# The Proto-Aalyu Language

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## Contents

# 1 Preface

The Proto-Aalyu language is intended as a Protolanguage for a world building project. The origin of this language group comes from a people who are partially agricultural and partially pastoral in an era before the pottery neolithic. The people originate from near a river system fairly far inland. In the warmer months, they hunt and graze, while accumulating some stock, especially fish, for the winters. During the winters, the groups coallesce into semi-permanent camps and rely on stored fish, tubers, and mildly fermented goods. They also continue to fish some.

Proto-Aalyu derives much of its phonological system from Australian languages, but with a moraic system. It is strongly head marking and makes extensive use of verb derivation to express complex meanings. Nouns have an unmarked implicit hierarchy based on animacy, which is heavily influenced by religious perceptions.

# 2 Phonology

Proto-Aalyu has an abundance of consonants that fills their space rather thoroughly. The vowels, conversely, are less than a typical language, and contrast only in length. The syllable structure is fairly simple, with open syllables being preferred overall. There are no tonal distinctions, and the words are mora timed. For the charts in the vowel and consonant sections, the romanization is provided in angle brackets to the right of each phoneme. The methodology for deriving this scheme will be discussed in a later section within the phonology with the main justification being that internal consistency and ease of use dominated over matching with the IPA or favoring an Anglocentric use of the alphabet.

## 2.1 Vowels

| | Front | Central | Back |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | i, iː<i, ii> | | u, uː<u, uu> |
| Low | | a, aː<a, aa> | |

Proto-Aalyu features three vowel qualities at the extremes of the vowel space. Vowels arise both as long and short variants, but long vowels are far fewer since they rarely surface outside of the first syllable of stems, especially in nouns. The most significant departure from this is that all verbal stems in the plain form have a \aː\ of some kind at their end. The vowels are synchronically very stable with no notable changes in quality regardless of length or environment. The long vowels are not distinguishable from a series of two short vowels. Also, diphthong like vowel-vowel sequences like \ai\ and \iu\ are extremely rare.

## 2.2 Consonants

| | Labial | Dental | Retroflex | Palatal | Velar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fortis | p <p> | t̪<t> | ʈ<th> | c <ky> | k <k> |
| Lenis | b <b> | d̪<d> | ɖ<dh> | ɟ<gy> | g <g> |
| Nasal | m <m> | n̪<n> | ɳ<nh> | ɲ<ny> | ŋ<gg> |
| Rhotic | | r̪<r> | ɻ<rh> | | |
| Lateral | | l̪<l> | ɭ<lh> | ʎ<ly> | |
| Approximant | | | | j <j> | w <w> |

Proto-Aalyu makes use of five places of articulation, in which three manners are fully present. Being a proto-language, the difference between fortis and lenis stops is not necessarily one of voicing, but could have also been aspiration or another mechanism which caused consistent differences to be related in daughter languages; the choice of using tenuis and voiced graphemes here reflects only their ease of use. In daughter languages, regardless of how they surface, the lenis consonants are much more prone to diachronic changes than either the fortis or nasal consonants.

The lenis consonants are further restricted to only word initial positions. Even within the protolanguage, it seems amply evident that when non-nasal sounds precede them in a word, they lenite to other sounds, which will be detailed later. However, when nasal sound occurs before a lenis consonant, such as with a prefix that has a coda nasal, the lenis consonant remains.

A further note is that the dental rhotic is expected to have been rendered as a tap consonant rather than a trill, but the two could have been interchangeable.

Furthermore, as presented in the following sections, there exist 3 underspecified syllable coda consonants which shall be rendered as **N**, **L**, and **R**. These respectively are homorganic coda nasals, laterals, and rhotics.

## 2.3 Coda Consonant Realizations

The coda consonants are very underspecified and in general homorganic to the place of articulation of the following consonant, if there is one. The nasal shows the most mutability while the rhotic shows the least which is reflective of the number of points of articulation in the language overall. When these occur word medially, they take on the place of articulation of the following consonant. For example, if **L** is before <ny> then it will surface as \ʎ\. Naturally, this means that **N** always mutates. When the rhotic and lateral can match place of articulation they do, but when they cannot, the dental version surfaces. When a coda consonant is present at the end of a word, the lateral and rhotic take of their dental forms, but the nasal takes on its velar form <gg>. If suffixes attach after it, they will once again become homorganic as described. If the suffix presents an initial vowel, then each of the coda consonants take on their dental form and become phonetically an initial consonant for the suffix.

## 2.4 Syllable Structure and Timing

The syllable structure is simply `(C)V(T)` where `T` is one of the homorganic coda consonants. Of these, the nasal **N** is more common than the other two. This means that there are four distinct syllable types, where the content affects how long it is. Sequences of `VV`, two sequential short vowels, has the same timing as a long vowel. However, short vowel clusters like that where the two differ in quality are extremely rare. For that reason, they're mentioned here but not explicit in the table.

| Syllable | No. Morae |
|---|---|
| `(C)V` | 1 |
| `(C)V:` | 2 |
| `(C)VT` | 2 |
| `(C)V:T` | 3 |

This timing system is fairly direct. A short vowel presents a single mora, a long vowel two, and coda consonants add an extra onto the syllable. Though the coda consonants take a full mora, they never form the nucleus of any phonemic syllable; however, the use of such sounds when thinking of what to say is not uncommon. All that said, some speakers and regions seem to prefer making some word initial patterns like \um\ a syllablic nasal or \ar\ a syllabic rhotic, especially at the beginning of words. This is not universal, however, but the pattern is definitely evident in daughter languages.

## 2.5 Romanization Scheme

The Romanization scheme is meant to be as internally consistent as possible and as quick to learn as possible as well, so this section will primarily present this reasoning with justifications for the inconsistencies present. In the interest of ease of use, this scheme was chosen to prefer digraphs over diacritics. It is also largely a phonemic mapping, but there are exceptions allowed for ease.

The vowels are simply echoes of the IPA in quality, and length is noted by doubling the vowel. This doubling provides a dual convenience. It clearly indicates the underlying moraic system that would be less transparent with something like macrons. It also is fairly intuitive since many languages, both natural and constructed, already use such a scheme.

The consonants probably require a little more effort to internalize. First, as the consonant section notes, the distinction between the fortis and lenis stops is not necessarily one of voicing, but the dividing line between voiced and unvoiced consonants in the Latin alphabet has been leveraged to this effect, which is not to far a cry from Hanyu Pinyin which uses it for aspiration. The retroflex series of consonants follows a simple pattern of appending a <h> to the associated dental sound. This was primarily done because <h> is not used elsewhere in Proto-Aalyu because of the lack of fricatives, so it is fairly clear that a digraph is indicated and syllable boundaries are not ambiguous. The palatal series follows a similar pattern of appending an otherwise unused graph, but is a bit less organized given the nature of the Latin alphabet and how palatal consonants are seemingly rendered in ad hoc manners in it. The graph <y> is appended to either the associated velar or dental consonant, with the exception of \j\ which is simply rendered as <j>. This latter choice was made so that coda nasals and laterals followed by \j\ could be easily distinguished from the palatal nasal and lateral without needing to resort to options like apostrophes to indicate syllable boundaries. The <ly> and <ny> digraphs were chosen both for familiarity and because appending to a velar series graph would either be impossible or cumbersome. The fortis and lenis palatal stops, however, append to the velar series. This is mainly done as an aesthetic measure so that <t> and <d> won't appear to be in abundance and in hopes it may be more intuitive than <ty> or <dy> digraphs may be.

The velar nasal, \ŋ\, is represented as <gg>. This is admittedly quite inelegant and rather non-intuitive. Had <g> not been taken by the lenis velar stop and <ng> not possible at a syllable boundary, both would have been preferred. However, since neither of those two were easy to use and other options like <q> and <g̃> were either less intuitive or more cumbersome to input, <gg> has been selected for clarity and some degree of internal consistency.

Finally, the coda consonants are almost always represented by the dental graph of their associated type, thus <n, l, r> for the nasal, lateral, and rhotic, respectively. An inconsistency with the nasal is tolerated. When it occurs before the labial consonants \p, b, m\, it may be written as <m>; however this is not mandatory. This document will strive to use <n> in all these cases.

## 2.6 Common Sound Mutations

Very many processes in Proto-Aalyu trigger phonetic changes. Rather than leave those scattered through this document, they will be summarized here. The grammatical rules that cause these patterns will not be explained here, but they should be easily searchable in this document.

### 2.6.1 Lenis Consonant Mutations

The lenis series of stops is notable for only being nativley attested word initially, and they often reduce when other sounds are affixed to the front of the word. If a vowel, coda **R**, or coda **L**, but not **N**, ends up in front of a lenis consonant, it will reduce as the table below indicates, which shows examples from partial reduplication of nouns:

| Consonant | Mutated | Base Word | Reduplicated Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| **b** | **w** | Baani - Bird | Baawaani - A flock |
| **d** | **l** | Dugya - Mountain | Dulugya - Mountain Range |
| **dh** | **lh** | Dhan - A Fruit | Dhalhan - A Bunch of Fruits |
| **gy** | **y** | Gyuul - A Bee | Gyuuyuul - A Swarm of Bees |
| **g** | **w** | Gara - Sand | Gawara - Desert |

# 3 Grammatical Overview

Proto-Aalyu

# 4 Nouns

Nouns in Proto-Aalyu are clearly an inflectional category of words, however the degree of morphology attached to nouns is fairly light. All nouns have an implicit animacy that fits into a loose hierarchy which has some minor effects on how nouns may be inflected. As will be seen, this animacy hierarchy has some importance in the verbal morphology as well. Furthermore, third person nouns are marked for obviation for various reasons ranging from sentence level distinctions, to thematic roles, to the general flow of discourse.

## 4.1 The Animacy Hierarchy

Proto-Aalyu displays a three level animacy hierarchy. Though mostly the same throughout, the different levels are treated differently in minor ways through the language, and the animacy system plays a significant role in verbal morphology. The 3 classes distinguish percieved inanimacy, animacy, and sentience, they are listed here with some examples.

| Class | Examples |
|---|---|
| Agentive | Humans, Spirits, dogs, horses, hawks |
| Animate | Small birds, reptiles, insects, plants |
| Inanimate | Rocks, water, tools, housing, ideas |

This table gives a rough illustration of how agency typically functions in Proto-Aalyu . That said, certain things may end up higher or lower depending on general or particular perceptions of agency. For example, if a reptile of some sort is seen as threatening or scheming it may be sporadically elevated to the agentive class. Lowering animacy can happen, but is exceedingly rare. Though one might think it would be useful for a rude insult, that too is very very rare. The culture of insults works rather differently.

## 4.2 Common Nominal Particles and Patterns

There a handful of general use particles and patterns in Proto-Aalyu . With the exception of a couple, they always join at the end on the noun stem, and several may stack on top of each other.

## 4.3 True Plurals with -lu, -na, and -thi

Plurals can be denoted on all nouns, but are only mandatory on agentive nouns and personal pronouns. The plural suffixes are **-l(u)**, **-na**, and **-thi** for the agentive, animate, and inanimate noun classes respectively. For agentive nouns, this surfaces as **-l** after vowels and as **-lu** after consonants. Some simple examples follow:

`ramaal`
spirit.PL
**spirits**

## 4.4 Associative Plurals via Partial Reduplication

Associative Plurals are common in Proto-Aalyu , and are used to indicate groups or collections of nouns that are the same or similar. For all noun classes, the associative plural is denoted by reduplicating the first syllable, with some rules based on the structure of the initial syllable. For syllables with an initial consonant, only the initial consonant-vowel sequence is reduplicated with

coda consonants ignored. For words with initial vowels, if the vowel is short it will become long. However, if a word has an initial long vowel, reduplication is not possible. This process is never applied to given names, and there is an aversion towards its use for very specific individuals. Certain consonants also mutate in the reduplication process. In particular, all the lenis stops lenite to approximants or laterals. This is enumerated in the table below:

| Consonant | Mutated | Base Word | Reduplicated Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| **b** | **w** | Baani - Bird | Baawaani - A flock |
| **d** | **l** | Dugya - Mountain | Dulugya - Mountain Range |
| **dh** | **l** | Dhan - A Fruit | Dhalan - A Bunch of Fruits |
| **gy** | **y** | Gyuul - A Bee | Gyuuyuul - A Swarm of Bees |
| **g** | **w** | Gara - Sand | Gawara - Desert |

`Yama -- Yayama`
tuber – RED.tuber
**tuber – a bunch of tubers**

## 4.5 Obviation with -an and -ku

Obviation is a marking system that is used to distinguish thrid person nouns that might otherwise be confused. For simple sentences, this allows for clarity in who effects the verb on the other and the degree of volition for lexcially reciprocal verbs. At a discourse level, it keeps competing topics clear. Both agentive and animate verbs share a suffix for indicating the obviative, **-a(n)**, which is **-n** after vowels and **-an** after consonants. Inanimate nouns are always marked with **-ku**. It should be noted, obviation is only marked when the two nouns are of the same animacy or in certain cases where a lower animacy noun exerts on a higher one. In the general case, if two third person nouns of different animacy are present, the higher animacy is assumed to be proximate and the lower obviative.

## 4.6 Nominal Possession

### 4.6.1 The -ini- infix

Possession in Proto-Aalyu is marked via the infix **-ini-**. This does not vary based on the animacy of the constituent nouns. This infix is however not used when possessive pronouns may fill the role. Furthermore, when two third person nouns, including pronouns, are the constituents of a possessive noun phrase, the possessed noun will always be marked as obviative

`Aamu ini bawan`
Mom POSS dog.OBV
**Mom's dog**

### 4.6.2 Deferential 1st and 2nd Person Possessives

Possession by 1st and 2nd person actors can be indicated through deferential patterns using Bound Adjectives, covered in a later section, and often demonstratives, also covered in a later section. These patterns are not strict possessives because they can be used in a more generic literal sense as well. Essentially, 1st person possession can be politely hinted at by disparaging a nominal with bound adjectives, namely the **run-** prefix mentioned in the Bound Adjectives section, while

elevating it with the **yu-** prefix can politely indicate 2nd person possession. Frequently, the 1st person disparagement will involve also affixing the proximal demonstrative, and 2nd person one of the distal markers, often the mediodistal marker. Demonstratives are also covered in a later section. 3rd person possession in this way, is not evident in the protolanguage. There are limitations to what kinds of nouns can be possessed with this hinting pattern. While most will be of the agentive class, animacy is not the dividing line. Normally, family members, close friends, and other elements closely tied to heartfelt relationships are not subject to the 1st person hint so as not to disparage one's children or spouse. 2nd person hints are unsurprisingly used a bit more liberally because the pejorative sound isn't present, so human relations indicated in this way cannot be seen as rude.

## 4.7 Bound Adjectives

Most words that map to English adjectives in Proto-Aalyu are verbs. However, a small, calcified group of adjectivals may prefix to nouns. All of these have fully regular verbal equivalents, but it common to use these adjectival prefixes to indicate not only their base meaning, but also frequently extended meanings. The below table elaborates all of the bound adjectives:

| Prefix | Base Meaning | Common Extenstions |
|---|---|---|
| **ma-** | big | strong, scary, old |
| **in-** | small | generic diminutive |
| **run-** | bad | crappy, stupid, |
| **al-** | un- | without, reversal |
| **yu-** | true | honest, pure |
| **gga-** | ripe | ready, tasty |
| **ka-** | dead | rotten, lost |

Only one adjectival prefix may be applied to a given noun. Furthermore, some, such as **ka-**, are exceedingly uncommon on inanimate nouns. The prefixes **ma-**, **in-**, and **yu-** are frequently used in forming epitaphs for influencial people and spirits or deities in religious contexts. The prefixes **gga-** and **ma-** also are often used for placenames too. These prefixes do not reduplicate, and when a noun reduplicates for the associative plural, the prefix that may be applied from this group will attach at the very front of the noun before the first reduplicated syllable. As mentioned before, the **run-** prefix is often used to denote 1st person possession, and the **yu-** prefix is common to hint at second person possession.

## 4.8 Pronouns

### 4.8.1 Introduction to some Binding Morphemes

Many of the pronouns in Proto-Aalyu are formed my mixing various binding morphemes. The ones specific to their sections will be introduced there, but there is a category of quasi-suffixes that denote generic nouns of various animacies, times, locations, and so on. The following table presents these suffixes:

| Suffix | Usage |
|---|---|
| Agentive Noun | **-nya** |
| Animate Noun | **-kya** |
| Inanimate Noun | **-wa** |
| Temporal Past | **-mi** |
| Temporal Non-Past | **-rhu** |
| Locations | **-pu** |

#### 4.8.2 Demonstratives and the du-, nyu-, and lhu- Prefixes

There are three levels of proximity distinguished by demonstratives in Proto-Aalyu . The proximal indicates things close to the speaker. The mediodistal denotes things close to the listener. And the Distal denotes things close to neither of them. These are made by compounding the deictic prefixes **du-**, **nyu-**, and **lhu-** to the nominal suffixes presented in the last section. This presents a three by three split in demonstrative pronouns based on animacy and distance, seen in the table.

#### 4.8.3 Interrogative

#### 4.8.4 Reflexive

#### 4.8.5 Indefinite

#### 4.8.6 Personal

#### 4.8.7 Possession

### 4.9 Multiple Affixes on Single Nouns

| | Proximal | Mediodistal | Distal |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agentive | dunya | nyunya | lhunya |
| Animate | dukya | nyukya | lhukya |
| Inanimate | duwa | nyuwa | lhuwa |

The prior sections enumerated the nominal affixes that can be attached to nouns, but did not go into the fairly common occurence of a given noun having several affixes. Of the strategies enumerated above only the True Plural and the Associative Plural tend to be mutually exclusive, but this depends on the lexical meaning of the word. For the suffixes, the True Plural markers always come before the Obviative markers. When a partially reduplicated noun is affixed with a Bound Adjective, the adjective binds at the front of the reduplicated noun with no further consonant mutations.