

THE AUXILIARY VERB IN NATCHEZ

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1. Natchez¹ 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) | haci ʔiš | : | h | aci | ʔiš | |
| | one to lie | | | Indef. lie | Infin. marker | ³ |
| | | | | SU | | |
| | heci ʔiš | : | h | eci | ʔiš | |
| | one to sit, | | | sit, | | |
| | live | | | live | | |
| (2) | tek ^w e-haki ʔiš | : | tek ^w e- | h | aki | ʔiš |
| | one to sit down | | sit down | Indef. Intr. | | Infin. |
| | | | Sing. | SU | | marker |
| | tek ^w e--hal ʔiš ⁴ | : | tek ^w e-- | h | al | ʔiš |
| | many to sit | | sit down | Indef. Supple- | | Infin. |
| | down | | 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^we-takaⁿ : tek^we- t aki aⁿ Normal⁵
 I am sitting sit down I SU Intr. Prog.
 down Sing. Pres.
- tek^we-panakaⁿ : pan
 you are sitting you SU
 down Pres.
- tek^we-nakaⁿ : n
 he, she is sit- he, she
 ting down SU Pres.
- tek^we-talaⁿ : tek^we- 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^we-yakaⁿ : tek^we- y aki aⁿ Normal
 I was sitting sit down I SU Intr. Prog.
 down (Sing.)
- tek^we-pukaⁿ : tek^we- p uki aⁿ Reduced⁶
 you were sit- you SU
 ting down Past
- tek^we-?ikaⁿ : tek^we- ? iki aⁿ Reduced
 he, she was he SU
 sitting down Past
- tek^we-yalaⁿ : tek^we- y al aⁿ Normal
 we were sit- I SU Suppl.
 ting 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-ʔaka ⁿ : | tek ^w e- | ʔ | aki a ⁿ | Normal |
| may I be sitting | sit down | I SU | Intr. Prog. | |
| down | Sing. | Opt. | | |
| | | | | |
| tek ^w e-pa·ka ⁿ : | tek ^w e- | p | a·ki a ⁿ | Lengthened |
| may you be sit- | | you SU | | |
| ting down | | Opt. | | |
| | | | | |
| tek ^w e-ʔa·ka ⁿ : | tek ^w e- | ʔ | a·ki a ⁿ | Lengthened |
| may he, she be | | he, she | | |
| sitting down | | SU Opt. | | |
| | | | | |
| tek ^w e-ʔala ⁿ : | tek ^w e- | ʔ | al a ⁿ | Normal |
| may we be sit- | sit down | I SU | Suppl. | |
| ting down (Plur.) | (Plur.) | Opt. | | |

The last two tense-modes permit the addition of deictic prefixes to indicate two additional tenses. The prefix ka·-⁷ when added to the Past tense paradigm makes the **Nonrecent Past tense paradigm** as shown in (6).

- (6) ka·tek^weyakaⁿ 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^weʔakaⁿ 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-halʔiš | : | cak- | h | ∅ | al | ʔiš |
| one to stab one | | stab | Indef. | him | Tr. | Infinitive |
| (him, her) | | Sing. | SU | DO | | |

cak-tala ⁿ	:	cak-	t	∅	al	a ⁿ	Normal
I am stabbing		stab	I	him	Tr.	Prog.	
him, her		Sing.	SU	DO			
cak-tapila ⁿ	:	cak-	t(a)	p	il	a ⁿ	Reduced
I am stabbing			I	you			
you			SU	DO			
cak-nanila ⁿ	:	cak-	n(a)	n	il	a ⁿ	Reduced
He is stabbing			he	me			
me			SU	DO			

The indirect object/benefactive (IO/B) can also be added to the complex, as shown in (9).

(9) ta·-hawʔiš	:	ta·-	h	∅	aw	ʔiš	
one to kill one		strike,	Indef.	him	Tr.	Infin.	
		kill Sg.	SU	DO			
ta·-haWšiʔiš	:	ta·-	h	∅	aw	hši	∅ ʔiš
one to kill one						IO/	him Infin.
for him							
ta·-naWca ⁿ	:	ta·-	n	∅	aw	hš(i)	t ʔiš
he is killing			he				me
him for me			SU			IO/B	
			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. me-halʔiš one to put out fire
 me·-halʔiš many to put out fire
- b. ta·-hawʔiš one to kill one
 taha-hawʔiš many to kill one
- c. nec-halʔiš one to laugh
 nece-halʔiš many to laugh
- d. tem-hawʔiš one to pick one
 temi·-hawʔiš many to pick one

- e. we·L-haki ʔiš one to talk
 we·le-haki ʔiš many to talk

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 ʔiš one to kill many, kill repeatedly
 ta·ha·-haw ʔiš many to kill many
- b. cakcak-hal ʔiš one to stab many, stab repeatedly
 caka·ha·-hal ʔiš many to stab many
- c. temtem-haw ʔiš one to pick many, pick repeatedly
 temi·hi·-haw ʔiš 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 Ø il a·ⁿ Reduced
 we 2 are stab- stab I Dual him Tr. Prog.
 bing him Sing. SU DO
- cak-pantanila·ⁿ : cak- pan tan Ø il a·ⁿ
 you 2 are stab- you
 bing him SU
- cak-natanila·ⁿ : cak- n(a) tan Ø il a·ⁿ
 they 2 are stab- he
 bing 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

5. 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·ʔiš : ʔocin-ha·ʔiš one to be hungry
ceL-ha·ʔiš one to be dirty, soiled

Intransitive auxiliaries are shown in (15).

- (15) -hakiʔiš : ta·-hakiʔiš one to stumble, stub toe
-haciʔiš ; tuluM-haciʔiš one to roll over

The involuntary auxiliary is shown in (16).

- (16) -hektiʔiš : tiša·-hektiʔiš one to sneeze
ʔoho·-hektiʔiš one to cough

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

- (17) -halʔiš : ta·-halʔiš one to strike, kill one
tem-halʔiš one to feed one (i. e. cause to pick,
gather; cf. tem-hawʔiš in (10) d)
-hawʔiš : ta·-hawʔiš one to kill one
-hakuʔiš : top-hakuʔiš one to cut, break one
-hewʔiš : maš-hewʔiš one to peel one
-helu·ʔiš : ta·-helu·ʔiš one to play ball (i. e. stick-ball)
-helkuʔiš : kolo-helkuʔiš one to cover, bury one

Some reflexive auxiliaries are shown in (18).

- (18) -hahšalʔiš : ta·-hahšalʔiš one to hit himself. Reflexive
of -halʔiš.
-hašu·ʔiš : ko·t-hašu·ʔiš one to scratch himself. Reflexive
of -hawʔiš.

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) -haLšiʔiř : ta·ta·-haLšiʔiř one to hit, strike repeatedly on... Indirective/benefactive of -halʔiř.
 -haWřiʔiř : ta·-haWřiʔiř one to kill one for ... Indirective/benefactive of -hawʔiř.

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

- (20) -heta hnu· ʔiř : weh-heta hnu·ʔiř to meet, gather together
 cikip-heta hnu·ʔiř to wrestle (lit., pinch each other); cf. cikip-hawʔiř 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) -helahciʔiř : ta·-helahciʔiř one to pay one
 weh-helahciʔiř one to gather something together
 -heřku ʔiř : kolo-heřkuʔiř one to put on (a hat)
 -heti· ʔiř : ʔo·h-heti·ʔiř one to wait for one
 -heLti· ʔiř : holoh-heLti·ʔiř one to take one out of
 -heNciʔiř : pata-heNciʔiř 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) hetpitiʔiř a little one, baby one to walk. This is the diminutive of hapitiʔiř a normal-sized one to walk; -et- is infixes.
 ta·-helilu·ʔiř one to hit, kill a little one, a baby one. This is the diminutive of both ta·-halʔiř one to strike one and ta·-hawʔiř one to kill one; -li- is infixes in -helu·ʔiř.

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) helcokoʔiš one to learn
 hetenilcokoʔiš two to learn; -tan-/-ten- Dual as in
 auxiliary verbs
 hepilcokoʔiš 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. haciʔiš one to lie
 hataNciʔiš two to lie. Regular formation with -tan-,
 Dual incorporated.
 holi·-ha·ʔiš three or more to lie. Active verb stem,
 Plural of nonexistent *hol-, plus the
 copular auxiliary; suppletive.
- b. heciʔiš one to sit, live
 hetukšiʔiš two to sit, live. Suppletive verb.
 ko·-hakiʔiš three or more to sit, live. Active verb
 stem, Plural of nonexistent *ko-, plus
 the intransitive auxiliary.
- c. hahtiʔiš one to go
 hakšiʔiš two to go. Suppletive verb.
 we·-hakiʔiš three or more to go. Suppletive construc-
 tion 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.

we have the set shown in (28).

(28) ta·-halʔiš	one to strike, hit one
ta·-hawʔiš	one to kill one
ta·-heluʔiš	one to play ball (stick ball)
ta·-helu·šiʔiš	one to discharge a gun (making a noise)
ta·-heliluʔiš	one to strike, kill a little one (diminutive)
ta·-hetahnuʔiš	to meet, come together; to kill together (two working together)
ta·-hakiʔiš	one to stumble, bump, stub toe
ta·-hahšalʔiš	one to hit himself
ta·-helahciʔiš	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 -hawʔiš 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 -halʔiš, for instance), but other examples belie this completely. It can even occur in intransitive combinations, as in ʔay-hawʔiš '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-hawʔiš	one to pick, gather something
tem-halʔiš	one to feed one (cause to pick, gather)
tem-heluʔiš	one to feed one (on something)
tem-heškuʔiš	one to graze (as sheep)
tem-helahciʔiš	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 -hawʔiš to -halʔiš or from -heškuʔiš to -helahciʔiš.

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

¹Natchez 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.

²In this paper I have written the lone sibilant of the language as š, its true phonetic value, instead of the simplified symbol s 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

haciʔiš	for	haci·s	-hakiʔiš	for	-haki·s
-hawʔiš	for	-hoʔis	-haWšiʔiš	for	-hohsi·s
-helkuʔiš	for	-helku·s	-hewʔiš	for	-hŋʔis

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

⁴For the use of -halʔiš here instead of the expected -hakiʔiš see section 6 below. Most intransitive verbs would retain the use of -hakiʔiš throughout the paradigm.

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

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

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

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