Conlang Documentation

LangTime Chat
Episode 40

You've seen our documentation method.

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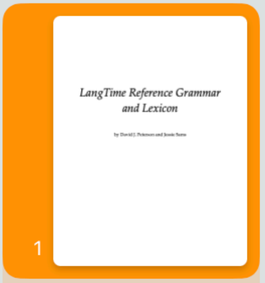

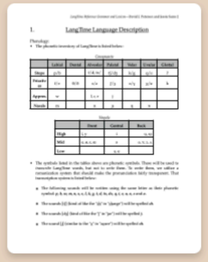

LangTime Reference Grammar and Lexicon

by David J. Peterson and Jessie Sams

Nothing selected.
Select an object or text to format.

LangTime Reference Grammar and Lexicon

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You don’t have to use the same format.

Some features make conlang documents more helpful.

Itlani

Jim Hopkins

Charts are good!

ITLANI CASES			
CASE	**MEANING**	**SINGULAR**	**PLURAL**
Nominative	subject, agent	-0	-ú
Accusative	object, patient	-ova	-ovó
Genitive	of (possession)	-a	-arun
Partitive	of (quantity)	-aris	-ainen
Dative	to, toward (indirect object)	-ese	-esea
Ablative	from, out of, by	-ay	-iena
Locative	place in time or space)	-an	-avá
Instrumental	by means of	-ilu	-ilisa
Prepositional	used with non-local prepositions	-ey	-ín
Vocative*	direct address	-ey	-ín

Examples are a necessity.

ACCUSATIVE CASE

The direct object in Itlani takes the ending of the accusative case. The accusative case is required in Itlani for the objects of verbs. The ending for the accusative singular is **-ova** or sometimes **-o**. The plural accusative ending is **-ovó**.

Ta	**Darél**	**ta**	**malachorova**	**zeytariyavel.**
The-ART	Queen-NOM.SG	the-ART	young-man-ACC.SG	meet-PST.3SG.F

'The Queen met the young man.'

Ta	**malachór**	**ta**	**Darelova**	**zeytariyavor.**
The-ART	young-man-NOM.SG	the	Queen-ACC.SG	meet-PST.3SG.M

'The young man met the Queen.'

In certain very colloquial sayings one will occasionally hear the short form of the accusative singular **-o**. This is a very informal usage and is never used for the plural. This usage is rare and appears to be getting rarer.

Dralpuuto!
Good-appetite-ACC.SG
'Bon Appetit!'

Dralkadimo! or **Kadimo!**
Good-coming-ACC.SG
'Welcome!'

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Skerre

Doug Ball

Show the same word in different forms.

4.5. **Verb.** The verb in Skerre is mildly inflected. The general structure of the verb is TAM – stem – TAM – OBJ – SUBJ, where only one of the TAM slots is filled (and the OBJ slot only filled if there is a pronominal object).

4.5.1. *TAM.* Tense, aspect, and mood (or TAM) is expressed inflectionally in Skerre. The imperfective for regular verbs is expressed with the prefix *hi-* and the prefix *e-* signals what is called the potential, a form that can express futurity, but also obligation or non-reality, depending on the syntactic (and pragmatic) context. The perfective is formed with a suffix, which can have the form *-in*, *-:n*, or *-yin* (following a consonant, short vowel, and long vowel, respectively). The bare stem can be used as an imperative. Thus, the following example paradigm:

Hi?ahor
IPFV.run
'S/he is running.'
E?ahor
POT.run
'S/he will run'
Ahorin
run.PFV
'S/he ran'
Ahor!
run.IMP
'Run'

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4.5.3. *Negation.* Clausal negation in Skerre is signaled with the preverbal particle *koni*:

Koni ahorin.
NEG run.PFV
'S/he didn't run.'

Any subject marker that appears in a negative clause must appear attached to the negative particle, not the verb:

Koni-ha hi?ahor.
NEG-1SG.SU IPFV.run
'I am not running.'

The particle *rone* negates a command:

Rone ahor.
PROH run.IMP
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Tanol

Harry Cook

Show a variety of relevant examples.

2.3 Prosody

Stress in Tanol categorically falls on the first syllable of a word:

Yazan (sun) – /ˈja.zan/
Leyokun (wine) – /ˈle.jo.kun/
Púnvóray (chair) – /ˈpʊ.nvɔ.ɾaj/

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Open syllable with diphthongs

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Leyokun (wine) – /ˈle.jo.kun/
Púnvóray (chair) – /ˈpʊ.nvɔ.ɾaj/

Closed syllables

If stems behave differently, show examples!

Radical	IV Mutation			Soft
	Palatal	De-af.	Hard	
/m/				/p/
/n/	/j/			/t/
/p/		/v/		
/t/		/s/	/θ/	
/k/	/j/	/x/		
/s/			/z/	
/x/			/h/	
/h/				
/v/				
/r/				/h/
/l/	/j/		/r/	/ɬ/
/j/				/ʃ/

Mutations do not always affect every word beginning with a certain radical, and the same word can cause different mutations on the following word. For example, *eyo* causes IV mutation, this means that a word beginning with /t/ could become /s/ or /θ/ or just not change at all:

- *Tórím* – to run (away) *Eyo **s**órímé* – I ran away
- *Tíyúné* – to draw *Su menva eyo **th**íyúné* – I drew a woman
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Yajee

P.A. Lewis

Again, show examples when stems/affixes behave differently!

4.2 Noun-Forming Derivations

Suffixes are attached to the oblique stem of nouns, and sometimes are accompanied by other changes.

The prefix **ha-** (or **he-** when preceding a word beginning in a high vowel) creates a noun meaning "place of X" where X is the original noun or verb.

(35) a. mar - mother; Hamar - motherland

b. kwüü - be new; Hegwüü - new land

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Kala

Carl Buck

Demonstrate language use with an original text.

Text Example

seko saye puani nahayo yalaye ma ke tsa'eto omoye
scorpion along bank river-GEN walk-PST and TOP across-way think-PST
A scorpion was walking along the bank of a river, wondering how to get to the other side.
haye seko ke tsola anyaye
sudden scorpion TOP fox see-PST
Suddenly, he saw a fox.
seko nya tsa'e naha amo ua'e muta tsolayo kanyoye
scorpion for across river carry on back fox-GEN ask-PST
He asked the fox to take him on his back across the river.
tsola kye ak na'eta amo yatli ta'ena kute nuesitli
fox IND.SP COP.NEG 1SG-P.2SG carry if.X.then.Y 2SG-P.1SG sting drown-FUT
The fox said, "No. If I do that, you'll sting me, and I'll drown."
seko kye na'eta kute yatli nam nuesitli
scorpion IND.SP 1SG-P.2SG sting if.X.then.Y 1PL drown-FUT
The scorpion assured him, "If I do that, we'll both drown."
tsola pue omo nkataye
fox after think agree-PST
The fox thought about it and finally agreed.

ya seko ua’e muta tsolayo uayaye ma tsola yokomuye
VOC scorpion on back fox-GEN climb and fox swim-begin-PST
So the scorpion climbed up on his back, and the fox began to swim.
me tsa’etsohue nahayo seko ke tsola kuteye
however across-half-LOC river-GEN scorpion TOP fox sting-PST
But halfway across the river, the scorpion stung him.
tsola ike sunu ke sila hayo yeno ka’e seko muka kye nye ta’ena kuteye ka ima ta nuesitli
fox while poison TOP vein 3SG.POSS fill toward scorpion face IND.SP reason 2SG-P.1SG sting-PST Q now 2SG drown-FUT
As poison filled his veins, the fox turned to the scorpion and said, “Why did you do that? Now you’ll drown, too.”
seko kye na’i ke to nayo tlinapayek
scorpion IND.SP 1SG.REFL TOP way 1SG.POSS stop-able-PST.NEG
“I couldn’t help it,” said the scorpion. “It’s my nature.”

These texts show character and demonstrate more complex features of the language.

Features

Often overlooked...

Sound change descriptions with clear examples of how they are applied.

Documentation to highlight paths of grammaticalization (where did these elements come from?).

Borderline examples or uses of grammatical features in unique ways (e.g. quirky case examples).

Examples with a diversity of vocabulary.

Clear descriptions of complex features.

Feeling overwhelmed?

Start with a list of features!

Grambank

Create an overview

You can use Grambank's features list to create a shareable overview of examples.

Features

Showing 1 to 100 of 195 entries

Id	Feature
Search	Search
GB020	Are there definite or specific articles?
GB021	Do indefinite nominals commonly have indefinite articles?
GB022	Are there prenominal articles?
GB023	Are there postnominal articles?
GB024	What is the order of numeral and noun in the NP?
GB025	What is the order of adnominal demonstrative and noun?
GB026	Can adnominal property words occur discontinuously?
GB027	Are nominal conjunction and comitative expressed by different elements?
GB028	Is there a distinction between inclusive and exclusive?

Feature	Y/N	Example(s)
020: Are there definite or specific articles?	N	Zhwadi lacks definite and indefinite articles, as demonstrated in this example: ***Pela liriyám abazíl.*** "The / A person collected (the) wildflowers."
021: Do indefinite nominals commonly have indefinite articles?	N	See example in Feature 020.
022: Are there prenominal articles?	Y	The demonstrative determiner attaches as a prefixed clitic to the noun (or to a modifier preceding the noun). • ***gyav-ani*** "that sky" • ***gyav-ara ani*** "that dark sky" See Feature 025 for more examples.
023: Are there postnominal articles?	N	The only articles in Zhwadi are demonstrative determiners, and they precede the noun.
024: What is the order of numeral and noun in the NP?	?	
025: What is the order of adnominal demonstrative and noun?	Dem-N	The demonstrative determiners attach as a prefixed clitic; their forms depend on the initial sound of the word they attach to: • ***ko-dunī*** "this moss" / ***kol-anjé*** "this bee" • ***gya-zhelu*** "that (visible) ivy" / ***gyav-obi*** "that (visible) mud" • ***akla-yazhī*** "that (non-visible) lightning" / ***aklav-itu*** "that (non-visible) mouse"

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Show examples, even if the feature is absent.

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If features overlap, you can put in a note to see the other feature.

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Show multiple examples if stems behave differently.

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Doing this can highlight what you haven't yet considered.

You can list as many examples as you need to highlight the feature!

Feature	Y/N	Example(s)
026: Can adnominal property words occur discontinuously?	N	Modifiers typically precede their noun, but they can also appear directly after them in their fully inflected forms. • ***gwava ipa ~ ipa igwava*** "smooth ice" • ***rakye sarā ~ sarā tarakye*** "rough leaf" Nominal modifiers can only occur before their nouns: • ***chāra sarā*** "green leaf" • ***uki chal*** "light hair" (or "white hair") Regardless of whether they appear before or after the noun, they cannot appear discontinuously.
027: Are nominal conjunction and comitative expressed by different elements?	?	
028: Is there a distinction between inclusive and exclusive?	Y	Inclusive "we" is ***loa*** (or ***lo(w)-*** in its dependent form), and exclusive "we" is ***wa*** (or ***w(a)-*** in its dependent form).
030: Is there a gender distinction in independent 3rd person pronouns?	Y	Zhwadi has eleven noun classes, and each noun class has a distinct third-person pronoun form, presented here in singular and plural forms: • animate ***a ~ vya*** • dirt ***me ~ mevo*** • stone ***ka ~ kavo*** • grass ***ta ~ taku*** • down ***lu ~ luvo*** • water ***she ~ shi*** • ice ***i ~ ipi*** • fire ***zu ~ zwi*** • sky ***ni ~ nī*** • day ***ro ~ roi/rozhe*** • night ***je ~ jei/jezhe***

General Advice

Documentation

Keep layouts open and easy on the eyes.

Make examples stand out from prose (tab in, bullets, bold/italic).

Charts and tables are your friends!

Describe your examples (so you remember later, too!).

Have fun!

Make examples
memorable for you.