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Obviation, Inversion, and Topic Rank in Ojibwa

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One of the most salient features of Algonquian syntax is a phenomenon called OBVIATION that marks disjoint reference in third persons. Non-Algonquianists often find this phenomenon hard to understand, in part because as linguists we are more used to thinking in terms of coreference than disjoint reference and in part because morphological idiosyncrasies in the marking of obviation somewhat obscure the relatively straightforward syntactic patterns that determine when nominals are obviative. Add to this the fact that Algonquian languages are PRO-drop (however one chooses to analyze that phenomenon) so that the presence of an obviative referent may only be reflected in verb inflection, and you have the formula for a phenomenon non-specialists find difficult to understand. The point of this paper is to show that there is an insightful analysis of obviation in syntactic terms (contra Wolfart (1973), Goddard (1984), Dahlstrom (1987), among others) in spite of the fact that previous proposals for syntactic analyses (Delisle (1973), Dunnigan, O'Malley, and Schwartz (1978), Grafstein (1981)) were unsatisfactory because they failed to recognize that discourse level factors interact with syntactic factors to produce the distribution of obviatives actually found in text. The discussion here will, of necessity, only outline this approach and will be limited to an examination of obviation in Ojibwa, and for the most part to obviation in the Ottawa dialect. While it is not feasible to give an exhaustive study of obviation in even a single language in a paper of this length, the viability of a syntactic approach and its advantages, at least in the case of Ojibwa, should be obvious by the time we are finished.

Let me begin the discussion by proposing some terminology. For convenience sake I will use the term NOMINAL to refer to whatever morphological means is used for explicit reference in any particular phrase, clause, or sentence—be it a true nominal expression or simply a verbal inflection. Since there are always two nominals involved in obviation, let me call the one which induces the obviation the CONTROLLER and the one which gets obviated the VICTIM. The next set of terms we will need are traditional among Algonquianists. Nominals which are the victims of obviation are OBVIATIVE, those which are not are PROXIMATE.

Given this terminology and the fact that Algonquian nominals may be of two genders, animate and inanimate, we can make our first generalizations about obviation, both of which depend on animacy.

- (1) All controllers are of animate gender.
- (2) Only animate obviatives bear obviative marking.¹

One implication of (2) is that there are nominals which are obviative but which bear no overt indication of their obviative status. This fact causes much confusion about obviation, because many Algonquianists do not understand it. We will have more to say about this below.

There are several different basic configurations in which nominals can control obviation in potential victims. These are listed in (3) in order of increasing extent of control:

- (3) (a) Within phrases, possessors control obviation in their possessees.

- (3) (b) Within clauses, control of obviation follows the relational hierarchy: subjects control obviation in objects and obliques,² direct objects control obviation in secondary objects and obliques, etc.
- (c) Within sentences, subjects of matrix clauses can control the obviation of:
- the subjects of adverbial adjunct clauses, and
 - the subjects of non-quote complements.

There is one further configuration of close-knit sentences in which obviation is at work, but we will delay discussion of that case until we have covered those in (3).

Let us consider each of the types of obviation in (3) in turn. The first is the obviation of possessors under control by their possessors. We will refer to this as *possessor obviation*. It is always obligatory. Examples are given in (4).

- (4) (a) *maaba mdimooyenh wgwisan* 'this old woman's son(s)'
maaba midimooyenh o - gwis - an
 this old woman 3POSS son OBV
- (b) *niw wdayan* 'his dog(s)'
o - day - an
 3POSS pet OBV
- but (c) *ngwis(ag)* 'my son(s)'
ni - gwis - (ag)
 3POSS son (PL)

Note that the overt mark of obviation, *-an*, is mutually exclusive with the plural, *-ag*. Thus in Ottawa obviatives are ambiguous with respect to number.³ The victims of possessor obviation differ from other obviatives in at least two respects. First they regularly have proximate appositives as in (5a) in contrast to other types of obviation which require obviative appositives, as for example the subject controlled obviation example in (5b).

- (5) (a) *Mdimoooyenh sa go naa gii-naanniwan niwi wgwisan,*
shkinwensag, shkinweg.
 'There was an old woman with five sons, boys and teenagers.'
 (R1 2:2 p. 116)⁴

midimooyenh sa go naa gii-naanani-w-an
 old woman EMPH PAST-be five-3-OBV

niwi o-gwis-an oshkinawens-ag oshkinawe-ag
 that/those-OBV 3POSS-son-OBV boy-PL adolescent-PL

- (b) *Mii gii-waabmaad ninwan, man' soonyan.*

'Then she saw some men, spooky fellows.' (R1 2:4 p. 116)

mii gii-waabam-aa-d aniniw-an amanisoony-an
 EMPH PAST-see-3AN OBJ-3SUBJ man-OBV spook-OBV

Second, possessor obviatives trigger obviative agreement only when they are the subjects of verbs,⁵ and in contemporary Ottawa, possessor obviatives trigger obviative agreement only when they are the subjects of intransitive verbs.⁶ In (6) the possessee is subject. In (7a) and (7b) the possessee is object. (7b) shows that the verb agreement reflects the notional plurality of the obviative object, while the marking of obviation on the nominal surpresses any indication of plurality.

- (6) *Wdaan'san da-zhichgewan wegdogwen enaagwen.*

'His daughter will do whatever he tells her.' (B S672 p. 171)

o-daanis-an da-izhichige-w-an
3POSS-daughter-OBV PAST-do-3-OBV

wegVdogwen CHANGE-in-aa-gwen
whatever COMP-tell-3AN OBJ-3 DUB

- (7) (a) *Nwaabmaa gwiiwzensmiwaan.*

'I see their boy.' (B S226 p. 155)

ni-waabam-aa o-gwiiwVzens-im-iwaa-an
1SUBJ-see-3AN OBJ 3POSS-boy-POSS-3PL-OBV

- (b) *Ngii-bshkobnaag wmiignan aw zhiishiibenh.*⁷

'I plucked the duck's feathers.' (B S288 p. 155)

ni-gii-bashkobin-aa-ag o-miigon-an aw zhiishiibenh
1SUBJ-PAST-pluck-3AN OBJ-3PL 3POSS-feather-OBV that duck

When the possessee is of inanimate gender the nominal itself is unmarked, but it triggers obviative subject agreement.

- (8) *Aw maa gaazhagens waawyeyaani ge wii wmakdewshkiinzhgwaan.*

'The pupil of a cat's eye is round.' (B T27:3 p. 208)

aw maa gaazhagens waawVyeyaa-ini-w
that EMPH cat round-OBV-3

ge wii o-makadewshkiinzhgwaan
EMPH 3POSS-pupil of the eye

The second type of obviation is clause bounded. We will call it *clausemate obviation*. Control in clausemate obviation is determined by the relational hierarchy: subjects control obviation in objects and objects control obviation in obliques. Clausemate obviation, like possessor obviation, is always obligatory, with one minor exception which we will discuss below.

- (9) Within a clause an animate nominal governs obviation in nominals of lower rank on the relational hierarchy.

This generalization is also true with respect to the two kinds of objects in Ojibwa—

traditionally called primary objects and secondary objects. As shown in Rhodes (to appear) primary objects are direct objects and secondary objects are syntactic (but not notional) indirect objects. Primary objects always control the obviation of secondary objects. Examples of clausemate obviation are given in (10). In (10a) the subject controls the obviation of a primary object. In (10b) the subject controls the obviation of a secondary object. In (10c) the subject controls the obviation of an oblique, in this case an instrumental. This example is taken from Southwestern Ojibwa, because Ottawa no longer allows simple obliques.⁸ Finally (10d) illustrates a primary object controlling the obviation of a secondary object.

- (10) (a) subject controller, primary object victim

Wgii-ggwejmaan dash niw ngitziiman maaba Gchi-mookmaan.

‘Then this white man asked my parents.’ (B T8.4 p.185)

o-gii-gagwejim-aa-an dash niw ni-gitiziw-im-an
3-PAST-ask-3-OBV emph that/those-OBV my-parent-POSS-OBV

maaba Gichi-mookomaan
this white man

- (b) subject controller, secondary object victim (‘duck’)

Wgii-boodaakwenan zhiishiibenyan.

‘She put the duck in the kettle.’ (B S190 p. 152)

o-gii-boodaakwe-n-an zhiishiibenyan
1SUBJ-put in kettle-AN OBJ-OBV duck-OBV

- (c) subject controller, oblique victim (‘potatoes’)

Gaawiin giwenh awiia daa-bakitehwaasiin iniw bagwaji-opiniin.

‘No one should be hit by wild potatoes.’⁹

gaawiin giwenh awiia
NEG so they say someone

daa-bakitehw-aa-siin-w iniw bagwaji-opini-an
MODAL-strike-PASS-NEG-3SUBJ that/those-OBV wild-potato-OBV

- (d) primary object controller (‘him’), secondary object victim
(‘tobacco’)

Nbiidwaa semaan. ‘I’m bringing him tobacco.’ (B S272 p. 155)

ni-biidaw-aa asemaa-an
1SUBJ-bring to-3AN OBJ tobacco-OBV

In contrast to possessor obviation, animate objects obviated by clausemate obviation trigger obviative verb agreement as shown in (10a) and (10b) above and they require obviative appositives, as exemplified in (5b) above. The agreement conditions of clausemate obviation take precedence over those of possessor obviation, so an animate nominal that is both possessed and the object of a transitive clause shows obviative object agreement, as in (11).

(11) *Wzeghaan wgitziiman.*

'He frightened his parents.' (B S294 p. 156)

o-zeegih-aa-an *o-gitziim-an*
3SUBJ-frighten-3AN OBJ-OBV 3POSS-parent-OBV

Subjects can also control obviation in inanimate clausemate objects. However, since inanimate nominals are not overtly marked for obviation, the obviative status of such nominals can only be seen through obviative agreement in relative clauses modifying them, as in (12).

(12) (a) object victim

(i) ... *gye gii-biiskang bekaandinigin niw sa gwiwnan.*

'and [right away] he put on different clothes.' (B T21:15 p. 201-2)

gye *gii-biisik-am-g*
and PAST-put on-3INAN OBJ-3SUBJ

CHANGE-*bakaanad-ini-g-in* *niw sa agwiwin-an*
REL-different-OBV-3SUBJ-PL those EMPH clothing-PL

(ii) ... *gye go wgii-gkendaanaawaa sa waa-bi-dgoshnoomgadnig niigaan.*

'and they knew what would come along in the future.'

(B T23:23 p. 204)

gye go *o-gii-gikend-am-naa-waa*
and 3SUBJ-PAST-know-3INAN OBJ-N-NON-1 PL

sa CHANGE-*wii-bi-dagoshinoo-magad-ini-g niigaan*
EMPH REL-FUT-coming-arrive-INAN-OBV-3SUBJ future

(b) oblique victim

... *gye go miinwaa wgii-wiiwkwejiinaan iw nembiiwegdinig bbagwayaanenh.*

'and she wrapped it up with a damp cloth.' (B T26:11 p. 208)

gye go miinVwaa *o-gii-wiiwkwejiin-am-n*
and and 3SUBJ-PAST-wrap-3INAN OBJ-N

iw CHANGE-*nimbiiwegad-ini-g babagwayaanenh*
that REL-damp-OBV-3SUBJ cloth

Examples such as those in (12) are problematic for analysts like Dunnigan, O'Malley, and Schwartz (1978) who want to claim that obviation is primarily functional. While there is no question that Ojibwa speakers use obviation to track reference, the fact that inanimates are obviative has no simple functional explanation and the fact that they arise in the same syntactic configurations that yield animate obviatives strongly supports the view that obviation is primarily syntactic.

There is one class of clausemate obviation cases that appears problematic for the generalization in (9). In these cases the notional object controls the obviation of

the notional subject, as exemplified in (13).

(13) *Wgii-noondaagoon wwiidgamaagnan.*

'His wife (*obv*) heard him (*prox*).'⁷ (B S360 p. 158)

o-gii-noondaw-igo-an *o-wwiidgemaagan-an*
3SUBJ-PAST-hear-INVERSE-OBV 3POSS-spouse-OBV

In all such clauses the verb contains the inverse morpheme, *-igo-*. In Perlmutter and Rhodes (forthcoming) it is extensively argued that the final grammatical relations of clauses containing inverse verbs are reversed from the notional relations. Under the Perlmutter and Rhodes analysis the generalization in (9) is also true for clauses containing inverse verbs provided we add the stipulation that it is determined on final relations.

(9') Within a clause an animate nominal governs obviation in nominals of lower rank on the relational hierarchy in final relations.

The third type of obviation is *crossclausal obviation*. In crossclausal obviation an argument in a matrix clause controls the obviation of an argument in an embedded clause. In Ottawa the controllers and the victims are limited to subjects. There are two general subclasses of crossclausal obviation. In the first, the obviation of the subject of adverbial adjunct clauses can be controlled by the subject of the matrix clause.

(14) (a) temporal clause

... *degwaagnigin zgaknamwaad iw mnoomin bboonnig waa-maamijwaad*
'... every fall they store wild rice which they eat in the winter.'⁷ (B T6:10 p. 184)

CHANGE-*dVgwaagi-ini-g-in* *zagakin-am-waa-d*
COMP-be fall-OBV-3SUBJ-ITERATIVE store-3INAN OBJ-3PL-3SUBJ

iw mVnomin *bVboon-ini-g*
that rice be winter-OBV-3SUBJ

CHANGE-*wii-RED-mij-i-waa-d*
REL-FUT-repeatedly-eat-3INAN OBJ-3PL-3SUBJ

(b) locative clause

Gii-boonii dash maa ddibew mtigoonskaanig.

'Then she landed on the shore where there were bushes.'⁷ (B T35.21 p. 220)

gii-boonii-w dash maa dVdibew mitigoonsikaa-ini-g
PAST-land-3SUBJ EMPH there shore be bushes-OBV-3SUBJ

In the second type of crossclausal obviation, the obviation of the subject of all types of complement clauses can be controlled by the subject of the matrix clause.

- (15) (a) *Maaba dash shkinwe wgii-bwaadaan wii-bi-yaanid myagi-nishnaaben waa-bi-nsigwaaajin.*

'Then this young man dreamed that foreigners (*obv*) would come to kill them.' (B T31.19)

maaba dash oshkinawe o-gii-bawaad-am-n
 this EMPH young man 3SUBJ-PAST-dream-3INAN OBJ-N
wii-bi-ayaa-ini-d mayagi-nishanaabe-an
 FUT-coming-be at-OBV-3SUBJ foreign-people-OBV

CHANGE-*wii-bi-nis-igo-waa-d-in*
 REL-FUT-coming-kill-INVERSE-3SUBJ-OBV

- (b) *Gaa wii go wgii-kenmaasiin iidig Nimkiiwnid niwi.*

'He must not have known that they (*obv*) were Thunderers.'
 (R1 4:56 p. 126)

gaa wii go o-gii-gikenim-aa-sii-an
 not EMPH 3SUBJ-PAST-know-3AN OBJ-NEG-OBV

iidig animikiiwi-ini-d niwi
 DUB be a Thunderer-OBV-3SUBJ that/those-OBV

- (c) *Gye go wgii-ggiikmaan maaba aw e-bgidenmaad nonda sa noosan gii-wiindmawaad gaa wiin da-aabnaabsinig gaa-bi-wnjibaanid, ...*

'And that one who buried my father_i (*obv*) preached to him_i (*obv*) that he_i (*obv*) should not look back to where he_i (*obv*) had come from, ...' (B T24:7 p. 206)

gye go o-gii-gagiikim-aa-an maaba aw
 and 3SUBJ-PAST-preach-3AN OBJ-OBV this that

CHANGE-*bagidenim-aa-d nonda sa n-oos-an*
 REL-hold funeral for-3AN OBJ-3SUBJ this-OBV EMPH 1POSS-father-OBV

gii-wiindamaw-aa-d gaa wiin da-aabVnaabi-ini-d
 PAST-tell-3AN OBJ-3SUBJ not MODAL-look back-OBV-3SUBJ

CHANGE-*gii-onjibaa-ini-d*
 REL-PAST-come from-OBV-3SUBJ

In the case of crossclausal obviation, there is more flexibility than with the other two types of obviation. Control of obviation into adverbial adjunct clauses is optional, as is control of obviation into certain types of complements. Examples of potential victims of crossclausal obviation remaining proximate are given in (16).

(16) (a) locative clause

... *gye go gii-dbaajmod gaa-dgoshing widi endaawaad.* (cf. (14b))

'... and she told the story as soon as she got to where they (*prox*) lived.'
(B T31:10 p. 203)

gye go *gii-dibaajimo-d* CHANGE-*gii-dagoshin-g*
and PAST-tell-3SUBJ COMP-PAST-arrive-3SUBJ

widi CHANGE-*daa-waa-d*
there REL-live-NON1-PL-3SUBJ

(b) complement clause

Gaa wii wgii-kenmaasiin manj ge-kidgwen aw noos. (cf. (15b))

'She didn't know what my father (*prox*) would say.'

(B T31:10 p. 203)

gaa wii *o-gii-gikenim-aa-sii-an* *manj*
not 3SUBJ-PAST-knew-3AN OBJ-NEG-OBV however

CHANGE-*ga-ikido-w-g-en* *aw* *n-oos*
COMP-MODAL-say-IRR-3SUBJ-DUB that 1SUBJ-father

The explanation for when potential victims remain proximate has to do with information flow. We will discuss that in some detail below. But note again that in many cases crossclausal obviation affects inanimates, and frequently the subjects of impersonal verbs. This is a significant problem for anyone espousing a view that *theraison d'être* of obviation is to help track reference. Even if the such a functional explanation accounts for some of the cases, the obviation of inanimates shows that obviation has a syntactic life of its own.

Now let us turn to an examination of the fourth case of control of obviation—that which crosses sentence boundaries. Ojibwa has a class of constructions which consist of two or more adjacent sentences forming a single syntactic unit. I will refer to such units as sentence clusters. Sentences clusters have very tight syntactic constraints and encode a few very specific semantic relationships, viz. temporal proximity, immediate cause-effect, paraphrase, and a few others. One type of sentence cluster has the first clause realizing background information in relation to a following event clause. Such sentence clusters frequently occur at the beginning of paragraphs. In this type of sentence cluster control of obviation can extend from the subject of the event sentence to the subject of the background sentence, as exemplified in (17).

(17) (a) *Jina dash eta gii-teni maa shkodeng, miinwaa gii-gweksidood.*

'[When] it (*obv*) has been in the fire for a short time, she (*prox*) flips it over.'" (B T26:6 p. 207)

(b) *Jina dash eta gii-teni. Mii dash gii-gwaawebhang.*

'[When] it (*obv*) has been there for a short time [longer], she (*prox*) flips it out of the fire.'" (B T26:8-9 p. 207)

- (17) (c) *Niw dash mtigoon gii-gziibweshkaawan megwaa yaazwaakshinnijn. "Nga-wa-kawe-niisaakbinaa," gii-nendam.*
 'Then a tree (*obv*) [started] rubbing in the middle where one part leans against another, and he (*prox*) thought, "I'll interrupt [my eating] and pull that tree down.'" (B T36:29-30 p. 223)

In Ottawa the victims of this type of obviation are largely limited to logical inanimates. I would like to claim about this case that it is a syntactic "idiom." In spite of the fact that more than one sentence is generally involved, the syntactic and semantic conditions are very restricted suggesting that a syntactic analysis is not only possible but is perhaps the most reasonable way to account for the facts.

Now let us turn to the question of optionality in the control of obviation. I will argue that where there is syntactic choice, the realization of obviation depends on the role the referents involved play in the text as a whole. The general view I will espouse is based on the fact that nominal referents in a text can be ranked by a notion of topicality similar to the one used by Givón in his studies on topic continuity (1983). The highest ranked nominals refer to the entity the text is most about or which are most important in the world of the text. The lowest ranked nominals refer to those entities the text is least about or are least important in the world of the text. Given the notion of topic rank the following generalizations obtain:

- (18) Where obviation is optional,
- Nominals representing topics of higher rank are more potent controllers and more resistant victims, but
 - Nominals representing topics of lower rank are less potent controllers and less resistant victims.

Unfortunately the determination of rank can only be made by looking at texts as a whole and the limits of a paper such as this require that examples be succinct, so for this paper I will simply assert the rank of nominals in the following examples and give the reference so the rankings can be independently verified. In (19) the contrast between high and low ranking nominals as potential controllers of obviation in adverbial clauses is exemplified. In (19a) the high ranking 'she' (= Partridge, the antagonist) controls the obviation of the subject of the locative clause. In (19b) the low ranking 'she' (= wife of the protagonist) does not control obviation in the locative clause.

- (19) (a) *Gii-boonii dash maa ddibew mtigoonskaanig. (=14b)*
 'Then she landed on the shore where it (*obv*) was bushy.'
 (B T35.21 p. 220)
- (b) ... *gye go gii-dbaajmod gaa-dgoshing widi endaawaad. (=16a)*
 '... and she told the story as soon as she got to where they (*prox*) lived.'
 (B T31:10 p. 203)

In (20) the contrast between high and low ranking nominals as potential victims of obviation is exemplified. In (20a) the high ranking 'my father' (= important person from the knower's point of view) resists the obviation. In (20b) the low ranking 'they' (= uncertain referent from the knower's point of view) appears as obviative.

- (20) (a) *Gaa wii wgii-kenmaasiin manj ge-kidgwen aw noos.* (= (16b))
 'She didn't know what my father (*prox*) would say.'
 (B T31:10 p. 203)
- (b) *Gaa wii go wgii-kenmaasiin iidig Nimkiiwnid niwi.* (= (15b))
 'He must not have known that they (*obv*) were Thunderers.'
 (R1 4:56 p. 126)

The sentence in (20a) is especially interesting. Like most such Ottawa sentences containing *gkendang* 'know,' it has copy raising to object, so it literally means: 'She didn't know him [= my father] what my father might say.' Leaving aside all the questions such a sentence might raise for non-Algonquianists regarding constraints on pronominalization, the agreement with nominal referring to the father in the matrix clause is obviative, as required by clausemate obviation, but in the complement clause the correferential nominal is proximate. Any theory of obviation that claims that it is a purely textual device without significant non-textual syntactic component founders on this sentence. Any hope of dismissing this sentence is also lost. Bloomfield collected three versions of the text in which this sentence appears. In each version the sentence is slightly different but all have copy raising with identical obviation facts. Bloomfield, himself, seems to have recognized the significance of this sentence because he also elicited a version (S665 p.171), but because of the verb form in that version, it is morphologically ambiguous on the question of obviation in the 'know' clause.

There are even some cases in which clausemate obviation fails. In such cases the potential victim is of high topic rank but is grammatically inanimate. A contrasting pair of sentences is given in (21). In (21a) the object is a low ranking nominal 'clothing,' an incidental prop. It can be seen to be obviative by the obviative agreement it triggers in the modifying participle, *nyaangnin' gin* 'those (*obv*) which are light'. In (21b), from a text about making bread, the object of the purpose clause is 'bread,' a high ranking nominal, which fails undergo obviation, even though there is a potential clausemate controller. Again this is seen in the proximate agreement of the modifying participle, *menpogok* 'that which is good tasting.'

- (21) (a) *Mii dash gii-biiskang nyaangnin' gin gwiwnan.* (not *nyaangngin*)
 'Then he put on some light clothes (*obv*).' (B T19.13 p. 200)
- (b) *Miinwaa mtigoons wgii-nokaason gii-bshanzhehang iw
 bkwezghan menpogok.* (not *menpogdinig*)
 'And she used a stick to knock the ashes off that tasty bread (*prox*).'
 (B T26:9 p. 203)

An extension of discourse level constraints on obviation into stricter syntactic domains, like that shown in (21b) make sense in morphological terms. Suppressing obviation in grammatical inanimates is morphologically subtle; i.e. unlike grammatical animates grammatical inanimates never bear any overt mark of obviation. The obviative status of a grammatical inanimate can only be seen if there is an intransitive relative clause modifying it.

In at least one syntactic configuration discourse level topic ranking can block clausemate obviation in grammatical animates. When there is a fronted NP that is being brought up as a new high ranking topic, control of obviation is

blocked, as in (22).¹⁰

- (22) (a) *Bezbig dash go wesiinh sa wgii-zhiingwenmaawaan sa giw getzijik ji-zhwenmaanid niw sa wdooshkniigiimwaan.*

'As for one creature (*prox*), parents hate to have him (*obv*) bless their young folks (*obv*).' (B T23:10 p. 203)

- (b) *Mii dash gaa-naad aw getzid gaa wiin aw mandaagnini da-daapnaasig sa sha waa-wiindmaagod.*

'The parent told [the child] that as for the fancy man (*prox*) they (*prox*) should not accept what he tells them. (B T23.12 p. 203-4)

The explanations that I given so far account for most of the obviative phenomena seen in Ottawa. However, there remains the matter of two-obviative sentences and the relation between obviation and verb forms containing the inverse marker. In Algonquianist terminology verbs containing an inverse marker, in our examples-*igo-*, are called INVERSE, those that do not contain an inverse marker are called DIRECT. Most Algonquianists point to facts like those in (23) to argue that obviation determines the distribution of inverse verb forms.

- (23) (a) *Wgii-noondawaan wwiidgemaagnan.*

'He heard his wife (*obv*).'

*'His wife (*obv*) heard him.'

o-gii-noondaw-aa-an *o-wiidgemaagan-an*
3SUBJ-PAST-hear-3AN OBJ-OBV 3POSS-spouse-OBV

- (b) *Wgii-noondaagoon wwiidgemaagnan.*

*'He heard his wife (*obv*).'

'His wife (*obv*) heard him.' (B S360 p. 158)

o-gii-noondaw-igo-an *o-wiidgemaagan-an*
3SUBJ-PAST-hear-INVERSE-OBV 3POSS-spouse-OBV

The standard conclusion is that verb morphology follows from obviation, via a principle like (24).

- (24) The inverse is used if and only if both the subject and object of a clause are third person animate and the (notional) subject is (possessor) obviative.

(24) will account for the distribution verb forms with respect to possible readings. However, it has gone largely unnoticed that there are many readily available examples of clauses which directly violate the conditions of (24): both arguments are third person animate and the notional subject is possessor obviative, but a non-inverse verb form is used, and vice versa. Some examples are given in (25).

- (25) (a) direct verb with obviative (notional) subject

Wgii-gnahmawaan niw wgwisan gaa wii nkwetwaasig niw bi-ggwejmigod mandaagninwan iw ji-zhwenmigod.

'He_i (*prox*) warned_{DIRECT} his_i son_j (*obv*) not to answer_{DIRECT} the fancy man_k (*obv*) when he_k (*obv*) asks_{INVERSE} to bless_{INVERSE} him_j (*obv*).' (B T31:6 p. 213)

- (b) inverse verb with obviative (notional) object

Wiiikiwenhen wgii-dkamgoon niw gnebgoon..

'The snake_i (*obv*) bit_{INVERSE} his_i friend_j (*obv*).' (B S359 p. 158)

The relationship between obviatives and inverses in clauses like those in (23) is mediated through a constraint like that in (26).

- (26) **Possessor Clausemate Constraint.** No clause is grammatical in which two clausemate nominals are in a configuration such that one is coreferent with the possessor of the other and the possessee would control obviation of the coreferent of the possessor in final relations.

The Possessor Clausemate Constraint also accounts for grammaticality facts like those in (27).

- (27) *Ngii-mkamwaa kiwenziinh niw wgwisan.*

'I found the old man_i's son_j for him_i.'

*'I found the old man_i for his_i son_j.'

<i>ni-gii-mak-amaw-aa</i>	<i>akiwenziinh</i>
1SUBJ-PAST-find-BEN-3AN OBJ	old man
<i>niw</i>	<i>o-gwis-an</i>
that/those-OBV	3POSS-son-OBV

As discussed in Rhodes (to appear) Ojibwa ditransitive clauses always have the recipient, beneficiary, etc. as the final primary object and the patient as the final secondary object. Furthermore as discussed above in connection with example (10d), primary objects outrank secondary objects with respect to the relational hierarchy and control of obviation. Thus the reading in which the possessee, 'son' is secondary object is possible, but the reading in which the possessor, 'old man' is secondary object is impossible. This exactly parallels the facts of (23). Therefore we claim that the distribution of obviation and the distribution of inverse verb forms are independent up to the point that other constraints come into play. For example, the ungrammatical readings of (27), and therefore the apparent limitations on mutual distribution, follow from the Possessor Clausemate Constraint (26).

In conclusion there is one final matter that needs to be discussed. We are proposing a system in which most of the facts of the distribution of obviatives follow from syntactic constraints, adjusted by discourse level constraints. However, a proponent of the primacy of discourse constraints will point to passages like that in (28) in support of a functional view of obviation.

- (28) *Ge wii maaba shkiniikwe gii-ni-giiwe widi endzhi-nokiid.*
Wgii-ggwejmigoon niw mshkikiiwninwan endgwen gaa-
waabmaagwen niw shkinwen.
 "Ngii-waabmaa," *wgii-naan.*

'Then the woman_i (*prox*) went back to where she_i (*prox*) worked.

'The doctor_j (*obv*) [she worked for] asked_{INVERSE} her_i (*prox*) if she_i (*prox*) had seen_{DIRECT} the young man_k (*obv*).'

'"I saw him," she_i (*prox*) told_{DIRECT} him_j (*obv*).' (B T30:32-34 p. 211)

In our account a discourse pattern of this sort, which is very common in Ojibwa, reflects a communication strategy in which final grammatical relations in a clause are aligned according to topic rank unless other constraints contravene. This means that if the notional subject bears a higher topic rank than the notional object, then a simple transitive clause is used since the final relations match the initial relations. But if the notional subject bears a lower topic rank than the notional object, then the final grammatical relations of the clause are reversed and the verb is marked inverse. In either case the obviation facts follow from the final grammatical relations. The passage in (28) has topics ranked as in (29).

- (29) woman > doctor > young man

In this analysis the clauses that have the woman as notional subject are a simple transitives, the notional subject is the final subject, and the clauses have direct verb forms. But in the first clause of the second sentence the doctor is the notional subject, the woman is the notional object, and the clause is reversed—the woman is the final subject and the verb form is inverse. Another example that works the same way can be seen in (25). The topic hierarchy for (25a) is:

- (30) old man (= he_i) > son > fancy man

In summary this paper has surveyed the high points of a syntax oriented analysis of obviation in the Ojibwa dialect of Ottawa. I hope to have shown that there are data which are difficult to explain for those who claim that obviation is primarily a discourse phenomenon or who want to propose strictly functional analyses. On the other hand we have also seen that without taking into consideration the topic structure of the context in which a sentence occurs no syntactic account can work either.

NOTES

¹In some dialects of Cree and Ojibwa inanimates can also be marked as obviative under certain circumstances, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

²This characterization assumes the analysis of clauses containing inverse verb forms argued for in Perlmutter and Rhodes (forthcoming).

³Some of the western dialects of Ojibwa have a plural obviative suffix, *-ah* and thus show a number contrast in the obviative.

⁴The apparatus for citing examples from published sources is as follows: The sources are: R1 = Kaye and Piggot (1971), R2 = Piggot and Kaye (1973), B = Bloomfield (1958). B contains both texts and sentences these are distinguished by T vs. S. The next number is the number of the text or example sentence. If the ci-

tation is from a text the number of the sentence following the punctuation of the published version is given preceded by a colon and the page number is given. In the case of R1 and R2, I have listened to the original tapes from which the texts were transcribed and restored the taped version if there is a difference.

⁵Some Ojibwa dialects have special verb forms used for a possessor obviated animate object with a non-third subject and possessor ascension with third person subject. Some also have obviative agreement in the former cases.

⁶There are citations of the appropriate transitive verb forms in the literature. Except for conjunct TAs, such verb forms are totally rejected by modern speakers.

⁷In Bloomfield this is wrongly transcribed without the possessive prefix on *wmiignan*. Informants all interpret this sentence as it is given here.

⁸The variety of Ottawa recorded in Bloomfield (1958) allowed instruments, e.g. S407 p. 159. Contemporary Walpole Island speakers reject such sentences.

⁹This example is from Kegg (1983), text 24, sentence 10, page 85.

¹⁰This paper does not exhaust the details of obviation in Ottawa. There are pairs of sentences which are structurally identical but differ in obviation. E.g.

(31) (a) ... *gye go wgii-kendaanaawaa sa waa-bi-dgoshnoomgadnig niigaan.*

'... and they knew what (*obv*) was going to come in the future.' (B T23:10 p. 203)

(b) *Aanii-sh mii sa go gii-kendmowaad iidig gaa-zhiwebak.*

'Well, they must have known what (*prox*) had happened.' (R1 2.41 p. 117)

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