

# Etruscan Grammar

Glen Gordon

<http://paleoglot.blogspot.com>

([glengordon01@gmail.com](mailto:glengordon01@gmail.com))

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The following is a standardized grammatical outline of Etruscan, using the oldest attested stage as exemplar. It may be subsequently useful for reading Lemnian, a dialect of Old Etruscan which was spoken on the Aegean island of Lemnos. In Italy, Etruscan continued to evolve from these canonical forms between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE. Among notable developments in later stages are the raising of **a** to **e** before resonants, the change of unstressed **-ai** to **-e** and the general syncope of unstressed word-medial vowels (eg. **Aranθai**al [ˈarəntʰəjəl] 'of Aranth' > **Arnθl** [ˈarntʰl]).

## Word order

Etruscan is an agglutinative language with a default word order of SOV (*subject-object-verb*). However it may shift to VSO when the action follows from a previously mentioned action or when using mediopassive verbs.

## Nouns

	human (animate)		non-human (inanimate)	
	singular	plural	singular	plural
nomino-accusative subject & direct object	<b>apa</b> <b>ati</b>	<b>apar</b> <b>atiiar</b>	<b>hiiul</b> <b>aθami</b>	<b>hiiulχva</b> <b>aθamiva</b>
genitive <b>-as / -al</b> 'of, from, belonging to'	<b>apas</b> <b>atiial</b>	<b>apasas</b> <b>atiiaras</b>	<b>hiiulas</b> <b>aθamiial</b>	<b>hiiulχval</b> <b>aθamival</b>
dative <b>-asi / -ale</b> 'for, to'	<b>apasi</b> <b>atiiale</b>	<b>apasasi</b> <b>atiiarasi</b>	<b>hiiulasi</b> <b>aθamiiale</b>	<b>hiiulχvale</b> <b>aθamivale</b>
partitive <b>-asa / -ala</b> 'part of, among'	<b>apasa</b> <b>atiiala</b>	<b>apasasa</b> <b>atiiarasa</b>	<b>hiiulasa</b> <b>aθamiiala</b>	<b>hiiulχvala</b> <b>aθamivala</b>
locative <b>-ai</b>	<b>apai</b>	<b>aparai</b>	<b>hiiulai</b>	<b>hiiulχvai</b>

'at, by, before'	<b>atiiai</b>	<b>atiiarai</b>	<b>aθamiiai</b>	<b>aθamivai</b>
committative <b>-a</b> 'with'	<b>apaia</b> <b>atiia</b>	<b>apara</b> <b>atiiara</b>	<b>hiuula</b> <b>aθamiia</b>	<b>hiulχvaia</b> <b>aθamivaia</b>
directive <b>-is</b> 'to, towards'	<b>apais</b> <b>atiiis</b>	<b>aparis</b> <b>atiiaris</b>	<b>hiuulis</b> <b>aθamiis</b>	<b>hiulχvais</b> <b>aθamivais</b>

Two genders exist, human and non-human (normally labeled *animate* and *inanimate* in the latest literature). Yet since animal terms present in the *Liber Linteus* appear to use "inanimate" plural marking, the terms *human* and *non-human* may more accurately describe the nature of this word class dichotomy. The human plural is marked by **-ar** while **-χva** (or its allomorph **-va**) is used for all non-human nouns.

The above cases may be combined with postpositions like **tra** 'throughout, across', **θi** 'in', **pi** 'by, with' and **ri** 'for' for further nuances.

## Adjectives

Adjectives are placed after the noun they modify. Unlike neighbouring Latin, adjectives completely lack case marking of their own. Noun-plus-noun phrases may be mistaken for noun-plus-adjective phrases but they are distinguishable by nuances in case marking. If a noun-plus-adjective is declined in the locative, only the noun bears the locative (see *Compound nouns*). Adjectives may be formed from both noun or verb stems by the suffix **-aχ**, eg. **mlaχ** 'blessed', **Rumaχ** 'Roman' and **\*araχ** 'lofty' (hence the noun **\*araχ** 'falcon', literally 'lofty one').

## Compound nouns

Two or more nouns may be placed one after the other in a kind of "reversed compound noun" with the head at the start rather than at the end, much like in French *hôtel-dieu*. Unlike in phrases where an adjective modifies its head noun, compounds are declined such that *\*all\** their individual members are declined with the same case (even possibly with the same accompanying postposition), as if to say that they are acting as a single unit. The equivalent of 'in the doghouse' in Etruscan then would be declined as *house-LOC=in dog-LOC(=in)*.

## Case embedding (Phrasal case marking)

Case endings may mark not only nouns but entire noun phrases. Subtleties that arise from this quirk can be confusing to the novice Etruscanist. A phrase in *TLE 890* reads **Tleχ-e Hanipal-us=cle** 'in the War of Hannibal', the equivalent of Latin *Bello Hannibalis*. The article

**=cle**, declined in the locative, agrees in case with the head noun of the internal phrase **Tlex-e Hanipal-us**. In effect, two layers of cases have been piled onto the end.

A more elaborate example, **Vanalasiai serunai murinail**, is found on the *Lemnos Stele*. Grouping shared cases together within layered brackets helps us break down its full complexity:

[**Vanal**-GEN [**seruna murina**]-LOC]-GEN.

In other words, a compound noun with both elements marked with the same locative case, **seruna-i murina-i**, has been further declined by the genitive case in **-(a)l** in agreement with preceding **Vanal-asi-al** which confusingly bears a second genitive of its very own. The combined effect leads to a possible translation of 'of (those) of Vanal in the funerary urn'.

### Pronouns

	1ps 'I'	2ps 'you'	3ps animate 'he, she'	3ps inanimate 'it'
nominative	<b>mi</b>	<b>*zu</b>	<b>an</b>	<b>in</b>
accusative	<b>mini</b>	<b>*zini</b>		
oblique			<b>ana</b>	

The case system of pronouns is impoverished in comparison to that of nouns. Unlike nouns, pronouns distinguish between nominative and accusative cases in 1<sup>st</sup> and, presumably, 2<sup>nd</sup> persons. Rather than case inflection, pronouns rely more heavily on postpositions in oblique cases. Thus **mini-pi** 'mine, with me' or **mini-ri** 'for me'. While the second person singular pronoun has not been found to date (despite false claims that the inanimate noun **un** 'libation' is this pronoun), the author suggests **\*zu** based on expectations derived from the Indo-Aegean hypothesis and has taken liberties to flesh out the system above to attempt a more coherent picture. The rare 3ps animate oblique, **ana**, is attested in *TLE 27* but no such corresponding oblique form is found for the paradigm of its inanimate counterpart. Oblique forms in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person were most often conveyed by the more-nuanced demonstrative declension below.

### Demonstratives

	proximal 'this'	distal 'that'	relative 'who'
nominative	<b>ca</b>	<b>ta</b>	<b>pa</b>

accusative		<b>can</b>	<b>tan</b>	<b>pan</b>
genitive	type-I	<b>cas</b>	<b>tas</b>	<b>pas</b>
	type-II	<b>cal</b>	<b>tal</b>	<b>pal</b>
dative	type-I	<b>casi</b>	<b>tasi</b>	<b>pasi</b>
	type-II	<b>cale</b>	<b>tale</b>	<b>pale</b>
partitive	type-I	<b>casa</b>	<b>tasa</b>	<b>pasa</b>
	type-II	<b>cala</b>	<b>tala</b>	<b>pala</b>
locative		<b>cai, cain</b>	<b>tai, tain</b>	<b>pai, pain</b>
commitative		<b>caia</b>	<b>taia</b>	<b>paia</b>
directive		<b>cais</b>	<b>tais</b>	<b>pais</b>

As with non-3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns, demonstratives also have distinct forms for the nominative and accusative cases yet use the full complement of case endings from the nominal declension. They lack plural marking. As postpositional clitics in later stages of Etruscan, the deictic meaning of the demonstratives was lost and they effectively became definite articles. This development led to the disambiguation in Late Etruscan of definite subjects and definite objects simply by appending the appropriate case form of the article (eg. **θi-ta** 'the water [nom.].' vs. **θi-tn** 'the water [acc.]').

## Verbs

	active	mediopassive (-in-)
infinitive	<b>luφ</b> 'to cross, crossing' <b>tau</b> 'to see, seeing' <b>am</b> 'to be, being'	<b>lupin</b> 'to be crossed' <b>tvin</b> 'to appear' <b>arin</b> 'to rise'
present-future (non-past) -a	<b>(an) lupai</b> '(s)he crosses' <b>(an) tva</b> '(s)he sees' <b>(an) ama</b> '(s)he is'	<b>(in) lupin</b> 'it is crossed' <b>(in) tvin</b> 'it appears' <b>(in) arin</b> 'it rises'
past -ai	<b>(an) lupai</b> '(s)he crossed' <b>(an) tvai</b> '(s)he saw' <b>(an) amai</b> '(s)he was'	<b>(in) lupinai</b> 'it was crossed' <b>(in) tvinai</b> 'it appeared' <b>(in) arinai</b> 'it rose'

participle -u / -aθ	lupu 'crossed' tvau 'seen' amaθ 'been'	lupinu 'crossed' tvinu 'apparent' arinθ 'raised'
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Any chain of affixes following the verb root follows this synopsis: VERB-*mood-aspect-tense*. The verb may appear alone or with any combination of suffixes conveying mood, aspect and/or tense. As in many languages like Japanese, subject pronouns may be freely dropped from a sentence but are nonetheless required when context is lacking in order to disambiguate different persons.

Two moods exist, active (the default mood) and mediopassive. The mediopassive mood omits the presentive marker found in the active mood and is used when conveying a reflexive action, that is, an action done to or by oneself (eg. 'he shaved', 'she sits', 'it rises'), or when speaking of the patient as subject of the sentence (eg. 'It was made by you' rather than 'you made it'). Thus the mediopassive form of **tra** is **trin** 'it pours; it is poured' and its corresponding past form would be **trinai** 'it poured'.

Available aspects include perfective **-ac-**, stative **-as-**, causative-factitive **-un-** and passive **-iχ-**. Thus further forms like **canacu** 'brought' and **zilχunace** 'has been made a supervisor' are possible.

The Etruscan verb cleaves time into a present-future (non-past) tense on the one hand and a past tense on the other. While on the surface it appears that **-a** literally marks the present-future, it was likely once a generic, tenseless subject marker for all persons singular and plural. This may help explain its apparent absence in the mediopassive present-future where the agent as subject is deposed to object. To the present-future is attached an additional **-i** to indicate past tense, forming **-ai** in both Old Etruscan and Lemnian. By Late Etruscan, this is reduced to **-e**. Participles are divided into transitives in **-u** and intransitive-statives in **-aθ**.

## Numerals

1	θu	10	śar
2	zal	20	zaθrum
3	ci	30	ciialχ
4	huθ	40	*huθalχ

5	<b>maχ</b>	50	<b>muvalχ</b>
6	<b>śa</b>	60	<b>śaialχ</b>
7	<b>samφ</b>	70	<b>samφalχ</b>
8	<b>*cazpa</b>	80	<b>cazpalχ</b>
9	<b>nurφ</b>	90	<b>*nurφalχ</b>

Occurrences are counted by way of the suffix **-zi** (eg. **θunzi** 'once', **zalzi** > **eslz** 'twice', **cizi** 'thrice', etc.). The distributive suffix is **-ur** (eg. **θunur** 'one each', **zalur** 'two each', etc.).

Calendar dates are marked by the directive suffix (eg. **zaθrumis Acalve** 'on the 20th of Acalva').

Unfortunately, the terms for 'hundred' or higher numbers, which Etruscans certainly had, remain unknown. Afterall these higher numbers were typically represented with only numeric symbols and not spelled out in full.