
Conlanging

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This is a small repository written using RST and Sphinx in order to show some of my conlanging work. I have been teaching myself the principles of historical and comparative linguistics as a hobbyistic project for about 2 years now, and naturally wanted to use the knowledge thusly acquired to develop my own conlangs along more naturalistic and scientifically grounded lines. I have always loved conlanging, and although it is somewhat unfashionable nowadays among conlangers (I think), did not hesitate to apply them to your typical post-Tolkienian fantasy setting, such as one for my D&D games. I wanted to develop at least one ‘canonical’ human, elven, and dwarven language, each with very different features and principles.

The human is inspired (among other things) by Austronesian and Polynesian languages; the elvish one by polysynthesis in native North America (albeit with a more traditionally ‘elvish’ phonology); the dwarvish one has a heavy nominal syntax and takes inspiration from Bantu and Australian languages. They are quite incomplete, some more so than others, and I tinker on them whenever I have the time. In due course I might make other ones also. Each is, of course, properly evolved from an ancestor, but as the conworld is my D&D setting, that information is so far implicit. The Dwarvish language is currently the best developed and has the best and most material, so far; the Human language is very incomplete, while the Elvish is very old and in that sense relatively ‘naive’, dating from when I was first beginning with conlanging. I nonetheless present the Dwarvish and the Elvish here and will update them as I work on them. The files for the Human language will follow when I have more material to present.

Of course, part of the exercise is also to teach myself the relevant markup and technical writing skills using these conlangs as a template. Since the originals are ODT files made in LibreOffice rather casually and laid out according to my own whims, and the grammar explanation is primarily aimed at people with some knowledge of linguistics and conlangs (such as myself...), I have had much to improve regarding the presentation, and that continues to be so. I used Pandoc to convert the files to a rough RST format and then manually edited them for further clarity, although I would like to find a better presentation for the vocabulary. On my [Github](#) repository for my conlangs you may also find other versions of the same files for practicing other writing tools, e.g. Markdown. The most up to date version will always be the one present here and published through Read the Docs, however. Over time, I will probably add more files, for example on the proto-languages, as I find time to do the editing. Any comments are welcome!

OLD DWARVISH SYNTAX

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1.1 General structure and ordering

Word Order and Headedness. The general (unmarked) word order of Old Dwarvish is **SOV**. Despite the use of case, in normal sentence structure this is fairly strict. The headedness parameter is generally final, including in (NN) compounds.

Element Order. In Old Dwarvish there is a combination of postpositions and phrasal clitics for adpositional phrases; manner adverbs precede regular adverbs which precede verbs; adjectives and numerals follow the noun; demonstratives and quantifiers are cliticized after the phrase. The genitive precedes the possessed noun.

1.2 Nouns

Noun Classes. Old Dwarvish is characterized by an extensive system of noun classes, describing both singular and plural number, arranged by a combination of semantic and phonological criteria (with, at this stage, the semantic dominating). The noun class structure of Old Dwarvish is inherited directly from Proto-Dwarvish, subject of course to sound change. The organization is as follows:

- I: Masculine humanoids; current or occasional agent
- II: Feminine humanoids; prof. or habit. agent (*includes many nature names*)
- III: Plural of classes I & II; ‘people’ or ‘nation’
- IV: Big things, augmentatives, valuable materials, large tools, stones
- V: Small objects, diminutives, (small) tools, small animals, etc
- VI: Plural of IV & V
- VII: Larger animals, fish, foodstuffs, textiles, some raw materials
- VIII: Plants, some natural phenomena, other sentient
- IX: Plural of VII-VIII
- X: Body parts, kinship terms, parts of things
- XI: Plural of X
- XII: Place, certain abstractions derived from space (eg time)
- XIII: Plural of XII
- XIV: Stative abstractions, emotions
- XV: Plural of XIV
- XVI: Collective nouns, uncountables, verbal nouns
- XVII: Things found in pairs, clusters, interpersonal/social things, lang.
- XVIII: Plural of XVI and XVII (*uncountables have no plural*)
- XIX: Opposites, negative or harmful nouns; dangerous things
- XX: Natural products, fire, liquids
- XXI: Plurals of XIX and XX

The noun classes are characterized by the use of a prefix, variable by noun class. These prefixes agree with the noun class but do not apply to the nouns themselves. Instead, they prefix to verbs, adjectives, adnominal demonstratives, numerals (insofar used adjectively), and determiners.

The system of noun class prefixes is as follows:

- I: ya-
- II: va-
- III: yaya-
- IV: tsa-
- V: ngi-
- VI: ma-
- VII: va-
- VIII: su-

IX: na-
 X: kha-
 XI: nakha-
 XII: sha-
 XIII: shasha-
 XIV: shiya-
 XV: shasha-
 XVI: p'a-
 XVII: t'a-
 XVIII: t'ata-
 XIX: gu-
 XX: wu-
 XXI: ska-

Note that there is syncretism between several noun classes, in part due to sound change: II and VII carry the same prefix, and so do XIII and XV. Since the latter two are both plural classes, it could be argued they have effectively merged.

Furthermore, note that the prefixes are subject to phonological rules in their application, including but not limited to:

- Those ending on -u become -o when followed by k, g, k' or q', and when the first syllabic vowel of the root form (to which the prefix is attached) is a.
- In Proto-Dwarvish, any consonant following the final vowel of the prefix geminated. This process became irregular in Old Dwarvish, applying only to unvoiced stops, s, m, and n. However, the sound changes induced by gemination in previous cases were preserved, leading occasionally to unexpected consonant changes in the root. (For example, *yazzikha, 'c1-fast' in Proto-Dwarvish, leads to Old Dwarvish *ya-zhikha* via sound change.)
- For root forms starting on a vowel, the noun class prefixes lose their final vowel in favor of the root initial vowel; except for VIII, XIX and XX, the prefixes on -u, which suppress the root initial vowel instead.

Noun Cases.

Baroquely, Old Dwarvish has besides the noun class system also an extensive system of case inflection. These cases apply to nouns, independent pronouns, and pronominal demonstratives (eg English 'that' when used independently). There is no case agreement for any other elements, including adjectives (with a few exceptions, see below).

The case structure includes neutral, nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, locative, essive, instrumental, and ablative.

- The neutral case represents the agent of an intransitive verb.
- The nominative represents the subject of a transitive verb.
- The genitive is used for possessive constructions (and applies to the possessor). (Reminder: the genitive precedes the possessed noun.) It is also used for partitive constructions and for the objects of nontelic transitive verb constructions.
- The dative is applied to the recipient or beneficiary of an action, and as the subject of certain dative experiencer constructions.
- The accusative represents the object of a transitive verb.
- The locative governs the noun affected by a number of spatial and temporal postpositions/enclitics. Its default meaning is 'in' or 'on'.
- The essive is complex: it represents a state of being ('as a...'), a temporary condition ('while being a...') which also applies to certain time related phrases ('on/at <X time point>'), and in past tense contexts implies a past period ('when X was a...'). It is also used in predicate constructions. Finally, it applies as an ending to

adjectives when used as a depictive adverbial: e.g. in a construction like ‘I eat my food cold’, the ‘cold’ would take essive case. Similar with ‘the dwarf fell down drunk’, where the ‘drunk’ takes the essive case suffix. This is an exception to the general rule of adjectives and adverbs not taking case suffixes. Note that this does not apply to resultatives, where the depictive indicates a change of state rather than a persisting state (‘he painted the door black’, ‘he wiped the floor clean’). See also *Adjectives* and *Predicates* sections below.

- The instrumental applies to a noun used in the process of something else (‘by means of...’). Unlike some languages, in Old Dwarvish the instrumental is not also a comitative. It applies frequently to abstract constructions. It can also be applied to the subject of a transitive verb, in the subject position, to render the meaning of that verb passive.
- Finally, the ablative is comparable to the locative, in that it governs the noun affected by spatial postpositions or enclitics, but the ablative applies to motion whereas the locative applies to position (cf. accusative vs dative in German, or ‘in’ vs ‘into’ in English). These are general principles; there are exceptions for specific adpositions (for example, ‘to, towards’ is governed by LOC rather than ABL). Note that the ablative is sometimes literarily or poetically used in an ‘excessive’ (without a c) function, meaning something moving away from a state of being: e.g. ‘he ceased to work as a shepherd’, ‘he came home leaving the life of a soldier’, ‘she has recovered from being an ill person’; in this function it supplants some of the uses of the essive case. This is, however, found less often than essive usage, and seems to imply a more formal register.

The suffixes indicating case are organized as follows:

NOM: - 0

NTR: - gemination + a

GEN: - gemination + redupl. of final VC (e.g. *yan* → *yannan*, *k’ur* → *k’urrur*)

DAT: - gemination + -ôq (*yan* → *yannôq*)

ACC: - gemination + i + final C again (*yan* → *yannin*)

LOC: - bul

ESS: - aa

INS: - nū

ABL: - thi

1.3 Adjectives

Old Dwarvish has an open class of independent modifying adjectives. These take noun class prefixes but do not agree with case. Adjectives follow the noun they modify. Note that Old Dwarvish has a very limited set of root color adjectives: only ‘light’, ‘dark’, and ‘colored’, the last one indicating roughly the red-orange-yellow spectrum. More precise colors are usually indicated with reference to representative objects.

Regular comparative constructions are made as follows, with predicate possession and a form of the ‘over, above’ clitic: ” Y-over to X is tallness”, ” all-over to X is tallness” (in that order, with the standard first!). However, the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives are often irregular; see the Syntax Tables for more information.

Resultatives.

Adjectives can be used as resultatives indicating a change of state in the object, e.g. in the sense of ‘he painted the door *black*’ or ‘he wiped the floor *clean*’, and when so used actually follow the verb at the end of the clause. (E.g. respectively ‘he door painted black’ and ‘he floor wiped clean’.) Of course, such adjectives are often derived from verbs, through (resultative) adjectivizers, akin to English past participles. In Old Dwarvish, they are also possible for subject resultatives: i.e., ‘he meat ate full’ means something like ‘he ate the meat until he got full, he ate the meat so that he became full’. The noun class prefixes on the adjective can clarify whether subject or object resultative meaning is meant, although where the noun classes coincide this is left to context.

Copredicatives.

The copredicative form of the adjective, i.e. modifying a noun phrase rather than the verb, is achieved through the essive case suffix applied to the adjective root, and the construction being placed structurally where an essive clause would be expected. For example: “they went home happy” would be something like “they happy-ESS home-LOC-go-PST”. “I want meat raw” would be rendered “I me-DAT meat-ACC raw-ESS want-PRES”, where the position of the essive clarifies it refers to the meat and not to “I”. (Here as in other examples irrelevant syntactic material, eg noun class agreement, is removed from the gloss. Such forms of adjectives do take noun class prefixes.)

1.4 Adverbs

Adverbs are mostly formed in one of two ways. Most manner adverbs are formed by using the instrumental case of the derivationally nominalized adjective: i.e., “X with Yness do Z”. (Manner adverbs, like all adverbs, precede the verb, and they also precede other types of adverbs.) However, in the case of experiencer (stative) verbs, the adjective on which the adverbial construction is based is instead preserved as-is, and simply interpreted as an adverb: “X Y good knew. . .”. Note that in this case the adverbially used adjective does not take noun class marking, or any other form of agreement, but is simply the adjectival stem. Stacking of manner adverbs is possible, where the order is as in English (e.g. “X very with Yness do Z”, etc.).

Spatial adverbs are part of the spatial clitics system, about which see *Clitics* below. Their adverbial usage simply derives from application to the verb phrase rather than the noun phrase.

There are a few adverbial constructions that use a (feeling) noun in the ABL: for example “from hunger”, “out of fear”, “from the heat”, etc. “He died of hunger” is rendered as: “he-NTR hunger-ABL die-PST”, while “he ran (away) out of fear” is “he-NTR fear-ABL run-PST”, etc.

Some degree and temporal adverbs are also simply lexical, and act as particles preceding the adjective, adverb, or verb, as the case may be.

1.5 Articles

There are no articles. Old Dwarvish does not distinguish for definiteness.

1.6 Numerals

Numerals are lexically independent items. When used adjectivally, they are treated as such, and when used independently can stand on their own (e.g. in predicate nominal constructions). Adjectivally, they come after the noun, and before any other modifiers. Old Dwarvish uses a base-10 counting system, although not all numerals 1-10 have underived forms, and there are root forms for certain higher numerals. (E.g. q’iqqâs, ‘eight’, is probably derived from ‘two-four’.)

Note that there are different numeral terms for different usages: cardinal (independent) usage, cardinal (adjectival) usage for noun classes I and II, cardinal (adjectival) usage for all other noun classes, and ordinal usage are all distinct lexically. Note that the numerals used adjectively on noun classes III and up are omitted if no other modifiers follow, i.e. for the purposes of noun class prefixes. “Three axes” would use no prefix on ‘three’, rather than the prefix of noun class VI, but if it were “three red axes”, this would not apply. (This rule is limited to numerals only, and does not apply to other modifiers.)

Numerals when used as depictives (e.g. ‘we three went to the city’, ‘those two must go’) do take case marking and do not take noun class markers: they always take the essive suffix. Note that the other element (‘we’ resp. ‘those’) takes the usual marking.

1.7 Demonstratives and Interrogatives

Demonstrative adjectives appear as enclitics on the noun phrase, following on the last element of the noun phrase (for example a modifier). Demonstratives used as pronouns are independent lexical items and take case (as mentioned under ‘Noun Cases’ above). The same thing applies to interrogative pronouns, which are also independent lexical items and take case. Like all question structures, a clause or sentence with an interrogative pronoun requires an interrogative particle in sentence final position.

As with many languages, Old Dwarvish has three degrees of distance in demonstratives.

1.8 Quantifiers

Quantifiers (each, every, etc.) are mostly enclitics on the noun phrase in Old Dwarvish. They behave much like demonstratives, other than that they cannot function independently. Like demonstratives, they agree with noun class.

1.9 Possession

Attributive possession (“X’s Y”) is effected through the use of the genitive case. The possessor, marked in the genitive case, precedes the possessed noun. Old Dwarvish does not distinguish alienable from inalienable possession, nor does it have inherent possession.

The possessive predicate construction (see also *Predicates* below) is normally expressed as “to X (DAT) is Y (NTR)”. The copula here is a verb form which is exclusively used for such constructions, and which is irregular, but takes normal verb inflection.

1.10 Clitics

Old Dwarvish uses enclitics, applied to the relevant phrasal level, fairly extensively. Important among these are spatial enclitics, which can be applied to noun phrases to indicate direction or location, and which have evolved from many Proto-Dwarvish postpositions. These can become fairly complex through combinations of elements, in the style of ‘up into’ and the like, and Old Dwarvish makes very fine distinctions in spatial matters. In some cases these can also be applied to verb phrases to give a temporal meaning, e.g. ‘before’, ‘after’, etc. Not all these are clitics, however; some have remained postpositional (and as such naturally precede any such enclitics).

Similarly, adjectivally used demonstratives function as enclitics on the noun phrase.

The comitative, ‘with’, is also an enclitic on the noun phrase. “I go with you” would be rendered as “I you-with go”.

Finally, adverbial clause markers act as enclitics on the thus subordinated clause, coming at the end of the final word in the clause: for example ‘because’ and ‘despite’.

1.11 Adpositions

All adpositions in Old Dwarvish are postpositional. Some of these are used for spatial and temporal terms, although many are enclitics instead (see *Clitics*). Others are more subordinating in nature, such as ‘about’, ‘besides’, ‘since’, and the like. Overall there is a rough but by no means absolute tendency for the spatial meanings to be enclitics and the temporal ones to be postpositions.

1.12 Pronouns

Old Dwarvish maintains independent pronouns, which are commonly used and which take case. It also maintains a system of prefixes for pronominal subjects of verbal clauses, either subjects/experiencers of stative verbs or agents of transitive verbs; these take respectively the neutral and nominative case, as with regular nouns. These pronominal prefixes are obligatory and function effectively the same way as the noun class prefixes on the verb do, to specify the actor in the verbal clause. If a pronominal prefix is used, the independent pronoun is generally omitted, though using both is not strictly ungrammatical and appears sometimes in emphatic or highly formal registers.

The pronominal system is as follows:

CAS	1S	2S	3S	1P	2P	3P
NOM	mau	‘âm	gâr	yur	t’ush	zhim
NTR	mauwâ	‘ammâ	galâ	yorrâ	t’oshâ	zhimmâ
GEN	mwau	‘âm	grâr	yurrur	utshur	zhim
DAT	mūq	‘ammuq	galuq	yurruq	utshuq	zhimmuq
ACC	mwī	‘âmir	grir	yurriir	utshish	zhim
LOC	mwâb	‘âb	grâb	yurbul	t’ubul	zhimbul
ESS	mwâ	‘â	grâ	yoraa	t’oshaa	zhimaa
INS	maunum	‘âm	grâm	yurnum	t’um	zhinnum
ABL	mwâs	‘âs	grâs	yus	t’us	zhimthi

Note: (NB: Besides regular sound change from Proto-Dwarvish, Old Dwarvish pronominal forms in the second person underwent some regularization under the influence of the third and first persons.)

The pronominal prefix system, limited to nominative and neutral case, is as follows:

NOM	ma-	‘a-	ga-	yu-/yo-	t’u-	zhi-
NTR	mwa-	‘a-	gra-	ya-	utsha-	zha-

1.13 Predicate Constructions

Predicate Existentials.

The general or nonspecific form of the existential predicate, as expressed in English with “there is/are”, as well as the predicative expression rendered in English as “it is...” (for example in the sense of ‘it is raining’) are expressed quite differently in Old Dwarvish. The latter uses the special particle or pseudoverb *yuryut* - originally derived from a construction meaning ‘to us/for us we find’ - following a nominal form of the clause to which the existential predicate is to apply. That noun then appears in the accusative case. For example, ‘it is raining’ would be rendered as ‘rain-ACC *yuryut*’.

Any subsequent locative or other clause following the existential (eg ‘there are books on the table’) can be placed freely either before or after the particle, eg ‘book-ACC *yuryut* table-LOC’ or ‘book-ACC table-LOC *yuryut*’. This predicate takes the noun class prefix of the noun given in the accusative only if it is essential/emphatic to emphasize that the noun has plural number (showing some reanalysis of *yuryut* as a proper verb in its own right), e.g. ‘book-ACC NCL.PL-*yuryut* table-LOC’. This is very rarely done with objects, more frequently (but still not commonly) with humanoid agents (‘there are humans on the wall’).

This construction also applies to the existential if it is part of a subordinate clause, e.g. “I believe that there are...”. The pseudoverb *yuryut* does not take any T/A/M; tense/aspect is indicated by combining it with temporal adverbs (‘in the future’, ‘yesterday’, ‘always’ etc.).

Predicate Nominals.

The predicate nominal distinguishes two kinds; permanence and impermanence of the copula complement (i.e., the Y in ‘X is Y’, where both are nouns). In case of the copula complement being impermanent in some semantic fashion, it appears in the essive case; in case of permanence or durability - again depending on semantic context - it appears in the nominative case. The copula subject (ie the ‘X’) is always in the neutral case, as an experiencer. The permanence/impermanence marking is compulsory for predicate nominals.

The predicate element (ie the verb) is zero copula in present indicative, but only for pronominals and humanoid subjects. Otherwise, a form of the verb ‘stay’ is used, which also applies to the habitual present tense. For both past tenses, an otherwise obsolete verb is used originally meaning ‘to be’; for the future tense orientation, the verb ‘become’. Modal conjugation is applied as normal.

Predicate Adjectives.

For some specific functions of adjectives in predicate constructions, such as the resultative and the copredicative, see Adjectives above.

In other respects, it functions just as the predicate nominal described above. The adjective in normal predicate constructions does take a noun class prefix as usual. It may however also acquire an essive suffix to mark impermanence of state, unlike adjectives when used as modifiers which never take case. For predicate adjectives this is optional, but not uncommon.

Predicate Possessives.

The possessive predicate (“X has Y”) is achieved in the form of the oblique: effectively the construction is ‘to X is Y’. The X is placed in the dative case and the Y in the neutral case. The verb in the predicate possessive construction otherwise functions as the nominal and adjective predicate constructions above, with the same quasi-suppletion depending on tense and the zero copula in the present indicative. Naturally, since the cases do not vary, there is no permanence distinction.

Predicate Locatives.

Predicate locatives (“X is in/on/at/etc Y”) behave not unlike predicate nominals. However, all nonfuture tenses use forms of the verb ‘stay’ and all future tenses forms of the verb ‘go, move’, so that there is no zero copula. There is, however, a permanence distinction like the nominal. Normally the copula complement (Y) will appear in the locative case, and the copula subject in the neutral case. However, in the case impermanence is desired to be marked, one combines the locative and essive case suffixes for the copula complement (in that order): e.g. ‘whrishbulaa’ (‘in (the) hand’). For predicate locatives this is optional. Modal conjugation is, again, applied as usual.

1.14 Verbs

General Verbal Morphology.

The basis of the verb is the root form, usually of the shape CVC, and frequently (but not always) monosyllabic. The verb root is normally preceded by the noun class prefix of the subject of the verbal clause or the pronominal prefix, as the case may be. The root is followed by suffixes for tense (with only few aspectual distinctions). Other T/A/M marking is achieved in other ways, as detailed below. Keep in mind that both diachronic and synchronic sound change (allophony) can affect the morphology of the verb after prefixation onto the verb root. The result is that verbal morphology does *not* inflect for person at all if not pronominal, and only for number via the number meaning present in the noun class or pronominal prefix.

Tense/Aspect:

The basic tense structure of Old Dwarvish distinguishes three standard tenses: past, present, and future. These afford no further aspectual distinctions. Beyond this, Old Dwarvish also has two tense-aspect forms that indicate habitual or gnomic past and present, respectively; these have separate (fusional) suffixes indicating tense plus the specific habitual or gnomic aspectual meaning. These evolved from a continuous meaning in the proto-language, but no longer have

that particular function. Finally, there is a near or immediate future tense, again with its own suffix (derived from Proto-Dwarvish ‘comes’). Old Dwarvish does not have a very rich verbal morphology, and does not morphologically distinguish (for example) perfective or imperfective aspect per se.

Further aspectual distinctions can be made with more elaborate constructions, for example using auxiliaries. Most of the time, aspectual distinctions are lexical, so that different aspects of the same verb may have different lexical roots. There is no general imperfective/perfective distinction at all. It is possible to express a continuous meaning of a verb through the combination of the verbal noun followed by an inflection of ‘to stand’ (for active verbs) or ‘to sit’ (for stative verbs). This is, however, only done where the continuous meaning is emphatic (primarily in past tense) and is not nearly as common as e.g. in English. (Something akin to “he was *still* working!” or “he was working all this time!”.)

Mood:

Old Dwarvish distinguishes a few modal forms, primarily the most common ones.

- The indicative stem is the verbal root, followed by an epenthetic -i- where the root ends on a consonant and the suffix does also.
- The imperative is simply the verb root. Here, too, Old Dwarvish does not inherently distinguish number. It is, however, possible to use pronominal prefixes on the imperative to make it more specific: e.g. *yudaw!* (2SG-NOM jump) for ‘jump, you!’ or ‘you, jump!’.
- There is a conditional, which is used in combination with conditional conjunctions like ‘if’ and ‘unless’. It is marked by the conditional suffix. It can also be used standalone in a single verb clause, in which case it has an optative or hortative implication: ‘if only X...’ shading into ‘X should...’.

Verbal Noun:

- The infinitive can only be expressed as a verbal noun. The nominalization is achieved by reduplication of the initial vowel CV, though this may vary due to regular sound change effects. In the more rare cases where the root is not of the CVC pattern, but for example CCV, the final CV may be reduplicated, in each case as a suffix. Verbal nouns are always of noun class XVI. The verbal noun is used rather widely in various constructions in Old Dwarvish, as illustrated below.

Their usage in the sentence varies according to the semantics. For example, in purpose sentences (in order to, so that...), one places the verbal noun in the dative case and adds the ‘for’ postposition to it. Temporal adverbial constructions apply to the verbal noun; an orientation from the past (because, since, after, etc.) implies an ablative combined with the relevant temporal adverb, so that the first clause in ‘because he left, she got angry’ would be rendered as ‘his leave-NOML-ABL because’. (Here the adverb itself may not be omitted.) Also temporally, a common verbal noun construction uses a locative form of the verbal noun and a postposition for ‘at’; this means something like ‘when, at the moment of’ (‘at his coming...’). Another such construction concerns topic: constructions like ‘thinking of...’, ‘speaking of...’ when complemented by a verbal clause (‘thinking of going home’) take the verbal noun in the locative case and a postposition for ‘on’. There are of course various more such postpositional verbal noun constructions, but these are some of the most common ones.

Of a different nature are verbal noun constructions where the verbal noun replaces the regular subject or object. In those cases, they are treated in terms of case as the respective subject or object normally would, including in predicate constructions (e.g. ‘working is dull’).

OLD DWARVISH LEXICON

2.1 Old Zhanîm (Old Dwarvish) Lexicon

Vowels:

a-aa(a:)-â()-au-ě(~)-i-î(i:)-o-ô()-u-û(u:)

Consonants:

b-mb(b)-d-nd(d)-f-fh()-g-h-k-kh(x)-k'-l-m-n-ng(■)-p-p'-q-q'-r-s-sh()-t-th()-t'-v()*-w-whr(r)-y(j)-xh(X)-z-zh()-'()

* note the <v> seems to have freely or unstably (possibly dialectally) varied between /v/ and /w/, with an average somewhere around //. The <l> is fairly 'dark', whereas the <r> is probably around //, with allophonic or dialectal range to // (e.g. in geminates) or even //.

Occasional etymologies or clarifications provided in italics.

Compounding rules:

- *Noun-noun*: NN compounds are head-final. They do not inflect internally.
- *Adjective-noun*: These compounds are by and large NAdj. The adjective takes a compressed form (the first C) of the corresponding prefix if the N ends on a vowel; otherwise, it is fully present in older forms, omitted in newer ones.

For each entry, the root form is given, followed by the grammatical type, the noun class or verbal category (where relevant), and finally a set of basic meanings.

bul adj fat, bloated, swollen

mbyoma n II bee

mbyum n XX honey

daua n II frog

dauâvbul n II toad

dizhuk n VII meal, supper

dizhâzh num six

dug n X bone

dugyû n V vulture

duzh n VII salt

ndâm num one

ndân n I human male, human person

ndun n X (older) sister
fsa num nine
fshish n VIII plant (*gen.*)
fhir n X foot
gimum n V pick, pickaxe, ice axe
harmân n XII river, stream
hâr n XX lake, pool
kokkû n V chicken, hen
krosâsh n VII beer; alcoholic drink
kroshâ n VIII grain (*gen.*); barley
 n XII granary
 n XVII grain (*granule*), grain seed
kru adj bitter
krusvâs n VII bread
khâr n X beard (with moustache); facial hair
khuinnâr num five
khul n IV metal, ore
k'ur n XIX eagle
k'us num four
lammu n XIV song
luruq adj good; fitting (*both lit. and fig.*), appropriate
mammâ n X mother
mân n XII road, path, way
mir n XII field, meadow
mnat n VII fur, animal hair
 n X (body) hair
mnudôg n X skull
mnut n X head
mrîs adj white, bright(-colored)
mum n IV mountain
nashk adj black, dark(-colored)
num n XII land, terrain, territory, domain
ngâzt num ten
ngîs n X nose
ngur adj hard, strong
ngurkhul n IV iron

pappâ n X father
pasī adj long, stretched, extended
pasīshīn n X hare, rabbit (*long-ear*)
pâs n XVII string, rope
qrut n V knife, dagger
q'ayâr adj red, yellow, orange, 'colored'
q'êd num two
q'iqqâs num eight
riz num three
rokhwâr n XIX dragon
ruxh n XX fire
sarrish adj sweet, pleasant
sis n X knee
sq'ân adj new
stush n X body; corpse
sul n VIII nature; the totality of living things
sush n XVI sand; beach
shâq n VII fish
shâr n XII place, area; location, position
shir n XX light
shirkhul n IV gold
shîa n XIV feeling, sensation, experience; sense (*'the five senses'*)
shînum n X ear
tsâr n IV rock, stone
thri n X arm
thrîsis n X elbow
t'ul n V feather
urâz n X tail; consequence, result, outcome; retinue, following
utsi n X tooth, tusk
vathâzh n XX soup, broth, stew
vân n II female dwarf; woman (*in compounds*)
vâng n VIII tree
 n XVII forest
 n XX wood (*material*)

vâz n VII food; meat

wanu n XIV intent, purpose, desire

warrû n V worm

n VII snake

wau n V dog

whrish n X hand

wushira n IV the Sun

wû n XII sky, air (*as surrounding*); weather

yân n I male dwarf; man, person

yī n X eye

yû n V bird

zau n X blood

zika n II animal

zikha adj fast

zim n X (older) brother

zqâs num seven

zhazhir n X baby, infant, (small) child, offspring

zhân n I (dwarf) person, conscious humanoid

zhâr adj heavy; severe, strict; rigorous

‘ashup n XX drink; potable water or other viable liquid; juice

‘is n X heart; centre, middle

OLD ELVISH SYNTAX

3.1 Old Elvish Syntax Tables

(See corresponding info for proto-Elvish. Note that, for the moment, all forms are rendered directly in IPA. I intend to develop a Romanization standard to replace this.)

Old Elvish pronouns distinguish animacy and inanimacy in the third person only. They have dual number, and besides the nominative three other cases, namely accusative, dative, and a comitative/instrumental.

3.1.1 Pronouns

Independent forms:

Person	NOM	ACC	DAT	COM/INS
1SG	wl:*	wlð	w ^w e	wln
2SG	i:ma	i:mað	i:G ^w e	i:man
3SGAN	dana	danið	danG ^w e	dan:
3SGIN	danam	damnið	daG ^w e	damnin
1DU	wlz	wlzið	w ^w e	wlzin
2DU	i:maz	i:mazið	i:mazG ^w e	i:mazin
3DUAN	danaz	danazið	danazG ^w e	danazin
3DUIN	danarm	danarmið	dana ^w e	danarmin
1PL	ml:a	mlð	m ^w e	ml:an
2PL	en	eð	eG ^w e	en
3PLAN	i:l	i:lið	i: ^w e	i:lin
3PLIN	i:lm	i:lmið	i: ^w e	i:lmin

* When the following word begins with a vowel, reduces to wl

Polypersonal bound forms (suffixed):

1SG: -w/**

2SG: -i:

3SGAN: -da

3SGIN: -dam

1DU: -wz

2DU: -i:z

3DUAN: -daz

3DUIN: -dar

1PL: -ml

2PL: -

3PLAN: -i:l

3PLIN: -i:m

** when word final

Polypersonal bound forms are compulsory on the verb. By leaving out the subject, object, or both, one can shift the pragmatic focus as a type of noun incorporation (see below). This is in fact the pragmatically unmarked strategy, but use of independent pronouns does happen to place emphasis on any argument in the clause.

3.1.2 Nouns and Articles

Dual marker (rare nouns, including referring to persons): Prefix zu-

Plural marker (used on nouns only): AN (humanoid, body parts and certain spirits etc.): prenominal plural word l:/l* AN (other, eg animals, other animate nouns): prenominal plural word o:n/o:na* IN: circumfix e...()m, from proto-Elvish ('also ... thing(s)', meaning 'all').

There are however a few irregular plurals that have other forms, e.g. m, m ('thing, things', cf. created by analogy m, m, meaning 'dwarf, dwarves'). Note that for small numbers of subject inanimate nouns (usually 2 or 3, sometimes more in specific contexts) it is considered literary to use the *singular* agreement form of the verb. This also applies to animates in diminutive, in particular contexts (little dogs, little children etc).

Definite article: j(a)-. Acts as a proclitic, either on the noun itself or on any classifier or demonstrative preceding the noun. Note the definite article does *not* take stress, so that the stress pattern shifts one syllable forward. Definite articles are used for ongoing topicality, referring back to an introduced topic, but *not* for generic reference ("the world is a big place").

Old Elvish has frequently (especially literarily) used noun classifiers. They are obligatory when combined with numerals or quantifiers (any, all, etc.). Otherwise they are optional but literarily preferred, especially for plurals. It is sometimes in literary style possible to omit the noun and preserve the classifier, when the noun is implied or obvious. Classifiers precede the noun but come after the numeral, and are not inflected in any way. Naturally they only occur with independent nouns, not incorporated nouns. When they are combined with a definite article, the definite article (ja-) is (pro)cliticized onto the classifier.

Old Elvish also uses noun incorporation of a moderate type (in terms of the categorization developed by Marianne Mithun and others). An incorporated noun form is possible to make it a general, unspecific, instance of a frequently performed thing, etc., as distinct from a specific or referential case, or something unusual that needs specifying. Also, there are many words where the root of the verb and the noun are the same and where only subsequent morphological inflection determines which word class it falls into. In such cases, the verb form of the word may imply the noun form also (e.g. the noun morphology of 'tie' means 'rope' and therefore 'tie' can also imply 'tie with rope' without needing to specify the noun in that case). Finally, there are cases where noun incorporation into a verb changes the lexical meaning of the verb, which represents the beginning of a new phase of noun incorporation, in this stage not yet complete. This corresponds to NI classes I & II in Mithun's classification.

3.1.3 Adjectives

Animate unmarked. Inanimate marker: -n

Adjectives follow nouns.

3.1.4 Demonstratives, numerals, etc.

Demonstratives:

The pronominal demonstrative is a deictic suffix on 3SG or noun forms. These distinguish nearness of the speaker and the hearer as follows:

Near speaker: -p^ha

Near hearer: -e (*of unknown origin*)

Distal: -m

Neutral: -a (*of unknown origin*)

The adnominal demonstrative is formed by a separate word following the noun. It lacks a neutral form:

Near speaker: jap^h (from 'ja p^han', meaning 'the here' in l proto-Elvish)

Near hearer: imas (from 'i:mas', no longer functional locative of 2SG, ie 'at you')

Distal: jmpn (from 'ja mpn', 'the there' in proto-Elvish)

There is a distributive suffix (meaning 'all around, all over the place, all about' etc. When used on a noun instead of the verb, it means 'each', e.g. "each of the elves carried..." etc): -um (from proto-Elvish 'um:a', meaning 'around, about')

Demonstratives and numerals precede nouns.

Numerals cannot be pluralized. They require some independent noun, possibly a placeholder noun, to be associated with. (E.g. 'to three I gave...' becomes 'to three people I gave...')

3.1.5 Adpositions

Adpositions precede nouns. Most, however, appear as derivational morphology: see *Derivational Morphology* below.

3.1.6 Verbs

Stems

-i is the stem for the infinitive and imperative, participles and for passives. This was an old proto-Elvish infinitive that got reanalyzed as the stem form in certain cases and then extended by analogy.

Past stems

Note that all past forms (see above) are based on the past stem, not the nonpast stem, of the verb. These follow apophony (ablaut) patterns, based on the stressed (first) vowel, as follows:

a -> u

-> æ

æ -> o

e ->

-> o

i ->

->

o -> e

->

u -> i

Long vowels, however, keep their form and are unaffected by the ablaut. The ablaut ignores compounding of any kind, including noun incorporation.

Tense

Present/Future: unmarked. Hodiernal: -xar (proto-Elvish 'ixara', 'yesterday') Proximate past: -par (unknown) General past: -t^hu (proto-Elvish verb stem 't^hul-', 'get, receive') Remote past: -qa (proto-Elvish verb stem 'qal-', 'say'; evolved from evidential to tense)

For verb stems ending on a consonant, the -i stem is also inserted in past tense.

Aspect

The perfective aspect is unmarked. Imperfective marker (follows tense): -o. Imperfective is also used for habituais. Strong completive marker ('all the way, completely, totally'): preverbal particle *tul* (from past stem of *tali*, 'finish' -> *tuli*)

Mood

Infinitive: stem + -ar. (The -ar form comes from the postverbal particle *ar*, meaning 'in order to'.)

Imperative: Declined like infinitive but with person prefixes. Imperatives can also have a softer obligation meaning, 'should/must/ought... ', which are the only (English) meaning for non-second person forms. With a past tense stem it implies epistemic necessity/inference, ('must have X...')

Ability/Possibility:

- Preverbal marker *t^hul* (derived from 'to get' in proto-Elvish), indicating physical ability ('can, able to...'), situational possibility, and permission
- Preverbal marker *alvrin*, derived from 'knowing' in proto-Elvish, indicating mental ability ('can, know how to...');
- Epistemic possibility ('could be, might be') is expressed with the preverbal particle *nmjaz*, derived from proto-Elvish 'it suffices', with a normally inflected verb.

Optative:

Auxiliary/modal verb function of inflected *aumi* 'wish' combined with infinitive acting as optative.

The simple sentence is: 'wish.1SG.NPST go.GER.3SG.NPST' -> "I want him to go" (I wish his going). Contrast with the optative meaning: "may he go, I hope he goes, would that he would go": 'wish.NPST.1SG.AN.3SG.DAT go', with an infinitive of the verb and the object of the wish, if any, in the dative (I wish for/to him (that) to go).

Frequentative/Iterative:

A preverbal marker *enno*, derived from proto-Elvish ('*hea nno*', 'stand/stay +at' in the imperfective), combined with the infinitive of the verb and the auxiliary 'to stand' or 'to lie', depending on whether the so conjugated verb is active or stative respectively. (The auxiliary can therefore duplicate the original meaning due to reanalysis, and a finite verb being required.)

E.g. 'stand.NPST.1SG FREQ miss.DETR.INF' -> "I keep missing" or "I miss all the time". A different word permitted word order is FREQ INF AUX.

Evidential:

There is one evidential marker, for direct sight of an ongoing object or situation, a main clause initial proclitic *lo*: derived from proto-Elvish ‘I see’ (‘wl: o:n’)

Standard Forms

Reflexive: -su(l) (from proto-Elvish ‘suls’, ‘body, self’)

Participle: ‘Xing’, in the participial phrase sense of ‘while doing X’, is indicated by a gerund form given the comitative suffix (“with the Xing”). Otherwise, the imperfective serves the progressive aspect purpose (‘I am/was walking’).

Gerund form: -ar (derived from Proto-Elvish -ara participle). Combines with person and tense markers. Contrasts with infinitive form (which has neither), and is used for nominalizations, also in combination with adpositional derivation. Also an already old fashioned or literary form of the ‘should’ clause appears with a gerund, such: ‘always have.2.SG.GER’ = ‘you should always have, make sure you always have’ etc.

Passive: there are two detransitivizers, which vary by verb. The detransitivizer combined with an obligatory agent in the instrumental case creates a passive. They have evolved from a proto-form, resp. a benefactive and a malefactive. The detransitivizer in question used for the verb depends on which of the proto-forms was most commonly associated with it in proto-Elvish, e.g. ‘cut’ with a malefactive, ‘give’ or ‘help’ with a benefactive, etc. This is because in proto-Elvish these acted a kind of middle between applicatives and derivation (like in German) and therefore over time came to allow intransitive usage (eg ‘to give-for’, or ‘to cut-attheexpenseof’, no longer requiring an object). That form then morphed into an intransitive in Old Elvish. The default form is the one derived from the malefactive.

The benefactive derived form is a suffix -s:a

The malefactive derived form is a suffix -wa (cf. proto-Elvish $q^w ar$ = ‘cut’, which is thought to be the remote origin of the malefactive)

3.1.7 Clausal:

Negation:

Proclitic on first verb, noun, adjective, demonstrative, or pronoun: *emin-* (from proto-Elvish ‘e min’, ‘and not-be’)

Qs:

- Polarity enclitic on subject, with SVO word order: -ami:n (from proto-Elvish ‘or not-be’, derived from negation marker, with vowel lengthening as result of emphatic shift)
- Interrogative enclitic on subject, with SVO word order: -a (from defunct proto-Elvish verb for ‘do’)

Relative clause markers:

- Interrogative pronoun (inflected for case and noun class): *ær* (*pl. æri*) (‘who, what’), mainly used in independent pronominal position
- Verbal suffix -da (*orig. via ‘da+ær’*), forming a relative form of the verb (‘the one who died...’ -> DEF.man die.PST.3.SG.REL)
- A third form is e.g. ‘DEF.house live.GER.PST.1SG’ -> “the house where I lived”, “the house which I lived in” (lit. “the house of my past living”) for subordinate clauses involving literal or figurative locational prepositional complements (in which, against which, to which, etc, contextually to be determined). Note the order change from the usual predicate-complement structure.

3.1.8 Possessives:

- Possessives are marked by the possessive enclitic -u, which attaches to the first noun of the possessed phrase, followed by the (non-obligatory) pronoun markers.

E.g. ‘I get the dog’s big white bone’ = *t^hulw eulnda galau ail yasi:ln:il* (get.1SG bone.3SG snow.like big DEF.dog)

3.1.9 Adverbials:

There's some adverbial/conjuncting things that serve primarily temporal and sequential purposes. These are generally clitics which can be attached to any word in the clause for relevant emphatic effect, such as:

- 'Then, and then, subsequently' is the proclitic e:-
- 'Then, at that moment' is the proclitic a:-

3.1.10 Derivational Morphology

Old Elvish has a great deal of lexically specific derivational suffixes, which precede TAM markers. These can be attached to the basic roots and by doing so interact with relevant nominal or verbal morphology, although some can be attached to either; as well as numerals and other word classes where relevant ('to three were given rings...'). There are also some more 'general' derivational forms, such as locative ones.

The derivational forms can also appear as parts of predicate constructions when combined with verbal morphology, e.g. ('shoe.inside.(NONPAST).3SG snail' = the snail is inside the shoe).

Note that often it is also possible to express the same meaning nonderivationally. Generally, this will have topicalizing or emphatic effect.

Nominal morphology

- Diminutive: -il
- Augmentative: -ul

(Note that diminutives usually have a positive association and augmentatives a negative one. Diminutives and augmentatives can also be used on adjectives to mean 'a little' or 'very' respectively, with a possible but not obligatory contextual meaning of 'too much' of either.)

- Collective or cluster, belonging together: -mn
- Surface, area, room, place for doing: -tal
- Ex-, former: i- (*past root*)
- Food: -al, -ah
- -like, akin to: -au
- Time: C/_# -> s (e.g. *nathail* 'moon' -> *nathais* 'month')
- Stative nominalizer (state of being): -ln, -n
- Habitual or institutionalized doer or performer of some V (for persons only), or producer or effecter of some V (for objects), or creature identified primarily with some specific action (for animals, spirits etc.; alternative to imperfective habitual verb form as noun): -sul
- Holding, containing (or holder, container): dun-

Verbal morphology

- Intermittently, occasionally: -k^wa
- Intensifier: reduplication of root (usually first V or CV)
- Causative: s-
- Diminutive/de-intensifier: -un or -n directly after the stem, before any verbal morphology. This indicates a semantic form of the verb with reduced intensity, e.g. 'a bit, a little'. Sometimes this has lexically specific meaning. It is not productive on all verbs. Ex.: o:n 'see' -> o:nn 'glance at, glimpse'; n: 'stand, stay' -> n:n 'stay briefly'; nd 'sleep' -> ndn 'nap (*verb*)'

- Together, joining two things: zu- (cf. dual on certain nouns)
- Again ('re-'): +duplicate following consonant, else h-

Locatives

- At (direction of), toward, onto: -(i)ð
- To, for, into: -G^we
- With (com. and ins.), using: -(i)n
- Forward, in a straight line: -kau
- Out, away: o-
- On, at (static), on top of: -efe
- Far (both adj. and adv.): -ym (from distal demonstr. morphology)
- Near, close (as above): -yap^h
- Around, to the back of: -

OLD ELVISH LEXICON

Note that when a word with verbal and nominal inflection has the verbal form semantically joined with the nominal (e.g. ‘tie (with) rope’), the nominal form is normally omitted in usage unless emphasis is intended. It is as if it were zero-incorporated.

- = the final vowel is omitted if the next word begins with a vowel, diphthong, or w.

Animacy is indicated for nouns. Otherwise the noun is inanimate.

Word classes as indicated roughly correspond to the class the free root would belong to in English. However, in Old Elvish adjectives do not form a separate class as such and most roots can carry both nominal and verbal inflection.

Note adj-noun compounds are left-headed (‘rootbitter’) while noun-noun compounds are right-headed (‘firestone’).

Romanization key:

- long vowels and consonants doubled
- : î
- : â
- : ê
- : ô
- : ë
- æ: æ
- : sh
- : th
- ð: dh
- j: y

4.1 Lexicon:

ae *n* *an* water; pond, lake

ail *adj* big, large; much, a lot

v enlarge **êsail**

ar *part* in order to

ath *v* dwell, reside, live in

n dwelling, living place, house, home **athil**

aul *v* jump, leap, pounce

aum *v* wish, desire, hope

n wish, desire, hope

aunn *v* eat

aus *v* face, stand/be opposite; oppose, gainsay, contest; rebel

n an face

auva *adj* bitter

n bitterroot (*Elvish edible plant*) **vaiauva**

aawan *n an* hair (*on head*)

âm (*pl. êm*) *n* thing, object (*also placeholder object*)

ânn *v* stand, stay

n an leg (*pl. ênn*)

n an dog **siilânnil** ('*little four-legs*')

âz *n an* eye (*pl. êz*)

ael *v* know, understand, comprehend (*PE *aell*)

n fact; truth; reality; essence

n knowledge, understanding **ællar**

deôn *num* two (*replaces proto-Elvish 'zul'*)

n an twin

din *v* affix, stick

e *conj* and, also

epë *n an* lower arm

eril *num* six

eyan *num* eleven

eun *n* bone (*PE: *eeln*)

n skeleton **eumnôn**

eus *num* one

adj single, alone

gala *n* snow

Gae *n an* fish (*generic*)

n fish trap/net **dunGae**

G^wethë *prep* to, for

G^winë *n an* navel

G^wôn *n/adj* gold

hal *v* run, chase, hunt

n an wolf **haxalo** ('*runs + intens. + hab. impf.*')

hon(ë) * *det* all, every
idhe *v* come (to), arrive (at), reach
il *n* place (*placeholder*)
ilë *n an* nose (P*E *hilên*)
in *v* smell (*trans.*) (PE **hiln*)
v stink **êsin**
inti *prep* with
iri *num* three
iril *num* eight
iriyân *num* thirteen
ixrath *adv* yesterday
înd *v* sleep
n sleep
v nap **indôn**
n nap **indôn**, **indil**
kal *n an* head (*pl.* **kol**)
n skull **ikal**
kawa *n* copper
kii *v* shoot, release (*bow*)
n bow
koleen *v* take, remove
kôlla *n an* ear (*pl.* **kella**)
kôm *n an* neck
lau *v* (elf) woman, wife
lîmma *n an* hand (*pl.* **lumma**)
lîn *n an* elf (*generic term, not gendered*)
llath *v* laugh
mael *n an* leaf; page; scroll
mêsh *n/adj* iron (tool)
mi *v* move; walk, go
v move (*trans.*), push **êsmi**
missalôn *nan* music (*lit.* ‘state of being moved’)
mizâl *n* axe
nath *n/adj* silver
n an moon **nathail** (‘big silver’)
n an month **nathais**

n an cat **nathailêz** (*‘mooneyes’*)

oon *v* see, observe

n sight, view

ônd *n* stone, rock

p^haella *nan* horse

p^ha *det* here

p^henn *n* feather

qal *v* say, speak; recite; sing

n an language, speech (*abstr.*); song

n an epic, legend, myth (*‘cycle’*) **qalmôn**

n an bird **qalo** (*‘sings + hab. impf.’*)

qaann *n* horn

adj hard

q^war *v* cut

âq^war *v* chop (into pieces) (*thing-cut*)

rath *v* burn (*act.*) (*stat. uses reflex.*)

n an fire

n in flint, pyriterathônd (*firestone*)

rila *num* five

rilyan *num* fifteen

roa *v* bleed, drain (*act.*) (*stat. uses reflex.*)

n an blood

sâsh *v* tie, bind

n rope

zusâsh *v* tie together (smth. to another th.)

sêth *v* pull (out), draw out

siil *num* four

siilyan *num* fourteen

siiril *num* nine

sulîs *n* self; person; nature, essence; character

shae *n* bark; book (*PE *ssae*)

shar *n* mountain

sheth *v* drink (*PE *seth*)

n drink

shil *n an* tongue

tissaa *n an* knee

t^h ul v get, receive, obtain

n gift

thâm (pl. **thêm**) nan dwarf

thaer pron who, what (pl. **thaeri**)

und n tooth (pl. **ônd**)

us nan foot (pl. **ôs**)

van v shine, gleam, glitter

n light, sheen

n an sun **vavano** ('shines intensely+hab. impf.')

n an day **vavas**

vai n an root, tuber; origin

vaa n an mouth; (fig.) opening

wai n an upper arm

wela n tree

yana num ten

yanyana num twenty

yilth v speed, hasten

n speed

adj/adv fast **yilthin**

zeu n an ant

zul v split, divide

zuril num seven

zuyan num twelve