

Petun Language

Abstract

Il n'y a personne qui parle Petun aujourd'hui, mais nous savons bien cette langue. Dans ce bulletin nous regardons la morphologie du verbe Petun, ses parents linguistiques et quelques traductions des nommes de d'un passage en cette langue.

No one speaks Petun today, but we have a great deal of information about this language. In this bulletin, we will look at the verb morphology of the Petun verb, its linguistic relatives and at some translations of names and of a passage in this language.

Introduction

Petun is no longer spoken. Yet for hundreds of years it had thousands of speakers in Ontario. Few place names now exist that come from this language. Yet the name of this province, coming from a noun root **-ontar-** meaning 'lake' and a verb **-io-** meaning 'to be large, great'¹ was what they called the lake far to the south of their country. Despite these facts, however, we actually know quite a lot about the language. The Petun were forced in the middle of the seventeenth century to move from their homelands near Collingwood, by the shores of Georgian Bay. A few years later, they formed the basis of another tribe, known historically as the Wyandot. While their traditional neighbours, the Huron and perhaps the Neutral as well, also made up part of that tribe, the Petun made up the better part of the group. We know that as the Wyandot were for years referred to either as the Petun or the **Etionnontateronnon**. The latter term, meaning 'people who live where there is a mountain or hill'², was what the people had been called when they had lived close to Blue Mountain.

The information behind the statements that will be made about Petun come from what we know about the language of the Wyandot, probably only one dialect (possibly that of the Deer division) that the Petun people spoke prior to their dispersal. We know about that language first from works written about the Wyandot language in the Detroit/Windsor area during the 1740s. The author was Jesuit Father Pierre Potier (Potier 1920), their missionary. The greatest source of information on the Wyandot language, however, comes from material taken by early Canadian anthropologist Marius Barbeau (Barbeau ms and 1960). He recorded data from the last speakers of that language at the turn of the twentieth century in Anderdon (near Windsor) and in Oklahoma, where one of the two Wyandot communities (the other is in Kansas) still exists today. The story of how they got there will have to wait for another publication of the Petun Research Institute. Stay tuned.

1- This **-io-** is cognate with the **-io-** in 'Ohio', meaning 'great river'.

2 - In the Petun language this would have been 'Ekhionnontateronnon'.

Connections

Petun did not exist in isolation. The language studied here can best be thought of as a dialect of **Wendat**, the term both Huron and Petun used to refer to their language. It is the word from which the name 'Wyandot' was derived. We can learn something of the history of the Petun from the nature of the similarities and differences between their language, and the languages of the various tribes of the Huron. Petun had as its closest relative the dialect of their nearest neighbours to the east, the Southern Bear, whose speech was recorded in the writings of Recollect Brother Gabriel Sagard in 1623-1624. Speakers of Southern Bear made up the greater part of the **Hatinnia8enten**³ ('They are of Bear Country') or Bear tribe, which in its turn made up about half of the early seventeenth century population of the Huron alliance of tribes. The closeness of the two dialects suggests that probably at one time the Petun (or at least the people that spoke the dialect of Petun that we know about) and the Southern Bear were one group, or belonged to a very close alliance of two groups. It could even be speculated that they may at one time have fought, breaking up into the core groups around which the Petun and Huron were formed. However, this might be considered to be speaking a bit beyond where the evidence safely takes us. Archaeological evidence is needed to confirm or refute this hypothesis.

Perhaps just as close or almost so was the language, more properly the dialect of the **Hatingeennonniahak** ('They used to make cord' i.e., for fishing) or Cord tribe. The Jesuit missionaries recorded that the Cord and the Bear were the two Huron groups that had been in the area the longest. The Cord dialect seems to have appeared in a few entries in dictionaries that were composed after 1657. That was the year that the Cord was left by the Bear and the **Arendaeronnon** ('People at the Rock') or Rock to form the nucleus of the surviving Huron tribe at Lorette, in Quebec City. Unfortunately, the information on this dialect is too sketchy at present to speak for certain as to its nature. However, it may eventually be proven that the Petun (possibly the Deer division), the Southern Bear and the Cord were once together in some way.

The other two dialects that we know about, Northern Bear (recorded by Jesuit Father Jean de Brebeuf and in the early Jesuit Relations) and Rock (recorded by Champlain, Sagard and in the later Jesuit Relations and dictionaries) had several points of difference between them and Petun and Southern Bear, as we can see from the following examples:

³ - The -8- , which is actually a n -o- with a -u- written on top of it, represents a -w- before a vowel. Wendat was often written as '8endat'. Before a consonant, it represents a -u- sound.

Figure 1: Dialect Features of the Wendat Language

<u>Translation</u>	<u>Dialect</u>	<u>Word</u>	<u>Key Feature</u>
'to dance'	Petun	-ndrawa-	-ndr-
	Southern Bear	-ndrawa-	-ndr-
	Cord	-ndrawa-	-ndr-
	Northern Bear	-nrawa-	-nr-
	Rock	-nrawa-	-nr-
'mouse'	Petun	etsongyatena	-ngy-
	Southern Bear	tsongyaten(a)	-ngy-
	Cord	tsondiatena	-ndy- (i.e., the -ndi-)
	Northern Bear	tsonniatena	-ny- (i.e., the -ni-)
	Rock	tsonniaten	-ny- (i.e., the -ni-)
'to battle'	Petun	atrio	-tr-
	Southern Bear	atrio	-tr-
	Northern Bear	akrio	-kr-
	Rock	atrio	-tr-
'to cut' (i.e., in two)	Petun	akyayi	-ky- ⁴
	Southern Bear	akyayi	-ky-
	Northern Bear	akyai	-ky-
	Rock	atyayi	-ty-
'wood'	Petun	ondhata	-ndh-
	Southern Bear	ond(h)ata	-ndh-
	Northern Bear	ondhata	-ndh-
	Rock	onnhata	-nnh-
'dry leaves'	Petun	urata	-u-
	Southern Bear	urata	-u-
	Cord	urata	-u-
	Northern Bear	urata	-u-
	Rock	orata	-o-
'head'	Petun	oskuta	-u-
	Southern Bear	oskuta	-u-
	Northern Bear	oskota	-o-
	Rock	oskota	-o-
'country'	Petun	ondechra	-chr-

⁴ The examples here are adapted from various versions of the term for 'Montreal', (i.e., te otiayi, 'it is cut in two').

Southern Bear	ondechra	-chr-
Northern Bear	ondecha	-ch-
Rock	ondecha	-ch-

The Wendat language did not exist by itself. It belonged to a language family known as **Iroquoian**, one of ten such families that still exist in Native Canada⁵. At the time of first contact between Natives and Europeans, member languages of this family were spoken in what is now Ontario (Wendat and **Neutral**⁶), Quebec (the language or languages of the **St. Lawrence Iroquoians**⁷), New York (from west to east, Erie, and the original Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, the **Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida** and **Mohawk**), Ohio and Pennsylvania (Erie), and at various places down the east coast of the United States, starting with the **Susquehannock** or **Andaste**⁸ in the north, and further south **Tuscarora** and its nearest relatives (**Nottoway** and **Meherrin**). The largest member of the family, **Cherokee**, is most distant in geography and in form. Cherokee is referred to as being the sole member of the Southern Iroquoian branch of the family. All others are termed Northern Iroquoian. In terms of their linguistic closeness to each other, the languages can be grouped in the following way. Neutral and Erie cannot be grouped as we don't have sufficient evidence to do so.

Figure 2: Groupings by Structural Similarities of Iroquoian Languages⁹

Southern Iroquoian

Cherokee

Northern Iroquoian

a) southern division¹⁰

⁵ -The ten language families are Algonkian, Iroquoian, Eskimo-Aleut, Siouan, Athapaskan, Wakashan, Salishan, Haida, Kutenai, Tlingit.

⁶ - The people that have come to be known historically as the Neutral were actually a group of tribes, possibly allied as were the Petun and Huron into one. Consequently, they probably spoke a number of different languages or dialects of one language.

⁷ - These were the people that Jacques Cartier encountered during the 1530s along the St. Lawrence. Contrary to what is sometimes believed, they did not later become the Mohawk or any other known member tribe of the Iroquois Confederacy. The language(s) of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians gave us such words as 'Canada' and 'Hochelaga ('At the Beaver Lodge').

⁸ - Again we are speaking about one known language, when at the time of contact there were a number of languages.

⁹ - In this figure and in a number of the examples, I am much indebted to the work of Marianne Mithun (Mithun 1984).

¹⁰ - The terminology for dividing up the Northern Iroquoian branch is my own.

Nottoway
Tuscarora
Meherrin

b) Wendat

Petun (Deer?)
Southern Bear
Cord (?)
Northern Bear
Rock

c) Iroquois

i) west

Seneca
Cayuga

ii) central

Onondaga
Susquehannock/Andaste

iii) east

Oneida
Mohawk

To see something of the closeness and distinction between the various languages, we will look at the words for 'village, town', 'pipe', 'bread' and 'flour, meal' among the following Iroquoian languages:

Figure 2 - Some Related Terms in Iroquoian Languages

a) 'Village, Town'

Petun	yandata
Northern Bear	andata
Mohawk	kanata
St. Lawrence Iroquois	Canada (probably very much like the Mohawk form)

Tuscarora utaneh¹¹

¹¹ - The fact that, when compared with other Iroquoian languages, Tuscarora switches the -n- and the -t- should not distract from the fact that it is still very similar to the other Northern Iroquoian languages.

b) 'Pipe'

Petun	yannondawan ¹²
Mohawk	kannonnawon
Oneida	kannunawon
Onondaga	kannonawenta
Tuscarora	unnonweh
Susquehannock	channona
Cherokee	gannonnowa

c) 'Bread'

Petun	yandatarā
Mohawk	kanataro
Oneida	kanatalok
Susquehannock	canadra
Cayuga	onata
Tuscarora	utanareh
Nottoway	gotatera
Cherokee	gadu

d) 'Flour, Meal'

Petun	uteshra
Rock	otesha
Mohawk	othesera
Oneida	othetsla
Onondaga	othetshae
Cayuga	othethra
Seneca	otheshae
Tuscarora	uthetsreh

More distant connections have been made with languages of the **Siouan** family (which includes languages such as Lakota, Mandan, and Winnebago). At the time of first contact, members of this family were found in what is now the eastern United States as near neighbours of some of the more southerly Iroquoian speakers. Sometimes words appear that make the Iroquoian-Siouan connection readily visible. An example would be the Siouan word 'Minnesota', with **-minn-** meaning 'water' and **-sota-** meaning 'clouded, or muddy'. Written in the Petun language it would be two words. The first would be would have been something like **'awen** for 'water'. This is closer to the Siouan word than it might appear at first. Petun had no -m- so a -w- would appear in its place. The second word would be **'usata'** which meant 'smoky, muddy' in Petun.

¹² -The words here have been adapted to have a more uniform appearance.

It has been suggested, further, that Iroquoian may be related even more distantly to the Caddoan language family, which includes such western languages as Pawnee and Wichita. Interestingly enough, there was no linguistic connection between Petun and its relatives to the language of the Algonkian-speaking Odawa (Ottawa), long term neighbours of the Petun.

Origins and Migrations

How long ago did the ancestors of speakers and Petun and these other languages split up from a possible single group (termed by linguists, **Proto-Iroquoian**) or closely-knit collection of groups living in one general area? In 1961, the pioneering Iroquoian linguist, Floyd Lounsbury, stated that he felt that the breakup of the Proto-Iroquoians took place with the separation of Southern and Northern Iroquoian sometime between 3500 and 3800 years ago (i.e., 1500 to 1800 B.C.). The method that he used to arrive at this date is called glotto-chronology or lexicostatistics. This involves measuring the change of a basic vocabulary of a limited number of words believed to be 'culture-free' (i.e., easily able to be translated). Say, for example, you have one-hundred words. During the time that Lounsbury did his study it was generally stated that approximately 86 of these words would stay the same, i.e., be cognates or related terms, and 14 would change to an unrelated term over a period of one thousand years.

The method is useful when trying to determine relative time that the speakers of various languages separated, i.e., that the Cherokee separated from the Northern Iroquoians before the Tuscarora separated from the other Northern Iroquoians. However, its usefulness becomes very questionable when it enters the area of speaking about absolute dates. The basic assumption is made that the rate of change is constant. Such a constant rate of change has never convincingly been demonstrated for Native language by means of a strict correlation with written or archaeological source materials. Languages change primarily according to changes that take place in other areas of life for the speakers of those languages. For the most part this involves the communities of speakers of other languages that they encounter. It involves the power relationship between the communities, the amount and kind of interaction that they have, and other such key factors. This cannot be seen as a constant. We can say that the initial split up of the Proto-Iroquoians must have taken place sometime more than two thousand years ago, but such a statement comes more from archaeological than linguistic research.

When did people speaking Petun (or something close to it) move their way north and west from their Proto-Iroquoians home, and eventually enter Ontario? There is not, as yet, a hard and fast answer to this question. In later publications of the Petun Research Institute we will be looking at the archaeological history of the people who were to become known as the Petun. A great difficulty in linking archaeological and linguistic material lies in the simple fact that having a continuity of resource use, pottery type or stone manufacture doesn't necessarily mean an identical continuity of language group. Just because a group of people living in pre-contact Ontario grew corn, something typically associated with Iroquoian

peoples, doesn't necessarily make them Iroquoians. The Odawa (Ottawa), an Algonkian-speaking people that lived next to the Petun, grew corn, and were equally capable of making pots that were very similar to those of the Petun.

Glotto-chronology dates given for the subsequent break-up of the Northern Iroquoians vary. Typical is the notion that Tuscarora and its nearest relative languages split off about 1,500 years ago, and the remaining languages divided no later than 1,000 years ago. I don't doubt that these dates do not go back far enough. The dates that archaeologists tend to give for the entry of Iroquoians into Ontario is being questioned right now.¹³ It is beyond my competence to discuss such dates conclusively; however, it seems to me that the archaeology at least points to there being Iroquoians in Ontario prior to the second date (i.e., 1000 A.D.), and possibly as far back as the first (i.e., 500 A.D.). Having Iroquoians in Ontario, New York and beyond speaking the same language does not make sense to me.

Structure

For a speaker of English, French, or any other European language, the first thing that would be noticed that is different about Petun is how many verbs there are relative to nouns. In the most complete Wendat dictionary I own (from the 1740s), there are over one thousand different verb roots, and only about 500 nouns. European languages are very much dominated by nouns, comparatively speaking. I can take any page of my Wendat-French dictionaries and generally expect to find about twice as many entries headed by verbs than by nouns, while the very opposite applies to my English and French dictionaries. Even if you cheat a little bit and include English and French adjectives as verbs, the nouns will still tend to outnumber the verbs. The same kind of counting game works with taking a page of text (if you count auxiliary verbs such as 'to be/etre', 'to have/avoir' as part of one verb). In the passage translated at the end of this article there are fifty-two verb roots and only twenty-four noun roots or stems. There is only one noun that stands by itself, not incorporated into a verb.

You may wonder how such a difference could be. Maybe it would help to learn that the Petun used verbs to do what we use nouns to do. When we would apply noun labels in calling someone a human being, a liar, a friend, or an enemy, the Petun would use verbs, as you can see from the following:

chion8e	<u>'you are a human being'</u>
chi-	-pronoun, <u>'you (s)'</u>
on8e	-verb root, <u>'to be a human being'</u> (plus stative aspect)
chiendachiondatha	<u>'you have a large tongue'</u> (i.e., you lie frequently)
chie-	-pronoun, <u>'you (s)'</u>
ndachi-	-noun root, <u>'tongue'</u>
ondat-	-verb root, <u>'to augment'</u>
ha	-habitual aspect

¹³ - See the various positions taken in this matter in Bekerman and Warrick, 1994.

onyiatenro	<u>'we two are friends'</u> (i.e., you are my friend)
onyi-	-pronoun, <u>'we two'</u>
atenro	-verb root, <u>'to be friends'</u> (plus stative aspect)
ayiatrich	<u>'we two fight each other regularly'</u> (i.e., you are my enemy)
ayi-	-pronoun, <u>'we two (including the listener)'</u>
at-	-semi-reflexive
rio-	-verb root, <u>'to fight, kill'</u>
ch-	-habitual aspect

One good point of comparison is the area of names: the names of places, individuals, animals and groups of people. In English and in French these are nouns. This is not so in Petun, where they are expressed only through verbs:

Figure 3: Petun Names as Verbs

a) Place Names

Eh8ae	<u>'they hit, strike'</u> ¹⁴ (Petun village name)
e-	-pronoun, 'they'
-h8ae	-verb root, <u>'to hit, strike'</u> (plus the stative aspect)
Ekan8tak	<u>'it is where (?) was standing'</u> (place name within the traditional country of the Petun) ¹⁵
ek-	-cislocative prefix, meaning <u>'where'</u>
a-	- pronoun, <u>'it'</u>
n-	-noun root, <u>'?'</u>
8t-	-verb root, <u>'to stand'</u>
ak-	- stative aspect plus the past suffix
Ekarenniondi	<u>'it is where a stone is standing out'</u> (the name of a Petun village and a sacred place)
ek-	-cislocative prefix, meaning <u>'where'</u>
a-	-pronoun, <u>'it'</u>
renn-	-noun root <u>'stone'</u>
iondi	-verb root <u>'to stand out'</u> (plus stative aspect)

¹⁴ - This is very much an educated guess. There probably should be some form of the cislocative here, with the -e- typical of the cislocative followed most likely by a -k- rather than an -h- which would give it a different meaning. There is no compelling culture reason to think that this translation is accurate. It just fits in terms of the sounds represented.

¹⁵ - This appears in the map "Description du Pais des Hurons" (see Heidenreich 1971:map 15). An alternative translation might involve the verb root -ndao- which refers to water flowing, although that is somewhat less likely.

Etharita	<u>'it is where he chews (with something, for some reason)'</u> ¹⁶ (the name of a Petun village)
et-	-cislocative, ' <u>where</u> '
ha-	-pronoun, ' <u>he</u> '
ri-	- verb root, ' <u>to chew</u> '
t-	- causative root suffix, ' <u>with something, for some reason</u> '
(h)a	- habitual aspect
Etia8eiondia	<u>'it is a small (place) where water stands up, out</u> (place name within the traditional country of the Petun) ¹⁷
eti-	-prefix, ' <u>where</u> '
a8-	-pronoun, ' <u>it</u> '
e-	-noun root, ' <u>water</u> '
iondi-	- verb root, ' <u>to stand out</u> ' (plus stative aspect)
a-	-diminutive suffix
Karenh8skaron	<u>'it is where the treetops, branches are peeled'</u> (the Wyandot term for Point Pelee by the north shore of Lake Erie)
k-	-cislocative prefix, meaning ' <u>where</u> '
a-	-pronoun, ' <u>it</u> '
renh-	-noun root, ' <u>treetops, branches</u> '
uskaron	-verb root, ' <u>to pull off, up</u> ' (plus stative aspect)
Otsand8ske	<u>'it is at (the place where) water is very cold, fresh'</u> ¹⁸ (Wyandot place name)
o-	-pronoun ' <u>it</u> '
tsa-	-noun root ' <u>water</u> '
ndus-	- verb root ' <u>to be cold, fresh</u> ' (plus stative suffix)
ke	- locative suffix ' <u>at</u> '

¹⁶ - The main reason for choosing this translation, other than the fact that the sounds fit, is that this was the community considered the capital of the 'Wolf' division of the Petun, and the Wendat word for 'wolf' was 'one who chews bones', using this same verb.

¹⁷ - This appears in the map "Description du Pais des Hurons" (see Heidenreich 1971:map15)

¹⁸ - From this name was derived the city and river name 'Sandusky' in Ohio.

b) Human Names

Onditachiae	<u>'they strike the beaver tails'</u> ¹⁹ (the name of an important Petun shaman)
ond-	-pronoun, <u>'they'</u>
itachi-	-noun root, <u>'beaver tail'</u>
ae-	-verb root, <u>'to strike'</u> , (plus the stative aspect)
Honare, enhak ²⁰	<u>'they met him at the river mouth'</u> (a Petun man's name)
hona-	-pronoun, <u>'they-him'</u>
re, en-	-verb root, <u>'to be at the river mouth'</u>
ha-	- dative root suffix plus habitual aspect
k	- past suffix
Outoure	<u>'it is cold'</u> (a Petun man's name)
ou-	- pronoun <u>'it'</u>
toure	- verb root <u>'to be cold'</u> (plus stative aspect)
Hondachiate, en	<u>'his tongue is burning'</u> (the name of an eighteenth century Wyandot man)
ho-	-pronoun <u>'he'</u>
ndachi-	-noun root, <u>'tongue'</u>
ate, -	-verb root, <u>'to burn'</u>
en-	- stative aspect
Skanderetsi	<u>'she has a very long size, body'</u> (the name of an eighteenth century Wyandot woman)
s-	-prefix, here meaning <u>'very'</u>
ka-	-pronoun, <u>'she'</u>
nder-	-noun root, <u>'size, body'</u>
ets-	-verb root, <u>'to be long'</u>
i	-stative aspect

¹⁹ - It should be pointed out that this translation, much like the one for Eh8ae is just an 'educated guess' on my part. The translation 'works' only in the sense that all the sounds are accounted for. Without cultural evidence that such a name is possible or likely, we cannot say with any certainty that this is an accurate translation. It is interesting, however, that this comes from the same verb that the similarly guessed translation for 'Eh8ae'. Coincidence?

²⁰ - The -, symbol here is used to represent a -y- like sound.

Hostagehtak 'he carried a present or bark
(a Petun man's name)
ho- -pronoun, 'he'
sta- -noun root, 'present' or 'bark'
geht- -verb root, 'to carry'
ak - habitual aspect plus past suffix

c) Animal Names

oskennonton 'one has gone to (the land of) the dead'
(the main Wendat term for deer)
o- -pronoun, 'it, one'
skenn- -verb root, 'to be a manifestation of the dead'
onton -possibly the distributive or the dislocative suffix (plus the stative)

yanniennon 'it is a dog'
ya- -pronoun 'it'
nniennon -verb root, 'to be a dog' (plus the stative aspect)

tsutayi 'it is very dark and shiny'
(the main Wendat term for the beaver)
ts- -prefix, here meaning 'very'
u- -pronoun, 'it'
tayi -verb root, 'to be dark and shiny' (plus the stative aspect)

d) Groups of People

hatitsihenstatsi 'they are called charcoal'
(this term was used to refer to the Jesuits)
hati- -pronoun, 'they (masc.)'
tsihenst- -noun root, 'charcoal'
ats- -verb root, 'to be called'
-stative aspect

hotinnonchiondi 'they made/make a house'
(this term was used to refer to the Confederacy of the Iroquois)
hoti- -pronoun, 'they (masc.)'
nnonchi- -noun root, 'house'
ondi -verb root, 'to make' (with the stative aspect)

Now, think about kinship terms such as sister/soeur, brother/frere, mother/mere and father/pere. They are expressed by nouns in English and in French, with possessive adjectives such as 'my', 'your', 'his' and 'her' added to

specify who you are talking about. However, that is not the case with the Petun language. The relationships are articulated by verbs that refer with pronominal prefixes to all individuals involved.

Figure 4: Kinship Terms as Verbs

ayatakhen	<u>'we two are same sex siblings'</u> (i.e., <u>'we two are brothers'</u> if a male is speaking or <u>'we two are sisters'</u> if a female is speaking). You would use this to refer to 'my brother' or 'my sister'.
ay-	-pronoun, <u>'we two'</u> (excluding the listener)
ata-	-reflexive
khen	-verb root, <u>'to be same sex siblings'</u> (plus the stative aspect)
tsarase	<u>'you two are cousins'</u> You would use this when speaking to someone about 'your cousin'
ts-	-pronoun, <u>'you two'</u>
arase	-verb root, <u>'to be cousins'</u> , (plus the stative aspect)
hoen	<u>'he has him as a child'</u> You would use this when referring to 'his son'.
ho-	-pronoun, <u>'he (subject) - him (object)'</u>
en	-verb root, <u>'to have as child'</u> (plus stative aspect)

Vocabulary Size and Verb Structure

One of the most powerful and long lasting stereotypes about Native language such as Petun is that they only had a small vocabulary. This comes partially from the fact that so many of the early Euroamerican writers speak of the languages in terms of what they don't have (i.e., terms for European concepts and material items that no reasonable person would expect the languages to have terms for). It comes partially from a sense that as they didn't have as many material items in their cultures as we do now in ours, they couldn't have had as many terms.

How many words were there in the Petun language? One way to try to answer that question is to look at the language's incredible capacity to generate words. We will take one verb root, **-atey-**, meaning 'to burn', and see how it would be possible to produce more than eight thousand words. First, however, we will briefly look at the way in which a Petun verb is constructed.

The Building Blocks of the Petun Language

There were eight fundamental structural positions or building blocks of the Petun verb. Each element must appear in a certain specified order. Both the positions and their order can be illustrated in the following way:

prepronominal prefixes	pronominal prefixes	voice	noun root	verb root	root suffixes	aspects	expanded aspects
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

teayotonnharandend 'they would not have been on top of life (rejoiced)'

1	t-	-negative prefix
	e-	- future prefix
2	ayo-	- <u>'they'</u>
3	t-	- semireflexive
4	onnha-	- <u>'life'</u>
5	ra-	- <u>'to be on top'</u>
6	nd-	- dislocative (see explanation below)
7	e-	- purposive
8	nd	- past

Now we will count the number of words that can be constructed using the verb root **-atey-**:

Six Basic Aspect Forms (6x)

Every Petun verb needed to have three parts: a pronominal prefix, a verb root, and an aspect suffix. There are six basic forms that can be used with little or nothing more than the bare minimum. The following are four examples:

utexa	<u>'there usually, typically is (a) fire'</u>	habitual aspect
uteyen	<u>'there is burning, a fire'</u>	stative aspect
eutey	<u>'there will be (a) fire'</u>	punctual aspect (with future prefix)
teutende	<u>'there is not going to be fire'</u>	purposive aspect (with future and negative prefixes and dislocative root suffix)

Noun Roots (x54)

Noun roots can be incorporated into Wendat verbs. If we only take human body parts, and nothing else that burns, there is a potential of fifty four noun roots that can be incorporated into the six forms given above. This gives us a total of 324 words, and we are just beginning to work this verb, adding six for when the noun roots are not present (total 330).

Pronominal Prefixes (x11)

As stated above, every Wendat verb must have a pronominal prefix. With this verb there are eleven basic pronominal prefixes that can be used without anything being added in the way of suffixes. This gives us 3630 words. The pronoun forms that can be used are as follows:

<u>Person</u>	<u>Translation</u>
first	singular (I), dual (we two) and plural (we, more than two)
second	singular (you), dual (you two), and plural (you, more than two)
third (he),	feminine singular (she), feminine plural (they), masculine singular masculine plural (they), and indefinite (one, they, somebody)

Adding the Root Suffixes

a) the distributive (6 x 2 x 1)

The distributive adds the meaning of 'many things, times or places'. It takes the six basic forms presented about, and can be used with the noun root **-at-**. This gives us a total of 12 words. It only takes one pronominal prefix, as in the following: **oteyannon** 'many things are burning'

b) the dative (6 x 3 x 11)

The dative adds the meaning of 'for someone's benefit or loss'. With this verb it can appear without a noun root, with **-yenk8ar-** 'clothing', or with **-ak8-** 'shoes', and takes eleven different pronominal prefixes, giving us an additional 198 words. One example is the following:

esak8ateyas 'your shoes will burn'

c) the causative (6 x 3 x 15, + 1 x 4, + 6 x 15, + 6 x 95 + 13)

The causative suffix often adds the sense of making things happen. It can be used with three different noun roots patterns that I have seen: no noun root, with **-ndat-** 'village', or with **-nnonchi-** 'house'. The pronominal possibilities are greater here (15), as the distinctions of 'we (including the listener(s))' versus 'we (excluding the listener(s))' for both dual and plural, plus a dual versus plural distinction with the masculine and feminine forms. We therefore can have words such as this:

ehannonchiateyat 'he will burn the house'

There is an additional aspect form that can be used here: the imperative. It takes four different pronominal forms: you (singular), you (plural), let's (dual) and let's (plural).

sateyakt 'make (you singular) some fire, light the fire!'

This gives us a total of 274 for this root suffix so far. But there's more. The instrumental suffix can be added, giving us the meaning, 'to make with something':

onteyatak8a 'one makes fire with it (i.e., flint)

This occurs with six aspect forms and fifteen pronominal prefixes, giving us an additional 90. This is nothing compared with what happens when you combine the causative with the dative. As both subjects and objects can be expressed with this combination, there are ninety-five different pronominal possibilities. Further, there are thirteen forms of imperatives possible.

tayateyaten 'make (you (s)) me a fire out of such material

This gives us 583 for this combination.

d) dislocative (2 x 6 x 15 x 3 + 4, + 583 x2, + 583 x 2)

The dislocative can add two different possibilities to the verb root, 'going' (with the translocative prefix or 'coming' (with no prefix). It takes six aspect forms, fifteen pronominal prefixes, and three noun root possibilities. Plus it can have four imperatives. This gives us a total of 544 words,

te8ateyandese 'it will not be coming to burn'

Add to the dislocative the causative plus the dative, and you have two new versions of the 583 possibilities: another 1166 words, including the following:

atayateyatiha 'come make me a fire!'

We are not finished with the dislocative yet. It can occur with the causative + dative + instrumental combination as well, adding another 1166 words, including:

atayateyatak8endiha 'come make me a fire out of such material'

e) frequentative (1 + 1 x 11)

There is only one more root suffix to consider: the frequentative. By itself,

there is only the one form:

oteyaskon 'fires start easily, frequently'

With the causative, it has eleven possible pronoun forms, for a total of 12 words.

How many words does this leave us with? We have 7675. Bear in mind that I have cut corners, using only a relatively small number of noun roots (more things can burn than what I have included here), and I have only used those root suffixes I have seen. Others are possible. If all 1,000 Wendat verb roots were this productive, the language would have more than 7,500,000 verb forms. I think that is enough for any language.

Language Sample

We will end this paper with a sample of the language. The piece that I have chosen is a letter written by the Wyandot on April 5, 1746, published in 1920 (Potier 1920:685). It is of a mixed dialect, poorly copied in places, but this does not diminish its significance as a text. No translation of this piece has ever been published. It is a rare piece, as from this period we have many things that the Jesuits composed in Wendat, but almost nothing composed by the Huron or Wyandot. It was a response by the Wyandot to a letter written to them in Wendat by Jesuit Father Richardie translating the French words of Governor Longueuil. The letter begins, as was common in Wendat speech, with a repeat of what they had been said to the Wyandot elders:

ihatonk	a,isten:	ichiatonk	innen
i-h- aton -k	a,- isten	i-chi- aton -k	
pa-MA- to say -ha	1P- to be father to -st	pa-2A- to say -ha	
he says	my father	you say	strongly
tia8enk	/,/8aena	atiaondi	
	,8a- en -a		
	1A2pP- to have as child -st-dm		
thank you	I have you as children	completely	
/h/orih8a8eti		atiaondi	hesk8atendoton
ho- rih8a-8e -t-i			hesk8-ate- ndon -on
MP- matter to be together -ca-st			2pAMP-sr- to recount -ds-st
it is all his matter		completely	you told him
			the
sk8aena	ti	,arih8ten;	
sk8a- en -a		,a- rih-8ten	
2pA1pP- to have as children -st-dm	FZA- matter to be such -st		
you have us as your children	as	it is a matter of such a nature	

My father says, “You strongly say thanks, you I have as my children. Completely it is his matter. Completely you told him ‘You have us as your children in this matter’”.

nonh8a	endixa	eθorih8ichiati et-ho- rih8-ichia -t-i cl-MP- matter-to complete -ca-st he finished the matter at such a time
	?	

/h/esk8atendotondi hesk8-ate- ndot -on-d-i MA2pP- sr-to recount -da-st he told a story to you	ti 8a as other(s)	/h/orih8aron,en ho- rih8-aron ,-en FZAMP- matter-to listen -st one listened to his matter
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dexa ,ochrate. ,- ochra-te FZA- winter-to exist -st this winter		“Now he finished the matter that he told you about, as others listened to his news this winter.”
--	--	--

,8aena ,8a- en -a 1A2pP- to have as child -st-dm my children	onne behold	n'onh8a now
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a,atate8enda,erit a,-atate- 8enda ,- eri -t fa-1A-rf- word-to complete -pu I have completed, been true to my word as	ti	8a,eren 8a,- er -en 1P- to do -st I said, did	,annenda,e, ,a- nnenda ,-e FZA- autumn -el in autumn
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“My children, behold now I have been true to my word, to what I said in autumn.

8a,en 8a,- en 1P- to say -st I said	innen, stan greatly not	te e,onrih8ase ^{ct} te-e-,on- rih8-aseht ng-fu-1A2P- matter-to hide -pu I will not hide any news from you	de sten the many things
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,arih8tas ,a- rih-8t -as FZA- matter-to stand -in-ha news arrives, is presented	eontatie continually	θo there	e,rih8aronj e,- rih8-aronj fu-1A- matter-to listen I will listen for news ('or') ²¹
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²¹ - This is the Latin word 'vel', here meaning 'or'.

e,rih8are	te tsitron	ti	8aende,aronj_.
e-,-rih8a-(nda)re	te-ts-iron		/a-e/8end-aronj
fu-1A-matter-to exist-pu	(sj)-re-FZA-to dwell-st		fa-IndA-word-to listen-pu
I will receive news	(if it still dwells)	as	(one listened to my words)

“I said strongly, I will not hide any news from you, the many things that arrive as news continually. I will listen for news (if it still exist, one who listened to my words).”

onne	ati	e,ak8endaerit	ti	8a,eren._
		e-,-ak-8enda-eri-t		8a,-er-en
		fu-1A-sr-word-to complete-pu		1P-to do-st
behold	then	I will be true to my word	as	I did, said it

“Behold, then, will be true to my word as I said it.”

tia8enk	d'aontatie	θo	achierhon
			a-chi-er-hon
			fa-2A-to wish-pu
thank you	(continually)	there	you wished, thought

ahotindi/,onrato,enk	de	xeena	d'
a-hoti-ndi,onra-to,e-n-k		xe-en-a	
op-MpP-mind-to know-st-pu		1AIndP-to have as child-st-dm	
they would be sure	the	I have them as children	the

hati8annens:	Thank you; continually you wished, “They should be
hati-/,8annen-s	sure, those I have as children, the elders.”
MpA-to augment-ha	
they are elders	

onne	ati	n'onh8a	a,8atonnhara	d'
			a,8-at-onnha-r-a	
			1xpA-sr-life-to be on top-ha	
behold	then	now	we are on top of life, rejoicing	the

a,8a,8annens	onh8a θaat	a,ondi,onrato,en	ti	8a
a,8a-,8annen-s		a,o-ndi,onra-to,e-n		
1xpA-to augment-ha		IndP-mind-to know-st		
we are elders	soon	they are sure	as	other(s)

de cheena, Behold, then, now we are on top of
 che-**en**-a life, rejoicing, we who are elders.
 2AIndP-**to have as child**-st-dm Soon they are sure, others that you
 the you have them as children have as children.

onh8aθaat etsonditiok8ichien a8eti
 e-ts-ond-**itio**-k8-**ichi**-en a-**8 e**-t-i
 fu-re-FZpP-**to be a lineage**-in-**to finish**-pu ?-**to be together**-ca-st
 soon they will again complete a group all

ehontonnharen d'onne ehonronj,
 e-hon-t-**onnha**-r-en e-hon-**ronj**
 fu-MpA-sr-**life to be on top**-pu fu-MpA-**to listen**-pu
 they will be on top of life, rejoice when they will hear

Soon they will again form a group, all will be on top of life, when they will hear.

aia, enrhon ,ato, en isen ti h8eren
 ai-a-**enr**-hon ,a-**to, e**-n i-s-**en** h8-**er**-en
 op-IndA-**to wish**-pu FZA-**to be true**-st pa-2P-**to say**-st MP-**to do**-st
 they would wish, think it is true you said it as he did it

d' ha8en a8eti e,8atendoton_
 ha8-**en** e-,8-ate-**ndot**-on
 MP-**to say**-st fu-1A2pP-sr-**to recount**-ds-pu
 that which he said all I will tell you

They would wish, "It is true that which you said, as he did that which he said, 'All will tell you'".

tia8enk a,isten ondechra8asti,
 a,-**isten** **onde**-chra-**8ast**-i
 1P-**to be father**-st FZA-**to have country**-nm-**to be beautiful**-st
 thank you my father It is a Beautiful Country (Father Richardie's name)

Thank you, my father, It is a Beautiful Country.

onne n'onh8a aesa8endaronj de
 a-esa-**8end**-ronj
 fa-1xpA-**word to listen**-pu
 behold now we listen to your words who

sk8aena	d'	ichiatonk	innen:
sk8a- en -a		i-chi- aton -k	
2A1pP- to have as child -st-dm		pa-2A- to say -ha	
you have us as children	that which	you say	strongly

/,/8aena	stana, sten	tsinnionka	te ,arih8andare
,8a- en -a			te-,a- rih8a -ndare
1A2P- to have as child -st-dm			ng-FZA- matter-to exist -st
I have you as children	nothing		there is no news

de	,arih8achien	dex'	ondechen	de
	,a- rih8a -chi-en		onde -ch- en	
	FZA- matter-to be bad -st		FZA- to have country -nm- to lie -st	
the	it is bad news	here	it is a country	the

kaarontaen._	Behold, now we listen to your words, we who are
k-a- ronta-en	your children, to that which you say strong, " My
cl-FZA- tree-to lie -st	children, there is no news that is bad here in this
where a tree lies (Detroit)	country of Detroit.

Key to Abbreviations

Pre-Pronominal Prefixes

cl-	cislocative ('where')
fa-	factual ('has/have just')
fu-	future ('will')
ng-	negative ('not')
op-	optative ('would')
sometimes a	
pa-	partitive ('such')
re-	repetitive ('again, still')
sj-	subjunctive ('if')

Pronominal Prefixes

A	agent (a lot like a subject)
FZ	feminine-zoic ('she, it, they (f)')
Ind	indefinite ('they, one, people')
M	masculine ('he, 'they (m)')
P	patient (like an object, but
	subject)
p	plural
1	first person ('I, we')
1x	first person exclusive (excluding the
	listener(s))
2	second person ('you')

Voice

sr	semireflexive (usually adds a sense that something happens to the agent)
rf	reflexive (usually adds a sense of 'each other')

Noun Suffixes

nm	nominalizer (makes a noun out of a verb)
el	external locative noun suffix

Root Suffixes

ca	causative ('for some reason, at some time, place')
da	dative ('for the benefit or to the detriment of')
ds	distributive ('many places, times')
in	instrumental ('by such a means')

Aspect Suffixes

ha	habitual ('often, frequently, usually')
pu	punctual ('once, once time')
st	stative ('in a state of')

Expanded Aspect Suffixes

dm	diminutive ('little one')
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