

# Takelma Pronunciation Guidelines

## I. Vowels

To produce vowels, the position of the tongue and lips (and sometimes jaw) is changed to create different sounds. The air flow from the lungs through the mouth is not obstructed and air is always moving through the vocal tract. As the air moves through the larynx, the vocal cords are pulled together and vibrate to create the sound. There are not many vowels in Takelma, so there can be a little variation in how they are pronounced.

**a** as in *alts 'il*

a is pronounced like the first vowel in the English word *father* (sometimes as in *pup*)

**e** as in *elá*

e is pronounced like the vowel in the English word *bed*

**i** as in *xi*

i is pronounced like the vowel in the English word *sit* (sometimes as in *ski*)

**o** as in *kolóm*

o is pronounced like the vowel in the English word *so*, but there is no lip rounding at the end as there is in English.

**u** as in *tukúm*

u is pronounced like the vowel in the English word *foot* (sometimes as in *moo*)

**ü** as in *sülüük<sup>h</sup>*

ü is pronounced in between German *ü* and *u*. To say it, pronounce the *i* as in English *bit* with lips rounded as if you were getting ready to pronounce *u*. It is not clear how different this is from *u*, and whether the two should be considered different vowels or not. We should be able to resolve this with more investigation.

**Long and short vowels** as in *tukúm* and *puùs*:

Takelma contrasts long and short vowels. The long vowels do not vary in pronunciation as do the short vowels. *ii* is pronounced like the vowel in English *ski*. Long vowels are held out for approximately twice as long as short vowels.

## Diphthongs

Diphthongs are combinations of two of the above vowel sounds. The beginning vowel sound for Takelma diphthongs is short or long *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*; the second vowel sound is *i* (spelled *y*) or *u* (spelled *w*). Some of these have comparable sounds in English:

- *aw* is pronounced like the vowel in the English words *cow*, *plow*, *meow*
- *ay* is pronounced like the vowel in the English words *try*, *my*, *sigh*
- *iw* is pronounced like the vowel in the English words *ewe*, *few*, *cue*
- *ow* is pronounced like the vowel in the English words *sew*, *toe*, *low*

- *oy* is pronounced like the vowel in the English words *toy, boy, soy*
- *uy* is pronounced like the vowel in the English words *phooey, buoy, (chop) suey*

*ew* and *ey* do not have English equivalents. They begin with the the vowel in the English word *bed* and end with a *u* or *i* sound.

One additional infrequent diphthong is *üy*. As stated above for the vowel *ü*, it is not yet clear how different this is from *uy*, and whether the two should be considered different diphthongs or not.

### **Vowel pitch**

There is much that remains to be learned about pitch and accent in Takelma. We will learn more about pitch as we work with the recordings of Frances Johnson. Takelma has words that are differentiated only by pitch of the vowel. Sapir gives as an example *nakà'ita'* “when he said” vs. *naka'ità'* “when you said.”

The pitches marked in this dictionary are falling, raised and rising, marked with an accent mark over the vowel.

- ˘ indicates a falling pitch, that starts at the same pitch or a little higher than the preceding syllable and falls. This is found on long and short vowels.
- ˆ on a short vowel indicates a raised pitch that is higher than the normal pitch of surrounding syllables.
- ˆ on a long vowel indicates the pitch rises as the vowel is pronounced.

Sometimes pitch is not distinctive, meaning that we find a single word that is marked with more than one pattern. So, to call ones father “Father!” we have both *hamii* and *hamíi*. Sapir was a very careful transcriptionist and wrote down everything he heard. Some of the variation he heard was important for meaning distinctions and some was probably not meaningful.

## **II. Consonants**

To produce consonants, air is constricted or blocked somewhere in the vocal tract. Takelma has three types of consonants. Stops are consonants that are made by completely blocking off the airflow at some point, like English *t* and *k*. Fricatives (sometimes called continuants) involve a restriction of air rather than a complete blockage, so the sound can continue over time. *s*, *z*, and *sh* are examples of English fricatives. Affricates are a stop followed by a continuant, but the sounds are produced so close together they are classified as one sound rather than two. English *ch* is an affricate.

### **A. Takelma consonants similar to English:**

- h** as in *hò'px*
- l** as in *lóom*
- m** as in *mena*
- n** as in *nihwik<sup>hw</sup>*
- s** as in *skìsi*
- w** as in *wilíi*
- y** as in *yola*

## B. Takelma consonants unlike English:

### 1. Glottal stop (ʔ)

The glottal stop is made by closing the vocal cords entirely.

After vowels in the middle of a word such as in *hà'k<sup>h</sup>aa*

Between vowels as in *iiteme'a*

At the beginning of a word, as in *'En, 'en*

At the end of a word after a vowel such as *eyit<sup>h</sup>e'*

### 2. Stops

The sounds *p*, *t*, *k* and *kw* in Takelma are similar to their English counterparts. However, these stops are pronounced a bit differently: each stop has a series of variations.

Rounded stop **kw** as in *kwii'neyixt'e'*

The letter *kw* is a sound similar to that at the beginning of the English words ‘quick’ or ‘queen’ – except the Takelma stop *kw* is unaspirated. The *w* indicates that the sound is made with rounded lips.

For *p*, *t*, *k* and *kw* Takelma has three types of pronunciations:

- unaspirated: *k*, *kw*, *p*, *t*
- aspirated: *k<sup>h</sup>*, *k<sup>h</sup>w*, *p<sup>h</sup>*, *t<sup>h</sup>*
- ejective: *k'*, *kw'*, *p'*, *t'*

*Aspirated vs. unaspirated stops* (k, k<sup>h</sup>; kw, k<sup>h</sup>w; p, p<sup>h</sup>, t, t<sup>h</sup>)

In an aspirated stop, indicated with a raised *h*, an extra puff of air accompanies the sound. In English, we make this distinction as well, but we don't pay attention to it. The sounds *p*, *t*, *k* are aspirated for most native speakers of English at the beginning of a word or stressed syllable (*pin*, *tan*, *kin*). They are unaspirated for almost all speakers when following word-initial *s*, as in *spin*, *stand*, *skin*. Usually, at the end of a word they are not aspirated. In Takelma, stops at the ends of words are always aspirated.

*Ejective stops* (k', kw', p', t')

Ejective stops are made with a complete closure of the vocal cords followed by an upward movement of the larynx. The vocal cords are closed and released at the same time another obstruction (as for *p*, *t*, *k*) is formed elsewhere in the vocal tract.

### 3. Affricate **ts'** as in *ts'èn's*

The Takelma sound *ts'* is an affricate. It is the sound at the end of the English word *cats* – but with the added ejective.

4. *Uvular/velar fricative x as in kwii'neyixt'e'*

*x* is a fricative, as in the German pronunciation of *Bach*, or like a cat's hissing sound. It is made with the back of the tongue pulled up and back towards the far back area of the mouth, near the soft palate. The tongue does not touch the mouth to block off air.