

FROM ASPECT TO TENSE,
OR, WHAT'S -nuh IN COMANCHE

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The time-depth separating Comanche from the Shoshoni dialects is quite shallow—no more than three centuries—and the changes between the two languages are rather close to the surface—in phonology, the underlying forms are nearly identical. The following chart shows the relationships of the Numic languages, a sub-branch of the Uto-Aztecan family. The grouping of Central Numic and Southern Numic as a separate subgroup called Eastern Numic has been proposed (Freeze and Iannucci 1979), and is the unit which will be focused upon here.

Numic
 Western Numic
 Mono
 Northern Paiute
 Eastern Numic
 Southern Numic
 Kawaiisu (K)
 Southern Paiute (SP), Chemehuevi (CH), Ute
 Central Numic
 Panamint
 Shoshoni-Comanche
 Shoshoni (SH)
 Comanche (CM)

Table 1. The classification of the Numic languages

In both Shoshoni and Comanche, aspect is marked by a set of suffixes which can be attached to most verbs. The set of aspect suffixes which can be used for non-future is rather detailed, having separate suffixes for duration, frequency, and finality. With only a few exceptions, the Shoshoni and Comanche suffixes are phonologically identical and easily reconstructible as they stand. The main differences between the two sets are in semantic and positional shifts. One of the most subtle, but widespread, changes is the semantic shift of -nuh 'completive'.

In Shoshoni, -nuh is found in two environments. The first is the most common, and is the only one mentioned in Miller (1975) and Dayley (1970). This is the completive use of the suffix. Miller (1975:37) defines -nuh as, "usually past activity, with the implication usually that the activity took place over a period of time". According to Dayley (1970:126) -nnu is the 'momentaneous-

perfective', although his examples do not seem to be clearly momentaneous. Examples (1) and (2) illustrate this use of -nuh.¹

- SH (1) pia koottoonuh
big made-fire
He made a big fire (Miller 1975:38)
(kottoo 'make a fire'; -nuh COMPL)
- (2) sutin umakattun kimmannuh
that-one to-him came
He came to him (Miller 1975:38)
(kimma 'come'; -nuh COMPL)

The second use of -nuh is in a context of obligation. In the published Shoshoni texts (Miller 1972), it is found in this function suffixed to the verb in a sentence following the particle witsa 'should'. This use of -nuh in obligatory structures is illustrated in example (3). (The 'h' at the end of -nuh is a final feature (Miller 1975:6) and is not always written in texts.)

- SH (3) ni witsa wihyu sunni u miinu
I should then that-way him do
I should do that to him (Miller 1972:47:12)
(miinu 'do'; -nuh COMPL)

Miller (1975:57) also mentions a suffix -nu used on the verbs puni 'see' and nanka 'hear' when these are imperative. Examples (4) and (5) illustrate this suffix and contrast it with -nuh 'completive'.

- SH (4) ma puninu
it look
Look at it! (Miller 1975:57)
(puni 'see'; -nu IMP)
- (5) ma puninuh
it saw
He looked at it (Miller 1975:57)
(puni 'see'; -nuh COMPL)

The only phonetic difference between these two forms is the devoicing of the final vowel in (5). The suffix in (4) may actually be an underlying -nuh with the sentence intonation of the imperative blocking the normal devoicing of the final vowel. Even if described as two different morphemes, they both have the same Proto-Eastern Numic source.

The meaning of Shoshoni -nuh can now be redefined as follows:

- SH -nuh a: completive, implying duration of activity (?)
 b: obligatory, 'should'
 c: imperative on puni 'see' and nanka 'hear'

As no grammar of Comanche has yet been published, we are forced to rely on an examination of Canonge's texts (1958 and ms) and the two brief sub-sketches provided in Osborn and Smalley (1949) and Casagrande (1954:146-151) to determine the meaning of -nuh in Comanche. Osborn and Smalley (1949:94) list -nū with a query as 'past' while Casagrande does not even mention it. More recently, Armagost (1982b:193) cites -nu as 'shortlived', as opposed to -yu 'longer lived (durative?)'. An examination of the texts reveals that both published glosses of -nuh are partially correct, but have not captured the full meaning. Examples (6) and (7) illustrate the usual sense of -nuh, viz., completed action, but without any particular indication of the length of time involved in the completion.

- CM (6) sunikIse' urii nayikwibiniku, oha'ahnakati urii*k*i bitinU
 that-way them as-continuing coyote among-them arrived
 As they were continuing that way, coyote arrived among
 them (Canonge 1958:3:3)
 (pit*ɛ* 'arrive'; -nuh COMPL)
- (7) sitikIse' tukaninU
 this got-dark
 It got dark (Canonge 1958:99:9)
 (tukani 'get dark'; -nuh COMPL)

-nuh does form a semantic pair with -yu, as Armagost suggests, but only in the sense that perfectives form pairs with imperfectives. -yu is a non-punctual aspect, an imperfective, while -nuh is one of the punctual aspects, a perfective. Example (8) illustrates the imperfective meaning of -yu contrasting with the perfective meaning of -nuh.

- CM (8) surikIse' wihnu okIhu paakIhu wih*t*ikwanU, nahubiniiyU
 that-one then at-there at-water hit was-groaning
 Then that one hit there in the water, and was groaning
 (Canonge 1958:5-6:12)
 (wi" - INSTR; t*ɛ*kwa 'hit'; -nuh COMPL)
 (nahubini 'groan'; -yu IMPRF)

To further refine the meaning of -nuh in Comanche, one must see how -nuh interacts with the full system of aspect suffixes. In comparing examples (9) and (10), one can see a further distinction between -yu and -nuh. -nuh occurs only after completion. In (9), the Kiowa has not yet found language, but in (10) he has.

- CM (9) suriikise' pii mi'anooko, kaaekwa pitaka kehena tekwapiha
urayu
 those-ones them as-go-along Kiowa he-alone none language
 was-finding
 As they walked along, the Kiowa alone could find no lan-
 guage (Canonge ms)
 (uta 'find'; -yu IMPRF)
- (10) kaaekwani~~i~~ sunihku tekwapiha uranU
 Kiowas that-way language found
 In that way the Kiowas found their language (Canonge ms)
 (uta 'find'; -nuh COMPL)

-nuh can also be contrasted with -h/kkan and -h/kkant~~in~~, which Armagost (1982b:193) glosses as 'stative' and 'temporary state' respectively. Examples (11), (12), and (13) compare these three forms in a single environment, viz., the first sentence of a story. -h/kkan 'resultative' is generally used when a state is being entered into, but also indicates a temporary state, as in (11). -h/kkant~~in~~ 'stative' is used when the subject is characterized by a particular verb and is of a longer duration than -h/kkan, as in (12). In contrast to these two statives, -nuh indicates a single occurrence, as in (13).

- CM (11) soobe'sikitsa' ria su'ana nim~~ini~~i nim~~ina~~ahka
 long-ago EVID there Comanches lived
 Long ago, it is said, Indians lived there (Canonge ms)
 (nim~~i~~ 'Comanche'; naa 'be'; -kkan RSLTV)
- (12) soobe'si nini nim~~ikahn~~iki nim~~ina~~ahkat~~ii~~
 long-ago we in-tipi lived
 Long ago we lived in a teepee (Canonge 1958:109:1)
 (nim~~i~~ 'Comanche'; naa 'be'; -kkant~~in~~ STAT)
- (13) su'anakitsa' ria s~~isi~~mi'ni~~i~~ nim~~ini~~i nobit~~in~~U
 there EVID some Comanches camped
 Somewhere it is said some Indians camped (Canonge
 1958:73:1)
 (no 'camp'; pit~~i~~ 'arrive'; -nuh COMPL)

A more problematic distinction is between -nuh and -i. The glosses for -i include 'past' (Osborn and Smalley 1949:94, Canonge 1957:63), 'semelfactive' (Casagrande 1954:149), and 'realized' (Armagost 1982b:193). 'Momentaneous' seems to be the best, but is not without problems. Examples (14) and (15) illustrate -i and -nuh on pekka 'kill' (which in Shoshoni nearly always occurs with -h/kkwan 'momentaneous') and (16) and (17) are given as alternate titles of one of Canonge's manuscript texts.

- CM (14) okIho ni' pi^hku^ti ni^mi ki^ma 'Iku^ti wasaasi'a pe^hka'I
 over-there I from-there we coming-from Osage killed
 Over there from the place we came from, I killed an
 Osage (Canonge 1958:100:23)
 (pekka 'kill', SG OBJ; -'i MOM)
- (15) suriⁱ ni^wiⁿi^tsⁱ, si^hpe'sⁱ u kwitikuⁿU; u behkanU
 those-ones saying all-at-once it shot-at it killed
 So saying, those ones all at once shot at it, killed
 it (Canonge 1958:28:21)
 (pekka 'kill', SG OBJ; -nuh COMPL)
- (16) hakanihku kaaekwa piⁱ tekwapIha yaanU
 in-what-way Kiowa their language took
 How the Kiowas got their language (Canonge ms)
 (yaa 'take', SG OBJ; -nuh COMPL)
- (17) piⁿiⁿihku kaaekwaniⁱ piⁱ tekwapIha ura'I
 this-way Kiowas their language found
 In this way the Kiowas found their language (Canonge
 ms)
 (uta 'find'; -'i MOM)

The main use of -nuh therefore is as a completive, basically unmarked for duration, but contrasting with -'i 'momentaneous', -yu 'imperfective', and the statives—-h/kkan 'resultative' and -h/kkantⁱn 'stative'. However, just as in Shoshoni, this was not the only use of -nuh, Comanche also has a use of -nuh in obligation, on a verb following the particle -witsa 'ought to'. Example (18) illustrates a sentence where -nuh follows -witsa with an obligatory meaning.

- CM (18) taniwitsa nah baakIhu ma wihinU
 we-ought just in-water him throw
 We ought to just throw him in the water (Canonge
 1958:6:20)
 (wihⁱ 'throw'; -nuh COMPL)

While the previous two uses for Comanche -nuh have apparently matched the Shoshoni uses, there is one more use for -nuh in Comanche that I have not seen in the Shoshoni texts available. This is what appears to be a polite request. Examples (19) and (20) illustrate this polite form of imperative while example (21) illustrates the more usual form of imperative without any verbal suffixes (the long vowel in (21) is a feature of utterance final position).

- CM (19) mii kahni nii'ka k^htaaku tsahtimi'inU
 y'all's house yourselves tightly close
 All of you shut your house tightly (Canonge 1958:3:7)
 (tsa"- INSTR; timi'i 'close', PL OBJ; -nuh COMPL)
- (20) ni makanU nii'
 me feed yourself
 You feed me (Canonge 1958:9:6)
 (maka 'feed'; -nuh COMPL)
- (21) oha'ahnakat^h ni maaka
 coyote me feed
 Coyote, feed me (Canonge 1958:7:32)
 (maka 'feed')

These occurrences of -nuh in an imperative context all have two features in common. First, they uniformly co-occur with the reflexive subject nii'. As in English, the subject of the imperative is not necessary on the surface in Comanche. The subject of the verb 'feed' in example (21) ends in an inorganic voiceless vowel (Miller 1975:10-11), indicating phrase final position, so it is clearly a vocative form and not at all necessary for the grammaticality of the sentence. Second, the context of the stories always indicates that the form is in a situation in which politeness is appropriate. Such contexts include a woman talking to her husband, strangers meeting in the woods and being invited over for coffee, and, not unexpectedly, coyote trying to put a few fast moves on some innocent victims. These contexts clearly indicate that -nuh in these situations marks polite requests.

The meaning of Comanche -nuh can now be summarized as follows:

- CM -nuh a: completive
 b: obligatory, 'ought to'
 c: polite request

From the meanings of -nuh in Shoshoni and Comanche, it seems to be clearly possible to reconstruct Proto-Shoshoni-Comanche (and possibly Proto-Central Numic, although without Panamint data it is impossible to be certain) *-nuh as meaning, at least, 'completive' and 'obligatory'. To determine the status of 'imperative' and 'polite request', it will be necessary to examine the history of *-nuh prior to Proto-Central Numic. This suffix does not appear to occur in Mono (Lamb 1957), so the Southern Numic languages are the only other source of information concerning Central Numic -nuh.

In Southern Paiute (Sapir 1930:152-153) and Chemehuevi (Press 1979:67), -nu is the suffix of momentaneous activity and is suffixed only to a certain class of verb stems, there being other momentaneous suffixes used with other verbs. (Momentaneous in

Southern Numic research means basically a limiter of scope when suffixed to a verb and is not considered an aspect suffix. Momentaneous in Central Numic research is an aspect suffix which indicates that the activity did not take very long at all to happen. These usages are retained here for the two branches respectively.) Examples (22) and (23) illustrate this momentaneous use.

- SP (22) tsippinuppikai
 came out, (suddenly) appeared (Sapir 1930:152)
 (tsippi 'emerge'; -nu MOM)
- (23) akiquttsikkwa
 having taken it all in in one gulp (Sapir 1930:552)
 (aki 'take into one's mouth'; -nu MOM)

On many verbs, this momentaneous suffix indicates a single instantiation of the verb as in (24) and (25).

- SP (24) ipiṇu
 to take a drink (Sapir 1930:152)
 (ipi 'drink'; -nu MOM)
- (25) otonwiṇu
 to give a roar (Sapir 1930:596)
 (otonwi 'roar'; -nu MOM)

On stative verbs, the suffix -nu has an inceptive meaning as in (26) and (27).

- SP (26) aṇkakaṇu
 to become red (Sapir 1930:548)
 (aṇka 'red'; -ka STAT; -nu MOM)
- CH (27) mucuṇu
 get strong (Press 1979:67)
 (mutsu 'strong'; -nu MOM)

As in Central Numic, the normal form of the imperative in Southern Numic is a bare verb stem, but in Southern Paiute and Chemehuevi, durative verb stems have the momentaneous suffix in the imperative form. This suffix is required in Chemehuevi (Press 1979:65), but is apparently optional in Southern Paiute (Sapir 1930:235-236).

- CH (28) nukwiṇu' (*nukwi')
 Run! (Press 1979:65)
 (nukki 'run'; -nu IMP; -'i 'you')

- SP (29) ipi'i
 Drink! (Sapir 1930:235)
 (ipi 'drink'; -'i 'you')
- (30) ipiŋu
 Take a drink! (Sapir 1930:235)
 (ipi 'drink'; -ŋu MOM)

This is the point at which Chemehuevi and Southern Paiute diverge in the use of -ŋu. In Chemehuevi, the -ŋu which is required on all -ŋu-class verbs in the imperative, has been reanalyzed to an imperative suffix on all non-momentaneous verbs and postpositions serving as verbs as in (31) and (32).

- CH (31) suwakaŋu'
 Breathe! (Press 1979:92)
 (suwakka 'breathe'; -ŋu IMP; -'i 'you')
- (32) mahavi mawantuan
 tree on-toward
 Get onto the tree! (Press 1979:92)
 (ma 'that'; -wa 'on'; -ntua 'toward'; -ŋu IMP)

This also seems to be true of Kawaiisu, but there is only one published imperative sentence in Kawaiisu, so it is difficult to be certain.

- K (33) kahniwadi^hmanaginu
 Get off the house! (Booth 1979:248)
 (kahni 'house'; -wa 'on'; -t^hmanaki 'from'; -nu IMP)

In Southern Paiute, the use of -ŋu as an inceptive on stative verbs has been extended to include inceptive or inchoative on verbs marked for momentaneous with other suffixes and in combination with the suffixes -y_ɛ 'present' and -(n)tsi 'diminutive'. (While Sapir writes -ŋu with a final nasalizing feature, this rarely surfaces and may be the result of what I. Miller calls 'overnasalization' (1982:448), i.e., the process by which a nasal in a root triggers a nasal later in the word. The nasal feature which occurs on -ŋu is especially dubious as it only seems to occur before t, either alone or in an affricate.) In Chemehuevi, however, verbs with -ŋu cannot co-occur with the present tense suffix -y_ɛ (Press 1979:65, 68). Examples (34) through (36) illustrate these three types of inceptive and inchoative.

- SP (34) tokokkiŋu
 starts to run, gets ready to run (Sapir 1930:688)
 (toko 'run'; -kki MOM; -ŋu MOM)

- SP (35) ipiṇuyɬaŋa
 he is about to drink (Sapir 1930:152)
 (ipi 'drink'; -ṇu MOM; -yɬ PRES)
- (36) appiṇuntsikkani
 I am about to fall asleep (Sapir 1930:153)
 (appiṇ 'sleep'; -ṇu MOM; -(n)tsi DIM)

-ṇu also occasionally has a cessative meaning as in (37).

- SP (37) ipiṇuntʃaŋa
 he (just) finished drinking (Sapir 1930:153)
 (ipi 'drink'; -ṇu MOM; -(n)tʃa REC PAST)

-ṇu therefore has, at least on some stems and in certain combinations of suffixes in Southern Paiute, three different meanings — momentaneous, inceptive, and cessative. Examples (38), (39), and (40) illustrate these three functions with the verb ipi 'drink'.

- SP (38) ipiṇu
 to take a drink (Sapir 1930:152)
 (ipi 'drink'; -ṇu MOM)
- (39) ipiṇuyɬaŋa
 he is about to drink (Sapir 1930:152)
 (ipi 'drink'; -ṇu MOM; -yɬ PRES)
- (40) ipiṇuntʃaŋa
 he (just) finished drinking (Sapir 1930:153)
 (ipi 'drink'; -ṇu MOM; -(n)tʃa REC PAST)

With the Southern Numic evidence in hand, it is now possible to reconstruct the history of Proto-Eastern Numic *-ṇu. The earliest stage was probably one in which *-ṇu was a momentaneous suffix (momentaneous in the Southern Numic sense) on one class of verbs. This use as a momentaneous required that it be present on imperative forms of those verbs. From this point, it was reanalyzed as an imperative suffix in some Southern Numic dialects. The limited use of *-ṇu on only certain verbs in the imperative is preserved in a relic form in Shoshoni -nu on puni 'see' and nanka 'hear'. The meaning of single instantiation which *-ṇu had on some forms was reinterpreted as a perfective form of the verb, the imperfective form having the suffix *-yɬ 'present/imperfective'. Chemehuevi and the Central Numic languages all developed the co-occurrence restriction that *-ṇu cannot occur with *-yɬ (Proto-Shoshoni-Comanche *-yu(n)). Chemehuevi, however, unlike the Central Numic languages preserved the use of -ṇu on only a specific verb class. After the specification of *-ṇu as a perfective, the Central Numic languages reanalyzed *-nuh as being also distal and generalized its use to all verbs regardless of

class, probably about the same time that the momentaneous marking on verbs was lost and verb stems became naturally momentaneous, the durative forms now being marked by internal consonant gemination. With **-nuh* specified as distal, the extension of its use to obligation was natural, as was also the extension of *-nuh* in Comanche to polite request.

While it may be apparent at this point that the only difference between Shoshoni *-nuh* and Comanche *-nuh* is their use as either imperative or polite request, there is a much more widespread distinction between the two that is not readily observable in isolated sentences, but is nonetheless important. In a simple count of the number of occurrences of *-nuh* in a body of similar texts, we find that, in Shoshoni, *-nuh* occurs in 9.7% of 486 sentences (Miller 1972:33-50), but that in Comanche, *-nuh* occurs in 55.8% of 1035 sentences (Canonge 1958). While raw numbers are not the primary tools of morphological and semantic analysis, such dramatic differences in percentages of use in texts of similar subject matter cannot be due to mere coincidence or chance. It is now necessary to further detail *-nuh* 'completive' in both Shoshoni and Comanche (*-nuh* 'obligatory' is fairly straightforward in both languages and presumably can be reconstructed to Proto-Central Numic).

In determining the reasons behind the different percentages of use between Shoshoni and Comanche *-nuh*, the first question to be asked is whether the difference is one of meaning, or one of use, i.e., which has changed—the semantics or the pragmatics. Langacker (1978) proposes an underlying meaning of distal for the past tense morpheme in English. In other words, in the same way that distal demonstratives establish physical distance between the ground (Langacker's term for speech event) and the objective content, distal tenses establish temporal distance between the ground and the objective content. In Langacker's terms, distal thus belongs to the epistemic levels separating the speaker from the event being described. In Shoshoni, *-nuh* also has this distal function. In obligation and completion, the suffix puts distance between the ground and the objective content. In the Shoshoni texts, *-nuh* is usually used in the introductory sections and in the concluding sections to a story. The demonstrative roots, *-u-*, *(-o-)*, *-a-*, *-e-*, and *-i-* (with graded meanings from 'out of sight' to 'quite close') are also distributed in the texts so as to make the introduction and conclusion more distant than the main body of the story. Figure 1 on the following page illustrates this structuring graphically, marking the relative distance between the ground and the objective content for the different sections of a typical story.

Occasionally, the main body retains *-u-* throughout for the participants, but will switch to *-a-*, *-e-*, and *-i-* for locations

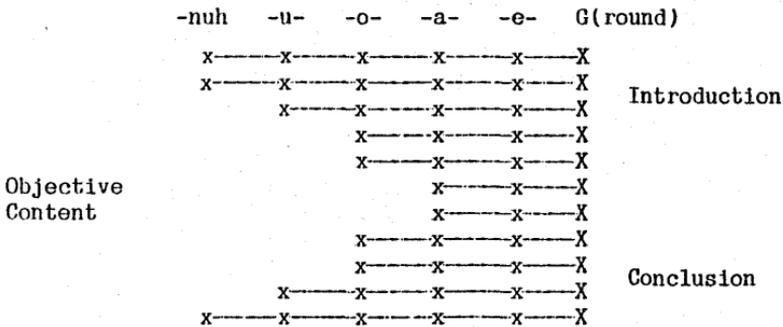


Figure 1. The distancing in a Shoshoni text
(Each line represents a separate sentence)

referred to (especially if the locations are in the vicinity of the speaker). The participants, however, usually do not get much closer than *-a-*. For example, in the story, "The Girl Who Ran Away From Her Husband" (Miller and Booth 1972), the first sentence contains three demonstratives (*-e-* and *-o-* for localities in the neighborhood and *-o-* for one of the participants) and *-nuh*. The next sentence contains *-u-* for the same participant, a place referent with *-a-*, and *-nuh*. By the middle of the second paragraph, *-nuh* has vanished and does not reappear in the remainder of the story. The demonstratives vary from *-u-* to *-i-* on both participants and locations.

Armagost (1982a) discusses the use of the demonstratives in Comanche—*-u-*, *-o-*, and *-i-*—and observes the same type of structure as is found in Shoshoni, i.e., a general lessening of distance as the main body of the text is told with greater distance at the beginning and end. *-nuh*, however, does not function as *-nuh* in Shoshoni does. In Comanche, *-nuh* is found throughout the body of any text, generally marking the event line. In addition, Comanche has two evidentials—*-k̄i* and *t̄īa*—which also serve to put distance between the ground and the objective content. A Comanche text therefore looks generally like figure 2 on the following page.

In story XXV of Canonge (1958:93-94, discussed in Armagost 1982a:10-11), for example, the story opens with *-k̄i*, *t̄īa*, and *-h/1:kan* 'resultative'. The following sentences contain the demonstrative *-u-* until sentence 12, referring to participants and locations. *-nuh*, however, only occurs on three of the sentences in this introductory section, as most of the verbs are either imperfective or marked with more specific perfectives. But when the cameras start rolling, *-nuh* occurs on each sentence which contains the demonstrative *-i-*. The conclusion, like the introduction, does not have *-nuh* on all verbs.

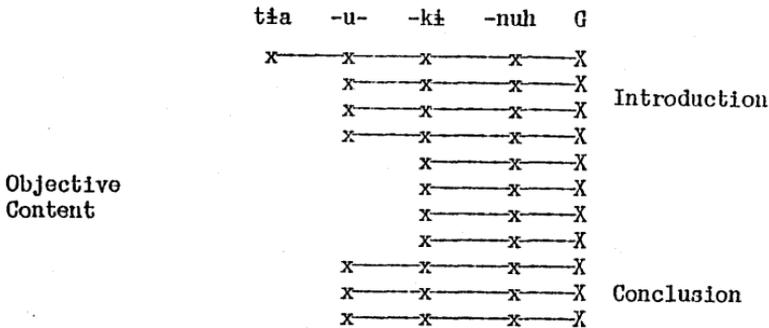


Figure 2. The distancing in a Comanche text

This difference in the use of -nuh in Comanche and Shoshoni tends to indicate that the distal function of -nuh in Comanche is retained even when highlighting an event by using the demonstrative -i-, while Shoshoni stories tend to use the distal function of the demonstratives -u-, -o-, and -a- when highlighting an event by dropping -nuh. Thus, the base distal in a Comanche text is -nuh while the base distal in Shoshoni is one of the distal demonstratives, the distance of the event never getting closer than the base distal will allow. The semantic domain of -nuh has not necessarily changed because of this difference in use, but a difference in use is the first step in a semantic shift. This pragmatic difference between Shoshoni -nuh and Comanche -nuh, however, is not the only difference between Shoshoni and Comanche -nuh. The pragmatic difference has, in fact, begun to affect the semantics.

Bickerton (1981:90), in discussing creole tense-mood-aspect (TMA) systems, makes the observation that every TMA system, whether simple or complex, covers all and only the same semantic area as every other TMA system. He likens it to a cake that is always the same size, but can be cut into a varying number of slices. If a cake has been divided four ways and it is decided later to get one more slice out of it, one or more of the original slices must be reduced to make room for the new slice. Meillet's observation that "le langage est un système où tout se tient" has a corollary that "if a new element intrudes, everything must shift its place somewhat" (Bickerton 1981:90). This is certainly true of -nuh. As discussed above, Proto-Eastern Numic *-gu was not even a part of the TMA system, but was a marker of a specific verb class, limiting their scope outside of the TMA system. *-nuh entered the Proto-Shoshoni-Comanche system as a completive, having already supplanted whatever earlier completive suffix was in use, expanding to obligation, similarly supplanting the archaic form. This expansion of role continued in Comanche, supplanting the demonstratives as the base distal in narrative.

-nuh in Comanche has also supplanted the Shoshoni 'momentaneous' suffix -h/kkwan (Miller's term 'momentaneous' for -h/kkwan does not mean the same as Sapir's term 'momentaneous' for -nu in Southern Palute). -h/kkwan has been lost as an aspect suffix in Comanche, its functions being assumed by -nuh. Compare (41) and (42) in Shoshoni with Comanche (43) and (44).

- SH (41) miakwa
He (already) left (Miller 1975:38)
(mia 'go'; -(h)kwan MOM (but see McLaughlin 1982))
- (42) tiiahkwa
He died
(tiai 'die', SG; -hkwan MOM)
- CM (43) surikise' oha'ainakati suni u miihitsi, wihnu mi'anU
that coyote that-way him doing then went
Acting on him that way, that coyote then went (Canonge
1958:13:6)
(mi'a 'go'; -nuh COMPL)
- (44) surikise' wihnu riyaainU
that-one then died
Then that one died (Canonge 1958:6:16)
(tiyaai 'die', SG; -nuh COMPL)

It is apparent from the above examples that -nuh in Comanche is expanding into environments where it does not normally occur in Shoshoni. Its use as a general distal marker in texts is also an indication that the general pattern of aspect suffixes has undergone a rearrangement due to the expansion of the scope of -nuh. In Comanche, -nuh has thus become the most common suffix on verbs, indicating a general perfective meaning, unmarked for duration. Is this the beginning of the reanalysis of -nuh to past tense rather than perfective aspect? There is only a thin line separating tense from perfective aspect, tenses being naturally perfective, i.e., markers which look at the event as a unit rather than as a sum of various parts. The evidence from Comanche tends to indicate that -nuh is following a course of development which will eventually make it a tense suffix rather than aspect, as it now appears to be. The course of development has been from perfective, possibly marked for some length of time, to perfective unmarked for duration, to base distal in narratives, supplanting other perfective suffixes in the process. The seemingly natural course of this development is the eventual replacement of all perfective suffixes with -nuh and the reanalysis of -nuh as past rather than completive.

NOTES

¹The cited forms are from a variety of sources, which can be found in the list of references. Each cited form is followed by the reference, listing the page number, and in the case of Miller (1972) and Canonge (1958) the sentence number. The forms are cited on the first line exactly as they appear in the source with changes to standardize the character set (nothing unusual, just things like changing 2 to 1, and the high back unrounded vowels to ɨ). Forms from Sapir (1930) have been phonemicized along the lines of Sapir (1949). The forms in parentheses below the translations have been phonemicized along the lines set down by Sapir (1949). Not all Numicists will completely agree with this, however. Abbreviations used in the translations are:

| | | | |
|-------|--------------|-------|-------------|
| COMPL | completive | OBJ | object |
| DIM | diminutive | PRES | present |
| IMP | imperative | REC | recent |
| IMPRF | imperfective | RSLTV | resultative |
| INSTR | instrumental | SG | singular |
| MOM | momentaneous | STAT | stative |

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