

The Mass-Count Distinction in Sadri

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Abstract: Sadri originated as the mother tongue of the Sadans, an Aryan group amongst the Non-Aryans in Chota Nagpur Plateau (Navarangi, 1965:5). It developed as a link language of the Adivasis living mainly in and around Chota Nagpur Plateau that spreads over present day Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and parts of West Bengal and Orissa. There are about 97 heterogeneous communities like the Munda, Kharia, Ho, and Oraons which come under the umbrella term Adivasis. These communities mainly belongs to three language families namely, Austro-Asiatic, Indo-Aryan and Dravidian used Sadri as their link language for inter and intra community communication. Sadri gradually evolved as a Creole from pidgin, primarily due to their inter community marriages between the various linguistic groups amongst them. The offspring of these bilingual parents adopted this link language as their mother tongue. According to the 2001 Census Report there are 2,044,776 Sadri speakers in India. There are about 845 tea gardens (Toppno 1999) in Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Sonitpur, Nagaon and Kokrajhar districts of Assam.

Key Words: Phonological features, Morphological Features, Literature Review, Importance of Sadri language in Assam, Research methodology.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Sadri originated as the mother tongue of the Sadans, an Aryan group amongst the Non-Aryans in Chota Nagpur Plateau (Navarangi, 1965:5). It developed as a link language of the Adivasis living mainly in and around Chota Nagpur Plateau that spreads over present day Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and parts of West Bengal and Orissa. There are about 97 heterogeneous communities like the Munda, Kharia, Ho, and Oraons which come under the umbrella term Adivasis. These communities mainly belongs to three language families namely, Austro-Asiatic, Indo-Aryan and Dravidian used Sadri as their link language for inter and intra community communication. Sadri gradually evolved as a Creole from pidgin, primarily due to their inter community marriages between the various linguistic groups amongst them. The offspring of these bilingual parents adopted this link language as their mother tongue. According to the 2001 Census Report there are 2,044,776 Sadri speakers in India. There are about 845 tea gardens (Toppno 1999) in Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Sonitpur, Nagaon and Kokrajhar districts of Assam.

1.1. Phonological features

Coming to the phonological features of Sadri, the following tables provides an overview of the consonant phonemes and vowel systems of Sadri which is based on the discussion in Jordan-Horstmann (1969:19ff).

	Bilabial	Dental	Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	p ph b bh	t th d dh		t̪ t̪h d̪ d̪h		k kh g gh	
Fricatives	M	N			c [tʃ] ch [tʃʰ] j [dʒ] jh [dʒʰ]	(ŋ)	
Nasals							
Laterals		L					
Flaps			R	(ɽ) (ɽh)			
Fricatives		S					H
Semi-Vowels	W				y [j]		

Table 1: Chart of Consonants.

	Front	Central	Back
High	I		U
Mid	E	ʌ	O
Low		A	

Table 2: Chart of Vowels

1.2. Basic word order

The basic word order of Sadri is S(subject)- O(object) -V(verb).The subject is at the clause initial position followed by object and the verb in the clause final position.

1. *meena c^hora tho ke dekhlak*

meena	c ^h ora-tho ke	dekh-l-ak
meena.NOM	boy-CL-ACC	see-PAST-3SG

‘Meena saw the boy.’

In the above sentence we have a transitive construction where the subject NP *meena* followed by the object NP *c^hora-tho* and the verb *dekh-l-ak* ‘see-PAST-3SG’.

The word order in Sadri is flexible and also allows scrambling.

2.

- | | | |
|----|--|-------|
| a. | <i>meena c^hora-tho ke dekh-l-ak</i> | (SOV) |
| b. | <i>c^hora-tho ke meena dekh-l-ak</i> | (OSV) |
| c. | <i>c^hora-tho ke dekh-l-ak meena</i> | (OVS) |
| d. | <i>dekh-l-ak meena chōra-tho ke</i> | (VSO) |
| e. | <i>dekh-l-ak c^hora-tho ke meena</i> | (VOS) |

Such type of flexibility is possible because of the case markers that distinguish between the subjects and object NPs and the agreement features that are inflected to the verb root. The agreement markers show that the verb agrees with the subject NP in person and number. Therefore the subject pronoun can be dropped in the language.

1.3. Morphological Features

Sadri is generally agglutinating, and almost all of the grammatical marking is suffixes, enclitics or postpositions. There is also one marker, earlier it was converbal marker, *-i/-e*, which now functions as a linker in complex verb. Sadri has two major word classes- nominals and verbs, postposition and adverbs.

1.3.1. Number

In Sadri, there is a two ways number marking on the nominal or the pronominal. The singular NP takes the classifiers, while, the mass nouns and generic nouns remain unmarked. Like other Indian languages, there is no singular morpheme in Sadri. The plural markers are *man* and *-gila/-gola*.

3.

a. *admi tho pathar me kam karat rahe*

admi-tho	pathar	me	kam	kar-at	rah-ε
man-CL	field	POSP	work	do-PROG	COP.PAST.3SG

‘The man was working in the field.’

b. *admi man pathar me kam karat rahe*

admi	man	pathar	me	kam	kar-at	rah-ε
man	PL	field	POSP	work	do-PROG	COP.PAST.3SG

‘The men were working in the field.’

In 3(a) *admi-tho* ‘the man’ which is the singular definite NP sits in the subject position. In 3(b), *admi man*, here *man* is the plural marker that comes after the noun *admi* ‘man’.

The plural marker *man* can be occur with both animate and inanimate nouns and pronouns, for example:

c. *c^hora man*

c^hora-man
boy-PL
‘Boys’

d. *o man*

o-man
3SG-PL
‘They’

Sadri has another plural marker *gila/gola* which occurs with both animate and inanimate nouns. For example:

e. *admi gila*
admi-gila
man-PL
'The men'

f. *kitab gila*
kitab-gila
book-PL
'The books'

The plural marker *gila/gola* can come from the Bangla language, which is one of the dominant languages in the region. The plural marker is *gola*, in Bangla,

g. *chele gola baire khel che*
chele-gola baire khel-ch-ε
Boy-PL outside play-PROG-3p
'The boys are playing outside'

1.4. Gender

Sadri has no grammatical gender marking. Sex distinctions can be specified for some noun pairs by means of derivational marking, e.g., *ghora* 'horse' / *ghori* 'mare', *aja* 'grandfather' / *aji* 'grandmother', *lohar* 'blacksmith' / *loharin* 'blacksmith's wife'.

1.5. Case

Case is a grammatical category that establishes the syntactic relationship between words in a sentence. According to Blake (1994:1), case is a "System of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads".

4. *hari meena ke cah bagan me dekhlak*
hari meena ke cah bagan me dekh-l-ak
hari.NOM meena ACC tea garden POSP see-PAST-3SG
'Hari saw Meena in the tea garden.'

In this sentence, *hari* takes the nominative case which is unmarked, while *meena* takes the accusative case, which is the direct object of the verb. The accusative marker is the *ke*.

1.6. Tense

In Sadri tense is distinguished into three types-present, past, future. The present tense is unmarked. The past tense marker is *-l* and the future tense marker is *-b*. This is illustrated with the lexical verb *k^ha* 'eat'. For example:

- 5.
- a. *mɔi masri kha^h na*
mɔi mas k^ha-ɔ-na
i-NOM fish eat-1SG-IMPERF
'I eat fish.'
- b. *mɔi masri k^halo*
mɔi masri k^ha-l-o
i-NOM fish eat-PAST-1SG
'I ate fish.'
- c. *mɔi masri k^ha-b-o*
mɔi masri k^ha-b-o
i-NOM fish eat-FUT-1SG
'I shall eat fish.'

In 5(a), *k^ha* is the verb root which is followed by the 1st person singular agreement marker *-ɔ*. The imperfective marker *-na* is suffixed to it. In 5(b), the verb *k^ha* is followed by the past tense marker *-l* and the 1st person singular agreement marker *-o*. And in 5(c) the verb root *k^ha* is followed by the future tense marker *-b* and the agreement marker *-o* which comes after it.

1.7. Aspect

Aspect is a grammatical category which expresses how an action, event, or state, denoted by a verb, extends over time. According to Comrie (1976), 'Aspect are the different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituencies of a situation'. By this definition we can know that an action or situation in Sadri can be either in perfective, imperfective (habitual) and progressive aspect.

1.7.1. Perfective

The perfective marker in Sadri language is $-ε/-i$, and $-ai$. The former occurs with the vowel sound and the later occur with the consonant sound.

6.

a.	<i>ramu bōrha hε hε</i>			
	ramu	bōrha	hε-ε	h-ε
	ramu.NOM	old	become-PERF	COP.PRES-3SG
	'Ramu has become old.'			

b.	<i>υ εkhn εi k^hana k^ha-ε</i>			
	υ	εkhn-εi	k ^h ana	k ^h a-ε
	hε-3SG.NOM	now-EMPH	meal	eat-PERF COP.PRES.3SG
	'He had his meal.'			

1.7.2. Progressive

The progressive marker in Sadri language is $-t/-at$.

7.

a.	<i>υ masri k^hat hε</i>			
	υ	masri	k ^h a-t	h-ε
	3SG.NOM	fish	eat-PROG	COP.PRES-3SG
	'He/she is eating fish.'			

b.	<i>rīma nachat hε</i>			
	rīma	nach- at		h-ε
	rīma.NOM	dance-PROG		COP.PRES-3SG
	'Rīma is dancing.'			

In 7a and 7b the copula *hε* is functioning as an auxiliary verb in the present tense and the progressive marker is $-t$ and $-at$ suffixed to the main verb *k^ha* 'eat' and *nach* 'dance' respectively.

1.7.3. Imperfective

The imperfective aspect can be refer to an action that is habitual in the present or was habitual for sometime in the past. The present imperfective marker is $-na/-la$.

8.	<i>moi rodzei girza jau na</i>			
	moi	rodzei	girza	ja-u-na
	I	everyday	church	go-1P-IMPERF
	'I go to church every day.'			

1.8. Literature Review:

In Central India, specifically in Jharkhand, books and magazine in NS are published. The language is taught in the Universities(Chettri,2005).Sadri, as Grierson(1903)has described in his 'Linguistic Survey of India'Vol5 part-2,which is the sub-dialect of Bhojpuri and the dialect of Bihari, an Indo-Aryan language.Grierson's analysis of the Sadri language is mostly based on the first ever grammar book written on this language by Rev. E.H.Whitley.The name of the book is Notes on the Ganwari Dialect(1886).Suniti Kumar Chatterji(1926)while classifying Magadhan speeches grouped Sadri with Bhojpuri under western Magadhan.However,recent linguists have claimed it to be an independent

language. In Assam, over a period of more than two hundred years, Sadri has incorporated many linguistic features of Assamese and Bangla which belong to the eastern Magadhan group of language. Some of the books on Sadri are-

- i. Language Handbook Sadani by Rev.Father Henric Flour and published the District Labour Association, Kolkata(1886).This book was published mainly to help the British Authorities to communicate with the tea garden labourers employed in Assam during the colonial rule.
- ii. *A Simple Sadani Grammar* and *A Sadani Reader* by P.S.Navarangi (1956)
- iii. *Nagpuriya Sadani Boli ka Biyakaran* (1965) by P.S.Navarangi.Here, he gives the description of the language along with its similarities as well as dissimilarities with other Indo-Aryan languages like Bihari, Bangali, Magahi, Nepali, Merwari and Hindi.
- iv. *English Sadri Dictionary* (1975) compiled by Father Edgar Blain.
- v. *Nagpuri Bhasa* (1976) Dr. Shraavan Kr. Goswami.
- vi. *Nagpuri (Sadani) Grammar* (2010) by Sakuntala Misra and Dr. Umesh Nand Tiwari.

1.9. Importance of Sadri language in Assam

For socio-economic, socio-political and other socio-cultural reasons most of the adivasis of Assam prefer Sadri as their first language. Besides, the lingua franca provides one linguistic identity to the various adivasi groups. The importance of mother tongue education at primary level cannot be ignored; many international bodies like the UNICEF, UNESCO and other government institutes like SECRET, missions like Sarbashiksha Abhijan are publishing text books in Sadri, mainly for other literacy programmes.

1.10. Research methodology

For the study of the mass count distinction in Sadri, data was collected from the speakers of Sonitpur district of Assam. Sonitpur is situated at the Brahmaputra valley where Assamese is the predominant language. This research methodology on Sadri language includes a literature review, survey of the tea garden and interaction with the native speakers. And, through questionnaires and interview schedules language data have been collected from the native speakers. The informants are mainly from the age group of 20 to 60 years.

This section provides a general introduction to some of the typological features of Sadri. The following chapters will explore some of them in details. Here; I have discussed briefly about the basic properties like the word order, nominal systems and verbal systems in Sadri.

2. The Mass Count Distinction:

The mass count distinctions go beyond the traditional division of linguistics into morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The mass count distinction can be characterized in terms of both quantificational and distributional differences between noun-types. Count nouns such as table, shirt, are individually quantified as individuals and pluralities .For example-a car, two shirts, many tables).On the other hand mass noun do not denote individuals when quantified (e.g., some water, much sand). (see Peter Gordon 1985).

2.1. The Mass Count Distinction as encoded in English

In a language like English we have two types of noun-mass nouns, e.g. water, sugar and count noun, e.g. dog, table.

It is traditional to make a distinction between the lexical category 'noun' and the syntactic category 'noun phrase'. House is a noun, the house, an old house, those three houses, a house I used to live in are noun phrases. This difference can be summarized as follows: A noun assigns a kind, or type of thing; a noun phrase assigns an instance of the type.

If we compare house and the house. House designates a type of entity. There exist countless instances of the type, present and past, real and imaginary, actual and potential. The use of 'the' in the noun phrase is to convey that out of the countless number of instances, only one has been selected for attention. The also conveys that the designated instance is one which both the hearer and speaker can identify. There may be several reasons why the exemplar is uniquely identifiable-one reason could be that both speaker and hearer have already been talking about, and the another reason could be that both speaker and hearer are standing near to it.Alternatively,the speaker may provide information that guides the hearer towards unique identification, by means of a descriptive relative clause(the house that I bought last week),by the use of adjective and other modifiers(the big house on the hill),possibly accompanied by a pointing gesture(the big house over there).

2.1.1. The basic NP forms of mass noun and count noun

First of all, the mass-count distinction is all about a syntactic distinction among nouns. In English the mass-count distinction shows up in a number of contexts. Count nouns have a singular and a plural form while mass nouns cannot be pluralized unless they shift to a count interpretation. Numerals and certain other quantity expressions(several,

many) can also be used with plural forms, while others need a singular count noun (each, a) or a mass noun (a bit). If a numeral combines with a mass term, one has to add a measure word, as in two glasses of water. This strategy is similar to the way numerals combine with all nouns in so-called numeral classifier languages such as Sadri language. In Sadri, the use of the numeral forces the presence of a so-called numeral classifier, which indicates a unit of counting or a measure:

1. *dui gilas pani*
dui gilas pani
two glass water
'Two glasses of water.'

According to Greenberg (1972/77:286) the languages that make use of numeral classifiers in their "basic mode of forming quantitative expressions" never have compulsory number marking on the noun (see also Sanches & Slobin 1973).

In a mass noun, e.g. water, is used in its bare form, e.g. *Water is transparent*. In this example, the noun water is an NP because it is a part of a sentence. In this example, water as an NP refers to the water kind of the world. In other words, it gives a generic meaning in the sentence. But depending on the context it can also be a mass noun as NP that can give a generic meaning as in He's drinking water. In this, a count noun cannot function as an NP in its bare form. Thus, **Cat is/are very faithful* is ungrammatical. This sentence will be grammatical only if [s] is added to the noun: *Cats are faithful*. Like the above sentence, *Water is transparent* this sentence *Cats are very faithful* is also a generic statement, because here cats refers to the whole cat kind. But it can also give a non-generic meaning as in *Cats are meowing outside*. Here we are not talking about the whole cat-kind-but some instance of the kind.

Thus, the mass-count distinction is encoded in English at the bare NP level, i.e. the level where the noun is not quantified by a quantifier: if the noun designates a kind of objects, then it has to be suffixed by an [s] before it can be used as an NP, on the other hand if the noun designates a kind of substance, then it is used in its bare form as an NP. So, as an NP a mass noun does not have a new form; but a count noun has, which is the so-called the plural form.

2.1.2. A plurality of similar bounded entities as a homogeneous mass

From the discussion it is clear that object-subject dichotomy is the basis of the mass-count distinction. But if we subscribe to the Cognitive Linguistics view that language is a description of the world as we perceive or understand it, rather than the objective world or, that, to put in other words, linguistic organization is done on the basis of our folk rather than our scientific interpretation of the world, then it must be born in mind that when we are talking about substance-object distinction, we are not just referring to some objectives or inherent properties (i.e. properties that exist independent of the mind) of the entities of the world. As we have found a discussion in Borah (2003):

Our folk interpretation of the world is based on how we interact with it with our body (for example, how we see it with our eyes, which form part of the body), and we understand on the basis of that bodily experience (e.g. the belief that the earth is round). Since the human body has its own limitations whereas folk interpretation does not, in many cases, it leads us to the objective structure or properties of the entities of the world. On the other hand, in scientific interpretation we always try it through experiments and tests, to arrive at such a structure or properties (however, this is not to say that folk and scientific interpretations always contradict). And in the folk approach to the world, the category of the discrete which includes not only entities that are objectively discrete, but also entities that look or perceived to be discrete in some or the other way. The same is true of the category of the indiscrete so that in order to belong to this category an entity, in this approach does not have to be objectively indiscrete.

2.1.2.1. Fuzzy quantifiers

Note, however, that grammar is sensitive to the loss of discreteness in the case of discrete entities like books too. This is evidence by the fact that plural count nouns share several formal properties with mass nouns (see Borah 2003).

One of the property is that plural count nouns do not resist quantification by fuzzy quantifiers, which typically quantifies mass noun (e.g., *a lot of milk*), and a plural count noun as well (e.g., *a lot of cows*). As we have shown above is that how a plurality of heterogeneous discrete entities can constitute a mass to our perception, and how grammar is sensitive to this.

But it also accounts for the possibility of using a count noun as a mass noun. Such a use is possible because if a plurality of heterogeneous discrete entities can constitute a mass, then any noun, whether subsuming such a plurality or a mass, seems to finally denote a mass. As it is observed in Borah (2003):

A further classic example here is the old philosopher's favorite *There was dog all along the street*, where *dog* commits rather to a mass schema. The *car*-type noun *dog* in this utterance satisfies a situation where the speaker interacts with the animal not in its individual discrete form, but in the form of a mass. Either a multitude of dogs behaving in

concert, or their smell (which is something that shape has no relevance to) constitutes this mass. Nouns such as *deer* and *fish* further add to the example: Both kinds of animals usually have in concert in large numbers so that in a situation where they rather look like, or are understood as, a mass, their labels will be used as a *water-* type noun: *This pond is well stocked with fish*(in lieu of *fishes*); or *Last year this time they caught a lot of deer*(*deers* instead).² Thus, when rabbits are understood as a category of game rather than individuals, the label *rabbit*, which is otherwise a *car-*type noun, will be used as a *water-*type noun: *They've been shooting rabbit*. And (to borrow a line from Crystal (1995:201) here the professional hunter goes *shooting duck* (again a *car-* type noun), never *ducks*, and visitors to the local pond *feed the ducks*, never *the duck-* unless, of course, the pond contains only one. Turning to the utterances such as *Put some more onion in the curry*, the *car-* type noun *onion* has rather a mass schema in that it denotes here a substance, i.e., an onion grated or sliced. To our folk perception of the world all discrete and bounded entities, whether natural or artificial, are made of some or other substance so that to de-bound or grind them is to arrive at the substance they are made of. Thus *wood*, for instance, by virtue of being the name of a substance of an (natural) object, i.e., a tree, is a *water-*type noun in English. In this case we have two different labels for the object and the substance, but in some other cases, where the object is mostly used or interacted with rather in the substance form, we have just one. Clearly, *onion* is such a case to valid at the arguments for MX-MS transformations.

From the above examples it establishes that given the appropriate ground, a *car* type, despite that they finally subsumes a plurality of discrete entities, can denote a mass. Linguistic philosopher Pelletier (1979:6) sees, therefore, there is no difference between the two types of nouns. He reports an invention by David Lewis, the “universal grinder”, which grinds anything discrete into its substance, and claims that all *car* –type nouns can be used as *water-*type nouns, which are often called mass nouns.

2.3. Re-categorization: All nouns are mass noun in origin

But it is not that only count nouns can be used as mass noun. It is also equally possible to use a mass noun as count noun in appropriate context. Therefore in the context of a restaurant, the mass noun *tea* is often used as a count noun so that people say “*Two teas, please!*” rather than “*Two cups of teas, please!*” This is because in the context of a restaurant *tea* is perceived as something discrete as in the context *tea* usually comes in some bounded form.

Thus, re-categorization rather seems to invalidate the mass-count distinction: all count noun become mass nouns, or all mass nouns become count nouns. Therefore, all nouns are mass noun as nouns, that is, the so-called count nouns are also mass nouns. The count noun *cat*, for example, designates no particular *cat*-it rather designates an abstract concept-the abstract qualities of a *cat*.

2.4. Classifier languages

There are languages where the mass count distribution is not grammatically encoded. It means among other things which are at the bare NP level of all nouns (whether they designate a substance-kind or an object-kind) are used in their bare form. Thus, for instance, in Assamese, which is a classifier language, both *pa:ni* ‘water’ are used as NP (note that in a language like English only a *water-*type noun is used as an NP). Thus, we have *p:ani zulia* ‘water’ ‘liquid’=‘Water is liquid’. Again in such languages verbs too have only one form the mass-count distinction, unlike in English, is not encoded in the verb form.

And the nouns in a classifier language, whether they designate a substance-kind or object kind, resist counting by numerals. From this point of view all languages in such a language are mass nouns. Thus a numerically quantified NP in such a language is either a classifier phrase(In the case of a noun that designate an object-kind), or a measure term-phrase(in the case of a noun that designates a substance- kind). A classifier denotes some salient perceived or imputed characteristics of the entity [e.g. shape and size, animacy] to which the associated noun refers. So, a classifier indirectly states that the associated noun designates a plurality of bounded entities, and hence is countable by numerals. On the other hand, the measure term functions as a unitizer. It unitizes an unbounded substance for numerical quantification. Thus, *tini-khan kita:p* ‘three’-CLF: Flat Object ‘book’ = ‘three books’ is grammatical in Assamese, but not * *tini kita:p* where the classifier *khan* is missing. In the same way, *tini-balti pa:ni* ‘three’-‘bucket’ ‘water’= ‘three buckets of water’ is a measure term phrase in Assamese where *balti* ‘bucket’ is a measure term.

From the above discussion it is clear that in a language like Assamese the mass-count distinction is not encoded at the bare NP levels. The distinction is encoded at the level of quantification, but it is not grammatical. By contrast in a language like English the distinction is encoded at the bare NP level itself, and it is grammatical.

3.1. The mass-count distinction in Sadri at the bare NP level

In Sadri, unlike in English, both types of nouns, i.e. a noun that refers to a countable object (henceforth an *object noun*) and a noun that refers to a mass (henceforth a *mass noun*), serves as an NP at the bare NP level as in the following examples:

1. *pani pania*

pani pania
water liquid
'Water is liquid.'

2. *gak^hir bɔga*
gak^hir bɔga
milk white
'Milk is white.'

3. *admi mɔren*
admi mɔren
man mortal
'Man is mortal.'

4. *kawa kala*
kawa kala
crow black
'The crow is black.'

In (1) and (2) above, we have two mass nouns as NPs; in (3) and (4) we have two object nouns as NPs.

Also note that such an NP can generate both generic and non-generic meaning in Sadri. This is clear from the following examples, where the NP is a mass noun. Compare (1) cited as (5) below with (6):

5. *pani pania*
pani pania
water liquid
'Water is liquid.'

6. *ɔ pani piat^he*
ɔ pani pia-t^he
he water drink-PROG-3RD
'He is drinking some water.'

While *pani* 'water' in (5) has a generic reference, in (6) it has a non-generic indefinite reference.

Now, compare (3), cited below as (7), with (8). The NP in both is an object noun, i.e. *admi* 'man'. While in (7) it has a generic reference, in (8) it gives a non-generic indefinite reference. Again, depending on the context, the NP in (8) may refer to a singular or a plural number of persons.

7. *admi mɔren*
admi mɔren
man mortal
'Man is mortal.'

8. *admi ahen*
admi ah-en
man come-PROG
'Some person/persons is/are coming to our come (to our house).'

But depending on the context, such an NP, i.e. a bare noun as an NP, can give a non-generic singular or plural reference as well as in the following examples:

9. *cah koi?*
cah koi
tea where
'Where is/are the (cup(s) of) tea?'

10. *gutyaman gelek*
gutyaman gelek
guest-PL leave-PAST

‘The guest/guests has/have left.’

It is clear from the the above discussion that Sadri does not maintain a mass-count distinction at the bare NP level. Depending on the context, the bare noun as NP can have a generic reference; a non-generic reference either indefinite or definite, singular or plural.

3.2. The mass-count distinction in Sadri at the level of quantification

3.2.1 Numerical quantification and the mass-count distinction in Sadri

The mass-count distinction in Sadri, as is revealed in our study, is encoded at the level of precise or numerical quantification. measure term is used

When subjected to numerical quantification, the bare noun expands into a classifier or a measure term phrase. A *classifier phrase* is phrase is a phrase where a classifier is used with the numeral quantifying the noun. In the same way, a *measure term phrase* is a phrase where with the numeral quantifying the noun.

Now, if the noun to be quantified is an object noun, then a classifier would be used with the numeral; if the noun is a mass noun, then a measure term would be used with the numeral.

Now, a measure term, e.g. glass, is a unitizer; it unitizes a mass. A classifier is also a unitizer in the sense that it explicitly states the shape of the object as referred to by the noun to be quantified. Thus, a classifier separates objects nouns from mass nouns.

The following examples exemplify our points above.

11. *umanker duita saikel ahe*
uman-ker dui-ta saikel ah-e
they-GEN two-CLF cycle exist-3P
‘There exist two bicycles as theirs’/‘They have two bi-cycles.’

12. *oker ekta saikel ahe*
o-ker ek-ta bəl ah-e
he-GEN one-CLF ball exist-3P
‘There exists one ball as his’/‘He has a ball.’

13. *ek litar petrəl*
ek litar petrəl
one liter petrol
‘One liter of petrol’

14. *ek gilās pani*
ek gilās pani
one glass water
‘One glass of water’

In (11) and (12) the nouns are object nouns, i.e. *saikel* ‘bi-cycle’ and *bəl* ‘ball’. They are three-dimensional objects. Thus, they are ‘unitized’ by *ta*, the classifier for three-dimensional objects in Sadri.

In (13) and (14) the nouns are mass nouns and they are, therefore, unitized by measure terms, i.e. *litar* ‘liter’ and *gilās* ‘glass’. As noted, classifier do not unitize referents of mass nouns; they ‘unitize’ referents of only count nouns. This is clear from the following examples, where *ek* is ‘one’; *ta* is a classifier; *petrol* is ‘petrol’, and *pani* is ‘water’.

15. **ekta petrol*
16. **ekta pani*

Turning to the **reference** of numerically quantified NPs in Sadri, there are indefinite when NUMERAL-CLASSIFIER precedes the noun; they are definite when the order is reversed. Thus, the NP with the order NUMERAL-CLASSIFIER NOUN is indefinite; NOUN-NUMERAL-CLASSIFIER IS DEFINITE as in the examples below. Compare (17) with (18):

17. *duita admi ahen* [NUM-CLF NOUN]
dui-ta admi ah-en
two-CLF man come-PROG
‘Two people are coming.’

18. *admiduita ahen* [NOUN-NUM-CLF]
admi-dui-ta ah-en

man-two-CLF come-PROG
'Two people are coming.'

3.2.2. Non-numerical quantification and the mass-count distinction in Sadri

Sadri has a set of imprecise quantifiers and they are inherently indefinite. In the opposite direction, it has a set of inherently definite imprecise quantifiers.

3.2.2.1. Inherently indefinite imprecise quantifiers

Following are some inherently indefinite imprecise quantifiers in Sadri.

- a. *bagra/bohut/d^her* 'more'
- b. *t^horata* 'little'
- c. *keita rokom* 'few/some'

When a noun is quantified by such a quantifier we arrive at an indefinite NP as in the following:

d^her

19. *p^hul bari mɛ d^her p^hul p^huil ahe*
p^hul bari-mɛ d^her p^hul p^huil ah-e
flower garden-LOC many flower bloom-PROG be-3RD
'Many flowers are blooming in the garden.'
20. *d^her gari*
d^her gari
a lot of car
'a lot of cars'
21. *d^her bilai*
d^her bilai
a lot of cat
'a lot of cats'
22. *d^her gak^hir*
d^her gak^hir
a lot of milk
'a lot of milk'
23. *d^her pani*
d^her pani
a lot of water
'a lot of water.'

bagra

24. *dukan mɛ bagra admi ahe*
dukan-me bagra admi ah-e
market-LOC many man be-3RD
'There are many people in the market.'
25. *bagra pani*
barga pani
much water
'much water'

t^horata

26. *t^horata gak^hir*
t^horata gak^hir
little milk
'a little milk'

27. *t^horata komla teja*
t^horata komla teja
a few orange
'a few oranges'

keita rokom

28. *keita rokom komla teja*
keita-rokom komla teja
few orange
'a few oranges'
29. **keita rokom pani/gak^hir*

It is clear from the examples above that inherently indefinite imprecise quantifiers in Sadri go with both object nouns and mass nouns (only exception is *keita rokom*, which quantifies only object nouns, not mass nouns, e.g. *pani* 'water'; *gak^hir* 'milk').

3.2.2.2. Inherently definite imprecise quantifiers

As noted, Sadri has a few inherently definite imprecise quantifiers. They are mostly *-man* and *-gila*. When a noun is quantified by such a quantifier we arrive at a definite noun phrase as in the following:

30. *kukurman bahire b^huka t^he*
kukur-man bahire b^huka-t^he
dog-DEF PL outside bark- PROG-3RD
'The dogs are barking outside.'
31. *bilai gila masri k^ha t^he*
bilai-gila masri k^ha-t^he
cat- DEF PL fish eat-PROG-3RD
'The cats are eating fish.'

Note that these quantifiers go with both object nouns and mass nouns. Furthermore, these quantifiers are not to be confused with the plural marker in a language like English, because they never go with numerals: they are imprecise and inherently definite unlike the English /s/. This is clear from the examples below, where such a quantifier, i.e. *-man* is used in the presence of a numeral, i.e. *dui* 'two'.

33. **duita aluman*
34. **duita saikelman*

It is clear from the discussion above imprecise quantifiers are fuzzy in Sadri and in so being they do not distinguish the mass and the count noun. In other words, Sadri does not maintain a mass-count distinction in the case of imprecise quantification.

4. Conclusion:

In the present work, we have shown how the mass-count distinction is a reflection of the real-life substance-object distinction. However, the encoding of the distinction in language may be grammatical or semantic. In a language like English the encoding is grammatical while in classifier languages it is semantic.

We investigated how the mass-count distinction is encoded in Sadri. The study reveals that Sadri is a classifier language like Assamese, and the mass-count distinction in the language, like in Assamese, is encoded semantically and at the level of numeral quantification. Thus, nouns in Sadri are NPs by default and as NPs they are neutral to number or a mass-count distinction. But when they are subjected to numerical quantification, the distinction surfaces: object nouns (i.e. noun referring to countable objects) go with classifiers, which indicate shape of countable things; mass nouns go with measure terms, which imply that referents of such nouns are uncountable. Thus, classifiers and measure terms encode the mass-count distinction at the level of numerical quantification in Sadri.

We have also shown that Sadri has a set of inherently indefinite imprecise quantifiers; and a set of inherently definite imprecise quantifiers. When a noun is quantified by such a quantifier, we arrive at either a non-numerical indefinite NP or a non-numerical definite NP. These quantifiers are fuzzy, i.e. they quantify both object nouns and mass nouns. This, in turn, implies that Sadri does not encode a mass-count distinction in non-numerical quantification.

We have also observed that nouns can be subjected to re-categorization. In Cognitive Linguistics, this implies that the mass-count distinction is motivated, not arbitrary or purely grammatical.

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Appendix

Name	Age	Occupation
Jidan Topno	35	Farmer
Anil Harensen	40	Farmer
Bejat Tiru	36	Service
Nirmala Barla	30	Housewife
Sangita Tiru	25	Housewife
Rita Barla	28	Housewife
Peroma Barla	27	Housewife
Katirna Barla	30	Teacher
Hena Vadra	28	Housewife
Rina Barla	32	Teacher
Parima Vadra	28	Housewife