



A documentation of the Nemkahusit Language



Introduction

Nemkahusit, which translates to “our tongue”, is a language made for the Speedlang 25 challenge. For clarity, there will be words marked in **orange** to show how this conlang satisfies the restrictions of the challenge. Additionally, text written in Nemkahusit will be colored in **blue** to distinguish it from English text. There are footnotes in this documentation, which should be ignored on the first reading.

I have not written something this long for a while so please ignore any grammar mistakes

Phonology

There are 11 phonemic consonants, which all has a hard (unpalatalized) and soft (palatalized) versions, which should result in 22 consonants, but since /w/ merged with /wi/, there are only 21 phonemic consonants and /w/ lacks a soft version. [f] is an allophone of /p/ and /b/ and similarly [fj] is an allophone of /pi/ and /bi/, as we'll see later.

Consonants		Labial		Coronal		Dorsal	
		Hard	Soft	Hard	Soft	Hard	Soft
Nasal		m	mʲ	n	nʲ [ɲ]		
Plosive	Voiceless	p	pʲ	t	tʲ [tʃ]	k	kʲ [c]
	Voiced	b	bʲ	d	dʲ [dʒ]	g	gʲ [ɟ]
Fricative		(ɸ)	(ɸʲ)	s	sʲ [ʃ]	x	xʲ [ç]
Approximant						w	

The letters used to represent hard sounds are the same as in the IPA, except that /x/ is represented by **h** and [ɸ] is represented by **f**, and the letters used to represent soft sounds are the same as their hard counterparts with an additional **y** after them.

There are 10 phonemic vowels, 6 of which are monophthongs and 4 are diphthongs.

Monophthongs	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e	ə	o
Low		a	

Diphthongs	Front	Back
High	ei	ou
Low	ai	au

All vowels are written in the same way as in the IPA, except that /au/ is written as **au**. When after a soft consonant, back vowels front, though the effect is less obvious for lower vowels. Specifically, /u/ fronts to [u̟] and /o/ fronts to [ö̟]. There are some reports of /ou/ turning into [əu] after soft consonants, though this is rare.

The syllable structure is (C)V(C), with the only restrictions being that /w/ is not allowed in coda positions and nonword-initial syllables must have an onset. Words that start with a vowel phonemically has a glottal stop prothesized phonetically.

When two consonants meet, especially obstruents (plosives and fricatives), they might violate the Obligatory Contour Principle (OCP), which tries to make adjacent segments as different as possible. If they do, they are resolved in the following order:

1. If the two consonants share the same major place of articulation and the same manner of articulation, then they merge into one and the resulting consonant shares the same major place and manner of articulation.
 - a. If either consonant is voiced, then the resulting consonant is voiced, else it is voiceless.
 - b. If either consonant is soft, then the resulting consonant is soft, else it is hard.
2. If the two consonants are one of /sxi/, /sxi/, /xʰs/ or /xʰsi/, then they merge into [ʃ:]. This is the only geminate in this language.¹
3. If the two consonants are both plosives or both fricatives, then they are turned into a plosive-fricative sequence by either fortifying the first consonant into a plosive or leniting (and possibly devoicing) the second consonant into a fricative. This is the only way that [f] and [fʰ] can appear.

After this process, the OCP deems the two consonants different enough and that is what is observed on the surface level. In casual speech, this effect can occur across word boundaries.

¹ This is technically assibilation and not something that the OCP should be able to do but I wanted to include it in this section anyway

Grammar

Morphology

Nouns are marked for 4 numbers, ie **singular, dual, paucal and plural**. Nouns in their singular form are unmarked; the dual is marked with **-to**; paucal with **-gup** and plural with **-taksa**. Mass nouns take the singular form if it is viewed as a whole, such as meat, take the paucal form if it is viewed as being made out of few things that make up a whole, for example a handful of sand and plural form if it is viewed as being made out of many things that make up a whole, such as a bucket of sand or a beachful of sand.

They are also marked on pronouns and demonstratives, as shown by the tables below:

Pronouns	Singular	Dual	Paucal	Plural
1 st person	uty	unsyit	unsi	usit
2 nd person	di	inti	otan	uwe
3 rd animate	he	hisim	heta	hem
3 rd inanimate	nesa	neste	nede	natou

Demonstratives	Singular	Dual	Paucal	Plural
Proximal	kis	kista	kemo	kiha
Distal	sauta	suso	sutou	suksa

In very formal speech, the second person is always used in the plural and the first person is never used in its plural form.

Verbs are marked for **tense (diurnal or nocturnal)**, aspect (perfective or imperfective) and mood (reportative evidentiality, non-reportative evidentiality or imperative).

Diurnal tense is the unmarked form and has no marking, while verbs marked with the nocturnal tense has the softness in their final syllable changed, ie hard consonants become soft and soft consonants become hard in the final syllable. In addition to marking tense, the diurnal tense can also be used for its realis connotation and the nocturnal tense can also be used for its irrealis connotation.

Next, the aspect suffix is added. The imperfective aspect is marked with **-tei** and the perfective aspect is marked with **-san**. The imperfective aspect also has a past tense connotation and the perfective aspect also has a non-past tense connotation. There is also a suffix **-dyi** which is derived from the imperfective and turns a verb into an adjective.

Lastly, the mood suffix is added. The non-reportative evidentiality is unmarked, the reportative evidentiality is marked with **-(i)ta** (adding the **i** if possible), and the imperative is marked with **-pe**. The reportative is used to quote someone as well as marking that speaker did not receive the information firsthand. The imperative can be used for wishes and invitations in addition to commands, with wishes and invitations usually being interrogative sentences.

Even though forming the positive form of a verb is very agglutinative, forming the negative form is more fusional due to it fusing with the tense and aspect suffixes. The mood suffix is placed after the negative suffix.

	Diurnal	Nocturnal
Perfective	-dou	-syet
Imperfective	-ba	-tyan

To turn a verb into its passive form, a final **-be** is added after all the suffixes.

Syntax

There are 6 prepositions in this language, the first of which is **kah**, the ablative preposition, which can also be used to compare two things with each other and is also a conjunction used to introduce the reason for doing something. It can also indicate the start of an event.

neho-Ø kap hasede-tei-Ø kah hepo-Ø
light-SG fast move\DIU-IMPF-NRPT ABL sound-SG

[nexo kap xasedetei ka xepo]

Light travels faster than sound.

(Conlang syntax test 204)

Next, there is **ka**, the dative preposition, which marks the destination of an action, the beneficiary of an action or the endpoint of an action. It can also be used to reintroduce the subject in a passive sentence.

There is also **sabu**, the instrumental preposition, which can also be used as a comitative preposition, ie accompanying someone or something. It can also mark the possessor of a thing.

² They could probably be merged into the ablative and dative respectively

There's also **sat**, which turns a sentence into a relative clause, but it must be between the relative clause and the noun and can either precede or follow the noun.

Lexicon

1. *mise*

This word traditionally means “big” but has semantically bleached to mean “good” in any number of ways. If used to mean “good”, it can only describe inanimate things such as prey, plants, the weather etc. If used for its “good meaning” on animate things, it sounds belittling.

2. *gudal*

This word traditionally means “small” but has also semantically bleached to mean “bad” in any number of ways. If used to mean “bad”, it can only describe inanimate things.

3. *gebog*

This word is generally understood to mean home but there are some fossilised phrases with it. For example, *mise gebog* not only means “big house” or “good house”, it also means “village”.

4. *han*³

This word can mean either “hand”, “wing” or “branch” depending on context.

5. *pokəpan*

This word means “to write” or “to carve”.

³ I have run out of ideas