Some notes on Gender in Dime

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1. Introduction

Dime is the south Omotic language which grouped with Aari and Hamer. The Dime communities are permanent settlers and horticulturalists. *Us'a* and *Gerfa* are the two mutually intelligible dialects. This Data is collected mainly from *Us'a* dialect.

In Dime there is a gender system that distinguishing masculine and feminine. As compared to other Omotic languages nouns are not often marked for gender. For instance, in other Omotic languages such as in Maale (Azeb Amha 2001: 43) masculine and feminine gender distinction is marked on nouns.

Moreover, words that are Masculine by default can trigger feminine agreement to indicate partitive (pieces of) (this is either semantic agreement or derivation from masculine to feminine indicating very smallness or partitive).

2. Gender marker in Dime

Dime distinguishes gender syntactically, through agreement on modifying categories such as adjectives and quantifiers. The language does not indicate gender distinction on verbs other than relative verbs that modify noun or pronouns. They have no also lexical demonstratives that are distinct for gender, and no gender-sensitive nominal affixes such as case and definiteness markers. For example the proper name Geban in Dime is gender

neutral. However, the gender of its referent can be seen from a modifying adjective:

a.geban   gičč6-b   nÍts

    geban   big-M   child

    'Geban is a big boy'

b. geban   gičč6-nd   nÍts

    geban   big-F   child

    'Maikro is a big girl'

c.?irfu m   ulmuli-nd

    moon   round-F

    'The moon is round'

As can be seen in the above examples masculine gender is conveyed by the suffix -b/- while Feminine gender or diminutiveness is conveyed by the suffix -nd. On the other hand the feminine and masculine are assigned to pronouns and demonstratives -u, for masculine and -a, for feminine. In both cases, the initial vowel of the gender marker is harmonized with the preceding vowel of the word. The former one is close resemblance **ababi** 'father', while the later one is also close resemblance to **?inde** 'mother'. Consider some of the examples that are illustrate in the table below:

Table of gender marking in Dime

No	Gender marker				Examples		Gloss
		Male	Female	PL	Nom	Acc	
1.	Pronouns -ú		-á	Ø	n-ú n-á	kÍ k6	'He' 'She'
	Demonstratives -ú		-á	Ø	sin-ú sin-á	sinú-m siná-m	'This (he) 'This (she)
2.	Adjectives -ub		-ind	-id	a.gudumi-nd-is ?amzi b.gudumu-b-is ?ayi c.wúúfi-d-is nÍts-af d.nÍts-is gicc6-b		'The tall woman' 'The tall tree' 'All the children' 'The child is big'
3.	Verbs -ub		-ind	-id	a.kɛn-is ?áadi-nd-is b.kɛn-is ?áadu-b-is c.báˋy-im ?its-id-is goŠt-af-is č'ək'k'i-d		'The dog who (F) came' 'The dog who (M) came' 'The men whose eat food are small'

3. Dime Default gender

Dime speakers know when to apply a feminine marker, since most adjectives in isolation are masculine (Fleming 1990). Moreover, since most of the inanimate things are marked by masculine gender marker -b in their adjectives the default gender may be the masculine one. Furthermore, to identify the feminine gender they must use the pronoun **na** before noun but they can identify masculine gender with out any additional information. Consider the following examples:

(1a)gúdmu-b kúlú   (2a)ʔinsu-b lálè

    long-M stick   heavy-M stone

    'long stick'   'heavy stone'

(1b) giccó-b ʔáyè   (2b) čék'k'ù-b ʔéhé

    big-M tree   small-M house

    'big tree'   'small house'

As can be seen from the above examples, the masculine marker is suffixed to adjectives of the above sentences. Even to express something small thy used the masculine marker-b as it is shown on example (c) above. They use the feminine marker only to express something very small, few or partitive. Consider the following examples:

(3a)lalé   c'ókk'i-nd   (4a) k'ís's'í č'ók'k'i-nd

    stone small-F   bread   small-F

    'a pieces of stone(F)'   'a pieces of bread'

(3b) lalé   gicco-b   (4b) k'ís's'í gìccó-b

    stone big-M   bread   big-M

    'big stone(M)'   'big bread'

Since the nouns are not marked for gender they used the 3rd p. feminine pronoun **ná** to indicate the feminine gender. Verb is not marked for gender in main clause while it is marked in relative clause in Dime. On the other hand, they can identify the masculine gender with out any additional information by default. Look at the following examples:

(5a) ken-is   ga?a-in

dog-DEF   eat-PF

'The dog (M) ate'

(5b) ná   kén-is   gá?a-in

she dog-DEF   eat-PF

'The dog(F) ate'

(6a) dúr-is   dey-in

elephant-DEF   die-PF

'The elephant died'

(6b) ná   dúr-is   dey-in

she elephant-DEF die-PF

'The elephant (F) died.'

What the observations made above would seem to suggest is that the masculine gender is unmarked as in examples /a/ and /c/ above. Moreover, demonstratives also usually uses the masculine marker /-u/ unless there is special condition to express something small, few or partitive. Consider the following examples:

(7a) sáysìn-ú   ?áye   vs   (7b) sáysìn-á   ?áyè

that-M   wood   that-F   wood

'that wood'   'that piece of wood'

(8a) sìn-ú   ?áyè   vs   (8b) sìn-á ?áyè

this-M   tree   this-F tree

'this tree'   'this piece of tree'

Furthermore, adjectives also marked-ind, which is the feminine gender, to indicate few or partitive (pieces of) meaning.

4. Gender and pronouns

4.1. Gender and Independent pronouns

In the independent pronoun system of Dime gender is marked only on third person singular. Consider the following structure that shows gender distinction only on third person singular paradigm.

Table: Independent Pronouns

Person	Gloss	Dime Nom	Acc
1st p.sg.	I	ʔàté	ʔa-/ʔis-m
p.pl	We	wótu	wó-n-im
2nd sg.m/f	You	yáày	yá-n-im
pl.m/f	You	yèsé	yè-n-im
3rd sg.m	He	n-ú	kí-n-im
sg.f	She	n-á	kó-n-im
pl(m/f)	They	kóté	ké-n-im

As can be seen in the above structure Gender is marked as suffix -ú or -á only in the 3ʳᵈ sg., person masculine & feminine (i.e., nú 'he' & ná 'she'). Consider the following structures:

(9)

a. ná yissí yissí-y-a ʔíst-en
   she little little-F eat-IMP
   'She eats less and less'

b. nú yissi yissi-y-a ʔíst-en
   he little little-F eat-IMP
   'He eats less and less'

As can be seen from the above examples, the feminine marker-a is suffixed on /yissí/ to express how he/she eats less and less. In this suffixation process glide insertion is occurred between /i/ and /a/ (i.e., yissí-y-a). Thus, the feminine suffix is playing an important role to indicate diminutive actions.

4.2. Gender and demonstrative pronouns

Gender also marked in the demonstrative pronouns of Dime only in singular nouns as shown below:

(10)

a. sin-á ʔamz
   this-F woman
   'This woman'

b. **sin-á   widri**

this-F   widri

'This girl'

c. **sin-ú   man**

this-M   man

'This man'

d. **sin-ú   nits**

this-M   child

'This child'

e. **san-á   ʔamzi**

that-F   woman

'That woman'

f. **san-ú   ʔiyyi**

that-M   man

'That man'

As it is demonstrated in the above examples, -á, is a feminine marker while -ú is a masculine marker.

4.3.   Gender and Number

If they want to indicate the gender of a person from many persons, it is possible to indicate the gender of that person. Thus, the masculine and the feminine marker can be also used to indicate the gender of a person from a group. Consider the following examples:

(11)

a. **wó-kó-dé   wokkilu-b-is**

1st PL-GEN-ABL   one-M-DEF

'One of us (M)'

b. **wó-kó-dé   wokkili-nd-is**

1st PL-GEN-ABL   one-F-DEF

'One of us (F)'

On the other hand, in plural demonstrative pronoun gender is not marked. Look at the following examples:

(12)

    a. siket   ?amz-af

       these   woman-Pl

       'These women'

    b. si-ket   nits-af

       these   child-PL

       'These children'

    c. sáket   ?amz-af

       those   woman-PL

       'Those women'

    d. sáket   gostu-af

       those   man-PL

       'Those men'

Furthermore, in plural nouns instead of the masculine (-b) and feminine (-nd) gender marker they used the suffix -d which expresses a plural form. Examples:

(13) [s'ús'ú 'many']

    a.s'úsi-d   ?iyyi

      Many-PL   people

      'Many people'

    b.wúú fi-d-is   nits-af

      all-PL-DEF   child-PL

      'All children'

    c. wudr-áf   gudmi-d-is

      girl-PL   tall-PL-DEF

      'The tall girls'

4.4. Independent morpheme for gender

As we have discussed so far in Dime Gender is not marked in noun but sometimes they are used independent word for gender as shown below:

(14)

    a. kéné   ?atsé

       dog   old

       'Male dog'

    b. kéné   gə̀šín

       dog   old

       'Female dog'

    c. t-níts

       cow-child

       'Female calf'

    d. zit-níts

       ox-child

       'Male calf'

As we observed from the above examples, the independent words /?àtse/ 'old', /gə̀šín/ 'old female', /?ót/ 'cow', and /zìt/ 'ox' are used to express the gender of the head noun. On the other hand, if the adjectives are occurred with nouns the gender marker falls on adjectives. Consider the following examples:

(15)

    a. kéné   s'ánu-b   ?àtsé

       dog   black-M   old

       'Old black dog (M)'

    b. kéne   s'áni-nd   gə̀šín

       dog   black-F   old

       'Old black dog (F)'

4.5. Lexical distinction for gender

Furthermore, there is also lexical distinction for gender. Words with meanings that have natural sex have their inherent gender, that is, words like man, woman, etc. Consider the following examples:

(16)

    a. ?àmzé 'woman'

    b. góšti 'man'

c. ʔàŋsé 'female goat/sheep' (equivalent to k'eb in Amharic)

d. s'ûmbû 'male goat/sheep (equivalent to t'ebot in Amharic)

For further understanding considers the following examples by comparing the structure in /a/ with /b/ which illustrated in each numbers /17, 18, 19, 20/ below:

(17)

    a. **wudr-is   gicco-nd**

       girl-the   big-F

       'The girl is big'

    b. **wudr-is   ček'k'-ind**

       girl-def   small-F

       'The girl is very small'

(18)

    a. **zób   wolk'á-b   kúfó-b**

       lion   strong-M   wild-M

       'Lion is a strong animal'

    b. **zób   wolk'ó-nd   kúfó-nd**

       lion   strong-F   wild- F

       'Lion is a strong animal'

(19)

    a. **zití   wolk'á-b   ʔéhó-b**

       ox   strong-M   house-M

       'Ox is a strong animal'

    b. **ʔótú   wolká -nd ʔéhó-nd**

       cow   strong-F   house-F

       'cow is a strong animal'

(20)

    a. **dùùrù   gìccó-b   kúfó-b**

       elephant big -M   wild-M

       'Elephant (M) is a big animal'

    b. **dùùrù gìccó-nd   kúfó-nd**

       elephant big –F   wild-F

       'Elephant (F) is a big animal'

As we have observed from the above examples (17-20), the masculine marker and the feminine marker -b and -nd, respectively, are suffixed twice in a sentence.

Furthermore, as we have seen so far, in syntactic relations there is no gender in the sense that every noun falls into a particular agreement class. Usually Gender is marked on adjectives and demonstrative pronouns, verbs and third person singular independent pronoun rather than directly marked on nouns.

4.6. Gender and Case

As we already discussed in the previous data's two-gender distinction are observed in Dime: feminine and masculine. It is also observed that Dime is Nominative-Accusative language in which the accusative case is semantically marked while the nominative case is identified only syntactically with out having morphological marking.

When the gender and case marker occurred together in a structure gender is marked first and then case. Consider the following examples:

(21)

1.yifub'guest'	2. gumt'inkab 'sick'
a. yífu-b-is 'the guest'(M-Nom)	a. gumt'ínka-b-is 'the sick (M-Nom)
b. yífu-b-is-im 'the guest'(M-Acc)	b. gumt'ínka-b-is-im 'the sick (M-Acc)
c. yífi-nd-is 'the guest '(F-Nom)	c. gumt'ínka-nd-is 'the sick (F-Nom)
d. yífi-nd-is-im 'the guest'(F-Acc)	d. gumt'ínka-nd-is-im 'the sick (F-Acc)

4.7. Gender and verb agreement

The masculine -b and the feminine -nd marker are suffixed also in to verbs to indicate the masculine and feminine gender distinction of a noun. If the noun is plural Dime used the suffix -d for both gender. In Dime only relative clauses are marked for gender in verb paradigm. It is illustrated by the following examples:

(22)

a. bǎy-im   ʔitsɛ́-b-is   góštu   č'ək'k'o-b
   food-ACC   eat-M-DEF   meɲ   small-M
   'One (M) who eats food is small'
b. bǎy-im   ʔítse-nd-is   ʔámze   č'ək'k'i-nd
   food-ACC   eat-fem-DEF   woman   small-fem
   'One (F) who eats food is small'

5. Conclusions

Dime gender system distinguishes masculine and feminine. It is expressed by means of markers. These markers occur in various positions in nominal modifiers, pronominal, and verbs. The most important points in the language as compare to the other relative Omotic languages nouns are not often marked for gender but rather their modifiers. Masculine and feminine, gender distinction is a common phenomenon in most Omotic languages. Moreover, in Dime words with meanings that have natural sex have their inherent gender, that is, words like man, woman, etc. Other words are masculine by default. There are a few inanimate words that have inherent feminine gender that is not masculine. Fore instance, the speaker consider the nouns /ʔírfí/ 'moon', /ʔíyyí/ 'sun' as feminine.

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