Part II    The Basic Verb

PRONOUN PREFIXES

Every Oneida verb has a pronoun prefix attached to the front of the verb stem. There are three classes of these prefixes: transitive, subjective, and objective.

Transitive Pronoun Prefixes

Some verb stems require transitive pronoun prefixes. These prefixes include a pronoun both for the doer of the verb action and for the receiver of the action. Consider the following examples from the vocabulary sample.

**kunolúhkwa**  
**ku**- is the pronoun prefix in which *I* is the doer and *you* is the receiver  
*I love you*

**shukwaya'tísu**  
**shukwa**- is the prefix in which *he* is the doer and *us* is the receiver  
*he has created us = the creator*

**shehlo'lí**  
**she**- is the prefix in which *you* is the doer and *her* or *them* is the receiver  
*(you) tell her or (you) tell them* (In English commands the subject *you* is understood, but in Oneida it is always expressed in the prefix.)

**hetshlo'lí**  
**hets**- is the prefix in which *you* is the doer and *him* is the receiver  
*(you) tell him!*

**Askya'takénha? ka**  
**sk**- is the pronoun prefix in which *you* is the doer and *me* is the receiver. (The *Α*- at the beginning is a prepronominal prefix that marks future tense.)

*will you help me?*

A summary of some transitive pronoun prefixes so far:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sk-</td>
<td><em>you to me</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she-</td>
<td><em>you to her or them</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hets-</td>
<td><em>you to him</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shukwa-</td>
<td><em>he to us</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ku-</td>
<td><em>I to you</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khe-</td>
<td><em>I to her or them</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-</td>
<td><em>I to him</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These prefixes can be attached to various compatible stems to create words such as the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sknolúhkwa</td>
<td><em>you love me</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shenolúhkwa</td>
<td><em>you love her / you love them</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hetsnolúhkwa</td>
<td><em>you love him</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shukwanolúhkwa</td>
<td><em>he loves us</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
khenolúhkwa  I love her / I love them
inolúhkwa  I love him

Most terms for relatives in Oneida are transitive verbs. So, from the vocabulary sample:

iyáha  i- is the prefix (see above) and the verb stem means be a parent to
iyáha  means I am a parent to him = my son

kheyáha  khe- is the prefix and the verb stem means be a parent to
kheyáha  means I am a parent to her = my daughter or
I am a parent to them = my children

aksótha  ak- is the prefix in which she is the doer and me is the receiver
aksótha  means she is grandparent to me = my grandmother

laksótha  lak- is the prefix in which he is the doer and me is the receiver
laksótha  means he is grandparent to me = my grandfather

Some other examples of transitive pronoun prefixes:

ahetsyatákénha? kâ  will you help him?
ashukwayatákénha? kâ  will he help us?
skya?tísu  you have made me
sheyáha  your children or your daughter
shukwayáha  our father

Subjective and objective pronoun prefixes

When a verb stem does not require a transitive prefix (typically when there is not both a doer and a receiver), then the stem requires either the subjective set of pronoun prefixes or the objective set. The difference between them is a matter of selection more than meaning and it is not predictable from knowing the meaning of the stem. Nothing obvious you know about English will help you predict whether an Oneida verb stem will take subjective or objective prefixes. From the vocabulary sample the verb know and the verb be happy both require objective prefixes. Here is a collection of several objective prefixes:

Objective pronoun prefixes:

wak-  I
sa-  you
lo-  he
yako-  she, or someone
And here are some examples of how they attach to verb stems:

- **wakanúhte**  : I know
- **samúhte**  : you know
- **lonúhte**  : he knows
- **yakonúhte**  : she knows
- **wakatunháhehle**  : I am happy
- **satunháhehle**  : you are happy
- **lotunháhehle**  : he is happy
- **yakotunháhehle**  : she is happy

The verb *like* requires subjective prefixes such as the following:

Subjective pronoun prefixes:

- **k-**  : I
- **s-**  : you
- **la-**  : he
- **ye-**  : she, or someone

- **knú·wehse**  : I like it
- **snú·wehse**  : you like it
- **lanú·wehse**  : he likes it
- **yenú·wehse**  : she likes it or someone likes it

The verb *like* can also be used with transitive prefixes as in the following:

- **kunú·wehse**  : I like you
- **sknú·wehse**  : you like me
- **inú·wehse**  : I like him
- **shukwanú·wehse**  : he likes us
SIMPLE SENTENCES

Statements
A verb can function as a complete sentence or additional identifications of the pronoun prefixes can be added:

- **lotunháhele**  
  *he is happy*
- **Amos lotunháhele**  
  *Amos is happy*
- **Wali yakotunháhele**  
  *Mary is happy*
- **betshlo·lí Amos**  
  *tell Amos*
- **shehlo·lí Wali**  
  *tell Mary*
- **iyáha lotunháhele**  
  *my son is happy*
- **kheyáha yakotunháhele**  
  *my daughter is happy*

Notice that the pronoun prefixes must always be used even when a name is used as well. Notice also that the pronoun prefix must agree with the subject in gender (as well as number and person). The order of words in Oneida expresses emphasis more than grammatical relations, so the following are also possible:

- **lotunháhele? Amos**  
  *Amos is happy*
- **yakotunháhele? Wali**  
  *Mary is happy*
- **lotunháhele? iyáha**  
  *my son is happy*
- **yakotunháhele? kheyáha**  
  *my daughter is happy*

It is also possible to express the same meaning with the particle né·n between the verb and the noun as in the following:

- **lotunháhele? né·n Amos**  
  *Amos is happy*
- **yakotunháhele? né·n Wali**  
  *Mary is happy*
- **lotunháhele? né·n iyáha**  
  *my son is happy*
- **yakotunháhele? né·n kheyáha**  
  *my daughter is happy*

Notice how the arrangement of words in a sentence affects the choice of whispered or non-whispered versions of a word.

Yes-no Questions
There is an easy way to turn any statement into the corresponding yes-no question. Add the particle ka. This is simply a grammatical word that signals a question. It is always positioned as the second word in the question.

- **lonúhte**  
  *he knows*
- **lonúhte ka**  
  *does he know?*
- **lonúhte Amos**  
  *Amos knows*
- **lonúhte ka Amos**  
  *does Amos know?*
- **sanúhte**  
  *you know*
- **sanúhte ka**  
  *do you know?*
- **lotunháhele? iyáha**  
  *my son's happy*
- **lotunháhele? ka iyáha**  
  *is my son happy?*
- **sknolúhkwa**  
  *you love me*
- **sknolúkhwa? ka**  
  *do you love me?*
Who Questions
The Oneida expression for who is úhka? náhte?. By itself this is pronounced úhka? náhohte. It is also possible to use just úhka? without náhte? or náhohte. Unless you know specifically that the answer will be a male, who-questions always use a feminine pronoun prefix on the verb. The general rule is that if you don't know whether you're talking about a male or female, then you assume female as an indefinite form.

úhka? náhte? yakonúhte  who knows?
úhka? náhte? yakotunháhehle  who is happy?
úhka? náhte? yenú·wehse  who likes it?
úhka? náhte? shenolúhkwa  who(m) do you love?
úhka? náhte? sheyáha  who is your daughter?

Negative statements
Negative statements are made by adding the particle yah before the verb and by attaching a special negative prefix to the verb. This is usually te?- (or just te- before an h or s) and it is one of the dozen or so prepronominial prefixes. If the verb already has a prepronominial prefix, then the negative prefix often combines or fuses with that prefix in ways that will be explained later.

yah te?yakonúhte  she doesn't know
yah teshukwanolúhkwa  he doesn't love us
yah te?wakanúhte  I don't know
yah te?knú·wehse  I don't like it

The h - l rule - a sound rule
When the negative prefix (or in fact any prefix) is added to a verb whose pronoun prefix starts with an l-, then that l- changes to an -h-. This is a very general pattern with only a few exceptions. Use l- when it starts a word and -h- when it doesn't.

lonúhte  he knows
yah tehonúhte  he doesn't know
lanú·wehse  he likes it
yah tehanú·wehse  he doesn't like it
lotunháhehle  he is happy
yah tehotunháhehle  he isn't happy
PRONOUN SUBCLASSES

The pronoun prefixes given earlier are just a few of many that are possible. There are fifteen subjective prefixes, about a dozen objective ones, and nearly sixty transitives. Each of those prefixes has variations that depend on the initial sound of the verb stem. It makes sense to classify stems both by what general class they are in (subjective, objective, or transitive) but also by the beginning sound. Here are the subclasses listed in the order of their frequency:

- **a-stems**: verb stems that begin with a
- **c-stems**: verb stems that begin with consonants (Except for a few peculiarities with stems that begin with y or h, it doesn't matter which consonant it is.)
- **i-stems**: verb stems that begin with i
- **o-stems**: verb stems that begin with either o or u
- **e-stems**: verb stems that begin with either e or ι

The first two subclasses are the biggest (over 80 percent of all Oneida verb stems) so we'll concentrate on those and postpone the others until later. Here's a slightly extended list of pronoun prefixes (still not the full list):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Subjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a-stem</td>
<td>c-stem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>wak-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>sa-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>lo-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>yako-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>lon-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The h in parentheses is only used when there's a prepronominal prefix.)

The verb stems from the previous lessons can now be identified as follows:

- **tell** -hlo·lį
- **ask** -liʔwanu·tús
- **parent of** -yáha
- **grandparent of** -hsotha
- **love** -nolúhkwa
- **help** -yaʔtakénha
- **know** -anúhte
- **live** -nakehlu
- **like** -mú·wehse
- **be happy** -atunháhehle

transitive c-stem
transitive c-stem
transitive c-stem
transitive c-stem
transitive c-stem
transitive c-stem
objective a-stem
subjective c-stem
subjective c-stem and transitive c-stem
objective a-stem
**Vowel drop rule - a sound rule**

In general when a pronoun prefix ending in a vowel is attached to a stem beginning in a vowel, the verb stem vowel is dropped. This is true of all the a-stems. There are some exceptions among o-stems.

Some more verbs

- **work** -yo'té  
  objective c-stem
- **have money** -hwístayá  
  objective c-stem
- **be hungry** -atuhkályaks  
  subjective a-stem
- **eat** -atekhu'nihe  
  subjective a-stem
- **drink** -hnekilha  
  subjective c-stem

Some examples:

- **wakyoté**  
  I am working
- **satuhkályaks ká**  
  are you hungry?
- **lutekhu'nihe**  
  they are eating
- **yah tehanekilha**  
  he doesn't drink
- **úhka? náhte? yakohwístayá**  
  who has some money
- **lonatunháhele? ká kheyáha**  
  are my children happy?
- **yah te?wakhwístayá**  
  I haven't got any money
CONVERSATIONAL VOCABULARY

There are several expressions for yes. The most general word is A. Use it for answering questions. For agreeing with someone you can use nē or nē wah. The word for no is yáht. There is also a slightly less formal word tah. For an intermediate response, you can use khe lé ki? wah which means I guess so or tat nu?u which means maybe.

Greetings

she'kú hello (a name or special greeting term for a relative can be added right after she'kú, the context form)

shekóli hello (a greeting typically between males)

skana?kó ka how are you?

skana?kó fine

oh (ni'sé) niyohtuháti how is it going with you?

yoyanláti it's going fine

kwah tsí? niyokwéni as well as can be expected

náhte? olí wase what's new?

yah oh náhohte nothing

kwah ok o'ná the same (this can be used as a greeting exchange - it is simply asked with a questioning intonation kwah ok o'ná and answered with a declarative one kwah ok o'ná)

ok ni'i sé and you?

Identifications

uhka? náhte? thi'ká who is that?

lu kwé man

yu kwé woman

yeksá child or girl

laksá boy

ukwehu'wé ni'i I am Oneida, or I am Iroquois

onayote?a'ká ni'i I am Oneida (People of the Standing Stone)

o'slu ni'i I am white

atwa'kánha ni'i I am an Indian (non-Iroquoian)

ukwehuwé'ne tekni tehlú I live in Oneida

kanatá'ke tekni tehlú I live in Green Bay

kanatá'ke tekánákehlé I live in Green Bay

oh nesa?taló ta what is your clan?

oské wáke niwaki?taló ta I am bear clan

onyáhtá niwaki?taló ta I am turtle clan

okwáho niwaki?taló ta I am wolf clan