

Na'vi Grammar Summary¹

This document will not teach you Na'vi, but is a concise summary of major points of the language. A larger document is in preparation.

Consonants

Ejectives	px	tx	kx	,
Voiceless Stops	p	t	k	,
Affricate		ts		
Voiceless fricatives	f	s		h
Voiced fricatives	v	z		
Nasals	m	n	ng	
Liquids		r, l		
Glides	w		y	

- **f s ts** may be the first element in a syllable-initial consonant cluster (**fpi**, **tsko**, **slä**)
- **px tx kx p t k ' m n l r ng** may occur in syllable-final position
- **ts f s h v z w y** may *not* occur in syllable-final position (exception: **w y** in diphthongs)

Vowels

i, i	u
e	o
ä	a

- The **diphthongs** are **aw**, **ay**, **ew**, **ey**.
- The **pseudo-vowels** are **ll** and **rr**. They may act like a vowel in a syllable (e.g., **trr**, **plltxe**). Regular vowels may form syllables on their own (**muia**, **mu.i.ä**), but pseudo-vowels must follow a consonant, and may *not* be in a syllable which ends in a consonant. So, while **plltxe** (**pll.txe**) is fine, ***plltxe** (**pllk.txe**) is forbidden. This plays a role in how you decline a noun ending in a pseudo-vowel.
- In Frommer's documentation, the **stress accent** of a word is indicated by underlining, **ngenga**.

Lenition

Certain grammatical processes cause **lenition**, a change in the first consonant of a word. Only eight consonants undergo lenition:

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	tsmukan but aysmukan
'	disappears	'eylan but fpi eylan

- Prefixes which cause lenition are indicated with a plus sign, rather than the usual dash, as in **ay+**, the leniting plural prefix.
- A few adpositions cause lenition when they precede a word: **fpi**, **ilä**, **mì**, **ro**, **sre**, **wä**.
- The glottal stop is not lenited when it is followed by a pseudo-vowel (**mì 'Rrta** not ***mì Rrta**).

Cases

The Na'vi case endings change depending on whether the word ends in a (C)onsonant, a (V)owel or a (D)iphthong.

	V-ending	C-ending	D-ending
Subjective		<i>none</i>	
Agentive	-l	-il	il
Patientive	-t, -ti	-it, -ti	-it, -ti
Dative	-r, -ru	-ur	-ru, -ur
Genitive	-yä, -ä	-ä	-ä
Topical	-ri	-iri	-ri

- After the vowels **o** and **u** the genitive is just **-ä**, not **-yä**.
- Words that end in the pseudo-vowels **ll** and **rr** should use the consonant endings: **trr-ä**, **'ewll-it**.
- The variation between the long and short endings in the patientive and dative appears to be largely a matter of style and euphony.
- Frommer's terms are given above. In current general linguistics the subjective is called "intransitive," the agentive is called "ergative" and the patientive is called "accusative."
- The **subjective** is used for the subject of an intransitive verbs, including **si**-construction verbs and reflexives with **<äp>**.
- The **agentive** is used for the subject of transitive verbs, as in **oel ngati kameie**.
- The **patientive** is used for the direct object of transitive verbs, as in **oel ngati kameie**.
- The **dative** is used as
 - the indirect object of transitive verbs
 - the "direct object" of **si**-construction verbs
 - the causee for the causative of a transitive verb, **oel ngaru tseykiye'a tsat** "I will make you see it."
- The **genitive** is used for possession, **oeyä tsko** "my bow."
- A noun may take the indefinite suffix **-o**, "one, some." Case endings follow the **-o**.

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

- The plural prefix *only* may be dropped if there is lenition: the plural of **prnren** is either **ayfrnren** or **frnren**. The dual and trial prefix are never dropped this way.
- If a word begins with **e** or **'e**, the resulting ***ee** is simplified, so **me+** + **'eveng** is **meveng**.

¹Version 1.1 by Wm Annis.

Pronouns and Deixis

Pronouns take the same case marking as nouns.

Person	Singular	Dual	Trial	Plural
1st excl.	oe	moe	pxoe	ayo
1st incl.	—	oeng	pxoeng	ayoeng
2nd	nga	menga	pxenga	aynga
3rd an.	po	mefo	pxefo	ayfo, fo
3rd in.	tša-	?	?	?

- 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**.
- **Ayoeng** has the short form **awnga**. Both may be used freely in any case, though **awnga** is more common.
- Genitives: **peyä** < **po**; **ngeyä** < **nga** (including **awngeyä** < **awnga**).
- In rapid or informal speech the final **ä** may drop from the genitive of pronouns, **ngey** 'upxaret.
- Third person inanimate cases: **tsaw, tsal, tsat, tsar(u), tseyä, tsari**.
- The third person indefinite pronoun is **fko**.
- There are also honorific/ceremonial forms of the first and second pronouns.

	Singular	Dual	Trial	Plural
1 ex.	ohe	mohe	pxohe	ayohe
2nd	ngenga	mengenga	pxengenga	ayngenga

- For the inclusive first person forms, use separate pronouns, **ohe ngengasi** (with enclitic **si** “and”).
- The proximal demonstrative (“this, these”) is the prefix **fi-**, *pl. fay-*, and distal (“that, those”) is the prefix **tša-**, *pl. tsay-*.

Adjectives

- Adjective predication in Na’vi simply uses the verb **lu**, as in **lu nga win si txur** “you are fast and strong.”
- 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.”
- A derived adjective in **le-** may drop the prefixed (but not suffixed) **a-**, so either **ayftxoä lefpom** or **ayftxoä alefpom**.
- Comparison is indicated with the particle **to**, “A is ADJ-er than B” is **A to B lu ADJ** as in **po to oe lu siltsan** “she is better than I.” The superlative is simply **frato** “than everything.”

Verbs

- Frommer describes three positions for verb infixes: pre-first position, first position and second position. Each position has infixes of a particular type.
- The **pre-first position** infixes, which change transitivity and form participles (verbal adjectives), are inserted before the vowel of the next-to-last syllable of a verb, or the last syllable if the verb has only one syllable (as **kä**, for example).

Participles	active	<us>
	passive	<awn>
Transitivity	causative	<eyk>
	reflexive	<äp>

- **First position** infixes mark tense, aspect and mood, and are inserted before the vowel of the next-to-last syllable of a verb, or the last 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>

- Tense and aspect need not be marked once a temporal or aspectual context has been established. The “general” row indicates either the present tense or unmarked tense and aspect.
- The s-futures, **<isy>** and **<asy>**, indicate a determination to bring about a state of affairs.
- 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>	—	—

- The subjunctive is used:

- as the complement for modal verbs (**oe new k<iv>ä** “I want to go”)
- to indicate wish (**oeyä swizaw nıngay t<iv>akuk** “let my arrow strike true”)
- in commands
- to indicate purpose after the conjunction **fte**, negative **fteke** (**sawtute zera’u fte fol Kelutrali sk<iv>a’a** “the sky people are coming to destroy Hometree”)
- with the conjunction **tsnı** (**ätxäle si tsnı k<iv>u oheru Uniltaron** “I respectfully request the Dream Hunt”)
- in some conditional sentences (lacking details here)

- The **second position** 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 (e.g., **kängä**).

Positive attitude	<ei>
Negative attitude	<äng>
Formal, ceremonial	<uy>
Inferential, suppositional	<ats>

- As for tense and aspect, once a context has been established for affect, there is no need to repeat the infix.
- In compound verbs, only the verb portion of the compound takes infixes, so **silpoley** from **silpey**.
- Commands are given by the bare verb, **kä!** “go!”, or the subjunctive. Negative imperatives use **rä’ä**, not **ke**, so **rä’ä kä** “don’t go!”