

A preverb stemmer for Potawatomi

Researchers have found that the order of preverbs in Menominee (Shields, 2005) and Ojibwe (Slavin, 2005) can be accounted for via semantic classes. However, an analysis of the order of preverbs in Potawatomi does not yet exist. The verb in Potawatomi, like other Algonquian languages, is composed of a stem, a preverb, and inflectional morphology before and/or after the preverb and stem. This paper argues for a semantic class order of preverbs based on an analysis of a text corpus (Hockett 1937, 1940a,b,c) and implements a preverb stemmer to computationally parse the preverbs.

The paper first reviews Hockett (1948)'s comments on the ordering of preverbs in Potawatomi, describes the corpus, and catalogs the inventory of preverbs.

The paper next presents an analysis of the corpus. I find 86 types of combinations of two or more preverbs. I then run a simple computational bubble sort on the combinations in an attempt to determine their overall relative order. This sort does not converge on an ordering for the following three reasons. First, the corpus is small. Second, there are reverse orders of the same two preverbs (e.g. *bwa-wthe-* and *wthe-bwa-*). Third, an overall ordering of preverbs misses that semantic classes actually organize the preverbs. Thus, I analyze one of the preverbs in reverse orderings as a topicalized particle following Dahlstrom (1995) and I define four semantic classes for the preverbs along the lines of Cook (2003) and Rhodes (2005). I then get the ordering in (1). Strikingly, the ordering in (1) differs from other Algonquian languages (Reynolds, 1996; Rhodes, 2005; Shields, 2005; Kline et al., 2022) and beyond Algonquian languages (Cinque, 1999).

(1) SUBORD > SPATIAL > ASPECT > ADVERB

Finally, the paper outlines the implementation of a preverb stemmer that is part of a morphological parser for the language.