

**TONKAWA**  
**AN INDIAN LANGUAGE OF TEXAS**  
BY  
**HARRY HOIJER**



<i>ga'-adcaw-o'</i>	I revive ( <i>ge'-adcaw-o'</i> )
<i>ha'-adnayew-o'</i>	they love each other ( <i>he'-adnayewo'</i> )
<i>no'oc-o'c</i>	I wipe his nose ( <i>ne'oc-o'c</i> )
<i>ho'oxaw-o'c</i>	I steal it ( <i>he'oxaw-o'c</i> )
<i>nenco'yaw-o'c</i>	I ferry it ( <i>nenco'yaw-o'c</i> )

The vowel *o*, coming directly before an element beginning with a vowel or *h*, becomes *w*.

<i>yago-</i>	to fetch water
<i>yagw-an</i>	bucket, container (-an noun forming suffix)
<i>yadxo-</i>	to fill pipe; prepare for smoking
<i>yadxw-an</i>	pipe
<i>necnaxo-</i>	to cause to ripen
<i>nadj-dam'axan-necnaxw-an</i>	cricket, he who causes pecans to ripen
<i>hec'ago-</i>	to shave oneself
<i>hec'agw-an</i>	razor

#### 4. The Consonant.

The consonantal scheme has the rather unique feature of glottalized nasals, spirants, sibilants and laterals. These glottalized consonants, as well as the glottalized stops, appear almost exclusively as initial consonants of complex elements (cf. 13). The question of their being basic consonants is, therefore, contingent upon the structure of the complex element. As will be shown later, the complex element is not always susceptible to closer analysis: for this reason and because of the rarer cases of the occurrence of glottalized consonants in unanalyzable forms, these consonants have been listed as on a par with the others. The bilabial stop *b* never appears in the glottalized form even when it is the initial of a complex element comparable to those requiring a glottalized initial consonant. A unique feature is the glottalized *gw'*, in which the glottal stop affects not the stop but its labialization. This feature is, however, congruent with the rest of the system: in all cases the glottal closure survives the oral closure and, when the nasals, spirants, sibilants, and laterals are glottalized, the glottal stop always follows.

V. L. Media	Stops		Nasals		Spirants		
	Glost.	Stops	Voiced	Glott.	V. L.	Voiced	Glott.
Labial	<i>b</i>	—	<i>m</i>	<i>m'</i>	—	<i>w</i>	<i>w'</i>
Dental	<i>d</i>	<i>t'</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n'</i>	—	—	—
Sibilant	—	—	—	—	<i>c</i>	—	<i>c'</i>
Palatal	—	—	—	—	—	<i>y</i>	<i>y'</i>
Guttural	<i>g</i>	<i>k'</i>	—	—	<i>x</i>	—	<i>x'</i>
Labial							
Gutturals	<i>gw</i>	<i>gw'</i>	—	—	<i>xw</i>	—	<i>xw'</i>
Faucal	—	—	—	—	<i>h</i>	—	—

Lateral: *l*; glottalized lateral: *l'*

Affricative: *dj*; glottalized affricative: *t'c*

The voiceless media (*b*, *d*, *g*, *gw*) are pronounced in a manner about halfway between the corresponding English surds and sonants; somewhat as the *b*, *d*, and *g* of the central German dialects. They occur in all positions — initially, medially, and finally. In the final position, *g* becomes the surd *-k*.

<i>co'bgo'c</i>	I swell up
<i>co'bak nadjgo'c</i>	I swell up and die
<i>yax'ago'c</i>	I shovel it
<i>yax'ak do'xo'c</i>	I shovel it all up

The sibilant *c* is the *sh* of English 'ship' with a forward articulation: *sh* pronounced halfway between English *s* and *sh*. It occurs in all positions. *x*, *xw*, vary in pronunciation between the guttural and palatal. Before or after back vowels (*a*, *o*,), they are guttural; before or after the front vowels (*e*, *i*,), they assume the palatal pronunciation of the *ch* of German 'ich'.

*dj* varies with *dz*. It is approximated in pronunciation by the *j* of English 'judge'. In the final position it is entirely unvoiced, *-tc*.

<i>t'caxw yabetc</i>	thread
<i>yabdjo'c</i>	I sew it
<i>ben'ats</i>	spring
<i>ben'atc</i>	spring

*h*, *w*, *y*, *l*, *m*, and *n* are pronounced as in English. *-h-*, in the medial position is usually absorbed by the preceding element (cf. 8). The semi-vowels *w* and *y*, in the final position, become *-u* and *-i*, respectively.

<i>'e'eyawo'c</i>	I work
<i>'e'eyau do'xo'c</i>	I finish working
<i>yaxoyo'c</i>	I hunt it
<i>yaxoi ciliwo'c</i>	I go about hunting

#### A. THEME ELEMENTS (5—13)

##### 5. Full and Reduced Forms: Vocalic Elision.

Before entering upon the explanation of vocalic elision — the most important single phonetic alternation affecting the theme — it will be necessary to define more accurately the various types of theme elements. We have already called attention to the fact that there are two main types — the simple and the complex. The simple element is composed of consonant plus vowel; the complex element, generally built up of consonant plus vowel plus consonant, has several types. In the following list of types of theme elements, C is to be read as any consonant and V as any vowel. The lower



Between 1933 and 1946 Hoijer revised his phonological analysis to yield the following inventory of consonants: plain stops *p*, *t*, *k*, *kʷ*, ?, affricate *c* (dental to postalveolar), fricatives *s*, *x*, *xʷ*, *h*, nasals *m*, *n*, and frictionless continuants *w*, *l*, *y*. (The stops were written earlier as *b*, *d*, *g*, *gʷ*. All consonants but *h* and ? were first seen as having glottalized counterparts. These were reanalyzed as clusters.) There are short and long vowels: *i*, *e*, *a*, *o*, *u*; *i·*, *e·*, *a·*, *o·*, *u·*. (Some long vowels result from contraction.) The vowels may be followed by glides within a syllable. Of special interest in Tonkawa is a process whereby even-numbered stem syllables are reduced: long vowels are shortened, and short vowels disappear. (Stops before deleted vowels are geminated; sonorants become syllabic.) Such a process can be seen in words built on the stem *yamax-* 'paint face'. In *yam·x(a)-o?c* 'I paint his face', the syllable *ma* is

# Tonkawa language

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Tonkawa language** was spoken in Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico by the Tonkawa people. A language isolate, with no known related languages, Tonkawa is now extinct, and the members of the Tonkawa tribe now speak only English.

Tonkawa	
Spoken in:	United States
Region:	Western Oklahoma, South-central Texas and into New Mexico
Language extinction:	20th century
Language family:	language isolate <b>Tonkawa</b>
Language codes	
ISO 639-1:	<i>none</i>
ISO 639-2:	nai
ISO/DIS 639-3:	tqw ( <a href="http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/documentation.asp?id=tqw">http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/documentation.asp?id=tqw</a> )
 Pre-contact distribution of the Tonkawa language	

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## Sounds

### Vowels

Tonkawa has 10 vowels:

	Front				Back	
	short	long	short	long	short	long
<b>High</b>	i	i:			u	u:

<b>Mid</b>	e	e:		o	o:
<b>Low</b>		a	a:		

- The vowels occur in five pairs that have differing vowel lengths (i.e. short vowels vs. long vowels).
- In the front and the mid back vowel pairs, the short vowels are phonetically lower than their high counterparts: /i/ → near-close [ɪ], /e/ → open-mid [ɛ], /o/ → open-mid [ɔ].
- The low vowels /a, a:/ vary between central and back articulations: [a~ɑ, a:~ɑ:].

## Consonants

Tonkawa has 15 consonants:

	Bilabial	Dental		Palatal	Velar		Glottal
		central	lateral		plain	labial	
<b>Plosive</b>	p	t			k	k <sup>w</sup>	?
<b>Affricate</b>		ts					
<b>Fricative</b>		s			x	x <sup>w</sup>	h
<b>Nasal</b>	m	n					
<b>Approximant</b>		l	j		w		

- The affricate /ts/ and fricative /s/ vary freely between dental and postalveolar articulations, i.e. [ts~tʃ] and [s~ʃ]. There is a tendency for [ʃ] to occur at the end of words (but no tendency for [tʃ]).
- The velar obstruents are palatal before front vowels /i, i:, e, e:/:
  - /k, k<sup>w</sup>, x, x<sup>w</sup>/ → [c, c<sup>w</sup>, ç, ç<sup>w</sup>]

## Phonological processes

An interesting feature of Tonkawan phonology is that the vowels in even-numbered syllables are reduced. That is, long vowels are shortened, while short vowels disappear.

## Grammar

## Writing system

The orthography used on the Tonkawa Tribe's website is very similar to Americanist phonetic notation.

Alphabet	Pronunciation	Alphabet	Pronunciation
c	/ts/	a	/a/
h	/h/	a•	/a:/
k	/k/	e	/e/

k <sup>w</sup>	/k <sup>w</sup> /	e•	/e:/
l	/l/	i	/i/
m	/m/	i•	/i:/
n	/n/	o	/o/
p	/p/	o•	/o:/
s	/s/	u	/u/
t	/t/	u•	/u:/
w	/w/		
x	/x/		
x <sup>w</sup>	/x <sup>w</sup> /		
y	/j/		
' or ?	/?/		

Long vowels are indicated with a following middle dot <•>. The affricate /ts/ is written as <c>. The glottal stop /ʔ/ is written as either an apostrophe <'> or with a superscript question mark <?<sup>?</sup>>. The palatal glide /j/ is written as <y>.

The phonemic orthography used in Hoijer's *Tonkawa Texts* is a later version of Americanist transcription. It uses a colon for long vowels <:> and the traditional glottal stop symbol <?>.

## Example

The following text is the first four sentences of *Coyote and Jackrabbit*, from Hoijer's *Tonkawa Texts*.

ha•csokonayla ha•nanoklakno?<sup>?</sup>o xam?<sup>?</sup>al?<sup>?</sup>a'y?<sup>?</sup>ik. ?e•k<sup>w</sup>a tanmaslak<sup>w</sup>a•low hecne•laklakno?<sup>?</sup>o lak. ha•csokonayla  
"?o•c!" noklakno?<sup>?</sup>o. "?ek<sup>w</sup>anesxaw sa•ken nenxales!" noklakno?<sup>?</sup>o. ?e•ta tanmaslak<sup>w</sup>a•lowa•?<sup>?</sup>a•lak hewleklakno?<sup>?</sup>o.

### Gloss:

Coyote / he was going along, S / on the prairie. When he did so / Jackrabbit / he was lying, S / (accus.). Coyote / "Oho!" / he said, S. "Horse /my / I have found it!" / he said, S. And then / that Jackrabbit afm / he caught him, S.

In this gloss, *S* is an abbreviation for "it is said", and *afm* for "the aforementioned".

## References

- Hoijer, Harry. (1933). *Tonkawa: An Indian language of Texas*. New York: Columbia University. (Extract from *Handbook of American Indian languages*, Vol. 3).
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- Mithun, Marianne. *The Languages of Native North America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- "The Tonkawa Language: Pronunciation Key." Internet: <<http://www.tonkawatribe.com/culture/language.htm>> October 12, 2005.

## External links

- Ethnologue report for Tonkawa ([http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=tqw](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=tqw))
- Tonkawa resources at the Rosetta Project  
(<http://www.rosettaproject.org/archive/coahuiltecan/americas/ton/view?searchterm=Tonkawa>)
- The Tonkawa Language (<http://www.tonkawatribe.com/culture/language.htm>) — Includes online Tonkawa dictionary

Retrieved from "[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonkawa\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonkawa_language)"

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