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## Ascensions to Subject in Blackfoot

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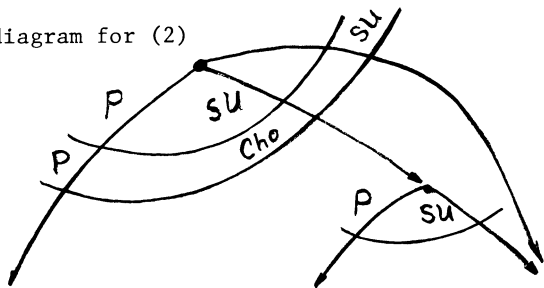
Blackfoot has been shown to be very liberal in the range of ascensions it permits for nominals of embedded clauses (Frantz 1978).<sup>1</sup> This paper examines, within the relational grammar (RG) framework, constraints on ascensions for predicates which take clauses as initial subject. It is found that there are two major types: predicates which allow ascension of the final subject of the downstairs clause, and predicates which allow ascension of non-subjects (primarily direct objects); only the latter type allow ascensions with a domain greater than two clauses. We note in passing that within the TG framework, the latter type ascensions are violations of both the "specified subject condition" and the "subjacency condition" of Chomsky 1977.

Blackfoot verbs agree with their final subject (SU) and direct object (DO) in person and (in most cases) number. In (1) the downstairs (DS) clause (in brackets) is SU of the upstairs (US) clause. The US verb is inflected for third person singular by suffix -wa '3s', and the stem shape is that used with an inanimate gender final SU. The DS verb is also inflected for third person by prefix ot- '3' (the inflectional system is slightly different for embedded clauses), in agreement with SU koko'siksi. Sentences (2) - (4) are paraphrases of (1).

- (1) Iksipisata'pi-wa [ot-sa-wattsiiyi-hsi k-oko'siksi].  
surprising (inan)-3s 3-neg-drunk-subord 2-offspring:p  
'It's surprising that your kids weren't drunk.'
- (2) Iksipisata'pssi-yi [otsawattsiiyihsi koko'siksi].  
surprising (anim)-3p
- (3) Iksipi'sata'pssiyi koko'siksi otsawattsiiyihsi.
- (4) Iksipisata'pssiyi koko'siksi [otsawattsiiyihs-aawa].  
-PRO(3p)

In (2) - (4), the US verb stem is that used with an animate gender final SU, and the US verb is inflected for third person plural by -yi '3p'. I claim that koko'siksi 'your kids' is final (but not initial) SU of the US clause in (2) - (4). That is, I claim that (2) - (4) involve 'ascensions'. (The US relation of the ascende is as predicted by Perlmutter and Postal's well supported 'Relational Succession Law'.) Ascensions are defined in RG as the head of a DS arc also heading a non-initial US arc, as shown in stratal diagram (5).

## (5) Stratal diagram for (2)



Iksipisata'pssiyi  
'surprising'

otsawattsiyyihsi  
'not drunk'

koko'siksi.  
'your kids'

Evidence for the final relations of this ascension includes:

1. The US verb has the animate gender form.<sup>2</sup>
2. The US verb agrees with the ascendee koko'siksi.
3. The ascendee may be positioned according to either the final US or final DS relation, as discussed in Frantz 1979; compare (2), in which koko'siksi is clearly a DS constituent, with (4) in which koko'siksi is an US constituent, and a 'replacer' (clitic pronoun -aawa '3p') is the final ds SU. The constituency of koko'siksi in (3) is indeterminate.<sup>3</sup>

It should be evident at this point that ascensions, like other rules of RG, are quite a different thing from the "movements" of transformational grammar; the former involve non-initial relations which do not necessarily correlate with positional differences when comparing paraphrases. And in fact it is not possible to treat (2), in comparison to (1), as involving a movement, for the linear position of the ascendee is the same in both (1) and (2).

The ascension involved in (2) - (4) is clearly "governed" by the US predicate. Ipisata'p- is representative of a small class of predicates which also includes iska'nistsina- 'seem'. The examples above involve ascension of the (final) DS SU. (6) shows that it doesn't matter whether the DS clause is transitive, and (7) shows that the final DS direct object (DO) cannot be the ascendee with this predicate; (8) shows that an oblique cannot be the ascendee.

- (6) Kits-iksipisata'pssi [kit-sspomo-a-hsi n-oko'siksi].  
2-surprising (anim) 2-help-direct-subord my-kids  
'You are surprising that you helped my kids.'
- (7) \*Iksipisata'pssi-yi noko'siksi [kitsspomoahs-aawa].  
surprising-3p -PRO(3p)  
('My kids are surprising that you helped them.')
- (8) \*Iksipisata'pssi-wa n-itakkawa nits-itap-oo-hsi.  
(My friend is surprising that I went to him.)

So it seems that ipisata'p- allows ascension of only DS SU. It remains to show that the ascendee must be a final DS SU. To do this, a clause is needed in which an initial SU is not a final

SU. The most likely candidate in Blackfoot is a class of clauses in which the "logical" SU of a transitive verb is semantically inanimate, for Blackfoot (and apparently most, if not all, Algonkian languages), does not allow semantically inanimate final ergatives. See (9).

- (9) N-imohts-issin-ookoo      omiksi    isskiksi.  
 1-instr-hit-x:1/2                those        pots  
 'Those pots hit me.'

'Those pots', though of animate gender, is evidently a final SU-chomeur, the presence of which is registered in the verb with imoht- 'instr'. (10) shows that 'those pots' cannot be ascendeo to 'surprising', even though it is apparently DS initial SU, because it is not a final SU.<sup>4</sup>

- (10) \*Iksipisata'pssi-yi [nimohtsissinookoohsi omiksi  
(issikiksi)].  
(*'Those pots are surprising that they hit me.'*)

It remains only to show that 'surprising', unlike a class of predicates to be discussed next, allows ascensions which have a two-clause domain and no more.<sup>5</sup> This is shown in (11), which if good would involve an ascende<sup>e</sup> from a clause within an embedded clause.

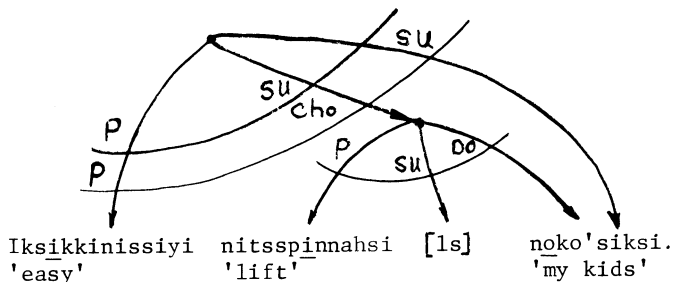
- (11) \*Kits-iksipisata'pssi [ots-ikkinis-si [kit-aahk-sspiyi-  
hsii]].  
2-surprising (anim) 3-easy-subord 2-might-dance-subord  
(*'You are surprising that it is easy for you to dance.'*)

Consider now (12) and its paraphrases (13) – (15).<sup>6</sup>

- (12) Iksikkinisi-wa [nit-sspinn-a-hsi noko'siksi].  
easy(inan)-3s 1-lift-direct-subord  
'It's easy for me to lift my kids.'
- (13) Iksikkinissi-yi [nitsspinnahsi noko'siksi].  
easy(anim)-3p
- (14) Iksikkinissi-yi noko'siksi nitsspinnahsi.
- (15) Iksikkinissi-yi noko'siksi [nitsspinnahs-aawa].

In (12) the predicate iksikkinisiwa is inflected for '3s' in agreement with its clausal SU (in brackets). In (13) – (15), however, the US predicate agrees with the initial DS DO (noko'siksi), its stem shape is that required for an animate gender final SU, and noko'siksi can be a constituent of the US clause. Thus I claim that noko'siksi is final (but not initial) SU of iksikkin-issiyi in (12) – (15); i.e. that these sentences involve ascension of the DS DO, as diagrammed in (16).

(16)



Sentences (17) and (18) show that the ascendeer cannot be the DS SU.

- (17) \*Nits-ikkinissi [nitsspinnahsi noko'siksi].  
1 - easy(anim)  
( 'I'm easy to lift my kids.' )

- (18) \*Iksikkinissi-yi noko'siksi ot-aohkitopi-ssi.  
easy(anim)-3p                    3-ride(horse)-subord  
( 'My kids are easy that they ride.' )

Sentences (20) and (21) show that the domain of ascension to 'easy' is not limited to two-clauses.

- (19) Iksikkinissi-wa [koko'siksi ot-aahk-anists-iksimsstaa-hsi]  
easy(inan)-3s    your:kids    3-might-manner-think-subord  
[kit-aahk-sspin-oki-hsi] .  
2-might-lift-2:1-subord  
'It's easy for your kids to think that you might lift me.'
- (20) Nits-ikkinissi [koko'siksi otaahkanistsiksimsstaahsi  
1-easy(anim)                    [kitaahksspin-noki-hsi]] .  
'I'm easy for your kids to think that you might lift [me].'
- (21) Nitsikkinissi [koko'siksi ot-aahks-ika'kimmaa-hsi  
3-might-try-subord  
[otaahkanistsiksimsstaahsi [kitaahksspin-noki-hsi]]] .  
'I'm easy for your kids to try to think that you might lift [me].'

Example (19) is the counterpart of (20) without an ascension; (20) differs only in that the predicate 'easy' agrees with the initial DO of 'lift', which is two clauses "down". Similarly, in (21) 'easy' agrees with the initial DO of 'lift', three clauses down. (20) and (21) also rule out analyses in which they each involve two or three ascensions of two-clause domain (i.e., that the ascendees ascend "one clause at a time"). This is so because Blackfoot verbs agree with final SU and final DO, and so the intermediate verb would also agree with the ascendeer in the two-step

analysis. In fact, such a sentence is possible ('think' permits ascension of either S or DO; see Frantz 1978); see (22).

- (22) Nitsikkinissi [koko'siksi nit-aahk-anists-iksimssta-i'ssi  
 1-might-manner-think(trans)-  
 invers:subord  
 [kitaahksspinnokihsi]].  
 'I'm easy for your kids to think (of me) that you might lift [me]'.

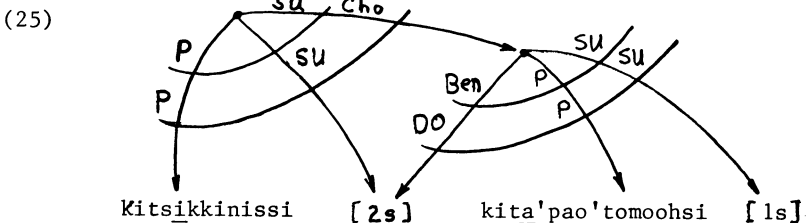
And since there are no rules of Blackfoot which would prevent agreement of a verb with its final DO, the only way to account for the difference between (20) and (22) is to say that (22) involves two ascensions and (20) involves only one ascension.

A three-step analysis is likewise not possible for (21) because of agreement facts, but also because 'try' does not allow ascensions, as seen in (23):

- (23) \*Nits-ika'kimmat-a-yi noko'siksi nit-aahk-sspim-a-hsi.  
 1-try(trans)-direct-3p 1-might-lift-direct-  
 ('I tried my kids that I might lift them.') subord

Thus far I have established that a DO may ascend to 'easy'<sup>7</sup>. Example (24) shows that it need not be an initial DO, for the ascende is initial Benefactee and final DO of 'work (for)'. See (25).

- (24) Kitsikkinissi kit-a'pao't-omo-o-hsi.  
 2-easy(anim) 2-work-ben-1:2-subord  
 'You are easy for me to work for.'



There is also some tentative evidence that the ascende must be a final DO; this would explain why (26) is bad, for 'these birds' would be a final DO chomeur of 'buy for'.

- (26) \*Iksikkinissi-yi [amoksi pi'kssiksi  
 easy(anim) these birds  
 kit-aahk-ohpomm-o-o-hsi].  
 2-might-buy-ben-1:2-subord  
 ('These birds are easy for me to buy for you.')

Returning briefly to predicates such as -ipisatap- 'surprising', we are now in a position to show that their ascendees need not be

initial SU's. Given the ascension analysis of sentences with -ikkinis- 'easy', we can embed them under 'surprising' to test whether the ascendee to 'easy' can further ascend to 'surprising'. (27) shows that this is possible:

- (27) Kits-iksipisata'pssi [kits-ikkiniss-si [kit-aahk-sspinn-  
o-hsi]].  
2-surprising(anim)      2-easy-subord 2-might-lift-  
1:2-subord  
'You are surprising that you are easy for me to lift.'

Conversely, the second ascension of second person in (27) also supports the claim that it is final SU of 'easy'.

Before concluding, I should discuss briefly why I consider a non-ascension analysis of sentences such as (2) - (4) and (13) - (15) inadequate. In the case of 'surprising', we would have to require that if this matrix predicate has a non-clausal SU, that SU must also be the final SU of a dependent clause (bearing what relation?). In addition, we would have to have a semantic rule which assured that pairs such as (1) and (2) involve the same semantic roles. Both of these complications are unnecessary with the ascension analysis, which automatically accounts for the apparent surface constraint and the paraphrase relation. In the case of 'easy', a surface constraint would be more complex, requiring that a non-clausal SU also be a final DO of a clause "further down".

### Summary

Predicates such as ipisata'p- 'amazing' permit ascension of the final SU of their clausal SU. This ascension is strictly limited to a two-clause domain. Ikkinis- 'easy' permits ascension of the final DO of its clausal SU; however, this ascension is not limited to a two-clause domain, for the DO of a clause "further down" may ascend to 'easy'.<sup>8</sup>

It is worth noting here, as has already been done for similar data in James Bay Cree (James 1979), that if these ascensions are somehow viewed as movement rules, a sentence such as (20) violates Chomsky's (1977) 'Subjacency Condition'. And whether a movement rule or a constraint on surface structure is used to account for such a sentence, it violates Chomsky's 'Specified Subject Condition.'

### Notes

1. While my initial investigation on this topic was conducted in 1974 as part of research reported on in Frantz 1978, a more thorough investigation was inspired by recent work of Debbie James (see James 1979).

I am particularly grateful to Martin Heavy Head and Pat Twigg (both speakers of the Blood dialect of Blackfoot) for their part in this research.

2. Most stative verbs have different "theme-suffixes" (Taylor 1969) depending upon whether they have an animate or inanimate gender (final) subject.
3. Or, as suggested in Frantz 1979, is simultaneously a constituent of two clauses, analogous to the status of "interludes" at syllable boundaries (Hockett 1955).
4. The following sentence shows that there is no constraint against 'pots' being SU of this predicate:  
Iksipisata'pssiyi omiksi issikiksi. 'Those pots are fancy.'
5. In transformational terminology, such rules are referred to as "bounded".
6. Sentences such as (13) - (15) may not be acceptable on the Blackfoot reserve. I have checked them with one speaker from Gleichen, and he finds them unacceptable. However, they are fine for the speakers I have consulted from the Blood reserve.
7. There is some evidence, though it is not clear, that some obliques can ascend to 'easy'.
8. Interestingly, for most speakers iyikoo- 'hard' apparently permits ascension of either SU or DO, but in the case of SU's the ascension is of no greater than a two clause domain. So the domain of ascensions may be a function of the DS GR of the ascendeo rather than governed by predicates as I have indicated above.

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