(36) A unified syntax and semantics of Kanien'kéha statives. Terrance Gatchalian, Jessica Coon, Lefteris Paparounas. NELS 56 abstract (New York University).

This presentation offers a unified account of the syntax and semantics of the "Stative aspect" in Kanien'kéha (N. Iroquoian), drawing on both existing descriptions and novel language material collected through work with first-language speakers. We propose that variation in **(i)** where a stative subject is merged, and **(ii)** the amount of *eventive* structure present under the stative projection, can account for variation in both the choice of *pronominal prefix* found in Stative forms, as well as corresponding differences in *temporal interpretations* available to stative predicates. We discuss wider implications for argument structure and semantics of stative predication cross-linguistically. Specifically, the split-S person marking in Kanien'kéha provides a transparent view into the heterogeneous ways "stative" structures are built. We show that the differences in person-marking correspond to **(i)** the *stage/individual-level* state distinction and **(ii)** whether or not the stative form *embeds eventive structure*.

The Puzzle. Certain predicative stems (built from "state roots") in Kanien'kéha appear *only* in the Stative aspect, and often correspond to adjectival predicates in English. As seen in (1)–(4) (from Mithun 2006), some stative-only forms appear with "patient" prefixes (P; in blue), while others appear with "agent" prefixes (A; in red). Mithun (1991, 2006) observes that agent prefixes typically appear with *inherent states*, while patient prefixes appear with predicates which are "resultant, possibly temporary conditions", noting that "something has happened to their participants" (Mithun 1991, 532).

(1)	**ro**-hton	(2)	**ro**-ion	(3)	**ra**-hnenies	(4)	**ra**-kowanen
	MSGP-full.STAT		MSGP-rich.STAT		MSGA-tall.STAT		MSGA-big.STAT
	'he is full'		'he is rich'		'he is tall'		'he is big'

A similar alternation can be replicated when the Stative aspect appears on stems which show three-way aspectual alternations (build from "event roots"). The verb *atori* 'drive', for example, appears in the Punctual (perfective), Habitual (imperfective), and Stative aspects. In the Habitual and Punctual, the single argument is marked with A-prefixes (5-a). In the Stative, however, the prefix shifts to a P-prefix (5-b), a pattern consistent across eventive stems (Michelson 1975).

(5)	a.	**k**-atorie-'s		(6)	a.	**roti**-nhoton	
		1SGA-drive-HAB				MPLP-close.STAT	
		'I drive'				'they have closed it'	
	b.	**wak**-atori-on			b.	**rati**-nhoton	
		1SGP-drive-STAT				MPLA-close.STAT	
		'I have driven'	(DeCaire 2023)			'they are locked up'	(Mithun 2006)

The form in (6-a) shows that P-marking is also found indexing the agent of transitives with inanimate themes (Koenig & Michelson 2015). A puzzle arises in (6-b), a minimal pair with (6-a). While in (6-a), the P-prefix indexes the *agent* and a perfect interpretation arises, in (6-b) we find an A-prefix indexing an apparent theme, and this form is no longer interpreted as a perfect. Instead, stative forms with A-prefixes like (6-b) are used to describe "persons or objects in the condition described" and they "eliminate the indirect reference to a prior event" characteristic of perfect forms (Mithun 2006, 206). The alternation in (6) between a perfect interpretation with a P-prefix, and an *inherent stative* interpretation with an A-prefix, is found productively across a number of stems. (7) summarizes.

(7)

	stative stems ("stative-only")	eventive stems
P-prefixes	transitory states (1),(2)	stative perfects (5-b),(6-a)
A-prefixes	inherent states (3),(4)	inherent statives (6-b)

Proposal I: The location of the subject and prefix choice. We propose following Ormston 1993 and Baker & Travis 1998 that while the perfective/imperfective aspects in Kanien'kéha reflect a contrast located on an inflectional aspect head, the Stative aspect is not a true grammatical aspect, but rather a **light verbal predicate**, which is lexically specified to trigger P-prefixes. Following Coon 2025, we represent this as $v_{\text{BE}}{}^{0}$, a head which consistently bears a probe responsible for generating P-prefixes, [uφ]P, in (8). A-prefixes, in contrast, are the result of a probe, [uφ]A, on a higher head, here Infl^{0}.

Following Paparounas 2025 on Greek "stative passives", we assume that the subjects of the inherent statives in (6-b) are not internal arguments of their predicates (i.e., not in true THEME or internal argument position). Rather, we propose the stative $v_{\text{BE}}{}^0$ merges directly with the root, existentially closing the event. The subjects merge in the **specifier** of the stative v_{BE}P; the [uφ]P-probe on the stative head $v_{\text{BE}}{}^0$ then does not find a lower goal and the subject is instead targeted by the [uφ]A-probe on Infl^0, in (9). Drawing on Kratzer (1995), who argues for a difference in *argument structure* between *stage-level* and *individual-level* predicates more generally, we propose that a similar difference can capture the contrast between the stative-only forms in (1)–(4): in line with Mithun's characterization, subjects of inherent states (3)–(4) are not themes/undergoers, but *state-holders*, as in (9).

(8) $[_{\text{IP}}\ \text{Infl}^0{}_{[u\phi]_{\text{A}}}\ [_{\text{vP}}\ v_{\text{BE}[u\phi]_{\text{P}}}\ [_{\sqrt{\text{P}}}\ \sqrt{}\ \boxed{\text{THEME}}\ ]]]$ (P)

(9) $[_{\text{IP}}\ \text{Infl}^0{}_{[u\phi]_{\text{A}}}\ [_{\text{vP}}\ \boxed{\text{SUBJ}}\ v_{\text{BE}[u\phi]_{\text{P}}}\ [_{\sqrt{\text{P}}}\ \sqrt{}\ ]]]$ (A)

Proposal II. Perfect and state readings of (6). The temporal interpretations associated with the pronominal prefix alternation in (6) reveals a further structural asymmetry between A-prefix and P-prefix Stative aspect eventive verbs. In general, the Stative aspect of eventive verbs like (5) is interpreted as a *perfect*, whereas with state verbs like (1)–(4) *and* eventive verbs with A-prefixes (6-b), have only *on-going state* readings. We propose a unified semantic characterization of these two readings under a perfect-state theory of the perfect (e.g., Kamp & Reyle 1993, Nishiyama & Koenig 2010), where the perfect introduces a PERFECT STATE, the content of which is pragmatically filled in.

To derive the asymmetry, P-prefix Statives (6-a) have the structure in (10): Stative v_{BE} takes an eventive VoiceP complement. Following Nishiyama & Koenig 2010, its interpretation involves the on-going perfect state e and an anterior *subpart* of the VoiceP-event *close*, e'. Syntactically, the layered v structure corresponds to a "state of an event". The perfect state is pragmatically identified as the result state of the vP-event of *closing*. Thus, (6-a) is interpreted as **resultative perfect**.

(10) a. $[_{\text{InflP}}\ \text{Infl}^0{}_{[u\phi]_{\text{A}}}\ [_{\text{vP}}\ v_{\text{BE}[u\phi]_{\text{P}}}\ [_{\text{VoiceP}}\ \boxed{\text{AGENT}}\ \text{Voice}\ [_{\text{vP}}\ v_{ev}\ \sqrt{be.closed}\ ]]]]$ (P) (= (6-a))

b. $[\![\ \text{(10-a)}\ ]\!] = \lambda t \exists e \exists e'.\text{PERF.STATE}(e)\ \&\ \tau(e) \circ t\ \&\ \text{close}(e', \text{DP}_{\text{AGENT}})\ \&\ \tau(e') < t$

On the other hand, the A-prefix Stative in (11) arises when v_{BE} merges directly with the root, like in "stative-only" stems. In this case, the perfect state is pragmatically identified by the content of the root. Since the structure embedded by Stative v_{BE} does not include an eventive projection, the resulting meaning is an **on-going state** with no prior event, sketched in (11-b). Crucially, since anteriority is defined over *subevents*, a uniform denotation across all the uses of the Stative is maintained.

(11) a. $[_{\text{InflP}}\ \text{Infl}^0{}_{[u\phi]_{\text{A}}}\ [_{\text{vP}}\ \boxed{\text{HOLDER}}\ [\ v_{\text{BE}[u\phi]_{\text{P}}}\ \sqrt{be.closed}\ ]]]$ (A) (= (6-b))

b. $[\![\ \text{(11-a)}\ ]\!] = \lambda t \exists e \exists e'.\text{be.closed}(e, \text{DP}_{\text{HOLDER}})\ \&\ \tau(e) \circ t\ \&\ \text{be.closed}(e')\ \&\ \tau(e') < t$

The lack of eventive vP layer in (11) means there is no claim about an event giving rise to the state. We show independent evidence for the absence of a prior event. For example, no contradiction arises in asserting the lack of such event, as in (12). Additional diagnostics include the felicity with counterfactual *almost*, which is only possible when there is an eventive projection present (i.e, for P-prefix forms (6-b)).

(12) **Context:** You walk by a cave and see people who are trapped in by a boulder. You say:
rati-hnhoton nek tsi iah onhka te-ronwati-hnoton
MPLA-close.STAT but NEG who NEG-FI>MPL-close.STAT
'They *are* locked up, but nobody *has* locked them up.'

In sum, Stative forms in Kanien'kéha have a two-way surface contrast: state stems (1)–(4) which combine with v_{BE}; event stems (5) which combine with v_{event}. Some roots like (6) occur in both structures, as shown by the pronominal prefix alternation. This work contributes to the broader discussion on the composition of "stative" forms, arguing that the class of "statives" is *structurally heterogeneous*, differing in: **(i)** where the argument originates and **(ii)** whether or not they embed eventive syntax.