

# Unclear word and morpheme boundaries in Dalkalaen

This is a presentation of points to discuss, not of results. Feedback/input  
very welcome!

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- All language examples in this presentation are from the corpus she and the speaker community compiled during her stays with them.

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 The demon was in its house.  
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## Verbs and modifiers in rigid order

- verb plus modifiers “in rigid order, like affixes around a root”

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
MOD	IRR	SAM	REAL	CONT	V	RED	TR

Table: [WIP] Slots of the Dalkalaen verb complex

## Verb modifiers as free forms

- modifiers “usually” free forms which can be said and glossed in isolation

gloss	modifier	slot
MOD	ga	-5
IRR	ba	-4
SAM	na, maro, muju, ...	-3
REAL	ma	-2
REAL:PFV	ta	-2
REAL:NEG	to	-2
CONT	do	-1
TR	ne	+1
RES	kuu, gate, kebwinu, ...	+1

Table: Dalkalaen verb modifiers

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- to vowel deletion

- (4) *Tomo maro-m-yan lo maro-m-kyep~kyep*  
 rat 1EX:DU-REAL-go DISC 1EX:DU-REAL-poop~poop  
*koo~koo gon lo ngay ∅-ma-merr.*  
 race~race just DISC 3 3-REAL-die  
 The rat and I had a pooping contest and she died.  
 (story #4: a rat and a crab have a pooping contest)

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- (5) *Ni ba-na-do fyan, ba-na-do-tee~tee-ne temyarr en tii.*  
 1 IRR-1-stay down IRR-1-CONT-look~look-TR demon SUB DISC  
 I’ll stay down and watch that demon.  
 (story #3: a rat and a bird steal food from a demon)



## Verbs can also occur without their markers

- Verb roots can appear in isolation when their subject is the same as a preceding verb's, as well as in SVCs.

(6) *∅-Ma-do-roo*            *to,*            *molone* *ji~je*            *nyee, top goote*  
 3-REAL-CONT-steal chicken destroy RED~thing PL    hit destroy  
*basel nyee.*  
 bird PL  
 It steals chickens, breaks things, kills birds. (nature discourse 1:  
 about the hawk)

## So what do we do?

- Synthetic ambiguity of verb complexes seems to be kind of accepted and glossed over in grammatical descriptions of different Oceanic languages, with structurally similar languages analyzed as highly synthetic in some cases and highly isolating in others (Butz & von Prince 2022).
- Any examples of grammatical descriptions that treat this issue very seriously and deal with it very rigorously?

## Onward to the inverse problem: person/number marking

	Singular	Dual	Paucal	Plural
1in		-ntaru	-njul	-r
1ex	-g	-nəmru	-nəmjul	-nəm
2	-m	-mru	-mjul	-mi
3	-n	-ru	-ril	~V

Table: Dalkalaen person-number endings

	Singular	Dual	Paucal	Plural
1in		entaru	enjul	er
1ex	ni	gənəmru	gənəmjul	gənəm
2	neg	gəmru	gəmjul	gəmi
3	ngay	(ə)ngaru	(ə)nyeril	(ə)nyee

Table: Dalkalaen personal pronouns

- The personal pronouns of Dalkalaen can be divided into two groups.
  - Singular personal pronouns are unique monomorphemic words which don't share their morphology with any other grammatical formative of the language.
  - Non-singular personal pronouns (NSPPs) are morphologically complex surface forms mostly comprised of the general person-number endings of Dalkalaen and epenthetic vowels which adjust the endings to fit the phonotactic constraints of Dalkalaen syllable structure.
- NSPPs exhibit some weird **syncretism** on the one hand, and a high degree of **discretism**(?, i.e. **affix suppletion**) on the other (somewhat reminiscent of e.g. case endings in conservative IE languages).

	Singular	Dual	Paucal	Plural
1in		e-n-ta-ru EP-1-???-DU	e-n-jul EP-1-PC	e-r EP-1:PL
	ni			
1ex	1	g-ə-n-əm-ru NI?-EP-1-EX-DU	g-ə-n-əm-jul NI?-EP-1-EX-PC	g-ə-n-əm-∅ NI?-EP-1-EX-PL
2	neg 2	g-ə-m-ru NI?-EP-2-DU	g-ə-m-jul NI?-EP-2-PC	g-ə-m-i NI?-EP-2-PL
3	ngay 3	nga-ru 3-DU	nye-ril 3-PC	nye~e 3~PL

Table: Morphological make-up of Dalkalaen personal pronouns?

## Again: What do we do?

- Do we split up the surface forms (cf. Distributed Morphology, [Halle & Marantz 1994](#)), try to explain the similarities and accept the irregularities?

⇒ presents us with a lot of theoretical problems

- Or do we instead lump together a bunch of categories into high-exponent morphemes, interpreting the surface forms of the words at face value (cf. Word-and-Paradigm Morphology, [Blevins 2016](#))?

⇒ looks less chaotic in a table, but potentially glosses over structural realities

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