

Relay 16: the torch in Old Tükwäi

jünöj, eiɣasnie giɬi sjimɣas ne idjänei tsai kokatj. gibodev–njöd si ɣekar
ɣasgap döleyi, njöd göbodev ixan tsaönjide. ɣas ne äɬ anrat do iadop däsjn.

A Short Grammar of Old Tükwäi

Depictives:

Depictives are a category (“part of speech”) somewhat unique to Old Tükwäi, and present the greatest challenge to translation. Here is a quick overview.

Depictives cover the same semantic space as verbs of motion, spatial orientation, and size or shape. In particular, they encode path, manner, direction, and goal of motion, along with generalized schema of spatial orientation and distribution.

Semantically, the most important difference between depictives and such verbs is that all these elements are all encoded image-schematically: A depictive corresponds to a particular visual/physical image, with function abstracted away. A fluent tükwäi speaker, if asked to define a particular depictive, is significantly more likely to give a gestural definition than a verbal one, reflecting the fact that depictives are, in some sense, “verbalized gestures”.

Both morphologically and syntactically, depictives function as a category separate from and equal to the categories of noun and verb. Syntactically, a clause in tükwai is best understood as a depictive phrase, which takes (optionally) an argument (the predicate) and an NP specifier (hereafter called the “d-theme”).

In order to facilitate translation from tükwäi for those unfamiliar with depictives and their uses, I have given three definitions of all depictives in the lexicon:

- 1) A verbal description of the image-schema
- 2) A brief description of possible uses (which may be idiomatic)
- 3) A brief video-clip of myself performing the gestural definition

Hopefully, with these definitions given, there shouldn’t be any trouble understanding the text.

General Syntax:

A clause consists minimally of a depictive. The d-theme (always an NP) will, if present, precede the head depictive; the argument (NP, VP, or DP) will follow it. A depictive with only an argument is understood as predicating it’s image-schema of that argument; a

depictive with a d-theme is understood as modifying or explicating the argument, which is predicated of the d-theme.

Modifiers typically follow their head.

Nouns:

Nouns decline for number, definiteness, case, and “modifier status”.

Number:

SINGULAR:	Ø –	
PAUCAL:	o –	(a small number, considered as a group)
DISTRIBUTIVE:	ei –	(plural)

Case:

	NOMINATIVE	ACCUSATIVE	DATIVE
DEFINITE:	–Ø	–gap	–yet
INDEFINITE:	–o	–ga	–yi

“Modifier status”: –i

The cases used reflect the nouns relationship to the verb phrase (not the depictive phrase): Nominative corresponds to the subject, accusative to the direct object, and dative to the indirect object. In sentences with no verb phrase, the nominative case is used by default, though the dative may be used to express destination, purpose, or benefactor.

The modifier state is on nouns is usually interpreted as the genitive case; some derivational morphology requires the noun to be in modifier status.

Verbs:

Verbs decline for person agreement (with their subject) and tense. For the text above, the only conjugation necessary is the nonpast:

Agreement:

	1	2	3	4
NONPAST	–ein	–än	–tzi	–Ø

The fourth person in tükwäi is the “general”, similar in meaning to the English pronoun “one”.

Arguments typically follow the verb.

Verbs are negated by preceding them with the particle tsi.

Depictives, continued:

Depictives decline for valency, dependency, mode, and “modifier status”. A valency of 0 means the depictive takes no arguments; valency of 1 means it takes just one argument; valency of 2 means it takes an argument and a d-theme. Dependency refers to the syntactic state of the depictive as being independent or dependent upon another clause; dependent depictives are most commonly used in relative clauses.

	0	1	2
INDEPENDENT	jü–	∅–	i–
DEPENDENT	gö–	gö–	gi–

Only two modes are relevant here: The irrealis is used in relative clauses; the abilative reflects the ability of the d-theme to perform the predicate. (Compare to English “can, be able to”.)

Mode:

IRREALIS:	–(e)v	(–v after a vowel)
ABILATIVE:	–öŋ	

Modifier status on depictives allows them to function as adverbs, adjectives, or “ad-depictives”, and takes the form –i.

Depictives are negated by preceding them with the particle do.

Pronouns:

The tükwäi pronominal system is fairly complex; only the 4th person (compare to “one” in English, “on” in French) is relevant here.

4	SINGULAR	PAUCAL	DISTRIBUTIVE
NOMINATIVE	ɬas	bezj	njöd
ACCUSATIVE	ɬai	bal	njödi
GENATIVE	ɬa	be	ne
DATIVE	ɬaŋ	bin	njödi

Relativization:

To form a relative clause in tükwäi:

Use a depictive in the subordinate phrase

The head of the relative clause must be the d-theme of the subordinate clause

The relativized depictive phrase follows its head noun.

Forming the Imperative:

To form an imperative clause in tükwäi:

Use a depictive in the irrealis mood

Use an explicit d-theme (often a pronoun)

Front the depictive (and hyphenate it with the pronoun immediately following it)

Comparisons:

The particle **äɬ** indicates a comparison between two noun-phrases in terms of a predicated quality.

Relevant vocabulary:

adop	d	diminishing in size (growing or being less)
aŋrat	n	life, living
bod	d	flipping over (this instead of that; this becomes that)
djänei	d	one entity moves towards the (fixed) other (movement towards a goal; telicity)
däsjen	n	importance, value, worth
döle	n	other
kokatj	n	failure
ɬi	d	one entity pushes another forward (causation, control)
nöj	d	pushing forwards (implies effort)
sjimyas	n	behavior
tša	d	indicating centered area (general existential; emphatic)
ɣas	n	manner
ɣasnie	n	religion
ɣekar	v	move, change
xan	d	boundless space (totality, completeness)