

The Syntax of Algonquian Ethnopoetics

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Having an understanding of Algonquian syntax is a great boon when analyzing a text; conversely, the discipline of going through a long text, working on clause after clause, deepens one's understanding of constructional patterns in the language and the uses to which they can be put.¹

To illustrate the interconnectedness of syntactic analysis and textual work I will focus on two practical problems. When editing a manuscript lacking punctuation, how does the editor of an Algonquian text know, first, where one clause stops and another begins, and second, what kind of clauses the two adjacent clauses are? The question of clause boundaries is especially acute if one chooses, as I have, to use a modified version of Hymes's ethnopoetic style, in which texts are presented in very short lines, roughly one clause per line (cf. Hymes 1981, 1987). An advantage of this convention is that it throws into relief the word order patterns of a language. Once a text is so edited, it is fairly easy to scan it quickly and spot instances of verb-subject order or object-verb order or other patterns. But as will be seen below it is not always immediately obvious whether a particular NP should be placed with the verb that precedes it, giving verb-subject order, or whether the NP stands instead in construction with the verb that follows, giving, say, object-verb order. The editorial decision made for each line of a text is in effect a claim about the syntax of that clause, and the word order patterns established for the text may provide data for cross-linguistic comparison of typological universals. For this and other reasons, it is important to try to get the syntax of these texts right.

1. The present essay was prompted by the theme of Oral Tradition and Interdisciplinarity, proposed by the organisers of the 37th Algonquian Conference. As a linguist who spends part of her time working with written versions of oral literature, I was led by their theme to reflect on the relationship between two subdisciplines of linguistic work: editing texts and analyzing syntax. I suggest that these two activities, which may at first seem quite far removed from one another, can in fact be closely intertwined.

THE MESKWAKI CORPUS OF SYLLABIC TEXTS

Locating clausal boundaries is particularly challenging if one works with only a written record, bereft of the prosodic and pausal information that helps listeners parse a stream of words into clausal units. For those of us who work on the corpus of Meskwaki texts collected by Michelson in the early 20th century, the task is even more daunting, because the texts are written in the Meskwaki syllabary, which does not indicate any punctuation except for a word boundary symbol (Goddard 1996).

A fragment of a text by Alfred Kiyana (1912:3-4) in the Meskwaki syllabary is given in transliteration in (1). The line breaks in (1) correspond to the line breaks in the original.

- (1) ...ma na ko . ke ta ne
 se na na ne mya na la wa na
 wa i wa . a mo ga ma ga ni
 we ta la ni ki [end of page]
 o tti ni wa ni . ne te na ba wa
 i na tti mo wa . e i na tti . o na
 be ma ni

What are the steps that an editor must take in order to get from the original manuscript version in (1) to a more accessible version as in (2), or (3), with its morphological analysis?²

- (2) (a) “*manakohi keta-nesena-na ‘nemya-na-hpawa-na-wa,’ iwa.*
 (b) *‘amokwa mahkwani,*
 (c) *we-ta-paniki oči-niwani,*
 (d) *netena-hpawa,’ ina-čimowa,”*
 (e) *e-hina-či ona-pe-mani.*
- (a) “You know, our daughter said, ‘I had a bad dream about him.’
 (d) She said, ‘I dreamed

2. Abbreviations in the examples: 21= 1st person inclusive plural, AOR = aorist, CH.CONJ = changed conjunct, EMPH = emphatic, EXCL = exclamation, FUT = future, IC = Initial Change, IND.IND = independent indicative, INTERR = interrogative, ITER = iterative, LOC = locative, NEG = negative, O = object, OBV = obviative, PART = participle, PERF = perfective, PL = plural, POSS = possessor, PRIOR = prioritive, QUOT = quotative, REDUP = reduplication, SUBJUNCT = subjunctive. Textual abbreviations: A = Anonymous (1918), L = text in Dahlstrom (1996), N = text in Dahlstrom (2003c), O = Kiyana (1914), R= Michelson (1925), W = Kiyana (1913), Wit = text in Dahlstrom (2003b).

WHERE ARE THE CLAUSE BOUNDARIES?

With these preliminary considerations out of the way, let us turn to the question of determining the clause boundaries in an unparsed stream of text. As mentioned above, I present the texts I have edited and published (e.g., Dahlstrom 2003b, 2003c) in a style somewhat influenced by the ethnopoetic work of Dell Hymes. Hymes proposes a detailed hierarchy of narrative structure; for our present purposes we need only consider his smallest unit, the line. Hymes (1987:21) says about lines that "... predications, verbs, go far toward segmenting a verse into lines." Let us then try to segment some Meskwaki text into lines, taking a line to be in the usual case a verb with its arguments and (non-clausal) modifiers.

It is often very easy to identify a verb and its arguments and consequently to establish the boundary between clauses. For example, (4) is the first line of a text:

- (4) *našawaye nekoti neniwa okwisani e-hmahkate-wi-na-či*
našawaye nekoti neniwa o-kwis-ani e-h-mahkate-wi-n-a-či
 long.ago one man 3-son-OBV AOR-make.fast-3>3'/AOR
 'Long ago a certain man made his son fast.' L1

The first verb encountered is transitive; the preceding two NPs are clearly the subject and object of that transitive verb. It is hard to imagine any objection to placing the two NPs, the adverb *našawaye* 'long ago', and the verb together in a single clause.

It is also an easy task to identify clauses when one encounters a string of verbs, each on its own constituting a separate clause:

- (5) *ki-ši-ča-kihkama-či,*
ki-ši-ča-kihkama-či
 PERF-smoke.all 3/CH.CONJ

e-hapihapiči.
e-h-apih-api-či
 AOR-REDUP-sit-3/AOR

 'After he had smoked it up,
 he just sat there.' L89-90

In (5) neither the first verb nor the second takes any external arguments, so each clause is comprised of only a verb. (See, however, (14) and (15) below for more difficult cases, where forms that appear to be verbs are actually arguments of another verb.)

The task of establishing clause boundaries can be greatly aided by the appearance of second-position enclitics, such as the quotative =*ipi* (printed in boldface in both lines of (6)):

- (6) *(po·hkwipi -ki·yo·te·neniwiniwani.)*
 po·hkw-i=**ipi** -ki·yo·te·neniwi-niwani
 broken-=QUOT -be.snake-3'/IND.IND
- o·sanipi* *ahpene·čimeko* “...” *e·hikoči,*
 ow-o·s-ani=**ipi** *ahpene·či=meko*“...” *e·h-Ø·ekoči,*
 3-father-OBV=QUOT always=EMPH “...” say.thus.to 3'-3/AOR
- ‘(It (obv) was half snake, it’s said.)
 His father (obv), it’s said, always told him, “...” NICD

Notice that the verb of the first line of (6) is inflected for an obviative subject, and that the noun at the beginning of the following line is obviative. But – even if we were tempted to construe *o·sani* ‘his father’ with the verb ‘be a half-snake’ (which in the context is admittedly not likely) – the presence of the quotative enclitic on *o·sani* ‘his father’ would prevent us from placing the NP on the previous line as a post-verbal subject. The second position enclitic obliges the editor of the text to start a new line.

In examples (4-6) we have seen that it is sometimes easy to establish clause boundaries. We will now examine some cases which are more challenging.

- (7) *pye·ya·niči* ***o·sani,***
 IC-pya·niči ow-o·s-ani
 IC-come-3'/CH.CONJ 3-father-OBV
- e·ha·čimoha·či* *e·na·hpawa·či.*
 e·h-a·čimoh-a·či IC-ena·hpawa--či
 AOR-tell-3>3'/AOR IC-dream.thus-3/PART/OBLIQUE.HEAD
- ‘When his father (obv) came,
 he told him (obv) what he had dreamed.’ L14-15

In (7) the possessed noun *o·sani* ‘his father’, in boldface, could in fact be construed with either the preceding or the following verb (unlike the context for *o·sani* in (6)). I place *o·sani* in the first line of (7), as a post-verbal subject in the temporal adverbial clause, and gloss the object inflection on the verb of the next clause as coreferential with *o·sani*.

Let us, however, also consider an alternative analysis of (7): putting *o·sani* as the object of the second clause, preceding the verb, and inter-

preting the changed conjunct verb in the first clause as having a pronominal subject coreferential with *o·sani*. In other words, ‘when he_j came, he_i told his_i father_j...’ This second, alternative analysis feels very wrong, and it is useful to try to articulate the reasons behind this intuition. One might propose, as a first hypothesis, that the awkwardness arises from the pronominal reference to the father preceding the appearance of the full NP: that there is a rule against, or at least a preference to avoid, backward anaphora. (The noun *o·sani* in (7) is not the first mention of the father in the story.) However, inspection of other contexts reveals that it is in fact possible to have a clause with a lexical NP follow a clause with coreferential pronominal inflection:

- (8) *ke·keya·hmeko* *e·hča·ka·mowa·či*,
 ke·keya·h=meko e·h·ča·ka·mo·wa·či
 finally=EMPH AOR-all.flee-3P/AOR
- waninawe* *e·hina·mowa·či* *aša·haki*.
 waninawe e·h·ena·mo·wa·či aša·h·aki
 all.directions AOR-flee.thither-3P/AOR Sioux-PL

‘Finally they all fled,
 the Sioux fled in all directions.’ Wit. 6A-B

In (8) the third person plural inflection of the verb of the first clause ‘all flee’ is a pronominal subject coreferential with the lexical NP subject of the second clause *aša·haki* ‘Sioux (plural)’.

Sentence (8) is also an excellent illustration of a particular characteristic of Meskwaki rhetorical style: narrators tend to spread the description of an event over more than one clause, instead of packing everything together in a single predication. The first clause in (8) tells us the Sioux *all* fled, and the second specifies the direction of their motion. We will have occasion to invoke this rhetorical pattern again, in the discussion of (9) below.

Returning to the question of where to place the clause boundary in (7), we may conclude that there is no general constraint against backward anaphora which would rule out taking the noun *o·sani* ‘his father’ to be part of the second, main clause. Rather, a more telling objection to such an analysis is that the positions to the left of a verb are employed for specialized discourse functions: either to indicate that an NP functions as a new topic, or that the NP is in focus in some way (cf. Dahlstrom 1993,

1995, 2003a).³ There is no reason to think that *o·sani* in (7) bears either of these discourse functions. Rather, the unmarked position for subjects and objects that are neither topic nor focus is to the right of the verb. Analyzing *o·sani* as the post-verbal subject of the first clause accords with this pattern, which may also be seen in the temporal adverbial clauses in (21) and (22) below.

Sentence (9), like (7) above, contains an NP which could be construed semantically with either the preceding or following verb: *mi·ša·tesiweni* ‘finery, fancy clothes’, given in boldface. An added complication in (9) is the morphosyntax of the verb of the first clause.:

- (9) *o·ni mehtose·neniwaki e·hma·watenike·wači **mi·ša·tesiweni**,*
o·ni mehtose·neniw·aki e·h·ma·watenike·-wa·či mi·ša·tesiweni
 &.then person-PL AOR-gather.things-3P/AOR finery
- nano·pehkameko e·hki·ši·ma·watenamowa·či.*
nano·pehka=meko e·h·ki·ši—ma·waten·amowa·či
 large.amount=EMPH AOR-PERF—gather-3P>0/AOR

‘And then the people got together some fancy clothes,
 they collected a very large amount.’ L118-119

The verb of the first clause in (9) is a derived Animate Intransitive verb, a general goal or antipassive form, *ma·watenike-* ‘gather things’. Such a verb does not require an object – indeed, some Algonquianists might assert that it cannot or should not take an object. The verb of the second clause is the basic Transitive Inanimate stem, *ma·waten-* ‘gather’, here in construction with a quantifier *nano·pehka* ‘large amount’, construed with the object of the verb. It might at first appear that *mi·ša·tesiweni* ‘finery, fancy clothes’ should be located in the second clause, in construction with the transitive verb ‘gather’, since the verb of the first clause is a derived intransitive. Nevertheless, I have placed *mi·ša·tesiweni* with the first clause of (9), even though such an editorial decision produces a mismatch between the clausal syntax and the verbal morphology.

Why not place *mi·ša·tesiweni* ‘finery, fancy clothes’ in the second clause of (9)? There are at least three reasons, in my view, against doing so. First, as we observed in the discussion of (7), the positions for NPs to

3. A constituent immediately to the left of the verb may also express the syntactic relation of oblique, but *o·sani* in (7) is not an oblique argument of either verb. *waninawe* in the second clause of (8) is an example of an oblique argument.

the left of a verb are reserved for new topics and argument focus, and *mi-ša-tesiweni* seems not to bear either of those discourse functions here. Second, such an analysis would create an NP with odd internal syntax (in Meskwaki, quantifiers nearly always precede head nouns). The third reason is that the resulting clause structure would have too much information packed into the second clause. The style that we saw in the clauses of (8), parcelling out a bit of information in each clause, also seems to be at play here. The first clause says that the people *gathered* things, with an amplification that the things gathered were of the finery-sort, and the second clause tells us that they succeeded in gathering a large amount.

As a final observation in this section, it should be noted that a frequent construction in Meskwaki texts is the use of a clause-external topic NP, preceding all other material in the clause. Some of these topic NPs, particularly ones without syntactic connection to the material which follows, seem to deserve a line of text on their own, such as *aša-haki wi-nwa-wa* ‘the Sioux themselves’, in boldface below:

- (10) ***aša-haki*** ***wi-nwa-wa***,
Sioux.PL they

pa-hkawaniki,
[fog].lift 0'/CH.CONJ

ayo-h=či-hi *kehči-ke-no-te-hi!*
here=EXCL great-longhouse

‘And as for the Sioux,
when the fog lifted,
lo and behold, there was a great longhouse!’ Wit. 5H-J

Less frequently encountered is the converse construction: an “anti-topic” (Chafe 1976, Lambrecht 1994), or right dislocated NP, occurring to the right of all other material, such as *maneto-waki* ‘spirits’ (in boldface):

- (11) *mehto-čimeko* *pi-tike* *e-howi-kiwa-či* ***ketašina-ke-pena***
mehto-či=meko pi-tike e-h-owi-ki-wa-či ke-tašina-ke--pena
like=EMPH inside AOR-dwell 3P/PART/LOC 2-sing.[there]-21/IND

maneto-waki
maneto-w-aki
spirit-PL

‘It is just as if we are singing inside [the lodges] where the manitous live.’
O136A

(‘It is just as if we are singing inside the lodges where they live, the spirits.’)

Placing an anti-topic on its own line emphasizes its syntactic independence from the clause proper.⁴

ARGUMENTS THAT LOOK LIKE VERBS

The heuristic developed so far for locating clause boundaries has proceeded in two steps: first, identify a verb, which is the core element of a clause; second, look for the arguments of that verb. But in following this procedure one must be take special care to consider the proper analysis of participles, the verb forms used in relative clauses. A participle can itself be an argument of the next highest verb, as in (12), where *me·hkate·wi·ta* ‘the one that was fasting’, given in boldface, is the object of ‘kill’:

- (12) ***me·hkate·wi·tapi*** *nes-ekokwe-ni* *mahkwani*
 IC-mahkate·wi·-ta=ipi nes-ekokwe-ni mahkw-ani
 IC-fast-3/PART/3=QUOT kill-3’>3/INTERR bear-OBV
 ‘They say the one who was fasting must have been killed by a bear.’ L116

Meskwaki participles agree with the head of the relative clause (Goddard 1987). In (12) the final vowel *-a* on the participle indicates that the head of the relative clause is proximate animate singular. The proximate animate singular morphology makes participles like the one in (12) easy to spot, because there are no other conjunct order verb forms which end in a final *-a*. Relative clauses in which the head belongs to a different grammatical category are more challenging, however, because the form of the participle may be identical to other inflected forms of the verb. For example, when the head of the relative clause corresponds to an oblique argument of the lower verb, the participle ends in short *-i*, as in (13), making such participles homophonous with the changed conjunct, used for ‘when’ clauses referring to a past point in time (cf. (22) below):

- (13) *we·ta·paniki*
 IC-ota-pan-niki
 IC-be.dawn.from-0’/PART/OBLIQUE

4. My treatment of a subset of NPs as topics and anti-topics with special syntax implies a claim about the syntactic status of other NPs in construction with verbs, namely that NPs not identified as clause external topics or clause external anti-topics are ordinary arguments of the verb (subject, object, second object, oblique).

‘[the direction] from which it is dawn; east’ (in line (c) of (2))

Other problems for analysis arise with a subset of the participles with an oblique head, those where the oblique argument expresses stationary location. Such forms require the aorist prefix *e-h-* instead of the usual Initial Change applying to the vowel of the first syllable of the verb. The locative participles are thus formally identical to verbs inflected in the aorist conjunct, the mode used for main clauses in narrative texts. It is very common to find strings of verbs bearing the aorist prefix, as in (14), where the editor of the text might at first assume that these verbs represent two clauses in apposition:

- (14) *i-ya·h e·hpya·či e·howi·kiwa·či.*
i-ya·h e·h-pya--či e·h-owi·ki-wa·či
 there AOR-come-3/AOR AOR-dwell-3P/PART/LOC

‘He came to the place where they lived.’ L201
 [not ‘he came there and they dwelled’]

But in fact the syntax of (14) is quite different: the main clause verb is ‘come’, which takes an oblique argument expressed by a (discontinuous) relative clause ‘there ... where they dwelled’. We can reject the alternative hypothesis, that (14) is composed of two clauses in apposition, ‘he came there [and] they dwelled’ for two reasons: glossing (14) in such a way does not make sense in the context of the story and, more importantly, ‘dwell’ is subcategorized for an oblique locative argument. Trying to read (14) as two conjoined clauses produces an incomplete predication. Recognizing that the “missing” oblique of ‘dwell’ is the head of a relative clause, the argument that has been relativized upon, is the crucial clue for understanding the syntax of this line.

An additional example of the same phenomenon:

- (15) *e·hapiniči i·nini še·škesi·he·hani i·na e·hnana·hapiči.*
e·h-api-niči i·n-ini še·škesi·he·h-ani i·na e·h-nana·hapi-či
 AOR-sit-3/PART/LOC that-OBV y.woman-OBVthat AOR-sit.down-3/AOR

‘That [guy] sat down where that young woman was sitting.’ L266
 [not ‘that young woman sat and that guy sat down’]

The final verb of (15), ‘sit down’, is the main clause verb and the first word of (15), the verb ‘sit’, is part of a relative clause expressing the location at which *i·na* ‘that [person]’ sat down. The alternative hypothesis, taking the two clauses to be conjoined, produces a reading in which both

verbs are missing an oblique argument. The relative clause analysis of (15), on the other hand, has no missing arguments. The oblique argument of ‘sit down’ is the relative clause ‘where that young woman was sitting’; the oblique argument of ‘sit’ is the argument which has been relativized on to form the relative clause.

MATRIX VS. COMPLEMENT CLAUSES

A slightly different issue in establishing clause boundaries concerns the relationship between main and complement clauses. Complement clauses nearly always occur to the right of the matrix verb in Meskwaki.⁵ Sometimes the complement clause is on the right edge of the matrix clause, as in (16), where the matrix object *o·sani* ‘his father’ precedes the complement clause, which is indicated by brackets:

- (16) *e·ha·čimoha·či* *o·sani* [*e·šawiči*]
 e·h·a·čimoh·a·či ow·o·s·ani IC·ešawi·či
 AOR-tell.to-3>3'/AOR3-father-OBV IC-fare.thus-3/PART/OBL

‘He told his father what had happened to him.’ N8G

Given examples such as (16), it might be tempting to assume that complement clauses are always found on the extreme right edge of the matrix clause, which would mean that any NP occurring to the right of the lower clause should be analyzed as part of the lower clause as well. But that assumption turns out to be false. The relative order of almost all the post-verbal constituents varies, including that of complement clauses.⁶ A complement clause can precede the object of the main verb, as in (17), or precede both the matrix object and the matrix subject, as in (18). Brackets in (17) and (18) indicate the clause boundaries of the embedded clauses.

5. Note, however, that oblique arguments, occurring to the left of the verb, may in some cases be embedded clauses, as in the quoted material in (2). The generalization that complement clauses occur to the right of the matrix verbs holds for complement clauses which are not obliques.

6. If a first object and a second object of a ditransitive verb are both expressed with NPs to the right of the verb, the first object nearly always precedes the second object. This seems to be the only syntactic generalization possible about the relative order of post-verbal constituents.

- (17) *ano·hka·na·ta·we* [wi·hni·mihenakwe] *kesese·hena·na*
 ano·hka·n·a·ta·we wi·h·ni·mih·enakwe ke·sese·h·ena·na
 give.O.job.of 21>3/IMP FUT-cause.to.dance-3>1/AOR 2-elder.bro-1P.POSS
 ‘Well, let’s get our elder brother to give us a dance!’ W983
- (18) *a·kwi wi·to·hkawa·čini* [i·tepi wi·ha·niči] *owi·wani i·na neniwa*
 a·kwi wi·to·hkaw·a·čini i·tepi wi·h·a·niči ow·i·w·ani i·na neniwa
 not allow-3>3'/NEG there FUT-go-3'/AOR 3-wife-OBV that man
 ‘That man doesn’t allow his wife to go there.’ R310.39

Consequently, embedded clauses are another context in which care must be taken to get the clause boundaries right.

IDENTIFYING CLAUSE TYPE

The discussion so far has addressed the first practical problem set out in the introduction of this paper, the problem of locating clause boundaries in a manuscript lacking punctuation. Once the clause boundaries are established, however, the editor of the text is faced with a second practical problem, that of determining clause type. By ‘clause type’ I mean the syntactic and semantic relationship between two adjacent clauses. Are the two clauses conjoined in a co-ordinate structure? Is one a complement clause, subcategorized for as an argument by the verb of the other clause? Or is one an adjunct clause modifying the other, giving information about the time of or reason for the action of the main clause? The discussion below considers the role played by inflectional morphology in indicating clause type. A Meskwaki verb may be inflected for the person/number features of the subject and object in one of more than 20 inflectional paradigms, known as modes.⁷ Some of the verbal modes in Meskwaki are extremely specialized: a verb so inflected unambiguously announces the sort of clause one is dealing with. Other modes, in particular the aorist conjunct, have such a wide range of uses that it requires some reflection and analysis to know whether the clause containing an aorist conjunct verb is a main clause, a complement clause, or an adjunct clause.

Let us first consider some examples where the verbal mode tells us unambiguously what the syntactic and semantic relations are between two clauses. Adjunct clauses expressing time – that is, locating the time of the

7. See Goddard 1994 for an overview of the Meskwaki modes.

action in the main clause in relation to some other point in time – typically appear before the main clause and contain verbs inflected with one of four modes illustrated in (19)-(23). In (19) the verb of the temporal clause is in the subjunctive, used for ‘when’ clauses referring to a point in time in the future; the subjunctive is also used for non-counterfactual ‘if’ clauses.

- (19) *ne-wake*,
 ne-w-ake
 see-1>3/SUBJUNCT

ni·hkehči-neškima-wa
 n-i-h-kehči—neškim-a-wa
 1-FUT-greatly—scold-[1]>3/IND.IND.

 ‘When I see him, I’m really going to scold him.’ N7G

The following sentence contains a temporal clause with a verb inflected in the iterative, used for events occurring or potentially occurring on multiple occasions:

- (20) *o-nina-hkači* *mena-škono-ni* *e-ka-wa-tamakwini*,
 o-ni=na-hkači mena-škono-ni IC-aka-wa-t-amakwini
 and.then=again fresh.meat IC-want-21>0/ITER

ki·hna-kwa-pena
 k-i-h-na·kwa--pena
 2-FUT-leave-21/IND.IND

 ‘And then, whenever we want meat, we will set out.’ W303AB

The first clause of (21) contains a verb inflected in the prioritive: the action of the main clause occurs before the event described in the adjunct clause.

- (21) *me-hmeko* *-nehki-nikwe* *ki-šeso-ni*
 IC-me-h-=meko -nehki-nikwe ki-šesw-ani
 IC-before-=emph -go.down-3'/PRIOR sun-OBV

e-hnana-hišinowa-či
 e-h-nana-hišin-owa-či
 AOR-lie.down-3P/AOR

 ‘Even before the sun went down they went to bed.’ W132B

It is much more common in narratives, however, to find temporal clauses referring to a point of time in the past, a function for which the changed conjunct mode is used. We have already seen several examples

of the changed conjunct above (5, 7, 10); an additional example is given here:

- (22) *to·hki·či* *metemo·ka,*
 IC-to·hki--či metemo·ka
 IC-wake.up-3/CH.CONJ old.woman
- awiya·tokemeko* *o·šiseme·hani* *e·hapihapiniči*
awiya·toke=meko *ow·o·šiseme·h·ani* *e·h·apih·api·niči*
 still.the.same=EMPH 3-grandchild-OBV AOR-REDUP-sit-3'/AOR
- ‘When the old woman woke up, her grandchild was still sitting in the same place.’ W91J

In each of (19)-(22) the temporal adjunct clauses are followed by the main clause. What generalizations can be made about the inflectional mode of the main clause verbs? In (21) and (22) the main clause verb is inflected in the aorist conjunct mode, used for main clauses in narrative contexts. (19) and (20) are direct quotes within a narrative, so in these examples the main clauses are inflected in the independent indicative, used in non-narrative contexts for non-negated assertions.

The aorist conjunct is used not only for main clauses in narratives, but also in various adjunct clauses, including clauses expressing the cause or reason for the action or state reported in the main clause, e.g.,

- (23) *a·kwi* *wi·ša·pene·ya·nini,*
a·kwi *wi·ša·pene--ya·nini*
 not be.hungry-1/NEG
- e·hše·kesiya·ni*
e·h·še·kesi·ya·ni
 AOR-be.frightened-1/AOR
- ‘I wasn’t hungry, because I was frightened.’ A42G

In this case, a non-narrative main clause, here inflected in the negative mode, is followed by the reason clause, with a verb in the aorist conjunct.

Sentence (24) is similar in structure: a main clause reporting an event (“going there”) followed by an adjunct clause expressing reason:

- (24) *i·tepi* *e·ha·či,*
i·tepi *e·h·a--či*
 there AOR-go-3/AOR

<i>e-hanemimeko</i>	<i>-a-hkwe-wite-he-či</i>
e-h-anemi=meke	-a-hkwe-wite-he-či
AOR-become=EMPH	-feel.angry-3/AOR

‘He went there, because he was really starting to feel angry.’ N7F

But in (24) the main clause is in a narrative context, so its verb is inflected with the aorist conjunct, the same verbal paradigm used for the verb of the adjunct clause. In such cases one must rely on context to determine the correct interpretation, and on the constructional pattern illustrated in (23), which demonstrates that reason clauses often occur to the right of a main clause.

The aorist conjunct is also used for the verbs of complement clauses, as in the following examples:

(25)	<i>nemata-kwe-neta</i>	<i>e-hanenwi-ya-ni</i>
	ne-mata-kwe-net-a	e-h-anenwi--ya-ni
	1-enjoy-[1]>0/IND.IND	AOR-swim-1/AOR

‘I enjoyed swimming’ A14C

(26)	<i>e-hkehke-nemekowa-či</i>	<i>e-haka-wa-tamowa-či</i>
	e-h-kehke-nem-ekowa-či	e-h-aka-wa-t-amowa-či
	AOR-know-3’>3P/AOR	AOR-want-3P>0/AOR

wi-hkehči-ni-miwa-či
 wi-hkehči—ni-miwa-či
 FUT-greatly—dance 3P/AOR

‘They (obv) knew that they (prox) wanted to dance vigorously’ R218.42

In (25), from a personal narrative, the main clause verb is in the independent indicative, clearly distinct from the aorist conjunct in the complement clause. (26), on the other hand, is from a traditional narrative. The construction in (26) exhibits two levels of embedding of complement clauses and thus the verbs of all three clauses appear in the aorist conjunct.

As a final example consider (9), repeated as (27) below, which shows that two adjacent clauses containing verbs inflected in the aorist conjunct are sometimes to be interpreted as conjoined clauses:

(27)	<i>o-ni mehtose-neniwaki</i>	<i>e-hma-watenike-wa-či</i>	<i>mi-ša-tesiweni,</i>
	o-ni mehtose-neniw-aki	e-h-ma-watenike--wa-či	mi-ša-tesiweni
	&.then person-PL	AOR-gather.things-3P/AOR	finery

<i>nano·pehkameko</i>	<i>e·hki·ši·ma·watenamowa·či.</i>
nano·pehka=meko	e·h·ki·ši—ma·waten·amowa·či
large.amount=EMPH	AOR-PERF—gather-3P>0/AOR

‘And then the people got together some fancy clothes,
they collected a very large amount.’ L118-119

This essay illustrates some of the ways in which the Meskwaki corpus of texts presents challenges for syntactic analysis, and suggests strategies for resolving some of the apparent problems. I hope to have also demonstrated the mutually beneficial relationship between doing syntax and editing texts: the more we understand about Algonquian syntax the easier it is to see what is going on in a text, and the more we work with texts, the better we understand the syntax.

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