

Deěreě
Grammar of a fantasy constructed language

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Introduction

- (1) **Fāssa mosoi'a.**
/ˈfā.s:a mo.'soi.a/

fāssa 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		χ
Lateral approximant			l			

Table 1.1 – Consonants in Deěreě

1.1.1 Romanization

Romanization is done with the IPA symbols, that is, the ones in table 1.1, except for ʃ, ʒ and χ, 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*’

1.1.2 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/, /ě/, /ə/	/o/
Open	/a/	/ã/

Table 1.2 – Vowels in Deěreě

IPA	/i/	/y/	/u/	/e/	/ẽ/	/ə/	/o/	/a/	/ã/
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, ẽi, 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.'bɾa.ki] (beer)

a-shëi [a.'ʃëi] (temple)

lë-lü ['lə.ly] (big)

tra-sa-ta [tɾa.'sa.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. Details though will be about pronoun suffixes, Deëreë's equivalent for articles and pronouns.

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 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	ē	u
Magic	a	o	ā
Common	ü	ë	i

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

Diphthongs put the word in the gender determined by the first diphthong vowel. This means words ending in *-ēi* 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: zeë, 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, bird), natural elements, and some objects as well. Nouns designating people with magical abilities, like fässa, 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 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	-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

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: *loishë*, history, some part of history; *loishër*, 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 9 for more detail.

2.2.4 Adverbs and adjectives

These do not agree, as is explained in chapter Syntax (page 11).

2.3 Pronoun suffixes

Pronoun 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

Pronoun 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 2.3.

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 2.3. For example see (2), with *mosoi*, cat.

- (2) a. *mosoi'a*
 cat(MAG)-3.SI.MAG
 'the cat'

Gender	Human	Magic	Common
1.SI	'esh	'ash	'üşh
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 2.3 – Pronoun suffixes in their basic form

- b. mosoi'ash
cat(MAG)-1.SI.MAG
'I, the cat'
- c. mosoir'ar
cat(MAG)-2.PL.MAG
'you, cats'

As we see in this example (2), the pronoun 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
1.SI	etesh	et'ash	et'üşh
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 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 eat
bird(MAG) 3.SI.MAG.INDEF
'a bird'
- b. shil et-'ül
worm(COM) INDEF-2.SI.COM
'You're a 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) mosoi-'ma
cat(MAG)-3.SI.DEM
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 *senü*, fish.

- (5) *senü-’asmü*
 fish(COM)-3.SI.ADEM
 that fish

2.3.5 Genitive

It is useful to repeat that the pronoun 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 pronoun 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 brëi’e*.
 /a.’dal.ʁɛl ’bʁɛ.ɛ/
- adal-’rel, brëi-’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 explicitly 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’

2.3.6 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 11). 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!’

2.4 Adjectives

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

2.4.1 Comparatives

- (9) samas'a nal lēlü āsta'a
lake-3SG through big ocean-3SG
The ocean is bigger than the lake.
- (10) zhas'ra fil mok'a
water(M)-3SG.GEN transparent(C) ghost(M)-3SG
The ghost is transparent as water.

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
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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

Conjugation

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

4.1 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 omitted. See table 4.1.

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

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 *ëi/oi/ëi*. See table 4.2.

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

Table 4.2 – Examples of *dekete*, *trasata* and *aütü* in the past simple tense, 1S, 2S & 3S

4.2 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*, *aä* 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 *trasaä* /tʁa.'sa.ä/

aütü *aüi* /a.'y.i/

The complex tenses are constructed using the verb's participle followed by a conjugated auxiliary verb, either *sete*, 'to do', or *drete*, 'to go'. See table 4.3 for reference.

Examples of the various tenses:

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

Table 4.3 – Complex tenses depending on auxiliary verb and tense

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

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

aüi dre'sh I(H) will come (future)

trasaã drēi'l you(H) started to give (past inchoative)

Chapter 5

Syntax

5.1 Noun phrase

Deēreē 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.

- (11) lif zhok-'a
red blood-3S
'The red blood'
- (12) 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**.

- (13) Ādiir ead trasat shükē'e
/ä.'diir e.'ad tʁa.'sat 'shy.kẽ.e/

ādiir ead trasat shükē-'e
flower 3S.INDF give man-3S

'The man gives flowers.'
- (14) Mog'ar parat naiēs'rel
/'mɔg.ar pa.'ʁat nai.'əs.ʁɛl/

mog-'ar parat naiēs-'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 additional 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, depending 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 15 that there is gender agreement, between the subclause particle *sep* and the verb in the clause, *asete*, meaning, ‘to light’.

- (15) **Asset milzhër’ü Nosh’a sep küt’esh.**
/as.’set mil.’zər.y ’noʃ.a sɛp ’kʏt.ɛʃ/

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 16, 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’.

- (16) **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 (17), *Nosh’a*, ‘the Moon’.

- (17) **Asset’la sap Nosh’a küt’esh.**
/as.’set.la sap ’noʃ.a ’kʏt.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 18. 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, *ādiil’ü*, ‘the flower’.

- (18) **Trasat’e lü süp ādiil’ü küt’esh.**
/tʁa.’sat.e ly syp ā.’diil.y ’kʏt.ɛʃ/

trasat-'e lü süp âdiil-'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 19), the agreement is still the same: both *sap* and the vocative *'la* agree with the actual indirect object, *sās'a*. However, the vocative is not within the subclause, but on the postposition *after* the subclause particle.

(19) **Aüt eltol'a sap ëi'la sās'a küt'esh.**

/a.'yt el.'tol.a sap 'ëi.la 'sās.a 'küt.ɛʃ/

aüt eltol-'a sap ëi-'la sās-'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.'

Glossary

A

adal old. 6, 14

B

brēi bread. 6, 14

D

drete to go. 3, 14

E

eltol bird. 3, 5, 14

et indefinite article. 14

F

fāssa wizard. 3, 14

G

geni milk. 4, 14

K

kretül mole. 4, 14

kueste noble. 3, 14

L

loishë history. 4, 14

M

magra soul. 3, 14

mosoi cat. 4, 14

murtef door. 3, 14

S

senü fish. 6, 14

shil worm. 5, 14

shëi house. 3, 14

soimata to think. 3, 14

sün metal. 4, 14

T

todel mother. 6, 14

torete to speak. 3, 14

toütü to know. 4, 14

Z

zeë city. 3, 14

zhalbraki beer. 3, 14

zheo fairy. 4, 14

zërsh pig. 4, 14

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torete: to say -> toruen: speech	8