

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

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Editor

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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 writing it does not seem likely we’ll be getting one very soon.¹ 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

¹First written in July 2010. Still true in January 2023.

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

³<https://kcb bluesman.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/>

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 -yă. Only later did we see evidence of the -ă ending. One can still find older documentation giving the genitive as -yă 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 movies use \mathcal{A} and \mathcal{A}^2 .

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.

paul-frommer-interview

⁷<https://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=1977>

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 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.

1.2.1. Reading the Interlinears. This grammar was first written with the idea that anyone reading it would have a basic command of Na’vi already. That is not a sound assumption these days (2022), so I have begun to add more detail to some of the examples, in the form of interlinears. These are a way to explain everything going on in an example — grammar, vocabulary, morphology — even to someone unfamiliar with the Na’vi language. This is the format:

- (1) **Oel ngati kameie.**
 oe-l nga-ti kam<ei>e
 1SG-AGT 2SG-PAT see<POS.AFF>
I see you.

The first line has the original Na’vi text. The second shows the prefixes, suffixes, and infixes. The third line explains each part, with numbers for the pronouns (1SG = first person singular pronoun), and various abbreviations for different parts of Na’vi grammar. Finally, the last line has the conventional translation.

The abbreviations take a little getting used to, but keep the examples brief and are easier to read in the long run.

s: subject, unmarked form	REL: relative a	NEG.AFF: negative attitude
AGT: agent, -(i)l form	PFV: perfective	CEREM: ceremonial
PAT: patient, -(i)t form	IPFV: imperfective	INFER: inferential
DAT: dative, -(u)r form	PST: past	ACT.PCPL: active participle
GEN: genitive, -(y)ä form	REM.PST: remote past	PASS.PCPL: passive participle
TOP: topical, -(i)ri form	FUT: future	CAUS: causative
VOC: vocative ma	REM.FUT: remote future	REFL: reflexive
LIG: adjective -a- ligature	SUBJ: subjunctive	QUOT: quotative san...sik
DIM: diminutive -(tsyìp)	POS.AFF: positive attitude	

Some Na’vi grammar affixes are infixes — they go into the middle of a word. Since English does not allow that, in the grammatical explanation line (line 3), the infixes are on the right or left side of the word. The example above has the positive attitude infix, which I note to the right of the word *see*, with the small < and > signs, instead of dashes used for prefixes and suffixes.

Converting old examples to use interlinears started in Summer 2022, and will take a while to complete.

1.3. The Way of Water

A new dialect of Na’vi appears in the second film, *Avatar: the Way of Water* (2022). As a practical matter, the main dialect of this grammar is Forest Na’vi (Li’fya Na’ringä), the language of the first movie and really the only Na’vi material to appear for a decade. In *The Way of Water* the new dialect is Reef Na’vi (Li’fya Wionä).

The main differences between the two dialects include all of phonology, morphology, syntax, and the lexicon. Among the phonological differences, there are different pronunciations for the ejective consonants, a different treatment of the glottal stop between vowels, and a vowel merger in Forest Na’vi that didn’t happen in Reef Na’vi, which thus retains **u** and **ù** as separate vowel phonemes. One example of a lexical difference is that Reef Na’vi favors *syawm know* where Forest Na’vi uses **omum**.

Because we have so much more Forest than Reef Na’vi, this grammar presents the dialect notes largely in reference to Forest Na’vi.⁸ Notes on Reef Na’vi are spread throughout the grammar, but I index these notes thoroughly, to make it easier to find the Reef Na’vi details.

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

Thanks also to everyone who has commented and suggested corrections since this grammar first appeared, as well as to all those who have asked Paul questions over the years and posted his answers in public places for everyone to learn from.

Finally, many thanks to Paul Frommer, who keeps answering grammar and vocabulary questions when he can, for more than a decade.

⁸In no way should this be taken to mean that Forest Na’vi is somehow a standard, or more correct, than any other dialect.

2. Letters and Sounds

2.1. Sound System

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

2.1.1. Consonants. Below are the consonants of Na'vi. Phonemes in parentheses are Reef Na'vi pronunciations of certain phonemes and assimilations, but which don't get a separate spelling.

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Ejectives	px [pʰ]	tx [tʰ]		kx [kʰ]	
Voiceless Stops	p [p]	t [t]		k [k]	' [ʔ]
Voiced Stops	([b])	([d])		([g])	
Affricate		ts [ts]	([tʃ])		
Voiceless fricatives	f [f]	s [s]	([ʃ])		h [h]
Voiced fricatives	v [v]	z [z]			
Nasals	m [m]	n [n]		ng [ŋ]	
Liquids		r [ɾ], l [l]			
Glides	w [w]		y [j]		

2.1.1.1. The voiceless stops are unaspirated at the beginning and middle of a word. They are also unreleased at the end of a word, as well as at the end of a syllable when followed by another consonant (such as **txepmì** and **'oktrr**). 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**. [NT \(23/12/2020\)](#)

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 \(21/12/2009\)](#)

2.1.4.2. In general, the sequence VCV will be syllabified V.CV rather than VC.V, so **tsenge** is [tɬɛ.ŋɛ] not *[tɬɛŋ.ɛ]. Onomatopoeia may override this, as in **kxangangang** [kʰaŋ.aŋ.aŋ], where the echo effect is desired.

2.1.4.3. There are no long vowels in Forest Na’vi, meaning identical vowels will not occur next to each other (but see §2.3.1). Reef Na’vi, due to glottal stop elision (§2.1.6.3), can have long vowels in several environments, including by omitting contraction (§2.3.1.5).

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**), **horentisì** (< **horenti** + **sì**).

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. **Reef Na’vi.** The reef Na’vi dialect has differences in both consonants and vowels from Forest Na’vi. [NT \(8/1/2023\)](#)

2.1.6.1. An ejective consonant at the start of a syllable—and, thus, also at the start of a word—is instead pronounced as a voiced stop in Reef Na’vi. That is, **px tx kx** → [b d g].

txon	[don]	<i>night</i>
holpxay	[hol.'baj]	<i>number</i>
kxitx	[gitʰ]	<i>death</i>
skxawng	[skʰawŋ] (as in Forest Na’vi)	<i>moron</i>

In general, this change is not spelled out. That is, Reef Dialect text will spell *night* as **txon** but expect the reader to understand it is pronounced as though **don**. If you wish to emphasize that the reef dialect is being used, however, it can be spelled **don**.

In a word like **tikankxan**, spelling out the Reef Dialect change results in an ambiguous spelling, ***tikangan**. To prevent interpreting the spelling ...ng... as [ŋ] instead of [ŋg], an interpunct (preferred) or hyphen may be used: **tikan·gan** or **tikan-gan**. [OmatiCon \(15/1/2023\)](#) [NT \(15/1/2023\)](#)

2.1.6.1.1. When a word that ends with an ejective takes a suffix that starts with a vowel, the pronunciation of the ejective will adjust to the new syllable structure. For example, 'awkx is [ʔawkʰ], with the ejective, but 'awkxit is [ʔaw.git], with the voiced pronunciation. [NT \(13/1/2023\)](#)

2.1.6.2. When in a cluster with y the s and ts palatalize. That is, sy is pronounced [ʃ] and tsy is [tʃ]. Due to Na'vi's syllable structure, this can only happen at the start of a syllable.

syaw	[ʃaw]	call
tsisyì	[tʃi.ʃi]	whisper (v.in.)

This Reef Na'vi sound change is never indicated in spelling.

2.1.6.3. When between two vowels, the glottal stop is normally dropped in Reef Na'vi. Both vowels are still distinctly enunciated, even if they are identical, as in rä'ä below,

fra'u	frau	everything
Lo'ak	Loak	Lo'ak (personal name)
rä'ä	rää	don't

This change is also present to a certain degree in Forest Na'vi, such as with the name Lo'ak (§2.3.8.1).

While the glottal stop is retained at the start and end of words, when affixes are added which then place the stop between vowels the stop may be dropped. For example, the phrase for *humorous person* is tute a'ipu in Forest Na'vi, but tute aipu in Reef Na'vi, or the adverb *nìaw* rather than Forest Na'vi *nì'aw*. [NT \(14/1/2023\)](#)

2.1.6.4. In unstressed syllables ä may become e in Reef Na'vi.

<u>ngey</u> ä	ngeye	your
<u>tätxaw</u>	tedaw	return (v.in.)
<u>kä</u>	kä	go

[OmatiCon \(15/1/2023\)](#)

2.1.7. **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

2.1.7.1. 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).

2.1.7.2. 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	<u>tx</u> ep but mì <u>te</u> p
p, t, k	f, s, h	<u>k</u> elku but ro <u>he</u> lku
ts	s	<u>t</u> smukan but ays <u>sm</u> ukan
'	disappears	'eylan but <u>f</u> pi eylan

In the interlinears, lenition is removed in the morphological breakdown on the second line (as in ex.2 below).

2.2.1. **Glottal Stop.** The glottal stop is not lenited when it is followed by a pseudovowel (mì 'Rrta not *mì Rrta). [NT \(3/28/2012\)](#)

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. [NT \(7/7/2010\)](#)

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), as in pehem *what (action)?* from kem *action, activity*.

2.2.5. **Numbers.** Suffixed, dependent forms of the numbers are lenited (§4.1.3), as in vopey *eleven (8 + 3)*, but pxey *three*.

2.2.6. **Proper Nouns.** Proper nouns still undergo lenition.

- (2) **Oe kelku si mì Helutral.**
 oe kelku si mì Kelutral
 1sg home do in hometree
I live in hometree

[NT \(10/28/2010\)](#)

2.2.7. **Reef Na'vi.** Although the ejectives in Reef Na'vi surface as voiced stops at the start of a word, the rules of lenition still apply as in Forest Na'vi. That is, though txon *night* is pronounced as don in Reef Na'vi, the lenited form is still ton. [Wiki \(8/1/2023\)](#)

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 < tsa- + 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

2.3.1.5. In Reef Na'vi vowel contraction is not applied. Forms such as **meeveng** or **apxaa** remain, where Forest Na'vi would simplify the doubled vowels. [NT \(13/1/2023\)](#)

2.3.2. Pseudovowel Contraction. Due to the shape of the aspect infixes, **<er>** and ****, it is possible for the pseudovowels to occur immediately after their consonantal counterpart, as in ***plltxe**. 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 ***vll**, and **ner** from ***n<er>rr**. [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, **seiyi < *s<ei>i**, **veykrreyin < *veykrr<ei>in**; **v<ei>yll < *veill**. [NT \(19/6/2012\)](#)

2.3.3.1. The dissimilation of **seii** into **seiyi** does not occur in Reef Na'vi. [NT \(31/1/2023\)](#)

2.3.4. Reef Na'vi Voiced Stop Assimilation. In Reef Na'vi, when a word has a cluster of ejectives, such as in **atxkxe** *land*, regressive voicing assimilation takes place. That is, the onset voiced stop (***atxge**) causes the voicing of the previous coda ejective as well, giving, **adge**. Similarly, **ekxtxu** *rough* is **egdu** in Reef Na'vi. [Wiki \(8/1/2023\)](#)

2.3.5. 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 **ting give**, **ting mikyun** being pronounced **tim mikyun**.

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

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

²Though Forest 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**.

2.3.6.1. The subjunctive future infix, <iyev>, most frequently appears as <ìyev>, with backing of the first vowel.

2.3.6.2. The vowel of the negative attitude infix, <äng>, may be raised if it is immediately followed by the vowel *i*, becoming <eng>.

- (3) **Tsap'alute sengi oe.**
tsap'alute s<äng>i oe
apology do<NEG.AFF> 1SG
I apologize.

[Utxa \(2/10/2010\)](#)

2.3.7. **Elision.** In rapid speech final *-e* is frequently elided when the following word starts in a vowel. **Kiyevamø ultø Eywa ngahu.** This is not indicated in writing. When the final *-e* is in a monosyllable (**ke, sre**), or when it is stressed (**tuté**), it is not elided. [Forum \(25/10/2022\)](#)

2.3.7.1. 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 \(1/7/2010\)](#)

2.3.7.2. 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 > nìyawr**. One exception: **nìean** instead of the expected ***nean**. [Forum \(9/8/2017\)](#)

2.3.8. Other Phonetic Processes.

2.3.8.1. 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 **li'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 (§2.3.5), 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-(i)t/-ay-ti, -ey-t(i)
Dative	-r, -ru	-ur, -'ru	-ru, -ur, -aw-(u)r/-aw-ru, -ew-r(u)
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'fyayä** from **li'fyä**.

3.1.1.3. Nouns in **-ia** have the genitive in **-iä**, as in **soaiä** from **soaia**. [NT \(25/5/2011\)](#)

3.1.1.4. In addition to several pronouns (§3.2.1.6), there are a few nouns with irregular genitives: **Omatikayä** (from **Omatikaya**). These are marked in the dictionary. [Forum \(19/3/2010\)](#)

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 can happen to the dative **-ur**, as in **fahewr to/for a smell**. In both situations the longer case ending which ends in a vowel could also be used, **keyeyti** and **fahewru**.

With **-ay** and **-aw**, however, either consonant ending form may be used, or the simplification may be. So, **wayt**, **wayit** or **wayti**; and **'etnawr**, **'etnawur**, or **'etnawru**. [NT \(1/25/2013\)](#)

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.

3.1.1.6. 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 \(25/12/2020\)](#)

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.

3.1.1.7.1. The Reef Na'vi dialect prefers the patientive form **-ti** to **-it** and **-t**. [OmatiCon \(15/1/2023\)](#)

3.1.2. **Foreign Nouns.** When human words are borrowed into Na'vi some words need to be adapted to the phonology of the Na'vi language, such as *Kerismisì Christmas*. Among the other changes, the final **-ì** is required because Na'vi words cannot end in **s**. Because some of the case endings have vowels that will resolve otherwise illegal clusters, the final **-ì** of such borrowings will be elided, such as with the genitive, *Kerismisä*. Using the German city of Cologne as an example (Köln in German):

Subjective	Kelni	
Agentive	Kelnìl	Keln-ìl , not Kelnì-l
Patientive	Kelnit	
Dative	Kelnur	
Genitive	Kelnä	
Topical	Kelnìri	Keln-ìri , not Kelnì-ri

Note that for the patientive and dative, only the forms that start with a vowel—**it** and **ur**—are permitted. A form like **Kelnti* is not a permitted Na'vi word shape. [NT \(8/1/2022\)](#)

3.1.3. **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 \(5/9/2011\)](#)

3.1.4. **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

3.1.4.1. 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 \(9/12/2009\)](#)

3.1.4.2. 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.

3.1.4.3. In Reef Na'vi **pxe-** will be pronounced as though **be-**. [NT \(13/1/2023\)](#)

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

3.2. The Pronoun

3.2.1. **The Basic Pronouns.** The pronouns take the same case endings and number marking prefixes 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</u> , <u>awnga</u>
2nd	<u>nga</u>	<u>menga</u>	<u>pxenga</u>	<u>aynga</u>
3rd animate	<u>po</u>	<u>mefo</u>	<u>pxefo</u>	<u>ayfo</u> , <u>fo</u>
3rd inanimate	<u>tsa'u</u> , <u>tsaw</u>	<u>mesa'u</u>	<u>pxesa'u</u>	<u>aysa'u</u> , <u>sa'u</u>
reflexive	<u>sno</u>	—	—	—
indeterminate	<u>fko</u>	—	—	—

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**.

If **oe** occurs after a word ending in **-u**, then **oe** is pronounced like **we**, with, for example, **'efu oe** pronounced like **'efu we**. [NT \(30/4/2021\)](#)

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.

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. [NT \(17/10/2017\)](#)

3.2.1.6. Several pronouns have irregular genitives with a vowel change,

Subjective	Genitive
fko	fkeyä
nga	ngeyä
po	peyä
sno	sneyä
tsa'u	tseyä
ayla	ayleyä

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

Pronouns derived from **po** ('**awpo** *one individual*, **frapo** *everyone*, **lapo** *another one*, **fipo** *this one*, **tsapo** *that one*) also take the vowel change, so it is **frapeyä**, not ***frapoä**. [Forum \(6/7/2023\)](#)

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
1st inclusive	-	oheng	pxoheng	ayoheng
2nd	ngenga	mengenga	pxengenga	ayngenga
3rd animate	poho			
3rd fem.	pohe			
3rd masc.	pohan			

The genitive of a form like **poho** is uncertain.

[NT \(28/2/2022\)](#)

3.2.2.1. For the inclusive first person forms, the **oheng** forms are standard. However, using separate pronouns, **ohe ngengasi** with enclitic **sì** *and*, is also available. [Forum \(25/10/2022\)](#)

3.2.3. **Lahe**. When used as a pronoun, **lahe** *other* has plural short forms:

	Full	Short
Subjective	aylahe	ayla
Agentive	aylahel	aylal
Patientive	aylahet(i)	aylat(i)
Dative	aylaher(u)	aylar(u)
Genitive	aylaheyä	ayleyä
Topical	aylaheri	aylari

Note that the short form (**ayla**) genitive has the irregular genitive vowel change seen in other pronouns (§3.2.1.6). [NT \(5/5/2023\)](#)

3.3. Prenouns

The preouns are adjective-like noun prefixes.

3.3.1. **Fi-**. This preoun 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 preoun 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 preoun 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 preoun 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 preouns 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 (§3.1.4.1) are not used with the deictic preouns; **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 preouns. However, the system is not perfectly regular.

	Person	Thing	Action	Time	Place	Manner
this	<u>fipo</u> <i>this one</i>	<u>fi'u</u> <i>this (thing)</i>	<u>fikem</u> <i>this (action)</i>	<u>set</u> <i>now</i>	<u>fitseng(e)</u> <i>here</i>	<u>fifya</u> <i>thus</i>
that	<u>tsatu</u> <i>that one</i>	<u>tsa'u</u> <i>that (thing)</i>	<u>tsakem</u> ³ <i>that (action)</i>	<u>tsakrr</u> <i>then</i>	<u>tsatseng</u> ³ <i>there</i>	<u>tsafya</u> <i>in that way</i>
all	<u>frapo</u> <i>everyone</i>	<u>fra'u</u> <i>everything</i>	—	<u>frakrr</u> <i>always</i>	<u>fratseng</u> <i>everywhere</i>	<u>fracya</u> <i>in every way</i>
no	<u>kawtu</u> <i>no one</i>	<u>ke'u</u> <i>nothing</i>	<u>kekem</u> <i>no action</i>	<u>kawkrr</u> <i>never</i>	<u>kawtseng</u> <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?	<u>pesu</u> , <u>tupe</u>	where?	<u>peseng</u> , <u>tsengpe</u>
what (thing)?	<u>peu</u> , <u>'upe</u>	how?	<u>pefya</u> , <u>fyape</u>
what (action)?	<u>pehem</u> <u>kempe</u>	why?	<u>pelun</u> , <u>lumpe</u>
when?	<u>pehrr</u> , <u>krpe</u>	what kind (of)?	<u>pefnel</u> , <u>fnepe</u>

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	<u>pesu</u> , <u>tupe</u>	<u>pestan</u> , <u>tutampe</u>	<u>peste</u> , <u>tutepe</u>
Dual	<u>pemsu</u> , <u>mesupe</u>	<u>pemstan</u> , <u>mestampe</u>	<u>pemste</u> , <u>mestepe</u>
Trial	<u>pepsu</u> , <u>pxesupe</u>	<u>pepstan</u> , <u>pxestampe</u>	<u>pepste</u> , <u>pxestepe</u>
Plural	<u>paysu</u> , <u>(ay)supe</u>	<u>paystan</u> , <u>(ay)stampe</u>	<u>payste</u> , <u>(ay)stepe</u>

The genitives of these are noun-like, with pesuä, rather than the vowel shift seen in forms like po vs. peyä.

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

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

NT (30/7/2011) Forum (19/12/2021)

³May be accented on either syllable.

3.4.2. **Fi'u and Tsa'u in Clause Nominalization.** The demonstrative pronoun **fi'u** and the inanimate pronoun **tsa'u** are used with the attributive particle **a** to nominalize clauses (§6.18.5). 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 \(21/4/2020\)](#)

In rapid speech **futa** may be pronounced as though **fta**, and **tsata** may be pronounced as **tsta**.

[Forum \(25/2/2022\)](#)

3.4.3. **Other Nouns 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*; and verbs of command will prefer **tson** *duty, obligation*. 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**), as well as **tsona** (< **tsonit a**). See §6.21.4 for the syntax.

[NT \(31/8/2011\)](#) [NT \(2/10/2014\)](#)

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 **ayftxoza lefpom** or, more rarely, **ayftxoza alefpom** may appear. However, when the **le-**adjective comes before the noun, it will always have the attributive **-a-** suffixed, **lefpoma ayftxoza**.

ayftxoza lefpom	usual
ayftxoza alefpom	permitted
*lefpom ayftxoza	an error
lefpoma ayftxoza	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<im>ä* and *taron* > *tar<ei>on*.

3.6.1.2. If a syllable has no onset consonant(s) the infix still precedes the vowel, as in *omum* > *<iv>omum* 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* > *h<ilv>awnu*.⁴

3.6.1.4. Usually, infixes are placed only in one element of a compound verb. For example, *yomting* *feed* is a compound of *yom* *eat* and *ting* *give*. The perfective of this is not **yomting*, but *yomting*. 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*. [Utxa \(2/10/2010\)](#)

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, *säpoli*, is often pronounced *spoli*, and *säpivi* is usually pronounced *spivi*. [NT \(30/9/2010\)](#) [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*. The transitivity of the original expression determines the case use with verbs that have <äp><eyk>. See §6.1.1.3 for usage.

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.

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*.

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

3.6.3.1. The futures with **s**, <asy> and <isy>, 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>, <eiy> (§2.3.3)
Negative attitude <äng>, <eng> (§2.3.6.2)
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.

	<u>eyk</u>	<u>fpak</u>	<u>taron</u>	<u>yom·tìng</u>
Near past	<u>imeyk</u>	<u>fpìmak</u>	<u>tìmaron</u>	<u>yomtìming</u>
Reflexive	<u>äpeyk</u>	<u>fpäpak</u>	<u>täparon</u>	<u>yomtäpìng</u>
Refl., near past	<u>äpimeyk</u>	<u>fpäpìmak</u>	<u>täpìmaron</u>	<u>yomtäpìming</u>
Ceremonial	<u>uyeyk</u>	<u>fpuyak</u>	<u>taruyon</u>	<u>yomtuyìng</u>
Perf., cerem.	<u>oluyeyk</u>	<u>fpoluyak</u>	<u>tolaruyon</u>	<u>yomtoluyìng</u>
Refl., perf., cerem.	<u>äpoluyeyk</u>	<u>fpäpoluyak</u>	<u>täpolaruyon</u>	<u>yomtäpoluyìng</u>

The meanings of some of these examples stretch good sense to the breaking point. The purpose 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>mune</u>	6	<u>pukap</u>
3	<u>pxey</u>	7	<u>kinä</u>
4	<u>tsing</u>	8	<u>vol</u>

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

8 (1×8)	<u>vol</u>	40 (5×8)	<u>mrrvol</u>
16 (2×8)	<u>mevol</u>	48 (6×8)	<u>puvol</u>
24 (3×8)	<u>pxevol</u>	56 (7×8)	<u>kivol</u>
32 (4×8)	<u>tsivol</u>	64 (8×8)	<u>zam</u>

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	-sing		

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 zizam forms is dropped before all of the forms except “one,” zamaw, but zamun, zapey, etc.

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

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

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

After zam the count goes: zam, zamaw, zamun, zapey, zasing, zamrr, zafu, zahin, zaval, and then continuing as zavalaw, etc. For example, octal 211 is mezavalaw. [NT \(1/4/2014\) Forum \(27/1/2021\)](#)

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	<u>'awve</u>	(l)- <u>awve</u>			
second	<u>muve</u>	- <u>muve</u>			
third	<u>pxeyve</u>	- <u>peyve</u>	eighth	<u>volve</u>	- <u>volve</u>
fourth	<u>tsive</u>	- <u>sive</u>	64th	<u>zave</u>	- <u>zave</u>
fifth	<u>mrrve</u>	- <u>mrrve</u>	512th	<u>vozave</u>	- <u>vozave</u>
sixth	<u>puve</u>	- <u>fuve</u>	4096th	<u>zazave</u>	- <u>zazave</u>
seventh	<u>kive</u>	- <u>hive</u>			

4.2.1.1. Ordinal numbers are treated as adjectives, and take -a- when used attributively (§3.5.1), as in mrrvea ikran *fifth banshee*. [Forum \(27/1/2021\)](#) F

4.2.1.2. 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	<u>mawl</u>	sixth	<u>pupxi</u>
third	<u>pan</u>	seventh	<u>kipxi</u>
fourth	<u>tsipxi</u>	eighth	<u>vopxi</u>
fifth	<u>mrrpxi</u>		

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 mrrpxì** *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 as turning a noun into adjective. However, the meanings of the derived forms are not always 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). These affixes should not be considered freely productive unless otherwise stated.

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 true* > *tìngay truth*.

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*.

This prefix is productive with adjectives, pronouns, and ordinal numbers, but not other parts of speech. [NT \(11/7/2010\)](#) [Wiki \(5/6/2013\)](#) [Wiki \(27/7/2013\)](#) [Forum \(16/8/2016\)](#)

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 *sätsyìl a climb* is a particular instance of the action of climbing, *tsyìl*. 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* < *mawey·pey 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 **kelfpomtokx** *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, **lim** *be far* and **sim** *be near* have adverbial forms **alim** *far away* and **asim** *nearby, at close range*. These are thought of as fossilized abbreviations of forms like **nifya'o a lim** (§6.6.8). They are fixed lexical items, and do not have forms such as ***lima** 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. **Ti- <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*, **tirey** *life*, but **tirusey** *living*. In compounds, **tì-** comes at the beginning of the word and **<us>** goes into the verbal element of the compound, **yomtìng** becomes **tiyomtusing**. 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 most often 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*. When attached to verbs, the noun might refer to either the agent or the patient of a verbal action, such as **frrtu** *guest* from **frrfen** *visit* (agent) **spe'etu** *captive* from **spe'e** *capture* (patient). This suffix is not productive. [NT \(30/4/2021\)](#)

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** *mischief-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 'itetsyìp** *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, **fitaronyutsyìp 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 oetsyìp 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 \(28/2/2013\)](#)

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, **letrrrtrr** *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*, **nänänän**¹ *less and less*.

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

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

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.

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, **lefptomtokx** *healthy* from **fpomtokx** *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. **Hi(')**. From the adjective **hi'i** *small*, the accented prefix **hi-** or **hi'** is used in a few words to form diminutives, but should not be considered productive (see §5.1.6), as in **hi'ang** *insect* (< **hi'** + **ioang** *animal*), **hikrr** *moment, a short time* (< **hi** + **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. **Munsna-**. From the word **munsna** *pair*, this prefix is used to indicate a single pair of something, especially things that naturally occur in pairs (except body parts, where the dual is usual), such as **munsnahawnven** *a pair of shoes*. The prefix takes no stress, **munsnatute** *a pair of people, a duo*. [NT](#) (19/7/2012)

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.

5.4.5. **-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 \(5/5/2011\)](#)

5.4.6. **-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**.

5.4.7. **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*.

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

5.4.9. **-tseng**. In colloquial speech the noun **tseng** *place* can be suffixed to verbs to create spontaneous words to identify places where particular acts take place, such as **yomtseng** for a place to have a meal. These words are not likely to end up in the dictionary. [Forum \(5/7/2023\)](#)

In some “official” compounds with **tseng** the other parts of the compound may have various phonetic changes, such as **numtseng** *school*, in which the verb **nume** has been modified for the compound.

5.4.10. **-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 \(25/1/2013\)](#)

5.4.11. **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 \(22/3/2011\)](#)

5.4.11.1. 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

5.4.12. **-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 \(31/3/2012\)](#)

5.4.12.1. 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*.

5.4.13. **-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, **sänumv** *lesson* from **sänume** *instruction, teaching*. [Wiki \(14/3/2010\)](#)

5.4.14. “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'ärip** *push* and **za'ärip** *pull* from **'ärip** *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”), **fiwon** *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.

6.1.1.3. Verbs that are a reflexive of a causative, taking, <äp><eyk>, are more complex, depending on the transitivity of the original expression:

- If the original construction is intransitive, <äp> dominates, and the doer is in the subjective case.
- If the original construction is transitive, <eyk> dominates, and the doer is in the agentive case.

For example,

Oe täpeykaron. *I cause myself to hunt.*

ƒ

Oel täpeykaron yerikit. *I cause myself to hunt yerik.*

ƒ

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.

This pattern parallels the verb without any transitivity changes at all, **oe taron** is to **oel taron yerikit** as **oe täpeykaron** is to **oel täpeykaron yerikit**. [Forum \(20/8/2021\)](#)

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).

6.2. 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, **mrra 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,

(4) **Nantangìl yom yerikit.**

nantang-il yom yerik-it
viperwolf-AGT eat hexapede-PAT

Viperwolves eat hexapedes.

F

[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*,

- (5) Lu law 'uo alahe, ma eylan.
 lu law 'u-o a-lahe, ma eylan
 be clear thing-some LIG-other, VOC friends
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. It can be used like an adjective, attaching with *-a-* (ex.6, 7), or it can be a conjunction (ex.8,9). The clause with *ketsran* often, though not always, takes the subjunctive,

- (6) 'U aketsran tsum tivam.
 'u a-ketsran tsum t<iv>am
 thing LIG-whatever can suffice<SUBJ>
Anything at all will be fine.

F

- (7) Pukit aketsran ivinan.
 puk-it a-ketsran <iv>inan
 book-PAT LIG-whatever read<SUBJ>
Read any book at all.

F

- (8) Ketsran tute nivew hivum, poru plltxe san rutxe 'ivi'awn.
 ketsran tute n<iv>ew h<iv>um, po-ru plltxe san rutxe 'iv>i'awn
 whatever person want<SUBJ> leave<SUBJ>, 3SG-DAT tell QUOT please stay<SUBJ>
No matter who wants to leave, tell them to please stay.

F

- (9) Ketsran tutel 'ivem, tsafnetsngan lu ftxivä'.
 ketsran tute-l 'iv>em, tsa-fne-tsgan lu ftxivä'
 whatever person-AGT cook<SUBJ>, that-kind-meat be gross
That kind of meat is gross no matter who cooks it.

F

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 Markusì* 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

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.* The name “Bob” is in apposition to “my friend.”

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

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 nìhawng** *very detailed examples* or **nìhawng hìnoa sikenong**, never something like **hìno nìhawnga 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 ayhapxitu li'fyaolo'ã 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 can be put into an attributive clause with **lu**,

- (10) **yayo a lu lor si hi'i**
 yayo a lu lor si hi'i
 bird REL be pretty and small
a small, pretty bird F

However, **yayo alor si hi'i** (without **lu**) is permitted, though not preferred. This is much more likely and acceptable when a third adjective is involved in the clause,

- (11) **mrra yayo atsawl si layon**
 mrr-a yayo a-tsawl si layon
 five-LIG bird LIG-big and black
five big, black birds F

Without **mrr-a** there, **tsawla yayo alayon** is preferred. [Ultxa \(2/10/2010\)](#) [NT \(28/2/2021\)](#)

6.2.5.5. A single 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 is yellow*. F

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

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*. [Wiki \(2/10/2010\)](#)

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*. *F*

6.2.7.2. Comparisons of equality, “as big as a tree,” are handled with the idiom *nìtxan adjective na noun or pronoun*, as in *oe lu nìtxan 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 nìtxan sìltsan*. This construction is also usable with adverbs. [Wiki \(1/12/2010\)](#) *F*

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?* *A*

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!* *A*

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?* F
(Fo) lu 'eylan Tsu'teyä. *They are Tsu'tey's friends.*

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 niayoeng** *she speaks like us or as we do*. For describing how someone is perceived, the the adpositions **na** or **pxel** are preferred. [Forum \(16/8/2016\)](#) F

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'nì** *one can use a net to catch a fish*. F

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 F

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?* F

(12) **Fra'ut fkol skera'a.**
 fra'u-t fko-l sk<er>a'a
 everything-PAT “they”-AGT destroy<IPFV>
Everything is being destroyed. A

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:

Pol 'olem peyä wutsot. *He prepared his (someone else's) meal.*
Pol 'olem sneyä wutsot. *He prepared his own meal.*

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*.

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 aynumeyüä** *F 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, **fìpoti oel** *A tspiayang, 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. **Contrastive Demonstratives**. To focus contrasting elements, forms of the pre-nouns **fi-** and **tsa-** are paired with forms of the independent demonstratives **fi'u** and **tsa'u** used with **alu**:

Fìfxen alu FÌ'u lu ftxìlor; tsafkxen⁷ alu TSA'u ngati tspang.

THIS vegetable is delicious; THAT one will kill you.

F

Fìkaryu alu fìpo lu tsulfätu; tsakaryu alu tsapo lu skxawng.

This teacher is a master; that teacher is a fool.

F

There is also a vocal contrastive stress on the independent forms of **fi'u** and **tsa'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.

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 fìtseng, 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 aysäfpìl** *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, **zìsito amrr ffolia ohe** *I studied for five years, herwì zereiu* **fìtrro nìwotx!** *It's been snowing all day!* [Wiki \(1/12/2010\)](#) *F*

⁷Or **pum**.

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 *F* tolel a krr *when I receive an answer.*

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

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 ayoengyã mowan lu oeru nìngay *our chat is truly enjoyable (to me).*

6.4.4.5. With verbs of speaking, the person addressed goes in the dative, oel poru poltxe fi'ut *I told him this.*

6.4.4.6. The verb *pawm* *ask* can use the dative for the addressee, but *ta* is more usual, pol *F* polawm tìpawmit oeta *he asked me a question.* [NT \(28/5/2020\)](#) [Forum \(6/8/2024\)](#)

6.4.5. **Genitive.** The genitive case marks possession, as in oeyã '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 awngyã *this place is ours.* However, the prop noun *pum* *possession, thing possessed* is more often used, kelku ngeyã lu tsawl; *F* pum oeyã lu hi'i *your house is large; mine is small.*

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

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

6.4.5.4. The genitive is also used as the object of verbal nouns, as in tiftia kifkeyã *study of the* *F* *natural world.*

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 often after the conjunction if in a subordinate clause. If the question marker *srake* is used, the topical may either come before or after that.

(13) **Srake ngari re'ò tìsraw si?**

srake nga-ri re'ò tìsraw si
Q you-TOP head pain do

Does your head hurt?

(14) **Ngari srake re'ò tìsraw si?**

nga-ri srake re'ò tìsraw si
you-TOP Q head pain do

Does your head hurt?

Similarly, if a complex sentence is introduced with a conjunction, the topical can come before that,

(15) **Fori mawkrra fa renten ioi säpoli holum.**

fo-ri mawkrra fa renten ioi s<äp>i hum
they-TOP after by.means.of goggles adornment <REFL>do<PFV> depart<PFV>

After they put on their goggles, they left.

[Wiki \(8/10/2011\) Forum \(6/5/2022\)](#)

6.4.6.1.1. In Reef Na'vi the topical may also come at the end of a clause, **irayo fistxeliri alor thanks for this beautiful gift**. In Forest Na'vi the topical only leaves initial position in poetry and songs. [OmatiCon \(15/1/2023\)](#)

6.4.6.2. Some expressions have particular uses of the topical which are idiomatic. For example, the topical is often used with the si-verb **irayo si to thank** to indicate the thing for which you're giving thanks, **timweypeyri ayngeyä seiyi irayo nìngay I really thank you for your patience**. These \mathcal{F} will need to be learned from the dictionary.

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 body parts and sometimes blood relatives are the most likely to have special grammar for inalienable possession. In Na'vi relatives usually do not use the topical for possession, but note below that one's spirit and one's life count do as inalienable in Na'vi.

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

Oeri tingayil 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 nitxan lu nang! *What a pretty little queue you have!* \mathcal{F}

Tseiun oe pivlltxe san oeri lu tirey siltsan nìngay sik. \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 \(11/7/2010\)](#)

Family members are not considered grammatically inalienable in Na’vi and will not normally take topical possession. However, in a conversation where a topic shift is needed you can get what looks like topical possession. For example, in a snippet of conversation like this:

A: Oeyä sempul lu kanu sì tstunwi.

My father is smart and kind.

F

B: Oeri sempul längu skxawng.

My father is an idiot.

F

Here the topical is used to pivot to speaker B, to focus on their situation. [Forum \(13/5/2024\)](#)

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

6.4.7. **Subject Dropping.** In English and many European languages you can drop the subject between clauses, so long as it stays the same,

I went home and I went to bed.

where I have used the underline, the same subject, *I*, is understood.

Na’vi has at least three case roles that can be understood broadly as the “subject:” the agentive, the subjective, and sometimes even the dative can approximate subject-like behavior, in such things as **fi’u sunu oer** *I like this*.

In Na’vi you can drop anything that is subject-like between clauses, so long as the context is clear.

Oeru lu upxare ulte I zene tivätaw. *I have messages and I must return.*

Teylu sunu oer. Yom pxim! *I like teylu. (I) eat (it) often!*

Fayupxaremì I payängkxo teri horen li’fyayä leNa’vi fpi sute a tsun srekr 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.

If clarification is needed, just use the appropriate pronoun. For example, in the first example above, you could also say **oe zene tivätaw**. Also notice in the second example that the “subject” is the dative, **oer**, but in the second sentence the omitted subject is in the agentive case, **oel**. [Forum \(25/10/2022\)](#)

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, **fitrmì letsranten** *on this important day*, **ayli'ufa awngeyä 'eylanä a'ewan** *in the words of our young friend*, **lala tsarelmì arusikx** *in that old movie*.

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 (§3.1.4.1), 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*.

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*. Similarly, in the dialog for the first film we encounter [ADV **lu** ADJ] once, **peyä menarisi nìhawng lu hi'i** *and his eyes are too small*.

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*.

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. *The more you practice, the better you'll get.*

'Ul tute, 'ul tingäzik. *The more people, the more problems.*

Nän ftia, nän lu skxom a emza'u. *The less you study, the less chance you have of passing.*

Nän yom kxamtrr, 'ul 'efu ohakx kaym. 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** (§6.18.7) 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 polähem** *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!** *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. **Niwotx.** The adverb **niwotx** *all (of), in toto, completely* is frequently used with plural nouns and pronouns to give a collective sense,

(16) **Aysutel niwotx new tilayrot.** F
ay-tute-l niwotx new tilayro-t
PL-person-AGT in.toto want freedom-PAT
All people want freedom.

Ayeylanur oeyä si eylanur li'fyayä leNa'vi niwotx *to all my friends and friends of the Na'vi language, tifyawintxuri oeyä perey aynga niwotx* *you are all waiting for my guidance.* F

6.6.7.1. With dual number, the sense of *nìwotx* is *both*,

- (17) **Mefo nìwotx yolom.**
me-po nìwotx yom
DUAL-3P in.toto <PFV>eat
They both ate.

NT (15/8/2011)

6.6.8. *Nifya'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 letrrrr]* *in an ordinary way*, *poe poltxe nifya'o alaw* *she spoke clearly.* \mathcal{F}

6.6.8.1. *Nifya'o* can also take attributive phrases, *nifya'o a hek* *in a way that's strange.* \mathcal{F}

6.6.8.2. **Note about sentence adverbs vs. *nifya'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 *fixey... fuke* construction, *pol viyewng ayevegit fiha'ngir, fixey 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*, *tì'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 is used for 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, **tengkrr palulkan moene kxll sarmi, poltixe Neytiril ayli’ut a frakrr ’ok seyä layu oer** as the *thanator was charging towards the two of us, Neytiri said something I will always remember.* \mathcal{F}

6.7.4. **Simultaneous Imperfective.** Because the imperfective presents a state of affairs as on-going, it can be used in complex sentences to indicate simultaneous action, **fitxon yom tengkrr teruvon** *this night (we) eat while leaning.* Wiki (14/3/2010) \mathcal{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,

Ti’eyngit oel tolel a krr, ayngaru payeng. \mathcal{F}
When I receive an answer, I will let you know.

Fori mawkrra fa renten ioi säpoli holum. \mathcal{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.

6.7.8.1. While the adverb **ye’rin soon** can be used with the future forms taking <ay>, it is redundant with the proximal future forms taking <iy>. Forum (25/10/2022)

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, tafra ke lisyek oel ngeyä keye’ungit therefore I will not heed your insanity.** \mathcal{F}

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.

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* \mathcal{F} *true*.

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 frnenur 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** \mathcal{F} **fyawivìntxu** *I want very much to guide you*, **fmawn a tsun oe ayngaru tivìng** *news which I can* \mathcal{F} *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 rikxi, ha ke tsayun yerikit tivakuk. \mathcal{F}

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

Furia tsolun oe ngahu pivängkxo, oeru prrte’ lu nìngay. \mathcal{F}

It was really a pleasure to speak with you.

Fteria oel li’fyati leNa’vi, slä mi ke tsängun pivlltixe na hufwe. \mathcal{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
nulnew	prefer		

[NT \(25/5/2011\)](#) [Wiki \(1/12/2010\)](#) [Wiki \(2/2/2011\)](#) [Ultxa \(2/10/2010\)](#) [Wiki \(13/12/2012\)](#) [NT \(6/6/2019\)](#) [NT \(23/12/2020\)](#)

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

¹⁰See also §6.8.4.

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,” §7.1.4.1, 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). ℱ

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 \(23/7/2019\)](#) ℱ

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** (§6.17.1), conditional sentences (§6.19), and with the conjunction **tsnì** when used with certain verbs (§6.20.8).

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 **tsl<us>am** 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, **tiyusom '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** (§6.18.5), **fwa yom teylut 'o' lu** *eating teylu is fun*. [Utxa \(3/10/2010\)](#) ℱ

6.10. Reflexive

6.10.1. **True Reflexives**. The reflexive infix **<äp>** indicates the subject of the verb is performing an act on themself. 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 tsngawvik** *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 niwotx. *They all know each other*. ℱ

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

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

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.

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

6.11.3. Causative of Modals. Modal verbs do not take causative marking. However, when *new want* is acting as a transitive verb it can still be transitivized, including when it takes a *futa* clause, *fipamtseol oeru neykew futa srew this music makes me want to dance.* [Forum \(29/11/2020\)](#)

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. [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 A

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 \(30/10/2011\)](#) F A

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 \(30/09/2019\)](#) 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.* A 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 \(1/2/2010\)](#) 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 \(19/2/2010\)](#) F

6.16. Negation

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

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

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 kawrr** *but (he) never catches (her)*. [Wiki \(2/5/2010\)](#)

6.16.2.1. When the prenoun **fra-** is negated the verb is also negated, **ke frapo ke tsolam** *not everyone understood*. [Utxa \(3/10/2010\)](#)

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 \(6/4/2010\)](#)

6.17. Complex Sentences

6.17.1. **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, ma samsiyu, fte tsivun pivähem niwin** *ride hard, warriors, so you can get there fast!* **tsun fko sivar hänit fte payoangit stivä'nì** *one can use a net to catch a fish*.

6.17.1.1. 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*.

6.17.2. **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** *something that matters a lot to all of us for the sake of The Balance of Life on both Pandora and Earth*; **lora ayli'u, lora aysäfpìl** *beautiful words and beautiful ideas*.

6.17.2.1. Two verbs in sequence without a conjunction are sequential, **za'u kaltxì si ko!** *come (and then) say hello!* **ngari hu Eywa salew tirea, tokx 'i'awn slu Na'viyà hapxì** *your spirit goes with Eywa and your body remains and becomes part of the People*, **pol tsatxumit noläk terkup** *he drank the poison and died*.

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 tsane karmä a tsengit ke tsime’a oel** *I didn’t see the place he was going to*, **palulkan a teraron lu lehrrap a thanator that’s hunting is dangerous. F**

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,

Ngal tse’a a tute lu eyktan. *The man whom you see is leader.*

Ngati 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 **ngal 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 nitxan.

Fisyulang ata’lengna-ean lor lu nitxan.

Ean-na-ta’lenga fisyulang lor lu nitxan.

Ta’lengna-eana fisyulang lor lu nitxan.

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

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.”

6.18.4. **With Adjectives.** A relative clause may follow an attributive adjective on the same side of the noun,

- (18) **Kaltxi, oeyä eylanur a'ewan a tok Toitslanti.**
 kaltxi, oe-ä ay-'eylan-ur a'ewan a tok Toitslan-ti
 hello, I-GEN PL-friend-DAT LIG-young REL inhabit Germany-PAT
Hello, my young friends from Germany. ℱ

Another acceptable word order is **Kaltxi, oeyä 'ewana eylanur a tok Toitslanti.** [NT \(28/2/2021\)](#) ℱ

6.18.5. **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).

6.18.5.1. 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 nolume nitxan.** 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 seiya oe nitxan.** 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 tifyawintxuri oeyä perey aynga niwotx.** ℱ
And I know that you all are waiting for my guidance.

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

6.18.5.3. 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. [Wiki \(18/6/2010\)](#)

Forms from **tsa'u** can also be used when there are contrasting clauses,

- (19) **Oel new futa fo kivä, slä sa'nokil new tsata fo 'ivi'awn.**
 oe-l new futa ay-po k<iv>ä, slä sa'nok-il new tsata ay-po 'iv>'awn
 1SG-AGT want that PL-3.AN go<SUBJ>, but mother-AGT want that PL-3.AN stay<SUBJ>
I want them to go, but mother wants them to stay.

[Forum \(25/2/2022\)](#)

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

6.18.6. **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.*

Forum (18/6/2010)

6.18.7. **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</i> (as a result)	kuma	akum	
<i>since</i> (from the time)	takrra	akrrta	from ta krr a

NT (31/3/2012) NT (19/6/2012)

Ti’eyngit oel tolel a krr, ayngaru payeng when I receive an answer, I will let you know could also be *krra ti’eyngit oel tolel, ...* Wiki (1/2/2010) Wiki (1/2/2010) NT (15/8/2011)

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)

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*iy*u txo ni’aw oe ngari / Tsakrr nga Na’viru yom*iy*ing* *Only if I am worthy of you / Will you feed the People.*

6.19.3. **Use of the Subjunctive.** The use of the subjunctive in the *txo* clause depends on the status of the condition. That is, if the speaker knows for certain that a situation holds, when *txo* has a bit of meaning “since,” then the subjunctive is not required. For example, in ex.20 the speaker does not really know if the person they are talking to is tired.

- (20) **Txo nga ngeyn 'ivefu, tsurokx.**
 txo nga ngeyn 'iv>efu, tsurokx
 if you tired <SUBJ>feel, rest
If you're tired, rest.

But if the speaker has heard someone say that they're tired, they can drop the subjunctive, as in ex.21,

- (21) **Txo nga ngeyn 'efu, tsurokx.**
 txo nga ngeyn 'efu, tsurokx
 if you tired feel, rest
Since you're tired, rest.

When to use the subjunctive is somewhat flexible, and there will be situations where either use can be justified. [Forum \(14/1/2022\)](#)

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
<imv>, <ilv>	<iv>, <irv>	<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. | <i>F</i> |
| <i>If you loved me, I would be so happy.</i> | |
| Zun oe yawne limvu ngar, zel 'imvefu oe nitram ni'aw. | <i>F</i> |
| <i>If you had loved me, I would have been so happy.</i> | |
| Zun tompa ziyevup tray, zel fo sriyevew. | <i>F</i> |
| <i>If it rained tomorrow, they'd do a dance.</i> | |
| Zun ayoe livu tsamsiyu, zel tsakem ke simvi. | <i>F</i> |
| <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. | <i>F</i> |
| <i>If you loved me, I would be so happy.</i> | |
| Zun oe yawne limvu ngar, zel 'efu oe nitram ni'aw. | <i>F</i> |
| <i>If you had loved me, I would have been so happy.</i> | |
| Zun tompa ziyevup tray, zel fo srew. | <i>F</i> |
| <i>If it rained tomorrow, they'd do a dance.</i> | |

[NT \(4/30/2013\)](#)

6.19.5. **Hypothetical.** Using **zun** *if* and **zel** *then* with the untensed subjunctive forms hypothetical conditions. Note the difference between the following two examples:

(22) **Zun** **ngal** **oey** **tsmuket** **tsive'a**, **zel** **am'aluke** **ivomum** **futa** **poe** **nga'prnen**.
 zun nga-l oe-yä tsmuke-t ts<iv>e'a, zel am'aluke <iv>omum futa poe nga'prnen
 if 2SG-AGT 1SG-GEN sister-PAT see<SUBJ>, then certainly know<SUBJ> that she pregnant
If you saw my sister, you would certainly know she was pregnant. ℱ

(23) **Zun** **ngal** **oey** **tsmuket** **tsimve'a**, **zel** **am'aluke** **imvomum** **futa** **poe** **nga'prnen**.
 zun nga-l oe-yä tsmuke-t ts<imv>e'a, zel am'aluke <imv>omum futa poe nga'prnen
 if 2SG-AGT 1SG-GEN sister-PAT see<PST.SUBJ>, then certainly know<PST.SUBJ> that she pregnant
If you had seen my sister, you would certainly have known she was pregnant. ℱ

Notice that ex.22 uses the plain subjunctive, and is translated as an imaginative hypothetical. Ex.23 is just usual counterfactual form, using past subjunctives in both clauses. [NT \(28/2/2024\)](#)

6.19.6. **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.* 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** **tsmukanur** **alu** **İstaw** *I gave the crossbow to my brother İstaw.* Note that the noun after **alu** is in the subjective case. [NT \(16/7/2010\)](#) 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.* 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'?* 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** **tsulfätu** — **tsiyevun** **fitsenge** **rivun** **'uot** **lesar** *I hope ... everyone — whether beginner or expert — will be able to find something useful here.* 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 sikkuke ayfrrtuä si ayioangä do not attempt to approach or cross any barriers designed for Guest and animal safety.* 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. **Sì**. The conjunction **sì** *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** (§6.20.9). **Lu pilokur pxesikan sì pxfne'upxare** *the blog has three needs and three sorts of message*, **ma smukan sì smuke** *brothers and sisters*. \mathcal{F}

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

6.20.5.2. Clauses that have been nominalized, such as with **fwa**, **futa**, etc. (§6.18.5), 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 karyusi ayngeyä, Pawl from your friend and teacher, Paul, tsakrr paye'un sweya fya'ot a zamivunge oel ayngar ayli'ut horentisi li'fyayä leNa'vi** *and I will then decide the best way to bring you the words and rules of Na'vi*. \mathcal{F}

6.20.6. **Tengkrr**. The sense of **tengkrr**, *while, the same time as* means that is usually used with the imperfective, **fitxon yom tengkrr teruvon** *on this night (we) eat while leaning*. [Wiki \(14/3/2010\)](#) \mathcal{F}

6.20.7. **Tik**. This adverb meaning *immediately, without delay*, can also be used as a conjunction indicating that a second action immediately follows a first, **fioang ke tsun slivele; nemfapay zup tik spakat** *this animal cannot swim; (if) it falls into the water, it immediately drowns*. [NT \(31/12/2021\)](#) \mathcal{F}

6.20.8. **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 fitioeyktìng law livu ngaru set** *I hope that this explanation is clear to you now*. [NT \(20/2/2011\)](#) \mathcal{F}

6.20.8.1. 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 \(1/3/2020\)](#)

6.20.9. **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... sɨk.** 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 **sɨk**, as in **slä ni'i'a tsun oe pivlltxe san Zola'u nɨprte' ne pilok Na'viteri sɨk!** *but now I can finally say "welcome to the blog Na'viteri."* NT (31/8/2011)

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... sɨk** pair can be dropped.

1. **Poltxe Eytukan san oe kayä sɨk, 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 **sɨk**. Similarly, **san** can be dropped if there no serious ambiguity, **frawzo sɨk, slä oel poet ke spaw** (*she said*) "all's well," *but I don't believe her.* Wiki (21/1/2010) Forum (4/8/2020)

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

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

6.21.3. **Transitivity.** When a verb of speaking uses **san... sɨk** it follows intransitive syntax, **po poltxe san srane** *she said "yes."* Utxa (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 pasyawm tsat* *I will ask him that.* NT (31/8/2011)

6.21.4. **Quotation Nominalization.** In addition to the **san... sɨk** pair, reported speech may be anchored to the nouns **fmawn** *news*, **tɨ'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... sɨk, fayli'u
stawm <i>hear</i> , peng <i>tell</i>	fmawn
pawm <i>ask</i>	san... sɨk, tɨ'eyng , nothing
vin <i>ask (for)</i>	tɨ'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 tɨ'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.

I don't know where they're going.

F

Teynga lumpe fo holum ke lu law.

It's not clear why they left.

F

6.21.4.2. And commands (with the verb *kxìim* *command, order, assign a task*) take a reduced form of *tsanit* *a duty to/which...*, namely *tsonta*,

(24) **Ayevengur kxolim sa'nokìl tsonta payit zamunge.**

ay-eveng-ur kxim sa'nok-il tsonta pay-it zamunge
PL-child-DAT command.<PFV> mother-AGT task.that water-PAT bring

The children were told by their mother to fetch water.

F

NT (2/10/2014)

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!*

F

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

A

(25) **Poan pak?! Ke lu po tsamsiyu kaw'it!**

3SG.MASC DISPAR! not be 3SG warrior a.bit

Him?! There's not a warrior's bone in his whole body!

(26) **Tsaw ke ley kaw'it pak!**

that not worth a.bit DISPAR

That's not worth a thing!

F

Normally **pak** goes with a single noun or pronoun you want to disparage, but it can be used in a looser way to disparage a whole idea or situation, as in ex.26. It is always sentence final.

Using <àng> with **pak** is stylistically disfavored, since **pak** on its own is sufficient to indicate your unhappiness. NT (31/3/2014) Forum (6/8/2010) Forum (16/6/2023)

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*.

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.**

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

F

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*. We will continue to use the “free word order” terminology here, but keep constituency in mind.

7.1.1.1. In complex constituents it is possible for a genitive to be separated from its noun by a relative clause,

- (27) **ngeyä teri faytele a aysänumeri**
nga-yä teri fi-ay-txele a ay-sänume-ri
2SG-GEN about this-PL-matter REL PL-teaching-TOP
concerning 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

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.

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.² NT (19/3/2011)

Another term sometimes used for free word order languages is “discourse configurational” languages. This rather technical term simply means that features of discourse determine word order choice, rather than grammar in the strictest sense. In particular, while we speak we are constantly adjusting the flow of information so that the listener understands not only what information is new and what is important, but how it fits into what has gone before. A very simplified scheme for saying a few sentences to a listener will go like this:

- Sentence 1: [... new₁]
- Sentence 2: [old₁... new₂]
- Sentence 3: [old₂... new₃] ...

Note that every new item introduced into the conversation is old information in subsequent sentences. English uses several constructions to signal old information, including the definite article, *the*, as well as more complex structures like the passive voice.

Na’vi tends to mark old information by moving it to the head of the clause. Here is a collection of examples from the dialog in the first *Avatar* film:

pot lonu	<i>let him go</i>	OV
tsaswiräti lonu	<i>let that creature go</i>	OV
fiswiräti ngal pelun molunge fitsenge?	<i>why did you bring this creature here?</i>	OSV
pot tsun oe tspivang niftue	<i>I could kill him easily</i>	OVS
ikranti makto	<i>take the ikran</i>	OV
ma sempul, ngati oel kin	<i>father, I need you</i>	OSV
ma ’ite, tskoti munge	<i>daughter, take the bow</i>	OV
Omatikayaru tihawnu sivi	<i>protect the people</i>	OV
fra’ut fkol skera’a	<i>everything is being destroyed</i>	OSV
fkol pole’un fi’ut	<i>this has been agreed</i>	SVO

Note that certain kinds of words are considered old information by default, just because of their meaning. In particular, personal pronouns (as in **pot lonu**), personal names, demonstrative pronouns (**fi’u**, **tsa’u**), as well as nouns with the demonstrative prefixes (as in **tsaswiräti lonu**). This will explain why so many of the examples have pronouns and demonstratives at the start.³

Notice how I have translated the fronted nouns, such as **tskoti munge** *take the bow*. I use the definite article, *the*, because that’s the major way English marks old information. Also note that it’s not just patientive nouns (objects) that are moved to the front. The dative can be, too, as in **Omatikayaru tihawnu sivi**. Similarly, a pronoun with an adposition can be fronted, **eo ngenga** *stand before you* (PP V S).

²In an earlier version of this document there was a tally of word orders used in a few of Frommer’s early larger texts. That was useful to establish that every word order is possible, but didn’t explain *why* this or that order was chosen. As of July 2023 we have better information on the reasons, so I have dropped the table.

³Nouns with possessive pronouns are often considered old information, too. An example from Frommer’s blog, **ayngeyä aysiralpengit ngop ni’o’!**

Finally, Frommer has emphasized that while fronting old information is common (probably more than 50% of the time), this fronting is a stylistic choice. Not fronting old information is not a grammatical error. It is likely that some sentences will have several pieces of old information, in which case the most relevant can be selected for fronting. If a sentence has both a personal pronoun and a definite noun (especially those marked with **fi-** and **tša-**), it does seem that the noun is more likely to be fronted than the pronoun (e.g., **fiswiräti ngal pelun molunge fitsenge and fketuwongti oel stiyefxaw**). [Forum \(9/7/2023\)](#) A

7.1.2.1. 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*, that is, fronting the patient, as one way to communicate the same effect (but see also **fko**, §6.3.4.2).

7.1.3. **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. One rule from Frommer about 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.

(28) **Fayvrrtep fitsenge lu kxani.**
 fi-ay-vrrtep fitsenge lu kxani
 this-PL-demon here be forbidden
These demons are forbidden here. A

(29) **Ni’ul kame tskxe.**
 ni’ul kame tskxe
 more see rock
A rock sees more. A

Notice in particular how Frommer translates these sentences:

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

Ke sunu ngar teylu srak? Txotsafya, tìng oeru pumit ngeyä! F
You don’t like teylu? If that’s the case, give me yours.

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

Spaw oel futa Mo’atil tsole’a Neytirit. F
I believe Mo’at saw Neytiri.

Kehe. Tsole'a Neytirit Eytukanil.

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)

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

7.1.4.1. 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* *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 ⁵
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)

7.2. 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 (§6.18.5).

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.

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

⁵According to Frommer’s blog, “...in all but the most formal situations.”

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

Ma oeyä eylan, faysänüm_{viri} rutxe fi'ut tslivam: ... ℱ
My friends, concerning these lessons, please understand this: ...

Ayngeyä sipawm_{iri} kop fmayi fitsenge tivng si'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 mawkr_{ra} fa renten ioi säpoli holum. ℱ
After they put on their goggles, they left.

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

Poeri uniltirantokxit tarmok a krr, lam stum niayfo, slä lu 'a'awa tiketeng — natkenong, ℱ
tsyokx_{iri} ke lu zekwä atsing ki amrr.
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 post⁶ 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.

⁶[A Na’vi Alphabet](#), August 20, 2010

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).

- (30) **Muntxatul ngengeyä tuyok pesenget?**
 muntxatu-l ngenge-yä t<uy>ok pe-tsenge-t
 spouse-AGT 2FORM-GEN be.at<FORM> what-place-ACC
Where is your spouse?

F

It isn’t necessary to always use the formal infix <uy> with the formal pronouns, nor is it required to use the formal pronouns with all uses of <uy>. It is most formal when both are used, and somewhat less formal when only one is. [NT \(28/2/2022\)](#)

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,

- (31) **Faysulfätuä tikangkem oheru meuia luyu nìngay.**
 fi-ay-tsulfätu-ä tikangkem ohe-ru meuia l<uy>u ningay
 this-PL-expert-GEN work 1SG.FORM-DAT honor be<FORM> truly
The work of these experts is truly an honor for me.

F

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 lāngu kxeyey.**

F

F

[NT \(5/4/2011\)](#)

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

7.3.3.3. The conjunction **tik** (§6.20.7) can be used when a second event is an immediate consequence of the first. This can replace some uses of conditional **txo**, as in **tsatxumit näk tik terkup** *if you drink that poison, you'll immediately die*. [NT \(31/12/2021\)](#) \mathcal{F}

7.3.3.4. A few words can be omitted in colloquial speech, though there is no requirement for them to be dropped: **lu**, **tok**, and **pum**. In Reef Na'vi **lu** is often omitted. [NT \(5/5/2023\)](#)

More formal: **Nga lu pesu?** *Who are you?* \mathcal{F}

More colloquial: **Nga pesu?** *Who are you?* \mathcal{F}

More formal: **Pol tok pesenget?** *Where is he?* \mathcal{F}

More colloquial: **Pol pesenget?** *Where is he?* \mathcal{F}

More formal: **Fitsko lu pum oeyä.** *This bow is mine.* \mathcal{F}

More colloquial: **Fitsko lu oeyä.** *This bow is mine.* \mathcal{F}

Note that because **tok** is transitive, the agentive and patientive endings are still required in **pol pesenget?** The verb **'efu** *feel* is not droppable in this way. [NT \(30/4/2021\)](#) [Forum \(25/10/2022\)](#)

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 \(21/5/2010\)](#)

8. Semantics

This section discusses a few matters which already have descriptions spread out over the grammar and dictionary, but which it is useful to describe all in one place to make certain patterns clear.

8.1. The Copula and Predication

The main verb of noun and adjective predication is **lu** *be*, along with verb **slu** *become*.

Oe **lu** sey~~ku~~xel. *I am strong.*

Oe **slu** sey~~ku~~xel. *I become strong.*

Oe **layu** taronyu. *I will be a hunter.*

Oe **slayu** taronyu. *I will become a hunter.*

8.1.1. **Existence.** The verb **lu** is also used to indicate existence, where English uses *there is, there are*, as in **äo fiutral lu tsmim 'angtsikä** *there is a hammerhead track under this tree*; **frauvaniri lu yora'tu, lu snaytu** *in every game, there's a winner and a loser.* F

8.1.2. **Possession.** Finally, **lu** is used with the dative to indicate possession, where English uses *to have*, as in **lu oeru ayli'u frapor** *I have something to say*, (lit., “I have words for everyone”). A

8.1.3. **Becoming.** Due to Na'vi's flexible word order, it could happen that the relationships between two nouns with the verb **slu** *become* would be unclear. In that situation, the adposition **ne** is used to clarify the target, **taronyu slu ne tsamsiyu** *the hunter becomes a warrior.*

8.1.4. **Location.** Na'vi has a separate verb, **tok**, for *be at*, which is used instead of simple **lu** for location predication,

- (32) **Awngal tok kelkut.**
awnga-l tok kelku-t
we.INCL-AGT be.at home-PAT
We're home. F

Notice that the verb **tok** is transitive. It takes an agentive subject (**awngal**) and patientive for the location (**kelkut**).

8.1.5. **Colloquial Omission.** Both **lu** and **tok** can be omitted in colloquial speech (§7.3.3.4). The normal case relations remain as they were, such as **oe seyksel** *I'm strong* which omits **lu**, and **oel fitsengit** *I'm here* which omits **tok**. **Lu** is dropped more often in Reef Na'vi.

8.2. Perception

Na'vi expressions of perception distinguish activity, sensation, and ability. Further, the verbs distinguish whether one is in control of the perception (*look at*) or if one is not (*see*).

	VTR -control	VTR +control	VIN +control	N sensation	N ability
sight	tse'a <i>see</i>	nìn <i>look at</i>	tìng nari <i>look</i>	'ur <i>sight, look</i>	tse'atswo <i>sight, vision</i>
hearing	stawm <i>hear</i>	yune <i>listen to</i>	tìng mikyun <i>listen</i>	pam <i>sound</i>	stawmtsw <i>hearing</i>
smell	hefi <i>smell</i>	syam <i>smell</i>	tìng ontu <i>smell</i>	fahew <i>smell</i>	hefitswo <i>sense of smell</i>
taste	ewku <i>taste</i>	may' <i>taste</i>	tìng ftxì <i>taste</i>	sur <i>taste, flavor</i>	ewktswo <i>sense of taste</i>
touch	zìm <i>feel</i>	'ampi <i>touch</i>	tìng zekwä <i>touch</i>	zir <i>feel, texture</i>	zìmtsw <i>sense of touch</i>

Take special note of the senses of smell and taste, where English uses the verbs *smell* and *taste* for quite a range of activities, Na'vi uses different words. To happen to catch a scent of something requires **hefi**, while smelling something on purpose will use **syam**.

The compound expressions with **tìng** are mostly used when there is no overt direct object, **tìng nari!** *look at that!* But they can be used with the dative for the thing perceived, **poru tìng nari!** *look at him!* though **poti nìn!** *look at him!* will be more common. NT (27/11/2012)

8.2.1. **Phenomena.** To express the experience of phenomena the verb **fkan** is used with the sensation nouns. **Fkan** itself means something like *resemble in a sensory modality, come to the senses as*.

- (33) **Finaerìri sur fkan oeru kalin.**
 fi-naer-ìri sur fkan oe-ru kalin
 this-drink-TOP flavor come.to.the.senses I-DAT sweet
This drink tastes sweet to me.

Note in ex.33 that the experiencer of the perception is in the dative. This can be omitted for general statements. The sense noun may also be omitted when a sense interpretation is obvious in the context.

Fkan is used with **na like** to make a comparison,

- (34) **Raluri fahew fkan oeru na yerik.**
 Ralu-ri fahew fkan oe-ru na yerik
 Ralu-TOP odor come.to.the.senses I-DAT like hexapede
Ralu smells like a hexapede to me.

Again, the dative experiencer and the sense noun can be omitted if the meaning is clear from context.

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