

Tentative orthography rules, November 2017

Alphabet

In a meeting on 10th March 2003 the Fur Language Committee agreed upon the following alphabet for the use in their orthography.

18 consonants:

b d g h j k l m n ŋ ny p r s t w y z

8 vowels:

a á â ǎ

ǎ á â ǎ heavy (+ATR) variant of the a.

e é ê ě

i í î Ě

í í î Ě heavy (+ATR) variant of the i.

o ó ô ǒ

u ú û ů

u ú û ů heavy (+ATR) variant of the u

That is with the tone marks rising ˇ, falling ^ and high ˘, like ǎ ǎ á a for the vowel „a“ (the unmarked is low tone)

other signs:

Apostrophe ´ to mark a possessive construction. The tone on the possessor is written as if it is without the possessive marker. Examples:

toŋ > toŋ´íŋ dǐó ”the inside of the house”

bora > bora´ŋ jaba “the drinking of milk”

kwě > kwě´ŋ bora “the milk of the children”

ása > ása´ŋ jaldó “the beating of the dog”

múrtá > múrtá´ŋ jelló “pulling of the horse”

Hyphon - to connect the object marker -sí to the object. The tone on the object is written as if it is without the -sí. Examples:

jí kŋa-sí jolel. “You are deceiving us.”

kin kútí-sí áŋ ummóba áláŋ dúŋ le awí. “I will not get these rats out of my thinking.”

Development

Over the years some more rules have developed. Though there have been different schools (like Abo´ŋ Soom and others), they have not disagreed on the writing system. In November 2017 a group of people tried to collect the rules which are in use all over the place. These rules are listed in this document. There were some questions (like the i/í versus the y at the end of syllables) where different ways of writing are in use. These were discussed and the result of the discussion documented below.

There are variations of the Fur language (dialects), yet people can understand each other without problems. It shall be recorded that every person can use the own dialect when writing any text. He or she shall only try to be consistent within the text. The following rules may apply to all written language, regardless the dialect.

In the plural formation of nouns, most people use the plural endings with a, while others use the plural endings with o instead, like

a, á, ŋa, ŋá, ta, tá, nta, ntá

o, ó, ŋo, ŋó, to, tó, nta, ntá

Regardless the dialect, the tones in these forms are the same. Most forms do not cause a

difficulty. Only the nouns which have a falling tone on the last vowel may be difficult to write. There the following rule applies:

- Every noun that has a falling tone on the last vowel, that vowel gets a high tone in the plural, and the plural suffix is low.

	Sugâr	Sugâra	degên	degêra
	guddâm	guddâma	godên	godêna
	batîn	balîra	wessê	wessêra
tugûr	Sibîn	Sibîra	puttô	puttôra
tugûra	mandûl	mandûla	dukkâ	dukkâra
tugûra	galdan	galdâna	Stimmô	Stimmôra
	kurrâ	kurrâra	pukkâ	pukkâra
dokkê	dokkêna	bautên	boorô	boorôra
	dokkêla	Segên		
	pukkâ	pukkâra		
		pukkâla		

Examples (P119-0296)

- The plural ending in nouns with t is -nta / -ntá after vowels. Examples: kapanta (scars), kolmanta (sp. Hunting tool), koranta or korâna (roads), kilpanta (traps), kîponta (sp. Trees). (see P119-0307).
- In verbs that have η in the complete form, it remains η before -ti or -tía, though it may sometimes sound like n (like búlîntía, kányîntía, and

nyîntis → nyîntis, nyîntía s

jásîntis → jásîntis, jásîntía (P119-0307)).

- Use i/î in verbs and y in nouns at the end of a syllable. Examples (see also P119-0313 and -0315):

nouns

săy	săyñá	Acacia tree
ray	răytá	field
pay	payta	room
dáy	káyta	he-goat
dăy	dăyñá	ant
day	dayña	oil
duy	düyñá	pus
gÿy	gÿyñá	sp. tree
kuy	kuyña/kÿyñá	soul, rain
toy	toya	old
wăy		death

verbs

dúi, dúti, dúya	he/she went, is going, they go
poi, poye	he/she/it fall, they fall
kui	he/she dig
toi	be unable
waiñá	he/she die

- There sometimes is a confusion weather to write -ii, i, or y. Thus, these different forms are explained in the following. (P119-0383)

* The word -ii that can be translated with 'he/she/it is' (in grammar it is called copula). It sometimes sounds like y, sometimes like i, yet it is always written -ii.

Examples:

In dîen nÿñ-ii. – 'This is your food'

Díñ oro-ii in ãl ká innân míñen ïndel.

– 'It is your responsibility that I am suffering like this.'

á-iiba – ‘it is not’

This word becomes ge in the plural. Thus, if plural becomes ge, write -ii, like

In díeŋ leel-ii => Kin kíeŋ leela ge

– ‘This is your donkey’ => ‘These are your donkeys’

á-iiba => á geba

* There is another i that shows that the object is ‘me’, ‘us’, or ‘you’. This i never becomes ge, but sometimes gi (nai ínì – ‘and he gave it **to me**’ (gave me it), na ray gi amul ínì – ‘and he gave **me** a fertile field’). So, if the object is me, us, or you, write i (like aísa, aílaŋ, ..., ái íniba, áis élabá).

* Finally, in a question word or exclamation word, write y (ay, ây, áy, ...).

So, there is á-iiba (‘it is not’), ái íniba (‘he does not give me’), and ay (‘how’).

- The use of w and u/ɯ is used the same way as it has been used in the past years. That is, at the beginning and at the end of syllables w is used, regardless if noun or verb (kwa, kwě, kwă (offspring singular, plural); bwa, waa (you, he said); baw, bawa, bǎw, ǎbɯŋ (4 different forms of the verb ‘take, carry’); baw, bǎwtá (pond(s)); g ɯ, g wɯ (hat(s)) ..., see also P119-0401).

- The words for “because” are written $i\hat{l}\hat{a}i\eta$ $i\hat{d}i\eta$ $\text{ɯ}\hat{d}i\eta$ (see P119-0308/310)
(comment: ila’η-ii / kila’η-ii are related. They mean literally ‘it is of this’ / ‘it is of that’. Only, people are not aware of the source of where the above words for ‘because’ may originally have come from, and the order of the parts is exchanged like ila-ii’η / kila-ii’η.)
- The particle kel is written as one word with the word amí (**kelamí** – ‘hear’), unless there are other particles coming in between. Then it is split up like <kel ay gísíŋ amí> – ‘Why shall he listen to me?’ Or, <kel á bámiba> – ‘You have not eaten.’ (see P119-0336)
- Capitalization: Capital letters are used with proper names (like English) to make a difference between the item and a person called after the item, and for structuring sentences as in English. For example, tíbó is a pole while Tíbó is a person, and kirrô means ‘green’ while Kirrô is the name of a person, and any word at the beginning of a sentence is written with a capital letter. Additionally a capital letter is used for religious nouns (like ‘God’) and for foreign concepts (like Mûsa’ŋ Dáálí – ‘the law of Mose’) to differentiate them from the profane meaning they have come from (see P119-0341 and -0338, left).
- (Punctuation marks have been discussed, yet not decided. For most parts the English system is followed, but there are also differences that need to be discussed. Except for coma and fullstop the marks are not really needed, because there are words and tone saying the same, but the participants would like to put them in, since that may ease the teaching of other languages) see P119-0341 and -0338, right.
- (How to deal with speech and other things need to be investigated in natural text and a discourse workshop, see P119-0341.)

Long ago the possessive marking ’ŋ/’íŋ was extended to all similar constructions, except pronouns and time words. These constructions are called genitive constructions. The pronouns

will be explained below. Time words are written with the tones without apostrophe, like saaréŋ, daáŋ, tóóŋ, arránŋ, luulíŋ, etc. As time passed by it became obvious that there are endings with ŋ for marking nouns that have different meanings and sometimes different tones. To bring an end to the confusion with the different forms of ŋ, iŋ, or íŋ, they are listed with their meanings in the following paragraphs.

- The possessive (or genitive) marker is written 'ŋ or 'iŋ, depending if it follows a vowel or a consonant, like in the following examples.

Teyya namás ton'íŋ majira ila belé kwá
 Teyya namás elle'ŋ majira songhá-sí ila belé dirró
 dáári'ŋ

- There is a ŋ which is marking that the noun or noun phrase¹ kí ... is accompanying the subject or object. This ŋ is attached to the noun phrase directly, and if it follows a vowel with a high tone, the tone becomes a falling tone. If the last vowel of the word it is attached to is rising, the tone change of the ŋ cannot be written. Examples:

Kirró kí Kirróŋ
 Teyya namás yeenja-sí kí dogóláŋ kwá
 kí kwéŋ
 Teyya kí dogóláŋ namás yeenja-sí koe
 Yeen Kaldte
 yé namá bísiŋ-sí kí ása láddí
 yé namá bíis-sí kí bart láddí
 yé namá ásaŋ-sí kí bíis láddí

- 'Those of' is treated like the above accompaniment in grammar, and it is written the same way, like

(Teyyan toya-lé katiŋ)?
 Teyyan toya katiŋ
 Teyyan tón katiŋ ná nŋŋ kaame
 Tíboŋ toya katiŋ ná nŋŋ kaame
 Kirróŋ toya katiŋ " " "
 Bráimíŋ namás kírsíŋŋŋ
 Teyyan namás kírsíŋŋŋ
 "those of..." is accompaniment in the grammar

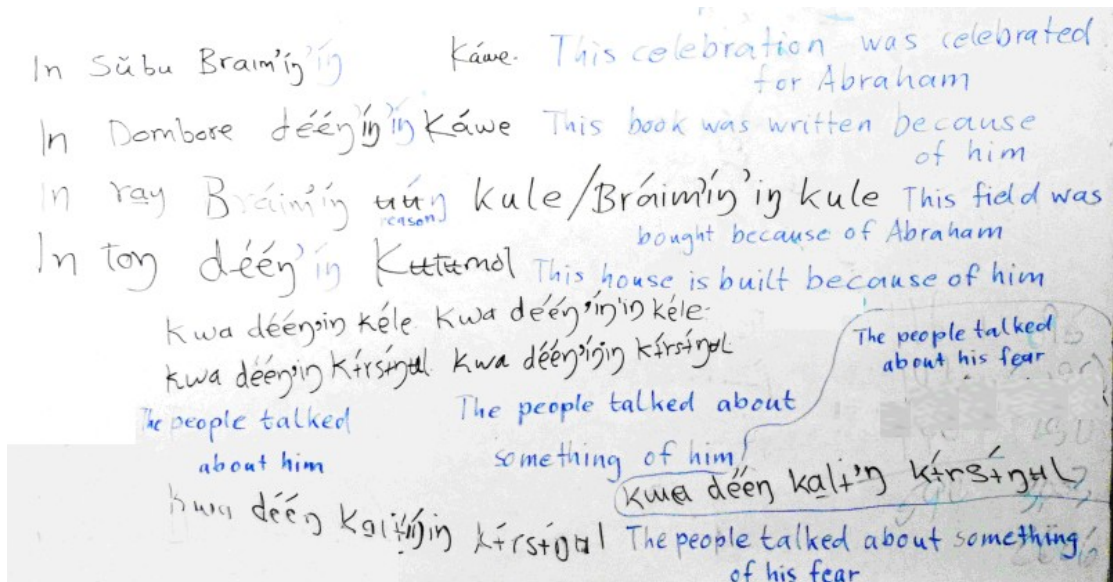
yeen toya-lé katiŋ (usually only animals)
 in the house
 yeen toya katiŋ (used for people)
 at home

no spelling problem, no dialect problem. Used in different context

(‘Those of Teyya/Tibo/Kirro are in the houses eating.’ ‘Those of Abraham/Teyya are talking.’ ‘They are in the houses.’)

- There is a third ŋ / íŋ / iŋ which brings a meaning of ‘because of’ or ‘about’, like in the following examples

¹ Noun phrase is a noun together with the words that belong to it, like ‘this house’ is a noun phrase as well as ‘the big house’ or ‘this big house’ or ‘these five big houses’.



The ways to write these are either like the possessive or without a tone mark on the 'íy. Examples (see boxes in P119-0376 and -0378):

Kwa dééy táarí'η kírśíŋul. – ‘The people talked about his work.’
 dééy'íy or dééy'íy – ‘because of him/her/it’
 Bráim'íy'íy or Bráim'íy'íy – ‘because of Abraham’s’

- There are other η in the grammar, which are doing different things. Most nouns can become a location by changing the tone, like toy – ‘house’ becomes tóy – ‘in the house’ and elle – ‘village’ becomes éllé – ‘in the village’. Some nouns add a η for their location like tabu – ‘head’ becomes t haiŋ – ‘on the head’ and k rí – ‘bottom’ becomes karíŋ – ‘at the bottom, under’. Another η is used for making time adverbs out of nouns as mentioned above, like saare – ‘morning’ becomes saaréŋ – ‘in the morning, tomorrow’ and luul – ‘night’ becomes luulíŋ – ‘at night’. And there are other η used with verbs or for making verbs (like máaleŋ eeŋ, máaleŋ piá, and dáabeŋ piá).
- Regarding the location marker -le / -lé / -lê, there are three dialects, each one has a different way of forming locative pronouns:

(if noun is low) ... -lé	... -LÉ	... -LÊ
dúí-lé	dúí-le	dúŋ-le
dúú-lé	dúú-le	dúŋ-le
dée-lé	dée-le	déeŋ-le
dái-lé	dái-le	dáiŋ-le
dée-lé	dée-le	déeŋ-le
(Dija)	(Bari)	(Alam)

All three dialects have -le if the last vowel of the word before has a high tone (or rising). If the last vowel of the word before is low (or with a falling tone), Dija and Bari have -lé and Alam has -lê. Examples (see 119-0380 and -0381):

Karı́ Tíbó-le yío – ‘He went to Tibo’s house yesterday.’
 Kéeŋ domboreŋa **tona-lé** kee – ‘His books are in the houses’ (Dija, Bari)
 Kéeŋ domboreŋa **tona-lê** kee – ‘His books are in the houses’ (Alam, Wittin)

The -le, -lé, and -lê are the same with pronouns, only the basic forms of the pronouns are different in the dialects, as in the table above.

The locative -le, -lé, and -lê is attached with a hyphen -, except if it is followed by the copula -ii. Then it is not attached (Joljól-lé – ‘on Joljol’, Joljól lé-ii – ‘It is on Joljol’)

- (verbal clitics, P119-0383, not discussed here but in a separate grammar book)

Compound words:

- There are certain words that follow a verb, an adjective, or another noun and make that word signifying a person having this attribute or doing this action (like *dálǎmekwǎ* ‘accusers’ from *dálǎme* ‘accusation’ and *ittí* – ‘small’ with *kwaŋ* becomes *ittíkwaŋ* – ‘small one’). Another word of this type is *dũŋo* / *dũoŋ* / *dũŋu* / *doŋo* – four forms according to different dialects, each with their own plural. All these words that depict a person who has the quality or does the action are joined as a compound. (see P119-0387)

In some context these words can specify a certain person or item out of a group. Then it is not a compound word. For example, *ittí* – ‘small’ with *kwaŋ* can be *ittí kwaŋ* – ‘the small one’ (out of a group of people or items).

- If a combination of words has its own meaning (one “new” meaning instead of the meaning of the single words), this combination is written as one word (compound word). Some words may become fairly long, but this is not a problem. Still, there are some specific challenges which were discussed:
 - * Some compound words like *yáaŋkwě* – ‘wife’ originate from possessives. Thus, the common way of writing them does not show the exact tone. This has led to some confusion and inconsistency. Other ways of writing this word would be *yáaŋkwě*, *yáa’ŋkwě*, or *yáaŋkwě*, of which the last two would give the correct tone, but the last one was not suggested from speakers (they did not get this idea) and the pre-last feels like having an interruption in the word flow. Thus, it was decided to go for the most common form of writing these words, as are *yáaŋkwě*, *máaŋkwě* – ‘babygoat’, *dũóbainiŋkwě* – ‘old man (not respectful)’ (see P119-0386).

* People colours, if they describe ethnic distinctions, the compound form is used (*dũópottâ* – ‘Kawaja (European/American/...)’, *dũópukkâ* – ‘Arab, Indian’), but if the expression is used for describing certain people, it is not joined (*Dijakajâk dũó ðikkó-ii*, Barak Obama *dũó urbé-ii*). (P119-0391, right side) (((*kírrôdũŋo*)))

* There are two ways of plural formation. If the compound is a fixed expression, the plural gets the regular plural ending, like *tagultágúl* - *tagultágulá* (vegetable(s) or fruit), *kalâmsũnné* - *kalâmsũnnéjá* (insects, spiders, millipeds, ...), or *súrukíbeeda* - *súrukíbeedaŋa* (kind of insect). In other compounds also parts can have a plural (both parts in *máaŋkwě* (sg.) - *máaŋáŋkwǎ* (pl.) – ‘babygoat(s)’). For some compounds there is a meaning difference, like in the following example (*kwǎ* is the plural of *dũŋo*).

- domoŋdũŋo* – ‘messenger’ (of one message)
 - domoŋkwǎ* – ‘messengers’ (all messengers of the same message)
 - domoŋadũŋo* – ‘messenger’ (of more than one message)
 - domoŋakwǎ* – ‘messengers’ (of different messages)
- (more examples of plural formations see P119-0399 and -0396 or -0401)