

Gender marking recruited for number marking in Garifuna

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This paper will present evidence of 3rd person singular male and female gender markers being used to non-canonically mark number of inanimate nouns. These are otherwise unable to be marked for number. Based on a corpus of spoken narrative and conversation, I study which inanimate nouns employ this number marking strategy.

Garifuna has two genders, male and female, distinguished only in the 3rd person singular (1).

- (1) wûri anyûgi-**ru** l-uma ában wûgûri anyûgi-**li** ha-ma bíyama iráhü-nyü anyûgi-nya
 woman young-3.F 3.M-with one man young-3.M 3PL-with two child-PL young-PL
 'the young woman with a young man and two small children'

Gender of inanimate referents tends to be based on certain semantic principles. Masculine nouns include piercing instruments, body parts, body products and wild plants. Feminine nouns include containers, vehicles, trees, clothing, cutting instruments, domesticated plants and fruits and guns (Taylor 1977). To this rather heterogeneous taxonomy, Munro (1997) added that animals of unknown sex, tend to be assigned gender according to size: larger animals tend to be male and smaller animals female. There are, however, exceptions both to this and the above taxonomy of inanimates. Nouns referring to human beings are marked for number, while non-human ones are not (2a). Animals trigger plural agreement, while inanimates do not (2b).

- (2) a. wûgûri-**nyu** **há** **ha-lúgura-ba-nya** biyama bágasu harú-**tinyu** **há**
 man-PL 3PL:DEM 3PL-sell-FUT-3PL two cow white-3PL 3PL:DEM
 'those men are going to sell those two white cows'
 b. wûgûri-**nyu** **há** **ha-lúgura-b-on** biyama fáluma bíme-tu tó
 man-PL 3PL:DEM 3PL-sell-FUT-3.F two coconut sweet-3.F 3.F:DEM
 'those two men are going to sell those two sweet coconuts'

If necessary for disambiguation, inanimates can be marked as plural with the clitic =*büri* (3).

- (3) l-arihi-ni l-a:gu=**büri** ánímalu le
 3.M-see-3.M 3.M-eye=PL animal 3.M:DEM
 'he saw the eyes of that animal'

Some inanimate lexemes are able to mark plural through a different strategy: they recruit 3rd person singular male and female verbal agreement markers to distinguish singular and plural, both in O function (4a) and in stative S function (4b). (Argument marking affixes move to an auxiliary to mark past tense.)

- (4) a. agányeha n-a-**li** muréy le pero agányeha b-a-**ru** muréy ha
 buy 1.SG-AUX-3.M nance 3.M:DEM but buy 2SG-AUX-3.F nance 3PL:DEM
 'I bought that nance, but you bought those nances'
 b. gay-**ti** aban n-a:ri pero gay-**tu** sun b-a:ri
 hurt-3.M one 1SG-tooth but hurt-3.F all 2SG-tooth
 'one of my teeth hurts, but all of your teeth hurt'

This paper investigates this non-canonical use of gender marking, uncovering any conditioning factors, such as tense-aspect.

References

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