

PERSON AND GENDER HIERARCHIES IN MICMAC

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ABSTRACT

There is a well-known hierarchy of grammatical persons in the Algonkian languages that determines the direct and inverse forms of the transitive verb. We may represent this hierarchy as follows: $2 > 1 > 3 > 3'$, which means that second person takes precedence over first, and these two take precedence over third proximate, which in turn takes precedence over third obviative ($3'$), the third person who is marked as secondary or derived. In the direct forms of the transitive verb the agent is hierarchically superior to the patient; in the inverse forms of the transitive verb the agent is hierarchically inferior to the patient.

But this hierarchy concerns only animate actors. Alongside this person hierarchy there is also a gender hierarchy where animate takes precedence over inanimate. It is of interest to note that there is an interplay of these two hierarchies: when the agent of a transitive verb is inanimate, an inverse form is required. The end result of the interplay between these two systems is a very close parallel to the kind of person hierarchy that has been proposed by Seiler (1983) as a linguistic universal.

(The following symbols are used: 21 is first plural inclusive (you and me), 13 is first plural exclusive (me and mine), 23 is second plural (you and yours), 33 is third (proximate) plural, and $33'$ is Obviative plural).

1. Introduction

One of the more remarkable features of all Algonkian languages is the contrast of direct and inverse forms in the transitive verb, whereby, without changing the grammatical category of the participants, a sentence such as I see him is changed into he sees me simply by changing the direction of the transitivity of the verb

by inverse marker. The fact that certain constructions are required to be direct, and others inverse, necessitates the establishment of a hierarchy of persons, so that the direct forms are actions DOWNSTREAM in the hierarchy, while inverse forms are UPSTREAM in the hierarchy.

The hierarchy of persons in Algonkian languages follows what are well known linguistic universals: the Speech Act Participants (first and second person) take precedence over third person proximate, and third person proximate (3) takes precedence over third person obviative (3'). Surprisingly, however, second person also takes precedence over first - a rare occurrence in the languages of the world.

Consequently we may symbolize the DIRECT forms with a set of arrows running down the hierarchy:

$$2 > 1 > 3 > 3'$$

and equally present the INVERSE forms with a set of arrows in the opposite direction:

$$2 < 1 < 3 < 3'$$

A more explicit and comprehensive presentation of this well-known system of person hierarchies in Algonkian languages may be found in Hockett (1966).

In a language like Cree the morphology of direct and inverse forms is often quite transparent, so that You see me and I see you would be as follows

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|-----------------|
| (1) | ki-wa:pam-in | ki-wa:pam-it-in |
| | you see me | I see you |

where the ki prefix marks second person, the precedential person, the stem wa:pam indicates transitive seeing of an animate object, in marks first person, the subordinate person, and it is the inverse marker for first person acting on a second, which turns the transitivity of the verb around on the ki prefix.

What has not often been commented upon is that a hierarchy also exists between the animate and inanimate genders in Algonkian languages where the animate is higher than the inanimate. Evidence will be presented from both the nominal and the verbal categories to

support this claim. The majority of the examples will be taken from Micmac but evidence from other Algonkian languages will be included. It will also be shown that interplay of the two hierarchies causes some interesting morphological effects.

2. Person Hierarchies

One purpose of this paper is to show that the gender hierarchy of Algonkian languages is an extension or extrapolation of the person hierarchy. Furthermore, the two hierarchies together largely correlate with the universal iconic hierarchy proposed by Hansjakob Seiler in his 1983 book Possession as an Operational Dimension of Language, the notable exception being the unusual precedence found in Algonkian languages of second person over first. Seiler's proposed hierarchy is as follows:

1st > 2nd > 3rd human > 3rd animate > 3rd inanimate
(Seiler 1983:46)

The allocation of the lowest level of all to the inanimate, as we shall see, is affirmed by data from Algonkian languages

Evidence to demonstrate the existence of the gender hierarchy will be drawn mostly from Micmac but where necessary data from other Algonkian languages will be incorporated. The evidence will be taken from four main areas which are as follows: a. possession b. gender shift c. inanimate agents in TA (transitive animate) verbs d. TA two-goal verbs.

The best way to start this discussion about an animacy hierarchy is to examine briefly some of the morphology of the hierarchy which is commonly discussed in the literature, namely the hierarchy of persons; in this way we study the lesser known (animacy hierarchy) through the better known (person hierarchy). This hierarchy of persons shows most clearly in the TA verb (Transitive verb with Animate goal). A partial paradigm of the Micmac TA verb pema'l-ik 'to carry' follows in 2. Micmac, unlike Cree, does not use prefixes indicating grammatical person.

2.1 TA Direct and Inverse Forms

	DIRECT		INVERSE
(2)	1>3 pema'l̥ik		1<3 pema'lit
	2>3 pema'l̥it		2<3 pema'l̥isk
	3>3' pema'lajl		3<3' pema'l̥j1
	1>33 pema'l̥kik		1<33 pema'lijik

In these forms the TA stem is pema'l̥; the apostrophe marks a long vowel. The main purpose of the schwa (marked by barred ̥ in the Smith-Francis orthography used here) is to prevent the formation of consonant clusters; it is not a morphological marker.

Since Micmac verb forms have no personal prefixes, the person morphology is all suffixed. In the third person forms the 3>3' suffix can be analysed as follows: a = DIRECT; j = 3; l̥ = 3'. When the direct marker is eliminated, the form automatically becomes INVERSE, since the schwa is not morphological.

Forms 1>33 and 1<33 are included here to show another difference between the direct and the inverse forms, namely the function of the ik suffix that marks an animate plural agreement. In form 1>33 (the direct form) the translation is 'I carry them'; the plural marker pluralizes the patient. In form 1<33 (the inverse form) the translation is 'they carry me' and in this case the plural marker pluralizes the agent, showing clearly the inversion of roles between the two forms.

The interplay of direct and inverse forms should be kept in mind when we come to examine the role occasionally played by the inanimate in the paradigms of the TA verb. First, however, it is important to look at the interplay of the animate and the inanimate in the hierarchies of possession.

3. Possession

In the nominal morphology of possession the animacy hierarchy is readily visible and will therefore be the first area to be discussed.

Possession in Algonkian languages also follows the same hierarchies that we have seen operating in the TA verb. For animates the following hierarchy applies: SAP (Speech Act Participants) > 3rd Proximate > 3rd Obviative. Obviatives cannot possess Proximates, and Proximates cannot possess SAP's (surely a universal: cf. my dog, but not dog's me). Neither can a Proximate possess an animate Proximate: the possessee automatically becomes Obviative, and is marked for Obviation, as may be seen in 3.1.

When a 3rd person animate possesses a 3rd person inanimate, however, the possessee is unmarked, in contrast to the case when a 3rd person animate possesses another 3rd person animate.

3.1 Possession in Micmac

(3)	ANIMATE POSSESSING INANIMATE		ANIMATE POSSESSING ANIMATE	
	ntul	'my boat'	ntus	'my daughter'
	ktul	'your boat'	ktus	'your daughter'
	wtul	'his boat'	wtusl	'his daughter'

The form wtusl is the form to be noted here as it displays the obviative marker, which in Micmac is -l. This marker sets the form off as something different: the possessee must be hierarchically lower than the possessor, undoubtedly stemming from the fact that '...possession is a matter of control.' (Hewson 1989:28). Hewson (1989) claims that it is possible for an animate to possess an inanimate and, corresponding to this, for a proximate to possess an obviative. But it is not possible for an inanimate to possess an animate and, corresponding to this, for an obviative to possess a proximate. According to Seiler's hierarchy the iconic order of things is followed when an animate possesses an inanimate as in the form wtusl. It is hierarchically (and iconically) appropriate for an animate to control an inanimate. A linguistic reflection of this iconicity is that the animate is represented as being hierarchically higher than the inanimate. The obviative, on the other hand, sets the form wtusl apart as being different and indicates that if an animate controls another animate, then the agentive possessor will be represented as a proximate, and the patientive possessee as obviative, that is, in a lower hierarchical position.

These details show clearly that the animate, in accord with its higher agentivity, takes precedence in the hierarchy over the inanimate.

4. Gender Shift

The second area to be discussed involves a temporary shift in gender, as noted by Wolfart (1978).

In Cree it is possible to have TA verbs of speaking where the goal is an inanimate noun. With such an inanimate goal one should, of course, normally have a TI verb, and the morphology of the TA likewise requires an animate goal. Since, of course, it is not possible to communicate in language with inanimate objects, it appears that these inanimate nouns are temporarily promoted to the animate gender as will be seen in the example in 4.

4.1 Gender Shift in Cree

- (4) so:skwa:c kahkiyaw kakwe:cime:w ota:pacihcikanah
 right away all ask (TA 3>3') her (3) utensils
 'Without delay she asked all her utensils.' (Wolfart 1978:21)

The verb stem is the only thing which indicates that the gender of the goal is animate.

According to Wolfart, 'Even when they are temporarily animate, showing agreement with animate verbs, their inflectional endings remain inanimate.' (Wolfart 1978:22)

Wolfart states further: 'Generally, all reference to speaker or addressee is animate...that this is not a hard and fast rule but a tendency which involves competing pattern pressures is clear from the great deal of variation that is encountered.' (Wolfart 1978:21)

The most important point to be noted here is that this gender transfer is '...a one-way transfer, from inanimate to animate.' (Wolfart 1978:22)

Thus an inanimate noun can temporarily be promoted to an animate noun but an animate noun cannot be demoted to an inanimate noun, another indication of an animacy hierarchy.

4.2 - Gender Shift in Micmac

Father Pacifique, in his Micmac grammar (Buisson 1939) gives a dedication opposite the opening page in Latin, French, and Micmac:

Omnis lingua confitebitur Deo (Rom. 14, 11)
 Toute langue donnera gloire à Dieu
 Ta'n te'sikl milnu'l wlima'tital Kisu'lkwl

(The Micmac citation has been retranscribed into the new orthography.) The Micmac is probably from the translations of Father Maillard (d. 1762), who worked extensively at providing a Micmac liturgy and Scriptures in Micmac. Of particular interest for our purposes is the fact that Micmac milnu, 'someone's tongue' (m-being the prefix for indefinite possessor) is an inanimate noun, and that the form milnu'l has the -l which marks it as inanimate plural (vowels are lengthened before adding the plural marker). The verb, however is a TA direct form (33>3'), and the patient Kisu'lkwl, 'He who created us,' is marked as obviative, as the goal of the direct form of the TA verb.

Here we have another case of an inanimate noun being temporarily promoted to the animate gender when the verb is a verb of speaking, only this time the promoted animate is the agent rather than the patient of the action, and it is perhaps obvious that the tongues so named are taken as being representative of the humans that possess them, that this is a figure of speech that we call metonymy, where a part is taken as representative of the whole.

Such shifts of gender are very different from the normal processes for dealing with inanimate agents of TA verbs, as when rocks hit people, or things hurt people, or even with such impersonal verbs as It is impossible for me. The normal morphological processes for dealing with such eventualities will be examined in the next section, and will show how the animacy hierarchy interacts with the hierarchy of grammatical persons.

5. TA Verbs With an Inanimate Agent

Since transitivity is fundamentally a matter of control, where the agent is the dominant element, and the patient the element that is controlled, it should be realized that it is natural for animates to be agents and for inanimates to be patients. Creative,

controlling activity is not to be expected from sticks and stones, and likewise it is sometimes hard to control animates, as anyone knows when the cat has to be put out in the rain. For an inanimate to act upon an animate, as in the TA verbs with inanimate agent, consequently goes totally against the universal iconic hierarchies we find in languages.

Since TI verbs (Transitive verbs with Inanimate goal) have a morphology distinct from TA verbs, perhaps we should expect a verb that represents an inanimate acting on an animate to appear as a TI inverse form. That is, since a TI represents an animate acting on an inanimate, an inverse form of such a verb should produce the form we are looking for. This is not the case, however; the form we are looking for has an animate goal, and this fact overrides all other considerations. What occurs is a variant morphology of the TA.

Any TA verb that has an inanimate agent is, in fact, automatically an inverse form. A sentence such as I have a toothache, would become in Micmac My tooth hurts me, and since tooth is inanimate, the result would be a TA verb with inanimate agent nipit kesinukuik, where the final k of kesinukuik marks the inanimate agent, and the preceding i is the normal inverse marker for $1 < 3$. If the agent were animate, which is the normal state of affairs in the TA, the verb would be kesinukuit 'he is hurting me.'

The following data in 5.2 involving the verb wela'l-ik, 'do well by, please', show the inverse paradigms for animate agent and inanimate agent:

5.2 Animate Agent Versus Inanimate Agent in the TA Verb

	ANIMATE AGENT		INANIMATE AGENT	
(5)	1<3	wela'lit	1<Inan	wela'lik
	2<3	wela'lisk	2<Inan	wela'lisk
	3<3'	wela'lɨjɨl	3<Inan	wela'lɨj

In the first line we can see the morphology already commented on that here gives the readings (s)he pleases me and it pleases me. In the second line it will be noted that the gender distinction does not show in the morphology, and the one form means (s)he/it pleases thee. In the third line, where, as we have already seen, the inverse form is unmarked (the direct form being the marked form), and the ɨ and the ɨ represent 3 and 3' respectively, the ɨ is

omitted when the agent is inanimate, which is just as it should be, since only animates can be obviative in Micmac. The inanimate agent in wela'l-ij 'it pleases him,' therefore, is unmarked, the marked form being the one with animate agent.

It should be remembered that the animate agent paradigms, being the normal paradigms of the TA, have both direct and inverse forms, but that the paradigm for inanimate agent is automatically an inverse paradigm. This means that for every DIRECT form there are two contrastive INVERSE forms, as the following partial paradigm demonstrates:

PRESENT			
(6)	DIRECT	3>3'	wela'laj <u>l</u>
	INVERSE (an.)	3<3'	wela'l <u>ij</u>
	INVERSE (inan.)	3<Inan	wela'l <u>ij</u>

It is not the case that in all modes of the verb these third person inverse forms are unmarked. In fact, as Proulx has pointed out (1978:52), this only occurs before -t or -j, allomorphs that mark 3rd person animate. In the future, for example, the INVERSE marker -uku, which is a reflex of Proto-Algonkian *-ekwi (Dawe 1986:138), contrasts with the regular DIRECT marker a that is found in both present wela'lajl 's/he pleases him/her,' and future wla'latal 's/he will please him/her,' as the following tabulation will show:

FUTURE				
(7)	DIRECT	3>3'	wla'latal <u>l</u>	's/he will please OBV'
	INVERSE (an.)	3<3'	wla'lukuta <u>l</u>	'OBV will please him/her'
	INVERSE (inan.)	3<Inan	wla'lukute <u>w</u>	'it will please him/her'

Here again we note that the inanimate agent form does not have the obviative marker l (in Micmac -ew + l regularly becomes al in final position), since only an animate can become obviative.

These paradigms show clearly that when there is interaction between the person hierarchy, which concerns only animates, and the gender hierarchy, the inanimate of the gender hierarchy is placed at the bottom of the person hierarchy along with the obviative. But since the obviative is animate, and animate takes precedence in the gender hierarchy, the inanimate is treated as the lowest

hierarchical element of all, exactly as in the universal iconic hierarchy posited by Seiler above. It is not surprising, as a result, that TA verbs with inanimate agents are inverse forms.

These inverse forms sometimes include subjects that are quite simply impersonal. Father Pacifique cites the TA verb me'si'k 'it is impossible for me,' and quotes (again presumably from Father Maillard) Kisu'lkwl moqwe'j me'si'kuk 'nothing is impossible to God', where we can recognise the -ku of the 3rd person inverse marker. The curious element in this quote is that Kisu'lkwl 'God (the Creator)' is in the obviative, which it certainly would not be in modern day Micmac: one would expect the only animate in the sentence to be proximate.

Before leaving the direct and inverse paradigms, it may be noted that morphology which is found in the intransitive paradigms also appears in the TA. The t and the k which distinguish maja'sit '(s)he moves,' from maja'sik 'it moves,' mark respectively 3rd animate and inanimate in the intransitive paradigms. These are the same elements that reappear in the following TA items that we have already seen:

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| (8) | INVERSE (an.) | 1<3 | kesnukuit 's/he is hurting me' |
| | INVERSE (inan.) | 1<Inan | kesnukuik 'it is hurting me' |

(The t of the 3rd person animate becomes j under certain conditions; if the ik of the animate plural is added to kesinukuit we get kesinukuijik 'they (an.) are hurting me' (in an inverse form, as we have seen, the plural marks the agent). This j is also the same element that we see in wela'lajl, etc.)

6. TA Two-Goal Verbs

The final area to be discussed is the TA two-goal verb. Two-goal verbs normally have a primary TI (transitive inanimate) final, to which a secondary TA final has been added. Two goal verbs, which correspond to English or French verbs with direct and indirect objects, are therefore always derivationally TA's, and consequently may have direct and inverse forms. This is tantamount to saying that in Algonkian languages it is the animate, not the inanimate, that is the direct object with two goal verbs. The opposite is of course the case in Indo-European languages, where the animate is the

indicating that all the animate persons have precedence over the inanimate. Apart from the one unusual difference noted earlier - that 2 takes precedence over 1 in Algonkian languages - we find that the hierarchy of persons, by interacting with the gender hierarchy, reflects exactly the universal hierarchy proposed by Seiler.

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