

# ʔaʔaFaM

A Reference Grammar

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7. November 2019



# Foreword

ʔaʔaFaM is a constructed language.

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**Part I**

**Grammar**



# Chapter 1

## Phonology

### 1.1 Consonants

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Fortis	$p^h \sim \widehat{p\phi}$	$t^h \sim \widehat{ts}$	$c \sim \widehat{c\zeta}$	$k \sim \widehat{kx}$	$q \sim \widehat{q\chi}$	$ʔ$
Lenis	$p \sim b$	$t \sim d$				
Fricative	$\phi$	$s$	$\zeta \sim x \sim \chi \sim \text{h} \sim h$			
Approximant		$l$	$j$	$w$		
Nasal	$m$	$n$				
Rhotic		$r \sim \text{r} \sim \text{ɹ} \sim \text{ɻ} \sim \text{ɽ} \sim \text{ɿ} \sim \text{ʀ} \sim \text{ʁ}$				

Table 1.1: Phonemic Consonant Inventory

### 1.2 Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	$i \text{ (i:)}$		$u \text{ (u:)}$
Mid		$\text{ə}$	
Open		$a \text{ (a:)}$	

Table 1.2: Phonemic Vowel Inventory

#### 1.2.1 Epenthetic schwa

### 1.3 Morphophonemics

### 1.4 Orthography

ʔaʔaFaM has two recognized orthographic conventions, both based on the Latin alphabet. Both conventions use marked letterforms to indicate which part of a word are part of the underlying root and which are grammatical markers. The precise manner in which they're marked is the major point of difference between the two orthographic styles.

By and large, both orthographic conventions attempt to use the most intuitive representation of a given phoneme. There are very few differences between the conventions. Fortis and lenis stops are written using the typical voiceless and voiced symbols, respectively, in both systems. The labial fricative is written as ⟨f⟩ and the dorsal fricative as ⟨h⟩. The palatal approximant is written using ⟨j⟩, and the rhotic is, of course, written as ⟨r⟩. The other phonemes are written with their usual IPA characters in both conventions, except for /ʔ/, which is dealt with differently depending on which convention one is using.

### 1.4.1 Formal writing style

The formal writing conventions make use of small-caps letterforms to highlight roots. In addition, it uses the glottal stop character to indicate the glottal stop phoneme, using the capital glottal stop character ⟨ʔ⟩ when the glottal stop is part of a root radical (for instance, in the word ʔaʔa) and the lowercase glottal stop character ⟨ʔ⟩ otherwise (such as in the suffix -(e)ʔ).

### 1.4.2 Informal writing style

The informal writing conventions, also known as “texting script”, is the orthography used in the majority of day-to-day communication. Rather than using small-caps letterforms, it uses true capital letters for roots. It also uses ⟨7⟩ for the glottal stop, with no difference between capital and lowercase. While these differences could be considered less aesthetically pleasing, they result in an ASCII-compatible script, which makes this writing style far easier to use in most messaging apps and computer interfaces. Texting-style ʔaʔaFaM also allows for several shorthand abbreviations that tend not to be used in more formal style.



## Chapter 2

# Morphology

### 2.1 Underlying roots

### 2.2 Derivational morphology

ʔaʔaFam allows for words to be altered syntactically and semantically using a rich set of morphological operations, divided into two categories based on their concatenation.

#### 2.2.1 Primary derivation

Primary derivation refers to the non-concatenative morphology of stems. These operations are for the most part not productive, and not all roots have a corresponding stem with each of these patterns. They may not stack, i.e. a stem may only be inflected by one pattern at a time.

<i>Pattern</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Example</i>	
ΘaΘ	Abstract noun	SaJ	sleep (cf. <i>iSaaJ</i> ‘to sleep’)
		KaL	rainfall (cf. <i>KuLi</i> ‘raindrop’)
ΘanaΘ	Person of X, Agentive noun	KanaJ	author (cf. <i>KiiJ</i> ‘to write X’)
ΘarΘi	Liquid noun	QarFi	coffee (cf. <i>iQaaF</i> ‘to drink coffee’)
ΘurΘi	Object noun	NurMi	food (cf. <i>Niim</i> ‘to eat X’)
ΘidiΘ	Loose granular mass	WidiW	sugar (cf. <i>WaWa</i> ‘sweet’)
ΘasiΘ	Long slender object	BasiT	hair (cf. <i>BuliT</i> ‘head’)
ΘuliΘ	Associated body part	BuliT	head (cf. <i>iBaaT</i> ‘to understand’)
mΘiΘ	Instrument, tool	mRiW	weapon (cf. <i>RaQ</i> ‘pain’)
iΘuΘa	Place of X/with X attribute	iHuJa	night (cf. <i>HaTa</i> ‘dark’)
ΘiiΘ	Transitive verb	FiiS	to give birth to (cf. <i>Fanas</i> ‘person’)
iΘaaΘ	Intransitive verb	iʔaaʔ	to act stupidly (cf. <i>eʔaʔa</i> ‘dumb’)
ΘaΘa	Primary attribute	SaFRa	hot (cf. <i>SaFeR</i> ‘heat’)
ΘuΘu	Animal	BuRKu	dog (cf. <i>BaRK</i> ‘bark’)
ΘuuΘ	Country	FuUNs	France (cf. <i>FuNSu</i> ‘frog’)
ΘajuΘa	Flat plane, surface	KajuLa	Water surface (cf. <i>KaLi</i> ‘water’)

Table 2.1: Primary derivation patterns

#### 2.2.2 Secondary derivation

Secondary derivation refers to the exclusively suffixing operations that may be applied to stems in addition to primary derivation. Unlike primary derivation, these suffixes may be stacked freely.

### 2.2.3 Gender

Certain lexical items may be inflected to convey the gender of its referent. On certain words, namely *-ara* greetings, gender marking is obligatory.

<i>-un</i>	Feminine gender
<i>-aj</i>	Masculine gender
<i>-uj</i>	Explicitly non-binary
<i>-an</i>	Gender-neutral, agender

## 2.3 Inflectional morphology

### 2.3.1 Verb finals

### 2.3.2 Evidential modality

## 2.4 Pronouns and determiners

	<i>Nonplural</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>Speaker-only</i>	nas	naswi
<i>Addressee-only</i>	mi	miwi
<i>Inclusive</i>	nemi	nemiwi

Table 2.2: Discourse participant pronouns

	<i>Determiner</i>	<i>Pronoun</i>
<i>Proximal</i>	wa	wase
<i>Medial</i>	par	parse
<i>Distal</i>	bu	buse
<i>Interrogative</i>	li	lise
<i>Relative</i>	kun	kunse

Table 2.3: Determiners and demonstrative pronouns

## Chapter 3

# Syntax

### 3.1 Verb stacking

### 3.2 Comparative constructions

from-comparative, marks standard (to which is compared)

- (1) a. *pUMu Fanas fun MANTa -uru*  
rabbit person from big COP  
'The rabbit was bigger than a person.'
- b. *TaN nemi buse fun JaL -ila*  
TOP QUAL STD MRK  
time DU.IN DIST:PN from many\_things have  
'We have more time than them.'

### 3.3 Animacy hierarchy

- 0 Natural Forces
- 1 Pronouns (1 > 2 > 3)
- 2 Speakers of ?a?afam
- 3 Non-speakers of ?a?afam
- 4 Higher-order animals (mammals, octopus, intelligent creatures)
- 5 Body parts, tools, any inanimate object used for acting upon something
- 6 Lower-order animals
- 7 Plants
- 8 Inanimate objects
- 9 Abstract concepts

Table 3.1: Animacy hierarchy in nominals



## Chapter 4

# Semantics and pragmatics

### 4.1 Phatic expressions

Phatic expressions in ʔaʔaFAM are all in some way related to the nouns they are derived from, suggesting an emphasis on acknowledging the addressee's current or upcoming actions. The addressee may respond with the same expression back, even if it does not apply to the original speaker in any way, or respond in kind with a more suitable expression.

The obligatory gender marking is a means of expressing your gender identity in an unintrusive manner.<sup>1</sup>

**FaSanara** (*from Fas 'life'*) is a catch-all greeting, suitable for any time of day.

**saJanara** (*from saJ 'sleep'*) is similar in use to "good night", but is only used if the person is going to bed, not just leaving for the night.

### 4.2 Idiomatic expressions

CuMPu CuMPuuru = no shit, preaching to the choir

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<sup>1</sup>The real reason is that as Beth once ended a conversation with "sayonara", Knut noticed some coincidental similarities with the word saJ 'sleep' and the affix -un to indicate feminine gender, with the -ara reanalyzed as a phatic/optative marker of sorts.



**Part II**

**Dictionary**





# Roots and Derived Words

## B—T

### BiiT • v.tr.

1. to know *smth.*, to understand *smth.*  
mi iBAARBe? kajuc nas BiiT  
'I know that you want to leave.'
2. to love *sme.* like a brother, to have a close platonic bond with *sme.*, to be best friends with *sme.*  
nas wan JanaB BiiTibi  
'I love my friends.'  
(NB: the subject is reversed from its use as 'to understand': mi nas BiiTibi means 'you understand me' but 'I love you'.)

### iBaaT • v.intr.

1. to know, to understand, to be in a state of knowing or understanding what is going on
2. (when used reciprocally) to love each other, to have a close platonic bond, to be the best of friends  
nemi iBaaTami  
'The two of us are thick as thieves.'

## K—L

### aKiLu • n.

container of water to be drunk from, glass, cup, water bottle

ha MARK KaJ men aKiLuila  
'Mark owned five water bottles.'

### iKaaL • v.intr.

1. (impersonal) to be a rainy day  
wajHuJa iKaaL  
'Today's a rainy day.'
2. (impersonal) to be raining  
iMuNTa daw nas iYaaTe? kaj da buse fit iKaaL  
'I wanted to go to the mountains, but it's raining there.'

### KajuLa • n.

water surface

naswi KajuLa tui FiiLami? dak  
'we could see ourselves in the water surface.'

### KaL • n.

humidity, wetness, dampness

nas wan iFuSa KaLila  
'My house is damp.'

### KaLa • adj.

1. covered in water, saturated with water, wet, soaked
2. fluid, liquid

### KarLi • n.

water served as a beverage, water not part of a body of water or stream

mi Narka KarLiilali?  
'do you have any cold water?'

### KaSiL • n.

1. river, stream
2. stream or sprinkle of water



# Rootless Words

## Auxiliary Verbs

**hwii** • *aux.*

not, no, don't, never

**kaj** • *aux.*

to want to, to be going to



### **Part III**

## **Example Texts & Translations**

