

# Pit River Languages Project

## Summary of work during May 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/>

Please let me know if you are unable to install the Odissi app on your Android phone. You can download the sound files from [this Dropbox folder](#). The spreadsheets that the app uses to organize them into categories are in the [not-sound-files](#) subfolder. It would be possible to convert these to web pages, but writing the grammar has higher priority on my docket, as well as more urgency with less than a year remaining in my schedule.

I am due to deposit the current FLEx backup with the archivists at the American Philosophical Society again. This happens once a year on 1 June.

The sections in this report are as follows:

1. A lexicon of prefixes
2. Acwuké' database project
3. Acúmmá 'ó tiši íima'cci'

The last two sections are from Paul Cason and Lisa Craig, reporting their work.

This and all prior monthly summaries are archived under a [Monthly Reports](#) link at <https://zelligharris.org/Achumawi/achumawi-db.html>.

## 1 A lexicon of prefixes

In May, I have continued to work on verb prefixes.

1. In the first line of investigation, I am adding glossed examples to the table of prefix combinations. Glosses for the prefixes and prefix combinations themselves will settle out last. Rather than incorporate the table in this report, I am providing this link to download the work-in-progress spreadsheet:
  - [+prefix-combinations.odt](#)
2. The second line of investigation focuses on the many usages of the *t*- participle. I am collecting these separately from the above **+prefix-combinations.odt** table. The *t*- prefix appears to be an argument indicator under a higher-level operator. The first step is to identify the diverse usage contexts in formal terms, and to gloss the semantic distinctions between them. The work-in-progress spreadsheet for that is here:
  - [+tV.odt](#)

The further and more difficult work will be to identify for each type of usage the verb or adverb over it which is the source of the distinctive semantics. In some cases this is evident,

for example, *cé* ‘I deny’ (a verb in the ‘say’ family), or *-íuwí-* .. *wa* ‘want to’.

3. The third line of investigation is to identify what determines the ‘stem vowel’ before the first root. In the first phase, I will work with a list of participles from the database, starting with the *t-* participle forms.

I have spent considerable time on a brute-force method for extracting such a list, as follows:

1. For each text in turn, copy the baseline to a temp.ods file.
2. With the Replace function, delete all punctuation and replace word space with newline.
3. Sort,.
4. Copy/paste to append it to a growing list in another file.
5. Periodically sort that list and run a LibreOffice filter to remove duplicates. (I can share that procedure if you want it; it’s documented in the LibreOffice online help system.)
6. Manually delete words that aren’t participles, and duplicates that differ additional roots, auxiliaries, and suffixes without affecting the conditioning of the stem vowel.

Then Ken Zook at SIL suggested a successive handful of procedures to export all the prepositions which have entries in the lexicon, using functions within FLEx. I tried them all, adding or clarifying steps where needed. For the record, this is the procedure that worked, and which could be used with other grammatical categories:

1. In Lexicon Edit, filter on Grammatical Category **Participle**.
2. Use **Tools > Configure > Dictionary > Manage Views**.
3. Duplicate **Lexeme-based** and rename it for the targeted grammatical category (in this case, **Participles**).
4. In **Tools > Configure > Dictionary**, select the new view (**Participles** here).
5. In the new view hide (uncheck) everything except the headword.
6. Select Apply and OK.
7. **Tools > Configure Columns** to remove all but Headword. (In my instance, I removed Glosses, Grammatical Category, and Morph Type.)
8. In the lexicon headers, choose just '**participle**'.
9. In Dictionary View, export to '**Dictionary, Reversal Index Word(DOCX)**'

This method would be more useful if the lexicon were perfectly up to date. It is not. Many of the items in this output should not be headwords in the lexicon. For example, *tilaháámí* ‘converse, discuss’ can appear as a headword because the semantic contribution of the roots is not (yet) clearly understood, but the many related forms that are currently headwords should at best appear only in examples under the headword: *tilaháámííci*, *tilaháámíci*, *tilaháámíci*, *tilaháámeyééwaci*, *tilaháámíyééwaci*, *tilaháámíyéwaci*, *tilaháámíyéwici*. Some of the forms in that list were added to the lexicon years ago and were not updated when I changed the spelling in the Baseline texts (e.g. *tilaháámíci* can no longer be found by concordance because it was corrected to *tilaháámííci*).

This work in the lexicon disclosed a number of issues that needed cleaning up in the Baseline

texts, and sometimes in the glosses, analyses, or notes, and I expect more as the work proceeds.

|          | Base |        | Lex  |        |
|----------|------|--------|------|--------|
| <i>i</i> | 985  | 57.77% | 737  | 63.53% |
| <i>a</i> | 511  | 29.97% | 247  | 21.29% |
| <i>u</i> | 136  | 7.98%  | 98   | 8.45%  |
| <i>o</i> | 44   | 2.58%  | 60   | 5.17%  |
| <i>e</i> | 29   | 1.70%  | 18   | 1.55%  |
|          | 1705 |        | 1160 |        |

The little table on the left displays current numbers for the processing of Baseline texts (the ‘Base’ column) and for the export from the lexicon (the ‘lex’ column). The numbers are skewed by duplications and irrelevantly variant forms, but that statistical noise probably has an equivalent effect on all vowel occurrences for both methods. What merits attention is the disproportionately high numbers for *i*, and about half that for *a*.

Although the Baseline count is incomplete, perhaps 1/3 of texts, the proportionate differences are pretty consistent under the two methods. The sharply fewer occurrences of *u*, *o*, and *e* suggests that they result from a prefix or from one of the peripheral Rp roots. We have tantalizing but still inconclusive bits of evidence for unraveling the relation of the two stative morphemes *w* and *y*. One bit of evidence is the alternation *o* ~ *awa* in e.g. *tóó’ííci*, *sáwaa’ííci* ‘weep’, suggesting the stative *w*. The stative *y* may be the source of fronting from *a* to *e*, in e.g. *sapti* ‘I go’, *tépti* ‘go back, go home’, and for this verb the *u* in *tupti* ‘go’ may be from the *w* stative (perh. i.e. ‘in a state of going’) Such vowel changes occur elsewhere. For example, the combination of *ca* ‘grasp’ + *ipli* ‘tongue, mouth’ appears to be the basis of *ticépli* ‘share, give a piece, give a share’.<sup>1</sup>

Assuming that the presence of *u*, *o*, and *e* can be accounted for, the disproportionate numbers suggest that *i* is the default stem vowel, if conditions can be determined for *a* to occur instead of *i*. It may be that stem-initial *a* must be described as a lexical property of some roots, as in Talmy’s description of Atsugewi.<sup>2</sup> It is true that in VC roots (e.g. *am* ‘eat’, *ic’* ‘bite’) the stem-initial vowel is an invariant part of the root, but they are exceptional. In cases where the *n* root occurs in the periphery before the stem proper, we see both *in* and *an*. This complicates an assumption that the initial root in the stem proper is the conditioning factor, and suggests instead some kind of prefix or root parallel to *w* and *y*, because the condition must extend past the *n* in the periphery. I hope that a survey of stem-initial roots will clear this up. A beginning at that work in progress is here:

- [+tv.ods](#)

1 Analyzing this with *ce* ‘visual appearance’ is much less plausible. The *e* in this *ce* is considered lexical, absent an etymology for it.

2 In his lexical representations of Atsugewi morphemes, Talmy uses morphophonemes (indicated by a prefixed superscript vowel) to indicate those with which a vowel change occurs. This is formally similar to the *w* and *y* statives that I have posited as distinct morphemes, except that he proposes no semantic distinctions or glosses for the superscript vowel-change morphophonemes. It might be possible to reconstruct historical antecedents for these. I would rather avoid this sort of artifice if possible.

## 2 'Acwuké' database project

Routine data entries were completed for the Atsuge database, with no significant changes this month. The current lexicons' browse section now holds **1,051** entries, while bulk wordforms have nearly doubled, reaching **2,048**.

## 3 Acúmmá 'ó tiši íímacci'

May was an active month for community language initiatives. Highlights include:

- An **AICLS luncheon interview** featured Radley Davis alongside language activists from across California.
- A **well-attended ceremony at Burney Falls State Park**, strengthened cultural connections.
- The **MMIW march through Burney, California on May 5th**, raised awareness and honored missing and murdered Indigenous women.
- The **annual Honor Gathering for graduating students within the RISE program** saw strong community participation.
- Two **language gatherings**, held both via Zoom and in person, fostered continued engagement.

Excitement is building around the concept of **Summer language camps**, with planning discussions under way. More details will be shared as plans progress.