

Introduction

Welcome to the online Tlingit verb dictionary, a database of over 1,100 Tlingit verb paradigms!

Why document Tlingit verb paradigms?

Tlingit is an endangered language with few remaining fluent speakers. Tlingit verbal structure is complex, involving a number of prefixes and suffixes as well as variation in verb stem length and tone depending on the tense/aspect/mode of the verb. These patterns are difficult to learn, and sometimes unpredictable. There are many determined and enthusiastic individuals however, learning Tlingit and teaching the language to others. The purpose of this website is to serve as a reference for learners to look up conjugated verb forms. For example, one can use this site to look up how to say things like, “I was paralyzed with fear”, “don’t be foolish”, “he hasn’t yawned yet”, or “they would have surprised us”.

How are verbs organized within the Tlingit index?

Verbs can be accessed either via the Tlingit index or the English index. Using the Tlingit index requires explanation. Verbs in the Tlingit index are listed under their roots. This is because the verb root (the part of the verb that carries the meaning of the verb) occurs at the end of the word, with subject, classifier, and other prefixes occurring at the beginning of the word. Here’s an example: *wutuwa^xáa* “we ate it”. This word is made up of the following parts: *wu-* (perfective (past) tense), *tu-* “we”, *ya-* (classifier which becomes *wa* in this context) and *-^xáa* (“eat” (verb root)). This verb is listed in the database under its root *-^xaa*. Because of the structure of Tlingit verbs, it wouldn’t make sense to list all verbs in alphabetical order by the first letter in the word, because there would be hundreds of entries listed under the letter “w” and it would be very difficult to find anything. The first step to looking up a verb using the Tlingit index then, is to determine its root. This is usually the last syllable of the word, occurring directly after the classifier.

What do the numbers in parentheses which follow the roots in the Tlingit index mean?

It is often the case that several verbs share the same root. You will see in the Tlingit index that some verb roots have a number in parentheses following the root, such as *-aat’ (3)*. That number indicates the number of individual verbs which are listed under that root. Clicking on the root will expand to a list of those verbs. The English gloss, verb theme, and the verb in the perfective aspect (past tense) are given for each item in the list. Clicking on the English gloss will expand to show the full verb paradigm.

What do the numbers directly following the roots in the Tlingit index mean?

There are also numbers directly following some of the roots, such as *-aa1* and *-aa2*. These numbers serve to distinguish between two roots of the same shape that may have the same classifier-root combinations listed underneath, and don’t always correlate with meaning. The numbering of roots in this way follows that of the Tlingit Verb Dictionary (Story & Naish, 1973), for easy cross-referencing. Because this resource does not contain all of the verb roots in Story & Naish (1973), you might sometimes notice that there is a root followed by a number 2 in this resource, but not a corresponding root with the number 1. This is because those particular verbs have not yet been added to this resource.