

The syntax of abstract and concrete finals in Ojibwe

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The aim of this paper is two-fold. First, I argue that a subclass of abstract finals and a subclass of concrete finals in Ojibwe are light verbs. Second, I put forward the hypothesis that phases are relevant at the word level.

Since the work of Bloomfield (1946), the linguistic literature treats Algonquian words as complex forms containing initials (roots), medial and final suffixes. Initials and medials have concrete meaning while finals fall into two groups: one group is traditionally considered to merely determine parts of speech (abstract finals), whereas the other is claimed to add palpable meaning (concrete finals). In this tradition, Goddard (1990) states that initials denote a state or a configuration, whereas finals refer to the means by which this state or configuration has come about, and also mark the inflectional valency of the verb. Medials are always noun-like (Goddard 1990: 463 n. 36): they may be classificatory (i.e. convey information on the nature of the subject or object such as ‘stone-like’), or incorporated nouns, with generalized meanings. In groundbreaking work, Denny (1978) argues that the abstract finals contained in **inanimate** intransitive (II) Ojibwe verbs are less abstract than previously thought in that they express the aspectual class of the verb. Four classes are identified: *-at* for states (1a), *-ē* for processes (1b), *-in* for events (1c) and *-ā* for spatial properties (1d). Thus, to quote Denny (1978:295): ‘Abstract finals must be seen as being abstract only in the sense of having more general meanings compared to the more specific meanings of the concrete finals.’ On Denny’s view, example (2) therefore contains a root, a concrete final, and an abstract final that combine together as verbal elements to form the verbal predicate being expressed.

In the same spirit, but in reverse, I argue in this paper that a subset of concrete finals in **animate** intransitive Ojibwe verbs (VAI) have more abstract meaning than previously envisaged. The distinction between concrete and abstract finals is therefore blurred: they both have palpable meaning; yet, they are less specific than roots. This motivates a light verb analysis where both abstract *and* concrete finals are pure instances of little *v* (see Britain 2003 for the idea that *abstract* finals are light verbs in *Plains Cree*). My starting point is Rhodes’ (1976) observation that Ojibwe has noun incorporation (a whole chapter is dedicated to the topic in his thesis), but that Ojibwe nominal elements are incorporated into verbal constructions in two basically different ways. The first kind of process results in the class of morphemes called *medials*. Leaving this case aside since it is not directly relevant to the discussion at hand, there is a second type of noun incorporation that is limited to a few verbal morphemes, most commonly: *w* ‘be’, *ke* ‘get’, and *mo* ‘speak’, as shown in (3). According to Rhodes (1976), this type is not much discussed in the literature, but is very productive. It will be shown that these morphemes are very productive indeed and that there are other verbal morphemes not considered by Rhodes which can be grouped with the ones that he identified (see examples (4) to (8) for a representative sample of the nature and productivity of these elements).

I will propose that the Ojibwe examples in (4)-(8) involve merger of a root pure light verb with a root nominal as shown in (9). Ojibwe finals therefore appear to have all the hallmarks of Inuktitut ‘lexical affixes.’ For Inuktitut, Johns (2005) gives a full syntactic analysis whereby the ‘lexical affixes’ are light verbs/instantiations of little *v* that merge with a root complement. This type of one root merger noun incorporation also appears to be available in Yup’ik (Mithun 1999), another Eskimo-Aleut language, in Halkomelem Salish, a Salishan language (Gerdt and Hukari 2002), and in Nuu-chah-Nulth, a Wakashan language (Wojdak 2005). The approach is similar to the structure proposed by Harley (2003) for verbs of creation/consumption. Whereas in English the light verbs are considered to be phonologically empty and limited in number (Harley identifies three: DO, CAUSE, and BECOME), the incorporating verbs in Ojibwe are pure little *vs*, i.e. morphological realizations of *v*. These are very broad in meaning. For example, *-mo* appears to refer to anything expressed by the mouth (see (10)).

Although there are similarities between lexical suffixes of the Inuktitut type and finals of the Ojibwe type, I will show that the two species of little *v* constructions are in fact rather different. First, although the elements that can satisfy the first position/left edge of the stem in Algonquian is admittedly quite large, the set of elements that can satisfy the left edge of the Inuktitut word is even larger (proper names, WH words, etc. can be ‘incorporated’). I show that one way to account for this difference between Algonquian and Eskimo-Aleut languages (and perhaps Salishan languages and Wakashan languages, since these languages also appear to have lexical suffixes) is to claim that while in the former raising of an element α to the left edge is achieved in the syntax, movement of the element that satisfies the first position of the word is done at PF.

In order to account for the obligatory presence of an element at the left edge of the word in Ojibwe (Brittain 2003, every stem has an initial, a fact well-established by Goddard 1990), I will argue that the EPP present on *v* is of a dual nature. Building on Holmberg's 2000 notion of the EPP, which requires not only a specifier to be created (Chomsky 2000, 2001) but also the specifier to be filled by overt phonological material, I will argue that the EPP on *v* in Ojibwe comes in two parts. It can be divided between a categorial feature [N] (and not [D], as in Holmberg 2000, since Ojibwe has no determiners), and a pure phonological feature notated [P].

Consequently, following recent work by di Sciullo (2006), I hypothesize that phases are relevant at the word level, and more precisely that the *v* projections instantiated by the abstract finals under review in this paper are strong phases. More generally, *v*P, *n*P and *p*P (i.e. stems) are all phases in Ojibwe. They undergo Transfer before preverbs and pronominal clitics (in that order) are projected. The derivation of words is therefore entirely cyclic.

- (1) a. kipōkkat 'it is damp' state
 b. ontē 'it boils' process
 c. takossin 'it arrives' event
 d. kinwā 'it is long' spatial

(2)	Root	Medial	Concrete final	Abstract final	Gloss
	wāp-	-āpikk-	-it-	-ē	(it [mineral] is white hot)
	(white)	(mineral)	(heated)	(PROCESS)	(from Denny 1978, p. 301)

- (3) a. n-gi:-abino:ji:hi:nh-(i)w-I
I-PAST-child-be-[-TR]
 'I was a child.'
 b. zi:siba:kwadw-(i)ke:-Ø-w
sugar-get-[-TR]-3
 'He's making sugar.'
 c. ža:gana:ši-mo-Ø-w
English-speak-[-TR]-3
 'He speaks English.' (Rhodes, 1976, 284)
- (Central Ojibwe)

- (4) -wi nishnaabe 'Native person' → nishnaabewi 'he/she is a native person.'
 uhke 'earth' → uhkéewi 'he is earth.'
 ukima 'chief' → ukimawi 'he is chief.'
- (5) -ke miikiwam 'house' → miikiwamike 'to make a house.'
 nboob 'soup' → nboobiike 'he/she makes soup.'
 mushkeegemene 'cranberries' → mushkeegemeneke 'he gathers cranberries'
- (6) -mo zhaaganaashii 'English' → gaazhaaganaashiimod 'they spoke English.'
 ucipwe 'Ojibwe' → ucipwemo 'he speaks Ojibwe.'
- (7) -i zhoonyaa 'money'
 wzhoonyaaman 'his/her money' → wzhoonyaami 'he/she has money.'
- (8) -kaa zgime 'mosquito' → zgimekaa 'there are a lot of mosquitoes.'
 nebe 'water' → nebéekaa 'there is a lot of water.'

- (9) $\begin{array}{c} vP \\ \diagdown \quad \diagup \\ v \quad \quad NP/DP \\ \text{non-root} \quad \text{root} \end{array}$
- (10) a. cacamo 'he sneezes'
 b. nenkamo 'he sings'
 c. nocemo?at 'he cures him' (TA)