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Author: David J. Peterson

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The Dai Language: An Embarrassment

David J. Peterson

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Introduction

Some time in late 2000 I came up with what I was sure was a brilliant idea. I had recently discovered language creation, and had been a few months into my very first language, Megdevi. Upon telling my relatives about my new pastime, they wondered if it could be monetized. Liking the idea of money, I began to scheme. Since I was the first person ever to create a language for art, as opposed to international communication (or so I thought at the time), what if I offered to create languages for others—for money? I was certain I'd have a corner on the market; the only question was how I'd advertise my services.

At that time, to access the internet, I opened up the America Online (AOL) application, logged in, waited for it to connect, and then was able to access the internet via the AOL interface. I (and many others, at the time) rather thought of the world wide web as one *feature* of AOL—i.e. as an AOL member, you could use their search engine to find websites on the world wide web. Additionally, as a member you could create your own website, using AOL's webpage designer. This would be the *perfect* way to advertise my new business! Naturally I assumed such a thing would only be available to other AOL users, which meant that if I wanted other AOL users to visit my website, I had to let them know about it.

Another byproduct of using a portal to the internet like AOL is that they could offer extra functionality exclusively to their users. For example, if one AOL user sent an email to another AOL user, the first user could check and see if the second had read it, and, if they had, when they'd read it. Another bit of functionality AOL offered was the ability to edit and share one's personal profile with other users. Many users did this at the time, and any given user was able to search AOL user profiles either by user names or by keywords. This I did, searching for users whose profiles featured words such as "fantasy", "scifi", "roleplaying", "rpg", "dragon", etc. Sifting through profiles thus, I manually compiled a list of about 40 AOL users that I thought might be interested in having me create a language for them. With that done, I composed an email advertising my services. I called my "company" *Languation*.

After sending off my email to these random AOL users (something which I would learn later is more commonly referred to as "spam"), I waited breathlessly, logging back onto AOL every hour to see if the users I'd emailed had read my message. Several had; many hadn't. None responded. I continued to check back every day. More and more recipients had read my message, but still no responses. Until one day when, as luck would have it, someone finally did respond. It was a high school student from Oklahoma who wanted a language for their D&D group. They had created a culture and people whom they'd called the Dai, and had designed their look, their armor, their weapons, etc., but to cement their aesthetic, they thought it would be perfect for them to have a language.

I had a quick phone call with my brand new client and went over some of the details of what kind of features the language could have, and then I set to work. I don't know how long I spent on the Dai language, but it probably wasn't long enough. Either way, once I had determined that I had "finished", I printed everything out, put it all in a manila envelope, and mailed it off. A few weeks later, I received a check for my work: \$45. This, then, was my first ever professional language creation project.

The result of this work is attached here for your consideration—not as an exemplar, but more as a curiosity. The work is terrible—something I'd figure out on my own not long later, after being a member of the Conlang-Listserv for a while. After coming to the crushing realization that I was not only *not* the first person to create a language for fun but was also quite bad at it, I quietly allowed my website to lapse and disappear into the void. I never heard from the person whom I made the Dai language for again, but I hope they felt like what I gave them was worth \$45. If not, I'll be happy to refund their money.

The Dai language below is presented nearly unedited. I've added a few return carriages here and there and fixed the margins in a few places, but the content is totally unedited (not even the embarrassing typos, like the misspelling of "adjectives" in the section on adjectives). Enjoy perusing. It is a train wreck.

Dai

a p b m e θ ð i t d s z ʃ
ʒ n r o k g ŋ u h (?)

Introduction to Dai Phonology (Sound System)

Above are the sounds of Dai. I've put them in a particular order, though this doesn't have to be the official, alphabetical order for Dai—that's up to you when you create the alphabet and writing system. These, however, are the sounds, and they're written in the International Phonetic Alphabet. Some may seem familiar, some may not, and some make different sounds than in English. I'll explain what the exact sounds of them are now:

[a] makes the "a" sound in "father"

[p] makes the "p" sound in "speak"

[b] makes the "b" sound in "boy"

[m] makes the "m" sound in "mother"

[e] makes either the "ay" sound in "hay", or the "e" sound in "met"—they're so close in articulation, that it doesn't matter much which sound you make, though the "ay" sound is more pure.

[θ] makes the "th" sound in "thin"

[ð] makes the "th" sound in "this"

[i] makes the "ee" sound in "see"

[t] makes the "t" sound in "steak"

[d] makes the "d" sound in "dare"

[s] makes the "s" sound in "sound"

[z] makes the "z" sound in "zoo"

[ʃ] makes the "sh" sound in "ship"

[ʒ] makes the "z" sound in "azure", or the "s" sound in "treasure"

[n] makes the "n" sound in "never"

[r] makes the "rr" sound in the Spanish word "burro"

[o] makes the "o" sound in "note"

[k] makes the "k" sound in "skin"
[g] makes the "g" sound in "give"
[ŋ] makes the "ng" sound in "hang"
[u] makes the "oo" sound in "boot"
[h] makes the "h" sound in "have"
[ʔ] makes the sound at the beginning of and in the middle of the phrase "uh-oh"

Okay, that's how to pronounce the alphabet. Here are a few of the additional sounds that will appear in Dai but won't be letters by themselves:

[tʃ] makes the "ch" sounds in "church"
[dʒ] makes the "j" sound in "jam"
[ts] makes the "ts" sound in "cuts"
[dz] makes the "ds" sound in "kids"

The rest you should be able to figure out.

Now, I've put the glottal stop ʔ in parentheses above, because I don't know how you want to deal with it in the orthography. You might want it just to be an apostrophe or a small diacritic, and so it wouldn't be considered a full, real letter of the alphabet, even though it is a sound. As I have it, the glottal stop is inserted automatically between similar vowels (so, "ee" is pronounced [eʔe], and "iii" is pronounced [iʔiʔi], etc.), and is used else-where as needed. The sound listed above are the way those letters are always pronounced, without variation, as with the word "t" in the English words "hat", "top", "stop", "Latin" and "nation" (believe it or not, "t" has five different sounds in those five different words). The only other thing to note for the phonology is that [i] doubles as the letter "y" in English when it's used in front of a vowel. So, if there were a Dai word "ian", it would be pronounced the same way as the English word "yawn". That's the run-down of morphology. Now, onto Morphology.

Dai Morphology

Morphology deals with some of the more important aspects of language. The Morpheme is the smallest bit of meaning in language. An example from English is the plural morpheme, or the bit of the word that indicates the plural. In English, the underlying plural morpheme is [z], with the variants [s] and [əz] (examples with these plurals: kids [kɪdz], cats [kæts], and bushes [bʊʃəz]). As you can see, the morphs (the examples) don't look the same. However, they all have the same function, and that is what a morpheme is. So, onto Dai morphology.

Noun Classes

The Dai language features five different noun classes, which each have their own endings:

Class I) Humans who are Dai; end in [i]

Class II) Humans who are not Dai; end in [u]

Class III) Animals; end in [en]

Class IV) Plants and natural substances; end in [oθ]

Class V) Tools, instruments and things created by humans; end in [az]

Class VI) Everything else not listed; end in anything

What happens with these is that you can create different words by changing the class of the verb. So, the word for fish is ʃramen . You'll notice it ends in [en], as animal nouns do. However, if you want a human who fishes, for instance, you drop the [en] ending and add the [i] ending to get ʃrami , "a fish person", or "a person of fish", or, in this case, "a person who fishes/captures fish". By adding the [az] you'd get ʃramaz , and maybe a word like "fishing pole", or "fishing spear" (depending on how the Dai fish). Also, if you strip off all the endings, you're left with ʃram , which falls into Class VI, which would mean "fishing", the action. Also, you can use this bare root ʃram as a verb to mean "to fish". It all depends on how the words are used in the sentences; the possibilities are limitless.

Taking another example, the word for mother is madi (as a side note, they've found that about 98% of the world's languages have words for "mother" that have an [m] in them, as well as a [p] in the word for father. So, when creating a language, it's a pretty good idea to have an [m] and [p] in mother and father if one wants the language to be authentic). So, you might strip off the ending and use the word mad as a verb to mean "to mother, to act like a mother, to take care of, to nurture, to give suck" or even "to give birth". In fact, the word can have all of those meanings, which would be determined by context; it's wide open.

There's some more information on noun classes in the section at the end entitled "Creating New Words"

Adjectives

Adjectives can end in anything, if they're natural adjectives. What I mean by "natural adjectives" (and, indeed, "natural" anything) is the first word created in a family of words. For instance, the words "lover", "loving", "lovely" and "beloved" all come from the family having to do with "love", but none of these four is the natural word; the natural word is "love", which is an abstract noun. So, the natural word for love is the abstract noun; the rest are derived from that. Natural adjectives are words whose basic, first forms are adjectives. For example, "happy" is a natural adjective, from

which "happiness" is derived. So, "happy" is an adjective which can end in anything, and the Dai word for happy is heis. heisi, then, is a happy person, and heis by itself (used as a noun) is happiness.

Another way to form adjectives is to add the prefix θi - to any noun. So, taking our word for "mother", *madi*, $\theta imadi$ would mean "motherly", or "like a mother". Basically, adding θi - to any noun means "like that noun".

In addition to this, adjectives have six forms. I'll explain them now:

Regular Form) *kasu θ* . The regular is merely the regular adjective, in this case, long.

Comparative Form) *kasu θ os*. The comparative is equivalent to the English "-er", in "longer".

Superlative Form) *kasu θ in*. The superlative is equivalent to the English "-est", in "longest".

Pejorative Form) *zekasu θ os*. There's no one-word equivalent in English, but it's the opposite of the Comparative (it's merely the comparative with the "opposite" prefix, ze -). In English it would mean "less long".

Sublative Form) *zekasu θ in*. Like the pejorative, only ze - is added to the Superlative form. It's English equivalent is "least long".

Equative Form) *kasu θ eks*. A somewhat foreign concept to English, this form indicates that something is "as x as". So, for long, this would mean "as long as", and one would follow it with whatever one was comparing it to. So, for "a spear as long as a snake", you'd say "*pagaz kasu θ eks esen*", where *esen* is "snake".

Lastly, when using these forms of the adjectives, you'll need the word "than", which in Dai is "koks". It's used as can be expected: "*kasu θ os koks esen*", longer than a snake.

That's it for adjectives. I'll explain how they're used in sentences in the "cases" section.

Adverbs

Adding $-oi$ to any word turns it into an adverb. So, *heisoi* means "happily", for example. Adding it to a adjective is similar to adding θi - to a noun. For example, if you wanted to explain that you swim like fish, you'd say you swim *framoi*. Again, adverb use will be explained in the section on "cases".

Prepositions

Prepositions precede the noun phrases they modify, as in most languages. They do things unlike most languages, though, and this will be explained now, in the section on "cases"

Cases

a.) The Cases: What "cases" are, more commonly referred to as "noun cases", are the ways in which a noun is used in a sentence. Here are the endings for the Dai case system, followed by an explanation of what each case is:

Nominative) no ending. The nominative case is the case that each noun is listed in. It's the case that the subject of the sentence is in. Examples: ak?ai (the human), ʃenoθ (the tree)

Accusative) -n, -in. The accusative case is the case that the verb's direct object is in. So, in the sentence "I chased the cat", "the cat" is in the accusative case. Examples: ak?ain, ʃenoθin

Dative) -ʃ, -iʃ. The dative case is the case that the verb's indirect object is in. So, in the sentence "I gave the man the letter", "the man" is in the dative case. In addition to this function, the dative case is the case used for nouns that are preceded by prepositions. So, in the sentence "I walk to the store", "the store" is in the dative, because it's preceded by the preposition "to". Examples: ak?aiʃ, ʃenoθiʃ

Genitive) -m, -im. The Genitive case, sometimes called the associative case, is the case that ties two nouns together. So, in the phrase "the tree of the boy", "of the boy" is in the Genitive case; same thing with "the boy's tree". Examples: ak?aim, ʃenoθim

Locative) -r, -ir. The locative case is used with prepositions of place, such as "inside" and "on top of". Examples: ak?air, ʃenoθir

Vocative) -o. The vocative case is the case a noun is in when one addressed the noun directly. It's not often used with words such as people's names. For instance, if one had a Dai friend named "siras", one might address him as "siraso". Examples: ak?aio, ʃenoθo

The way these cases are used is that every part of the phrase takes the appropriate case ending. So, "the long spear" in the nominative is "pagaz kasuθ", since adjectives follow the nouns they modify (when I get to syntax, I'll explain why this isn't necessary). If you, for example, were going to take the long spear, then it'd be in the accusative, so the phrase would be "pagazin kasuθin". If you were going to give something to that same long spear, it would become "pagaziʃ kasuθiʃ". If you were going to sit on that spear, it would become "kan pagazir kasuθir", where "kan" is the word for "on". If this spear had a mother, than it would become "madi pagazim kasuθim", where "madi" is "the mother" in the nominative, and "pagazim kasuθim" is "of the long spear". And, finally, if you decided to up and have a conversation with this long spear, you might address him as "pagazo kasuθo".

b.) Plurals: I have decided to include plurals for each case, but I don't know if you'll want to use them. If, after all, the Dai are semi to fully telepathic, then they might be able to figure out whether the noun is plural or singular on their own. So, you might not need these. However, if they'll make life easier on you, who is (I assume) not telepathic, then here they are:

Nominative) -e, -ie or -i. If the word ends in a consonant, or ends in the vowels [i] or [u], then simply add [e] for the nominative plural. If the word ends in the vowel [e], then add [ie] for the plural. If the word ends in [a] or [o], then add [i] for the plural. Examples: akʔaie (humans), ʃenoθe (trees), akʔaue (non-Dai humans), hieie (yellow in the plural)

Accusative) -ne, -ine. If the word ends in [n], then use [ine]. Examples: akʔaine, ʃenoθne

Dative) -ʃe, -iʃe. If the word ends in [s], [z], [ʃ] or [ʒ], use [iʃe]. Examples: akʔaiʃe, heisiʃe

Genitive) -me, -ime. If the word ends in [m], use [ime]. Examples: akʔaime, ʃenoθme

Locative) -re, -ire. If the word ends in [r], use [ire]. Examples: akʔaire, ʃenoθre

Vocative) -oi. Examples: akʔaioi, ʃenoθoi

Pronoun Declension:

Like nouns, every pronoun is declined. I'm going to show you how you'd decline the pronoun [si], or "you" as an example. All the rest decline in the same way:

Case	Pronoun
Nominative	si
Accusative	sin

Dative	siŋ
Genitive	sim
Locative	sir
Vocative	sio

The only irregularity is that the Vocative of "o" (I) is just plain old "o", rather than o?o. Of course, you'd never use the vocative of "o" unless you were talking to yourself.

There's just one point about this chart I'd like to make. The Genitive of any pronoun is generally not used. Instead, you use the adjective marker "θi-" to make a word meaning "your" rather than "of you". So, "θisi" is "your", and it declines as an adjective.

Some Examples with Prepositions:

Some of the above can be a bit confusing, so it's always best to see some examples.

a.) Prepositions often have two meanings: one is stative (meaning, no movement is involved); and the other is motive (movement is involved). So, using a preposition we've already seen, kan (which means "on"), here's how one expresses the difference in meaning between "on" and "onto":

i.) "I sleep on a rock": o kan goθir zi. ("rock" is in the locative case)

ii.) "I walk onto a rock": o kan goθin upaŋ. ("rock" is in the accusative)

The reason for the two different cases is because, in (i), the rock is merely used as a place to sleep. In (ii), however, something is happening to the rock; it's state is changing. Most importantly, there is movement involved. To show just how the changing of a case can change the meaning of the sentence:

iii.) "I sit on a rock": o kan goθin kend. ("rock" is in the accusative, again)

iv.) "I am sitting on a rock": o kan goθir kend. ("rock" is in the locative)

The difference here is that, in sentence one, you're describing the actual motion of crouching down and planting oneself on a rock. In the second, you're just describing what's happening: the speaker is already sitting, and he happens to be doing it upon a rock. This disambiguates lots of phrases that are ambiguous in English. For example, what would you think of if I said, "I ran on the ice"? Would I be running from dry ground onto ice, or would I already be on the ice when I decided to start running? Using the locative and accusative helps to fix this problem.

b.) Prepositions that don't have to do with relationship to physical objects take the dative. These prepositions are prepositions like "for" (kasi), "about" (unu), "because of" (tum) and "by means of" (gaŋ). Here are some examples with those particular prepositions:

i.) "This dog is for you": mai gen kasi siŋ i. ("si", meaning "you", is in the Dative)

- ii.) "He's teaching about fire": bi unu ʒedzoθiʃ tʃo. ("ʒedzoθ", "fire", is in the Dative)
- iii.) "I lead because of you": o tum siʃ ʒod. (same as (i))
- iv.) "I eat with/by means of a knife": o gaŋ ʒozaziʃ kandʒ. ("ʒozaz", "knife", Dative)

Dai Syntax

Since Dai is a fully inflectional language, word order is largely unimportant. What this means is that the sentence "The dog sees the wolf" can be written in each of the following ways:

- a.) gen aʃaθ kupenin (Subject "the dog", Verb "sees", Object "the wolf")
- b.) gen kupenin aʃaθ (Subject "the dog", Object "the wolf", Verb "sees")
- c.) aʃaθ gen kupenin (Verb "sees", Subject "the dog", Object "the wolf")
- d.) aʃaθ kupenin gen (Verb "sees", Object "the wolf", Subject "the dog")
- e.) kupenin gen aʃaθ (Object "the wolf", Subject "the dog", Verb "sees")
- f.) kupenin aʃaθ gen (Object "the wolf", Verb "sees", Subject "the dog")

You'll notice that in (f), the rough English gloss would be "the wolf sees the dog", which, in English, renders the exact opposite meaning. However, since Dai marks cases, any one of those six possible word orders is acceptable. I have been using the SOV word order (in (b)), because that's the word order I prefer. You, however, may prefer one of the other six, which is perfectly fine; Dai allows you to do that. What might be interesting for you to do is to have a formal word order (probably something odd, like OVS or VOS) that, say, could be used in formal writing or recitation or chanting, whereas when the people speak, they use a more common word order (the first two, SVO and SOV are the most common in the world's languages—(f) is probably the least common). With Dai, you can do whatever you want, as long as you maintain the integrity of the phrases. By this I mean that the adjectives that modify a noun can't be in one part of the sentence with its noun in the other—it just wouldn't make sense. For that matter, adjectives should "touch" the noun they modify, either being before or after the noun.

Adverbs

Adverbs that modify the main verb of the clause can come anywhere in the sentence. For instance, kapoi is an adverb meaning "yesterday". Here are some examples with it:

- i.) o kandʒ kampoi (I ate yesterday)
- ii.) o kampoi kandʒ (I yesterday ate)

iii.) *kampoi o kandz* (yesterday I ate)

It doesn't matter where it goes; it's up to your stylistic preferences.

Adverbs that are a part of an adjective phrase, though, must come before the adjectives they modify. What do I mean by that? You can't say, "I really ate a bad steak" when you mean "I ate a really bad steak"—the sentences have two different meanings. The intended meaning involves the adverb being placed before the adjective it modifies. Here's a Dai example:

iv.) "I ate truly bad food yesterday": *kampoi o danidoi kandz_oθin ſogzin kandz*. ("danid" means "true", adding *-oi* makes it "truly", and it comes before "bad food", "kandz" being the word for "eat", which, after adding the ending for natural substance nouns *-oθ*, becomes "food", and "ſogz" being the word for "bad")

Verbs

Before launching into a discussion about relative clauses, I'll mention verbs. The verbs in Dai, as you specified, are as simple as they can get: They consist of one word which isn't conjugated for person, tense or aspect. You've already seen the verb "kandz" (to eat), "aſaθ" (to see), "zod" (to lead), "tʃo" (to teach), "upaſ" (to walk) and "i" (to be). The verb should be easy to pick out, since it will be the only thing in the sentence with no particular ending and no case marker.

You can turn the verb into a verbal adjective by adding the adjective prefix *θi-*. So, the verb *kandz*, "to eat", becomes *θikandz*, "eating". Now, this is only an adjective, used, for example, in the phrase "the eating man", "*θikandz zi*" ("*zi*" is "man"). These adjectives will never be the main verb of a sentence; they merely modify a noun. The other form of a verbal adjective is when the passive particle (which is "se") is prefixed to the verb itself. So, "*θisekandz*" means "eaten", and "*θisekandz zi*" means "the eaten man". So, you might say "*θisekandz zi θiadz*", meaning "the eaten man dies/is dead".

Since verbs can't be conjugated for tense, you must always use some sort of a time indicator. So, when a Dai is describing when he ate, he would say "this morning", or "yesterday", or "last week". Without any time indicator, it will be assumed that the verb is in the present tense.

To form the passive, you use the passive particle "se". Now, this can be used in one of five ways:

i.) *zi se kandz* (the man is eaten)

ii.) *zi sekandz* (same thing, but the particle becomes a prefix)

iii.) *zi kandz se* (the man is eaten, the particle is behind)

iv.) *zi kandzse* (same as above, but the particle becomes a suffix)

v.) *zi se...kandz* (you can string any number of adverbs in between "se" and "kandz")

If you use the particle as a prefix or a suffix, it starts to look something like a conjugation, so if you really want there to be no conjugation, you should leave "se" as a separate word, but it's totally up to you.

The imperative, or command form is simply the form of the verb without a pronoun. So, "kandz!" is "eat!"; "tʃo!" is "teach!", et cetera.

Lastly, there's a thing called aspect which has a lot to do with verbs. These indicate how one does an action, or what one's thoughts are about that action. So, these are things like "to be able to/can" (e), "may/might" (ʃo), "would (but won't)" (dub), "would, if..." (haks), "want/desire" (kam), etc. There are tons, and there will be a list of some common ones in the all-purpose reference section. Here are some examples with the ones listed, though:

vi.) "I can walk" o e upaʃ. (These aspect verbs come before the main verb)

vii.) "You may go" si ʃo ris.

viii.) "I would go, but I don't want to go" o dub ris, ros o ðu kam ris. (word-for-word translation: I would go, but I no (don't) want to go)

ix.) "I would go if you went" o haks ris kuθ si ris. ("kuθ" is "if")

Relative Clause Formation:

Relative clauses are sentences that, in English, use words like "that", "which", "who" and "where", or maybe "in which", "by which", etc. An example of a simple sentence with a relative clause is "The man who sat on a rock yesterday is happy":

a.) zi koi kan goθir kampoi kend i heis. (word-for-word: the man the one on a rock yesterday sat is happy)

In Dai, for all relative clauses there are a particular bunch of words one uses which translate to "the" whatever. So, in (a), it translates to "the one", or "the person". There's a whole list of these which are in the table of correlatives in the all-purpose reference section, and they'll be explained there. What needs to be addressed is the order of these relative clauses. While word order is free in ordinary clauses, word order is not free in relative clauses. The relative clause must begin with a relative clause word (they all begin with [k]) and must end with the main verb, thus indicating the clause has come to an end. Also, the relative clause word must have the case marking that it takes within the relative clause. In (a), it acted as the subject of the relative clause, and thus was in the nominative, so it took no ending. In the following example, though:

b.) zi koin kampoi o aʃaθ i heis. (the man I saw yesterday is happy)

The relative particle is the direct object of the relative clause, and so it's in the accusative. Next:

c.) zi koiʃ kampoi o zisazin beθ i heis. (the man to whom I gave a sword is happy)

In this sentence, the relative particle is the indirect object, so it's in the dative. Next:

d.) zi koim boti tʃoi i i heis. (the man whose child is a teacher is happy)

This sentence is a bit tough. The relative particle is in the Genitive case and followed by it's possessed noun, *boti* (child). Since the relative particle must be the first word of the close, the possessed must follow the possessor. So, whereas it would probably ordinarily be *boti koim* (the child of the one), it is *koim boti* (the one's child). Keeping with the Genitive, but a bit more difficult:

e.) *ʒi koim botin o aʃaθ i heis.* (the man whose child I see is happy)

Here, the possessed, *boti*, is in the accusative, so it's *botin*, but it still is subordinate to "koim". One more example:

f.) *goθ koθir kan kampo i kend i begʒid.* (The rock, on which I sat yesterday is hard.)

In this sentence, the relative particle is in the locative, and the preposition it is subordinate to (*kan*) becomes a postposition and follows it.

Subordinate Clauses

These are the clauses that come with performative verbs, or verbs which perform the action they entail merely by speaking them. "Think" is a performative verb in the sentence "I think that it's true." Here, the speaker tells what he thinks by saying "I think". In Dai, these types of sentences are relatively simple. The initial clause must always end with the verb, but after that the rest can go on in any order; there is no word that's the equivalent of "that" in the above sentence. Some illustrations:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| a.) <i>o totʃ ne danid i</i> (I think it's true) | d.) <i>o totʃ i ne danid</i> |
| b.) <i>o totʃ danid ne i</i> (same) | e.) <i>o totʃ i danid ne</i> |
| c.) <i>o totʃ ne i danid</i> | f.) <i>o totʃ danid i ne</i> |

Dai Pragmatics

There are just a few simple notes on pragmatics I have. Pragmatics largely deal with how syntax allows one to alter ordinary word order to change the meaning of a sentence (e.g.: "I have a cat" versus "It's a cat I have". The second sentence would lead one to believe that someone had suggested that the speaker had a different sort of pet, maybe a dog). Since, however, Dai's word order is totally free, there's not much in the way of pragmatics. There are a few things, though.

Fronting

Remember how I said word order depends on stylistic preference? Well, if one wants to emphasize a certain part of the sentence, merely have it come first. With free word order, this can be done very easily.

Questions

There are two types of questions: yes/no questions, and WH-questions (so-called because most of these questions begin with a word that starts with "wh" in English: what, where, when, why...). Both involve the word that begins the sentence. WH-questions begin with WH words (listed in the reference section), and yes/no questions begin with the particle dzei. It can be defined as the word "do" in the sentence "Do you want to eat?" It begins every sentence where the answer is either "yes", "no", "maybe", "I don't know", etc. Questions can also be formed by simply saying a direct sentence with a rising intonation.

Emphasis

Emphasis is used to assert the truth or falsehood of a claim. In Dai, the words for "yes" and "no" ("a" and "đu", respectively) are used. So, while "o genin u" means "I have a dog", "o a u genin" means "I *do* have a dog". This particle can be repeated for further emphasis. So, "o a genin a u" means "I *do* have a (*real*) dog", and "a o a genin a u" means "I *do have a dog!*" The same can work in the opposite way. "o genin đu u" simply means "I don't have a dog", but you can emphasize it further with "o đu genin đu u", and further than that with "đu o đu genin đu u!"

Dai Semantics

I spoke of noun classes above, but there are a few more remarks I'd like to make, mainly in reference to how you will create words of your own.

Creating New Words

The one thing that gives a language its flavor is the way it deals with meaning. This will be your most important job in making Dai a successful, original language.

a.) When going from one language to another, you notice that where some language uses one word, others use two or three, or don't even have an equivalent. Take the word "rainbow". In English, it comes from "bow" (it's shape), and "rain" (the time after which it comes). In French, it's "arc de ciel", or "arch of the sky". Another example is the word "walrus", which in Hawaiian is "elepani o kai", or "elephant of the sea" (though I marvel at how they saw elephants before walruses). So, you might try giving unique names to what would seem to be common things in English. Maybe in Dai society they hang traitors from oak trees, and so rather than giving the tree some name meaning "oak", you could call it "the hanging tree". I'm just making these examples up out of thin air, but these are things you should consider.

b.) Phrases make the color of the language. So, maybe the phrase "Don't look at the clouds when it rains" could be the equivalent to "don't look a gift horse in the mouth". An interesting French example is the term "esprit d'escalier" (the feeling of the

staircase). It refers to the feeling you get when you leave a room and only then think of the perfect thing to say. They call it the staircase feeling because it's the feeling you get after you've gone down the stairs. You only need two and a half words to say that in French, but you need a whole sentence to describe it in English. So this is another avenue of exploration for you.

c.) Finally, you've got something very unique with these noun classes. Even if many languages had them thousands of years ago, there are very few that still have them, and even fewer that will keep them as the years go by. The words I've given you all fall directly into certain classes without exception. You, however, might want to mix things up a bit. The classic example of this is the Aboriginal language Dyirbal. In Dyirbal, there are four categories which are pretty standard: Male, Female, Plants and Everything else. Naturally, the word for "woman" falls into the Female class. But then, so do "fire" and "dangerous things". So what do "women", "fire" and "dangerous things" have in common? Radial, metaphorical extension, of course: The Dyirbal have an ancient myth about the sun and the moon, and the moon is a man, and the sun is a woman. So, the sun goes into the Female class. And, where does fire come from? The sun. So, fire goes into the Female class. And, while fire can be helpful, it is, no doubt, a dangerous thing, and so, dangerous things go into the Female class. Just by looking at the words, though, you'd have no idea why they belong to the Female class. You can do this type of thing with Dai, somewhere down the road.

d.) Oh, and just some general advice: When creating new words, start with the natural term (be it noun, adjective, verb, etc.), then go from there.

Et Cetera

I created a base-ten number system (meaning, based on the numbers 0-9) for Dai. It's the most common in the world's language, but not the only type. I didn't know if you wanted base-ten, but I can't do anything like base-8 or base-6, so this is it. If you want to change it (if you know how; I'm mathematically inept), you can.

Oh, and I didn't mention it, but Dai has no definite or indefinite articles, like "the" or "a/an". This is because they're not needed.

Some more etc.:

The accusative, Genitive and locative endings can all be shortened, if you'd like. By this, I mean they can all be syllabified. Take the word $\text{jeno}\theta$ (tree). The accusative should be $\text{jeno}\theta\text{in}$, the Genitive $\text{jeno}\theta\text{im}$ and the locative $\text{jeno}\theta\text{ir}$. However, each of the letters [n], [m] and [r] can be pronounced as syllables themselves: [n] like the /n/ in Latin (notice how it hums); [m] like the /mmm/ in Hmmm... (it also hums); [r] like the /r/ in "birth", except trilled like Spanish (notice how there really doesn't have to be a vowel sound). So, the forms could be $\text{jeno}\theta\text{n}$, $\text{jeno}\theta\text{m}$ and $\text{jeno}\theta\text{r}$ if you can pronounce

them. I find it easier and more practical, but you might not. The only place where an [i] would have to be put in between is when the last letter is the same as the letter to follow, so you wouldn't get [nn], [mm] or [rr].

Also, when you start creating your own words, I recommend that you do it on the computer—this isn't something for pen and pencil. When you do, if you want to use the IPA symbols I use in this document, then you can go to the following website:

<http://user.dtcc.edu/~berlin/font/ipa.htm>

At this website you can download to IPA font files for Windows. The first (the one I'm using, the Kansas University Linguistics Department IPA font) allows you to use all the capital letters and punctuation of English, though the IPA symbols are scattered about. The SIL font has IPA symbols in recognizable places, but you can't use capital letters or English punctuation. I would recommend the first font, and simply use a Symbol finder program to find the symbols you want.

I've included a number of animals in the word list, but you may decide that such animals either don't exist in the world that the Dai exist in, or at least are not in their area of the world, and so they wouldn't have a word for it. If this happens, then just don't use the word.

Finally, I gave you words for the eleven basic color terms (black, white, red, yellow, blue, green, brown, orange, purple, gray, pink), but a language like yours might not use them all. For instance, there are many Native-American languages in which there is no word, say, for the color "orange", or even for the colors "blue" and "green". Instead, there are words that mean "any color on the scale from blue to green", or "any color on the scale from yellow to red". Some languages actually have only two color words: (1) warm colors (white, yellow, orange, red, pink), and (2) cool colors (black, gray, blue, green, purple, brown). You may want to decide if you want such terms for your language, and you may not have words for terms like "pink" or "brown".

Basic, All-Purpose Reference Section

INTERROGATIVE PARTICLE: dʒei (dʒei o ʃo ris? May I go?)

YES (EMPHATIC PARTICLE) AND NO (NEGATIVE PARTICLE): a and ðu, respectively

NOUNS:

Class:

I.) Human, Dai: -i, akʔai (Dai human being)

II.) Human, Non-Dai: -u, akʔau (human being who isn't Dai)

III.) Animal: -en, gen (dog)

IV.) Plant, mineral, natural substance / thing: -oθ, ʃenoθ (tree), goθ (rock), ʃeoθ (rain), kuθ (knee)

V.) Instrument, manmade thing: -az, pagaz (spear)

VI.) Everything Else: any ending, danid (truth)

Case:

	<u>Singular</u>		<u>Plural</u>
<u>Nominative</u> : ———	akʔai (human), ʃenoθ (tree)	-e, -ie, -i	akʔaie, ʃai, hieie
<u>Accusative</u> : -n, -in	akʔain, ʃenoθin	-ne, -ine	akʔaine,
	ʃenoθine		
<u>Dative</u> : -ʃ, -iʃ	akʔaiʃ, ʃenoθiʃ	-ʃe, -iʃe	akʔaiʃe,
	ʃenoθiʃe		
<u>Genitive</u> : -m, -im	akʔaim, ʃenoθim	-me, -ime	akʔaime,
	ʃenoθime		
<u>Locative</u> : -r, -ir	akʔair, ʃenoθir	-re, -ire	akʔaire,
	ʃenoθire		
<u>Vocative</u> : -o	akʔaio, ʃenoθo	-oi	akʔaioi,
	ʃenoθoi		

ADJECTIVES:

Adjective Prefix: θi- (turns any noun / verb into an adjective)

Comparative: -os, kasuθos (longer)

Superlative: -in, kasuθin (longest)

Pejorative: ʒe- -os, ʒekasuθos (less long)

Sublative: ʒe- -in, ʒekasuθin (least long)

Equative: -eks, kasuθeks (as long as)

"THAN": koks

ADVERBIAL SUFFIX: -oi, as heisoi (happily)

VERBS:

Passive Participle: se, as se kandz (to be eaten)

Partial list of aspect and modal verbs:

a?i (almost), as in o a?i ris (I'm almost on my way)

pur (continue to), as in o pur ris (I keep on going)

e (to be able to), as in o e ris (I am able to go)

est (just), as in o est ris (I just went)

ez (habitual), as in o ez ris (I go all the time)

ðer (about to), as in o ðer ris (I'm about to go)

dub (would but won't), as in o dub ris (I would go, but...)

zo (should), as in o zo ris (I should go)

ʃak (to stop), as in o ʃak ris (I stop going)

ʃo (may, might), as in o ʃo ris (I may go, I have permission to go)

nini (repetitive), as in o nini ris (I go and go and go and go...)

ro (must), as in o ro ris (I must go)

kam (desire), as in o kam ris (I want/ would like to go)

haks (would, if) as in o haks ris (I would go, if...)

PERSONAL PRONOUNS:

x	Singular	Plural	Plural (Exclusive)
First Person	o (I)	io (we, inclusive)	oni (we, exclusive)
Second Person Dai	si (you)	eksi (you all)	x
Second Person Official	su (you)	eksu (you all)	x
Third Person Male	bi/bu (he)	ebi/ebu (they)	x
Third Person Female	mi/mu (she)	emi/emu (they)	x
Third Person Neuter	ne (it, or s/he)	ene (they)	x

The way these work is that:

1.) io includes the person that the speaker is speaking to, as well as others (if any).

2.) oni does not include the person the speaker is speaking to; just the group he's from.

3.) si and eksi are used with people within the Dai; su and eksu for those without.

4.) bi, ebi, mi and emi are used with Dai; bu, ebu, mu and emu for non-Dai.

5.) ne and ene can refer to a person whose gender is not identified, as well as objects.

NUMBERS:

Zero: ðuz	Four: boθ	Eight: got	Twenty: isop	Billion: eren
One: ren	Five: kud	Nine: hez	Hundred: uren	Trillion: iziren
Two: sop	Six: peŋ	Ten: iren	Thousand: oren	Quadrillion: uzuren
Three: taŋ	Seven: dem	Eleven: reniren	Million: aren	Quintillion: ozoren

Numbers decline as adjectives. When you want to say "fourth" or "seventh", the cardinal numbers, use the prefix θi-. So, 5,923,678 would be akud, ouzez-taŋisop, upeŋ-gotidem.

THE TABLE OF CORELATIVES:

You use the following table the way you use the words "no one", "something", "everywhere", "this", "why", etc. Just match up the adverb on the left and the number above, and you'll come out with every combination. There's some more explanation to follow, so look at these examples below the table (which is on the next page):

x	every/ each	any/ some	WH words	relative particle s	no/ none	"this" (close to speaker)	"that" (close to listener)	"that" (close to neither)
place	as	hos	ŋes	kos	ðus	mas	rus	des
time	ag	hog	ŋeg	kog	ðug	mag	x	deg
person	ai	hoi	ŋei	koi	ðui	mai	ru	dei
thing	aθ	hoθ	ŋeθ	koθ	ðuθ	maθ	ruθ	deθ
reason	aŋ	hoŋ	ŋeŋ	koŋ	ðuŋ	maŋ	ruŋ	x
manner	ab	hob	ŋeb	kob	ðub	mab	rub	x
kind	at	hot	ŋet	kot	ðu	mat	rut	det

1.) The WH words are the question words of dai. They translate (in order from top to bottom) as: where, when, who/which, what, why, how and what kind of. *jei* can be used by itself (which is the "who" translation), or it can be used as an adjective, in which case it means "which", as in "which box is yours?" *jet* is used when, for example, you to the clerk at a clothing store, "I want a jacket", and the clerk asks, "What kind of jacket do you want?" In Dai, "what kind of" is translated as one word.

2.) The rest translate in predictable ways: *ag* (everywhere, each place), *hoi* (anyone, someone), *ðuθ* (nothing), etc. You can find more information on each corelative in the dictionary section. The relative particles are explained in the section on Relative Clauses.

3.) The last three columns give three types of spatial references. The ones that start with [ma] all refer to things that are close to the speaker. So, "*maθ*" means "this thing" which is close to the speaker, and "*mai*", as an adjective, is used with things close to the speaker. "*mas*" means "here", and is used just as it is in English, and "*mag*" means "now". The next column refers to things that are close to the person or people the speaker is addressing. So, you might say "give me that box", and the box is next to the person you're talking to, and so you'd use the adjective "*rui*". You'll notice that there's no form for time in this column, even though it would be "*rug*". This is because it's odd to think of a time that's close to the person you're talking to and not you. So, it isn't used. It can be derived if you want to use it, though. The last column is for things that are neither close to the speaker nor the listener, but which are off in the distance. Here there is a word for time, which is "*deg*", and it means "then", as in a time far away from the speaker. There, however, are not words for reason and manner because it would make sense for there to be a reason far from both the speaker and the listener (maybe an unknown reason?), and a manner just doesn't make sense at all.

Dai to English Dictionary

a

a (particle) yes (a response), or an emphatic particle which indicates the truth of an assertion

ab (adverb) everyway, each way, in every way, in each way

amoθ (noun, class IV) metal (remember, the natural term is listed first); **ami** (n., cl.I) a Dai who works with metal, a blacksmith; **amu** (n., cl.II) a non-Dai blacksmith; **am** (n., cl.VI) metalwork; **θiamoθ** (adj.) metallic; **amaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) metal thing, metallic tool

aθ (pronoun) everything, each thing

ai (pron.) everyone, each one, (adjective) every, each; **θiai** (possessive pron.) everyone's

aimi (n., cl.I) (a/the) friend; **aimu** (n., cl.II) (an/the) ally; **aim** (n., cl.VI) friendship, alliance; **aim** (v.) to befriend, to ally, to make friends, to be a friend, to make peace

at (adjective) every kind, every kind of

as (pron., adv.) everywhere, every place, each place, at every place, at each place

aʃaθ (verb) to see, to look at (transitive)

anoθ (n., cl.IV) (a/the) plant; **ani** (n., cl.I) one who plants, a farmer; **an** (v.) to plant, to farm; **anaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) farm

akʔai (n., cl.I) (a/the) human being (Dai); **akʔau** (n., cl.II) (a/the) human being (non-Dai); **akʔa** (n., cl.VI) humanity

ag (adv.) every time, each time, always, forever

aŋ (adv.) every reason, each reason, for every reason, for each reason

aʔi (modal verb) almost, as in the sentence "I am almost gone": o aʔi ris.

p

panaz (n., cl.V) (a/the) bow (as in a bow and arrow); **pani** (n., cl.I) (an/the) archer; **pan** (n., cl.VI) archery

pandi (n., cl.I) (a/the) father; **pand** (n., cl.VI) fatherhood; **pand** (v.) to father, to be a father; **θipandi** (adj.) fatherly

pagaz (n., cl.V) (a/the) spear; **pagi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) spearsman; **pag** (v.) to spear; **θipagaz** (adj.) spear-shaped, spear-like

pauen (n., cl.III) (a/ the) raccoon
peti (n., cl.I) grandfather (Dai); **petu** (n., cl.II) grandfather (non-Dai)
pesen (n., cl.III) (a/ the) fy (the bug); **pes** (v.) to pester (as a fy does a human)
penj (n./ adj.) six; **θipenj** (adj.) sixth
pob (v.) to put, to place; **pobi** (n., cl.I) one who puts something into place
prai (n., cl.I) nephew
pur (v.) to continue to, to keep on, as in the sentence "I continue to sit/keep on sitting": o pur kend.

b

bat (v.) to beg; **bati** (n., cl.I) one who begs, a begger; **bat** (n., cl.VI) beggary; **θibat** (adj.) begging
bantsen (n., cl.III) (a/ the) chicken
beθ (v.) to give; **beθi** (n., cl.I) one who gives, a giver; **beθaz** (n., cl.V) a given thing, a gift
begʒid (natural adjective) heavy; **begʒidaz** (n., cl.V) (a/ the) heavy thing; **begʒid** (n., cl.VI) heaviness, weight; **begʒidi** (n., cl.I) (a/ the) heavy person
bi (personal pron.) he (refers only to a Dai male); **θibi** (poss.pron.) his
bisi (n., cl.I) (a/ the) baby, infant
bikaz (n., cl.V) (a/ the) sack; **bik** (v.) to sack (something), to put something into a sack
braioθ (n., cl.IV) sand; **θibraioθ** (adj.) sandy; **braiaz** (n., cl.V) glass (do the Dai have glass?)
breien (n., cl.III) (a/ the) turtle
boθ (n./ adj.) four; **θiboθ** (adj.) fourth
bu (pers. pron.) he (refers only to a non-Dai male); **θibu** (poss.pron.) his
buti (n., cl.I) (a/ the) child; **but** (n., cl.VI) childhood

m

mab (adv.) this manner, in this manner, this way, in this way
mamend (expression) today
maθ (pron.) this (close to me) thing
mai (pron.) this person/ one, (adj.) this; **θimai** (poss.pron.) this one's

maiki (n., cl.I) one who transgresses tribal law; **maiku** (n., cl.II) one who does damage to the tribe (non-Dai); **maiken** (n., cl.III) an animal which does harm (a fox, for instance, or a bear, a wolf, etc.); **maik** (n., cl.VI) wrong-doing, harm, danger; **maik** (v.) to do harm, to transgress tribal law, to do wrong
mat (adv.) this kind, this kind of
matji (n., cl.I) (an/the) aunt
madi (n., cl.I) (a/the) mother; **maden** (n., cl.III) an animal mother; **mad** (v.) to mother, to be a mother, to become a mother, to give birth (thereby becoming a mother)
mas (pron./adv.) this place, at this place, here
majoθ (n., cl.IV) powder
manaz (n., cl.V) (a/the) club; **man** (v.) to club (someone/thing)
mar (v.) to build, to construct; **mari** (n., cl.I) (a/the) builder; **maraz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) building, or construction; **mar** (n., cl.VI) construction
mag (pron./adv.) this time, now
manj (adv.) this reason, for this reason
med3 (preposition) near (to the speaker)
mend (n., cl.VI) (a/the) day; **mendoi** (adv.) daily
megi (n., cl.I) (a/the) wife; **meg** (v.) to become a wife
mi (pers.pron.) she (Dai); **θimi** (poss.pron.) her, hers
misoθ (n., cl.IV) (a/the) liquid; **mis** (v.) to liquify, to melt
mikoθ (n., cl.IV) poison; **mik** (v.) to poison; **miki** (n., cl.I) one who poisons; **θimikoθ** (adj.) poisonous
mu (pers.pron.) she (non-Dai); **θimu** (poss.pron.) her, hers
muoθ (n., cl.IV) grass
muf (prep.) in between, between
munoh (adj.) purple; **munoh** (v.) to turn purple, to purple (something)
mukoθ (n., cl.IV) dirt; **θimukoθ** (adj.) covered with dirt, or, dirty

e

e (mod.v.) to be able to (can), as in the sentence "I can/am able to go": o e ris.
eps (prep.) outside (with locative), out of/from (with accusative)
ebi (pers.pron.) they (masculine, Dai); **θiebi** (poss.pron.) their, theirs
ebu (pers.pron.) they (masculine, non-Dai); **θiebu** (poss.pron.) their, theirs
emi (pers.pron.) they (feminine, Dai); **θiemu** (poss.pron.) their, theirs

emu (pers.pron.) they (feminine, non-Dai); **θiemu** (poss.pron.) their, theirs
etres (adj.) green; **etres** (v.) to turn green, to make something green
esen (n., cl.III) (a/the) snake; **θiesen** (adj.) serpentine
est (mod.v.) just, as in the sentence "I just went": o est ris.
esk (n., cl.VI) south (the direction); **eskoι** (adv.) south (as in, "I go south")
eskroθ (n., cl.VI) southwest (the direction); **eskroθoι** (adv.) southwest (as in, "I go southwest")
eskhan (n., cl.VI) southeast (the direction); **eskhanoι** (adv.) southeast (as in, "I go southeast")
ez (mod.v.) habitual mood, as in the sentence "I go all the time": o ez ris.
ene (pers.pron.) they (neuter, non-gender specific); **θiene** (poss.pron.) their, theirs
eksi (pers.pron.) you (plural, Dai); **θieksi** (poss.pron.) your, yours
eksu (pers.pron.) you (plural, non-Dai); **θieksu** (poss.pron.) your, yours
egz (prep.) in order to, so that, that, so, to (as in the phrase "In order to go": egz ris)

Θ

θanaz (n., cl.V) (an/the) arrow; **θani** (n., cl.I) one who makes arrows, an arrowsmith
θendz (prep.) with (only with people), as in "I am with my mother": o θendz θioʃ madiʃ i.
θiadʒ (v.) to die (when used intransitively), to kill (when used transitively), or to cause to die; **θiadʒi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) killer; **seθiadʒi** (n., cl.I) one who has died; **θiadʒ** (n., cl.VI) death; **θiadʒaz** (n., cl.V) an instrument of death, a weapon; **θiθiadʒaz** (adj.) deadly; **θiseθiadʒ** (adj.) dead; **θiθiadʒ** (adj.) dead (no difference between this and the previous word)
θur (mod.v.) still, as in the sentence "I am still a teacher": o tʃoi θur i.
θuʔasa (conj.) nevertheless, regardless, irregardless

ð

ďande (n., cl.VI) (a/the) family; **ďandei** (n., cl.I) (a/the) family member; **ďandeu** (n., cl.II) (a/the) new member of the family—one who has just married into the family from another family; **ďandez** (n., cl.V) (a/the) house or home of a family; home, house
ďer (mod.v.) about to, as in the sentence "I'm about to go": o ďer ris.
ďu (negative particle) no, or not
ďub (adv.) no way, no manner, in no way, in no manner
ďuθ (pron.) nothing
ďui (pron.) no one, (adjective) no (as in, ďui ſenoθ, "no tree"); **θiďui** (poss.pron.) no one's
ďut (adv.) no kind, no kind of
ďus (pron./adv.) nowhere, no place, at no place
ďuz (n./adj.) zero
ďug (adv.) never, no time, at no time
ďuŋ (adv.) no reason, for no reason

ı

ı (v.) to be; **ıŕı** (n., cl.I) (a/the) being; **ı** (n., cl.VI) life, existence, being
iabi (n., cl.I) grandmother
ıpʔa (v.) to use; **ıpʔa** (n., cl.VI) use
iesoθ (n., cl.IV) (a/the) moon
ıdzu (n., cl.II) (a/the) foe, villain, enemy, adversary (from outside the tribe); **ıdzi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) traitor; **ıdz** (v.) to go against, to be a traitor
ıne (conj.) and
ıŋasa (conj.) therefore, so, and so, then
ıren (n./adj.) ten; **θiʔıren** (adj.) tenth
ıo (pers.pron.) we (including the person one is speaking to); **θiʔıo** (poss.pron.) our, ours

t

taiſaz (n., cl.V) jewelry; **taiſı** (n., cl.I) (a/the) jeweler

taik (n., cl.VI) art, artwork; **taiki** (n., cl.I) (an/the) artist; **taikaz** (n., cl.V) an artist's tool
taɰ (n./adj.) three; **θitaɰ** (adj.) third
teɰ (prep.) across from (with locative), across (with accusative)
teʒi (n., cl.I) (an/the) uncle
tisi (n., cl.I) (a/the) son
tifɛn (n., cl.III) (a/the) bird
tisti (adj.) pink; **tisti** (v.) to pinken
tɰeien (n., cl.III) (a/the) chipmunk
tɰo (v.) to teach; **tɰoi** (n., cl.I) teacher
tɰup (v.) to cook; **tɰupi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) cook; **tɰupoθ** (n., cl.IV) cooked food
totɰ (v.) to think; **totɰi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) thinker; **totɰ** (n., cl.VI) thought
tub (prep.) away from (with accusative), from/of (with dative or locative)
tum (prep.) because of
tun (prep.) because
tuʔen (conj.) or

d

daboθ (n., cl.IV) (a/the) mushroom
dai (n., cl.I) a person in the Dai tribe; **dai** (n., cl.VI) the language of the Dai people; **dai** (v.) to speak Dai
danid (n., cl.VI) truth; **danid** (nat.adj.) true; **danid** (v.) to tell the truth; **danidi** (n., cl.I) a person who tells the truth, one who can be trusted
dak (v.) to make, to prepare; **θisedak** (adj.) made
dangoi (adv.) tomorrow
debi (n., cl.I) (a/the) husband; **deb** (v.) to become a husband, to marry
dem (n./adj.) seven; **θidem** (adj.) seventh
deθ (pron.) that thing, that
dei (pron.) that one, that person, (adjective) that; **θidei** (adj.) that one's, that person's
det (adj.) that kind of, that kind
dedʒ (prep.) far
des (pron./adv.) that place, there, at that place
deg (adv.) that time, then, at that time
diʔen (n., cl.III) (a/the) mosquito

dʒambu (prep.) together
dʒei (part.) interrogative particle that begins a "yes/no" question
dʒomen (n., cl.III) (a/the) horse; **dʒomi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) horse rider; **dʒomaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) saddle; **dʒom** (v.) to ride a horse, to ride
dof (prep.) through
dondo (prep.) beyond
dub (mod.v.) would but won't, as in the sentence "I would go, but I won't": o dub ris.
duken (n., cl.III) (a/the) cow

S

san (adj.) left; **sanoi** (adv.) left, as in "Go left!": ris sanoi!
spek (conj.) while
se (adv.) already (also used as a passive particle to form passive constructions)
set (v.) to run; **seti** (n., cl.I) (a/the) runner
si (pers.pron.) you (used only with Dai); **θisi** (poss.pron.) your, yours
stagzen (n., cl.III) (a/the) rat
sop (n./adj.) two; **θisop** (adj.) second
sketsen (n., cl.III) (a/the) spider; **sketsoθ** (n., cl.IV) (a/the) spiderweb
su (pers.pron.) you (used with non-Dai); **θisu** (poss.pron.) your, yours

Z

zami (n., cl.I) (a/the) cousin
zeð (nat.adj.) sharp; **zeð** (n., cl.VI) sharpness; **zeðaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) sharp tool
zedi (n., cl.I) (a/the) brother; **zed** (n., cl.VI) brotherhood, fraternity
zedʒ (v.) to hunt; **zedʒi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) hunter; **zedʒaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) hunting tool;
zedʒ (n., cl.VI) (a/the) hunt
zeʒ (adj.) red; **zeʒ** (v.) to redden, to blush
zi (v.) to sleep, to dream; **zi** (n., cl.VI) sleep, dream; **ziʔi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) sleeper / dreamer; **ziaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) bed or cot or bedroll

zigen (nat.adj.) big; **zigenaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) big tool/instrument; **zigeni** (n., cl.I) (a/the) big person; **zigen** (v.) to make (something) big
zo (mod.v.) should, as in the sentence "I should go": o zo ris.

ƒ

ƒa (v.) to speak, to talk; **ƒai** (n., cl.I) (a/the) speaker; **ƒa** (n., cl.VI) speech
ƒaf (n., cl.VI) north (the direction); **ƒafoi** (adv.) north (as in, "I go north")
ƒafroθ (n., cl.VI) northwest (the direction); **ƒafroθoi** (adv.) northwest (as in, "I go northwest")
ƒafhan (n., cl.VI) northeast (the direction); **ƒafhanoi** (adv.) northeast (as in, "I go northeast")
ƒak (v.mod.) to stop, to finish, to end as in the sentence, "I stop playing": o ƒak ƒopi.
ƒanoθ (n., cl.IV) hair
ƒeb (adv.) how, what/which manner/way, in what/which manner/way
ƒeθ (pron.) what/which thing, what
ƒei (pron.) who, what/which person/one, (adjective) what/which; **θiƒei** (adj.) whose
ƒeien (adj.) white
ƒeisoθ (n., cl.IV) rain; **ƒeis** (v.) to rain
ƒet (adj.) what/which kind, what/which kind of
ƒedek (adj.) gray
ƒes (pron./adv.) where, what/which place, at what/which place
ƒestoθ (n., cl.IV) water; **ƒest** (v.) to give water, to drink water, to put water on something; **θiƒestoθ** (adj.) watery
ƒenoθ (n., cl.IV) (a/the) tree; **ƒenaz** (n., cl.V) wood; **θiƒenaz** (adj.) wooden; **ƒeni** (n., cl.I) someone who works with wood; **ƒen** (n., cl.VI) woodwork
ƒeg (pron./adv.) when, what/which time, at what/which time
ƒen (adv.) why, what/which reason, for what/which reason
ƒim (prep.) like, as, similar to
ƒtoioθ (n., cl.IV) (a/the) fower; **ƒtoi** (v.) to fower, to grow, to grow fowers
ƒramen (n., cl.III) (a/the) fish; **ƒram** (v.) to fish, to capture fish; **ƒrami** (n., cl.I) (a/the) fisherman; **ƒramaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) fishing pole/spear
ƒo (mod.v.) may/might, as in the sentence "May I go?": dzei o ƒo ris?
ƒopi (v.) to play (as a child); **ƒopi** (n., cl.VI) play, playtime, childhood

jom (v.) to write; **jomi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) scribe; **jom** (n., cl.VI) writing, scripture, script;
jomaz (n., cl.V) writing implement
foz (v.) to sing; **fozi** (n., cl.I) singer; **foz** (n., cl.VI) song
fogz (nat.adj.) bad; **fogz** (v.) to make something bad, to be bad; **fogz** (n., cl.VI) badness;
fogzi (n., cl.I) a bad person; **fogzaz** (n., cl.V) a bad thing/tool
fuen (n., cl.III) (an/the) owl

3

3amaz (n., cl.V) (a/the) bowl
3ad (v.) to mentor, to instruct; **3adi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) mentor; **3ad** (n., cl.VI) mentorship
3agz (prep.) behind
3e- (prefix) opposite prefix. Attach this to the front of any word to get the opposite meaning. So, take the word **fogz**, attach **3e-**, and you get **3efogz**, "good".
3eb (v.) to order (someone), to command; **3ebi** (n., cl.I) commander; **3eb** (n., cl.VI) order
3em (n., cl.VI) love; **3em** (v.) to love, to be in love; **3em** (n., cl.I) (a/the) lover, one who loves; **θi3em** (adj.) lovely, or loving; **θise3em** (adj.) loved; **θi3emoi** (adv.) lovingly;
se3emi (n., cl.I) (a/the) beloved; **se 3em** (v.) to be loved
3ed (v.) to master, to be a master of (something); **3ed** (n., cl.VI) mastery; **3edi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) master; **θi3ed** (nat.adj.) masterful
3edzen (n., cl.III) (a/the) lizard
3i (n., cl.I) (a/the) man; **3i** (n., cl.VI) (irregular) manhood, manliness; **θi3i** (adj.) masculine
3isaz (n., cl.V) (a/the) sword; **3isi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) swordsmen; **3is** (n., cl.VI) swordplay;
3is (v.) to fight with swords, to stab, to slice with a sword, to use a sword; **θi3isaz** (adj.) sword-like
3od (v.) to lead; **3odi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) leader; **θi3od** (adj.) leading
3ozaz (n., cl.V) (a/the) knife; **3oz** (v.) to stab, to knife

n

nas (n., cl.VI) peace; **nas** (v.) to make peace, to pacify; **θinas** (adj.) peace-making, peaceful; **nasaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) peace treaty, peace accord; **nasi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) peaceful person
ne (pers.pron.) it (used as in English, but also to refer to a human whose gender is not specified); **θine** (poss.pron.) its
nezoθ (n., cl.IV) (a/the) sun; **nez** (v.) to shine (like the sun), to be sunny
nezoθ (n., cl.IV) (an/the) ocean; **neʒ** (n., cl.VI) ocean life, sea creatures and plants
neks (adj.) right (side, not "correct"); **neksoi** (adv.) right, as in "Go right!": ris neks!
ni (n., cl.I) (a/the) woman; **ni** (n., cl.VI) (irregular) womanhood; **θini** (adj.) feminine
nieθ (adj.) orange (the color)
niti (n., cl.I) (a/the) niece
nini (mod.v.) repetitive marker, as in the sentence "I go again and again": o nini ris.
no (part.) self, own (this particle is used to indicate reflexive action. So, to say "I see myself", you could say "o on aʒaθ", literally "I see me", but to indicate "self" you'd say "o no on aʒaθ". It, however, has another more important use. Imagine the sentence "He loves his wife". Well, whose? It could be anyone's, unless you say "his own". That's the main function of "no". That sentence in Dai is: bi no θibin megin ʒem.)

R

rapaz (n., cl.V) cloth (to wear); **rapi** (n., cl.I) one who makes clothes; **rap** (n., cl.VI) clothing
ram (adj.) old; **rami** (n., cl.I) (an/the) old person, elder; **ram** (v.) to age, to get older; **ram** (n., cl.VI) age
radi (n., cl.I) (a/the) boy; **rad** (n., cl.VI) boyhood; **θiradi** (adj.) boyish
ragz (prep.) behind
redaz (n., cl.V) (a/the) belt; **redoθ** (n., cl.IV) (a/the) waist
redʒ (prep.) near (to the listener)
ren (n./adj.) one; **θiren** (adj.) first
reks (prep.) inside, in (with locative), into (with accusative)
ris (v.) to go, to travel; **se ris** (v.) to be forced to go, to be evacuated, to be driven out; **risi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) traveler; **ris** (n., cl.VI) travel, movement
ro (mod.v.) must, as in the sentence "I must go": o ro ris.
roθ (n., cl.VI) west; **roθoi** (adv.) west, as in "I go west"
ros (conj.) but
roʔasa (conj.) however

rub (adv.) that manner / way, in that manner / way
ruθ (pron.) that thing, that
ru (pron.) that one, that person, (adjective) that
rut (adv.) that kind, that kind of
ruŋ (adv.) that reason, for that reason

O

o (pers.pron.) I; **θio** (poss.pron.) my, mine
oðis (nat.adj.) new; **oðisaz** (n., cl.V) (a / the) new tool, new instrument; **oðis** (n., cl.VI) newness
-oi (suffix) the adverbial suffix, which makes an adverb out of whatever it's suffixed to
od (prep.) by (as in, "That book is by him")
ofe (v.) to know, to understand; **ofei** (n., cl.I) one who knows and understands, a wise man; **ofe** (n., cl.VI) knowledge, wisdom; **θiofe** (adj.) wise, knowledgeable
ofoθ (n., cl.IV) ice; **θiofoθ** (adj.) icy
oni (pers.pron.) we (excluding the person one is speaking to); **θioni** (poss.pron.) our, ours
ok (n., cl.VI) cure, curing; **oki** (n., cl.I) (a / the) curer, doctor, medicine man, healing man; **ok** (v.) to cure, to heal; **θiok** (adj.) curing, curative
ogen (n., cl.III) (a / the) beaver; **ogoθ** (n., cl.IV) (a / the) beaver's dam
oʔos (prep.) above (with locative), over (with accusative)

k

kaben (n., cl.III) (a / the) bear; **θikaben** (adj.) bear-like, fierce
kam (mod.v.) want, as in the sentence "I want / would like to go": o kam ris.
kampoi (adv.) yesterday
kasi (prep.) for (as in, "This gift is for you")
kasuθ (nat.adj.) long; **kasuθ** (v.) to lengthen; **kasuθaz** (n., cl.V) (a / the) long weapon / tool

kadi (n., cl.I) (a/the) girl; **kad** (n., cl.VI) girlhood; **θikadi** (adj.) girlish
kan (prep.) on, on top of (with locative), onto (with accusative)
kandʒ (v.) to eat; **kandʒi** (n., cl.I) (an/the) eater; **kandʒoθ** (n., cl.IV) food; **kandʒaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) eating utensil
kedi (n., cl.I) (a/the) sister; **ked** (n., cl.VI) sisterhood
kend (v.) to sit, to sit down; **kendi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) sitter; **kendaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) seat, chair
keraz (n., cl.V) (a/the) shield; **ker** (v.) to shield, to guard, to cover; **ker** (n., cl.VI) shielding, defense; **keri** (n., cl.I) (a/the) guard, defender
kioθ (n., cl.IV) skin
kras (prep.) below (with locative), under (with accusative)
krast (adj.) black; **krast** (v.) to blacken, to burn
kopoθ (n., cl.IV) (a/the) knee; **kop** (v.) to knee (someone) or to kneel
kob (adv.) the manner / way, in the manner / way (relative particle)
koθ (pron.) the thing, that which (relative pronoun)
koi (pron.) the one / person, that which (relative pronoun)
kot (adv.) the kind, the kind of (relative particle)
kodzen (n., cl.III) (a/the) bison
kos (pron. / adv.) the place, at the place (relative pronoun / particle)
koks (conj.) than
kog (adv.) the time, at the time (relative particle)
koŋ (adv.) the reason, for the reason (relative particle)
kupen (n., cl.III) (a/the) wolf; **θikupen** (adj.) wolf-like, ravenous
kuθ (conj.) if
kud (n. / adj.) five; **θikud** (adj.) fifth
kusen (n., cl.III) (a/the) squirrel
kur (v.) to work, to toil, to labor; **kuri** (n., cl.I) (a/the) worker, laborer; **kur** (n., cl.VI) work, toil, labor; **θikur** (adj.) toilsome, laborous

g

gadʒi (n., cl.I) (a/the) soldier; **gadʒ** (n., cl.VI) war; **gadʒ** (v.) to go to war, to war; **gadʒaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) weapon; **θigadʒ** (adj.) war-like
gaoθ (n., cl.IV) (a/the) stick
gaŋ (prep.) by means of, with (only with instruments, as in the sentence "I hit you with a bat")

gem (n., cl.VI) music; **gem** (v.) to make music, to play music; **gemi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) musician; **gemaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) musical instrument; **gemu** (n., cl.II) (a/the) traveling minstrel; **θigem** (adj.) musical

gen (n., cl.III) (a/the) dog

gib (prep.) at (with locative), to (with accusative)

gitfi (n., cl.I) (a/the) daughter

greðen (n., cl.III) (a/the) mountain lion

grimoθ (n., cl.IV) clay; **grimaz** (n., cl.V) things made from clay; **grim** (n., cl.VI) claywork

go (v.) to believe, to take for truth; **goi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) believer, one who believes; **go** (n., cl.VI) belief

goθ (n., cl.IV) (a/the) rock; **θigoθ** (adj.) rock-like, solid

got (n./adj.) eight; **θigot** (adj.) eighth

goʒ (nat.adj.) foreign; **goʒi** (n., cl.I) (an/the) outcast; **goʒu** (n., cl.II) (an/the) outsider; **goʒ** (v.) to cast out, to be foreign, to estrange; **goʒ** (n., cl.VI) foreignness, estrangement

gun (v.) to swim; **guni** (n., cl.I) (a/the) swimmer

ŋ

ŋasi (n., cl.I) a distant relation (second cousin and on)

ŋeien (n., cl.IV) (a/the) foot; **ŋei** (v.) to go by foot, to walk

ŋiðaz (n., cl.V) (a/the) quiver (for arrows)

ŋo (v.) to smell, to sniff; **ŋo** (n., cl.VI) smell, scent; **ŋoʒoθ** (n., cl.IV) (a/the) nose; **θiŋo** (adj.) aromatic, fragrant

ŋuren (n., cl.III) (a/the) duck

u

u (v.) to have (only as far as possession, NOT as in "to have to", or "I have gone"); **ui** (n., cl.I) one who has; **uaz** (n., cl.V) (a/the) possession; **u** (n., cl.VI) possession

upaʃ (v.) to walk; **upaʃi** (n., cl.I) (a/the) walker; **upaʃ** (n., cl.VI) (a/the) walk, walking

uðats (v.) to argue; **uðats** (n., cl.VI) argument; **uðats** (n., cl.I) one who argues; **θiuðats** (adj.) argumentative

usaʃ (adj.) blue; **usaʃ** (v.) to make blue, to bruise

unu (prep.) about (as in, "I talk about him", not "I walk about")
uŋg (v.) to give birth; **uŋg** (n., cl.VI) birth; **uŋgi** (n., cl.I) one who gives birth; **seuŋg** (n., cl.I) (a/the) newborn
uʔuŋ (adj.) brown

h

hatf (prep.) off (with locative), off of (with accusative)
han (n., cl.VI) east; **hanoi** (adv.) east, as in "I go east"
haks (mod.v.) would, if, as in the sentence "I would go, if you went": o haks ris, kuθ si ris.
hauðen (n., cl.III) (a/the) coyote
hez (n./adj.) nine; **θihez** (adj.) ninth
heri (prep.) next to
hie (adj.) yellow
hopsen (n., cl.III) (a/the) donkey; **hops** (v.) to go by donkey
hob (adv.) some/anyway, some/any manner, in some/anyway, in some/any manner
hoθ (pron.) some/anything
hoi (pron.) some/anyone, some/any person, (adj.) some/any
hot (adv.) some/any kind, some/any kind of
hotsen (n., cl.III) (a/the) bee; **hots** (v.) to buzz like a bee
hos (pron./adv.) some/anywhere, some/any place, at some/any place
hog (adv.) some/anytime
hoŋ (adv.) some/any reason, for some/any reason
humen (n., cl.III) (a/the) badger

Practice

The best way to learn a language is to practice using it, so I'm going to list some English sentences that you'll translate into Dai, and then some Dai sentences you'll translate into English (if you want, of course). The answers are on the next two pages, so DON'T LOOK until you're done!

- 1.) Do you want to go somewhere?
- 2.) I must kill the bison with a spear.
- 3.) That's a big tree.
- 4.) Yesterday I saw a sword that was sharper than the sharpest knife.
- 5.) The man who has a long bow is running away from me.
- 6.) o zeʒin ʒamazin aʔi ʃak ipʔa.
- 7.) ni koiʃ o gaoθin etresin beθ genin kam.
- 8.) o kan muoθir upaʃ; si zo kan muoθin upaʃ.
- 9.) ʃeg daŋgoi si kandʒ?
- 10.) pandio! o debi oðis gitʃim θisim i; dʒei θendz eksiʃ ðandezoi ʃo ris?

Answers

- 1.) d3ei si/su hosin kam ris? "d3ei" is the question word that begins "yes/no" sentences; "si/su" is "you", and either one is correct; "hos" means "somewhere/anywhere", and it's used as a pronoun here, so it takes the accusative because you're moving from one place to somewhere; "kam ris" means "want to go", "kam" being the "want", "ris" being the "go".
- 2.) o kodzenin gaŋ pagaziʃ ro θiad3. "o" is "I"; "kodzen" is "bison", and it's in the accusative because it's the direct object of "to kill"; "gaŋ" means "by means of" or "with" when referring to instruments, and a spear is an instrument, that being "pagaz", which is in the dative because it follows a preposition; "ro θiad3" means "must kill". "θiad3" means "to die" when there is no direct object.
- 3.) deθ zigen ʃenoθ i. Word-for-word: That a big tree is. You can put the verb at the end because "deθ" is a pronoun, not an adjective. So it literally means "that thing".
- 4.) kampoi o ʒisazin aʃaθ, zeðos koks zeðin ʒozaz. "kampoi" is yesterday; "ʒisaz" is in the accusative because it was seen, so it's the direct object; the next phrase is separated by a comma so that you know it's a comment on the previous phrase, like what I talked about with performative verbs; the last four words translate word-for-word as "sharper than the sharpest knife", and they're all in the nominative.
- 5.) ʒi koi panazin kasuθin u tub on set. "ʒi" is "the man"; "koi" is the relative particle meaning "who", and it's in the nominative, so it takes no ending; remember that an adjective can come before or after the noun—in this case it comes after; "u" is to have and indicates the end of the relative clause; "tub on" means "away from me"—[o] is in the accusative because "away from" indicates motion, that the man is running in a direction away from the speaker, not that he's just far away from him; "set" is "run". Remember, "set" means "he runs", "he does run" and "he is running". There's no difference in Dai.
- 6.) "I'm almost done with the red bowl." You could probably figure out "I" and "red bowl", but the three verbs are a bit tough. However, if you look at their meanings and just go from left to right, you should get it: "aʔi" almost; "ʃak" to be done, to finish; "ipʔa" to use. So, it translates literally as "I am almost finished using the red bowl".
- 7.) "The woman to whom I gave a green stick wants a dog." The main point of this one is to show you that some of the modal verbs can be used as regular verbs. In this one, "to want" can just mean "want", like in English. And so, she wants a dog, so dog is in the accusative. And the relative pronoun was in the

dative because she was the indirect object of the direct object, which was the green stick, which was in the accusative.

- 8.) "I'm walking on the grass; you should walk onto the grass." This is just an illustration of how the case of a word can change the meaning of the sentence or phrase. In the first phrase, "kan muoθir" indicates that the speaker is walking while on the grass; in the second, "kan muoθin" indicates that the speaker thinks the listener should walk onto the grass.
- 9.) "When are you going to eat tomorrow?" Just a reminder that tense depends entirely on the time words you use in the sentence.
- 10.) "Dad! I'm your daughter's new husband; may I come home with you?" Several points in this sentence. The first grammatical point is the use of the Vocative. Here, the speaker is calling to Dad, so he uses the vocative. The second grammatical point is the phrase "debi oðis gitʃim θisim". The first two words make up a nominal phrase, meaning "new husband". The last two are a bit different. "gitʃi" is in the genitive, so you have "daughter's new husband", and "θisi", remember, is strictly an adjective, and since it modifies "gitʃim", it's also in the Genitive, so it's "θisim". Next, the usage of the pronouns is important. As you can see, the Dad would probably be annoyed because the beau is already addressing him with "si", the familiar, even though he probably didn't know he was a part of the family. Also, there's another word for "house", or a place where people live (ienaz), but he specifically uses the word "ðandeez", which, as you can see, is derived from the word for "family", indicating that the beau already thinks of their home as his home. So, an interesting situation. At least he used "ʃo" and not "e". :)