

Review question from last time

Remember our rules for the pronunciation of the letter **i**:

Witsuwit'en **i** is pronounced like English “short-u” after:

p	t	ts	tl	c	kw	k	
	t'	ts'	tl'	c'	kw'	k'	'
		s	lh	yh	wh	kh	h

Witsuwit'en **i** is pronounced like English “short-i” after:

b	d	dz	dl	g	gw	gg	
		z	l	y	w	gh	

Witsuwit'en **i** is pronounced like English “short-u” before **k kh**.

Witsuwit'en **i** is pronounced like English “short-i” before **c**.

You may have noticed that in some words, these rules conflict with each other. What would be an example of such a conflict, and which rule(s) takes precedence over the others?

K and C

Examples of K

Witsuwit'en **k** is not a sound found in English. Witsuwit'en **k** is produced further back in the mouth (throat) than English *k* (as in *King Kong*).

ka 'car'

ka' 'heck no, don't'

kambīlh 'rabbit snare'

nenkat 'it snowed'

nikēs 'it (vehicle, plate) is going around'

lhikit 'he/she is clapping'

ku' 'puppy'

Examples of C

Witsuwit'en **c** is kind of like the *c* in English words like *cute*, almost sounding like it has a *y* after it.

can 'rain'

cin 'song'

dicin 'wooden, stick'

cinīh 'marten'

celh 'young man'

Tsē Cakh 'Hagwilget, Tse-Kya'

k'intic 'it's broken (in two)'

dinī ilhcic 'police' (lit. "arrests people")

Words with both c and k

bicak 'his/her rib'

cilkē 'young men'

tacēk 'mouth of river'

kecip 'spoon'

K vs. C

binik/bisnik ‘his/her (baby’s) eye’	binic ‘his her nostril, sense of smell’
dik, ndik ‘up’	dic ‘well’, as in:
	dic, ’en ’alha’ ’itnī ‘well, he’s right’
bikak ‘its surface’	bicak ‘his/her rib’
skak ‘child’	scak ‘my rib’
bikēn ‘its (ant, beaver, muskrat) lodge’	cēn ‘summer’
bikē ‘his/her foot’	bice ‘its tail’
bikiy ‘her husband’	’atcey/’atciy ‘he/she was buried’
lhakē ‘dogs’	lhic ‘dog’
bilekē ‘his/her dogs’	bilic ‘his/her dog’
sikoy ‘he vomited’	’et silhcoz ‘it (cloth) is there’
nikat/nikatnī ‘movable goods’	bicat ‘inside his/her/its stomach’
bizek ‘inside his/her mouth’	kēledzec ‘tiptoe’
bit’ik ‘his/her collarbone’	binit’ic ‘his/her muscle’

GG vs. G***Examples of gg***

The tricky thing about **gg** is that some speakers seem to pronounce this sound identically to **k**. (That is, some speakers don’t seem to have the sound **gg**.) In the dictionary, we’ll write words with **gg** and it will be understood that for some speakers this sound is not different from **k**. (Note: This seems to be a Witsuwit’ēn innovation in pronunciation. Burns Lake, Fort Babine, etc. always has **gg**.)

ggīs ‘spring salmon’

ggikh ‘rabbit’

ggunek ‘hummingbird’

sikh ggis ‘gaff pole’

c’its’isggeek ‘chickadee’

nilggeyh ‘he/she is running around’

ho’ggec

‘nothing’

yizggis

‘he/she sprained it’

Examples of g

gis ‘hook’

Gisdewe (chief name)

nigit ‘fear’

hillgit ‘it’s rotting’

gen ‘here; old age’

’igeqh ‘it happened’

sgiz ‘he/she is breathing’

gin/ginih ‘don’t’, as in nulggeyh gin ‘don’t run around’

gabun ‘credit’

gg vs. g

ts’ilhggī ‘we dried it’

ts’ilhgī ‘grebe’

ggīs ‘spring salmon’

gīstan ‘6’

ggit ‘there’

git ‘old, rotten’, as in:

halho’ git’ ‘rag’ (lit. ‘rotten cloth’)

tsëggis ‘fire poker’

gis ‘hook’

ggunek ‘hummingbird’

’ugunī ‘porcupine’

ggenīs/gginīs ‘dog, chum salmon’

gen ‘here’

Udiggī ‘God’

digī ‘huckleberry’

dilggī ‘it’s grey’

nek wilgī (nek-wilgi) ‘butterfly’

ggin ‘that person’

gin ‘don’t’



I vs. Ĩ

The vowel ĩ is rare after these consonants:

p	t	ts	tl	c	kw	k	
	t'	ts'	tl'	c'	kw'	k'	'
		s	lh	yh	wh	kh	h

ĩ can occur at the beginning of a word, but i cannot. Therefore contrasts between i and ĩ are found after these consonants:

b	d	dz	dl	g	gw	gg	
		z	l	y	w	gh	

At the end of a word, there are other distributional differences between ĩ and i. (1) i must be followed by a consonant, but ĩ need not be. (2) ĩ cannot be followed by **k**, **kh**, or **gh** at the end of a word, but i can be.

Examples of contrasts between i and ĩ follow:

bilh 'sleep; with it'

bĩlh 'net, snare'

bibit 'his/her abdomen'

bĩt 'lake trout; in it'

yizbiz 'she stretched it'

ts'o bĩz 'black spruce'

bĩs 'flint'

bis k'it 'stream bank'

bĩs k'et 'flint collection area' (lit. 'flint place')

dilh 'with oneself', in:

dĩlh 'crane'

dilh neyeldic 'he's talking to himself'

dinĩ 'man, person'

dĩnĩ 'four people'; 'his/her own mind'

dinĩh 'kinnikinnik'

dĩnĩh 'say it'

dildlit 'he's hollering'

dĩldlit 'he was hollering'

wizil 'warmth'

bizil 'his/her body odor'

ītggis ‘wire, cable’

syin ~ siyin ‘my spine’

yin, nyin ‘you (sg.)’

yilhghis ‘it’s chewing it’

bilits ‘its urine’

uzlit, uzdlit ‘it (snow) melted’

nentadzilh ‘it (e.g. water) will warm up)’

ggīs ‘spring salmon’

siyīn ‘he/she is standing’

yīn ‘moss’

hilhghīs ‘it itches’

bilits ‘its dust, ashes’

ulīt ‘it (snow) is melting’

nenīzilh ‘it’s warming up’