Some Semantic Consequences of the Structural Position of Preverbs in Severn Ojibwe

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This paper concerns the relationship between preverbs and initials in Severn Ojibwe. It has long been noted that not only preverbs but initials, too, have properties that locate them in syntax (Goddard 1988, Branigan et al. 2005), and that the only factor that distinguishes between the two is their morphological or phonological status. I examine the behaviour of three roots – kishepaa- ‘in the morning’, niipaa- ‘at night’, and nihtaa- ‘be able to, do often, be good at’ – and argue that the structural position of these roots (as preverbs vs. as initials) has a systematic effect on the interpretation of the predicate: when these roots appear in the preverb position, the predicate is interpreted as an event, but when they are in the initial position, the predicate is interpreted as a state. I also present some preliminary evidence that this eventiveness contrast might best be described as a contrast between stage-level and individual-level readings.

THE TRADITIONAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN PREVERBS AND INITIALS

Many roots that are traditionally considered preverbs have corresponding initial forms. There are several criteria for determining whether a certain root appears in the position of a preverb or an initial. In this section I will

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2. Severn Ojibwe is a dialect of Ojibwe spoken in Northern Ontario and Manitoba; it is referred to as “Oji-Cree” by its speakers in Kingfisher Lake and in some other communities.

review these criteria, as well as some problems with them, which are also well known.

One factor that can distinguish preverbs and initials is their phonological status (see Piggott 1974 for details). Initials are phonologically part of the stem, while preverbs are independent phonological words, as illustrated in the following examples:

\[(1a)\] \(piishaa\) \(\rightarrow pi + ishaa\)
\(hither.go.VAI 3 INDEP\)
\('s/he comes here'\)
\(\text{‘hither’ ‘go’}\)

\[(1b)\] \(pi-ishkoonoo\) \(\rightarrow pi + ishkoonoo\)
\(hither.go.to.school.VAI 3 INDEP\)
\('s/he attends school here'\)
\(\text{‘hither’ ‘attend school’}\)

In both cases, the root \(pi\)- ‘hither’ combines with a free morpheme, so the only determining factor for its position is its phonological status. In (1a) it constitutes part of the same phonological word as the stem \(ishaa\) ‘go’, which suggests that it appears here in the initial position; in (1b), on the other hand, the root \(pi\)- is an independent phonological word – it is attached to the vowel-initial stem \(ishkoonoo\) with an epenthetic glottal stop, and it constitutes a separate stress domain – which means that in this case \(pi\)- is a preverb rather than an initial.

Morphological factors can also distinguish between preverbs and initials. In the following examples the same root functions as a preverb in (a) and as an initial in (b). The status of these roots as preverbs or initials is determined by the material that follows: if the material that follows is a free morpheme, then the root is considered a preverb, while if it is a bound morpheme, then the root occupies the position of initial:

\[(2a)\] \(pimi-taacipo\) ‘crawl along.VAI 3 INDEP’
\(\text{‘crawl’}\)

\[(2b)\] \(pimiwitoon\) ‘carry s.t. along. VTI 3 INDEP’
\(\text{*witoon}\)

\[(3a)\] \(nihtaaw-ikamo\) ‘skilled at singing.VAI 3 INDEP’
\(\text{‘sing’}\)

\[(3b)\] \(nihtaaw-wahse\) ‘knows how to walk.VAI 3 INDEP’
\(\text{*wahse}\)

The root *pimi- ‘along’ appears in preverb position when it is attached to the verb *taacipo ‘crawl’ (2a), and the same root appears in initial position when it combines with the final *-witoon (2b). The difference is simply that taacipo ‘crawl’ occurs independently, while *witoon does not. The same happens with the roots *nihtaa- and *ishi- in (3) and (4).

Since the initial is considered to be part of the stem, its position is invariable (5a), as opposed to the preverb, which can often be ordered freely with other preverbs (5b):

(5a) *kihci-*wahkewenawesi. / *wahke-kihci-very- easily angry.VAI 3 INDEP
     ‘S/he gets very angry easily.’

(5b) *kihci-*wahke-kiishiwaasi. / wahke-kihci-very- easily- angry. VAI 3 INDEP
     ‘S/he gets very angry easily.’

The root *wahke- acts as an initial in (5a) and is therefore bound to its position in front of the final *-wenawesi ‘be mad’, which is a bound morpheme; in (5b), on the other hand, it appears in the position of a preverb, and its order relative to other preverbs can be varied.

In some cases lexicalization patterns determine whether a given root is a preverb or an initial. If the meaning of a combination of a preverb and a stem is not discernible from the meaning of its parts, then this preverb is considered to be an initial. For example, the verb *mihkawi is a free morpheme that means ‘remember’. However, in combination with the root *wani- ‘wrongly’ it does not mean ‘wrongly remember’ as expected from the meaning of its parts, but ‘lose one’s mind’. In other words, the combination of *wani- plus the verb *mihkawi is lexicalized, and *wani- here is considered an initial rather than a preverb. As a result, the sequence of *wani- plus *mihkawi is not interruptible, as evident from (6), where the preverb *pihci- ‘by accident’ cannot come after *wani-. The fact that this restriction has to do with the different structural positions of *pihci- and *wani- is confirmed by sentence (7), where the same two roots have identical status (preverbs) and can come in either order.

(6a) *Nikiih- *pihci- *wani- mihkaw. / *-wani-pihci-mihkaw
     1SG.PAST- by accident- wrongly- remember.VAI INDEP
‘I have lost my mind by accident.’
*‘I remembered wrongly by accident.’

(7)  
\[\text{Nikiih- pihci- wani- tootaan.} \quad /-\text{wani-pihci-tootaan}\]
\[\text{1SG.PAST- by accident- wrongly- make.VAI INDEP}\]
‘I made a mistake by accident.’

To summarize, the traditional criteria for determining the position of a root as a preverb or as an initial are its phonological status, the morphological status of the material it combines with, and lexicalization. This distinction, however, is not always as straightforward as in the cases above. The following section will review some cases that render the distinction between preverbs and initials problematic.

_Problems with preverbs vs. initial distinction_

There are at least two obvious problems with the preverb : initial distinction. First, there is a large number of cases where the criteria described above contradict each other. For instance, consider the following examples, where the root _wani_- ‘wrongly’ is attached to the stem _ihkit_ ‘say’ in (8a) and to the stem _ishkoonoo_ ‘attend school’ in (8b) (both are free morphemes). Phonological evidence suggests that in the former case _wani_- is in the initial position, but in the latter it is in the preverb position.

(8a)  
\[\text{Nikiih- pihci- wani-ihkit.} \rightarrow [\text{wani:ihkit}]\]
\[\text{1SG.PAST- by accident- wrongly-say.VAI INDEP}\]
‘I said something stupid by accident.’

(8b)  
\[\text{Nikiih- pihci- wani-ishkoonoo.} \rightarrow [\text{wani?iʃkofo:nɔː}]\]
\[\text{1SG.PAST- by accident- wrongly-attend school. VAI INDEP}\]
‘I went to the wrong classroom by accident.’

By analogy with (1) above, _wani_- is an initial in (8a) since it constitutes one phonological word with the stem; it is a preverb in (8b), where it appears as an independent phonological word. Hence, one would expect the root _wani_- to be attached to its position in (8a), as is the case with initials, and be able to move more or less freely in (8b), as preverbs do. However, the following examples show that this is not the case here:

(9a)  
\[\text{Nikiih- wani- pihci-ihkit.} \rightarrow [\text{pihçi?iʃikit}]\]
\[\text{1SG.PAST-wrongly-by accident-say.VAI INDEP}\]
‘I said something stupid by accident.’
The relative order of the roots \textit{pihci-} and \textit{wani-} can be reversed not only as in (9b), where \textit{wani-} is definitely a preverb, but also in (9a), where it should be an initial according to the phonological evidence in (8a) above.

A second – and even bigger – problem with the preverb vs. initial distinction is that in many cases it is completely arbitrary. For instance in example (5) above (repeated here as (10)) the root \textit{wahke-} ‘easily’ appears in the initial position when it is attached to the bound morpheme – \textit{wenawesi} ‘be angry’ (10a); but it appears in the preverb position when attached to the verb \textit{kiishiwaasi} with the same meaning ‘be angry’ (10b). The meaning of the two sentences, however, is exactly the same.

Several studies propose to treat preverbs and initials the same, since in many cases they complete the same function, and differ only phonologically. Goddard 1988 proposes to eliminate the distinction between preverbs and initials by analyzing both on the syntactic level, since “the choice between a derived stem [i.e., initial + stem] and a compound stem [i.e., preverb + stem] to express a given concatenation of elements is [...] morphologically determined, rather than based on syntactic and semantic factors.” Branigan et al. (2005) advance a similar proposal, arguing further that preverbs ‘lower’ to the initial position for purely prosodic reasons: to satisfy minimal size constraints. Syntactically and semantically they fulfill the same function.

While treating preverbs and initials on the syntactic level seems right and greatly simplifies the theory, it is not clear whether they should always be treated as identical. In the following section I will present evidence that in some cases there are reasons to retain two different positions for preverbs and initials, even though both are on the same (syntactic) level.
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SEMANTIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE PREVERB VS. INITIAL DISTINCTION

In this section I discuss three roots — *kishepaa*—‘in the morning’, *niipaa*—‘at night’ and *nihtaa*—‘habitually’, ‘be able to’ — whose position as a preverb or as an initial influences the interpretation of the predicate. I show that there is phonological evidence determining whether these roots appear as a preverb or as an initial in a given verb, and argue that when they appear in the preverb position with certain verbs, then the predicate is interpreted as a dynamic event, while when they appear in the initial position, the predicate is interpreted as a state.

**Kishepaa—‘in the morning’ and niipaa—‘at night’**

When the preverbs *kishepaa*—‘in the morning’ and *niipaa*—‘at night’ appear before certain *a/aa*-initial verbs, an epenthetic *w* optionally resolves the hiatus. The two variants do not exhibit a perceptible difference in meaning:

(11)  
*Kihci-kishepaa-anohkii ahawe naape. / -kishepaa[w]anohkii*  
a lot-in the morning-work.VAl3 INDEP that man  
‘That man works hard in the morning.’

(12)  
*Nikihci-niipaa-ayamihcike. / -niipaa[w]ayamihcike*  
1SG.a lot-at night-read.VAl INDEP  
‘I read a lot at night.’

The *w*-epenthesis is a rather unexpected phenomenon in this environment. Traditionally, *w*-epenthesis is considered in the literature to be a word-internal sandhi process (see, for example, Valentine 2001), as shown in (13) below, and it is never found at a phonological word boundary (14).

(13)  
**Word-internally:**

(13a)  
*aapihtawaapihk*  
‘fifty cents’

(13b)  
*ishkotewaapoo*  
‘alcohol’

(13c)  
*nihtaaawahse*  
‘knows how to walk.VAl 3 INDEP’

\[ \rightarrow \quad *aapihta-* + *-aapihk*  
\text{half metal} \]

\[ \rightarrow \quad *ishkote-* + *-aapoo*  
\text{fire water} \]

\[ \rightarrow \quad *nihtaa-* + *-ahse*  
\text{good at walk} \]
(14) Word-externally:

(14a) Nika-anohkii. → *nikawanohkii  
1SG.FUT-work.VAI INDEP  
'I will work'.

(14b) Ishkwaa-ayamihcike. → *ishkwaawayamihcike  
finish-read.VAI 3 INDEP  
'He finished reading.'

(14c) Manaa-ahsamaahtepi. → *manaawahsamaahtepi  
avoid-sit in the sun.VAI 3 INDEP  
'He avoids sitting in the sun.'

In the examples in (13) w-epenthesis is used to resolve hiatus at the boundary of two morphemes within a phonological word. For instance, in (b) it connects the initial ishkote 'fire' with the bound morpheme for 'water', -aapoo. In (c) it is used to connect the initial nihtaa- 'able to' with the final -ahse. The examples in (14) show that w-epenthesis never occurs at the boundary between two phonological words. As noted above, preverbs are independent phonological words, and therefore they are not followed by word-internal sandhi. This is the case with the preverbs ishk-waa- ‘finish’ and manaa- ‘avoid’ in (b) and (c), and also with the future tense preverb ka- in (a). Considering these facts, w-epenthesis in (11) and (12) above is an unusual phenomenon, because it follows preverbs, which have been claimed to be independent phonological words.4

Considering that w-epenthesis normally appears only within phonological word, it is reasonable to propose that this is also the case in (11) and (12) above: namely, when w-epenthesis resolves the hiatus, the roots kishepaa- and niipaa- occupy positions of initials rather than preverbs. A closer look reveals that the appearance of the w-epenthesis is not arbitrary, and it does, in fact, influence the interpretation:

(15a) Ani- kishepaa-anohkii. / *kishepaa[w]anohkii  
about to- in the morning- work.VAI 3 INDEP  
'He is getting ready to go to work in the morning.'

4. W-epenthesis, in fact, has limited productivity with these roots. Kishepaa- ‘in the morning’ can be followed by w-epenthesis before three verbs in the data: anohkii ‘work’, ataawaaake ‘sell’, ataawe ‘buy’; and niipaa- ‘at night’ also can have w-epenthesis before three verbs: anohkii ‘work’, ataawaaake ‘sell’ and ayamihcike ‘read’. The set of verbs varies slightly from one speaker to another.
When the prospective preverb *ani-* ‘about to’ precedes *kishepaa-* or *niipaa-* and there is no epenthetic [w] (as in (15a) and (16a)), the reading is different than when w-epenthesis is present (15b, 16b). In the former case, without the epenthesis, the reading is ‘getting ready to do X’ and in the latter, with the epenthesis, ‘going to become X’. In other words, when the roots *kishepaa-* and *niipaa-* are followed by an epenthetic [w], the resulting predicate is a state denoting a constant property of the subject (‘morning worker’ in (15b) and ‘night reader’ in (16b)), while when no epenthetic [w] appears, the predicate denotes an event (‘go to work in the morning’ in (15a) and ‘read at night’ in (16a)). Hence, the function of the prospective preverb *ani-* is different in the (a) and in the (b) examples. When it combines with the stative predicates in (b), it functions as an inchoative marker, so that the reading is ‘going to become X’; however when it combines with eventive predicates in (a), its meaning is simply ‘about to’ or ‘getting ready to’. Thus, these examples show that the position of the roots *kishepaa-* and *niipaa-* as preverbs or as initials creates a contrast in the event structure: when they appear in the initial position (and are followed by w-epenthesis), the resulting predicate is stative, but when they are in the preverb position, the resulting predicate is dynamic, or eventive. If this is the case, we should expect the restrictions that are traditionally said to apply to states (see, for example, Vendler 1957) to hold for the variants with w-epenthesis but not for those without w-epenthesis. The tests that will be used here are the ability to appear in imperative form and compatibility with various elements referring to the internal structure of the event.

It is traditionally assumed that stative predicates cannot appear in imperative constructions. The following examples illustrate the difference in acceptability of initial-variants and preverb-variants in the imperative.
As expected, only the variants without w-epenthesis can appear as imperatives (17a, 18a), while those with w-epenthesis cannot:

(17a)  
\textit{Kaa win kishepaaw-anohkiin!}  
not in the morning-work.VAl IMPER  
‘Don’t work in the morning!’

(17b)  
\textit{*Kaa win kishepaa[w]anohkiin.}  
not in the morning-work.VAl IMPER  
‘Don’t be a morning worker!’

(18a)  
\textit{Kaa win niipaa-ataawaaken!}  
not at night-sell things.VAl IMPER  
‘Don’t sell things at night!’

(18b)  
\textit{*Kaa win niipaa[w]ataawaaken!}  
not at night-sell things.VAl IMPER  
‘Don’t be a night seller!’

Another test for the distinction between stative and dynamic predicates is compatibility with elements that refer to the beginning and end points of an event. Since states do not have a beginning point and an end-point, they should be incompatible with these elements. The following set of examples exhibits the patterning of initial-variants and preverb-variants with the aspectual preverbs referring to the beginning- and end-points of an event: the preverbs \textit{pooni- ‘stop’, maacii- ‘start, and ishkwaa- ‘finish’}. Variants with w-epenthesis, being states, cannot be used with these preverbs; while the preverb variants without w-epenthesis are perfectly acceptable in this context.

(19a)  
\textit{Kiih- pooni- kihci- kishepaa- ataawe.}  
PAST- stop- a lot- in the morning- buy.VAl 3 INDEP  
‘He stopped buying lots of things in the mornings.’

(19b)  
\textit{*Kiih- pooni- kihci- kishepaa[w] ataawe.}  
PAST- stop- a lot- in the morning- buy.VAl 3 INDEP  
?? ‘He stopped being a morning buyer.’

(20a)  
\textit{Maacii- niipaa- ataawaake.}  
start- at night- sell.VAl 3 INDEP  
‘He starts selling things at night.’

(20b)  
\textit{*Maacii- niipaa[w] ataawaake.}  
start- at night- sell things.VAl 3 INDEP|  
?? ‘He starts being a morning seller.’
The situation is similar with aspectual preverbs referring to the internal structure of an event: noomake- ‘for a while’ and ontami- ‘busy/right now’. The preverb noomake- ‘for a while’ defines the temporal boundaries of an event, implying its beginning- and end-points. It therefore should be incompatible with w-variants if they create stative predicates. This is indeed the case, as is evident from example (22) below. The aspectual preverb ontami- ‘busy doing X’ is roughly equivalent to the progressive in English in that it specifies that the event denoted by the verb takes place at or is relevant at a certain reference point. Therefore, similarly to stative predicates in English being incompatible with progressive aspect, the constructions with w-epenthesis should not be able to co-occur with the preverb ontami-. This is what we see in (23) below.

Since states, as opposed to activities, do not have temporal boundaries, there is also no time period that might be conceived of as before, after, or coincident with them. States are therefore expected to be unacceptable with elements that refer to these notions. Indeed, the variants with w-epenthesis are also unacceptable in the following sentences, where they appear in embedded clauses that are introduced by subordinators cip-waa- ‘before’, mekwaa- ‘while/during’ and ishkwaan- ‘after’ These subor-
The position of the roots kishepaa- ‘in the morning’ and niipaa- ‘at night’ is crucial to the interpretation of the verbal complex: if they appear in the initial positions, the resulting verb complex exhibits properties of state, and is subject to restrictions that apply to states; when they appear in preverb positions, on the other hand, the predicate is interpreted as dynamic, and these restrictions do not apply.
In (28) I present two structures associated with the two possible readings of the predicates depending on the position of the roots *kishepa* and *niipa*. Note that the main claim here is that the two positions exist – one of them lower in the structure and closer to the stem, and the other higher and farther from the stem; the former is associated with what is traditionally called ‘initial’ in the Algonquian literature, and the latter corresponds to what is traditionally called ‘preverb’. It is not clear at this point what exactly these two positions are on a syntactic tree, and I do not yet have a formal analysis clarifying this question. Thus, the only purpose of the two structures in (28a) and (28b) is to schematically represent the difference in the constituency structure between the two types of predicates.

(28a) *Kishepa/* anohkii. (stative)  
in the morning work VAI 3 INDEP  
‘S/he is a morning worker.’

(28b) *Kishepa-* anohkii. (eventive)  
in the morning- work VAI 3 INDEP  
‘S/he works in the morning.’

To summarize, when the roots *kishepa- ‘in the morning’* and *niipa- ‘at night’* appear as initials (and are followed by an epenthetic *w* before some *a/aa-initial verb stems), then the resulting predicate is interpreted as a state, but when they appear as preverbs, the resulting predicate is interpreted as an event. I have shown that the initial-variants, but not the preverb-variants, are subject to various constraints that are traditionally said to apply to states. In the following section I discuss the root *nihta*- ‘be able to, habitually’, arguing that in addition to the apparent contrast in lexical meaning created by the position of this root, it also creates the same contrast in aspectual properties as the two roots discussed above.
Nihtaa- ‘be able to, be skilled at, do often’

The root nihtaa- can mean ‘do often, habitually’ or ‘be good at’, and, as I argue below, it is another preverb that exhibits the same behaviour as the two roots kishepaa- and niipaa- discussed in the previous section. It deserves to be discussed separately, since, in addition to the contrast in the event structure, its different positioning seems to produce a contrast in meaning illustrated in the following examples:

(29a) Nihtaa-anohkii ahawe naape.
habitually-work.VAI 3 INDEP this man
‘This man works all the time.’

(29b) Nihtaa\[w\]anohkii ahawe naape.
good at work.VAI 3 INDEP that man
‘This man is a good worker.’

When nihtaa- is followed by w-epenthesis before a stem beginning in a/aa, the reading that is usually preferred by the speakers is ‘be good at’ rather than ‘habitually’. It also seems to be the case that when the verb does not begin in a/aa and the epenthesis evidence is not available, the two meanings are still available, and the sentence is ambiguous, as in (30a) and (30b). Sometimes, the presence of another preverb helps to disambiguate the meaning, as in (30c) and (30d) below: when the intensifier kihci- ‘very’ appears before nihtaa-, the reading is ‘very good at’ (30c), however when it appears between nihtaa- and the stem and, thus, directly modifies the stem (as in (30d)), then the preferred reading of nihtaa- is ‘habitually’, and of the whole verb complex ‘S/he habitually dances a lot’. 5

(30a) Nihtaa- niimi ahawe naape.
habitually/good at-dance.VAI 3 INDEP that man
‘That man is a good dancer.’ / ‘That man dances all the time.’

(30b) Kakwe-nihtaa- niimi.
try-habitually/good at-dance.VAI 3 INDEP
‘S/he tries to dance all the time.’ / ‘S/he tries to be a good dancer.

5. For a detailed treatment of the difference between the two meanings of nihtaa-, see Slavin (2005).
My claim here is that the primary contrast in interpretation created by the preverb nihtaa- is of aspectual properties. Thus, I argue that nihtaa-, in fact, exhibits the same kind of behaviour as the roots kishepaa- ‘in the morning’ and niipaa- ‘at night’: when it appears in the initial position, the predicate is interpreted as state denoting a general property of the subject, and when it appears in the preverb position, the predicate is eventive. The fact that the contrast is primarily that of aspectual properties rather than of lexical meaning is illustrated by the following examples: the variant where nihtaa- appears with w-epenthesis cannot be used with the adverbial ‘twice a week’ suggesting that it is a stative predicate, since, as discussed above, the w-epenthesis is used with events.

When the epenthesis evidence is not available, the two contrastive interpretations are still possible, which suggests that the two positions still exist. The difference between them arises when the presence of another preverb (such as the intensifier kihci- in (32) below) disambiguates the meaning of the verbal complex:

That the difference between the two readings is of aspectual properties rather than of meaning is further confirmed by the fact that the behav-
"Semantics of Structural Position"

The semantic consequences of structural position are significant when considering verb usage and interpretation. With the verb *minihkwe* 'to drink', the two readings resulting from two different positions of *nihtaa* - 'drink habitually' and 'be a drunkard' - show distinct patterns.

(33a) *Niishwaa peshiko-pimikonakaak nihtaa-kihci-minihkwe.*
    twice one-week.VII CONJ habitually-a lot-drink.VAI 3 INDEP
    'S/he usually drinks heavily twice a week.'

(33b) *Niishwaa peshiko-pimikonakaak kihci-nihtaa-minihkwe.*
    twice one-week.VII CONJ very-habitually-drink.VAI 3 INDEP
    '*Twice a week s/he is a drunkard.'

Thus, the root *nihtaa* - patterns exactly the same as the two temporal roots *kishepaa* - and *niipaa* - when it appears in the preverb position the resulting predicate is a dynamic event, and when it appears in the initial position, the predicate is interpreted as a state and is subject to the restrictions that usually apply to states.

**The Contrast: Individual- vs. Stage-Level Reading?**

In the preceding sections, I have proposed that the three roots *kishepaa*, *niipaa* - and *nihtaa* - can appear in the initial position or in the preverb position, creating contrast in the interpretation of the predicate: in the former case the predicate is interpreted as a state, and in the latter as a dynamic event. There exists, however, some preliminary evidence that the contrast in question can be further described as that between individual-level reading and stage-level reading. That is, the initial-variants that have been argued here to behave like states exhibit properties of individual-level predicates, and the preverb-variants that are interpreted as dynamic events exhibit properties of stage-level predicates. While the evidence that will be presented here in support of this proposal is far from conclusive, it is nevertheless suggestive.

In the terminology of Carlson (1977), individual-level predicates denote constant properties of subjects, and stage-level predicates denote temporary properties of subjects; and according to Diesing (1992) these two kinds of predicates further differ in the interpretation and position of their subjects at a certain level of representation. The evidence that will be adduced here in support of an individual-level vs. stage-level distinction has to do precisely with the different patterning of initial-variants and pre-
verb-variants with respect to subjects. During elicitation the consultant preferred to have an overt subject with initial-variants, while preverb-variants could go with or without subject. This is illustrated in the following examples:\(^6\)

(34a) \(\text{Kihci-kishepaa-anohkii} (\text{ahawe naape})\).  
\(\text{a lot- in the morning- work.VAl 3 INDEP} \text{ this man}\)  
'This man works a lot in the morning.'

(34b) \(\text{Kihci-kishepaa[\text{w}]anohkii} *(\text{ahawe naape})\).  
\(\text{a lot- in the morning- work.VAl 3 INDEP} \text{ this man}\)  
'This man is a morning worker.'

(35a) \(\text{Nihtaa-pi-kishepaa-ataawaake} (\text{ahawe naape})\).  
\(\text{habitually-hither-in the morning-sell.VAI 3 INDEP} \text{ this man}\)  
'This man usually comes here in the morning to sell things.'

(35b) \(\text{Nihtaa-pi-kishepaa[\text{w}]ataawaake} *(\text{ahawe naape})\).  
\(\text{habitually-hither-in the morning sell.VAI 3 INDEP} \text{ this man}\)  
'This man usually comes here to sell things in the morning.'

If this contrast proves to be consistent – which has to be further documented – then this data can be analyzed along the lines of Diesing (1988, 1990, 1992). Diesing argues that the core difference between individual-level predicates and stage-level predicates is that at LF the subjects of the former appear in [Spec, IP], and the subjects of the latter can appear either in [Spec, IP] or in [Spec, VP]. If we further assume that, as noted for example by Branigan et al. (2005), in a ‘pronominal argument’ language, much of the content inside vP will be \(\text{pro}\), then this would account for the preference for the overt subject with initial-variants but not with preverb-variants, and support the claim that the contrast between the two is that of an individual-level vs. stage-level reading, rather than dynamic vs. stative. However, as noted above, this issue must await further study.

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6. An anonymous reader points out that in Cree, a closely related language, there exists a contrast between sentences with verbal and nominal predicates: the former show evidence of having small \(\text{pro}\) arguments within inflected verbal forms, whereas the latter have overt DP arguments (see Déchaine 1997 for an analysis). In the cases discussed here, however, both predicates are clearly inflected verb forms. This point of comparison between Cree and Severn Ojibwe data definitely deserves further attention, however, it is beyond the scope of this paper to address it here.
CONCLUSION

In this paper I have shown that, although both preverbs and initials should be analyzed on the syntactic level, the distinction between the two cannot always be reduced to purely morphological or phonological factors. The three roots discussed in this paper provide evidence that sometimes there are semantic consequences to the distinction between preverbs and initials. When these roots appear in initial position the resulting predicate denotes a state, and when they appear in preverb position the predicate is interpreted as a dynamic event. I also presented some preliminary evidence that this contrast might better be viewed as a contrast between stage-level predicates and individual-level predicates.

Many questions remain unanswered. Thus, though the contrast between the two readings is very consistent, not all verbs beginning in a/aa participate in this contrast (cf. n. 4, above). It is possible that only the verbs that are used relatively often can become such deverbal finals. Second, it is not clear whether the two contrastive readings are available with the roots kishepaa- ‘in the morning’ and niipaa- ‘at night’ when they combine with verbs that are not a/aa-initial, as it is the case with the root nihtaa-. More data will have to be examined to answer this question.

The next question is this: is there a particular reason that these three roots can create this contrast in meaning, and are they the only ones that can? Is this ability due to a particular feature that these roots have but others do not? Are there other semantic consequences of the preverb-initial distinction?

REFERENCES


