

According to the introspection of my consultant, these endings are not those of the concrete absolutive of the feminine common noun. They might originate in the *-e* ending of the non-concrete oblique plus the postposition *-yyo* ‘for, to’, as *níyo* ‘for you (SG), to you (SG)’ does in *né-* ‘you (OBL.SG)’ plus the postposition *-yyo* ‘for, to’ (see section 4.2.4.1.1). However, I leave this question open here too.

4.2.1.3.6.4 Nominative and Oblique in *-u*

The common noun *7aaw-áa* ‘father’ and compound nouns (see section 5.2.2) with this as their second element have aberrant nominative and oblique forms with the ending *-u* in addition to normal ones.

(4.2.1.3.6.4-1)

keetta7aaw-ú báa.
householder-NOM not.present.

‘The householder is not (here).’

(4.2.1.3.6.4-2)

7í ba-7aaw-ú s-óo b-íis.
he his.own-father-OBL home-ABS.SG.M go-PFV.3SG.M

‘He went his father’s home.’

These forms are reminiscent of the Masculine Class U person-name noun (see section 4.2.2.3.1). They might be evidence for the erstwhile Masculine Class U common noun proposed in section 4.2.1.3.6.2.

4.2.1.4 Concreteness

As is observed in (4.2.1.1-1), common nouns in Wolaytta distinguish two series of forms: concrete and non-concrete forms. The former is used when a concrete referent is or can be somehow presupposed, and the latter is used elsewhere.

Concrete forms in Wolaytta sometimes correspond to what we call “definite” forms in English, since concrete referents usually do exist and can be presupposed when the latter are used. Thus, demonstratives usually co-occur with concrete forms.

(4.2.1.4-1)

hegáá mat’ááp-aa 7imm-ité.
that.ABS.M book-ABS.SG.M.CONCR give-OPT.2PL

‘Give (me) that book.’

Likewise, “possessive pronouns” are usually attached to concrete forms.

(4.2.1.4-2a)

git-á garaw-áa be7-áas.
big-OBL.NCONCR cat-ABS.SG.M.CONCR see-PFV.1SG

‘I saw a big cat this morning.’

The concrete form can be used even if no particular example of a concrete referent is intended as long as one could be pointed out if required. Thus, it is often used in sentences that express generalities.

(4.2.1.4-6)

hagéé táání leemis-ídoog-g-éé wóí
this.NOM.M I exemplify-REL.PFV.NSBJ-NMLZ-NOM or

yoot-íyo-g-éé 7issipétett-ai
tell-REL.IPFV.NSBJ-NMLZ-NOM unity-NOM.SG.M.CONCR

maadd-ées, síík’-oi maadd-ées,
help-IPFV.3SG.M love-NOM.SG.M.CONCR help-IPFV.3SG.M

7iss-í-ppé gid-á 7úr-ai
one-OBL-from become-REL.PF V.SBJ person-NOM.SG.M.CONCR

hink-ó b-áá-kká
other-OBL.NCONCR thing-ABS.SG.M.CONCR-too

t’oon-ées, ... g-íyo-g-áá
win-IPFV.3SG.M ... say-REL.IPFV.NSBJ-NMLZ-ABS

yoot-an-áa-ssa.
tell-INF-OBL.SG.M-to

‘This, what I exemplified, or what I tell is to tell that unity helps, love helps, a person who is in union (lit. from one) overcomes others ...’

(4.2.1.4-7)

dors-ái d-ées,
sheep-NOM.SG.M.CONCR exist-IPFV.3SG.M

par-ái d-ées,
horse-NOM.SG.M.CONCR exist-IPFV.3SG.M

míízz-ai d-ées, ...
cattle-NOM.SG.M.CONCR exist-IPFV.3SG.M ...

(An answer to the question “What kinds of animals are there in Wolaytta?”) ‘There are sheep, horses, cattle ...’

(4.2.1.4-8)

ʒash-úwa k'ant'-áis.
meat-ABS.SG.M.CONCR cut-IPFV.1SG

(An answer to the question “What is your job?”) ‘I cut meat (i.e. I am a butcher).’

For the same reason, the concrete form can often be found in proverbs.

(4.2.1.4-9)

kap-ói kap-úwa-ppe
bird-NOM.SG.M.CONCR bird-OBL.SG.M.CONCR-from

yétt-aa 7er-ées.
song-ABS.SG.M.CONCR know-IPFV.3SG.M

‘One bird knows songs better than another bird (i.e. Ability differs from person to person).’

(4.2.1.4-10)

zaall-ái za77-íi-ni
rock-NOM.SG.M.CONCR break-SUBOR-in

maat-ái mukk-ées.
grass-NOM.SG.M.CONCR grow-IPFV.3SG.M

‘When a rock breaks, grass grows.’

Concrete forms in the absolutive were the forms encountered in the course of my lexical investigation (see section 4.2.1.3.5). This coincides with the fact that two Wolaytta dictionaries edited by native speakers (i.e. Alemaayehu and Tereezaa (1991 EC) and Lemma (1992 EC) give common nouns in the concrete absolutive as headwords. In these cases, too, concrete examples must be somehow visualized in the native speaker’s mind.

Adams (1983) regards our concrete forms as “definite” forms, and Azeb (1996), Hirut (1999), and Hayward (2000b) concur, at least in terms of terminology. Adams’s distinction between “definite” and “indefinite” forms seems to be similar to that involved in the use of the definite and indefinite articles in English, since (a) in his English glosses he uses the definite article for Wolaytta concrete forms and the indefinite article for Wolaytta non-concrete forms, and (b) for nominalizers (but not common nouns) he says that the definite form is used when the referent is specific and the indefinite form is used when the referent is not specified (Adams 1983: 232). This claim seems to hold in some cases, as in (4.2.1.4-1) and (4.2.1.4-2). However, that it is not correct is evident from the other examples above in which the English counterpart of the Wolaytta concrete form does not use the definite article.

The non-concrete form is used elsewhere. In other words, it is used when a concrete referent is not or cannot be presupposed in any way.

There are several different cases where the non-concrete form of a common noun is used. The most notable is the case where only the notion or category expressed by a stem is in question.

From the above examples, we might say that the concrete form is noun-like and the non-concrete form is adjective-like. We might also as well remember Jespersen's (1924: 75) words: "on the whole substantives are more special than adjectives, they are applicable to fewer objects than adjectives. . . . The adjective indicates and singles out one quality, one distinguishing mark, but each substantive suggests, to whoever understands it, many distinguishing features by which he recognizes the person or thing in question."

Considered in this way, what we call "adjectives" in Wolaytta can be regarded as (part of) common nouns used in the non-concrete form, concerning only the notion or category relating to the stems. For example, *l677-o* in (4.2.1.4-15a) is a Masculine Class O common noun in the non-concrete oblique, and that in (4.2.1.4-15b) is a Masculine Class O common noun in the non-concrete absolutive.

(4.2.1.4-15a)

l677-o *múzz-iyó*
good-OBL.NCONCR cow-ABS.SG.F.CONCR

'a good cow'

(4.2.1.4-15b)

hagéé *mat'ááp-ai* *l677-o*.
this.NOM.M book-NOM.SG.M.CONCR good-ABS.NCONCR

'This book is good.'

Of course, there exists a concrete counterpart, *l677-uwa*, which refers to a concrete 'good one'.

(4.2.1.4-15c)

l677-uwa *door-á*.
good-ABS.SG.M.CONCR choose-OPT.2SG

'Choose a good one.'

Thus, both *baakim-iyá* 'doctor' in (4.2.1.4-11a) and *l677-o* 'good' in (4.2.1.4-15a) are regarded as common nouns, and indeed follow the paradigm in (4.2.1.1-1). Although there are common nouns that are more often used in the concrete form (i.e. common nouns that are noun-like) and common nouns that are more often used in the non-concrete form (i.e. common nouns that are adjective-like), the distinction is a question of degree. Any stems of the common noun have both forms in principle (for exceptions, see below in this section).

Although the term "adjective" has been frequently used to denote an independent grammatical category in previous works, no precise and convincing definition of it has been offered. Hayward (2000b: 411–412), for example, mentions "that subset of nominals that need to be distinguished as adjectives." Likewise, Azeb (2002: 86) says that "there are morpho-syntactic and functional properties which justify proposing a separate syntactic class for adjectives in Wolaitta." It is unfortunate that they do not offer further explanations, although these articles are review articles, not specialized works on Wolaytta grammar. Hirut (1999: 77) says: "Adjectives are words that modify nouns by expressing their qualities, colours, sizes etc." However, she also gives examples

of adjectives that are used without any modified noun, similar to (4.2.1.4-15c). She also says that “the same inflectional morphemes used with nouns are also used with adjectives for the same function.” Ohman and Hailu’s description (1976: 158) of “adjectives” is far from clear, but certainly does not contain a definition of the word class. Lamberti and Sottile (1997: 73) say that “indeed Wolaytta, as for other Cushitic languages, does not seem to possess a genuine word class consisting of adjectives.” However, they give an independent section entitled “Adjective” which amounts to six pages and contains many examples. This is criticized by Azeb (2002: 86).

Adams (1983: 266–267) also holds that “adjective” differ from “nouns.” The following are examples he gives of “adjectives”:

(4.2.1.4-16)

gu:tta ‘small’, *lo??o* ‘good’, *gita* ‘big’, *goba* ‘important’, *mino* ‘strong’, *dure* ‘rich’, *le:?e* ‘thin’, *?adussa* ‘long’, *bo:tta* ‘white’, *mu?ale* ‘dazzling white’, *karetta* ‘black’, *zo??o* ‘red’, *bull*a ‘grey’, *?alla:tte* ‘spotted’

According to Adams (1983: 220, 226), adjective phrases “manifest only the adjective Modifier function in a N[oun phrase],” although “[t]he Adj[ective phrase] may also manifest the Complement function in a stative clause” such as “That boy is very tall.” Unlike other authors, he explicitly argues for the independent category “adjective” in the following way:

(4.2.1.4-17) From Adams (1983: 266–267)

Although words classified here as adjectives do resemble nouns that are unmarked [*sic*] for indefinite, absolutive, and singular categories, adjectives in Wolaitta differ from nouns in the following respects:

- 1) Adjectives have not been observed to inflect for case, definiteness, number, or gender like nouns do.
- 2) Adjectives may be modified by an intensifier, but the intensifier /*kehi*/ “very” has not been observed modifying a noun directly.
- 3) If Adjectives were thought to be nouns that manifest the Head of a N[oun phrase] manifesting the genitive Modifier in a N, then because of all the restrictions placed upon them . . . a special type of N would need to be posited, which is no more economical than classifying the word as an adjective that manifests the Head of an adjective Phrase, e.g.,
 . . .
- 4) While adjectives might be considered to be a closed class of words in that there must be fewer items in it than nouns, it is presumed that new adjectives could be included, which would make it an open class of words.

(2)	/gu:tta/	“small”	/lo??o/	“good”
	/gita/	“big”	/goba/	“important”
	/mino/	“strong”	/dure/	“rich”
	/le:?e/	“thin”	/?adussa/	“long”

Since words describing colours behave like adjectives, they are treated here as adjectives,

e.g.,

(3)	/bo:tta/	“white”	/mu?ale/	“dazzling white”
	/karetta/	“black”	/zo??o/	“red”
	/bulla/	“grey”	/?alla:tte/	“spotted”

(Colours such as green and yellow are not rendered by one word, but by means of a phrase,

e.g., /ma:ta mala/ “green”,
 grass like
 (4)
 /ʔadilʔiya: mala/ “yellow”).
 yellow daisy like

Regarding his first argument, I say that his “adjectives” do inflect in the same way as his “nouns.” As discussed above, “adjectives” and “nouns” are the same morphologically, and have common semantics in each of the concrete and non-concrete forms.

Regarding his second argument, I say that “intensifiers” can modify common nouns in Adams’s sense. Even if *l677-o* ‘good’ is an adjective as Adams claims, *l677-oi* in the following would not be an adjective since, according to him, adjectives are indeclinable.

(4.2.1.4-18)

keehí l677-oi d-í-kkó shamm-aná.
 very good-NOM.SG.M.CONCR exist-SUBOR-if buy-FUT

‘If there is a very good one, I will buy (it).’

In the following, the intensifier modifies a verb in the relative form (section 4.4.3.3).

(4.2.1.4-19)

tá-yyo keehí 7er-íyo-g-éé
 my-for very know-REL.IPFV.NSBJ-NMLZ-NOM

koshsh-ées.

be.needed-IPFV.3SG.M

‘It is needed for me to know well.’

Thus, the use of “intensifiers” completely depends on semantics, not on word class. “Intensifiers” can modify any words expressing notions that can be realized to different degrees. His “adjectives” happen to be such common nouns.¹⁷⁶

Regarding his third argument, the restrictions placed upon adjective phrases are the following three factors (Adams 1983: 220–221): (I) the head of an adjective phrase may not occur in the definite (“concrete” in my terminology) form, whereas that of a modifying noun phrase may be in the definite or indefinite (“non-concrete” in my terminology) form; (II) adjective phrases may contain one or more intensifiers (*kebi* ‘very’ and *daro* ‘very’), which never appear in noun phrases, and none of the functions that do occur in noun phrases (i.e. determiner, relative clause, oblique noun phrase, numeral phrase, adjective phrase, postpositional phrase) may occur in adjective phrases; and (III) an adjective and a noun phrase cannot be conjoined. The first factor and the problems concerning the intensifier are discussed above. That the different “functions” may not occur in “adjective” phrases can also be explained semantically. Since the attributions expressed by his “adjectives” happen to be what usually unrelated to the notions of definiteness, number, etc., they are not usually modified by words that express such notions. The same semantic restriction would more or less apply to his “indefinite” nouns. What is more, I argue that such “functions” may

occur in “adjective” phrases where this makes sense. Although it is often difficult to judge whether a given common noun in non-concrete form is a “noun” or “adjective,” I can say at least that his “adjective phrases” may be modified by a postpositional phrase.

(4.2.1.4-20)

hadíy-a biitt-ái woláítt-a-daani
 (name of a land)-OBL land-NOM.SG.M.CONCR Wolaytta-OBL-like

ló77-o biitt-á.
 good-OBL.NCONCR land-ABS.NCONCR

‘The Hadiyya land is a good land like Wolaytta.’

(4.2.1.4-21)

ha zááp-ee he
 this tree-NOM.SG.M.CONCR that

zááp-iyá-ppé 7aduss-á.
 tree-OBL.SG.M.CONCR-from long-ABS.NCONCR

‘This tree is taller than that tree.’

In my analysis, the “intensifier” *dár-o* ‘very’ is a common noun in the non-concrete form, and thus an “adjective.” Adams’s last factor (III), for which examples are not given, seems to correspond to a test explained by Adams (1983: 86–87) with reference to Comrie (1981: 105): “Items which can be conjoined are considered in this thesis to manifest the same tagmeme, and those which cannot be conjoined are generally considered to manifest separate tagmemes.” However, the reference to Comrie is not appropriate. Comrie (1981: 105–107) argues that, in coordination of clauses, if a noun phrase in the second conjunct that is semantically coreferential to a noun phrase in the first conjunct can be omitted, they are syntactically treated alike, but he does not say that items that can be conjoined *are* syntactically alike. What is more, in Wolaytta, two coordinated modifiers do not seem to be conjoined by a “conjunction” unless the notions expressed by them are closely related in terms of semantics. Consider the following two examples. In (4.2.1.4-22), the two “adjectives” (*git-á* ‘big’ and *karétt-a* ‘black’) are only juxtaposed, while the two “adjectives” in (4.2.1.4-23) (*túll-e* ‘deaf’ and *dúúl-e* ‘dumb’) are conjoined by the “conjunction” *-nne* ‘and’.

(4.2.1.4-22)

tá-yyo heezz-ú git-á karétt-a
 my-for three-OBL big-OBL.NCONCR black-OBL.NCONCR

kan-atí de7-óosona.
 dog-NOM.PL exist-IPFV.3PL

‘I have tree big black dogs (lit. For me three big black dogs exist).’

(4.2.1.4-23)¹⁷⁷

ha túll-e-nne dúúd-e
 this deaf-OBL.NCONCR-and dumb-OBL.NCONCR

7ayyáán-au, ...
 spirit-VOC.SG.M.CONCR ...

‘You deaf and mute spirit ...’ (From Mark 9:25)

Thus, two linguistic forms may be alike if they can be conjoined, but the reverse is not true. Accordingly, this test is invalid for our purpose.

Regarding Adams’s fourth argument, I do not see how it relates to separating nouns and adjectives. I suspect that that was mistakenly inserted in the course of editing, and quoted the entire passage above for readers to judge.

The difficulty of separating “adjectives” from “nouns” in Wolaytta is observable in Adams’s own description. While he (1983: 267) regards /dure/ ‘rich’ as an adjective, a homophonous word is used in one of his paradigms elsewhere (1983: 216) in which a “noun phrase” manifests a Complement (i.e. is used as the predicate of a sentence, as in (4.2.1.4-13)). Is the word /dure/, then, an “adjective” or a “noun”? Are there two different but homophonous words?

Common nouns in the non-concrete absolutive may modify a verb adverbially. Such uses can be explained in the same way as above: only the notion or category expressed by the stem is in question.

(4.2.1.4-24)

dár-o galat-áis.
 much-ABS.NCONCR thank-IPFV.1SG

‘I thank (someone) a lot.’

(4.2.1.4-25)

mandád-ói ba-micc-ée-ppe
 (personal name)-NOM his.own-sister-OBL.SG.F.CONCR-from

heezz-ú láítt-a bairat-ées.
 three-OBL year-ABS.NCONCR be.older-IPFV.3SG.M

‘Mandado is three years older than (lit. old from) his sister.’

(4.2.1.4-26)

núúni síik-o d-íída.
 we love-ABS.NCONCR live-PFV.1PL

‘We lived with love.’

There is one use of the non-concrete form that is relatively common but difficult to explain. Consider the following: