

Vorsai Nominal Morphology



A Case Study on Marahai's language
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Let's start with the basics!

Basic nouns:

hei = person

ar = rock/thing of the ground

hai = land

heih = people

serah = sea/ocean

hoi = animal

kei = child

torah = sky

vor = number

fei = adult

marah = volcano

sa = word

sei = newborn/baby

Marahai = land of the volcano

Vorsai = language

Now let's make some words!

This is a batch of blueberries.



**The Isles of Marahai have a TON
of them! (because I like them)**

They don't have a word for blueberry... Let's fix that.



Well...what is a blueberry?

A SMALL FRUIT!

But we don't have a word for fruit!

THAT'S OKAY! Because → we have a word for rock.

**The word ar that refers to “rock”
is actually better defined as
“thing of the ground.”**

**A blueberry is something that
grows from the ground!**



**We got part of it, now we need something to
denote small!**

Well...what's small that we know of?

Babies!



**Actually just kidding, we're going to use the
word for children!**

Here's why:

**Blueberries grow from seeds and children
grow up from babies.**

This means:

We'll use the word sei “baby” to develop a word for seed and the word kei “child” to develop a word for small fruit/blueberry.

Here's the data we have:



“seed” :
sei & ar

“blueberry” :
kei & ar

Phonological Rules Matter:

All words must either end in a VV cluster or a consonant.

CC clusters can only be:

CN → consonant, nasal

CA → consonant, aspirate

VVV clusters DO NOT EXIST.

This prevents:

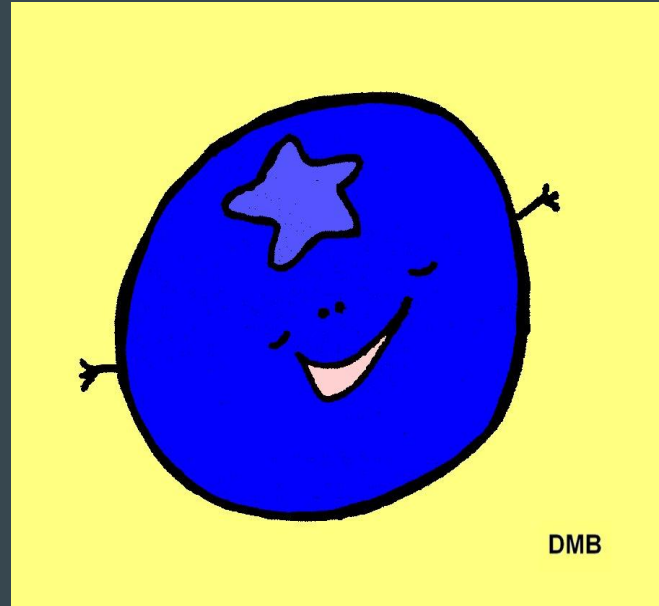
“seed” : arsei/seiar

“blueberry” : arkei/keiar

The only possible words that are:

“seed” : sar

“blueberry” : kar







**This is a jackfruit,
they're delicious.**

**We need a word for
them!**

Let's call them far → derived from the word fei
“adult” and the word ar “thing of the ground”.

Here's a fei holding a far like a sei!



This is my favorite thing ever! Feel free to read this NPR article on why jackfruit is amazing:
<http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2014/05/01/308708000/heres-the-scoop-on-jackfruit-a-ginormous-fruit-to-feed-the-world>

It is evident that Vorsai uses base words to make new words.

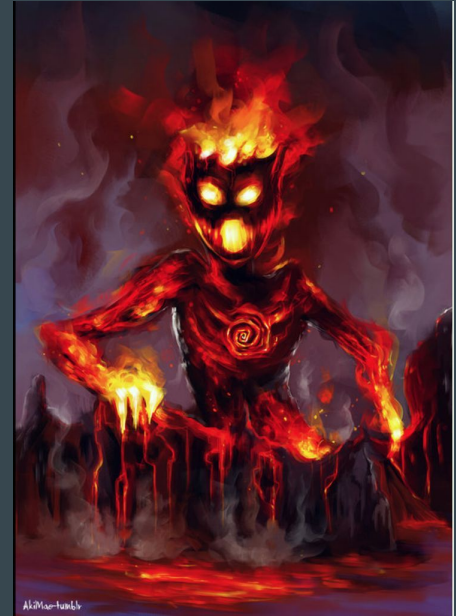
hei = person



hoi = animal



hai = land



If this is true, we need to simplify some nouns!

Breakdown of complex nouns:

serah = sea/ocean

→

ser = water

torah = sky

→

tor = cloud

marah = volcano

→

mar = volcanic rock

Did you see any patterns?

Nominal Gender Marker: Animate vs. Inanimate

Animate nouns in their singular form always end in a VV cluster, denoting their attribute.

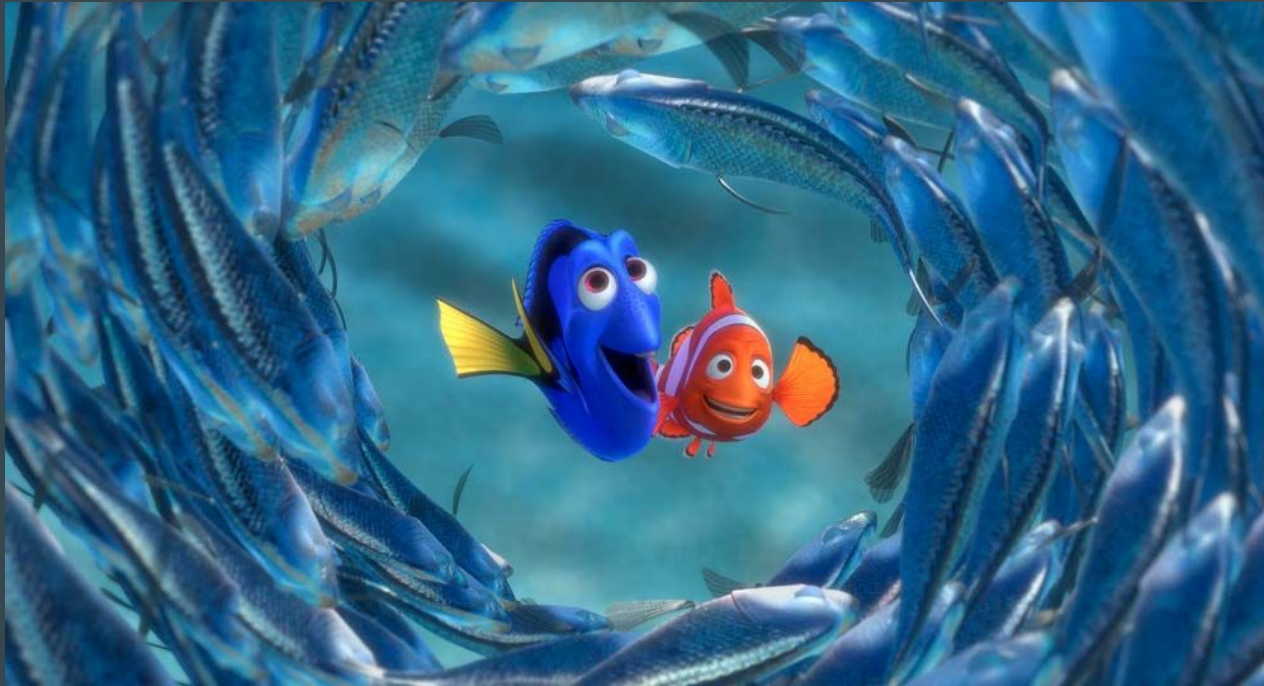
Example: hei “person” & hoi “animal”

Inanimate nouns in their singular form must always end with an –r suffix.

Example: ar “rock” & ser “water”

But wait...where are the words for animals?

Well if fish are animals of the water, then:



“fish” = seroi

derived from ser & hoi

What about animals of the sky?



“bird” = toroi

derived from tor & hoi



What about animals of the land?



“tortoise” = faroi

derived from fei & ar & hoi



Tortoises are the largest animal on the Isles of Marahai and they love being ridden!



Lava lizards are the smallest creatures!



“lava lizard” = maroi
derived from mar & hoi



Animate Gender Marker Subcategories:

Human attribute is denoted by the suffix –ei, as seen in fei “adult”.

Animal attribute is denoted by the suffix –oi, as seen in seroi “fish”.

Inanimate Objects also have subcategories!

It's to deal with these...



Man-made objects!

“man-made object” : heir → derived from hei “person” & ar “rock”

“small man-made object” :
keir ← kei & ar

“large man-made object/house” :
feir ← fei & ar



Inanimate Gender Marker Subcategories:

To denote man-made objects, the suffix –eir is used (coming from –ei- (human attribute suffix) and –r- (inanimate suffix)), as seen in feir “house”.

If a word lacks the –eir, it is considered inanimate and not man-made.

Now onto plurals!

Nominal Number coincides directly with Gender!

hei “person” → heih “people”
tor “water” → torah “ocean”

The suffixes derive directly from basic words!

-h suffix → animate objects

-ah suffix → inanimate objects

Plurals Examples:

kei “child” → keih “children”

seroi “fish” → seroih “fish”

feir “house” → fierah “houses”

ar “rock” → arah “rocks/sand”

Irregular Plurals: Use Reduplication!

marah “volcano” → maramarah “volcanos”

serah “ocean” → serazerah “oceans”

torah “sky” → toradorah “skies”

The reduplicated syllable must be voiced, for emphasis!

Specific Plurals: Use Numbers!

vo = “one” | ne = “two” | si = “three” | su = “four” | ta = “five” | va = “six” | se = “seven”

so = “eight” | nu = “nine” | to = “ten” | voh = “eleven” ... nuh = “nineteen”

neto = “twenty” | netovo = “twenty-one” ... totoh = “hundred” | sototoh = “eight hundred”

todoh = “thousand” | dodoh = “a hundred-thousand” | doh = “million”

Turn them into prefixes: kei “child” → nekei “two children”

The number 1,234,567:
vodo-netotositosutodo-tatotovatose
“one million, two-hundred thirty four
thousand, five hundred sixty-seven”

Now what about the Vorsai Case system?

Say you stumble upon this mess...



And you saw two people arguing over it:



Actually that's just one of the google results
you get when you type in "two people
arguing".

Anyways, back to this mess:



Mock Conversation:

Fei Vo “Man One”: Keir! “Tool!” *waits*

Fei Ne “Man Two”: Dah? “Yes?” *hands him the incorrect one*

FV: Nah... *looks back at the pile, sees the tool* Ah! *points at the tool* Keir!

FN: Ah...keir? Akeir! “Ah...tool? The tool!”

This is how ah “the” was born!
Which lead to the prefix a/ah-, denotes the
specific item someone is referring to.

**Legend Has It: people had these kinds of
conversations all the time...**

Then the Nominal Case System was born:

Nominative: All words are already in the nominative case.

Vocative: To address someone/something directly, the prefix *da-* is added. For example, sakei! “child!”
It comes from the word dah “yes,” as if they are saying “yes, you child!”

Genitive: To note ownership, the *e/eh-* prefix is added to the possessor. For example, to say “birds of the sea”, it would be toroih eserah. Grammatically, “eh” is only added if the possessor begins with a vowel. The order is always possessee-preposition-possessor.

To distinguish subject and indirect/direct object, Vorsai uses word order, so the words do not change, they stay in the nominative form. The specific word order is direct-indirect-(verb)-subject. For example, kar kei fei “adult gives child blueberry”.

Some modifiers arose this way! Here's a few common ones:

na- = that/this specific thing, i.e nator = this/that cloud

k- = small, i.e keir = small manmade object

f- = large, i.e feir = large manmade object

s- = new, i.e sei = baby/newborn (literal translation: new human)

ser- = water/ocean-related, i.e serier = boat (literal translation: large manmade object that's ocean related)

tor- = sky-related, i.e toroi = bird (literal translation: animal of the sky)

Now that we know all this...

The Words “Marahai” and “Vorsai”:

mar “volcanic rock” → marah “volcano” + hai “land”

→ Marahai “land of the volcano”

vor “number” + “sa” + hai “land”

→ Vorsai “language” (land of the number and word!)

The suffix -ai denotes land, which causes problems with nominal gender in terms of animate objects.

Some fun lore about the Isles of Marahai:

Their ruler is called marei “person of the volcanic rock” while the people of marahai are called marahei/maraheih “people of the volcano.”

The distinguishment comes from a ritual competition where the people of Marahai, after a ruler has passed, send their ruling candidates to the volcano to fight to the death under the eyes of the Toreih “Gods”.

Local lore speaks about how the first marei of Marahai emerged from the lava itself, fueling them with the power to rule.

That's the end! Questions?