





*Modification of the Noun in Somali and in Cushitic*

b. OK qálin-ka dhéer oo cusúb  
 pen-det(m) big oo new  
 ‘the big new pen’ (two adjectives)

(5) a. \* heesá-ha soomaaliy-éed cusúb  
 songs-det(m) Somali-eed new

b. OK heesá-ha soomaaliy-éed oo cusúb  
 songs-det(m) Somali-eed oo new  
 ‘the new Somali songs’ (adjective+noun-*eed*)

The coordination is necessary not only for modification by adjectives but also for modification by adjectives that are more complex, e.g. relative clauses are illustrated in (8) and (9).

(6) a. \* kóob-ka [bulúug-ga ah] cusúb  
 cup-det(m) [blue-det(m) is] new

b. OK kóob-ka bulúug-ga ah oo cusúb  
 cup-det(m) blue-det(m) is oo new  
 ‘the new blue cup’ (adjective+*ah*-relative)

(7) a. \* gabdhá-haas [qurúx-da badán] [halkáas marayá ]  
 girls-those beauty-det(f) much over there walk

b. OK gabdhá-haas [qurúx-da badán] oo[halkáas marayá ]  
 girls-those beauty-det(f) much oo over there walk  
 ‘those very beautiful girls that are walking over there’  
 (adj.noun + subj.relative)

(8) a. \* wíil-ka yar [halkáas ku cayaarayá]  
 boy-det(m) small there prep runs

b. OK wíil-ka yar oo [halkáas ku cayaarayá]  
 boy-det(m) small oo there prep runs  
 ‘the little boy running there (far away)’  
 (adjective+subj.relative)

(9) a. \* wíil-ka yar [aan arkó]  
 boy-det(m) small I see

b. OK wíil-ka yar oo [aan arkó ]  
 boy-det(m) small oo I see  
 ‘the small boy that I see’ (adjective+obj.relative)

- (10) qayb-tan yaab-kéeda [loo bogay] ee fiican  
 share-dem.f surprise-hers one+with be satisfied EE good  
 ‘this surprising and good way of sharing that one is satisfied with’  
 (in Morin (1986, p.114)) (relative clause + adjective)

The case of modification by a genitive and a relative is illustrated in (11c).

- (11) a. qálin-ka macállin-ka oo cusúb  
 pen-det(m) teacher-det(m) oo new  
 ‘the new pen of the teacher’ (genitive + adjective)
- b. kóob-ka macállin-ka oo [shaah-a ah]  
 cup-det(m) teacher-det(m) oo tea-det(m) is  
 ‘the tea cup of the teacher’ (genitive + ah-relative)
- c. waláal-ka Warsáme oo [halkáas kú cayaarayá]  
 brother-det(m) Warsame oo there prep. runs  
 ‘Warsame's brother who is running there (far away)’  
 (genitive + subj.relative)

The second property of noun modification in Somali is that the order of any two coordinated modifiers is free. Consider for instance modification by an adjective and an object relative. We see in (9b) that the order adj >> obj rel is good. Now as shown in (12b), the inverse order obj rel >> adj is also good.

- (12) a. qálin-ka cusúb oo macállin-ka  
 pen-det(m) new oo teacher-det(m)  
 ‘the new pen of the teacher’, cf. (11a) (adjective + genitive)
- b. wíil-ka [aan arkó] oo yar  
 boy-det(m) I see oo small  
 ‘the small boy that I see’, cf. (9b) (obj.relative + adjective)

Note that the modifier that appears first is perceived as more important or new.

- (13) a. qálin-ka macállin-ka oo cusúb  
 pen-det(m) teacher-det(m) oo new  
 OK: ‘the new pen of the TEACHER’ (genitive+adjective)
- b. qálin-ka cusúb oo macállin-ka  
 pen-det(m) new oo teacher-det(m)  
 OK: ‘the NEW pen of the teacher’ (adjective + genitive)



### 2.1. Afar

As expected for an SOV language, the word order inside the noun phrase in Afar is Modifier Noun. Various examples of modified nouns are given in (17). In all cases, the modifier precedes the head N.

- |      |                               |                  |  |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------|--|
| (17) | <i>Modifier</i>               | <i>Noun</i>      |  |
| a.   | woó<br>dem                    | 9ari<br>house    | 'that house'<br>( <i>demonstrative</i> )       |
| b.   | nabá<br>great                 | num<br>man       | 'big/great/old man'<br>( <i>adjective</i> )    |
| c.   | sagá-h<br>cow-gen             | iba<br>foot      | 'a cow's foot'<br>( <i>genitive</i> )          |
| d.   | tidhdhigillé<br>it was broken | boddina<br>tooth | 'tooth that was broken'<br>( <i>relative</i> ) |
- (exs a.b.d from Hayward 1998:625, ex c from Bliese 1977:277)

The different types of modifiers follow a strict order: demonstrative >> adjective >> genitive (examples from Bliese 1977:25/285).<sup>4</sup>

- |      |             |             |                  |                   |                              |
|------|-------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| (18) | <i>dem</i>  | <i>adj</i>  | <i>N</i>         |                   |                              |
| OK   | amá<br>this | 9asá<br>red | saró<br>clothing | sarté<br>I put on | 'I put on this red clothing' |
| *    | 9asá        | amá         | saró             | sarté             | (* adj >> dem)               |
- 
- |      |             |              |             |                         |                             |
|------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (19) | <i>dem</i>  | <i>adj</i>   |             |                         |                             |
| OK   | wóo<br>that | ni9ín<br>hot | xán<br>milk | mádhagin<br>don't touch | 'Don't touch that hot milk' |
| *    | ni9ín       | wóo          | xán         | mádhagin                | (* adj >> dem)              |
- 
- |      |               |                  |               |  |
|------|---------------|------------------|---------------|--|
| (20) | <i>adj</i>    | <i>gen</i>       | <i>N</i>      |  |
|      | datá<br>black | awk-í<br>boy-gen | ko9só<br>ball | 'the boy's black ball'<br>( <i>adj.+genitive</i> ) |

The examples in (18), (19), and (20), also show that multiple modification does not trigger coordination. These observations suggest that Afar has multiple slots for the different types of modifiers and that the modifiers occupy hierarchically ordered positions.

<sup>4</sup> Relatives are more complicated: rel >dem>N and dem>rel>N are both OK. (Bliese 1977:25,26)

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**2.2. Harar Oromo**

In Harar Oromo, like in Somali, the word order inside the noun phrase is: Noun >> Modifier, as illustrated in (21) (examples from Owens 1985:87/ 103/ 107).

- |      |    |                      |                  |  |
|------|----|----------------------|------------------|--|
| (21) | a. | namá<br>men          | gaarí<br>good    | ‘good men’<br><i>(adjective)</i>       |
|      | b. | bif-níi<br>color-nom | sárée<br>dog/gen | ‘the dog’s color’<br><i>(genitive)</i> |
|      | c. | gaalá<br>camel       | xiyyán<br>my     | ‘my camel’<br><i>(possessive)</i>      |

As in Afar, and unlike in Somali, however, the different types of modifiers appear in a fixed order: adjective >> genitive >> relative >> demonstrative, (Owens 1985:86).

- |      |    |   |                              |  |  |
|------|----|---|------------------------------|--|--|
| (22) | a. | <i>N</i><br>xeesumminná<br>guests<br>‘that man’s good guests’   | <i>adj</i><br>gaarí<br>good  | <i>gen</i><br>[ namiccá suní ]<br>man that/gen | (Owens1985:104)  |
|      | b. | <i>N</i><br>makiináa<br>car<br>‘He saw that red car you bought’ | <i>adj</i><br>díimtúu<br>red | <i>relative</i><br>[ at bítte ]<br>you buy2pst | <i>dem</i><br>sán<br>that<br>arke<br>saw<br>(Owens 1985:132) |

Again as in Afar, multiple modification of the noun does not trigger the insertion of any coordinating particle in Harar Oromo.

**2.3. Iraqw**

The word order inside the noun Iraqw noun phrase is: Noun >> Modifier.

- |      |    |                             |                             |               |
|------|----|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| (23) | a. | <i>N</i><br>hhaysáa<br>tail | <i>adj</i><br>tléer<br>long | ‘a long tail’ |
|      | b. | garmoó<br>boy               | úr<br>big                   | ‘a big boy’   |

We observe a strict ordering among different types of modifiers: genitive >> adjective (see (24) from Mous 1993:229), with relative clauses following all other modifiers (see (25) Mous 1993:231).

- (24) *N*                      *gen*                      *adj*  
 maká                      gadá                      ninakw                      ‘small forest animals’  
 animals(cs)              forests(cs)              small(p)
- (25) tsir´i tam ar                      wák ar                      aa                      dakúus                      i                      káhh  
 bird(f) even indep.f.cs one indep.f.cs 3perf miss.3ms.past 3 be absent3fs  
 ‘A bird, even one, that he missed, does not exist’

Again, Iraqw allows multiple modification of the noun without recourse to a coordinating particle.

#### 2.4. Beja

In Beja the word order inside the noun phrase is variable: an indefinite adjective or a genitive precedes the head noun, (see (26)), while definite adjectives follow the head noun (see (27a)).

- (26) a.              win      kaam                      ‘a big camel’ (Almkvist:§90)  
                     big      camel                      (*adjective*)
- b.              masankoo-ti      biya                      ‘a harpstring’  
                                  harp-gen(f)      string                      (*genitive*)

This distribution implies in particular, that definite genitives and definite adjectives occupy different positions.

- (27) a.              *detN*                      *det adj*  
                     uu-kaam                      uu-win                      ‘the big camel’ (Almkvist §90)  
                     det(m)-camel              det(m)-big                      (*definite noun+definite adjective*)
- b.              *det gen*                      *det N*  
                     oo-taki                      oo-gaw                      ‘the house of the man’  
                     det(m)-man              det(m)-house                      (*definite genitive+definite noun*)

In Beja, multiple modification does not trigger coordination.

- (28) uu-san-ii-ta                      meek      tuu-win-t  
 det(m)-brother-gen-poss 1s donkey det-big-det(f)                      (Almkvist 1881:§119)  
 ‘my brother’s big she-donkey’                      (*genitive + N + definite adjective*)

#### 2.5. Properties of noun modification in the languages examined

The properties of noun modification in the languages we examined are summarized in table (29).

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|  |                                |               |             |               |              |             |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| (29)                                     |                                | <u>Somali</u> | <u>Afar</u> | <u>HOromo</u> | <u>Iraqw</u> | <u>Beja</u> |
| SOV order                                |                                | yes           | yes         | yes           | yes          | yes         |
| Word order inside the NP:                |                                |               |             |               |              |             |
| N  | modifier                       | yes           | no          | yes           | yes          | yes/no      |
| Mod. occupy a single syntactic position: |                                |               |             |               |              |             |
| a.                                       | free order of mod.             | <u>yes</u>    | no          | no            | no           | no          |
| b.                                       | multiple mod. --> coordination | <u>yes</u>    | no          | no            | no           | no          |

This brief excursion into the noun modification in other Cushitic languages shows that Somali is unique in that the modifiers occupy a single position: all other languages have multiple slots for different types of modifiers, as can be seen from the strict ordering among them in Afar, Harar Oromo and Iraqw. In Beja definite adjectives and genitives even occupy different syntactic positions (pre- and post-nominal respectively).

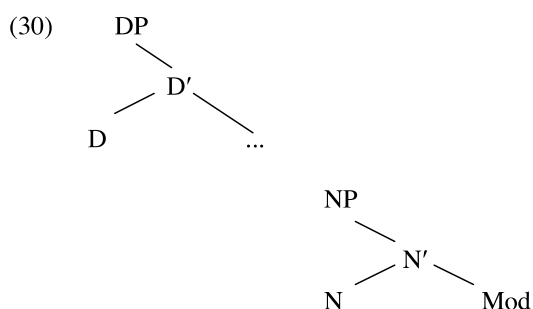
The cross-linguistic data also show that the properties of Somali noun modification cannot be reduced to variation in terms of headedness: Harar Oromo and Iraqw show the same fundamental word order properties (SOV, N>>modifier) while at the same time these languages distinguish several syntactic positions for the different types of noun modifiers.

**3. The structure of the Somali noun phrase**

To account for the properties of Somali noun modification we need to assume a structure that provides a single surface position for autonomous modifiers. This position hosts co-ordinations of NPs, relative clauses and adjectives, suggesting that it is a position for maximal projections.

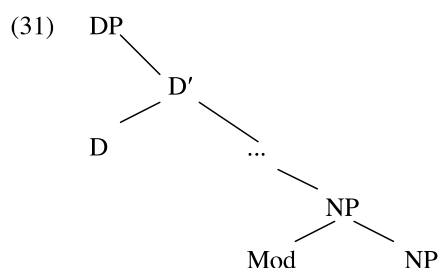
If we now assume that the modifiers occupy a DP-internal position, we may think of three possibilities.

The first possibility is that the modifiers occupy a complement position under N as in (30).



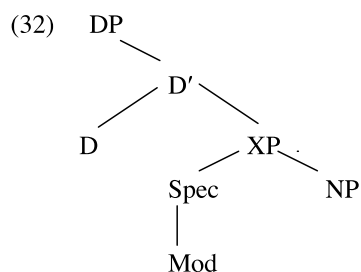
This structure is problematic, however, since it is traditionally assumed that there is a relationship of selection between a head and its complement, and there is no such selectional relationship between a N and its adjectival or relative clause modifiers.

A second possibility consists in a structure where the modifier complex is analysed as an adjunct to NP as in (31).



Since adjunction can in principle be iterated, this line of analysis has to postulate a separate ban on multiple adjunction within the Somali DP to account for the fact that the modifiers occupy a single structural position.

A third possibility consists in a structure where the modifier complex occupies a specifier position. This would derive the uniqueness of the modifier position.



Under the assumption that Spec is to the left of the head, modifiers cannot be in SpecDP because modifiers are on the right of the N+D complex they modify. This Spec has to be the Spec of an intermediate projection XP; so we would have to assume an additional functional projection (XP) for which we have no supplementary evidence.

We have no empirical argument to decide for or against these three options. Faced with the problems they raise, however, we would like to propose a different hypothesis.

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- (33) a. Modifiers are not inside the DP projection of the head noun, in Somali the DP is limited to the noun with its enclitic determiners.
- b. The Somali noun combines with its modifiers in a verbless clausal structure.

This hypothesis accounts for the two remarkable properties of the modification of the noun in Somali: First, modifiers have to be coordinated by the same particle that coordinates clauses that do not contain a focus marker.

In Somali there are three coordinating particles, they coordinate types of constituents. In (34a), *iyó* coordinates noun phrases. Independent propositions are coordinated by *-na* suffixed on the first constituent of the second sentence (34d). Finally *oolée* coordinates incomplete verbal projections (34b and 34c): the second clause does not contain a focus marker.

- (34) a. [ shabéel ] **iyó** [ wéer ]  
 leopard coord. hyena  
 ‘a leopard and a hyena’ (Saeed 1998:106)
- b. [ wáy kú soó noqotay ] **oo** [ iibsatay ]  
 foc3f to part returned coord. bought  
 ‘She came back (to it) and bought it’ (Saeed 1998:104)
- c. [ nin-kí wuu soo booday ] **oo** [ yiri ]: “...”  
 man-det foc part jumped coord said  
 ‘The man made a big leap and said: “...” (from a story)
- d. [ Axmed wúu yimi ] [ wúu-**na** ilá hadlay ]  
 A. he came he- coord with me talked  
 ‘Axmed came and he talked with me’ (Saeed 1998:105)

Second, under hypothesis (33), the freedom in the order of the modifiers is natural since it is plausible that coordinated clausal modifiers appear in a free order.

#### 4. Conclusion

We proposed that the Somali noun phrase is embedded in a predication structure. This view suggests that the autonomous modifiers are predicates, in a structure comparable in part to ‘this book is green’ or ‘this book is John’s’ in English. The Somali structure containing the noun differs from the English examples in that it does not include a finite verb.

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