

Lesson Eight

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The Seven Magic Verbs

Pronouns are the toughest part of learning Cherokee. English speakers use their pronouns separately from the words, Cherokee speakers add them to the words. Pronouns used here will be 'I,' 'you,' (one person) and 'he,' (or she, or it).

In English we say, 'I am hungry,' using three separate words. Cherokee speakers say 'Agiyosi,' one word, meaning the same thing, 'I am hungry.'

There are different sets of pronouns. These seven verbs represent those different sets as well as what kind of verb they are used with. You learn these seven, you learn them all. The 'Active' set of verbs refer to the speaker taking part in, or performing, the verb. 'Stative' verbs indicate more of a state of being rather than action. You cannot go out and make yourself hungry, you kind of wait til hungry happens to you, and then you are in a 'state' of being hungry.

This is the onliest thing I will allow you to memorize. Yes this is the toughest part of the language for an English speaker to pick up. However the reason I call these verbs magic is because once you learn them the rest of what you may learn in Cherokee is a cakewalk.

Also you cannot learn Cherokee the same way you learned any other language, so you will need to forget whatever method you used to learn another language .. forget forget... okay, now first think of who you are speaking about, then what you want to say, then when you are saying it, put all that into the one word and you are speaking Cherokee.

Stative:

I am hungry a-gi-yo-si-ha (ah ghee yo shee ha)

You are hungry tsa-yo-si-ha (dzah yo shee ha)

He is hungry u-yo-si-ha (oo yo shee ha)

I forgot a-gw-ke-wa (ahg wuhkay wah)

You forgot tsv-ke-wa (dzuh kay wah)

He forgot u-wa-ke-wa (oo wah kay wah)

I want it a-gwa-du-li-ha (ah gwah doo lee ha)
You want it tsa-du-li-ha (dzah doo lee ha)
He wants it u-du-li-ha (oo doo lee ha)

Active:

I am talking tsi-wo-ni-ha (dzee woe nee ha)
You are talking hi-wo-ni-ha (hee woe nee ha)
He is talking ga-wo-ni-ha (gah woe nee ha)

I am an Indian tsi-yv-wi-ya (dzee yuhwee yah)
You are an Indian hi-yv-wi-ya (hee yuhwee yah)
He is an Indian a-yv-wi-ya (ah yuhwee yah)

I understand go-li-ga (go lee gah)
You understand ho-li-ga (hoe lee gah)
He understands go:-li-ga* (go-o lee gah)

I am walking ge-do-ha (gay doe hah)
You are walking he-do-a (hay doe hah)
He is walking e:do-ha (aay doe hah)

*this is pronounced ever so slightly differently. 'I understand,' is like (gooh lee gah); in 'he understands,' that vowel sound is slightly longer, like (go-oh lee gah.)

Notice that the verb 'forget' is always past tense in Cherokee, you cannot make yourself forget something now or in the future.

Now when you are speaking, for example, you use the active set of pronouns. When you are in a state of being spoken to, you would change pronouns and use the stative:

I am speaking tsi-wo-ni-ha (chee woe nee ha)

I am being spoken to a-gi-wo-ni-ha (ah ghee woe nee hah)

'I am being spoken to,' or 'Someone is speaking to me.' This is why you will see different pronouns with the verbs, because you are changing the meaning from active to stative or

vice versa. You change from performing the action of the verb to having the action of the verb performed to you.

This is a lot to absorb, and you will need to take your time with it. Cherokee is a language of verbs, a lot of information is in them, and English speakers have trouble getting all that information into one word. Here is a scary statistic for you: there are 21,250 variations on any Cherokee verb. In other words there are 21,250 ways of saying 'want' in Cherokee. I truly admire whoever counted all those. But there is no way anyone will memorize all that, so you learn the pieces and how to put the pieces together. This is how the Cherokee kids learned to speak from their moms. Picking this up will put you in a whole nother category from those who only memorize things like how to say 'I see the deer.'**

I find that I have to turn my brain sideways and think a little differently as I learn Cherokee, but thinking differently is part of the mystery and the excitement of learning the language. I hope you find the same spirit of wonder and excitement on your path with this new and unique language.

<lee uwoyeni

** a-wi tsi-go-ti-ha (ah hwee dzee go tee hah)

a-wi a-gi-go-ti-ha (ah hwee ah ghee go tee ha) = the deer sees me