

ZELE LANGUAGE by brandrinn  
(Akana, Zeluzh)

### The North Wind and the Sun

The North Wind and the Sun are disputing. Which one is stronger than which? When a traveler, wrapped in a cloak, comes to them, they say that the one who makes the man take off the robe, then of course it's this one that's stronger. Then the North Wind blows as hard as he could, but in vain, as the poor sod wraps himself up in the robe just as hard.

So the unfortunate North Wind has to stop and call upon the Sun to see what he would do. Then the Sun comes up and shines strongly, and the man takes his cloak off, and look, goes into a stream and bathes! So the North Wind says that, oh well, the Sun really is the stronger. Gentle persuasion is stronger than force.

*furuzh shig re sharabazhi med. Nam she nāhab she fonoas? Mefabes fofi gomor rali shānāha, re nāsosh poti “masibes tseyās gonam nās rofonoasosh.” Ruzh rurune puhas, bu mor rali masibes gatahas fonoa bilir.*

*Shānāhab, furuzh shig rafa tseneahas boboti sharabaha. Shanam rafani re mor tseyo masibes re teguhas shisheani ko! Tsa furuzh shig rib “sharabazhi rofonoasosh ir.” Shishamibi reshās yamuhab.*

The north wind and the sun argue. Which one is stronger than the other? A robed stranger comes before them, and they say “the one who knocks the clothes off him is the strongest.” The wind blows hard (lit: “in his back”), but the stranger holds the cloak under a firm grip.

After that, the frustrated North Wind stops to challenge (lit: “challenge stoppingly”) the Sun. He shines (lit: “does a shining”), and the stranger drops his cloak and bathes in the river! So the North Wind grumbles “the Sun is stronger, I suppose.” Delicateness defeats force.

### The goat and the wolf

"A goat is grazing upon a steep cliff, when he is seen by a wolf, who would not be able to reach him. So the wolf begins to call to him, 'You should come [to me] so that you would not fall, also, there are meadows where I am, here the grass is most tender.' The goat calls, 'You are calling not for my benefit, you're calling so that you can eat!'"

*Shāyami mat parākelihās shish minames, shabes soki huyami goboabun sheati shabes. Tsa boabun shaha poti. Reha tsoshoa tsa tsuhi hukareteas. Re rehas minam. Shahas, minam robās. Shāyami poti “hufusoas re i. pusoas tsu tsezhires.”*

## PHONOLOGY

### Consonants (with SAMPA if not already in SAMPA)

	ts		
p	t		k
b	d		g
m	n		
f*	s	sh /S/	h
	z	zh /Z/	r /R/
	l		y /j/

Any letter besides y, ts, t, k, p, h, or f may end a syllable or word. Not all words require an onset, but two vowels never appear side by side within a word.

\*f is only an allophone of p and sh, but for ease of reading it is written with its own symbol.

### vowels

i				u
e	ã /@~/			o
	ea /E/		oa /O/	
a				

## GRAMMAR

### Nominal morphology

Nouns have six forms: the genitive, nominative, accusative, and the oblique cases: locative, dative, and ablative. The six major declensions are organized based on the last consonant of the noun in the nominative.

- 1) First Declension: Zh(i). This declension has six possible endings: azh, izh, uzh, azhi, izhi, and uzhi. All forms have regular case formation; the zh or zhi is replaced by zhes, has, ha, or hab, for the accusative, locative, dative, and ablative, respectively. The genitives are much trickier. If the word ends in zhi, the genitive form will end in a vowel. If the ending is azh(i), the vowel will be a or e. If the ending is izh(i), the vowel will be i. If the ending is uzh(i), the vowel will be u or e. If the ending ends with zh (no i), and the word is more than one syllable, then it will likely end in a consonant, though not always.
- 2) Second Declension: N(i) and M(i). The nasal nouns are treated as one category. The possible endings are: an, am, in, im, un, ani, ami, ini, imi, and uni. In every case, the accusative is formed regularly by replacing the n(i) or m(i) with nes or mes. The oblique cases are formed by adding Vhas, Vha, and Vhab, where V is a transformed version of the vowel found before n(i) or m(i). If the original vowel is a, i, or u, the transformed vowel will be ã, ea, or oa, respectively. The genitive form is again likely to end in a consonant if no i is seen on the end of the word, but if a vowel is present, it is the transformed vowel found in the oblique cases.
- 3) Third declension: Sh(i). This declension can have any vowel followed by sh(i). The cases are formed regularly, except all the case endings begin with sh. The genitive always ends in s.

- 4) Fourth Declension: R(i). this declension can have any vowels followed by r(i). The accusative ending is res and the oblique cases are formed regularly by replacing r(i) with has, ha, or hab. The genitive ends in r.
- 5) Fifth Declension: bi. This declension has only two possible endings: abi and ibi. The accusative and oblique endings are regular (bes, has, ha, hab), but the a or i preceding the oblique cases becomes o. the genitive ends in o or a consonant.
- 6) Sixth Declension: Hi. In this declension, and vowel can be followed by hi. The cases are regular, all beginning with h. the genitive is the same as the nominative with hi removed, and sometimes the vowel before that will be gone as well.

#### Use of cases

The nominative, genitive, and accusative are used just as you would expect, with the genitive usually preceding its noun, although this is completely flexible if the genitive is adjacent to its noun. The locative is used for temporal or physical location, and can also be used as an adverbial marker. The dative can be the indirect object, but it can also mean “to,” “for,” and “until.” The ablative means “from” or “since.”

#### Prefixes

shV, where V is the first vowel of the noun, is the article. It's use is very restricted compared to the definite article in English. It is more like a demonstrative. If the vowel is o or u, then f is used instead of sh.

rV is the first person possessive. Note that there is no other personal possessive prefix- they are expressed through separate words.

go denotes that the noun is the object of a relative clause. All of these prefixes are mutually exclusive.

Appositives are signaled with zhi between the two noun phrases.

#### Mass nouns and state nouns

The suffix Vsosh (3<sup>rd</sup> declension), where V is the vowel used before the oblique cases (for 3<sup>rd</sup> declension use the genitive), is used to derive nouns of state from verbs or more general or mass-like nouns from other nouns. For example, “son” + sosh would be “descendants” and “observe” + sosh would be “science.”

#### Verbal morphology

Each verb has five forms: simple past, past perfect, present, relative present, and future. The basic categories or “conjugations” are best formed based on the number of syllables found in the verb in the present tense.

- 1) 1 syllable verbs. The present and future tenses are formed by changing the vowel to ã and adding s (replacing any consonants that might have already been there). The relative present is formed by changing the final vowel to i if it is a, i, u, o, or e, and changing it to ea if it is ea, oa, or ã. The perfect is the same as the simple past.
- 2) 2 syllable verbs. These act the same way, but with two major exceptions: the simple past is the same as the perfect with the final vowel removed, and if there is a voiceless stop (p, t, or k) in the second syllable of the present tense it will be voiced in the future and past perfect tenses, assuming it does not follow s. note that p will usually be realized as [f], but not all [f] are /p/.

- 3) 3 syllable verbs. The simple past and relative present are the same, ending in consonants. The present and future tenses add *ã*s, and the simple past sometimes adds a vowel to the perfect. Which vowel depends on the word (this time it is the simple past where the final vowel is retained). If there is a voiceless stop in the second syllable of the perfect tense, it will be voiced in the past and present, again if it does not connected to *s*.
- 4) 4 syllable verbs. Here the present and future are the same, and the past, perfect, and relative present are the same, although they are not predictable from the present tense. If there are voiceless stops in the second or third syllable, the first will be voiced in the perfect and future tenses, the second in the present, past, and relative present tenses.

#### Use of tenses

The relative present and future tenses have fallen out of common use and are only used poetically. Most spoken dialects do not distinguish them. However, the three-way distinction between present, past, and past perfect is alive and well, although the past and perfect may be easily confused.

#### Intensives and progressives

Intensives are formed differently for different conjugations. For single and double syllable verbs, the first syllable is simply reduplicated. Single syllable verbs in the past, relative present, and perfect then drop the final vowel, while double syllable verbs remain otherwise unaffected. For three syllable verbs, the past, present, and relative present remain the same, except any voiceless stops in the second syllable not attached to *s* become voiced, and the perfect and future are reduplicated, and drop any final vowels. Progressives are formed by adding the suffix *ni* to the verb. Two syllable verbs then become three syllable verbs, etc.

#### Negation

Verbs are negated with the prefix *hu*.

#### Example verbs:

	present	past	perfect	future	rel. present
chew (irreg)	<i>nã</i> s	<i>ha</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>nã</i> s	<i>yi</i>
love	<i>yizã</i> s	<i>yiz</i>	<i>yizã</i>	<i>yizã</i> s	<i>yizea</i>
drink	<i>kabã</i> s	<i>kab</i>	<i>kapa</i>	<i>kapã</i> s	<i>kapi</i>
drop	<i>tsozhã</i> s	<i>tsozh</i>	<i>tsozho</i>	<i>tsozhã</i> s	<i>tsozhi</i>
hit	<i>tadoas</i>	<i>tadur</i>	<i>tatur</i>	<i>tatoas</i>	<i>tatir</i>

#### Syntax

Word order is SVO, with the subject appearing first, followed by optional noun phrases, a verb, and more optional noun phrases. The accusative almost always comes after the verb, but not always, and the order is more flexible for the oblique cases. The voice can be changed to passive voice by fronting the accusative and then moving the nominative after the verb, or omitting it.

Adjectives and genitives precede the word they modify, but if the words are adjacent this order can be fairly flexible. Relative clauses must always precede their object, and they are marked by the relative clause marker *go-* attached to the modified noun.