

Horen Lì'fyayä leNa'vi
A Reference Grammar of Na'vi

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	3 Morphology	14
	3.1 The Noun	14
	3.1.1 Cases	14
	3.1.2 Indefinite -o	15
	3.1.3 Number	15
	3.2 The Pronoun	15
	3.2.1 The Basic Pronouns	15
	3.2.2 Ceremonial/Honorific Pronouns	16
	3.2.3 Lahe	16
	3.3 Prenouns	16
	3.3.1 Fì-	17
	3.3.2 Tsa-	17
	3.3.3 -Pe+	17
	3.3.4 Fra-	17
	3.3.5 Fne-	17
	3.3.6 Contraction	17
	3.3.7 Combinations	17
	3.4 Correlatives	17
	3.4.1 Questions	18
	3.4.2 Fì'u and Tsaw in Clause Nominalization	19
	3.4.3 Fmawn and Tì'eyng in Clause Nominalization	19
	3.5 The Adjective	19
	3.5.1 Attribution	19
	3.6 The Verb	19
	3.6.1 Infix Location	19
	3.6.2 Pre-first Position	20
	3.6.3 First Position	20
	3.6.4 Second Position	21
	3.6.5 Examples	21
1 Introduction		5
1.1 History of Decipherment		5
1.2 Notation and Conventions		6
2 Letters and Sounds		8
2.1 Sound System		8
2.1.1 Consonants		8
2.1.2 Vowels		9
2.1.3 Pseudovowels		9
2.1.4 Syllable Structure		9
2.1.5 Stress Accent		10
2.1.6 Spoken Alphabet		10
2.2 Lenition		11
2.2.1 Glottal Stop		11
2.2.2 Adpositions		11
2.2.3 Number Prefixes		11
2.2.4 Question Prenoun		11
2.2.5 Numbers		11
2.2.6 Proper Nouns		11
2.3 Morphophonology		11
2.3.1 Vowel Contraction		11
2.3.2 Pseudovowel Contraction		12
2.3.3 Affect Infix Epenthesis		12
2.3.4 Nasal Assimilation		12
2.3.5 Vowel Harmony		12
2.3.6 Elision		12
2.3.7 Other Phonetic Processes		12
2.4 Orthographic Conventions		12
2.4.1 Proper Names		12
2.4.2 Quotation		13
2.4.3 Etymological Spelling		13
2.4.4 Attributive Phrase Hyphenation		13
	4 Numbers	22
	4.1 Cardinal Numerals	22
	4.1.1 The "Ones"	22
	4.1.2 Powers of Eight	22
	4.1.3 Dependent Forms	22
	4.2 Ordinal Numbers	23
	4.2.1 Suffix -ve	23
	4.3 Fractions	23
	4.3.1 -Pxì	23
	4.3.2 Numerator	23

4.4	Other Forms	24	6	Syntax	30
4.4.1	Alo	24	6.1	Transitivity and Ergativity . . .	30
4.4.2	-lie	24	6.1.1	Transitivity	30
4.4.3	Alien Digits	24	6.1.2	Tripartite	30
5	Word Building	25	6.2	Noun Phrases and Adjectives . .	31
5.1	Derivational Affixes	25	6.2.1	Number	31
5.1.1	Prefixes	25	6.2.2	Indefinite	31
5.1.2	Negative Prefix	26	6.2.3	Free Choice Indefinites . .	31
5.1.3	Adverbial “a-”	26	6.2.4	Apposition	32
5.1.4	Prefix with Infix	26	6.2.5	Adjective Attribution . .	32
5.1.5	Agent Suffixes	26	6.2.6	Predication	32
5.1.6	Diminutive Suffix	26	6.2.7	Comparison	33
5.1.7	-Nay Suffix	27	6.2.8	Direct Address	33
5.1.8	Gender Suffixes	27	6.3	Pronouns	34
5.2	Reduplication	27	6.3.1	Gender	34
5.2.1	Iteration	27	6.3.2	Number	34
5.2.2	Shift in Degree	27	6.3.3	Similarity	34
5.3	Compounds	27	6.3.4	Fko	34
5.3.1	Headedness	27	6.3.5	Sno	34
5.3.2	Apocope	28	6.3.6	Lahe	35
5.3.3	“Si” Construction	28	6.3.7	PRO-Drop	35
5.4	Common and Noteworthy Compound Elements	28	6.3.8	Contrastive Demonstratives	35
5.4.1	-fkeyk	28	6.4	Use of the Cases	35
5.4.2	Hì(’)-	28	6.4.1	Subjective	35
5.4.3	-ìva	28	6.4.2	Agentive	36
5.4.4	-nga’	28	6.4.3	Patientive	36
5.4.5	-pin	28	6.4.4	Dative	36
5.4.6	Pxi-	28	6.4.5	Genitive	36
5.4.7	Sna-	28	6.4.6	Topical	37
5.4.8	-tsim	29	6.5	Adpositions	37
5.4.9	Tsuk-	29	6.5.1	Position	37
5.4.10	-tswò	29	6.5.2	Lenition	38
5.4.11	-vi	29	6.6	Adverbs	38
5.4.12	“Kä-” and “Za-”	29	6.6.1	Degree and Quantity . .	38
5.5	Time	29	6.6.2	With Gerunds	38
5.5.1	The Current Time	29	6.6.3	Correlative Comparisons	38
5.5.2	The Previous Time	29	6.6.4	Fitxan and Nìftxan . . .	39
5.5.3	The Next Time	29	6.6.5	Keng	39
			6.6.6	Li	39
			6.6.7	Nìwotx	39
			6.6.8	Nìfya’o	39
			6.6.9	“Kop” and “nìteng” . . .	40

6.6.10	Sunkesun	40	6.14.5	Conjectural Questions	47
6.7	Aspect and Tense	40	6.14.6	Choice Questions	47
6.7.1	The Role of Context	40	6.15	Affect and Evidence	47
6.7.2	The Unmarked Verb	40	6.15.1	Affect	47
6.7.3	Aspect	40	6.15.2	Evidence	47
6.7.4	Simultaneous Imperfective	41	6.16	Negation	47
6.7.5	Anterior Perfective	41	6.16.1	Simple Negation	47
6.7.6	Punctual Perfective	41	6.16.2	Pleonastic Negation	47
6.7.7	Tense	41	6.16.3	Kaw'it	47
6.7.8	Proximal Tense	41	6.17	Complex Sentences	48
6.7.9	Intentional Future	41	6.17.1	Tense and Aspect in Dependent Subjunctives	48
6.8	Subjunctive	41	6.17.2	Purpose	48
6.8.1	Optative	41	6.17.3	Asyndeton	48
6.8.2	Nìrangal	41	6.18	Relative Clauses and Phrase Attribution	48
6.8.3	Modal Complement	42	6.18.1	Particle "A"	48
6.8.4	Modals with Subclauses	43	6.18.2	Referential Hierarchy	48
6.8.5	Other Uses	43	6.18.3	Other Attributive Phrases	49
6.9	Participles and Gerunds	43	6.18.4	Clause Nominalization	49
6.9.1	Participles	43	6.18.5	Nominalized Clauses with Adpositions	50
6.9.2	Gerunds	44	6.18.6	Nominalizations as Conjunctions	50
6.10	Reflexive	44	6.19	Conditional Sentences	51
6.10.1	True Reflexives	44	6.19.1	General	51
6.10.2	Intransitive Reflexives	44	6.19.2	Future Conditional	51
6.10.3	Detransitive	44	6.19.3	Hypothetical	51
6.10.4	Reciprocal	44	6.19.4	Contrafactual	51
6.11	Causative	44	6.19.5	Imperatives in Conditions	52
6.11.1	Causative of Intransitive Verb	45	6.20	Conjunctions	52
6.11.2	Causative of Transitive Verb	45	6.20.1	Alu	52
6.12	Ambitransitivity	45	6.20.2	Ftxey	52
6.12.1	Omitted Object	45	6.20.3	Fu	52
6.12.2	Causative	46	6.20.4	Ki	52
6.13	Commands	46	6.20.5	Sì	52
6.13.1	Unmarked	46	6.20.6	Tengkrr	53
6.13.2	With the Subjunctive	46	6.20.7	Tsnì	53
6.13.3	Prohibitions	46	6.20.8	Ulte	53
6.14	Questions	46	6.21	Direct Quotation	53
6.14.1	Polar Questions	46	6.21.1	San... sük	53
6.14.2	Ftxey... Fuke	46	6.21.2	Questions	54
6.14.3	Wh-Questions	46			
6.14.4	Tag Question	46			

6.21.3	Transitivity	54	7.1.4	Focus	57
6.21.4	Quotation Nominalization	54	7.1.5	The English Passive . . .	58
6.22	Particles	54	7.2	Topic-Comment	58
6.22.1	Ko	54	7.2.1	Topical Case	58
6.22.2	Nang	55	7.2.2	Topical Role	58
6.22.3	Pak	55	7.2.3	Using the Topical	59
6.22.4	Tut	55	7.3	Register	59
6.22.5	Tse	55	7.3.1	Formal Register	59
6.23	Other Notable Words	55	7.3.2	Poetic Register	60
6.23.1	Sweylu	55	7.3.3	Colloquial Register . . .	60
7	Pragmatics and Discourse	56	7.3.4	Slang	60
7.1	Constituent Order	56	7.3.5	Clipped Register	60
7.1.1	Free Word Order	56	A	Index	61
7.1.2	SOV, SVO, VSO	56	B	Changelog	67
7.1.3	Word Order Effects . . .	57			

1. Introduction

We do not yet have an official grammar of the Na'vi language, written by Paul Frommer and blessed by the financial and intellectual property Powers that Be at Lightstorm Entertainment or 20th Century Fox. As of this writing¹ it does not seem likely we'll be getting one very soon. In light of that, I decided to turn a grammar summary I wrote into a longer document.

Like that grammar summary, this document will not teach you Na'vi. Instead, it is intended to provide a concise and accurate reference on the current state of our knowledge about the language. It is based on all the analytical work that has gone on in the months and years since the film was released, as well as any communications from Frommer which clarify language points.

I rely heavily on the Corpus and Canon wiki pages at LearnNavi.org, without which resources this document would not be possible. The recent appearance of Frommer's own blog has also provided material.²

1.1. History of Decipherment

It is important for newcomers to Na'vi to understand how it is we know what we know about the Na'vi language.

Our earliest hints about the language came out in interviews with Frommer in December of 2009, leading up to the release of the film. Na'vi had ejective consonants. It had a tripartite case division. We had a few phrases.

The big break came when someone among the IMDB refugees on their own forum posted the Na'vi word list.³ It was transcribed from the *Activist Survival Guide*.⁴ That list was republished in a public blog post on December 11th.⁵ All current dictionaries are based on that initial post. So, now we had enough vocabulary to start analyzing the sentences coming out in Frommer's interviews.

On December 15th, in an interview with the UGO Movie Blog⁶ we got for the first time that fundamental Na'vi greeting, **oel ngati kameie** *I See you*. This was in addition our first sighting of

¹July 2010

²In late June 2010, <http://naviteri.org>

³<http://kcbluesman.websitetoolbox.com/post?id=4013403> requires login

⁴Wilhelm, Maria; Mathison, Dirk (2009). *James Cameron's Avatar: A Confidential Report on the Biological and Social History of Pandora (An Activist Survival Guide)*, It Books (HarperCollins).

⁵<http://www.suburbandestiny.com/?p=611>

⁶<https://web.archive.org/web/20100818193039/http://www.ugo.com/movies/paul-frommer-interview>

the agentive and patientive case endings. Thanks to the dictionary, we could guess **-l** for agentive and **-ti** for patientive.

Our next big break came a few days later, with the Language Log guest blog post on December 19th.⁷ This is still fundamental reading for every student of Na’vi. In it we learn a good deal about the Na’vi sound system. It also told us enough about Na’vi grammar to guide all our future analysis of the examples coming out in interviews.

Even now, much of what we know has come not from Frommer directly telling us, for example, “this is the genitive case ending,” but by him saying in an interview that there is a genitive, and people using that information to analyze Na’vi language examples. Some of the early analysis was incomplete, which has led to some confusion, especially about case endings. Our earliest examples of the genitive were all in **-yä**. Only later did we see evidence of the **-ä** ending. One can still find older documentation giving the genitive as **-yä** only.

In the months since then, Frommer himself has provided larger examples of Na’vi, each of which has been analyzed in great detail in order to extract as much grammatical information as possible. Frommer has also answered some direct questions about the language. This often confirms what we suspected from analysis, sometimes corrects what we thought we know, and sometimes gives us new information.

I have tried as much as possible to ensure that everything in this grammar is confirmed directly by Frommer himself or, absent that, by giving enough examples from Frommer’s own Na’vi to make the case for the grammatical point being explained. Nonetheless, this document is necessarily provisional. It is Frommer’s prerogative to tweak and update the language in light of his own understanding of the language’s needs, to correct misconceptions that may have escaped his notice until now, and to fill in grammatical gaps as he gets to them. We must also assume that future *Avatar* movies will alter the Na’vi language in unexpected ways, not only to satisfy Cameron’s demands for his movies, but from the inevitable changes a created language undergoes when actors finally speak it on the set.

1.2. Notation and Conventions

Na’vi text is given in bold face type and English translations in italics, **fifya thus**.

When a Na’vi example comes directly and unmodified from the interviews, email or blog of Paul Frommer there will be an \mathcal{F} floating in the margin, as in **kìyevame**. The *Hunt Song* and the *Weaving Song* from the *Activist Survival Guide* are also so marked. Examples from the movie use *A*.

This work uses the digraphs **ts** and **ng** instead of the scientific orthography Frommer developed (§2.1.1.3). The majority of people are more familiar with the digraph system.

In Frommer’s original documentation for the actors stress accent was indicated by underlining the stressed syllable. This grammar follows that practice, as in tute person vs. **tute** woman. To avoid confusion with Frommer’s accenting convention, this document uses a wavy underline to draw attention to parts of words or phrases.

Following the usual convention in technical linguistics works, examples that are hypothetical or have some sort of error are marked with a leading asterisk, ***m’resh’tuyu**. Prefixes are indicated

⁷<http://language-log.ldc.upenn.edu/n11/?p=1977>

by putting a dash at the end of the prefix, as in **fi-**. Leniting prefixes (§2.2) use a plus sign, as in **ay+**. Suffixes are indicated with a leading dash, **-it**, and infixes with small brackets, . Transcription using the International Phonetic Alphabet goes between square brackets, [fi.'fja].

When quoting one of the four songs Frommer translated for the film, I use a single slash to separate lines, **Rerol tengkrr kerä / ìlä fya'o avol**.

Starting in September of 2011, links to citations for grammatical points are included for new material. They occur at the end of a section, and look like this: [NT \(11/7/2010\)](#). Note that the dates follow European convention, Day/Month/Year. “NT” is for Frommer’s blog, including his replies in comments, “Wiki” is for the LN.org Wiki, “Forum” is the LN.org forum, and “Utxa” is for the October 2010 meeting. There remain gaps in citations for some areas, and I fill these in as I notice them.

Text **in maroon** is for matters that seem to me to be serious questions about the language but for which no answer is currently available. Some will require simply confirmation from Frommer, others will require much deeper thought and work on his part. This grammar aspires to someday be maroon-free.

Thanks are due to LearnNavi.org members ‘Eylan Ayfalulukanä, Taronyu and Ftiafpi for looking at drafts of this grammar and making suggestions. I did not always follow their advice, so any flaws are my own.

Thanks are also due to everyone who has commented and suggested corrections since this grammar first appeared.

2. Letters and Sounds

2.1. Sound System

The Na'vi language has 20 consonant sounds, 7 vowel sounds and two vocalic resonants Frommer calls “pseudovowels.” [LangLog \(9/12/2009\)](#)

2.1.1. Consonants.

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Ejectives	px [p']	tx [t']		kx [k']	
Voiceless Stops	p [p]	t [t]		k [k]	' [ʔ]
Affricate		ts [ts]			
Voiceless fricatives	f [f]	s [s]			h [h]
Voiced fricatives	v [v]	z [z]			
Nasals	m [m]	n [n]		ng [ŋ]	
Liquids		r [r], l [l]			
Glides	w [w]		y [j]		

2.1.1.1. The voiceless stops are unaspirated at the beginning and middle of a word and unreleased at the end. However, within a phrase a final stop coming before a vowel will in natural speech be released as the words flow together, **oel set omum**. Unreleased stops will be most noticeable at major pauses, as in **oel omum set**.

2.1.1.2. The **r** is an alveolar flap. The **l** is clear and front, as in “leaf,” not the velarized, “dark-l” of English “call”.

2.1.1.3. Frommer devised a scientific orthography in which two of the digraphs were written as a single letter, **c** for **ts** and **g** for **ng**. The digraph system was easier for the actors, but it has been also used by Frommer in media interviews and in most of his own email. The scientific orthography is only seen in a few early emails to and from Frommer.

2.1.1.4. Because plain stops can be used as syllable codas, the more common ejective notation, **p'**, is too ambiguous: **tsap'alute** is not ***tsapxalute**. [Wiki \(21/12/2009\)](#)

2.1.4.3. There are no long vowels in Na’vi, meaning identical vowels will not occur next to each other (but see §2.3.1).

2.1.4.4. Double consonants do not occur in root words, but may occur at morpheme boundaries, for example in derivations, **tsukkäteng** < **tsuk-** + **käteng**, or with enclitics **Mo’atta** < **Mo’at** + **ta** (§2.1.5.3).

2.1.4.5. As is usual in most Human languages, some interjections break the rules, such as **oïsss**, a sound for anger, or **saa**, a threat cry.

2.1.5. **Stress Accent.** Every Na’vi word has at least one stress accent, which is not predictable. In a very few situations otherwise identical words may differ only by accent, such as **tute** *person* vs. **tute** *woman*.

2.1.5.1. For this word alone, *woman*, an accent may be written in normal Na’vi to indicate the accent, **tuté**.

2.1.5.2. Some word creation processes may cause accent shifts (§5.1.2.3, §5.1.8).

2.1.5.3. All adpositions as well as a few conjunctions and particles may be enclitic. They give up their own stress accent and effectively become part of the word to which they are attached, and are written so, **tsane** (< **tsaw** + **ne**), **horentisi** (< **horenti** + **si**).

2.1.5.4. Though a noun compound is written as a single word, the individual parts of that compound may each retain their original accent, as in **tireafya’o** *spirit path*.

2.1.6. **Spoken Alphabet.** Except for **tiftang**, the glottal stop, the names of the phonemes encode information about how the sound is used. They also have unusual capitalization when written out:

tiftang	ì	ReR
A	KeK	’Rr
AW	KxeKx	Sä
AY	LeL	TeT
Ä	’Ll	TxeTx
E	MeM	Tsä
EW	NeN	U
EY	NgeNg	Vä
Fä	O	Wä
Hä	PeP	Yä
I	PxePx	Zä

2.1.6.1. Vowels and diphthongs are simply pronounced and spelled as themselves. The pseudo-vowels take a leading glottal stop, since they require a consonant onset (§2.1.4).

2.1.6.2. The name for consonants which cannot end a syllable are formed by adding **ä**, as in **Tsä**. Those which can end a syllable use the vowel **e** and repeat the consonant at the end of the name, **PeP**.

2.2. Lenition

Certain grammatical processes cause changes in the first consonant of a word. This change is called “lenition.” Only eight consonants undergo lenition. [LangLog \(9/12/2009\)](#)

Consonant	Lenition	Example
px, tx, kx	p, t, k	txep but mì tep
p, t, k	f, s, h	kelku but ro helku
ts	s	ṭsmukan but aysmukan
'	disappears	'eylan but fpi eylan

2.2.1. Glottal Stop. The glottal stop is not lenited when it is followed by a pseudovowel (**mì** 'Rrta not *mì Rrta).

2.2.2. Adpositions. A few adpositions cause lenition when they precede a word: **fpi, ilä, mì, nuä, ro, sko, sre** (and derived **lisre** and **pxisre**), **wä**. When suffixed they do not cause lenition in either the word they are attached to or to the following word.

2.2.3. Number Prefixes. Prefixes which cause lenition are indicated with a plus sign, rather than the usual dash, as in **ay+**, the leniting plural prefix.

2.2.4. Question Prenoun. When used as a prefix, the question prenoun **pe+** causes lenition (§3.3.3).

2.2.5. Numbers. Suffixed, dependent forms of the numbers are lenited (§4.1.3).

2.2.6. Proper Nouns. Proper nouns still undergo lenition. **oe kelku si mì Helutral** *I live in Hometree* [NT \(10/28/2010\)](#)

2.3. Morphophonology

2.3.1. Vowel Contraction. Since identical vowels may not occur next to each other, a few grammatical processes involve a doubled vowel reducing to just one.

2.3.1.1. The adjective morpheme **-a-** disappears when attached to an **a** at the start or end of an adjective, as in **apxa tute** not ***apxaa tute**.

2.3.1.2. When the dual and trial prefixes leave a sequence of two **es**, as in **me + 'eveng** > ***meeveng** (note lenition), the two vowels contract to just one, **meveng**. [Wiki \(20/1/2010\)](#)

2.3.1.3. When the prenoun prefixes end in the same vowel the following word starts with, they reduce to one, as in **tsatan** < **ṭsa-** + **atan**, **filva** < **fi-** + **ilva** (§3.3.6).¹ [Wiki \(18/5/2011\)](#)

2.3.1.4. Contraction does not occur for indefinite **-o** or enclitic adpositions. When two identical vowels occur next to each other, they are written with a hyphen between them, **fya'o-o** *some way*, **zekwä-äo** *under a finger*.²

¹The glottal stop is a consonant, so **fi'ihayu** from **fi-** + **'ihayu**.

²Though Na'vi does not technically have long vowels, the effect of long vowels occurs in this situation. Take care to pronounce both **ä** in a word such as **zekwä-äo**.

2.3.2. Pseudovowel Contraction. Due to the shape of the aspect infixes, ⟨er⟩ and ⟨ol⟩, it is possible for the pseudovowels to occur immediately after their consonantal counterpart, as in *p⟨ol⟩lltxe. When this happens in an unstressed syllable, the pseudovowel disappears, **poltxe**. In a stressed syllable, the infix disappears, *f⟨er⟩rrfen > **frrfen**. Pseudovowels in monosyllables behave as though unaccented, **vol** from *v⟨ol⟩ll. [Wiki \(23/3/2010\)](#) [NT \(19/6/2012\)](#)

2.3.3. Affect Infix Epenthesis. When the positive affect infix ⟨ei⟩ is followed by the vowel i, ì or a pseudovowel, a y is inserted, **seyi** < *s⟨ei⟩i, **veykrreyìn** < *veykrr⟨ei⟩ìn; v⟨ei⟩yll < *veill. [NT \(19/6/2012\)](#)

2.3.4. Nasal Assimilation. In many compounds as well as in some idioms, final nasals assimilate to the position of the following word, as in **lumpe** as a variant of **pelun**. Such assimilation is not always written, which may make the etymology of a word clearer, as in **zenke** instead of ***zengke**, from **zene ke**, or in the several idioms with the verb **tìng give**, **tìng mikiyun** being pronounced **tìm mikiyun**.

2.3.5. Vowel Harmony. Na'vi has two instances of optional regressive vowel harmony in verb infixes.

2.3.5.1. The subjunctive future infix, ⟨iyev⟩, most frequently appears as ⟨iyev⟩, with backing of the first vowel.

2.3.5.2. The vowel of the negative attitude infix, ⟨äng⟩, may be raised if it is immediately followed by the vowel i, becoming ⟨eng⟩, as in **tsap'alute sengi oe**. [Utxa \(2/10/2010\)](#)

2.3.6. Elision. In rapid speech final -e is frequently elided when the following word starts in a vowel. **Kìyevame/ultē/Eywa ngahu**. This is not indicated in writing. **But not monosyllables? ke? sre?** \mathcal{F}

2.3.6.1. The vowel ì in **mì, sì** and the adverb prefix **nì-** drops before the plural prefix **ay+**, though there is no change in writing. So, **nìayfo like them** is pronounced as **nayfo**. [NT \(1/7/2010\)](#)

2.3.6.2. The vowel in **nì-** will usually elide before a stressed **e**, as in **nì- + etrìp > netrìp**. If the **e** is unstressed, it will usually, though not always, elide, **nì- + eyawr > niyawr**. One exception: **nìean** instead of the expected ***nìan**. [Forum \(9/8/2017\)](#)

2.3.7. Other Phonetic Processes.

2.3.7.1. In colloquial speech names containing the sequence **o'a** may eliminate the glottal stop, such as **Mo'at ~ Moat** and **Lo'ak ~ Loak**. [NT \(1/3/2017\)](#)

2.4. Orthographic Conventions

Na'vi in general follows the spelling, punctuation and capitalization habits of English, but there are a few differences.

2.4.1. Proper Names. When taking lexical prefixes (§5.1), proper names retain their original capitalization, as in **lì'fya leNa'vi**.

2.4.2. Quotation. Direct quotes are not punctuated with quotation marks in Na'vi. Instead it relies on the quotation particles **san...sik** (see §6.21).

2.4.3. Etymological Spelling. In addition to the occasional spelling of nasals to reflect etymology (§2.3.4), there are a few grammatical processes which result in spelling that reflects the grammar more than the pronunciation.

2.4.3.1. The first person pronoun root **oe**, though pronounced **we** when taking a suffix, retains the original spelling (§3.2.1.1).

2.4.3.2. Before words starting with **y** the plural prefix **ay+** is unchanged, **ayyerik**. [Wiki \(18/4/2010\)](#)

2.4.4. Attributive Phrase Hyphenation. Certain short attributive phrases are written with hyphens joining the elements.

2.4.4.1. Attributive phrases of color using **na like** are hyphenated, **fisyulang aean-na-ta'leng** *this skin-blue flower* (§6.18.3.1).

2.4.4.2. Participles of **si** construction verbs are also hyphenated, **srung-susia tute** *a helping person* (§6.9.1.2).

3. Morphology

3.1. The Noun

3.1.1. Cases. The Na’vi case endings change depending on whether the word ends in a consonant, a vowel or a diphthong.¹

	Vowel	Consonant & Pseudovowel	Diphthong
Subjective	—	—	—
Agentive	-l	-il	-il
Patientive	-t, -ti	-it, -ti	-ti, -it, -ay-t, -ey-t
Dative	-r, -ru	-ur, -’-ru	-ru, -ur, -aw-r, -ew-r
Genitive	-yä, -o-ä, -u-ä	-ä	-ä
Topical	-ri	-iri	-ri

[Wiki \(24/3/2010\)](#)

3.1.1.1. Note that words ending in the pseudo-vowels **ll** and **rr** take the consonant endings: **trr-ä**, **’ewll-it**.

3.1.1.2. After the vowels **o** and **u** the genitive is just **-ä**, but after all other vowels it is **-yä**. So, **tsulfätuä** from **tsulfätu**, but **Na’viyä** from **Na’vi** and **li’fyä** from **li’fyä**.

3.1.1.3. Nouns in **-ia** have the genitive in **-iä**, as in **soaiä** from **soaia**.

3.1.1.4. In addition to several pronouns (§3.2.1.6), there are a few nouns with irregular genitives: **Omatikayaä** (from **Omatikaya**).

3.1.1.5. Due to the similarity in sound between **y** and **i**, the patientive ending **-it** is simplified when suffixed to a diphthong ending in **y**, as in **keyeyt errors** instead of ***keyeyit**. And due to similarity in sound between **w** and **u**, the same simplification happens to the dative **-ur**, as in **’etnawr to/for a shoulder** instead of ***’etnawur**. [NT \(1/25/2013\)](#)

3.1.1.6. A noun ending in the glottal stop may also take the dative in **-ru**, such as **li’fyaolo’ru**. [F](#) Otherwise nouns ending in consonants take **-ur**. [NT \(6/10/2012\)](#) [Forum \(25/12/2020\)](#)

¹The case names Frommer uses reflect the terminology used by Bernard Comrie in his writings on ergative languages. In most linguistic writing Frommer’s “subjective” is called the intransitive, the “agentive” is the ergative and the “patientive” the accusative.

3.1.1.7. The variation between the long and short endings in the patientive and dative appears to be largely a matter of style and euphony.

3.1.2. **Indefinite -o.** A noun may take the indefinite suffix **-o**, “one, some.” Case endings follow the **-o**, such as **puk-o-t**. [Wiki \(14/3/2010\)](#) [NT \(5/9/2011\)](#)

3.1.3. **Number.** Na’vi nouns and pronouns may be singular, dual, trial or plural (four or more). Number is indicated by prefixes, all of which cause lenition.

Dual	me+	mefo (< me+ + po)
Trial	pxe+	pxehilvan (< pxe+ + kilvan)
Plural	ay+	ayswizaw

3.1.3.1. The plural prefix *only* may be dropped if there is lenition. The plural of **prnen** is either **ayfrnen** or the short plural **frnen** (but see §6.5.2.2).² The dual and trial prefix are never dropped this way. [LangLog \(9/12/2009\)](#)

3.1.3.2. In the dual and trial, if a word begins with **e** or **'e**, the resulting ***ee** is simplified, so **me+** + **'eveng** is **meveng**. See also §2.3.1.2.

3.2. The Pronoun

3.2.1. **The Basic Pronouns.** The pronouns take the same case endings as nouns.

Person	Singular	Dual	Trial	Plural
1st exclusive	<u>oe</u>	<u>moe</u>	<u>pxoe</u>	<u>ayoe</u>
1st inclusive	—	<u>oeng</u>	<u>pxoeng</u>	<u>ayoeng, awnga</u>
2nd	nga	menga	pxenga	aynga
3rd animate	po	mefo	pxefo	ayfo, fo
3rd inanimate	tsa'u, tsaw	mesa'u	pxesa'u	aysa'u, sa'u
reflexive	sno	—	—	—
indeterminate	fko	—	—	—

3.2.1.1. In everyday speech, when the first person root **oe** does not occur at the end of the word, its pronunciation changes to **we**, as in **oel** pronounced **wel**, **oeru** as **weru**. However, this pronunciation does not happen to the dual and trial forms, **moe** and **pxoe**, which would result in illegal consonant clusters at the start of a word, such as ***mwel**. This pronunciation is indicated with the accenting underline on the **e**.

3.2.1.2. The non-singular first person pronouns are either exclusive (excluding the person addressed) or inclusive (including the person addressed). The inclusive ending, **-ng**, is from **nga**, which reappears in full when a case ending is added. The agentive of **oeng** is **oengal**, not ***oengil**.

3.2.1.3. **Ayoeng** has the short form **awnga**. Both may be used freely with any case ending, though **awnga** is more common.

²Exception: **'u** *thing* does not take the short plural, always occurring as **ayu**.

3.2.1.4. There are separate third person pronouns for animate and inanimate objects. Animals may be referred to with the animate pronoun **po**, but bugs are not. The more important the speaker’s relationship to the animal, the more likely a form of **po** is used. [Forum \(25/2/2017\)](#)

3.2.1.5. The third person animate **po** does not distinguish gender — it will do for “he” or “she” in English. However, gendered forms do exist, **poan** *he* and **poe** *she*, which are declined regularly, though they do not have plural forms. See §6.3.1 for their use.

3.2.1.6. Several pronouns have irregular genitives with vowel changes,

Subjective	Genitive
fko	fkeyä
nga	ngeyä
po	peyä
sno	sneyä
tsa’u	tseyä

This vowel change occurs in all numbers, **feyä** < **fo**, and in the first person inclusives, **awngeyä** < **awnga**.

3.2.1.7. In informal and clipped military speech the final **ä** may drop from the genitive of pronouns, **ngey** *’upxaret*.

3.2.1.8. The third person inanimate, **tsa’u**, is simply the demonstrative pronoun “that,” and has the genitive in **tseyä**. In informal, rapid speech it may take the form **tsaw**, which may be used with postpositions (**tsawfa**), but may not take case marking (there is no ***tsawl**). However, the stem **tša-** may be used with the case endings (**tsal**, **tsar**, etc.), or with a postposition (**tsafa**), again in rapid speech. [Wiki \(6/5/2010\)](#) [NT \(3/8/2011\)](#)

3.2.1.9. The reflexive pronoun **sno** is not altered for number.

3.2.1.10. The third person animate indefinite pronoun is **fko** (gen. **fkeyä**). [Wiki \(17/5/2013\)](#)

3.2.2. Ceremonial/Honorific Pronouns.

	Singular	Dual	Trial	Plural
1st exclusive	ohe	mohe	pxohe	ayohe
2nd	ngenga	mengenga	pxengenga	ayngenga

3.2.2.1. For the inclusive first person forms, use separate pronouns, **ohe ngengasì** (with enclitic **sì and**). **In the film we apparently get ohengeyä.**

3.2.3. **Lahe**. When used as a pronoun, the adjective **lahe other** has an irregular dative plural **aylaru**.

3.3. Prenouns

The preouns are adjective-like noun prefixes.

3.3.1. Fi- This prenoun is for proximal deixis, *this*. When it is followed by the plural prefix **ay+** they generally contract into **fay+**, *these* in casual speech. However, in precise or formal speech, **fiay+** may be used, **oel foru fiayli'ut toling a krr, kxawm oe harmahängaw**. [Forum \(27/7/2013\)](#) ℱ

3.3.1.1. Some nouns and adjectives pair with **fi-** to form adverbs, such as **fitrr** *today* and **fitxan** *so (much)*.

3.3.2. Tsa- This is distal deixis, *that*. When it is followed by the plural prefix **ay+** they contract into **tsay+** *those*.

3.3.3. -Pe+ This question prenoun means *what, which* as in **pe'li'u** *which word?* It is unusual in that it may be either a prefix (**pe'li'u**) or a suffix (**li'upe**). When prefixed, the following word takes lenition. When the prefix is followed by the plural prefix **ay+** they contract into **pay+**.

3.3.4. Fra- This prenoun means *all, every*. When it is followed by the plural prefix **ay+** they contract into **fray+**. [Forum \(27/7/2013\)](#)

3.3.5. Fne- This prefix means *type (of), sort (of)*.

3.3.5.1. The prefix is related to the noun **fnel**, also meaning *type, sort*. It can occur with a noun in the genitive to get the same meaning as the prefix. **Tsafnel syulangä** and **tsafnesyulang** both mean *that kind of flower*.

3.3.6. Contraction. When a prenoun ends with the same vowel the following word starts with, the vowels contract, as in **tsatan** *that light* from **tsa-atan** (§2.3.1.3).

3.3.7. Combinations. The prenouns may combine on a single word, in this order —

fi-					
tsa-	fra-	number marking	fne-	the noun	-pe
pe+					

Only one from each column may be used, and of course the question affix is only used once. **The full details of this ordering are not yet confirmed for fra-**.

3.3.7.1. Short plurals (§3.1.3.1) are not used with the deictic prenouns; **tsaytele** *those matters*, never ***tsatele** (singular **txele**).

3.4. Correlatives

Demonstrative pronouns and certain common adverbs of time, manner and place, are simply nouns paired with prenouns. However, the system is not perfectly regular.

	Person	Thing	Action	Time	Place	Manner
this	fipo <i>this one</i>	fi'u <i>this (thing)</i>	fikem <i>this (action)</i>	set <i>now</i>	fitseng(e) <i>here</i>	fifya <i>thus</i>
that	tsatu <i>that one</i>	tsa'u <i>that (thing)</i>	tsakem ³ <i>that (action)</i>	tsakrr <i>then</i>	tsatseng ³ <i>there</i>	tsafya <i>in that way</i>
all	frapo <i>everyone</i>	fra'u <i>everything</i>	—	frakrr <i>always</i>	fratseng <i>everywhere</i>	fracya <i>in every way</i>
no	kawtu <i>no one</i>	ke'u <i>nothing</i>	kekem <i>no action</i>	kawkrr <i>never</i>	kawtseng <i>nowhere</i>	—

Wiki (18/5/2011) NT (24/7/2011)

3.4.0.1. Plurals for these are a bit funky. Though **tsa'u** is from **tsa-** and **'u**, the plural is **(ay)sa'u**. Confirmed, but details might be nice. How to work in **tsapo**?

3.4.0.2. For the forms of **tsa'u**, see §3.2.1.8.

3.4.1. Questions. As with nouns, the question affix **-pe+** may be either a leniting prefix or a suffix.

who?	pesu, tupe	where?	peseng, tsengpe
what (thing)?	peu, 'upe	how?	pefya, fyape
what (action)?	pehem, kempe	why?	pelun, lumpe
when?	pehrr, krrpe	what kind (of)?	pefnel, fnepe

3.4.1.1. The question word for people, **tupe** / **pesu** *who*, has a enormous collection of gendered and non-singular forms:

	Common	Male	Female
Singular	pesu, tupe	pestan, tutampe	peste, tutepe
Dual	pemsu, mesupe	pemstan, mestampe	pemste, mestepe
Trial	pepsu, pxesupe	pepstan, pxestampe	pepste, pxestep
Plural	paysu, (ay)supe	paystan, (ay)stampe	payste, (ay)step

The non-singular forms of **pehem** / **kempe** follow a similar pattern:

Singular	pehem, kempe
Dual	pemhem, mehempe
Trial	pephem, pxehempe
Plural	payhem, (ay)hempe

NT (30/7/2011)

³May be accented on either syllable.

3.4.2. Fi'u and Tsaw in Clause Nominalization. The demonstrative pronoun **fi'u** and the inanimate pronoun **tsaw** are used with the attributive particle **a** to nominalize clauses (§6.18.4). When the attributive particle follows certain case forms of the pronoun, they contract:

Case	Fi'u Contraction	Tsaw Contraction
Subjective	fwa (< fi'u a)	tsawa
Agentive	fula (< fi'ul a)	tsala
Patientive	futa (< fi'ut a)	tsata
Dative	fura (< fi'ur a)	tsara
Topical	furia (< fi'uri a)	tsaria

[Wiki \(18/6/2010\)](#) [Forum \(21/4/2020\)](#)

3.4.3. Fmawn and Ti'eyng in Clause Nominalization. While **fi'u** and **tsaw** may nominalize clauses of most types, verbs of hearing, speaking and questioning prefer the nouns **fmawn** *news*, **ti'eyng** *answer* and **fayli'u** *these words*. There are fewer contractions:

Case	Contraction
Subjective	teynga (< ti'eyng a)
Agentive	teyngla (< ti'eyngil a)
Patientive	teyngta (< ti'eyngit a)

There are contractions only in the patientive for **fmawn** and **fayli'u**, which are **fmawnta** (< **fmawnit a**) and **fayluta** (< **fayli'ut a**). See §6.21.4 for the syntax. [NT \(31/8/2011\)](#)

3.5. The Adjective

3.5.1. Attribution. Attributive adjectives are joined to their noun with the affix **-a-**, which is attached to the adjective on the side closest to the noun, as in **yerik awin** or **wina yerik** for “a fast yerik.”

3.5.1.1. A derived adjective in **le-** usually drops the prefixed (but not suffixed) **a-**, so either **ayftxozä lefpom** or, more rarely, **ayftxozä alefpom**. However, when the **le-**adjective comes before the noun, it will always have the attributive **-a-**, **lefpoma ayftxozä**.

ayftxozä lefpom	usual
ayftxozä alefpom	permitted
*lefpom ayftxozä	an error
lefpoma ayftxozä	correct

3.6. The Verb

3.6.1. Infix Location. Frommer describes three positions for verb infixes: pre-first position, first position and second position. Each position has infixes of a particular type (described below).

3.6.1.1. All infixes occur in the last (ultima) and next-to-last (penult) syllables of the verb stem, and are inserted before the vowel, diphthong or pseudovowel of that syllable, as in **kä** > **k^ìm^ä** and **taron** > **t^olar^eion**.

3.6.1.2. If a syllable has no onset consonant(s) the infix still precedes the vowel, as in **omum** > **i^vomum** and **ftia** > **fti^ats^a**.

3.6.1.3. The stress accent stays on the vowel that originally had it before any infixes were added, **hawnu** > **hⁱlv^awnu**.⁴

3.6.1.4. Usually, infixes are placed only in one element of a compound verb. For example, **yom^ting** *feed* is a compound of **yom** *eat* and **ting** *give*. The perfective of this is not ***y^ol^omtⁱng**, but **yom^tol^oing**. Most compound verbs will have the verb element last, which will take the infixes. A few compounds, however, do add infixes to the first element. These must be learned from the lexicon.

3.6.1.5. A small number of verb+verb compounds take infixes in both elements of the compound, such as **kan[’]in** *specialize in*, made up of **kan** *aim, intend* and **’in** *be busy*. [Ultraxa \(2/10/2010\)](#)

3.6.2. **Pre-first Position.** These infixes change transitivity. They are inserted before the vowel of the next-to-last syllable of a verb, or the verb syllable if the verb has only one syllable.

Causative <eyk>
 Reflexive <äp>

[Wiki \(1/2/2010\)](#) [Wiki \(15/2/2010\)](#)

3.6.2.1. In casual conversation the reflexive perfective of **si**-construction verbs, **säpöli**, is often pronounced **spöli**. [NT \(3/8/2011\)](#)

3.6.2.2. The causative reflexive, “cause oneself to,” is formed with <äp><eyk>, so **po täpeykerkup** *he causes himself to die*.

3.6.3. **First Position.** These mark tense, aspect and mood, and create participles. They are inserted before the vowel of the next-to-last syllable of a verb, or the verb syllable if the verb has only one syllable. They will always follow any pre-first position infixes.

	Tense only	Perfective	Imperfective
Future	<ay>, <asy>	<aly>	<ary>
Near future	<iy>, <isy>	<ily>	<iry>
General	—		<er>
Near past	<im>	<ilm>	<irm>
Past	<am>	<alm>	<arm>

[LangLog \(9/12/2009\)](#) [Wiki \(27/1/2010\)](#) [Wiki \(19/2/2010\)](#)

⁴Exception: the verb **omum** shifts the accent to the **o** for any inflected or derived forms, **ivomum**, **nⁱawnonum**. The verb **inan** follows the same pattern, **olinan**.

3.6.3.1. The futures with **s** mark intention (§6.7.9).

3.6.3.2. The subjunctive infix, <iv>, has a restricted set of combinations with fewer tense gradations.

	Tense only	Perfective	Imperfective
Future	<iyev>, <iyev>	—	—
General	<iv>	<ilv>	<irv>
Past	<imv>	—	—

[Wiki \(9/1/2010\)](#) [Wiki \(30/1/2010\)](#) [Wiki \(30/1/2010\)](#)

3.6.3.3. There are only two participle infixes. They do not combine with tense, aspect or mood infixes.

Active <us>
Passive <awn>

Since the participles are adjectives that cannot be used as predicates, they will always occur with the attributive adjective affix **-a-** (§3.5.1, §6.9.1). [Wiki \(13/3/2011\)](#)

3.6.4. **Second Position.** These infixes, which indicate speaker affect or judgement, occur in the final syllable of the verb, or after the first position infixes in a verb of one syllable.

Positive attitude <ei>, <ey> (§2.3.3)
Negative attitude <äng>, <eng> (§2.3.5.2)
Formal, ceremonial <uy>
Inferential, suppositional <ats>

[Wiki \(19/2/2010\)](#)

3.6.5. **Examples.** The rules given above are a bit abstract, so I give here examples of some possible inflections for a few verb shapes. The verbs are **eyk** *lead* as an example of a single-syllable word with no onset consonant, **fpak** *stop* as a single-syllable with consonant cluster onset, **taron** *hunt* the usual two-syllable word Frommer uses in examples, and **yom·tìng** *feed*, a compound verb, in which only the final element is inflected.

	eyk	fpak	taron	yom·tìng
Near past	ìmeyk	fpìmak	tìmaron	yomtìming
Reflexive	äpeyk	fpäpak	täparon	yomtäpìng
Refl., near past	äpimeyk	fpäpìmak	täpìmaron	yomtäpìming
Ceremonial	uyeyk	fpuyak	taruyon	yomtuyèng
Perf., cerem.	oluyeyk	fpoluyak	tolaruyon	yomtoluyèng
Refl., perf., cerem.	äpoluyeyk	fpäpoluyak	täpolaruyon	yomtäpoluyèng

The meanings of some of these examples stretch good sense to the breaking point. The purpose of these is only to show infix locations across a consistent set of verb shapes.

4. Numbers

The Na'vi language has an *octal*, or base eight, number system, like a very small number of Human languages.¹ Rather than calculating numbers in the form $(m \times 10) + n$ (as in $(4 \times 10) + 2 = 42_{10}$, *forty-two*), the numbers are calculated from $(m \times 8) + n$ (as in $(5 \times 8) + 2 = 52_8$, **mrrvomun**, 42_{10}).

4.1. Cardinal Numerals

4.1.1. The “Ones”. The independent forms of the numerals from one to eight are:

1	'aw	5	mrr
2	<u>m</u>une	6	<u>p</u>ukap
3	<u>p</u>xey	7	<u>k</u>inä
4	<u>t</u>sìng	8	<u>v</u>ol

4.1.2. Powers of Eight. Rather than “tens,” Na'vi has “eights:”

8 (1×8)	<u>v</u>ol	40 (5×8)	<u>mrr</u>vol
16 (2×8)	<u>me</u>vol	48 (6×8)	<u>pu</u>vol
24 (3×8)	<u>pxe</u>vol	56 (7×8)	<u>kiv</u>ol
32 (4×8)	<u>tsi</u>vol	64 (8×8)	<u>z</u>am

The higher powers of eight are **vozam** (512, octal 1000) and **zazam** (4096, octal 10000).

4.1.3. Dependent Forms. When combined with powers of eight words, the basic number words take abbreviated, single-syllable forms, with lenition where possible:

1	(l)-aw	5	-mrr
2	-mun	6	-fu
3	-pey	7	-hin
4	-sìng		

¹Apparently a result of counting not the fingers but the spaces between them.

4.1.3.1. All of the dependent forms except “one”, **(l)-aw**, evict the final -l of the “eights” forms. Similarly, the final -m in the **zam**, **vozam**, and **zazam** forms is dropped before all of the forms except “one,” **zamaw**, but **zmun**, **zapey**, etc.

4.1.3.2. The attached dependent forms take the word accent. Combined with **vol** *eight*:

9 (1×8 + 1)	volaw	13 (1×8 + 5)	vomrr
10 (1×8 + 2)	vomun	14 (1×8 + 6)	vofu
11 (1×8 + 3)	vopey	15 (1×8 + 7)	vohin
12 (1×8 + 4)	vosìng	16 (2×8 + 0)	mevol

The pattern will continue this way with **mevol**: **mevolaw**, **mevomun**, **mevopey**, etc.

After **zam** the count goes: **zam**, **zamaw**, **zmun**, **zapey**, **zasìng**, **zamrr**, **zafu**, **zahin**, **zavol**, and then continuing as **zavolaw**, etc. For example, octal 211 is **mezavolaw**. [NT \(1/4/2014\)](#)

4.2. Ordinal Numbers

4.2.1. **Suffix -ve**. The ordinal numbers are formed by means of the suffix **-ve**, which does not alter the word accent, though it does cause changes to a few number stems.

Ordinal	Independent	Dependent			
first	'awve	(l)-awve	fifth	mrrve	-mrrve
second	muve	-muve	sixth	puve	-fuve
third	pxeyve	-peyve	seventh	kive	-hive
fourth	tsìve	-sìve	eighth	volve	-volve

4.2.1.1. All ordinals can combine freely with **nì-** to form adverbs, **nì'awve** *first*, **nìmuve** *second*, etc. [Wiki \(5/6/2013\)](#)

4.3. Fractions

4.3.1. **-Pxi**. Except for *half* and *third*, which have separate lexical forms, fractions are formed by replacing the **-ve** of an ordinal with **-pxi**. Note the accent shift:

half	mawl	sixth	pupxi
third	pan	seventh	kipxi
fourth	tsìpxi	eighth	vopxi
fifth	mrrpxi		

4.3.1.1. Note that unlike the cardinals and ordinals, the fraction words are nouns, not adjectives (see §6.4.5.2 for syntax).

4.3.2. **Numerator**. To make higher fractions, combine an attributive cardinal with a fraction noun, **munea mrrpxi** *two fifths*.

4.3.2.1. The fraction *two thirds* has a special form, **mefan**, the dual of **pan**.

4.4. Other Forms

4.4.1. **Alo**. The word **alo** *time, turn* combines with numbers to form instance adverbs. Four of these form compounds, **'awlo** *once*, **melo** *twice*, **pxelo** *thrice, three times* and **fralo** *each time, every time*. All others combine as normal attributive adjectives, **alo amrr poan polawm** *he asked five times*.

4.4.2. **-lie**. The word **'awlie** refers to a single event in the past.

4.4.3. **Alien Digits**. When quoting English digits, Na'vi will use **'eyt** for *eight* and **nayn** for *nine*. These are not used for counting, but for things like phone numbers.

4.4.3.1. **Kew** is zero. *Current documentation doesn't make clear if this idea is native or imported from the Humans.*

5. Word Building

5.1. Derivational Affixes

Na'vi has a number of affixes used to create new vocabulary. Several simply change the word class, such turning a noun into adjective. However, these affixes should not be considered freely productive, and the meanings of the derived forms are not entirely predictable. Only with the help of a dictionary can you be certain of a derived word's meaning (but see §6.6.8 for adverbs). Unless otherwise stated, the affixes below are not freely productive.

While there are strong patterns in how stress accent is altered by some derivational processes, there are no exceptionless rules for this. Again, only with the dictionary can you be certain of the accenting of a derived word.

5.1.1. Prefixes. These derivational prefixes rarely cause the accent to move from its original location, **ngay** > **tìngay**.

5.1.1.1. Le- creates adjectives from nouns, as in **lehrrap** *dangerous* from **hrrap** *danger*.

5.1.1.2. Nì- creates adverbs from nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs, as in **nìNa'vi** *Na'vily, in Navi* from **Na'vi**, **nìayfo** *like them*, **nìftue** *easily* from **ftue** *easy*, and **nìtam** *enough* from **tam** *to suffice*.

5.1.1.3. Sä- creates instrumental nouns from verbs and adjectives, as in **sänume** *instruction, teaching* from **nume**, and **säspxin** *disease* from **spxin** *sick*.

5.1.1.4. Sä- also creates nouns to indicate a particular, concrete instance of a general action. A **sätsyil** *a climb* is a particular instance of the action of climbing, **tsyil**. Roots may have derivations in both **tì-** and **sä-**, as in **'ipu** *humorous*. **Tì'ipu** is the abstract concept of being humorous, that is, humor in general. **Sä'ipu** is a particular instance of being humorous — for example, a joke.

NT (29/2/2012)

5.1.1.5. Tì- creates nouns from adjectives, verbs and occasionally other nouns, as in **tìngay** *truth* from **ngay** *true*, **tìftia** *study (n.)* from **ftia** *to study*, **tì'awm** *camping* from **'awm** *camp (n.)*.

5.1.1.6. With these prefixes stem syllables may lose a vowel if the onset consonant is also a legal coda, **nìmweypey** *patiently* < **maweypey** *to be patient*.

5.1.2. Negative Prefix. Some words, mostly but not exclusively adjectives, are created using the word **ke** *not* as a prefix.

5.1.2.1. When **ke-** comes before the adjective prefix **le-** the adjective prefix is reduced to just **-l-**, as in **keltsun** *impossible* compared to **letsunslu** *possible*, and **kelpomtokx** *unhealthy* from **lefpomtokx** *healthy*.

5.1.2.2. When **le-** comes before **ke-** the negative prefix reduces to just **-k-**, as in **lekye'ung** *insane* from **keye'ung** *insanity*.

5.1.2.3. The **ke-** prefix may be used with root adjectives and participles, in which case the accent usually shifts to **ke-**, as in **keteng** *different* from **teng** *same, equal* and **kerusey** *dead* from **rusey** *living*. However, note **keyawr** *incorrect* from **eyawr** *correct*.

5.1.2.4. The **ke-** prefix may also create and combine with nouns, as in **keye'ung** *insanity*, and **ketuwong** *alien*. There are too few examples to determine accent behavior.

5.1.3. Adverbial “a-”. Two stative verbs, **lìm** *be far* and **sim** *be near* have adverbial forms **alìm** *far away* and **asim** *nearby, at close range*. These are thought of as fossilized abbreviations of forms like **nifya'o a lìm** (§6.6.8). They are fixed lexical items, and do not have forms such as ***lìma** and ***sima**. [wiki \(17/5/2010\)](#)

5.1.4. Prefix with Infix. There is a single derivation using the combination of a prefix and an infix.

5.1.4.1. **Tì- <us>** creates a gerund. It is fully productive for verb roots and compounds (**si-**construction verbs, §5.3.3, cannot be made into a gerund). This is most useful when a simple **tì-** derivation already has an established meaning, as in **rey** *live*, **tìrey** *life*, but **tìrusey** *living*. In compounds, **tì-** comes at the beginning of the word and **<us>** goes into the verbal element of the compound, **yomting** becomes **tìyomtusing**. See also §6.9.2. [Forum \(31/1/2013\)](#)

5.1.5. Agent Suffixes. These suffixes also do not cause an accent shift.

5.1.5.1. **-tu** creates agent nouns from parts of speech other than verbs, as in **pamtseotu** *musician* from **pamtseo** *music*, **tsulfātu** *master of a craft or skill, expert* from **tsulfä** *mastery*.

5.1.5.2. **-yu** creates agent nouns from verbs, to indicate a person who regularly performs some activity or role, as in **taronyu** *hunter* from **taron** *hunt*. This suffix is freely productive, with regular verbs as well as **si-**verbs, such as **stiwisiyu** *mischievous-maker*, from **stiwì si** *do mischief*. [NT \(11/7/2010\) Forum \(30/10/2020\)](#)

5.1.6. Diminutive Suffix. The unstressed suffix **-tsyìp** may be used freely to form diminutives, on both nouns and pronouns. Personal names may lose syllables when taking this suffix, such as **Kamtsyìp** or **Kamuntsyìp** for *little Kamun*. The diminutive has three uses. [NT \(11/7/2010\)](#)

5.1.6.1. First, the diminutive form may be a primary lexical derivation. Such words will end up in the dictionary, such as **puktsyìp** *booklet, pamphlet* from **puk** *book*. The diminutive force is weak enough that one may use the adjective **tsawl** *large* with a diminutive without contradiction, as in **tsawla utraltsyìp** *a large bush*.

5.1.6.2. Second, the diminutive may express affection or endearment, **za'u fitseng, ma 'itetsyip** *come here, little daughter*. This use should not be taken to imply an age. The daughter in the previous sentence could be an adult.

5.1.6.3. Third, the diminutive may express disparagement or insult, **fitaronyutsyip ke tsun ke'ut stivä'nì** *this (worthless) little hunter can't catch anything*. The disparaging tone may be directed at oneself, **nga niawnomum to oetsyip lu txur nìtxan** *as everyone knows, you're a lot stronger than little old me*. Only context will distinguish the disparaging from affectionate use of the diminutive.

5.1.7. **-Nay Suffix**. This creates a new noun which indicates something lower on some hierarchy, size, rank, accomplishment, etc. The suffix receives the accent, **karyunay** *apprentice teacher* from **karyu** *teacher*. If the noun already ends in **-n** the suffix loses the **-n**, **'eylanay** *acquaintance* from **'eylan** *friend*, **ikranay** *forest banshee* from **ikran** *banshee*. It isn't productive. [NT \(2/28/2013\)](#)

5.1.8. **Gender Suffixes**. The gender suffixes are unusual in that they are used not only with nouns but also the third person pronoun (§3.2.1.5).

5.1.8.1. The suffix **-an** indicates males, as in **poan** *he* and **'itan** *son*.

5.1.8.2. The suffix **-e** indicates females, as in **poe** *she* and **'ite** *daughter*.

5.1.8.3. The effect of these suffixes on the accent is unpredictable, **tutan** *male (person)* from **tute** *person*, but **muntxatan** *husband* from **muntxatu** *spouse, mate*.

5.2. Reduplication

Reduplication is a nonproductive derivational process. Nonetheless, a few common words do use it.

5.2.1. **Iteration**. With words of time, reduplication indicates repetition or habitual occurrence, **letrrtrr** *ordinary*, that is, occurring daily; and **krro krro** *sometimes*.

5.2.2. **Shift in Degree**. With the verbs **'ul** *increase* and **nän** *decrease*, reduplicated adverbs mark change to an extreme degree, **nì'ul'ul** *increasingly, more and more*, **nìnänän**¹ *less and less*.

[NT \(29/2/2012\)](#)

5.3. Compounds

5.3.1. **Headedness**. The dominant element of a Na'vi compound may come first or last in the compound.² There is, however, a strong tendency for head-final compounds. Verb compounds are the most likely to be head-initial.

¹The reduplication is partial, since consonants cannot be doubled.

²Many human languages are more strict. English compounds, for example, generally have the dominant element, or "head," last, as in *blueberry, night-light, blackboard*. On the other hand, Vietnamese uses head-initial order for native compounds and head-final order for compounds using the substantial Chinese vocabulary it has borrowed.

5.3.1.1. Compounds are in the same word class as their head, so **txampay** *sea* is noun, because **pay** *water* is a noun.

5.3.1.2. Like root words, compounds may change word class with the addition of the derivational affixes listed above, **lefpomtökx** *healthy* from **fpomtökx** *health*.

5.3.2. **Apocope**. Words may lose parts when used in a compound, as in **venzek** *toe* < **venu** *foot* + **zekwä** *finger*, and **silpey** *hope* < **siltsan** *good* + **pey** *wait (for)*.

5.3.3. **“Si” Construction**. The usual way to convert a noun or adjective to a verb is to pair the uninflected noun with the prop verb **si**, which only ever occurs in these constructions. The order is fixed **N si**, with **si** getting all verb affixes.

5.3.3.1. In the verb **irayo si** *to thank* the order is less fixed. [Wiki \(12/5/2010\)](#)

5.3.3.2. The normal **N si** word order is also broken for negation, **oe pamrel ke si** *I don't write* (§6.16.1.1), **txopu rä'ä si** *don't be afraid* (§6.13.3).

5.4. Common and Noteworthy Compound Elements

5.4.1. **-fkeyk**. Derived from the noun **tifkeytok** *state, condition, situation*, this unaccented suffix produces some words with specialized, idiomatic meanings, such as **yafkeyk** *weather*. It is nonetheless widely productive, **kilvanfkeyk lu fyape fitrr?** *how's the condition of the river today?* NT [F \(1/4/2011\)](#)

5.4.2. **Hì(')**-. From the adjective **hì'i** *small*, the accented prefix **hì-** or **hì'-** is used in a few words to form diminutives, but should not be considered productive (see §5.1.6), as in **hì'ang** *insect* (< **hì'** + **ioang** *animal*), **hikrr** *moment, a short time* (< **hì** + **krr** *time*).

5.4.3. **-iva**. When the noun **ilva** *flake, drop, chip* is used in compounds, the **l** drops, **txepiva** *ash, cinder*, **herwiva** *snowflake*. NT [\(1/4/2011\)](#)

5.4.4. **-nga'**. This suffix, derived from the verb **nga'** *contain*, creates adjectives from nouns and describes something “containing” the noun, as in **txumnga'** *poisonous*. It is much less common than **le-**. It is possible for a noun to have both **le-** and **-nga'** derivations, **lepay** *watery* vs. **paynga'** *damp, humid*. NT [\(5/5/2011\)](#)

5.4.5. **-pin**. Derived from the noun **'opin** *color*, this unaccented suffix is attached to color adjectives to form color nouns, **rimpin** *the color yellow* from **rim** *yellow*. A final **-n** in the color adjective will become **-m** by assimilation, **eampin** from **ean**.

5.4.6. **Pxi-**. The adjective **pxi** *sharp* is prefixed to adverbs and adpositions of time to indicate immediacy. The prefix doesn't take the accent, **pxisre** *immediately before*, **pxiset** *immediately, right now*.

5.4.7. **Sna-**. A shortened form of the noun **sna'o** *group, set, clump, stand*, this prefix can be freely used with living things other than people to indicate a natural grouping, such as **snatalioang a**

herd of sturmbest, **snautral** a stand of trees. The prefix is used with non-living things to produce words, but this is not productive, **snatxärem** skeleton. [NT \(31/3/2012\)](#)

5.4.8. -tsim. The noun **tsim** source can be suffixed to nouns to indicate the source or cause of some state, such as **sngumtsim** worrisome matter, source of worry from **sngum** worry, **yayayrtsim** something confusing, source of confusion from **yayayr** confusion, **ingyentsim** mystery, riddle, enigma, conundrum from **ingyen** feeling of mystery or noncomprehension. Note that it doesn't change the accent. This form is not productive. [NT \(25/1/2013\)](#)

5.4.9. Tsuk- Derived from **tsun fko**, this unaccented prefix creates ability adjectives from transitive verbs, **tsukyom** edible (from **yom** eat). The negative simply takes the prefix **ke-**, which also causes no accent change here, **ketsuktswa'** unforgettable (from **tswa'** forget). [NT \(22/3/2011\)](#)

5.4.9.1. In addition, intransitive verbs may be combined with **tsuk-**, with a looser relationship between the noun and resulting adjective, **fitseng lu tsuktsurokx** one can rest here, this place is "restable," **lu na'ring tsukhahaw** one can sleep in the forest. F

5.4.10. -tswō. This suffix may be freely used on any verb, and creates a noun meaning the ability to perform the action of the verb, **wemtswō** ability to fight, **roltswō** ability to sing. This suffix is related to the word **tsu'o** ability. [NT \(31/3/2012\)](#)

5.4.10.1. The suffix **-tswō** is attached to the noun or adjective element of **si-**verbs, as in **srung-tswō** ability to help and **tstutswō** ability to close.

5.4.11. -vi. From the noun **'evi**, itself a shortened form of **'eveng** child, the unaccented suffix **-vi** is used rather loosely for the spawn of something bigger or a part of a larger whole, **txepvi** spark (< **txep** fire), **li'fyavi** expression, bit of language (< **li'fya** language). It may cause minor changes to the word it is attached to, **sännumvi** lesson from **sänume** instruction, teaching. [Wiki \(14/3/2010\)](#)

5.4.12. "Kä-" and "Za-". The two verbs of motion **kä** go and **za'u** come (reduced to just **za-**) are used in some compound verbs to indicate direction of motion, **kämakto** ride out. Note the distinction between **kä'ärìp** push and **za'ärìp** pull from **'ärìp** move (something).

5.5. Time

Adverbs of time are derived from nouns in a predictable pattern.

5.5.1. The Current Time. The prenoun **fi-** (§3.3.1) creates an adverb for the current unit of time, **fitrr** today ("this day"), **firewon** this morning.

5.5.2. The Previous Time. The accented suffix **-am** creates an adverb for the previous unit of time, **trram** yesterday, **pxiswawam** just a moment ago.

5.5.3. The Next Time. The accented suffix **-ay** creates an adverb for the next unit of time, **trray** tomorrow, **ha'ngiray** tomorrow afternoon.

6. Syntax

6.1. Transitivity and Ergativity

6.1.1. Transitivity. Na’vi marks the subject of transitive and intransitive verbs differently. To speak any Na’vi sentence with a verb requires one to understand transitivity. This means a deeper and earlier understanding of transitivity is required for Na’vi than is usually required to learn a Human language.¹

6.1.1.1. Many compound verbs are created by pairing an uninflected noun or adjective, or occasionally an interjection, with the verb stem **si** *to do, to make*, which is only used in these compounds, **irayo si** *to thank*, **kavuk si** *to betray*. These verbs are always intransitive and use the dative for any object (§6.4.4.1).

6.1.1.2. Reflexive verbs with the **<äp>** infix are always intransitive, and causative verbs with the **<eyk>** infix are always transitive.

6.1.2. Tripartite. Na’vi marks nouns and pronouns differently if they are the subject of an intransitive verb, the subject of a transitive verb or the direct object of a transitive verb (§6.4).

6.1.2.1. Though the English concept of the “subject” of a verb in Na’vi is divided in two depending on the transitivity of the verb phrases, this division does not apply to participles. There is a verbal object adjective (the passive participle) and a verbal subject adjective (the active participle) which is used for both subjective and agentive subjects (§3.6.2).

6.1.2.2. Na’vi is also pragmatically split-ergative. In connected discourse one may drop the subject pronoun if it doesn’t change. The subject may be either subjective or agentive. See *some pragmatics section*.

¹Since formal grammar isn’t taught as much as it used to be, some English speakers have trouble identifying transitive vs. intransitive verbs. This is further complicated by English grammar, where very often it’s not the verb that is transitive or intransitive, but the entire phrase. For example, “I move” is intransitive while “I move the car” is transitive, and only the presence of a direct object triggers the transitive interpretation of the verb. In Na’vi, too, it is usually best to think about transitivity as a clausal, rather than purely verbal, phenomenon.

Here are two quick ways to test for transitivity in English. First, if the word immediately after the verb is a person or thing. So, in “I see the moon” the verb is transitive, but in “he complains constantly” the verb is not. The second test, in case you’re uncertain about what’s coming after the verb, is to see if you can turn the thing after the verb into a passive sensibly. So, “The moon is seen” is a well-formed passive, while “constantly is complained” is gibberish.

6.2. Noun Phrases and Adjectives

6.2.1. Number. Are the dual and trial collective vs. plural distributive? Or always obligatory?

6.2.1.1. When used with an attributive numeral, nouns are not marked for number, **mr-ra zìsìt** *five years*. [Wiki \(18/6/2010\)](#)

6.2.1.2. The adjectives of quantity — **'a'aw** *several*, **hol** *few*, **pxay** *many*, **polpxay**, **holpxaype** *how many?* — also take singular nouns in attributive phrases, **lu poru 'a'awa 'eylan** *he has several friends*. [NT \(16/7/2010\)](#)

6.2.1.3. In colloquial speech, number may be marked with the adjective **pxay** *many*, **lu awngar aytele apxay a teri sa'u pivlltxe** *we have many matters to talk about*. [Forum \(16/7/2010\)](#)

6.2.1.4. With verbs of identity (**lu** and **slu**), the basic rule of number marking in Na'vi is, “in referring to the same entity, express number only once per clause.”

Menga lu karyu. *You two are teachers.* F

Fo lu karyu. *They are teachers.* F

Menga lu oeyä 'eylan. *You two are my friends.* F

In the first two sentences, **karyu** is not marked for number since the pronouns are already marked, and the same for **'eylan** in the third sentence. But see §6.3.2 for the question pronoun **tupe**. [NT \(30/7/2011\)](#)

6.2.1.5. General statements about a group or class use nouns in the singular, **nantangìl yom yerikit**, *viperwolves eat hexapedes*. [NT \(30/7/2011\)](#)

6.2.2. Indefinite. The adjective **lahe** *other* has the sense of *else* when used with indefinite nouns having the suffix **-o**, as in **lu law 'uo alahe, ma eylan** *something else is clear, my friends*. F

6.2.3. Free Choice Indefinites. Na'vi uses the adjective **ketsran** *no matter (what), whatever* with generic nouns to create free choice indefinites. The clause with **ketsran** often, though not always, takes the subjunctive,

Ketsran tute nivew hivum, poru plltxe san rutxe 'ivi'awn. F
No matter who wants (or: may want) to leave, tell them to please stay.

'U aketsran tsun tivam. F
Anything at all will be fine.

Ketsran fya'o sivunu ngar, kem si. F
Do it however you'd like.

Pukit aketsran ivinan. F
Read any book at all.

[NT \(3/31/2013\)](#)

6.2.4. Apposition. Nouns in apposition² to other nouns are in the subjective case, **ayli'ufa awngeyä 'eylanä a'ewan Markusi** *in the words of our young friend, Marcus*. However, the conjunction **alu** is also used for this (see §6.20.1).³ F

6.2.4.1. Titles act as noun modifiers, and are thus not declined when used with proper names. The dative of **Karyu Pawl** “teacher Paul” is **Karyu Pawlur**.

6.2.5. Adjective Attribution. Attributive adjectives are joined to the noun they modify with the affix **-a-** (see §3.5.1), **silpey oe, layu oeru ye'rìn siltsana fmawn** *I hope I will soon have good news, lora ayli'u, lora aysäfpil* *beautiful words and beautiful thoughts*. F

6.2.5.1. Regardless of the order of noun and adjective, the case endings always attach to the noun, never the adjective. Similarly, an enclitic adposition is always attached to the noun (see §6.5.1).

6.2.5.2. When an adverb is used with an attributive adjective, it must not come between the adjective and its noun, that is, **sikenong ahìno nihawng** *very detailed examples* or **nihawng hìnoa sikenong**, never something like ***hìno nihawnga sikenong**. F

6.2.5.3. If there are two adjectives modifying a noun, Frommer has a tendency to order them Adj - N - Adj, **niawnomum tolel oel ta ayhapxìtu li'fyaolo'ä pxaya sipawmit atxantsan** *as you know, I have received many excellent questions from members of the language community*. F

6.2.5.4. For more than two adjectives, or to use some order other than Adj - N - Adj given above, the adjectives must be put into an attributive clause with **lu, yayo a lu lor sì hì'i** *a small, pretty bird*. [Utxa \(2/10/2010\)](#) F

6.2.5.5. The adjective may be repeated on both sides of the noun to mark intensity. The second adjective receives the phrase stress, **lu po lora tuté alor** *she's an extremely beautiful woman*. [NT \(2/28/2013\)](#) F

6.2.5.6. When repeating a noun with different adjectives (“the big dog, the little dog, the yappy dog,” etc.) the prop noun⁴ **pum** is used for the repetitions, **lam set fwa Sawtute akawng holum, pum asiltsan 'i'awn** *it now seems that the evil sky-people are gone, the good ones remain*. However, if a more specialized general term is available it is more elegant to use that. In answer to **polpxaya taronyu kelku si tsatsraymi?** *how many hunters live in that village?* the more elegant reply is **tute amevol** *sixteen people*, though **pum amevol** is still perfectly possible. [Forum \(30/5/2020\)](#) F

6.2.5.7. The noun element in most **si** constructions verb may have an attributive adjective, **wina uvan si** *play a quick game*. [Forum \(6/12/2013\)](#)

6.2.6. Predication. Adjective and noun predicates both use the same construction with the verb **lu be**, as in **reltseotu atxantsan lu nga** *you are an excellent artist*, **fisyulang lu rim** *this flower* F

²Nouns are described as *in apposition* when they occur immediately next to each other, with one describing or defining the other. In English, we usually set off the second noun phrase with commas, as in *I told my best friend, Bob, that he should learn Na'vi, too*.

³The bare apposition is Early Na'vi. Using **alu** may be better for future use.

⁴Frommer calls it a “dummy noun,” but it can be reasonably thought of as a kind of pronoun, too.

is yellow.

6.2.6.1. Other verbs that take predicative syntax: **slu** *become* and **'efu** *feel*, such as in **ngenga sliyu Na'viyä hapxi** *you will become part of the people*, **oe 'efu ohakx** *I am (feel) hungry*.

6.2.6.2. If there is ambiguity with **slu** *become* about which constituent is the subject and which the predicate, the predicate can be marked with the adposition **ne**, as in **taronyu slu ne tsamsiyu** *the hunter becomes a warrior*.

6.2.6.3. **Sleyku**, the causative of **slu** *become*, also takes an adjective predicate, **fula tsayun oeng** **pivängkxo ye'rìn ulte ngari oel mokrit stayawm, oeti nitram sleyku nìtxan** *it makes me very happy that we two will soon be able to chat and that I will hear your voice*. **What about 'eykefu?**

6.2.7. **Comparison**. Adjective comparatives and superlatives (*big, bigger, biggest*) are marked with the particle **to**, which, like an adposition, may come before the noun compared to or be enclitic on it (§2.1.5.3).

Oe to nga lu koak *I am older than you.*

Oe ngato lu koak *I am older than you.*

6.2.7.1. The superlative is handled with **frato** *than all*, **fisyulang arim lu hì'i frato** *this yellow flower is the smallest of all*.

6.2.7.2. Comparisons of equality, “as big as a tree,” are handled with the idiom **nìftxan** *adjective na noun or pronoun*, as in **oe lu nìftxan sìltsan na nga** *I am as good as you*. If the point of comparison is a pronoun, or definite noun already part of the discourse, the topical case may be used, **ngari lu oe nìftxan sìltsan**. This construction is also usable with adverbs. [Wiki \(1/12/2010\)](#)

6.2.8. **Direct Address**. When speaking to an individual directly the vocative particle **ma** comes immediately in front of the relationship noun, noun phrase or name, **oel ayngati kameie, ma oeyä eylan** *I see you, my friends, ma Tsu'tey, kempe si nga?* *Tsu'tey, what are you doing?*

6.2.8.1. With polar questions, the vocative follows the final **srak**, as in **ngaru lu fpom srak, ma Txewi?** *how are you, Txewi?* And while it is most common for the vocative to come at the beginning or end of a clause, it may occur within a clause, **nga, ma Neytiri, plltxe nìltsan** *you, Neytiri, speak well*. [Wiki \(26/2/2018\)](#)

6.2.8.2. If multiple individuals are addressed **ma** is not repeated, **ma smukan sì smuke** *brothers and sisters*.

6.2.8.3. The vocative is obligatory when speaking to people (and Eywa), but optional when talking to animals. [Forum \(6/4/2010\)](#)

6.2.8.4. Collective nouns may take the suffix **-ya**, as in **mawey, Na'viya, mawey** *(be) calm, people, (be) calm!*

6.3. Pronouns

6.3.1. Gender. The gendered third person pronouns, **poan** and **poe**, are used only when it will help to avoid ambiguity in discourse. Speakers of English and other Western European languages should take care to not use them too often.

6.3.2. Number. The forms of the question pronoun **tupe** have a behavior that differs from the number agreement rules discussed in §6.2.1.4. Here, the pronoun may be marked for number even when the noun has been, too. Note the answers to these questions,

Tsaysamsiyu lu tupe? *Who are those warriors?*
(Fo) lu 'eylan Tsu'teyä. *They are Tsu'tey's friends.*

F

Tsaysamsiyu lu supe? *Who are those warriors?*
(Fo) lu Kamun, Ralu, İstaw, si Ateyo.
They're Kamun, Ralu, İstaw, and Ateyo.

The plural forms ask for the identity of individual members, while the singular asks about a group characteristic.

6.3.3. Similarity. Pronouns may take the adverbial prefix **nì-**, producing a form like **nìnga** *like you*. These forms are used to indicate way of acting, **plltxe po nìayoeng** *she speaks like us or as we do*. For describing how someone is perceived, the adpositions **na** or **pxel** are preferred. [Forum \(16/8/2016\)](#)

6.3.4. Fko. The indefinite pronoun **fko** is like the English pronoun “one” or the less formal “you” in the general sense, as in *one doesn't say such things vs. you don't say things like that*. **Tsat ke tsun fko yivom** *you can't eat that*; **tsun fko sivar hänit fte payoangit stivä'ni** *one can use a net to catch a fish*.

6.3.4.1. Fko is also used where English would use an unspecified “they” when making general statements, as in **plltxe fko san ngaru lu mowan Txilte ulte poru nga** *They say you like Txilte and vice versa*.⁵

6.3.4.2. Fko can be used for the English passive when the agent of the verb⁶ is animate, as in the idiom **oeru syaw fko Wilyim** *my name is William, I am called William*, **tsali'uri fko pamrel si fyape?** *how is that word written, how does one write that word?*

6.3.5. Sno. The reflexive pronoun **sno** refers to the subject or agent of the clause it occurs in. In the genitive (**sneyä**) it may be translated *his own, her own, their own, etc.* It is used to clear up situations found in a sentence like “he prepared his meal.” Without clarification, it may not be clear if “his” refers to the person preparing the dinner or someone else:

⁵Frommer's translation of this is *I hear you like Txilte and vice versa*.

⁶The agent of a passive verb is the person or thing you put with the preposition “by” in English, as in *I was hit by a car*.

Pol ’olem peyä wutsot. *He prepared his (someone else’s) meal.*

Pol ’olem sneyä wutsot. *He prepared his own meal.*

Sno can refer back to a topical acting as the subject,

Skxawngiri zìmup ulte sneyä tsko kxakx.

The idiot fell and broke his/her (own) bow.

As of Dec 2020 there remain questions about how to resolve **sneyä**, etc., when a topical and subject are both in play, as well as whether or not **sneyä** can refer to things in an outer clause, *he thinks that his father....*

Note that the reflexive can anticipate the noun it refers to, as in **sìpawmìri sneyä aynumeyuä** *karyu ’eyng* the teacher responds to his students’ questions. Here **sneyä** is coming before **karyu** teacher.

Sno is for third person antecedents only. [Wiki \(23/1/2018\)](#)

6.3.6. Lahe. The adjective **lahe** *other, another* can also be used alone as a pronoun, **fipoti oel** *tspiyang, fte tikenong liyevu aylaru* *I will kill this one as a lesson to the others* (see §3.2.3 for the form).

6.3.7. PRO-Drop. A subject pronoun (either subjective or agentive) may be dropped if it is the same as the subject of the previous statement. Note the lack of a subject pronoun in the second sentence:

Fayupxaremì oē payängkxo teri horen lì’fyayä leNa’vi fpi sute a tsun srekr r tsat sivar. Ayngeyä sìpawmìri kop fmayi fitsenge tivìng sì’eyngit. F

In these messages I will chat about the rules of the Na’vi language for people who can already use it. I will also try to give answers here concerning your questions.

6.3.8. Contrastive Demonstratives. To focus contrasting elements, forms of the pre-nouns **fi-** and **tša-** are paired with forms of the independent demonstratives **fi’u** and **tša’u** used with **alu**:

Fìfkxen alu Fì’u lu ftxìlor; tsafkxen⁷ alu TSA’u ngati tspang. F
THIS vegetable is delicious; THAT one will kill you.

Fìkaryu alu fipo lu tsulfätu; tsakaryu alu tsapo lu skxawng. F
This teacher is a master; that teacher is a fool.

There is also a vocal contrastive stress on the independent forms of **fi’u** and **tša’u** in this construction. [NT \(31/12/2011\)](#)

6.4. Use of the Cases

6.4.1. Subjective. The unmarked subjective case is used as the subject of intransitive verbs, the predicate noun in predicate constructions (§6.2.6) and with adpositions.

⁷Or **pum**.

6.4.1.1. With verbs of motion, if the destination comes immediately after the verb, the adposition **ne** may optionally be dropped, leaving an unmarked noun, **za'u fitseng, ma 'itetsyip** *come here, little daughter.* F

6.4.1.2. The subjective is also used in exclamations, when a noun or noun phrase is used by itself as an utterance, **lora ayli'u, lora aysäfpil** *beautiful words and beautiful thoughts*, **ayli'u apawnlltxe nìltsan** *words well spoken!* F

6.4.1.3. A time word with the indefinite **-o** is used in the subjective to indicate a duration of time, **zìsìto amrr ftolia ohe** *I studied for five years*, **herwì zereiup fitrro nìwotx!** *It's been snowing all day!* [Wiki \(1/12/2010\)](#) A

6.4.2. **Agentive.** The agentive case is used for the subject of transitive verbs, **oel ngati kameie** *I See you.*

6.4.3. **Patientive.** The patientive is used as the direct object of transitive verbs, **tì'eyngit oel tolel a krr** *when I receive an answer.* F

6.4.4. **Dative.** The dative is used for the indirect object of ditransitive verbs, **sìltsana fmawn a tsun oe ayngaru tivng** *good news which I can give to you.* F

6.4.4.1. The object of a **si**-verb takes the dative, **oe irayo si ngaru** *I thank you.*

6.4.4.2. The causee for the causative of a transitive verb may be in the dative, **oel ngaru tseyk-ìye'a tsat** *I will make you see it (see §6.11.2).*

6.4.4.3. The verb **lu** with the dative forms an idiom for possession, where English uses the verb “have,” **lu oeru ikran** *I have an ikran.* In this construction the verb usually comes first in the clause. [Wiki \(28/1/2010\)](#)

6.4.4.4. The dative of interest limits the scope of an adjective to the judgement **or benefit** of a particular individual, **fi'u oeru prrte' lu** *this is pleasant to me*, **tìpängkxo ayoengeyä mowan lu oeru nìngay** *our chat is truly enjoyable (to me).*

6.4.4.5. With verbs of speaking, including a word like **pawm** *ask*, the person addressed goes in the dative, **oel poru polawm fi'ut** *I asked him this.*

6.4.5. **Genitive.** The genitive case marks possession, as in **oeyä 'eylan** *my friend*. But see below for inalienable possession (§6.4.6.3).

6.4.5.1. The genitive can be used predicatively, as in **fitseng lu awngeyä** *this place is ours*. However, the prop noun **pum** *possession, thing possessed* is more often used, **kelku ngeyä lu tsawl; pum oeyä lu hì'i** *your house is large; mine is small.* F

6.4.5.2. The partitive genitive marks the larger whole of which something is part, **Na'viyä luyu hapxi** *you are part of the people*. This is also used with fractions, **Tsu'teyil toling oer mawlit smarä** *Tsu'tey gave me a half of the prey.* F

6.4.5.3. The genitive is occasionally separated from the noun phrase it goes with, **Na'viyä luyu hapxi** *you are part of the people.* A

6.4.5.4. The genitive is also used as the object of verbal nouns, as in **tiftia kifkeyä** *study of the natural world*. \mathcal{F}

6.4.6. **Topical.** The topical case marks the topic in a topic-comment construction. See *Topic-Comment*, §7.2, for a longer discussion of this use. The topical has a few more fixed uses, as well.

6.4.6.1. In prose, a topical noun phrase will come as early in the clause as possible: first in a main clause, but after the conjunction if in a subordinate clause. [Wiki \(8/10/2011\)](#)

6.4.6.2. The topical is often used with the **si**-verb **irayo si** to *thank* to indicate the thing for which you're giving thanks, **tìmweypeyri ayngeyä seiyi irayo nìngay** *I really thank you for your patience*. \mathcal{F}

6.4.6.3. The topical can be used to mark inalienable possession. Inalienable possession is possession of those things which are intrinsically yours, and which in theory cannot be given away or taken (except by damage). In most languages that have this, words for blood relatives and body parts are the most likely to have special grammar for inalienable possession. Note below that one's spirit and one's life count as inalienable in Na'vi.

Oeri nì'i'a tsyokx zoslolu. *My hand is finally healed.* \mathcal{F}

Oeri tìngayìl txe'lanit tivakuk. *Let the truth strike my heart.* \mathcal{F}

Oeri ta peyä fahew akewong ontu teya längu. \mathcal{A}

My nose is full of his alien smell.

Ngari hu Eywa salew tirea, tokx 'i'awn slu Na'viyä hapxi. \mathcal{A}

Your spirit goes with Eywa, your body remains to become part of the People.

Ngari tswintsyip sevin nìtxan lu nang! *What a pretty little queue you have!* \mathcal{F}

Tseiun oe pivlltxe san oeri lu tìrey sìltsan nìngay sìk. \mathcal{F}

Happily I'm able to say that my life is really good.

Note in most of the examples that the possessed noun need not fall immediately next to the topical. [NT \(11/7/2010\)](#)

6.4.6.4. The topical can be used for the point of comparison in comparisons of equality (see §6.2.7.2).

6.5. Adpositions

Na'vi adpositions may govern nouns, pronouns and adverbs of place and time. Please see the dictionary maintained at [LearnNavi.org](#) or Stefan Müller's [Annotated Dictionary](#) for the range of uses and meanings for individual adpositions.

6.5.1. **Position.** Adpositions can fall in two places. First, they may come before the entire noun phrase they modify, and are written as separate words, **ta peyä fahew akewong** *with (from) his alien smell*, **ngari hu Eywa salew tirea** *your spirit goes with Eywa*. Second, they may be enclitic, in which situation they are always attached to the noun, **fitrrmì letsranten** *on this important day*, **ayli'ufa awngeyä 'eylanä a'ewan** *in the words of our young friend*. \mathcal{F}

6.5.2. Lenition. Several of the adpositions cause lenition in the following word. In dictionaries these are generally indicated as *adp.+*, with the plus sign, as usual, indicating lenition.

6.5.2.1. Enclitic adpositions do not cause lenition in the noun they are attached to. So, **mì hilvan** *in a river*, but **kilvanmì**. The combination **hilvanmì** can only mean *in rivers*. Enclitic adpositions also do not cause lenition on a following word, so **fo kilvanmì kllkxem** *they stand in a river*, not **fo kilvanmì *hllkxem**.

However, whatever word immediately follows a non-enclitic adposition will be lenited. It doesn't have to be the noun, **mì hivea trr** *on the seventh day* (not ***mì kivea srr**). [Wiki \(24/8/2010\)](#)

6.5.2.2. Since lenition alone is also used as the short plural (§3.1.3.1), there is a chance for number uncertainty depending on the conversational context. To be clear about number, use the full plural prefix **ay+**; the lenited form without **ay+** should be interpreted as singular. [NT \(1/7/2010\)](#)

6.6. Adverbs

6.6.1. Degree and Quantity. Adverbs of degree and quantity very often follow the element they modify, **'Rrtamì tsranten nìtxan awngaru nìwotx** *on Earth it matters very much to us all*. \mathcal{F}

6.6.1.1. With predicate adjectives a very common pattern is ADJ **lu** ADV, **ngeyä li'fya leNa'vi txantsan lu nìngay** *your Na'vi is truly excellent*. \mathcal{F}

6.6.2. With Gerunds. The gerund retains enough of its verbal nature that it, too, may take an adverb, **Koren a'awve tìruseyä 'awsiteng** *the first rule of living together*. \mathcal{F}

6.6.3. Correlative Comparisons. The verbs **'ul** *increase* and **nän** *decrease* are used idiomatically as correlative adverbs, **'ul... 'ul** *the more... the more* and **nän... nän** *the less... the less*.

'Ul tskxekeng si, 'ul fnan. \mathcal{F}
The more you practice, the better you'll get.

'Ul tute, 'ul tìngäzik. \mathcal{F}
The more people, the more problems.

Nän ftia, nän lu skxom a emza'u. \mathcal{F}
The less you study, the less chance you have of passing.

Nän yom kxamtrr, 'ul 'efu ohakx kaym. \mathcal{F}
The less you eat at noon, the hungrier you'll feel in the evening.

[NT \(29/2/2012\)](#)

6.6.4. Fitxan and Niftxan. Both adverbs **fitxan** and **niftxan** are used with the conjunction **kuma** (§6.18.6) for result clauses,

Lu poe sevin niftxan (or fitxan) kuma yawne slolu oer. F
She was so beautiful that I fell in love with her.

In these constructions the **akum/kuma** must be contiguous with the **fitxan/niftxan**. [NT \(19/6/2012\)](#)

6.6.5. Keng. The adverb **keng**, *even*, is used to prop up unexpected information, **yom teylut keng oel** *even I eat teylu*. [Wiki \(31/12/2010\)](#)

6.6.6. Li. The primary meaning of **li** is *already*, **tikangkem li hasey lu** *the work is already finished*. F
[NT \(20/2/2011\)](#)

6.6.6.1. The negative, **ke li**, means “not yet,” and uses pleonastic negation (§6.16.2), **fo ke li ke polāhem** *they have not yet arrived*. [NT \(4/9/2011\)](#)

6.6.6.2. With imperatives **li** indicates strong urgency, **Ngal mi fitsengit terok srak? Li kä!** F
You’re still here? Get going! With **ko** (§6.22.1), **li ko** (accented on **li**) it means “well, get to it, then,” or “let’s get on it.”

6.6.6.3. In answers it conveys a somewhat hesitant “yes,” much like English “sort of,”

A: **Nga mllte srak?** *Do you agree?* F
B: **Li, slä...** *Well, yes, I guess so, but....*

The negative of this, **ke li**, means something like “not really.”

6.6.6.4. When **li** is paired with the adposition **sre** they mean “by” in the temporal sense of “before or up to but, not after,” **kem si li trraysre** *do it by tomorrow*. If **sre** comes before the noun, it combines with **li** into **lisre**, which like **sre** will cause lenition, **kem si lisre srray** *do it by tomorrow*. F

6.6.7. Nìwotx. The adverb **nìwotx** *all (of), in toto, completely* is frequently used with plural nouns and pronouns to give a collective sense, **ayeylanur oeyä sì eylanur li’fyayä leNa’vi nìwotx** *to all my friends and friends of the Na’vi language*, **tifyawìntxuri oeyä perey aynga nìwotx** *you are all waiting for my guidance*. F

6.6.7.1. With dual number, the sense of **nìwotx** is *both*, **mefo nìwotx yolom** *they both ate*. [NT \(15/8/2011\)](#)

6.6.8. Nìfya’o. A noun phrase built on **fya’o** can be used freely to produce adverbs of manner. In this construction the entire noun phrase is adverbialized, not just the word **nì-** is prefixed to, **nì-[fya’o letrrrrr]** *in an ordinary way*, **poe poltxe nìfya’o alaw** *she spoke clearly*. F

6.6.8.1. **Nìfya’o** can also take attributive phrases, **nìfya’o a hek** *in a way that’s strange*. F

6.6.8.2. **Note about sentence adverbs vs. nìfya’o forms?**

6.6.9. “Kop” and “nìteng”. Both **kop** and **nìteng** answer to the English adverb *also*. **Kop** has more the sense of *in addition, further*, while **nìteng** means *similarly, too, likewise*. Compare **oel poleng kop poru tsa’ut** *I also (in addition) told him that* to **oel poleng nìteng poru tsa’ut** *I told him that, too*.

6.6.9.1. They can even be used together, **furia nga lu nitram, lu oe kop nitram nìteng** *since you’re happy, I, too, am also happy.* \mathcal{F}

6.6.10. Sunkesun. The adverb **sunkesun** *like it or not* is a shortened form of **sunu ke sunu** with the default addressee being *you*, **sunkesun po slayu olo’eyktan** *whether you like it or not, he’s going to become chief.* [NT \(6/6/2019\)](#) \mathcal{F}

6.6.10.1. Note that **sunkesun** can only be addressed to the listener, otherwise one must use a **ftxey... fuke** construction, **pol viyewng ayevenngit fiha’ngir, ftxey sunu fuke** *He is going to take care of the children this afternoon, whether he likes it or not.* \mathcal{F}

6.7. Aspect and Tense

6.7.1. The Role of Context. Na’vi verbs are frequently unmarked for tense or aspect, leaving a verb without infixes, or at most the subjunctive infix. Absent other information, such as an adverb of time or some break in discourse, an unmarked verb continues the tense and/or aspect of the verb in the previous sentence.

6.7.1.1. Although a subordinate clause may occur before the main clause, it takes its temporal and aspectual context from the main clause, **oel foru fiayli’ut toling a krr, kxawm oe harmahängaw** *when I gave them these words perhaps I was sleeping*, **ti’eyngit oel tolel a krr, ayngaru payeng** *when I receive an answer, I will tell you.* \mathcal{F}

6.7.2. The Unmarked Verb. The unmarked verb form has two additional jobs. First, it can indicate the present tense, **ayngaru seiya irayo** *I thank you*. Second, it marks habitual or general statements, **nga za’u fitseng pxim srak?** *do you come here often?*, **lu fo lehrrap** *they are dangerous.* \mathcal{F}

6.7.3. Aspect. In general, Na’vi marks aspect more than it marks tense.⁸ It is useful to think of the perfective as a snapshot presentation of an event, while the imperfective sets the background,

⁸Verb aspect can be difficult for speakers of English and most European languages, since these mix tense and aspect together in their verbs, making it difficult to distinguish the ideas. The dangerous confusion for beginners is this idea that verb aspect is about the completion or non-completion of an act. This is not the case. Rather, verb aspect is about how the speaker wishes to *present* a scene. For example,

1. I went to the store. (perfective)
2. While I was going to the store (imperfective), I saw the most amazing thing. (perfective)

In both sentence (1) and (2) the act of going to the store is done and over, but I use the imperfective in sentence (2) because it’s background to the next, perfective, statement.

In complex sentences aspects might take on senses related to completion or non-completion with respect to other clauses in the full sentence, but these are special uses.

tengkr̄r paluluk̄an moene kxll sarm̄i, poltxe Neytiril ayl̄i'ut a frakrr 'ok seyä layu oer as the thanator was charging towards the two of us, Neytiri said something I will always remember. F

6.7.4. Simultaneous Imperfective. Because the imperfective presents a state of affairs as ongoing, it can be used in complex sentences to indicate simultaneous action, **fitxon yom tengkr̄r teruvon** *this night (we) eat while leaning.* [Wiki \(14/3/2010\)](#) F

6.7.5. Anterior Perfective. In complex sentences, the perfective in a subordinate clause can indicate the completion of an action prior to the event in the main clause,

Tì'eyngit oel tolel a krr, ayngaru payeng. F
When I receive an answer, I will let you know.

Fori mawkr̄ra fa renten ioi säpoli holum. F
After they put on their goggles, they left.

6.7.6. Punctual Perfective. The perfective is used in several single verb expressions to indicate the event occurred in an instant, **tslolam** *got it, I understand*, **rolun** *found it!* Frommer says **tolel**, *got it!*, is for a “flash of insight.”

6.7.7. Tense. Na'vi tense, as in Human languages, simply locates an event in time.

There are too few examples of complex sentences to be sure about relative tense in subordinate clauses.

6.7.8. Proximal Tense. The proximal past and future mark events in the “near” past or future, where nearness is not an absolute scale, but is determined by context and the perspective of the speaker.

6.7.9. Intentional Future. The intentional future forms in <isy> and <asy> indicate the determination by the speaker to bring about a state of affairs, rather than a prediction about the future. **Ayoe ke wasyem** *we will not fight*, **tafral ke lisyek oel ngeyä keye'ungit** *therefore I will not heed your insanity.* F

6.8. Subjunctive

The subjunctive is very frequent in Na'vi. Outside its use in independent sentences, the subjunctive is highly grammaticalized, that is, its use is simply required in certain grammatical constructions without necessarily hinting at an *irrealis* sense.

6.8.1. Optative. It is used to indicate a wish, **oeyä swizaw nìngay tivakuk** *let my arrow strike true.* F

6.8.2. Nìrangal. Unrealizable wishes use the adverb **nìrangal** followed by the imperfective subjunctive to indicate an unattainable wish in the present, with the perfective subjunctive for an unattainable wish in the past. This can be expressed in English with phrases like, “if only” or “I wish,” **nìrangal lirvu oeyä frn̄enur lora sanhì** *I wish my children had pretty stars*, **nìrangal oel tslilvam nì'ul** *if only I had understood more.* [Wiki \(14/3/2010\)](#)

6.8.3. Modal Complement. The verbal complement to a modal verb, such as **zene** *must*, **tsun** *can*, etc., will take the subjunctive, as in **ayngari zene hivum** *you must leave*, **oe new nìtxan ayngaru fyawivìntxu** *I want very much to guide you*, **fmawn a tsun oe ayngaru tivìng** *news which I can give to you*.

6.8.3.1. The verb controlled by the modal will only takes the pre-first position infixes (the reflexive and causative, §3.6.2) and the subjunctive. It will not take tense, aspect, or affect infixes. So, marking for these should go on the modal, **oe namew tsive’a** *I wanted to see*, never ***oe new tsimve’a**. [Forum \(14/10/2010\)](#)

Pori mesyokx rìkxi, ha ke tsayun yerikit tivakuk. F

His hands tremble, so he will not be able to hit the hexapede

Furia tsolun oe ngahu pivängkxo, oeru prrte’ lu nìngay. F

It was really a pleasure to speak with you.

Fteria oel li’fyati leNa’vi, slä mi ke tsängun pivlltxe na hufwe. F

I’m studying Na’vi, but I’m afraid I still can’t speak it fluently.

Except in poetry or ceremonial language, the modal verb will always come before the controlled verb. [NT \(3/19/2011\)](#)

6.8.3.2. Known modal verbs and verbs with modal syntax:⁹

fmi	try, attempt	sngä’i	begin, start
ftang	stop	sto	refuse ¹⁰
kan	intend to ¹⁰	tsun	can, be able
kom	dare	var	keep on, continue to
may’	try (experiential)	zene	must, have to
new	want ¹⁰	zenke	must not

[NT \(25/5/2011\)](#) [Wiki \(1/12/2010\)](#) [Wiki \(2/2/2011\)](#) [Ultxa \(2/10/2010\)](#) [Wiki \(13/12/2012\)](#) [NT \(6/6/2019\)](#)

6.8.3.3. Note that the modal verbs are considered intransitive with the subject of the modal phrase in the subjective case, regardless of the transitivity of the controlled verb, **oe new yivom teylut** *I want to eat teylu*. But see “word order effects,” §7.1.3.1, for some exceptional patterns.

If the modal is one capable of taking a subclause, however, then it behaves transitively, **oel new futa nga srew** *I want you to dance* (§6.8.4).

6.8.3.4. When **ke** is used with modal verbs, it may go either in front of the modal verb or in front of the controlled verb. In some cases, this changes the meaning as with **ke zene kivä** *do not have to go* versus **zene ke kivä** *must not go* or **po ke tsun yivom** *they are not able to eat* versus **po tsun ke yivom** *they are able to not eat*. [Forum \(23/7/2019\)](#)

⁹Other candidates: **flä** *succeed*, **hawl** *prepare*.

¹⁰See also §6.8.4.

6.8.4. Modals with Subclauses. Several of the modals may also take subclauses introduced with **futa** or **a fi'ut** (§3.4.2). Normally when the subject of the modal and the controlled verb are the same, you do not need to use one of the conjunctions, but it is possible.

Oe new srivew. *I want to dance.* ℱ

Oel new futa srew. *I want to dance, lit., I want that I dance* ℱ

Note here than the subclause does not require the subjunctive. However, due to analogy with the very common pattern seen in **oe new srivew**, it is permitted to use the subjunctive as well, **oel new futa srivew**. This also applies if the the subject of the subclause is different from the main clause:

Oel new futa nga srew. *I want you to dance.* ℱ

Oel new futa nga srivew. *I want you to dance.* ℱ

Poel stolatso futa mefo tivaron tsaha'ngir.

She must have refused (their request) to hunt that afternoon.

[Forum \(29/11/2020\)](#) [Forum \(13/12/2012\)](#)

The verbs which permit this variation in the subclause are: **fmi**, **kan**, **may'**, **new**, **nulnew**, and **sto**.

6.8.4.1. The causative of transitive **new** will also take a **futa** clause, **pol oeru neykew futa oel yivom teyluti** *he made me want to eat teylu*, lit. *he made me want that I eat teylu*. [Wiki \(3/10/2010\)](#) [Forum \(29/11/2020\)](#) ℱ

6.8.5. Other Uses. The subjunctive is also used in purpose clauses with **fte** (§6.17.2), conditional sentences (§6.19), and with the conjunction **tsni** when used with certain verbs (§6.20.7).

6.9. Participles and Gerunds

6.9.1. Participles. Na'vi participles are restricted in their use — they may only be used attributively, never as predicates. Since they are adjectives, they are linked to the noun they go with using the attributive affix **-a-** (§3.5.1), **palulukan atusaron lu lehrrap a hunting thanator is dangerous**. ℱ

6.9.1.1. Some derived words have participles in them, and these may be used predictively, as in **lu nga txantslusam** *you are wise*, with the active participle **tskusam** in it. ℱ

6.9.1.2. The participles of **si** construction verbs are counted as a single word. They are written with a hyphen connecting **si** and the other word and the attributive **a** is attached to the entire phrase, not just **si**:

srung-susia tute

tute asrung-susi

Both phrases mean *a helping person*.

6.9.2. Gerunds. Any verb may be freely turned into a gerund, a noun describing the action of the verb (§5.1.4.1). They can be used with adverbs (§6.6.2), but they may not take subjects or direct objects, **tìyusom 'o' lu** *eating is fun*. [Wiki \(18/6/2010\)](#) ℱ

6.9.2.1. English often uses gerunds to nominalize a phrase (“running a marathon is difficult”). In Na’vi such clause nominalization is handled with **fi’u** or **tsa’u** (§6.18.4), **fwa yom teylut 'o' lu** *eating teylu is fun*. [Ultxa \(3/10/2010\)](#) ℱ

6.10. Reflexive

6.10.1. True Reflexives. The reflexive infix <äp> indicates the subject of the verb is performing an act on themselves. The subject is in the subjective, not agentive, case, as in **oe tsäpe’a** *I see myself*. [Wiki \(1/2/2010\)](#) ℱ

6.10.2. Intransitive Reflexives. With intransitive verbs that take dative objects reflexive pronoun **sno** is used,

Po yawne lu snor. *He loves himself.*

[NT \(31/12/2011\)](#)

6.10.3. Detransitive. The reflexive infix may also be used to create intransitive verbs,¹¹ such as **win säpi** *to hurry*.

6.10.4. Reciprocal. When a reflexive verb occurs with the adverb **fitsap** *each other*, the meaning is reciprocal, **mefo fitsap mäpoleyam tengkrr tsngawìk** *the two of them hugged each other and wept*. [NT \(30/10/2011\)](#) ℱ

6.10.4.1. With intransitive verbs that take dative objects there are two possibilities,

Moe smon moeru fitsap. *We know each other.* ℱ

Moe smon fitsap. *We know each other.* ℱ

With third person reflexives of any number, the dative of **sno** is used,

Fo smon (snoru) fitsap nìwotx. *They all know each other.* ℱ

[NT \(31/12/2011\)](#)

6.11. Causative

The causative infix <eyk> increases the transitivity of a verb, adding another argument. All causative verbs are thus transitive, requiring the agentive case for the subject.

¹¹Students of Romance languages will find this familiar, *je me lave* vs. *je lave ma voiture*.

6.11.1. Causative of Intransitive Verb. When an intransitive verb is made causative, the causee, which had been in the subjective case, is in the patientive.

Oe kolä neto *I went away.*

Pol oeti keykolä neto *She made me go away.*

6.11.2. Causative of Transitive Verb. When a transitive verb is made into a causative, the causee, which had been in the agentive case, goes into the dative. This leaves the original accusative in place.

Neytiril yerikit tolaron *Neytiri hunted hexapede.*

Eytukanil Neytirir yerikit teykolaron

Eytukan made Neytiri hunt a hexapede.

F

6.11.2.1. The causee may also be indicated with the adposition **fa**, *by means of*. This defocuses the causee somewhat, focusing instead on either the causer or object.

Neytiril yerikit tolaron *Neytiri hunted hexapede.*

Eytukanil fa Neytiri yerikit teykolaron

Eytukan had a yerik hunted by Neytiri.

F

6.12. Ambitransitivity

A normally transitive verb can be paired with a subjective, rather than agentive, noun as the subject. This is used when the direct object is considered irrelevant and only the verbal action matters. For example, **oe taron** *I hunt* is a general statement about one's activities, where what one is hunting in particular doesn't matter. Or, [NT \(28/3/2012\)](#)

Ngal pelun faystxenut frakrr tsyär?

Why do you always reject these offers? vs.

Nga pelun frakrr tsyär?

Why do you always reject everything? or such things?

F

F

This pattern of alternation can also be called an “antipassive” construction, and may be freely used in Na’vi.

6.12.1. Omitted Object. This use should be distinguished from omission of a direct object that exists in the context. For example,

Ngal ke tse’a txepit srak? *Do you not see the fire?*

Oel tse’a. *I see (it).*

Here the direct object is simply not mentioned, rather than suppressed entirely, so the verb and subject still follow the normal transitive syntax.

6.12.2. Causative. There is no way to distinguish the antipassive in the causative. For example, the resulting action of the sentence **oel poru teykaron** *I make him hunt* could either be **po taron** *he hunts (something we don't care about)* or **pol taron** *he hunts (something in particular)*. [Utxa \(3/10/2010\)](#)

6.13. Commands

6.13.1. Unmarked. Commands in Na'vi require no special infix. Positive commands are simply a verb stem, **Kä! Kä!** *Go! Go!*, **mefoti yim** *bind them!* The pronoun may also be stated explicitly, **'awpot set ftxey ayngal** *(you) choose one now.* A
F

6.13.2. With the Subjunctive. A command may also use the subjunctive infix <iv>. Frommer says, “at an earlier point in the history of the language there was probably a polite/familiar distinction (the <iv> form being the politer one), but that's no longer the case. They're used interchangeably. So to say 'Go!' you can say either **kivä** or just **kä.**”

6.13.3. Prohibitions. Negative commands are not negated with the usual negative adverb **ke**, but rather use the word **rä'ä**, as in **rä'ä hahaw** *don't sleep.*

6.13.3.1. Rä'ä may follow the verb for special emphasis, **oeti 'ampi rä'ä, ma skxawng!** *don't touch me, you moron!* [NT \(27/11/2012\)](#) F

6.13.3.2. With **si**-construction verbs, **rä'ä** intrudes between the noun and **si**, **txopu rä'ä si** *don't be afraid*, **tsakem rä'ä sivi** *don't do that (action)* (see also §6.16.1.1).

6.14. Questions

6.14.1. Polar Questions. Simple yes-no questions are marked with the particle **srak(e)** which occurs at the start or the end of the clause. When the particle appears at the end of the clause, it is usually just **srak**, the longer **srake** occurring at the beginning of the clause. **Ngaru lu fpom srak?** *are you well?* F

6.14.1.1. The particle **srak(e)** is requesting confirmation on the truth or falsity of the entire statement it is attached to. So the correct answer to **nga ke lu Txewi srak?** *you're not Txewi?* is **srane** if you are not, and **kehe** if you are. Note that English handles this situation differently, and English speakers will need to take care with how they answer negative questions. [NT \(28/2/2018\)](#) F

6.14.2. Ftxey... Fuke. In addition to **srak(e)** a yes-no question can be made with an idiom using **ftxey** *choose* and **fuke** *or not*. You can say either **srake nga za'u?** *are you coming* or **ftxey nga za'u fuke** *are you coming or not?* [Wiki \(24/3/2010\)](#) F
F

6.14.3. Wh-Questions. Use of a question word that contains **-pe+** is sufficient to create a question, **kempe si nga?** *what are you doing?* In many languages a question word must come first in the sentence. Na'vi has no such requirement, **fiswiräti ngal pelun molunge fitsenge?** *why did you bring this creature here?* A

6.14.4. Tag Question. The Na'vi tag question (Eng. “right?”, Fr. “n'est-ce pas?”) is marked with either **kefya srak** or simply **kefyak** (ultimately derived from **ke fifya srak?**). [Wiki \(1/3/2010\)](#)

6.14.5. Conjectural Questions. Questions which the speaker doesn't expect even the listeners to know the answer to are marked with the evidential infix <ats>, **pol pesenget tatsok?** *where in the world could she be?* **srake pxefo li polähatssem?** *I wonder if the three of them have already arrived.* NT (30/10/2011) \mathcal{F}

6.14.6. Choice Questions. A question in which the speaker offers two choices is formed by placing **fu** before each choice, **Nulnew ngal fu fi'ut fu tsa'ut?** *Do you want this or that?* NT (30/09/2019) \mathcal{F}

6.15. Affect and Evidence

6.15.1. Affect. Two second position infixes are used to mark the speaker's attitude about what they are saying, <ei> for positive orientation and <äng> for negative orientation, **oel ngati kameie** *I see you*, **oeri ta peyä fahew akewong ontu teya längu** *his alien smell fills my nose.* \mathcal{A}

6.15.1.1. If a statement inherently encodes very positive or negative emotion the infix is likely to be omitted, as in **nga yawne lu oer** *I love you.* Wiki (1/2/2010) \mathcal{F}

6.15.2. Evidence. The second position infix <ats> is used to mark a suppositional statement from evidence,¹² **'uol ikranit txopu sleykolatsu, taluna po tsik yawo** *something must have frightened the banshee, because it suddenly took to the air.* Wiki (19/2/2010) \mathcal{F}

6.16. Negation

6.16.1. Simple Negation. The adverb **ke** is used to negate a sentence, **fitxon na ton alahe nñwotx pelun ke lu teng?** *why is this night not like all other nights?* \mathcal{F}

6.16.1.1. With **si**-construction verbs, the **ke** comes before **si**, as in **po pamrel ke si** *he doesn't write*. The phrase accent shifts from the noun or adjective part of the **si**-verb to **ke**, **pamrel ke si** (see also §6.13.3).

6.16.1.2. Imperatives are negated with the adverb **rä'ä**. See §6.13.3.

6.16.1.3. In some cases, the position of **ke** in a modal construction changes the meaning. See §6.8.3.4.

6.16.2. Pleonastic Negation. When a negative adverb or pronoun (§3.4) is used **ke** is still required with the verb, **ke'u ke lu ngay** *nothing is true*, **slä ke stä'nì kawrrr** *but (he) never catches (her).* Wiki (2/5/2010) \mathcal{F}

6.16.2.1. When the prenoun **fra-** is negated the verb is also negated, **ke frapo ke tsolam** *not everyone understood.* UItxa (3/10/2010) \mathcal{F}

6.16.3. Kaw'it. A word or phrase may be singled out for negation with **ke... kaw'it** *not... at all*, as in **fo ke lu 'ewan kaw'it** *they are not young at all.* Wiki (6/4/2010)

¹²This roughly corresponds to English “must” in such statements as “it must have rained” or “he must be having trouble with his homework.”

6.17. Complex Sentences

6.17.1. Tense and Aspect in Dependent Subjunctives. Do dependent verbs have TAM-solidarity with their controlling verb?

6.17.2. Purpose. Purpose clauses take the conjunction **fte** (negative **fteke**) with the subjunctive, **sawtute zera’u fte fol Kelutraliti skiva’a** *the sky people are coming to destroy Hometree*; **makto kawl,** *F*
ma samsiyu, fte tsivun pivāhem nìwin *ride hard, warriors, so you can get there fast!* **tsun fko sivar** *F*
hänit fte payoangit stivä’nì *one can use a net to catch a fish.*

6.17.2.1. In Na’vi purpose clauses are used in several situations where English would simply use an infinitive, **pxiset ke lu oeru krr fte ti’eyngit tivìng** *right now I don’t have time to give an answer.* *F*

6.17.3. Asyndeton. Short, parallel phrases¹³ may be joined without a conjunction connecting them. **Yola krr, txana krr, ke tsranten** *it doesn’t matter how long it takes, literally short time, long time, doesn’t matter*; **’uo a fpi rey’eng Eywa’evengmì ’Rrtamì tsranten nìtxan awngaru nìwotx** *F*
something that matters a lot to all of us for the sake of The Balance of Life on both Pandora and Earth; **lora** *F*
ayli’u, lora aysäfpil *beautiful words and beautiful ideas.*

6.17.3.1. Two verbs in sequence without a conjunction are sequential, **za’u kaltxì si ko!** *come* *F*
(and then) say hello! **ngari hu Eywa salew tirea, tokx ’i’awn slu Na’viyā hapxì** *your spirit goes with* *A*
Eywa and your body remains and becomes part of the People.

Verbs controlled by a modal may also be sequenced in this way, with the possibility that both might take the subjunctive. Both of the following are acceptable:

Tsun nekll zivup tsawng. *It can fall to the ground and break.* *F*

Tsun nekll zivup tsivawng. *It can fall to the ground and (can) break.* *F*

Additional verbs can be introduced in a sequence by inserting **tsakrr**. [Forum \(2/5/2020\) NT \(21/4/2020\)](#)

6.18. Relative Clauses and Phrase Attribution

6.18.1. Particle “A”. Na’vi relative clauses are created with the attributive particle **a**. As with adjective attribution, a relative clause may either precede or follow the word it modifies, **po** *F*
tsane karmä a tsengit ke tsime’a oel *I didn’t see the place he was going to*, **palulkan a teraron** *F*
lu lehrrap *a thanator that’s hunting is dangerous.*

6.18.1.1. Note that the attributive **a** is a particle, not a pronoun, and will not take case marking.

6.18.2. Referential Hierarchy. When the head¹⁴ of a relative clause is the subject or direct object in that relative clause, it is omitted,

¹³That is, phrases following the same pattern of grammar.

¹⁴The “head” of the relative clause is the noun to which the relative clause is attached. It has a syntactic role in both the main clause and the relative clause. For example, in the sentence *I see the man who is running*, the word “man” is the direct object of the main clause “I see the man” but is the subject of the relative clause “the man is running.” This element common to both clauses is sometimes also called a “pivot.”

Ngäl tse’a a tute lu eyktan. *The man whom you see is leader.*
Ngäti tse’a a tute lu eyktan. *The man who sees you is leader.*

For other cases or adpositional phrases, a resumptive pronoun must be used — **po** for animate heads and **tsaw** for inanimates.

poru mesyal lu a ikran *an ikran with two wings* F
Po tsane karmä a tsengit ke tsime’a oel. F
I didn’t see the place which she was going (to it).
Fipo lu tute a oe pohu perängkxo.
This is the person who I’m talking with (him).

6.18.2.1. When the head of the relative clause is a direct object in it, the subject of the verb must still take the agentive marking, as in **ngäl tse’a a tute** *the man whom you see from above*, not ***nga tse’a a tute** and **teylu a oel yerom lu ftxilor** *the teylu I’m eating is delicious*. NT (28/3/2012) F

6.18.3. Other Attributive Phrases. Though English can modify nouns directly with prepositional phrases (“the man on the moon”), Na’vi attaches such phrases to nouns with **a**, as in **fipo lu vrrtep a mi sokx atsleng** *this is a demon in a false body*, **ngeyä teri faytele a aysänumeri** *your instructions about these matters*. A

6.18.3.1. The shades of colors can be made more precise with the adposition **na** *like*. To use such a phrase attributively the entire phrase is hyphenated and treated like a normal adjective. So, from **ean na ta’leng** (*Na’vi*-)skin-blue: F

Fisyulang aean-na-ta’leng lor lu nìtxan.
Fisyulang ata’lengna-ean lor lu nìtxan.
Ean-na-ta’lenga fisyulang lor lu nìtxan.
Ta’lengna-eana fisyulang lor lu nìtxan.

6.18.3.2. Single adverbs may also be used attributively, **ke zasyup li’Ona ne kxutu a mifa fu a wrrpa** *The l’Ona will not perish to the enemy within or the enemy without*. F

6.18.4. Clause Nominalization. Entire clauses can be turned into nouns and brought into the syntax of another sentence using the attributive particle, with either **fi’u** or **tsa’u** to anchor the phrase in the main clause. This is common enough that certain combinations of pronoun and attributive particle contract (see §3.4.2).

6.18.4.1. Just as in a relative clause, the anchor pronoun is inflected to match its role in the main clause. For example, in the subjective (**fwa**) as the intransitive subject of **lu**:

Law lu oeru fwa nga mi reltseo nolome nìtxan. F
It is clear to me that you have learned much in art.

In the topical (**a fi’uri**) with **irayo si**:

Ngal oeyä 'upxaret aysuteru fpole' a fi'uri, ngaru irayo seiyi oe nìtxan.

F

I thank you very much for sending my message to people.

As the direct object (**futa**) of the verb **omum**:

Ulte omum oel futa tifyawìtxuri oeyä perey aynga nìwotx.

F

And I know that you all are waiting for my guidance.

6.18.4.2. Very often particular verbs and idioms will require a particular clause nominalization. For example, subclauses with **omum** know will generally take an accusative clause (usually **futa** or **a fi'ut**).

6.18.4.3. Clauses may also be nominalized with forms of **tsa'u**. The difference between **fi'u** and **tsa'u** is that the **tsa'u** form can be used when the clause it anchors refers to something old in the discourse, something which has been previously discussed. This subtlety is not required, however, and forms in **fi'u** are never wrong. **Example conversation using both?** [Wiki \(18/6/2010\)](#)

6.18.4.4. The noun **tìkin** need is used with an attributive clause for the idiom “need to,” **awngaru lu tìkin a nume nì'ul** we need to learn more (literally, “we have the need to learn more”). It can also be used impersonally, **lu tìkin a ...** there is a need to/for ... *F*

6.18.5. Nominalized Clauses with Adpositions. Nominalized clauses may be used with some adpositions, giving sense that match certain English conjunctions and gerund clauses. **Oe ke tsun stivawm fayfneli'ut luke fwa sngä'i tsngivawvik** I cannot hear such words without starting to cry.

6.18.5.1. A list of legal ones might be nice. Other likely candidates: **fpi, mikam, pxel/na?** Or the dictionary may be the better place for a full list.

6.18.6. Nominalizations as Conjunctions. There are a few Na'vi constructions involving nouns and the attributive particle that do what English uses conjunctions for. Because of this, what appear to be identical conjunctions have two forms — one for when the conjunction comes at the end of a clause, and one for when it comes at the start. Often these phrases have contracted into one word, sometimes with sound changes.

	At the start	At the end	
<i>after</i>	mawkrra	akrrmaw	from maw krr a
<i>because</i>	talun(a)	alunta	from ta lun a
<i>because</i>	taweyk(a)	aweykta	from ta oeyk a
<i>when</i>	krra	a krr	
<i>that (as a result)</i>	kuma	akum	
<i>since (from the time)</i>	takrra	akrrta	from ta krr a

[NT \(31/3/2012\)](#) [NT \(19/6/2012\)](#)

Tì'eyngit oel tolel a krr, ayngaru payeng when I receive an answer, I will let you know could also be **krra tì'eyngit oel tolel, ...** [Wiki \(1/2/2010\)](#) [Wiki \(1/2/2010\)](#) [NT \(15/8/2011\)](#) *F*

6.19. Conditional Sentences

Na'vi conditional sentences are introduced with the conjunction **txo** *if* for the condition, and the consequent optionally by **tsakrr** *then*.

6.19.1. General. General conditions describe situations that are commonly or generally true, such as “if it doesn’t rain, plants and animals suffer.” In Na’vi, a **general condition takes txo with the subjunctive in the condition and a non-future indicative in the consequent**, **txo fkol ke fyivel uranit paywä, zene fko slivele** *if one does not seal a boat against water, one must swim*. NT (19/6/2012) ℱ

6.19.2. Future Conditional. In English future conditionals have the present tense in the condition and the future in the consequent, “If you do this, I will do that.” In Na’vi, the condition takes the subjunctive and the consequent takes the future, **pxan l_ivu txo ni’aw oe ngari / Tsakrr nga Na’viru yomt_iy_ing** *Only if I am worthy of you / Will you feed the People*. ℱ

6.19.3. Hypothetical. No examples yet.

6.19.4. Contrafactual. Contrafactual questions use a separate set of conjunctions, **zun** *if* and **zel** *then*. The subjunctive is used in both clauses, with the following tense senses:

Past	Present	Future
⟨iv⟩, ⟨irv⟩	⟨imv⟩, ⟨ilv⟩	⟨iyev⟩

So, for present situations the bare subjunctive or the imperfective subjunctive is used, for past situations the past or perfective subjunctive is used, and finally for future situations the future subjunctive is used (see §3.6.3 for the infix forms).

- | | |
|--|---|
| Zun oe yawne livu ngar, zel ’ivefu oe nitram ni’aw. | ℱ |
| <i>If you loved me, I would be so happy.</i> | |
| Zun oe yawne limvu ngar, zel ’imvefu oe nitram ni’aw. | ℱ |
| <i>If you had loved me, I would have been so happy.</i> | |
| Zun tompa zìyevup trray, zel fo sriyevew. | ℱ |
| <i>If it rained tomorrow, they’d do a dance.</i> | |
| Zun ayoe livu tsamsiyu, zel tsakem ke simvi. | ℱ |
| <i>If we were warriors, we wouldn’t have done that.</i> | |

When the time of both clauses is the same, and only then, the verb in the **zel** clause may take the bare verb, without the subjunctive,

- | | |
|---|---|
| Zun oe yawne livu ngar, zel ’efu oe nitram ni’aw. | ℱ |
| <i>If you loved me, I would be so happy.</i> | |
| Zun oe yawne limvu ngar, zel ’efu oe nitram ni’aw. | ℱ |
| <i>If you had loved me, I would have been so happy.</i> | |
| Zun tompa zìyevup trray, zel fo srew. | ℱ |
| <i>If it rained tomorrow, they’d do a dance.</i> | |

NT (4/30/2013)

6.19.5. Imperatives in Conditions. When imperatives are used as the consequent of a condition, imperative mood and syntax rules override the normal conditional patterns. For example, a future conditional with imperative consequent, **txo tsive’a ayngal keyeyt, rutxe oeru piveng** *if you see errors, please tell me.* \mathcal{F}

6.20. Conjunctions

This section lists conjunctions that have not been discussed elsewhere, but which still deserve mention in some way. I omit conjunctions that require no special comment.

6.20.1. Alu. The primary use of **alu** is for nouns in apposition, **tskalepit oel toling oeyä tsmu-kanur alu İstaw** *I gave the crossbow to my brother İstaw.* Note that the noun after **alu** is in the subjective case. [NT \(16/7/2010\)](#) \mathcal{F}

6.20.1.1. Alu may also be used conversationally to mark a restatement, like “that is to say,” or “in other words.” **Txoa livu, yawne lu oer Sorewn... alu... ke tsun oeng muntxa slivu** *Sorry, but I love Sorewn... in other words, you and I cannot marry.* \mathcal{F}

6.20.1.2. In discussions of grammar and language, **alu** can clarify the word or construction you’re speaking about, **tsalsungay tsali’u alu zeykuso lu eyawr** *nonetheless, that word, namely zeykuso, is correct, li’uri alu tskxe pamrel fyape? how do you spell the word ‘tskxe’?* \mathcal{F}

6.20.2. Ftxey. In addition to forming yes-no questions (**ftxey... fuke**, §6.14.2), **ftxey** can be used to enumerate *whether... or...* options, **silpey oe, ... frapo — ftxey sngä’iyu ftxey tsulfātu — tsiyevun fitsenge rivun ’uot lesar** *I hope ... everyone — whether beginner or expert — will be able to find something useful here.* \mathcal{F}

6.20.3. Fu. The conjunction **fu**, *or*, may be used to combine either noun phrases or verb phrases. **Ke zasyup li’Ona ne kxutu a mifa fu a wrrpa** *The l’Ona will not perish to the enemy within or the enemy without; rä’ä fmivi livok fu emkivä ayekxanit a fkol ngolop fpi sikxuke ayfrtuä si ayioangä* *do not attempt to approach or cross any barriers designed for Guest and animal safety.* \mathcal{F}

6.20.3.1. For a choice statement, use **fu** once. For a choice question, use **fu** twice, before each of the two choices. **Nulnew oel fi’ut fu tsa’ut** *I want this or that* vs. **nulnew ngal fu fi’ut fu tsa’ut?** *Do you want this, or do you want that? What’s your choice?* \mathcal{F}

6.20.4. Ki. The conjunction **ki**, *but rather, but instead*, is paired with the negative adverb **ke**. Take care to distinguish this from **slä** *but*. **Nga plltxe ke nifyeyntu ki ni’eveng** *you speak not like an adult but a child.* [NT \(16/7/2010\)](#) \mathcal{F}

6.20.5. Si. The conjunction **si** *and* is used for making lists and combining elements of the same idea. It is not used to join clauses, which is the job of **ulte** (§6.20.8). **Lu pilokur pxesikan si pxfne’upxare** *the blog has three needs and three sorts of message, ma smukan si smuke* *brothers and sisters.* \mathcal{F}

6.20.5.1. Though **si** is most often found joining noun phrases, pronouns and adjectives, it can join verbs that are closely related, **sänume sivi poru fte pivlltxe si tiviran niayoeng** *teach him* \mathcal{A}

to speak and walk like us.

6.20.5.2. Clauses that have been nominalized, such as with **fwa, futa**, etc. (§6.18.4), may be joined to a list of nouns with **sì**, too, as in **sunu poru syulang sì mauti sì fwa tswayon yaka** *he likes flowers, fruits, and to fly through the air.* [Wiki \(23/1/2018\)](#)

6.20.5.3. **Sì** can also be enclitic (§2.1.5.3). In that situation it follows the word or phrase it is joining to the list, **ta 'eylan karyusì ayngeyä, Pawl** *from your friend and teacher, Paul, tsakrr* *paye'un sweya fya'ot a zamivunge oel ayngar ayli'ut horentisì li'fyayä leNa'vi* *and I will then decide the best way to bring you the words and rules of Na'vi.* F

6.20.6. **Tengkr**. The sense of **tengkr**, *while, the same time as* requires it to be used with the imperfective, **fitxon yom tengkr teruvon** *on this night (we) eat while leaning.* [Wiki \(14/3/2010\)](#) F

6.20.7. **Tsnì**. The conjunction **tsnì** that introduces some kinds of report clause, **ätxäle si tsnì livu oheru Uniltaron** *I respectfully request the Dream Hunt, silpey oe tsnì fitioeykting law livu ngaru set* *I hope that this explanation is clear to you now.* F

6.20.7.1. Verbs known to take **tsnì**: **ätxäle si, rangal** (a marginal use), **silpey, la'um, mowar si, fe'pey, leymfe', leymkem, srefey,** and **srefpil**. Some verbs, such as **silpey** *hope*, require the **tsnì** clause to take the subjunctive, while others, such as **la'um** *pretend*, will not take the subjunctive. The dictionary is the best place to verify. [Forum \(18/8/2011\)](#) [NT \(1/3/2020\)](#)

6.20.7.2. **Tsnì seems most often used when intransitive constructions are in the main clause.**

6.20.8. **Ulte**. This conjunction connects clauses, **oel ngati kameie, ma tsmu-kan, ulte ngaru seiyi irayo** *I see you, brother, and thank you.* Do not confuse with **sì** (§6.20.5).

6.21. Direct Quotation

6.21.1. **San... sìk**. Na'vi does not have indirect quotes (*He said that they were gone*), but instead uses direct quotation, with the quoted words put between the particles **san** and **sìk**, as in **slä ni'i'a tsun oe pivlltxe san Zola'u nìprte' ne pilok Na'viteri sìk!** *but now I can finally say "welcome to the blog Na'viteri."* [NT \(31/8/2011\)](#) F

6.21.1.1. If the beginning or end of a quotation coincides with the beginning or end of an utterance, one or the other of the **san... sìk** pair can be dropped.

1. **Poltxe Eytukan san oe kayä sìk, slä oel pot ke spaw.** F
Eytukan said he would go, but I don't believe him.
2. **Poltxe Eytukan san oe kayä.**
Eytukan said he would go.

In (2), since nothing is said after the quote, there is no need to close the quotation with **sìk**. Similarly, **san** can be dropped if there no serious ambiguity, **frawzo sìk, slä oel poet ke spaw** *(she said) "all's well," but I don't believe her.* [Wiki \(21/1/2010\)](#) [Forum \(4/8/2020\)](#) F

6.21.2. Questions. Reported questions are also quoted directly, **polawm po san srake Säli holum sïk** *he asked whether Sally left, literally he asked, “did Sally leave?”* Wiki (24/3/2010) ℱ

6.21.2.1. With **pawm**, but not other verbs of speaking, **san... sïk** may be dropped, **Polawm po, Neytiri kä pesengne?** *he asked where Neytiri was going.* NT (31/8/2011) ℱ

6.21.3. Transitivity. When a verb of speaking uses **san... sïk** it follows intransitive syntax, **po poltxe san srane** *she said “yes.”* UItxa (2/10/2010)

6.21.3.1. When the speaking verb has a direct object, it follows transitive syntax, **ke poltxe pol tsayli’ut** *she didn’t say that, oel poru pasyawn tsat* *I will ask him that.* NT (31/8/2011) ℱ

6.21.4. Quotation Nominalization. In addition to the **san... sïk** pair, reported speech may be anchored to the nouns **fmawn** *news*, **tì’eyng** *answer* and **fayli’u** *these words* with the attributive **a** (see §3.4.3 for contractions). NT (31/8/2011)

Verb	Quotation
plltxe <i>say</i>	san... sïk, fayli’u
stawm <i>hear</i> , peng <i>tell</i>	fmawn
pawm <i>ask</i>	san... sïk, tì’eyng , nothing
vin <i>ask (for)</i>	tì’eyng

The quotations attached to these are still in the direct form,

Poltxe pol fayluta oe new kivä. *She said she wanted to go.* ℱ
 Lit., “she said, ‘I want to go.’”
Ngal poleng oer fmawnta po tolerkup. *You told me that he died.* ℱ
Volin pol tì’eyngit a Neytiri kä pesengne.
He asked where Neytiri was going.

6.21.4.1. Other verbs introducing indirect questions may use **tì’eyng** nominalizations,

Ke omum oel teyngta fo kä pesengne. ℱ
I don’t know where they’re going.
Teynga lumpe fo holum ke lu law. ℱ
It’s not clear why they left.

6.22. Particles

6.22.1. Ko. The sentence-final particle **ko** is used to solicit agreement of various sorts, including such senses as “let’s,” “don’t you think?,” “why don’t you? why don’t I?” Often heard in the film, **makto ko** *let’s ride.*

6.22.1.1. In the special case of **siva ko** *rise to the challenge*, the phrase can be written as a single word: **sivako**. NT (3/8/2019)

6.22.2. Nang. This particle marks surprise, exclamation or encouragement. It is always sentence-final and appears with adverbs of degree or approbation, such as **nìngay**, **nìtxan**, **fitxan**, etc. **Txantsana sìpawm apxay fitxan lu ngaru nang!** *you have so many excellent questions!* **Ngari tswintsyip sevin nìtxan lu nang!** *what a pretty little queue you have!* \mathcal{F}

6.22.3. Pak. This particle follows the word it goes with and marks disparagement, **tsamsiyu pak!** *a warrior? yeah, right!*

6.22.4. Tut. This is a particle of continuation, so far only seen in pick-up questions in dialogs,

A: **Ngaru lu fpom srak?** *How are you?*

B: **Oeru lu fpom. Ngaru tut?** *I'm well. You?*

6.22.5. Tse. This particle is a marker of conversational hesitation, *well*. In English “well” relates to felicity conditions in divergent ways.

6.23. Other Notable Words

6.23.1. Sweylu. The syntax of this verb meaning “should” (from **swey lu** *it's best*) changes depending on whether the obligation refers to something that has not yet happened or if it refers to an event that has already taken place.

6.23.1.1. To refer to the future, **txo** with the subjunctive is used, **sweylu txo nga kivä** or **nga sweylu txo kivä** for *you should go*. Note that the negative is in the **txo** clause, **sweylu txo nga ke kivä** or **nga sweylu txo ke kivä** *you shouldn't go*. \mathcal{F}

6.23.1.2. For something that has already happened, use **fwa** or **tsawa** with a past or perfective indicative,

Tsenu: **Spaw oe, fwa po kolä längu kxeyey.** \mathcal{F}
I believe it was a mistake for him to go/have gone.

Kamun: **Kehe, kehe! Sweylu fwa po kolä!**
No, no! He should have gone!

Note that this refers to a past event that did happen and was the right thing to do, not an unfulfilled past action (which is another use of “should” in English). [NT \(5/4/2011\)](#)

7. Pragmatics and Discourse

In previous chapters I have discussed sounds, words and sentences in Na’vi. Much of that discussion took the form of rules. This chapter is devoted to language one step higher than even the sentence — conversation, narrative and the contexts in which language takes place, what linguists group together under the name pragmatics. Simple rules are harder to come by here, so the discussion necessarily takes a slightly different structure.

7.1. Constituent Order

7.1.1. Free Word Order. Na’vi has been described as having free word order. This is a little misleading since that phrase means something quite specific to linguists. Rather, Na’vi has free constituent order.¹ Within constituents, word order may be quite constrained. You cannot stick part of one constituent into the middle of another. For example, in **ayoel tarmaron tsawla yerikit** *we were hunting a large hexapede*, I cannot break apart the direct object constituent **tsawla yerikit** and produce things like ***tarmaron tsawla ayoel yerikit** or ***ayoel tsawla tarmaron yerikit**.

7.1.1.1. In complex constituents it is possible for a genitive to be separated from its noun by a relative clause, **ngeyä teri faytele a aysänumeri** *your instructions about these matters*.

7.1.2. SOV, SVO, VSO. Many human languages can conveniently be categorized based on their default word order for subject, verb and direct object, usually shortened to just S, V and O. English is mostly an SVO language, Japanese is SOV. Free word order languages are not easily categorized into this system, though some do have tendencies worth noting. Looking at Frommer’s Na’vi, and only counting sentences with all three constituents, we can say that the three main word orders are SVO, SOV and VSO, with a very slight preference for VSO. Other orders, such as OVS and OSV, are much rarer. Frommer himself has said that word orders where the subject precedes the

¹A *constituent* is a slightly bigger building block than the word, but smaller than a sentence. A constituent is a group of words that function as a single grammatical unit. For example, in the sentence, “the big bad wolf ate Little Red Riding Hood’s grandmother,” the phrase “the big bad wolf” is one constituent acting as the subject, the verb “ate” stands on its own and “Little Red Riding Hood’s grandmother” is the direct object constituent. Sometimes a constituent can be a single word (“he ate her” — each word a constituent) and sometimes they can be quite a lot more complex.

object are more common.² [NT \(19/3/2011\)](#)

7.1.3. Word Order Effects. Changes in word order can sometimes cause changes in grammar.

7.1.3.1. If a sentence is ordered such that a modal and its controlled, transitive verb are contiguous, and the subject and direct object are contiguous, the modal and verb combination may be reanalyzed as a single transitive verb. For example, **oe teylut new yivom** *I want to eat teylu* \mathcal{F} has the expected, correct case use, with the subject of the modal in the subjective case, the direct object in the patientive case (§6.8.3). However, in a few word orders the subject may be put in the agentive case. In decreasing order of acceptability:

<u>Oel</u> teylut new yivom.	widely acceptable ³
Teylut <u>oel</u> new yivom.	about 50% acceptable
New yivom teylut <u>oel</u> .	about 30% acceptable
*New yivom oel teylut.	completely unacceptable

[NT \(19/3/2011\)](#)

7.1.4. Focus. Since free word order languages do not use word order for syntax, they are free to use it to indicate other things, such as style, emphasis and focus. The only thing Frommer has told us for certain about Na’vi word order is, “the end of the sentence is where the ‘punch’ comes.” We can take this to mean that if you wish to emphasize a constituent, put it at the end of the clause. Notice in particular how Frommer translated this sentence:

Fkxilet a tsawfa poe ioi säpalmi ngolop Va’rul. \mathcal{F}
Va’ru is the one who created the necklace she was wearing.

The focused, salient part of the answer to a question is similarly moved to the end of the clause:

Spaw oel futa Mo’atìl tsole’a Neytirit. \mathcal{F}
I believe Mo’at saw Neytiri.

Kehe. Tsole’a Neytirit Eytukanìl. \mathcal{F}
No. The one who saw Neytiri was Eytukan.

In English such focus can also be handled by emphasizing a particular word with stress, *Eytukan* saw Neytiri. [NT \(19/3/2011\)](#)

²This is based off two of the larger pieces of connected Na’vi text Frommer has produced, his first blog post and his message on the MaSempul.org web site.

Order	Blog	Ma Sempul	Total
SVO	2	3	5
SOV	4	1	5
VSO	5	2	7
OVS	0	1	1
OSV	0	2	2

³According to Frommer’s blog, “...in all but the most formal situations.”

7.1.5. The English Passive. Although generations of English teachers have convinced many people that the passive voice is weak and flimsy, it is in fact simply one tool English uses to organize information clearly for listeners. The passive lets us bring the patient of some action to prominence by moving it to the head of the sentence. If we say, “the nun was run over by a car” we’re communicating to our listeners that the nun is the most salient part of the sentence, and that the exact vehicle is less a concern.⁴ Na’vi does not have a passive voice, but Frommer has suggested the word order OSV as one way to communicate the same effect (but see also **fko**, §6.3.4.2).

7.2. Topic-Comment

The topic-comment construction is conceptually straightforward: the “topic” announces what the rest of the sentence relates to, and the comment makes some statement relating to that topic. While plenty of Human languages organize discourse heavily around topic-comment structure, English is not one of them. This can make it difficult to present decent translations of topic-comment structures that are both true to the meaning of the original but which also make clear the structure under discussion. In this section I’ll often use prepositional phrases with “as for” and “concerning” for all examples, but this is a clunky work-around, used only for clarity.

7.2.1. Topical Case. In Na’vi only nouns, noun phrases and pronouns can be topics. These are marked with the topical case (**-ri**, **-iri**). More complex topics can be created with nominalized clauses (§6.18.4).

7.2.2. Topical Role. The topic can be especially confusing for those unfamiliar with it because almost any syntactic role in a sentence may be pulled out of the sentence to be the topic. One idiomatic use is marking inalienable possession (§6.4.6.3). But you can use the topical where English would simply use a direct object:

Fayupxare layu aysngä’iyufpi, fte li’fyari awngeyä fo tsiyevun niftue niltsansi nivume. *F*

These messages will be for beginners so that they can learn our language easily and well.

But the relationship between the topic may not match a strict syntactic role, too:

Ma oeyä eylan, faysänumviri rutxe fi’ut tslivam: ... *F*

My friends, concerning these lessons, please understand this: ...

Ayngeyä sipawmìri kop fmayi fitsenge tivìng sì’eyngit. *F*

As for your questions, (I) will also try to give answers (for them) here.

7.2.2.1. A topic may introduce a complex sentence, coming before even a leading conjunction,

Fori mawkrra fa renten ioi säpoli holum. *F*

After they put on their goggles, they left.

⁴In English, we can even omit the agent of a passive altogether, “the nun was run over.”

7.2.2.2. Similarly, a topic may apply for multiple comments,

Poeri uniltirantokxit tarmok a krr, lam stum niayfo, slä lu 'a'awa tikiteng – natkenong, tsyokxiri ke lu zekwä atsing ki amrr.

F

As for her, when she inhabited an avatar, she was almost like them, but there were a few differences – for example, as for her hand there were not four fingers but five.

7.2.3. Using the Topical. Each human language has its own rules and tendencies about when the topical should be used. At this stage it is a little difficult to set rules for this, but a few tendencies can be drawn from what we have seen so far. First, so far Frommer has not used topic-comment constructions nearly as often as it is used in Chinese or Japanese (both topic-prominent languages, though each in their own way). Second, Frommer does not use the topical to introduce new matters for discussion, rather topics refer to current matters, or matters which are readily inferable from the conversation.

English uses the definite article, *the*, to mark information that has already been introduced into discourse, as well as information that can be assumed or deduced from the conversation. For example, if I say, “I wanted to see *Avatar*, but the line was too long,” I can use the definite article with *line* not because we’ve been talking about lines, but because standing in line is something we’re used to when seeing a popular film. In comments on a recent blog post⁵ Frommer says,

But if the message is indefinite, the topical case doesn’t work as well, since topics are usually definite. So **'upxareri ngaru pamrel soli trram** can certainly mean *I wrote you THE message yesterday*. Can it also mean *I wrote you A message yesterday*? Since there are no articles per se in Na’vi and nouns can be either definite or indefinite, I guess it could. But something about it rubs me the wrong way.

It seems best to avoid truly indefinite topicals.

7.3. Register

7.3.1. Formal Register. Na’vi has two main ways to mark ceremonial or formal speech: with special pronouns (§3.2.2) and with the verb affect infix <uy> (§3.6.4).

7.3.1.1. The formal pronouns may be used in close succession, **Sifmetokit emzola’u ohel. Ätxäle si tsni livu oheru Uniltaron** *I have passed the tests. I respectfully request the Dream Hunt.*

7.3.1.2. Like the tense and aspect markers, it is not necessary to repeat the infix **uy** once a formality context has been established.

7.3.1.3. Solemnity or sincerity of a statement may be shown by using both pronoun and verb formality marking, **faysulfätuä tikangkem oheru meuia luyu nìngay** *the work of these experts is truly an honor for me.* *F*

⁵A Na’vi Alphabet, August 20, 2010

7.3.2. Poetic Register.

7.3.2.1. In prose the topical will come first in its clause or immediately after a conjunction (§6.4.6.1). In verse, it may move deeper into the clause structure, **pxan livu txo ni'aw oe ngari** */ tsakrr nga Na'viru yomtiyìng* *only if I am worthy of you will you feed the people.* F

7.3.2.2. In normal prose, when an adposition comes before the noun or noun phrase, any genitive must also come after the adposition, as in **fa oeyä tsyokx** or **fa tsyokx oeyä** *with my hand*. In poetry, the genitive may also come before the adposition, **oeyä fa tsyokx**. [Wiki \(17/3/2012\)](#)

7.3.2.3. In day-to-day speech a modal verb must come before its controlled verb (§6.8.3.1). In poetic or ceremonial language, the modal may follow. [NT \(3/19/2011\)](#)

7.3.3. **Colloquial Register.** The colloquial register presents itself mostly in simplified grammar or abbreviated expression.

7.3.3.1. Verbs of cognition may introduce a subclause without any conjunction.

I believe it was a mistake for him to have gone.

Spängaw oel futa fwa po kolä lu kxeyey.

Colloquial: **Spaw oe, fwa po kolä längu kxeyey.**

F

F

7.3.3.2. In casual conversation the reflexive perfective of **si**-construction verbs, **säpoli**, is often pronounced **spoli**. [NT \(3/8/2011\)](#)

7.3.4. **Slang.** At the request of the community, Paul Frommer approved some constructions deviating from standard grammar that could be used as 'slang' among the Na'vi in informal contexts, or as a way to have fun with the language.

7.3.4.1. The attitude infixes <ei> and <äng>, normally used in verbs, may be inserted into **srane** *yes* and **kehe** *no* instead of using adverbs to express a mood. Following the common pattern in verbs, the attitude infixes go into the second syllable (§3.6.4), **sran<äng>e, keh<ei>e**. [Forum \(19/04/2020\)](#)

7.3.4.2. Proper names may form a compound verb with **si** to express *do as X* as an extension to the current formation method of these verbs. [Forum \(19/04/2020\)](#)

7.3.5. **Clipped Register.** In military settings certain features of grammar can be modified or omitted for brevity.

7.3.5.1. In noun phrase utterances, participles may go with their noun without using the attributive affix **-a-** (§6.9.1), **tikan tawnatep** *target lost* (from the video game). [Wiki \(21/5/2010\)](#)

7.3.5.2. Some pronoun genitives lose the final **-ä**, see §3.2.1.7. This may be used casually, in non-military situations, among friends or close acquaintances. [Wiki \(21/5/2010\)](#)

A. Index

- 'a'aw, 31
- 'awlie, 24
- 'awlo, 24
- 'efu
 - predicate syntax, 33
- 'eyt, 24
- 'opin, 28
- 'u
 - no short plural, 15
- a-
 - with **a** in an adjective, 11
 - with adverbs, 26
- a-, 19
- am, 29
- ay, 29
- fkeyk, 28
- iva, 28
- lie, 24
- nay, 27
- nga', 28
- o, 15
 - in time expressions, 36
- pin, 28
- pxì, 23
- tsim, 29
- tswò, 29
- tu, 26
- ve, 23
- vi, 29
- ya
 - vocative, 33
- yu, 26
- a, 48
- adjective
 - attributive, 32
 - with adverb, 32
 - comparative, 33
 - contraction, 11
 - equal comparison, 33
 - predication, 33
 - superlative, 33
- adjective
 - attributive
 - formation, 61
- adposition
 - attributive phrase, 49
- adpositions, 37
 - lenition, 11
 - position, 37
 - with nominalized clauses, 50
- adverbs, 38
 - attributive, 49
- affect
 - negative, 47
 - positive, 47
- affix
 - derivational, 25
- akrrmaw, 50
- akrrta, 50
- akum, 50
- alim, 26
- alo, 24
- alphabet
 - spoken, 10
- alu, 52
 - with contrastive demonstratives, 35
- alunta, 50

ambitransitive, 45
 animacy, 16
 antipassive, 45
 causative, 46
 apposition, 32, 52
asim, 26
 asyndeton, 48
 attitude infixes, 21
aweykta, 50
awnga, 15
 genitive **awngeyä**, 16
ayoeng, 15

 both, 39

 case
 agentive, 36
 dative, 36
 with **lu**, 36
 with causative, 36, 45
 with verbs of speaking, 36
 genitive, 36
 dislocation, 36
 partitive, 36
 patientive, 36
 subjective, 35
 exclamatory, 36
 topical, 37, 58
 as definite, 59
 inalienable possession, 37
 point of comparison, 33
 word order, 37
 with titles, 32
 causative
 formation, 20
 of intransitive, 45
 of transitive, 45
 command
 negative, 46
 plain, 46
 with subjunctive, 46
 commands, 46
 comparison
 correlative, 38
 of adjectives, 33
 compound word
 accent, 10
 conditional sentence, 51
 contrafactual, 51
 future, 51
 general, 51
 hypothetical, 51
 conjunctions
 omitting, 48

 demonstrative
 contrastive, 35
 diminutive, 26
 direct address, 33
 with animals, 33
 direct object, 36
 omitted, 45
 dual, 15
 contraction, 11

 elision, 12
 enclitics, 10
 evidential, 47
 in questions, 47

fa
 with causative, 45
fay+, 17
fayli'u, 19
fayluta, 19
fi-, 17
 in adverbs of time, 29
fitsap, 44
fko, 34
 for English passive, 34
 genitive **fkeyä**, 16
fmawn, 19
fmawnta, 19
fmi
 modal, 42
 with **futa**, 43
fne-, 17
fnel, 17
 focus, 57
fpi
 lenition, 11
fra-, 17

- with **ke**, 47
- fractions, 23
- fralo**, 24
- frato**, 33
- fray+**, 17
- ftang**
 - modal, 42
- fte**, 48
- fteke**, 48
- ftxey**, 46, 52
- fu**, 52
- fuke**, 46
- fula**, 19
 - use, 49
- furia**, 19
 - use, 49
- futa**, 19
 - use, 49
- future
 - intentional, 41
- fwa**, 19
 - use, 49
- general statements, 31
- genitive
 - shortened in pronouns, 16
- gerund
 - formation, 26
 - use, 44
 - with adverb, 38
- glottal stop
 - lenition, 11
- hì(°)**-, 28
- hol**, 31
- holpxaype**, 31
- ilva**, 28
- ilä**
 - lenition, 11
- imperative, 46
 - in conditional sentences, 52
- imperfective
 - simultaneous, 41
- inan**
 - accenting, 20

- indefinite noun, 15, 31
- indefinites
 - free choice, 31
- indirect object, 36
- kan**
 - modal, 42
 - with **futa**, 43
- kaw'it**, 47
- kä-**, 29
- ke**, 47
 - ke li**, 39
 - with **fra-**, 47
 - with **si** construction, 47
- kefyak, kefyä srak**, 46
- keng**, 39
- ketsran**, 31
- ketsuk-**, 29
- kew**, 24
- ki**, 52
- ko**, 54
- kom**
 - modal, 42
- kop**, 40
- krr**
 - with attributive **a**, 50
- kuma**, 50
- lahe**
 - as pronoun, 35
 - declension, 16
 - with indefinite nouns, 31
- le-**, 25
- lenition, 11
 - adpositions, 11
 - number prefixes, 11
 - numbers, 11, 22
 - proper nouns, 11
- li**, 39
- lisre**, 39
- lu**
 - number agreement, 31
 - with dative, 36
- ma**, 33
 - with animals, 33

mawkrra, 50
may'
 modal, 42
 with **futa**, 43
mefan, 24
melo, 24
mì
 elision with plural, 12
 lenition, 11
 modal verb, 42

na
 point of comparison, 33
 with colors, 49
nang, 55
 nasal assimilation, 12
nayn, 24
ne
 with **slu**, 33
 omitted with verbs of motion, 36
 negation, 47
 double negatives, 47
 si construction, 47
new
 causative, 43
 modal, 42
 with **futa**, 43
nga
 genitive **ngeyä**, 16
nì-, 25
 elision before e, 12
 elision with plural, 12
 not yet, 39
 noun
 declension, 14
 predication, 33
nuä
 lenition, 11
nulnew
 with **futa**, 43
 numbers
 cardinal, 22
 fractions, 23
 ordinal, 23
nìftxan, 33
nìfya'o, 39

nìrangal, 41
nìteng, 40
nìwotx, 39
 with dual, 39

omum
 accenting, 20

pak, 55
 participle
 formation, 21
 use, 43
 passive
 with **fko**, 34
 with word order, 58
pawm, 54
 perfective
 anterior, 41
 punctual, 41
plltxe, 54
 plural, 15
 short, 15, 38
 not used with pre-nouns, 17
 with leniting adpositions, 38
 unmarked with numerals, 31
 with **lu** and **slu**, 31
po
 genitive **peyä**, 16
polpxay, 31
 possession
 inalienable, 37
 possessive, 36
 pre-noun, 16
 combinations, 17
 contraction, 11, 17
 PRO-drop, 35
 prohibitions, 46, 47
 pronouns
 honorific, 16
 short genitive, 16
 pseudovowel
 contraction, 12
 declension, 14
pum
 with attributive adjectives, 32
 with genitive, 36

punch, 57
 purpose clause, 48
pxay, 31
 with plural noun, 31
pxelo, 24
pxi-, 28
pxisre
 lenition, 11

question, 46
 conjunctural, 47
 direct with **ftxey... fuke**, 46
 negative, 46
 polar, 46
 tag, 46
 with choices, 47
 with question words, 46
 yes-no, 46

quotation
 direct, 53
 punctuation, 13

reciprocal, 44
 reduplication, 27
 reflexive
 formation, 20
 of a causative, 20
 of intransitive, 44
 syntax, 44

register
 clipped, 60
 colloquial, 60
 formal, 59
 military, 60
 slang, 60

relative clause, 48
ro
 lenition, 11

san, 53
sä-, 25
si construction, 28
 negation, 47
 no gerund, 26
 participle, 43
 prohibition, 46
 with attributive adjective, 32

sì, 52
 elision with plural, 12
 enclitic, 53
sìk, 53
sko
 lenition, 11
 slang, 60
sleyku
 predicate syntax, 33

slu
 number agreement, 31
 predicate syntax, 33
 predicate syntax with **ne**, 33

sna-, 29
sngä'i
 modal, 42

sno, 34
 genitive **sneyä**, 16
 not marked for number, 16
 with intransitive reflexives, 44

sre
 lenition, 11

stawm, 54
sto
 modal, 42
 with **futa**, 43

subject, 35, 36
 subjunctive, 41
 for commands, 46
 infix, 21
 optative, 41

sunkesun, 40
sweylu, 55

takrra, 50
talun(a), 50
taweyk(a), 50
tengkrr, 53
teynga, 19
teyngla, 19
teyngta, 19
ti'eyng, 19
ti-, 25
to, 33
 topical, 58

inalienable possession, 37
transitivity, 30
 with verbs of speaking, 54
trial, 15
 contraction, 11
tsa'u, 16
tsa-, 17
tsakrr, 51
tsaria, 19
 use, 50
tsata, 19
 use, 50
tsaw, 16
tsawa, 19
 use, 50
tsay+, 17
tse, 55
tsni, 53
tsuk-, 29
tsun
 modal, 42
-tsyip, 26
tut, 55
tuté, 10
txo, 51
tikin
 with attributive clause, 50
ulte, 53

var, 42
 modal, 42
verb
 compound
 infix location, 20
 present tense, 40
 sequential, 48
 unmarked, 40
vin, 54
vocative, 33
 with animals, 33
vowel
 contraction, 11
 inhibited, 11
 harmony, 12

wä
 lenition, 11
word order, 56
 effects, 57
 focus, 57

za-, 29
zel, 51
zene
 modal, 42
zenke
 modal, 42
zun, 51

B. Changelog

Recent and notable updates:

- **1.28** (Jan 1 2021): slang section added; many minor style and formatting tweaks; a good dose of example, citation, and indexing backfill; full set of **tša-** conjunction contractions; visual version of legal syllable rules; productivity of **-yu** with **si-**verbs; clarification on omission of **san** or **sik**; refinement on use of **pum**; numbers after **zam**; **-tsim** compound element; modals that take **futa** section redone; syntax section for **sno** redone; sequential verbs with modal; dative in **-ru** with glottal stop
- **1.27** (Mar 5 2020): Edited section on **tsni** to reflect new information.
- **1.26** (Oct 21 2019): added new **fu** subsection for choice questions; fixed two counts of typo for word “conjunction”. Added new subsection for lenition of proper nouns.
- **1.25** (): negative polar questions; vocative location possibilities; **sunkesun** specifics; model syntax with **ke**; new modal verb
- **1.24** (Jan 26 2018): renamed “Punch” section “Focus,” and added examples to it; notes about modal word order; reorganized “Register” section; various small formatting and style tweaks; example of **fu** with verb phrases; clarify forms of **tša’u**, **tsaw**; Plumps’ reported clarification on **si**; firm statement from Paul about only 3rd. person antecedents for **sno**.
- **1.23** (Dec 17 2017): additional example sentences in the Syntax chapter; tidied section on **-eyä** genitives; meanings of individual adpositions removed — we have good dictionaries for that, and I’ve added links.
- **1.22** (Nov 28 2017): More citations; **fıay+** vs. **fay+**; **fray+** confirmed; difference between **nì-** and **na/pxel** with pronouns; **nì-** with ordinals; animals and **po**; **mì** in time expressions detail.
- **1.21** (June 2 2013): note modal syntax of **sto**; **kxamlä** example; clarification on diphthong declension; ADJ_i -a N a- ADJ_i construction; **-nay** derivation; **frafya**; free choice indefinites with **ketsran**; contrafactuals, **zun** and **zel**.
- **1.20** (Nov 29 2012): new meaning of **ilä**; **akum/kuma** with **niftxan** and **fitxan**; general condition; clearer explanation of **srake**; note pronunciation of **säpoli** in casual conversation; “Affect and Evidence” section; say more about pronoun genitives.
- **1.19** (April 7 2012): note temporal use of **mì**; added a section on poetic register; new adp. **sko**; **sna-** and **tswo** compound elements; clarify infix position in V-V compounds; **krra** not **krr a**; some detail on relative clauses and transitivity; rename “antipassive” section to “ambitransitivity,” and add some more details from blog post; as always, some more citations.
- **1.18** (March 4 2012): **fitsap** with intransitives; intransitive reflexives; a bunch of typo fixes from LN.org member Blue Elf; contrastive demonstratives; new info on **sä-**; correlative comparisons; clean up redupli-

cation section, with help from **ni'ul'ul** example.

- **1.17** (November 3 2011): widened margins a bit and added a toc; reciprocal w/ **fitsap**; conjectural questions; **kam, kay, nuä**; more citations.
- **1.08** (October 15 2010): Everything from the Language Workshop¹
- **1.0** (Aug 13 2010): Initial release.

¹<http://wiki.learnnavi.org/index.php/Canon/2010/UltxaAyharyuä>