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500+ VERBS IN UMONHON (OMAHA). By Alice Saunsoci and Ardis Eschenberg. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016. Pp. 276, \$10.00¹ (paper).

This book, co-written by the late Umo^hoⁿ speaker Alice Saunsoci and the linguist Ardis Eschenberg, is the first published book to be dedicated specifically to the verbal system of Umo^hoⁿ, a Siouan language referred to as “Omaha” in most anthropological and linguistic literature.

Since it is primarily intended for learners and tribal members, it avoids technical linguistic terms as much as possible and contains numerous sentences illustrating the uses of verbs in context.

The book begins with a short introduction to the spelling system and to the grammar of the language (parts 1 to 4). The main body of this book (part 5) includes more than 500 verb paradigms. Each verb is provided with imperative forms (except when the semantics do not allow it), and at least one example sentence. The main section is followed by indexes that list the verbs by Umo^hoⁿ and English alphabetical order, as well as by conjugation patterns (parts 6 to 8).

This work is very useful for documenting and revitalizing the language given the importance and complexity of the Umo^hoⁿ verbal system. Umo^hoⁿ verbs can index two

¹We warmly thank Guillaume Jacques and Catherine Rudin for their corrections and comments.

arguments, generally the agent and the patient, as in *oⁿ-thá-noⁿ'oⁿ* (1SGPATIENT-2AGENT-hear) ‘You hear me’. The system is split intransitive, which means that some intransitive verbs, called “stative”, use the patient markers of the transitive verbs to mark the subject (e.g. *oⁿ-xtá* ‘I am sleepy’), while other intransitive verbs, called “active”, use the agent markers of the transitive verbs to mark the subject (e.g. *a-wáoⁿ* ‘I sing’). Finally, Umoⁿhoⁿ has a large number of conjugation classes. The authors divide the verbs into nine conjugation patterns, and one could further subdivide them.

In the forms provided by the book, we see that the second person subject of verb stems beginning with *th-* [ð] is marked by initial *n-*. In nineteenth century data from Dorsey (1890, 1891), described in detail by Koontz (1984, 2001), and also in Marsault (2016) for the verbs, there used to be variation between *shn-* (the older form), *n-* and *hn-*, which has disappeared in modern Umoⁿhoⁿ. On the other hand, the book shows a lot of variation in other areas, such as accent, vowel length and nasal harmony, apparently more than was recorded by Dorsey.

A particularly interesting fact revealed by the data in this book has to do with the numerous “Ablaut” verbs. Umoⁿhoⁿ, like other Siouan languages, has a category of verbs which undergo a final vowel alternation (from *-e* to *-a*), called “Ablaut” (Rankin 1995). One of the suffixes that historically triggers the Ablaut is *-i*, which marks plurality and proximate (i.e. main actor)² subjects. In nineteenth-century texts, most third person subjects were marked as proximate. In modern Umoⁿhoⁿ, the proximate/plural suffix *-i* has disappeared except with imperative plurals and in certain traditional speech styles, but the final vowel alternation remains. The authors explain that first SG and second persons correlate with the *-e* final vowel, while third and first person PL correlate with *-a* (p.25).

² The proximate/obviative parameter in Umoⁿhoⁿ works in discourse somewhat like the well-documented Algonquian systems but lacks associated direct/inverse distinctions and does not serve a clear reference-tracking function, unlike those systems. For further description see Koontz (1989) and Eschenberg (2005, 78).

This would mean that third person subjects of Ablaut verbs have an unchangeable *-a* final vowel based on person alone, and regardless of the proximate/obviative parameter and aspect. The negative suffix *-azhi* seems to be conditioned similarly. This suffix occurs with an initial *-b-*, an allomorph of proximate/plural *-i*, when the subject of the verb is 1PL or third person, and it takes an *-m-* whenever the subject of the verb is 1SG person.

Table 1 presents the person marker prefixes of the regular conjugational pattern (the “A pattern” in the authors’ terminology). It also shows the distribution of the final vowel of Ablaut verbs, according to the statements on p.25, and the negation marker paradigm in the right column, albeit without the Ablaut vowels. It shows a nominative/accusative alignment of intransitive verbs according to verb ending and negation, in contrast with the split intransitivity of person markers. Most verbs in the book conform to the data given in Table 1. The apparent double alignment can be checked with the stative verbs *bíize* “be dry” (p.41) for Ablaut and *giúdoⁿ-bazhi* “not feel well” (p.145) for negation.

		PATIENT					Active	Negative (all verbs)
		1SG	1PL	2	3SG	3PL		
A G E N T	1S			wí-Σ-e	a-Σ-e	a-wá-Σ-e	a-Σ-e	Σ-m-azhi
	1P			o ⁿ -thí-Σ-a	o ⁿ -Σ-a	o ⁿ -wó ⁿ -Σ-a	o ⁿ -Σ-a	Σ-b-azhi
	2	o ⁿ -thá-Σ-e	wa-thá-Σ-e		tha-Σ-e	wa-thá-Σ-e	tha-Σ-e	Σ-azhi
	3	o ⁿ -Σ-a	wa-Σ-a	thi-Σ-a	Σ-a	wa-Σ-a	Σ-a	Σ-b-azhi
	Stative	o ⁿ -Σ-e	wa-Σ-a	thi-Σ-e	Σ-a	Σ-a	[Σ = verb stem]	

Table 1: Alignment of prefixed person markers, final vowel alternation, and negation.

However, a closer look at the data in the book reveals that the Ablaut alternation is still controlled by the proximate/obviative parameter, animacy, aspect, and sometimes plurality.

For example, the third person form of stative verbs is written with a final *-a* in the Table above, but a final *-e* does occur in most example sentences (e.g. *Ágthiⁿ-thoⁿ sábe* ‘The chair is black’, p.34). Other verbs take an *-e* final vowel in interrogative sentences (e.g. *Midé-a?* ‘Is she crawling?’ , p.85). On one occasion at least, an active perfective verb is shown with an *-e* final vowel, in agreement with the obviative article of its subject: *Shóⁿge-k^{he} t’é* ‘The horse died’ (p.39). Moreover, the verbs ‘to hate’ (p.111) and ‘to look for’ (p.133) have 1SG>2PL forms ‘I hate/looked for all of you’ with an *-a* final vowel, evidence of the original presence of the *-i* plural suffix. Such data show that the old parameters are still operating, although they are not explained in this book. The authors do state that the *-b* on the 3SG negative is not obligatory but “more likely in conversational circumstances” (p.9).

In sum, this book provides learners and linguists with rich information about modern Umoⁿhoⁿ, and with a glimpse of the changes that have taken place over the previous century. Presumably in order to help beginning learners, it avoids some grammatical detail, such as the multiply constrained *-e/-a* variation. Advanced learners and linguists may wish to use this volume in combination with other reference works in order to have a complete overview of the verb endings.

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