Introducing Wuxu, a Germanic Conlang

A Refresher on the Universe, with relevant history

Wuhu is an archipelagic nation located off the coast of Southern California. It consists of the Wuhu Islands from the Wii games, plus the land forming the nations in the game *Papers, Please*. The set of islands that today form the nation of Wuhu were colonized in 1850, though the natives were luckier here and due to the mountainous terrain (and the fact that there were several islands) were more easily able to put up a fight against the colonizers. The attempt at genocide of the Wuhu indigenous people, thus, was a resounding failure, and begrudgingly, the two sides effectively shared rule, an arrangement that continues today and has grown more trusting. More people came to the islands in the time following colonization, and thus English became the default language, with the indigenous Wuhu language (Uto-Aztecan) largely being spoken only among that group, though the speaker base has since expanded through initiatives to teach it in schools. Wuhu gained its independence from the United States on 26 June 2009. English remains the most spoken language in the nation as of 2025, though there is no official language. English underwent significant changes in the years following and eventually became distinct enough from English to become its own language.

Phonology

I chose to use Modern Southern California English as the starting point of Wuxu.

Southern California English Phonemes

Consonants

	Labial	**Dental**	**Alveolar**	**Palatal**	**Velar**	**Glottal**
Nasal	**m**		**n**		**ŋ**	
Stop	p, **b**		t, **d**	t͡ʃ, **d͡ʒ**	k, **g**	
Fricative	f, **v**	θ, **ð**	s, **z**	ʃ, **ʒ**		h
Approx.	(**w**)		**ɹ**	**j**	**w**	
Lateral Approx.					**ʟ**	

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i	**ʉ̟**	
Near Close	ɪ	**ʊ̟**	
Close Mid	ej	ɵw	
Mid		ə	
Open Mid	ɛ		
Open		a	ɑ

Allophony

- Some speakers vocalize coda /ʟ/ to [u] or labialize it to [w].
- Nasals assimilate to the place of articulation of the following consonant.
- /p t k t͡ʃ/ are aspirated before stressed syllables.
- Plosives have no audible release in word-final position.
- Plosives have a masked release if followed by another plosive.
- Intervocalic /t d/ are flapped and realized as voiced alveolar flap [ɾ].
- The consonant cluster /nt/ is realized the same as above intervocalically.
- Before nasals, /a/ is diphthongized to [ɛə].
- /ʉ̟/ is backed to [u] before /ʟ/.

Full Sounds Chart

Consonants

	Bilabial	Labiod.	Dental	Alveolar	Postalv.	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal	**m**	**ɱ**	**n̪**	**n**	**nʲ**		**ŋ**	
Plosive	pʰ, p, **b**			tʰ, t, **d**			kʰ, k, **g**	
Affricate					**t͡ʃʰ**, **t͡ʃ**, **d͡ʒ**			
Fricative		f, **v**	θ, **ð**	s, **z**	ʃ, **ʒ**			h
Approx.				**ɹ**		**j**		
Lateral Approx.							**ʟ**	
Tap				**ɾ**				

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i	~~**ʉ**~~	**u**
Near Close	ɪ	ʊ̟	
Close Mid	ej	ɵw	
Mid		ə	
Open Mid	ɛ		
Open		a	ɑ

English to Wuxu

First Wuxu Consonant Shift

There were two major consonant shifts, the first being caused mostly by African American Vernacular English (AAVE) influence.

- Dental fricatives /θ ð/ were fortited and alveolarized to plosives /t d/.
- Plosives were lost:
    - Word-finally
    - In clusters with fricatives
    - In clusters of two plosives, the first plosive was lost.
- Affricates /t͡ʃ d͡ʒ/ were lenited to fricatives /ʃ ʒ/
- /h/ split in one of two directions:
    - /h/ palatalized to /ç/ if before a front vowel or /j/.
    - /h/ velarized to /x/ if before a non-front vowel or /w/.
- Coda /ɫ/ vocalized to /w/ if after a vowel or /u/ if after a consonant.

Second Wuxu Consonant Shift

The second Wuhu Consonant Shift is much more consequential and was the primary trigger for causing Wuxu to become its own language instead of being simply a dialect of English.

- Phase one of this shift was the lenition of voiceless plosives /p t k/ to fricatives /f s x/. This also caused loss of aspiration.
- Phase two of this shift was the devoicing of the voiced stops /b d g/ to /p t k/.
- Phase three of this shift was the fortition of voiced fricatives /v z ʒ/ to /b d dʲ/.
- Phase four of this shift was fortition of central approximants /ɹ w/ to /ʃ ʒ ɣ/.

    - /ɹ/ became /ʒ/ in most cases, though clusters of /ɹ/ and a voiceless consonant became /ʃ/. This resulted in the reappearance of /t͡ʃ d͡ʒ/ as phonemes.
- Phase five of this shift was actually not part of a chain shift, but rather a palatalization of newly formed consonants caused by the split of /j/ in various directions:
    - /j/ after a non-labial consonant coalesced into said consonant, causing a number of palatalizations:
        - /sj/ > /ʃ/
        - /zj/ > /ʒ/
        - /xj/ > /ç/
        - /tj kj/ > /c/
        - /dj dʲ/ > /ɟ/
        - /nj/ > /ɲ/
        - /ʟj/ > /ʎ/
    - /j/ after a labial consonant lateralized to /ʎ/.
    - /j/ before a vowel fortited to /ʝ/.
    - Coda /j/ was lost completely.

Vowels

- The loss of coda /j/ caused the following shifts:
    - /aj ej/ > /e/
    - /ɔj/ > /ə/
- There was also a general loss of diphthongs, causing the following shifts:
    - /aw/ > /o/
    - /əw/ > /ə/
    - [ɛə] > /ɛ/
- Around the same time, a chain shift of stressed non-open vowels occurred.
    - /ɪ ə/ > /ɛ/
    - /ɛ/ > /æ/
    - /ʉ/ > /y/ except before laterals.
    - /ᵿ/ > /ə/

Wuxu Phonemes

Consonants

	Labial	**Alveolar**	**Postalv.**	**Palatal**	**Velar**
Nasal	**m**	**n**		**ɲ**	**ŋ**
Stop	p, **b**	t, **d**	**t͡ʃ, d͡ʒ**	c, **ɟ**	k
Fricative	f	s	**ʃ, ʒ**	ç, **ʝ**	x, **ɣ**
Lateral Approx.				**ʎ**	**ʟ**

Tap		**ɾ**			

Vowels

	Front	**Central**	**Back**
Close	i, **y**		**u**
Near Close			
Close Mid	e		**o**
Mid		ə	
Open Mid	ɛ		
Open	æ	a	ɑ

Vowels are referred to as tense or lax, with /æ ɛ ɑ ə/ and unstressed /i/ being lax and /a e o y/ and stressed /i/ being tense.

Allophony

- Nasals assimilate in place of articulation to the consonant that follows.

Full Sounds Chart

Consonants

	Bilabial	**Labiod.**	**Alveolar**	**Postalv.**	**Palatal**	**Velar**
Nasal	**m**	**ɱ**	**n**	**nʲ**	**ɲ**	**ŋ**
Plosive	p, **b**		t, **d**		c, **ɟ**	k
Affricate				**t͡ʃ**, **d͡ʒ**		
Fricative		f	s	**ʃ**, **ʒ**	ç, **ʝ**	x, **ɣ**
Lateral Approx.					**ʎ**	**ʟ**
Tap			**ɾ**			

Orthography

Letter	Letter Name	Sound
A a	a	[æ]
Ā ā	ā	[a]
B b	bī	[b]
C c	cī	[c]
D d	dī	[d]
Dz dz	dzī	[d͡ʒ]
E e	e	[ɛ]
Ē ē	ē	[e]
F f	ef	[f]
H h	he	[ç]
I i	i	[i] when unstressed
Ī ī	ī	[i] when stressed
J j	je	[ɟ]
K k	ke	[k]
L l	el	[ɫ]
Ľ ľ	ľe	[ʎ]
M m	em	[ɱ] before <f> [m] otherwise
N n	en	[nʲ] before <dz š tš z> [ɲ] before <c h j ľ y> [ŋ] before <g k l x> [n] otherwise
Ň ň	ňe	[ɲ] not before a consonant
Ṅ ṅ	eṅ	[ŋ] not before a consonant
O o	o	[ɑ]

Ō ō	ō	[o]
P p	pe	[p]
R r	re	[r]
S s	es	[s]
Š š	eš	[ʃ]
T t	te	[t]
Tš tš	tše	[t͡ʃ]
U u	u	[ə]
Ū ū	ū	[y]
Ů ů	ů	[u]
W w	we	[ɣ]
X x	xe	[x]
Y y	ye	[ʲj]
Z z	ze	[ʒ]

Diacritics

- A macron is used to distinguish tense vowels /a e o y/ from lax vowels /æ ɛ ə ɑ u/ and unstressed /i/
- A caron is used to distinguish palatalized /ɲ ʃ ʎ/ from non-palatal /n s ʟ/ .
- A dot is used to mark velar /ŋ/ not before a consonant.
- An acute is used to mark non-initial stress, and a grave is used to mark secondary stress.

Grammar

Nouns

- The plural morpheme for nouns is <-s> if the noun ends in a vowel and <-is> if the noun ends in a consonant.
- The genitive case is formed with the suffix <-’d>.

- The adjectival suffix for nouns is written <-d> if the noun ends in a non-plosive. If the noun ends in a plosive, said plosive is changed to <d>.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs, apart from sound changes, remain unchanged from English. The comparative suffix is <-iz>, and the superlative suffix is <-is>. The adverbial suffix is <-lī>.

Determiners and Articles

English Determiner	Guxu Determiner	IPA
a	u	[ə]
a few	u fľū	[ə ˈfʎy]
a little	u lērů	[ə ˈʟeru]
all	ow	[ɑw]
an	un	[ən]
another	unḗtuz	[əˈnetəʒ]
any	eni	[ˈɛni]
anybody	enipèri	[ˈɛniˌpɛri]
anyone	enigun	[ˈɛniɣən]
anything	enisēń	[ˈɛniseŋ]
anywhere	enigaz	[ˈɛniɣæʒ]
both	pus	[pəs]
certain	sušn	[ˈsəʃn̩]
each	īš	[iʃ]
either	ītuz	[ˈitəʒ]
enough	inéf	[iˈnɛf]
every	ebzi	[ˈɛbʒi]
everybody	ebzipèrī	[ˈɛbʒiˌpɛri]
everyone	ebzigun	[ˈɛbʒiɣən]

everything	ebzisēń	[ˈɛbʒiseŋ]
everywhere	ebzigaz	[ˈɛbʒiɣæʒ]
few	fľū	[fʌy]
fewer	fľūguz	[fʌyɣəʒ]
fewest	fľūgus	[fʌyɣəs]
last	lās	[ʟas]
least	līs	[ʟis]
less	las	[ʟæs]
little	lērů	[ˈʟeru]
many	meni	[ˈmɛni]
many a	meni u	[ˈmɛni ə]
more	moz	[mɑʒ]
most	mos	[mɑs]
much	meš	[mɛʃ]
neither	nītuz	[ˈnitəʒ]
next	nas	[næs]
no	nu	[nə]
no one	nupèri	[ˈnəˌpɛɾi]
nobody	nugun	[ˈnəɣən]
none	nun	[nən]
nothing	nusēń	[ˈnəseŋ]
nowhere	nugaz	[ˈnəɣæʒ]
once	gens	[ɣɛns]
one	gen	[ɣɛn]
said	sat	[sæt]
several	sabzů	[ˈsæbʒu]
some	sem	[sɛm]

somebody	sempèri	[ˈsɛmˌpɛɾi]
someone	sengun	[ˈsɛŋɣən]
something	sensēṅ	[ˈsɛnseŋ]
somewhere	sengaz	[ˈsɛŋɣæʒ]
sufficient	sufḗšns	[səˈfeʃn̩s]
that	tās	[tas]
the	tu	[tə]
these	tīz	[tiz]
this	tēs	[tes]
those	tuz	[təz]
three	šī	[ʃi]
thrice	šēs	[ʃes]
twice	wēs	[ɣes]
two	sū	[sy]
us	es	[ɛs]
various	bezus	[ˈbɛʒəs]
we	gī	[ɣi]
what	get	[ɣɛt]
whatever	getébuz	[ɣɛˈtɛbəʒ]
which	gēš	[ɣeʃ]
whichever	gēšébuz	[ɣeˈʃɛbəʒ]
you	yū	[ʲy]
zero	dīzu	[ˈdiʒə]

Numbers

Cardinal Numbers

Number	Guxu	IPA
0	dīzu	[diʒə]
1	wen	[ɣɛn]
2	sū	[sy]
3	šī	[ʃi]
4	foz	[fɑʒ]
5	fēb	[feb]
6	sēs	[ses]
7	sabn	[sæbn̩]
8	ēs	[es]
9	nēn	[nen]
10	san	[sæn]
11	ulabn	[əlæbn̩]
12	gawb	[ɣæwb]
13	suzīn	[səˈʒin]
14	fozīn	[fɑˈʒin]
15	fēfīn	[feˈfin]
16	sēsīn	[seˈsin]
17	sàbnsīn	[ˌsabn̩ˈsin]
18	ēsīn	[eˈsin]
19	nēnsīn	[nenˈsin]
20	gansi	[ˈɣænsi]
21	gansi gen	[ˈɣænsi ɣɛn]
30	suši	[ˈsəʃi]

40	foši	[ˈfɑʃi]
50	fēfsi	[ˈfefsi]
60	sēsi	[ˈsesi]
70	sabnsi	[ˈsæbn̩si]
80	ēsi	[ˈesi]
90	nēnsi	[ˈnensi]
100	xendzut	[ˈxɛnʲd͡ʒət]
1000	sōdunt	[ˈsodənt]
1,000,000	mēľun	[ˈmeʌən]
1,000,000,000	pēľun	[ˈpeʌən]

- Ordinal numbers and fractions are formed with the suffix <-s>.
- Collective numbers are formed with the suffix <-sam>.
- Birth numbers are formed with the suffix <-las>.

Pronouns

English <y'all> became the default second person plural pronoun in all contexts.

English Pronoun	Guxu Pronoun	IPA
I	Ē	[e]
me	mī	[mi]
myself	mēsáwf	[meˈsæwf]
mine	mēn	[men]
my	mē	[me]
we	gī	[ɣi]
us	es	[ɛs]
ourselves	ōšáwfs	[oˈʃæwfs]
ours	ōš	[oʃ]
our	ōz	[oʒ]
you	yū	[ʲy]

yourself	yošáwf	[ˌjɑˈʃæwf]
yours	yoš	[ˌjɑʃ]
y’all	yow	[ˌjɑw]
y’allselves	yowsáwbs	[ˌjɑwˈsæwbs]
y’alls	yows	[ˌjɑws]
he	hī	[çi]
him	hēm	[çem]
himself	hēmsáwf	[çemˈsæwf]
his	hēs	[çes]
she	šī	[ʃi]
her	xuz	[xəʒ]
herself	xušáwf	[xəˈʃæwf]
hers	xuš	[xəʃ]
it	ēs	[es]
itself	ēsáwf	[eˈsæwf]
they	tē	[te]
them	tam	[tæm]
themself	tansáwf	[tænˈsæwf]
themselves	tansáwbs	[tænˈsæwbs]
theirs	teš	[tɛʃ]
their	tez	[tɛʒ]
one	gen	[ɣɛn]
oneself	gensáwf	[ɣɛnˈsæwf]
one’s	gen’d	[ɣɛnd]
who	hū	[çy]
whom	hūm	[çym]

whose	hūd	[çyd]
which	gēš	[ɣeʃ]
each other	išétuz	[iˈʃɛtəʒ]
each other’s	išétuz’d	[iˈʃɛtəʒd]
one another	gènunétuz	[ˌɣɛnəˈnɛtəʒ]
one another’s	gènunétuz’d	[ˌɣɛnəˈnɛtəʒd]
there	tez	[tɛʒ]

Verbs

Conjugation was lost completely outside of the copula, English <to be>.

English Form	Guxu Form	IPA
to be	sū pī	[sy pi]
am	em	[ɛm]
is	ēd	[ed]
are	oz	[oʒ]
was	gud	[ɣəd]
were	guz	[ɣəʒ]
being	pīṅ	[piŋ]
been	pēn	[pen]

Sample Text

English

The cold winter is near, a snowstorm will come. Come in my warm house, my friend. Welcome! Come here, sing and dance, eat and drink. That is my plan. We have water, beer, and milk fresh from the cow. Oh, and warm soup!

Guxu Orthography

Tu xult gēruz ēd nīz, u snusozm gēw xem. Xem ēn mēn wozm xōs, mē šant. Galxum! Xem hīz, sēń ent tens, īs ent dzēnx. Tās ēd mē plen. Gī hāb wosīz, pīz, ent mēwx šaš šum tu xō. U, ent gozm sūf!

Guxu IPA

[tə xəwt ˈɣerəʒ ed niʒ, ə ˈsnəsɑʒm̩ ɣew xɛm. xɛm en men ˈɣɑʒm̩ xos, me ʃænt. ˈɣæɪxəm! xɛm çiʒ, seŋ ɛnt tɛns, is ɛnt d͡ʒeŋx. tas ed me plɛn. ɣi hab ɣɑsiʒ, piʒ, ɛnt mewx ʃæʃ ʃəm tə xo. ə, ɛnt ˈɣɑʒm̩ syf!]