



# A Guide to Conversational Na'vi

Version 1.0.7  
Created by Mako



# Contents

<b>Contents</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>An Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What is Conversational Na’vi?</b>	<b>4</b>
Conversational Language:	4
Formal vs. Colloquial Language	4
Colloquial Language:	5
Formal Language:	5
<b>Formal Na’vi</b>	<b>7</b>
Ceremonial and Honorific	7
Formal Words and Phrases	8
<b>Idioms in Na’vi</b>	<b>9</b>
Idioms	9
Idiomatic Constructions	11
<b>Slang and Shorthand in Na’vi</b>	<b>13</b>
Colloquial and Slang Words	13
Colloquial Phrases	15
Colloquial Constructions	16
<b>Useful Resources</b>	<b>18</b>
Naviteri Conversation Starters Posts	18
Vawmataw’s Na’vi Phrasebook	18
<b>Ayli’u ta Mako</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Change log</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Sources</b>	<b>21</b>
Colloquial and Slang Words	21
Colloquial Phrases	21
Colloquial Constructions	22
Formal Words and Phrases	22
Idioms	22

Idiomatic Constructions	23
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>24</b>

# An Introduction

Welcome to A Guide to Conversational Na'vi. This document's driving purposes are to 1) identify conversational Na'vi and explain what it is, 2) explain the difference between conversational Na'vi and formal Na'vi, 3) provide areas of study that will facilitate in the use of Na'vi conversationally, and 4) provide areas of study that will facilitate in the use of Na'vi formally. The overarching goal of this document is to continue to instruct learners on how to speak like a native Na'vi speaker.

As a spoken, constructed language, Na'vi contains many quirks common to a variety of natural languages, as well as a high degree of flexibility. Understanding these quirks and the shortcuts they allow can help speakers to reach a place of comfort and proficiency in conversation more quickly. In short, comprehension of the grammatical rules that Na'vi has allows us to begin to bend and flex them in order to streamline and shorten sentences.

Bear in mind, **this guide will not be spending time teaching basic Na'vi grammar**, and the shortcuts here are **not a substitute for learning the rules** that make them work in the first place. If you are just beginning to learn, your efforts are better focused on **Na'vi as a Second Language** before beginning this guide.

If you spot any outstanding errors in grammar, spelling or formatting, please send all corrections to Mako on the **Kelutral.org Discord**. Suggestions are also welcome.

# What is Conversational Na'vi?

The definition of conversational use of a language can vary from person to person, depending on that person's level of comfort. Because of this, it's helpful to define what is meant by conversational language in this document before we begin.

## Conversational Language:

Able to be used on a daily basis to communicate at length with someone of equal or greater fluency, in rapid response, without the need for further clarification or explanation of intended meaning, concerning topics or subjects common to everyday routine or discussion

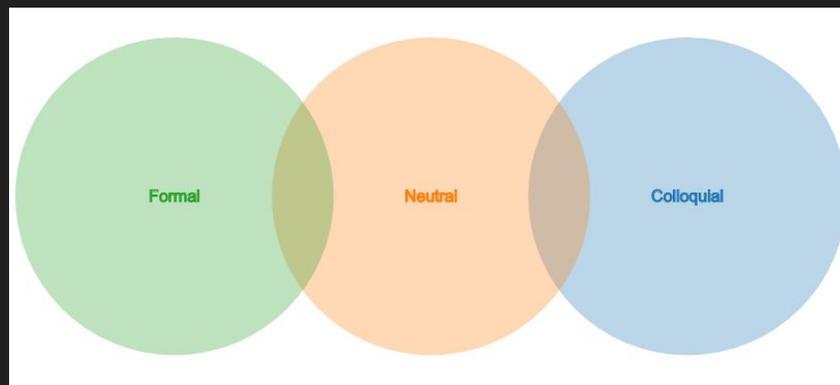
Conversational language is a complex web of shorthand, idioms, slang and ease of access rules that allow speakers to communicate quickly and effectively, much like what you do in your native tongue on a daily basis. It can also be referred to as common or colloquial language.

Much like a natural language, which evolves each of these things over time, Na'vi has also quickly evolved many forms of shorthanded colloquial communication of its own. Over the years that it has been in development, new methods of communication have been developed both through use by the speaker base and by revelation from Paul Frommer's own use of the language.

Once a learner is well-versed in the rules that form the backbone of Na'vi grammatical structure, they can begin to omit and imply information from context by use of these conversational/colloquial methods, significantly reducing the amount of effort it takes to speak a thought in Na'vi.

# Formal vs. Colloquial Language

Spoken language falls into three categories: formal and colloquial language, and one flexible middle category which we will call neutral language. Neutral language is the realm of language that you are likely already familiar with, so we aren't going to talk about it much from here on out. These three categories form a venn-diagram that looks like this:



It is apparent from the glimpses that we have seen of Na'vi clan life, from the insight that the language gives us into their culture, and from the word of Paul Frommer that the Na'vi have a social structure that distinguishes between the different types of conversation. Let's talk about what sets each of these apart.

## Colloquial Language:

"[Colloquial] language is a complex web of shorthand, idioms, slang and ease of access rules that allow speakers to communicate quickly and effectively."

Colloquial language is fast, natural and comfortable, and is the default form of communication that native speakers of a language use to communicate with other familiar native speakers. In Na'vi, Paul has equated "colloquial" and "informal" language. <sup>[1]</sup> <sup>[2]</sup> Colloquial language is *mutually exclusive* from formal language.

An easy way for an English speaker to identify this realm of conversation is to think of the kind of context where one would say something similar to "Hey, how's it going?" Often, it's with friends, family, coworkers, or people of a younger age than

the speaker and because of this, colloquial language usually indicates a level of comfort or familiarity with the person that is being communicated with.

### Formal Language:

Formal language is reserved for ceremonial or honorific circumstances. It is used to communicate more elegantly, and to show respect or honor to someone deserving of the courtesy.

Conversely to colloquial language, formal language is slow and intentional, often using unique constructions or more complicated synonyms for common words. It is reserved for special circumstances and even among native speakers of a language it is rare. Formal language is likewise *mutually exclusive* from colloquial language.

As silly as it sounds, an easy way for an English speaker to identify this realm of conversation is to think of the kind of context where one would say something similar to “O’ great person, I respectfully request your pardon.” Formal language is exceedingly rare in modern English, with the bulk of conversation taking place in neutral or colloquial language.

# Formal Na'vi

On one end of the conversational spectrum is formal Na'vi. The use-case for much of this area of Na'vi is in the context of ceremonial language, though certain constructions carry into more casual conversation as well. Because the only two official formal constructions we have are the ceremonial aspect and the honorific pronouns, this area of the guide is also going to stray into the realm of neutral Na'vi to cover some constructions that won't be used in colloquial Na'vi. Let's get started.

## Ceremonial and Honorific

There are two conventional areas where Na'vi is exclusively formal, in the ceremonial aspect and in honorific pronouns. The ceremonial aspect is the second position infix <uy>. The ceremonial aspect, as it would seem, is only used in ceremonial circumstances. The only example in the film where we have seen this so far was in Jake's coming of age ceremony at Hometree with the line, **Ngenga 'itan Omatikayaä luyu set. Na'viyä luyu hapxi**. You are a son of the Omatikaya now. You are part of the Na'vi. Like many other infixes, the ceremonial aspect can be dropped once context has been established by its use.

Additionally, ceremonial or honorific speech requires honorific pronouns. They're formed around the base forms **ohe** and **ngenga**. A helpful table can be found below.

	Singular	Dual	Trial	Plural
1st Person Exclusive	<b>ohe</b>	<b>mohe</b>	<b>pxohe</b>	<b>ayohe</b>
2nd Person	<b>ngenga</b>	<b>mengenga</b>	<b>pxengenga</b>	<b>ayngenga</b>

Lastly, according to Frommer's use in the first post on [naviteri.org](http://naviteri.org), use of both of the ceremonial affect and honorific pronouns together can indicate sincerity or solemnity. <sup>[naviteri.org]</sup>

## Formal Words and Phrases

There are no examples of truly formal usage of words or phrases outside of the ceremonial or honorific. However, there are situations where Paul has mentioned that a word or phrase are "more formal", or gives things on a scale from most formal to most colloquial. For the sake of being thorough, the following is a list of words and phrases that fall into the "more formal" or neutral speech realms. Na'vi words are marked by **bold**. English translations are marked by *italics*.

**Ätxäle si oe pivawm...** *I request to ask... A polite way to ask Can I ask?"* <sup>[1]</sup>

**Lì'fyari po kllexem sìn peyì?** *Regarding the Language, on what level does she stand?* <sup>[2]</sup>

**Lu oeru lie a...** *I had the experience of... A more formal way to talk about experiences.* <sup>[3]</sup>

**Ngari solalew polpxaya zìsìt?** or **Ngari solalew zìsìt apolpxay?** *How old are you? The most formal way to ask about someone's age.* <sup>[1]</sup>

Related: **Ngari solalew polpxay?** **Ngari solew polpxay?** Neutral speech possibilities.

**Ngeyä kewan pìmtxan?** *How old are you?* <sup>[4]</sup>

**Tsali'uri fko pamrel si fyape?** *How does one write that word?* <sup>[5]</sup>

Related: **Pamrelfyari fyape?** *How do you spell it?* Neutral speech equivalent.

# Idioms in Na'vi

A crucial element to speaking a language conversationally is knowing the idiomatic elements of the language. Idioms are words, phrases and constructions that, when used in specific circumstances, take on a different meaning than their given definition. They occur frequently in neutral speech and colloquial conversation. This document will divide idiomatic uses of words into two categories, idioms and idiomatic constructions.

## Idioms

The following is a list of words and phrases that fall into the idiomatic category. Na'vi words are marked by **bold**. English translations are marked by *italics*.

**'lvong nìk'ong.** *Take your time. Lit. Bloom slowly.* <sup>[1]</sup>

**Ätxäle si Palulukanur tsnì smarit livonu...** *Ask for the impossible. Lit. Ask a Thanator to release its prey...* <sup>[2]</sup>

**Eltur tìtxen si.** *Interesting, intriguing. Lit. Makes awake the brain.* <sup>[30]</sup>

**Etrìpa syayvi.** *Good luck! Lit. Favorable chance.* <sup>[2]</sup>

**Fìfya tsafya.** *One way or another. Lit. This way, that way.* <sup>[3]</sup>

**Ftu X ne Y pela'a?** *How far is X from Y? Lit. From X to Y what distance?* <sup>[39]</sup>

**Fwäkì ke fwefwi.** *To do something against one's nature. Lit. The mantis doesn't whistle.* <sup>[38]</sup>

**Hayalo oeta/ta oe.** *You're welcome. Lit. Next time from me.* <sup>[4]</sup>

**Hìpey taronyu, hifwo yerik.** *He who hesitates is lost. Lit. The hunter hesitates and the Yerik is lost.* <sup>[5]</sup>

**Hìtxoa.** *Sorry, excuse me. From hì'ia txoa, lit. little forgiveness.* <sup>[6]</sup>





**To títseri.** *Than is apparent/Than you know. Lit. Than awareness.* <sup>[10]</sup>

**...verar wivan.** *...keeping (that) a secret. Lit. Continuing to hide.* <sup>[28]</sup>

**Za'u nì'eng.** *Share an interest in common. Lit. Come levelly.* <sup>[29]</sup>

**Zola'u nìprte'.** *Welcome! Lit. Come pleasurably!* <sup>[18]</sup>

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## Idiomatic Constructions

The following is a list of rules and constructions that fall into the idiomatic category. Na'vi words are marked by **bold**. English translations are marked by *italics*.

**'ul... 'ul...**, *The more...the more...*, in this construction, **'ul**, increase, becomes the more. <sup>[1]</sup>

**Ftxey...fuke**, *Whether...or not*, in this construction, **ftxey**, choose, becomes *whether*. <sup>[2]</sup>

**Li** can be combined with **sre+** to indicate 'by' as in, "by x time (but not after)" i.e. **Kem si li trraysre.** *Do it by tomorrow. Lit. Do it already before tomorrow.* <sup>[3]</sup>

**Li** can be used as a hesitant or unexpected yes, i.e. **Li, slä...**, *Well, yes, I guess so, but...* <sup>[3]</sup>

**Li <verb>**, used to show strong imperative, i.e. **Li kä!** *Get going! Lit. Go already!* <sup>[3]</sup>

**Lu** can be used with the dative to idiomatically say something has something else, i.e. **Lu oeru tsko.** *I have a bow. Lit. The bow is to me.* The verb + dative typically come first in this construction. <sup>[4]</sup>

**Nän...nän...**, *The less...the less...*, in this construction, **nän**, decrease, becomes the less. <sup>[1]</sup>

**Nìftxan X...na Y**, as X as Y, used in equal comparisons. In this construction, **nìftxan**, so, to such an extent, becomes as. <sup>[5]</sup>

The topical case can be used idiomatically to mark inalienable possession, ie. **Oeri txe'lan**, my heart. <sup>[6]</sup>

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# Slang and Shorthand in Na'vi

On the opposite end of the spectrum from formal Na'vi is colloquial Na'vi. Paul Frommer was very intentional from the beginning to mark out cases in Na'vi where words and phrases are used in colloquial context. Furthermore, because Na'vi is a living, breathing language, there are also slang and colloquialisms that have arisen from common use of the language in speaker communities that fit within the parameters of use of Na'vi- or have been approved by Paul himself, that add even more depth to Na'vi as a spoken language. For example, a commonly held opinion about the formality vs. colloquial registers of speech in Na'vi is that the more abbreviation, truncation, and omission you employ in your sentence, the more colloquial it will sound. Vice versa, the less abbreviation, truncation, and omission you employ in your sentence, the more formal it will sound.

## Colloquial and Slang Words

The primary way that language usage becomes colloquial is through slang and shorthand. Slang and shorthand is often a direct result of native speakers contracting words or phrases for ease of pronunciation or communication. As such, the root of slang words can often be traced through the slang itself. Na'vi follows this trend by practically contracting words to reach the shortened, colloquial versions.

The following is a comprehensive list of Na'vi words that are considered slang, shorthand, informal or colloquial, their roots, and their meanings. Na'vi words are marked by **bold**. English translations are marked by *italics*.

**'evan**, n. - *boy*, a colloquial usage of **'evengan** <sup>[15]</sup>

**'eve**, n. - *girl*, a colloquial usage of **'evenge** <sup>[15]</sup>

**ayawnven**, pln. *shoes*, which is a spoken colloquial variant of **ayhawnven**. <sup>[naviteri.org]</sup>

Related: **mawnven**, **pxawnven**

**Eyweveng**, pn. *Pandora*, a spoken slang of **Eywa’eveng** <sup>[16]</sup>

**fewtsok**, adj. *opposite, on the other side*, a spoken slang of **fewtusok** <sup>[16]</sup>

**fta**, dem. *that, it (as a direct object)*, a colloquial usage of **futa** <sup>[1]</sup>

**fyìpmaut**, n. *squid fruit tree*, when spoken colloquially it becomes **FYÌP.mawt**, two syllables instead of the traditional three. <sup>[23]</sup>

**ketsran**, adj., conj., intj. *no matter, no matter what, whatever*, used colloquially as a question response meaning “whatever.” <sup>[2]</sup>

**kxi**, intj. *hi/hey*, a colloquial usage of **kaltxi**, intj. *hello* <sup>[3]</sup>

**komum**, vtr. *don’t know*, a slang of **ke omum**, *don’t know*

**leykekyu**, n. *law enforcer*, a slang of **horenleykekyu** <sup>[25]</sup>

**leyngkem**, vin. *protest*, a spoken slang of **leymkem** and derivations.

Related: **tìleyngkem**, **säleyngkem** <sup>[13]</sup>

**maitan**, n., ph., [*vocative*] *son*, a casual shortening of **ma ‘itan** <sup>[21]</sup>

**maite**, n., ph., [*vocative*] *daughter*, a casual shortening of **ma ‘ite** <sup>[21]</sup>

**may+**, pref. *in [noun]s*, a spoken slang of **mì ay+** <sup>[19]</sup>

**mungwrrto**, conj. *unless, except if*, a casual shortening of **mungwrrtxo** <sup>[24]</sup>

**nayweng**, adv. *like us, as we do*, a spoken slang of **nàyoeng** <sup>[17]</sup>

**ngey**, pn. *your*, a colloquial usage of **ngeyä** <sup>[4]</sup>

**oey**, pn. *my*, a colloquial usage of **oeyä** <sup>[5]</sup>

**palukan**, pn. *Thanator*, colloquial usage of **Palulkan** <sup>[6]</sup>

**pela’a/la’ape**, int. *what distance*, a colloquial alternative to **pelimsim/limsimpe** <sup>[22]</sup>

**pinvul**, n. *crayon*, colloquial usage of **‘opinultsyìp** <sup>[7]</sup>

**pxuǎmpxaw**, irr. adp. *around*, when suffixed to a noun ending in **n**, can be morphed to **m** <sup>[20]</sup>

**rik**, n. *leaf*, a possible colloquial usage of **yomyo lerik**, n. *leaf-plate* <sup>[8]</sup>

**ronsrewngop**, vtr. *imagine, envision*, a spoken slang of **ronselngop** <sup>[9]</sup>

**rumaut**, n. cannonball fruit tree, when spoken colloquially it becomes **RU.mawt**, two syllables instead of the traditional three. <sup>[23]</sup>

**say+**, pref. and [noun]s, a spoken slang of **sì ay+** <sup>[19]</sup>

**snrrtsyìp**, n. Proxima Centauri, the little sky light, a colloquial shortening of **tawsnrrtsyìp** <sup>[21]</sup>

**solew**, v. had/have proceeded, a spoken slang of **solalew** <sup>[5]</sup>

**so'yu**, n. enthusiast, fan, a colloquial usage of **txanso'hayu** <sup>[10]</sup>

**srangehe**, part., intj. more or less, yes and no, a spoken slang of **sranglehe** <sup>[3]</sup>

**srane**, part., intj. yes, a colloquial usage of **srane** <sup>[17]</sup>

**sunkesun**, adv., [whether you] like it or not, a shortening of **sunu ke sunu** <sup>[21]</sup>

**-syu**, suf. [verb]-er, a colloquial usage of the suffix created by **si + yu** <sup>[5]</sup>

**txungä'**, adj. poisonous, a colloquial usage of **txumngä'** <sup>[11]</sup>

**vovä'**, n., intj. asshole, dickhead, stink-soul, a colloquial shortening of **vonvä'** <sup>[13]</sup>

**wou**, svin. be amazing, fascinating, wow, a slang loan word adopted by the Na'vi <sup>[14]</sup>

**yayayngä'**, adj. confusing, a spoken slang of **yayayngä'** <sup>[11]</sup>

**yo**, n. surface, a possible colloquial usage of **fyanyo**, n. elevated utilitarian surface, table <sup>[8]</sup>

**zawsena**, n. quiver, a colloquial usage of **swizawsena** <sup>[12]</sup>

**zengke**, vinm. must not, a spoken slang of **zenke** <sup>[18]</sup>

**zìsaltrr**, n. (yearly) anniversary, a colloquial usage of **zìsìsaltrr** <sup>[7]</sup>

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## Colloquial Phrases

Expanding colloquial speech also means learning about idiomatic and colloquial phrases. An idiom is a phrase that says one thing but means something entirely

different based on cultural context and use. They are common in all spoken languages and are often confusing to new learners who are trying to translate the meaning without understanding the idiom itself.

The following is a comprehensive list of colloquial phrases and their meanings. Na'vi words are marked by **bold**. English translations are marked by *italics*.

**Ätxäle palukanur...** Colloquial shortening of the idiomatic proverb **Ätxäle si Palulkanur tsnì smarit livonu...** Ask a Thanator to release its prey... [8]

**Lì'fyari po sìn peyì?/Lì'fyari po peyì?** Idiomatic construction for *How's their Na'vi?* Highly colloquial. Full version is **Lì'fyari po kllkem sìn peyì?** Lit. *Regarding the Language, on what level do they stand?* [9]

**Makto zong!** Take care - Colloquial shortening of **Mivakto nìzawnong!**, travel safely. [1]

**Ngafkeyk fyape/pefya?** *How ya' doin'?* *What's your status?* [2]

**Ngari keftxo ke tok**, colloquial shortening of the idiom **Ngari keftxo lu fwa ke tok.** [11]

**Ngari solew polpxay?** The colloquial way to ask *How old are you?* [3]

**Oeru ke'u.** Colloquial idiomatic phrase meaning *I don't care.* Lit. *Nothing to me.* [4]

**Pamrel fyape?** The colloquial way to ask *how do you write it?* Used in response to hearing an unfamiliar word. [5]

**Pefmawn?** *What's new? What's the news?* [2]

**Pewn torukä!** Colloquial shortening of the idiom **Ke tsun fko tspivang torukit fa fwa pewnti snew!** *One can't kill toruk by strangling him.* [10]

**X-ìri peral?** The colloquial way to ask *What does X mean?* [6]

**Tifkeytok fyape/pefya?** *How are things? What's the existing situation?* [2]

**Tsun pehem?** *What are you going to do? That's life.* Colloquial shortening of the phrase **Tsun fko pehem sivi?**, *What can one do?* [3]

**Yafkeyk pefya?** Colloquial shortening of **Yafkeyk za'u pefya?** *How comes the weather?* [7]

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## Colloquial Constructions

Rounding out the section of colloquial Na'vi are colloquial constructions, grammar rules that are not immediately apparent that can be used in colloquial conversation.

The following is a comprehensive list of colloquial constructions and their meanings. Na'vi words are marked by **bold**. English translations are marked by *italics*.

With verbs that use **ne/ñlã/fa**, adp. to, towards/by, via/with, by means of, like **kã**, vin. go, and **za'u**, vin. come, it is more colloquial to state the place after the verb and drop the adposition. If the place comes before the verb, then the adposition is required. <sup>[1]</sup>

In Na'vi names containing **\_\_o'a\_\_** it is colloquial to pronounce them without the **tiftang**. <sup>[2]</sup>

A speaker can use **pxay**, many + **ay+** colloquially, instead of **pxay**, many + singular noun. <sup>[3]</sup>

A single number is able to be used to respond to **Ngari solalew polpxay?** *As for you, how many years have passed?* when speaking colloquially. <sup>[4]</sup>

A speaker can drop the agentive suffix on nouns of transitive verbs with unknown objects when speaking colloquially. <sup>[5]</sup>

A speaker can use **oe spaw**, **\_\_/spaw oe**, **\_\_**, *I believe that \_\_* colloquially (as opposed to **oel spaw futa \_\_**). <sup>[6] [7]</sup>

A speaker can drop the **<iv>** infix in the **zel** clause of **zun...zel**, *if...then* constructions when speaking colloquially if the verb tenses are the same in both clauses. <sup>[8]</sup>

A speaker can drop **niftxan/nì'eng**, adv. so, to such an extent/equally, in value and worth comparisons when speaking colloquially. <sup>[9]</sup>

A speaker can drop **lu**, *am/is/are/be*, in interrogatives, ie. **Ngeyä kxìmyu pesu?** *Who is your commander?* <sup>[13]</sup>

A speaker can shorten **sä-** prefixed words to **s-** when speaking colloquially as long as the created syllable is legal and it can't be confused with another word. <sup>[10]</sup> <sup>[11]</sup> <sup>[12]</sup>

A speaker can drop **tok** when it can be reasonably assumed from context in casual conversation. They retain the case endings. <sup>[14]</sup>

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# Useful Resources

You've reached the end of what this document (currently) has to offer! Here are some other resources from members of the Na'vi community that will complement your study of conversational Na'vi.

## Naviteri Conversation Starters Posts

Web, [session one here](#). [Session two here](#). [Session three here](#).

Karyu Pawl's Naviteri posts introducing phrases that we can use for basic introductory conversation.

## Vawmataw's Na'vi Phrasebook

PDF, 323.27 kB, [download here](#).

This is an excellent document that covers some of the common phrases you will see as you spend time in any Na'vi language community.

# Ayli'u ta Mako

Many hours were logged compiling, sourcing and sorting all of this information for your convenience. My thanks goes out to Plumps, Pamirik and Vawmataw for their assistance in sourcing the information in this document where my knowledge or ability to search was insufficient. If you, the reader, have read this far then a sincere thank you from me for using this material to aid in your study of the Na'vi language. If this document helps anyone beyond me learn how to expand their conversational knowledge beyond simple phrases and greetings, then it will have been worth it.

Hufwel kxiveltek ngeyä ikranä syalit.

Hayalovay.

ta Mako

# Change log

Version 1.0.7, fixed a missing citation. 11-28-2020

Version 1.0.6, updated the theme to match with Kelutral.org branding. 6-2-2020

Version 1.0.5, fixed the **reykìkxi utralti, mauti zup** idiom (thanks Heyranyu!). 4-21-2020

Version 1.0.4, updated the theme to match with my personal branding. 4-20-2020

Version 1.0.3, added notes about **tok**, and **mungwrrtxo**. 3-26-2020

Version 1.0.2, added **fyipmaut, rumaut, pela'a/la'ape, ftu X ne Y pela'a, nari si <verb>, po keynven sìn ketse**, and **ngari keftxo fwa ke tok/ngari keftxo ke tok**.

Version 1.0.1, added **fwäkì ke fwefwi** and updated **ätxäle si Palulkanur tsnì smarit livonu**.

Version 1.0, nothing to see here yet!

# Sources

The following are all of the sources above, fully expanded and listed by section.

## Colloquial and Slang Words

1. <http://naviteri.org/2017/06/ayliu-a-ta-eywaeveng-kifkey-uniltirantokxa-words-from-disneys-pandora-the-world-of-avatar/>
2. <http://naviteri.org/2013/03/whoever-whatever-whenever/>
3. <http://naviteri.org/2018/03/100a-liu-amip-64-new-words-part-1/>
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# Acknowledgments

The cover artwork is thanks to AVATAR lead concept artist Dylan Cole.