Deẽreẽ
Grammar of a fantasy constructed language

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Contents

Introduction iii

1 Phonology 1
- 1.1 Consonants . . . 1
  - 1.1.1 Romanization . . . 1
  - 1.1.2 Consonant pairs . . . 1
- 1.2 Vowels . . . 1
  - 1.2.1 Romanization . . . 2
  - 1.2.2 Allowed diphthongs . . . 2
- 1.3 Syllables . . . 2
- 1.4 Stress . . . 2

2 Morphology 3
- 2.1 Gender . . . 3
  - 2.1.1 Formation . . . 3
  - 2.1.2 Human . . . 3
  - 2.1.3 Magic . . . 3
  - 2.1.4 Common . . . 3
- 2.2 Number . . . 4
  - 2.2.1 Formation . . . 4
  - 2.2.2 Meaning and agreement . . . 4
- 2.3 Numerals . . . 4
  - 2.3.1 Cardinal numbers . . . 4
  - 2.3.2 Ordinal numbers . . . 4
  - 2.3.3 Partital numbers . . . 4

3 Derivational Morphology 5
- 3.1 Derivations from nouns . . . 5
- 3.2 Derivations from verbs . . . 5

4 Morphosyntax 6
- 4.1 Person suffixes . . . 6
  - 4.1.1 Form and agreement . . . 6
  - 4.1.2 Definite . . . 6
  - 4.1.3 Indefinite . . . 7
  - 4.1.4 Demonstrative . . . 7
  - 4.1.5 Genitive . . . 8
  - 4.1.6 Vocative . . . 8
- 4.2 Adjectives . . . 9
  - 4.2.1 Comparatives and Superlatives . . . 9
- 4.3 Verbs . . . 9
  - 4.3.1 Negation . . . 9
  - 4.3.2 Simple tenses . . . 9
  - 4.3.3 Complex tenses . . . 10
  - 4.3.4 The imperative/prohibitive . . . 11
- 4.4 Postpositions . . . 11
  - 4.4.1 *i*, at, where (place) . . . 11

4.4.2 *izher*, inside (place) . . . 11
4.4.3 *ne*, outside (place), ablative . . . 11
4.4.4 *ron*, over (place) . . . 11
4.4.5 *nal*, through (place), despite/though (weak opposition) . . . 11
4.4.6 *ol*, to (place, benefactive) . . . 11
4.4.7 *ëi*, from (place, time) . . . 11
4.4.8 *mor*, when (time) . . . 11
4.4.9 *ir*, while (time) . . . 11
4.4.10 *ëlët*, before (time) . . . 11
4.4.11 *dür*, after (time) . . . 11
4.4.12 *nol*, from (composition) . . . 11
4.5 Conjunctions . . . 11
4.5.1 *ak*, and, comitative . . . 11
4.5.2 *lüsh*, with, instrumental . . . 11
4.5.3 *kẽ*, if, condition . . . 11
4.5.4 *ãbin*, because, cause . . . 11
4.5.5 *zhin*, so, consequence . . . 11
4.5.6 *va*, but, strong opposition . . . 11

5 Syntax **12**
5.1 Noun phrase . . . 12
5.2 Sentence . . . 12
5.2.1 Primary order . . . 12
5.2.2 Secondary order . . . 12
5.3 Subclauses: *sep/sap/süp* . . . 13
5.3.1 Subclause as a noun . . . 13
5.3.2 Subclause as a qualifier . . . 13
5.4 Questions . . . 14
5.4.1 Yes/No questions . . . 14
5.4.2 Open questions . . . 14

A Samples of the language **15**
A.1 Nalkor un'rar Dësish'ü — The King of All Snakes . . . 15

Glossary **16**

List of Figures **17**

List of Tables **18**

Introduction

(1) **Fãssa mosoi'a.**
/'fã.s:a mo.'soi.a/

fãssa mosoi-'a
wizard cat-3S

'The cat is a wizard'

In example 1, we see that blah blah blah...

fig:glossing abbrevia-tions

Chapter 1

Phonology

Phonology regards the phonemes incorporated into the language, consonants or vowels, and their use in syllables and words.

1.1 Consonants

Point of articulation	Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Velar	Uvular
Nasal	m		n			
Plosive	p b		t d		k g	
Fricative		f v	s z	ʃ ʒ		ʁ
Lateral approximant			l			

Table 1.1 – Consonants in Deĕreẽ

1.1.1 Romanization

Romanization is done with the IPA symbols, that is, the ones in table 1.1, except for ʃ, ʒ and ʁ, which are written respectively as *sh*, *zh* and *r*. Pronunciation of these three letters is:

sh as in English '*sh*eep'

zh as in English 'vi*s*ion'

r as in French 'F*r*ance'

1.1.2 Consonant pairs

The combinations of consonants allowed are the following: **pr**, **br**, **tr**, **dr**, **kr**, **gr**. Other will occur due to phonotactics, but no other beginning in a plosive.

1.2 Vowels

The nine vowels are as described (IPA and orthography) in table 1.2.

	Front	Back
Closed	/i/, /y/	/u/
Mid	/e/, /ɛ̃/, /ə/	/o/
Open	/a/	/ɑ̃/

Table 1.2 – Vowels in Deĕreẽ

IPA	/i/	/y/	/u/	/e/	/ɛ̃/	/ə/	/o/	/a/	/ɑ̃/
Romanization	<i>	<ü>	<u>	<e>	<ẽ>	<ë>	<o>	<a>	<ã>

Table 1.3 – Vowels orthography

1.2.1 Romanization

As for consonants, we use IPA symbols, except for the a few exceptions. See table 1.3.

1.2.2 Allowed diphthongs

Allowed diphthongs are only the following: /ii, ai, ɛ̃i, əi, oi/.

1.3 Syllables

The syllable structure is given below (onset-nucleus-coda):
onset can be any single consonant, or *pr, br, tr, dr, kr, gr*;

nucleus can be any vowel or diphthong;

coda can be *<l>, <r> or <s>*, but only if nucleus is not a diphthong.

1.4 Stress

Stress in words is on the **last syllable** when the word ends in a *consonant or diphthong*, and on the **second-to-last syllable** when the word ends in a *single vowel*.

For example:
zhal-bra-ki [ʒal.ˈbʁa.ki] (beer)

a-shëi [a.ˈʃëi] (temple)

lë-lü [ˈlə.ly] (big)

tra-sa-ta [tʁa.ˈsa.ta] (to give)

Chapter 2

Morphology

This chapter, morphology, aims to describe *what the words look like*. This means describing the nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs in their basic forms.

2.1 Gender

Deẽreẽ has three genders: Human, marked *H*, Magic, marked *M*, and Common, marked *C*. Every word has a gender, whatever its grammatical nature (part of speech) might be: nouns have gender, but verbs have gender too, as well as adjectives. Words that are not nouns do not just agree in gender (if they do), but have their own intrinsic categories.

2.1.1 Formation

To determine the gender of a word, you have to look at its last vowel (whether or not it ends in a vowel). The rules are in table 2.1.

Human	e	ẽ	u
Magic	a	o	ã
Common	ü	ë	i

Table 2.1 – Vowels in the Deẽreẽ genders (H:e/ẽ/u, M:a/o/ã, C:ü/ë/i)

Diphthongs put the word in the gender determined by the first diphthong vowel. This means words ending in *-ẽi* are Human, those ending in *-ai/-oi* are Magic, and those ending in *-ëi/-ii* are Common.

For example:

zhalbraki beer, ending in *i*, is of *Common* gender

drete to go, ending in *e*, is of *Human* gender

magra soul, ending in *a*, is of *Magic* gender

shëi house, ending in *ëi*, is of *Common* gender

2.1.2 Human

The **Human** gender regroups everything that is a non-magic person, a human made thing or skill. Example words are: zeẽ, city, torete, to speak, murtef, door, kueste, noble.

2.1.3 Magic

The **Magic** gender represents everything that is of magic or mystical nature. This thus heavily depends on the culture. In the setting of Deẽreẽ, the Kingdom of Reosal, magic, shortly explained, is the soul, present in everyone, and in many animals (eltol, bird), natural elements, and some objects as well. Nouns designating people with magical abilities, like fãssa, wizard, are also of this gender.

Abilities of the mind (soimata, to think) also fall into this category.

2.1.4 Common

What is **Common** is not necessarily unimportant. An example is toütü, to know. However, kretül, mole, and a lot of other words, are **Common**. This gender roughly regroups what doesn't fall into the other two categories, that is, what is not specific to humans or what isn't magical.

2.2 Number

Number in Deẽreẽ is simply singular (*SI*) and plural (*PL*). As gender is marked with the last vowel of a given word, number is marked with the last consonant.

2.2.1 Formation

Singular	-n	-m	-p	-t	-k	-f	-s	-sh	-l	-*vowel*
Plural	-n	-m	-b	-d	-g	-v	-z	-zh	-r	-r

Table 2.2 – Number (singular and plural) formation

For example, magra, magrar; aal; aar; sün (metal), sün, zërsh (pig), zërzh.

2.2.2 Meaning and agreement

The meanings of singular and plural for nouns are as expected: singular means that the thing is present once, plural that it is present several times: zheo, fairy, zheor, fairies.

As for uncountable nouns, singular means 'some stuff', while plural means 'several kinds of the stuff'. This also is quite an expected behavior: loishë, history, some part of history; loishër, histories, or geni, milk, some milk; genir, several kinds of milk.

2.3 Numerals

This section discusses how to count in Deẽreẽ. The language uses a *base 12* counting system.

2.3.1 Cardinal numbers

The terms for numbers 1 to 11 are given in the table below:

Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Deẽreẽ	ki	miki	as	toni	taki	mias	mibe	tol	kani	üma	moi

Powers of 12 and 0 have other meanings in the language:

Number	0	12	$12^2 = 144$	$12^3 = 1728$	$12^4 = 20736$
Deẽreẽ	dal	shëi	lül	zeẽ	kënak
Meaning	nothing	house	village	city	palace

Numbers are constructed with the conjunction *ak*, 'and', and the word *kon*, 'number, quantity'. For example:

$42 = 3 \times 12 + 6$ as shëi ak mias kon

$200 = 144 + 4 \times 12 + 8$ lül ak toni shëi ak tol kon

2.3.2 Ordinal numbers

ordinals

2.3.3 Partital numbers

fractions

Chapter 3

Derivational Morphology

The name 'derivational morphology' refers to all the mechanisms of word derivation, that is, how to make a word out of another. These rules apply to several kinds of words, and are hereafter grouped by part of speech they derive.

3.1 Derivations from nouns

See table 3.1.

Construction	Part of speech	Short	Description

Table 3.1 – Noun derivations

3.2 Derivations from verbs

See table 3.2.

Construction	Part of speech	Short	Description
-ete/-ata/-ütü => -esën/-asën/-üsën	noun	tool	that with which action is done

Table 3.2 – Verb derivations

1t1 –> 31n: result, that which X does
torete: to say –> toruen: speech

Chapter 4

Morphosyntax

This chapter discusses inflexions of words in Deẽreẽ.

4.1 Person suffixes

Person suffixes in Deẽreẽ are suffixes that can be added to different kinds of words, notably nouns, verbs, or postpositions. Their purpose is to precise which person the word refers to. The language uses six grammatical persons, the usual ones:

1.SI I, speaker

2.SI singular you (thou), whom is spoken to

3.SI he/she/it, neither speaker nor person being spoken to

1.PL we, several people including the speaker

2.PL plural you, several people including the one(s) spoken to

3.PL they, several people neither speaking nor being spoken to

4.1.1 Form and agreement

Person suffixes have to agree with what they *refer to*. This is very important because, the word they refer to is not always the word on which they are. They decline in *number*, *person*, and *gender*. Their basic forms, preceded by an apostrophe, are listed in table 4.1.

Gender	Human	Magic	Common
1.SI	’esh	’ash	’üsh
2.SI	’el	’al	’ül
3.SI	’e	’a	’ü
1.PL	’ezh	’azh	’üzh
2.PL	’er	’ar	’ür
3.PL	’er	’ar	’ür

Table 4.1 – Person suffixes in their basic form

We have to notice there is no difference between **2.PL** and **3.PL**. The difference is thus done with context understanding.

4.1.2 Definite

The definite article, that is, the equivalent of *the*, is formed simply by applying the person suffix after the noun, in their basic form from table 4.1. For example see (2), with mosoi, cat.

(2) a. **Mosoi’a**
/mo.’sɔi.a/

mosoi-’a
cat(MAG)-3.SI.MAG

‘The cat’

b. **Mosoi’ash**
/mo.’sɔi.a/

mosoi-’ash
cat(MAG)-1.SI.MAG

‘I, the cat’

c. **Mosoir’ar**
/mo.’sɔiʁ.aʁ/

mosoir’ar
cat(MAG)-2.PL.MAG

‘You cats’

As we see in this example (2), the person suffixes add meaning to the words in a short, efficient way. They are also used with verbs, as in *dret’ẽil*, I go. Details on conjugation are however in a separated chapter.

4.1.3 Indefinite

Indefinite articles express the idea that the speaker doesn’t know *which* thing they are speaking about, but *a* thing. Its form in Deẽreẽ is a separate word, not a suffix. This word is *et*, which declines as described in table .

Gender	Human	Magic	Common
1.SI	etesh	et’ash	et’üsh
2.SI	etel	et’al	et’ül
3.SI	et	eat	eüt
1.PL	etezh	et’azh	et’üzh
2.PL	eter	et’ar	et’ür
3.PL	ed	ead	eüd

Table 4.2 – Indefinite article *et* and its declensions

The position of the indefinite article is still after the noun it describes. See example 3.

(3) a. **Eltol eat**
/ɛl.’tɔl e.’at/

eltol eat
bird(MAG) 3.SI.MAG.INDEF

‘a bird’

b. **Shil et’ül!**
/ʃil ’ɛt.yl/

shil et-’ül
worm(COM) INDEF-2.SI.COM

‘You’re a worm!’

4.1.4 Demonstrative

Without a pretty table this time; demonstrative articles are used to designate a specific object out of a group, as a transition from indefinite to definite. The English equivalent are *this* and *that*.

These are of two types: proximal and distal.

Proximal demonstrative

The word proximal means *close*, so a proximal demonstrative is an article designating a thing close to the speaker (*this*). In Deẽreẽ, it is formed with the definite suffixes preceded with the letter *m*.

(4) **Mok’ma**
/’mɔk.ma/

mok-'ma
ghost(MAG)-3.SI.DEM

'This ghost'

Distal demonstrative

As proximal means close, distal means *remote*. It is so the equivalent of *that*. It is made in the language with the definite suffixes preceded with *asm*. It is the occasion here to introduce the word senü, fish.

(5) **Senü'asmü**
/'se.ny.as.my/

senü-'asmü
fish(COM)-3.SI.ADEM

'That fish'

4.1.5 Genitive

It is useful to repeat that the person suffix on a word does *not* necessarily refer to this word, and agrees with what it refers to. In this part, we'll describe how person suffixes can express the notion of property, or a general link between two objects.

Its shape is very simple: prefix the suffix with the letter *R* (*'e* becomes *'re*). It is always used to refer to the *owner* in a property relationship.

Overt owner

This is like a genitive word case. A word with a *'re* suffix is the owner of the following word; it works like an adjective.

(6) **Adal'rel brẽi'e.**
/a.'dal.ʁɛl 'bʁɛ̃.e/

adal-'rel, brẽi-'e
old-2.SI.GEN bread-3.SI

'Your bread, old man.'

Non-overt owner

Another case of use exists, where the owner is not explicitely given. A genitive personal suffix can be used on a word alone, not being used as a qualifier. This means the object is owned by the person the suffix agrees with.

(7) **Todel'resh**
/to.'dɛl.rɛʃ

todel-'resh
mother-1.SI.GEN

'My mother'

4.1.6 Vocative

The vocative is used to call out to someone, to state existence of something, as well as in subclauses (see chapter Syntax on page 12). It is constructed by adding an **L** in front of the suffix.

(8) **Eltol'la!**
/ɛl.'tɔl.la/

eltol-'la
bird-3S.VOC

'There is a bird!'

4.2 Adjectives

They come before the noun, and do not agree with it in any way.

4.2.1 Comparatives and Superlatives

Comparatives are ways of expressing that something is *more*, *less* or *as much X as* something else.

The comparative in Deẽreẽ is placed before the comparee, as a qualifier. It is constructed in three parts: **reference-scale-direction**.

The reference followed by *nal*, 'through', is what the comparee will be compared to.

The scale states on what criteria the comparison will be.

The direction indicates if the comparee is more, less or equal to the reference in the given scale.

Reference	Scale	Direction	Comparee	Translation
shükẽ'me *nal*	lëlü		azhe'me	this woman is **taller** than this man
samis eat *nal*	dreri	**rar**	edan eat	a river is **less** wide than a lake
ãda'a *nal*	lif	**sho**	zhok'a	the blood is **equally as** red as the rose

Table 4.3 – Comparatives

Table 4.3 shows through examples how the comparative is constructed. Vocabulary used in this table:

shükẽ man (male)

azhe woman

lëlü big, tall

samis lake

edan river

dreri wide

ãda rose (flower)

zhok blood

lif red

Table 4.3 shows well the role of the postposition *nal*: its meaning is, 'relative to', 'by reference to'. Hence a sentence like *shükẽ'me nal lëlü azhe'me* can be litterally translated as: 'Relative to this man, this woman is tall.', meaning 'This woman is taller than this man.' (See vocabulary list above).

A superlative is constructed the same way as a comparative, except that we compare with everything: to be the *best* means to be *better than everything*.

(9) **Un'ur nal mama aso ẽi'esh sep are'sh!**
/'un.uʁ nal 'ma.ma 'a.so 'ẽi.eʃ sɛp a.'ʁɛʃ/

un-'ur nal mama aso esh sep are-'sh
all-3PL CMP very good 1S SUBC want-1S

'I wanna be the very best!'

The superlative of example 9 litterally means, 'Relative to everything, me be very good, I want'.

4.3 Verbs

Here I'll explain the different tense/aspect grams in *Deẽreẽ*. We'll use three example verbs in this chapter: *dekete*, 'to write'; *trasata*, 'to give', and *aütü*, 'to come'.

4.3.1 Negation

Negation of a verb is done by putting the word *rar*–also meaning 'no'–after the verb.

4.3.2 Simple tenses

To construct the present simple, one has to apply a pronoun suffix to the verb root (which ends in *et/at/üt*). However if the verb's gender is the same as the pronoun's gender and this suffix is indefinite, the verb's final *t* and the suffix's vowel may be ommited. See table 4.4.

deke'sh I write.

Verb	dekete (H)	trasata (M)	aütü (C)
Human	deke'sh, deke'l, deke	trasat'esh, trasat'el, trasat'e	aüt'esh, aüt'el, aüt'e
Magic	deket'ash, deket'al, deket'a	trasa'sh, trasa'l, trasa	aüt'ash, aüt'al, aüt'a
Common	deket'üsh, deket'ül, deket'ü	trasat'üsh, trasat'ül, trasat'ü	aü'sh, aü'l, aü

Table 4.4 – Examples of *dekete*, *trasata* and *aütü* in the present simple tense, 1S, 2S & 3S

trasat'el rar You do not give.

aü rar It does not come.

The past simple is constructed in a manner similar to the present simple, except that here the verb endings *et/at/üt* are replaced with *ẽi/oi/ëi*. See table 4.5.

Verb	dekete (H)	trasata (M)	aütü (C)
Human	dekẽi'sh, dekẽi'l, dekẽi	trasoi'esh, trasoi'el, trasoi'e	aëi'esh, aëi'el, aëi'e
Magic	dekẽi'ash, dekẽi'al, dekẽi'a	traoi'sh, trasoi'l, trasoi	aëi'ash, aëi'al, aëi'a
Common	dekẽi'üsh, dekẽi'ül, dekẽi'ü	trasoi'üsh, trasoi'ül, trasoi'ü	aëi'sh, aëi'l, aëi

Table 4.5 – Examples of *dekete*, *trasata* and *aütü* in the past simple tense, 1S, 2S & 3S

dekẽi'sh rar I did not write

trasoi It(M) gave

aëi'e He/She came

4.3.3 Complex tenses

The previous tenses were simple tenses. The tenses in this section will require a *verb participle* to be constructed.

The verb participle is constructed by replacing the infinitive ending with either *eu, aã* or *üi*, depending on gender. Note that those are *not* diphthongs, and should not be pronounced as such.

Continuing our example:
dekete *dekeu* /de.'ke.u/

trasata *trasaã* /tʁa.'sa.ã/

aütü *aüi* /a.'y.i/

The complex tenses are constructed using the verb's participle followed by a conjugated auxilary verb, either *sete*, 'to do', or *drete*, 'to go'. See table 4.6 for reference.

Tense of auxilary	**Present**	**Past**
PTCP + sete	present progressive	past progressive
PTCP + drete	future	past inchoative

Table 4.6 – Complex tenses depending on auxilary verb and tense

When a verb in a complex tense is negated, the word *rar* must come **between** the participle and the auxilary. Examples of the various tenses:

aüi se'a it(M) is coming (present progressive)

dekeu sẽi'sh I(H) was writing (past progressive)

aüi rar dre'sh I(H) will not come (future)

trasaã rar drẽi'l you(H) did not start to give (past inchoative)

4.3.4 The imperative/prohibitive

Orders and interdictions in Deẽreẽ are constructed with a prefix **a(r)-** added to the verb. The person suffix stays the same, but there is only two tenses allowed: the present simple and the future. Future imperatives are *weaker* than present simple imperatives. They are both less compelling and more polite.

adeke'l! write!

adekeu rar dre'l Do not write in the future.

atrasat'ezh let us give!

araüt'el rar come not!

4.4 Postpositions

4.4.1 *i*, at, where (place)

Following a noun phrase, it means 'at', and following a verb phrase, it means 'where'.
Reosal dësistis'ü i üsaat'esh I live in the Kingdom of Reosal

Kula aal'a sap i dre'sh I go to where the wind turns

4.4.2 *izher*, inside (place)

4.4.3 *ne*, outside (place), ablative

4.4.4 *ron*, over (place)

4.4.5 *nal*, through (place), despite/though (weak opposition)

4.4.6 *ol*, to (place, benefactive)

4.4.7 *ëi*, from (place, time)

4.4.8 *mor*, when (time)

4.4.9 *ir*, while (time)

4.4.10 *ëlët*, before (time)

4.4.11 *dür*, after (time)

4.4.12 *nol*, from (composition)

4.5 Conjunctions

4.5.1 *ak*, and, comitative

4.5.2 *lüsh*, with, instrumental

4.5.3 *kẽ*, if, condition

4.5.4 *ãbin*, because, cause

4.5.5 *zhin*, so, consequence

4.5.6 *va*, but, strong opposition

Chapter 5

Syntax

5.1 Noun phrase

Deẽreẽ is a **head-final** language. This means that in most cases if not all, the modifier words or clauses will come *before* the modified item. This is true of noun-adjective order.

(10) lif zhok-'a
red blood-3S
'The red blood'

(11) aso kal eat
good eye 3S.INDF
'a good eye'

5.2 Sentence

This section will discuss the ordering of parts of a sentence, and the morphemes needed for certain specific constructions, such as subclauses. Let us define a few notations first: **V** for Verb, **O** for the Objects of the verb, both direct and indirect, and **S** for Subject of the verb.

5.2.1 Primary order

The basic sentence word order is **OVS**.

(12) **Ãdiir ead trasat shükẽ'e**
/ɑ̃.'diiʁ e.'ad tʁa.'sat 'shy.kɛ̃.e/

ãdiir ead trasat shükẽ-'e
flower 3S.INDF give man-3S

'The man gives flowers.'

(13) **Mog'ar parat naiës'rel**
/'mɔg.ar pa.'ʁat nai.'əs.ʁɛl/

mog-'ar parat naiës-'rel
ghost.PL-3PL toFear child-2SG.GEN

Your child fears the ghosts.

5.2.2 Secondary order

The secondary order of words, is secondary by rank. It is fairly often used, but only in particular constructs that will be treated below.

This word order is verb-first. So it can be either **VOS**, if the subject **S** is not attached to the verb in the form of a pronoun suffix. It gives *V O S*. If the subject *is* a pronoun suffix on the verb, then the word order can be noted **VSO** : *V'S O*. In this latter case, the subject being attached to the verb, we can say that there is no fully described subject, and write this word order as **V('S)O(S)**. The chosen notation will be **VOS**.

Clauses in this order can still have adverbial modifiers come before the verb.

5.3 Subclauses: *sep/sap/süp*

Subclauses use the secondary word order, **VOS**, and an additionnal morpheme, the particle *sep/sap/süp*, depending on gender (resp. Human, Magic, Common). In the following examples, this particle will be glossed as SUBC.

Its construction will be described below, depeding on whether the subclause is nominalized or not, that is whether it acts as a noun or qualifies a noun.

5.3.1 Subclause as a noun

Subclauses may be used as nominal constructions, in which case they may include a subject, and an object if required by the verb.

We see in example 14 that there is gender agreement, between the subclause particle *sep* and the verb in the clause, *assete*, meaning, 'to light'.

(14) **Asset milzhër'ü Nosh'a sep küt'esh.**
/as.'sɛt mil.'ʒər.y 'noʃ.a sɛp 'kyt.eʃ/

asset milzhër-'ü Nosh-'a sep küt-'esh
toLight(H) forest-3S Moon-3S SUBC(H) see-1S

'I see that the Moon lights the forest.'

In example 15, the clause is used as a noun and followed by the benefactive postposition *ol*. Once again, there is agreement between *sep* and the verb *dekete*, 'to write'.

(15) **Deke sep ol trasat'esh.**
/dɛ.'kɛ sɛp 'ɔl tʁa.'sat.ɛʃ/

deke sep ol trasat-'esh
write(H).3S SUBC(H) to give-1S

'I give to the person who writes.'

5.3.2 Subclause as a qualifier

Whenever a subclause qualifies a noun, the verb inside the subclause takes the qualified noun either as its subject or its object, direct or indirect.

In all three cases (subject, direct object, indirect object), what is missing in the subclause will be identified by a pronoun in the *vocative* case (*le/la/lü*).

This vocative pronoun will be inside the subclause (between the verb and *sep/sap/süp*) in the first two cases, and directly after, on a postposition, in the case of an indirect object.

When the subclause is **missing subject**, a subject is placed on the verb in the subclause, as a vocative pronoun suffix. Both this pronoun and the subclause particle agree in gender with what the subject actually is, in the case of example (16), *Nosh'a*, 'the Moon'.

(16) **Asset'la sap Nosh'a küt'esh.**
/as.'sɛt.la sap 'nɔʃ.a 'kyt.ɛʃ/

asset-'la ezh sap Nosh-'a küt-'esh
toLight-3S(M).VOC 1PL SUBC(M) Moon(M)-3S(M) see-1S

'I see the moon that lights us.'

The **direct object** is missing in example 17. A vocative placeholder is used within the subclause where an object would be. The vocative pronoun *lü* as well as the subclause particle *süp* agree in gender with the actual object, located after the subclause, *ãdiil'ü*, 'the flower'.

(17) **Trasat'e lü süp ãdiil'ü küt'esh.**
/tʁa.'sat.e ly syp ɑ̃.'diil.y 'kyt.ɛʃ/

trasat-'e lü süp ãdiil-'ü küt-'esh
give-3S 3S(C).VOC SUBC(C) flower(C)-3S(C) see-1S

'I see the flower s/he gives.'

In the case of an indirect object missing from the subclause (example 18), the agreement is still the same: both *sap* and the vocative *'la* agree with the actual indirect object, *sãs'a*. However, the vocative is not within the subclause, but on the postposition *after* the subclause particle.

(18) **Aüt eltol'a sap ëi'la sãs'a küt'esh**.
/a.'yt ɛl.'tol.a sap 'əi.la 'sɑ̃s.a 'kyt.ɛʃ/

aüt eltol-'a sap ëi-'la sãs-'a küt-'esh
come bird-3S SUBC(M) from-3S(M).VOC tree(M)-3S(M) see-1S

'I see the tree from which the bird comes.'

5.4 Questions

The syntax of questions requires a question particle, depending on gender: **lu**, **lo**, **li** for *Human*, *Magic* and *Common* respectively. They are not to be confused with the vocative suffixes *'le, 'la, 'lü*.

Questions use the **secondary word order**, (VOS), and the question particle can be inside or at the end of the sentence.

5.4.1 Yes/No questions

(19) **Küt'el tor'a ron eltol'a li?**
/'kyt.ɛl 'tɔʁr.a ʁɔn eltol'a li/

küt-'el tor-'a ron eltol-'a li
see-2S mountain-3S on bird-3S Q

'Do you see the bird on the mountain?'

In example 19, we see that the verb is in first position, followed by an object (*tor'a ron eltol'a*, 'the bird on the mountain'), and the question particle *li* comes in the end.

In a yes/no (or closed) question, the question particle is located at the end of the sentence and must agree in gender with the verb.

5.4.2 Open questions

An open question is one that would use a wh- word in English (what, who, when, etc.). In Deẽreẽ, those are constructed with the VOS word order, and the question particle is used as (and called) a placeholder for what is asked for. This placeholder can take qualifiers in the form of adjectives or nouns, that serve to discriminate if we ask about nature of thing, time, location, etc. The placeholder will also take a person suffix, making it well distinct from the closed question particle.

Compare:

Feu dre'l le? Are you drinking?

Feu dre'l li'ü What are you drinking?

le in the first sentence is the question particle, whereas in the second sentence *li* is an interrogative placeholder. The placeholder is in the *Common* gender to agree with an expected response, whose gender is yet unknown.

(20) **Fet zhalbraki'ü lu'mer?**
/fɛt ʒal.'bʁa.ki.y 'lu.mɛʁ/

fet zhalbraki-'ü lu-'mer ?
drink beer-3S Q(H)-2PL.DEM ?

'Who of you drinks a beer?'

Example 20 shows how the interrogative placeholder agrees with the expected answer: its suffix is a second person demonstrative, indicating the question is asked to a group of people.

Appendix A

Samples of the language

A.1 Nalkor un'rar Dësish'ü — The King of All Snakes

This was the first 'poem' written in Deẽreẽ.

Edan'ra mete'e asabre'l,
Nusha'r noshi i lavësã sap aküt'el,
Lëlü aal'ra eltol'ra nën'ü atoüt'el,
Adal tis'mü'rü mig'ür ak ãdiir'ar asãgre'l.

Kerpo pitëk'ü i üsaat nalkor un'rar dësish'ü.
Sabre'l sep un'e, küt'el süp un'ü, toüt'el süp un'ü, sãgre'l sep un'e, osket dësish'ü.
Ãgre dësistis'rü sep trẽshet rar kidren'mü.
Pa vilẽ'rü nãilat greba'r sap un eltor'ar.

English translation

Listen to the river's laugh,
See in the sky the clouds swim,
Know the calm of the great wind bird,
Love the riches and flowers of this old place.

In the yellow mangrove lives the king of all snakes.
Everything you hear, everything you see, everything you know, everything you love, belongs to the king.
This noble being hasn't finished ruling his kingdom.
Every bird that flies sings his just name.

Glossary

A

adal old. 8, 16

B

brẽi bread. 8, 16

D

drete to go. 3, 16

E

eltol bird. 3, 7, 16

et indefinite article. 16

F

fãssa wizard. 3, 16

G

geni milk. 4, 16

K

kretül mole. 4, 16

kueste noble. 3, 16

L

loishë history. 4, 16

M

magra soul. 3, 16

mosoi cat. 6, 16

murtef door. 3, 16

S

senü fish. 8, 16

shil worm. 7, 16

shëi house. 3, 16

soimata to think. 3, 16

sün metal. 4, 16

T

todel mother. 8, 16

torete to speak. 3, 16

toütü to know. 4, 16

Z

zeẽ city. 3, 16

zhalbraki beer. 3, 16

zheo fairy. 4, 16

zërsh pig. 4, 16

List of Figures

List of Tables

1.1 Consonants in Deẽreẽ . . . 1
1.2 Vowels in Deẽreẽ . . . 1
1.3 Vowels orthography . . . 2

2.1 Vowels in the Deẽreẽ genders (H:e/ẽ/u, M:a/o/ã, C:ü/ë/i) . . . 3
2.2 Number (singular and plural) formation . . . 4

3.1 Noun derivations . . . 5
3.2 Verb derivations . . . 5

4.1 Person suffixes in their basic form . . . 6
4.2 Indefinite article *et* and its declensions . . . 7
4.3 Comparatives . . . 9
4.4 Examples of *dekete*, *trasata* and *aütü* in the present simple tense, 1S, 2S & 3S . . . 10
4.5 Examples of *dekete*, *trasata* and *aütü* in the past simple tense, 1S, 2S & 3S . . . 10
4.6 Complex tenses depending on auxilary verb and tense . . . 10

Todo list

fig:glossing abbreviations iii
ordinals 4
fractions 4
1t1 –> 31n: result, that which X does
torete: to say –> toruen: speech 5