A (Highly Abridged) Grammar of Ijíco

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Ijíco (/ì.jí.cʰò/) is a language spoken by a population of kangaroo rats, somewhat near the mouse kingdom but separated by some difficult-to-navigate terrain (that is, difficult for a kangaroo rat or a mouse). The language is descended from Proto-Wokuthízhű-Ijíco, and split off from its sister language very soon after this protolanguage stage, as the kangaroo rats, generally less patient than the mice in both their speech and their social customs, set out to found their own community.

The two languages were isolated from each other for a time, until technological developments among the mice allowed for easier passage across the difficult terrain. As a result, the two languages came into contact with each other once again, and certain developments in Wokuthízhű (notably, loss of coda consonants and the emergence of tone) influenced the language of the kangaroo rats. The two languages (and possibly others) now constitute a sprachbund, and could potentially be confused for each other by an opossum or a cat whose ear is not attuned to the many (but sometimes subtle) differences between the languages.

Phonology

Consonants

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar
Approximants	w	ɹ	j	
Nasals	m	n	ɲ	ŋ
Fricatives	v, f, f’	z, s, s’	ʝ, ç	
Affricates		d͡z, t͡s, t͡s’		
Stops	b, p, p’	d, t, t’	ɟ, c, c’	g, k, k’

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i, y		u
Mid	e, ø		o
Low		a	

Sounds written in black and red were present at the protolanguage stage; those in black and green are present in the modern form of the language.

The maximal Ijíco syllable is CGVG. The only permitted diphthongs are /aj/ and /aw/.

Ijíco is a register tone language. High vowels are marked with acute accents (e.g. *í, ű, ú*) and low vowels are unmarked.

The following are used in the romanization of Ijíco:

ny	/ɲ/
ng	/ŋ/
zh	/ʒ/
sh	/ç/
j	/ɟ/
ü	/y/
ö	/ø/

All other sounds are written as in the IPA. However, note that the voiceless stops and affricate /p t t͡s k/ are aspirated [pʰ tʰ t͡sʰ kʰ], and the voiced stops and affricates may actually be realized as voiceless and unaspirated instead of as true voiced consonants.

Sound Changes

1. Fricative Voicing
As with Wokuthízhű, the fricatives /f/ and /s/ voice to /v/ and /z/ respectively when following a sonorant. Presumably this sound change was already underway when the kangaroo rats left the mice.

2. Glide Fortition
As with Wokuthízhű, glides become fricatives in certain positions. However, this change is slightly different and more extensive than with Wokuthízhű: /j/ becomes the true palatal fricative /ʒ/ instead of /ʒ/, and all instances of non-coda glides are fortified.

3. R-rounding
The phoneme /ɹ/, which has secretly been [ɹʷ] for some time, decides to commit to being a labial consonant and becomes /w/ in all positions. Any resulting instances of geminate or back-to-back glides are simplified, leaving only the second glide (no quadruple-u allowed!). This rule carries through and simplifies double glides whenever they may occur.

4. Hiatus Resolution
Sequences of two vowels in hiatus coalesce into one vowel, a glide followed by a vowel, or a vowel followed by a glide. In all cases length is preserved by making the vowel long. In lieu of a table, the following list is provided:
· /i/ and /u/ become /j/ and /w/ respectively before any vowel (including like vowels, so e.g. /ii/ → /jiː/)
· other sequences of like vowels become long vowels
· /i/ and /u/ become /j/ and /w/ respectively when following a non-high vowel

· /e/ and /o/ become /j/ and /w/ respectively before non-like non-high vowels (i.e. /eo, ea, oe, oa/ → /jo, ja, we, wa/)
· /e/ and /o/ become /j/ and /w/ respectively after /a/

Subsequently, /eː, oː/ break into diphthongs to merge with /eːj, oːw/ and any previously-existing instances of short vowels with coda glides lengthen to merge with their long counterparts.

Note that the maximal syllable at this stage is now CGVC, whereas previously no onset clusters were permitted.

5. <u>Palatalization</u>
Alveolar consonants and palatal glides are smashed together as if in a particle accelerator, producing a single palatal consonant and a small but measurable amount of energy. For reasons not yet understood to physics, the sequence /ŋj/ is also affected and becomes /ɲ/. The newly-formed palatal affricates /c͡ɟ and c͡ç/ turn out to be highly unstable and merge with the stops, and any remaining palatal glides following a palatal consonant are deleted.

6. <u>Nasalization</u>
Not willing to be outdone by mere consonant clusters, sequences of vowels and a coda nasal consonant coalesce into nasal vowels.

7. <u>Nasal Lowering</u>
High nasal vowels lower to mid nasal vowels.

8. <u>Front Rounded Vowels</u>
Front vowels round before /w/ (i.e. /iw, ew/ → /yw, øw/), and back vowels front before /j/ (i.e. /uj, oj/ → /yj, øj/). If the glide is in the syllable coda (in which case the vowel is already long), it is deleted. This is the case for all instances of /yj/ and /øj/, since all non-coda /j/ has already become /ɟ/.

9. <u>Denasalization</u>
It turns out the nasal vowels acted too rashly based on peer pressure. Nasal vowels go back to being oral vowels, but do lengthen to make up for it.

10. <u>Tony Genesis I</u>
Long vowels, as it turns out, have been pronounced with a higher pitch than short ones (a lot like stressed vowels in English). They now lose their distinctive length, leaving only their high pitch behind. At this point, the language basically has two register tones, high and low, but it may be more useful to think of them as high and neutral for the time being.

11. <u>Coda Simplification</u>
Codas begin their exodus from Ijíco. First, coda glides are deleted except after /a/ (i.e. /ij, uw, ej, ow/ → /i, u, e, o/). Then, coda fricatives devoice if they were voiced to begin with, coda affricates spirantize,

and all coda obstruents debuccalize. In other words, /v, z, f, s, ts/ → /h/ and /p, t, k/ → /ʔ/. The only codas left in the language now are /j/, /w/ (both only after /a/), /h/, and /ʔ/.

12. <u>Tony Genesis II</u>
The two remaining obstruent codas are deleted, leaving behind tone. Specifically, coda /h/ leaves low tone and coda /ʔ/ leaves high tone. At this point, there are essentially three register tones, with many syllables (those which were short and coda-less) still having neutral tone.

13. <u>Consonant Chain Shift</u>
Ejective consonants are ejected from the language! Non-ejective fricatives and stops become voiced, and ejective ones lose their ejective quality.

14. <u>Tone Dissimilation</u>
The neutral tone is eliminated from the language, leaving Ijíco as a two-tone language once and for all. Specifically, syllables with neutral tone immediately preceding syllables with high tone will take on marked low tone, exaggerating the existing rising contour. Likewise, syllables with neutral tone immediately preceding syllables with low tone will take on a marked high tone, and neutral-tone syllables behave similarly following syllables with marked tone. If a neutral-tone syllable is between syllables with differing marked tones, it will dissimilate from the preceding one and match the following.

This dissimilation propagates within words only in certain cases. A root with two neutral syllables followed by a high one will retain the same contour (now two low syllables followed by a high one). However, certain affixes which consistently dissimilate in other situations, like the prefix *so-* (a negating prefix; see below) will dissimilate even before a formerly neutral syllable as a result of this rule: *so-* + *gobí* = *sógobí.*

<u>Selected Vocabulary</u>

cőgi n. mouse (*c'ewki)
go vt. stack (*kos)
gobí vt. buy (*kopik)
göwé n. knot (*keɹen)
í n. squeak (*ic)
ijí n. language (*ic-ic)
jáy vt. boil (*cai)
mave n. owl (*mawe)
mí vt. eat (*mip)
miní n. turtle (*minij)
náwda n. water (*naɹta)
ní vi. come (*nik)

ó vt. sell (*on)
ógobí n. marketplace (*on + *kopik)
ű n. order (*uj)
vőde n. rabbit (*woite)
vowú n. litter (*woɹup)
zháwa vi. sing (*jiara)
zidzi n. barleycorn (*sitsi)
zóza n. cherry (*sorsa)

Morphology

Affixes which have multiple syllables in the protolanguage reduce very early on to a single syllable (see note above on the relative patience of kangaroo rats and mice). Generally, the last heavy syllable is retained, sometimes with consonants from other syllables if allowed by the phonotactics.

Noun Number

The inanimate plural is from *keɹen, "knot." It generally reduces to *-ɹen after a heavy syllable and *-kɹen after a light syllable, and generally appears as *-wé* or *-gwé* in Modern Ijíco.

The animate plural is from *woɹup, "litter." It generally reduces to *-ɹup after a heavy syllable and *-wɹup after a light one, though both merge to *-wup early on. It generally appears in Modern Ijíco as *-wú*, and causes the rounding of an immediately preceding front vowel (e.g. *miní → minűwú, mave → mavöwú*).

The dual is from *soɹsa, "cherry." It reduces to -*soɹ in all cases, and appears in Modern Ijíco as *-zó*, without any changes to the root.

Noun Case

The ablative case is from *nik, "come," and is *-ní* in Modern Ijíco.

The locative case is from *k'ow, "to sit," and is *-kó* in Modern Ijíco.

The unnatural case is from *uj "order" + *nik "come," which generally reduces to *-inik and has various outcomes in modern Ijíco. For most roots which end in a low-tone vowel, that vowel generally becomes high, changes quality (except for *e*), and the suffix *-ní* is added.

e.g. *cőgi → cőgyíní, zóza → zózáyní, mave → mavéní*

Roots which end in a high-tone vowel instead have a *-iní* suffix, with lowering of the the final syllable's tone and the reappearance of a final consonant.

e.g. *miní → minizhiní, gobigó → gobigoniní, vowú → vowubiní*

Some words ending in low tone follow the latter pattern (without a change of tone), due to having ended with a fricative in the protolanguage. However, some of these have been regularized according to the dominant pattern for low-tone-final roots.

The dual and plural suffixes are slightly simplified when followed by the unnatural case suffix, reducing early on to *-(k)ɹe, *-(w)ɹu, and *-so before *-inik. The resulting fused suffixes are generally -(*g*)*wéní* for the inanimate plural, *-wíní* for the animate plural (with the same vowel changes as above), and *-zőní* for the dual.

Nominalization

Verbs may be zero-derived into nouns: *zháwa* is both "to sing" and "a song," *í* is "to squeak" and "a squeak," and so on.

Negation

Negation in Ijíco is slightly different than in Wokuthízhű. Whereas in the language of the mice verbs are negated by the addition of a variable negation suffix and a (mostly) fixed negation suffix, the suffix has been entirely lost in Ijíco and negation is accomplished by means of the prefix alone.

Additionally, there are fewer negation prefixes in Ijíco than in Wokuthízhű. However, it just so happens that *s'ou → *só* "crumb" and *p'ep → *pé* "raindrop" are among those used in Ijíco. Their tones dissimilate from the initial tone of the verb, as they reduced early on to *s'o and *p'e respectively, and thus had neutral tone until very recently.

As with Wokuthízhű, objects of negated verbs are put into the ablative case.

Pluractional Marking

Verbs with dual or plural subjects are marked with partial reduplication. This reduplication is often even more reduced in Ijíco than in Wokuthízhű, with added open syllables sometimes trimmed to just their first consonant. Thus, the reduplicated form *jiarara is reduced to *jiarar, which becomes *zháwáw* in modern Ijíco.

Pluractional marking is often applied in situations where the subject is technically singular, but is a mass noun referring to multiple individuals (like "group"). This is also the case when the comitative is used, as there are two or more individuals partaking in the action, even though only one is technically the verb's subject.

Pluractional marking may also be applied to zero-derived nominalizations of verbs, in order to convey that the implied or potential agents of the verb are plural. Thus, *zháwa* "to sing" may be used as the noun "song," and the pluractional form *zháwáw* is a song that is sung by multiple people. Similarly, *í* is "squeak," and *ijí* is "language," which one could more colorfully translate as "squeak of the many." The kangaroo rats think of their own language as the second one (after Wokuthízhű), and so they called it *ic-ic c'o, which became *Ijíco*, "The Second Squeak of the Many."

Argument Indexing Prefixes

The argument indexing prefixes which are optional in Wokuthízhű are rarely seen in Ijíco. They are only retained for the reflexive, and instances where word order is altered for some reason. Since neither of these circumstances exist in the example sentences below, that's all you need to know about that.

Comitative

The comitative is from *mem, "hug." It appears as *-mem-* before vowel-initial verbs and *-mé-* before consonant-initial verbs.

Example Sentences

Cőgi zháwa.
[cʰǿ.gì ɟá.wà]
The mouse is singing.

Cőgizó zháwáw.
[cʰǿ.gì.zó ɟá.wáw]
The two mice are singing.

Cőgüwú zháwáw.
[cʰǿ.gỳ.wú ɟá.wáw]
The mice are singing.

Cőgi ógobíkó zháwa.
[cʰǿ.gì ó.gò.bí.kʰó ɟá.wà]
The mouse is singing in the marketplace.

Cőgi vődemézháwáw.
[cʰǿ.gì vǿ.dè.mé.ɟá.wáw]
The mouse is singing with the rabbit.

Cőgi zidzi mí.
[cʰǿ.gì zì.d͡zì mí]
The mouse eats the barleycorn.

Cőgi zidziní somí.
[cʰǿ.gì zì.d͡zì.ní sò.mí]
The mouse doesn't eat the barleycorn.

Mave náwda jáy.
[mà.vè náw.dà ɟáj]
The owl is boiling water.

Mave náwdaní pejáy.
[mà.vè náw.dà.ní pʰè.ɟáj]
The owl isn't boiling water.

Minűwú zózagwé gózo.
[mì.nʸ́.wú zó.zà.gwé gó.zò]
The turtles are stacking cherries.

Zózagwéní minűwíní gózo.
[zó.zà.gwé.ní mì.nʸ́.wí.ní gó.zò]
The cherries are stacking turtles.