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 fol-
lowing 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)   sutɨn 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 il-
lustrated 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)   nɨ witsa wihyu sunni u mɨɨnu
           I should then that-way him do
           I should do that to him (Miller 1972:47:12)
           (mɨɨ '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 'com-
pletive'.

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 actu-
ally 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 -nU 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 in-
volved in the completion.

CM   (6)   sunikɨse' urii nayɨkwibɨniku, oha'ahnakatɨ urɨɨkɨ bitɨnU
            that-way them as-continuing coyote among-them arrived
            As they were continuing that way, coyote arrived among
               them   (Canonge 1958:3:3)
            (pitɨ 'arrive'; -nuh COMPL)

      (7)   sitɨkɨse' 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 imperfect-
ives. -yu is a non-punctual aspect, an imperfective, while -nuh
is one of the punctual aspects, a perfective. Example (8) illus-
trates the imperfective meaning of -yu contrasting with the per-
fective meaning of -nuh.

CM   (8)   surɨkɨse' wihnu okɨhu paakɨhu wɨhtɨkwanU, 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)
            (wɨ"- INSTR; tɨkwa '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 distinc-
tion 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) kaaekwanii 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/kkantin,
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/kkantin 'stative' is used when the subject is character-
ized 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 niminii niminaahkΛ
           long-ago EVID there Comanches lived
           Long ago, it is said, Indians lived there (Canonge ms)
           (nimi 'Comanche'; naa 'be'; -kkan RSLTV)

     (12) soobe'si nini nimikahnikI niminaahkatii
           long-ago we in-tipi lived
           Long ago we lived in a teepee (Canonge 1958:109:1)
           (nimi 'Comanche'; naa 'be'; -kkantin STAT)

     (13) su'anakitsa' ria sisimi'nii niminii nobitinU
           there EVID some Comanches camped
           Somewhere it is said some Indians camped (Canonge
              1958:73:1)
           (no 'camp'; piti '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 al-
ternate titles of one of Canonge's manuscript texts.

CM   (14)   okɫho nɨ' pɨhkutɫ nɨmɨ kima'Ikutɫ wasaasi'a pehka'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)   surɨɨ niwɨnɨtsi, sɨɨhpe'sɨ 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 pɨɨ tekwapɫha yaanU
            in-what-way Kiowa their language took
            How the Kiowas got their language (Canonge ms)
            (yaa 'take', SG OBJ; -nuh COMPL)

     (17)   pɨnihku kaaekwanɨɨ pɨɨ tekwapɫha 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/kkantɨn '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)   tanɨwitsa nah baakɫhu 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) mɨɨ kahni nɨɨ'ka kɨhtaaku tsahtɨmi'inU
          y'all's house yourselves tightly close
          All of you shut your house tightly (Canonge 1958:3:7)
          (tsa"- INSTR; tɨmi'i 'close', PL OBJ; -nuh COMPL)

    (20) nɨ makanU nɨɨ'
          me feed yourself
          You feed me (Canonge 1958:9:6)
          (maka 'feed'; -nuh COMPL)

    (21) oha'ahnakatɨ nɨ 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 nɨɨ'. As in English, the subject of the impera-
tive 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 polite-
ness 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 suf-
fixed 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.   Momen-
taneous in Central Numic research is an aspect suffix which indi-
cates 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)   tsippiŋuppɨkai
             came out, (suddenly) appeared   (Sapir 1930:152)
             (tsippi 'emerge'; -ŋu MOM)

      (23)   akiŋuttsikkwa
             having taken it all in in one gulp   (Sapir 1930:552)
             (aki 'take into one's mouth'; -ŋu MOM)

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

SP   (24)   ipiŋu
             to take a drink   (Sapir 1930:152)
             (ipi 'drink'; -ŋu MOM)

      (25)   otoŋwiŋu
             to give a roar   (Sapir 1930:596)
             (otoŋwi 'roar'; -ŋu MOM)

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

SP   (26)   aŋkakaŋu
             to become red   (Sapir 1930:548)
             (aŋka 'red'; -ka STAT; -ŋu MOM)

CH   (27)   mucuŋu
             get strong   (Press 1979:67)
             (mutsu 'strong'; -ŋu 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)   nukwiŋu'   (*nukwi')
             Run!   (Press 1979:65)
             (nukki 'run'; -ŋu 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 re-
quired on all -ŋu-class verbs in the imperative, has been reana-
lyzed 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) mahavɨ mawantuaŋ
            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) kahniwadɨmanaginu
            Get off the house!   (Booth 1979:248)
            (kahni 'house'; -wa 'on'; -tɨmanaki '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 -yɨ '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 -yɨ (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)   ipiŋuyɨaŋa
              he is about to drink (Sapir 1930:152)
              (ipi 'drink'; -ŋu MOM; -yɨ PRES)

      (36)   appɨŋuntsikkani
              I am about to fall asleep (Sapir 1930:153)
              (appɨi 'sleep'; -ŋu MOM; -(n)tsi DIM)

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

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

      -ŋu therefore has, at least on some stems and in certain com-
binations 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)   ipiŋu
              to take a drink (Sapir 1930:152)
              (ipi 'drink'; -ŋu MOM)

      (39)   ipiŋuyɨaŋa
              he is about to drink (Sapir 1930:152)
              (ipi 'drink'; -ŋu MOM; -yɨ PRES)

      (40)   ipiŋuntʃaaŋa
              he (just) finished drinking (Sapir 1930:153)
              (ipi 'drink'; -ŋu MOM; -(n)tʃa REC PAST)

      With the Southern Numic evidence in hand, it is now possible
to reconstruct the history of Proto-Eastern Numic *-ŋu. The ear-
liest stage was probably one in which *-ŋu was a momentaneous suf-
fix (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 reana-
lyzed as an imperative suffix in some Southern Numic dialects.
The limited use of *-ŋu 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 *-ŋu had
on some forms was reinterpreted as a perfective form of the verb,
the imperfective form having the suffix *-yɨ 'present/imperfec-
tive'. Chemehuevi and the Central Numic languages all developed
the co-occurrence restriction that *-ŋu cannot occur with *-yɨ
(Proto-Shoshoni-Comanche *-yu(n)). Chemehuevi, however, unlike
the Central Numic languages preserved the use of -ŋu on only a
specific verb class. After the specification of *-ŋu as a per-
fective, 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 gemina-
tion. 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 dif-
ference between Shoshoni -nuh and Comanche -nuh is their use as
either imperative or polite request, there is a much more wide-
spread 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 sen-
tences (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 straightfor-
ward 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 con-
tent, 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
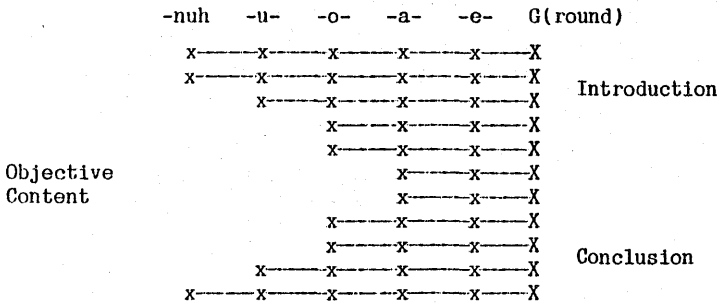participants, but will switch to -a-, -e-, and -i- for locations

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        -nuh    -u-     -o-     -a-     -e-    G(round)
        x------x------x------x------x-----X
        x------x------x------x------x----X
               x------x------x------x----X        Introduction
               x------x------x------X
               x------x------x----X
                       x------x-----X
Objective              x------x-----X
Content             x------x------x-----X
                    x------x------x------X
               x------x-----x------x-----X        Conclusion
        x------x------x------x------x----X
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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 that -a-. For example, in the story, "The Girl Who Ran
Away From Her Husband" (Miller and Booth 1972), the first sen-
tence 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 para-
graph, -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 struc-
ture 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—-ki and tia—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 -ki, tia, and
-h/l:kan 'resultative'. The following sentences contain the demon-
strative -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 con-
tains the demonstrative -i-. The conclusion, like the introduc-
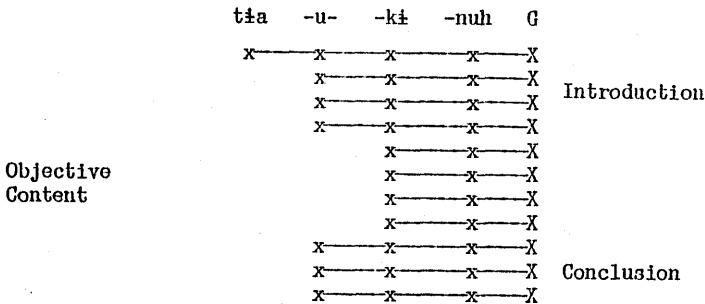tion, does not have -nuh on all verbs.

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              tɨa   -u-   -kɨ   -nuh   G
          x————x————x————x————X
              x————x————x————X
              x————x————x————X      Introduction
              x————x————x————X
                  x————x————X
                  x————x————X
                  x————x————X
                  x————x————X
          x————x————x————X
          x————x————x————X      Conclusion
          x————x————x————X

Objective
Content
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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 *-nu 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 Paiute). -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)   tiaihkwa
             He died
             (tiai 'die', SG; -hkwan MOM)

CM   (43)   surɨkɨse' oha'ahnakatɨ suni u mɨɨhtsi, 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)   surɨkɨse' wihnu rɨyaainU
             that-one then died
             Then that one died   (Canonge 1958:6:16)
             (tɨyaai '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 then 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 per-
fective, 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

[1]The 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 ʔ to ', 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 trans-
lations have been phonemicized along the lines set down by Sapir
(1949). Not all Numicists will completely agree with this, how-
ever. 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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