The Noun Phrase in the Miri Language, Nuba Mountains

by

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Dedication

To the soul of my father,

my beloved Mother and

to my family and friends
Abstract

Research title: The Noun Phrase in the Miri Language, Nuba Mountains
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The present research is a descriptive study of one of the Nilo-Saharan languages spoken in the Nuba Mountains – Miri. It tries to describe and analyze the structure of the noun phrase in Miri, focusing on the main grammatical categories of the noun phrase in the Miri language.

The study aims at fulfilling the following objectives: to identify the different word classes that form the noun phrase in Miri, to give a preliminary description of the noun phrase in the language, to discover how the noun phrase in Miri functions and to collect information from previous studies on Miri and the data of the present research into one work, in order to provide a basis for further work in the future. The primary (linguistic) data were collected from native speakers of Miri by means of interviews and supported with relevant data from sources. A descriptive method was used in analyzing the data.

The study came out with the following findings. Firstly, the noun phrase in Miri consists of a noun as its main constituent, followed by a number of modifiers. Secondly, Miri has a system of three pronouns (independent, possessive and reflexive pronouns). Thirdly, the noun phrase in Miri has different syntactic functions. The findings of this study are expected to help in designing an orthographic system for the Miri language, which will facilitate the process of documenting the Miri language and literature.

In light of the above findings, the researcher recommends future research on Miri, particularly on some phonological issues related to the structure of the noun phrase and verbal syntax.
مستخلص

عنوان البحث: الجملة الإسمية في لغة الميري بمنطقة جبال النوبة

اسم الطالب: أحمد محمد أحمد

هذة دراسة تحليلية وصفية لإحدى اللغات النيلية الصحراوية المتحدثة في منطقة جبال النوبة، وهي لغة ميري. تقوم الدراسة بوصف وتحليل الاسم وبنية الجملة الإسمية في هذه اللغة. فتهدف الدراسة إلى وصف كامل للجملة الإسمية والتعرف على تركيبتها في لغة ميري، ووظائفها النحوية، ومن ثم تجميع المادة اللغوية عن الاسم والجملة الإسمية عن اللغة والمادة اللغوية التي جمعت لغرض هذا البحث، جمعها في عمل واحد لوضع نظام موحد لأي دراسة مستقبلية.

جمعت المادة الأولية (اللغوية) التي تقوم عليها هذه الدراسة من متحدثي لغة ميري عن طريق المقابلة الشخصية، ودعت بمادة من مصادر ثانوية ذات الصلة المباشرة بموضوع البحث. ثم تحليل المادة البحثية وفقًا للمنهج الوصفي المتعارف عليه في علم اللغويات.

توصلت الدراسة إلى عدة نتائج، أهمها أن الجملة الإسمية تتكون من الاسم كمكونين رئيس ينبعه عدد الأمدات المميزة له، وأن لغة ميري نظام للضمائر يشمل ثلاثة ضمائر (المستقلة وضمائر الملكية والمنعكسة)، وأن للجملة الإسمية وظائف نحوية مختلفة. فيتوقع لهذه الدراسة أن تساعد في وضع نظام موحد لكتابة لغة ميري، ومن ثم تراثها.

في ضوء النتائج أعلاه توصي الدراسة بإجراء مزيد من البحوث على لغة ميري، ولاسيما المتعلقة ببعض السمات الصوتية ذات الصلة بنية الجملة الإسمية، بالإضافة إلى دراسة الوظائف النحوية للفعل.
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I also express my thanks to my friend Eisa Mohamed Awal, who encouraged me and supported me to study the language. Many thanks to my sister Najat Mohamed Adam who stood with me in everything for this study.

Deep thanks to my family: my mother who always supports me to do my work in the proper way and my wife for being so patient with me.
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<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>first person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>second person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>third person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJ</td>
<td>adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATR</td>
<td>advanced tongue root</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEN</td>
<td>beneficiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMR</td>
<td>comparative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>copula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVC</td>
<td>consonant vowel consonant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEM</td>
<td>demonstrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>genitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN</td>
<td>locative noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOC PRO</td>
<td>locative pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOC</td>
<td>locative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NK</td>
<td>North Kordofan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>noun phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUM</td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>personal pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSS</td>
<td>possessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUANT</td>
<td>quantifiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFL</td>
<td>reflexive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBJ</td>
<td>subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPP N</td>
<td>suppletive noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNS</td>
<td>tense marker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Symbols and diacritics

- morpheme boundary

+ boundary between two elements of a compound

→ lexical rule (used in ordering the components of a certain structure)
Map 1. Miri, Kadugli, Katcha

(Source: Map 9.MIRI, KADUGLI, KATCHA Stevenson 1956-57)
Map 2. Language families (Nuba Mountains)

Miri is spoken in area number 29.

http://www.smi.uib.no/sa/tan/nuba.html)
Map 3. Western village-areas (Miri circle)

(Source: Kadugli locality (1986), South Kordofan state, Sudan)
Section One

Introductory notes

1. Introduction

This chapter is an introductory chapter. It introduces some important information about the Miri language, such as its location and number of speakers; its classification, its endangered situation and the previous studies which have been carried out. In addition, this chapter presents the methodology adopted for this study, i.e. the objective of the study, methods, data collection and the organization of the study.

1.1 The Miri language: Location and speakers

Miri is a language spoken in the Nuba Mountains in the South Kordofan state. Its location is about 30 kilometres west of the town Kadugli,

Miri is primarily spoken in seventeen areas. These villages start from Kohaliat, Miri barra up to Kanga as shown in map 3. The exact number of Miri speakers is difficult to determine. The number of Miri speakers was estimated by Baumann (1987:20) as 2.500, with 800 – 1.000 living as labour migrants in Kadugli and Khartoum in the year 1955/6. A more recent number of Miri speakers is 800, estimated by Kuku\textsuperscript{11} (p.c.2011). The number of Miri speakers is estimated by Ethnologue to be 4.000 (in 2004) (Lewis et al 2013).

As mentions by (Stevenson 1956-57:105) “Number of speakers 648 TP. This figure is however incomplete and does not cover all the hills where the language is spoken.”

\textsuperscript{1}Hamid Kuku, the manager of the Nuba Mountains Committee for Development and Peace (N. K.).
1.2 Language name and community

The origin of the name Miri seems to, according to Miri speakers, firstly come from the following story. During the Turkish colonialism (1821) in Sudan, some people of Miri were in a camp of training. One of the Turkish leaders asked them 'Are you ready to fight?' They replied, ‘We are Miri’. Secondly, the Miri say that there was a deaf man, and when one of the Turks asked him ‘What is your name?’, he said ‘Miri’.

The word ‘Miri’ is therefore the self-designation of the people, and other tribes have taken over this name and call them *Miri* as well. The meaning of the name has no negative connotation to the speakers of the language and is widely used in the Sudanese culture, i.e. this language name is well known to outsiders including linguists.

It is important to note that the Miri people use the same root *miri* to refer to their language as *Timiri* and to themselves as *Kamiri*. It also has several alternative names used by Arab groups when referring to Miri speakers such as *Mirawi* (Baumann 1987:22).

Having mentioned the origin of the Miri name and the approximate number of the speakers, some background information about the Miri community is presented next. All Miri speakers are Muslims. Most of the people work in agriculture. They grow mainly sorghum and sesame. The Miri community is divided into two principal villages, which are distinguished according to their location as *Miri aribaro*, the inner Miri (in Sudanese Arabic: Miri guwa), and *Miri moguro*, the outer Miri (in Sudanese Arabic: Miri barra). They are located in the southern and northern part of the Miri Hills respectively and they are surrounded by smaller settlements.
1.3 The classification of the language

This section discusses the classification of the Miri language. Stevenson (1956-57) states that there are three main divisions of the Kordofanian languages in the Nuba Mountains: Western: Tulishi, Keiga, Kanga, Central: Miri, Kadugli and Tumma. Eastern: Krongo, Tumtum (see figure 1 below). Miri thus belongs together with Kadugli to the Central branch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kordofanian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western    Central     Eastern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulishi   Miri           Krongo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keiga     Kadugli        Tumtum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanga     Tumma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. The classification of the Kordofanian language family by Stevenson (1956-57:73)

Greenberg (1966) classified the Kordofanian family into five distinguishable groups. He classified Miri as a language of the Kadugli group, i.e. he saw the close relationship between Miri and Kadugli (see figure 2 below).
Schadeberg (1981a/1981b) investigated a word list of 100 items among more than 20 linguistic communities that speak the Kordofanian languages. He agrees that Miri is a language of the Kadugli group. But he excluded this group (Kadugli- Krongo) from Kordofanian and moved it into the Nilo-Saharan family, because as he stated, ‘it shares more common features with Nilo-Saharan languages than with Kordofanian languages’ (Schadeberg 1981a/1981b). In other words, Schadeberg argues that Miri belongs to the big phylum which is Nilo-Saharan. According to Blench (2000:3), Miri is included in the Nilo-Saharan language listing as shown in figure 3 below.
Table 1: Nilo-Saharan Kadugli – Krongo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tulishi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamdang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keiga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Sinun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiroro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadugli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katcha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krongo Abdulla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumtum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurondi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Nilo-Saharan Kadugli – Krongo group (Blench 2000)

For more details see the maps.

1.4 The endangerment of the Miri language

As it is the case with many languages in Sudan, the Miri language is considered to be highly endangered. Baumann (1987) notices that Timiri has undergone some changes in the past decades. The Miri language is endangered because it is not any longer spoken by children, especially those
who grow up in urban centres. In addition, the migration of the Miri people to different states in Sudan has increased as a result of the war in the past decades in the Nuba Mountains. Another reason for the endangerment is the multilingualism in the Miri area. Miri young people tend to use Arabic and English more often in their daily interaction outside home, this is mainly due to the domination of Arabic in the area. Jah Alla (2005) mentioned that Arabic is used as a lingua franca among the different Nuba Mountains ethnic groups. This is due to the language policy in the Sudan, where the national governments, after independence, have tried to increase the spread of Arabic as a national language in the area. Baumann (1987) showed, that in all parts of the Nuba Mountains, Arabic has been adopted by the Miri people. All Miri speakers have at least a working knowledge and a comfortable command of Arabic. Most older men learned their first Arabic during Army service during the Second World War or during labour migration in the 1940s. He added that the character of Timiri has undergone some change and that there are a number of expressions only used among the older people which represent archaisms to the younger and are replaced by Arabic loan nouns (see section 3 for more details). The endangerment of the Miri language was first noticed by Miri community members themselves, especially those who are living in big cities. These people observed that their children were unable to speak the Miri language. Also many Miri people reported that they speak Arabic because they considered it as the language of schools and cultures. These observations make it clear that there is a process of language loss threatening the Miri language.

1.5 Previous studies on Miri

There are only few linguistic attempts concerning the study of Miri. The first linguistic information about Miri is found in Stevenson (1956-57). He gave
information about the Kadugli – Krongo group. A survey of Kordofanian languages, in particular of the Kadugli- Krongo group, has been carried out by Schadeberg (1981). In his survey, he established a lexical database and some basic information on the noun class system of these language groups. Miri is therefore considered as a poorly known language.

There are no specific linguistic studies and no comprehensive descriptive studies which investigate Miri. There are studies aiming at the investigation of Miri from a sociolinguistic point of view, as Baumann (1987), who described the national integration and local integrity of Miri. There is a recent MA study by Suker (2013) focusing on the verb morphology of Miri. The Miri language committee (2005) has published short stories and a Miri alphabet book.

1.6 Objectives of the study

The study is set to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the different word classes that forms the noun phrase in Miri.
2. To give a preliminary description of the noun phrase in the language.
3. To discover how the noun phrase in Miri functions.
4. To collect information from previous studies on Miri and the data of the present research into one work, in order to provide a basis for further work in the future.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study is considered as the first attempt of its kind in studying Miri from a syntactic point of view. This study can thus be regarded as a significant contribution to our knowledge of one of the small and endangered languages of Sudan.
1.8 The informants

The native speakers of Miri, who were consulted, have been very keen to work on their language and their pronunciations were very clear. Regular sessions with them were held 3 days a week between 1-3 hours per day. These meetings started in July 2009, in the Sahafa area of AlObeid city, in North Kordofan. The numbers of the informants are two. In addition, we had irregular meetings with the members of the language committee of Miri.

I worked for six months with the speakers. The first of the speakers is a 53 year-old man, Hamid Kafi, who lives in Alobeid. He was born in the Miri area, west of Kadugli. He speaks the language fluently and understands the language in detail. The second speaker is female and her name is Huweida Abd-Alaziz, she is 30 years old and was born and lives in Alobeid. She understands the language, but she is not fluent in the language. In the Miri area, only people over sixty years know the language, but most of these people have nowadays migrated to other areas in Sudan.

1.9 Data collection

The study used different techniques in collecting primary data: the first is the ‘direct interview’. In this interview, I asked the native speakers direct questions, and then I took notes and wrote the words in IPA. Then I analyzed them to elicit useful information that helps in describing the various morphological features of the language. The second approach for collecting the data was ‘sentence elicitation’. I gave the native speakers sentences in Arabic in order to translate them to Miri. Sometimes I recorded, using cassette tapes or a mobile phone. Elicitation was done with native speakers in Arabic and rarely in English. The data consists of approximately 160 sentences, with approximately 500 words.
1.10 Presentation of the language data

Miri language data are presented as follows. In each example there are three lines: the first line gives the data in the target language (i.e. the Miri language). The second line represents the glossing morpheme-by-morpheme. The third line gives a free translation of the phrases and clauses into English.

1.11 Organization of the study

This study consists of four sections. Section one gives a brief background about the language and its classification. Information about Miri speakers and their community is mentioned. The section gives information about the objectives and significance of the study. It sheds light also on the way of presenting the data as well as of collecting it.

Section two is about the theoretical background and the Miri phonology. The focus is on one of the major categories of language, which is the noun phrase. The different morphological and syntactical phenomena associated with this category are presented in detail. Although the thesis is about the noun phrase, Miri phonology is also discussed with a focus on the vowels and consonants to give the reader some background information about phonology.

Section three analyses the noun phrase in Miri. It is divided into three major sub-sections. The first sub-section deals with word classes. The second sub-section focuses on the head of the noun phrase: nouns and pronouns. The discussion of nouns focuses on the marking of singular and plural. Different types of nouns are also illustrated with their structure such as: singulative nouns, mass and collective nouns, loan nouns, locative nouns, and kinship terms. In addition the Miri pronominal system is described such as: personal pronouns, possessive constructions, pronominal possessives and nominal possessives. Each of these pronouns is discussed and described in detail. The
third sub-section is about the nominal modifiers found in the language, mainly the adjectives, numerals and non-numeral quantifiers, in addition to the prepositional phrase and the relative clause. Each modifier is discussed and described in detail. In addition, the number agreement between modifiers and the head noun is explained. The section concludes by showing how the noun phrase in Miri is constituted.

Section four is about the functions of noun phrases in Miri. It covers the functions of noun phrases as subject, object, beneficiary, object of a preposition, genitive, comparative, and relative noun phrases, in addition to word order.

The study concludes with section five where the findings are summarized and some aspects for future research are discussed.
Section Two

Theoretical background and Miri phonology

2. Introduction

It has been noted that every language has a grammar which contains structured patterns. These patterns can be studied. So in order to study these patterns we concern ourselves with the way they combine in a linear order to form the grammatical sentences that we use in our languages (Bloomfield 1933:5).

Lyons (1968) defines grammar as consisting of the forms of words and the manner of their combination in phrases, clauses and sentences. Some linguists, as mentions by Tallerman (1998), uses the term ‘grammar’ to mean the same as syntax, although most linguists follow the more recent practice whereby the grammar includes all of its organizing principles, information about the sound system and about the form of words, and how to adjust language according to context.

2.1 Grammatical categories

Payne (1997:32) states that in traditional grammar grammatical categories are called “parts of speech”. Every language has at least two major grammatical categories: noun and verb. Two other minor categories are adjectives and adverb which may or may not be found in any given language. Grammatical categories are distinct from formal relational categories, such as subject, object and predicate, or functional categories, such as agent, topic or definite noun phrase. Payne (1997) says that each grammatical category has both morphological and syntactic properties. The grammatical category noun can for example function syntactically as the head of a noun phrase, or it can
express number morphologically. For example, a noun phrase may function as subject as in ‘the boys eat vegetable’ where, in the noun phrase (NP) ‘the boys’, the word ‘boys’ functions as head and ‘the’ as the determiner of the NP. This can be illustrated with the Miri sentence below:

1)  a-leela  ka-kori  ayio  
   PL-boy  COP-eat  vegetable  
   ‘The boys eat (a/the) vegetable’

The word a-leela ‘boys’ functions as the head of the noun phrase and this noun phrase functions as subject, the word ka-kori ‘eat’ functions as a verb and the noun ayio ‘vegetable’ constitutes a noun phrase that functions as object. Miri lacks indefinite and definite articles.

### 2.2 Phrase structure

As mentions by Pace (1997:12) “a phrase is a group or potential group of words that are linked in the same way.” That is to say, a phrase is the unit of the grammatical hierarchy, which is at the level above the word. That means words are the units which make up phrases or are the constituents of phrases. Thomas (1993) shows that phrases are descriptive units that may contain one or more morphemes. Therefore phrases internally usually contain different parts which function externally as the subject, predicate and object. They are known by names such as noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, prepositional phrase, etc. With all these definitions in our minds, one can conclude that a phrase is really a group of words that function externally as a unit.

### 2.3 Noun phrase

Cope (1994) mentions that phrases that occur in clause positions that realize A (agent) and P (patient) roles are usually noun phrases. Lyons (1968) shows
that all linguists regard the noun as the central constituent of the noun phrase which behaves as its head. This head may form a noun phrase with one or more other modifying constituents that function to describe the noun. These modifying elements may come before or after the noun depending on the language.

Thomas (1993) and other linguists call the modifiers by their position in the phrases. For instance those modifiers that come before the nouns are called pre-modifiers and those which follow the nouns are called post-modifiers.

Payne (1997:33) agrees that ‘in phrases, nouns serve as heads of noun phrases’. So, the head of a noun phrase is the one word in the phrase, which refers to the same entity that the whole phrase refers to. As Watters (2000:203) argues, the modifiers in the noun phrase usually agree with the head noun, and so does any anaphoric pronoun.

2.3.1 Simple noun phrase

A simple noun phrase is the most common noun phrase in many languages. The simplest noun phrase contains a single word which is either a noun or a pronoun. In most languages pronouns occur alone in noun phrases without any modifiers. Other types of simple noun phrases contain single-word modifiers such as the ones discussed below.

2.3.1.1 Articles

As stated by Shopen (2007 b:152) “some languages require articles while others lack articles. One language, in which there is an indefinite article, but no definite article is Amele (Roberts 1987), a Madang language of Papua New Guinea, which has an indefinite article oso, which follows the noun.” as in the example below:
2) Amele (Roberts 1987)

a. *dana oso ija na sigin heje on*
    man INDEF SG GEN knife illicit take.3SG. REM. PST
    'A man stole my knife'.

b. *dana ho-i-a*
    man come-3SG-PST today
    'The man came today'.

Example 2a) includes an indefinite article 'oso' which follows the noun 'dana'. Example 2b) illustrates a definite sentence, but lacks a definite article.

Also Shopen (2007 b:152) has argued that there are some languages with neither an indefinite article nor a definite article. In such languages, noun phrases are generally vague with respect to definiteness as in example 3 for Cherokee (Iroquoian, North Carolina and Tennesse):

3) Cherokee (Scancarelli 1987: 190)

*Ki:hli u:-skala achu:ca*
    dog 3SG-bite boy
    'The/a dog bites the/a boy'.

From example 3 above we notice that this language lacks articles. Example 4 below indicates that the Miri nonu phrase also lacks indefinite and definite articles.

4) *tiira ki-dano beela*
    dog COP-bite boy
    ‘The/a dog bites the/a boy.’
2.3.2 Modifiers

2.3.2.1 Demonstratives

As stated by Haspelmath et al (2005:170) “demonstratives are divided into pronominal demonstratives, which substitute for a noun (phrase), and adnominal demonstratives, which accompany a coreferential noun” as in the second English example below:

a. I don't like that.  (Pronominal)

b. This book.  (Adnominal)

Also he mentioned that adnominal demonstratives can be clitics. Demonstrative clitics are bound forms that attach to a noun or another word in the noun phrase. See the example from Lango (Niloitic, Uganda) below:

5) Lango (Noonan 1992:155)

\[ gwok =ki \]
dog this
'This dog'.

Notice that the demonstrative in example 5 follows the noun in the noun phrase. Shopen (2007b:162) argues that these are two features that characterize demonstratives in most languages. The first can be used to draw the hearer's attention to something in the perceptual space of the speaker and hearer, possibly with a gesture indicating the approximate location of the referent. The second is that they involve at least a two-way contrast in terms of distance from the speaker as in English this and that. Miri also employs a two-way distinction:

this /these  Miri equivalent: \textit{m-ino } F.SG/ \textit{ino } M.SG/ \textit{k-ino} PL

that /those  Miri equivalent: \textit{m-ane} F.SG/ \textit{kane} M.SG/ \textit{k-ino} PL

More details in section 3.3.6.
2.3.2.2 Numerals

According to (Dryer quoting Shopen 2007:164) there are two sorts of numeral words that occur as modifiers of nouns. One of these are the cardinal numerals, words that indicate how many referents the noun phrase denotes, as in the English NP ‘three books’. The second are ordinal numerals, which are most commonly derived from cardinal numerals as illustrated by the English suffix -th (six vs. sixth). Also he mentions that cardinal and ordinal numerals often differ in their syntax as illustrated in the example from Karo Batak (Dryer 2007:164, quoting Woollams 1996):

6) Karo Batak

a. telu  wari
   three   days
   'Three days'.

b. lubang  pelimaken
   hole      fifth
   'The fifth hole'.

Example 6a) above indicates that the cardinal numeral precedes the noun while in 6b) the ordinal numeral follows the noun.

Higher numerals are usually formed on the base of lower numerals. For example, Comrie (1976) gives the following example from Mandarin.

7) Mandarin

er  - shi - liu
two - ten - six
'twenty six'

He added that in Mandarin the convention is that a numeral before the word ten is to be multiplied by ten while any numeral after ten is to be added to this product ([2x10] + 6).
Numerals in Miri are used as modifiers of nouns. The numerals are built on a base six systems, but with base ten for 10 to 14. For more details see section 3.3.4.

2.3.2.3 Adjectives

An adjective is a word used to describe a noun in a noun phrase. Bickford (1998) views an adjective as a word which is used to describe a property or characteristic of a noun. (Dixon quoting Shpoen 2007a:14) points out that there are four types which are typically associated with adjective classes: Dimension: ‘big, small’, Age: ‘new, old’, Value: ‘good, bad’, and Colour: ‘black, white’. Haspelmath et al (2005) mentions that adjectives may occur either as predicates (for example, *This apple is red*) or within noun phrases, where they typically function as attributives to nouns (for example, *I want the red apple*).

Within the noun phrase, adjectives are seen as modifiers of nouns, as shown in the example from the Swahili language below:

8) Swahili

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hii} & \quad \text{shati} & \quad \text{myeupe} \\
\text{this} & \quad \text{shirt} & \quad \text{white} \\
\text{'This white shirt'}. \\
\end{align*}
\]

9) Swahili

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ki-tabu} & \quad \text{ki-zuri} \\
\text{c/7-book} & \quad \text{c/7-nice} \\
\text{'Nice book'} \\
\end{align*}
\]

10) Swahili

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wa-toto} & \quad \text{wa-zuri} \\
\text{c/2-children} & \quad \text{c/2-nice} \\
\text{'Nice children'}. \\
\end{align*}
\]
It is important to note here that adjectives in Swahili follow the noun they modify and at the same time agree with the noun they modify.

In Miri adjectives agree in number with the noun they modify. For further discussion of adjectives in the noun phrase, see section 3.3.3.

2.3.3 Complex noun phrases

A complex noun phrase contains not only single-word modifiers, but also possessive constructions (section 2.3.3.1), reflexive constructions (section 2.3.3.2), prepositional phrases (section 2.3.3.3) and relative clause (section 2.3.3.4).

2.3.3.1 Possessive constructions

Payne (1997:104) considers a possessive noun phrase to contain two elements (i.e. a possessor and a possessed item). This means that a possessor can be regarded as the genitive (regardless of whether the language has a morphological genitive case or not). Also he points out that the possessed item can be referred to as the possessum or the possessee. For example, ‘Mary’s dog’, where the word ‘Mary ‘in the phrase is the possessor and the word ‘dog’ is the possessee, and ‘s’ marks the possessive relationship.

Complex noun phrases are genitive constructions with nominal possessors (Shopen 2007:151). These are constructions in which a noun occurs with another noun phrase denoting a possessor as in English London's mayor or the mayor of London. Example from Kayardild (Evans 1995: 177).

11) Kayardild

\[\text{dangka - karra - dulk}\]

\[\text{man - GEN country}\]

'The man's country'.

The noun /dangka-karrai/ is the possessor or the genitive noun phrase.
Shopen (2007:178) also mentions that “some languages mark the possessor while other languages mark the possessed noun as shown in the example from Hua, a Trans-New Guinean language, it is the possessor which is marked, occurring in the genitive case.”

12) Hua

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
    \text{de-ma’} & \text{fu} \\
    \text{man-GEN} & \text{pig} \\
\end{array}
\]

'The man's pig'.

A possessive noun phrase may alternatively contain a possessive pronoun. All these possessive pronouns are used either before the nouns or after the nouns depending on the type of the syntactic structure of the language.

In Miri possessive pronoun remain the same with singular or plural possessed nouns. More details in section 3.2.2.2.

2.3.3.2 Reflexive pronouns

Many African languages mark the reflexive on the verb. Other languages indicate it by means of a pronoun or noun that has been assigned a reflexive meaning. In fact, 'body' is used in many languages across Africa as the reflexive, as well as 'head', 'heart', and 'soul' (Watters, 2000).

Miri reflexive pronouns are shown in table 15 (see section 3.3.2.2).

2.3.3.3 Prepositional phrase

A prepositional phrase is a term used for the combination of a preposition and a noun phrase. So a prepositional phrase has been defined as a phrase that is made up of two constituents, the preposition and a noun phrase. This noun phrase can be called an embedded noun phrase or the object of the preposition (Pace 1997:27).
A prepositional phrase can occur within the noun phrase. In this case, Thomas (1993:91) considers that a ‘prepositional phrase is an adjective phrase which functions to modify the head noun that precedes it’.

Prepositions in Miri follow the noun that they modify as discussed in section 3.3.1.

2.3.3.4 Relative clauses

The relative clause may be thought of as a construction that is entirely embedded in a noun phrase and which may describe the head noun. The relative clause primarily acts as an adjective when it specifies what the head noun refers to or provides additional information about it (Bickford, 1998).

‘A relative clause can function as nominal modifier’ (Payne, 1997:325). A relative clause can be pronominal, postnominal or they may be headless. Since they are the noun modifiers they can occur in the same positions as descriptive adjectives, numerals, etc.

In Miri the relative clause occurs after the head noun and the relative pronoun can either occur at the beginning or at the end of the relative clause. For further discussion see section 3.3.2.4.

2.4 Inflectional categories of nouns

Typologically, the inflectional properties of nouns tend to be the marking of gender, case and number.

2.4.1 Gender/Noun class

Payne (1997:107) mentions that a noun class, gender, or grammatical system is the grammatical classification of nouns, pronouns and other referential devices. He adds that gender for linguists is grammatical classification, which may be quite independent of any natural classification. If a language has a
gender system, then the basic of this classification is male vs. female (Shopen 2007b:241).

Miri is classified within the Kadu-group which is a family that has been recognized by many linguists to lack gender markers in their grammar. Miri has a gender system in that it distinguishes masculine and feminine in its pronouns.

2.4.1.1 Miri gender
Miri gender is marked on the pronouns: 2SG, 3SG, 1PL and 2PL, while the nouns are not marked (for more detail sees section 3), as shown in the examples below:

13) *kuloba, okok aana tarabza*

   knife 3SG.F on table

   ‘The knife, she is on the table.’

14) *sulk, ii aana trabiza*

   arrow 3SG.M on table

   ‘The arrow, he is on the table.’

2.4.2 Case
Some languages have formal markers on the noun to indicate the grammatical relation or function of its noun phrase in the sentence. This is called case (Payne 2007).

Miri does not make a formal distinction between subject and object, so it does not have case in its grammar. Instead Miri uses prepositions to mark the noun phrases that fulfil the different peripheral semantic roles present in the language.
2.4.3 Number

The category of number is frequently denoted in nouns, verbs, pronouns and attributives. Some languages distinguish singular, dual and plural, and a few indicate singular, dual, trial and plural (Nida 1965).

According to Payne (1997:96) the most common number distinctions found in languages are singular vs. plural, less common distinctions are singular, dual and plural, as in the Arabic language. Miri distinguishes between singular and plural.

Number is usually morphologically marked either by affixes, internal change, reduplication, etc. The way of marking differs from a language to another.

Singular and plural nouns in Miri are marked by the process of prefixation. Miri has inherently plural (collective) nouns and singulative nouns, in addition to different strategies of plural formation of names (more details in section 3.2).

2.5 Definition of terms

This thesis focuses on the syntax of the Miri noun phrase, but it also deals with the morphology of Miri nouns. That is why this section introduces some basic morphological terminology.

2.5.1 Morphology

This part presents some background to the morphological analysis of the Miri noun phrase. According to Van Valin (2001:13), “morphology is concerned with the structure of words and morphological analysis is the process by which linguists break complex words down into their component parts.” Also Yule (2006:62) states that morphology literally means the study of forms and the basic elements that are used in a language. For instance, the English word ‘cats’ consists of two morphemes ‘cat’ and ‘-s’. This leads to the distinction
between two types of morphemes: free morphemes and bound morphemes (Spencer 1991). Free morphemes stand alone as single words, e.g. ‘cat’, but bound morphemes never occur alone and must attach to another form to give meaning, e.g. ‘-s’ means plural in English nouns. Spencer (1991) adds that ‘a morphologically complex word will contain a central morpheme which contributes to the basic meaning and a collection of other morphemes serving to modify this meaning in various ways. These morphemes are known as the root and affixes respectively’.

Pace (1997) mentions that linguists usually use the term morphology to designate the study of the structures of words and the term syntax to describe the study of the structures of larger units.

2.5.2 Affixation

Affixes play an important role in the structure of words. Affixes are bound morphemes which carry grammatical meaning that add to the basic meaning of the root. Affixation is a process by which prefixes, suffixes, infixes and circumfixes are attached to the root. According to Yule (1990), prefixes are attached before the roots, suffixes are attached after the roots, infixes are placed inside the roots and circumfixes are considered discontinuous morphemes.

Payne (1997:114) mentions “For our purposes a copula is any morpheme (affix, particles, or verb) that join or ‘couples’ two nominal elements in a predicative nominal construction. It marks the clause as predicate nominal and often carries the tense/aspect and other information necessary for predications in the language.”

In Miri there is a large number of affixes of various kinds. For example Miri has a number of noun prefixes which are attached to the root in order to distinguish between singular and plural nouns (e.g. the prefix na- for plural,
for more details see section 3.2.3.1). Moreover, Miri makes use of a few suffixes with nouns, e.g. the suffix –\(ni\) (see section 3.2.3.2).

2.5.3 Suppletion

Bybee (1985) states that suppletion is a type of allomorph in which the suppletive forms are considered as lexical irregularities. According to Finnegan (2004) suppletion is the (complete or partial) replacement of one form by another as in the English example of ‘go’ and ‘went’. Miri has a few nouns that make number through suppletion. Suppletive nouns in their singular forms do not have a morphologically related plural form. The plural is formed by a completely different form (this is called complete suppletion) or by a partially different form (partial suppletion). For more details see section 3.2.3.3.

2.5.4 Phonology

This section describes the phonological system of Miri in order to give the reader some background information. Note that a phoneme is a distinctive sound that changes the meaning of a word.

2.5.4.1 Tone

Yip (2002:1) mentions that “a language is a ‘tone language’ if the pitch of the word can change the meaning of the word. Not just its nuances, but its core meaning.” She also added that Africanists have traditionally used a set of accent marks to convey tone.

Miri is possibly a tone language, but I have not investigated tone in this research. This thesis does not mark tone, except the high tone on the long vowel, as in table 1 below:
Table 1. Miri high tone (on long vowels)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel length</th>
<th>Tone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>áa</td>
<td>1SG. high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>íi</td>
<td>3SG. high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>óó</td>
<td>2SG. high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>óó</td>
<td>2PL. high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5.4.2 Vowels

Casali (2001) stated that a very large number of African languages have symmetric triangular vowel system with one or more central vowels and an equal number of front and back vowels. Clements (2000) suggested the types of vowel systems that are widely found in Africa are: five vowels, seven vowels and nine vowels.

Many languages of Africa possess two sets of vowels which are known as + Advanced Tongue Root (+ ATR) and -Advanced Tongue Root (-ATR) (Casali 2001). This is also true for Miri. Miri has ten vowels (+/-ATR) ‘o, e, i, 2, o’. The transcription used here conforms to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

2.5.4.2.1 Advanced Tongue Root [ATR]

Chapman et al (1990:80) stated that the shape and the position of the tongue root may affect the vowel quality in the process of production. During the production the tongue root may advance (i.e. move forward) or it may retract (i.e. move backward). The advanced tongue root movement may cause the
size of the pharyngeal cavity to expand or enlarge and the larynx to lower, while the backward movement may cause the size of the pharyngeal cavity to decrease. This increase and decrease set up two distinctive vowel sets. One is marked [+ATR] and the other is marked [-ATR].

Miri has ten vowel phonemes. They can be divided in terms of the feature Advanced Tongue Root [ATR] into two sets. The first includes [+ ATR] vowels and the second comprises [-ATR] vowels as shown in table 2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[+ATR]</th>
<th>[-ATR]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Miri [±ATR] vowels phonemes

The phonetic description of Miri vowel phonemes is shown in example 15 below:

15) Miri vowel phonemes

a. [+ATR] vowel phonemes = advanced tongue root

/ɪ/  close-front unrounded vowel

/e/  half-open front unrounded vowel

/a/  open central unrounded vowel

/o/  half-open back rounded vowel

/u/  close-back rounded vowel

b. [-ATR] vowel phonemes = retracted tongue root.

/ɪ/  close-front unrounded vowel
/e/    half-open front unrounded vowel
/a/    open central unrounded vowel
/o/    half-open back rounded vowel
/u/    close-back rounded vowel

In Miri [-ATR] vowels are more frequently used than [+ ATR] vowels.

In contrast to the system of 5 short vowels, the systems of long vowels comprise 5 units only. Miri vowel length is illustrated in the example below:

16) Miri vowel length

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Miri equivalent</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) /aa/</td>
<td>aatu</td>
<td>'head'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) /ee/</td>
<td>eefo</td>
<td>'cows'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) /ii/</td>
<td>iito</td>
<td>'horns'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) /oo/</td>
<td>oore</td>
<td>'pot'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) /uu/</td>
<td>uufu</td>
<td>'meat'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that long vowels may also occur in the positions of personal pronouns, prepositions or tense markers.

2.5.4.3 Consonants

Nasr (1980:170) mentions that a consonant is defined as any speech sound made by partly or completely stopping the flow of air as it goes through the mouth. A phoneme means that it is a distinctive sound which can change meaning in a word.
Miri has 20 consonant phonemes. They are shown in Table 3 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosives</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>ɗ</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implosives</td>
<td>ɓ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>ʃ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>ɲ</td>
<td>ŋ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral</td>
<td></td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trill</td>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glides</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Phonemic inventory of Miri consonant phonemes

The phonetic description of these sounds is as follows:

**Plosive**

/p/ voiceless aspirated velar plosive

/b/ voiced bilabial plosive

/t/ voiceless alveolar plosive

/d/ voiced alveolar plosive

/g/ voiced velar plosive
/q/ voiced  retroflex plosive

Implosive

/ɓ/ voiced  bilabial implosive

Fricative

/f/ voiceless  labio-dental fricative
/s/ voiceless  alveolar fricative
/z/ voiced  alveolar fricative
/f/ voiceless  palatal fricative

Nasal

/m/ voiced  bilabial nasal
/n/ voiced  alveolar nasal
/ŋ/ voiced  palatal nasal
/ŋ/ voiced  velar nasal

Lateral

/l/ voiced  alveolar lateral

Trill

/r/ voiced  alveolar trill

Glide

/y/ voiceless  palatal glide
/w/ voiced bilabial glide

2.5.4.3.1 Minimal Pairs

In this section we will attempt to determine which consonant sounds actually belong to the same class by examining the distribution of the sounds. It has been stated by phonologists that two sounds that are phonetically similar may occur in the same phonetic environment. And if one sound is substituted for another and this results is a difference in meaning, then it means that they are different phonemes. For example, if [f] is substituted for [l] in the word \[fina\] ‘hear’, a different meaning will result namely \[liña\] ‘woman’. Thus, [f] and [l] are different phonemes. If the two words differ only because of two different sounds (e.g. at the beginning), we say that the words constitute a minimal pair. The word \[fina\] ‘hear’ and the word \[liña\] ‘woman’ form a minimal pair since they differ in one consonant only (Lyons 1968: 114 and Hyman 1975: 65).

In order to present evidence of the occurrence of consonant contrasts, table 4 below shows some minimal pairs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contrasts</th>
<th>Word 1</th>
<th>Word 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>k d</td>
<td><em>ki</em> liver</td>
<td><em>di</em> house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f l</td>
<td><em>fjna</em> hear</td>
<td><em>lipa</em> woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k f</td>
<td><em>ka</em> person</td>
<td><em>fa</em> tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nj nj</td>
<td><em>nja</em> wind</td>
<td><em>jya</em> mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k m</td>
<td><em>kana</em> there</td>
<td><em>mana</em> who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t th</td>
<td><em>tila</em> young</td>
<td><em>thila</em> small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t l</td>
<td><em>tata</em> grandmother</td>
<td><em>lata</em> lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w j</td>
<td><em>wane</em> go</td>
<td><em>jane</em> village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f n</td>
<td><em>fini</em> path/road</td>
<td><em>nini</em> his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k th</td>
<td><em>kabu</em> axe</td>
<td><em>thabo</em> big</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Miri consonant minimal pairs

Notice also that there is doubling of consonants, tt, nn, ss…etc in Miri. They never occur in initial position, for example:

17) **muttu** 'horse'

18) **timmi** 'horns’
Section Three

Analysis of the Miri noun phrase

3. Introduction

This chapter analyzes the structure of noun phrases in Miri. This analysis attempts to find the specific rules and patterns for the noun phrase.

3.1 Word classes

Miri has a number of word classes that differ morphologically from each other. It is mentioned by Payne (1997) that the class of nouns in any language includes words that express the most time-stable concepts e.g. ‘rock’, ‘tree’, etc. These are concepts that characteristically do not vary appreciably over time.

1) ali ‘Ali’

2) fa ‘tree’ SG na-fa ‘trees’ PL

3) misk ‘stone’ SG na-kisk ‘stones’ PL.

Examples 2 and 3 illustrate that in Miri there is distinction between singular and plural. In the case of example 2, the plural prefix na- is used and in the case of example 3, the plural prefix na- is attached to the irregular noun.

Payne also says that you cannot define a word class by its meaning. You have to define it by its form:

a) By its morphological properties e.g. only nouns are marked for SG + PL.

b) By its syntactical properties e.g. only nouns can occur as heads of noun phrases.
The main morphological characteristic of Miri nouns is its inflection for number. The main syntactic characteristic is that it occurs as the head of noun phrase that can function as the subject or object of clauses.

In Miri, nouns are characterized by the following properties:

a. They can be marked for singular or plural.

b. The nouns or pronouns can occur as heads of noun phrases.

Note that, as mentioned by Shopen (2007a: 226), “in some languages, the words serving the functions of copulas are nonverbal”. In Miri there are two copulas, one used with singular subject, the other with plural subject, that are derived from singular and plural third persons, but only in case if the subject is unknown. Also these copulas are used with verbs and the differentiation between them is according to number.

3.2 Nouns

As discussed in section 2.3, the head of a noun phrase is a noun or pronoun. The following sections introduce the different types of nouns and pronouns in Miri.

3.2.1 Miri gender on nouns

Payne (1997:107) mentions that “[a] noun class, gender, or grammatical system is the grammatical classification of nouns, pronouns and other referential devices”. Shopen (2007:241) says that “nouns may be classified in various ways, only one type of classification counts as a gender system, it is one which is reflected beyond the nouns themselves through agreement”.

Miri gender is marked on the pronouns 2SG, 3SG, 1PL and 2PL while the nouns are not marked, i.e. we cannot distinguish the gender of nouns with the morphology of the noun itself. In Miri singular personal pronouns distinguish
between masculine nouns (referred to by ‘he’) and feminine nouns (referred to by ‘she’). For the nouns denoting things and abstract concepts are quite the same as the personal pronouns distinction. The grammatical gender with living beings depends on the natural gender. We find evidence for this with the demonstrative pronouns (see section 3 on demonstrative pronouns) that distinguish between masculine and feminine. See Tables 4 and 5 below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Demonstrative</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>nany</strong></td>
<td><strong>m-iɲo</strong></td>
<td>proximal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baby</td>
<td>F-DEM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intabo</td>
<td>iɲo</td>
<td>proximal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ostrich</td>
<td>M-DEM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nany</td>
<td>iɲo</td>
<td>proximal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baby</td>
<td>M-DEM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intabo</td>
<td>m-iɲo</td>
<td>proximal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ostrich</td>
<td>F-DEM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuloba</td>
<td>m-iɲo</td>
<td>proximal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knife</td>
<td>F-DEM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sulk</td>
<td>iɲo</td>
<td>proximal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrow</td>
<td>M-DEM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Examples of proximal demonstratives with gender distinction
3.2.2 Miri Nouns

This section sheds light on the various noun prefixes/suffixes that are found in Miri and other forms of nouns (such as kinship terms).

3.2.2.1 Countable nouns

Countable nouns refer to the nouns which have singular and plural forms. These nouns are marked (either by prefixes, suffixes or internal change).

3.2.2.2 Mass nouns

Mass nouns in Miri are inherently plural. These mass nouns are unmarked. Below are some examples of liquid and solid mass nouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miri</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kote</td>
<td>‘honey’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sika</td>
<td>‘milk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kididi</td>
<td>‘porridge’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2.2.3 Collective and singulative nouns

Dimmendaal (2000:218) mentions that “[…] number marking system with singulatives markers is found in Nilo-Saharan languages”. Singulative nouns indicate that only one entity of the species is referred to. Singulative refers to an individual unit of what its basic noun denote collectively.

Miri has a number of mass nouns that are inherently collective, but they do also have singular counterparts that can be expressed by any of the common singular prefixes. This means that the collective noun is considered as a base while the singulative noun has to be derived from it. See the examples below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective</th>
<th>Singulative</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aayio</td>
<td>intal-aayio</td>
<td>‘leaf/ a piece of leaf’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buku</td>
<td>anta-buku</td>
<td>‘sand/ one seed of sand’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awo</td>
<td>intal-awo</td>
<td>‘hair/ a single one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>otu</td>
<td>intol-otu</td>
<td>‘excrement/ a piece of excrement’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Miri there is only one irregular mass noun which does not behave like others in its shape, as in the example below:
### Singular | Gloss | Plural | Gloss
--- | --- | --- | ---
*thole* | ‘one piece of grass’ | *na-thole* | ‘grass’

In addition some of Miri nouns do not have plural forms as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ootro</em></td>
<td>day</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>oosokatane</em></td>
<td>night</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>fale</em></td>
<td>year</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2.2.4 Loan nouns

As in other Nuba Mountain languages, some nouns in Miri are borrowed from Arabic. These words follow the same procedure as Miri nouns in forming the plurals as shown in Table 6 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miri</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mozt</em></td>
<td><em>na-mo</em></td>
<td><em>mozt</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>matrasa</em></td>
<td><em>na-matra</em></td>
<td><em>madrasa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mofta</em></td>
<td><em>na-mof</em></td>
<td><em>mofta</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>suk</em></td>
<td><em>na-suk</em></td>
<td><em>suq</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>aba</em></td>
<td><em>na-aba</em></td>
<td><em>abu</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Miri loan nouns
Table 6 above indicates that all these loans receive the plural prefix \textit{na-}.

4) \textit{ali ma-raŋka mofta}
   ali COP-want key
   ‘Ali wants the key.’

5) \textit{ali ma-raŋka na-mofta}
   ali COP-want PL-key
   ‘Ali wants the keys.’

3.2.3 Number marking on nouns

According to Dimmendaal (2000:217), number marking in Nilo-Saharan tends to be expressed by way of suffixation. In a number of sub-groups, this may combined with prefixation. The Miri number marking system, for example, involves plural prefixes, plural suffixes, singulative prefix, irregular forms and suppletives.

3.2.3.1 The plural prefixes

Number marking in Miri expresses by means of prefixes attached to an inherently singular noun (plural marking).

3.2.3.1.1 The plural prefix \textit{na-}

A very productive plural marker in Miri is the prefix \textit{na-}. This plural prefix marks countable nouns, as in Table 7 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lenissu</td>
<td>finger</td>
<td>na-lennisu</td>
<td>fingers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yumi</td>
<td>thorn</td>
<td>na-yumi</td>
<td>thorns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kabu</td>
<td>axe</td>
<td>na-kabu</td>
<td>axes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiri</td>
<td>river</td>
<td>na-kiri</td>
<td>rivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surne</td>
<td>book</td>
<td>na-surne</td>
<td>books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa</td>
<td>tree</td>
<td>na-fa</td>
<td>trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aatu</td>
<td>head</td>
<td>na-atu</td>
<td>heads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. The plural prefix *na-* on nouns

Examples:

6) *lenissu neete rorik*
   finger 1SG.POSS thin
   ‘My finger is thin’

7) *na-lennisu neete ko-rorik*
   PL-finger 1SG.POSS PL-thin
   ‘My fingers are thin’

The examples above indicate that there is agreement between the nouns and the adjectives in number.

3.2.3.1.2 The plural prefix *no-*

Some words in Miri that have *o* as the first root vowel take *no-* prefix. This prefix is used in connection with different kinds of roots. This shows that the distribution of ‘morphologically conditioned allomorphy’ is not without
exceptions. This marker is attached to the nouns that start with a consonant in the initial position of the noun as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>thokothak</td>
<td>forehead</td>
<td>no-thokothak</td>
<td>foreheads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kojo</td>
<td>bat</td>
<td>no-kojo</td>
<td>bats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toro</td>
<td>bull</td>
<td>no-toro</td>
<td>bulls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dotifido</td>
<td>sky</td>
<td>no-dotifido</td>
<td>skies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toluk</td>
<td>shadow</td>
<td>no-toluk</td>
<td>shadows</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. The plural prefix no- on nouns

8) iɲo        toroneete
    SG.M.DEM bull 1SG.POSS
    ‘This bull is mine’

9) k-iɲo       no-toroneete
    PL-M.DEM PL-bull 1SG.POSS
    ‘These bulls are mine’

3.2.3.2 The plural suffixes

Apart from prefixes, number marking in Miri is expressed through a variety of suffixes, i.e. -ni, -to, and -na attached to an inherently singular noun (plural marking). Most of these nouns with this suffix end with final root vowel -i or -a, there are also a few examples with consonant ending as in Table 9 below:
Table 10. The plural suffixes on nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kiɓe</td>
<td>female goat</td>
<td>kiɓe-ni</td>
<td>female goats/sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ka</td>
<td>person</td>
<td>ka-to</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kifini</td>
<td>donkey</td>
<td>kifini-na</td>
<td>donkeys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kormok</td>
<td>male goat</td>
<td>kormok-na</td>
<td>male goats/sheep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples:

10) ka aanani kiɓe ka-aba neete
   person gave goat to-father 3SG.POSS
   ‘The person gave the goat to my father’

11) naka aanani kiɓe-ni ka-aba ta-neete
   people gave goat-PL to-father PL-POSS
   ‘The people gave the goats to my father’

3.2.3.3 Irregular and suppletive forms

The border between irregular forms and suppletive forms is not clear-cut, but we are dealing here with a kind of continuum, with more or less sounds in common. Suppletive singular noun forms do not have morphologically related plural forms. Rather, the plural is formed by a completely different form. This situation is also found in Miri. It has a few nouns that are considered to be suppletive forms. That is the form of singular noun which is completely different from its plural counterpart, as in Table 10 below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ontiiyi</td>
<td>bird</td>
<td>akoyi</td>
<td>birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aawe</td>
<td>eye</td>
<td>iyie</td>
<td>eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liña</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>iia</td>
<td>women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awa</td>
<td>leg</td>
<td>onee</td>
<td>legs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misik</td>
<td>stone</td>
<td>nakisik</td>
<td>stones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mite</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>nikite</td>
<td>men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fio</td>
<td>cow</td>
<td>eefo</td>
<td>cows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beela</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>aleela</td>
<td>boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iiira</td>
<td>dog</td>
<td>iiitini</td>
<td>dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niisu</td>
<td>hand</td>
<td>inseene</td>
<td>hands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Examples of irregular and suppletive forms of plural of nouns

Examples with suppletive forms:

12) **aawe** **neete** **abassa**

   eye 1SG.POSS white

   ‘My eye is white’

13) **iyie** **neete** **k-abassa**

   eyes 1SG.POSS PL-white

   ‘My eyes are white’

Miri singular nouns involve irregular alternation as with the examples below:
SG
14) *mitee awe biti*
    man   drink    water
    ‘The man drinks water’

PL
15) *nakite k-a-awe biti*
    men  PL-COP-drink   water
    ‘The men are drinking water’

SG
16) *beela a-kisso fara*
    boy.SG. COP-run    well
    ‘The boy has run well’

PL
17) *aleela k-a-kisso fara*
    boy.PL  PL-COP-run well
    ‘The boys have run well’

3.2.3.4 Singulative

Miri has various singulative prefixes. The singulative is grammatically singular and morphologically marked. The plural forms are grammatically plural, but morphologically unmarked.

3.2.3.4.1 The singulative prefix *ti-*

The singular noun is marked with the prefix *ti-*, while in the plural form there is no prefix. The singulative *ti-* refers to an item, as shown in Table 11 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ti-matakek</em></td>
<td>star</td>
<td><em>matakek</em></td>
<td>stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ti-marakek</em></td>
<td>(corn of) sesame</td>
<td><em>marakek</em></td>
<td>sesame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ti-mi</em></td>
<td>thorn</td>
<td><em>mi</em></td>
<td>thorns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ti-bitiri</em></td>
<td>forest ant</td>
<td><em>bitiri</em></td>
<td>forest ants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. The prefix *ti-* on singulative nouns

Examples:

**SG**

18) ali a-ajo *ti-matakek* mazaki yom otona
    ali COP-see SG-star ADV day three
    ‘Ali saw the star last Monday’

**PL**

19) ali a-ajo *matakek* mazaki yom otona
    ali COP-see stars ADV day three
    ‘Ali saw the stars last Monday’

Example 18 indicates that the singulative noun is marked with the singular marker *ti-*., while in example 19 the plural form is not marked.

**3.2.3.4.2 The singulative prefix *to-***

Another type of singulative marking involves the prefix *to-*, illustrated in Table 12 below.
### Table 6. The marker to- on singulative nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to-sule</td>
<td>egg</td>
<td>sule</td>
<td>eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to-kororok</td>
<td>(piece of) ice</td>
<td>kororok</td>
<td>ice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to-toli</td>
<td>flower</td>
<td>toli</td>
<td>flowers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples with singulative to-:

20) ³³ a-kori  to-sule

- He COP-eat SG-egg
- ‘He eats the egg’

21) ekek  k-a-kori  sule

- they PL-COP-eat eggs
- ‘They eat the eggs’

### 3.2.3.5 Number marking on the semantic sub-group of kinship terms

Dimmendaal (2000:227) states that “kinship terms in Nilo-Saharan often - though not necessarily always, […] - have their own inflectional paradigms.” However, Miri kinship terms behave the same as other nouns. Miri kinship terms tend to take the plural markers na- and ni-. Most of the Miri kinship terms are inherently singular, i.e. the singular forms are morphologically unmarked.

#### 3.2.3.5.1 The plural prefix na-with kinship terms

The plural forms are formed by adding the productive plural prefix na- to the unmarked singular forms. The epenthetic sound -k- is inserted between the plural prefix na- and the root, if the latter starts with a vowel to avoid a sequence of vowels, as shown in Table 13 below.
### Table 14. The plural prefix *na*-with kinship terms

In Miri, some kinship terms form the plural by the productive prefix *na-* while the singular form is unmarked. In this case, the plural form behaves the same as nouns from other semantic groups.

#### 3.2.3.5.2 The plural prefix *ni*- with kinship terms

Other kinship terms in Miri are formed by the plural prefix *ni*. The plural form behaves the same as nouns from other semantic groups, as in Table 14 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>aba</em></td>
<td>father</td>
<td><em>na-aba</em></td>
<td>fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ayia</em></td>
<td>mother</td>
<td><em>na-ayia</em></td>
<td>mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>fofa</em></td>
<td>grandfather</td>
<td><em>na-fofa</em></td>
<td>grandfathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tata</em></td>
<td>grandmother</td>
<td><em>na-tata</em></td>
<td>grandmothers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. The plural prefix *ni*- with kinship terms
Examples with the plural prefix *ni*- with kinship terms:

22) *ali anii ne neete*

   *ali*  saw  sister  1SG.F.POSS
   n ‘Ali saw my sister’

23) *ali anii ni-kipi neete*

   *ali*  saw  PL-sister  1SG.F.POSS
   ‘Ali saw my sisters’

### 3.2.3.6 Nominal possessive

According to Creissels *et al* (2008:121), “a nominal possessive in most cases consists of two nouns with an overt linker meaning ‘of’ (genitive marker).” Accordingly, in Miri, the genitive construction of two nouns is formed in most cases with an overt linker *ma-*; this linker is attached to the possessor noun. The possessor nouns follow the possessed one, as shown in the examples below:

Examples with genitive marker:

24) *toro ma-ali*

   *bull*  GEN-ali
   ‘Bull of Ali’

25) *ayia ma-jori*

   *mother*  GEN-husband
   ‘Husband’s mother’

26) *tikini ma-fatima*

   *tooth*  GEN-fatima
   ‘Fatima’s tooth’
Examples of regular plural nouns in genitive construction are shown below.

27) *enkini ma-fatima*

    teeth GEN-fatima

    ‘Fatima’s teeth’

28) *eere ma-ola ta-neete*

    names GEN-friends PL-1SG.POSS

    ‘My friends’ names’

In Miri there is also the possibility of forming genitive construction of two nouns without an overt linker (called the compound noun in this thesis). The compound noun is formed as follow:
Examples:

**SG**

33) *siyia  kamee*  
field  wheat  
‘Wheat field’

**PL**

34) *na-siyia  kamee*  
PL-field  wheat  
‘Wheat fields’

We observe from the examples above, that the possessor nouns follow the possessed ones. The structure of the compound noun construction is:

Compound noun NP → N possessed+ N possessor

There is another possibility where the nominal possessive construction is formed by an overt genitive marker. The genitive marker is *ma-* , which precedes the possessor noun, see the example below:

35) *eere  ma-ola  ta-neete*  
names  GEN-PL.friend  PL-poss  
‘My friends’ names.

The possessive pronoun here is marked for plural, this is the case with plural nouns in nominal possession, then it is likely that this morpheme is needed because the plural prefix on the noun was lost (which was replaced by the genitive prefix). As shown in example 35, there is a genitive marker that marks the possessor. The structure of this nominal possessive is as follows:

P → possessed N + GEN + possessor N.
3.2.3.7 Locative markers on nouns

Miri has two types of locative markers on nouns: *ki-* and *ka-*, and one genitive marker *ma-*. In all cases, these prefixes replace all other prefixes (e.g. plural prefixes). This is the reason why I discuss locative marking in this section.

36) áa nana *ki-dı*

1SG stay LOC-home.

'I stay at home.'

Example 36 above illustrates that the locative *ki-* is prefixed to the noun to indicate static location. In this case, the nouns which take this location marker *ki-* has to occur in its singular form.

Miri prepositional nouns take the genitive marker *ma-*, for example, the prepositions *katane* and *kubu*, which mean ‘under’ and ‘inside’, respectively, trigger the marker *ma-* as a prefix on the following noun to indicate location as in examples 37a) and 37b.

37)

a. *aalili katane ma-fantee* (Lit. inside of the bag)

money PREP GEN-bag

'The money is inside the bag'

b. *ɓeela i-mik kubu ma-tarabiza* (Lit. under of the table)

child COP-sit PREP GEN-table

'The child is sitting under the table.'

In this case we can say that Miri expresses locative prepositional phrases as follows:
Prep. [inside, under] + GEN (ma-) + N.

To indicate direction, Miri uses the locative marker ka-, which usually accompanies proper nouns of place, as shown in the examples below:

38) oku mafe ka-su
    3SG.F went LOC-market
    'She went to the market.'

39) ali yia-ja ka-touri
    ali COP-travel LOC-Khartoum.
    'Ali travelled to Khartoum.'

3.3 Pronouns

According to Van Valin (2001:6) “pronouns are closely related to nouns, as they both function independently as heads of NPs. Pronouns are traditionally characterized as substitutes for nouns or as standing for nouns.”

This section consists of three sub-sections that deal with independent pronouns, possessive pronouns and reflexive pronouns.

3.3.1 Miri pronouns

Miri distinguishes up to nine personal pronouns. In verbal clauses, these pronouns are optional because the verb is already marked for person. The pronominal forms are summarized in Table 15 below.
Table 8. Miri pronouns

Note that the 3SG.F form *oku* is used when this pronoun occurs in initial position. We observe from Table 15 that the personal pronouns can occur in the subject function. In this case, they function as the head of the noun phrase as in examples 40. The object pronoun also function as head of noun phrases as in example 41.
40)

a. áa mata  
1SG. singer  
'I am a singer.'

b. ekek na-mata  
3PL. PL- singer  
'They are singers.'

c. ekek ka-kori ayio  
3PL. COP-eat vegetable  
'They eat vegetable.'

d. oku m-we biti  
3SG.F COP-drink water  
'She drinks water.'

e. íi a-leele tfïna  
3SG.M. COP-cultivate land  
'He cultivates the land.'

f. óo ilik ti-riidle  
2SG. early COP-sleep  
‘You slept early.'

g. áa aa-fi ka-su  
1SG. COP-go PREP-market  
'I went to the market.'

41)

a. ka aa-nani kîbe  
person COP-give goat  
‘The person gave the goat.'
b. *ka aa-nani okok*
   
   person COP-give 3SG.F
   
   ‘The person gave it.’

c. *áa ni okok*
   
   1SG. see 3SG.F.
   
   ‘I can see her.’

d. *oku mija áa*
   
   3SG.F. see me
   
   ‘She can see me.’

3.3.2 Possessive constructions

There are two forms of the genitive construction in Miri: pronominal possessives and nominal possessives. Even though this section focuses on pronouns, I also discuss nominal possession here, as this makes the discussion clearer.

3.3.2.1 Pronominal possessive

According to Schadeberg (1981:157), “the possessive elements precede or follow the noun”. Miri has a set of possessive pronouns which are written as independent words throughout this study, e.g. *neete* ‘mine’. For more information, see Table 15.

Possessive pronouns remain the same whether they are used with singular or plural possessed nouns. See the examples below:
The examples in 42 indicate that the pronominal possessives (possessor) follow the nouns they modify (possessed). The possessive pronoun follows the noun in the noun phrase. The structure of the possessive noun phrase is therefore as follows:

$$\text{NP} \rightarrow \text{N [Possessed]} + \text{Poss. Pron. [possessor]}$$

Some more examples with possessive pronouns:

43)

a. **yia nini ali**  
   name 3SG.M.POSS Ali  
   'His name is Ali.'

b. **aleela nono ka-kisso fara**  
   children 3SG.F.POSS COP-run well  
   'Her children have run well.'

c. **na-kayio neja kilik ti-riide**  
   PL.-mother 1PL.posd early COP-sleep  
   'Our mothers sleep early.'
d. *tola*  *notu*  *aa-jio*  *musa*

friend 2SG.M.POSS COP-see musa

'Your friend saw Musa.'

Possessive pronouns can be used with kinship terms. There is no change in the structure of the genitive construction. The kinship terms are used in the same way as other nouns. This suggests that Miri does not distinguish between alienable and inalienable nouns. See the examples below.

44)

a) *aɓa*  *neete*  *i-into*  *mitee*

father 1SG.POSS COP-strong man

'My father was a strong man.'

b) *na-kayio*  *nene*  *na-rika*

PL-mother 3PL.POSS COP-sing

'Their mothers are singing.'

c) *aɓa*  *motu*  *a-ssik*  *a-sorne*

father 2SG.M.POSS COP-move PL-book

'Your father moved the books.'

Possessive pronouns can be used together with other modifiers. They still follow the possessed noun they modify directly as shown in the examples below:

45)

a. *ɓeela*  *thobo*  *notu*

child big 2SG.M.POSS.

'Your big child.'
b. *aleela na-thobo notu eera*
   children PL-big 2PL.M. POSS. two
   'Your two big children.'

c. *na-kajo kin-thithila nene eera*
   PL-granddaughter PL-small 3PL.POSS two
   'Their two small granddaughters.'

d. *ɖi m-iɲo neete*
   house SG.F.DEM. 1SG.poss
   'This is my house.'

Example 45a shows that the adjective follows the possessive noun phrase. The possessive pronoun follows the head noun in the possessive noun phrase. Examples 45 b and c indicate that the adjective follows the possessive noun phrase while the possessive noun phrase precedes the numerals. Note that adjectives and demonstratives follow the noun. This means that we do not expect the position of the possessive pronoun to be affected. The real test is numerals which occur after the noun, in this case we see clearly that the [N-poss.] is a unit, and that the possessive occurs directly after the noun.

Possessive pronouns can be used as heads of noun phrases. In this case they have the same form as adnominal possessive. See Table 15 and examples below:

46)

a. *[kata m-iɲo] NP1 [neete] NP2*
   spear SG.F.DEM 1SG.POSS
   'This spear is mine.'

b. *[na-kata k-iɲo] NP1 [notu] NP2*
   PL-spear PL.DEM 2PL.M.POSS
   'These spears are yours.'
3.3.2.2 Reflexive pronouns

Miri has an analytic reflexive pronoun which is based on a combination of personal pronoun plus possessive pronoun as shown in Table 15. The following examples show the use of reflexive pronouns in Miri:

47)

a. *ekék ka-do na-ɖi ka-thobo kayi tanène*
   
   3PL.  COP-give  PL-house  PL-big  3PL.REFL.PRON
   
   'They gave themselves big houses'

b. *íi aa-bo kayi tini*
   
   3SG.M  COP-hit  3SG.M.REFL.PRON
   
   'He hits himself'

c. *áa tadana ana neete*
   
   1SG.  hurt  1SG.REFL.PRON
   
   'I hurt myself'

Example 47 shows that there is agreement in number between the subject and the reflexive pronoun.

Having finished presenting and analyzing Miri nouns and pronouns we now turn to the presentation of nominal modifiers that associate with the noun in order to form noun phrases.

3.4 Nominal Modifiers

Section 3.4 will present and describe the different modifiers that are found in Miri and their association with the noun they modify in a noun phrase.

Miri has different types of nominal modifiers, such as adjectives, numerals, non-numerals quantifiers, demonstratives. Some of these modifiers follow the
head noun while others precede the head noun which they modify. The following sections will describe the structure of each category and their relation to the head noun in the noun phrase.

3.4.1 Adjectives

Miri adjectives are used predicatively for adding new information about the head noun, i.e. they are predicking a property about the head noun. There is an obligatory agreement in number between the predicative adjective and the noun. When the adjective occurs as modifier in the noun phrase, it also agrees in number and gender with the head noun. The predicative adjective in Miri takes the singular and plural marker, thus agreeing with the head noun in number. Attributive and predicative markers are the same.

Examples with adjectives in predicative use

48) **kîbê**  **yia**  **aɖoɖok**
   goat  COP  black
   ‘The goat is black’

49) **atalifo**  **yie**  **k-abassa**
   feathers  COP  PL-white
   ‘The feathers are white’

Examples with adjectives in attributive use

50) **nîno**  **thobo**
   mouth  big
   ‘Big mouth’

51) **thole**  **akiri**
   grass  green
   ‘Green grass’
Adjectives in Miri take the plural prefixes *k-* and *ki-*.

For nouns with morphological plurals, noun and (predicative / attributive) adjective must both take the plural form as shown in sections below.

### 3.4.1.1 The plural marker *k-* with adjectives

The plural prefix *k-* attached to the adjective with initial vowel root *a*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>arakara</em></td>
<td><em>k-arakara</em></td>
<td>harsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>adila</em></td>
<td><em>k-adila</em></td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>atidila</em></td>
<td><em>k-atidila</em></td>
<td>bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>akiri</em></td>
<td><em>k-akiri</em></td>
<td>uncooked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>adone</em></td>
<td><em>k-adone</em></td>
<td>cook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Adjectives with plural marker *k-*

Examples with predicative adjectives:

54) **íi yia adila**

-it COP good

‘It is good’
55) ekek  yie  k-ɖila

3PL. COP PL-good
‘They are good’

3.4.1.2 The plural marker *ki-* with adjectives

The plural marker *ki-* is attached to the Miri adjective that starts with the initial digraph *th-*, as illustrated in Table 17 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>thobo</td>
<td>ki-thobo</td>
<td>big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thila</td>
<td>ki-thila</td>
<td>small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thakoro</td>
<td>ki-thakoro</td>
<td>long</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Adjectives with plural marker *ki-*

3.4.1.3 The plural marker *ko-* with adjectives

The plural marker *ko-* is attached to the Miri adjective that starts with the initial digraph *th-*, as shown in 18 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>thoko</td>
<td>ko-thoko</td>
<td>short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thabo</td>
<td>ko-thabo</td>
<td>wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rorik</td>
<td>ko-rorik</td>
<td>thin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Adjectives with plural marker *ko-*
Examples:

56) ɖokola  thabo
    fence  wide
    ‘Wide fence’

57) ɖokola  yia  thabo
    fence  COP  wide
    ‘The fence is wide’

58) na-ɖokola  ko-thabo
    PL-fence  PL-wide
    ‘Wide fences’

59) na-ɖokola  yie  ko-thabo
    PL-fence  COP  PL-wide
    ‘The fences are wide’

60) ɓonino  thoko
    chin  short
    ‘Short chin’

61) ɓonino  yia  thoko
    chin  COP  short
    ‘The chin is short’

62) na-ɓonino  yie  ko-thoko
    PL-chin  COP  PL-short
    ‘The chins are short’
3.4.1.4 Adjectives with different markers

Some adjectives in Miri take different markers na-, n-, aa-as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tarko</td>
<td>na-tarko</td>
<td>old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akiri</td>
<td>n-akiri</td>
<td>green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aɓe</td>
<td>na-k-abe</td>
<td>red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iɲiaro</td>
<td>aa-iɲiaro</td>
<td>dirty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20. Adjectives with different markers

According to (Stevenson 1956-57) “most of the Nuba Mountains languages use distinct prefixes to illustrate the concept of diminutive. It usually conveys the meaning of 'small/little'.”

Miri uses the ordinary adjective thila / kinthithila ‘small’ to express the diminutive concept. It should be used with the common nouns to indicate smallness in size or age. So it means both ‘small’ and ‘young’

The diminutive in Miri can co-occur with singular and plural nouns as in the examples below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADJ. SG</th>
<th>ADJ. PL</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ontayi</td>
<td>na-ontayi</td>
<td>kin-thithila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bird</td>
<td>small</td>
<td>PL-bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiɓe</td>
<td>thila</td>
<td>kiɓe-ni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goat</td>
<td>small</td>
<td>PL-goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa</td>
<td>thila</td>
<td>na-fa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tree</td>
<td>small</td>
<td>PL-tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nye</td>
<td>thila</td>
<td>ni-kinye</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sister young       PL-sister     PL-young

Examples with adjectives of size:

63) ḍi       thobo
    house     big
    ‘A big house’

64) na-ḍi       ki-thobo
    PL-house   PL-big
    ‘The big houses’

65) ḍi       yia       thobo
    house       COP     big
    ‘The house is big’

66) na-ḍi       yie       ki-thobo
    PL-house   COP   PL-big
    ‘The houses are big’

3.4.1.5 Plural marking on adjective of colours

Miri uses the plural markers k-/n-/na- and ki- with colours. The use of k- in red /na-k-abel/ to avoid the sequence of vowel a.
Table 12. Plural markers of Miri colour adjectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aɖoɖok</td>
<td>k-aɖoɖok</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akiri</td>
<td>n-akiri</td>
<td>green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aɓe</td>
<td>na-k-ɑɓe</td>
<td>red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abassa</td>
<td>k-abassa</td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anikiri</td>
<td>ki-anikiri</td>
<td>yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67) ᣸iɪalafa  abassa
    ant white
    ‘The white ant’

68) ofo k-abassa
    ants PL-white
    ‘The white ants’

The examples in 67 and 68 indicate that, a simple adjective is juxtaposed to a subject noun phrase with no overt copula.

Examples with adjectives of age:

69) iira yia tarko
    dog COP old
    ‘The dog is old’

70) iiṭini yie na-tarko
    dogs COP PL-old
    ‘The dogs are old’
Examples with adjectives of value:

71) *neeso yia iɲiaro*
    ear COP dirty
    ‘The ear is dirty’

72) *insee ne yie aa-iɲiaro*
    ears COP PL-dirty
    ‘The ears are dirty’

In example 72 both the adjective and the noun are marked by the plural marker.

73) *ali towe biti k-aɖila*
    ali drink water PL-healthy
    'Ali drinks healthy water'.

In example 73 the adjective is marked with the plural marker and the noun is inherently plural.

Examples with adjectives of different markers:

74) *fiyo rori*
    cow thin
    ‘Thin cow’

75) *eefo ko-rori*
    cows PL-thin
    ‘Thin cows’

76) *[oku]_{NP1} [a-djiila]_{NP2}*
    3SG.F. SG-beautiful
    'She is beautiful.'
Example 76 has a singular adjective and a singular pronoun, and the adjective is marked by the singular marker. While example 77 indicates that a plural pronoun triggers the plural makers in the adjective. The examples above indicate that there is obligatory agreement in number between the predicate / attributive adjective and the noun.

Example with more than one adjective:

78) **na-ɖi** **na-tharko** **ki-thobo** **na-kaɓe** **aa-iɲiro**

PL-house PL-old PL-big PL-red PL-dirty

‘The big old red dirty houses’

Notice: when there is more than one adjective, the structure is as follows:

NP → N + Adj. of age + size, colour and value.

The rule for an NP that contains an adjective as modifier can be written like this:

NP → N + Adjective (age, size, colour, value)

### 3.4.2 Numerals

Most languages in the world have a particular system of counting. According to Payne (1997:66) “[…] almost all natural number systems are either base-five or base ten”. Numerals in Miri are used as modifiers of nouns. The numeral system of Miri is built on bases, i.e. a base-six system with base-ten for 10 to 14. It has native terms for numbers from one up to 14. From 15 to a million it uses parts of animals and animal names.
3.4.2.1 Cardinal numbers

Miri cardinal numbers from 1 to 14 are shown in the Table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Miri</th>
<th>Literally meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ojathok</td>
<td>one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>eera</td>
<td>two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>otona</td>
<td>three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>iikissu</td>
<td>four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>iitingo</td>
<td>five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>thomtona</td>
<td>six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>thomtona afono ojathok</td>
<td>6 + one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>thomtona afono eera</td>
<td>6 + two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>thomtona afono otona</td>
<td>6 + three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>elena</td>
<td>ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>elena afono ojathok</td>
<td>ten + one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>elena afono eera</td>
<td>ten + two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>elena afono otona</td>
<td>ten + three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>elena afono iikissu</td>
<td>ten + four</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13. Miri cardinal numbers

Numbers 15 to a million make use of parts and names of animals as shown below:

**dukono ma-nessu ma-muru**

half   GEN-ear   GEN-rabbit

'15'
The number 20 to 90 are formed as follows:

\[
\text{nessu ma-muru}
\]

ear GEN-rabbit

'20'

\[
\text{nessu ma-muru afono elena}
\]

ear GEN-rabbit plus ten

'30'

\[
\text{nessu ma-muru ana eera}
\]

ear GEN-rabbit times two

'40'

\[
\text{nessu ma-muru afono eera}
\]

ear GEN-rabbit plus two

'22'

\[
\text{nessu ma-muru afono elena afono eera}
\]

ear GEN-rabbit plus ten plus two

'32'

\[
\text{nessu ma-muru ana eera afono eera}
\]

ear GEN-rabbit times two plus two

'42'

The numbers from 100 to 900 are formed by multiplies of 100. See these numbers below:

\[
\text{nessu ma-kissne}
\]

ear GEN-donkey

'100'
The numbers from 1000 to 9000 are formed as follows:

**nessu ma-moŋoŋo**

ear GEN-elephant

'1000'

**nessu ma-moŋoŋo eera**

ear GEN-elephant two

'2000'

The number 1,000,000 is only one word:

**ɲaro**

tiger

'1,000,000'

**na-ɲaro eera**

PL-tiger two

'2,000,000'

There is agreement between the numerals and the noun they modify in noun phrases. For the numeral one, the head noun has to be singular. For numerals above one, the head noun has to be plural. But note that the numerals do not agree morphologically with the head noun: they do not take any singular or plural prefix. See the examples below:

79)

a) **mutu ọŋathok**

   horse one

   'One horse'
The examples in 79 shows that the numerals follow the nouns they modify. The rule is:
NP → N + Num

Numerals in Miri are used as modifiers of nouns. Miri people find it difficult to use Miri numeral above 10 in counting. Instead they use Arabic numerals.

Example 80 shows that Miri cardinal numbers follow the head noun which they modify. There is agreement between the cardinal number and the head noun.

b) **na-mutu eera**
   PL-horse two
   'Two horses.'

a) **ofo elena**
   ants ten
   'Ten ants.'

b) **ofo thomtona afono eera**
   ants six plus two
   'Eight ants.'

c) **ofo elena afono iikissu**
   ants ten plus four
   'Fourteen ants.'

d) **ofo nessu ma-muru afono elena**
   ants ear GEN-rabbit plus ten
   'Thirty ants'

Example 80 shows that Miri cardinal numbers follow the head noun which they modify. There is agreement between the cardinal number and the head noun.
### 3.4.2.2 Ordinal numbers

Ordinal numerals in Miri are not directly derived from the cardinal numbers. Miri ordinal numbers shown in Table 22 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ordinal number</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td><em>katok</em></td>
<td>in front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td><em>karee mini</em></td>
<td>karee ‘back’ + mini ‘him’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td><em>kane karee</em></td>
<td>kane DEM + karee ‘back’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td><em>ii kane karee</em></td>
<td>ii ‘he’ + kane DEM + karee ‘back’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th to 9th</td>
<td><em>ekek karee</em></td>
<td>ekek ‘they’ + kane DEM + karee ‘back’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td><em>aata elena</em></td>
<td>aata PREP + elena ‘ten’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14. Miri ordinal numbers

The ordinal number *aata elena* ‘tenth’ derived from cardinal number *elena* ‘ten’ plus the preposition ‘*aata*’. The preposition precedes the cardinal number. Ordinal numbers in Miri also follow the nouns they modify as in the example below:

81) a) *mitee kare mini*

   man back him

   'The second man.'
b) *na-kite*  *kare nene*  *ka-kee*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PL-man</th>
<th>back 3PL.</th>
<th>COP- die</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

'The second men died.'

From example 81 above there is agreement in number between the ordinal number and the head noun. In 81a the ordinal number takes 3SG object pronoun *mini*, while in 81b takes the 3PL object pronoun *nene*.

Numerals in Miri can be used adverbially, in this case only the cardinal number can be used as shown in the examples below:

82)

a) *oku*  *mo-dok*  *otona*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3SG.F.</th>
<th>COP-come</th>
<th>three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

'She came third.'

b) *ka-malaka*  *neete*  *a-dok*  *iikissu*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PL-camel</th>
<th>1SG.PSS.</th>
<th>COP-come</th>
<th>four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

'My camels came fourth.'

The ordinal numbers cannot be used pronominally. If the head noun is unknown, Miri speakers need to use a personal pronoun. In this case the 3SG masculine should be *yia* 'he'. They can only be used as modifiers see the example below:

83)

a) *yia*  *katok*  *aɖoɖok*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3SG.M.</th>
<th>first</th>
<th>black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

'The first was black.'

b) *yia*  *kare mini*  *ɖila*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3SG.M.</th>
<th>back him</th>
<th>nice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

'The second one is nice.'
3.4.2.3 Non–numeral quantifiers

According to Payne (1997:65) “non-numeral quantifiers include such terms as ‘much’, ‘any’, ‘few’, ‘some’, ‘a lot of’, etc.” We observed the following quantifiers in Miri:

- **fayi**: 'many/much/a lot of' (with countable/uncountable nouns)
- **thila**: 'a few/ little' (with countable or uncountable nouns)
- **dok**: 'all/every' (with countable nouns)
- **kino**: ‘some’ (with uncountable nouns)

In Miri all quantifiers modify only plural nouns and they must take the plural marker in order to agree with the nouns they modify. The form of the plural marker is the same as the adjectives (i.e. *ka*- marking the quantifiers all / many / much, *ni*- marks the quantifier some, while *ki*- marks the quantifier a few / little. These quantifiers follow the nouns as shown in the example below:

84)  

a) **kibe-ni**   **ka-fayi**  
   goat-PL  PL-a lot of  
   'A lot of goats'

b) **na-sorne**   **ka-dok**  
   PL-book  PL-all  
   'All books.'

c) **aleela**   **ki-thila**  
   children  PL-a few  
   'A few children.'
There is thus agreement between the quantifiers and the head nouns. Note that Miri quantifiers do not have a singular form. The rule is:

NP → N + Quant

### 3.4.3 Miri demonstratives

Miri has a two-way distinction: *this* SG/PL vs. *that* SG/PL. Miri has number agreement between the head noun and the demonstrative in a noun phrase. Singular demonstratives agree in gender with the noun they modify. Plural demonstratives are neither differentiated for gender nor for distance. In Miri there is no equivalent for *those*, as shown in Table 23 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>this (proximal)</th>
<th>that (distal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SG.M</td>
<td><em>ino</em></td>
<td><em>k-ane</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG.F</td>
<td><em>m-ino</em></td>
<td><em>m-ane</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td><em>k-ino</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15. Miri demonstratives
Miri uses the demonstrative *k-inyo* for both plural masculine and feminine. Note from table 23 that in Miri there is a gender distinction in singular demonstratives ‘this’ where *inyo* indicates singular masculine and *m-inyo* indicates singular feminine. While in the singular demonstrative ‘that’ the singular masculine is /k-ane/ and singular feminine is /m-ane/ as shown in the examples below:

85) *nag*  *m-inyo*

baby  F-DEM

'This baby'.

86) *arabia*  *k-ane*

car  M-DEM

'That car.'

87) *na-akwa*  *k-inyo*

PL-leg  PL-DEM.

'These legs'.

88) *na-akwa*  *k-inyo*

PL-leg  PL-DEM.

‘Those legs.’

Singular demonstratives follow the head noun as in 85 and 86 and also plural demonstratives follow the head noun as in 87 and 88. Miri has number agreement between the head noun and the demonstrative in a noun phrase. See the example below:
89)

**NP SG**

a) *ontayi iño*
   
   bird F.DEM
   
   'This bird'

**NP PL**

b) *na-ontayi k-iño*
   
   PL-bird PL-DEM
   
   'These birds'

c) *ontayi k-ane*
   
   bird SG.F.DEM
   
   'That bird'

An NP consisting of a head noun plus demonstrative may thus be represented as follows:

NP → N + DEM

In Miri there are two copulas one word with singular subject, the other with plural subject, that are derived from SG / PL third person pronouns.

Demonstratives cannot be used pronominally. If the referent is unspecified, they have to co-occur with a person, such as *yia 3SG, yie 3PL*, which functions as the head of the noun phrase.

See the examples below:
The examples above indicate that there is agreement in number between the demonstrative modifier and the head noun.

### 3.5 Noun phrase constituent order

As mentioned above, Miri has different kinds of modifiers that occur with the noun. The modifiers differ in their order within a noun phrase. See table 24 below:
This chapter has discussed various sorts of elements that occur in noun phrases. The order of the various modifiers is represented in table 24.

The above table can be read as follows. The Miri noun phrase consists of a noun head that is followed by a number of optional modifiers. The modifiers occur in the following order: noun in first position (singular or plural), then demonstratives (usually singular demonstratives), then adjectives of age, then adjectives of size, colour and value, and finally numerals and quantifiers.

The slash (/) between the numerals and quantifier indicates that these two constituents cannot co-occur in a single phrase. Both of these modifiers indicate more than one. In addition to that the data in table show that the others can co-occur, including several different adjectives. Most modifiers in the noun phrase must agree with the head noun of the phrase. That is, if the head noun of the phrase is singular or plural, these modifiers must take the respective singular or plural markers.
The Miri noun phrase may be a noun without any modifiers. Likewise the noun phrase may consist solely of a pronoun; in this case, it is called a minimal noun phrase. For example:

91) \textit{aŋa akido tabbako} \\
\hspace{10pt}1PL. dig sand \\
\hspace{10pt}‘We dig the sand.’

Another type of Miri noun phrase consists of a noun and a demonstrative. The demonstrative follows the noun. See example 92.

92) \textit{na-ɖi k-iɲo aa-iɲro} \\
\hspace{10pt}PL-house PL-DEM PL-dirty \\
\hspace{10pt}‘These dirty houses’

93) \textit{ontayi k-ane} \\
\hspace{10pt}bird SG.M-DEM \\
\hspace{10pt}‘That bird’

Example 94 indicates that adjectives of age follow the noun.

94) \textit{na-ɖi na-takro} \\
\hspace{10pt}PL-house PL-old \\
\hspace{10pt}‘Old houses’

The possessive pronoun occurs after the noun as in the example below:

95) \textit{ɖi neete} \\
\hspace{10pt}house 1SG.POSS. \\
\hspace{10pt}‘My house’

Adjectives of age, size, colour and value followed the noun. See example 96 below. It is not clear if they always have to occur in this order.
Table 24 indicates that the numerals follow the adjectives in the noun phrase structure. They are always placed at the end of the noun phrase in Miri as seen in example 97.

### Example 97

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>na-ɖi</th>
<th>ki-thobo</th>
<th>na-kaɓe</th>
<th>aa-iɲiro</th>
<th>eera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PL-house</td>
<td>PL-big</td>
<td>PL-red</td>
<td>PL-dirty</td>
<td>two</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘The two big red dirty houses’

There are a few examples of NPs that consist of quantifiers and nouns. Quantifiers occur after the noun, for instance:

### Example 98

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>na-ɖi</th>
<th>ka-fayi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PL-house</td>
<td>PL-many</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Many houses’

A table like this includes as many modifiers as possible, but this does not mean that speakers will ever produce noun phrases with all modifiers represented. The main point of such a table is simply to represent the order of any pair of modifiers. Table 24 illustrates a noun phrase with single-word modifiers. Miri can also have multi-word modifiers: relative clauses and prepositional phrases. These come after the noun.

The next section will deal with the functions of the Miri noun phrase.
Section Four

Different functions of the noun phrase

4. Introduction

This chapter discusses the major functions of noun phrases in Miri. According to Langacker (1972), the terms nominal and Noun phrase are used more or less interchangeable in modern linguistics. The defining properties of the nominal or noun phrase pertain to its syntactic functions rather than to its internal structure. The most important of these properties is the ability to function as a subject or object.

Shopen (2007a:132) also adds other grammatical functions, ‘grammatical functions are also important for principles governing the form of the sentence structure’. The following sections discuss various such functions in Miri.

4.1 Unmarked grammatical relations

4.1.1 Subject

Miri has the word order Subject Verb Object, as illustrated below:

1) musa eeta hassan
   musa kill hassan
   'Musa killed Hassan.'
The example above illustrates that the noun phrase in the subject position does not take any grammatical marker, i.e. it is unmarked.

2) áa yia-kori kek
   1SG. COP-eat cake
   'I have eaten cake'
The examples above indicate that the singular subject is unmarked, while the plural subject marked with plural marker.

4.1.2 Object

6) **yokara a-kuk tafale**
    director COP-sign letter
    'The director signed the letter.'

7) **ali mija neete**
    ali sees 1SG.POSS
    'Ali sees mine.'

8) **ali anii ayia neete**
    ali saw mother 1SG.F.POSS
    'Ali saw my mother'

9) **ali anii na-kayia neete**
    ali saw PL-mother 1SG.F.POSS
    'Ali saw my mothers'
The examples above illustrate that the noun in the object position is unmarked as in example 6. Example 14 indicates that the ‘3SG.F’ in the object position is marked. With pronouns and possessive pronouns there is agreement in number between the noun phrase in the object position and the subject. Also note that in Miri there are different subject and object pronouns.

4.2 Prepositional phrases

In Miri, the prepositional phrase follows the noun that it modifies. Miri uses different type of prepositions to introduce prepositional phrases that occur within a noun phrase, as in the example below:
15) beela nya jia awe
   child hill PREP singing
   ‘The child on the hill is singing’

16) beela batholo kita awe
   child lake PREP singing
   ‘The child near the lake is singing’

17) thara biti iina
   hippo water PREP
   ‘The hippo is in the water’

18) beela jane aana awe
   child village PREP singing
   ‘A child in the village is singing.’

19) aba neete thile aana
   father 1SG.POSS forest PREP
   ‘My father is at the forest’

The prepositional phrase word order is represented by the phrasal rules below:

NP → N (PP)
PP → NP P

4.3 Noun phrase as the object of a preposition

The noun phrase when it occurs as the object of a preposition is unmarked as shown in the example below:

20) iina kalak katane
   PREP class same
   ‘In the same class.’
21) *nia taarabiza atafalek kado*

PREP. table flat high

'On a high flat table'

In example 20, the noun phrase is the object of the preposition *iina* 'in' and is unmarked. In example 21 the noun phrase is governed by a preposition *nyia* 'on', but the noun phrase is unmarked for its syntactic functions as prepositional object.

### 4.4 Relative clause

In Miri the relative clause follows the head noun. The relative pronoun can either occur at the beginning see example 22b or the end 22c of the relative clause. See example 22 below:

22) a)  *liňa m-bi mitee*

   woman F-hit man

   ‘The woman hit the man.’

b)  *[[mitee]N [tajake liňa a-bi] REL.NP]*

   man that woman F-hit

   ‘The man that the woman hit.’

c)  *mitee a-ana [[mutu]N [aa-jio tajake]REL.NP]*

   man COP-buy horse COP-see that

   ‘The man bought the horse that I saw.’

### 4.5 Relative pronouns

“Relative pronouns are typically similar to other pronouns in the language either the question words or the pronouns used to refer to non-specific, identified items. Relative pronouns can be thought of as combining the
functions of a plain relativizer and a clause internal pronoun” (Payne1997:333). This is also true for Miri relativizers, as in example 23 and 24 where the pronouns used to refer to non-specific identified items. Miri makes use of a number of different relativizers:

\[ \text{yia kate} \quad \text{‘Which’ (locative REL)} \]

\[ \text{yia kiyia} \quad \text{‘Where’ (locative REL) directional} \]

\[ \text{tajake} \quad \text{‘That/whom’ (object REL)} \]

Examples:

23) \[ \text{laŋaree} \quad \text{yia kate} \quad \text{ta-foŋo} \quad \text{yia neete} \]
   \[ \text{bed} \quad \text{which} \quad \text{COP-sleep} \quad \text{2SG.F.POSS} \]
   \[ 'The bed in which I slept.' \]

24) \[ \text{ɖi} \quad \text{yia kiyia} \quad \text{ta-fee} \quad \text{nini} \]
   \[ \text{house} \quad \text{where} \quad \text{COP-go} \quad \text{3SG.M.POSS} \]
   \[ 'The house where I went.' \]

25) \[ \text{liɲa} \quad \text{mita} \quad \text{mitee} \quad \text{m-bi} \]
   \[ \text{woman} \quad \text{who} \quad \text{man} \quad \text{F-hit} \]
   \[ ‘The woman who hit the man’ \]

\[ \text{4.6 The beneficiary} \]

According to Blake (1997), the beneficiary is an animate entity on whose behalf an activity is carried out. A beneficiary construction in Miri contains three noun phrases, the agent precedes the patient and the patient precedes the beneficiary. The Noun phrase containing the beneficiary in Miri is marked by the prefixes \text{aa}, \text{a}- as in the following examples:
Examples:

26) hamit utu aa-lili a-atam

hamid give PL-money BEN-adam

'Hamid gave Adam money'

27) balata mana kori a-beela

girl give food BEN-child

'A girl gave a child food'

Examples 26 and 27 above indicate that the beneficiary noun occurs as indirect object in the final position of the sentence.

4.7 Genitive

In Miri the genitives are formed by adding a bound morpheme ma-. The prefix ma- acts as a genitive marker to the noun as shown in example below:

28)

a) ayia ma-ali

mother GEN-ali

'Ali's mother'

b) na-sorne ma-musa

PL-book GEN-musa

'Musa's books'

c) iitini ma-kide

PL-dog GEN-men

‘The men’s dogs’

d) iitini ma-mitee

PL-dog GEN-man

'The man's dogs'
In Miri the genitive precedes the noun. Example 28 indicates that the genitive marker is prefixed to nouns that take the singular forms. Example 28 indicates that the genitive marker replaces any other prefixes, such as the plural prefixes. For example, in 28c, it is prefixed to the plural form *kide* "men" (cf. the corresponding singular form *mitee* "man"). However, *kide* is otherwise only attested in the form *na-kide*, but the plural prefix *na-* is replaced here by genitive *ma-*.

The ablative which is translated into English as 'from' is expressed in Miri by the word ‘*naka*’ M /’*maka*’ F. This form is fronted to the following noun or adverb by means of the genitive marker *ma-* as seen in the example 29 below:

29) 

a) ́óó *naka ma-kiyia*  
   2SG.M. M.from GEN-where  
   'From where are you?'

b) ́áá *naka ma-tala*  
   1SG. M.from GEN-kadugli  
   'I am from Kadugli.'

c) *oku maka ma-lobeit*  
   3SG.F. F.from GEN-alobeid  
   ‘She is from Alobeid’

Notice that in Miri there is a gender distinction in the ablative.
4.8 The comparative

In Miri the comparative construction is formed as follows, a noun phrase, plus the marker of comparison *ofo* ‘than’ followed by the quality compared as adjective or a verb and the standard of comparison, as shown below:

30)

a)  
re  neete  ofo  ta-koro  áa

  brother  1SG.Poss than  SG-tall  1SG.Obj

  'My brother is taller than me'

b)  
hamit  ofo  teema  ti-miri  atam

  hamid than speak  SG-miri  Adam

  'Hamid speaks Miri better than Adam.'

c)  
oku  m-ofo  tarik  kuri  ayia

  3SG.F. F-than better cook mother

  'She cooks better than her mother'

d)  
ɖi  notu  ofo  thila  ɖi  neete

  house  2SG.M.Poss than small house 1SG.Poss

  'Your house is smaller than mine'

Note that the word *ofo* is marked for feminine, while in masculine it is unmarked.

4.9 Interrogatives

The interrogative words ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’ etc. are placed at the end of the sentence in Miri. According to Watters (2000:204) “many African languages also typically have these interrogative words, but they remain in the basic word order position of the language rather than being placed at the beginning, i.e. in the subject or object position or another position depending
on how the language works.” Miri is a language which has interrogative words and uses a word order strategy in which the question word occurs in the final position of a question. As in the following examples:

31) óo mija mita?
   2SG. see who
   ‘Who did you see?’

32) ali na-dok ɲaa?
   ali COP-come how
   ‘How did Ali come?’

33) óo na oŋathok aajo?
   2SG. want one which
   ‘Which one do you want?’

34) óo ni yiee?
   2SG. were where
   ‘Where were you?’

35) ñi na-tana ḷi aata?
   3SG.M cop-buy house when
   ‘When did he by a house?’

36) oku nita kati mana?
   3SG.F angry inside her why
   ‘Why is she angry?’

Note that in Miri the interrogative starts with the noun phrase noun / pronoun. The interrogative word occurs in the final position of the question. The structure of the interrogative word should be:

Interrogative → NP (noun/pronoun) + V + O + interrogative word.
According to (Dryer quoting in Shopen 2007a: 61) one of the primary ways which languages differ from one another is in the order of constituents. When people refer to the word order of a language they often refer specifically to the order of constituents, i.e. subject, object, and verb with respect to each other but word order refers more generally to the order of any set of elements either at the clause level or within a noun phrase.

It is found that the basic constituent order of most of the sentence constituent in Miri is 'S V O'. It means that the subject is the first and the verb comes in the second position and the object is placed at the end of the sentence as shown in the example below:

37) ɲaro a-keta murko
    tiger COP-kill cat.
    'The tiger has killed the cat'
Section Five

Summary, conclusion and

Suggestions for further research

5. Summary

In this section, we will attempt to conclude by summarizing the findings and conclusion about the investigation and descriptive analysis of the noun phrase in Miri. We will also try to provide some suggestions which will be helpful for future linguistic research in this language.

Sudan includes a large number of languages. The focus of the study is on Miri which is a Nilo-Saharan, Kadugli – Krongo group, language. The study aims to set out certain rules and patterns of Miri that may serve as a base for further studies in the area of syntax and to give a brief background on the classification of the language and Miri community. The methods of collecting the data were illustrated. The way of presenting the data throughout this study was stated.

The emphasis of this study is on syntax and morphology of the noun phrase.

The aims of the research were:

1. To identify the different word classes that forms the noun phrase in Miri.
2. To give a preliminary description of the noun phrase in the language.
3. To discover how the noun phrase in Miri functions.
4. To collect information from previous studies on Miri and the data of the present research into one work, in order to provide a basis for further work in the future.
Miri distinguishes between two types of nouns: countable nouns and collective nouns. Number is marked on countable nouns by different markers. There is also small number of nouns where the plural is formed by suppletion. Some nouns in Miri are borrowed from Arabic. The diminutive in Miri can co-occur with singular and plural nouns.

There are different types of independent pronouns in Miri. Personal pronouns which are optional in a noun phrase. Possessive pronouns are written as independent words throughout this study. In Miri there is also the possibility of forming genitive construction of two nouns without an overt linker (called the compound noun in this thesis).

Miri has an analytic reflexive pronoun which is based on a combination of personal pronoun plus possessive pronoun. The prepositional phrase in Miri follows the noun that modifies. The relative clause follows the head noun, and the relative pronoun can either occur at the beginning or at the end of the relative clause.

Miri has different types of modifiers, such as adjectives, numerals, non-numerals quantifiers and demonstratives. The predicative adjective in Miri takes the singular and plural marker, thus agreeing with the head noun.

Numerals system of Miri is built on a base-six system, with base ten for 10 to 14. The Miri numbers from 15 to a million make use of parts and names of animals. Ordinal numbers are not directly derived from the cardinal numbers. We observed that the numerals occur after the noun.

In Miri all quantifiers modify only plural nouns and they must take the plural marker in order to agree with the noun they modify.
Demonstratives in Miri can occur in different positions in the noun phrase. Plural demonstratives tend to precede the head noun, while singular demonstratives can either follow or precede.

The major functions of noun phrase in Miri are discussed in chapter four.

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that Miri has the word classes of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, demonstratives, numerals and quantifiers. The noun phrase in Miri consists of a noun as its main constituent preceded or followed by a number of modifiers.

Miri nouns distinguish singular and plural, and Miri uses a number of different strategies to mark number on the noun.

Loan nouns follow the procedure that original Miri nouns take in forming the plurals. In addition there are locative nouns that specify a location.

Miri uses the adjective 'thila' SG/ 'kin-thithila' PL which mean 'small' to express the diminutive concept. They are used with common nouns to indicate smallness in size or age.

Miri has two types of quantifiers, non-numeral quantifiers and numeral quantifiers. In counting, Miri uses the parts of animals and animal names for higher numbers. Also there is agreement between the numerals and the noun they modify.

The adjective in Miri (age, colour, size and value) agrees in number with the head noun.

Miri has two degrees of distance in its demonstratives. Demonstratives occur in same positions in the noun phrase (after the noun).
Miri has a system of independent pronouns. These pronouns differ in their form from pronominal prefixes. The pronouns that occur in isolation or act as subject have one form and those that act as object or indicate possession have other forms.

The noun phrase can occur in different syntactic functions, and section 4 has shown the available possibilities.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

The focus of this research was the morphological and syntactic analysis of the noun phrase in Miri. The following areas are left for further studies:

1. Phonological issues that are unresolved or unexplained.
2. To cover information in different area on verbal syntax.
3. The stative clauses to describe the state rather than an action or event.
4. Complex constructions to cover the complex and compound sentences.
Bibliography


Kadugli Locality 1986, South Kordofan State, Sudan.


### Appendix

**List of Miri words and their meanings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miri</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Miri</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>aa</em></td>
<td>I</td>
<td><em>akiri</em></td>
<td>green</td>
</tr>
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<td>be tired</td>
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