Referential-Access Dependency in Penobscot

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1. Introduction

1.1 Goals of Quinn 2006

Broad: Develop an analysis that derives pronominal features and their hierarchical relations, based on the observation that they have an internal syntax directly parallel to that of clausal dependency features.

Narrow: De-exoticize a number of core features of Algonquian grammar (Proximate-Obviative and Inverse systems), and motivate principled solutions to a number of basic problems of descriptive and predictive adequacy.

1.2 Key observations from Quinn 2006

(a) Standard view of transitive stem-agreement for the gender of the internal argument is unnecessary; better accounted for by feature-driven dative-accusative syncretism and antipassivization (= Ch. 2, not discussed).

(b) Interpretational and distributional constraints on the Algonquian split 3rd person contrast (Proximate vs. Obviative) parallel those on the English Independent vs. Dependent clause-types. Model building up pronominal feature interpretations from inherent referential-access dependency predicts this (= Ch. 3).

(c) Inverse system for [3[1|2]] configurations is not global in Algonquian: it is only obligatory for one morphological clause-type (Idp), which has the morphosyntax of a possessed nominal (= Ch.4). [If time:]

1.3 Bare background

Proximate vs. Obviative

- Roughly: a morphosyntactic split within 3rd person, forming two distinct pronominal subtypes:

morphologically unmarked:	*Proximate*
morphologically marked:	*Obviative*

(1) pəsəwis 'cat (Proximate)' (SDMC)
pəsəwisal 'cat (Obviative)'

Algonquian gender contrast: NA vs. NI

NA	= "animate"	e.g.	na	'that^{NA}'
NI	= "inanimate"	e.g.	ni	'that^{NI}'

- Does not correspond directly to semantic animacy, though ultimately linked to it
- Will use "NA" and "NI" here in lieu of clumsy English pronominal translations

2. Deriving pronominal features (and their hierarchies): referential-access dependency

Goal: derive rather than stipulate pronominal features and their 1 » 2 » 3 hierarchies.

Tool: the topological contrast between a **Core and its Periphery**, *iterated*.

- pronominal feature interpretations are built up from the inherent dependency relationships so created: this is referential access dependency (RAD)

- *traditionally:*

3rd person = absence of Speech Act Participant (SAP) features (Harley & Ritter 2002a,b, Benveniste 1966),

- *here: still so, but...*

3rd person = interpretationally dependent on the prior determination of SAP status: *3 is RAD on SAP*

- dependencies encoded by pronominal feature hiearchy emerege directly from Core-Periphery iteration structure, starting from basic discourse-referential Core of 1st person.

- syntactically active pronominal hierarchy effects arise from purely structural constraints on the derivational dependencies that exist between different pronominal feature complexes.

So: pronominal features derive by a simple internal syntax (≠ familiar phrase-structural syntax)

Surprising result:

Constraints on the distribution and interpretation of pronominal-feature dependencies match exactly those operating over the *distribution* and *interpretation* of Independent and Dependent clauses. In all languages, even the one you're reading this in.

(1) [Core]Periphery

a. [I eat] while I read.
b. [I read] while I eat.

Bc: the [±Independent] status of a clause is also a matter of establishing a referential-access Core (i.e. the Independent clause) that can host Periphery dependents, i.e. Dependent clauses.

In short: pronominal feature hierarchy effects derive directly from the same minimal syntactic mechanisms that derive the interpretation of grammatical person contrasts.

What it explains:

Prox vs. Obv: = outcome of the next logical Core-Periphery iteration after the one that produces the SAP vs. non-SAP contrast; i.e. = equiv of SAP vs. non-SAP within the non-SAP domain); distrib and interp facts accordingly

Possessor Constraint: Obv is oblig on Possessees when the Possessor is 3rd person, but not when 1/2

Bc: extra level of structure---extra step of mediating referential-access---inherently involved in the full composition of referential-access interpretation for Possessees of 3rd person Possessors.

her mother involves more structure than *my/your mother*

Multiple Proximate Constraint: against multiple non-coordinated referentially distinct Proximates within a single transitive-clausal domain

Bc: Proxs, like SAPs, are Core elements defining their iterational domain; and thus like any true geometric Core, cannot be truly multiple, identity-wise.

Prox-Obv interp effects: (a grab bag of observations in the literature)

traditionally: "discourse obviation" as opposed to "syntactic obviation" (Bruening 2005, Buszard-Welcher 2004, Hasler 2002, Brittain 2001, Aissen 1997, Goddard 1990, 1984)

here: **all** arise from Prox-Obv syntax

- discourse-interp effects & distributional constraints both come from fundamentally syntactic-configurational nature of Prox-Obv contrast...
- ...which is a simple structural derivation via the Core-Periphery system

N.B. evidence framed in terms of interpretational and distributional properties; this is just for presentational utility; ultimately formally derive from one source (hence interp/distrib distinction often blurry)

❖ Minimal structure-building algorithms predict a surprising amount of the syntactic behavior of pronominal features, also solve some longstanding "exotic problems" in Algonquian grammar.

Transition...

- Taking this cyclic-derivation-based model of pronominal features and their constraints and applying it to the problem of Algonquian argument-structure marking, with a main focus on the Inverse system.

3. Pronominal features in configuration

Goal: examining pronominal features in configuration, demonstrate how pronominal feature hierarchies are both unnecessary and hindering to an adequate account of the effects of pronominal feature configurations on Algonquian verbal morphosyntax.

Tool: most famous config-sensitive aspect of the Algonquian verbal system: the Direct-Inverse system.

Key: a problematic fact for standard pronominal feature hierarchy-based accounts:

The use of the Inverse for [3[1|2]] configurations (i.e. non-SAP acting on SAP) varies according to morphological clause-type.

traditionally: feature-hierarchy-based system has to stipulate specific domains over which it applies

here: no need to appeal to such hierarchies, let alone stipulate their domains; and can predict still more phenomena...

Instead:

- Inverse-use variation comes down to formal properties of just one morphological clause-type, the *Independent (Idp).*

- bc Idp is morphosyntactically a formal **possessed nominal** (cf. Goddard 1974, Bloomfield 1962).

Link two crucial properties of the Idp:

(a) Idp indexes the hierarchically "highest" argument in its argument structure with the same morphology used to mark Possessors in nominal possession constructions

(b) Idp consistently requires that Inv be used for [3[1|2]] configurations, even as other morphological clause-types (i.e. Conjunct) can vary re Inv for [3[1|2]] across Algonquian languages

Claim:

- Idp, as a formal possessed nominal construction, instantiates a Person-Case Constraint (PCC) config, and so disallows a 3rd person Possessor over a SAP argument (cf. §2).

- Inv repairs this structure by raising the SAP Patient (via A-movement) over the non-SAP Agent, resulting in a $[[1|2]_i[3[t_i]]]$ configuration, a SAP-topmost structure that in turn surfaces as a SAP Possessor construction that satisfies the PCC.

- no explanation offered for PPC itself (limits on feature configs on one local head domain?)...

- ...but PCC-like effect between the Obviative and the Proximate in nominal possession constructions shows that this aspect of the PCC ultimately derives back to the RAD model of pronominal feature derivation.

→ Eliminate need to stipulate a pronominal feature hierarchy to account for PCC and Inv effects.

New facts covered:

Inverse Variation: Idp consistently requires that Inv be used for [3[1|2]] configurations, even as other morphological clause-types (i.e. Conjunct) can vary re Inv for [3[1|2]] across Algonquian languages

Bc: (again) only Idp, as formal possessed nominal construction, has a PCC effect driving it; Conjunct morphology does not

Antihierarchy effects:

Peripheral Ending and Algonquian "2 » 1" facts violate cross-linguistic 1 » 2 » 3 (etc.) hierarchy, even as 1 » 2 » 3-like effects also occur.

- no explanation offered for antihierarchy effects themselves; simply that they occur, and so even a language-specific global parameterization (e.g. 2 » 1 » 3... instead of 1 » 2 » 3...) is descriptively inadequate; has to be stipulated on a domain-by-domain basis...

- ...which at least suggests that a radically configuration-driven approach may be the answer.

3. Concerns and conclusions

What I still need to do:

- Determine much more precisely how RAD syntax (pronominal features, clausal dependency) interacts/interfaces with familiar phrasal-syntax (relation to c-command is suggestive but not one-to-one): how *does* the Possessor Constraint really work, interface-wise?
- Develop a more predictive model of the PCC (related to the previous, of course).
- Answer all of your questions.

What I have done:

§2: Demonstrated that core properties of pronominal features, even ones as seemingly exotic as those of the Proximate-Obviative contrast, can be derived through a minimal iterative structure-building algorithm---and observed that these properties are much more an outcome of that structure than of properties peculiar to pronominal features: hence the novel link between constraints on clausal dependency and on the Proximate-Obviative contrast.

§3: Developed a preliminary account of the distribution of an inverse construction based on a new generalization about its interaction with clause-type morphology.

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