'he did not break.'
(*Tigrinya*)

(15) Ɂal-səbbər-ə-mm
NEG-PRF.break-S3MS-NEG
'he did not break.'
(*Amharic*)

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