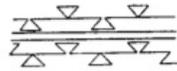


# Basic Yurok grammar



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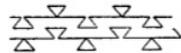
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Basket design illustrations are reproduced from A. L. Kroeber, *Basket designs of the Indians of northwestern California* (1905).



## I Introduction

This booklet provides information about basic grammatical patterns in the Yurok language. The patterns covered are identified by the Yurok Tribe as elements of “basic” Yurok for teacher certification purposes. Anyone is welcome to use this, but teachers and future teachers are the intended audience. Please keep in mind that languages are best learned by speaking and listening, not by reading; this is meant as a supplement to the spoken language.

Among the many topics NOT covered here are bipersonal verbs, attributive verbs, locative nouns, and other more elaborate sentence patterns. These and other important areas of grammar will be included in intermediate and advanced descriptions of Yurok grammar. Advanced students may wish to consult R. H. Robins’s *The Yurok language: Grammar, texts, lexicon* (1958), written in a rather technical style for professional linguists, as well as the publications of Yurok Language Project participants at UC Berkeley. These publications are listed on our website: <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~yurok>.

Thanks to many people:

- Participants in the Yurok Language Institute and many grammar workshops over several years have made helpful comments and suggestions on grammar and handouts; the participants in the 2010 Yurok Language Institute gave valuable feedback on a draft of this booklet. The language program staff — James Gensaw Sr., Carole Lewis, Barbara McQuillen, and Kathleen Vigil, as well as their colleagues, helpers, and interns — are good friends and inspiring teachers.
- My colleague Juliette Blevins and my students Lisa Conathan, James Martin, Alysoun Quinby, and Tess Wood, among many other Berkeley students, have greatly improved my understanding of Yurok grammar.
- We would not know what we know about Yurok without the patient work of many generations of fluent speakers who never stopped teaching their language. I personally have worked with **aawokw** Aileen Figueroa, **aawokw** Jimmie James, **aawokw** Glenn Moore, Sr., **aawokw** Georgiana Trull, and Archie Thompson, but I have also spent countless hours listening to, and reading transcripts of, the voices of Florence Shaughnessy, Alice Spott, Robert Spott, and many other elders of earlier generations. All of them have generously shared what they know so that their language can endure with its people.

If you have questions or suggestions about this booklet, or if you find errors in it, please don’t hesitate to write or call me. My email address is [garrett@berkeley.edu](mailto:garrett@berkeley.edu) and my full mailing address is the following:

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## 2 Definitions and symbols

### 2.1 Grammatical terms and symbols

You do not need to know special terminology to speak a language fluently. Yurok children learned their language perfectly, and elders have spoken masterfully and subtly in the language, for centuries without any help from linguists. But linguistic terminology is sometimes helpful in talking about the structure of a language, and describing how a language is used. The following terms will come up frequently:

**Singular and plural.** A singular noun or verb refers to one person or thing; a plural noun or verb refers to more than one. (On the terms **NOUN** and **VERB** see §5.)

**Subject and object.** Almost every sentence has a subject: the person or thing that does the action or is in the state expressed by the sentence. In English, for example, *that rock* is the subject of the sentences *Yesterday that rock fell on my car* and *That rock was big*. Some sentences also have an object: the person or thing affected or targeted by the action. So, in English, *that rock* is the object of the sentences *I saw that rock* and *I threw that rock*. In Yurok, it is common for subjects and objects to be understood but not actually expressed in sentences; for example, in **To' kee kem newochek'** "I will see you again", the subject ("I") and object ("you") are understood.

**1st, 2nd, 3rd person.** Verb forms are said to be first-, second-, or third-person forms: 1st person means that the subject is "I" or "we"; 2nd person means that the subject is "you" (singular or plural); and 3rd person means that the subject is "he", "she", "it", or "they".

**Prefix and suffix.** Prefixes and suffixes are pieces of longer words. A prefix is added to the beginning of a word (like English *un-* in *unhappy*), while a suffix is added to the end of a word (like English *-ness* in *happiness*).

Two special symbols are occasionally used. A dagger or obelisk (†) marks phrases or sentences that are impossible in a language (unacceptable to fluent speakers). For example, in English †*Man the old is* is impossible; in Yurok you cannot say †**Keech saawelek' ochkaa**. An asterisk (\*) before a word or phrase marks Yurok expressions that are almost certainly possible, but that do not happen to be documented in recordings of speakers.

### 2.2 Classical and Modern Yurok

All languages change all the time; Yurok is no exception. It is occasionally helpful to distinguish the usage patterns of two sets of Yurok speakers at different times:

**Classical Yurok.** This term will refer to the usage of Yurok speakers recorded in the first half or two thirds of the 20th century, those born before about 1900–1910.

**Modern Yurok.** This term will refer to the usage of Yurok speakers recorded late in the 20th century and in the 21st century, those born after about 1900–1910.

It is important to stress that the differences over time are real but very small, and that the description of both periods is based on the usage of fluent first-language speakers who grew up speaking Yurok. Note also that the dates given are somewhat arbitrary; in every period of every language, there are some speakers who speak in an older style and other speakers who speak in a newer style. The point here is that it is occasionally helpful to distinguish the older and newer styles used by fluent speakers.

## 2.3 Abbreviations

Nearly all the example sentences cited in this booklet are quoted from first-language Yurok speakers, recorded sometime during the long period of Yurok language documentation from the 1880s to the present day. Wherever possible, the speaker and year are noted as well as the source of the quotation.<sup>1</sup> Citations use the abbreviations in Table 1 below.<sup>2</sup>

### SPEAKERS

AF	Aileen Figueroa	JJ	Jimmie James
AS	Alice Spott	LB	Lowana Brantner
AT	Archie Thompson	LBy	Lame Billy
BF	Bessie Fleischman	LT	Lucy Thompson
DW	Domingo of Weitchpec	MM	Mary Marshall
FD	Frank Douglas	MR	Minnie Reed
FS	Florence Shaughnessy	RS	Robert Spott
GM	Glenn Moore, Sr.	VM	Violet Moore
GT	Georgiana Trull		

### SOURCES

AG	recordings by Andrew Garrett	LC	recordings by Leo Canez
ALK	notes and recordings by A. L. Kroeber	MRO	recordings by Margo Robbins
AQ	recordings by Alysoun Quinby	PJS	recordings by P. J. Shinahan
ES	notes by Edward Sapir	PP	recordings and notes by Paul Proulx
GR	notes by Gladys Reichard	RHR	recordings and notes by R. H. Robins
JB	recordings by Juliette Blevins	WB	recordings and notes by William Bright
JC	notes by Jeremiah Curtin	YL	R. H. Robins, <i>The Yurok language</i> (1958)
JP	recordings by Jean Perry	YLCB	<i>Yurok language conversation book</i> (2003)

Table 1: Speakers and sources cited

Of course, many other Yurok speakers have worked on language documentation over the years; this list includes only those whose sentences happen to be quoted here.



<sup>1</sup>Because some speakers were recorded anonymously, this is not always possible.

<sup>2</sup>Most of the sources listed in Table 1 consist of unpublished notes or recordings. These unpublished materials are mostly held in the following archives: the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia; the National Anthropological Archives in Washington, D.C.; and, at the University of California, Berkeley, the Berkeley Language Center, the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages, the Bancroft Library, and the Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology.

### 3 Writing and pronunciation

A basic linguistic principle underlies the writing of a language and its sound patterns: the principle of the basic sound or PHONEME. In every language, sounds can be arranged into a set of phonemes or basic sounds. In some cases a phoneme is pronounced in only one way in a language, but in other cases a phoneme may have two or more different pronunciations depending on its position in the word, or the sounds nearby. In what follows, the writing system to be described is PHONEMIC in the sense that each basic Yurok sound has a unique spelling (which may consist of more than one letter, such as **er** or **ch**).

#### 3.1 Basic introduction

Tables 2–3 show the symbols used here to represent the 40 phonemes of Yurok: 11 vowels, 29 consonants. International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols are also shown in brackets.

SHORT VOWELS		LONG VOWELS	
<b>a</b>	[a]	as in <b>pa'ah</b> 'water'	<b>aa</b> [a:] as in <b>raak</b> 'creek'
<b>o</b>	[ɔ]	as in ' <b>yoch</b> 'boat'	<b>oo</b> [ɔ:] as in <b>hoogech</b> 'star'
<b>er</b>	[ɚ]	as in <b>tergers</b> 'rat'	<b>err</b> [ɚ:] as in <b>k'err</b> 'crow'
<b>ee</b>	[i]	as in <b>keehl</b> 'redwood'	<b>eee</b> [i:] as in <b>cheek</b> 'money'
<b>ue</b>	[u]	as in <b>muesmues</b> 'cow'	<b>uue</b> [u:] as in <b>puuek</b> 'deer'
<b>e</b>	[e] ~ [ɛ] ~ [ɛ̃]	as in <b>nepuy</b> 'salmon', <b>nepek</b> 'I eat', or <b>kem</b> 'also'	(unlike the other short vowels, short <b>e</b> has no long counterpart)

Table 2: Yurok vowel phonemes (with IPA in brackets)

Note that all words printed here with initial vowels are actually pronounced with an initial glottal stop; for example, **oyhl** 'lie' is pronounced '**oyhl**'. This is automatic in English, so it is easy for Yurok learners. For pronunciation help, listen carefully to elders, consult your teachers, or listen to archived recordings on the Yurok Language Project website at UC Berkeley: <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~yurok>.

#### 3.2 Differences from the Yurok Alphabet

The spellings used here differ in three important ways from the Yurok Tribe's official Yurok Alphabet.

##### 3.2.1 Syllable breaks

Syllable breaks are not usually shown here: **sootok**', for example, not **soo-tok**'. This has three reasons:

- Speakers must pronounce a word slowly to reveal its syllabification, but slow pronunciations by elders are only rarely documented for Yurok words; too many guesses would be needed.
- Even fluent speakers disagree on the syllabification of some words in their language. In Yurok, for example, **sonowok**' may be syllabified as **so-no-wok**' or **son-o-wok**', **hesek**' as **he-sek**' or **hes-ek**', and **heyomues** as **he-yo-mues** or **hey-o-mues**. There are thousands of words like this.
- In long words hyphens take up a lot of space, and in complicated charts they can be confusing.

Hyphens can certainly help learners, but they are very hard to place in a consistent and systematic way.

SPELLING	IPA	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
<b>ch</b>	[tʃ] ~ [tʃ̥]	like English <i>ch</i> , or like a combination of <b>t</b> + Yurok <b>s</b>	<b>chaahl</b> “sand, beach’
<b>ch’</b>	[tʃʰ] ~ [tʃ̥ʰ]	glottalized <b>ch</b>	<b>ch’eeshah</b> “dog’
<b>k</b>	[k]	like English <i>k</i>	<b>ka’an</b> “blanket’
<b>k’</b>	[kʰ]	glottalized <b>k</b>	<b>k’ooy</b> “bluejay’
<b>kw</b>	[kʷ]	like English <i>qu</i> in <i>queen</i>	<b>kwār</b> “nail, peg’
<b>kw’</b>	[kʷʰ]	glottalized <b>kw</b>	<b>cheekw’ar</b> “chair’
<b>p</b>	[p]	like English <i>p</i>	<b>pahtuen</b> “neck’
<b>p’</b>	[pʰ]	glottalized <b>p</b>	<b>kaap’</b> “brush’
<b>t</b>	[t]	like English <i>t</i>	<b>teseer</b> “beaver’
<b>t’</b>	[tʰ]	glottalized <b>t</b>	<b>t’ohl̥t’ohl</b> “mud’
<b>l</b>	[l]	like English <i>l</i>	<b>lekwssee</b> “outside’
<b>l’ ~ ’l</b>	[ʔl]	glottalized <b>l</b>	<b>kel’</b> “you’
<b>m</b>	[m]	like English <i>m</i>	<b>mech</b> “fire’
<b>m’ ~ ’m</b>	[ʔm]	glottalized <b>m</b>	<b>ko’moyok’</b> “I hear it’
<b>n</b>	[n]	like English <i>n</i>	<b>nek</b> “I, me’
<b>n’ ~ ’n</b>	[ʔn]	glottalized <b>n</b>	<b>re’noh</b> “feather’
<b>r</b>	[ɹ]	like American English <i>r</i>	<b>raak</b> “creek’
<b>r’ ~ ’r</b>	[ʔɹ]	glottalized <b>r</b>	<b>ekar’</b> “necklace’
<b>w</b>	[w]	see §3.3.4	<b>wenchokws</b> “woman’
<b>w’ ~ ’w</b>	[ʔw]	glottalized <b>w</b>	<b>ke’ween</b> “eel’
<b>y</b>	[j]	like English <i>y</i>	<b>yohpenee</b> “in a circle’
<b>y’ ~ ’y</b>	[ʔj]	glottalized <b>y</b>	<b>we’yon</b> “teenage girl’
<b>s</b>	[ʃ]	somewhat like English <i>s</i> with a different tongue position	<b>segep</b> “coyote’
<b>sh</b>	[ʃ̥]	like English <i>sh</i>	<b>ch’eeshah</b> “dog’
<b>hl</b>	[ʃ̥]	voiceless lateral fricative (see §4.1)	<b>oohl</b> “(Indian) person’
<b>x</b>	[x]	voiceless velar fricative (see §4.1)	<b>mer’erx</b> “gills’
<b>g</b>	[g] ~ [ɣ]	see §3.3.3	<b>keget</b> “mountain lion’
<b>h</b>	[h]	like English <i>h</i>	<b>heekon</b> “long ago’
<b>’</b>	[ʔ]	glottal stop	<b>to’</b> “thigh, hip’

Table 3: Yurok consonant phonemes (with IPA in brackets)

### 3.2.2 The letters *i* and *u*

These two letters are not used here, though they are sometimes used in the Yurok Alphabet for reduced variants of **ee** and **o**. For example, the **o** in the word **cheenomewes** ‘young man’ is sometimes pronounced with a reduced vowel (like the first vowel in English *about*), and might then be spelled **cheenumewes**; similarly, when spoken rapidly, the preverb **keetee** might be spelled **kitee**. In careful speech, elders clearly pronounce these words as **cheenomewes** and **keetee**.

The reduced-vowel letters **i** and **u** are not used here because reduction depends on speech rate and style: a fluent speaker may clearly pronounce an **o** in careful speech, but in quick or casual speech it may sound like the vowel in English *about*. Variation that depends on speech rate is best ignored in a writing system.

### 3.2.3 The letter *e*

The letter **e** is used here for three related but distinct sounds. Only one of these three sounds, the first one below, is identical to an English sound:

- LAX **e**, the vowel sound in **kem** “also”, **mehl** “because of, from”, etc. This sound is identical to the vowel sound in English *bed* and *head*.
- TENSE **e**, the vowel sound in the FIRST syllable of **nepuy** “salmon”, **newook** ‘I see it’, **segep** “coyote”, etc. This sound is intermediate in pronunciation between lax **e** and the vowel sound of English *hate* and *bait*; for some but not all Yurok speakers it is identical to that English sound.
- OPEN **e**, the vowel sound in the LAST syllable of **kweget** “visit”, **segep** “coyote”, etc. This sound is intermediate in pronunciation between lax **e** and the vowel sound of English *hat* and *bat*.

In the Yurok Alphabet, the tense **e** is spelled **ey** (and the open **e** is sometimes spelled **a**. In other words, the Yurok Alphabet uses spellings like **ney-puy** “salmon” and also sometimes **sey-gap** “coyote”.) There are three reasons that a single symbol **e** is instead used here for all three sounds above.

- There is variation among speakers and even in the speech of a single speaker on different occasions: a word that usually has a tense **e**, like the first vowel in **nepek** ‘I eat’, is sometimes pronounced with a lax **e**. Since this can happen in hundreds of words (if not more), it would be cumbersome to spell all such words in two different ways.
- The symbol **ey** is used here for the combination **e + y**, as in **cheykenee** “small”, which is not the same as the tense **e** in **nepuy**; and lax **e** is not the same as the **a** in **pa’ah** “water” or **raak** “creek”.
- Most importantly, the three different **e** sounds are related in such a way that the pronunciation in a given word is usually predictable. When sounds have a predictable relationship in a language, they are considered variants of a phoneme (basic sound).

The three variants of the Yurok phoneme **e** are distributed according to the rules in §3.3.5.

## 3.3 Pronunciation rules

Some of the major rules affecting the pronunciation of Yurok phonemes are described in §§3.3.1–3.3.5.

### 3.3.1 Prefix and suffix *er* and *err*

Prefixes and suffixes added to words with the vowels **er** and **err** tend to be influenced by those vowels. The affected prefixes include possessive **'ne-** “my’, our’, **k'e-** “your”, and **'we-** “his, her, its, their” (discussed in §6.2); the affected suffixes include endings like 1st person **-ek'**, 2nd person **-om'**, etc.

When a prefix or suffix containing **a**, **o**, or **e** (but not **ee** or **ue**) is added to a word that has **er** or **err** in it, then **a**, **o**, or **e** tend to change to **er**; the long vowels **aa** and **oo** likewise tend to change to long **err**. Examples are given in (1) for the prefixes **'ne-** and **'ke-**, and in (2) for the suffixes **-ek'** and **-oom'**.

(1) The change to **er** in prefixes

a. **Yerhperh 'ner-per'ercherkws.**

“My baskets are round.”

FS 1980 (PP)

b. **Cho' chyuep'ery k'er-wer'yers we-'lep!**

“Comb your girl’s hair!”

FS 1951 (RHR)

(2) The change to **er** in suffixes

a. **Cheekor' serrhlerperk'.**

“I am doing everything.”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

b. **Kel' kee nergerykerrm'.**

“You will help.”

FS 1951 (YL)

These changes are more likely to occur in conversational speech or story-telling that takes place at a fluid pace, and less likely to occur in slower speech or if a speaker is pronouncing words carefully.

### 3.3.2 Rules affecting preverb–verb combinations

The consonant at the beginning of a verb is sometimes affected by the vowel of an immediately preceding preverb. This always depends on speech rate; it is more likely in more conversational or fluid speech. There are two relevant rules.

The first rule applies to **s** at the beginning of a verb. Whenever **s** is immediately preceded by a preverb ending in **ee**, then it is pronounced as **sh**. For example, as in (3), when the word **son'** “it is (thus)” or **sonowok'** “I do (thus)” is preceded by **keetee** or **kee**, it is pronounced with word-initial **sh**.

(3) The change **s** → **sh**

a. **Wey' keetee shon'.**

“This is going to happen.”

FS 1980 (PP)

b. **To' wee kee shonowok'.**

“This is what you will do.”

RS 1933 (PJS)

The second rule applies to **h** at the beginning of a verb. Whenever **h** is immediately preceded by a preverb ending in a vowel, then **h** changes to another consonant. If the vowel is **ee**, then **h** changes to **y**; after any other vowel, it changes to **g**. In the examples in (4), the words beginning with **g** and **y** are basically **hoh** “make”, **hookwch'** “he gambled”, **hem'** “he said”, and **hegok'** “I go”.

- (4) The changes **h** → **g** and **h** → **y**
- a. **Keech ho goh per'erk.**  
“I made dried mussels.” FS 1980 (PP)
  - b. **Kue o'rowee' kem o gookwch'.**  
“The dove too was gambling.” FS 1951 (YL)
  - c. **Kwesee o gem', Chyuue', Tue' kee yegok'.**  
“So he said, *Well, I will go.*” FS 1951 (YL)

### 3.3.3 The phoneme **g**

The phoneme **g** has three pronunciation variants:

- The most common variant is a somewhat weak articulation linguists call a **FRICATIVE** (technically, the voiced velar fricative [ɣ]), with air passing between the tongue and the roof of the mouth. It may sound to English speakers like a weak vibration toward the back of the mouth.
- Yurok **g** can also be pronounced like an English *g*.
- At the end of a word, **g** is pronounced as a very, very weak fricative ([ɣ]). If you listen carefully, you will hear what may sound like a very weak vibration (weaker than the first variant), but in this position **g** is almost inaudible; it may sound to you like **y**, but if you listen carefully you should hear that it is not **y**.

The last variant can be heard in words like **ha'aag** “rock”, **nepe'weeshneg** “otter”, **nueneg** “food”, and **'wehketeg** “fingernail”. The first two variants can be heard in different pronunciations of most Yurok words. For example, if you listen to various speakers saying **hoogech** “star”, **keget** “mountain lion”, **kweget** “visit”, and **segep** “coyote”, you will hear many examples of the first pronunciation variant above, and some examples of the second one.

### 3.3.4 The phoneme **w**

The phoneme **w** has two pronunciation variants:

- The most common Modern Yurok variant is identical to English *w*.
- A common Classical Yurok variant is a weakened fricative articulation (technically, a labialized voiced velar fricative [ɣ<sup>w</sup>]), with air passing between the tongue and the roof of the mouth and with the lips rounded. This is a combination of **w** and the weak variant of **g**.

If you listen carefully to recordings of words like **newook'** “I see it”, you will hear examples of both pronunciations. The second variant was often written down as *gw* by anthropologists and non-Yurok people in the early twentieth century. (Yurok does not actually have a **gw** combination.)

### 3.3.5 The phoneme *e*

The phoneme *e* has three pronunciation variants:

- If *e* is stressed in the last syllable of a word (or the only syllable of a one-syllable word), the OPEN pronunciation is used. Open *e* is intermediate between the vowels in English *head* and *had*. Open *e* is found in the final syllable of the following words:
  - One-syllable words: **chekws** “heart”, **mech** “fire”, **'yekwhl** “maggot”
  - Two-syllable words with open *e* before *w* or *y*: **Chuerey** “Trinidad”, **Hop'ew** “Klamath”, **perey** “old woman”
  - Other two-syllable words: **keekwten** “moss”, **keeshen** “summer”, **pontet** “ashes”

Open *e* is sometimes spelled *a* by users of the Yurok Alphabet, but it is not the same as the vowel in English **had**; nor does it have the same quality as the *a* vowels in Yurok **ma** (past time preverb), **ch'eeshah** “dog”, or **chaahl** “beach”.

- If *e* is stressed in the first syllable of a word with more than one syllable, the TENSE pronunciation is used (but not before *r*). Tense *e* is intermediate between lax *e* and the vowel sound of English *hate* and *bait*; for some but not all Yurok speakers it may be identical to that English sound.

In each of the following words, the first vowel is a tense *e*, and the second *e* is either open (if it is in the final syllable) or lax:

- Repetitive verbs: **slekwslekw** “put clothes on”, **tektekon'** “it's sticky”, **tekwtekwsook'** “I cut it up”
- Other words: **chekwchem** “black acorns”, **keges** “surf fish”, **keget** “mountain lion”, **keychek** “tired”, **kweget** “visit”, **legech** “mudhen”, **segep** “coyote”

Tense *e* is spelled *ey* in the Yurok Alphabet. Note, however, that tense *e* is not the same sound as the combination of *e* plus *y*. That combination occurs in words like **cheykenee** “small”, and it is also spelled *ey* in the Yurok Alphabet.

- Otherwise, the LAX pronunciation is used. Lax *e* is the same as the vowel sound of English *head*.

Open and tense *e* only occur in stressed syllables and only in adverbs, interjections, nouns, pronouns, and verbs — not in the various PARTICLE word classes (see §5.6). Otherwise, there are very few exceptions to the rules above; one exception is **hesek'**, whose first syllable has a lax vowel rather than the tense vowel.

The relationships among the variant pronunciations of *e* can clearly be seen when the same vowel, in a related word, undergoes a change because its word position has changed. Several such examples are in (5). In each case, the first word has a tense *e* that becomes open *e* in the related second word.

- (5) Tense *e* → open *e*
- Third-person verbs
    - chkeyek'** “I sleep” → **chkey'** “s/he sleeps”
    - nekek'** “I put it” → **nek'** “s/he puts it”
    - nepek'** “I eat” → **nep'** “s/he eats”

b. Iteratives

**meskwoh** “medicine” → **meges** “doctor”

**sepolah** “prairie” → **segep** “coyote” (“goes on the prairies”)

**tetolo’hl** → **teget** “cry”

c. Possessed short forms

**lewet** “net” → **’ne-lew** “my net”

**’leptoyhl** “hair” → **’ne-’lep** “my hair”

**pekcheech** “rope” → **’ue-pek** “his or her rope”

**’ne-k’ep’ch’em** → **’ne-k’ep’** “my daughter-in-law”

d. Other related words

**pechue** → **heepech** “upriver”

**leksee** → **lekws** “outside”

Compare also the suffix **-etew-** “hand, finger”, whose second vowel is open **e** in **pletew** “thumb” and **sketew** “little finger”, but lax **e** in the longer words in (6).

(6) a. **Nue pe’wetewes!**

“Go wash your hands.”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

b. **Cho’ ko mewoletewe’m!**

“Wash your hands!”

FS 1980 (PP)

### 3.4 Twentieth century pronunciation changes

Like all languages, Yurok has changed during the last hundred years. If you listen to old recordings or read old transcriptions (or publications), you may encounter pronunciations that are less common today. Notable Modern Yurok pronunciation changes include the following:

- The variant of the **g** phoneme that sounds like English *g* has become more common (§3.3.3).
- The variant of the **w** phoneme that sounds like English *w* has become more common (§3.3.4).
- The tense variant of the **e** phoneme more often has the quality of the vowel of English *bait* (§3.3.5).
- Some unstressed vowels are likelier to have the neutral quality of the first vowel in English *about*.

These changes reflect a process called ACCOMMODATION, in this case between Yurok and English; this is a process that happens when people who are bilingual unconsciously adapt their speech to the speech of other people they talk with. Accommodation is a sign of linguistic adaptability and strength, a process that happens in all healthy languages all the time; speakers of Modern Yurok are as fluent as any earlier generations of speakers.

**Key topics in §3:** symbols used in writing Yurok sounds; how symbols vary in pronunciation

**Not covered:** vowel reduction patterns

## 4 Seven differences between English and Yurok

When you learn a second language as an adult, your first language always influences your new language. For example, usually you have an accent in your second language; you do not sound like somebody who grew up speaking that language. To reduce your accent and what you carry over from your first language, it can be helpful to focus on major differences between the two languages.

Seven differences between English and Yurok are described here: not a complete list, but if you pay attention to these differences, your Yurok may sound less English-influenced. You can hear recordings of most words below on the Yurok Language Project website: <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~yurok>.

### 4.1 Consonants not found in English

Most obviously, two Yurok consonants are unlike anything heard in English: **hl** and **x**. To articulate **hl**, hold your tongue in the position for **l** but then try to say **h**; it is likely that you will say **hl**. To articulate **x**, hold your tongue in the position for **k**, then start to say **k** but relax your tongue somewhat so that air passes between your tongue and the roof of your mouth. In Yurok, **hl** is common while **x** is rare.

Other Yurok consonants and vowels may be identical to English sounds, or they may be similar but not fully identical to English sounds. You should listen carefully to elder speakers or recordings of elders, to make sure you are articulating each sound as closely as possible to the way it is pronounced by fluent first-language speakers.

### 4.2 The vowels *a* and *o*

Unlike most varieties of California English, Yurok distinguishes between two vowels **a** and **o**, or long **aa** and **oo**. Whereas the English vowels of *cot* and *caught* are often confused or pronounced the same (in the US), in Yurok the vowels of words like **pa'ah** “water” and **po'oh** “scar” are never confused. Note also that Yurok **o** is rounder than the vowel in *caught*: it is not exactly the same as any American English vowel.

### 4.3 Long vowels

The term LONG VOWEL refers to a vowel sound that lasts twice as long as an ordinary vowel. English doesn't have long vowel phonemes (vowels that are always twice as long as other vowels). The Yurok long vowels **aa**, **oo**, **err**, **eee**, and **uue** correspond, respectively, to the short vowels **a**, **o**, **er**, **ee**, and **ue**. Make sure to draw them out; they should last fully twice as long as short vowels, and about as long as a short vowel plus **h**. Practice the examples in Table 4 on page 12. Some very common words with long vowels are also listed in (7).

(7) Common words with long vowels

- a. **paa** “no”, **ochkaa** (present time preverb), **wehlowaa** “ten”, **ha'aag** “rock”, **chmeyaan** “yesterday”, **maageen** “some”
- b. **noohl** “then”, **ook** “I am”, **sootok** “I go”, **oohl** “person”, **hlook** “I take”, **roo** “time”
- c. **er'gerrch** “sweathouse”, **serrhlerperk** “I do”, **errwerh** “grass”, **k'err** “crow”
- d. **we'eeet** “this”, **neee'nowok** “I watch it”, **cheek** “money”, **rek'eeen** “sit” (collective)
- e. **nuuem** “arrive” (collective), **chyueekwenek** “I sit”, **huuek(soh)** “child(ren)”, **chyuue** “good-bye”

SHORT VOWEL	LONG VOWEL
<b>hakw's</b> “s/he laughs” <b>ma</b> (past time preverb)	<b>chaahl</b> “sand” <b>chpegaa</b> “cormorant”
<b>so</b> “toward” <b>komchuemek'</b> “I know it”	<b>soo</b> “thus” <b>myootek'</b> “I put it on”
<b>'wer'errgerch</b> <b>'ne-merm</b> “my son”	<b>kerrcherh</b> “mountain ridge” <b>kerrmeek'</b> “nine”
<b>kohchee</b> “once” <b>ch'eeshah</b> “dog” <b>heekon</b> “formerly”	<b>spegeee</b> “hawk” <b>cheeshep'</b> “flower” <b>reeek'ew</b> “shore”
<b>kuechos</b> “grandmother” <b>muenchey</b> “white” <b>wohpuek</b> “into the water”	<b>muuweemor</b> “old men” <b>puenomaap'</b> “dogwood” <b>puuek</b> “deer”

Table 4: Short and long vowel pairs

#### 4.4 Glottal stop (ʔ) and *h* after vowels

Yurok has **h** and glottal stop (ʔ) after vowels and at the ends of words; English doesn't. For practice, listen to the difference between the two types of words in Table 5. In addition, notice the difference between the sounds of vowel + **h** and vowel + ʔ, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the sound of a pure long vowel as in Table 4, and (7) above.

VOWEL + <b>H</b>	VOWEL + GLOTTAL STOP (ʔ)
<b>chahchew</b> “difficult” <b>ch'eeshah</b> “dog”	<b>ha'p'ehl</b> “forget” <b>hekwsa'</b> “whale”
<b>sohchee</b> “on top” <b>pohsey'</b> “madrone berries”	<b>re'go'</b> “maidenhair fern” <b>ko'ses</b> “crab”
<b>herkw'erh</b> “rabbit” <b>nerhpery</b> “berry”	<b>chperger'</b> “razor clam” <b>mer'p'erhl</b> “pubic hair”
<b>pee'eeh</b> “mussel”	<b>che'lee'</b> “it's dried”
<b>hue'ueh</b> “nut” <b>merueh</b> “five”	<b>hohkue'</b> “it's built” <b>pemue'</b> “it's cooked”

Table 5: Glottal stop (ʔ) and *h* after vowels

#### 4.5 Glottalized stops

Unlike English, Yurok has a set of glottalized stops: **p'**, **t'**, **ch'**, **k'**, and **kw'**. They are sometimes hard to hear, especially at the end of a word, but they can be very important. For example, first-person singular verb forms (meaning “I” did it) usually end in **-k'**, and for many verbs glottalization also expresses the third-person singular. Examples for practice are given in Table 6 on page 13.

PLAIN STOPS	GLOTTALIZED STOPS
<b>Chuelue nee nep</b> “wild parsley”	<b>nep’</b> “s/he eats”
<b>segep</b> “coyote”	<b>cheeshep’</b> “flower”
<b>nek</b> “I, me”	<b>nek’</b> “s/he puts it”
<b>keychek</b> “tired”	<b>ohchek’</b> “I give it to you”
<b>sraat</b> “scrub jay”	<b>se’raat’</b> “s/he shaves wood”
<b>seryerkert</b> “robin”	<b>sermert’</b> “s/he killed him/her”

Table 6: Glottalized and non-glottalized consonant pairs

#### 4.6 Word-final *kw*

Unlike English, Yurok has **kw** at the ends of words. Examples appear in Table 7, with words ending in **k** for comparison. Listen carefully to the difference; final **k** and **kw** may sound similar to English speakers.

<b>kw</b>	<b>aawokw</b>	“alas!”	<b>megokw</b>	“dog”
	<b>elek</b>	“I don’t know”	<b>penkw</b>	“acorn flour”
	<b>che’mekw</b>	“a little bit”	<b>plegokw</b>	“headroll”
	<b>cherkw</b>	“jump center”	<b>puelek</b>	“downriver”
	<b>kwegokw</b>	“raven”	<b>sraakw</b>	“ring”
<b>k</b>	<b>cheek</b>	“money”	<b>huuek</b>	“child”
	<b>chmuuek</b>	“bobcat”	<b>kelok</b>	“goose”
	<b>hehlkeek</b>	“inland”	<b>skewok</b>	“like, want”

Table 7: Word-final **kw** and **k**

#### 4.7 Stress patterns

Stress is a conspicuous feature of how a language sounds to fluent speakers; Yurok words can have very different stress patterns from English words. Two common (and non-English-sounding) stress patterns are noted here. To describe both patterns, it is necessary to introduce three new terms:

- A **CLOSED** syllable has a vowel followed by more than one consonant. For example, the first syllable of **hohkuemek’** “I make” is closed because it has a short vowel **o** followed by two consonants **hk**. (These two consonants are not both in the closed syllable: **h** is in the first syllable of **hohkuemek’** but **k** is in the second syllable; the point is that **o** is followed by two consonants.)
- A **HEAVY** syllable is closed or has a long vowel. (All closed syllables are also heavy.) For example, the first syllable of **plerrserk’** “I talk loudly” is heavy because it has a long vowel **err**.
- A **LIGHT** syllable is any syllable that is not heavy. For example, the first syllable of **nepuy** “salmon” is light because it has a short vowel **e** followed by a single consonant **p**; the second syllable of **hohkuemek’** is light because it has a short vowel **ue** followed by a single consonant **m**.

The two stress patterns described below explain stress in many Yurok words, but not all words.

The first Yurok stress pattern is that a vowel in a heavy syllable is ALWAYS stressed. You should always stress long vowels, and you should always stress vowels that are followed by more than one consonant. Examples of the first kind (stressed long vowels) are given in (8); hyphens divide syllables, and stressed syllables are underlined. (Table 8 below gives examples of the second kind, with stressed vowels followed by consonant groups.)

- (8) Stressed long vowels:  
cheee-shep ‘flower’, hoo-gech ‘star’, wer-’err-gerch ‘alder’, plerr-serk ‘I talk loudly’

The second Yurok stress pattern is that a vowel in the syllable AFTER a closed syllable is always stressed. In other words, stress the syllables before and after a consonant cluster. (This pattern is striking from the point of view of English, which avoids stress on adjoining syllables.) As above, in the examples in Table 8, hyphens divide syllables and stressed syllables are underlined.<sup>3</sup>

TWO-SYLLABLE WORDS

<u>chah-chew</u>	“difficult”	<u>keekw-ten</u>	“moss”
<u>Koh-pey</u>	“Crescent City”	<u>pon-tet</u>	“ashes”
<u>wen-chokws</u>	“woman”		

THREE-SYLLABLE WORDS

<u>chey-ke-nee</u>	“little”	<u>hoh-kue-mek’</u>	“I make”
<u>kep-che-neesh</u>	“fawn”	<u>kom-chue-mek’</u>	“I know”
<u>kwom-hle-chok’</u>	“I return”	<u>oh-pue-mek’</u>	“I feed him”
<u>tek-tek-ehl</u>	“(sturgeon) glue”	<u>t’ohl-t’o-leehl</u>	“swampy”

FOUR-SYLLABLE WORDS

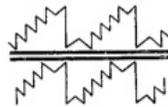
<u>che-gey-ke-nee</u>	“little ones”	<u>che-yoh-pee-nek’</u>	“I hide it”
<u>me-wah-se-goh</u>	“boys”	<u>re-go’-p’ee-nes</u>	“fill it up”
<u>ske-wok-see-mek’</u>	“I like it”	<u>tey-ke-lue-mek’</u>	“I bite it”
<u>ye-goh-pe-chok’</u>	“I go around in circles”		

FIVE-SYLLABLE WORDS

<u>hee-moo-re-yo-wo’s</u>	“hurry up!”	<u>hlker’-mer-kerhl-kee-nek’</u>	‘I tie a knot’
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Table 8: Stressed vowels after closed syllables

If possible, it is helpful to listen to elders (or recordings of elders) saying the words above. Getting stress patterns right may be the single most effective thing a learner can do to “sound Yurok”.



<sup>3</sup>You may notice that the second syllable of hlker’merkerhlkeenek’ ‘I tie a knot’ is not stressed, though it follows a heavy syllable; this appears to contradict the pattern. The reason is that this Yurok stress pattern never affects a single light syllable SURROUNDED by two heavy syllables; such syllables are not stressed.

## 5 Word classes

In any language, words can be grouped into various CLASSES, which are defined partly by their meaning and partly by how they are used in sentences. It is useful to identify the word classes of a language because then you can make general statements about them, for example, “Yurok nouns do not usually change according to whether they are singular or plural” and “Yurok preverbs are positioned before the verb”.

Though there are many similarities across languages, word classes do differ from language to language. For example, English has a class of ADJECTIVES; Yurok does not. In Yurok, the meanings that are expressed by English adjectives are instead expressed by the class of verbs. Likewise, English has no class of PREVERBS despite the importance of this word class in Yurok grammar. English also lacks NON-INFLECTED VERBS.

Every Yurok word belongs to one of the ten word classes below.

### 5.1 Verbs

Verbs in the broad sense actually consist of two distinct word classes:

- A VERB is a kind of word that usually changes its form according to the subject (and possibly the object) of the sentence, and that usually refers to a kind of activity or state. English verbs include *know*, *run*, *sing*. A Yurok verb is **komchuemek'** “I know it”, which changes its form according to the subject (and sometimes the object), as illustrated by this selection of forms:

<b>komchuemek'</b>	“I know it”	<b>komchuechek'</b>	“I know you”
<b>komchuemem'</b>	“you know it”	<b>komchuepa'</b>	“you know me”
<b>komchuem'</b>	“he or she knows it”	<b>komchuesek'</b>	“I know him or her”

For more information about Yurok verbs see §8.

- A NON-INFLECTED VERB is a special kind of verb that does not change its form; it is not “inflected” according to the subject. For example, without changing its form, the Yurok non-inflected verb **skewok** “like, want” can be used in expressions like **nek skewok** “I want”, **kel' skewok** “you want”, or **yo' skewok** “he or she wants” For more information see §8.1.

### 5.2 Adverbs

An adverb is a kind of word that modifies a verb by indicating the time, place, or direction of an action (among various other notions). Examples include **owook** “tomorrow”, **lekwsee** “outside”, and **pueleek** “downriver”. The use of adverbs is not much discussed in this booklet.

### 5.3 Nouns

A noun is a kind of word that can be the subject or object of a sentence, or the object of a preposition; nouns usually refer to kinds of person, place, thing, event, substance, or quality. English nouns include *boy*, *creek*, *boat*, *water*, and *happiness*; Yurok nouns include **mewah** “young boy”, **raak** “creek”, and **'yoch** “boat”. (Abstract concepts tend to be expressed as verbs in Yurok, not nouns.) For more information about Yurok nouns see §6.

## 5.4 Pronouns

A pronoun is a kind of word that stands in place of a noun. It may be the subject or object of a verb, for example, but its reference may differ from sentence to sentence, depending on context. English pronouns include words like *me*, *that*, and *what*. Yurok pronouns are of three types:

- PERSONAL PRONOUNS refer to “I”, “you”, “me”, etc.: **nek**, **kel'**, **nekah**, **kelew**, etc.
- DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS refer to a third person, that is, “s/he”, “that one”, “them”, etc.: **yo'**, **wee'eeet**, etc.
- QUESTION PRONOUNS (also called INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS) include words such as **kues** “how?”, **tee'now** “who?”, **tee'neesho** “what?”, and other words in forming content questions (§14.2).

## 5.5 Interjections

Interjections are words used as exclamations (like *ouch!*), or in greetings (*hey!*) or other social interactions (*thanks*). They mostly constitute sentences on their own, and do not combine grammatically with other words. Yurok interjections include **elekw** “I don’t know”, **ohlkuem** “of course”, and **egaa** “ouch”, among many others.

## 5.6 Particles

The term PARTICLE refers to a set of five different word classes which share two features: all of them have relatively few words, ranging from only two articles to a few dozen preverbs; and in all cases they cannot be used on their own to form utterances. Particles occur only with other words. For example, since you can answer a question with just an adverb, an adverb is not a particle: if someone asks where you’re going, you can just answer **lekwsee** “outside”. A noun is not a particle because if someone asks what you want to eat, you can say **nepuy** “salmon” by itself. But you cannot say words like **keetee**, **ochkaa**, **k'ee**, or **kwelekw** on their own without being part of a larger phrase or sentence. The five Yurok word classes that can be regarded as particles are detailed in §§5.6.1–5.6.5.



Figure 1: Yurok baskets (early 20th century)

### 5.6.1 Articles

An article is a little word (like English *a* and *the*) that occurs with a noun. Yurok has two articles: **kue**, which can mean either “the” or “that”; and **k'ee**, which means “this”. For more information about Yurok articles see §7.

### 5.6.2 Conjunctions

A conjunction is a word that is used to combine words, phrases, or sentences. In English, common conjunctions include *and* and *but*. Yurok conjunctions include **esee** (or **emsee**) “and”, **mee** “because”, **mo(cho)** “if”, and others.

### 5.6.3 Discourse particles

The term discourse particle refers to the class of words that includes **hes**, **kem** “also, even”, **kwelekw**, **to**, and **tue**. Most Yurok discourse particles tend to occur near the beginnings of sentences, and while a few have uses that are easy to describe (for example see §14.1 on the question particle **hes**), many have very elusive meanings and will not be discussed here.

### 5.6.4 Prepositions

A preposition is a word that is used together with (and preceding) a noun to indicate how the noun relates to the meaning of the sentence as a whole. English examples include *for* and *with*; Yurok examples include **ho** “to” and **mehl** “because of, for, with”.

### 5.6.5 Preverbs

A preverb is a kind of Yurok word that is short (one or two syllables) and ordinarily occurs before the verb, expressing meanings having to do with time, place, and direction (among various other notions). The meanings expressed by preverbs are broadly similar to those expressed by adverbs, but adverbs can have much more specific meanings (like “tomorrow” or “over there”) and adverbs can occupy various positions in the sentence. Typical Yurok preverbs include **ho** (referring to past time), **keech** (referring to past and present time), and **nue** (referring to motion that takes place together with the verbal action). Some of the most common Yurok preverbs are listed here:

- Circumstance, manner, and relation: **eekee**, **keekkee**, **mehl**, **neekee**, **noo**, **see**, **soo**
- Direction and location: **ee**, **nee**, **o**, **so**
- Motion: **neenee**, **nue**
- Negation: **eemee**, **mee**, **neemee**
- Time: **kee**, **keech**, **keet**, **keetee**, **keetue**, **kue**, **ma**, **ochkaa**, **wo**

See below for more information about Yurok preverbs of time (§11), negation (§12), and motion (§13).



## 6 Nouns

This section will describe a couple of changes that nouns undergo, and ways that you can modify their forms. Two areas are emphasized: changes in PLURAL nouns, expressing “more than one” (in §6.1); and the various prefixes that mean “my”, “your”, and so on (in §§6.2–6.3).

### 6.1 Plural nouns

Usually nouns have no separate singular vs. plural forms, but can refer to one or more than one. For example, **wenchokws** can mean “woman” (singular) or “women” (plural). But a few nouns do have distinct plurals; as seen in Table 9, these are mostly words for people.

SINGULAR		PLURAL	
<b>meweemor</b>	“old man”	<b>mueweemor</b>	“old men”
<b>perey</b>	“old woman”	<b>pegerey</b>	“old women”
<b>mewah</b>	“boy”	<b>mewahsegoh</b>	“boys”
<b>we’yon</b>	“girl”	<b>we’yono’</b>	“girls”
<b>wer’yers</b>	“girl”	<b>wer’yernerk</b>	“girls”
<b>huuek</b>	“child”	<b>huueksoh</b>	“children”
<b>’ne-k’ep’ew</b>	“my grandchild”	<b>’ne-k’ep’eworoh</b>	“my grandchildren”
<b>’ne-me’y</b>	“my daughter”	<b>’ne-me’yp’or</b>	“my daughters”
<b>sepolah</b>	“prairie”	<b>segepolah</b>	“prairies”
<b>knuuue</b>	“hawk”	<b>knuuuewerehl</b>	“hawks”

Table 9: Nouns with special plural forms

Modern Yurok speakers mostly use **huuek** as the singular “child” and **huueksoh** as the plural “children”, but other (earlier) speakers used both words in both meanings.

### 6.2 Possessed nouns

To express possession of nouns — “my”, “our”, “your”, etc. — Yurok has a set of PREFIXES that can be attached to the beginning of a noun:

- 1st person **’ne-** “my, our”
- 2nd person **k’e-** “your”
- 3rd person **’we- ~ ’ue-** “her, his, its, their”

Like nouns themselves, these prefixes do not have separate singular vs. plural forms: **’ne-** means “my” or “our”, **k’e-** means “your” (singular or plural), and **’we- ~ ’ue-** means “her”, “his”, “its”, or “their”. A few examples are given in Table 10 on page 19.

The possessive prefixes are also used to construct longer expressions like those in (9).

“X”	<b>smohta’r</b>	<b>nepuy</b>	<b>’yohlkoych’</b>	<b>pahtuen</b>
“my, our X”	<b>’ne-smohta’r</b>	<b>’ne-nepuy</b>	<b>’ne-’yohlkoych’</b>	<b>’ne-pahtuen</b>
“your X”	<b>k’e-smohta’r</b>	<b>k’e-nepuy</b>	<b>k’e-’yohlkoych’</b>	<b>k’e-pahtuen</b>
“her, his, its, their X”	<b>’we-smohta’r</b>	<b>’we-nepuy</b>	<b>’we-’yohlkoych’</b>	<b>ue-pahtuen</b>
	“bow”	“salmon”	“(fire)wood”	“neck”

Table 10: Nouns with possessive prefixes

(9) Possessive phrases

**nek ’ne-pahtuen** “my neck”

**kue ch’eeshah ue-pahtuen** “the dog’s neck”

**’ne-psech ’we-yohlkoych’** “my father’s wood”

**k’e-psech ue-psech** “your father’s father”

The possessive prefixes also often change their form, according to the following three rules:

- If a noun begins with **h**, then at least in fluid speech, Yurok speakers usually substitute the initial consonant of the prefix for the **h**. See Table 11 for examples.

NOUN		POSSESSED NOUN	
<b>haamoh</b>	“bear grass”	<b>k’-aamoh</b>	“your bear grass”
<b>ha’aag</b>	“rock”	<b>’n-a’aag</b>	“my rock”
<b>herhkerh</b>	“potato”	<b>’w-erhkerh</b>	“his potato”
<b>holeehl</b>	“hazel stick(s)”	<b>’w-oleehl</b>	“her hazel sticks”
<b>herkwterkws</b>	“drinking basket”	<b>’w-erkwterkws</b>	“his drinking basket”

Table 11: Possessive prefixes and nouns beginning with **h**

- In the third person (“her, his, its, their”), the prefix has two basic forms, **’we-** and **ue-**. Here is how you know which one to use:
  - Use **ue-** if the noun begins with any **k** sound or any “labial” sound (articulated with the lips), in other words, any of the following: **k k’ kw kw’ p p’ w’w m’m**.
  - Use **’we-** otherwise, unless the noun begins with **h**, in which case see the first rule above.

This is called the KMPW rule, named (by Kay Inong) after the consonants K, M, and P, and W. Some examples of the rule are listed in Table 12 on page 20.

- A special pattern is found in words beginning with **hue-** in the third singular (“his, her, its, their”) form, **h** is replaced by **’** rather than **’w**. The only common examples are with **huuek** “child” and **huueksoh** “children”: **’n-uuекsoh** “my children”, but **uuекsoh** “his or her children”. Note that word-initial glottal stop (ʔ) is not written, so the word **uuекsoh** is actually pronounced as **’uuекsoh**, and the initial glottal stop (ʔ) is the possessive prefix!

A final rule that affects possessive prefixes has to do with their stress pattern. Usually the prefix is not stressed, and the possessed noun has its usual stress pattern. But for a small subset of nouns (see §6.3) with one syllable, the prefix plus noun are treated as a single word and the prefix is stressed. Examples are listed in (10).

KMPW NOUNS (PREFIX UE-)	OTHER NOUNS (PREFIX 'WE-)
<b>ue-kahkah</b> “his sturgeon”	<b>'we-leen</b> “his or her eyes”
<b>ue-mey'</b> “her daughter”	<b>'we-'yoch</b> “his boat”
<b>ue-meehl</b> “his legs”	<b>'we-'lep</b> “his or her hair”
<b>ue-kegoh</b> “her acorn soup”	<b>'we-to'</b> “her hip”
<b>oohl 'ue-pop</b> “Indian bread”	<b>oohl 'we-ekah</b> “Indian cap”
<b>ue-'wers</b> “his skin”	
<b>tekwonekws ue-kwerhl</b> ‘television’	

Table 12: Third-person possessive prefixes: The KMPW rule

(10) One-syllable nouns with stressed possessive prefixes

a. Nouns beginning with **l** and **hl**:

**'ne-hlpehl** “my eyelash”, **'ne-leen** “my eyes”, **'ne-luehl** “my mouth”, **'ne-lew** “my net”, **'ne-'lep** “my hair”, **'ne-let** “my (a woman’s) sister”

b. Other nouns: **'ne-seen** ~ **'ne-sen** “my arm”, **'ne-chkah** “my foot”, **'ne-psech** “my father”

This pattern is important, because it explains why sometimes the prefix vowel is tense **e** rather than the otherwise expected lax **e**. The words in (10) regularly have tense **e**. Note that this rule applies only to words of one syllable, including ALMOST all words beginning with **l** or **hl**.<sup>4</sup> The words in (10) are mostly dependent nouns, because many one-syllable possessed nouns happen to be dependent.

### 6.3 Dependent and independent nouns

Yurok has a class of nouns that cannot be used without a possessive prefix. An example is “father”. You must say **'ne-psech** “my or our father”, **k'e-psech** “your father”, or **ue-psech** “his or her father”; you cannot simply say †**psech** or †**kue psech**!

Nouns that require a possessive prefix are called DEPENDENT (abbreviated *n dep* in the dictionary); others, called INDEPENDENT, may occur by themselves with no prefix. Almost all Yurok dependent nouns are kinship terms (§6.3.1) or body part terms (§6.3.2).

#### 6.3.1 Kinship terms

Dependent kinship terms are listed in Table 13, divided into four groups according to type of relation.<sup>5</sup> Independent kinship terms are listed in Table 14, divided into five groups. Note that many (but not all) independent kinship terms end in **-os** and that many also have address terms, used in speaking directly to the person.

<sup>4</sup>The only clear exception is **'ne-ley'** “my (a woman’s) brother” (and other possessed forms of this word), in which the prefix is unstressed and its vowel is therefore lax. In the case of **'ne-'lep** “my hair”, most speakers have stress and a tense **e** in the prefix but some speakers leave the prefix unstressed and its vowel lax.

<sup>5</sup>In Classical Yurok, the term **'ne-mey'** was apparently used only for unmarried daughters. With twentieth-century changes in family structure, it is also used for married daughters and the term **'ne-'moo** has fallen out of use. The term **'ne-chkar** designates in-laws after the blood relative connecting them has died; for example, after her brother dies, a woman could use this term for her brother’s wife.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN	
'ne-chek "my mother"	'ne-psech "my father"
'ne-mey' "my (unmarried) daughter", PLURAL 'ne-me'yp'or	'ne-'moo "my married daughter" 'ne-merm "my son"
SIBLINGS AND COUSINS	
'ne-ley' "my (a woman's) brother or male cousin"	'ne-let "my (a woman's) sister or female cousin"
'ne-wey "my (a man's) sister or female cousin"	'ne-ykew "my younger sibling"
'ne-paa "my (a man's) brother or male cousin", PLURAL 'ne-paagoh	
NIECES AND NEPHEWS	
'n-ekchuem "my nephew"	'ne-romech "my niece"
RELATIONS BY MARRIAGE	
'n-ahpew "my wife"	'ne-nos "my husband"
'n-ahpemew "my mate, my spouse"	'ne-chne'wkw'os "my son-in-law"
'ne-k'ep'ch'em "my daughter-in-law"	'ne-kwaa "my more distant relative by marriage"
'ne-chkar "my relative by marriage after the connecting relative has died"	

Table 13: Dependent kinship terms

REFERENCE TERMS	ADDRESS TERMS
PARENTS	
kokos "mother" (familiar)	kok "mom"
totos "father" (familiar)	tot "dad"
GRANDPARENTS AND GRANDCHILDREN	
kuechos "grand- or great-grandmother"	kuech "grand- or great-grandmother"
peechowos "grand- or great-grandfather"	peechech "grand- or great-grandfather"
k'ep'ew "grand- or great-grandchild", PLURAL k'ep'eworoh	
kekchew "deceased grandmother"	
peychew "deceased grandfather"	
	tos "child or grandchild"
SIBLINGS AND COUSINS	
meechos "older brother or male cousin"	meet "older brother"
peenos "older sister or female cousin"	peen' "older sister"
cheechos "much younger sibling"	chich "younger sibling"
AUNTS AND UNCLES	
tuelos "aunt"	tuel' "aunt"
cheemos "uncle"	cheem' "uncle"
RELATIONS BY MARRIAGE	
cheween "mother-in-law"	
paarew "father-in-law"	
chnaa "woman's brother-in-law"	
tey "man's brother-in-law"	
chneen "sister-in-law (of a man or a woman)"	
me'loh "widow(er) living with a spouse's family"	

Table 14: Independent kinship terms

TERMS BEGINNING WITH VOWELS

'n-aawech “my back”	'n-eeph1 “my tongue”
'n-ekwol “my fishing rock”	'n-erp'ern' “my nose”
'n-erp'ern' 'we-tohpew “my nostril” (“my nose hole”)	

CONSONANT-INITIAL TERMS

'na-rkow “my armpit”	'na-rpehl “my tooth, my teeth”
'ne-hlp'ehl “my eyelash”	'ne-keek “my hips”
'ne-kwen “my chest”	'ne-leen “my eye(s)”
'ne-luehl “my mouth”	'ne-yah “my stomach, my belly”
'ne-'rep' “my eyebrow”	'ne-chkah “my foot, my feet”
'ne-leen “my eye(s)”	'ne-'rep' “my eyebrow”
'ne-seen ~ 'ne-sen “my arm”	'ne-ykwet “my (a little boy's) penis”

Table 15: Dependent body part terms

6.3.2 Body part terms

Many body part terms are independent; but many others are dependent nouns, requiring a possessive prefix whenever they are used. Among the numerous independent body part terms are **chekws** “heart”, **'leptoyhl** “hair”, **merterw** “butt”, **pahtuen** “neck”, **errkerhl** “knee”, and **'werrh1ker'** “bone”, and many other nouns. Nearly all dependent body part terms are listed in Table 15. In some cases, as in the first set of examples in Table 15, the prefixes appear in their shorter forms because the dependent nouns begin with vowels.

Finally, it is important to notice the difference between the two patterns shown in Table 16. Nouns like **errkerhl** “knee” are actually pronounced with an initial glottal stop (ʔ), not written here. (If it were written, one would write **'ne-'errkerhl** “my knee”.) But in **'n-erp'ern'** “my nose”, there is no extra glottal stop immediately before the **er**.

	DEPENDENT	INDEPENDENT
“my, our X”	'n-erp'ern'	'ne-errkerhl ~ 'ner-errkerhl
“your X”	k'-erp'ern'	k'e-errkerhl ~ k'er-errkerhl
“her, his, its X”	'w-erp'ern'	'we-errkerhl ~ 'wer-errkerhl
	“nose”	“knee”

Table 16: Two possessed noun patterns

**Key topics in §6:** plural nouns; possessed nouns (“my”, “your”, etc.); dependent vs. independent nouns; kinship and body part nouns

**Not covered:** locative nouns; short forms of nouns; the prefix **me-** “somebody's”

## 7 Articles

(Articles are included in this booklet, though they are not part of the “basic”-level Yurok standards, because they are so frequently used together with the nouns discussed in §6.)

### 7.1 The articles *kue* and *k’ee*

Yurok has two articles, **kue** and **k’ee**. The first of these, **kue**, is far more common and is used in most contexts where English *the* would be used; it can mean “the one(s) we were talking about”, “the one(s) you know about”, or “that” or “those”. Articles cannot be used on their own; they must be used together with a noun. The second article, **k’ee**, means “this” or “these”, or “the one(s) right here”. Some examples are given in (11–12).

#### (11) Examples of **kue**

- a. **Nek kue mewah meskwok’**  
 “I’m treating the boy with medicine.” GT 2007 (AG)
- b. **Kue pegerk pa’aahl ’ee koo’**  
 “The man is standing in the water.” JJ 2007 (LC)
- c. **Keech hl’ewhl’ekw kue ’weryhl**  
 “The eggs broke.” JJ 2006 (AG)

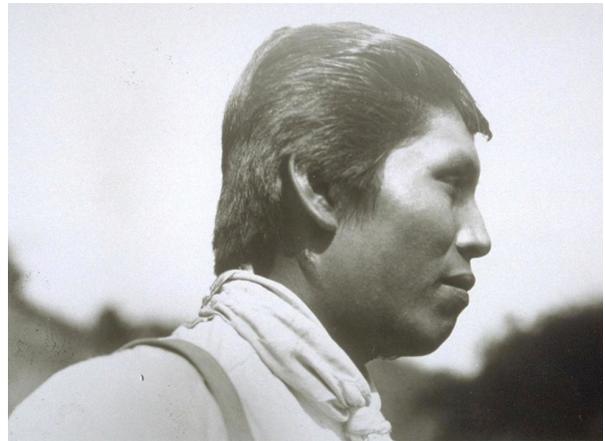
#### (12) Examples of **k’ee**

- a. **Cho’ negahchkem’ k’ee ahtemar**  
 “Pass out these papers.” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- b. **Nek megetohlkwok’ k’ee ch’eeshah**  
 “I’m taking care of this dog.” FS 1980 (PP)

If you are pointing or referring to something near you, or newly under discussion, use **k’ee**. Use **kue** otherwise.

### 7.2 Articles and possessives

A notable difference between English and Yurok concerns the use of articles together with possessives. In English, you cannot say †*the my father* or †*the my leg*, but in Yurok, the equivalent expressions are not only common but ordinary. In English, you can say *this leg of mine*, but nothing as simple as †*the my leg*. In Yurok, by contrast, you would ordinarily say **kue ’ne-psech** “my father” or **kue ’ne-meehl** “my leg”; **kue** implies familiarity, or that people know that the person or thing exists, and this is ordinarily true of body parts and kin terms. You might say plain **’ne-psech** “my father” or **’ne-meehl** “my leg” in a situation where you hadn’t been talking about your father or your leg, or where their existence was even uncertain. (An orphan might say **Neemokw’ ’ne-psech** “I don’t have a father.”)



**Figure 2:** Robert Spott in 1907. The adoptive son of Captain Spott, Robert wrote *Yurok narratives* (1940) with A. L. Kroeber and also worked with the linguist R. H. Robins.

- (13) Examples of **kue** with possessives
- a. **Kue k'e-k'ep'ew ho negeeen'.**  
 "Your granddaughter was looking for you." GT 2007 (LC)
  - b. **Kue 'n-ekchuem o chkey'.**  
 "My nephew fell asleep." AF 2002 (JB)
  - c. **Kues kue 'ne-leen?**  
 "Where are my glasses?" GT 2003 (YLCB)
  - d. **Kues lootem' kue 'ne-ekah?**  
 "Where did you put my hat?" GM 2004 (AG)
  - e. **Keech tmoolor' kue k'e-chekas.**  
 "I shot your donkey." FS 1986 (JP)
- (14) Examples of **k'ee** with possessives
- a. **Cho' myootem' k'ee k'e-no'oy.**  
 "Put on your shoes." JJ 2006 (AG)
  - b. **Kee hekwsem' k'ee 'ne-ma'a'.**  
 "You will find my spear." MM 1927 (ES)

This difference between Yurok and English is important because people often refer to family members, body parts, and familiar possessions like glasses and clothing. The article **kue** is ordinarily used in such references.

**Key topics in §7:** **kue** "that, the" vs. **k'ee** "this"; using articles in possessive phrases

**Not covered:** using articles in attributive phrases

## 8 Forming verbs

Broadly speaking, Yurok verbs are of two types:

- non-inflected verbs, which do not change their form depending on the subject or object
- inflected verbs, which do change their form

Every inflected verb — that is, every verb that changes its form depending on whether its subject is first person (“I, we”), second person (“you”), etc. — belongs to one of four **VERB CLASSES**. The four classes are named according to the vowel that sometimes appears before the ending:

- **e**-class verbs (see §8.2.1 and §8.3 below)
- **o**-class verbs (see §8.2.2 and §8.3 below)
- **oo**-class verbs (see §8.2.3 and §8.3 below)
- **aa**-class verbs

The first three of these classes are described below. The fourth class, the **aa**-class verbs, includes a very small number of verbs like **chewep’ak’** “I tidy it”, and is not illustrated here.

For details about the forms of individual verbs, you may want to consult the *Yurok Verb Guide*, which describes usage and lists most of the forms of many common verbs. In general, when you learn a verb, you should learn its class (and its subclass if it is an **oo**-class verb), whether its usual plural is collective, whether it has any irregular forms, and its usage patterns.

### 8.1 Non-inflected verbs

Noninflected verbs (abbreviated *vn* in the dictionary) have no endings. They are shorter — sometimes a lot shorter — than their inflected counterparts; usually they are used in familiar expressions or in certain settings in narratives. See Table 17 on page 26 for a list of some common non-inflected verbs, given with inflected counterparts where those are common. Examples in sentences are given in (15).

- (15) a. **Skewok kee ’ne-newochek’.**  
 “I want to see you.” FS 195I (RHR)
- b. **Kues keech roo? Chomee’sh keech roo.**  
 “What time is it? It’s mid-day.”
- c. **Mos nek kom.**  
 “I don’t know.”
- d. **Nek soo neemoksue nue nes o wee’shk’oh.**  
 “I don’t think he’ll come today.” FS 195I (RHR)
- e. **Keetee kol’ nue goh (hoh).**  
 “I’m going to work.” FS 195I (RHR)

NON-INFLECTED VERBS	INFLECTED COUNTERPARTS
<b>chahchew</b> “it’s difficult”	
<b>chergerhcherhl</b> “be lazy”	<b>chergerhcherhkok’</b> “I am lazy”
<b>chween</b> “speak”	<b>chweenkepek’</b> “I speak”
<b>ekonor</b> “keep safe”	<b>ekonorkwok’</b> “I keep (people) safe”
<b>e’gah</b> “eat a meal” (> 1 person)	
<b>ha’p’ehl</b> “forget”	<b>ha’p’ehlkok’</b> “I forget”
<b>hlkyork</b> “watch”	<b>hlkyorkwek’</b> “I watch”
<b>hl’e’goh</b> “thunder”	<b>hl’e’gohko’hl</b> “it’s thundering”
<b>hoh</b> “make”	<b>hohkuemek’</b> “I make”
<b>keychek</b> “be tired”	
<b>kweget</b> “visit”	
<b>myah</b> “jump”	<b>myaahlkepek’</b> “I jump”
<b>neeen’</b> “look”	<b>neee’nek’</b> “I look at it” ~ <b>neee’nowok’</b> “I watch it”
<b>rohkor’</b> “roll”	<b>rohko’repek’</b> “I’m rolling”
<b>sa’ar</b> “be crazy”	<b>sa’arkeyek’</b> “I am crazy”
<b>skewok</b> “want, like”	<b>skewokseemek’</b> “I want, I like”
<b>slo’ehl</b> “be skinny”	<b>slo’ehlkok’</b> “I am skinny”
<b>soch</b> “say, speak”	<b>sochpeyewek’</b> “I say”
<b>soo</b> “think”	<b>soosek’</b> “I think”
<b>serrhl</b> “do”	<b>serrhlerpek’</b> “I do”
<b>ten</b> “it’s raining”	<b>tenpewe’hl</b> “it’s raining”
<b>tewomehl</b> “be glad”	<b>tewomehlok’</b> “I am glad”
<b>toh</b> “talk, use language”	

Table 17: Some common Yurok non-inflected verbs

## 8.2 Singular verbs

### 8.2.1 Singular e-class verbs

The chart in (16) shows how e-class verbs work for singular subjects, that is, where one person does the verbal action; either I do it (1 SG); you (one person) do it (2 SG); or he, she, or it does it (3 SG).

(16) Singular e-class verbs

1 SG	<b>ro’opek’</b>	<b>myootek’</b>	<b>kepoyuerek’</b>
2 SG	<b>ro’opem’</b>	<b>myootem’</b>	<b>kepoyuerem’</b>
3 SG	<b>ro’op’</b>	<b>myoot’</b>	<b>kepoyuer’</b>
IMPV. SG	<b>ro’op’es</b>	<b>myoot’es</b>	<b>kepoyue’res</b>
	“run”	“push (it)”	“swim”

Most e-class verbs are regular according to the pattern in (16), but a few are irregular. For example, **hegolek’** has two irregular forms: **hem’** “he, she says, tells” and imperative **hach’es** or **heksem’** “tell him, her!”

Two e-class sub-regularities for IMPERATIVES — imperative patterns that don’t hold for all e-class verbs, but that are regular for certain subclasses — are notable:

I SG VERB FORM	IMPERATIVE SINGULAR
<b>ekonemek'</b> "I hold (it), I keep (it)"	<b>ek'ones</b> "hold it!"
<b>mehlonemek'</b> "I touch (it)"	<b>mehl'ones</b> "touch (it)!"
<b>ke'yonemek'</b> "I release (it), I let (it) go"	<b>ke'yones</b> "let go of it!"
<b>s'ooponemek'</b> "I hit (him)"	<b>s'oop'ones</b> "hit him!"

Table 18: Imperatives of verbs in **-onemek'**

- Verbs in **-eemek'** and **-uemek'** make imperative singular forms in **-'es** and **-'ues**, not **-ee'mes** and **-ue'mes**. An example is **knoks'es** "leave!", the imperative of **knokseemek'** "I leave".
- Verbs ending in **-onemek'** often have imperative singulars ending in **-'ones** (sometimes in addition to the expected forms in **-'onemes**).

Examples of the second pattern are shown in Table 18.

### 8.2.2 Singular **o**-class verbs

The regular pattern, illustrated in (17), is very similar to the **e**-class pattern (but with **o**, not **e**). Note that "listen" in (17) has an alternative imperative **hechpar'**. Similar **o**-class verbs include **hloypeyok'** "I taste it", **nohsuenowok'** "I grow up (in a place)", **tenpeyok'** "I overeat", and **neee'nowok'** "I watch, look for".

(17) Singular **o**-class verbs

I SG	<b>chpe'royok'</b>	<b>ruerowok'</b>
2 SG	<b>chpe'royom'</b>	<b>ruerowom'</b>
3 SG	<b>chpe'roy'</b>	<b>ruerow'</b>
IMPV. SG	<b>chpe'ro'yos</b>	<b>ruero'wos</b>
	"listen"	"sing"

There are common irregularities in two areas of the **o**-class singular. First, in the imperative form, verbs in **-ey-** or **-oy-** often lack the imperative glottalization. For example, the imperative of **ko'moyok'** "I hear, I understand" is **ko'moyos**. Second, in the third-person singular of many verbs in **-owok'**, but not in **ruerowok'** above, the **-ow-** is absent. Examples are in (18).

(18) Third-person **o**-class verb forms without **-ow-**

I SG	<b>wa'soyowok'</b>	<b>sonowok'</b>
2 SG	<b>wa'soyowom'</b>	<b>sonowom'</b>
3 SG	<b>wa'soy'</b>	<b>son'</b>
	"be poor"	"act or be (in a certain way)"

### 8.2.3 Singular oo-class verbs

The **oo**-class verbs are not quite as straightforward as the **e**-class and **o**-class verbs. There are four main **oo**-class patterns, differing in the 3rd person singular form. Note that some speakers shorten the 2nd person singular **oo** to **o** (making the 1st and 2nd person forms identical to **o**-class forms). Examples are given in (19).

(19) Singular **oo**-class verbs

1 SG	<b>kohchewok'</b>	<b>wenok'</b>	<b>sootok'</b>	<b>rechok'</b>
2 SG	<b>kohchewoom'</b>	<b>wenoom'</b>	<b>sootoom'</b>	<b>rechoom'</b>
3 SG	<b>kohchewom'</b>	<b>wenokw'</b>	<b>sootokw'</b> or <b>sootol'</b>	<b>recho'</b>
IMPV SG	<b>kohche'wos</b>	<b>wenos</b>	<b>soot'os</b>	<b>rech'os</b>
	“catch”	“come”	“go”	“paddle”

In other words, for an **oo**-class verb you have to learn what 3rd person singular form it is. There are some good generalizations: for example, verbs in **-echok'** mostly go like **sootok'**. This includes a lot of verbs, such as **neskwechok'** “I arrive”, **kwomhlechok'** “I return”, **sloychok'** “I descend, I go downhill”. See the *Yurok Verb Guide* for details about many of these individual verbs.

## 8.3 Plurals

Plural verbs distinguish two kinds of formation: collective and non-collective. Collectives have an extra element inserted before the plural ending, for example **-ee'm-** or **-e'm-** below. When you learn a verb, you should also learn which plural it usually forms. (A verb that usually has collective plurals can sometimes make non-collective plurals, but the best learning strategy is to learn its ordinary plural.)

Plurals of **e**-class verbs are illustrated in (20). It is important to note that collective and non-collective plurals have different second-person plural (“you”) endings. Collectives have **-ow'**, while non-collective **e**-class verbs have **-ue'**.

(20) Plurals of **e**-class verbs

	NON-COLLECTIVE PLURALS		COLLECTIVE PLURALS	
1 SG	<b>sermertek'</b>	<b>hohkuemek'</b>	<b>nepek'</b>	<b>helomeyek'</b>
2 SG	<b>sermertem'</b>	<b>hohkuemem'</b>	<b>nepem'</b>	<b>helomeyem'</b>
3 SG	<b>sermert'</b>	<b>hohkuem'</b>	<b>nep'</b>	<b>helomey'</b>
IMPV SG	<b>sermert'es</b>	<b>ho'k'ues</b>	<b>nep's</b>	<b>helomes</b>
1 PL	<b>sermertoh</b>	<b>hohkuemoh</b>	<b>nepee'moh</b>	<b>helomeye'moh</b>
2 PL	<b>sermertue'</b>	<b>hohkuemue'</b>	<b>nepee'mow'</b>	<b>helomeye'mow'</b>
3 PL	<b>sermertehl</b>	<b>hohkuemehl</b>	<b>nepee'mehl</b>	<b>helomeye'mehl</b>
IMPV PL	<b>sermertekw</b>	<b>hohkuemekw</b>	<b>nepee'mekw</b>	<b>helomeye'mekw</b>
	“beat, kill”	“make”	“eat”	“dance”

Examples of **e**-class plurals are given in (21–22).

- (21) a. **Nekah skewokseemoh yo’.**  
 “We like him.” YL 1951
- b. **Kelew hes neekECHYUE tokseemue’ kue yo’hlkoh?**  
 “Do you all admire them?” YL 1951
- c. **Tee’neesho skewokseemehl?**  
 “What do they want?” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- (22) a. **Kol’ nue’ neps!**  
 “Come and eat!” MR ~1970 (MRo)
- b. **Kol’ nue nepee’mekw!**  
 “Come and eat (plural)!” GT 2003 (YLCB)

Collective and non-collective plurals of **o**-class and **oo**-class verbs are illustrated in (23).

- (23) Plurals of **o**-class and **oo**-class verbs

	NON-COLLECTIVE PLURALS		COLLECTIVE PLURALS	
1 SG	<b>neee’nowok’</b>	<b>kooychkwok’</b>	<b>ruerowok’</b>	<b>hlkook’</b>
2 SG	<b>neee’nowom’</b>	<b>kooychkwoom’</b>	<b>ruerowom’</b>	<b>hlkoom’</b>
3 SG	<b>neee’now’</b>	<b>kooychkwom’</b>	<b>ruerow’</b>	<b>hlko’</b>
1 PL	<b>neee’nowoh</b>	<b>kooychkwoh</b>	<b>ruerowoo’moh</b>	<b>hlkuue’moh</b>
2 PL	<b>neee’nowow’</b>	<b>kooychkwow’</b>	<b>ruerowoo’mow’</b>	<b>hlkuue’mow’</b>
3 PL	<b>neee’nowohl</b>	<b>kooychkwohl</b>	<b>ruerowoo’mehl</b>	<b>hlkuue’mehl</b>
IMPV PL	<b>neee’nowekw</b>	<b>kooychkwekw</b>	<b>ruerowoo’mekw</b>	<b>hlkuue’mekw</b>
	“look for”	“buy”	“sing”	“gather acorns”

Some verbs, illustrated in Table 19, have collective plurals that sound very different from the singulars. These are simply irregular, and must be learned as such. (In some cases the expected regular plurals may be possible, but are extremely rare.)

SINGULAR	PLURAL
<b>ook’</b> “I am”	<b>oole’moh</b> “we are”
<b>hegok’</b> “I go, walk”	<b>hoole’moh</b> “we go, walk”
<b>sootok’</b> “I go, leave”	<b>le’moh</b> “we go, leave”
<b>neskwechok’</b> “I arrive, come”	<b>nuue’moh</b> “we arrive, come”

Table 19: Irregular collective plurals

An important and useful rule is that collective verbs can be used without endings: they are optional. In (24–26), several collective plural verbs are illustrated with and without their endings.

- (24) Examples of **oolem’**
- a. **Weet nee oolem’ kue kwegeruer’.**  
 “Pigs live there.” AF 2004 (AG)
- b. **Nekah neeko’hl pueleek nue nee oole’moh.**  
 “We often go to the beach to stay.” FS 1980 (PP)

- c. **Wonew nee oole'mehl.**  
 “They live up in the hills.” YL 1951
- (25) Examples of **hoolem'**
- a. **Raak nee ma hoolem'**  
 “They went up the creek.” FS 1980 (PP)
- b. **Nekah kee hoole'moh kue 'ne-negeee'n.**  
 “We will all go and look for it.” FS 1980 (PP)
- (26) Examples of **lem'**
- a. **Pechue keetee lem'**  
 “They (salmon) are going to go upriver.” AF 2004 (AG)
- b. **Lekwsee le'mekw!**  
 “Go outside!” GT 2003 (YLCB)

#### 8.4 Table of verb inflections

See Table 20 on page 31 for a summary of **e**-class, **o**-class, and **oo**-class singulars and plurals, including for each verb only the more commonly used type of inflected plural (collective or non-collective).<sup>6</sup> For additional details, see the various sections above and the *Yurok Verb Guide*.

**Key topics in §8:** verb classes; 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person verbs; singulars and plurals; collective and non-collective plurals

**Not covered:** passives; bipersonals; attributives; iteratives; repetitives; reflexives; reciprocals

<sup>6</sup>Note that **ro'opek'** also has a collective non-inflected plural **lo'omah** “we, you, they run”, which is more common than the non-collective inflected plural.

	E-CLASS	E-CLASS	O-CLASS	O-CLASS	O-CLASS	OO-CLASS	OO-CLASS	OO-CLASS
						3 SG -Ō'm	3 SG -okw'	3 SG -o'
SINGULAR	1	ro'opek'	nepek'	nee'nowok'	ruerowok'	kohchewok'	hegok'	rechok'
	2	ro'opem'	nepem'	nee'nowom'	ruerowom'	kohchewoom'	hegoom'	rechoom'
	3	ro'op'	nep'	nee'now'	ruerow'	kohchewom'	hegokw'	recho'
	IMPV	ro'opes	nep's	nee'no'wos	ruero'wos	kohche'wos	hego'och	rech'os
PLURAL	1	(ro'opoh)	(nepoh)	nee'nowoh		kohchewoh		rechoh
	2	(ro'opue')	(nepue')	nee'nowow'		kohchewow'		rechow'
	3	(ro'opehl)	(nepehl)	nee'nowohl		kohchewohl		rechohl
	IMPV	(ro'opekw)	(nepekw)	nee'nowekw		kohchewekw		rechekw
COLLECTIVE	1	lo'omah	nepee'moh		ruerowoo'moh		hoolé'moh	
	2	lo'omah	nepee'mow'		ruerowoo'mow'		hoolé'mow'	
	3	lo'omah	nepee'mehl		ruerowoo'mehl		hoolé'mehl	
	IMPV		nepee'mekw		ruerowoo'mekw		hoolé'mekw	
	"run"	"eat"	"look for"	"sing"	"catch"	"go, walk"	"paddle"	

Table 20: Singular and plural patterns for e-class, o-class, and oo-class verbs (parenthesized forms are rare)

## 9 Subjunctive verbs

A special topic in verb formation concerns so-called SUBJUNCTIVE verbs. These are formed in a distinctive way and are used in distinctive types of sentences. There are many details and subtleties in their usage that will not be discussed here, but even a basic description gives language learners a powerful tool.

### 9.1 Basic patterns

Subjunctives have three main characteristics:

- They use the prefixes that otherwise express possessive meanings (**'ne-**, **k'e-**, **'we-** ~ **ue-**).
- The singular subjunctive endings are the same as ordinary first-person singular endings.
- They are used in special contexts — for example, after **skewok** or with **neeko'hl** “always”.

The prefixes and endings are shown in the singular paradigms in Table 21. The subjunctives in Table 21 have prefixes; their endings make them look like first-person singular verbs, but in fact some of them are not. Examples in sentences are given in (27), including questions in (27d–27e).

Nek skewok kee 'ne-nepek' nepuy.	“I want to eat salmon.”
Ke'l skewok kee k'e-nepek' nepuy.	“You want to eat salmon.”
Yo' skewok kee 'we-nepek' nepuy.	“He or she wants to eat salmon.”
Skewok kee 'ne-ruerowok'.	“I want to sing.”
Skewok kee k'e-ruerowok'.	“You want to sing.”
Skewok kee 'we-ruerowok'.	“He or she wants to sing.”
Skewok kee 'ne-sootok'.	“I want to go.”
Skewok kee k'e-sootok'.	“You want to go.”
Skewok kee 'we-sootok'.	“He or she wants to go.”

Table 21: Basic subjunctive singular forms

- (27) a. **Skewok kee k'-egook'.**  
“You want to go.” MM 1927 (ES)
- b. **Skewok kee 'ne-rekwoh skuuewolonee pa'ah.**  
“I want to drink soda.” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- c. **Skewok kee 'ne-moskek' k'e-cheek.**  
“I want to borrow your money.” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- d. **Skewok hes kel' kee k'e-megelok'?**  
“Do you want to go along?” FS 1980 (PP)
- e. **Tee'neesho skewok kee k'e-nepek'?**  
“What do you want to eat?” GT 2003 (YLCB)

To form a plural subjunctive, the appropriate prefix is used (first person **'ne-**, second person **k'e-**, third person **'we-** ~ **ue-**) and the ordinary verb ending is used as it would be used elsewhere.

## 9.2 Using subjunctives

The following are two very common contexts where subjunctive verbs are used:

- with **neeko'hl** and other similar words that mean “always”
- generally, in many situations when two verbs are combined in a single sentence

The first context for subjunctive use — subjunctive verbs with **neeko'hl** — is illustrated in (28).

- (28) a. **Neeko'hl k'e-tetolohlek'.**  
 “You're always crying.” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- b. **'Ne-romech neeko'hl 'w-ahkwsek'.**  
 “My niece is always laughing.” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- c. **Neeko'hl 'we-hlmeyowohl.**  
 “They are always mean.” FS 1980 (PP)
- d. **Neeko'hl kol' nee k'-egok'.**  
 “You are always going off somewhere.” YL 1951
- e. **Neeko'hl wee'eet o 'we-chyuuekw'enek'.**  
 “She was always sitting there.” MM 1927 (ES)

It is occasionally possible, as in (29), for the prefix to be separated from the verb. In this example, the prefix **'we-** occurs before **skuy'** because **skuy' soneenepek'** is such a close unit and common phrase.

- (29) **Neeko'hl 'we-skuy' soneenepek'.**  
 “She or he always feels good.” FS 1980 (PP)

Examples of the second context for subjunctive use above — the combination of two verbs — were given above in (27). A few other examples appear in (30), showing that subjunctives are used together with verbs that mean “thank you (for . . .)” or “I am glad (that . . .)”.

- (30) a. **Tewomehl kee k'e-megelok'.**  
 “I'm glad that you came with me.” GT 2007 (LC)
- b. **Wokhlew 'ne-newochek'.**  
 “I'm glad to see you.” MR ~1970 (MRo)
- c. **Koweeshcho' k'ee ma k'er-nergery.**  
 “Thank you for helping.” FS 1951 (RHR)

Learners will note that in Classical Yurok not all speakers used the words **wokhlew** and **koweeshcho'** in the same way they are used today.



## 10 Expressing “be”, “have”, and related meanings

In Yurok, meanings like “be” and “have” are expressed quite differently from the way they are expressed in English. A few common constructions are described here.

### 10.1 Being

In several contexts English might use a form of “be”; Yurok construes each context differently.

First, to express a meaning like “I am tall”, “the boat is long”, “my daughter is good”, etc., usually a Yurok verb meaning “am tall”, “is long”, “is good”, etc. would be used. This is because Yurok has no adjectives, and usually uses verbs to express the meanings that are expressed with adjectives in English.

Second, to express a meaning like “we are in Requa”, “you were outside”, “it is in the house”, etc. — sentences in which somebody or something is said to be in a location — one of the Yurok posture verbs is often used: **oolo** “stand”, **key** “sit”, or **oyhl** “lie”. Examples are given in (31).

(31) Posture verbs used to express location

a. **Neskwee kue oolo' keech laayekeek'.**

“It’s flowing past where (I) am (where I stand).”

FS 1980 (PP)

b. **Kue wee' o key kue chekas skelee keech lechee'.**

“The donkey that was (sitting) there had fallen down.”

FS 1986 (JP)

Third, to express a meaning like “this is a salmon”, “my pet is a cat”, “I am a doctor”, etc. — sentences in which somebody or something is said to be a type of thing — you just use the noun itself with no verb that means “is” or “be”. Examples are given in (32–33).

(32) Examples of “X (is) ”Y”

a. **Kee nuemee peleen nepuy.**

“(I) will (be) a very big salmon.”

MM 1927 (ES)

(33) Examples of “X (is) ”Y” with **wee'**

a. **Segep wee' kue nepuy.**

“That salmon (was) Coyote.”

MM 1927 (ES)

b. **Nek kwelekw wee' neemuech 'ne-tektoh.**

“It (is) my own log.”

FS 1951 (YL)

[*Intermediate-advanced topic*] In (34), note the use of the past time preverb **ho**. If **ho** is placed inside a noun phrase, as in (34a) where it is between **kue** “the, that” and **k'e-ka'ar** “your pet”, then it modifies the noun with the meaning “former”. If it is placed outside the noun phrase, as in (34b), then it expresses past time: “it was my boat”.

(34) a. **Nek wee' kue ho k'e-ka'ar.**

“I (am) your former pet.”

FS 1951 (YL)

b. **Nek wee' ho 'ne-'yoch.**

“It was my boat.”

YL 1951

## 10.2 Having

Yurok lacks a verb with the precise meaning of English *have*.<sup>7</sup> Instead, to express the meaning of English sentences like *I have a brother* or *You have a pretty dress*, Yurok uses a form of the verb **ook'** "I am". This will seem counterintuitive to English-speaking students, and it may be difficult to master, but it is one of the most common of all Yurok constructions.

Schematically, where X stands for some noun, the construction is this: **okw' ne-X** "I have an X". But the verb form **okw'** does not actually mean "have"; it is a third-person singular form of **ook'** "I am", and it means literally "there is". What the schematic sentence **okw' ne-X** means literally is "there is my X" or "my X exists". This is how Yurok, like many languages around the world, expresses the meaning "have".

Some actual examples are given in (35). Note the position occupied by modifiers of the noun: attributive modifiers like **skuyenee** "good" in (35b) appear after **okw'**; but nouns and pronouns that emphasize or identify the possessor, including **kel'** "you" in (35b) and **pegoy** "yellowhammer" in (35c), typically appear before **okw'**.



Figure 3: Row of three houses in Wahsek (early 20th century)

(35) Basic expressions of having

a. **Okw' ner-erkerh.**

"I have a fishing rock."

LITERALLY: "There is my fishing rock, my fishing rock exists."

FS 1980 (PP)

b. **Kel' okw' skuyenee k'e-'yoch.**

"You have a good boat."

LITERALLY: "There is your good boat, your good boat exists."

YL 1951

c. **Pegoy okw' ue-poy.**

"Yellowhammer has a tattoo."

LITERALLY: "There is yellowhammer's tattoo, his tattoo exists."

YL 1951

d. **Kwesee okw' ue-peeowos.**

"He had a grandfather."

LITERALLY: "There was his grandfather, his grandfather existed."

FS 1951 (YL)

e. **Okw' hes k'-ahpew?**

"Do you have a wife?"

LITERALLY: "Is there your wife? Does your wife exist?"

MM 1927 (ES)

To negate sentences like those in (35), a similar construction is used with **neemokw'** or **neemo'okw'**, meaning literally "it is not" or "there does not exist". This is a contraction of **okw'** with the negative preverb **neemee**: that is, **neemee okw'** → **neemo'okw'** → **neemokw'**. Examples appear in (36).

<sup>7</sup>The meanings of Yurok verbs like **ekonemek'** "hold" and **megetohlkwok'** "take care of" are rather different.

(36) Basic expressions of NOT having

a. **Neemokw' ue-kerter'.**

“It has no lid.”

LITERALLY: “There is not its lid, its lid does not exist.”

FS 1980 (PP)

b. **Neemokw' 'ne-cheeek.**

“I don't have any money.”

LITERALLY: “There is not my money, my money doesn't exist.”

MR ~1970 (MRo)

c. **Keech neemokw' 'we-tewon.**

“He no longer had any flesh.”

LITERALLY: “There is no longer his flesh, his flesh no longer exists.”

DW 1907 (ALK)

Finally, a similar construction is used to express the meanings “have a lot of” and “have little of”. The verb **teno'** “there's a lot of it” is used for the former meaning, and for the latter meaning the verb **chkeno'** “there's little of it” is used. Examples are given in (37).

(37) Basic expressions of excessive and insufficient quantity

a. **Teno' 'ne-cheeek.**

“I have a lot of money.”

LITERALLY: “My money is a lot.”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

b. **Yo' teno' 'we-chegel'.**

“She has a lot of seaweed.”

LITERALLY: “That one's seaweed is a lot.”

YL 1951

c. **Keech chkeno' ke'mow.**

“Food is scarce.”

YL 1951

**Key topics in §10:** how to express the meaning “is”; how to express the meaning “has”

**Not covered:** other uses of **ook'** “I am”, etc.; other ways to express “am”, “is”, etc.

## II Time reference

Basic time reference is expressed in Yurok by preverbs and preverb combinations. It is also possible to use adverbs of time, words like **chmeya** “yesterday”, **owook** “tomorrow”, or **we’yk’oh** “now”, which need not be pre-verbal and can even stand on their own without a verb. But these supplement the basic system of preverbs, to make time reference more specific.

There are several important differences between Yurok and English systems of time reference:

**BASIC CATEGORIES OF TIME REFERENCE.** The basic English categories are PAST vs. PRESENT vs. FUTURE: “I saw” vs. “I see” vs. “I will see”. Many languages have an English-style three-way set, but many other languages — including Yurok — have different systems. It is possible to distinguish past-time and future-time preverbs in Yurok, of course, but the basic system is more nuanced.

**ASPECT.** Linguists use the term ASPECT to describe such concepts as starting and completing an action, as well as the viewpoint that a speaker chooses on an action being described (for example, depicting it as ongoing or as unitary). You do not need to know this terminology, of course, but the concepts sometimes play a key role in Yurok preverb choice.

**PRESENT VS. PAST TIME.** In English, whenever you use a verb you must choose between a present-time form (*I see*) or a past-time form (*I saw*), among other verb forms. A distinction between present and past is obligatory in English grammar. But in Yurok, depending on context, verbs may express either present or past time; for example, **newook’** can mean either “I see” or “I (recently) saw”. The context will usually make the intended meaning clear.

Table 22 lists the eight Yurok categories of time reference that are described in this section. Of course it is not necessary to learn the terminology; the key point is what the preverbs mean and how they are used. This is described in §§II.1–II.3; combinations of **keech** with other preverbs are described in §II.4. The categories of time reference in Table 22 also play an important role in Yurok negation and associated motion, topics which will be discussed in §§I2–I3.

	LABEL	PREVERB	ROUGH TRANSLATION
PAST (§II.1)	GENERAL PAST	<b>ho</b>	“was doing it”
	PUNCTUAL PAST	<b>ma</b>	“went and did it”
PRESENT (§II.2)	GENERAL PRESENT	—	refers to present or recent past
	COMPLETIVE PRESENT	<b>keech</b>	“has done it, is now”
	DURATIVE PRESENT	<b>ochkaa</b>	“right now”
	INCEPTIVE PRESENT	<b>keet</b>	“starting to”
FUTURE (§II.3)	NEAR FUTURE	<b>keetee</b>	“about to, going to soon”
	GENERAL FUTURE	<b>kee</b>	“will, can”

Table 22: Basic preverbs of time reference

Many preverbs of time are omitted from Table 22 and not discussed in this section. Some of them — for example, **wo’nee**, often used in present-time sentences — will be included in discussions of intermediate and advanced Yurok grammar

## 11.1 Preverbs of past time

Two past-time preverbs are discussed in this section. They are referred to here as GENERAL and PUNCTUAL past preverbs.<sup>8</sup>

- The GENERAL PAST preverb **ho** generally indicates that a past action or situation existed without necessarily implying anything about its beginning or ending. It is always used in the intended meaning “was doing (something)”. If the question is “what was going on?”, **ho** may be in the answer.
- The PUNCTUAL PAST preverb **ma** generally indicates that a past action took place in one moment, or is understood as completed at a moment in the past. It is always used in the intended meaning “went and did (something)”. If the question is “what happened?”, **ma** may be in the answer.

The general past future preverb **ho** and the punctual past preverb **ma** are illustrated in (38–39).

### (38) Examples of general past **ho**

- Ho nerrmeryek' nahschueh kue o melonee.**  
“I sang last night at the brush dance.” JJ 2007 (LC)
- Kue k'e-k'ep'ew ho negeen'.**  
“Your granddaughter was looking for you.” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- Ho okw' 'ne-ka'ar ner'er'eryhl.**  
“We had two pets.” AF 2002 (JB)
- Yokmokee ho t'la.**  
“It was raining big drops all around.” FS 1980 (PP)
- Wek ho oyhlke's.**  
“It was lying here.” FS 1980 (PP)

### (39) Examples of punctual past **ma**

- Ma nohsepek' ku 'ne-slekwoh.**  
“I took off my shirt.” JJ 2006 (AG)
- Ma kooych 'ne-nepuy.**  
“I bought some salmon.” YL 1951
- Ma tmegok'.**  
“I went hunting.” YL 1951
- Tee'neesho ma newoom'?**  
“What did you see?” YL 1951
- Segep ma kweget kohchee Merkwteeks.**  
“One time Coyote went visiting Crane.” MM 1927 (ES)

Compare the examples in (40). In the first example, the singing is described without any starting or ending point; in the second example, the implication is that the speaker started singing.

<sup>8</sup>Linguists might use the terms IMPERFECTIVE and PERFECTIVE rather than GENERAL and PUNCTUAL, respectively, but the terms used here are probably clearer. Note that Yurok does have other past-time preverbs, such as **ap**, but these are less frequent than the two discussed here.

(40) Examples of **ruerowok'**

a. **Ho ruerowok'.**

“I sang.”

JJ 2003 (JB)

b. **Ma ruerowok'.**

“I came and sang.”

JJ 2003 (JB)

A good way to appreciate the function of **ho** is to examine its use in stories. Given in (41) are the first three sentences of Florence Shaughnessy's story “The Young Man of Serper”, told in 1951 to R. H. Robins and published in his 1958 book *The Yurok language*.

(41) The first three sentences of Florence Shaughnessy's “The Young Man of Serper” (1951)

a. **Noohl heekon pecheek ho okw' perey.**

“A long time ago there was an old woman upriver.”

b. **Tue' wo'oot ho okw' ue-k'ep'ew.**

“She had a grandson there.”

c. **Tue' o chahchew ho soo megetohlkwom' kue ue-k'ep'ew.**

“She looked after her grandson with difficulty.”

Each sentence in (41) uses **ho** because these first few sentences are setting the background for the story; **ho** is ordinarily used for information about what was happening prior to, or in the background of, the events of a story. After the third sentence, the narration shifts to the series of events and **ho** is not used.

[Intermediate-advanced topic] A final specific situation where only **ho** is used is together with iterative verbs, in the meaning “used to”. This is illustrated in (42).

(42) Examples of general past **ho** with iterative verbs

a. **Nek ho hegelomeyek'.**

“I used to dance.”

GT 2007 (YLCB)

b. **Sloowehl tue' kem ho negepue'.**

“Wild oats also used to be eaten.”

AS ~1962 (WB)

c. **Keech cheenkee' kue ho legaaye'mow'.**

“The path where people used to pass has been changed.”

YL 1951

Iteratives are not discussed in this booklet, but each iterative verb in (42) has the inserted element **-eg-**.

## 11.2 Preverbs of present time

There are four main present-time categories:

- The term GENERAL PRESENT refers to verbs that have no time-reference preverbs. Such verbs can refer generally to the present or the recent past. For example, **ko'moyok'** can mean “I hear it” or “I (just) heard it”, and you might ask somebody **ko'moyom' hes?** “did you hear it?”

- The COMPLETIVE PRESENT preverb **keech** indicates that something is true now because it has just recently come to be and the new situation now exists. Somebody may have just done something, or a situation may have just come to exist. It implies that some action or event has been completed, and a new situation now exists. Good translations will vary depending on the verb; they may include the words “now” or “has X-ed”.
- The DURATIVE PRESENT preverb **ochkaa** indicates that an action is ongoing at the time of speaking, without implying anything about its duration or whether it recently started. Often a good translation is “is doing it right now”.
- The INCEPTIVE PRESENT preverb **keet** indicates that the action described by the verb is beginning. A good translation is usually “is starting”.

### 11.2.1 Present-time preverb examples

Examples of the completive present preverb **keech** appear in (43–44). In (43), an event in the past created an effect that is still true in the present; in (44), a new situation has come into existence.

- |      |  |                |
|------|--|----------------|
| (43) | a. <b>Keech sermertercherk’</b><br>“I have killed you.”                                  | MM 1927 (ES)   |
|      | b. <b>Keech kohchew’ nepuy.</b><br>“He caught a fish.”                                   | GT 2003 (YLCB) |
|      | c. <b>Kue meweemor lekwseek keech sootokw’.</b><br>“The old man went outside.”           | FS 1951 (RHR)  |
|      | d. <b>Wer’yers keech nohpew’.</b><br>“The girl came in.”                                 | FS 1951 (RHR)  |
| (44) | a. <b>Kue ’n-uuek keech popel’.</b><br>“My children are now big (they have become big).” | YL 1951        |
|      | b. <b>Nek poy keech sonowok’.</b><br>“I am in charge now (I have come to be in charge).” | FS 1951 (YL)   |
|      | c. <b>Nek keech skeweenepk’.</b><br>“I’ve had enough to eat (I have become full).”       | GT 2003 (YLCB) |
|      | d. <b>Keech ha’p’ehl.</b><br>“I forgot (I have come to forget).”                         | GT 2003 (YLCB) |

Thus, **Keech tenpewe’hl** “it’s raining” means more precisely “it’s raining now (it might not have been raining before, it might have just started to rain).” This is also why **keech** is used in the expressions **keech ee roo** “it’s time” and **keech ee son’** “we’re ready”.

Examples of the durative present preverb **ochkaa** are given in (45).

- |      |  |         |
|------|--|---------|
| (45) | Examples of <b>ochkaa</b>  |         |
|      | a. <b>Ochkaa helomey’ kue pegerk.</b><br>“The man is dancing now.” | YL 1951 |

- b. **Ochkaa kol' nepek'.**  
 "At the moment I am eating." YL 1951
- c. **Ochkaa hlkyorkwek' kue tekwoekws u-kwerhl.**  
 "I'm watching the tv." GT 2003 (YLCB)
- d. **Ochkaa tektek' yohlkoych.**  
 "I'm cutting wood." GT 2003 (YLCB)
- e. **Nek ochkaa yekwoyekwoh 'ne-slekw.**  
 "I'm folding clothes." GT 2003 (YLCB)

Examples of the inceptive future preverb **keet** are given in (46).

- (46) Examples of **keet**
- a. **Kwelekw keet markewech' kue meweemor.**  
 "The old man is starting to die." FS 1951 (YL)
- b. **Keet po'oh 'ne-meehl.**  
 "My leg is healing." YL 1951
- c. **Noohl keet saaweohl.**  
 "Then they began to cool off." YL 1951
- d. **Keet hegehlpa'.**  
 "The water is rising." YL 1951
- e. **Neekee ko'moy' kue keet 'we-ruerowoom'.**  
 "Then he heard them begin to sing." BF 1951 (YL)
- f. **'Ne-chewes keet tmentmen.**  
 "My hand has started to throb." YL 1951

### 11.2.2 How the present-time preverbs differ

The difference between **ochkaa** and **keet** is illustrated by the example in (47). Here, notice that the first sentence (with **ochkaa**) describes an ongoing action (peeling hazel sticks) that may have been underway for a while; the second sentence indicates that this action is the first step in making a baby basket.

- (47) **Ochkaa pekwoleum' kue 'w-oleehl. Keet holeem' 'we-no'os.**  
 "She's peeling her hazel sticks. She's starting to make a baby basket." JJ 2007 (LC)

The difference between **keech** and **keet** is illustrated by the examples in (48). The verb **kweskwesek'** means "I have a cold". In (48a) the situation has changed so that the speaker already has a cold, whereas in (48b) the speaker is starting to have a cold.

- (48) a. **Keech kweskwesek'.**  
 "I have a cold." JJ 2006 (AG)
- b. **Keet kweskwesek'.**  
 "I'm catching a cold." JJ 2006 (AG)

The examples in (49–50) highlight the difference between the completive present **keech** and the general present (with no preverb). The first example, (49), was given as a good, positive answer to the question **Komchuepa' hes?** “Do you know me?”

- (49) **Komchuechek'.**  
“I know you.”

JJ 2004 (JB)

The second example, (50), would be appropriate if the speaker at first could not remember the other person, and then suddenly recalled: “Oh, right, now I know you!” In other words, the example with **keech** involves a change of situation from not knowing to knowing.

- (50) **Keech komchuechek'.**  
“I know you now.”

JJ 2004 (JB)

The difference between **keech** and **ochkaa** is illustrated by the pairs of examples in (51–54). In each case, in the first example **keech** is appropriate because there was a recent change of state. In the second example in each pair, **ochkaa** is appropriate because the action is presented as ongoing without a necessary starting or ending point.

- (51) Examples of **swoo'mel'** “he stinks”

a. **Keech swoo'mel'.**

“He stinks (from contact with something).”

YL 1951

b. **Ochkaa swoo'mel'.**

“He stinks (naturally).”

YL 1951

- (52) Examples of **no'oyek'** “I have shoes on”

a. **Keech no'oyek'.**

“I have shoes on.”

JJ 2006 (AG)

b. **Ochkaa no'oyek'.**

“I am putting on shoes.”

JJ 2006 (AG)

- (53) Examples of **teykelew** “bite”

a. **Keech teykelew.**

“Something bit me.”

FS 1980 (PP)

b. **Nek ochkaa teykelew.**

“I’m biting.”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

- (54) Fishing examples

a. **Keech nue mega'ahskehl.**

“They’ve gone spear-fishing.”

FS 1980 (PP)

b. **Ochkaa kertkerk'.**

“I’m pole-fishing.”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

### 11.3 Preverbs of future time

There are two main future-time preverbs:

- The NEAR FUTURE preverb **keetee** indicates that the action described by the verb is about to take place, or will take place very soon or in the near future. (What “very soon” and “the near future” mean may vary somewhat, depending on speaker’s point of view.)
- The GENERAL FUTURE preverb **kee** indicates that action described by the verb will take place in the future, without specifying the near or distant future; these preverbs may also have the somewhat different meaning that the subject of the verb can do the verbal action.

The near future preverb **keetee** is illustrated in (55). As the examples show, sometimes **keetee** refers to an event that is just about to happen, and “about to” is a good translation.

(55) Examples of **keetee**

a. **Kolo keetee me’lomek’.**

“I kind of feel like puking (it’s like I’m about to puke).”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

b. **Keetee ho’oh.**

“It’s getting dark (it’s about to be dark).”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

c. **Kwesee noohl keech roo keetee ye’womey’.**

“Then the time came when the sun was about to set.”

LB 1951 (YL)

d. **Keetee kol’ sonowom’.**

“You are about to die.”

DW 1907 (ALK)

e. **Keetee sloyowon’.**

“The frost is going to come.”

FS 1980 (PP)

As the examples above and in (56) show, sometimes the near future reference can be immediate and sometimes it is farther in the future.

(56) a. **Keetee tenpewe’hl.**

“It’s going to rain at any moment.”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

b. **Owook keetee tenpewe’hl.**

“It will rain tomorrow.”

JC 1889

The general future preverb **kee** usually means that the action described by the verb will take place some-time in the future, but it can also mean that the subject of the verb CAN do the action described by the verb. Examples of the two meanings are given in (57–58).

(57) Examples of **kee** = “will”

a. **Kee s’oks’oop.**

“I’m going to pound (you).”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

b. **To’ kee laayoluechek’.**

“I will teach you.”

JJ 2007 (LC)

- c. **Owook koy kee nowonem' puuek.**  
 "Tomorrow morning he will bring deer (meat)." JJ 2007 (LC)
- d. **Skewok kee 'we-komchuemehl.**  
 "They want to know." JJ 2007 (LC)
- (58) Examples of **kee** = "can"
- a. **Kol' neemee hesek' kee ko'moyohl.**  
 "I don't think they can hear (you)." JJ 2007 (LC)
- b. **K'ee regook tue' kem kee nepue'.**  
 "Trout can also be eaten." AS ~1962 (WB)
- c. **Yo' kee saa'agoch'.**  
 "He can speak Yurok." YL 1951

#### 11.4 Preverb combinations [*Intermediate–advanced topic*]

The completive present preverb **keech** can be combined with past-time and future-time preverbs. In each case the meaning of the resulting combination is the sum of its elements: it means that the subject of the verb is now in a state or circumstance (**keech**) in which he or she was doing (**ho**), did (**ma**), or can do (**kee**) something.

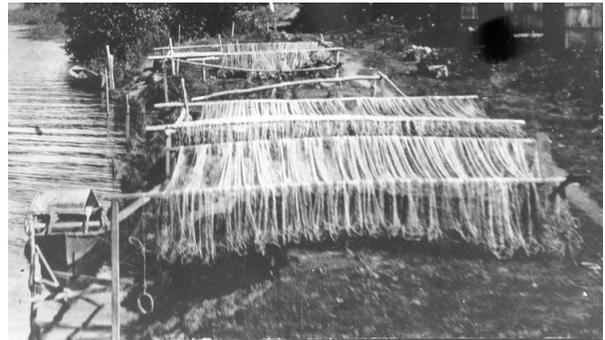


Figure 4: Fish nets drying along a Klamath River channel

The most common combination with **keech** is **keech ho**, which means "have been doing it". In many cases a good translation is just "have done it". For example, if someone asks "What are you doing?", you might answer with a **keech ho** sentence. Examples appear in (59).

- (59) Examples of **keech ho**
- a. **Keech ho nep' puuek.**  
 "He's been eating deer." MM 1927 (ES)
- b. **Kel' hes keech ho helomeyem'?**  
 "Have you danced yet?" YL 1951
- c. **Kol' keech ho hohkuemek'.**  
 "I've been working." FS 1951 (RHR)
- d. **Keech ho sloyhlkek'.**  
 "I've been flattening eels." FS 1980 (PP)
- e. **Keech ho wey 'w-o'omepek'.**  
 "He had finished making his fire." DW 1906 (ALK)

A second (less frequent) combination, **keech ma**, does not mean "have been doing it" but more simply "has done it", somewhat analogous to the English expression. An event happened in the past (**ma**), but its effect is still present now (**keech**). Examples appear in (60).

(60) Examples of **keech ma**

a. **Keech ma saawelek’.**

“I’ve gotten cold.”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

b. **Keech ma markue’ kue ’n-oolehl.**

“My plants got eaten.”

FS 1980 (PP)

c. **Yo’ keech ma tohpekwtom’.**

“He has made a hold.”

FS 1980 (PP)

The rarest combination is **keech kee**, which means “now (somebody) can (do something)”; the “can” part of the meaning comes from **kee** and the “now” part from **keech**. An example is in (61).

(61) **Keech kee ’na-ahspee’moh.**

“Now we can drink.”

YL 1951

**Key topics in §II:** past-time preverbs **ho** and **ma**; present-time preverbs **keech**, **ochkaa**, and **keet**; the general present; future preverbs **keetee**, **kee**

**Not covered:** less common time preverbs (e.g. **wo’nee**); other time expressions; interactions with the preverbs **neekee**, **keekee**

## 12 Negation

English negative sentences usually have *not* or *-n't*. Yurok negative sentences are usually formed with the following words:

- the ordinary negative preverb **neemee**, or (especially in earlier Yurok) its variants **mee**, **eemee**, and **keemee** “will not”
- the EMPHATIC negative particle **mos** (and a rare longer variant **mosee'**)

Note that **neemee** is a preverb that occurs before the verb together with other preverbs, while **mos** is a discourse particle that occurs, like **to'**, at the beginning of a sentence. In texts and spontaneous language use by fluent speakers, in the expression of negation **neemee** is more common; **mos** occurs in an important but restricted set of situations.

### 12.1 Emphatic and ordinary negation

The emphatic negative particle **mos** is used in four main situations. First, **mos** is the usual negative word used to express meanings such as “nobody”, “nothing”, “not . . . anybody”, and “not anything”. Examples, which mostly have **mos kol'**, are shown in (62).



**Figure 5:** Aawokw Aileen Figueroa taught Yurok for many years, in schools and community classes, and was a founder of the Yurok Elder Wisdom Preservation Project.

(62) Examples of **mos kol'**

a. **Mos kol' soosek'.**

“I’m not thinking about anything.”

FS 1951 (YL)

b. **Mos kol' kee nee nosep'.**

“Nobody could marry there.”

BF 1951 (YL)

c. Q: **Neemee hes newoom' kuech kue 'ne-ka'ar?**

A: **Paa, tos, mos k'ee we'yk'oh 'u-wook kol' o newook'.**

“Haven’t you seen my pet, grandmother?”

“No, child, I have not seen anything here this morning.”

FS 1951 (YL)

d. **Mos kwelekw wee'eeet kol' mehl son'.**

“That does not matter to me.”

FS 1951 (YL)

Second, **mos** is the usual negative word used with the particle **cheetaa** “at all”. Examples of **mos cheetaa** “not at all” are shown in (63).

- (63) Examples of **mos cheetaa**
- a. **Mos cheetaa wo pahchew.**  
“it made no movement at all.” FS 1951 (YL)
  - b. **Mos cheetaa kue 'wo-'o'hl.**  
“His house was no more.” FS 1951 (YL)
  - c. **Kwesee mos cheetaa wo neee'nowee'.**  
“No notice at all was taken of him.” FS 1951 (YL)

Sometimes the first two patterns are combined, with **mos cheetaa kol'** “nobody at all”, as in (64).

- (64) Examples of **mos cheetaa kol'**
- a. **Mos cheetaa kol' osreer.**  
“There isn't a sound anywhere.” FS 1980 (PP)
  - b. **Mos cheetaa kol' sook kee nee oyhl.**  
“Nothing at all lay on it.” FS 1951 (YL)
  - c. **Mos cheetaa koleen chwinkep'.**  
“Neither (of them) spoke at all.” FS 1951 (YL)

A third context for **mos** is when the intended meaning has a generalizing sense like “could not”, “would not”, “shall not”, or “never”, as in (65).

- (65) Generalizing **mos**
- a. **Wek mos kelew hasee wohpew kee negosepeem', 'ohlkuemee mos kee skuy' soo goole'mow'.**  
“Here you shall not marry into the west, because you would not fare well.” BF 1951 (YL)
  - b. **Mos weet kee skuyen' kee k'e-'wegahpemew.**  
“It would not be good for you to marry with them.” BF 1951 (YL)
  - c. **Mos wey ue-kertkerk'.**  
“He was never done fishing for trout.” FS 1951 (YL)

Finally, in (66), examples are given of a fourth context for **mos**.

- (66) Emphatic examples of **mos**
- a. **Mos kelee' k'-ekwol.**  
“It is not your fishing place.” FS 1951 (YL)
  - b. **Mos kee nahcheechek'.**  
“I won't give you any.” FS 1951 (RHR)

In (66a), for instance, the emphasis is clear from the emphatic pronoun **kelee'**: “this is absolutely not YOUR fishing place!” The example in (66b) implies the meaning “any”. In general, when the intended negative expresses or implies meanings such as “not at all” or “not any”, then the emphatic negative particle **mos** is used.

By contrast, the ordinary negative preverb **neemee** is used in other situations. It is the default negative marker, and illustrated in (67).

- (67) Examples of **neemee**
- a. **Neemee skuy' soneenepek'.**  
 "I don't feel well." FS 1980 (PP)
  - b. **Eemee wo tektesoh.**  
 "We were not angry." FS 1951 (YL)
  - c. **Neemee nuemee rookw's o wee'eeet.**  
 "It's not very windy here." FS 1980 (PP)
  - d. **Neemee cheeweyek'.**  
 "I'm not hungry." YL 1951
  - e. **To' neemee heeme'mehl.**  
 "They did not hurry." FS 1951 (YL)
  - f. **Kue pa'aahl 'we-tmenomen neemee nepue'.**  
 "The the half of the salmon facing the water was not eaten." FS 1951 (YL)
  - g. **Muehlcho' neemee soo komchuemehl.**  
 "Perhaps they do not know." FS 1951 (YL)
  - h. **Neemee hegohkuemehl stowstek' ue-'weskwen neemee mehl hego'omah.**  
 "They did not pick fir branches and did not make fire with them." FS 1951 (YL)
  - i. **Weesh neenee rek'eeen eemee nepehl.**  
 "They sit around and do not eat." FS 1951 (YL)

The difference between **mos** and **neemee** comes out sometimes in the difference between **mos skuy'** and **neemee skuy'**. The first of these, **mos skuy'**, means "not at all well" — implying "quite badly". By contrast, **neemee skuy'** just means "not well". Examples are given in (68–69).

- (68) Examples of **mos skuy'** "not at all well"
- a. **Mos skuy' kee k'e-teloyewek'.**  
 "It's not (at all) good for you to lie." FS 1980 (PP)
  - b. **Mos nuemi skuy' soo chwegeen kue wenchokws.**  
 "I don't like to talk to that woman." JJ 2007 (LC)
  - c. **Mos skuy' soo chkeyek' nahschueh.**  
 "I slept badly last night." JJ 2007 (LC)
- (69) Examples of **neemee skuy'** "not well"
- a. **Nimi sku'y soo newi'.**  
 "It doesn't look good." GT 2003 (YLCB)
  - b. **Neemee skuy' soneenepek'.**  
 "I don't feel well." FS 1980 (PP)

In (69a), for example, it is more polite to say something doesn't look good than to say that it looks bad ("not at all good"). Or compare "slept badly" in (68c) vs. "don't feel well" in (69b).

## 12.2 Negation and time reference

### 12.2.1 Negation and past time

A special past-time preverb **wo**, shown in (70), is used in negative contexts. This is the most common way of expressing past time negation.

(70) Examples of past time negation with **wo**

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| a. <b>Neemee wo nahchelek' ki 'ne-hlkyorkwek'.</b><br>“They didn’t let me watch.”   | FS 1980 (PP) |
| b. <b>Neemee wo hlee'.</b><br>“It was not accepted.”  | BF 1951 (YL) |
| c. <b>Neemee wo skeweenepek'.</b><br>“I didn’t eat enough.”   | FS 1980 (PP) |
| d. <b>Nimi wo newook'.</b><br>“I did not see it.”   | YL 1951      |
| e. <b>Neemee wo weykee'.</b><br>“It was not finished.”  | YL 1951      |
| f. <b>Neemee heenoy wo hoole'moh.</b><br>“We did not follow you.”   | YL 1951      |
| g. <b>Tue' neemee wo hewon newom'.</b><br>“He was not the first to see it.”   | FS 1951 (YL) |
| h. <b>Tue' kue 'ne-psech 'eemee nuemee wo tenpey' kue wee'eeet 'we-chmeyonen.</b><br>“But my father did not eat much that evening.” | FS 1951 (YL) |
| i. <b>Kwesee' neemee nuemee wo chpaa nohl helomey'.</b><br>“Coyote did not dance for a very long time.”                             | MM 1927 (ES) |
| j. <b>Eemee wo pelep' mehl wee'.</b><br>“There was no fighting over it.”  | FS 1951 (YL) |

### 12.2.2 Negation and future time

To express future negation, only two patterns are common; the general future preverb **kee** is used with either **mos** or **neemee**.<sup>9</sup> Typically, **neemee kee** means “will not (won’t)”, and **mos kee** means “cannot (can’t)”. These two patterns are illustrated in (71) and (72).

(71) Examples of **neemee kee** “will not”

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| a. <b>Neemee kee kooych.</b><br>“I will not buy it.”                      | YL 1951      |
| b. <b>Neemee kee skuy' soo hoole'mow'.</b><br>“You will not get on well.” | FS 1951 (YL) |
| c. <b>Neemee kee yegok'.</b><br>“I will not go.”                          | YL 1951      |

<sup>9</sup>The near-future preverb **keetee** is not ordinarily used with negation.

- (72) Examples of **mos kee** “cannot”
- a. **Mos kee nahcheechek’ we’yk’oh.**  
“I can’t pay you today.” FS 1951 (RHR)
  - b. **Mos kee kol’ nepek’.**  
“I cannot eat anything.” YL 1951
  - c. **Mos kee yegokw’.**  
“He cannot go.” YL 1951

Notice the difference between (71c) and (72c): “I will not go” vs. “he cannot go”.

### 12.2.3 Negation and *keech* [Intermediate–advanced topic]

With the completive preverb **keech**, the negation may appear BEFORE OR AFTER **keech**. The difference is important for the meaning: the order negation + **keech** means “not yet”, as in (73), while **keech** + negation means “now (something is) not”, as in (74).

- (73) Examples of negation + **keech** “not yet”
- a. **Mos keech ee roo kee ue-kemeyeem’.**  
“It is not time to go home yet.” GT 2003 (YLCB)
  - b. **Mos keech hopkekom’.**  
“He has not started yet.” YL 1951
  - c. **Neemee keech lekon’.**  
“It has not fallen yet.” YL 1951
- (74) Examples of **keech** + negation “now it is not”, “stop doing something”
- a. **Keech neemee skuyen’.**  
“Now it is no good.” YL 1951
  - b. **Keech mee chweenkep’.**  
“He stopped talking.” FS 1951 (YL)
  - c. **Noohl keech emee newee’ . . . kue ’we-rewoh.**  
“Then no longer could their lips be seen.” RS 1951 (YL)
  - d. **Kolo keech neemokw’ ho ekek’olehkokw’.**  
“It was as if he no longer had strong legs.” DW 1907 (ALK)
  - e. **Keech mehl mokw’ k’e-tewon.**  
“You no longer have flesh.” DW 1907 (ALK)

### 12.2.4 Negation and iterative verbs [Intermediate–advanced topic]

There is one situation in which **ho** is regularly used in referring to past time: if a verb is iterative, with the inserted element **-eg-** that means “always” or “regularly”, then **ho** is used to express the meaning “used to”. This is illustrated in (75).

(75) Examples of **ho** + iterative verb = “used to”

a. **Neemee ho negepue' nepuy.**

“Salmon used to be eaten.”

FS 1951 (YL)

b. **Heekon neemee wi' mehl ho regoowo's oohl.**

“People didn't use to smoke with pipes like this.”

FS 1951 (YL)

c. **Chelue mos ho legaay' oohl.**

“A person couldn't go through Bald Hills.”

AS ~1962 (WB)

**Key topics in §12:** ordinary negative **neemee** vs. emphatic negation **mos** “not at all, not anyone, etc.”; past-time negative preverb **wo**

**Not covered:** negative expressions with other preverbs

## 13 Associated motion

(Associated motion is included in this booklet, though it is not part of the “basic”-level Yurok standards, because its use is very closely linked with the time reference discussed in §II.)

The term ASSOCIATED MOTION refers to motion that is simultaneous with the action of a verb; it refers to meanings like “go make dinner”, “come say hello”, and so on. In Yurok, there are two basic associated motion categories:

- UNDIRECTED motion, expressed by the preverb **neenee** (§13.1)
- DIRECTED motion, expressed by the preverb **nue** as well as two special future preverbs (§13.2)

Another use of **neenee**, to express comparison (“more”), will not be discussed here.



**Figure 6:** Domingo of Weitchpec (photographed in 1906), a celebrated singer and drummer, recorded songs and stories for A. L. Kroeber and taught him about the Yurok language.

### 13.1 Undirected motion

The preverb **neenee** is used for actions done in an aimless or undirected way. Examples appear in (76).

- (76) a. **Wee' neenee kepoyurek'.**  
 “I swim about at random.” MM 1927 (ES)
- b. **Neenee rek'een.**  
 “They sit around.” FS 1951 (YL)
- c. **Kolo wee' neenee hakw's.**  
 “She was kind of laughing around there.” FS 1951 (YL)

As in these examples, “around” is usually a good translation.

### 13.2 Directed motion

The preverb **nue** is used for actions along with a directed motion: “come do it” or “go do it”. Examples appear in (77).

- (77) a. **Nue hl'os.**  
 “Go get it!” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- b. **Kol' nue' neps.**  
 “Come eat.” GT 2003 (YLCB)

c. **Nue o'ch'es k'e-ch'eeshah.**

“Go feed your dogs.”

LT 1922 (GR)

d. **See nue kweget.**

“You should come visit.”

YL 1951

In theory **neenee** and **nue** are contradictory or incompatible, since the first refers to undirected motion (“around”) while the second refers to directed motion (“go do it”). But the two meanings can be combined in a sentence like (78). Here there are a lot of grasshoppers: each individual grasshopper is going in some direction (**nue**), but collectively the swarm is just going around (**neenee**).

(78) **To' nue neenee tene'm.**

“There are a lot (of grasshoppers) going around.”

AS ~1962 (WB)

**13.2.1 Present and past time reference**

The preverb **nue** is most commonly used in commands, as in the first three examples in (77). It is not used in past-time sentences, and it is not used in sentences with the durative present preverb **ochkaa**. But it is often used with the completive present preverb **keech** as in (79), and it can be used with the inceptive present preverb **keet** as in (80).

(79) a. **Keech nue kweget.**

“He's gone visiting.”

MM 1927 (ES)

b. **Kue pegerk keech nue hoh.**

“The men have gone to work.”

YL 1951

c. **Keech nue tmeego'.**

“They've gone hunting.”

YL 1951

d. **Keech nue tregelah.**

“They've gone dipnet-fishing.”

FS 1980 (PP)

(80) **Keet nue chege'lohsek'.**

“I am going to gather seaweed.”

YL 1951

**13.2.2 Future time reference**

Directed motion also appears in future-time sentences. The preverb **nue** can be used together with the near future preverb **keetee** or the general future preverb **kee** to refer to “going and doing” something in future time. Examples appear in (81–82).

(81) Examples of **keetee nue** “about to go do something”a. **Keetee nue kepoyurek'.**

“I'm going swimming.”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

b. **Wonew keetee nue hegok'.**

“I'm going up in the hills.”

YL 1951

c. **Keetee nue tmegook'.**

“I'm going hunting.”

JC 1889

- (82) Examples of **kee nue** “will go do something”
- a. **Chyue puelekw kee nue hoo.**  
“Let’s go down the road.” GT 2003 (YLCB)
  - b. **Keech ee roo kee nue chkeyek’.**  
“It’s time to go to sleep.” GT 2003 (YLCB)
  - c. **O meguehl kee nue hegok’.**  
“I’ll go to the store.” MR ~1970 (MRo)
  - d. **Nekah hesoh Kohpey kee nue goo (hoo).**  
“We decided to go to Crescent City.” YL 1951

But an alternative way of expressing directed motion with future time is to use special preverbs that combine the functions of **nue** plus either **keetee** or **kee**. These special combining or contracted preverbs are common.

The first contracted near-future directed-motion preverb is **keetue**, illustrated in (83).

- (83) Examples of **keetue**
- a. **Keetue hlkuue’moh.**  
“We’re going acorn gathering.” YL 1951
  - b. **Keetue kweget ’ne-chek.**  
“I’m going to visit my mother.” GT 2003 (YLCB)
  - c. **Keetue tmegok’.**  
“I’m going hunting.” GT 2003 (YLCB)
  - d. **Nek keetue lewetek’ o kue ha’aag.**  
“I’m going to set my net on that rock.” GT 2007 (LC)

The second contracted general-future directed-motion preverb is **kue**, illustrated in (84). In (84a–84b), note that **kue** is used with **skewok** instead of **kee**. This is the normal way of saying “want to go do something”.

- (84) Examples of **kue**
- a. **Skewok kue ’ne-melok’.**  
“I want to go to the brush dance.” GT 2007 (AG)
  - b. **Skewok hes kue k’e-kepoyuerek’?**  
“Do you want to go swimming?” MR ~1970 (MRo)
  - c. **Kue meges kue kweget.**  
“I’m going to visit the doctor.” LC 2007 (LC)
  - d. **Kel’ kue lewetem’ hes?**  
“Are you going to fish with a net?” GT 2007 (LC)
  - e. **Tue kegey kue negeeen’.**  
“We’ll look for an Indian doctor.” GT 2003 (AQ)
  - f. **Chue kue nergerh.**  
“Let’s go pick berries.” GT 2003 (YLCB)

g. **Nek kem kue hlkyorkwek’**

“I’ll go and watch too.”

FS 1951 (YL)

h. **To’ nekah kue hloo k’e-’yoh.**

“We’ll go get your firewood.”

YL 1951

The combined preverb sequence **mos kue** means “cannot go do it”, as in (85).

(85) **Mos kue hlkyorkwem’**

“You can’t go watch it.”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

**Key topics in §13: neenee** “around”; **nue** “go and do it”; future **keetue** and **kue**

**Not covered:** comparative **neenee**; other motion expressions

## 14 Questions

Questions are of two types:

- In a YES–NO question, the expected answer to the question is “yes” or “no”. For example, in English *Will you help me?*, the likely answers are either “yes” or “no” (or some expansion or equivalent).
- In a CONTENT question, the range of likely answers is much broader. For example, in English *Who will help me?*, there is a range of possible answers (“Alice”, “Bill”, “Charlie”, “Donna”, etc.).

In many languages, yes–no questions and content questions are formed in different ways. In English, for example, content questions use a word such as *where?*, *what?*, *why?*, etc., while yes–no questions are formed by changing word order: *Can you hear me?* Yurok too has two different methods for forming the two types of questions.



Figure 7: Alice Spott in 1907

### 14.1 Yes–no questions

Yes–no questions are formed using the question particle **hes**, positioned either at the end of the sentence (this is less common) or (more often) after the first word or phrase of the sentence. The examples below are divided into two groups: neutral questions, where the answer might be “yes” or “no” (there is no expected answer) and questions expecting a negative answer, where the expected answer is “no”.

#### 14.1.1 Neutral yes–no questions

The most common position for **hes** is immediately after the first word of the sentence, as in (86).

(86) Questions with **hes** after the first word

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| a. Kel' <b>hes</b> keech cherhkwer'm?                  |                |
| “Are you jumping center?”                              | GT 2007 (AG)   |
| b. Skewok <b>hes</b> kee k'e-megelok'?                 |                |
| “Do you want to go with us?”                           | GT 2007 (LC)   |
| c. Matthew <b>hes</b> o tegeruesem' we'yk'oh kechoyhl? |                |
| “Have you talked to Matthew today?”                    | JJ 2007 (LC)   |
| d. Okw' <b>hes</b> mehl e'ga'?                         |                |
| “Do you have a pencil?”                                | GT 2003 (YLCB) |
| e. Kel' <b>hes</b> kem newoom'?                        |                |
| “Did you see it too?”                                  | FS 1980 (PP)   |

But as in (87), if a sentence begins with a preverb or two followed by a verb, then **hes** may be delayed to follow the verb. Yurok avoids interrupting the preverb–verb sequence.

(87) Questions with **hes** after a preverb + verb group

a. **Keech ee son' hes kee kol' k'e-nepek'?**

“Are you ready to eat?”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

b. **Keetee tenpewe'hl hes?**

“Is it going to rain?”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

c. **Keech ko'moyom' hes?**

“Did you hear (me)?”

MM 1927 (ES)

A different position for **hes** is illustrated in (88): **hes** is positioned at the end of the sentence. This is less common than the option in (86–87), but it is a well documented alternative, especially in Modern Yurok (and occasionally in Classical Yurok).

(88) Questions with **hes** at the end of the sentence

a. **Nekomuy kee k'e-pemek' kegoth hes?**

“Do you know how to make acorn soup?”

JJ 2007 (LC)

b. **Nekomuy k'e-holeemek' kue luemon hes?**

“Do you know how to make eel baskets?”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

Note in (88b) that subjunctive **k'-oleemek'** would also have been possible instead of **k'e-holeemek'**.

#### 14.1.2 Questions expecting a negative answer [*intermediate–advanced topic*]

Some questions presuppose that a negative answer is likely. An English example of this pattern is the sentence *Don't you see the hawk?*, to which a likely answer is *No, I don't see it*. In Yurok, much as in English, such questions are formed with negatives. Examples are in (89).

(89) a. **Neemee hes newoom' kuech kue 'ne-ka'ar?**

“Haven't you seen my pet, grandmother?”

FS 1951 (YL)

b. **Kuech, nee mokw' hes oyhl kee nepek'?**

“Grandmother, isn't there anything lying here for me to eat?”

FS 1951 (YL)

c. **Kel' hes eemee uema newoom'?**

“Didn't you see it?”

YL 1951

d. **Nee mokw' hes k'-ohsepek'?**

“Aren't you ashamed?”

YL 1951

In an example like (89d), the addressee may or may not actually be ashamed. The point is that the speaker, in asking this question, assumes that the speaker should have been ashamed but isn't.

## 14.2 Content questions

Unlike yes–no questions, content questions seek a more open-ended answer to questions like “who?”, “when?”, “where?”, etc. They can be classified according to the type of information they seek, and also according to their form. In Yurok, content questions are formed using one of the question words **tee’now**, **tee’neesho**, and **kues**. Among these, **kues** is the most flexible.

### 14.2.1 Who? What?

Questions that ask “who?”, as in (90), use the question word **tee’now**.

- (90) a. **Tee’now puen’?**  
“Who farted?” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- b. **Tee’now hegoo’s?**  
“Who’s hollering?” YL 1951
- c. **Tee’now swechohpen’ kue ahtemar’?**  
“Who opened the letter?” LT 1922 (GR)
- d. **Tee’now helomey’?**  
“Who’s dancing?” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- e. **Tee’now ho helomey’?**  
“Who was dancing?” YL 1951
- f. **Tee’now keech kweryerw’?**  
“Who whistled?” FS 1980 (PP)

Questions that ask “what?”, as in (91), use the question word **tee’neesho**. As a rule, **tee’neesho** questions are used with verbs that ordinarily have a noun as their (missing) subject or object. In (91c), the missing noun is understood with **mehl** “about”.

- (91) a. **Tee’neesho kee nepem’?**  
“What are you going to eat?” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- b. **Tee’neesho ho’yk’etem’?**  
“What did you lose?” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- c. **Tee’neesho mehl toh’?**  
“What are you (or they or we) talking about?” GT 2003 (YLCB)

[Intermediate–advanced topic] **Tee’neesho** questions often have subjunctive verbs. Then they mean more like “What is it that . . .?” and are sometimes emphasized with **weesh** or **wee’**. Examples are in (92).

- (92) a. **Tee’neesho mehl k’e-chwegeen’?**  
“What are you talking about? (What is it that you’re talking about?)” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- b. **Tee’neesho weesh ’we-skewok’?**  
“What does he want? (What is it that he wants?)” GT 2003 (YLCB)

## 14.2.2 Where? How?

In the simplest sentences with **kues**, as in (93), it usually means “where?”

- (93) a. **Kues kee le'moh?**  
“Where are we going?” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- b. **Kues me'womechoom'?**  
“Where do you come from?” AF 2004 (AG)
- c. **Kues nekem'?**  
“Where did you put it?” FS 1980 (PP)
- d. **Kues keech roo?**  
“What time is it?” (Literally: “Where is the sun at?”) JJ 2007 (LC)

With the preverb **soo** “thus, in that manner” as in (94), and with the equivalent roots of verbs in **soo-**, **so-**, and **serr-** as in (95), questions are usually formed with **kues** because literally such questions mean “in what way?”

- (94) a. **Kues soo nekey'?**  
“What’s it called?” YL 1951
- b. **Kues soo hegolem'?**  
“How do you say it?” YL 1951
- c. **Kues soo hesem'?**  
“What do you think?  
/ Why do you think it?” FS 1951 (YL)
- (95) a. **Kues cho' sonowom'?**  
“How are you?” MR ~1970 (MR0)
- b. **Kues soch?** or **Kues sochpeyowom'?**  
“What did you say?” (Literally: “In what way did you speak?”) GT 2003 (YLCB)
- c. **Kues wo'nee serrhlerpem'?**  
“What are you doing now?”<sup>10</sup> YL 1951
- d. **Kues serrnerh?**  
“What color is it?” (Literally: “In what way is it colored?”) FS 1980 (PP)
- e. **Kues serrnerkws?**  
“How fast is the wind blowing?” (Literally: “In what way is it windy?”) FS 1980 (PP)



Figure 8: Yurok Immersion Camp, Tuley Creek, 2010

## 14.2.3 When? How far?

To question time, two patterns are common: **kues cho'** and **kues noohl**. The difference between them is uncertain, though probably **kues cho'** means “at what time?” while **kues noohl** means “how long (ago or in the future)?” Questions with **kues noohl** (or its equivalent **kues no'ohl**) are more common in reference to future time, and questions with **kues cho'** are more common in reference to past time. Examples of the two constructions are given in (96–97).

<sup>10</sup>At least one Modern Yurok speaker often used **tee'neesho**, not **kues**, with this verb.

- (96) Examples of **kues cho'**
- a. **Kues cho' nuue'm?**  
“When did they come?” FS 1980 (PP)
  - b. **Kues cho' neskwechokw'?**  
“When did he come?” YL 1951
- (97) Examples of **kues noohl**
- a. **Kues noohl nes?**  
“When did you come?” JC 1889
  - b. **Kues no'ohl kee kemeyem'?**  
“When are you going home?” YL 1951
  - c. **Kues noohl ki kemeyem'?**  
“When will we go home?” FS 1951 (RHR)
  - d. **Kues no'ohl kee kem nue nuuem' yo'hlkoh?**  
“When will they come again?” YL 1951

In addition, **kues noohl** can be used in a more literal way, as in (98), to mean “how far (in distance)”.

- (98) Examples of **kues noohl** “how far (in distance)”
- a. **Kues noohl wee' kee k'e-le'mow'?**  
“How far will you all go?” FS 1980 (PP)
  - b. **Kus noohl ho wi'it?**  
“How far is it to that place?” YL 1951

#### 14.2.4 Why? How many? Which?

Content questions that ask “why?”, “how many?”, and “which (one of them)?” are shown in this section. To ask “why?”, most often either **kues son' mehl** or **kues 'we-son'** is used — literally, “because of how?” These are illustrated in (99).

- (99) a. **Kues 'we-son' mehl mee' 'we-nuue'm?**  
“Why didn't they come before?” FS 1951 (YL)
- b. **Kues 'we-son' mehl tetomokseemem'?**  
“Why are you mad at me?” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- c. **Kues son' mehl nes?**  
“Why have you come?” YL 1951

Questions asking “how many?”, as in (100), are formed using **kues** with the appropriate numeral question form (§17.1).

- (100) a. **Kues choo'm k'-uuek?**  
“How many children do you have?” YL 1951

b. **Kues kee toom' kelew kee lewetem'?**

“How many nets are you going to fish with”

GT 2007 (LC)

Finally, as in (101), to ask “which (of more than one)?”, the combination **kues wee'** is found.

(101) **Kues wee' k'e-skewok kue nepuy?**

“Which salmon do you want?”

JJ 2007 (LC)

Literally, this sentence means something like “Which is the salmon that you want?”

**Key topics in §14:** yes-no questions; content questions asking “what?”, “who?”, “when?”, etc.

**Not covered:** word order in questions

## 15 Commands, requests, and exhortations

### 15.1 Commands and requests

Three common strategies are used in commands and in requests for people to do something. They are the following, in increasing order of politeness:

- Imperative verbs, with meanings like “Come eat something!”
- **cho’** + second-person forms, with meanings like “Please come and eat something!”
- **pekwsue hes** + second-person forms, with meanings like “Won’t you please eat something?”

The use of imperative verbs is common, and though it is direct it is not at all impolite. The three strategies above are illustrated in (102–104). Note that formally, requests with **pekwsue hes** are yes–no questions.

#### (102) Imperative verbs

- Yo’kw’en soot’os!**  
“Get out of my way!” GT 2007 (LC)
- Now soot’os!**  
“Go away!” FS 1951 (YL)
- Yo’kw’en loot’es koweesh!**  
“Throw the stick away!” MM 1927 (ES)

#### (103) Requests with **cho’**

- Cho’ nergerykerm’ kue k’e-let.**  
“Help your sister.” GT 2007 (LC)
- Kue ekah cho’ o myootem’.**  
“Put on the hat.” JJ 2006 (AG)
- Cho’ kwoychoom’.**  
“Go quietly (slowly).” FS 1980 (PP)

#### (104) Examples of **pekwsue hes**

- Pekwsue hes nekah kelew o megeluue’moh so Kohpey?**  
“May we not go with you to Crescent City?” YL 1951
- Pekwsue hes pewomem’?**  
“Will you cook?” GT 2003 (YLCB)

Finally, as in (105), prohibitions or negative commands or prohibitions are formed using **kowecho’** with a second-person verb: “Don’t do it!”

#### (105) Negative commands

- Kowecho’ moskem’ ’ne-muech ro’!**  
“Don’t borrow my car!” AF 2004 (AG)
- Kowecho’ ahspem’ pa’ah.**  
“Don’t drink water.” LBy 1902 (ALK)

## 15.2 Exhortations

To urge a group that includes the speaker to do something, a construction with **chue kee** (or **chue kue**) is used. This is shown in (106).

- (106) a. **Chue kee ma’ahskoh!**  
“Let’s spear it!” MM 1927 (ES)
- b. **Chue kee chkee’moh!**  
“Let’s go to bed!” GT 2003 (YLCB)
- c. **Chue kue nergerh!**  
“Let’s go pick berries!” GT 2003 (YLCB)



**Figure 9:** Long-time Yurok language and culture teachers, **aawokw** Florena Smoker, **aawokw** Georgiana Trull, **aawokw** Glenn Moore, and **aawokw** Ollie Foseide, at Georgiana’s 89th birthday party, Weitchpec, 2005.



## 16 Basic word order

### 16.1 General patterns

Yurok word order is flexible. It is often possible to arrange the words in the same sentence in two or more different ways, all of them quite acceptable. The order that speakers choose may depend more on emphasis and the nature of their conversation or story than on purely syntactic rules. But several clear patterns can be noted here.

One obvious pattern is that preverbs come before the verb; this is why they are called pre-verbs. For example, with preverbs underlined in (107):

- (107) a. **Keech ho nep' puuek.**  
 "He's been eating deer." MM 1927 (ES)
- b. **Ha'aag keech mehl ho retkah.**  
 "You've made a wall with rocks."  
 FS 1980 (PP)



**Figure 10:** Florence Shaughnessy, a very knowledgeable and thoughtfully articulate elder, worked on Yurok language documentation over many years, with R. H. Robins, Howard Berman, Paul Proulx, Jean Perry, and other linguists.

In contrast, adverbs, even those with generally similar meanings, may be positioned before or after verbs. For example, in (108), the time adverbs **chmeyaan** "yesterday" and **owook** "tomorrow" occupy a position before the verb (and before the preverbs) in two sentences, and after the verb in two others.

- (108) a. **Chmeyaan tenpewe'hl**  
 "It rained yesterday." JC 1889
- b. **Chmeyaan neskwechok' mehl Kohpey.**  
 "Yesterday I came from Crescent City." YL 1951
- c. **Kue pegerk no'p'en' mewehhl chmeyaan.**  
 "The man chased an elk yesterday." YL 1951
- d. **Kee lahchue' so Kohpey owook.**  
 "A voyage will be made to Crescent City tomorrow." YL 1951

Preverbs never show the word order flexibility of adverbs. Some other patterns, discussed in the next section, concern the relative order of nouns and verbs.

### 16.2 Nouns and verbs

It is uncommon for a sentence in ordinary usage to have more than one noun, and it is not rare for a sentence to have no nouns. But if there is a noun, it may be positioned either before or after its verb. As a rule, NO MORE THAN ONE NOUN will be positioned before the verb. Any others will be positioned after the verb, and it is even possible that all nouns will be positioned after the verb.

If one noun at most is positioned before the verb, which noun is it? When are nouns positioned before their verbs? The general rule is this:

*A noun is usually BEFORE the verb if it is contrastive, emphasized, or new to the discourse.*<sup>11</sup>

In (109a), for instance, **ka'ar wee'** “a pet” is emphasized; the idea that the speaker will make the deer his pet is new in this sentence. In (109b), there is a series of three contrasting subjects: everyone, **kue lochom'** “the toad”, and **kue negeneech** “the mouse”. Each of the two contrasting nouns is positioned before its verb; the verbs are in *italics* and the preverbal nouns are underlined.<sup>12</sup>

- (109) a. **Nek kwelekw keech kohchewok', tue' nek ka'ar wee' kee yoh.**  
 “I have *caught* it (a deer), and I will *make* it a pet.” FS 1951 (YL)
- b. **Eekee toom' nue hlkeegor. Kwesee kue lochom' o ges', Nek kem kue hlkyorkwek'.  
Kue negeneech tue' kem wee' o gegokw'.  
 “Everyone went to watch. And the toad thought, ‘I will go watch too.’  
The mouse too was walking there.” FS 1951 (YL)**

The complement of the general rule is as follows:

*A noun is usually AFTER the verb if it conveys old information, or if it is very long.*

For example, later in the story quoted in (109b), when the toad and mouse are mentioned again they are already known, so the position of the noun is after the verb. This is illustrated in (110).

- (110) **Kwesee yem' kue negeneech . . . Kwesee o te'noy' kue lochom' . . .  
**Kwesee wee' neenee noo's kue negeneech.**  
 “Then the mouse *said* . . . And the toad *was annoyed* . . . Then the mouse *giggled* around.” FS 1951 (YL)**

In each case the (underlined) noun follows rather than preceding the (*italicized*) verb.

**Key topics in §16:** preverb position in the sentence; adverb position in the sentence; noun and verb position

**Not covered:** relative position of preverbs; other locative expressions; multiple nouns; etc.

<sup>11</sup>This general rule applies to nouns; pronouns (like **nek**) are almost always preverbal.  
<sup>12</sup>Note also that **kue negeneech** is explicitly marked as contrastive via the particle **tue'**, which can be translated “but” and highlights a contrasting noun.

## 17 Numerals and color terms

Words used for counting things (“one”, “two”, etc.) and words used to describe colors (“light-colored”, “red”, etc.) are mostly verbs in Yurok. (Recall that Yurok, unlike English, does not have any adjectives.) The forms that are most commonly used are ATTRIBUTIVE verb forms and NON-INFLECTED verb forms.

One distinctive feature of Yurok numerals and color terms is that they often change form depending on the meaning of what they are applied to; a different form of “two” or “light-colored” is used for snakes and for human beings. This kind of system, in which words change form depending on characteristics of what they refer to, is called a CLASSIFICATORY system; it is how the Yurok language organizes phenomena in the world. Yurok numerals show more different forms than color terms, but both are classificatory.

### 17.1 Numerals

Yurok numerals change their form depending on what is being counted; they classify what they count. A few of the most common sets of numerals (from 1 to 10 only) are shown in Table 23.

	PEOPLE	ANIMALS (suffix <b>-er'eryhl</b> )	ROUND THINGS AND MONEY (suffix <b>-oh</b> )	NUMBERS OF TIMES
1	<b>koora'</b>	<b>kerhtery'</b>	<b>kohtoh</b>	<b>kohchee</b>
2	<b>nee'eehl</b>	<b>ner'er'eryhl</b>	<b>no'oh</b>	<b>na'mee</b>
3	<b>nahkseyhl</b>	<b>nerhkser'eryhl</b>	<b>nahksoh</b>	<b>nahksemee</b>
4	<b>cho'oneyhl</b>	<b>cher'erner'eryhl</b>	<b>to'onoh</b>	<b>choona'mee</b>
5	<b>merueh choom'</b>	<b>merueh termerwer'eryhl</b>	<b>merueh tomowoh</b>	<b>merueh chee</b>
6	<b>kohchew choom'</b>	<b>kohchew termerwer'eryhl</b>	<b>kohchew tomowoh</b>	<b>kohchew chee</b>
7	<b>cherwerseek' choom'</b>	<b>cherwerseek' termerwer'eryhl</b>	<b>cherwerseek' tomowoh</b>	<b>cherwerseek' chee</b>
8	<b>kneweteek' choom'</b>	<b>kneweteek' termerwer'eryhl</b>	<b>kneweteek' tomowoh</b>	<b>kneweteek' chee</b>
9	<b>kerrmeek' choom'</b>	<b>kerrmeek' termerwer'eryhl</b>	<b>kerrmeek' tomowoh</b>	<b>kerrmeek' chee</b>
10	<b>werhlerweryhl</b>	<b>werhlerwer'eryhl</b>	<b>wehlowaa tomowoh</b>	<b>wehlowaa chee</b>
Q	<b>Kues choom'?</b>	<b>Kues termerwer'eryhl?</b>	<b>Kues tomowoh?</b>	<b>*Kues chee?</b>

Table 23: Some numerals from 1 to 10 (Q = question “How many?”)

As Table 23 illustrates, the structure of Yurok numerals is as follows. Each numeral from 1 to 4 is a single word, changing its form according to the type of thing being counted. Above 5, the numerals consist of two (or more) words: the first word is usually an invariant form, like **kohchew** “six”, and the second word changes its form depending on what is being counted. The last line in Table 23 shows the form used in questions: to ask “How many are there?” you need to know what kind of thing you are asking about.

Shown in Table 23 are the numerals for people, for animals, for round things and money (because coins are round), and for numbers of times (“once”, “twice”, etc.). Yurok has many other sets of numerals as well: for plants and bushy things, for flat things, for things shaped like ropes or snakes, for things shaped like sticks, for bundles and sacks of things, for houses, for boats, for dentalium strings, and so on. Eventually you will want to learn at least a dozen sets.

Yurok numeral usage is illustrated in (III).

- (III) a. **Kee moksek' kohtoh k'e-cheek.**  
 “I will borrow one dollar from you.”

YL 1951

- b. **Ho okw' 'ne-ka'ar ner'er'eryhl.**  
 “We had two pets.” AF 2002 (JB)
- c. **Nek nahkseme ho kweget.**  
 “I visited her three times.” YL 1951
- d. **Merueh chee weesh serrhlerp'.**  
 “He did this five times.” FS 1951 (YL)
- e. **Wehlowaa' chee hegokw' 'we-sa'awor.**  
 “Ten times its shadow appeared.” YL 1951
- f. **Kues choom' k'-uuek?**  
 “How many children do you have?”  
 LITERALLY: “How many are your children?” JJ 2007 (LC)
- g. **Kues tomowoh ha'aag?**  
 “How many rocks are there?”  
 LITERALLY: “How many are the rocks?” YL 1951

## 17.2 Color terms

Languages differ greatly in the variety of terms commonly used in referring to colors, and in what aspect of color they express (for example, hue vs. brightness). In many languages, while there are numerous terms for specific hues, only a few color terms are generally used. The traditional use of color terms in Yurok and other languages of northwestern California was probably of this type. Probably a few color terms were used to refer to general hues as well as brightness or saturation, with other color terms used to refer to specific hues.

Yurok color terms can be divided into three groups:

- CLASSIFICATORY color terms (Table 24)
- TWO-FORM color terms (Table 25)
- INVARIANT color terms ((I14–I15) below)

The colors in Table 24 have a relatively rich classificatory structure; they show many different forms.<sup>13</sup> These were probably the most common color terms in Classical Yurok usage; probably the “light” and “dark” terms had a broader range of uses than English *white* and *black*. For example, they might have been used for hues with light or dark brightness or saturation that could be described as (*light*) *green* or (*dark*) *brown* in English usage. Some of the color terms in Table 24 are exemplified in (I12–I13).



**Figure 11:** Aawokw Georgiana Trull, author of the *Yurok Language Conversation Book* (2003), was for decades a leader in northwest California Indian language teaching and cultural revival.

<sup>13</sup>The abbreviation ATTR stands for ATTRIBUTIVE. An asterisk (\*) means this is surely the correct form, but no examples are actually recorded.

	LIGHT, WHITE	DARK, BLACK	RED
GENERAL	<b>muenchey</b>	<b>lo’ogey</b>	<b>pekoyoh</b>
ANIMALS	<b>muenther’ery</b>	<b>ler’ergery</b>	<b>perkeryer’ery</b>
HAIR	<b>muencher’ery</b>	<b>*ler’ergery</b>	<b>*perkeryer’ery</b>
TREES & STICKS	<b>muenchar’</b>	<b>lo’ogar’</b>	<b>pekoyar’</b>
ROUND	<b>muencherh</b>	<b>ler’ergerh</b>	<b>perkeryerh</b>
FLAT THINGS	<b>muenchok’s,</b> ATTR <b>muenchokseen</b>		<b>pekoyok’s,</b> ATTR <b>pekoyokseen</b>
WATER		<b>ler’ergerh</b>	<b>pekoyop’,</b> ATTR <b>pekoyohpeen</b>

Table 24: Classificatory color terms

(II2) Examples of DARK, BLACK and RED

a. **Kue ’we-’ekah pekoyoh ’esee lo’ogey.**

“His hat is red and black.”

GT 2003 (YLCB)

b. **See kee lo’ogey.**

“It is almost black.”

YL 1951

c. **Neekee pekoyoh kue wee’ o teponee.**<sup>14</sup>

“All the trees are red.”

FS 1980 (PP)

(II3) Examples of LIGHT, WHITE

a. **Newom’ muenchey ’ue-’wer’.**

“You see its white roots.”

AS ~1962 (WB)

b. **Keech muencher’ery’.**

“He or she has white hair.”

FS 1980 (PP)

c. **Muenchey ’ue-’wers.**

“Its skin is white.”

FS 1980 (PP)

d. **Newom’ wee’eeet ’oyhl nuemee chey muenther’ery kepcheneesh.**

“He saw lying there a very small white fawn.”

FS 1951 (YL)

In contrast to the richer classificatory scheme in Table 24, the colors in Table 25 have only a couple of forms each; in most cases, one is used for animals (especially deer) and one applies to anything else.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, (II4–II5) lists Yurok color terms that do not classify: (II4) shows the documented terms referring to brightness or saturation, other than those in Table 24, and (II5) shows terms for specific hues. Here there is only form per color term; in some cases the term is derived from the name of an object with that color.

(II4) Yurok terms for brightness or saturation

a. BRIGHT: **cherhkee’** “it is bright” (**cherhkeryerhl** “they are bright-colored”)

b. DULL, FADED: **swerykerh** (non-inflected) or **sweykemee’** “it is dull” (**sweykemoyehl** “they are dull”)

<sup>14</sup>The attributive phrase **wee’ o teponee** “rooted there” is a very common way to say “tree”.

<sup>15</sup>The term for gray hair is included because it probably has other forms which are not yet documented.

	GENERAL	ANIMALS	HAIR
REDDISH-BROWN, BROWN, BAY	<b>s'oktoy</b>	<b>s'erokter'ery</b>	
GRAY (like mold)	<b>polhkwen 'ue-son</b>	<b>perhkw'er'ery</b>	
GRAY (like ashes)	<b>pontet son</b>	<b>perncherch, ponchech</b>	
LIGHT GRAY			<b>k'yerwerler'ery</b>
MANZANITA-COLORED	<b>pyaap't'ery</b>	<b>pyerrp't'ery</b>	
SPOTTED	<b>tege'yk'enee</b>	<b>terger'yk'er'ery'</b>	

Table 25: Color terms with two forms

(115) Invariant Yurok color terms for hue

- a. BLUE (like the sky): **skoyon son'** or **skoyon**
- b. YELLOW-GREEN (like moss): **taanep**
- c. YELLOW-GREEN (like porcupine quills or moss): **tee'npelah** or **tegee'n**
- d. GREEN (like grass): **'errwerh son'**
- e. ORANGE (like alder bark): **'wer'errgerch son'**
- f. JET BLACK: **weeshew**

It is also possible to develop new terms for specific colors, using the pattern **X son'** “like X” (for example, **luuehl son'** “like wild iris, i.e. purple”).

**Key topics in §17:** the Yurok counting system; Yurok color terms and their traditional usage

**Not covered:** other numeral classifiers; numerals higher than 10; other classificatory verbs