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The gender system of Noon: insights into the reorganization of agreement

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Abstract: This chapter examines the gender and deriflection systems of the Noon language of Senegal. The Noon deriflection system is notable for exhibiting a high number of unprefixing nouns, in contrast with the pervasive gender system characterized by prefixes on a variety of agreement targets. Two related but distinct gender systems can be identified. The first system is sensitive only to the lexical identity of the noun. The second system is influenced by the semantic factors of animacy and diminutiveness, as well as the phenomenon of reduction to a “default” gender, which can be seen as a reorganization of the first, more conservative agreement scheme.

Keywords: Cangin; gender; nominal classification; Noon; reduction of class marking

1 Introduction

This study presents an analysis of the gender and nominal form systems (in traditional terms the “noun class system”) of Noon, one of five Cangin languages of the Atlantic group within the Niger-Congo phylum.¹ Noon is spoken in and around the city of Thiès in western Senegal and exhibits – based on the existing documentation – the most dialectal variation of all Cangin languages. Internally, the language is frequently divided into three dialectal areas (i.a. Lopis 1980: 1; Soukka 2000: 26ff.; Wane 2017: 14): the Thiès dialect (aka Cangin dialect, Cangin-Noon, or Caañak) spoken within the city, the Padee dialect (aka Pade-Noon or Fanden) spoken to the east of Thiès in the area around the village of Fandène (Padee), and the Northern dialect (aka Saawii dialect or Saawi-Noon) spoken in the villages to the north of Thiès, closer to the Laalaa-speaking area. The most recent estimate from 2007 reports 32,900 total speakers of Noon (Eberhard et al. 2019).

¹ The Cangin languages are Noon, Laalaa, Saafi, Ndut, and Paloor. The term “Cangin” (the name of the city of Thiès in the Thiès dialect of Noon) was first applied by Pichl (1966). Although Atlantic as a whole must be seen as a “genealogical pool rather than a proven lineage” (Güldemann 2018: 180), the genetic unity of Cangin is entirely uncontroversial (see Drolc 2005, Merrill in preparation).

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Northern Noon is in some respects more similar to Laalaa (~14,000 speakers; Eberhard et al. 2019) than to the two other Noon dialects, and it has been remarked that the Thiès dialect exhibits a number of divergent features when compared with the other two Noon dialects (Soukka 2000: 317; Wane 2017: 14). In our opinion, Noon-Laalaa is best seen as a dialectal continuum rather than two distinct languages. This view is supported by a number of sociolinguistic observations in existing sources (Lopis 1980: 1; Pichl 1981: i; Williams 1994: 55, also Christine Diop, p.c.).

The present study is based on data from Northern Noon presenting – to our knowledge – the first description of this variety. The fieldwork data (see references under CLA) was collected by John Merrill and Nico Baier in 2014 and 2019 with Christine Diop, a speaker from the town of Lalane to the northeast of Thiès.

Noon is a non-tonal language exhibiting [\pm ATR] (advanced tongue root) vowel harmony under certain conditions (Soukka 2000: 56f.; Wane 2017: 34ff.). Vowel length is distinctive, and geminate consonants can occur across morpheme boundaries. The basic word order is SVO. Suffixes are used for nominal and verbal derivation as well as for verb conjugation. Prefixes indicating class affiliation are found on various targets to show agreement with the head noun, as well as on some nouns themselves, often resulting in alliteration. Nouns and agreement targets are grouped into classes according to their morphological properties (affixation), with some class assignment being sensitive to semantic factors (such as animacy or size).

There is an official orthography² for Noon which – apart from slight modifications concerning the representation of allophony and morpheme breaks – has been adopted here.³

2 Description

2.1 The morphosyntax of nominal forms

2.1.1 Nominal form (NF) classes

Most Noon nouns are unmarked for class or number, with only a minority of nouns containing a segmentable nominal form class prefix.⁴ Of about 700 collected nouns,

² Décret n° 2005-986 du 21 octobre 2005: <http://www.jo.gouv.sn/spip.php?article4796>.

³ Differences from the IPA are as follows: palatal <j, nj, ñ, y, y> = [j, nj, j, j, f]; glottal stop <'> = [ʔ]; the acute accent mark represents the contrastive feature [+ATR] on vowels, and /ë/ is phonetically [ɘ], the [+ATR] counterpart of /a/. The implosive stop phonemes /b, d, y/ have coda allophones [wʔ, ʔ, jʔ], and intervocalic allophones [w, r, j] within the same word. The voiced stop phonemes /b, d, j, g/ have nasal allophones [m, n, j, ŋ] in coda position.

⁴ Here we adopt the notions of nominal form classes and agreement classes as laid out in Güldemann and Fiedler (2019).

the vast majority of nouns – over 600 – are morphologically unmarked. For these nouns, number-based alternations are seen only in agreement, and as such they must be analyzed as transnumeral. Of the prefixed nouns, 31 exhibit a prefix alternation between *k-* (21 nouns), *p-* (four nouns), or *j-* (six nouns) in the singular, and *t-* in the plural. There are five noun pairs in which a C-prefix alternation signals a derivational change. Four of these involve a *k-*prefixed noun and a corresponding diminutive with *j-*. In addition to these unproductive C-prefixes, there are a number of productive CV-prefixes which derive nouns from existing lexemes. Thus, a three-way distinction can be identified for nominal form classes: unprefixed, C-prefixed, and CV-prefixed.

The unprefixed group includes nouns with a synchronically unsegmentable, fossilized C- or CV- prefix, as in *fónúf* ‘feather’ from Proto-Cangin **fa-núf*, and *mEEK* ‘urine’ from Proto-Noon-Laalaa **me-sook* (see Merrill in preparation). These frozen prefixes never alternate between the singular and plural form of the noun and are phonologically indistinguishable from any other root-initial C(V) sequence. Notably, a number of nouns referring to liquids or powders are *m-* initial and trigger the etymologically-related “m” agreement class, and 11 out of 40 collected nouns in the “f” agreement class are *f-* initial, but synchronically there is no morphological justification for segmenting these initial consonants as prefixes.

The second type of nominal form class comprises nouns with overt C- prefixes which alternate between singular and plural forms (e.g. *k-edik* ‘tree’ vs. *t-edik* ‘trees’), or between derivationally-related nouns (e.g. *k-anu* ‘calabash’ vs. *j-anu* ‘small calabash’). These prefixes are segmentable purely due to their alternation – otherwise they are phonologically indistinguishable from any root-initial consonant.

The third type of nominal form class comprises nouns containing an active CV-prefix which derives a noun from a verb (e.g. *ci-fool* ‘running’ from *fool* ‘run’), an adjective (e.g. *ti-yenaah* ‘something funny’ from *yenaah* ‘funny’), or another noun (e.g. *ku-k-edik* ‘little tree’ from *k-edik* ‘tree’). These CV-prefixes are phonologically distinct from root-initial CV sequences in that they do not receive stress. Furthermore, they do not trigger the intervocalic allophones of implosive consonants (e.g. *ti-yeek* [ti.ʃɛ:k] ‘singing’, in which /y/ does not exhibit its intervocalic glide allophone [j]).

The nominal form classes of Northern Noon are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Nominal form classes of Northern Noon.

NF	NUMB	Examples	Semantics
∅-	TN	<i>yaal</i> ‘man/men’, <i>calus</i> ‘trash’, <i>waas</i> ‘road(s)’	“default” ^{NF} class; many animate nouns; loan words; proper names
<i>K-</i>	SG	<i>k-edik</i> ‘tree’, <i>k-úuc</i> ‘needle’, <i>k-iis</i> ‘spatula’	long and rigid objects; other
<i>P-</i>	SG	<i>p-edim</i> ‘tongue’, <i>p-ilkēt</i> ‘thread’, <i>p-iin</i> ‘metal’	long and flexible objects; ‘metal’
<i>J-</i>	SG TN	<i>j-anu</i> ‘little calabash’, <i>j-okun</i> ‘finger’ <i>j-oow</i> ‘girl(s)’	(unproductive) diminutive singular; ‘finger’; ‘girl(s)’

Table 1: (continued)

NF	NUMB	Examples	Semantics
<i>Jl-</i>	SG	<i>ji-kot</i> ‘little leg/foot’	diminutive SG (uncommon)
<i>T-</i>	PL	<i>t-edik</i> ‘trees’	plural of singular nouns with <i>K-</i> , <i>P-</i> , and <i>J-</i> ;
	TN	<i>t-oooh</i> ‘millet’	‘millet’
<i>KU-</i>	SG	<i>ku-peoh</i> ‘a seed’, <i>ku-baay</i> ‘puppy’	singulative; diminutive SG
<i>TU-</i>	PL	<i>tu-cooh</i> ‘elephants’, <i>tu-baay</i> ‘puppies’	plurative; diminutive PL
<i>Cl-</i>	TN	<i>ci-pok</i> ‘wedding’	verb/ADJ nominalizations
<i>Tl-</i>	TN	<i>ti-kod</i> ‘crying’	verb/ADJ nominalizations;
	PL	<i>ti-kot</i> ‘little legs/feet’	diminutive PL (uncommon)
<i>Kl-</i>	TN	<i>ki-waal</i> ‘Wolof’, <i>ki-yeek</i> ‘to sing’, <i>ki-Jóob-Jóob</i> ‘area of the Diop family home’	languages; infinitives; areas of habitation for families
<i>Bj-</i>	TN	<i>bi-Noon</i> ‘Noon people’	ethnic/family groups
<i>Dl-</i>	TN	<i>di-ñamaah</i> ‘eating place’	locative nominalizations

2.1.2 Derivational function of nominal form class prefixes

A number of prefixes identified in the previous section can be used to derive a noun from a verb, adjective, or other noun. These are: *j-*, *ji-*, *ku-*, *tu-*, *ci-*, *ti-*, *ki-*, *bi-*, and *di-*.

The unproductive diminutive singular prefix *j-* is used exclusively with a few nouns which have in common that their non-diminutive forms are prefixed with *k-*.

- (1) *j-anu* ‘little calabash’ ↔ *k-anu* ‘calabash’
j-etaa ‘little ceramic pot’ ↔ *k-etaa* ‘ceramic pot’
j-úlúnj ‘little jug’ ↔ *k-úlúnj* ‘jug’
j-oow ‘girl(s)’ ↔ *k-oow* ‘child’
j-oku ‘little pestle’ ↔ *k-od* ‘pestle’

The only other noun prefixed with *j-* is *j-okun* ‘finger’ (PL *t-okun*) for which there is no *k-* prefixed counterpart. Note that in *j-oku* ‘little pestle’, the diminutive prefix was historically added to the full prefixed noun (Proto-Noon-Laalaa **njo-k-od* from *od* ‘grind, pound in mortar’), but synchronically these words are best treated as containing distinct roots. In the four remaining noun pairs, the prefix *j-* replaces the prefix *k-*. The semantic relationship between ‘girl’ and ‘child’ is not a straightforward diminutive, but note also *ke-’oomah* ‘young girl’ in Laalaa, the diminutive of *oomah* ‘child’ (Dièye 2011: 208).

When the first three noun pairs in (1) are pluralized, the prefixes *j-* and *k-* are both replaced by *t-*, leaving any information on size unexpressed. For example,

t-anu is the plural of both *k-anu* ‘calabash’ and *j-anu* ‘little calabash’. The rare diminutive prefix *ji-* (PL *ti-*) is encountered in at least *ji-kot* ‘little leg/foot’ from *kot* ‘leg(s)/foot/feet’, but its productivity is marginal at best in Northern Noon. This prefix *ji-* might be taken as an allomorph of *j-*.

The prefixes *ku-/tu-* have two functions in Northern Noon: singulative/ plurative and diminutive. The use of *ku-* as a singulative marker is impressionistically much more common than its diminutive function, while the use of *tu-* as a plurative marker is less common than the use of *ku-* to mark singulative. The singulative use of *ku-* is especially notable on mass nouns referring to grains, e.g. *ku-peoh* ‘a seed’ from *peoh* ‘seeds’. However, even on count nouns, *ku-* is often employed with a non-diminutive sense, as this prefix allows a transnumeral nominal form to acquire an unambiguous singular reading which it does not receive without the prefix. This is illustrated in (2):

- (2) *mi* *hot* *ku-cooh*
 1SG see KU.6⁵-elephant
 ‘I see an elephant.’ (regardless of size)

The derivation of diminutive nouns from other nouns is completely productive; e.g. *ku-baay* ‘puppy’, *tu-baay* ‘puppies’ from *baay* ‘dog’. When *ku-/tu-* appears on a noun containing a C-prefix, the prefixes co-occur, and these nouns can be seen as exhibiting double prefixation (aka prefix stacking); e.g. *ku-k-edik* ‘little tree’, *tu-t-edik* ‘little trees’ from *k-edik* ‘tree’, *t-edik* ‘trees’.

The two transnumeral prefixes *ci-* and *ti-* are used as deverbal or deadjectival nominalizers. Examples are *ci-fool* ‘running’ from the verb root *fool* ‘run’ or *ti-kod* ‘crying’ from the verb root *kod* ‘cry’. In addition to these prefixes, the nominalization may simultaneously involve suffixation (e.g. *ci-wo'-een* ‘rumor’ from *wo* ‘say’) or reduplication (e.g. *ci-keen-keen* ‘epilepsy’ from *keen* ‘fall’). The prefixes *ci-* and *ti-* seem to be roughly equivalent semantically, though *ci-* is somewhat more common, and certain roots prefer one prefix over the other. Both prefixes are rather productive, though not completely so. For example, no *ci-* or *ti-* prefixed noun can be formed from *kad* ‘go’ or *ap* ‘kill’.

The prefix *ki-* has two functions. First, it forms nouns referring to languages from nouns referring to ethnic groups or places, with reduplication of the noun root in the second of these scenarios, for example *ki-Noon* ‘Noon language’ from *Noon* ‘Noon person’ and *ki-Siili-Siili* ‘Ndut-Paloor language’ from *Siili* ‘Mont Roland region’. In the same way, nouns designating the area of habitation of a family can

5 The information on agreement of nouns given in the glosses refers to the agreement class of the definite determiner which is suffixed to the noun stem (agreement pattern 1, see Section 2.1.3.1). Hence, in this example, the nominal form prefix *ku-* would trigger agreement class 6 on a definite determiner.

be formed with the prefix *ki-* and reduplication of the family name: *ki-Jóob-Jóob* ‘area of the Diop family home’. Some of these language nouns have no corresponding unprefixing noun, e.g. *ki-Cagin-Cagin* ‘Thiès Noon dialect’ (cf. *Caañaak* ‘Thiès’ in Northern Noon, vs. *Cagin* ‘Thiès’ used in the Thiès dialect). There are no plural forms for these language nouns, and so they are treated as transnumeral.

Secondly, the prefix *ki-* is used as the infinitive marker on verb stems, e.g. *ki-kad* ‘to go’ from *kad* ‘go’. Unlike *ci-* or *ti-* prefixed deverbals, *ki-* prefixed infinitives are used in a number of grammatical constructions, such as the periphrastic future construction. Many (though not all) infinitives can be suffixed with a definite article, in which case they show class 6 (*k*) agreement, as in example (3).

- (3) *ki-tiid-k-ii* *miik-in*
 KI.6-walk-6-DEF.PROX be.hard-PFV
 ‘Walking is hard.’

The prefix *bi-* derives nouns referring to people in an ethnic group (4a) or family (4b):

- (4) a. *ḡ-a* *bi-Noon*
 9-PRO BI-Noon
 ‘They are Noon (people).’
 b. *ḡ-a* *bi-Jóob*
 9-PRO BI-PN
 ‘They are Diop family members.’

The use of these *bi-* prefixed nouns is very restricted in Northern Noon, and they do not have definite forms. We treat these nouns as transnumeral, as they stand in contrast with noun pairs like *Noon-ii* ‘the Noon person’, *Noon-c-ii* ‘the Noon people’ in their morphosyntactic behavior.

The locative prefix *di-* derives place names from verb roots on which the derivational suffix *-aah~aad* has been added, as in *(di-)ñam-aah* ‘eating place’ from the verb root *ñam* ‘eat’. This prefix is always optional, with the unprefixing noun (e.g. *ñam-aah*) being synonymous with the prefixed noun.

2.1.3 Agreement and agreement (AGR) classes

Class agreement in Noon is marked by overt thematic class consonants or their absence (\emptyset). The full inventory of Noon agreement classes with various agreement targets is given in Table 2b below. The arbitrary number assigned to each class follows the scheme used by Dièye (2011) for Laalaa, with the addition of classes 2 (\emptyset) and 13 (*n*). The large number of agreement targets allows for noun phrases and clauses exhibiting a high degree of alliterative agreement, as in example (5).

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| (5) | <i>t-edik-t-ii</i> | <i>t-aay=t-ii</i> | <i>t-i-yaak=t-ii</i> |
| | T.11-tree-11-DEF.PROX | 11-three=11-DEF.PROX | 11-ADJ.V-big=11-DEF.PROX |
| | <i>t-ii</i> | <i>t-ii</i> | <i>tak</i> |
| | 11-DEM.PROX | 11-PROG.PROX | burn |
- ‘These three big trees are burning.’

The thick line in Table 2a divides agreement targets that take two distinct agreement patterns, singling out a series of suffixed definite determiners to the left of the line. These suffixed definite determiners have a three-way deictic distinction: proximal (near the speaker), medial (near the addressee), and distal (far from both). The medial definite determiner, however, is rare in the Northern dialect. In Section 2.1.3.1, we will discuss the two patterns before giving a short summary in Section 2.1.3.2.

2.1.3.1 Two agreement patterns

Among class agreement targets, a basic two-way distinction must be made. In the existing literature, this distinction is noted most prominently by Wane (2017: 53–66) who refers to a “first” and “second” noun class system.

The first “bound” group of agreement targets consists of the three definite determiners (proximal *-ii*, medial *-um*, and distal *-aa*) which are suffixed to the noun itself. The thematic consonant appears between the noun and the suffixed definite determiner. An example is given in (6).

- | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|
| (6) | \emptyset - <i>baay-f-ii</i> |
| | \emptyset -dog.5-5-DEF.PROX |
| | ‘the dog’ |

For suffixed definite determiners, each noun can trigger at most two agreement markers (one singular and one plural), outside of a few lexically-specific cases of variable class assignment.

The second “unbound” group of agreement targets consists of all other agreement targets, none of which are affixes on the noun. These include but are not limited to demonstratives, adjectives, and pronouns (for a full list see Table 2b above). For these targets, the thematic consonant used is in most cases equivalent to that used with the suffixed definite determiners. Compare (7) below with (6) above in which the consonant *f* appears on both targets.

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---------------|
| (7) | \emptyset - <i>baay</i> | <i>f-iida</i> |
| | \emptyset -dog.5 | 5-which |
| | ‘Which dog?’ | |

However, there are two respects in which this second agreement pattern differs from that used with the suffixed determiners. First, the thematic consonants *null* (\emptyset) and *n*

Table 2a: Agreement classes and agreement targets of Northern Noon.

AGR class C	Thematic class C	Numb	Suffixed prox. definite det.	Suffixed medial definite det.	Suffixed distal definite det.	Suffixed mal dem.	Proxi dem.	Medial dem.	Distal dem.	Far distal dem.	Enclitic definite proximal det. ^a	Enclitic definite medial det. ^a	Enclitic definite distal det. ^a	Prox. existential dem. ^b	Distal existential dem. ^b
1	y	SG	-y-ii	-y-um	-y-aa	y-ii	y-um	y-um	y-aa	y-úu	=y-ii	=y-um	=y-aa	yiyyii	yayyaa
2	∅	SG	-i	-um	-aa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	w	SG	-	-	-	w-ii	w-um	w-um	w-aa	w-úu	=w-ii	=w-um	=w-aa	wiwwii	wawwaa
4	m	SG	-m-ii	-m-um	-m-aa	m-ii	m-um	m-um	m-aa	m-úu	=m-ii	=m-um	=m-aa	mimimii	mamimaa
5	f	SG	-f-ii	-f-um	-f-aa	f-ii	f-um	f-um	f-aa	f-úu	=f-ii	=f-um	=f-aa	fiffii	faffaa
6	k	SG, TN	-k-ii	-k-um	-k-aa	k-ii	k-um	k-um	k-aa	k-úu	=k-ii	=k-um	=k-aa	kikkii	kakkaa
7	j	SG	-j-ii	-j-um	-j-aa	j-ii	j-um	j-um	j-aa	j-úu	=j-ii	=j-um	=j-aa	jijjii	jajjaa
8	p	SG	-p-ii	-p-um	-p-aa	p-ii	p-um	p-um	p-aa	p-úu	=p-ii	=p-um	=p-aa	pippii	pappaa
9	b	PL	-b-ii	-b-um	-b-aa	b-ii	b-um	b-um	b-aa	b-úu	=b-ii	=b-um	=b-aa	bibbii	babbaa
10	c	PL, TN	-c-ii	-c-um	-c-aa	c-ii	c-um	c-um	c-aa	c-úu	=c-ii	=c-um	=c-aa	ciccii	caccaaa
11	t	PL, TN	-t-ii	-t-um	-t-aa	t-ii	t-um	t-um	t-aa	t-úu	=t-ii	=t-um	=t-aa	tittii	taittaa
12	d	TN	-	-	-	d-ii	d-uma	d-uma	d-aa	d-úu	-	-	-	-	-
13	n	SG	-n-ii	-n-um	-n-aa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

^aThe enclitic determiners appear on agreeing adjective/numeral phrases (see Section 2.1.3.3). There is also a set of agreeing preverbal progressive markers, identical in form to the definite determiners (C-ii, C-aa, C-um). ^bThese three sets of existential demonstratives mean 'is/are here' (there' as in *baay-f-ii fiffii* 'the dog is here'). There is another set of existential demonstratives of the form C-*imma* (proximal), C-*umma* (medial), and C-*amma* (distal) used in the same way.

Table 2b: Agreement classes and agreement targets of Northern Noon.

AGR class	Far distal exist. dem. ^a	Pronoun ^b	Adjective AGR pref.	'where' ^c	'which'	'how many'	Term focus marker	'one'(sg)/ 'few'(pl)	'two'	'three'	Ordinal numb. pref.	Associative prefix	Nominal form default
1	yéyyúu	y-a	y-i-	y-ada	y-ida	-	y-édíi/y-è	y-íino	-	-	y-u-	y-uu-	∅
2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	∅
3	wéwwúu	w-a	w-i-	w-ada	w-ida	-	w-édíi/w-è	w-íino	-	-	w-u-	w-uu-	∅
4	mémámúu	m-a	m-i-	m-ada	m-ida	-	m-édíi/m-è	m-íino	-	-	m-u-	m-uu-	∅
5	fěffúu	f-a	f-i-	f-ada	f-ida	-	f-édíi/f-è	f-íino	-	-	f-u-	f-uu-	∅
6	kěkkúu	k-a	k-i-	k-ada	k-ida	-	k-édíi/k-è	k-íino	-	-	k-u-	k-uu-	K-, KU-, KI-
7	jějjúu	j-a	j-i-	j-ada	j-ida	-	j-édíi/j-è	j-íino	-	-	j-u-	j-uu-	J-, JI-
8	pěppúu	p-a	p-i-	p-ada	p-ida	-	p-édíi/p-è	p-íino	-	-	p-u-	p-uu-	P-
9	běbbúu	b-a	b-i-	b-ada	b-ida	-	b-édíi/b-è	b-íino	benak	baay	b-u-	b-uu-	∅, (BI-)
10	cěccúu	c-a	c-i-	c-ada	c-ida	-	c-édíi/c-è	c-íino	kanak	kaay	c-u-	c-uu-	∅, CI-
11	těttúu	t-a	t-i-	t-ada	t-ida	-	t-édíi/t-è	t-íino	tenak	taay	t-u-	t-uu-	T-, TU-, TI-
12	-	-	d-i-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(DI-)
13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	∅

^aThese three sets of existential demonstratives mean 'is/are here/there' as in *baay-fii fíffii* 'the dog is here'. There is another set of existential demonstratives of the form *C-imma* (proximal), *C-umma* (medial), and *C-amma* (distal) used in the same way. ^bUsed in subject and object position, and as possessors, *y-a* is replaced by *-dí* as an object pronoun, and by *ci* as a possessive pronoun. ^cSentence-initial *C-ada* 'where' agrees with the noun that it specifies, while sentence-final *deeda* 'where' is invariant: *c-ada céeewí-c-ii goo* 'Where are my keys?', *f-ada f-a* 'Where is it?', *kaad laak deeda* 'Where is there a house?'

of classes 2 and 13 are never employed on unbound agreement targets, while the consonants *w* and *d* of classes 3 and 12 are never found on the suffixed definite determiners.⁶ Most nouns triggering class 2 (\emptyset) or 13 (*n*) agreement on suffixed definite determiners take class 3 (*w*) on other targets. This discrepancy can be seen in examples (8a) and (8b), in which a noun is modified by both a suffixed definite determiner and a demonstrative.

- (8) a. \emptyset -*bak*- \emptyset -*ii* **w-ii**
 \emptyset -side.2-2-def.prox 3-DEM.PROX
 ‘this side’
- b. \emptyset -*yaal-n-ii* **w-ii**
 \emptyset -tree.sp.13-13-def.prox 3-DEM.PROX
 ‘this *yaal* tree’

Second, there can be “mismatches” between the class used on the suffixed definite determiner and the one used on all other agreement targets (even when taking \emptyset , *n*, and *w* as equivalent). These mismatches are motivated by one of three factors: animacy, diminutiveness, or reduction to a default agreement pattern. In effect, this means that for certain nouns in certain situations, the agreement class used on the suffixed determiners and the agreement class used on other targets will not be the same. The following sections give more detail on these mismatches.

2.1.3.1.1 Agreement mismatches due to animacy. The first and most common type of agreement class mismatch is motivated by animacy.⁷ For nouns which trigger singular class 2 (\emptyset) or 13 (*n*) agreement on suffixed definite determiners, the agreement class for all unbound targets is determined by animacy. Contrast (9a) in which the animate noun triggers agreement in class 1 (*y*), and (9b) in which the inanimate noun triggers agreement in class 3 (*w*).

- (9) a. \emptyset -*yaal*- \emptyset -*ii* **y-ii**
 \emptyset -man.2-2-DEF.PROX 1-DEM.PROX
 ‘this man’
- b. \emptyset -*bag*- \emptyset -*ii* **w-ii**
 \emptyset -bench.2-2-DEF.PROX 3-DEM.PROX
 ‘this bench’

⁶ An analysis in which classes 2 (\emptyset) and 3 (*w*) are treated as allomorphs would also be justified, but will not be explored here.

⁷ No animate nouns exist in agreement classes 4 (*m*) and 8 (*p*), so animacy-based mismatches never occur for nouns in these classes.

The class 1 consonant *y* is rare on suffixed definite determiners, but the nouns that trigger it all refer to humans (*bo* ‘person’ and nouns referring to family members). Thus, the association between class 1 (*y*) and animacy is quite strong.

The same animacy-based distinction is seen with plural nouns, for which those triggering class 10 (*c*) agreement on suffixed definite determiners use either class 9 (*b*) for animate nouns or 10 (*c*) for inanimate nouns with all other agreement targets, as illustrated in example (10).

- (10) a. *Ø-yaal-c-ii* ***b-ii***
 \emptyset -man.10-10-DEF.PROX 9-DEM.PROX
 ‘these men’
- b. *Ø-bag-c-ii* ***c-ii***
 \emptyset -bench.10-10-DEF.PROX 10-DEM.PROX
 ‘these benches’

Setting aside diminutives and the two *k-* prefixed nouns *k-oow* ‘child’ and *k-ui/k-uyi* ‘young woman’ (discussed at the end of this section), all nouns referring to humans obligatorily take gender 1/9 (*y/b*) on unbound agreement targets.

Animals are usually treated as animate, but can optionally be treated as inanimate. In (11a), *muus* ‘cat(s)’ takes animate plural agreement in class 9 (*b*), and in (11b) it takes inanimate plural agreement in class 10 (*c*).

- (11) a. *Ø-muus-c-i-n* *Kodu* ***b-i-súus=b-ii***
 \emptyset -cat.10-10-DEF.PROX-GEN PN 9-ADJ.V-black=9-DEF.PROX
 ‘Kodu’s black cats’
- b. *Ø-muus* ***c-i-súus***
 \emptyset -cat.10 10-ADJ.V-black
 ‘black cats’

Curiously, it is even possible for the animate and inanimate agreement classes to co-exist within the same utterance as in (12), though their co-occurrence on unbound agreement targets is ungrammatical within the same noun phrase.

- (12) *Ø-baay* *c-i-súus* *na* *Ø-muus* *c-i-súus* *b-a*
 \emptyset -dog.10 10-ADJ.V-black and \emptyset -cat.10 10-ADJ.V-black 9-PRO
 b-i-nikiis
 9-ADJ.V-four
 ‘There are four black dogs and cats.’ (lit.: Black dogs and cats, they are four)

For animals which trigger class 5 (*f*) agreement on suffixed determiners, class 1 (*y*) agreement is also possible on unbound targets within the noun phrase, though class 5 (*f*) agreement is seemingly more common.

Like animals in class 5 (*f*), optionality exists for the two singular animate nouns in agreement class 6 (*k*): *k-oow* ‘child’, and *k-ui/k-uyi* ‘young woman’.⁸ They can either agree in class 6 (*k*) or 1 (*y*). Somewhat unexpectedly, this optionality does not exist for the plural forms of these two animate nouns – agreement must be in class 11 (*t*), and not in class 9 (*b*).

Finally, the extremely common noun *iñ* ‘thing’ triggers class 1 (*y*) agreement for unbound targets, without any animacy-based semantic motivation. Plural agreement with *iñ* ‘thing’ uses class 10 (*c*) with all targets, and as such it is the only noun that triggers gender 1/10 (*y/c*) for unbound agreement targets.

2.1.3.1.2 Agreement mismatches due to diminutiveness. The second type of agreement class mismatch is motivated by diminutiveness. Recall that there are three pairs of diminutive nominal prefixes, *j-* (PL *t-*), *ji-* (PL *ti-*), and *ku-* (PL *tu-*). For the few diminutives prefixed with *j-* or *ji-*, no mismatch is observed since the use of agreement class 7 (*j*) is mandatory throughout all agreement targets, and the use of any other agreement class is impossible.

For singulatives (13a) and diminutives (13b) prefixed with *ku-*, the use of agreement class 6 (*k*) is mandatory on suffixed determiners, but for all other targets within the noun phrase class 7 (*j*) is required.

- (13) a. *ku-maalu-k-ii* *j-ĩinoo=j-ii* *j-ii* (**k-ĩinoo=k-ii k-ii*)
 KU.6-rice-6-DEF.PROX 7-one=7-DEF.PROX 7-DEM.PROX
 ‘this one grain of rice’
- b. *ku-baay-k-ii* *j-i-súus=j-ii* (**k-i-súus=k-ii*)
 KU.6-dog-6-DEF.PROX 7-adj.v-black=7-DEF.PROX
 ‘the black puppy’

However, for more distant agreement targets (outside of the noun phrase), class 6 (*k*) agreement is possible, as seen in example (14).

- (14) *ku-baay-k-aa* *j~k-aa* *fool*
 KU.6-dog-6-DEF.DIST 7~6-PROG.DIST run
 ‘The puppy is running.’

It is possible that this use of class 6 (*k*) agreement on the progressive marker is in fact a manifestation of the “reduction to *k*” pattern discussed in the next section. The situation is further complicated when animacy is considered. In general,

⁸ These two nouns contain the diminutive prefix *ku-* historically (Proto-Cangin **ku-bo* and **ku-yo*), but the full CV-prefix can no longer be segmented.

diminutive singular nouns take class 7 (*j*) agreement as described above. However, if the noun is also animate, it can sometimes agree in class 1 (*y*) as in (15) below.

- (15) *mi hot-in ku-baay j~y-i-súus*
 1SG see-PFV KU.6-dog 7~1-ADJ.V-black
 ‘I saw a black puppy.’

This use of class 1 (*y*) for animate diminutives is rare, and often deemed ungrammatical. The factors which determine the acceptability of this construction are as of yet not well understood. The only animate noun which does not allow agreement in class 1 (*y*) under any circumstance is *j-ooow* ‘girl’, always requiring class 7 (*j*) agreement. For pluratives and plural animate diminutives prefixed with *tu-*, agreement must be with class 11 (*t*) throughout all agreement targets, and never with class 9 (*b*).

2.1.3.1.3 *Reduction to a “default” agreement class.* The third and final type of agreement class mismatch can be seen as a reduction to a less marked “default” agreement class. In some cases, singular inanimate nouns in any class can take class 3 (*w*) agreement on unbound agreement targets.⁹ This “default” use of class 3 is generally observed when the agreement target is found in a later clause as in (16), especially after a prosodic break as in (17). In these examples, both class 4 (*m*) and “reduced” class 3 (*w*) agreement are possible in the later clause.

- (16) *mi ñam-in Ø-miip-m-ii waa mi léey ki-tík w~m-a*
 1SG eat-PFV Ø-sauce.4-4-DEF.PROX when 1SG finish KI.6-cook 3~4-PRO
 ‘I ate the sauce after I cooked it.’

- (17) *Kodu y-ii tik Ø-miip; w~m-a w~m-i-súus*
 PN 1-DEM.PROX cook Ø-sauce.4 3~4-PRO 3~4-ADJ.V-black
 ‘Kodu is cooking sauce; it is black.’

Somewhat remarkably, nouns which usually trigger agreement in classes 8 (*p*) and 7 (*j*) exhibit “reduced” agreement with class 6 (*k*), class 3 (*w*) agreement being judged grammatical only in some cases. There is little data on this “reduction to class 6 (*k*)” pattern, so no definitive conclusions can be drawn as of yet regarding

⁹ This phenomenon affects only inanimate nouns simply because the animate agreement pattern cannot be overridden. It is not accurate to think of the use of *w* as described in this section as “inanimate agreement” analogous to the animate agreement pattern. In contrast with animate agreement, it is not obligatory, and never operates within a noun phrase. Furthermore the use of both *k* and *w* indicates that this phenomenon is not motivated by agreement with a single semantic feature.

its usage in different contexts. Note that the *k*-, *p*-, and *j*- nominal prefixes are exactly those which alternate with *t*- in the plural, and of these three singular prefixes *k*- appears on most nouns. Thus, it is conceivable that the nominal form classes *k*-, *p*-, and *j*- (along with the corresponding agreement classes 6, 8, and 7) are treated as a “family” of prefixes, of which *k*- is the most salient member.

2.1.3.2 Summary of agreement

Two agreement class patterns must be distinguished in Noon. The first pattern is found with definite determiners which are suffixed to the noun stem, and the second pattern with all other (“unbound”) agreement targets. Pattern 1 shows very little lexical variation, and involves a somewhat higher degree of alliteration with the noun-initial consonant than pattern 2. Pattern 2 is more sensitive to semantic factors (animacy and diminutiveness) and allows a greater deal of optionality in class agreement. There is furthermore a phenomenon of reduction to a “default” class for some pattern 2 targets which seems to become more likely the further the target is from the nominal controller. Historically, agreement on unbound targets involves a reorganization of the more conservative pattern seen in pattern 1.

The pairings between the agreement classes used on suffixed definite determiners (pattern 1) and those used on other agreement targets (pattern 2) are shown in Figure 1 below. Dashed lines indicate agreement seen only in the “reduction” to classes 3 (*w*) or 6 (*k*), which is in general only encountered in agreement across a clause boundary or after a prosodic break (see Section 2.1.3.1.3).

The most notable distinction between these two agreement patterns is that the two “animate” classes 1 (*y*) and 9 (*b*) are each triggered by a very small set of nouns in pattern 1, but are used for almost all animate nouns in pattern 2 (see Section 2.1.3.1.1). The second discrepancy is the absence of classes 2 (\emptyset) and 13 (*n*) in pattern 2, and of class 3 (*w*) in pattern 1. The third discrepancy involves singular diminutive nouns, most of which are prefixed with *ku*- and take class 6 (*k*) agreement in pattern 1, but trigger class 7 (*j*) agreement in pattern 2 (see Section 2.1.3.1.2).

2.1.4 Nominal form classes versus agreement classes

Figure 2 below shows the associations between nominal form classes and agreement classes. The figure is meant to be read from left to right following the order of elements in the noun phrase: the prefix on the noun (N_F) followed by the suffixed definite determiner (pattern 1), and finally all other (unbound) agreement targets (pattern 2). Number values are given for nominal form (N_F) and agreement (A_{GR}) classes if different.

The dashed lines between nominal forms and pattern 1 indicate correspondences represented by a single noun each: *j-ooow* ‘girls’ (plural agreement

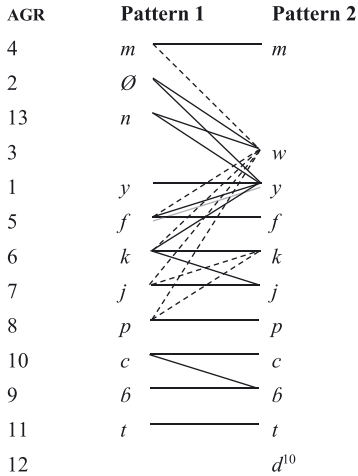


Figure 1: Correlations between AGR patterns 1 and 2 in Northern Noon.¹⁰

with either *c* or *t*), and *bo* ‘people’. The \emptyset to *k*- correspondence represents only *kúum* ‘honey’ and *kedik* ‘medicine’.¹¹ All nouns with the \emptyset to *p*- correspondence are *p*-initial, and the initial *p*- can optionally function as a prefix in alternation with *t*-. The \emptyset to *t*- correspondence represents three *t*-initial transnumeral (both in nominal marking and agreement) nouns which in other dialects show a *p*-/*t*- alternation, as well as the borrowed noun *téedi* ‘book’ which optionally shows *t*- agreement in the plural. The dashed lines between patterns 1 and 2 indicate the “reduction” phenomenon.

One of the most important findings from Figure 2 is that prefixless nouns are distributed over 10 distinct agreement classes. “Alliterative” agreement patterns are overwhelmingly common when the noun does contain a prefix (the only exception is *j-ooow* ‘girls’). However, the alliterative link is weakened for unbound agreement targets where the semantic factors of animacy and diminutiveness, or the reduction to a default class may overrule the class used in pattern 1. Hence, it is not sufficient to identify a single agreement class for each noun, since different agreement targets can – or in many cases must – have agreement class mismatches, even within the same noun phrase. It can be no coincidence that the target closest to the noun stem is overall more alliterative, while the more distant agreement targets have more freedom in allowing semantic factors to take precedence over lexically-determined agreement.

¹⁰ Note that while determiners like *d-ii* ‘here’ exist with the prefix *d*-, there are no nouns that trigger class 12 agreement, and thus no bound (pattern 1) agreement forms in this class.

¹¹ Both nouns have non-alternating plurals, and so are not analyzed as having a nominal prefix *k*-.

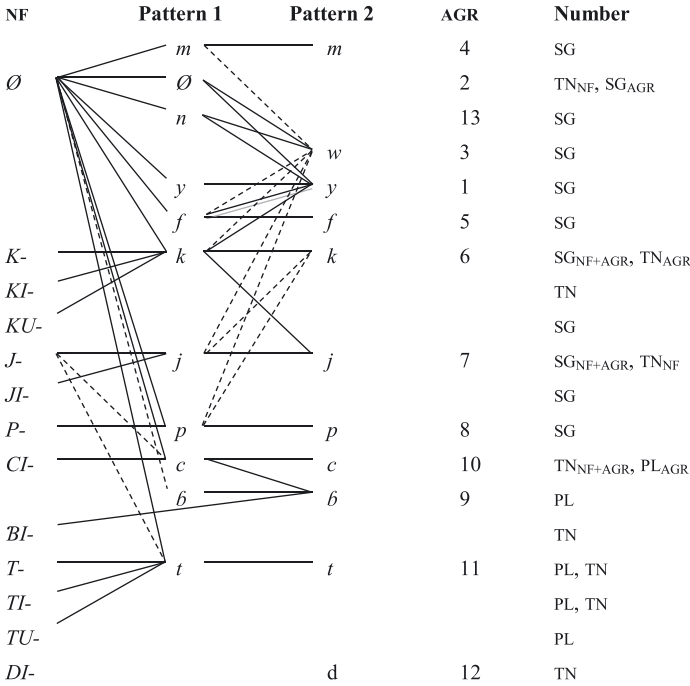


Figure 2: Relationship between nominal form classes and agreement classes.

2.2 The behavior of nominal lexemes

2.2.1 Deriflection system

The deriflection system of Northern Noon with its 13 deriflection classes is given in Figure 3 below. The deriflection system represents the alternation of nominal form prefixes between singular and plural forms of nouns, as well as those prefixes that appear on transnumeral nouns.

For the large majority of nouns, the form of the noun itself is the same whether it refers to a singular or plural entity, and as such these are considered transnumeral from the standpoint of nominal form marking. For example, *muus* ‘cat(s)’, *bíñ* ‘mouse/mice’, and *atoh* ‘stone(s)’ can be semantically and syntactically either singular or plural; the number value is only overtly marked at the level of agreement. Other singular nouns have a prefix *k*-, *p*-, or *j*- which alternates with *t*- in the plural.

Of these three C- prefix alternations, *k*-/t- is the most common: 21 collected nouns exhibit this deriflection pattern, e.g. *k-úu*/t-úu ‘mouth’.

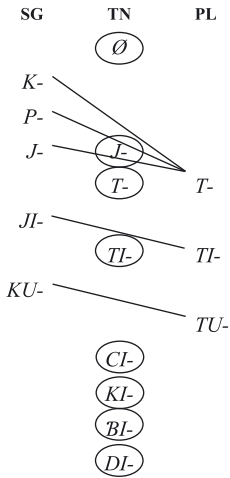


Figure 3: Deriflection system of Northern Noon.

The productive deriflection *ku-/tu-* exhibits this same consonant alternation. These singulative/pluralive/diminutive prefixes allow for the only possible cases of “prefix stacking”, e.g. *ku-k-edik* ‘little tree’. When these nouns are pluralized, the C- prefix generally also alternates; e.g. *tu-t-edik* ‘little trees’. However, with the diminutive *j-* prefix, this alternation does not take place, e.g. *ku-j-anu* ‘little calabash’, pl. *tu-j-anu*.

The *p-/t-* alternation is found in only four collected nouns: *p-/t-ew* ‘palm pin(s)’, *p-/t-iin* ‘metal(s)’, *p-/t-ilkët* ‘string(s)’, and *p-/t-edim* ‘tongue(s)’ (note that *t-edim* ‘tongues’ is only marginally acceptable in the Northern dialect). All four of these nouns can optionally exhibit the non-alternating pattern (e.g. *pew* ‘palm pinna(s)’), hinting at an ongoing reduction of the deriflection *p-/t-* and in turn the overall leveling of the nominal form class system of Northern Noon.

The *j-/t-* alternation is found in five collected nouns: *j-/t-anu* ‘little calabash(es)’, *j-/t-etaa* ‘little ceramic pot(s)’, *j-/t-oku* ‘little pestle(s)’, *j-/t-ülün* ‘little jug(s)’, and *j-/t-okun* ‘finger(s)’. Recall that all of these nouns except *j-okun* ‘finger’ are diminutives of *k-*prefixed nouns. As such, their plural form is the same for the diminutive and non-diminutive noun. For *j-oku* ‘little pestle’, the plural *t-oku* is distinct from *t-od*, the plural of *k-od* ‘pestle’. The rare diminutive prefix pair *ji-/ti-* shows the same consonant alternation.

Apart from prefixless nouns and *j-* in the noun *j-ooow* ‘girl(s)’, there are six transnumeral nominal form prefixes (see Section 2.1.2). The first, *t-*, is attested only in *t-oooh* ‘millet’ (cf. *p-oooh* ‘millet plant’). The three most common transnumeral prefixes are *ci-* and *ti-* deriving nouns from verbs or adjectives, and *ki-* which derives language names as well as infinitives. The prefix *bi-* forms nouns referring

to members of an ethnic or family group, and the prefix *di-* optionally appears on deverbal locative nouns with the suffix *-aah~aad*.

2.2.2 Gender system

The gender system of Northern Noon is given in Figure 4 below. This figure shows the pairings between agreement classes for singular and corresponding plural nouns, as well as transnumeral agreement patterns. On the left are shown the genders based on suffixed definite determiner agreement (aka pattern 1). On the right are the genders based on all other agreement targets (aka pattern 2). The bold lines represent the most frequent genders found in the lexicon.

An important difference between these two systems is that whereas for suffixed definite determiners the pair 1/9 (*y/b*) is used only for *bo* ‘person’, for other agreement targets 1/9 (*y/b*) is a major gender, used for most animate nouns. The gender 1/10 (*y/c*) contains completely different nouns in each system: for pattern 1 it contains mostly nouns referring to family members, and for pattern 2 only *iñ* ‘thing’.

Gender IV (\emptyset/c) (for the numbering see Figure 5 below) can be thought of as the “default” gender in Northern Noon, having by far the largest membership, and serving as the gender for all recent borrowings. Among the paired (singular/plural)

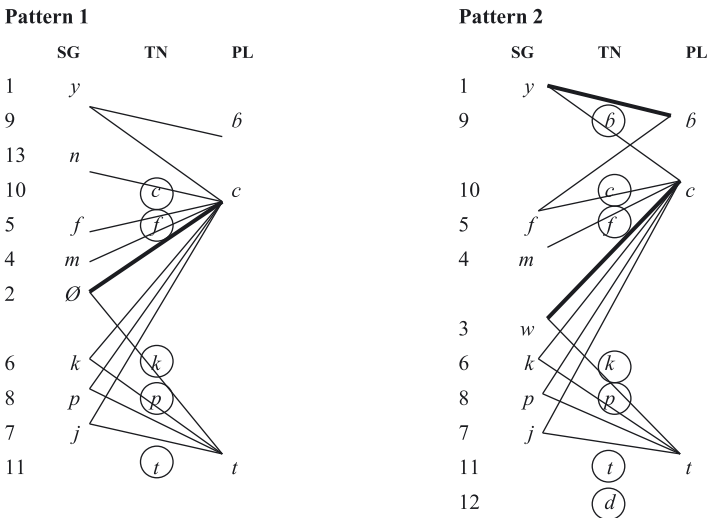


Figure 4: Genders in Northern Noon.

genders, the plural class 11 (*t*) is overwhelmingly paired with the singular classes 6 (*k*), 7 (*j*), and 8 (*p*). However, these singular classes also exist in paired genders with the plural class 10 (*c*). These are among the six genders which are not mentioned in existing descriptions of Noon-Laalaa: III (*y/c*), V (*n/c*), VI (\emptyset/t), X (*k/c*), XVII (*j/c*), and XI (*p/c*). The nouns in gender III (*y/c*) are reported to be in gender IV (\emptyset/c) in other dialects. The transnumeral genders I (*c*), XV (*k*), and XIII (*t*) are not specifically commented on for other dialects, though they very likely exist (see Soukka 2000: 79). Thus overall, the pairings between singular and plural agreement patterns is reported to be much neater in other Noon dialects and Laalaa. Moreover, 16 Northern Noon nouns were found to exhibit free variation between two genders. It remains to be seen whether these gender discrepancies are true dialectal differences, or whether some of the “messier” patterns have simply gone unreported.

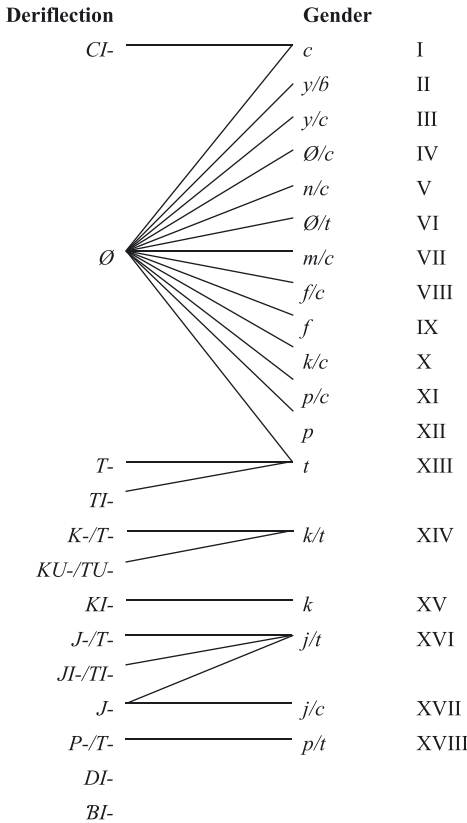


Figure 5: Relationship between deriflections and genders in Northern Noon.

2.2.3 Deriflection classes versus genders

Nouns exhibiting the deriflection classes identified in Figure 3 correspond to the genders identified in Figure 4 (based on the suffixed definite determiners, aka pattern 1), as shown in Figure 5 below.

Eleven genders contain only nouns with the unmarked (\emptyset) deriflection pattern. The non-alternating *j*-deriflection pattern of *j-ooow* ‘girl’ can correspond with either the unique gender XVII (*j/c*) or gender XVI (*j/t*). The five alternating deriflection patterns *K-/T-*, *KU-/TU-*, *J-/T-*, *Jl-/Tl-* and *P-/T-* are mapped neatly to the genders marked by the alliterative agreement consonants. Nouns belonging to the transnumeral deriflections *CI-*, *KI-*, *TI-*, and *T-* are all assigned to the alliterative transnumeral gender.

3 Discussion

This chapter has examined the gender and deriflection systems (traditionally “noun classes”) of Noon, focusing on the Northern dialect. After treating the Noon gender and deriflection systems separately, we explored the interaction between these two systems.

The Noon deriflection system of nominal form marking is notable for exhibiting a high percentage of unprefixed nouns (roughly 85% of the lexicon). Among these synchronically unprefixed nouns are a number of nouns which contain a historical class prefix which must now be considered frozen within the stem. It is noteworthy that many nouns referring to liquids and powders begin with the consonant /m/ (and also trigger agreement with the thematic consonant *m*), being the remnant of a former *mV-* nominal prefix. Since this noun-initial *m* never alternates, it can no longer be segmented synchronically. A second group of nouns has overt C- prefixes which alternate between the noun’s singular and plural form, or more rarely between a diminutive and non-diminutive form. The third group of nouns contains unstressed CV- prefixes, which are most often used in productive derivational processes, e.g. the formation of diminutives, language names, infinitives, or locations.

The Noon gender system makes use of C- agreement prefixes on a number of targets such as adjectives, determiners, and pronouns to agree with the head noun. The co-occurrence of multiple agreement targets can result in a high degree of alliteration which can aid in keeping track of the head noun in discourse. Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the Noon gender system is that there are two patterns of agreement used on different agreement targets. The first pattern is used on definite determiners which are suffixed to the noun, and is sensitive only to the lexical identity of the head noun. The second pattern is used on unsuffixed agreement targets, and here the lexical gender of the head noun as seen in the first pattern can be

“overridden” by the semantic factors of animacy and diminutiveness, or the reduction to a “default” class, resulting in mismatches between the agreement-marking consonants seen on the suffixed definite determiner and all other agreement targets. The first pattern is more conservative from a historical-comparative perspective, and more often results in alliteration between the noun itself and the agreement consonant.

The mapping between nominal form class and agreement class is highly alliterative for prefixed nouns. With few exceptions, the thematic consonant used in agreement matches the consonant of the nominal prefix. Even for unprefixed nouns, certain agreement classes tend to be used for nouns which start with the matching consonant (notably *m* as mentioned above). As such, even though most Noon nouns are unprefixed, alliterative agreement is a notable phenomenon in the language.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations follow the Leipzig glossing rules, except the following:

ATR	advanced tongue root
C	consonant
NF	nominal form
NUMB	number
PN	proper name
PRO	pronoun
TN	transnumeral
V	vowel, verb

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