

SENTENCE CORES

The words which fulfill the role of verbs in Dakota — we will usually refer to them as sentence cores — are the most important part of speech, and consequentially the most complex. In fact, many complete sentences in Dakota consist of just one of these words, with affixes taking the place of the many other words necessary in English and other European languages.

In Dakota, the sentence core expresses a complete idea, not just the action occurring in the sentence but also the participants and their relationship to each other. This is in stark contrast to English, where verbs specify the action alone, and have 'subjects' and 'objects' which mention the participants involved. Some examples are

wayáte	waŋčhíyaŋke	wičháuŋk'upi	čhícíčage
You ate.	I see you.	We gave it to them	I made it for you.

For example; the verb *to eat* in English is not a complete sentence, and neither are its conjugated forms *eats*, *ate*. To make a complete sentence, you need to add in a subject, the person doing the running. *He ate*, *I ate*, *You guys ate* and *We ate* are all complete sentences because we have specified both an action and an actor. In Dakota, both of these are taken care of simultaneously by the sentence core.

wóte	wawáte	wayátapi	waúntapi
He ate.	I ate.	You guys ate.	We ate.

Dakota cores store the pronouns they need right inside of them, no extra words involved. In this case, there is only one actor in the sentence, and there is correspondingly one pronoun affix. At first, this may seem reminiscent of the ways verbs conjugate in other European languages, such as German or Spanish. For while English doesn't really conjugate its verbs, many other European languages have different forms of each verb depending on if the subject is *I*, *you*, *we*, or *they* and so on. However, even in these cases, we usually think of the verb as being conjugated to "agree with the subject of the sentence," and not the subject of the sentence as being literally *inside the word* as it is in Dakota.

Furthermore, subjects aren't the only things which get marked inside Dakota cores—objects do too. For example, to make a complete English sentence out of the verb *to see*, you need to say both *who is doing the seeing*, and *what is being seen*. *I see him*, *You see me* and *We see them* are all complete sentences; but leaving one of the participants out and saying something like *sees you*, or just *sees* renders it nonsensical. Likewise in Dakota, you need to specify both a *see-er* and a *seen*, but these both occur within the core.

waŋbdáke waŋmáyadake waŋwíchuŋyaŋkapi
I see him. You see me. We see them.

Of course, not all Dakota sentences are one-word long like these ones. Cores specify all of the information that is needed to form a complete sentence, but nothing more. This is the reason for our choice of terminology here, a Dakota core encapsulates the 'core' meaning of a sentence, and so instead of trying to make an analogy between these words and English verbs, it is better to come to an understanding of sentence cores in English. For example, take the sentence

haŋ'áŋna kiŋ de bdé ektá waŋwíchuŋyaŋkapi
We saw them at the lake this morning.

The main thing going on in this sentence is two groups of people seeing each other, namely *we* and *them*. The rest of the sentence just adds extra information about when and where this occurred. So, the core of this sentence (in English) is *we saw them* which is the same in Dakota.

waŋwíchuŋyaŋkapi We saw them.

Since these types of words are the cores of Dakota sentences, the best way to get a feeling for them is to understand the different types of cores that sentences can have.

WHAT IS A SENTENCE CORE?

The core of a sentence is just a sentence stripped down to its basics—with all of the unnecessary descriptors and sidenotes removed. For example, here are a few examples in English of sentences and their cores.

I ran around the lake today.

I ran

Yesterday I made some big steaks with my friend.

I made steaks

I gave it to you last week when we were at your uncle's doing yardwork.

I gave it to you.

In elementary school grammar class we are taught to think of sentences as having subjects, objects, verbs, indirect objects, prepositional phrases, adverbs,...etc. However, it's much easier to put this English-centric mindset aside for now, and think of sentences as having two main components; a core and some descriptors. In English, these descriptors are sprinkled throughout the sentence and can occur before, after, or inside of the core. Not so in Dakota. All Dakota descriptors *precede* the sentence core, making it the last element of the sentence.

hékta okó ihánke héehaŋ wapázo thípi ed waŋčhíyaŋke

Last weekend I saw you at the movie theater.

In this example, it also works out that Dakota and English treat the same portion of the sentence as the core, *I saw you*, or *waŋčhíyaŋke*. However this is not always the case. Dakota cores are always full sentences by themselves, so everything else in the sentence must be a descriptor, whereas in English sentence cores consist of a subject, a verb, and possibly some objects; all of which are separate words. Consider the example

ĥtáníhaŋ mazóphiye ed iná kčhí aǵúyapi ophéwathuŋ

Yesterday I bought bread at the store with my mom.

The core of the English version of this sentence is *I bought bread* where there are two participants involved; *I* (the buyer), and *bread* (the thing bought). The core of the Dakota version is the verb *ophéwathuŋ*, which is better translated into English as *I bought it*. Thus, the Dakota core also has two participants involved, but unlike in English where *bread* itself is part of the sentence core, Dakota treats *aǵúyapi* as a descriptor, describing what *it* exactly was that was purchased. All Dakota cores come with pronouns built in. Everything else is a descriptor, adding information about *when*, *where*, *who*, or *what* is being talked about. A more literal translation of the above into English might then read,

ĥtáníhaŋ mazóphiye ed iná kčhí aǵúyapi ophéwathuŋ

Yesterday / at the store / with my mom / bread / I bought it.

Even simple sentences can be viewed like this, such as

Bobby waŋbdáke. I saw Bobby.

The sentence core here is *waŋbdáke*, or *I saw him*, and so a more faithful English translation would be *as for Bobby, I saw him*. Likewise, the example from above, *yesterday I made some steaks with my friend*, could be expressed in Dakota as

ĥtáníhaŋ mithákhoda kčhí thadó čheǵúǵuyapi unǵé špaŋwáye

Yesterday / with my friend / some steaks / I cooked them

I made some steaks with my friend yesterday.

without
descriptors, a
sentence may be
bland, but
without a core a
sentence is
meaningless (just
imagine saying
*yesterday some
with my friend*)

From here on out, we will forget about the descriptors for awhile, and concentrate just on sentence cores. Understanding sentence cores is the most important step to understanding Dakota.

TYPES OF SENTENCE CORES

Each sentence has a core, so in order to get a better feel for what's going on, its useful to try and tease out the similarities and differences between different types of sentences. On the most basic level, simple

sentences can do one of two things: they can describe a state of being, or talk about an action that is being done.

I was cold when I was camping in the fall.
I bought this when I was shopping at the mall.

The first sentence here has *I was cold* as a core; it expresses the fact that I was in the state of being cold at a certain time, and not that I was doing anything in particular. On the other hand, the core of the second sentence is *I bought this*, which talks about me doing a particular action, namely purchasing something. Because sentences, and thus sentence cores do one of these two things, we can talk about two types of sentence cores, *stative* ones, and *active* ones. Stative cores have only one participant involved (the person/thing who is in the state being described), whereas the number of participants involved in an active core depends on the action being done.

STATIVE CORES

English expresses states of being with adjectives, so when we want to form a sentence describing a state, we need to employ a *helping verb* like *to be* (it's a quirk of English grammar that all sentences need a subject and a verb). Thus in English to express the fact that in my current state, I possess the property of tallness, we glue the subject and the adjective together with the verb *am*, leaving us with *I am tall*.

Since Dakota verbs are just sentence cores however, Dakota does not have to express this concept in a round-about way using linking verbs. Instead, there is an entire class of verbs (the stative verbs) which serve as the cores of sentences like this. The stative core describing tallness is *háŋska*, and so in Dakota this is simply conjugated for the person involved, to get

maháŋske | I am tall.

Wherever there's an adjective describing a particular state of being in English, there is a stative verb which takes its place in Dakota. Some further examples are

omákhaté	niptéčedanpi	tháŋka	ištáunĥbapi
I am hot.	You guys are short.	It is big.	We are sleepy.

nouns that can't
be treated as
stative cores are
used with the
core *héčha*

Note however
that not all
nouns work this
way; nouns
which are
formed out of
active verbs do
not conjugate
but instead are
paired with the
verb *héčha*.

Stative cores in Dakota do not only take the place of English adjectives however, they can be used for almost any state of being whatsoever. Many words that we would normally think of as nouns in English (for example *man*, *woman*, *boy* and *girl*) can be states of being in Dakota. Just like *háŋskA* can be thought of as describing the state of being tall, *wičhášta* can be thought of as describing the state of being a man. These 'nouns' can be conjugated like any other stative core:

wimáčhašta wiŋníyaŋ hoúŋkšipidaŋ wičíŋyaŋnapi
I am a man. You are a woman. We are boys. They are girls.

These stative constructions take the place of English *to be+adjective* constructions across the board, even in complex sentences. For example, the stative verb *hokšídaŋ*, *to be a boy*, is used when expressing the sentence *I lived in Minneapolis when I was a boy*. In Dakota:

homákšidaŋ héehaŋ bdeóta othúŋwe héčhiya wathí
When I was a boy / the city of Minneapolis / I lived there
I lived in Minneapolis when I was a boy.

ACTIVE CORES

While some sentences convey states of being such as above, the vast majority of the time they are about an action. But not all actions are created equal; some only involve one person (or one group of people), and some involve more. Here are some examples of sentence cores in English which have one, two, three, and four different groups of participants.

I ran.
I saw you.
I gave it to her.
I sent it to them for you.

Even though here we have four different types of sentence cores, we can break them into two main groups. The first verb, *ran*, describes an action that one person does. There are no other participants (people or objects) involved. The second one, *saw* however requires a second participant, not only the person doing the action, but the person being

seen. The third verb, *gave*, also requires additional participants, not only the giver but the thing given and the person its given to as well. And finally, *sent* involves not only a sender, but the object sent, the receiver, and the person on whose behalf it was sent.

The underlying distinction here is really that there are two types of active sentences; ones that describe an action that is simply *performed* (like *running*, *swimming*, *sitting*, etc) and ones that describe an action *done to something* (like *seeing*, *giving*, *sending*, *buying*, etc). Here are a few more examples of each type.

ACTION IS PERFORMED	ACTION IS DONE TO SMTH.
I sat down.	I kicked the ball.
You walked.	We saw the sign.
He will win.	You ate the pizza.
I was cooking.	He broke the cup.

The first class, the sentence cores describing pure actions, are usually called *intransitive*, and likewise the sentences describing actions done to something are called *transitive*.

In Dakota this distinction is very important, since Dakota verbs themselves are the full cores of sentences; cores with different numbers of participants will need different words.

In English, the same verb can be used in multiple different ways, because the verb itself is only a portion of the core meaning of a sentence. Consider for example the following two sentences;

He ate this morning.
He ate bread this morning.

The core of the first sentence is *he ate*, and the core of the second is *he ate bread*. To better see the difference in meaning between these two cores, consider these more verbose ways of saying the same things

He was engaged in the process of consuming food.
He took bread, put it in his mouth, chewed and swallowed.

Since in Dakota all sentence cores are single words, there needs to be two different words to express these two different related meanings of *eat*, and indeed there are!

wóte he was engaged in the process of eating he ate
yúte he chewed and swallowed something he ate it

The original sentences would then be rendered in Dakota as

hań'áŋna kiŋ de wóte hań'áŋna kiŋ de aǵúyapi yúte
He ate this morning. He ate bread this morning.

And so, different verbs are used for the different types of sentence cores. Another good example to highlight the differences between English and Dakota is the following sentence cores.

He read today.
He read a book today.
He read a book to her today.

The sentences are all active, and have one, two, and three participants respectively. In English, the same verb *read* is used in all of the sentence cores, with the fact that there are differing numbers of participants marked by other words in the sentence. In Dakota however, three different words are used; one for each more specialized meaning.

wayáwa yawá kiyáwa
He read. He read it. He read it to her.

And so in Dakota, the above sentences would be said

anpétu kiŋ de wayáwa Today, he read.
anpétu kiŋ de wówapi waŋ yawá Today, a book, he read it.
anpétu kiŋ de wówapi waŋ kiyáwa Today, a book, he read it to her.

In these examples it's clear that *anpétu kiŋ de* and *wówapi waŋ* are just descriptors in the sentence—the entire meaning of the sentence core is packed into the verb. In the last sentence in particular, the only mention that the book is being read by somebody to somebody is in the form of the verb itself. Should we want to specify who is reading and who is being read to however, we could just tack it on as another descriptor.

anpétu kiŋ de Čhaské Winúŋna wówapi waŋ kiyáwa
today / Čhaské / Winúŋna / a book / he read it to her
haské read a book to Winú na today.

TYPES OF CORES IN DAKOTA

The classes of cores in Dakota line up exactly with the types of sentences discussed above. There are sentences describing states, and so there are stative cores in Dakota. There are sentences with an action and one participant, and so there are active cores with one participant. There are sentences with an action and two participants, and so there are active cores with two participants. There are sentences with an action and three participants, and so there are active cores with three participants....

The particulars of how to conjugate and use verbs will be discussed in the following chapters, so here we'll just talk about the most basic properties. One of the most important things to note is that as Dakota sentence cores are more than just verbs, there is no "infinitive" form like in English. The act of running can not be separated from the runner, and so there is no analog of the English form to run, for instance; only the full sentences *he runs, she runs, I run, you run, we run...*etc. Every form of a Dakota core is a full sentence, with the correct number of participants built in.

The default participants for Dakota verbs are 3rd person singular, which is just a fancy word for *he, she, it*. Thus, the most basic forms of Dakota sentence cores correspond to sentences with *he/she/it* taking the place of all necessary participants. For example,

íŋyaŋke	wanyáŋke	špaŋyé
He ran.	He saw her.	She cooked it.

The important point here (at risk of overstating it) is that *the simplest form of Dakota cores is the he, she, it form, and is a full sentence in and of itself*. Whenever cores are mentioned out of the context of a sentence, this basic form will be the one used; and to avoid English-centric thinking, will almost always be translated as a full sentence, and never as an infinitive. That is, it's a good idea to think *íŋyaŋke=he/she/it runs* and not simply that *íŋyaŋke=to run*. With that out of the way, on to the classification.

While the above English translations involve variously *he, she, or it*; Dakota does not distinguish gender in its pronouns. *Wanyáŋke* could also mean *he saw her*, depending on context.

STATIVE CORES

Stative cores for the most part have a single participant; and that participant alone is marked on the verb. The default, 'unconjugated' form is the *he/she/it* form, and the addition of different conjugations can change that. We've already said a good amount about them above, so here is an example of the stative verb *ptéčedan*, meaning *it is short*, in all of its conjugations for reference.

maptéčedan	niptéčedan	uṅptéčedan	ptéčedan
I am short.	You are short.	You & I are short.	He is short.
	niptéčedanpi	uṅptéčedanpi	ptéčedanpi
	You guys are short.	We are short.	They are short.

ACTIVE CORES WITH ZERO PARTICIPANTS

There are some actions which occur, but have no participant to initiate them. A good example of one of these is snowing. It's an action for sure, snow is falling to the ground, but it makes no sense to say *someone* is *snowing* the way it makes sense to say *someone* is running. English deals with this by inserting a 'dummy subject' into these types of sentences, such as it in *it's snowing*, *it's raining* or *it's humid*.

Dakota however treats these as sentence cores with no participants, and uses a class of active verbs with no participants to express the ideas. These verbs can't be conjugated at all, which avoids the silliness of possible English sentences like *you're raining* altogether. A few examples are

called
Impersonal
Verbs sometimes

maǵážu	odídita	okháte	osní	mašté
It's raining.	It's humid.	It's hot.	It's cold.	It's sunny.

ACTIVE CORES WITH ONE PARTICIPANT

Active verbs with one participant like *to run* or *to swim* also have a base form with *he/she/it* already included in the meaning, and adding various conjugations can alter that. Depending on the particular verb, there are three main conjugation patterns for active verbs, all of which

are discussed in detail in the chapter CONJUGATING ACTIVE VERBS. For now just one example will be given, for *wayáwa*, which means *he read*.

wabdáwa	wadáwa	waúŋyawa	wayáwa
I read.	You read.	You & I read.	He read.
	wadáwapi	waúŋyawapi	wayáwapi
	You guys read.	We read.	They read.

ACTIVE CORES WITH TWO PARTICIPANTS

Active verbs with two participants like *to cook something* or *to see something* can be conjugated twice in Dakota, once for each participant. The base form of these verbs has *he/she/it* included for both arguments, such as

wanŋyáŋke
He saw it.

To keep the do-er of the action distinct from the recipient of the action, Dakota employs two different sets of conjugations to mark them. This leads to many different forms for any given verb, like the example below.

wak'ú	yak'ú	uŋk'ú
I gave him it.	You gave him it.	We gave him it.
nič'úpi	yak'úpi	uŋk'úpi
They gave you it.	You guys gave him it.	We gave him it.
wiçhák'uw	wiçháyak'uw	wiçhúŋk'uw
I gave them it.	You gave them it.	Me & you gave them it.
nič'úpi	wiçháyak'upi	wiçhúŋk'upi
They gave you guys it.	You guys gave them it.	We gave them it.

mayák'u You gave me it.	mayák'upi You guys gave me it.	mak'ú He gave me it.
čhič'ú I gave you it.	čhič'úpi I gave you guys it.	nič'ú He gave you it.
uŋk'ú Me & you gave her it.	uŋk'úpi We gave her it.	uŋk'ú She gave me & you it.
uŋnič'upi We gave you it.	uŋnič'upi We gave you guys it.	uŋyák'upi You gave us it.
k'ú She gave him it.	k'úpi They gave him it.	wichák'u He gave them it.
wichák'upi They gave them it.	mak'úpi They gave me it.	nič'úpi He gave you guys it.
uŋk'úpi She gave us it.	uŋyák'upi You guys gave us it.	

As can be seen from this table, there are some different sentence cores which have the same conjugated form in Dakota (*wanúŋyanŋkapi* can mean either *he sees us* or *we see it*, for example). The intended meaning must come from context. While this may seem difficult at first, there are many words in English that work the same way, and in practice it's almost never difficult to understand the meaning. Take for example the word *bear*. When used in context, it's nearly impossible to get the two meanings confused.

*Did you see the bear at the zoo?
I can't bear to lose her again.*

Of course, just like in English, being able to immediately tell the correct meaning in context comes with practice.

ACTIVE CORES WITH THREE PARTICIPANTS

Dakota treats active cores with three or more participants differently than other cores. Instead of allowing conjugation for every participant involved, only a maximum of two conjugations are allowed. The remaining participants are permanently encoded as 3rd person singular, or *it*.

This may seem strange at first, but is less so when you think of examples of sentence cores which have three or more participants involved: most common ones only have two human/animate participants, with the rest being 'things'. Take for example the action of *giving*. Usually a person is giving a thing to another person. Or the action of *sending*. Someone sends something to someone. Or even *making dinner*. Someone makes dinner for some others. In all these cases there are only two animate participants involved, and so only two animate conjugations are needed. Of course, it's possible to say things like *I gave you to them*, but it's not nearly as common. Dakota takes care of these exceptional cases outside of the verb, as we will see.

As an example verb with three participants, look at *to give*. In Dakota this is expressed via the sentence core *k'ú*.

k'ú

He gave it to her.

This verb conjugates exactly like the verbs with two participants discussed above, with one set of conjugations for the one doing the giving, and one set for the recipient.

Specifying what was given appears as a modifier before the verb,

wapháha kiŋ de mak'úpi

hat / the / this / they gave it to me

They gave me this hat.

As do the the people doing the giving and receiving, if necessary.

Hepáŋ Hapstíŋ wapháha waŋ k'ú

Hepáŋ / Hapstíŋ / hat / a / he gave it to her

Hepá gave Hapstí a hat.

Because these verbs always conjugate just like the active verbs with two participants, we can group them together into a single category when talking about conjugations. As long as we remember that these always have an implied *#* in their meaning, verbs can be classified into three main groups for conjugation purposes —stative verbs, active verbs with one conjugation, and active verbs with two conjugations.