

THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES LANGUAGE LESSON

Learner's Corner

The "Learner's Corner" is a new segment for us. This will be an on-going section that will cover, little by little, the grammar details of our three languages. (Grammar, put simply, is the set of rules that determine how words are put together and then ordered.) As the weeks go by, reading the usual lessons on the previous page should become easier and easier. It has been some time since we have covered the written alphabet and their sounds, so this week we will start from the very beginning. Please practice pronouncing the words on the previous page and listen to the KWSO language broadcasts for examples from the language program staff. (Hopefully this and coming issues will be helpful to you in learning languages. Since this is meant for you, your feedback would be greatly appreciated! Feel free to leave comments for Tim Finch at the Culture & Heritage Dept.)

The Ichishkiin Alphabet

a	ä	aa	a'	c	c'	ch	ch'	h	i	ii
k	k'	kw	kw'	l	l'	m	n	p	p'	q
q'	qw	qw'	s	sh	t	t'	tf	tf'	u	u
				w	x	xw	y			

The Kiksht Alphabet

a	ä	b	c	c'	ch	ch'	d	e	g	g
h	i	j	k	k'	l	l'	m	n	p	p'
q	q'	s	sh	t	t'	tf	u	w	x	x
				y	z					

The Numu Alphabet

a	aa	b	d	dy	dz	e	ee	g	h	i
k	kw	m	mm	n	nn	ng	o	oa	oe	oi
oo	ooo	ooa	ooe	ow	p	s	t	ts	tz	u
				uu	w	y	z			

- | Character | Sound |
|------------|--|
| a | Like the a in "father". |
| aa | An elongated (held longer) a sound. |
| a' | The apostrophe indicates the sound before it is shortened by a sudden stop of breath and voice. The closest equivalent exists in this (poor) English example: "a owl". |
| ä | Like the a in "can". |
| c | This sounds like a slightly sharper English s. An English example is the ts sound in "cats". |
| c' | The apostrophe after the c indicates a "glottal stop". Temporarily close your air-way to build up a burst of air and then say the c. |
| ch | Like the ch in "chip". |
| ch' | The apostrophe following the ch indicates a "glottal stop". Position your tongue to say the ch sound, then put extra pressure on your tongue and say the ch sound. |
| h | Identical to the English h, as in "hill". |
| i | Pronounced like the ee sound in "seem". |
| ii | An elongated i sound. |
| k | This is said like the English c in "cake". |
| k' | The apostrophe indicates a "glottal stop" after the k. Position your tongue for the normal k sound and then put extra pressure against your tongue as you say k sound. |
| kw | Pronounced like the qu in "quit". |
| kw' | This is the kw sound said with a "glottal stop". Similar to k', this sound requires extra pressure behind the tongue as you say the normal kw sound. |
| l | This is the same as the English l, as in "lay". |
| l' | The "barred-L" has no English match. It is said similarly to the th sound in "think". First, position your tongue for the "th" sound and then slide the front tip of your tongue back so that it is touching the front of the roof of your mouth. Keep your tongue there and push air out, as you would with th. |
| m | Identical to the English m, as in "mother". |
| n | Identical to the English n, as in "need". |
| p | Identical to the English p, as in "proud". |
| p' | This is the p sound said with a "glottal stop". It is made by tightening the throat and adding extra pressure just before making the normal p sound. |
| q | This is said much like the c in "cool", only with the tongue even further back. The q sound forces the tongue to block air flow all the way at the very back of the mouth. |
| q' | The glottal q is pronounced by momentarily holding the normal q sound to build up pressure behind the tongue. Then, in a burst, release the pressure without exhaling and say the normal q. This result is sudden, louder, and sounds as if there is a catch in your throat. |
| qw | Pronounced by combining the Ichishkiin q and the English w sound (as in "will"). The result sounds much like kw only with a deeper catch in the throat. |
| qw' | This is said by combining the q' sound and the English w sound (as in "wish"). The result sounds like kw' only with a deeper catch in the throat. |
| s | Identical to the English s, as in "silly". |
| sh | Identical to the English sh, as in "shout". |
| t | Identical to the English t, as in "tall". |
| t' | The glottal t (hard t) is said by momentarily holding the normal t sound to build up pressure behind the tongue. Then, in a burst, release the pressure without exhaling and say the normal t. |
| tf | The "t-barred-l" sound is one for which, again, English has no equivalent. To pronounce this sound, position your tongue for the t sound, but say the t (barred-L) sound. |
| tf' | Say the the normal t-barred-l, but with more pressure behind the tongue. The result is a sharper, more sudden, and slightly louder tf sound. |
| u | Said like the English oo sound in "boot". |
| uu | An elongated u sound. |
| w | Identical to the English w, as in "wash". |
| x | The x sounds similar to a clearing of the throat. As the middle of the tongue touches the top of the roof of the mouth, breathe out with a friction sound. |
| xw | This sound is a combination of the x and the w sound, with no pause or space between them. To put it another way, it xw sounds much like the normal x said with a rounded open mouth. |
| y | Identical to the English y, as in "yellow". |

- | Character | Sound |
|------------|--|
| a | Like the a in "father" or the u in "up". |
| a' | The apostrophe indicates the sound before it is shortened by a sudden stop of breath and voice. The closest equivalent exists in this (poor) English example: "a owl". |
| ä | Like the a in "can". |
| b | Like the b in "boy". |
| c | This sounds like a slightly sharper English s. An English example is the ts sound in "cats". |
| c' | The apostrophe after the c indicates a "glottal stop". Temporarily close your air-way to build up a burst of air and then say the c. |
| ch | Like the ch in "chip". |
| ch' | The apostrophe following the ch indicates a "glottal stop". Position your tongue to say the ch sound, then put extra air pressure against your tongue and say the ch sound. |
| d | Identical to the English d, as in "dog". |
| e | Like the u in "up". |
| g | Identical to the English g, as in "give". |
| g | The g (deep g) sound is similar to the gargling sound. The deep g is a g sound made in the throat instead of the mouth. |
| h | Identical to the English h, as in "hill". |
| i | Like the ee in "seem". |
| j | Identical to the English j, as in "judge". |
| k | This is said like the English k in "kite". |
| k' | The apostrophe indicates a "glottal stop" after the k. Position your tongue for the normal k sound and then put extra pressure against your tongue as you say k sound. |
| l | This is the same as the English l, as in "lay". |
| l' | The "barred-L" has no English match. It is said similarly to the th sound in "think". First, position your tongue for the "th" sound and then slide the front tip of your tongue back so that it is touching the front of the roof of your mouth. Keep your tongue there and push air out, as you would with th. |
| m | Identical to the English m, as in "mother". |
| n | Identical to the English n, as in "need". |
| p | Identical to the English p, as in "proud". |
| p' | This is the p sound said with a "glottal stop". It is made by tightening the throat and adding extra pressure just before making the normal p sound. |
| q | This is said much like the c in "cool", only with the tongue even further back. The q sound forces the tongue to block air flow all the way at the very back of the mouth. |
| q' | The glottal q is pronounced by momentarily holding the normal q sound to build up pressure behind the tongue. Then, in a burst, release the pressure without exhaling and say the normal q. This result is sudden, louder, and sounds as if there is a catch in your throat. |
| s | Identical to the English s, as in "silly". |
| sh | Identical to the English sh, as in "shout". |
| t | Identical to the English t, as in "tall". |
| t' | The glottal t (hard t) is said by momentarily holding the normal t sound to build up pressure behind the tongue. Then, in a burst, release the pressure without exhaling and say the normal t. |
| tf | The "t-barred-l" sound is one for which, again, English has no equivalent. To pronounce this sound, position your tongue for the t sound, but say the t (barred-L) sound. |
| tf' | Say the the normal t-barred-l, but with more pressure behind the tongue. The result is a sharper, more sudden, and slightly louder tf sound. |
| u | Like the u in "pull". |
| w | Identical to the English w, as in "wash". |
| x | The x sounds similar to a clearing of the throat. As the middle of the tongue touches the top of the roof of the mouth, breathe out with a friction sound. |
| x | The "deep x" is same friction sound as x except that the tongue makes contact with the roof of the mouth as far back as possible. |
| y | Identical to the English y, as in "yellow". |
| z | Identical to the English z, as in "zoo". |

- | Character | Sound |
|------------|---|
| a | Like the a in "father". |
| aa | An elongated (held longer) a sound. |
| b | This is a cross between the English "b" and "v" sounds. It is closest to the pronunciation of the "b" sound except that the lips do not quite meet in the Numu b. |
| d | Identical to the English d, as in "dog". |
| dy | Like the English j in "judge". |
| dz | This sounds like the ds in "adds". |
| e | Like the ee in "seem". |
| ee | An elongated e. |
| g | Identical to the English g, as in "great". |
| h | Identical to the English h, as in "hill". |
| i | Like the i in "bite". |
| k | Like the English k, as in "kid". |
| kw | Like the English qu sound, as in "quiet". |
| m | Identical to the English m, as in "mother". |
| mm | An elongated m. This sound usually receives the emphasis in a word (like the double-m in the English word "commemorate"). |
| n | Identical to the English n, as in "need". |
| nn | An elongated n. This sound usually receives the emphasis in a word. |
| ng | Like the English ng, as in "sing". |
| o | Like the English o, as in "rope". |
| oa | Like the English oa, as in "koala". |
| oe | Like the English vowel sound in "coin". |
| oi | This sounds like English vowels in "coin". |
| oo | Identical to the English oo, as in "boot". |
| ooo | An elongated oo, like the English expression for what a cow says: Moo! |
| ooa | This sounds like how English would pronounce "oo-wa", but without a break after oo and with a softened w sound. |
| ooe | This sounds like the vowels in the English word "goosey". |
| ow | Like the English ow, as in "cow". |
| p | Identical to the English p, as in "proud". |
| s | Either like the English s (as in "silly") or like the English sh (as in "shop"), which of the two depends on what sounds are next to it. If the s is next to an e or an i, it sounds like the sh. (For example, the word "pesa" sounds like "p-ee-sh-a".) If there is no e or i next to the s, it is simply an English s. (For example, the word "soba" sounds like "s-o-b-a", with a long o like in rope.) |
| t | Identical to the English t, as in "tall". |
| ts | Like the English ts, as in "bits". |
| tz | Like the English ds, as in "loads", or like the "ts" in "cats". |
| u | This vowel doesn't have an exact match in English, but it is close to the "u" as in "put", but the lips aren't rounded. Instead they are flat—almost smiling—which makes it sound a little different. |
| uu | An elongated u. Like mm and nn, this long sound receives emphasis over other short sounds in a word. |
| w | This sound is a cross between an English w and an English m. It sounds like the w in "will", but softer. |
| y | Identical to the English y, as in "yellow". |
| z | Identical to the English z, as in "zoo". |

Numu also has several glottal stop characters (ones marked with an apostrophe immediately following them). However, unlike Kiksht and Ichishkiin, all of the Numu stops take place after vowels (such as a, oo, and u, for example). These vowels are pronounced like their un-stopped counter-parts except with a sudden end. A common example is the a vowel in the Numu word wuda'a. While English works to avoid these sounds, you can see examples in some (bad) English sentences, such as "a afternoon". The sound of the two neighboring a vowels is exactly the sound you hear in the Numu a'a combination. Another example can be seen on the previous page: pu'a. The u'a sound can be seen, approximately, in the English example "do a". The momentary catch in breath you would make after "do" is the same catch in breath that fits between the Numu u and a. So instead of simply sliding between vowel sounds, as happens in the Numu ooa, the glottal stop (apostrophe) marks a split-second interruption of breath and sound.

Keep watching this page over these coming weeks as we continue to learn more of our three languages. And, above all, take every opportunity to practice the words and sounds you learn here!