

Gros Ventre/White Clay Student Reference Grammar Vol. 1

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Part One: Introduction

Purpose of This Book

This grammar is designed to be used by Gros Ventre students of the Gros Ventre/White Clay language. It is oriented primarily towards high school and college students and adult learners, rather than children. It will be easiest to use this grammar in conjunction with a class on the language, with a language teacher, but of course you can use it on your own as well. Please note that this is a grammar of the language for reference purposes, rather than a textbook. There are not any reading exercises, or practice exercises or homework included here. The topics are not necessarily covered in the order they would be if this were a progressive language textbook. You should feel free to skip around in the material, read the examples, and learn whatever you can from it, without worrying about mastering everything in one section before looking at another section.

The Way Gros Ventre Works

Think about the difference in English between 'I wish' and 'I wished.' In the second case, the ending [*suffix*] *-ed* is added to the word. The suffix indicates that the action in question happened in the past rather than the present. You can add this ending to all kinds of verbs: 'I looked' 'I sailed' etc. On the other hand, when you shift from 'I like her' to 'you like her' to 'they like her' you don't change or add anything on the word 'like': you just use different the words for 'I' 'you' and 'they.' So in English, you have two different methods of changing the meaning of sentences - by changing the form of a word (another example would be 'car' versus 'cars') or by using a different word entirely. Gros Ventre language uses both of these methods as well. But the biggest different between Gros Ventre and English is that Gros Ventre uses the first method - changing the form of the word - *much* more than English. For example, the sentences 'he steals things' and 'I steal things' are *náábíítik'i* and *náábíít'a*. We could make the difference clearer by writing these words as *náábíít-ik'i* and *náábíít-'a*. The form *náábíít-* means 'to steal things habitually' and the different endings *-ik'i* and *-'a* mean 'he' and 'I.' In most cases, things which are expressed in English by separate words are expressed in Gros Ventre by changing the form of the original word, like English does with *-ed* for indicating the past and *-s* for indicating more than one thing [*plural*]. If I want to say 'I stole it,' I say in Gros Ventre *nih-'abíít-'a*, with the first segment [*prefix*] *nih-* indicating the past. Similarly, 'she want to be pretty' is *niith'íi-itéh-k'i*, while 'she's very pretty' (or 'she's beautiful') is *'anáacinéé-itéh-k'i* = very-be pretty-she. As you can see, the same part *-itéh-* meaning 'be pretty' is in both words, but surrounded by other elements. In this grammar, we will often write words with dashes between them, to show the different parts of the word, though this is not strictly necessary. We will also use labels underneath the parts to help you understand them. Finally, we will put natural-sounding English translations on a third line. The above sentences could be written:

'anáacinéé-itéh-k'i
 very-be pretty-she
 'she is very pretty'

niith'íi-itéh-k'i
 want-be pretty-she
 'she wants to be pretty'

We have tried to avoid excess linguistic terminology in this book, but some terms are worth learning because they can be very helpful in concisely describing how the language works. In the second lines of examples, things like *past tense*, which are labels for grammar categories, have typically been capitalized, whereas things like the actual meaning of a verb have been written in small letters. This is to help keep things clear: PAST means 'past tense' while passed would mean that the verb in question has the translation of '(he, I etc) passed (by some place).'

The Verb

The action word [*verb*] is the heart of the Gros Ventre language. As you have already seen, many sentences in Gros Ventre consist only of a verb, and many things which are expressed in English using separate words are expressed within the verb in Gros Ventre. So we will start with the verbs.

The Gros Ventre language has four different ways to use verbs. These four ways are: 1) affirmative/positive statements; 2) non-affirmative/negative and question statements ; 3) commands; and 4) subordinate/background statements. Following are examples of the four different uses, all with the same verb *ᠨᠠᠴᠢᠬᠤᠪ-* ('to see someone'):

- a) Affirmative: *nih-ᠨᠠᠴᠢᠬᠤᠪ-áak'i*
 PAST-see-I/him
 'I saw him'

- b) Non-affirmative: *nee-ih-ch'ii-ᠨᠠᠴᠢᠬᠤᠪ-aa'*
 I-PAST-NEGATIVE-see-him
 'I didn't see him'

- c) Command: *ᠨᠠᠴᠢᠬᠤᠪ-únh*
 see-him
 'see him!/look at him!'

- d) Subordinate: *nee-ih-ᠨᠠᠴᠢᠬᠤᠪ-aa-k'i*
 I-PAST-see-him-NOUN SUFFIX
 'the one who(m) I saw'

As you can see, the part which means 'he/him' changes each time. However, the basic verb does not change from one time to the next. So what you need to understand from this example is that depending on the way you want to use a verb, the different prefixes and suffixes will change, even though the verb itself stays the same. That may seem tricky, but the good news is that the types of suffixes for affirmative, non-affirmative, etc. are always the same. Look at the following example using the verb

niitɔn- ('hear/understand someone'):

- a) Affirmative: nih-niitɔn-áak'i
 PAST-see-I/him
 'I hear/understand him'
- b) Non-affirmative: nee-ih-ch'ii-niitɔn-aa'
 I-PAST-NEGATIVE-see-him
 'I didn't hear/understand him'
- c) Command: niitɔn-ính
 see-himɔ
 'hear/understand him!'
- d) Subordinate: nee-ih-niitɔn-aa-k'i
 I-PAST-see-him-NOUN SUFFIX
 'the one who(m) I hear/understand'

Even though the verb is different, the prefixes and suffixes for the different types of expressions are all still the same, with the small exception of –unh > -inh (don't worry about that for the moment). So as you can see, there is a *system* here, with regular rules. Whenever you want to make a positive statement about 'I...him,' the ending will always be –áak'i:

nih-nh'óɔɔn-áak'i	I chased him.
nih-'áatah-áak'i	I beat/defeated him.
nih-biin-áak'i	I gave it to him.

Likewise, the non-affirmative statements about 'I didn't...him' all match the pattern above:

nee-ih-ch'ii-nh'óóɔn-aa'	I didn't chase him.
nee-ih-ch'aatáh-aa'	I didn't beat/defeat him.
nee-ih-ch'ii-bíín-aa'	I didn't give it to him.

The Noun

The other main type of word in Gros Ventre is names for things [*nouns*], such as 'ɔc'i 'arrow' or wóshóóθ' 'horse.' The most interesting thing about the way Gros Ventre nouns work is that there is a fundamental distinction between animate and inanimate things. While living things are considered 'animate,' so are rocks, trees, and other items. Anything that is truly living will be animate in Gros Ventre (people, animals, birds, etc.). And you can assume that something which is not living is inanimate (houses, tools, clothes, etc.) But there is a list of things that are not actually living but are still considered animate in Gros Ventre. You will have to memorize these exceptional items. Some of the most common are:

Body Parts: artery, bloodclot, calf, fingernail, hip, kidney, knee, pupil of eye, shin, skin, snot, stomach, testicle, toenail, vein

Heavenly Bodies: moon, morning star, star, sun

Newer Items from Euro-American Culture: car, wagon, cross, month, tire, wheel, radio

Old Gros Ventre Cultural Items: ball, belt, centerpole of Sun Dance lodge, doll, door, drum, feather, glove/mitten, pillow, pipe, plume, quill, red ceremonial paint, rock, rope, shoelace, spoon, tipi pole, top, toy

Plants: bean, cactus, canteloupe, carrot, currant, gooseberry, gourd, gum/sap, mint, onion, pea, peyote, pine, poplar, pumpkin, rice, rose hip/tomato, raspberry, squash, strawberry, tobacco, tree/cottonwood, turnip, vine, watermelon

Spirits: ghost, spirit, soul

Weather Elements: hailstone, snow, snowball, thunder

Miscellaneous: ball-bearing, marble, photograph, penny

Initial Change

Before we get into the details of Gros Ventre, there is one key feature of the language related to verbs that you should know about – at least to recognize, if not to use right away. Linguists call it ‘initial change’ because the beginning/initial part of the verb changes in Gros Ventre if there is no prefix. More specifically, whenever there is no prefix in front of a verb, the initial syllable lengthens or doubles. When the initial vowel is short, it becomes long.

- a) nih-'at'wasi-k'i = he was swaybacked
'aat'wasi-k'i = he is swaybacked
- b) nih-t(ɔ)'w-wak'i = he hit him
tɔ́'w-wak'i = he has just him him, he is hitting him

In the first example, -a- becomes -aa- when there is no prefix, and in the second example, -ɔ- becomes -ɔɔ-.

When the initial vowel is already long or there are two vowels [*diphthong*], you add either *-in-* or *-ɔn-* immediately after first consonant of the verb:

c) 'iini'ikii- = to live

'ɔɔ-ci-iin'ikii'

QUESTION-NEGATIVE-live(AI)

'is he still alive?'

'iniin'ikii-'

live(AI)-1

'I'm alive, living.'

e) nei'eh- = to be stubborn

nih-nei'eh-k'i = he was stubborn.

ninei'eh-k'i = he is stubborn.

Notice in the first example that 'ii- became 'iini-. In the second example, nei- became ninei-. When the first vowel has an -i- or -e-, add -in-. When there is an -o-, add -on-:

f) nih-'óoun-áak'i = I stopped him from fighting.

'ɔnóoun-áak'i = I have just now stopped him from fighting, I am stopping him from fighting.

g) 'ɔɔ-'a-nóóchíin'i = are you a Cree Indian?

nɔnóóchíini-k'i = she is a Cree Indian.

Part TWO: Affirmative/Positive Statements

AI and II Verbs (Intransitive Verbs)

As you have already gathered from the examples, the different people involved in activities and descriptions, as well as how many of them there are [*singular* or *plural*] is indicated by prefixes and suffixes attached directly to the verb, and they become a part of it, forming a single word. In this section, we will examine what those different prefixes and suffixes are. With positive statements, suffixes are always used for this purpose.

The following tables give the endings for first ('I'), second ('you') and third ('he/she') person, as well as third person obviative ('the other one' - explained later), and also for the plural of each of these persons ('we,' 'you guys,' 'they'). There is also what we'll call "zero" person, meaning 'it.' Note that Gros Ventre does *not* have separate forms for 'he' and 'she,' unlike English. It *does* however make a distinction between 'we' including the person addressed ('inclusive' 'you and me') and 'we' not including the person addressed ('exclusive' 'us guys, but not you'). In English, the difference would be in a sentence like 'we're going to the store (but you who I'm talking to are not)' as opposed to 'we (all) are going to the store (including you who I'm talking to)'.

SUFFIXES

0 (it)	-h
1 (I)	-nh or -nɔɔ'
2 (you)	-n'ɔ
3 (he/she)	-k'i
3' (other one)	-nic'i
0p (they)	-ih/-uh
1p (we)	-nh
12 (we, incl. you)	-nin'(ɔ)
2p (you all)	-naah
3p (they)	-ch
3p' (the other ones)	-nich

Examples:

0	'inííyɔɔtɔɔ-h = 'it is clean'
1	níí-niibyɔɔɔ-nh or níí-niibyaaa-nɔɔ' = 'I am singing'
2	níí-niibyaaa-n'ɔ = 'you are singing'
3	níí-niibyaaa-k'i = 'she is singing'
0p	'inííyootóo-uh = 'they are clean'
1p	níí-niibyɔɔɔ-nh = 'we are singing' (not including person spoken to)
12	níí-niibyááá-nin'ɔ = 'we are singing' (including the person being spoken to)
2p	níí-niibyááá-naah = 'you guys are singing'

3p níi-niibyááá-ch = 'they are singing'

More examples:

- 1 níi-nééíccóóó-nh or níi-nééíccóóóncó = 'I am afraid'
 2 níi-nééíccaaa-n'ó = 'you are afraid'
 3 níi-nééíccaaa-k'i = 'she is afraid'
 1p níi-nééíccóóó-nh = 'we are afraid' (not including person spoken to)
 12 níi-nééíccááá-nin'ó = 'we are afraid' (including the person being spoken to)
 2p níi-nééíccááá-naah = 'you guys are afraid'
 3p níi-nééíccááá-ch = 'they are afraid'
- 0 ʈóó'óó-h = 'it is flat'
 0p ʈóó'óó-uh = 'they are flat'

TI Verbs (transitive verbs, with inanimate object)

Notice that all the examples above either descriptions (flat, clean), or actions done by oneself rather than to someone else (you sing on your own, you're afraid on your own). These are called intransitive verbs, because there's no transfer of action onto someone or something else. In contrast, if you talk about hitting or taking, you obviously have to hit something else, or take some thing, so your action is transferred onto that object or person. This is called a transitive verb. The suffixes you use in Gros Ventre for transitive verbs are a little different than for intransitive verbs:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1 (I) | -óóó', -ih/-uh, or -wuh (dropping preceding syllable of verb) |
| 2 (you) | -ow'ó |
| 3 (he/she) | -'ó |
| 3' (other one) | -ówunic' |
| 1p (we) | -ówunh or -ówuh (drop preceding syllable of verb) |
| 12 (we, incl.) | -ówunin'(ó) |
| 2p (you all) | -ówunaah |
| 3p (they) | -ó' |
| 3p' (the others) | -ówunich |

Examples:

- ʈó'óó- = 'to hit s.t.'
- 1 nih-t'ó-(ó)wuh = 'I hit it'
 3 nih-t'óó-ó = 'he hit it'
- 'itén- = 'to take s.t.'
- 2 nih-'itén-ow'ó = 'you took it'
 3 nih-'itén-ó = 'he took it'

- náaataanáat- = 'to depend on s.t.'
 3 náaataanáat-'ó = 'he depends on it'
 12 náaataanáat-owunín' = 'we depend on it'

- 'ówtónáán- = 'to extinguish s.t.'
 3 nih-'ówtónáán-'ó = 'he put it out'
 3p nih-'ówtónáán-'ó = 'they extinguished it'

TA Verbs (transitive verbs, with animate object)

All of the preceding examples with transitive verbs involved doing something to an inanimate object. But you can also talk about doing something to another person, or to an animal. This involves transferring action onto an animate object. The suffixes used for this are a little more complicated than the ones so far, because you have to indicate not only who's doing the action, but who's getting acted on:

Action involving 'you' and 'I' only:

1-2 (I do it to you)	-áan'ó
1-2p (I do it to you all)	-ánaah
2-1 (you do it to me)	-ei'aan'ó
2-1p (you do it to us)	-ei'aan'ó
1p-2 (we do it to you)	-áan'ó
1p-2p (we do it to you all)	-ánaah
2p-1 (you all do it to me)	-ei'aanaah
2p-1p (you all do it to us)	-ei'aanaah

EXAMPLES:

2p-1 náaacinaa-tó'wóccíccóh-éi'ánaah
 really/a lot-bother-2p/1
you folks really get on my nerves

1-2 náaataanéb-áán'ó
 depend on-1/2
I depend on you

2-1p 'ó-nináánính 'oh-nóshob-éi'aan'ó
 QUEST-us that-see-1p/2
 'was it *us* that *you* saw?'

Action involving 'you' or 'I' acting on 'he, she, they':

	singular object	plural object
1-3 (I do it to him/her)	-áak'i	-áach
2-3 (you do it to him/her)	-ɔk'i	-och
3-3' (he/she does it to the other one)	-ɔɔk'i	-ook'i
1p-3 (we do it to him/her)	-áak'i	-áach
12-3 (we do it to him/her)	-ɔɔnin'(ɔ)	-ɔɔnin'(o)
2p-3 (you all do it to him/her)	-ɔɔnaah	-ɔɔnaah
3p-3' (they do it to the other one)	-ɔɔch	-ɔɔch

The 'plural object' forms mean: 'I do it to *them*' 'you do it to *them*' 'he/she does it to the other *ones*' etc.

EXAMPLES:

1-3	nih-nh'ináatɔn-áak'i	
	PAST-force-1/3	
	<i>I forced him</i>	
3-3'	nih-nh'ináatɔn-ɔɔk'i	
	PAST-persuade-3/3'	
	<i>He persuaded him(the other one)</i>	
2-3	níh-wɔkííh	náákicínɔh-ɔk'i
	PAST-said by people	send-2/3
	<i>they say that you sent him</i>	

Action involving 'he/she' or 'the other one' acting on 'you' 'me':

	singular subject	plural subject
3-1 (he/she does it to me)	-ei'aak'i	-ei'aach
3-2 (he/she does it to you)	-ein'ɔ	-ein'ɔ
3'-3 (the other one does it to him/her)	-eik'i	-eik'i
3-1p (he/she does it to us)	-ei'aak'i	-ei'aach
3-12 (he/she does it to us)	-einin'ɔ	-einin'ɔ
3-2p (he/she does it to you all)	-einaah	-einaah
3'-3p (the other one does it to them)	-eich	-eich

The 'plural subject' forms mean '*they* do it to me' '*they* do it to you' 'the other *ones* to it to him/her' etc.

EXAMPLES:

- 3p-1 nááásính-éi'áách 'ín' 'óh-ooóθóóton-éi'áách
 make angry-3p/1 that[time] when-laugh at-3p/1
they make me mad when they laughed at me
- 3-12 nii-níiciniib-éinin'ó 'áatós-kicíininih
 HABIT-stay-3/12 every-winter
he always stays with us every winter
- 3-1 'aasính-éi'aak'i
 make angry-3/1
he made me mad
- 3p-2 'íibiiních 'óót-náaatiníih-éin'ó
 angels FUTURE-protect-3p/2
the angels [they] will protect you

[Details on the logic behind the different verb endings]

While the above TA tables may look very confusing, they can be reduced to a few simple rules. After the verb, there are really two parts to each of the TA endings. The first parts are as follows:

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------------|
| -áa(a)- | action by 1 on 2 or 3 |
| -ei'aa- | action by 2 or 3 on 1 |
| -ei- | action by 3 on 2 (or 3' on 3) |
| -óó- | action by 2 on 3 (or 3 on 3') |

As you can see by the explanation, these endings indicate the 'direction' in which action occurs. Inclusive 'we' ('12') counts as action by 2 for these purposes, not 1.

The second part of the endings then indicates which of the multiple possibilities is doing or being done to:

- aa-**k'i** = action by 1 on **3**
- aa-**n'ó** = action by 1 or **2**

- ei'aa-**k'i** = action by **3** on 1
- ei'aa-**n'ó** = action by **2** on 1

- ei-**n'ó** = action by 3 on **2**
- ei-**k'i** = action by 3' on **3**

-ɔɔ-**k'i** = action by **3** on 3'

-ɔ-k'i = action by **2** on 3 [this one is a little irregular]

The rest of the differences in the second part of the endings involve whether singular or plural is involved:

-ɔɔ-**k'i** = action by **3SING** on 3'

-ɔɔ-**ch** = action by **3PL** on 3'

-aa-**k'i** = action by 1 on **3SING**

-aa-**ch** = action by 1 on **3PL**

-ei'aa-**n'o** = action by **2SING** on 1

-ei'aa-**naah** = action by **2PL** on 1

Once you see how the system works, it is amazingly intricate, and amazingly logical. Note that the possible second parts of the endings in the TA are:

	<i>sing</i>	<i>pl</i>
1	-X (does not occur finally)	-X (does not occur finally)
12	-X	-nin'ɔ
2	-n'ɔ	-naah
3	-k'i	-ch
3'	-nic'	-nich

These should look familiar - they are exactly the same as the AI endings!

Verb Prefixes

Prefixes are used to indicate the time when something happens (past, future), and related details about exactly how something happens (finished, ongoing at this very moment, habitual, etc).

The order in which prefixes are used is:

Time[*tense*] + how[*aspect*] + verb

You can use either a time prefix a manner prefix, or both. Examples with just time prefixes are:

Past Tense = nih-

nih-tóó'én-ook'i =
PAST-stop(TA)-3/3'
'he stopped him'

Future Tense = 'ɔɔt-; 'ɔ(ɔ)tɔn-

'ooton-níih-áak'i
FUT-adopt(TA)-1/3
'I'm going to adopt him'

The second future tense seems to have a stronger sense of intention

How action occurs:

The two fundamental ways of looking at actions in Gros Ventre are *imperfective* (ongoing or habitual), *perfective* (finished, completed).

Imperfective = nii-; -ii-

Past Tense with Imperfective Aspect = nih'ii-

Future Tense with Imperfective Aspect = 'wotnii-

Perfective = 'iniis-; -iis-

Past Tense with Perfective = nih'iis-

Future Tense with Perfective = 'wotniis-

EXAMPLES:

a) Past tense:

nih-kwonnéei-h

PAST-tan hides(AI)-1

'I tanned it'

nih-nówúnw'w-k'i

PAST-float(AI)-3

'he floated away'

b) Imperfective aspect:

nii-kóninéei-k'i

IMPERF-tan hides(AI)-3

'she's tanning a hide'

nii-nówóóú'w-h

IMPERF-float(II)-0

'it (boat) is drifting away'

c) Past tense; Imperfective aspect:

nih-'íi-kwonnéei-k'i

PAST-IMPERF-tan hides(AI)-3

'she used to tan hides (regularly, multiple times)'

d) Perfective aspect:

'iníís-téi'iyóót-'o tébicíhii'
 PERF-hem(TI)-3 skirt
 'she finished hemming the skirt'

'iníís-aaasθóh'-u'
 PERF-warm up(TI)-1
 'I already warmed it up'

e) Past tense; Perfective aspect:

nih-'íísí-biθáaa-k'i
 PAST-PERF-haul wood(AI)-3
 'he done hauled wood'

Part THREE: Non-affirmative Statements

When you want to make a non-affirmative statement (negatives or questions), the person and number markers used are quite different from those used for affirmative statements. Most importantly, many person markers *precede* the verb, rather than following it. These person markers combine with the same time/tense and manner/aspect prefixes described above.

The negative prefix in Gros Ventre is *ci-* or *cih'-*. The question prefix is *'ɔɔ-*. Another prefix like the question prefix is the word *tɔɔk'i* 'where?'. Other prefixes like the negative prefix are *tɔɔs-* 'what/how?', *tou'-* 'when?' and others that are less commonly used.

The order in which these elements occur is:

question + person marker + tense + negative + aspect

Examples:

- a) 'ɔɔ-h-tɔɔs-áássín' 'áakikíín-'a
 you-PAST-how-hurt(AI) 2.HAND-LOC
 'how did you hurt your hand?'
 b) tɔɔk' 'a-h-nitɔɔ'
 where you-PAST-stay(AI)
 'where did you stay?'
 c) 'ɔɔ-'a-cííbahci-nɔɔhów-ɔ' 'óto' 'ɔh-kinísi-'
 QUEST-you-ever-see(TA)-3 star when-fall(AI)-it
 'did you ever see a falling star?'
 d) 'ééí-ci-níitón-aaa'
 you-not-hear(TA)-1
 'I can't hear you'

The tense and aspect markers are basically the same as with positive statements. However, the past tense marker *nih-* is shortened to *-(i)h* and the perfective marker *'iis-* is often shortened to *-(i)s-*:

- a) 'ɔɔ-'éé-ís-ɔɔɔθów-ɔɔɔh 'ótibiih
 QUEST-2-PERF-feed(TA)-3.PL dogs
 'did you finish feeding the dogs?'

- b) 'ဘ-'éé-ih-၎်၎်၎်၎်၎်-ဘဘဘ '၎်tibiih
 QUEST-2-PAST-feed(TA)-3.PL dogs
 'did you feed the dogs?'
- c) 'ဘ-'éé-ih-'ိိိ-၎်၎်၎်၎်၎်-ဘဘဘ '၎်tibiih
 QUEST-2-PAST-PERF-feed(TA)-3.PL dogs
 'did you already feed the dogs?'

List of Negative and Other Non-affirmative Prefixes:

All of the following prefixes REQUIRE you to use non-affirmative marking with the verb:

Negation	ch'-
Obligation/Must	'oouni-
Obligation/Must	'akyeeih-
Possibility/Might	'aabeh-
Wish	'ouh-
What/How?	T၎၎-
Why?	thuuc-
When?	tou'u-
Ever/Never	ciibahci-
Anymore/No more	ch'၎်၎်၎်-
Supposedly	'o'uh-

List of Negative/Non-Affirmative Words Similar to 'ဘ- and တဘ်':
 The following forms occur prior to the person markers:

Hope	k၎'၎ + PERS + -oouhu-
Wonder	w၎၎' + PERS + -thuuc'-

Examples:

- a) w၎၎' 'in' '၎်'a *thuuc-k၎၎၎၎၎'၎၎*
 I wonder that dog why-raise hackles(AI)
 'I wonder why that dog is raising his hackles'
- b) 'ဘ-'eei-*ciibahc*-ciib'a'
 INTERR-2-NEVER/EVER-sweat(AI)
 'did you ever take a sweat?'
- c) 'a-h-*t၎၎*-iiih 'assin'i 'a-ky'ဘဘဘ-၎်'i
 2-PAST-how-ADV hurt(AI) 2POSS-shoulder-LOC?
 'how did you hurt your shoulder?'

- d) 'óouní-niibyóon-óonóh
must-sing to(TA)-3.PL
'you must sing to them'
- e) 'óóún-'éitóóθ-ikí-n'ó
must-delouse(TA)-RECIP-12
'let's delouse each other' [Must]
- f) cíinikii-ch 'aaph'-ótóhu'
stop(AI-T)-IMPER 2.maybe-be burned(AI)
'stop it! you might get burned!'
- g) nóubaa-nóh 'aabáh-tééíθaa-n(ó)h
fly-PL 3.maybe-get into(AI)-PL
'the flies might get into it (food)'
- h) nó-ouh phii-nííhaanéhi'
1-wish all-own(AI)
'I wish I owned everything'
- i) 'ó-ouh phii-nííhaanéhi'
2-wish all-own(AI)
'you wish you owned everything'

Non-affirmative prefixes and suffixes

Now that you have an understanding of the various prefixes that require non-affirmative marking on the verb, and the order in which the prefixes occur, you need to understand the actual person and number markers that are used.

Following is a list of all the forms used for non-affirmative statements, parallel to the list for affirmative statements:

II Forms

sing	pl
-'	-nóh

AI Forms

1	na-/neei-; 'ii-	
2	'a-/'eei-	
3	('ii-)	
3'	('ii-)	-n'i
1p	'ii-	-ph
12	'a-/'eei-	-nin'(ó); -n'i

2p	'a-/eei-	-ph
3p	('ii-)	-nɔh
3p'	('ii-)	-ninh

EXAMPLES:

3p'	'ikííkitɔh	'óu'uh-tóu'únɔɔ'ɔɔ-ninh
	his kidneys	SUPP-fail(AI)-3.OBV
	'his kidneys	evidently failed'
12	'ii-ch'íi-niibyɔɔɔ-n'i	
	'we're not singing'	
1p	na-ch'íi-niibyááá-ph	
	'we didn't sing'	
3	'ii-ch'íi-niibyáaa'	
	'she's not singing'	
3p	'ou'uh-cíi-niibyáaaa-nɔh	
	SUPP-BEG-sing(AI)-3P	
	'did <i>they</i> sing?'	
3'	'ou'uh-cíi-niibyáaaa-n'i	
	SUPP-NEG-sing(AI)-3.OBV	
	'did <i>he</i> sing?'	
2p	'ɔɔ-'a-h-cíi-niibyááá-ph	
	INTERR-2-PAST-NEG-sing(AI)-PL	
	'did <i>you folks</i> sing?'	

TI Forms

1	'ii-	-aa'
2	'a-	-aa'
3		-aa'
3'		-ɔwun'i
1p	'ii-	-ɔwuph
12	'a-	-ɔwun'i
2p	'a-	-ɔwuph
3p	('ii-)	-ɔwuuh
3p'	('ii-)	-ɔwunin'

Examples:

- a) 'ɔɔ-'a-cééí'ín-aa'
 QUEST-2-not know-it
 Do you not know (it)?
- b) 'ɔɔ-'é-í'ín-aa'
 QUEST-2-know-it
 Do you know (it)?
- c) 'ɔ-h-tóú'-ééí'ín-aa'
 2-PAST-when-know-it
 When did you learn (it)?

TA Forms

First and Second Person Action

1-2	'eei-	-áa(a)'
1-2p	'eei-	-aa(a)ph
2-1	'ééí-	-éí'aa'
2p-1	'eei-	-ei'aaph
1p-2	'eei-	-aa(a)'
1p-2p	'eei-	-aa(a)ph
2-1p	'eei-	-ei'aa'
2p-1p	'eei-	-ei'aaph

Direct Action

	sing object	plural object
1-3	'neeí- -ɔɔ'	'neeí- -ɔɔɔɔh
	'ii- -aa';-ɔɔ'	'ii- -aaɔɔh; -ɔɔɔɔh
2-3	'eei- -ɔɔ'	'eei- -ɔɔɔɔh
3-3'	-aa'	-aa'
1p-3	'ii- -aa'	'ii- -aaɔɔh
12-3	'eei- -ɔɔɔɔnín'(ɔ)	'eei- -ɔɔɔɔnín'(ɔ)
2p-3	'eei- -ɔɔph	'eei- -ɔɔph
3p-3'	-aaɔɔh	-aaɔɔh

Indirect Action

	sing subj	pl subj
3-1	'ii- -ei'aa'	'ii- -ei'aaɔɔh
3-2	'a- -a'	'a- -a'
3'-3	-a'	-a'
3-1p	'ii- -ei'aa'	'ii- -ei'aaɔɔh
3-12	'eei- -einín'ɔ	'eei- -einín'ɔ
3-2p	'eei- -eiph	'eei- -eiph

3'-3p -ei -ei

Notice for the TA that the 'direction' of action markers are exactly the same as for affirmative statements. The only thing that changes is the second part of the endings. And these second parts work exactly like the AI non-affirmative endings, just as the second parts of TA affirmative endings work exactly like AI affirmative endings.

Examples:

- 1/3 'ii-ch'i-níitón-ɔɔ'.
1-NEG-hear-3
I don't understand him.
- 2/3 'ɔɔ-'a-cíibahci-níitón-ɔɔ' kyáakiθaa'
QUEST-2-ever-hear-3
Have you ever heard a wolf?
- 2/3p 'ɔɔ-'a-níitón-ɔɔnɔh níitééh'aa-nɔh
QUEST-2-hear-3p dove-pl
Do you hear the doves?
- 3/3' 'ó'uh-nííthíib-aa'.
EVIDENT-help-3'
She evidently helped him.
- 2/1 'ɔɔ-'ééí-cééí'ínɔn-éi'aa'.
QUEST-3.IMPERF-not know-1
Do you not understand me/know what I'm saying?
- 1/2 'a-ch'-ééí'inón-aaa'
2-NEG-know-1
I don't know you.
- 2/3 'ɔɔ-'a-cééí'inón-ɔɔ'
QUEST-2-not know-3
Do you not know him?

Question Sentences

A number of question words form independent sentences in Gros Ventre. These sentences all correspond to those with 'is/are' in English. For any other verb which you wish to translate other than 'is/are,' the question word must be used in combination with another Gros Ventre verb. Compare the following:

- a) taataa' where *is* he?
 taat'aa-n(ɔ)h where *are* they?
- took'i 'oh-niisicaaak'i where did he *work*?
- b) 'aanaa' who/whose *is* it?
 'aan'aa-nɔh who *are* they?
- 'aanaa' 'oh-niisicaaak'i who *worked*?

ASIDE: Different Types of Verbs in Gros Ventre, and “Agreement”

As you looked at the various examples of affirmative and non-affirmative statements, you may have noticed that there are four different categories of verbs in Gros Ventre, II, AI, TI and TA. Each of these different types of verbs has different kinds of prefixes and suffixes. In fact, the actual verbs themselves differ slightly in Gros Ventre according to whether a verb is II (used for inanimate subjects), AI (used for animate subjects), TI (transitive, and used for inanimate objects) or TA (transitive, and used for animate objects). Note that all four categories of verbs can be used in all the different ways that Gros Ventre verbs are used: for affirmative statements, non-affirmative statements, commands, and background statements. Following are some examples of different types of verbs, used for both affirmative and non-affirmative statements:

	Affirmative	Non-affirmative
a)	II: niihɔɔyɔɔ-h yellow-it 'it is yellow'	ch'ii-nihɔɔyɔɔ' NEG-yellow 'it is not yellow'
b)	AI: niihɔɔneh-k'i yellow-he/she 'he is yellow' (a dog, for example)	ch'ii-nihɔɔneh NEG-yellow 'he is not yellow'
c)	TA: nih-nɔɔhɔw-ɔɔk'i 'he saw him'	'i-h-ch'ii-nɔɔhɔw-aa' 'he didn't see him'
d)	TI: nih-nɔɔhɔɔt-'ɔ 'he saw it'	'ii-h-ch'ii-nɔɔhɔɔt-ɔɔ' 'he didn't see it'
e)	AI: nih-nɔɔhɔɔcaaa-k'i 'he saw things'	'ii-ch'ii-nɔɔhɔɔcaaa' 'he didn't see things'

Notice how the actual verb itself changes in each sentence as you go down the columns: II *nihɔɔyɔɔ-* becomes AI *nihɔɔneh-*. The part *niihɔɔ-* means 'yellow', and the rest changes according to the type of verb it is. TA *nɔɔhɔɔ-* becomes TI *nɔɔhɔɔt-*: the part *nɔɔh-* means 'see' and the rest changes according to the type of verb. Notice

however that the verb does *not* change as you go horizontally across the table): *ncwncwt-* means ‘to see something inanimate’ in all cases, just as *ncwncw-* means ‘to see something animate’ in all cases.

This may all seem very complicated at this point. It is in a way, but you should simply be aware of how the language works right now- there is no need to understand everything in the above examples. Things will gradually make more sense as you work through the grammar. But now you know what to expect, and the grammar is organized based on the different ways the verbs can be used, as well as the different types of verbs.

The big lesson to understand from this is that whenever you’re talking about an inanimate thing, you have to use an inanimate-type verb (an II verb). When you’re talking about animate things, you have to use an animate-type verb (an AI verb). So for example you want to talk about a leaf that is big. First, you have to ask, is leaf animate or inanimate in Gros Ventre? It’s not alive, and it’s not on the list of exceptions above, so it’s inanimate. So you’re going to have to use an inanimate-type verb (II verb) to talk about the leaf. If you look in the dictionary, you’ll see two verbs for ‘big,’ *baaθeiti-* (AI) and *baaθei’cw-* (II). Obviously you’re going to use the second one. There’s no prefix, so you’ll need initial change, so *binaaθei’cw-*. Then you know that the suffix for 0singular is -h, so you say *binaaθei’cwh* ‘it is big.’ On the other hand, if you’re talking about a person, they will be animate, so you’ll have to use the AI verb. Then you figure out, are you saying ‘you’, ‘she’ etc. and find the correct ending plus add the initial change. If it’s ‘you,’ then you say *binaaθeitin’c*.

The same things goes for transitive verbs. ‘I hit it’ you want to say. First question is, was the thing you hit animate (a tree) or inanimate (a chair). If it’s a tree, you’ll have to use a TA verb, if it’s a chair, you’ll have to use a TI verb. So in other words, the type of verb you use has to “agree” with the type of noun you’re talking about. That’s why when you use the dictionary you always want to pay attention to whether a noun is NI (inanimate) or NA (animate), and then you want to make sure you pick out the right verb, either AI or II or TA or TI. That information will tell you what prefixes and suffixes to use. *Nih-t’cwuh* ‘I hit it’ (chair) vs. *nih-t’cb-aak’i* ‘I hit it’ (tree). It’s a super-logical system, but somewhat intricate.

Part FOUR: Commands

Commands are very easy in Gros Ventre. You simply use the basic form of the verb, without any initial change. There are suffixes to indicate person and number. Commands are called 'imperatives' by linguists, abbreviated IMPER.

There are no II forms, since you can't give a command to something inanimate.

AI Forms

The markers below distinguish whether you're giving a command to one person, or more than one person:

2 -ch
2p -h

Examples:

- 2: affirmative: nii-kóouch(')áyaa-k'i
 IMPERF-spit-3
 'he spits'
- command: kóouch'áyaa-ch
 spit-IMPER.2
 'spit!'
- 2p: affirmative: nii-wóhnóóócíí-ch
 IMPERF-stand in line-3p
 'they're standing in a line'
- command: wóhnóóócíí-h
 stand in a line-IMPER.2p
 'you folks stand in a line!'

TI Forms

2 -óóh
2p -óówuh

Examples:

- 2: affirmative: 'iníís-titékin-'(ó)
 PERF-roll-3
 'he already rolled it'

command: k'i-titékin-óoh
 back-roll-IMPER.2
 'screw it back in!'

TA Forms

2-1 -ei'aa-ch
 2p-1 -ei'aa-h
 2-1p -ei'aa-ch
 2p-1p -ei'aa-h
 2-3 -unh/-inh
 2p-3 -ah
 2-3p -unh/-inh
 2p-3p -ah

Examples:

2-1 cáác-cóoh-éi'aa-ch
 to here-shave(TA)-1-IMPER.2
 'come shave me!'

2-1p bíín-éi'aa-ch
 give(TA)-1p-IMPER.2
 'give it to us!'

2-3 biin-ính
 give (TA)-3
 'give it to him!'

Prefixes

In general, the prefixes used with the Independent Order can be used with the Imperative as well. Tense prefixes cannot be used, however.

Imperfective:	'ii-
Perfective:	'iis-
Imperf Neg:	'ii-ch'ii-
Perf Neg:	'ii-ch'iis-

There are also certain prefixes which are specific to the imperative:

Prohibitive (don't...)	ch'aabah-
Emphatic/Strong command	'atib-

Examples:

- a) *caaph-’óóc-biisíθaa-ch*
 don’t-anymore-show face(AI)-IMPER.2
 ‘you better not show your face around here anymore!’
- b) *’atib-cíínin-ính*
 EMPHAT-put away(TA)-2
 ‘(you had better) put him away!’
- c) *’íi-ch’i-nón-hóótɔwkúucaaaa-ch*
 IMPERF-NEG-fast-swallow(AI)-IMPER.2
 ‘don’t swallow so fast!’

“Let’s....”

The idea of ‘let’s] is indicating by putting the following prefix on the verb, with the accompanying suffix (note that technically, this is a non-affirmative statement):

’ɔtoouh- -n’(i)

- a) *’ɔtóóúh-kyáánóci-n’*
 potential-sit down(AI)-12
 ‘let’s sit down’

Future or Delayed Command

This form of the imperative gives a command with a delayed time of action. It is sometimes translated by native speakers as ‘you must do...’ Like the preceding form, this is technically a non-affirmative statement. When speaking to one person, you use the prefix:

’ak-

- a) *’ak-cíikyaa’*
 IMPER.FUT-enter(AI)
 ‘you must come in!’

When talking to more than one person, the non-affirmative 2p suffix is used:

- b) *’ak-cíikyaa-ph*
 IMPER.FUT-enter(AI)-PL
 ‘you all must come in!’

It can also be used with TA verbs. The TA non-affirmative person and number markers are used:

Part FIVE: Subordinate/Background Statements

In English, you often say things such as ‘when I was young....’ or ‘if she comes over, then...’ or ‘after they finished, then...’ These background statements that lead up to the main point of the sentence are called “subordinate” statements by linguists. There are a number of ways to express this in Gros Ventre.

Simple Subordinate Clauses

These forms look just like affirmative statements in terms of person and number markers. It is distinguished by a set of verbal prefixes, however, which are only used in subordinate clauses:

when/where/because.PAST	‘ɔh-
when/where/because.IMPERF	‘ohuu-
when/where/because/after.PERF	‘ohuus-
so that/in order to	toh-
before	‘aascii-

EXAMPLES:

- a) nii-baatɔnb-aak’i ‘ɔh-cɔɔ-’ɔnb-ei’aak’i
 HABIT-sulk towards(TA)-1/3 because-NEG-feed(TA)-3/1
 ‘I’m pouting at him because he didn’t feed me’
- b) ‘ooun-naatɔ’ɔɔ’ toh-biicih-n’ɔ
 should-stay(AI) so that-eat(AI)-2
 ‘you should stay so that you can eat’
- c) nih-kɔsiitin-tou’-uhkih-k’i ‘in’ ‘ɔh-niitooub-aak’i
 PAST-suddenly-stop-quick-3 that [time] when-yell-1/3
 ‘he stopped quickly when I yelled at him’
- d) naaaci-naasiinitaab-ei’aak’i ‘in’ ‘oh-uu-tikyɔ’n-oooθoooni-k’i
 really-make mad(TA)-3/1 that [fact] when-IMPERF-always-laugh(AI)-3
 ‘it really makes me mad that he always laughs’
- e) ‘ɔɔtɔnaan-ɔɔh ‘isítaakúutɔɔ’ ‘ááscíí-koyɔɔkúukíí-n’o
 extinguish(TI)-it match before-throw away(AI-T)-2
 ‘put our the match before you throw it away!’
- f) nih-ph-ɔɔθɔɔɔni-ních ‘in’ ‘inɔtɔɔh ‘ɔh-kiniθéinníi-h
 PAST-all-laugh(AI)-3p’ that 3.pants when-fall(II)-0
 ‘Everybody laughed when his pants fell down.’

- g) nih-’óóosib-éi’aak’i ‘óótón-nh’-éi’aak’i ‘iníín’ó ‘óh-nóóót-éik’i.
 PAST-threaten(TA)-3/1 FUT-kill(TA)-3/1 3.wife because-leave(TA)-3’/3
 He threatened to kill me because his wife left him.

Note that the demonstrative ‘*in*’ (‘that’) is often used in these sentences, especially with ‘when’. A very complete, literal translation of c) would be: ‘he stopped quickly at that time when I yelled at him.’ This translation allows one to see the rationale behind the use of ‘*in*’.

“Iterative” Mode

Basic Use

The iterative indicates multiple background events, especially spaced out over time, or uncertainty as to exact time of background events. It is used in phrases such as ‘when(ever) we go to town...’ (something done commonly and regularly) or ‘when(ever) he gets finished, then we’ll...’ (it’s unclear exactly when he’ll get finished). It is used to express habitual occurrences as well, such as ‘on Mondays...’ or ‘in the summer, I always...’.

Be aware also that the iterative is used only in the present and future. When you want to say ‘whenever he used to do something, then...’ you must use the simple background forms:

‘ín’ ‘óh(uu)-niisíhii-k’i nih(ii)-cóókóuhu-níc’ ‘i-wóshóóθ-ibii’
 those [times] when-whistle-3 PAST-come running-3.OBV 3POSS-horse-OBV
 ‘whenever he whistled, his horse would come running’

Iterative Forms

Iterative forms are based on affirmative forms, but have a special suffix added. It’s underlying form is *-i*. However, it has several different variants. Notice that the verb *always* has initial change when the iterative is used. The endings are the same for both positive and negative statements.

II Form:

-ih/-uh (singular and plural)

‘iníísbétaaníísiín(i)-h = it is Monday [Affirmative]
 neeihiiθecóónh ‘iníísbétaaníísiín*í-ih* = I do my laundry *on* Mondays [Iterative]

beniike-’ = it is Summer [Affirmative]
 beniike-’*ih* = *in* the Summer is the busiest time [Iterative]

AI Forms:

Following are the AI forms, with examples where available.

1	-nɔɔn'(i) -ih	nɔɔkuh-nɔɔn' = when I'm asleep nííkot'óhóóó-nh = I'm beading [Independent] Kɔɔt'óhɔɔɔ-níih = while/whenever I'm beading (The first form is older, the second one newer)
2	-nɔn'(i)	nɔɔkuh-nɔn' = when you're asleep Kɔɔt'óhɔɔɔ-nón' = while/whenever you're beading
3	-ch	nii-kɔt'óhɔɔɔ-k'i = she's beading [Affirmative] ni-niibyɔɔɔ-k'i 'ini' kɔɔt'óhɔɔɔ-ch = she sings while she's beading nii-biícíh-k'i = he's eating [Independent] biníícís-ch = [he belches] when(ever) he eats
3'	-nich	
1p	-nou'	
12	-nou'	nii-niibyɔɔɔ-n' 'in' kɔɔt'óhɔɔɔ-nou' = we sing while we're beading
2p	-neeih	
3p	-nɔɔch	níi-biibítih-ch = they are praying [Affirmative] béniibítih-nóóch = [they kneel down] when they pray
3p'	-nɔɔch	

TI Forms:

	Sing	Pl
1	-ɔwunin'i	-ɔwunin'i
12	X	-ɔwunou'
2	-ɔwunɔn'i	-ɔwuneeih
3	-ɔwuch	-ɔwunɔɔch
3'	-ɔwunich	-ɔwunɔɔch

TA Forms:

The forms look like affirmative forms except with the variant of –i added to the end. So -n > -nɔn'i, -k'i > ch, etc, just like with AI forms. A few examples are:

1/3	-aach (vs. aak'i 1/3 affirmative)	
	natiθáh'a 'aasính-áách	nii-nóoukúut-éi'aak'i
	my wife make angry-1/3.ITER	HABIT-throw out-3/1
	'whenever I make my wife angry, she throws me out' [I.25]	

- 2/3 -och (vs. ɔk'i 2/3 affirmative)
 ciníí-kó'wɔciw-óch 'ás'i
 NEG-scold(TA)-2/3.ITER your husband
 'if [whenever] you can't Scold your husband,
- 'íí-kó'wɔcib-ín(ɔ)h nóh wɔtɔnínɔw'ów'
 IMPERF-scold(TA)-3 this picture
 scold his picture!

More details on usage:

Use with Dubitative

The iterative is required with the dubitative prefix 'o'. This prefix translates as 'I don't know...' or 'I wonder...'. It is often used with other verbs or words which explicitly state 'I wonder' (wɔwɔ) or 'I don't know' but this is not necessarily required.

- a) ch'-eei'inɔn-in'i 'o'-uuci-nei'ih-ch
 NEG-know(TA)-?? DUBIT-why-Sullen(AI)-3.ITER
 'I don't know why he's so stubborn'
- b) 'ou'-uθoo-uh wɔwɔ'
 DUBIT-happen/be(II)-ITER I wonder
 'I wonder what happened'
- c) 'ou'-uhteh-ch wɔwɔ'
 DUBIT-happen/be(AI)-3.ITER I wonder
 'I wonder what's wrong with him'

Use with 'each, every'

The iterative is required with the prefix 'aatos- meaning 'each, every':

- a) niiθenɔw' nii-niicin-niib-einin'ɔ 'aatos-kiciinin-iih
 my father HABIT-with-stay-3/12 each-winter-ITER
 'my father stays with us every winter'
- b) 'aatos-ííísííinin-íih
 each/every-day-ITER

"Subjunctive" Mode

Basic Use

The subjunctive is used for background future events and conditions which may or may not happen or haven't happened yet. It is commonly used in phrases such as 'when he arrives, then...' (with certainty that he will arrive, and a good idea of when it will occur, unlike the iterative examples), or 'if you want to come...' or 'if I had been able to...'. It is typically used with verbs after the word 'ónówɔ' meaning 'until' as well. The

subjunctive is also used to talk about the ‘next’ day, week etc.: literally ‘when it will be X time.’

‘iisi-náasíiniθ’-ahk’ó = next Wednesday

The word for ‘tomorrow’ thus contains the subjunctive ending:

Nóokón(i)n-ahk’ó or nóok’-ahk’ó

Subjunctive endings:

The ending is basically *-ahk* or *-ohk*, added to the regular affirmative endings (for first and second person), or used in place of the regular endings (0, third and fourth persons). The endings are the same for both positive or negative statements.

II	0	-a/óhk’ó	biníik-’i = ‘it is Summer’ [Affirmative] ‘óoci-bíik-ahk’ó = ‘next summer...’ ni’-óhk’i = ‘if it is good...’
	0p	-a/óhkónh	
AI	1	-nóohk’ó	
	2	-nahk’ó	
	3	-a/óhk’ó	wóóθh-éhk’ó = ‘if he is bad...’ ‘ónínóó’óoh-hóhk’ó = ‘[chase him <i>until</i>] he drops’ cíi-n’ih-áhk’ó = ‘if he is not good...’
	1p	-ninóhk’ó	
	12	-ninóhk’ó	
	2p	-naahak’ó	
	3p	-a/óhkónh	n’uθaa-ch = ‘they are coming’ [Affirmative] n’uθaa-hahkónh = ‘[I’ll wait <i>until</i>] they come’

TI These forms are not well documented for Gros Ventre, even from 1900. Normally, the prefix ‘oh- ‘when’ is added to the verb, and affirmative endings are used.

TA The same is true for TA forms as for TI. There are a few examples documented, such as:

1/3 -áatáhk’ó nah’-áatáhk’ó bíh’ih = if I kill a deer

Today, it is probably best simply to use the prefix ‘oh- along with affirmative endings.

Modifying Nouns: Relative Clauses/Dependent Participle

It is very common in English to modify a noun. For example you can say ‘I see the tall man.’ The word ‘tall’ is called an adjective in English – adjectives modify nouns. Sometimes however you want to modify a noun in more complicated ways. For example

you might want to say 'I see the man who is standing over there.' The entire phrase 'who is standing over there' is really a type of adjective, which modifies the noun 'man.' In English grammar, these types of adjective-like phrases are called "relative clauses." You can express the same type of idea in Gros Ventre, but in this language, you use what is called a "Dependent Participle." You don't need to worry too much about all the linguistic terminology – just remember that a "dependent participle" is basically a phrase that modifies a noun. Notice that in English, you can break up a sentence with a relative clause into two separate sentences:

I see the man who you like = I see the man/ You like that man (2/3 TA)
 He found the money that I lost = He found the money/ I lost that money (1/0 TI)
 Who (is the one who) made you cry? = Who is he/ He made you cry (3/2 TA)
 What is it that you want? = What is it/ You want it (2/it TI)

Gros Ventre dependent participles translate the second of the two sentences in each case, and they indicate person and number just like affirmative verbs.

AI Forms

If you think for a moment, you'll notice that all the English relative clauses cited above used transitive verbs in the second half of the clause - look at the above examples again. You could of course have a sentence like: I see the man/ The man is running (3 AI). This would become (in English) 'I see the man who is running'. These types of sentences are translated into Gros Ventre using Simple Conjunct Mode verbs for the most part, and are relatively unproblematic. We will discuss them more in a later section. Dependent participles are used when the second part of the sentence involves transitive verbs. But in Gros Ventre, AI intransitive verbs can be used in this same construction, in which case, they have an implied object, and thus become transitive in meaning if not in original grammatical form. An example would be: What is it/ You have arrived. In English, we might be tempted to translate this as 'Why have you arrived?'. The corresponding Gros Ventre sentence would be an Irrealis form:

- a) 'ei-ih-thuuc-n'uθaa'
 2-PAST-why-come
 'why have you come?'

But one could also put the sentence together in English as 'What is the reason for your arrival?' or even 'What is it that you have come for?' While the distinction may seem subtle in English, it is important in Gros Ventre, because the latter sentences would be translated:

- b) 'aayou' 'ei-ih-n'uθaak'i
 what 2-PAST-come.PARTICIPLE

The second sentence (b) places much more emphasis on what specific thing the person hopes to get from the people he's come to see, while sentence (a) places more emphasis on the general motivations behind the person's action.

Dependent participles are formed from verbs, but you turn the verb into a noun: by lengthening the final vowel, if short, and then by adding a final *-k'i*. The resulting forms are, grammatically speaking, nouns, and their person and number markings closely resemble those used for possession of standard nouns. However, these 'nouns' can also have tense, aspect, instrumental, and negative prefixes, so they are really verb/noun hybrids, as seen in the example below:

'aayoun'i 'i-ih-'ii'-ii-nistɔɔn-inɔɔ' 'ookeh'i-n'o'
 what 3POSS-PAST-INSTR-IMPERF-make.DEPPART-PL shield-OBV
 'what did they use to make the shields out of?'

The markers are as follows:

1	neii-	
2	'eii-	
3	'ii-	
3'	'ii-	-in'i
1p	neii-	-ɔɔ/-iininɔɔ'
12	'eii-	-ɔɔ/-iinin'i
2p	'eii-	-ɔɔ/-iininɔɔ'
3p	'ii-	-ɔɔ/-iininɔɔ'
3p'	'ii-	-ɔɔ/-iininɔɔ'

EXAMPLES:

2 (you): 'aayóu' 'éei-'ii-ch'óhaaak'i
 what 2POSS-INSTR-chop things
 'what do you use to chop things with?'

3 (he/she): 'aayóɔh'i 'ii-tɔnóuyóɔ' 'íii-'ii-ch'óháaaak'i
 what 3POSS-use(TI) 3POSS-INSTR-chop things
 'what does he use to chop things with?'

3p (they): 'ó'úu-tóunii(i)h wɔnó' 'íii-n'uθáak-íínínɔɔ'
 DUBIT-why(II).ITER 'I wonder' 3POSS-arrive.PART-PL
 'I wonder why they came'

3p (they): ‘aayóun’i cííθóóúhó ‘í-biichíít-tóónínóó’
 what nighthawks 3POSS-eat.PART-PL
 ‘what do nighthawks eat?’

TI Forms

The participial form of TI verbs is formed through a process slightly different from that used for AI verbs. In particular, TI verbs whose stem ends in *-n* change the *-n* to *-y* and then add *-oo’*. Other verbs simply add the *-oo’*.

1	nee-	-óó’
2	‘eei-	-óó’
3	‘ii-	-óó’
3’	‘ii-	-oo’
1p	neei-	-óó-nínóó’
12	‘eii-	-óó-nínóó’
2p	‘eii-	-óó-nín’i
3p	‘ii	-óó-nínóó’
3p’	‘ii-	-óó-nínóó’

Examples:

‘aayou’ ‘eei-niicóóót-óó’ = what are you sucking on? [2]
 ‘aayóun’ ‘ééí-n’áaanáat-óóhóh = which ones do you like? [2]
 ‘óó-naa’ ‘in’ ‘a-h’itiy-óó’ = was that the one you took? [2]
 ‘aayou-n’i ‘in’ ‘iθaa’ ‘ii-nei’óóhóót-óó’ = what is that woman staring at? [3]
 ‘aayoo’h’i ‘ii-tóonoy-óó’ = what does he use? [3]
 ‘aayoun’i ‘i-ih-’ii’-ii-nistóón-inóó’ = what did they (habitually) make it with? [3p]

TA Forms

Note: The Dependent Participle is used idiomatically with *tóónh* (‘whichever, whatever’):

tóónh ‘áá-biin-éi’aak’i
 INDEF 2-give-1.PART
 ‘[give me] I don’t care which!’

First and Second Person Action

2/1	‘a-	-ei’aak’i
2p/1	‘a-	-ei’aakóó-nínóó’
1/2	‘a-	-aaak’i
1/2p	‘a-	-aaakóó-nínóó’
1p/2	same as	1/2
1p/2p	same as	1/2p
2/1p	same as	2/1

2p/1p same as 2p/1

EX: တၢၢ်ဟ် 'a-biin-ei'aak'i = whatever you give me (2/1)

Direct Action

1/3	'i-	-ဘၣ်k'i
2/3	'a-	-ဘၣ်k'i
3/3'	'i-	-ဘၣ်n'ၣ်
1p/3	'i-	-ဘၣ်ဘၣ်n'inၣ်
12/3	'a-	-ဘၣ်ဘၣ်n'in'i
2p/3	'a-	-ဘၣ်ဘၣ်n'inၣ်
3p/3'	'i-	-ဘၣ်ဘၣ်n'inၣ်

EX:

တၢၢ်ဟ် 'i-biin-ဘၣ်k'i = whatever I give him (1/3)

'i-toun-ဘၣ်ကၢ်h = the ones he caught (3/3')

'i-h-níthíw-ၣ်ဘၣ်'ၣ် = the one she helped (3/3')

Indirect Action

3/1	'i-	-ei'aak'i
3/2	'a-	-eeit'ၣ်
3'/3		-eeitၣ်'ၣ်
3/1p	'i-	-ei'aak'i
3/12	'a-	-eeitၣ်n'in'i
3/2p	'a-	-eeitၣ်n'inၣ်
3'/3p		-eeitၣ်n'inၣ်

EX:

'áánaa' 'éi-niyóóh-éeit'ၣ်
 who 2-heal-3.PARTICIPLE
 'who healed you? (3/2)

'áán'aa-n'i 'áaθib'i 'i-h-níthííb-éeitၣ်'ၣ်
 who-OBV your daughter-in-law 3-PAST-help-3.OBV.PARTICIPLE
 'who helped your daughter-in-law? (3'/3)

တၢၢ်ဟ် 'i-biin-ei'aak'i = whatever he gives me (3/1)

တၢၢ်ဟ် 'a-biin-eeit'ၣ် = whatever he gives you (3/2)

'áánaa' 'a-h-nístၣ်n-éeit'ၣ် nၣ်h bíit'ၣ်h-nၣ်h = who made these mocassins for you? (3/2)

'áán'ááni' 'áatinih-éeitၣ်'ၣ် = who takes care of him? (3'/3)

[Details on plurals]

The Direct and Indirect Forms can also be marked for plural object and subject, respectively, like the Independent and Irrealis Order equivalents. In addition, where the

actor/possessor' is singular, these forms can distinguish between singular and plural objects:

TI *nee-i-touyɔɔ' = that which I am holding*
 nee-i-touyɔɔnɔh = those which I am holding

TA *'i-h-n'uθh-ɔɔn' = the one he brought*
 'i-h-n'uθh-ɔɔnɔh = the ones he brought

Part Six: Nouns

As stated in the Introduction, nouns must be divided between animate and inanimate. This is the fundamental fact about the nouns in Gros Ventre. Nouns are, in general, much less complex than verbs in Gros Ventre.

Plural and Obviative

Nouns can be made plural by adding a final suffix. Animate nouns also can be made obviative, with the obviative plural being the same as the proximate plural.

	Inanimate Plural	-noh	
EX:	bisinóow'	dish	
	bisinóow-noh	dishes	
	Animate:		
	Plural	-noh	
	Obviative	-n'ó	
	Obv Plural	-noh	
EX:	né'iiθow'	gosling	
	né'iiθow-noh	goslings	
	né'iiθow-n'ó	gosling (obv.)	

Another set of endings used on some animate nouns collapses the plural and obviative together:

	'óniiih	gopher
	'óniiih-ó'	gophers; gopher (obv.)
[or:	'óniiih-óho'	gophers; gopher (obv.)]
	'abis'i	beaver
	'abis-iih	beavers; beaver (obv.)

Demonstratives

There are two basic forms meaning 'this' or 'that'. These are called "demonstratives." Both can be used as adjectives, before a noun, or as pronouns, on their own in place of a noun.

noh(u)' = this
'in'(i) = that

Introductory Forms

There are also "introduction" forms which can be translated as 'here is a...'. These

forms are introduced to introduce or point out new objects in the conversation. Like the standard demonstratives, they distinguish between ‘here’ and ‘there’.

- a) náayóu’ ‘ít’a = ‘there it is over there’
 b) ‘íyóu’ nahéihóóh = ‘here, Auntie, [I’ve brought you a ham]’

Indefinite Forms

The indefinite pronouns include:

something = ‘aayouhuuh
 someone = ‘inenitee-nóh
 another, one = kyaaθeeih, kyaaθah

Indefiniteness is more generally indicated by the use of *tóonh* :

- a) caaci-biin-ei’aa-ch wóóθh tóonah kóókouniiθou-h
 to here-give-1-IMPER knife INDEF sharp-SING
 ‘give me a sharp knife/any knife which is sharp’

In the preceding sentence, no particular knife is referred to - simply any one which meets the criteria, if such a one exists. This usage can often be translated by English ‘a’.

Possession

Possession means that something belongs to someone, such as ‘my name’ or ‘your car’. In Gros Ventre, this is indicated by prefixes (to mark persons) and suffixes (to mark plural number) added to the nouns, rather than by separate words as in English. The suffixes and prefixes are as follows:

	SING	PLURAL	
1	na/nó-	na/nó-	-inóó’
12	X	‘a’ó-	-in’i
2	‘a’ó-	‘a’ó-	-inóó’
3	‘i-	‘i-	-inóó’

The na-/’a- forms are used when the first vowel in the noun is an a, e, or i. The ná-/’ó- forms are used when the first vowel in the noun is an ó, o or u. Examples are:

nó-tóuw’u = my blanket
 ‘ó-wóóθh = your knife
 ‘i-tóuw’u = his blanket
 ‘ó-wóóθéh’-inóó’ = you guys’ knife
 ‘i-wóóθéh’-inóó’ = their knife

When the possessor of an object is singular, the object possessed can be singular or plural. If it is plural, normal plural endings are added. When possessors are plural (we,

they, etc) then there is no distinction between singular and plural possessed objects. So the last two sentences could be translated 'their knife' or 'their knives' and 'you guys' knife' or 'you guys' knives'.

Animate Possessed Objects

Animate objects, when possessed, take special endings for 1sing and 2sing possession, as well as 3sing possession (in which case the object is treated as obviative). Special plural markers are also used:

animate	possessed:	-b'i	1sing, 2sing
		-w'ɔ	3sing (obv.)
		-wɔh	1pl, 2pl
		-wɔh	3pl (obv.)

Examples:

na-cɔɔti-by'i = my enemy
 'i-cɔɔɔɔ-w'ɔ = his enemy
 na-cɔɔɔɔ-wɔh = my enemies
 'i-cɔɔɔɔ-wɔh = his enemies

With plural possession, the special possessive suffix still appears: 'i-cɔɔti-b-inɔɔ' = their enemy(s)

On the other hand, possessed animate *body parts* show the normal endings, not special "possession" endings:

- a) 'a-ky'ɔɔɔɔɔ = your shoulder
- b) 'i-ky'ɔɔɔɔɔ-n'ɔ = his shoulder (obv.)

When one wants to say something like 'the man's wife cooked the meal' the form of this sentence in Gros Ventre is literally 'the man his wife she cooked the meal'.

Locatives

Whenever you refer to a an object/noun in Gros Ventre with regards to a location ('in the car' 'at the river' 'on the table'), you have to add a special suffix to the noun, called a locative suffix. The basic, underlying form of the locative suffix is *-a'* or *-i'*. Often, the possessed suffix (-b- or -w-) is added prior to the locative for animate nouns. When the full word is actually pronounced, the ending comes out as *-a* or *-i* most of the time.

Examples:

- a) niicaahah-a' = 'at the river'
- b) 'óóóó-a' = 'in the bed'
- c) 'istaan-'a = 'in the fire'

Diminutives

A diminutive means that something is smaller than normal or just especially small, such as when in English you say 'a little mouse' or 'a little baby.' Often in English, using this expression makes something more cute or treasured as well: 'what a cute little puppy,' 'my special little grandchild.' The same kind of meaning can be expressed in Gros Ventre. However, you do this by adding a suffix to the noun (or verb). It is called a diminutive suffix. The suffix for nouns is -(h)ih. For verbs, it is -(h)ih-. The (h) occurs after vowels, but it dropped when the word ends in a consonant. Examples are:

Nouns:	'íθaa'	woman
	'íθaanǫh	women
	'íθeih(ih)	girl ('little woman')
	'íθeihíhǫ'	girls ('little women')
Verbs:	niikǫh'ohu-k'i	'it is cracked' (AI)
	Niikǫh'ohu-híh-k'i	'it is little and cracked' (AI)
	(see: bináaskh'ǫhíhk'i	'fifty cent piece')

For people and animals only, there is also a suffix -(ii)θóó' that can be added to nouns, and which means 'a young...':

wúúsih	cat
wúúsih-ííθóó'	kitten
wóósi	bear
wóósi-iiθóó'	bear cub

Agents

Agents corresponding to English verbs with '-er' added to the end, such as run > runner 'one who runs,' hunt > hunter ('one who hunts') and so forth. The same thing can be done in Gros Ventre. The ending -(i)hiih is added to the end of verbs, turning them into nouns. Some speakers use a shorter form -(i)hih instead sometimes.

- a) nǫóóóó-ǫti-yaa-
white-rump-have(AI)-
- > nǫóóóó-ǫti-yee-ihiih
white-rump-have-AGENT
'the white rumped one' [Bald Eagle]

- b) 'iinoo'aa- > 'iinoo'éi-hih 'hunter'
 hunt(AI)-
- c) 'iihaaa- > 'iihee-ihih 'lender'
 lend things(AI)

The plural of this form is always either *-(i)híihoh* or for the shorter form, *-(i)hyóh*: 'iinoo'éi-hyóh 'hunters'. This suffix is only added to AI verbs. The (i) is not included when the verb already ends in an *-i*.

Part SEVEN: Nouns from Verbs: Participles

All Gros Ventre verbs can be turned into nouns by changing their endings slightly. The resulting forms often correspond to English ‘-ing words,’ such as ‘running’ or ‘laughing’ when they are used as nouns: ‘running is dangerous in a crowd’ ‘laughing is good for you.’

AI Verbs

For verbs with -aaa- endings, the nominal ending is -ɔɔɔ’ or -ɔɔɔk’i:

- a) nii-k’ɔitaayaaa-k’i
HABIT-shoot(AI)-3
‘he is shooting’

nii-niitɔwoou-h k’ɔitaayɔɔɔ’
HABIT-hear(TI)-1 shooting
‘I hear shooting’

nii-niitɔwoou-h-k’i k’ɔitaayɔɔɔk’i
HABIT-hear(TI)-1-??? shooting
‘I hear shots’

- b) nii-baatiθɔhaaaa-k’i
HABIT-talk in signs(AI)-3
‘he talks signs’

baatiθɔhɔɔɔk’i
‘talking in signs’, ‘sign language’

AI verbs with the -kuukii- (AI.T) ending have -kuutɔɔ’ as participles:

- c) nɔɔ’ɔwkuukii-k’i
close(AI-T)-3
‘he’s closing it’

‘ɔ’ɔwukúutɔɔ’
scissors (‘things that close’)

Other AI verbs simply lengthen the final vowel (if necessary) and add -t’ɔ:

- d) ‘ɔkɔwuu-k’i
sick(AI)-3
‘he’s sick’

‘ɔ̀kɔ̀wuuɔ̀
 ‘sickness, illness, a disease’

Impersonal Verbs

The participles just discussed are the basis of what are called Impersonal Verbs. These are verbs which do not have a definite subject, but instead have a subject of ‘one’ or ‘some people’ or ‘people’ or ‘they’ (as in ‘they say that...’ without the speaker having in mind any particular set of people) and so forth. To form an impersonal verb, the impersonal II ending *-ɔ̀ɔ̀n(i)-* is added to the participle, then the II singular *-h*:

a) *nɔ̀khu-* = to sleep(AI)

nɔ̀khuuɔ̀ = sleeping, act of sleeping

‘oh-uu-nɔ̀khuuɔ̀-ɔ̀ɔ̀n-h
 where-HABIT-sleep.PART-IMPERS-SING
 ‘where people sleep’ [‘hotel’]

These impersonal verbs often have a meaning of ‘everyone’. When the prefix ‘all’ is used, the impersonal verb is typically used:

b) *tɔ̀wɔ̀cii-ch!* *tɔ̀wɔ̀ciit-ɔ̀ɔ̀ni-h* = get up! everybody is up.
 rise up-IMPER rise up.PART-IMPERS-SING

c) ‘ɔ̀wɔ̀t’ɔ̀ɔ̀-ch! *beihi-tɔ̀wɔ̀ciit-ɔ̀ɔ̀ni-h* = wake up! everybody is up.
 wake up-IMPER all-rise up.PART-IMPERS-SING

TI Verbs

TI verbs ending in *n* change the *n* to *y* and add *ɔ̀ɔ̀* to make the participle. Verbs ending in *h* simply add *ɔ̀ɔ̀*:

TA Verbs

TA participles are formed by adding the reflexive/reciprocal ending *-iki-* to the TA verbs, then following the normal AI nominalization procedure - that is, by lengthening the final vowel and adding *-t*.

Part EIGHT: Modifying Verbs with Prefixes

In English, there are lots of words that you use to modify the verb – ‘I did it *quickly*,’ ‘I did it *slowly*,’ ‘I am *very* tired,’ ‘I am *somewhat* tired,’ etc. In Gros Ventre, you can do the same thing, but instead of separate words, normally these kinds of modifications are done by adding a prefix to the verb. These prefixes always come *after* the time/tense and aspect/manner prefixes, and immediately precede the verb. They correspond to adverbs in English.

Also in English, there are short verbs usually called “auxiliary verbs”. They express ideas ‘like I like to...,’ ‘I am able to...,’ ‘I want to...’ Again, in Gros Ventre, the same idea is expressed using prefixes. Common prefixes in Gros Ventre that modify and clarify how an action was done (‘manner adverbs’ and ‘auxiliary verbs’ in English) are:

very/lots	‘aaacinaa-
somewhat	binɔɔt-/byɔɔt-
all	phi- (people, participants)
all, everything	‘ɔɔn- (objects)
evidently	wɔkii-
maybe	nɔɔθei-
pretend	nenaaasi-
go to	wɔn-
too, excess	‘oh-
almost	tɔɔn-
unable	cɔɔn-
always	tik’ɔ’n-
on one’s own	niihaan-
stop (doing s.t.)	ciin-
begin (doing s.t.)	kyaas(i)s-
(do s.t.) first	niitow-
with, also, too	niic(i)-
still	nɔɔθoou-
want to/try	th’ii-
stay behind to do s.t.	naas-
able to	n’i-
mistakenly	kyaat-
again	k’ii-
seems to be	‘iiθɔwu-

EXAMPLES

- a) nih-wɔkii-teei’aani-k’i
 PAST-EVIDENTLY-stick head in(AI)-3
 ‘I heard he stuck his head in’

- b) nih-’wɔn-oouhu-ch
PAST-everything-climb(AI)-3P
‘they were climbing up *on anything at all*’
- c) ‘ííθɔwu-níhɔɔyɔɔ-h
seems-yellow(II)-SING
‘it *seems* to be yellow’
- d) nih-kyáat-óótɔwóó-k’i
PAST-mistakenly-swallow(AI)-3
‘he ate the *wrong* thing’
- e) nih-náás-k’úyaaa-k’i
PAST-stay to do something-pick fruit(AI)-3
‘she *stayed* to pick berries’

More prefixes: location and direction:

Many times in English you want to modify a verb by specifying directions or locations: ‘I sat *down*,’ ‘I sat *next to* him,’ ‘I sat *over there*.’ The same ideas are expressed in Gros Ventre with prefixes. There are many, many of these prefixes. A few examples of these include:

‘inɔw-	out of sight
kyaasis-	away; begin to
’ɔɔw-	downwards; off/away, as in descending
kyaaby-	past, along
caab-	aside, to the side
kyaan-	downwards, as in ducking
tou’-	stop
kin-	far
kic-	away
kɔheeis-	up from lying or sitting
caac-	to speaker, to here

Examples:

nih-kiby-óh’uh-k’i
PAST-past-fly-3
‘he flew by’

nih-nóóúh’-oh’u-k’i
PAST-to outside-fly-3
‘he flew outside’

kyáásis-óh'ohu-k'i

away-fly-3

'he flew away'

'óh-uu-'inow-óh'uh-k'i

when-IMPERF-out of sight-fly-3

'[until] he flew out of sight'

nouh-'úhkih-k'i

upwards-rapid-3

'she jumped up'

nih-cáác-íhkih-k'i

PAST-to here-rapid-3

'he jumped towards me'

nih-'óów-úhkih-k'i

PAST-downwards-rapid-3

'he jumped down off it'

'óósíí-íhki-ch

across-rapid-IMPER

'jump across [the creek]!'

nih-kóhééis-íhkih-k'i

PAST-up from laying-rapid-3

'he jumped up [from laying/sitting]'

Abstract Directional Prefixes

Gros Ventre has two special prefixes that express a very wide range of meanings. Whereas there are many more specific prefixes with meanings such as 'downhill, with surface contact' or 'downwards, vertically, without surface contact' these two prefixes are used much more generally, often for extra emphasis:

to speaker

caaci-

from speaker

naaci-

caac-bíin-ei'aa-ch

to speaker-give(TA)-1-IMPER

'give me that!'

Turning prefixes/verb modifiers into separate words:

Sometimes, if you want to put special stress on a modifying prefix, you can actually separate it off from the verb and use it as a separate word. However, you have to add a special ending -ííh/-úúúh to the prefix when you do this.

EXAMPLES:

- a) niitow- = first
niitowúúh = first
- b) bebiis- = meticulously, with great care
bebiisííh = meticulously, with great care
- c) 'ááscíí- = before
níh-'ówúkhihi'-' 'ááscííh tih-'icínó'óó-k'i.
PAST-jump down(AI)-1 before when-roll over(AI)-3
I jumped off [the car] before it rolled over.
- d) 'ótónwón- = go to do s.t.
'óó-'ó-ótón-wónííh 'íínó'óó-óónóh 'iwósiih-iih?
QUEST-2-FUT-go to hunt(TA)-3/3'PL elk-PL
Are you going elk hunting?

Comparatives and Superlatives

To say that something is 'better' or 'the best' 'the fastest' etc, one uses the preverb kyaab'aa-, which means 'beyond, exceeding':

- a) 'áánaa' 'óto' kyaab'áá-nóh'ukéθ'óó-k'i
who star beyond-shine(AI)-3
'which star is the brightest?'

Part Nine: Using Entire Phrases as Subjects and Objects (“complement clauses”) or Verb Modifiers (“adverbial clauses”).

Normally, some specific noun is the subject or object of a sentence. But sometimes you use an entire phrase as a subject or object. These are called ‘complement clauses’. Here are examples in English:

I see [the dog]. (simple object)
I see [what you are doing]. (complement clause object)

[Bears] are dangerous. (simple subject)
[What you doing right now] is dangerous. (complement clause subject)

In other cases, very similar phrases are used to modify a verb. An example in English would be

She is going [fast]. (simple adverb)
She is going [where he is standing]. (clausal adverb)

The word ‘what’ could be replaced by ‘how,’ ‘why’ ‘how much’ and so forth – not necessarily in the exact sentence above, but in other possible sentences. In Gros Ventre, in the same kind of situations, the separate English words for ‘what’ and so forth become prefixes to the verb:

what/how (habitual)	niis-
where	‘oh-
to what extent	‘ei’i-
how many	‘aatɔs-
when (habitual)	nii’i-
what/how	‘aas
why	‘aac-

Examples of sentences using these prefixes (with the complement/adverbial clause in italics) include:

- a) nohu’ iθeih ‘iniiθɔɔhɔɔt-ɔwɔɔ-k’i *‘aas-kiwouwu-k’i*
this girl learn-for self(AI)-3 how-swim(AI)-3
‘this girl is learning how to swim’

- b) nih-nəktən-ei'aak'i *təʊnih* *'aats-keci-n(i)wəʊʊ-nh*
 PAST-ask(TA)-3/1 INDEF how many-year-possess(AI)-1
 'he asked me how old I am'
- c) nih-'ihəʊ-nh *'in'* *'əh-niciin-h*
 PAST-go(AI)-1 that [place] where-water is there(II)-0
 'I went where there was water'
- d) 'ééi'inón-əʊk'i *níís-təwóun-əʊk'i* *'íísíisii'*
 know(TA)-3/3' how-take apart(TA)-3/3' clock
 'he knows how to take a clock apart'

'to be...' in Gros Ventre with complement/adverbial clauses

When the verb of the clause is 'to be' in English, the Gros Ventre prefixes are turned into complete verbs, since there is no verb 'to be' in Gros Ventre. Examples of such sentences in English are 'I know [where he is]' or 'I see [how it is/what it's like]'. In Gros Ventre, such sentences appear as follows:

- a) ...'aaθəʊ-h = 'how it is/what it is'
- b) ...'aatih-k'i = 'where he is from'

'that...' in Gros Ventre

Sometimes you don't need to be specific and use 'how,' 'what' and so forth. You just want to say something like 'I know [that he is strong].' There are two different ways to say 'that' in Gros Ventre in these sentences. The first way is to use a TA verb which refers to the topic of the second part of the sentence:

- a) 'eei'inón-aak'i *tenei'eh-k'i*
 know(TA)-1/3 strong(AI)-3
 'I know that he is strong' (lit. 'I know him, he is strong')

The other way to say 'that' is simply to use the prefix 'əh-' on the second verb:

- b) niniitəwəʊʊ-nh *'əh-kec'əʊt-əʊk'i* *'ii-θiphiitə-n'ə*
 hear-1 that-go off-3/3' 1POSS-niece-OBV?
 'I heard that he eloped with my niece' (lit. 'I heard it, he went off with my niece')

'that's when/where/how/why' etc. in Gros Ventre

Sometimes in English you want to emphasize part of a sentence by saying the most important part all alone at the beginning, as in: 'Montana, that's where I live.' These are called 'cleft' sentences by linguists, because instead of just saying 'Montana is where I live,' you have broken the sentence up into two parts. Similar sentences in English are 'that's the man who is singing.' This is kind of a shortened version of the first sentence: you could have said 'John, he's/that's the one who is singing,' but instead, perhaps you

just pointed at John and said ‘that’s the man who is singing.’ The exact difference between the two types of sentences isn’t the major issue here. The important point is to recognize that when ‘that’ comes at the *beginning* of a phrase, as in the two previous examples, it works differently in Gros Ventre than the sentences in the previous section, where ‘that’ comes in the middle of the sentence. You have to use a beginning prefix *naa-*, then add the prefixes seen in the previous section or variants of them:

that’s when...	naahnii’i-
that’s how...	naahiis-
that’s why...	naahaac-
that’s where...	naahaat-
that’s how far...	naahei’-

Examples of such sentences are:

- a) nih-’ii’-ɔɔkowuu-’ naahaac-cii-cɔɔ-nh
 PAST-INSTR-sick(AI)-1 that’s why-NEG-come(AI)-1
 ‘I got sick because of it, that’s why I didn’t come’
- b) naahnii’i-tɔwɔcii-k’i
 that’s when-rise up(AI)-3
 ‘that’s when he get’s up’
- c) naa-nh-’iisi-bitaaa-k’i
 that-PAST-how-dance(AI)-3
 ‘that’s how he used to dance’
- d) naahaat-ouni-h ‘i-yaaah
 that where-located (II)-0 3POSS-house
 ‘that’s where is house is located’
- e) betɔɔtɔs’i naahei’-iθaa-k’i
 ten that’s how far-go(AI)-3
 ‘it’s Ten o’clock’
- f) 25, nahaatɔs-keci-neibaa-k’i
 25 that’s how many-year-possess(AI)-3
 ‘25, that’s how old he is’
- g) nahaatɔh-ooou-h
 that how many-cost(II)-0
 ‘that’s how much it cost’

‘to be’ in Gros Ventre with cleft sentences

As with the previous section, cleft sentences whose second verb is ‘to be’ are

expressed in Gros Ventre by making a complete verb based on the prefixes:

- a) nahaatōsi-ch
 that how many(AI)-3p
 'that's how many there are'

'then, next...' in Gros Venre

Gros Ventre also has a special prefix to indicate 'then, next'. It translates literally as 'that's when...':

- a) bááán'a nih-'ááánéki-k'i 'óh nááhé'i-ciikyaa-k'i
 a little bit PAST-speak(AI)-3 and then/next-go inside(AI)-3
 'he talked a while, and then he went inside'

As with all the other prefixes, you can make a separate word out of this prefix by adding -ííh. The result is na(a)he'ííh = 'then'.

Part TEN: Particles

There are three types of words in Gros Ventre, nouns, verbs and particles. Particles, unlike verbs and nouns, are always used on their own, and do not have different forms or get prefixes or suffixes added. In this sense, they are the easiest part of Gros Ventre.

However, a number of particles combine with nouns and especially verbs to form complex sentences. Sometimes a particular particle forces verbs to be negative, or positive, or an imperative. Following are some examples:

'óóón'	not yet	'óóón'	ch'íí-coo'
		not yet	NEG-come(AI)
			'he hasn't come yet'

(This particle is always followed by non-affirmative inflections)

héeich	anyway, anyhow	'óóh	héeich	nih-bíí'in-ih
		and	anyway	PAST-find(TI)-1
				'and Anyway, I found it'

kóókóh	just	kóókóh	nii-báátóóííib-ááán'ó
		just	IMPERF-kid(TA)-1/2
			'I was just kidding you'

Kóóón'ó	only	kóóón'ó	nii-'ó'óóónááák-'i
		only	IMPERF-speak GV(AI)-1
			'I only speak Gros Ventre'

Part Eleven: Numbers and Time

Numbers and Counting

Except for actual one-two-three counting, Gros Ventre numbers are all verb forms. The verbs are either II or AI depending on the thing counted.

There are also “ordinal” number forms (‘the fifth,’ ‘the seventh,’ etc) which also occur in both AI and II forms.

When number verbs are used in the past, they often take a special number prefix ‘ah-:

nih-kebyɔɔ-k'i 'ah-neh'i-nich 'itetoouh noh 'ah-niiθih-nic' nɔɔkɔ'eei-hɔ'
 PAST-shoot-3 #-three-3'pl goose.OBV.PL and #-one-3' swan-OBV.PL
 'he shot three geese and a swan'

'ah-neh'i-nich
 #-three-3.OBV.PL
 'there were three of them, I guess'

Time

Following are the ways to express common time terms:

Next... = 'ɔɔc(i)-

Last... = 'ɔnuh- 'ɔnuh-biik-'i = last summer

ago = taak'iin' naaθ' taak'iini' = three days ago

yesterday = 'ɔn(ɔ)h-uuus'i (= last-be day(II))

tomorrow = nɔɔk'-ahk'ɔ (= dawn-when.SUBJ)

recently, lately = wɔɔniih

today = noh('this') wɔɔniih

Time duration:

for/during = 'ii'(iiah) nih-biniinniini-k'i 'ii'iih betɔɔtɔs' keciih
 PAST-be soldier-3 during ten years
 'he was a soldier for Ten years'

nih-'ii-'ɔkuh-k'i yɔɔtɔn'a kech
 PAST-INSTR-locked up(AI)-3 five year
 'they locked him up for five years'

APPENDIX

Abbreviations used in labeling sentences:

AGT = agent
DIM = diminutive
DUBIT = dubitative
FUT = future tense
HABIT = habitual aspect
IMPER = imperative
IMPERF = imperfective aspect
IMPERS = impersonal verb (subject undefined)
INCHOAT = inchoative
INDEF = indefinite
INSTR = instrumental
INTERR = interrogative
ITER = iterative mode
NEG = negative
OBV = obviative
ONGOING = ongoing action
PAST = past tense
PERF = perfective aspect
PL = plural
POSS = possessive
PROHIB = prohibitive
QUEST = question
REDUP = reduplication
SING = singular
SUBJ = subjunctive mode

Appendix: Grammar For Students of Gros Ventre

The following explains some basic linguistic terms that may help you learn Gros Ventre a little bit better, use the dictionary better, or use the grammar and textbooks better. The terms below are ordered in terms of complexity: the later terms on the list assume you understand what the earlier terms mean, and the earlier terms may be used as part of the definition of the later terms. However, you can consult the terms in any order if you want, and skip earlier ones if you already know what they mean.

Here is an alphabetical list of all the terms discussed, and what section they are discussed in:

TERM	SECTION
Animate	2
Exclusive	13
Inanimate	2
Inclusive	13
Initial Change	7
Intransitive	8
Long vowel	11
Noun	1
Object	8
Obviative	10
Person	5
Pitch Accent	12
Plural	3
Prefix	4
Proximate	10
Reduplication	9
Short vowel	11
Singular	3
Subject	8
Suffix	4
Tense	6
Transitive	8
Verb	1

1. *Noun and Verb*

A Noun is a word for a thing, such as 'ball,' 'woman,' 'eagle,' or 'love' (the emotion, not the action)

A Verb is a word for an action, such as 'drink,' 'think,' 'hit,' or 'see,' OR (in Gros Ventre) for a description, such as 'big,' 'blue,' 'fast,' or 'hungry.'

Test: are the following nouns or verbs in English?

Run
Man
Bird
Fly
Sing
Dance
Mouse
Anger

Answers: V, N, N, V, V, V, N, N

One special feature of Gros Ventre is that many 'nouns' are actually descriptive verbs: that is, the word names a thing, but the actual content of the word is a description. Here are some examples:

Kə̀kə̀́'aa'k'i	Flathead Indian (lit. 's/he has a flat head')
Tóó'ohúh	Flour (lit. 'it is ground up into pieces')
Kou'únə̀'ə̀ə̀h	Flower (lit. 'it opens up/blooms')
'aaníibaak'i	Elephant (lit. 'it has a long nose')

2. *Animate and Inanimate*

Animate means 'living, moving', inanimate is the opposite. Every single noun in Gros Ventre is automatically either animate or inanimate. The reason that this is important is that the exact verb-word used depends on whether the noun is animate or inanimate. An example:

Biiθoout 'shirt' (a noun, inanimate)
'ot'a 'dog' (a noun, animate)

Say you want to use a verb-word 'white' to describe the shirt and the dog. Then you have to say:

Nɔnɔɔ**ccɔh** biiθoout = a white shirt
Nɔnɔɔ**kehk'i** 'ot'a = a white dog

Similarly, say you want to use a verb-word 'blowing (in the wind)'. Then you have to say:

Nɔh'ɔɔbaas'**a** biiθoout = a white shirt is waving in the wind
Nɔh'ɔɔbaas'**i** 'ot'a = a dog is getting blown around by the wind

This means that you always need to know whether a noun you are using is animate or inanimate. All truly living things are animate, and most non-living things are inanimate. However there are some non-living things which are also treated as animate by Gros Ventre speakers. The reference grammar has a list of these.

In the dictionary, nouns are normally labelled NA (noun, animate) or NI (noun, inanimate), so you should be able to figure this out. In some dictionaries, only animate nouns are labelled, so if there is no label, then assume the noun is inanimate. If you don't know, or don't have a dictionary, just ask a fluent speaker to describe the thing as being 'white' and see which of the two forms of the verb-word they use, as in the examples above with dog and shirt.

The other question you may have is, once I know a noun is animate or inanimate, how do I know what variety of the verb to use with it? In the dictionary, normally verbs are labeled as AI and II, or else used in example sentences with animate or inanimate subjects. AI means Animate Subject, Intransitive Verb (don't worry about the second part for now). II means Inanimate Subject, Intransitive Verb. So use AI verbs for animate things, II verbs for inanimate things.

Test: Are the following animate or inanimate in Gros Ventre?

Nííthííwóok'i ('help')

'óh'ónáákyaa' ('rock')

Te'yóonah ('child')

Wó'óoc'i ('leg')

Wó'oh ('shoe')

'ótiib'a ('wheel')

'asinóok'i ('hunger, famine')

Answers: I, A, A, I, I, A, I

3. *Singular and Plural*

Singular means one of a thing (a noun), Plural means more than one. So 'dog' is singular, 'dogs' is plural. Nouns are always either singular or plural in Gros Ventre, and you can see the difference by the way the word changes at the end.

'ot'a dog (singular)
'otibiih dogs (plural)

There are two basic ways to make plurals with Gros Ventre nouns. One is to add –iih (or a version of this, –uuh), to either animate or inanimate nouns:

'abis'i beaver (animate noun)
'abisiih beavers (plural)

'oc'i arrow (inanimate noun)
'ociih arrows (plural)

Wos'i bear (animate noun)
Wosiuh bears (plural)

The one common variant on this is words ending in –Vh. These change to –Vih for the plural (V = any vowel):

Basiiθah eye (inanimate noun)
Basiiθeeih eyes (plural)

The other way is to add –nɔh or –hɔh:

Niibyóóok'i song (inanimate noun)
Niibyóóókinɔh songs (plural)

Wótɔh pants (inanimate noun)
Wótɔhɔh multiple pairs of pants (plural)

'iθaa' woman (animate noun)
'iθaanɔh women (plural)

There is not really a way to predict what the plural will be, but the dictionary should show you the right form of plural to use. There are a few nouns (like 'dog') where you have to make slightly more changes or different changes, but those are relatively uncommon.

Test: Are the following singular or plural?

Disgust

Eggs

Nest

Mice

Child

Love

Feathers

Answers: S, P, S, P, S, S, P

4. Prefix and Suffix

A prefix is a small addition put on the beginning of a word. It is not a separate word – it can only be used added to a noun or verb. A suffix is a small addition put on the ending of a word. Like a prefix, it is not a separate word, and can only be used when added to a noun or a verb. The endings used to make a noun plural (-ii, -nɔh) are suffixes. Common prefixes in Gros Ventre are nih- (makes an action occur in the past) and 'ɔtɔn- (makes an action occur in the future). Other common prefixes are to show an object is possessed: na-biiθoout, 'my shirt,' 'a-biiθoout, 'your shirt,' 'i-biiθoout, 'his/her shirt.'

Test: Do the following words have prefixes or suffixes?

'áasinɔɔ-nh	I'm hungry
'aabiɔɔ-nɔh	spoons
'ɔɔ-'asinaa'	is she hungry?
bitɔɔki-nɔh	dances
Na-bé'cítah	my money
'ɔɔtɔn-ihɔɔ-nh	I will go.

Answers: S, S, P, S, P, P and S

5. *Person*, as in “First Person,” “Second Person”

“First person” is the same thing as ‘I’ or ‘we’. “Second person” is the same thing as ‘you’ (singular or plural). “Third person” is the same things as ‘he’ or ‘she’ or ‘they’. This term is often used in textbooks or dictionaries.

You can also talk about verbs being singular or plural – if one person is involved in the action or description (I, you singular, he, she), then the verb is singular. If more than one person is involved (we, you plural, they), then the verb is plural.

You can combine the ideas of person and singular/plural as follows

	Singular	plural
1 st person	-nɔɔ' or -nh (I)	-nin'ɔ(we, inclusive); -nh (we, exclusive)
2 nd person	-n'ɔ (you)	-naah (you, plural)
3 rd person	-k'i (he, she)	-ch (they)

6. Past and Present and Future *Tense*

Tense is just a way of saying the time something is happening. If it's going on right now, it's present tense. If it already happened ('I finished my homework') it's past tense. If it's going to happen later ('I'm going to to the basketball game tonight'), it's future tense. In Gros Ventre, put the prefix nih- on a word to make it past tense, and use the prefix 'ɔtɔn- to make it future tense. For present tense, you have to use initial change (see following entry).

7. Initial Change

This is a term specific to Gros Ventre and related languages, and has no meaning in relation to English or Spanish. Initial change is a change that you make to a verb when you're NOT talking about past or future tense. In Gros Ventre, if something is happening RIGHT NOW, especially a description of someone, you have to have initial change with the verb. Initial change works like this: if you have a verb that starts with a short vowel ('asnaa-, 'hungry,' 'ʷθɔɔɔni-, 'laugh,' kyabiθaa-, 'walk'), then that first short vowel becomes LONG in the sentence:

'aasinaa-n'ɔ	You're hungry
'ɔθɔɔni-n'ɔ	You're laughing
kyabiθaa-n'ɔ	You're walking

Compare this with:

Kibiθaa-ch!	Walk! (not happening right now, someone is telling you to start)
Nih-kibiθaa-n'ɔ	You walked
'ɔtɔn-kibiθaa-n'ɔ	You're going to walk
Nih-'ɔθɔɔni-n'ɔ	You were lazy
Nih-'asinaa-n'ɔ	You were hungry

If you look in the dictionary, you should see lots of examples of this change in the example sentences for each verb. The easiest way to remember how to use initial change is this: if there is NO prefix before the verb (and it's not a command), then you have to do the initial change. Otherwise, the verb stays normal. Initial change "makes up for" the fact that there are no prefixes.

So what happens if the first vowel in the verb is already long? Then you have to add -in- right after the first letter of the verb, or -on- if the verb has -o- or -ɔ- as the first vowel:

Nɔɔhɔb-	see
Nɔnɔɔhɔb-aan'ɔ	I see you
Biin-	give
Biniin-aan'ɔ	I am giving it to you
Biicihi-	eat
Biniicihi-n'ɔ	You're eating.

Compare the above with:

Biicihi-ch!	Eat!
Nih-biicihi-n'ɔ	You ate
'ɔtɔn-biicihi-n'ɔ	You're going to eat

Test: Take the following commands and make them into present tense sentences,
With initial change:

Béni-ch!	Drink!
Kyaanɔci-ch!	Sit down!
Nihi'kouhu-ch!	Run!
'aaaneki-ch!	Talk!
Ciinkyɔɔ-ch!	Quit!
'ɔtɔɔba-ch!	Eat it up!

Answers: baani-n'ɔ, You're drinking, kinaanɔci-n'ɔ, You are sitting down, niihi'kouhu-n'ɔ, You are running, 'anaaaneki-n'ɔ, You are talking, ciniinkyɔɔ-n'ɔ, You are quitting, 'ɔtɔɔbi-n'ɔ, You are eating it up.

In the dictionary, initial change is not specifically labelled in the examples. You have to recognize that there is a prefix (in which case there's no initial change) or not in the examples, and then make the necessary changes depending on exactly how you want to use the word. So if you want to say 'I flew' and you find in the dictionary kyaabih'ohuk'i 'he is flying,', you see that there is no prefix, so the verb has initial change. The basic, unchanged form must be kibyóh'ohu, fly, so you'll need to say nih-kibyóh'ohu-nh, PAST-fly-I.

Test: go backwards from the following forms, with initial change, to a command, without initial change. If the first vowel is long, it has to become short. If the first vowel is short, then it will always be e + n or o + n, and you just take out the en or on.

'aniinkouhu-nh	I'm driving around
Tɔnɔɔ'uθaa-nh	I'm stopping (walking)
Nɔkɔɔyaa-nh	I'm fasting
'ɔθɔɔɔni-nh	I'm laughing
Biniiwouhu-nh	I'm crying

Answers: 'iinkouhu-ch, drive around!, tóu'úθaa-ch, stop!, nɔkɔɔyaa-ch, fast!, 'ɔθɔɔɔni-ch, laugh!, biiwouhu-ch, cry!

SPECIAL NOTE: Often, especially in more recent times, people leave off a prefix, but don't do initial change, so you can here people say niisicaaa-n'ɔ. They should say **n**niisicaaa-n'ɔ if they want to say 'You're working now.' When they say niisicaaa-n'ɔ, they usually mean either 'You worked at the school' (past tense – better to say nih-niisicaaa-n'ɔ) or else 'You work there' (customarily, as a job, but I'm not actually working there this very moment – better to say nii-niisicaaa-n'ɔ). However, some people seem to, rarely if ever do initial change, even when they are saying 'I'm working at the school right now.' But if you try to use the dictionary, you will see that most examples have initial change where it should be. So don't get confused!

8. *Subject and Object, Intransitive and Transitive Verbs*

The subject of a verb/sentence is, most of the time, the same thing as the person or thing doing the action, or the thing being described. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined.

The dog is running.

The man sees the dog.

The man is strong.

The dog is very fast.

The car is red and white.

The car sped past.

As discussed under Animate and Inanimate, Gros Ventre verbs are different depending on whether the subject is animate or inanimate.

The object of a verb/sentence is, most of the time, the same thing as the person or thing that is being acted on, rather than doing the action. In the following sentences, the object is underlined.

The car hit the cow.

The boy threw the ball.

The woman is buying a pair of shoes.

The dog bit the man.

As you can see, in each sentence, the object has something done TO it, by someone else – the cow is hit BY the car, the ball is thrown BY the boy, the man is bitten BY the dog.

Test: In the following sentences, what are the subject and the object?

1. The boy played the drum
2. The woman beaded the mocassins
3. The mocassins are pretty.
4. The man bought a new car.
5. The car goes really fast.

Answers: 1. Subject: the boy, Object: the drum. 2. Subject: the woman, Object: the mocassins. 3. Subject: the mocassins, Object: none. 4. Subject: the man, Object a new car. 5. Subject: the car, Object: none.

An intransitive sentence has only a subject, no object. In the test above, #3 and #5 are intransitive sentences. More specifically, we could say that the verbs are intransitive, because the verbs 'are' and 'goes' do not involve doing something to anything else, whereas 'play (an instrument)' 'bead' and 'bought' are verbs that involve doing something to something else – they are transitive verbs. Another way of saying the same thing is that transitive sentences involve both a subject, doing something, and an object, to which something is done.

Test: Are the verbs in the following sentences transitive or intransitive?

The girl sold her car.
 The horse is running around.
 The dog chased the cat.
 The cat ran away.
 The radio is loud.
 I turned off the radio.

Answers: T (object is 'her car'), I, T (object is 'the cat'), I, I, T (object is 'the radio')

These terms are important because in Gros Ventre, transitive verbs are different depending on whether the object of the verb is animate or inanimate. For example, with the transitive verb 'see':

Nɔ́nɔ́hɔ́b-aak'i	I see it (something animate, a dog, for ex.; -aak'i is a suffix meaning 'I act on him/her')
Nɔ́nɔ́hɔ́w-ɔ́k'i	He sees her (-ɔ́k'i indicates one person sees the other)
Nɔ́nɔ́hɔ́t-ɔ́wɔ́'	I see it (something inanimate, a stick, for ex.; -ɔ́wɔ́' is a suffix meaning 'I act on it')
Nɔ́nɔ́hɔ́t-o'	They see it (something inanimate; -o' indicates 'they act on it')

So when you use an intransitive verb, you have to pay attention to whether the *subject* is animate or inanimate (see the section on Animate and Inanimate). When you use a transitive verb, you have to pay attention to whether the *object* is animate or inanimate. The dictionary labels transitive verbs as TA or TI, meaning transitive verb for use with an animate object, and transitive verb for use with an inanimate object.

9. Reduplication

Reduplication means you double the first part(syllable) of a verb. Here are some examples – notice the difference in meaning:

Nih-nah'aaa-k'i	He killed some game.
Nih-naanah'aaa-k'i	He killed all kinds of different game.

Nih-tɔ'ɔw-ɔɔk'i	He hit him.
Nih-tɔɔtɔ'ɔw-ɔɔk'i	He hit him over and over.

'aasinihii-k'i	What she is saying.
'aanaasinihii-k'i	Whatever stuff she is saying.

'ɔɔ-ni'iiih	Is it okay, is this good, can I go ahead?
'ɔɔ-niini'iiih	Are things good?

'aayɔɔnaa-k'i	He has a long leg.
'anaanayɔɔnaa-k'i	He has long legs.

Reduplication indicates that an action is done several times, or that a description applies to several different things. It “duplicates” or “multiplies” the action or the things involved in the action. The exact effect of reduplication changes depending on the specific verb involved. Reduplication is very common in Gros Ventre, including in the dictionary, so you should learn to recognize it when you see it or hear it, even if you can't do it yourself right away when you speak.

How does it work? Take the first syllable of the word, then put the same consonant and two vowels on the beginning of the word:

Ni'iiih > nii-ni'iiih
Tɔ'ɔw- > tɔɔ-tɔ'ɔw

It's a little different when the word starts with '-. In that case, the original '-' at the start of the word turns into an n:

'ayɔɔnaa- > 'aa-nayɔɔnaa-
'aasinihii- > 'aa-naasinihii-

Finally, you still have to do initial change where it's required:

'ayɔɔnaa- > 'aa-nayɔɔnaa-, BUT with initial change:

'aa-nayɔɔnaa- becomes 'anaa-nayɔɔnaa-n'ɔ 'You have long legs'

Test: Make reduplicated forms of the following commands:

1. béni-ch! 'drink'
2. kibiθaa-ch! 'walk'
3. nóh'aθóó-ch! 'jump'
4. 'aaaneki-ch! 'speak'
5. kóókóóku-ch! 'open your eye'

Answers: 1. baabana-ch! 'have some drinks' 2. kyaakyabiθaa-ch! 'walk back and forth' 3. Nóónóh'aθóó-ch! 'jump up and down' 4. 'aanaaaneki-ch! 'keep on speaking' 5. kóókóókóóku-ch!'open your eyes'

10. *Proximate and Obviative*

These are two terms that are used specifically with Algonquian languages like Gros Ventre (and Cheyenne, Blackfoot, Cree, etc.). They do not really have any meaning for English or Spanish.

In Gros Ventre, when you are talking about two different third persons ('this one guy' and 'this other guy'), you have to decide which one of them is more important. That one is called "proximate" and then the other one is "obviative". You actually change the nouns, with suffixes, to show what is the obviative noun. Note you only do this with ANIMATE things – if you have an animate and an inanimate thing, the inanimate one is automatically considered less important. Here are some examples:

'inén	normal, proximate 'man'
'inén-in	with suffix, indicates obviative 'some other man'
'iθaa'	normal, proximate 'woman'
'iθaan	with suffix, indicates obviative, 'some other woman'
'inén-nɔh	plural, proximate 'men'
'inén-nɔh	plural, obviative 'some other men'

This makes most sense in a sentence:

'inén nɔnɔɔhɔw-ɔɔk'i 'iθaa-n
The man sees the woman (OBV)

Wɔs'i nih-biin-ɔɔk'i 'inén-in
The bear ate the man (OBV)

Nouns that have plural forms with –ii or –uu have this same ending/suffix to show they are obviative and obviative plural.

11. Long and Short Vowels

All Gros Ventre vowels are either short or long. This refers to the actual time it takes to say a vowel. So in a word like *biicihi* 'eat!', the first *-i-* is held out roughly twice as long as the other *i*'s in the word. You can almost count this. Listen to the word said slowly, and you can count to two during the first syllable, but only to one during the other syllables. This difference in length of vowels does not really exist in English (although you may notice small differences from vowel to vowel). Notice that the difference in length in Gros Ventre can completely change the meaning of a word:

'isih	Wood tick
'iisih	Day
Bah	Friend!
Baa'	Excrement
Tɔɔnɔun-ɔw'ɔ	You are using it
Tɔnɔun-ɔw'ɔ	You are holding it

One of the things learners often do is pronounce every syllable of an Gros Ventre word the same length, as if it were an English word. You **MUST** not do this – it makes it very hard for someone else to understand what you're saying, and it sounds completely wrong. Because differences in length produce completely different words, native Gros Ventre speakers are very attuned to vowel length. If you pronounce something long where it should be short or short where it should be long, it completely throws them off.

If you're in doubt exactly how a word should be spelled or pronounced, look it up in the dictionary! There are many misspelled words posted all over the reservation because someone has not bothered to look up the spelling in the dictionary!

SPECIAL POINTER: when /i/ is pronounced short, it usually sounds much different from /ii/ pronounced long. The first one sounds like in *bit* or *hit* or *sit*, while the second one sounds like in *beat* or *heat* or *seat*. **HOWEVER**, when short /i/ is followed by an /-h/ or a /-'/, it often sounds more like in *beat* or *heat* or *seat*. Nevertheless, if you listen closely, it is still short in length, and length is what counts, not sound quality, so it still must be written short. This is a very common error, even among native speakers writing the language. The same is true to a lesser extent with the other vowels before /-h/ and /-'/.

12. Pitch Accent.

In English, words have an accent, which is indicated by stronger pronunciation on one or more syllables: you say resPECT, INdian, and MOUNtain. Gros Ventre has a similar feature, except rather than pronouncing one syllable louder or stronger, you raise the “pitch” of the syllable, so that it sounds “higher” than other syllables. This can be indicated by putting an accent mark over the syllable or vowels in question:

Nii'íhih	Bird
Níí'ihyóh(ɔ')	Birds
kyaabíθaa-k'i	He/she is walking
kyaab(i)θáá-ch	They are walking
Nináatéhi-n'ɔ	You are tired
Nináatehí-ch	They are tired

As you can see from the preceding examples, the accent can change its place on a word, depending on whether it is a singular or plural noun, or whether the verb is singular or plural. When you are learning to speak, it is very useful to have pitch accents indicated, so you will know exactly how a word is said. Fluent speakers do not need to have pitch accents indicated, because it just comes naturally for them.

Note also that sometimes, when a syllable loses its pitch accent (as when bird becomes birds, or he/she is walking becomes they are walking), then a short syllable often basically disappears from pronunciation (especially short /i/ and /u/), while a long syllable (especially if it has two different vowels, like –ei- or –ou-) can become short. A long syllable can also have a falling pitch accent, as in tired – notice the accent is only on the first –e- of the second syllable.

SPECIAL POINTER: One tricky thing about Gros Ventre is that many people, when first writing the language, often tend to think that a syllable with pitch accent is long, even when it is short – pitch accent makes things “sound” long to a non-Gros-Ventre ear. You must be very careful to distinguish pitch accent from actual LENGTH of the vowel.

