

Dveze the Language

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Speedlang Challenge #6

Introduction

This grammar was written for Speedlang Challenge 6, organised by Miacomet in April of 2020. The time limit is two weeks; these are the requirements, and brief statements of how I've met them:

- *Neutralization of some phonemes in certain environments.* I don't know how not to do this. There are some examples in [§1.4.8](#).
- *A productive morphophonological process involving suprasegmental features.* The most obvious thing is changes to vowel length conditioned by footing and stress.
- *Sound symbolism or sound iconicity of some sort.* Er, does reduplication count? Besides that, there's a token comment about how to sound cute in [§1.5](#), and I guess the verb **vuuʃ** *to blow (of wind)* is fairly onometapoetic.
- *Show some kind of unusual agreement phenomenon.* Wh-agreement is reasonably unusual, I think, and there are various twists and turns elsewhere.
- *Clearly distinguish factive and non-factive complement clauses.* Maybe not clearly. There are a few different sorts of complement clause, including a sort of nominalisation that's clearly factive, but the distinction isn't grammaticalised in a consistent way across all complement-selecting heads and all clause types. See [§7](#) for details.
- *Incorporate noun classifiers or measure words in some construction.* See especially [§2.5](#).

I've spent more time on some of these than others, but have tried to tick all the boxes.

As for the required tasks:

1. This document is the documentation.
2. I've translated five 5MOYD sentences, see examples [\(2\)](#), [\(11\)](#), [\(71\)](#), [\(73a\)](#), [\(76\)](#).
3. There's a token discussion of kinship in [§9](#).
4. I didn't do the extra credit assignment. In fact I've ignored the challenge's framing story entirely, I'm situating the language instead in my usual world.

In fact Dveze is spoken within what I'm thinking of as the Gagur linguistic area, centering on the Gagur shrine and the Gagur language. It's also in contact with the Qisə languages. The geography isn't worked out in detail, but I know that Gagur shrine is significantly elevated in what is otherwise a fairly flat region; that below the shrine there's a river that runs into a valley where it widens to form a substantial lake; and that eventually this river feeds into the Akiatu River. None of the people in this region are truly sedentary; possibly the only continuously-inhabited place known to Dveze speakers is the Gagur shrine. Roughly speaking, though, Gagur speakers inhabit the higher ground,

Dveze speakers spend much of their time by the river, upriver from the valley and lake; and it's in that valley and around that lake that you'll mostly find Qisə speakers.

There's a definite linguistic area here. Dveze's alternation between VSO and SVO is quite similar to Gagur's, both make significant (though very different) use of classifiers. Phonologically Dveze has a lot more in common with the Qisə languages, particularly Vædty Qys, which, like Dveze, has a harmony system involving both retroflex and uvular consonants—though Dveze's system specifically involves pharyngealisation, maybe suggesting some connection to the Nḏaḥaḥ languages. (But I've derived the Dveze system from an earlier language that completely lacked it, so direct inheritance from Nḏaḥaḥ seems unlikely. —Maybe this is actually an Akam linguistic area...)

Dveze has a moderate degree of synthesis in the verb, which agrees in person and number with the subject, and distinguishes three spatial 'tenses' as well as three directional 'aspects.' Many verbs have classifier-like suffixes that characterise the patient argument. Negation can be expressed either with a preverbal particle or with an auxiliary that hosts tense and agreement inflectios. Pronominal objects are normally expressed with second position clitics, which are often but certainly not always hosted by the verb itself.

Nouns are more analytic. There are no articles. Bare nouns occur freely, and can be interpreted as indefinite, definite, or generic, depending on context. More complex noun phrases can show some tricky interactions between deixis, possession, and quantification. Classifiers are obligatory with most quantifiers, including numbers.

In neutral clauses objects consistently follow verbs, though when there's an overt subject both VSO and SVO constituent orders are common. There are prepositions rather than postpositions, and it's natural, though not exactly theory-neutral, to analyse the noun phrase as head-initial.

I think Dveze's two most unusual features, typologically speaking, are its spatial tense and the fact that it has both numerical classifiers and verbs that agree in number with their subject.

Some conventions

Normally when I mention individual lexical items (whether in glosses or in running text) I'll give what I take to be the underlying form, but in other contexts, I'll give the surface form. (This will mostly affect the extent to which my transcriptions show the effects of pharyngeal harmony.) I won't indicate syllabification and stress.

In glosses, I usually won't try to analyse the agreement/tense/polarity complex morphologically. Normally it's easy enough to segment an individual form, but you end up with a lot of allomorphs and quite an analytic mess.

I normally won't try to convey Dweze's spatial tense distinctions in my English translations, for those you'll have to depend on my discussion and on the glosses. Conversely, Dweze sentences are normally neutral with respect to temporal tense, and I won't try to convey that either; normally I'll just pick a tense that seems reasonable.

Glossing abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ABL	ablative
ADJZR	adjectiviser
ALL	allative
APPL	applicative
ASSOC	associative particle
AWAY	centrifugal (directional aspect)
BACK	restorative (directional aspect)
CL	classifier
COME	venitive (directional aspect)
DIST	distal
EXIST	existential copula
GO	andative (directional aspect)
IRR	irrealis
LOC	locative
MED	medial
NEG	negative
NMLZ	nominaliser
PASS	passive
PL	plural
PLAC	pluractional
POSS	possessor
PROX	proximal (deictic)
REDUP	reduplication
REFL	reflexive
S	singular
WH	<i>wh</i> agreement

1 Phonology

1.1 Inventory

Here are the consonants, given in a practical orthography that departs from the IPA in mostly obvious ways:

	Bilabials	Alveolars	Retroflexes	Velars	Postvelars
<i>Nasals</i>	m	n	ɳ	ŋ	(ŋ)
<i>Plosives</i>	p b	t d ts dz	ʈ ɖ ʈʂ ɖʂ	k g	ɣ (g)
<i>Fricatives</i>	(f) v	(θ) ð s z	ʂ (z)		ħ
<i>Oral sonorants</i>		r l	ɽ (l)		

Table 1: Dveze consonants. Surface phonemes that do not occur in underlying forms are in parentheses.

The main orthographic departure is to flag ‘dark’ (retroflex, postvelar) consonants with a dot, a subdot in all forms other than **ṅ ḡ**. (I also use **ḥ** though the most common pronunciation is [χ], and **f v** in place of **ϕ β**.)

The distinction between dark and light segments is fundamental to Dveze phonology, among both consonants and vowels. Dark phonemes are all secondarily pharyngealised, though they differ from their light counterparts in primary features as well: coronals are retroflex rather than alveolar, dorsals are uvular rather than velar, and vowels are somewhat lower (you might think of them as +RTR).

The labial consonants and **ḏ** are the only segments (including vowels) that are not counted as either light or dark. This makes them neutral (and transparent) to pharyngeal harmony. Phonetically, none of these segments gets pharyngealised.

Table 1 includes six parenthesised consonants. These are consonants that (as I analyse things) do not occur in underlying forms but are part of Dveze’s surface phonology. They are not mere allophones, because they are produced by processes that also result in neutralisations. For example, **ɭ** occurs only when **l** is subject to pharyngeal harmony; I nonetheless treat **ɭ** as a (surface) phoneme because the very same process neutralises the distinction between, say, **r** and **ɾ**, and is therefore not just an allophonic or phonetic rule.

Phonetically, most segments are about what you’d expect, but some comments might be helpful. **f v** are strictly bilabial, and **θ ḏ** are dental rather than alveolar. **r** is a trill, but **ɾ** is an approximant. **ḡ** is [ɣ] more often than it’s [g] (but the phonology clearly treats it as the voiced counterpart of **ḵ**). **ḥ** varies between [χ] and actual [h]. **ḵ** is just [q].

There’s also a phonetic glottal stop that’s inserted to fill empty syllable onsets. It could be considered part of Dveze’s surface phonology, but I’ll leave it out of my transcriptions.

Next we have the vowels:

	Front	Nonfront
<i>High</i>	i (i)	u (u)
<i>Mid</i>	e ɛ	o ɔ
<i>Low</i>		a (a)

Table 2: Dveze vowels.

There are three vowels that occur only in surface forms. They can result from (but never trigger) pharyngeal harmony, which, as noted above, as a phonological rather than an allophonic process.

The dark vowels (flagged with a subdot) are pharyngealised, and also differ from their light counterparts in primary quality, something like [ɪ ʊ ɛ ɔ ɑ] rather than [i u e o ɐ]. The front vowels also tend to get backed a bit under the influence of neighbouring retroflex consonants, to the point where the vowel in (say) **ṭɛ** gets very close to the vowel in **ta**.

1.2 Phonotactics

On the surface, all syllables require an onset, though this can be a high vowel rather than a consonant, and word-initially it can be an epenthetic glottal stop.

The onset can be complex. Both elements in a complex onset are always true consonants, never a high vowel or a glottal stop. They are never underlyingly pharyngealised (though can become so as a result of harmony). The second element is always **v**, **z**, or **l**; only the first of these can follow a coronal consonant. **v** and **z** are sometimes devoiced when clustering after a voiceless obstruent.

Given the existence of clusters in **z**, you might wonder why I do not treat **ts dz** as clusters. The knockdown argument here is that reduplication treats onset clusters differently from single phonemes, and it treats **dz** as a single phoneme but (say) **bz** as a cluster. For example, **bzamu** *crush* reduplicates to **babzamu**, but **dzelo** *dance* reduplicates to **dzedzelo**—the process treats **dz** as a unit but separates **b** from **z**.

Underlyingly all vowels can be long, but long **ɛ ɔ** diphthongise to **ɛə ɔə**. The diphthongs **ɛɪ ɔɪ** are also possible only with pharyngealised vowels, while **ai au** are never underlyingly pharyngealised but can become **aj aɥ** as a result of harmony.

Morphophonological alternations suggest that all consonants can occur in coda, but there are several processes that tend to simplify coda options: **r** always becomes **ɾ**, obstruents lose voicing contrasts before another obstruent, and nasals lose some contrasts; also geminate consonants are also disallowed. Finally, syllabification will always prefer an onset cluster to a coda consonant, where there's a choice.

1.3 Stress

Stress is moraic trochaic, calculated from the right, with primary stress going to the rightmost foot. Feet are strictly bimoraic, so HL feet are disallowed (cf. §1.4.5). A light word-initial syllable can remain unfooted and unstressed (but cf. §1.4.6).

For the purposes of stress calculation, only vowels count as moraic, so heavy syllables are just those that contain a long vowel or vowel sequence; coda consonants are irrelevant.

1.4 Processes

1.4.1 Coda **r**

Coda **r** always becomes **ɾ**. This can feed pharyngeal harmony.

1.4.2 Coda nasals

Coda **n ŋ** become **ŋ**. Phonologically, this probably amounts to losing their place features entirely.

Non-labial nasals also assimilate in place to a following consonant (including a following labial consonant). This happens consistently within a word, optionally across clitic boundaries, and occasionally in fast speech across word boundaries.

The two processes must be considered distinct, since the first can bleed pharyngeal harmony whereas the second is fed by it. (For examples, see §1.4.8.)

You'll notice that neither process affects **m** (and neither does pharyngeal harmony, for that matter).

1.4.3 Coda voicing

Coda obstruents lose contrastive voicing before another obstruent, in the same environments that trigger nasal assimilation.

1.4.4 Pharyngeal harmony

The phonologically active feature in Dveze's dark/light contrast is secondary pharyngealisation, and it is active in a pair of harmony processes. The first occurs within metrical feet: if any segments in a metrical foot is underlyingly pharyngealised, then all other segments with pharyngealised counterparts harmonise. The second process triggers the same changes, but within consonant clusters; it is active primarily within words, but sometimes also across clitic boundaries, or across regular word boundaries in fast speech. The two processes must be considered distinct, since the first can feed the second but the second cannot feed the first (see §1.4.8).

The labial consonants do not distinguish light and dark, and are transparent to pharyngeal harmony. **ð** is a bit of a special case, since it originated from a sound change **z**→**ð** and there are alternations that seem to treat it as the pharyngealised counterpart of **z**. But this is no longer productive, **z** usually alternates with **ẓ**, and **ð** never triggers pharyngeal harmony on its own.

One more subtlety: all of **ẓ** **ḷ** **ŋ̣** **g̣** can surface as a result of pharyngeal harmony, but none can trigger it; this is a big part of the reason I take them to be surface phonemes only. (In coda position **ẓ** **g̣** can also result from voicing assimilation.)

1.4.5 Syllables losing weight

The strict requirement that feet be bimoraic can require heavy syllables to become light. This is pretty simple: long vowels become short, and diphthongs become mid vowels with predictable frontness and pharyngealisation.

A long vowel in a stem-initial syllable will also shorten if a monosyllabic prefix is added, ensuring that the prefix can be footed. Prefixes with both monomoraic and bimoraic allomorphs will select their monomoraic allomorphs when room can be made for them this way. This rule can be fed by CV reduplication.

1.4.6 Syllables gaining weight

Sometimes a light syllable will become heavy, always by lengthening its vowel, except that long **ẹ** **ọ** break to **ẹạ** **ọạ**. This can occur to satisfy the requirement that phonological words be at least bimoraic. It can also happen optionally with unfooted word-initial syllables, to allow the syllable to be footed. This is never done with prefixes, however.

1.4.7 Resyllabification

Within prosodic phrases (roughly speaking), a morpheme-final consonant will be resyllabified if the following morpheme begins in a vowel. I'm inclined to say that no other resyllabification takes place, so that prefixing (say) **ab-** to **zab** would leave **b** in the first syllable, and create a potential contrast with monomorphemic **abzab** (in which the **bz** would be an onset cluster). But so far I don't have the vocabulary to really be sure about this, and I'm not sure what phonetic difference it would make, given that coda consonants are not moraic. (One possible case: the prefix is instead **ap**, but the prefixed form is **.abzab.**, with the coda **p** assimilating in voicing, though **pz** is a legal onset cluster.) Possibly relevant, it's reasonable to think that **oble sister** and **gile brother** might have started out as morphologically complex, with a shared bit **le**; but even if so, **oble** is now syllabified **o.ble**.

Incidentally, the fact that resyllabification occurs only with apparently vowel-initial morphemes is a pretty good reason to think that they really are vowel-initial and that the glottal stops that fill in empty onsets are truly epenthetic.

1.4.8 Rule ordering

The two sorts of pharyngeal harmony can interact in somewhat complex ways both with each other and with the rules concerning nasals and **r**. So let's see how that works.

There are cases where suffixation reveals a coda **ɾ** to be **r** underlyingly, as when **gvaarɾ hunt (something)** becomes **gvaarobi hunt (a place)**. This example also shows that derived coda **ɾ** can trigger foot-level pharyngeal harmony; the rule turning coda **r** into **ɾ** must therefore apply before pharyngeal harmony.

Meanwhile, with a different classifying suffix, **gvaar** becomes **gvaarɾkado**. The same classifier occurs elsewhere as **kado**; its initial **k** has become **ɕ** under the influence of the preceding **ɾ**, but this has not affected the vowels in the suffix. This illustrates the fact that pharyngeal assimilation within clusters cannot feed foot-based pharyngeal assimilation.

The nominalising prefix **an** provides good examples of how pharyngeal assimilation interacts with coda nasals. That its consonant is underlyingly **ŋ** can be seen in forms such as **anil growth**, from **il to grow**: none of the other segments can trigger pharyngeal assimilation, so the **ŋ** must be underlying. The forms **andzelo dancing** (from **dzelo to dance**) shows that a coda retroflex nasal must lose pharyngealisation before pharyngeal harmony comes into play; presumably it has been mapped to **ŋ** (which is what it would be word-finally) before assimilating to the following consonant. Finally, **anɾara eating (head-shaped things)** is a complex case in which the **ŋ** must lose pharyngealisation before foot-level harmony comes into play (otherwise the initial vowel should be **a**), but regain it as a result of assimilating to the following consonant.

1.5 Baby talk

For a while I've kind of wanted a language with a cute or baby-directed register that involved pharyngealising absolutely everything, and given that this challenge calls for sound symbolism, I guess Dveze is it.

I won't be working this out in detail at the moment, but here are a few possible corollaries:

- Plosives also tend to get glottalised.
- There'll need to be a substantial chunk of vocabulary that does not underlyingly contain any dark segments, but which will be common in cute talk. Like, names for animals and such.
- In effect, you could end up having pharyngealisation used to form diminutives of a good number of nouns.
- Also possibly proper names, on both the preceding points: I guess it could be pretty common to avoid dark segments in given names, with pharyngealisation and glottalisation used to form cute or familiar or diminutive variants. (So maybe Govdi's intimates would call him ԳօՎճի, for example.)

Pharyngealisation is cute, right?

1.6 Diachronics

This is pretty shallow diachrony, but it's enough to set up some patterns and some alternations.

Table 3 shows the consonant inventory of pre-Dveze. Notable are the ab-

	Bilabials	Alveolars	Velars
<i>Nasals</i>	m	n	ŋ
<i>Plosives</i>	p b	t d ts dz	k g
<i>Fricatives</i>	v	s z	x
<i>Oral sonorants</i>		r l	

Table 3: Pre-Dveze consonants.

sences both of **ǰ** and of the retroflex and uvular series, as well as the presence of a velar fricative.

The vowel system was also somewhat different, with no height contrast among the mid vowels, but a contrast between **æ** and **ɑ**.

One big thing is the complete lack of the dark/light contrast.

There's also a mystery phoneme, by its behaviour maybe a pharyngeal glide, though maybe it was just a glottal word-finally; it occurred only after vowels.

Phonotactically the main difference from Dveze is that **i** and **u** regularly occurred as onglides, and could follow any consonant (though not an onset cluster). All vowels could occur long, and there were also diphthongs **æi ei au ou**. I think that in coda **r** was already allophonically **ɾ**, retroflex and probably at least uvularised if not yet exactly pharyngealised.

Process-wise, **r** would become **l** before onglide **i**, any **æ** next to the mystery phoneme would become **ɑ**, and coda nasals simplified in the same way they do in Dveze.

Here's what happens.

- Lots of high vowels become secondary articulations. This affects all on-glides, as well as word-final short vowels (which are always unstressed) that do not follow consonant clusters. Former **i** is now palatalisation on the preceding consonant, former **u** is now rounding.
- In unstressed open syllables, **u** drops before **v** and **i** before **l**, in this case leaving no secondary articulation on the preceding consonant.
- The mystery phoneme drops word-finally. (It's job there was just to preserve some final high vowels.)
- **e**→**i** **æ**→**e** with a palatalised onset in the next syllable. Other vowels, in particular **a**, are not affected.
- **g^j**→**j** **g^w**→**b^w** **ŋ^w**→**m^w** **l^w**→**l** **r^j**→**lj**.
- Palatalisation just drops.
- Rounded alveolars (sibilant or not) become retroflex; rounded velars become uvulars; otherwise rounding just drops.
- The same shifts (alveolar to retroflex, velar to uvular) take place before **a**.
- The low vowels merge.
- The mystery consonant drops in all contexts. Adjacent **e o** have become **ɛ ɔ**, phonemicising that contrast. I don't know the full details of how the resulting vowel sequences get resolved, but the diphthongs **ɛa ɔa** might well date from this point (though maybe for now you just get long **ɛ ɔ**).
- Pharyngealisation starts spreading, initially just within individual syllables.
- **z**→**ð**.
- Some syllables lose pharyngealisation. Basically, if the syllable's only potential pharyngealisation triggers are among **ð l ŋ ġ i u a**, then pharyngealisation is lost. As a result **ð** becomes unquestionably phonemic (it contrasts with **z** in nonpharyngeal syllables), but the other listed segments are now predictable variants of **l ŋ ġ i u a**.
- Pharyngealisation now spreads through the whole foot.
- Loss of **x**, with resolution of resulting vowel sequences somehow, ideally not in exactly the same way as when the mystery consonant was lost. (But former **x^w** lives on in **h**.)
- Somewhere in there, long **ɛ ɔ** break to **ɛa ɔa**, whereas **ei ou** monophongise to long **e o** (but **ɛi ɔu** remain distinct).
- You start getting pharyngeal harmony in consonant clusters.

That's a bit convoluted, and the consequences for Dveze's derivational morphology are sometimes unexpected. But overall it's not too bad, I think.

It'll also get affected a bit, and certainly reinforced, by borrowings. Just to take an obvious example, Vædty Qyş has a sound change **d**→**ð** just about the right time to provide an additional source for **ð**. (It's also got **b**→**v**, for that matter.)

2 The noun phrase

The noun phrase can be maximally simple, consisting of just a bare noun. But as we'll see it can also get quite complex.

2.1 Bare nouns

The noun phrase can consist of a simple bare noun (and this is very common). Such a noun phrase can be definite or indefinite, specific or nonspecific. They also do not distinguish singular or plural. Er, and that's all I have to say about this.

2.2 Descriptive and phrasal modifiers

I don't have much to say about these either except that they always follow the head noun and in a generally unsurprising order.

2.3 Possession

A possessed noun takes a prefix that agrees with the possessor (cf. [Table 5](#)). The morphophonology is predictable but maybe worth reviewing.

1SING **ja-** and 2SING **ma-** will lose the vowel only before another **a**. Before any other vowel you get a diphthong, which might then have to reduce to a mid vowel because of Dveze's stress rules.

1PL **its-** becomes **idz-** before a voiced obstruent.

2PL **eri-** becomes **er-** before **i** and **il-** before another vowel.

3SING **de-** loses its vowel before any other vowel. In principle you might expect diphthongisation when followed by **i** in a pharyngeal context, but that doesn't actually happen.

3PL **u** becomes **g** before another **u** and nonsyllabic (pronounced and written **w**) before any other vowel.

The possessor itself can be pro-dropped; pronominal possessor's are usually retained only for focus or in possessor raising constructions. If not pro-dropped, it always precedes the head noun.

Here are some examples: **govdi ukaptu** *Govdi's scraper*, **ukaptu** *his/her scraper*, **govdi vadok ukaptu** *Govdi's one scraper*, **vadok govdi ukaptu** *one scraper of Govdi's*. (A **kaptu** is a tool used to prepare animal hides.)

As these examples show, you get different interpretations when a number is present, depending on whether the possessor precedes or follows the number. There's a general rule here. If a noun phrase includes a classifier, together with the quantifying expression that goes with the classifier, then if there's anything

to the left of that, this forces a specific interpretation. In the same context, it's also possible to drop the number **vai one**. I'll come back to this.

2.4 Deixis

Dveze deictics contrast proximal **weez**, medial **migaz**, and distal **waað**. (The medial is actually a sort of second person deictic, picking out things near the addressee; but I don't know a good name for that sort of deictic.)

These deictic elements can either precede or follow a possessor. You also get the same interactions with classifiers as you do with possessors. When a deictic occurs in a specific noun phrase, it'll often be appropriate to think of it as a demonstrative.

Here are some examples: **waað goam** *that goomfruit* (alternatively, *a goomfruit there*); **weez=ra goam** *this (one) goomfruit* (with an implicit **vai one**; **ra** is the classifier); **waað govdi ukaptu** *that scraper of Govdi's*; **govdi waað ukaptu** *Govdi's scraper there*.

In cases of actual physical possession it's common to use medial **migaz** with second-person possessor agreement on the noun: **migaz makaptu** *that scraper you've got there*, **migaz eri goam** *your (PL) goomfruit there*.

The words **baaj same** and **moṭeṭi other** are not deictics, but they have the same distribution: **moṭeṭi vara goam** *another goomfruit (specific)*, **vara moṭeṭi goam** *another goomfruit (nonspecific)*.

2.5 Classifiers

When I refer to classifiers I actually have in mind nominal auxiliaries of a few distinguishable sorts.

True classifiers are lexically selected by individual nouns, usually on the basis of obvious characteristics of the referent; for example, nonrigid things with one primary dimension (arms, snakes, fish...) generally select **bea**. Some of these classifiers (though not many) transparently derive from nouns; when they do, the source noun generally serves as its own classifier, as in **vai obi obi** *one place*. Not all nouns actually select a classifier, and the ones that don't constitute a sort of counterpart to mass nouns. However, the classifier **po**, generally selected by nouns referring to smallish roundish things, can step in when necessary as a kind of default.

Measure words, by contrast, say little about the properties of the referent, focusing instead on a container or amount or kind of grouping. Most of these can also be used as nouns in their own right, but generally don't select themselves as a classifier. For example, you'd use **vadok mead** for *one basket*; **vai mead mead** would be *a basket of baskets*. Measure words include container words like **mead** *basket*, collection words like **widz** *bundle* or **wenj** *flock, group*, amount words like **sou** *portion* or **kzap** *large amount*, and relatively pure units like **kik** *pace* and **tvai** *year* (which most often occur without a separate noun). There's another hint of a mass/count distinction here, in that collection words are more apt to be used with nouns that you'd think of as count nouns; however, while, say, **vai widz quu** *a bundle of water* may be semantically improbable, it's not actually ungrammatical.

Finally, there are generic words like **peit** *kind, type*. There are probably a few of these, with nuances, but I don't know them yet. The ones that can also be used as nouns select the classifier **po**.

Nominal auxiliaries of all these sorts behave the same syntactically, and can never be used together, which suggests that despite their differences they constitute a sort of paradigm. For want of a better label, I'll refer to them all as "classifiers".

A classifier usually occurs with some quantifying expression, often a number, immediately to its left. (More technically: they are heads that require a quantifier in their specifiers.) Exceptionally, though, in specific noun phrases, the number **vai one** can be dropped.

The quantifying expressions that occur with classifiers are given in [Table 4](#). You'll see that native numbers only reach five. Many Dveze speakers also know

Gloss	Long variant	Short variant
1	vai	va-
2	eem	em-
3	daats	das-
4	patso	tso-
5	şai	şe-
<i>a few</i>	goom	gom-
<i>many</i>	gamo	gam-
PL	gii	gi-, j-

Table 4: Quantifiers that occur with classifiers. The table distinguishes the numbers from two number-like quantifiers and from the plural word.

Vædty Qyş numbers, and will use them when wanting to go above five. (There's also a counting system based on body parts, but it's not used for cardinal numbers.)

It's the classifier that determines whether the long or the short variant of the quantifier will be used. This behaviour distinguishes three groups of classifier:

- A handful of monomoraic classifiers, including **di** CL:PERSON and **po** CL:SMALL-ROUND, always combine with the short form of the quantifier. The result is a single, integral phonological word. The first syllable (the quantifier) is stressed but not lengthened, not what you'd get if the classifier were a clitic. And phonological rules (pharyngeal harmony, nasal assimilation) do not recognise a clitic boundary here.
- All other monomoraic classifiers select the short form of **vai one** and **eem two**, combining with them as above, but the long form of all other quantifiers, onto which they cliticise. For example, *one pace* is **vakik**, but *three paces* is **daatş=kik**.
- Classifiers of two or more moras are always independent words, with their own stress, and always occur with the long form of the quantifiers.

vai one also tends to fuse with vowel-initial classifiers, e.g. **vajobi one place**, though this is optional.

goom and **gamo** are like nonspecific numbers. Generally, **goom** is used when the number is five or lower, **gamo** for higher numbers.

The plural word **gii** is distinctive in a couple of ways: it always takes narrow scope and it is never discourse-linked. This is why I consider it a plural word rather than an existential quantifier like English “some.” “Some” can take wide scope, and, for example, “some people” can have the discourse-linked meaning “some of *the* people.” **gii** also doesn’t implicate *not all*.

By contrast, numbers can take wide scope and can be discourse-linked, so, for example, **jaşhouk vərə goam** *I want one goomfruit* could have any of the following senses:

- I want a goomfruit, I don’t care which one (nonspecific)
- I want a goomfruit, there’s some particular one that I want (specific)
- I want one of the goomfruit (discourse-linked; and both specific and non-specific readings are possible here, too)

As you might expect, numbers also trigger scalar implicatures: if you say you want one goomfruit, you’re indicating that you don’t want more than one. (Though the implicature can be canceled, for example by eating two goomfruit.)

As I said, I take the classifier to be a head that (usually) wants a quantifier in its classifier. This means that the combination of (say) a number with a classifier is not a syntactic constituent of the noun phrase. This is the case even though (as we’ll see) it’s possible for the combination to be separately focused, and be pronounced in a different syntactic position from the rest of the noun phrase.

One last point about classifiers. When one is present, it’s possible to drop the head noun. Thus **vadi one** CL can be used as a sort of indefinite pronoun, for example. Given the rule that allows **vai one** to be dropped when something precedes it in the noun phrase, classifiers can look a bit like nominalisers: **weez=di** for *this one*, or **govdi=dok** for *Govdi’s (one)*, for example.

2.6 Other quantifiers

There’ll be other quantifiers, with different distributions. But, er, for now I’ve not got them figured out, so I’ll just give some scattered thoughts.

- I’m pretty sure I want a distributive universal quantifier (like “every”) as well as a collective one (like “all”), with both of them possible constituents of the noun phrase. These would inevitably end up at the front of the noun phrase, and likely be merged there.
- I don’t think I want adverbial quantifiers that bind nominal variables, because Dveze needs to keep its distance from Akiatu. But also this is an area I don’t understand well enough yet.
- I want some quantify-ish adjectives that go in the ‘classifier’ slot of the noun phrase. Actually I’m set on at least one of them, **dzej** *enough*. I think this is another one that can’t be used adverbially (though you can predicate it of a clause).
- There’s **hama** *which*, which probably fits here, and likely there’ll be something like “any” as well.

2.7 Grammatical number

For the purposes of agreement on the verb, a Dveze noun phrase (ignoring pronouns for the moment) counts as plural only if it contains a number other than **vai** *one* or one of the plural quantifiers. That’s to say, a bare noun, or a noun phrase that contains a demonstrative or possessor but no plural quantifier, will be treated as singular even if its referent is semantically plural. You can think of it this way: in the absence of a classifier, all nouns are mass nouns, and mass nouns are grammatically nonplural.

Plural pronouns can be chosen with more attention to semantics. For example, the plural pronoun **wegan** can be used with **bala** *person* as antecedent even though **bala** cannot trigger plural agreement on verbs. (But **wegan** *will* trigger plural agreement.) I think you also get the opposite pattern, because plural pronouns are mostly only used for human beings, and (outside of anthropomorphising contexts) are quite rare with inanimate referents: you’ll often get singular **wede** even if the antecedent is overtly plural when the referents are nonhuman.

2.8 Specificity and definiteness

Specificity is a tricky concept, and I’m not sure I’m completely on top of it. Here’s how I’m thinking about it at the moment.

First, a specific noun phrase will always take wide scope; in other words, it will be interpreted *de re* rather than *de dicto*. Examples with *want* verbs are especially easy to understand, I think. If I say, “I want a book,” I could be talking about a particular book: there’s some particular book that I want. In this case, “a book” takes wide scope over “want”; it’s interpreted *de re*, and is specific. But it’s also possible that I don’t care at all which book, I just want any book. In that case, “a book” is taking narrow scope, and is interpreted *de dictu*; it’s nonspecific.

So the distinction is relatively clear with noun phrases that occur in the scope of something like a *want* verb. When the noun phrase occurs at matrix scope, you can’t get the same kinds of effects, but I still want to distinguish—and anyway Dveze distinguishes—specific from nonspecific noun phrases.

So, second, I’m going to assume that at matrix scope there’s also a sort of pragmatic distinction. I’m not sure how to spell this out, though. It’s got something to do with whether it matters to the speaker which particular thing they’re talking about. Like, if I say “I saw a cat,” maybe I want to go on and tell you about just that cat, in which case “a cat” would be specific. But maybe it doesn’t matter which cat, I’m just phobic about cats, and I want to tell you about that; then maybe “a cat” is nonspecific. (I’m assuming that “see” doesn’t raise any relevant scope issues.)

Anyway, whether or not that’s the right way to think about specificity, Dveze noun phrase syntax is sensitive to considerations like that.

I’ve already given some indication of how a Dveze noun phrase can be marked as specific or non-specific, but now I want to set out the rule more generally.

First I’ll try to state it in relatively nontechnical terms. A noun phrase can contain a classifier. Immediately to the left of the classifier, you might find one of the quantifiers listed in [Table 4](#). If anything occurs to the left of *that*, then

the noun phrase can only be interpreted as specific. Otherwise, it can only be interpreted as nonspecific.

What about when there's no classifier? Then a noun phrase cannot be unambiguously specific. No doubt something like **waað bala** *that person, a person there* most often will be specific. But that's not guaranteed by the surface form of the noun phrase.

Here's the rule in more technical terms. There's a silent functional head, call it \emptyset_{SPEC} , that encodes specificity; you could think of it as a kind of article. When present, it's always the highest head in the extended projection of the noun (not counting prepositions, if those are part of the extended projection of the noun). It can have two sorts of effect on noun phrase syntax. First, it must host something noun-y in its specifier. This will be something that moves from lower in the noun phrase: a deictic element, a possessor, or the head noun itself, whichever is highest (nearest). Second, it licenses a silent **vai** *one* in the specifier of a locally c-commanded classifier. Neither of these effects will be audible in the absence of a classifier, however, which is why you get ambiguity.

There'll be a bit of a complication once I introduce universal quantifiers. They'll always force a specific interpretation, and I think they won't occur along with \emptyset_{SPEC} (so they won't license silent **vai** *one*, and won't require movement of any other element from lower in the noun phrase). But for now, my official story is that you only get specificity in the presence of the silent article.

Here's an example. Take the surface form **waað bala** *DIST person*. This could correspond to two underlying structures:

- (1) a. As nonspecific:
 waað bala
 DIST *person*
 “a person there”
- b. As specific:
 waað_i \emptyset_{SPEC} t_i bala
 ↑—————↓
 DIST *person*
 “that person”

In general, in the absence of a classifier, noun phrases will always be surface-ambiguous in this way.

This is true even of a bare noun; simple surface **bala** *person* could, but need not, correspond to underlying **bala**_i \emptyset_{SPEC} t_i, and therefore is itself ambiguous between specific and nonspecific interpretations.

Of course ambiguous noun phrases don't have to lead to confusing utterances. This might even sound like it's no big deal, because English, for example, also doesn't distinguish specific from nonspecific most of the time, and though a sentence like “I want a goomfruit” is strictly ambiguous, this rarely trips us up.

It's a bigger deal in Dveze, though, because there's also no way to specify definite reference, so context has a bit more work to do. That's fine, it can do it, but it's potentially a bigger issue than you might expect.

Actually, let's think a bit about how definiteness fits into this picture.

Many Dveze noun phrases will be surface-ambiguous between specific and nonspecific meanings. But there’s an easy way to disambiguate: include a classifier, since (for example) neither **vadi bala** nor **bala vadi** is ambiguous in the way I’ve been discussing: the first is plainly nonspecific, the second specific.

On the other hand, there’s no way to strictly encode definiteness. This isn’t just ambiguity. There is no way for a Dveze noun phrase to strictly entail, or strictly presuppose, the combination of maximality and familiarity that you get with a definite article.

That said, you’ll still be able to convey definiteness. Frequently (as you might expect) you’ll use demonstratives to do this. But even with demonstratives, even in a noun phrase like **weez vadi bala** *this person*, you don’t get a strict presupposition that there’s exactly one salient and identifiable person (or however exactly you want to spell out definiteness). I think the most you can get is an implicature, a strong implicature, but still a defeasible one.

Let me fill in some background. (I’m mostly drawing here on various publications by and responding to Željko Bošković, if you’re interested.) There are some fairly robust generalisations concerning languages that don’t have definite articles. For example, you don’t find nominal classifiers or second-position pronominal clitics in languages with definite articles; conversely, you only find clitic doubling in languages that do have definite articles. The sorts of discontinuity you can get in Dveze noun phrases (er, I haven’t talked about that yet) also doesn’t seem to be possible in languages with definite articles. So it seems that, at least in many languages, the lack of a definite article is not a superficial feature, it actually speaks to something fairly deep in nominal syntax. One way to understand this is to conjecture that in many languages without definite articles, noun phrases do not project a DP layer, with the possible consequence that nominals do not constitute locality domains for movement (that is, phases).

Whether or not that’s generally what’s going on in languages without definite articles (it’s controversial, of course), I’m taking it to be the right way to think about Dveze noun phrases. And I take it to imply that not only does Dveze not have definite articles, syntactically speaking it also does not have definiteness.

2.9 Pronouns

Table 5 gives the personal pronouns in three series: the independent pronouns, the weak pronoun, and the possessor agreement prefixes.

	Independent	Clitic	Possessor prefix
1s	jame	=ja	j(a)-
1PL	idzme	=its	its-
2s	mame	=ma	m(a)-
2PL	erime	=ri	er(i)-, il-
3s	ide	=de	d(e)-
3PL	wezu	=wezu	u-, g-
REFL	ozme	=os	os-

Table 5: Dveze pronouns

Subject pronouns can be freely dropped, and in other positions it’s usually

the weak, cliticising pronouns that are used. So the independent pronouns don't show up that much.

When they do, they behave more like nouns than you might expect. They can occur with adjectives, deictics, numbers, and so on, with the pronoun consistently occurring where you'd expect to find a noun. One clear (and unsurprising) difference is that noun phrases headed by pronouns are always specific.

3 Verbs

Morphologically speaking, verbs have more going on than nouns do, so I'm going to focus on that for a bit.

3.1 The verbalising suffix

Most verbs are formed with a distinguishable suffix. Morphologically, the available suffixes seem to form a paradigm, since a verb can take at most one of them, but there is no obvious semantic or syntactic rationale for this restriction.

At least two of the suffixes specifically derive verbs from nouns. **-lau**, **-lo** derives unergative verbs from the nouns you might think of as their cognate objects, like **dzelo** *to dance* from **dzai** *dance*. Often there's a corresponding construction with a light verb (like **avu dzai** *to throw a dance*). **-anad**, **-nad** also derives intransitives from nouns, like **babilanad** *to become happy* from **babil** *happiness*. (The pattern where a verb *Xanad* means something like *acquire X* is common.)

Derived (agentive) transitive verbs often take **-umu**. These can either be causatives, derived from other verbs (in which case **-umu** replaces any existing verbalising suffix), or they can derive verbs from nouns or adjectives, with a range of meanings. For example, **agabemu** is *to fish*, from **agabe** *fish*; **babilumu** is *to cheer up*, from **babil** *happiness*; and **dzemu** is *to shake*, from **dzai** *dance* or **dzelo** *to dance*.

Underived agentive verbs, whether transitive or intransitive, frequently end in **-u**.

There's no particular suffix that marks unaccusative verbs, though **bve** and **ve** are sometimes used to form anticausatives.

I note that it seems very unlikely to be a coincidence that three suffixes that form agentive verbs end in **-u**, especially given that short word-final **u** is otherwise quite rare (cf. §1.6).

There are also a variety of classifiers that occur semi-productively with some verbs. These overlap with the numerical classifiers that are used with nouns, but there are verbal classifiers that cannot be used with nouns and nominal classifiers that cannot be suffixed to verbs. These have two main uses.

First, they can further specify the verb's patient or theme. For example, the root **si** *to move* can become **sa**, an unaccusative in **-a**. But with a human subject it is more often **sidi**; and with snakes, for example, it can be **sibeḡa**. (These are two examples of classifiers that are also used with nouns.) These combinations sometimes take on idiosyncratic meanings; like **dzaiḡa** describes a wiggly sort of dancing done by humans, not dancing done by snakes or fish or other wiggly

things. (Part of the idiosyncrasy here is that **dzaibea** probably has to be classed as an unaccusative verb, while **dzelo** is presumably unergative.)

Second, a handful can function as applicatives, adding a patient argument. This is most common with **-obi**, a classifier for places that can form locative applicatives, and **-dok**, a classifier for tools that can form instrumental applicatives. Notably there's no dedicated way to make benefactive applicatives, though I think locative applicatives can be used with a benefactive sense.

The verbs formed by suffixing classifiers can be either unaccusative, mono-transitive, or ditransitive, and it's fairly common for them to be usable in more than one way. It's possible to interpret this in the light of the morphological ban on multiple verbalising suffixes: once a verb has taken a classifier suffix, there's no way for any further valency-changing morphology to be overt.

3.2 The tense/agreement prefix

Each finite verb has a prefix that encodes both subject agreement and spatial tense. I treat these as fused forms; the alternative is to posit a fair bit of allomorphy.

I'll discuss the semantics of Dveze's spatial tense system below. For now it's enough to know that it draws a three-way distinction between events close to the deictic centre, events close to the addressee, and events anywhere else. (The deictic centre will often be the speaker, and will often be big enough to include the addressee, but it can shift, especially in narrative.) I'll gloss these as PROX, MED, and DIST, respectively.

The prefix distinguishes first, second, and third person (with no clusivity distinctions), and singular and plural. There's also a slot in the paradigm for what I'll call *wh* agreement. This is used in place of regular agreement in certain cases when the subject gets fronted—for contrastive focus, in questions, and in relative clauses.

In any case, [Table 6](#) gives the details.

	Affirmative		Negative	
	S	PL	S	PL
<i>Proximal</i>				
1	jas-	bas-	jaşam	başam
2	mas-	bera-	maşam	berem
3	as-	era-	aşam	erem
WH	das		ðaşam	
<i>Medial</i>				
1	jota-	boťa-	jotam	botam
2	moťa-	boťo-	moťam	boťom
3	oťa-	ťa-	otam	toam
WH	doťa-		dotam	
<i>Distal</i>				
1	iva-	bva-	ivem	bveem
2	ŗuva-	gvau-	mveem	gvoam
3	va-	vau-	veem	voam
WH	dva-		dveem	

Table 6: Agreement and tense. The affirmative forms are prefixes, the negative forms independent words.

There are various reasons to think that the forms given as third person singular are actually defaults, and contain no true agreement morphology. Accordingly, I'll gloss them just as, say, DIST, rather than as 3S:DIST.

3.3 Negation

Negation can be expressed either as a bound form, which seems to be something like **-m**, or as the independent particle **ami**. In the latter case, it must precede the verb; I think it might strictly be possible for it also to precede a preverbal subject, but that'll be rare at best. As a bound form it functions as a sort of inflecting auxiliary, fusing (in not entirely predictable ways) with the agreement/tense prefix to form an independent phonological word.

3.4 Directional aspect

There are four directional prefixes that attach directly to the verb stem, and encode a sort of spatial aspect. I'll gloss them as COME, GO, AWAY, and BACK. In more standard terminology the first two could be called venitive and andative, or cislocative and translocative. The others I guess could be called centrifugal and restorative, or something.

Here I'm just going to introduce the morphology. For some attempt to think about what these prefixes mean, see §8.

The basic forms are in Table 7. The morphophonology can be a bit compli-

Gloss	Fancy name	Forms
COME	venitive	ki-, k-
GO	andative	zo-, z-, ð-
AWAY	centrifugal	utez-, tez-
BACK	restorative	ḵou-, ḵo-

Table 7: Directional aspect.

cated, I'll explain it a bit here.

- Venitive **ki-** is **k-** before a vowel. The one complication is if the following vowel is not also **i**, and if the verb has a proximal or distal prefix ending in **-a** or **-as**, then the **a** in the prefix rises to **e**. (This does not happen with the medial forms.)
- Andative **zo-** loses its vowel before a rounded vowel; before any other vowel it becomes **ð-**. When the forms in **z** are subject to pharyngeal harmony, the result can be either **ḵ** or **ḵ̣**, depending on the verb. There's no way to predict which it is, synchronically, and even the diachronics sketched in §1.6 can be misleading, because this is a point where you've had a fair bit of both analogy and hypercorrection. Alas!
- Centrifugal **utez** might have its initial **u** merge with a preceding vowel, but the results are predictable.
- Restorative **ḵou** is also well-behaved, the trickiest interactions coming when its final **u** is lost before another **u**. This prefix also triggers pharyngeal harmony.

3.5 Reduplication

The verb stem can undergo partial reduplication. This tends to indicate that the described event is spread out in space or time or among a variety of participants, though individual verbs can be semantically ideosyncratic. I'll gloss it as PLAC, for "pluractional."

It's CV reduplication at the front of the verb stem. There are two complications.

First, any word-initial vowel is simply overwritten. This includes the of-glide in a heavy nucleus, but not a coda consonant. Thus **abila** *hurt* becomes **bibila**, for example.

Second, if the initial syllable begins with a consonant cluster, only the first consonant is copied; and if that syllable has a heavy nucleus, only the first (syllabic) vowel is copied. Thus **bzamu** *crush* becomes **babzamu**, and **ḥoḥuḥ** *want* becomes **ḥoḥoḥuḥ**.

3.6 Nominalisation

There are at least two nominalising prefixes.

aŋ- applies directly to the verb; I haven't yet thought about whether and how any of the verb's arguments might be realised, but most likely you'll find both possessors and arguments linked by the associative particle **u**.

There's also **te-**, which selects for larger constituents. I discuss its use in §7.2.

4 Other word classes

4.1 Adjectives

There's not a huge amount to say here, but it doesn't fit anywhere else, so here we are.

We've already seen some adjectives. There's at least **baaŋ** *same*, **moṭeṭi** *other*, and **dzeṭi** *enough*; and probably it makes most sense to think of **weez** PROX, **migaz** MED, and **WAAḌ** DIST as adjectives, too.

There are at least a few other underived adjectives, like **owalo** *good*, **tseṣem** *old*, and **lomo** *big*.

And there are loads of derived adjectives. So far I know about **su-** and **mi-**, related both in form and in meaning to the prepositions **ṣom** *with* and **miḵa** *without*. The derived adjectives have about the meanings you'd expect, like **subabil** *happy*, from **babel** *happiness*. The morphophonological behaviour of **su-** is unsurprising, but to understand how **mi-** works it helps to know that at one time it ended with pre-Dveze's mystery consonant—it has a tendency to trigger pharyngeal harmony with vowel-initial stems.

4.2 Prepositions

I haven't done much work on this, and it's meant to be an area where a fair bit's going on, with a lot of prepositions, and a lot of compound prepositions.

Here are the prepositions I know about so far.

- **ava** is *across, beyond*; often it's compounded with allative **su** or ablative **laš**.
- **miḵa** is *without*, the privative counterpart to **šom**.
- **la** is the most generic locative preposition, often with the sense *in, among*, especially in compound prepositions.
- **laš** is the ablative preposition ("from"), often compounded with other prepositions, like **lašava** *from across* or **lašla** *from in*. It's used to form comparatives with adjectives.
- **ra** is *up*. It's cognate with the classifier that's used for head-shaped things.
- **šom** is the commitative/instrumental preposition.
- **su** is the allative preposition ("to"), but has a number of extended uses; I think it'll be the preposition used with demoted objects, and that it can be used to form equatives with adjectives (like **owalu su govdi** *as good as Govdi*).

Compounded prepositions behave like integral words for the purposes of pharyngeal harmony, clitic placement, and so on.

Here's an example showing a threesome:

- (2) **ivazoḍam lašlaraḵare**
 iva- zo- ḍaam laš- la-ḵa ḵare
 1S:DIST- GO- *fall* ABL-LOC-*up* *tree*
 "I fell out of the tree" (5MOYD 1237)

There's also an associative particle **u**, which will look like a preposition but I think strictly is something else.

5 Verbal clauses

5.1 vs(o)

Let's start with the simplest sort of clause: all arguments are full noun phrases, and the subject follows the verb.

- (3) **vadzelo govdi**
 va- dzelo govdi
 DIST- *dance* *Govdi*
 "Govdi is dancing"
- (4) **vavu govdi vajobi dzai**
 va- avu govdi vai obi dzai
 DIST- *throw* *Govdi* *one* CL *dance*
 "Govdi had a dance"

In a ditransitive, neither object is specially marked. The recipient or applied object comes first in linear order; whatever tests turn out to be applicable will also show that it is higher in the structure (it c-commands the theme).

- (5) **vađai govdi wara vaṛa ǵoṃ**
 va- zo- ai govdi wara va-ṛa ǵoṃ
 DIST- GO- give Govdi Wara one-CL goomfruit
 “Govdi gave Wara a goomfruit”

- (6) **vapadok govdi oskaptu waađ=pak ǵeli**
 va- pad -dok govdi os- kaptu
 DIST- prepare -CL(APPL) Govdi REFL:POSS scraper
 waađ =pak ǵeli
 DIST CL skin
 “Govdi prepared the skin with his scraper”

Prepositional arguments and adjuncts generally follow all (other) objects; manner adverbs can either precede or follow the object.

- (7) **vakinau govdi ǵoṃ laṣava awez**
 va- ki- nau govdi ǵoṃ laṣ-ava awez
 DIST- COME- get Govdi goomfruit ABL-across river
 “Govdi got the goomfruit from across the river”

- (8) **askisidi vadi gaweṭ laṣ ǵaḡur**
 as- ki- si -di va-di gaweṭ laṣ ǵaḡur
 PROX- COME- move -CL one-CL stranger ABL Gagur
 “A stranger has come from Gagur”

The subject can be pro-dropped:

- (9) **bazdzelu**
 bas- dzelo
 1PL:PROX dance
 “We are dancing”
- (10) **erazogindi su ǵaḡur**
 era- zo- gin -di su ǵaḡur
 3PL:PROX GO rise -CL ALL Gagur
 “They are going up to Gagur”

Pronominal objects are usually represented by clitics, on which see §5.5.

Modal, spatial, and temporal adverbs generally go between the verb and the subject in VSO sentences:

- (11) **aṣam emdela abeḡ siij wara**
 aṣam emdela abeḡ siij wara
 PROX:NEG sleep already really Wara
 “Wara has not yet really slept” (5MOYD 1243)

5.2 sv(o)

It's possible for the subject to move to a position before the verb:

- (12) **govdi vadzelo**
 govdi va- dzelo
 Govdi DIST- dance
 "Govdi is dancing"

I haven't figured out when exactly this happens. It's definitely not topicalisation, and I'm pretty sure that some of the conditions on it are prosodic (with heavier subjects less likely to move). But I think at least sometimes it'll reflect predicate focus, and at least in those cases it'd be reasonable to say that the subject is a topic.

To be a bit technical, this isn't what's called A-bar movement. For example, if it turns out that Dveze has parasitic gaps, movement of the subject to a position before the verb won't license parasitic gaps. And (a bit more strikingly), whenever the subject clearly A-bar moves (for contrastive focus or in questions or relative clauses), the verb gets a distinctive agreement prefix, which does not vary with the person and number features of the subject; but in sentences like (12), the verb agrees with the subject as usual. Which is all to say, I take there to be a genuine subject position before the verb, even though the subject does not always end up there.

Unsurprisingly, the conditions under which the subject is likely to move before the verb overlap considerably with the conditions under which the subject is likely to be pro-dropped. So SVO clauses don't end up being tremendously common.

When the subject noun phrase contains a possessor, you can get a sort of possessor raising that seems to move only the possessor into the preverbal position:

- (13) **govdi vaḥoḍoḵ ukaptu**
 govdi va- ḥoḍ -dok u- kaptu
 Govdi DIST- chip -CL 3S:POSS scraper
 "Govdi's scraper chipped"

You'll notice that the possessed noun still agrees with its possessor. Also, though **vaḥoḍoḵ** *chip* (a tool) can also be used transitively, (13) cannot mean *Govdi chipped his scraper*, because that would require the reflexive possessor prefix **os-** rather than third person singular **u-**.

There's various ways the semantics can go here, but normally there's an implication that the raised possessor is significantly affected by the reported event. I think you don't tend to get the converse implication, that the raised possessor is responsible for the event.

Unsurprisingly, this construction is especially common when the possessed noun is a body part:

- (14) **jame asabila jagve**
 jame as- abila ja- agve
 1S PROX hurt 1S:POSS foot
 "My feet hurt"

As the last example also shows, the verb in this construction agrees with the possessed noun, not the possessor. (Remember that though **agve** likely has a plural reference here, it is still treated as singular, grammatically speaking; cf. §2.7.) So, surface appearances aside, it's still the whole discontinuous noun phrase that's serving as subject. (Cf. §5.6.)

5.3 v

There are a handful of verbs, including weather verbs and ambience verbs, that cannot occur with an overt subject:

- (15) **azbvaleḡa**
 as- bvaleḡa
 PROX *rain*
 ‘‘It is raining here’’
- (16) **aḡvuḡ**
 as- vuḡ
 PROX *wind.blow*
 ‘‘The wind is blowing here’’
- (17) **azgoliḡoli**
 as- goliḡoli
 PROX *be.spooky*
 ‘‘It is spooky here’’

These examples seem to show null third-person agreement, but this is one of the cases that makes me think that these forms are true defaults, with a lack of agreement rather than a null agreement morpheme. (The issue is slightly complicated because of suppletion in the proximal forms.) That's to say, this is what you'd expect to find even if there were no subject at all. And the fact that it's not grammatical to include a subject implies pretty strongly that there really isn't one there in the syntax.

Sometimes patterns like this are taken to imply the existence of a covert expletive pronoun. But I take it you get expletive pronouns where a language's syntax requires a subject even when it's semantically void; but Dveze syntax doesn't show any syntactic need for a subject. (Technically, if Dveze has an EPP at all, it seems to be satisfied by the inflected verb, and does not require a noun phrase in canonical subject position. Cf. §6.6.)

5.4 Negation and auxiliaries

As noted in §3.3, there are two ways to express clausal negation.

The first uses an independent (stressable) particle **ami**. You'll normally find it before the inflected verb, but after any preverbal subject:

- (18) **govdi ami vadželo**
 govdi ami va- dzelo
 Govdi NEG DIST- *dance*
 ‘‘Govdi is not dancing’’

(I'm not yet sure if the independent negation particle should have a somewhat free distribution. In particular I kind of want to allow it to occur before a pre-verbal subject in some contexts; and maybe it should also be possible for it to adjoin to VP, which would put it after the inflected verb. This is a matter for later conlanging.)

The second way to express clausal negation is with what looks like an auxiliary verb (its forms were given in [Table 6](#)).

(19) **govdi veem dzelo**

govdi veem dzelo
Govdi DIST:NEG dance

“Govdi is not dancing”

As you can see, the verb itself is left uninflected (though it can still take directional prefixes).

The subject can precede the negative auxiliary; it can also follow it, but if it does, it must also follow the lexical verb:

(20) a. ***veem govdi dzelo**

veem govdi dzelo
DIST:NEG Govdi dance

Intended: “Govdi is not dancing”

b. **veem dzelo govdi**

veem dzelo govdi
DIST:NEG dance Govdi

“Govdi is not dancing”

I said that the inflecting negative “looks like” an auxiliary verb. One reason for the qualification is that I originally thought of this phenomenon in morphological terms: for whatever reason, the negation affix insists on being word-final. But the more important point is that syntactically speaking these negative forms are not verbs, and a syntactic context that allows only a verb phrase cannot include these negative forms.

Dveze has a good number of verbs that take VP complements. These include aspectual verbs like **đal** *to start* and **medza** *to continue*, and also the passive auxiliary **no** (presumably related to **nau** *to get, take*). Here are some patterns with **đal**:

(21) a. **jazđal ɽaɽa ɣoɣam**

jas- đal ta -ɽa ɣoɣam
1S:PROX- start eat -CL goomfruit

“I started eating the goomfruit”

b. **vano ɽaɽa ɣoɣam**

va- no ta -ɽa ɣoɣam
DIST- PASS eat -CL goomfruit

“The goomfruit was eaten”

c. **vađal noo ɽaɽa ɣoɣam**

va- đal no ta -ɽa ɣoɣam
DIST start PASS eat -CL goomfruit

“The goomfruit started being eaten”

d. **jaşam ðaal ta-ɾa ɣoam**

jaşam ðal ta -ɾa ɣoam
 1S:PROX:NEG start eat -CL goomfruit
 “I didn’t start eating the goomfruit”

There’s no way to use the apparent negative auxiliary in the complement to verbs like **ðal**; it doesn’t even have an uninflected form, so I cannot even show you what such a sentence might look like. (If the independent negative particle **ami** can adjoin to VP, though, it could go with the embedded verb; maybe this is a reason to allow it to adjoin to VP.)

A technicality: these complements are not strictly VPs, or even vPs, since they can include the directional prefixes, which presumably head an aspect projection of some sort. So maybe I should be saying ASPP or DIRP instead. (An important issue here is that subjects apparently get merged and licensed outside of VP and vP, but inside ASPP.)

5.5 The clitic cluster

I said that pronominal objects are usually represented by clitics. These are second-position clitics, so their exact position depends on what else is going on in the clause.

(22) **vaɾaɾa=de govdi**

va- ta -ɾa =de govdi
 DIST- eat -CL =3S Govdi
 “Govdi ate it”

(23) **govdi=de vaɾaɾa**

govdi =de va- ta -ɾa
 Govdi =3S DIST- eat -CL
 “Govdi ate it”

(24) **veem=de govdi ta-ɾa**

veem =de govdi ta -ɾa
 DIST:NEG =3S Govdi eat -CL
 “Govdi didn’t eat it”

Any non-prepositional object can be represented in the clitic cluster:

(25) **eskai=ja govdi ɣoam**

as- ki- ai =ja govdi ɣoam
 PROX- COME- give =1S Govdi goomfruit
 “Govdi gave me a goomfruit”

(26) **wara=de vekai govdi**

wara =de va- ki- ai govdi
 Wara =3S DIST- COME- give Govdi
 “Wara gave it to Govdi”

(27) **eskai=ja=de**

as- ki- ai =ja =de
 PROX- COME- give =1S =3S
 “He gave it to me”

When there are multiple clitics, they always cluster together in second position, as in (27). The order is always the same that you’d find with full noun phrases, which is to say that recipients or applied objects always precede themes.

I haven’t decided yet if there’ll be a person-case constraint of any kind, but there is a (morphological?) constraint on having the same clitic occur twice in succession. As far as I can tell this issue can only arise with third person forms. Dveze allows a fix: the second of the two clitics will have its number features change:

(28) **wara=de=wezu vekai**

wara =de =wezu va- ki- ai
 Wara =3S =3PL DIST- COME- give
 “Wara gave it to him”

(29) **wara=wezu=de vekai**

wara =wezu =de va- ki- ai
 Wara =3PL =3S DIST- COME- give
 “Wara gave them to them”

There are a handful of nonpronominal clitics that also end up in the same cluster. The ones I know about are =**ti** *and, also, even*, =**tupe** *but, only, exactly*, and =**tas**, an irrealis particle of some sort. But there’ll probably end up being more. (And there might end up being one or two corresponding to prepositional arguments.)

Now, I’m calling these second-position clitics, but that’s not terribly precise. The general rule is that the clitics will follow a single element in the clause, where:

- I think complementisers don’t always get counted, but I don’t know the details yet
- the preceding element can be phrasal, and in principle rather long phrases are possible
- the clitics will follow the initial portion of a discontinuous noun phrase, when that is clause-initial

I’ll illustrate the last point with two examples, the first involving possessor raising, the second involving focus movement (which I haven’t discussed yet):

(30) **Govdi=de vakiṭaṛa woble**

govdi =de va- ki- ta -ṛa u- oble
 Govdi =3S DIST- COME- eat -CL 3S:POSS- sister
 “Govdi’s sister ate it on him”

(31) **vadi=de dvaṭaṛa bala**

va-di =de dva- ta -ṛa bala
one-CL =3S WH:DIST eat -CL person

“One person ate it”

Finally, it’s maybe worth asking whether these or other clitics function as second position clitics in other domains. So far I’m afraid the answer is no. I’d originally planned to encode possession using second position pronominal clitics, but I couldn’t make it work. And though the same clitic pronouns will occur as the objects of prepositions, I think they’ll probably always directly follow the preposition, even if their end up being cases where that doesn’t look like second position (e.g., with compound prepositions, or in the presence of prepositional modifiers). But we’ll see.

5.6 A-bar movement

A-bar movement is a sort of movement that takes some constituent of the sentence that is especially salient for some reason, and moves it towards the front of the clause. The particular types that will mostly concern me here are *wh* movement, which moves question words, and focus movement, which moves elements that are contrastively focused. I’ll also say a bit about relative clauses.

Dveze A-bar movement holds two possible surprises. First, when it’s the subject that moves, the verb shows a distinctive sort of agreement, which I’ll call *wh* agreement. And second, it’s possible for only part of the moved constituent to show up clause-initially. (Presumably A-bar movement is also island-sensitive, but that’s not surprising and anyway I’m not going to take up that sort of issue for now.

5.6.1 Contrastive focus

This section is specifically about contrastive focus. That’s to say, I’m not talking about bits of a sentence that are focused only in the sense that they express especially interesting or surprising new information. As is crosslinguistically typical, it’s only contrastive focus, never informational focus, that triggers movement.

You get contrastive focus in a number of characteristic contexts:

- When correcting what someone has said. “Merry kissed Frodo.” “No, *Sam* kissed Frodo.”
- When expressing exhaustivity. “*Sam* kissed Frodo (and no one else kissed him).” Or: “It was *Sam* who kissed Frodo.”
- When associating the focused constituent with a focus-sensitive particle. “Only *Sam* kissed Frodo.” Or: “Even *Sam* kissed Frodo.”

In cases like these, Dveze makes it obligatory for the focused constituent to move to a preverbal position. It can look like this:

(32) **goṃ jaṣṭaṛa**

goṃ jas- ta -ṛa
goomfruit 1S:PROX eat -CL

“It was goomfruit that I ate”

(My translations will often use clefts to indicate focus when there's no overt focus-sensitive particle.)

This example makes things relatively easy. You can tell that the initial noun phrase is the object, and therefore that it must be focused, because of the semantics of the verb, the (first person) agreement marking on the verb, the classifier suffix on the verb (indicating that its object is roughly head-shaped, like a goomfruit); and the fact that this is an obligatorily transitive verb, so there must be an overt object.

You won't always have that much help, and sometimes you have none of it. You might have an ambitransitive verb with a single argument, preverbal, which matches the agreement on the verb. In this case, it's only intonation that distinguishes an intransitive verb with an overt preverbal subject from a transitive verb with a pro-dropped subject and a focused object. But intonation will generally be enough in real contexts.

When it's the subject that's focused, something more happens: the verb no longer agrees with the subject in person in number, instead it has the unvarying agreement prefix **d-**. I'm going to gloss this as *WH*, after the common practice of referring to all sorts of A-bar movement as *wh*-movement.

Here's an example:

(33) **govdi dvaṭaṛa ɣoam**

govdi dva- ta -ṛa ɣoam
Govdi WH:DIST- eat -CL goomfruit

"It was Govdi who ate the goomfruit"

Here, regardless of the lexical semantics of the verb, the classifier suffix, and the presence of an overt object, the presence of *wh*-agreement on the verb tells you both that the preverbal constituent is the subject and that it is focused.

Other elements of the sentence can be focused:

(34) **su ɣaɣur poleko jazosidi**

su ɣaɣur poleko jas- zo- si -di
ALL Gagur shrine 1S:PROX- GO- move -CL

"It is to Gagur shrine that I am going"

I don't think it's common, but it's possible to have both a focused object and a preverbal subject; you might do this in a sort of list, when both subject and object are contrastive:

(35) **ɣoam govdi aṣṭaṛa, agabe wara astabea**

ɣoam govdi as- ta -ṛa agabe wara as- ta -bea
goomfruit Govdi PROX- eat -CL fish Wara PROX eat -CL

"Govdi ate goomfruit, Wara ate fish"

(I'm actually not sure whether it should be correct to use verb forms with different classifier suffixes in a case like this. I guess probably not?)

As was the case above with possessor raising, focus movement can create discontinuous noun phrases. This can happen with possessors, but also with other things that go before the noun, including deictics and quantifying expressions:

- (36) a. **wara vaṭaṛa govdi uḡoam**
 wara va- ta -ṛa govdi u- ḡoam
Wara DIST- eat -CL *Govdi* 3S:POSS *goomfruit*
 “It was *Wara*’s goomfruit that Govdi ate”
- b. **vaṛa vaṭaṛa govdi ḡoam**
 va-ṛa va- ta -ṛa govdi ḡoam
one-CL DIST- eat -CL *Govdi* *goomfruit*
 “It was *one* goomfruit that Govdi ate”
- c. **waaḏ vaṭaṛa govdi ḡoam**
 waaḏ va- ta -ṛa govdi ḡoam
 DIST DIST- eat -CL *Govdi* *goomfruit*
 “It was *that* goomfruit that Govdi ate”

Now look again at (36b). You’ll see that the fronted element is **vaṛa** *one*-CL. Remember that this is not a constituent of the noun phrase—something odd is definitely going on here.

Now, you might also remember that something like **vaṛa** can occur on its own, with no head noun. So you might think the syntax here involves two distinct noun phrases, **vaṛa** *one* and **ḡoam** *goomfruit*, with something guaranteeing that they’ll corefer. But it’s not that either, as we can see in (37):

- (37) **su ḡaḡuṛ jazosidi poleko**
 su ḡaḡuṛ jas- zo- si -di poleko
 ALL *Gagur* 1S:PROX- GO- move -CL *shrine*
 “It is to Gagur shrine that I am going”

This cannot be analysed as a sentence with two coreferring destination arguments because “Gagur” does not actually corefer with “Gagur shrine,” and because **poleko** *shrine* is not independently flagged as a destination (the preposition is not repeated).

What’s going on here, I think, is that the whole constituent is moved, but parts of it are getting pronounced in the focus position and parts in the base position. Like this:

- (38) **su ḡaḡuṛ jazosidi poleko**
 [su ḡaḡuṛ poleko] jas- zo- si -di [su-ḡaḡuṛ poleko]
 ALL *Gagur* 1S- GO- move -CL *shrine*
 “It is to Gagur shrine that I am going”

(I’m basing this pretty directly on an analysis of some things in Russian that I learned about from priscianic.)

When focus movement produces a discontinuous subject, the verb takes *wh* agreement:

- (39) **ḡaḡuṛ daskisidi ḡawəṭ laṣ ḡaḡuṛ**
 ḡaḡuṛ-di das- ki- si -di ḡawəṭ laṣ ḡaḡuṛ
three-CL WH:PROX- COME- move -CL *stranger* ABL *Gagur*
 “It is *three* strangers that have come from Gagur”

When there's a focused element, it will normally host any clausal clitics, including any cliticising focus sensitive particles:

- (40) **wara=ṭi=de dvata**
 wara =ṭi =de dva- ta
Wara =and =3S WH:DIST- eat
 “Even Wara ate it”

In principle you might expect to be able to do something like this:

- (41) ?**wara=tupe=de woble dvata**
 wara =tupe =de u- oble dva- ta
Wara =but =3S 3S:POSS sister WH:DIST- eat
Intended: “It was only Wara’s sister who ate it”

But I’m not sure it’d ever make sense both to focus the possessor (or the number or whatever) and to move the subject before the verb.

Whenever focus movement creates a surface-discontinuous noun phrase, the elements of the noun phrase remain in their usual order. This makes it impossible to focus just the head noun, and leave the possessor in a regular subject position:

- (42) ***woble=tupe=de dvata wara**
 u- oble =tupe =de dva- ta wara
3S:POSS- sister =but =3S WH:DIST- eat Wara
Intended: “It was only Wara’s sister who ate it”

This is ruled out because **woble wara** is not a grammatical noun phrase; possessors cannot follow the head noun.

(It’s possible there’ll be an alternative possession construction using the associative particle, and maybe it’ll turn out that you could front just the head noun in that sort of structure, but for now the closest you can come is focusing the whole noun phrase.)

5.6.2 Content questions

Yes, I fully intend to cover content questions but not polar questions.

I’m also going to be quick, because the syntax is pretty much exactly the same except that the fronted element will either be or contain a question word. And I’m going to be doubly quick because I’m not ready to decide on the full range of question words, so I’m only going to discuss questions in **niid** *who*, **nala** *what*, and **ḥama** *which*. Er, I’m also not ready to think about questions that involve complement clauses or islands or anything like that.

In questions with a single question word, something containing the question word—often just the question word itself—will move to the front of the sentence. I don’t know if it’s strictly into the same position where you’d find a focused element, but you never get a separate focus, so maybe.

The same rules apply with questioned constituents as with focus. In particular, you get distinctive *wh* agreement when the subject is questioned, and *wh* movement can give rise to discontinuous noun phrases—with the constraint that

the question word itself must be in the part of the noun phrase that's actually pronounced at the front of the clause. One detail is maybe worth emphasizing: when it's just a constituent of the subject that's questioned—a possessor, maybe—you always get *wh* agreement, even when the noun phrase is discontinuous; see (51).

Here are some examples:

- (43) **niid daṣṭara ɣoam**
 niid das- ta -ra ɣoam
who WH:PROX- eat -CL *goomfruit*
 “Who ate the goomfruit?”
- (44) **niid=de daṣṭara**
 niid =de das- ta -ra
who =3S WH:PROX- eat -CL
 “Who ate it?”
- (45) **nala=de daṣṭara**
 nala =de das- ta -ra
what =3S WH:PROX- eat -CL
 “What ate it?”
- (46) **nala masta**
 nala mas- ta
what 2S:PROX- eat
 “What are you eating?”
- (47) **niid uɣoam maṣṭara**
 niid u- ɣoam mas- ta -ra
who 3S:POSS- *goomfruit* 2S:PROX- eat -CL
 “Whose goomfruit did you eat?”
- (48) **niid maṣṭara uɣoam**
 niid mas- ta -ra u- ɣoam
who 2S:PROX- eat -CL 3S:POSS- *goomfruit*
 “Whose goomfruit did you eat?”
- (49) **ḥama ɣoam maṣṭara**
 ḥama ɣoam mas- ta -ra
which goomfruit 2S:PROX- eat -CL
 “Which goomfruit did you eat?”
- (50) **ḥama maṣṭara ɣoam**
 ḥama mas- ta -ra ɣoam
which 2S:PROX- eat -CL *goomfruit*
 “Which goomfruit did you eat?”

- (51) **ḥama=de daṣṭara vadi**
 ḥama =de das- ta -ra va-di
which =3S WH:PROX- eat -CL one-CL
 “Which one (person) ate it?”

5.7 Relative clauses

I think there are probably a bunch of ways of making relative clauses, and there’ll be at least some relative clauses in which a relativised subject is registered by *wh*-agreement on the verb. But there are a few sorts of complement clause (§7), and they don’t all include subject agreement, and I’m not sure how that might affect what’s possible in relative clauses. Someday.

6 Nonverbal clauses

Many clauses in Dveze are nonverbal. This is in part because nominal and adjectival predicates do not require a copula and the copula in locative and existential sentences is not a verb (it does not inflect). More than that, though, Dveze will often use locative or existential structures where other languages might use verbs.

A nonverbal clause lacks more than just a lexical verb—it lacks subject agreement, deictic tense, and directional aspect. My current understanding of what’s going on posits a few null heads, which is unlovely, but here’s how I think it works. I think the position in which the tense morphemes occur must still be somehow present in nonverbal clauses, because adverbs can be adjoined there, the subject can move there, and so on. So I posit a silent tense head that occurs with nonverbal predicates. Unlike the overt tense morphs, which require an aspect phrase for their complement, this silent tense head selects either a small clause (which itself has a silent head) or a structure headed by the existential copula. Finally, the silent tense head cannot compine with agreement or negation morphology.

6.1 Nominal predicates

Clauses with true nominal predicates, in which the predicate noun is nonspecific, allow both conceivable orders, though the predicate can come first only if it is contrastively focused.

- (52) a. **govdi paudaja**
 govdi paudaja
Govdi dancer
 “Govdi is a dancer”
- b. **paudaja govdi**
 paudaja govdi
dancer Govdi
 “Govdi is a *dancer*”

(I'm not sure of the details, but a **paudaja** dancer is someone who takes on a particular role in certain ceremonies. (52b) could be uttered in order to correct someone who just said that Govdi is a shaman, for example; though maybe you'd expect **paudaja=tupe govdi** *Govdi is just a dancer.*)

Adverb tests suggest that the subject nominal is in the higher of the positions available in verbal clauses:

- (53) **govdi siij paudaja**
 Govdi siij paudaja
Govdi really dancer
 "Govdi is really a dancer"

I'm not coming up with any good examples of a sentence with a focused predicate noun in which an appropriate adverb can probe the position of the subject, but my intention is that it be in the same position in those sentences as well.

In identity claims, word order is a bit more free, in that either nominal can be the subject:

- (54) a. **govdi siij waað paudaja**
 govdi siij waað paudaja
Govdi really DIST dancer
 "Govdi is really the dancer"
- b. **waað paudaja siij govdi**
 waað paudaja siij govdi
 DIST dancer really Govdi
 "The dancer is really Govdi"

(I've included the adverb to make it clear that these examples don't require focus movement.)

No pro-drop is possible in these sentences, instead you use a clitic pronoun, which will end up in second position. In this case, I think the predicate noun has to end up in the higher subject position, as if the pronoun is invisible to whatever EPP probe triggers that movement.

- (55) **paudaja=de**
 paudaja =de
dancer =3S
 "He is a dancer"

These constructions allow discontinuous noun phrases, both for subject movement and for focus.

- (56) **wara=de ugile**
 wara =de u- gile
Wara =3S 3S:POSS brother
 "He is Wara's brother"

A nominal predicate can only be negated with **ami**, whose placement tends to confirm what I've said above about structure:

- (57) a. **wara ami paudaja**
 wara ami paudaja
Wara NEG *dancer*
 “Wara is not a dancer”
- b. **paudaja=de ami**
 paudaja =de ami
dancer =3S NEG
 “She is not a dancer”

6.2 Adjectives

Adjectival predicates combine features of verbs and nominal predicates: the adjectives moves high in the clause, like a verb, and its subject can remain low, so an ADJ-SUB order is possible. But pro-drop is impossible, and negation is always with **ami**.

- (58) **subabil siin wara**
 su- babil siin wara
 ADJZR- *happiness* *really* *Wara*
 “Wara is in fact happy”
- (59) **ami şototsi wara**
 ami su- ototsi wara
 NEG ADJZR- *sickness* *Wara*
 “Wara is not sick”
- (60) **govdi=ti ami suglo**
 govdi =ti ami su- uglo
Govdi =and NEG ADJZR- *hunger*
 “Even Govdi is not hungry”
- (61) **şototsi=de**
 su- ototsi =de
 ADJZR- *sickness* =3S
 “He is sick”

6.3 Locative and existential clauses

Locative predicates require the (uninflecting) existential copula **jete**. Syntactically, this behaves just like adjectives do, as far as I can see.

- (62) **jete wara la- ra kare**
 jete wara la- ra kare
 EXIST *Wara* LOC-up *tree*
 “Wara is up in the tree”

The same structure is used for existential claims:

- (63) **jete gaweṭ la-ṛa ḳare**
 jete gaweṭ la-ṛa ḳare
 EXIST *stranger* LOC-up *tree*
 “There is a stranger up in the tree”

Strictly speaking there is no locative inversion in Dveze, though the location can be focus-moved to the front of the sentence:

- (64) **la-ṛa ḳare jete gaweṭ**
 la-ṛa ḳare jete gaweṭ
 LOC-up *tree* EXIST *stranger*
 “There is a stranger *up in the tree*”
 Not: “Up in the tree there is a stranger”

6.4 Possession

Possession clauses also use **jete**, with a possessed subject.

- (65) a. **jete govdi ukaptu**
 jete govdi u- kaptu
 EXIST *Govdi* 3S:POSS- *scraper*
 “Govdi has a scraper”
- b. **jete jakaptu**
 jete ja- kaptu
 EXIST 1S:POSS- *scraper*
 “I have a scraper”
- c. **ami jete makaptu**
 ami jete ma- kaptu
 NEG EXIST 2S:POSS- *scraper*
 “You do not have a scraper”

Discontinuous subjects are common in possession statements:

- (66) **govdi jete ukaptu**
 govdi jete u- kaptu
Govdi EXIST 3S:POSS- *scraper*
 “Govdi has a scraper”

6.5 Usages

Dveze uses locative, existential, and possession constructions a lot more than do many other languages; in particular it often uses them rather than using a derived adjective. That’s to say, instead of saying you are happy or sick or hungry, you’d often say that you have happiness or sickness or hunger, or that these things are in you.

Like this:

- (67) a. **jete siiŋ babil la wara**
 jete siiŋ babil la wara
 EXIST *really* *happiness* LOC *Wara*
 “Wara is in fact happy”
- b. **wara jete siiŋ ubabil**
 wara jete siiŋ u- babil
Wara EXIST *really* 3S:POSS- *happiness*
 “Wara is in fact happy”

(Compare (58).)

There’s also an extended sort of existential clause that allows you to use **jete** with nominal and adjectival predicates; you just need the particle **ka**, which is maybe a preposition.

- (68) **jete govdi ka paudaja**
 jete govdi ka paudaja
 EXIST *Govdi* *as* *dancer*
 “Govdi is a dancer”

- (69) **jete wara ka owalo**
 jete wara ka owalo
 EXIST *Wara* *as* *good*
 “Wara is good”

As you can see, I’ll gloss **ka** as “as.” This construction is used more often in subordinate clauses than in full clauses, I think.

6.6 The EPP

The Extended Projection Principle is a (very badly named) principle that’s supposed to explain why languages like English require a syntactic subject even in clauses with no semantic subject. Basically, it requires that something noun-y occupy a canonical subject position towards the beginning of the clause.

There are languages that clearly don’t observe a principle exactly like that, but which seem to have some analogous kind of requirement. One pattern that’s often posited is for a language to satisfy a variant of the EPP by putting an inflected verb near the front of the clause; the idea is that the inflections on the verb are enough to satisfy the EPP even in the absence of an overt subject. Italian seems to be like this, for example; so is Dveze. (And so is Gagur, for that matter.)

The picture in Dveze is complicated by nonverbal predicates, though I’ve tried to set things up so there’s always something that ends up in the right sort of position to satisfy a variant of the EPP:

- Adjectives and the existential copula can satisfy it directly, by moving to the position where you might otherwise find an inflected verb. I might be cheating here a bit, because in Dveze adjectives and the existential copula don’t inflect.

- With nominal predicates, there's obligatory movement of one of the noun phrases into canonical subject position. If the subject is an NP, it moves; but if the subject is represented by a pronominal clitic, it's the predicate nominal that will move.

Er, obviously this is a topic that calls for a lot more discussion. But I'm at the stage in this speedlang were I'm properly rushing, so that'll have to wait.

7 Complement clauses

There are a few types of complement clause. Which one gets used depends on the selecting head, and can depend on such factors as facticity.

7.1 Restructuring verbs

I already discussed these in §5.4: verbs that take VPs as complements. Strictly these don't involve complement *clauses*, but I figured they were worth a mention here. I think this construction will always be factive, to an extent. (The limitation is just that when the selecting verb is, say, *ðal start*, it's factive only about the beginning of the described event.)

7.2 Nominalised verbs

These again aren't really big enough to count as complement *clauses*, but need to be mentioned here.

There are actually two sorts of nominalisation, though both are formed with the prefix *te-*. They differ in the size of the phrase selected by *te-*: it can select either a bare verb phrase, or what I've called an aspect phrase (which can include directional prefixes).

The key difference between the two is the status of the verb's arguments. In the larger of the two, subject and object must both occur, and with no special marking. There are three differences from a full verbal clause: the subject must follow the nominalised verb; the subject cannot be pro-dropped, but, like the object, can take the form of a pronominal clitic; and adverbs that can only occur high in the clause must be replaced by adjectives (though for all I so far know these adjectives might not differ in form from the adverbs).

By contrast, the smaller sort of *te-* nominalisation gives its arguments special treatment. Here the relevant distinction is not between subject and object so much as between internal and external argument, or (in a different vocabulary) between actor and undergoer. If the nominalised verb would normally occur with an external argument (typically either an agent or an experiencer), then this argument can be added as a possessor, with the usual possessor agreement on the nominalised verb—but this is entirely optional. If the verb would normally require an internal argument (typically a patient or a theme), then this argument must also occur in the nominalisation, though it will require the preposition *su*.

These nominalisations are both factive, and it's very common to use them in place of a full complement clause when the sense is factive. For example:

(70) **jete jaðamez u govdi=pə utetəra su goəm**

jete ja- ðamez
 EXIST 1S:POSS *knowledge*
 u govdi =pə u- te- ta -ra su goəm
 ASSOC *Govdi* =CL 3S:POSS- NMLZ- *eat* CL ALL *goomfruit*

“I know that Govdi ate the goomfruit”

Bit-by-bit that would be something like “there exists my knowledge of Govdi’s eating of the goomfruit.” The use of a classifier there is by no means obligatory, but it’s common; nominalisations consistently take the classifier **pə**.

Another example:

(71) **vagal ðaḳal aṣḳowaŋu jatsare u utewetase**

va-gal ðaḳal as- ʁou- aŋu ja- tsvare
 one-CL *diagram* 3S:PROX- BACK- *carry* 1S:POSS *memory*
 u u- te- wetase
 ASSOC 3S:POSS- NMLZ- *disappear*

“A diagram reminded me of his disappearance” (5MOYD 1241)

The nominalising prefix can also take as its complement the existential copula **jete**; this always yields a VP nominalisation.

(72) **jete jaðamez u govdi utejete ka paudaja**

jete ja- ðamez
 EXIST 1S:POSS- *knowledge*
 u govdi u- te- jete ka paudaja
 ASSOC *Govdi* 3S:POSS- NMLZ- EXIST *as dancer*

“I know that Govdi is a dancer”

Later comment. Actually I don’t really know how to handle the last kind of case, maybe it should be **tejete su govdi ka paudaja**. And I feel like there might have been a missed opportunity here to relate all stuff about specificity in noun phrases to facticity in nominalised verbs.

7.3 Full clausal complements

At the other end of the scale you get full clauses as complements, generally (maybe always) following the complementiser **wek** (which is also a verb meaning *say*). These occur most often with verbs of speech, and are most often non-factive, but in principle I think they can show up most places where you find other sorts of complement clause. In particular, they can occur in contexts that demand a factive interpretation. For example, you can use a full clause as the complement to **ðamez knowledge**.

7.4 Slightly reduced clausal complements

Finally, there’s a sort of complement clause that’s only a touch smaller than a full clause: it can include everything, except that the verb always shows default

third person singular agreement, negation must be with **ami**, and subjects cannot be pro-dropped (but they can be represented by second position clitics). Further, in nonfactive contexts only, complements of this sort will include the second position irrealis clitic **=go**.

(I haven't had time to think much about where *else* you'll find **=go**, though it'll certainly show up in main clauses as well. And, maybe it's worth mentioning somewhere that second position clitics don't climb out of complement clauses.)

One place you'll find subclauses of this sort are as complements of the conjunction (or whatever) **bi** *if, when*. Here's a pair of examples that shows the difference between factive and nonfactive:

- (73) a. **bi askvo=go govdi lomo=ṭi itstetata**
 bi as- kvo =go govdi
if 3S:PROX- arrive =IRR Govdi
 lomo =ṭi its- te- REDUP- ta
big =and 1PL:POSS- NMLZ- PLAC- eat
 “If Govdi arrives, then we will make a big feast” (5MOYD 1234)
- b. **bi askvo govdi lomo=ṭi itstetata**
 bi as- kvo govdi
if 3S:PROX- arrive Govdi
 lomo =ṭi its- te- REDUP- ta
big =and 1PL:POSS- NMLZ- PLAC- eat
 “When Govdi arrives, we will make a big feast”

(A side issue: you'll notice that the second position clitic **=go** doesn't get hosted by **bi**. This is because **bi** is itself too small to be an independent phonological word, and must cliticise onto whatever follows it.)

I also intend for these complements to occur in raising and control structures, in which contexts there won't be any sort of overt subject in the complement:

- (74) a. **jasekam aṣṭaraṣ vaṣa ḡoḡam**
 jas- ekam as- ta -ṣa va-ṣa ḡoḡam
 1S:PROX- enjoy 3S:PROX- eat -CL one-CL goomfruit
 “I enjoyed eating a goomfruit”
- b. **jasekam aṣṭaraṣ=go vaṣa ḡoḡam**
 jas- ekam as- ta -ṣa =go va-ṣa ḡoḡam
 1S:PROX- enjoy 3S:PROX- eat -CL =IRR one-CL goomfruit
 “I want to eat a goomfruit”

8 Tense and aspect

I introduced the morphology in §3, but I haven't really discussed its significance. I'm going to do a bit of that here.

8.1 Deictic centres and other locations

The Dveze ‘tense’ inflections mark a three-way distinction:

- The proximal picks out the deictic centre. This is often the utterance location, but in narratives Dveze allows the deictic centre to follow the action (so this is not always the utterance location).
- As with the demonstratives, the medial picks out a location near to the addressee, not a location at middle distance from the deictic centre. This is important: though the location that counts as proximal can shift in the course of a narrative, the medial stays fixed, and generally stays fixed at the utterance location. Among other things, this allows use of the medial to recentre a narrative on the actual utterance location. Generally speaking, you’ll only use the medial when the proximal would not be appropriate.
- Of course the distal is used for locations at a distance from the deictic centre.

In the absence of a directional prefix, the location indicated by the tense inflection—which I’ll call the topic location—is the location where the reported event supposedly takes place. With a directional prefix, the two locations can come apart; and they come apart in different ways with the different directional prefixes.

- The venitive (COME) posits a source location at some distance from the topic location, with the event taking place either at the source location or on the way from the source location to the topic location.
- The andative (GO) posits a destination location at some distance from the topic location, with the event taking place either at the destination location or on the way to it. The andative can also shift the topic location to the destination location.
- The centrifugal (AWAY) locates the event at the topic time but relates it to an indefinite location elsewhere, either because the event involves or leads to motion away from the topic location or because it is somehow relevant elsewhere.
- The restorative (BACK) locates the event at or on the way back to the topic location, with the implication that it involves a return from somewhere else.

My guiding idea is that the directionals encode a spatial analog of perfects, with the event being located in one location, but the clause focusing on its relevance elsewhere. The analogy is tightest with the venitive, because that will consistently be used to describe an event at some distance from the deictic centre in terms of its relevance at the deictic centre. (It’s also the venitive that I’ve spent most time thinking about.)

Anyway, I’m going to try to sketch some of the main ways this can play out, but this is going to be far from complete.

8.2 Accompanying motion

Probably the easiest uses of the directionals is to describe accompanying motion. You get this for example with the general motion verb **sa**, which can be

venitive **kisa** *come*, andative **zosa** *go*, centrifugal **utesa** *leave*, and restorative **ḵoṣa** *leave*.

There are a handful of verbs (and **sa** is one of them) that almost always take a directional prefix indicating accompanying motion. And it's reasonably productive; I'm sure at least about **utezdzelo** *dance away, dance while leaving*—and if that's okay, then presumably quite a lot of other combinations are too.

8.3 Motion leading to action

It's fairly common to use the directionals to indicate that the event being described is preceded by motion, like in the *go and* --- constructions you get in many languages.

Notably, you can't get this sense with a venitive, so something like this won't work:

(75) *askibebe gedzalo waaḏ=di ṣototsiu

as- ki- REDUP- ebe gedzalo waaḏ =di su- ototsi
PROX- COME- PLAC- look.at shaman DIST =CL ADJZR- sickness

Intended: “The shaman came and examined the sick one”

This might mean *the shaman examined the sick one and then came*, or *the shaman examined the sick one for us*, but it cannot describe activity preceded by motion.

One way to get the intended meaning here would be to use a biclausal structure of some sort. But you can also just use the restorative:

(76) aṣḵoṣebebe gedzalo waaḏ=di ṣototsiu

as- ḵou- REDUP- ebe gedzalo waaḏ =di su- ototsi
PROX- BACK- PLAC- look.at shaman DIST =CL ADJZR- sickness

Intended: “The shaman came and examined the sick one”

(5MOYD 1231)

This can work even if the shaman isn't really returning.

8.4 Action leading to motion

You get this sense mostly with the venitive: the event takes place at a distance, but is relevant at the deictic centre because that's where the agent goes next.

(77) oṭaḵemdela

oṭa- ki- emdela
MED- COME- sleep

“He will come to you after sleeping”

8.5 Entering and leaving states

With some verbs, directional prefixes can be used to indicate the start or end of a state or activity. For example, andative **ḏemdela** for going to sleep, restorative **ḵowenḏele** for going back to sleep, and venitive **kemdela** for waking up.

Many descriptions of states actually use a noun rather than a verb to characterise the state—for example **babil** *happiness*. You can use any such noun with verbs such as **kisa** *come*, **zosa** *go*, and **utesa** *leave* to talk about entry into and exit from the state. I think the equivalents of *happiness came* and *I went to happiness* will both be possible. (And *happiness left* and *I left from happiness*, too, I guess.)

8.6 Benefactives and malefactives

The directionals can be used with a benefactive or malefactive sense. There are at least three patterns that are fairly common.

- MED+COME, to indicate that the addressee is the beneficiary or maleficiary of the action
- PROX+COME, to indicate that the speaker (often as part of an inclusive plural) is the beneficiary or maleficiary
- Any tense +AWAY, to indicate that the action was taken to benefit or harm either arbitrary or understood others.

8.7 Other uses

Well, there are probably other uses. The main one that's occurred to me is a sort of evidential use, again mostly with the venitive, where you're mentioning an event elsewhere in a context where what's salient is the evidence of the event at the deictic centre:

- (78) **askidzadzava awez**
 as- ki- REDUP- dzava awez
 PROX- COME- PLAC- *burn river*
 “The river is burning (I can see it)”

(I don't know what this is talking about, but it is obviously somehow lore.)

9 Kinship

This is only the briefest sketch, because my ideas are pretty unformed and I don't want to commit to too much. The broad strokes actually owe a fair bit to a conversation about foodways with Gufferdk.

The context is that Dveze speakers spend a lot of their time in fairly small bands (maybe ten-ish people of all ages), but for parts of the year many bands will congregate together. This mostly depends on seasonal patterns in food gathering, in ways I haven't worked out yet.

The individual band will normally correspond to a slightly extended nuclear family, and the core kinship vocabulary will track relations within the band. I think it'll be strictly generational, treating everyone of roughly your generation as a sibling, everyone of a generation up as a parent, and so on. This vocabulary distinguishes male, female, and *taw* genders. It won't be sensitive to any distinction between membership by birth and membership by adoption (or whatever).

There's an extended vocabulary that's used for nonbandmates, though it is not exclusively a kinship vocabulary; like **kabze** (a gender-neutral term) is *cousin* but it's also *friend* and maybe *ally*. And it probably fades into vocabulary that characterises people by their age; like there might be just one word that covers both elders and people of one's grandparents' generation, and the uncle/aunt vocabulary might also be used for people with authority in certain domains (like, the ones who lead the hunts) regardless of their age relative to ego. (Possessor agreement will often distinguish the generational uses of these terms from the honorific ones, I expect.) I'm not sure how consistently this vocabulary will distinguish gender. I also don't know how exactly relate to incest taboos, or where exactly those taboos will draw a line.

Another big open question is how exactly the *taw* gender fits into the division of labour, as that pertains to reproduction, food gathering, ceremony, or anything else.

Er, and the only actual kin terms that I've so far coined are **oble sister**, **gile brother**, and **kabze cousin**.