

Chapter 5 Nawat

5.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the Nawat/Pipil language. Section 5.2 explains the Nawat/Pipil and the Nawat/Nahuatl distinction. A brief history of the Pipil people is provided in section 5.3. Section 5.4 reviews the available Nawat language resources. A basic grammar is outlined in section 5.5. A more complete description would require more resources beyond the scope of the present project. Section 5.6 discusses the issues that arise for the present project, including what alphabet and dialect to use. Section 5.7 provides a summary of the chapter.

5.2 Nawat – Some Basic Facts

Nawat versus Pipil

In the literature, the Nawat language of El Salvador is referred to as Pipil. The people who speak the language are known as the Pipil people, hence the use of the word Pipil for their language. However, the Pipil speakers themselves refer to their language as Nawat. In El Salvador, the local Spanish speakers refer to the language as “nahuatl” (pronounced “/nawat/”). Throughout this document, the language will be called Nawat.

El Salvador is a small country in Central America. It is bordered on the north-west by Guatemala and on the north-east by Honduras. See Figure 5.1 for a map of Central America.



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Figure 5.1 Map of Central America

Nawat versus Nahuatl

Nawat is an Uto-Aztecan language (Campbell, 1985). It is related to the Nahuatl language spoken in Mexico (which is where the Pipils originally came from, see section 5.3). When the Spanish arrived in Central America, they initially tried to teach the locals Spanish. However, as they failed to do this, they decided that "all the local languages must be alike" and picked on Nahuatl as the lingua franca of their Central American empire. However, Nahuatl, Mayan and the other local languages are not mutually intelligible and while they did succeed to some extent, Nahuatl never became a true *lingua franca* for the region. Today, Nahuatl is the language spoken in Mexico and Nawat is the language spoken in El Salvador.

Some Nawat Words You May Already Know

There are some Nawat words (which came from Nahuatl originally) that have passed through Spanish and into English. They are mainly words for plants and fruit that the Spanish encountered for the first time in Central America. For example, the Nawat word *tumat* became *tomate* in Spanish and *tomato* in English. *cukulut* in Nawat became *chocolate* in Spanish and English.

There are other words that went from Nawat to Spanish (but sound different in English). For example, *awakat* is *aguacate* in Spanish (*avocado* in English). *elut* (*corncob*) became *elote* in Spanish. There are other words that are used in Salvadorian Spanish that come from Nawat. Words such as *tunalmil* (summer harvest) and *xupanmil* (winter harvest) are still used by Salvadorians, although they are pronounced in a Spanish way (i.e. with the accent on the *mil* rather than *na* for *tunalmil* and *pan* for *xupanmil*).

5.3 Brief History of the Pipil People and their Language

Arrival in El Salvador

It is estimated that the Pipil people (originally Aztecs) arrived in (present day) El Salvador from Mexico around 900 AD. They left Mexico, fleeing from persecution by the Olmecas. They travelled down through present day Guatemala and arrived in El Salvador. It is assumed that there were several waves of migration, which continued until 1300 AD (Campbell, 1985). Even though the Pipil people of El Salvador originally spoke Nahuatl (from Mexico), their language (Nawat) evolved and diverged from Nahuatl over many hundreds of years. At the time of the Spanish invasion (1524), the Pipil communities occupied most of the land that is present-day El Salvador. The Mexican (Nahuatl) interpreters that arrived with the Spanish considered the language spoken by the Pipils, while intelligible to them, to be childlike. They therefore called the people they encountered "pipil" (child or boy) – a pejorative term. There is another interpretation of the name Pipil, which means "prince". However, while this is more flattering, the first explanation is more likely.

The Spanish brought with them a different way of farming (Browning, 1987). Before their arrival, the land did not belong to anyone in particular – it was all community land. When someone was starting a family, he was allowed to use land to build a house and for planting crops (corn and beans). Land was not zoned or fenced off.

However, the Spanish brought with them cattle (which were not native to Central America). Cattle obviously had no concept of where their owner's land ended and so rambled about, eating whatever they found. Often, this meant that they would eat the crops of the local people. To avoid this problem, it was decided to fence off the land that "belonged" to the cattle owners. This in effect meant that community land was "acquired" by the Spanish and their descendants, setting up problems for future generations of Salvadorians.

1932 Massacre

While the Nawat language was in decline by 1932, the 'matanza' (massacre) of that year dramatically brought the language to the verge of extinction. Although there is no definitive account of what exactly happened, the general thrust of the events are generally accepted. By the early 1900s the majority of the Pipil people were living in the west of El Salvador, principally in the area between Sonsonate and Santa Ana.

In 1882, the government of El Salvador abolished the last (Indian) communal lands in El Salvador (to make way for coffee plantations) (OYO, 1995). By the end of the 19th century, there was an enormous, unequal distribution of wealth in El Salvador, with 0.01% of the population controlling 90% of the country's wealth. This naturally caused great unrest in the country. The Salvadoran Communist Party was founded in 1930. It was supported by urban workers and rural peasants. An uprising was planned for January 22, 1932. The government (led by General Maximiliano Martínez, who had taken power in an army coup) knew of the plans in advance and arrested some of its leaders.

The peasants decided to go ahead with the uprising and occupied towns in the western part of El Salvador (the main coffee growing region of the country). The demonstrators were armed with machetes and knives, the army with guns. It was an uneven fight. Within a week, the army had regained control of the towns, but continued to extract revenge. The "rebellion" was mercilessly crushed and between 10,000 to 30,000 indigenous people were killed in various clashes starting in January 1932. People were killed purely on the basis that they spoke Nawat ("proof" that they were subversives) and/or wore traditional clothing. To have any outward signs of being "indigenous" risked death. (For more details, see Byrne (1996)).

Nawat was banned and only Spanish could be spoken. Many of the women could not speak Spanish and when they brought food to the male family members in prison, they did so in silence. People feared being killed just for being "indigenous". They stopped wearing their traditional clothes that identified them as Pipils. The effects of the 1932 Massacre still live on. Many elderly are afraid to talk openly about the events of that time. They fear "repercussions" for speaking Nawat and some do not like to get involved with "the white (i.e. non-Pipil) people"¹. Perhaps modern-day terms such as "ethnic cleansing" and "linguist genocide" could be applied to the 1932 Massacre. Either way, it marked a turning point for the Pipil people and their language.

¹ I was fortunate in that I was able to work with two Nawat speakers who were willing and enthusiastic about the project and did not share these fears (see section 5.6).

Current Status

Although the Ethnologue (Grimes, 2000) reports that there are less than 20 speakers, based on field trips to El Salvador (December 2000 - January, 2001; July, 2001), I believe that the total is slightly higher, maybe 100. Current local estimates are that there are less than 200 speakers of Nawat, most of them over 50 years of age. No one uses Nawat as his/her principal language of communication and it is not being spoken to the children of the community. There are some language teaching projects underway but they have not been very successful up to now.

The elderly members of the community, even those who can speak Nawat, do not like to do so. Apart from general negative attitudes towards the language, some still remember the massacre of 1932 and the problems suffered by just being Nawat speakers. However, on my field trips to El Salvador, I have observed that several people in Santo Domingo de Guzmán were happy to talk to Genaro Ramírez (the native speaker who collaborated on this project) in Nawat. There were some who, although they could not speak the language, could understand Genaro Ramírez.

It is hard to define what exactly is meant by “an indigenous person” in the Salvadorian context today. In other Central American countries, language and dress help define whether someone is “indigenous” or “ladino” (mixed blood). Sometimes there are discernible physical characteristics. However, in El Salvador, where traditional dress disappeared after the 1932 Massacre and the language has almost disappeared, this is not so easy. Some studies (Chapin, 1990) have shown that 1 in 10 people in El Salvador is “indigenous”, but this seems a high estimate. In this project, the term is used for anyone who comes from a village that has a majority indigenous population and/or who identifies themselves as indigenous (along the lines of the definition proposed by Levi-Strauss, 1972). Indigenous Salvadorians tend to be darker skinned and smaller than the ladino or mestizo (mixed) population but this does not always hold.

El Salvador is a developing country. Its indices of development, health and living conditions are lower than for developed countries. Within El Salvador, indigenous communities have worse indices than other Salvadorians. For example, 23% of Salvadorians suffer from malnutrition, whereas the figure is 40% for people from indigenous communities (OPS, 1998). 48% of Salvadorians have access to the basic necessities of life whereas only 1% of people from indigenous communities fall within this socio-economic category. 99% of indigenous community members fall into either the poverty (61%) or absolute poverty (38%) categories.

Given such statistics, it is easy to understand why “niceties” such as language revitalisation rank low on the list of priorities for community members. They are more concerned about basic survival and living conditions. However, community members are interested in halting the disappearance of the language and with the help of people from outside the community, they may be able to stop its total demise. Roque (1996) reports 61% of the community do not consider economic factors to be part of the reason why the language is disappearing. Reasons cited include a lack of interest, shame and the fear of being mocked

(62%)², no one to teach the language (20%) and lack of government help (18%). An increase in the organisational capacity of the indigenous communities since the late 1980s has led to some small projects to teach Nawat.

5.4 Nawat Language Resources

Nawat has been documented by various authors with different goals in mind. This section reviews the documentation available on Nawat and the language learning resources that have been developed. One important observation is that it is very difficult to access these documents - they are not commonly available and are generally out of print (there are some exceptions). Even if the reader can track down the documents, they are often not very easy to assimilate. Some of the books that describe the language confuse rather than illuminate (for example, using inconsistent spelling). Campbell (1985) is an exception. His book is titled “The Pipil language of El Salvador” but he notes that the language is called Nawat by its speakers and that he only used the word Pipil as it is so strongly entrenched in the scientific literature. Appendix F, p188 provides a Nawat bibliography.

Documentation

The Nawat language was initially mentioned by the Spanish at the time of the Spanish conquest. Once they decided that the “natives” could not learn Spanish, they tried to make Nahuatl (of Mexico) the *lingua franca* of the empire. There are several documents that contain information about Nahuatl, mainly written by Spanish missionaries in the 1500s.

Various books have been published about Nawat, some of them more reliable than others. Jiménez published several books including: *Idioma pipil o náhuatl de Cuzcatlán y Tunalán hoy República de El Salvador en la América Central* (Pipil or Nawat language of Cuzcatlan and Tunalan now the Republic of El Salvador, Central America) (1937) and *La lengua de los pipiles, sus relaciones con el dialecto lenca y su distribución en El Salvador* (The language of the Pipils, its relationship with Lenca and its distribution in El Salvador) (1959). Geoffroy Rivas wrote “El Nawat de Cuzcatlán: apuntes para una gramática tentativa” (The Nawat of Cuzcatlán (El Salvador): grammar pointers) (1969). Aráuz wrote “El pipil de la región de los Izalcos” (The Pipil of the Izalco region) (1960).

The definitive work on the language was written by Campbell “The Pipil language of El Salvador” (1985). It draws on the material already published, as well as the author’s knowledge of the language and expertise as one of the world experts on indigenous languages of North America. It contains chapters on phonology, grammatical categories and morphology, syntax, Nawat-Spanish-English dictionary, Spanish-Nawat dictionary and Nawat texts.

There have been several studies of the language and the Pipil people by other authors. Dr Jorge Lemus (Universidad de Don Bosco, Universidad de El Salvador) has published documents on the language, including a proposal for the Nawat alphabet (Lemus, 1997a) (see section 5.6). Gallo Tiberio (Universidad de El Salvador) has worked on the language and with its people for many years. There have been several projects in the Literature Department of the Universidad de El Salvador, which involved

² This is how the data is presented in Roque (1996) although, to my mind, these factors are quite different.

documenting various aspects of the language (with Lidia Margarita Muñoz and Consuela Roque, amongst others). There is also a book written by Schultze-Jena (1935) that has been translated from German to Spanish by Gloria Menjívar Rieken and Armida Parada Fortín.

Language Learning Resources

Several books and booklets have been produced for learners of the Nawat language. Some are aimed at children, while others are for adults. The books for children mainly consist of simple phrases and wordlists. The most recent publication (Roque, 2000) is colourful and appealing. It uses an alphabet based on the Spanish alphabet and covers the Cuisnahuat dialect of Nawat.

CONCULTURA (the cultural section of the Ministry of Education and Culture in El Salvador) has produced several guides for the teaching of Nawat along with booklets for students. These were used in 16 schools from 1st to 6th grade in primary school in the Department of Sonsonate, western El Salvador between 1988 and 1991. Several booklets with phrases have been published for adults. Most use an alphabet based on the Spanish alphabet. The format tends to be a list of phrases and vocabulary. There is usually no explanation of the grammar of the language or of why things are said a certain way. Granted, a detailed technical explanation would probably not be appropriate, but some level of grammatical explanation would be helpful.

Unfortunately, most of the material is out of print. During my field trips I was often informed that “such and such” a booklet existed, but when I tried to track it down in CONCULTURA and the various cultural centres in the west of El Salvador, it was not to be found. This was a common theme: a certain booklet was in existence but no one had seen it (they had only heard about it) and it was (often) impossible to track down a copy. When a copy was finally located, it was generally not in a very good state – however, contents were still legible. Obviously, this makes it very difficult for any potential learners and teachers to obtain language learning resources.

Members of the Pipil community have produced some booklets about the language. Genaro Ramírez has written several, including a Nawat-Spanish dictionary (Ramírez, 1997). He continues to work on Nawat language material. There are several projects underway in the Pipil communities to teach Nawat to the local children. Some are run by Non Governmental Organisations, who work in co-operation with the local people. However, these projects face many difficulties, including lack of teaching material, teacher training and organisation amongst others.

5.5 Basic Nawat Grammar

This section outlines the grammar of Nawat. It uses Campbell (1985) as its main reference, although the other Nawat language books referred to in section 5.4 have also been consulted. Campbell reports that an optional lengthening of vowels exists in certain words. As this distinction is no longer very discernible (and for reasons of clarity), only non-lengthened forms are shown. The alphabet used is that proposed by Lemus (1997a) – see section 5.6 for details.

Here are some points of note about the Nawat language

- the stress falls on the penultimate syllable,
- vowel loss can occur in verbs, nouns, suffixes and prefixes,
- absolutes: a suffix called the ‘absolute’ occurs with most noun roots when these appear without other affixes (e.g. *siwat* (woman), *siwapil* (girl)),
- there are no grammatical gender distinctions.

5.5.1 Grammatical Categories and Morphology

5.5.1.1 Nouns

5.5.1.1.1 Possession

Nouns take the ‘possessive pronominal’ prefixes (see Table 5.1).

Prefix	Meaning
<i>nu</i>	my
<i>mu</i>	your (singular)
<i>i</i>	his/her/its
<i>tu</i>	our
<i>amu</i>	your (plural)
<i>in</i>	their

Table 5.1 Possessive pronominal prefixes

5.5.1.1.2 Other Nominal Suffixes

Noun roots which end in *a/e/i* generally take a possessive suffix *w* (e.g. *nusiwaw* (my wife) (from *siwat* (woman))). Some nouns lose their final vowel when they take a possessive prefix. The intimate or inalienable suffix, *yu*, which is common to all Mesoamerican Indian languages, is used (e.g. compare *nunakaw* (my meat) with *nunakayu* (my flesh)). Some plural forms take *wan* (the plural of *w*) when possessed (*sihsiwawan* (women: *siwat* (woman) see section 5.5.1.1.3 for information on plurals)).

Nawat has other nominal suffixes, some of which are no longer productive³. Table 5.2 lists the other nominal suffixes. Only those suffixes for which its productive state is known have information in the “Productive” column – the rest are left blank.

Suffix	Meaning	Productive	Example
<i>pan</i>	on, upon, near	No	<i>apan</i> (river) (from <i>at</i> (water))
<i>tan</i>	in, among, under, near	No	<i>kutan</i> (woods) (from <i>qawi</i> (tree))
<i>k, ku</i>	in		<i>ih tik</i> (in) (from <i>ih ti</i> (belly))
<i>ta, tal</i>	land		<i>etal</i> (beanfield) (from <i>e</i> (bean))
<i>ka</i>	nouns derived from verbs or adjectives		<i>patka</i> (change) (from <i>pata</i> (change))
<i>ni</i>	agentive suffix		<i>kucini</i> (sleepyhead) (from <i>kuci</i> (to sleep))
<i>s</i>	derives nouns from verbs		<i>kukulis</i> (sickness) (from <i>kukuyu</i> (to get sick))
<i>zin, cin</i>	diminutive or reverential function	Yes	<i>mistunzin</i> (kitten) (from <i>mistun</i> (cat))
<i>pil</i>	diminutive	No	<i>siwapil</i> (girl) (from <i>siwat</i> (woman))
<i>l</i>	nouns derived from passive verbs (passive nominalization)		<i>taqal</i> (food) (from <i>taqa</i> (to eat))

Table 5.2 Other nominal suffixes

³ A suffix is productive in the sense that it can be added to (almost) any word, rather than just being part of the words that already use it. In this case, its use is said to be non-productive or frozen.

5.5.1.1.3 Plural

There are different ways of forming the plural in Nawat and some nouns take a combination of forms. Table 5.3 shows the plural forms. Note that adjectives and verbs may also be reduplicated.

Form	Comment	Example
ket	Most restricted, limited to a few human nouns	<i>sihswatket</i> (women) (from <i>siwat</i> (woman))
met	Generally limited to human nouns	<i>pipilmet</i> (boys) (from <i>pipil</i> (boy))
wan	Limited to kinship terms	<i>sihswawan</i> (women) (from <i>siwat</i> (woman))
zi(n)zin	Plural of 'zin'; diminutive or reverential	
pi(l)pil	Plural of 'pil'	Note that the <i>l</i> is optional
CVh	Consonant-Vowel-h; reduplication and the most frequent and productive form. First C if present and vowel are reduplicated with h added	<i>ahawakat</i> (avocados) (from <i>awakat</i> (avocado)) <i>kuhkuwat</i> (snakes) (from <i>kuwat</i> (snake))
other	Reduplicated possessive pronominal prefixes	<i>ihitan</i> (her teeth) (from <i>tan</i> (teeth))

Table 5.3 Plural forms

5.5.1.2 Pronouns

5.5.1.2.1 Independent Pronouns

Independent pronouns are optional in Nawat as subject and object pronominal affixes are required with the verb. Table 5.4 shows the independent pronouns. The shortened forms are more common.

Pronoun	Shortened form	Meaning
<i>naha</i>	<i>na, nah</i>	I
<i>taha</i>	<i>ta, tah</i>	you (singular)
<i>yaha</i>	<i>ya, yah</i>	he, she, it
<i>tehemet</i>	<i>temet</i>	we
<i>anehemet</i>	<i>amet</i>	you (plural)
<i>yehemet</i>	<i>yemet</i>	they

Table 5.4 Pronouns

5.5.1.2.2 Pronominal Subject Affixes

Verbs take pronominal affixes that either indicate

- the pronominal subject (if no independent subject pronouns, nouns or noun phrases occur),
- or make a cross-reference to independent subjects and occur with a plural suffix 't' on the verb when the subject is a plural person.

Table 5.5 shows the list of pronominal subject affixes. Note that blank implies that nothing is added.

Subject affixes	Meaning
<i>ni</i>	I
<i>ti</i>	you
	he, she, it
<i>ti ... t</i>	we
<i>an ... t</i>	you (am before vowels)
<i>... t</i>	they

Table 5.5 Pronominal subject affixes

As an illustration, Table 5.6 shows the conjugation of the verb *panu* (to pass).

Nawat	Meaning
<i>nipanu</i>	I pass
<i>tipanu</i>	you pass
<i>panu</i>	he/she/it passes
<i>tipanut</i>	we pass
<i>anpanut</i>	you (plural) pass
<i>panut</i>	they pass

Table 5.6 Conjugation of the verb *panu*

5.5.1.2.3 Pronominal Copula

There is an equational construction in which a pronominal subject has a noun or adjective as complement that is formed by merely affixing these pronominal subject morphemes to the complement. See Table 5.7 for examples.

Nawat	Meaning
<i>nitakat</i>	I am a man (<i>takat</i> (man))
<i>titakat</i>	You are a man (<i>takat</i> (man))

Table 5.7 Examples of the pronominal copula

5.5.1.2.4 Pronominal Object Prefixes

Transitive verbs normally bear a prefix that references the object. These prefixes can

- cross-reference an independent object pronoun, noun or noun phrase (usually with a 3rd prefix),
- can signal the object directly if it is pronominal.

Table 5.8 shows the pronominal object prefixes.

Nawat	Meaning
<i>nec</i>	me
<i>miz</i>	you
<i>k(i)</i>	him/her/it
<i>tec</i>	us
<i>mizin</i>	you
<i>(k)in</i>	them

Table 5.8 Pronominal object prefixes

They function as direct objects but also serve to indicate indirect objects. See Table 5.9 for some examples.

Nawat	Meaning
<i>nikidak</i>	I saw it (<i>idak</i> (saw))
<i>tinecitak</i>	You saw me (<i>itak</i> (saw))
<i>nimizitak</i>	I saw you (<i>itak</i> (saw))
<i>tinizinitak</i>	We saw you (plural)

Table 5.9 Examples of pronominal object prefixes

5.5.1.2.5 Possessive Pronominal Prefixes

Possessive pronominal prefixes precede the noun. For example, *numistun* (my cat) (table 5.1 is repeated in table 5.10 for clarity).

Nawat	Meaning
<i>nu</i>	my
<i>mu</i>	your
<i>i</i>	his, her, its
<i>tu</i>	our
<i>anmu or amu</i>	your (plural)
<i>in</i>	their

Table 5.10 Possessive pronominal prefixes

5.5.1.2.6 Indefinite Pronouns

Table 5.11 provides a list of indefinite pronouns.

Nawat	Meaning
<i>ahnakah</i>	someone, somebody
<i>kanah</i>	elsewhere, somewhere
<i>kakah</i>	someone
<i>su akah</i>	no-one, nobody
<i>tesu katka</i>	nothing
<i>su kanah</i>	nowhere, there is/are not
<i>su datka</i>	nothing

Table 5.11 Indefinite pronouns

5.5.1.3 Articles and Demonstratives

5.5.1.3.1 Articles

The articles in Nawat are more demonstrative than in English or Spanish. As articles in Nawat are optional, using them provides more emphasis (see Table 5.12).

Nawat	Meaning
<i>ne</i>	the
<i>se</i>	a/an

Table 5.12 Articles in Nawat

5.5.1.3.2 Demonstrative Pronouns and Adjectives

Although there are some dialectal differences, the basic demonstrative pronouns and adjectives are shown in Table 5.13. They function as demonstrative pronouns when they occur independently and as demonstrative adjectives when they occur with nouns.

Nawat	Meaning
<i>ini</i>	this (immediate)
<i>uni</i>	that (non-immediate)
<i>nene</i>	that (more emphatic, less frequent)

Table 5.13 Demonstrative pronouns and adjectives

5.5.1.3.3 Demonstrative Adverbs

Table 5.14 shows some of the demonstrative adverbs of time, location, purpose and manner.

Nawat	Meaning	Type
<i>ne</i>	there	location
<i>nikan</i>	here	location
<i>kanah</i>	elsewhere, somewhere	location
<i>an</i>	now	time
<i>tekeman</i>	never	time
<i>sempa</i>	again	time, manner
<i>kiuni</i>	thus	manner
<i>sehseika</i>	one by one	meaning
<i>ika</i>	therefore	purpose

Table 5.14 Demonstrative adverbs

5.5.1.4 Quantifiers

In Nawat the quantifiers go before the noun. Table 5.15 shows some quantifiers.

Nawat	Meaning
<i>aci</i>	a few
<i>actu</i>	first
<i>cupi</i>	a little
<i>keski</i>	how much?
<i>miyak</i>	many, much
<i>muci</i>	all, whole, entire
<i>tiki</i>	barely, hardly

Table 5.15 Quantifiers

Table 5.16 shows some Nawat numerals.

Nawat	Meaning
<i>se</i>	One
<i>sehseika</i>	one by one
<i>ume</i>	two
<i>uhume</i>	both
<i>yey</i>	three
<i>nawi</i>	four
<i>maqil</i>	five

Table 5.16 Numerals

5.5.1.5 Locatives

5.5.1.5.1 Independent Prepositions

Some independent prepositions are shown in Table 5.17. Some Spanish loanwords are also used.

Nawat	Meaning
<i>ka</i>	in, at
<i>katani</i>	below, under
<i>tik</i>	in, into, inside
<i>wan</i>	with

Table 5.17 Independent prepositions

5.5.1.5.2 Relative Nouns

Relative nouns bear possessive pronominal prefixes on a noun root. They look like possessed or “owned” nouns. See Table 5.18 for some examples.

Nawat	Meaning
<i>nuwan</i>	with me
<i>muwan</i>	with you
<i>nuhpak</i>	on me (<i>pak</i> (on))

Table 5.18 Relative nouns

5.5.1.6 Adjectives

Nawat has several adjective types. These are shown in Table 5.19.

Ending	Meaning	Example	Example meaning
<i>k, tik</i>	basic adjective	<i>ciltik</i>	red
<i>nah</i>	“ish”, somewhat	<i>cicilnah</i>	reddish
<i>awak, ak</i>	‘inchoactive’ verb	<i>tumawak</i>	fat
<i>tuk</i>	derived from verbs	<i>cicilhtuk</i>	reddening

Table 5.19 Adjectives

There are other adjectives that are borrowed from Spanish. Adjective plurals are formed with the same reduplication pattern as nouns.

For example: *ne cih-ciltik zaput*
the PL-red zapotes
(The red zapotes – a fruit).

5.5.1.7 Verbs

There are four class types for verbs in Nawat. Dr Lemus (Universidad de Don Bosco, Universidad de El Salvador) (personal communication) has proposed three rather than four class types. However, for the purposes of this grammatical summary, the Campbell classification is used. Class I is by far the most common type.

5.5.1.7.1 Order of Verbal Affixes

Table 5.20 shows the order for both intransitive and transitive verbs.

Verb type	Order
Intransitive	pron. subj (+ directional) + root + tense/aspect + (number)
Transitive	pron subj (+ directionnal) + pro. obj. + root + tense/aspect + (number)

Table 5.20 Order of verbal affixes

5.5.1.7.2 Tense and Aspect

Present

The present tense is used for momentaneous, habitual, present progressive actions. There are no special affixes. Transitive verbs frequently end with an 'a' (and this may be the only difference between them and their intransitive equivalent). Table 5.21 shows some transitive and intransitive verbs. For a conjugation in the present, see Table 5.6.

Intransitive		Transitive	
Nawat	Meaning	Nawat	Meaning
<i>puliwi</i>	gets lost	<i>pulua</i>	loses
<i>sewi</i>	goes out	<i>sewia</i>	extinguishes
<i>tami</i>	ends	<i>tamia</i>	finishes

Table 5.21 Some transitive and intransitive verbs

Preterite (Simple Past)

The conjugation in the past depends on the class type. Table 5.22 outlines preterite conjugation. All plural subjects add *ket* in the past tense.

Class	Verb	Rule	Singular	Plural	Meaning
I	<i>ciwa</i>	drop final vowel, add ki in singular	<i>ciwki</i>	<i>ciwket</i>	did
II	<i>cuka</i>	keep final vowel, add k in singular	<i>cukak</i>	<i>cukaket</i>	cried
III	<i>mactia</i>	drop final vowel, add h	<i>mactih</i>	<i>mactihket</i>	taught
IV	<i>qa</i>	add h	<i>qah</i>	<i>qahket</i>	ate

Table 5.22 Verbs in the preterite tense

Perfect

The same 'dropping rules' (and 'h' addition) that apply in the preterite also apply in the perfect. *tuk* is added to verbs to form the perfect for singular persons and *tiwit* is added for plural persons. The verb classes which lose their stem final vowel in the preterite also lose it in the perfect (see table 5.23).

Class	Verb	Singular	Plural	Meaning
I	<i>ciwa</i>	<i>ciwtuk</i>	<i>ciwtiwit</i>	have/had done
II	<i>cuka</i>	<i>cukatuk</i>	<i>cukatiwit</i>	have/had cried
III	<i>mactia</i>	<i>mactihtuk</i>	<i>mactihtiwit</i>	have/had taught
IV	<i>qa</i>	<i>qahtuk</i>	<i>qahtiwit</i>	have/had eaten

Table 5.23 Verbs in the perfect tense

Conditional, Future, Desiderative and Imperfect

Table 5.24 shows a brief summary of how the conditional, future, desiderative and imperfect tenses are formed. Examples are used for Class I, which is by far the most common type. The use of the future tense is rare, a periphrastic future is much more common (as in ‘I am going to do ...’ (*niyu* ...)). The imperfect is also rarely used. See Campbell (1985) for details about these tenses.

Tense	Singular	Plural	Verb	Example
conditional	- <i>skiya</i>	- <i>skiyat</i>	<i>nikpuluskiya</i>	I would lose it (<i>pulua</i> (to lose))
future	- <i>s</i>	- <i>sket</i>	<i>nikciwas</i>	I will do it (<i>ciwa</i> (to do))
desiderative	- <i>s + neki</i>	- <i>s + neki</i>	<i>niqasneki</i>	I want to eat (<i>qa</i> (to eat); <i>neki</i> (to want))
imperfect	<i>ya</i>		<i>kinamakaya</i>	He used to sell it (<i>namaka</i> (to sell))

Table 5.24 Conditional, future, desiderative and imperfect tenses

5.5.1.7.3 Other information

Pronominal Affixes with Verbs

Nawat has two main pronominal affixes: *mu* (reflexive) and *ta* (unspecified object). With *mu*, the subject pronominals precede the verb. With *ta*, the action of the verb is the focus and the object is of little relevance.

Reduplication in Verbs

Verb reduplication means that plural objects or a repetition of the action are involved. It is done by duplicating the initial consonant (if present) and vowel. For example, *kukuci* (to nod off: *kuci* = to sleep).

Other Verb Prefixes

Nawat has several other verb prefixes. (*w*)*al* is a directional prefix, which indicates motion toward the speaker or toward where the action of the verb takes place. *el* indicates mentation/inside or perception by the senses. It is not productive. Other non-productive prefixes include *ah* (buccal, related to the mouth e.g. *ahkana* (to blow)) and *ih* (related to the surface of objects e.g. *ihpak* (on top of)).

Verb Moods and Tense

Nawat has a number of suffixes which signal “voice” (changes in the relationship between a verb and its arguments) and “mood” (the attitude of the speaker toward the action of the verb). These include: imperative/optative/subjective, causatives, inchoatives, passives, applicatives and diffusion verbs. See Campbell (1985) for more details.

5.5.2 Syntax

5.5.2.1 Word Order

The word order in Nawat is relatively free and is pragmatically determined, depending on focus and on the topic. The most natural, least marked order for intransitive verbs is VS (Verb Subject). The orders OV and SV also occur, but only to emphasise the object or the subject respectively. For transitive verbs, VOS is the neutral order. An SVO order places emphasis on the subject, while a VSO order is rare and object heavy. If the subject full independent pronoun is used, it goes before the verb.

For example: *naha ni-k-ciwa*
 I I-it-do
 (I do it)

Adjectives precede the nouns they modify (unless they are Spanish borrowings, in which case the noun precedes the adjective). Adverbs nearly always precede verbs.

Pronominal object prefixes can indicate direct and indirect objects. When both objects are pronominal, it is usually the indirect object that is marked on the verb, with the direct object signalled as a full independent pronoun.

5.5.2.2 “To Be”

nemi is the verb ‘to be’, but Nawat has other constructions which express the idea of ‘to be’. The pronominal copula can be used. In some cases no verb is used, there being just a noun phrase.

For example: *ni-takat*
 I-man
 (I am a man).

For example: *ne takat cikitik*
 The man small
 (The man is small).

nemi is also means ‘to be somewhere’ and is used with locatives.

For example: *nikan nemi ne xuret*
 here is the old-man
 (Here is the old man).

nemi has an existential function (like ‘hay’, there is/are in Spanish).

5.5.2.3 Questions

Yes-no questions use rising intonation (just like in Spanish) with no word-order changes.

For example: *ti-k-pia wey pan?*
 you-it-have lots bread
 (Do you have lots of bread?).

Table 5.25 shows some wh-question words with examples. The wh-question words go at the start of the question.

Wh word	Meaning	Example	Example meaning
<i>ka</i>	who	<i>ka walah?</i>	who came? (<i>walah</i> (came))
<i>kan</i>	where	<i>kan nemi?</i>	where is it?
<i>keman</i>	when	<i>keman tiwalah?</i>	when do you come (<i>tiwalah</i> (you came))
<i>ken</i>	how	<i>ken tinemi?</i>	how are you? (<i>tinemi</i> (you are))
<i>tay</i>	what	<i>tay tiyahtuk?</i>	why have you gone? (<i>tiyahtuk</i> (you have gone))

Table 5.25 Question words

5.5.2.4 Other Information

Imperatives

Imperatives in Nawat are similar to their counterparts in Spanish (they have a subjective/optative sense – they are less direct than their English counterparts, something akin to “that you would do ...”). The second person imperative prefix is *x(i)*, while others take the exhortative particle *ma*, with *kan* for plural persons.

For example: *xi-k-ilwi ma yawi*
IMP-him-tell that go.
(tell him to go).

Second person negative imperatives are formed with *te* (no) or *ma/maka*, plus the *xi* imperative and *kan* in the plural.

For example: *te xiyu*
no IMP-you-go
(don't go!).

Possession

Prefixes are used for pronominal possession (see section 5.5.1.2.5). For nominal possession, when the possessor is an independent noun, the possession construction uses the form: possessive pronominal prefix-noun_1 noun2.

For example: *ican ne takat*
his-house the man
(The man's house).

pal is used in periphrastic possession, along similar lines to Spanish.

For example: *ne nakat pal ne masat*
the meat of the deer
(The deer's meat).

Nawat, unlike other Mesoamerican Indian languages, has a verb “to have” (*piya*). It is similar to the verb in English.

For example: *nikpia se kinia*
I-it-have a banana
(I have a banana).

5.6 Issues for this Project

Alphabet

Several different alphabets have been used to write Nawat. Jiménez (1937) used an alphabet based on the Spanish alphabet, while Schultze-Jena (1982) and Campbell (1985) based theirs on the international phonetic alphabet. Geoffroy Rivas (1969) proposed an alphabet for Nawat that is very close to the phonetic inventory of Nawat. There have been other writers who have used their own alphabet (often without defining it) and this often causes confusion (Todd 1953; Aráuz, 1960).

This project uses the alphabet proposed by Lemus (1997a), which differs from that of Geoffroy Rivas by just one letter (Geoffroy Rivas used *t'* for a glottalised variant of *t* at the end of the word). A brief outline of the alphabet is provided here – a full alphabet is shown in Appendix C, p185.

The alphabet contains 12 consonants, 2 semi-consonants and 4 vowels. Most of the letters used in the alphabet correspond to their equivalents in Spanish. The vowels a, e, i, u sound the same as their Spanish counterparts. The letter u is sometimes pronounced as /o/ at the end of a word. The letter o does not exist as a separate vowel (it occurs in very few words and these have usually been borrowed from Spanish).

The following letters have the same pronunciation as in (Central American) Spanish: l, m, p, s, t. The letter k is pronounced as [k] at the end of a word and before a non-voiced consonant. At the beginning of a word and after voiced consonants, it is pronounced as [g]. Between vowels, it is pronounced as [ɣ]. The letter n is pronounced as [n] at the start of a syllable and [ŋ] at the end of a word. W is pronounced as [ɣw] at the beginning of a word and as [w] in other positions.

The letter y is pronounced as [y] at the beginning of a word and as a semi-consonant [j] in other positions. The letters t and k have a glottalised variant at the end of a word. In some cases, this glottalisation replaces the letter completely, especially for the letter t.

The letter c is pronounced [c] (like “ch” in “church”). The letter z is pronounced [c] (like “ts” in “tsar”). [š] (like “sh” in “sheet”) is represented by the letter x. The letter h is like h in English (and j in Spanish). The letter q is pronounced [k^w] (like “qu” in “quick”). For Spanish borrowings that use sounds not found in Nawat, the Spanish letters are used (e.g. f, b, d, and r).

Dialect

There are several dialects of Nawat and the number is shrinking. Even though the number of remaining speakers is small, Campbell (1985) identified 11 different dialects during his stays in El Salvador between 1970 and 1976. There are some vocabulary and pronunciation differences. One of the most common area of difference is with respect to the pronunciation of the letter k.

In this project, the Nawat of Santo Domingo de Guzmán (commonly known as Santo Domingo) has been used as source dialect. Santo Domingo is about 14km north of Sonsonate, in the west of El Salvador. It was relatively isolated from Sonsonate until quite recently and for this reason has been able to hold on to its language and culture more so than other villages in El Salvador. Ramírez (1999) reports that in 1825 no-one in Santo Domingo spoke Spanish – Nawat was the only language. The population of Santo Domingo is about 7000, with 1760 urban and 5240 rural dwellers. See Figure 5.2 for a map of El Salvador.



(Used by permission of The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin)

Figure 5.2 Map of El Salvador

Genaro Ramírez and Paula Lopéz were the two Pipil informants for the CALL Nawat course. They are both Nawat speakers, and helped in the revision of the lesson contents. It was interesting to participate (as a listener) in their discussions when I asked “How would you say in Nawat?” for something new (e.g. describing time). They are also the speakers on the audio portion of the course. I am very grateful to them for their help with this project.

Genaro Ramírez is the director of the cultural centre in Santo Domingo. He is a native Nawat speaker, having learnt from his parents. Although he only has 2 years of formal schooling, he is literate and has worked on many projects documenting the Nawat language. He has represented El Salvador at various Indigenous People’s conferences internationally and is well aware of the importance of maintaining the language. He teaches village children and has produced several Nawat-Spanish dictionaries (Ramírez, 1997). He sometimes speaks Nawat at home with his wife Maria, who is also a Nawat speaker.

Paula Lopéz is one of the youngest Nawat speakers. She was born in the early 1950s (exact date unknown) and learnt Nawat from her mother. Indeed, her mother was probably one of the last people whose first language was Nawat – she spoke limited Spanish with a Nawat accent. Paula is a poet, songwriter and storyteller. She has worked on Nawat language documentation projects. One of her songs in Nawat is included in the culture section of the course.

5.7 Summary

This chapter introduced the Nawat language with an outline of its history and people. It discussed the issue of Nawat language resources, both language documentation and language learning resources. It highlighted the fact that resource accessibility is a problem. There is a problem with access to the documents and also in terms of “understandability”. A basic grammar was presented, explaining the grammatical categories, morphology and syntax. Some of the issues that arose with regard to the alphabet and dialect were discussed.