Part I Introduction

SOUNDS AND THE ALPHABET

Vowels

There are six vowel sounds. They are represented by the following letters:

a, e, i, o, u, Λ
The first four are oral vowels and correspond to the following English sounds:

a as in <u>ah</u> or <u>father</u>
e as in <u>they</u>
i as in <u>ski</u>
o as in <u>no</u>

The last two are nasal vowels spoken as if an n sound always followed:

u as in <u>tune</u>

 Λ as in *ton*

Consonants

Four consonants are known as resonants and are very close to the sounds of the English letters:

 1
 as in
 low

 n
 as in
 <u>no</u>

 w
 as in
 <u>will</u>

 y
 as in
 yes

Examples: la lo ye ya wa wi nu na

h

There is also an h sound, which is pronounced as a breath of air as in *hello*. This sound is far more common in Oneida than it is in English and it occurs in Oneida in places such as before consonants where it does not occur in English. The sound itself is not difficult for English speakers to produce, but it will take some practice to produce it before consonants.

Examples: ha he hi ho hA hu ahla ahya ihle ehnA ohwa ohlu

Three consonants have sounds that vary slightly depending on the surrounding sounds:

t before a vowel or resonant consonant (l, w, y, or n) as in still (more like an English d) before other sounds (or silence or whispering) as in till

Examples: ta te ti to tA tu tha the thi tho thA thu tlu atla tye atyA twe Atwe tni etni thlu athla thye athyA thwe Athwe thni ethni

k before a	vowe	l or res	sonant	conso	nant a	s in <i>s<u>k</u></i>	<i>ill</i> (mo	ore lil	ke an	English	g)
before o	ther s	sounds	(or si	lence o	or whi	spering)	as	in <u>k</u> r	ill		
Examples:	ka 1	ke ki	ko	kn ku	ı kha	khe	khi .	kho	khn	khu	
	klo	۸klo	kya	akya	kwn	akwn	kna	okna			
	khlo	^khlo	khya	akhya	<u>khw</u> v	akhwn	khna	okhn	a		

s before a vowel or resonant consonant as in was (more like an English z) before other sounds (or silence or whispering) as in see
There is variation among speakers in the pronunciation of s. It is often somewhere between an s and a z sound, but all agree that when the sound comes between two vowels, it is most like a z.
Examples: ise usa ese isa she ashe sha esha sha isha

?

There is also a glottal stop in Oneida and it is represented by this symbol - ?. This is the catch that is made in the throat between the two vowels in *uh-uh* or *uh-oh* or *oh-oh*. It is used as a regular consonant in Oneida. However, it never occurs immediately after another consonant.

Examples: a'o e'e i'A u'u In the following examples notice the differences between glottal stop, h, and neither before a consonant: ata ahta a'ta ekA ehkA e'kA inu ihnu i'nu iko ihko i'ko

Special combinations

A few additional sounds are represented by special combinations of letters.

tsy (before vowels) or tsi (before consonants) is used to represent the sound of the j in English *judge* or the g in *gee whiz*Examples: tsya tsye tsi tsyo tsyA tsyu

tshy (before vowels) or tshi (before consonants) is used to represent the sound of the ch in *church*

Examples: tshya tshye tshi tshyo tshya tshyu

sy is used to represent the sound of the sh in she Examples: sya sye syi syo syA syu Here then are all the letters used in writing Oneida: a, e, h, i, k, l, n, o, s, t, u, w, y, Λ , ?

Other symbols

Three additional symbols are needed to fully represent Oneida sounds. A **raised dot** (the upper dot in a colon) is used to lengthen a vowel sound. It occurs immediately after the vowel it lengthens. An **accent mark** over a vowel helps indicate the stress pattern of the Oneida word. One final symbol is needed to indicate whispered syllables that occur at the end of many Oneida words. The symbol to indicate whispering is **underlining**.

Some common problems in using this writing system for Oneida

If you are an English speaker just learning the Oneida sound system, experience has shown some parts of the writing system are more difficult than others. Here are some of the stumbling blocks that may need a little extra attention.

h before consonants

This is not a sound combination that occurs in English so both making the sound and recognizing it will take some practice. Nothing replaces oral practice for developing this new speech habit.

h after consonants

This is a sound combination that does occur in English pronunciation but it is generally not recognized in English spelling. The **h** represents an aspiration you can feel (just put your hand to your mouth as you say the sounds) so the tricky part is not in producing the sound. It is the new spelling habit that needs some attention before it becomes natural.

hs and sh

Since the letter **s** between two vowels always represents a **z** sound, when you hear an Oneida word with an **s** sound between two vowels, there is some aspiration and it should be written as either **hs** or **sh**. You have to listen very closely to determine whether the aspiration of the **h** comes right before or right after the **s** itself. It is not a very easy difference to hear.

Examples:	áhsn three	áhsu not yet	teyóhses high
	niwásha tens	a·sé new	óhses syrup
	ka? niwá·sa small	things	

Remember that English typically uses the combination \mathbf{sh} to represent a distinct single sound but in Oneida the \mathbf{sh} combination always represents an \mathbf{s} sound followed by an \mathbf{h} sound. The English \mathbf{sh} sound corresponds to the Oneida \mathbf{sy} letter combination.

Examples: asyu ashu sya[·]tú write!

Nasal vowels before stop consonants

English has no vowels that must always be nasalized. Instead English speakers tend to nasalize any vowel only if it comes before a nasal consonant. The two Oneida nasal vowels \mathbf{A} and \mathbf{u} are always nasalized no matter what comes after them. When the following sound is a **t**, **k**, or **s**, then the movement the tongue makes in the transition between the vowel and the following consonant will automatically produce an **n** sound. Since there is no possibility of leaving that **n** out, it really does not have to be written. It is not really wrong to write it; it is just unnecessary.

Examples: kalu tóte? tree tutá le? he came back loht ti his house yusá le? he went back ti noon Akí lu? I will say Before other consonants the presence of the n matters. Consider the following: unhe uhe unyu uyu Anle Ale

Initial consonant clusters

Oneida allows words to start with some combinations of sounds that are not used in English. These are certainly not impossible to produce but they are not familiar and will take some practice.

Some examples: tkaye'li correct ktákhe I'm running tki'tlu I live there

ay sound

You will at times hear in Oneida words the vowel sound heard in the English words *buy, lie, why,* or *sigh.* What you are hearing is really the **a** vowel gliding off into another vowel. Combine an **a** syllable with a **ye** syllable and notice the sound that is produced.

Examples: aye ayn kaynte·lí *it's a sign* aka·yú old tkaye·lí correct

A, **u**, and **a**

Distinguishing these three vowels is sometimes tricky. For some speakers the two nasalized vowels Λ and \mathbf{u} are very close to one another. For others the \mathbf{a} and Λ are separated only by a little nasalization. It is especially difficult to hear the differences between **an** and $\Lambda \mathbf{n}$. It helps to have some expectations about the sounds because your ears may not always be reliable enough to determine the spelling.

Examples: ola·ná· corn soup kalA·ná· song, prayer

Doubled consonants

English often uses doubled consonants in its spelling even when there is no doubling in pronunciation. In Oneida most consonants don't double their sounds so they are not doubled in writing, but there are two consonants that can be doubled in sound. They are \mathbf{t} and \mathbf{k} . The doubling is produced by not fully releasing the first one before you start the second one. Or you can think of it as holding the doubled consonant.

Examples: sattók<u>ha</u> you are smart akkáha my blanket Other consonant clusters

English has more consonants but Oneida allows its consonants to combine in more combinations. These combinations may be unfamiliar but if you know the individual sounds, it should be possible to figure out the clusters.

Examples: ótku snake

kánhke when wakna^γkhwλu I am mad tasatáwyaht come in lola?nháu he knows how

Final glottal stops

Glottal stops at the ends of words are notorious for dropping off. Many speakers will sometimes say them and sometimes not. In general there are only a very few cases where the presence or absence of a final glottal stop matters to the meaning, so this is not a sound distinction to get hung up on.

Initial vowels

Many Oneida words begin with a vowel. There is some variation among speakers about how to pronoun such words. Some people always add an \mathbf{h} to any word beginning with a vowel and other people don't. The meaning is unaffected and so the \mathbf{h} is typically not written.

RHYTHMS IN WORD PRONUNCIATION

In addition to its consonants and vowels each Oneida word has its own rhythm. In most languages rhythmic patterns come from manipulations of the pitch, loudness, and duraction of the vowels. Combinations of these acoustic features are commonly known as accent or stress. In an English word the pattern is that one syllable has the primary stress (if it is a long word there might be a syllable with a secondary stress). In Oneida there are five patterns that give words their distinctive rhythms. All the patterns are incorporated into the writing system.

The first pattern is the straight accent and it is most like the English pattern in which one syllable of the word is stressed (typically with a louder sound and slightly higher pitch than the other syllables). In Oneida the straight accent is indicated by an accent mark over the vowel of the stressed syllable.

	tátatata	tatátata	tatatáta	tatatatá
--	----------	----------	----------	----------

A second pattern is long stress, where the stressed vowel is extended, unlike anything in English. A raised dot indicates in writing that the vowel is extended.

tatatá • ta tá·tatata tatá tata tatatatá.

Samples Oneida words:

wá·yat	pie	í·lelhe	he wants
ká khale?	skirt	á·shale?	knife
olú [.] ya	blue	o?swk·ta	black
kayá tase	girl	náhte? olí wase	what's new
ohw∧tsyá ke	on the earth	ukwehuwé ne	Oneida (place)
sw∧ná•not	read!	oh niwehnisló ta	what kind of day is it?
o?nikú·la?	mind	kayá tale?	picture
osahé ta?	bean(s)	yá yahk	six
snú wehse	you like it	wahk·lu?	he said
lonolú·sehe	he's lazy	kanatá ke wá ke	I'm going to Green Bay

The third pattern is the drag - pounce. It consists of dragging out one syllable with an even tone and then accenting the following one. The dragged syllable is indicated with a raised do owel.

dot after its vowel	and the accente	ed one has an acc	ent mark over its vov
ta·tátata	tata [.] táta ta	tata•tá	
Sample Oneida wo	rds:		
tsya·ták	seven	o·níste?	corn
i kélhe?	I want (it)	náhte? ka túhe?	what does it mean?
i wát	inside it	kohsa [.] t⁄s	horse
kaw∧ nés	long word	kalihwi∙sáks	she looks for news
to káske	really	wake káhs <u>e</u>	I like the taste of it
hetsli?wanu tús	ask him!	náhte? yesa yáts	what's your name?
swahyo wáh <u>ne</u>	apple	ukwehu wé	Oneida (person)
kaw naye nás	tape recorder	kalu·tóte	tree
kana táy∧	town	On∧yote?a·ká	Oneida people
aw^·lá	green	-	

it

The fourth pattern, a **double drag**, is really a combination of the previous two. It consists of a dragged syllable (indicated by the raised dot) followed by a syllable with a long stess (indicated by both accent mark and dot).

tata·tá·ta tatata·tá·

Sample Oneida words:				
ka?slehti [.] yó [.] se?	good cars			
sa·yk· kn	do you have it?	oye·lí·	ten	
katsa? ka yk	which one	i·sé·	you	

The last pattern, the **final drag**, seems to have no accented syllable but in these words the last syllable is dragged out with an even tone. In such words there really is an accented syllable, but it is whispered and occurs right after the dragged out syllable. So this last rhythm is actually just the drag - pounce (or double drag) rhythm combined with whispering, but since whispered syllables are not always noticed by learners, it seems like a distinctive rhythm.

tatata•t<u>á</u>

Sample Oneida words:

ukwehu <u>wé</u>	Oneida person	ni?i·s <u>é</u>	you
o?slu·n <u>í</u>	white person	kaw∧ni∙ <u>yó</u>	good word
shehlo·l <u>í</u>	tell her	osk∧nu∙t <u>ú</u>	deer
nok ∧wa∙t <u>ú</u>	it has to be	tyoh∧ t <u>ú</u>	leader
yaw∧·l <u>é</u>	teen	oye·l <u>í</u>	ten
kanuhso k <u>ú</u>	in the house	ka?slehtowa n <u>k</u>	big vehicle

Notice some patterns in these rhythms. Every word has an accent mark (although sometimes it is on a whispered syllable). No word has more than one accent mark. The raised dot only occurs right before or right with the accented syllable. There are no dragged syllables after an accented syllable.

It also happens that a glottal stop (?) never occurs immediately after a dragged vowel or an accented one. The rhythms of words are not arbitrary and there is enough patterning so that a set of rules can usually predict the type of rhythm a word will have. These rules will be presented later.

Becoming aware of the rhythms both in hearing them and producing them makes for more efficient learning. Some confusions have been common in the past. Be sure not to confuse a dragged syllable with one that has an h after a vowel; or to confuse an accented syllable with one that has a ? after the vowel. Learning the expected rhythms in words will help some, but the glottal stop is often not very prominent. Close attention and plenty of oral practice will help in recognizing it.

Sample Oneida word	ls:		
skahwistat	one dollar	othahyu ní	wolf
katuhkályahks	I'm hungry	lahnekílha	he is drinking
kahuhtá ke	my ear	teyohyó [.] tsist	salt
yonehlákwat	amazing	skahlá ke	my eye
okalyahtá ne?	mosquito	atuhkwánha	belt
atekhwahlákhwa?	table	sk∧hnáks∧	fox
áhs∧	three	náhte? séhsaks	what are you looking for?
wakanúhte	I know	onúhkwaht	medicine
onikw/htala?	red	atláhti	sock
wesáhtane? ka	are you full?	teyakolihwáhkwa	. she is singing
tsinuhnéhklis	bee	lukwe?ti yó	a good man
o ⁹ sluni ⁹ kéha	English	nihaya ⁹ tó [.] t∧	the kind of man he is
otsi?t∡ha	bird	ot nisa?taló.ta	what is your clan?
o?wá·lu	meat	atwa?kánha Ind	dian (non-Iroquoian)

WORD EXPECTATIONS

Oneida and English differ in what counts as a word. Often an Oneida word corresponds to a phrase or sentence in English. Most Oneida words (especially verbs) consist of stems with prefixes and suffixes added on. Some of these prefixes and suffixes are obligatory meaning the stem cannot be used without them - and some are optional ways for a speaker to add more meanings. So, for example, if you were to ask a native speakers for the Oneida word for hunt, you would be asking for only a piece of a word. Each of the following expressions would be single Oneida words:

> he's hunting they will go hunting again over there I should hunt for them she used it to hunt with

Each of these is formed by adding prefixes and suffixes to a basic stem meaning hunt.

Even when it appears that an Oneida word corresponds well to a single English word, as with o'n/ste corn, the Oneida word is often still complex. Here the word o'n/ste consists of three parts (a prefix, a stem, and a suffix) even though the meaning of the three combined corresponds to a single English word.

Sometimes the parts of a complex Oneida word can be represented in English if you are willing to modify the English translation. So, for example, kawAnaye nás tape recorder could be translated as *it word-catches* to represent its internal structure. Similarly iy/ha my son could be translated as I am in the parent relation to him and shukwaya?tisu the creator could be translated as he has created our bodies. Such translations are sometimes quite helpful but English only bends so far. To identify the parts of lonatlihwahtstyé tu as they self matter operate with-it have shows there is a limit; it's better to use a translation such as they carry out their responsibilities, which captures the meaning but not necessarily the form of the Oneida word.

As with any two languages one should not expect the range of meaning of a word (or stem) to be the same in both languages. Sometimes Oneida is more specific and precise than English. Oneida has several words for kinds of squirrels but no word to cover them all as English does. On the other hand Oneida has a single term for all the plants of the squash - melon - cucumber family where English only has a technical word invented by botanists (*cucurbit*). A word such as **yoyánehle** generally corresponds to *good*, but it also extends to *nice* or *pretty* as well.

The lesson in all this is that searching for exact correspondence between words in one language and words in another is at best messy and may be impossible. The solution used in these lessons is to identify words as having both form and meaning. The forms of any language have their own pattern and the patterns of Oneida are described in these lessons. Collections of forms have meanings and those meanings correspond to English meanings. Translate meanings, not forms.

PRODUCTIVITY and LEXICALIZATION

One reason for using a teaching grammar such as this is that language learning can become more efficient when you learn explicit patterns (expressed as grammatical rules) than when you learn just individual expressions one by one. this is especially true when opportunities for immersion are difficult to find. Linguists can probably account for any expression with some sort of tule about its formation or meaning. The problem is that some of these rules are so complex and apply to such rare circumstances that learning them, interesting as they may be, does ot rally have much of a payoff in increasing the efficiency of language learning. Rules that organize the hundreds of pronominal prefixes into sets can be very helpful whereas one that describes that an alternative form is used when a stem begins with a certain vowel and the word is short enough so the accent rules put the qaccent on a syllable before the pronominal prefix may be less helpful. It helps then to think of the productivity of the rules. This grammar is organized so that the most productive patterns and rules – those most frequent and helpful – are described before less productive rules.

There are two cautions to enjoying the benefits of productive rules. One is that speakers of a language do not always exploit productive rules. The English suffix *-er* is a good example. The rule in English is that adding *-er* to a verb creates a word that means a person or mechanism that does the action of the verb. It is a very productive rule. You can add *-er* to just about any verb. You could add it to the verb *admit* and speakers of English would certainly know what you meant but the word is hardly ever used.

The second caution is a process known as lexicalization. this is an instance of the result of a productive pattern taking on a life of its own. For example, if you put *-er* on the verb *plant*, the result should mean person or mechanism that plants and the word does indeed mean that, but it also means a container for potted plants. That is a semantic specialization and it is an example of lexicalization. If you add *-er* to the verb *play*, the

expected meanin may be lost to a semantic specialization. If you tell me your five year old son is a *player*, I am likely to think he is cooperative (*a team player*) or else he has established himself in some way as the alpha male in his group. I am less likely to think he simply spends time playing, even though that is what the rule predicts. The same process of lexicalization happens in Oneida. For example, there is a pattern of adding prefixes and suffixes to noun roots to signify counting. It is a very productive pattern but there is some lexicalization. The words for counting *boxes* tend to mean counting *thousands* instead and there are probably some nouns that are not in practice counted even though they could be. It is useful to keep in mind such limitations whenever patterns are presented in this work.

PARTS OF SPEECH

English words are classified grammatically into eight parts of speech: verb, noun, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, article, and interjection

Oneida words are classified into three parts of speech: verb, noun, and particle.

What this means is that just because you know the part of speech of a particular English word you cannot assume it is the same in Oneida. Many words that are nouns in English are constructed as verbs in Oneida. For example:

farmer = he plants tape recorder = it word-catches teacher = she makes the tradition for them table = used to place food on

Although there are distinct noun and verb stems, verbs often can incorporate noun stems inside them to form complex and descriptive verbs such as the above. English adjectives for the most part correspond to verbs in Oneida. To be happy, old, big, lazy and hot are all considered verbs in Oneida. English prepositions correspond to a number of devices in Oneida depending on their meaning. Those meanings can be expressed as: noun suffixes, separate particles, parts of complex verb stems, or verb prefixes. See pages 136-137 for some ways the meanings of English prepositions get expressed in Oneida. Anything that is not a noun or verb is considered a particle in Oneida. Particles tend not to have prefixes or suffixes and are usually short words. Many of them have grammatical functions just as English conjunctions and some adverbs do. Oneida has no articles - a, an, and the.

BASIC VERB STRUCTURE

The basic structure of an Oneida verb consists of four parts. There must always be a stem that carries the basic dictionary meaning of the verb. All verbs must have a pronoun prefix (pronominal prefix) that indicates the number (one, two, or more), gender (masculine, neuter, or either of two feminines), and grammatical person (1st - person(s) speaking; 2nd - person(s) spoken to; and 3rd - person(s) spoken about) of whoever is doing and/or receiving the action of the verb. Suffixed to the stem is an aspect marker that indicates some grammatical information. These three parts are obligatory. All Oneida verbs have them. The fourth part is a set of about a dozen prefixes (prepronominal prefixes) that are attached to the front of the pronoun prefixes. As many as half a dozen of them can occur on a single word or as few as none. They have a variety of meanings having to do with time, repetition, direction, negation, and a few other meanings.

PREFIX	PRONOUN	STEM	ASPECT SUFFIX

This seems straightforward, but three things make it more complex. One is that the pronoun prefixes exist in alternative sets. For example, in one set **wak**- means I and **lo**-means *he*, while in another set **k**- means I and **la**- means *he*. This idea of alternate forms with the same meaning also occurs occasionally in the other parts of the verb, but it is most prominent in the pronoun prefixes.

A second complication, partly caused by the first one, is that not every prefix, suffix, and stem is compatible with every other. There are patterns of selection. So, for example, certain aspect suffixes require specific prefixes and other aspect suffixes are incompatible with them (for example, modalizer prefixes only occur when the punctual aspect suffix is used); stems select a particular set of pronoun prefixes and the particular forms of their aspect suffixes; and there are certain incompatibilities between pronoun sets and aspect suffixes.

The third complication is that even after you've made the right selections, the sounds of the parts of the verb may alter or fuse with surrounding sounds. For example, if one part ends in a vowel and the next part starts in a vowel, the second vowel usually is dropped; or if putting together parts of a verb result in too many consonants in a row, then a vowel is often inserted to make the word pronouncable.

These three complications - the alternative sets of forms, the patterns of selection and compatibility, and the sound fusions and alterations - are likely to make Oneida verbs overwhelming at first. It is the strategy of these lessons to confront those complications gradually, that is to oversimplify matters at first to stress the most general patterns and then to confront more specialized patterns.

To begin with we'll focus on the stems and the pronoun prefixes. Initially we'll think of the aspect suffix as just part of the stem and only take passing notice of any prepronominal prefixes that occur. For the moment we'll ignore any internal structure within stems.

WHISPERING

Oneida is unusual among the world's languages in that whispering is a regular part of normal use of the language. Most words have two pronunciations depending on where they occur in a sentence. Words that occur with other words immediately after them in the same sentence have no whispering. But when those same words occur at the end of a sentence or when spoken in isolation, then the last syllable is typically whispered. Such whispering is indicated in the writing system by underlining.

Some words are exactly the same with no whispering whether there are words following or not. Other words undergo more complex changes (e.g. an extra vowel, an added \mathbf{h} , or a change in rhythm) than just whispering when they occur without words following. The color words will illustrate some of the possibilities:

meaning	context form	isolation form
	(with words following)	(alone or at end of sentence)
yellow	otsí•nkwal	otsí nkwal
green	awv.lą.	awa : <u>lá</u>
red	onikwáhtala?	onikw/hta <u>la</u>
blue	olú·ya?	olúh <u>ya</u>
black	o?swk·ta?	o?sw.kht <u>a</u>
white	owískla?	owískeh <u>la</u>

These changes are not completely arbitrary but the patterns (and the rules for describing them) are a bit complex. They will be presented in a later lesson (page 52).

A VOCABULARY SAMPLE

The following sample vocabulary demonstrates the common sound and rhythm patterns and also illustrates how Oneida words are structured. This is a good list to learn since later lessons will be making use of these words.

tape recorder
Creator
tell her; tell them
ask him
my son
my daughter
my grandmother
my grandfather
what is your name?
I love you
will you help me?
I know
on the earth
what does it mean?
how do I say?
where do you live?
long house
house, building
car, vehicle
big car
corn
do you like it?
I want to eat
do you want this?
who is happy?