
The prefixal template of Umoⁿhoⁿ

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Umoⁿhoⁿ (Omaha) is a native american language from the Siouan family spoken in eastern Nebraska, United States. As a head-marking language, grammatical relations are encoded by verbal morphology (with split-S indexation), while case marking is non-existent. The verbal prefixal chain presents templatic features (Bickel & Nichols, 2007) such as, for example, an arbitrary ordering of prefixes, or the encoding of the same category (here, person markers) in different slots. Moreover, Umoⁿhoⁿ verbal morphology is particularly complex because of the frequent merging of different prefixes into opaque surface forms.

Table 1 summarizes the verbal template of Umoⁿhoⁿ verbs, focusing on prefixes and pre-verbal particules. Personal inflection appears in red : it corresponds to agentive and patientive indexation markers. Up to two of them can appear, on top of the derivational prefixes from the same slot. For the sake of simplicity, only the prefixes from the regular paradigm are listed. Table 1 thus presents a template somewhat simplified, because several tables would be necessary to describe the exact ordering of prefixes in all their possible combinations (see Marsault, 2016, 47).

Table 1 highlights several features of Umoⁿhoⁿ verbal system that are cross-linguistically rare:

1. Person markers often appear closer to the root than derivational morphemes, challenging the Split Morphology hypothesis.
2. Person markers can appear in different slots (1, -3, -5 or -6) according to which derivational morpheme is present in the verb form.
3. There is sometimes a multiple exponence (Harris, 2017) of agentive person markers.
4. Most of the derivational prefixes presented in Table 1 are found lexicalized with some roots, often creating discontinuous stems.

All of these are characteristic features of the Siouan family, and have been surveyed at family level (Rankin et al., 2003) or documented in particular languages (Helmbrecht & Lehman, 2008; Kasak, 2019). In my presentation, I focus on the so called ‘dative’ prefix *gí-* (slot -5). This prefix functions productively as an applicative marker introducing a beneficiary, a maleficiary, or a recipient. It is also lexicalized in a few cases. I will illustrate the features listed above with data including *gí-*.

1 Split Morphology Hypothesis

We see in Table 1 that personal inflection can appear closer to the stem than derivational prefixes or ‘preverbs’ (the latter can be considered as the first part of a discontinuous stem). An example of a verbal form displaying such characteristics is presented in (2) below. The insertion of inflectional morphemes closer to the root than derivational morphemes is unexpected (Bybee, 1985, 33).

Table 1: Template of Umoⁿhoⁿ verbal prefixes

Indef. -7	Oblique -6	Dative -5	Outer Instr. and preverb -4	Person markers -3	Reflexive Possessive -2	Inner Instr. -1	Root 1 0	Root 2 1
<i>wa-</i>	<i>í-</i> <i>á-</i> <i>u-</i> <i>ithá-</i> <i>uthú-</i> + person markers	<i>gí</i> + person markers	<i>má-</i> <i>mú-</i> <i>ná-</i> preverb	<i>a-</i> <i>oⁿ(g)-</i> <i>tha-</i> <i>oⁿ-</i> <i>wa-</i> <i>thi-</i> <i>wi-</i>	<i>gi-</i> <i>ki(g)-</i>	<i>tha-</i> <i>thi-</i> <i>ba-</i> <i>bi-</i> <i>ga-</i> <i>noⁿ-</i>	Root 1	<i>the</i> <i>tha</i> <i>thiⁿ</i> <i>thiⁿtha</i> + agentive person markers

2 Changes of slot

First of all, example (1) illustrates the respective order of the dative prefix and the ‘outer instrumental’ prefixes (Rankin, unp.). The instrumental prefixes (slots -1 and -4) specify by which means a process takes place, like ‘by fire’, ‘by shooting’, etc. As expected from Table 1, the prefix *gí-* (in blue) stands on the left side of the instrumental.

- (1) *thiⁿge* *ná-thiⁿge* *gí-na-thiⁿge*
 be.gone INSTR.fire-be.gone BEN-INSTR.fire-be.gone
 it is gone it was burnt to nothing it was burnt to nothing on him (Dorsey, 1890)

Examples (2) and (3) illustrate two possible loci of person markers. When a stem comprises a root and any derivational prefix between slot -1 to slot -4, the person markers are inserted on slot -3, i.e. on the right edge of outer instrumentals, as in Example (2).

- (2) *té* *ma* *mú-wa-hega-b-azhi*
 buffalo ANIM.PL INSTR.shoot-P3PL-(be.a.)few-PL-NEG
 They shot down many of the buffaloes. (Dorsey, 1890, 350.6 / Big Elk)

On the other hand, the locus of indexation is realized in the same slot as the prefix *gí-*. Underlyingly, the indexation takes place before *gí-*, as shown in example (3), and the prefixes merge in the following way : the initial <g> of the dative prefix lenites, then the two contiguous vowels undergo monophthongization. The morphophonological merging, together with other features presented in the following section, are the reason why the indexation markers and the prefix *gí-* are integrated in the same slot.

- (3) *gíboⁿ* *wé-boⁿ*
gí-boⁿ **wa-gí-boⁿ*
 BEN-call P3PL-BEN-call
 he called him he called them (Saunsoci & Eschenberg, 2016, 77 / Alice Saunsoci)

In Example (4), it can be seen that the prefix *gí-* has priority over outer instrumentals in determining the locus of inflection. Again, *gí-* and the indexation marker merge into an opaque surface form, and this form appears to the left side of the instrumental.

- (4) *wénathiⁿgai*
 **wa-gí-na-thiⁿge-í*
 P1PL-BEN-INSTR.heat-be.gone-PL
 it was burnt to nothing for us (Dorsey, 1890, 498.4 / Maxpíya-xága)

In this manner, the locus of inflection has a conditional positioning (Bonami, 2014), conditioned by the presence or absence of the dative prefix. Unlike the examples presented by Bonami (2014), though, the prefix *gí-* is not purely inflectional and cannot be considered as a syntactic feature.

3 Multiple exponence of agentive prefix

Some verbs derived with *gí-* show multiple exponence of the agentive prefix, as a direct result of the reanalysis of merged forms as a specific conjugation paradigm. *Baxú* ‘to write it’ is called a ‘syncopating verb’ (Koontz, 2001) because the indexation of the 1st person singular and 2nd person agentive arguments is realized through the alteration of the initial consonant of its stem, as we see in (5a). When this verb is derived with *gí-*, the agentive argument is realized both by the initial consonant alteration and by the merged form *thé-* (< **tha-gí-*). This corresponds to an ‘accidental multiple exponence’ (with exponents in a subset relationship) according to Harris (2017)’s classification. This double exponence could be an instance of hybrid forms described by Haspelmath (1993) as an intermediate step towards externalization of inflection.

- (5) a. *baxú* ‘write it’ → *shpáxu* ‘you write it’
 write A2.write
- b. *gí-baxu* ‘write it to him’ → *iⁿ-thé-shpaxu* ‘you write it to me’
 BEN-write P1SG.BEN-A2.BEN-A2.write

Inflection or derivation? The merging of the dative prefix with indexation markers, and the double exponence it entails, question the status of the dative prefix as a derivational morpheme. Exemple 6 shows further support for analyzing *gí-* as an inflection marker: When a verb with the prefix *gí-* indexes both A and P arguments, each of the corresponding indexation markers is realized in its merged form with *gí-*, unlike what is expected.

- (6) underlying form **a-wa-gí-boⁿ*
 A1SG-P3PL-BEN-call
 expected surface form *ʔa-wé-boⁿ* (with mergin of *wa-gí-*)
 attested surface form *e-wé-boⁿ*
 I called them (Saunsoci & Eschenberg, 2016, 77 / Alice Saunsoci)

Thus, forms like *é-* (< **a-gí-*), *wé-* (< **wa-gí-*), *iⁿ-* (< **oⁿ-gí-*), etc, have been reanalysed as a conjugation paradigm (Koontz, 1989).

4 Lexicalization

Finally, the prefix *gí-* is sometimes lexicalized with the stem on which it occurs, and thus forms a verb which is not analysable as a complex word.

- (7) *gíthe* to be glad (from *gí-* and **the*)
uíkoⁿ to help him/her (< **u-gí-koⁿ*, from *gí-* and **u-koⁿ*)

In such examples, *gí-* retains the morphophonological characteristics of the derivational prefix, but otherwise cannot be analysed as such, because the root does not exist without it. As Helmbrecht & Lehman (2008) remark, this feature is common to all verbal derivational prefixes, and makes the morphological analysis of Siouan verbs particularly complex.

All the morphological specificities described here in relation to the prefix *gí-* applies to other prefixes as well ; they are pervasive in Umoⁿhoⁿ verbal morphology. In particular, the ‘oblique’ prefixes listed in slot -6 display similar features: they are involved in conditional positioning, they entail misaligned positioning (Bonami, 2014) of person markers and double exponence of agentive markers, and they have undergone more lexicalization processes than the prefix *gí-*.

Gloss

1, 2, 3 first, second, third person ; A Agentive argument ; ANIM animate ; BEN benefactive ; INSTR.fire instrumental prefix denoting action of fire ; INSTR.shoot instrumental prefix denoting action done by shooting ; NEG negation ; P Patientive argument ; PL plural ; SG singular.

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