

# A Study of Inflectional Categories of Noun in Sistani Dialect

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## Abstract

The present article aims to provide a synchronic study of the inflectional or morpho-syntactic categories of noun in Sistani dialect. These categories comprise person, number, gender or noun class, definiteness, case, and possession. Linguistic data was collected via recording free speech, and interviewing with 30 (15 females, 15 males) illiterate Sistani language consultants of age 40–102 years, living in central (Markazi) district of Zabol city in Sistan and Baluchestan province of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The research results indicate that nouns are inflected in three distinct persons i.e., first, second, and third persons with either singular or plural in number. Grammatical gender of nouns takes no specific morphological marker. As to the category of definiteness, this dialect makes use of syntactic devices (like demonstrative adjectives), and/or morphological devices (such as the use of /=ak/ and /=e/ clitics) to display the definite and indefinite nouns. Its case system is nominative-accusative system. In this regard, only the accusative or objective case marking is morphologically realized by the object marker /=a/. In addition, possession is expressed through the use of the word /mal=e/ ‘belonging to’ or the preposition /az/ ‘from, of’ along with nouns/noun phrases/personal pronouns and also applying ezafe-construction in the form of genitive structure.

**Keywords:** Noun, Person and Number, Definiteness, Case, Sistani Dialect

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## **1. Introduction**

The present study deals with the study of the inflectional categories of noun in the Sistani dialect in the form of person, number, gender or noun class, definiteness, case, and possession.

Sistani dialect is considered as a language variety of Persian which belongs to the south-western group of Iranian languages (Windfur, 1989, p. 248; Bearman, Bianquis, Bosworth, Donzel & Heinrichs, 2003, p. 427). This dialect 'is spoken in Sistan in northern Sistan and Baluchestan province in the southeast of the Islamic Republic of Iran; Farah and Nimruz provinces of Afghanistan; Sarakhs in Turkmenistan; and in some regions of Iran including the town of Zahedan, Mazandaran province, Golestan province, and the towns of Mashhad and Sarakhs in the Razavi Khorasan province, where a great number of migrant native speakers of Sistani dialect live (Ahangar, 2010, p. 5)'.

According to Mohammadi Khomak (2000, p. 7), 'since ancient times, Sistani citizens and their dialect have been called "Sakzi" and, in Persian dictionaries, Sakzi has been regarded as one of the seven Persian languages and as one of its four antiquated varieties. Studying and comparing today's dialect of inhabitants of Zabol and its suburban villages with what has been documented in Persian historical texts as Sakzi language, one can deduce the fact that this language [dialect] of Zabol inhabitants is a language remnant typicality of the ancient Sakzi language. Notably, until the eleventh century, Sakzi was sophisticatedly transformed to the extent that in "Remaining Signs of Past Centuries," Abu Rayhan Biruni, with reference to Abu Saeed Ahmad ibn Mohammad ibn Abdoljalil, listed the names of months in Sakzi language under the title of "Month Names of Ancient Sajestani Inhabitants.'

Considering the relationship between Sistani dialect and Middle Persian language, Windfur (1989, p. 543) believes that Sistani dialect has preserved

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some linguistic characteristics of Middle Persian and Modern Persian languages such as the initial consonant clusters and /e:/ and /o:/ vowels. It may, perhaps, be claimed that Sistani dialect represents a diachronic stage between the Middle and Modern Persian languages.

As to the phonology of Sistani dialect, there are such works like Lazard (1974), Oveisipoor (1374 [1995]), Barjasteh Delforooz (1375 [1996]), Omrani (1375 [1996]; 1378 [1999]), Doosti (1380 [2001]), Ahangar (1382 [2003]), Okati (2008), Okati, Ahangar, and Jahani (2009a, b), Okati, Ahangar, Anonby, and Jahani (2010), and Ahangar, van Oostendorp, and Soohani (2013) dealing with various aspects of the phonology (some of these works also pay heeds in some way to some aspects of morphology) of Sistani dialect spoken in different areas in Sistan region located in the northern of Sistan and Baluchestan province in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

On the other hand, although there exists no independent and unified research on morphology of Sistani dialect, particularly on the inflectional categories of noun, few studies have rudimentarily and sporadically examined such categories in this dialect. Of course, Ahangar (2010) studied the verbal system of Sistani dialect concentrating merely on morpho-syntactic or inflectional categories of verb.

Oveisipoor (1374 [1995]) analyzed Sistani dialect of a part of the Posht-e Ab district of Sistan. In relation to the morphology of Sistani dialect, he investigated the inflectional and derivational structures of different types of words in this dialect. However, such an incomplete and rudimentary investigation did not comprehensively study the inflectional categories of nouns of Sistani dialect.

Doosti (1380 [2001]) presented a morphological and phonological description of the Adimi variety of Sistani dialect of the Posht-e Ab district in

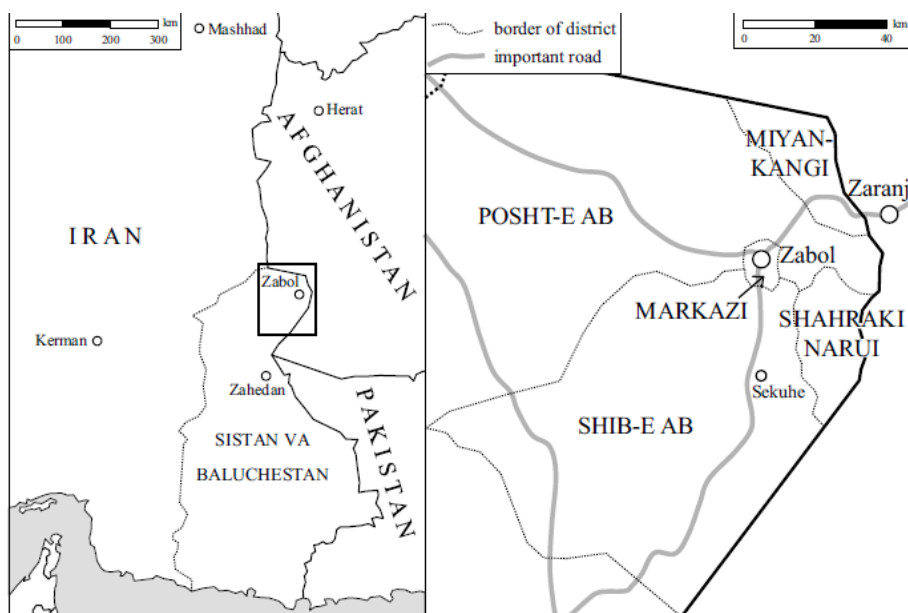
Sistan. Regarding the inflectional morphology, he described the morphological elements of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, number, prepositions, vocatives, and verbs. Nevertheless, the inflectional categories of noun of this dialect were not investigated comprehensively in his study.

The article comprises five sections. Apart from the first section dedicated to the introduction, section two briefly introduces the methodology of the research. Section three gives the explanation of the theoretical concepts of the research. Section four provides a detailed description and discussion on the inflectional categories of nouns in Sistani dialect. Finally, the research ends with the conclusion.

## **2. Method**

The linguistic data of the present research were collected through fieldwork method. In this regard, the researchers found enough qualified Sistani language consultants. Then one of the researchers recorded the free speech of and interviewed with 30 illiterate language consultants (15 females, 15 males) of the age 40–102 years living in central (Markazi) district of Zabol city, in spite of the fact that the researchers themselves are native speakers of Sistani dialect. All female participants were housewives and most male participants were farmers and livestock holders. The participants were asked to talk about various topics such as their occupation, historical commemorations, memories, storytelling traditions, cooking style, marriage rituals, lamentation ceremonies, tribal background, and other prevalent customs. After data collection, the linguistic corpus was examined carefully to find out how the inflectional categories of noun in Sistani dialect were manifested in the data under investigation.

Figure 1 shows the geographical location of Markazi district of Zabol city.



(Sincere thanks to Christian Rammer and Agnes Korn, Frankfurt am Main, for making this map.)

**Figure 1. *The Geographical Location of Markazi District of Zabol in the Province of Sistan and Baluchestan, Iran***

### **3. Theoretical Concepts**

Generally speaking, nouns, semantically, have their own semantic content. As to their syntactic nature, they occupy distinctive syntactic positions and get specific grammatical functions. Morphologically, nouns take their own derivational and/or inflectional morphemes. Subsequently, they carry specific morphological features in regard with the inflectional categories of number, gender or noun class, definiteness, case, and possession.

Person and number are considered as intrinsic features of nouns (Tallerman, 2011). Person is a grammatical category or feature that

distinguishes entities referred to in an utterance. First person refers to the speaker(s) and second person refers to the addressee(s). Third person is a default category that refers to everything else, a third party, except for the speaker(s) and the addressee(s). Person is often combined with number and thus we often speak of person-number combinations such as ‘third person singular (3SG) or ‘first person plural’ (1 PL), etc. When we speak of the inflectional categories of person (and/or number), we’re usually referring to a grammatical agreement relation, most often subject-verb agreement relation (Fasold & Connor-linton, 2006, pp. 80-81).

Number, in fact, seems to be the most widespread inflectional category in all languages. All speech communities have ways of encoding the notion of countability. Many languages distinguish between one and more than one (Katamba & Stonham, 2006, p. 250).

In such a linguistic differentiation, singular nouns refer to a single person or object and plural nouns indicate more than one person or an entity. Apart from such a basic differentiation, other distinctive differentiations of noun number include singular, dual (for referring to two persons or objects), trial (for referring to three objects or persons), and plural. It is worth mentioning that trial and dual structures are rarely utilized in languages (Payne, 1997; Booij, 2007; Tallerman, 2011). Furthermore, there is a close relationship between the number and animacy to which different languages assign appropriate morphological manifestations.

Grammatical gender or noun class is among the other inflectional categories of noun. In regards with gender, Yule (2010) distinguished among natural gender, grammatical gender, and social gender. According to this discernment, natural gender is based on the biological male–female differentiation. Simultaneously, grammatical gender is established on the basis

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of noun class and masculine–feminine distinction. Social gender bases on the fundamentals of social roles of females and males in a society. In reference to masculine-feminine characteristics of grammatical gender, nouns are morphologically categorized and marked in various ways in different languages (Haspelsmath, 2002; Katamba & Stonham, 2006). Generally, in some languages, such an inflectional feature is marked on the noun itself or on the dependent of nouns, such as articles. The most common type of grammatical gender is categorized as masculinity and femininity. Nevertheless, in some languages, grammatical gender is distinguished in more details (Tallerman, 2011).

Another inflectional categories of noun is the issue of its definiteness. As to definiteness, nouns are divided as definite, indefinite and generic nouns in terms of being known or unknown for the listener(s), the speaker(s), or simultaneously for both. Due to the notion of definiteness, nouns are either intrinsically or morphologically marked. In some cases, syntactic structures mark definiteness and indefiniteness of nouns, as well. Definite nouns are known for both listeners and speakers (Vahidian Kamyar, 1381[2002]; Mahoutian, 1384 [2005]). On the other hand, indefinite nouns refer to one or more than one unknown entities, persons, plants, animals, or any physical or non-physical phenomenon (Meshkato-Dini, 1386[2007], p. 40).

Case is an inflectional category that represents the relationship and role of a particular noun or noun phrase with another linguistic element in a sentence or a syntactic phrase. Accordingly, nouns in various languages may be marked morphologically, syntactically, or both on the basis of their syntactic or semantic roles (Katamba & Stonham, 2006; Fasold, 2006). Nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive case systems are considered as the predominant case systems among various languages. In nominative-accusative

system, the subject of an intransitive verb and that of a transitive verb have the same morphological structure; however, the direct object of the transitive verb takes a different morphological form than such subjects (Booij, 2007; Tallerman, 2011).

Possession is the other inflectional category that shows the relation between the possessor and possessed nouns. This category also has its own specific syntactic and morphological realizations in different languages. According to Mahoutian (1384[2005]), ezafe-construction is of productive devices employed for nominal modification in the Persian language. This construction, apart from connecting the non-verbal heads to their dependents, is used to indicate the possessive relation and also the dependency between the head noun and its dependents as well. Besides, the possessive relation between the nouns or noun phrases can be manifested as attributive possession in the form of a noun phrase or predicative possession in the form of a prepositional phrase as a part of the predicate of a sentence (cf. Heine, 2001).

#### **4. Data Description and Analysis**

The application of nominal inflectional categories as employed in Sistani dialect are analyzed and discussed in this section of the study. These categories include the person, number, gender or noun class, definiteness, case, and possession of noun.

##### **4.1. Person**

Since pronouns, as a subcategory of nouns, show person along with number, this subsection deals with the way(s) such inflectional or morpho-syntactic properties are realized in the personal pronoun system of Sistani dialect. Correspondingly, the personal pronouns of this dialect including subject



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pronouns, object pronouns, reflexive pronouns, are introduced in what follows. Also it will be shown, while this dialect lacks suffixed or dependent pronouns what will replace them in the relevant morpho-syntactic configurations.

**1. Subject pronouns**

Personal pronouns in Sistani dialect get three persons (first, second, and third) and two numbers (singular and plural). Third person singular pronoun is not different to feminine-masculine and animate-inanimate subjects, in fact, the neutral third person singular pronoun *o* ‘he/she/it’ is used with all such singular subjects. Also, third person plural pronouns /oʃo/ ‘they’, /iʃo/ ‘these’ are neutral to gender and animacy of the subjects. Furthermore, in this dialect, first person plural pronoun is utilized in the form of exclusive ‘we’, including the speaker and the other person(s), while excluding the listener(s), and also inclusive ‘we’ comprising the speaker and the other person(s) as well as the listener(s). Subject pronouns of Sistani dialect are represented in table1.

**Table 1. Subject Pronouns of Sistani Dialect**

Person	Singular	Plural	
First person	/me/ (I)	/ma/ (exclusive ‘we’)	/meʃma/ (inclusive ‘we’)
Second person	/to/ (you)	/ʃma/ (you)	
Third person	/o/ (he/she/it)	/oʃo, iʃo/ (they, these)	

(1) /me xe: to b-goft-o ke oʃo me:-r-a:/.  
 I with you PM-say.PAST-1SG that they IND-  
 go.PRES-3PL  
 ‘I said to you that they go.’

## 2. Object pronouns

In Sistani dialect, object or accusative marker /=a/ is added to personal pronouns occurring in object position in a sentence and make them to function as object pronouns. In this case, if a pronoun or a noun ends with a vowel sound, the epenthetic or hiatus phoneme /r/ or /n/, appears between the pronoun or the noun and the object marker. In addition, in the pronouns or nouns which end with the vowel /a/ this vowel changes to the vowel /a/, in case the object marker is added to them. Table 2 shows object pronouns of Sistani dialect.

**Table 2. Object Pronouns of Sistani Dialect**

Person	Singular	Plural
First person	/mna/ (me)	/ma ra/, /me[ma ra/ (us)
Second person	/tra/ (you)	/[ma ra/ (you)
Third person	/ona/ (him/her/it)	/o[na/, /i[na/ (them)

- (2) a. /ma-r=a      da:r      xo:na      va:di      kard-e/.  
 we-EP=OM in      home      find      PM.do.PAST-3PL  
 ‘They found us at home.’
- b. /o[n-a      me-[nas-o/.  
 they-EP=OM      IND-know.PRES-1SG  
 ‘I know them.’

In the case of indirect objects, their form is the same as the form of subject and object pronouns. Indirect objects are used with prepositions such as /xe:/ ‘with’ or /var/ ‘for’ (e.g. 3a-b), etc. Simultaneously, in this dialect, the use of an indirect object with the object marker /=a/ is widespread, too (e.g. 3c).

- (3) a. /xe:      me      b-g-a      ke      t-r=a      m-xa-a/.  
 with I      PM-say.PAST-3SG      that you-EP=OM      IND-  
 want.PRES-3SG  
 ‘He told me that he marries you.’

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- b. /var o      tadʒyan<sup>1</sup>=e      goʃt=e      bard-o/.  
           for she      pan=EZ      meat=INDF      PM.take.PAST-1SG  
           ‘I took her a dish full of meat.’
- c. /oʃtor=a      ouk-e:      luʃf=a      b-dad-e/.  
           camel=OM      water-PL.EZ      muddy=OM      PM-give.PAST-1PL  
           ‘We gave the camel the muddy water.’

### 3. Reflexive pronouns

Sistani dialect has merely /xod/ ‘self’ as its reflexive pronoun. This pronoun is correspondingly utilized with all persons. This pronoun is, actually, used along with personal subject pronouns, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Reflexive Pronouns of the Sistani Dialect**

Person	Singular	Plural
First person	/xod me/ (myself)	/xod ma/, /xod meʃma/(ourselves)
Second person	/xod to/(yourself)	/xod ʃma/~ / xod=e ʃma/ (yourselves)
Third person	/xod-j-o/ (himself/herself/itself)	/xod ʃo/ (themselves)

- (4) /xot<sup>2</sup> to sra-r=a      ba-froxt-i/.  
           self you      house-EP=OM PM-sell.PAST-2SG  
           ‘You sold the house yourself.’

Reflexive pronouns are mostly utilized in order to emphasize on subjects. In such a case, the reflexive pronoun follows the subject or the object.

<sup>1</sup> /tadʒyan/: a bowl-shaped pan which, instead of handles, has rings on both sides. Its height is ten to twenty centimeters. Its shape is circular and its diameter is about one meter, the mouth of this pan is narrower than its bottom.

<sup>2</sup> The final consonant /d/ of /xod /in this combination is usually assimilated to the initial consonant of the pronoun /to/ in voicing and becomes /t/, so /xod/ is realized as /xot/.

- (5) a. /gotʃa:-g-o xod ʃo ʃi:ʃa-r=a ba-ʃka:st-e/.  
child-EP-PL self they glass-EP=OM PM-break.PAST-3PL  
‘The children themselves broke the window.’
- b. /gotʃa:-g-o ʃi:ʃa-r=a xod ʃo ba-ʃka:st-e/.  
child-EP-PL glass-EP=OM self they PM-break.PAST-3PL  
‘The children broke the window themselves.’

Besides, the reflexive pronoun /xod/ ‘self’ can be used emphatically in ezafe -constructions, henceforth, it precedes the nouns and pronouns.

- (6) /xod=e gotʃa:-g-o ʃi:ʃa-r=a ba-ʃka:st-e/.  
Self=EZ child-EP-PL glass-EP=OM PM-break.PAST-3PL  
‘The children broke the window themselves.’

#### **4. Suffixed or dependent pronouns**

In Sistani dialect, suffixed or dependent personal pronouns do not exist. However, personal subject pronouns are utilized independently, instead.

- (7) a. /bazol me/ b. /go:ʃ-e: to/  
arm I fear-PL.EZ you  
‘My arm’ ‘Your ears’

#### **4.2. Number**

In Sistani dialect, the category of number on nouns manifests either as singular or plural.

##### **1. Singular number**

In this dialect, singular number takes no particular morphological marker. In other words, singular nouns have no inflectional marker and simply refer to singular entities.

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- (8) /palpalasi/ ‘shorebird, swallow’, /baqa/ ‘pool eagle’, /ya:zum/ ‘scorpion’,  
/go:/ ‘ball’, /our/ ‘cloud’, /kenda/ ‘girl’, /go:tʃa/ ‘child’, /po:r/ ‘partridge’,  
/tas/ ‘bowl’, /dʒong/ ‘baby camel’, /lo:k/ ‘male camel’, ... .

## 2. Plural number

In Sistani dialect, plural nouns refer to more than one entity and are marked by or without any inflectional marker. In this dialect, plural nouns are marked by /-o(n)/, and /-a/ as plural markers. Furthermore, /-at/ is applied as a plural marker, as well; however, in comparison with other two plural markers, it has low frequency and is highly prevalent in Arabic loan words (e.g., /nafar-at/ ‘individuals, forces’ and /kmdl-a/t ‘moral attainments’). As to /-o(n)/ morpheme, it is usually utilized as a plural marker of animate entities and /-a/ morpheme is used as a plural marker of countable and uncountable inanimate entities. Furthermore, in this dialect, consonant phoneme of /-o(n)/ is usually silent and, therefore, /-o/ is more prevalent than /-o(n)/ as a plural marker. However, when the plural noun is added to another word, or a suffix is added to the plural noun, the omitted /n/ is pronounced.

- (9) a. /gotʃa:-g-o                      b-j-o:mad-e/.  
child-EP-PL                      PM-EP-come.PAST-3PL  
‘Children came.’
- b. /namo                      gotʃa:-g-on=e    pki:za-r=a    se:    ko/.  
That                      child-EP-PL=EZ                      clean-EP=OM look  
IMP.do.PRES.2SG  
‘Look at those clean children.’

In regard with the utilization of plural morphemes /-o(n)/ and /-a/ and their phonetic modifications and variations, the following points should be taken into consideration.

A. Plural morpheme /-o(n)/:

1. Most animate and some inanimate nouns take /-o(n)/ as their plural marker.

	Singular	Plural	
(10)	a. /dʒadʒdʒ/	/dʒadʒdʒ-o(n)/	'hedgehogs'
	b. /me:f/	/me:f-o(n)/	'eves'
	c. /madʒg/	/madʒg-o(n)/	'eyelashes'
	d. /klakk/	/klakk-o(n)/	'jaws'

2. The names of tribes, villages, and cities take plural marker /-o (n)/ in case the speakers refer to the members or inhabitants. If the singular noun ends with a vowel sound, the consonant /g/ appears as an epenthetic phoneme between the singular noun and plural suffix.

	Singular	Plural	
(11)	a. /pudna/	/pudna:-g-o(n)/	'members of Poodineh tribe'
	b. /tork/	/tork-o(n)/	'the Turkish people'
	c. /lu:taki/	/lu:taki-g-o(n)/	'people from Lootak village'
	d. /sarni/	/sarni-g-o(n)/	'members of Sarani tribe'

3. If an animate noun ends with vowel sounds other than /ou/, the epenthetic phoneme /g/ and, in some cases, /k/ is utilized after /-o (n)/ as the plural marker. Furthermore, in singular nouns ending with the vowel /a/, when pluralized, this vowel is lengthened.

	Singular	Plural	
(12)	a. /nvasa/	/nvasa:-g-o(n)/	'grandchildren'
	b. /kendʒa/	/kendʒa:-k-o(n)/	'girls, daughters'

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4. In some words denoting males and females, though they end with consonant sounds, the consonant /k/ occurs between such words and the plural morpheme /-o(n)/ (this point deserves more investigations).

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	
(13)	a. /ma:rd/	/ma:rd-k-o(n)/	‘men’
	b. /psa:r/	/psa:r-k-o(n)/	‘boys’
	c. /za:(n)/	/za:n-k-o(n)/	‘women’

**B. Plural morpheme /-ɑ:/**

1. Inanimate singular nouns, such as names of vegetables, trees, objects, body parts<sup>3</sup>, and time are used with the plural marker /-ɑ/.

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	
(14)	a. /dra:xt/	/dra:xt-ɑ/	‘trees’
	b. /seng/	/seng-ɑ/	‘stones’
	c. /tʃa:ʃ/	/tʃa:ʃ-ɑ/	‘eyes’
	d. /ro:z/	/ro:z-ɑ/	‘days’

2. If a singular noun ends with vowel /ou/, the epenthetic consonant /v/ occurs between this vowel and /-ɑ/ as the plural marker. In the case of the noun /ou/ ‘water’, the consonant /k/ is used as well.

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	
(15)	a. /ʃou/	/ʃou-v-ɑ/	‘nights’
	b. /ou/	/ou-v-ɑ/~ou-k-ɑ/	‘waters’

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<sup>3</sup> Some body parts (e.g., /tʃɒŋgəl/ ‘finger’- and /ro:da/ ‘intestine’ take both /-ɑ/ and /-o(n)/ as their plural markers.

3. If a singular noun ends with vowel /a/, and /-a/ is used as the plural morpheme, an epenthetic consonant is not added between the singular noun and the plural suffix. Instead, the short vowel /a/ is pronounced longer.

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	
(16)	a. /xo:na/	/xona:-a/	‘houses, homes’
	b. /ʃo:na/	/ʃona:-a/	‘combs, shoulders’

4. If the singular noun ends with a long vowel, and /-a/ is added as a plural marker, this addition makes the long vowel of the singular noun short.

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	
(17)	a. /ko:/	/ko-a/	‘mountains’
	b. /mu:/	/mu-a/	‘hairs’

In addition, in Sistani dialect, some nouns do not take any plural morpheme, they, instead, are used as collective nouns.

(18)	a. /gourom/	‘cattle’
	b. /bagg/	‘herds of camels’
	c. /romm/	‘a group of people’
	d. /bandal/	‘a package of bills’

### 4.3. Gender

In Sistani dialect, no particular inflectional or morphological markers are used for indicating the grammatical gender. In the case of personal pronouns, as already mentioned, third person singular pronoun /o/ ‘he, she, or it’ and third person plural pronouns /ifo/ ‘these’ and /ofo/ ‘they’ are linguistically used for referring to masculine, feminine, or neutral entities in this dialect. However,



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natural gender is shown through employing the words indicating masculinity or femininity.

- (19) /ma:rɔi:na, ma:rd/ 'man', /ourti:na, za:(n)/ 'woman', /psa:r/ 'boy', /kɛndʒa/ 'girl', /mary/ 'hen', /xross/ 'rooster', /dall/ 'bitch', /xa:si/ 'bull',....

Similarly, in Sistani dialect, except for the simple nouns, natural gender of animals can be referred to through the use of adjective-noun combination for either female or male gender.

- (20) /mada: gou/ 'cow', /matʃa ~ mada xa:r/ 'jennet', /nar xa:r/ 'jackass', /na:r boz/ 'billy goat', /mada boz/ 'nanny goat', ... .

#### **4.4. Definiteness**

In Sistani dialect, nouns are divided as definite, indefinite and generic nouns on the basis of their inflectional category of definiteness, that is, being definite or known to the listener(s), speaker(s), or both of them. Each subcategory of definite and indefinite nouns takes its distinct morpho-syntactic characteristics. The third subcategory namely generic nouns take no morphological markers to show definiteness.

##### **4.4.1. Definite nouns**

In Sistani dialect, the definiteness of a particular noun or a noun phrase is recognized innately, morphologically, or syntactically.

A. Inherent definiteness: Demonstrative pronouns, personal pronouns and proper nouns are inherently definite in this dialect and are used with no morphological marker:

1. Singular demonstrative pronouns: /i(n)/ 'this', /o(n)/ 'that', /ami/ 'this', /amo ~ namo/ 'that'

Plural demonstrative pronouns: /iʃo/ 'these', /oʃo/ 'those', /amʃo~ namʃo/ 'those'.

- (21) a. /i asp=e me bud-ak/.  
this horse=EZ I PM.be.PAST-3SG  
'This was my horse'
- b. /oʃo za:n-on=e ps-e: a:vdol-e/.  
those woman-PL=EZ boy-PL.EZ Abdol-COP.PRES.3PL  
'Those are Abdol's son's women'
- c. /namʃo var tʃe ondʒa be-stad-e/?  
those for what there PM-stand.PAST-3PL  
'Why did they (LIT. those) stand there?'

2. Personal pronouns:

- (22) a. /me xe: to m-j-a-o/.  
I with you IND-EP-come.PRES-1SG  
'I (will) come with you.'
- b. /meʃma baad xe:a:m baʃ-e/.  
we must together SUB.be.PRES-1PL  
'We must be together (united).'

3. Proper nouns:

- (23) a. /barat tonak na-diʃt ke kar  
kon-a/.  
Barat power NEG-have.PAST.3SG that work  
SUB.do.PRES-3SG  
'Barat was not able (LIT. did not have power) to work.'

B. Morphological definiteness: In Sistani dialect, the clitics /=a/ and /=ak/ are the morphological markers of definiteness.

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1. Clitic /=a/: In this dialect, the clitic /=a/ is applied as an object marker and also as a marker of definiteness. If a singular or a plural noun ends with a vowel sound, the epenthetic consonant /r/ and, in rare cases, /k/ appear between the clitic /=a/ and the noun<sup>4</sup>. In other words, the object marker and definite marker in Sistani dialect take up an epenthetic consonant, following the noun ending with a vowel sound. The clitic /=a/ can be used with any noun phrase in a direct object position, depicting its definiteness. Therefore, this suffix functions simultaneously as an object marker and a marker of definiteness in direct object position.

- (24) a. /sing=a                      ba:r/  
stone=DEF.OM                  IMP.take.PRES.2SG  
‘Take the stone’  
b. /xolf=a                      va:di    kard-o/.  
padlock=DEF.OM              find    do.PAST-1SG  
‘I found the padlock.’

It should be mentioned that the omitted /n/ of the nouns with the plural marker /-o(n)/ is pronounced with the addition of the clitic /=a/.

- (25) a. /go:ɕ-o    b-j-o:mad-e/.  
bee-PL    PM-EP-come.PAST-3PL  
The bees came/.  
b. /go:ɕ-on=a                      se:    ko/.  
bee-PL=DEF.OM                  see    IMP.do.2SG  
‘Look at the bees.’

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<sup>4</sup> In Sistani dialect data, it can be seen in only one case that the question pronoun /tʃez/ ‘what’ ends with a consonant, but, in interrogative construction, the epenthetic phoneme /r/ also occurs between /tʃez/ and the objective marker /=a/. For example: / tʃez-r-a b-j-ar-o/? ‘What do I bring?’

In addition, demonstrative pronouns /o(n)/ ‘that’ and /i(n)/ ‘this’ are also associated with the clitic /=a/ in direct object position.

- (26) a./on=a                      va      me      b-rason-ak/.  
that=DEF.OMto      I      IMP.arrive-2SG  
‘Deliver that to me.’  
b. /mɑ in-a                      tla:ng b-dad-e/.  
we      this-DEF.OM      push      PM-give.PAST-1PL  
‘We pushed this.’

2. Clitic /=ak/<sup>5</sup>: Sistani dialect makes use of this suffix with the nouns: /za:(n)/ ‘woman’, /psa:r/ ‘boy’, and /ma:rd/ ‘man’, making them definite. As a direct object (27b-c), these definite nouns are inflected with the definite marker /=ak/ and the clitic /=a/ as the object marker.

- (27) a. /za:n=ak                      xo:na      b-ra:ft-ak/.  
woman=DEF                      home      PM-go.PAST-3SG  
‘The woman went home.’  
b. /xod me      psa:r=ak=a                      b-di:d-o/.  
self I                      boy=DEF=OM                      PM-see.PAST-1SG  
‘I saw the boy myself.’  
c. /ofo      ma:rd-ak-a      var      ʃom      sa:lɑ      b-zad-e/.  
they man-DEF.OM                      for      dinner complement      PM-  
hit.PAST-3PL  
‘They invited the man for dinner.’

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<sup>5</sup> The clitic /=ak/ is also used with a diminutive or endearing force. Accordingly, definite nouns depending on the context and purpose of the speaker can be used as diminutive or endearing.

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C. Syntactic definiteness: In addition to the direct object position in a sentence as a syntactic device which makes the object noun or noun phrase to simultaneously take a definite marker, Sistani dialect employs the following syntactic device to make the relevant noun or noun phrase definite.

1- The demonstrative adjectives: /i/, /ami/, or /nami/ all meaning ‘this’ and /o/, /amo/, or /namo/ all meaning ‘that’ are used along with nouns or noun phrases, making them definite (the accompanied adjectives also make them definite such as /su:r/ in 28b).

- (28) a. /i    ɣla:m    az        ba:pur        m-n-a/.  
          this pencil from grandfather I-EP-COP.PRES.3SG  
          ‘This is my grandfather’s pencil.’  
      b. /namo        gou-v-e su:r        az        ke-n-a/?  
          that cow-EP-EZ    auburn from    who-EP-COP.PRES.3SG  
          ‘Whose cow is that auburn one?’

D. Generic nouns: Generic nouns doesn’t have any specific morphological marker to indicate definiteness in Sistani dialect.

- (29) /zmi:(n)/ ‘earth’, /ʃou/ ‘wood’, /mardi:na/ ‘man’, /ourti:na/ ‘woman’, ...

#### 4.4.2. Indefinite Nouns

In Sistani dialect, the clitic /=e/ is a marker of indefiniteness, too.

- (30) a. /seng=e                    va        da:r        b-zad-o/.  
          Stone=INDF                to        door        PM-hit.PAST-1SG  
          ‘I knocked a stone at the door.’  
      b. /pe:nar=e        me-ston-a/.  
          shirt=INDF IND-buy.PRES-3SG  
          ‘She (will) buy a shirt.’

Besides, the word /jag/ or /jak/ 'one' is also utilized before the indefinite noun or noun phrase.

- (31) a. /jag dʒvaldo:z=e b-j-ar/.  
one bodkin=NDF IMP-EP-bring.PRES.2SG  
'Bring a bodkin.'  
b. /jak kif=e m-n=a b-dad-e/.  
one bag=INDF I-EP=OM PM-give.PAST-3PL  
'They gave me a bag.'

Those nouns ending in the vowels /i:/ and /u:/, don't take the indefinite marker /=e/ and simply /jag/ or /(j)ak/ comes before the noun.

- (32) a. /jax<sup>6</sup> xefti: ba-froxt-o/.  
one necklace PM-sell.PAST-1SG  
'I sold a necklace.'  
b. /jak ka:pu: b-di/.  
one spider PM-see.PAST.3SG  
'He saw a spider.'

#### 4.5. Case

As to the case system in Sistani dialect, this dialect follows the nominative-accusative case system. As to Sistani linguistic corpus under study, except for the accusative case for which the object marker /=a/ is added to the noun/noun phrase in object position, the nouns carrying other types of cases take no morphological case marker. For these cases, indeed, it is the syntactic position

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<sup>6</sup> The final consonant of the word /jak/ assimilates to the initial sound of the following word in place of articulation and becomes /x/.

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(e.g., subject position for nominative case) and syntactic configuration (e.g., genitive marker in ezafe-construction) or object of different prepositions that assigns a given case.

### 1. Nominative Case

In Sistani dialect, the nominative case is assigned based on the linguistic position of a particular noun or noun phrase in a sentence. In fact, it is the subject position of the sentence (with a transitive or an intransitive verb) which gives the nominative case to subject noun/noun phrase. Thus such nouns or noun phrases do not take a morphological marker.

- (33) a. /o var ma aso:k=e b-g-a/  
she to we story=INDF PM-say.PAST-3SG  
'She told us a story.'
- b. /kor me:x-a ru: devaI-e/  
big nail-PL on wall-COP.PRES.3PL  
'The spikes are on the wall.'

### 2. Accusative Case

In case a noun or a noun phrase functions as the direct object of the sentence, it is morphologically marked for grammatical case in Sistani dialect. In this regard, the direct object receives the accusative case and takes the object marker (=a).

- (34) a. /ofo no:n-a-r=a p-xard-e/  
they bread-PL-EP=OM PM-eat.PAST-3PL  
'They ate the (slices of) bread.'
- b. /a:li ma:ngal=a b-j-ard-ak/  
Ali sickle=OM PM-bring.PAST-3SG  
'Ali brought the sickle.'

But indefinite direct objects and generic nouns do not take the object marker /-a/.

- (35) a. /me jag ma:ngal=e ba-stond-o/.  
I one sickle=INDF PM-buy.PAST-1SG  
'I bought a sickle.'  
b. /a:li ma:ngal me-fro:f-a/.  
Ali sickle IND-sell.PRES-3SG  
'Ali sells sickle.'

### 3. Genitive case

The genitive case shows a possessive relationship between the two nouns. In Sistani dialect, the genitive marker /=e/, known as ezafe marker or 'kasre ezafe' in Persian, is used to show the case of the possessed noun.

- (36) a. /ling=e asa:(n)/  
leg=EZ Hasan  
'Hasan's leg'  
b. /go:f=e to/  
ear=EZ you  
'Your ear'

In this dialect, the genitive case follows some lexical configuration of the head noun which are mentioned below:

1. When the head noun ends in a consonant, the clitic /=e/ is usually added in genitive construction.

- (37) a. /tʃaʃ=e gou/  
eye=EZ cow  
'Cow's eye'  
b. /marɣ=e meʃma/  
hen=EZ we.INCL  
'Our hen'



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However, if the head noun ends in consonant /r/, the genitive marker /=e/ is not added.

- (38) a. /sar        dra:xt/  
      head        tree  
      ‘The top of the tree’  
      b. /dar        xo:na/  
      door        house  
      ‘The door of the house’

2. If the head noun ends in vowel /a/, while adding /=e/, the vowel /a/ is omitted.

- (39) a. /parra/ ‘blade’        /parr=e panka/        ‘The blade of the fan’  
      b. /nvasa/ ‘grandchild’    /nvas=e ma:mad/    ‘Mohammad’s grandchild’  
      c. /xla:ka/ ‘aunt’        /xla:k=e fma/        ‘Your aunt’

3. If the head noun ends in vowels /i:/ and /u:/, it does not take the clitic /=e/.

- (40) a. /pafti:/ ‘supporter’    /pafti: a:mad/        ‘Ahmad’s supporter’  
      b. /lampu:/ ‘Lariat’        /lampu: o:tor/        ‘Camel’s lariat’

4. If the head noun ends in a vowel in which its final /n/ is usually omitted, in genitive structure, the omitted /n/ appears again before the genitive marker /=e/.

- (41) a. /dendo:(n)/ ‘tooth’    /dendo:n=e gorba/    ‘The cat’s tooth’  
      b. /su:zu(n)/ ‘needle’    /su:zun=e xa:jat/    ‘The tailor’s needle’

5. In some cases, the head nouns ending with plural morphemes /-o(n)/ and /-a/ or ending with /o/ and /a:/ vowel sounds, they lose their plural morphemes and final vowel sounds in genitive structure. In such cases the genitive marker /=e/ becomes long.

- (42) a. /madʒg-o(n)/            /madʒg=e: tʃa:ʃ/            ‘The eyelashes of the eye’  
 b. /go:ʃ-a/                    /go:ʃ=e: savda:r/            ‘Safdar’s ears’  
 c. /ba:bo/                     /ba:b=e: akba:r/            ‘Akbar’s father’  
 d. /ra:/                        /r=e: zabol/                ‘The road of Zabol’

#### 4.6. Possession

In Sistani dialect, possession is implemented through the use of /mal=e/ (combination of / mal/ ‘property, possession) plus genitive marker /=e/) ‘belonging to, that of’, or the preposition /az/ ‘of, from’ plus the possessor noun/noun phrase as well as ezafe construction in the form of genitive structure.

A. Expressing possession utilizing /mal=e/ or the preposition /az/: In Sistani dialect, possession is expressed through the use of /mal=e’ or the preposition /az/ along with the shortened or full form of the copula verb /astan/ ‘to be’<sup>7</sup>. In this regard, the use of shortened forms of this verb is much more prevalent. Generally speaking, possessed entities come before /mal=e/ or the preposition /az/ and possessor nouns/noun phrases come after /mal=e/ or the preposition /az/. Furthermore, the use of prepositional phrase with copula verb makes predicative possession possible.

<sup>7</sup> In Sistani dialect, the copula verb of /astan/ acquires two contracted and full forms. Non-past contracted and full form of this copula verb are formed as follows (for more exposition regarding non-past and past copula verbs refer to Ahangar (2010: 16-17).

person	singular		plural	
	short	full	short	full
<b>First</b>	-o	ast-o	-e	ast-e
<b>Second</b>	-i	ast-i	-e	ast-e
<b>Third</b>	-a	ast-a	-e	ast-e

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(43) a. /i kafta:r mɔl=e ~ az m- n-a/.  
this dove property=EZ from I-EP-COP.PRES.3SG  
'This dove is mine.'

b. /nami ba:t-o xɑ mɔl=e ~ az ma ast-e/.  
this duck-PL that property=EZ from we  
F.COP.PRES.3PL  
'These ducks are ours.'

B. Expressing possession with genitive structure: As already mentioned, possession is realized through the use of genitive structure in which the genitive marker /=e/ attaches to possessed entity and the possessor in the form of a noun/noun phrase, a personal pronoun, or a reflexive pronoun occurs afterward. Thus, this syntactic structure helps to the manifestation of attributive possession.

(44) a. /gurduk-e: boz=e fma/  
Kidney-PL.EZ goat=EZ you  
'The kidneys of your goat'  
b. /xɑr=e nosra:t/  
sister=EZ Nosrat  
'Nosrat's sister'  
c. /mo:k=e xot to/  
mother-EZ self you  
'Your own mother'

## 5. Conclusion

As observed, the inflectional or morpho-syntactic categories of noun in Sistani dialect can be linguistically examined and described. As to person category, all personal pronouns in Sistani dialect are categorized under independent personal pronouns and, therefore, there is no dependent, suffixed or clitic personal pronouns in this dialect. When it comes to number, it is manifested as singular and plural. Singular nouns take no morphological marker. In Sistani dialect, plural nouns are made through the addition of plural markers. Plural markers in this dialect are inflectional suffixes such as /-o(n)/ and /-ɑ/ as well as /-ɑt/. The plural morpheme /-o(n)/ is usually utilized as a plural marker of animate entities, and the plural morpheme /-ɑ/ is used as a plural marker of inanimate nouns. The plural marker /-ɑt/ is employed with borrowed Arabic nouns. In Sistani dialect, grammatical gender is not marked morphologically. Subsequently, when it comes to pronouns, it is indicated that the third person singular pronoun /o/ 'he/ she/ it' and third person plural pronouns /oʃo/ 'they, those' or /iʃo/ 'these' are utilized for referring to both masculine and feminine entities. Furthermore, in this dialect, first-person plural pronoun 'we' is rendered inclusively and exclusively. Definiteness, in Sistani dialect, is realized with or without a morphological marker and also it is syntactically determined. In this regard, the use of the clitic /=a/ is more prevalent, and especially the clitic /=ak/ is peculiar to this dialect compared with Persian. The case system of this dialect comprise nominative, accusative, and genitive cases taking morphological and/ or syntactical realizations, of course, with some restrictions on the manifestation of the accusative or object case marker /=a/. This dialect, to show possession, makes use of genitive structure in the form of ezafe-construction and the use of /maɪ=e/ or the preposition /az/.

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**List of Abbreviations**

1	1 <sup>st</sup> person	2	2 <sup>nd</sup> person
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	~	alternation
=	clitic	COP	copula
DEF	definite marker	EP	epenthetic
EZ	ezafe marker	F.COP	full copula marker
INCL	inclusive pronoun	IND	indicative
INDF	indefinite	IMP	imperfective
LIT	literally	OM	object marker
PAST	past	PL	plural
PM	past marker	PRES	present
SG	singular	SUB	subjunctive

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