

xây ithra

IV/IV: Grammar + Bibliography

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Grammar + Bibliography

This booklet offers the grammar of xây ithŕa, written by linguist Margaret Ransdell-Green, followed by a bibliography for the project.

There are some technical linguistic terms used in this grammar, and in the interlinear glosses for each example sentence, the following abbreviations of these terms are used:

1 : first person

2 : second person

3 : third person

cont : continuative

diss : dissimulative

excl : exclusive

gen : genitive

hab : habitual

incho : inchoative

incl : inclusive

int : intentional

interr : interrogative

irr : irrealis

pl : plural

poss : possessive

r : realis

sg : singular

term : terminative

The interlinear glosses are formatted in the following style:

Line 1: the full sentence in xây ithŕa, as it is normally written

Line 2: a breakdown of morphemes (parts of meaning) with hyphens between each morpheme

Line 3: a gloss (technical explanation or translation) of all morphemes

Line 4: a free translation (natural and grammatical) in English of the sentence

1: PHONOLOGY

The phonemic inventory of xây ithra, diagramed below, shows the sounds that can occur in the language, written in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). An interactive IPA chart with audio examples of each symbol's pronunciation can be found online, see link in bibliography at the end of this booklet.

CONSONANTS:

| | BILABIAL | LABIODENTAL | DENTAL / ALVEOLAR / POST ALVEOLAR | RETROFLEX | PALATAL | VELAR | GLOTTAL |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------|-------|---------|
| PLOSIVE | | | t | | | | |
| NASAL | m | | | | ɲ | | |
| TAP / FLAP | | | | ɽ | | | |
| FRICATIVE | | f | θ s ʃ ʒ | | | x | h |
| LATERAL FRICATIVE | | | ɬ ɮ | | | | |
| APPROXIMANT | | | | | j | | |

VOWELS:

| | FRONT | CENTRAL | BACK |
|-----------|-------|---------|------|
| CLOSE | i ɪ | | u ʊ |
| CLOSE-MID | e | | |
| OPEN-MID | | | |
| OPEN | | a | ɑ |

OTHER SYMBOLS:

| | | | |
|----|----|----|---|
| tʃ | dʒ | ʈʂ | w |
|----|----|----|---|

2: ROMANISATION

ġây ithŗa uses a latin alphabet. The romanisation system is demonstrated in the tables below.

CONSONANTS:

| IPA | ROMANISED |
|-----|-----------|
| d̪ | dȳ |
| f | f |
| h | h |
| ʒ | j̇ |
| l | l |
| ɫ | lh̃ |
| m | m |
| n̪ | nȳ |
| ɾ | ř |
| s | s |
| ʃ | sh |
| t | t |
| θ | th |
| t̪ | tȳ |
| ʈ͡ʂ | ṭṣ̣ |
| w | w |
| x | ṡ |
| j | y |
| j̥ | ȳ |
| ʙ | ẓḷ |

VOWELS:

| IPA | ROMANISED |
|-----|-----------|
| a | a |
| ɑ | â |
| e | e |
| ɪ | i |
| ɨ | é |
| u | ó |
| ʊ | û |

3: VERBS

In this language, verbs are not conjugated for tense, but time is inferred via context and other information in the sentence, such as adverbials (e.g. now, later, soon, before). Subject is not marked morphologically on verbs, but this is rather determined by word order (SOV).

3.1: IRREALIS AND REALIS

Verbs may take an irrealis or realis suffix, but these are not obligatory for any given verb. The irrealis may show that a verb does not describe a real event (i.e. the event is hypothetical, uncertain, or conditional). It may also describe an action that is not taking place presently, but will in the future. It can be used to express doubt on the part of the speaker about the veracity or probability of the proposition expressed in the verb. It can also be used to express a command (imperative).

The irrealis suffix is *-dŷatha*, and realis is *-siya*. These are affixed directly after the verb stem.

1: léla lamayadŷatha

léla lamaya-dŷatha
3sg sleep -irr
they may be asleep

2: lamayadŷatha!

lamaya-dŷatha!
sleep -irr
sleep!

3: lélawâ zlitŷitŷe hala ẖaẖadŷatha

léla-wâ zlitŷi -tŷe hala ẖaẖa-dŷatha
3 -pl expectation-pl same do-irr
they (plural) may have the same desires

4: yathete dŷidŷatha alŷethaŕa tẖŷiwâdŷatha

yathete dŷidŷatha alŷethaŕa tẖŷiwâ-dŷatha
1pl.incl later vulnerable be -irr
we (inclusive) will be vulnerable

By contrast, realis *-siya* is used to assert the certainty or truth of a proposition. It's also used to contrast present events from future events.

5: yathete li yâdŷanŷe tẖŷiwâsiya

yathete li yâdŷanŷe tẖŷiwâ-siya
1pl.incl in nature be-r
we (inclusive) are in nature

3.2: ASPECT

Verbs are also optionally marked for aspect. Aspects in ẖây ithŕa include: inchoative (beginning actions), terminative (ending actions), habitual (habitual or repeated actions), continuative (ongoing actions), intentional (carefully completing actions), and dissimulative (pretending to do actions).

The suffixes below are added to the end of a verb (after the irrealis/realis suffix) to indicate the aspects.

-*ha* : inchoative

-*ṭyāṭyē*: terminative

-*ḍỵiwa*: continuative

-*ḍỵaḍỵa*: habitual

-*ṭṣiṛ̌û*: intentional

-*ḍỵiṇỵe*: dissimulative

3.3: INTERROGATIVES

To form a yes/no (polarity) question, the suffix -*fâ* is added to the very end of a verb. This suffix follows other verbal suffixes, such as aspect and irrealis.

te maṇỵethehafâ?

te maṇỵethe-ha -fâ

2sg struggle -incho-interr

are you beginning to struggle?

To form a wh-question (information question), *ẋây itḥřa* uses the following interrogative pronouns.

hama: what

hâlê: who

haḍỵi: when

haḍỵala: where

haḷỵa: why

hâṭṣó: how

thóře: that / which

Wh-questions are formed *in situ*, meaning that the question word does not move to the left edge of the clause as it does in English, but rather remains in place. The question suffix -*fâ* is also used in wh-questions.

te ẓliṭỵifâ hama?

te ẓliṭỵi-fâ hama

2sg desire-interr what

what do you desire?

yathe wélh̃ad̃yathafâ had̃yala
yathe wélh̃a-d̃yatha-fâ had̃yala
1pl.incl move-irr -interr where
where might we go?

hâlé ñyiral̃yathófâ?
halé ñyiral̃yathó-fâ
who be happy -interr
who is happy?

4: NOUNS

Nouns in *ġây ith̃ra* are not marked with morphological case, but argument role is rather determined by word order. Nouns do not take grammatical gender, nor do personal pronouns. The verbal alignment is nominative-accusative, and subjects precede verbs, and objects follow. Indirect objects can be indicated with the preposition *fûr̃a*.

4.1: NOMINAL DERIVATION

Nouns can be formed through derivational morphology from other lexical categories. Agents of verbs can be formed with the suffix *-r̃û* (*t̃s̃yiwâla* 'believe' > *t̃s̃yiwâlar̃û* 'believer'). *-ye* creates a noun from an adjective (*ñyāt̃su* 'sweet' > *ñyāt̃suye* 'a sweet'), as does *-shi* (*ġithe* 'build' > *ġitheshi* 'building').

Other nouns can be created from verbs using *-ñye*, often describing instances of the event of the verb (*ûth̃ra* 'search' > *ûth̃rañye* 'a search'), or *-miye*, which is used to describe a place associated with something (*shath̃rawe* 'to know' > *shath̃rawemiye* 'school / university').

4.2: PRONOUNS

Pronouns can stand in for nouns as they can in other languages. The personal pronouns in *ġây ith̃ra* are below. As can be seen, there is a distinction between inclusive and exclusive first person plural. Inclusive means that it includes the speaker and the addressee, while exclusive only applies to the speaker and another or others (not the addressee).

1st singular ('I, me'): *ya*

2nd singular ('you'): *te*

3rd singular ('they'): *léla*

1st plural inclusive ('we: me and you'): *yathete*

1st plural exclusive ('we: me and other(s), not you'): *yathe*

2nd plural ('you all'): *tewa*

3rd plural ('they'): *lélawâ*

4.3: RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Relative pronouns are below. They are used in relative clauses and are identical to interrogative pronouns. Relative clauses follow the head noun.

hama: what

hâlé: who

hadÿi: when

hadÿala: where

halÿa: why

hâṭṣó: how

thóře: that / which

Yala hâlé ṣay sófé nÿĩralÿathó

person who the moon love

the person who loves the moon

tÿithe hadÿi ya nâṭṣó tÿila

moment when 1sg sweet ask

the moment when I asked for sweetness

4.4: POSSESSIVES

Possessive determiners can be formed from these pronouns with the suffix *-nÿâřû* (*yanÿâřû*: my). These determiners are placed after the noun they modify.

Yala yanÿâřû

Yala ya-nÿâřû

body 1sg-poss

my body

hafathřa jatenÿâřû

hafathřa jate-nÿâřû

purpose 1pl.excl-poss

our purpose

Genitive constructions (grammatical structures that show a relationship of some kind between two nouns, typically consisting of a head noun and a genitive noun) can also be formed between two nouns by the use of this same suffix. The genitive noun precedes the head noun, as seen below.

nÿatṣunÿâřû tÿithetÿe

nÿatṣu-nÿâřû tÿithe -tÿe

sweetness-gen moment-pl

moments of sweetness

4.5: PLURALS

Nouns can be pluralized with the use of the suffix *-ṭyê*.

laḷȳa

leaf

laḷȳaṭȳe

laḷȳa-ṭȳe

leaf-pl

leaves

4.6: ARTICLES

ġây itḥřa has one article, ġây, which can be use to indicate definiteness or can be used as a focus marker for a noun. It is optional in many cases. It is used in the name of the language to draw attention to the importance of the word *itḥřa*, meaning ‘pledge’.

ġây Yala

the body

ġây ḍyala yaṇȳâṛû ṭş̣ȳiwâḍȳiwa

ġay ḍyala ya-ṇȳâṛû ṭş̣ȳiwâ-ḍȳiwa

the sickness 1s-poss be -cont

the sickness is mine

4.7: PREPOSITIONS

In ġây itḥřa, prepositions are used with nouns and pronouns to indicate a host of modifications, including those that are spatial, temporal, and relational. Their usage may be literal or metaphorical.

li: with, amongst

fûřa: for, to

lịṭş̣óṇȳe: through

yila: in

aṭȳa: on, on top of

ya yila wařuṇȳe ṇȳiraḷȳathóḍȳaḍȳa

ya yila wařuṇȳe ṇȳiraḷȳathó-ḍȳaḍȳa

1sg in autumn be happy -hab

I (habitually) am happy in autumn

5: ADJECTIVES

Adjectives in *ġây ithra* tend to follow the nouns they modify.

yanŷala tṣayathé

season hot

a hot season

wéwa nŷiřalŷathó

worm be happy

a happy worm

NOTES ON TRANSLATION:

The word Yala in *ġây ithra* means both body, home, and planet earth. It has been translated as body for ease of reading, but the meaning of each statement that contains the word Yala cannot be understood without grasping the way that the body is conceptualised within *ġây ithra* as being both a physical body, the home of a being or community, and the celestial body of planet earth.

Yala is the only word that is capitalised within *ġây ithra*; punctuation is used as expected but a capital letter is not required following a full stop. Capitalisation can be used as an emphasis tool at the pleasure of the writer.

ġây ithra uses words that describe the elements/conditions of the earth to describe experiences of the body. For example, a sharp pain may be described as *ġâwehethřathařa*: a rock tumbling down a mountain or *ařřaithřahethřa*: lightning striking. An experience of fatigue could be described as *felathařaxatṣŷi*: sinking into mud or *dŷelathařaxatṣŷi*: pulled under water. The easing of pain might be expressed as *wélhathřafóshâtŷama*: wind caressing trees or *dŷathathelalayala*: sun breaking through clouds.

These are compound words, created in that way to show respect for the elements that form them. For example, *ġâwehethřathařa*: a rock tumbling down a mountain is made up of the words rock + above + below. *dŷelathařaxatṣŷi*: pulled under water is made up of the words water + below + without consent. *dŷathathelalayala*: sun breaking through clouds is made up of the words sun + cloud + hello (which is, in turn, a compound word made up of the words body + to be here).

Time is understood within *ġây ithra* to be nonlinear/circular/simultaneous, or in a disability-centered sense, *crip time*¹. This means that phrases such as today and tomorrow don't exist within the language, but that notions of time are non-specific (now, soon, later) and inferred by context. This idea centralises those who experience normative time and the culture that grows around that as exclusive, ableist and unmanageable. *ġây ithra*'s notions of time prioritise slowness, intuitive/body-centered decision making, and an understanding that the body and its needs must come before requirements of productivity or man-made (read profit-led) deadlines.

¹See 'Notes for "Sick Time, Sleepy Time, Crip Time: Against Capitalism's Temporal Bullying" in conversation with the Canaries': Taraneh Fazeli, 'Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time': Ellen Samuels, 'Feminist, Queer, Crip': Alison Kafer.

6: XÂY ITHŘA / A PLEDGE

The language *xây ithřa* (a pledge) derives its name from the title of the text below.

The text consists of 11 statements that demonstrate the foundational concepts of the language.

léla óathřanýâró yami tšýiwâ yila Yala yawathřa; shathřawe útsé tšínýetha yayafenýû ithe alýethařa dýiwatýi

lila uaθřaniarū jami tšiwā jila jala jawaθřa jaθřawe útsi tšineθa jajafeŋu iθe alieθařa diiwati

It is the work of a life to live inside of a body; to understand that I am both immensely powerful and unendingly vulnerable

ya nýilanýe ithe nýatýe fûřa yayala ithe yalayatýe yanýâró silewa

ja nīlāŋe iθe natiē fūřa jajala iθe jalajalatiē janarū silewa

I seek care and relief for myself and my communities

ya wayanýâró ithe nýatšónýâró týtithetýe li xây atatha silewa

ja wajaniarū iθe natsunarū tiθetiē li xaj ataθa silewa

I seek moments of pleasure and sweetness on the outsides

ya tšira wâ ihe lhatsû li hafathřa tšýiwâ awa xâythe ithe lalýa ithe wiwa ithe fósša

ja tšira wa ihe tatsu li hafaθřa tšiwā awa xajθe iθe lalia iθe wiwa iθe fuřa

I am no more or less on purpose than every bug and every leaf and every worm and every tree.

nýathřayala ithřatha ya tšýiwâ

nīaθřajala iθřaθa ja tšiwā

Everybody is around me

ya dýala litsónýe ya yila dýi ithe yanýala lélanýâró wélħa iyewa

ja dīala litsunē ja jila dī iθe janala līlāŋarū wīħa iyewa

I let illness move through me in its own time and season

ya xây Yala ya ishalħa iyewa

ja xaj jala ja īfaħa iyewa

I let the body lead me

léla týe Yala thóře yathete lawa yila ówamé dýinýâró nýařala ithe dýalanýâró ithřadýelařayeye

lila tiē jala θuře jaθete lawa jila uwami diŋarū nařala iθe dīalāŋarū iθřadiēlaxaje

There is something to be found in the swamp of nonlinear time and the fog of disease

ya xatýetṣ̌i yanýâró fûřa óathřa yanýâró xithe

ja xatiētsi janarū fūřa uaθřa janarū xiθe

I build my own expectations for my life

ya tesinýû hâlé dýisiya ya tšýiwâ, dýidýatha ya tesinyû tšýiwâ hâlé ya dýidýatha tšýiwâ

ja tesinū hali diisija ja tšiwā diidiaθa ja tesinū tšiwā hali ja diidiaθa tšiwā

I am exactly who I am today, tomorrow I am exactly who I am tomorrow

ya Yala yanýâró nýila, ya yalayala yanýâró nýila, ya Yala yanýâró nýila, ya Yala yanýâró nýila

ja jala janarū nīla ja jalajala janarū nīla ja jala janarū nīla ja jala janarū nīla

I take care of my body, I take care of my community, I take care of my planet, I take care of my home

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