Mixed verb formation in Michif (French / Cree)

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Michif is a mixed language combining Plains Cree (autoglossonym Nēhiyawēwin) verbs and Metis French nouns. Bakker (2017) and Meakins & Stewart (to appear) classify Michif as a Noun-Verb mixed language. Michif is severely endangered, with less than 150 speakers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and North Dakota (Canada/USA) (Mazzoli 2019). Michif loss and resistance in four Metis communities (Kahkiyaaw mashchineenaaan, “All of us are disappearing as in a plague”). Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien 69. 96-117.

In this presentation, I will analyse patterns of word-internal mixing of French nominals inserted in a Cree verb frame, to form stems inflected and derived as other etymologically-Cree verbs in Michif. Cases of mixed Cree-French verb stem are relatively rare in Michif (Bakker 1997: 243-244, Antonov 2019). However, an account of mixed verb formation in Michif is currently missing in the literature, and the analysis provided here should shed some light on the constraints that originated them.

The template in (1) show the general template of the Michif verb (Mazzoli accepted, Bakker 2006). In the schema in 1, components that are necessary to form a grammatical verb form are in square parenthesis, while components that are optional are in round parenthesis. Underlined elements are slots that can be occupied by non-Algonquian nominals (non-Algonquian elements are in italics in the examples):

(1) [prefixes] + (PREVERB) + [INITIAL+FINAL] + (DERIVATIVE) + [suffixes]

[STEM]

French nominalised infinitives as full stems:

(2) sapraañ kiihtwam chi-arañzhii-kaasho-t, chi-li-arañzhii-yahk
need.to again CNJ-to.arrange-MED.AI-CNJ.3S CNJ-the.M.S-to.arrange-CNJ.AI.1PL.INCL
‘this has to be rearranged, we (you INCL) have to rearrange it’

French complex noun phrases as stems derived through verbalizing lexically-heavy affixes (also know as light verb noun incorporation in the literature on Algonquian languages):

(3) gakway-la maegríwin
гаакваи-la-mаeґри-in
1.try-the.F.S-slim-be.AI-IND.non3
‘I’m trying to reduce (size)’

French nominals used in combination with Cree FINALS, forming mixed stems:
I will provide a survey of mixed or French-derived verb stems in Michif, to assess: (1) the different constructions that permit word-internal mixing, and what morphological slots in the Michif verb template allow insertion of non-Algonquian material, (2) whether stem internal mixing has added in any way to the non-lexical Michif verb morphology, and (3) whether stem-internal mixing attested in Michif differs in some way from similar phenomena in other mixed languages or comparable borrowing situations.

References


MAZZOLI, MARIA. 2019. Michif loss and resistance in four Metis communities (Kahkiyaaw mashchineenaan, “All of us are disappearing as in a plague”). Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien 69. 96-117.

MAZZOLI, MARIA. Accepted. Secondary derivation in Michif: beyond the traditional Algonquian template (presented with glossed text of “La Sandrieuz” in Appendix). In PEREZ, DANAE M. AND EEVA SIPPOLA (eds), Postcolonial varieties in the Americas. Berlin/Amsterdam: John Benjamins.