DIRECTIONAL PARTICLES AND ABSTRACT MOTION IN CHOCTAW

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1 Introduction

It is well-known that motion, both physical and abstract, plays an important role in structuring the semantic representations of lexical items (Gruber 1965, Jackendoff 1983) This paper examines the ways in which the directional particles of Choctaw, a Muskogean language spoken in Mississippi and Oklahoma, yield insight into the semantic structure of that language [1]

1.1 The descriptive problem

Choctaw has a set of directional particles, shown in (1) below

1) Group A
pit 'motion away from (a reference point)'
it 'motion towards (a reference point)'
[awit 'motion towards (a reference point)'][2]

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[1] Special thanks to Henry Willis who provided all the Choctaw examples not otherwise attributed Symbols in the orthography have their usual phonetic values, with the following exceptions <sh> = [š], <ch> = [č], <lh> = [ɬ], and underlining represents nasalization

The following abbreviations are used ac=accusative, comp=complementizer, con=constrastive, dpast=distant past, ds=different subject, foc=focus, hn=hn-grade (iterative aspect), irr=irrealis, l=l-grade (a stem form that appears before some suffixes), loc=locative, n=n-grade (durative aspect), m=nominative, part=participle, pl=plural, prev=previous mention, pt=past, super=superessive, ss=same subject, tns=tense

[2] For the puposes of this paper, *it* and *awit* are essentially synonymous Speakers of Choctaw I consulted considered *awit* a somewhat archaic variant of *it*

However, Byington (1915) suggests that in 19th century Choctaw, *awit* and *it* contrasted with each other *Awit* was used to indicate an endpoint of motion closer to the

Group B
ǫt 'motion away from (a reference point)'
at 'motion towards (a reference point)'

These directional particles are never used alone, but always before some other verb or verb phrase

There are two descriptive problems that I will address in this paper First, what is the difference between the directionals of group A and those of group B? Second, what sorts of predicates involve motion?[3]

1 2 Previous discussion

There has been little discussion of the directional particles in previous literature on Choctaw Nicklas (1974 209) merely glosses *pit* 'thither' and *ut* 'hither' and says that they "state the direction of the action relative to the position of the speaker "

Ulrich (1986) is the only author to address the difference between group A and group B directionals He writes, "The dynamic directional particles [*at-* and *ǫt-*] are used to indicate motion of the subject *Ut-* and *pit-* are like *at-* and *ǫt-* in indicating actions directed toward (*ut-*) or away from (*pit-*) the speaker However, the static directional clitics are used when the subject is not itself moving, but merely sending something else, physical or otherwise " (pp 276-7)

However, Ulrich himself notes that there are problems with this generalization Textual data show clearly that *pit* and *ut* occur in cases where the subject is in motion, as in the following examples

2) vba pit anumpula chi hosh ilap illvt nvnih chaha yo pit oiya tok

/ aba pit anǫpol-aachi-h-oosh
up away talk-1sI-irr-tns-part ss

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speaker than the endpoint for *ut* Despite this, the Choctaw Bible almost always uses *awut* and very rarely uses *ut*

[3] I will not discuss here in any detail a third, and more difficult question, that of how the point of reference or (center of deixis) is determined In general motion is interpreted from the point of view of the speaker when first or second person pronouns are present in the sentence In the absence of first or second person pronouns, the directionals generally reflect the point of view of the subject of the sentence However, there are exceptions to this generalization, and the issue requires more investigation

ɪlaap ɪlla-t nanɪh chaaha-yo
self only-ss hɪll hɪgh-foc ac

pɪt oyya-ttook /
away go up-dpast

' he **went up** ɪnto a mountaɪn apart to pray ' Matt 14 23, Mark 6 46

3) Mɪhma lumvt penɪ pɪt **vlhto** cha, a haɪaka ka pɪt **ɪlhkolɪ** tok

/Mɪhma lohma-t pɪɪnɪ
and secret-ss boat

pɪt alhto-chah aahayaakaka
away enter-ss wɪlderness

pɪt ɪlhkolɪ-ttook
away go-dpast

'And they departed ɪnto a desert place by shɪp prɪvately ' Mark 6 32
[Lɪt 'They secretly **entered** a boat and **went away** to the wɪlderness ']

2 One event vs two events

I propose that the difference between group A and group B directionals can be described as follows

The group A directionals (*pɪt* and *ɪt*) are used when the motion is conceived of as forming a single event with the following predicate Group B directionals (*ot* and *at*) are used when the motion is conceived of as a distinct event from the following predicate

Group B directionals correspond most closely to English phrases like 'go and' and 'come and'

2.1 Simple cases

In the great majority of case, the distinction between single events and distinct events explains the interpretations of sentences with group A and group B directionals Consider the following contrasting examples

4) Im-Ø-aachi-h-o ot
III-give-irr-tns-part ds go&

im-anooli-li-tok
III-tell-1sI-pt

'I went and told them to give it to him '

5) Im-Ø-aachi-h-o pit
III-give-irr-tns-part ds away

im-anooli-li-tok
III-tell-1sI-pt

'I told them to give it to him '

In example (4), use of the group B directional *ot* implies that there was a distinct event of motion prior to the action of telling In contrast, the use of the group A directional *pit in* (5) does not imply any such motion prior to the telling Instead, *pit* shows that telling is an event in which the motion is directed away from the speaker

However, there are a few cases which require a bit more discussion

2.2 Directionals and inchoatives

With certain verbs, the two-event directionals are used in the formation of inchoatives [4]

6) Ittóla-tok STATIVE
lie n-pt

'It lay there '

7) At ittola-tok INCHOATIVE
come& lie-pt

'It fell ' (Literally "It came and lay " or "It came to lie")

Similar uses are found with verbs of entering, such as *chokkowah* 'to enter/be in (sg subj)' *alhtoh* 'to enter/be in (du subj)' *abihah* 'to enter/be in (pl subj)' are ambiguous between stative and inchoative readings For these verbs, the two-event directionals are used with the inchoative readings

Choctaw appears to differ from English in the grammatical treatment of events like

[4] An additional difference between the stative and inchoative senses is that the stative usually occurs in the n-grade (durative) Inchoative senses usually appear in other grades

falling and entering Notice that both these verbs involve events of motion that result in a particular final state English treats the entire semantic complex as a single event However, Choctaw separates the motion and stative portions of the event grammatically

2.3 Idiomatic uses

There are also some idiomatic uses of the group B particles. For example, *qt iyah* means 'pass by' (literally 'go and go')

8) okhvta paknaka ya a nohowvt, ayvt im ona, yohmi kvt ont ia hi a aiahni tok

/ okhata paknaka-ya aa-nohowa-t
water top-ac loc-walk hn-ss

aya-t im-onah, yohmi-kat
go by-ss III-reach do so-comp ss

qt iy-ahii-ya aay-ahni-ttook
go& go-irr-ac loc-think-dpast/

' he was walking on the water, coming towards them, as if he would pass them by '
Mark 6 48

3 What constitutes motion?

I have claimed above that the single-event directionals *pit*, *it*, and *awiit* are used when the following verb includes a motion component Verbs with a motion component contrast with stative predicates, and the single-event directionals are inappropriate with statives

9) *Ofi-yat pit hommah
dog-nm away red

(The dog is red)

Speaking more formally, we may say that the single-event directionals are appropriate with verbs that contain the predicate GO in their semantic representation In the following sections I identify several classes of verbs which include GO in Choctaw

3.1 Physical motion (and sending)

It is unsurprising that verbs in which there is actual physical motion of objects or people through space count as motion predicates in Choctaw The following is a partial list of

verbs of physical motion that may be used with the group A directionals

iyyakayyah	'to follow'
atohnoh	'to send, order'
tilhiilih	'to send (pl obj)'
oyyah	'to go up, climb'
tanablih	'to cross over'
ilhkolih	'to go (pl)'
kanallih	'to move'
kachih	'to send, to sell'
pilah	'to throw, send'
itokaahah	'to throw in the fire'
kochchah	'to go out'
ashaachih	'to gather'
okachih	'to throw in the water'
lhayah	'to throw away'
abachakaalih	'to lift the head'

Some examples of these verbs follow

10) Iit pilah
toward throw/send

'He threw it (toward me) '

11) Pit pilah
away throw/send

'He threw it (away from me) '

12) Chokka ila pit kanalli-tok
house other away move-pt

'They moved to a different house.'

13) Atuk osh okhvta hash mish tvnnvp pit tanvblit Katalenes yakni a okla ona tok

/Aatokoosh okhatah-aash tanap
and ocean-prev other side

pit tanabli-t Gadarenes yakni-ya
away cross-ss Gadarenes land-ac

oklah ona-ttook /
pl arrive there-dpast

'And they **came over unto** the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes ' Mark 5 1

14) Shukha laua ak o pit ish pi on **tihleli** na yvmmak o ont il abehashke

/Shokha lawa-ako pit
hog many-con ac away

ish-pi-o-tilhiili-nah yamm-ako
2sI-1pII-super-send 1-ds that-con ac

ot il-abiiha-shkiih /
go& 1pI-be in-exhort

'**Send** us into the swine, that we may enter into them ' Mark 5 12

I assume that the lexical entry for a verb like *pilah* 'to send' is something like that in
(14) The lexical entries here follow the notational conventions of Jackendoff (1983, 1990)

15)

pilah 'throw, send'
Verb
___ NP_j
[CAUSE ([ ]$_i$, [$_{EVENT}$ GO ([ ]$_j$, [$_{PATH}$])])]

Note that this entry doesn't tell us anything anything specific about the path of motion—merely that there is some such path

The lexical entries for *pit* and *it* are as shown below Their semantic contribution to the sentence is to provide information about the endpoint of a path of motion

16)

pit 'away from (a reference point)'
Particle
___ VP
[$_{PATH}$ TO [THERE]]

17)

ıit 'toward (a reference point)'
Particle
___ VP
[$_{PATH}$ TO [HERE]]

3.2 Giving

Verbs of giving also appear with the directional particles, suggesting that GO also appears in the semantic representations of the following verbs

ımah 'to give'
ıpıitah 'to give (to several), to distribute'

18) Nana kvt holitompa hokvno ofi puta ma **pit hvch ik imokmvt,**

/Nana-kat holitopa-h-ook-anoh
thing-comp ss holy n-tns-com-ac2

ofi pootta-ma pıt hachik-ım-o-kmat /
dog all-that away 2pII-III-neg-ırr ss

'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs ' Matt 7 6

19) pıt ıpeta tok

/ Pıt ıpiita-ttook /
away give-dpast

"he gave them (to his disciples)" Matt 14 19

The lexical entry for a verb like *imah* 'to give' is something like the following

20)

ımah 'to give'
V
___ NP_j NP_k
[CAUSE ([ ]$_i$, [$_{EVENT}$ GO ([ ]$_k$, [$_{PATH}$ FROM [ ]$_i$, TO [ ]$_j$])])]

Note that verbs of giving show a degree of abstraction from physical motion to the predicate GO Giving need not involve any physical motion of the object that is given If I

give you a house, the house does not (typically) move Nevertheless, the semantic representation of the verb *give* does include GO, whether this corresponds to the external world or not

3.3 Perception

The directional particles also show that the following verbs of perception contain the predicate GO in their semantic representation

pisah	'to see'
hopo̲koyoh	'to look here and there'
ha̲kloh	'to hear'

Consider the following examples

21) Yohmi tok kia Chisvs vt mishema ho̲ minti na **pit pisa** mvt, malelit ont aiokpvchit,

/Yohmi-ttook-kia Jesus-at mishiima-h-o̲
do so-dpast-but Jesus-nm far off-tns-part ds

miti-nah pit pisa-hmat, malili-t
come-ds away see-when ss run-ss

o̲t ayokpachi-t /
go& worship-ss

"But when he saw Jesus [coming] afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and " Mark 5·6

22) ...Vba pilla ha̲ **pit ish hopo̲koyo** cha

/ aba pillah-ac pit
up toward-ac away

ish-hopo̲kooyo-chah /
2sI-look l-ss

"**Look** now towards heaven." Gen 15 5

Verbs of perception show a further degree of abstraction from physical motion, for what is the moving object in perception? In the folk physics of vision implied by English semantics, this object is an abstract *gaze*, conceived of as moving from the perceiver to the perceived object The Choctaw *pisah* 'to see', shows that a similar abstract theme is conceived of as moving along a path from the seer to the thing

However, Choctaw and English show somewhat surprisingly different conceptions of hearing In English, sounds are conceived as moving from their sources to arrive at the ear of the perceiver, and the perceiver is the goal of the abstract motion In Choctaw, however, hearing is like sight—an auditory equivalent of the gaze is conceived of as moving away from the hearer, and the particle *pit*, showing motion away from the reference point, is used

23) Mihma mɨko Helot vt yvmma **pit haklo**

/Mihma mɨko Herod-at yamma pit
and king Herod-nm that away

haklo /
hear

"and King Herod **heard** of him "

The relevant lexical representations are as follows.

24)

[see, pisah
V
___ (NP_j)
[GO ([GAZE], [$_{PATH}$FROM [ ]$_i$, TO [ ]$_j$])]

25)

[hear
V
___ (NP_j)
[GO ([SOUND], [$_{PATH}$FROM [ ]$_j$, TO [ ]$_i$])]

26)

[hakloh 'to hear'
V
___ (NP_j)
[GO ([AUDITORY GAZE], [$_{PATH}$FROM [ ]$_i$, TO [ ]$_j$])]

3.4 Speech and thought

There is also a motion component in the following verbs of speech and thought, as the use of the directional particles shows

anopolih	'to say'[5]
ithanah	'to know, recognize'
hoyoh	'to call'
mihah	'to say'
anoolih	'to tell'
yimmih	'to believe'
anokfillih	'to think, consider'

Consider the following examples

27) Pit im-anoolih'
away III-tell

`Tell him!'

28) Kvna hosh vm anumpa ha haklo cha, auet sa kanchi tok a **pit i** yimmi hokvto, aiokchayvt bilia ya ahayuchi

/Kanah-oosh am-anopah-a haklo-chah
who-foc nm 1sIII-word-ac hear-ss

awiit sa-kachi-ttook-a pit
toward 1sII-send-dpast-ac away

i-yimmi-h-ookatoh aay-okchaya-t
III-believe-tns-com nm2 loc-live n-ss

[5] *Aba pit anopolih*, literally 'talk upwards' is idiomatic for 'pray'

bíllıya-ya aa-hayoochı /
forever-ac loc-find

"Whoever hears my words and **believes him** who sent me shall have eternal life " John 5 24

29) pvska yatuk ash okla **pit ik anukfillo kak a tok**

/ paska-yaatok-aash oklah pıt
bread-ʔ-prev pl away

ık-anukfill-ok-ak a-ttook /
N-think l-neg-obl be-dpast

" **.they did not consider** the [mıracle of the] bread " Mark 6 52

30) mıh makınlı hǫ yvmmak ash okla **pit ıthana tok**

/ mıh-m-akılıh-ǫ yammak-aash
same-dem-ındeed-ac that-prev

oklah pıt ıthana-ttook /
pl away know-dpast

"[ımmedıately] **they knew hım** " Mark 6 54

[In thıs context, something lıke "recognızed hım" ıs closer]

The use of the directional particles with these verbs implies a lexical semantics in which thoughts and communication move from the mind of the subject to others in the world The lexical entries for verbs in this semantic class are something like the following

31)

ıyımmıh 'to believe'
V
___ NP_j
[GO ([THOUGHT], $[_{PATH}$FROM [ ]$_i$, TO [ ]$_j$])]

32)

[im-anoolih 'to tell'
V
___ NP_j
[CAUSE ([ ]$_i$, [GO ([COMMUNICATION], [$_{PATH}$FROM [ ]$_i$, TO [ ]$_j$])])]

The four semantic fields just outlined—physical motion, giving, perception, and speech and thought—do not exhaust the verbs with motion components in Choctaw In particular, verbs of orientation and comparison also appear to require GO in their semantic representation, but the constraints of space prevent discussing them in this paper

4 Summary

The lexical patterns of Choctaw suggest the existence of items such as the visual and auditory gaze, and the abstract motion of thoughts through space What is the relation between these lexicalizations and conscious thought in Choctaw (or any language)?

An earlier, less cautious, Whorfian perspective tended to equate the two with each other But this seems too hasty English lexicalization patterns also support the concept of the gaze, a mythical object or emanation originating in the eye of a seer Yet speakers of English who say *My gaze fell on him* need not in any way believe the implicit physics of vision that this sentence implies In a similar fashion, Choctaw speakers do not necessarily believe that recognizing a person causes your thoughts to move through space towards that person

A distinction that Talmy (1983) suggests between the "fine-structural level" of language and the "macro-expository level" of language is useful here The fine-structural level consists of the closed-class and verbal elements of a language, while the macro-expository level uses the full lexical and syntactic resources of the language Talmy notes that the sort of spatial distinctions which can be expressed at the fine-structural level are a restricted subset of those which can be expressed at the macro-expository level In particular, the fine-structural level of language often tends to imply a naive physics of the world which may be at odds with higher-level conceptualizations of the world

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