The Timah Language

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1 | Introduction

1.1 | External History

The Timah language (*tímǝh* [tı̃mə̀h]; lit. <u>language, speech</u>) is a constructed language (*conlang*) made by me, Mareck (M.M.N.H.). Its primary goal is simply to be documented entirely in LaTeX (*LaTeX*).

    Like most of my constructed languages, it tries to focus balancing between the interesting and the naturalistic, in terms of phonology, grammar, etc. Naturalism, however, is not the primary goal. I have therefore given myself the freedom to take liberties in terms of naturalism.

1.2 | Internal History

The Timah language is spoken by the Khogòjòḥe people (*kʰɔ̰kɔ̀tɕɔ̀ʔe* [kʰɔ̰̀k̰ɔ̀dʑɔ̀ʔḛ̀] lit. <u>many-person</u>).

2 | Phonology

2.1 | Consonants

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal	Placeless
Nasal	m	n				ɴ
Plosive		tʰ t t̪̬	tɕʰ tɕ tɕ̰	kʰ k k̰	ʔ	
Fricative		sʰ s s̰			h	
Approximant	w	l	j			

Figure 1: Consonant Phonemes

- /tʰ t t̪/ are dental; /n sʰ s s̰ l/ are alveolar.

- /tɕʰ tɕ tɕ̰/ are alveolo-palatal; /j/ is palatal.

- /h/ is articulated with true frication of the glottis, i.e. it is not a voiceless glottal approximant.

- /ɴ/ is a nasal coda archiphoneme |ɴ|, i.e. not an uvular nasal[1].

- The aspirated obstruents /tʰ tɕʰ kʰ sʰ/ may be accompanied by slight breathy-voice on the following vowel.

- The fortis obstruents /t̪ tɕ̰ k̰ s̰/ are articulated with laryngeal tension, and may be accompanied by slight creaky-voice on the following vowel.

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[1] Yes, I say /ən ˈuvjələ˞/. Deal with it.

2.1.1 | Consonant Allophony

- /m n/ surface as the implosives [ɓ ɗ] word-initally.

- The coda archiphoneme |ɴ| surfaces as [n ɲ ŋ] before alveolar, (alveolo-)palatal, and velar plosives, respectively. It surfaces as nasalization of the preceding vowel before all other consonants. It surfaces word-finally as [ŋ].

- The tenuis obstruents /t tɕ k s/ are voiced to [d dʑ g z] intervocalically and after /ɴ/.

- The aspirated obstruents /tʰ tɕʰ kʰ sʰ/ are deäspirated to [t tɕ k s] intervocalically and after /ɴ/.

- /kʰ/ surfaces as [x] before /a/.

- /n/ is palatalized to [ɲ] before [i] word-medially.

- The sibilants /sʰ s ʂ/ are palatalized to [ɕʰ ɕ ɕ] before /i/. [ɕ] is voiced to [ʑ] and [ɕʰ] is deäspirated to [ɕ] intervocalically and after /ɴ/.

- /l/ surfaces as [ɾ] intervocalically and after /ɴ/.

- /w/ surfaces as [ʋ] before /i/.

2.1.2 | Dialectal Variations of Consonants

- /tɕʰ tɕ tɕ̬/ may surface as alveolar affricates [tsʰ ts tʂ] in some[which?] dialects.

- In some[which?] dialects, the lateral [l] has merged with either /j/ or /n/.

- In some[which?] dialects, the glottal fricative /h/ may be realized as pharyngeal [ħ].

- The lateral /l/ may variously surface as any of [ɹ ɭ ɻ ʎ ð ʐ z], depending on dialect[which ones?] and idiolect.
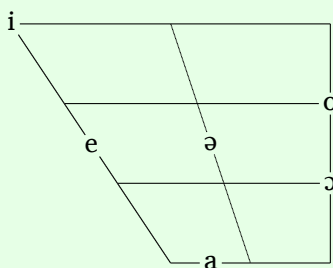
2.2 | Vowels

Figure 2: Vowel Phonemes

- /e/ is true mid [e̞][2].

- /a/ is near-front [a] (i.e. not central [ä]).

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[2][e̞ o̞] will be transcribed as [e o] for the sake of brevity.

2.2.1 | Vowel Allophony

- All vowels are nasalized before nasal consonants.

- /i/ surfaces as [ɨ] after the velars /kʰ k k̥/ and before coda [ŋ]

- /o ɔ/ raise to [u ọ][2] word-finally in open syllables and when preceded by /kʰ k k̥ w/.

2.2.2 | Dialectal Variations of Vowels

- Some[which?] dialects have merged the back mid vowels /o ɔ/ into true mid [ọ].

- Some[which?] dialects have merged the back the front vowels /i e/ into [i~ɪ]

2.2.3 | Stress

Stress placement in Timah is phonologically determined and is not phonemic.

Stress occurs on the left-most live syllable, wherein a syllable ending in a sonorant /N w j/ or long vowel are grouped as *live* and those ending in /ʔ h/ are grouped as *dead*.

Open syllables (i.e. syllables with a short vowel and no coda) are superseded by live syllables but take precedence over dead syllables in terms of stress hierarchy.

2.3 | Phonological Processes

2.3.1 | Vowel Harmony

Timah displays vowel harmony based on tongue root position.

Vowels are divided into two classes: +ATR and −ATR, traditionally grouped as *light* and *heavy* vowels. If ambiguous, vowels are assumed to be of the +ATR class.

+ATR (Light)	i	e	ə	o
−ATR (Heavy)	e	ə	a	ɔ

Figure 3: Vowel Harmony

Vowel harmony is very pervasive; harmony spreads rightwards from a stressed vowel until it is terminated.

Vowel harmony is terminated after dead syllables (i.e. syllables ending in /ʔ h/) and non-harmonizing morphemes, e.g. clitics and certain affixes.

ˈCV.CV.CV   ˈCV.CVG.CV

Q   Q
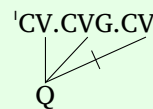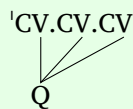
Figure 4: Harmony Spread

2.3.2 | Obstruent Alterations

Radical	Fortis	Tenuis	Aspirate
*t	ṱ	t	t^h
*tɕ	tɕ̤	tɕ	$tɕ^h$
*k	ḵ̤	k	k^h
*s	ṣ̤	s	s^h
*ʔ		ʔ	h

Figure 5: Obstruent Alterations

2.3.3 | Approximant Nasalization

Approx.	Nasal
w	m
l	
j	n

Figure 6: Approximant Nasalization

2.4 | Tone

Timah has two distinct tonemes: *high* and *low*, as well as the option of being unmarked for tone. Tonally unmarked syllables are phonetically realized identically to the low tone, but unlike low tone, it can be affected by various tonological processes such as *tone association* and *tone mobility*.

2.4.1 | Tone Association

Tone association is the process in which the tone of a given syllable spreads (or doesn't spread) to the preceding toneless syllable.
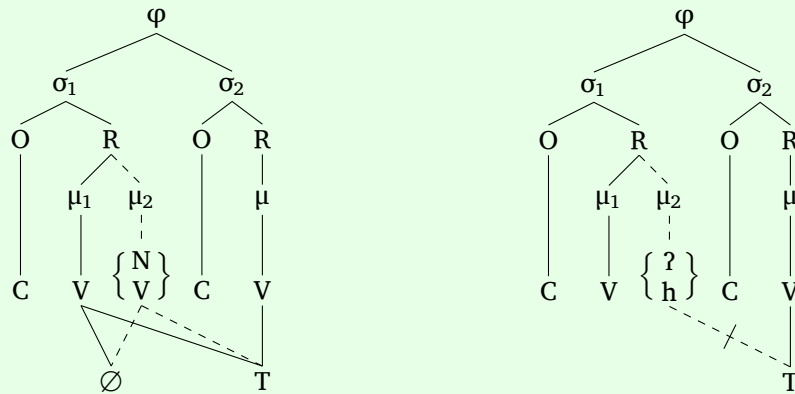
Figure 7: Tone Association

2.4.2 | Tone Mobility

2.4.2.1 | Leftward Tone Shift At the end of a Prosodic Unit (PU), all tones are shifted one syllable leftward until a toneless syllable, leaving the final syllable toneless.
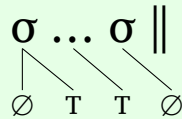
Figure 8: Leftward Tone Shift

2.4.2.2 | Rightward Tone Shift

2.5 | Phonotactics

2.5.1 | Syllable Structure

$$CV(T)(V^3(T)|H|S)$$

$$H = \{ʔ,h\}$$
$$S = \{\textsc{n},w,j\}$$
$$T = \{ó,ò\}$$

Figure 9: Syllable Structure

2.5.2 | Restraints

These phonotactic restraints govern allomorphy.

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[3]Long vowel codae must be homorganic in vowel quality but not necessarily in tone quality.

- The nasal coda /N/ cannot precede a nasal /m n/.

- The glottal codae /ʔ h/ cannot precede another glottal /ʔ h/.

- The glottal coda /h/ cannot precede a sonorant /m n w l j/.

- The glides /w j/ cannot precede another glide /w j/.

3 | Orthography

4 | Syntax

4.1 | Sentence Structure

Word order in Timah is primarily *Subject-Object-Peripheral-Verb* in independent clauses, and secondarily *Verb-Subject-Object-Peripheral* in dependent clauses. Only the *verb* must be present.

The *Subject*, or syntactic agent, is the thing that performs the verb; the verb may grammatically agree with the subject's *person, number*, and *modality*. It consists of one or more noun phrase(s).

The *Object*, or syntactic patient, is the thing that the verb is directly performed upon; the verb may agree with the salience, or level of affectedness, of the object. It, like the subject, consists of one or more noun phrase(s).

The *Peripheral*, or indirect object, is the thing that the verb is indirectly performed upon. It is usually marked with a *postposition* (cf. § 5.4) or *oblique case* (cf. § 5.3.1) and consists of noun or prepositional phrase(s).

The *Verb* is the action that is performed within a statement. It consists of one or more *verb phrase(s)*. Some verbs may not take a subject or object (cf. § 6.2).

4.2 | Alignment

The morphosyntactic alignment in Timah is a type of dually-split-ergative. *Realis* nouns align in an *active-stative* manner, while *Irrealis* nouns align in an *ergative-absolutive* manner.

The *active-stative* alignment is only used on realis arguments and is split-S, i.e. the case of the subject of a monovalent verb is determined by the verb's inherent *volitional class* (cf. § 6.3). Volitional verbs' subject takes the agentive case, while non-volitional verbs' subject take the patientive case. In *multivalent* (i.e. an ambivalent or polyvalent verb that takes two or more arguments, cf. § 6.2) verbs, the agentive marks the subject and the patientive marks the object.

The *ergative-absolutive* alignment is used only on irrealis arguments. In multivalent verbs, the *ergative* marks the subject and the agentive marks the object. In monovalent verbs, the agentive marks the subject.

Timah is secundative, with the theme of a trivalent verb (i.e. a polyvalent verb that takes three arguments) being marked by the postposition *lí* (cf. § 5.4).

5 | Nouns

5.1 | Pronouns

5.1.1 | Personal

			Agt.	Pat.	Assoc.	Loc.
Sg.	1		lə	ləhi	jə́N	sʰaj
	2		nɔ́	nɔ		nò
	3	Anim.	tə́ʔ	tə́hi	tɕàN	kéh
		Inan.	haN			
Pl.	1		to	tò		t̥áw
	2		nɔɔ́	nɔ́ɔ̀		néj
	3	Anim.	t̥ó?	t̥óhi	tɕʰoN	kèè
		Inan.	tʰɔN			

(a) Realis

	Agt.	Erg.	Assoc.	Loc.
1	ká	tàʔ	tɕà	ləj
2	nɔ́ɔ́	nəw		sɔ́
3	sə́sá	kíN		s̥əw

(b) Irrealis

Figure 10: Personal Pronouns

5.1.2 | Interrogative/Relative

5.1.3 | Demonstrative

5.2 | Article Enclitics

Articles in Timah attach as enclitics to the final element of their head noun phrase.

	Referential		Non-referential	
	Visible	Non-visible	Visible	Non-visible
Singular	=mɔ́ɔ	=haN	=s̥i	=t̥éʔ
Plural	=k̥ə	=mé	=kʰə̀N	=tɕáá

Figure 11: Article Enclitics

5.3 | Declensions

5.3.1 | Cases

- Agentive (*Agt.*) : In *multivalent* verbs (i.e. *ambivalent* or *polyvalent* verbs that take two or three arguments, cf. § 6.2), the *agentive* case marks a realis subject or an irrealis object. In *monovalent* verbs, it marks a volitional realis subject (cf. § 6.3) or irrealis subject.

- Patientive (*Pat.*) : In polyvalent verbs, the *patient* case marks a realis object. In monovalent verbs, it marks a non-volitional realis subject.

- Ergative (*Erg.*) : In polyvalent verbs, the *ergative* case marks an irrealis *subject*. It also indicates an inalienable genitive.

- Associative (*Assoc.*) : The *associative* case marks alienable relations that can be further clarified using prepositions.

- Locative (*Loc.*) : The *locative* case marks physical and/or temporal location and movement that can be expanded upon using prepositions.

	Realis	Irrealis
Agt.	-∅	-né
Pat.	-si	-séɴ
Erg.	-ʔi	-ho
Assoc.	-wɔ	
Loc.	-tɕó	-je

(a) Open

	Realis	Irrealis
Agt.	-∅	-té
Pat.	-si	-séɴ
Erg.	-ki̤	-kʰo
Assoc.	-kɔ	
Loc.	-tɕó	-se

(b) Closed

Figure 12: Cases

The *Associative* and *Locative* cases may be accompanied by a postposition (cf. § 5.4). In isolation the *Associative* takes the meaning of an alienable genitive (in contrast to the *Ergative*, which may have an inalienable genitive meaing) and the *Locative* takes on the meaning of a general locative or temporal (i.e. marking place or time).

5.4 | Postpositions

There are two types of postpositions in Timah: those of *Association* and those of *Location*. These types are directly related to the *Associative* and *Locative* noun cases, as the Postpositional Object must take the respective case of its postposition.

- *Associative Postpositions*

    – lí : *accompaniment/use*
    – ke̤ : *lack of accompaniment/use*
    – sì : *intent of reference/relation*
    – kʰɔno : *intent of benefit/purpose*
    – tɕé : *state of being*
    – kʰò : *change of state*
    – kéh : *similarity/comparison*
    – ṭɔka : *causation*

- *Locative Postpositions*
    - tí : *movement toward*
    - sʰì : *movement away from*
    - mí : *movement onto*
    - tɕɔ̀ɔ : *movement under*
    - tʰìsé : *movement into*
    - siiʔi : *movement out of*
    - tɕoli : *beginning of movement/time*
    - ʔaɴ : *end of movement/time*
    - kaɴʔɔ : *movement through, by way of, adjacent to*
    - soʔa : *in front of/below/before*
    - sàkə : *behind/above/after*
    - seeʔá : *between, amidst, within*
    - sɔtʰe : *surrounding, around, encompassing*

5.5 | Noun Classes

Noun classes in Timah are separated into the groups *Realis* and *Irrealis,* which are in part related to verbal modality (cf. § 6.4.4), but are also determined by the speaker's semantic notion of existence concerning the noun in question as well as the noun's state of focus (cf. § 10.2).

The *Realis* group is further divided into the classes *Animate* and *Inanimate,* and also distinguishes the *Singular* and *Plural* numbers. The *Irrealis* group does not make any of these distinctions in isolation, but number can be indicated by articles (cf. § 5.2).

The concepts of *realis* and *irrealis* are directly associated with *yaks* and *tigers,* respectively (cf § 10.1). Yaks and things closely associated with yaks are obligatorily marked as *realis,* while tigers and things closely associated with tigers are obligatorily marked as *irrealis.*

Nouns are also divided into *count* nouns and *non-count* nouns. *Count* nouns are inherently singular and are marked for plural, while *non-count* nouns are inherently transnumeral (i.e. number is underspecified) and are marked for singular or plural. *non-count* nouns are also unmarked for inanimacy instead of animacy.

	Realis		Irrealis
	Animate	*Inanimate*	
Singular	∅-	kaw-, kɔ-	wí-
Plural	tɔ-	jé-	

(a) Count

	Realis		Irrealis
	Animate	*Inanimate*	
Collective	na(ɴ)-	∅-	kɔ́-
Singulative	sé-	kəw -, ko-	wí-
Plurative	to-	jí-	

(b) Non-count

Figure 13: Noun Classes

6 | Verbs

6.1 | Active & Stative Verbs

6.2 | Valency Classes

There are four main valency classes in Timah: *avalent, monovalent, ambivalent,* and *polyvalent.*

- *Avalent* verbs take zero arguments.

- *Monovalent* verbs take one argument.

- *Ambivalent* verbs take one or two arguments.

- *Polyvalent* verbs take two or more arguments.

Ambivalent and polyvalent verbs that take exactly two arguments are grouped as *divalent*, polyvalent verbs that take exactly three arguments are grouped as *trivalent,* and polyvalent verbs that take three or more arguments are grouped as *multivalent.* These terms (*divalent, trivalent, multivalent*) are used only in analysis and meta-grouping.

6.2.1 | Valency-Altering Operations

6.3 | Volitional Classes

Verbs are inherently classed as either *volitional* or *non-volitional.* These classes determine the case of the subject in monovalent verbs, as well as semantic intention regardless of valency.

Volitional verbs usually denote an action that is intentionally performed by the subject.

Non-volitional verbs usually denote an action that is accidentally performed by the subject.

6.4 | Conjugations

6.4.1 | Pronominal Proclitics

Pronominal proclitics are appended to verb phrases and must agree with the subject. Subject pronouns can subsequently be dropped from the statement entirely.

			Realis	Irrealis
	1		lə=	ká=
Sg.[4]	2			nɔ́=
	3	Anim.	tɘ́=	sá=
		Inan.	ha=	
	1		to=	
Pl.	2		nɔ=	
	3	Anim.	ṭó=	
		Inan.	tʰɔ=	

Figure 14: Pronominal Proclitics

6.4.2 | Voice

The verbal voices in Timah are symmetric, i.e. they do not alter the valency of the verb, only the arguments' roles.

Voice indicators also inflect for the *salience* of the patient, i.e. if the patient is or is not significantly affected by the agent.

	Salient	Non-salient
Actor	-tá	-tɕà
Undergoer	-ṣɔ́ɔ́	-jɘ́ɘ̀
Correlative		-mɔ́tè

Figure 15: Voice

6.4.3 | Expressive Moods

There are three moods in Timah that are independent from normal moods. These are called *Expressive Moods*, and are placed at the beginning of a statement.

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[4]*Irrealis* pronominal proclitics can be either singular or plural, but are grouped under *Singular* due to how they pattern.

- tɕɔ́ : **Imperative**; *commands, wishes, desires*

- sʰa : **Interrogative**; *questions, requests*

- kì : **Precative**; *polite requests and commands*

6.4.4 | Mood & Aspect

	Perfective	Habitual	Continuous	Experiential	Capacitive
Indicative	laj-, le-	k̥a(ʔ)-	tɕee-	tɕíhi-	həw-, ho-
Conditional	haj-, he-	tew-, tə-	sʰe(ʔ)-	já-	ʔàti-
Dubitative	kʰà-		sà(ɴ)-	taʔe-	nə̀w-, nò-
Desiderative	sɔ̀-		sʰeʔté-	jeʔi(h)-	mátɕa-
Necessitative	séme-		tɕʰɔɔ-	kìtə(ɴ)-	mátɕa-

Figure 16: Aspect & Mood

6.4.5 | Evidentiality

Timah optionally marks four levels of evidentiality. Evidentiality markers are placed before their head verb.

- kʰekʰì : **Witness**; *knows of event directly*

- sə́sɔɴ : **Evidential Inferential**; *knows of event via evidence*

- tɔɴke : **Anecdotal Inferential**; *knows of event via prior experience(s)*

- mɔ́hɔ : **Reportative**; *knows of event indirectly*

6.4.6 | Venitive, Andative & Applicatives

The *ventitive* and *andative* suffixes are commonly used with verbs of movement, such as *wə́* move, walk, *sʰɔj* carry, give/take, and others.

- -tí : **Venitive**; *motion toward*

- -sʰì : **Andative**; *motion away from*

Applicatives are valency-increasing operations that promote an oblique (indirect) object to the role of the (direct) object. They are formed by appending an applicative suffix to the verb, which can be used in tandem with the venitive and andative markers in order to specify direction or efficiency.

- -lí : **Relational**; *accompaniment*

- -kʰòɴ : **Beneficial**; *intent of reference/relation or benefit/purpose*

- -t̥ɔʔ : **Causal**; *causation, final causation*

- -kéh : **Complemental**; *similarity/comparison, state of being*

- -t¢ò : **Locational**; *physical or temporal location and movement*

- -t¢ɔɴ : **Peripheral**; *beginning/end of movement/time*

- -sɔ̀ʔ : **Positional**; *relative physical or temporal location and movement*

Further specifications can be made by supplementing the applicative suffix with a postposition (cf. § 5.4) placed after the object.

6.5 | Serial Verb Constructions(?)

6.6 | Noun Incorporation(?)

6.7 | Essential Copulae

6.7.1 | Assertive-Essential

6.7.2 | Negative-Essential

6.7.3 | Revelatory-Essential

6.8 | Existential Copulae

6.8.1 | Assertive-Existential

6.8.2 | Negative-Existential

6.8.3 | Revelatory-Existential

7 | Descriptives & Derivation

There are eleven descriptives (which function as adjectives or adverbs) in Timah. They are placed before their head noun or verb.

- t¢ʰàné : *good, positive; full*

- sìɴkà : *bad, negative; empty*

- kʰɔ̝̀kɔ : *big, strong; many*

- t¢ʰì : *small, weak; few*

- semɔ́ʔ : *fast; loud; hard, rough*

- lɔ́ : *slow; quiet; soft, smooth*

- sɔɴ : *short, wide; feminine*

- ʔiɴ : *long, narrow; masculine*

- tɕósʰa : *white, light; fresh, new*

- káj : *warm (color); hot, dry*

- sɔtɕe : *cool (color); cold, wet*

- tʰawsá : *black, dark; stale, old*

7.1 | Derivation

Noun and verbs can be zero-derived from each other, i.e. no overt marking is used to change a noun to a verb and vice versa. More derivations are possible by appending a descriptive before a noun or verb, i.e. attaching it as a prefix.

8 | Numerals

Timah uses a base-60 numeral system.

9 | Ideophones

There are three types of ideophones in Timah: *phonomimes*, *phenomimes*, and *psychomimes*.
   Phonomimes imitate sounds directly.
   Phenomimes imitate sounds associated with tangible states and conditions.
   Psychomimes imitate sounds associated with intangible states and conditions.

10 | Semantics & Pragmatics

10.1 | Yak/Tiger Dichotomy

10.2 | Existence & Focus

10.3 | Deixis