

## **Understanding English Grammar: A Linguistic Introduction**

### **Problem of the Month, December 2011: Nahuatl**

*by Tom Payne, adapted from Farmer, Ann and Richard A. Demers. 1996. A Linguistics Workbook. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.*

In many languages of the world, whole sentences can be expressed with a single word. This is true of Classical Nahuatl, the language of the Aztec Empire that flourished in what is now Mexico between 1325 and 1522 CE. Further, like many languages, Nahuatl makes a distinction between "you" (singular) and "you" (plural). In this problem the English translation "Y'all" represents the Nahuatl form meaning "you (plural)" whereas "you" represents the Nahuatl form meaning "you (singular)."

Note: The symbol ":" after a vowel simply means that the vowel is pronounced longer than otherwise. It does NOT necessarily mean that the word must be divided at that point.

<b>Nahuatl sentence</b>	<b>English translation</b>
1. Nicho:ka.	I cry.
2. Ankochinih.	Y'all are sleeping.
3. Tikochih.	We sleep.
4. Kochiya.	He was sleeping.
5. Kwi:kas.	He will sing.
6. Ankochiyah.	Y'all were sleeping.
7. Nicho:kas.	I will cry.
8. Cho:kayah.	They were crying.
9. Tikochi.	You sleep.
10. Ancho:kasah.	Y'all will cry.
11. Tikochis.	You will sleep.
12. Ticho:kayah.	We were crying.
13. Cho:ka.	He cries.
14. Kochini.	He is sleeping.
15. Ancho:kayah.	Y'all were crying.
16. Ticho:kanih.	We are crying.
17. Kwi:kah.	They sing.
18. Tikwi:kani.	You are singing.
19. Cho:kanih.	They are crying.

A. Translate the following additional Nahuatl sentences into English:

Tikwi:ka.

Cho:kani.

Nikochiya.

Tikochisih.

B. Translate the following English sentences into Nahuatl:

You are sleeping.

They will sing.

We cry.

Y'all will sleep.