

Basic Sona Grammar in Four Pages

This summary assumes that you are familiar with the general idea of Sona and the rules of pronunciation. It also assumes that you either understand terms like “morpheme” and “copula” or you are willing to look up the definitions.

articles

The English definite and indefinite articles (the, a, an) are normally not translated into Sona. The word **en** sometimes serves as an emphatic article: **en gelen** = The Book, that very book, the only book that matters in this context.

plural

Plural status of a noun can be indicated by the suffix **-e** but this is only done when necessary (not as often as English marks plural status). **lenie** = letters. Plural is not marked after a numeral: **mi ima do can** = I have two cases. If the noun ends with **-a**, **-e**, **-o** or **-n**, then **-y-** is inserted before **-e**: **raye** = men, **peceye** = boots, **rugoye** = wheels, **kanye** = buildings.

adjectives

Adjectives are often formed by adding **-o** to some other type of word: **ikio** = sudden, **molio** = fertile. Often **-y-** must be inserted before **-o**: **atayo** = wide, **dengayo** = dental. However not every word ending with **o** is an adjective: **pomo** = apple, **hairo** = the sun.

Another common adjective ending is **-vio** “having the quality of”: **igevio** = sticky, **juvio** = happy, **savio** = wise.

Comparative and superlative can be formed with the prefix **e-**: **evanyo vandi** = a darker night, **en evanyo vandi** = the darkest night. The prefix **e-** is followed by **-y-** if the following morpheme starts with **a**, **e**, or **o**: **eyaka ra** = a taller man, **en eyaka ra** = the tallest man.

adverbs

Adverbs are often formed by adding **-(y)u** to some other type of word: **ireyu** =

repeatedly, **fuyu** = externally, **akiu** = quickly. Not every word ending with **u** is an adverb.

“Adverbs of rest and motion” are formed with the prefix **a-** and the suffix **-li** respectively: **afu** = located outside, **fuli** = moving outwards.

verbs

The most common forms of verbs are:

da ru = to go — *infinitive*
ru = go, goes — *present*
ruto = went — *simple past*
va ru = will go — *future*
ruha or **ru** = go! — *imperative*

-cio creates the active participle: **inocio ra** = a sleeping man, **ulacio dure** = a singing tree.

-ni passive: **abuni** = beloved, **udeni** = broken, **seni** = the view (that which is seen), **ulani** = song (that which is sung)

The suffix **-i** can form an adverbial clause that refers to a verb’s action or state:
perui homali mi seto inocio xen. = (While) walking homewards I saw a sleeping dog.

zii jun mi akasi ki. = Being young I get up early.

pronouns

The personal pronouns are:

mi I, me, my — **mie** we, us, our
tu you (singular), your — **tue** you (plural), your
on he, him, his — **onye** they, their (masculine)
an she, her — **anye** they, their (feminine)
en it, its — **enye** they, their (neuter)
ti they, them, their (without reference to gender)

Sona does not use the personal pronouns as often as English. You may omit them whenever they are not absolutely necessary for communication.

There is no distinct possessive form. The possessing pronoun can be suffixed onto the noun: **mi kadi** or **kadimi** = my head.

Pronouns can be affixed to a verb, with the subject appearing as a prefix and the

object appearing as a suffix: **mi sa ti** or **misati** = I know them; **tu sa an** or **tusayan** = you know her.

ci is the relative pronoun. **ra ci sa ti** = the man who knows them.

copula

The copula **zi** “be, is, am, are, were,” is often omitted when doing so causes no confusion: **on inya** = he (is) here, **in kan ta** this building (is) large. The phrase **ti bara** could be interpreted either as “their soldiers” or “they are soldiers,” but this ambiguity could be avoided by rephrasing it as either **barati** or **ti zi bara**.

zi can be suffixed onto another word as in **atozi** “to be old,” **un ra atozi** “that man is old.”

existential sentences

Sentences about the existence, presence or location of something are constructed in this manner:

mi zia homa. = I am at home.

asesi! zia ipe. = Look out! There’s a snake!

na zia bivelen. = There is no toilet paper.

zikeya ipa lia on? = Is there enough room for him?

tu fa to semi ken na zia huvan. = You might have seen me if there had not been a fog.

interrogatives

The interrogative particle **ke** forms words like **keji** = who?, **kena** = what?, **keri** = when?, **keta** = how much?

There is no change of word order in a question: **tu ima su** = you have water, **tu imake su?** = do you have water?

Note that **ke** is often suffixed onto the verb: **tu sake laba Sona?** = do you know how to speak Sona? Also, **ke** is used as an *infix* in a few words like **zikeya**.

gender, agent, human

Gender of a creature can be marked by the prefix **ra-** male or **zan-** female:

zanyibo = cow, **raibo** = bull, **zanpi** = hen, **rapi** = cock.

-ra and **-zan** used as suffixes can sometimes be interpreted as “an X which is male” or “an X which is female”: **kora** = boy (child which is male), **kozan** = girl (child which is female). Some of these words have a vaguely agentive sense: **kisara** = a learner (student) who is male.

-ci at the end of a compound sometimes means agent, do-er, “one who does the stated activity.” **kaci** = leader, **peruci** = pedestrian (one who walks), **kisaci** = student (either male or female).

-ji (human being) at the end of a compound means “person (of unstated gender) who has the quality or is associated with the activity.” **soji** = friend, **boji** = blood relative, **ubiji** = servant.

common noun suffixes

At the end of compound words, the following morphemes often have the meanings given here and usually indicate that the words are nouns:

-na inorganic thing: **pana** bread, **sunna** liquid, **lana** word.

-ga organic thing: **kinga** root, **tega** arm, **denga** tooth.

-ne abstract state/thing: **mane** position, **tane** size, **sane** knowledge.

-bi tool, utensil: **cobi** knife, **jabi** brush, **tebi** handle.

-da action: **ruda** motion, **meda** thought, **ageda** meeting.

-kan building: **alakan** hotel, **jokan** church, **abakan** prison.

-cia business: **bocia** butchershop, **panacia** bakery.

-ma locality: **sama** school, **unama** island, **akema** mountain.

numerals

1 **enna**, 2 **do**, 3 **tin**, 4 **ca**, 5 **pen**, 6 **xi**, 7 **zun**, 8 **atu**, 9 **nun**, 10 **dici**, 11 **ennadici** or **endici**, 12 **dodici**.

Ordinal adjectives are formed with the suffix **-(y)o**: **enyo** = first, **doyo** = second, **tinyo** = third.

Number of iterations is expressed by the prefix **e-**: **eyen** = once, **edo** = twice, **etin** = three times.