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# A grammar of Ik (Icé-tód) : Northeast Uganda's last thriving Kuliak language

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# A grammar of Ik (Icé-tód)

Northeast Uganda's last thriving Kuliak language

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# A grammar of Ik (Icé-tód)

Northeast Uganda's last thriving Kuliak language

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ter verkrijging van
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
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geboren te Atmore, Alabama USA

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To my parents, Arlin & Velma:

Dad, for imparting his way with words and his search for truth,

Mom, for showing how to learn the world with love and wonder.

And both, for taking a young boy to Africa long ago...

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And last but not least, I acknowledge my Lord Jesus Christ, the Grammar of God, for τὰ πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται· καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν—“all things were created through him and for him, and he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:16-17)—including the intricacies of the Ik language. I offer this labor of love for his glory and the advance of his reign on Earth.

*In Memory of:*

Lochiyo Gax Gabriel (197?-2011)
Lopuwa Paul (198?-2014)

*Ik friends whose lives were cut short by sickness*

# Foreword

This book contains *a* grammar of Ik, not *the* grammar. It is really just a 'state of knowledge' report of one individual non-Ik linguist at one point in history. Of the many topics covered in the following pages, some are no doubt incorrectly analyzed, while others could probably have been correctly analyzed in more than one way. And then, of course, the ways of phrasing the descriptions of each linguistic entity number to infinity.

Trying to capture the grammar of a living language linearly on paper is a little like photographing an elusive wild animal. As it darts through the underbrush, you snap your photo. What the photo captures is true: the shape and contours of the animal, its color and patterns, its mode of movement. But as true as the photo may be, it in no way does justice to the living beast. In the same way, a written grammar can trace the structural features of a language: its phonemes, morphemes, syntactic structures. But seen in light of the living language in use, the grammar pales in comparison. Even after completing this project, all I have to do is walk through the neighborhood, overhear a conversation, or attend a public function to learn something totally new about the language. After cataloguing all the phonemes, morphemes, and many lexemes, I can still hear a string of Ik speech whose meaning escapes me entirely. I have tried to write a true description of Ik, but the language in use is much more colorful…and alive.

With this grammar I have also tried to initiate a philological tradition for Ik—'philological' in the etymological sense of 'love of learning', yes, but also in the sense of language study from written sources. From now on, one can study Ik from books alone, perhaps furthering the inquiry into the relationships between East African languages and where they came from. Attending to these questions is attending to the people who speak these languages, and this is one way we can communicate our love for them too.

*“Man [and the language he speaks: TBS] is a mystery. It needs to be unraveled, and if you spend your whole life unraveling it, don’t say you’ve wasted time. I am studying that mystery because I want to be a human being.”*
F. Dostoevsky 1839.

*“To decipher man [and the language he speaks: TBS] is essentially to try to find out how the world was made and how it ought to go on making itself. The science of man is the practical and theoretical science of hominisation. It means profound study of the past and of origins. But still more, it means constructive experiment pursued on a continually renewed object.”*
Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955)

*“Grammar would appear to represent the pinnacle of humanness.”*
Martin Edwardes (2010)

# Abbreviations

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | first person | DISTR | distributive |
| 2 | second person | DP | dummy pronoun |
| 3 | third person | EMPH | emphatic particle |
| A | transitive subject | EV | epenthetic vowel |
| ABL | ablative | EXC | exclusive |
| ABST | abstractive | FF | final form |
| ACC | accusative | FILL | filler word |
| ADJ.PL | adjectival plural | FUT2 | removed future |
| ADV | adverb | FUT3 | remote future |
| AGT | agentive | G | glide (semi-vowel) |
| AND | andative | GEN | genitive |
| ANPH | anaphoric | H | high tone |
| ATR | advanced tongue root | HORT | hortative |
| AUX | auxiliary | HYPO | hypothetical |
| BHVR | behaviorative | IDEO | ideophone |
| C | consonant | IMP | imperative |
| CAUS | causative | INC | inclusive |
| CC | copula complement | INCH | inchoative |
| COMP | completive | INF | infinitve |
| COMPL | complementizer | INFR | inferential |
| CONF | confirmational | INS | instrumental |
| CONJ | conjunction | INT | intentional |
| COP | copulative | INTJ | interjection |
| CS | copula subject | IPFV | imperfective |
| DAT | dative | IPS | impersonal passive |
| DEF | definite | IRR | irrealis |
| DEM | demonstrative | L | low tone |
| DIM | diminutive | M | mid pitch |
| DIST | distal | MED | medial |

| | |
|---|---|
| MID | middle |
| N | noun |
| NF | non-final form |
| NOM | nominative |
| NP | noun phrase |
| O | object |
| OBL | oblique |
| OPT | optative |
| PASS | passive |
| PAT | patientive |
| PHYS1 | physical property I |
| PHYS2 | physical property II |
| PL | plurative, plural |
| PLUR | pluractional |
| POSS | possessive |
| PRES | distended present |
| PRF | perfect |
| PRO | pronoun |
| PROX | proximal |
| PSSM | possessum |
| PST1 | recent past |
| PST2 | removed past |
| PST3 | remote past |
| QUOT | quotative particle |
| REAL | realis |
| RECIP | reciprocal |
| REFL | reflexive |
| REL | relative pronoun |
| S | subject |
| SEQ | sequential |
| SG | singular |
| SIML | simultaneous |
| SING | singulative |
| SPS | sequential impersonal passive |
| STAT | stative |
| SUB | substantive |
| SUBJ | subjunctive |
| V | verb, vowel |
| VCS | verbless clause subject |
| VEN | venitive |

## Symbols

| | |
|---|---|
| ∅ | zero realization |
| * | proto- or archaic form |
| ** | ungrammatical |
| → | realized as, progressively assimilates |
| ← | regressively assimilates |
| ↛ | is not realized as |
| = | results in |
| ≠ | does not result in |
| [ ] | phonetic form, allophone |
| / / | phonemic form, allomorph |
| { } | morphemic form |
| - | morpheme boundary |
| = | clitic boundary |
| + | joined to |
| > | historically becomes |
| ˡ | downdrift, downstep |
| ˊ | high tone or pitch |
| ˋ | low pitch |
| ˷ | low-falling pitch |
| | mid-to-high pitch rise |
| ˆ | high-to-low pitch fall |
| ˉ | mid pitch |
| ⁺ | floating [+ATR] |
| ‖ | pause |
| † | deceased |

# Affixes

| *Affix* | *Abbreviation* | *Full name* | *Section* |
|---|---|---|---|
| -∅ | [OBL] | Oblique Case | §6.3.1 |
| -∅ | [IRR] | Irrealis Modality | §7.7.1 |
| -a$^{+}$ | NOM | Nominative Case | §6.3.2 |
| -a$^{+}$ | REAL | Realis Modality | §7.7.2 |
| -aák$^{+}$- | DISTR | Distributive Adjectival | §7.10.6 |
| -amá$^{+}$- | PAT | Patientive Nominalizer | §7.2.4 |
| -án$^{+}$- | STAT | Stative Adjectival | §7.10.3 |
| -aní- | IPS | Impersonal Passive | §7.9.3 |
| -anó | OPT/HORT | Optative First Plural/Hortative | §7.7.4 |
| -ásí- | ABST | Abstractive Nominalizer | §7.2.3 |
| -áti | 3PL | Third Person Plural | §5.1.2, §7.5 |
| -ɔ | INS | Instrumental Case | §6.3.3 |
| -ɔ | ABL | Ablative Case | §6.3.4 |
| -ɔnɪ- | INF | Intransitive Infinitive | §7.2.1 |
| -ɔ́sí- | PASS | Passive | §7.9.2 |
| -ɛ | GEN | Genitive Case | §6.3.5 |
| -ɛdɛ- | POSS.SG | Possessive Singulative | §4.2.6 |
| -ɛ́s | INT | Intentional Modality | §7.7.3 |
| -ɛ́s | IPFV | Imperfective Aspect | §7.8.3 |
| -ɛsɛ́ | SPS | Sequential Impersonal Passive | §7.9.4 |
| -ɛ́sí- | INF | Transitive Infinitive | §7.2.2 |
| -ɛt- | VEN | Venitive Directional | §7.4.2 |
| -ɛt- | INCH | Inchoative Aspect | §7.8.5 |
| -ɛ́ | IMP.SG | Imperative Singular | §7.7.6 |
| -ɪ | 3SG | Third Person Singular | §5.1.2, §7.5 |
| -í- | PLUR | Pluractional Aspect | §7.8.8 |
| -ɪá- | 1SG[SEQ] | Sequential First Person Singular | §7.8.1 |
| -íɔ́ | IMP.PL | Imperative Plural | §7.7.6 |

| *Affix* | *Abbreviation* | *Full name* | *Section* |
|---|---|---|---|
| -ídɪ | 2SG | Second Person Singular | §5.1.2, §7.5 |
| -íí | 1SG | First Person Singular | §5.1.2, §7.5 |
| -ɪk- | ADJ.PL | Plural Adjectival | §7.10.5 |
| -ɪka- | PL | Plurative III | §4.2.3 |
| -íkó- | PL | Plurative I | §4.2.1 |
| -ím- | MID | Middle 2 | §7.9.5 |
| -ɪmá | 1PL.EXC[OPT] | Optative First Plural Exclusive | §7.7.4 |
| -ɪmá- | 1PL.EXC[SEQ] | Sequential First Plural Exclusive | §7.8.1 |
| -ímí | 1PL.EXC | First Person Plural Exclusive | §5.1.2, §7.5 |
| -ínɔ́sí- | RECIP | Reciprocal | §7.9.6 |
| -ɪnɛ́ | 1SG[OPT] | Optative First Singular | §7.7.4 |
| -ɪnɪ | 3PL[SEQ] | Sequential Third Person Plural | §7.8.1 |
| -ɪnɪ- | POSS.PL | Possessive Plurative | §4.2.5 |
| -ísínɪ | 1PL.INC | First Person Plural Inclusive | §5.1.2, §7.5 |
| -ɪt- | CAUS | Causative | §7.9.1 |
| -ítí | 2PL | Second Person Plural | §5.1.2, §7.5 |
| -ítíní- | PL | Plurative II | §4.2.2 |
| -ka$^{+}$ | ACC | Accusative Case | §6.3.6 |
| -kɔ | COP | Copulative Case | §6.3.8 |
| -kɔ | SEQ | Sequential Aspect | §7.8.1 |
| -kɛ | DAT | Dative Case | §6.3.7 |
| -kɛ | SIML | Simultaneous Aspect | §7.8.2 |
| -nanesi- | BHVR | Behaviorative Verbalizer | §7.2.6 |
| -ʊkɔtí- | AND | Andative Directional | §7.4.1 |
| -ʊkɔtí- | COMP | Completive Aspect | §7.8.6 |
| -V́d- | PHYS1 | Physical Property I Adjectival | §7.10.1 |
| -VkV- | SUB | Substantive Nominalizer | §7.2.5 |
| -V́m- | MID | Middle 1 | §7.9.5 |
| -V́m- | PHYS2 | Physical Property II Adjectival | §7.10.2 |
| -Vma- | SING | Human Singulative | §4.2.7 |
| -ʹka$^{+}$ | PRF | Present Perfect Aspect | §7.8.7 |

## Morphemes grammaticalizing into affixes (?)

| *Morpheme* | *Abbreviation* | *Full name* | *Section* |
|---|---|---|---|
| -aɟíká- | INT.PL | Internal Plurative | §4.3.6 |
| -ama$^{+}$- | AGT.SG | Agentive Singular | §4.3.4 |
| -ɛní- | PSSM | Impersonal Possessum | §5.2 |
| -icé- | AGT.PL | Agentive Plural | §4.3.4 |
| -icíká- | VAR.PL | Variative Plurative | §4.3.7 |
| -imá- | DIM.SG | Diminutive Singular | §4.3.3 |
| -wicé- | DIM.PL | Diminutive Plural | §4.3.3 |

## Archaic Affixes

| *Affix* | *Function* | *Source* | *Section* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *a- | Gender marker? | ? | §4.1.4 |
| *a- | Verbal prefix | ? | §7.1.4 |
| *-a(t) | Singulative | Teso-Turkana/Cushitic? | §4.1.4 |
| *-áŋi- | First sg. possessive | Proto-/Pre-Kuliak? | §4.4 |
| *-ata- | Singulative | Teso-Turkana/Cushitic? | §4.1.4 |
| *-ati- | Singulative | Teso-Turkana/Cushitic? | §4.1.4 |
| *-atí- | Third sg. possessive | Proto-/Pre-Kuliak? | §4.4 |
| *ɔ-/o- | Gender marker? | ? | §4.1.4 |
| *ɛ-/e- | Verbal prefix | ? | §7.1.4 |
| *ha- | Verbal prefix | ? | §7.1.4 |
| *ɪ-/i- | Class 2 verbal prefix | Teso-Turkana | §7.1.4 |
| *-ísí- | Nominalizer | Eastern Nilotic | §7.2.3 |
| *-ita- | Singulative | Teso-Turkana | §4.1.4 |
| *-iti- | Singulative | Teso-Turkana | §4.1.4 |
| *-kɪ/ki- | Preposition, case? | (pre-)Nilotic | §4.1.4 |
| *lo-/lɔ- | Locative masc./neuter | Teso-Turkana | §4.1.4 |
| *na- | Locative feminine | Teso-Turkana | §4.1.4 |
| *-nan- | Nominalizer | ? | §7.2.5 |
| *nd(V)- | Interrogative | Proto-Nilo-Saharan | §5.4 |
| *nt(V)- | Interrogative | Proto-Nilo-Saharan | §5.4 |
| *ɲV- | Nominal gender | Teso-Turkana | §4.1.4 |
| *ŋa- | Feminine plural prefix | Teso-Turkana | §4.1.4 |
| *ŋi- | Masc./neuter plurative | Teso-Turkana | §4.1.4 |
| *-oo- | Second sg. possessive | Proto-/Pre-Kuliak? | §4.4 |
| *sɪ-/si- | Nominal prefix | (pre-)Nilotic | §4.1.4 |
| *tɔ-/to-/ta/ | Class I verbal subsec. | Teso-Turkana | §7.1.4 |
| *tɛ-/te- | Verbal prefix | ? | §7.1.4 |
| *tɪ-/ti- | Nominal prefix | ? | §4.1.4 |
| *tɪ-/ti- | Verbal prefix | ? | §7.1.4 |

| *Affix* | *Function* | *Source* | *Section* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *-Vc | Singulative | Cushitic | §4.1.4 |
| *-Vɗ- | Adjectival? | Proto-Nilo-Saharan? | §7.10.2 |
| *-Vk- | Adjectival? | Proto-Nilo-Saharan? | §7.10.2 |
| *-Vl- | Adjectival? | Proto-Nilo-Saharan? | §7.10.2 |
| *-Vɲ | Singulative | Cushitic | §4.1.4 |
| *-Vɲ- | Adjectival? | Proto-Nilo-Saharan? | §7.10.2 |
| *-Vŋ- | Adjectival? | Proto-Nilo-Saharan? | §7.10.2 |
| *-Vr- | Adjectival? | Proto-Nilo-Saharan? | §7.10.2 |
| *-Vs- | Adjectival? | Proto-Nilo-Saharan? | §7.10.2 |
| *-Vts’ | Singulative | Cushitic/Surmic? | §4.1.4 |

# Clitics

| *Clitic* | *Abbr.* | *Full name* | *Section* |
|---|---|---|---|
| =batse | PST2 | Removed Past Marker | §7.11 |
| =ɟá | ADV | Adverb: ‘so, then, just’ | §8.3 |
| =ɟɪkɪ | ADV | Adverb: ‘also, too, even’ | §8.3 |
| =kɔ́tɔ́ | ADV | Adverb: ‘so, then, but’ | §8.3 |
| =kɛ | DEM.SG.DIST | Distal Demonstrative Enclitic Sg. | §8.2.1 |
| =ki | DEM.PL | Distal Demonstrative Enclitic Pl. | §8.2.1 |
| =na | DEM.SG | Proximal Dem. Enclitic Sg. | §8.2.1 |
| =na | REL.SG | Non-Past Relative Pronoun Sg. | §5.6 |
| =náka | PST1 | Recent Past Marker | §7.11 |
| =ná-ka | DEM.SG-PST1 | Recent Past Demonstrative Sg. | §8.2.2 |
| | REL.SG-PST1 | Recent Past Relative Pronoun Sg. | §5.6 |
| =ɲáka | ADV | Adverb: ‘so, then, just’ | §8.3 |
| =nɔkɔ | PST3 | Remote Past Marker | §7.11 |
| =nɔ-kɔ | DEM.SG-PST3 | Remote Past Demonstrative Sg. | §8.2.2 |
| | REL.SG-PST3 | Remote Past Relative Pro. Sg. | §5.6 |
| =nɛ | DEM.SG.MED | Medial Demonstrative Enclitic Sg. | §8.2.1 |
| =ni | DEM.PL | Proximal Dem. Enclitic Pl. | §8.2.1 |
| =ni | REL.PL | Non-Past Relative Pronoun Pl. | §8.2.2 |
| | | | §5.6 |
| =ní-ki | DEM.PL-PST1 | Recent Past Demonstrative Pl. | §8.2.2 |
| | REL.PL-PST1 | Recent Past Relative Pronoun Pl. | §5.6 |
| =nu-ku | REL.PL-PST3 | Remote Past Demonstrative Pl. | §8.2.2 |
| | | Remote Past Relative Pronoun Pl. | §5.6 |
| =sɪ-na | DEM.SG-PST2 | Removed Past Demonstrative Sg. | §8.2.2 |
| | REL.SG-PST2 | Removed Past Relative Pro. Sg. | §5.6 |
| =si-ni | REL.PL-PST2 | Removed Past Demonstrative Pl. | §8.2.2 |
| | | Removed Past Relative Pro. Pl. | §5.6 |
| =ʰdɛ́ɛ́ | ANPH.SG | Anaphoric Demonstrative Sg. | §8.2.3 |
| =ʰdíí | ANPH.PL | Anaphoric Demonstrative Plural | §8.2.3 |

| *Clitic* | *Abbr.* | *Full name* | *Section* |
|---|---|---|---|
| =ˊdɛ | DP | Dummy Pronoun | §5.10, §6.6 |
| kɪ= | DIST | Distal Demonstrative Proclitic Sg. | §5.5, §8.2.4 |
| ki= | DIST | Distal Demonstrative Proclitic Pl. | §5.5, §8.2.4 |
| na= | PROX | Proximal Dem. Proclitic Sg. | §5.5, §8.2.4 |
| naˊ⁺= | CONJ | Subordinating Conjunction | §8.4.1 |
| ni= | PROX | Proximal Dem. Proclitic Pl. | §5.5, §8.2.4 |