THE AUXILIARY VERB IN NACHTCHEZ

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1. Natchez verbs are inflected for person (first, second, and third), for number (singular, dual, and plural), and for tense-mode (present, past, optative). There are two main kinds of verbs. There are, first, active verbs which are directly inflected only for the distinction between singular and plural, as shown in (2). All the rest of the inflectional paraphernalia is carried by the auxiliary verb with which it obligatorily occurs; see righthand portion of (2). Secondly, there are inflected verbs which occur in two subcategories, (i) independent inflected verbs, as shown in (1), and (ii) auxiliary verbs.2

(1) hacíʔiš : h aciʔiš
one to lie Indef. lie Infin. marker
SU

heciʔiš : h eciʔiš
one to sit, sit, live

(2) tekʷ e-hakiʔiš : tekʷ e- h akiʔiš
one to sit down sit down Indef. Intr. Infin.
Sing. SU marker

tekʷ e- h alʔiš
many to sit Plur. SU tive marker

The two inflected subcategories are inflected alike except for the plural number. The independent inflected verbs have their own special type of plural formation; see section 6. The auxiliary verbs, on the other hand, do not since that is shown by the active verb.

2. That auxiliary verbs should carry the inflection for the verb phrase in which they occur is not unusual. In English we have do : does, have : has (number) and do : did, have : had (tense). What is unusual in Natchez is the scope of this inflectional apparatus which encompasses pronominal subject, tense-mode (combined with pronominal subject), pronominal direct object, pronominal indirect object/benefactive, and singular and
dual number (of subject and object). The pronominal subject, as combined with present tense, is illustrated in (3).

(3) tek\textsuperscript{w} e-taka\textsuperscript{n} : tek\textsuperscript{w} e- t aki a\textsuperscript{.n} Normal\textsuperscript{5}
I am sitting sit down I SU Intr. Prog.
down Sing. Pres.

tek\textsuperscript{w} e-panaka\textsuperscript{n}:
you are sitting
down
pan you SU Pres.

tek\textsuperscript{w} e-naka\textsuperscript{n}:
he, she is sitting
down
n he, she SU Pres.

tek\textsuperscript{w} e-\textsuperscript{a}tala\textsuperscript{n}:
tek\textsuperscript{w} e- t al
we are sitting sit down I SU Suppl.
down (Plur.) Pres.

In addition to the pronominal subject/present tense combination shown in (3), there are two other sets of pronominal subjects distinguished for tense-mode. But in each case in addition to the change in form of the pronoun, the auxiliary stem itself appears in one of three ablaut grades: Normal, Reduced, and Lengthened. The present tense shown in (3) requires the Normal grade throughout the singular and the plural. In contrast, the Past tense appears in the Normal grade with the first person, but in the Reduced grade with the second and third persons, as shown in (4).

(4) tek\textsuperscript{w} e-yaka\textsuperscript{n} : tek\textsuperscript{w} e- y aki a\textsuperscript{.n} Normal
I was sitting sit down I SU Intr. Prog.
(Sing.)

tek\textsuperscript{w} e-puka\textsuperscript{n}:
tek\textsuperscript{w} e- p uki a\textsuperscript{.n} Reduced\textsuperscript{6}
you were sitting
down
you SU Past

tek\textsuperscript{w} e-\textsuperscript{a}rika\textsuperscript{n}:
tek\textsuperscript{w} e- \textsuperscript{a}ri \textsuperscript{.n} Reduced
he, she was sitting
down
he SU Past

tek\textsuperscript{w} e-\textsuperscript{a}yla\textsuperscript{n}:
tek\textsuperscript{w} e- \textsuperscript{a}yla\textsuperscript{.n} Normal
we were sitting
down
(Plur.)
The third pronominal subject/tense-mode combination is that of the optative mode. This mode takes the Normal grade with the first person and the Lengthened grade with the second and third persons, as shown in (5).

(5) tek w-e- ?aka·n : tek w-e- a·ki a·n  
may I be sitting \[ I SU \] 
\[ Intr. Prog. \] 
th down \[ Sing. \] \[ Opt. \] 
\[ tek w-e- pa·ka·n : tek w-e- p a·ki a·n \] 
may you be sitting \[ you SU \] \[ Opt. \] 
\[ tek w-e- a·ka·n : tek w-e- a·ki a·n \] 
may he, she be \[ he, she \] \[ SU Opt. \] 
\[ tek w-e- ala·n : tek w-e- al a·n \] 
may we be sitting down \[ sit down \] \[ I SU \] \[ Suppl. \] \[ (Plur.) \] \[ (Plur.) \] \[ Opt. \]  

The last two tense-modes permit the addition of deictic prefixes to indicate two additional tenses. The prefix ka- when added to the Past tense paradigm makes the Nonrecent Past tense paradigm as shown in (6).

(6) ka·tek w-eyaka·n I was sitting down some time ago. 
\[ Etc. as in (4) \] 

In a similar fashion the prefix ma-, when added to the Optative paradigm gives us the Future paradigm, as shown in (7).

(7) ma·tek w-e ?aka·n I shall be sitting down. 
\[ Etc. as in (5) \] 

3. With transitive verbs the pronominal direct object (DO) is also included in the auxiliary verb, as illustrated in (8).

(8) cak-hal ?iš : cak- h Ø al ?iš  
one to stab one \[ stab \] \[ Indef. him Tr. Infinitive \] \[ (him, her) \] \[ Sing. \] \[ SU DO \]
The indirect object/benefactive (IO/B) can also be added to the complex, as shown in (9).

(9) \[ \text{ta-} \cdot \text{haw?iš} : \] one to kill one
    \[ \text{ta-} \cdot \text{h} \] strike, Indef.
    \[ \text{h} \] him Tr. Infin.
\[ \text{kill Sg.} \] \text{SU DO} \text{aWši} \]
\[ \text{ta-} \cdot \text{haWši?iš} : \] one to kill one
    \[ \text{ta-} \cdot \text{h} \] for him
\[ \text{h} \] IO/ him Infin.
\[ \text{SU DO} \text{B} \text{šc} \]
\[ \text{ta-} \cdot \text{naWca-} \cdot \text{n} : \] he is killing
    \[ \text{ta-} \cdot \text{n} \] he
\[ \text{h} \] me
\[ \text{SU IO/B} \text{Pres.} \]

4. Singular and plural number is expressed in the active verb stem, as is shown above in (2). The plural of such verb stems take many shapes, depending on the phonological shape of the singular. A few examples are shown in (10).

(10) a. \[ \text{me-} \text{hal?iš} \] one to put out fire
    \[ \text{me-} \text{hal?iš} \] many to put out fire

b. \[ \text{ta-} \cdot \text{haw?iš} \] one to kill one
    \[ \text{taha-} \text{haw?iš} \] many to kill one

c. \[ \text{nec-} \text{hal?iš} \] one to laugh
    \[ \text{nece-} \text{hal?iš} \] many to laugh

d. \[ \text{tem-} \text{haw?iš} \] one to pick one
    \[ \text{temi-} \cdot \text{haw?iš} \] many to pick one
Plurality of object is also shown by the shape of the active verb stem. With a singular subject, plurality of object is shown by reduplication, but if both subject and object are plural, an additional change takes place, as in (11).

(11) a. ta·ta·-haw?iś one to kill many, kill repeatedly
ta·ha·-haw?iś many to kill many
b. cakcak-hal?iś one to stab many, stab repeatedly
caka·ha·-hal?iś many to stab many
c. temtem-haw?iś one to pick many, pick repeatedly
temi·hi·-haw?iś many to pick many

While the distinction between singular and plural subject and object is shown by the shape of the active verb stem, dual number is incorporated within the auxiliary verb complex immediately following the pronominal subject, as shown in (12).

(12) cak-tatanila·n : cak-\(t(a)\) tan \(\emptyset\) il a·n Reduced
we 2 are stabbing him
Sing. SU DO

cak-pantanila·n : cak-\(p\) an tan \(\emptyset\) il a·n
you 2 are stabbing him
SU

cak-natanila·n : cak-\(n(a)\) tan \(\emptyset\) il a·n
they 2 are stabbing him
SU

It should also be observed that the pronominal subjects for the plural number are the same as for the singular number, since the plurality of subject is shown only in the shape of the active verb stem. Examples are in (13).

(13) cak-tala·n I am stabbing him
caka-tala·n we (more than 2) are stabbing him
cakcak-tala·n I am stabbing them
caka·ha·-tala·n we (more than 2) are stabbing them
There are also lexical problems associated with the process of combining active verb stems with auxiliary verbs. Although the active verb stem imparts the basic lexical meaning, this is modified to a greater or less extent by the auxiliary verb with which it is combined. There are some forty or fifty different auxiliary verbs and the nature of their semantic distinctions is not always clearly discernible. Distinctions that have been identified include copular, intransitive, involuntary, transitive/causative, reflexive, indirective/benefactive, and reciprocal. The copular auxiliary is illustrated in (14).

(14) -ha· ?iš : ?ocin-ha· ?iš one to be hungry
     ceL-ha· ?iš one to be dirty, soiled

Intransitive auxiliaries are shown in (15).

(15) -haki ?iš : ta· -haki?iš one to stumble, stub toe
     -haci?iš : tuluM-haci?iš one to roll over

The involuntary auxiliary is shown in (16).

(16) -hekti?iš : tiša· -hekti?iš one to sneeze
     ?oho· -hekti?iš one to cough

There are several auxiliaries which may be described as transitive. The most commonly used one, -hal?iš, is also sometimes causative. Examples are shown in (17).

(17) -hal?iš : ta· -hal?iš one to strike, kill one
     tem-hal ?iš one to feed one (i.e. cause to pick, gather; cf. tem-haw?iš in (10) d)
     -haw?iš : ta· -haw?iš one to kill one
     -haku ?iš : top-haku?iš one to cut, break one
     -hew?iš : maš-hew?iš one to peel one
     -helu· ?iš : ta· -helu· ?iš one to play ball (i.e. stick-ball)
     -helku?iš : kolo-helku?iš one to cover, bury one

Some reflexive auxiliaries are shown in (18).

The indirective/benefactive auxiliaries impart the meaning 'to, on, for ...' and there is one for each of the transitive auxiliaries. Some of them are shown in (19).

(19) -haLLši?iš : ta·ta·-haLLši?iš one to hit, strike repeatedly on... Indirective/benefactive of -hal?iš.

The reciprocal auxiliary imparts the meaning 'each other, one another, together' as shown in (20).

(20) -hetahnu·?iš : weh-hetahnu·?iš to meet, gather together
 cikip-hetahnu·?iš to wrestle (lit., pinch each other); cf. cikip-haw?iš one to pinch one

There are several other auxiliaries, most of which have been difficult to assign a meaning to. Some of these are in (21).

(21) -helahci?iš : ta·-helahci?iš one to pay one
 weh-helahci?iš one to gather something together
 -hešku?iš : kolo-hešku?iš one to put on (a hat)
 -heti·?iš : ṭo·h-heti·?iš one to wait for one
 -heLti·?iš : holoh-heLti·?iš one to take one out of
 -heNci?iš : pata-heNci?iš one to put something together, assemble something (as a boat)

Another interesting feature associated with auxiliary verbs is that they can be diminutivized. Independent inflected verbs can also be diminutivized. This diminutivization applies to the subject of intransitive verbs and to the object of transitive verbs. Some examples are shown in (22).

(22) hetpiti?iš a little one, baby one to walk. This is the diminutive of hapiti?iš a normal-sized one to walk; -et- is infixed.
 ta·-helilu·?iš one to hit, kill a little one, a baby one. This is the diminutive of both ta·-hal?iš one to strike one and ta·-haw?iš one to kill one; -li- is infixed in -helu·?iš.
6. In the case of the active verb stem plus auxiliary verb complex the plural number is indicated only in the active verb stem. Independent inflected verbs, on the other hand, must indicate number within the verb itself. This is illustrated in (23).

(23) helcoko?iš one to learn
hetenilcoko?iš two to learn; -tan-/-ten- Dual as in auxiliary verbs
hepilcoko?iš three or more to learn; -p- Plur. in independent verbs but not auxiliary verbs

In addition to the regular ways of expressing number in Natchez verbs, as already shown in (2), (10), (11), (12) and (23), there is a considerable amount of suppletion in the language. This introduces several kinds of irregularities. Independent verbs which utilize suppletion have different stems in the dual and plural. However, the plural is often especially marked in that it is composed of an active verb stem plus an auxiliary verb, as shown in (24).

(24) a. haci?iš one to lie
hataNci?iš two to lie. Regular formation with -tan-.
holi: -ha: -?iš three or more to lie. Active verb stem, Plural of nonexistent *hol-, plus the copular auxiliary; suppletive.
b. heci?iš one to sit, live
hetukši?iš two to sit, live. Suppletive verb.
ko- -haki ?iš three or more to sit, live. Active verb stem, Plural of nonexistent *ko-, plus the intransitive auxiliary.
c. hahti?iš one to go
hakši?iš two to go. Suppletive verb.
we- -haki ?iš three or more to go. Suppletive construction as in (24) b.

In the examples in (24) the plural suppletive form is constructed as if it were a normal active verb stem plus auxiliary verb complex and the active verb stem appears in plural form. In the example shown in (25) below, the active verb stem is not in the plural form normal for such stems.
Active verbs have their own kinds of irregular plural formations. Sometimes they take one auxiliary in the Singular/Dual but another in the Plural, as shown in (26).

(26) a. yuku-haki?iš one to stand. Dual adds -tan-.
yuku·-hal?iš three or more to stand.
b. tek we-haki?iš one to sit down. Dual adds -tan-.
tek we·-hal?iš three or more to sit down.

These sets are special because -hal?iš, which is normally transitive/causative is here suppletive to an intransitive auxiliary. But some active verb stems change not only the auxiliary but the active verb stem itself as well. A notable example is in (27).

(27) kweL-hešku?iš one to run
kweL-hete·šku?iš three or more to run. Plural signalled by a change in auxiliary, a change in active verb stem and nonplural form for hekeL- (Plural should be *hekele-).

7. For the final section of this paper I would like to point up the semantic difficulties inherent in the nature of the active verb stem plus auxiliary verb complex. Earlier I pointed out that the active verb stem bears the lexical content. But in terms of a suitable translation into English there are frequent difficulties. In English we label hit a transitive verb and run an intransitive verb. But we also have many verbs like break which can be either transitive (I broke it) or intransitive (it broke). In Natchez the distinction between transitive and intransitive is made overt by the use of a transitive auxiliary for the transitive, an intransitive one for the intransitive. But still other refinements can be expressed through the choice of auxiliary. Recapitulating the various auxiliaries used with ta·-, as shown in previous examples,
we have the set shown in (28).

(28) ta·-hal?iš one to strike, hit one
    ta·-haw?iš one to kill one
    ta·-helu·?iš one to play ball (stick ball)
    ta·-helu·ši?iš one to discharge a gun (making a noise)
    ta·-helîlî·?iš one to strike, kill a little one (diminutive)
    ta·-hetahnu·?iš to meet, come together; to kill together
        (two working together)
    ta·-haki?iš one to stumble, bump, stub toe
    ta·-hahšal?iš one to hit himself
    ta·-helahci?iš one to pay one

What does ta·- mean? And what do the several auxiliaries add to the meaning of the whole? Some we have already sorted out, but others remain opaque and none has been found with an invariant meaning. The stem ta·- seems basically to mean 'to strike a blow', but what does -haw?iš add, over and above transitivity, that makes the combination mean 'to kill'? Here we might suggest that it is a sort of intensive transitive (more intensive than -hal?iš, for instance), but other examples belie this completely. It can even occur in intransitive combinations, as in ?ay-haw?iš 'to think'. The most we can say is that in general the combination of active verb stem and auxiliary verb is fixed and cannot be freely changed around. Hence the combination is often similar to a fixed expression in other languages. Another interesting set of examples is shown in (29).

(29) tem-haw?iš one to pick, gather something
    tem-hal?iš one to feed one (cause to pick, gather)
    tem-helu·?iš one to feed one (on something)
    tem-hešku?iš one to graze (as sheep)
    tem-helahci?iš one to cause one to graze

These examples show that in certain cases to change from one transitive auxiliary to another signals the causative, e.g. from -haw?iš to -hal?iš or from -hešku?iš to -helahci?iš.

While all such comparisons are helpful each set fits only a limited number of circumstances. Further study will surely reveal other insights, but it is doubtful if these will change the deep impression that Natchez is a language rich in fixed expressions.

8. Although Natchez is a language isolate, it is structurally similar to many of our North American linguistic families, such
as Muskogean, Iroquoian, Algonkian, Athapaskan, etc., in that it has a very elaborate verb structure. The details differ from family to family but the ability to compress into one 'gigantic verb' a multitude of ideas that in other languages require a sentence is characteristic of them all.

Footnotes

1 Natchez is a language isolate of the Southeast, formerly spoken in a string of villages in the vicinity of the present Natchez, Mississippi. Natchez is probably distantly related to the Muskogean family (Swanton 1924, Haas 1956) and the other Gulf languages (Haas 1951). My materials on the language were collected forty years ago from the last two speakers, Watt Sam and Nancy Raven.

2 In this paper I have written the lone sibilant of the language as $\tilde{s}$, its true phonetic value, instead of the simplified symbol ~ used in other papers of mine. I have also written the verbs in their underlying form rather than their surface form as was done in other papers (Haas 1956, 1973). Thus here I write

haci?i$\tilde{s}$ for haci·$s$  
-haki?i$\tilde{s}$ for -haki·$s$
-haw?i$\tilde{s}$ for -ho·$i$·$s$  
-haWši?i$\tilde{s}$ for -hohsi·$s$
-helku?i$\tilde{s}$ for -helku·$s$  
-hew?i$\tilde{s}$ for -htl·$i$·$s$

3 Abbreviations used include: SU, subject; DO, direct object; IO, indirect object; B, benefactive. Other abbreviations require no explanation.

4 For the use of -hal?i$\tilde{s}$ here instead of the expected -haki?i$\tilde{s}$ see section 6 below. Most intransitive verbs would retain the use of -haki?i$\tilde{s}$ throughout the paradigm.

5 'Normal' refers to the Normal ablaut grade as explained immediately below.

6 The Reduced grade of -aki- is -iki- or -uki- after a labial.

7 In other uses ka· can mean 'this', ma· can mean 'that'; hence these prefixes are basically deictics.
References

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