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Loan verb integration in Michif*

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Abstract: This paper looks at the different ways French (and English) loan verbs are being integrated in Michif, a mixed language (the noun system is French, the verbal one is Cree) based upon two dictionaries of the language. The detailed study of the available data has shown that loan verbs are almost exclusively assigned to the VAI class, i.e. a class of verbs whose single core argument is animate. This seems natural enough given that the overwhelming majority of them do have an animate core participant in the donor language as well. Still, quite a few of them can be transitive. This is accounted for by claiming that VAI is the most ‘neutral’ inflectional class of Cree as far as morphology and argument structure are concerned as verbs in this class can be syntactically both intransitive and transitive.

Finally, all of the loan verbs examined have Cree equivalents and so the claim that they were borrowed because of the lack of a corresponding Cree verb in the language is difficult to accept at face value.

Keywords: loan verbs, valency, transitivity, animacy, direct/inverse, hierarchical agreement, Algonquian, Cree, Michif

1 Introduction

This paper deals with French and English loan verbs in Michif, and in particular the ways in which they have been integrated into the almost exclusively Cree (ie Algonquian) verbal system of that language. It is especially concerned with the ways in which the argument structure of the original verb has been mapped onto the existing valency patterns.

Michif (-Cree) is a mixed language, famously unique in that its lexicon and grammar are (almost) neatly made up of two main components with separate sound systems,*

*I would like to thank all of the anonymous reviewers, the editors and especially Peter Bakker for invaluable comments which greatly improved the previous versions of this paper. I am solely responsible for any remaining errors. I follow the Leipzig glossing rules, to which the following are added: CNJ conjunct, IND independent, INIT initial change, INV inverse, NA animate noun, NI inanimate noun, PA Proto-Alqonguian, VI inanimate intransitive verb, VAI animate intransitive verb, VTA transitive animate verb, VTI transitive inanimate verb.
morphology and syntax: the nominal one (including most NP modifiers) is (Canadian) French, while the verbal one is (Plains) Cree (Bakker, 1997, 4). No (significant) simplification in nominal and verbal morphology is to be observed (Bakker, 1997, 9; 10-11), and indeed it has even been said that Michif combines the most difficult parts of French and Cree grammar, respectively, even if this impressionistic claim is difficult to evaluate empirically (Bakker, 1997, 24).

The study is based upon a careful examination of the material presented in Laverdure and Allard (1983), supplemented at times by Fleury (2013) (on which see section 3).

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 offers some terminological preliminaries for non-Algonquianists, section 3 represents the bulk of the article and examines both loan verbs from French (3.1) and loan verbs from English (3.2), as well as some unclear classes (3.3). In both cases loan verbs are classified according to their transitivity in the donor language (i.e. intransitive, transitive and ambitransitive). Finally, section 4 summarizes and discusses the findings and offers a hypothesis as to the reason why almost all loan verbs have been assigned to the VAI (intransitive verbs with an animate actor) class.

2 Some terminological preliminaries

Algonquian languages present multiple challenges to the unprepared. I will try to explain some of these, especially those pertaining to the verbal domain, in a somewhat simplified way in this short introduction (an expanded version of the discussion on Algonquian in Jacques and Antonov (2014)).

2.1 Verb classes and animacy

Algonquian verbs are traditionally classified into four large classes, according to the transitivity of the verb and the animacy of its S or P argument, respectively. In the case of a transitive verb, the A is always animate. There is thus a major distinction between animate (NA) and inanimate (NI) nouns. It is important to note that the criteria used to ascribe animate or inanimate gender to a given referent do not always coincide with those familiar from European languages: ‘sock(s)’ and ‘rock(s)’, for instance, are animate.

We have VII (intransitive verbs with an inanimate actor), VAI (intransitive verbs with an animate actor), VTI (transitive verbs with an inanimate patient) and VTA (transitive verbs with an animate patient). The last two classes also have an animate actor. In fact,
there are also several subclasses of ‘deponent’ VAI and VTI verbs whose syntactic behaviour does not match their morphological makeup (cf. Table 1). These are usually either not specifically signalled or else termed VAI-T and VTI-I. Here I will call them VAI$_T$ and VTI$_{INTR}$, respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb class</th>
<th>Transitivity</th>
<th>S, A, P [+ANIM]</th>
<th>Cree</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>intransitive</td>
<td>S=INAN</td>
<td>wâpiskâ–</td>
<td>‘be white’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>miywâsi–</td>
<td>‘be good’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wâpa–</td>
<td>‘be dawn’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>intransitive</td>
<td>S=ANIM</td>
<td>wâpiskisi–</td>
<td>‘be white’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>miywâsisi–</td>
<td>‘be good’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pimipahtâ–</td>
<td>‘run’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAI$_T$</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>A=ANIM+P=±ANIM</td>
<td>mêki-</td>
<td>‘give (out) s.o. or sth’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>A=ANIM+P=INAN</td>
<td>âpachihtâ-</td>
<td>‘use sth’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTI</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>A=ANIM+P=INAN</td>
<td>wâpaht–</td>
<td>‘see sth’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTI$_{INTR}$</td>
<td>intransitive</td>
<td>S=ANIM</td>
<td>mâham</td>
<td>‘canoe downriver’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTA</td>
<td>(mono)transitive</td>
<td>A=ANIM+P=ANIM</td>
<td>wâpam–</td>
<td>‘see s.o.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(di)transitive</td>
<td>A=ANIM (+ T=±ANIM) + R=ANIM</td>
<td>miy–</td>
<td>‘give someone (sth/s.o.)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.2 Direct/inverse and obviation

It is important to observe that in spite of the existence of syntactically transitive deponent verbs, the only verbs that index both of their participants as long as they are not third person are the VTA (transitive animate) ones. The resulting complex forms reference their participants using S, A, P-neutral affixes. This, in turn, calls for the use of a special ‘direction’ marker (traditionally called a ‘theme sign’) in order to indicate the ‘direct’ vs ‘inverse’ direction of the action. The use of one or the other reflects the relative position of the agent and the patient on the following hierarchy (valid for Plains Cree):

1. SAP > animate proximate > animate obviative > inanimate

If the agent is located higher than the patient the verb shows direct marking, but if it is lower then the verb receives inverse marking. Thus, we observe a tripartite distinction between proximate animate, obviative animate and inanimate referents.

\[^2\]It is generally considered that the second person outranks the first person \( (2 > 1) \) in Algonquian languages, but this refers to a distinct hierarchy related to the slot accessibility of person prefixes, not the distribution of direct and inverse forms.
Obviation is an ubiquitous feature in Algonquian, which is reflected both in verbal and nominal morphology. Its main function is to distinguish two or more third-person participants within a given sentence or stretch of discourse. Thus, in oral narratives, the obviative (OBV, -(w)a in Cree) is used to introduce a hitherto unknown participant by contrast with the unmarked form which is called the proximate (PROX). There can be at most one proximate participant within a given clause. Later on, the interplay between the two helps the listener to keep track of who does what to whom. Except if s/he is a persistent topic, no participant is inherently tied to a proximate or obviative status solely by virtue of their inherent semantic features. The obviative must also be used on the possessee, and on the verb whose argument the possessee is, whenever the possessor is third-person (cf. ex. 2).

(2) eeka la Sandriyeuz o-papa-wa ekota kaa-ayaa-yit
    NEG ART:FSG Cinderella 3-father-OBV there NMLZ-be-3OBV
    'When Cinderella's father was not around...' (Bakker and Fleury, 2007, 1:38)

2.3 Independent vs. Conjunct order

The inflectional paradigms of the Algonquian verb classes have further been organized in five sets (called 'orders') in Proto-Algonquian, of which most modern languages preserve only three, i.e. the Independent, the Conjunct and the Imperative, having discarded the other two, i.e. the Interrogative and the Prohibitive. While the imperative order is self-explanatory (and won’t be dealt with in this paper), the independent (which will be discussed only in passim) and the conjunct roughly correspond to verb forms used in main and subordinate clauses, respectively. Examples 3 and 4 illustrate these with the VTA verb wâpam- 'see' (for an exhaustive presentation of the forms in Plains Cree for these two orders for all verb classes, cf. Tables 5 and 6. No differences between Plains Cree and Michif (non-loan) verbs have been found in the data available).^3

(3) pi môhkâc kihtwâm kî-wâpam-êw anihi la (vy[ey])
    and never again PST-see-3SG→3OBV that:ANIM:OBV DEF:FSG (o[ld])
    fam la, la movez fam pi si fiy
    woman DEF:FSG DEF:FSG evil.FSG woman and poss:3SG→3PL girl
    'And never again did she see the o[ld woman] woman, the evil woman and her daughters.' (Bakker and Fleury 2007, 11:9-10)

(4) ē-wâpam-ât anihi la fam-a
    CNJ-see-3SG→3OBV:CNJ that:ANIM:OBV DEF:FSG woman-OBV
    'when he saw that woman...' (Bakker and Fleury 2007, 6:37)

^3Differences in form between the forms in these tables and the ones in the Michif examples are by and large due to different spelling conventions and initial vowel elision of suffixes when the preceding verb stem ends in a vowel.
It is important to stress that wh-clauses, those with focalized constituents or under the scope of (clausal) negation require the use of the conjunct order, so in a sense these are ‘de-subordinated’ clauses. We can now give the full paradigms for the four main classes (excluding the deponent ones). Table 5 presents the independent order while Table 6 shows the conjunct order.

3 Loan verbs in Michif

As in Algonquian languages in general, loan verbs are not well attested in the Michif material available to me. There are less than thirty loan verbs clearly attested in the corpus comprised of Laverdure and Allard (1983) (an English-Michif dictionary with more than 7,000 entries) and Fleury (2013) (an online English-Michif dictionary with about 11,500 translations; this was used only occasionally as in the vast majority of cases, contrary to Laverdure and Allard (1983) there are no real examples which would make it possible to determine the transitivity of the loan verb in Michif). Whether the source is French or English, an almost constant feature of these verbs is the presence of an initial li and a final ee (henceforth the ‘li...ee (outer) shell’), historically thought to represent the combination of the French definite article in its masculine singular form le followed by the infinitive of the relevant verb. This in turn has uniformly the form ee ([i:] < [e]) which is actually the infinitive (a participle) ending for the biggest inflectional verb class in French (Bakker, 1997, 242). I have excluded all cases of loan verbs attested only with French but no Cree inflectional material⁴, since this fact alone suggests that we might be dealing with cases of code-switching, or more likely, imperfect loan verb reanalysis. Likewise, I have not included denominal verbs derived by way of Cree suffixes (-iwi- ‘be’, -ihê- ‘make’) added on to a (usually French) Michif noun.

The fact that English loan verbs are also subject to insertion in the li ... ee outer shell could be explained by assuming that at the time Michif came into being there were no English loan verbs. Nowadays, Michif speakers are overwhelmingly bilingual in English (but not in French) and so they have started treating loan verbs from English in the same way as they earlier did loan verbs from French. This means that the li ... ee outer shell can be thought of as ‘flagging’ foreign material not subject to the usual analysis in Cree initials, medials and finals (cf. Bakker, 1997, 243).

As far as valency is concerned, the loan verbs belong to both the transitive and intransitive class in French and English, with some ambitransitive ones, but no ditransitive verbs. Now, verbs in Michif show the same fourfold distinction as Cree verbs between inanimate intransitive (VII), animate intransitive (VAI), transitive inanimate (VTI) and transitive animate (VTA).

⁴In the case of French this includes bare imperatives as well as cases of the third person pronoun (i(l) [no final l before a consonant initial verb form] ‘s/he’) used with auxiliaries (i va ‘3:FUT’, il i’s/he is’, il a ‘he has’ + loan verb ‘infinitive’ in -ee).
3.1 Loan verbs from French

All verbs in the corpus but three conform to the above-mentioned rule of insertion inside a li... ee outer shell. These are ashchinee 'haggle' and lahchin 'id.', which lack the initial and the final, respectively, on the one hand, and biniwahwåw, the Creeized variant of libinii 'bless', which lacks both and is not attested in our corpus.

Table 2: French loan verbs in Michif

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>S, A, P [+ANIM]</th>
<th>Transitivity</th>
<th>Michif</th>
<th>Verb class</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(s')astiner</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]; A [+ANIM] P [+ANIM]</td>
<td>(in)transitive</td>
<td>ashchinee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'haggle'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; (s)obstiner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lahchin</td>
<td></td>
<td>'id.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bégayer</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]</td>
<td>intransitive</td>
<td>libegee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'stutter'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bîne à wîne</td>
<td>A [+ANIM] P [+ANIM]</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>biniwahwåw</td>
<td>VTA (!)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broder</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]</td>
<td>intransitive</td>
<td>librodee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'do fancy work'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>défêneur</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]</td>
<td>intransitive</td>
<td>lidizhaanii</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'eat breakfast'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dompter</td>
<td>A [+ANIM] P [+ANIM]</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>lidoontee(-h)</td>
<td>VTA (!)</td>
<td>'break in; train'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gager</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]</td>
<td>intransitive</td>
<td>ligazhee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'bet'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mèler</td>
<td>A [+ANIM] P [+ANIM]</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>limaenlee(n)</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'mix'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peinturer</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]; A [+ANIM] P [-ANIM]</td>
<td>(in)transitive</td>
<td>lipaenchuree</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'paint'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>témoigner</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]</td>
<td>intransitive</td>
<td>litimwaenee(n)</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'testify'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.1 Intransitive verbs

There are four intransitive loan verbs in the corpus: libegee (< bégayer) 'stutter' (ex. 6 and 7), lidizhaanii (< défêneur) 'eat breakfast' (ex. 9), ligazhee (< gager) 'bet' (ex. 10) and litimwaenee (< témoigner) 'testify' (ex. 11). Not surprisingly, all of them have been assigned to the VAI class.

The first two examples (6 and 7) show the verb libegee (< bégayer) 'stutter' used in the VAI independent order 3rd person singular ('he stutters') and the conjunct order unspecified actor form in a relative clause 'they who stutter'.

(5)

(6) libegee (< bégayer) 'stutter'

Jerry tahkinay libegee-w.
Jerry always       stutter-3:VAI:IND

'Jerry always did stutter.' Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 320

(7) libegee (< bégayer) 'stutter'

Naenpaywshi-nawniwun   kaw-libegee-hk.
be_ashamed-UNSPECl:VAI:IND NMLZ-stutter-UNSPECl:VAI:CNJ
‘To stammer and stutter is embarrassing (lit. One is embarrassed who stutters).’
(Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 313)

The second example (8) shows the verb *librodee* (< broder) ‘embroider; do fancy work’ used in the VAI conjunct order in the first person ‘as I am embroidering’.

(8) *librodee* (< broder) ‘embroider’

Ni-miyayhten-n ay-librodee-yawn.
1-like-1/2:VAI:IND COMP-embroider-1:VAI:CN]

‘I like to do fancy work.’ Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 91

The verb *lidizhaanii* (< déjeuner) ‘eat breakfast’ (ex. 9) is the only one in the corpus of loan verbs attested in the first person singular. Morphologically it presents no problems as to its inflectional class (it is a VAI) but as far as its derivation is concerned, we may also be dealing with a denominal verb created in Michif out of the noun *li dishaanii* ‘breakfast’ (cf. *lideelee* in section 3.2.3).

(9) *lidizhaanii* (< déjeuner) ‘eat breakfast’

Ni-lidizhaanii-n a set heur di mataen.
1-eat_breakfast-1/2:VAI:IND at seven hours of morning

‘I eat breakfast at 7:00 am.’

Ex. 10 illustrates the intransitive use of *ligazhee* (< gager) ‘bet’ with its (necessary) indirect object *li braen* ‘the brown one (horse)’ introduced by the preposition *seu* ‘on’.

(10) *ligazhee* (< gager) ‘bet’

Gee-ligazhee-n seu li braen.
1.PST-bet-1/2SG:VAI:IND on DEF:MSG brown

‘I bet on the bay.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 36)

The existence of an English loan verb *libeti* is suggested by the corresponding entry in Fleury (2013) who gives what looks like the past tense form, *kii-libeti-w* (PST-bet-3:VAI:IND) ‘he bet’ but without any examples.

Ex. 11 shows the use of *litimwaenee* (< témoigner) ‘testify’. This entry is problematic since the inflectional ending indicates that the subject is 1SG or 2SG but the translation talks about a 3SG.

(11) *litimwaenee* (< témoigner) ‘testify’

Ka-litimwaenee-n a la koor.
NMLZ-testify-1/2SG:VAI:IND at DEF:SG court

‘She (I/You?) has (have?) to testify in court.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 330)
3.1.2 Transitive verbs

There are four transitive loan verbs in the corpus: *libinee* (< *bénir*) ‘bless’ (ex. 12), *lidoontee* (< *dompter*) ‘break; train; domesticate’ (ex. 13, 14 and 15), *limaenlee* (< *mêler*) ‘mix’ (ex. 16) and *livarzeew* (< *vernisser?) ‘whitewash’ (ex. 17). Three of them are VAI (*libinee* ‘bless’, *limaenlee* ‘mix’) and *livarzeew* ‘whitewash’, and one is VTA (*lidoontee* ‘break; train; domesticate’).

The first one of these, *libinee* (< *bénir*) ‘bless’ (ex. 12) appears in a transitive clause with *limood* ‘the people’ as its direct object.

(12) *libinee* (< *bénir*) ‘bless’

\[ Li \ payr \ kee-libinee-w \ limood. \]
\[ DEF:MSG \ priest \ PST-bless-3SG:VAI:IND \ DEF:MSG.\text{people} \]

‘The priest blessed the people.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 45)

Since the patient is human, and so intrinsically animate, the most natural way of reflecting this in the verb would be to map it onto an existing VTA morphological model which would entail the use of a direction marker, in this case the direct one -â-. Yet, loan verbs are expected not to accept direction marking (Bakker, 1997, 243) and this one conforms to this expectation. We are thus dealing with the transitive use of a VAI verb.

Interestingly, Fleury (2013) says *libiniiw* means ‘to bless something’ whereas for ‘to bless someone’ he gives another verb: *biniwahwâw*. Now this verb is clearly borrowed from French (*bénir*) but doesn’t show the initial *li-* and has further been adapted to fit a regular VTA conjugation model (using the VTA stem final /-hw-/). It thus shows the direct marker -â-. Unfortunately, once again there are no examples given. It would be especially interesting to see how the sentence ‘The priest blessed me’ would be translated using this verb. The expected verb form would be *biniwahok* < *biniwahw-ik-w* with the inverse /-ikw-/.

The verb *lidoontee* (< *dompter*) ‘break; train; domesticate’ (ex. 13, 14 and 15) is another interesting case of loan verb adaptation. Since once again the patient is animate this verb should naturally be taken over as a VTA. This is exactly what has been done, this time using the causative suffix /-h/.

(13) *lidoontee* (< *dompter*) ‘break’

\[ Li \ likoo’d \ kawbl \ ka-awpachistaw-nawn \ ka-lidoontee-h-aw-yahk \]
\[ DEF:MSG \ hackamore \ FUT-use-1PE:VAI:IND \ FUT-break-CAUS-DIR-1PE:VAI:CNJ \]
\[ li \ zhwal. \]
\[ ART:MSG \ \text{horse:SG} \]

‘We’ll use the hackamore to break the horse.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 121)
(14) **lidoontee** (< dompter) ‘train’

\[\text{Aen } zhen \text{ shyaen il i jeur ka-lidoontee-h-ist.}\]

INDEF:MSG young dog he is hard FUT-break-CAUS-UNSPEC:VTA:CNJ

‘A pup is hard to train.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 245)

(15) **lidoontee** (< dompter) ‘domesticate’

\[\text{Lidoontee-h-ik } \text{ tee } \text{ zhvoo.}\]

FUT-domesticate-CAUS-2SG>3PL:VTA:IMP POSS:2SG:3PL horse:PL

‘Domesticate your horses!’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 78)

The verb **limaenlee** (< mêler) ‘mix’ (ex. 16) is an example of a VAI used transitively.

(16) **limaenlee** (< mêler) ‘mix’

\[\text{Kaw-limaenlee-n } \text{ li } \text{ bouziyazh?}\]

2.FUT-mix-1/2SG:VAI:IND DEF:MSG plaster

‘Will you mix the plaster?’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 232)

Finally, **livarzeew** (< vernisser?) ‘whitewash’ (ex. 17) is another instance of a VAI used transitively.

(17) **livarzeew** (< vernisser?)

\[\text{Kee-livarzee-w } \text{ sa } \text{ maenzoon avik la } \text{ shoo}\]

PST-varnish-3SG:VAI:IND 3FSG:POSS house with DEF:FSG lime

‘She whitewashed her house (lit. S/he varnished her house with lime).’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 356)

### 3.1.3 Ambitransitive verbs

From the point of view of their transitivity in the donor language, i.e. French, there are only two ambitransitive verbs in the corpus, the Michif loanword equivalents to *(s’)astiner* (< *(s’)obstiner) ‘argue; haggle’ (ex. 19, 20, 21, 22, 18) and **peinturer** ‘paint’ (ex. 23, 24).

The verb *(s’)astiner* is the Quebec evolution of Standard French *(s’)obstiner* ‘to persist in (doing) sth’. In Quebec French it can be used both as a transitive *(astiner quelqu’un ‘to contradict s.o.’) and as an intransitive *(s’astiner avec quelqu’un ‘to argue with s.o.’) verb. Only the latter is attested in the corpus. What is interesting is that this verb is mostly attested in a form without the initial li- which signals a loan verb. Instead it takes directly the first person prefix nit- > d- which is the form this affix takes before a vowel-initial verb in Cree.
(18) *ashchinee* (<s’>astiner <s’>obstiner) ‘haggle’

\[ \text{Aen} \text{ shawr neu kaw-atawway-yawn, d-ascheenee-n avik} \]
\[ \text{INDEF:MSG car new COMP-buy-1SG:VAI:CNJ 1-haggle-1/2:VAI with} \]
\[ \text{lekoumee.} \]
\[ \text{salesman:DEF:MSG} \]

‘When I buy a new car, I haggle with the salesman.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 121)

(19) *ashchinee* (<s’>astiner <s’>obstiner) ‘argue’

\[ \text{Shi-ascheenee-hk si koum aen pchee.} \]
\[ \text{COMP-argue-UNSPEC:VAI:CNJ COP:PRS:3SG like INDEF:MSG little} \]

‘To have words with another is childish.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 359)

There is also a variant *laschin*, which clearly comes from the expected fusion of the definite article/accusative clitic/loan verb flag *li* and *aschin* but interestingly without the infinitive/past participle ending *ee*.

(20) *ashchinee* (<s’>astiner <s’>obstiner) ‘argue’

\[ \text{Kishkayimaen-w John soo metr kaw-laschin-ichik.} \]
\[ \text{know(VRTA)-3IND his master NMLZ-argue-3PL:CNJ} \]

‘John knows who’s master in an argument.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 173)

A variant thereof, *lahchin* occurs as well, but in the only example found so far it lacks any inflectional suffixes altogether (cf. ex. 21).

(21) *ashchinee* (<s’>astiner <s’>obstiner) ‘argue’

\[ \text{Tom pi Marie lahchin tuhkinay.} \]
\[ \text{Tom and Mary argue always} \]

‘Tom and Mary argue all the time.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 26)

Finally, ex. 22 (a variant of ex. 21) uses the corresponding Cree verb *kîhkâhto- ‘argue with one another’.*

(22) *ashchinee* (<s’>astiner <s’>obstiner) ‘argue’

\[ \text{Tom pi Marie tuhkinay keehkawhtou-wuk.} \]
\[ \text{Tom and Mary always argue-3PL:VAI:IND} \]

\[ ^{3}\text{Reciprocal verbs, which contain the reciprocal suffix –ito-, are always morphologically intransitive.} \]
'Tom and Mary argue all the time.' (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 26)

Concerning the other ambitransitive verb lipaenchervee (< peinturer) 'paint', both the transitive (ex. 23) and intransitive (ex. 24) use are attested in the corpus.

(23) lipaenchervee (< peinturer) 'paint'

Koum l'or kee-lipaenchervee-wuk li lee.

like DEF:MSG.gold pst-paint-3PL:VAI:IND DEF:MSG bed

'They painted the bed with gilt.' (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 110)

(24) lipaenchervee (< peinturer) 'paint'

Diseu aen nishafou neepawi-wuk, ay-lipaenchervee-chik.
on INDEF:MSG scaffold stand-3PL:VAI:IND COMP-paint-3PL:VAI:CNJ

'They stand on a scaffold to paint.' (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 282)

3.2 Loan verbs from English

As stated previously, English loan verbs also follow the above-mentioned rule of insertion inside a li ... ee outer shell. All verbs but one in the corpus are attested in this form. The one exception is kalektee which lacks the initial li.

As with French loan verbs, the following sections present the English loan verbs according to their transitivity in English.

Table 3: English loan verbs in Michif

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>S, A, P [+/-ANIM]</th>
<th>Transitivity</th>
<th>Michif</th>
<th>Verb class</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>beg</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]; A [+ANIM]</td>
<td>(in)transitive</td>
<td>libegee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'beg, panhandle'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]; A [+ANIM]</td>
<td>(in)transitive</td>
<td>liboksee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'box'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brush</td>
<td>A [+ANIM]; P [-ANIM]</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>librushii</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'brush'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can</td>
<td>A [+ANIM]; P [-ANIM]</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>likaenee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'can'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>charge</td>
<td>A [+ANIM]; P [-ANIM]</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>licharjee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'charge'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>celebrate</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]; A [+ANIM]</td>
<td>(in)transitive</td>
<td>liselebratee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'celebrate'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collect</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]; A [+ANIM]</td>
<td>(in)transitive</td>
<td>kalektee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'collect'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deal</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]; A [+ANIM]</td>
<td>(in)transitive</td>
<td>lidelee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'make a deal'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gamble</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]</td>
<td>intransitive</td>
<td>ligamblee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'gamble'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haul</td>
<td>A [+ANIM]; P [-ANIM]</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>lihaulee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'haul'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pack</td>
<td>S [+ANIM]; A [+ANIM]</td>
<td>(in)transitive</td>
<td>lipaaktii</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'pack'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rob</td>
<td>A [+ANIM]; P [-ANIM]</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>lirobee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'rob'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>settle</td>
<td>A [+ANIM]; P [-ANIM]</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>lisetlee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'settle'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trust</td>
<td>A [+ANIM]; P [-ANIM]</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>litrustee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'trust'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2.1 Intransitive verbs

There is only one intransitive English loan verb in the corpus: *ligamblee* < gamble (ex. 25) and it is unambiguously attested as a VAI verb in Michif.

(25) *ligamblee* < gamble

*Kee-pahkoun-ow* ay-ligamblee-*d.*

PST-skin(VTA)-UNSPEC COMP-gamble-3SG:VAI:CNJ

‘He was scalped in gambling.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 282)

3.2.2 Transitive verbs

There are seven transitive loan verbs from English: *librushii* ‘brush’, *likaenee* ‘can’ (ex. 26 and 27), *licharjee* ‘charge’ (ex. 28), *lihaulee* ‘haul’ (ex. 29), *lirobee* ‘rob’ (ex. 31), *lisetlee* ‘settle’ (ex. 32) and *litrustii* ‘trust’.

*librushii* ‘brush’ and *litrustii* ‘trust’, are attested only in Fleury (2013) with no examples in the case of the former, and only the expressions ‘brush one’s teeth’ *librushii lii daan* vs ‘brush the floor’ *librushii lii plaanshii* in the case of the former. This shows that *librushii* ‘brush’ is used transitively in Michif as well, and so it must be a VAI, as it does not have VTI morphology. As for *litrustii* ‘trust’, it appears in the forms *li trustiihk* and *li trustiiw* which show that it must also be a VAI, although no collocations are given in this case. Of course with ‘trust’ the object tends to be human (and therefore animate), and so we would expect a VTA here, but this does not seem to be the case.

*likaenee* ‘can’ (ex. 26 and 27) is attested in two examples: one in the VAI unspecified actor form which translates the English gerund *canning* without an overt object and another one in the 1SG.

(26) *likaenee* ‘can’

*Lalaen awpachistaw-niwun kaw-likaenee-hk.*

alum:DEF use(VAI)-UNSPEC:VAI:IND NMLZ-can-UNSPEC:VAI:CNJ

‘Alum is used for canning.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 22)

(27) *likaenee* ‘can’

*Bakwawtae-n shi-licani-yawn daw li tawn payzawn* 1SG:dislike-1SG:VAI:IND COMP-can-1SG:VAI:CNJ in DEF:MSG weather humid

‘I don’t like to can in humid weather.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 137)

Ex. 28 illustrates the use of *licharjee* ‘charge’ in a relative clause headed by *kaw-* (‘that which charges’) to translate *battery charger* with *en batree* ‘a battery’ as its object. It is thus transitively used in Michif as well in spite of its VAI morphology.
licharjee ‘charge’

Dawayhtae-nawn en batree kaw-lichawrjee-t.
1.need(VTI)-1PE:VAI:IND INDEF:FSG battery NMLZ-charge-3:CNJ

‘We need a battery charger (lit. ‘that which charges a battery’).’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 60)

Ex. 29 shows the verb lihaulee ‘haul’ to be a VAI verb used transitively in Michif as well. It is another instance of the use of the unspecified actor form to render the English gerund.

lihaulee ‘haul’

en wawginn for pour kaykiyuw kaykwuy ay-lihaulee-hk.
INDEF:FSG wagon for for all thing COMP-haul-UNSPEC:VAI:CNJ


This example has also another version (ex. 30) with the antipassive of the Cree verb âwacikêw (VAI) ‘haul things’, itself an antipassive from âwatâw (VAI_TR) ‘haul something’, appearing in the conjunct order of the VAI unspecified actor form.

awwachikaw ‘haul’

aen wawgoon ay-yawwachikaw-kay-hk.
INDEF:MSG wagon COMP-haul-ANTIPASS-UNSPEC:VAI:CNJ


In ex. 31 the verb lirobee ‘rob’ is used transitively with la bawnk ‘the bank’ as its object. It stands in the VAI unspecified actor form used in the conjunct order as it is a complement clause to the verb kishkayist- (VTI) ‘know something’.

lirobee ‘rob’

Noo kee-kishkayist-am la bawnk
NEG PST-know(VTI)-3SG:VTI:IND DEF:FSG bank
ay-kee-li-robee-hk.
COMP-PST-rob-UNSPEC:VAI:CNJ

‘He was incognizant of the robbery at the bank (lit. He didn’t know that they (=someone) had robbed the bank).’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 143)

Finally, ex. 32 shows the verb lisetlee ‘settle (a dispute, etc.)’ used transitively with aen nushchinaawsyoon ‘a dispute’ as its object.
339 (32) lisetlee 'settle'

awiyek kaw-lisetlee-t aen nushchinawsyoon awntour deu
someone NMLZ-settle-3SG:VAI:CNJ INDEF dispute between two
nawsyoon.
nation

'Someone who settles a dispute between two nations.' (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 25)

3.2.3 Ambitransitive verbs

There are six ambitransitive English loan verbs in the corpus: libegee < beg (ex. 33), li-
boksee < box (ex. 35), liselebratee < celebrate (ex. 36, 37 and 38), kalektee < collect (ex.
40), lideelee < deal (ex. 41) and lipaaktii 'pack' (only as translational equivalent in Fleury,
2013). While all of these can be used transitively and take a direct object in English, their
intransitive use is the only one attested in the corpus.

The first of these, libegee < beg (ex. 33), appears in the VAI unspecified actor form
(ay-libegee-hk), which often serves as a translation of the English infinitive in the corpus.
There is not enough context, but we can assume that here the infinitive is used in the
same way as the -ing form, i.e. the verbal noun 'begging, panhandling,' would be.

(33) libegee < beg

Ay-libegee-hk da la reu’d vil.
COMP-beg-UNSPEC:VAI:CNJ in DEF:F:PL town street

'Panhandle on the town streets.' (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 214)

This example actually has a second variant with the antipassive (-Ôkë) of a Cree verb
this time, nitotamâw (VAI) 'request/ask for something', used in the unspecified actor form

(34) doutamaw < nitotamâw

Aen-doutamaw-kay-hk da la reu’d vil.
COMP-beg(VAI)-ANTIPASS-UNSPEC:VAI:CNJ in DEF:F:PL town street

'Panhandle on the town streets.' (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 214)

The next verb, liboksee 'box' (ex. 35), is attested in only one example in which it ap-
pears in an expression translating the English to shadow box. This could be analysed
synchronically as the verb to box used as a transitive verb with shadow as its incorporated
object, i.e. *to box one’s shadow* > *to shadowbox.*⁶ The result of course is an intransitive verb. Now, in Michif no such incorporation takes place and what we have is literally ‘he boxes his shadow’. The verb is therefore used transitively. It is still a VAI verb, since shadow is not animate and so we have another case of a transitive VAI.

(35) *liboksee* < *box*

*Liboksee*-w soo *meerazh pour achiyuw.*
box-3VAI:IND 3SG:POSS shadow for a while

‘He’ll shadow box for a while.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 291)

There are four examples of *liselebratee* ‘celebrate’ in the corpus, in all of which it is used intransitively. In ex. 36 it appears in the independent order of the unspecified actor form for VAI verbs *-nawniwun* (=*-nâniwan*), but without the initial *li*.

(36) *liselebratee* < *celebrate*

*Selebraytee-nawniwun.*
celebrate-UNSPEC:VAI:IND

‘They are having a celebration.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 58)

Ex. 37 and 38 illustrate its use in the future and the past tense, respectively.

(37) *liselebratee* < *celebrate*

*Bronson ka-liselebraytee-w pour soon bacheezee.*
B. FUT-celebrate-3:VAI:IND for his baptism

‘Bronson will have a ceremonial baptism (litt, Bronson will celebrate for his baptism).’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 58)

(38) *liselebratee* < *celebrate*

*Li kaet di Zhouyet gee-liselabratee-nawn.*
def:MSG four of July 1.PST-celebrate-1PE:VAI:IND

‘We had a fourth of July celebration (lit. We celebrated [on] the fourth of July).’
(Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 58)

While the verb in ex. 37 is used unambiguously as intransitive, ex. 38 can be analysed as either intransitive (ie ‘We celebrated on the fourth of July’) or as transitive (‘We celebrated the fourth of July’). The former seems more probable given the other examples and the fact that time adjuncts are rarely verb arguments, even if we have another potentially ambiguous example 39.

⁶From a diachronic point of view, we are most certainly dealing with a case of back-formation from the gerund form *shadowboxing*, as with all cases of incorporating verbs in English. This does not make them any less incorporating synchronically.
(39) \textit{lislebratee} $<$ celebrate

\[\text{Kalikyuuw liselabraytee-wuk} \quad \text{Li kae}t \text{ di Zhouyet.}\]

\text{all celebrate-3PL:VAI:IND DEF:MSG four of July}

Everyone celebrates the fourth of July.' \textit{(Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 102)}

Ex. 36 and the translation of \textit{celebration} as \textit{kaw-selebraytee-hk} \textit{(NMLZ-celebrate-UNSPEC:VAI:CNJ)}

leave no doubt that this verb belongs with the VAI class.

Ex. 40 illustrates the only use of \textit{kalektee} 'collect (money, taxes)', a verb which lacks

initial \textit{li-} and is used intransitively.

(40) \textit{kalektee} $<$ collect

\[\text{Saprawn chi-kalektee-yen wiya ouhchi.}\]

\text{it is necessary COMP-collect-2SG:VAI:CNJ 3 from}

‘You have to collect from her.' \textit{(Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 64)}

The last English ambitransitive loan verb is \textit{lideelee} 'deal' (ex. 41). This may actually

not be a direct borrowing from English given its meaning in Michif, i.e. ‘make a deal’.

It is not excluded that we are dealing with a denominal \textit{(a deal > li deel)} verb created in

Michif itself, although this noun is not attested in the corpus which has the French \textit{lee marshee} instead. \textit{lideelee} 'deal' is used intransitively and is thus another instance of a VAI

verb.

(41) \textit{lideelee} $<$ deal

\[\text{Tawnshi kaw-shi-lideelee-yen?}\]

\text{how NMLZ-COMP-make_a_deal-2SG:VAI:CNJ}

‘What kind of deal did you make (lit. How [is it] that you dealt)? \textit{(Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 70)}

3.3 Loan verbs from French or English

There are two verbs in the corpus which may have been borrowed either from French or

from English: \textit{lifyeuzee} $<$ refuse(r) (ex. 42) and \textit{livotee} $<$ vote(r) (ex. 43 and 44)

Table 4: English/French? loan verbs in Michif

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English/French</th>
<th>Transitivity</th>
<th>Michif</th>
<th>Verb class</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>refuse(r)</td>
<td>(in)transitive</td>
<td>lifyeuzee</td>
<td>VAI?</td>
<td>'refuse, decline'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vote(r)</td>
<td>(in)transitive</td>
<td>livotee</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>'vote'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.1 Ambitransitive verbs

There is one ambitransitive verb in the corpus: lifyeuzee < refuse(r) (ex. 42) used intransitively. It is interesting to observe that it must have been subjected to haplological apocope (li-lifyeuz-ee > lifyeuzee). Furthermore, it is one of two examples (cf. 21) in the corpus of a loan verb which lacks any inflectional ending at all. This formally prevents us from ascertaining its inflectional class, although it most probably belongs to the VAI class.

(42) lifyeuzee < refuse(r)

Ka-lifyeuzee gishkayht-aen.
FUT-refuse 1.know(VTI)-1/2SG:IND

‘He will decline it I know.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 70)

3.3.2 Intransitive verbs

There is one intransitive verb livotee < vote(r) (ex. 43 and 44).

(43) livotee < vote(r)

Niyawn doo-livotee
GO.IMP GO_to-vote

‘Go and vote!’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 349)

(44) livotee < vote(r)

Gee-itoustaw-nawn itay kaw-livotee-hk.
PST:1-GO(VAI)-1PE:IND there NMLZ-VOTE-UNSPEC:VAI:CNJ

‘We went to the polls.’ (Laverdure and Allard, 1983, 235)

4 Discussion

This paper has attempted a preliminary study of loan verbs in the mixed language Michif (French/Cree), whose verbal system is almost exclusively Cree (ie Algonquian), based on two dictionaries of this language: Laverdure and Allard (1983) and Fleury (2013).

While the way loan verbs are integrated from the morpho(phono)logical point of view is in itself a topic of interest, it is their syntactic integration which has been at the centre of my work. This is due to the existence of (broadly) two main inflectional classes in French or English (the donor languages for the loan verbs attested in the corpus) versus at least four in Cree (as in Algonquian languages in general): VII, VAI, VTI and VTA.
Verbs are assigned to one of these classes according to the animacy of their single core argument (S), in case of an intransitive verb, or their patient (P), in the case of a transitive one. There is thus one supplementary piece of information to be taken into account when deciding to which verb class to assign a given loan verb.

The detailed study of the available data has shown that loan verbs, both from French and from English, are almost exclusively assigned to the VAI class, i.e. a class of verbs whose single core argument is animate. This seems natural enough given that the overwhelming majority of them do have an animate core participant in the donor language as well. What may seem more problematic is the fact that this core participant is not always or uniquely the single core participant (S), i.e. most verbs (especially those from English) are ambitransitive, and some are clearly only transitive. The question then is why VAI has been considered a better choice than for instance VTI or even VTA?

The short answer to that question is that VAI appears to be the most ‘neutral’ inflectional class of Cree as far as morphology and argument structure are concerned. Indeed, on the level of morphology, with the exception of VII, all other verb classes have endings derived from those of the VAI class, in addition to some extra material characteristic of VTI and VTA. In the case of VTI we have a typical final (-ht-) and a thematic vowel (-ê-) in the case of SAP, or a suffix (-âm-) in the case of non-SAP agents, respectively, which index a third person inanimate object. In the case of VTA the verb has affixes indexing both participants and additionally indicates direction of action by way of a direction marker (direct /-â-/ vs. inverse /-ikw-/). On the level of argument structure, VAI are flexible as they can be both intransitive and transitive. What is more, when transitive, their P can be either animate or inanimate. This is not the case of VTI or VTA. VTI verbs can be intransitive as well but only for a very short list of verbs which were earlier transitive but whose object has now become generic, and their P argument when transitive can only be inanimate. VTA verbs, on the other hand, can only have an animate agent and an animate patient, and cannot be used intransitively.

In conclusion, VAI is the only class which does not impose any profound morphological changes to any given loan verb, and it can be used both intransitively and transitively, and when used transitively can have both an animate and an inanimate P.

Nevertheless, there are two verbs in the corpus which have been adapted in different ways in order to be eligible for membership in the VTA class: binîwahwâw ‘bless someone’ (ex. 12) and lidoontee ‘domesticate’ (ex. 15). Both show relevant VTA affixes such as crucially the direct marker /-â-/. This shows that there is nothing inherent in loan verbs which would preclude them from becoming VTA verbs and receiving direction marking as well (pace Bakker, 1997, 243).

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7Note that there is no verb assigned to this class among those attested, i.e. all of the loan verbs I have found have an animate S or A.

8It is only in the case of ditransitive verbs which are all VTA that we can have a T(heme) argument which is either animate or inanimate and which is not indexed on the verb.

9It remains to be confirmed that the inverse marker /-ikw-/ can also be used on these.
Finally, all of the loan verbs I have examined have Cree equivalents and so the claim that they were borrowed because of the lack of a corresponding Cree verb in the language (Bakker, 1997, 242) seems difficult to accept at face value, although it can indeed be argued that the corresponding Cree verbs, when they exist, “either have a much more general meaning, hence they are not as precise as the French/English verbs, or they describe different activities” (Bakker, pc).

References


Bakker, Peter, and Norman Fleury. 2007. La Pchit Sandrieuz an Michif - Cinderella in Michif. Aarhus / Saskatoon / Winnipeg. [Sound/Visual production (digital)].


Table 5: Plains Cree Independent Order paradigms of VTA wâpam– “see s.o.”, VTI wâpaht– “see s.th”, VAI wâpiskisi– “be white (+ ANIM)”, pimipahtâ– “run”, VII wâpiskâ– “be white (-ANIM)”, miywâsin “be good”, wâpan “be dawn” (based on Wolfart, 1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>P</th>
<th>1SG</th>
<th>1PI</th>
<th>1PE</th>
<th>2SG</th>
<th>2PL</th>
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Table 6: Plains Cree Conjunct Order paradigms of VTA wâpam– “see s.o.”, VTI wâpaht– “see sth”, VAI wâpiskiš– “be white (+ANIM)”, pimipahtâ– “run”, VII wâpiskâ– “be white (-ANIM)”, miywâsin “be good”, wâpam “be dawn” (based on Wolfart, 1996)

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