

Full Length Article

Open Access

Code: 4335

## Number System in Bodi

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<b>Citation:</b> Fekede Menuta. (2023). Number system in bodi. <i>Ethiop.j.soc.lang.stud. Vol. 10 .No.1</i> , pp.149-161.
eISSN: 2408-9532; pISSN: 2412-5180. Web link: <a href="http://journals.ju.edu.et/index.php/ejssls">http://journals.ju.edu.et/index.php/ejssls</a>
<b>Publication history:</b> Received in revised form: 26 June 2023
<b>Subscription</b> (electronics): Submission fee: Free of payment ; Accessing fee: Free of payment
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## Abstract

Bodi is an East Sudanic branch of the Nilo-Saharan family spoken in Ethiopia. The study aimed to describe and analyze number marking in nouns, pronouns, and verbs in the marginalized and hitherto unstudied language of Bodi (self-name, Tukte Meenun). The study had six linguistic informants from the Hanna area of the Selamago district. The researcher used a general linguistic description approach for data analysis. The finding showed that the singular and plural in the nominative pronouns are expressed with {-ji} and {ed-}, respectively. In possessive pronouns, a plural marker {-g-} is added to possessive affixes as in {-gaji} ‘our’ and {-guzi} ‘your’(PL). In reflexive and demonstrative pronouns {-d-} and {-g-} are used as singular and plural markers, respectively. In nouns number is expressed in five ways, (1) singularizing a plural noun with {-f}, {-ji} or {-it}, (2) pluralizing a singular noun with {-(n)a}, (3) with vocalic changes, (4) with gemination, and (5) using different lexical items. In a verb agreement, {k-} and {g-} are used to express singular and plural, respectively.

**Keywords:** /Bodi/ Nilo-Saharan/Number/Plural/ Singulative/

## 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The Bodi people, as they are known to the administration and other ethnic groups (Fukui, 2001) live in the South Omo Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS). They call themselves ‘Me’enit’, and claim that ‘Bodi’ is the English version of ‘body’ a term used by white tourists who visited the area. It was reported that the whites were surprised by the physical build of the people who culturally feed themselves and build their bodies for the annual cultural struggle and defense game called *ka?el*. The cultural practice has significance in mate selection for women and witnessing physical fitness for men. According to Fukui (1979), the term *Me?enit* is the modern self-designation of the group (especially after the 1974 Ethiopian revolution) for the vast majority of the Me?enit-speaking population. Another name used for the same group is Meken. The researcher will use

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the administratively recognized name Bodi in this article. The population of Bodi was 4594 based on the CSA, 1994, and according to the 2007 CSA of Ethiopia, the population was 6,994.

Selamago district or Wereda is found in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region of Ethiopia in the Debub Omo Zone at about 140 km away from Jinka Town, the administrative town of Debub Omo Zone, which is 739 km away from Addis Ababa. Selamago borders Nyangatom in the south, Bako Gazer in the east, Omo River that separates the district from Bench Maji, Keffa, and Konta in the west, and Gamo Gofa Zone in the northeast. It is found in the coordinates of 5° 54' 59.99" N latitude and 36° 04' 60.00" E longitude (<https://latitude.to/articles-bycountry/et/ethiopia/282583/selamago>).

The map in Figure-1 shows the location of the Selamago district.

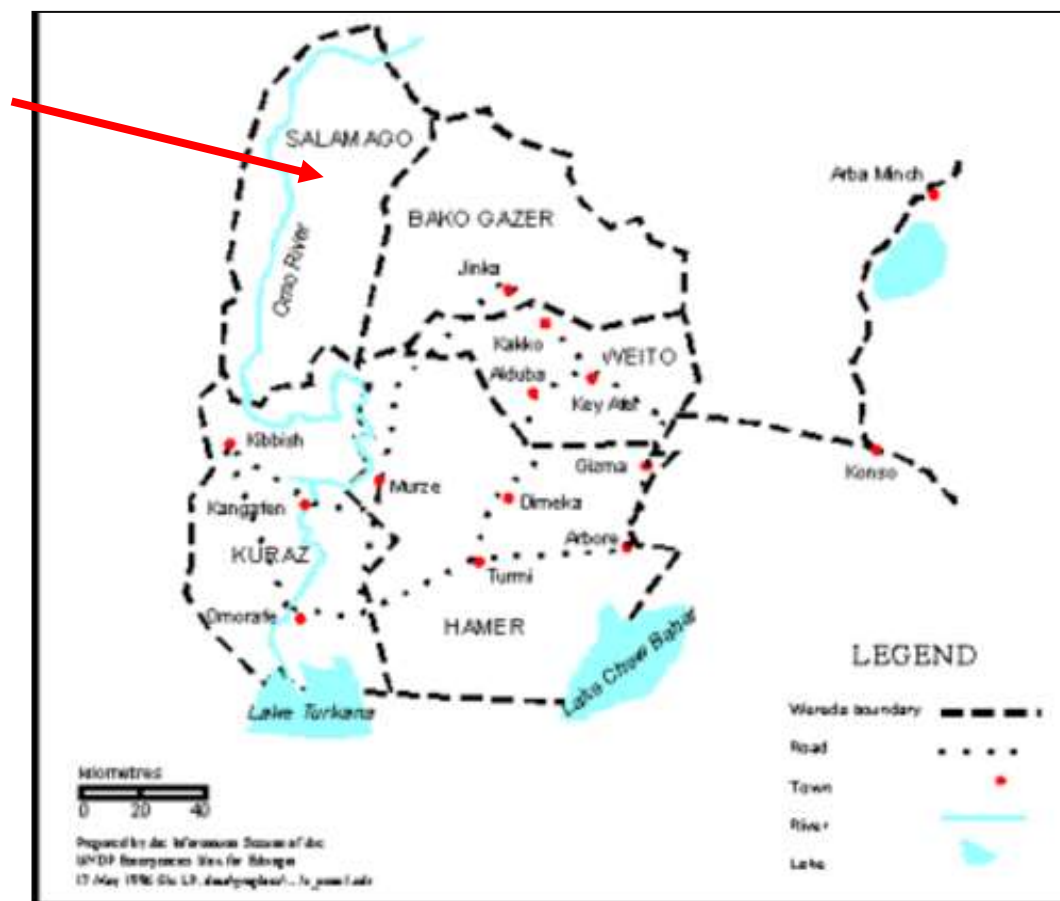


Figure-1: Selamago within South Omo Zone

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=Selamago+district+map> (2/7/2022)

## 1.2 The Language

Bodi belongs to the Nilo-Saharan language family. This language is part of the southeast, Surmic group, an East Sudanic language sub-family, related to the Proto-Nilotic language group, from which it may have separated several millennia ago (Abbink, 1990). Fukui (2001) also states that Meʼen (Meken) is one of the Surma languages spoken by this group of people. A similar view is reflected by Hudson (1999) who relates the genetic link of Bodi (*Tukte-Meʼenun*) to a Nilo-Saharan language that belongs to the Surmic sub-family. The Bodi has two main groups, “the Mela and the Chirim” (Mursi Online, [Bodi \(Me'en\) — Mursi Online](#)). Other languages in the family that are spoken in the SNNPRS include Kwegu, Mursi, Nyangatom, Murle, and Chai.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

Bodi is one of the Nilo-Saharan languages for which, hitherto, there is no well-documented linguistic study. Bodi is not used as a medium of instruction in education or as a school subject or as the language of media. It is a language the people have maintained intact in the face of many challenges. However, it is now facing more challenges due to language contact with languages of workforces that migrate to the area following major development projects such as the construction of giant sugar factories. Bodi language with only 6,994 is under threat of endangerment. There is an urgent need to document the linguistic and cultural features of Bodi. This study, the number system in Bodi, is a part of the documentation efforts of the language (Fekede, forthcoming). The finding can be significant to the people of Bodi who may use the language in the school system. It can help researchers to know the little-known language. It can be used for comparative and typology purposes by linguists and anthropologists.

### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to provide a descriptive account of the number system of the Bodi language. It specifically describes and analyses the number system used in pronouns, nouns, and verbs that agree with nouns and pronouns in the syntax of the language.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

The vast majority of speakers of the Bodi language (also known as Me'enit, or Mekan) live in the highlands west of the Omo River, while a small number of them live in the lowlands east of the Omo River (Abbink, 1990, p. 22). According to Abbink (1990), the Me'en who live in the highland area are referred to as the 'Tishana', while those living in the lowland around the Omo River are called Bodi, thus making a distinction between the '*Tishana-Me'en* living in Kaffa area and the *Bodi Me'en*, the focus of this article.

Bodi is one of the least studied languages in Ethiopia. The literature on this language is very scanty. There are a few works that focus on anthropology including (Fukuki 1979, 2001; Abbink, 1990). Hitherto, there are no well-documented linguistic studies on Bodi. The researcher found two linguistic works on Me'en (Tishena), a related language to Bodi, by Eba and Amanuel (2015) a 'Sketch Phonology of Me'enit'<sup>2</sup> and another article by the same authors and year titled 'Sketch Morphology and Syntax of Me'enit'. The phonological sketch indicated that Me'en has 27 consonants and seven (7) vowel phonemes. All consonant phonemes can occur at the beginning and in the middle of words. A consonant cluster does not occur at the word-initial position. The language has vowel length and consonant gemination. Regarding syllable structures, they found three open and three closed syllable patterns with thirteen types of structures. Their study on the sketch of morphology and syntax of the language identifies nouns and verbs as major word classes in which nouns are described in terms of number, gender, nominalization, and pronouns, and verbs are described concerning tense, aspect, copula, and verb to have. Moreover, the authors described adjectives, adverbs, adpositions, conjunctions, numerals, and the calendar system of the language. Regarding syntax, the study identified simple declarative, interrogative, imperative, and passive sentences. As this study is on *Tishena-Meen*, it can help as a cross-reference. *Tishena-Meen* is quite different from *Bodi* in the grammatical systems.

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<sup>2</sup> Me'enit basically refers to the people and their language is Me'en.

### 3. Methodology

This study used a non-interventional descriptive design and Basic Linguistic Theory (BLT) of structuralism approach as outlined in Dixon (2012) chapter 20. It adopted a qualitative methodology for data collection and analysis. The required data were collected using the elicitation method and recording of spoken texts from purposively selected key informants. For lexical items elicitation, the researcher used a questionnaire adapted from Lingua. The study had six key informants who were selected from the speech community, particularly from Hanna and the surroundings, based on their knowledge of the language and culture. The key informants were asked for their willingness to participate in the study and that they were guaranteed their names would be anonymous. The elicited lexical items and recorded texts were transcribed phonemically, glossed using Leipzig glossing rules, transliterated, and analyzed. The analysis method used was descriptive.

### 4. Analysis

Before presenting the number system, the researcher has provided in 4.1 the phonemic inventory of the language as a tool for data transcription. Then, number marking in pronouns, nouns, and verbs is provided in sub-sections 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4, respectively. In 5 he has provided the discussion and conclusion of the findings.

#### 4.1 Phonemic Inventory of Bodi

The phonemic inventory of Bodi consonants is provided in Table 1. The details on the phonology of the language will appear in the forthcoming publication. The vowel phonemes are provided in Table 2.

Table 1: Consonant Phoneme of Bodi

		Place of articulation								
		Labial		Alveolar		Palatal	Velar	Glottal		
		Vl.	Vd.	Vl.	Vd.	Vl.	Vd.	Vl.Vd.	Vl <sup>3</sup> .	
Manner of articulation	Stop	p	b	t	d			k	g	ʔ
	Fricative	f		s	z	ʃ				h
	Affricate					tʃ	dʒ			
	Ejective			t'		ʃ'		k'		
	Implosive	ɓ		ɗ						
	Lateral				l					
	Nasal		m		n		ɲ		ŋ	
	Trill				r					
	Glides		w				j			

<sup>3</sup> Abbreviations Used: AUX= auxiliary, F= feminine; FOC= focus, LOC= locative, M= masculine; PL= plural, POSS= possessive, PSR= past, REF = reflexive, SG= singular, Vd= voiced, and Vl= voiceless

Bodi language also has seven phonemic vowels (Table 2), which can be long or short. Vowel length is phonemic in the language.

Table 2: Vowel phoneme of Bodi

		Front	Central	Back	
Spread	High	i		u	Round
	Mid	e		o	
	Mid-low	ɛ		ɔ	
	Low		a		

## 4.2 Number in Pronouns

The number is a grammatical category that in most languages is an opposition of singular and plural. Some languages also distinguish “dual (two individuals), trial (three individuals), and paucal (a few individuals)” (Bickel and Nichols, 2007, p. 227). Opposition in number may be made in nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and verbs. In this article, the researcher excluded the number system in adjectives as it behaves the same way as nouns. The number in Bodi pronouns is reflected explicitly in the nominative, possessive, reflexive, and demonstrative forms.

**Number in nominative pronouns.** Pronouns in Bodi distinguish a number and a person. The number of nominative pronouns is distinguished in all three persons (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>). Gender is not morphologically distinguished in nominative pronouns. Politeness as well is not marked with pronouns. The number system in nominative pronouns is shown in Table 3.

Table-3: Number in nominative pronoun

Person	SG	Gloss	PL	Gloss
1.	<i>a-ni</i>	‘I’	<i>(i)ed-a`</i>	‘we’
2.	<i>i-ni</i>	‘you (SG)’	<i>ed-u`</i>	‘you (PL)’
3.	<i>nen</i>	‘he’/ ‘she’	<i>ed-e</i>	‘they’

The following examples show the number system in the nominative pronouns:

- (1) *ani ka-tara luf kon boji*  
I 1SG-buy(SG) ox one AUX.PST  
‘I bought an ox’
- (2) *eda-ga ele-eda-gijuwa-tɛko*  
we-FOC tell.PST-1PL- 2PL - LOC  
‘we told you (PL)’
- (3) *ida ena tala luf boji*  
we earlier buy ox AUX.PST  
‘we bought an ox (earlier)’
- (4) *ini f’ak-aji boji*  
you (SG) laugh-2SG AUX.PST  
‘you (SG) laughed’

- (5) *edu reji motkawe`*  
 You(PL) body tired  
 ‘You(PL) are tired’
- (6) *nen ele-gingo-teko*  
 she tell-3SG-LOC  
 ‘she told.PST him/her’
- (7) *ede talla lufkon boji*  
 they buy(PL) ox one AUX.PST  
 ‘They bought an ox’

The plural marker is {*ed-*} with alternation of {*id-*} in first person plural and {*-a*}, {*-u*}, and {*-e*} are the bases for the first, second, and third-person plural, respectively. There is no clear connection between the bases of the singular and plural forms except in the first person where {*a*} is as common as in *a-ni* and *ed-a`*; yet the base is prefixed in the singular but suffixed in the plural. The researcher has also witnessed the alternation of {*ed-*} and {*id-*} (examples 2 and 3, respectively) in the first person in which we find an element of /i/ in the singular and plural forms. The first and second-person singular pronouns are {*a-*} and {*i-*}, respectively. The morpheme {-*ni*} is singulative in the first and the second person singular pronouns. The third-person singular form *nen* is aberrant.

**Number in the possessive pronoun.** Unlike the independent nominative pronouns, the possessive pronouns in Bodi are dependent and are suffixed to the possessed noun (N). The following paradigm shows the possessive construction with the noun *kesse* ‘house’ which alternates with *tuwidi* ‘hut’:

- (8) *kesse-an*  
 house-1SG.POSS  
 ‘my house’
- (9) *kesse-gaji*  
 house-2PL.POSS  
 ‘our house’
- (10) *kessu-nu*  
 house-2SG.POSS  
 ‘your (SG) house’
- (11) *kessu-guzi*  
 house-2PL.POSS  
 ‘your (PL) house’
- (12) *kesse hindu-da*  
 house 3SG.POSS  
 ‘His/her house’
- (13) *kesse zuwu-gija*  
 house people-3PL.POSS  
 ‘their house’

A number is distinguished in all the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> person-possessive forms. The morpheme {-g} marks plural and co-occurs with possessive forms attached in Bodi. The forms *gaji* (9) and *guʒi* (11) differ due to phonological processes. Bodi does not allow diphthongs; hence, it inserts either /j/ or /ʒ/ depending on the vocalic environment. In this case, the former appeared between the low and central vowel /a/ and the front and high vowel /i/; in the latter case, /ʒ/ occurs after the back and high vowel /u/. The possessive plural forms with the plural morpheme {g-} are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Number in the Possessive suffixes

Person	SG	Gloss	PL	Gloss
1.	-aŋ	'my'	-gaji	'our'
2.	-nu	'your'	-guʒi	'your'
3.	-da	'his'/'her'	-gija	'their'

There is no pattern to show the singular in Table 4, though the plural is marked with {-g}. There are three different forms; -nu and -da, in the first, second, and third-person singular possessive forms.

**Number in reflexive pronouns.** Reflexive pronouns are co-referential with the subject of a clause, that is, the self pronoun refers back to the speaker. The following are examples of reflexive constructions in Bodi with singular and plural subject (nominative) pronouns:

- (14) *aŋi re-d-ijaŋ*  
 I REF-SG-my  
 'I myself'
- (15) *ida reji-g-edaji*  
 we REF-PL-our  
 'we ourselves'
- (16) *iji re-d-unu*  
 you(SG) REF-SG-your  
 'you yourself (M/FSG)'
- (17) *edu reji-g-udi*  
 you(PL) REF-PL-your  
 'you yourselves (M/FPL)'
- (18) *nen re-d-ene*  
 he/she REF-SG-him/her  
 'he/she himself/ herself'
- (19) *ede reji-g-edede*  
 they REF-PL-them  
 'they (M/F) themselves (M/F)'

The reflexive pronouns assume the form *dijaŋ* 'myself', *gedaji* 'ourselves', *dunu* yourself, *gudi* 'yourselves', *dene* 'himself/herself', and *gedede* 'themselves'. The {d-} and {g-} in the reflexive forms show singular and plural, respectively. The reflexive forms vary in singular {re-} and plural {reji-}. The vowel of the reflexive {re-(ji)} harmonizes with the vowels in the preceding words.

**Number in demonstrative.** Demonstratives are classes of deictic expressions used to indicate an object, a person, or an animal. In Bodi, a demonstrative shows three ways distance, in singular and plural forms, from the speaker. Table 5 shows distance in the singular and plural forms of demonstrative:

Table 5 Number in demonstratives

	Proximal	Medial	Distal
SG	<i>anda</i>	<i>Anduwa</i>	<i>andu?a</i>
PL	<i>angija</i>	<i>Anguwa</i>	<i>angu?a</i>

The language has proximal, media, and distal demonstratives marked for singular and plural. The proximal (PROX) singular is *anda* ‘this’; the medial singular is *anduwa* ‘that’(MID), and the distal singular is *anduuzá* ‘that (DIS)’. The plural proximal and distal forms are derived from the singular forms mainly by changing the singular morpheme {d-} into the plural {g-}. The proximal plural is *angija* with the change of {d-} into {g-} and adding /i/ which itself led to the insertion of /j/ to avoid gliding of vowels /i/ and /a/. The medial plural is *anguwa* which is the plural form of *anduwa*. Similarly, the distal plural *angu?a* is just the plural form of the singular *andu?a* where {d-} > {g-}.

### 4.3 Number in Nouns

Nouns in Bodi can be singular or plural. The way singular and plural are marked is novel. Affixes, tone system, and singularizing the plural are employed as a means. The ways singular and plural nouns are formed are discussed as follows.

**The singular.** Bodi has nouns in the absolutive form with singular meaning and nouns with singulative meaning represented with affixes whose forms vary as shown in the examples in Table-6:

Table 6 Nouns in singular and singulative forms

Absolutive singular noun	Gloss	Singulative Noun	Gloss
<i>luf</i>	‘ox’	<i>?uŋo-ʃ</i>	‘a day’
<i>mokaʃ</i>	‘woman’	<i>muŋa-ʃ</i>	‘a star’
<i>taʒis</i>	‘month/moon’	<i>boŋa-ji</i>	‘a calf’
<i>oji`</i>	‘bull’	<i>meʒen-it</i>	‘a man’
<i>mor</i>	‘heifer’	<i>ho-ʃen</i>	‘a boy’
<i>gaba</i>	‘week’	<i>mun-it</i>	‘a girl’
<i>komorut</i>	‘king’	<i>ke-do`</i>	‘a tree’

There is no clear morphological motivation to decide which noun takes a singulative form and which other cannot. In most singulative forms, the suffix is palatalized {-ʃ} or a palatal vowel {-i} which is sometimes followed by /t/. One may argue that the singulative form is underlyingly {-it} but it is palatalized in some cases, remains without being palatalized in others, and may delete the /t/ as in *boŋa-ji* ‘a calf’.



**The plural.** Bodi uses several strategies to show plural such as deleting the singulative form, adding plural markers, and vocalic changes, each of which is discussed as follows.

**Type-1 plurals.** Some nouns add a singulative to plural forms. This type of singular formation from the plural is witnessed in *Ngaalam*, a recently identified language in southwestern Ethiopia, and spoken by a few hundred people, such as *émé-ni* ‘bone’ and *émé* ‘bones’ (Dimmendaal, 2022, p. 23). In Bodi, there are three singulative forms, namely, *{-it}*, *{-ɸ}* and *{-ji}*, as shown in the examples in Table 7:

Table-7: Type-1 plurals

Singular		Plural	
a)	<i>ɖuŋo-ɸ</i> ‘day’	<i>ɖuŋo</i>	‘days’
b)	<i>muŋa-ɸ</i> ‘star’	<i>muŋa</i>	‘stars’
c)	<i>boŋa-ji</i> ‘calf’	<i>Boŋa</i>	‘calves’
d)	<i>meɖen-it</i> ‘man’	<i>meɖen</i>	‘men’
e)	<i>mun-it</i> ‘girl’	<i>Modi</i>	‘girls’

There is no phonological condition that determines which singulative form a noun takes. It is found that the singulative forms are not free variants, and the change may be idiosyncratic. The plural forms look like the absolute forms and can end with a vowel or consonant. In Table 7 (e), the root of the singulative noun changes in the plural absolutive form.

**Type-2 plural.** In this type, the singular and plural noun forms add a singulative and plural morpheme to a single base as in *ho-ɸen* ‘boy’ and *ho-ja* ‘boys’, respectively. In other cases, a plural marker is added to the singulative form as shown in Table -8:

Table-8: Type-2 plurals

Singular		Plural	
a)	<i>ho-ɸen</i> ‘boy’	<i>ho-[j]a</i>	‘boys’
b)	<i>luɸ</i> ‘ox’	<i>luɖɔ-o</i>	‘oxen’
c)	<i>mokaɸ</i> ‘woman’	<i>mokaɸ-a</i>	‘women’

In Table 8 (a), the base is *ho-* ‘boy’ and the singulative form is *{-ɸen}* and the plural form is *{-a}*. The sound *[j]* is phonetic which is inserted to avoid non-identical vowel sequences. In (b), *luɸ* ‘ox’ is base and has no singulative marker. The plural marker in (b) is *{-o}* and the singular form *luɸ* becomes *luɖɔ-o* where */-ɸ/* is voiced to */-ɖɔ-/* due to the addition of the plural marker *{-o}* which creates an environment for voice, that is, the voiceless affricate becomes voiced between vowels. We can argue here that the plural marker in (b) is the same *{-a}* used to mark plural in (a), but it changed to *{-o}* in harmony with the */u/* of *luɖɔ*. In (c), only the plural marker *{-a}* is added to the singular form. In short, the plural form in Type-2 plural is *{-a}* but may change its quality due to the environment.

*Type-3 plurals.* This group has {-na} as a plural marker as shown in Table-9:

Table-9: Type-3 plurals

Singular		Plural	
a) <i>tazis</i>	‘Month/moon’	<i>tazis-na</i>	‘months’
b) <i>oji`</i>	‘bull’	<i>oji-na</i>	‘bulls’
c) <i>mor</i>	‘heifer’	<i>mor-ra</i>	‘heifers’
d) <i>ke-do`</i>	‘tree’	<i>ke-na`</i>	‘Trees’
e) <i>komorut</i>	‘king’	<i>komort-ija</i>	‘kings’
f) <i>gaba</i>	‘week’	<i>gaba-na</i>	‘weeks’

There are some morphophonemic changes in the morpheme boundary. In Table 9 (b), {-na} becomes {-*na*} after the palatal vowel /i/. In (c), the consonant /n/ of {-na} is completely and regressively assimilated to /r/ of the noun base. In (d), the singulative {-do} is deleted, and the plural form {-na} is added parallel to (a). In (e), there is rule adjustment; first, *komorut* becomes *komortu* by deleting the syllable /u/ whose phonological motivation is not clear, and then {-*ja*}, the plural marker is added. Because the addition of {-*ja*} created three consonant clusters, which is not permitted in the phonology of the language, an epenthetic vowel /i/ is inserted between /t/ and /j/; hence, *komort-ija* ‘kings’.

*Type-4 plural.* These types of plurals are formed with vocalic changes, such as the change of /u/ into /o/ in the examples in Table 10:

Table-10: Type-4 plurals

Singular		Plural	
a) <i>mun-it</i>	‘girl’	<i>Modi</i>	‘girls’
b) <i>ηundi`</i>	‘woman’	<i>ηondi`</i>	‘women’
c) <i>tojo</i>	‘goat’	<i>tena?</i>	‘goats’

In Table 10 (a), the singular form has a singulative {-it}. In the plural form the vowel /u/ of the singular changes to /o/, and the nasal /n/ of *munit* becomes /d/ in the plural form whose phonological motivation is not clear. In (b), the only process to mark plural is to change /u/ into /o/.

*Type-5 plurals.* These categories do not uniformly use the same morpheme to form the plural but employ different strategies as shown in Table 11:

Table-11: Type-5 plurals

Singular		Plural	
a) <i>ɲone</i>	‘brother’	<i>ɲon-ig-e</i>	‘brothers’
b) <i>bergu</i>	‘year’	<i>bergu-wan</i>	‘years’
c) <i>kees-</i>	‘house’	<i>keess-i</i>	‘houses’

In Table 11(a), the plural marker *{-ig-}* is infixes within the singular stem. In (b), a suffix *{-wan}* is added to the singular form. We can argue here the plural marker is *{-an}* similar to the type-3 plurals and that */w/* is added to avoid sequences of non-identical vowels. In (c), there is a gemination of the word-final consonant and the addition of a plural marker *{-i}*. It seems, however, that the plural marker in *keessi* is the gemination of */s/* and *{-i}* marks definiteness in the language.

There are also irregular plurals that are expressed with completely different lexical items such as *ɲabul* ‘cow’ and *bijo* ‘cows’ / ‘cattle’.

#### 4.4 Number in Verbs

Verbs in Bodi are inflected for singular and plural as an agreement to the nouns and pronouns functioning as an argument. The following example sentences show the way verbs are inflected for a number in agreement with pronouns functioning as a subject.

- (20) a) *ede g-us-kija boji*  
 they PL-eat-3PL AUX.PST  
 ‘Let them eat them’
- b) *nen k-us-o boji*  
 he SG-eat-3SG AUX.PST  
 ‘Let him eat it’
- (21) a) *g-us-kija boji*  
 PL-eat-3PL aux.PST  
 ‘We ate them’
- b) *k-us-ija boji*  
 SG-eat-1SG AUX.PST  
 ‘I ate it’
- (22) a) *eda g-ir-ito boji*  
 We PL-drink-1PL AUX.PST  
 ‘we drank’
- b) *ani k-ir-o boji*  
 I SG-drink-1SG AUX.PST  
 ‘I drank’

- (23) a) *g-ogom-da boji*  
 PL-dance-1PL AUX.PST  
 ‘we dance’
- b) *k-ogoma boji*  
 SG-dance.1SG AUX.PST  
 ‘I danced’

The pairs of sentences in 20-23 have singular and plural verbs shown with {*k-*} and {*g-*}, respectively. The agreement suffixes added to verbs are not consistent in their shapes; we have {*-kija*} for ‘third-person plural’, {*-o*} seems to show ‘third-person singular’ (20b) and ‘first-person singular’ (22b). However, assigning two roles for the same morpheme does not sound logical, hence, {*-o-*} must be showing only singular agreement, and may not person. This, however, needs further investigation.

### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The number system in pronouns and nouns behaves differently. Pronouns tend to show plural with {*-g*} and singular sometimes with {*-d*} and some other times not expressed. Nouns on the other hand use different number-marking strategies. The singular is not strictly marked but a few plural nouns are singularized with singulative forms as in Type-1 plural. Some nouns form their plural with {*-a*} or {*-o*} as in Type-2. Some others show plural with {*-(n)a*} as in Type-3 nouns, and still, others show plural with vocalic changes as in Type-4, and some others have idiosyncratic affixes as in Type-5. The multiple number marking system is common to other Nilo-Saharan languages (cf. Eba and Amanuel, 2015b) for (Tishena) Meen. Deriving singulative from the plural stem was also witnessed in *Ngaalamas* reported by (Dimmendaal, 2022). Verbs show singular with {*k-*} and plural with {*g-*}. The plural marker {*g-*} is more productive in the language as it is used to mark plural in pronouns as well as verbs.

Bodi uses different number markers in pronouns and nouns. Nouns employ affixation, gemination, and/or vocalic change to express plural. The morpheme {*g-*} shows plural in verbs as well as pronouns in Bodi. There are some morphemes for which the change of their form is not phonologically and/or semantically accounted for; this needs further investigation.

### Acknowledgments

The researcher would like to acknowledge the Bureau of Tourism and Sport of Southern Nation, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Regional State for financial support. He would also like to express his thanks to the study’s linguistic informants from Hanna village of the Selamago district.

### Authors’ contributions:

1. Dr. Fekede Menuta: Collected data, developed the proposal, transcribed the interview data, interpreted the data, and wrote the manuscript.

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### Competing of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

### Consent for publication

I have agreed - to - submit to the Journal of Social Sciences and Language Studies and approved the manuscript for

submission. Author’s signature:  , Fekede Menuta (PhD).

### Funding

The author disclosed that he has received funding from Hawasa University.

**Publisher’s Note.** Jimma University is neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published material and affiliations.

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