

Deëreë
Grammar of a fantasy constructed language

Jirsad İoH

2016 — March 21, 2017

Contents

Introduction	iii
1 Phonology	1
1.1 Consonants	1
1.1.1 Consonant pairs	1
1.2 Vowels	1
1.2.1 On /ẽj/ or /ẽ/	1
1.3 Phonotactics	2
1.3.1 Vowel pairs	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	3
2.2.1 Formation	4
2.2.2 Meaning and agreement	4
2.2.3 Verbs	4
2.2.4 Adverbs and adjectives	4
2.3 Person suffixes	4
2.3.1 Form and agreement	4
2.3.2 Definite	5
2.3.3 Indefinite	5
2.3.4 Demonstrative	5
2.3.5 Genitive	6
2.4 Adjective	6
2.5 Adpositions	6
3 Conjugation	7
3.1 Tense	7
3.1.1 Present	7
3.1.2 Past	7
3.1.3 Future	7
3.2 Mood	7
3.2.1 Indicative	7
3.2.2 Participle	7
3.2.3 Interrogative	7
3.2.4 Subjunctive	7
3.2.5 Imperative	7
3.3 Aspect	7
3.3.1 Perfect/Imperfect	7
3.3.2 Cessative/Inchoative	7
3.4 The Copula	7

4 Syntax	8
4.1 Noun phrase	8
4.2 Sentence	8
4.2.1 Basic order	8
4.2.2 Questions	8
4.2.3 Imperatives	8
4.3 Subclauses	8
4.4 Existentials	8
5 Pragmatics	9
5.1 Sayings	9
5.2 Samples	9
5.2.1 Ėj un naklër'ur dësish'rù — The King of All Snakes	9
Glossary	10
List of Figures	11
List of Tables	12

Introduction

- (1) mosoj'a fāssa eat a
cat-3S wizard 3S.INDEF 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

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

Table 1.1 – Consonants in Deěreě

Romanization is done with the IPA symbols, that is, the ones in table , 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 ‘sheep’

zh as in English ‘vision’

r as in French ‘France’

1.1.1 Consonant pairs

The combinations of consonants allowed are the following: **tr**, **dr**, **pl**, **bl**, **kl**, **gl**, **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 .

	Front	Back
Closed	/i/, /y/ <û>	/u/
Mid	/e~ɛ/, /ẽ(j)/ <ěi>, /ø~œ/ <ě>	/o~ɔ/
Open	/a/	/ã/ <ã>

Table 1.2 – Vowels in Deěreě

1.2.1 On /ěj/ or /ě/

One of the doubtful phonemes in Deěreě’s phonology is the grapheme <ěi>’s pronunciation. It can be pronounced with palatalization or not, that is, /ěj/ or /ě/. How to pronounce it is normally determined by its position in the word.

As the last phoneme of a word <ëi> will be palatalized: /ëj/. But when <ëi> is initial or inside a word, it will be pronounced as either palatalized or not. When followed by j, l, s, n, p, t, or sh, that is a consonant from bilabial to palatal but not further back (k, g, r), it is palatalized, otherwise it is not.

1.3 Phonotactics

The syllable structure is (C|B)V(L)(F) where:

C is any consonant

B is a group of two consonants among *tr, dr, pl, bl, kl, gl, kr, gr*

V is any vowel

L is a consonant among *j, l, r, s*

F word-final only, a consonant among *n, p, t, k, f, s, sh, l*

1.3.1 Vowel pairs

Quite often, two vowels will appear in a word consecutively. In this case, there are three cases: long vowel, diaeresis, or semi-vowel.

Long vowel sounds

In a word like *aal*, There is a long vowel sound due to vowel reduplication. There, it is pronounced as [a.al], instead of [a:l]. That is, the real pronunciation of this word is as close to diaeresis as possible, as opposed to a 'real' long vowel.

Diaeresis

Two consecutive vowels will give a diaeresis, that is, the two vowels being pronounced separately without any semi-vowel, in words like *fûã*, powder, or before a verb ending, for example in *tëfuete*, to wipe.

Semi-vowel

A semi-vowel, that is, a sound like /j/, /w/, or /ɥ/ (the *u* in the French *huit*), is used in various words, for example the *Deëreë* word for nature, *marùëlf*.

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. Details though will be about person suffixes, Deëreë's equivalent for articles.

2.1 Gender

Deëreë 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 has 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 .

Human	e	ēi	u
Magic	a	ā	o
Common	ù	ë	i

Table 2.1 – Vowels in the Deëreë genders (H:e/ēi/u, M:a/ā/o, C:ù/ë/i)

For example:

zhalbarki 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

2.1.2 Human

The **Human** gender regroups everything that is a non-magic person, a human made thing or skill. Example words are: zeëi, 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 Deëreë, the Kingdom of Reosal, magic, shortly explained, is the soul, present in everyone, and in many animals (eltol), natural elements, and some objects as well. Nouns designating people with magical abilities, like fassa, wizard, are also of this gender.

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

2.1.4 Common

What is **Common** is not necessarily unimportant. An example is traùtù, to know. However, kretùl, 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 Deëreë 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	-l	-n	-p	-t	-k	-f	-s	-sh	-vowel
Plural	-r	-m	-b	-d	-g	-v	-z	-zh	-r

Table 2.2 – Number (singular and plural) formation

For example, *magra*, *magrar*; *aal*; *aar*; *sùn* (metal), *sùm*, *zërsh* (pig), *zërzh*.

2.2.2 Meaning and agreement

Nouns

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: *lojshë*, history, some part of history; *lojshër*, histories, or *geni*, milk, some milk; *genir*, several kinds of milk.

2.2.3 Verbs

Verbs agree in number with the agent. See chapter Conjugation on page 7 for more detail.

2.2.4 Adverbs and adjectives

These do not agree, as is explained in chapter Syntax (page 8).

2.3 Person suffixes

Person suffixes in Deëreë are suffixes that can be added to different kinds of words, notably nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, 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

2.3.1 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 .

Gender	Human		Magic	Common
	Female/neuter	Male		
1.SI	'esh	'ëish	'ash	'ùsh
2.SI	'el	'ëil	'al	'ùl
3.SI	'e	'ëi	'a	'ù
1.PL	'ezh	'ëizh	'azh	'ùzh
2.PL	'er	'ëir	'ar	'ùr
3.PL	'er	'ëir	'ar	'ùr

Table 2.3 – 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.

2.3.2 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 . For example see (2), with *mosoj*, cat.

- (2) a. *mosoj'a*
cat(MAG)-3.SI.MAG
'the cat'
- b. *mosoj'ash*
cat(MAG)-1.SI.MAG
'I, the cat'
- c. *mosojr'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'ëil*, I go. Details on conjugation are however in a separated chapter.

2.3.3 Indefinite

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

Gender	Human		Magic	Common
	Female/neuter	Male		
1.SI	etesh	etëish	et'ash	et'ùsh
2.SI	etel	etëil	et'al	et'ùl
3.SI	et	ëit	eat	eùt
1.PL	etezh	etëizh	et'azh	et'ùzh
2.PL	eter	etëir	et'ar	et'ùr
3.PL	ed	ëid	ead	eùd

Table 2.4 – 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 et*
bird(MAG) 3.SI.MAG.INDEF
'a bird'
- b. *shil et'ùl*
worm(COM) 2.SI.COM.INDEF
'You worm!'

2.3.4 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 Deëreë, it is formed with the definite suffixes preceded with the letter *m*.

- (4) *mosoj'ma*
cat(MAG)-3.SI.PDEM
this cat

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 *senù*, fish.

- (5) *senù'asmù*
 fish(COM)-3.SI.PDEM
 that fish

2.3.5 Genitive

're

Owner

todel'rēi

Distinct

ēj adal'e āblēi're

2.4 Adjective

before: all, no suffix

after: one only, 3S suffix

2.5 Adpositions

post-positions a lot

pre-positions with stuff.

Chapter 3

Conjugation

3.1 Tense

3.1.1 Present

et

3.1.2 Past

ëiet

3.1.3 Future

et trã

3.2 Mood

3.2.1 Indicative

et

3.2.2 Participle

ej

3.2.3 Interrogative

Vf es

3.2.4 Subjunctive

Vf es

3.2.5 Imperative

Vf a-V-et

3.3 Aspect

3.3.1 Perfect/Imperfect

drej

3.3.2 Cessative/Inchoative

drëiej/drej trã

3.4 The Copula

first suffix repetition

Mosoj'a fãssa eat'a. => the cat is a wizard.

Chapter 4

Syntax

4.1 Noun phrase

4.2 Sentence

4.2.1 Basic order

4.2.2 Questions

4.2.3 Imperatives

4.3 Subclauses

Vf

4.4 Existentials

at

Chapter 5

Pragmatics

5.1 Sayings

5.2 Samples

5.2.1 Ēj un naklēr'ūr dēsish'rù — The King of All Snakes

This was the first 'poem' written in Deēreē.

Asaber ěj edan'a mete're,

Akùt'er i noshi nushata lavēdā'ar,

Atraùt'er ěj lēlù aal eùt ěj eltol'ra nēn'rù,

Asākrer ěj adal tis'mù mik'rù ak ādijl'rar.

Iszher kerbo pitrēk'ù ùsaat ěj un naklēr'ūr dēsish'rù.

Sabeser un'me, kùs'er un'me, traùs'er un'me, sākreser un'me, osket dēsish'ù.

Dēsistis'rù kla drēiej āgret kiden'me.

Pa vimēilf're nājlat un grebas eltol'mar.

English translation

Hear 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

aal wind. 2, 10

D

drete to go. 3, 10

E

eltol bird. 3, 5, 10

et indefinite article. 10

F

fāssa wizard. 3, 10

fũã powder. 2, 10

G

geni milk. 4, 10

K

kretùl mole. 3, 10

kueste noble. 3, 10

L

lojshë history. 4, 10

M

magra soul. 3, 10

marùelf nature. 2, 10

mosoj cat. 5, 10

murtef door. 3, 10

N

naklë snake. 10

S

senù fish. 6, 10

shil worm. 5, 10

sojmata to think. 3, 10

sùn metal. 4, 10

T

torete to speak. 3, 10

traùtù to know. 3, 10

tëfuate frother. 2, 10

Z

zeëi city. 3, 10

zhalbarki beer. 3, 10

zheo fairy. 4, 10

zërsh pig. 4, 10

List of Figures

List of Tables

1.1	Consonants in Deěreě	1
1.2	Vowels in Deěreě	1
2.1	Vowels in the Deěreě genders (H:e/ěi/u, M:a/ã/o, C:ù/ě/i)	3
2.2	Number (singular and plural) formation	4
2.3	Person suffixes in their basic form	4
2.4	Indefinite article <i>et</i> and its declensions	5

Todo list

fig:glossing abbreviations	iii
--------------------------------------	-----