

# Chapter 1

## TEST DESIGN

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The Cherokee syllabary is a syllabary invented by Sequoyah to write the Cherokee language in 1819. Each of the characters represents one syllable.

The syllabary achieved almost instantaneous popularity, and for decades was used in the Cherokee Phoenix, a Cherokee newspaper. It has been used since it was formed to write letters, keep diaries, and record medical formulas. Although little new material is published in Cherokee, it is still used today to transcribe recipes, religious lore, folktales, etc. Knowledge of the syllabary is considered necessary for full Cherokee citizenship. According to evidence as of 1980, the (Western) Cherokee language is still spoken both formally and informally by around 10,000 people. The language remains strong, as the number of speakers has been continuing to increase since 1930.

Cherokee languages classes typically begin with a transliteration of Cherokee into Roman letters, only later incorporating the syllabary. The syllabary is finding increasingly diverse usage today, from books, newspapers, and websites to the street signs of Tahlequah, Oklahoma and Cherokee, North Carolina.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cherokee\\_alphabet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cherokee_alphabet)

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### 1.1 Accompanying Audio

The accompanying audio is available for download from <http://www.cherokeellessons.com/> at no charge. If you prefer, you can purchase

a physical disk containing the audio for this book as DRM-free MP3 files from <http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/wolfiee>.

## 1.2 On-line Support

It is strongly recommended that you join the on-line Cherokee Lessons website forum. Sign up is fast, free, and easy. Just visit <http://www.cherokeelessons.com/> and click on “Cherokee Discussions”. You will find people of all skill levels willing to help you in your journey of learning to speak, read, and write Cherokee.

## 1.3 Getting the most out of this material.

### 1.3.1 Dull repetition is not the answer!

For you to be able to learn the Cherokee Language and Syllabary, you need the vocabulary presented to you in a specially ordered fashion. Simply starting out by repeating a word over and over will not work. Your brain will quickly become numb to the information you are trying to learn and you will encounter great difficulty going beyond a dozen or so words. Instead what needs to be done is to have a challenge and response exercise in a specially crafted pattern that prevents the brain from becoming quickly numb to what we are trying to learn, giving us the ability to learn all great many words in very short order with a much longer retention time.

### 1.3.2 Graduated Interval Recall is the answer.

#### 1.3.2.1 Paraphrased from Wikipedia :

Graduated-interval recall is a specific method of spaced repetition, published by Paul Pimsleur in 1967. It is particularly suited to programmed audio instruction due to the very short times (measured in seconds or minutes) between the first few repetitions, unlike other forms of spaced repetition which may not require such precise timings.

Graduated Interval Recall is a complex name for a very simple theory about memory. No aspect of learning a foreign language is more important than memory, yet before

Dr. Pimsleur's work, no one had explored more effective ways for building language memory.

In his research, Dr. Pimsleur discovered how long students remembered new information and at what intervals they needed to be reminded of it. If reminded too soon or too late, they failed to retain the information.

### 1.3.3 How Graduated Interval Recall fits in.

After studying Dr. Pimsleur's Graduated Interval Recall methodology, I created special audio files to accompany this printed material for the different groupings of the Cherokee Vocabulary presented in this material, including bound pronouns and other associated word forms. If you did receive a copy of these audio files, please visit <http://www.cherokeelessons.com/> to download them free of charge. While there, please join the forums for free language assistance and all around general chat.

### 1.3.4 Audio Lesson Structure

Each set of audio lessons is composed of three main components:

#### 1.3.4.1 Syllabary Dictation Exercises

Learning to **write** and **read** Cherokee is very important for long term language retention and on-line communication.

#### 1.3.4.2 General Lectures

They explain important concepts like how plurals work, etc. You should be able to follow along with the printed material very closely.

Even if you don't understand the lectures in entirety, listen through each lecture at least once before doing the following vocabulary exercises.

If you find anything confusing and would like assistance, please visit us on the web at <http://www.cherokeelessons.com/>.

### 1.3.4.3 Vocabulary Exercises

This is where you will learn most of your vocabulary. Most individuals will need to repeat these exercises several times. These are the challenge response audio files that have been crafted based on the concepts behind the “Graduated Interval Recall” method.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.4 Syllabary

The Cherokee Alphabet is composed of written symbols that represent (or approximate) syllables, which make up words. This is why it is called a syllabary. A symbol in the Cherokee Syllabary typically represents a consonant sound followed by an optional vowel sound.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.5 Speaking

To speak Cherokee correctly, keep your lips still and the front of your tongue against your lower front teeth. One is supposed to use the middle of your tongue to make the “s”, “l”, and other sounds, not the tongue’s tip. This takes practice, don’t give up.

### 1.5.1 Tone

In the Durbin Feeling Dictionary and other source materials you will see references to pitch or tone. In most cases, the pitch or tone of a word or phrase does not impact its meaning, though there are a few exceptions.

Here we compare the Cherokee for salt and water:

- The Cherokee for water, “a-MA”, has a shortened “a” that is of a lower tone.
- The Cherokee for salt, “A-ma”, has both syllables of about equal length and of equal tone.

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<sup>1</sup>The example “timings” as published, were not used. His paper clearly states they were only for example usage, and were not the actual numbers he came up with that matched his student population at the time of the study.

<sup>2</sup><http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syllabary>

Cherokee	Pronunciation	Meaning
Dᵛ	a-MA	water
Dᵛ	A-ma	salt

You can also compare the musical scores representing pronunciation between the two:



### 1.5.2 Glottal stops

The glottal stop is a type of consonant sound used in many spoken languages. They are very common in Cherokee and the pronunciation column will be using a “?” to represent them.

English examples of glottal stops are the pause in “uh-oh!” and the “t” in “mitten” or “bitten”.

When you see a “?” in the pronunciation column, you should pause briefly before going on to the next syllable.

### 1.5.3 The Intrusive “H”

Periodically you will see an an extra “h” added to the beginning of a syllable in the pronunciation column, even though the matching syllabary does not start with an “h”. Except for the letters ᵗ, “hna”, and G, “nah”, this sound is not written. As the amount of “intrusive h” you will encounter will vary from speaker to speaker, you will hear some words with it, others without it.

### 1.5.4 “gi”? “ki”? “do”? “to”?

Sometimes you will see “ki”, “ko”, “ke”, or “to” in the pronunciation column, and the Cherokee letters for “gi”, “go”, “ge”, and “do” in the Syllabary column. Native speakers are accustomed to varying some “g” sounds towards “k” sounds and varying some “d” sounds towards “t” sounds. This can also be heard when you hear different people reciting the Syllabary as some individuals substitute “gw” for “qu”.

### 1.5.5 “tla”? “hla”?

Throughout this material, the syllables “tla”, “tle”, “tli”, “tlo”, “tlu”, and “tlv” can also be voiced “hla”, “hle”, “hli”, “hlo”, “hlu”, and “hlv” and you will see both forms used interchangeably in the pronunciation column. When voicing the “tl”/“hl” sound, one should drop the tongue straight down, which causes both “tla” and “hla” to sound almost alike.

### 1.5.6 Nasalization.

The “v” sound is always nasalized.

The last syllable in each word is many times nasalized.

## 1.6 “You” vs “YOU”

In this and future lessons, you will see references to “You”, “You and I”, “You Two”, “You All”, etc. Unlike English, Cherokee speech specifies relationships of “one to one”, “one to two”, “one to many”, “one to many but not you”, etc. While a strange concept at first for non-native Cherokee speakers, with a little practice, these relationships will become second nature and a natural part of your everyday Cherokee speech.

From this point onwards, if a quantity of people is not specified when using the word “you”, assume “you” is referring to a single person.

## 1.7 Writing

In this material are two Syllabary charts: one with English pronunciation marks (see Section 1.10 on page 9) and one without English pronunciation marks (see Section 1.11 on page 10), after your penmanship exercises, try sounding out each of the Syllabary characters starting where your penmanship exercises left off and working in reverse till you reach “D”. Try using the chart that does not have any pronunciation marks, referring to the one with pronunciation marks only as a last resort.

To be able to read and write Cherokee, you need to learn the Syllabary by writing it, not just reading it. You must do the penmanship exercises, making sure to sound out the letters each time you write them.

## 1.8 Let us say the letters.

Trying to keep your tongue against your lower front teeth and moving your lips as little as possible, practice sounding out each of the characters on the Syllabary on page 9. Repeat aloud along with the Syllabary on page 10 and the Syllabary sounds audio included on the Chapter 1 audio disk. Try and keep the tip of your tongue against your lower front teeth as you say aloud each letter.

## 1.9 Vocabulary

**Exercise 1.1.** Create flash cards from the following vocabulary list with the Cherokee words from the pronunciation column on one side and the English words on the other side. The act of creating your own flash cards helps with the learning process. With your study group, practice saying the Cherokee for the English, and the English for the Cherokee with the flash cards. Make sure your group has learned all of these phrases before moving on to the next section. For most effective use of your flash cards, use the Leitner system.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The Leitner system is a widely used method to efficiently use flashcards that was proposed by the German science journalist Sebastian Leitner in the 1970s. It is a simple implementation of the principle of spaced repetition, where cards are reviewed at increasing interval.

**Method** In this method flashcards are sorted into groups according to how well you know each one in the Leitner's learning box. This is how it works: you try to recall the solution written on a flashcard. If you succeed, you send the card to the next group. But if you fail, you send it back to the first group. Each succeeding group has a longer period of time before you are required to revisit the cards.

**Example** Suppose you have 3 groups called Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3. The cards in Group 1 are the ones that you often make mistakes with, and Group 3 contains the cards that you know very well. You might choose to study the Group 1 cards once a day, Group 2 every 3 days, and the Group 3 cards every 5 days. If you look at a Group 1 card and get the correct answer, you "promote" it to Group 2. A correct answer with a Group 2 card "promotes" that card to Group 3. If you make a mistake with a Group 2 or Group 3 card, it gets "demoted" to the first level, which forces you to study that card more often.

The advantage of this method is that you can focus on the most difficult flashcards, which remain in the first few groups. The result is, ideally, a reduction in the amount of study time needed.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leitner\\_system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leitner_system)

ᑎᑎᑎ	Pronunciation	English Translation
ᑎᑎᑎ	o'-si-yo'	Hello.
ᑎ	ni!	Look at that!
ᑎᑎ	a-yo!	Ouch!
ᑎᑎᑎᑎ	v-s-gi-gi	Really?
ᑎᑎ	ho-wa.	All right. Okay. Agreement.

**Exercise 1.2.** Add the following vocabulary to your flash cards. With your study group, practice saying the Cherokee for the English, and the English for the Cherokee with the flash cards. Make sure your group has learned all of these phrases before moving on to the next section.

ᑎᑎᑎ	Pronunciation	English Translation
ᑎᑎ	v: v'	Yes
ᑎ	tla' (hla')	No
ᑎᑎᑎ	ja-la-gi	Cherokee
ᑎᑎᑎ	yo-ne-ga	English



1.10 The Cherokee Syllabary, with English markings.

i<sup>v</sup> E<sup>gv</sup> &<sup>hv</sup> A<sup>lv</sup> O<sup>nv</sup> E<sup>quv</sup> R<sup>sv</sup> P<sup>dv</sup> C<sup>tlv</sup> G<sup>jv</sup> B<sup>wv</sup> Y<sup>yv</sup>

O<sup>u</sup> J<sup>gu</sup> I<sup>hu</sup> M<sup>lu</sup> Y<sup>mu</sup> A<sup>nu</sup> O<sup>quu</sup> S<sup>su</sup> P<sup>du</sup> J<sup>flu</sup> G<sup>ju</sup> C<sup>wu</sup> Y<sup>yu</sup>

O<sup>o</sup> A<sup>go</sup> H<sup>ho</sup> G<sup>lo</sup> S<sup>mo</sup> Z<sup>no</sup> W<sup>quo</sup> F<sup>so</sup> V<sup>do</sup> P<sup>tlo</sup> K<sup>jo</sup> Q<sup>wo</sup> R<sup>yo</sup>

T<sup>i</sup> Y<sup>gi</sup> A<sup>hi</sup> P<sup>li</sup> H<sup>mi</sup> h<sup>ni</sup> P<sup>qui</sup> b<sup>si</sup> J<sup>di</sup> C<sup>tli</sup> H<sup>ji</sup> O<sup>wi</sup> S<sup>yi</sup>

R<sup>e</sup> R<sup>ge</sup> P<sup>he</sup> O<sup>le</sup> H<sup>me</sup> A<sup>ne</sup> O<sup>que</sup> S<sup>se</sup> S<sup>de</sup> L<sup>tte</sup> V<sup>je</sup> W<sup>we</sup> B<sup>ye</sup>

D<sup>a</sup> S<sup>ga</sup> P<sup>ka</sup> W<sup>ha</sup> M<sup>la</sup> P<sup>ma</sup> O<sup>na</sup> T<sup>hna</sup> G<sup>nah</sup> I<sup>qua</sup> P<sup>sa</sup> W<sup>ta</sup> L<sup>dla</sup> C<sup>tla</sup> G<sup>ja</sup> C<sup>wa</sup> O<sup>ya</sup>

## 1.11 The Cherokee Syllabary, without English markings.

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S	Ꭰ	Ꭲ		Y	A	J	E
Ꭳ		Ꭴ		Ꭵ	F	Ꭶ	&
W		Ꭷ		Ꭸ	G	M	Ꭹ
Ꭺ		Ꭼ		H	Ꭽ	Y	
Ꭻ	Ꭳ	Ꭽ		Ꭾ	Z	Ꭾ	Ꭿ
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Ꭾ	Ꭶ	Ꮁ	Ꭾ	Ꮁ	Ꮃ	Ꮃ	Ꮂ
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ᐸ	ᐱ	ᐼ		ᐼ	ᐾ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᐹ	ᐲ	ᐾ		ᐾ	ᐿ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᐺ	ᐳ	ᐿ		ᐿ	ᑀ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᐻ	ᐴ	ᑀ		ᑀ	ᑁ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᐼ	ᐵ	ᑁ		ᑁ	ᑂ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᐾ	ᐶ	ᑂ		ᑂ	ᑃ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᐿ	ᐷ	ᑃ		ᑃ	ᑄ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑀ	ᐸ	ᑄ		ᑄ	ᑅ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑁ	ᐹ	ᑅ		ᑅ	ᑆ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑂ	ᐺ	ᑆ		ᑆ	ᑇ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑃ	ᐻ	ᑇ		ᑇ	ᑈ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑄ	ᐼ	ᑈ		ᑈ	ᑉ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑅ	ᐾ	ᑉ		ᑉ	ᑊ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑆ	ᐿ	ᑊ		ᑊ	ᑋ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑇ	ᑀ	ᑋ		ᑋ	ᑌ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑈ	ᑁ	ᑌ		ᑌ	ᑍ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑉ	ᑂ	ᑍ		ᑍ	ᑎ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑊ	ᑃ	ᑎ		ᑎ	ᑏ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑋ	ᑄ	ᑏ		ᑏ	ᑐ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑌ	ᑅ	ᑐ		ᑐ	ᑑ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑍ	ᑆ	ᑑ		ᑑ	ᑒ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑎ	ᑇ	ᑒ		ᑒ	ᑓ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ
ᑏ	ᑈ	ᑓ		ᑓ	ᑔ	Ꮡ	Ꮄ

i: as (i) in pique or pig, or short as (i) in pit

o: as (o) in note, approaching (aw) in law

u: as (oo) in fool, or short as (u) in pull

v: as (u) in but, nasalized

### Consonant Sounds

g: nearly as in English (g)oa**t**, but approaching to (k)ite. So that syllables beginning with g, except  $\mathfrak{S}$  (ga) will sometimes sound like (k).

d: nearly as in English (d)am, but approaching to (t)ask. In addition, as there are no (to), (tu), and (tv) symbols, words pronounced with these sounds are written with the V (do), S (du), or  $\mathfrak{D}$  (dv) symbols. One has to remember the pronunciation.

h k l m n q s t w y as in English.

The  $\mathfrak{T}$  (qua),  $\mathfrak{Q}$  (que),  $\mathfrak{P}$  (qui),  $\mathfrak{V}$  (quo),  $\mathfrak{W}$  (quu), and  $\mathfrak{E}$  (quv) are pronounced as though they were kwa, kwe, kwi, kwo, kwu, and kwv.

Syllables written with (tl) except  $\mathfrak{L}$  (tla) sometimes sound more like they start with (dl). When pronouncing the dla, tla, fle, tli, flo, flu, and tlv, place the tongue at the roof of the mouth and bring it down as you speak these syllables.

The j in  $\mathfrak{G}$  (ja),  $\mathfrak{V}$  (je),  $\mathfrak{I}$  (ji),  $\mathfrak{K}$  (jo),  $\mathfrak{J}$  (ju), and  $\mathfrak{C}$  (jv) normally has the sound of the (j) as in jaunt.<sup>5</sup>

The Syllabary does not provide symbols to indicate unvoiced vowels, glottal stops, lengthened vowels, and stressed syllables. These will be indicated in the pronunciation guides as follows:

- Unvoiced vowels: The syllable will be enclosed in parentheses (“”, “”). The consonant is usually combined with the previous syllable. Buffalo.  $\mathfrak{W}\mathfrak{H}$ 4. ya (na) se.<sup>6</sup>
- Glottal stops: A (?) will be inserted. A glottal stop is a very short pause to prevent syllables from combining together. Skunk.  $\mathfrak{I}\mathfrak{P}$ . di?li.
- Stress is indicated by (’) after the syllable.  $\mathfrak{D}\mathfrak{B}\mathfrak{H}$  O’ si yo’.
- A lengthened/double long vowel is indicated by a (:) after the vowel. I go.  $\mathfrak{P}\mathfrak{S}$ . ge: ga.

<sup>5</sup>In many texts you will see “ts-” instead of “j-”. “J-” is being used in this material and not “ts-” to eliminate observed confusion in students between “ts-” and “-st-”.

<sup>6</sup>In some writings, an apostrophe (’) replaces the unvoiced vowel.

## 1.13 Exercise

**Exercise 1.3.** Keeping your tongue against your lower front teeth and moving your lips as little as possible, recite the Syllabary on page 10 along with the audio found at <http://www.cherokee.org/Extras/Downloads/syllabary.html>. Repeat this exercise at least once a day until your next class.