The Vằăls Language

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Introduction

Vằăls /ˈvɑ̀əls/ is my entry for the 26th Speedlang Challenge. There are three main dialect groupings of Vằăls:

1. The standard dialect is spoken in the city of the king's residence. It does not have many speakers outside of the capital city and surrounding areas.
2. The Ùcata dialect is spoken in the east, mainly in mountainous areas. It is perceived as an uneducated register, used by serfs.
3. The Ārsāh dialect is spoken in the central regions of the kingdom, which happen to be its agricultural hub. This dialect has by far the greatest number of speakers, so it is not too stigmatized but it's still never used in formal settings.

These three dialects can be considered three points on a gradual dialect continuum, as each city and region has its own dialect which may be "in-between" the other dialects.

Phonology

Consonants

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar
Nasal	m	n		
Stop	p	t	tʃ ⟨c⟩	k
Fricative	v	s		x ⟨h⟩
Approximant		l	j ⟨y⟩	
Trill		r		

/x/ is usually pronounced as a glottal [h] in the Ārsāh dialect. Other consonants remain similar in other dialects, though the vowels are very divergent. There are marginal palatalized consonants in the Ùcata dialect.

Vowels

	Front	**Central**	**Back**
High	i		u
Mid	e	ə ⟨ă⟩	o
Low	a		ɑ ⟨ā⟩

The Ùcata dialect has [eə̯, oə̯] ⟨ĕ, ŏ⟩ in places where there would be /e, o/ in the standard dialect before an /ə/ in the next syllable. /ə/ is not present in the Ùcata dialect, as it has merged with /a/. Conversely, in the Ārsāh dialect, /ə/ merges with /ɑ/. Word-final /i/ is turned into a /ʲ/ glide, in Ùcata, which may palatalize preceding consonants:

- /…ki, …tʃi, …si, …xi/ > […kʲ, …tʃʲ, …sʲ, …xʲ] > […c, …tɕ, …ʃ, …ç]
  - This will be represented by a final ⟨y⟩.

Tone

In Ùcata and the standard dialect, the stressed syllable can have one of three tones:
1. The low tone, /à/,
2. The middle tone, /a/,
3. And the high tone, /á/.

Tones are not present in the Ārsāh dialect, and it has fixed stress on the first syllable.

Phonotactics

The maximum syllable structure is (C)V(C)(C), however stops can only occur in the onset, not the coda, except in geminates. Vowel hiatus is allowed, however, vowel hiatus caused by adjacent morphemes is not allowed, and is broken by an epenthetic /n/. If a morpheme ends in /v, s, j, x/ and is adjacent to a morpheme that starts with a stop consonant, the two consonants merge into a stop geminate.

Syntax

The default word order is SOV. Adjectives precede nouns. There are postpositions instead of prepositions, and auxiliary verbs follow the main verb. There is V2 order in the Ārsāh dialect. The finite verb takes the second position in a phrase. Non-finite verbs, however, follow the normal SOV rules.

Grammar

Nouns

There are three noun classes, human, animate, and inanimate, and two numbers, singular and plural.

	Singular	**Example**	**Plural**	**Example**
Human	ar-	aràr "hunter"	hāsar-	hāsaràr "hunters"
Animate	ă-	ăsiv "bird"	hāsă-	hāsăsiv "birds"
Inanimate	-	tòò "rock"	eh-	ehtòò "rocks"

Nominal adjectives agree with nouns in class and number, using the same prefixes. In the Ārsāh dialect, however, the human prefixes are used for both the human and animate classes, but only for adjectives. Nouns are declined like the standard dialect

Adjectives

There are two types of adjectives in Vàăls, nominal adjectives and verbal adjectives. Verbal adjectives are limited in number and are a closed class, while nominal adjectives are the majority of adjectives. Nominal adjectives decline just like nouns, while verbal adjectives are conjugated for person and tense like verbs.

Verbs

Tense

	Perfective	**Imperfective**
Past	-mi	-pam
Present	-	-pas
Infinitive	-eh	-eh

The future tense is formed periphrastically by putting the main verb in the infinitive and using the copula as an auxiliary verb. In Ùcata, the infinitive form is used only as a future tense. The copula is not used with the infinitive in that case.

Copula used as future auxiliary	Perfective	Imperfective
Past	**Subjunctive**	**Conditional**
	virăm	virăpam
Present	**Future Perfect**	**Future**
	virăh	virăppa

Polypersonal Agreement

Verbs agree with their subject and object in person and number. Verbal adjectives agree with their head in person.

	Singular	Plural
1st Person	kă-	va-
2nd Person	pam-	lă-
3rd Person	-	ma-

Pronouns

		Singular	Plural
1st Person		ki	va
2nd Person		pam	li
3rd Person	**Human**	àrăn	ma
	Animate	ùn	ma
	Inanimate	eh	ma

The Ùcata dialect has stressed variants of pronouns which are used for emphasis as well as used as genitive pronouns.

		Singular	Plural
1st Person		kin	van
2nd Person		pama	lin
3rd Person	**Human**	àrăna	man
	Animate	ùna	man
	Inanimate	eha	man

Example Sentences

The following example sentences are taken from 5MOYD:

Vǎ̀ăls: Săvárye rǎ̀ pivăv kis virăppa
Gloss: `Sweden in ginger NEG be-PRES.IPFV`
Translation: "there is no ginger in Sweden"

Vǎ̀ăls: ki hāsarè vi kis òs malas
Gloss: `1SG HU.PL-child from NEG one 3PL-ill`
Translation: "none of my children has ever been ill"

Vǎ̀ăls: Àrăn yal hāsăsaypăă lis mavapăy vapăypas.
Gloss: `3SG.HU only AN.PL-rats REL 3PL-eat eat-PRES.IPFV`
Translation: "He eats only what these groundhogs (lit. rats) eat."

Vǎ̀ăls: Kis òs ray pèăl lats àrăn ăkirăs vu virăppa.
Gloss: `NEG one anger GEN mark 3SG.HU AN.SG-face on be-PRES.IPFV`
Translation: "There's no sign of anger on his face."

Vǎ̀ăls: Inká piseh minmi àrsul à.
Gloss: `Iŋgá work-INF stop-PST.PRFV healer as`
Translation: "Iŋgá quit (working) as a doctor."