









**:: FERNALESE PRONUNCIATION ::**  
**Bruce Rimell**

Fernalese pronunciation is fairly easy to master with only a few sounds that might present some difficulty. However, the system of transliteration into Roman characters does not represent the pronunciation of Fernalese precisely, but instead aims towards a neat balance between a reasonably accurate guide to the pronunciation of the language, and to make the grammar of the language more accessible and transparent than if an exact transliteration system were employed. There are thus differences between the actual pronunciation of Fernalese and the romanisation used to represent it. However, these differences are *always* regular: this is illustrated in the pronunciation guide at the end of this section.

The general pronunciation of Fernalese is lighter and more lyrical than English and most European languages – consonants generally lack the puff of breath that accompanies their English equivalents and vowels are always clearly expressed in both stressed and unstressed positions. Unlike most European languages, which distinguish between voiced and unvoiced consonants, Fernalese tends to lack voiced consonants (with the exception of **b**) – the main distinction tends to revolve around unvoiced consonants and voiced fricatives. Vowel sounds are always pure, without any gliding as in English, and remain the same in both stressed and unstressed positions.

**A**      **ó a**  
**A** is always pronounced in all positions as /æ/, that is to say, 'a' as in British English 'cat' and never 'ah' as in 'cart'. Combines with other vowels to make diphthongs **ae**, **ai** and **ao**.

**B**      **á ba á be ʘ bi ǎ bo ʘ bu**  
**B** is always pronounced in all positions as /b/, that is to say, 'b' as in English 'big'. There is a slight implosive element to this consonant, similar to the implosive 'b' in Japanese and some African languages.

**C**      **ʘ ca ɛ che ǎ chi ʘ co ʘ cu ǎ c**  
**C** is pronounced as /k/, that is to say 'c' as in English 'scan'. It lacks the puff of breath that accompanies the sound in English. At the end of a syllable it is clipped like a sharp 'g' sound. **C** is written as **c** in syllables **ca**, **co** and **cu** and as digraph **ch** in syllables **che** and **chi**. It is also written irregularly as **ch** in a few words such as **char** and **chuar**.

**D**      **ǎ da ʘ de ʘ di ʘ do ʘ du**  
**D** is always pronounced in all positions as /d/, that is to say, 'th' as in English 'the', but pronounced more softly.

**E**      **á e**  
**E** is always pronounced in all positions as /e/, that is to say, 'e' as in British English 'met', a pure clear vowel dissimilar to the glide often found in American English. Combines with other vowels to make diphthongs **ea**, **ei** and **eo**.

**F**      **ʘ fa ʘ fe ʘ fi ʘ fo ʘ fu ʘ f**  
In word-initial position, **f** is pronounced as /f/, that is to say, 'f' as in English 'fit' but without the puff of breath in the English equivalent. Otherwise it is pronounced as a light /v/ sound.

**H**      **ʘ ha ʘ he ʘ hi ʘ ho ʘ hu ʘ h**  
**H** is pronounced as /ʔ/, that is to say, a light glottal stop similar to the sound between the vowels in 'uh oh' or as in the Hawaiian consonant. It is never pronounced as English 'h'

**HU**      **ʘ ó hua ʘ-á hue ʘ ʘ hui ʘ ʘ huo**  
The digraph **hu** is always pronounced in all positions as /ʔw/, a glottal stop followed by 'w' as in English 'wall'. The letter **u** on its own is never found word-initially.

**I**      **ʘ i**  
In most positions **i** is pronounced /i/, that is to say, 'ee' as in English 'beet' or 'i' as in French 'dix', a pure vowel without any trace of a glide.

Before another vowel, **i** is pronounced as /j/, that is to say, 'y' as in English 'yes'. Thus **ia** is pronounced as /jæ/. 'ya', **ie** as /je/ 'ye' and **io** as /jo/, 'yo'. The combination **iu** is pronounced as /ju/ 'yu' but if this combination precedes a third vowel, **i** and **u** function as consonants /jw/

'yw' – for example **iu**a /jwæ/, /ywa/, pronounced as a single syllable. This can be a difficult combination to pronounce.

## L

𐌲 la 𐌵 le 𐌶 li 𐌷 lo 𐌸 lu 𐌹 l

**L** is pronounced as /l/, that is to say, the light 'l' as in 'light' found in Southern British English dialects or as in Russian лъ, and never as the dark 'l' as in 'dull'. **L** often transmutes to **R** in the middle or end of a word and there is sometimes free variation between the two sounds.

## M

𐌺 ma 𐌻 me 𐌼 mi 𐌽 mo 𐌾 mu 𐌿 m

**M** is always pronounced in all positions as /m/, that is to say, 'm' as in English 'met'. There is a slight implosive element to this consonant.

## N

𐍩 na 𐍪 ne 𐍫 ni 𐍬 no 𐍭 nu 𐍮 n

In syllable-initial position **n** is pronounced as /n/, that is to say, 'n' as in English 'net' but with the tongue slightly further forward in the mouth, similar to Spanish or Japanese.

Following a vowel and preceding another consonant, however, **n** nasalises the preceding vowel and is itself not directly pronounced. This is also the case when **n** occurs at the end of a word.

## O

𐍯 o

**O** is nearly always pronounced as /o/, that is to say, 'o' as in British English 'pot' or /â/, the 'aw' in American English 'hawk'. This is a pure clear vowel without any glide. Combines with other vowels to make diphthongs **oa**, **oe** and **oi**.

In word-final position, **o** is pronounced as /u/ and the combination **-on** in word-final position is pronounced as a nasalised /u<sup>n</sup>/ - this variation applies to the stand-alone pronoun **non** but does not apply to many monosyllabic particles such as **io**, **ho** and **to**, which are pronounced as /o/ above.

## P

𐍲 pa 𐍳 pe 𐍴 pi 𐍵 po 𐍶 pu

**P** is always pronounced in all positions as /p/, that is to say, 'p' as in English 'spoon'. It lacks the puff of breath that accompanies the sound in English and sounds rather light.

## R

𐍷 ra 𐍸 re 𐍹 ri 𐍺 ro 𐍻 ru 𐍼 r

In syllable-initial position, **r** is pronounced as /r/, that is to say, the gentle flap or light trill 'r' as in Spanish 'para' or Japanese, never as in English 'r'.

In syllable-final position, **r** is pronounced as /ɾ/, that is to say, a lightly-voiced velar fricative similar to 'r' in French 'gare' or in German 'ruhe'. However, before another syllable-initial **r**, the combination **-rr-** is pronounced as a strong trill, as the 'rr' in Spanish 'tierra'. The digraph **ry** is always pronounced as /dj/ as the 'dy' in English 'dyou'

## S

𐍿 sa 𐎀 se 𐎁 si 𐎂 so 𐎃 su

**S** is always pronounced in all positions as /s/, that is to say, 'sh' as in English 'she', but with the tongue further forward in the mouth to create a tighter sound similar to the Japanese sound, and lacking the puff of breath that accompanies the equivalent English consonant.

## T

𐎄 ta 𐎅 te 𐎆 ti 𐎇 to 𐎈 tu 𐎉 t

In syllable-initial position, **t** is pronounced as /t/, that is to say, 't' as in English 'stake', but without the puff of breath that accompanies the equivalent English consonant, and as such sounds rather light. Between two vowels, this letter often sounds a little like English 'd'.

## TL

𐎊 tla 𐎋 tle 𐎌 tli 𐎍 tlo 𐎎 tlu

The digraph **tl** is pronounced as /t/, that is to say, 'tl' as in a carefully-pronounced English 'atlas' or as in the common digraph in Nahuatl.

## TX

𐎏 txa 𐎐 txe 𐎑 txi 𐎒 txo 𐎓 txu

The digraph **tx** is pronounced as /t͡ʃ/ or /d͡ʒ/, that is to say, a sound very similar to 'ch' in English 'chair' or 'j' as in English 'jar', but without the puff of breath which accompanies 'ch' and with the tongue further forward in the mouth to create a tighter sound similar to the Japanese sound.

# TZ

Ƨ *tza* Ƨ *tze* Ƨ *tzi* Ƨ *tzo* Ƨ *tzu*

The digraph **tz** is always pronounced in all positions as /c/, that is to say, 'ts' in English 'cats', but lighter and without the puff of breath that accompanies the sound in English.

# U

Ƨ *u*

**U** is always pronounced as a consonant /w/, never as a vowel /u/. This holds true even between consonants and when occurring at the end of a word, such that for example the Fernalese words Ƨ *deru* /dherw/ and Ƨ *cusu* /kušj/ both have one syllable and are somewhat strange to pronounce.

The combination **ui** is pronounced as /wi/ 'wi' but if this combination precedes a third vowel, **u** and **i** function as consonants /wj/ 'wy' – for example **uia** /wya/, pronounced as a single syllable. This can be a difficult combination to pronounce.

# X

Ƨ *xa* Ƨ *xe* Ƨ *xi* Ƨ *xo* Ƨ *xu*

**X** is always pronounced in all positions as /ž/, that is to say, a sound 'zh' like the 's' in English 'leisure' but with the tongue further forward in the mouth to create a tighter sound similar to the Japanese sound, and lacking the puff of breath that accompanies the equivalent English consonant.

# Y

Ƨ *ya* Ƨ *ye* Ƨ *yi* Ƨ *yo* Ƨ *yu*

**Y** is always pronounced in all positions as /ɣ/, that is to say, the modern Greek gamma, a lightly voiced velar fricative, similar to a sound medially between English 'y' and English 'g'. It can be a little difficult to pronounce. The combination **yi** before a vowel in particular sounds like an intense, emphatic 'yy'

# Z

Ƨ *za* Ƨ *ze* Ƨ *zi* Ƨ *zo* Ƨ *zu* Ƨ *z*

**Z** is always pronounced in all positions as /s/, that is to say, 's' in English 's', but lighter and without the puff of breath that accompanies the sound in English.

## Phonological Considerations

The above analysis of Fernalese sounds demonstrates that each letter or digraph represents a phoneme in the language, and that a couple of the phonemes display allophony dependent on whether they are syllable-initial or -final. From the diagram below we can conclude that Fernalese has 24 phonemes, bearing in mind the allophony particularly of letter **r**.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular/ Glottal
Nasals	<b>m</b> /m/			<b>n</b> /n/				
Stops	<b>b</b> /b/ <b>p</b> /p/			<b>t</b> /t~c/		<b>ry</b> /dj/	<b>c</b> /k~g/	<b>h</b> /ʔ/
Affricates				<b>tz</b> /c/	<b>tx</b> /č/			
Fricatives		<b>f</b> /f~v/	<b>d</b> /d/	<b>z</b> /s/	<b>s</b> /š/ <b>x</b> /ž/		<b>y</b> /ɣ/	<b>r</b> /r~ʀ/
Liquids	<b>u</b> /w/			<b>l</b> /l/ <b>tl</b> /ʎ/	<b>r</b> /r~ʀ/			
			Vowels	<b>a</b> /æ/, <b>e</b> /e/, <b>i</b> /i~j/, <b>o</b> /o~u/				



**:: FERNALESE SYLLABLES AND SOUND CONTACTS ::**  
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Being an agglutinative language, where parts of speech slot together to make long words, Fernallese has some fairly strict rules on which sounds can come in contact with each other, and how sounds change when placed adjacent to each other. Fernallese also has a strict syllable structure. A brief knowledge of these will help in understanding the grammar of the language.

**Fernallese Syllable Structure**

Unlike English, which allows complex consonant clusters like 'str-' in 'street' and '-ldfl-' in 'wildflower', Fernallese has a very strict syllable structure which minimises consonant clusters. All syllables in Fernallese must contain one or two vowels. Syllables can begin with any consonant except **u**, or any consonant plus **u** or **i** but can only end with a limited set of consonants. This list should clarify:

V	ó	a	'name announcer'
V <sub>1</sub> V <sub>2</sub>	óꝛ	ao	'world'
CV	ɔ	la	'place'
CV <sub>1</sub> V <sub>2</sub>	ɔ-ɔ	mae	'eye'
CiV	ꝛꝛ	bio	'life; be alive'
CuV	óꝛꝛ	cuo	'wear'
CiV <sub>1</sub> V <sub>2</sub>	ɔóꝛ	fiai	'wait'
CuV <sub>1</sub> V <sub>2</sub>	óóꝛ	cuai	'eternity'
CVC	ɔꝛ	ban	'good; well; healthy'
CV <sub>1</sub> V <sub>2</sub> C	ɔ-ɔꝛ	daet	'maintain, cherish'
CiVC	ꝛóꝛ	rian	'weave, create'
CuVC	ꝛꝛꝛ	fuon	'the one who...'
CVCu	ɔꝛꝛ	deru	'portal'
CuCV	óꝛꝛ	куси	'hide'
CuC	ꝛóꝛ	luc	'inner light'
VC	ꝛꝛ	il	'house'
V <sub>1</sub> V <sub>2</sub> C	ꝛꝛꝛ	ion	'waken, come alive'

Syllable final consonants can only be the following letters: **-c, -h, -n, -r, -t**, and more rarely **-f, -l, -m, -z, -(u)**.

Syllables can begin with...	...with medial vowels...	...and can end with...
<b>b-, c(h)-, d-, f-, h-, l-, m-, n-, p-, r-, s-, t-, tl-, tx-, tz-, x-, y-, z-</b>	V <sub>1</sub> : <b>-a-, -e-, -i-, -o-</b> V <sub>1</sub> V <sub>2</sub> : <b>-ae-, -ai-, -ao-, -ea-, -ei-, -eo-, -oa-, -oe-, -oi-</b>	<b>-c, -h, -n, -r, -t -f, -l, -m, -z, -(u)-, -(uh)</b>

There are occasional words ending in **-tz** such as **chetz** 'ask' – these always combine with a vowel **e** to preserve the sound rules above. If all of this seems rather abstract, it will become clearer as we begin to use the language and delve into the grammar, particularly in the next section, *Basic Fernallese Phrases*.

## Sound Contact in Fernalese

Because Fernalese is agglutinative and synthetic, syllables come into contact with each other to make long words that, in English, might be the equivalent of a sentence. The limited syllable structure of the language means that sometimes, sounds change when in contact with each other at syllable boundaries. A simple example should clarify. To ask 'how are you?' in Fernalese, one says **Δ t ʒ ʔ ʔ bantitxa?** (literally: *are you well?*) and this word actually consists of four parts of speech, or morphemes:

<b>ban-</b>	'good, well, healthy'
<b>-(e)t</b>	'habitual aspect' – denotes events that are regular, usual or customary
<b>-iz</b>	'you' - 2 <sup>nd</sup> person
<b>-sa</b>	'yes/no question marker'

The vowel **e** of the habitual marker drops out – we'll talk about this in the grammar. But note when the **z** of **-iz** comes into contact with the **s** of **-sa**, the two sounds fuse into **tx**, making a fused suffix **-itxa**. This is because in Fernalese, the consonant combination **-zs-** at a syllable boundary is impossible. It becomes **-tx-** instead.

**ban – (e)t – iz – sa** becomes **ban – t – itxa**

There are quite a few examples of these, mostly relating to the sounds **-t-**, **-s-**, **-z-**, **-tx-** and **-tz-** although there are rules pertaining to **-c-** and to vowels also. Here's the full list, with examples:

### 1. -t combines with another sound

-t + z- becomes -tz-	<b>sat</b> 'fly' + <b>zono</b> 'music'	> <b>satzono</b> 'lapwing'
-t + x- becomes -tx-	<b>yat</b> 'energy' + <b>xan</b> 'happy'	> <b>yatxan</b> 'delighted'
-t + t- becomes -tt-	<b>lit</b> 'reveal' + <b>tero</b> 'journey'	> <b>littero</b> 'insight'
-t + l- becomes -tl-	<b>bit</b> 'rush' + <b>lar</b> 'run'	> <b>bitlar</b> 'rushing'

### 2. -t changes in contact with another sound

-t + s- becomes -tx-	<b>daet</b> 'cherish' + <b>sai</b> 'bless'	> <b>daetxai</b> 'blessing'
-t + d- becomes -td-	<b>lit</b> 'reveal' + <b>deo</b> 'swap'	> <b>litdeo</b> 'have an idea'

### 3. -t elides in contact with another sound

-t + tz- becomes -tz-	<b>lit</b> 'reveal' + <b>tze</b> 'person'	> <b>litze</b> 'teacher'
-t + tx- becomes -tx-	<b>yat</b> 'energy' + <b>txac</b> 'heart'	> <b>yatxac</b> 'enthusiastic'
-t + tl- becomes -tl-	<b>lut</b> 'red' + <b>tlai</b> 'man'	> <b>lutlai</b> 'red man'

### 4. -z combines with another sound

-z + t- becomes -tz-	<b>faz</b> 'travel' + <b>timi</b> 'bird'	> <b>fatzimi</b> 'migratory bird'
-z + z- becomes -zz-	<b>caz</b> 'search' + <b>zen</b> 'way'	> <b>catzen</b> 'religion'
-z + tz- becomes -ttz-	<b>caz</b> 'hunt' + <b>tze</b> 'person'	> <b>cattze</b> 'hunter'

### 5. -z changes with another sound

-z + s- becomes -ts-	<b>-iz</b> 'you' + <b>-sa</b> 'question'	> <b>-itxa</b> 'are you...?'
-z + x- becomes -tx-	<b>oz</b> 'inner eye' + <b>txahi</b> 'tea'	> <b>ottxahi</b> 'entheogenic drink, psychedelic brew'

### 6. any consonant followed by hu-

-C + hu- becomes -Cu-	<b>diat</b> 'turn around' + <b>-huia</b> 'trickster'	> <b>diatuiua</b> 'trickster'
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### 7. -l followed by r-

-l + r- becomes -rr-	<b>il</b> 'house' + <b>-ra</b> 'go, towards'	> <b>irra</b> 'go home'
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### 8. two similar vowels together – one elides

-V + V- becomes -V-	<b>ona</b> 'woman' + <b>alde</b> 'cow'	> <b>onalde</b> 'cow which has borne calves'
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### 9. -c elides with c-

-c + c(h)- becomes -c(h)-	<b>bac</b> 'magic' + <b>catar</b> 'sing'	> <b>bacatar</b> 'sing magically'
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