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## Nguvian: A Voiced, Antonymous Conlang

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# Nguvian: A Voiced, Antonymous Conlang

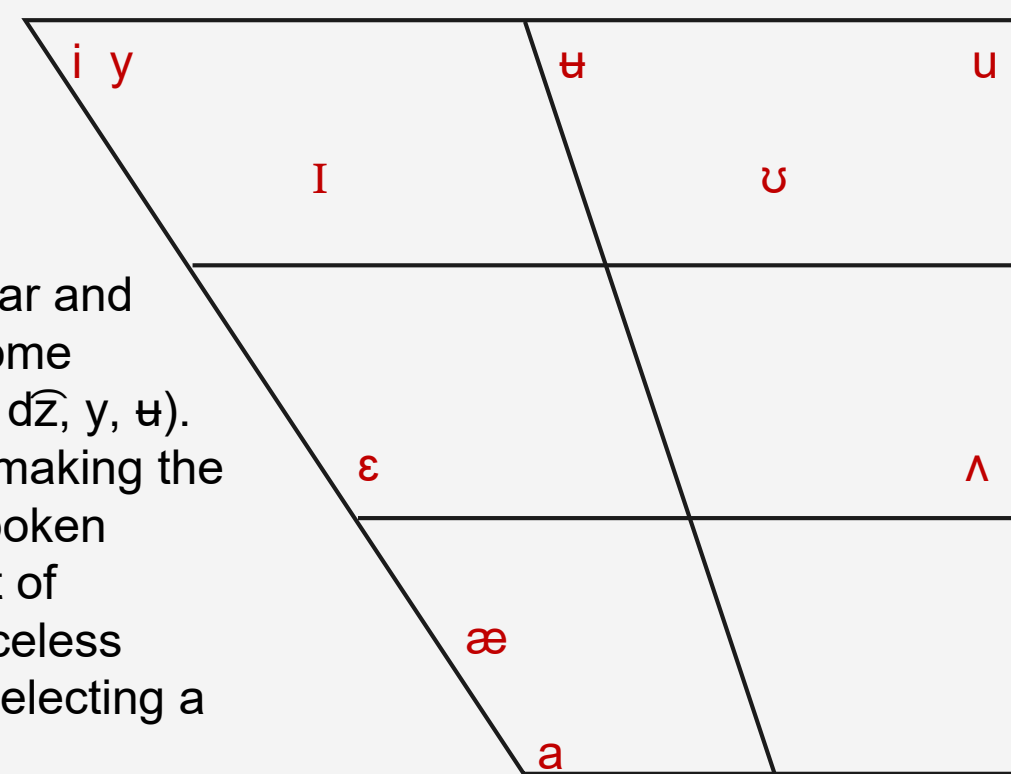
Mindy Mawhirter and Sean Tellvik | Western Oregon University

## Phonemes

Consonants	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	b			d			g	ʔ
Nasal	m			n		ɲ	ŋ	
Fricative		v	ð	z	ʒ			
Approximant				r		j		
Lateral Approximant				l				

Non-pulmonic consonants: l (click)  
Voiced labial-velar approximate: w  
Affricates: dʒ, dʒ̥

### Vowels



We wanted to explore a language that is clear and distinct, using only voiced phonemes and some sounds we were unfamiliar with ( l (click), ɲ, dʒ̥, y, ɨ). We also took away the schwa and the flap, making the language more enunciated throughout its spoken community. We have a low-average amount of consonants (19) because we eliminated voiceless consonants, but we have compensated by selecting a larger-than-average amount of vowels (10).

## Word Classes and Syntax

Class	Morphological Criteria	Frames
Noun	Infix [ l ]	Det ____
Verbs	Prefix na, an	Aux ____ Prep
Adjectives	Prefix zu, zud	Free Moving within a NP
Determiners Interrogatives Numerals Possessives		Precedes a N in a NP
Prepositions		Follow verb phrase; end of clause
Pronouns Personal Possessives Relative	All pronouns are a variant of the word Vuz	
Auxiliaries		Followed by verb phrase
Conjunctions	Connect clauses	

Our Adjective Phrases are free moving within the Noun Phrase and there can be more than one in the sentence. There can be an adjective in all the three spots, if so desired by the speaker, and nothing is semantically altered by the decision to put it in one place over the other.

### Phrase Structure Rules

S → (NP) NP VP  
NP → (ADJP+) (DET) (ADJP+) N (ADJP+)  
VP → V (P)  
ADJP → (ADJ) ADJ

## Word Creation

**Compounding** — if vowels are the same  
Examples: Nuv'doogun [ɲuv'dugun] - n. "Not-yet/will-be" partner; someone who will eventually be the speaker's partner

**Acronyms**  
Example: AZU [azu] - literal translation from Adzavan Zabab Uhgudumvun: "fast move machine." Refers to the standard Nguvian vehicle

**Initialisms**  
Example: BB - Bjaibai Byd, a.k.a. the Parent Association

**Reduplication**  
Example: Zeg zeg - far left  
Gez gez - far right

**Antonymy**  
Examples: Nguvuj [ɲuvuʒ] - No  
Juvung [ʒuvunʒ] - Yes  
Bjaibai [bjaɪbaɪ] - n. Parent  
Aibaijb [aɪbaɪjb] - n. Child

**Affixing**  
Examples: Zuv [dʒuv] - you  
Zulv [dʒulv] - you (plural)  
Joboth [ʒoubouð] - v. explain  
Na joboth [na ʒoubouð] - v. explained  
Ayda [ajda] - adj. or v. Agitated  
Na Ayda [na ajda] - was agitated

**Shifting**  
Example: "Ughudumvun" or "Ugh" originally meant something that has many parts, but now refers specifically to a mechanical machine.

**Clipping**  
Example: "Ugh" is the shortened form of "Ughudumvun" (Machine)

**Coining**  
Example: Regwedegen [ɾɛgwɛdɛɡɛn] - n. the period of one's life in which they have gone through their most significant change  
This phrase was coined to describe the previously unnamed experience

## Phonological Rules and Morphology

### Phonological Rules

- Only 1 vowel phoneme is allowed in each word (exception: initialisms and acronyms)
- / ʒ / → [ j ] / b\_, d\_

1 vowel per word is something that peaked our interest when we first started designing the language, and then when we started playing around with words in our language, we thought they sounded nicely symmetrical with only one vowel sound, so we kept the rule.

### Other rules

- Antonyms are pronounced in reverse of one another
- [ ʔ ] indicates modification (often lessening) of a word\*
- [ ʔ ] spelled as ' (apostrophe)

### Allophones

- { [ ɲ ] / u\_, \_u
- / n / → { [ ɲ ] / C\_V
- { [ n ] elsewhere

### Syllabic Structure

- CCVCC
- [ r ] can only be in the onset of the first syllable
- [ l ] appears only as a plural infix

### Misc. Grammar

- Word Order - OSV
- Noun Gender: None
- Articles: None

### Infixes

- [ l ] indicates plural / follows the vowel of the first syllable: V\_C
- [ ʔ ] modifier used to soften the meaning of a word (opposite of an intensifier). Follows the first syllable.

### Prefixes

- Past tense [ na ]  
Allomorph: \_#a → [ nɛ ]  
Everywhere else → [ na ]  
Future tense [ an ]

### Intensifier

- [ zɹ ]  
Allomorph: \_#V → [ zɹd ]

We decided to exclude articles from our language to increase language efficiency, and noun genders because we did not want binary thinking incorporated in our language.

The idea of a glottal stop changing the meaning of a word gave us the ability to express gradable antonyms. The way the stop modifies the sound of the word reflects that the word is semantically modified.

We chose to be sparse with our affixes, but made sure to include a past-tense prefix and what we felt were two unique infixes.

## Sample Words

Geged [gɛɡɛd] - v. Warn	Woolzuth [wulzuð] - n. People	Aibaijb [aɪbaɪjb] - n. Children	Rigk [rɪɡ] - n. An alcoholic
Doogun [dugun] - n. Partner	Vuz [vudʒ̥] - l / me	Joboth [ʒoubouð] - v. Explain	Uhgudumvun [ʌɡɹdʌmʌn] - n. Machine
Doolgun [dulgun] - n. Partners	Vuzu [vudʒu] - My	Na joboth [na ʒoubouð] - v. Explained	Uhg [ʌɡ] - n. Machine (shortened)
Nugood [ɲugud] - n. Rival	Zuv [dʒuv] - You	Adya [adʒa] - adj. or v. Calm	Zabab [zæbæb] - v. Move
Nguvuj [ɲuvuʒ] - No	Zulv [dʒulv] - You (plural)	Ayda [ajda] - adj. or v. Agitated	Babaz [bæbæz] - v. Stop
Nguv'uj [ɲuvʉʒ] - Not yet	Zuvu [dʒuvu] - They (singular)	Ryugt [ɾɛɡ] - adj. Funny	Adzavan [adʒavan] - adj. Fast
Nguv [ɲuv] - (colloquial) Nah	Zulvu [dʒulvu] - They (plural)	Eñeð [ɛɲeð] - det. When	Navadza [navadʒa] - adj. Slow
Juvung [ʒuvunʒ] - Yes	Gi [gɪ] - v. Reside	Añeð [aɲeð] - det. Where	Hiku [ɪɡu] - adj. More beautiful than I
Vung [vun] - (colloquial) Yeah	Giim [ɡɪɪm] - prep. In, On	Iñeð [ɪɲeð] - det. What	can put into words
Juv'ung [ʒuvʉunʒ] - Maybe	Miig [miɪɡ] - prep. Out, Off	Regwedegen [ɾɛgwɛdɛɡɛn] - n. The period of one's life in which they have gone through their most significant change	Hi'ku [iʒgu] - adj. Pretty
Nuvu [ɲuvu] - adj. Cold	Goomu [ɡumu] - v. Flow	Vik [vɪɡ] - n. the smell of rain, adj. rain-smelling	Byd [byd] - n. Organization/association
Zeg [zɛɡ] - n. Left	Bjaibai [bjaɪbaɪ] - n. Parent		Jowzaum [dʒauzaum] - n. Street
Gez [gɛz] - n. Right	Bjaibai [bjaɪbaɪ] - n. Parents		Yih [ɪ] - prep. At
Woozuth [wuzuð] - n. Person	Aibaijb [aɪbaɪjb] - n. Child		

## Sample Sentences

### Nguvian

Woozuth doogun na geged.  
Gez vuz ki giim.  
Vuz zuvu na adya.  
"AZU? Nguv! NZU [nzu]."

Hi'ku vuzu jowzaum zuv an babaz yih.

### Exact English Translation

Person partner warned.  
Right I live on.  
Me they calmed.  
"Fast move machine? No! Slow move machine."

Pretty my street you will stop at.

### Common English Translation

The partner warned the person.  
I live on the right.  
They calmed me down.  
"Fast moving machine? More like aslow moving machine!" (common Nguvian joke about a slow vehicle)

You will stop at my pretty street.