Geobon

A Grammar

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13. February 2021

Background & Motivation

Geobоŋ is a conlang spoken by a race of goblins in my as-of-yet-unnamed conworld. As goblins are sort of an underclass, their language will always be in a semi-precarious diglossic situation, and in the future I hope to add some fun sociolinguistics and diachronics based on interactions with the other languages from this conworld.

This language is intended to have some deliberately weird elements yet still retain a veneer of quasi-naturalism—while naturalism is definitely a concern, it can be discarded for the sake of trying out something fun.

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Part I

Grammar

Chapter 1

Phonology

1.1 Phoneme Inventory

With an inventory of 29 consonants and 6-7 vowels (depending on analysis, Geoboŋ's inventory isn't particularly noteworthy in its size. The distribution of its phonemes, however, could be seen as a bit abnormal, particularly when it comes to the vowels.

1.1.1 Consonant Inventory

	Bilabial	Laminodental		Apical		Palatal	Velar	Glottal
		Non-Sibilant	Sibilant	Non-Sibilant	Sibilant			
Nasal	m	n̪		n̪		ɲ	ŋ	
Stop	p b	t̪ d̪	t̪s̪ d̪z̪	t̪ d̪	ʈs̪ ɖz̪	c͡ç ɟ͡ʝ	k g	ʔ
Fricative		ɬ̪	s̪	ɬ̪	ʂ	ç		
Approximant		ɹ̪ l̪		ɹ̪ l̪				

Table 1.1: Consonants

Geoboŋ's consonant inventory is on the larger size, and distinguishes between six places of articulation. Notably, there is a distinction between laminodental and apicoalveolar coronal consonants, as well as a distinction between sibilant and non-sibilant coronal stops/affricates and fricatives. The result remains, however, a very balanced inventory, and Geoboŋ is thus not notable for its consonants.

It should be noted that Geoboŋ orthography possesses distinct symbols for [t͡ɬ̪], [ʈ͡ɬ̪], and [x]. However, due to their distributions, these are generally not analyzed as distinct phonemes but rather as allophonic realizations of other phonemes/clusters of phonemes. This is elaborated on in Section 1.3.

1.1.2 Vowel Inventory

	Front	Back	
		Unrounded	Rounded
High	i	ɯ	u
Mid-High	e	ɤ	o
		∅ or ə	

Table 1.2: Vowels

Geoboŋ's vowel inventory is where it is particularly strange. While its size is fairly average, at six or seven vowels, their distribution is strikingly abnormal, with no low vowels whatsoever and six at mid-high or higher. If presented with vowels lower than the canonical six, Goblins will tend to analyze them as though they were mid-high vowels of equivalent front- and roundedness.

The existence of a seventh vowel, typically analyzed as /ə/, is fairly contentious. If this consonant exists, it only surfaces on a phonetic level in a very small subset of phonological contexts and is otherwise realized as syllabification[1] of the following consonant. Many argue that these syllables are better analyzed as vowelless, with [ə] being epenthetic when it occurs. If this is the case, Geoboŋ could be said to have no vowels lower than mid-high whatsoever. Geoboŋ orthography, however, uses seven-vowel analysis and writes /ə/ as ⟨a⟩.

1.2 Syllable Structure

There are two competing analyses of Geoboŋ syllable structure, which depend upon one's analysis of so-called vowelless syllables. One analysis posits the widespread permissability of vowelless syllables, in which the first consonant in the rime 'takes over' as the nucleus of a vowelless syllable. Others, as previously discussed, posit the existence of a seventh seldom-realized phonemic vowel /ə/ to avoid vowelless syllables entirely. Below we discuss both analyses and their implications.

In both analyses, the onset of a syllable in Geoboŋ is optional, at least on a phonemic level, and can consist of any consonant optionally preceded by a sibilant fricative (represented in this section by S) and/or followed by a sonorant or continuant. In Geoboŋ, sonorants and continuants (i.e., all non-stop consonants) form a natural class, indicated in this section with the symbol R whenever relevant.

1.2.1 Vowelless Analysis

In the 'vowelless analysis' of Geoboŋ syllable structure, the nucleus of the syllable is analyzed as potentially containing both a vowel and a continuant or sonorant, but with each being optional. However, the nucleus itself is not optional and thus at least one segment, be it a consonant or vowel, must occur therein. The coda is analyzed as optional and consisting of any single consonant.

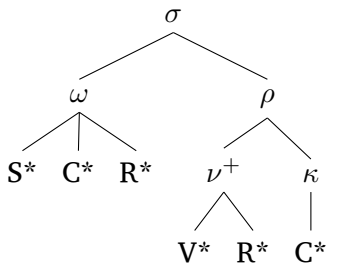

Figure 1.1: Syllable Structure in Vowelless Analysis

This syllable structure can also be expressed in Recursive Baerian Phonotactic Notation[2] as follows:

$$\#\left[\left[\left[\begin{array}{ccc} \text{S} & & \text{R} \\ \varnothing & \text{C} & \varnothing \\ & \varnothing & \end{array}\right]_{\omega}\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{V} \\ \text{R} \end{array}\right]_{\nu}\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{C} \\ \varnothing \end{array}\right]_{\kappa}\begin{array}{c}\sigma \\ \varnothing\end{array}\right]_{\sigma}\right]_{\lambda}\#$$

1.2.2 /ə/ Analysis

Among those who don't subscribe to an analysis of Geoboŋ as possessing vowelless syllables, the dominant approach is to analyze the syllable structure as underlyingly more symmetric and regular, such as that shown in Figure 1.2, with a mandatory vowel nucleus and both onset and coda allowing any consonant to cluster with a non-stop. Within this analysis, what phonetically surface as syllabic consonants are really just allophonous realizations of /ə/ + consonant clusters.

This structure is expressed in Baerian notation as follows:

$$\#\left[\left[\left[\begin{array}{ccc} \text{S} & & \text{R} \\ \varnothing & \text{C} & \varnothing \\ & \varnothing & \end{array}\right]_{\omega}\text{V}\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{R} \\ \varnothing \end{array}\begin{array}{c}\text{C} \\ \varnothing\end{array}\right]_{\kappa}\begin{array}{c}\sigma \\ \varnothing\end{array}\right]_{\sigma}\right]_{\lambda}\#$$

[1] Though the term 'syllabification' is itself a bit of a generalization, since this is realized in various ways depending on the consonant in question.

[2] Described in `https://llblumire.github.io/recursive-baerian-phonotactics-notation/Recursive_Baerian_Syntax_Notation.pdf`. Here we make some minor changes to the notation, moving the labels for the blocks to subscripted after the final bracket for readability. We also use λ for word-level blocks such that ω can be freed to be used for the syllable-onset block, in keeping with traditional syllable notation.

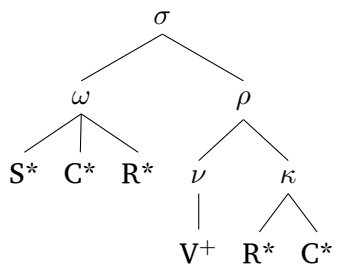

Figure 1.2: Syllable Structure in Vowelless Analysis

Those who champion this vowelless analysis tend to point to the relative symmetry of this structure compared to the more complicated analysis that allows for vowelless nuclei. However, those who oppose this analysis tend to point to the lack of similarity to surface forms as a point against this analysis.

In practice, both analyses generally can capture Geobon̪ phenomena. In this paper, we will point out where differences between these two analyses become relevant and refer to both analyses in those cases, but by and large we will focus on the actual changes in the surface forms rather than on their theoretical syllabic structure. Where phonemic representations of relevant Geobon̪ words are given, a schwa will be included for clarity, but this should not be taken as being wed to the schwa analysis by any means.

1.3 Phonotactics & Allophony

1.3.1 Laminarity in Clusters

Geobon̪ coronals can be divided into two distinct places of articulation—one lamino-dental, the other apicoalveolar. While laminarity is certainly phonemically contrastive (see, for example, laminal and apical consonant cannot be adjacent to one another. Thus, coronals in clusters persistently assimilate in laminarity to the following consonant.

This change is productive and does occur when compounding or inflection would result in adjacent coronals. In addition, syllabic consonants are considered adjacent to the onsets of their syllables—e.g., In the vowelless analysis, this is the natural extension of the restrictions on clusters, since the syllabic consonant is analyzed as being directly adjacant to the onset, and it serves as a major point in that analysis's favor. In the schwa analysis, this behavior is described as a limited form of laminal harmony.

$$[+\text{ consonantal}] \rightarrow [\alpha\,\text{distributed}] \;/\; \_\begin{bmatrix} +\text{ consonantal} \\ \alpha\text{ distributed} \end{bmatrix}$$

1.3.2 Palatals and their Interactions

When sibilant coronals are preceded by palatals, they become palatalized into alveolopalatal sibilants.

$$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{ consonantal} \\ +\text{ anterior} \\ +\text{ strident} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} +\text{ dorsal} \\ +\text{ high} \\ -\text{ low} \\ +\text{ front} \\ -\text{ back} \end{bmatrix} \;/\; \begin{bmatrix} +\text{ dorsal} \\ +\text{ high} \\ -\text{ low} \\ +\text{ front} \\ -\text{ back} \end{bmatrix} \_$$

Likewise, when palatal consonants are preceded by alveolar sibilants (including alveolopalatals), they themselves become alveolopalatal sibilants.

$$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{ consonantal} \\ +\text{ coronal} \\ +\text{ dorsal} \\ +\text{ front} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} +\text{ anterior} \\ +\text{ strident} \end{bmatrix} \;/\; \begin{bmatrix} +\text{ anterior} \\ +\text{ strident} \end{bmatrix} \_$$

Palatal consonants themselves are realized as velars when they precede a non-palatal consonant. Alveolopalatals are considered palatal for these purposes.

$$\begin{bmatrix} + \text{ consonantal} \\ + \text{ coronal} \\ + \text{ dorsal} \\ + \text{ front} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \left[\text{- coronal} \right] \; / \; \_ \begin{bmatrix} + \text{ consonantal} \\ \alpha \text{ dorsal} \\ \text{-}\alpha \text{ front} \end{bmatrix}$$

Unlike the other changes in this section, syllabic consonants are not considered adjacent to the last consonant in the onset. So in a word like *śas* /ɕəs̻/, while the presence of /ɕ/ triggers realization of /s̻/ as [ɕ], in a word like *śał* /ɕəɬ̻/ the presence of /ɬ̻/ doesn't trigger realization of /ɕ/ as [x].

Palatals also condition a regressive sound change when they follow any consonantal phone that is neither labial nor glottal. Sibilant coronals become alveolopalatal in this context, while non-sibilant coronals and velar consonants are palatalized at their current place of articulation. This palatalization also occurs when these phones follow the vowel /i/ as well.

$$\begin{bmatrix} + \text{ consonantal} \\ \text{- labial} \\ \text{- constricted glottis} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} + \text{ dorsal} \\ + \text{ high} \\ \text{- low} \\ + \text{ front} \\ \text{- back} \end{bmatrix} \; / \; \_ \begin{bmatrix} + \text{ dorsal} \\ + \text{ high} \\ \text{- low} \\ + \text{ front} \\ \text{- back} \end{bmatrix}$$

Palatalized coronals are all laminal, so the usual distinction between laminal and apical coronals is not maintained in environments where these phones are palatalized. This is the only aspect of these palatalization changes that is evident from the orthography, as these coronals are written using the laminal symbols—both /eɬ̻ç/ and /eɬ̺ç/ would be written as *ełś* and realized as [eɬ̻ʲç].

1.3.3 Obstruent Voicing Assimilation

1.3.4 Nasals

1.3.5 Sibilants and Laterals

1.3.6 Changes at Vowel Hiatus

1.3.7 Onsets and Codas with Syllabic Consonants

1.3.8 Syllabic Consonants Before Onset-Less Syllables

/ʔ/ or [ʔ]?

1. Coronal consonants persistently assimilate in laminarity to the following consonant.
    - syllabic consonants included
    - reflected in orthography
2. Sibilants become alveolopalatal after a palatal & palatal obstruents become alveolopalatal after a sibilant
    - syllabic consonants included
    - *not* reflected in orthography
3. Palatals become velar when they precede a non-palatal consonant
    - syllabic consonants *not* included
    - *not* reflected in orthography

4. Velars and non-sibilant coronals are palatalized before a palatal consonant
    - syllabic consonants included
    - *not* reflected in orthography
5. Obstruents persistently assimilate in voice to a following obstruent. Approximants devoice before unvoiced obstruents.
    - syllabic consonants included
    - reflected in orthography *sometimes* (i.e., when there is a symbol for the voiced/devoiced version of the respective sound)
6. Nasals assimilate in POA to a following plosive or nasal
    - syllabic consonants *not* included
    - reflected in orthography
7. Nasals become partially-voiced non-nasal stops before a voiceless obstruent
    - only applies to non-syllabic nasals
    - only reflected in orthography when it occurs due to productive *derivational* morphology, not when it occurs within a root or due to inflection
8. Coronal obstruents assimilate in sibilancy to a following fricative. Before a non-sibilant fricative, sibilant obstruents become lateral. Before a sibilant fricative, non-affricate stops become affricates
    - syllabic consonants *not* included
    - reflected in orthography
9. Two of the same consonant in a row merge into a single occurrence of that consonant. Fricatives following affricates at the same place of articulation are also deleted. Partially-voiced stops absorb following voiceless stops at the same place of articulation.
    - syllabic consonants included
    - reflected in orthography
10. Lateral fricatives cannot be adjacent to lateral approximants
    - if the approximant's placement violates the sonority hierarchy (if they are in the same syllable and it occurs before the fricative in the onset or after the fricative in the coda), the approximant is deleted
    - if they meet at a syllable boundary, they merge and the resulting phone takes on the voicing of the latter and the manner of articulation of the former
    - otherwise, the lateral fricative is realized as a velar non-lateral fricative
    - reflected in orthography, but

1.4 Orthography

Coronals

Non-Coronal Consonants

⟨p⟩	⟨b⟩	⟨m⟩	⟨ć⟩	⟨ź⟩	⟨ś⟩	⟨ń⟩	⟨k⟩	⟨g⟩	⟨ŋ⟩	⟨h⟩	⟨x⟩
[p]	[b]	[m]	[c͡ç]	[ʑ͡ʝ]	[ç]	[ɲ]	[k]	[g]	[ŋ]	[ʔ]	[x]

Vowels

⟨i⟩	⟨e⟩	⟨u⟩	⟨o⟩	⟨eu⟩	⟨eo⟩	⟨a⟩
[i]	[e]	[u]	[o]	[ɯ]	[ʏ]	/a/ or ∅

Chapter 2

Syntax

2.1 Noun Classes

Geoboŋ has six noun classes. The assignment of nouns to a particular noun class is largely semantic, and the descriptions of these classes is as follows

Class I: Dominant Forces This class contains anything that is 'animate' and so much more powerful than a goblin that an individual goblin can't do much but annoy it at best. This includes natural forces like celestial bodies, weather events, fire, explosions, etc., but also non-goblin humanoids, mythical beasts, particularly enormous or unfamiliar predators, massive moving structures like ships, and later particularly powerful weapons such as cannons. This class could also be described as 'dangerous things,' but given the goblin notion of danger, the label 'dominant' is a bit easier for most to parse

Class II: Goblins This class is pretty self-explanatory—it includes goblins, parts of goblins, and anything else sufficiently intelligent and goblin-like to be considered a person by goblins. This generally does not include so-called 'tall people,' who usually fall in Class I, but goblins have been heard referring to elf or human children who are old enough to talk and communicate but young enough to not pose a threat using this class.

Class III: Animals This class includes all non-intelligent animals, as well as any parts thereof. This includes parts of a dead animal's body that are being used for things—for instance, a pelt or a piece of meat.

Class IV: Quasi-animate/Useful Things This class contains things that aren't considered 'alive' per se, but which are more alive than things considered inanimate by nature of being made by intelligent/living creatures, or by otherwise being useful or consumable. Plants are in this class, but not all parts thereof are—the usefulness or quasi-livingness of the individual part is taken into account.

Class V: Inanimate Objects This class contains the remainder of all inanimate objects—anything that's part of the physical world but not animate-esque enough to get into Class IV falls here.

Class VI: Abstract Concepts This class is generally limited to words formed through particular grammatical operations, such as nominalized verbs and other such matters. Some things traditionally considered abstract concepts, like 'chaos,' are notably not in this class, but generally speaking this class captures most things that can't be said to have a physical form.

2.1.1 Animacy Hierarchy

Geoboŋ's parent language (known as *Cokizboŋ*, lit. 'finished language', to the goblins) was a direct-inverse language, and as such had an animacy hierarchy among what are now the noun classes. Modern Geoboŋ only shows remnants of this hierarchy in the verbal morphology.

0	1st & 2nd Person
1	Dominant Forces
2	Goblins
3	Animals
4	Quasi-animate/Useful Things
5	Inanimate Objects
6	Abstract Concepts

Table 2.1: Animacy Hierarchy

2.1.2 Verbal Agreement

Verbs in Geoboŋ are marked with a suffix that agrees with the syntactic object in person/noun class. These markers originate from pronouns that used to be placed after the verb and thus resemble reduced forms of those pronouns.

These markers agree in person and animacy with the syntactic *object* rather than the subject—that is, generally the more patientlike P argument rather than the more agentlike A argument (though the semantic roles these syntactic roles fill can obviously vary significantly depending on both the verb in question and the context). The reflexive pronouns shown here occur in the subject position, never in the object position, when the subject and object are the same entity.

If both the subject and object are of the same noun class and it is thus ambiguous which entity in the sentence the agreement marking is referring to, the appropriate standalone pronoun can be placed directly after the subject. However, this is only done if the sentence would be obviously ambiguous otherwise.

2.2 Verbs & Transitivity

Agreement with the syntactic P argument naturally leads to the question of what (if any) markings verbs take if the verb is intransitive. The simple answer is that Geoboŋ lacks true syntactic intransitives entirely. Rather, several different constructions are used as workarounds so that otherwise transitive Geoboŋ verbs can express typically-intransitive meanings.

For verbs in which the single argument does not initiate or is not actively responsible for the action of the verb, the most common solution is to use the abstract pronoun *es* as a dummy subject, similar to how English would use 'there' or 'it' in certain types of clauses.

(1) *Geob es łemp-eog*
goblin 3.ABST trip -3.GOB
'The goblin trips.' (lit., 'It trips the goblin.')

There does not have to be an unspoken agent or cause of the action described by the verb for this structure to work—the purest of statives with no actual cause can also be represented by this structure.

Many verbs, particularly those of position and motion, contrast this dummy-subject structure with another that uses reflexive pronouns. For these verbs, use of a reflexive pronoun as the subject indicates a dynamic reading, while the dummy-subject structure indicates a stative reading.

(2) a. *Geob es ot -eog*
goblin 3.ABST sit-3.GOB
'The goblin is sitting.' (lit., 'It seats the goblin.')

b. *Geob geog ot -eog*
goblin 3.GOB.REFL sit-3.GOB

'The goblin sits down.' (lit., 'Himself seats the goblin.')

As evidenced by the use of the dummy-subject strategy for a verb like 'to sit', it doesn't take much for an argument to be considered sufficiently un-agent-like for that strategy. Indeed, only the most prototypical agents are not captured by this strategy.

For would-be intransitive verbs where the argument explicitly represents an agent (known as unergative verbs in English grammar), there is yet another strategy. One can nominalize the main verb adding the nominalizing suffix *-stu* to the root, and then treat this nominalized verb as the object of the verb *śe* 'to do, to make'.

For certain motion verbs, both the nominalization and reflexive strategies are both appropriate. In this case, the former allows the speaker to put the action in focus in a way that cannot be done when the action is not nominalized, as in the reflexive strategy (see section 2.7 for more on focus marking). In addition, the former carries connotations of duration/ongoingness, while the latter is more explicitly inchoative. Compare (2) with (3):

The reflexive strategy is not necessarily appropriate for all would-be intransitives, however, as for many (if not most) verbs, it simply carries the expected reflexive meaning.

(3) *Karkar bol -ar*
2.REFL strike-2
*'You're hitting yourself.' (*not *'You're getting yourself to hit things.')*

2.3 Possession & Quantification

As Geoboŋ is head-marking, in a possession scenario it is the possessed noun that is inflected. A possessive affix *-(a)ɬ-* is added to the end of the possessed noun and then followed by a suffix that agrees in person and number with its possessor. The possessor, if specified, is placed before the possessed noun.

This syntactic structure is also used more broadly, however, for quantification. Perhaps counterintuitively, the quantified noun is treated as the possessor of the noun indicating the relevant quantity.

This is not limited to more ambiguous quantifiers—it is used for numbers as well.

This use of quantifiers is one of Geoboŋ's main methods of compensating for the fact that it does not mark for number whatsoever, even in pronouns. If a speaker wants to pluralize a pronoun (for instance, saying 'we') that speaker can simply use the quantifier inflected for the relevant person and animacy

To quantify over verbs (i.e., to say something happened 'twice' or 'many times'), one must quantify over the object. This is true even if the object seems to be something unquantifiable, such as an abstract noun or nominalized verb.

Distinguishing between whether a quantifier on the object semantically indicates quantification over the object or the verb is only done if context does not make it clear which is meant, but can be done using adjectives and embedding quantifiers under one another.

2.4 Postpositions

Postpositions follow their nouns and inflect to agree with their objects. Their endings are identical to those used for verbs.

If the postposition would only be preceded by a pronoun, it can be omitted and the inflected postposition used on its own as a whole phrase.

In addition to traditional postpositions, Geoboŋ demonstratives are also realized as postpositions. Since postpositional phrases cannot be embedded within each other, one cannot use an explicit demonstrative with a noun that is already part of a postpositional phrase.

This does not otherwise change the syntactic behavior of the noun—if the argument in question is the object without the demonstrative postposition, it remains the syntactic object and verbal agreement still takes place.

2.5 Ditransitives

Geoboŋ is secundative, so for inherently ditransitive verbs like *ćneu* 'to give', the syntactic object of the verb is the recipient. The theme can be included as a postpositional argument using the instrumental *čo*.

Benefactive ditransitives can be derived from many verbs that are not inherently ditransitive by addition of the affix *-tu-* before the agreement suffix but after the negation affix (if any).

Since the theme is optional in these 'ditransitives', this is also an effective way of describing an action in which the theme is unknown or unspecified, effectively serving as another argument-reduction strategy.

2.6 'Adjectives'

Strictly speaking, there is not a separate syntactic class known as 'adjectives' in Geoboŋ. What appear to be adjectives are actually verb forms—an uninflected verb can be used attributively by placing it directly before the noun it modifies.

In more complex NPs containing possession or quantification, the location of the adjective can affect the meaning of a phrase.

As we've already seen in earlier examples, originally causative verbs can serve practically as predicative adjectives when inflected with a dummy subject

By default, bare verbs used attributively (i.e., as adjectives in the above examples) carry the meaning characteristic to the *object* of that verb—e.g., *ćreź* means 'alive'/'flourishing' not 'live-giving', *uh* means 'dead' not 'deadly', etc. In this respect, they could be called 'passive participles.' Corresponding active participles, with meanings more characteristic of the subjects of these verbs, can be formed using the causative derivational prefix *(o)c-* (e.g., *occreź* 'live-giving', *cuh* 'deadly', etc.). While this prefix technically also derives a causative verb, due to the nature of Geoboŋ verbs, the resulting verb is probably more often used as an attributive or predicative adjective than as a causative verb proper.

Geoboŋ lacks separate comparative forms of the verb. In order to make predicative comparisons, the verb is turned into a benefactive ditranstive using the affix *-tu-*. The 'lesser' of the compared items then serves as the syntactic object of the verb, with the 'greater' item as the optional instrumental argument, and the dummy pronoun remains the syntactic subject.

Note that the verb still agrees with the syntactic object, so unlike in the non-comparative example, the verb agrees with the noun that is less well-described by the adjective in question. This means that in such comparisons, the standard of comparison cannot be omitted.

2.7 Focus & Word Order

To the casual observer, Geoboŋ seems superficially OSV. While it is true that this pattern is certainly the most commonly seen in the language, the reality is more complicated. This typical ordering is actually due to the focus marking that lies at the core of Geoboŋ sentence structure.

In any given sentence, whichever argument is the focus is moved to a sentence-initial position.

Before this movement, the sentence is underlyingly SOV, so if a complement other than the subject or object is the focus, this is the order in which those arguments will appear.

Only arguments can be fronted like this, so if the verb or an adjunct is the focus, the object is moved to this position in their stead. If one wishes to emphatically focus a non-argument, a preceding clause can be formed with the verb *śe* 'to do, to make, to cause'

If the object is not in focus and would be represented with a pronoun, it can be omitted from the sentence. However, this is not the case with any other argument (i.e., subjects must always be explicitly included).

2.8 Relative Clauses

Geoboŋ relative clauses are formed via adjoined clauses. The relativized noun must be fronted in both clauses, and therefore only arguments can be relativized. The complementizer *deoł* is placed clause-initially in the relativized clause, which is then directly followed by the main clause. The argument in question can be either restated in the main clause (often with a demonstrative) or replaced with a pronoun.

The order of the relativized and main clause is determined by whether the relative clause is restrictive or not. In restrictive relative clauses, the relative clause precedes the main clause, while in non-restrictive relative clauses, the relative clause occurs afterwards.

Content clauses, in which the subordinate clause serves as an argument of the main sentence, are expressed using relative clauses modifying the dummy noun *as*. Historically, *as* could be roughly translated 'case, situation, affair', but in the modern language it is not used outside of the formation of content clauses

Most other subordinating conjunctions in English are approximated by using the above strategy combined with various prepositions or verbs.

2.9 Aspect Particles

Geoboŋ is tenseless, only specifying tense if doing so is necessary in context and doing so using temporal adverbs, which are typically placed before the verb.

However, Geoboŋ does systematically mark aspect through use of particles, which occur at the beginning of the subject-less VP (that is, after the subject and before the object and other arguments should they not be fronted or otherwise moved).

Habitual–*go*

This particle indicates that something is always or virtually always the state of affairs. It is used in contexts where a gnomic or generic would be used in other languages:

as well as in contexts that describe habitual actions that still go on in the present and are expected to continue to go on for the foreseeable future:

Since aspect particles scope over negation, applying *go* to a negated verb means 'never'. If one wants to scope negation over the aspect, the whole clause must be embedded under a negative verb.

Completive—*ośk*

The completive particle *ośk* is used when discussing an eventuality that has already occurred in relation to the time being discussed. It can often be translated with the English perfect or with the word 'already'.

When used with a negative verb, it can be more accurately translated as 'still haven't.'

Retrospective Habitual—*pu*

The retrospective habitual particle *pu* is used to describe an eventuality that was once generally, habitually, or always the case, but has since ceased to be. It's usually best translated with 'used to', 'once', or 'would X' in English.

This particle scopes over negation, so using it with a negative verb conveys that it used to be the case that they generally did not do a thing, but that now they do that thing (or at least have done so once). To merely negate the former habituality of an action, one must embed the whole clause under a negative verb, just as one must do to force negation to scope over the habitual particle.

Change-of-state—

The change-of-state particle indicates that an eventuality is new or novel in some way, a change to the previous status-quo or otherwise contrastive to the prior context.

It's often contrasted with a status quo or former status quo expressed with the gnomic or retrospective habitual particles. However, there is no requirement that they be paired together; the change-of-state particle can be used on its own to merely imply the departure from the status quo without making the status quo itself explicit.

In these contexts, it's often translated with 'now' or 'anymore'.

In most dialects, the aspect particles are mutually exclusive. However, in some dialects can be combined with other aspectual particles, in which case it directly precedes them.

However, this usage of is markedly dialectical and not more generally acceptable.

2.10 Modality

Modal affixes are placed directly following the verb stem, prior to negation (if present).

2.11 Discourse Markers

Possibility—

The possibility particle indicates that an event is possible. It generally only represents circumstantial or epistemic possibility, though it can take on a deontic flavor if combined with (see 2.12). No obvious distinction is made between epistemic and circumstantial possibility in Geoboŋ, so which the speaker intends must be decided based on context alone.

2.12 Discourse Particles

In addition to the particles indicating TAM, Geoboŋ possess a series of more discourse-focused particles which indicate the attitude of the speaker towards the propositional content of their utterance—they tend to communicate the illocutionary rather than locutionary act. They always occur sentence-finally, following even the TAM particles if any are present.

Question—*ńeł*

The question particle *ńeł* is appended to the end of a sentence when the sentence is a yes/no question. It's also used to ask what would be considered a tag question in English, wherein the speaker believes what they're saying is true and is seeking agreement. Intonation often plays a role.

(4) *Meołar* *reu* *eumim* *ośk* *ńeł*
mother:POSS:2 home go_to:3.INAN CMPL Q
'Did your mother already go home?' or 'Your mother already went home, right?'

Note that *ńeł* is only used if the speaker is seeking information or agreement—while yes/no questions are often used for other illocutionary acts in other languages, these are indicated by different particles in Geoboŋ. The above sentence would not be used, for instance, if the question was actually intended as a request for the listener to send their mother home.

Ńel can also be used for embedded questions, serving as an equivalent to the English 'whether'

Emphatic questions can be unambiguously asked by turning the entire clause, including *ńeł*, into an embedded question under a verb directly questioning the truth of the utterance, essentially doubling-up on the questioning nature of the utterance.

(5) *Deoł meołar reu eumim ośk ńeł , as es hisnes ńeł*
C mother:POSS:2 home go_to:3.INAN CMPL Q C ES real:3.ABSTR Q

'Did your mother already go home?' (lit., 'Is it true whether your mother already went home?')

This is generally seen as quite forceful and is thus impolite outside of very casual or very formal situations.

Ńeł is also often used on its own as a dialogue filler to ellicit agreement or encourage elaboration, much like the English 'right?', 'uh-huh?', or 'really?'

Request—

The request particle is appended to the end of a sentence when the speaker wants to turn the sentence into a request or suggestion for action. Often this manifests as it being directly appended to the end of a clause describing the content of the request:

However, it can also be used with shorter utterances, even appended simply to the end of a noun if the context is right.

It can be even further abstracted, used with sentences that do not directly reference the requested eventuality whatsoever and only imply what the request itself actually is.

Like all discourse particles, scopes over negation. In order to negate a request rather than turning the sentence into a request for the negative, one must negate the verb

Command—

The command particle is appended to the end of a sentence to indicate that the speaker is commanding the hearer to do something. It is essentially a more forceful version of

Negation can scope over the command particle using the verb 'to command'. However, since simply using the command particle with a negative verb doesn't necessarily lead to a prohibitive meaning as one would expect were the imperative to scope over the negation, many speakers use that construction and treat the negation as scoping over the imperative.

The latter construction is seen as childish and 'incorrect', but the former is seen as somewhat stilted and formal, so which is chosen largely depends on the context.

Prohibitive—*iz*

The prohibitive particle *iz* is appended to the end of a sentence to indicate that the speaker forbids the hearer from doing something. Usually, it'll be something referred to directly by the sentence the particle is attached to, though it doesn't necessarily have to directly be the proposition expressed by the rest of the clause.

Like the other deontic particles, it can be used with a single noun, indicating that the hearer should avoid or not interact with that particular noun (in whatever way is context appropriate). It can also be used more obliquely, prohibiting something more indirectly related to the clause it's attached to

Related constructions formed with *iz* can often approximate the meanings of other discourse particles, though usually with differences in affect or formality. Like other discourse particles, *iz* scopes over negation, and therefore using it with a negative verb can be interpreted as an imperative.

However, this construction can be seen as awkward in many contexts, as it is often blocked by so it's used sparingly if ever by many speakers.

Negation can scope over the prohibitive using the verb *iłś* 'to forbid', which behaves essentially like a permissive.

However, unlike the permissive particle this construction is highly distancing and heavily implicates that the speaker isn't the relevant one when it comes to deciding whether the thing in question is permitted or forbidden.

Iz is also used to mean 'no' when the speaker is saying it in a forward-thinking context in which they want to prevent some future eventuality from happening via their 'no'.

Permissive—

The permissive particle is appended to the end of a sentence to indicate that the speaker is allowing the hearer to do something (typically but not always what the sentence overtly describes) but doesn't have any strong feelings one way or the other, positive or negative. It's the Geoboŋ equivalent of shrugging and saying 'Sure, I don't really give a shit,' but is also more widely used to indicate that the hearer may do something but isn't necessarily being encouraged to do that thing.

Like many of the other particles, it can be used with a simple noun in many contexts.

Like related particles, it can also be used with more opaque sentences if context makes it clear what's being permitted.

Scoping negation over the permissive particle is done via embedding with the verb

While this may seem at first glance to be identical to the use of the prohibitive particle, it doesn't constitute a direction illocutionary prohibition the way *iz* does. Instead, it comes off as a statement about the way things are and thus strongly implicates that the speaker is not the one in control of whether the hearer is permitted or prohibited from doing whatever is described.

is also used as an equivalent for 'yes' when the speaker wants to express lethargy or apathy towards their agreement.

Positive Attitude—*ip*

The positive attitude particle *ip* is appended to the end of a sentence to indicate that the speaker has a positive outlook on the eventuality described by the sentence in question—that they believe that eventuality is/was good, fortunate, natural, and/or just.

Ip is also used as an equivalent for 'yes' when the speaker wants to express enthusiasm or an otherwise positive attitude toward their agreement.

Negative Attitude—*huł*

The negative attitude particle *huł* is appended to the end of a sentence to indicate that the speaker has a negative outlook on the eventuality described by the sentence in question—that they believe that the eventuality is/was bad, unfortunate, unjust, unnatural, or otherwise unnacceptable.

Huł is also used as an equivalent for 'yes' when the speaker wants to express a negative attitude toward their agreement.

Part II

Dictionary

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Part III

Sample Texts & Translations