

The Morphology of the Nominative Case in Somali

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Somali is an East Cushitic language of the Omo-Tana group. Its Northern variety, which this paper refers to, is also the language of the Somali classical poetry and the official language of Somalia. Here we will assume in its broad outlines Hyman's (1981) analysis of Somali as a tonal accent language, where accents are assigned to moras and bear a one-to-one relationship with (underlying, ie. prior to downdrift) H-tones.

The Somali case system, described by Andrzejewski (1964, 1979), can be viewed as consisting in 4 cases: (i) Absolutive (Abs), (ii) Genitive (Gen), (iii) Nominative (Nom) and (iv) Vocative. Two facts should be pointed out about the distribution of the Nom in this language. Firstly, it marks only non-focussed subjects (cf. 1a), while focussed subjects are in the Abs (cf. 1b):

- (1) a. *Nin baa naagi aragtay*
man FOC woman she-saw
'A woman (*naagi* Nom) saw A MAN'
b. *Naag baa nin aragtay*
'A WOMAN (*naag* Abs) saw a man'

Secondly, the exponents of the Nom occur only on the last element of the subject NP (with one exception, cf. below). For instance, the Nom-inflection occurs only on the definitive (ie. article, demonstrative or possessive) in a group [N Def]_N (cf. 2a), on the rightmost NP in a sequence of co-ordinate NPs (cf. 2b), on the dependent verb of a relative clause (cf. 2c), and is superimposed on the Gen-inflection in a group Noun-Genitive (cf. 2d):¹

- (2) a. *Nin baa naagtu aragtay*
'The woman (*naag* Abs, *-tu* Nom 'the') saw a man'
b. *Beri baa nin iyo naagi abeeso arkeen*
day and snake they-saw
'One day a man (*nin* Abs) and a woman (*naagi* Nom) saw a snake'
c. *Nin aan dhididini ma dhergo*
not sweat-not not fills-not-his-belly
'A man (*nin* Abs) who doesn't sweat (*dhididini* Nom) doesn't fill his belly' (proverb)
d. *Hadal waayeel waa guudmar*
talk elders IND allusive-speech
'Talk (*hadal* Abs) of elders (*waayeel* Nom of *waayeel* Gen) is allusive speech' (proverb)

In this manner, Nom-inflections can occur only on the following items:

- (3) a. Bare nouns (N).²
b. Definitives (Def): articles, demonstratives and short possessives (Poss, ie. possessives not followed by other Def; cf. *walaal-kaa* 'your brother' [N Poss]_N vs. *walaal-kaa-gan* 'this brother of yours' [N Poss Def]_N).
c. Bare nouns with Gen-inflection.
d. Attributives (Attr, eg. *kalé* 'other', *kasta* 'each', etc.).
e. Ordinal numbers (Ord).
f. Dependent verbal forms: extensive and restrictive present, extensive and restrictive past, and invariable negative.³

To these six classes of items it is necessary to add a seventh one, ie. nouns followed by short possessives, that have a special tone-accent melody (TA-melody) in the Nom (eg. Nom *gacan-taa* vs. Abs *gacán-taa* 'your hand'). This is the only known type of a Nom-inflection occurring on a non-final element of an NP.

Somali Nom-inflections are represented by TA-melodies and by segmental morphemes. For reasons of space, as well as for the sake of convenience, the single forms will be dis-

aggregated directly into these two levels, which will be treated separately. For instance, the Nom forms *naagi* 'woman' and *abeéso* 'snake' will be analysed as shown in (4). (For further details cf. below):

(4)	TA-melody	Segmental structure
<i>naagi</i> (Abs <i>naág</i>)	LL	X + i
<i>abeéso</i> (Abs <i>abeesó</i>)	HL	X

The TA-melodies affect the last two moras of the inflected word (or the only mora in monomoraic words). The preceding moras are all accentless and L-toned. It should be pointed out that compound forms such as [N Def]_N, the continuous tenses of S-verbs and the periphrastic present of St-verbs count as two words and bear two TA-melodies, cf. the Abs forms in (5) below. But for the structures [N Poss]_N, only the second TA-melody is affected by case inflections.

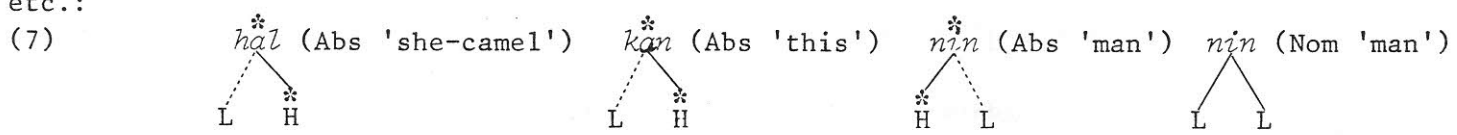
(5)	Segmental form	TA-melody
<i>naágtáá</i> 'your wife'	/naag # taa/	LH LH
<i>keénayáan</i> 'that they are bringing'	/keen # ayaan/	LH HL
<i>nóoshahay</i> 'that she lives'	/nool # tahay/	HL LH

The prevailing type of Nom TA-melody is LL (L in monomoraic words), while D3 nouns (including optionally also *labá* 'two') and most short possessives have HL. In a few cases there is no separate TA-melody for the Nom-forms. With the only exception of the definite article *ku* (Abs *ka*) in such cases there is no segmental Nom-morpheme and consequently they have to be regarded as invariable. The distribution of these three types is shown in (6) below:

(6)	Nom	Abs	Distribution
i.	LL	HL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. polymoraic D1 nouns b. optionally D5 nouns c. Extensive Pres. and Past 2p/3p d. Restrictive Pres. in [CVVC] St-verbs e. Inv. Neg. of St-verbs f. polymoraic D1 and D5 nouns with Poss
	LL	LH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. polymoraic D2 nouns b. optionally D4 nouns c. optionally <i>labá</i> 'two' d. Def: <i>kíí</i> 'the', remote demonstratives, optionally <i>kayó</i> 'our' e. polymoraic genitives of D1, D2, D3, D4 and optionally D5 nouns f. Attr and Ord g. Extensive Pres. and Past 1/2/3m/3f/1p h. Restrictive Pres. of S- and P-verbs, and of polymoraic non-monosyllabic St-verbs i. Restrictive Past j. Inv. Neg. of S-verbs k. polymoraic D2, D3 and D4 nouns with Poss
	LL	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. monomoraic D2 nouns b. Def: <i>kán</i> 'this'
	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. monomoraic D1 nouns b. monomoraic D1 genitives c. monomoraic D1 and D2 nouns with Poss
ii.	HL	LH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. D3 nouns, optionally <i>labá</i> 'two' b. Poss (except <i>kayó</i> 'our' and <i>kí</i> 'his')
iii.	HL	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. optionally D5 nouns b. optionally D5 genitives

- LH* a. optionally D4 nouns
- H* b. optionally the Poss *kayó* 'our'
- H Poss: *kí* 'his'
- L Def: *ka* 'the'

By resorting to the autosegmental weaponry monomoraic TA-melodies can be viewed as realisations of bimoraic melodies on monomoraic segmental strings. In this manner, eg., it is possible to collapse all the D2 nouns, *kán* and the other demonstratives, all the D1 nouns, etc.:



Segmentally, most Nom-forms do not differ from their respective Abs-forms. There are however three Nom-suffixes with a restricted distribution: /i/, eg. in *naagi* 'woman' (Abs *naág*), *labi* 'two' (Abs *labá*), or *noolayni* 'who doesn't live' (Abs *nooláyn*); /aa/, eg. in *kastaa* 'each' (Abs *kastá*), or *keenaa* 'who brings' (Abs *keenó*); /u/, eg. in *ku* 'the' (Abs *ka*), or *kaasu* 'that' (Abs *kaás*). Regarding forms like *labi* or *keenaa* as /*laba*+*i*/ and /*keeno*+*aa*/, ie. as /*X*+*i*/ and /*X*+*aa*/ respectively, is justified by the fact that in Somali the prevailing type of contraction is $V_i \rightarrow \emptyset / _ V_{ii}$, cf. *tukiyo libáax* /*tuké iyo libáax*/ 'a crow and a lion', *ma abeésáa* /*ma abéeso áa*/ 'is it a snake?'. Notice however that there is no straightforward way for deriving \emptyset , /i/, /aa/, and /u/ from each other via phonological rules. Their distribution is shown in (8) below:

(8)	Nom	Abs	Distribution
i.	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. D1, D3, D4 and D5 nouns b. Def: <i>kí</i> 'the', and Poss c. genitives d. Attr (except <i>kastá</i> 'each' and <i>wál-ba</i> 'each') e. Ord f. Extensive Pres. and Past 2p/3p g. Extensive Pres. of the P-verb <i>áh</i> 'be' which forms also the Extensive (periphrastic) Pres. of St-verbs h. Extensive and Restrictive Past i. nouns with Poss
ii.	X+i	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. D2 nouns b. optionally in <i>labá</i> 'two' and cardinals 10-90 c. Def: <i>keér</i> 'that' and <i>koó</i> 'that', optionally <i>kán</i> 'this' and <i>kaás</i> 'that' d. Attr: <i>wál-ba</i> 'each' e. Extensive Pres. 1/2/3m/3f/1p and Restrictive Pres. of P-verbs f. Restrictive Pres. of St-verbs g. Inv. Neg. of S- and St-verbs
iii.	X+aa	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Attr: <i>kastá</i> 'each' b. Extensive Pres. 1/2/3m/3f/1p and Restrictive Pres. of S-verbs
iv.	X+u	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Def: <i>ka</i> 'the', optionally <i>kán</i> 'this' and <i>kaás</i> 'that'

If Nom-forms identical with their respective Abs-forms are represented as containing a \emptyset -morpheme, and all TA-melodies are regarded as being basically bimoraic, it is possible to aggregate the different TA-melodies and segmental structures into the following types of inflections:

(9) Nominative morphemes:

	Context [__ Y] _{NP}	TA-tier	Segm. tier	Distribution
i.		LL	\emptyset	[__ Poss] _N
ii.		\emptyset	\emptyset	elsewhere

b. Context [Y ___] _{NP}			Distribution
	TA-tier	Segm. tier	
i.	LL	<i>i</i>	a. D2 nouns b. optionally the cardinals <i>labá</i> 'two' (D3), <i>tobán</i> '10' and <i>labaatán</i> '20' (D4), and <i>sóddon...sagaáshan</i> '30...90' (D1) c. Def: <i>keér</i> 'that' and <i>koó</i> 'that', optionally <i>kán</i> 'this' and <i>kaás</i> 'that' d. Attr: <i>wál-ba</i> 'each' e. Extensive Pres. 1/2/3m/3f/1p and Restrictive Pres. of P-verbs f. Restrictive Pres. of St-verbs g. Inv. Neg. of S- and St-verbs
ii.	LL	<i>aa</i>	a. Attr: <i>kastá</i> 'each' b. Extensive Pres. 1/2/3m/3f/1p and Restrictive Pres. of S-verbs Def: optionally <i>kán</i> 'this' and <i>kaás</i> 'that'
iii.	LL	<i>u</i>	
iv.	LL	\emptyset	a. D1 nouns, optionally D4 and D5 nouns b. Def: <i>kí</i> 'the', optionally <i>kayó</i> 'our' c. D1, D2, D3 and D4 genitives, optionally D5 genitives d. Attr (except <i>kastá</i> 'each' and <i>wál-ba</i> 'each') e. Ord f. Extensive Pres. 2p/3p of S- and P-verbs g. Extensive Pres. of the P-verb <i>áh</i> 'be' which forms also the Extensive Pres. of St-verbs h. Extensive and Restrictive Past
v.	$\ddot{H}L$	\emptyset	a. D3 nouns b. Poss (except <i>kí</i> 'his' and <i>kayó</i> 'our')
vi.	\emptyset	<i>u</i>	Def: <i>ka</i> 'the'
vii.	\emptyset	\emptyset	a. optionally D4 and D5 nouns b. Poss: <i>kí</i> 'his', optionally <i>kayó</i> 'our' c. optionally D5 genitives

The prevailing types are distinctly LL with either /X+Suff/ or /X/ in the context [Y ___]_{NP}. Yet of the suffixes only /i/ has a rather widespread distribution. The other suffixes /aa/ and /u/ are distinctly marginal, even though /u/ is statistically quite frequent because it occurs in the article *ka*. The type $\ddot{H}L$ with /X/ is well established in D3 nouns. The type with no variation at all is well established only in the Poss *kí* 'his', elsewhere it always has just an optional status. In addition to this, the Nom-inflections have the NP-final distribution of postpositions, even though their degree of allomorphy has rather an inflectional character. The occurrence of Nom-inflections NP-internally before short possessives is wholly marginal in this system.

In conclusion, if it is viewed in this manner the system appears to consist in a few dominant types (9a.ii., 9b.i. and 9b.iv.) and several isolated pockets (eg. 9a.i., 9b.ii., 9b.iii., etc.). Some of the latter are likely to be relics from previous stages of the language.

Notes

- 1 - Somali is transcribed here according to the Somali national orthography. Its main peculiarities are: *c* for IPA [ʔ], *dh* for retroflex [d̠], *j* for [dʒ], *kh* for [χ], *sh* for [ʃ], *x* for [ħ], and ' for [ʔ].
- 2 - Somali nouns should be divided into at least five inflectional classes (declensions) in order to distinguish their inflectional behaviour. They are given in (i) below

together with Andrzejewski's (1964, 1979) and Hyman's (1981) classifications:

(i) Decl.	Andrz.	Hyman	Gender	Examples
D1	1/2/3	1	m.	<i>nín</i> 'man', <i>áwr</i> 'he-camel', <i>ínán</i> 'boy'
D2	4	1	f.	<i>hál</i> 'she-camel', <i>áwr</i> 'he-camels', <i>ínán</i> 'girl'
D3	5	2	m./f.	<i>aabbé</i> 'father', <i>abeesó</i> 'snake'
D4	6	3	m./f.	<i>nimán</i> 'men', <i>haló</i> 'she-camels', <i>dhagáx</i> 'stone'
D5	7/8	-	f.	<i>dhextáal</i> 'refrain', <i>bídix</i> 'left side'

D3 nouns change their TA-melody from LH̄ to HL̄ when they are focussed or in isolation.

D4 nouns lose their final accent and H-tone when they are immediately followed by another full word, but not by an internal word boundary (ie. LH̄ → LL / __ ## Word).

3 - Somali verbs belong to three different inflectional classes: suffix verbs (S-verbs), prefix verbs (P-verbs) and stative verbs (St-verbs). The four P-verbs *dhéh* 'say', *imów* 'come', *áal* 'lie, stay', and *aqóo* 'know' can have vocalic tense-suffixes and case-inflections like the S-verbs, but *áal* and *aqóo* have also forms without vocalic suffixes and with separate case-inflections, cf. the following 3m forms of the Dependent Extensive Present in the Abs and Nom:

(i)	S-verb (<i>kéen</i> 'bring')	P-verb (<i>áal</i> 'lie, stay')	
Abs	<i>keen-ó</i>	<i>y-aall-ó</i>	<i>y-aál</i>
Nom	<i>keen-aa</i>	<i>y-aall-aa</i>	<i>y-aall-i</i>

When there are no further specifications, the statements about case-inflections in P-verbs in this paper regard only these separate forms of *áal* and *aqóo*.

References

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