

Pit River Languages Project

Summary of work during October 2024

You can download the current Achumawi backup from

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

I have updated the automatically generated Achumawi webonary at

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

During October I have focused on identifying the elementary sentence forms in the sentences of the three texts and part of a fourth in which I have worked on analyzing the external syntax, that is, the syntax of words rather than the internal syntax by which the sentential verb is constructed. I have specified almost twenty sentence forms for the core sentences that I have identified in the syntactic analysis thus far. Derivations for complex adjuncts, conjunctions, and second-order predication will come later.

The sections in this report are

1. Elementary sentence forms
2. 'Acwuké' database project
3. Acúmmá 'ó tiši ímaçci'

In the first section there is a subheading for each of the sentence forms, which are listed at the beginning. Interspersed among them are callouts in the margin locating discussion of the following:

- *umásmi, umá, mi*
- *wáka, ka, amq^háka, wál .. wál*
- 'Topic' extraposition
- *mów*
- *a, y, w*

The last two sections are from Paul Cason and Lisa Craig, reporting their work. This and all prior monthly summaries are archived at

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

1. Elementary sentence forms

I have interrupted my ongoing analysis of external syntax in texts to focus on the core sentences identified so far. Internal syntax, in my current nomenclature, concerns relations among morphemes within the verb, and external syntax concerns relations among words in the sentence, treating the verb as an unanalyzed word. Pronominal affixes, therefore, are not indicated in this interim form of analysis. In the analysis, for each adjunct and for each core sentence (a.k.a. center string) the words in the given construct are represented by the labels for the form classes to which those words belong. The string of form-classes remaining after all adjuncts are placed in their separate columns is the sentence-form of an elementary sentence or, equivalently, an elementary sentence-form. Nearly 20 elementary sentence-forms have been identified so far. This section lists these and illustrates them with examples. It should not be a surprise that the examples usually call for additional discussion, and that going back through the preliminary analysis of centers and adjuncts for this purpose often results in revision of glosses and sometimes further rectification of the text (duly identified as such in FLEx notes).

The examples are presented in small tables. In the first column, the source text is identified as T1, T2, T3, or T4, referring to one of four texts as follows:

T1 — Bear Doctor cures a thief

T2 — Bear, Deer, and their children

T3 — Father finds the deer

T4 — Fox and hungry Coyote

The second column contains the number of the sentence in the text, as assigned by FLEx. The third and widest column contains the text of the sentence. Conjunctions are broken over several lines, with the conjunctions in the 4th column (including the pause represented as comma). The remaining columns are:

Meta. Metalanguage and metadiscourse words, most often referentials to context, such as *amq'há*. I have discussed these at some length.

Interj. Interjections like *wé*, *hé*, *yá*.

S. The core sentence form.

N-adjunct. Adjectives and apposed nouns for the most part.

S-adjunct. Adverbs on the sentence as a whole.

V-adjunct. Adverbs on the verb.

A-adjunct. Adverbs on adjectives (A = Adjective).

D-adjunct. Adverbs on adverbs (D = aDverb).

Vs, Vsn, Vsnn. Second-order verb with a sentence as its argument. The n and nn distinguish cases where one noun argument is explicit (*ckisí qá woh* 'Grizzly Bear said') or two ('said to her children')

Vs, Vsn, and Vsnn in these last three columns identify second-order verbs. The analysis is already

shifting from adjunction to word dependencies in a grammar of word entry and reductions. Because the analysis will continue to shift and deepen significantly, I am keeping a snapshot of the two main spreadsheet files in which I organize these data, [+Adjuncts20241021.ods](#) and [+S-forms20241021.ods](#), so that their current state will be available in the future to illustrate what I say about them in this month's report.

The abbreviations that I use are in the first sheet of the Adjuncts file (the sheet named 'terms'), listed as follows:

V-!	Volitional
A	adjective
c	c 'do'
ic	ic 'be'
D	adverb
n, n-, -n	pronoun
N	noun
Nm	name
Nq	quantifier
S	sentence
V	verb
Vś	I say' verb
w	-uw- copula/stative
ý	-ý- copula/stative
As	adjective reduced from S
Ds	adverb reduced from S
Ns	noun reduced from S

The various reductions of sentences to Ns (nominal arguments of Vs, etc.) and to adjuncts As and Ds will be of great interest and value, and I am collecting examples of these, but prior to that we must clearly understand the sources for the reductions, the core sentence forms. The core sentence forms identified so far are collected in the sheets of the **+S-forms** spreadsheet file. The remainder of this section is dedicated to examples of each elementary sentence form that has been identified so far.

V-!

Imperative and 'volitional' forms (underscored in the example).

T1 13	<i>amq^há tyííśííní :</i>	Nevertheless [in that context] she said
	<i><u>icupté umásmi,</u></i>	go ahead and go
	<i><u>icááhe,</u></i>	take the lead
	<i><u>icááhe,</u></i>	take the lead
	<i><u>icupté umásmi .</u></i>	go ahead and go

Umásmi, umá, mi

The S-adjunct *umásmi* 'go ahead and ___' may be *u* the *w* stative + *ma* 'see, find' + *s* 'indefinite' + *mi* 'down, thither'. The gloss 'maybe' has been given to *umá* as a word (e.g. *Té umá muwí* 'thus maybe it

might be' (or more idiomatically 'maybe that's it'); it may have the same *w + má* analysis. It is possible that the last syllable of *umásmi* is *mi* 'you'.

goes beyond centers and adjuncts A verb with no explicit argument noun(s) identifying the referent(s) of the pronoun(s).

T1 16 *húúkú palá' tyíkuutístaćcíní állistáté.* Over there she already sat atop a rock.

This is the only occurrence in the database of *húúkú*. It is similar in meaning to *hukýí* 'yonder', but instead of the *y* stative it ends with the *u / w* stative. The verb has one argument, indicated by the *y-* in *ty-* but the sentence does not explicitly identify *qa ckittaawálu*, the doctor.

T2 1.2 *qa pálmás itýíicí' ka cktatíwwalmíwci.*

The core verb *cktatíwwalmíwci* 'they were neighbors' has the sense of going back and forth between one another's homes and (as the text says) doing things together.

Wáka, ka, amq^háka, wál .. wál

The phrase *qa pálmás itýíicí' ka* 'when first setting up housekeeping' is an example of the subordinate Ds clauses of the form -V- *y ka* 'while V-ing, ...' which I discussed in May 2024. I proposed there that the agentive (*wa*)*ka* should occur in the source sentence or sentences from which the Ds is reduced. We can say

qa pálmás cktitýiicí qá wóh wáka

qa pálmás cktitýiicí qá tóósi wáka

qa pálmás cktitýiicí qá wóh wáka má (ánca) cktitýiicí qá tóósi wáka

However, with the comitative *wál .. wál* construction, *q^há* would probably be used to carry the agentive auxiliary, in the referential *amq^háka*:

qá wóh wál qa tóósi wál, amq^háka qa pálmás cktitýiicíwci.

This construction is frequently used, affirming part of the sentence in an incomplete initial clause, then affirming the complete sentence with *amq^há* referring to that initial affirmation. Given the availability of this reduction which (in the terms of this type of language) is more fluent and efficient, putting the agentive after each noun is awkward and clumsy (*qa pálmás itýiicí qá wóh wáka wál qa tóósi wáka wál cktatiwwalmiwci*), and placing it after the *wál .. wál* construction is not only awkward but perhaps ambiguous (*qa pálmás itýiicí qá wóh wál qa tóósi wál wáka cktatiwwalmiwci*).

'Topic' extraposition

The collection in the 'Topic' sheet of the [S-forms.ods](#) file includes examples in which the referential in the main sentence is a repetition of all or part of the preposed material. This is not actually cognate with what is called topicalization, but the label will do for now. Because the primary burden is carried by the sentential verb, with obligatory pronouns, nouns and other explicit argument words have a secondary status apposed to the pronouns. Even the pronouns can be reduced to the subordinate 3rd person *t*, what Sapir called the

‘narrative infinitive’ in Yana. This is usually subordinate under a tacit verb in the ‘say’ family, zeroed because of its predictability (low information).¹

NV, VN, VNN, N ka NV, NVN

A verb with one or more argument nouns preceding and/or following. I expect to encounter additional ways to linearize the arguments of first-order verbs. These forms will help us understand decisions to state argument words explicitly and when to leave the burden entirely to the pronominal affixes. The collection will also help us assess the frequency of each form, and the conditions in which *wáka* indicates the agent.

T1 5 *ma áncá we qá q^hé winéémacwí* And when that one finished feasting
tiníyaymi qá q^hé qa píláyuucoólucan . that young man got sick

The first clause is of NV form (with the demonstrative *q^hé* functioning as a pronoun). There is no word corresponding to ‘when’. It is the subordinate 3rd person *t-* which makes the relationship between *tiníyaymi* ‘got sick’ and the main verb *winéémacwí* ‘he finished eating it up’ (*inéémi* ‘able to eat’ + *acwí* ‘finish’). In English, the relation of subordination is reversed. ‘He got sick’ is the main clause, and ‘when’ makes ‘he finished eating’ the subordinate clause. The second clause is of VN form (where the demonstrative *q^hé* is now an N-adjunct). In the first clause, *q^hé* could refer to either of the two arguments of the *inéémi* stem, the eater or the eaten, but parallelism with *q^hé* in the second clause is preferred. The sentence could alternatively be *qá q^hé qa píláyuucoólucan winéémacwí tiníyaymi* or even *qá q^hé winéémacwí tiníyaymi*.

T1 51 *aapóoha ka tmicéptaswacicka* Hatchet Mountain was watching you

Here is another NV sentence. The agentive *ka* is not there to indicate which of two N is the agent because *-icka* identifies the 2nd person patient. In this case, it affirms that the mountain *has* agency and is able to watch and judge one’s actions.

T1 59 *wohíicaka tíimaaci qá kac^hú tissíci* Her clothing transformed to grizzly bear cubs

The larger context of this NVN clause involves extraposed repetition as described above

T1 59 *má áncá qá kac^hú tissíci* And her clothing
amq^há tóólol wohíicaka tíimaaci qá kac^hú tissíci . as to that all into bear cubs transformed her clothing

ic N, N ic

A verb like *tyíicíni* ‘he/it was’ may be *y* + auxiliary *c*, in contrast with *w* + *c* in e.g. *tyúúicíni* ‘he/it did’. No examples of the latter have occurred yet in the texts analyzed so far, but they do occur in abundance and I expect to add them in due course.

T1 2 *amq^há tyíicíni hanís píláyuucoólucan,* As to that, there was one young man

1 Harris, *A Theory of Language and Information*, p. 91; *A Grammar of English on Mathematical Principles* sec. 3.5.

tyanawámmííni qa wiyáácáálu ú támmi kúci . he stole an old woman's food.

This is a straightforward existential statement, 'there was a young man'.

T1 61 *amq^hááwáté tyííqáccíni qá kac^hú tisíci wíló* Meanwhile, her clothes followed closely,
qa cókca wohíicika tyííciíni. little grizzly cubs they were

The underlying form is N N *ic* 'clothes were cubs', but as a contiguous repetition from the first clause, the first N *tisíci* is zeroed.

V *ic* N, N -V- *ic*

These sentences combine auxiliary *ic* with V or with -V- (a bare-stem participle).

T1 1 *qa ís ílíci' twicííni* People were doctoring

Because -V- (a bare-stem participle) can function as a noun this sentence could be construed as N N *ic* and glossed 'people were doctors'. I have labeled this N -V- *ic* because *ílíci'* has the form of -V-. I am anticipating the analysis in which -V- functioning as a noun is reduced from a sentence in which -V- is an adjunct to an indefinite or low-information noun corresponding to 'one' or 'someone' in English, which is zeroed.

T1 63 *álictikwáci' tyííciíni qá kac^hú timáqci* Her travel was fearsome

The field gloss at transcription time was 'she looked fierce when she traveled'. The -V- participle *álictiki* 'afraid, being frightened' plus the auxiliary verb *wáci* 'does continuously' (or habitually, characteristically) makes a compound verb, 'causing fear', but the stative *y* at the end (written as ' glottal stop) makes *álictikwáci'* an adjunct on the subordinate verb *timáqci* functioning as N (reduced from *kac wamáqci* 'she travels' with the repetitious pronoun *kac*).

A *w*, N *w*

T2 1.8 *allu suwí* I'm hungry

This exemplifies a frequent use of the stative *w* as copula, functioning to carry the verb morphology for a preceding stative word of the sort that we traditionally call an adjective, exactly as the 'be' copula does in English.

T1 6 *táq sa [stuwí],* Whatever is affecting me (my *w* state),
c^hú sa stuwí, however is it affecting me,
macwá suwí I ache

Here, however, *w* is transitive in the first two clauses, with 3rd person *t*-agent and 1st person *s*-patient. (The first occurrence of *stuwí* is in braces because it is not explicit in the text, and I presume here that the contiguous repetition is zeroed.) The final clause is in the usual A *w* form, as above, although 'ache' in English

is of course a verb and not an adjective or other stative predicate. I have grouped this example with the N *w* form, although the form here is n *w* (n = pronoun). In the gloss, ‘-ever’ translates *sa*, the indefinite morpheme that we see sometimes in a verb stem as *s* or *as*. It may be related (perhaps historically) to *as* ‘water’.

V *w*, N V *w*

T1 38 *wéépupa lám mów* May it be I will eat ants!

The pronominal prefix *m-* is the 3rd person unmanifest, glossed as potential or future, depending on context. Imperative/volitional verbs are often formed by dropping the stem-final *-i* vowel (e.g. you can say either *tuskímcóo* or *tuskím* ‘sit down!’). This is consistent with the volitional form *lám* ‘I will eat! Let me eat!’ which is in construction with *mów*. Because this example is from a song it calls for some corroboration. As you know, words are modified and syllables added to fill the rhythm of a song (the full line here is *wéépupa hé lám mów*).

mów

The sentence T2 9.22 begins with the phrase *pálmás wínóo mów*, again two volitional verbs.

T2 9.22 *pálmás wínóo mów cé st^háyuwí háy tucci té tiici kúci* I never thought it would turn out to be this way, she
ckisí. said.

In the audio record, the last word is clearly *muwí* ‘it might be’. I take this to be a semantic correction that she made when we transcribed the tape together, rather than a stylistic variant of pronunciation by the mother bear (who is quoted here under the verb *ckisí*). As with *lám mów* above, we see here two volitional verbs in construction, *wínóo mów*. This sentence is the argument of *háy* ‘think’. *Háy* ‘think’ and *hew* ‘remember’ occur in the same constructions as e.g. *allu* ‘hungry’, which in English we traditionally classify as an adjective. It is best to think of these as stative operators which require *w* or *c* to carry the verb morphology, just as English adjectives and adverbs require *be* to carry the verb morphology. The verb *st^háyuwí* adds *s-* as 1st-person patient to *t^háyuwí* ‘it evidently is’. Compare e.g. *hew t^háyuwí* ‘she forgot (evidently)’. The gloss ‘it evidently is with respect to me’ quite awkward in English.

Morphemically, this is *t-yuwí*. Phonologically, the high-pitch epenthetic vowel appears after evidential *t-* before a low pitch syllable (*t-yuwí* → *t^háyuwí*). However, this is not at all well researched, with exceptions e.g. before *c* in *tyicííní*.

a, y, w

It is possible that a ‘volitional’ *a* morpheme can appear there, with high pitch, much as the *y* and *w* statives may. Consider the following, from the ‘Spider and Lizard’ story:

sáwtu tím t^hííyuwí t^hááyuwí ckwapsíwci qa ámínínca. She is certainly pregnant, thought the old woman.

The *y*-3rd person in *t^hííyuwí* ‘she evidently is’ refers to the daughter: she is evidently in that *y* state of *sawtu* pregnancy (where *íí* in the first syllable is an allomorph of *y*). The *y*-3rd person in *t^hááyuwí* refers to the preceding clause (and thence to that state in the girl): ‘it is evidently that ...’. An *a* crops up here and there in the analysis of verb stems which I have tentatively identified with the final *-a* of the imperative, but with obscure semantics. The *w* stative may underlie the *ó* in *t^hóllím* ‘for a long time’ (*li* ‘extend’, *m* ‘down to here’), *t^hóllíwí* ‘old-timer’ (*wi* says he has that property), and *tóólol* ‘all’ where *lol* ‘roll, round’ refers to “the whole ball of wax”, so to speak (though it is not an example of initial *t^h*).

y’V

The *y*’ stative is commonly used in “I’m the one who _” and “He’s the kind that _” constructions.

T4 3.3 *tsínááyá ká tsiyí* ‘In fact, I made it’; ‘I made it, it was I indeed’.

In this *y*’V construction, the evidential *t*- supports the ‘in fact’ gloss. The *-a* ending seems to emphasize will or intention, as it does explicitly in the imperative and other ‘volitional’ verb forms. This example shows how *ka* as an independent word can be a verb adjunct or sentence adjunct emphasizing the manifest actuality of what is asserted, whence the gloss “I indeed”. Phonologically, the *t*- of *tsiyí* closes the preceding syllable, yet the phonetic realization as an affricate remains: [t’ gat’ t̪iːyí’].

sááwá tsiyí cásti máátíy ca I’ve been writing for three days.
túnní wa yucí tsiyí. I’d like to come all the time. (I’m the kind who wants to come.)

T2 2.2 *táq^há tím aamá tsiyí séét^huukí ckiší.* ‘I might not come back at all’

The source of negation is not obvious in this example. *Aamá* does have an exclusive, limiting character.

amúuyá aamá Muddy. (Just mud, all mud, mud exclusively.)
íé wiší aamá tkiyí You always talk like that. (You’re the kind that only talks that way.)
c^hú sa aamá ó mlís Let her say whatever she wants! (Let her say just anything.)
aamá k^hókcam, aamá íl áhtúkcaníy aamá q^ham q^ham mám taciisúúma.
Just a bit, just a handful but many, many (kinds) put in bags

The source of negation in example T2:2.2 may be something like that for English ‘but’ meaning ‘except for’, e.g. something like *Everybody but Coyote was awake* ← *Everybody but not Coyote was awake* ← *Everybody was awake but Coyote was not (awake)*.

Other constructions occur, such as N *y*’ N, D *y*’, but no clear examples have turned up yet in the texts

analyzed so far.

2. 'Acwuké' database project

With a word count of 1086 we conclude October's entries into the FLEx database. This month was more or less a continuation of entries from L. Talmy's PDF file 002.001 with additional information following his cross-references to pages in his fieldnotes, as usual. Many of this month's verbs centered around eating, and holding or placing various items into/onto/towards a location. The main purpose for now is entering the roots, but where morpheme boundaries were identified the other morphemes and in some cases allomorphs were entered into the lexicon. and lexical categories assigned where they appeared obvious. Not all of these could be glossed at this stage. For example, among the pronominal prefixes only the /s-/ for first person verbs is glossed. This /s-/ pronoun functions very much like the /s-/ in acúmmááwi. The others will come in time.

3. Acúmmá 'ó tisi ímacci'

Three very productive language classes were held in the month of October, with a focus on the home domains. The hand-washing activity in the Bathroom domain was the focus for two of the classes. In the combined in-person and virtual learning situation, different approaches to teaching were used to help learners learn and retain the target language from the script. We introduced a new approach to teaching by demonstrating the instrumental prefixes with the verb stem and building out from there. This approach seemed to bring into understanding what each part of a verb construct corresponds to. The last pillar, writing, was introduced to the learners in the latest class and was received well.

A small team of learners have agreed to help us present at the 10th Annual Tuolumne MiWuk Language Symposium on November 5-7 2024 in Tuolumne CA. We will be demonstrating our innovative pedagogical methods to our neighboring tribal communities and their language programs. In the spirit of sharing we hope that what we present can be impactful for someone else's language journey.