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**Verb roots, stems and finals in Blackfoot: lexical, grammatical or somewhere in the middle?**

This paper considers verb stems consisting of a root and a so-called “abstract final” in Blackfoot (Algonquian, Canada/USA). The central question is where and how transitivity and animacy are best represented: in the lexicon or in the grammar?

Verb stems in Algonquian languages are traditionally categorized into four subclasses according to their transitivity and the animacy of their logical subject (for intransitives) or primary object (for transitives). This creates the well-known four-way distinction between Animate Intransitive (AI), Inanimate Intransitive (AI), Transitive Animate (TA) and Transitive Inanimate (TI) verb stems. Blackfoot verb stems consist of at least a root plus an affix called a “final” in the Algonquianist literature, as shown in (1) and (2) (Frantz 2009: 97-98):

(1) a. nitánii b. nitánistoo’pa c. nitánistaawa
   nit-waan-ii nit-waan-istoo-hp-wa nit-waan-ist-aa-wa
   1-say_INTR-AI 1-say_INTR-TI-TITH-3SG.OBJ 1-say_INTR-TA-DIR-3SG
   ‘I talked’    ‘I said it’     ‘I told him/her’

As Armoskaite (2010, 2011) has shown, Blackfoot verb roots are subcategorized for inherent transitivity (indicated with a subscript on the verb gloss), while finals are subcategorized for transitivity, animacy, and what she calls (transitivity) agreement. Agreeing finals have the same inherent transitivity as the root with which they combine; non-agreeing finals have opposing transitivity. Different verb roots select different sets of finals, even if their lexical properties are identical, suggesting that final selection is at least partially lexically determined.

Following the distinction between lexemes and words as outlined by Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008), I propose to analyze Blackfoot verb stems as follows:

- **Roots** are introduced into the representation as lexemes at RL and inserted into a particular State of Affairs frame.
- **Finals** are introduced into the representation as abstract grammatical morphemes at ML in response to the semantic specifications at RL combined with the requirements of templates for verbal complexes. They are introduced as abstract placeholders which reserve a slot that copies the values for transitivity, animacy and transitivity agreement from RL.
- **Roots** and finals are combined into phonemic stems at PL by the selection of the correct suppletive form of the appropriate final. These suppletive forms are selected from the set of available forms included in the root’s lexical entry.

**References**


