

2 Grammatical Preliminaries

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce those aspects of Potawatomi grammar which will be addressed in later chapters, and to provide a background for understanding the system of transcription and interlinear annotations. It is therefore not intended as a grammatical description, or sketch. For a fuller description of Potawatomi grammar, particularly phonology and morphology, the reader is referred to Hockett's series of articles on Potawatomi in the *International Journal of American Linguistics* (1948a; 1948b; 1948c; 1948d).¹

2.2 Background on Potawatomi

Potawatomi is the heritage language of the Potawatomi people, who are indigenous to the Great Lakes region of North America.² In Potawatomi, the language is sometimes referred to as *Bodéwadmimwen* ('the language of the Potawatomis'), or more commonly as *Neshnabémwen* ('the language of the people'). It is an Algonquian language, of the Central branch, which includes other languages such as Ottawa, Ojibwe, Cree, Fox, Shawnee and Miami. Its closest linguistic relatives are Ojibwe and Ottawa, although this

¹ This series of articles is a revision and distillation of the material in his dissertation on Potawatomi (1939). The article series cited above is more readable, and generally easier to obtain, than the dissertation.

² Today, largely as a result of 19th century U.S. government relocation policies, Potawatomi people live on or near reservations across the Midwestern United States, and in adjacent areas of Ontario, Canada.

is somewhat obscured by vocabulary and grammatical changes resulting from an extended period of contact with Fox speakers.³

Potawatomi is a polysynthetic language. It is ‘pro-drop’ in that verbal participants are represented by verbal inflections, which may then further specified by NPs. Along with being pro-drop, it is also non-configurational in that word order is generally flexible, and governed by discourse principles.⁴

Potawatomi grammar is probably best known among linguists for its system of inflections in the independent paradigm, particularly on transitive verbs, which has been frequently used to demonstrate the robustness of various morphological theories.⁵ While Potawatomi is certainly interesting in this respect, it should be noted that many Algonquian languages have similar paradigms, and equally complex systems of verbal inflection.

2.3 Guide to the orthography

The orthography used here is known as the WNALP⁶ system, and was developed in the 1970’s by a team of native speakers and linguists. It is a phonemic system,

³ More precisely, Sauk speakers. There are differences between Fox and Sauk, however the differences are irrelevant for the present discussion. I will generally cite Fox because of the availability of lexical materials in that language.

⁴ There are some word order restrictions however; such as the placement of second-position particles and the negative particle *jo* which precedes the verb.

⁵ For a fairly typical example, see Anderson (1992).

⁶ Wisconsin Native American Languages Program.

designed for the purposes teaching Potawatomi as a second language. The orthographic representation of phonemes is fairly straightforward, and is given in the chart in (1).

(1) ORTHOGRAPHY CHART

Consonants		Vowels	
Orthographic	Phonemic	Orthographic	Phonemic
b	/ b /	a	/ a /
p	/ p /	é	/ _ /
d	/ d /	i	/ i /
t	/ t /	o	/ o /
g	/ g /	e	/ _ /
k	/ k /		
'	/ _ /		
m	/ m /		
n	/ n /		
w	/ w /		
y	/ y /		
s	/ s /		
z	/ z /		
sh	/ _ /		
zh	/ _ /		
h	/ h /		
ch	/ t _ /		
j	/ d _ /		

There are, in addition, a few special symbols that are used in the morphophonemic representations in interlinear glosses. These are described below in Section 4.

2.4 Morphophonemic processes and representations

A couple processes important for morphophonemic representations are noted here, as well as the set of morphophonemic symbols used in glosses.

Final devoicing. Voiced consonants are devoiced in word-final position. The voicing resurfaces when suffixes are added. The following are a few examples, showing the alternation between stem-final consonants in singular and plural forms:

(2) FINAL DEVOICING

SINGULAR	PLURAL
mte <u>k</u> 'tree'	mte <u>g</u> ok 'trees'
mskoga <u>t</u> 'yarn belt, sash'	mskoga <u>d</u> ék 'yarn belts, sashes'
nne <u>ch</u> 'my hand'	nne <u>j</u> én 'my hands'

Weak vowel deletion. All instances of /e/ and some /o/ vowels are subject to a process of deletion. These are known as weak vowels, and are represented by {E} and {O}, respectively in morphophonemic forms.⁷ In a sequence of weak vowels, odd vowels delete (counting from the beginning of the sequence). If the sequence is

⁷ This rule basically affects Proto-Algonquian (PA) short vowels. Potawatomi merged short PA *i and *a to schwa (/e/). There was also a merger of PA short *o and long *o:, with the result that some /o/ vowels delete, and some do not. The term 'weak' vowel is from Hockett (1948a).

interrupted, the count begins again with the first sequential weak vowel. Final weak vowels are not subject to deletion. This process is illustrated below in (3). Weak vowels are numbered, and long vowels are represented by “L”. Vowels preserved in final syllables are shown with parentheses surrounding the number. Note that prefixes can contribute short vowels, resulting in different pattern of deleted stem vowels as compared to base forms.

(3) WEAK VOWEL DELETION

< b E kw é zh E g E n > → *bkwézhgen* ‘bread’
 1 L 1 (2)

< n E - b E kw é zh E g E n - E m > → *nbekwézhgenem* ‘my bread’
 1 2 L 1 2 (3)

Palatalization. The remaining morphophonemic symbols used are for those consonants that participate in a process of palatalization, where morpheme final /n/, /d/, /t/ and /s/ become /zh/, /j/, /ch/ and /sh/, respectively, before a morpheme initial /e/ or /i/. These consonants are represented by the capitol letters {N}, {D}, {T} and {S}.

2.5 Parts of speech

The parts of speech are noun, verb, pronoun, prenoun, preverb, and particle.

Nouns and verbs are subject to inflection; these are described in more detail in Sections 6 and 7. The remaining parts of speech are introduced here.

2.5.1 Pronouns

Potawatomi has two primary pronoun series, personal pronouns and demonstratives. The set of personal pronouns is shown in (4). Because nouns and verbs

make anaphoric reference in their inflections and do not require the use of pronouns, the function of the free pronouns is essentially for emphasis.

(4) PERSONAL PRONOUNS

POTAWATOMI	ENGLISH GLOSS
<i>nin</i>	I
<i>gin</i>	you
<i>win</i>	he, she
<i>ninan</i>	we (excluding the addressee)
<i>ginan</i>	we (including the addressee)
<i>ginwa</i>	you (plural)
<i>winwa</i>	they

The set of demonstrative pronouns has three series; proximal, medial and distal. In discourse, the demonstrative in the medial series have a determiner-like function. Each series is given below:

(5) PROXIMAL DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

	ANIMATE	INANIMATE
SINGULAR	<i>ode</i> 'this'	
PLURAL	<i>gode</i> 'these'	<i>node</i> 'this (obviative), these'

(6) MEDIAL DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

	ANIMATE	INANIMATE
SING.	<i>ow</i> (frequently reduced to <i>o</i>) ‘that’	<i>iw</i> (frequently reduced to <i>i</i>) ‘that’
PLURAL	<i>giw</i> (frequently reduced to <i>gi</i>) ‘those’	<i>niw</i> (frequently reduced to <i>ni</i>) ‘that (obviative), those’

(7) DISTAL DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

	ANIMATE	INANIMATE
SINGULAR	<i>ago</i> ‘that over there’	<i>é’i</i> ‘that over there’
PLURAL	<i>égi</i> ‘those over there’	<i>éni</i> ‘this (obv.) over there, those over there’

2.5.2 Prenouns and preverbs

Prenouns and preverbs are prefixes that attach to nouns and verbs, respectively. They attach directly before the stem, so if personal prefixes are used, they will attach to the preverb or prenoun (in the case of possession). Initial change (see Section 7) will affect the first preverb, if there are any.

Each is a rather small set, consisting of less than 100 forms. Because prenouns and preverbs behave phonologically as separate words, they are written with a following hyphen. While most are fairly productive, their use is often specialized (for example, *msko-bnéshi*, literally ‘red-bird’, refers to a Cardinal, and not just any red bird).

The most important for our discussion are the preverbs, which include the tense preverbs (see Section 7), as well as the factive preverb *é-*. Ordering restrictions among

preverbs require that *é-* be first in the preverb sequence, followed by any tense / modal preverbs.

2.5.3 Particles

The set of particles in Potawatomi is a closed class consisting of approximately 300-350 lexemes. Commonly used particles are *jo* ‘no, not’, *ne* ‘question’, and *zhe na* ‘emphatic’. The category includes numbers, exclamations, words with discourse functions and a large set of words with adverbial and adjectival meaning, such as *jayék* ‘all’, *mégwa* ‘still, yet’, *gnebech* ‘maybe’. Although particles do not inflect, they can be morphologically complex. Many take pre-nouns and preverbs, and have inflectional suffixes such as the locative *azhodakik* ‘over the hill’ or the dubitative *yédek* ‘must be, maybe, I wonder’. Particles can also occur as groups or clusters. Where this is the case, they are semantically idiomatic, and behave syntactically like a unit.

2.6 Categories of inflection

Person. The categories for person are first, second and third. Within first person, there is a distinction between inclusive ‘we’ (that includes the addressee) and exclusive ‘we’ (that does not include the addressee). Human gender is not distinguished in third person pronouns or inflections. These can be illustrated with the series of personal pronouns, shown in (4) above.

Obviative. Within third person, there is a distinction between *proximate* and *obviative*: In contexts where there is more than one third person, only one third person may be proximate, and any other third person will be obviative. There are both syntactic and discourse contexts for obviation. Some syntactic contexts are obligatory.

Obviatives are marked with inflections, proximates are unmarked. Nouns inflect for obviation, and verbs inflect for obviative agreement. Only animate nouns inflect for obviation, however inanimate nouns can trigger obviative agreement on verbs. The following shows the obviative inflection that is obligatory on animate possessives with third person possessors:

(8) OBVIATION OF POSSESSEE

ngwes	‘my son’
ggwes	‘your son’
wgwes <u>en</u>	‘his / her son (obv.)’

Number. The numbers are singular and plural.

Gender (animacy). The grammatical genders are *animate* and *inanimate*. The animate category includes notional animates; items of cultural / religious importance such as *séma* ‘tobacco’ and *déwé’gen* ‘drum’; some objects that move without the apparent application of external force such as *dabyan* ‘automobile’, *gizes* ‘sun’, *negos* ‘star’; and other non-notional animates such as *kek* ‘kettle’ or *mjenkawnek* ‘mittens’. The inanimate category includes everything else.

Other nominal forms. Most nouns additionally have locative, diminutive and pejorative forms. Some kinship terms have vocative forms. Nouns can also take the verbal preterite ending *-ben* to mean ‘former’ or ‘deceased’, as in *nosben* ‘my late father’.

Order. There are three orders: *independent*, *conjunct*, and *imperative*. In everyday discourse, independents are used in main clauses, and conjunct verbs in subordinate

clauses. Conjunct verbs are used in main clauses in content questions, and with certain ‘subordinating’ particles (these uses are described in more detail in Chapter 4). The primary inflectional difference between the two orders, are that the independent has both personal prefixes and suffixes, whereas on the conjunct, person markings are strictly suffixal. This is shown in (9), with the intransitive verb stem *majit* ‘leave’:⁸

(9) INDEPENDENT AND CONJUNCT ORDERS COMPARED

	INDEPENDENT	CONJUNCT
I	<u>n</u> maji	maji <u>yan</u>
you sg.	<u>g</u> maji	maji <u>yen</u>
he	maji(<u>wak</u>)	maji <u>t</u>
obviative	maji <u>n</u>	maji <u>net</u>
we exclusive	<u>n</u> maji <u>men</u>	maji <u>yak</u>
we inclusive	<u>g</u> maji <u>men</u>	maji <u>ygo</u>
you pl.	<u>g</u> maji <u>m</u>	maji <u>yék</u>
they	maji <u>k</u>	maji <u>wat</u>

Imperatives are used for commands as well as polite requests. The verbal orders are illustrated in (10) below using the verb *bidget* ‘enter; come in’:

(10) VERBAL ORDERS COMPARED

INDEPENDENT	<u>Bidgé.</u>	‘He is coming in.’
CONJUNCT	(gishpen) <u>bidgét</u>	‘(if) he comes in’
IMPERATIVE	<u>Bidgén!</u>	‘Please, come in.’

⁸ Verbs are cited in the conjunct indicative form for third person subject.

The conjunct occurs in two forms, *plain* and *changed*. Changed conjuncts have ablaut of an initial vowel, which is known as *initial change*. The form of initial change is shown in (11) below:

(11) INITIAL CHANGE

PLAIN	CHANGED
{i}	a
{E}	é
{o}	wa
{O}	wé
{a}	(no change)
{é}	(no change)

Examples are shown in (12) below, comparing the plain conjunct with participle. The morphophonemic form underneath the plain conjunct form shows the presence of weak vowels affected by ablaut, which may be deleted in the inflected form.

(12) EXAMPLES SHOWING INITIAL CHANGE IN PARTICIPLES

CONJUNCT	GLOSS	PARTICIPLE	GLOSS
minkét { <u>min</u> Ekéd}	‘if he picks berries’	m <u>an</u> két	‘the one who picks berries’
bmosét {b <u>Em</u> Oséd}	‘if he walks’	b <u>é</u> msét	‘the one who walks’
bodwét {b <u>od</u> Ewéd}	‘if he builds a fire’	b <u>wad</u> wét	‘the one who builds a fire’
wdemat { <u>Od</u> Emé/ad}	‘if he/she smokes’	<u>wé</u> dmat	‘the one who smokes’
majit {m <u>aj</u> id}	‘if he/she leaves’	m <u>aj</u> it	‘the one who leaves’
débsat { <u>déb</u> Esad}	‘if he has enough’	d <u>é</u> bsat	‘the one who has enough’

Changed conjuncts are generally found in contexts of presupposition (such as the main clauses of wh- questions and certain adverbial clauses), whereas plain conjuncts are found in hypothetical or irrealis contexts. Participles are identical in inflection to the changed conjunct, except for third person obviative and third person plural forms.

Examples of conjunct forms are shown below in (13), using the verb *bidgét* ‘come in; enter’:

(13) VERBAL ORDERS AND INITIAL CHANGE

CONJUNCT, PLAIN	(gishpen) <u>bidgét</u>	‘(if) he comes in’
CONJUNCT, CHANGED	ga- <u>bidgét</u>	‘after he came in’
CONJUNCT, PARTICIPLE	<u>badgét</u>	‘the one who comes in’

Mode. The major verbal modes are the indicative, negative, preterite, dubitative, negative preterite, and negative dubitative. These are found as suffixal inflections. The independent mode has an indicative, negative, preterite, dubitative, negative preterite and negative dubitative mode. Independent negative modes require the use of a preposed negative particle *jo*. The conjunct has an indicative, preterite and dubitative, but does not have negative modes. Negation is expressed on conjunct verbs with the use of a preverb *bwa-*. The imperative order has a prohibative mode.

The function of each mode is illustrated below with the independent form of the verb *wabmat* ‘see someone’:

- *Indicative*: the basic form of an assertion or yes/no question. *Gwabma*. ‘You see him’. *Gwabma ne?* ‘Do you see him?’
- *Negative*: requires the negative particle *jo* in addition to negative suffixal inflection: *Jo nwabmasi*. ‘I don’t see him.’
- *Preterite*: expresses something that happened habitually in the past, often accompanied by the particle *neko* ‘used to’: *Neko nwabmaben*. ‘I used to see him’

- *Dubitative*: in the present tense, the dubitative expresses doubt; in the past tense, it expresses an inference: *Gnebech nwabmadedek*. ‘Maybe I see him.’
Ngi-nwabmadedek. ‘I must have seen him.’
- Combinatory modes: these require the use of the negative particle *jo*:
 - *Negative preterite*: *Jo nwabmasiben*. ‘I didn’t used to see him.’
 - *Negative dubitative*: in the present tense, often used with the particle *gnebech* ‘maybe’: *Jo gnebech nwabmasidek*. ‘I might not see him.’ In the past, expresses an inference: *Jo ngi-wabmasidek*. ‘I must not have seen him.’

The modes are illustrated below with the intransitive verb *majit* ‘leave’:

(14) VERBAL MODES

INDEPENDENT INDICATIVE	Maji.	‘He is leaving.’
INDEPENDENT NEGATIVE	Jo majisi.	‘He is not leaving.’
INDEPENDENT PRETERITE	Majiben.	‘He used to leave.’
INDEPENDENT DUBITATIVE	Majidek.	‘He supposedly left.’
INDEPENDENT NEGATIVE PRETERITE	Jo majisiben.	‘He did not leave.’
INDEPENDENT NEGATIVE DUBITATIVE	Jo majisidek.	‘He must not have left.’

Tense. The tenses are past, present (unmarked) and future. Present tense is unmarked; past and future tenses are marked by verbal prefixes. There are two future tenses, one of which is volitional:

(15) TENSE INFLECTION

PRESENT	Maji.	'He is leaving.'
PAST	<u>Gi</u> -maji.	'He left.'
FUTURE	<u>Ge</u> -maji.	'He will leave.' (he is going to)
FUTURE VOLITIONAL	<u>Wi</u> -maji.	'He will leave.' (he wants to, or intends to)

Transitivity. Potawatomi verbs inflect for the presence or absence of an object. If the verb has an object then the verb will further inflect based upon the animacy of the object. If the verb does not take an object it will inflect for the animacy of the subject. These parameters result in the following division of verbs into four main categories of inflection, or paradigms: transitive animate (TA), transitive inanimate (TI), animate intransitive (AI), and inanimate intransitive (II).

2.7 Nominal Inflection

Noun stems are either animate or inanimate, as described in (Section 5) above. Nouns inflect for number and obviation. Possessed nouns inflect for the person and number of the possessee.

Plural inflection. Animate and inanimate nouns have different plural inflections. Animates take the plural ending /-k/, and inanimates take the plural ending /-n/, as shown by the following (a 'connective' /e/ is added before the plural ending if morphophonemic form of the noun stem ends in a consonant, I usually show this connective as part of the suffix in morphophonemic representations):

(16) PLURAL INFLECTION OF ANIMATES AND INANIMATES

ANIMATE	PLURAL	INANIMATE	PLURAL
nene ‘man’ {EnEnE}	nenwe <u>k</u>	dopwen ‘table’ {dopEwEn}	dopwene <u>n</u>
mtek ‘tree’ {mEtEg#O}	mtego <u>k</u>	mkezen ‘shoe’ {mEkEzEn}	mkezne <u>n</u>
mdamen ‘corn, kernel of corn’ {mEdamEn}	mdamne <u>k</u>	bkwézhgen ‘bread’ {bEkwézhEgEnEn}	bkwézhgene <u>n</u>

Obviative inflection. Obviation is marked only on animate nouns, however verbs show agreement with obviative inanimates. Obviative nouns are inflected like inanimate plurals, taking the suffix /-n/ as shown in the following table:

(17) INANIMATE PLURAL AND OBVIATIVE INFLECTION COMPARED

	SINGULAR	PLURAL	OBVIATIVE
ANIMATE	wabozo ‘rabbit’	wabozoye <u>k</u>	wabozoye <u>n</u>
	dabyan ‘car’	dabyane <u>k</u>	dabyane <u>n</u>
INANIMATE	dopwen ‘table’	dopwene <u>n</u>	N.A.
	mkezen ‘shoe’	mkezne <u>n</u>	N.A.

Possessive inflection. Many nouns show the use of the possessive suffix {Em}. In addition, possessed nouns inflect for the person and number of the possessee:

(18) POSSESSIVE INFLECTION

MORPHOPHONEMIC FORM	POTAWATOMI WORD	ENGLISH GLOSS
{nE-bnEakwan-Em}	<u>n</u> benakwanem	'my comb'
{gE-bEnakwan-Em}	<u>g</u> benakwanem	'your comb'
{wE-bEnakwan-Em}	<u>w</u> benakwanem	'his/her/its comb'
{nE-bEnakwan-Em-Enan}	<u>n</u> benakwan <u>menan</u>	'our (excl.) comb'
{gE-bEnakwan-Em-Enan}	<u>g</u> benakwan <u>menan</u>	'my (incl.) comb'
{gE-bEnakwan-Em-Ewa}	<u>g</u> benakwan <u>mewa</u>	'your (pl.) comb'
{wE-bEnakwan-Em-Ewa}	<u>w</u> benakwan <u>mewa</u>	'their comb'

2.8 Verbal inflection

Basic information about the inflection of AI, II, TI and TA verbs is provided below. For detailed example paradigms, the reader is referred to Hockett (1948c).

Animate Intransitive. AI verbs inflect for the person, number, and obviation of the animate subject.

Inanimate Intransitive. II verbs inflect for person, number, and obviation of the inanimate subject. II's optionally take a suffix {-mEgEd}, which is known as an augment. This morpheme directly follows the stem and is then followed by inflections.

Transitive Inanimate. TI verbs inflect for person, number and obviation of the subject, and optionally for number of the primary object

Transitive Animate. TA verbs inflect for person, number and obviation of the subject and primary object. TAs have an inverse system involving first, second and third persons. The inverse system indicates whether the personal prefixes are the properties of

the subject or primary object. The person hierarchy used for this system is second person > first person > third person. If the subject is higher on this hierarchy than the primary object, a direct theme sign will be used. If the subject is lower than the primary object, an inverse theme sign will be used. There are four theme signs, two each for direct and inverse, depending on whether a third person is involved (non-local) or is not involved (local). The theme sign directly follows the stem and is indicated in interlinear glosses:⁹

(19) TA THEME SIGNS

	DIRECT	INVERSE
Local	(not marked)	{En}
Non-local	{a}	{EgO}

2.9 Interlinear glossing conventions

Examples in the following chapters are cited in a few different ways. If it is necessary to discuss a particular morpheme, examples are given a three-line interlinear

⁹ Hockett describes the direct, local theme sign as morphophonemically zero, but that it causes palatalization. Sources for Ottawa such as Rhodes (1976) and Valentine (2001) cite this theme sign as /-i/, the Potawatomi equivalent of which would be {E}. Hockett's decision may have been based on abstractness, since the {E} is never found in forms—only its effects may be observed. Since morphophonemic forms are already abstract, I agree in principle with Rhodes and Valentine, however follow Hockett's practice here. The inverse, local marker has two forms: {En} which is used in the conjunct paradigm, and {EnE} which is used in the independent. There are inconsistencies in Hockett's treatment of the inverse, non-local theme sign. I follow the practice of using {EgO} with final short {O}, rather than the more standard {Egw}.

Potawatomi, subscript indices are given). Lines from the text are given along the left hand side, and the code for the text cited is given below the English translation.

(22) FACING TRANSLATION

4	[Iw je é-bme-byat niw beshkmwén é-nat] _{NC} ["Nsezé! Gyétnam <u>nzéges</u> .]cc	When he [Rabbit] came across the lion he said to him, "Brother, I'm very <u>scared</u> .
5	[Nwébi'wé.]cc	I'm <u>running away</u> from someone.
6	[Weye zhode <u>nshiwagze</u> anwe gé gin <u>gneshiwagwes</u> nesh je win nwech.]cc	Someone here is pretty <u>scary</u> ; and you're <u>scary</u> , but he's even worse.
7	[Ibe <u>gge-zhyamen</u> ; gétén <u>nshiwagze</u> .]cc	<u>Let's go</u> over there; he sure <u>is scary</u> ."
8	[Beshkmwé <u>é-kedot</u> ,] _{NC} [" <u>Gzhyamen</u> , <u>gge-we-wabmamen</u> ."]cc	Lion said, " <u>Lets go</u> and <u>take a look at him</u> ."
		(JS.4.1)

If the two line gloss or facing translation is used, the full interlinear gloss is available in either Appendix B (sentential examples) or Appendix C ('Crane Boy' narrative).

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