

# Sepko-Pelo Descriptive Grammar

Winter Qrt. 2022

Welcome to grammar writeup for Sepko-Pelo, one of Conlang Club's projects.. The goal is for the language to be speakable enough that it is reasonable for our club members to learn it. Here's what we've got so far. The main features of this language are the poly-nonnucleaic(PNN) non-concatenative morphology, phonesthemic lexicon, inchoitive and cessive aspect, six verbal mood suffixes, and a four way number distinction.

You can use the document outline to navigate.

## Goals

- be speakable (the phonology/phonotactics should be easy enough for English speakers)
- by typable (the romanization should use only ascii characters)
- be learnable (ex. the grammar shouldn't have epistemological evidentiality or edibility)
- have non-concatenative grammar (because we like it)
- use a modified version of the Lesson Lang phono
- speak this language in a (modded) minecraft server

# 1 Phones

## 1.1 Phonology

Consonants:

	labial	alveolar	palatal	velar
stop	p	t	c	k
nasal	m	n	ɲ <nj>	ŋ <g>
fricative	f	s	ç <hj>	h
approx.		l	j	

Vowels:

	front	back
high	i	u
mid	e ě <é>	o ō <ó>
low	a ã <á>	

Stress: always initial syllable

## 1.2 Phonotactics

Syllable structure:

(F)C<sub>1</sub>V(N(C<sub>2</sub>))

F = any fricative

C<sub>1</sub> = any consonant (yes any)

V = any vowel

N = any nasal

C<sub>2</sub> = any consonant except for nasals and approximants, i.e. /m n ɲ ŋ l j/

F always agrees with C<sub>1</sub>, e.g. /ftan/ → /stan/, /span/ → /fpan/

N always agrees with C<sub>2</sub>, e.g. /tank/ → /taŋk/, /taŋc/ → /taŋc/

Double consonants are removed, e.g. /ffan/ → /fan/

Nasal vowels are lengthened before nasal, e.g. /tãn/ → /tã:n/

## 1.3 Phonological rules

nasals assimilate in place with the following consonant

tunjge -> tugge

consonants assimilate in voicing accross word boundaries  
tun.se -> tun.ze (spelled tuse)

epenthetic /i/ in inserted between fricatives and stops  
njuste -> njusile

illegal stops at the end of syllables become nasals  
tut.se -> tun.se

fricative stop become stop fricative? no  
fpupke -> pfupke

## 2 Morphology

### 2.1 Nominal Inflections

There is a four way number distinction. For all non-derived words (PNN that has not undergone one of the derivational rules found below), number is indicated by PNN pattern as follows:

Number	Pattern	Example (w/ t-t-s)
singular (SG)	CeCCo	tetso "a tree"
paucal (PAUC)	CeCCám	tetsám "a few trees"
plural (PL)	haCCeCo	hatteso "trees"
multal (MULT)	haCCeCám	hattesám "many trees"

For all other words (derived words), some inflection of n-k (DET/"thing") must be used.  
ex.

nekám tutsika  
DET/PAUC tree.person  
"a few tree people".

### 2.2 Nominal Derivations

Base PNNs can undergo one of the following derivational rules. (This is intended to be a system to make filling out the lexicon easier)

Derivation	Pattern/Affix	Example (w/ t-t-s)
Verbalizer	CuCCe	tutse "to be a tree"
Person of Doer of	CuCCika	tutsika "tree person"
Place of	CaCCant	tatsant "forest"
Made of Product of Material	ConjeCCe	tonjetse "wood"
Augment-tative	<ol>	toletso "big tree"

	<ol>	nolokám "a few big things"
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The augmentative is an infix <ol> that is placed just before the first vowel.

### Diminutive

The diminutive form depends on the number of the noun.

Number	Pattern
singular	CeCCuso
paucal	CeCCusám
plural	haCCiCuso
multal	haCCiCusám

If you want to apply two derivations, you must apply one to the root noun and one to a supportive determiner. For example, "nikusám tutsika" means "small/lesser tree people". Here, "person of" is indicated on the root ("tutsika") and "small/lesser" is indicated on the supporting determiner ("nikusám").

## 2.3 Verbal Inflections

The vowels for all verbs is:

- CuCCe (for 3NN roots)
- CuCe (for 2NN roots)

This is the same as the Verbalizer pattern for turning nouns into verbs.

Tense and aspect is marked with a fusional prefix.

	past	non-past
perfective (PFV)	pa-	pi- (FUT)
imperfective (IPFV)	tu-	∅- (PROG /FUT PROG)
start (INCH)	mé- (HAB)	fé-
stop (CESS)	mulu-	fulu-

ex.

Tetso mulu-tutse  
 tree/person CESS-tree/be  
 "The tree stopped being a tree"

## Verbal Suffixes

Suffix	Meaning	Abbreviation
-tam	conditional ("would")	COND
-ni	imperative	IMPER
-mag	potential ("probably")	POT
-le	("can", "able to")	ABLE
-njo	tentative ("might", "maybe")	TENT
-mané	interrogative	INTER

## 3 Syntax

Word Order: SOV

postpositions

adjective precedes noun

### 3.1 VP structure

?

### 3.2 NP structure

## Numerals

(Det) (PP) (AdjP) noun (num)

those in the park nice dogs 3

those 3 nice dogs in the park

words for digits 0-9

10;100;1000;10.000;1.000.000

For large numbers, use the word for magnitude <undecided>

no nóme teg <mag> <seven> leg no <mag> teg <parts> <five><eight>

123 magnitude 7 and 10 and 100 parts 58

"1,230,000,010.58"

number	sepko-pelo	days of the week
0		
1	no	monday
2	nóme	tuesday
3	teg	wednesday
4		thursday
5		friday
6		saturday
7		sunday
8		monday 2.0
9		
10		
100		
1000		
1,000		
10,000		
1,000,000		

There are two numeral constructions

### 3.3 PP structure

Postpositions go at the end of the PP, after the NP.

Postposition	Meaning
sana	instrumental/comitative (using, with)
géfo	dative/allative (to, towards)
sã	ablative (from)
tu	Locative (in, at)
jo	Benefactive (for)

	about
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### 3.4 Clausal Complements

### 3.5 Interrogative pronoun

Use *mo*

Sto mo pa-<see>?  
 2SG what PAST.PRIV-see?  
 "What did you see?"

### 3.5 Relative Clause

Use *món*

món I ...  
 the dog what i saw...  
 "The dog that I saw..."

### 3.6 Questions

Polar Questions  
 use *mané* (see section 2.3)

Content Questions: see section 3.5 interrogative

### 3.7 Conjunctions

Conj.	Meaning
leg	and
tónju	but
cepa	or
sá	if (goes at the end of a clause), e.g. <i>sto njusle sá</i> "if you're a car..."
cekolo	because



### 3.8 Negation

NEG so goes just before the phrase it negates

Pilo so pugfe  
1SG NEG understand  
"I don't understand"

### 3.9 Passives

Use some conjugation of n-k to substitute the subject.

### 3.10 Possession

Possession is indicated solely by word order. Place the possessum immediately after the possessor.

"My chair broke"

## 4 Lexicon

The lexicon has moved to this spreadsheet. You can create a new entry by copying an existing row and changing the PNN and the definitions. The word automatically fill in.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1VI1jbYy3wOZR02vz3pJv1BG6Cdw0RkH5psPJ-oGTKA/edit?usp=sharing>

Most nouns are organized into one of several phonosthematic categories, and are related to other words in their category phonological and semantically. Specifically, each word in a category starts with the same syllable onset, and each word in that category is in a hyponym or metaphor relationship with the general meaning of that category.

New words are formed by identifying the appropriate existing phonsthetic category and deriving a new PNN that starts with that category's syllable onset. If no appropriate category exists, new ones are made by taking auditory inspiration and selecting a yet unused syllable onset. The auditory inspiration for a sound can come from one of the hypernyms of that category. For example, the sounds for "animal" can come from a specific animal.

### 4.1 Pronouns

	singular	paucal	plural	multal
first	pilo	pilám	hapilo	hapilám
second	sto	stám	hasto	hastám
third	to	tám	hato	hatám

## 4.2 Compounds

In compounds, the non-head word precedes the latter in uninflected (or in the case of nominal compounds, singular) form. When inflecting compound nouns for number, all prefixing units go to the beginning of the compound as a whole; only head features consonant movement. See page 3 of the spreadsheet lexicon for a list of existing compounds.

## 4.3 Miscellaneous

usóm - specifically, especially

pa - to be located at (not to be confused with the PAST.PRV marker "-pa")

## 5 Example texts

### Miscellaneous sentences

Pilo njeslo sana njute.

1SG car/SG INST go

"I am going by car"

Pilo njeslo sana pa-njute.

1SG car/SG INST PAST.PRV-go

"I went by car"

Pilo njusle

1SG car/V

"I go by car/drive" ("I do the car thing")

Halmemo cukke-le

bee/pl family-ABLE

"Bees can be family"

Hapilo jehjo tu pa mo tu hapnjehjuso tu-fpupke

1PL start LOC be.at, what loc words HAB-break

"We're here at the start, where the words fall apart."

Nekám punjhjika punjhje

thing.PAUC speak.DOER speak

Some speakers speak

To hkuhke

3SG scissors/V

"It is a (pair of) scissors."

To hkuhke-mané?  
3SG scissors/V-INTER  
"Is it a (pair of) scissors?"

To méhkuhkenjo  
3SG INCH-scissors/V-TENT  
"It might have started to be a (pair of) scissors."

Pilo lumme-tam.  
2sg bee-would  
"I would be a bee"

Pilo Germany géfo njute-tam-mag.  
1SG germany DAT travel-would-probably  
"I would probably go to germany"

Berlin pilo géfo fatgant.  
berlin 1SG DAT interesting/place  
"I find Berlin to be an interesting place" or "Berlin is interesting to me"

sto mé-fpunjhje-mané?  
2sg hab-lie-QUES  
"Are you a liar?" ("Do you lie")

Pilo temco-milan hjepco-megmo mé-f<ol>ukle  
1SG bean-spice freeze-pudding HAB-<AUG>like  
"I most like vanilla ice-cream"

pilo haneko feklo-futika tu-fpukle  
1sg PL influencer hate  
"I hate influencers"

Sto pilo géfo sto penjhjo pupele leg pilo sto géfo neko penjhjo pupele  
2SG 1SG DAT 2SG language teach-can and 1SG 2SG DAT this language teach-can  
"You can teach me your language and I can teach you this language."

### **A short dialogue**

Sto mo folikal cenjhjám teg sehpo-minjahj caljant géfo jumke-tam?  
2SG what <AUG>popular person/PAUC three evening-food/ADJ party DAT invite-COND  
"What three famous people would you invite to a dinner party?"

Pilo **neko** Egyptian folutika jumke-tam. Cepa Mansa Musa.  
1SG **DET/SG** Egyptian <AUG>leader invite-COND. or Mansa Musa  
"I would invite **some** Egyptian pharaoh. Or Mansa Musa."

Pilo tám lejhám pegfo-fpuffe  
1SG 3SG life/PAUC know-want.  
"I want to know about their lives."

### A short dialogue

Stám, món HPSG pugfe, ALE (Attribute-Logic Engine) pajultemane'?  
2PAUC, who HPSG know, ALE (Attribute-Logic Engine) PAST.PFV-use-INTER?  
"Those of you who know HPSG, did you use/have you used ALE (Attribute-Logic Engine)?"

Sto sto neko funge-le-tam sá, sto mo funge-tam-mané?  
you.SG you.SG thing change-ABLE-COND if, you what change-COND-INTER  
"If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?"

### A short dialogue

David sto Civilization 5 cepa 6 fugsemané, yes? Pilo sana hjcjusceni.  
"David you have Civilization 5 or 6, right? Play (the video game) with me."

Pilo Civilization 5 leg 6 fugse, tónju pilo fpulefpe.  
"I have Civilization 5 and 6, but I am very busy."

### A short dialogue

Sto futika cepa juskika?  
2SG leader or follower  
"Are you a leader or a follower?"

Pilo juskika.  
1SG follower  
"I am a follower"

Tonju sto conlang club futika 😞.  
but 2SG conlang club leader 😞  
"But you are the Conlang Club leader 😞"

### A short dialogue

sto <which.one> felfo mé-folukle?

2SG <which.one> sound HAB-<AUG>like

"What is the sound you love the most?" ("Which sound do you most like"?)

Pilo lessám felfo mé-folukle, usós nekám black-capped-chickadee

2SG bird/PAUC sound HAB-<AUG>like, especially DET/PAUC black-capped-chickadee

"I most like the sound of a few birds, especially black-capped chickadees"

Only lessám? so lessó cepa halseám?

only bird/PAUC? no bird/SG or bird/MULT?

"Only a few birds? Not just one and not a lot?"

Pilo lessó leg halseám felfo mé-fukle, tónju usóm lessám.

2SG bird/SG and bird/MULT sound HAB-like, but especially bird/PAUC

"I like the sound of one bird and of many birds, but especially just a few."

Pilo pilo fpeghjo funge-tam.

1SG 1SG boredom change-COND

"I would change my boredom"

## Long Translation

hji pac njufikika leg njuhjikika fufpe gunjhje

north wind and sun be.strong fight

"The North Wind and the Sun fought about which of them was the stronger."

## Unresolved Issues

- Does our language have a copula?
  - How do we say "<noun> equals <noun>"?
  - How do we say "<noun> is <adj>"?
    - Answer: adjectives follow the verb PNN pattern
  - (compare "Berlin pilo géfo fatgant", "To me, Berlin is interesting")
- Do all color words start with /j/? (it's the misc phonestheme)
- How do we do adverbs? (i.e. "You run quickly")
- Numerals
- Adverbs
- How to say "which one"
- Proposals pinned in discord chat
- dates/times
- HOW DO WE DO COMPARISONS