



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR
SPRÅK OCH
LITTERATURER

A STUDY OF SHORT POSSESSIVE SUFFIXES IN SOMALI: PATTERNS AND USAGE

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Essay/Degree Project:	15 hp
Program or/and course:	African languages, independent project at bachelor level
Level:	First cycle
Term/year:	Vt/2024
Supervisor:	Morgan Nilsson
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Report nr:	Xx

Abstract

Title: *A Study of Short Possessive Suffixes in Somali: Patterns and Usage*

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Abstract: Possessive suffixes in Somali have two forms: one short form and one long form. This study aims to investigate and analyze the patterns and usage of short possessive suffixes. The research uses a method approach involving the investigation of specific nouns through corpus searches to analyze short possessive suffixes in Somali. To identify the noun categories that can be suffixed with short possessive suffixes, the thesis examines 40 nouns divided into 6 sets. In addition, a typological and cross-linguistic overview is presented to create a theoretical basis and an overall picture of some other languages that exhibit similar linguistic patterns. The findings and discussions provide insights into the distribution and usage of possessive suffixes with different types of nouns, including family members, body parts, friends, and quantificational nouns. The study supports previous research, questions it at some points, and contributes new findings. Also, it opens new ways for future research to explore different patterns of possession construction in the language. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the Somali language has a possessive classification based on *alienability* split.

Keywords: Somali language, Cushitic, possessive suffixes, corpus searches, possessive classification,

Resumé

Possessiva suffix på somaliska har två olika former: en kort form och en lång form. Denna studie syftar till att undersöka och analysera mönster och användning av korta possessiva suffix. Metoden i studien är en undersökning av specifika substantiv genom korpussökningar för att analysera de korta possessiva suffixen på somaliska. För att identifiera de substantivkategorier som kan ta de korta possessiva suffixen, undersöker jag 40 substantiv uppdelade i 6 kategorier. Dessutom presenteras en typologisk och tvärspråklig översikt för att skapa en teoretisk grund och helhetsbild av en del av språk i världen som uppvisar liknande språkliga mönster. Resultaten och diskussionerna ger insikter i fördelningen och användningen av possessiva suffix med olika typer av substantiv, inklusive familjemedlemmar, kroppsdelar, vänner och kvantifierande substantiv. Studien stödjer tidigare forskningar, ifrågasätter dem vid vissa tillfällen och bidrar med nya fynd. Det öppnar också nya vägar för framtida forskning för att utforska olika mönster av possessivkonstruktion i somaliska språket. Dessutom visar studien att det somaliska språket har en possessiv klassificering baserad på så kallade alienability *split* som är en lingvistiska mönster som skiljer substantiv för släktingar och/eller kroppsdelar bland annat, från andra possessiva kategorier.

Nyckelord: Somaliska språket, kushitisk, possessiva suffix, korpussökning, possessiv klassificering

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List of Abbreviations Used in Glossing

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
≠	Not equal to
*	Ungrammatical
ABS	absolutive case
COM	comitative
DEF	definite
DM	declarative marker
EXC	exclusive
F	feminine
FOC	focus marker
IDEF	interrogative determiner
INCL.	inclusive
INAL	Inalienable
M	masculine
NCM	Noun class marker
PL	plural
POSS	possessive determiner
PRS	present tense
PST	past tense
SG	singular

1. Introduction

This thesis focuses on the possessive suffixes in the Somali language. To that end, two different forms of possessive markers appear as suffixes at the end of a noun. Section (1.1) introduces the different Somali possessive suffixes, while section (1.2) elaborates on the aim and research questions. Finally, the paper's structure and outline are presented in section (1.3).

1.1 Somali possessives

Possessive construction comes in different forms in Somali. One way is the independent personal possessive pronouns such as *kayga* 'mine' for masculine possessee (i.e., the possessed object) or *tayda* 'mine' for feminine possessee. In addition, a possessive suffix can be added to the end of the noun as a possessive determiner as shown in (1).

(1)

a. *qalinkayga* (Source: Korp¹)

qalin-k-ay-ga

pen-M-POSS-DEF.M

'my pen'

b. *walaalkay*

walaal-k-ay

brother-M-POSS.1SG

'my brother'

In (1a), the speaker is represented by the complex suffix *-kayga* 'my', and is the possessor (i.e., the owner of the object), while the *qalin-* 'pen' is the noun for the possessed object (the possessee). In (1b), the possessor is represented by the simple suffix *-kay* 'my', while the possessee is represented by *walaal-* 'brother'. Observe, there are two forms: one short form

¹ Korp: The Somali parts of the corpus Korp at Språkbanken, Göteborg universitet. It is found at <https://spraakbanken.gu.se/korp/?mode=somali>.

without the definite article *-ga*, for *walaalkay* 'my brother', and a long one with the definite article *-ga* for *qalinkayga* 'my pen'. The question is why a suffixed possessive element to a head noun appears in two ways, like the examples shown in (1a) and (1b). This is the problem for which I am looking for an explanation.

One explanation for this phenomenon is that the possessive suffix without a definite article is used on nouns for family members, parts of the body, and occasionally for close friends (Saeed 1999: 115). Also, Appleyard (1984: 114) points out that possessive suffixes with the definite article are the general rule in standard Somali, while the short form is the exception and is limited to "a small number of nouns such as kinship terms and parts of the body".

These explanations are partially correct, but they are not completely right. For example, the nouns shown in (2) and (3) belong to family members and body parts respectively but all occur in long forms. Nouns in (4) and (5) appear in short forms also even though they are not family members.

(2)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p><i>a. inankayga</i>
 inan-k-ay-ga
 boy-M-POSS.1SG-DEF.M
 'my son' (lit. 'my boy')</p> | <p><i>b. inantayda</i>
 inan-t-ay-da
 girl-F-POSS.1SG-DEF.F
 'my daughter' (lit. 'my baby girl')</p> |
| <p><i>c. ninkayga</i>
 nin-k-ay-ga
 man-M-POSS.1SG-DEF.M
 'my husband' (lit. 'my man')</p> | <p><i>d. naagtayda</i>
 naag-t-ay-da
 woman-F-POSS.1SG-DEF.F
 'my wife' (lit. 'my woman')</p> |

(Source: personal knowledge)

(3)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p><i>a. carrabkaaga</i>
 carrab-k-aa-ga
 tongue-M-POSS.2SG-DEF.M
 'your tongue'</p> | <p><i>b. lugtaada</i>
 Lug-t-aa-da
 Leg-F-POSS.2SG-DEF.F
 'your leg'</p> |
|--|--|

(Source: personal knowledge)

The possessed nouns in (2), belong to kinship while those in (3), belong to body parts and all take long possessive suffixes. Thus, the claim that the short possessive forms are for kinship and body part nouns does not hold without further limitation.

(KORP)

(4)

a. *eebbehood*
eebbe-h-ood
god-M-POSS.3PL
'their God'

b. *rabbigeen*
rabbi-g-een
lord- M-POSS.1PL (inclusive)
'our lord'

(5)

(KORP)

a. *dhammaantood*
dhammaan-t-ood
all- F-POSS.3PL
'all of them'

b. *weligeed*
weli-g-eed
ever- M-POSS.3SG.F
'forever' (lit. her entire life)

In (4) and (5), the possessed nouns belong neither to relatives nor to body parts even though they take short possessive endings. Again, the claim that the short possessive forms are only for relatives and body parts' nouns does not hold.

1.2 Aims and research question

The use of the above-mentioned different forms of the possessive suffix in Somali, i.e., the short and long forms, constitutes a gap in the description of Somali. The long suffix forms are well described in the literature, but the short ones are briefly mentioned. Moreover, it is unclear in what contexts are they used. Therefore, the short possessive endings without a definite article are the topic of this thesis. I will investigate and try to answer these questions:

- What nouns are used with short possessive suffixes in the Somali language?
- Do some nouns use both short and long possessive suffixes? And if so, in what contexts?
- What reasons can be found for using short possessive suffixes?

1.3 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows: In Chapter 1, I introduce the possessive suffixes in the Somali language and the research gap that thesis aims to fill. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the general linguistic theory and background on possessive suffixes in different world languages, focusing particularly on the Somali language. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used in this thesis, while Chapter 4 presents the data and its analysis. In Chapter 5 (results and discussion), I connect the theoretical framework and research questions with the results. Finally, in Chapter 6, the conclusion presents a summary of the thesis, followed by a reference list and any appendices.

2. Background and Theory

This chapter provides in section 2.1 an overview of possession in linguistics. Section 2.1.1 starts with defining key terms related to possession, then it continues to explain the different types of possession, such as alienable vs. inalienable possession, and the various ways possession can be expressed across languages. Section 2.1.2 also includes a theoretical explanation of possessive classification and how it relates to the Somali language. The Somali language is introduced in 2.2, and previous research is briefly reviewed in 2.2.1. Overall, the Chapter provides a theoretical foundation for the research conducted in the thesis.

2.1 Possession in linguistics

The word possession is a linguistic term denoting a broader meaning than that associated with the word possession in its everyday use. It is not limited to owning something even though it includes a relationship of ownership or possession, "it also includes kinship relations (as in *my father*), part-whole relations (as in *my hand*), and other relations as in *its population*, *its foreign minister*, *his first novel*, or *his favorite movie*" (Dryer 2023). Henceforth, when the term possession is used, it refers to its linguistic meaning.

Many languages have possessive affixes. These affixes are well distributed throughout the world's languages. Some languages have possessive prefixes, others have possessive suffixes. A third group, which is very small, has both prefixes and suffixes, while there is a fourth group without possessive affixes. According to 902 languages presented in (Dryer 2013), 255 have possessive prefixes, 355 have possessive suffixes and 260 have no possessive affixes, while 32 languages have both types.

However, this paper does not aim to investigate all types of possession, even though a typological and cross-linguistic overview is important for a linguistic overall picture. It is more focused on languages with possessive classification to find what they share with the Somali language which has different possessive suffix forms.

2.1.1 Possessive classification

Many languages have two or more forms of possessive marking. That is exactly what is meant by possessive classification. According to Nichols & Bickel (2013), **Possessive classification** is when a language has two or more forms of possessive marking, determined by the possessed noun. Example (1) in Chapter 1, shows that the Somali language has a typical possessive classification. One common thing in many of these languages is a phenomenon called **alienable** and **inalienable** possession. Alienable possession is about things that may or may not be possessed and the possessor (i.e., the owner) can cease to own it at some point. **Inalienable** possession is a type of possession in which a noun is obligatorily possessed by its possessor like body parts (Haspelmath 2017:5). For example, *Mohamed's arm* is inalienably possessed because it cannot, without outside enforcement, be removed from *Mohammed*. In contrast, *'Mohamed's glasses'* are alienably possessed because they can be separated from him.

Another related term to the (in)alienable possession is the **alienability split** which is about when the "kinship terms and/or body-part terms behave differently from other kinds of possessed nouns occurring in an ownership relationship" (Haspelmath 2017:4).

Many languages use different forms of affixes for alienable and inalienable possession where alienability split is included. I present examples from different languages in the next lines below. Examples (6) and (7) are retrieved from Wals online (Nichols & Bickel 2013):

(6) Mesa Grande Diegueño (Yuman; California) (Langdon 1970: 143)

a. ʔ-ətalʷ

1SG-mother

‘my mother’

b. ʔə-nʷ-ewa:

1SG-alienable-house

‘my house’

In (6a), the noun *atal* 'mother' takes the short prefix *ʔ*- 'my', and in (6b), the noun *ewa* 'house' takes the complex prefix *ʔa-nʷ*- 'my'. This distinction is called linguistically, possessive classification because it classifies or divides the nouns of the language, e.g., Mesa Grande Diegueño into two different groups: a group that behaves like 'mother' with simple affix and a group that behaves like 'house' with more complex prefix.

(7) Warndarang (Maran; Northern Territory, Australia) (Heath 1980: 28-29)

a. ng-baba	b. wu-radburru ngini
I-father	NCM-COUNTRY 1SG.GEN
'my father', 'our father'	'my country'

In (7a), the noun *-baba* 'father' takes the possessive prefix *ng*- 'I' but in (7b), the pronoun for the first person singular takes a genitive case. That means the Warndarang language has two different kinds of morphology for the two kinds of possession i.e., possessive prefix for kinship nouns and independent pronoun for alienable nouns. This is in contrast to the Mesa Grande Diegueño language which uses one kind of affix for the two kinds of possession, i.e., prefix. Also, the two languages have an alienability split because the kinship terms in both languages behave differently from the other kinds of possessed nouns.

In some languages, the possessive person forms are shorter in inalienable than in alienable. Hungarian, (Uralic language) belongs to this group as shown in (8) retrieved from (Haspelmath 2017:16):

Hungarian, (Uralic language) (Elekfi 2000:159):

(8)	(Alienable)	(Inalienable)
	a. bőr-je	b. bőr-e
	skin-3SG.AL	skin-3SG.INAL
	'his/her leather'	'his/her skin'

This pattern in Hungarian also occurs in the Italian language even though they belong to different language families. Italian is an Indo-European language while Hungarian belongs to

the Uralic language family. The possessive marker in Italian is shorter for inalienable nouns than alienable nouns as shown in (9).

(9)

(alienable)	(inalienable)
a. <i>la mia borsa</i>	b. <i>mia madre</i>
DEF POSS.1SG bag	POSS.1SG mother
'my bag'	'my mother'

(Italian Pills)

In (9a), the noun, *borsa* 'bag' takes the definite marker *la* 'the' and, the possessive marker *mia* 'my' but in (9b), the noun *madre* 'mother' takes the single possessive marker *mia* 'my'. That means the Italian language has two kinds of possession construction, i.e., a short possessive marker for inalienable nouns and a complex prefix consisting of a definite article and a possessive marker for alienable nouns.

2.1.2 Theoretical explanation

There are many theoretical explanations for what is happening, why, and how (in)alienability behaves. I will address some relevant points that, among others, Haspelmath (2017) calls universals, and some explanations about why languages make alienability split.

For instance, universal number 3 points out, that if the language distinguishes the length of the possessive person forms, it "*is always the inalienable construction that has the shorter person form, while the alienable construction has the longer person forms*" Haspelmath (2017:16). This statement is consistent with the Mesa Grande Diegueño (6), Hungarian (8) and Italian examples (9).

The reason behind the language's distinction of the possessive marking in alienable - and inalienable construction is explained in different ways by linguists. Haiman (1983), according to Haspelmath (2017) advocates for linguistic distance rule. This rule means that the distance between the possessor and possessee in a sentence with inalienable possession is less than in a sentence with alienable constructions. For instance, the inalienable has a bound affix when the

alienable has an independent marker as in (7) or it has a shorter affix when the alienable has a complex affix as in (8) and (9).

Relationship stability can also have a role in the alienability split as (Hollmann & Siewierska 2007: 410 according to Haspelmath 2017: 5) argues for. They mean that inalienable possession concerns relatively stable relationships in which possessors have minimal or no control. In contrast, alienable possession usually applies to a range of less permanent, more controlled relationships.

Haspelmath 2017 has another explanation based on the frequency and predictability of the inalienable noun. It becomes unnecessary to add additional identification markings when one already knows. The frequency argument is supported by Nichols (1988:579), who explains, that frequently possessed nouns, such as body parts and kinship terms and parts of whole in some languages, often occur with possessors, and alienable nouns occur less often with possessors. The conclusion of this point is because the common nouns for close relations are usually mentioned as possessed in possessive phrases, there is less need for marking. But there is a greater need for other common nouns to be clarified with some sort of determiners

2.2 The Somali Language

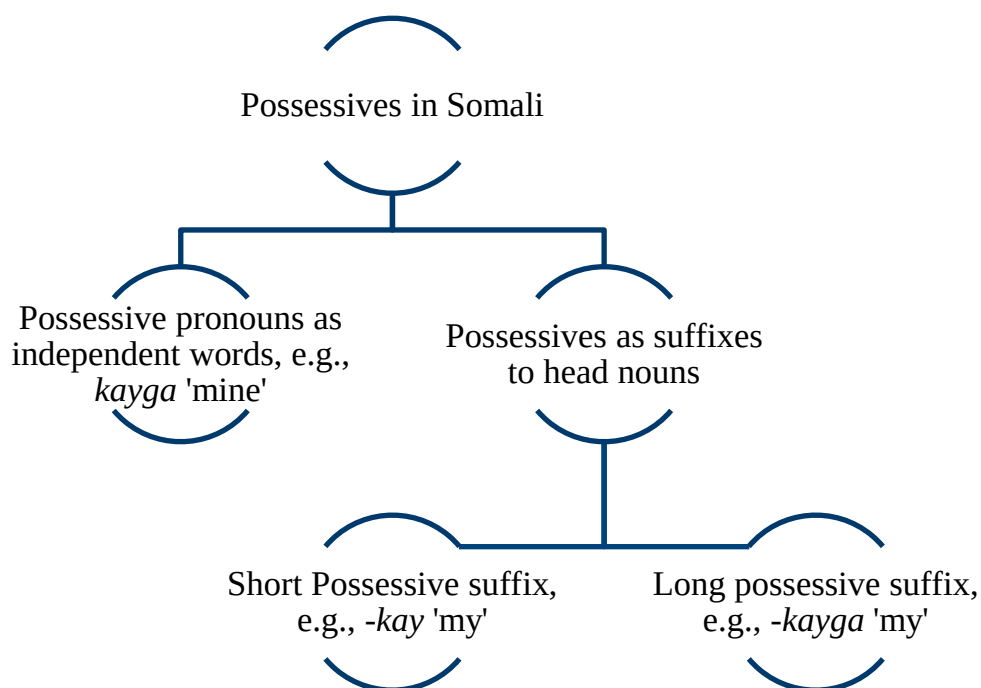
The Somali language belongs to the Cushitic group of the Afro-Asiatic language family. The Cushitic language group consists of about 40 languages spoken in areas of Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, and northeastern Tanzania (Mansuur 2016:18). Somali belongs to the East Cushitic group of languages and is the second largest after Oromo. It is spoken natively in the Horn of Africa i.e., Somalia (including Somaliland), Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya. As well as there are millions of Somali diaspora around the world.

The Northern Somali dialects are regarded as the base standard and official language of Somalia (Lamberti 1986:14). This dialect group covers most of the Somali territory in the Horn of Africa. It is spoken by more than 60% of the Somali population. Based on this, my thesis focuses on Standard Somali, i.e., The Northern Somali dialects and its possessive suffix morphology.

2.2.1 Possessive classification and Somali language

Possessive pronouns in the Somali language exist as both independent words and suffixes added to nouns. The relationship between different possessive pronouns can be illustrated as a tree diagram like the one in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: *possessive pronouns*

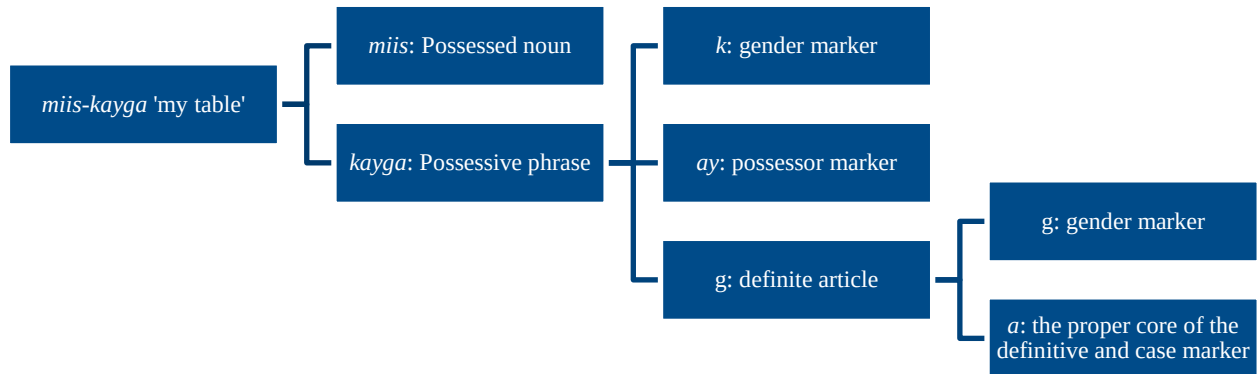


Source: personal knowledge

The possessive pronoun as an independent word or a suffix consists of three morphemes. The first morpheme marks the gender of the possessee. The second morpheme marks the person of the possessor. The third morpheme is a definite article which in turn consists of two parts, a gender marker consonant, and a short vowel which represents the proper core of the definitive and carries the case marking for the current word (Appleyard 1984:115, Banti 1984:135).

Figure 2 illustrates these facts as a tree diagram.

Figure 2: *possessive morphemes*



The noun phrase *miiskayga* ‘my table’ illustrated in the tree diagram above is also shown in (10).

(10)

miiskayga

miis-k-ay-ga

table-DEF.M-POSS.1SG-DEF.M

‘my table’

In (10), the possessee is *miis* ‘table’, while the complex suffix *-kayga* ‘my’ represents the possessor. The latter consists of three morphemes. The *-k-* ‘*the*’ is a masculine gender marker for the possessee. The *-ay-* ‘my’ is a possessive marker for first-person singular. The last morpheme *-ga* ‘the’ is a definite article masculine for the possessor.

The independent forms of possessive pronouns in Somali correspond to the English ones, such as *mine*, *yours*, *his*, *hers*, *ours*, *yours*, and *theirs* with minor exceptions as shown in Table 1. They can also be divided when concerning morpheme-by-morpheme glossing.

Table 1: Independent forms of possessive pronouns

	Masculine possessee	Feminine possessee	Plural possessee
1SG.	<i>kayga</i> 'mine'	<i>tayda</i> 'mine'	<i>kuwayga</i> 'mine'
2SG.	<i>kaaga</i> 'yours'	<i>taada</i> 'yours'	<i>kuwaaga</i> 'yours'
3SG.M	<i>kiisa</i> 'his'	<i>tiisa</i> 'his'	<i>kuwiisa</i> 'his'
3SG.F	<i>keeda</i> 'hers'	<i>teeda</i> 'hers'	<i>kuweeda</i> 'hers'
1PL.EXCL.	<i>kaayaga</i> 'ours' (EXCL.)	<i>taayada</i> 'ours' (excl.)	<i>Kuwayaga</i> 'ours' (EXCL.)
1PL.INCL.	<i>keenna</i> 'ours' (INCL.)	<i>teenna</i> 'ours' (INCL.)	<i>kuweenna</i> 'ours' (INCL.)
2PL.	<i>kiinna</i> 'yours' (PL)	<i>tiinna</i> 'yours' (PL)	<i>kuwiinna</i> 'yours' (PL)
3PL.	<i>kooda</i> 'theirs'	<i>tooda</i> 'theirs'	<i>kuwooda</i> 'theirs'

Table 1: (Nilsson 2024:24)

Table 1 presents the independent possessive pronouns based on the eight personnel pronouns in the Somali language. Also, there are different masculine and feminine forms in the singular, but only one common form in the plural. However, the dependent forms correspond to the possessive adjectives in English such as *my*, *his*, *her*, *its*, *your*, and *their*. But unlike in English, these words are suffixes in Somali. Hence, these suffixes are the focal point of this thesis. They have two different forms, a long form with a definite article and a short form without a definite article as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Possessive suffixes with definite articles (i.e., the long form)

	Masculine possessee	Feminine possessee
1SG.	<i>-kayga</i> 'my'	<i>-tayda</i> 'my'
2SG.	<i>-kaaga</i> 'your'	<i>-taada</i> 'your'
3SG.M	<i>-kiisa</i> 'his'	<i>-tiisa</i> 'his'
3SG.F	<i>-keeda</i> 'her'	<i>-teeda</i> 'her'
1PL.excl.	<i>-kaayaga</i> 'our' (exc.)	<i>-taayada</i> 'our' (exc.)
1PL.inc	<i>-keenna</i> 'our' (inc.)	<i>-teenna</i> 'our' (inc.)
2PL.	<i>-kiinna</i> 'your' (PL)	<i>-tiinna</i> 'your' (PL)
3PL.	<i>-kooda</i> 'their'	<i>-tooda</i> 'their'

Table 2: (Banti 1983:137)

Table 3: Possessive suffixes without definite articles (i.e., the short form)

	Masculine possessee	Feminine possessee
1SG.	- <i>kay</i> 'my'	- <i>tay</i> 'my'
2SG.	- <i>kaa</i> 'your'	- <i>taa</i> 'your'
3SG.M	- <i>kiis</i> 'his'	- <i>tiis</i> 'his'
3SG.F	- <i>keed</i> 'her'	- <i>teed</i> 'her'
1PL.excl.	- <i>kaayo</i> 'our' (exc.)	- <i>taayo</i> 'our' (exc.)
1PL.inc	- <i>keen</i> 'our' (inc.)	- <i>teen</i> 'our' (inc.)
2PL.	- <i>kiin</i> 'your' (PL)	- <i>tiin</i> 'your' (PL)
3PL.	- <i>kood</i> 'their'	- <i>tood</i> 'their'

Table 3: (Bruhn 200:3)

Table 3 presents the possessive suffixes without definite articles.

One important characteristic of the Somali determiner suffixes, including possessives as shown in Tables 1 and 2, is that the suffixes adjust to the final phoneme of the stem, and four different allomorphs occur for each gender: /k/, /g/, /h/ or $\emptyset$ (zero) for masculine gender, /t/, /d/, /sh/ or $\emptyset$ (zero) for feminine gender. The initial letter changes are due to Sandhi² alternations. Saeed (1999:28) elaborates this further with examples.

The following examples in (11) show possessed nouns suffixed with different forms, i.e., the long and short forms:

- | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| (11) | Short form | long form | |
| a. | <i>hooyaday</i> | <i>lacagtayda</i> | (KORP) |
| | hooya-d-ay | lacag-t-ay-da | |
| | mother-DEF.F-POSS.1SG | money-DEF.F-POSS.1SG-DEF-F | |
| | 'my mother' | 'my money' | |

². **Sandhi**: is a type of morphophonemic process. It's when sound changes occur at morpheme/word boundaries.

c.	<i>adeerkaa</i>	d.	<i>gurigaaga</i>	(KORP)
	adeer-k-aa		guri-g-aa-ga	
	paternal uncle-DEF.M-POSS.2SG.M		guri-DEF.M-POSS.2SG-DEF.M	
	'your paternal uncle'		'Your house'	

In (11a), the possessor is represented by the suffix *-ay* 'my' which is the last morpheme of the noun phrase. The possessed noun is *hooyo* 'mother'. In (11b), the possessor is represented by the possessive suffix *-ay* 'my' plus the feminine definite determiner *-da*. The possessed noun is *lacag* 'money'. The letters *-d-* in (a) and *-t-* in (b) immediately following the possessed nouns are the initial determiner and the allomorph of *-t*. The same analysis applies to (11c) and (11d). The only differences are that they are masculine forms and for the second person singular (2SG.). Nouns in (11a-c) have short possessive suffixes, while those in (11b-d) have long possessive suffixes. That shows an alienability split, i.e., kinship nouns are distinguished from other nouns in the possessive construction (Haspelmath 2017:4).

2.2.2 Literature review and previous research

The Somali language is one of the most researched and linguistically documented languages, compared to other Cushitic languages (Saeed 1999: 5). Since adopting the Somali script in 1972, numerous books on the Somali language have been published, including grammar books and dictionaries (Nilsson 2022: 54-59). Some of the published books or online resources address the topic of this thesis, which is the differences in Somali possessive suffixes, especially the short forms without definite articles. I have compiled a list of literature that mentions this subject or discusses it more deeply.

Various terms in the literature refer to the possessive suffixes. For instance, Saeed refers to it as a possessive determiner (1999: 114), while the short possessive ending is mentioned as the inalienable form (Saeed 1999:116). Appleyard calls it a possessive pronoun suffix (1984: 115) while Aden calls it a possessive adjective (2009: 292). Green (2021: 240) describes the short possessive suffix as a "Bare possessive determiner".

Puglieli and Mansur (1999:59) state that the short forms of possessive endings are used for nouns concerning family members, body parts, and the noun *saaxiib* 'friend'. Saeed (1999) discusses the possessive pronouns in the Somali language several times in several places in the book. He mentions a characteristic feature of the possessive suffixes that occur without definiteness; they mark the semantic distinction that resembles the distinction between alienable and inalienable possession in some languages and *are "used with nouns for family members, parts of the body and by extension for close friends"* (p.115). He adds the so-called partitive constructions to these categories, such as *giddigood* 'all of them' and *qaarkood* 'some of them'.

Green (2021: 240) agrees with Saeed regarding the nouns modified by short possessive suffixes and their similarity to inalienable possession. However, Green adds an interesting nuance that the possessive determiner always comes after the noun it modifies directly, even when there is more than one determiner in the phrase. Except for the possessive determiners, there are four other types of determiners, such as demonstrative determiners, remote definite determiners, definite determiners, and interrogative determiners. In (12), examples of the five types of determiners are shown. In (13), the suffixed determiners are shown when there is more than one. Green means that the possessive determiner cannot be separated from the noun it modifies, while all other four types can be separated.

(12)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a. Possessive determiner:</p> <p><i>qalinkayga</i></p> <p>qalin-k-ay-ga</p> <p>Pen-DEF.M-POSS.1SG-DEF.M</p> <p>'my pen'</p> | <p>b. Remote definite determiner:</p> <p><i>qalinkii</i></p> <p>qalin-kii</p> <p>pen-RDEF.M</p> <p>'the pen'</p> |
| <p>c. Demonstrative determiner:</p> <p><i>qalinkaa</i></p> <p>qalin-kaa</p> <p>pen-DEM.M.</p> <p>'that pen'</p> | <p>d. Definite determiner:</p> <p><i>qalinka</i></p> <p>qalin-ka</p> <p>pen-DEF.M</p> <p>'the pen'</p> |
| <p>e. Interrogative determiner:</p> <p><i>qalinkee</i></p> | <p>(KORP)</p> |

qalin-kee
 pen-IDEF.M
 'which pen?'

(13)

a. Remote definite determiner:

qalinkaygii
 qalin-k-ay-gii
 pen- DEF.M-POSS.1SG -RDEF.M
 'the pen of mine'

b. Possessive +demonstrative:

qalinkaygaas
 qalin-k-ay-gaas
 Pen-DEF.M-POSS.1SG-DEM.M
 'That pen of mine'

c. Definite determiner:

qalinkayga
 qalin-k-ay-ga
 Pen-DEF.M-POSS.1SG-DEF.M
 'my pen'

d. Possessive +Interrogative:

qalinkaygee
 qalin-k-ay-gee
 pen- DEF.M-POSS.1SG-IDEF.M
 'which pen of mine?'

(Source: personal knowledge)

Nilsson (2023: 67) discusses the possessive determiners in a separate section entitled 'Short possessive endings'. He limits the noun group to family members and friends. In contrast to other authors, Nilsson leaves out nouns for body parts, which is an interesting nuance worth highlighting. Nilsson also adds three other points of interest. Number one, the long possessive endings are: "*used with nouns that do not exclusively denote a relationship between two persons...*" (p. 68). Number two, if a modifier, e.g., adjectives, is added after the suffixed noun, the long possessive endings are used. An example of this is shown in (14). Number three, the short possessive suffixes are used with certain partitive constructions. However, Nilsson does not mention alienable and inalienable possession.

(14)

a. *saaxiibaday*

saaxiibad-d-ay

friend- F-POSS.1SG

'my female friend'

b. *saabiibaddayda cusub*

saaxiibad-d-ay-da cusub

friend- F-POSS.1SG-DEF.F new

'my new female friend'

In (14a), the possessor is represented by the short suffix *-day* 'my' without a definite article, while the possessee is represented by *saaxiibad-* 'girlfriend'. In example (14b), the speaker is indicated by the long suffix *-dayda* 'my' which functions as the possessor, the term *saaxiibad-* 'girlfriend' is the noun for the possessee. According to Nilsson, the noun *saaxiibad* 'girlfriend' takes a long ending with the definite article because there is the adjective word, *cusub* 'new' after the possessive phrase.

Other authors who took up the short possessive endings are among others, (Appleyard 1984:115), (Gabbard 2010:54) (Banti 1984:137), (Bruhn 2007:3). But they either mention the subject in a different context or took a similar position as the other authors who claim that the possessive suffixes without a definite article are used with nouns for family members, parts of the body, and (close) friends.

3. Method

To investigate the use and patterns of the short possessive endings, I used the Somali parts of the corpus Korp at Språkbanken, Göteborgs universitet (KORP)³. The objective of the investigation is to present an overview of the environment and function of short possessive suffixes and to answer the research question of this thesis (see 1.2). I analyzed six different noun groups in the corpus, including common nouns for nuclear family, extended family, body parts, friends, God, and quantificational nouns. A total of 40 common nouns were selected. I limited myself to these six noun categories because the literature points out these categories as possible environments for short possessive suffixes (see 2.2.2 literature review and previous research). The only additions I made are the nouns for God and my division of the family nouns into nuclear family and other family members. The investigated nouns are presented in 3.1. How the Corpus is used is presented in 3.2. Finally, challenges on Corpus searches are discussed in 3.2.1.

3.1 Investigated nouns (the wordlist)

The wordlist selected to investigate is presented here. It consists of 40 words, divided by six sets of nouns. The wordlist is shown in (15 to 20):

(15) 13 Common nouns for family members (spouses and offspring not included)

- *aabbe* 'father'
- *hooyo* 'mother'
- *awoow* 'grandfather'
- *ayeeyo* 'grandmother'
- *adeer* 'paternal uncle'
- *(e)eddo* 'paternal aunt'

³ <https://spraakbanken.gu.se/korp/?mode=somali>. Somali Korp is found as a subcorpus in Språkbanken's search infrastructure for language data.

- *abti* 'maternal uncle'
- *habaryar* 'maternal aunt'
- *walaal* 'sibling'
- *seeddi* 'brother-in-law'
- *dumaashi* 'sister-in-law'
- *soddoh* 'mother-in-law'
- *soddog* 'father-in-law'

(16) Eight common nouns for the nuclear family (spouses and offspring only)

- *naag* 'waman, spouse, wife'
- *nin* 'man, husband, spouse'
- *xaas* 'wife, spouse, 'children & wife'
- *say* 'husband, spouse'
- *wiil* 'boy', son'
- *gabadh* 'girl, daughter'
- *inan* 'boy, son'
- *inan* 'girl, daughter'

(17) Seven quantificational nouns

- *keli* 'alone, only'
- *kulli* 'everyone, everything', all'
- *dhamman* 'all, all of them'
- *weli* 'forever'
- *badh* 'half'
- *giddi* 'everybody, all of them'
- *qaar* 'some, Some of them'

(18) Five common nouns for friends and allies

- *saaxiib* 'male friend'
- *saaxiibad* 'female friend'
- *tol* 'kinfofks, clan'
- *gacal* 'beloved one, relative'
- *jaalle* 'comrade'

(19) Three nouns for God

- *rabbi* 'lord'
- *eebbe* 'God'
- *ilaah* 'God'

(20) Four common nouns for body parts

- *lug* 'leg'
- *gacan* 'hand'
- *dheg* 'ear'
- *san* 'nose'

3.2 The Corpus searches

Two corpus sites for the Somali language are available. One is the Somali Korp which belongs to Språkbanken (the Swedish language bank). The second one is Somali Wac (2016) which is known by its original project name HiBiT with more than 79 million tokens while the first contains 22.19 million tokens. Somali Wac exclusively consists of texts collected from the Internet by a computer programmed to search for instances where a small number of the most common words in Somali appear together in the text.

The Somali Korp of Språkbanken is chosen for this thesis because most of its text material comes from reliable sources such as fact books, schoolbooks, and formal institutions. It also contains some texts from informal sources, such as the Somali Wikipedia and other websites. The Korp has four options for searching, namely Simple, Extended, Advanced, and Compare.

My corpus searches were carried out in three ways:

- First, I searched the previously selected nouns suffixed with short possessive endings
- Second, I searched the same nouns with long possessive endings
- Thirdly I searched the same nouns without possessive endings and with definite articles in absolutive case to compare the occurrence frequency.

There are eight Somali personal possessive suffixes (see Table 2). But, third person masculine in short form has two alternative forms *-ii* and *-iis* 'his', e.g., *hooyadii* 'his mother' and *hooyadiis* 'his mother'. Therefore, I chose to search for both forms. Thus, the number of investigated short possessive suffixes becomes 9.

The investigations aim to see and compare which nouns take short possessive endings, long possessive endings, or both. In addition, the investigation will determine whether these nouns mostly occur as possessed or non-possessed. This is to check whether the theory of frequency and predictability (Haspelmath 2017:8) holds. Haspelmath's explanation is if two grammatical forms or patterns occur in different frequencies, the less frequent form needs more coding material such as long possessive suffixes in our case while more frequent forms need less coding material such as short possessive suffixes in our case or be zero coded in some other languages.

3.2.1 Orthographic challenges on Corpus searches

I have had some issues with the spelling of certain words that I have been working on in this study. To begin with, Somali has five short vowels and five long vowels. In addition, diphthongs behave like long vowels. The long vowels are written with double letters (, e.g., *aa*, *ee*, *ii*, *oo*, *uu*). Furthermore, due to the writing rules not being followed or due to variation in the spelling rules, some words are written differently, e.g., *awoow* 'grandfather' occurs in the KORP in three different ways <*awoowo*> with 33 hits, <*awoow*> with 34 hits, and <*awow*> with 21 hits. I chose to use *awoow* 'grandfather' with long vowels because it has the highest number of hits, and all take the same suffix regardless of spelling. The same goes for

ayeeyo 'grandmother', but for *(e)eddo* 'paternal aunt' and *gabadh/gabar* 'girl', I chose to use both the forms <eddo> & <eeddo> 'paternal aunt' and <gabadh> & <gabar> 'girl', because these differences are due to regional variations.

The used forms are shown in Table 4 for the grandfather, Table 5 for the *grandmother*, and Table 6 for the paternal aunt.

Table 4: *awoow* 'grandfather' with possessive endings

1SG.	<i>awoowgay</i>	'my grandfather'
2SG.	<i>awoowgaa</i>	'your grandfather'
3SG.M ₁	<i>awoowgii</i>	'his grandfather'
3SG.M ₂	<i>awoowgiis</i>	'his grandfather'
3SG.F	<i>awoowgeed</i>	'her grandfather'
1PL.EXCL.	<i>awoogayo</i>	'our grandfather'
1PL.INCL.	<i>awoowgeen</i>	'our grandfather'
2PL.	<i>awoowgiin</i>	your grandfather
3PL.	<i>awoowgood</i>	' their grandfather'

Table 5: *ayeeyo* 'Grandmother' with possessive endings

1SG.	<i>ayeeyday</i>	'my grandmother'
2SG.	<i>ayeeydaa</i>	'your grandmother'
3SG.M ₁	<i>ayeeydii</i>	'his grandmother'
3SG.M ₂	<i>ayeediis</i>	'his grandmother'
3SG.F	<i>ayeeydeed</i>	'her grandmother'
1PL.EXCL.	<i>ayeeydayo</i>	'our grandmother'
1PL.INCL.	<i>ayeeydeen</i>	'our grandmother'
2PL.	<i>ayeeydiin</i>	your grandmother
3PL.	<i>ayeeydood</i>	' their grandmother'

Table 6: (e)eddo 'paternal aunt' with possessive endings

	Paternal aunt ₁	Meaning	Paternal aunt ₂	Meaning
1SG.	<i>eddaday</i>	'my paternal aunt'	<i>eeddaday</i>	'my paternal aunt'
2SG.	<i>eddadaa</i>	'your paternal aunt'	<i>eeddadaa</i>	'your paternal aunt'
3SG.M ₁	<i>eddadii</i>	'his paternal aunt'	<i>eeddadii</i>	'his paternal aunt'
3SG.M ₂	<i>eddadiis</i>	'his paternal aunt'	<i>eeddadiis</i>	'his paternal aunt'
3SG.F	<i>eddadeed</i>	'her paternal aunt'	<i>eeddadeed</i>	'her paternal aunt'
1PL.EXCL.	<i>eddadayo</i>	'our paternal aunt'	<i>eeddadayo</i>	'our paternal aunt'
1PL.INCL.	<i>eddadeen</i>	'our paternal aunt'	<i>eeddadeen</i>	'our paternal aunt'
2PL.	<i>eddadiin</i>	'your paternal aunt'	<i>eeddadiin</i>	'your paternal aunt'
3PL.	<i>eddadood</i>	'their paternal aunt'	<i>eeddadood</i>	'their paternal aunt'

Another problem is the gemination rule of seven consonants, three stops (**bb**, **dd**, and **gg**), and four sonorants (**ll**, **mm**, **nn**, and **rr**) (Nilsson 2023: 11). The standard orthography for geminate letters has not stabilized yet among many writers. Therefore, a single word appears in different ways of writing as if it were completely different words. Three words in my research list that all have double consonants in their stems are *Aabb*e 'father', *sodd*og 'father-in-law', and *sodd*oh 'mother-in-law'. All appear in the corpus in two different ways. However, the search is limited to the standard spelling that includes double consonants, either in the definite form as illustrated in (20), or in the possessive form. endings.

(21)

*aabb*baha 'the father'

*sodd*ohda 'the mother-in-law'

*sodd*ogga 'the father-in-law'

(KORP)

The third problem is the spelling of compound words. There is a single word in my vocabulary stock which is a compound. It is the word *habaryar* 'maternal aunt'. It appears in three different ways i.e., as one word <*harbaryar*>, as one word with a hyphen, <*habar-yar*>, and as two separate words <*habar yar*>. In this case, joint writing is chosen i.e.,

habaryarta 'the maternal aunt' because it is the recommended way of writing for compound words (Nilsson 2023: 55).

The fourth challenge is how to write or search for diphthongs in the possessive suffix for 1SG which has two different spellings i.e., <ay> and <ey>. For instance, when the word <*hooyaday*> 'my mother' is searched in the corpus, the result is 718 hits. On the other hand, the result for <*hooyadey*> 'my mother' is 98 hits. Somali has five diphthongs (Green 2021: 61) which are two couples <**ey/ay**, **ow/aw**>, and one single <**oy**>. Nilsson (2023: 11) writes:" In the 1970's the spelling with <ey> and <ow> was somewhat more frequent than it is nowadays. At present, especially <ay> has become evidently more common than <ey>". Based on this, I chose to use only <ay> in all my possessive suffix searches for 1SG.

Lastly, I found four distinct meanings that can mislead one when searching short possessive suffixes for 1SG, 2SG, masculine 3SG, and long possessive suffix for 3SG. The possessive marker for 1SG is *-kay* 'my'. The possessive marker for 2SG is *-kaa* 'your'. The possessive marker for the short masculine 3SG is *-k-ii(s)* 'his', while the long possessive suffix for 3SG is *-kiisa* 'his'. But if they are attached as suffixes to nouns that take only long possessive suffixes, e.g., nouns for body parts, they can mean something completely different. Thus, can affect eventual corpus searches. They are namely homonymous suffixes for possessive or either demonstrative or remote definite. Look at examples in (22) for the 2SG possessive marker and demonstrative determiner, (23) for the 3SG possessive marker and remote definite, and (24) for the 1SG possessive marker and subject pronoun for 3SG masculine.

(22)

A) *fiiri walaal-kaa*

look brother-M.POSS.2SG

'look at your brother'

B) *fiiri geed-kaa*

look tree- M.DEM

'look at that tree' (≠ 'look at your tree')

(Source: personal knowledge)

In (22a), the possessed noun is *walaal* 'brother', and the possessor marker is *-kaa* 'your'. In (22b), the determiner suffix *-kaa*, is not a possessive suffix. It is a demonstrative determiner. Instead of *-kaa* 'that', the appropriate possessive suffix is *-kaaga* 'your' i.e., *geedkaaga* 'your tree'. In this case, the short possessives for 2SG and demonstratives are written in the same way i.e., homographs.

(23)

A) *fiiri walaal-kii*

look brother-M.POSS.3SG

'look at his brother'

B) *fiiri geed-kii*

look tree- M.RDEF

'look at the tree' (≠ 'look at his tree')

C) *fiiri geed-kiisa*

look tree- M.POSS.3SG

'look at his tree'

In (23a), the possessed noun is *walaal* 'brother', and the possessor marker is *-kii* 'his'. In (23b), the suffixed noun is *geed* 'tree' but the determiner suffix *-kii*, is not a possessive suffix. It is a remote definite determiner. Instead of *-kii* 'the', the appropriate possessive suffix here is *-kiisa* 'his' i.e., *geedkiisa* 'his tree' as in (23c). In this case, the short possessives for 3SG and remote definite determiner are written identically, i.e., homographs. What typically functions as a short possessive marker when you suffix 'on' to inalienable nouns, such as kinship nouns, becomes a different category of determiner when added to alienable nouns, such as *geed* 'tree'.

(24)

a. *fiiri walaalkay*

look brother-M.POSS.1SG

'look at my brother'

b. *fiiri gurigay aadday*

fiiri guri -g-ay aad-d-ay

look house-DEF.M-3SG.F GO-3SG.F-PST.

'look at the house that she went to' (gurigay ≠ my house).

The suffix *-ay* in (24a), is a possessive suffix for 1SG. But in (24b), it is a subject pronoun for 3SG feminine (i.e., she) attached to the noun *guri* ‘house’.

4. Data and Analysis

This chapter presents and analyzes the collected data via corpus searches. It consists of six sections based on the selected six noun categories covered in Chapter 3 and the wordlist presented in its first section. In 4.1, the obtained results of nouns for the nuclear family are presented. In 4.2, nouns of the extended family are presented. In 4.3 to 4.6, the results of some selected nouns of body parts, for friends, for God, and quantificational nouns are presented. The investigation for each word has proceeded in three steps. In the beginning, the word with a short possessive suffix was searched, and then the word with a long possessive suffix. Finally, the word unpossessed with the definite article was searched.

4.1 Nouns for nuclear family members

To avoid confusion, the term nuclear family in this thesis refers to a household consisting of two parents and their children. The selected words for this category are 8 nouns: two for husband, two for wife, two for daughter, and two for son. The list is presented in (15). The obtained results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Corpus search results of nouns for the nuclear family

wordlist	Meaning	short poss. suffix	long poss. suffix	Percentage of short poss. Suffix
<i>naag</i>	'woman, wife'	0	68	0%
<i>Nin</i>	'man, husband'	8 (28)	369	2,2% (7,6%)
<i>xaas</i>	'wife, children & woman'	1	734	= 0,14%
<i>Say</i>	'husband'	0	54	0%
<i>wiil</i>	'boy, son'	4 (18)	668	≈ 0.6% (3,2%)
<i>gabadh</i>	'girl, daughter'	3 (9)	438	≈0,7% (2.6%)
<i>inan</i>	'boy, son'	(1)	145	= 0.6%
<i>Inan</i>	'girl, daughter'	0	79	0%

As shown in Table 7, the nouns for nuclear family members tend to take long possessive suffixes with no exceptions whatsoever. Some nouns may sometimes have a short possessive suffix due to misspellings or to create a rhyme. However, an interesting factor is a possessive form with a unique construction which the KORP searches observed. For example, the only times that the word *xaas* 'wife' occurs in a short possessive suffix is *nin iyo xaaskiis* 'a man and his wife'. Also, *nin xaaskii* 'a man's wife' is possible construction. The only difference is the conjunction *iyo* 'and' between the head and dependent nouns. The head noun is suffixed with a short possessive suffix while the dependent noun is a possessor and occurs before the suffixed head noun. The possessor must be always undefined (i.e., without a definite article). These forms are reconstructed from another possessive expression in Somali, made up of two definite adjacent nouns as shown (25)

(25)

daaqadda daarta

daaqad-da daar-ta

window-DEF.F daar-DEF.F

'the window of the house'

((Zholkovski 1971:15))

In (25), the possessee *daaqad-da* 'the window' comes before the possessor; *daar-ta* 'the house'. Both nouns are in the definite form, and no one has a possessive marker. But if the possessor changes position, i.e. comes before the possessee and becomes indefinite, the possessee takes a short possessive ending as shown in (26).

(26)

daar daaqaddeed

a house daaqad-d-eed

a house window-DEF.F-POSS.3SG.F

'the window of a house'

The first word in (26), is *daar* 'a house' and represents the possessor. The phrase *daaqaddeeda* 'her windhow' is a possessed construction, consisting of the possessee and the possessive suffix. The possessor is always indefinite and comes before the possessed

construction. Sometimes, possessor and possessed construction are linked by the conjunction *iyó* 'and' as shown in (27).

(27)

<i>nín iyó xaas-k-iis</i>	(KORP)
man and wife-M-POSS.3SG	
'man and his wife'	

Another point to note in section 4.1, is that translated texts in the KORP tend to contain shorter possessive endings. For example, the Bible translation (*Kitaabka Qudduuska ah*) seems to follow a systematic pattern based on the (in)alienability theory which can be misleading in this context. Therefore, I put the hits from the bible translation in Parentheses. This trend is also found in other religious texts translated from other languages, e.g., an Islamic text about Jesus and Mary in Wikipedia uses the word phrase *wiilkeed* 'her son' four times. Otherwise, the normal occurrence for *wiilkeed* 'her son' is with a long possessive suffix.

As mentioned in (22-24) the short possessive endings for 1SG, 2SG, and a variant for 3SG masculine, i.e., *-ii* 'his' can be confused with other grammatical endings if inserted on the nouns that take only long possessive suffixes, such as nouns for nuclear family members. Here, the suffix *-ay* is not necessarily a possessive suffix for the first-person singular. There are homographs in other grammatical categories like the subject pronoun for 3SG feminine as shown in (24b). Likewise *-ii* is not equal to the possessive suffix for third person singular masculine but is a remote definite determiner for "a known or understood referent but on that is not necessarily physically present" (Green 2021:142). Also *-kaa/taa* are not always short possessive suffixes for the second person singular but can be demonstrative determiners meaning 'that, those'. Considering all these factors it becomes clear that the nouns of nuclear family members do not take short possessive endings. Table 8 shows this fact.

Table 8: Corpus search results of nouns for the nuclear family excluded 1SG & 2SG short suffixes & Bible translation

Wordlist	total hits for all short possessive suffix forms	Hits without 1SG & 2SG short suffixes & Bible translation
<i>naág</i> 'woman, wife'	30	3
<i>nin</i> 'man, husband'	743	8
<i>xaas</i> 'wife, children & woman'	7	1
<i>say</i> 'husband'	0	0
<i>wiil</i> 'boy, son'	83	10 (of which six translated words and two rhymes)
<i>gabadh</i> 'girl, daughter'	207	7 (of which two counting words and two rhymes)
<i>ínan</i> 'boy, son'	36	0
<i>inán</i> 'girl, daughter'	44	0

Table 8 presents in the first column all investigated nuclear family nouns. The second column shows the total results for short possessive suffixes for each noun transferred from Table 7. When the results are filtered out from 1SG & 2SG short suffixes & Bible translation, the number of hits becomes much less as the third column shows. This is to avoid misinterpretations and to get incorrect statistics.

4.2 Nouns for family members excluding the nuclear family.

Table 9: Corpus search results of nouns for extended family members

Wordlist	Meaning	short poss. suffix	long poss. suffix	Percentage of short poss. suffix
<i>aabbe</i>	'father'	2582	48 (41 holy bible)	98%
<i>hooyo</i>	'mother'	4284	12	99,8%
<i>awoow</i> (o)	'grandfather'	112	6	94,9%
<i>ayeeyo</i>	'grandmother'	89	0	100%
<i>adeer</i>	'paternal uncle'	608	7	98,9%
<i>(e)eddo</i>	'paternal aunt'	132	0	100%
<i>abti</i>	'maternal uncle'	298	5	98%
<i>habaryar</i>	'maternal aunt'	285	1	≈ 100%
<i>walaal</i>	'sibling'	1771	74	96%
<i>seeddi</i>	'brother-in-law'	36	0	100%
<i>dumaashi</i>	'sister-in-law'	27	0	100%
<i>soddoh</i>	'mother-in-law'	45	1	98,3%
<i>soddog</i>	'father-in-law'	59	0	100%

In this section, 13 nouns of family members excluded nuclear family, are presented. It relates to a person's closest relatives, other than his or her spouse and offspring. Unlike the previous section, short possessive suffixes dominate here. The collected Korp data is presented in Table 9.

Long possessive suffixes are avoided with these nouns in the standard Somali and are semantically unclear. If these kinship nouns are suffixed with a long possessive suffix, one must add a modifying word or word phrase. See the example in (28).

(28)

a) *la hadal adeerkeed*

la hadal adeer-k-eed

COM talk uncle-M-POSS.3SG.F

'Talk to her paternal uncle'

b) **la hadal adeer-keeda....*

la hadal adeer-k-eed-a

COM talk uncle- M-POSS.3SG.F-DEF

'Talk to her paternal uncle'

c) *la hadal adeerkeeda weyn*

la hadal adeer-k-eed-a weyn

COM talk uncle-M-POSS.3SG.F-DEF great

'Talk to her elder paternal uncle'

(Source: personal knowledge)

4.3 Friends and cognate nouns

Nouns for close friends, comrades, and some other relatives usually take short possessive suffixes. In Table 10, five nouns are presented. Two for close friends, one for comrades, one for close tribe members, and one for beloved ones in or outside the relative circle.

Table 10: Corpus search results of nouns for friends

Wordlist	Meaning	short poss. suffix	long poss. suffix	Percentage of short poss. suffix
<i>saaxiib</i>	'male friend'	1224	74	92,3%
<i>saaxiibad</i>	'female friend'	124	12	91,18%
<i>tol</i>	'kinfolks'	262	60	77,1%
<i>gacal</i>	'beloved one, relative'	27	8	77,14%
<i>jaalle</i>	'comrade, friend'	3	0	100%

The noun *Jaalle* 'friend, comrade' appears in the Corpora to a minimal extent and all instances have a short possessive ending. The other four nouns are also dominated by the short

possessive endings. When they have long possessive suffixes, there are modifying words or phrases after the possessee as you can see in (29)

(29)

saaxiibkaaga runta ah

KORP

Saaxiib-k-aa-ga runta ah

Friend-M-POSS.2SG-DEF.M

‘Your true friend’

4.4 Nouns for God

The most common nouns for God in Somali are *Ilaahay* 'my God', *rabbi* 'lord', and *Eebbe* 'God'. The first two have an Arabic origin. The third one, *Eebbe* 'God' is a Somali word. There is a strong preference that the fully Somali word *Eebbe* 'God' takes the short possessive ending. 91.18% of all hits demonstrate this. *Rabbi* 'lord' takes both short and long possessive endings, with more hits for short than long. Most of the 109 hits with a long suffix come from translated texts mostly from the Holy Bible. The percentage of short suffixes would be 85% if the 79 hits from the Bible are excluded. The third noun is *Ilaahay* 'my God' which is the most common proper name for God in Somali. Etymologically, the name comes from the Arabic word *ALLAH* 'God'. The root of the word is *Ilaah*. But the Somali speaker rarely says, *Ilaah* 'God' or *Ilaaha* 'the God'. The most common form is *Ilaahay* 'my God' which is not perceived as my God, but as 'the God'. When searching for all forms of short possessive suffixes, the result is 4528 hits against 457 hits for long suffixes. More than 85% of these hits are from the first-person singular possessive (1SG) *Ilaahay* 'my God' which I am unsure about the suffix -*ay* is a possessor marker still. The marker's current status is thus unclear. No doubt it was a possessor marker historically, but whether it is still considered, needs further research. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Corpus search results of nouns for God

Wordlist	Meaning	short poss. Suffix (hits after excluding 1SG, 2SG and 3SG)	long poss. suffix	Percentage of short poss. suffix
<i>eebbe</i>	'God'	48	1	91,18%
<i>rabbi</i>	'lord'	174	109 (79)	59,56% (85,29%)
<i>Ilaah</i>	'God'	4528 (74)	457	13,94% (90,83%)

Columns three and four in Table 11 show the number of hits for short and long possessive suffixes respectively. The numbers in parentheses in the fourth column for *rabbi* 'lord' stand for hits from Bible translation. If we remove them, hits for the long possessive suffix are only 30 hits versus 174 for the short form. The numbers in parentheses in the third column for *Ilaah* 'God' stand for short possessive suffixes after excluding 1SG, 2SG, and 3SG hits. This is to avoid getting incorrect statistics due to ambiguity mentioned above and because are homographs in other grammatical categories discussed in 3.2.1 and 4.1.

The result for the remaining five short possessive suffix forms became 74 hits of which all but 11 come from the bible translations.

4.5 Nouns for parts of the body

The sample of this section is very small but shows a clear pattern. Nouns for body Parts take long possessive suffixes overwhelmingly. Only the word *gacan* 'hand' showed slightly deviant results. 404 hits appear in the beginning. I then did the same procedure as the word *Ilaahay* 'God' (due to the reasoning discussed in 3.2.1 and 4.1). I excluded 1SG, 2SG, and 3SG of short possessive forms, and the result became 22 hits of which all but 9 come from the bible translation. The results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Corpus search results of nouns for the body parts

Wordlist	Meaning	short poss. suffix	long poss. Suffix	Percentage of short poss. suffix
<i>Lug</i>	'leg'	1	87	1,13%
<i>Gacan</i>	'hand'	22 (13)	519	4,1%
<i>Dheg</i>	'ear'	0	76	0%
<i>San</i>	'nose'	0	102	0%

Upon closer examination of the nine instances of *gacan* 'hand' with short possessive endings, it becomes apparent that one instance is a verse rhyming with a short ending, while six instances seem to have short suffixes due to misspellings. The only two semantically correct with a short possessive ending, have a clear pattern worth closer investigation. The possessor is an undefined entity (i.e., without a definite article) preceding the head noun which is the possessee and its suffix. Also, the only time that the word *lug* 'leg' appears in the short possessive ending, has the same pattern. The above-mentioned three hits are glossed in (30)

(30)

a. *dad gacantood*

dad gacan-t-ood

People hand- DEF.F-POSS.3PL

'a people's hand'

b. *belaayo gacanteed*

belaayo gacan-t-eed

disaster hand- DEF.F-POSS.3SG.F

'a disaster's hand'

c. *baranbaro weyn lugteed*

baranbaro weyn lug-t-eed

cockroach big leg-F-POSS.3SG.F

'a big cockroach's leg'

(KORP)

In (30a), the word *dad* 'people' is an undefined entity that owns *gacanta* 'the hand'. Thus, the possessor is *dad* 'people' and the possessed entity is *gacan* 'hand'. The short suffix *-ood* 'their'

is a possessor marker. The same analysis applies to 30b-c. If the word *dad* 'people' were defined with a definite article, the possessee would be suffixed with a long possessive suffix. An example is shown in (31)

(31)

dadka gacantooda

dad-ka gacan-t-ooda

People-DEF.M hand-DEF.F-POSS.3PL

'the people's hand'

Other examples in (30b) and (30c) follow the same pattern.

Worth noting is that the possessor noun in this construction is always the indefinite form, e.g., *baranbaro* 'cockroach'.

4.6 Quantificational nouns

Nouns in this section have in common that they denote some kind of measure. Therefore, I chose to call them Quantificational nouns. All chosen seven nouns take a short possessive suffix. Results are shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Corpus search results of quantificational nouns

Wordlist	Meaning	short poss. suffix	long poss. suffix	Percentage of short poss. suffix
<i>keli</i>	'alone, only'	Kelida 235, keliga 1142	2, 15	99,16%; 98,7%
<i>kulli</i>	'everyone, everything', all'	319	0	100%
<i>dhamman</i>	'all, all of them'	1494	7	99,53%
<i>weli</i>	'forever'	2507	0	0%
<i>badh</i>	'half'	459	28	94,3%
<i>giddi</i>	'everybody, all of them'	66	3	95,7%
<i>qaar</i>	'some, Some of them'	6185 (5629 qaarkood	67	98,93%

From Table 13, the short possessive suffixes are dominant on these quantitational nouns. Two nouns, i.e., *kulli* 'all' and *weli* 'ever', have zero long suffix and thus take 100% of the short suffixes. Three have a low number of long possessive suffix frequencies: 3 hits for *giddi* 'everybody', 7 hits for *dhammaan* 'all of them', 2 hits for one form of *keli* 'alone', and 15 hits for another form of the same word. The remaining two words, *badh* 'half' and *qaar* 'some of them', has a slightly higher frequency of long possessive endings than the other five words. The third person plural form (3PL) dominates all the hits for the word *qaar* 'some of them', which is 5629 of the total 6185 hits. The word *keli* 'alone' also has both masculine '*keliga*' and feminine form '*kelida*', and both predominantly take short possessive suffixes. I couldnot find

a linguistic explanation for why some quantificational nouns sometimes use the long possessive suffix. Further research in this category may generate more scientific explanations.

4.7 Comparing the Frequency Patterns of nouns in possessed and non-possessed forms

To conclude Chapter 4, the full list of the 40 nouns that were presented above is collected. I compared the frequency of possessed and non-possessed forms by searching for the same nouns. The non-possessed nouns are searched in combination with definite articles in absolute cases. The result is shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Corpus search results for frequencies of possessed and non-possessed occurrences

No.	The word and meaning	Possessed	Non-possessed	Percentage of poss. forms	Dominated possessive suffix form
1.	<i>aabbe</i> 'father'	2630	198	92,99%	short possessive suffix
2.	<i>hooyo</i> 'mother'	4296	575	88,19%	short possessive suffix
3.	<i>awoow</i> 'grandfather'	138	7	95,17%	short possessive suffix
4.	<i>ayeeyo</i> 'grandmother'	176	23	88,44%	short possessive suffix
5.	<i>adeer</i> 'paternal uncle'	615	85	87,86%	short possessive suffix
6.	<i>(e)eddo</i> 'paternal aunt'	132	7	94,96%	short possessive suffix
7.	<i>abti</i> 'maternal uncle'	303	38	88,86%	short possessive suffix
8.	<i>habaryar</i> 'maternal aunt'	286	15	95,02%	short possessive suffix

9.	<i>walaal</i> 'sibling'	1845	33	98,24%	short possessive suffix
10.	<i>seeddi</i> 'brother in law'	36	1	97,29%	short possessive suffix
11.	<i>dumaashi</i> 'sister-in- law'	28	2	93,33%	short possessive suffix
12.	<i>soddoh</i> 'mother-in- law'	46	16	74,19%	short possessive suffix
13.	<i>soddog</i> 'father-in- law'	59	18	76,62%	short possessive suffix
14.	<i>saaxiib</i> ' male friend'	1298	242	84,29%	short possessive suffix
15.	<i>saaxiibad</i> 'female friend'	136	5	96,45%	short possessive suffix
16.	<i>tol</i> 'kinfolks'	2722	108	96,18%	short possessive suffix
17.	<i>gacal</i> 'beloved one, relatives'	35	12	74,47%	short possessive suffix
18.	<i>jaalle</i> 'comrade'	3	1	75%	short possessive suffix
19.	<i>keli</i> 'alone, only'	238	80	74,84%	short possessive suffix
20.	<i>kulli</i> 'everyone, everything', all'	391	0	100%	short possessive suffix
21.	<i>dhamman</i> 'all, all of them'	14501	0	100%	short possessive suffix
22.	<i>weli</i> 'forever'	2507	0	100%	short possessive suffix
23.	<i>giddi</i> 'everybody, all of them'	69	1	98,57%	short possessive suffix

24.	<i>qaar</i> 'some, some of them'	6252	202	96,87%	short possessive suffix
25.	<i>badh</i> 'half'	487	151	76,33%	short possessive suffix
26.	<i>naag</i> 'waman, spouse, wife'	68	305	18,23%	long possessive suffix
27.	<i>Nin</i> 'man, husband, spouse'	396	6252	5,96%	long possessive suffix
28.	<i>xaas</i> 'wife, spouse, children & wife'	734	180	80,30%	long possessive suffix
29.	<i>say</i> 'husband, spouse'	54	8	87,09%	long possessive suffix
30.	<i>wiil</i> 'pojke, son'	690	1465	32,02%	long possessive suffix
31.	<i>gabadh</i> 'girl, daughter'	438	20106	2,13%	long possessive suffix
32.	<i>inan</i> 'pojke, son'	145	324	30,92%	long possessive suffix
33.	<i>inan</i> 'girl, daughter'	79	491	13,86%	long possessive suffix
34.	<i>lug</i> 'leg'	88	439	16,69%	long possessive suffix
35.	<i>gacan</i> 'hand'	519	7266	6,67%	long possessive suffix
36.	<i>dheg</i> 'ear'	76	507	13,04%	long possessive suffix
37.	<i>san</i> 'nose'	102	465	17,99%	long possessive suffix
38.	<i>eebbe</i> 'God'	48	36	57,14%	short possessive suffix

39.	<i>Ilaah 'God'</i>	531	762	41,08%	long possessive suffix
40.	<i>rabbi 'lord'</i>	283	4176	6,35%	short possessive suffix

Table 14 demonstrates a clear correlation pattern: Nouns that are frequently used in the possessive form tend to have shorter possessive endings, while those with lower possessive usage tend to have longer possessive endings. The only exceptions are nouns number 28, 29, and 40. Number 28 *xaaska* ‘the wife’ and number 29, *say-ga* ‘the husband’ occur mostly in the possessive form but still take a long suffix. The word *rabbi* ‘lord’ can take both short and long possessive endings, with more occurrences of the short form than the long form (see section 4.4). However, it appears less in the possessive form compared to not being possessed. Further research is needed to fully explain these phenomena.

5. Results and Discussion

In Chapter 5, the results of the data collected from the KORP are presented and discussed. The data is compared with the research questions presented in section 1.2.

Section 5.1 addresses research question 1, focusing on the nouns that use short possessive suffixes. Section 5.2 provides the answer to research questions 2-3. It discusses nouns that use short and long possessive suffixes equally as well as those that exclusively use short endings. Finally, section 5.3 discusses the theoretical explanations in 2.1.2 and 2.2.2 for why some nouns take short possessive endings while most nouns take long suffixes with definite articles.

5.1 Nouns that typically take short possessive suffixes

Short possessive suffix refers to possessive determiners without definite articles as shown in Table 4. In contrast, a long possessive suffix has a definite article at the last morpheme as shown in Table 3. The long possessive suffix with a definite article is the common rule for nouns with few exceptions (Appleyard 1983: 115). This thesis aims to identify the noun categories associated with short possessive suffixes, which are the limited exceptions mentioned by Appleyard and others. It also explores the instances in which certain nouns use both short and long possessive suffixes and the contextual factors influencing this usage. Additionally, the thesis seeks to uncover the reasons behind the preference for short possessive suffixes in Somali.

The result from the investigation shows that nouns for family members (Table 9) except nouns for spouses and offspring in the nuclear family (Table 7) take short possessive suffixes. This category of nouns is referred to as extended family members. Glossed examples of both subcategories are shown in (1b) and (2) respectively.

Likewise, nouns for friends (*saaxiib/saaxiibad* 'friend/girlfriend') and allies via blood (*tol* 'tribe members'), love (*gacal* 'beloved one/s'), and social coworker (*jaalle* 'camrade') are suffixed with short possessive markers (see Table 10). Also, the nouns expressing some kind

of measure such as *qaar* 'some of them', *giddi* 'all of them' and *keli* 'alone' are usually suffixed without a definite article (see Table 13). These kinds of nouns are referred to as quantificational nouns. The possessive suffixes after these nouns are usually used in so-called partitive constructions (Nilsson 2023: 63, Saeed 1999: 116). On the other hand, nouns representing body parts and nuclear family members specifically use long possessive suffixes (see Tables 7 and 12). The proper name for God (i.e., *Eebbe* 'God') of Somali origin also takes a short possessive ending. The other names for God *Ilaah* 'God' and *Rabbi* 'lord' take probably short possessive suffixes but require further research. Table 15 illustrates the confirmed results.

Table 15: The results of nouns/ noun categories with the short possessive suffix

Short possessive suffixes typically occur after the following noun categories:	
1.	Nouns for family members excluded spouses and offspring
2.	Nouns for friends and allies
3.	Quantificational nouns
4.	The proper name for God

5.2 Nouns that take both short and long possessive suffixes

The results of the investigated nouns shown in Tables 7-14 indicate that almost all nouns can be suffixed with both long and short possessives. Only 12 nouns show one form, eight for the short possessive form, and five for the long form. If a noun is found to take both short and long suffixes in different contexts, one suffix form is regular, while the other requires further explanation and delimitation

For instance, the natural suffixes for noun categories in Table 15 are short forms, but they can take long possessive suffixes if there are modifying words or phrases after possessee, e.g., an adjective. In (32), is *saaxiib* 'friend' shown with a short possessive for 1SG. In (33), the same

noun is shown with the long possessive suffix for same person, due to the modifying word after it.

(32)	(33)
<i>Cali waa saaxiibkay</i> (KOPRP)	<i>saaxiibkayga koowaad ayaa tahay</i> (KORP)
Cali waa saaxiib-k-ay	saaxiib -k -ay -ga koowaad ayaad tahay
Ali DM friend-M-POSS.1SG	Friend -M-POSS.1SG -DEF.M first FOC=you are
'Ali is my friend'	'you are my first friend'

In (32) and (33), the possessee is *saaxiib* 'friend' which usually takes a short possessive suffix as (32) shows. But due to the modifying word *koowaad* 'first', the suffix appears in the long form in (33). The long possessive suffix is used as soon as a modifier is added.

On the other hand, all nouns that usually take long possessive suffixes can take short forms in part-whole relationships if the possessor is expressed as an indefinite noun. (, e.g., *baranbaro lugteed* 'a cockroach's leg'). This statement is one of the new findings in this thesis expressed already in (25). The construction looks like possessor-possessed construction (Zholkovski 1971:14). The possessor is always an indefinite noun, and the possessed construction contains a possessee and possessive suffix. If the possessor becomes a definite noun or a proper name, the possessive suffix takes a long form. I exemplified it in (31).

Sometimes the possessor and possessed construction are linked by the conjunction *iyoo* 'and' as shown in (34).

(34)	
a. <i>nin iyo xaas-kiis</i>	(KORP)
man and wife-POSS.3SG	
'a man and his wife'	
b. <i>xabaal iyo ninkeed</i>	(Source: personal knowledge)
<i>xabaal iyo nin -k-eed</i>	

grave and man -M-POSS.3SG.F

'Grave and its owner' (lit. grave and man her): an idiomatic expression which means you must take care of your affairs by yourself.

- c. *iyaga iyo allahood*

3PL and God-POSS.3PL

'They and their God' (an idiomatic expression meaning it is between them and their God if they are lying or telling the truth).

(KORP)

In (34a) the possessor is the word *nin* 'a man', and the possessed construction is *xaaskiis* 'his wife' with a short possessive suffix. The possessor and possessee are linked by the conjunction *iyo* 'and'. (34b and c) have the same pattern which is a common occurrence in the language. The only difference between this and the previous possessor-possessed construction is the conjunction *iyo* 'and', between the possessor and possessee. In other words, the indefinite possessor precedes the conjunction *iyo* 'and', and the possessed construction. The reason behind this difference requires further research. Maybe it distinguishes between part-whole relationships and other types of relationships. Table 16 summarizes the noun categories that can take both short and long possessive suffixes.

Table 16: noun categories that can take both short and long possessive suffixes

1	Nouns that usually take the short possessive suffixes (Table 15), can also take long suffixes if they are followed by a modifier, e.g., an adjective
2a	Nouns that usually take the long possessive suffixes (e.g., body parts and nuclear family nouns) can also take short possessive suffixes if the possessor is a preceding indefinite noun, e.g., <i>nin gacantiis</i> ‘a man's hand’
2b	Nouns that typically take long possessive suffixes can also take short possessive suffixes if the possessor is a preceding indefinite noun accompanied by the conjunction <i>iyo</i> ‘and’, for example, <i>nin iyo xaaskiis</i> ‘a man and his wife’.

5.3 The reasons for using short possessive suffixes

In section 2.1.1, are **possessive classification** and **alienability split defined**. The first term is about when a language has two or more forms of possessive marking, determined by the possessed noun (cf. with the short and long possessive suffixes in Somali). The other term, alienability split, is about when the "kinship terms and/or, body-part terms behave differently from other kinds of possessed nouns occurring in an ownership relationship" (Haspelmath 2017:4). Then glossed examples (e.g., 1a and 1b) showed that the Somali language has a clear possessive classification which is based on an *alienability* split that some relational nouns are distinguished from other nouns in the possessive construction.

Section 2.1.2 presented theoretical explanations for the possessive classification and alienability split. Some of these explanations are relevant to Somali possessive classification. For example, according to Haspelmath (2017:16) if the language distinguishes the length of the possessive person forms, it *"is always the inalienable construction that has the shorter person form, while the alienable construction has the longer person forms"*. This statement fits well in our case. Somali distinguishes the length of possessive suffixes. The long form is used for all nouns except a few noun categories that tend to take short possessive suffixes (see Table 15).

One of the reasons for the different use of long and short possessive endings for different categories of nouns is the frequency argument (Haspelmath 2017:9) which means nouns that denote close relations are almost always mentioned as possessed entities, and it becomes unnecessary to add additional identification markings while other common nouns that occur less often with possessors, needs some sort of determiner to clarify with them. This explanation is also consistent with our data from the KORP. Results from Table 14 show nouns that are more frequently used in possessive forms tend to have short possessive suffixes, while those that are used less frequently in possessive forms tend to have long possessive suffixes. Only three of 40 nouns deviate from this pattern.

Section 2.2.2 exhibited a short literature review regarding short possessive suffixes in the Somali language. The majority of the authors but not all point out that nouns for family members, parts of the body, and close friends take short possessive suffixes. This

investigation confirms all these statements, whole or partially, except the one regarding the body parts.

According to Saeed (1999: 116), the short possessive forms are also used to indicate partitive quantification, which is correct according to our data in section 4.6 (see Table 13). In addition to that, Nilsson distinguishes (2023: 62) between nouns that exclusively denote a relationship between two persons and those that do not. Only the first group takes short possessive suffixes. This aligns with the findings presented in sections 4.2 and 4.3. Family-specific nouns use short possessive suffixes (see Table 9), while non-family-specific nouns use long possessive suffixes (see Table 7). For instance, all eight nouns used for the nuclear family are not exclusive to family members except the words *say* 'husband' and *xaas* 'wife'. Also (33) can shed light on this to better understand the reasoning.

(33)

a. *ninka timaha xiira* (KORP)

nin -ka timo -ha xiira
 man -DEF.M hair -DEF.M cuts.PRS.M.1SG
 'The man who cuts the hair'

b. *ninka walaashay*

nin-ka walaal-t-ay
 man-M-DEF sibling-F-POSS.1SG.F
 'My sister's husband' (lit. the man of my sister)

In (33a), the noun *ninka* 'the man' refers to a masculine human being while in (33b) the same word denotes a family member, the sister's husband. It is therefore not a relationship-specific word. Other nouns for spouses and offspring behave the same.

The concept of alienable and inalienable distinction, and its similarity to the possessive classification in Somali, are also mentioned by Saeed (1999:115) and Green (2021:240). Nouns that stand for family relationships are two groups: The largest group takes short possessive suffixes, while only nouns for spouses and offspring take long possessive suffixes. A distinguishing feature between the two relative groups is that the possessor has no control over who becomes his relative, except in the

case of nuclear family members, i.e. spouses and offspring. This is consistent with the relationship stability that (Hollmann & Siewierska 2007: 410 according to Haspelmath 2017: 5) explained on the concept of alienable and inalienable (see 2.1.2). It means that inalienable possession refers to relatively stable relationships where the possessor has minimal or no control. In contrast, alienable possession usually refers to less permanent, more controlled relationships. In the context of Somali possessive suffix, nouns for relatives you cannot choose, e.g., mother and father, take short possessive suffixes while nouns for relatives you can choose, e.g., wife and husband take long possessive suffixes. If this applies only to kinship members or to all indentified (in)alienable nouns, further research is needed.

6. Conclusion

The main goal of this thesis was to find linguistic answers to the research questions regarding the role and usage of short possessive suffixes in the Somali language. It was already well known that Somali has two forms of possessive suffixes. I was seeking to identify the type of nouns that take short possessive suffixes, and then check if they are flexible to different suffix forms or if some nouns have strict limits to one form. Finally, I would look for the reasons behind using short possessive suffixes

This study of short possessive suffixes in Somali has shown new usage patterns. Many authors initially suggested that short possessive forms were limited to kinship terms, close friends, and body parts, but the analysis has shown that this is not always the case. For example, nouns for body parts do not belong here. Likewise, nouns of the nuclear family (i.e., spouses and offspring) take long possessive suffixes. On the other hand, nouns for extended family members, nouns for friends including some allies, quantificational nouns, and the proper name for God, *Eebbe* 'God', and partially *Ilaah* 'God' and *Rabbi* 'Lord', use short possessive suffixes. Below I summarize the answers to the thesis questions using the results found.

Question 1: What nouns are used with short possessive suffixes in the Somali language?

Short possessive suffixes are typically used with:

1. Nouns for family members excluded spouses and offspring in the nuclear family
2. Nouns for friends and allies
3. Quantificational nouns
4. The proper name for God in Somali origin, *Eebbe* 'God' and partially *Ilaah* 'God' and *Rabbi* 'Lord'.

Question 2: Do some nouns use both short and long possessive suffixes? And if so, in what contexts?

- 1 Nouns that usually take the short possessive suffixes (Table 15), can also take long suffixes **if** they are followed by a modifier, e.g., an adjective
- 2a Nouns that usually take the long possessive suffixes (e.g., body parts and nuclear family nouns) can also take short possessive suffixes **if** the possessor is a preceding indefinite noun e.g., *nin gacantiis* ‘a man's hand’
- 2b Nouns that typically take long possessive suffixes can also take short possessive suffixes if the possessor is a preceding indefinite noun accompanied by the conjunction *iyó* ‘and’, *nin iyo xaaskiis* ‘a man and his wife.’

Question 3: What reasons can be found for using short possessive suffixes?

This question needs deeper and more extensive research. Several theoretical explanations were discussed in this thesis, but the following findings seem interesting to point out:

When a noun specifically refers to a family relationship, e.g., *aabbe* for 'father', *hooyo* for 'mother', it is suffixed with a short possessive ending. On the other hand, nouns that can refer to both family members and other entities or situations take long possessive suffixes. These findings can help answer the question of why certain relationship nouns, e.g., kinship nouns only take short forms of possessive suffixes, while some other kinship nouns do not.

Furthermore, the relationship stability may be the explanation why some types of nouns use short possessive suffixes while others only take long possessive endings. That means, nouns for relatives you cannot choose e.g., *hooyo* 'mother', take short possessive suffixes while nouns for relatives you can choose, e.g., *xaas* 'wife', take long possessive suffixes.

Moreover, Nouns that are commonly used in possessive forms typically have short possessive suffixes. In contrast, nouns that are less frequently used in possessive forms tend to have long possessive suffixes (see Table 14).

These points might be more identification signs than reasons, thus calling for more research to better explain the reasons.

In conclusion, this study contributes to our understanding of possessive suffix usage in Somali. Thus, opens up new ways for future research to explore different nuances of possessive suffix patterns in greater detail. Further research into the different aspects of possessive suffix usage in Somali could provide valuable insights into the motivations behind the observed patterns. Additionally, a comparative analysis with possessive constructions in other Afro-Asiatic languages, particularly within the Cushitic branch and lowland East Cushitic subbranches, may help to explain the broader linguistic context in which these patterns are situated.

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Appendix: List of Words Used for Corpus Investigations

13 Common nouns for family members (not nuclear family included)

Nr	Word	Meaning
1.	<i>Aabbe</i>	'father'
2.	<i>Hooyo</i>	'mother'
3.	<i>awoow</i>	'grandfather'
4.	<i>ayeeyo</i>	'grandmother'
5.	<i>adeer</i>	'paternal uncle'
6.	<i>(e)eddo</i>	'paternal aunt'
7.	<i>abti</i>	'maternal uncle'
8.	<i>habaryar</i>	'maternal aunt'
9.	<i>Walaal</i>	'sibling'
10.	<i>Seeddi</i>	'brother in law'
11.	<i>dumaashi</i>	'sister in law'
12.	<i>soddoh</i>	'mother-in-law'
13.	<i>soddog</i>	'father-in-law'

Eight common nouns for the nuclear family

Nr	Word	Meaning
14.	<i>Naag</i>	'woman, wife'
15.	<i>Nin</i>	'man, husband'
16.	<i>Xaas</i>	'wife, children & woman'
17.	<i>Say</i>	'husband'
18.	<i>Wiil</i>	'boy, son'
19.	<i>Gabadh</i>	'girl, daughter'
20.	<i>Inan</i>	'boy, son'
21.	<i>Inan</i>	'girl, daughter'

Five common nouns for friends and allies

Nr	Word	Meaning
22.	<i>saaxiib</i>	'male friend'
23.	<i>saaxiibad</i>	'female friend'
24.	<i>tol</i>	'kinfoles'
25.	<i>gacal</i>	'beloved one, relatives'
26.	<i>jaalle</i>	'comrade, friend'

Four common nouns for body parts

Nr	Word	Meaning
27.	<i>Lug</i>	'leg'
28.	<i>Gacan</i>	'hand'
29.	<i>Dheg</i>	'ear'
30.	<i>San</i>	'nose'

Seven quantificational nouns

Number	Word	Meaning
31.	<i>keli</i>	'alone, only'
32.	<i>kulli</i>	'everyone, everything', all'
33.	<i>dhammaan</i>	'all, all of them'
34.	<i>weli</i>	'forever'
35.	<i>badh</i>	'half'
36.	<i>giddi</i>	'everybody, all of them'
37.	<i>qaar</i>	'some, Some of them'

Three nouns for God

Nr	Word	Meaning
38.	<i>eebbe</i>	'God'
39.	<i>rabbi</i>	'lord'
40.	<i>Ilaah</i>	God'