

Speedlang 23 – Pucaxwa

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Phonology

Consonants

Pucaxwa has several places of articulation, including sibilant, palatal, and labialized velar series (which are not found in any of my prior languages).¹

Consonants

	Labial	Plain Alv.	Sibilant Alv.	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop	p	t	ts <c>	tʃ <č>	kʷ <kw>	ʔ <’>
Fricative			s	ʃ <š>	xʷ <xw>	h
Sonorant	m	n	l	j	w	

Vowels

The vowels include a common five-vowel oral system, as well as three phonemic nasal vowels (also not found in my prior languages).²

Vowels

	Front	Center	Back
Close	i ĭ		u ũ
Mid	e		o
Open		a ă	

Syllable Structure

Syllables take the form CV(K), where C is any consonant, V is any vowel, and K is a sonorant or fricative.

The velar stop and velar fricative lose their labialization before /u/ and /ũ/.

Nasal codas only occur in a handful of words, all of which are direct loans from the (fictional) Lompa language and related to sailing, suggesting that coda nasals developed into nasalized vowels before these loans entered the language.³

In closed syllables or syllables with nasal vowels, onset fricatives become stops.⁴ This is especially relevant for past tense verbs, with the definite singular oblique suffix, and with personal-pronoun clitics.

jexweši “sleep”

jexwečil “sleep”

cuhe “wind”

cu’eš “a wind (oblique)”

si “of (relative particle)”

cis “of me”

Morphology

Nouns

Nouns have direct and oblique cases. In regular (nominative) clauses, the direct case is used for intransitive subject and transitive agent, and the oblique case is used for transitive object. In (ergative) subclauses, the direct case is used for the transitive agent, and the oblique case is used for intransitive subject and transitive object.⁵ In both kinds of clauses, the direct case is used for the “object” of copular sentences, and the oblique case is used in possessive/genitive phrases, adpositional phrases, and most other situations.

Nominal Case-Definiteness Marking

Definiteness	Direct	Oblique
Generic	-	-xwe
Indefinite	-pu	-pi
Definite Singular	-la	-(o)š
Definite Plural	-čal	-čũ

Pronouns

Dedicated pronoun forms only exist for human referents. Non-human referents use *mili* (“this”) or *cu’i* (“that”) with appropriate case-definiteness marking as an anaphoric “pronoun”.

Personal Pronouns

Person	Direct	Oblique	Suffix	Clitic
1SG	cũ	xwece	-mu	=(a)s
1PL	pone	tomo	-co	=ša
2SG	kwos	la	-li	=(e)l
2PL	čoxwmo	lũxwo	-čã	=’es
3SG	nuš	’ũ	-’uš	=nũ
3PL	mopu	mũ	-wu	=mi

The direct and oblique forms are used like regular nouns described above.

- (1) *mopu litu xwece*
3PL.DIR see 1PL.OBL

“They see us.”

The suffix form functions like the direct case, and attaches to the verb to indicate a pronominal subject (or direct object in a transitive subclause). In such cases there is no separate direct pronoun in the sentence.

The clitic form functions much like the oblique form but can only be used for a core argument of the main verb, namely the accusative of

a regular clause or the ergative of a subclause. The clitic form attaches to the first word in the clause. Since subclauses always start with an adverb, the clitic will attach to that adverb.

Verbs

Present tense verbs are fairly synthetic and mark aspect, mood, and noun agreement via affixes. However there is only a single past tense form for verbs, which is accompanied by a specific auxiliary verb that takes all of the typical verbal marking for the clause. Which auxiliary verb is used with which main verbs has some semantic tendencies but is ultimately lexically dependant (i.e. you just need learn which one to use).⁶

Auxiliary Verbs

Original Meaning	Classifier Meaning	Present Root	Past Tense
“go”	<i>specific action</i>	huto	lekwel
“take”	<i>movement towards</i>	sekwi	tikul
“put”	<i>movement away</i>	ma	’al
“sit”	<i>slow/gradual</i>	pokwas	nawul
“make”	<i>creative/productive</i>	wĩ	tu’ol
“live”	<i>experiencing</i>	šipi	wocul

Some verbs can take on very different meanings when paired with different auxiliary verbs. Here are examples of each auxiliary verb being used to specify the general verb *čupe* “eating”:

- (2) *cũ* *čupe* *tila-pi*
 1SG.DIR eat meat-NDEF.OBL
 “I eat meat.”

- (3) *cũ* *čupe* *tila-pi* *huto*
 1SG.DIR eat meat-NDEF.OBL go.AUX
 “I’m eating some meat.”

- (4) *cũ* *čupe* *tila-pi* *sekwi*
 1SG.DIR eat meat-NDEF.OBL take.AUX

“I’m getting some meat (to eat).”

- (5) *cũ* *čupe* *tila-pi* *ma*
1SG.DIR eat meat-NDEF.OBL put.AUX

“I’m serving some meat.”

- (6) *cũ* *čupe* *tila-pi* *pokwas*
1SG.DIR eat meat-NDEF.OBL sit.AUX

“I’m snacking on some meat.”

- (7) *cũ* *čupe* *tila-pi* *wĩ*
1SG.DIR eat meat-NDEF.OBL make.AUX

“I’m cooking some meat.”

- (8) *cũ* *čupe* *tila-pi* *šipi*
1SG.DIR eat meat-NDEF.OBL live.AUX

“I’m enjoying some meat.”

Present Tense

Verbs take prefixes to indicate aspect/mood.

When a subject is dropped and conveyed only from verbal agreement, the verb is called an ***integrated-verb***.⁷

When no other words precede a transitive integrated-verb within a clause, the oblique clitic will attach to that verb and create a ***composite-verb*** which marks both agent and patient.⁸ These composite-verbs can form entire clauses on their own, as shown in (9) which is equivalent to sentence (8) above.

- (9) *litu-wu=ša*
see-3PL=1PL

“They see us.”

Past Tense

When a verb occurs in past tense, a present-tense auxiliary verb is added at the end of the clause which takes all of the marking for the

clause. One can even create a *pluperfect* (past in the past) meaning by putting this auxiliary in past form and adding another present-tense auxiliary at the end, as in sentence (11).

Past tense verb forms all end in a coda /l/, and may involve other minor sound changes as well. Most verbs still maintain a transparent correlation between the present and past forms, but the auxiliary verbs are entirely suppletive between past and present tense (as seen in the table above).⁹

- (10) *litol=ša ma-wu*
 see.PST=1PL put.AUX-3PL
 “They saw us.”

- (11) *litol=ša ’al ma-wu*
 see.PST=1PL put.AUX.PST put.AUX-3PL
 “They had seen us.”

Adjectives

Adjectives behave like nouns, and most can derive into nouns with zero derivation.¹⁰

- (12) *niso-li leš-oš tos xweji-š*
 bring-2SG white-DEF.SG.OBL to house-DEF.SG.OBL
si leš
 REL white
 “Bring the white (one) to the white house.”

- (13) *xwe~xwece nehine hokwi-la šučeno*
 GEN~1SG.OBL moody father-DEF.SG.DIR recognize
nehine-š ci=s
 moody-DEF.SG.OBL REL=1SG
 “My fickle father recognizes my fickleness.”

- (14) *lāhu-la=nũ si cijix hanapal sekwi*
 calm-DEF.SG.DIR=3SG REL large possess.PST take.AUX

“A great calm came over him.”

Syntax

Adjectives

Adjectives may precede the noun they modify with no additional agreement. However, it is far more common for adjectives to occur after the relative particle *si* that follows the noun being modified.

Possession

The typical way to express possession is to place the possessor in oblique form after the relative particle *si* which follows the possessed noun. For a small set of possessed nouns, namely kinship terms and certain relational nouns, possession is instead marked by reduplicating the first syllable (without coda) of the possessor and placing it before the possessed noun.¹¹

- (15) *kwel-la* *si* *la*
knife-DEF.SG.DIR REL 2SG.OBL
“your knife”

- (16) *to~tomo* *hokwi-la*
GEN~1PL.OBL father-DEF.SG.DIR
“our father”

Subclauses 12

There are two major kinds of subclauses in Pucaxwa, *relative clauses* which modify a noun and *subjunctive clauses* that modify an independant clause. Both have ergative alignment rather than nominative, meaning the subject of an intransitive subclause is marked in the oblique case rather than the direct case. They differ in which particles/adverbs begin the clause, and where they occur in the sentence; relative clauses follow the noun they modify as in (17), whereas subjunctive clauses uses precede or follow the entire independant clause as in (18).

(17) *litol xwece kwi=ša jexwečil šipi*
 see.PST 1PL.OBL REL=1PL sleep.PST live.AUX

ma-wu
 put.AUX-3PL

“They saw we who slept.”

(18) *?ila=ša jexwečil šipi litol=ša*
 while=1PL sleep.PST live.AUX see.PST=1PL

ma-wu
 put.AUX-3PL

“They saw us while we slept.”

Texts

Example Sentences 13

(19) *he so’ucal hi tila-š ma?*
 who urinate.PST in water-DEF.SG.OBL put.AUX

cũ ma!
 1SG.DIR put.AUX

“Who urinated (in) the water? I did!”

1225th 5MOYD

(20) *mopu si cekũ nũ-so~soca tila-pi,*
 3PL.DIR REL two NEG-RECP~give meat-NDEF.OBL

čuče wi~wikumi-wu.
 maybe RECP~hate-3PL.OBL

“They two wouldn’t give each other meat, maybe they hate each other.”

1386th 5MOYD

(21) *cu’i-la se mipi-la kwi jaxwi-’uš*
 this-DEF.SG.DIR COP girl-DEF.SG.DIR REL begin-3SG

manihu-’uš nicol-pi.
 draw-3SG lion-NDEF.OBL

“Here is the girl who started drawing a lion.”

1406th 5MOYD

- (22) *xutuĩ nicol mili-š ceti*
immediately bring.PST that-DEF.SG.OBL from
nolopol-oš kwe ma-’uš.
river-DEF.SG.OBL should AUX-3SG

“He should have brought it up from the river right away.”

1451st 5MOYD

- (23) *motu tihu hu’o-čũ hãja-Ø*
and during time-DEF.PL.OBL child-GNR.DIR
wicil wukwinus mičo kuluš-čũ
walk.PST permittedly without shoe-DEF.PL.OBL
huto, šija nũ-huto-mu.
go.AUX but NEG-go.AUX-1SG

“And in those days all children were allowed to walk barefoot, except for me.”

1689th 5MOYD

Story of the Sea ¹⁴

The following story reflects how Pucaxwa speakers view the ocean as a source of both risk and opportunity.¹⁵

Pucaxwa

Wimila se totomo nehine kwojuceš. Hu’opi milila niso comičũ si lãhu leš wol suhičũ si ji’i. Hu’opi milila niso cuhečũ si cijix wol cãwũčũ si watimas. Šomje’ečal si lompa helnal ’epasaš si wimiš šipi, motu kwemu čisciwu šice nucucičũ wohuwu ne likupočũ si xwakwe. Piša helna wimila kwal mũ nuponaco tihũsi.

English

“The sea is a our fickle neighbor. Sometimes it brings calm white clouds and plentiful fish. Sometimes it brings great winds and jagged

waves. The Lompa sailors have mastered the balance of the sea, and now they travel along the coast sharing with every tribe. If we can master the sea like them, we could also prosper.”

Gloss

- (24) *wimi-la se to~tomo nehine*
 sea-DEF.SG.DIR COP GEN~1PL.OBL moody

kwojuce-š
 neighbor-DEF.SG.OBL

“The sea is a our fickle neighbor.”

- (25) *hu'o-pi mili-la niso*
 time-NDEF.OBL that-DEF.SG.DIR bring

comi-čũ si lāhu leš wol
 cloud-DEF.PL.OBL REL calm white and

suhi-čũ si ji'i
 fish-DEF.PL.OBL REL very_many

“Sometimes it brings calm white clouds and plentiful fish.”

- (26) *hu'o-pi mili-la niso cuhe-čũ*
 time-NDEF.OBL that-DEF.SG.DIR bring wind-DEF.PL.OBL

si cijix wol cāwũ-čũ si watimas
 REL large and wave-DEF.PL.OBL REL sharp

“Sometimes it brings great winds and jagged waves.”

- (27) *šomje'e-čal si lompa 'elnal*
 sailor-DEF.PL.DIR REL Lompa master.PST

'epaca-š si wimi-š šipi,
 balance-DEF.SG.OBL REL sea-DEF.SG.OBL live.AUX

motu kwemu čisci-wu šice nucuci-čũ
 and now travel-3PL among coast-DEF.PL.OBL

wohu-wu ne likupo-čũ si xwakwe
 share-3PL with tribe-DEF.PL.OBL REL all

“The Lompa sailors have mastered the balance of the sea, and now they travel along the coast sharing with every tribe.”

(28) *pi=ša 'elna wimi-la kwal mũ*
if=1PL master sea-DEF.SG.DIR like 3PL.OBL
nupona-co tihũsi
prosper-1PL likewise

“If we can master the sea like them, we could also prosper.”

Prompts

1. Use two points of articulation you don't use very often - (free choice! anything out of your comfort zone - willing to consider any secondary articulation that patterns as a POA as a separate POA if it makes sense)☹
2. Alternative! use some vowel feature you don't use often (phonation, backness, protrusion, etc etc)☹
3. Have a closed set of roots which break phonotactic tendencies (e.g. from direct loans from another language or lost substrate etc.) - provide examples of how they differ from regular roots☹
4. Have at least three phonemes which exhibit some kind of gradation (e.g. this means they merge with other phonemes in certain morphological settings, or create new phones in some morphophonological environment)☹
5. Display some kind of split morphosyntactic alignment (e.g. active-stative, DOM, etc.)☹
6. Have a number of verbal classifiers, and have various lexeme have a different meaning entirely depending on verbal classifier (what exactly “classifier” means here is up to you) - show at least 3 examples☹
7. Come up with a label: whether describing an unusual combination of functions for a morpheme, or a specific case

which doesn't have an assigned name, or a phenomenon that requires ad hoc terminology - what this feature is and where it appears is up to you

8. Come up with a label: whether describing an unusual combination of functions for a morpheme, or a specific case which doesn't have an assigned name, or a phenomenon that requires ad hoc terminology - what this feature is and where it appears is up to you
9. Have some morphological category marked on a closed set of words by suppletion. (bonus points if the morpheme in question wouldn't otherwise be adjacent to the root)
10. Have a class of roots which can change word class through zero derivation (with at least 3 examples)
11. Have some kind of possessive classifier system (e.g. alienability, edibility) (Bonus! have them marked differently, in terms of agreement, location of morphemes, or otherwise)
12. Have radically different marking for subclauses (up to you whether it's inversion of marking, if this is the split ergativity, or some word order inversions, or something of the like)
13. As per usual, 5 sentences from 5moyd or Conlangers Syntax Test Cases (or make your own as you wish of a similar complexity)
14. Finally, write some description of the sea! (leaving this broad, so either "it's big and wet" or a poem or a scientific definition or whatever! surprise me!) - if your people don't live by the sea tell me about how they might describe it if they saw it (big lake? like the sky but wet? liquid substance with stuff in it?)
15. As a bonus; show me a sea or water related conceptual metaphor