

## Lesson 2:1

Core concept: **FRONTING** for focus/emphasis.

Something that English doesn't do so much, but lots of other languages do, is to blurt out the most important part of the sentence first – and then get around to saying the rest of the sentence. It's like saying “Mushrooms, I don't like on my pizza”, where the main thing on the speaker's mind is to make a contrast with stuff like pepperoni or extra cheese.

Chinook Jargon, particularly our Northern dialect, loves to do this kind of blurting a thing out early. This moving stuff to the start of the sentence, we call “fronting” that thing.

We think the best way to teach a lot of our Year 2 concepts to you is, to just show you real examples from fluent speakers. You'll get a good hang of how to “front” things by reading and thinking about these instances.

Here, we'll show you how a real person used these techniques in one of his letters. We'll **orange-highlight** where fronting is happening. Helpful hint: speakers often front spotlighted expressions like “only this” and “about this”:

**Kopa iht naika tikki wawa kopa maika...**

*about one I want talk to you...*

“There's one thing I want to talk to you about...”

-- Chief Narcisse of Sahhalkum, BC

...which is the “fronted” version of the usual **Naika tikki wawa kopa maika kopa iht**, “I want to talk to you about one thing.” You might think of the fronted expression very literally, if you like, as “About one thing, I want to talk to you...”

Here's another example, where the speaker is fronting a thing that he's really interested in focusing on:

**Okok Chinook-Peipa naika tolo.**

*this Chinook-writing I master*

“I'm mastering this Chinook Writing!”

-- Jimmy Michel, Quilchena/Spahomin, BC

...which is a “fronting” of the normal **Naika tolo okok Chinook-Peipa**, “I'm mastering this Chinook Writing.” Again, if you like, you can take the fronted expression literally as “This Chinook writing, I'm mastering it”.

A useful trick for translating sentences like these into English can be to start with “It's”, as in “It's one thing...” and “It's this Chinook Writing...”

You can even front really big groups of words, as you see here:

**Pi kopa okok tanas-peipa maika lolo kopa nesaika, dleit nesaika tl'ap-tloosh-tumtum.**  
*and about that little-paper you bring to us, really we get-good-heart*  
“And we really got happy about that little paper you brought us!”  
-- Jules the watchman & Frank Eugene, Sechelt, BC

A variation on fronting a thing to the start of the whole *sentence* is, to “front” that thing only to the beginning of its *phrase*, like here (also from Chief Narcisse):

**Poos maika tikki ikta wawa...**  
*if you want anything say*  
“If you want to say anything at all...”

...where **ikta wawa** is the “fronting” version of the normal **wawa ikta** ‘say something’.

For another example of fronting that’s just inside of a phrase (instead of a whole sentence), look at this:

**...yaka tayi(,) okok kanawei post-ofis...**  
*its boss, those all post-office...*  
“the boss of all those post offices (the postmaster)”  
-- Charlie the watchman, Sliammon, BC

The normal version of a possessive phrase like this is **okok kanawei post-ofis yaka tayi**, “all those post offices’ boss”.

All of this “fronting” has lots to do with Chinook Jargon’s preferences of how to build all normal sentences. By this, we mean that CJ likes to say intransitive sentences (the ones with just a subject and a verb) as (first) the Verb (and then) the Subject, like these, also from Chief Narcisse:

**mimaloos naika iktas**  
*be.dead my property*  
“My cattle are dead.” (Dead are my cattle.)

**Tloosh heilo sik maika tumtum.**  
*good not hurting your heart*  
“Please don’t be upset.” (It’s good if your heart isn’t hurting.)

And this from Kikisoblu, Duwamish Tribe, Washington:

**Kanawei mimaloos Boston ilep chako.**  
*all die White.person first come*  
“The Whites who came here first have all died.’

In most intransitive sentences, like these, the most important information is the event that’s happening. Because the subject of them doesn’t have any control over the situation to speak of, the subject gets left till the end, while the verb gets fronted.

And for comparison, normal transitive sentences typically have a subject, who has some control over a situation, doing something to an object – so it's this much more important subject that then comes first in the sentence, as in the following from Chief Narcisse:

**Naika heilo tikki mash naika iktas.**

*I not want leave my property*  
“I don't want to leave my cattle.”

**Mamook peipa kopa yakwa.**

*make writing to here*  
“Send a letter over here.”

So, having the subject first is normal, in a transitive sentence – but when it doesn't come first, because some other part of the sentence got bumped up the front, that other thing has been fronted.

### *Exercises 2:1*

Now that you have some understanding of “fronting”, try translating these real sentences! (Use the Vocabulary freely, too.)

- 1 **Kakwa, kopitt iht peipa naika tz'um.**  
*so, only one newspaper I write*  
-- Kamloops Wawa #9
- 2 **Kanawei-ikta maika mamook-tz'um kopa okok tanas-book(.)**  
*every-thing you make-write in that little-book*  
-- Baptiste Simon, “Little” (Shuswap?) Lake, BC
- 3 **Kopitt kopa ilii tlaska tumtum.**  
*only about be.alive they think*  
-- Father FM Thomas, Williams Lake, BC
- 4 **Kopitt okok naika syutsum kopa maika.**  
*only this I report to you*  
-- Pete Nhinaskrit, Alkali Lake, BC
- 5 **Wuht iht naika tikki wawa kopa maika.**  
*also one I want say to you*  
-- Pete Nhinaskrit, Alkali Lake, BC
- 6 **(Kopa) iht naika dleit sik-tumtum.**  
*(about) one I really hurting-heart*  
-- Charlie the watchman, Sliammon, BC

- 7 **...Kopa okok naika tikki wawa kopa maika.**  
*...about this I want talk to you*  
 -- Chief Narcisse, Sahhalkum, BC
- 8 **Dleit haiyoo peipa alta yaka mamook kakwa.**  
*really lots.of letters now he do like.that*  
 -- Charlie the watchman, Sliammon, BC
- 9 **Kopa okok naika tolo tanas-haiyoo chikmin.**  
*from this I earn little-lot money*  
 -- Johnny Sam, Secwépemc\* of BC
- 10 **Pi yawa masaika haiyoo mukmuk mitlait.**  
*and then you.folks lots.of food have*  
 -- old Chief Adam, quoted by William Waspulawh, Canoe Creek, BC
- 11 **Kopa maika Pir Lshyun nesaika mamook-peipa**  
*to you Father Le.Jeune we make-letter*  
 -- Jules the watchman & Frank Eugene, Sechelt, BC
- 12 **Okok sitkum-tala(,) Looi Astkwa yaka pii (Ø).**  
*this half-dollar; Louis Astkwa he pay it*  
 -- William Waspulawh, Canoe Creek, BC

### *Tips for Southern speakers 2:1*

The Northern Dialect is your secret weapon, because practically anything you say in Northern can be understood by folks who know Southern. It doesn't always work the other way around! Here are some broad differences to get us started:

Fronting is also traditionally used in Southern dialect (but less often). An example is:

**\*Pus ikta yaka patlach kopa yaka, yaka iskum Ø.\***  
*when something he give to her, she take it*  
 "When he gave her anything, she took it."  
 -- Victoria Howard, Grand Ronde, Oregon<sup>2</sup>

The Northern dialect doesn't have the "Chinookan ideophones" that are common in Southern,

e.g. \*laɣ\*, \*chxəp\*, \*qʰwəl\*,

many of which are reduplicated in Southern talk, like

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2 Transcribed into Northern Dialect.

**\*p'əqp'əq\*, \*k'witk'wit\*, \*t'limint'limin\*.**

You'll be learning Northern synonyms for these, and it's usually very easy because the North has usually substituted English words for them!

Related to this, the Northern dialect hardly uses any “reduplication”,

e.g. **\*nánich-nanich\***, **\*wawa-wawa\***, **\*tunus-tunus\***.

Rule of thumb: please don't try reduplicating anything in the North, until you hear us reduplicate first!

The North also lacks the old Chinookan/Salish-based words for your relatives (which also got replaced by English words etc.) So Southern

**\*ats\***, **\*aw\***, **\*that\***, **\*chich\***

correspond to Northern

**sista**, **brotha**, **unkel**, and **papa yaka papa** (or **mama yaka papa**).

It's similar for the times of day, so Southern

**\*chxi-san\*** and **\*laxw-san\***

equate with Northern

<b>tanas-sun</b>	and	<b>kopitt-sitkum-sun</b>
<i>little-day</i>		<i>after-middle-day</i>
“morning”		“afternoon”.

In the North, the “short a” sound (æ as in English “ash”) is much more frequent. Everyone will understand you if you say every “a” as in English “ma”, but you'll hear many Northern speakers say **yæka** for ‘she/he’, and **mæn** for ‘a man’.

You'll find some idioms in the North that are new to you, again often from English, like these:

**ja-bon** “on credit (not cash); owe”,  
**steem-kaa** “a train”, and  
**Chinook-man** “translator/interpreter”.

If you're a Southern dialect speaker looking for the Northern things to read that will be easiest for you to understand at first, you can seek out Catholic religious stuff, which is a kind of historical bridge between dialects. Once you can read **Chinook-Peipa** alphabet, look for *Kamloops Wawa* and/or the books of Father JMR Le Jeune online at the [University of Saskatchewan Libraries](#), [Canadiana Online](#), the [University of British Columbia Libraries](#), and [Archive.org](#).