This paper will attempt to define the future markers of Woods Cree (as spoken at and near Pukatawagan, Manitoba), and, in particular, will explore the status of na- among the other future markers.

It is generally agreed that ka-, the second person future marker, is a reduction — in some manner — of the second person prefix ki- and the future marker ka-. It is tempting, therefore, to look at the first person future marker na- as a parallel reduction of the first person prefix ni- and the same future marker ka-. I will argue instead that na- is a portmanteau realization of person and tense categories.

Before examining the future markers per se, we will identify and display the personal prefixes as they occur with independent order verbs:

- **ni-** marks the first person, as in the following examples:
  1) ni-pimohta:na:n ‘we are walking’
  2) ni-pi:hik ‘he is waiting for me’

- **ki-** marks the second person, as in the following example:
  3) ki-pi:hitin ‘I am waiting for you’

There is no prefix to mark the third person, as in the following examples:

- 4) takosin ‘he gets there’
- 5) pakamahwi:w ‘he hits him’

Optionally the short unstressed vowel of the prefix is elided, as in the following example:

- 6) [ntakosinin] ‘I am arriving’
By a rule of assimilation, the nasal may change to a bilabial or a velar, as in the following examples:

7) \[mpakasimon\] ‘I am swimming’
8) \[ŋ ki:patahwa:w\] ‘I missed him’

(The \(-ki:-\) in example 8 is a past or completive marker.)

The above verbs all have stems that begin with a consonant. With verbs that have a stem beginning with a vowel, there are two different connectives that occur between the vowel of the prefix and the initial vowel of the stem. One of these is \(-t-\), as in:

9) ni-t-apin ‘I am sitting down’

The other is \(-y-\), which is equally acceptable:

10) ni-y-apin ‘I am sitting down’

This is an unusual form from the perspective of Plains Cree where the usual connective is \(-t-\), but Wolfart (1973:82) notes that there are also some isolated instances of both \(-h-\) and \(-w-\). In Woods Cree, by contrast, the \(-y-\) connective is fully productive. It is used with nouns as well as verbs; both of the following examples are equally acceptable:

11) ni-y-akohp ‘my blanket’
12) ni-t-akohp ‘my blanket’

An adequate analysis of the frequency with which these two connectives are used has not been made, but casual and informal observation indicates that \(-t-\) is the more common of the two.

A more striking pattern emerges, however, when we examine those cases in which the vowel \(-i-\) of the prefix is elided, as illustrated by the following two examples:

13) a5ahwi:w ‘he buries him’
14) n-at5ahwa:w ‘I am burying him’

It should be noted that in both the above examples, the initial vowel of the stem is short. In contrast with this, when a word ending in a short vowel is followed by another word beginning with a short vowel, the rules of external sandhi require that the final vowel of the first word be dropped, and the initial vowel of the second word be lengthened, as in the following example:

15) awa ‘this’ + iskwi:w ‘woman’
is realized as:

16) aw i:skwi:w 'this woman'

In the case of the form n-aδ ahwa:w there has been no lengthening of the initial vowel of the stem aδahw-, which indicates that we are not dealing with a prefix ni-, but rather with only n-. This form of the prefix does occur regularly with certain dependent noun stems, as in the following:

17) n-atay 'my belly'
18) k-atay 'your belly'

When the initial vowel of a verb stem is i-, it is lengthened to i:- when it is preceded by a personal prefix, as in the following examples:

19) iti:w 'he tells him'; n-i:ta:w 'I am telling him'
20) itohti:w 'he goes'; n-i:tohta:n 'I am going'

The reduced variant of the prefix ki- is found in apparent free variation with the variant with the connective -y-. In the first example following, the ki- is followed by the connective -y-; in the second, the reduced variant k- directly precedes the verb:

21) ki-y-ayamihitona:na:w 'we are talking to each other'
22) k-ayamina:naw 'we are talking'

Note that when the reduced variant k- is used, the initial short vowel of the stem is not lengthened. The foregoing examples were elicited in totally different contexts. (Unfortunately, I did not happen to record examples of the second person prefix ki- plus a verb stem with initial i-, nor any instances of either ni- or ki- before a verb stem with initial o-.)

It is unusual for prefixes to be reduced from ni- or ki- to n- or k- in this manner. In Plains Cree as described by Wolfart (1973), for example, only stems beginning with o- have the variation involving the insertion of the connective -t- and lengthening of the initial o- if short, or, as is illustrated in the following examples, lengthening the stem-initial vowel after the reduced variant:

23) otine:w 'he takes him'
24) n-o:tina:w 'I take him'

Examples involving the reduced variants n- or k- in Woods Cree are not as frequent as those involving the connectives, but they do occur with enough frequency to suggest that they are
not slips of the tongue or recording errors. It also turns out that they do not exist in isolation, and will be seen to have some bearing of the analysis of the future markers.

Before looking at the future markers in Woods Cree, we will examine them in other dialects of Cree, paying special attention to the phonological realization of these markers. In contemporary grammars and teaching manuals of Cree, the treatment of the future paradigm is fairly routine. Ellis (1983:30), dealing with material from the west coast of James Bay, states that: "The future marker with ni-... and ki-... subject prefixes is ka-; with 3rd person subject, ta-.” He states that nika-contracts to n’ka-, as in the following example:

25) n’ka-itohta:n ‘I shall go there’

He also notes that ki-, the 2nd person prefix, plus -ka-, the future marker, contract to -ka- alone, so that the full form:

26) kika-kihtohta:n ‘you will go away’

becomes, except in careful or emphatic speech:

27) ka-kihtohta:n ‘you will go away’

The third person form has the future marker ta-:

28) ta-kihtohte:w ‘he will go away’

Wolfart (1973:77) in discussing the preverb ka- notes that: “the shape ka- also occurs as a contraction (haplology) of the personal prefix ki followed by the preverb ka-.”

Jolly and Joseph (1983) analyse this reduction as a two-fold process: first a syncope of [kika] to [kka], and second a cluster reduction to [ka]. They prefer this analysis to one that involves haplology, which they feel is not an especially common or natural process. They claim that sequences that have similar phonetic shape, like:

29) ka:-k(h) (subordinator past)

do not undergo such haplological shortening, indicating that haplology is a severely restricted rule. For this reason, an analysis other than haplology seems preferable to them. This, of course, depends on what is regarded as a similar sequence. For example, is a sequence of Ca:-Ci:, which includes a preverb boundary, to be considered similar to a sequence Ci:Ca, which does not contain a preverb boundary? Jolley and Joseph extend their treatment of kika- to cover the reduction of kita- to
ta-, although kita-, unlike kika-, does not include the personal prefix.

Edwards (1979:9.3), dealing with Plains Cree, gives a future tense paradigm of the TI verb in which the first, second and third person prefixes plus future markers are nika-, kika-, and kita-; she makes no mention of ka-. On the other hand, she notes that kita-, which does not include the personal prefix, may be shortened to ta-. This information suggests that a phonological rule is involved in this formation.

Voorhis et al (1972), dealing with dialects spoken in Manitoba, with the principal contributors being speakers of Swampy Cree, analyzes the future marker as an underlying and abstract ta- which actually surfaces only in the third person. Consequently he analyzes the first person n(i)ka- as underlying ni- plus underlying ta-. He also analyzes the second person ka- as underlying ki- plus underlying ta-.

As for the semantics of these future markers, Freda Ahenakew (personal communication) informs me that in Plains Cree, her native dialect, there is a difference between the meaning of ta- and kita-. In the following examples, (30) is felt to be more definite than (31):

30) ta-me:tawe:w o:ta 'he will play there'
31) kita-me:tawe:w o:ta 'he will play there'

In addition to these two, the following expression is also acceptable, apparently with no specialization as to definiteness or lack thereof:

32) ka-me:tawe:w o:ta 'he will play there'

These examples, it should be noted, use the preverbs ta-, kita- and ka- with verbs of the independent order. By contrast, in Woods Cree ta- and kita- occur only with the conjunct order, while na- or nika- occur with the independent order, and ka- occurs with both.\(^2\) I consider na- as a portmanteau morpheme expressing the first person future. In the second person there

---

1 Paul Voorhis tells me that it makes little difference whether ka- or ta- is taken as the base form — historically, the form was /kata/.

2 John Nichols tells me that in Split Lake, Manitoba, a neighbouring Swampy dialect, only ta- occurs as the future marker for third person in the independent order. Both he and Voorhis affirm that the na-, ka-, ta-pattern is found in many parts of Northern Manitoba with the independent order of verbs.
is no kika- to parallel ka-. Also, both the second and third person forms are ka-.

The first person variant nika- is rare and I have heard it only in slow careful speech when a repetition was asked for, as in the following:

33) na-pi:ha:w 'I'm going to wait for him'
When asked to say this again, the speaker said:

34) nika-pi:ha:w 'I'm going to wait for him'

The fact that these two variants both occur does not mean that they are related phonologically. My claim that na- is a portmanteau morpheme is based on the fact that the nasal is a dental nasal [n]. It cannot be a contraction or cluster reduction of nika- since in rapid speech the [n] assimilates to the following [k] and becomes a velar nasal, as in the following example:

35) [ŋ kapi:hik] 'he is going to wait for me'

The analysis of Jolley and Joseph, which posits syncope and cluster reduction for a reduction of nika- to na-, would predict two possible results: either [ka], in which case the distinction between persons would have collapsed, or [ŋ a], with a velar nasal. Since it is neither of these two possible results, I prefer the analysis of na-, as a portmanteau morpheme for the first person future. It is, in effect, a new preverb, formed by morphological rather than phonological processes. The following examples are of consonant-initial verbs:

36) na-to:ti:n 'I'll do it'
37) ka-to:ti:n 'you'll do it'
38) ka-to:tam 'he'll do it'
39) na-na:ta:w 'I'll fetch him'
40) ka-na:ta:naw 'we'll (incl) fetch him'
41) ka-na:ti:wak 'they'll fetch him'

In the following set of examples, the surface contrast between present and future resides solely in the use of the vowel i in present tense and the use of the vowel a in the future (and, of course, in the sandhi difference between the personal prefixes ki- and ni- and the preverbs ka- and na-:

42) ki-pi:hitin 'I am waiting for you'
43) ka-pi:hitin 'I'll wait for you'
44) ni-ki:sihta:n 'I've finished'
45) wi:pac na-ki:sihta:n 'I'll finish soon'
With vowel-initial verb stems, Woods Cree uses the vowelless variants of the personal prefixes. The following examples illustrate this point, as well as providing us with a minimal pair between short and long vowel following the prefix:

46) a\ddot{a}ahwi:w 'he buries him'
47) n-a\ddot{a}ahwa:w 'I am burying him'
48) n-a:a\ddot{a}ahwa:w 'I will bury him'

The surface difference between these last two forms is one of vowel length only. The underlying structures are, of course, different. The form n-a\ddot{a}ahwa:w consists of n-, the vowelless variant of the prefix, plus the verb stem plus suffix a\ddot{a}ahwa:w. The form n-a:a\ddot{a}ahwa:w consists of the future morpheme na- plus the same verb stem plus suffix a\ddot{a}ahwa:w. When the two short vowels come together across a word or preverb boundary, the first vowel drops and there is a lengthening of the second. The following set of examples further illustrates this point:

49) ah\ddot{a}:ci 'as he places him'
50) ni-y-ah\ddot{a}a:w 'I place him'
51) n-a:h\ddot{a}a:w 'I will place him'

So far we have discussed only the future markers which are used with verbs in the independent order. We shall now examine the future markers which occur with verbs in the conjunct order, focusing our attention on the contractions between future marker and verb stem. The following example illustrates the preverb ka- before a vowel-initial verb stem:

52) k-a:samita:n 'I will give you food'

This form is analyzed as including of the preverb ka- plus the verb stem asam-, with resultant drop of the a of ka- and lengthening of the a of asam-. We also find the future marker ka- with verbs beginning in o, yielding o:, as follows:

53) k-o:tinaman 'you will take it'

This form consists of the preverb ka- plus the verb stem otin-. The first vowel is dropped and the second is lengthened. The preverb ta- combines with vowel-initial verbs in the same way as ka-:

54) t-a:samita:n '(for me) to feed you'

The forms ka- and ta- (with kita- as an uncommon alternative) occur with all persons in the conjunct order. The following examples illustrate ka-:
The following examples illustrate ta-:

58) ta-pi:tohtïya: '(for us) to come over'  
59) ta-ta:pwe:htame:k 'for all to believe' (Ahenakew 1985)  
60) ta-pi:cipahta:t 'if she runs to this side'

This last was spontaneously given during the recording of a text, but when the text was being transcribed, the speaker volunteered the information that the following form also occurs:

61) kita-pi:cipahta:t 'if she runs to this side'

The form kita-, therefore, does not occur spontaneously in texts, and its status is undetermined. Further, although I find ta- only with first and third persons in my data, I am inclined to believe that its absence from constructions with the second person is only accidental, since it apparently does occur in that position in Plains Cree.

Finally, let us briefly look beyond phonology and morphology. One of the unsolved problems is the usage of both ta- and ka- with the conjunct. As a preliminary hypothesis, ta- appears to be used when the future is felt to be potential, and ka- is used when the future is felt to be factual. The potential usage is illustrated by the following sentences:

‘and there we went and watched for a moose to see if he would come out’

63) aswaho ana ayihw no:si:mo:swa ta-pi:cipahta:t  
‘watch out lest that mother moose runs to this side’

Both these examples with ta- refer only to what might happen. The following examples with ka- suggest that the events described will indeed happen:

64) pa:tim: wañawi:yan, k-a:samita:n  
‘when you go out, I will give you some food’

‘all kinds of spirits will defend them from everything’

There are, however, apparent counter-examples to these:

66) atimwa poko ta-nipaha:t  
‘he will have to kill the dog’
67) pokoko k-o:tinaman kimaski:hki:m
'you will have to take your medicines'

It should be noted that (65) has ta- with the conjunct, and (66) has ka- with the conjunct. Whether the form pokoko has any effect on this has not been determined. In the following two examples, in which the conjunct clause is introduced by the same independent verb and both indicate the potential future, the first has ta- and the second has ka-:

68) niki:kosti:n ta-sipwi:ya:mohka:tak
'I was scared that I would chase him away'

69) nikosti:na:n iša ka-na:ta:ya: ana omanisis
'we were scared, you know, to go get that calf'

The purpose of this paper was to examine the future markers of Woods Cree, and to propose an interpretation of the form na-. Their use with the independent order is straightforward enough. Their usage with the conjunct order, however, has not yet been established, and further work must be done.

REFERENCES

Ahenakew, Freda

Edwards, Mary.
1979 *Cree: An Intensive Language Course.* Edited by Ida McLeod. Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College.

Ellis, C. Douglas

Jolley, Catherine, and Brian Joseph

Voorhis, Paul H., et al

Wolfart, H. Christoph