

# Grammars and the community

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The audience for a grammatical description is an important consideration for anyone involved in descriptive linguistics. Potential grammar users include linguists, the interested public, and members of the communities in which the language is spoken. An awareness of the target audiences is necessary in shaping the grammar to meet varying needs. It might, for example, affect the choice of topics to be discussed, the organization and style of the presentation, the depth of detail to include, the use of technical terminology, and the nature of exemplification. It is not yet clear whether one grammar can serve all potential audiences and purposes. Whether it can or not, however, there is a good chance that any grammar will eventually be pressed into service for more than one. This paper offers some suggestions based on the author's experience with Mohawk communities situated in Quebec, Ontario, and New York State.

## 1. Introduction — Who reads linguistic grammars?

A useful point to consider when planning a grammar is its intended audience. Potential grammar readers might include linguists, interested laymen, or, increasingly, members of the communities in which the language is spoken. Since these groups approach grammars from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of purposes, an awareness of the target audience can be useful in shaping the grammar to meet their needs. It might, for example, affect such decisions as the choice of topics to be discussed, the organization and style of the presentation, the depth of detail to include, the use of technical terminology, and the nature of exemplification. It is not yet clear whether one grammar can serve all potential audiences and purposes. Whether it can or not, however, there is a good chance that it will eventually be pressed into service for more than one. This likelihood is increased in the case of endangered languages, where further descriptions may not be possible.

None of the three audiences mentioned above, linguists, interested laymen, or community members, is itself a homogeneous group. Among linguists, probably the most avid grammar readers are typologists, scholars engaged in comparing particular structures across large numbers of languages. Their primary goal is often to check certain predetermined features and correlations. Does the language show basic verb-initial, verb-medial, or verb-final word order? Does it show preposed or postposed relative clauses? Other linguists consulting grammars might be engaged in constructing models of a particular area of language structure, such as coreference relations between noun phrases and pronouns in different clauses. Such theoreticians may hope for detailed accounts of all logically possible combinations of relevant structures within a particular domain: subject pronouns in preposed subordinate clauses (*Because he had left, John missed seeing Bill*), object pronouns in preposed subordinate clauses (*Because John had seen him, Bill asked Sam to wait ...*), etc. Comparative linguists, interested in how languages change over time, might consult a grammar in order to see how the language described compares with others that are genetically related or areally contiguous. They might hope to find systematic and explicit lists of correspondences to those other languages, as well as discussions about the sources of forms and constructions that can be traced within the language itself. Still other linguists might be working on grammars themselves. These readers may be more interested in learning about the unexpected possibilities: unusual distinctions languages might encode, or previously unidentified structural generalizations that could characterize large numbers of expressions. Reading a grammar can alert them to categories and patterns to investigate in the language they are documenting.

A more general lay public might include individuals who are simply interested in the community in which the language is spoken and its culture. It might include anthropologists and historians hoping to gain an understanding of traditional patterns of thinking. It might include translators whose goal is to produce materials for community use or to bring material from the community to a broader audience. It might include persons from outside the community who hope to provide various support services. Such community workers might wish for information that might help them to gain a rudimentary speaking ability in order to facilitate communication.

Finally, an important and growing audience for the grammar might come from within the community in which the language is spoken. Among these readers might be language teachers, that is, speakers charged with passing on the traditional language to children or adults who do not know it or do not know it well. There might be curriculum planners who are constructing lesson

plans and teaching materials for the community. There might be community members who are simply intrigued by the beauty and intricacies of a system of which they were not previously conscious. Or, increasingly, there might be descendants of speakers, eager to discover and appreciate this central aspect of their heritage. Important functions of grammars directed at these audiences might be to show the overall structure of the language in its own terms, and to document its richness, particularly of what makes it special. (For an additional perspective, see the contribution by James Kadanya in this volume.)

The potential audience for a good grammar is thus likely to be diverse, with a variety of backgrounds, skills, interests, desires, tastes, and purposes. It will also be a changing one. Topics of interest to linguistic theoreticians are notoriously ephemeral. The hottest issues, those generating the most excited discussion at one moment, are often the quickest to become outmoded. Even more important is the potential for change within the community audience. Not long ago relatively few community members were very interested in the work produced by linguists. When everyone knew the traditional language well and used it as a primary means of communication, their linguistic knowledge was often taken for granted, and the humble attempts of an outsider to record and describe a fragment of it could offer little excitement. Increasing globalization, however, has meant increasing worldliness, sophistication, education, and curiosity on the part of members of many communities. Speakers and their descendants are increasingly aware of the complexity and value of their own heritage. A good grammar can even heighten their appreciation of it.

If grammars are to be consulted by such a varied and ever-changing audience, it might be useful to begin discussion of how grammar writers can best serve the diverse needs of their readers now and in the future. Among the issues for discussion are the relation between grammar writing and linguistic theory, the use of technical terminology, the quantity of detail to include in descriptions, the choice and format of examples, and the nature of the data that provide the foundation for the description.

## **2. Grammar writing and linguistic theory**

An ongoing question for grammar writers is the optimal balance between theoretical abstraction and language-specific substance. It is clear that a sound knowledge of the categories and structures that have already been observed to occur in other languages is essential to the effective analysis and description of a new language. If one has never heard of ergativity, for example, a tremendous

amount of time can be wasted trying to find subjects and objects in a language without them. A familiarity with ergative patterns, on the other hand, can allow the researcher to identify such patterns quickly and, furthermore, alert him or her to note how far the patterns extend. Are they confined to lexical noun phrases or do they extend to pronouns as well? Do they appear in both main and subordinate clauses, or just one? Do they appear in all tenses, aspects, and moods, or just some? Antipassive constructions frequently play a significant role in languages with ergative patterns. The theoretically sophisticated researcher will be on the lookout for antipassives in a language with ergative constructions, and the syntactic and pragmatic roles they might play in connected speech.

At the same time, a certain amount of judgment is called for in determining the extent to which the shape of a grammar should be driven by current theoretical concerns. Because of the modern history of linguistic theory, with its strong roots in Europe and North America, the theoretical issues most heavily discussed have tended to involve structures found in English and, to a lesser extent, related languages. The syntactic structures of written English in particular have defined the foci of a substantial proportion of theoretical work to date, though fortunately there is increasing consideration of a wider range of languages. If a grammar is based primarily on translations of the English sentences that underlie current theoretical issues, the potential contribution of that grammar to both the linguistic and local communities is diminished. We will be deprived of some of the most theoretically interesting aspects of the language under consideration, those which would allow us to broaden our theoretical perspective in the most interesting ways. We will also fail to document what makes this language special, a record of the particular culture that shaped it.

Linguistic typologists often express frustration at the gaps they find in grammars. They would like each grammar to contain not only a specification of the categories and structures that exist in the language, but also a specification of those that do not. This desire is certainly understandable: the goal of typology is the comparison and classification of recurring features or constructions across large numbers of languages.

The work raises deeper questions about whether languages are fundamentally the same, with only incidental differences, or profoundly different. These discussions will probably continue throughout the life of the discipline. But the issue calls for reflection about the level of categories and structures worthy of mention. Should we specify for every language whether or not it has a passive construction? Double *wh*-movement? Prepositions? A perfect?

An ablative case? A potential danger in over-inclusiveness is that of shaping the description of a little-known language in terms of the structures currently recognized in better-known languages. One alternative that has been suggested is a large index at the end of the grammar, listing all occurring and non-occurring structures, with pointers to the pages on which the occurring structures are discussed, and explicit labeling of non-occurring ones.

A closely-related issue is the extent to which the grammar should reflect the full range of logically possible structures, as opposed to the distribution of structures that occur in natural speech. In many cases speakers can supply literal translations of English constructions in their language even when these constructions rarely if ever occur spontaneously. The elicited translations may fail to occur for a variety of reasons. They may be pragmatically self-contradictory, for example, or other constructions may normally be used in their place. Certain constructions may be used only with particular lexical items in natural speech. A theoretician could be chagrined to find no example of a particular logically possible construction, and no specification of its ungrammaticality, but the grammarian might wonder whether an elicited translation is truly part of the language and belongs in the permanent record. Again, such decisions must be made on a case-by-case basis. Awareness of the logical possibilities can prompt the grammarian to search for the full range of pertinent examples in the database, so that crucial examples are not inadvertently omitted. Creating structure, however, can provide a distorted view of the intricate system of systems that is the language.

On this issue, community concerns might motivate greater fidelity to actually-occurring speech. In many cases, local languages are being replaced by global languages in stages. Skilled speakers use the traditional languages in fewer and fewer contexts. Succeeding generations control smaller inventories of rhetorical styles, complex constructions, and vocabulary. In such situations, faithful documentation becomes increasingly important. A record of what is actually said by skilled speakers in a variety of situations, when they are choosing what to say and how to say it, can provide a priceless record not just of relative clause structures, for example, but also of what was said, of how experience was segmented into concepts and how these concepts were combined, of how speakers interacted with each other. Each example taken from spontaneous speech provides an illustration not just of the point it is meant to illustrate, but of many more aspects of the language and language use. Such documentation can also provide answers to theoretical questions we do not yet know enough to ask. It can be our best hope for serving future readers from all backgrounds.

### 3. Terminology

It has sometimes been suggested that the actual technical terminology used in a grammar is insignificant, so long as all terms are defined. Definitions are certainly important, both for the casual, uninitiated reader and for the theoretician interested in knowing the exact concept intended by the author. But the choice of terms can also be important. A number of sometimes contradictory factors can enter into the optimal choice. If the grammar is to be accessible to the largest possible audience, unnecessary technical terminology can be detrimental. In any field, technical terminology plays both intellectual and social roles. Intellectually, it can permit the refinement of our understanding of a concept. But socially, it can distinguish members of the 'in-group' from all others. In-group terminology can constitute a barrier to understanding and discourage general readers. (It can also be short-lived, so that work incorporating it can appear outmoded quite quickly.)

Where technical terms are necessary, several considerations are at stake. Linguistic typologists often express frustration at the incommensurability of grammars if terminology is not uniform. Someone researching subjunctives, for example, might prefer that every grammar include a section labeled 'Subjunctives', with either a description of the forms or a statement that they do not exist in that language. As the kinds of linguistic categories that occur have become better known and understood over the past half-century, much common linguistic terminology has become widely established. It is important for the grammarian to know what terms are in general use, and exactly how they are commonly understood. Inventing a new term for a category that is common cross-linguistically and already known under another name is counterproductive. At the same time, if incommensurate categories are forced too quickly into a single terminological box, we can lose an important value of the grammar: the opportunity to appreciate the potential richness of language variation.

Two other factors can enter into the choice of technical terminology where it is necessary. One is the existence of terminology in previous studies of the language or related languages. If there is a strong tradition, for example, of using a certain term for a particular grammatical prefix, the grammarian might think twice before choosing a different term. If a change is made, it is helpful to specify the equivalence.

To lessen frustration for grammar users within the speech community, of course maximal transparency of terminology is extremely important. All else being equal, a term like 'past' is more transparent than a term like 'preterite'. It can sometimes be useful to include the form of a marker when mentioning

the term, as in 'the s-Repetative'. Learning new terminology requires an investment of time and patience for anyone, particularly for those who are not in the habit of reading grammars. For this reason, it can be important to make careful choices the first time, in order to minimize the trauma of revision. The linguist might suddenly decide that a particular suffix would be more appropriately called an Inceptive than an Inchoative. In the end, however, changing an established term might not be worth the risk of alienating the audience.

#### 4. Questions of quantity

Different audiences will certainly vary in the amount of detail they would like to find in a grammar. Furthermore, the preferences of individual grammar users can change over their lifetimes. We expect a grammar to specify the basic patterns that characterize the language. But just how much detail should be supplied? Should the patterns be simply stated, or should they be explained where this is possible? Should apparent irregularities be discussed? Should examples be simple, brief, and few, or should they be elaborate and numerous? Should full inflectional paradigms be included, even where they are predictable by general rule, or are general rules sufficient? Should forms be illustrated in the context of larger stretches of speech? Should gaps in usage be discussed?

The best answers to such questions will undoubtedly be different for different communities. Some points for reflection are offered here from the experiences of a consortium of six Mohawk communities situated in Quebec, Ontario, and New York State. Beginning in the early 1970's community members noticed that children were no longer learning the language at home. Speakers began offering language classes in community schools, but they soon realized that their skill at speaking the language did not fully equip them to pass on the language during the limited classroom time at their disposal. They felt they could benefit from some technical knowledge of the structure of the language and teaching techniques, so they set about establishing university certificate and degree programs in these areas. Community orthographies were established, and teachers began to learn about the complex structures of their language, making conscious what had previously been largely unconscious. They realized that if they were to teach Mohawk effectively, with the goal of passing on Mohawk ways of viewing the world, their classes should not be organized according to the curriculum used for teaching French. Mohawk teachers did not teach grammar as a formal subject, but their lesson plans were based on a fundamental understanding of Mohawk in its own terms. At this stage,

emphasis in teacher-training programs was on the basic, recurring, regular patterns specific to the Mohawk language.

Over time, language programs for both children and adults blossomed in all of the communities. Immersion programs, in which students learn all of their subjects in Mohawk, were established and have continued with great success. Teachers became increasingly sophisticated in their conscious understanding of the intricacies of the language. Curriculum committees were formed to produce materials for the classrooms. At a certain point, community members involved in these programs realized that they would like a comprehensive reference grammar of the language, complete with fine details about the sounds of the language, dialect differences, word structure, sentence structure, discourse structure, and style, as well as explanations of the seeming exceptions that crop up repeatedly as they prepare lessons. The issues considered below come from our experiences in planning and working on this grammar.

#### 4.1 How much detail should be included with descriptions?

All grammars should of course outline the basic structures of the language. Mohawk, for example, contains three different constructions comparable to the possessive constructions of languages like English. If teachers are to present coherent lessons, they need to be aware of the three constructions and perhaps present them at different times.

(1) Three Mohawk possessive constructions:

Inalienable possession	<b><u>k</u>-kahrà:ke</b>	<i>my eye</i>
Alienable possession	<b><u>ak</u>-hnà:ta'</b>	<i>my purse</i>
Interpersonal relationships	<b><u>rak</u>-hsótha</b>	<i>my grandfather</i>

How much more should be said in the grammar? Certainly the situations in which each construction is used should be specified, and the form of each should be described. Mohawk teachers, who are quite sophisticated, are comfortable with at least as much description as below.

Inalienable possessive constructions are used for most, but not all, body parts. They are formed from an inalienable possessive prefix referring to the possessor (*k-* 'my'), followed by a noun stem identifying the possession (*-kahr-* 'eye'), a noun suffix (*-a'*), and an ending (*=ke*) meaning 'place'.

## (2) Inalienable possession

**kkahrà:ke**

k-kahr-a'=ke

1SG.INALIEN.POSSessor-eye-NOUN.SUFFIX=LOCATIVE.NOMINALIZER

'my eye (place)'

Alienable possessive constructions are used for most other possessions. They are formed from an alienable possessive prefix referring to the possessor (*ak-* 'my'), a noun stem identifying the possession (*-hna't-* 'purse'), and just a noun suffix (*-a'*).

## (3) Alienable possession

**akhnà:ta'**

ak-hna't-a'

1SG.ALIEN.POSSessor-purse-NOUN.SUFFIX

'my purse'

Most kinsmen and other associates are identified in terms of relationships rather than possession. Both parties in the relationship are specified in the pronominal prefix. Senior members are expressed first, junior members second.

## (4) Kinship terms

a. **rakhsótha**rak-hsót=haM.SG/1SG-be.grandparent.to=DIMINUTIVE'he is grandparent to me' = 'my grandfather'b. **riiaterè:'a**rii-aterè'=a1SG/M.SG-have.as.grandchild=DIMINUTIVE'I have him as a grandchild' = 'my grandson'

When both members are of comparable rank, a reciprocal construction is used.

## (5) Reciprocal kinship terms

**ontiarà'sè:'a**onki-ar-à'sè'=a1.EXCLUSIVE.DU-RECIPROCAL-be.cousin.to=DIMINUTIVE'we two are cousins to each other' = 'my cousin'

In addition to the major question of just how much detail to include in the description, there is the issue of how much additional commentary should be provided. Some explanation can certainly be interesting, particularly if it is

accurate, and it can make the structures easier to understand and remember. Relating particular structures to deeper generalizations can be useful for some readers. The Mohawk inalienable possessive prefixes resemble the agent pronominal prefixes that appear on verbs (*I jumped, I grabbed him*), with certain minor, systematic differences in form. The alienable possessive prefixes resemble the grammatical patient pronominal prefixes that appear on verbs (*I slept, he grabbed me*), again with certain minor, systematic differences in form. When these parallels between the pronominal prefix paradigms are pointed out, it significantly reduces the overall learning time for the reader.

#### 4.2 How much detail should be included about form?

As in many languages, the shapes of prefixes and suffixes in Mohawk can vary according to the sounds adjacent to them. The possessive prefixes show different shapes before different sounds.

(6) Allomorphy of possessive prefixes

<u>k</u> -kahrà:ke	<i>my eye</i>	<u>ak</u> -hnà:ta'	<i>my purse</i>
<u>ke</u> -neri'tstà:ke	<i>my navel</i>	<u>akè</u> :-sere	<i>my car</i>
<u>k</u> -a'kotarà:ke	<i>my heel</i>	<u>akw</u> -atháhsteren	<i>my pants</i>
<u>t</u> -ia'tà:ke	<i>my body</i>	<u>à:t</u> -iare'	<i>my pouch</i>

The Mohawk communities show dialect differences as well.

(7) Dialect variation

<u>k</u> -ia'tà:ke	<i>my body</i>	(Ohswé:ken, Taientané:ken, Ahkwesáhsne)
<u>t</u> -ia'tà:ke	<i>my body</i>	(Kanehsatà:ke, Wáhta, Kahnawà:ke)

A traditional value in linguistics has been economy of description. A simple rule has been more highly valued than a complex one. No more examples have been deemed necessary than those required to prove the point. It is not clear that this kind of economy is the best answer for a useful grammar, particularly for community members. Additional examples might be of several kinds. In describing allomorphy, for example, one could first provide a full paradigm, like that below.

(8) Possessive paradigm

<u>ke</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>my head</i>
<u>se</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>your head</i>
<u>ka</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>its head, her head</i>
<u>ie</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>one's head, her head</i>
<u>ra</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>his head</i>

<u>teni</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>you and I, our heads</i>
<u>iakeni</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>he or she and I, our heads</i>
<u>seni</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>you two, your heads</i>
<u>keni</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>they two (animals or women), their heads</i>
<u>ni</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>they two (males) their heads</i>
<u>tewa</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>you all and I, our heads</i>
<u>iakwa</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>they and I, our heads</i>
<u>sewa</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>you all, your heads</i>
<u>konti</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>they (animals or women) their heads</i>
<u>rati</u> -nontsi:ne	<i>they (males) their heads</i>

To show patterns of allomorphy and dialect variation, additional paradigms could be provided. (The initials to the right below identify dialects.)

(9) Inalienable possession with a- stems

<u>k</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>my feet</i>	
<u>s</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>your feet</i>	
<u>w</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>its feet, her feet</i>	
<u>ion</u> -hsi'tà:ke	<i>one's feet, her feet</i>	
<u>r</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>his feet</i>	
<u>ti</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>you and I, our feet</i>	O, T, Kw, Ks, W
<u>ki</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>you and I, our feet</i>	A
<u>iaki</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>he or she and I, our feet</i>	O, T, A
<u>iati</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>he or she and I, our feet</i>	Kw, Ks, W
<u>tsi</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>you two, your feet</i>	O, T, A
<u>ts</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>you two, your feet</i>	Kw, Ks, W
<u>ki</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>they two animals or women, their feet</i>	O, T, A
<u>ti</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>they two animals or women, their feet</i>	Kw, Ks, W
<u>i</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>they two males, their feet</i>	
<u>tew</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>you all and I, our feet</i>	
<u>iakw</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>they and I, our feet</i>	
<u>sew</u> -ahsi'tà:ke	<i>you all, your feet</i>	
<u>kon</u> -hsi'tà:ke	<i>they all (animals or women) their feet</i>	
<u>ron</u> -hsi'tà:ke	<i>they all (males) their feet</i>	

To convey the full pattern, still more paradigms would be necessary, displaying forms with noun stems beginning with other vowels and consonant clusters.

Alternatively, the basic paradigm could be followed by rules or statements about phonological processes or alternations, in the style preferred by the grammar writer. The form of the Mohawk neuter-zoic prefix, for example, used

for animals and for some women and girls, appears as *ka-*, *w-*, or *i-*. (This *i* is the orthographic convention for the palatal glide [j] before a vowel. Nasalized vowels are written as digraphs *en* and *on*.)

- (10) Neuter.zoic inalienable possessor *its, her*
- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>ka-</b>           | before consonants and the vowel <b>i</b>               |
| <b>ka-i &gt; ken</b> | ( <b>en</b> = [ɛ̃])                                    |
| <b>w-</b>            | before vowels <b>a, e, en</b>                          |
| <b>w &gt; i</b>      | before vowels <b>o, on</b> (i = [j], <b>on</b> = [ɔ̃]) |

The alternations described here represent a variety of types. The dissimilation of the back glide *w* to a front glide *i* [j] before back vowels is a regular, recurring alternation that can be seen throughout the grammar. The fusion of the vowels *a* and *i* to the nasal vowel *en* (phonetically a nasalized mid-central vowel) can be seen just within the pronominal prefix paradigms. The shift of *ka-* to *w-* before vowels *a*, *e*, and *en* is not a regular phonological alternation at all. It is unique to this form and suppletive. The grammar writer describing this allomorphy must decide whether to state these alternations together in the same part of the grammar, individually in separate areas of the grammar, or both.

For the Mohawks, the best solution appears to be a combination, even if certain regularities are stated more than once. Full sets of paradigms are crucial. The grammar writer may have assimilated the intricate sets of alternations and be able to recreate them, and of course speakers can produce the forms without reflection, but the full sets of paradigms allow readers to see the patterns for themselves. They provide teachers and curriculum designers with examples. And they provide non-speakers with forms they can be confident are correct, incorporating all of the complex alternations that interact. At the same time it is useful for many readers to see a summary of the forms as in (10), whether in that format or some other. It provides helpful generalizations to adults learning the language or teachers and curriculum planners assembling lessons that will allow students to absorb patterns. Finally, particularly if the grammar is meant to serve linguists as well, it is appropriate to repeat the individual alternation patterns in the various appropriate sections of the phonological description.

### 4.3 How many examples?

As noted, scholarly linguistic analyses typically provide only enough examples to illustrate the point under discussion. Similarly, language patterns are sometimes easiest for the non-linguist to see in one or two simple examples. The Mohawk first person singular pronominal prefixes *k-* and *ak-* are followed by

an epenthetic *e* before certain consonants (*n*, *r*, *w*) and consonant clusters beginning with glottal stop. This point can be made by a statement of the distribution and an illustrative example as in (11).

- (11) Mohawk prefix allomorphy: the simple view

<b><u>k</u>hnia'sà:ke</b>	<b>akhnià:sa'</b>
<u>k</u> -hnia's-a'=ke	<u>ak</u> -hnia's-a'
<u>1SG.INAL.POSS</u> -throat-NS=LOCATIVE	<u>1SG.AL.POSS</u> -throat-NS=LOCATIVE
'my throat'	'my collar'
<b><u>ke</u>'nionkserà:ke</b>	<b>ake'niónkseri</b>
<u>ke</u> -'nionkser-a'=ke	<u>ake</u> -'nionkseri
<u>1SG.INAL.POSS</u> -toe-NS=LOCATIVE	<u>1SG.AL.POSS</u> -toe-NS=LOCATIVE
'my toe'	'my onion'

The grammar writer could stop with these examples, or provide more, as in (12).

- (12) Mohawk prefix allomorphy: the more extensive view

<b><u>k</u>-konhsà:ke</b>	'my face'	<b><u>k</u>-ken'kwarà:ke</b>	'my forehead'
<b><u>k</u>-hsonhkarà:ke</b>	'my lip(s)'	<b><u>k</u>-hsineko'tà:ke</b>	'my ankle(s)'
<b><u>k</u>-hiohsà:ke</b>	'my elbow(s)'	<b><u>k</u>-hsinà:ke</b>	'my leg(s)'
<b><u>k</u>-hna'tshà:ke</b>	'my rump'	<b><u>k</u>-ho'kwà:ke</b>	'my buttock(s)'
<b><u>k</u>-tsi'erà:ke</b>	'my nail(s)'	<b><u>k</u>-hsiahontà:ke</b>	'my stomach'
<b><u>k</u>-ihná:ke</b>	'my skin'	<b><u>k</u>-entskwe'nà:ke</b>	'my chest'
<b><u>k</u>-ahsi'tà:ke</b>	'my foot/feet'	<b><u>k</u>-ahontà:ke</b>	'my ear(s)'
<b><u>k</u>-ahiakwirà:ke</b>	'my toe(s)'	<b><u>k</u>-ahsi'tò:kon</b>	'sole of my foot'
<b><u>ke</u>-nontsi:ne</b>	'my head'	<b><u>ke</u>-na'wasà:ke</b>	'my eyelid'
<b><u>ke</u>-nho'kwà:ke</b>	'my cheek(s)'	<b><u>ke</u>-nhoskwà:ke</b>	'my jaw'
<b><u>ke</u>-nawirà:ke</b>	'my teeth'	<b><u>ke</u>-na'ahtà:ke</b>	'my rib(s)'
<b><u>ke</u>-nahsà:ke</b>	'my tongue'	<b><u>ke</u>-nhonhrò:kon</b>	'my armpit(s)'
<b><u>ke</u>-nia'kwà:ke</b>	'my throat'	<b><u>ke</u>-nekwen'tà:ke</b>	'my belly'
<b><u>ke</u>-ronhkwe'nà:ke</b>	'my back'	<b><u>ke</u>-nentshà:ke</b>	'my arm(s)'
<b><u>ke</u>-rhiotshà:ke</b>	'my chin'	<b><u>ke</u>-ratà:ke</b>	'my heel'
<b><u>ke</u>-weionhkarà:ke</b>	'my thumb'	<b><u>ke</u>-'rhiotshà:ke</b>	'my chin'
<b><u>ke</u>-'nionhsà:ke</b>	'my nose'	<b><u>ke</u>-'nahsà:ke</b>	'my tongue'

As in the case of paradigms, more examples do allow readers to see patterns for themselves. They can provide teachers and curriculum designers with useful material, as well as second language learners. They can also provide a check on combinations of rules and details of allomorphy.

#### 4.4 Should apparent irregularities be discussed?

It was noted earlier that the possession of body parts is usually expressed in Mohawk with an Inalienable possessive construction. But some body parts appear only with Alienable possession.

- (13) Mohawk body parts with Alienable possession  
ake-nónhkwis ‘my hair’      ake-nekwénhsa’ ‘my blood’  
akw-atstíéhseri ‘my kidney(s)’      ak-htsinonhiatà:ke ‘my vein(s)’

Furthermore, some Mohawk nouns for body parts can appear in either Inalienable or Alienable possessive constructions.

- (14) Mohawk body parts with either  
k-tsi’erà:ke      ak-tsi’erà:ke      ‘my fingernail’  
ra-nontsi:ne      rao-nontsi:ne      ‘his head’

For community readers learning about the structure of their language for the first time, it might be easier not to hear about such exceptions while they are attempting to make sense of the overall generalization. They might prefer to hear about just the forms that contribute to the general pattern. If the seeming exceptions are pervasive, however, they will appear soon enough. Teachers and curriculum designers will bump into them as they try to devise coherent lesson plans.

If exceptions are to be included, there are again options. The choice will depend on the pervasiveness and transparency of the seeming exceptions and the preferences of the readership. One option is simply to list exceptions at the end of the description. The Mohawk chapter on possession could list body part terms that appear in Inalienable possessive constructions, then those that appear in Alienable possessive constructions, then those that can appear in both.

A second option is to offer possible explanations for the differences. Again, an important consideration is the quality of the explanation. Good, valid explanations can make the patterns easier to understand, assimilate, and appreciate. The Mohawk body parts that appear with Alienable possession are not a random set. Most are internal organs like veins and kidneys, not ones normally visible to one viewing a live person or animal, and not ones that the owner normally has conscious control over. Mohawk speakers have suggested that body parts like arms and legs are extensions of the owner in a way that veins and kidneys are not. If someone hits my arm she hits me. Asked about hair, speakers note a sense of separation and lack of control. The Mohawk body parts

that appear in both Inalienable and Alienable possessive constructions, like eyelashes and fingernails, are also not a random set. They occur both attached to and separated from their owners: one can lose an eyelash or cut off a fingernail. They tend to occur in Alienable possessive constructions when they are separated from their owners, and in Inalienable constructions when attached. The final example with the head is especially revealing. Possession of a head is normally inalienable. The Alienable construction *raonontsi:ne* 'his head' came from a story about a Headless Horseman who carried his head under his arm.

#### 4.5 Should examples illustrate the use of forms in context?

Another consideration is whether words illustrating morphological structure should be shown in the larger syntactic or discourse contexts in which they occur.

For beginners and anyone else unacquainted with the language, it is obviously easier to see morphological patterns when just the word is provided, as in the examples above. The paradigms in (9) and the lists of terms in (12) allow speakers to see generalizations they would miss in more elaborate examples. If the purpose of the grammar is to provide as full a description as possible of the language, however, examples of the construction in a larger context can be important as well. The words described may not fit into natural speech in the same way as their English translations. Their use may be dependent on certain features of the larger context that may not even be apparent to the grammarian at the outset. For full documentation, then, at least some examples from the spontaneous speech of skilled speakers can be useful.

If such examples are to be included, one might consider how much grammatical information about the example should be included. Is a simple sentence translation sufficient? Would a word-by-word gloss help? A full morphological analysis? For examples like those in (15) and (16), for example, one could provide just the first lines given here (the sentence as spoken) and last lines (the free translation); or the first (as spoken), fourth (word-by-word translation), and last (free translation); or the first (as spoken), the second (morphological parsing), third (morpheme-by-morpheme gloss), and last (free translation); or all five.

- (15) Possession in context: Sha'tekenhátie' Phillips, Kahnawà:ke, speaker p.c.

**Iáh ò:ni' ne énska tekhé:kén**                    **ne: akhwá:tsire'**  
 iáh o'ni' ne énska te-khe-ken-'                    ne ak-hwatsir-'  
 not also the one    NEG-1SG/3-see-PRF the 1SG.INAL.POSS-family-NS  
 not also the one    did I see                    the my family  
*And not once did I see my family.*

- (16) Possession in context: Margaret Edwards, Ahkwesáhsne, speaker p.c.

**Ionkwará'se'okòn:'a**  
ionkw-ar-á'se'=okon'a  
1.EXCLUSIVE.PL-RECIPROCAL-be.cousin=DISTRIBUTIVE  
we all are individually cousins to each other  
My cousins

**kiótkon thatinatà:re's.**  
 tiotkon t-hati-nat-a-hr-e'-s  
 always    CISLOCATIVE-M.PL.AGT-visit-JOINER-PURPOSIVE-STATIVE-DISTRIBUTIVE  
 always    they come to visit here and there  
*were always coming to visit.*

Mohawk speakers feel that such examples are crucial for documenting the language in its full glory. The morphological structure of the language is sufficiently complex that it will not be obvious to most readers, whether or not they are speakers themselves, so the analysis is useful. (Not all readers, linguists or non-linguists, will read a grammar from cover-to-cover, memorizing each form along the way.) Printing the medial analysis lines in finer type allows those who are not interested in such detail to pass over them more easily. Each example can also provide information about not just the particular construction being described at that point, but about many other points of grammar.

#### 4.6 Should frequency be addressed?

As mentioned earlier, a recurring criticism by some grammar readers is the absence of overt statements about structures that do not occur in the language. Most grammar writers attempt to present the language in its own terms. To what extent should the structures of English or other well-known languages shape the description of the target language? At least in part, such decisions will depend to some extent on the frequency of particular constructions cross-linguistically.

A more subtle issue is the relative frequency of a construction within the language described. A construction that is central to one language and common in natural speech may be marginal in another and extremely rare.

Quantifying the difference precisely is nearly impossible in most situations; it would require an extensive corpus of speech in a variety of genres, somehow weighted to reflect daily usage. But frequency can be an interesting fact about a form or construction. Again the Mohawk possessive constructions provide an example. Apart from kinship terms, possessive constructions are surprisingly rare in spontaneous Mohawk speech. It can be useful to discuss the kinds of constructions that are used in their place.

Nouns are comparatively rare in Mohawk speech. In situations where English speakers would use sentences with independent possessed nouns, Mohawk speakers often use verbs alone. To say *I cut her hair*, for example, Mohawk speakers do not use an inalienably possessed noun *her hair*. They use a verb into which the noun stem for hair has been incorporated. The affected person, the one whose hair was cut, is not identified by a possessive prefix. Instead, she is a core argument of the clause, the person directly affected. She is represented by a pronominal prefix on the verb.

- (17) Mohawk affected person:

**Wa'khenónhkwahe'**

wa'-khe-nonhkw-a-hre-'

FACTUAL-1SG/F.SG-hair-JOINER-cut-PRF

'I haircut her = I cut her hair.'

Verbal constructions are also used in place of alienably possessed nouns. Instead of a sentence with possessed noun phrase, like *They plowed my garden* or *I turned off my light*, a verb is used. The person indirectly affected by the plowing and the darkness is identified not by a possessive prefix on a noun, but by a pronominal prefix on the verb. The garden and the light are specified by nouns incorporated into the verb, and the indirect affectedness is indicated by a benefactive suffix.

- (18) Indirect affectedness: Awenhráten Deer, Kahnawà:ke, speaker

**Wa'tionkwatonhontsahríhten.**

wa'-t-ionkw-at-onhontsi-a-hri-ht-en-'

FACTUAL-DV-3PL/1SG-MIDDLE-earth-JOINER-break-CAUSATIVE-BEN-PRF

'They broke the ground for me = they plowed my garden.'

- (19) Indirect affectedness: Leatrice Beauvais Kahnawà:ke, speaker p.c.

**Sok wa'katà:swahte'.**

sok wa'-k-at-a'sw-a-ht-'

SO FACTUAL-1SG.AGT-REFLEXIVE-go.out-JOINER-CAUSATIVE-PRF

'So then I extinguished for myself = So then I turned off my light.'

In fact in many cases, verbal constructions with incorporated nouns are used in Mohawk where sentences with independent possessed nouns would be used in English.

- (20) Verbal construction: Josie Horne, Kahnawà:ke, speaker  
**Kaieríthon nì: ióntiats.**  
 Kaieríthon n=i:'i ionk-iat-s  
 (name) the=I INDEFINITE/1SG-call-HABITUAL  
*As for me, they call me Kaieríthon = My name is Kaieríthon.*
- (21) Verbal construction: Sha'tekenhátie' Phillips, Kahnawà:ke, speaker  
**Iáh ki' nowén:ton nahò:ten taken'**  
 not actually ever anything not is  
*There was never actually anything*
- tha'tewakatonnhatierónnion.**  
 tha'-te-wak-atonnh-atieron-nion'  
 CONTR-DV-1SG.PAT-life-be.strange-DISTRIBUTIVE.STATIVE  
 I was life-strange  
*unusual about my life.*

## 5. The view from the data

Simple examples can frequently provide the clearest illustrations of grammatical points. But the language that occurs in spontaneous conversation and narrative is rarely that simple. Often the only way to avoid all extraneous complexity is to construct examples for the point to be illustrated. It can be hoped that speakers are always involved in this process, either in drawing up sets of examples themselves to illustrate the patterns, or in providing translations of key sentences drawn up by the grammar writer.

For many purposes, constructed examples provide an accurate view of the language. In some domains, however, even the best speakers produce material that falls short of capturing the essence of the language. Material based consciously or unconsciously on translations from the encroaching language can be shaped by that language. Simplification can also filter out elements that represent the heart of the language. It is interesting to compare some textbook materials devised by an excellent Mohawk speaker with her spontaneous speech. Now an elder, she was raised by her grandparents. She taught Mohawk for years and attended courses in Mohawk linguistics. The materials she developed, consisting primarily of lists of vocabulary and sentences, are an extremely valuable resource.

At the same time, it is interesting to observe some of the subtle ways her written materials differ from her normal speech. The written material is not technically ungrammatical; it is simply, on occasion, different from what is usually said. (In examples (22) and (23) below, the first and third lines are from her original manuscript. The middle line, with word-by-word translation, has been added here to make the examples easier to follow. In the spontaneous examples transcribed from conversation, each line represents an intonation unit or prosodic phrase.)

- (22) Textbook example by Mohawk language teacher

**Istèn:'a wa'ehní:non akotià:tawi.**

my mother she bought dress

*My mother bought a dress.*

- (23) Textbook example by Mohawk language teacher

**Raké'niha rawé:ka's sewahió:wane' tewà:ia.**

my father he likes apple pie

*My father loves apple pie.*

- (24) Same speaker in casual conversation

**Né: ki' na' ni' enkathrória'te'**

né ki' ná:'a n=i:'i en-k-at-hrori-a't-e'

the just guess the=EMPHATIC.I FUT-1SG.AGT-MIDDLE-tell-CAUSATIVE-PRF

the guess myself I will cause myself to discuss

*What I would like to talk about is*

**tsi niió:re'**

tsi ni-io-or-e'

so PARTITIVE-N.PAT-COVER-STATIVE so N-other-NS

so as it is far

*how unusual*

**tsi ò:ia**

tsi o-hi-a'

so N-other-NS

so other

**niwakenhnhò:ten**

ni-w-akennh-o't-en

PARTITIVE-N.AGT-summer-be.a.kind.of-STATIVE the=now

such a kind of summer

*this summer has been.*

**nòn:wa.**

n=onhwa

the=now

now

- (25) Same speaker in another conversation about golf

Speaker A

**Iáh tho niió:re'**

iáh tho ni-io-r-e'

not there PARTITIVE-N.PAT-be.far-STATIVE CONTR-TRANSLOC-OPT-N.AGT-go

not there so it is far

*It won't go that far.*

**thiahón:we.**

th-i-ahon-w-e

CONTR-TRANSLOC-OPT-N.AGT-go

would it go there

Speaker B

**Tsi ní:** **tsi**  
 tsi ni-io-ht tsi  
 so PARTITIVE-N.PAT-be.SO.STATIVE so  
 so so it is so

*The way,*

**wáhi' shes ahshwà:'éke' tho'k niió::re'**  
 wáhi' shes a-hs-hwa'ek-' tho='k ni-io-r-e'  
 right used.to OPT-2.SG.AGT-hit-PRF there=just PRT-N.PAT-be.far-STATIVE  
 right used to you would hit it just there so it is far  
*you know you used to hit it so far that*

**kwah seronhkè:nek enhsatkátho'**  
 kwah se-ronhkehnek en-hs-at-kaitho-'  
 really 2.SG.AGT-struggle FUT-2.SG.AGT-MIDDLE-see-PRF  
 really you struggle you will see it  
*you were really struggling to see*

**tsi niió:re' ieká:ien'**  
 tsi ni-io-r-e' ie-ka-ien  
 so PARTITIVE-N.PAT-be.far-STATIVE TRANSLOC-N.AGT-lie  
 so so it is far it lies there  
*to see how far away it was.*  
 (laughter)

Speaker A

**Iáh ki' nòn:wa ken'k thiekaién:ta's.**  
 iáh ki' n=onhwa ken='k th-ie-ka-ient-a'-s  
 not just the=now just=only CONTR-TRANSLOC-N.AGT-lie-INCH-HABITUAL  
 not just the now just only does it come to live over there  
*Now it doesn't even go over there.*

Speaker B

**Tóka' ni' khé: tha'kaién:ta'ne'**  
 tóka' ohni' khé:ken th-a'-ka-ient-a'-ne'  
 maybe also instead CONTR-FACTUAL-N.AGT-lie-INCH-PRF  
 maybe also instead it just comes to lie  
*And it might just land right here.*

### 5.1 Lexical categories and idiomaticity

One difference between the constructed and spontaneous Mohawk is in the kinds of words that occur. Constructed example (22) contains 1 predicate and 2 nominals; example (23) contains 1 predicate and 3 nominals. In the spontaneous examples in (24) and (25), however, which are much longer, there is not a single nominal. (The examples were not chosen to illustrate this difference.) What is expressed in nouns and complex noun phrases in English is more typically expressed with verbs in Mohawk. Constructions with independent nouns are not ungrammatical; they certainly do occur. They are simply comparatively infrequent and pragmatically specialized. Multiple lexical noun phrases within a clause, like those in the constructed examples, are particularly rare. If example sentences are consciously or even unconsciously based on English, the distribution of lexical categories such as nouns and verbs can be affected. Idiomatic ways of speaking, an integral part of the language, are easily lost. A sample of the kind of expression that may fail to appear can be seen by comparing the textbook example in (26) with a similar request taken from spontaneous conversation in (27). Both are grammatical. The idiomatic expression in (27) is simply less likely to appear in constructed examples.

(26) Textbook request

<b>Enwá:ton</b>		<b>ken enkatshó:ri</b>	<b>onòn:tara</b>
en-w-at-on		ken en-k-atshori	o-onon'tar-a
FUT-N.AGT-MIDDLE-be.possible	Q	FUT-1SG.AGT-sip	N-soup-NS
it will be possible	Q	I will eat	soup
<i>May I have some soup?</i>			

(27) Spontaneous request in conversation

<b>Enwá:ton</b>		<b>ken enkatathnekáhrhahse'</b>	
en-w-at-on		ken en-k-atat-hnek-arh-ahse-'	
FUT-N.AGT-MIDDLE-be.possible	Q	FUT-1.SG.AGT-RFL-liquid-serve-BEN-P	
it will be possible	Q	I will liquid serve for myself	
<i>May I have a cup of coffee?</i>			

### 5.2 Particles

Another striking difference in the kinds of words used in the constructed and spontaneous examples is the density of particles: small, morphologically unanalyzable words such as *wáhi* 'you know,' *kwáh* 'quite,' and *ki* 'just.' There are no particles in the constructed examples in (22) and (23). In the spontaneous

examples in (24) and (25), there are more than three times as many particles as verbs. One of the clearest marks of talented speakers is their extravagant and lively use of particles. Older, admired speakers use them exquisitely, while younger speakers who spend more time in English use them noticeably less often. The particles, which are notoriously difficult to translate, serve a variety of functions. Some mark syntactic constructions, but many others shape discourse, contribute innuendo, provide humor or surprise, mark presupposition, suggest the basis on which a statement is made, involve the listener, or convey politeness. Speakers are rarely conscious of the functions of particles or of their pervasiveness, due in part to their small size and their broader discourse and extra-linguistic scope. When helping to transcribe and translate recordings of Mohawk speech, speakers often simply fail to notice them. Because the particles rarely have clear English equivalents, and because the kinds of meanings they convey are often not concrete, speakers tend to omit them in careful, written Mohawk. Since their functions are so subtle, they are difficult to explain and are seldom taught in language classes. But they can be the heart and soul of the language.

Constructed examples are certainly clearer without the distractions of particles. At the same time, if all examples in the grammar are constructed, a major richness of the language will not be documented.

### 5.3 Styles of interaction

Documentation of spontaneous conversation can provide a record of how people talk to each other, how they interact. Constructed examples may or may not capture these traditions. The textbook request for soup in (26) and the spontaneous request for coffee in (27) show approximately the same general structure. But numerous particles that appear throughout conversation never appear in constructed sentences. An example is *wáhi'* or *wáhe'*, loosely translated as *you know* or *right?*. It rarely occurs in textbook examples, but it can be seen in the third line of the spontaneous example in (25) *You know you used to hit it so far that ...*

Differences in style pertaining to setting and politeness can be seen by comparing the requests for a name in (28) and (29). That in (28) is perfectly grammatical and straightforward. It would not be appropriate in many contexts, however. The spontaneous request in (29) is more courteous: less direct and mitigated with particles.

(28) Textbook example

**Nahò:ten iesá:iats?**

what one calls you

*What is your name?*

(29) Spontaneous request

**Enwá:ton' kati' ken n ní:se' ahsatatenà:ton**

it will be possible just Q also yourself you would name yourself

*Would you also give your name.*

#### 5.4 Word order

The constructed and spontaneous examples also differ in their constituent order. The order in the textbook examples is a consistent replication of English SVO (Subject-Predicate-Object): *My mother bought a dress; My father loves apple pie*. This is not an ungrammatical order in Mohawk. All major orders are possible under appropriate conditions. But it not the predominant order. Mohawk constituent order is not based on the syntactic roles of constituents, such as subject or object. It is instead fully pragmatic, used by speakers to manipulate the flow of information. Speakers highlight important, newsworthy information by placing it early in the clause, and background more accessible or secondary information by placing it later. The power of this pervasive device is lost in the constructed examples.

#### 5.5 Syntactic structure: Conjoined arguments

When speakers are accustomed to writing the encroaching language, the very process of writing can bring out syntactic structures from that language. The prevalent SVO order in Mohawk textbook examples is perhaps due at least in part to this phenomenon. Its effect can also be seen in conjoined structures. The constructed example in (30) is not ungrammatical strictly speaking. It is quite unlike usual Mohawk style in several ways, however. It is heavy with independent nominals: *your son, my children, movie*. It has only one particle, the syntactic conjunction *and*. It shows SVO word order. And it contains a very heavy agent expression consisting of conjoined nominals, both newly introduced in this sentence: *your son and my children*.

(30) Conjoined structure: textbook example

**Tièn:'a tánon' kheien'okòn:'a ronaterohrókhon tei'óia'ks.**

your son and my children they have gone to watch movie

*Your son and my children have gone to the movies.*

A more usual way of identifying joint participants is with a structure like that in (31). The full set of actors is identified by the pronominal prefix **ionki-** *we two* on the verb. The speaker is obviously one of the participants. The other is specified by name after the verb.

- (31) Conjoined structure: spontaneous conversation
- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| ... <b>teiontiahthenno'khónhne</b>                | <b>Charlotte.</b> |
| te-ionki-ahthenno-o'k-h-on-hne                    | Charlotte         |
| DV-1DU.PAT-ball-hit-PURPOSIVE-STATIVE-PAST (name) |                   |
| we two had gone to hit balls                      | Charlotte         |
- Charlotte and I had gone to play golf.*

## 5.6 Pragmatically marked syntactic constructions

Even the small samples of conversation given here show that Mohawk sentences rarely consist simply of a subject and predicate. The speaker opened a new topic of discussion in (24) above by saying *What I would like to talk about is how unusual this summer has been*. She accomplished this with series of particles and embedded clauses.

- (24) Topic introduction: spontaneous conversation
- |  |
|--|
| <b>Né: ki' na' ni' enkathrória'te'</b>                 |
| it is just guess myself I will cause myself to discuss |
- What I would like to talk about is ...*

Such structures rarely appear in constructed examples.

## 6. The shape of the grammar

The best shape for a grammar will ultimately depend on the needs it is destined to serve. Most grammars will be consulted by a variety of users. In many cases grammars are being consulted more and more by members of the communities in which the language is spoken. This audience is likely to be not only quite diverse, but also changing rapidly. Where the language is endangered, spoken well by ever fewer people, readers are likely to be becoming increasingly sophisticated and eager for knowledge about their heritage.

For the Mohawk grammar project we have arrived at a format geared to serve this evolving readership and to document as much as possible of the richness of the language. The presentation is layered. Each topic is introduced with an overview consisting of just the basic facts, illustrated with a few simple

examples. Following the overview are subsections with additional detail, full paradigms where these are pertinent, and parsed examples from spontaneous connected speech, with representation of all communities. Additional subsections may contain information on related topics not of interest to all readers. Readers who are just beginning their study of the language, or who simply want an overview before plunging into a particular topic, can read the basic overviews alone.

In the description of the sound system, for example, the basic overview simply lists each distinctive sound with the symbol representing it in the standard community orthography and an example. The overview is followed by more detailed discussion of the phonetic properties of each sound, then a description of the phonetic properties of stress, tone, and vowel length and their patterns of occurrence. Another section describes the intonation patterns characteristic of larger syntactic constructions. An additional section that might not be of interest to the casual reader traces the history of transcription practices, primarily in missionary documents, so that those interested in consulting earlier written records of the language will have a guide to equivalences. Another section provides a brief sketch of the cognates of Mohawk sounds in related languages.

In the description of the verbal morphology, each prefix and suffix is described in a separate section. Each section opens with the basic meanings and forms of the affix under discussion, its position within the template, and one or two pairs of examples for each of its uses. If a verb can occur both with and without the affix, an example of each is provided with just a free translation. Additional subsections provide examples of the affix in context drawn from spontaneous speech, discussion of its formal and semantic behavior in combination with other affixes, and any special idiomatic uses and combinations.

Other chapters follow the same general format. Some deal with larger grammatical structures, such as enumeration and quantification, question formation, and complex sentences. Others deal with particular semantic domains, such as kinship, color, and place names. All contain brief introductory overviews of the structures under discussion which can be read on their own, plus additional sections providing fully parsed, naturally occurring examples of the structures and terms in context.

The layered approach could prove overwhelming to communities just beginning to be interested in the inner workings of their language. For the Mohawks, it is hoped that this format can provide an introduction for beginners, a resource for more sophisticated users such as language teachers and curriculum planners, and a record of the language, in all its grammatical and stylistic complexity, as spoken by the elders who still use it so eloquently.

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