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Oneida-English/English-Oneida Dictionary (review)

Edward J. Vajda

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Karin E. Michelson and Mercy A. Doxtator. *Oneida–English/English–Oneida Dictionary*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2002. Pp. xii + 1398. US\$150.00 (hardcover).

Reviewed by Edward J. Vajda, *Western Washington University*

This impressive volume is the most comprehensive lexical description ever produced for Oneida, a critically endangered Iroquoian language with fewer than 250 native speakers remaining. Most speakers live in Ontario, and this book represents their dialect. An earlier dictionary (Abbott, Christjohn, and Hinton 1996) described the other surviving dialect, Wisconsin Oneida, which has only about a dozen speakers. Differences between the two dialects (mentioned on p. 1) are rather minimal, and this dictionary occasionally includes Wisconsin forms for comparison. Although the Oneida Nation originally lived in what is today New York, there are no native-speaker communities left in that state, though speakers from the Ontario community are actively teaching Oneida as a second language there.

The dictionary's format is broadly similar to the *Tuscarora–English/English–Tuscarora* dictionary by Blair Rudes (1999), which the University of Toronto Press published earlier. The same press has also just published major dictionaries of two other Northern Iroquoian languages — *Onondaga* (Woodbury 2003) and *Cayuga* (Frohman et al. 2002). These and other comprehensive dictionaries of the languages of Canada's First Nations are in part an outgrowth of an initiative by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training aimed at recording and preserving the province's native linguistic diversity.

The Oneida dictionary project involved extensive collaboration between linguistics professor Karin E. Michelson (State University of New York at Buffalo) and native speaker Mercy A. Doxtator, who directed the Oneida Language Center from 1993 to 1997. Fifteen additional native contributors are listed on p. ix.

The volume is divided into three main parts: an Oneida–English dictionary (pp. 57–877), an English–Oneida dictionary (pp. 883–1275), and a series of appendices that offer an English-first thesaurus of Oneida vocabulary in selected semantic fields (pp. 1277–1398). There is also introductory material on Oneida history and traditional culture (pp. 1–3), a description of Oneida orthographic conventions (pp. 4–7), and a preliminary grammatical sketch (pp. 8–54). The latter prepares the user for the morphological complexities of the language by describing salient characteristics of different types of lexical bases, as well as functional categories of affixes and clitics. There are also several charts showing pronominal agreement prefixes, prepronominal prefixes, and aspect-conjugation markers. Much of this material builds on the excellent analytical work done by Floyd Lounsbury (1953). Major morpho-phonological processes are also described, and there is a small discussion of idiolectal variation (pp. 53–54). Although a full grammatical description

of the language is not provided, of course, this material does furnish a sort of minimum essential to any serious user of the dictionary, given that Oneida lexical and inflectional morphology differs radically from that of English.

Overall, the dictionary includes over 6,000 Oneida lexemes. The Oneida–English section richly focusses on morphological structure by listing bases as well as bound-morphemes, clitics, and particles as separate entries. Each of these is cross-referenced to other morphemes that combine with it. The individual entries contain many short examples of full words or short phrases. Examples of verbal bases contain forms showing the base used as part of a full utterance in a variety of tenses and aspects. This plethora of verb forms helps compensate for the absence of exhaustive conjugational paradigms in the dictionary’s introductory section. Because of the language’s polysynthetic nature, single-word sentences predominate over multi-word examples. But enough complex sentences can be found among the examples to provide substantial illustration of the language’s basic syntactic patterns.

The English–Oneida section is shorter and focusses less explicitly on word-internal morphological detail. Nevertheless, even here the information provided far exceeds a simple vocabulary list that would have been useful only for looking up isolated words. For instance, the typical verb entry contains several different conjugated forms, which provide the user with an understanding of how the given lexeme is actually used in different speech situations. This also faithfully reflects the typological profile of Oneida, a language (like the other members of the Iroquoian family) in which verb forms predominate over simple nouns and in which even many basic nominal concepts cannot be expressed without the addition of verb-like affixal morphology. For example, inalienably possessed nouns denoting body parts or clothing are given in combination with a variety of possessor prefixes, and adjectival concepts such as ‘narrow’ are expressed by stative verbs given in various tense-aspect forms. A more laconic method of dealing with such English–Oneida entries would have completely failed to transmit the morphological complexity and typological flavour of the language. The approach taken here, by contrast, is well tailored to the structure of the language and makes the dictionary very usable, though at first perhaps a bit daunting to the uninitiated non-speaker.

For those wishing simply to pick up some basic, straightforward Oneida vocabulary, the series of four appendices at the volume’s end (pp. 1279–1398) will be of the most immediate use. These appendixes provide thematic lists of selected Oneida vocabulary, grouped according to dozens of semantic categories. Appendix 1 contains animals, birds, trees, colours, foods, and fifteen other nominal categories. Appendix 2 contains thirteen categories of vocabulary pertaining to family, kinship, or the human body. Appendix 3 lists words in eleven categories revolving around household and community (e.g., clothing, games, measures, money, etc.). Finally, Appendix 4 provides a brief list of exclamations and slang expressions.

This superb dictionary offers magnificent testimony to what can be achieved through persistent collaboration between professional linguists and native speaker communities. With its clarity and breadth of scholarship, it will be of enormous use both to native pedagogues and scholars of linguistics. Despite its price, this book is essential to anyone seriously interested in Oneida language or culture. Given the endangered state of the language, it is not likely ever to be superseded.

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J.K. Chambers, Peter Trudgill, and Natalie Schilling-Estes, eds. *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*. Oxford: Blackwell. 2002. Pp. xii + 807. US\$124.95 (hardcover).

Reviewed by Gerard Van Herk, *University of Ottawa*

The Handbook of Language Variation and Change is the most recent volume of Blackwell's linguistics handbook series, described by its editors as "a convenient, hand-held repository of the essential knowledge about the study of language variation and change" (introduction, p. 2). The volume pushes the boundaries of "hand-held" at 807 pages, considerably longer than Blackwell's earlier *Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, which itself includes a substantial variationist component.

Following a brief introduction and "An Informal Epistemology" (J.K. Chambers), the book is divided into five parts: methodologies, linguistic structure, social factors, contact, and language and societies.

As the search for masses of vernacular data is a goal and a distinguishing characteristic of variationist research, it is appropriate that the handbook begins with discussions of methodology. The "Field Methods" section includes chapters on fieldwork, focussing on the sociolinguistic interview and advance preparation (Crawford Feagin); language attitudes, dealing more with findings than methodology (Dennis R. Preston); the advantages and pitfalls of written materials (Edgar W. Schneider); and the use of large, electronically searchable text databases (Laurie Bauer). The "Evaluation" section is made up of chapters on the quantitative paradigm, particularly multivariate analysis with VARBRUL and related computer programmes (Robert Bayley); implicational scales, once highly influential in the analysis of linguistic continua (John R. Rickford); and an overview of the use of instrumental phonetics in sociolinguistics (Erik R. Thomas).

Part two of the handbook deals with linguistic structure. Chapters discuss the links between variationist work and current theoretical phonology, especially Optimality Theory (Arto Anttila); the role of chain shifts and mergers in sound change (Matthew J. Gordon); the relationship of variation to (Chomskyan) syntactic theory (Alison Henry); and a (largely negative) discussion of the relatively young field of variationist discourse analysis (Ronald Macaulay).

Part three, the book's longest section by far, is concerned with social factors, divided into subsections on time, social differentiation, and domains. The "Time" section includes