# Plurality in Magahi Language and Reference to count/mass Noun

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**Abstract**

The concept of the reference of number system in the language is particularized due to the different linguistic ecology. The perception particularly in the domain of additive plural, however, is not very arbitrary. A limited number of possibilities have been identified cross-linguistically; most of the languages follow two-way distinction i.e. singular versus plural. Some languages, particularly, classifier morphologically have inbuilt three-way number distinction. Magahi, a new Indo-Aryan language, uses morpho-phonetic way to mark plurality, and is purely a nominal phenomenon[1]. Magahi has two forms of noun, and marked noun carries 'identifiability' or 'uniqueness' property (Lyons 1999). For the present pupose, we entitle this marker as 'discourse marker/definite determiner'[2]. The paper following Corbett (2000) discusses how Magahi makes three-way number distinction. The three-way number distinction is based on the fact that the marked noun in Magahi, strictly, is singular (following Jespersen 1924; Corbett 2000, etc.). Obligatoriness/optionality of the system is discussed following Drayer (2013). The plural mechanism shows a restricted regular pattern on the animacy hierarchy[3]. Despite having the obligatory numeral classifier system; it has regular plural system which seems to be problematic for the observation made in Aikhenvald (2000) that classifier languages don't have regular plural system. With only few exceptions like abstract noun, mass noun, etc. the system of plurality is regular in the language. Magahi also distinguishes between the bare plural [N+PL] and marked plural [[N+DEF] +PL]]; marked plural deriving the semantics from marked singular has semantics of familiarity, identifiability, presupposition, etc. The second section of the paper ventures into available measurement units in the speech community for the reference of mass noun (solids, liquids, etc.). Though the paper deals with the important classifiers that language uses for measuring the mass noun, is a preliminary effort and invites future research in the area.

*Key words: - Bare/marked noun, Three-number system, Animacy-hierarchy, definite determiner, Numeral classifier*

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[1] Nominal means Noun Phrase here (Halliday 1985). The plural is only seen on NPs i.e. on nouns, on Adjectives, and on Pronouns (in inflected forms). There are some lexical items too which are used for the purpose of plurality. Plurality is not seen beyond NPs i.e. in verbal phrase (VPs).

[2] Though, this can be thought of as an instance of bare classifier system as in Bangla, Hmong, Vietnamese, etc. (Simpson, Hooi & Hiroki (2011). I have not discussed the terminological issue with its relevance in this paper and, it is limited to the semantics of '-wɑ' and its effect onto the noun phrase (NP).

[3] The categorical distinction is given by Drayer (2013) in the online language description database WALS.

## 1. Introduction

Politically speaking, Magahi is one of the dialects or varieties of Hindi language. Nevertheless, some of the linguists have tried to establish it as a complete language of its own e.g. Aryani (1965), Verma (1985), Verma (2003). In this paper, I am considering Magahi as a language of its own that has all kinds of prototypical properties which are very different to Hindi, in fact, closer to Maithili and, in turn, to Bengali (Grierson 1903,Verma 1985). Magahi is predominantly spoken in Northern part of India, mainly in Bihar, and in some regions of UP and Jharkhand. In Bihar, it is widely present in eight districts. Though there are varieties of Magahi, it is believed that variety spoken in Patna and Gaya districts is the standard one. There are very few works devoted in understanding the structures of the language. Some works work as the background of the present endeavour e.g. Verma (2003), where she talks about the definiteness of the noun particle 'wɑ' in Magahi; Verma (1985) speaks of the verbal structure of Magahi; Alok (2012)[4] speaks of the semantics of '-wɑ' particle in Magahi. He considers it as noun particle which functions as specificity marker in the language. There are no works available to my knowledge which directly deals with the concerned topic. The only grammar book available on the language has long back written by Aryani in (1965). The work is linguistically not sound, and cannot be seen as a scientific documentation of the language. Aryani (ibid) talks about the mechanism of plurality in Magahi; according to him plural in Magahi is formed by adding '-ən' suffix to the noun. Alok (2012 (Unpublished MPhil dissertation)) speaks about the number system of the language very briefly; however, he mentions that since Magahi has classifiers 'numeral classifier', its number system is highly irregular. The explanation he draws from Aikhenvald (2000)[5]. My say on this claim is that the language has classifier system (more than ever explained), but it simultaneously has a regular plural system with very few constraints. This paper explains some of the very interesting and atypical characteristics of the number system (plurality) found in Magahi. My claim that the language has three-way number distinction is based on the fact that Magahi has the preference of bare classifier over bare noun in the context of singular reference, in fact, bare noun gives general reading (Simpson et. al. 2011 for bare classifier).

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 deals with the methodology; it speaks about the number of informants, the variety under the observation, the base of the questionnaire, the procedure, and the critical literature which serve as the basis of the paper. Section 3 describes the semantics of bare noun and marked noun; the difference arises because of the semantics of marked noun. Section 4 speaks about the system of plurality in the language. The two important questions, like what are the morpho-syntactic ways Magahi uses for the plural marking, and the restriction of the plurality on animacy hierarchy have been discussed. Section 5 explains the phenomenon of three-way number system in the language which is based on the morphological peculiarity of the singular and the general number. Section 6 discusses the major quantifiers and measurement units used for the mass noun, mainly. The paper ends suggesting some of the future endeavours in the area.

[4] Unpublished MPHIL thesis, submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University (2012).

[5] Languages with the classifier system restrict the regular plural marking system, Aikhenvald (2000).

## 2. Methodology

The variety under consideration is spoken in Patna district (Bihar), which can be believed as the standard variety of Magahi. The issue at hand is based on the competence of the author and the close observation of the speech community. 11 informants were interviewed informally. They are mostly family and friends who reside in different places of the district. First, from innate knowledge or the competence of the author the problems are observed, and then are framed in sentences and after that got validated by informants. So a set of the ever-changing questionnaire have been given to cross-check the observations (questionnaire was subject to change based on the spot-on responses of the informants). The questionnaire was motivated by the factors like the nature of the problem, the review of the relevant literature, and feedback from the informants. Literature worked as the background or framework for the present study. Since the problem doesn't directly address any phonological alternation, no extra care is taken while choosing the informants; however, literate-illiterate, male-female, and age factors were taken into account (no variation as such were seen). Works that this paper followed, particularly, are Jesperson (1924), Corbett (2000), Akhinvald (2000), Drayer (1989; 2007; 2013), Yadav (1996), Verma (1985; 2003), Kachru (1980), Alok ((2012), Kumar (2015, 2015a, 2016) etc. The work is qualitative in nature, and follows the Basic Linguistic Theory Dixon (2010, 12) for methodological consideration.

## 3. Noun Phrase and Noun Particle in Magahi

It is imperative to discuss the forms of nouns in Magahi to get the better hold of the plural system. In Magahi, two forms of nouns are easily observable; can be understood as uninflected (root/stem) and the inflected/derived form. Uninflected nouns are stems which are semantically equivalent to the root. The concern, however, for the present purpose is the form and function of the derived noun. In Magahi, in a conversation or discourse, nouns are used with some functional suffixes whose core function is to give 'grounding' (Langacker 1968, Taylor 2002)[6] to the noun. There are three suffixes which hang around the noun for the feature [+ DEF]; these are '*-wa*', '*-ya*', and '*-a*'[7]. These morphemes are in complementary distribution, and are phonologically conditioned i.e. their selections depend upon the last sounds of the words. So, when a word ends with /*-i*/ either '*-ya*' or '*-a*' is used; when the words end with sound /*-u*/, '*-a*' suffix is used; remaining sounds take '*-wa*' form. This is *('wa'*) the elsewhere form. The function of these noun particles have been discussed by Verma (2003), Alok (2012, 14), Kumar (2015,16), etc. where it is claimed that these particles function as the definite determiner or specificity marker. The present work is based on this analysis of noun particle as a definite determiner within the noun phrase[8].

[6] Grounding is more a conceptual instantiation of a type; in which the designated objects are located in a certain speech event.

[7] Sometimes '-mɑ' is also used when the last sound of a word is nasal but that differs on the ideolectal level. However, I have not noticed this pattern in my experience or observations. Alok (2012) listed the variants 'mɑ'.

[8]For the present purpose I am avoiding any other terminology for the function it plays, however, there is a full scope to see this noun particle as 'bare classifier' in the language. But it would invite a thorough investigation regarding its distribution and function. The particle has functions other than definiteness in the language (Kumar 2015, 2016). It affects the speech from sociolinguistics point of view as well. Since the primary aim of this paper is to see the plurality in the language, it is avoiding any further concept which needs a detailed explanation.

(1) kiʈəb-wɑ pɑpɑ-ke ɖe ɖihə
book-DD father-DAT give give.FUT.3H
Give the book to father.
(2) kiʈɑb kʰəriɖe pərʈəu
book buy.O (have to)INFN.2
You have to buy a book.

The sentence in example (1) is an instance of the marked noun in Magahi. The speaker asks the shopkeeper to give the particular book to his father (reference about the book is already made). But the noun phrase (henceforth NP) in example (2) which is unmarked doesn't refer to any particular book, but the book in general. There are more semantic and syntactic layers working in the derivation and use of these particles, but for the sake of present purpose we conclude that it has the function of definiteness (in terms of identifiability) or specificity[9]. As far as the terminology 'discourse particle' is concerned, it has been observed that most of the instances of nouns in speech/discourse are marked ones. This linguistic strategy of the speech community might reflect many possibilities in terms of seeing the world in discourse or to concretise/individualise the abstract form of speech or to introduce the NPs into the discourse from its lexical entry. Though this is true that it strictly attaches with noun only, it doesn't morphologically stands with nouns when they are used out of the discourse or used as one-word response. So, it would be bizarre to respond with marked noun of the question like 'what did you drink this morning', one cannot say *'*ɖuɖʰwa*' (milk.DEF); the response would be like '*ɖuɖʰ*" (milk). I am leaving the discussion of terminological set up of the particle here, and shall strongly argue that it should be seen as 'bare classifier' in the language, also because of its individualizing function.

## 4. Magahi Plural System

Semantics of plurality is rather not the primary concern here; the focus is on the linguistic mechanism language or speaker uses to refer to more than one objects. Plurality in Magahi is achieved through the morpho-phonological process[10]. For the additive plural language uses the suffixation process whereby a bound morpheme *'-ən*' is used with the bare noun e.g.

(3) rəjuɑ gəi-ən-ke le ɑo
rɑju.DD cow-PL-ACC bring come.2.NH
Raju, bring the cows!
(4) ləik-ən ɑ:j əskul kɑhe ne ələ̈i he
boy-PL today school why NEG come.PST.3 be.PRS.3
Why have children not come to school today?

The plural marker according to Haspelmath (2013) varies on two dimensions i.e. animacy and obligatoriness. Animacy makes the distinction between the animate and

[9] Though definiteness and specificity cannot be understood as the same thing, lacks the clear distinction in the literature and are used interchangeably. Following the Simpson et al. (2011) criteria of mapping definiteness, the noun particle in Magahi evidently has definiteness. See also Ihsane & Puskas (2001) for specificity.

[10] I am restricting myself only to the morpho-phonetic way of pluralisation. Otherwise, the language uses very different and more than one ways of refereeing to the numbers. e.g. echo-formation, reduplication, associative plural, classifiers, etc.

inanimate noun; the semantics of inanimate sometimes extend to the non-human animate too; however, in this paper we are considering inanimate as non-living. According to Haspelmath (ibid) when the two dimensions (i.e. animacy and obligatoriness) combine we get six possible values in the language[11]. Magahi belongs to- plural in all nouns, optional in inanimate. The categorization is not very strict though. Magahi in its formalization of plural marking works differently; the system works well on (non)/human nouns, it also does well with the majority of inanimate nouns. It's hard to make a categorization of the kinds of the noun it goes with and with which it doesn't. The system restricts its mechanism on the abstract noun. With few exceptions, the language has no problem in using the plural marker *'-ən*' with animate (human & non-human) and inanimate nouns as it is evident in the examples below.

(5) kursi-ən leʈe ɑo iɖʰər
chair-PL bring.PROG come.2 this side
Bring the chairs, here!

(6) (ʔbor-ən)/bor-w-ən yəɦɑ-se hətɑo
sack.PL/sack-DD-PL here-ABL remove.PRS.2
Take the shacks from here.

(7) (*kəpr-ən)/kəpər-w-ən fek ɖe
cloth-PL/cloth-DD-PL throw give.2
Throw away the cloths.

(8) səb kətori-ən/kətoriyɑ kəɦɑ həi
all bowl-PL/ bowl.DD where be.PRS.3
Where are all the bowls?

(9) əɖəmi-ən-ke bulɑ ke lɑwə
man-PL-ACC. call CP bring.2.H
Call the men.

The above-shown morphological realization on nouns is how Magahi formalizes the plurality. Examples (1) & (9) are the instances where the references are human nouns. Sentences in examples (5), (6) and (7) make reference to the inanimate nouns; the constructions are grammatical and acceptable. The phonotactic constraint with the examples (6) and (7) is whether phonetically motivated or not is a critical question to be investigated. When the plural morpheme is directly added to the inanimate noun '*bora*' (sack) and '*kəpra*' (cloth),[12] they became infelicitous but with the derived forms there is no such problem of infelicity. What is out of the ordinary in this paradigm is that it only happens in the case of inanimate noun[13]. Example (8) further agrees with the fact that the inanimate nouns regularly

[11] a. No nominal plural, b. Plural only in human nouns, optional, c. Plural only in human nouns, obligatory, d. Plural in all nouns, always optional, e. Plural in all nouns, optional in inanimate, f. Plural in all nouns, always obligatory.

[12] The concern also arises because some of the speakers raise their eyebrows on the pluralisation of some of the inanimate nouns, which cannot be categorized. E.g. the plurality of 'chair' is very well accepted but with the 'door' they have given mixed reactions.

[13] The problem or issue is further explained and discussed in the section where the marked and unmarked plural is discussed i.e. in section 4.1.

form the plural. The grammaticality of the NP *'səb kətoriya'* (all the bawls) validates the claim that the marked form *'kətoriya'* is appropriate with the universal quantifier *'səb'* (all), therefore, is singular or has an inclusive reference. We have discussed this issue in more detail later in the paper.

### 4.1.Grammatical Number

Whether Magahi has the grammatical number or not is a question of open possibilities. The language, as one can observe in above examples, makes no further agreement other than the use of plural marker on nouns. It uses no overt or covert marking on the verb regarding the number of referents. Plurality in Magahi is limited to nominal only, but in nominal or NPs there is an agreement between adjective and noun in terms of number. So, most of the speakers (not all) accepted or given their affirmative consents to the plural form of the adjectives with plural nouns. Such agreement, however, is a question to geographical variability. See the examples below

(10) piləkən kəprəwən kene rəkʰə ɖelhĩ
yellowPL clothePL where keep give.PST.3
Where have you put the yellow clothes?

(11) bəriyərkən əɖəmiən jiʈ gelәi
strongPL manPL win go.PST.3
The strong people have won.

(12) gorəkən ləikwən kekər həi
fairPL childDDPL whose be.PRS.3
Whose are these fair children?

(13) tutəlkən kursiən enne məʈ ləgɑo
breakPL chairPL here NEG arrange.PRS.3
Don't arrange broken chairs here.

(13.a) tutəl kursiənke hiɑ̃se hətɑ le
break.PST.SG chairPLACC herePP.from remove be.3

(13.b) tutəlkən kursi hətɑ de hiɑ̃se
break.PSTPL chair remove give.3 herePP.from
Remove these broken chairs from here.

(14) je ləikəwən kʰele gel həlәi u
who.REL boyPL play go.PST be.PST CORR
səb ɑ gelәi
all.PL come go.PST.3
The boys, who have gone to play, have returned.

Above examples are accepted forms in the Magahi speech community. Adjectives in greater than chance frequency agree with noun in number and gender; the question is whether the morphological marking on adjective and noun qualifies as the grammatical agreement or not. Though it might be an important issue, it is pertinent to critically engage with the various forms of irregularities in the constructions like (13, 13a, and 13b) at this juncture. It seems the forms of the adjectives and nouns are quite free and hardly effect or break the agreement

pattern. However, considering the examples (13, a, b), the agreement might be understood as morphologically irregular; though is an agreement. Either of the two marked forms i.e. adjective or noun manages to give the plural reference. The system at this point is little fragile and cannot be regularized with the amount of data I have. The instance (14) shows that in reflexive construction the agreement is intact. We got two structural/grammatical domains where agreement is palpable, namely, nominal & clausal (RC). There would be no harm in deriving from these instances that Magahi has grammatical number. Nevertheless, there is a good reason not to do so. One cannot strictly make a rule here that for the plural reference of an NP adjective and noun both should be in agreement or there must be plural use of reflexive; these are optional, which varies on geographical and ideolectal level.

The application of plural formalization on animacy hierarchy is something which needs a very exhaustive study. The language does not have plural marking with the abstract noun. Abstract nouns cannot be made plural e.g. **yaɖən* (memories), **k$^{h}$usiyən* (happiness), **ɖosʈiyən* (friendship), etc. The abstract noun in Magahi also protests against its occurrence with discourse marker/noun particle '*-wa*'.

At the present, essential question is whether the system is obligatory or optional. Haspelmath (2013) defines obligatoriness as non-occurrences or optional occurrences or obligatory occurrences of the system on various noun classes. Since Magahi uses morphological plural marking for the animate and inanimate nouns; it is for the most part obligatory if we loosen the criteria of obligatoriness a bit i.e. if we say that the language uses plural marking with the animate noun except when a quantity expression is present[14], and if we can consider the irregular realization of *'-ən*' with inanimate nouns. In many of the world's languages, the plural marker is not attached to the quantity-modified noun. So, the system is obligatory in one sense (if we only include animate and inanimate nouns), and optional in another (if we broaden the criterion and include other kinds of nouns, and restrict the forms of nouns).

### 4.2.Bare/marked plural in Magahi

Language interestingly has two forms of plural i.e. marked plural and unmarked plural. But before discussing the semantics of difference between the bare plural and marked plural; we have to understand the difference between the bare and marked noun in Magahi. Whenever the marker '-wɑ' is used with a bare noun it gives the semantics of identifiability (Lyons 1999) i.e. it speaks about the previous occurrence of the object. Interlocutors are familiar with the instances or the referred objects. There are two important issues in the semantics of (un)/marked plural; first, the semantic interpretation of the two forms i.e. the distinction in the reference; second, the acceptance of one phonetic form over another, in the case of inanimate nouns.

Plural marker, in the case of additive plural, attaches a suffix to the bare noun that gives the semantics of more than one, which is indefinite as in example (15). But as we have seen, the marked noun ('*-wa*') in Magahi bears the semantics of definiteness, and when made plural, keeps the semantics intact (definiteness). This dichotomy generates two forms of plural in the language. One, where the plural morpheme is directly added to the stem or

[14] Language has numeral classifier. In Magahi, number doesn't directly modify the noun. With numeral classifier, noun doesn't inflect for plurality.

uninflected lexemes, and another, where the morpheme is added to the inflected or marked form, marked with '*wa*'.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (15) | ləik-ən | kʰeliʈ | həi | mæɖan | me |
| | child-PL | play.PROG | be.PRS | field | in.PP.LOC |
| | Children are playing in the field. | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (16) | ləikə-w-ən | kʰeliʈ | həi | mæɖan | me |
| | child-DD-PL | play.PROG | be.PRS | field | in.PP.LOC |
| | The children are playing in the field. | | | | |

The interpretive difference between the above two constructions is not the number but the familiarity and uniqueness. The sentence in the example (15) refers to some unknown children or arbitrary children playing in the ground, but in (16) there are known children; it may be the case that children are in relation with the speaker or the hearer or both. The semantic extends to the maximum number of animate nouns where plurality is possible. The difference between the two nouns in above examples is the addition of the plural marker and the changed form of the noun. The morpheme *'-wa'* is very regular in its semantics and occurrences; it goes with every noun which can be within the system of plurality, and beyond.

Its effect on the unacceptable plural forms with inanimate nouns is interesting to see. There are some instances of inanimate nouns as in examples (6) and (7) which for the majority of the speakers are erroneous. However, the realization of plural with the marked noun is correct. The possible motivation which I see is the familiarity of the form; the marked form i.e. the plural as well as non-plural (marked with '*-wa*') is mostly in use in the language. It is imperative to mention here that the general or regular form of the plural is the marked plural in the mentioned variety here. It is the bare form which is restricted, and it needs an exhaustive study to understand its whole function. Some of the works have shown that the plural marker in Magahi directly attaches to the bare form of the noun e.g. Aryani (1965), Alok (2012), etc. however, it is not the case in spoken discourse. Speakers add plural morpheme more frequently with the marked noun. The generalization of this form further make us think about the claim of the noun particle as 'discourse particle', the form with '*-wa*' is used more than it is necessary or needed.

## 5. Three-way number distinction

The discussion on the bare and marked noun and their semantics further set the tone for the explanation of the three-way number distinction in Magahi. The three-way number distinction is based on the morphological distinction between singular and general number as the plural number has already been discussed, and it's linguistic forms are very clear from the morpheme '*-ən'*. The semantics of singular and general number has been discussed by some linguists e.g. Corbett (2000), Jespersen (1924), etc. Semantically, every language distinguishes between the two kinds of referents but the point of departure is the morphological realization that whether a language structurally makes the distinction between the general and singular referents.

According to Corbett (2000) and Jespersen (1924) 'language in which the meaning of the noun can be expressed without reference to Number is called general number' (Corbett (2000) itself taken the terminology from Andrzejewski (1960) cited in Corbett (2000)). It is

outside of the number system or ambiguous between the two kinds of system i.e. either singular & general, or plural & general. If the use of a noun refers to the more generic sense and does not reveal the singular or plural reference of the noun; the system is called general number. Corbett (2000), however, has given the example of the system which speaks about the three kinds of sub-systems; first, which can be formulated as general/singular vs. plural. Languages which follow this system do not overtly distinguish between the general and singular number. It can simply be said Singular vs. Plural or General vs. Plural.

**a. [Number [(general/singular) and plural]]**

Hindi and English languages are the examples of this sub-system. They use morphological markers on plural to figure it differently from singular; singular, on the other hand, is unmarked in Hindi and English, and so as general. However, with English, there is a bit of convolution, the distribution of indefinite and definite is blurred, and instances are seen where indefinite is used to state general number concept and definite for singular or unique (Jesperson 1924: 203-04). The use of the definite article in the language doesn't only refer to the singularity, but of familiarity too, it goes well with the plural nouns too. Hindi seems to be a straightforward example of this sub-type.

a. 1. ləkərɑ/lərəkẽ $k^h$el/$k^h$el rəhɑ/rəhẽ hɛ/hɛ̃
Boy.S/G/PL play PROGG.S/PL be.PRS.S/PL
The boy/boys is/are playing.

Singular expression in Hindi is indefinite in its general interpretation[15], and therefore is general.

Second sub-system is clubbing together of the general/plural versus singular. In such a system, the distinction between the plural and general is not morpho-syntactically made or it is implied with zero markers. Languages with this sub-system mark singular nouns morphologically.

**b. [Number [(general/plural) and singular]]**

There is no attested language which follows this sub-system. Where plural and general are null marked or similarly marked, and the singular is marked differently. However, the important question is whether 'General' number is singular or plural (semantically). This sub-system, however, at least raises doubts over the question of the number of referents in the general number. This system doesn't exist in pure form, and no language employs it in normal case (Corbett 2000: 17)

The third type of languages show a morphological distinction among the singular, plural and general reference. All the three are differently marked.

**c. [Number [general] [singular] [plural]]**

A language with such sub-system differentiates among the three forms of the noun. There is a language called Bayso (Corbett, 2000: 10) which has the unmarked general number. The form for singular is marked which refers to the single entity. The plural is marked differently in the language, mostly morphologically. General number is unmarked and 'non-committal' to the number (Corbett & Hayward 1987, referred in Corbett 2000:10).

[15] General interpretation refers to the interpretation where extra-linguistic features are not involved. It also refers to the fact that the object should not be used as reflexive to refer to some precedent.

Same semantics or phenomenon is seen in Magahi; the discourse marker or definite determiner *'-wa'* acts as definiteness marker and at the same time functions as singular. It definitely plays the semantics of individualization.

Magahi discerns singular noun from plural and general through the morphological marker '*-wa*' which as we have discussed functions as definiteness marker. This definiteness marker, looking through the binary of singularity and plurality, functions as singular. The marked noun in Magahi refers to the singular number. The general number is unmarked.

(17) ser [0] kʰəʈ̪ərnɑk howə həi
lion dangerous happen be.PRS.3.NH
Lion is dangerous.

(18) ser-wɑ ujərɑ hələ̈i
lion-DD white be.PST.3.NH
The lion was white.

(19) ser-ən bəhuʈ̪ rəng ke hələi
lion-PL very colour of.PP be.PRF.3.NH
Lions were of many colours.

(20) *serwɑ kʰəʈ̪ərnɑk howə həi
lion.DD dangerous happen be.PRS
The lion is a dangerous animal.

Above examples clearly show the morphological distinction among the forms of the nouns. The construction in the case of (17) is an instance of linguistic realization of general number whereby the referent does not possess any distinct number. The noun denotes to a set or a kind of animal i.e. lion and doesn't present any particular instantiation of the kind. Moreover, it is an indefinite instantiation of the noun that denotes every possible reference of lion that can exist, and this is due to the open position the noun possesses as a part of its lexical entry (Higginbotham 1985:560). The construction in example (18) is an instance of a noun which has familiarity and uniqueness attached to it. This definiteness marker binds the open position of the noun, and therefore, gives instantiation. In this case, it refers to the singular expression. All the instances of the noun with definiteness marker in Magahi are good examples of the singular reference. Example (19) is an instantiation of the plural system in Magahi whereby '-ən' morpheme is used as a morphological marker with a bare noun. Construction (20) is an interesting example which also facilitates the claim that the marked *('-wa'*) noun cannot make reference to a general number. The construction, in particular, refers to some general property of the noun; however, the instantiation of the noun is definite or specific. The two phrases i.e. VP and NP contradict each other.

Three-way number distinction is, in fact, a morphological distinction in which all the three kinds of referents must be marked differently. Most of the languages make a distinction between singular and plural where the plural is marked and the singular is not. Magahi, in this regard, too differentiates between singular and plural, but since singular and plural both overtly marked in a different way give the possibility of three-way number distinction.

One issue persists in the case of reference of marked plural and the unmarked plural. As we have discussed that the marked noun in Magahi is definite therefore is singular in

expression, but it also gives the sense of familiarity e.g. sentence (18); it is a lion interlocutors known about. So the question arises in the case of marked plural where it is plural and also definite, therefore, raising the serious morphological and conceptual concern about the issue of inclusiveness as a singular expression, and the referential status of the plural definite noun. The reference to these kinds of noun can be seen as plural. The marked plural formalizes as plural and functions as familiarity marker in the language. There is, of course, a definite reference and the definiteness extends its semantics to the familiarity or identifiability and 'inclusiveness'. The interface of definiteness marker and plural marker actually presents the syncretise semantics. The plural marker refers to plural number and the definiteness marker adds the familiarity and inclusiveness in NPs.

(21) ləikwən kəne geləu
boy.PL where go.PST.3
Where have the boys gone?

The reference in example (21) is inclusive in nature. It refers to all the children the parent has. So it is inclusive in nature, a definite but a plural; familiar to the interlocutors. Example (22) and (23) will make the issue clearer.

(22) čɑr-o ləik-w-ən ke leɻ̈e əihe
four-all kid-DD-PL PP bring.PROG.3 come.PRS.3
Come with all the four children.

(23) čɑr-go ləik-ən (*-w-ən) ɑilə hələu
four-NCL kid-PL come.PRF.3 be.PRF.2
Four boys have come.

There are clearly two systems in place. The marked plural shows familiarity, where it gives the sense of a certain pre-identified objects and their numbers. It behaves similar but not identical to English plural marked with 'the'. So, if the reference is to be made for all the objects in question which are in some ways identified, marked noun is preferred. When the reference is indefinite, as it is in the case of (23), unmarked plural is used. Numeral classifier is one of the very usual features in the language, and whenever a count noun has to combine with numeral, a classifier has to be inserted. The issue of definiteness in plurality hardly interferes with the three-way-number system of the language. Clearly, the use of *'-wa'* particle is used for the disambiguation between what is strictly singular, plural and general. Its use eliminates the salient generic interpretation of the noun.

## 6. Units of measurement and Mass Noun

This paper restricts itself by not dwelling into the theoretical issues prevalent in the domain of mass noun and plurality. The concern is the morphological or lexical apparatus language uses to measure mass noun. Morpho-syntactically the mass noun differs in its manifestation; it lacks the system of singular and plural (it does not take number words), and also differs in the kinds of quantifiers it takes (Bunt 1985:3). The section tries to understand or explain two issues here. First, how language reveals the number referents in mass noun, and what are the linguistic mechanisms which work in the place of morphological marking plural *'-ən'* in Magahi? Second, how quantifiers in the language work in the domain of mass noun? The article examines their forms, functions, distributions, and constraints.

The study of measurement units for the mass noun is important for all languages, since its description reveals how the community conceptualizes the world knowledge and shares it. If a community uses the name of body parts for many kinds of linguistic references; it reveals that body is one of the important parts of their understanding of the universe. Moreover, they bring them into their everyday's discourse. Magahi, in this regard, uses different kinds of measurement units to measure or refer to long or short distance, the height, and depth, etc, along with mass noun. Though many of the speakers use the same measurement units as of Hindi (mainly because of intense contact); I have constrained myself to use only some and those measurement units which are true to Magahi.

### 6.1.For the short and long distance measurement

Speakers use two kinds of measurement units; for the shorter distance, parts of the body are used; for the longer distance which is visible, wooden objects are used; and for the longest distance some other borrowed lexical items are used.

Table.1. Measurement Units for different Kinds of referents

| Numerals | Measurement Units | Meaning of measurement units |
|---|---|---|
| ek(one)/ɖo(two).. | əngul | The thickness of a finger |
| ek(one)/ɖo(two).. | čək$^{h}$o | Its equal to the thickness of four fingers together |
| ek(one)/ɖo(two).. | bi:ʈɑ | the length between thumb and the smallest finger(stretched) |
| ɖo(two),ʈin(three).. | t$^{h}$ut$^{h}$i | it's the height of the fist |
| ek(one)/ɖo(two).. | inč | a hand's figure has three inches |
| ek(one)/ɖo(two).. | hɑʈ$^{h}$ | the length from elbow to the longest figure |
| ek(one)/ɖo(two).. | mutt$^{h}$i[16] | (fist) this one is used for the mass noun |
| ek(one)/ɖo(two).. | deg | Step-distance while walking |
| ek(one)…….. | čullu | Folded palm (mainly, liquid mass noun) |

[16] mut$^{h}$i' (fist), is also used to measure the concrete mass noun such as rice, sand, etc. but not the MU '*čullu'* which is mainly used with liquid mass noun.

(i) ek mut$^{h}$i$_{i}$/čullu$_{j}$ b$^{h}$ɑʈ$_{i}$/pɑni$_{j}$ ɖihe
one MU/MU rice/water give.IMPF.2
Give me some rice/water.

The use of numerals is non-restricted. Any number of numerals can be used with all the above-listed measurement units. There are more measurement units of such kinds which are used by the speakers for different purposes like mapping distance, measuring mass nouns, etc. Some measurement units are presented in examples.

(24) həm ʈɑrɑ čər əngul bʰi zəmin ne ɖebəu
i.1S. you.2.GEN four MU[17] even land NEG. give.1.FUT
I won't even give you the land equal to the thickness of four fingers.

(25) ek biʈɑ/hɑʈʰ/tʰutʰi ke ləkri kɑt ke le ɑo
one MU of.PP wood cut CP bring come.2.NH
Cut the wood of the length of a fist/elongated palm/hand and bring me.

These measurement units are stimulated by the length of the body parts. The use of body parts in understanding the spatial arrangement also gives us a clue about their cognitive perception of the world that how they see the shortest distance from the perspective of their body. The whole body is used for referring to different heights and lengths. E.g. *'aɖmi-bʰər ləmba'* (as long as a man), *'jang-bʰər gəhərai'* (as deep as the length of thigh), '*kəmər-bʰər ləmba'* (tall to the waist), *'cʰaʈi-bʰər pani'* (water to the chest), etc. The linguistic invariant *'bʰər'* here functions as adverb meaning 'as much as' in English, and *'jiʈna'* (as much) as in Hindi.

**6.2.For longer distance**, help is taken from surroundings; largely wooden things or the length of trees and plants are referred to measure distance.

Table.2. Measurement Units for distance

| Numerals | Measurement Units | Meaning of measurement units |
|---|---|---|
| ek/ɖu/ʈin.. | bɑ̃s | Bamboo (it's the longest bush) |
| ek/ɖu/ʈin.. | lɑtʰi | a stick made out of wood |
| ek/ɖu.. | ʈɑr | It is a very long plant |
| ek/ɖu.. | per | Tree |
| ek/ɖu.. | kos | one and a half kilometer |

There are more such objects which are used to measure distance. Other than their mechanism; Hindi standard measurement units are frequently used by the speakers.

[17] MU- Measurement Unit (translation is given in the chart); I have used MU at all the places, whose meaning can be seen in charts.

(26) hĩɑ-se čɑr bɑ̃s ɖur he həmər gʰər
here-from.PP four MU away be.PRS i.1.GEN home
My home is as far as the length of four-bamboo from here.

(27) ʈɑr jeʈənɑ ləmbɑ ho geləi he cʰəurɑ
plant.MU REL tall happen go.PRF.3 be.3.PRS boy
He becomes as tall as the coconut tree. (*'ʈar'* used as metaphor for tallness)

Since in all these cases the numerals have directly attached with measurement units, and no numeral classifier has been used to mediate the two. All the instances of measurement units are noun, and don't need numeral classifier to be interpreted.

For the measurement of other uncountable concrete or liquid mass noun, language uses either the container which is used to contain the noun e.g. *bəlti* (bucket) , *gilas* (glass), *kəp* (cup), etc. for liquids like milk, water, tea, etc., and *'gilas'* (glass), *'kətori'* (bowl), *'nəpəna'*(a fixed-measured container), *'tina'* (a container), etc. for giving a unit to the mass nouns[18]. These containers cannot be strictly adhered to the type of mass noun i.e. whether *'gilas'* (glass) is only used for liquid mass noun or solid mass noun e.g. rice, flour, sugar, etc. These all containers actually used for measuring both the kinds of mass noun.

## 7. Quantifier in Magahi

There are some quantifiers which also work as the classifier in the language. The quantifiers like each, every, any, both, a lot of, a little, no, several, some, all, etc. are used for the count and the mass noun. Though, Magahi doesn't have the same amount of quantifier as it is in English. The language, for instance, doesn't distinguish between a little/ a few/ some. Only some quantifiers are described in this paper.

**a.** ***'səb'*** (all) – It (*səb*) is a universal quantifier. It can be used with the animate or inanimate noun. But when this quantifier is followed by another lexical item '*koi*' (any), its use is reserved for human referents only. It is partly because the morpheme '*koi*' refers to someone (human-being), exclusively human class.

(28) səbʰe-koi-ke awela həu
all.EMPH-any-of.PP come.FUT be.PRS.2.NH
Each and every one has to come.

(29) səb čəuɑ/pɑniyɑ girɑ ɖeləi[19]
all rice/ water pour.PRF give.PRF.2
He poured all the water/rice.

[18] It is not possible to list the entire available measurement units in this paper considering the scope of the paper. This is a preliminary work in the domain and will work as the reference work. I have listed some of the measurement units language uses.

[19] It is not usual to use *'səb'* with uncountable concrete or mass noun. But it can be used when only the reference is made and the quantifier is not being used adjacent to the noun. E.g. A. *'dʰan* (paddy) *i-bar* (this time) *kəisən*(how) *həi* (be.PRS)' (How is the paddy this time?) B. *səb* (all) *tʰik* (good) *nə* (Neg) *həwə* (be.PRS.2H). Another example with uncountable mass noun e.g. *səb* (all) *pani* (water) *gira* (fell) *ɖe-ləi* (give.PST.3) *cʰaura* (boy); (the boy pour down all the water). It is difficult to make a constraint on this quantifier. The use of this is acceptable with the mass noun like '*čau'* (rice), *'pani'* (water), etc.

**b.** ***'hər-ek*' (each one) and '*eke-ek*' (each and every**), is used only with the count nouns E.g.

(30) ekeek kursi leʈe əihe
each & every chair bring.2 come.2.NH
Bring each and every chair.

(31) hərek-ke bulɑhi
each & ever-of.PP call.2.NH
Call each and every one.

The quantifier in example (30) & (31) can be used for both the animate and inanimate noun. However, none of them can be used with uncountable nouns. Since, they refer to numbers.

**c. kuc$^{h}$ (some), ʈ$^{h}$orɑ, ʈ$^{h}$orɑ-mɑni (a little/some), ʈəni-sɑ/mɑni/sun (a little), d$^{h}$er-mɑni (a lot)**, are used to refer to the objects of little size, and quantity.

These quantifiers need a little detail description. The quantifier *'kuč$^{h}$'* (some) is not used without constraints. It is positively used with the countable noun, and with the human reference. But its distribution with the uncountable noun and non-human reference is problematic. It's difficult to out rightly deny its use with uncountable or non-human reference, but the random restriction is hard to follow. The odd behaviour of sentences like (32), (37) is concerning. Below are the few examples which capture the essence of the above statement.

(32) məmmi (*kuc$^{h}$)/ʈəni-sɑ/ʈ$^{h}$orɑ-sɑ b$^{h}$ɑʈ ɖihe
mother some-CLF rice give.3.NH
Mother, give me some rice.

(33) həmərɑ kuc$^{h}$/ʈ$^{h}$orɑ rupiya-ke jərurəʈ he
i.1S.O some money-of.PP need be.PRS
I need some money.

(34) kuc$^{h}$/*ʈ$^{h}$orɑ əɖəmi-ke jugɑr ho jəʈəi kɑ
some man-of.ACC arrange be.PRS.3 go.PROG Q
Can you find me some men?

(35) kuc$^{h}$/*ʈ$^{h}$orɑ kiʈɑb/kopi/kursi hoʈəu kɑ
Some book/copy/chair have Q
Do you have some books/copies/chairs?

(36) ʈ$^{h}$orɑ pɑni ɖihə
some water give.PRS.2H
Give me some water.

(37) soni, kuc$^{h}$ čɑye-pɑni ho jɑye
soni some tea-water happen go.PRS.3
Soni, can we have some tea etc.!

The distribution of '*ʈʰora*' (some) and '*kucʰ*' (some) is not clear. As example (32) suggests '*kučʰ*' cannot be used with uncountable noun, and '*ʈʰora*' goes well with the uncountable noun. Example (33) shows that '*ʈʰora*' even goes well with countable nouns. The ungrammaticality of the use of the word '*tʰora*' in (34) and (35) again raises the question of the use of '*ʈʰora*' with countable noun[20]. The use of 'ʈʰorɑ' is clear, and it is mostly used with uncountable noun (with limitation). But the use of *'kučʰ'* is not that clear; it definitely doesn't go well with uncountable noun but the instance like (35) raises the question on its restriction.

There are some classifiers which are used with these quantifiers such as *'-sun'*, and *'-mani'*. The use of classifier *'-sun'* is restricted. It can only be used when the reference is for small quantity; it in this way can be called a **diminutive classifier**. The use of *'-mani'*, however, is not subjected to restriction; it can be used with both the kinds of references whether small or large. Both the classifiers can be used with countable and uncountable nouns.

(38) ʈəni-sun činni ɖebə kɑ
little-CLF sugar give.FUT.2 Q
Will you give me some sugar?

(39) ʈəni-sun/*dʰer-sun əɖəmi ɑilə hələ̈i
little-CLF/ many-CLF man come.PST.3 be.PST.3NH
Few people had come.

(40) dʰer-mɑni/ ʈəni-mɑni əɖəmi ɑilə hələ̈i
manu-CLF/ few-CLF man come.PST.3 be.PST.3NH
Many/ Few people had come.

Two more important forms of above-mentioned quantifiers are '*tʰora-mani*' (a little), and '*təni-sa*' (a little) or '*itti-sa*' (a little). As it is discussed that the classifier *'-mani'* is not subject of size restriction i.e. it can be used for both referents small & large, and this is very productive as well. The suffix '*-sa*' seems to be borrowed from Hindi from the constructions like '*tʰora-sa*' '*cʰota-sa, bəra-sa*', *ləmba-sa*', etc. where it means 'like', but not with amount e.g. '*ʈəni-sa*'.

Magahi is a classifier language. It has mandatory occurrences of numeral classifier. Apart from numeral classifier, as we have seen, there are some more classifiers. This paper, understanding the limitation and the scope of the paper, doesn't deal with the various other ways Magahi uses for the linguistic realization of the number references e.g. reduplication, associative plural, use of very regular and productive lexical item *'səb'* (all) and *'log'* (people) with nouns or pronouns, classifiers, aggregative number, other morpho-phonetic ways which are equally complex and even more important.

[20] The use of '*tʰora*' (some) is restricted with the countable nouns, except 'money', and in some cases 'people'.

## 8. Conclusion

I end this paper with opening some of the future possibilities this work invites. The core area of concern is the actual status of the 'discourse marker' *'-wa'*. The paper, following some reference works, maintained the claim that the morpheme's quintessential property is 'identifiability' (Lyons 1999). Its status in the language is very regular and, therefore, arises the need to think the noun with this form as another form of nouns in the language as a part of the lexical entry or its status as a bare classifier which gives grounding to the noun. The marked plural and its semantics are another concern this paper raises here. The constraint on animacy hierarchy is not maintained in the language. The plural marker goes well with non-human and even with the majority of inanimate nouns, and only restricts the system with abstract noun and mass noun. The paper described the three-way number system that is readily available in the language; the system is motivated by the morphological distinction between singular and general number. The description of three-way number system further raises issues like- the true reference of *'-wa'* particle as singular, and marked plural as 'plural'; in the case of marked plural the semantics of inclusiveness has to be investigated more seriously. In the category of mass noun and quantifiers; this paper works as basic which describes some of the measurement units and discusses some of the fundamental problems in the area. Further, this paper dealing with some of the classifiers in the language raises questions or at least sought for the description of whole classifier system in the language in detail. The paper sadly didn't deal with the numeral classifier and its semantics in detail. It also restricts itself in not dealing with other mechanism through which language refers number; importantly, associative plural, reduplication, and extra-linguistics.

## Abbreviation

ABL- Ablative, ACC- Accusative, CLF- Classifier, CP- Conjunctive Particle, DAT- Dative, DD- Definite Determiner, EMPH- Emphatic, FUT-Future, GEN-Genitive, H-Honorific, LOC-Locative, MU-Measurement unit, NEG-Negative, NH-Non-Honorific, O-Oblique, PRF-Perfective, PST-Past, PRS-Present, SG-Singular, PL-Plural, PROG-Progressive aspect, Q-Question, REL-Relative, RC- Relative clause, S-Singular, 1-first person, 2-second person, 3- third person.

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