

THE PRACTICAL

≠A NŨĨ

ON PHONOLOGY, GRAMMAR,  
AND THE PREVENTION OF MOUTH INJURIES.

BY CANCRIZANS CANON

## 0.1 Overview

**!Um!oi!**

(‘Hello!’)

**ǀA Nǀuĩ** ([ǀa: nǀmĩ<sup>h</sup>], ‘*first words*’ or ‘*first language*’), or also just **ǀA**, is, as much as it pains me to admit it, not a real language, but it does try to be. It is a naturalistic constructed language (conlang) that makes extensive use of complex **click sounds**, which are strange loud consonants you make by abusing your tongue like a cheapo suction cup. It is *a priori*, meaning it is not based on any real-world language of the present or past. As for the purpose of designing this language, let’s keep that a surprise.

While an original creation, the sound of **ǀA** takes inspiration mainly by the beautifully intricate phonologies of the **Khoisan languages**, a group of many language families indigenous to southern Africa, which feature large inventories of decorated clicks, and strange phonation distinctions in vowels. In addition to that, there are sprinkles of other sound-looks I like, picked from languages such as Basque, Sanskrit, and one of my favourite families: Aboriginal Australian languages. **ǀA**’s phonation-tone register system is similar to that of Burmese.

For what concerns grammar, **ǀA** is typologically a mostly isolating language, analogous to Mandarin Chinese. It has a strict SVO (or better, AVP, as will be clear later) word order, it is (split-)ergative, and strongly head-final. It possesses almost no true “grammatical particles” in that very often they turn out to also double as regular nouns, like the relational nouns of Mayan languages.

This booklet should hold all information there is on both the phonology and grammar of **ǀA**. However, this document, as all my conlanging stuff, may try to explain things in a bit more pedantic detail than what you’d expect if you’re a big linguistics buff. It is definitely aimed more at casual readers that don’t remember off the

top of their head what a *wh-in-situ* or an *accessibility hierarchy*<sup>1</sup> is; if you find parts of it make your eyes roll please go ahead and skip what's obvious to you.

This conlang is meant primarily to exist as spoken. Phrases in **‡A** in this book are presented in its specialised orthography, which is designed to prioritise ease of pronunciation, is explained in the following sections, and are displayed **like this** . Instead, phonemic/phonetic transcriptions using the IPA are in /slashes/ and [square brackets] respectively.

---

<sup>1</sup>Something to do with power and wheelchair ramps?



# Contents

0.1	Overview . . . . .	2
<b>1</b>	<b>Phonology</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1	Vowels . . . . .	8
1.1.1	Registers . . . . .	9
1.2	Consonants . . . . .	12
1.2.1	Ejectives . . . . .	14
1.2.2	Pulmonics . . . . .	14
1.2.3	Clicks . . . . .	16
1.3	Phonotactics . . . . .	21
1.3.1	Back vowel constraint . . . . .	21
1.3.2	U Unrounding . . . . .	22
1.3.3	Syllable structure and articulatory constraints	22
1.3.4	Word structure and stress . . . . .	23
1.3.5	Irregular words and reduplication . . . . .	24
1.3.6	Sandhi Rules . . . . .	25
1.3.7	Click-Pulmonic Harmony . . . . .	26
1.4	Notes on Orthography . . . . .	27
<b>2</b>	<b>Grammar</b>	<b>29</b>
2.1	The Noun Phrase . . . . .	29
2.1.1	Possession and adjectives . . . . .	31
2.1.2	Nominalisation . . . . .	32
2.2	Alignment and Coordination . . . . .	32
2.2.1	Secundativity and ditransitives . . . . .	34
2.2.2	Causatives . . . . .	35

2.3	Copula . . . . .	36
2.4	Verbal voices . . . . .	36
2.5	Pronouns . . . . .	38
2.5.1	Personal Pronouns . . . . .	38
2.5.2	Demonstrative Pronouns . . . . .	39
2.6	Relative Clauses . . . . .	39
2.7	Serial Verb Constructions . . . . .	40
2.8	Imperatives and Polarity . . . . .	43
2.9	Interrogatives . . . . .	43
2.10	Topic-Comment . . . . .	43
<b>3</b>	<b>Corpus</b>	<b>45</b>
3.1	Sun-Tongue and the Night . . . . .	45
3.2	The North Wind and the Sun . . . . .	46
<b>4</b>	<b>Lexicon</b>	<b>49</b>
4.1	Basic Classifier Taxonomy . . . . .	49
4.2	Greetings and idioms . . . . .	50
4.3	Numerals . . . . .	51
4.4	Dictionary . . . . .	52

# Chapter 1

## Phonology

‡A makes, curiously, no phonemic distinction of voicing. It does, however, distinguish **nasality** as a binary feature between oral and nasal, and **glottalization** from modal, to “glottalic”, to full glottal closure. Glottalic phones involve some form of glottal intervention (as in ejectives or creaky-voiced sonorants), while fully glottal sounds involve some (coarticulated) glottal closure.

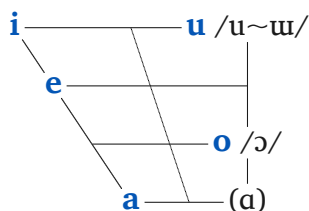
This structure can help navigate the oversized phonological inventory, from vowels to click consonants to non-click consonants, by elucidating these overarching symmetries:

Sound Type→ Phonation↓	Vowels	Clicks	Non-Clicks
Modal Oral	Plain vowels /a/	Oral clicks /!/ 	Oral pulmonics /p/
Modal Nasal	Nasal vowels /ã/	Nasal clicks /ʸ!/ 	Nasal pulmonics /m/
Glottalic Oral	Creaky-voiced (laryngealised) vowels – /ǎ/	Ejective-contour Clicks /!q’/	Ejectives /q’/
Glottalic Nasal	Creaky-voiced nasal vowels /ǣ/		Creaky-voiced nasals (only allophonic) [ṁ]
Full Glottal Oral	“Broken” vowels /ǎʔa/	Glottalized clicks /!ʔ/	Glottal stop /ʔ/
Full Glottal Nasal	Nasal broken vowels /ǣʔǣ/	Pre-nasal glottalized clicks /ʸ!ʔ/	

## 1.1 Vowels

Five vowel qualities are phonemically distinguished:





**u** can be realised as unrounded [ʊ] following some consonants (see Section 1.3.2). [ɑ] exist as a “backened” version of **a** (see for example Section 1.3.1 on contextual backening). In addition, the following diphthongs are allowed and behave essentially as additional single vowel qualities for the purpose of registers and phonotactics:

**au**, **ao** /aɔ/, **ai**, **oi** /ɔi/, **ui**, **oa** /ɔa/<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted that **ui** specifically could be seen as a backened or “pre-backened” version of **i**, so that, say, the sequence **!ui** ought to be interpreted as the realisation of the phonetically impossible sequence **!i**. A similar but weaker relationship should exist between **ɔi** and **e**. This is paralleled in the distribution of open-to-close diphthongs which preferably appear in stressed syllables and frequently following “backening” clicks and consonants which wouldn’t allow a front vowel in the same position. This rule isn’t universal, however.

### 1.1.1 Registers

We anticipate that **!A** has a concept of *stress* or *accent* whereby one syllable in a polysyllabic word (and occasionally in a syntactically close word sequence, like a noun phrase) is marked as **stressed**. This stress is expressed mostly through vowel length and in minor part volume, but not pitch.

Unstressed vowels may only be monophthongs. Stressed vowels, instead, may be a mono- or a diphthong, and in addition they carry

<sup>1</sup>Diphthongs are preponderantly closing; the only opening diphthong /ɔa/ is barely so.

one of six different phonations, or more precisely **six registers**, that is a phonation + tone combination:

Notation	Phonation	Tone
<b>aa</b>	Oral Modal [a]	↑
<b>aã</b>	Nasal Modal [ã]	↓
<b>ḃa</b>	Oral Creaky [ḃ]	↓ (on back vowels) ↑ (on front vowels)
<b>ḃã</b>	Nasal Creaky [ḃ̃]	↑
<b>ḃ'a</b>	Oral Broken [ḃ'a]	↓ (on back vowels) ↑ (on front vowels)
<b>ḃ'ã</b>	Nasal Broken [ḃ'ã]	↓

Creaky voice is realized as laryngealisation (creaky voice proper) or even pharyngealisation (“strident” or “sphincteric”), with no phonemic distinction. Front vowels **e i** are more likely to be sphincteric than proper creaky, and back vowels **o u** are more likely creaky than sphincteric. **ḃ** is either, consistently with the frontness of its realisation. As a variant on the orthography, creaky voice may be marked with a grave accent **ḃa** → **àa** if combining diacritics are not allowed or unsupported.

The “Broken” register is better classed as a type of phonation rather than a cluster of pre-existing sounds. It consists of a crescendo of glottalisation up to a glottal stop that “breaks” the vowel. An off-glide of the same vowel quality escapes right after. This produces a characteristic stuttered sound, which one could imagine as the phonation equivalent of a contour tone. The off-glide is truly an inseparable part of the pattern; it is impossible to have broken diphthongs like **\*ḃ'i** and nasality is consistent across the glottal stop.

All of the vowel **e**’s nasal forms merge with those of **i**, so that there is no **\*ẽ**.

The nasal forms of **u** are special in that the nasalisation and lip clo-

sure are strong enough that they are better transcribed as a syllabic /m/:

$$\begin{aligned} *u\tilde{u} &\rightarrow \underline{u}m \rightarrow /m/ \quad [\underline{m}] \\ *u\tilde{u} &\rightarrow \underline{u}m \rightarrow /m/ \quad [\underline{m}] \\ *u'\tilde{u} &\rightarrow \underline{m}'m \rightarrow /m?m/ \quad [\underline{m}?m] \end{aligned}$$

Degrees of rounding of such syllabic /m/ are usually inconsequential.

In the case of diphthongs, a single register is applied uniformly and a mid-swipe register change is not allowed (phonemically at least). In the orthography, the creaky voice diacritic is written on the first component and the nasal diacritic on the second (with the caveat that *\*ũ* is replaced by *m*). The resulting table of vocalic phonemes is as follows:

Unstressed (always short)					
<b>a</b> /a/	<b>e</b> /e/	<b>i</b> /i/	<b>o</b> /ɔ/	<b>u</b> /u/	

Stressed					
Plain		Nasal	Creaky	Nasal Creaky	Broken
Short	Long				
<b>a</b> /a/	<b>aa</b> /a:/	<b>aã</b> /ã:/	<b>aa</b> /a:/	<b>aã</b> /ã:/	<b>a'a</b> /a?a/
<b>e</b> /e/	<b>ee</b> /e:/	<b>ĩĩ</b> /ĩ:/	<b>ee</b> /e:/	<b>ĩĩ</b> /ĩ:/	<b>e'e</b> /e'e/
<b>i</b> /i/	<b>ii</b> /i:/		<b>ĩĩ</b> /ĩ:/		<b>ĩ'i</b> /ĩ:/
<b>o</b> /ɔ/	<b>oo</b> /ɔ:/	<b>oõ</b> /õ:/	<b>oo</b> /ɔ:/	<b>oõ</b> /õ:/	<b>o'o</b> /ɔ?ɔ/
<b>u</b> /u/	<b>uu</b> /u:/	<b>um</b> /m:/	<b>uu</b> /u:/	<b>um</b> /m:/	<b>u'u</b> /u?u/
<b>au</b> /au/	<b>am</b> /ãm/	<b>au</b> /au/	<b>am</b> /ãm/		
<b>ui</b> /ui/	<b>uĩ</b> /mĩ/	<b>ui</b> /ui/	<b>uĩ</b> /mĩ/		
<b>oi</b> /ɔi/	<b>oĩ</b> /ɔĩ/	<b>oi</b> /ɔi/	<b>oĩ</b> /ɔĩ/		
<i>(etc. for remaining diphthongs)</i>					

A stressed, plain register monophthong may also be *predictably* long or short. Specifically, it will be short if word-final and / or following a glottal(ised) consonant ' , and it will be long otherwise. In the orthography, it will be accordingly written with a single or double letter. Instead, all unstressed vowels are short, while all diphthongs and all stressed non-plain vowels are long.

## 1.2 Consonants

The consonant phonemes of ꞤA are divided mainly by airstream mechanism into **ejectives**, **pulmonics** and **clicks**. They are all presented in the table that follows; the rest of this section will be dedicated to explaining its contents.

Cells in grey are unattested in ꞤA or impossible. Cells spanning multiple rows or column denote degrees of allophonic variation. Phonemes in parentheses are highly marginal.

Front Artic. →		Labial	Dental	Apical	Palatal	Lateral	Velar	Uvul.
Glottal Stop		ʔ /ʔ/						
Ejective				tʼ /tʼ/	cʼ	tɬʼ /tɬʼ/		qʼ
Pulmonics	Stop	p	t	t̚ /t̚/	j/ɟ/	tɬ	k	
	Affricate		t͡s /t͡s/	t͡ʃ /t͡ʃ/	ch /t͡ʃ~t͡ʃ/	tɬ̥ /tɬ̥/		
	Trill			r /r/				
	Nasal	m /m~m <sup>b</sup> /	n /n̥/	ɳ /ɳ~ <sup>n</sup> ɖ/	ɲ /ɲ/	l	ŋ /ŋ~N~ŋ <sup>g</sup> /	
Clicks	Plain	⦿	ɀ	!	Ɂ			
	Glottalised		ɀʼ	!ʼ	Ɂʼ	ʼ		
	Fric.-release		ɀx	!x	Ɂx	x		
	Ejec.-release		ɀqʼ	!qʼ	Ɂqʼ	qʼ		
	Nasal	N⦿	Nɀ	N!	NɁ	N		
	Nasal Glott.		Nɀʼ	N!ʼ	NɁʼ	N  ʼ		
	Nasal Fric.-rel.		Nɀx	N!x	NɁx	N  x		
	Pre-fricative		sɀ	ʃ!	ʂɁ	ɬ		
	Pre-fr. Glott.		sɀʼ	ʃ!ʼ	ʂɁʼ	ɬ  ʼ		
	Pre-fr. Ej.-rel.		sɀqʼ	ʃ!qʼ	ʂɁqʼ	ɬ  qʼ		
(Implosive-rel.)				(!ɢ)		(  ɢ)		

(Rear click and contours articulation)

### 1.2.1 Ejectives

Consistently with the language-wide pattern of distinction of degree of glottalisation, **ɬA** distinguishes a few ejective phonemes, all of which but **q'** are actually uncommon. Frontal (labial or dental) ejectives do not exist. The next three ejectives **t'**, **c'**, **ɬ'** parallel the pulmonic obstruents. [**\*k'**] is notably missing; it is generally understood that this sound has merged into the palatal **c'**, which varies across [**c' ~ k'**].

The uvular **q'** is *always* ejective, with no pulmonic counterpart. It originates from the lenition of clicks with ejective contour (class IV) where the click itself vanished leaving behind the lone uvular ejective.

### 1.2.2 Pulmonics

It is useful, not only for the purpose of phonotactics, to classify pulmonics in terms of nasality. Specifically, we divide into **oral pulmonics** (obstruents and the trill), the **nasal pulmonics** (actual nasal and **l**), and finally the glottal stop has to be set aside as neither oral nor nasal<sup>2</sup>. It's necessary to imagine that *phonemically* /**l**/ be a nasal consonant, even though phonetically it often is not, and in particular the nasal counterpart to /**ɬ**/ . This allows, for example, to explain sequences such as **laã** *tongue*, whereas anywhere else an oral pulmonic + nasal vowel sequence is forbidden (see Section 1.3.3).

The dentals are usually “strongly dentalised”, often going as far as interdental, similarly to the situation in Australian Aboriginal languages, though this is not usually marked in transcription. The dental obstruent **t** is typically an interdental affricate, usually sibilant. Occasionally it may be a simple fricative (sibilant or or not), especially before front vowels, but this distinction is not phonemic. In addition, **n** is often also voiceless, resulting in the scary IPA creature [ɱ̥].

---

<sup>2</sup>This is true in a more literal sense: since the glottis is behind the velum, a glottal closure is really insensitive to the lowering of the velum.

The series marked as “apical” oscillate between the apical alveolar (like **r**) and the true subapical retroflex (as **ɽ** typically is). Here the stop and affricate are distinguished.

Similarly the palatal series varies in palatalisation from fully palatal **j** to the laminal palato-alveolar **ch**.

**ɲ**, while rare, is a true phoneme, and may also appear word-initially, see **ɲàã** *woman* vs **nàã** *to laugh*, and it must be seen as the nasal counterpart to **k**. Before front vowels it’s always velar; before back vowels it alternates between velar /ɲ/ and the uvular allophone [N].

There is significant allophonic variance associated specifically with the lack of phonemic value to voicing of consonants. Nevertheless, there are significant irregularities to keep in mind.

- Labial or labiodental fricatives and affricates are unattested.
- Because of the phonemic distinction of nasality, the voiced stops [b], [ɗ~ð], [d] are allophonic for the voiceless stops /p/ /tʂ/ /t/, instead of the nasals /m/ /ɱ/ /ɳ/ as would be more typical. The same holds in palatal articulation where [c] and [ç] are the same phoneme, but in this case the voiced form is more common realization, and so it is marked as /ʝ/, or **j**.
- In turn, the nasals can be realized with only partial nasality in stressed syllables before oral vowels. Specifically, /m/ and /ɲ/ can feature an audible voiced oral plosive release, while /ɳ/ can go as far as just a pre-nasalized ɗ. Instead /ɱ/ /ɳ/ are always fully nasal.
- In guttural (velar-glottal) position, curiously [g] can substitute not only for /k/ but also for the glottal stop /ʔ/. As for /k/, it may often affricate to [kx] or even [x] directly, especially before front vowels, while a back vowel may uvularise it to [q].
- /r/ is always a trill, never tapped (a tap is more likely to

be perceived as a nasal). It is geminated always in medial position (which we reproduce in the orthography with **rr**), occasionally even word-initially.

### 1.2.3 Clicks

‡A's unique phonetic identity lies in its inventory of click consonants. While we will ultimately analyse each possible click sound as a separate phoneme, resulting in a disproportionately large inventory but simpler phonotactical rules, it must be understood that clicks are complex consonants best decomposed into many semi-independent features. We recall that a click is produced by enclosing a pocket of air in a surface between the tongue and the palate. It is necessary to fully seal this pocket to produce the click sound, and the mouth-palate sealing occurs along a circle passing through a **rear point of contact**, laterally, and through a coronal **front point of contact**. In ‡A the rear contact is *tendentially* always uvular, while the front contact may be in several positions, similarly to pulmonic consonants. By downward movement of the tongue, the trapped air pocket is rarefied, akin to a suction cup. Finally, one point in the sealing is opened and air violently rushes into the pocket. The corresponding implosion produces the loud sound of the click. We thus may begin to list some parameters that may change in the production of the click and which may affect the sound:

- The location in the mouth where the sealing is opened; this is what is referred to as the **point of articulation** of the click.
- The opening of the velum and simultaneous airflow through the nose, i.e. **nasality** (or better, pre-nasalisation).
- The closure of the glottis simultaneously with the click, i.e. **glottalisation**.
- The mode of release of the rear closure, after the click sound has been produced. These are called **contours** or **effluxes** and can be seen as coarticulation of the click with a uvular



pulmonic.

Four points of articulations are distinguished in ɗA (plus the rare bilabial):

- /ɗ/, written ɗ, is laminal dental. The sound is noisy and highest in pitch.
- ɗ̥ is lateral. The release is lateral (typically only on one side) and far back in the mouth. The coronal position of the tongue does not affect the sound, which is noisy but lower in pitch than the dental, and with a characteristic 'liquid' quality.
- ɗ̥ is the alveolar or alveolo-palatal click, for us also conveniently called apical, and the essential feature is that the tongue is pulled down (and back), resulting in a very clean and loud 'pop' sound of lowest pitch.
- ɗ̥ is the palatal or palato-alveolar click. The tongue is flat and adhering to a wide area on the palate and the alveolar ridge; the tongue tip does not make contact. The tongue is pulled backwards (and slightly downwards), resulting in a higher-pitched, still clear 'tick' sound.
- The rarer bilabial click ɗ̥. It usually begins as labial and moves to labiodental, and has a loud, very noisy sucking-like sound. A very limited set of manners of articulation is attested for ɗ̥, and it appears only in very few words. It likely originates from strong labialisation of other clicks.

Given a point of articulation, the language then distinguishes a total of ten different **manners of articulations** for each:

- I **Plain** The click is oral, glottis open, and the back-release is tenuis.
- II **Oral Glottalized** The glottis is closed, and kept open for a short while after the click sounds. This may appear as the onset of the following vowel being delayed. The click is oral.
- III **Fricative-contour** The click is oral, glottis open, and the back

release is into a uvular fricative [χ]. The frication is usually quite strong and raspy, granting these clicks an “affricate” sound.

IV **Ejective-contour** The click is oral, glottis open, and the back release is into a uvular ejective [qʰ].

V **Nasal** The click is nasal. Because of the velar/uvular closure, a velar/uvular nasal [ŋ ɴ] appears to sound throughout the click. The glottis must be open, back-release is tenuis.

VI **Nasal Glottalized** The glottis is closed, and kept open for a short while after the click sounds. This may appear as the onset of the following vowel being delayed. The click is nasal.

VII **Nasal + Fricative-contour** The click is nasal, glottis open, and the back release is a strong uvular fricative, marked [ɤ] as nasality is almost always accompanied by voicing.

VIII **“Pre-fricative”** A fricative is sounded before the click closure. While this is not a true co-articulation, since the fricatives may not occur in **ǀA** without a following click we class this series of clusters as separate consonant phonemes. The clicks are oral, glottis open, back release tenuis. Only a specific fricative precedes a certain point of articulation for the click; the combinations are /sǀ/, /sǀʰ/, /ʃǀ/, /tǀ/. The point of articulation of the fricative matches roughly with that of the frontal closure, but specifically in /sǀʰ/, /ʃǀ/ the configuration of the tongue tip is *opposite* that of the click; respectively switching from apical to laminal and laminal to apical. In a sense, the fast articulation of these prefricative clicks is agevolated by the momentum from this motion, which is maintained into the lingual motion to articulate the click. The “crossed” /sǀʰ/, /ʃǀ/ involve a continuous, snake- or whip-like motion of the tongue, while the non-existent “direct” alternates /\*ʃǀʰ/, /\*sǀʰ/ would be considerably more awkward.

IX **Pre-fricative + Glottalized** These clicks have a fricative onset, oral, glottal closure with delayed release of glottal stop.

X **Pre-fricative + Ejective-contour** Fricative onset, oral, back release into [q']

XI (rare/marginal) **Implosive-contour** These very rare clicks involve a released into a voiced implosive. They usually occur as alternates to plain clicks employed for humour or onomatopoeia. Only /\*!ǧ/ and /\*ǥ/ are attested.

All in all, the following 40 click phonemes, + 2 marginal bilabials exist:

Manner	Point of articulation				
I	/ /	/ǀ/	/!/	/ǁ/	/ǂ/
II	/ ʔ/	/ǀʔ/	/!ʔ/	/ǁʔ/	
III	/ χ/	/ǀχ/	/!χ/	/ǁχ/	
IV	/ q'/	/ǀq'/	/!q'/	/ǁq'/	
V	/ᵛ /	/ᵛǀ/	/ᵛ!/	/ᵛǁ/	/ᵛǂ/
VI	/ᵛ ʔ/	/ᵛǀʔ/	/ᵛ!ʔ/	/ᵛǁʔ/	
VII	/ᵛ ɓ/	/ᵛǀɓ/	/ᵛ!ɓ/	/ᵛǁɓ/	
VIII	/ ʄ/	/ǀʄ/	/!ʄ/	/ǁʄ/	
IX	/ ʄʔ/	/ǀʄʔ/	/!ʄʔ/	/ǁʄʔ/	
X	/ ʄq'/	/ǀʄq'/	/!ʄq'/	/ǁʄq'/	
(XI)			(/!ǧ/)	(/ǥ/)	

If we are willing to segment the click even more, a somewhat clearer picture emerges. Among manners, we can distinguish an “onset” feature, which may be plain, nasal, or pre-fricative, and a “release” feature, which may be tenuis, glottal, fricative, or ejective. The 3 × 4 table that results makes it clear that all combinations except two are realised:

		Release			
		∅	ʔ	χ/ʙ	q'
Onset	∅	I	II	III	IV
	ŋ	V	VI	VII	
	F	VIII	IX		X

As for the two unattested manners, their absence may be explained by difficulty of production. The missing nasal-ejective clicks in particular would present the difficulty of switching from voiced to voiceless mid-click, or producing a fully voiceless nasal click, something that is certainly quite alien to **ɬA** speakers.

In the orthography, the clicks are transcribed using the following dictionary:

Phonemic	Orthography
	<b>ɬ</b>
ŋ*	<b>N*</b>
ʂ	<b>sɬ</b>
ʂ†	<b>ʂɬ</b>
ʃ!	<b>ʃ!</b>
ɬ	<b>ɬ  </b>
*ʔ	<b>*ʔ</b>
$\widehat{*}\chi / \widehat{*}\mathfrak{b}$	<b>*x</b>
$\widehat{*}\mathfrak{q}'$	<b>*q'</b>
$\widehat{*}\mathfrak{c}$	<b>*c</b>

## 1.3 Phonotactics

Here and in the following, these abbreviations are employed to describe phonotactical rules:

(...)	Optional segment (may appear zero or one time)
.	Syllable boundary
C	Any consonant phoneme – click, ejective or pulmonic.
X	Any click consonant.
P	Any pulmonic consonant.
E	Any ejective consonant.
M	A sonorant consonant (nasal or trill).
V	Any vowel, mono- or diphthong, stressed or unstressed, in any register
ˈ	The following syllable is stressed
v	An unstressed vowel (monophthong)

### 1.3.1 Back vowel constraint

A fundamental mechanical constraint applies to vowel qualities directly following specific clicks (backening clicks) and the ejective **q'**. Specifically, uvular articulations cause retraction of the tongue root, which makes it impossible to pronounce a front vowel directly after. In **ɁA**, all clicks **Ɂ Ɂ! Ɂ ||** have uvular rear closure, and thus really release uvularly and cause tongue root retraction.

This back vowel constraint applies to

- **q'**
- All non-glottalised clicks. (i.e., all groups except II and VI).

Glottalised clicks bypass the constraint because the glottal closure can be released with sufficient delay for the tongue to prepare in position for a front vowel, as in **sɁ'e** *four*.

A backening consonant may not be followed by a front vowel **e** or **i**. In addition, **a** becomes [ɑ]. For a diphthong, the constraint applies to the starting quality of the glide, therefore **ui** may follow a backening click, as can **au**, though it will sound as [au].

### 1.3.2 U Unrounding

While **o** is always rounded, **u** is realised as rounded [u] or unrounded [ɯ] depending on the preceding consonant. The following consonants will trigger unrounding of **u**

- Non-glottalized **⊙ !** ∥, for example **⊙ui** [⊙wi].
- Retroflex pulmonics **ṭ ṭṛ ṇ**, for example **ṭrui** [ṭṣwi], but *not* the retroflex ejective **ṭ'**.

### 1.3.3 Syllable structure and articulatory constraints

**‡A** features a strict alternation of consonant and vowel, and thus a (C)V syllable structure. Generally, phonotactical restrictions appear as constraints related to the nasality and glottalisation features. The direction of consonant-vowel nasality interference is different for clicks and pulmonics, with the nasality of clicks interacting with that of the previous vowel and that of pulmonics with the following one. The precise rules are

- in a VX sequence, either both are oral or both are nasal.<sup>3</sup>
- in a PV sequence, P cannot be oral if V is nasal.

E.g.: the sequences /a!-/ and /ãᵛ!-/ are possible, but /\*ã!-/ , /\*aᵛ!-/ are not possible; while the sequences /pa/, /ma/, /mã/ are allowed but /\*pã/ can not occur.

For what concerns glottalisation,

- a CV sequence with a creaky voiced vowel will erase glottalization distinctions in the consonant C. This means that

---

<sup>3</sup>Note that since a vowel preceding a click is always unstressed, this nasality will never be reported in the orthography.

sequences like /!ʔa/ and /!a/ are not phonemically distinct – by convention we will transcribe the click without glottalisation. On the same line, ejectives and pulmonic obstruents are not distinguished before  $\underline{V}$ , and we transcribe with the pulmonic by convention, except in the case of **q'** since it has no pulmonic equivalent.

- A glottal stop followed by a creaky vowel  $\text{?}\underline{V}$  is indistinguishable from the lone vowel  $\underline{V}$ . We chose to transcribe both broad IPA and orthography *with* the glottal stop to preserve the simpler CV structure.
- A sonorant will become itself creaky before a creaky vowel:  $\underline{M}\underline{V} > \underline{M}\text{?}\underline{V}$ , e.g. **màa** = /mā/ > [mā̰]. This is not marked at all in the broad transcription.

### 1.3.4 Word structure and stress

Due to the extremely minimal morphology, the vast majority of words appear uninflected. This uninflected form follows a very rigid scheme:

$$(\underline{v}_0).{}^1\text{CV}_1.(\text{P}\underline{v}_2)$$

In other words, we necessarily have a **main syllable**  $\text{CV}_1$  which always stressed, and is composed of either a click, an ejective or pulmonic, and a vowel which, being stressed, may have any of the four registers, and be a mono- or diphthong. Optionally, one may have an unstressed **opening vowel** monophthong  $\underline{v}_0$ , and/or an unstressed **secondary syllable** with a pulmonic and a monophthong.

The possible word structures are named as follows:

Monosyllabic	CV
Sesquisyllabic	v.'CV
Disyllabic	'CV.Pv
Trisyllabic	v.'CV.Pv

The opening and secondary vowels, being unstressed, may not carry registers, and no distinction of phonation is made on them. However, phonetically the nasality of an opening vowel necessarily matches that of a main syllable click which follows as per the rules of Section 1.3.3, and this nasality is accordingly transcribed even if not phonemic.

### 1.3.5 Irregular words and reduplication

Some special words break the patterns described thus far. A select few are lexicalised idioms and onomatopoeias. Most, however, are produced by one of the very few morphological processes of the language, which is **main-syllable reduplication**. This self-explanatory operation is used on adjectives and adverbs to mark comparatives, and on verbs to mark the applicative voice. The main syllable of the word is repeated, usually violating the word structure, exceeding the maximum number of syllable, and producing words with multiple clicks:

**ɿaala** *easily* → **ɿaɿaala** *more easily*

More accurately it can be described as a reduplication  $C \rightarrow C_1 v C_2$  of the main consonant only, with the insertion of the epenthetic vowel v. Here is the full list of rules for reduplication:

- v is always short / unstressed; the quality is the same as that of the main vowel if a monophthong and its starting quality if a diphthong. In pronunciation, and especially when C is a click or ejective v may be very short if not fully elided (voiceless or glottalised)
- if C is a pre-fricative click, only  $C_1$  is pre-fricated.



- if C is nasal and/or glottalized, the nasality and/or glottal closure persist throughout the C<sub>1</sub>vC<sub>2</sub> sequence. Example: **n||ui** *to jump* → **n||un||ui** *to jump on*, the vowel v (**u**) is nasal, though this is unmarked. In **sɿ'i** *slender* → **sɿ'ɿ'i** *more slender*, the glottal closure is kept throughout and correspondingly the vowel is simply not written. This also applies to ejective C.
- if C has a uvular contour, then only C<sub>2</sub> gets the contour. Example: **ɬxoɪɬa** *strange* → **ɬoɬxoɪɬa** *more strange*

### 1.3.6 Sandhi Rules

Adjacent words that are syntactically close (generally, they are part of the same noun phrase, they are a noun-classifier pair, a dependant-postposition pair, an auxiliary-main verb pair, or simply part of a very short clause) are usually pronounced with no gap between them and are affected by **syntactical sandhi rules**. These are assimilatory processes involving the vowel V that ends the preceding word, and the first sound of the following word. Depending on the latter, one may have vowel-click (VX), vowel-vowel (VV), and vowel-pulmonic (VP) sandhi. Sandhi processes are never written in the orthography.

*VX sandhi* consists simply in V assimilating to the nasality of X, similarly to what would happen mid-word. This nasality will only be triggered if V is unstressed.

In *VV sandhi*, the second vowel is an opening vowel and therefore always unstressed. Quality assimilation occurs according to the following scheme:

- if the first vowel is a diphthong, there is no assimilation and an epenthetic ' is inserted.
- if the sequence VV describes a valid diphthong, assimilate to that diphthong.
- **a-e** and **o-e** assimilate to **ai** and **oi** respectively.
- **o-u** assimilates to **oo**

- In all remaining cases (e.g. **u-a**) there is no assimilation and ' is inserted.

If there is assimilation, then the first vowel determines the register.

### 1.3.7 Click-Pulmonic Harmony

**Click-Pulmonic Harmony** is a specific kind of consonantal harmony that occurs in words that contain both a click and a secondary pulmonic, (v)ǁVPv. At present, ǁ-P harmony is mostly a phonological constraint on roots rather than a dynamic phenomenon given that there is no real morphology to speak of. Therefore, a speaker or a potential learner of the language need not worry about this restriction.

ǁ-P harmony only concerns the four lingual clicks **ǀ ! ǁ ǁ**, and restricts the possible points of articulation of P, provided that P is coronal (i.e. labial and dorsals are unaffected). This is due to the difficulty of transitioning between certain too different articulations, especially with the added momentum from the click release. The pulmonic consonants that may follow each of the clicks are as follows:

Preceding ǁ	ǀ	!	ǁ	ǁ
Interdental	Yes	No	No	No
Apical/Retroflex	No	Yes	No	Yes
Laminal/Palatal	No	Yes	Yes	Rarely
Lateral	Yes	Yes	Rarely	Yes

The occasional word violates the constraint – for example **ǁxoitǁ** is Palatal → Retroflex, which is strange, coherently with the fact that it means *strange*.

Usually disharmonic tension is less likely to be problematic if a long vowel, especially a diphthong, separates the two offending consonants. Harmony does not usually act across word boundaries

(likely because it would create too many ambiguities), but short vowels may lengthen to reduce strain, in particular if the words are syntactically close. For example, in the very name of the language, **†A Nūĩ**, the two adjacent words are syntactically related as a determiner-classifier pair, and the nominally short vowel **a** separates the disharmonic **†** and **ṇ**. Therefore the vowel is usually lengthened in pronunciation, to ease the difficult movement. Hence the final pronunciation [†ɑ: ṇmĩ†].

While weaker, a form of more general consonantal harmony applies when the main consonant is not a click. In particular interdentals are never followed by non-interdentals.

## 1.4 Notes on Orthography

The orthography of **†A** is designed by prioritizing these guidelines:

- Transparency: pronunciation should be easy and immediate to evince and reproduce. In particular, clicks should be well distinguished from pulmonics.
- Phonemic: it should be unambiguous, i.e. broad transcription should be uniquely determined.
- Clarity: written text should be easily readable, avoiding too similar glyphs, or superscript and subscript glyphs.
- Portability: no combining diacritical marks should be used; only existing precomposed letters may be employed. (This is due to combining glyphs rendering improperly in many contexts).

All are satisfied with the exception of the creaky voice low tilde diacritic on **ǎ** and **ǒ**, which violates portability<sup>4</sup> – the grave accent alternative **àèìòù** can obviate in these cases.

The orthography uses conventional punctuation and most typeset-

---

<sup>4</sup>Curiously, **ẽ**, **ũ** and **ĩ** are precomposed.

ting standards<sup>5</sup>. For what concerns capitalisation, for starting sentences or for proper names, I employ the typical Khoisan convention where the first *capitalisable* character in the word is capitalised. Capitalisable characters include all latin letters including diacritics, the letter **ŋ**, **ɲ**, **ʄ** which capitalize as **Ŋ**<sup>6</sup>, **Ɓ**, **ᄌ**, the click nasality letter **ɴ** which simply becomes **N** in uppercase; and the remaining letters (’ **⊙** **!** **‡** **||**) don’t capitalise.

---

<sup>5</sup>There is no risk of confusing the alveolar stop glyph ! with the identical-looking, but distinct exclamation mark ! because phonotactics prevent clicks in syllable codas anyway.

<sup>6</sup>The shape of capital Eng may be wildly different in different fonts. Shouldn’t be a cause of concern.

# Chapter 2

## Grammar

### 2.1 The Noun Phrase

A noun phrase in  $\text{ɬA}$  may consist of a single noun:

- (1)  $\text{unjaã}$   
wolf  
*wolves / a wolf*

in which case the intended meaning is indeterminate, and of unspecified number (i.e. wolves in general, as one would intend in a phrase like ‘*wolves are ferocious*’). If instead one would like to talk about one specific wolf, thus introducing determinacy, they would have to say

- (2)  $\text{unjaã ɬaa}$   
wolf CLF<sub>predatory animal</sub>  
*the wolf*

$\text{ɬaa}$  is called a **noun classifier** (CLF), and it is specifically the classifier associated to predatory animals. There are hundreds of classifiers available for various categories of nouns; these categories do not have to be disjoint nor as general as standard noun classes

in synthetic languages. When a CLF is used, the CLF is itself the head of the noun phrase, and the noun is a dependent that *specifies* the general meaning of the classifier further (so the example may be translated more literally as ‘*the predatory animal which is more specifically a wolf*’). This justifies why the CLF always *follows* the classified noun, being that this language is strongly head-final.

Multiple CLFs may apply to the same noun under different circumstances, with subtler or more relevant differences in intended meaning depending on the situation. Rarely, a CLF choice may completely disambiguate a noun:

- (3) **juli** **tla**  
 mother/breast CLF<sub>woman</sub>  
*the mother*
- (4) **juli** **juu**  
 mother/breast CLF<sub>body part</sub>  
*the breast(s)*

Proper names are always determined and they **always** take a classifier. However, the choice of specific classifier is again up to the speaker, and may express some nuances of context, politeness, and relevant information:

- (5) **N!upaṇa nui**  
 N!upaṇa CLF<sub>person</sub>  
*N!upaṇa (a person of unspecified gender).*
- (6) **N!upaṇa tla**  
 N!upaṇa CLF<sub>woman</sub>  
*N!upaṇa (the woman).*

A classifier is also triggered by numerals and partitives. When a numeral is used, the numeral is considered the head and the classifier its dependant, so the order is Noun-CLF-Numeral:

- (7) **N!oo'o uṭu** **N!oiči**  
 chicken CLF<sub>bird</sub> seven  
*seven chickens.*

The explicit numeral **!oo** *one* can be used to mark indeterminacy in situations where the presence of the classifier would be triggered anyway. For example:

- (8) **juli tla !oo**  
 mother/breast CLF<sub>woman</sub> one  
*a mother (but **not** a breast)*

### 2.1.1 Possession and adjectives

Dependants of a noun phrase precede the noun / pronoun they modify. This occurs always, independently of whether the dependant is used as a determiner or not<sup>1</sup>. Adjectives are always unflected:

- (9) **||q'a unjaã taa**  
 big wolf CLF<sub>predatory animal</sub>  
*the big wolf*

Because of the effect of zero-copula, and the VS word order in intransitive clauses, there is no true distinction between an adjective and an intransitive/copular verb meaning to be that adjective (see Section 2.3).

If a *determined* noun phrase is placed as a dependant for another noun phrase, it marks an inalienable possessive. For example

- (10) **ɲaã tla š!a**  
 woman CLF<sub>woman</sub> teeth  
*The woman's teeth*

Note that the classifier ensures **ɲaã tla** is determined. If it was not, we would open ourselves to ambiguity:

- (11) **ɲaã š!a**  
 woman teeth  
*Teeth of a woman / \*Female teeth*

---

<sup>1</sup>In general, there is no specific syntactic nor morphological marking for determiner phrases.

Clearly, often context will be able to disambiguate.

### 2.1.2 Nominalisation

todo

## 2.2 Alignment and Coordination

‡A is always syntactically ergative. For intransitive clauses, with a verb V and a sole subject S, the verb always precedes the subject. For example

- (12) in||aa N!upaṇa tla  
sleep N!upaṇa CLFwoman  
'N!upaṇa is sleeping.'

In a transitive clause, involving a verb V, an agent A and an object O, the order is *fixed* as AVO:

- (13) N!upaṇa tla ilqorri šloiṇe  
N!upaṇa CLFwoman eat meat  
'N!upaṇa is eating meat'

This rigid syntactical structure invites us to identify S and O as a single type of argument that always follows V, namely the Patient P, contrasting with agents A as a special role marked by preceding V. This syntactical alignment is therefore **ergative-absolutive** in nature. However, whereas a typical ergative language would provide a morphological way to mark Agents, i.e. an Ergative case, in ‡A this does not usually occur; the optional ERG marker 'a by, from (which may equivalently also mark an Ablative) can be employed in special emphatic conditions (see Section 2.10):

- (14) N!upaṇa tla ('a) ilqorri šloiṇe  
N!upaṇa CLFwoman (ERG) eat meat  
'N!upaṇa is eating meat'



This overt marking is rare and considerably formal sounding; in the modern language it still doesn't allow for changing the word order except in a few idioms.

A transitive verb may be employed intransitively by omitting the Agent.

- (15) **!qorri šloiñe**  
 eat meat  
*'The meat is being eaten.'*

It is, however, ungrammatical to instead omit the Patient. Equivalently, a (lone) sentence may never finish on a verb. If we wanted to express a meaning alongside the lines of *'N!upaṇa eats (nothing specific)'*, we would need to perform a valency-changing operation that shifts argument so as to fill the Patient slot. An antipassive, marked by the auxiliary **uji**, does the job:

- (16) **uji !qorri N!upaṇa tla**  
 ANTIP eat N!upaṇa CLF<sub>woman</sub>  
*'N!upaṇa is eating (nothing specific)'*

We shall examine valency-changing operations in greater detail in Section 2.4.

We remark that it is possible to drop a repeated Patient in a co-ordinated clause, provided it is shared with a previous one. For example:

- (17) **!oono ji N!uĩ 'utla noõ †aãṇi †u**  
 boy CLF<sub>child</sub> kick ball CLF<sub>round</sub> tool fly.away and  
*'The boy kicked the ball, and it flew away.'*

In cases like these, the post-conjunction **†u** *and* is preferred to the (here) equivalent pre-conjunction **'ai** *and, and then* because it prevents the clause from ending in a verb, though the second option would not be considered ungrammatical:

- (18) **!oono ji      N+uĩ 'utla noõ      'ai ‡aãni**  
 boy      CLF<sub>child</sub> kick ball      CLF<sub>round</sub> tool and fly.away  
*'The boy kicked the ball, and it flew away.*

It is not, however, possible to omit a shared Agent in coordinated clauses, or to omit a Patient to be replaced with another clause's Agent and viceversa. For example, in *'The boy kicked the ball and scored a point'* there is a shared Agent, and it is not possible to drop it in the coordinated clause in ‡A like it is in English. A resumptive pronoun is necessary. And in *'The boy kicked the ball and smiled'*, the boy is A in the first clause and P in the second, meaning that the boy's second appearance may not be dropped. (All of these example may of course be expressed with coordination and drop provided the right valency-changing is performed to make sure the coordinated arguments are always two Patients).

This behaviour, which persists under all conditions, concludes the other side of ‡A's syntactical ergativity.

### 2.2.1 Secundativity and ditransitives

‡A lacks a type of complement that may be described as 'Dative'. In a phrase involving a verb like *give* (**ditransitive verb**), which involves some *Donor* D giving a *Theme* T to a *Recipient* R, it is the Recipient which is treated as the direct object, while the Theme is placed in the instrumental (with postposition **ra**). For example

- (19) **U||aa ku    ioã a||'i ra    !oono ji**  
 U||aa    CLF<sub>man</sub> gift money INSTR boy      CLF<sub>child</sub>  
*U||aa gifted money to the child. (lit. gifted the child with money.)*

Into this category of ditransitives fall not only verbs relating to giving, but also verbs concerning speaking, talking and telling – the said thing is the Theme, and the addressee is the Recipient:

- (20) **I!xaane !am    n||aãe A!auje ñe'e    n||'am ra.**  
 ancestor    CLF<sub>spirit</sub> tell    A!auje    CLF<sub>elder</sub> man story INSTR  
*The ancestor told A!auje a story.*

A construction is also possible where one employs a monotransitive verb as a ditransitive with the meaning of possession – specifically the Theme is the original Patient, while the Recipient role is filled by the possessor of the original Patient. For example

- (21) **N!upaṇa tla n|xape tḥum ra A!auje ñe'e**  
 N!upaṇa CLF<sub>woman</sub> scold son INSTR A!auje CLF<sub>elder man</sub>  
*N!upaṇa scolded A!auje's son (lit.: she scolded a son to him / he is getting his son scolded by her)*

### 2.2.2 Causatives

A **causer** of an action is seen as a “super-Agent”, i.e. an argument placed even higher in a hierarchy of agency. If an agent is already present, the causer is placed in **ablative (ABL)**, which is to say paired with the postposition **'a**. Usually the ABL argument, both in the sense of causer and of literal ablative (motion from), is placed before the verb and possible agent, but its position in the sentence is somewhat more free than the closer arguments.

- (22) **U||ḡa ku 'a N!upaṇa ||ḡa nṭuĩ 'utla noõ**  
 U||ḡa CLF<sub>man</sub> ABL N!upaṇa ||ḡa CLF<sub>young woman</sub> kick ball CLF<sub>round tool</sub>  
*U||ḡa made N!upaṇa kick the ball.*

However, in the absence of another true agent, the distinction between agent and causer is usually unimportant. Placing for example an argument in agentive position for an intransitive verb already communicates a meaning of causation:

- (23) **U||ḡa ku in||ḡa Q'oaṣuu tla**  
 U||ḡa CLF<sub>man</sub> sleep Q'oaṣuu CLF<sub>young woman</sub>  
*U||ḡa made Q'oaṣuu sleep. (lit. he slept her)*

and, as seen before, forcing the argument into ablative position marks either a stronger emphasis for causation / volition, or focus for that argument (see again Section 2.10). For example:

- (24) **in||ḡa Q'oaṣuu tla U||ḡa ku 'a**  
 sleep Q'oaṣuu CLF<sub>young woman</sub> U||ḡa CLF<sub>man</sub> ABL

*It was U//ga that made Q'oaɣuu sleep / Q'oaɣuu slept because of U//ga*

## 2.3 Copula

Yeahh... I still have to write it.

## 2.4 Verbal voices

Let us reprise, more in detail, the schema of a **‡A** verb phrase, with optional dependants in round brackets:

(Causer) (Agent) Verb Patient (Oblique(s) + post.)

with no specific focus, now, on the word order. Used as such, a verb is said to be in **active voice**. When necessary, it is possible to redirect the arguments of the verb in different argument slots by employing a different verbal voice, marked by an auxiliary which goes before or after the verb. The simplest case, already seen, is the **antipassive**, only really sensible for a transitive verb, and formed by prepending **uji**; this is a *demotion* in the agency hierarchy, working in this manner:

Causer → Agent → Patient → Theme

In an antipassive sentence, the argument in agentive position (optional) has the meaning of causer, the one in patientive position (mandatory) has that of agent, and the instrumental oblique is the object. The purposes of this shift are several: it can be used to fill a patient gap, to express a transitive causative, or to relativize an agent (more on this in Section 2.6).

Some examples needed.

Antipassives may not be applied typically whenever an instrumental, especially in the role of theme, is present. A way to understand it is that instrumentals are part of the chain of agency described above, and the antipassive is attempting to demote the instrument to a position of lower agency that does not exist. I will

describe shortly how to antipassivize a ditransitive, such as ‘U//’àa gave money to his mother’ if we want to place U//’àa in the Patient position.

Another widely employed voice is the **applicative**. This is marked by the **main-syllable reduplication** (see Section 1.3.5) of the verb and is used to *promote* an oblique (of various types) to a patient. The chain is

Agent ← Patient ← Oblique

The applicative has thus some reminiscence of a passive, but it is restricted in that the original presence of an oblique argument to promote to patient is essential (it is ungrammatical otherwise). The applicative is a sacrifice of the information on the *type* of oblique, since the postposition is lost, in exchange for transitivity of the verb, which may be necessary for relativisation.

Here’s an example involving an oblique with the postposition **iñi** over:

- (25) **||aũpe U||qa ku utʔ’e iñi**  
walk U||qa CLF<sub>man</sub> path on  
*U||qa walks on the path*

With the applicative, one may produce the **transitive** verb **||a||aũpe** to walk on (but also potentially to walk in, into, with...):

- (26) **U||qa ku ||a~ ||aũpe utʔ’e**  
U||qa CLF<sub>man</sub> APPL~ walk path  
*U||qa walks on the path*

The ambiguity inherent in an applicative can be displayed by presenting an example of a different oblique, for example

**examples**

## 2.5 Pronouns

### 2.5.1 Personal Pronouns

Exceptional within the language, the 1st and 2nd person pronouns are inflected, simultaneously for role (case), number, and clusivity.

PNC	Refers to	ERG	INTR	ACC
1SG	Just the speaker	<b>!a</b>	<b>ja</b>	<b>e!uũ</b>
1DU	The speaker + one addressee	<b>!xoo</b>		<b>an!xoo</b>
1PL.INCL	Speaker + addressee + others	<b>!uupa</b>	<b>uuma</b>	
1PL.EXCL	Speaker + others (no addressee)	<b>!auṭa</b>	<b>jaṭa</b>	<b>e!uũṭa</b>
2SG	Only one addressee	<b>u!ui</b>	<b>uchi</b>	<b>!uũñi</b>
2PL	Addressee(s) (+ others)			<b>!uũṭa</b>

When used as the argument of an intransitive clause or a copular clause, a personal pronoun takes the INTR case. If it's the agent of a transitive clause or the dependant of the proposition **'a** it takes the ERG. In all other situations, meaning when used as the object of a transitive clause or as dependant to any other postposition, it takes ACC. This implies that morphologically the language effectively has **tripartite alignment** in the first and second person (and, more precisely, nominative-accusative for 1DU and ergative-absolutive for the 1PL.INCL). Since the optional causative-ergative marker **'a** can be seen as a kind of (weak) morphological ergative marker that can instead be used on the 3rd person, one could argue that **ṭA** is morphologically split-ergative, with the split occurring between the 2nd and 3rd person, while remaining always syntactically ergative<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup>Minus the unnecessary of explicit case-marking, this is analogous to the alignment system of Dyirbal.

## Classifiers are the 3rd person pronouns

Noun classifiers double as 3rd person pronouns. These are uninflected by case and number (though they may be optionally specified by an explicit numeral, identically to noun phrases). However, if one wants to reference a previously introduced noun that was determined by a classifier, one ought to use the same identical classifier as a pronoun. For example, if we refer through the noun phrase **nlupana nui** *nlupana CLF<sub>woman</sub>*, it would be considered ungrammatical then to later employ **tla** *CLF<sub>woman</sub>* with the same referent.

example

### 2.5.2 Demonstrative Pronouns

todo

## 2.6 Relative Clauses

Being a primarily left-branching, ergative language, **†A** is severely restricted in which positions are accessible for relativisation, a limitation that is obviated with the use of the aforementioned voices.

**Only the patient position may be relativised** – meaning that the antecedent (the element that the relative clause describes) can only perform the role of patient in a relative clause. For example, amongst all these English examples

1. I saw the dog that was sleeping (Patient position)
2. I saw the dog that bit the cat (Agent position)
3. I saw the dog that my sister had gifted me (Instrumental position)
4. I saw the dog whose ears I find funny (Possessor position)

only the first can be translated *literally* into **†A**, since ‘the dog’ is Patient for the verb ‘sleep’ in that case. The other examples have

to be reworked with voice changing.

A simple (Patientive) relative clause is not marked with any special grammatical particle. It is simply placed before the antecedent with its own Patient omitted, constituting part of its noun phrase, and thus placing the antecedent itself in Patientive place for the relative clause. This entire noun phrase may then occupy any role in the *main* clause. Here's an example where a main clause Patient is relativized, with the relative clause marked in [square brackets]:

- (27)    **!a**    **ɬa** [ **!a**    **ɬq'ula 'ua** ] **ŋaã (nui)**  
          1S.ERG see    [ 1S.ERG before meet ] woman (CLF<sub>person</sub>)  
*I saw the woman I had met.*

Generally such a determinative relative clause may trigger drop of the classifier, and in this case **nui** may be omitted, as we will do from now on. Determinacy is implied automatically.

We may also have the antecedent as Agent in the main clause:

- (28)    [ **!a**    **ɬq'ula 'ua** ] **ŋaã ɬa eluũ**  
          [ 1S.ERG before meet ] woman see 1S.ACC  
*The woman I had met saw me.*

Proceed on voice changing and other positions.

## 2.7 Serial Verb Constructions

**ɬA** allows some kinds of **Serial Verb Constructions** (SVCs), whereby two or more verbs are chained together with no linking element in a single clause. Some of them are lexicalised (for example **uji ...** for the antipassive), in which case they can be understood better as auxiliary verbs, though fundamentally the spirit is that of SVCs, which are productive.

In the simplest kind of SVC two intransitive verbs are chained together sharing a patient – this is called **intransitive patientive SVC**. The resulting combined intransitive verb has the meaning of



performing the first action so that the second action may *follow*, either just temporally or also causally. While not necessary, the first verb is usually one of motion. A practical example:

- (29)    †aã in||a nã †'a  
go    sleep    eland CLF<sub>large</sub> herbivores  
*The eland went to sleep (went so it could sleep / goes and sleeps)*

This construction may also help express TAM (Tense, Aspect, Mood) for intransitive verbs, using particular preceeding verbs, for example:

Preceding Verb	Translation of V. + ...
<span style="color:blue">uɰum</span> <i>stand up</i>	be about to ..., will ..., be likely to...
<span style="color:blue">  arra</span> <i>close (their) eyes</i>	refuse to ..., not intend to...
<span style="color:blue">†aã</span> <i>go</i>	begin ..., go to do..., go there and ...,
<span style="color:blue">tʃ'oi</span> <i>exit, leave</i>	stop ..., finish ...,

We may not, however, serialize such intransitive verbs with a transitive verb, with the same types of meaning. For example, the following (with the presented intended meaning) is ungrammatical:

- (30)    \*ʂ†a ku    †aã !ope nã †'a  
human CLF<sub>man</sub> go    kill    eland CLF<sub>large</sub> herbivores  
*\*The man went to kill the eland.*

because this construction would appear to attempt to share an argument between the patientive and agentive role in the SVC, which is not allowed by ergativity. You *could* see the example as grammatical and translate it in the purely ergative sense as *The eland went and got killed by the man*, but this **intransitive-first patientive SVC** construction is extremely uncommon, due to the unpleasant distance between the agent and the transitive verb it modifies.

To communicate the meaning we originally wanted, which is ‘*the man went to kill the eland*’, an astounding feature only possible

thanks to **‡A**'s lack of ergative morphology is given by **chain SVCs**<sup>3</sup>. In a chain SVC, an argument is placed, unmarked, *inbetween* an intransitive and a transitive verb, in that order, followed by the object of the latter. The sandwiched argument acts as the patient to the first verb (given that it follows it), and as agent of the second (coming before it)<sup>4</sup>. This quite readily fixes the previous example:

- (31) **‡aã ‡‡a ku !lope nãã ‡'a**  
 go human CLF<sub>man</sub> kill eland CLF<sub>large herbivores</sub>  
*The man went to kill the eland.*

Finally, we may also much more easily have regular SVCs where the first verb is transitive. If the second one is intransitive, then we have a **transitive-first patientive SVC**, where the transitive action causes the intransitive action:

- (32) **!Xao'aã ku n|xape tui n!upaṇa tla**  
 !Xao'aã CLF<sub>man</sub> insult cry n!upaṇa CLF<sub>woman</sub>  
*!Xao'aã insulted n!upaṇa and she cried (made her cry).*

If both are transitive, we have a **binary SVC**, where both agent and patient are shared. The meaning is more likely of temporal consequence than of causality, though this is not an absolute. Example:

- (33) **!Xao'aã ku !lope au!q'o nãã ‡'a**  
 !Xao'aã CLF<sub>man</sub> kill skin eland CLF<sub>large herbivores</sub>  
*!Xao'aã killed and then skinned the eland.*

In summary, the following kinds of SVCs are possible:

<sup>3</sup>The name serial verb construction is improper in this case since the verbs are not literally adjacent, but it still constitutes a monoclausal, polyverbal setup.

<sup>4</sup>When a 1st or 2nd person pronoun is infixed as part of a chain SVC, as when translating '*I went to kill the eland*', the ERG teform is commonly employed.

SVC type	V. 1	V. 2	Shared argument	Likely translation
Intr. Patientive	intr.	intr.	Patient	Tense/Aspectual
Chain	intr.	tr.	One infix argument acting as Patient and Agent respectively	Tense/Aspectual
Tr. Patientive	tr.	intr.	Patient	Causal
Binary	tr.	tr.	Both Patient and Agent separately	Consecution

## 2.8 Imperatives and Polarity

To doo be doo

## 2.9 Interrogatives

To doo be doo

## 2.10 Topic-Comment

You guessed it



# Chapter 3

## Corpus

### 3.1 Sun-Tongue and the Night

Laula ɪq'aãta, †xaa ‖q'ote paala Ɔaa 'a uɪum †U'u-  
laã !am. !Am 'ao †um ke, !am †u sɔona tuña !xa,  
'ai Ɔaa 'a uɪum 'm'm !am !aala. †'A 'a 'm'm N!ui  
cha, !'oã iñi o!o. Nam 'ai, †U'ulaã !am †a isɪq'atla  
N‖oi †'a uɲa: ali'a š!o puutɪ iɪ'i !o, !am ‖uɲa nãã  
nãã †u.

*One night, Sun-Tongue awoke because of the distant  
wail of a hurt beast. He filled up his canteen and  
tipped his arrows, and began tracking the sound by  
moonlight. After he'd tracked it for long, he finally  
caught up to the animal. However, Sun-Tongue dis-  
covered that there was no hurt animal which he  
could skin for meat: there was only a mongoose,  
snickering at him.*

To finish story

- (34) **Laula** **ɪq'aãta** , **†xaa ‖q'ote paala Ɔaa** 'a  
once.upon.a.time at.nighttime hurt game wail CLF<sub>screams</sub> from  
**uɪum †U'ulaã !am** .  
stand.up SunTongue CLF<sub>spirits</sub>

*One night, Sun-Tongue awoke because of the distant wail of a hurt beast.*

- (35) **!Am 'ao †um ke , !am †u**  
CLF<sub>spirits</sub> fill.with.water canteen CLF<sub>containers.of.liquids</sub> CLF<sub>spirits</sub> and  
**sʰooŋa tuŋa !xa , 'ai ʔaa 'a uʰum 'm'm !am**  
poison.tip arrow CLF<sub>blades</sub> and CLF<sub>screams</sub> from stand.up run CLF<sub>spirits</sub>  
**!aala .**  
under

*He filled up his canteen and tipped his arrows, and began tracking the sound by moonlight.*

- (36) **†A 'a 'm'm n!ui tʂa , !'oã iŋi o!o .**  
CLF<sub>large.herbivore</sub> from run CLF<sub>repeated.actions</sub> while end over arrive.to

*After he'd tracked it for long, he finally caught up to the animal.*

- (37) **Ŋam 'ai , †U'ulaã !am †a isɿq'atla n||oi †a**  
but and Sun tongue CLF<sub>spirits</sub> see skin.for.meat can CLF<sub>large.herbivore</sub>  
**uŋa :**  
none

*However, Sun-Tongue discovered that there was no hurt animal which he could skin for meat:*

- (38) **ali'a š!o puutʂi iɿ'i !oo , !am ||uuna naã naã †u .**  
merely be mongoose CLF<sub>small.animals</sub> one CLF<sub>spirits</sub> about laugh laugh and

*there was only a mongoose, snickering at him.*

## 3.2 The North Wind and the Sun

*This should be updated to the orthography changes.*

**Laula N!òò U!q'a maã Jùu aje †u e||a iŋi nɯm**  
**nui 'èe sʰajau ||ùuŋa. ʦurra, loõŋi ɿxoi onɿ'a**  
**o!o q'aŋi. Maã aje †u n!oirre nui 'èe †a 'a**  
**q'aŋi ku n||xòì upa ɿxoi ʦèe, unɿu sʰajau ʦhì š!u**  
**nui. N!òò U!q'a maã †xàù'a ʦre ra tsùu nʔaã,**  
**ŋam ča uʒi tsùu maã, q'aŋi ku 'a ʦèe onɿ'a**  
**!q'ati n!xùu. 'ai U!q'a maã eŋa sʰq'o. 'ai 'ai,**  
**loõŋi ra čìiçi Jùu aje, 'ai †u ku u!q'o ɿxoi ʦèe.**  
**N!òò U!q'a maã †a sʰajau Jùu aje.**

*Once upon a time, the North Wind and the Sun were discussing over which one of them two was stronger. Suddenly, a vagabond wrapped in a warm cloak arrived to them. The Wind and the Sun decided that the first of them that would make the vagabond take off the cloak, truly that one would have been the strongest. The North Wind blew as strong as he could, but as the wind blew, the vagabond enveloped themselves in the cloak ever more. And so, the Wind gave up. But then, the Sun shone warmly, and so the vagabond took off their cloak. Thus, the North Wind saw that the Sun was stronger.*

- (39) **Jaula** **N'òõ U!q'a maã** **Jùu aje** **ɥu eɬa**  
 once.upon.a.time North wind CLF<sub>weather</sub> sun CLF<sub>celestial</sub> object and conflict  
**iĩi**  
 over

*Once upon a time, the North Wind and the Sun were discussing*

- (40) **nɔum nui** **'èe sɔajau** **ɥùuɔa .**  
 two CLF<sub>people</sub> PTV COMP~strong about  
*over which one of them two was stronger.*

- (41) **ɥurra , loõni ɣxoi onɔ'a o'o** **q'añi .**  
 suddenly warm cloak envelop walk.into vagabond  
*Suddenly, a vagabond wrapped in a warm cloak arrived to them.*

- (42) **Maã aje** **ɥu n'oirre nui** **'èe ɥa 'a q'añi**  
 CLF<sub>weather</sub> CLF<sub>celestial</sub> object and decide CLF<sub>people</sub> PTV first ABL vagabond  
**ku n|xòì upa ɣxoi tèe ,**  
 CLF<sub>man</sub> remove SUBJ cloak CLF<sub>clothing</sub>  
*The Wind and the Sun decided that the first of them that would make the vagabond take off the cloak,*

- (43) **unɔ sɔajau tɬi šlu nui .**  
 truly COMP~strong COND RES CLF<sub>people</sub>  
*truly that one would have been stronger.*

- (44) **N'òõ U!q'a maã** **ɥxàu'a tɕe ra tsùu nɔaã ,**  
 North wind CLF<sub>weather</sub> strain peak INSTR throw air

*The North Wind blew as strong as he could,*

- (45) **ṇam ča uji tsùu maã , q'añi ku 'a tètè onɔ'a**  
 but while ANTIP throw CLF<sub>weather</sub> vagabond CLF<sub>man</sub> ABL CLF<sub>clothing</sub> envelop  
**!q'ati nɔxùu .**  
 self.ACC more

*but as the wind blew, the vagabond enveloped themselves in the cloak ever more.*

- (46) **'ai U!q'a maã eña ʃɛq'o .**  
 and wind CLF<sub>weather</sub> surrender neck

*And so, the Wind gave up.*

- (47) **'ai 'ai , loõṇi ra čiiči Jùu aje , 'ai ɬu ku**  
 and.then warm INSTR shine sun CLF<sub>celestial object</sub> and and CLF<sub>man</sub>  
**u!q'o ɬxoi tètè .**  
 peel.off cloak CLF<sub>clothing</sub>

*But then, the Sun shone warmly, and so the vagabond took off their cloak.*

- (48) **N!dõ U!q'a maã ɬa ʃaɬau Jùu aje .**  
 North wind CLF<sub>weather</sub> see COMP~strong sun CLF<sub>celestial object</sub>

*Thus, the North Wind saw that the Sun was stronger.*

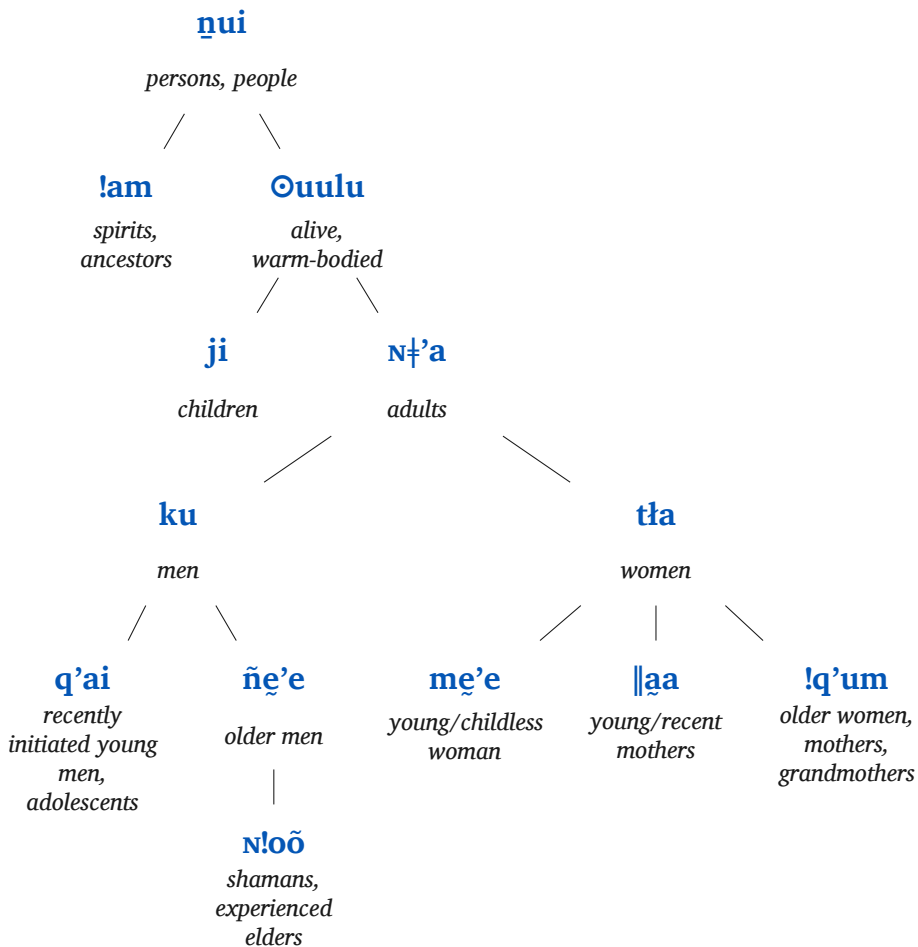


# **Chapter 4**

## **Lexicon**

### **4.1 Basic Classifier Taxonomy**

A basic, non-comprehensive hierarchy of noun classifiers for people:



## 4.2 Greetings and idioms

to do as well

## 4.3 Numerals

𐆳A doesn't have a consistent way of expressing cardinal numbers larger than 24, and ordinals are even more severely under-developed, only rarely ever going as far as *third*. The stable numerals are reported as follows, with \* marking rare forms. The derivational patterns that can be evinced from many of these numerals are varied and chaotic. The constructions - 'a 𐆳oo *one from* and - 𐆳a *next after* are used to create cardinals respectively one or more less than one with a simpler name, main-syllable reduplication may produce a number twice or thrice the original, and the almost unattested form of 22 seems to attempt a 'second after' construction from 20, which itself is unstable to being represented either as 𐆳ee *digit* or 'double ten', where 10 itself is 𐆳uuma *hand* (instead of it being assigned, more logically, to 5).

	Cardinal	Ordinal		Cardinal
1	𐆳oo	𐆳a	13	𐆳um 𐆳a
2	𐆳um	𐆳aaru	14	𐆳um 𐆳aaru
3	𐆳aaka	*𐆳umrru	15	𐆳!q'oi
4	𐆳'e		16	𐆳o𐆳i
5	𐆳!q'oi		17	𐆳o𐆳i 𐆳a
6	𐆳um		18	𐆳um𐆳u
7	𐆳oiči		19	*𐆳ee 'a 𐆳oo
8	𐆳i		20	𐆳ee (or *𐆳u!𐆳uma)
9	𐆳aati		21	𐆳ee 𐆳a
10	𐆳uuma		22	*𐆳ee 𐆳aaru
11	𐆳um 'a 𐆳oo		23	*𐆳um 'a 𐆳oo
12	𐆳um		24	𐆳um

## 4.4 Dictionary

In the following dictionary, we report words in the standard orthography and in broad IPA transcription (in particular, no tones nor stress are marked, since they are fully predictable).

- For nouns, we make suggestion of the most commonly used classifiers in [CLF ...].
- Some phrasal verbs are circumfixal, usually because they involve a lexicalized combination of a verb and a postposition. These are entered with dots ... to mark the space in which the Patient *and* the oblique must be inserted.
- The subtler syntax of some verbs is clarified by expressing the action in terms of explicit arguments, namely (A) for agent, (P) for patient, (T) for theme (instrumental), and (ABL) for ablative/causer.
- For a language such as this one, alphabetical sorting is useless and cumbersome. I find it more practical and meaningful to present entries classified primarily by the main, i.e. first consonant instead.

||

**a||um** - /a||m:/ • *card.num.* six

**||a** - /||a/ • *card.num.* few

**||arra** - /||arra/ • *v.intr.* close one's eyes, not see, refuse to look • *v.intr.* (in SVC) refuse to ..., not intend to ..., resist ...

**||aũpe** - /||ãmpe/ • *n.* foot [CLF **||uũ**] • *v.intr.* walk

**||aa** - /||a:/ • *v.tr.* hold • *clf.* young women, recent mothers

**||oi** - /||ɔi/ • *Postverb* NEG, not, negates the action of the verb.  
**Uji i!oorri ||oi ñe'e** *The old man doesn't eat anything.*

**||uũa** - /||u:ũa/ • *post.* about

||'

**||'u** - /||'u/ • *Ditransitive verb* give, provide, (A) give (T) to (P)

||x

**||xa** - /||χa/ • *n.* penis [CLF **||uũ**]

||q'

**||q'a** - /||q'a/ • *adj.* big, large

**||q'ooña** - /||q'ɔ:ũa/ • *n.* crab  
• *n.* lobster

**||q'ote** - /||q'ɔtse/ • *n.* game, animals to be hunted, especially larger herbivores [CLF **||'a**]

||Ɔ

**||Ɔa** - /||Ɔa/ • *v.tr.* scare, (P) be afraid of (A), • *n.* fear [CLF **||a**]

N||

**in||aa** - /ĩʔ||a:/ • *v.intr.* sleep

**in||oi** - /ĩʔ||ɔi/ • *v.* say

**N||aũe** - /ʔ||aũe/ • *Ditransitive verb* (A) tell, recount, say (T) to (P)

**N||a'a** - /ʔ||a'a/ • *n.* gold

**N||oi** - /ʔ||ɔi/ • *v.* can

**N||oũ** - /ʔ||ũ:/ • *v.* descend

**N||otro** - /ʔ||ɔtɔ:/ • *n.* door

**N||ui** - /ʔ||ui/ • *v.intr.* jump

N||'

**N||'am** - /ʔ||'ãm/ • *n.* story, tale [CLF **||uũ**]

N||x

**n||xape** - /<sup>n</sup>||xape/ • *v.tr.* insult, berate, scold

**n||xoi** - /<sup>n</sup>||xoi/ • *v.* remove

‡||

**e||a** - /e||a/ • *n.* conflict, discussion, disagreement, verbal fight

**i||ui** - /i||ui/ • *n.* milk [CLF ‡um]

**‡||a** - /‡||a/ • *v.tr.* see

**‡||au'i** - /‡||au'i/ • *adj.* graceful, delicately beautiful

**‡||oi** - /‡||oi/ • *clf.* static formations, groups and sequences of inanimate objects, layouts, patterns and textures

‡||'

**a‡||i** - /a‡||i/ • *n.* money

**‡||'a** - /‡||'a/ • *v.intr.* transform

‡||q'

**‡||q'a** - /‡||q'a/ • *n.* egg [CLF **noõ**]

‡

**e‡aaka** - /e‡a:ka/ • *card.num.* three

**u‡uũa** - /u‡u:na/ • *n.* song [CLF **Qaa**]

**‡a** - /‡a/ • *ord.num.* first

**‡aã** - /‡ã:/ • *v.intr.* go, travel, move • *v.intr.* (in SVC) begin ..., go to do..., go there and ...,

**‡aãni** - /‡ã:ni/ • *v.* flee

**‡a‡xaa** - /‡a‡xaa:/ • *v.tr.* snap, break (especially crack) in half

**‡am** - /‡ãm/ • *n.* man

**‡oipe** - /‡oipe/ • *adv.* maybe, not

**‡ootri** - /‡o:tri/ • *n.* mountain

**‡oi** - /‡oi/ • *v.intr.* fly

**‡oõ** - /‡õ:/ • *clf.* lids, lid-like objects, covers, doors

**‡u** - /‡u/ • *conj.* and

**‡um** - /‡m:/ • *n.* canteen

**‡um** - /‡m:/ • *clf.* liquids, drops, rain, beverages

**‡u'u** - /‡u'u/ • *n.* the sun, sunlight, daylight, the daytime sky [CLF **aje**]

‡'

**a‡'ui** - /a‡'ui/ • *clf.* wooden

**‡'a** - /‡'a/ • *clf.* larger herbivores, elands, elephants, giraffes, etc

ɬX

ɬxaa - /ɬχa:/ • *v.tr.* hit, strike  
with a loud sound • *v.tr.*  
damage, hurt, offend

ɬxau'a - /ɬχau'a/ • *n.* effort,  
strain, force

ɬxoita - /ɬχɔita/ • *adj.* strange

ɬxoõ - /ɬχõ:/ • *n.* young child  
[CLF **ji**]

ɬxoi - /ɬχõ:/ • *post.* through  
• *post.* across

ɬq'

ɬq'ai - /ɬq'ai/ • *v.* know

ɬq'ula - /ɬq'ula/ • *adv.* before  
• *n.* (anatomy) back, spine,  
buttocks

Nɬ

anɬai - /ãɬai/ • *adj.* every

unɬaaki - /mɬa:ki/ • *v.intr.* (S)  
climb

unɬoi - /mɬɔi/ • *n.* language,  
way of speaking [CLF **nuĩ**]

unɬuu - /mɬu:/ • *rel.pr.*  
which.ERG

Nɬaã - /ɱɬã:/ • *v.* complain

Nɬoa - /ɱɬa/ • *v.intr.* discover

Nɬoichi - /ɱɔitʃi/ • *card.num.*  
seven

Nɬoõ - /ɱõ:/ • *n.* bed

Nɬui - /ɱmĩ/ • *v.* kick

Nɬuu - /ɱu:/ • *v.intr.* die • *n.*  
death, especially personified  
as "Lady Death" [CLF **me'e**]

Nɬ'

Nɬ'a - /ɱ'a/ • *v.tr.* have sex,  
mate, copulate; (P) is usually  
the woman or passive role,  
and (A) or (T) is the male or  
active.

Nɬ'i - /ɱ'i/ • *Particle* NEG, not,  
negates a preceding adverb,  
adjective or noun (not verbs)

Nɬ'Nɬ'a - /ɱɱ'a/ • *v.intr.* (of  
multiple people) have sex  
with each other

NɬX

Nɬxa - /ɱɬa/ • *adv.* always, of-  
ten, it is a regular occurrence  
that

ʂɬ

ʂɬa - /ʂa/ • *n.* human being,  
person

ʂɬum - /ʂm:/ • *n.* knife [CLF  
**!xa**]

ʃʔ

**ʃʔo** - /ʃʔʔɔ/ • *v.intr.* sweat • *n.* sweat [CLF **ʃum**]

ʃʔqʔ

**ʃʔqʔo** - /ʃʔqʔɔ/ • *n.* neck

!

**a!uuma** - /a!u:ma/ • *n.* hand  
• *card.num.* ten

**e!um** - /e!m:/ • *pers.pr.* me  
(ACC), to me

**e!umʔa** - /e!m:ʔa/ • *pers.pr.*  
1.PL.EXCL.ACC

**!loorri** - /!lɔ:rrɪ/ • *v.* eat

**o!ao** - /ɔ!aɔ/ • *adj.* old

**u!aama** - /u!a:ma/ • *n.* misstep,  
mistake

**u!oõ** - /u!õ:/ • *n.* year

**u!oi** - /u!ɔi/ • *adj.* jittery, irrita-  
ble, violent, uneasy, startled  
**U!ui 'a u!òì nàã ʔ'a!** *You*  
*startled the eland!*

**u!uuji** - /ulu:ʒi/ • *adv.* for the  
duration / over the course  
of a whole day, starting in  
the morning and ending in  
the evening, possibly repeat-  
ing over multiple days each  
occupied completely by the

action • *n.* day, span of  
a day, time duration between  
sunrise and sunset [CLF **'urri**]

**!a** - /!a/ • *pers.pr.* I (ERG), me,  
from me, because of mes

**!aala** - /!a:la/ • *post.* under, be-  
low • *post.* moving by means  
of, travelling by • *n.* palm  
(of hand), sole (foot)

**!am** - /!ãm/ • *clf.* spirits, ghosts,  
ancestors, the dead • *clf.*  
trees

**!auʔa** - /!auʔa/ • *pers.pr.* Us, ex-  
cluding you (ERG)

**!oa** - /!ɔa/ • *adj.* idiot

**!oi** - /!ɔi/ • *post.* for the benefit  
of, for the purpose of giving to  
• *post.* for the purpose/with  
the intent of going to, travel-  
ling to, or moving towards

**!ooja** - /!ɔ:ʒa/ • *preverb* Neg-  
ative Deontic marker – the  
speaker wishes, desires, re-  
quests, plans or intends for  
the action not to happen.

**!oorro** - /!ɔ:rrɔ/ • *n.* urine [CLF  
**ʃum**] • *v.intr.* urinate

**!oono** - /!ɔ:nɔ/ • *n.* boy [CLF  
**ji,nui**]

**!ope** - /!ɔpe/ • *v.tr.* kill, slay,  
murder



**!qo** - /!q:/ • *card.num.* one, non-plural • *adj.* lone, alone, unaccompanied, unpaired

**!qotlo** - /!q:tlɔ/ • *n.* vulva

**!umña** - /!m:ɲa/ • *n.* rain

**!umñi** - /!m:ɲi/ • *pers.pr.* 2.S.ACC

**!umta** - /!m:tʰa/ • *pers.pr.* 2.PL.ACC

**!uuli** - /!u:li/ • *n.* celebration, party

**!uũoi** - /!m:ɔi/ • *N/A* hello, hi

!

**e!ʼaɲi** - /e!ʼaɲi/ • *v.* sing

**o!ʼo** - /ɔ!ʼɔ/ • *v.intr.* arrive (among others), join (Dat), meet up with others (Dat)

**u!ʼui** - /u!ʼui/ • *pers.pr.* 2.ERG

**!ʼa** - /!ʼa/ • *post.* besides, to the side of, near • *n.* hips, iliac crests [CLF **!uɯ**]

**!ina** - /!ʼina/ • *n.* boat

**!oã** - /!ʼã/ • *n.* fingernail • *n.* (of a location or a stretch in time) end, endpoint, boundary, finish, completion, last portion

**!uulu** - /!ʼu:lu/ • *v.tr.* bite • *v.-intr.* feel pain, especially itching of the skin

!x

**olxooji** - /ɔ!xɔ:ji/ • *v.* get stuck, become unable to move or act

**olxu** - /ɔ!xu/ • *n.* walking cane

**ulxam** - /u!xã/ • *v.* concern

**!xa** - /!xʰa/ • *clf.* blades, things with a sharp edge or point, arrows, spears, teeth

**!xaje** - /!xʰaje/ • *v.tr.* open

**!xape** - /!xʰape/ • *adj.* happy

**!xaa** - /!xʰa:/ • *n.* house, hut • *n.* roof [CLF **!qõ**]

**!xoo** - /!xɔ:/ • *pers.pr.* you and I

!qʼ

**u!qʼa** - /u!qʼa/ • *n.* wind [CLF **maã**]

**u!qʼo** - /u!qʼɔ/ • *v.tr.* peel, scrape or remove a covering, protective layer, film, piece of clothing

**!qʼao** - /!qʼao/ • *n.* clock

**!qʼatɪ** - /!qʼatɪ/ • *refl.pr.* self.ACC, placed in P position,

marks that (C) is also acting as (P).

**!q'oa** - /!q'ɔa/ • *v.tr.* steal

**!G**

**!Goa** - /!Gɔa/ ← variant form of **!oa**

**N!**

**n!ai** - /n!ai/ • *adj.* similar to, akin to

**n!ali** - /n!ali/ • *n.* father [CLF **ñe'e**]

**n!aa** - /n!a:/ • *n.* fire, firepit  
• *v.tr.* cook (on fire), roast

**n!ooɬo** - /n!ɔ:ɬɔ/ • *n.* chicken  
[CLF **uɬu**]

**n!oõ** - /n!õ:/ • *n.* North

**n!o'o** - /n!ɔ?ɔ/ • *v.intr.* breathe

**n!ui** - /n!ui/ • *clf.* repeated.actions

**N!'**

**n!'oirre** - /n!ʔɔirre/ • *v.* decide

**N!X**

**an!xoo** - /ãn!xɔ:/ • *pers.pr.* me and you

**n!xaa** - /n!xɑ:/ • *post.* inside

**š!**

**iš!uka** - /iʃ!uka/ • *N/A* the very same

**uš!uupa** - /uʃ!u:pa/ • *v.* re-organize

**š!a'a** - /ʃ!aʔa/ • *v.tr.* memorize, either by practice or through an intense experience resulting in a vivid memory

**š!o** - /ʃ!ɔ/ • *Copulative verb* be temporarily, be contingentially, there be, be present

**š!o ... iñi** - /ʃ!ɔ ... iɲi/ • *v.* (smth) be over, be on top of  
• *v.* (actions & events) be involved in, act in, perform, be busy with  
• *v.* lie on, lay down on, cover **š!o ku n!ɬòõ iñi** *he is lying on the bed*

**š!oiñe** - /ʃ!ɔiɲe/ • *n.* meat [CLF **laa**]

**š!u** - /ʃ!u/ • *Resumptive marker* RES

**š!**

**š!'a** - /ʃ!ʔa/ • *n.* tooth [CLF **juu!xa**]

**š!q'**

**š!q'oi** - /ʃ!q'oi/ • *card.num.* five

ɬ

**ɪaã** - /i|ã:/ • *v.intr.* do nothing, be slacking, loiter **Nɬxa ɪaã !Xao'aã ku**. *!Xao'aã is always slacking.* • *v.intr.* lie down, be on the ground • *v.tr.* (a dead person) bury

**uɪum** - /u|m:/ • *v.intr.* stand up, stand up straight, get up • *v.intr.* (in SVC) be about to ..., will ..., be likely to ..., plan to ..., intend to ...

**ɪa** - /a/ • *clf.* feelings, emotions, relationships, mental states

**ɪaala** - /a|la/ • *adv.* easily

**ɪaula** - /a|ula/ • *adv.* once.upon.a.time

**ɪaõ** - /ãõ/ • *clf.* orifices, bodily holes, openings, wounds

**ɪoã** - /õã/ • *Ditransitive verb* (A) gift (T) to (P)

**ɪuli** - /uli/ • *n.* breast [CLF **ɪuu**] • *n.* mother [CLF **ɬla**]

**ɪuu** - /u:/ • *clf.* body parts

**ɪuupa** - /u:pa/ • *pers.pr.* 1.PL.INCL.ERG

ɬ'

**ɪq'ali** - /i|²ali/ • *n.* barrier

**ɪq'i** - /i|²i/ • *clf.* small or medium-sized animals, especially smaller mammals

**uɪ'ule** - /u|²ule/ • *v.* create, make, build, manufacture

ɬx

**ɪxoi** - /ɬxoi/ • *n.* cloak

ɬq'

**ɪq'a** - /q'a/ • *n.* night

**ɪq'aãta** - /q'ã:ta/ • *adv.* at.nighttime

Nɬ

**unɪaã** - /mᵛ|ã:/ • *n.* wolf [CLF **ɬaa**] • *adj.* (of a person) unpredictably aggressive, pugnacious, cruel, dangerous

**unɪu** - /mᵛ|u/ • *adv.* truly

**nɪa** - /ᵛ|a/ • *n.* child (as in progeny, son or daughter)

**nɪaati** - /ᵛ|a:ti/ • *card.num.* nine

**nɪai** - /ᵛ|ai/ • *post.* face

**nɪa'ã** - /ᵛ|ã?ã/ • *n.* womb, vagina [CLF **ɪuu**]

**nɪum** - /ᵛ|m:/ • *card.num.* two

Nɿ'

**onɿ'a** - /ɔ̃ɿ<sup>ʔ</sup>a/ • *v.* envelop

sɿ

**sɿau** - /sɿ|au/ • *adj.* strong

**sɿooɳa** - /sɿ|ɔ̃:ɳa/ • *v.tr.* poison.tip

**sɿui** - /sɿ|ui/ • *n.* snake

sɿ'

**sɿ'e** - /sɿ<sup>ʔ</sup>e/ • *card.num.* four

**sɿ'i** - /sɿ<sup>ʔ</sup>i/ • *clf.* slender

sɿq'

**isɿq'a** - /isɿq'a/ • *v.tr.* skin.for.meat

⊙

**⊙aa** - /⊙a:/ • *clf.* songs, music, singing, sung phrases, rhythmic noises, birdsong  
• *clf.* dances, dancing, dance moves, rhythmic movements

**⊙ui** - /⊙ui/ • *v.tr.* want

N⊙

**N⊙aã** - /<sup>ʊ</sup>⊙ã:/ • *n.* air

**N⊙um** - /<sup>ʊ</sup>⊙m:/ • *Ditransitive verb* (A) suck (substance (T))

from (P), (A) suck on (P) • *v.-tr.* suckle on, (A) be breastfed by (P) **N⊙um Q'oaqùu ɿàa** *Young Q'oaqùu is breastfeeding (her child).* • *v.tr.* kiss (on the lips or otherwise)

ch

**cha** - /t̪a/ • *conj.* while

**chi** - /t̪i/ • *clf.* aquatic.animals

**che'e** - /t̪eʔe/ • *n.* (of tree) trunk, log, column

**chjichi** - /t̪i:t̪i/ • *v.* shine

**uchi** - /ut̪i/ • *pers.pr.* 2.INTR

c'

**c'aã** - /c'ã:/ • *n.* arm [CLF **ɿuu**]  
• *n.* wing (of bird) [CLF **ɿuu**]

**c'i** - /c'i/ • *adj.* such, similar, of the same kind, of the type being discussed

j

**aje** - /aje/ • *clf.* objects and phenomena in the sky, stars, the sun, the moon, comets, clouds, rainbows, sunrises and sunsets, eclipses, etc.

**ja** - /ja/ • *pron.* 1S.INTR

**jaṭa** - /jaṭa/ • *pers.pr.*  
1.PL.EXCL.INTR

**ji** - /ji/ • *clf.* children, young people

**jipa** - /jipa/ • *n.* hare

**jeeñi** - /je:ɲi/ • *N/A* this

**jum** - /jɯm:/ • *v.tr.* surround, circle, flank, in either threatening or protective manner • *n.* circular formation of people or objects, ring of items, a group encircling a centre [CLF **ʔoi**] • *n.* group of people by a campfire

**uji** - /uɟi/ • *preverb* ANTIP

## k

**ke** - /ke/ • *clf.* containers.of.liquids

**ku** - /ku/ • *clf.* male adults, men

**kuñe** - /kuɲe/ • *adv.* simply

## l

**ali'a** - /aliʔa/ • *adv.* merely

**laã** - /lã:/ • *n.* tongue [CLF **ʔuu**]

**laa** - /la:/ • *clf.* foul-smelling objects, rotting matter, feces, waste, corpses, infections,

pus, diseases, the severely diseased

**la'ã** - /lãʔã/ • *v.tr.* disgust, repulse, cause nausea to, cause to vomit, disturb, distress • *v.intr.* be disgusted, nauseous, sick

**loõɲi** - /lõ:ɲi/ • *adj.* warm, warming • *n.* warmth • *adj.* sensual, seductive, comforting

## m

**mau** - /mau/ • *v.intr.* talk • *v.-intr.* (O) act like (A), makes decision or behaves according to what is expected of (A) • *v.intr.* (following in SVC) pretend to ..., deceive oneself or others that you are ...

**maã** - /mã:/ • *clf.* weather phenomena, winds, rains, sandstorms

**moõ** - /mõ:/ • *Interrogative pro-form* what? which?

**moõ !oi** - /mõ: !oi/ • *Interrogative pro-form* Why? To which end or purpose?

**me'e** - /meʔe/ • *clf.* young childless women, girls who have started menstruating but are yet to be married

**uma** - /uma/ • *pers.pr.*  
1.PL.INCL.ABS

## p

**paala** - /pa:la/ • *n.* wail

**pau** - /pau/ • *adj.* abundant

**po** - /pɔ/ • *n.* lips (of the mouth)  
[CLF **ɣuu**] • *n.* mouth, oral  
cavity [CLF **ɣaõ**]

**puuṭri** - /pu:ṭsi/ • *n.* mon-  
goose

**upa** - /upa/ • *preverb* SUBJ

## q'

**q'añi** - /q'ani/ • *n.* vagabond

## r

**ra** - /ra/ • *post.* INSTR

## tɬ

**tɬa** - /tɬa/ • *clf.* adult women

**tɬa'a** - /tɬa'a/ • *n.* fish

**tɬi** - /tɬi:/ • *preverb* COND

## tɬ'

**tɬ'oi** - /tɬ'ɔi/ • *v.intr.* leave,  
abandon (ABL), exit • *v.-*  
*intr.* (in SVC) stop, interrupt  
..., finish, conclude ...

**utɬ'e** - /utɬ'e/ • *n.* walking  
path, paved path, dirt road  
• *n.* groove, incision, in-  
dented strip

## ñ

**eña** - /eɲa/ • *v.tr.* surrender  
(smth.), let go of, unwillingly  
offer

**eña sɬq'o** - /eɲa sɬq'ɔ/ • *v.tr.*  
(A) surrender oneself, give up  
(lit. offer neck)

**iñi** - /iɲi/ • *post.* over, on top of,  
above • *Subordinating con-*  
*nective* provided that, resting  
on the fact that, the fact that  
... guarantees that ... • *n.*  
head

**ñṇā** - /ɲṇa:/ • *N/A* liver

**ñṇa'aña** - /ɲṇa'aɲa/ • *n.* hunter

**ñiĩ** - /ɲi:/ • *adv.* instead, yes in-  
stead, but ... yes; marks that  
the clause holds despite or in  
opposition to an example pre-  
viously given. **Uluuji 'm'm**  
**Nṇoi ṇoi ṇq'ote, ṇam sɬa**  
**ñiĩ.** *Prey can't run for a whole*  
*day, but a human can.*

**ñe'e** - /ɲe'e/ • *clf.* elder men

## ŋ

**uŋa** - /uŋa/ • *adj.* none

**ṇāã** - /ṇã:/ • *n.* woman

**ṇum** - /ṇm:/ • *card.num.*  
twelve

**ṇee** - /ṇe:/ • *n.* evening, time of  
sunset [CLF **'urri**] • *n.* sunset  
(the process of sun setting)

,

**'a** - /ʔa/ • *post.* ABL, coming  
from, originating from, cre-  
ated by, moving away from  
• *post.* causative marker,  
denotes causer of the action  
• *post.* emphatic ergative  
marker

**'a ... n||oi** - /ʔa ... ɲ||ɔi/ • *v.tr.*  
allow, permit, facilitate, (A)  
allow (O) to ... (lit. because  
of (A), (O) can ...)

**'ai** - /ʔai/ • *adv.* and (for  
clauses)

**'ai 'ai** - /ʔai ʔai/ • *conj.* and  
thus, and as a consequence,  
and immediately after

**'ao** - /ʔaɔ/ • *n.* water [CLF **ʔum**]  
• *v.tr.* fill up with water

**'m'm** - /ʔmʔm/ • *v.intr.* run

**'u** - /ʔu/ • *post.* of

**'urri** - /ʔurri/ • *clf.* timespans,  
events in time, occurrences,  
dates, appointments

**'utla** - /ʔutla/ • *n.* playing ball  
[CLF **noõ**]

**'ee** - /ʔe:/ • *post.* PTV

**'ii** - /ʔi:/ • *clf.* slither-  
ing.animals

**'ua** - /ʔua/ • *v.tr.* (someone)  
meet, make acquaintance of,  
get to know, greet, receive

ṇ

**ṇam** - /ṇãm/ • *conj.* but

**ṇam ... ñiĩ** - /ṇãm ... ɲĩ:/  
←variant form of **ñiĩ**

**ṇāã** - /ṇã:/ • *n.* eland [CLF **ʔ'a**]

**ṇe** - /ṇe/ • *preverb* Positive DEO  
marker – the speaker wishes,  
requests, desires or intends  
for the action to happen.

**ṇui** - /ṇmĩ/ • *clf.* spoken  
word, utterances, phrases,  
languages, words, voices,  
thoughts, reasonings, stories

ṇ

**ṇa** - /ṇa/ • *n.* grass • *n.* hair,  
head hair, facial hair, body  
hair • *n.* (of animal) fur

**ṇāã** - /ṇã:/ • *v.* laugh

**noõ** - /ṇõ:/ • *clf.* round tools,  
round instruments, artificial

balls, spheres, globes, round toys

**noti** - /nɔ̃tʃi/ • *card.num.* eight

**nui** - /nui/ • *clf.* persons, people, humans, personified entities, individuals, animate

**t**

**utu** - /utu/ • *clf.* bird

**taa** - /ta:/ • *clf.* predatory animals, carnivores

**tuma** - /tuma/ • *adj.* great, awesome

**turra** - /turra/ • *adv.* suddenly

**tee** - /te:/ • *clf.* articles of clothing, cloth, shoes

**tr**

**tre** - /tʃe/ • *n.* peak

**trui** - /tʃui/ • *n.* nose

**t'**

**t'anì** - /t'anì/ • *v.tr.* remind

**t'oa** - /t'ɔa/ • *n.* corpse, cadaver, carcass (human or animal) [CLF **laa**]

**t't'anì** - /t't'anì/ • *v.tr.* recognize

**t**

**ete** - /etʃe/ • *N/A* when

**tui** - /tʃui/ • *v.intr.* cry

**tuña** - /tʃuɲa/ • *n.* arrow

**tuu** - /tʃu:/ • *v.tr.* throw, launch  
• *v.tr.* produce, spit out, blow, excrete