

Ahale: A Complete Reference

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Chapter 1

Phonology

1.1 Phonemic Inventory

	Labial	Alveolar	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p	t	k	ʔ
Nasal	m	n		
Fricative	ɸ	s	x	h
Sonorant	w	l		

Table 1.1: Consonant Inventory

1.2 Phonotactics

(C)V(V)

C: Any consonant

V: Any vowel

1. PHONOLOGY

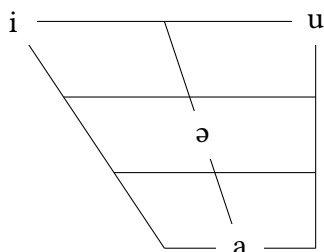


Figure 1.1: Phonemic Vowels

Diphthongs are permitted, provided the vowels differ in height. Under this rule, the diphthongs /iu/ and /ui/ are disallowed. The similar sequences /i?u/ and /u?i/, however, are permitted.

1.3 Stress

Stress is typically placed on the first syllable in a word. The only exception is when a word begins with /ə/, in which case it is placed on the second syllable. Stressed /ə/ is phonologically unstable, which makes it susceptible to shifting elsewhere. This can be observed in the following hypothetical forms: /ə.pa.lo/ [ə'palo], and /pa.lo/ ['palo]. Note how both forms are stressed on /pa/, even though the syllable is positioned differently in the word.

1.4 Allophony

/h/ realized as [ɣ] in stressed syllables

$$h \rightarrow \gamma / _V[+\text{stress}]$$

/ə/ is realized as [e] in stressed syllables

$\text{ə} \rightarrow \text{e} / _ [+\text{stress}]$

$/\phi/$ and $/h/$ are in free variation before $/u/$

$/au/$ monophthongizes to $[o]$ after glottal consonants

$au \rightarrow o / C [+\text{glottal}] _$

Part I

Morphology

Chapter 2

Nominal

2.1 Alignment

Ahale nouns are quite analytic. A typical noun consists of a stem, plus an affix denoting case. This may be either ergative or absolutive, though the absolutive is unmarked. The following points give an indication of when each case should be used.

- The agent of a transitive verb (A) is marked with ergative case
- The core argument of an intransitive verb (S) and the patient of a transitive verb (P) are both marked with absolutive case.

- (1) a. hawi keke
[ʔa.wi ʔe.kə]
Ø-hawi keke
ABS-rabbit NPST.IPFV-eat

‘The rabbit is eating’

- b. hahawi keke ϕ umau

[‘ya.ha.wi ‘ke.kə ‘ ϕ u.mau]

ha~hawi keke ϕ umau
ERG~rabbit NPST.IPFV-eat ABS,grass

‘The rabbit is eating the grass’

Notice that “rabbit” is declined in a different case for these two similar sentences. The ergative is marked through reduplication of the first syllable.

2.2 Plurality

Plurals are formed with an affix *me-*. To illustrate its use we can revisit Example 1b. ‘*hahawi keke ϕ umau*’. If we want to pluralize *hahawi*, we may expect *mehahawi*. This is not the case however. *-me* is inserted between the root and the reduplicated ergative marking. The reduplicated segment is not changed though, so the correct plural is *hamehawi*. *-me* is most accurately described as an interfix.

- (2) a. ana

[‘a.na]

Ø-ana

ABS-eye

- b. aʔana

[‘a.ʔa.na]

aʔ~ana

ERG~eye

- c. meana

[‘me.a.na]

<me>Ø-ana

<PL>*ABS-eye*

- d. ameana

[‘a.mə.a.na]

a<me>ana

ERG<PL>~eye

- (3) a. hawi
[ʔa.wi]
Ø-hawi
ABS-rabbit
- b. hahawi
[ʔa.ha.wi]
ha~hawi
ERG~rabbit
- c. mehawi
[me.ha.wi]
<me>Ø-hawi
<PL>*ABS-rabbit*
- d. hamehawi
[ʔa.mə.ʔa.wi]
ha<me>hawi
ERG<PL>~rabbit

In Example 2b, an epenthetic /ʔ/ has been inserted. This is done because of restrictions surrounding diphthongs. The full explanation can be found in §1.2.

For stems beginning with a syllable containing a diphthong, the reduplication surfaces a bit differently:

- (4) a. auna
[ʔa.na]
Ø-auna
ABS-moon
- b. aʔauna
[ʔa.ʔo.na]
aʔ~auna
ERG~moon
- c. meauna
[me.au.na]
<me>Ø-auna
<PL>*ABS-moon*
- d. ameauna
[ʔa.mə.au.na]
a<me>auna
ERG<PL>~moon

Chapter 3

Adjectival

Adjectives are not a unique class of words in Ahale. What may look like “adjectives” on the surface are simply nouns.

(5) masaʔe si sixi

[ˈma.sa.ʔə ˈsi ˈsi.xi]

[masa ʔe si] sixi
sun ASSOC brightness NPST.IPFV-shine

‘The bright sun shines.’

If the noun being modified in this way has ergative marking, it should be noted that the noun *does not* inflect in agreement with the main noun.

3.1 Adjective Ordering

Ahale’s basic adjective ordering is: «opinion» «size» «physical quality» «shape» «age» «color» «origin» «material» «type» «purpose»

In some cases however, this basic ordering may be deviated from. A single adjective may be placed before *?e*, allowing the main noun itself to be dropped, and the main to be referenced in futher discourse using the promoted adjective + *?e* as a logophoric pronoun. This is particularly useful when many of the same object with similar but differing qualities are being discussed for extended lengths of time (for example, a discussion about two different people, or about several types of a similar object). It may also be used, as seen below to chain clauses together.

(6) masa si?e sixi si?e sihu ka?a

['ma.sa 'si.?e 'si.xi 'si.?e 'si.hu 'ka.?a]

[masa	si		?e]	sixi		si-?e		sihu
	<i>SUN</i>	<i>brightness</i>		<i>ASSOC</i>		<i>NPST.IPFV-shine</i>		<i>brightness-?e</i>		<i>happen</i>
										ka?a
										<i>happiness</i>

‘The bright sun shines, and its light makes me happy.’

Chapter 4

Verbal

In Ahale, verb inflection is extremely minimal. Most verbal information is conveyed through periphrastic constructions, the most common being multiple-verb constructions.

	Nonpast	Past
Imperfective	Ø-	i-
Perfective	V(?)	m(u)-

Table 4.1: Verb Inflection

The NPST.PFV form is special. The vowel inserted is dependent on the nucleus of the syllable it attaches to. V ‘echoes’ from adjacent syllables. Thus, a form such as *ama*, conjugated in the NPST.PFV form, becomes *a?ama*.

Similarly, a form with an initial consonant such as *litu* will have its nucleus echoed to produce *ilitu* as the NPST.PFV form. But it also brings up the question, how does this differ from the PST.IFV form? This echo vowel behaves slightly differently than a typical Ahale prefix. It is unable to be

stressed, which in turn means that *litu* will be realized as [i.li.tu] in the PST.IPFV form, but [i'li.tu] in the NPST.PFV form. These minimal pairs only occur with i-stem verbs.

4.1 Alignment

Verbs follow direct-inverse alignment, which utilizes a person hierarchy to determine the appropriate verb marking. The direct construction is used when the agent of the transitive clause outranks the patient in the person hierarchy, and the inverse is used when the patient outranks the agent. It should be made clear that this type of alignment coexists with the ergative-absolutive alignment of nouns.

Person Hierarchy

One of the core mechanisms of a direct-inverse system is its person hierarchy. As mentioned above, this determines if the verb will be used in the direct or inverse form, based on the relative positions of verbal arguments in the hierarchy.

The person hierarchy in Ahale is: 2nd person > 1st person > 3rd person proximate (PROX) > third person obviative (OBV).

The proximate/obviative distinction is particularly notable. It is used to disambiguate situations where both arguments of the verb are 3rd person. It is not uncommon for the proximate/obviate marking to be dropped, due to functional overlap with the noun cases that *do* exist.

(7)

a. dudu kula me

[du.du 'ku.la 'me]

b. *du kula meme

Ø-du kula-Ø me~me

ABS-2SG hurt-DIR ERG~1SG

4. VERBAL

du~du kula-Ø Ø-me
ERG~2SG hurt-DIR ABS-1SG
 ‘You are hurting me.’

(8)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a. meme kulasi du
 [‘me.mə ‘ku.la.si ‘du]
 me-me kula-si Ø-du
 <i>ERG~1SG hurt-INV ABS-2SG</i>
 ‘I am hurting you.’</p> | <p>b. *me kulasi dudu
 me kula-si du-du
 <i>ABS-1SG hurt-INV ERG~2SG</i></p> |
|--|--|

The latter parts of these examples are ungrammatical, because the case marking on the nouns implies roles which are opposed by the marking on the verbs.

The direct-inverse marking is not entirely redundant, as it may seem from the above examples. The overlap of these systems allows some pronouns to be dropped, with no loss in clarity. For example, Example 7a may also be conveyed as follows:

- (9) kula me
 [‘ku.la ‘me]
 kula-Ø Ø-me
hurt-DIR ABS-1SG
 ‘You are hurting me.’

There is no explicitly stated agent in this example, but it is not necessary in this instance. The verb *kula* is in its direct form, meaning its agent outranks its patient in the person hierarchy. Only one thing outranks a 1st person patient, that being a 2nd person agent.

In a similar fashion, the object of an obviously transitive verb may be dropped as well:

- (10) *kula!*
[*'ku.la*]
kula-Ø
hurt-DIR
'You are hurting me.'
'It hurts!'

Because of the origin of this construction, this may not be used in the same general way 'It hurts!' can be in English, though *kula!* is still translated as such based on context.

4.2 Tense and Aspect

Constructing the Future

Ahale makes no morphological distinction between present and future tense. In everyday discourse, its speakers avoid explicitly referring to the future, as it is seen as overly speculative for most purposes. This is especially noticable when the reoccurrence of a habitual action is questioned. To exemplify this with an English example, a speaker of Ahale will prefer "The sun rises?" to a similar "Will the sun rise?". Self evident truths such as these do not require additional tense marking, as the interrogative fills the same role.

Habitual Imperfectives

The above question and answer would be rendered as follows in Ahale:

4. VERBAL

- (11) ti masa
[ˈti ˈma.sa]
Ø-ti masa
NPST.IPFV-rise[Q] sun
‘The sun rises?’
‘Will the sun rise?’

Note that even though this event may be typically rendered with the perfective aspect, the imperfective is used instead. This is because the rising of the sun is known to be habitual, and so the imperfective is used to show the knowledge of this. This is not typical, but is commonly done when referring to things that happen out of human control, things which are “just the way the world works”. Phenomena which follow this principle include:

- The passage of seasons
- Cycles of the sun and moon.
- Other cyclic natural processes
- Time, in the context of inevitability and continual change

Now that the question has been constructed, we must construct an answer. The SVO order, typical of declarative sentences, is returned to. In a simple example such as this one, the rest of the sentence remains unaltered. And thus, an Ahale speaker will simply reply:

- (12) masa ti
[ˈma.sa ˈti]
masa Ø-ti
sun NPST.IPFV-rise

‘The sun rises.’

These imperfectives continue to be read as specifically habitual, even in declarative sentences. To convey a progressive reading, a duration must be specified. It should also be noted that units of time have a implicit quantity of one, and so no explicit mention of quantity of hours is necessary in this example.

- (13) masa neʔe ti
 [ˈma.sa ˈne.ʔə ˈti]
 masa neʔe Ø-ti
sun hour NPST.IPFV-rise
 ‘The sun has been rising for one hour.’

- (14) masa pa ti
 [ˈma.sa ˈpa ˈti]
 masa pa Ø-ti
sun now NPST.IPFV-rise
 ‘The sun is rising.’

Explicit Future

On the rare occasion that the future must be explicitly marked, a different construction can be used. Ahale has an expression which loosely translates to “It was, it is [therefore it must always be]”. This implied segment allows similar constructions to be used in a grammatical context, as well as in discourse.

This construction can be used with almost any verb, but it is avoided due to its formality, and doubly so because an archaic copula, *wa*.

4. VERBAL

(15) iwa, alete wa

[i.wa, 'a.lə.te 'wa]

i-wa, alete Ø-wa

PST.IPFV-COP thus NPST.IPFV-COP

‘It was, it is, [therefore it must always be].’

The copula used in this phrase is another of these verbs, as it refers more to the ongoing passage of time rather than the event itself (if it were, *wa* would not be used in this fashion).

Here, Example 12 is rendered explicitly in the future, using *wa-repetition*.

(16) masa iti, alete ti

[ma.sa 'i.ti | 'a.lə.te 'ti]

masa i-ti alete Ø-ti

sun PST.IPFV-rise, thus NPST.IPFV-rise

‘The sun will rise.’

The most notable exception is when discussing emotion, in which case this construction cannot be used at all.

(17) *inale, alete nale

[i.na.le | 'a.lə.te 'na.lə]

i-nale, alete Ø-nale

PST.IPFV-be_sad thus NPST.IPFV-be_sad

‘I will be sad.’

Due to the sense of permanence the construction creates, it is ungrammatical to use here. It may even sound to some to be a malformed causative, but this is neither grammatically nor semantically correct. Emotions in

Ahale are treated as only things felt. Although a person can *do things* to cause an emotional response, they cannot cause them directly. This idea is reflected in the constructions used in reference to emotion.

The proper way to convey Example 17 will be discussed in §4.4.

In discourse, this construction (from now on referred to as *wa-repetition*) has a similar, but distinct meaning to its grammatical counterpart. Any one of “So be it.”, “It is what it is.”, or sometimes even “Leave it be.” may be apt translations. In these situations, the phrase may be shortened to ‘iwalete’, although this is seen as incredibly informal and potentially rude.

4.3 Mood

Expressing Interrogatives

Ahale’s interrogative is expressed through a change in word order. The verb is fronted, and conjugated as would be expected.

- (18) muti xanu
 [ˈmu.ti ˈxa.nu]
 mu-ti xanu
PST.PFV-rise[Q] bear
 ‘Did the bear wake up?’

The type of question being asked is often left up to context, and is usually translated using English ‘do’ or ‘how’ when there is insufficient context to make a finer distinction. Ambiguous questions, as seen here, also form polar questions. Deliberately underspecifying these is done as well.

- (19) mai muti xanu
 [ˈmai ˈmu.ti ˈxa.nu]

4. VERBAL

mai mu-ti xanu
time PST.PFV-rise[Q] bear
 ‘When did the bear wake up?’

Several things should be noted from this example. Ahale does not have dedicated *wh*-forms, instead using nouns for this purpose, which behave somewhat like an adverb, specifying what specifically is being questioned. The words used in this clarification can function as typical nouns as well. The use of these nouns is not mandatory, however, as the nature of the question can sometimes be inferred through context. When nouns are used as clarification of interrogatives, they are placed directly before the verb, and left unmarked for case. This is significant in that *muti* is being used intransitively, rather than in a transitive sense with *mai* as an argument of the verb.

(20) mamai uhumi xaku
 ['ma.mai u'yü.mi 'xa.ku]
 ma~mai u-humi Ø-xaku
ERG~time NPST.PFV-heal ABS-pain
 ‘Time heals all wounds.’

In this example, *uhumi* ‘to heal’, has *mai* as an argument. It is being used transitively, as evidenced by the direct object *xaxaku* and the presence of ergative marking. Though *mai* precedes the verb, there is no interrogative reading of this example.

Many words can be used to clarify the nature of an interrogative, far more than the interrogative pronouns of English. Here are just a few examples of how this can be used:

(21) laʔia xanu ['laʔia 'xa.nu]	(22) kane xanu ['ka.nə 'xa.nu]
------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

laʔia xanu
color bear

‘What color is the bear?’

kane xanu
strength bear

‘How strong is the bear?’

4.4 Stative vs. Dynamic Verbs

Ahale treats stative verbs quite differently than dynamic ones, especially when it comes to disambiguating TAM through morphology. This is seen most notably in the the disambiguation of future from past and present. The usual strategy of *wa-repetition* for dynamic verbs is not applicable for stative verbs, and as such a different strategy must be used.

Stative verbs can only be explicitly placed into the future tense through the use of an auxilliary verb, *sihu* placed before the main verb.

(23) sihu nale

[ˈsi.hu ˈna.lə]

Ø-sihu

Ø-nale

NPST.IPFV-happen NPST.IPFV-be_sad

‘I will be sad.’

Part II

Syntax

Chapter 5

Verbal

5.1 Focus

- (24) ϕ umau keke hahawi
[ϕ u.mau 'ke.kə 'ya.ha.wi]
 \emptyset - ϕ umau \emptyset -keke ha~hawi
ABS-grass NPST.IPFV-eat ERG~rabbit
'The grass is being eaten by the rabbit'

Because the grass is still the patient of the verb, it is still marked with the ergative. Fronted arguments of transitive verbs become focused. A passive construction will be used in translation to English. This is solely to approximate the topicalization, as this example is not a true passive (the verb's valency is not decreased). Arguments in default position can be focused, albeit in a different manner. Returning to Example 1b, but with the agent explicitly focused:

- (25) hahawi keke lu ϕ umau
[ya.ha.wi 'ke.kə 'lu 'phi.mau]

5. VERBAL

ha~hawi keke lu φumau
ERG~rabbit NPST.IPFV-eat OBV ABS,grass

‘The rabbit (as opposed to something else) is eating the grass’

By marking the already established patient with the obviative¹, it puts more focus on the (unmarked) proximal argument than would be typical.

5.2 Labile Verbs

A labile verb is a verb that can be either transitive or intransitive, and whose subject when intransitive corresponds to its direct object when transitive. They are also sometimes referred to as “S=O ambitransitive” verbs. A prototypical example of this being “John tripped” in contrast with “John tripped Tim”. Unlike a typical ambitransitive verb, the subject’s role changes.

- (26) φiha?au me
 [‘phi.ha.ʔo ‘me]
 φiha?au-Ø me
 trip-DIR 1SG.ABS
 ‘You tripped me’

- (27) me φiahau
 [‘me ‘phi.a.ho]
 me φiahau-Ø
 1SG.ABS trip--DIR

¹The standard use of proximate/obviate morphology is falling out of use in favor of case marking. Remaining instances have either become fossilized in expressions and idioms, or fulfilled another grammatical purpose, as seen here.

‘(You) tripped me’

These first two examples utilize concepts which have previously been covered in §4.1. The following utilizes the proximate particle, *ta*, in order to mark *me* as the most agentlike argument of a transitive verb. As such, there is no possibility of inferring an agent of *phiha?au*. In this way, labile verbs can be expressed without the need for a dummy agent.

(28) *ta me phiha?au*

[‘ta ‘me ‘phi.ha.ʔo]

ta me phiha?au-Ø

PROX 1SG.ABS trip-DIR

‘I tripped’

Chapter 6

Discourse

6.1 Discourse Repair

If someone mishears, or for whatever reason needs clarification on the arguments of a transitive verb, the obviative and proximate markers can be used.

(29) hahawi keke lu ϕ umau

[ʔa.ha.wi 'ke.kə 'lu 'ʔu.mau]

ha-hawi keke lu ϕ umau

ERG~rabbit NPST.IPFV-eat OBV ABS,grass

‘The rabbit (as opposed to something else) is eating the grass’

If the listener only hears *hahawi ke-ke lu*, and not the *patient*, the listener can ask the following:

(30) lu?

[ʔu]

If a listener only hears *keke lu ϕ umau*, and not the *agent*, the listener can ask the following:

(31) ta?

[ʔa]

lu	ta
OBV	PROX
‘Eating what?’	‘What is eating grass?’

This covers a very small portion of even the most basic discourse.

If our listener only heard “*hahawi — lu φumau*”, the response may be:

- (32) ta sihu lu?
 ['ta 'si.hu 'lu]
 ta sihu lu
 PROX happen OBV
 ‘The rabbit is doing what to grass?’

ta and *lu* are used here in a resumptive fashion, rather than repeating the content words. This implies more confidence, in that repeating *hahawi* or *φumau* may imply that the listener is also unsure of these components as well, rather than just the verb.

Because this phrase is somewhat of a standard one, it is shortened in colloquial speech. The most aggressive of these shortenings being ['tasul(ə)].

Responding to Repair Questions

Repair questions can be responded to quite similarly to how a “standard” question would be. The main difference is the necessity of the associative particle, *?e* to connect *ta* or *lu* to the appropriate content word(s). For example:

- (33) ta ?ehawi
 ['ta '?e.ha.wi]
 ta ?e hawi
 PROX ASSOC rabbit

‘The rabbit (is eating grass)’

The same structures used to respond to repair questions may be employed to correct or clarify the logophoric pronouns, for example if the pronoun was formed with an adjective which is too ambiguous, incorrect, or is no longer relevant.

(34) tatakaʔe ala ta ʔekatu kulasi me

[ʔa.ta.ka.ʔə 'a.la 'ta 'ʔe.ka.tu 'ku.la.si 'me]

tataka ʔe ala ta ʔe-katu kulasi me
ERG:rock ASSOC white PROX ʔe-sharpness hurt:INV ABS:1SG

‘The big white — no, sharp — rock is hurting me’

When *ʔe* is used in discourse repair, it attaches to the correction, rather than to *ta* or *lu*. This is the opposite of when *ʔe* is used associatively (see §3), where *ʔe* attaches to the noun being described.