# First, Second, and Third Person Imperatives in Kanien'kéha

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# Background

- Most languages have a special sentential form used uniquely to express a command or request. Such directive clauses are called **imperatives**.

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## LISTEN TO THIS TALK!

- English imperatives:　 no subject/no agreement　　 →　　 **command!**

# Background

- Inherently, a command involves the speaker and the addressee.
    - **Speaker** directs the command
    - **Addressee** carries out the command

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- Inherently, a command involves the speaker and the addressee.
  - **Speaker** directs the command
  - **Addressee** carries out the command


- Typically, imperative subjects have a restricted interpretation → second person

**(You) Listen to this talk!          *The table be clean!**

# Puzzle

- In Kanien'kéha (Iroquoian): standard imperatives mark second person subjects and share the same interpretation as in English.

(1) **Sew**-atahónhsatat!

**2plA**-listen

'Listen!'

# Puzzle

- BUT, unlike English (and most other languages), the same form can also be used with first and third person subjects.

(2) **Iakw**-atahónhsatat!

**1pl.exclA**-listen

'Let's listen!'

(3) **Sew**-atahónhsatat!

**2plA**-listen

'Listen!'

(4) **Kon**-tahónhsatat!

**FplA**-listen

'May they listen!'

**FIRST**

**SECOND**

**THIRD**

# Puzzle

- In English, each of these would be considered a different type of speech act...

(2) **Iakw**-atahónhsatat!

    **1pl.exclA**-listen

    'Let's listen!'

(3) **Sew**-atahónhsatat!

    **2plA**-listen

    'Listen!'

(4) **Kon**-tahónhsatat!

    **FplA**-listen

    'May they listen!'

**Hortative**  **Imperative**  **Optative**

# Puzzle

- In English, each of these would be considered a different type of speech act...<u>but in Kanien'kéha, they're all the same</u>.

(2) <span style="color:red">Iakw</span>-atahónhsatat!

**1pl.exclA**-listen

'Let's listen!'

(3) <span style="color:red">Sew</span>-atahónhsatat!

**2plA**-listen

'Listen!'

(4) <span style="color:red">Kon</span>-tahónhsatat!

**FplA**-listen

'May they listen!'

**Hortative**     =     **Imperative**     =     **Optative**

# Puzzle

- Why do Kanien'kéha imperatives allow first, second, and third person subjects while most other languages have restrictions?

- How does a single form in Kanien'keha do the semantic work of three (or more) forms in languages like English?

# Main claims

- All Kanien'kéha imperative forms are the same directive speech act but this speech act is relatively weak.

  - Standard imperatives create an action item and assign it to someone (typically the addressee).

  - Kanien'kéha imperatives just make the action item without specifying who it's assigned to.

# Main claims

- Kanien'kéha imperatives are underspecified commands…

  **English**: I want [you to listen] and **YOU** are in charge of making that happen.

  **Kanien'kéha**:  I want [you to listen] and **someone** is in charge of making that happen.

- The interpretation of Kanien'kéha imperatives is determined <u>pragmatically</u>. When you're talking to someone, it's implied that you want them to carry out the command but it's not required.

# Roadmap

1. **Background on Kanien'kéha**
2. Imperatives in Kanien'kéha
3. Past analyses of imperatives
4. Proposal
5. Conclusion

# Kanien'kéha (a.k.a. Mohawk)



HISTORIC AND CURRENT HAUDENOSAUNEE TERRITORY
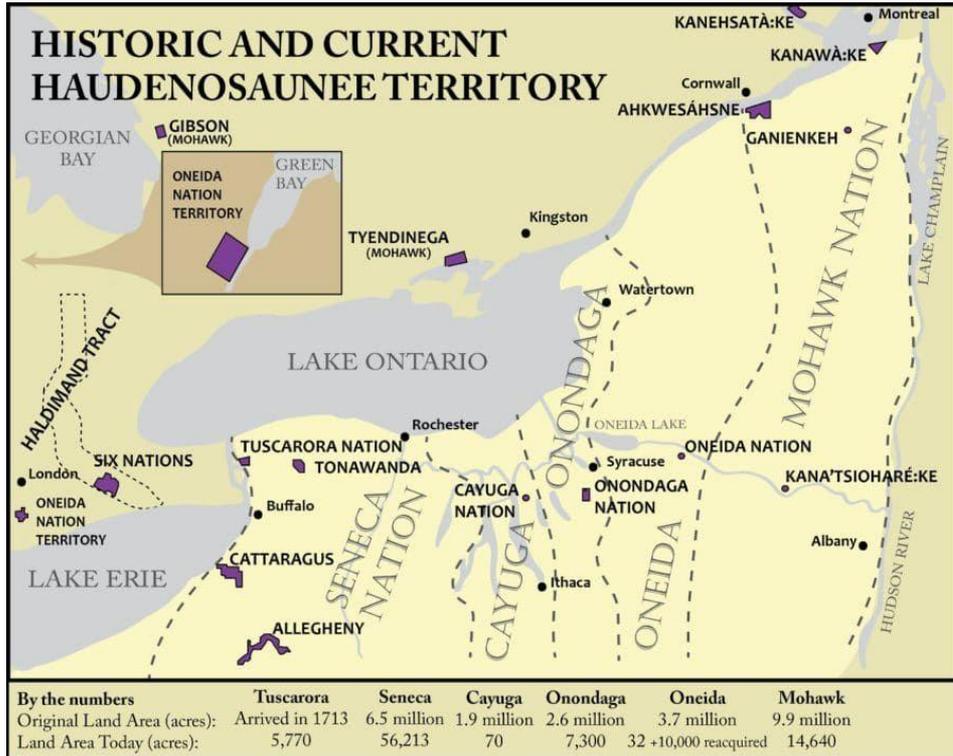
- Northern Iroquoian language

- Spoken by ~600 people by Quebec, Ontario, and New York

- most speakers are L1 Elders but growing number of fluent L2s

# Grammar background: basic verb

- Polysynthetic

- Lots of verbal morphology

(MOOD – ) AGREEMENT – VERB STEM – ASPECT

(5)  **Enkatá:wen'.**
en-k-atawen-'
FUT-1sgA-swim-PUNC
'I will swim.'

# Grammar background: agreement

- Agent vs. patient

   (6)  a.  Ra-hiaton-s.
              MsgA-write-HAB
              '**He** writes.'

        b.  Ro-tetshen-s.
              MsgP-dream-HAB
              '**He** dreams.'

- Intransitive vs. transitive

   (7)  a.  Kon-hrori-s.
              1sg>2sg-tell-HAB
              '**I** tell **you**.'

        b.  Tak-hrori-s.
              2sg>1sg-tell-HAB
              '**You** tell **me**.'

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# Roadmap

# Form of Kanien'kéha imperatives

- All Kanien'kéha imperatives share a single form.

- Bare verb form → no aspect or mood

(10)  **En**-hs-hiaton-**'**!          (11)  S-hiaton!

FUT-2plA-write-PUNC                2plA-write

'You will write.'                      'Write!'

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# Form of Kanien'kéha imperatives

- If you've been to a Kanien'kehá:ka community…

  (12)   Te-s-ta'n!

         DUP-2plA-stop

         'Stop!'

# The full paradigm: person/number

| *'hiaton,'* to write | First | Second | Third |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Singular** | k-hiá:ton-s | s-hiá:ton-s | ra-hiá:ton-s |
| **Dual** | teni-hiá:ton-s | seni-hiá:ton-s | ni-hiá:ton-s |
| **Plural** | tewa-hiá:ton-s | sewa-hiá:ton-s | rati-hiá:ton-s |

# The full paradigm: agent/patient

(13)  Declarative
   a.  Ra-hiaton-s.
      MsgA-write-HAB
      'He writes.'

   b.  Ro-tetshen-s.
      MsgP-dream-HAB
      'He dreams.'

(14)  Imperative
   a.  Ra-hiaton!
      MsgA-write
      'May he write!'

   b.  Ro-tetshen.
      MsgP-dream
      'May he dream.'

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# The full paradigm: transitives

(15)  Declarative

    a.   Kon-hrori-s.
        1sg>2sg-tell-HAB
        'I tell **you**.'

    b.   Tak-hrori-s.
        2sg>1sg-tell-HAB
        '**You** tell **me**.'

(16)  Imperative

    a.   Kon-hrori.
        1sg>2sg-tell
        'Let me tell you!"

    b.   Tak-hrori.
        2sg>1sg-tell
        '(You) tell me.'

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# Properties of imperative clauses

- Imperative clauses in Kanien'kéha exhibit many widely documented cross-linguistic properties of imperatives (Portner 2017).

  1. cannot be true or false
  2. cannot be embedded
  3. exhibit non-canonical negation

# Property 1: True/false

(17)  a.  **Ra-hnekihra!**

MsgA-drink

'May he drink!'

b.  #Iah tóske té:-ken!

NEG true NEG-be

'That's not true'

- Just like in English, it's infelicitous to say that an imperative is true or false.

# Property 2: Embedding

(18)  *Te-wak-atonhontsioni **s-hnekihra**!

DUP-1sgP-need          1sgA-drink

Intended: 'I need you to drink!'

(19)  Te-wak-atonhontsioni a-hs-hnekihra!

DUP-1sgP-need        OPT-1sgA-drink

'I need you to drink!'

- Imperatives can't be embedded.

- Embedded clauses require mood and aspect marking.

# Property 3: Negation

(20)  *Iah te-**s**-hnekihra

NEG NEG-3sgA-drink-HAB

Intended: 'Don't drink!'

- Imperatives can't use standard negation.

**(21)  Tohsa s-hnekihra!**

Don't 3sgA-drink

'Don't drink!'

- They use an alternative strategy with the particle *tóhsa*.

# Interpreting Kanien'kéha imperatives

- One area in which Kanien'kéha imperatives DO NOT pattern like canonical imperatives is in their interpretation.

  - In most languages, the imperative subject must refer to <u>the addressee or a set containing the addressee</u>.

# Interpreting Kanien'kéha imperatives

- True for second person imperatives in Kanien'kéha, which have the classic <u>imperative</u> interpretation.

(22)  S-atahonhsatat!

**2sgA**-listen

'Listen!'

(23)  Sew-atahonhsatat!

**2plA**-listen

'Listen!'

# Interpreting Kanien'kéha imperatives

- But…the subject of first person imperatives, does **not** need to include the addressee.

(24)    K-atahonhsatat!

       **1sgA**-listen

       'Let me listen!' / 'I'll listen!'

(25)    Iakw-atahonhsatat!

       **1pl.exclA**-listen

       'Let's listen (not incl. you)!'

# Interpreting Kanien'kéha imperatives

- And third person imperatives <u>never</u> include the addressee.

(26)   Ion-tahonhsatat!

         **FIsgA**-listen

         'May she listen!'

(27)   Kon-tahonhsatat!

         **FZplA**-listen

         'May they listen!'

# Interpreting Kanien'kéha imperatives

Context: you and John went out last night and he drank a lot. This morning, you're talking with a friend who's never met John. You don't know where John is this morning but you're worried about his hangover.

(28)  Ohnekanos ra-hnekihra!
water         MsgA-drink

'May he drink water!'

→ This utterance demands **<u>nothing</u>** of the addressee.

# Summary

- Kanien'kéha look and pattern like canonical imperatives.
    - reduced verbal form – no mood/aspect
    - unique speech act – no embedding, special negation, etc.

- They differ from standard imperatives in two key ways:
    - full paradigm of subject inflection
    - there is no demand on the addressee (or anyone else!)

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- They differ from standard imperatives in two key ways:
    - full paradigm of subject inflection
    - there is no demand on the addressee (or anyone else!)

    → **How do we account for this variation?**

# Roadmap

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3. **Past analyses of imperatives**
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# Imperatives and to-do lists (Portner 2004)

- Each person in a conversation has a To-Do List of properties which he/she wants to realize in the most ideal world.

- Imperatives are properties that are assigned to someone's To-Do List.

**Leave!**

= property of leaving, assigned to addressee by speaker

# Semantic/pragmatic approach

- Who gets assigned the To-Do is based on context.

- Typically, this is the addressee because otherwise the speech act is not very useful.

    - But the Kanien'kéha third person imperative is exactly this sort of speech act…

# Syntactic approach (Zanuttini et al. 2012)

- Something in the syntax determines who gets assigned a To-Do.

- Imperative operator (=Jussive head)
    - takes a proposition
    - makes a property (To-Do item)
    - assigns it to someone's To-Do List

- JUSS has person features which determine the assignee.

    *(formally, interpreted person features → presupposition restricting domain of imperative property)*

# 1st/2nd person imperatives

(29)  a.   Cemsim-ul sa-**ma**.

lunch-ACC  buy-**1sg.IMP**

I will buy lunch!'

b.   Cemsim-ul sa-**ca**.

lunch-ACC  buy-**1pl.IMP**

'Let's buy lunch!'

c.   Cemsim-ul sa-**la**.

lunch-ACC  buy-**2.IMP**

'Buy lunch!'                        (Korean)

- Person agreement determines who is assigned the To-Do item.

  ○  **1sg** = promissive
  ○  **1pl** = exhortative
  ○  **2** = imperative

# Third person imperatives

(30)   Kʰa:y!

eat.**3pl**.IMP

'Eat! (polite)' / 'Let him eat!'

(Bhojpuri)

- **How does this work???**

  - ○ Agreement doesn't denote a speech act participant…

# Third person imperatives

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- **Proposal:**
  - addressee is still assigned [2]

# Third person imperatives

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(Bhojpuri)

- **Proposal:**
  - addressee is still assigned [2]

- Available readings
  - Polite second person

    → you eat!

  - Directive

    → you make him eat!

# But...a third reading...

(30)  Kʰa:y!

eat.**3pl**.IMP

'Eat! (polite)' / 'Let him eat!' / **'May he eat!'**

(31)  Tebulwa: sa:ph rahe!

table.NOM clean NOM be.**3sg**.IMP

**'(Let) the table be clean!'**

(Bhojpuri)

- **Agreement doesn't signal assignee.**

- **No default assignee.**

- **No assignee at all!**

# Back to Kanien'kéha…

(31)  Ohné:kanos ra-hnekì:ra!
      water        MsgA-drink

      '(May) he drink water!'

- Even clearer than Bhojpuri → only one reading.
  - No one is in charge of the To-Do item.

  - Agreement/person features aren't doing anything extra.

  - Same form as all other uses.

# Back to Kanien'kéha...

(31)   Ohné:kanos ra-hnekì:ra!
       water         MsgA-drink

       '(May) he drink water!'

**A syntactic approach is also challenging!**

- Even clearer than Bhojpuri → only one reading.
  - Agreement doesn't denote assignee.

  - No one is in charge of the To-Do item (even though same form as "assigning" imperatives).

# Roadmap

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# Proposal

- Kanien'kéha imperatives are **underspecified jussive speech acts**.

- Like other imperatives, they denote properties and these properties are assigned to a To-Do List…

- …but whose To-Do List is determined **pragmatically**, not syntactically.

# How it works

- An imperator operator (Jussive head) takes a vP denoting a proposition...

    [ JUSS   [John drink water] ]

- ...and makes a property to add to someone's To-Do List.

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- An imperator operator (Jussive head) takes a vP denoting a proposition…

  [ JUSS    [John drink water] ]

- …and makes a property to add to someone's To-Do List.


- However, JUSS has no person features (or other assigning mechanisms).

  →    no presuppositions about whose To-Do List gets the To-Do Item.

# How it works

- <u>The result</u>: a To-Do Item that is assigned to <u>someone's</u> To-Do List, but whose is left up to pragmatics.

$$[ \lambda x : x \text{ is determined by } c, [ \lambda w. \text{ John drinks water in } w ] ]$$

**→ in some ideal world, John drinks water!**

# Consequences

- Even with first and second person imperatives in Kanien'kéha, the owner of the To-Do list is unspecified…directive/hortative readings arise pragmatically.

- Interpreting imperatives cannot be wholly determined by the syntax.

- Cross-linguistic variation in featural specification on Jussive head.

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# Conclusion

- Imperatives in Kanien'kéha exhibit many of the classic traits of imperatives cross-linguistically.

- However, unlike most imperatives, they display the full range of subjects, complete with subject agreement.

- Most significantly, third person imperatives obligatorily have an "optative" reading (no assignee) → typologically rare

# Conclusion

- To account for these empirical facts, we proposed an analysis of imperatives which mixes past syntactic and semantic/pragmatic approaches.

  - Syntax:         IMP + vP
  - Semantics:     property assigned to a To-Do List
  - Pragmatics:    <u>WHOSE</u> To-Do List is contextually decided

# Takeaways

- **Linguistic:** not all directive speech acts are created equal
  - subject restrictions
  - uses
  - pragmatics

- **Pedagogical**: thorough documentation of the imperative form, and its difference from L1 English, for L2 learners of Kanien'kéha

# Niá:wen!

- Mary Onwá:ri Tekahawáhkwen McDonald
- Kaherienentha Martha Lickers
- Roti'nikonhrowá:nens
- Jessica Coon, Alan Bale, Max Blackburn

# Appendix 1: second person singular

- Second person singular agreement in imperatives is slightly different than in other clause types.

Te-**s**-ta'n　　　　　(Imperative)

DUP-**2sgA**-stop

ten-**hs**-ta'ne-'　　　(Declarative)

DUP-**2sgA**-stop-PUNC

# Appendix 2: L2 Revitalization Efforts

5 full-time adult immersion schools:

- Onkwawén:na Kentyóhkhwa
- Ratiwennahní:rats
- Ratiwennenhá:wi
- Shatiwennakará:tats
- Á:se tsi Tewá:ton

Child immersion programs started in the 1970s - movement led by the Akwesasne Freedom School, and also in Kahnawà:ke particularly in response to Bill 101.

Community language groups:
- Ionkwahronkha'onhátie'
- Iakwawennenhá:wi
- Skátne Ionkwaweientehta'onhátie
- Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkhwa
- Tsi Tyónhnheht Onkwawén:na

# Appendix 3: imperative vs. other speech acts

**Declaratives**      T/F test seen above

**Questions**      *Ohné:kanos ken ra-hnekì:ra.      → Can't use with QP

                    water        QP  MsgA-drink

                    Intended: 'Drink water?'

**Exclamatives**      *Na-ha-hnekì:ra.                    → can't use with PART

                    PART-MsgA-drink

                    Intended: 'Drink so much water.'

# Appendix 4: Grammar background: aspect

- 3 aspect suffixes
- Always required!

(8)

a. K-hninon-s.
1sgA-buy-HAB
'I buy it.'

**Imperfective**

b. Wa'-k-hninon-'.
FACT-1sgA-buy-PUNC
'I bought it.'

**Perfective**

c. Wak-hninon-∅.
1sgP-buy-STAT
'I have bought it.'

**Perfect**

# Appendix 4: Grammar background: mood

- 3 mood prefixes

- Not always required!

(9)

a. Wa'-k-hninon-'.
FACT-1sgA-buy-PUNC
'I bought it.'

**Factual**

b. En-k-hninon-'.
FUT-1sgA-buy-PUNC
'I will buy it.'

**Future**

c. A-k-hninon-'.
OPT-1sgA-buy-PUNC
'I might/should buy it.'

**Optative (Indefinite)**