

Appendix B: Note on Mgalearan grammar

(Extended) Note on pronunciation:

There was not ever an alphabet used to write down Mgalearan, simply because, during its life, Mgalearan was never written down. Still, faced now with the necessity of converting an oral language into a written one, I am forced to invent some conventions with which to unify any writings or written records of Mgalearan speech.

The conventions used throughout this book use an alphabet for Mgalearan with 22 characters. The full alphabet, in order, is ! | # A AH B CH D E EH G I K L M N O R S T U and W. The first three letters in this alphabet are likely to be the most confusing to English speakers. They represent the various clicks used in the Mgalearan language. The letter ! represents the alveolar click. It is formed by pulling the tip of the tongue down abruptly and forcefully from the roof of the mouth. It makes a hollow *pop!* like a cork being pulled from an empty bottle. The letter | represents the dental click, (written *tut-tut* or *tsk tsk*), formed by sucking on the front teeth. Finally, the letter # represents the palatal click, which is formed by pulling the flat tongue off the roof of the mouth.

The majority of the consonants in the above alphabet are pronounced the same in Mgalearan as in English. The exception are the words beginning with an N or M followed by another consonant. In this case, the N or M is sounded out independently with the lips closed. Mgaleara, for example, is not pronounced Um·gah·leh-ahr-uh, but Mm·gah·leh-ahr-uh.

The five vowels A, E, I, O, and U are pronounced *ah*, *eh*, *ee*, *oh*, and *oo* respectively. The only exception is when the vowel A appears at the end of a word. In this case, the pronunciation is closer to *uh*. If the final sound of the word is, in fact, *ah*, then the combination AH is used. In this case the H is silent, and the trailing A is pronounced like any other midword A.

Vowels are not combined in Mgalearan, but there are certain combinations which are blended. AI, or *ah-ee*, is said swiftly and sounds a lot like an English long I. EI makes a sound comparable to the English long A. EA is pronounced as *eh-ah*, making one syllable. Note that all these combinations are not separate sounds, but merely a series of sounds pronounced swiftly in a row.

Verbs:

All Mgalearan verbs in their infinitive end with the sound *e*, pronounced “eh”. The present tense is the same as the infinitive. The past tense is formed by dropping the *e* and adding the sound *i*, (“ee”). The future tense is formed by dropping the *e* and adding the sound *u* (“oo”).

The participles are formed by adding the appropriate tense of *n|e* (to be) before the verb.

Here are the simple conjugations of the verb *ngake* – to believe/to know:

Present: ngake	Past: ngaki	Future: ngaku
Present Participle: n engake*	Past Participle: n ingake	Future Participle:** n ungake

Note that in Mgalearan verbs are not conjugated with regard to grammatical person. *I am*, (oken ngake), *you are* (okon ngake), and *he/she is* (okan ngake) all use the same tense of the verb *ngake*.

There are two additional tenses in Mgalearan, the persuasive and the authoritative. The persuasive tense refers to an action that is not done, and may not be done, but should be done. It is also used as a command tense. It is formed by dropping the *e* and adding the sound *o* (“oh”). *Okon ngako oken* means *you should know me* or *you may know me*.

The authoritative describes what can be done. It is used for giving orders, as well as for describing the limits of possibility. There is no subjunctive mood in Mgalearan, so the authoritative can be used in its place. It is formed by dropping the *e* and adding the sound *a* (“uh”). *Oken gan!una oken* means *I can see you* (*gan!une* means *to see*).

The persuasive participle is essentially the same as the future participle, but less demanding. *Oken n|e n|ualkane* means *I will not die*, whereas *Oken n|e n|oalkane* means *I should be allowed to live* (*alkane* means *to live*). The authoritative participle is used to describe an action that can be applied toward an object. The English equivalent is the suffix -able. For example, *n|angake* means *knowable*.

Here are the complete conjugations of the verb *ngake*:

	Normal	Participle
Present:	ngake (know)	n engake (knowing)
Past:	ngaki (knew)	n ingake (known)
Future:	ngaku (will know)	n ungake (certainly to be known)
Persuasive:	ngako (should know)	n ongake (hopefully to be known)
Authoritative:	ngaka (can know)	n angake (knowable)

*This is pronounced as one word, and is not said as *n|e ngake* but rather as *n|en·ga·ke*.

**The future participle indicates belief an action ought to be done to the subject. For example, the merchants cry of *Da#i ubonkwi n|e n|umganwe* means *These beads are to be bought*, or *These beads should be bought*.

Nouns:

In Mgalearan, nouns do not have gender. Plurals are formed by dropping the ending vowel* and adding the sound *i* (“ee”). If there is a consonant at the end, the *i* is simply added to the noun. If the final sound in the word is already *i*, as in the word *ubonkwi* (bead strings – see glossary), then the plural is the same as the singular. The plurality of the noun must be determined from context.

A verb can be made into a noun by adding -sko to the end. *Mtare* means *weave*, so *mtaresko* means the *one who weaves*, or *weaver*. *Mganwesko* means *trader*, and so on. Present participles can also be used as nouns, e.g. *n|emtari* means *weavings*. Sentences like *the weaver wove the weavings*, or *mtaresko mtari n|emtari*, demonstrate this relationship.

* Since Mgalearan is not a written language, do not take this literally. For example, the word *shield* is *!arah*, but the plural is not *!arahi*. (It is *!ari*). The *h* at the end here is merely a way to describe the sound at the end of the word, but *ah* is still a vowel sound.

Adjectives:

Adjectives are usually added after the noun. The pleased husband would be *ngoche n!oku* (*ngoche* is husband and *n!oku* is happy/pleased). However, on certain occasions the adjective precedes the noun, and is combined with it. For example, *the vast world* would be *n!agtuko* (*n!agte* (vast) + *Uko* (the world)), and *true love* is *kagn|u* (*kag* (true) + *n|e* (love)). There is no exact rule to combinations, as they simply developed as the language grew. They are not required, but neglecting to use them is the English equivalent of consistently saying *the love that is true* instead of *the true love*. Adjective-noun combinations make Mgalearan a tricky language to learn.

In general, adjectives end with consonants, and almost always combine with nouns beginning with vowels, N-vowel, or M-vowel combinations. Depending on the trailing consonant of the adjective and leading consonant of the noun, other combinations are possible, like RB, RD, RK, NK, ND, N#, N!, N|, M#, M!, etc. If an adjective ends with a vowel, it is usually combined with nouns beginning in consonants. Finally, if part of the end of an adjective is the same as part of the beginning of the noun, the overlap is used to combine the two, and only said once. For example, *ndar* means *kind*, and *ariche* means *sister*. Since the AR sound is shared, they combine, and *kind sister* is *ndariche*.

Note that if one word is already a combination, it is not usually combined. *Dondar*, meaning *unkind*, is a combination of *do* (not) and *ndar*. Unkind sister is *ariche dondar*. The only exception is when a combination word becomes so common that it almost becomes a word in its own right, as *akenuko* (*earth*, literally *world-part*) or *alkan!oka* (*soul*, literally *life force*).

Note that there are no articles in Mgalearan. When a noun is used the article *a* or *the* is implied. For example, *ukinga* should really be translated as *a witch*, and *!gero* really means *an eye*. To indicate a specific instance of the object, possessives or *da#e* (this) or *da#u* (that) can be used, as in *da#u ukinga* (that witch) or *oken!geri* (my eyes). There is no word *the* in Mgalearan.

Adverbs:

Adverbs are used much the same in Mgalearan as they are in English. An adjective can be made into an adverb by adding the suffix *-ta*. Adverbs can come before or after the verb. Both *merwi gali mkorata* (the sun shone brightly) and *merwi mkorata gali* (the sun brightly shone) are equally acceptable.

Pronouns and Possessives:

The three pronouns in Mgalearan are *oken* (I), *okon* (you), and *okan* (he/she/it). The plurals are *okoni* (you) and *okani* (they). For “we” *okeni* is not used, literally that would translate to multiple instances of oneself, and would only make sense if you had clones. Instead, a combination of *oken*, an abbreviated form of *kada* (and), and another pronoun is used. The four ways to say *we* are *okenkadokan* (I and him/her/it), *okenkadokon* (I and you (singular)), *okenkadokani* (I and them), and *okenkadokoni* (I and you (plural)). Additionally, combination pronouns are used for you (plural) if not everyone being referred to is present. *Okon* or *okoni* is used depending on whether one or more of the subjects is present, then *kad*, then *okan* or *okani*, depending on the number of subjects absent. The

four forms are *okonkadokan*, *okonkadokani*, *okonikadokan*, and *okonikadokani*.

Pronouns do not change inflexion when used in the nominative or accusative – *to me* (*ka oken*) is written as *to I*. For example, *he found her* is *okan gati okan* (*gate* means *to find*). Additionally, there are no reflexive pronouns – *myself* is simply *oken*.

Pronoun possessives are formed by adding the pronoun followed by the sound | to the front of the noun being modified. For example, *his arms* is *okan|arki* (*arka* means *arm*). *Our love* would be *okenkadokon|-n|u*.^{*} If another click consonant begins the next word, the | is not added. Their shield is *okani!arah* (*!arah* is *shield*).

Possessives of other nouns are formed through use of the word *am#u* (*of*). The Fate's kindness would be *ndargu am#u Magan|o* (*kindness of Fate*). Chains of possessives are possible, such as *my husband's sister's hut* (*kan!ua am#u ariche am#u oken|-ngoche* – the hut of the sister of my husband).

^{*} (In writing, a dash is used if the noun begins with an n or m followed by another consonant, such as *mg*, *nd*, etc. This is done to describe the brief pause pronounced in the word. Mgalearan was not a written language, so this is only notation, not an actual spelling requirement.)

Sentence structure:

Mgalearan sentence structure is very similar to the structure of English. Grammatically there is no punctuation, as it is an oral language. For sake of clarity, periods may be used to denote a pause. Exclamation points are written upside-down to avoid confusion with the letter *!*. Question marks, quotations, commas, etc. can be used for clarification.

Mehne ngake N!agno n|ugu okan. Agataku okan okan|-n|u? Mehne ngake okan agataku n|u. Anam!uke okani n|u n!oku

Mehne knows (ngake=to know) N!agno will love (n|uge - to love) her. Will he realise (agatake=to realise) his love? She knows he will realise the love (n|u=love). Then they will be (n|e=to be) happy!*

^{*} Do not confuse the noun *n|u* with the future tense of the verb *n|e*, although they sound the same.

In Mgalearan it is not redundant to state explicitly, for example, *He traded for a shield and gave the shield to her*. (*Okan mganwi !arah. Kada okan kan|ali !arah ka okan. – mganwe=to buy/trade for, kan|ale=to give, ka=to*). The reason for this is to avoid the confusion of sentences such as *He gave it to her*. (*Okan kan|ali okan ka okan.*)

In general, there are not compound sentences in Mgalearan. The word *kada* (*and*) can be used to carry a thought from a previous sentence, but there is no distinction between *At last I found my sister, and I was glad* (*Man!oki oken gati oken|ariche, kada okan n|j n!oku*) and *At last I found my sister. And I was glad* (*Man!oki oken gati oken|ariche. Kada okan n|j n!oku*). Notationally, periods are used to describe these pauses.