

Khoe-San names (African click languages)

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This article explains the distribution of Khoe-San or ‘click’ languages, defines clicks, provides a style and typing guide on how to obtain the symbols representing them in the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) or (for Naro) Roman characters, and considers the ordering of click signs in indexes. Finally, it describes the current situation of the Khoe-San languages and the various projects in which native speakers of these languages are now involved.

Khoe-San or click languages

The languages under discussion are spoken mainly in southern Africa and are sometimes referred to as ‘click languages’ because these unique consonants are found only in such languages and in those Bantu languages that have been influenced by them. The term ‘Khoe-San’ is a construct developed by linguists from two Nama words, Khoe meaning ‘person’ and San meaning ‘forager’ (Andersson and Janson, 1997). The Khoe and San peoples were the earliest indigenous inhabitants of the countries where they still exist, and they pre-date the speakers of Bantu and European languages who subsequently became the rulers of South Africa, Namibia and Botswana. The Khoe or Khoi were cattle and sheep herders while the San, until the recent past, were hunters and gatherers.

The Khoe and San peoples are distantly related but are genetically quite distinct from the Bantu-speaking family which covers such a large part of Africa. The fact that there are two click languages in Bantu Tanzania (Sandawe and Hadza) suggests that the Khoe-San peoples were once far more widespread in Africa. The Bantu languages that contain click sounds are: in South Africa, Zulu and Xhosa; in Lesotho, Sesotho; in Botswana, Shiyeyi, Hambakushu and Gciruku. These Bantu languages are not dealt with here.

What are clicks?

Speakers of English may use two interjections which are similar in sound to ‘clicks’: the expression of disapproval or displeasure which is written as ‘tsk-tsk’, and a lateral click used in dealing with horses. (Wikipedia, 2007). Clicks are a type of consonant, and are usually represented by special symbols from the IPA. The Khoe-San languages are extremely complex, and click sounds may have accompaniments which must also be indicated by IPA symbols. By contrast, the Naro Language Project in Botswana uses characters from the Roman alphabet to signify click consonants.

These characters, C, Q and X, do not occur elsewhere in the orthography devised for Naro, and can therefore be employed to designate the click sound. In the case of the dental, palatal and lateral clicks, they are the same as those used in Zulu and Xhosa, which also have no ordinary words beginning with these letters.

A style and typing guide for the four major Khoe-San language groups is annexed. This could be of particular assistance for keying in personal and other names. It may also be of interest to see the names of the various peoples who are numbered among the Khoe-San, and to note that some of them are now extinct. Several of the languages have not been studied in any detail and have as yet no orthography, but younger speakers of the languages are now taking the initiative on deciding on the standardization of their languages and how they should be written, rather than leaving these decisions to foreign linguists.

The clicks

There are four clicks that occur in most of the languages. These are represented by the IPA symbols or (in the case of the Naro language) by Roman characters shown in Table 1.

Khoe-San personal names

In the past, the Khoe-San speakers did not use surnames, a practice which has only come about with modernization and the requirement to produce an acceptable surname for official purposes. People who are more educated will use the name of their father or of their mother’s father for school purposes, or in the case of those who write books and articles, for bibliographical purposes, while the adoption of a family name is becoming more common. And of course, since names of individuals may occur within a text, there needs to be some sort of standardization for indexing purposes. Khoe-San names do not all begin with clicks, but many do, and if they do not, they may contain a click consonant within the name. The information that follows reflects the decisions taken by a group of anthropologists and librarians, including the author of this article, who were responsible for producing *The Khoe and San: an annotated bibliography*.

Alphabetical order

The group decided that in the indexes, click symbols should be arranged in order shown in the left-hand column in Table 2.

A computer does not recognize IPA symbols, and

Table 1 Symbols for clicks

IPA symbol	Roman character (Naro)	Description
	C	Dental click: tip of the tongue is pressed against the front teeth and quickly withdrawn
‡	Tc	Alveolar-palatal click: tip of tongue is pressed against the alveolar ridge and adjacent palate, then released sharply downwards
!	Q	Click: tongue is pressed against the upper palate and released sharply downwards, something like when a cork is pulled from a bottle
	X	Lateral click: the click sound produced at the side of the tongue when tongue is held pressed against the palate

Source: Le Roux and White (2004: ix).

arranges terms containing them as if the first recognizable letter was the beginning of the name. To avoid this, it was decided to list all names (or words) beginning with clicks at the beginning of the index and then follow the normal alphabetic arrangement of terms. Within each click sequence, the terms were arranged by the first conventional letter following the click symbol.

It should be noted that this particular sequence of click symbols was decided upon by people none of whom was a linguist. In recent publications containing an index showing clicks, a different arrangement has been followed. As so often, the indexer is working in a situation of uncertainty and change. The only answer is for indexers dealing with publications containing names beginning with clicks to make a decision about the order to be used in consultation with author and editor, and keep to that.

The indexing of texts in the Naro language was not dealt with in the *Bibliography* as at the time of compilation we had no examples of authors writing in that language. It is arguable that it would be best to adopt the same sequence for the IPA symbols (see the right-hand column in the table above) and so force names to the beginning of the index, as would happen in an index using click symbols. However this would leave somebody not familiar with click symbols and the conventional sort order somewhat bemused. A headnote would be needed to show what was happening.

Table 3 shows examples of personal names, including several authors taken from the *Annual Report 2003* of the Kuru Family of Organizations and put in recommended sort order. Names such as ||Kabbo and |Han‡kasso are not surnames in the same sense as those of modern San or Khoe, but were the names of two of the men who, in the 19th

century, assisted W. H. I. Bleek and Lucy Lloyd in their mammoth task of collecting the stories of the now extinct |Xam people of the Cape.

Khoe-San languages today

Finally, although it is perhaps not directly related to the problems of indexing African click names, it might be useful to look at what is happening regarding the Khoe-San languages. These are languages that are spoken by communities who, in all the countries where they live today, are in the minority, usually marginalized and among the poorest in the population. Writing in 1977, Andersson and Janson commented, 'From a linguistic point of view, the Khoisan languages are rich, fascinating, exciting and impressive in many ways. In grammatical and structural terms, these languages are world class competitors in structural complexity' (1977: 168). They went on to say that when these languages are examined in terms of the domains of language use or numbers of speakers, all of them with the possible exception of Nama (Khoekhoegowab) are either endangered or moribund. They commented further, 'The structures of these languages and the structure of these speech communities are much too precious to be allowed to disappear. The world of languages would be impoverished without them' (Andersson and Janson, 1977: 168–9).

In terms of attitudes towards their own language, groups like the Naro, the ‡Kxáu||éini, the ||Gana and the ||Gwi say they want to preserve their languages and to be able to read and write in them. Andersson and Janson refer to efforts being made at the time of writing to render this possible. It can now be said that the situation for some of the languages has changed for the better, and this is because the speakers of the various languages have become aware, in ways not possible to them when isolated in remote areas, of a common heritage and common problems.

To describe in detail how things have developed since Andersson and Janson wrote their book would require a whole article to itself. Let it be said, however, that the speakers of the Khoe-San languages are now recognized as part of the worldwide community of indigenous peoples, whose rights are

Table 2 Alphabetical order for indexing purposes

IPA click symbols	Roman characters (Naro)
!	Q
	X
	C
‡	Tc

Table 3 Examples of personal names

	Roman characters
IPA click symbols	(Naro)
!Nais, Lissie	Qhomatcā, Xgaiga
Aeka, Goiseone	Xare, Xgaoc'ō
Ais, Magdalena	
Garoeb, I. F. H.	
Kabbo	
Kahabares, Margareth	
Aib, Samuel	Cam, Miki
Anwa, Naeg!xoma	Cg'ase, Bega
Haega, Ouma	Cg'ase, Ggara
Hanɛkasso	Cg'ose, Ncaku
Kaeca, Martin Gɛace	
Uriseb, A Useb, Joram	
ɛEichab, H. A.	Tcebebe, Nqosa
ɛGaesab, Scolastica	
ɛGaeses, Elfrieda	
ɛOma, Moses Kxao	

supported by the United Nations. In the local situation, there are now strong local and regional organizations such as the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities (WIMSA) established in 1996, the South African San Institute, and in Botswana, the Kuru Family of Organisations (KFO) and the UB/Tromsø Project based at the University of Botswana. As a result of the intense networking and educational activities of these organizations, there are now in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, groups of Khoe-San speakers collecting oral history materials and information on their people's environmental knowledge of plants and animals, and publishing their findings in booklets and textbooks.

One of the most interesting of these is *The voice of the San living in southern Africa today* (Le Roux and White, 2004), which contains materials collected by San in the three countries in which they live, translated into English. This is the first time these people 'have come together between the pages of a book to tell their own stories in their own words'.

The work of WIMSA and KFO was predated by the work of the Naro Language Project in Botswana, in creating the orthography for Naro and training local speakers to become translators and teachers for their people. In Namibia, the first effort to collect folktales and from them to create reading books in Ju|'hoansi elementary schools was done in the 1990s by the Nyae Nyae Village Schools Project, when young Ju|'hoansi teachers took their tape-recorders round the elders in the various communities and recorded their stories.

Conclusion

From the indexer and bibliographer's point of view, I hope this article has shown that although coping with names in a click language is a challenge, not least because of the parallel ways of representing them with either IPA symbols or Roman characters, an attempt is being made to bringing greater consistency and clarity into the task, with an increasing respect for the views of the native speakers of these languages and of linguistics scholars. From the point of view of the click languages themselves, although inevitably they remain under threat, steps are being taken to preserve what remains, make it more readily available, and encourage a living use of the languages in question.

References

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Names of peoples and languages		
Language family	Term	Use
Ju	!Xun (Used to be !Xu) Ju 'hoansi Ju 'hoan !Kung	The language and the people The language and the people Use only as an adjective The language and the people
Khoe	Khoekhoegowab Khwedam Khwe (used to be Kxoe) Anikwe Naro G ui or Cgui G ana or Xgana	The language of the Hai om, Nama and Damara peoples Language of the Khwe people The people Part of the Khwe peoples, mostly in Botswana The language and the people The language and the people The language and the people
Taa	!Xóó or !Xoon	The language and the people
!Ui	N u N n‡ ‡Homani or ‡Khomani !Xam Xegwi	The language of the southern Kalahari Speakers of N u People who used to speak N u and 'Auo Extinct language Extinct language

Annex: Style and typing guide for Khoe, Ju, !Ui and Taa languages

Prepared by the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa. (WIMSA).

Obtaining in special symbols in Word

To achieve the special symbols, you can pull down the Insert menu, choose Symbol, go to Normal and select the appropriate symbol. Or you can use your number pad (make sure your number pad is activated):

‡ Alt + 0135 (looks better in Arial than Times New Roman)
 â Alt + 131
 ê Alt + 136
 î Alt + 140
 ô Alt + 147

ō can only be added by Ins or Ctl + Shift + ~, let go, press o or O

| and || are now on most keyboards, usually appear in upper case only.

Note: The symbols achieved in this way will normally work well for the purposes of Word, but anyone presenting a Word or RTF file will want to check with the editor/printer (or setter) that the symbols as they appear in their file carry through into the printed version. Users of indexing software (eg Cindex, Macrex or Word) should follow their usual practice when working with symbols and diacritics.