The Negative Future Imperative in Algonquin

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It is well known that languages of the Ojibwe-Algonquin group generally have three types of imperatives: a present imperative, a future or delayed imperative, and a negative present imperative, often called the prohibitive. In the case of the Algonquin sub-group, this situation appears to have changed little since the time of the first records we have of the various dialects. In particular, the evidence for the negative present imperatives is, perhaps not surprisingly, fairly straightforward (and as it has been rather thoroughly discussed elsewhere, I will have little to say about it here). On the other hand, the various manuscripts I have been working with for the last several years offer clear evidence for a second type of negative imperative, a NEGATIVE FUTURE OR DELAYED IMPERATIVE.

THE EARLY SOURCES

The negative future imperative may well be an Algonquin innovation, filling in a gap in the imperative system. Examples have so far been found in five manuscripts, all in the collection of the Sulpician Archives, although the evidence is a bit more confused than that for the negative present imperative. The basic pattern, nonetheless, seems quite clear: the affirmative future imperative is modified by the negative particle eka

1. I would like to express my thanks to Marc Lacasse, archivist at the Sulpician Archives in Montréal, for his kindness and assistance in making several of the manuscripts mentioned herein available to me. I would also like to thank David Costa, Ives Goddard, and David Pentland for their assistance and comments on an earlier version of this paper. As usual, I alone am responsible for any shortcomings that persist.

2. Manuscript 43, attributed to Mathevet, is a grammar followed by several pages of dictionary items. Manuscript 103 (1669?) is the longest of the group, containing a dictionary, a grammar, and a series of texts. Manuscripts 104 (1661) and 105 (1662) are primarily dictionaries, both with rather short grammatical sections. Manuscript 107 is a grammar followed by dictionary and catechism sections; although some of this manuscript is in French, most of the headings and much of the grammatical discussion is in Latin. For more detailed descriptions, cf. Aubin 1997, 2001, 2003, 2005.
before the verb and the negative inflectional suffix -si- added to the verb before the 2nd person singular ending -kan and often also before the 2nd person plural ending -keg.

In Manuscript 104 (1661), the negative suffix -si- occurs before the -kan ending of the 2nd person singular, but not before the ending of the 2nd person plural:

1. Manuscript 104 (1661), pp. 65r, 65v

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Futur} & \quad \text{Futur} \\
Eka & \quad \{Eka\} \\
\text{sakihasikan} & \quad \text{papisikan} \\
\text{sakihasikang} & \quad \text{papisikang} \\
\text{sakihakeg} & \quad \text{papikeg}
\end{align*}
\]

The same situation obtains in Manuscripts 105 (1662) and 103 (1669?), but with complications. In addition to the -si- occurring in the 2nd person singular form in both manuscripts, we also find it in the 2nd person plural before the -keg ending in the example from Manuscript 105 (1662).

2. Manuscript 105 (1662), p. 218

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Futur} \\
Eka & \quad \text{papisikan} \\
Eka & \quad \text{papisikang} \\
Eka & \quad \text{papiskeg}
\end{align*}
\]

In Manuscript 103, on the other hand, the intransitive forms agree with those of Manuscript 104, but in the transitive animate there is no -si- in the 1st person inclusive plural form:

3. Manuscript 103 (1669?), p. 154

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Eka} & \quad \text{sakihasikan} \\
\text{Eka} & \quad \text{sakihasikang} \\
\text{Eka} & \quad \text{sakihakeg} \\
\text{Eka} & \quad \{Eka\} \\
\text{papisikan} & \quad \text{papisikang} \\
\text{papikeg}
\end{align*}
\]

3. Goddard (2006:198) points out that there was an earlier PA *-w NEG in the future imperative, which, though it disappeared by contraction, indicates that the future imperative originally meant 'don’t fail to'. Thus, although partly negative in form, the future imperative was affirmative in meaning, unlike the "new" negative future imperative discussed here, which was negative in both form and meaning. The situation is very unclear, but, even though all of the Algonquin dialects with the "new" tense have eka before the verb, it is perhaps possible that a faint vestige of the earlier negative remained in those dialects which do not show -si- in the 2p forms, yet, interestingly, do show it in the 2s forms.
In Manuscripts 107 (n.d.) and 43 (n.d.), we have -si- before the 2nd person singular as well as before the 2nd person plural ending in all three of the verbs given:

(4) Manuscript 107 (n.d.), pp. 11a, 13a
*Eka* tiberindamosikan, *Eka* tiberindisósikan,
mösikang — sikang
mösikeg — sikeg,

(5) Manuscript 43 (n.d.), p. 20
au futur
*Eka* papisikan. 'to [sic] ne ris pas'.
*Eka* [sic] au plurier
*Eka* papisikang. 'ne rions pas'.
*Eka* papisikeg. 'ne ries [sic] pas'.

In the light of these five manuscripts, it is surprising that the Nicolas manuscript (1672-1674), from the same general period, gives no example at all of the negative future imperative. Nicolas limits himself to two brief comments which appear to relate to the affirmative future imperative, one on the translation of the future imperative (p. 25):

La signification du paulo post future [i.e., the future imperative] est La
mesme que celle du present il ne faut qu'adiouter . 'bientot' . v.g.
‘gouverne le Bientot’ . &c.

and the other on the fact that impersonal verbs do not have a future imperative (p. 67):

[verbe impersonnel] [...] et a l'imperatif il na point de futur.

MORE RECENT SOURCES

Turning to more recent studies of Algonquin, we find in Cuoq (1886, 1893a, 1893b) a good deal of information about negative present imperatives. On the other hand, the only time he appears to be referring to negative future imperatives is in his grammar (1893a, section 337), where he gives examples, not of 2nd person imperatives but, unfortunately, only of 3rd person imperatives:

L'impératif n'ayant pas de temps composés, n'a nul besoin de particules; le futur de ce mode est un temps simple aussi bien que le
présent. Il n’a pas de troisième personne, si ce n’est au négatif de quelques verbes absolus, et seulement au singulier :

\[
Ka \text{manatwesiwitc awiia}, \quad \text{que personne ne dise de mauvaises paroles;}
\]

\[
Ka \text{kitimisiwitc ki kwisis}, \quad \text{que ton fils ne soit pas paresseux ;}
\]

\[
Ka \text{widjiwesiwitc kit anis i nimihitinaniwang}, \quad \text{que ta fille n’assiste pas aux danses.}
\]

Less than twenty years after Cuoq’s last published work, Lemoine (1909) provides far more details than any of his predecessors in the appended Tableaux Synoptiques. The negative future imperative endings to be added to various types of stems for AI, TI, and TA verbs are shown below (with Lemoine’s (c) representing [ʃ]):

(6) Lemoine (1909)

a. **VERBES ABSOLUS ACTIFS : (Suite)**

(VERBES EN \(e\)) : (VERBES EN \(am\)) : (VERBES EN \(n\)) :

(ajout.) : (chang. \(m\) en) : (ajout.) :

2s sikan nsikan sikang
21 sikang nsikang sikang
2p sikeg nsikeg sikang

b. **VERBES ACTIFS AVEC RÉGIME INANIMÉ : (Suite)**

(VERBES EN \(on\)) : (VERBES EN \(an\)) :

(chang. \(n\) en) : (ajout.)

Sg. Pl.
2s sikan idem sikang idem
21 sikang " sikang "
2p sikeg " sikeg "

c. **VERBES ACTIFS AVEC RÉGIME ANIMÉ = (Suite)**

(ajout. à l’Impér.) :

Sg.
2s asiwakan
21 asiwakang
2p asiwakeg

Pl.
asiwakatwak
asiwakangwak
asiwakegwak
d. VERBES PASSIFS Tu me ETC. = (Suite)

(VERBES EN eh, ih, ci, j, m, n, aw) : (VERBES EN v (h) [i.e., /-hw/]):

(ajout. à l'Impér.) :

(ajout. à l'Impér.) :

[2s-1s] —moi iciken ociken
[2s-lp] —nous icikangen ocikangen
[2p-lp] —ez-nous icikekon ocikekon

All of the negative future imperative endings given here appear to contain the negative marker -si-, with one exception. For the so-called 'Verbes Passifs' (2nd person acting on 1st person, or TA theme 3), with -iši- preceding the endings -ken and -kegon, Lemoine gives exactly the same endings for the negative future imperative (6d) as for the negative present imperative. It is clear that the endings given are those of the negative present imperative in -ken and -kegon, and, as expected, without -si-, not those of the negative future imperative in -kan and -keg.

Bloomfield (1958), representing Eastern Ojibwe and not Algonquin, includes no discussion of the negative future imperative and no examples of that tense, although there are a small number of examples of affirmative future imperatives but, interestingly, only of 2nd person singular forms.

DISCUSSION

Nicolas (1672-1674) makes no mention and offers no examples of the negative future imperative. This may indicate that this tense, although perhaps an Algonquin innovation, did not exist in all of the Algonquin dialects. In the case of the dialect reported by Nicolas, this may have been due to the influence of Attikamek, as suggested by Daviault (1989:214, who cites Béland (1978) as her source for Attikamek).

Beginning with the very earliest stage attested of the negative future imperative, the 2nd person singular ending -kan is preceded by -si- in all of the examples found. At a later stage, we find cases in which the 2nd person plural ending -keg either is or is not preceded by -si-. This evidence would seem to indicate that the negative future imperative may have been elaborated over time, perhaps in somewhat different ways in different Algonquin dialects.
Although I have found no examples of the negative future imperative in Cuoq (1886, 1893a, 1893b), it presumably still existed at the time of his investigations, but not in the dialect(s) he worked on. This may be taken as an indication that this tense was lost at different times in the different Algonquin dialects which may have once had it.

The evidence of Lemoine (1909) shows the negative future imperative to have been quite robust in the dialect(s) he investigated, but the negative present imperative and the negative future imperative appear to have coalesced in favor of the negative present imperative in at least one case, that of the "Verbes Passifs" (2nd person acting on 1st person, or TA theme 3).

In the dialect studied by Bloomfield (1958), there are no examples of the negative future imperative, presumably because it had never existed there. Finally, Valentine (2001), which has no discussion and no examples of the negative future imperative, may indicate that the coalescence of the negative present imperative and the negative future imperative in favor of the negative present imperative, of which we see an example in Lemoine (1909), has subsequently eliminated the negative future imperative from all of the Algonquin dialects.

If we accept that the negative future imperative has disappeared from most, and perhaps all, of the dialects of the Algonquin group, the last vestiges of this tense are datable to the time between Lemoine, when it was still robust in one or more dialects, and Valentine, when it seems that there are no longer any traces of it anywhere.

Pending further analysis of the numerous 18th- and early 19th-century Algonquin manuscripts which have been preserved, it appears that there is little post-17th-century evidence for this tense. It seems to me that there are at least two ways to deal with this question, neither of which is entirely satisfactory. First, we can say that the fact that there is so little post-17th century evidence for the negative future imperative is simply an "accidental gap" in our records. While this explanation might be attractive for an Algonquian language for which we have few documents, it does not easily apply to the Algonquin group, for which we have relatively voluminous accounts stretching back well over 300 years. Further, these records come from many different places in the Algonquin-speaking area and were gathered by many different individuals. It would stretch plausibility to argue that most, if not all, of the 18th- and 19th-century observers missed exactly the same thing.
To take one example, Cuoq was certainly aware of the earlier work done by Gay (or Guay), Mathevet, and others (see Cuoq 1886:122 and 1893b:170-174), yet, as far as I have been able to ascertain, except for the one case cited above, he never mentions the negative future imperative in any of his publications. On the other hand, Lemoine’s work certainly offers support for the survival of the negative future imperative in spite of the lack of evidence for it elsewhere in the post-17th-century period.

A second view, which I will call “gradual obsolescence,” focusses on the high degree of variability in the forms of the negative future imperative, and the fact that there is so little post-17th century evidence suggests that this tense, which was in some sense marginal, became obsolescent and eventually disappeared.

All of the negative future imperative endings listed by Lemoine show the suffix -si-, making this tense like some of the non-imperative negative tenses. This may have helped the survival of the negative present imperative, which would then be a negative imperative tense without the negative suffix -si-, perhaps thereby heightening its salience and aiding in its retainability. What may well be an additional important consideration is the fact that neither Cuoq nor Bloomfield discusses the affirmative future imperative in much detail, and each gives a relatively small number of examples to illustrate its use. This may be taken to indicate that the affirmative future imperative is marginal in some sense, perhaps because of its relatively infrequent use or for some other reason. If this were the case earlier, it may well be that the negative future imperative was also marginal, perhaps even more so than its affirmative counterpart. Even if the negative future imperative was marginal, it is not surprising that the early missionaries noted its presence, because Latin, which all of them knew, has very much the same kind of tense: the negative future imperative was quite simply a linguistic feature they were familiar with (see Gildersleeve & Lodge 1990:175-179).

In addition to these language-internal considerations, there may have also been an external factor at work. The period in which this tense became obsolete and eventually disappeared was a period which, in all

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4. In this connection, Goddard (2006:198) points out that the future imperative has been obsolete in Meskwaki for some time.
5. I would like to thank my colleague, Bonnie Catto, Professor of Classics at Assumption College, for this information.
probability, saw fewer monolingual speakers of Algonquin and rising numbers of bilinguals. The language as spoken by a monolingual is rarely matched by that of a bilingual (although there are exceptional individuals sometimes referred to as ambilinguals). Neither French nor, later, English – languages to which Algonquin speakers were more and more exposed – has a future imperative or a negative future imperative. Just as the vocabulary of these European languages affected the indigenous vocabulary, their tense structure may also have had an effect, of interference, on what may have been in some sense a marginal tense, particularly in the language of the ever more numerous bilinguals, leading to its coalescence in some cases with the negative present imperative, as we see in Lemoine’s so-called “passive verbs,” then to its more general obsolescence and eventual disappearance.

The negative future imperative in Algonquin is an unusual development in the history of the Algonquian languages. Although many aspects of this tense are incompletely understood, it draws renewed attention to the large number of manuscripts on Algonquin which have come down to us from earlier periods, manuscripts which may yet yield much valuable information on the history of this language.

REFERENCES
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