

**Article**

## Nayi Noun Morphology\*

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to describe and document the noun morphology of the Nayi language. The word Nayi is a generic term the name of the language, the people and the place. The Nayi language is one of the least studied and most endangered languages among southwest Ethiopian languages. These data were collected from the native speakers of the language in Decha district of Kafa zone. In order to maintain the data for long and recheck their quality, I have used digital voice and video recorders. Then, the data were transported into ELAN software and morphemic segmentation was made. Having done this, I have explained the inflectional and derivational morphology of Nayi. The language has seven personal pronouns and uses the suffix *-kimba* for possession. The clitic *imotif* and *-ka* are morphemes that serve as reflexive and reciprocal intensifiers, respectively. Common nouns are changed into abstract and agent nouns when they take morphemes *-akur* and *-ka(ba)*, respectively. Plurality in Nayi is marked by adding a morpheme *-uskis* as a suffix on countable nouns and the grammatical feminine gender is marked by *-in*. Nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, locative, instrumental, ablative and commutative cases are discussed. There are new findings which add knowledge in the field of linguistics.

### **1 The People and the language**

This paper discusses the noun morphology of Nayi, which is one of the endangered and least studied languages of South-West Ethiopia. Most Nayi speakers live in the area comprising Udadish, Goba, Angela-Menesh and Gushi villages of the Decha district of

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\* The abbreviations in this article: ABL = Ablative, ACC = Accusative, CON = Converb, COP = Copula, DAT = Dative, DEF = Definite, DIM = Diminutive, F = Feminine, IMPF = Imperfective, INST = Instrumental, INTRO = Interrogative, JUS = Jussive, LOC = Locative, M = Masculine, NSEL Non-selective, NP = Noun Phrase, NPST = Non-past tense, PF = Perfective, PL = Plural, POSS = Possessive, PST = Past tense, REC = Reciprocal, SGM = Singular masculine

the Kafa-Zone in the South West region of Ethiopia. Some members of the ethnic group live in the district's main town Chiri (currently, renamed as Awrada). In addition, we also find few members of the ethnic group dwelling in Bonga town, the Shoa-Bench and Sheko 'Weredas' (cf. Aklilu 1997).

Neighboring ethnic groups call the Nayi people by various names. According to Aklilu (1991), the Sheko, the Me'enit, the Chara, and the Kafa linguistic groups refer to them respectively as 'Tolcho', 'Laandi', 'Tol', and 'Nao'. We also find various names used in various sources such as: 'Nao', 'Na?o', 'Naa' and 'Nayi' referring to the people and their language. However, the self-name and the preferred name of the linguistic community is the Nayi people and their language is the Nayi language.

In the 2007 census, the number of Na?o people is 7,188. However, according to Zelealem (2004: 37), the number of people is 4,004. Of these 3,168 (i.e. 79%) speak the language as their mother tongue. Of the total number, only 1,137 (i.e. 28.4%) are monolingual in the Nayi language, while the majority 2,868 (i.e. 71.6%), are bilingual in other languages such as Amharic or Kafi Noono 'the language of Kafa'. Furthermore, it has been recently mentioned that the number of Nayi people is severely deteriorating to below a hundred<sup>1</sup>. If the information is true, the need for documentation of the language and culture of the ethnic group should be a question of rescuing life on the verge of death.

In response to this problem, this researcher has been working to document the language, supported by Yamaguchi University, Japan. Though the major objective of this task is to describe and document the grammatical features of the Nayi language, this manuscript discusses the noun morphology of the language. The term 'morphology' refers to the study of the internal structure of words, and of the systematic form–meaning correspondences between words (Booji 2007: 7). It is the study of shapes of words. Morphology deals with the smallest meaningful unit called morpheme. A **morpheme** is a minimal form. The classical definition of a morpheme is a minimal formal shape or piece that expresses meaning (Payne 1997: 20).

Traditional grammarians study languages classifying into various types of word classes by morphology. "Every language has at least two major word classes – nouns and verbs" (Payne 2006: 93). Word classes that come after nouns and verbs are adjectives and adverbs. Most (if not all) languages have these four major word classes – noun, verb, adjective and adverb. There are also many languages of the world which have ad-positions, particles and conjunctions. Nayi has all these grammatical

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<sup>1</sup> Personal communication with Dr. Bayileyeegn Tasew, who is currently working on the ethnography of a neighboring marginalized group, called *menja*.

units at different levels of existence and function. We begin our discussion with pronouns, which are part of noun morphology.

The analysis of the collected data for the morphological properties will be based on the Basic Linguistic Theory (BLT hereafter) (Dixon 2010; Dryer 2000, 2006). BLT is a cumulative framework that has been developed out of traditional grammar and typology (Dryer 2006). It is one of the frameworks currently used by many linguists who want to describe the grammar of a language in its own terms without the influence from the grammar of other languages. Dryer (2006) points out that BLT is a descriptive theory concerned with ‘what languages are like’ and the primary goal of this theory is description without any intended theoretical significance like ‘why languages are the way they are?’ He further claims that its goal is “to describe a set of facts, without any particular theoretical implications.”

## 2 Phonemic Inventory

### 2.1 Consonant Phonemes

Regarding the number of phonemes, Aklilu (1997) and Ephrem (2007) proposed 29 and 28 consonant phonemes, respectively. However, both of them agree on the number of vowels except Aklilu suggests the status of /ə/ should be further investigated. Most of (if not all) words are vowel terminal or open ended syllables in Nayi language. Therefore, the final phoneme is usually a vowel. The following table shows the phoneme inventory of Nayi.

Table 1: Nayi Consonant Phonemes

		Bilabial	Alveolar	Alveopalatal	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	Vl	p	t			k	ʔ
	Vd	b	d			g	
	Ej	p̥	t̥			k̥	
Fricative	Vl		s	ʃ			h
	Vd		z	ʒ			
	Ej		s̥				
Affricate	Vl				tʃ		
	Vd				dʒ		
	Ej				tʃ̥		
Nasal		m	n		ɲ	ŋ	
Lateral			l				
Trill		B	r				
Glide		w			j		

## 2.2 Vowel phonemes

Nayi language has a total of seven vowel phonemes out of which three are high, three are middle and one is low; and when they are described from the horizontal position of the tongue, two are front, three are central and two are back vowels. According to Aklilu (1997) and Ephrem (2007) the numbers of vowel phonemes are five with their long counterparts. However, in this paper the two central vowels /i/ and /ə/ are found to occur as often as other vowels. I had come to fieldwork having a biased stand on the presence of these mid vowels as they are not a feature of Cushitic and Omotic languages. For that case, I repeatedly checked and certainly approved their presence in Nayi. The following table shows the vowels of Nayi.

Table 2: Nayi vowel phonemes

	Front	Central	Back
High	i/ii	i	u/uu
Mid	e/ee	ə	o/oo
Low		a/aa	

## 3 Noun Morphology

### 3.1 Pronouns

Pronouns are free forms (as opposed to affixes) that function alone to fill the position of a noun phrase in a clause. They normally have all the distributional properties of noun phrases (Payne 1997: 43).

#### 3.1.1 Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns in Nayi distinguish between masculine and feminine gender only in singular third person. In first person and second person singulars and in all plural persons Nayi does not distinguish gender. Therefore, Nayi has only seven personal pronouns. The unmarked personal pronouns are listed in the table below.

Table 3: Personal Pronouns

Person	Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
1	na	‘I’	nakis	‘we’
2	jet	‘you’	ʔikis	‘you’
3 M	ʔiss	‘he’	ʔuʃkuss	‘they’
F	ʔiʃʃ	‘she’		

Personal pronouns substitute nouns in subject and object position as indicated below.

### 3.1.2 Possessive pronouns

Nayi language shows possession by the suffix *-kimba* ‘of’. The following table illustrates how the suffix *-kimba* marks possession attached on all personal pronouns.

Table 4: Possessive pronouns

Pronoun	Gloss	-kimba ‘of’	Gloss
na	‘I’	nakimba	‘my’
jet	‘you’	jetimba	‘your’
ʔiss	‘he’	ʔiskimba	‘his’
ʔiff	‘she’	ʔifkimba	‘her’
nakis	‘we’	nakiskimba	‘our’
ʔikis	‘you’	ʔikiskimba	‘yours’
ʔuʔkuss	‘they’	ʔuʔkuskimba	‘their’

A possessive pronoun in Nayi is indicated by the suffix *-kimba*, changed into *-timba* for second person singular. However, sometimes possession can be expressed without clear morphological marking. The following example does not employ any morpheme to show possessor – possessed relationship.

1. takkal ʔij  
 takkal ʔij  
 Takkele house  
 ‘Takele’s house’

As the data in (1) shows, there is no linguistic unit which is visibly added to play possessive role but the language community understands the expression has possessor – possessed relationship. The same is true in pronouns instead of proper nouns as seen below.

2. a. nij  
 na ʔij  
 I house  
 ‘my house’
- b. ʔikisiji  
 ʔikis ʔij  
 you (PL) house  
 ‘your house’

The data in (2a) shows that the combination of the pronoun *na* and the common noun *ʔij* gives the possessive phrase *nij* meaning ‘my house’. During combination of two words, the final vowel of the pronoun and the initial glottal phoneme of the common noun are deleted. Similarly the initial glottal phoneme of the head word *ʔ* is deleted. The following table summarizes how possession is expressed using the head word *ʔij* ‘house’ with all pronouns.

Table 5: Possession in Pronouns

<b>Pronoun</b>	<b>SG + ʔij</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>PL + ʔij</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<b>1</b>	<i>na + ʔij ~ nij</i>	‘my house’	<i>nakis + ʔij ~ hinniji</i>	‘our house’
<b>2</b>	<i>jet + ʔij ~ jeji</i>	‘your house’	<i>ʔikis + ʔij ~ ʔikisiji</i>	‘your house’
<b>3 M</b>	<i>ʔit + ʔij ~ ʔisiji</i>	‘his house’	<i>ʔuʃkuss + ʔij ~ ʔuʃkusiji</i>	‘their house’
<b>F</b>	<i>ʔit + ʔij ~ ʔifiji</i>	‘her house’		

Plenty of morpho-phonological processes occur in the above data. For example, in Table 5 the final vowel of first person singular is deleted due to the influence of the medial vowel of the noun *ʔij*. As the initial glottal of the noun is not influential, the front high vowel [i] changes the final vowel of 1SG and finally deletes it. Similarly, the final alveolar [t] and the glottal consonant in the noun [ʔ] are deleted when the pronoun and the noun are juxtaposed. In 3SGM, the interaction between the final consonant [t] and the initial glottal [ʔ] yields another consonant [s] which is dissimilar neither of the two. The same morpho-phonemic change is seen with 3SGF but the result is [ʃ].

Similarly there are many morho-phonemic changes in the plural pronouns as seen in Table 5. In 1PL the formation of the stem and the possessive suffix yields the deletion of the medial consonant [k] and the final consonant [s]. Furthermore, the germination of [nn], the realization of [h] as initial consonant and [i] as terminal vowel are vivid changes we observe after the interaction of the stem and the suffix. In 2PL there is no basic difference between the structure of the individual morphemes and realized forms except the change of high mid vowel [ɨ] into high front vowel [i].

In short, Nayi language does not have a genitive marker except in possessive pronouns. The head word in a noun phrase is known only by the position where it appears. Look at the following examples in (4) below.

Table 6: Possession

	Possessor	Gloss	Possessed	Gloss	NP	Gloss
a.	tijampa	‘wheat’	ƒala	‘bread’	tijampa ƒala	‘wheat bread’
b.	tijampa	‘wheat’	puntu	‘straw’	tijampa puntu	‘wheat straw’
c.	gans	‘ox’	ʔuƒa	‘horn’	gans ʔuƒa	‘ox horn’
d.	zunku	‘sheep’	sitsu	‘wool’	zunku sitsu	‘sheep’s wool’
e.	kasa	‘Kasa’	dodu	‘son’	kasa dodu	‘Kasa’s son’
f.	naji	‘Nayi’	jabarku	‘people’	naji jabarku	‘Nayi people’

Genitive case is used for various semantic roles; such as showing the origin or the belongingness or the owner or the place of the entity expressed by the head word. For instance, the noun phrase (NP) in Table 4a shows what the bread is made of. *tijampa* ‘wheat’ is the source of the entity expressed by ƒala ‘bread’. However, in Nayi there is no physically revealed morpheme that indicates the function of each constituent in the phrase. We understand that the head word comes at the end; i.e., the function of words in a phrase is depicted via the structure of the components. All other noun phrases are similar in their structure.

### 3.1.3 Reflexive intensifiers

The most common reflexive pronoun in Nayi is the clitic *emotif* ‘one’s self’. The following table shows the reflexive intensifiers.

Table 7: Reflexive intensifiers

Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
na himotif	‘I myself’	nakis himotif	‘we ourselves’
jet jemotif	‘you yourself’ (SIG)	ʔikis ʔikiss motif	‘you yourself (PL)’
ʔis emotif	‘he himself’	ʔuƒkus ʔekismotif	‘they themselves’
ʔif emotif	‘she herself’		

There is a nasalized hissing sound like *hĩ* at the beginning of first person singular and plural pronouns. The initial vowel of the reflexive clitic is changed either to [i] in first persons or deleted second persons due to phonological arrangements. Though the generic 3MSG and 3FSG were *ʔiss* and *ʔiff*, respectively (see Table 3), they appear as non-geminated in reflexive intensifiers.

### 3.1.4 Reciprocal intensifiers

Reciprocal intensifiers imply an action is committed between two parties against each other or one over the other. The Nayi language uses the suffix *-ka* to show reciprocity as indicated below.

3. a.  $\text{ʔekiska ʔekiska}$   
 $\text{ʔekis-ka ʔekis-ka}$   
 you (PL)-REC you (PL)-REC  
 ‘you each other’
- b.  $\text{jetka jetka batʃəkʌn}$   
 $\text{jet-ka jet-ka batʃa-kʌn}$   
 you-REC you-REC quarrel-2PL  
 ‘don’t quarrel each other’
- c.  $\text{ʔeka ʔeka batʃa}$   
 $\text{ʔe-ka ʔe-ka batʃa}$   
 3PL-REC 3PL -REC quarrel-PST  
 ‘They quarreled each other’

There are some morpho-phonological processes affecting the combination or organization of speech sounds in an utterance form.

### 3.1.5 Indefinite pronouns

The following words and phrases are used to express someone or something which is not definite in the discourse.

Table 8: Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite Pro	Gloss
jab	‘someone/somebody’
jirij jab istənt	‘someone/somebody’
ʔakimba istənt	‘whoever’

4. jabega  
 jab      juga  
 man     come.PST  
 ‘A man came’

As we can see from the data, *jab* can be used as just a ‘man’ in its literal meaning and could be used also to refer to indefinite human beings. I think, this might be common in various languages including my mother tongue ‘Amharic’.

### 3.1.6 Selective pronouns

Table 9: Selective pronouns

Selective Pro	Gloss
ʔissimba	‘one of us’
jissimba	‘one of you’
ʔissimbos	‘one of them’

These selective pronouns use different forms of the head verb in a full sentence as seen in the following examples.

5.      **Selective Pro**    **Gloss**
- a. ʔissimba            tenis  
 one of us            go  
 ‘let one of us go’
- b. jissimba            tawəzga  
 ‘let one of you go’
- c. ʔissimbos            təgozga  
 ‘let one of them go’

### 3.1.7 Non-selective pronouns

If someone wants to include all members of the group in his discourse, the Nayi language uses *koja* ‘all’ as in the following examples.

6. **Non-selective Pro**

- a. *koja hĩntəga*  
NSEL go.JUS  
‘let all of us go’
  
- b. *koja teniʔit*  
NSEL go.2PL.JUS  
‘let all of you go’
  
- c. *koja tenuf*  
NSEL go.3PL.JUS  
‘let all of them go’

3.1.8 **Interrogative pronouns**

Nayi language has the following interrogative pronouns which are used as subject or object of sentences replacing personal pronouns.

Table 10: Interrogative pronouns

INTRO	Gloss	INTRO	Gloss
ʔitije	‘who’	asta	‘when’
jira	‘what’	jiriʃ	‘why’
wasaba	‘which one’	asas	‘how’
wasa	‘where’	ambits	‘how much/many’

3.2 **Determiners**

3.2.1 **Demonstratives**

Nayi has two demonstrative pronouns; one for near and one for far distance. These singular demonstratives can be pluralized with the suffix *-kis*. Look at the following data.

Table 11: Demonstratives

SG	Gloss	PL	Gloss
has	‘this’	haskis	‘these’
nes	‘that’	neskis	‘those’

However, Nayi plural demonstratives cannot take a definite marker.

### 3.2.2 Numerals

Nayi uses two kinds of numerals: cardinal and ordinal numbers.

Table 12: Cardinal numerals

Cardinal	Gloss	Cardinal	Gloss
jissij	‘one’	fatamka jissij	‘twenty one’
faqij	‘two’	kattam	‘thirty’
kaddu	‘three’	kubbub tam	‘forty’
kubbub	‘four’	ʔuftam	‘fifty’
ʔutffu	‘five’	jakutam	‘sixty’
jakku	‘six’	tustntam	‘seventy’
tussuŋ	‘seven’	zettam	‘eighty’
zejjetə	‘eight’	sagijtam	‘ninety’
sagij	‘nine’	balla	‘hundred’
tammu	‘ten’	fa balla	‘two hundred’
tamka jissij	‘eleven’	ʔutffu balla	‘five hundred’
fatam	‘twenty’	ʔuma	‘thousand’

As we see from the data, the form *-tam* is the stem of the cardinal numbers from ten to ninety. However, it takes an initial position for the cardinal number ‘ten’ but the final position for numbers from twenty to ninety. Though there are some morpho-phonological changes, numbers from twenty to ninety are counted by ‘tens’ i.e. ‘two tens’ for twenty, ‘three tens’ for thirty’, ‘four tens’ for forty and so forth.

Similarly, Nayi uses ordinal numbers for comparison such as rank. The following table shows how Nayi uses cardinal numbers for ordinal purposes.

Table 13: Ordinal numbers

jissinna	‘first’	tamminna	‘tenth’
fajjinna	‘second’	tamka ʔutffunna	‘fifteenth’
kaddunna	‘third’	fataminna	‘twentieth’
kubbubinna	‘fourth’	ballahinna	‘hundredth’

As the data reveals above in Table 11, the morphological marker for ordinal numbers is [-na].

### 3.2.3 Non-numeral quantifiers

Nayi speakers can use the following unlimited quantifiers if the amount or number of the entity is not convenient to count.

harku	‘many/much/plenty/several’
jilku	‘few’
tʃatiŋ	‘small’

These are the only indefinite quantifiers I found in Nayi. Therefore, Nayi has two opposite non-numeral quantifiers one for few and one for many. There are no quantifiers in between or at the middle position.

### 3.3 Nouns

A noun has often been defined as the name of a person, animal, place, concept or thing (Todd 1987). Nayi has various types of names which can be included to one of the following groups.

#### 3.3.1 Common nouns

As most of (if not all) the world languages, Nayi has common nouns as the following.

Table 14: Examples of Common nouns

atʃu	‘tooth’	ʔaʃku	‘meat’
afu	‘leg’	naaku	‘animal’
dodu	‘boy’	gans	‘ox’
saj	‘baby’	zeg	‘calf’
galma	‘slave’	intʃu	‘tree’
afala	‘clothes’	saku	‘sky’

Kinship nouns are commonly grouped with common nouns though some scholars treat them separately as the following.

aku	‘grandfather’	baaji	‘mother’	babʃiŋ	‘uncle (father’s brother)’
ʔegi	‘grandmother’	toos	‘brother’	ʔuku	‘uncle (mother’s brother)’
babu	‘father’	tojsiŋ	‘sister’	bəʃiŋ	‘aunt (mother’s sister)’

Many of the world languages use a single name for aunt, uncle, grandparent and grandchild whereas some others including Nayi use different names for these kinship members according to the sex of the referent.

### 3.3.2 Proper nouns

Proper nouns are names of individual persons or personal names, things and places and which are sometimes gender-distinctive. Common proper nouns for males and females in Nayi language are the following.

Table 15: Proper nouns

Male	Female
gunət	dīngul
koltajab	duʃka
tʃolab	zogu
ʃimerijab	natʃa
galbiʃ	
bitʃiʔitʃ	
gaʃta	
diɣmari	

Some of these proper names contain the syllable *jab* as part of the proper name. I speculate the remaining part may be adjectives that modify *jab* ‘person’ so that the full proper name may be like good person, kind person, beautiful man etc.

### 3.3.3 Derived nouns

Nouns can be formed using different strategies such as affixation, root-pattern modification and compounding.

#### 3.3.3.1 Abstract nouns

Nayi language allows the formation of abstract nouns from common nouns by adding a suffix *-akur*.

Table 16: Formation of abstract nouns

	<b>Common noun</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Abstract noun</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
a.	babu	‘father’	bab <sup>u</sup> akur	‘fatherhood’
b.	baaji	‘mother’	baajakur	‘motherhood’
c.	jab	‘man’	jabakur	‘manhood’
d.	dodu	‘child’	dod <sup>u</sup> akur	‘childhood’
e.	dalu	‘foolish’	dalakur	‘foolishness’
f.	zaʒu	‘kind’	zaʒakur	‘kindness’
g.	katʃbu	‘generous’	katʃbakur	‘generousness’
h.	ʃəngu	‘jealous’	ʃəng <sup>u</sup> akur	‘jealousness’

As one can see from the data above, abstract nouns can be formed using the suffix *-akur* either on common nouns or adjectives. The words a – d are common nouns whereas e – h are adjectives. Whenever they come with the suffix *-akur* abstract nouns are yielded.

### 3.3.3.2 Agent nouns

Agent nouns can be derived adding the suffix *-kaba* to common nouns. However, sometimes the initial syllable *-ka* is deleted leaving only *-ba*.

Table 17: Formation of agent nouns

	<b>Common noun</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Agent noun</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
	para	‘horse’	parakaba	‘one who rides a horse’
	ʔaʃu	‘foot’	ʔaʃukaba	‘one who walks on foot’
	nog	‘talk’	nokkaba	‘talkative person’
	kud	‘path’	kudba	‘passenger’
	wəʒʒi	‘lie’	wəʒʒimba	‘liar’
	ʔajn	‘sorrow’	ʔajnaba	‘one who sorrows’
	warfa	‘desert’	warfatba	‘one who lives in a desert’

As the data show, the archaic agent noun marker is the suffix *-kaba* but it loses the initial syllable in some contexts. Furthermore, the phonemes *m* and *t* come preceding the agent marker *-ba* in *wəʒʒimba* ‘liar’ and *warfatba* ‘one who lives in a desert’, respectively, for so-far unclear reasons.

Nayi language does not use any affixation to name languages.

Table 18: Examples of language names

Language names	Gloss
amara	‘Amharic’
ingiliza	‘English language’
oroma	‘Oromo language’
kafi	‘Kafa language’
naji	‘Nayi language’

### 3.3.4 Compound nouns

The final form of noun derivation is compounding. Compounding is the combination of two words that yields another new meaning which is different from the meaning of the individual words.

Table 19: Examples of compound nouns

ʔeffi ʔeffi	‘firstly’
bara ʔij	‘church’
k <sup>u</sup> alla ʔij	‘first house’
nijolu ʔij	‘a house made of clay’
ũmmij	‘restaurant’
k <sup>a</sup> aluj	‘bar’

### 3.3.5 Noun Inflection

The nouns of Nayi are inflected for definiteness, number and gender.

#### 3.3.5.1 Definiteness

The definiteness marker of Nayi is *-s*. Look at the following examples.

Table 20: Formation of definite nouns

	Common noun	Gloss	Definite	Gloss
a.	zingu	‘sheep’	zinkus	‘the sheep’
b.	ʔesku	‘goat’	ʔeskus	‘the goat’
c.	dodu	‘boy’	dodus	‘the boy’
d.	ʔij	‘house’	ʔijs	‘the house’
e.	abz	‘grass’	abzus	‘the grass’

As the data in Table 20 show, all common nouns take the suffix *-s* except the word in (e) which attached the suffix *-us*. The voiced velar stop /g/ in *zingu* is changed into /k/ due to regressive assimilation. i.e., the definite marker, which is a voiceless alveolar fricative, shares its feature to the preceding consonant phoneme so that /g/ is changed into its voiceless counterpart. How the definite marker functions is illustrated via the following examples:

7. a. *dodu jega*  
 dodu            jega  
 boy            come.PST  
 ‘A boy came’
- b. *dodus jega*  
 dodu-s        jega  
 boy-DEF     come.PST  
 ‘The boy came’
- c. *takkal zingu fokṇa*  
 takkal        zingu                    fokṇa  
 Takkele     sheep                   slaughter.PST  
 ‘Takkele slaughtered a sheep’
- d. *takkal zinkusa fokṇa*  
 takkal        zingu-s-a                fokṇa  
 Takkele     sheep-DEF-ACC        slaughter.PST  
 ‘Takkele slaughtered the sheep’

### 3.3.5.2 Number

The simplest understanding we have in relation to number is “just an opposition of singular versus plural” (Corbett 2004: 1). Number for many languages (but not all) is a nominal category. Nayi nouns have singular and plural forms. The singular noun is not marked whereas the plural one is marked by a suffix *-uskis*. The following table shows the singular versus plural forms of Nayi nouns.

Table 21: Formation of plural nouns

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
a.	gans	‘ox’	gansuskis	‘oxen’
b.	jab	‘man’	jabuskis	‘men’
c.	dodu	‘boy’	doduskis	‘boys’
d.	ʔesku	‘goat’	ʔeskuskis	‘goats’
e.	afala	‘cloth’	afalaskis	‘clothes’
f.	ʔijats	‘big’	ʔiatuskis	‘big things’
g.	jilku	‘small’	jilkuskis	‘small things’
h.	ʃaɖɖiŋ	‘tall’	ʃaɖɖiŋskis	‘tall things’

The words listed from a – e are nouns but from f – h are adjectives. The initial phoneme of the plural number marker *-uskis* in the noun *afala* is either deleted or changed into *a*. The same plural marker is applied to adjectives too. Adjectives can be pluralized using the suffix *-uskus*. However, there are some phonological changes during the arrangement of words. Hence, the final consonant phoneme of the adjective in f and the initial vowel phoneme of the suffix in h are deleted.

### 3.3.5.3 Gender

The gender marker in Nayi is very difficult to distinctively transcribe for people who are not familiar with the language.

Table 22: Gender marker

	<b>General</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Feminine</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
a.	ʔoot	‘cow’	ʔootiŋ	‘the she cow’
b.	ʔesku	‘goat’	ʔeskiŋ	‘the she goat’
c.	zung	‘sheep’	zuŋŋ	‘the she sheep’
d.	ʔij	‘house’	ʔijiŋ	‘the she house’
e.	dodu	‘boy’	degiŋ	‘girl’

As the data shows, the feminine marker of Nayi language is *-iŋ* though the suffix is sometimes changed into various forms due to morpho-phonological process. As one can see in Table 22:c the final consecutive phonemes are mixed and changed into geminated *ŋŋ*.

### 3.3.6 Case

In general, case is a grammatical function, which characterizes the syntactic relationships of nouns in a sentence. According to Blake (2001: 1), “case is a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads.” Traditionally, cases such as nominative, accusative, genitive are termed as ‘syntactic’ or ‘grammatical’ while cases like dative, instrumental, ablative, locative, comitative are taken as ‘semantic’ or ‘concrete’ cases (Blake 2004: 31-32). Here, we are going to discuss the major cases of Nayi.

#### 3.3.6.1 Nominative case

Nominative case is not morphological in Nayi, i.e., there is no morphological unit that marks nominative case. Subject in Nayi is identified through the position of nouns in a sentence.

8. a. j<sup>u</sup>annis abbabma daʔaʔə  
j<sup>u</sup>annis        abbab-ma        daʔaʔə  
Yohannes     Abebe-ACC        kick.PST  
‘Yohannes kicked Abebe’
- b. abbabma j<sup>u</sup>annis daʔaʔə  
abbab-ma        j<sup>u</sup>annis        daʔaʔə  
Abebe-ACC     Yohannes        kick.PST  
‘Yohannes kicked Abebe’

Therefore, Nayi does not use a nominative marker so that subject is known either by position or by its accusative counterpart. For instance, in 8a, the subject is known by the position of Yohannes and by the accusative marker on the object Abebe. Similarly, in the sentence 8b, the subject is indicated merely by the accusative marker on Abebe.

#### 3.3.6.2 Accusative case

Accusative case marks nouns in object position. In traditional grammar it is known as direct object – the receiver of the action. In Nayi, accusative marker varies according to the final phoneme of the noun in an object position. If the final phoneme of the noun in an object position is bilabial, the suffix *-ma* is attached as accusative marker. We can

see in (8a) above. Abebe – abbab in Nayi<sup>2</sup> – is the direct object where *-ma* is suffixed. If the final phoneme of the direct object is not bilabial, the accusative marker will be different from *-ma*. Let us see the following examples.

9. a. abbab j<sup>u</sup>annisa daʔaʔə  
 abbab j<sup>u</sup>annis-a daʔaʔə  
 Abebe Yohannes-ACC kick.PST  
 ‘Abebe kicked Yohannes’

- b. naʃas kotʃina mutʔaʔə  
 naʃa-s kotʃi-na mutʔaʔə  
 husband-DEF wife-ACC kick.PST  
 ‘The husband kicked his wife’

As we can see from the data, accusative case is marked by *-a* and *-na* in (9a) and (9b), respectively.

10. a. kasa almaza ʔutʔaʔə  
 kasa almaz-a ʔutʔaʔə  
 Kasa Almaz-ACC love.PST  
 ‘Kasa loved Almaz’

- b. almaz kasana ʔutʔaʔə  
 almaz kasa-na ʔutʔaʔə  
 Almaz Kasa-ACC love.PST  
 ‘Almaz loved Kasa’

In (10a) *-a* is the accusative marker whereas in (10b) a different morpheme *-na* appears to play the same role. There is no clear morpho-phonological rule that distinguishes one from the other. In these two sentences, the direct objects are proper nouns. One difference lies on the final phoneme they have in the direct object position; i.e., ‘almaz’ ends with a consonant and ‘kasa’ with a vowel, but this cannot be the reason for the different accusative markers. The following sentences assure my argument.

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<sup>2</sup> Personal names in Amharic like Abebe, Takele, Demeke, Abere are commonly modified as Abbab, Takkal, Demmak, and Abbar, respectively. I put the names of the persons in phonetic transcription as I heard from the informant.

11. a. niggus asterna daʔaʔə  
 niggus aster-na daʔaʔə  
 Niggus Aster-ACC kick.PST  
 ‘Niggus kicked Aster’

b. aster niggusa daʔaʔə  
 aster niggus-a daʔaʔə  
 Aster Niggus-ACC kick.PST  
 ‘Aster kicked Niggus’

As one can vividly see from the data, ‘Aster’ and ‘Niggus’ both end with alveolar consonants but use different morphemes to indicate accusative case. In (11a) the direct object is marked by *-na* but in (11b) by *-a*. Therefore, though the nouns in the direct object position are similar almost in all forms, the accusative markers differ from one to another. The only difference between these direct objects is the gender of the proper nouns which are ‘Aster’ and ‘Niggus’ feminine and masculine, respectively.

Let us add the following sentences if they give us some clue regarding the rule of accusative marker.

12. a. efrem andualemma wəssaʔə  
 efrem and<sup>u</sup>alem-ma wəssaʔə  
 Ephrem Andualem-ACC send.PST  
 ‘Ephrem sent Andualem’

b. takkal tadʒʒətna wəssaʔə  
 takkal tadʒʒət-na wəssaʔə  
 Takkele Tajjeto-ACC send.PST  
 ‘Takkele sent Tajjeto’

c. degiŋ hafalana tʃupamaʔə  
 degiŋ hafala-na tʃupamaʔə  
 girl.DEF clothes-ACC wash.PST  
 ‘The girl washed the clothes’

As one can observe in the above expressions, except the bilabial ending objects where [-ma] is the suffixed, the accusative marker seems constantly the suffix [-na].

### 3.3.6.3 Dative case

Dative case shows that a noun has an indirect object role. In traditional grammar, it marks a noun that receives an object from a giver. Dative case is marked by the morpheme [-iʃ]

13. a. *degiŋ egzaʃ k<sup>w</sup>aja ʔatsa*  
 degiŋ      egza-iʃ      k<sup>w</sup>aja      ʔatsa  
 girl.DEF    cat.DEF-DAT    milk      give.PST  
 ‘The girl gave the cat milk’
- b. *takkal tadʒʒatt-iʃ haj atsaʔə*  
 takkal      tadʒʒatt-iʃ      haj      atsaʔə  
 Takkele    Tajjeto-DAT    water    give.PST  
 ‘Takkele gave Tajjeto water’
- c. *kaasa ekotʃ-iʃ k’amisa pura*  
 kaasa      ekotʃ-iʃ      k’amisa    pura  
 Kasa      wife.DEF-DAT    dress      buy.PST  
 ‘Kasa bought his wife a dress’

As the data show, the dative marker is apparently the suffix *-iʃ*. This morpheme is attached to the indirect object or receiver of the action in Nayi. However, the initial vowel *i* is deleted when it is attached to a stem that ends with the low vowel [a] as shown in (13a). The final vowel [a] in the word *egza* ‘cat’ affects the initial vowel of the suffix [-iʃ].

### 3.3.6.4 Genitive case

Genitive case is a grammatical relation expressed by a possession and possessed relationship. It signifies the origin or the place of the noun expressed by the head. In Nayi language genitive case is not marked by morphological operations rather by position.

14. a. *detʃʃa dodu*  
 detʃʃa      dodu  
 Decha      child  
 (Lit.The child of Decha) ‘the child whose origin is Decha’

<sup>3</sup> /k<sup>w</sup>/ is heard in this word but its phonemic status is not determined for the time being.

- b. *gefa ʔees*  
*gesha ʔees*  
 Gesha honey  
 (Lit. the honey of Gesha) ‘the honey that is produced in Gesha’
- c. *naji jabarku*  
*naji jabarku*  
 Nayi people  
 ‘Nayi people’

In 14a, the relationship is between the place *detffa* ‘Decha’ and the noun *dodu* ‘child’. Though there is no visible morphological marker that shows their grammatical relation, which is head and which is modifier is clear from the position of the nouns. Thus, it expresses that the noun *detffa* is the place where the *dodu* was born or currently lives. The relationship between *gefa* ‘Gesha’ and *ʔees* ‘honey’ in 14b is also clear from the position of the nouns. Hence, the interlocutor will understand that *gefa* is the place where the *ʔees* ‘honey’ is produced. Similarly, in 14c the speaker is talking about the *jabark’u* ‘people’ of Nayi.

### 3.3.6.5 Locative case

Locative expresses the place where something expressed by the noun is found or exists. The following examples illustrate how a location of something is expressed.

15. a. *gobsu keʃakiŋ betiŋka tena*  
*gobsu keʃa-kiŋ betiŋka tena*  
 barley.DEF sack-LOC in/exist.NPST COP.NPST  
 ‘The barley is in the sack’
- b. *jaʔŋa bambukum betiŋka tena*  
*jaʔŋa bamboo-kum betiŋka tena*  
 fox.DEF hole-LOC in/exist. NPST COP.NPST  
 ‘The fox is in the hole’
- c. *intojsi ʔansasa gongulkum baʃak’a kalmusaʔə*  
*intojsi ʔansasa gongul-kum baʃak’a kalmusaʔə*  
 sister.POSS gold.DEF.ACC box-LOC in put.PST  
 ‘My sister put the gold in the box’

Nayi uses the suffixes *-kiŋ* and *-kum* to indicate the location of the entity expressed by the noun. The morpho-phonological factor, however, that determines which suffix of the two shall be discussed in detail.

### 3.3.6.6 Instrumental case

Instrumental case is one of the peripheral case systems that could be discussed with adpositions. It shows the instrument by which an action is performed. The morphological unit that designates the role comes either as a prefix or suffix in most Ethiopian languages. Nayi uses a suffix to indicate that the noun is an instrument to execute the action expressed by the verb.

16. a. *nafas ekotʃina arengaka daʔə*  
       *nafa-s*                *e-kotʃi-na*                *arenga-ka*                *daʔə*  
       husband-DEF      POSS-wife-ACC      belt-INST                beat.PST  
       ‘The husband beat his wife with a belt’
- b. *mooj warduduna gewduka k’it’saʔə*  
       *mooj*                *wardudu-na*                *gewdu-ka*                *k’it’saʔə*  
       mother.DIM      calf-ACC                rope-INST                tie.PST  
       ‘My mother tied the calf with rope’
- c. *t’usuba tusudodusa s’araka daʔə*  
       *t’usuba*                *t’usudodu-sa*                *s’ara-ka*                *daʔə*  
       teacher                student-ACC                stick-INST                beat.PST  
       ‘The teacher beat the student with a stick’

As the data shows, the noun which is used as an instrument for the action to be done is indicated by the suffix *-ka*. Accordingly, *arenga* ‘belt’, *gewdu* ‘rope’ and *s’ara* ‘stick’ are instruments with which the actions in the clauses are accomplished so the suffix *-ka* is attached.

### 3.3.6.7 Ablative case

Ablative case is a grammatical relation that signifies the place from where an individual or entity comes. In short, it shows the source of the actor or subject, noun. The morpheme *-ta* is suffixed to the noun used as source of the movement.

17. a. na dzimmata k'ajtetena hinnagaba  
 na dzimma-ta k'ajte-tena hinnagaba  
 I Jimma-ABL start.CNV-COP.NPST come.REL.PST  
 'I came from Jimma'
- b. himmes'ujab gabata k'ajte jega  
 himmes'ujab gaba-ta k'ajte jega  
 neighbor.POSS.1SG market-ABL start.CNV come.REL.PST  
 'My neighbors came from market'

As the data show, the suffix *-ta* is attached to *dzimma* 'Jimma' in 17a and *gaba* 'market' in 17b to show the source of the subject referent.

### 3.3.6.8 Commutative case

Commutative case is a case that shows whom an entity goes with. The clitic *dante* 'together with' is used to show the commutative case in Nayi language.

18. a. moʔoj maabka dante dijank'a tagaʔə  
 moʔoj maab-ka dante dijank'a tagaʔə  
 mother.1SG.POSS father-1SG.POSS COM to\_work go.3SGF.PF  
 'my mother went to work with my father'
- b. gaʃta ebenk'a dante nogungi  
 gaʃta ebenk'a dante nogungi  
 Gashta friend.3SGM.POSS COM talk.3SG.M.IMPF  
 'Gashta talks with his friend'
- c. duʃka enaʃka dante batʃ'aʔa  
 duʃka enaʃka dante batʃ'aʔa  
 Dushka husband.3SGF.POSS COM quarrel.3SG.F.PF  
 Dushka quarreled with her husband

As one can see from the data above, commutative case is marked by the word-like clitic *dante* but supported by the morpheme *-ka* which is attached to the noun in the accompanier role. As discussed in 3.3.6.6, the morpheme *-ka* is attached to nouns to mark an instrumental function. However, it is also attached to proper nouns to mark commutative case. The accompanying person is used as an instrument for the noun in the subject position to do the action expressed in the verb.

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