Pit River Languages Project

Summary of work during February 2025

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/

My focus now is on pulling together a descriptive grammar. An outline of the grammar is in Outline.odt. As always, I come across things that need fixing in the database. In some cases, rather than taking the time immediately, I will just make note of them for future attention in Fix-list.ods. Or that is my intention. So far, I've continued fixing things as I go along, but changes that require protracted attention to many entries will go there.

The sections in this report are

1. Grammar
2. 'Acẇuké· database project
3. Acúmmá 'ó tiṡi íímaċci'

The last two sections are from Paul Cason and Lisa Craig, reporting their work. This month includes illuminating results from a poll of language learners in the community.

This and all prior monthly summaries are archived at https://zelligharris.org/Achumawi/achumawi-db.html.

1   Grammar

This will be a descriptive grammar, not a teaching grammar, though learning materials can draw upon it. In this draft form it is especially unfriendly to a reader who is unfamiliar to the language. The examples certainly will need to be provided with more explicit and detailed glosses.

A fundamental requirement is to let the language speak for itself, without imposing traditional or supposedly universal categories. Many things may suggest relationships and derivations in the data and lines of investigation, and among these the traditional or otherwise customary grammatical categories are important and useful, but the reported results must be confirmed. Otherwise we are like the padres of old, writing grammars of Latin with exotic words and morphemes in them. Certainly, familiar grammatical terminology may be help the reader to integrate new information about this language into their prior understandings, but that, too, may be misleading. One consequence of this requirement is that, as far as possible, the data must include the context of naturally occurring discourse. This is one of the most important values in recording and analyzing narrative texts. Paradigms elicited in isolation are too easily glossed according to the grammatical presuppositions of the fieldworker, and consultants can too readily ring the changes with nicely regular analogical differences including expressions that do not actually occur and having no occasion to produce other forms that might be more deeply revealing.

The customary form of a descriptive grammar begins with phonology, phonotactics, and prosody, followed by morphophonemics, morphology, and lexical derivation, and finally syntax, beginning with simple sentences and working up to more complex constructions. This description goes the opposite way, from the outside in.

Here is a preliminary outline of chapters and topics.

1. Complex Sentences
    Connectives
    Referentials
    Subordinate clauses

2. Simple sentences
    The Noun Phrase
    Adverbs

3. The Verb Phrase
    The sentential 'verb'
    Classes of roots (inventory each class)
    Reductions of roots
    Verb stem templates
    Auxiliaries
    Pronominal affixes

4. Reductions
    Noun reduced from subordinate clause
    Other form classes reduced from subordinate clause
    Reductions under metalanguage operators

5. Idioms and frozen expressions (cp. etymology)
    For example: iwi, tiwi, kantiwi; laʾay (sasúúlaʾayíntiwi); tátapẏíwci

There will be an introduction with some discussion of the data, the methodology, and the organization of the presentation. The phonological description is covered elsewhere, but a summary should be included. Stress is not marked in the record, and working out the patterning of stress and intonation is an important project (see #4 below). No grammar is ever complete and finished. (Some students of Pāṇini think so, but his grammar of Vedic Sanskrit is an idealization.)

- For the most recent revision of the outline, see Outline.odt.)
- For the most recent revision of Chapter 1, see 1.Complex.Sentences.odt.

2 ’Acw̓uké· database project

This month's entries for Atsuke have proceeded well as I continue to examine the working parts of Atsuke at a closer level and, with Bruce's help, understand the nuances of FLEx.

3 Acúmmá ’ó tis̓i íímác̓ci

In addition to the database, we have five working files being built from the Leonard Talmy collection. The current verb file has caused me to consider yet another approach to teaching this language as well as Acúmmááwi. Such an approach would be somewhat different from what we have currently been employing. A root-based approach where the focus is at first on the sound and enunciation of a verb-root and subsequent sounds/affixes that are attached on either sides of the root would follow in a strategic order (with the accompanying sign/letters). In my view, Atsuge mirrors Acúmmááwi in many respects and I think this approach could apply to both languages:

The Instrumental Prefix (IP), the verb Root (R), the Directional Suffix (DS): /IP-/+/R/+/-DS/ make up the core of verb conjugation. Additional affixes can be attached to this common core to build it out in greater detail. The system suggests that we start with the "root" of it.

As this develops out I hope to be able to target other aspects that follow some natural order that might have once been employed in a natural setting. The rebus principle with a twist comes to mind but watch for more to come on this vibe.

With some great teamwork a language poll was generated and disseminated on all current platforms. Much constructive feedback from the community led us to be able to generate several target-points providing a direct plan of action to enhance our current services. Additionally, we can submit articles for our various newsletters with current data points. Poll data and stories from the community will be presented in depth next month. This month, here is a summary overview of what we have learned from the poll.

The first section of the report presents responses to seven yes/no questions about the availability and usage of language resources. We will further evaluate the effectiveness of these resources, beginning with the Fieldworks database. By analyzing the responses, we aim to provide valuable insights into how these resources can be optimized for greater usefulness.
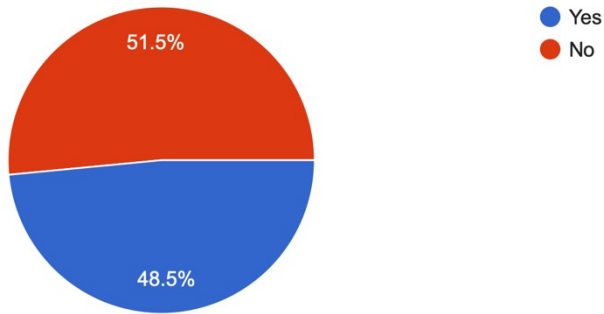
Have you had the opportunity to use Fieldworks Language Explorer software for PCs featuring the Achumawi database?
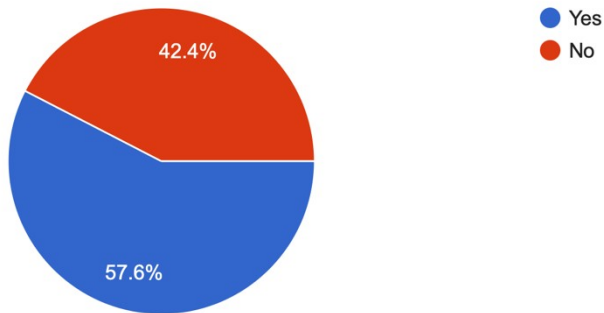
33 responses

- Yes
- No

57.6%

42.4%
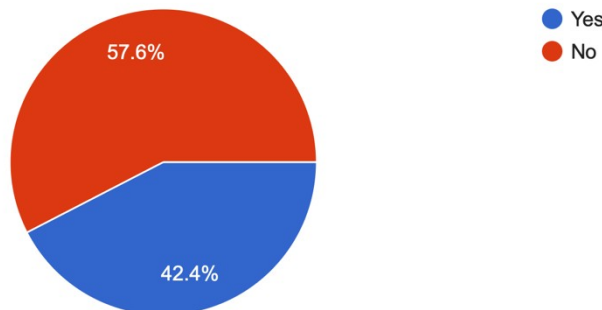
Have you explored the Odissi app for Androids?

33 responses

- Yes
- No

51.5%
48.5%

Have you viewed content from the YouTube channel, Indigenous Language Network?

33 responses

- Yes
- No

42.4%
57.6%

Have you engaged in the WhatsApp page, íssi wa Ó tíssi (Pit River Language)?

33 responses

- Yes
- No

72.7%
27.3%
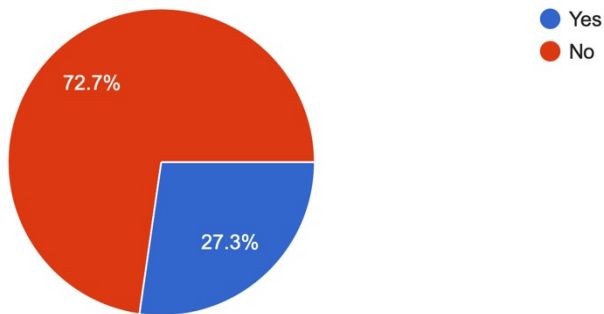
In the past five years, have you attended any language gatherings or classes?
33 responses

- Yes
- No

21.2%
78.8%
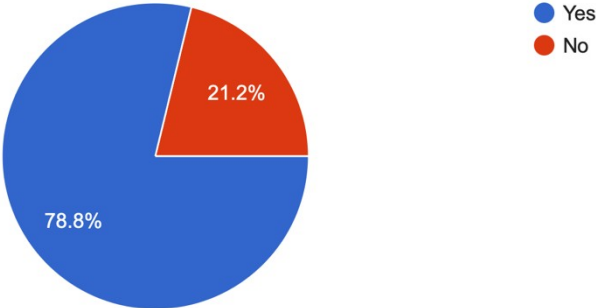
Have you participated in any of the Zoom classes that have been offered?
33 responses

- Yes
- No

27.3%
72.7%
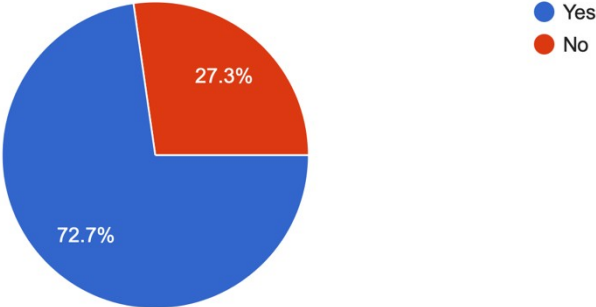
Do you find these resources beneficial?
33 responses

- Yes
- No

97%
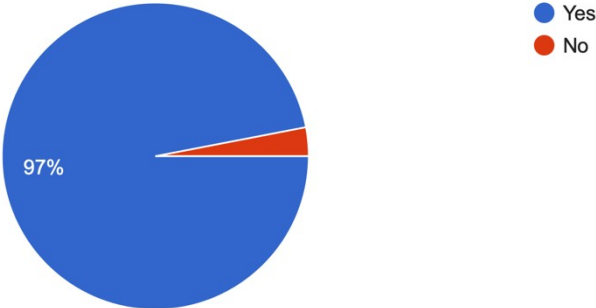
In the second section are suggestions how additional resources could enhance the learning experience. These responses provide valuable insights into the needs of language learners in the community. They can be categorized into several areas for improvement.

- Linguistic Resources – Translation resources and short instructional videos
- Interactive Learning – Additional live classes
- Digital Platforms – Mobile app for Apple phones, increased social media engagement
- Cultural Enrichment – Inclusion of songs, stories, and cultural insights, and development of workshops focused on prayers
- Audio-Visual Materials – Recordings of elders speaking for offline users, materials to practice vocabularies accompanied with pronunciations
- Community Engagement – Podcasts and more YouTube content
- Advanced Learning Opportunities – Courses for advanced learners and comparative linguistics
- Hands-On Materials – Flashcards for vocabulary and physical tools/toys for interactive learning at home
- Language Events – Camps or retreats

Implementing these enhancements and maintaining clear communication about available resources will be essential for maximizing participation and learning outcomes.

The third section of the report underscores the impact of cultural language resources on individuals' mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being, reinforcing a sense of belonging and community.

Key Themes:

- Connection to Identity

- Community Belonging

- Healing and Recovery

- Emotional Fulfillment

- Education and Cultural Understanding

Overall, these resources play a significant role in personal growth and resilience. The report highlights the participants' journeys as language learners, emphasizing the importance of community connections, creative expression, and mentorship.

The final section of the report offers suggestions and insights on how the language team could improve.

Feedback Insights:

- Program Format and Content: Participants expressed appreciation for the classes and a strong desire for the inclusion of creation stories.

- Instructors and Resources: There was acknowledgment of the excellent work done by instructors, along with a request for more comprehensive resources, such as recordings that include interpretations.

- Access and Participation: Suggestions were made to empower teachers by giving them control over Zoom platform settings and to promote a welcoming environment for beginners.

- Cultural Sensitivity: Participants emphasized the need to validate the new written language/dictionary to help bridge generational gaps.

The collected feedback reflects the participants' commitment to language learning and highlights opportunities to improve support for preserving the linguistic heritage of the Pit River people. We thank all participants for their valuable contributions to these initiatives!