

Nuuchahnulth grammar reference for LC language notes*

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§1. Overview

This is a concise reference to Nuuchahnulth grammar, intended for quick reference. It describes the language, but does not explain or teach, leaving that to the accompanying lessons. It is necessarily technical, but uses practical terms as much as possible. For more detailed grammatical information, see *Nootka Texts*, Rose 1981, the *Quuquu?aca* textbook, Nakayama 2001, and Davidson 2002 (§24).

The abbreviations *B*, *C*, *N*, *Q* are used for the four main Nuuchahnulth dialect groups.

(1) abbreviation dialect group¹ tribes

Q, QC	Kyuquot-Checleset	Ka:’yu:’k’t’h’-Che:k’tles7et’h’
N	Northern	Mowachaht-Muchalaht, Nuchatlaht, Ehattesaht-Chinehkint
C	Central	Tlaoquiaht, Ahousaht, Hesquiaht
B	Barkley Sound	Huuayaht, Hupacasath, Tseshaht, Uchucklesaht, Toquaht, Ucluelet

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¹ These dialect names are chosen partly because they correspond roughly to the existing political regions used by Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, namely the Southern Region (Ditidaht, Huuayaht, Hupacasath, Tseshaht, and Uchucklesaht), Central Region (Toquaht, Ucluelet, Tlaoquiaht, Ahousaht, and Hesquiaht), and Northern Region (Mowachat-Muchalaht, Nuchatlaht, Ehattesaht-Chinehkint, and Ka:’yu:’k’t’h’-Che:k’tles7et’h’). See nuuchahnulth.org.

Within the Northern dialect, it is sometimes useful to distinguish Mowachaht-Muchalaht (MM) from Ehattesaht-Nuchatlaht (EN). Within Barkley, it is sometimes useful to distinguish Inner Barkley (IB) from Ucluelet-Toquaht (YT).

Data that pertain to particular dialects are indicated with an abbreviation (*B, C, N, Q*), or with a following star (*). For example, *čapac**, *čapic** ‘canoe’. Data from several dialects are listed vertically from north to south, or horizontally from south to north.

§2. Alphabet

Alphabetical order is used to organize lists. This table gives every letter in alphabetical order, with its equivalent in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

(2) Nuuchahnulth alphabetical order, with IPA equivalents²

Nuuchahnulth	a	aa	c	č	č̣	e	ee	h	ḥ	i	ii	k	k ^w	ḳ	ḳ ^w	ł	ł̣	ł̣̣								
IPA	ʌ	aː	ts	tʰs	tʃ	tʃ̣	ɛ	ɛː	h	ḥ	ɪ	iː	k	k ^w	kʰ	k ^w ʰ	ɫ	ɫ̣	ɫ̣̣							
	m	ṃ	n	ṇ	o	oo	p	p̣	q	q ^w	s	š	t	ṭ	u	uu	w	ẉ	x	x ^w	x̣	x̣ ^w	y	ỵ	ʔ	ʔ̣
	ṃ	ʔṃ	ṇ	ʔṇ	ɔ	ɔː	p̣	p̣ʰ	q̣	q̣ ^w	ṣ	ʃ̣	ṭ	ṭʰ	ụ	ụː	ẉ	ʔẉ	x̣	x̣ ^w	χ̣	χ̣ ^w	j̣	ʔj̣	ʔ̣	ʔ̣̣

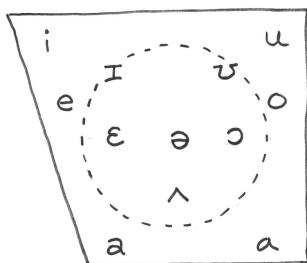
- ▶ Vowel length is ignored in alphabetization.
- ▶ The first words in an alphabetized list begin with /c/, because Nuuchahnulth words never begin with vowels. Words like *ʔink*, *ʔaasiqsu*, *ʔuusimč* begin with /ʔ/.
- ▶ The IPA equivalents above are the main pronunciation of each letter. Some letters, especially vowels, have other pronunciations as well (§3).

§3. Vowels

Although each Nuuchahnulth vowel is always written with a particular letter, its pronunciation can be different in different contexts. While the long vowels are usually pronounced tense (closer to the edges of the vowel space), the short vowels can be either tense or lax (closer to the centre of the vowel space). Therefore, while short and long vowels differ in *quantity*, they do not consistently differ in *quality*.

² This alphabetical order is determined according to the following principles. 1. Letters that are shared with English appear in the same order as in English. 2. The el-like sounds (ł ł̣ ł̣̣) appear in the same order as English el (l). 3. Letters with diacritics follow their plain counterparts. 4. The orders *k k^w ḳ*, and *ł ł̣ ł̣̣*, and *ʔ ʔ̣ ʔ̣̣* follow a similar principle, the latter sounds in each case being less plain, both in terms of phonetic complexity, and by being sometimes morpho-phonologically derived.

(3) The vowel space

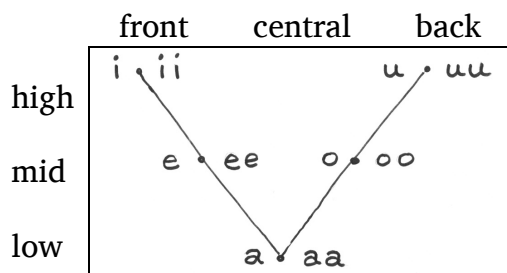


(4) Vowel qualities

vowel	quality	vowel	quality
/a/	ʌ ~ a	/aa/	a:
/e/	ɛ ~ e	/ee/	ɛ: ~ e:
/i/	ɪ ~ i	/ii/	i:
/o/	ɔ ~ o	/oo/	ɔ: ~ o:
/u/	ʊ ~ u	/uu/	u:

The relative places of vowels explain some of their behaviour. The most common vowels in Nuuchahnulth are the corner vowels /a aa i ii u uu/.

(5) Vowels by place



In some dialects, the corner vowels /a aa i ii u uu/ can shift, fuse together, or assimilate to each other, becoming the mid vowels /e ee o oo/. This happens most in the Barkley dialect, and very little in northern dialects.

- ▶ /a/ plus /i/ becomes /e/ or /i/
- ▶ /a/ plus /u/ becomes /o/ or /u/
- ▶ /i/ plus /u/ becomes /u/

Two sources of mid vowels are umlaut (§20) and direct address forms (§).

§4. Consonants

This table organizes the consonants according to their place and manner.

(6) Consonants by place and manner

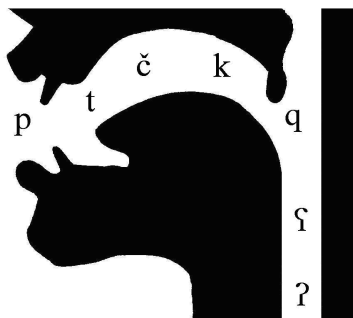
	lips	tongue tip			tongue back				throat		
plain plosives	p	t	ʔ	c	č	k	k ^w	q	q ^w		
hard plosives	p̣	ṭ	ʔ̣	c̣	č̣	ḳ	ḳ ^w			ʕ	ʔ
spirants			ɬ	s	š	x	x ^w	ɣ	ɣ ^w	ħ	h
plain resonants	m	n			y		w				
hard resonants	ṃ	ṇ			ỵ		ẉ				

This phonetic arrangement of the alphabet clarifies some sound patterns.

- ▶ Only tongue back sounds can be rounded (C^w).
- ▶ Plosives and resonants can be plain (C) or hard (C̣). Spirants are only plain.
- ▶ There are no hard /q̣ q̣^w/, so /q q^w/ harden to /ʕ/ (§17).
- ▶ The back consonants /q q^w ɣ ɣ^w ħ/ deform the high vowels /i ii u uu/.
- ▶ Consonants at the centres of large consonant clusters include only plain plosives /p t ʔ c č k q/ and spirants /ɬ s š x ɣ ħ/—that is, no resonants or hard sounds. An exception is Q clusters of two resonants, as in *hišimyt* ‘gather indoors’.

This diagram shows where in the vocal tract several consonants are made.

(7) Consonant places



§5. Syllables

Syllables are units of rhythm smaller than words. When speaking to a beat, it is natural to match each syllable to one beat. Nuuchahmulth syllables always start with exactly one consonant, followed by one vowel. They can end in any number of consonants.

(8) Examples of syllabification

ci/ci/qi*	language	wi/kaḥs	empty vessel
ʕaa/ʕaa/ti/qa*	thanking	ʔučq/šiʔ	become foggy
pu/ʕaʔ/ʔa/tu*	sleepy	ʕapɬc/k ^w ii	fish jerky
huks/či/ʔaʔ*	start counting	ca/qiicq/ʔičħ	twenty years

- ▶ In this reference, the slash (/) is used to divide syllables.
- ▶ Syllables are units of rhythm, not of meaning. They do not necessarily correspond to the meaningful parts of a word. Compare *ca/qiicq/?ičh* versus *caqiic-q?ičh*.

§6. Sentence structure

A sentence in Nuuchahnulth can be a lone interjection (ex. *čuu, čuk^waa, ?iihaa*), or a clause. A clause contains at least a predicate. A clause can also contain mood and person endings, participants, and modifiers.

(9) Sentence structure

sentence		
clause		
predicate	mood	participants

event, description, relation = mood = person (subject) (object)

The subject is the most important participant in a clause. Objects are less important participants. The person of the subject is marked on mood endings (§10).

There is a preference in Nuuchahnulth for certain kinds of participants to be the subject, with some preferred more than others.

(10) Participant types ranked according to their preferredness as subjects

I, you > possessor > topic > non-topic

- ▶ Any full word can serve either as a predicate or as a participant. Full words include verbs, nouns, adjectives, relations, pronouns (§11), and pointers (§12).
- ▶ A sentence can contain from one to any number of clauses, because clauses can be embedded inside other clauses as participants and modifiers.

§7. Word structure

The core of a word is a root. The root can be augmented by prefixes, infixes, suffixes, and clitics, which occur in a fixed order. There are many suffixes and clitics, but few infixes. The only prefixes involve reduplication (doubling) of the root.

There are two main kinds of endings, namely suffixes and clitics. Suffixes appear before any clitics, and are more tightly bound to their stem. Clitics follow suffixes, and are less tightly bound to their stem. When appropriate, suffixes and clitics can be distinguished in writing by the symbols – and =, respectively.

The following chart shows the main parts of the word and their relative order, with examples.

(11) Word structure

word									
prefixes	root	suffixes			clitics				
reduplication		early	aspect	late	early	past	mood	person	late
plural	–ca	–ak, –uk	LS–sa	=ʔis	=(m)it*	=ʔi·š*	=s	=ʔał	
repetitive	–mis	–(y)a·	–maŋqλ*	=ʔaqλ*	=mit*	=ma·*	=ḥ*	=λaʔ*	
off–and–on	–na·k	–iλ, –uλ	–maḥsa*	=ʔa:qλ*	=mt*	=ḥa·*	=c	=λa·*	
	–!i·c*	–(y)a	–matk*	=!ap	=int*	=ḥ*	=k	=ʔinł*	
	–!i·s*	–š, –ł, –ḥ	–matak*	=!aλ	=nit*	=!i·	=n	=ʔa·ł*	
	–yik*		–wits*	=!at		=ʔi·tq*	=su:	=ʔa·ł*	
	–yak*		–witas*	=ʔak		=ʔi·q*	=č	=ʔa:ła*	
	L–čil			=uk		=qu:*			
	R-wa					=qu·*			

§8. Aspect

Aspect refers to the shape of an event in time, or how it relates to other events. There are at least five, and perhaps up to seven, aspects in Nuuchahmulth.

(12) Aspect categories

practical name	technical name	forms	meaning
complete	momentaneous	-(C)iλ, -uλ	do once, start doing
	inceptive	-°ačiλ, -iičiλ	become, start doing
continuous	durative	-(ʔ)ak, -(ʔ)uk, -hi·	static events
	continuative	-(y)a·	dynamic events
ongoing	graduative	LS	in the middle of doing
repetitive	repetitive	RL-(λ)-L-(y)a	do at regular intervals
off-and-on	iterative	R-š, -ł, -h	do at irregular intervals

- ▶ Abbreviations. C consonant, V vowel. Regarding L, S, R, see stem templates (§18).
- ▶ When complete aspect is expressed by an aspect suffix, it always ends in /λ/, such as -čiλ, -šiλ, -kʷiλ, -uλ. This /λ/ disappears under hardening (§17).
- ▶ Some analyses separate the momentaneous and inceptive aspects, but for most purposes they can be assumed to be one aspect, namely, *complete*. Similarly, some separate the durative and continuative, but both are treated here as *continuous*.
- ▶ In the repetitive aspect, the infix consonants -λ-, -y- occur only with CV roots.

§9. Tense

Past and future tenses are expressed by endings. The future endings -wítas*, -wíts* ‘going to’ and =ʔaqλ*, =ʔaqλ* ‘will’ have different meanings. While =ʔaqλ* refers to a future event, -wítas* conveys an intention or expectation that something will happen.

Special future endings appear in ʔamiiλik* ‘tomorrow’, tuupšiiik* ‘future evening’.

The past tense clitic =mit takes several different forms, depending on the shape of its stem, on what other endings precede and follow it, and on dialect. The following patterns do not correspond exactly to village boundaries, but Central 1 (C1) is more characteristic of Ahousaht, and Central 2 (C2) of Tlaoquiaht and Hesquiaht.

(13) Past tense forms

after...	Barkley	C1	C2	MM	EN	Q
CV stem	= mit	= mit	= mit	= mi(t)	= mi(t)	= nit
long V /m n/	= mit	= mit	= mit	= mi(t)	= mi(t)	= nt
short V	= imt	= mit	= mit	= mi(t)	= mi(t) = um(t)	= int
other C	= it	= it	= mit	= mi(t)	= in(t)	= int
= !ap	= !amit	= !amit	= mit	= mi(t)	= in(t)	= int
= !at	= !a:nit	= !anit	= mit	= mi(t)	= in(t)	= int

- ▶ EN, Q stand apart in having /n/ in some forms of the past (= *int*, = *nit*, = *nt*).
- ▶ In Q, the past undergoes further changes in combination with following question (= *h*), definite (= *?irtq*), and possible (= *qu*) mood endings (§).
- ▶ MM, EN lose the /t/ of the past before the reduced question endings = *k*, = *h*, and before /q/-initial mood endings (= *qu*, = *qs*, = *qin*).
- ▶ Some B, C dialects stand apart in that the past sometimes takes the form = *it*. In some dialects, = *mit* combines with a preceding = *!ap* or = *!at*.

(14) Examples of past tense forms

stem	MM	EN	Q	
waa	waamit	waamit	waanit	said
?amii	?amiiimit	?amiiimit	?amiiint	yesterday
saasin	saasinmit	saasinmit	saasinnt	dead hummingbird
ciiqciqa	ciiqciqamit	ciiqciqumt	ciiqciqint	spoke
wiikapuλ	wiikapuλmit	wiikapuλint	wiikapλint	passed away
hił = !ap	hił?apmit	hił?apint	hił?apint	hosted at
waa = !at	waa?atmit	waa?atint	waa?atint	was told

stem	Barkley	Central 1	Central 2	
waa	waamit	waamit	waamit	said
?amii	?amiiimit	?amiiimit	?amiiimit	yesterday
saasin	saasinmit	saasinmit	saasinmit	dead hummingbird
ciiqciqa	ciiqciqimt	ciiqciqamit	ciiqciqamit	spoke
wiikapuλ	wiikapuλit	wiikapuλit	wiikapuλmit	passed away
hił = !ap	hił?amit	hił?amit	hił?apmit	hosted at
waa = !at	waa?aanit	waa?anit	waa?atmit	was told

Future and past endings are ordered differently. Some early clitics follow the future endings *-witas*, *-wits*, = *?aqλ*, = *?aqλ*, but precede past = *mit* (§7).

§10. Mood

Mood is a fundamental category in the clause, expressed by clitics (§6, §7). Its function is to indicate the purpose, source, and truth of the information in the clause. Following is a complete or near-complete list of Nuuchahnulth moods.

(15) Moods³

practical name	technical name	form
neutral	absolute	= ∅
real	indicative	= ma* [*]
strong	assertive	= ?i*š [*]
weak	indefinite relative	= (y)i:, = (y)i [*]
definite	definite relative	= ?i*rtq, = ?i* [*] q
embedded	subordinate	= qa* [*]
unknown	dubitative relative	= (w)u:si* [*]
possible	conditional	= qu:, = qu [*]
hearsay	quotative	= wa*?iš, = we*?in
guessing	inferential	= ča*ʔaš
maybe	dubitative	= qa*ča
purposive	purposive	= !ee?it(a), = !a:hi
question	interrogative	= ɥa*, = ɥ
command	imperative	= !i [*]
future command	future imperative	= !im, = !um
'go' command	'go' imperative	= či [*]
'come' command	'come' imperative	= !i*k
article	article	= ?i [*]
hearsay article	quotative article	= ča [*]

The moods can be divided roughly into those that mark the main clause of a sentence, and those that mark embedded clauses and participant phrases.

Sentence moods indicate the purpose of the sentence, and the source of its information.

³ Most technical names for moods are from Sapir 1924, Swadesh and Swadesh 1933, and Sapir and Swadesh 1939. The “assertive” is from Davidson 2002.

(16) Importance sentence moods

mood	form	meaning
neutral	= ∅	The speaker makes no claim.
real	= ma·*	The sentence is a true statement.
strong	= ʔi·š*	The sentence is a true statement.
hearsay	= wa·ʔiš*	The sentence is reported information.
question	= ɥa·*	The sentence is a question.
command	= !i·	The sentence is a command.

Embedded moods indicate the source and accuracy of information.

(17) Important embedded moods

mood	form	meaning
weak	= (y)i:*	The speaker makes no claim.
definite	= ʔi·tq*	The participant is a particular one.
article	= ʔi·	The participant is a particular one.
hearsay article	= ča·	The participant is reported information.
embedded	= qa·*	The information explains the main claim.
possible	= qu:*	The information is possibly or sometimes true.
unknown	= (w)u:si*	The information is unknown.

All moods (except the articles = ʔi·, = ča·) take person endings that indicate the subject of the clause. The whole mood-plus-person unit is commonly called a *mood ending*.

The following tables lay out the forms of some of the most important mood endings across dialects. Endings are listed according to the order *I, you, he/she/it, we, you all, they*. The = ʔał of the ‘they’ endings is optional.

Real mood		Strong mood	
(18) B	(19) C	(20) N	(21) Q
= (m)a·ɥ	= si·š, = s	= si·š, = s	= si·š, = s
= (m)e·ʔic	= ʔi·ck	= ʔi·c	= ʔi·c
= ma·	= ʔi·š	= ʔi·š	= ʔi·š
= (m)in	= ni·š	= ni·š	= ni·š
= (m)e·ʔicu:	= ʔi·cu:š	= ʔi·cu:š	= ʔi·cu:š
= ma·ʔał	= ʔi·šʔał	= ʔi·šʔał	= ʔi·taʔłš

Question mood

(22)	B	(23)	C	(24)	N	(25)	Q
	= ɥa's = ɥa'k = ɥa' = ɥin = ɥa'su: = ɥa'?aɭ		= ɥs = k = ɥ = ɥin = ɥsu: = ɥ?aɭ		= ɥs = k = ɥ = ɥin = ɥsu: = ɥ?aɭ		= ɥa's = ɥa'k, = k = ɥa' = ɥin = ɥa'su: = ɥa'?ɭ

Weak mood

(26)	B	(27)	C	(28)	EN*	(29)	Q
	= (y)i:s = (y)i:k = (y)i: = (y)in = (y)i:su: = (y)i'?aɭ		= (y)i:s = (y)i:k = (y)i: = (y)in = (y)i:su: = (y)i'?aɭ		= (y)i's = (y)i'k = (y)i' = (y)in = (y)i'su: = (y)i'?aɭ		= (y)i:s = (y)i:k = (y)i: = (y)in = (y)i:su: = (y)eɭ

Definite mood

(30)	B	(31)	C	(32)	N	(33)	Q
	= qa's = ?i'tqak = ?i'tq = qin = ?i'tqsu: = ?i'tq?aɭ		= qs = ?i'tk = ?i'tq = qin = ?i'tqsu: = ?i'tq?aɭ		= qs = ?i'k = ?i'q = qin = ?i'qsu: = ?i'q?aɭ		= qa's = ?i'tk = ?i'tq = qin = ?i'tqsu: = ?i'tqa?ɭ

Possible mood

(34)	B	(35)	C	(36)	EN*	(37)	Q
	= qu:s = qu:k = qu: = qun = qu:su: = qu'?aɭ		= qu:s = qu:k = qu: = qun = qu:su: = qu'?aɭ		= qu's = qu'k = qu' = qun = qu'su: = qu'?aɭ		= qu:s = qu:k = qu: = qun = qu:su: = qo:ɭ

Hearsay mood

(38)	B	(39)	C	(40)	N	(41)	Q
	= weʔisi = weʔincuk = weʔin = weʔinni = weʔincu: = weʔinʔaʔ		= waʔičas = waʔick = waʔiš = waʔičin = waʔicu:š = waʔišʔaʔ		= waʔis = waʔic = waʔiš = waʔniš = waʔicu:š = waʔišʔaʔ		= waʔsš = waʔc = waʔš = waʔinš = waʔcu:š = waʔtaʔš

Neutral mood*

(42)	B	(43)	C
	= siʔ = su:k = ∅ = niʔ = su: = ʔaʔ		= saʔ = su:k = ∅ = naʔ = su: = ʔaʔ

Unknown mood*

(44)	B	(45)	C
	= (w)u:sis = (w)u:sik = (w)u:si = (w)u:sin = (w)u:sisu: = (w)u:siʔaʔ		= (w)u:sis = (w)u:sik = (w)u:si = (w)u:sin = (w)u:sisu: = (w)u:siʔaʔ

- ▶ Where B, C use neutral = ∅ and unknown = (w)u:si, N, Q use weak = (y)iʔ*.
- ▶ The strong endings = siʔ, = s vary freely in C, N, but follow the weak long vowel pattern in Q. That is, in Q, = siʔ is used after short stems, and = s after long stems. The Q question endings = ʔaʔ, = k follow the same pattern.
- ▶ The weak and possible mood endings with weak long vowels (= yiʔ*, = quʔ*) are characteristic only of EN. In MM, they have strong vowels, as in other dialects.

The articles have only two person forms each, namely ‘he/she/it’ and ‘they’.

Article mood

(46)	B, C, N	(47)	Q
	= ʔiʔ = ʔiʔaʔ		= ʔiʔ = ʔaʔ

Hearsay article mood

(48)	B, C, N	(49)	Q
	= čaʔ = čaʔaʔ		= čaʔ = čaʔʔ

The command mood takes person endings for both subject and object. Subjects include ‘you’, ‘you all’, ‘we’. Objects include ‘me’, ‘us’, ‘them’. Third-person-singular objects (‘him’, ‘her’, ‘it’) are not marked—that is, they are expressed as if there were no object.

(50) Command mood

subject	no object	me	us	them (B, C, N)	them (Q)
you	= !i·	= !i·s	= !in	= !i·ʔał	= !a·ʔł
you all	= !i·č	= !i·čas*	= !i·čin*	= !i·čʔał	= !i·čaʔł
we	= !in	—	—	= !inʔał	= !inł

Not all combinations of subject and object are possible, for example = !i·čas*, = !i·čin*. Objects are also expressed by full pronouns (§11) and participant phrases.

§11. Pronouns

Pronouns are elements that stand in for and refer to participants. The subject, object, and possessive pronouns can serve as predicates.

(51) Pronouns

	root	object	subject	possessive	short	ending
I	si-	siičil	siyaaq	siyaas	siya*	=s, =h*
you	sut-	suutił	suwaaq	suwaas	suwa*	=k, =c
we (N, Q)	nuh-	nuuħil*	nuuwaaq	nuuwaas	nuuwa*	=n
we (B, C)	nih-	niiħil*	niiwaaq	niiwaas	niiwa*	=n
you all	sih-	siiħil	siiwaaq	siiwaas	siiwa*	=su:, =č

Q does not use short pronouns at all. B, C can use short pronouns as objects, and B, C, N use short pronouns alone and as topics. For example, siya* ‘as for me...’.

Objects can be expressed by full participant phrases, by full object pronouns, by short pronouns (B, C), and by command mood endings.

(52) phrase	ʔatiqšił.in yaqiisuu tuk ^w aaʔaħ.*	We thank you Toquahts.
object pronoun	ʔatiqšił.in siiħil.*	We thank you all.
short pronoun	ʔatiqšił.in siiwa.*	We thank you all.
command ending	łaałsiʔis hupii.*	Please help me.

§12. Pointers

Pointers are words that point to what is being talked about, similarly to English *this*, *that*. Nuuchahmulth pointers distinguish four distances (here < by you < there < far), but do not distinguish entities, places, and times. For example, ʔaħkuu means both ‘this’ and ‘here, this place’. ʔaħʔaa means ‘that’ or ‘then, that time’, and so on. All pointers have full forms. Some have short forms too.

(53) Pointer roots and stems

	Barkley		Central, Northern		Q	
this	ʔahkuu	ʔah	ʔahkuu	ʔah	ʔahkuu	ʔah
this (dynamic)	—	—	hiyaʔi	hiya	hiyaʔ(a)*	—
that (by you)	ʔahnii	—	ʔahnii	—	ʔahnii	—
that (topical)	ʔahʔaa	—	ʔahʔaa	—	ʔahʔaa	—
that	yaaʔ	yaa	haayaʔi* C, MM haaʔaʔi* EN	haa	haaʔaʔ(a)	—
that (far)	yeet	yee	huuyaʔi* C, MM huuʔaʔi* EN	huu	huuʔaʔ(a)	—

- ▶ Q does not use short pointers, except for *ʔah*.
- ▶ *hiyaʔi** points to something just appearing, or just entering the conversation.
- ▶ Topical *ʔahʔaa* refers to something just mentioned. The form *ʔahʔaaʔaʔ**, *ʔahʔaaʔ** means ‘and, or, and then, also’.

§13. Quantifiers

Quantifiers are words that say how much or how many, such as *all*, *many*, *some*, *none*. Most Nuuchahmulth quantifiers are formed by adding a variety of suffixes to quantifier roots like *hiš-*, *ʔaya*, *ʔuuš*, *wik*.

(54) Quantifier roots and stems

	root	predicate	entities	times
all, every	hiš-	hišuk	hišuk	taakšiʔ
many	ʔaya	ʔaya	ʔaya	ʔayaʔit*, ʔayaʔt*
some	ʔuuš	ʔuuš	ʔuušʔ	ʔuušyuuya*, ʔuušyuuy(a)*
no, none	wik	wikiit	wikstup	wiiya

- ▶ Quantified places (‘somewhere’, ‘nowhere’) are expressed with *-sa:cu*, *-sa:c(a)*.

§14. Indefinites

Indefinites are descriptions that do not refer to a particular person or thing, but rather how something might be. For example, ‘who’, ‘whatever’, ‘where you live’, ‘how many’. Unlike English, Nuuchahmulth distinguishes question words from general indefinites. That is, there are two stems for ‘who’, two for ‘what’, and so on.

(55) Indefinite roots and stems

	question indefinites	general indefinite
who, what	ʔač–, B, C ʔačaq, N, Q ʔačaaq	yaq, yaq ^w –
what	ʔaq–, B, C ʔaqaq, N, Q ʔaqaq	q ^w iq, q ^w i–
how	ʔaaqin	q ^w aa
do	B, C, N ʔaaqinʔap, Q ʔaaqinp	q ^w aaʔap
do, happen	ʔaqis	q ^w is
why	ʔaqish, ʔaaqinqh (?)	q ^w aa, q ^w aaqhin (?)
where	waas–, B, C, N waasi, Q waasa	hił
when	B, C, N waasq ^w ii, Q waasq ^w ii	B, C, N q ^w iyu, Q q ^w iya
which	waayaq	waayaq
how much	ʔuna	quṁaa

The question and indefinite meaning ‘whose’ is formed by adding the possessive suffix *–iic* to the roots for ‘who’. That is, *ʔačīic, yaq^wiic ~ yaqīic*.

The question words *ʔačaq, ʔačaaq* mean ‘who’, while *ʔaqaq, ʔaqaq* mean ‘what’. However, the general indefinites *yaq^w–, q^wi–* express a different distinction. While *yaq^w–* refers to some particular entity, *q^wi–* usually refers to something nonspecific.

§15. Plurals

Nuuchahnulth forms plurals in several ways. The most common strategies are reduplication and the suffix *–mīnh*. Plurals are formed also by vowel lengthening, with the suffixes *–iīh, –ah*, with the infixes *–t–, –aḡ–*, and by combinations of these.

(56) Pluralization patterns and examples

process	singular	plural	
reduplication	māamīiqsu*	māa–māamīiqsu*	older sibling
suffix <i>–mīnh</i>	mamałni*	mamałni–mīnh*	white person
suffix <i>–iīh</i>	čakup	čaakup–iīh*	man
infix <i>–t–</i>	taṅa	taa–t–ṅa	child
infix <i>–aḡ–</i>	ʔuušḡyims*	ʔ–aaḡ–uušḡyims*	friend, relative

There is much variation in pluralization patterns. For example, *quuʔasmīnh** ~ *quutquuʔas** ~ *quq^waas** ‘people’, *nananiqsu** ~ *natnaniqsu** ‘grandparents’.

Nouns referring to human beings are usually pluralized when appropriate, but pluralization of non-human nouns is usually optional. Pluralization of adjectives and verbs is optional. A few adjectives and non-human nouns are regularly pluralized.

(57) Regularly pluralized non-human words

	singular	plural
house, village, tribe	maʔas	maa-t-maas
mountain	nučii	nuuč-yuu
song	nuuk	nuuk-nuuk
big	ʔiiḥ	B ʔe-ʔiiḥ, C ʔa-ʔiiḥ
other	ʔaʔuu	ʔa-ʔuu

Tribe names formed with *-ʔath* are often not pluralized, even when plural. When they are pluralized, it is typically by reduplication, as in *ʔii-ʔiiḥatisʔath** ‘Ehattesahts’.

§16. Possession

Possession is indicated by several kinds of elements, including possessive pronouns (§11), the possessive clitic =*ʔak*, =*uk*, the passive clitic =*!at*, and the possessive suffix *-iic*. All of these can be used both in predicates and in participant phrases.

Possessive pronouns (*siyaas*, *suwaas*) can be predicates. The clitics =*ʔak*, =*uk*, =*!at* convey that the subject possesses the participant described by the predicate. The suffix *-iic* expresses a relation of ownership or belonging between two participants.

(58) Possession in predicates

possessive element	predicate example	
possessive pronoun	niiwaasniš nisma.*	It’s our land.
possessive clitic	maḥtiiʔakniš ʔaḥkuu.*	This is our house.
passive clitic	qasiiʔats ʔaḥkuu.*	These are my eyes.
possessive suffix	ʔuk ^{wiic} niš ciciqi.*	It’s our own language.

The passive =*!at* is used to express possession only of body parts, while the possessive clitic =*ʔak*, =*uk* is used for everything else, including blood relatives.

Possessed participant phrases are formed with the definite and article moods.

(59) Possession in participant phrases

possessive element	participant example	
possessive pronoun	siiwaasʔi nisma*	your land
possessive clitic	maḥtiiʔakqin*	our house
passive clitic	qasiiʔatʔi*	his eyes
possessive suffix	ʔuk ^{wiic} ʔimtii*	one’s own name

- ▶ The possessive suffix *-iic* is used in combination with *ʔu-* as *ʔuuc* ‘own, belong to’.
- ▶ The possessive clitic =*uk* is used in combination with *ʔuḥ* as *ʔuḥuk* ‘one’s is’.

- ▶ The possessive clitic has two forms. The form =ʔak is used after vowels and /m n/, and =uk after consonants. The form =ʔak often contracts with a short vowel, yielding a long vowel in a second syllable (ex. *taña*, *tañaak*), or a short vowel in a later syllable (ex. *nuwiiqsu**, *nuwiiqsak**).

§17. Mutations

A mutation is a pattern where one sound changes into another. Some endings mutate the last sound of their stem. There are two kinds of mutation, *hardening* and *softening*. Generally, hardening makes consonants glottalized, while softening turns them into resonants. Both mutations are often realized as /ʔ/.

There are mutating suffixes and mutating clitics. In Nuuchahnulth, mutating suffixes can be hardening (-!) or softening (-°), but mutating clitics are only hardening (=!).

(60) Notation for hardening and softening mutations

	suffix	clitic	notations used in other works				
hardening	-!	=!	'_	'_	-ʔ	-'	='
softening	-°	=°	'_	,-	-ʔh	-'	

This table summarizes the effects of suffix softening (-°), suffix hardening (-!), and clitic hardening (=!) on the last sound of a stem.

(61) Nuuchahnulth mutations

stem-final sound	becomes	-°	-!	=!
p λ t c č k k ^w	→	no change	p̣ λ̣ ṭ c̣ č̣ ḳ ḳ ^w	p̣ λ̣ ṭ c̣ č̣ ḳ ḳ ^w
q q ^w		no change	ɣ	ɣ
m n y w		no change	ṃ ṇ ỵ ẉ	ṃ ṇ ỵ ẉ
ł s š		y	ỵ	łʔ sʔ šʔ
ł x ^w ɣ ɣ ^w ɥ		w	ẉ	łʔ x ^w ʔ ɣʔ ɣ ^w ʔ ɥʔ
ɣ ɥ		no change	ɣʔ ɥʔ	ɣʔ ɥʔ
V		Vʔ	Vʔ	Vʔ

- ▶ The /λ/ of complete aspect endings vanishes when followed by a hardening ending.
- ▶ Some softening suffixes are -°it ‘indoors’, -°is ‘on beach’, -°ačĩλ ‘become’.
- ▶ Some hardening suffixes are -!as ‘outdoors’, -!ath ‘person of’, -!aqsup ‘female of’.
- ▶ Some hardening clitics are =!aλ ‘now’, causative =!ap, passive =!at, command =!i. Compare the article =ʔi.

§18. Stem templates

Some suffixes cause changes in their stem, including lengthening (*L*), shortening (*S*), and reduplication (*R*). These stem templates are always realized on the first one or two syllables of the stem. These are some common templatic suffixes, with examples.

(62)	suffix		stem	plus suffix	
	L-(č)ił	do to	?aya	?aayačil*	do to many
	L-(č)i:ł, L-(č)i·ł	make	čapac*	čaapaciił*	make canoe
	LS-sa	very, most	wikiit	wiikitsa*	none at all
	LS	(ongoing)	wikiičił*	wiikičičił*	becoming not
	R-kuk	look like	supic-	susupickuk*	sugar
	R-sum, R-sim	want, need	wik	wiwiksum*	not want any
	RL-(ł)-L-(y)a	(repetitive)	p̄a-	p̄aałp̄aaya*	give away gifts

§19. Rounding

For most speakers, the dorsal (tongue back) consonants *k q x ɣ* are typically round after /u uu/ and before another vowel. Conversely, round consonants lose their rounding before consonants, and at the ends of words.

(63)	kuuk	packed lunch	B kuuk ^{wiics} , C kuuk ^{wiic}	bring a lunch
	łaakšił	please	łaakłaak ^{wa*}	pleading
	tiqpił	sit on floor	tiq ^{wił}	sitting on floor
	tuxšił	jump	tuuxtuux ^{wa*}	jump repeatedly
	muuxšił*	boil	mux ^{wa*}	boiling

Exceptionally, in Q words where a vowel has deleted, rounding is found before consonants and finally. For example, *ħa?uk^{wł*}* ‘retaliate’, *łaakłaak^{w(a)*}* ‘pleading’.

§20. Umlaut

In B, /a aa/ becomes /e ee/ when separated from a following /i ii/ only by /?/.

(64) Examples of umlaut

stem		B	C, N	Q	
tapił	get sick	te?ił	ta?ił	ta?ił	sick
ča?ak	water	če?iis	ča?iic	ča?iic	drink water
taña	child	tañe?i	taña?i	taña?	the child
waa	say	wee?ii.	waa?ii.	waa?ii.	Say it!

§21. Weak vowels

Some vowels are *weak* in the sense that they sometimes shorten or disappear. Vowels that do not shorten or disappear are *strong*. This is an *underlying* property of vowels. That is, in actual pronunciation, any vowel is simply short or long.

(65) Symbols for underlyingly short and long vowels⁴

	short	long
weak	ǚ	V·
strong	ǚ	V:

Weak long vowels (V·) shorten in third and later syllables, while strong long vowels (V:) never shorten. Some Westcoast languages (Kyuquot-Checlesseht, Ditidaht) also have weak and strong short vowels (ǚ, ǚ), but this is not important in most dialects.

Weak long vowels shorten when they are pronounced in a third syllable or later.

(66) Some weak long vowels

ending	short stem		long stem	
/-na·k/	muunaak	have four	ʔaʔanak*	have two
/-i·qsu/	naniiqsu*	grandparent	nananiqsu*	grandparents
/-ck ^w i·/	ʔapʔck ^w ii	fish jerky	čawaack ^w i*	from one
/-m̄u·p/	ʔuučm̄uup	sister	ʔuučm̄up	sisters
/=ma·/	ʔuʔmaa.*	It's good.	m̄aʔama.*	It's cold.
/=ʔi·š/	ʔuʔʔiiš.*	It's good.	m̄aʔaaʔiš.*	It's cold.

Strong long vowels never shorten.

(67) Some strong long vowels

ending	short stem		long stem	
/-(č)i:ʔ/*	ʔuuk ^w iiʔ*	make	k ^w aapiqiiʔ*	make coffee
/-cu:t/	hišcuut*	both sides	ʔumʔaccuut*	the mother's side
/=su:/	wiksuu*	you are not	ʔapaaksuu*	you are willing

► A rule of thumb—Short stem, long ending. Long stem, short ending.

⁴ The notations V·, V: for long vowels follow Rose 1981. The notations ǚ, ǚ for short vowels are adapted from Swadesh and Swadesh 1933, where these symbols indicate epenthetic (“inorganic”) vowels and vowel deletion, respectively. Swadesh and Swadesh use ǚ for strong (“permanent”) short vowels.

§22. Weak consonants

Weak consonants are pronounced only in certain contexts. In dictionary forms, weak consonants are written in parentheses. Many endings begin in weak consonants, which are pronounced only after stems that end in vowels (*a aa i ii u uu*) or nasals (*m n*).

(68) Some common endings with weak consonants

ending	after a vowel or nasal		after other consonant	
/-(t)wii/*	ʔu-twii*	first	yaq-wii	first one
/-(č)i:ł/*	tii-čiił	make tea	k ^w aapiq-iił*	make coffee
/=(m)aḥ/*	ʔukłaa = maḥ*	my name is	huḥtak = aḥ*	I know
/=(m)it/*	łak ^w in = mit*	pleaded	ńaču?at = it*	saw
/=(y)i:/*	q ^w ičłaa = yii*	what it's called	waasał = ii*	wherever it is

§23. Negation

The regular negator is *wik* 'not'. It always precedes the predicate that it negates.

(69)	miłaa	raining	wik miłaa	not raining
	ḥawil	chief	wik ḥawil	not a chief
	qii	long time	wik qii	not a long time

Some verbs are not negated by *wik*. Instead, they have irregular negative forms.

(70) Verbs with irregular negative forms

dialect	positive		negative	
Q	ʔuʔumḥ(a)	can	wiḿaaqł	cannot
N, C	ʔuʔumḥi	can	wiḿaaqł	cannot
B	čamuł	can	wikłḿaa	cannot
Q	ńaaca	see	čañii	not see
N, C, B	ńaacsa	see	čañii	not see
	naʔaa	hear	wikaap	not hear
Q	nanaʔ(a)	understand	kukums	not understand
N, C, B	nanaʔa	understand	wiwikap	not understand
Q	huḥtik	know	hayimḥ(a)	not know
N	huḥtik	know	hayumḥi	not know
C	huḥtak	know	hayimḥi, hayumḥi	not know
B	huḥtak	know	hayaaʔak	not know
C	kaapap	like	wiipap	dislike
	ḥamup*, ḥamip*	recognize	łachuuč	recognize

§24. References

The following works provide detailed grammatical description and analysis, and are recommended as supplements to this reference. Some comments follow each citation.

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