Dzibdziapha

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Speedlang 9

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I | Sounds

I.A Consonants

The consonants bear the heavy lifting in the language, with there being, at the most liberal count favoring the vowels, over eight times as many consonants as vowels. The conservative count reckons it at over *forty* times as many!

I.A.i Dzibdziapha has two valid analyses of its consonants

There are two analyses of the consonants: the massive-inventory–simple-phonotactics approach, and the reduced-inventory–complex-phonotactics approach. They each have their benefits and their drawbacks, which I will elucidate when I don't have to spend only two or so hours a day at a public library on this.

I.A.i.a Complexity in sound with simpler rules

This analysis purports an absolutely massive inventory of 161 consonants in Dzibdziapha, making for a huge and ugly table. Here they are anyway, all laid out:

p	˂p	ƥ	˂ƥ	t	˂t		c	˂c	k	
b	˂b	ɓ	˂ɓ	d	˂d		ɟ	˂ɟ	g	
ph	˂ph	ƥh	˂ƥh	th	˂th		ch	˂ch	kh	
bɦ	˂bɦ	ɓɦ	˂ɓɦ	dɦ	˂dɦ		ɟɦ	˂ɟɦ	gɦ	
pˀ	˂pˀ	ɓ	˂ƥˀ	tˀ	˂tˀ		cˀ	˂cˀ	kˀ	
ˀb	˂ˀb	ˀɓ	˂ˀɓ	ˀd	˂ˀd		ˀɟ	˂ˀɟ	ˀg	
pɸ		pɸ		tθ		ʦ	kɕ		kx	
bβ		bβ		dð		ʣ	gʝ		gɣ	
pɸh		pɸh		tθh		ʦh	kɕh		kxh	
bβɦ		bβɦ		dðɦ		ʣɦ	gʝɦ		gɣɦ	
pɸˀ		pɸˀ		tθˀ		ʦˀ	kɕˀ		kxˀ	
ˀbβ		ˀbβ		ˀdð		ˀʣ	ˀgʝ		ˀgɣ	
ɸ		ɸ		θ		ʂ	ɕ		x	
β		β		ð		ʐ	ʝ		ɣ	
ɸh		ɸh		θh		ʂh	ɕh		xh	h
βɦ		βɦ		ðɦ		ʐɦ	ʝɦ		ɣɦ	ɦ
ɸˀ		ɸˀ		θˀ		ʂˀ	ɕˀ		xˀ	ʔ
βˌ̥		βˌ̥		ðˌ̥		ʐˌ̥	ʝˌ̥		ɣˌ̥	ɦˌ̥
m	ˢb			ɳ	ˢd		ɲ	ˢɟ		
ʰm	ˢpʰ			ɳʰ	ˢtʰ		ɲʰ	ˢcʰ		
mɦ	ˢbɦ			ɳɦ	ˢdɦ		ɲɦ	ˢɟɦ		
ʰmˀ	ˢpˀ			ɳˀ	ˢtˀ		ɲˀ	ˢcˀ		
mˌ̥	ˢbˌ̥			ɳˌ̥	ˢdˌ̥		ɲˌ̥	ˢɟˌ̥		
				ɾ						

The whole inventory is very occlusive-heavy. There is an active avoidance of laterals in the phonology, and they are never heard from the mouths of the speakers. There is also heavy use of laryngeal features on top of the main points and manners of articulation, which astronomically balloons the consonant count.

I.A.i.b Simplicity in sound with more complex rules

This analysis takes note of the remarkable and pervasive symmetry of Dzibdziapha's consonant inventory, mostly due to the 6-way laryngeal contrast at most manners of articulation, along with a laryngeal approximant for 4 out of them, so it reduces the count massively by proposing a system of clustering to achieve the observed effects. Here they are, laid out in two tables:

p	ʿp	ƥ	ʿƥ	t	ʿt		c	ʿc	k
pɸ		pƥ		tθ		ʦ	kç		kx
ɸ		ƥ		θ		ʂ	ç		x
m	˂b			ɳ	˂d		ɲ	˂ɟ	
				r					

And the laryngeal inventory:

	[+spread glottis]	[-s.g. -c.g.]	[+constricted glottis]
[-voice]	h	∅	ʔ
[+voice]	ɦ	ɦ̠	ɦ̰

The sound /ɦ̠/ is an abstraction that doesn't actually exist. Proponents of the theory claim that it is a good explanation for hiatus vowels that otherwise violate condensation rules, but either way, this sound, if it really exists, possesses its only phonetic basis in the voiced plosives.

I.A.i.c A middle ground?

These viewpoints represent the extremes. There are those (mostly non-specialists) who believe that the optimal analysis must be some sort of harmonious reconciliation between the two. Such people have never actually *proposed* such an analysis, so experts in the field of Dzibdziapha Studies tend to politely ignore the musings of the lay.

For various reasons that I don't have time to get into now since I have a deadline to meet, I shall use the analysis in I.A.i.a. The analysis directly above can be left here and kept in mind.

I.A.ii The consonant inventory has some defectivities

There are some defectivities in the inventory, specifically concerning the dejectives (*offIPA* 'clicks'). Consonants have the ability to convert into and out of dejectivity in certain morphological environments. However, there are less dejectives than non-dejectives, so in some cases, substitution must occur (there are also specific cases where no substitution happens, and they just remain *talis qualis*, *viz.* for the velar consonants). This affects the productivity of these processes as well.

I.A.iii The stops and affricates differ in softness

Every stop has a corresponding affricate—this is no mistake. The gentle fricative release of the affricates stands in contrast to the more abrupt out-forcing of air that in the stops; thus, the speakers of Dzibdziapha consider the affricates to have a softer sound than the stops. The opposition between them is neutralized after a fricative, where they both collapse into a stop. The fricative interferes with the

distinctiveness of the following sound, so the occlusion is articulated more forcefully to compensate. This, however, causes loss of affrication.

As plosives, both the stops and the affricates can undergo dejectivization. The dejectives are defective here, lacking a distinction in softness altogether, so the stops and affricates at a given point of articulation both collapse into the same dejective. And actually, reflecting this, the dejectives /ʻp ʻp ʻt/ have taxophones of the noisier, affricated flavors; *i.e.*, they can be [ʻpp ʻpp̣ ʻtθ] (for different reasons, /ʻc/ does not do this). These are in free variation with the canonical values, though the stop *vs.* the affricate's crisper sound is preferred for clarity and euphony, with the latter even seen as sloppy and uncouth in some circles.

I.A.iv Sibilants have less contrasts than other sounds

Dzibdziapha is a one-sibilant language, possessing only variants of the cross-linguistically very common /ʂ/. Rather than as a point of articulation *ipse*, the sibilants behave like a variant of the /t θ/-series, like in many languages. As variants, they have a quality slightly different: whereas /tθ/ is considered to be a *softer* variant of /t/, /tʂ/ is altogether different, perceived as *sharper*. The affinity it has with /t/ is not as great, so it actually will *not* change to the stop after a fricative, and it will keep itself. Obviously lacking its own dejective, however, it *will* merge with both /t/ *and* /tθ/ into /ʻt/.

I.B Vowels

There are two tiers of vowels: condensable and incondensable.

I.B.i Condensable vowels are affected by their environment

There are three **condensable vowels**: /i/, /u/, and /ɚ/. They alternate between uncondensed [i u ɚ] and condensed [j w ɹ], depending on the phonological environment they're in.

NB mementoque that the taxophone [ɹ] is *not* labialized, at all. Other than this detail, it is *almost identical* to the same sound found in English onsets!

I.B.ii Incondensable vowels are considerably more stable

The class of **incondensable vowels** comprises just one member: /a/. /a/'s phonetic value changes in the presence of a condensable vowel. Ordinarily, it's [ɐ]; next to /i/, it's [ɑ]; to /u/, it's [ɔ]; and /ɚ/, [a].

I.C Romanization

For such a huge phonemic inventory, romanization is a daunting task. The syllable structure of Dzibdziapha is a very great help, making digraphs and trigraphs quite practical:

Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound
p	p	pqh	ʻph	qʔ	ɓ	t	t
b	b	bqh	ʻbɦ	bʔ	ʾɓ	d	d
ph	ph	pqʔ	ʻpʾ	qq	ʻp̣	th	tɦ
bh	bɦ	bqʔ	ʿʾb	bq	ʻɓ	dh	dɦ
pʔ	pʾ	q	p̣	pqh	ʻph	tʔ	tʾ
bʔ	ʾb	b	ɓ	bqh	ʻbɦ	dʔ	ʾd
pq	ʻp	qh	p̣h	qqʔ	ʻpʾ	tq	ʻt
bq	ʻb	bh	ɓɦ	bqʔ	ʿʾb	dq	ʻd

Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound
tqh	ʻth	tƅ	tθ	fʔ	ɸ’	ʔm	m̩
dqh	ʻdɦ	dð	dð	ʊʔ	ʁɦ̩	mq	ˢb
tqʔ	ʻt’	tƅh	tθh	ƅ	θ	hmq	ˢpɦ
dqʔ	ʿ’d	dðh	dðɦ	ð	ð	mqh	ˢbɦ
c	c	tƅʔ	tθ’	ƅh	θh	mqʔ	ˢp’
j	ɟ	dðʔ	ˀdð	ðh	ðɦ	ʔmq	ˢbɦ̩
ch	cɦ	ts	tʂ	ƅʔ	θ’	n	ɳ
jh	ɟɦ	dz	dʐ	ðʔ	ðɦ̩	hn	ɳ̊
cʔ	c’	tsh	tʂh	s	ʂ	nh	ɳɦ
jʔ	ˀɟ	dzh	dʐɦ	z	ʐ	nʔ	ɳ’
cq	ʻc	tsʔ	tʂ’	sh	ʂh	ʔn	ɳ̩
jq	ʻɟ	dzʔ	ˀdʐ	zh	ʐɦ	nq	ˢd
cqh	ʻch	cç	kɕ	sʔ	ʂ’	hnq	ˢtɦ
jqh	ʻɟɦ	jy	gʑ	zʔ	ʐɦ̩	nqh	ˢdɦ
cqʔ	ʻc’	cçh	kɕh	ç	ɕ	nqʔ	ˢt’
jqʔ	ʿ’ɟ	jyh	gʑɦ	y	ʑ	ʔnq	ˢdɦ̩
k	k	cçʔ	kɕ’	çh	ɕh	n̄	ɲ
g	g	jyʔ	ˀgʑ	yh	ʑɦ	hn̄	ˀɲ
kh	kh	kx	kx	çʔ	ɕ’	n̄h	ɲɦ
gh	gɦ	gw	gɣ	yʔ	ʑɦ̩	n̄ʔ	ˀɲ’
kʔ	k’	kxh	kxh	x	x	ʔn̄	ɲ̩
gʔ	ˀg	gwh	gɣɦ	w	ɣ	n̄q	ˢɟ
pf	pɸ	kxʔ	kx’	xh	xh	hn̄q	ˢcɦ
bv	bβ	gwʔ	ˀgɣ	wh	ɣɦ	n̄qh	ˢɟɦ
pfh	pɸh	f	ɸ	xʔ	x’	n̄qʔ	ˢc’
bvh	bβɦ	v	β	wʔ	ɣɦ̩	ʔn̄q	ˢɟɦ̩
pfʔ	pɸ’	fh	ɸh	h	h	l	r
bvʔ	ˀbβ	vh	βɦ	hh	ɦ	i	i
pf	pɸ	fʔ	ɸ’	ʔ	ʔ	u	u
bʊ	bɞ	vʔ	βɦ̩	ʔʔ	ɦ̩	r	ɚ
pfh	pɸh	f	ɸ	m	m	a	a
bʊh	bβɦ	ʊ	β	hm	m̊		
pfʔ	pɸ’	fh	ɸh	mh	mɦ		
bʊʔ	ˀbβ	ʊh	βɦ	mʔ	m̊’		

Henceforth, this Romanization will be used in the giving of words. Only occasionally will a phonetic transcription accompany, always when necessary.

I.D Structure

The maximal syllable is $ = $XC_1C_2V_1V_2r$, with $C_1 \neq C_2$ and $V_1 \neq V_2$. An important restriction is that the two Vs that can appear in a syllable must be of a different tier; *ergo*, if there are two vowels in a syllable, always exactly one of them must be /a/.

All CC clusters are broken up with a very brief epenthetic [[ᵊ]]. This functionally means that each stop is released in a cluster: /CCV/ = [C_*CV]. On that detail, this means that stops are released all the time, in all the places, since they can only appear in onset anyway.

Tautosyllabic clusters must agree along their laryngeal node. The laryngeal properties of the preceding consonants are abandoned totally in favor of the last one. Thus, tenuis consonants never appear before any nasal, since there is no tenuis nasal.

I.D.i Weight is determined by morae

Dzibdziapha is primarily a mora-based language. This gives it a quality many would consider staccato. This, combined with the lack of any appreciable level of tone or stress, gives it a rather monotonous quality that less-kind peoples mock as "robotic." This has become a national insecurity.

I.D.i.a A word must meet the minimum weight to be valid

For a word to be well-formed, it must meet the minimum weight, which is three morae. Under the typical rules, this means that the word must be at least two syllables. Bare roots are illegal! They must have an affix, and depending on the root and affix, sometimes even two of them.

I.D.i.b Coda /r/ can sometimes act heavy

A vowel counts for one mora, as does coda /r/, but this latter with restriction. Under typical circumstances, a syllable can hold at most two morae. /r/ counts 'less' as a mora than a vowel does, so when there is a conflict of weight, /r/ is often bullied out.

The heaviness of coda /r/ comes out only really in these two scenarios: when all the syllables are otherwise the same weight, so it works as a tie-breaker, and in monosyllabic words, where it creates what is called a "super-heavy"—*i.e.*, three-mora—syllable. This causes the monosyllable to satisfy the minimal weight constraint. Normally, such a situation would be avoided, and indeed, in older language, this was not acceptable. But the tie-breaking role that /r/ played *made heavy* the consonant, which spawned the remarkable phenomenon wherein an otherwise-illegal monosyllable actually gains an *excrescent* /r/, forcing it to become legal. This can only affect ~10² roots, but most are common, so the process is quite audible.

Previous repair mechanisms involved avoidance of the form entirely, either by rephrasing or by attaching redundant derivational affixes, the latter of which was considered to be clumsier and less refined. This new method, with excrescent /r/, has been met with opposition from the aged *vs.* the youthful. The former group almost never uses this method, except in cheap attempts to seem young and cool, while the latter group uses it extensively (excepting certain pretentious individuals who thrive off of winning over small details and prefer kissing up to those above them over getting along with their own peers). This brings the usual grumbling over the deterioration of the language and how the world has gone to wrack and ruin, which is met in turn by jeers against the judgment and turgidity of old people, who are never content.

I.D.i.c Morae determine the final form of a word

Even though there is no appreciable tone nor stress, the weight of a syllable is absolutely critical for the well-formedness of a word and for the allomorphy of affixes. Many affixes come in a full and a reduced form. Which form is assumed depends on the meter of the word, which favors the iamb. This will sometimes cause an excrescent /a/ to appear in the front of a word if the first syllable is heavy. This will further cause an excrescent consonant to appear, since all words in Dzibdziapha must begin with one. This is always one of the four laryngeal consonants. Which one is determined by the following consonant: if it has a laryngeal place of articulation, the consonant will match that; otherwise, the default is /ʔ/ for plosives and /h/ for the rest (with the appropriate voicing applied).

Very skilled speakers can form highly rhythmical poems by rearranging words, choosing affixes carefully, and using variant alternations of them. This is a traditional artform called dqʔarkshi, but it has recently been on the decline, for it really emphasizes the rhythmical nature of the language, everything the recently-prestigious, fluid Zŷzoa language is not—dqʔarkshi reminds them of their insecurity.

I.D.ii Consonants have tendencies on the position they appear at in a word

Naturally, not all the consonants are made equal, and some prefer a certain position in the onset cluster over others. Generally, more sonorant consonants prefer appearing in the second position; *e.g.*, the nasal consonants appear in the second slot in the great majority of cases, despite it being perfectly legal for them to appear in the first slot, before a plosive (which does happen).

I.D.iii Dejective consonants cannot appear directly in front of another consonant

A hard rule is that dejectives *never* appear in the first consonant slot. This is complicated by the fact that dejectives never appear as the second consonant of a root. Thus, to fix this, roots that are placed in such a compromising position undergo **dejective transfer**. This is basically a swapping of the dejectiveness from the back to the front. This happens so systematically that traditional grammars treat them as a separate root category, but in our treatment here, they behave *grammatically regularly* with *phonological adjustment*.

I.D.iii.a Velar consonants are absorbed by the dejective

Since dejectives are really compound sounds that have an anterior part and a dorsal part, velar consonants cannot dejectivize. They instead mix with dejectives to form a complex known as a **hybridized dejective**. These sounds have rather more complex phonations, approaching the so-called contour clicks of !Xóõ; *i.e.*, [ʼKkx ʼKgɣɦ ˤKx’] *&c*. The plain stops are already manifest in the dejectives, so these are wholly absorbed; therefore, this particular breed of cluster is indistinguishable from unitary phonemes.

The rule that consonants assimilate into the laryngeal node of the last consonant still applies, so therefore, in a root like √ɓqakh- [ʼɓʁkh-] "wash, clean," the voiced dejective assimilates and turns aspirated in the reduced grade, yielding the stem ƥqh- [ʼƥh-].

I.D.iii.b Fricatives trigger another kind of transfer

There are no dejective fricatives, due to impossibility in articulation, but there is still the rule that a dejective consonant must be followed by a vowel. So, in roots with a second consonant being fricative, this triggers another rule known as **fricative transfer**. In this, the baton holding the features still passes on [+dejective], but it receives in turn another baton containing the [+fricative] as payment. No other features

are transferred, and assimilation goes on as normal. Thus, for example, the root √dqhafʔ- [ʻdɦɐqʼ-] “stumble, lose balance, err” appears as ƙʔpqʔ- [θʼʻpʼ] in the reduced grade. Sibilants lose distinctiveness in the same as explained in I.A.iv, and they do not transfer sibilance: *e.g.*, the root √tqʔazh [ʻtʼɐʐɦ] “accept, take; forgive begrudgingly” is ðhdqh- [ðɦʻdɦ-] in the reduced grade, *not* zhdqh- [ʐɦʻdɦ-].

II | Roots

II.A Shape

The roots in Dzibdziapha follow a remarkably uniform basic shape. They can be divided into a few categories based on their morphophonological weight and their mutability.

II.A.i Roots are very preferentially monosyllabic

The great majority of roots are monosyllabic. This is easily achieved by the high consonant count of the language, allowing for an astonishing 100,000 theoretical roots of two consonants. Naturally, there are some restrictions to take into account, *viz.* that dejectives must be the first consonant of the root, but factoring this in still yields nearly 80,000 possible roots. However, the attested root count is a mere fraction of this number, sitting at less than one fifteenth of it.

There has been observed a strong preference toward monosyllabic roots in Dzibdziapha. In fact, a count of every attested root to appear in the last two centuries of Dzibdziapha's literature gives an incredible 98.4% of roots being monosyllabic—over two standard deviations. There are only about eighty roots that are more than one syllable long, of which only about ten are widely-known. Clearly, there is immense pressure for roots to be monosyllabic. This is observed in the nativization of foreign lexemes: this often entails coalescence, restructuring, and reanalysis to ultimately spit out a new, monosyllabic root. This can be exemplified in the root mautʔ- "print words", whose progress to nativization is attested at every stage in the historical record:

1. Zŷzoa source, 700 years ago: mopétʌʌɣ [ˌm̂əˉpɛtˑʔʌɪ] "printing press" (lit. "ink-hit") is borrowed as mupetai [mupɛtᵪ] *ibidem*. Most printers are Zŷzoa-speaking at this time.
2. 550 years ago: as printing becomes common, the word enters the common parlance. Old mupetai is awkward to say and becomes mupotái [mupɔtaʔɪ].
3. 500 years ago: mupotái is analyzed as consisting of a root mupatá + an old suffix i; this makes pressure which causes the ultimate vowel to elide, creating mupotti [mupɔtʼə].
4. 350 years ago: idiosyncratic dialectal resolution and diachronic drift results in various variants, the three most common being *mauuatɔa* [mɒwɒtʼə], *mupɔa* [mupʼə], and *puuatɔa* [pwɒtʼə].
5. 200 years ago: the form mautɔa [mɔwtʼɐ] emerged from the first variant above through elision, where it eventually spread and dominated. This remains the word today, pronounced as [məwtʼɐ].

This incredible pressure totally transformed a word from a three-syllable–zero-derived compound to a root possessing the preferred single syllable. The idiosyncratic character of the changes demonstrates the lack of rigorous rules in reducing polysyllabic roots, leaving them to a sort of "entropic decay," to abuse the term. This process is greatly aided by a general aversion on the part of the speakers against explicitly foreign-sounding vocabulary.

II.A.ii One or two consonants most frequently characterize a root

The maximal monosyllabic root consists of a consonant, a vowel, and another consonant. Each part is optional, though, and there are roots that are simply one sound. Roots are usually cited in the full grade; *i.e.*, with morphological /a/ inserted. Since the full grade is formed in this way, the vowel that appears in a

root *must* be a condensable vowel. Any historical /a/ that might have appeared in a root has long been analogized away. In fact, the grade system is so productive that even foreign words get adapted to have or lack /a/, depending on the proper morphological environment in Dzibdziapha.

II.A.iii Not every consonant combination is equal

When there are two consonants in a root, there are certain trends and a rule to follow. The rule is that a dejective appearing absolutely *must* be the first consonant, *without exception!* Foreign words with a dejective violating this principle are adapted according to dejective transfer, described in I.D.iii.

The trends are not hard and fast rules (they might have been at one point in history), but they are nice to be aware of. First, there is what is traditionally called **tongue-avoidance**. This is an aversion to consonants of the same place of articulation appearing within a root. It's pretty straightforward and easy to grasp. Second, there is what is traditionally called **throat-avoidance**. This is an aversion to consonants sharing the same laryngeal mode of articulation. In the past, there were dissimilatory strategies to avoid this between a root and an affix, but nowadays they have fallen out of use and remain in doublets and fossilized byforms. Both of these together are often called **dissimilatory trends** by modern scholarship, considering them both as different subtypes of the same tendency, making this the first trend altogether.

The second trend is traditionally called **texture control**. Assigning the stops as "hard" and the affricates as "soft," roots prefer to have a mix of "textures" than have both consonants be the same texture. Roots with the same texture are called "bland," and they see stylistic use in poetry sometimes for their more staccato quality. *NB* this applies only if both consonants are non-dejective plosive, *mementoque* that sibilant affricates are considered "sharp," so they do not participate here.

The third trend is stronger, more pervasive, and less recognized. It has no name. In Dzibdziapha, generally, roots are much more likely to have the first root consonant be less sonorous than the second one. This creates a very skewed distribution, with upwards of 85 percent of roots following this. Speakers are subconsciously aware of it: words formed from a root with rising sonority are more likely to be felt as native than roots with falling sonority, even though the distribution of loaned roots' sonority direction is similar to that of pure Dzibdziapha.

II.A.iv Syllabic rules do not apply to roots

Roots very frequently violate the legal structure of a syllable. This is almost never a problem, for they receive affixes that reestablish the normal pattern of syllables.

The maximal structure of a root is CVC, though there are roots that are just C or just V. Unlike normal syllables, roots cannot possess consonant clusters, and any consonant can appear in the second position. In addition, the special status /r/ is afforded naturally does not hold in the root.

III | Words

III.A Stems

III.A.i The root is rather frequently used naked as a stem *ipse*

III.A.ii Whole-root reduplication has two main meanings

III.A.iii Dejectivization of the first consonant is typical of euphemisms, but only if it's a stop

III.A.iii.a Stops that lack a dejective are deleted entirely, though they may leave a trace

III.B Affixes

III.B.i Prefixes are preferred for verb derivation

III.B.ii Most nouns have a suffix indicating their nominal status

III.B.iii The suffix -ə has vague, general use and comes from a merger of several unrelated endings

IV | Verbs

The character of verbs is mildly polysynthetic. Much information is packed into the verbal complex, which can host a variety of affixes, including actor, undergoer, recipient, tense, extent, attitude, and certainty. Only a few of them are mandatory, though naturally, verbs usually do possess some of the non-mandatory affixes for natural speech. The polysynthetic character of the verb is also reflected in the syntax, which is quite lax in the legal ordering of words.

On top of the three-mora–minimum restriction already present in the phonology, verbs themselves have their own minimum of six morae. Normally, this is easily met even in the least legally inflected forms, but certain roots on certain inflections spawn result in a total mora count of five: one short of the minimum. This triggers a repair mechanism, to be detailed in IV.A.x.

IV.A Chain

The affixes attach to the verb stem and form what is known as the **verbal chain**. It's so called because the individual morphemes are considered to be linked together to form a longer, stronger unit, like links on a chain.

To illustrate the examples below, the well-behaved root katɸ- "hit, beat, strike" will be used.

IV.A.i Two sets of endings determine the direction of action on transitive verbs

Dzibdziapha, like other languages in its family, expresses what is cross-linguistically called "voice" in the suffix for person. This is called **direction**.

IV.A.i.a The forward direction is nearly exactly an active voice

This is the default, unmarked system used in transitive verbs, called the **forward direction**. The meaning is basically that of an active voice, but the subjects of verbs in the forward are more agentive than typical for normal active voices.

There are eight endings used in person marking for all transitive verbs. Here are the forward-direction ones:

	Singular	Plural
1a	-fin	-vnais
1b	-vas	
2a	-kin	-gnais
2b	-gas	
3	-ʔau	-ʔʔus

The first and second persons have two forms, called "a" and "b." The "b" form is used when the undergoer is a speech-act-participant, and the "a" form with anything else being the undergoer. This distinction is not used in the plural. Originally, this was due to sound changes involving voicing assimilation and cluster reduction, but the repair mechanisms used then to cope with the loss of distinction in the forward direction have become productive processes now, so this merger has therefore spread to the endings of the reverse direction, which had otherwise kept them distinct.

Under normal circumstances, 3SG 1PL, and 2PL trigger /a/ deletion in the root, putting it in the reduced grade. There are some other circumstances, though, described in IV.A.iv and IV.A.viii, that cause /a/-containing endings to reduce, sometimes very dramatically, and keep the full grade of the root intact.

These are the variant reduced endings (where be an em dash, there be no reduced form for that particular suffix):

	Singular	Plural
1a	—	-vnis
1b	-fs, -f	
2a	—	-gnis
2b	-ks, k	
3	-ʔu	—

The single- *vs.* double-consonant allomorphs depend on the particular phonological environment (*viz.* whether it would cause the creation of an illegal cluster).

IV.A.i.b The reverse direction resembles a transitive passive voice

The meaning of the **reverse direction** is as if the position of A and P were swapped relative to the forward. This makes for a reversal in meaning, hence the appellation. Here, the emphasis is on the undergoer of action, which makes the reverse reminiscent of a passive voice. *NB* the verb is still transitive: the prototypical passive voice's optional agentive phrase present is a mandatory, full-fledged core argument.

Like the forward direction, the reverse has eight person endings:

	Singular	Plural
1a	-xal	-xaubis
1b	-xlut	
2a	-mal	-maubis
2b	-mlut	
3	-zañ	-zais

The persons are the same as above. Here, though, all of the plural forms trigger /a/ deletion and none of the singular forms, a simpler rule than the situation in the forward direction.

These endings do not appear etymologically related to the forward direction very much; their presence is quite ancient within the family, with most branches possessing cognates (a key exception is, like usual, Zŷzoa, which is typologically aberrant compared to its sisters and cousins). Thus, they can be reconstructed for the earliest stages of the family, wherein there is also no clear etymology.

Again, like the forward direction, there are allomorphs of the endings in reduced-grade contexts:

	Singular	Plural
1a	-xl, -x	-xaubis
1b	—	
2a	-ml, -m	-maubis
2b	—	
3	-zñ, -z	-zis

Here is a very interesting phenomenon to be found: the first- and second-person plural suffixes are big enough that they are shielded from reducing influence, meaning that they still repress the /a/ of the root. This is *not* the case for the third-person plural, which behaves like the rest of the singulars in preserving the full grade of the root.

IV.A.i.c Animacy is the main factor for direction choice, but not the only one

IV.A.ii Intransitive verbs take an entirely different set of endings that appear related to the reverse

Intransitive verbs are vague with respect to direction. The person marked on the intransitive verb may be either passive or antipassive with respect to the forward direction, depending on the specific semantics of the verb and context.

Since there is only one core argument of the verb, intransitive verbs do not make the "a"/"b" distinction, so there are six endings to be found here:

	Singular	Plural
1	-xu	-xsi
2	-mu	-msi
3	-zu	-su

As visible, all of these endings end in a vowel. These can form complexes with the following suffix, but more frequently, they assume an elided allomorph, especially if the following syllable already has two vowels

IV.A.iii Mandatory tenses are more ancient and attach directly to the stem

There are three mandatory tenses, being the present, past, and future. They all attach directly after the verb stem, sitting in front of the person endings.

IV.A.iii.a The present tense is remarkably flexible in meaning, and is only weakly temporal

The present tense is marked as -ar. Deletion of /a/ happens in response to the weight of the next syllable: in iambic circumstances (assume so henceforth unless indicated otherwise), a heavy person ending will cause syncopation of the /a/. This is carried back to the stem as well, which is the root of the grade alternation in verbs mentioned throughout IV.A.i. Here are some examples:

IV.A.iii.b The past tense naturally has a rather narrowed temporal scope

The past tense is marked as -ai. Like the present tense above, deletion of /a/ is sensitive to the following syllable.

IV.A.iii.c The future tense may only be used in situations of surety, so it has a rather limited distribution

The future tense is marked with an invariate -a. In the past, this /a/ was dropped like all others, but it created all sorts of clusters that had to be resolved, so nowadays, this ending is always preserved (irregular verbs and fossils notwithstanding).

It disrupts the meter, which isn't *strictly* a bad thing, but the preference toward iambic structure means that the future tense is disfavored among regular verbs, preferring alternate strategies.

IV.A.iv Moods mark the end boundary of the mandatory chain

IV.A.v Negation is prefixed to the whole chain, and it sometimes triggers a shift in affix order

IV.A.vi Prefixes control the general circumstances and attitudes of the verb

IV.A.vii Some attitudes can form a complex with a basal tense to form a composed tense

IV.A.viii The extent of action may be conveyed *via* metrical shift, in addition to the suffix

IV.A.ix Some additional arguments may be marked on the verb, but they are defective

IV.A.x Underlyingly-small verb chains are poorly tolerated and repaired by conserved pathways

IV.B Causatives

Consider the following expression: "I made you hit him." In English, this type of construction is the predominant means of expressing causation. Dzibdziapha possesses two such grammaticalized constructions, each of which have different grammatical properties and focuses on meaning.

IV.B.i The derivational causative's meaning is applied before direction is

The more ancient construction is the **derivational causative**. This is so old that it's actually a derivational suffix, instead of the normal prefix as described in III.B.i.

To form it, all that needs to be done is to attach -ʊatqh to the desired stem. It triggers the reduced grade. The additional argument is usually expressed with the primary prefixes described in IV.A.ix.

Since the primary prefixes are defective, control over the arguments is afforded by the direction system. For example, to say "I made you hit him," it would be ghaktƥutqhaivaslai; reversing it to ghaktƥutqhaixlutlai would mean "I made him hit you" (lit. "I made you be-hit-by him").

IV.B.ii Control of cause-direction is a distinguishing feature of the periphrastic causative

The newer causative construction arose to allow for finer control of the reversal process; it also emphasizes the causation more than the derived one. To form it, a serial verb construction with the root dðʔach "allow, permit" is made. Fun fact: this root is actually etymologically related to the causative suffix above, but a couple of millennia have obscured this relation dramatically.

To say "I made you hit him" periphrastically, it would be hathchaivaslai ʔaktƥaigaslai; reversal of this would yield hathchaixlutlai ʔaktƥaizñilai "you made me hit him" (lit. "I was-made-by you and he was-hit-by someone (*viz.* me)"). *NB* the change in person ending between the reversal: this has to do with the semantics of a serial construction. Saying it with any other person combination would either violate the rule that components of serial constructions have the same direction, make no semantic sense, or not flow naturally and be interpreted as a coordinate instead. This is explained further in IV.D.ii.

IV.C Copula

IV.C.i The copula has independent and dependent forms

IV.C.ii Periphrastic complexes formed serially with nominalized verbs have novel, nuanced meanings

IV.C.iii Substitution for other verbs occurs due to the copula's dummy properties

IV.D Ordination

IV.D.i Subordination is marked directly on the verb with an ancient suffix and is uncommonly used

IV.D.ii Coordination is the preferred connective method

IV.D.iii There is a novel strategy termed "superordination" used in deep-core dialects

V | Nouns

The morphology is very simple, declining for only three cases and nothing else.

V.A Direct

V.B Genitive

V.B.i Marking of the genitive is suffix-dependent

V.B.ii Possessors are commonly marked in the genitive

V.B.iii Limited attribution is expressed by the genitive

V.B.iv Instruments are redundantly marked genitive

V.B.v Inflected prepositions always take a genitive object

V.C Dative

V.C.i There are two strategies used to mark dativity

V.C.ii Recipients are redundantly marked dative

V.C.iii Some prepositions assume a dative object

VI | QuickSyntax

Since this is a Speedlang, I will demonstrate most of my syntax through these example sentences in this section I'm calling QuickSyntax.

VI.A TAME control

This is an overview of the various TAME combinations utilized in the language. The intransitive sentence "The sun shines" will be used as the base.

VI.A.i The present tense is quite vague, and its meaning is highly context-dependent

Take this sentence:

(1) dzakhua haskarzilai
dzakhua zak -ar -zu -ilai
3.IT
sun.NOM shine PRS R IND
The sun shines

VI.A.ii The past tense used by itself denotes something no longer true

(2) dzakhua haskaizilai
dzakhua zak -ai -zu -ilai
sun.NOM shine PST 3.ITR IND
The sun shone (but not anymore)

VI.A.iii Only certainties are expressed by the plain future tense

(3) dzakhua haskazilai
dzakhua zak -a -zu -ilai
3.IT
sun.NOM shine FUT R IND
The sun shall shine (for sure)

VI.A.iv Observations in the present tense have an imperfective quality

(4) dzakhua ðiskarzilai
dzakhua ði- zak -ar -zu -ilai
3.IT
sun.NOM OBS shine PRS R IND
The sun is shining

VI.A.v Past observations are often used with contrastives

(5) dzakhua ðiskaizilai
dzakhua ði- zak -ai -zu -ilai
sun.NOM OBS shine PST 3.ITR IND
(Well, when I checked) The sun was shining

VI.A.vi The optative expresses a particular wish or preference

(6) dzakhua haskarzuɒau
dzakhua zak -ar -zu -ɒau
3.IT
sun.NOM shine PRES R OPT
It would be good if the sun shone

VI.A.vii The past optative expresses regrets and points of contention

(7) dzakhua haskaizuɒau
dzakhua zak -ai -zu -ɒau
3.IT
sun.NOM shine PST R OPT
The sun should have shone

VI.A.viii Observations with the optative form an evidential complex denoting opinion

(8) dzakhua ðiskarzuɒau
dzakhua ði- zak -ar -zu -ɒau
sun.NOM OBS shine PST 3.ITR OPT
The sun ought to shine (in my opinion)

VI.B Independent Pronouns

Dzibdziapha lacks independent personal pronouns, so this will serve as a demonstration of the various strategies speakers use to express what other languages would use pronouns for.

VI.C Free *vs.* Bound Copula

Whether to use the copula independently or dependently is often answered interchangeable, but the meaning is slightly different, and are some circumstances where one is absolutely appropriate to the exclusion of the other.

VI.D Nominal Description

This is a style of description that can only be used to describe nouns. Even though it is formed simply and easily, its meanings are rather limited, and it is not versatile enough to be main style of description. This will serve as an overview of the appropriate circumstances and nuances in meaning.

VI.E Verbal Description

This style of description may be used to describe both nouns and verbs, and is the preferred descriptive strategy. This will be a guide to its formation and general characteristics.

VII | Rhizomorphopædia

ɱqai – refers to decoration, adorning, and such.

tabʔ – new connections, lifelines, only links, veins, *&c.*

ʔai – generally negative root for aging.

ɱautʔ – generally refers to wordprinting.
ɱautʔa: printing press.
ɱutʔalni: poster
ɱudɱautʔa: the state when the printers are continually printing without stop; pre-release week.

ɓqakh – refers to washing, cleaning, laundering.

dqhafʔ – generally refers to spectacularly pitiful displays of discoordination.

tqʔazh – general taking and accepting, usually not willful. healthy metaphorical use.

dqʔarkh – refers to narration, pleasant speech.
dqʔarkshi: a type of traditional poetic art.

katƀ – general beating, hitting, striking; it most often refers to one big blow rather than one or many smacks. copious metaphorical uses, especially in the reverse direction.

dziaph – parlance, conversation, negotiation. this root usually refers to formal types of speaking.
dzibdziapha: a proper and pleasing conversation; when used as a proper noun, the name of the language.

dðʔach – general allowing, tolerance, permission.
dðʔajdðacha – excessive leniency