

A quantitative look at Plains Cree text types: *âtayôhkêwina* vs. *âcimowina* in Bloomfield's texts and *âcimisowina* vs. *kakêskihkêwina* in the Ahenakew-Wolfart corpus

In this presentation, we explore the relative frequencies of several morphological features and syntactic phenomena in spoken Plains Cree from two time periods; comparing two text types within each time period. For this initial exploration, we look at *âtayôhkêwina* (legends) and *âcimowina* (stories) in texts collected by Bloomfield (1930, 1934), and at *âcimisowina* (personal stories) and *kakêskihkêwina* (counselling speeches) drawn from three volumes of the Ahenakew-Wolfart corpus (Bear et al., 1998; Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, 1998; Whitecalf, 1993). The distinctions between the text types are taken from identifications made by the editors; however these distinctions are not clear cut, especially in Bear et al. (1998), as the casual nature of the recording results in variation in the content of individual texts.

Several main morphosyntactic features are compared within each pair of texts, centering around verbs and their arguments. Verbs vary by class and person; for example, in the set of *âcimisowina*, 1Pl participants occur in 16.4% of verb tokens, but in 2.5% of verbs in the *kakêskihkêwina*; while 21 participants occur in 1.6% of verbs in the *âcimisowina* and in 6.8% of verbs in the *kakêskihkêwina*. Similarly, less than one percent of verbs in the *âcimisowina* are imperative, while in the *kakêskihkêwina*, 2.7% of verbs are imperative. Variation also occurs with actors and goals; in the *âcimisowina*, 68.6% of overt participants are nouns and 29.1% are pronouns (demonstrative and personal), while in the *kakêskihkêwina*, overt participants are 57.8% nouns and 41.8% pronouns. Alongside such comparisons, the functions of different text types and how they might drive the relative prevalence of features are also explored (cf. Biber et al., 2002; Biber & Conrad, 2019).

References

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