Dandasian

Dandas, the language of the Mbvùga people

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A descriptive grammar

2019

Dedicated to miacomet

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Contents

Figures

Glossing abbreviations

Gloss	*Definition*
∅	null
.	metalanguage element
:	inherent/unimportant element
·	non-concatenative element
~	reduplication
RED	reduplication result
PRS	personal
NPR	impersonal
PRF	perfective
IMP	imperfective
NTR	intransitive
TR	transitive
NAT	natural
HUM	human
ANI	animate
EDI	edible
INA	inanimate
OBL	oblique
SPE	speaker
LIS	listener
PRT	participant
EST	established
INT	introduced
NDF	indefinite
RFL	reflexive
LOG	logophoric
ERG	ergative
ESS	essive
INS	instrumental
LAT	lative
ABL	ablative
ANT	antipassive

EXP	experiential
ADV	adversative
CNJ	conjunct
DSJ	disjunct
SBJ	subjunct

0 | Introduction

0.1 | Overview

In this book, I shall document and describe the Dandas language.

In Ch. 0, I shall introduce the conventions and content of this book, and also provide a look into the history of the language, both external (out-of-world) and internal (in-world). In Chs. 1 to 3, I shall describe the sounds and related phenomena, both segmental and suprasegmental, as well as the orthography. In Ch. 4, I will delve into various syntactic details. In Chs. 5 to 9 I will detail various categories and processes relating to words. In Ch. 10, I shall explain the numeral system. In Apps. A to D, I will give a set of lexicons and example sentences/translations.

0.2 | Conventions

In this book, I shall use blue text for Dandas words, whether they be in orthographic transcription or non-bracketed phonemic transcription (common).

Forward slashes (/example/) are used for phonemic transcription, square brackets ([example]) are used for phonetic transcription, blue-text pipes (|example|) are used for morphemic transcription (except in glosses), and blue-text angle brackets (⟨example⟩) are used for orthographic transcription.

Underlined text (which may sometimes be enclosed by 'single quotes') is used for translations, sans-serif text is used for important terms, *italicized* text is used for normal emphasis, and SMALL CAPS is used for glossed terms. "Scare quotes" are used for non-standard, ironic, or otherwise deviant usages of terms.

Glosses are structured as follows:

(1) ⟨orthography⟩
phonemic transcription
morphemic transcription (object language)
morphemic transcription (metalanguage)
translation
LIT. 'optional literal translation'

Ungrammatical, unfelicitous, or otherwise "bad" glosses are preceded by an asterisk (*) on each line.

0.3 | External history

Dandas is a speedlang (a conlang created within a time restraint) created within the timeframe of Wednesday, February 20, 2019, to Sunday, March 3, 2019. The challenge was proposed by *miacomet*, a.k.a. *u/roipoiboy*.

The following creative restraints have been made:

- a three-way phonation contrast
- three or less, or seven or more vowels
- at least one archiphoneme

- productive reduplication
- no concatenative morphology
- lack at least one part of speech that English has

As well as the following tasks:

- document and showcase the language
- translate five “syntax test” sentences, as provided by Leo or some other acceptable source
- write what the speakers first said to you when contacted
- (optional) write part of your conversation with the village’s matriarch after learning the language
- (optional) invent and write a recipe in your language for a dish from your conculture’s cuisine.

In-world, this language is an isolate spoken somewhere in New Guinea. It is, however, *a priori* in nature.

0.4 | Internal history

I discovered the Dandas language while trekking through the wilderness in the eastern highlands of New Guinea. The Mbvùga people seem to be almost completely secluded from other peoples, although they may have had contact in the past.

The Dandas language appears to be a language isolate, unrelated to any of the languages spoken nearby.

1 | Phonology

In this chapter and the following two chapters we explore the sounds and related phenomena of Dandas. This includes abstract (phonemic[1]) and concrete (phonetic) forms, as well as suprasegmental units and orthographic conventions. We shall use (a modified) *^{off}IPA* for phonemic transcription, and *^{can}IPA*[2] for phonetic transcription.

1.1 | Consonants

There are nine phonemic consonants:

	Labial	*Coronal*	*Dorsal*
Lenis plosive	b [b̥]	d [d̥ ɖ̥ʐ̥]	g [g̊ ɟ̊]
Fortis plosive		t [t̥ː tʂ̊ː]	k [k̠ː c̠ː]
Voiced plosive	ᵐb [~b ~bʙ m]	ⁿd [~ɖ ~ɖr n ɾ ɳ ɲ ŋ]	
Constrictive		s [ʂ s ʂ]	ɬ [ɬ ʎ̝]
Sonant		r [ɾ]	l [l ʎ]

Figure 1.1: Consonant phonemes & taxophones

Wherein:

- the lenis and fortis plosive groups both pattern as voiceless, as do the constrictives
- the lenis plosive group are slack-voiced; the fortis group is glottalized and slightly lengthenesd
- the voiceless coronal plosives are laminodental (and can palatalize), while the coronal voiced plosive and constrictive are apicoalveolar (and do not palatalize)

There are many (arguably) remarkable features of this consonant inventory. Most notably, there is a three-way phonation distinction in the coronal plosives, and two-way distinctions in the labial and velar groups.

Also interesting is the group of prenasalized plosives, which are accompanied by trilling when word-initial, as well as the lateral consonants, which are persistently dorsal in articulation.

1.1.1 | Consonant taxophony

- /ᵐb ⁿd/ surface as [~bʙ ~ɖr] word-initially
- /d g t k ɬ l/ surface as [ɖ̥ʐ̥ ɟ̊ tʂ̊ː c̠ː ʎ̝ ʎ], respectively, before /i/[3]
- /ᵐb ⁿd/ surface as [m n] between a vowel and a consonant or word boundary (in that order); /mm nn/ surface as [mm nn]

[1] wherein a phoneme is a strictly *contrastive unit* that is abstracted to succinctly represent various but related phonetic surface forms

[2] see *canipa.net*

[3] any taxophony associated with /i/ is also associated with the high taxophone of /ɨ/ (i.e., when it is preceded by /i u/)

- /ⁿd s/ surface as [ɲ s] before /d t/; they surface as [ɲ ʂ] before /di ti/
  /ⁿd/ surfaces as [ŋ] before /g k/; it surfaces as [ɲ] before /gi ki/
- otherwise, /b d g t k ᵐb ⁿd s ɬ r l/ surface as [b̥ d̥ g̊ t̥ː k̥ː ~b ~d̥ ʂ ɬ ɾl̥]

1.2 | Vowels

There are seven phonemic vowels, four of which are archiphonemic:

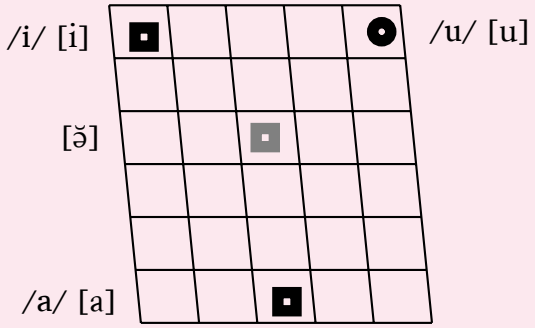

Figure 1.2: Vowel phonemes & taxophones

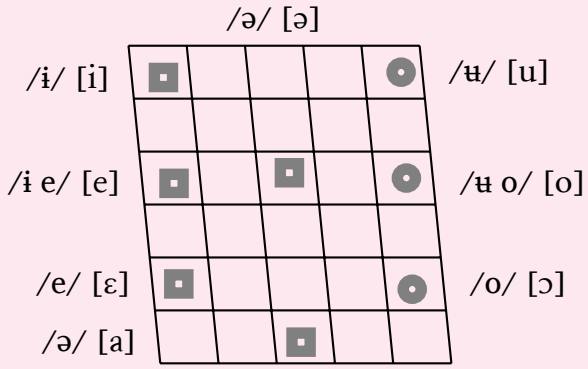

Figure 1.3: Vowel archiphonemes & taxophones

The realizations of the various archiphonemic vowels are dependent on the preceding vowel (one of /i u a/); this occurs between any amount of consonants or archiphonemic vowels.

The epenthetic vowel [ə̆] only occurs between heterorganic inversely-voiced consonant clusters (i.e., clusters of consonants *not* of the same place of articulation, *nor* of the same voicing), after a word-final consonant, and before word-initial geminate lenis and fortis plosive clusters (i.e., clusters of the same lenis/fortis plosive).

It is *not* inserted between the clusters /ᵐbb ⁿdd ⁿdg ⁿdt ⁿdk sb sd sg st sk rb rd rg rt rk/; it is only inserted before these clusters when they are word-initial.

It is always inserted word-finally after a consonant.

1.2.1 | Vowel taxophony

- /ɨ ʉ ə e o/ surface as [i u ə e o], respectively, after /i u/
- /ɨ ʉ ə e o/ surface as [e o a ɛ ɔ], respectively, after /a/
- /i u a/ surface as [i u a]

1.3 | Phonotactics

1.3.1 | Phonological profile

The profile of the phonological word is as follows[4]:

$$\#\left[_{\omega}\ \mathrm{C}^{?}\left[_{\varphi}\ \mathrm{T}^{?}\left[_{\mu_1}\ \mathrm{C}^{?}\mathrm{V}_1\right]\left[_{\mu_2}\ \mathrm{CV}_2|\mathrm{C}|\mathrm{V}_2\right]\right]^{+}\mathrm{C}^{?}\right]\#$$

Figure 1.4: Phonological profile

Wherein:

- # a word boundary
- ω a phonological word
- φ a foot
- μ a mora
- [ ] a domain
- T tone (§ 2.3)
- $\circ^{?}$ zero or one
- $\circ^{+}$ zero or more
- C a consonant (in μ_1, it may only be null word-initially)
- V_1 a vowel /i u a/
- V_2 an archiphonemic vowel /~~i~~ ~~u~~ ə e o/

Roots are minimally bimoraic; this constraint does *not* apply to particles, which may be monomoraic.

[4] we shall use a modified version of *Recursive Baerian Phonotactics Notation* (RBPN), a non-standard but infinitely more useful notation; see *Blumire & Baer (2017)*

2 | Prosody

Prosody is the patterns of tone, intonation, stress, and other suprasegmental units, as well as how these interact with each other.

2.1 | Isochrony

Isochrony is the rhythmic division of utterances. The isochrony of Dandas is moraically-timed, i.e., the duration of every mora (μ) is approximately equal.

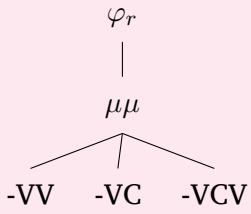

Figure 2.1: Moraic structure

The foot rime (φ_r) consists of everything within a given foot except the first consonant (if present).

2.2 | Prosodic units

All utterances are divided into many levels of prosodic units.

The smallest unit is the mora, explained in the previous section. Above the moraic unit, there is the prosodic foot (φ). Feet are obligatorily bimoraic; a bimoraic rime may consist of two vowels, or a vowel and /h/.

2.3 | Tone

There are two phonemic tones: high /◌́/ and low /◌̀/, as well as the unmarked /◌/. The unmarked tone surfaces as mid [◌̇], the high tone surfaces as high [◌̇], and the low tone surfaces as low [◌̣].

Verb roots may only take the high and unmarked tones; the low tone only occurs via inflection. Noun roots, on the other hand, may take all tones.

Tone spans the metrical foot; a vowel in μ_2 will take the tone of the vowel in μ_1. This may be modelled autosegmentally:

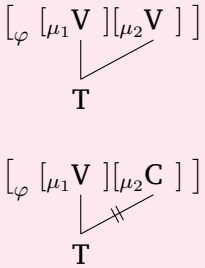

Figure 2.2: Tone expansion

2.4 | Stress

Stress is weak and relatively unimportant in Dandas, largely being superseded by tone. Stress consistently occurs on the first mora within each foot. It tends to be stronger on the very first foot of a word, and weaker on non-initial feet.

3 | Orthography

Dandas is a completely spoken-only language; the Mbvùga have no formal way of writing.

Because of this, I have devised an orthography largely for personal use. It is as follows:

	Labial		*Coronal*		*Dorsal*	
Lenis plosive	b	⟨b⟩	d	⟨d j⟩	g	⟨g⟩
Fortis plosive			t	⟨t c⟩	k	⟨k⟩
Voiced plosive	ᵐb	⟨mb mbv m⟩	ⁿd	⟨nd ndr n⟩		
Constrictive			s	⟨s⟩	ɬ	⟨ł⟩
Sonant			r	⟨r⟩	l	⟨l⟩

Figure 3.1: Consonants (Latin)

Wherein:

- [d̥ʒ ʈʂː] ⟨j c⟩
- [~bʁ ~ɖr] ⟨mbv ndr⟩
- [m] ⟨m⟩; [n ɾ ɲ ɲ ŋ] ⟨n⟩
- otherwise, /p t k h d g m n s ɬ r l/ ⟨b d g t c mb nd s h r l⟩

i u a	i u a
ɨ [i e]	i e
ʉ [u o]	u o
ə	a
e [e ɛ]	e ẹ
o [o ɔ]	o ọ
[ə̆]	’
◌ ◌́ ◌̀	◌ ◌́ ◌̀

Figure 3.2: Vowels (Latin)

Wherein:

- [ə̆] is only written as ⟨’⟩ when within a word (i.e., when not word-initial or word-final); otherwise, it is unwritten

4 | Syntax

The order and structure of constituents of an independent clause is as follows:

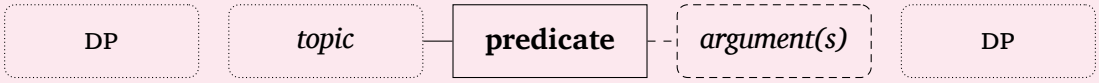

Figure 4.1: Constituent profile (independent)

Wherein DP stands for discourse particle (§ 9.2).

The topic of an independent clause is determined by semantics, not pragmatics; it consists of the highest-ranked (with regard to the empathy hierarchy) noun within the clause.

In dependent clauses, it changes as follows:

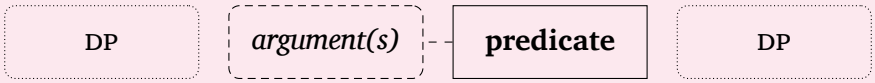

Figure 4.2: Constituent profile (dependent)

4.1 | Empathy hierarchy

The empathy hierarchy ranks arguments semantically and syntactically, which determines the order in which they go within a clause.

The order of arguments is primarily determined by a semantic hierarchy.

LIS ≫ SPE ≫ NAT ≫ HUM ≫ ANI ≫ EDI ≫ INA

← *higher* ← → *lower* →

Figure 4.3: Empathy hierarchy (semantic)

Wherein LIS and SPE refer to the listener and speaker of a conversation (Ch. 8), while the rest refer to the various noun classes (§ 7.1).

If the arguments are of the same class, it follows an additional syntactic hierarchy:

S ≫ A ≫ O

← *higher* ← → *lower* →

Figure 4.4: Empathy hierarchy (syntactic)

These roles are detailed in the next section. Oblique (X) arguments are always placed directly after the predicate; the order of multiple oblique arguments is determined by the empathy hierarchy.

4.2 | Alignment

Alignment describes how arguments are arranged within a clause with regard to marking and syntax.

S represents the sole argument of an intransitive predicate; A and O represent the most agent-like and most patient-like arguments of transitive clauses, respectively.

Determiners align accusatively; the S of intransitive clauses is associated with the A of transitive clauses.

Nouns align ergatively; the S of intransitive clauses is associated with the O of transitive clauses.

In accusative-aligned clauses, the subject argument is S and A; in ergative-aligned clauses, the subject argument is S and O. Likewise, the object argument is O and A in accusative- and ergative-aligned clauses, respectively.

Role preference (e.g., when a determiner and a noun occur in the same clause) is determined by the empathy hierarchy.

All predicates may take oblique arguments (X), which are usually marked by a case particle (§ 9.1.1).

These roles are relevant to dependent clauses, pivot, and agreement (§ 6.1).

4.3 | Copular clauses

Copular clauses are constructions in which two arguments are associated to indicate various relationships between the aforementioned.

They are most often used to describe a quality or state of being of an argument, and are formed by using the auxiliary verbs tasʉ ‘say’ and dáᵐbo ‘eat’ (wherein they must be marked as transitive). The former is used for external/physical/temporary states, while the latter is used for internal/mental/permanent states (§ 5.1).

The entity being described is the A argument, while the quality or state is the O argument.

(2) ⟨ndambẹ táso bákẹ⟩

ⁿddaᵐbe tásʉ báke

ⁿddaᵐbe tásʉ báke

betelnut say:TR nut

betelnuts are nuts

LIT. ‘betelnuts say nuts’

When an inanimate entity is being described, it must be the S argument, the auxiliary verb must be modified by a modal particle (usually the antipassive; see § 9.1.2), and the quality or state is demoted to X via the essive case (§ 9.1.1.2).

4.3.1 | Comparative

Comparative clauses are a subtype of copular clauses, and express comparison between the arguments in relation to a state.

The comparer is the S argument, the comparee the X argument, and the quality being compared is serialized (§ 5.3) into the predicate.

They always use a modal particle to reduce the valency of the auxiliary verb (again, usually the antipassive), and a case particle (§ 9.1.1) is used to modify the comparee (X) to indicate a neutral, positive, or negative comparison.

The essive case is used to indicate neutral comparison.

(3) ⟨umbu ndra su atọ táso ui umbu tág⟩
u^{m}bʉ ^{n}da su ato tásʉ uɨ u^{m}bʉ tág
u^{m}bʉ ^{n}da su ato tásʉ uɨ u^{m}bʉ tág
pig SPE ANT red say:TR ESS pig LIS
my pig is as red as your pig

The lative case is used for positive comparisons ('more…than').

(4) ⟨umbu ndra su atọ táso agẹ umbu tág⟩
u^{m}bʉ ^{n}da su ato tásʉ age u^{m}bʉ tág
u^{m}bʉ ^{n}da su ato tásʉ age u^{m}bʉ tág
pig SPE ANT red say:TR LAT pig LIS
my pig is more red than your pig

While the ablative case is used for negative comparisons ('less…than').

(5) ⟨umbu ndra su atọ táso ind umbu tág⟩
u^{m}bʉ ^{n}da su ato tásʉ i^{n}d u^{m}bʉ tág
u^{m}bʉ ^{n}da su ato tásʉ i^{n}d u^{m}bʉ tág
pig SPE ANT red say:TR ABL pig LIS
my pig is less red than your pig

4.4 | Dependent clauses

Dependent clauses depend on an argument or predicate, whether implicit or explicit.

Dependent clauses follow a modified argument. The argument a dependent clause modifies must also be contained in the dependent clause itself, and is referenced by the logophoric determiner (§ 8.8). The modified argument and logophoric determiner must share role as subject/object of their respective clauses.

When used as arguments themselves, dependent clauses form deverbal nouns, or predicates which behave as arguments. These fall under the inanimate noun class (§ 7.1.5).

4.5 | Pivot

Pivot is the argument around which certain syntactic processes revolve. This affects argument-dropping, argument-modifying dependent clauses, and other phenomena. Pivot is centered on the subject argument.

5 | Lexical classes & general morphology

There are four lexical classes ("parts of speech"): verbs, nouns, determiners, and particles. Determiners and particles are closed classes; they does not readily accept new members. In contrast, verbs and nouns are open classes.

Within these classes, there are various subclasses. Certain verbs can be used to indicate details such as tense and mood (auxiliary verbs), and certain nouns may be used to indicate location and/or position (adpositional nouns).

5.1 | Auxiliary verbs

Auxiliary verbs are a special subset of verbs used to indicate various grammatical phenomena. They often take deverbal nouns as their O argument (although some may take nouns). There are eight auxiliary verbs:

táe	hit
ᵐbidʉ	sense
tasʉ	say
dáᵐbo	eat
utə	throw
kiⁿdə	burn
sukʉ	carry
daɨ	lack

Various uses may be dependent on the determiner (Ch. 8) used, the presence of a relational particle (§ 9.1.3), or the aspect (§ 6.2) of the auxiliary.

5.1.1 | Hit

The auxiliary verb táe 'hit' is the external general auxiliary. It is often used to derive verb-like meanings using a noun as the O argument.

(6) ⟨ndra tàẹ t'kúu⟩

ⁿda tàe tkúʉ

ⁿda tàe tkúʉ
SPE hit:TR canoe

I canoed; I went canoeing

It is used to emphasize the predicate, when using the logophoric determiner in the deverbal noun clause. This may also indicate that the agent of the predicate has explicit control over the event.

(7) ⟨ndra dàmbọ uga⟩

ⁿda dàᵐbo ugə

ⁿda dàᵐbo ugə
SPE eat:TR potato

I ate a potato

(8) ⟨ndra tàẹ mbváọ uga dàmbọ⟩

ⁿda tàe ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo

ⁿda tàe ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
SPE hit:TR LOG potato eat:TR

I *did* eat a potato (on purpose)

s

It is used to form urgent commands, when using the listener determiner in the deverbal noun clause.

(9) ⟨ndra tàẹ tág uga dàmbọ⟩

tág tàe tág ugə dàᵐbo

ⁿda tàe tág ugə dàᵐbo
SPE hit:TR LIS potato eat:TR

you, eat a potato (now)!

Using the participant determiner creates a hortative-like meaning.

(10) ⟨ndra tàẹ si uga dàmbọ⟩

tág tàe tág ugə dàᵐbo

ⁿda tàe si ugə dàᵐbo
SPE hit:TR PRT potato eat:TR

let's eat potatoes (now)!

5.1.2 | Sense

The auxiliary verb ᵐbidʉ 'sense' is the internal general auxiliary. It is used to derive sensory verb-like meanings using a noun as the O argument.

(11) ⟨ndra mbvídu daọ⟩

ⁿda ᵐbídʉ dao

ⁿda ᵐbídʉ dao
SPE sense:TR nose

I smelled (something)

It is used to indicate circumstantial obligation and ability, when using the logophoric determiner in the deverbal noun clause.

(12) ⟨ndra mbvídu mbváo uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda ᵐbídʉ ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda ᵐbídʉ ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
SPE sense:TR LOG potato eat:TR
I want to/can (due to circumstance) eat a potato

It is used to indicate predictive (likely) possibility, when using the indefinite determiner in the main clause.

(13) ⟨kís mbvídu ndra uga dàmbọ⟩
kís ᵐbídʉ ⁿda ugə dàᵐbo
kís ᵐbídʉ ⁿda ugə dàᵐbo
NDF sense:TR SPE potato eat:TR
it is likely I eat a potato; I will eat a potato (probably)

It is used to indicate non-urgent commands (including requests and suggestions), when using the listener determiner in the deverbal noun clause.

(14) ⟨ndra mbvídu tág uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda ᵐbídʉ tág ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda ᵐbídʉ tág ugə dàᵐbo
SPE sense:TR LIS potato eat:TR
you should eat a potato; may you eat a potato?

Again, a hortative-like meaning is formed using the participant determiner instead of the listener determiner.

It is also used to indicate that one obtained information via visual and/or auditory means (sensory evidence), when using the subjunct relational to modify the deverbal noun clause.

(15) ⟨ndra mbvídu bi ci uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda ᵐbídʉ bi ti ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda ᵐbídʉ bi ti ugə dàᵐbo
SPE sense:TR SBJ EST potato eat:TR
they ate a potato (I have visual/auditory evidence for this)

5.1.3 | Say

The auxiliary verb tasʉ 'say' is the auxiliary of voluntary expulsion. It is used to form external/physical states using a noun as the O argument.

(16) ⟨uga táso atọ⟩
ugə tásʉ ato
ugə tásʉ ato
potato say:TR red
the potato is red

It is used to focus the beginning of an event, when using the logophoric determiner in the deverbal noun clause, and the conjunct relational to modify the deverbal noun clause.

(17) ⟨ndra tásọ út mbváọ uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda tásʉ út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda tásʉ út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
SPE say:TR CNJ LOG potato eat:TR
I began to eat a potato

It is used to indicate indirect speech or that one obtained information via someone else (reported evidence), when using the subjunct relational to modify the deverbal noun clause.

(18) ⟨ndra tásọ bi ci uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda tásʉ bi ti ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda tásʉ bi ti ugə dàᵐbo
SPE say:TR SBJ EST potato eat:TR
they ate a potato (someone told me)

5.1.4 | Eat

The auxiliary verb dáᵐbo 'eat' is the auxiliary of voluntary consumption. It is used to form internal/mental states using a noun as the O argument.

(19) ⟨sík dàmbọ atọ⟩
sík dàᵐbo ato
sík dàᵐbo ato
liver eat:TR red
I am angry
LIT. '(my) liver is red'

It is used to focus the end of an event, when using the logophoric determiner in the deverbal noun clause, and the conjunct relational to modify the deverbal noun clause.

(20) ⟨ndra dàmbọ út mbváọ uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda dàᵐbo út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda dàᵐbo út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
SPE eat:TR CNJ LOG potato eat:TR
I stopped/finished eating a potato

It is also used to indicate inherent obligation and ability, when using the logophoric determiner in the deverbal noun clause.

(21) ⟨ndra dàmbọ mbváo uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda dàᵐbo ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda dàᵐbo ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
SPE eat:TR LOG potato eat:TR
I need to/can (inherently) eat a potato

5.1.5 | Throw

The auxiliary verb utə ‘throw’ is the auxiliary of involuntary expulsion. It is used to indicate counterfactual (unlikely) possibility, when using the indefinite determiner in the main clause.

(22) ⟨kís úta ndra uga dàmbọ⟩
kís útə ⁿda ugə dàᵐbo
kís útə ⁿda ugə dàᵐbo
NDF throw:TR SPE potato eat:TR
it is unlikely I eat a potato; I might eat a potato (but probably not)

It is also used to indicate an attempted or delayed event, when using the conjunct relational to modify the deverbal noun clause.

(23) ⟨ndra úta út mbváo uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda útə út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda útə út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
SPE throw:TR CNJ LOG potato eat:TR
I almost ate/tried to eat a potato; I will eat a potato (later)

5.1.6 | Burn

The auxiliary verb kiⁿdə ‘burn’ is the auxiliary of involuntary consumption. It is most often used to indicate that the agent of the predicate has little to no control over the event, when using the logophoric determiner in the deverbal noun clause. This may indicate an accidental event, or an event caused by a natural, non-sentient, and/or supernatural force.

(24) ⟨ndra kínda mbváọ uga sae ták dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda kíⁿdə ᵐbáo ugə saɨ ták dàᵐbo
ⁿda kíⁿdə ᵐbáo ugə saɨ ták dàᵐbo
SPE burn:TR LOG potato ERG LIS eat:TR
I ate your potato (by accident, I did not intend to; a higher force compelled me to)

In the perfective aspect and when using the conjunct relational to modify the deverbal noun clause, it is used to emphasize that an event has occurred recently.

(25) ⟨ndra kínda út mbváọ uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda kíⁿdə út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda kíⁿdə út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
SPE burn.PRF:TR CNJ LOG potato eat:TR
I have just eaten a potato

In the imperfective aspect and when using the conjunct relational to modify the deverbal noun clause, it indicates that the event is currently ongoing.

(26) ⟨ndra kíndanda út mbváọ uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda kíⁿdəⁿdə út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda kíⁿdə ~ⁿdə út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
SPE burn:TR ~IMP CNJ LOG potato eat:TR
I am eating a potato (right now)

5.1.7 | Carry

The auxiliary verb sukʉ ‘carry’ is the auxiliary of transfer. It is most often used to form ditransitive predicates, or predicates that take up to three core arguments.

(27) ⟨ndra súku agẹ ták uga⟩
ⁿda súkʉ age ták ugə
ⁿda súkʉ age ták ugə
SPE carry:TR LAT LIS potato
I gave you a potato
LIT. ‘I carried a potato to you’

In the perfective aspect and when using the conjunct relational to modify the deverbal noun clause, it is used to focus the result of an event.

(28) ⟨ndra súku út mbváọ uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda súkʉ út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda súkʉ út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
SPE carry.PRF:TR CNJ LOG potato eat:TR
I have eaten a potato (and, thus, it is now gone)

In the imperfective aspect and when using the conjunct relational to modify the deverbal noun clause, it is used to indicate that the event has continued past its inception, or that it is repeated more times than expected.

(29) ⟨ndra súkuku út mbváọ uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda súkʉkʉ út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda súkʉ ~kʉ út ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
SPE carry:TR ~IMP CNJ LOG potato eat:TR
I keep/kept on eating potatoes

5.1.8 | Lack

The auxiliary verb daɨ ‘lack’ is the auxiliary of negation. It is most often used to negate predicates, when using the logophoric determiner in the deverbal noun clause.

(30) ⟨ndra dáe mbváọ uga dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda dáɨ ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
ⁿda dáɨ ᵐbáo ugə dàᵐbo
SPE lack:TR LOG potato eat:TR
I did not eat a potato

It is used to form questions, when using the indefinite determiner in the main clause.

(31) ⟨kís dáe tág uga dàmbọ⟩
kís dáɨ ⁿda ugə dàᵐbo
kís dáɨ ⁿda ugə dàᵐbo
NDF lack:TR LIS potato eat:TR
Did you eat a potato?

5.2 | Adpositional nouns

Adpositional nouns are a special subset of nouns that are used to indicate position, location, and direction. They are often used in tandem with another argument. The argument and adpositional noun are connected by the ergative case (§ 9.1.1.1).

They are usually used as oblique arguments, marked by the essive (§ 9.1.1.2), lative (§ 9.1.1.4), or ablative (§ 9.1.1.5) case.

There are seven adpositional nouns:

bíɨ	head	on top of, above
lue	mouth	near, close to, at the entrance of
bù^{n}dʉ	torso	in the center of
tibo	arm(s)	along, through (a horizontal path)
búto	hand(s)	touching, in physical contact with
ulo	leg(s)	along, through (a vertical path)
dúgɨ	foot/feet	at the bottom of, under

Using the essive case indicates static location.

(32) ⟨ui bíi sae umbu⟩

uɨ bíɨ saɨ u^{m}bʉ

uɨ bíɨ saɨ u^{m}bʉ
ESS head ERG pig

…on/at the top of the pig

Using the lative case indicates motion to or toward the referent.

(33) ⟨age bíi sae umbu⟩

uɨ bíɨ saɨ u^{m}bʉ

age bíɨ saɨ u^{m}bʉ
LAT head ERG pig

…to/toward the top of the pig

Using the ablative case indicates motion away from the referent.

(34) ⟨i^{n}d bíi sae umbu⟩

uɨ bíɨ saɨ u^{m}bʉ

i^{n}d bíɨ saɨ u^{m}bʉ
ABL head ERG pig

…off/away from the top of the pig

5.3 | Serialization

Serialization is the process of modifying a verb using a noun, forming a complex predicate. Syntactically, a complex predicate acts as a single unit (this is evidenced by the placement of predicate-modifying particles, such as modal particles).

Serialization is usually lexical in nature, deriving new words from previous ones.

(35) ⟨áso⟩
ásʉ
ásʉ
move
move (using one's body)

(36) ⟨dúgi áso⟩
dúgɨ ásʉ
dúgɨ ásʉ
foot move
walk, move on foot

However, it may also serve syntactic purpose. A prominent example is shown by comparative copular clauses (§ 4.3.1), wherein the quality being compared is serialized with a state-denoting verb.

6 | Verbs

Verbs may serve as the predicate of a clause. The phonological profile of verb roots is as follows:

$$\#\left[_{\omega}\left[_{\varphi_1}\mathrm{T}^{?}\left[_{\mu_1}\mathrm{C}_1^{?}\mathrm{V}_1\right]\left[_{\mu_2}\mathrm{C}_2\mathrm{V}_2|\mathrm{C}|\mathrm{V}_2\right]\right]\left[_{\varphi_{1+n}}\mathrm{T}^{?}\left[_{\mu_1}\mathrm{C}_2^{?}\mathrm{V}_1\right]\left[_{\mu_2}\mathrm{C}_2\mathrm{V}_2|\mathrm{C}|\mathrm{V}_2\right]\right]^{*}\mathrm{C}_2^{?}\right]\#$$

Figure 6.1: Phonological profile

The same conventions are used as in fig. 1.4, with the following differences:

- $\circ^{*}$ zero or more
- C_1 /b d g t k ᵐb ⁿd s ɬ/
- C_2 any consonant

6.1 | Agreement

Agreement tracks the subject argument of a predicate. All verbs are inherently classed as personal, and are marked for the impersonal via mutation of the initial consonant:

b		∅
d		s
g		ɬ
t		d
k	→	g
ᵐb		b
ⁿd		d
s		r
ɬ		l
∅		g

6.1.1 | Personal

The personal agreement (PRS) tracks the natural, human, and animate classes.

6.1.2 | Impersonal

The impersonal agreement (NPR) tracks the edible and inanimate classes.

6.2 | Aspect

Aspect describes the structure of time regarding an event. All verbs are inherently perfective; they are marked for the imperfective via reduplication:

$$\begin{matrix} \text{-C(V}_1\text{)V}_2{}^{\#} \\ \text{-VC}^{\#} \end{matrix} + \begin{matrix} \sim\text{CV}_2 \\ \sim\text{V} \end{matrix}$$

6.2.1 | Perfective

The perfective aspect (PRF) describes an event as a complete temporal whole, with no internal structure.

6.2.2 | Imperfective

The imperfective aspect (IMP) describes an event as being temporally incomplete, and as having internal structure.

6.3 | Transitivity

Transitivity describes the number of arguments a predicate takes. All verbs are inherently intransitive, and are marked as transitive by applying the following tone changes:

6.3.1 | Intransitive

Intransitive verbs (NTR) take one core argument, S. The S argument is prototypically patient-like in nature, often being the experiencer of a state or patient of an action.

The S argument may be given an agent-like meaning by using a modal particle (§ 9.1.2) to modify the predicate.

6.3.2 | Transitive

Transitive verbs (TR) take two core arguments, A and O. The A argument is prototypically agent-like, while the O argument is prototypically patient-like.

7 | Nouns

Nouns may serve as arguments of a clause.

7.1 | Class

All nouns are grouped into one of five classes, which determine the order in which arguments are arranged

7.1.1 | Natural

The natural class (NAT) includes natural forces (wind, weather, gravity), fundamental materials (water, fire, soil), and certain animals (birds, bats, insects).

7.1.2 | Human

The human class (HUM) includes native Mbvùga people, kinship terms, and body parts. It does not include foreigners.

7.1.3 | Animate

The animate class (ANI) includes all terrestrial animals, excluding scaly and/or shelled animals. It also includes foreigners, non-rigid tools, and shiny objects, such as polished metal or particularly reflective water.

The indefinite determiner (§ 8.6) also falls under this class.

7.1.4 | Edible

The edible class (EDI) includes food and drink (that are safe to ingest), and rigid tools. Numeral and color terms also fall under this class.

7.1.5 | Inanimate

The inanimate class (INA) includes all entities and concepts not covered by the previous classes, and mostly consists of scaly/shelled animals, plants, dead entities, and locations. All deverbal nouns fall under this class.

Inanimate nouns cannot be the A argument of a predicate; a modal particle (§ 9.1.2) must be used to force an A-like meaning in inanimate arguments (where they are syntactically an S argument).

7.2 | Reduplication

Reduplication is the process of repeating a word. It is most often used to form plurals, indicating more than one entity. This seems to be falling out of use with younger speakers, except when mandatory. Compare the following:

(37) ⟨umbu⟩

uᵐbʉ

uᵐbʉ
pig

a pig; pigs

(38) ⟨umbu umbu⟩

uᵐbʉ uᵐbʉ

uᵐbʉ ~uᵐbʉ
pig ~RED

pigs

Plural reduplication is only mandatory when a noun is modified by a determiner (Ch. 8) or relational particle (§ 9.1.3), and only when the relational particle is only modifying one noun (i.e., when *not* being used to coördinate nouns).

(39) ⟨umbu ndra⟩

uᵐbʉ ⁿda

uᵐbʉ ⁿda
pig SPE

my pig

(40) ⟨umbu umbu ndra⟩

uᵐbʉ uᵐbʉ ⁿda

uᵐbʉ ~uᵐbʉ ⁿda
pig ~RED SPE

my pigs

Plural reduplication never occurs when a noun is modified by a numeral (Ch. 10).

8 | Determiners

Determiners are used to refer to or modify an entity, whether implicit or explicit. There are eight determiners:

	core	*oblique*
speaker	ⁿda	ⁿdat
listener	tág	ták
participant	si	siə
established	ti	tiə
introduced	ká	kás
indefinite	kís	kít
reflexive	saⁿdo	saⁿdʉ̶
logphoric	ᵐbáo	ᵐbáʉ̶

Determiners may be used on their own, but the core forms may also be used to modify a noun (wherein the determiner is usually placed after the noun). This is often used to indicate inalienable possession.

(41) ⟨ak ndra⟩

ak ⁿda

ak ⁿda
eyes SPE
my eyes

(42) ⟨dúgi ci umbu⟩

dúgɨ̶ ti uᵐbʉ̶

dúgɨ̶ ti uᵐbʉ̶
foot EST pig
the pig's foot

Inalienable possession describes a possessive relationship that is permanent or not easily separable.

The established and introduced determiners may be used like this to mark a noun as established or introduced information, respectively.

The core forms are used when a determiner is used as a core argument (S, A, or O; see § 4.2); the oblique forms (OBL) are used when it is used as an oblique argument (X).

The listener and speaker determiners have their own slots in the empathy hierarchy (§ 4.1); the established, introduced, reflexive, and logophoric determiners inherit the class of their referent; the indefinite determiner is classed as animate.

8.1 | Speaker

The speaker determiner (SPE) refers to the current speaker of the conversation.

8.2 | Listener

The listener determiner (LIS) refers to the current listener(s) of a conversation

8.3 | Participant

The participant determiner (PRT) refers to all participants within a conversation.

8.4 | Established

The established determiner (EST) refers to an entity that is established within the universe of discourse. This consists of old, given information, and information that is shared between the speaker and the listener.

8.5 | Introduced

The introduced determiner (INT) refers to a newly-introduced or reintroduced entity within the universe of discourse. This consists of new information, and information that is known only to the current speaker.

8.6 | Indefinite

The indefinite determiner (NDF) refers to an unknown and/or unspecified entity.

8.7 | Reflexive

The reflexive determiner (RFL) refers to a previously-stated entity within the given clause.

8.8 | Logophoric

The logophoric determiner (LOG) refers to a previously-stated entity outside of the given clause.

9 | Particles

Particles are used to modify clauses and phrases. There are two types: adjunct particles and discourse particles.

9.1 | Adjunct

Adjunct particles are used to modify nouns and verbs. There are two subtypes: case, modal, and relational particles.

9.1.1 | Case

Case particles describe the relationship between an argument and its predicate, or between arguments.

ergative	saɨ
essive	uɨ
intrumental	ⁿdú
lative	age
ablative	iⁿd

Case particles are usually placed before the argument they modify

9.1.1.1 | Ergative

The ergative case (ERG) is used to mark the A of transitive clauses (except for inanimate nouns; see § 7.1.5).

(43) ⟨sae umbu ndràmbọ uga⟩

saɨ uᵐbʉ ⁿdàᵐbo ugə

saɨ uᵐbʉ ⁿdàᵐbo ugə
ERG pig NPR:eat:TR potato

the pig ate a potato

It is also used to mark alienable possessors, wherein the possessor is always placed after the possessed.

(44) ⟨umbu sae ndrat⟩

uᵐbʉ saɨ ⁿdat

uᵐbʉ saɨ ⁿdat
pig ERG SPE.OBL

my pig

Alienable possession describes a possessive relationship that is temporary or easily separable.

9.1.1.2 | Essive

The essive case (ESS) is the general oblique case. It is most often used to form oblique arguments that behave as the O argument of a predicate modified by a modal particle.

(45) ⟨sidu su ndráskọ ui sando⟩

sidʉ su ⁿdásko uɨ saⁿdʉ

sidʉ su ⁿdásko uɨ saⁿdʉ
potato plant ANT NPR:be tall:TR ESS RFL
the potato plant grew

It is also used to mark manner and purpose.

(46) ⟨ndra dámbọ ui sbágọ uga⟩

ⁿda dáᵐbo uɨ sbágo ugə

ⁿda dáᵐbo uɨ sbágo ugə
SPE eat:TR ESS foreigner potato
I ate a potato as/like a foreigner

(47) ⟨ndra tíndi ui mbváo sandọ ndráskọ bákẹ⟩

ⁿda tíⁿdɨ uɨ ᵐbáo saⁿdo ⁿdásko báke

ⁿda tíⁿdɨ uɨ ᵐbáo saⁿdo ⁿdásko báke
SPE plant:TR ESS LOG RFL NPR:be tall:TR seed
I planted seeds so/for that they grow

9.1.1.3 | Instrumental

The instrumental case (INS) indicates that the modified noun is used as a tool or instrument.

(48) ⟨ndra kùd ndrú ndrúk uga⟩

ⁿda kùd ⁿdú ⁿdúk ugə

ⁿda kùd ⁿdú ⁿdúk ugə
SPE wrap:TR INS woven fiber potato
I wrapped the potatoes in/with/using fabric

It is also be used to mark the cause(r) or stimulus of an event.

(49) ⟨kala guso ndrú ndrat⟩

kalə guso ⁿdú ⁿdat

kalə guso ⁿdú ⁿdat
fish NPR:hang INS SPE.OBL
the fish were hung up by/because of me

9.1.1.4 | Lative

The lative case (LAT) is used to indicate efficiency to/toward a locus.

(50) ⟨ndra dúgi áso agẹ umbu⟩
ⁿda dúgɨ ásʉ age uᵐbʉ
ⁿda dúgɨ ásʉ age uᵐbʉ
SPE foot move LAT pig
I walked to/toward a pig

It is also used to mark recipients.

(51) ⟨ndra súku agẹ ták uga⟩
ⁿda súkʉ age ták ugə
ⁿda súkʉ age ták ugə
SPE carry:TR LAT LIS potato
I gave you a potato

9.1.1.5 | Ablative

The ablative case (ABL) is used to indicate efficiency away from a locus.

(52) ⟨ndra dúgi áso ind umbu⟩
ⁿda dúgɨ ásʉ age uᵐbʉ
ⁿda dúgɨ ásʉ iⁿd uᵐbʉ
SPE foot move ABL pig
I walked away from a pig

It is also used to indicate static location.

(53) ⟨ndra áe ind iło⟩
ⁿda áɨ iⁿd iło
ⁿda áɨ iⁿd iło
SPE stand ABL house
I am standing at a house

9.1.2 | Modal

Modal particles reduce the valency of a predicate, and apply semantic nuance to the predicate.

antipassive	su
experiential	da
adversative	taⁿd

Modal particles are usually placed before the predicate they modify.

All modal particles suppress the S/O argument of a given predicate. With intransitive predicates, the S argument is suppressed and there are no overt arguments. With transitive predicates, the O argument is suppressed, making the previous A argument syntactically S, but still semantically A.

Arguments are marked as their derived role (A→S, S→∅), but behave as their underived role.

The suppressed role may be reintroduced using a case particle, usually the essive.

Modal particles are usually used to conform to certain syntactic restraints, such as pivot (§ 4.5).

9.1.2.1 | Antipassive

The antipassive modal (ANT) simply suppresses the argument.

(54) ⟨ndra dàmbọ uga⟩
ⁿda dàᵐbo ugə
ⁿda dàᵐbo ugə
SPE eat:TR potato
I ate a potato

(55) ⟨ndra su dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda su dàᵐbo
ⁿda su dàᵐbo
SPE ANT eat:TR
I ate

With intransitive predicates, this has the unique property of making the predicate refer to the event itself.

(56) ⟨su dámbọ⟩
su dáᵐbo
su dàᵐbo
ANT eat
(the act of) eating

9.1.2.2 | Experiential

The experiential modal (EXP) indicates that the suppressed argument is an entity that is strongly associated with the given predicate; the suppressed argument is expected, and the event may have a more habitual meaning.

(57) ⟨ndra da úambib⟩
ⁿda da úəᵐbib
ⁿda da úəᵐbib
SPE EXP smoke:TR
I smoked (fish meat, to preserve it)

9.1.2.3 | Adversative

The adversative modal (ADV) indicates that the event is undesireable and/or unfortunate, that it is somehow malicious (or at least non-beneficial).

(58) ⟨ndra tand dàmbọ⟩
ⁿda taⁿd dàᵐbo
ⁿda taⁿd dàᵐbo
SPE ADV eat:TR
I ate (something bad)

9.1.3 | Relational

Relational particles coördinate and modify predicates and arguments.

conjunct	út
disjunct	asə
subjunct	bi

Relational particles are usually placed before the clause or argument they modify.

Coördinated clauses and arguments are placed adjacent to each other, usually in linear order of occurrence (for clauses) or by the empathy hierarchy (for arguments; see § 4.1). Coördinated clauses are always dependent (§ 4.4).

9.1.3.1 | Conjunct

The conjunct relational (CNJ) indicates that the associated clauses are similar in participants (usually the subject argument), timeframe, and/or situation.

(59) ⟨ndra kùd kala út ndra úambib⟩
ⁿda kùd kalə út ⁿda úəᵐbib
ⁿda kùd kalə út ⁿda úəᵐbib
SPE wrap:TR fish CNJ SPE smoke:TR
I wrapped up the fish and smoked them

For arguments, it simply coördinates the arguments with no additional implications (‘and’).

(60) ⟨ak út gaọ⟩
ak út gao
ak út gao
eyes CNJ ears
eyes and ears

When used to modify a single constituent, it indicates universal quantification ($\forall x$; ‘all, every, always’).

(61) ⟨út umbu umbu⟩
út uᵐbʉ uᵐbʉ
út uᵐbʉ ~uᵐbʉ
CNJ pig ~RED
all pigs

9.1.3.2 | Disjunct

The disjunct relational (DSJ) indicates that the associated clauses are dissimilar or in some way contrastive.

(62) ⟨ndra kùd kala asa tág úambib⟩
ⁿda kùd kalə asə tág úəᵐbib
ⁿda kùd kalə asə ⁿda úəᵐbib
SPE wrap:TR fish DSJ LIS smoke:TR
I wrapped up the fish and/but you smoked them

It is used to coördinate arguments, and additionally indicates that there is some form of contrast between them (‘but’).

(63) ⟨ak asa uda⟩
ak asə udə
ak asə udə
eyes DSJ fruit fly
eyes, but also fruit flies

When used to modify a single constituent, it indicates uniqueness quantification ($\exists!x$; ‘only, alone’).

(64) ⟨asa umbu umbu⟩
asə uᵐbʉ uᵐbʉ
asə uᵐbʉ ~uᵐbʉ
DSJ pig ~red
only pigs

9.1.3.3 | Subjunct

The subjunct relational (SBJ) indicates that the following clause is irrealis, or only in at least one possible world ($\exists x$), or that they clauses are exclusive alternatives (‘or, or else’).

(65) ⟨ndra kùd kala bi ndra úambib⟩
ⁿda kùd kalə bi ⁿda úəᵐbib
ⁿda kùd kalə bi ⁿda úəᵐbib
SPE wrap:TR fish SBJ SPE smoke:TR
I wrapped up the fish or else I smoked them

It is most often used to form conditionals and to indicate indirect speech.
It is also used to coördinate arguments as exclusive alternatives.

(66) ⟨umbu bu uda⟩
uᵐbʉ bi udə
uᵐbʉ bi udə
pig SBJ fruit fly
pigs or else fruit flies

When used to modify a single constituent, it indicates existential quantification ($\exists x$; ‘some, at least one, sometimes’).

(67) ⟨bi umbu umbu⟩
bi uᵐbʉ̵ uᵐbʉ̵
bi uᵐbʉ̵ ~uᵐbʉ̵
SBJ pig ~red
some pigs

9.2 | Discourse

Discourse particles are used to modify the flow and state of discourse, or conversation.

contrast	lái̵
dismissal	ibʉ̵
attention	áə
continuation	agi̵
conclusion	giə

9.2.1 | Contrast

The contrast discourse particle (CONTRAST) indicates that there is some form of contrast between the listener's and speaker's statements. It is often used as a negative answer to polar questions. For example, a possible answer to the question "Is that pig yours?":

(68) ⟨láe ndra dáe ci umbu⟩
lái̵ ⁿda dái̵ ti uᵐbʉ̵
lái̵ ⁿda dái̵ ti uᵐbʉ̵
CONTRAST SPE lack:TR EST pig
no, that pig is not mine
LIT. 'no, I lack the pig'

9.2.2 | Dismissal

The dismissal discourse particle (DISMISS) suppresses the listener's statement, indicating it is unimportant or irrelevant to the current situation. As a response to "I don't want to feed the pigs!"

(69) ⟨ibu sae umbu su dàmbọ ndrú ták⟩
ibʉ̵ sai̵ uᵐbʉ̵ su dàᵐbo ⁿdú ták
ibʉ̵ sai̵ uᵐbʉ̵ su dàᵐbo ⁿdú ták
DISMISS ERG pig ANT eat:TR INS LIS
you will feed the pigs anyways
LIT. 'regardless, the pigs will eat because of you'

9.2.3 | Attention

The attention discourse particle (ATTENTION) demands attention from the listener (or another entity).

(70) ⟨áa sisa⟩
áə sisə
áə sisə
ATTENTION rain
look, rain!

9.2.4 | Continuation

The continuation discourse particle (CONTINUE) is used to provide additional information.

(71) ⟨ndra kùd kala út age ndra úambib⟩
ⁿda kùd kalə út agɨ ⁿda úəᵐbib
ⁿda kùd kalə út agɨ ⁿda úəᵐbib
SPE wrap:TR fish CNJ CONTINUE SPE smoke:TR
I wrapped up the fish, and even smoked them

9.2.5 | Conclusion

The conclusion discourse particle (CONCLUDE) is used to indicate the end of the speaker's statement(s), and that the listener may reply.

(72) ⟨ndra kùd kala gia⟩
ⁿda kùd kalə giə
ⁿda kùd kalə giə
SPE wrap:TR fish CONCLUDE
I wrapped up the fish, now what?

10 | Numerals

Numerals are a subset of nouns, and are used to express quantity. There are five numeral terms:

ukə	one
tíɨ	two
ɬas	three
búto	five
kásə	(one) more

Wherein kásə '(one) more' is used to describe any amount greater than a previously-given amount, and defaults to one. The amount more may be specified by placing another numeral after kásə.

(73) ⟨(ɬas) kása uka⟩

(ɬas) kásə ukə

(ɬas) kásə ukə
(three) more one

one more (than three; i.e., four)

Multiplication may be expressed using the ergative case marker for possession.

(74) ⟨búto sae cíi⟩

búto saɨ tíɨ

búto saɨ tíɨ
five ERG two

two sets of five (i.e., ten)

When modifying nouns, numerals use possession via determiners.

(75) ⟨umbu ká cíi⟩

u^{m}bʉ saɨ tíɨ

u^{m}bʉ ká tíɨ
pig INT two

two pigs

Appendices

Appendices A and B are lexicons of verbs and nouns, respectively. Appendix C contains example sentences, while Appendix D contains longer translations.

Verb entries are structured as follows:

• ⟨orthography⟩ lemma : (NTR) meaning (intransitive) ‡ (TR) meaning (transitive)

Different meanings are separated by a double dagger ‹‡›; Idiosyncratic meanings derived from phenomena such as reflexives and modal particles are separated by a double dagger, and preceded by the appropriate abbreviation in parentheses. Reflexive O arguments are noted as (O_{RFL}).

Oftentimes, parenthetical details are only noted in the first entry (preceded by NTR); these details apply to all meanings.

Complex predicates take the same entry structure, but the serialized noun is italicized (only in the 'lemma' field).

Noun entries are structured as follows:

• ⟨orthography⟩ lemma (class) : meaning

A | Verbs

| Actions

• ⟨táẹ⟩ táe : (NTR) be hit ‡ (TR) hit

• ⟨mbvidu⟩ ᵐbidʉ : (NTR) be sensed (visual or auditory) ‡ (TR) sense

• ⟨tasọ⟩ tasʉ : (NTR) be said ‡ be emitted, expelled (voluntarily) ‡ (TR) say ‡ emit, expel

• ⟨dámbo⟩ dáᵐbo : (NTR) be eaten, drunk ‡ be consumed ‡ (TR) eat, drink ‡ consume

• ⟨uta⟩ utə : (NTR) be thrown ‡ be emitted, expelled (involuntarily) ‡ (TR) throw ‡ emit, expel

• ⟨kinda⟩ kiⁿdə : (NTR) be burned, burnt ‡ be consumed (involuntarily) ‡ (TR) burn, cause to burn ‡ consume

• ⟨suku⟩ sukʉ : (NTR) be carried ‡ held ‡ (TR) carry ‡ hold

• ⟨dae⟩ daɨ : (NTR) be lacked, have no owner ‡ (TR) lack (ownership)

• ⟨mbv'dúa⟩ ᵐbdúə : (NTR) be wet ‡ be clean ‡ (TR) make wet ‡ clean

• ⟨daẹ⟩ dae : (NTR) be organized, neat ‡ be free of obstructions, unwanted entities ‡ (TR) organize, make neat ‡ make free of obstructions, unwanted entities

• ⟨kaẹkia⟩ kaekiə : (NTR) be distracted, have one's attention be diverted ‡ (TR) distract ‡ (EXP) be a distraction ‡ be loud, obnoxious ‡ (O_{RFL}) ignore others ‡ be carefree, naïve ‡ (EXP,O_{RFL}) lack routine ‡ be random, spontaneous ‡ be insane

| Description

• ⟨ái⟩ áɨ : (NTR) stand ‡ (TR) cause to stand

• ⟨ube⟩ ube : (NTR) sit ‡ (TR) cause to sit

• ⟨gáẹ⟩ gáe : (NTR) lie (down) ‡ (TR) cause to lie (down)

• ⟨undand⟩ uⁿdəⁿd : (NTR) be thick, heavy (especially of a mass or container) ‡ (TR) make thick, heavy ‡ (O_{RFL}) become thick, heavy

• ⟨das'kọ⟩ dasko : (NTR) be tall, long ‡ (TR) make tall, long ‡ (O_{RFL}) become tall, long; grow

• ⟨sambo⟩ saᵐbo : (NTR) leave (of a container) ‡ (TR) cause to leave ‡ (O_{RFL}) relax, rest ‡ sleep

| Cooking & food preparation

• ⟨uambib⟩ uəᵐbib : (NTR) be smoked, dried (over a fire) ‡ (TR) smoke, dry ‡ (EXP) smoke, dry (of fish or other meat)

• ⟨kúd⟩ kúd : (NTR) be wrapped (in leaves or sheets of woven fiber, of food, for storage) ‡ (TR) wrap

| Position

Position verbs lexicalize ground, or the location of an action.

• ⟨kuso⟩ kuso : (NTR) be hung (from a rigid entity) ‡ (TR) hang O ‡ (O_{RFL}) become hung

• ⟨ndragẹ⟩ ⁿdage : (NTR) be hung (from a non-rigid entity) ‡ (TR) hang O ‡ (O_{RFL}) become hung

• ⟨cindi⟩ tiⁿdɨ : (NTR) be planted; be put in a hole (in the ground) ‡ (TR) plant, put in a hole ‡ (EXP) plant seeds, plants; make/care for a garden ‡ (O_{RFL}) plant oneself; put oneself in a hole

• ⟨mbvuto⟩ ᵐbuto : (NTR) be laid (on a flat surface) ‡ (TR) lay (down) ‡ (EXP) lay out to dry ‡ (O_{RFL}) lay oneself down ‡ (EXP,O_{RFL}) go to bed, sleep ‡ retire (from one's current activity)

• ⟨ungo⟩ uⁿdgo : (NTR) be put (in a fire) ‡ (TR) put ‡ (EXP) cook over/in a fire ‡ (O_{RFL}) get in(to) a fire

• ⟨sáta⟩ sátə : (NTR) be put (in flowing/potable water) ‡ (TR) put ‡ (EXP) bathe ‡ (O_{RFL}) get in(to) water

• ⟨kile⟩ kile : (NTR) be put (in still/impotable water) ‡ (TR) put ‡ (EXP) bathe ‡ (O_{RFL}) get in(to) water

• ⟨basa⟩ basə : (NTR) be put (in water in a container) ‡ (TR) put ‡ (EXP) bathe ‡ (O_{RFL}) get in(to) water

| Motion

Motion verbs lexicalize manner, or how an action is performed.

• ⟨áso⟩ ásʉ : (NTR) move (using one's body) ‡ (TR) cause to move

• ⟨dúgi áso⟩ *dúgi* ásʉ : (NTR) walk, move (using one's feet) ‡ (TR) cause to walk

• ⟨ulo áso⟩ *ulo* ásʉ : (NTR) run, move (quickly, using one's feet) ‡ (TR) cause to run

• ⟨búsi⟩ búsɨ : (NTR) be scattered (from an area); be moved haphazardly, in many directions ‡ (TR) scatter ‡ (O_{RFL}) dance

| Direction

Direction verbs lexicalize path, or the route of an action.

• ⟨úlib⟩ úlɨb : (NTR) be moved (across a surface) ‡ (TR) (cause to) move

| Division

• ⟨tákо⟩ tákʉ : (NTR) be cut (shallow, through a single layer) ‡ (TR) cut ‡ (EXP) cut up (a layer, sheet) ‡ (O_{RFL}) perform ritual scarification

| Sounds

• ⟨subu⟩ subʉ : (NTR) make sound by movement (of a liquid); slosh, splash ‡ (TR) cause to make sound by movement; agitate (a liquid)

| Weather

• ⟨sisa⟩ sisə : (NTR) rain, precipitate ‡ (TR) cause to rain

B | Nouns

| People

• ⟨mbvùga⟩ ᵐbùgə (HUM) : Mbvùga native; the Mbvùga people

• ⟨sbágọ⟩ sbágo (ANI) : foreigner; non-Mbvùga people

• ⟨rage⟩ ragɨ (ANI) : dead person ‡ person who has gone away and not returned

| Kinship

Kinship terms indicate that the referent is of the same or of a different gender compared to the speaker.

• ⟨mbvamba⟩ ᵐbaᵐbə (HUM) : parent, ancestor (same)

• ⟨ugu⟩ ugʉ (HUM) : parent, ancestor (different)

• ⟨gátẹ⟩ gáte (HUM) : older sibling (same)

• ⟨sgud⟩ sgud (HUM) : older sibling (different)

• ⟨gárọ⟩ gáro (HUM) : younger sibling (same)

• ⟨aro⟩ arʉ (HUM) : younger sibling (different)

• ⟨índe⟩ íⁿde (HUM) : child, descendant

| Body parts

• ⟨ak⟩ ak (HUM) : eye(s) ‡ sight

• ⟨gaọ⟩ gao (HUM) : ear(s) ‡ hearing

• ⟨daọ⟩ dao (HUM) : nose ‡ smell, taste

• ⟨kúi⟩ kúɨ (HUM) : tongue ‡ speech, sound

• ⟨bíi⟩ bíɨ (HUM) : head

• ⟨lue⟩ lue (HUM) : mouth

• ⟨ánd⟩ áⁿd (HUM) : tooth/teeth

• ⟨báɬ⟩ báɬ (HUM) : hair (of the head, face)

• ⟨ágo⟩ ágʉ (HUM) : hair (of the body)

• ⟨aɬ⟩ aɬ (HUM) : hair (of the nose, ears)

• ⟨bùndu⟩ bùⁿdʉ (HUM) : torso

• ⟨tibo⟩ tibo (HUM) : arm(s)

• ⟨búto⟩ búto (HUM) : hand(s) ‡ tactile sensation

• ⟨ulo⟩ ulo (HUM) : leg(s)

• ⟨dúgi⟩ dúgɨ (HUM) : foot/feet ‡ balance, direction

• ⟨sík⟩ sík (HUM) : liver ‡ seat of emotion, empathy

• ⟨ndrál⟩ ⁿdál (HUM) : bladder ‡ seat of intuition, knowledge

• ⟨kàl⟩ kàl (HUM) : heart ‡ seat of fear, excitement

• ⟨sùɬ⟩ sùɬ (HUM) : gallbladder ‡ seat of logic, reason

• ⟨bát⟩ bát (HUM) : brain ‡ seat of life, vitality

• ⟨łákẹ⟩ łáke (HUM) : spleen ‡ seat of anxiety, suspicion

• ⟨làa⟩ làə (HUM) : kidney(s) ‡ seat of vigor, willingness

• ⟨umbʼła⟩ uᵐbłə (HUM) : pancreas ‡ seat of willpower, perseverance

• ⟨tàbu⟩ tàbʉ (HUM) : lung(s) ‡ seat of grief, emotional pain

Concepts

• ⟨dandas⟩ da^{n}dəs (HUM) : the Dandas language

• ⟨jimb⟩ di^{m}b (ANI) : any foreign language

Numerals

• ⟨uka⟩ ukə (EDI) : one

• ⟨cíi⟩ tíɨ (EDI) : two

• ⟨łas⟩ łas (EDI) : three

• ⟨búto⟩ búto (EDI) : five

• ⟨kása⟩ kásə (EDI) : (one) more

Colors

• ⟨atọ⟩ ato (EDI) : red, orange, brown, purple

• ⟨tárọ⟩ táro (EDI) : light blue, green

• ⟨mbvise⟩ ^{m}bise (EDI) : yellow, white, light gray

• ⟨gànd⟩ gà^{n}d (EDI) : black, dark blue, dark gray

Nature

• ⟨dund⟩ du^{n}d (NAT) : flowing and/or potable water

• ⟨mbvidu⟩ ^{m}bidʉ (NAT) : still and/or impotable water

• ⟨báẹ⟩ báe (NAT) : water (in a container)

• ⟨guka⟩ gukə (INA) : sand ‡ any particulate matter ‡ beach

Places

• ⟨isu⟩ isʉ (INA) : flowing water feature; river

• ⟨gàa⟩ gàə (INA) : still water feature; lake

• ⟨g'sáe⟩ gsái (INA) : water feature with no visible boundary; ocean

• ⟨d'sumb⟩ dsu^{m}b (INA) : vertical water feature; waterfall

• ⟨jił⟩ dił (INA) : hill, mountain ‡ large pile of rocks

• ⟨r'ndìse⟩ r^{n}dìse (INA) : forest, collection of various different trees

• ⟨t'lás⟩ tlás (INA) : forest, collection of identical trees

Animals

• ⟨uda⟩ udə (NAT) : fruit fly

• ⟨umbu⟩ u^{m}bʉ (ANI) : pig

• ⟨uind⟩ uɨ^{n}d (ANI) : small cat; kitten

• ⟨lándẹ⟩ lá^{n}de (ANI) : lion; any large, wild cat

• ⟨badọ⟩ bado (NAT) : duck

• ⟨balos⟩ balʉs (NAT) : pidgeon, dove ‡ airplane

• ⟨kala⟩ kalə (INA) : fish

Animal products

• ⟨línd⟩ lí^{n}d (INA) : pig meat (raw)

• ⟨tála⟩ tálə (INA) : fish meat (raw)

Plants

• ⟨sidu⟩ sidʉ (INA) : potato, yam plant

• ⟨ndr'suga⟩ ^{n}dsugə (INA) : betel/areca tree

• ⟨bákẹ⟩ báke (INA) : seed ‡ nut (with shell) ‡ pit (of a fruit)

• ⟨bile⟩ bile (INA) : sago palm

Plant products

• ⟨ámba⟩ á^{m}bə (INA) : sago pith

• ⟨tusu⟩ tus~~u~~ (INA) : wood (from a newly-felled tree)

• ⟨b'daọ⟩ bdao (INA) : wood (from an already-felled tree; a tree felled by the wind or some other natural force)

Food & drink

• ⟨uga⟩ ugə (EDI) : potato, yam (in general)

• ⟨ndambẹ⟩ ^{n}dda^{m}be (INA) : betel/areca nut (in general)

• ⟨támba⟩ tá^{m}bə (EDI) : dried sago pith; sago flour

• ⟨mbvásse⟩ ^{m}bássi (EDI) : sago dough

• ⟨bìku⟩ bìk~~u~~ (EDI) : sago porridge (boiled sago flour)

• ⟨kút'l⟩ kútl (EDI) : sago flatbread

• ⟨mbvìr⟩ ^{m}bìr (EDI) : pig meat (cooked)

• ⟨ałe⟩ ałi (EDI) : fish meat (cooked)

Products

• ⟨ndrúk⟩ ^{n}dúk (ANI) : (sheet of) woven fiber

• ⟨b'sus⟩ bsus (EDI) : (piece of) clothing, apparel ‡ any non-rigid covering

Tools

• ⟨sug⟩ sug (EDI) : axe ‡ the head/blade of an axe

• ⟨tał⟩ tał (EDI) : short knife

• ⟨ndragọ⟩ ^{n}dago (EDI) : long knife

• ⟨tui⟩ tui (INA) : blade (of a knife)

Constructions

• ⟨iło⟩ iło (INA) : house

• ⟨kándọ⟩ ká^{n}do (INA) : firepit ‡ center of a house

Vehicles

• ⟨subit⟩ subit (EDI) : boat, watercraft in general

• ⟨t'kúu⟩ tkú~~u~~ (EDI) : long boat made of a single hollowed-out log, usually fitting between one and three people

• ⟨t'gumba⟩ tgu^{m}bə (EDI) : raft made of logs lashed together by rope

C | Example sentences

"The canoe got heavy from the water."

(76) ⟨t'kúu gúndand ndrúu báe sando⟩
tkúʉ gúⁿdəⁿd ⁿdúʉ báe saⁿdo
tkúʉ g· ó· uⁿdəⁿd ⁿdúʉ báe saⁿdo
canoe NPR· TR· be heavy INS water RFL
the canoe became heavy because of water

"She throws sand everywhere while sweeping."

(77) ⟨ci bùsisi guka út mbváo su dáede⟩
ti bùsisɨ gukə út ᵐbáo su dáede
ti ò· búsɨ ~sɨ gukə út ᵐbáo su ó· dae ~de
EST TR· scatter ~IMP sand CNJ LOG ANT TR· organize ~IMP
they scatter sand while cleaning

"All the seeds that have been sown have sprouted."

(78) ⟨út báke báke mbváo jindi su gínda ui mbváo ui sando tás'kọ⟩
út báke báke ᵐbáo diⁿdɨ su gíⁿdə uɨ ᵐbáo uɨ saⁿdʉ tásko
út báke báke ᵐbáo d· tiⁿdɨ su g· ó· kiⁿdə uɨ ᵐbáo uɨ saⁿdʉ t· ó· dasko
CNJ seed ~RED LOG NPR· plant ANT NPR· TR· burn ESS LOG ESS RFL.OBL NPR· TR· be tall
all the planted seeds have grown

"They gave me two pairs of trousers."

(79) ⟨ci súku agẹ ndrat b'sus sae ulo ká cíi⟩
ti súkʉ age ⁿdat bsus saɨ ulo ká tíɨ
ti ó· sukʉ age ⁿdat bsus saɨ ulo ká tíɨ
EST TR· carry LAT SPE.OBL clothing ERG legs int two
they gave me two pieces of clothing for legs

"I used to pour water out."

(80) ⟨ndra da sámbo ui báẹ⟩
ⁿda da sáᵐbo uɨ báe
ⁿda da sáᵐbo uɨ báe
SPE EXP leave:TR ESS water
I used to empty (a container) of water

D | Long translations

The following text is what the people said to me when they first saw me:

(81) ⟨áa ká táso sbágọ⟩
áə ká tásʉ sbágo
áə ká ◌́· tasʉ sbágo
ATTENTION INT TR· say foreigner
look, there is a foreigner!

They then refused to talk to me for the next few days. I have since learned that this is because I attempted to speak to them in Tok Pisin, and that they don't like Tok Pisin nor the people that speak it.