

WHO is doing the action to someone or something else

Cherokee language has another set of sounds that can go in the WHO column of the Grandmother Chart, replacing the sounds above. These describe precisely WHO is doing the action to someone or something else. For example, you can say: “I am helping,” *gasdeliha*. Or you can say “I am helping you,” *gvsdeliha*, or “You are helping me,” *sgisdeliha*.

Here are some examples of the most commonly used options:
 Using *gv-* in the WHO column means “I am doing something to you.”
 Using *sgi-* in the WHO column means “You are doing something to me.”
 Using *tsi-* in the WHO column means “I am doing something to him, her, or it.”
 Using *agi-* in the WHO column means “He/she or it is doing something to me.”

				<i>English</i>	<i>in syllables for pronunciation</i>
WHO	WHAT	HOW	WHEN		
g	asdeli	h	a	I am helping	ga sde li ha
gvy	asdeli	h	a	I am helping you	gv ya sde li ha
sgiy	asdeli	h	a	You are helping me	sgi ya sde li ha
tsiy	asdeli	h	a	I am helping he/she/it	tsi ya sde li ha
agw	asdeli	h	a	He/she/it is helping me	a gwa sde li ha
				I am being helped	

This aspect of how Cherokee language works was first documented by missionary/linguists in the early 1800s, who seemed fascinated by it. Rev. Daniel Sabine Butrick and Rev. Samuel Worcester documented the many sounds that are used in this way, supplied to them by Cherokee speakers. Worcester’s conjugation of “tying” with all these forms has been quoted by almost every Cherokee language scholar since 1830. In 1979 William Cook made a graph showing fifty-seven possibilities. In 2007 we made a chart showing the Cherokee patterns of these beginnings.

Using this chart makes Cherokee language simple and easy. Other methods of teaching Cherokee teach that there are three sets of pronouns that you must learn and must understand what verbs to use them with. We simplify this by showing you that in the patterns of the language, there is only WHO is doing the action (the ten possibilities in the WHO column) OR someone is doing the action to someone else.

For example, you can say “I am speaking,” *gawoniha*, or you can say, “I am speaking it,” *tsiwoniha*. Remember that *tsi-* means “I am doing the action to him/her/or it.”

				<i>English</i>	<i>in syllables for pronunciation</i>
WHO	WHAT	HOW	WHEN		
g	awoni	h	a	I am speaking	ga wo ni ha
tsi	awoni	h	a	I am speaking it	tsi wo ni ha

You would use this in a sentence like: “I am speaking Cherokee,” *Tsalagi tsiwoniha*. For some Cherokee words, people understand this as the form that should be used, because the meaning of the word often includes doing the action to someone or something else.

For other Cherokee words, WHO is always in the form of “He/she/or it is doing the action to me.” You saw “I am being helped” *agisdeliha*. When you’re talking about “being hungry,” or “getting warm” the Cherokee words have this sense of being passive, like the action is being done to me. The distinction is really simple: Am I doing an action, or not?

WHO	WHAT	HOW	WHEN		
agi	yosi	h	a	I am hungry	a gi yo si ha
agi	ganowo	sg	a	I am getting warm	a gi ga no wo sga

About one-third of Cherokee words are in this category of not being an action. This distinction goes back thousands of years, and is also common in the Siouan languages, like Lakota and Catawba. You cannot compare it to English grammatical forms like transitive and intransitive, or active and passive, because Cherokee does not work like this. It has its own patterns. For example in English, you can want “something,” so want is considered an active verb. “I want coffee.” You can say this in Cherokee, too: *Kowi agwaduliha*, but wanting is still considered a feeling, not an action.