

Definiteness in Argobba NPs

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes and analyzes the morphosyntactic manifestation of definite nominals in Argobba, a Semitic language spoken in Ethiopia, in HPSG framework. The objective of this study is, therefore, twofold: to describe the surface realization of definite nominals and put forward theoretical analysis of the categories in question. In Argobba, indefinite nominals (nouns, adjectives and numerals) are not morphologically marked. Definite nominals in contrast are morphologically marked. The Argobba definite article is a morphologically bound element with specification for gender. Plural nouns and adjectives are not morphologically marked for definiteness. There are different definite article suffixes for the category noun, adjective and numeral. Unlike in other sister languages in Ethio-Semitic subfamily, in Argobba, a singular noun qualified by a demonstrative, possessive pronoun and genitive NP obligatorily carries a definite article. In this paper, I argued that the article combines with nominals in the lexicon, not at the level of syntax. Accordingly, a DLR is posited to derive a definite nominal word.

Keywords: Argobba, definiteness, nominals, morphosyntax, HPSG.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at describing and analyzing definiteness in Argobba. The analysis is framed in Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG). The paper limits itself to the morphosyntactic analysis of definite NPs. Their pragmatic or semantic property is not the area under discussion. Argobba is one of the seriously endangered languages in Ethiopia. The data for this study are from Shonke and Telha where there are fluent Argobba speakers. In some works, Bender (1976), Bender and Hailu (1978), Zelealem (1994), Leslau (1997), Argobba is considered a dialect of Amharic. The data collected from Shonke and Telha prove that Argobba and Amharic are not dialects rather independent sister languages (Wetter 2006, Getahun 2009). Some scholars in their surveys and case studies on endangered languages and language death in Africa refer to Argobba with different levels of endangerment. Batibo (2005: 147), for instance, identifies it as extinct or nearly extinct language together with other Ethiopian languages like, Ge'ez and Gafat among others. The language situation in Shonke and Telha however does not substantiate this proposition. It rather asserts that Argobba is an endangered language.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 addresses different definite article suffixes for different nominal categories. Section 3 gives formal analysis and finally section 4 sums up the discussion.

2. THE DATA

In Argobba, indefinite nominals are unmarked whereas the definite nominals are marked by different definite affixes. The term nominal is used to subsume the categories noun, adjective and numeral. As a starting point, the definite suffix for the category noun is shown in (1).

- (1) a. *lij* ‘a child’
 child
- b. *lij-ičči*¹ ‘the boy’
 child-DEF.M
- c. *lij-iti* ‘the girl’
 child-DEF.F

The following empirical facts could be mentioned from the examples in (1). First, the definite article appears as *-ičči* and *-iti* for masculine and feminine singular common nouns respectively. Second, the definite article is morphologically dependent element – it can never stand alone. Third, the definite article attaches to the right of the head noun (N).

In Leslau (1959: 254; 1997: 12), the definite article is *-u* (with allomorph *-w* after a vowel) for masculine singular and *-wa* for feminine. The definite article for plural is *-u* regardless of gender. In Leslau’s work, the morphology of the definite article in Argobba is identical to the one in Amharic as illustrated in (2).

- (2) (i) a. *bet-u* ‘the house’ (Amharic)
 house-DEF.M
- b. *bäre-w* ‘the ox’
 ox-DEF.M
- c. *lam-wa* ‘the cow’
 cow-DEF.F
- d. *set-očč* ‘women’
 woman-PL
- e. *set-očč-u* ‘the women’
 woman-PL-DEF

¹ This suffix looks a lot like the singulative suffix in Afaan Oromo. It might be plausible to argue that the Argobba variety in Shonke has borrowed it from Afaan Oromo.

- (ii) a. bed-u ‘the house’ (Argobba)
 house-DEF.M
- b. bäre-w ‘the ox’
 ox-DEF.M
- c. lam-wa ‘the cow’
 cow-DEF.F
- d. bed-ač ‘houses’
 house-PL
- e. bed-ač-u ‘the houses’
 house-PL-DEF

As the examples in (2) illustrate, the definite article and its affixation to nouns in Argobba is one and the same to Amharic.

If one closely observes the Argobba data in Leslau (1959, 1997), it is possible to learn that the definite article in Argobba is identical to Amharic not only in the morphology but also in distribution. If an NP contains a qualifier (quantifier, AP, relative clause), the definite article attaches to the qualifier exactly like in Amharic. Leslau (1997: 13) writes “*If the noun is qualified by an adjective, a relative clause or a quantifier – qualified complex, the article is placed after the qualifier.*” Leslau supports his claim by providing examples like *läham-u bed* (big-DEF house) ‘the big house’ which is exactly like *tillik’-u bet* in Amharic for the same meaning. It is, however, possible to argue that as Leslau collected his data from Alyu Amba and Addis Ababa, it seems that his Argobba data is highly affected by Amharic.

The data for this study show that the definite article is completely different from the ones in Leslau’s work in both morphology and distribution. First and foremost, different definite suffixes are used for nouns, adjectives and numerals.

2.1 NOUNS

In Argobba, unlike the ones in (2ii), the definite article suffixes are *-ičči* for masculine and *-iti* for feminine nouns. The examples in (3) are additional data which substantiate the proposed claim.

- (3) a. bet-ičči
 house-DEF.M
 ‘the house’

- b. bāʔara-ičči [bāʔaričči]²
ox-DEF.M
'the ox'
- c. hara-īti [harīti]
sheep-DEF.F
'the ewe'
- d. nišča-īti [niščīti]
female-DEF.F
'the woman'

Contrary to what is observed in Leslau (1959, 1997); plural nouns are not marked for definiteness. Consequently, plural nouns can have ambiguous readings as depicted in (4).

- (4) a. nišča-čč māt't'-äy
female-PL come-3PLs
A. 'Women came.'
B. 'The women came.'

However, in structures like (5) below, plural nouns have a definite reading only. This is so because as the accusative case is sensitive to definiteness and as *haraččin* carried the accusative case marker *-n*, it is implied that *haračč* is definite.

- (5) k'amära ħāʔet-u har-ačč-in šerrāh-ačč (-eyem)
Kemera two-DEF sheep-PL-ACC buy.PF-3FSs (-3PLo)
'Kemera bought the two sheep.'

2.2 ADJECTIVES

The definite suffixes *-e* and *-it* are attached to singular masculine and feminine adjectives respectively as shown in (6).

- (6) a. läham-e
big-DEF.M
'the big'

² If a noun ends in a vowel, the vowel will be elided when the definite suffix is attached.

- b. läham-it
big-DEF.F
'the big'

According to Leslau (1997), in Argobba, adjectives do not have a definite suffix; rather they bear a definite article of a head noun when they occur in a definite noun phrase. Leslau (1997: 19) writes '*If an adjective-noun complex is definite, the article is placed after the adjective....*' This is how the definite surfaces in Amharic, but not in Argobba. This is so because in Argobba, if a definite NP contains a qualifier, the definite article appears on the head noun not on the qualifier. Consequently, the example *läham -u bed* (big-DEF house) 'the big house' mentioned earlier from Leslau's data is expressed by *läham bet-iččī* (big house-DEF) in the Argobba data collected for this study. Furthermore, Leslau (1997) states that plural adjectives are marked by *-ač* and take the definite article suffix *-u* like nouns. This is also similar to the case in Amharic.

Contrary to Leslau (1997), the plural nouns are marked by *-ačč* and plural adjectives are derived by reduplication (e.g. *läham* 'big' > *lähaḥam*). Unlike in Amharic, in Argobba, plural adjectives, like plural nouns, are not morphologically marked for definiteness.

2.3 NUMERALS

Numerals take the definite article *-u*, which is not marked for gender. Consider the examples in (7).

- (7) a. häʔet t'aʔi-čč³
two goat-PL
'two goats'
- b. häʔet-u t'aʔi-čč
two-DEF goat-PL
'the two goats'
- c. häʔet-u nišča-čč
two-DEF female-PL
'the two women'

Therefore, contrary to the data in Leslau (1959, 1997) and unlike in Amharic, in Argobba, there are three different definite article suffixes for different nominals: nouns, adjectives and numerals. The use of different definite articles for different

³ The /a/ in the plural suffix *-ačč* is deleted when it is attached to a noun ending in a vowel.

nominals distinguishes Argobba not only from Amharic and other Ethio-Semitic languages but also from other Semitic languages like Hebrew, which has only one definite article, *ha-*.

When nouns are modified by demonstratives, *ini* ‘this’, *?o* ‘that’, *innen* ‘these’ and *inno* ‘those’, the modification results in a specification of the entity denoted by the head noun. Syntactically, if an NP headed by a singular head noun contains a demonstrative, the head noun obligatorily carries the definite suffix as illustrated in (8).

- (8) a. *?o* **lij-ičči** *bä-kämise ama* *xäyd-äl*
 that child-DEF.M to-Kemissie to go.IMPF-AUX.3MSs
 ‘That boy will go to Kemissie.’
- b. **?o* **lij** *bä-kämise ama* *xäyd-äl*
 that child to-Kemissie to go.IMPF-AUX.3MSs
- c. *ini* **nišč-iti** *bä-kämise ama* *xäyd-ill-äčč*
 this woman-DEF.F to-Kemissie to go.IMPF-AUX-3FSs
 ‘This woman will go to Kemissie.’
- d. **ini* **nišča** *bä-kämise ama* *xäyd-ill-äčč*
 this woman to-Kemissie to go.IMPF-AUX-3FSs
- e. *inno* *ba?ara-čč* *ä-kämära* *n-äy*
 those ox-PL GEN-Kemera be-3PLs
 ‘Those oxen belong to Kemera.’
- f. *innen* *nišča-čč* *bä-kämise ama* *xäyd-u-ll-äy*
 these woman-PL to-Kemissie to go.IMPF-3PLs-AUX-3PLs
 ‘These women will go to Kemissie.’

Notice that in (8e) and (8f), neither the plural head nouns nor the demonstratives carry a definite suffix.

It seems that a head noun specified by a demonstrative does not carry a definite article suffix in Ethio-Semitic languages. Consider the following examples from Amharic, Tigrinya and Kistanya.

- (9) (i) a. *ya* **bet** (Amharic)
 that.M house
 ‘that house’
- b. *yičč* **set**
 this.F woman
 ‘this woman’

- (ii) a. ʔitti **säb** (Tigrinya)
 that.M person
 ‘that man’
- b. ʔiziʔa **g^wal**
 this.F girl
 ‘this girl’
- (iii) a. za **säb** (Kistanya)
 that.M person
 ‘that man’
- b. zi **säb**
 this.M person
 ‘this man’

Although the co-occurrence of demonstratives and definite articles is not possible in languages such as English and the Ethio-Semitic languages mentioned above, it is possible in sizable natural languages like Greek (Kolliakou 1996), Romani (Boretzky 2000). In Semitic languages like Hebrew (Wintner 2000) and Silte (Gutt 1997), a definite article suffix is attached to demonstratives.

Like the case we saw with demonstratives, if a singular head noun is qualified by a possessive pronoun or a genitive NP, the head noun carries a definite suffix obligatorily. Consider the examples in (10).

- (10) (i) a. iwwat **t’aʔi-čči** nare mot
 his goat-DEF.M today die.PF.3MSs
 ‘His he-goat died today.’
- b. * iwwat **t’aʔi** nare mot
 his goat today die.PF.3MSs
- (ii) a. ä-zäynäba **lam-iti** nare mot-äčč
 GEN-Zeyneba cow-DEF.F today die.PF-3FSs
 ‘Zeyneba’s cow died today.’
- b. * ä-zäynäba **lam** nare mot-äčč
 GEN-Zeyneba cow today die.PF-3FSs
- c. ä-yett **zinaw-ičči** häbid ïmber
 GEN-night rain-DEF.M heavy be.PAS.3MSs
 ‘The rain at tonight was heavy.’
- d. * ä-yett **zinaw** häbid ïmber
 GEN-night rain heavy be.PAS.3MSs

- e. ä-šonke **nišč-iti** xäyd-äčč
 GEN-Shonke female-DEF.F go.PF-3FSs
 ‘The woman from Shonke went.’
- f. * ä-šonke **nišča** xäyd-äčč
 GEN-Shonke female go.PF-3FSs

As is observable from examples in (10), singular nouns specified by possessive pronouns and genitive NPs carry a definite suffix. The ungrammatical structures in (10ib) and (10iib, d, f) attest that the appearance of the definite article is mandatory.

Like in other Ethio-Semitic languages, if a singular head noun is modified by a relative clause, the entire noun phrase will be definite. What makes Argobba different from the other languages in the subfamily is that the definite article appears on the head noun. Compare the examples from Amharic (11) and Kistanya (12) with the examples from Argobba in (13).

- (11). a. hirut yä-läbbäs-äčč-īw **k’āmis**
 Hirut REL-wear.PF-3FSs-obj-DEF.M dress
 ‘the dress that Hirut wore’
- b. * hirut yä-läbbäs-äčč **k’āmis** -u/-w
 Hirut REL-wear.PF-3FSs-obj dress-DEF.M
- (12) a. šämsu yä-läbbäs-ä-nn-i **gillajä**
 Shemsu REL-wear.PF-3MSs-3MSo-DEF trousers
 ‘the trousers that Shemsu wore’
- b. * šämsu yä-läbbäs-ä-nn **gillaj-i**
 Shemsu REL-wear.PF-3MSs-3MSo trousers-DEF
- (13) a. k’ämära i-läwwäs-äčč-äy **sär-ičči**
 Kemera REL-wear.PF-3FSs-3MSo dress-DEF.M
 ‘the dress that Kemera wore’
- b. * k’ämära i-läwwäs-äčč-äy-ičči **säro**
 Kemera REL-wear.PF.3FSs-3MSo-DEF.M dress
- c. k’ämära i-šerräh-ačč-äy **sär-ačč**
 Kemera REL-buy.PF-3FSs-3MSo dress-PL
 ‘the dresses that Kemera bought’

As is observable from the example in (13c), plural head nouns modified by a relative clause appear without the definite suffix.

If a definite head noun is modified by an AP, the adjective may or may not bear a definite article suffix. The following examples illustrate the case in point.

- (14) a. amud nišča bä-šonke ama xäyd-äčč
 fat female to-Shonke to go.PF-3FSs
 ‘A fat woman went to Shonke.’
- b. amud nišč-iti bä-šonke ama xäyd-äčč
 fat female-DEF.F to-Shonke to go.PF-3FSs
 ‘The fat woman went to Shonke.’
- c. amud-it nišč-iti bä-šonke ama xäyd-äčč
 fat-DEF.F woman-DEF.F to-Shonke to go.PF-3FSs
 ‘The fat woman went to Shonke.’
- d. *amud-it nišča bä-šonke ama xäyd-äčč
 fat-DEF.F woman to-Shonke to go.PF-3FSs
- e. amamud nišč-ačč bä-šonke ama xäyd-äy
 fat.PL female-PL to-Shonke to go.PF-3PLs
 ‘The fat women went to Shonke.’

The examples in (14) give us an idea about the fact that a definite noun is modified by a definite or an indefinite adjective whereas an indefinite noun is modified by an indefinite adjective. The grammaticality of (14b) shows that the whole NP is definite because the head noun is definite. This attests that the definite article on the adjective in (14c) does not indicate the definiteness of the whole NP. Furthermore, the example in (14e) shows that neither the plural adjective nor the plural head noun bears the definite suffix.

Before passing to the next section, let us see the notion of headedness. In different works on related languages whose definite article is an affix like in Argobba, the head is the definite article, like other determiners, to project to DP (Girma 2003; Girma 1994). Although the notion of head is one of the controversial issues in syntactic literature, let us apply two criteria among the criteria suggested by Zwicky (1985) to determine the head.

- *Distributional equivalent*: The constituent that belongs to a category with the same distribution as the phrase as a whole. As Argobba bare nouns have almost identical distribution to the NPs, the criterion applies to the Argobba nouns.
- *Obligatory constituent*: The one that has to be present in non-elliptic constructions, those that can be interpreted out of context. As a noun cannot be omitted when the only determiner present is a definite article, the noun is obligatory in Argobba NPs.

In general, besides its being an affix, these criteria do not allow the Argobba definite article to be the head. The definite nominal structures thus support the *NP Analysis* (Pollard and Sag 1994, Eynde 2004) rather than the *DP analysis* (Abney 1987, Netter 1994).

Taking a view of the data we have seen so far, some generalizations emerge. First, different nominal categories take different definite article suffixes. Second, unlike in other languages in the subfamily where Argobba belongs, if the head noun is qualified by non-head constituents, the definite article for the noun will appear on the head noun. Third, a head noun qualified by a demonstrative, possessive pronoun or genitive NP, the head carries a definite article obligatorily. Fourth, plural nominals are not morphologically marked for definiteness.

3. ANALYSIS

In works on related languages (Girma 1994, Girma 2003 among others), the morphosyntactic analysis of definiteness has been couched in the derivational view in which morphology can be generated by syntax and the surface structure position of definiteness is determined by constraints on movement. This study is an attempt to provide an alternative lexical view where morphology, and syntax are independent components and the surface possibilities of syntactic elements including definiteness are derived from lexical properties and surface structure constraints.

This section gives analysis and generalizations for definiteness phenomena described in section 2 in the spirit of the non-derivational view. If we begin with the nature of the definite articles,

- they are affixes,
- they attach to type *word* not *phrase*,
- they attach to nominals.

In the analysis, the feature DEF (DEFINITENESS) with a boolean value is required. As the study is mainly concerned with the morpho-syntax of definiteness, the feature is added to the SYN feature of nominals.

As is observable from (14b), definiteness is the feature inherited from lexical heads by the help of Head Feature Principle (HFP). The DEF feature is thus one of the appropriate features for nominals.

The data in section 2 show that definite articles are affixes which attach to *lexeme* nominals to yield definite *word* nominals. The attachment of the definite suffixes takes place in the lexicon. Hence, based on the assumption that the definiteness is a lexical process, Definite Lexical Rule (DLR) in (15) is posited.

(15) Definite Lexical Rule

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \text{INPUT} \langle \underline{1}, \left[\begin{array}{l} \textit{lexeme} \\ \text{SYN} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{nominal} \\ \text{DEF} - \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \rangle \\ \text{OUTPUT} \langle F - \textit{defs} \underline{1}, \left[\begin{array}{l} \textit{word} \\ \text{SYN} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{nominal} \\ \text{DEF} + \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \rangle \end{array} \right]$$

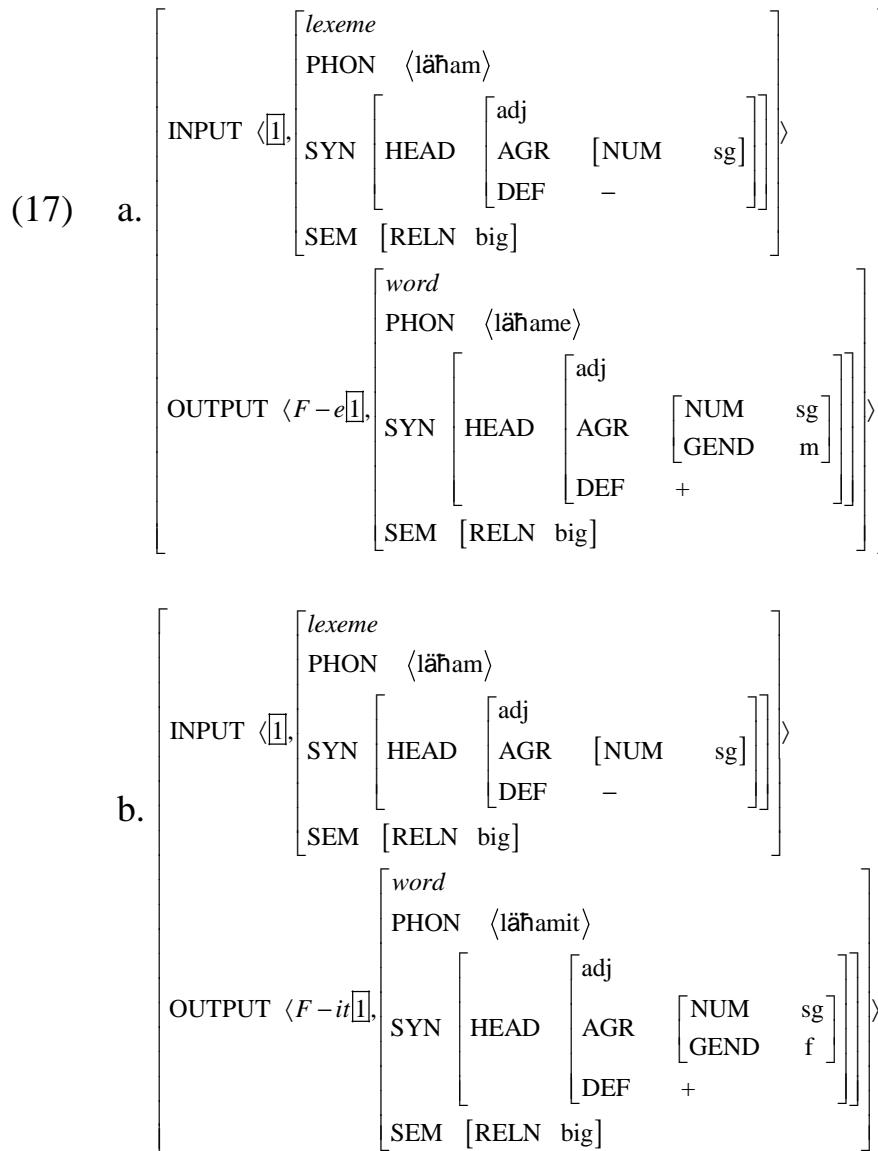
The DLR operates provided that the INPUT nominal has the value ‘√’ (minus) for the feature DEF. The rule yields a nominal word with the DEF value ‘+’ (plus). The effect of the rule on nouns, adjectives and numerals is shown in (16), (17) and (22) respectively.

(16) a.

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \text{INPUT} \langle \underline{1}, \left[\begin{array}{l} \textit{lexeme} \\ \text{PHON} \langle \textit{bet} \rangle \\ \text{SYN} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{noun} \\ \text{AGR} \left[\begin{array}{l} \underline{1} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{NUM} \text{ sg} \\ \text{GEND} \text{ m} \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \rangle \\ \text{SEM} \left[\text{RELN} \text{ house} \right] \end{array} \right] \\ \text{OUTPUT} \langle F - \textit{ičči} \underline{1}, \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PHON} \langle \textit{betičči} \rangle \\ \text{SYN} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{noun} \\ \text{AGR} \left[\begin{array}{l} \underline{1} \end{array} \right] \\ \text{DEF} + \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \\ \text{SEM} \left[\text{RELN} \text{ house} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

b.

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \text{INPUT} \langle \underline{1}, \left[\begin{array}{l} \textit{lexeme} \\ \text{PHON} \langle \textit{lam} \rangle \\ \text{SYN} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{noun} \\ \text{AGR} \left[\begin{array}{l} \underline{1} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{NUM} \text{ sg} \\ \text{GEND} \text{ f} \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \rangle \\ \text{SEM} \left[\text{RELN} \text{ cow} \right] \end{array} \right] \\ \text{OUTPUT} \langle F - \textit{iti} \underline{1}, \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PHON} \langle \textit{lamiti} \rangle \\ \text{SYN} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{noun} \\ \text{AGR} \left[\begin{array}{l} \underline{1} \end{array} \right] \\ \text{DEF} + \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \\ \text{SEM} \left[\text{RELN} \text{ cow} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

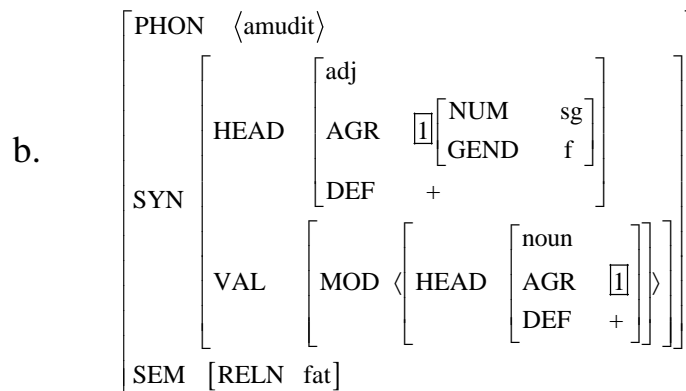
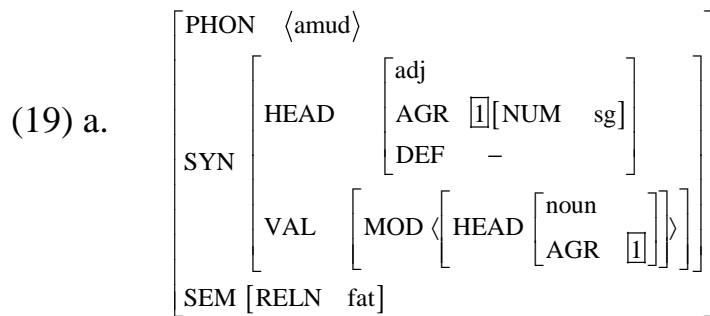


As is noticeable from (17a), the adjective with the DEF value ‘√’ is specified only for the feature NUM (NUMBER). The definite adjective (17b) is, however, specified for both NUM and GEND (GENDER). Consequently, *lāḥame* and *lāḥamit* are specified for the features DEF, NUM and GEND. Accordingly, *lāḥame* and *lāḥamit*, but not *lāḥam*, obligatorily agree with a noun selected for modification in definiteness and gender in addition to number. Consider the examples in (18) with the adjective *amud* ‘fat’.

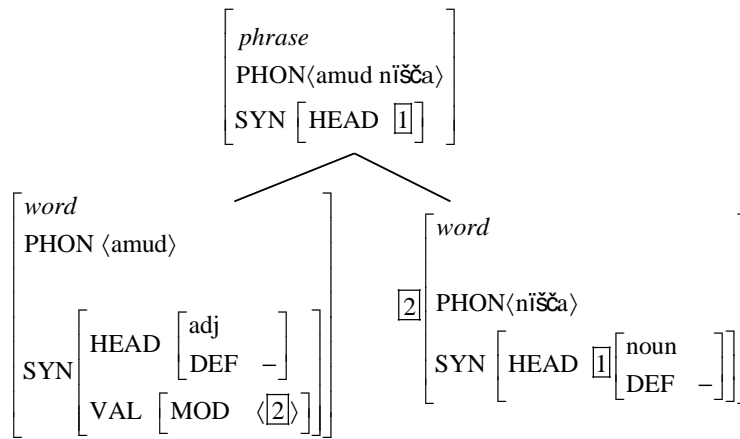
- (18) a. amud nišča
 fat female
 ‘a fat woman’
- b. amud nišč-iti
 fat female-DEF.F
 ‘the fat woman’

- c. *amud-it nišča
fat-DEF.F female
- d. *amud nišča-čč
fat female-PL
- e. amud-it nišč-iti
fat-DEF.F female-DEF.F
‘the fat woman’
- f. *amud-e nišč-iti
fat-DEF.M female-DEF.F

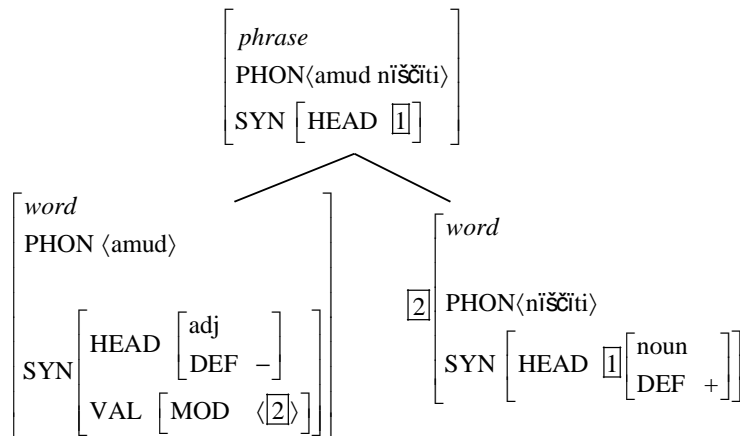
The well-formed NPs in (18a) and (18b) show that indefinite adjectives select for nouns to modify regardless of their value for definiteness. The ungrammaticality of (18c) and the grammaticality of (18e) show that definite adjectives select for definite nouns only. The selection property of adjectives can be seen from lexical entries for *amud* (19a) and *amudit* (19b) which generate the NPs in (18a-b) and (18e) respectively, which are shown in tree structures in (20a-b) and (21). 239



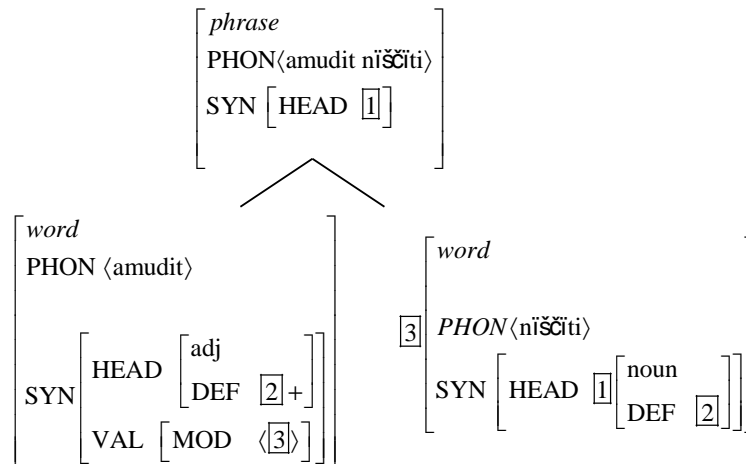
(20) a.



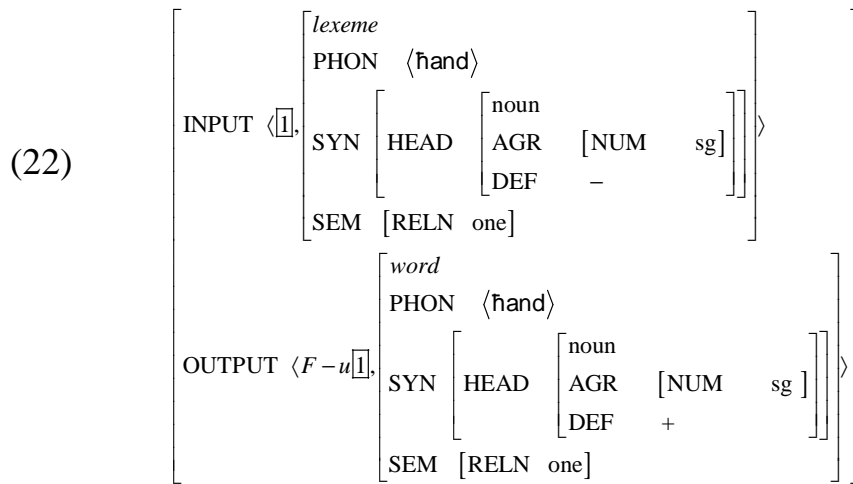
b.



(21)



The effect of the DLR on numerals can be shown in the derivation of *hand-u* ‘the one’ from *hand* ‘one’ and the definite article suffix *-u* in (22).



The interesting point here is that indefinite numerals can co-occur with nouns with or without the plural marker *-ačč* as illustrated in (23).

- (23) a. ħamist bet-(ačč)
 five house-PL
 ‘five houses’
- b. soʔost säw(-ačč)
 three person-PL
 ‘three men’

However, when a noun is quantified by a definite numeral, the noun obligatorily carries the plural suffix. Consider the following examples.

- (24) a. ħamist-u bet-ačč
 five-DEF house-PL
 ‘the five houses’
- b. *ħamist-u bet
 five-DEF house
- c. soʔost-u säw-ačč
 three-DEF person-PL
 ‘the three men’
- d. *soʔost-u säw
 three-DEF person

Such co-occurrence of indefinite and definite numerals with nouns is specified in lexical entries for the indefinite and definite numerals.

In section 2, we saw that a singular noun specified by a demonstrative, a possessive pronoun or a genitive NP obligatorily carries the definite article. It is

possible to account for such structures by introducing the feature SPEC, which refers to the idea that a specifier selects for what it specifies or a head sister. Based on this assumption, it is possible to posit the constraint in (25).

$$(25) \left[\text{SYN} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \text{ det} \\ \text{VAL} \left[\text{SPEC} \left\langle \left[\text{SYN} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \text{ noun} \\ \text{DEF} + \end{array} \right] \right] \right\rangle \right] \right] \right] \right]$$

The co-occurrence of the demonstratives with the definite article is observed from their own lexical entries. The lexical entry for *?o* ‘that’, for instance, looks like the one in (26).

$$(26) \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{PHON} \langle ?o \rangle \\ \text{SYN} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{det} \\ \text{AGR} \underline{1} \end{array} \right] \\ \text{VAL} \left[\text{SPEC} \left\langle \begin{array}{l} \textit{phrase} \\ \left[\text{SYN} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{HEAD} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{noun} \\ \text{AGR} \underline{1} [\text{NUM} \text{ sg}] \end{array} \right] \\ \text{DEF} + \end{array} \right] \right] \right\rangle \right] \right] \end{array} \right] \\ \text{SEM} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{MODE} \text{ none} \\ \text{RELN} \text{ that} \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have presented an account of definiteness in Argobba nominals couched in the framework of HPSG. The study has produced counter examples and counter argued to Leslau (1959, 1997), which seem to have data highly dominated by Amharic. It is found that Argobba shows some idiosyncratic definiteness properties which are not observed in sister languages in the subfamily where Argobba is a member. In Argobba, unlike in other Ethio-Semitic languages,

- there are different definite article suffixes for different nominal categories (nouns, adjectives and numerals);
- a singular noun qualified by a demonstrative, possessive pronoun or genitive NP obligatorily carries a definite suffix;
- if an NP is modified by a relative clause, the definite article appears on the head noun.

The definite suffixes attach to nominal *lexemes* to yield nominal *words*. Plural nouns and adjectives are not morphologically marked for definiteness. It is argued that the attachment of a definite suffix to a nominal category is a lexical process accounted for by a lexical rule. Accordingly, a DLR is posited to derive the

definite nominal word. The rule operates using a nominal INPUT with the feature DEF ‘√’. It seems that the rule can account for the other Ethio-Semitic languages too. The study found out that Argobba has both monadic definite and polydefinite structures. In the polydefinite structures, there is definite concord.

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