

Basic Pomo Grammar

General information:

Eastern Pomo is a “verb last” language. This means the word order seems “backwards” from English, but remember that English is a much younger language. Eastern Pomo is thousands of years old. For comparison, Spanish is also a “verb last” language.

In an Eastern Pomo simple noun statement, the subject usually comes first.

Example 1: Xa-bahten heh xkatchil eh.
Water big the cold is

The lake is cold.

Example 2: Meep haiyoo noowahx dooweh shohk eh.
He dog barking night heard (confirmation)

He heard the dog barking last night.

As you can see, Eastern Pomo cannot be literally translated into English, neither can English be translated literally, word for word, into Eastern Pomo. To try to do this will cause serious problems for any Eastern Pomo student. Throw out all your ideas about how something should be said. Start over. Don't assume anything. Remember, you are dealing with a culture and society that is thousands of years old. There isn't much that is unknown or misunderstood. Everything is ordered within the society and much of the information is taken for granted within each daily situation or relationship. The world view is strikingly different from the view today. Relationships are differently expressed. Even reality is constructed in a different way. Everything has a spirit. Many of the ideas you commonly use in English have no meaning and may not be able to be said in Eastern Pomo. Similarly,

everything that is said in Eastern Pomo may not be translatable into English.

Imagine you are on an alien planet. This is how different English and Eastern Pomo are in the way they describe the world, and what they think about it. Also remember that Eastern Pomo has not been spoken as a language for many decades. Much of the modern world cannot be described with Eastern Pomo language. To try and do so might even corrupt the language and destroy its ability to present the traditional values and priorities of its Peoples.

Take a moment to think about some of the things we say in English. For example the simple statement:

I went to cut firewood.

You simply would not say this in Eastern Pomo. First, firewood was not cut. There were no chainsaws. There was plenty of wood to gather.

You would only gather wood for a fire, so there was no need to use the word 'fire' with the word 'wood'.

There were specific wood gathering work societies within the structure of the common village—so there would be no need for you to gather wood. If you were in one of these societies you would be instructed when to go so it would not be a spur of the moment decision.

If you had indeed been told that a wood-gathering party was going out, everyone would know about it anyway, so there would not be any need to tell anyone.

So, this simple statement—so necessary to English--becomes meaningless within the framework of the ancient and fully established Eastern Pomo way of life.