

01 - Spelling & Pronunciation

The language of yani sayo is intended to explore how simplified the Adinjo language can become, and starts from the base of the officially endorsed language, Xoltwatax or Journalist. It is inspired by the language toki pona, and borrows some of its particles from that language.

Spelling & Pronunciation

Yani sayo has only 15 sounds and the same number of letters. These can be written in Adinjo script or the Latin script used by English speakers, and require no diacritics or special marks. Every letter is pronounced one way, with only a few exceptions that have their own clear rules as well.

◆ Consonants in Yani sayo

- ◆ k, l, m, n, p, s, t, x, w, y

All of these consonants are pronounced as in Adinjo or English, with the exception of <x> which is not a sound normally used in English words, but is used in some expressions like "yech" /jɛx/ which is used to express distaste, disgust, and a feeling of grossness.

In addition to this, in either script you may use the letter <h> instead of <x>, and in Latin script only, you may use the letter <j> instead of <y>. You should try your best to be consistent with these choices within a text.

◆ Vowels in Yani sayo

- ◆ a, e, i, o, u

These vowels are pronounced more closely to how they are pronounced in Spanish or Japanese than they are to strict Adinjo or English pronunciations. It is important to note that all of these vowels are strictly **monophthongs**, and none of them have an inherent off-glide as some English vowels do. We are offering our best approximation of the vowels as they are used in English

- ◆ **a** sounds like the “a” in the word “car” or (in some dialects of English) the “o” in “pot,” or the “a” in “bath.”
- ◆ **e** sounds like the “a” in the word “bate,” though it has a sharper closure without an off-glide.
- ◆ **i** sounds like the “ee” in the word “fee,” but it does not have an off-glide like the English sound does when another letter follows it.
- ◆ **o** sounds like the “o” in the word “phone.”
- ◆ **u** sounds like the “oo” in “coo” or “moon,” or the “ou” in “you.”

The *International Phonetic Alphabet*, or IPA, is a common way of showing how words and letters are pronounced. It is by design that the Latin spelling of Yani sayo reflects the IPA with the exception of preferring the letter <y> to represent the IPA /j/ sound.

Homophony

Because yani sayo has so few sounds and letters, each letter can be **realized** with a wider range than simply the English or Adinjo standard expectations. For example, the sounds of <p>, <t>, <k> can be pronounced with or without aspiration, and with or without voicing. For example, the word **pulik** can also be pronounced as **pulig**, **bulik**, or **bulig** without changing in meaning.

This includes the vowels, even though they have strong prototypes listed above.

Stress

Yani sayo has strict word-initial stress. This means that as you learn the sound of stressed syllables, you can easily tell where every word begins.

Exercise

Practice speaking yani sayo by pronouncing the following words:

1. tolexi
2. tilin
3. kalim
4. kiltin
5. yi
6. luwin
7. lawin
8. win

Each of these words matches, or is very similar to, its primary corresponding word in Adinjo Journalist.

Exercise Key

Here are the meanings of the Exercise words in English and Adinjo. Because this project is inspired by **toki pona**, there is also a column for an equivalent word (or words) in toki pona.

Yani Sayo	Adinjo	English	Toki Pona
tolexi	cholrex, jaluai, kinar	shit, feces, crap, dirty, filthy, disgusting, gross, contaminated	jaki
tilin	ciron, narug, orind	yellow, orange, gold, reflective, bright color	jelo
kalim	galm, mer	can, may, able, allowed, permitted	ken
kiltin	gilden, gil, daimos	money, currency, cash, coin, dollar, pound	mani
yi	yi, ki, kuyi, kuki	I, me, we, us, my, mine, our, ours	mi
luwin	luan, luando, coci	moon, month, night	mun
lawin	larn, amkeil	two, divided	tu
win	win, winirin, varmel	one, together, united	wan