

Ořan

SPOOPIEST LANGUAGE YOU EVER DID SEE

SPEEDLANG 22

BY /U/CHRSEVS

Phonetic Inventory

The Ořanic phonetic inventory has several notable features including voiced-voiceless pairs for nearly every non-stop (or affricate) consonant and the nearly perfect front-back split of its six vowel system. Phonetic change has also left the inventory with some minor examples of asymmetry including the singletons **d** [ð], **h** [x] and **ř** [ʃ], and the presumed merger of /v/ and historic /w/ into **v** [ʋ]. The following table summarizes the recognized phonemes for the consonants.

p	t	ts		k
m̥ m		n̥ n		
f v	ð	s z	ʃ	x
		r̥ r	ř j	

The vowel inventory consists of six vowels at three levels of height and includes no diphthongs. Each of these vowels can also be nasalized, which is indicated by a following **n** before another consonant. Vowels that appear in sequence are pronounced as separate syllables, clearly separated by a hiatus. The following table summarizes the vowel phonemes.

i	u
e	o
æ	a

Syllable Structure

In general, Ořan has a (C)V(C) syllable structure. The situation of the coda is slightly more complicated than it first seems to be. Codas can appear at the ends of words only if the word is the last in a phrase and even then the consonants that can appear in this position are fairly limited, with only **k** [k], **n** [n] and **s** [s] being accepted. Word-internally, codas are limited to **n** [n] (which becomes **m** [m] when followed by a labial consonant), which merely indicates nasalization of a preceding vowel.

Phonemically, a word may end with a coda, but if it is not the final word of a phrase, the coda is eliminated via phonological processes, even across word boundaries. These changes are regular and predictable, which makes them easy to produce. In some cases, whether or not a coda is pronounced might indicate a grammatical difference, as the lack of one indicates the following word is part of the same phrase.

Phonological Processes

There are several phonological processes that actively occur in Ořan and that have historically operated, though they may be obscured now. Most of these current changes happen at the word edge, either the start or the end, when appearing near another word that provides the correct environment. They are conditioned by the presence of a coda at the end of one word or by the vowel at the start of another. The situation is made slightly more complicated in that it only operates within a phrase and only if the words involved in that phrase are adjacent.

CODA-CONDITIONED CHANGES

When appearing internally at a morpheme boundary or if appearing internally within a contiguous phrase, the small set of coda consonants all have unique resolutions. Each of them is determined by the quality of the coda consonant and the consonant (or vowel) that follows it.

The first of the coda consonants is **k** [k], which has the following resolutions based on following consonants:

- ☒ Before stop consonants and the affricate:
 - **k** is deleted
- ☒ Before vowels
 - **k** is retained
- ☒ Before all others:
 - **k** is deleted, and the other sound is devoiced

The second possible coda consonant is **n** [n]. It's far simpler than the first, because it simply nasalizes the preceding vowel and remains present if followed by a vowel.

The final possible coda consonant is **s** [s], which has the following resolutions:

- ☒ Before stop consonants and the affricate:
 - The pair is replaced by a fricative (or the affricate) at the same point of articulation: **sp** > **f**, **st** > **c**, **sc** > **s**, **sk** > **š**
- ☒ Before vowels
 - **s** is retained
- ☒ Before voiced consonants:
 - **s** is voiced to **z**, except before **r** where it becomes **d**

These changes are not reflected orthographically unless they're occurring word-internally at a morpheme boundary.

LOW VOWEL FRONTING

The low vowel **a** [a] becomes the low front vowel **æ** [æ] when followed by a front vowel. As **æ** itself can trigger this change, it causes a chain of effect until it reaches a back vowel. This change happens across word boundaries. Similarly, **a** [a] becomes the low front vowel **æ** [æ] when following the consonants **j**, **ɟ**, and **c**.

Nouns

Of the two larger word categories, nouns are superficially the most complex. In reality, it could be argued that they are the most simple, as their level of marking makes clear a speaker's meaning far more easily than with the less marked verbs.

Nouns at their simplest are composed of a root, a theme and a case suffix. The root is the element that gives the noun the majority of its meaning; the theme is a short segment that is almost akin to a classifier in that it provides more information about the shape or quality of the noun; and the case suffix is used to express the noun's role in the sentence.

Beyond this, there are a number of morphemes that can be added to a noun's base form to change its meaning including its number, its "tense" and a whole slew of other things expressed through prefixes or concatenation.

CASE AND NUMBER

In order to be accepted as well-formed, every noun must appear with a case suffix that marks its role in a sentence. There are a total of eight classes into which a noun might be placed:

- ☒ Nominative - the agent **-ak** [-an]
- ☒ Accusative - the patient **-i** [-i]
- ☒ Genitive - the possessor **-a** [-a]
- ☒ Dative - the recipient or benefactor **-as** [-as]
- ☒ Locative - the location **-an** [-an]
- ☒ Ablative - the source **-æci** [-ætsi]
- ☒ Allative - the destination **-æri** [-æri]
- ☒ Instrumental - the means **-ik** [-ik]

Independent of case, nouns can also be marked for number. The unmarked form of the noun is singular and to be made plural, they need to take a prefix **ra-** [ra-]. Though bear in mind this prefix will change to **ræ-** [ræ-] if followed by a front vowel in the next syllable.

There are also words called quantifiers which can be used to add more specificity to the quantity of nouns being referred to. These words will always precede the words they modify and those nouns will usually take the singular form. If they do happen to be used with quantifiers, the understood meaning would be plurative (i.e. multiple groups of the noun). For example:

☞ **kaji** [kæji] 'person'

☞ **rækaji** [rækæji] 'persons, people'

☞ **ohu kaji** [oxu kæji] 'two people'

☞ **ohu rækaji** [oxu rækæji] 'two groups of people'

One final complication for noun number is natural pairs. Things that are found in natural pairs like **jisak** 'eyes', **henak** 'arms' or **canajak** 'parents' have their singular forms refer to two and their plural form refer to more than two. In order to refer to specifically one of these nouns, the word needs to take a singulative prefix **an-** [an-]. For example, take the three words above from which one can derive **anjisak** 'eye, small hole', **anhenak** 'arm, branch' or **ancanajak** 'parent'. Note that unlike the plural prefix, the singulative is not removed when used with specifiers: **oja anjisak** 'every eye, small hole'

DERIVING NOUNS

Ořan employs a number of affixes in order to derive new nouns from existing words. The lion's share of these are applied to verbs, but there are a number that can be used with nouns or adjectives too.

In the previous section, **canajak** 'parents' was presented as an example. This word is comprised of the verb **cana** 'to make, create, form' and a suffix **-j**, which can be added to verbs to create agents AKA the word for 'parent' is 'maker, creator, former' when translated literally. Other suffixes that can be added to **cana** include **-vu**, which creates nouns that are the result or byproduct of the action having been performed (**canavuak** 'creation, product, shape'), **-pir**, which creates nouns that are prone to performing the action, often the names of animals (**canæpirak** 'termite'), and **-g**, which doesn't actually surface phonetically, but creates nouns that are tools to accomplish the verb (**canaak** 'tool, instrument'). Note that there are also verb-noun forms for every verb that are indicated via the suffix **-u** (**canu** 'creation, genesis, birth'). These forms will be discussed in a later section

In order to derive nouns from nouns or adjectives, one can employ suffixes like **-un**, which can create an abstraction to describe a noun or adjective as a collective entity (**kajunak** 'population, tribe'), or **-iř**, which creates nouns that bear the likeness of the one modified in some way (**kajiřak** 'statue, scarecrow, bust'). Nouns can also be concatenated to form compounds with new meanings. This is particularly true for a small subset of nouns that might as well be considered true affixes in their own right, such as the example term that can be used to derive agent or professional terms

for those who work with the modified noun (**henakajak** 'laborer' from **henak** 'arms' + **kajak** 'person').

DEFINITENESS

If a speaker is referring to a specific noun rather than a generic one, they can employ one of the definite articles. Both of the articles will always appear at the very start of a noun phrase, before any quantifiers, possessors or descriptors.

The first article is **æn** [æn], the deictic article. This article is used when the speaker is specifically talking about something that they're pointing out to the listener either physically or through signs, if written. If there is no reference when this word is used, it can come across as pejorative, but is more likely to confuse the listener.

The second article is the anaphoric article **e** [e]. This article specifies a noun that has already been brought into the context of the conversation. Speakers will not use it without a prior reference point and might even use it as a form of light obviation if there's a second noun in context that they need to disambiguate:

Mida racanajan e ancanajak zarava.

[miða ratsanajan e ätsanajak zarava]

among PL-parent-LOC DEF2 SG-parent-NOM

speak-PST

'Among parents the parent spoke.'

Adjectives & Adverbs

Akin to nouns in nearly every way, adjectives in Oñan agree with the nouns they modify in case, but not number. They generally follow the nouns they modify in the noun phrase, but can be moved to the front for emphasis. When this occurs, they must be preceded by one of the definite articles and any adverbs modifying them remain in place. As a result, this construction is only ever used with single adjectives, not multiple. Also note that the trace *t* left behind by the adjective after it's moved continues the coda suppressing effect of the phrase, even in situations where it might otherwise be pronounced:

æn adi mararuñi opik evira cihan

[æn æði mararuñi opi evira tsixan]

DEF1 big-ACC cabin-ACC very-INS *t* sit-R mountain-LOC
'the very big cabin that sits on a mountain'

In the above example, despite the sequence **opik evira** being prime for the inclusion of the coda because of the second word being pronounced with a vowel, the trace between them suppresses the coda completely. Stranger yet, the trace stands in for an adjective that begins with a vowel, which means that if it had not been moved forward, the coda would have been pronounced. This suppression is the key to knowing whether or not a trace is present AKA an adjective has been moved forward.

ADVERBS

Adverbs are a little cleaner in the way that they're formed. Apart from a small set of dedicated adverbs related to time and space, the rest of them are simply

adjectives in the instrumental case. They appear directly before the adjectives or verbs that they modify, generally closer to the head than nouns in the instrumental, which can appear anywhere in the clause.

DEGREES OF COMPARISON

Adjectives form comparatives via the addition of a prefix **maa-**, such as in the word **maadak** 'larger' (note that the initial vowel of the adjective is dropped in the comparative form to avoid the creation of an overlong vowel). This is true of any adjective. The noun being compared against always appears in the genitive case.

E marak evirava maadak ciha.

[e marak evirava ma.aða tsixa]

DEF2 tree-NOM sit-PST-R larger-NOM mountain-GEN
'The tree was larger than a mountain.'

To convey superlatives, the adjective movement strategy is employed with the comparative form of the adjective. For example:

æn maadak cihak

[æ ma.aða tsixak]

DEF1 larger-NOM mountain-NOM
'the largest mountain'

DERIVING ADJECTIVES

Adjectives are derived in a way that parallels nouns—the source words simply take suffixes. For example, there's a suffix **-is**, which can be added to a noun to derive an adjective akin to the English suffix '-like' (**marisak** 'tree-like'). There's another **-ank**, that can be used to form an adjective whose meaning is defined

as having the noun (**cihankak** 'mountainous'). The opposite also exists in the form **-af** (**racanajafak** 'parentless, orphaned').

Another method of creating new adjectives is reduplication. It can be seen with many adjectives, but is no longer productive. For example, the adjective **adak** 'big, large' can undergo reduplication to **adaadak** 'giant, enormous'. Another example would be **duvak** 'dark' which can become **duvaduvak** 'pitch black, lightless'.

Verbs

Compared to nouns, the morphology of verbs is a breeze. There are very few affixes a speaker needs to remember, no agreement, and only a few unusual situations one needs to keep in mind when working with them.

TENSE, ASPECT AND MOOD

The TAM markers (really just T&M) are the only morphemes applied to the verb as part of inflectional morphology. A verb that is recognizable and usable in a sentence at its most basic form will only appear with a root and a suffix indicating mood. In the following example, we see a root **zæf-** and the ending for the realis mood **-a**.

zæfa
[zæfa]
sing-R
'sings'

Tense is conveyed either by the present of the past tense suffix **-av-**, or by that suffix not being present, which indicates the non-past. The distinction between the two tenses is, as their names might suggest, a distinction between past events and those happening currently or that may happen in the future.

Jak zæfa, pae hezæfava šaran.
[jak zæfa pæ.e xezæfava šaran]
they-NOM sing-R but NEG=sing-PST-R back-LOC
'They're singing, but [they] didn't sing yesterday.'

Unlike for tense, there are two morphemes for mood, one for each. The Realis mood marker was used in the previous example, **-a**, and is used when a speaker believes something to be a true and real event. The other marker is for the Irrealis mood, **-is**, and is used when a speaker believes that something is unlikely or unrealistic, doesn't know it to be true, or desires it.

Jak zæfavis šaran.

[jak zæfævis ʃaran]

they-NOM sing-PST-I back-LOC

'They may have sung yesterday.'

Aspectual differences are a little less clearcut. To express a difference in aspect, speakers use additional verbs in their sentences. Many of these verbs are, on their own, verbs that express the position of the body, such as **evira** 'sits', **peta** 'jumps', or **taja** 'stands'. These three, respectively, when used with other verbs can convey that an action is ongoing, has just been stopped or finished, or happens habitually. When used in this way, the verb conveying the aspect and the verb conveying the action appear with the same tense and mood, generally one after the other. For example, we can construct an example using **evira** 'sits' and **zæfa** 'sings' like so:

Jak evira zæfa.

[jak evira zæfa]

they-NOM sit-R sing-R

'They are singing.'

Another set of verbs include those that convey additional modal distinctions such as wishing, wanting, hoping, doubting, etc. Each of these distinctions can be conveyed through a verb that's conjugated and used

just like the positional verbs previously mentioned. However, in this case, the verb that provides the meaning is included as a verb-noun in the accusative with its subject in the genitive and any additional objects in the accusative, as well. Note that the non-subject arguments of verb-nouns will always follow the verb.

Onak dua ja zæfui.

[onak ðu.a ja zæfu.i]

I-NOM want-R they-GEN singing-ACC

'I want them to sing.'

VERB-NOUNS

Hot on the heels of their inclusion with modal verbs, the verb-noun is an important form of the verb that performs the function of an abstract noun, an infinitive and the verb in a complement clause. They're reliably formed through the use of a suffix **-u**, and take case marking just like a noun or adjective. Here's a short list of the ways in which a verb-noun can be used:

☞ **As a noun:**

- **jeñu**
- 'eating, meal'

☞ **As a purpose for an item:**

- **jeñua kirak**
- 'blade for eating, dinner knife'

☞ **As a purpose for an action:**

- **jak jeñuas huja**
- 'they arrive in order to eat'

☞ **As the object of desire, doubt, etc:**

- **dua jeñu**
- 'want to eat'

ANONYMOUS VERBS

The Anonymous Verb is perhaps the most challenging and novel aspect of Ořan. The concept mirrors anonymous functions in lambda calculus in that the function is never named, just described. In Ořan, this primarily describes a strategy of relativization employed by some speakers, where the verb is deleted from the sentence and its meaning is instead conveyed through the presence of additional nouns. Quite similar to the previously discussed trace *t* that suppresses codas when adjectives are moved, the Anonymous Verb λ also prevents the coda of the noun phrase it modifies from ending where one might otherwise expect it to:

Onak jeřa duakatavas řehik zemisæri e rækajak.

[onak jeřa řu.akatava řexik zemisæri e rækajak]
I-NOM eat-R temple-LOC λ fire-INS earth-ALL DEF2
PL-person-NOM

'I eat at the temple that [was done] with fire to the ground by the people.'

AKA

'I eat at the temple that was burned down by the people'

Because the anonymous verb removes so much of the meaning, whether or not the meaning of the verb is clear is dependent upon existing context in a conversation and any details that the speaker backs in to make it more clear.

Anonymous verbs can also appear after the interrogative particle **u** and the imperative particle **ke**. In these instances, there is no primary verb to rely on for context, so speakers again need to include a robust set of nouns or need to have established context previously in the sentence.

Ke hiak terahæci kirik?

[ke xi.ak teræxætsi kirik]

INT you-NOM bowl-ABL knife-INS

'Are you [eating] from a bowl with a knife?'

PHASE

Phasal polarity is indicated through the use of two words **nis** 'already' and **man** 'still', which indicate from the speaker's time reference that an action happened before that reference point or has continued into it. Though they're adverbs and modify the verb, they can appear anywhere in the sentence. Quite unusually, they also have a tendency to attract the negation clitic, if present, away from the verb itself. When they do attract the negation clitic, their meanings shifts and the reference points change with **xenis** referring to an action in the past that doesn't persist to the speaker's reference point, and **xeman** referring to an event at a future reference point as opposed to the speaker's current one.

NEGATION

A clause is negated simply by having the negation clitic **xe** 'not' present in the sentence. It has a tendency to attach itself to the beginning of the verb, but can move to other words as a pseudo-focus marker. For example, attaching it to a noun in the nominative case might imply that the noun in question might not have performed the act, but something else did. Similarly, it might attach to a genitive noun to imply that the action was completed by something belonging to someone else.

Translations

1

Hekajak e maan oni mada

[xekajak e ma.an oni maða]

NEG-person-NOM DEF2 place-LOC I-ACC like-R

'Nobody here likes me.'

5moyd #2013

2

E anra šaran, onak ño jik hotava zirik.

[e anra šaran onak no jik xotava zirik]

DEF2 sun-GEN back-LOC I-NOM together they-INS

join-PST-R small-INS

'Day before yesterday, I met him briefly.'

İrava jak oni os ranis jak kicæri aši.

[irava jak oni o ranis jak kitsæri aši]

tell-PST-R he-NOM I-ACC that come-IR he-NOM

face-ALL again

'He (then) told me he would come to the front again'

5moyd #2102

3

Apak jukava hire ja sontik ane ja peřavui.

[apak jukava xire ja sōtik æne ja peřavu.i]

grandfather-NOM die-PST-R without he-GEN

seeing-INS one he-GEN descendant-ACC

'The grandfather died without seeing any of his grandchildren.'

5moyd #2100

4

Raonak umpava os jak ja uri cakik.

[ra.onak umpava o jak ja uri tsækik]

pl-I-NOM want-PST-R that λ he-NOM he-GEN ears-ACC
water-INS

'We were wanting to make him finish washing his
ears.'

5moyd #2096

5

Apak manak, heu e hiak jeṃava hia raponavui eki
facaki.

[apa ṃanak xe.u e xi.ak jeṃava xi.a raponavu.i eki
fætsæki]

grandfather-NOM old-NOM NEG-INT DEF2 you-NOM
eat-PST-R you-GEN PL-groat-ACC and broth-ACC

'Old man, didn't you drink/eat your rice millet and
gruel?'

5moyd #2095

Dictionary

Word

[phonetics]

POS 'definition'

onak

[onak]

pn 'l'

kirak

[kirak]

n 'knife, blade, leaf, shard'

xe

[xe]

prt 'no, not'

kajak

[kajak]

n 'person, human'

maak

[ma.ak]

n 'place, location, zone'

madu

[maðu]

v 'liking, enjoyment, pastime'

jisak

[jisak]

n 'eyes'

henak

[xenak]

n 'arms'

canajak

[tsanajak]

n 'parents'

ohu

[oxu]

spc 'two'

canavuak

[tsanavu.ak]

n 'creation, product, shape'

canu

[tsanu]

v 'creation, making'

canæpirak

[tsænæpirak]

n 'termite'

canaak

[tsana.ak]

n 'tool, instrument'

kajunak

[kajunak]

n 'population, tribe'

kajisak

[kajisak]

n 'statue, scarecrow, bust'

oja

[oja]

spc 'every, all'

henakajak

[xenakajak]

n 'laborer'

mida

[miða]

pp 'between, among'

zaru

[zaru]

v 'speech, speaking'

zarakajak

[zarakajak]

n 'speaker, orator'

zaræpirak

[zærækajak]

n 'coyote'

adak

[aðak]

adj 'big, large, grand'

mararuňak

[mararuŋak]

n 'cabin, hut'

opik

[opik]

adv 'very, quite'

eviru

[eviru]

v 'situation, placement, sitting'

cihak

[tsixak]

n 'mountain'

marak

[marak]

n 'tree'

maadak

[ma.aðak]

adj 'larger'

marisak

[marisak]

adj 'tree-like, branching, columnous'

cihankak

[tsixankak]

adj 'mountainous'

racanajafak

[ratsanajafak]

adj 'parentless, orphaned'

adaadak

[aða.aðak]

adj 'giant, enormous'

duvak

[ðuʋak]

adj 'dark'

duvaduvak

[ðuʋaðuʋak]

adj 'pitch black'

zæfu

[zæfu]

v 'song, singing'

jak

[jak]

pn 'he, she, they'

šarak

[ʃarak]

n 'back, rear'

pae

[pa.e]

cnj 'but, yet, however'

petu

[petu]

v 'leap, jumping'

taju

[taju]

v 'posture, standing'

duu

[ðu.u]

v 'desire, wanting'

jeṃu

[jeṃu]

v 'meal, eating'

terahak

[terahak]

n 'bowl'

huju

[xuju]

v 'arrival, arriving'

terahak

[terahak]

n 'bowl'

anrak

[ārak]

n 'sun, day'

zirak

[zirak]

adj 'small, tiny'