

Achumawi Database

Summary of February 2023 work

You can download the current backup from

- <http://zelligharris.org/Achumawi/achumawi-db.html>

I have updated the webonary at

- <https://www.webonary.org/odissi/>

The sections in this report are

1. Funding and plans
2. Pronouns.
3. Two Rp roots *n* and *s*.
4. Thoughts on levels of grammar and lexicon.
5. Roots can stand alone as words.
6. Computer issues

1. Funding and plans. The NSF is funding the Pit River Languages Project for another three years.

1. The primary aim is to wrap up the Achumawi work in publishable form—dictionary, grammar, and collection of texts—and ‘repatriate’ the Achumawi database to language activists in the Indigenous Language Network (ILN). I hope to continue as a linguistic consultant for them as needed.
2. A second aim is to begin a FLEx database for Atsugewi (hence the name, “Pit River Languages Project”). I will help Paul Cason working with Leonard Talmy, the linguist who worked with Selena Lamarr 1968-1971. We will transcribe Talmy’s field record into FLEx and make recordings of his pronunciations of sufficient vocabulary to exemplify the phonology. Further work with archival materials should be planned, and it may be possible to do some during the grant period. This database will belong to the ILN.
3. A third aim is to provide training for others to create and begin building a FLEx database for their respective languages. There is interest from Michelle Radcliff-Garcia for Winemem Wintu, Brennan Ramsey for Yana, and perhaps James Sarmento for Shasta.

There are unspent funds in the Achumawi DB grant that ends on 31 May, largely because the pandemic curtailed travel. This money must be used before 30 November 2023. I am seeing if I can use it for travel and accommodation expense for participants in (2) and (3).

2. Pronouns. I am building an inventory of all the combinations of pronominal verb prefixes that occur in the database. This will not yield a report immediately.

3. Two Rp roots *n* and *s*. The Rp class (*p* for ‘periphery’) is a subclass of Rcv roots with C(V) form. Some occur in the periphery before the three slots of the central verb stem template, some after it, and some, perhaps all, may also occur in slot 2 as the main root.

The *n* root indicates a change of manifest state. I have previously listed examples with glosses ‘move, go, come, bring, grow’ as a main root, and ‘repeat, severally, intensive’ before the main stem.

- *yáána qa tóosi* ‘There goes/comes/passes/appears a deer’.

- *ís yáána* ‘someone is coming’
- *tinúúwí innáací* ‘blue camas growing’ (name of a place where camas grows)

Here are examples illustrating a diversity of meanings:

- *c^héy’é ání uptó’ooyí’ ttiyí* ‘wherever might they have gone’
- *ckwatuúúíisi* ‘shot’, *ckwintuúúíisi* ‘shot accidentally’
- *timáqci* ‘travel’, *tinmáqci* ‘travel far’
- *sataawááyí* ‘I cook’ (stirring hot stones in basket); *sintaawááyí* ‘I look for it/him’

There is an *s* root in this class (alongside the *s* roots glossed ‘say’, ‘sing’, and ‘hunt’). Glosses include ‘unmanifest, indefinite, be unable, veil, clothe’.

- *tissíici* ‘wear clothes’, *tisaswáaci* ‘clothes’ (*wáaci* ‘one does continuously’)
- *tíiyí* ‘be, manifest’ (*c^hááwa tíiyí* ‘where is he?’, *kac^hú tatíyí tíiyí* ‘her actual mother’), *tinááyí* ‘prepare, make, replicate’
- *tísanaayí* ‘send for, wait for’ = *s* ‘unmanifest’ *n* ‘change’ *y* ‘manifest’

There are many examples of *waci* and *swaci*. I have not made a collection to inspect for consistent semantic differences.

4. Thoughts on levels of grammar and lexicon. In any language there are idiomatic or ‘frozen’ expressions whose meaning diverges from a simple recitation of the meanings of the individual words in the expression, for example English ‘spilled the beans’ and ‘lost his head’. So likewise with the range and specializations of meanings of Achumawi roots. This is especially so of Rcv roots in peripheral locations, such as the uses of *n* and *s* just noted.

The headwords in the lexicon include complex words as well as roots. The entry for a complex word should include its analysis into roots and affixes, and the entry for a root should give examples of words in which it occurs. Not an easy task, but straightforward.

The grammar must describe not only how words can be linearized into syntactic constructions, but also the construction of words. In traditional grammar, this is called word derivation, and shades into etymology. One might invoke scruples about describing the language as it was at the time of record (19th-20th centuries) without reference to reconstructed history. But this pales to pointlessness in face of the urgent needs of language revitalization for vocabulary not found in the database, and as well the requirements for reconstructing linguistic and cultural history.

5. Roots can stand alone as words.

pi ‘set in place, set in ground, place upright’
tuupímci, tatuupímci ‘set in ground, place upright’
sánaapímcumí ‘set (pegs) in a line’

pi ‘this; here!’

ka ‘exert intention’

ka, waka ‘agentive’ (after a noun w/ transitive V)

ís iikááci ‘living, being alive’

aka ‘choosing from variety’

tikasaacumí ‘drive cattle across thither’

Here are examples with *aka*:

mímééka aka kinááyá ‘You’re the only one not related to him’

qa tóólollíni aka tíici ‘Do everything’ (all the variety of tasks)

tóólollí aka úicóo. ‘Do anything you like’

tóóllóllí áka iicí. ‘Doing anything; (he) does anything’
aka sisi’ ‘I joked’ *aka tissa!*; ‘make a joke’; *t^hús yééwa aka tissa!* ‘tell a good joke’
aka issi’ ‘(He’s) always saying just anything, always joking’
aka wás ‘Joker’
aka wiyí’ ‘He’s done everything’
aka iccí’ twiyí’ ‘He does everything’
aka ilúúmi twiyí’ ‘Telling tales, telling yarns’
aka winéqmiimáymáké twiyí’ ‘He can disguise himself’
aka wintáy’waamáké twiyí’ ‘He can dress up in different ways’
kwán u tóóllóllíni aka lty tipsiwci kacc^hé ’ka amá ckwincukayúcí. ‘Whatever Fox tried to do, he screwed it up.’
aka ticúúci ‘Be busy’
illim aka ckwaacúúci qá accát qá kac^hú tissúúli. ‘Squirrel was busy outside with his drying’
wihímmáálí aka tyíiyí. ‘He has gray hair’
aka wincécúki. ‘Looking things over; seeing a lot’
áka icééci’. ‘All colors’
qa t^hiyí aamá tici aka yí’ ‘The hair (growing) in an entirely different way’

6. Computer issues. I am working with Ken Zook and others at SIL to fix a bug that causes FLEEx to crash without error message. This is a rarely reported problem. It occurs when I have been going back and forth between Baseline, Analysis, and Lexicon, making changes in Baseline and inserting Notes in Gloss or Analysis when I need to preserve the original transcript. This is not a typical use case for FLEEx, which I think is fundamentally designed for working with language users in a community. It has not occurred with ordinary data entry and analysis.

I have installed OBS Studio and have configured it to record 120 seconds of activity on my desktop. After a crash, I save the most recent 120 seconds to a .mov file, which I send to SIL. I am currently working on my old laptop to verify that it is not a hardware problem with the newer computer that I have already sent twice to the Dell repair center. (The old computer’s keyboard is broken, but an external USB keyboard works.)