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BELAUAN ORTHOGRAPHY AND GRAMMAR

PCAA / HEAD START FAMILY LITERACY PROJECT

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SOUND AND SPELLING OF PALAUAN

Palauan language like every language of the world uses its own particular set of sounds to construct words. No two languages have precisely the same set of sound or the same number of sounds. Hawaiian language for example, uses only 13 distinctive sounds, perhaps the samllest number among world languages. Palauan language uses 17 distinctive sounds, not including sounds used in borrowed words.

PALAUAN CONSONANTS	PALAUAN VOWEL
b ch d h k l m ng r s t	a e i o u schwa e

SIGNIFCANT SOUNDS OF PALAU

Let's look at the more outstanding features of the sound system of Palauan. The significant sounds (phonemes) are the subtitution of one sound for another results in different word and, consequently a change of meaning.

If you take Palauan word tub 'spit' for example, and subtitute a d for the first sound t, we will get dub, which is completely different word meaning 'dynamite'. We can conclude now that t and d are significant sounds or phonemes of Palauan.

CONSONANT D

Consonant d has four possible pronunciation depending on the environment in which it occurs. The two phonetic symbols that are used to represent the allophones of d are ɵ which sounds like the first sound of the English word THIN and ð which sound like the first sound of the English word THEN and t which is voiceless sound like Palauan word dbak, 'my dynamite'. Allophone [t] tends to appear before b and m while [ɵ] occur before k and ng.

ALLOPHONES OF D

[t]	dmak	[tmak]
	dbak	[tbak]
[ɵ]	dngod	[dngoɵ]
[ð]	daob	[daob]
	deel	[deel]
[d]	Ng diak	[Ng diak]
	ak di	[ak di]

PALAUAN CONSONANT B

The letter B is pronounced like English "b" or "p" depending on the situation. The rules for pronouncing the letter B correctly are given below:

1. At the begining of a word (word-initially) before an L or any vowel, B is like English "b":

    blai
    blekeradel
    bloes
    Belau
    beot
    bilis

2. Inside a word (word-internally) between two vowels, B is also just like English "b":

    oba
    rubak
    kebelung
    kebesengei

3. If B is right next to another consonant (except L) anywhere in the word, it is pronounced like English "p":

    btar
    kboub
    brer
    brak

3. If B occurs at the very end of a word (word-finally) after vowel, it is also pronounced like English "p":

    tub
    kbokb
    omeob
    sob

PALAUAN CONSONANT NG

The nasal allophones of ng are [ng] and [n]. The [ng] has a less restricted distribution, since it occurs before all vowels, in word-final position, and before consonants such as k, ch,and l. The allophone of NG changes to [n] before t, d, s and r in words.

1. Word-initially:
    ngau
    ngor
    nguis
    ngel

2. Word-internally:

ongor
mengas
ungil

Word-finally

sang
tang
bong

"N" Pronounciation of NG

Before a certain group of consonants-namely, T, D, S, and R-Palauan NG is actually pronounced like an "n".

ng til
ngduul
ng diak
iungs
mengsous
osongd
ongraol
olengrull

"NG" AS SEPARATE SYLLABLE
NG BEFORE B

If the word following NG 'he, she, it', starts with letter B,the NG will be pronounced like "m".

ng boes
ng balech
ng blai
ng belochel
ng bad

WORD-FINAL NG

There are quite a few Palauan words ending a, o, or u when pronounced within a sentence, but have a word-final ng when spoken in isolation or at the end of a sentence. The rule for spelling this kind is simple to remember: if word-final ng is pronounced and heard, we also spell ng; if however no ng is pronounced or heard, it is ommitted from the spelling.

PALAUAN SCHWA E

The Palauan schwa e occurs only in unstressed syllables. Every Palauan word of two or more syllables has just one stressed syllable, with remaining syllables unstressed. It is usually not to difficult to identify the stressed syllable in such words, since this syllable tends to be louder and stronger than near by syllables.

mesilek
rektel
kotel

PRINCIPLES OF VOWEL WEAKENING

The vowel changes is an important pattern of Palauan pronounciation called VOWEL WEAKENING (or vowel reduction). Before going into further details, here are the principles of vowel weakening:

1. All Palauan possessor suffixes are STRESSED.

2. When a (stressed) possessor suffix is added to a Palauan noun stem, any originally stressed vowel in that noun stem become UNSTRESSED.

3. When the stressed vowels A, (full) E, I, and U of a noun stem become unstressed, they are often WEAKEN (reduced) to a weak E.

   Example: The full vowel A of the noun stem CHARM, becomes a weak E in the possessed forms chermek, chermem, chermel, etc. The same thing is happening in BUCH (bechik, bechim, bechil, etc.) and in DUCH (dechak dechal, decham, etc.), where the full vowel U of the noun stem also becomes WEAK E.

VOWEL WEAKENING: A TO WEAK E

Noun Stem	Possessed Form
kar	keruk
bad	beduk
bar	beruk
ngalek	ngelekek
malk	melkek
kall	kelek

VOWEL DELETION

There are quite a few cases, a stressed full vowel of noun stem is DELETED (or omitted) entirely in the possessed form. This VOWEL DELETION is often (though not exclusively) found in cases where the lost vowel is preceded by such consonants as NG,L, and R. You may recall that these are syllabic consonants

VOWEL DELETION

Noun Stem	Possessed Form
ngakl	ngklek
ngikel	ngkelel
rasech	rsechek
lusech	lsechek

RELATIONAL WORD ER

The relational word ER has a wide range of English equivalents such as 'in, of, at, from, because of, etc., and is always spelled as separate word. However, if the preceding word of ER is vowel-final, the e of Er is not pronounced.

Ke mo er ker?
Ke imis el mekeald.
Ke omes er techang?
Ke uleba a ngelekem.
Ke ekebil er ker?

PALAUAN WORD A

The major function of the Palauan word a is to introduce every Palauan noun but never pronouns. It also introduce Palauan verbs. However, it does not introduce the verb when the sentence subject is a pronoun.

A Tina a mo er a omeraeL.
A Nino a meraeL er a klukuk.
A Yoko a smecher.

There is one further type of Palauan noun that is not introduced by a. This type of noun includes words such as tiang, aikang,aikei etc. Such a nouns are called demonstratives because they are used to point out persons or things or specifiy where someone or something is located.

Ng ngar er ngii aika el kall er ker?
Sei ng mo er ker el mlai.
Tia ta er a klou el blengur.

RULE FOR PRONOUN AK

When a pronoun AK is used as subject of a sentence, if the following verb begiins with a vowel O, that letter O will be pronounced as U.

Ak omes a rurt.
Ak ousbech er kau.
Ak omdasu er a ngelekek.
Ak olengit a udoud.

TEST FOR CH

If you are in doubt about whether or not to spell CH, as at the begining of a Palauan word, there is a simple test you can apply. Take the word to be tested, and put it after ng 'he, 'she, 'it to make a short sentence.

Ng chull.
Ng chad.
Ng chui
Ng chisel.

If the word in question really begins with the consonant CH as do chull, chad and etc., it will cause the preceding ng to be pronounced as a totally separate syllable.

By contraxt, let us take some words which, as it turns out, are not spelled with word-initial CH but start simply with a vowel.

Ng oles.
Ng omes.
Ng ekil.
Ng edei.

CONNECTING WORDS ME AND E

Palauan complex sentences are formed by joining two simpler sentences with words me 'and (so)' or e and (then)'. These words are called conneting words because they connect two simple sentences into one and relate the ideas which they represent. However,the connecting word me 'and (so)' not only serves to join both clauses, but also functions to introduce the result clause, which explains what happened as a result (or consequence) of the state desribed in the preceeding independent clause.

Ng mla mo mekngit a eanged.
Ng diak kbong.
Ng mla mo mekngit a eanged me ng diak kbong.

Ke mo e mei.
Ng diak lsebechek el ekong.
Ke mo e mei e ng diak lsebechek el ekong.

CONJUNCTION EL

The conjunction EL is used in many different situations to join one word or phrase to another. In all of its usages, el links a modifying word or phrase to the noun (or verb) modified. Eventhough the pronunciation of el may be reduced (or even totaly lost), it is always spelled as an independent word.

tia el klalo	se el hong
kmal el ungil	kmal el mekngit
tirka el chad	aike el charm

PALAUAN PLURAL

The plural noun in Palauan, we simply attach re- to the begining of the noun. But if, the noun begins with a vowel, then re- will be shorten to r-. Plural form re- can only be added to hman being.

Example:
1. A rechad er a Merikel a metongakl.
2. Ak milsterir a retede el chad.
3. Te ngar er ngii a rodam el milil.
4. A rongalek a subed el mei.

PALAUAN NOUNS

Nouns constitute one of the most important part of speech in Palauan. Let us say that nouns name or make reference to many different types of things or living things. Noun can be concrete or abstract nouns. Nouns which identify things we can see, hear, touch, taste, smell, things we preceived by one or more senses are called concrete nouns. Abstract nouns have referants which cannot be perceived by any of the five senses. It refers to different kinds of concepts, ideas, emotions, which "exist" only in mind and etc.

Example:	Concrete Nouns	Abstract Nouns
	chad	remg
	bilis	ultoir
	kerrekar	ngakl
	ngikel	deureng

PALAUAN PRONOUNS

Palauan pronouns are spelled as separate words, while others are spelled as part of another word. Pronouns that are spelled as separate words are called independent pronouns, where as the others that are spelled as part of another word, called affix pronouns.

Non-Emphatic Pronouns		Emphatic Pronouns
1st. pers sg	ak	ngak
2nd. pers sg	ke	kau
3rd. pers sg	ng	ngii
1st. pers pl incl	kede	kid
1st. pers pl excl	aki	kemam
2nd. pers pl excl	kom	kemiu
3rd. pers pl	te	tir

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HYPOTHETICAL PRONOUNS

Palauan has a special st of pronouns which appear as preffixes on verbs in a large variety of complecated grammatical constructions. Because many of these constructions express hypothetical events or situations- e.e., ones which are not real, but which are supposed, assumed, or imagined- the term hypothetical has come to be used as an identifying label for pronoun preffixes as well as the verb forms to which they are attached.

Person and number of hypothetical Pronouns	Variant Forms
1st. pers sg	ku-, k,
2nd. pers sg/pl	chomo-, mo-, chomu-, cho-, chome-, m-
3rd. pers. sg/pl	lo-, lu-, le-, l-
1st. pers pl incl	do-, du-, de-
1st. pers pl excl	kimo-, kimu-, ki-, kim-

Example:
1. A kusuub e ak mo meduch.
2. A ksecher e ak di kiei.
3. A chomorael e mereched.
4. A lorael e ke mei.
5. A kimsecher e ng diak kimorael.

NEGATION

Mostly all Palauan negative sentences contain some forms of ngative verb diak 'is'nt' does not exist. When a verb or noun directly following the negative verb diak, it must be preffixed with hypothetical pronoun.

Example:
1. A Sabo a diak lesecher.
2. A Ng dimlak lorael a Thomas.
3. Te diak lsecher el rokui.
4. Kom diak mkie e kimorael.
5. Ng locha diak dorael.

PALAUAN VERBS

Palauan has two types of verbs which behave differently in at least two important ways. Action verbs designate action, activities, or events while state verbs specify states, conditions or qualities. Action verbs formed by verb marker and verb stem. It consists of verb marker followed by verb stem.

VERB MARKERS

(me)
me+rael = merael
me+subed = mesubed
me+silek = mesilek
me+dakt = medakt
me+saik = mesaik

There are also verb markers in the form of an infixes which appears after initial consonant of the verb stem which has three variants- -em, -m, -u,and -o-.

Example:

(m)
s-m-echer = smecher
l-m-uut = luut
k-m-eed = kmeed
l-m-angel = lmangel

(em)
ch-em-iis = chemiis
r-em-os = remos
ch-em-ars = chemars
r-em-ei = remei

(u)
s-u-ebek = suebek
r-u-ebet = ruebet
t-u-obed = tuobed

(o)
s-o-iseb = soiseb

Verbs that begin with verb marker prefix -O- plus verb stem are as follows:

(o)
o-mes = omes
o-maart = omart
o-siik = osiik
o-sus = osus
o-bes = obes

PAST TENSE FORMS

Palauan action verbs form its past tense froms by third types of affixes- namely infixes. Infixes are morphemes which ae inserted into a word. If a word begins with the verb marker prefix me-, the past tense is derived by infixing the past tense marker -il or -l after m or the verb marker. Those which begin with the verb marker prefix o- derive its past tense forms by replacing initial -o with ul- ule- or ulu-.

Verb Marker	Present Tense	Past Tense
(me)	mengang	milengang
	mengedub	milngedub
	melim	millim
	melekoi	millekoi
(o)	omes	ulemes
	omart	ulemart
	osiik	ulsiik
	oukat	uluukat

The past tense form of action verb in which the verb marker prefix me- is followed by a verb stem which begins with r is to be infixed with ir instead of il or l-.

Present tense	Past Tense
merasm	mirrasm
merael	mirrael
meruu	mirruu
meradel	mirradel
merodel	mirrodel

STATE VERB NGAR

The state verb ngar which is found in the sequences ngar er ngii and mla er ngii is normally used as an existenctial verb which denotes the existence of some one or something in particular location. The existence of verb ngar 'exist, be (located)' always occurs in sentences followed by a location phrase, which simply tells us where someone or something is. Look at the following sentences.

1. A bung a ngar er a medal a bai.
2. A Ngchesar a ngar er a Babeldaob.
3. A Helen a ngar er a blil.
4. Ng ngar er ngii a kall.
5. Te ngar er a bilas el mei.

The relational phrase in ngar er ngii and mla er ngii is of the location type. The existential verb ngar is usually is that it has the irregular past tense form mla existed, was (located). This form is probably closely related to the auxiliary word mla, which is used to denote recent past time or past experience. Look at the sentences below.

1. Ng ngar er ngii a kerim?
2. Te ngar er ngii a rechad.
3. Ng mo er ngii a ocheraol.
4. Ng ngar er sei.
5. Ng ngar er ngii a kall.
6. Ng ngar er ngii a soam

PALAUAN IMPERFECTIVE VERB FORMS

Palauan imperfective verb forms consist of three morphemes and have the structured verb marker + imperfective marker + verb stem.

The three morphemes or imperfective markers are L, NG, AND M. The imperfective verb marker appear as NG if the following verb stem- initial consonat is CH, or K.

Example:	Basci Form	Imperfective Form
CH become NG	mechat	me-NG-at
	mechesimer	me-NG-esimer
	mechaus	me-NG-aus
	mechert	me-NG-ert
	mechaus	me-NG-aus
K become NG	mekereel	me-NG-ereel
	mekang	me-NG-ang
	meklou	me-NG-lou
	mekesadel	me-NG-esadel
	mekiis	me-NG-iis
T becomes L	metekoi	me-l-ekoi
	metord	me-lord
	metemall	me-l-emall
	metirm	me-l-irm
D become L	medeel	me-l-eel
	medasech	me-l-asech
	medalem	me-l-alem
S become L	meseseb	me-l-eseb
	mesius	me-l-ius
NG become L	mengatech	me-l-atech
	menguked	me-l-uked
	mengas	me-l-as

CONJUNCTION EL

The conjunction EL is used in many different suations to join one word or phrase to another. In all of it usages, el links a modifying word or phrase to the noun (or verb) modified. Even though the pronunciation of el may be reduced (or even totally lost), it is always spelled as an independent word.

Example: tia el klalo
se el hong
tirka el chad
dart el kluk
euid el klok
ungil el chad

In some of the examples above, the E of el is not pronounced, while in others it is heard as a weak E after consonant final word. If the word preceding el ends in an L, then el is omitted totally from the pronounciation (sound like "ungilchad"). In addition, if el precedes a word beginning with R, as in mekelekolt el ralm, then the L of el and following R blend into a double R (sound like "mekelekolterralm").

OBLIGATORILY POSSESSED NOUN

Palauan has nouns which have possessed forms but no independently occuring noun stem. In other words, we have forms like budek, but no word "bud" that ever occurs separately. Noun like budek, budem, budel, etc. are called obligatorily possessed nouns because they mustoccur in a possessed form with a possessor suffix.

Parts of the body:

budel
kekul
chimal

Kinship (family) terms:

obekul
chudelel
ngusel

Part-whole relationaship

rsel
tkul
chelsel

Other relationships (often abstract)

belkul, ultutelel, bengengel

NOUN POSSESSORS

Possessor suffixes are suffixes that are attach to Palauan nouns and we should have clear idea of their function. Basically, they serve to express a relationship of possession between the noun stem (the thing possessed) and the person or thing to which the suffix refers (the possessors)

Example: Nouns function as stems in words like sersek 'my garden' and chimal 'his hand' are followed by -ek, -al, which identify the person who owns or possesses the noun in question. The ending -ek, and -al and many others are called suffixes because they followed the noun stem. This relationship of possession can be of several different types.

Possessor Suffixes

e set: reng	i set: buch	u set: reng	a set: char
bilek	bechik	renguk	cherak
bilem	bechim	rengum	cheram
bilel	bechil	rengul	cheral
biled	bechid	rengud	cherad
bilam	bechemam	rengmam	cheremam
biliu	bechemiu	rengmiu	cheremiu
bilir	becherir	rengrir	cherrir

OBJECT PRONOUNS

Palauan has a set of affix pronouns which appear as suffixes on vers. These pronouns always identify the object of the verbs -i. e.,the person or thing affected by the action which the verb designates - they are called object pronouns.

	Object Pronouns	Emphatic Pronouns
1st pers. sg	-ak	ngak
2nd. pers. sg	-au	kau
3rd. pers. sg	-ii	ngii
1st. pers pl incl	-id	kid
1st. pers pl excl	-emam	kemam
2nd. pers pl	-emiu	kemiu
3rd. pers pl	-terir	tir

Example:		
	cholebedak	sobekak
	cholebedau	sobekau
	cholebedii	sobekii
	cholebedemam	sobekemam
	cholebedemiu	sobekemiu
	olebedeterir	sobeketerir

PALAUAN CAUSATIVE VERBS

All Palauan causative verbs consist of all least two morphemes- the causative prefix and the stem. To derive the imperfective forms of causative verbs, we attach a variant of the causative prefix (omek-, ome-, om-, ole-,ol-, or-) to the stem of a state verb, an action verb, or even a noun.

Causative Verb	Related State Verb
omekedechor	dechor
omekungil	ungil
omekbeches	beches
omekesiu	osiu
omekard	kmard
omekcharm	chuarm

Causative Verb	Related Noun Stem
omdaob	daob
omdoim	odoim
omdai	dai
omcheled	cheled
olekiis	kiis
olechiis	chiis
olekeed	keed
olechau	chau
omechar	char
omesiur	siur
omeruul	ruul
oltaut	taut
olsingch	singch
olsiseb	siseb
orreked	reked
orrurt	rurt
orrenges	renges
orreched	reched

RECIPROCAL VERBS

All Palauan reciprocal verbs can be easily identified by the presence of the reciprocal prefix, which hasa considerable number of variant forms: kai-, kau-, kao-, ka-, and cha-. Reciprocal verbs are used to describesituations in which two or more persons (or other living things as animals) are affecting each other in the same way. They may be doing the same action to each other.

Example:	(kai)	kaingeseu	(kau)	kauteketok
		kaidechedang		kauteketok
		kaisiuekl		kaublas
	(kao)	kaodengei	(cha)	chachelebed
		kaocheliu		chacheblad
	(ke)	keluches	(ka)	katekoi
		kelatk		kakeikr
		ketub		kadecheduch

REDUPLICATION OF BELAUAN VERBS

The reduplication of Belauan verb involves repeating or reduplicating part of a given verb stem. The patterns of reduplication are complex and often highly irregular and we will therfore mention only the most commonly used (or productive) processes.

Example:
bebubong
dekdekimes
kekedung
sesongerenger
ousesekool
ousesimang
mekekeald
mekekelekolt
mededengei