An introduction to Sumerian Cuneiforms

Eduardo Costa   Marcus Santos   Sergio Teixeira

Chapter 1

Ur-Nammu-9

The cuneiform script was the first writing system invented by humankind. Therefore, all educated individuals should learn this 5,000-year-old script. In this tutorial, we will learn how to read Sumerian cuneiform.

There are few grammar books for Sumerian. Unfortunately, Marie-Louise Thomsen's **"The Sumerian Language"** does not use cuneiform, so I cannot recommend it. This leaves us with John Hayes' Manual of Sumerian and Joshua Bowen's **"Learn to Read Ancient Sumerian"**. Therefore, I advise you to buy **"A Manual of Sumerian: Grammar and Texts"** by Hayes to learn this ancient language in depth. It is also a good idea to acquire **"Learn to Read Ancient Sumerian"** by Joshua Bowen and Megan Lewis.

1.1   Disclaimer

The authors of this book are not a scholars in Sumerian studies in any sense. Therefore, they may not help serious students of cuneiforms to solve their pendencies and questions.

For scholars and graduate students who are writing their thesis, the authors recommend John Hayes' **Manual of Sumerian** and Joshua Bowen's **Learn to Read Ancient Sumerian**. Hayes' manual strong points are inscriptions and dedicatories, while Bowen and Lewis prefer literary texts.

1.2   Sentence structure

To discuss grammar, scholars use a transliteration of Sumerian cuneiforms to the Latin alphabet. Below, you will find the transliteration of the Ur-Nammu-9 document that we will study in this lesson.

```
1- [nanna
2-    lugal.ani].{(r)} #dat          -- For his king
3- [ur-nammu                         -- Ur-Nammu,
4-    lugal.urim.{ak}].{e} #gen/erg   -- the king of UR,
5- [e2.ani].{}  #object              -- his temple
6- mu.na.du3 #verb                    -- he built
7- [bad3.urim5.{a(k)}].{} #gen/obj    -- the city wall of Ur
8- mu.na.du3  #verb                   -- he built
```

1.3   Grammar functions in transliteration

In the transliteration, grammar functions are represented by indicators between braces. In the example, the grammar functions are:

1,2 The benefactive has an unwritten "(r)", which is represented by `{(r)}`

3,4 The genitive ends in `{ak}` after consonant; the ergative ends in `{e}`

5 The object of the action has no ending, which is represented by `{}`

7 The genitive has an unwritten "(k)", which is represented by `{a(k)}`

8 The verbal chain 𒈬𒈾𒆕 (tr mu na du3) starts with the ventive prefix 𒈬, followed by a cross-reference 𒈾 (tr na) to the dative.

Square brackets delimit a noun chain, i.e., a noun followed by a sequence of limiting qualifiers that may contain adjectives, apositives and a genitive. Example: `[ur-nammu lugal.urim5.{ak}].{e}` means

> `[Ur-Nammu, Ur's king].{task-doer}`

After the close square bracket, a braced symbol suffix indicates the function of the noun chain. For instance, `.{e}` shows that `[ur.nammu...].{e}` is the doer of the sentence's task. The `{(r)}` symbol shows that `[nanna...].{(r)}` receives the benefits of the task: `[God Nanna].{benefactive}`.

The noun chain may contain a genitive, as was stated in the previous paragraph. If you don't know the role of a genitive, it is a grammar function that shows possession. In English, the Saxon genitive marks the possessor with [**'s**] and comes before the noun: *Ur's king*. In Sumerian, the possessor follows the noun and is marked with `{ak}` after consonant and `{k}` after vowel: `{urim5 ma}.{k}` is equivalent to *Ur's king*.

Braces represent the grammatical function endings. For instance, the ergative function-ending represents the doer of the task and is written as `{e} #erg`, where `#erg` is a comment that will be omitted in more advanced lessons. The person who receives the benefit of the action is called dative and is represented as `{ra} #dat`, where the `#dat` comment is usually omitted.

The empty ending of the object is commented as `{∅} #obj` or simply as `{} #obj`. In the example, the objects are the constructions of king Ur-Nammu:

```
[e2 a ni].{}              -- his temple
[[bad3.urim5].{a(k)}].{}  -- the city wall of Ur
```

Unwritten endings are placed between parentheses, such as `{(r)}`.

1.4 Line 1 & 2

The Ur-Nammu 9 document is divided into eight lines.

^{d}nanna   lugal   a ni
(tr an nanna lugal a ni)
For the god Nanna, his master,

 (^{d}nanna) the god Nanna
 (lugal) king, master
 (a ni) his

In the first line, the text ❊⩘⟨ is written, which is the Sumerogram for the name of Nanna, the god of the Moon. The ❊ symbol is read as `an` (or `digir`) and is determinative for deity. We will learn in the next paragraph that this word is in the dative case; therefore, the translation of the rectangle is *"For Nanna."*

Sumerian uses symbols, called determinatives, to make the meaning clearer. The star ❊ in front of a god's name is the determinative of divinity. In transliteration, the determinatives are represented as a superscript letter, such as ^{d}`nanna`.

The Emacs command (`tr an nanna lugal a ni`) is used to typeset Sumerian. There are instructions about this command on the page where you found this tutorial.

1.5   Line 3 & 4

The third line of the Ur-Nammu-9 document contains the name of Ur-Nammu (⊏❊⊡), the king who rebuilt the temple of ^{d}Nanna and is the document's author. The king's name is formed by ⊏ (`ur`), which means *man* or *dog*, and ❊⊡ (^{d}`nanna`), the Mother Earth of the Sumerians. Therefore, the king's name, ⊏❊⊡, means *"The Man of Nammu."* Note that the determinative of deity (❊) precedes the goddess' name.

⊏❊⊡	⊨⩘	⩘⊏⟨	⊏	⊞
ur-^{d}nammu	lugal	urim	ma	ke4

(tr ur nammu lugal urim ma ke4)
Ur-Nammu, the king of Ur,

⊏❊⊡ (ur-^{d}nammu) King Ur-Nammu

⊨⩘ (lugal) king, master

⩘⊏⟨ (urim^{ki}) the city of Ur

⟨ (ki) *determinative of places*

⊏ (ma(k)) *dative after the consonant "M"*

⊞ (ke4) *contraction of dative with ergative*

⊏⊞ (ma ke4) *genitive contracted with ergative*

The fourth line contains ⊨⩘⩘⊏⟨⊏⊞ (tr lugal urim2 ma ke4), where ⩘⊏⟨ (tr urim) represents the city that was the cult center of Nanna. It is formed by the Sumerograms (tr shesh) (⩘) and (tr unug) (⊏⊏). The Sumerogram ⟨ is the determinative for geographic names.

Determinatives, such as ✳ ("digir" - deity) and ⬨ ("ki" - place), are not pronounced. Their role is to make the meaning of the word clearer.

The genitive case denotes possession. Unlike the dative, English has a genitive case, formed by an apostrophe followed by **"s."** In English, one would say, **"Urim's King."** In Sumerian, the genitive follows the possessor and is marked with `{ak}` after consonants and `{k}` after vowels. In this nominal chain, the "a" of `{ak}` was assimilated with the previous consonant, becoming 𒈠 (`ma`). The Sumerogram 𒆤 (`ke4`) represents the `{k}` of the genitive and the `{e}` of the ergative.

Sumerian is an ergative language, meaning the agent of transitive actions is marked. In Sumerian, the ergative marker is `{e}`. However, the subject of an intransitive verb, like "to go" or "to sleep," does not receive the `{e}` that marks the agent, whom linguists call ergative. Unmarked functions, such as the Sumerian subject of an intransitive verb and direct object of a transitive verb, are called absolutive and said to be marked with the null symbol `{}`. In short, for the Sumerians and modern Basques, if the subject of a sentence does not perform a task, it cannot be called ergative.

1.6 Line 5

The fifth rectangle introduces the temple (e2 - 𒂍) that Ur-Nammu built. The expression 𒂍𒀀𒉌 (e2 ani) means "*his temple*." It is in the absolutive case and, therefore, receives the null symbol mark `{}`, a technical way of saying it does not bear a mark. The noun chain 𒂍𒀀𒉌 (e2 ani) undergoes the consequences of the task performed. Thus, it is often called patient, accusative or target.

𒂍 𒀀 𒉌

e2   a   ni
(tr e2 a ni)
his temple

𒂍 (e2) house, temple
𒂍𒈨𒌍 (e2 me esh-pl) pl. houses, temples
𒀀𒉌 (a ni) his

1.7   Line 6

A verbal stem prefixed by a sequence of particles and possibly followed by a suffix is called a *verbal chain.* The verbal chain 𒈬𒈾𒆕 (mu-na-du3) can be translated as "*built.*"

𒈬	𒈾	𒆕
mu	na	du3

(tr mu na du3)
he has built for the god

___

𒆕 (du3) to build, to make, to plant
𒈬 (mu) *conjugation prefix (CP), ventive prefix,* here
𒈾 (na) *cross-references the dative*

The verbal chain of the example has two prefixes and a stem:

Ventive Conjugation Prefix 𒈬 (CP). The Ventive CP indicates that the action occurs here, close to the speaker.

Dimensional Prefix 𒈾 (DP) cross-referencing the dative. Sumerian has a DP for each sentence component, except the ergative and the absolutive cases.

Verbal stem 𒆕 *he has built*

1.8   Line 7 & 8

The noun phrase 𒂦𒌶𒈠 (tr bad3 urim ma) means "*wall of Ur.*" The sumerogram 𒂦 (tr bad3) means "*city wall.*" The {(k)} of the genitive is omitted, meaning it is not expressed because it was not pronounced at the end of a nominal phrase.

bad3	urim	ma	mu	na	du3

(tr bad3 urim ma mu na du3)
the city wall of Ur, he has built

___

𒊏 (ra) ra, *dative ending*
𒈾 (na) *reference to dative*

1.9 Reading the brick

Let's read the whole brick inscription.

1. (tr an nanna) (𒀭𒈾𒀭) – ***For the god Nanna...***

2. (tr lugal ani) (𒈗𒀀𒉌) – ***his master,*** // The word 'lugal' means
   king or master. It is formed from 'lu2,' (𒇽) which means 'man,' and
   'gal,' (𒃲) which can be translated as 'great.' The expression 'a-ni'
   (𒀀𒉌) is equivalent to the possessive pronoun 'his.'

3. (tr ur-nammu) (𒌨𒀭𒅁) – ***Ur-Nammu,***

4. (tr lugal urim ki ma ke4) (𒈗𒋀𒀊𒆠𒈠𒆤) – ***the king of Ur,***

5. (tr e2 a ni) (𒂍𒀀𒉌) – ***his temple,*** // Remember that you already
   learned the meaning of 'a ni.'

6. (tr mu na du3) (𒈬𒈾𒆕) – ***he has built.***

7. (tr bad3 urim ma) (𒂦𒋀𒀊𒆠𒈠) – ***The wall of Ur,***

8. (tr mu na du3) (𒈬𒈾𒆕) – ***he built for Nanna.***

1.10 Translation

The meaning of the whole document is something like this: ***"For the god
Nanna, his Master, Ur-Nammu, the King of Ur, built his temple.
The king also built the city walls of Ur for Nanna."***

1.11 The method

I will use the method I employed in this first chapter to introduce a few other
documents. In other words, each chapter will contain grammar, vocabulary,
syllables, and essential Sumerograms for reading a Sumerian document. This
methodology ensures you can handle a manageable amount of information
initially.

After discussing how to read a Sumerian inscription, each chapter con-
tains an in-depth presentation of the Sumerian grammar. Initially, you can
do without reading this final grammar section. You can return to it after
practicing Sumerian with a few inscriptions.

1.12   Grammar notes

In the expression *transitive verb*, the word *transitive* means "affecting something or someone else." Therefore, a transitive verb only makes sense if someone exerts the verbal action on an object. On the other hand, an intransitive verb makes sense without any object. In a few words, without an object to affect, the sentence constructed around a transitive verb does not seem complete:

> *The king built.*

If you say something like that, people around you will ask: "What did he build?" Then you may answer:

(tr nanna ra)   (tr lugal e)   (tr e2 tur)   (tr mu na du3)
(tr nanna ra lugal e e2 tur mu na du3)
The king built a small house for Nanna.

If you say that a man went out, nobody will ask for further information. Therefore, the verb "to go out" is intransitive.

(tr lu2)   (tr ba e3)
(tr lu2 ba e3)
The man went out.

Here is the novelty: In Sumerian, any transitive verb can be turned into a transitive verb. Thus, let us consider the sentence below.

(tr lugal e)   (tr lu2)   (tr mu un e3)
(tr lugal e lu2 mu un e3)
The king expelled the man.

Now, the verb has an object, which changed the intransitive verb "to go out" into the transitive verb "to cause to go out." This method of creating transitive verbs is called *causative construction.*

APPENDIX 1: Grammar notes

Congratulations. You have finished the first lesson. This appendix gives further details about the case elements, the noun chain and the verbal chain. If you don't feel like it, you don't need to read it now. You can return to this lesson after completing a few Sumerian documents.

1.13   Case elements

The subject of a sentence is the topic of the conversation. Besides the subject, the sentence may have other marked components called case elements. Case elements may have references in the verbal chain. The leading case elements with their marks and references are:

Ergative: {e} task doer

(tr lugal e bad3 urim ma mu na du3)
The king built the city wall of Ur.

Dative: {ra} / (-na-) for

(tr nin a ni ra lugal e bad3 urim ma mu na du3)
The king built the wall of Ur for his lady.

Locative: {a} // (-ni-) in, on

𒈗 𒂊 𒌷 𒀀 𒂍 𒈬 𒌋 𒁺

(tr lugal e uru a e2 mu ni du3)
The king built a house in the city.

Terminative: {še}// (-ši-) in order to

𒂼 𒌷 𒈬 𒊺 � 𒅆 𒁺
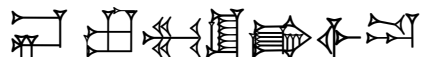
(tr ĝe26 uru ĝu10-my she-goal ga shi ĝen)
I will go there to my city.

Ablative: {ta}// (-ta-) or (-ra-) out of

𒌷 𒋫 𒁀 𒋫 𒁺

(cn uru ta ba ta ĝen)
He went out from the city.

Comitative: {da} // (-da-) with

𒈗 𒂊 𒌉 𒀀 𒉌 𒁕 𒂍 𒈬 𒌦 𒁕 𒁺

(tr lugal e dumu a ni da e2 mu un da du3)
The king built the house with his son.

Equitative: {gin} // (-gin-) like, as

𒀀 𒁀 � 𒈬 𒁷

(tr a ba shesh ĝu10-my gin-equitative)
Who is like my brother?

Absolutive: {∅} or {}

𒊩 𒀀 𒉌 𒊏 𒈗 𒂊 𒂄 𒈬 𒈾 𒁺

(tr nin a ni ra lugal e bad3 mu na du3)
For his lady, the king has built the city wall.

1.14 Dative conjugation

When used as a prefix to a verb, the dative takes different forms depending
on the person and number it is referring to.

(-ma-) to me

𒂷 𒂷 𒈗 𒂊 𒂍 𒈬 𒈠 𒆕

(tr ĝe26 ra lugal e e2 mu ma du3)
The king built a house for me.

(-ra-) to you

𒍣 𒍝 𒈗 𒂊 𒂍 𒈬 𒊏 𒆕

(tr ze2 ra lugal e e2 mu ra du3)
The king has built a house for you.

(-na-) to him/to her

� � 𒈗 𒂊 𒂍 𒈬 𒈾 𒆕

(tr nin ra lugal e e2 mu na du3)
The king has built a house for the lady.

(-me-) to us

𒈗 𒂊 𒂍 𒈬 𒈨 𒆕

(tr lugal e e2 mu me du3)
The king has built a house for us.

(-ne-) to them

𒈗 𒂊 𒂍 𒈬 𒉈 𒆕

(tr lugal e e2 mu ne du3)
The king has built a house for them.

1.15   Transitive verbs

A transitive verb describes an action that transitions from a subject to a direct object. In a transitive verb, the subject is the doer of the action and is called ergative, which is the Greek term for the person who performs a task. In Sumerian, the ergative is marked with 𒂊 {e}.

The absolutive case is the entity that undergoes the consequences of a task. The absolutive case can be the person accused of a deed. In this case, it is called accusative.

The absolutive case can also be a target of a shooting. Or it can be the object of health care, in which case it is called patient by the doctors.

Some linguists call *patient* all kinds of absolutive cases of a transitive verb, while others prefer the term accusative.

In Sumerian, the absolutive case receives no mark, but the linguists say it is marked by the null symbol {∅}.

The transitive verb itself comes last in a Sumerian sentence, and is described by a chain of affixes surrounding the stem. This verbal chain may contain a Modal Prefix (MP, such as 𒉡 • nu • not), a Conjugation Prefix (CP, such as 𒈬 • mu • *ventive*, here), initial pronominal prefix (IPP, such as N in 𒈬𒌦𒁤𒁲 • mu-n.dab.e • he seizes her) and suffix pronouns (𒂗𒉈𒂗 • en-de3-en • us, 𒌦𒍢𒂗 • un-ze2-en • you people). Below, there are examples of all initial pronominal prefixes.

1.16   Initial Pronominal Prefixes (IPP)

In the verbal chain, the Initial Pronominal Prefixes (IPP) come after the Conjugation Prefix (CP) that is 𒈬 (-mu-) in the examples below. The 𒈬 (-mu-) prefix is the ventive, i.e., it shows that the action is performed towards the speaker. English uses different verbs for the *andative* (motion away from the speaker) and the *ventive* (motion towards the speaker): *to take away / to bring*, *to go / to come*, etc. Sumerian gets the same effect by adding the *ventive* Conjugation Prefix (CP) to the verbal chain.

Below is an exhaustive list of the Initial Pronominal Prefixes for all grammatical persons.

(tr mu dab e)

𒈬𒀭𒁾𒌓

He seizes me.

(tr mu e dab e)

𒈬𒀭𒌓𒁾𒌓

He seizes you.

(tr mu un dab e)

𒈬𒀭𒌦𒁾𒌓

He seizes her.

(tr mu me dab e)

𒈬𒀭𒈨𒁾𒌓

He seizes us.

(tr mu un ne dab e)

𒈬𒀭𒌦𒉈𒁾𒌓

He seizes them.

I have for you a complete example of a transitive sentence below. I provide a pronunciation key and vocabulary, so I hope you can scan the sentence.

𒊩𒊏 𒇽𒂠 𒊺 𒌷𒀀 𒈬𒈾𒀊𒋧𒂠

(tr munus ra lu2 e she uru a mu na ab shum2 e)
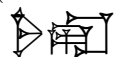
𒊩𒊏	𒇽𒂠	𒊺	𒌷𒀀	𒈬𒈾𒀊𒋧𒂠
munus ra	lu2 e	she	uru a	mu na ab shum2 e
for the woman	the man	barley	in the city	he gave it to her

The translation of the sentence is: *The man gave barley to the woman in the city.* The person who receives the barley is marked with the dative 𒊏 {ra}; the doer of the action has the ergative marker 𒂠 {e}, and the place of the occurrence has the locative marker 𒀀 {a}.

Vocabulary

𒊩 • (munus) woman, female

𒊏 • (ra) *dative marker*

𒇽 • (lu2) man, male

𒂊 • (e) *ergative marker*

𒊺 • (še) barley, grain

𒌷 • (uru) city

𒀀 • (a) *locative marker*

𒈬 • (mu) *venitive conjugation prefix*, here

𒈾 • (na) *cross-reference to the dative*, to her

𒀊 • (ab) *Initial Prefix Pronoun*, it

𒋧 • (shum2) to give

1.17 Intransitive verb

An intransitive verb does not have a direct object. In Sumerian, the subject of an intransitive verb goes to the absolutive case and, therefore, is not marked.

𒈗 𒌷𒈬𒊺 𒄿𒅎𒁺

(tr lu2 uru ĝu10-my she-goal i3 im ĝen)

𒈗	𒌷𒈬𒊺	𒄿𒅎	𒁺
lu2	uru ĝu10 she-goal	i3 im	ĝen
the king	to my city	*finite verb prefix*	came

The translation of the above example is: *The king came to my city.* You find the vocabulary necessary to scan this example below.

𒈗 • (lugal) king

𒄿𒅎 • (im) *finite verb marker*

𒁺 • (ĝen) to come

𒊺 • (še3) to, towards

𒌷 • (uru) city

𒌷𒈬 • (uru.ĝu10) my city

𒌷𒈬𒊺 • (uru ĝu10 she-goal) to my city

1.18   Modal Prefix (MP)

The modal prefixes express modality, i.e., relationships to reality or truth. You can only learn the indicative and negation modal prefixes for now. You may learn the other prefixes when you encounter them in Sumerian documents and inscriptions.

Indicative: (∅-)

In Sumerian, the indicative is unmarked. The empty prefix /∅-/ may represent this fact in transliteration. However, people rarely show unmarked prefixes.

Negation: /nu-/

(tr nu un gu7)
He didn't eat it.

Let him: hhe2-
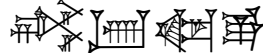
(tr hhe2 ib gu7 e)
Let him eat it.

Indeed: hha-

(tr hha an gu7)
He ate it, indeed.

Cohortative: ga-

(tr ga i3 ib2 ĝar re en ne en)
Let us put it there.

Prohibitive: na-

(tr na ab gu7 e)
He must not eat it.

1.19   Conjugation Prefix (CP)

The main Conjugation Prefixes (CP) are `/mu-/` to indicate that the action occurs here, `/ba/` to form middle/passive voice, `/i3/` to create a finite verbal tense, and `/ma/` in combination with `/ra/` of benefit. Below, you will find a fairly complete list of Conjugation Prefixes, but you need to learn only `/mu-/` and `/i3/` for this first lesson.

Here:

(tr mu un re6)
He brought it here.

Finite verb:

(tr i3 im ĝen)
He came here.

Finite verb, followed by open vowel:

(tr bi2 in re6)
He made the team bring it.

Finite verb, followed by ra:

(tr ma ra an re6)
He brought it here to you.

Middle voice:

(tr ba an re6)
He took it for himself.
Obs. The middle voice with /ba/ indicates an action that affects the doer.

Passive voice:

(tr ba re6)
It was brought.

1.20   Nominal chain

In Sumerian, most adjectives are formed from verbs by adding the suffix 𒀀 {a}. For example, the verb below means to be strong.

𒆗 (kalag) to be strong

To form an adjective from kalag, one adds an {a}. In Sumerian, different from English, the adjectives follow the noun.

   The expression below means *mighty king.* Note that the adjective follows the verb, and the 𒀀 marker contracts with the previous consonant to form the � (ga) syllable.

𒈗 𒆗 �

(tr lugal kalag ga)
a mighty king

   In English, the Saxon genitive is marked with S and precedes the verb. Therefore, one writes "*Elil's Warrior.*" In Sumerian, the genitive is marked with {k} after a vowel and {ak} after a consonant. Like the adjective, the genitive follows the noun. The {k} of the genitive was rarely written except when combined with the ergative. In this case, it was written as 𒆤 {ke4}.

   Below, there is another example of the adjective 𒀀 {a} marker contracting with the previous consonant to form an open syllable.

𒂍𒈗𒆷

(tr e2 lugal la)
the king's house

Now, let us examine a somewhat longer example of a noun chain.

�𒈗𒆷𒆤 • 𒂍

(tr ama a ni ra • dumu lugal la ke4 • e2 mu na du3)
The king's son has built a house for his mother.

Chapter 2

Inscription in Inanna's temple

Translation: *For Inanna, his lady, Ur-Nammu, the mighty man, the king of Ur, the king of Sumer and Akad, built her temple.*

2.1   Sentence structure

```
1- [inanna nin a ni].{(r)}        -- For Inanna, his Lady,
2- [ur-nammu                       -- Ur-Nammu,
3-   [nita kalag].{a}              -- the mighty man,
4-   [lugal urim ma].{(k)}         -- the king of Ur,
5-   [lugal ki-en-gi ki uri].{k}].{e} -- the king of Sumer and Akkad,
6- [e2 a ni].{}                    -- her (Inanna's) temple
7- mu na du3                       -- built.
```

From now on, the sentence structure will not contain the comments `.{k}` `#gen` for the genitive, `.{r}` `#dat` for the dative or `.{e}` `#erg` for the ergative (doer of the task). The suffixes `.{r}` for the dative, `.{k}` for the genitive and `.{e}` for the ergative should suffice for showing the grammatical function of the noun chain and its components. However, functional suffixes you didn't learn in the previous lessons will be commented on.

2.2   Annotations

an   inanna   nin   a ni

(tr an inanna nin a ni)

For Inanna, his lady,

- • (^dinana) Inanna
- • (nin) lady, queen, mistress
- • (a ni) his, her

This noun phrase ends in an unwritten `{(r)}`, the dative marker. However, there is no ambiguity since the verb chain has a dative reference.

ur-nammu   nita   kalag   ga

(tr ur-nammu nita kalag ga)

Ur-Nammu, the mighty man,

- • (nita) man, male
- • (kalag) to be strong, to be mighty
- • (kalag ga) *adj. from verb*, mighty
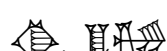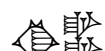
One may form adjectives by adding an `{a}`-suffix to a verbal root, *kalag* in the above expression. This nominalizing suffix contracts with the preceding word's final `g`, giving extra information about its correct reading. Different from English, Sumerian adjectives follow the noun they modify.

𒈗 𒋀𒀊𒆠 𒈠
lugal   urim   ma
(tr lugal urim ma)
the king of Ur,

As we learned from text 1, the genitive is formed by `{k}` after vowels and `{ak}` after consonants. The scribe often omitted the `{(k)}` of `{ak}`. The "*m*" of "*ma*" is contamination from the final consonant of the previous word.

𒈗 𒆠𒂗𒄀 𒆠𒌵 𒆤
lugal   ki-en-gi   ki uri   ke4
(tr lugal ki-en-gi ki uri ke4)
the king of Sumer and Akkad,

𒆠𒂗𒄀 • (ki-en-gi) Sumer
𒆠𒌵 • (ki-uri) Akkad

In ke4 (𒆤), the `{k}` is the genitive marker, and the `{e}` is the ergative marker. You already saw the analysis of the last two lines in lesson 1, therefore they should pose no difficulty to you.

𒂍 𒀀 𒉌
e2   a   ni
(tr e2 a ni)
his temple

𒂍 (e2) house, temple
𒂍𒈨𒂠 (e2 me esh-pl) houses, temples
𒀀𒉌 (a ni) his

𒈬 𒈾 𒆕
mu   na   du3
(tr mu na du3)
he has built for the god

𒆕 (du3) to build, to make, to plant
𒈬 (mu) *conjugation prefix (CP), ventive prefix,* here
𒈾 (na) *cross-references the dative*

2.3   Verbs

The introduction of an ergative subject into the sentence is the preferred method of expressing causation with intransitive verbs, as you learned on page 8.

𒈛𒍢 𒍑 (tr lu2 hhulu e)   (tr munus sumun)   (tr mu un ĝen)
(tr lu2 hhulu e munus libir ra mu un ĝen)
The bad man caused the old woman to go.

Consider a sentence: "The powerful king caused the man to build a house." This sentence has three participants, to wit, the mighty king, the man, and the task of building a house. One of the participants forced the other to perform the task. In Sumerian, the dative case marked by �551 (ra) identifies the person who is caused to do the task. In the third person singular, the Sumerians used the conjugation prefix 𒉌 (ni) to referece this kind of dative.

(tr lugal kalag ga e)   (tr lu2 ra)   (tr e2)   (tr mu ni in du3)
(tr lugal kalag ga e lu2 ra e2 mu ni in du3)
The powerful king made the man to build a house.

In the second person, the verbal chain would have 𒊑 (ri) as reference. In the example below, (za ra) (za ra, you) is usually omitted since the conjugation prefix 𒉌 (ni) makes clear who was caused to build the house.

(tr lugal kalag ga e)   (tr za ra)   (tr e2)   (tr mu ri in du3)
(tr lugal kalag ga e za ra e2 mu ri in du3)
The powerful king made you build a house.

To make a long story short, in sentences with three participants, the dative indicates the person that the ergative participant causes to do something. However, you must be careful in distinguishing dative of the participant that was caused to do something from the dative of the beneficiary.

APPENDIX 2: Conjugation

Congratulations on finishing another lesson. This appendix details Sumerian pronouns and verbs. After completing the fifth lesson, you can return to it to gain an in-depth understanding of verbs.

2.4 Possessive Pronouns

You already learned a possessive pronoun: 𒈗𒀀𒉌 (tr lugar ani) *"his master"*. Below, I've included a complete list of possessive pronouns.

(tr e2 ĝu10) – my house
𒂍 𒈾

(tr e2 zu) – thy house
𒂍𒍪

(tr e2 a ni) – his house
𒂍𒀀𒉌

(tr e2 bi) – its house
𒂍𒁉

(tr e2 me) – our house
𒂍𒈨

(tr e2 zu ne ne) – your house
𒂍𒍪𒉈𒉈
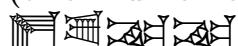
(tr e2 a ne ne) – their house
𒂍𒀀𒉈𒉈
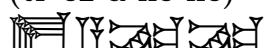
2.5 Independent pronouns

Sumerian has a set of independent pronouns that I advise you to learn right away. They are very important.

(ĝe26) I/me

𒂷

(ze2) thou/thee

𒍢

Obs. 𒍢 (ze2) becomes 𒍝 (za) when followed by the dative 𒞻 (ra).

(a-ne) he/she/him/her

𒀀𒉈

(a-ne-ne) they

𒀀𒉈𒉈
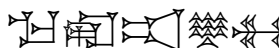
𒀀𒉈	𒁖	𒍝𒞻	𒈠𒞻𒀊𒈹𒈬
a ne	dab5	za ra	ma ra ab shum2 mu
he	the tablet	to you	will give

He will give you the tablet.

Vocabulary

𒀀𒉈 (a-ne) he/she

𒁖 (dab5) the tablet

𒍝𒞻 (zara) to you. 𒍢 (ze2) plus 𒞻 (ra) becomes 𒍝𒞻

Sometimes, an independent pronoun appears with an enclitic copula (verb *to be*) attached to its end, as shown below.

gu5-li	zu	ĝe26	me en
friend	your	I	am

I am your friend

(tr gu5 li ĝu10-my (my friend) ze2 me en (you are))

You are my friend.

(tr gu5 li zu (your friend) a ne am3 (she/he is))

She is your friend.

(tr gu5 li zu (your friend) me en ne en (we are))

We are your friends.

(tr gu5 li ĝu10-my (my friend) me en ze2 en (you guys))

You guys are my friends.

(tr gu5 li zu (your friends) a ne ne me esh-pl (they are))

They are your friends.

2.6   Interrogative pronouns

Sumerians marked yes/no interrogative sentences only by intonation and possibly by lengthening the final vowels, like many modern languages, such as Spanish and Portuguese.

To ask who performed a task, Sumerians used the interrogative word 𒀀𒁀𒀀 (tr a ba a), as shown below.

𒂍 • 𒀀𒁀𒀀 • 𒅔𒁺
(tr e2 • a ba a • in du3)
the temple • who • built?
Who built the temple?

To ask who is something, Sumerians used the interrogative pronoun 𒀀𒁀 (tr a-ba), as shown in the following example:

𒀀𒁀 • 𒀭𒌓 • 𒈾
(tr a ba • utu • gin-equitative)
Who • Utu • is like?
Who is like Utu?

In Sumerian, there is no wh-movement to the beginning of the clause, like in English and Spanish. Instead, the interrogative words are placed immediately before the verb.

𒈗𒂊 • 𒀀𒈾 • 𒈬𒌦𒀝
(tr lugal e • a na • mu un ak)
the king • what • did he do?
What did the king do?

𒁲𒈦𒌇 . 𒀀𒈾𒉈 . 𒉡𒍪

(tr dumu ĝu10-my • a na • nu zu)

my son • what • does not know?

What does my son not know?

𒀀𒈾𒉈 . 𒀀𒀭 . 𒉈𒂊

(tr a na • am3 • ne e)

what • is • this?

What is this?

An exception to the rule of placing the interrogative word immediately before the verb occurs in why-questions, as the example below shows.

𒀀𒈾𒀸 . 𒀀𒀭 . 𒉌𒂗

(tr a na ash • am3 • i3 ĝen)

what is it • that he came?

Why did he come?

The expression 𒀀𒈾𒀸 (a-na-ash) that one usually translates as "why?" means literally "what for?"

2.7   Conjugation

Sumerian verbs have two aspects: the hamtu (perfective) and the marû (imperfective). For the time being, you can translate the hamtu as the English present perfect, and the marû, as the English future.

hamtu: 𒈗𒂊𒁁𒈬�
(tr lugal e bad3 mu un gub)
The king has erected a wall here.
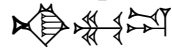
marû: 𒈗𒂊𒁁𒉌�
(tr lugal e bad3 i3 gub e)
The king will erect a wall.

Marie-Louise Thomsen says that the transitive verb distinguishes the hamtu conjugation with pronominal prefixes, while the marû conjugation has pronominal suffixes. As for intransitive verbs, both the hamtu and the marû have pronominal suffixes.
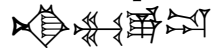
First person
𒈾𒈬𒁁cuneiform
(tr na mu gub)
hamtu: I have set up a border stone.

𒈾𒉌𒁁𒂗cuneiform
(tr na i3 gub en)
marû: I will set up a stone.

Second person singular
𒈾𒈬𒂊𒁁cuneiform
(tr na mu e gub)
hamtu: You have set up a stone.

𒈾𒉌𒁁𒂗cuneiform
(tr na i3 gub en)
marû: You will set up a stone.

Third person singular (humans)

𒆜𒅍𒈬𒌦𒄖
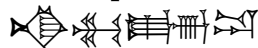
(tr na mu un gub)
hamtu: He has set up a stone.

𒆜𒈾𒉌𒄖𒂊

(tr na i3 gub e)
marû: He will set up a stone.

First person plural

𒆜𒅍𒅗𒁉𒂗𒌷𒂗
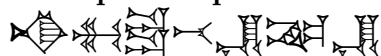
(tr na mu sug2 be en de3 en)
hamtu: We have set up a stone.

𒆜𒈾𒅗𒂗𒌷𒂗

(tr na i3 sug2 en de3 en)
marû: We will set up a stone.

Second person plural

𒆜𒅍𒂊𒅗𒁉𒂗𒍢𒂗
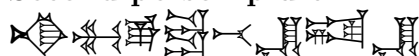
(tr na mu e sug2 be en ze2 en)
hamtu: You have set up a stone.

𒆜𒈾𒅗𒁉𒂗𒍢𒂗
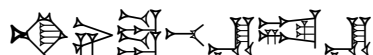
(tr na i3 sug2 be en ze2 en)
marû: You will set up a stone.

Third person plural

𒆜𒅍𒈬𒌦𒅗𒁉𒌍
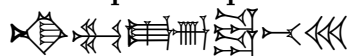
(tr na mu un sug2 be esh-pl)
hamtu: They have set up a stone.

𒆜𒈾𒅗𒁉𒂊𒉈

(tr na i3 sug2 be e ne)
marû: They will set up a stone.

Animals and plants have different pronouns for the third person singular. Therefore, in the third person singular, the hamtu aspect is not the same for humans and animals.

𒈾𒈬𒌒𒄄

(tr na mu ub gub)
It has set up a stone.

Most verbs have the same stem for the hamtu and the marû stems. However, some verbs reduplicate the hamtu stem to form the marû.

to have	singular	plural
hamtu	tuku	tuku
marû	tuku tuku	tuku tuku

to push	singular	plural
hamtu	du7	du7
marû	du7-du7	du7-du7

A few verbs exhibit a different root for hamtu and marû.

to speak	singular	plural
hamtu	du11	e
marû	e	e

2.8 Intransitive verb conjugation

Intransitive verbs have the same forms for the hamtu and the marû aspects. Below is the complete conjugation of the verb 𒂵 (ĝen), "to go" (or "to come").

Singular

(tr i3 ĝen en)

I went.

(tr i3 ĝen en)

You went.

(tr i3 ĝen)

He went.

Plural

(tr i3 re7 en de3 en)

We went.

(tr i3 re7 en ze2 en)

You people went.

(tr i3 re7 esh)

They went.

2.9   True adjectives

As you learned on page 18, Sumerian adjectives follow the noun they modify. Then, "mighty king" becomes 𒈗𒆗𒂵 (lugal kalag ga – *king mighty*) in Sumerian. You also learned that most adjectives are formed from verbs by adding the suffix 𒀀 {a}. The verb below means to be strong.

𒆗 (kalag) to be strong

The expression below means *mighty king*. Pay attention to the fact that the adjective follows the verb, and the 𒀀 marker contracts with the previous consonant to form the 𒂵 (ga) syllable.

𒈗 𒆗 𒂵
(tr lugal kalag ga)
a mighty king

Besides the adjectives formed from verbs, Sumerian has a few true adjectives. Below is a list of the most common adjectives that are not formed from verbs.

𒆜 • 𒆸	kaskal • daĝal	wide road
𒂍 • 𒃲	e2 • gal	big house
𒂍 • 𒌉	e2 • tur	small house
𒇽 • 𒈤	lu2 • mahh	great man
𒁔𒉺𒂍 • 𒋫	hhur saĝ • sukud	high mountain
𒂍 • 𒌓	e2 • babbar	white house
𒌤𒁉𒀀 • 𒈪	tum9 dir • giggi	black cloud
𒂍 • 𒄆	e2 • gibil	new house
𒂍 • 𒋤	e2 • sumun	old house

Chapter 3

Ur-Nammu-31

For Ningal, his lady, Ur-Nammu, the mighty man, the king of Ur, the king of Sumer and Akkad, dedicated this vessel for the protection of his life.

Sentence structure
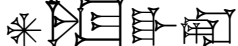
```
1- [ningal                       -- For Ningal,
2-     nin a ni].{(r)}           -- his Lady,
3- [ur-nammu                     -- Ur-Nammu,
4-   nita kalag.{a} #adjective    -- the mighty man,
5-   [lugal urim5 ma].{(k)}      -- the king of Ur,
6-   [lugal ki-en-gi ki uri].{k}].{e} -- the king of Sumer and Akkad,
7- [nam til3 a ni].{she3} #goal   -- for the sake of his life,
8- a mu na ru                    -- dedicated (this vessel).
```

3.1 Verbal chain

A Sumerian verb appears as a chain of affixes in a particular order, which is depicted in the table below for the most common occurrences.

Modal Prefix	Indicative	Negative	Coortative	Desiderative
	.∅ null prefix	nu	ga	hha or hhe2
Conjugation Prefix	Finite	Coordinator	Ventive	Middle Voice
	i3	'n ga	mu	ba
Dimensional Prefix	Dative	Locative	Directive	
	-na-	-ni-	-she3-	
Ergative Infix	i3 du3	e du3	in du3	ib2 du3
	I built	thou built	s/he built	they built
Verbal stem				

Example:

(tr an nin gal ra) for Ningal dative	(tr lugal e) the king ergative	(tr uru a) in the city locative	(tr e2) a temple absolutive	(tr i3 na ni in du3) he built ref. dat/loc

3.2 Annotations

(an) ningal   nin   a ni
(tr an ningal nin a ni)
For Ningal, his lady,

(^{d}Nin-gal) goddess of prisons

(nin) lady

ur-nammu   nita   kalag   ga
(tr ur-nammu nita kalag ga)
Ur-Nammu, the mighty man,

(nita) man
(kalag) to be mighty
(ga) *adj. from verb*

lugal   urim   ma
(tr lugal urim ma)
the king of Ur,

(lugal) king
(urim) the city of Ur
(ma) *contr. of gen. with "m" of "urim"*
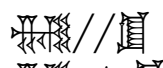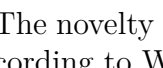
𒈗𒃲   𒆠𒂗𒄀   𒆠𒌵   𒆤
lugal   ki-en-gi   ki uri   ke4
(tr lugal ki-en-gi ki uri ke4)
the king of Sumer and Akkad,

𒆠𒂗𒄀   (ki-en-gi) Sumer
𒆠𒌵   (ki uri) Akkad
𒆤   (ke4) *adj. contraction gen/erg*

𒉆   𒋾   𒆷   �manni   �
nam   til3   la   ni   she3
(tr nam til3 la ni she3)
for the sake of his life,

𒉆𒇉//�   (nam + genitive//she3) because of
𒉆𒇉𒁉�   (nam bi she3) because of this
𒋾   (til3) to live, to be alive
𒋾𒆷   (til3 la(k)) of his life

The novelty in this inscription is the terminative marked with � (she3). According to Wikipedia, *Sumerians used the terminative case "-še" to indicate end-points in space or time and the targets or the goals of the action.*

𒀀   𒈬   𒈾   𒊒
a   mu   na   ru
(tr a mu na ru)
dedicated it (this object).

𒀀 // 𒊒   (a//ru) to dedicate

APPENDIX 3: Imperative

The prefix /ḫa/ 𒄩 expresses a request to the second person. It can be considered a polite form of imperative.

she	ĝu10-my	hha	mu	tum3

(tr she ĝu10-my hha mu tum3)
You should bring my barley.

𒊺	(she) barley, grain
𒈬	(ĝu10) my, *first-person possessive pronoun*
𒈬	(mu) *ventive particle*, here
𒌈	(tum3) *Alternative form of* 𒌉 (tum2), to bring

On the other hand, the imperative expresses a direct command to a person. It is expressed by re-shaping the verbal phrase: imperative forms start with the hamtu base followed by the prefixes of the finite verbal form.

shum2	ma2-me	ab-it

(tr shum2 ma2-me ab-it)
Give it to me.

𒋧	(šum2) to give
𒈠	(ma2) *1st-person personal pronoun:* to me, I, with me
𒀊	(ab) *3rd-person pronoun:* it

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Compare the imperative with the declarative sentence:

𒈣   𒀀𒉈   𒄴
ma2   a ne   shum2
(tr ma2-me ane-him shum2)
He gave it to me.

𒄴 (shum2) to give
𒈣 (ma2) *personal pronoun:* to me, I, with me
𒀀𒉈 (a ne) he, she
𒀀𒉈𒁕𒉡𒈨𒀀 (a ne da nu me a) without him

Plural imperative forms add the suffix 𒌦𒍢𒂗 (tr un ze2 en) that you
will learn in a future lesson. This suffix means "You people."

� nin9-sister   𒈬𒈮   𒌈   𒈬   𒌦𒍢𒂗
nin9-sister   ĝu10-my   tum2   mu   un ze2 en
(tr nin9-sister ĝu10-my tum2 mu un ze2 en)
You people, bring in my sister.

�nin9 (nin9) sister
𒈬𒈮 (ĝu10-my) my
𒈬𒈮 (mu) *ventive prefix*, here
𒌈 (tum2) to bring, pl. 𒑆
𒌦𒍢𒂗 (un ze2 en) *suffix pronoun*: you people

Another example of imperative:

𒅗 𒀀𒉈𒉌 𒀊𒐊

dug4	ane-him	ab-it

(tr dug4 ane-him ab-it)

Say it to him.

𒅗 (dug4) to speak, to say

𒀀𒉈𒉌 (ane-him) he/him, she/her

𒀊𒐊 (ab-it) *3rd-person pron.:* it

In the imperative, the prefix 𒉿 (i3) is often replaced by /-a/:

𒂍𒂠𒉿𒁺

(tr e2 she3 i3 ĝen)

"He went home."

𒂍𒂠𒁺𒈾

(tr e2 she3 ĝen na)

Go home!

3.3   Conjunctions

All languages have conjunctions to connect sentences, and Sumerian is no exception. An important conjunction is tukun-be2, which means "if."

𒁾𒈦𒁁𒋻	𒁾𒁍𒋫	𒅗	𒈬𒁕𒀊𒉌	𒂍𒊺	𒁺𒈾
tukun-be2	dub bu2 ta	gu3	mu da ab de2	e2 she3	ĝen na
if	this tablet	out	can read	to house	go

(tr tukum dub be2 ta gu3 mu da ab de2 e2 she3 ĝen na)
If you can read out this tablet, go home.

Vocabulary

𒉈𒂗   • (ne-en) this thing

𒁾𒈦𒁁𒋻𒁉   • (tukun-be2) if

𒅗 // 𒈨   • (gu3//de2) to read out, *requires ablative*

𒁾   • (dub) tablet

𒁾𒁉   • (dub.be2) this tablet

Other important conjunctions are 𒅥 (tr u3) "/also||and/," 𒌓 (tr ud) "/when/," 𒌓𒁕 (tr ud da) "/when||if/," 𒁾𒈦𒁁𒋻𒁉 (tr tukum bi) "/if/" and 𒂗𒈾 (tr en na) "/until/."

Mark of an entrepreneur

𒄿𒉈𒇷 (tr lipish u3 nam-ku3-zu)
(tr lipish u3 nam-ku3-zu)
Courage and Sagacity

Vocabulary

𒄿 (lipish) emotion, anger, rage, courage

𒅇 (u3) and

𒉆𒆬𒍪 (nam-ku3-zu) intelligence, sagacity

A colaborator is a brother

𒍝𒂊 • 𒅇 • 𒂷𒂊 • �911 • 𒈨𒂗�date𒂗
za-e • u3 • ĝa2-e • shesh • me.en.de3.en
you • and • I • brothers • we are
You and I are brothers.

Vocabulary

𒍝𒂊 • (za-e /ze/) Alternative form of , you

𒅇 • (u3) and

𒂷𒂊 • (ĝa2-e) *Alternative form of* 𒂷 (ĝe26), "I"

�911 • (šeš /šeš/) brother, collaborator

𒈨𒂗𒁲𒂗 • (me.en.de3.en) we are

Dedication to Gilgamesh

Gilgamesh was the first king of Uruk. His rule probably took place in the beginning of the Dynastic Period, c. 2900 – 2350 BC, and he became a major figure in Sumerian legend during the Third Dynasty of Ur, from circa 2112 to circa 2004 BC.

𒉌𒍑𒂵𒈩𒊏

𒈗𒌨𒀭𒃶𒆤

𒆠𒂗𒄀𒆠𒌵

𒆠𒂗
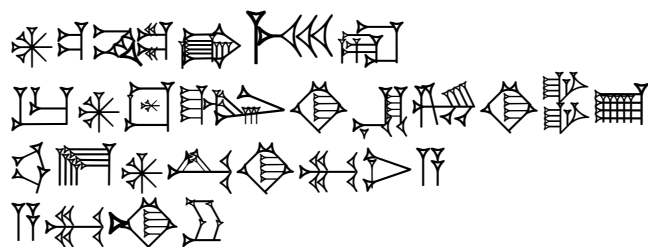
(tr bil3-ga-mesh3 ra)

For Gilgamesh,

    𒊏 • (ra) *Dative marker*, to || for

𒌨𒇉 • 𒈗 • 𒆠𒂗𒄀 • 𒆠𒌵 • 𒆤

(tr ur-nammu • lugal • ki-en-gi • ki uri • ke4)

Ur-Nammu, the king of Sumer and Akkad,

    𒆠𒂗𒄀 • (ki-en-gi) Sumer

    𒆠𒌵 • (ki-uri) Akkad

𒌓 • 𒂍𒀭𒈾𒈾 • 𒈬𒆕 • 𒀀

(tr ud • e2 an nanna • mu du3 • a)

when he built the temple of Nanna,

    Obs. 𒀀 (a) is the locative marker.

    𒌓 • (ud) when

    𒂍𒀭𒈾𒈾 • (e2 an nanna) temple of the god Nanna

    𒈬𒆕 • (mu-du3) he built here

𒉈𒂗 • 𒀀 / 𒈬𒂊 / 𒊒
(tr ne-en • a / mu-e / ru)
he dedicated this object.

> 𒉈𒂗 • (ne-en) this thing, this object
> 𒀀//𒊒 • (a // ru) to dedicate
> Obs. the verb 𒀀//𒊒 is split around its prefixes

The 𒀀/ (a/) component comes before the prefix chain, and the /𒊒 (/ru) component comes after. In the vocabulary, the two components of such a verb are separated by a double slash, C1//C2. Examples:

> 𒅗//𒁲 • (gu3//de2) to read out, *requires ablative*
> 𒀀//𒊒 • (a // ru) to dedicate
> 𒊕𒄑//� • (saĝ-ĝiš-ra) to commit murder

Ur-Nammu's Law

𒌉𒆕𒁉 𒈝 𒅇 𒊕 𒄑 𒁉 𒅔 𒊏 𒈝 𒁉 𒉌 𒄤 𒂊

(tr tukun-be2 lu2 u3 saĝ gish bi in ra lu2 bi i3 gaz e)
If a man commits murder,
this man will be executed.

𒌉𒆕𒁉 • 𒈝 • 𒅇 • 𒊕𒄑/ 𒁉𒅔 /𒊏
(tr tukun-be2 • lu2 • u3 • saĝ-gish / bi in / ra)
if • a man • and • commit murder,

> 𒌉𒆕𒁉 • (tukun-be2) if
> 𒈝 • (lu2) man
> 𒅇 • (u3) and
> 𒊕𒄑//� • (saĝ-ĝiš-ra) to commit murder

𒇽𒁉 • 𒉌𒄤𒂊
(tr lu2 bi • i3 gaz e)
that man • will be executed

　　　𒇽𒁉 • (lu2 bi or lu2 be2) this man
　　　𒉌 • (i3) *finite verb marker in the verbal chain*
　　　𒄤 • (gaz) to kill, to slaughter, to execute

Vocabulary for the examples of conjunction

𒍝𒂊 • (za-e /ze/) *Alternative form of* 𒍝, you

𒉈𒂗 • (ne-en) this thing

𒀀// 𒊒 • (a // ru) to dedicate

𒌓 • (ud) sun, day, when

𒆠𒂗𒄀 • (ki-en-gi) Sumer

𒆠𒌵 • (ki-uri) Akkad

𒄤 • (gaz) to kill, to execute

𒊕𒄑𒊏 //𒊏 • (saĝ-ĝiš-ra) to commit murder

𒇽 • (lu2) man

𒇽𒁉 • (lu2 bi or lu2 be2) this man

𒉈𒂗 • (ne en) this object

𒉈 • (ne) this object

𒌇𒊬𒁉 • (tukun-be2) if

Chapter 4

Ur-Nammu-23

Translation: *For Enil, the king of all the lands, his master, Ur-Nammu, the king of Sumer and Akkad, built his temple. The king also dredged the Enerinnun canal for Enlil.*

4.1   Sentence structure

The text starts with the benefactive, that ends in `{(r)}`, not expressed.

𒀭𒂗𒆤
𒈗𒆳𒆳𒊏
𒈗𒀀𒉌

The plural of nouns that refer to human beings is formed by a suffixed
"`ene`". The plural of things, plants and animals is usually unmarked. Redu-
plication – such as "`kur kur`" (𒆳𒆳) – conveys the idea of totality: "all the
lands."

Then comes the agent, with the E prefix combined with the genitive
ending into KE4 (𒆤).

The next in the line is the object that was built, to wit, his temple 𒂍𒀀𒉌
(tr e2 a ni).

```
1- [enlil                            -- For Enlil,
2-   [lugal kur kur].{ra(K)}         -- the king of all lands,
3-   [lugar ani]].{(r)}              -- his king,
4- [ur nammu                         -- Ur-Nammu,
5-   [lugal urim].{ma(k)}            -- king of Ur,
6-   lugal [kiengi kiuri].{k}].{e}   -- king of Sumer and Akkad,
7- [e2 ani].{}                       -- his temple
8- mu na du3                         -- build
9- [id2 en erin2 nun                 -- The Enerinnun canal,
10- [id2 nidba].{k}.ani].{}          -- his canal of food offering,
11- mu na ba al                      -- (the king) dredged for him.
```

4.2   Annotations
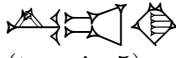
𒀭𒂗𒆤 𒈗 𒆳𒆳𒊏 𒈗𒀀𒉌
an en lil2   lugal   kur kur ra   lugal a ni
(tr an en lil2 lugal kur kur ra lugal a ni)
For Enlil, king of all lands, his master,

𒀭𒂗𒆤 (d-en-lil2) Enlil, the king of gods
𒆳 (kur) mountain,land, country
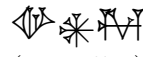
(tr ur-nammu)　(tr lugal)　(tr urim5)　(tr ma)
(tr ur-nammu lugal urim5 ma)
Ur-Nammu, the king of Ur,

(tr lugal)　(tr ki-en-gi)　(tr ki uri)　(tr ke4)
(tr lugal ki-en-gi ki uri ke4)
the king of Sumer and Akkad,

(tr e2)　(tr a ni)　(tr mu na du3)
(tr e2 a ni mu na du3)
he has built the god's temple.

(tr id2)　(tr en)　(tr erin2)　(tr nun)
(tr id2 en erin2 nun)
The Enerinnun canal,
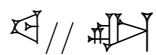
(tr id2)　(tr nidba)　(tr ka)　(tr ni)　(tr mu na ba al)
(tr id2 nidba ka ni mu na ba al)
his canal of food offerings, the king dredged for him.

Vocabulary

(id2) river, watercourse, canal

(kurum6) food ration

(kurum6 inanna.k) food of Inanna

(ba-al) to excavate, to dig

4.3   Proper Adjectives

On page 32, you learned that most Sumerian adjectives are formed from verbs that express qualifications, such as "*te be mighty*" (mahh ⇌). The 𒀀 (a) suffix transforms such verbs into adjectives. However, there are proper adjectives that you should learn by heart since they are very few. Below is the rest of the list of proper adjectives.

lugal • libir		former king
inim • zid		true word
inim • lul		false word
(she) • (hhulu)		bad barley
(na) • (dugud)		heavy stone
(ninda) • (du10)		sweet food
(barag sig9 ga) • (ku3)		holly shrine
(ĝar) • (sikil)		clean place
(munus) • (silim)		healthy woman
(ninda) • (sis)		bitter food

Appendix 4: Numerals

You completed lesson four. Then you should be able to read many votive Sumerian artifacts that you find in museums around the world.

To boost your reading skills, I recommend that you go back to the first lesson and read the contents of the **APPENDIX: Gramar notes**. Thus, you will improve your holding of case elements, and learn that the dative changes depending on the person to whom the scribe is dedicating a building or an object. You will also receive introductory concepts of transitive verbs, intransitive verbs, the hamtu and the marû conjugation.

However, before returning to the first lesson, you may want to read about Sumerian numerals, and learn to count things in cuneiform.

4.4   Sumerian Numerals

To count things, modern people use ten digits: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 0. Therefore, it is said that we use base 10. Computers use only two digits to perform calculations: 0 and 1. Then, computers work with base 2. As we will see below, Sumerians used base 60. Therefore, they needed 60 digits to count things.

You will be happy to learn that we still use the Sumerian method of counting when we deal with navigation and time. That is the reason for having 60 minutes in an hour and 60 seconds in a minute. Besides this, the latitude and the longitude that determines a position on the Earth's surface is measured in degrees, where each degree is divided in 60 minutes.

Since the distance from the North Pole is 90 degrees and ten thousand km, each degree of latitude has 10000/90, roughly 111 km. If you divide 111 km by 60 to discover the length of one minute, you get 1852 km, which is a nautical mile.

Numbers from 1 to 9: dish

𒁹	1 – (tr dish)	𒈫	2 – (tr 2-dish)	𒐈	3 – (tr 3-dish)
𒐉	4 – (tr 4-dish)	𒐊	5 – (tr 5-dish)	𒐋	6 – (tr 6-dish)
𒐌	7 – (tr 7-dish)	𒐍	8 – (tr 8-dish)	𒐎	9 – (tr 9-dish)

Numbers from 10 to 50

𒌋	10 – (tr 1-u)	𒌋𒌋	20 – (tr 2-u)	𒌍	30 – (tr 3-u)
𒑩	40 – (tr 4-u)	𒑪	50 – (tr 5-u)	𒑪𒈫	42 – (tr 4-u 2-dish)

Numbers from 60 to 360

In the same way that we use the digit 1 to represent the numbers one and ten, the Sumerians used 𒁹 to represent both one and sixty.

𒁹	60 – (ĝesh)	𒈫	120 – (2-ĝesh)	𒐈	180 – (3-ĝesh)
𒐉	240 – (4-ĝesh)	𒐊	300 – (5-ĝesh)	𒐋	360 – (6-ĝesh)
𒐌	420 – (7-ĝesh)	𒐍	480 – (8-ĝesh)	𒐎	540 – (9-ĝesh)

Numbers from 600 to 3600

The geshu wedges are used to represent both multiples of 600 and the numbers 70, 80, 90, 100 and 110, as shown below.

𒐏	600/70 – (tr 1-geshu)	𒐏𒐏	1200/80 – (tr 2-geshu)
𒐏𒐏𒐏	1800/90 – (tr 3-geshu)	𒐏𒐏𒐏𒐏	4 – (tr 4-geshu)
𒐏𒐏𒐏𒐏𒐏	5 – (tr 5-geshu)	●	3600 – (tr 1-shar2)

Chapter 5

Ur-Nammu-5

𒌑𒌋𒁕𒈾𒈬𒌋

𒈗𒋼

𒋀𒀊𒆠

𒀭𒀭𒃲𒀭𒈗

𒃮𒊬𒁉𒈬

𒈬𒈾𒆕

𒆬𒁺𒁀𒈾

𒈬𒈾𒆕

Translation: *Ur-Nammu, the king of Ur, planted a magnificent garden for An, the king of gods. He also has built a dais in a pure place for the god.*

5.1   Sentence structure

```
1- [an lugal [diĝir.{re.ne}]        -- For An, king of the gods,
2-    lugal a ni].{(r)}             -- his master,
3- [ur-nammu                        -- Ur-Nammu,
4-    [lugal urim5].{ma (k)}].{e}   -- the king of Ur,
5- [gish kiri6 mah].{∅}            -- an outstandig garden
6- mu na gub                        -- planted.
7- [barag [ki sikil].{la}].{∅}     -- a dais in a pure place
8- mu na du3                        -- (the king) built (for An).
```

5.2   Annotations

(tr an)   (tr lugal)   (tr digir)   (tr re ne)
(tr an lugal digir re ne)
For An, the king of the gods,

___

⌗ (an) sky, the sky god Ān
⌗ (digir) deity, god/goddess
⌗⌗ (diggir-rene) gods

(tr lugal)   (tr a ni)
(tr lugal a ni)
his master,

(tr ur-nammu)   (tr lugal)   (tr urim5 ma ke4)
(tr ur-nammu lugal urim5 ma ke4)
the king of Ur,

(tr gish)   (tr kiri6)   (tr mah)   (tr mu na gub)
(tr gish kiri6 mah mu na gub)
a magnificent garden he planted.

𒑱 𒀭 𒉺𒌇 𒀭 𒆳𒈨𒈾𒂦

(tr barag) (tr ki) (tr sikil) (tr la) (tr mu na du3)

(tr barag ki sikil la mu na du3)

He also has built a dais in a pure place for An.

Vocabulary

𒄑 (ǧeš, ǧiš) tree

𒆠𒉿 (kiri6) orchard, garden plot

𒈤 (maḫ) to be lofty, magnificent

𒑱 (barag) dais, throne

   barag 𒑱 ! dais, throne

𒉺𒌇 (sikil) to be pure, clean

   sikil 𒉺𒌇 ! to be clean

5.3 Writing numbers

On page 49, you learned how to write basic numerals in Sumerian. In this section, you will learn how to combine these basic numerals.

Modern people use ten digits to count: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 0. Therefore, computer scientists say the contemporary world uses base ten. In base 10, a digit n can represent $n \times 1$, $n \times 10$, $n \times 100$, etc.

How do we know which value the digit stands for? By its position in the numerical string. If the digit comes first from right to left, it simply represents its unities. If it comes second, its basic value must be multiplied by ten. If it comes third in the numerical string, its basic value is multiplied by 100. Then, 342 represents $3 \times 100 + 4 \times 10 + 2$.

A system where the interpretation of a digit depends on its position in the numerical string is called place-value notation or positional numerical notation. Like us, Sumerians used a place value notation, but they counted in base 60. Therefore, the symbol $\vec{1}$ can be assigned the values 1, 60, 3600, etc. If $\vec{1}$ comes first in the numerical string, then its value is 1. If it comes second, it represents 60. If it is the third digit from left to right, it represents $1 \times 60 \times 60$, which produces 3600.

There are further details in this story that we need to clarify. Modern arithmetic students have zero to fill the empty places in a numerical figure.

Therefore, they can interpret a value without ambiguity. Sumerians invented zero only late in their history. Then, they needed to interpret the number from context. They could also place the numerical string in boxes and leave empty boxes where we would place a zero. Let us see one example. Below, you can see the number 1273.

𒐖	𒌋	𒐊
(tr 2-ĝesh)	(tr 1-geshu)	(tr 3-dish)
2×60	$60 + 10$	3
1200	70	3

Cardinal numbers show how many things one is dealing with. In Sumerian, cardinal numbers come after the noun, exactly like adjectives. Therefore, 𒈬𒅔 (mu imin) means *"seven years"*. Here, 𒐓 (imin) is the name of the number seven. Just like one can write 7 or seven in English, one can say (7-dish) or (imin) in Sumerian. Consider the example below.

𒀭𒈾𒊏𒄠𒀭𒋗𒂗   𒈬𒅔𒀀𒀔   𒈬𒌦𒄀𒂗
(tr an na ra am an suen)   (tr mu imin am3)   (tr mu un ge en)
For seven years, Naram-Suen was motionless.

𒈬𒅔 (mu) year
𒄀𒂗 (ge) to be firm, to be motionless

A literal translation of 𒈬𒅔𒀀𒀔 (mu imin am3) could be: *"years that are seven."* Another example:

𒀊𒃲𒅔𒂊   𒋝𒉏𒋫   𒋗𒈬𒊏𒅔𒈬𒍑
(tr abgal imin e)   (tr sig nim ta)   (tr shu mu ra in mu2 ush)
The seven sages have enlarged it for you in the lowlands and highlands.

𒀊𒃲 (abgal) sage
𒋝 (sig) lowland
𒉏 (nim) highland
𒋗 // 𒈬 (shu//mu2) to enlarge

Chapter 6

Ama gi
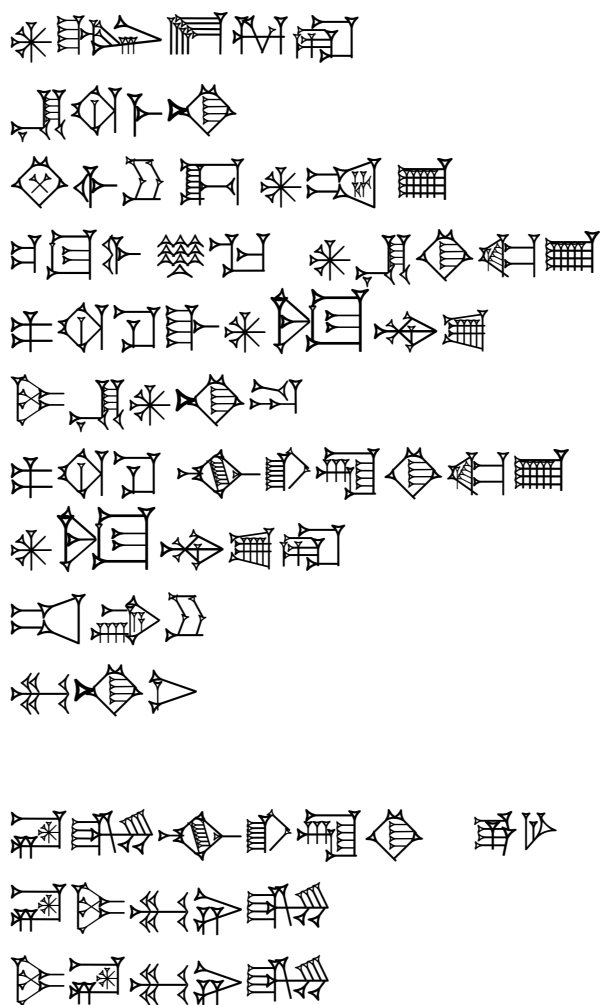
6.1   Translation

For Lugalemush, Entemena, the chosen of Nanshe's heart, the general governor of Ningirsu, the son of Enannatum, the governor of Lagash, has built the shrine of Dugru. He instituted a remission of Lagash's obligations. He returned the mother to her children. He returned the children to their mother.

6.2   Annotations

𒀭   𒈗𒂍𒈹   𒊏
(tr an)   (tr lugal e2 mush3)   (tr ra)
(tr an lugal e2 mush3 ra)
For the divine Lugalemush

───────────────────────────────────────

𒀭𒈗𒂍𒈹 (an lugal e2 mush3) Lugalemush, *Inanna's husband*

★ ★ ★
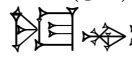
𒂗𒋼𒈨𒈾   𒊮   𒅆𒁕   𒀭𒀀𒉌𒆠
(tr en-te-me-na)   (tr sha3)   (tr pad3 da)   (tr nanshe ke4)
(tr en-te-me-na sha3 pad3 da nanshe ke4)
Entemena, the chosen of Nanshe's heart,

───────────────────────────────────────

𒂗𒋼𒈨𒈾 (en-te-me-na) Entemena
𒊮 (sha3) heart
𒊮 𒈬𒁀𒆠 (tr sha3 mu ba ka) in the middle of that year
𒅆𒁕 (pad3) to find, to choose
𒀭𒀀𒉌 (nanshe) the goddess Nanshe

★ ★ ★
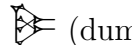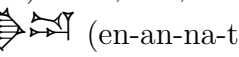
𒉺𒂠   𒋧𒈠   𒀭𒂗𒆠𒆠
(tr geshtug2)   (tr shum2 ma)   (tr enki ka ke4)
(tr geshtug2 shum2 ma enki ka ke4)
given wisdom by Enky,

───────────────────────────────────────

𒉺𒂠 (geshtug2) intelligence
𒋧 (shum2) to give
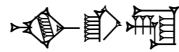
𒉺𒓤𒁲 𒃲 𒀭𒊩𒌆𒄖𒋢
(tr ensi2)   (tr gal)   (tr an ningirsu)
(tr ensi2 gal an ningirsu)
the general governor of Ningirsu

𒉺𒓤𒁲 (ensi2) governor
𒃲 (gal), pl. 𒃲𒃲 (gal gal) big, large, great
𒀭𒊩𒌆𒄖𒋢 (ningirsu) the city of Ningirsu

⋆⋆⋆

𒇻 𒂗𒀭𒈾𒉪
(tr dumu)   (tr en-an-na-tum2)
(tr dumu en-an-na-tum2)
the son of Enannatum,

𒇻 (dumu) child, son, daughter
𒂗𒀭𒈾𒉪 (en-an-na-tum2) Enannatum I of Lagash

⋆⋆⋆

𒉺𒓤𒁲 𒉢𒁓𒆠 𒅗 𒆤
(tr ensi2)   (tr lagash ki)   (tr ka)   (tr ke4)
(tr ensi2 lagash ki ka ke4)
the governor of Lagash,

𒉢𒁓 (lagash) the city of Lagash
𒆤 (ke4) *gen. contracted with erg.*

⋆⋆⋆

𒀸𒊏𒀭𒊬𒁺 𒂔𒅗𒊬𒋩 𒈬𒈾𒁺

(tr an ningirsu ra)   (tr esh3 dug ru)   (tr mu na du3)

(tr an ningirsu ra esh3 dug ru mu na du3)

he built the shrine of Dugru for Ningirsu.

★ ★ ★

𒂼𒄄 𒆷𒉋𒆠 𒂊𒃻

(tr ama gi4)   (tr lagash ki)   (tr e gar)

(tr ama gi4 lagash ki e gar)

He instituted a remission of the obligations of Lagash.

𒂼𒄄 (ama gi4) freedom from debt or bondage

𒃻 (gar), marû 𒃻𒃻 (gar gar) to institute

𒂊 (e) *Finite verb marker before roots containing the vowel "a"*

★ ★ ★

Ama-gi4 means freedom, liberty, the right to return to one's mother, and remission. The verb e-gar (𒂊𒃻) means "to place" but conveys the idea of "to institute."

★ ★ ★

According to Marie-Louise Thomsen, the finite verb Conjugation Prefix 𒉈 (i3) has the variant 𒂊 (e) in Old Sumerian texts from Lagash, Uruk, Ur and Umma. In particular 𒂊 /-e/ is used immediately before verbal roots containing the vowels "a" and "e", e.g., 𒂊𒃻 (e ĝar), 𒂊𒀝 (e ak), 𒂊𒇲 (e la2) and 𒂊𒈨𒀀 (e me a). The finite verb marker 𒂊 (e) is also used before the case elements 𒁕 /-da-/, 𒈾 /-na-/, 𒉈 /-ne-/, 𒂠 /-she-/ and �télta /-ta-/.

𒀀 𒌉 𒈬𒉌𒄄
(tr ama) (tr dumu) (tr mu ni gi4)
(tr ama dumu mu ni gi4)
He returned the mother to her child.

𒀀 (ama) mother
𒌉 (dumu) child
𒄄 (gi4) to send back
𒉌 (ni) *loc.,* to the place
𒈬 (mu) *ventive,* here

⋆ ⋆ ⋆

𒌉 𒀀 𒈬𒉌𒄄
(tr dumu) (tr ama) (tr mu ni gi4)
(tr dumu ama mu ni gi4)
He returned the child to her mother.

6.3   Reduced relative clause

Suppose you want to say, in Sumerian, that *"Nanshe's heart has chosen Entemena."* You could write something thus:

(tr sha3 nanshe ke4)   (tr en-te-me-na)   (tr i3 pad3)
(tr sha3 nanshe ke4 en-te-me-na i3 pad3)
Nanshe's heart has chosen Entemena.

In the example, the reader knows that the heart of Nanshe performs the task due to the genitive/ergative marker ▦ (ke4).

In English, one uses a relative clause to say something like that: *"Entemena, whom Nanshe's heart has chosen, built the shrine of Dugru for Ningirsu."* In this example, to qualify Entemena, one uses the clause: *"whom Nanshe's heart has chosen."* Therefore, such a clause plays the role of an adjective and is called "relative clause."

English has an abbreviated form of relative clause, which is called ***reduced relative clause***: *"Entemena, chosen by Nanshe's heart – governor of Lagash – has built the temple of Dugru for Ningirsu."* Sumerian also has reduced relative clauses, as shown in the present inscription.

(tr en-te-me-na)   (tr sha3 pad3 da)   (tr nanshe ke4)
(tr en-te-me-na sha3 pad3 da nanshe ke4)
Entemena, chosen by Nanshe's heart,

⋆ ⋆ ⋆

(tr ensi2)   (tr lagash ki)   (tr ka)   (tr ke4)
(tr ensi2 lagash ki ka ke4)
the governor of Lagash,

⋆ ⋆ ⋆

(tr an ningirsu ra)   (tr esh3 dug ru)   (tr mu na du3)
(tr an ningirsu ra esh3 dug ru mu na du3)
he built the shrine of Dugru for Ningirsu.

Chapter 7

Relative clause

𒌨𒀭𒈗
𒈗𒋀𒀊𒆠𒈠
𒈗𒆠𒂗𒄀𒆠𒌵
𒈗𒆠𒂗𒆤𒊑𒀀𒈾
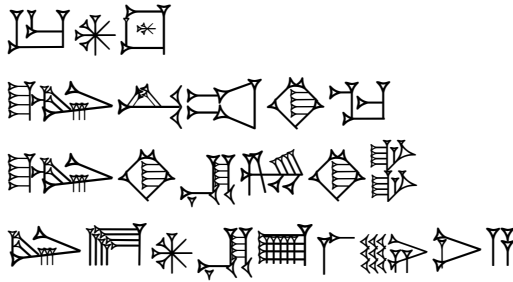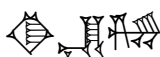
Translation: *Ur-Nammu, the king of Ur, the king of Sumer and Akkad, the man who built the temple of Enlil.*

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7.1   Annotations

(tr ur-nammu)   (tr lugal)   (tr urim5)   (tr ma)
(tr ur-nammu lugal urim5 ma)
Ur-Nammu, the king of Ur,

⋆⋆⋆

(tr lugal)   (tr ki-en-gi)   (tr ki uri)
(tr lugal ki-en-gi ki uri)
the king of Sumer and Akkad,

(ki-en-gi) Sumer

(ki uri) Akkad

⋆⋆⋆

(tr lu2)   (tr e2)   (tr en-lil2 la2)   (tr un du3 a)
(tr lu2 e2 en-lil2 la2 un du3 a)
the man who built the temple of Enlil.

(lu2) man

(en-lil2) the god Enlil

⋆⋆⋆

7.2   Relative clause

In a Sumerian relative clause, there are two elements. The first element is
the head noun, LU2 (   ), the person who built the temple. The second
element is a verbal phrase, which is transformed into an adjective by the
suffix A (   ). There is no need for a relative pronoun, such as "who" or
"that." The verbal phrase follows the noun directly.

Pay attention to an important point: the relative clause ends in the
adjective-forming A-morpheme (   ). After all, relative clauses are adjectives.

Chapter 8

The Finite Verb

Let us analyze the chapter about the **finite verb** in Marie-Louise Thomsen's *The Sumerian Language.* This exercise will show the reader how to cope with a book where all examples are given in transliterate form, without sumerograms.

According to Thomsen, the finite form is a verbal construction with a prefix chain and infix pronouns. It has three conjugations: the intransitive conjugation, the transitive hamtu and the transitive marû conjugation. The components of the finite form are given below.

- Modal Prefixes (MP) – nu 𒉡, ba ra 𒁀𒊏 , na 𒈾, ga 𒂷, ha �халь, sha 𒃶, u 𒌋

- Conjugation Prefixes (CP) – i3 𒉌, ga 𒂷 , mu 𒈬 , ba 𒁀 , bi 𒁉

- Pronominal Prefixes – e/a 𒂊 /𒀀, ?n 𒈝, ?b 𒀊

- Verbal stem

- ed (e)/(de3)/

- Pronominal Suffixes – en 𒂗, e 𒂊, enden 𒂗𒁕𒂗, en ze2 en 𒂗𒍢𒂗, esh2 𒌍, en ne 𒂗𒉈

- Syntactic suffix **-a-** 𒀀

- Pospositions – e 𒂊 , ra 𒊏 , ta 𒋫 , da 𒁕, etc.

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8.1 Intransitive and Transitive verbs
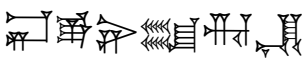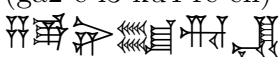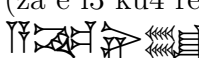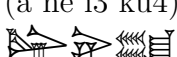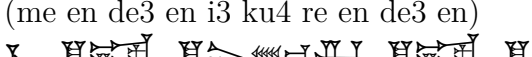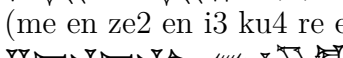
In principle, the Sumerian verbal root is neither transitive nor intransitive, but neutral concerning transitivity. The best way to decide about the transitivity is to count the number of participants in the action. If there is only one participant, one must interpret the verb as intransitive. Two participants indicate that the verb is transitive.

isimud4 de3   lu2 ki sikil   abzu eridu ki she3   im ma ni in ku4 ku4
(tr isimud4 de3 lu2 ki sikil abzu eridu ki she3 im ma ni in ku4 ku4)
Isimud made the girl enter Abzu Eridu.

(tr ki sikil)   (tr abzu eridu ki she3)   (tr i3 ku4)
(tr ki sikil abzu eridu ki she3 i3 ku4)
The girl entered Abzu Eridu.

8.2 One participant conjugation

Below, is the complete conjugation of the intransitive verb **ku4** 𒆭.

I entered	(ĝa2 e i3 ku4 re en)
you entered	(za e i3 ku4 re en)
he entered	(a ne i3 ku4)
the man entered	(lu2 i3 ku4)
we entered	(me en de3 en i3 ku4 re en de3 en)
you entered (pl.)	(me en ze2 en i3 ku4 re en ze2 en)
they entered	(a ne ne i3 ku4 ru esh2)

8.3 Two-participant conjugation

In the two-participant hamtu conjugation, the 1st-singular person has no
subject mark and the 1st-plural has only a suffix.

I raised the head.	𒂷𒂊𒊕𒄿𒅁𒍣	
	(ĝa2 e saĝ i3 ib2 zig3)	
You raised the head.	𒍥𒂊𒊕𒍣	
The man raised the head.	𒇽𒂊𒊕𒅔𒍣	
	(lu2 e saĝ in zig3)	
The ox raised the head.	𒄞𒂊𒊕𒅁𒍣	
	(gud e saĝ ib2 zig3)	
We raised the head.	𒈨𒂗𒉈𒂗𒊕𒄿𒅁𒍣�𒂗𒉈𒂗	
	(me en de3 en saĝ i3 ib2 zig3 ge en de3 en)	
You raised the head.	𒈨𒂗�zé𒂗𒊕𒈬𒂊𒍣�𒂗�zé𒂗	
	(me en ze2 en saĝ mu e zig3 ge en ze2 en)	
They raised the head.	𒀀𒉈𒉈𒊕𒅔𒍣�𒂠	
	(a ne ne saĝ in zig3 ge esh2)	

8.4 Three participant construction

In English, three participant constructions have the form: *X caused Y to at-*
tack Z. In this pattern, there is an underlying two-participant sentence, which
is *Y attacked Z*. In Sumerian, the subject of the underlying two-participant
sentence is marked with the dative postposition � (ra). The verbal chain
references to this dative with 𒉌 (ni) for the 3rd-singular and 𒊑 (ri) for the
2nd-singular person.

𒀭𒂗𒆤𒂵𒁀�шу𒃻𒉡𒈬𒉌𒌇

𒀭𒂗𒆤	𒂵𒁀�šu𒃻	𒉡𒈬𒉌𒌇
an en lil2 le	gaba shu ĝar	nu mu ni tuku

(tr an en lil2 le gaba shu ĝar nu mu ni tuku)
Enlil did not let him have a rival.

𒂵𒁀�šu𒃻 (gaba shu ĝar) rival
𒌇 (tuku) to have, to acquire

𒆳𒊑𒂵𒁀𒋗𒃻𒉆𒊑𒅔𒌇𒌦

𒆳𒊑 𒂵𒁀𒋗𒃻 𒉆𒊑𒅔𒌇𒌦
kur re   gaba shu ĝar   nam ri in tuku un
(tr kur re gaba shu ĝar nam ri in tuku un)
I will not let you have a rival in the mountains.

𒍝𒂊𒈨𒂗𒅗𒈬𒀭𒆠𒀀𒂵𒁀𒊑𒉣𒁀𒂊𒉌𒌇

𒍝𒂊𒈨𒂗   𒅗𒈬   𒀭𒆠𒀀   𒂵𒁀𒊑   𒉣𒁀𒂊𒉌𒌇
za e me en   inim ĝu10   an ki a   gaba ri   nu ba e ni tuku
(tr za e me en inim ĝu10 an ki a gaba ri nu ba e ni tuku)
You did not let my word have a rival in heaven and earth.

8.5   The imperfective suffix -ed-

Many scholars believe that 𒂊 (e) is a marû stem formant. People who do not
accept this theory introduced a prefix /-ed-/ to account for occurrences of 𒂊
(-e) in the 3rd person singular marû of intransitive verbs. If a vowel follows
the **-ed-** prefix, the /d/ is realized, but the /e/ is omitted. Otherwise, only
the /e/ is expressed.

  𒉿𒍠𒌇𒂊𒂗
  i3 zahh3 de3 en
  I will escape.

  𒉿𒍠𒂊
  i3 zahh3 e
  He will escape.

   The sentence below consists just of a verbal chain. The verb 𒆜 (du8 –
to hold, to detain) is marked with the imperfective suffix /-ed-/. The prefix
𒁀𒊏 (ba ra) expresses a strong negative statement.

  𒁀𒊏𒁀𒆜𒂊
  (tr ba ra ba du8 de3)
  I will not hold her back.

Chapter 9

Hamtu and Maru

Page 28 contains a short introduction to the hamtu and marû forms. Linguists believe that the hamtu form implements the imperfective aspect, which describes an ongoing or repeated action. In contrast, the marû form represents finished actions that grammarians associate with the perfective aspect.

Mamoru Yoshikawa, Dietz Edzard and Marie-Louise Thomsen classify Sumerian verbs, according to the way of forming the marû stem. To simplify the discussion, this chapter discusses only Thomsen's classifications, to whom regular verbs do not have a particular marû stem.

Hamtu	Marû
𒈗𒂊𒀀𒈾𒈬𒌦𒀝	𒈬𒊏𒀊𒋳𒂊
lugal e a na mu un ak	mu ra ab shum2 e
What did the king do?	He should give it to you.

The reduplication class forms the marû by reduplicating the hamtu stem. The example below shows the pronominal conjugation, which is equivalent to the English when-clause, with the reduplicating verb 𒍣 (zi). The pronominal conjugation consists of a verb nominalized with -/a/ and a following possessive pronoun referring to the subject.
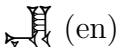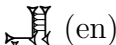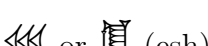
Hamtu	Marû
𒍣𒂵𒈬𒉈	𒍣𒍣𒁕𒈬𒉈
zig3 ga ĝu10 ne	zi zi da ĝu10 ne
as I rose	when I rise
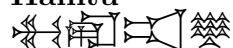
9.1   Regular verbs

The class of regular verbs comprises 70% Sumerian verbs. In this class, the
only way to distinguish the imperfective aspect from the perfective is that
the conjugation of the hamtu form is often realized with pronominal prefixes,
whereas the marû conjugation is accomplished with pronominal suffixes.

𒈹	shum2	to give	𒉡	aĝ2	to measure
𒊬	sar	to write	𒀝	ak	to do
𒁀	ba	to divide	𒁀 // �	ba // al	to dig
𒁇	bar	to open	𒁄	bala	to cross
𒄿 // 𒁇	igi // bar	to inspect	𒁁	dab5	to seize
𒉈	de2	to pour	𒁉	dib	to pass by
𒆕	du3	to build	𒁿	du8	to bake
𒂄	dul	to cover	𒅥	gu7	to eat
𒉋	il2	to carry	𒆪	ku5	to cut off
𒆳	kur2	to change	𒇲	la2	to bind
𒅆	pad3	to call	𒊬	sar	to write
𒋻	tar	to cut	�	tahh	to add
𒍑	us2	to follow	𒌵	uru4	to plow

Since they are so important to distinguish the marû from the hamtu form, below there is a table of the suffix pronouns for the two forms.

	Hamtu	**Marû**
1st person sing.	𒂗 (en)	
2nd person sing.	𒂗 (en)	
3rd person sing.	𒂊 (e)	∅
2nd person pl.	𒂗𒉈𒂗 (en de3 en)	
2nd person pl.	𒂗𒍢𒂗 (en ze2 en)	
3rd person pl.	𒂊𒉈 (e ne)	𒌍 or 𒐖 (esh)
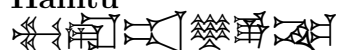
Hamtu
𒈬𒊏𒀊𒋳
mu ra ab shum2
He gave it to you.
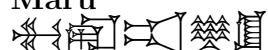
Maru
𒈬𒊏𒀊𒋳𒂊
mu ra ab shum2 e
He should give it to you.

Hamtu
𒈬𒊏𒀊𒋳𒂊𒉈
mu ra ab shum2 e ne
They gave it to you.
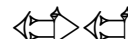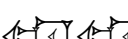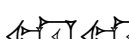
Maru
𒈬𒊏𒀊𒋳𒐖
mu ra ab shum2 esh2
They should give it to you.

9.2   Reduplicating verbs

This class of verbs forms the marû by reduplicating the hamtu stem.

to enter		singular			plural
hamtu	𒆳	ku4	𒋧		sun5
marû	𒆳𒆳	ku4 ku4	𒆳𒆳		ku4 ku4

to push		singular			plural
hamtu	𒂺	du7	𒂺		du7
marû	𒂺𒂺	du7 du7	𒂺𒂺		du7 du7

to return		singular			plural
hamtu	𒄀	gi4	𒄀		gi4
marû	𒄀𒄀	gi4 gi4	𒄀𒄀		gi4 gi4

to destroy		singular			plural
hamtu	𒄢	gul	𒄢		gul
marû	𒄢𒄢	gul gul	𒄢𒄢		gul gul

to place		singular			plural
hamtu	𒃻	ĝar	𒃻		ĝar
marû	𒂷𒂷	ĝa2 ĝa2	𒂷𒂷		ĝa2 ĝa2

to drink		singular			plural
hamtu	𒉊	naĝ	𒉊		naĝ
marû	𒉊𒉊	naĝ naĝ	𒉊𒉊		naĝ naĝ

to surround		singular		plural
hamtu	⬜	niĝin2	⬜	niĝin2
marû	⬜⬜	niĝin2 niĝin2	⬜⬜	niĝin2 niĝin2

to beat		singular		plural
hamtu	𒂍	ra	𒂍	ra
marû	𒂍𒂍	ra ra	𒂍𒂍	ra ra

to cover		singular		plural
hamtu	𒋙	shush2	𒋙	shush2
marû	𒋙𒋙	shush2 shush2	𒋙𒋙	shush2 shush2

to obtain		singular		plural
hamtu	▷	tuku	▷	tuku
marû	▷▷	tuku tuku	▷▷	tuku tuku

9.3 Alternating verbs

Marie-Louise Thomsen claims that only three verbs have been classified as alternating. This class has a short and an expanded form serving as hamtu and marû, respectively.

to go out
hamtu: 𒂊 (e3),   marû: 𒀀𒂊 (ed3)

to approach
hamtu: 𒋾 (ti),   marû: 𒋼 (teĝ)

The consonant "ĝ" of the marû form 𒋼 (teĝ) is only visible if an affix is added after the stem.

9.4   Complementary verbs

Only very few verbs have two entirely different roots for the hamtu and marû
stems.

to say		singular		plural
hamtu	𒅗	dug4	𒂊	e
marû	𒂊	e	𒂊	e

to go		singular		plural
hamtu	𒁺	ĝen	𒁺	du
marû	𒁻	re7	𒁻	su8

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