

The Morpheme $j\partial$ - in Gurage Morpho-Syntax

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Abstract: Gurage is South Ethio-Semitic language spoken in the Gurage Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State of Ethiopia. The aim of this article is to provide descriptive account of the morpheme $\{(-)j\partial\}$, which is used in several morpho-syntactic contexts bearing different meanings. Data were elicited, in the Gumer variety of Gurage, from eleven key informants in the Gumer district. The finding showed that $\{j\partial\}$ also as $\{-j\partial\}$ is used both in inflectional and derivational morphology. In the inflectional morphology of nouns, it marks possessive genitive, source genitive, accusative, dative, and definiteness. At a clause level, it shows a relative clause. In verb inflection, it shows person in the imperfective form. It is also used to form comparisons. In the derivational morphology, it is used to derive instrument nouns, attributive nouns and some adjectives. A few compound nouns are also formed with this morpheme.

Key Words: Derivation, Gurage, Inflection, Morpheme, Semitic

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Gurage refers to the area, the Gurage Zone, in the Southern Nation, Nationalities, and People's Regional State (SNNPRS). The capital city of Gurage Zone is Wolkite located at 150 KM south west of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. Gurage also refers to the people who inhabit the Gurage Zone. It is, however, worth to mention that there are two Highland East Cushitic languages speaking groups, Qabena and Mareqo, living in the Gurage Zone. The language of Gurage is called Guragina by its native speakers. The language has thirteen dialect clusters; namely, Chaha, Ezha, Endegegn, Ener, Inor, Gumer, Gura, Geyto, Meskan, Muhir (with sub-varieties ədi-bet and anə-bet), Dobi also called Gogot, Kistane also called Sodo or Aymelel, and †Mesmes . Mesmes is a dead language whose speakers have shifted partly to the languages of Endegegn (Semitic language) and partly to Hadiyya (Cushitic language).

The level of intelligibility among the clusters of Gurage varies from reversible mutual intelligibility to one way intelligibility and unintelligibility [1]. Despite, the lexical and to some degree morphological variations among Gurage language varieties, the syntactic structure among the language varieties is largely similar. The present study, the morpheme $\{j\partial\}$ in Gumer Gurage, is largely based on Gumer variety for the purpose of transcription consistency, however, comparisons are made among other Gurage varieties to substantiate the similar roles of the morpheme.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Several works on Gurage language studies provide description of the grammar including the phonology, morphology and syntax. Since the appearance of descriptive and comparative studies on Gurage by [2], [3], [4]; [5]; [6]; [7]; [8]; [9]; [10]; [11], to list a few among others), the morpheme $\{j\partial\}$ has been used to show mainly three function; namely, to mark possessive, accusative and dative. The function of $\{j\partial\}$ in Muhir as a object marker (direct and indirect) has been discussed by [12]. Despite the several descriptive works, the multiple roles of the morpheme in Gurage has not yet been exhaustively discussed. To my knowledge, its role in derivation has not been addressed at all. The present study, therefore, attempts to fill into the gap by describing the various roles of the morpheme. It also discusses as to how the native speakers of Gurage distinguish the several roles of the morpheme used as inflection and derivation.

1.3 Objective

The main objective of the study is to describe the roles of $\{j\partial\}$ in Gumer Gurage. It specifically attempts to uncover (1) whether the different roles mentioned in different varieties of Gurage by different authors (cf. 1.4) are also attested in the Gumer variety, (2) find out if the morpheme has other functions other

those mentioned by previous studies, and (3) discuss as to how native speakers predict the different roles of the morpheme with several functions.

1.4 Significance

The finding of the study will help linguists working in the area. It will help the Gurage community in developing pedagogical grammar. It can help for comparative study of Ethiopian Semitic languages in particular and Semitic languages in general. It can also help linguists working on language contact.

1.5 Methodology

The methodology followed is qualitative description. Linguistic data were elicited from six key informants, and were transcribed phonemically. IPA symbol is used for the transcription. A morpheme-by-morpheme glossing, as outlined in the Leipzig glossing rule, is followed. Then, the various roles of the morpheme *{(-)jə}* as used in different contexts is shown with examples. Finally, summary and conclusion is provided.

1.6 Literature review

Morphology is "branch of linguistics which is concerned with the 'forms of words' in different uses and constructions" [13]. Morpheme is the smallest indivisible meaningful unit of morphology. This definition, however, applies typologically for agglutinating languages, such as Turkish, but not to isolating languages such as the classical Chinese which has no inflection but a word as a morpheme. In inflection language, such as Latin, Amharic and Gurage, the same form can have more than one meaning (cf. [13]). Since, a section of a word is also used as a meaningful unit and functionally to form or derive another word from the existing words, the concept of morpheme is not limited to an inflection. Due to all these factors, we shall use the term morpheme in this article as a word or a part of a word used to show grammatical categories or derive a word of the same or different categories.

The distinction between inflection and derivation is important to the discussion of the morpheme *{jə-}* in Gurage. Inflection refers to addition of an affix to a word to show grammatical relations, such as number, gender, definiteness, case, person, tense, aspect, etc. in inflectional and agglutinative languages, whereas derivation refers to addition of affix to a word to form or derive another word of the same or different lexical category.

There are several linguistic descriptions (cf. 1.2) in Gurage languages. Instead of reviewing all the issues of linguistic studies in the area, we focused on the contexts in which the morpheme *{jə-}* has been used by different authors.

Different roles of the morpheme *{-jə-}* in different Gurage language varieties have been identified. Its role as a relative clause in Ezha has been mentioned by [14]¹ as genitive case by [9]²; [14]; [10] and [1] for Ezha; [15] for Geyto; [16] for Dobbi; as accusative case marker [14] for Ezha; [9] for Kistane; [15] for Geyto, [16] for Dobbi; [12] for Muhir); as dative [14] for Ezha; [9] for Kistane; [15] for Geyto); as instrument [9]; as third person marker in jussive construction [9] for Kistane, [1] for Ezha, Chaha and Inor, as possessive [9] for Kistane. The morpheme *{jə-}* is replaced by *{ə}* in Geyta and Inor [15]:79 and by *ə* in Endegegn [17]:92.

II. DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

We discussed here the various roles of *-jə-* in terms of inflectional, derivational and in some cases as both inflectional and derivational affixes. Then, We argued in the discussion section as to how language users distinguish the multiple meanings of *{(-)jə-}*.

2.1. Inflection

The inflectional affixes that employ the morpheme *{-jə-}* to express different grammatical functions are genitive (possessive & source), accusative, dative, comparative, relative, pre(post) position, person and definiteness. Each of these role is demonstrated with examples below.

¹ In *ji-məŋ'ŋ'* the sound *ŋ'* is geminated in the Ezha language he described so should be *ji-məŋ'ŋ'ŋ'*

² The pages quoted refer to the pre-publication thesis of the author.

2.1.1 Genitive case

Genitive possessive marks possession of an entity (alienable or non- alienable) by a certain agent- the possessor. The morpheme *jə-* as possessive marker is used in different linguistic contexts. It is, for instance, used to form *possessive pronouns* from nominative pronouns as in (1):

| (1) | Person | Nominative | | Possessive | |
|-----|--------|-------------|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | SG | PL | SG | PL |
| | 1 | <i>ijja</i> | <i>jina</i> | <i>jə-ijja</i> [<i>jijja</i>] | <i>jə-jina</i> [<i>jina</i>] |
| | 2M | <i>ahə</i> | <i>ahu</i> | <i>jə-ahə</i> [<i>jahə</i>] | <i>jə-ahu</i> [<i>jahu</i>] |
| | 2F | <i>ahʼ</i> | <i>ahma</i> | <i>jə-ahʼ</i> [<i>jahʼ</i>] | <i>jə-ahma</i> [<i>jahma</i>] |
| | 3M | <i>hut</i> | <i>hino</i> | <i>jə-hut</i> | <i>jə-hino</i> |
| | 3F | <i>hʼt</i> | <i>hinəma</i> | <i>jə-hʼt</i> | <i>jə-hinəma</i> |

The morpheme *{jə-}* is prefixed to the nominative pronouns to form possessive pronouns; first person plural; however, differs as the surface form is the same for then nominative and possessive. When the nominative pronoun begins with a consonant, the vowel of the prefix is maintained as in the third person; if the nominated pronoun begins with a vowel, the vowel of the prefix is deleted as in the 1st and 2nd persons.

The morpheme *{jə-}* is also used to mark *possessive genitive* case in nouns as in the examples in (2) below:

- (2) *jə-gijə məza jə-hir-n-hə*
 GEN-dog wound 3SG-happen-3SG-2SG
 'Let it be dog's wound for you'

This is an expression used when somebody gets wounded. It is believed that a dog gets healed soon when it is wounded. So, people wish the same to someone, when he or she gets wounded.

- (3) *jə-zəbərga bet*
 GEN-zeberga house
 'Zeberga's house'

The morpheme *{jə-}* is used to express *source genitive* as in (4):

- 4) *dula jə-ansawa te sij-ə-m*
 dula GEN-ansawa sheep buy-3SGM-PST
 'Dula bought a sheep of Ansawa area'

- 5) *jə-bozəbar dinifa t'ək'ik'-u*
 GEN-Bozhebar potato soft-COP
 'The potato from Bozhebar is soft'

The morpheme *{jə-}* is used to form *interrogative genitive pronoun* as in (6):

- 6) *mʷan* 'who' *jə-mʷan* 'whose'
mir 'what' *jə- mir* 'why (for what)'

2.1.2 Accusative Case

According to [10] "the accusative case marks the direct object of a transitive verb, and it is expressed with the morpheme *{jə-}* prefixed to the noun". The noun that receives the accusative marker must have the features [+HUMAN, + DEFINITE]. According to [14]:133 the accusative marker *jə-* is "freely attached to proper names and personal pronouns as they are inherently definite". It can be argued that it is not because they are inherently definite, for example the indexical 'you' is not necessarily definite, but because they are +HUMAN. The examples below show accusative case marking:

- 7a) *kasa jə-kəbədə dənəgʷ-ən-m*
 Kasa ACC-Kebede hit-3SG.O-PST
 kasa kit kebede
- b) * *kasa kəbədə dənəgʷ-ən-m*
- 8a) *kasa əram dənəg-ə-m*
 kasa cow(ACC) hit-3SGM-PST
 'Kasa hit a cow'
- b) * *kasa jə-əram dənəg-ə-m*
- c) *kasa jə-əram-hut dənəgʷ-ən-m*
 kasa ACC-cow-DEF hit-3SGO-PST
 'Kasa hit the cow'

- d) *kasa sin səppər-ə-m*
 kasa cup break-3SGM-PST
 'Kasa broke a cup'
- e) *kasa sin-hut səpp^wər-ə-n-m*
 kasa cup-DEF brea-3SGS-3SGO-PST
 Kasa broke the cup
- f) **kasa jə-sin-hut səpp^wər-ə-n-m*

We can see that accusative is marked with {*jə-*} when the noun is +HUMAN as in 7a, when [+ANIMATE] and [+DEFINITE] as in 7c; without the prefix; when the accusative noun is not definite the accusative is shown with syntactic position of the noun (the accusative noun occurring after nominative and before the verb. Inanimate entities do not take accusative marker {*jə-*} whether they are definite or indefinite as shown in (8d, e and f). These show that accusative case is still marked by syntactic means and {*jə-*} must be just additional feature in [+ ANIMATE] nouns which are definite.

2.1.3 Dative Case

Dative case shows an indirect object of a verb in a sentence. Like the genitive and accusative cases, it is marked with {*jə-*} which is attached to the noun that is indirectly affected by the action of the verb. consider the examples in (9):

- 9a) *kasa jə-ʃ'amut hudʒir sij-əl-a-m*
 kasa DAT-chamut clothes buy-3SGM.BEN.O-3SGF-PST
 'Kasa bought clothes to Chamut'
- b) **kasa ʃ'amut hudʒir sij-əl-a-m*
- c) *kasa jə-taj-əta wədərə sij-ə-m*
 kasa DAT-sheep-1SG.POSS rope buy-3SGM-PST
 'Kasa bought a rope to his sheep'
- d) *kasa jə-bet əʃba sij-ə-m*
 Kasa DAT-house pole buy-3SGM-PST
 'Kasa bought a pole to a house'

The dative case is necessarily marked whether the dative noun is human (9a), animal (9c) or inanimate entity(9d). In fact, a noun functioning as dative without the {*jə-*} is ill formed as in (9b).

It was noted that Gojam Amharic, unlike the Shewa Amharic which uses {*lə-*}, marks dative case with {*jə-*} as shown in the example taken from [18]:37 in (10):

- 10) *birr-u-n jə-ihit-wa sit'-at*
 money-DEF-ACC DAT-sister-POSS.3SF give\JUS.2SF-OJ.3SF
 'Give the money to her sister!'

2.1.4 Comparative construction

The morpheme {*jə-*} is also used as a *comparative marker* as in the examples in (11 and 12):

- 11a) *jə-rʃ att*
 DEG-son one
 'The best(top) of men'
- b) **ərʃ att*
- c) *att ərʃ*
 one son
 'a boy'

The structure in 11b is not acceptable, but with change of the order of the words as in 11c is acceptable. However, with the change of the word order, the meaning changes as shown in the gloss.

- 12) *giza jə-mis mis-u*
 Giza DEG-man man-COP
 'Giza is man of man' which means/ 'Giza is the top or the best of all men'

2.1.5 Relative Clause Marking

The morpheme {*jə-*} is also used as a *relative clause marker*. It relates the verb with the noun about which or whom the verb talks. The morpheme is prefixed to the verb that expresses the state or action about the noun spoken to as in the examples in (13):

- 13a) *tirama k'irərə jə-ʃənə mis, m^wena-na-u*
 yesterday morning REL-come man, uncle-1POSS-COP
 'The man who came yesterday morning is my uncle'.

- b) *jə-bəna tiwə-u*
REL-ate strong-COP
'The one who is [well] fed is strong'.
c) *jə-t-səppər sin e-sef^w-i*
REL-PASS-break cup NEG-sew-3SGM
'The cup which is broken cannot be sewed[mended]'

As can be seen from the examples in 13a-c, the relativizer {*jə-*} is prefixed to the verbs -*tʃənə-* 'come', -*bən-* 'eat' and -*səppər-* 'break'. Note that the verbs with the relativizer {*jə-*} will not add the past tense marker -*m*, which is also considered finite verb marker by some scholars.

2.1.6 Preposition

The morpheme {*jə-*} is used as *post-position* in the context of 'to' and 'for' as in the examples in 14 (a-c):

- 14a) *jə-k'an-əna ahir tə-waka-n-kə-m*
to the-horn-1POSS extent REC-fight-1SG-2SG-PST
'To the strength (extent) of my horn, I fought for you'
b) *jə-ɔ̄wə-na ahir tə-srem-n-kə-m*
to -tail-1POSS extent PASS-wag-1SG-1SG-PST
'To the extent(degree I could), I wagged my tail for you'
'I tried **to** help you'
c) *jə-ədota-na ba-h^w-m fənnə-h^w-m*
for-mother-1SG.POSS say-1SG-PST, be.patient-1SG-PST
'I was patent **for** the sake of my mother'

The morpheme {*jə-*} here is used as 'to' in 14a and b with comparative construction shown with the adverb *ahir* 'extent' or 'degree'; in 14c as 'for' - expressing 'purpose'. Note the Guragina is pro-drop language and the subject 'I' is dropped in 14 a-c.

In some cases, it seems that {*jə-*} marks preposition and definiteness at the same time as shown in 15:

- 15) *jə- gura-m jə- kənəm afə-nə-m fənd-i-nə-m*
to.the-left-CONV to.the-right see-1PL-PST judge-EP-1PL-PST
'Looking to the left and to the right, we have judged'
'Taking all the issues into considerations, we made a decision'

2.1.7 Person marking

The morpheme {*jə-*} marks third person in jussive forms of verbs as in the examples in (16):

- 16a) *jə-tən-b-i³*
3SGM-come:JUSS-MAL.O-1SG.O
'Let it come onto me'
'welcome'
b) *jə-tot-m jə-bra*
3SGM-till:JUSS-CONV 3SGM-eat:JUSS
'tilling, let him eat'

Pragmatically, it implies a kind of advice to someone to let the person in the discourse to earn money and fed himself than being dependent on some other person. The example in 16a is expression used to welcome. Literally it means 'let it [soil] come onto me' metaphorically referring to 'let me die for you'. It is self-cursing as an expression of courtesy [19].

2.1.8 Definiteness

Definiteness in Gurage is expressed with pronominal affixes in Gumer, Cheha, Inor, with {-we} in Ezha and Muhir, with {-i} in Dobi, Meskan and Kistane. A few examples from the three clusters are given in (17):

³ Note that the verb form changes in Kistane and Muhir as *jə-mt'abi* and *jə-bsabi*, respectively, yet the person marker remains the same.

| | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| 17) | Gumer/Cheha | Ezha/Muhir | Kistane/Dobi | Gloss |
| | <i>ərɸ-hut</i> | <i>ərɸ-we</i> | <i>baj-i</i> | 'the boy' |
| | <i>gərəd-h'it</i> | <i>gərəd-we</i> | <i>gərəd-i</i> | 'the girl' |
| | <i>səb-hino</i> | <i>səb-we</i> | <i>səb-i</i> | 'the people' |
| | <i>ifta-hinəma</i> | <i>ifta-we</i> | <i>iftat-i</i> | 'the women' |

Note that the definite marker varies based on person, number and gender in Gumer and Cheha as it is marked with pronominal suffixes, which themselves are subject pronouns when used in isolation, but definiteness is uniformly marked by a single morpheme {-we} in Ezha & Muhir and with {-i} in Kistane, Mesqan, Wolane & Dobi.

When it comes to the {jə-} as a determiner in general and definiteness specifically, it is used less uniformly among the Gurage varieties. Consider the examples from *Gumer* in (18) below:

| | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 18) | Adjective indefinite | Gloss | Adjective definite | Gloss |
| | <i>af'ir</i> | short | <i>af'ir-jə</i> | 'the short' |
| | <i>funir</i> | amputated | <i>funir-jə</i> | 'the amputated' |
| | <i>gəmbəna</i> | black | <i>gəmbən-jə</i> | 'the black' |
| | <i>gədər</i> | new | <i>gədər-jə</i> | 'the new' |
| | <i>mut'it'</i> | bad | <i>mut'it'-jə</i> | 'bad one'/'spoiled' |
| | <i>dunir</i> | 'legless' | <i>dunir-jə</i> | 'the legless' |
| | <i>barik'</i> | 'old' | <i>barik'-jə</i> | 'the old' |

The examples in 19 provide the context in which the adjective that modify the noun is used to mark indefiniteness (19a) and definiteness (19b):

- 19a) *barik' mis iha səɸ'-ə-m*
old man water drink-3SG.M-PST
'An old man drank water'
- b) *barik'-jə mis iha səɸ'-ə-m*
old-DEF man water drink-3SG.M-PST
'The old man drank water'

It seems that {jə-} co-occurs with the modifier than with the head noun as shown below:

- c) *barik' mis-hut iha səɸ'-ə-m*
old man-Def water-3SGM-PST
'the old man drank water'
- d) **barik'-hut mis iha səɸ'-ə-m*

The form becomes unacceptable when a pronominal suffix functioning as definite marker is attached to *barik'* 'elder' than to the head noun *mis* 'man'. Thus, the structure in 19d is ill formed.

In Ezha and Muhir varieties that use {-we} as definite marker, the morpheme {jə-} as determiner is not used, rather {-we} is uniformly used similar to the nouns, such as *mis-we* 'the man'. Similarly, in Kistane and Meskan, adjectives take {-i} like the nouns to mark definiteness of adjectives again similar to the nouns functioning as head as in *gərəd-i* 'the girl'. Thus, the Gumer definite forms in (18) will assume the form given in (20):

| | | | | | |
|-----|------------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 20) | Adj. indefinite | Gloss | Adj. definite | | Gloss |
| | <i>af'ir</i> | short | <i>af'ir-we</i> | <i>Ezha & Muhir</i> | <i>Meskan & Kistane</i> |
| | <i>funir</i> | amputated | <i>funir- we</i> | <i>af'ir-i</i> | 'the short' |
| | <i>gəmbəna</i> | black | <i>gəmbən-we</i> | <i>funir- i</i> | 'the amputated' |
| | <i>gədər</i> | new | <i>gədər-we</i> | <i>gəmbəl-i</i> | 'the black' |
| | <i>mut'it'</i> | bad | <i>mut'it'-we</i> | <i>gədər-i</i> | 'the new' |
| | <i>dunir</i> | 'legless' | <i>dunir-we</i> | <i>mut'it'-i</i> | 'the bad'/'spoiled' |
| | <i>barik'</i> | 'old' | <i>barik'- we</i> | <i>dunir-i</i> | 'the legless' |
| | | | | <i>balik'- i</i> | 'the old' |

Thus, the sentence structures in 19b, will assume the structure in (21a) and (21b) for Ezha and Meskan, respectively:

- (21a) *barik'-we miss iha səɸ'-ə-m*
old-DEF man water drink-3SG.M-PST
'The old man drank water'

- (21b) *balik'-i mis iha səf'f'-ə-m*
 old-DEF man water drink-3SG.M-PST
 'The old man drank water'

In other words, Gumer has two definite forms: the pronominal affixes which are used with nouns, and the morpheme {*jə-*} which is used with adjectives that modify nouns. The other Gurage varieties, such as Meskan and Ezha uniformly use definite markers {-i} and {-we}, respectively in nouns as well as adjectives. Compare the examples in (22) which show co-occurrence and co-occurrence restrictions in Gumer which uses two forms of definite markers:

| (22) | Indefinite | | Definite | |
|------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | | Gumer | Ezha | Meskan |
| | <i>gərəd</i> 'girl' | <i>gərəd-h'it</i> | <i>gərəd-we</i> | <i>gərəd-i</i> |
| | <i>barik</i> 'old' | <i>barik'-jə</i> | <i>barik'-we</i> | <i>balik'-i</i> |
| | | * <i>gərəd-jə</i> | | |
| | | * <i>barik'-hut</i> | | |

As can be seen from the examples in (22), Gumer pronominal affixes are not used with adjectives and {*jə-*} is not used with nouns.

2. 2. Derivation

We have seen in 2.1 the roles of {-*jə-*} as an inflexion. In this section we shall discuss the role of the morpheme as a derivation. It is found that {-*jə-*} is used to derive adjectives or nouns as shown in the example (23):

| 23) | Noun | Gloss | Adjective/Noun | Gloss |
|-----|---------------|---------------|------------------|------------------------|
| | <i>gunər</i> | head | <i>gunər-jə</i> | 'heady' |
| | <i>andir</i> | 'drum' | <i>andir-jə</i> | 'drummer' |
| | <i>ambik'</i> | 'common cold' | <i>ambik'-jə</i> | 'having a common cold' |
| | <i>aməd</i> | ash | <i>aməd- jə</i> | 'ashy' |

In 23, the adjectives/nouns with {-*jə*} are derived from nouns. The morpheme {-*jə*} derives agent nominal in *andir-jə*, it is attributive providing the meaning 'having a certain quality, size or illness' in all the other examples.

Some nouns related to birth have {*jə-*} as derivational suffix. The derived forms have the attribute of having or not having certain quality as shown in (24):

| 24) | Noun/verb | Gloss | Adjective | Gloss |
|-----|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| | <i>marf'ə</i> | 'last ' | <i>jə-marf'ə</i> | 'last born' |
| | <i>bəhir</i> | 'elder' | <i>jə-bəhir</i> | 'first born' |
| | <i>ləmfə</i> | 'twin' | <i>jə-ləmf-jə</i> | 'of twin born' |
| | <i>imat</i> | 'only one' | <i>imat-jə</i> | 'lonely' |
| | <i>dingar</i> | 'abortion' | <i>jə-dingar-jə</i> | 'the aborted' |
| | <i>samir</i> | 'feast for birth' | <i>jə-samir-jə</i> | 'the eighth born' |
| | <i>f'an-</i> | 'give birth' | <i>inf'ərəb-jə</i> | 'the pre-maturely born' |

Some of the derived forms have {-*jə-*} as a prefix and suffix at the same time; thus, the basic word is circumscribed. It seems that the prefix offers genitive meaning and the suffix provides attributive meaning as we can say:

- a) *jə-samir t'an-əndə- m*
GEN-birth.feast call-IPL-PST
 'we are invited for the birth feast'
- b) *jə-samir-jə tikə e-trək'*
of-eighth. born child NEG-grow
 'An eighth born child does not grow'

Note that *samir* refers to 'feast of birth' and the prefix which is inflectional does not affect its content meaning; however, the derivational affix {-*jə*} changes the content of the word from 'feast' (24a) to 'eight born person' (24b). This clearly informs that the same form has both inflectional and derivational function, and it can be attached to a single root, such as *samir*.

The examples in (25) below further demonstrate the nominal and adjectival functions of the word *ləmfə* 'twin':

- 25a) *tena ləmfa ʃ'an-əʃ-i-m*
 Tena twin give.birth-3SG.F-EP-PST
 'Tena gave birth to twin babies'
- b) *bedru jə-ləmʃ-i-jə-w*
 Bedru of-twin-EP-DEF-3SG.COP
 'Bedru was born as a twin'
 The word *ləmfa* 'twin' is a noun in 25a, but it is an adjective in 25b having the meaning 'an eight born'.

The morpheme *{-jə}* is used to derive participles that function as adjectives as in the examples in (26):

| | | | | |
|-----|----------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 26) | Verb | Gloss | Participle | Gloss |
| | <i>səpər-</i> | 'break' | <i>sur-jə</i> | 'the broken' |
| | <i>nət'ər-</i> | 'filter(v)' | <i>niʃ'ir-jə</i> | 'the filtered' |
| | <i>t'anək-</i> | 'dry' | <i>tərək'-jə</i> | 'the dry one' |
| | <i>banər-</i> | 'demolish' | <i>burir-jə</i> | 'the toothless' |

Some ensete variety names have the morpheme *{-jə}* which characterize them based on their shape, color or importance as shown in (27):

| | | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| 27) | Noun | Gloss | Noun | Gloss |
| | <i>g^warə</i> | 'competition' | <i>g^war-jə</i> | 'competitive' |
| | <i>marə</i> | 'heal' | <i>mar-jə</i> | 'that heals' |
| | <i>fərəz</i> | 'horse' | <i>fərəz-jə</i> | 'horsey' |
| | <i>wənad</i> | 'mare' | <i>wənad-jə</i> | 'marey' |
| | <i>ank'əʃ^və</i> | 'spoon' | <i>ank'əʃ^v-jə</i> | 'spoon like' |
| | <i>t'ər</i> | 'hunger' | <i>t'ər-jə</i> | 'extreme hunger' |
| | <i>dər-ət</i> | 'blessing' | <i>dər-jə</i> | 'the blessed' |

Note that nouns ending in vowel delete their terminal vowel when attaching the morpheme *{-jə}*. In *dər-ət* the abstract nominal marker *{-ət}* is deleted before adding *{-jə}* to derive the noun with the attribute meaning 'having the property or quality of'.

The morpheme *{jə-}* is also used to derive instrument nouns from verbs as in (28) :

| | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|----------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 28) | Verb | Gloss | Noun | Gloss |
| | <i>want'ir</i> | 'to filter' | <i>want'ir-jə [want'ijə]</i> | 'pot to filter with' |
| | <i>nək'ət'ə</i> | 'hit with leg' | <i>nək^{mw}ət'-jə [nək^{mw}əʃ'-ə]</i> | 'pole to tie animal with' |
| | <i>t'ək'ərə</i> | 'hide' | <i>t'ək'u-jə</i> | 'tool to store/handle grain with' |
| | <i>ʃəkər-</i> | 'cook' | <i>tink-jə</i> | 'pot to cook with' |

There are some morphophonemic changes that take place in the derivation process. In *want'ir-jə*, the /t/ before /j/ of *{-jə}* is deleted. In *nək^{mw}ət'-jə* there is palatalization of /t/ to the /ʃ/ and at the same times labialization of /k/ both of which are triggered by /j/ of the suffix.

The morpheme *{-jə-}* is further used to derive adjective form adverb as in (29):

| | | | | |
|-----|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 29) | Adverb | Gloss | Adjective/noun | Gloss |
| | <i>k'irərə</i> | morning | <i>jə- k'irərə-jə</i> | 'of the morning time' |
| | <i>gəpat</i> | evening | <i>jə-gəpat-jə</i> | 'of the evening time' |
| | <i>zihur</i> | noon | <i>jə-zihur-jə</i> | 'of the noon time' |

It seems that the prefixed *{jə-}* has the meaning 'of' whereas the suffix *-jə* gives the attributive meaning as shown in 30(a-c):

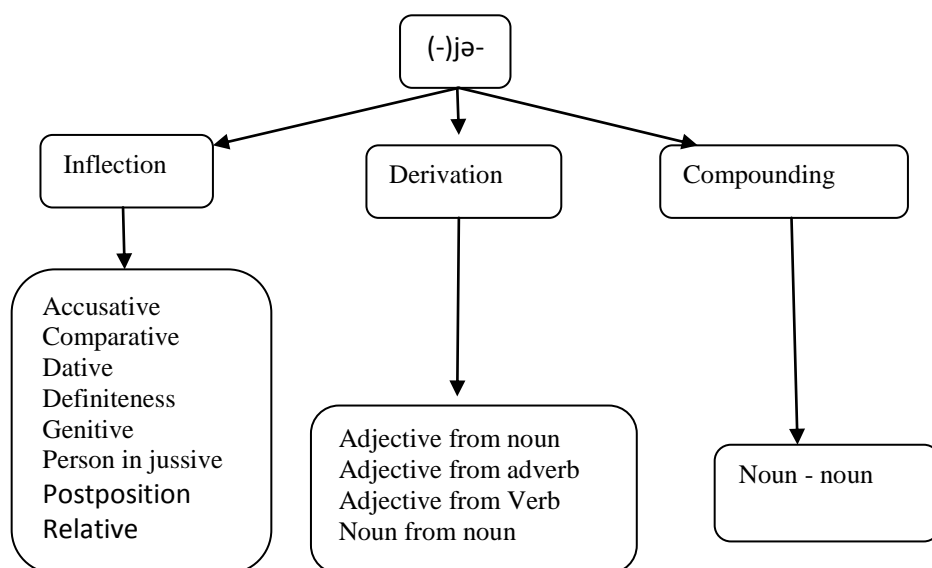
- 30a) *jə-kirər-jə* *mena wər-ə-m*
 of-morning-DEF job go-3SG.M-PST
 'He went to the morning time job'
- b) *jə-gəpat-jə* *b^wən-e-m*
 of- evening.meal-DEF eat-3SG.M(IMP)-PST
 'The evening meal is eaten'
- c) *jə-zihur səlāt*
 DEF noon prayer
 'Prayer of the noon'
- d) *jə-zihur-jə mena*
 of-noon-DEF job
 'Job of the noon (time)'

2.3 Compounding

The morpheme *jə-* is used in deriving **compound noun** as in (31):

- 31a) *jə-bet-im*
of-house-mother 'wife (POL)'
- b) *jə-bet-ab*
of-house- father 'husband (POL)'
- c) *jə-bet-gərəd*
of-house-girl 'servant(F)'
- d) *jə-bet-ərɸ*
of-house-son 'servant(M)'
- e) *jə-wəɸər-eb* [jəwəɸəreb]
of-pot-milk 'yoghurt'

We can summarize the functions of {*jə-*} and the environment in which it is used as follows:



III. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

3.1 Discussion

Most of the roles of {*jə-*} identified by scholars such as accusative [12] for Muhir, relativizer [14] for Ezha, possessive, genitive and instrument [9] for Kistane, are also true for Gumer. There are several additional roles observed in the Gumer variety, such as the use {*jə-*} as definite marker of adjectives modifying nouns. What is more, {*jə-*} as a derivational affix is an important area of discovery for Gumer which must be checked in the other Gurage varieties as well.

We can generalize from the findings, the morpheme {*jə-*} is always prefixed when it functions as inflection except when it is functioning as definite marker. On the other hand, the morpheme can be prefix, suffix or circumfix in derivational morphology. In the compounding, the morpheme is used only as a prefix.

The question to be asked and needs discussion is as to how native speakers know the meanings of the morpheme {*jə-*} in such a diverse functions and environment- prefix, suffix and circumfix?

The plausible answer to assume is that morphemes, like words, have context of use. Native speakers know the meaning from the linguistic context of the words in which the morpheme is attached, and from the socio-cultural contexts of the words with which the morpheme is attached. This implies that native speakers have to extend the pragmatic use of words to the smaller meaning bearing units- the morphemes.

3.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the morpheme {(-)*jə-*} in Gumer Gurage has several contextual meanings and use. It, structurally, can be used as prefix, suffix and circumfix as has been discussed so far. In inflectional morphology and compounding it is prefixed, but in derivational morphology it can be prefix, suffix or both prefix and suffix at a time. In most case, the morpheme is obligatory in the dative case, but it is optional in the accusative case. A further comparative research on the topic within Gurage, among Ethiosemitic languages and across Semitic languages can help to uncover the typology of the morpheme's use.

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