Notes on Agreement Affixes of Eža

Fekede Menuta

1.0. Introduction

Eža is one of the Central West Gurage languages within the Ethio-semitic language family. It is spoken in the southwestern part of Ethiopia in the Gurage Zone, particularly in the Ežana Wenene district. Eža also designates the people who speak the language. The language is one of the least studied Gurage languages. To my knowledge the topic on agreement affixes has not been addressed or exhaustively discussed by scholars or linguists so far. Thus in this article I will try to provide the descriptive accounts of the agreement affixes, the orders of the affixes, and their allomorphs to fill the existing gap. The paper is organized as follows: In section 1.1, some general notes on Morpho-syntax of Eža including word order, and the orders of affixes will be provided; in 1.2, I will discuss the subject agreement affixes of verbs; in 1.3, I will deal with the object agreement affixes; and finally in 1.3, I will present concluding remarks with highlights of the paper. The transcription used is phonemic, but for the ease of presentation, the traditional phoneme marker is not used. Square brackets are used when the phonetic form is emphasized. The abbreviations and symbols that used in this article are given as a footnote below.

1.1. Notes on Morpho-Syntax

Eža, as most Ethio-Semitic languages, has subject-object-verb (SOV) word order in a simple sentence structure. The noun functioning as subject or object has to agree with the verb in person, gender, and number. Consider the following examples:

(1) (a) iyya bett siyy̱-xʷ-m
    I house buy-1ss-past
    ‘I bought a house’

(b) yinna bett siyy̱-ṉi-m
    We house buy 1ps-past
    ‘We bought a house’

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2 S= subject/singular, V=verb, O=object, def=definite, Acc=accusative, AgrS=agreement of subject, AgrO=agreement of object, T=tense, M=masculine, F=feminine, P=plural/Phrase C=consonant, V=verb, sth=something, Sh=somebody; ~ = allomorphic variation, ∅=Zero Morpheme, => = becomes/changes to, - = morpheme boundary, * = unacceptable utterance or structure, def = definite.
(c) iyya bett-we siyyä-x*-n-m
1-house-def-buy-lss-Acc (3so)-past
'I bought the house.'

As we can see from the examples (1) the forms of the verb siyya "buy" changes with change of the subjects in (1A and B) in order to agree with the number and person of the subject nouns. The nouns iyya 'I' and yinna 'we' are subjects of the sentences in 1 (A and B) respectively. The noun bett is an object. As E2a is a pro drop language\(^3\), the pronouns in 1 (A and B) can be totally omitted and the sentence gives a complete meaning. The agreement affixes help the speaker and listener to identify about who or what the communicators are referring to. The suffix -x*- in 1 (A and C) shows the first person singular subject 'I' referring to iyya, and similarly, -nä- represents first person plural with reference to yinna 'we'. In 1(c) we find another suffix -n-, which indicates third person singular object or in more technical term the accusative case\(^4\).

Thus, the structure of morphemes in a word as can be seen from the verbs above is as follows:
(2) V-AgrS-AgrO-T

The order of affixes in verbs with imperfect aspect, however, is different for the fact that the subject agreement affixes come before the verb as in:
'tena bett -we t-siyya -n-te
Tena-house-def-3ss-buy-sso-future. "Tena will buy the house".
Thus, the order of affixes in imperfect verbs can be shown as in (3) below:
(3) AgrS-Verb-AgrO-T

Syntactically, V' has to dominate AgrS in imperfective aspect and the AgrS adjoins V to form the whole sequences of affixes as an output.

These orders of morphemes, which is common in most Ethio-Semitic languages, is not in conformity with Baker's (1985) universal claim of the Mirror principle\(^5\) which asserts the structure of words in a sentence/syntax is mirrored in the structure of morphemes in a word.

A sentence structure in perfective aspect with its possible verbal affixes is shown in a tree below. The tense phrase dominates all the structure as it closes the sentence. T' immediately dominates AgrOP and T; AgrOP branches out to Spec and AgrO'; AgrO' further branches out to AgrSp and AgrO; AgrSP in turn branches out into Spec and AgrS' that branches out to VP and AgrS; the VP branches out into its Spec and V' which itself branches out into Spec and V. The tree diagram below shows the representation. Here t, shows a trace in which a noun has been moved upward cyclically. For instance, the object noun bett-we was sister

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\(^3\) These are languages in which a pronoun can be omitted in a communication and yet the sentence is acceptable to the speaker and listener. For example, in the structures above it is possible to say: bett syya-x*-m
house-buy-lss-past 'I bought a house'. To the contrary a language like English is not a pro drop hence it is not acceptable to say: "bought a house"; one has to add a subject like i, he, etc.

\(^4\) The accusative case marker in E2a is overt only when the object noun is definite and /or animate. The morpheme also has an alternate as in: yinna bett-we syya- näl-y-m
We-house-def-buy-lps-ncc-past 'We bought the house.'

For the detail discussions see Fekede (2002).
to V both of which immediately dominated by V'. The noun moves to the spec of VP and then to the Spec of AgrSP cyclically. Finally it lands at the Spec of AgrOP. The trace marker indicates the traces of all the moved nouns. The verb šyyyī adjoins all its affixes moving upward to the right side of the tree.

\[
\text{TP} \\
\text{Spec} \\
\text{šyyyī} \\
\text{AgrOP} \\
\text{Spec} \\
\text{bett-we} \\
\text{AgrSP} \\
\text{i} \\
\text{AgrS} \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{i} \\
\text{V} \\
\text{šyyyī-}
\]

šyyyī bett-we šyyyī-hʷu-n-m
I-house-def-buy-AgrS-AgrO-T 'I bought the house'

Having an insight on the comparative structure of morphemes in word verbs, and in simple sentences, I will discuss the internal structures of the verbs, their subject and object affixes and the allomorphs of the affixes.

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5 Baye Yimam (1998) provides a detailed argument on this issue referring Amharic and other Ethio-Semitic languages such as Chaha and Tigrinya. He provides how other researchers like Halefom (1994), Mullen (1986), and Rose (1996) tried to account the problem so that the word order should mirror the morphological order as of the claimed universal mirror principle. Most of the mentioned linguists considered the object suffixes as clitics while subject affixes as true morphemes. Yet the morpheme structure is not in conformity with the principle. Baye also disproves the object suffixes not to be clitics for they do not satisfy most of the features of clitics he listed them as follow:

i. Phonologically, they are reduced forms of full forms;
ii. Syntactically, they are like words in the sense that they may stand independent of their host;
iii. Semantically, they have a straightforward meaning.
iv. Morphologically, they usually do not have idiosyncratic allomorphic variants, nor do they cause any such variations on their host stems;
v. They cross-refer to an object or subject NP/ their doubled NP... This is typical of pronominal clitics, which are believed to absorb the case feature of their host, thus forcing the doubled NP to occur with a prepositional element from which it gets its case;
vi. They can move from their base position to a higher position, known in the literature as clitics climbing.

Thus, Baye concludes that Ethio-Semitic languages behave differently and are exceptions to the mirror principle; and/ or mirror principle should be open for parametric variations than considering it as the hard claim of the universal linguistic Phenomenon.
1.2. Subject Agreement Affixes

Subject agreement affixes of Eža are suffixed to verbs in perfective forms while they are prefixed in imperfective and jussive forms. They are shown in (4) (A), (B), (C) and (D) below.

(4) (A) Subject agreement suffixes in perfective aspect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-xʷ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2m.</td>
<td>-x-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>-x-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3m.</td>
<td>-ā-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>-ā-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following in (5) are some examples of morphologically complex words showing the affixes given in (4):

(5) (a) dānnāg - xʷ - n -m

hit - 1s -3sma-past | 'I hit him'

(b) dānnāg - x-ā -na- m

hit - 2s-m - 3sfo-past | 'you (sm) hit her'

(c) dānnāg - x-iʔ -ndā- m

hit - 2s-f - 1po past | 'you (sf) hit us' 

(d) dānnāg -nā -y- m

hit-1pls-3sma-past | 'we hit him' 

(e) dānnāg -x-u -y- m

hit-3p-plm-3sma-past | 'you (plm) hit him' 

(f) dānnāg -x-ma -y- m

hit-3p-plm-3sma-past | 'you (plf) hit him' 

(g) dānnāg -ā -uʰ-y- m

hit-3p-plm-3sma-past | 'They (m) hit him' 

(h) dānnāg -ā-ma-y- m

hit-3p-3plf-3sma-past | 'They (f) hit him' 

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6 The feminine markers in the language are - l and -t and some times we find only - t as in the adjective guadwā 'whitish (m) and guadwā-t 'whitish (f)'.
7 There is a third person marker -ā - occurring before the vowel 1, however it is deleted at the surface form because the language does not allow vowel sequences.
8 The vowel -ā - is deleted to avoid vowel sequence and the vowel u that occurs after the central low vowel is changed to o in harmony with height.
(B) Subject agreement prefixes in imperfective aspect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular Person</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Plural Person</th>
<th>Gender/number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ä-</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>- nä</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2m</td>
<td>t-</td>
<td>t-</td>
<td>- o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>t-</td>
<td>- i</td>
<td>- äma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3m</td>
<td>y-</td>
<td>y-</td>
<td>- o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>y-</td>
<td>- äma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subject markers are similar in singular and plural forms in second person. The third person markers are also the same except in third person singular feminine form which becomes /l/, a homophones to the second person. First person markers are however different in the singular and plural forms.

The following conjugation shows examples of the subject agreement suffixes in imperfective aspect.

(6) (a) ä - därg -xä [ädärgixä]

1s - hit -2mo  'I hit you (sm)'

(b) t - därg -na [tärgina]

2sm - hit -3so  'you (sm) hit her'

(c) t - därg -i -n [tärgyin]

2s - hit -f-iso  'you (sf) hit me', etc.

(C) Subject agreement affixes in jussive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular Person</th>
<th>Plural Person</th>
<th>Number/gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>-nä</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3m.</td>
<td>yä -</td>
<td>-o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3f.</td>
<td>t -</td>
<td>-äma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compare the examples below:

(7) (a) n - sbr [näšbir]

1s - break  'Let me break'

(b) yä - sbr [yäšbir]

3sm - break  'Let him break'

(c) t - sbr [täšbir]

3sf - break  'Let her break'

(d) n - sbr - nä [näšbinä]

1 p - break - 1p  'Let us break'
(e) yä - sbr - o [yäbäro]

3pm - break - 3pm

'Let them (m) break'

(l) yä - sbr - ama [yäbärama]

3pf - break - 3pf

'Let them (f) break'

(D) Subject agreement affix in Imperative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2m. - ø</td>
<td>- ø -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2f. - ø</td>
<td>- i</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subject agreement affix is zero in singular and plural. Gender is shown only in the second person singular and plural feminine. The examples in (8) show this.

(8) sbr - ø [sibr] 'you break! (2sm)'

sbr - ø - i [sibr] 'you (2sf) break!'

sbr - ø 'you (2pm) break!'

sbr - äma 'you (2pf) break!'

In (8) the stem final /i/ is deleted occurring before the feminine marker /-i/ because /i/ has vocalic property.

1.3 Object Agreement Affixes

Object agreement affixes are suffixed to verbs. They are direct and indirect object affixes referring to complement.

1.3.1 Direct object suffixes

Direct object agreement suffixes are singular and plural in form. They also vary according to the aspectual form of the verb particularly in the second person. They are shown in (8) below.

(9) Singular | Plural

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperfect</th>
<th>Perfect</th>
<th>Imperfect</th>
<th>Perfect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. n ~ y (e)</td>
<td>n ~ y (e)</td>
<td>- n-dä</td>
<td>- n-dä</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2m. n-ax-ä ~ kkä</td>
<td>x-ä ~ kk-ä</td>
<td>n-ax-u ~ kk-u</td>
<td>x-u ~ kk-u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. n-ax-i ~ kk-i</td>
<td>x-i ~ kk-i</td>
<td>n-ax-ma ~ kk-ma</td>
<td>x-ma ~ kk-ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3m. n ~ y</td>
<td>n ~ y</td>
<td>n-o ~ y-o</td>
<td>n-o ~ y-o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. n-a ~ y-a</td>
<td>n-a ~ y-a</td>
<td>n-ä-ma ~ y-ä-ma</td>
<td>n-ä-ma ~ y-ä-ma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paradigm of verbs showing the affixes will be given as we proceed discussing each allomorph.

The alternations between object suffixes are common in most of the Gurage languages and different
linguists have treated them differently. They have been grouped as heavy and light sets by Hetzron (1977: 62). The cause of the alternations according to Hetzron is not phonologically conditioned.

Rose (1996) maintains the light-heavy distinction in which the distinction "constitutes a separate morpheme expressing both the person of the object and the person of the subject" (Rose, 1996: 207). However, the examples she offers do not clearly show the distinctions she claims.

As to the allomorph of Eža object suffixes the light-heavy distinction does not seem to be relevant except in the second person, in which allomorphs with the velar fricative /x/ might be considered light whereas those with the geminate /kk/ heavy on phonetic ground for the former is continuant whereas the latter is stop.

In Eža, the alternations seem to be caused by grammatical, semantic and phonological conditions.

To begin with, the allomorphs in the second person object forms are aspect sensitive. In light suffixes we have { -n-ax-ä } in the perfect aspect and { -x-ä } in the imperfective for 2smo and { -n-ax-u } ~ { -x-u } for 2pmo. Similarly, in the 2sfu we have { -n-ax-i } ~ { x-i } and in the 2pfo { -n-ax-ma } ~ { x-ma } where the first member in each alternants (for example, { -ax-i } in pairs {ax-i} ~ { -xi } ) is in the perfective and the second in the imperfect aspect. The heavy affixes are not aspect sensitive and have the same form in the perfective and imperfective aspect.

To gain an insight on the variations between { -n-ax-ä } / {xä } ~ { kk-ä }, let us see the data in (10) below.

(10) (A) Perfective aspect
(a) nämmäd - į̈-kk-ä - 'I loved you'
(b) nämmäd - į̈-n-ax-ä - 'He loved you'
(c) nämmäd - į̈ti - n-ax-ä - 'She loved you'
(d) nämmäd - nā - kk-ī̇ - 'We loved you'

(e) nämmäd - o - kk-ä - 'They (m) loved you'
(f) nämmäd - ā-ma - kk-ä - 'They (f) loved you'

(B) Imperfect Aspect
(a) ā - rāmd - x-ā 'I love you'
(b) y - rāmd - x-ā 'He loves you'
(c) t - rāmd - x-ā 'She loves you'
(d) n - rāmd - nā - kk-ā 'We love you'
(e) y - rāmd - o - kk-ā 'They (m.) love you'
(f) y - rāmd - āma - kk-ā 'They (f.) love you'
In the data on (10) (A) and (B), there are two conditioning factors for the alternation. First, the heavy suffixes occur only when the subject affix is plural, except in (10A) (a) in which we have \{-kk-\} though the subject affix is singular. The reason for this is semantic. Using the light affix \{-x-\} instead of \{-kk-\} in the first person as in /nämmd –x-ä/ 'you (sm.) loved someone' has different reading from the expected gloss 'I loved you.' Thus, we may argue that all the light suffixes occur with singular subject affixes and the heavy suffix, \{-kk-\} in the first person singular perfective form is used to avoid confusion. Second, we observe that /x/ is always degeminated unlike the heavy object suffix /-kk-/ and is restricted to intervocalic position. Therefore, it is claimed here that the non-geminate /h/ changes to [x] intervocically.

Degif (1997) argues that the opposite phonological process is happening in Chaha, that is, /x/ is strengthened to /k/. As far as Eža is concerned, there is no motivation for strengthening /x/ to /k/ and what is happening is weakening of /k/ to /x/ between vowels. The weakening process is phonologically plausible since /k/ becomes a continuant occurring between vowels, which are continuants. Furthermore, there is a general tendency for non-geminate stops to become continuants or approximants in intervocalic position in Eža as well as in other Gurage languages (cf. Hetzron, 1977:537; Leslau, 1992:32).

Now let us consider the allomorphy of the first person singular object suffixes using the paradigm in (11)

(11) (a) námmd – x-ä - y [nammädxe] ‘you (sm.) loved me’
(b) námmd – x-i - n [nammädxi n] ‘you (sfl) loved me’
(c) námmd – ä - y [nammäde] ‘He loved me’
(d) námmd – ä-ti - y [nammädte] ‘She loved me’
(e) námmd – x-u - n ‘you (pm.) loved me’
(f) námmd – x-ma - n [nammädxman] ‘you (pf.) loved me’
(g) námmd - o - n ‘They (m.) loved me’
(h) námmd – ä-ma - n ‘They (f.) loved me’

In the data \{-y\} occurs when the subject is singular except in the second person feminine singular whereas \{-n\} occurs with plural subject. Which means, the alternation is grammatically conditioned and no phonological factor is visible for the alternation? If the change between \{y\} – \{n\} is caused by singular versus plural subject, why do we have the object marker \{-n\} in the 2sf. form? This is due to a semantic reason operating in general in the grammar of Eža. As shown in (12) below \{-y-\} marks 3smo when the subject is 2sf. Therefore, to avoid confusion and secure the unique read off, \{-n\} is used to refer to 'me' with singular subject, and \{-y-\} to 'him' with 2sf subject.

Consider, the systemic alternations of object suffixes for third person singular masculine in (12)

(12) (a) námmd – x* - n - ‘I loved him’
(b) námmd – x* - ä - n - ‘you (sm) loved him’
(c) námmd – x-i - y - ‘you (sfl) loved him’
(d) námmd – ä - n - ‘He loved him’
(e) næmmäd - ä-ti - n -  'She loved him'
(f) næmmäd - nä - y -  'We loved him'
(g) næmmäd - x-u - y -  'You (pf.) loved him'
(h) næmmäd - x-ma - y -  'You (pl.) loved him'
(i) næmmäd - o - y -  'They (m.) loved him'
(j) næmmäd - ä-ma - y -  'They (f.) loved him'

Since both {n} and {y} can occur after vowels, they are not phonologically predictable. Contrary to object suffixes of the first person singular, in the third person object affixes, {y} occurs with plural subjects except with 2sf subject and {n} occurs with singular subjects. These alternations systematically maintain the unique reading between the first and third person objects.

What triggers labialization of /x/ and /m/ in (12a, b, d, e) and the palatalization in (12c)?

In (12c) the palatalization is triggered by the feminine marker {-i}. As to the labialization, I assume that the third person singular marker {-u}, as in /x-u/- 'he', is floating and can labialize the right most labilizable consonant; in (12a, b) /x/ is the right most labilizable consonant, hence, it is labialized. In (12d,e), the process applies to /m/, which is relatively the right most labilizable element.

The source of labialization and palatalization has been a topic of many linguists. Hetzron (1977: 45) quoting (Polotsky, 1938: 163; 1951: 19; Leslau, 1950 b: 235; Hetzron, 1971a: 200 - 5) argues that labialization "comes from the absorption of an originally suffix u."

Hetzron also proposes that labialization might be concomitant with palatalization, for instance, in the construction of impersonals. The palatalization usually operates on a word final palatalizable9 consonant; Hetzron calls it end palatalization (EP), whereas labialization applies to the relatively right most labilaizable consonant.

Hetzron’s observation correctly predicts the labialization and palatalization processes in Eza impersonal forms shown in (13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(13)</th>
<th>Present form</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Impersonal present</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>y-därg</td>
<td>'He hits'</td>
<td>y-därg-u [y:därg'-]</td>
<td>'one is hit'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>y-räm̄d</td>
<td>'He loves'</td>
<td>y-räm̄d-u [y:räm̄'-]</td>
<td>'one is loved'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>y-kä't'r</td>
<td>'He kills'</td>
<td>y-kä't'r-u [y:kä't'r'-]</td>
<td>'one is killed'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d)</td>
<td>y-sätt'r</td>
<td>'He/it withers'</td>
<td>y-sätt'r-u [y:sätt'r'-]</td>
<td>'one/ sth. withers'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In (13a) the stem final consonant is labilizable and is labialized in the impersonal surface forms. In (13b), the final consonant is palatalizable and is palatarized. The back feature, hence, moves and applies to the second segment from the last consonant, that is, to /m/. In (13c) labialization applies to the third

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9 See the argument on the palatalization of Type B verbs in Fekede (2005:178).
consonant from the last since the other right most consonants are not labilizable. 'End palatalization' applies vacuously since the last consonant /t/ is not palatalizable. In (13d) both labialization and 'end palatalization' apply vacuously since there are no labializable consonants in the word and the last consonant is not palatalizable.

Dalgis (1997) argues that in Chaha /u/ has three realizations: [u] and [w], which are nuclear and non-nuclear respectively, and another autonomously floating [u] with the features [+round] and [+high]. He claims that the floating [u] triggers labialization and / or palatalization for it has both features by virtue of its being labiodorsal (Dalgis, 1997: 188).

Winding up the triggering force of labialization and palatalization, let us go back to the other allomorphs of object suffixes in the 2sf, 3sf and the plural object suffixes. These suffixes are governed by the same rules discussed above in examples (12) - (13). For instance, the non-geminate [k‘], which is basically /-ki/ where /i/ marks feminine, in 2sf changes to [x‘] or /-xi/ intervocally.

### 1.3.2 Indirect or second Object Suffixes

Based on formal differences and the semantic notion, indirect object suffixes can be divided into two:

(i) 'benefactive' with the notion 'for the benefit or advantage of' and (ii) 'maleactive' with the meaning 'against' or 'to the detriment of' somebody or something.

**Benefactive object suffixes**

This is shown by {n} ~ {l}, which is followed by person suffixes. The object suffixes with the benefactive meaning are given in (14) below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-n-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2m.</td>
<td>-n-xä ~ n-kk-ä</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>-n-x-i ~ n-kk-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3m.</td>
<td>-l-ä</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3f.</td>
<td>-l-a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examples in (15) illustrate the use of the benefactive objects given in (14) above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) dànnäg ~ x-ä -n-i</th>
<th>'you(sm) hit (past) (sb/sth.) for me'.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(b) dànnäg ~ x-ä -n-dä</td>
<td>'you(sm) hit (past) (sb/sth.) for us' or ' you hit us'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) dànnäg ~ n-kk-ä [dànnägnikkä]</td>
<td>'I hit (past) (sb/sth.) for you (sm.)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) dànnäg ~ a - n-x-ä [dànnägnixä]</td>
<td>'He hit (past) (sb/sth.) for you (sm.)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) dànnäg ~ n-kk-i [dànnägnikk' ]</td>
<td>'I hit (past) (sb/sth.) for you (sf.)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) dànnäg ~ a - n-x-i[dànnägnix‘i]</td>
<td>'He hit (past) (sb/sth.) for you (sf.)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) dànnäg : xw- l-ä[dànnägx‘ilä]</td>
<td>'I hit (past) (sb/sth.) for him.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h) dànnäg ~ x-i -l-a</td>
<td>'I hit (past) (sb/sth.) for her'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) dànnäg ~ x-1-o [dànnägx1lo]</td>
<td>'I hit (past) (sb/sth.) for them (m.).'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the sample data shows, the benefactive marker for the first and second person object is /u/, which
becomes /\i/ in the third person benefactive object. Thus, [n] and [l] are in complementary distribution. The complementation is not phonologically conditioned; it is motivated by semantic reason. Using /-n/ in the third person benefactive forms leads to a structure and meaning, which is similar to those used in direct object. Consider the following contrasts, for example:

(16) (a) dännäg - x- n-o                'I hit them'
     (b) dännäg - x- l-o                'I hit (sb/sth.) for them'

Here, the two affixes differ due to the difference in {-n-} and {-l-} of {-n-o} and {-l-o} in the paradigms (a) and (b). Had {-n-} been used in place of {-l}, the semantic reading between (a) and (b) would have been the same, hence, leading to no benefactive meaning.

In (15b) the morpheme {-n-dä} is used with the meanings 'us' and 'for us'; it is ambiguous. The two readings are understood only from the context of discourse.

In the second person benefactive object suffixes, the light-heavy alternation is accounted for with the same rule discussed earlier, that is, non-geminate /\i/ changes to [x] intervocically assuming that the second person feminine [k:] is sequence of /\i/ and /\i/.

(ii) Malefactive object suffixes

The malefactive is expressed by {-bb-}, which changes to [β] / [w] intervocically when it is not geminated. It is followed by person suffixes as shown in (17) below.

(17) **Singular**

1. bb-i ∼ β-i
2. m. bb-kk-ä ∼ β-x-ä
   f. bb-kk-i ∼ β-x-i
3m. bb-e-ä ∼ β-e-ä (wä)
   f. bb-a ∼ β-a

**Plural**

bb-nd-ä ∼ β-nd-ä
bb-kk-u ∼ β-x-u
bb-kk-ma ∼ β-x-ma
bb-o ∼ β-o
bb-ä-ma ∼ β-ä-ma

Compare the examples in (18) below.

(18) (a) sääbär - xä- β-i-
     (b) sääbär - ä-β-x-ä- [sääbäräβ'xä-]
     (c) sääbär-ä-ti- β-x-i [sääbäräč[β'xå]']
     (d) sääbär - xä- β-e-ä (wä )-
     (e) sääbär - xä- β-a-
     (f) sääbär - x-u- bb-i-
     (g) sääbär - o-bb-kk-ä [sääbäröbbıkkä]
     (h) sääbär-ä-ma-bb-kk-i [sääbärämabbrıkki']
     (i) sääbär - x-u- bb-e-ä
     (j) sääbär - x-u- bb-a

'You(sm) broke (sth. ) of mine/me'
'He broke (sth. ) of you (sm.)'
'She broke (sth.) of you (sm.)'
'You(sm) broke (sth. ) of him'
'You(sm) broke (sth.) of her'
'You(pm) broke (sth. ) of mine/me'
'They (m) broke (sth.) of you (sm.)'
'They(f) broke (sth.) of you(sf.)'
'You(pm) broke (sth. ) of him'
'You(pm) broke (sth.) of her'
The malefactive marker, as can be seen from the data is /b/, which is geminated when used with plural subjects and degeminated as well as weakened in intervocalic position whenever used with singular subjects. Similarly, labialized [bʷ] becomes [βʷ], which is mostly heard as [w] between vowels. The labialization of /b/ to [bʷ] and the weakening of [β] to [βʷ] in the third person masculine object form in (16d, i) is caused by the masculine morpheme -u. Thus, the underlying form of -bbwā- is -bbuā and the vowel /u/ is deleted after labializing the preceding consonant /b/ to avoid impermissible vowel sequences.

As discussed so far, there is a general tendency in Eža for non-geminated stops to become continuants intervocally. This morphophonemic change can be stated as follows:

\[
(19) \quad C \quad \Rightarrow \quad C /V - V
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\{ + \text{ obs} \\
\text{ - cont.} \}
\end{array}
\]

This rule reads a consonant with features plus obstruent but minus continuant changes to plus continuant between vowels.

In this article, I have presented some notes on morpho-syntax of Eža and I discussed the internal structures of subject and object agreement affixes. The agreement affixes are suffixed to a verb in perfective aspect but in the imperfect aspect the subject agreement affixes are prefixed while object affixes are suffixed to a verb. It is shown that the object affixes have allomorphs, which are governed by grammatical, semantic and phonological conditions. The description provided here gives an insight on the structure of morphemes in the language and it might help to make a further research on the structure of words from theoretical perspective.

References

Baye Y. 1998: Agreement phenomena in Amharic, Paper presented to the fourth Afro-Asiatic Languages, SOAS.


