Complete Grammar of the Andva Language

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Version 1

1   Introduction

The Andva [ˈaⁿd.va] language is spoken by the Faazngge people along the eastern coast of Sheth. Andva is descended from Proto-Andva, an earlier language originally spoken in roughly the center of the Faazngge's current land area. The Faazngge are steppe-dwellers and are specialist pursuit hunters of large game such as bison and rhinos (north and south, respectively) on horseback. The Faazngge have been in constant contact with the Yajé people through a Yajé diaspora community along the southern coast bordering the Western Sea, and have inherited a small number of loanwords from them. Many words referring to nautical activities or rainforest flora and fauna come from these islanders.

Figure 1: Current Distribution of Andva Speakers

I began working on Andva as part of the CDN Speedlang Challenge 8 in March 2021, and it is part of my conworld Leyet. The phonology is inspired by Guaraní, and the pronoun system is inspired by ASL and Vietnamese.

To anyone who reads this, please send me any comments and critiques you may have. I am always trying to get better at conlanging. Thank you!
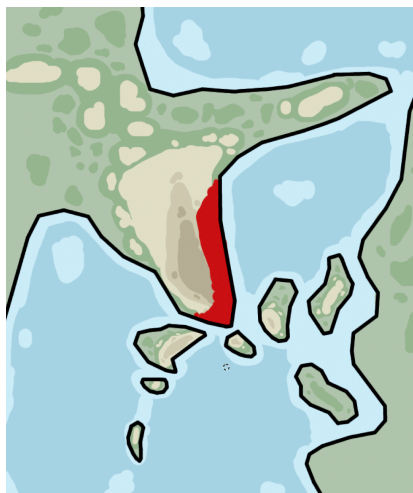
1.1   Abbreviations

Gloss	Name
FPAST	far past
FUT	future
IMP	imperfective
IND	indefinite
INF	infinitive
NPAST	near past
NEG	negative

Contents

2 Phonology

2.1 Phonemic Inventory

		Labial	Alveolar	Velar	Uvular
	Prenasalized	ᵐb~m	ⁿd~n	ᵑg~ŋ	
Stops	Plain	p	t	k	q
	Ejective	p'	t'	k'	q'
Affricates		pf	ts	kx	qχ
Fricatives		f	s	x	
Approximants		w	l		

	Front	Back
High	i ĩ	u ũ
Mid	e ẽ	o õ
Low	a ã	ɑ

2.2 Allophony

- Fricatives /f, s, x/ voice to [v, z, ɣ] when bordering a voiced consonant.

- The nasals and prenasalized stops differ depending on the nasalization contexts, as do the pairs of nasal vowels and oral vowels. See section 2.5 for more details.

- Ejective stops do not occur in clusters.

- When before another vowel, the high vowels /i, u/ become semivowels [j, w]. Only [w] is marked in the romanization.

2.3 Orthography

Andva has no native writing system. Its romanization is entirely phonemic, though it does take some phonetic considerations into account.

- The velar nasal /ŋ/ is romanized as <ng>.

- The prenasalized stops /ᵐb, ⁿd, ᵑg/ are romanized as <mb, nd, ngg>.

- /x, ɣ/ are romanized as <kh, gh>.

- Affricates /kx, qχ/ are romanized as <kkh, qh>.

- Long vowels are marked by doubling.

2.4 Stress

Stress always falls on the leftmost heavy syllable. A heavy syllable includes a long vowel and/or a syllable coda. If there are no heavy syllables, stress falls on the initial syllable of the word. Affixes can change the stress placement of a word and sometimes alter its nasality (see 2.5).

2.5 Nasalization Harmony

Andva features nasalization harmony. This affects both vowels and some consonants, the nasals and prenasalized stops.

Only stressed syllables can be phonemically nasal.[1] If a stressed syllable is nasal, every contrastive sound in the language will become nasal: The vowels will all be nasalized, and any prenasalized stops will become plain nasals.

(1)   /ĩ.wa/ [ĩ.wã]

When an affix or clitic is added, it will take the nasality of the word it modifies (unless it takes over stress).

(2)   ndi-faas "a horse"

(3)   nĩ-khwõ "a chair"

Alternations are possible when a word takes an affix, if that affix now must take stress.

(4)   kata "hold"

(5)   fõkãtãl "not hold"

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[1]However, every syllable has an underlying nasality, and so in cases of stress shifts this leads to very interesting alternations.

2.6   Phonotactics

Andva's phonotactics are defined as:

CGVCC

- C = any consonant

- V = any vowel

- G = any approximant

- Only obstruents can form clusters, and only in alternations between stops and fricatives.

- Geminates are treated as only a single consonant by this model.

3 Nominal Morphology

Andva nouns are definite by default, and noun phrases take a proclitic to mark for indefinite state. Andva nouns are also treated as mass nouns by default, and so the indefinite clitic also functions as a singulative marker. Nouns do not inflect for case or gender/class. Nouns can also be used as pronominal referents very frequently.

The basic noun template is as follows:

IND=stem

3.1 Indefinite Clitic

The indefinite clitic **ndi-/nĩ-** makes a noun indefinite. It is never stressed.

(6)   ndi-Soo liismbi qlonggi.

> ndi=soo   liis-mbi   qlonggi
> IND=animal   see-NPAST   rock

> "An animal saw the rock."

It is a clitic rather than an affix because it attaches to the beginning of a noun phrase, even if there are modifiers preceding the noun.

(7)   ndi-mbwal soo "a big animal"

It can also mark a noun as singulative, rather than mass.

(8)   põtã "sand"

(9)   nĩ-põtã "a grain of sand"

3.2 Pronominal Reference

Andva has an open pronoun class, and such there are no true pronouns. Any nouns used as pronouns in Andva still hold their lexical meaning and can be used as such in other contexts. Andva readily accepts new pronouns to be used. Some pronominal nouns are more common than others, but generally (if all social norms are followed), the person to speak first will set the appropriate pronouns for the speaker and listener with a greeting

meaning "I see you." The other party will then continue the conversation using those pronouns (unless he/she feels they are not socially appropriate), with both individuals adding new pronouns for any other parties mentioned thereafter.

Some common pronouns include:

(10) a.   qendi "man"

     b.   sil "woman"

     c.   akangge "rider"

     d.   k'oombgha "chief"

     e.   usangge "teacher"

     f.   ãkã "son"

     g.   p'ia "daughter"

     h.   fäfo "father"

     i.   nĩnĩ "mother"

     j.   qol "this"

     k.   tis "that"

     l.   hoowi "thing"

     m.   ndeki "sister"

     n.   älu "brother"

     o.   soo "animal"

Contrary to many of the lexical meanings of these words, they can be used in a variety of social contexts. For example, a young individual may refer to an older man as **fäfo**, regardless of whether he is his father, but he is not required to use this in such a context, as **usangge** or even something as informal as **qendi**, though this is far less likely if the old man is the listener.

(11)   Ãkã liis usangge.

     ãkã   liis   usangge
     son   see   teacher

     "Hello. (from young man to old man)"

(12)   Usangge liis ãkã.

       usangge   liis   ãkã
       teacher   see   son

       "Hello. (returning greeting to the young man)"

4 Verbal Morphology

Andva verbs inflect for finiteness, negation, and tense, with no overt marking for aspect, valency, or mood.

The verb template is variable, and will be discussed at the end of this section.

4.1 Tense

Andva verbs inflect for four tenses, with a two-way distinction in the past tense. The near past is used for past tense events within a day or so before the moment of speaking, and the far past is used for past tense events further than a day prior to the moment of speaking.

Far Past	-akh
Near Past	-mbi
Present	-
Future	-qe

(13)   Qendi liisakh soo.

   qendi liis-akh   soo
   man   see-FPAST   animal

   "I saw the animal (a month ago)."

(14)   Qendi liizmbi soo.

   qendi liiz-mbi   soo
   man   see-NPAST   animal

   "I saw the animal (earlier today)."

(15)   Qendi aka faas.

   qendi aka   faas
   man   ride horse

   "I am riding a horse."

(16) Qendi akaqe faas.

    qendi   aka-qe   faas
    man   ride-FUT horse

    "I will ride a horse."

4.2 Negation

Andva verbs take a circumfix for negation. However, this also moves the tense markers to prefix position, in between the prefix portion of the circumfix and the main verb. This makes positive and negative forms of the same verb look quite different from each other.

Far Past	fondakh-äl
Near Past	fomb(i)-äl
Present	fo-äl
Future	foq(e)-äl

(17) wit'ee "goes"

(18) wit'aakh "went"

(19) fondakhwit'ääl "did not go"

It is worth noting that a verb stem with no heavy syllables will see its stress moved to the negative prefix portion, and will be nasalized.

(20) kata "holds"

(21) fõkãtãl "does not hold"

Thus, there are two basic verb templates for an Andva finite verb. The positive verb template is:
stem-TENSE,
while the template for a negative verb is:
NEG-TENSE-stem-NEG.

4.3 Infinitive

The infinitive suffix **-ka** marks the lexical verb in an auxiliary construction.

(22) Qendi ĩwãmĩ ãkã ndi-faas ngẽ.

qendi	ĩwã-mĩ	ã-kã	ndi=faas	ngẽ
man	IMP-NPAST	give-INF	IND=horse	person

"I was giving the person a horse."

In addition, the infinitive can be insubordinated, used in a main clause with an abilitative meaning.

(23) Fäfo akaka ndi-faas.

fäfo	aka-ka	ndi=faas
father	ride-INF	IND=horse

"Father can ride a horse."

5 Constituent Order

5.1 Verb Phrases

Andva is analytic, and role marking is done entirely with word order. As such, the basic SVO word order is quite strict, and most topicalization is done with the indefinite clitic to show new information.

More specifically, the word order is AVPE where AVP is analogous to SVO, and E represents the experiencer, or indirect object.

(24) Qendi liizmbi faas.

qendi liiz-mbi faas
man see-NPAST horse

"I saw the horse."

(25) Nĩnĩ ãmĩ ndi-qlonggi faas.

nĩnĩ ã-mĩ ndi=qlonggi faas
mother give-NPAST IND=rock horse

"She gave the horse a rock"

Auxiliary verbs always come before the lexical verb. An auxiliary takes the tense marking for the phrase.

(26) Qendi ĩwãqẽ liiska sil.

qendi ĩwã-qẽ liis-ka sil
man IMP-FUT see-INF woman

"I will be seeing you.[2]"

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[2]This is a common way to say goodbye, as it is more or less the reciprocal of the hello greeting.

5.2   Noun Phrases

Noun phrases, unlike verb phrases, are head-final. As such, all modifiers (adjectives, numbers, demonstratives, genitives) occur before their head nouns.

(27)   mbwal soo "the big animal"

(28)   nũ soo "two animals"

(29)   qol soo "this animal"

(30)   luu qendi soo "my animal"

5.3   Adpositional Phrases

Andva uses prepositions, occurring before their dependent noun phrases.

(31)   k'uul khwõ "on the chair"

(32)   luu kakle "from the land"

6 Semantic Fields

6.1 Loanwords

Andva has received a fair amount of loanwords from the Yajéé language of the Yajé islanders to the south. Yajéé has received more loanwords from Andva than the other way around, but there is still a notable amount of loanwords, particularly in the southern dialect.

Loanwords from Yajéé typically include nautical and maritime terms, as well as words for rainforest flora and fauna.

(33)   a.   YJ wagwómo "moa" - AV wãwõõmõ "any large bird, flightless or otherwise"

       b.   YJ way *wale "fish" - AV wale

       c.   YJ rös "to hunt" - AV los "to fish"

7 Examples

(34)   Tis ngẽ uf fondakhkinggäl luu ngẽ p'ia.

tis   ngẽ   uf   fond-akh-kingg-äl   luu   ngẽ   p'ia
that   person   at.all   NEG-FPAST-know-NEG   of   person   daughter

"That person did not know his child at all. 5MOYD 1411"

(35)   Älu sokh nggis aat'a.

älu   sokh   nggis   aat'a
brother   have   bad   opinion

"He has bad opinions. 5MOYD 1371"

(36)   Älu aqakh ĩwãkã ndi-titi.

älu   aq-akh   ĩwã-kã   ndi=titi
brother   may-FPAST   be-INF   IND=rabbit

"He might have been a rabbit."

(37)   Luu fäfo ãkã k'eelo liizmbi qendi.

luu   fäfo   ãkã   k'eelo   liiz-mbi   qendi
of   father   son   only   see-NPAST   man

"Only his son saw me. 5MOYD 1352"

(38)   Qendi ĩwã mbundika qee fõnĩwãl khokh.

qendi   ĩwã   mbundi-ka   qee   älu   fõn-ĩw-ãl   khokh
man   IMP   leave-INF   and   brother   NEG-be-NEG   happy

"I'm leaving and he is not happy. 5MOYD 1337"