Fiat Lingua

Nuvutani:
Introducing a new language

by

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Introduction

I am most famous for Kelen, a verbless language, and so for my second language, sodna-leni or sodemadu, I created a language with a closed class of verbs. However, in fleshing out Sodemadu, I became frustrated with its limitations, so one weekend I decided to forego the limitations of Sodemadu and created a new language, my third, that had an open class of verbs. Like Sodemadu, most of the vocabulary has cognates in Kēlen. At the end of the weekend I had a draft of a story in this new language. The story comes from a book of Australian Aboriginal myths and legends, shortened and adapted to suit me and this new language.

Then, after checking for and correcting inconsistencies, I created a sort of torch. The story itself is too long to make a good torch, but the exercise of laying out the grammar and vocabulary necessary to decipher the story is a useful one, allowing me to find inconsistencies in the grammar and correct them. What follows then is a copy of the story, Nuvutani, and then a section on grammar and vocabulary. A few pages later, I offer an interlinear and a smooth English translation. I've put a few pages between the grammar/vocabulary section and the interlinear in case anyone wants to treat the story as a torch. If I've left anything out of the grammar and vocabulary, or if anything is unclear, let me know (in the comments) and I will supply the missing information or elaborate on anything unclear.

This third language doesn't quite have a name yet, though I am thinking 'Tessese' might be a good name for this stage of the language. My next step is to find another text to translate, maybe a dialogue or an announcement. I also need to figure out a stress pattern, but I already have something in mind that should work. And after that I may apply sound changes and see what happens.

The Story

Nuvutani

Neletani kyumu mabededoda Nuvu mapodo sonoma basa mapododusu usama kadu. Davuŋyenedololo manemmaduhaŋi dinele niki mapettadotoyo manemmadututu vovele. Mabalodohaŋi manemmadukyeya ŋovele nadisyenitoyo malugu nadittu kyege. Malodolana nadda malugutoyo nadittu kyege kiŋili. Hadittudege bigittu manemmadodo vovele makasodo pelene onono danellododa ŋomuŋi eppomo ŋovette ennisi ŋohimi pidi ŋomomo mudusebe.

Nittuladi syebe aŋe luvu matiŋedo tadya dukini. Matiŋedogoli kyalatepe gogotepe lakatepe madoŋedotodo alu noleko susisi. Dalu datenedo noleko pama Nuvu. Aŋe matiŋedo tannatanna dulu.

Masedosodo ŋilalikeŋi haggogo dule? Nele masedo avo. Masedosodo lekasadayissi maggogo duŋeya.

Aŋesodo ŋidelikeŋi leŋesutukyeya ŋeya kyala sulu noleko paŋi? Nelesodo datenedayissi mallu duŋeya.

Aŋesodo ŋikasada hammomo mudusebe kele. Ŋivadeligiya lelahaŋi sulu noleko lesututoyo aŋiŋya amomo duŋeya.

Nuvudanu masedosodo umumu ŋipellaka daŋomomo. Lelalata duŋeya daŋomomo vudunadi ŋovele vekebe nadivusulugodotata nadittu paŋeya.

Aŋedanu luvu mapettodo madutiŋedo abene mede siŋi liyagi. Nele madoŋedohaŋi syenisyeni aŋe sasutiŋedololo olaya abene liyagi. Aŋe mapettalodo nono kibibene pesibene nenette masutodo aŋiŋya nono duŋeya. Aŋedanu masalledonna ŋosese kedekele.

Atana udu dalodololo daŋyakedo susi ŋotadu keyodo dalamodotodo teddele lada. Petana tadatada datiŋedonna tadya Nuvu masutiŋedotoyo meya alaka. Atanasusu deni datanonodonna dalamodololo tekko somadusiyo. Datanodo aŋiŋya dulaka dapeppudodo ŋomuŋi eppomo ŋovette ennisi ŋohimi pidi ŋolaŋi mudusebe kele. Datanodololo dapeppudodo alaka.

Nuvu matiŋedo tannatanna dubene pesibene masutiŋedobeye olaya abene liyagi. Atana datanadololo Nuvu mapeppudododatoyo. Aŋe luvu malodo masada Nuvu saduma sapettodo tanatana.

Nuvu manolododa adodo nuvu dasadoladahaŋi nuvunuvu.

Grammar and Vocabulary

Word Order

The word order is Subject - Verb - Object (SVO). The subject can be a pronominal proclitic attached to the verb. The subject of an intransitive verb can sometimes come after the verb (VS).

Peripheral phrases usually appear after the object or before the subject. Some adverbs will appear between the verb and the object.

Subjects are generally only stated in full the first time they are referenced. After that, a pronominal proclitic on the verb generally suffices. Sometimes a determiner plus classifier used as a pronoun is stated as the subject when the subject would otherwise be unclear.

Fully inflected verbs appearing next to each other are conjoined. Nouns phrases in juxtaposition are also conjoined. No actual conjunctions appear in this text.

Verbs

Verbs inflect for tense and evidentiality. The two tenses are non-past (NP) and past. The evidentiality distinctions are firsthand (FH) for evidence personally seen, sensed, or done, non-firsthand (NFH) for evidence not seen, sensed, or done, and a zero evidentiality form for imperative, interrogative, and various subordinate clauses. Furthermore, negative verbs never take FH evidentiality, only NFH or zero.

Present	Present FH	Present NFH	Past	Past FH	Past NFH	Gloss
bala	balada	balodo	balete	baleta	baleto	think that
bede	bededa	bededo	bedete	bedeta	bedeto	name, call
deli	deleda	deledo	delete	deleta	deleto	allow, permit
doŋi	doŋeda	doŋedo	doŋete	doŋeta	doŋeto	see
dutiŋi	dutiŋeda	dutiŋedo	dutiŋete	dutiŋeta	dutiŋeto	go up to
kasa	kasada	kasado	kasete	kaseta	kaseto	hold, have
la	lada	lodo	late	lata	lato	spend time, stay
lala	lalada	lalodo	lalate	lalata	lalato	make, create, build
lali	laleda	laledo	lalete	laleta	laleto	give
lama	lamada	lamodo	lamete	lameta	lameto	cover, hide, obscure
lugu	lugoda	lugodo	lugote	lugota	lugoto	do, work
nella	nellada	nellodo	nellate	nellata	nellato	make with
nemmadu	nemmadoda	nemmadodo	nemmadote	nemmadota	nemmadoto	dwell with
nola	nolada	nolodo	nolate	nolata	nolato	become, change into
ŋesutu	ŋesutoda	ŋesutodo	ŋesutote	ŋesutota	ŋesutoto	put, place oneself
ŋyaki	ŋyakeda	ŋyakedo	ŋyakete	ŋyaketa	ŋyaketo	push
pa	pada	podo	pate	pata	pato	have
pella	pellada	pellodo	pellate	pellata	pellato	leave alone
peppudu	peppudoda	peppudodo	peppudote	peppudota	peppudoto	wash away
petta	pettada	pettodo	pettate	pettata	pettato	go away, leave
pettala	pettalada	pettalodo	pettalate	pettalata	pettalato	take away
sada	sadada	sadodo	sadete	sadeta	sadeto	hear
sadola	sadolada	sadolodo	sadolate	sadolata	sadolato	speak with
salle	salleda	salledo	sallete	salleta	salleto	sing

Present	Present FH	Present NFH	Past	Past FH	Past NFH	Gloss
se	seda	sedo	sete	seta	seto	say
somadu	somadoda	somadodo	somadote	somadota	somadoto	dwell in
sulugu	sulugoda	sulugodo	sulugote	sulugota	sulugoto	to do with, to help
sutiŋi	sutiŋeda	sutiŋedo	sutiŋete	sutiŋeta	sutiŋeto	go on/into
sutu	sutoda	sutodo	sutote	sutota	sutoto	put, place
syeni	syeneda	syenedo	syenete	syeneta	syeneto	expect
tana	tanada	tanodo	tanete	taneta	taneto	flow, blow
tanono	tanonoda	tanonodo	tanonote	tanonota	tanonoto	overflow, flood
tene	teneda	tenedo	tenete	teneta	teneto	be (inanimate)
tiŋi	tiŋeda	tiŋedo	tiŋete	tiŋeta	tiŋeto	go, move along
vadeli	vadeleda	vadeledo	vadelete	vadeleta	vadeleto	disallow
vuŋyene	vuŋyeneda	vuŋyenedo	vuŋyenete	vuŋyeneta	vuŋyeneto	displease
vusulugu	vusulugoda	vusulugodo	vusulugote	vusulugota	vusulugoto	not help at

Verbs also inflect for subject using one of the pronominal proclitics. Inflected verbs can optionally carry a suffixed verbal enclitic.

Verbal Enclitics

These attach to the end of the verb to add extra meaning. More than one can attach, and the ordering can vary.

beye	frustrative: "try and fail", "fail to"
da	passive
dusu	habitual
giya	denotes a hypothetical condition: "if …."
haŋi	continuous: "keep (on)", "continuing to", "still"
ka	imperative, denotes a command
keŋi	interrogative, denotes a question
kyeya	denotes a hypothetical situation: "if (this goes on)"
	appears in questions asking permission
lana	denotes real condition: "when"
lolo	"increasingly", "more and more", "even more"
nna	inchoative: "begin to", "start to"
sodo	direct quote, this can attach to a verb of speaking or, in the absence of a verb of speaking, to the end of the noun phrase denoting the person speaking
tata	"decreasingly"
	emphatic with a negative verb
todo	change in the situation: "until"
toyo	result of a situation: "therefore", "so"
	response to or result of a condition, following a clause using *giya, kyeya,* or *lana*: "then"
tutu	"for the purpose of", "in order to"
yissi	"merely", "only"

Pronominal Proclitics

These are attached to the front of the verb. Additionally, the personal pronouns can be attached to the end of an obligatorily possessed noun.

Personal Pronouns

le	first person singular (1S)

lidi	first person plural (1P)
ŋi	second person singular (2S)
ŋidi	second person plural (2P)
ma	third person animate singular (3S)
nadi	third person animate plural (3P)

Other Pronouns

da	third person inanimate, no number (3I)
sa	third person, different subject as before, no number (DS)

In addition, the pronominal third person clitics can be prefixed to a determiner plus classifier combination as deictic or emphatic reference.

Nouns: General

Nouns are generally preceded by a determiner plus classifier combination. They do not show number, as number is expressed in the determiner.

bigittu	season
deni	river
ennisi	knife
eppomo	spear, staff
gogo	food
kedekele	magic
keyodo	dark clouds, rain or storm cloud
kibibene	skin of a plant, bark
kyege	task, labor
kyumu	man, male person
luvu	star
mede	tree
mudusebe	rug made of skinned hide
noleko	campfire
nuvu	owl
pidi	basket
somadusiyo	dwelling place
syebe	night
tadatada	rain
udu	wind

Nouns: Obligatorily Possessed

Obligatorily possessed nouns (such as body parts), when objects of a verb, do not have a determiner or classifier. They are, however, suffixed with one of the pronominal clitics detailed above.

sadu	voice
sono	head
usa	tongue

Adjectives

Adjectives follow nouns, modifying them though the noun being modified can be dropped, provided the determiner plus classifier is still included. A case could be made for no difference between nouns and adjectives.

basa	bad
kadu	rough
kele	fine, well-made

kiŋili	wanted
kyala	warm
liyagi	smooth
nadda	alone, solitary
niki	nearby, neighboring
onono	very big
siŋi	tall
vekebe	idle, lazy

Pronouns

There are very few actual pronouns, as the determiner plus classifier will act as a pronoun.

ŋeya	reflexive pronoun, all persons
sisi	yonder, at a distance
susi	here, there

Determiners

Determiners precede the noun and are suffixed with a classifier. Determiners express number. Determiner plus classifier combinations can act as pronouns. In brackets are the allomorphs for before a vowel and before a consonant. # stands for a reduplicated first consonant of a suffixed enclitic. Ø stands for nothing, no vowel or consonant in that environment.

[n|a]	a single, one (SG)
din[Ø|i]	group of people
e[n|#]	pair, two, a small set
ha[d|#]	some, several, three
ma[m|#]	enough
nad[Ø|i]	all kinds of, various types of
ŋo[v|Ø]	many, various (PL)
pe[y|Ø]	pile or collection of something (COLL)
te[n|#]	all of, whole
vo[v|Ø]	none, no (NEG)

Classifiers

Classifiers express the category or shape of the noun. Some classifiers act as derivational suffixes on more generic nouns or on other words, making them nouns. Speakers may deliberately use different classifiers for nouns in the same category to distinguish them.

bene	plant
dele	unbounded
dodo	animal
ele	person
ette	knife, spear, tool, instrument
gogo	food, something edible
himi	something hollow
ittu	time period, event, task
kini	land, earth, ground
ko	fire, campfire, a camp
laka	shelter, hut, house
lene	pile of stuff
lu	light source, gleam
momo	something flat

muɲi	long and thin
ŋe	animate being
ono	something large in size
sese	speech
sisi	small and distant, small because distant
siyo	place, location
tadu	surface
tana	wind, flowing water

Adverbs

Adverbs express manner and direction. While they can occur anywhere in the sentence, the preference is to put them immediately after the verb.

aɲiŋya	around, surrounding
meya	inside, into
nuvunuvu	mournfully
olaya	up, upwards
syenisyeni	curiously, expectingly
tadya	down, downwards
tanatana	flowing
tannatanna	quickly
umumu	while shouting

Prepositions

Prepositions are often suffixed with a determiner plus classifier, a pronoun, or a pronominal clitic. The singular determiner 'a' disappears when prefixed with a preposition.

du	denotes motion towards, beneficiary, recipient, indirect object: "to", "for"
nene	instrumental: "with"
pa	pertensive: "belonging to"
pesi	direction from, "away from", "out of"
su	location: "at", "on", "in"
vudu	negation of beneficiary: "not to, not for"

Adverbial and Other Enclitics

Adverbial enclitics attach to the first word in the sentence. They generally express time.

danu	then, and then, next
dege	after, afterwards, later
goli	for a long time
ladi	once, one time, once when
susu	not long after, soon after

The evidential clitic *tani* can be used as an adverbial clitic and attached to the first word in the story. The story is then told in present nonfirsthand. *Tani* can also attach to a proper noun to make a title: "The story of…"

The enclitic *tepe* attaches to nouns and means "without" or "lacking". Nouns suffixed with *tepe* do not need a determiner or classifier.

Interjections

These can be treated as a whole clause.

avo	"no"

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Interlinear

Nuvu=tani
Nuvu=story

n =ele   =tani kyumu ma=bededo   =da   Nuvu ma=podo   sono=ma basa
SG=person=story man   3S=name.NP.NFH=PASSIVE Nuvu 3S=have.NP.NFH head=3S bad
ma=podo   =dusu   usa   =ma kadu
3S=have.NP.NFH=HABITUAL tongue=3S rough

da=vuŋyenedo   =lolo   ma=nemmadu   =haŋi   din =ele   niki
3I=displease.NP.NFH=INCREASE 3S=dwell.with.NP=CONTINUOUS group=person nearby
ma=pettodo   =toyo   ma=nemmadu   =tutu   vov=ele
3S=go.away.NP.NFH=RESULT 3S=dwell.with=PURPOSE NEG=person

ma=balodo   =haŋi   ma=nemmadu   =kyeya   ŋov=ele
3S=think.NP.NFH=CONTINUOUS 3S=dwell.with.NP=HYPOTHESIS PL=person
nadi=syeni =toyo   ma=lugu nad   =ittu   kyege
3P=expect.NP=RESULT 3S=do.NP all.kinds=time.period task

ma=lodo   =lana   nadda
3S=spend.time.NP.NFH=REAL.CONDITION alone
ma=lugu =toyo   nad   =ittu   kyege kiŋili
3S=do.NP=RESULT all.kinds=time.period task wanted

had   =ittu   =dege bigittu ma=nemmadodo   vov=ele
several=time.period=after season 3S=dwell.with.NP.NFH NEG=person
ma=kasodo   pe =lene onono   da=nellodo   =da
3S=hold.NP.NFH COLL=pile very.big 3I=make.with.NP.NFH=PASS
ŋo=muŋi eppomo ŋov=ette ennisi ŋo=himi   pidi   ŋo=momo mudusebe
PL=long spear PL =tool knife PL=hollow basket PL=flat skinned.hide.rug

n =ittu   =ladi   syebe a =ŋe   luvu ma=tiŋedo   tadya   du=kini
SG=time.period=one.time night SG=animate star 3S=go.NP.NFH downwards to=land

ma=tiŋedo   =goli   kyala=tepe   gogo=tepe   laka   =tepe
3S=go.NP.NFH=long.time warm =without food=without shelter=without
ma=doŋedo   =todo a =lu   noleko su=sisi
3S=see.NP.NFH=UNTIL SG=light campfire at=distance

da=lu   da=tenedo   noleko pa   =ma Nuvu
3I=light 3I=be.NP.NFH campfire belong.to=3S Nuvu

a =ŋe   ma=tiŋedo   tannatanna du=lu
SG=animate 3S=go.NP.NFH quickly   to=light

ma=sedo   =sodo ŋi=lali =keŋi hag =gogo du=le
3S=say.NP.NFH=QUOTE 2S=give.NP=QUERY some=food to=1S

n =ele   ma=sedo   avo
SG=person 3S=say.NP.NFH no

ma=sedo   =sodo le=kasada   =yissi mag   =gogo du =ŋeya
3S=say.NP.NFH=QUOTE 1S=hold.NP.FH=merely enough=food for=self

a =ŋe   =sodo ŋi=deli =keŋi le=ŋesutu   =kyeya
SG=animate=QUOTE 2S=allow=QUERY 1S=put.self.NP=HYPOTHETICAL
ŋeya kyala su=lu   noleko pa   =ŋi
self warm at=light campfire belong.to=2S

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n =ele    =sodo  da=teneda   =yissi mal  =lu   du =ŋeya
SG=person=QUOTE 3I=be.NP.FH=merely enough=light for=self


a =ŋe     =sodo  ŋi=kasada      ham   =momo mudusebe        kele
SG=animate=QUOTE 2S=hold.NP.FH several=flat  skinned.hide.rug fine


ŋi=vadeli      =giya         le=la          =haŋi       su=lu   noleko
2S=allow.NEG.NP=CONDITIONAL 1S=spend.time.NP=CONTINUOUS at=light campfire
le=sutu =toyo   aŋiŋya a =momo du=ŋeya
1S=put.NP=RESULT around SG=flat to=self


Nuvu=danu ma=sedo       =sodo   umumu
Nuvu=next 3S=say.NP.NFH=QUOTE shoutingly
ŋi=pella      =ka       da=ŋo=momo
2S=leave.alone=COMMAND 3I=PL=flat


le=lalata       du =ŋeya da=ŋo=momo
1S=make.PAST.FH for=self 3I=PL=flat
vudu   =nadi ŋov=ele   vekebe nadi=vusulugodo    =tata    nad       =ittu pa        =ŋeya
not.for=3P   PL=person lazy   3P  =do.NEG.NP.NFH=EMPHASIS all.kinds=event belong.to=self


a =ŋe     =danu luvu ma=pettodo        ma=dutiŋedo     a =bene  mede siŋi liyagi
SG=animate=next star 3S=go.away.NP.NFH 3S=go.to.NP.NFH SG=plant tree tall smooth


n =ele    ma=doŋedo     =haŋi       syenisyeni  a =ŋe
SG=person 3S=see.NP.NFH=CONTINOUS expectingly SG=animate
sa=sutiŋedo      =lolo     olaya   a =bene  liyagi
DS=go.onto.NP.NFH=INCREASE upwards SG=plant smooth


a =ŋe      ma=pettalodo        n =ono   kibibene pesi=bene  nen =ette
SG=animate 3S=take.away.NP.NFH SG=large bark     from=plant with=tool
ma=sutodo      aŋiŋya n =ono   du=ŋeya
3S=put.NP.NFH around SG=large to=self


a =ŋe     =danu ma=salledo    =nna    ŋo=sese   kedekele
SG=animate=next 3S=sing.NP.NFH=BEGIN PL=speech magic


a =tana udu  da=lodo             =lolo     da=ŋyakedo    susi ŋo=tadu    keyodo
SG=flow wind 3I=spend.time.NP.NFH=INCREASE 3I=push.NP.NFH there PL=surface dark.cloud
da=lamodo      =todo   ted =dele      lada
3I=cover.NP.NFH=UNTIL whole=unbounded sky


pe  =tana tadatada da=tiŋedo   =nna   tadya
COLL=flow rain     3I=go.NP.NFH=BEGIN downwards
Nuvu ma=sutiŋedo       =toyo   meya  a =laka
Nuvu 3S=go.into.NP.NFH=RESULT inside SG=shelter


a =tana=susu       deni  da=tanonodo       =nna
SG=flow =soon.after river 3I=overflow.NP.NFH=BEGIN
da=lamodo      =lolo     tek =ko   somadusiyo
3I=cover.NP.NFH=INCREASE whole=camp dwelling.place


da=tanodo     aŋiŋya du=laka    da=peppudodo
3I=flow.NP.NFH around to=shelter 3I=wash.away.NP.NFH
ŋo=muŋi eppomo ŋov=ette ennisi ŋo=himi  pidi   ŋo=laŋi   mudusebe        kele
PL=long spear  PL =tool knife  PL=hollow basket PL=praised skinned.hide.rug fine


da=tanodo     =lolo     da=peppudodo         a =laka
3I=flow.NP.NFH=INCREASE 3I=wash.away.NP.NFH SG=shelter
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Nuvu ma=tiŋedo   tannatanna du=bene   pesi=bene
Nuvu 3S=go.NP.NFH quickly   to=plant from=plant
ma=sutiŋedo   =beye   olaya   a =bene liyagi
3S=go.onto.NP.NFH=FRUSTRATED upwards SG=plant smooth

a =tana da=tanado   =lolo   Nuvu ma=peppudodo   =da   =toyo
SG=flow   3I=flow.NP.NFH=INCREASE Nuvu 3S=wash.away.NP.NFH=PASSIVE=RESULT

a =ŋe   luvu ma=lodo
SG=animate star 3S=spend.time.NP.NFH
ma=sada   Nuvu sadu =ma sa=pettodo   tanatana
3S=hear.NP Nuvu voice=3S DS=go.away.NP.NFH flowing

Nuvu ma=nolodo   =da   a =dodo   nuvu da=sadolada   =haŋi
Nuvu 3S=change.into.NP.NFH=PASSIVE SG=animal owl 3I=speak.with.NP.FH=CONTINUOUS

nuvunuvu
mournfully

Smooth English

The Story of Nuvu

There is a man named Nuvu who has a bad head and usually a rough tongue. It displeases him to live with his neighbors so he goes away to live alone. He thinks that if he lives with people, then they will expect him to do all kinds of tasks. When he is alone, then he does what he wants. After several seasons living alone, he has a large pile of spears, knives, baskets, and skinned hide rugs.

One night, a star comes down to land. He walks a long time without warmth or food or shelter, until he sees a light from a campfire in the distance. That light is from Nuvu's campfire. The star hurries towards the light.

He says, "Will you give me some food?"

Nuvu says no, "I have only enough food for myself."

The star says, "Will you allow me to warm myself by your campfire?"

Nuvu says, "There is only enough light for myself."

The star says, "You have several fine skinned hide rugs. If you do not allow me to spend time at the campfire, I will put a rug around myself."

Then Nuvu shouts, "Leave those rugs alone! I made those for myself, not for lazy people who do not do their own tasks."

The star goes away and goes to a tall, smooth tree. Nuvu watches the star climb up the smooth trunk. The star peels off a large piece of bark from the tree and puts it around himself. Then the star starts to sing a magic spell.

The wind increases and pushes in dark clouds until they cover the whole sky. Rain begins to fall and so Nuvu goes into his hut. Soon after, the river begins to overflow and cover more and more of the camp. It flows around the shelter and washes away the spears and knives and baskets and fine skinned hide rugs. It flows even more and washes away the shelter.

Nuvu goes from tree to tree but cannot climb the smooth trunks. The river flows even more and Nuvu is washed away. The star listens as Nuvu's voice floats away.

Nuvu is changed into an owl who still speaks mournfully.