

A Comprehensive Diachronic Grammar of Modern ULTRAFRENCH

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Oral vowels before the stressed syllable are often somewhat muted or reduced, and stressed vowels are lengthened if they are nasalised, e.g. the pronunciation of *ad'hór*, which we just transcribed as /a'ðɔ̃u/, is actually closer to [a'ðɔ̃ṽ]. This is a regular process, and is often implied or omitted.

Furthermore, as indicated in that same example, word-final /u/ is often realised as velarisation of the preceding vowel; the same, however, is not the case for /ũ/.

1.2 Orthography

The spelling of most UF sounds is indicated above; the less exotic consonants are spelt as one might expect. That is, /b, d, n, ɸ, s, z, h/ are spelt ⟨b, d, n, f, s, z, h⟩, respectively.

The ‘hard’ voiced *ḅ, ḍ* which are pronounced exactly like their regular counterparts, are normally also spelt ⟨b⟩ and ⟨d⟩. However, the dot below is commonly used in dictionaries and grammatical material to distinguish between the two as they differ from one another in how they are lenited.

2 Accidence

2.1 Verbal Morphology

Verbs in UF are inflected for person, number, tense, aspect, mood, and voice. Verbal inflexion is mainly done by means of concatenating a vast set of prefixes onto a verb, with the occasional suffix and circumfix making its appearance. This chapter details these affixes, their meanings, uses, forms, and restrictions.

2.1.1 Active/Passive Affixes

UF has a set of active/subject as well as passive/object prefixes which can be used on their own or in combination with one another, though at most one active and one passive prefix may be combined with a verb.³ Table 1 below lists those prefixes, two of which are actually circumfixes.

Active	Sg	Pl	Passive	Sg	Pl
1st	<i>j-</i>	<i>ó-/r-/w- -(y')ó</i>	1st	<i>v-</i>	<i>ó-/r-/w-</i>
2nd	<i>ḍ(e)-</i>	<i>b'h(y)- -(y')é</i>	2nd	<i>ḍ(e)-</i>	<i>b'h(y)-</i>
3rd m	<i>ḷ(e)-</i>	<i>ḷ(e)-</i>	3rd m	<i>y'-</i>	<i>lý-</i>
3rd f	<i>ll(a)-</i>	<i>lḷ(e)-</i>	3rd f	<i>y'-</i>	<i>lý-</i>
3rd n	<i>s-</i>	<i>ḷ(a)-</i>	3rd n	<i>sy-</i>	<i>lý-</i>
Infinitive	<i>ḍ(e)-</i>		Infinitive	<i>à-/h-</i>	

Table 1: Active (left) and passive (right) verbal affixes.

A great degree of syncretism can be observed in the third-person forms. The gender distinction in the 3SG that diachronically resulted from gendered personal pronouns is almost non-existent in the plural; the reason for this development is that those forms are derived from the old dative form, which lacked this distinction altogether.

The ACT 1PL, 2PL forms are only distinguished from their passive counterparts by the presence of additional suffixes in the former. The 3SG N in the active and passive is derived from the PF demonstrative **ce* and its variants; the 3PL N is derived from the other 3PL forms.

³ Irrespective of whether they are personal or infinitive prefixes. For instance, it would also be illegal to combine e.g. the active infinitive prefix with the first person active singular prefix.

The 1PL prefix varies if there is a vowel following it: if it is any vowel that is not a variant of ‘o’, the prefix is realised as *r-* instead, e.g. *ad’hór* ‘love’ to *rad’hóró* ‘we love’. If the vowel is a variant of ‘o’, the prefix is realised as *w-* instead, e.g. *ob’heír* ‘obey’ to *wob’heíró* ‘we obey’.⁴

The INF PASS prefix *à-* coalesces with any vowel following it: it becomes *á* if it is followed by a non-nasal variant of ‘a’, e.g. *ad’hór* to *ád’hór* ‘to be loved’; *â* if it is followed by a nasal variant of ‘a’, e.g. *ánvé* ‘give life to’ to *ânvé* ‘to be animated’; and *h-* if it is followed by any other vowel, e.g. *ob’heír* to *hob’heír* ‘to be obeyed’.

The parenthesised vowels are used if the prefix is followed by a consonant, e.g. *dír* ‘say’ to *lledír* ‘they (F) say’ and *b’hydíré* ‘you (PL) say’, but *ad’hór* to *llad’hór* ‘they (F) love’ and *b’had’hóré* ‘you (PL) love’. The prefixes *ó-* and *à-* retain their main forms if followed by a consonant, e.g. *dír* ‘say’ to *ódíró* ‘We say’ and *àdír* ‘to be said’. The exception to this is that 2PL *b’h(y)-* drops the *y* if followed by a glide, e.g. *y’ír* ‘to hear’ to *b’hy’íré* ‘you (PL) hear’ (not **b’hyy’íré*).

The *y* in the suffix parts of the 1PL, 2PL ACT are dropped if the verb ends with a consonant, e.g. *ad’hór* to *b’hád’hóré*, or if it ends with a vowel that is a variant of ‘o’ in the case of the 1PL and ‘e’ in the case of the 2PL, in which cases the vowels are contracted and a level of nasalisation is added, e.g. *vvóríhe* ‘to remember’ to *b’hyvvóríhé* ‘you (PL) remember’ (not **b’hyvvóríhyé*). In all other cases, the *y* is retained, e.g. *óvvóríheyó* ‘we remember’.

When multiple prefixes are used together, active prefixes precede passive prefixes, except that infinitive prefixes always come first, e.g. *ad’hór* ‘love’ to *jvad’hór* ‘I love myself’ (not **vjad’hór*) and *b’hyád’hóré* ‘you (PL) love him/her’, but *devad’hór* ‘to love me’ and *àb’had’hóré* ‘to be loved by you (PL)’. Recall that at most one infinitive prefix may be used.

By way of illustration, consider the paradigm of the verb *ad’hór* as shown in Table 2 below. Since this word starts with a vowel, the parenthesised vowels in Table 1 above are not used. Furthermore, since it starts with a non-nasal ‘a’-like vowel, the *ó-* prefix is realised as *r-* and the *à-* prefix coalesces with the initial ‘a’ of the stem to form *á*.

Active	Sg	Pl	Passive	Sg	Pl
1st	<i>jad’hór</i>	<i>rad’hóró</i>	1st	<i>vad’hór</i>	<i>rad’hór</i>
2nd	<i>ḍad’hór</i>	<i>b’had’hóré</i>	2nd	<i>ḍad’hór</i>	<i>b’had’hór</i>
3rd m	<i>lad’hór</i>	<i>lad’hór</i>	3rd m	<i>y’ad’hór</i>	<i>lýad’hór</i>
3rd f	<i>llad’hór</i>	<i>llad’hór</i>	3rd f	<i>y’ad’hór</i>	<i>lýad’hór</i>
3rd n	<i>y’ad’hór</i>	<i>lad’hór</i>	3rd n	<i>y’ad’hór</i>	<i>lýad’hór</i>
Infinitive	<i>dad’hór</i>		Infinitive	<i>ád’hór</i>	

Table 2: Paradigm of the Verb *ad’hór*.

For comparison, the paradigm of the verb *vvóríhe* ‘remember’ is shown in Table 3 below. Since it starts with a consonant, the parenthesised vowels in Table 1 are used, and any prefixes that end with a vowel remain unchanged.

Active	Sg	Pl	Passive	Sg	Pl
1st	<i>jvvóríhe</i>	<i>óvvóríheyó</i>	1st	<i>vvvóríhe</i>	<i>óvvóríhe</i>
2nd	<i>ḍevvóríhe</i>	<i>b’hyvvóríhé</i>	2nd	<i>ḍevvóríhe</i>	<i>b’hyvvóríhe</i>
3rd m	<i>lëvvóríhe</i>	<i>lëvvóríhe</i>	3rd m	<i>y’vvóríhe</i>	<i>lývvóríhe</i>
3rd f	<i>llavvóríhe</i>	<i>llëvvóríhe</i>	3rd f	<i>y’vvóríhe</i>	<i>lývvóríhe</i>
3rd n	<i>y’vvóríhe</i>	<i>lavvóríhe</i>	3rd n	<i>y’vvóríhe</i>	<i>lývvóríhe</i>
Infinitive	<i>ḍevvóríhe</i>		Infinitive	<i>àvvóríhe</i>	

Table 3: Paradigm of the Verb *vvóríhe*.

⁴Diachronically, the base form of this prefix is **o-*, whence e.g. **oad’hóró* > *rad’hóró* and **oob’heíró* > *wob’heíró*.

2.2 Tense and Aspect Marking

Tense in PF is marked by additional sets of affixes that are appended to the verb in addition to the active/passive affixes. There are two broad groups of such affixes: suffixes, which are appended to the end of the verb and replace the ACT 1PL, 2PL suffixes in those persons, as well as circumfixes and prefixes, which are inserted before the active/passive markers and replace the replace the ACT 1PL, 2PL suffixes in some cases.

2.2.1 Suffixed Tenses

The present anterior and preterite are formed by appending a set of suffixes to the verb. Table 4 below lists the suffixes for those tenses. The present anterior has a perfective aspect, while the preterite has an imperfective aspect. The former is commonly used to describe events that are completed—particularly events that occurred recently, hence the name—while the latter is used to describe events that are ongoing or habitual.

Present Anterior	Sg	Pl	Preterite	Sg	Pl
1st	^L é	^L â	1st	^L á	-y'ô
2nd	^L á	^L áḏ	2nd	^L é	-y'ě
3rd	^L á	^L ér	3rd m	^L é	^L é
Infinitive	-á		Infinitive	-é	

Table 4: Present Anterior and Preterite Affixes.

Neither tense distinguishes gender in the third person. All suffixes, except for the infinitive and 1PL, 2PL PRET, lenite any consonant *before* them, e.g. *ḃárḏáḏ* ‘to be willing’ to *jḃárḏát'hé* ‘I was willing’ but *deḃárḏáḏá* ‘to have been willing’.

Diachronically, the 1SG PRET is an interesting case; in EUF, it was originally ^{*}-é, but it later changed to -á to distinguish it from the 2SG, 3SG PRES ANT. The remaining forms—save the infinitives, which are derived from the tenses’ definite endings by analogy—originated from the PF simple past tenses.

The table below lists the example paradigm of the verb *ad'hór* in the present anterior and preterite tenses. Observe that there is no difference between the 1PL, 2PL active and passive.

Active	Sg	Pl	Passive	Sg	Pl
1st	<i>jad'hóré</i>	<i>rad'hórâ</i>	1st	<i>vad'hóré</i>	<i>rad'hórâ</i>
2nd	<i>ḏad'hórá</i>	<i>b'had'hóráḏ</i>	2nd	<i>ḏad'hórá</i>	<i>b'had'hóráḏ</i>
3rd m	<i>lad'hórá</i>	<i>lad'hórér</i>	3rd m	<i>y'ad'hórá</i>	<i>lýad'hórér</i>
3rd f	<i>llad'hórá</i>	<i>llad'hórér</i>	3rd f	<i>y'ad'hórá</i>	<i>lýad'hórér</i>
3rd n	<i>y'ad'hórá</i>	<i>lad'hórér</i>	3rd n	<i>y'ad'hórá</i>	<i>lýad'hórér</i>
Infinitive	<i>dad'hórá</i>		Infinitive	<i>ád'hórá</i>	

Table 5: Present Anterior Paradigm of the Verb *ad'hór*.

Active	Sg	Pl	Passive	Sg	Pl
1st	<i>jad'hórá</i>	<i>rad'hóry'ô</i>	1st	<i>vad'hórá</i>	<i>rad'hóry'ô</i>
2nd	<i>ḏad'hóré</i>	<i>b'had'hóry'ě</i>	2nd	<i>ḏad'hóré</i>	<i>b'had'hóry'ě</i>
3rd m	<i>lad'hóré</i>	<i>lad'hóré</i>	3rd m	<i>y'ad'hóré</i>	<i>lýad'hóré</i>
3rd f	<i>llad'hóré</i>	<i>llad'hóré</i>	3rd f	<i>y'ad'hóré</i>	<i>lýad'hóré</i>
3rd n	<i>y'ad'hóré</i>	<i>lad'hóré</i>	3rd n	<i>y'ad'hóré</i>	<i>lýad'hóré</i>
Infinitive	<i>dad'hóré</i>		Infinitive	<i>ád'hóré</i>	

Table 6: Preterite Paradigm of the Verb *ad'hór*.

2.3 Irregular Verbs

2.3.1 The Conjugation of *ed* ‘to be’

Present	Sg	Pl	Pres. Ant.	Sg	Pl	Preterite	Sg	Pl
1st	<i>vy’i</i>	<i>ósó</i>	1st	<i>vę</i>	<i>ófý</i>	1st	<i>vet’h</i>	<i>wedy’ó</i>
2nd	<i>de</i>	<i>b’hed</i>	2nd	<i>dyf</i>	<i>b’hu</i>	2nd	<i>det’h</i>	<i>b’hedy’é</i>
3rd m	<i>le</i>	<i>leşó</i>	3rd m	<i>leb’h</i>	<i>lefýr</i>	3rd m	<i>let’h</i>	<i>let’he</i>
3rd f	<i>lle</i>	<i>lleşó</i>	3rd f	<i>lle’bh</i>	<i>llefýr</i>	3rd f	<i>llet’h</i>	<i>llet’he</i>
3rd n	<i>s</i>	<i>lasó</i>	3rd n	<i>seb’h</i>	<i>lafýr</i>	3rd n	<i>set’h</i>	<i>laet’h</i>
Infinitive	<i>éd</i>		Infinitive	<i>éfyđ</i>		Infinitive	<i>ét’hed</i>	

Table 7: Paradigm of the verb *ed*.

The etymology of these forms is mostly from a gradual simplification of coalesced forms of the personal pronouns with the PF copula. To compensate for the fact that PF lacks certain forms that are present in UF, some of the forms were coined by analogy. For instance, the PRES ANT INF *éfyđ* is derived from the PRES ANT stem **fy* and the PRES INF *éd*, and the same is true for the PRET INF *ét’hed*.

For obvious reasons, the copula lacks passive forms. At the same time, the first person forms are manifestly derived from the first person passive pronoun, for unknown reasons.

Unlike nearly every other word in the language, all forms of the copula are summarily stressed on the first syllable.

2.4 Noun Morphology

UF has 4 declensions. A definite and indefinite vocalic declension, and a definite and indefinite consonantal declension. As their names might suggest, the former two are used for nouns that start with a vowel, and the latter two for nouns that start with a consonant. UF has no morphologically separate articles; rather, the old PF articles have been incorporated into the declensions. Furthermore, UF no longer has a gender distinction in nouns.

2.4.1 Declension

The table below shows the affixes of the definite and indefinite declensions. The declensions are mostly identical, except that, as with the conjugation of verbs, the consonantal prefixes often end in a vowel (marked below with parentheses), which are not present in the vocalic declension.

Definite	Sg	Pl	Indefinite	Sg	Pl
Nominative	<i>lá^{-L}</i>	<i>lé^{-L}</i>	Nominative	<i>ýn^{-N}</i>	<i>ý^{-L}</i>
Vocative	<i>∅^{-L}</i>	<i>∅^{-L}</i>	Vocative	/	/
Partitive	<i>dy^{-L}</i>	<i>de^{-L}</i>	Partitive	<i>dýn^{-N}</i>	<i>dý^{-L}</i>
Accusative	<i>y’i^{-L}</i>	<i>sý^{-L}</i>	Accusative	<i>s^{-L}</i>	<i>s-</i>
...					
Inessive	<i>dwá-</i>	<i>dwé-</i>	Inessive	<i>dáhýn-</i>	<i>dáhý-</i>

Table 8: UF Declension.

Most of these forms cause lenition in the initial consonant of the noun, e.g. *dale* ‘table’ to DEF ACC SG *s’thale*; this lenition is blocked in the INDEF ACC PL due to the presence of a hypercorrected ‘s’ in PF **ces*, e.g. *s’dale* ‘the tables (ACC)’ (not *s’thale*, which is the singular), as well as in less commonly used forms such as the DEF inessive *dwádale* ‘on the table’.

The INDEF NOM SG *ŷn-* prefix and some other forms nasalise nouns; as a reminder, this means that in nouns starting with *ḑ*, the *ḑ* is deleted, e.g. *ŷnale* ‘a table’; it causes nasalisation in words that start with a vowel e.g. *ehyó* ‘shield’ to *ŷnéhyó* ‘a shield’. The indefinite vocative does not exist, as that would make little sense. As lenition, nasalisation too is blocked in rarer forms, e.g. INDEF inessive *dáhŷnḑale* ‘on a table’.

The diachrony of these forms is mostly from the PF definite and indefinite pronouns, though some forms, such as the accusative, are borrowed from demonstratives instead (DEF from PF **celui* and INDEF from PF **ce*); the definite partitive forms are from the PF partitive article, and the indefinite forms are formed with an additional *d-* by analogy to the definite forms. The locative cases are combinations of the articles and PF prepositions.

Definite	Sg	Pl	Indefinite	Sg	Pl
Nominative	<i>lát’halẹ</i>	<i>lét’halẹ</i>	Nominative	<i>ŷnale</i>	<i>ýt’halẹ</i>
Vocative	<i>t’halẹ</i>	<i>t’halẹ</i>	Vocative	/	/
Partitive	<i>dýt’halẹ</i>	<i>dét’halẹ</i>	Partitive	<i>dŷnale</i>	<i>dýt’halẹ</i>
Accusative	<i>y’it’halẹ</i>	<i>sýt’halẹ</i>	Accusative	<i>st’halẹ</i>	<i>sḑale</i>
...					
Inessive	<i>dwáḑale</i>	<i>dwéḑale</i>	Inessive	<i>dáhŷnḑale</i>	<i>dáhýḑale</i>

Table 9: Consonantal declension of *ḑale*.

3 Examples

Çár-vá, sráho dwávôt’há daçt’heá?

Çár	-vá	s-ráho	dwá-vôt’há	ḑ-açt’he-á
ʃãʊ	ʊvã	sʊã'hõ	duãvõ'θã	daʃ'θe.ã
Charles.VOC	PARTICLE	INDEF.ACC-fish	DEF.INESS-mountain	2SG.ACT-buy-PRES.ANT.2SG

‘Charles, you bought a fish on the mountain?’

4 Dictionary

açt'he *v. tr.* [PF *acheter*] To buy.

ad'hór *v. tr.* [PF *adore*] To love, adore.

ánvé *v. tr.* [PF *animer*] To bring to life, animate.

bárdád *v.* [PF *partante*] (+ ACI) To be interested in, willing to, ready to, prepared for.

bət'hə *adj.* [PF *petit*] Small, little.

b'heđ → *ed.*

b'heđy'é → *ed.*

b'hu → *ed.*

Çár *n. male given name, equivalent to English 'Kyle' or 'Charles'.*

c'hes *part.* [PF *qu'est-ce que*] interrogative particle.

c'húr *v.* [PF *court*] To shrink, reduce in size, narrow.

ďalə *n.* [PF *tableau*] Table.

ďe → *ed.*

ďet'h → *ed.*

ďír *v. tr.* [PF *dire*] To say, tell.

Dóvníc'h *n. male or female given name, equivalent to English 'Dominic'.*

ďyf → *ed.*

ebhə *adj.* [PF *épais*] Thick.

éd → *ed.*

edrrá *adj.* [PF *étroit*] Pointy.

ed *v. irreg.* [PF *être*] FORMS: *active only.* PRES: SG *vy'í, ċe, le, lle, s;* PL *ósó, b'heđ, ləsó, lleşó, lasó;* INF *éd.* PRES ANT: SG *və, ċyf, leb'h, lleb'h, seb'h;* PL *ófý, b'hu, ləfýr, lleşfýr, lafýr;* INF *éfyđ* PRET: SG *vet'h, ċet'h, let'h, llet'h, set'h;* PL *wedy'ó, b'heđy'é, let'he, llet'he, laet'h;* INF *ét'hed.* To be.

Edy'è *n. male given name, equivalent to English 'Stephen'.*

éfyđ vet'h → *ed.*

ehyó *n.* [PF *écusson*] Shield.

ét'hed → *ed.*

Já *n. male or female given name, equivalent to English 'John' or 'Joan'.*

laet'h → *ed.*

lafýr → *ed.*

lár *adj.* [PF *large*] Wide, broad.

lasó → *ed.*

leb'h → *ed.*

le → *ed.*

ləfýr → *ed.*

leşó → *ed.*

let'h → *ed.*

let'he → *ed.*

lleb'h → *ed.*

lle → *ed.*

lleşfýr → *ed.*

lleşó → *ed.*

llet'h → *ed.*

llet'he → *ed.*

ló *adj.* [PF *long*] Long.

lúr *adj.* [PF *lourd*] Bulky, oversized, heavy.

ob'heír *v. (in)tr.* [PF *obéir*] To obey.

ófý → *ed.*

ósó → *ed.*

rá *adj.* [PF *grand*] Big, large, great.

ráhó *n.* [PF *poisson*] Fish.

rvá *interj.* [of unknown origin] FORMS: *after words that end with 'r', this is spelt '-vá' instead.* Alas, woe, oh. Exclamation of distress, surprise, sadness, or regret.

seb'h → *ed.*

s → *ed.*

set'h → *ed.*

vá → *rvá.*

və → *ed.*

vôt'há *n.* [PF *montagne*] Mountain.

vvórihe *v. (in)tr.* [PF *mémoriser*] To remember.

vy'í → *ed.*

wedy'ó → *ed.*

y'ír *v. (in)tr.* [PF *ouir*] To hear, understand, listen.