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Multiple Oblique Arguments in Meskwaki

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INTRODUCTION

The present paper examines aspects of the behavior of Meskwaki verbs with a particular valence: verbs which are subcategorized for more than one oblique argument. The issues to be addressed here are, first, how are the oblique arguments realized? Second, what consequences does this valence pattern have for Meskwaki word order? It will be seen that the multiple-oblique verbs most frequently appear in contexts in which only one overt oblique is used. The single oblique often appears immediately next to the portion of the verb complex requiring that oblique, which sometimes entails breaking up the verb complex into a discontinuous preverb-verb construction.

Below I first present background information on Meskwaki word order in general, as well as on the oblique grammatical relation and the range of formal categories associated with obliques before turning to the specific issues raised by multiple-oblique verbs. The examples presented here are drawn from lengthy syllabary texts written by monolingual Meskwaki speakers in the early twentieth century; see Dahlstrom (2003) for discussion of the textual corpus and writing system.

BACKGROUND

The discussion in the present paper aims to be as descriptive and theory-neutral as possible, but it is worth pointing out that I assume an informal version of Lexical Functional Grammar (cf. Bresnan 2001), in which grammatical relations such as subject are taken to be primary and universal, as opposed to constituent structure, which may vary significantly across languages. For Meskwaki I have claimed that word order is sensitive to a template as seen in (1), with mostly flat structure, except for overt topics, which occupy a position outside the rest of the clause (Dahlstrom 1993, 1995). Within the clause proper, a negative element, if present, will be leftmost, followed by a focused element, such as contrastive focus or the answer to a question word question.2

(1) [NP/topic [a NEG-focus oblique V XP* ]] [SUBJ, OBJ, OBL2, COMP]

To the immediate left of the verb is the unmarked position for an oblique argument, as seen in (2), where the oblique nekotahi ‘somewhere, anywhere’ is in boldface. Some of the other Algonquian languages, such as Cree and Ojibwe, seem to allow more flexibility for obliques, with the obliques sometimes coming after the verb, but in Meskwaki an oblique is nearly always immediately to the verb’s left.3

(2) a:kwi nekotahi wi:hnahi-ih^a^/yanini
   a:kwi nekotahi wi:h-nahi-ih^a^/yanini
   not anywhere fut-be.in.habit.of-go.(thither)-2/NEG
   ‘You will never go anywhere.’ W934

2. Goddard (2009) points out that a second slot for focus following the focus position in (1) is sometimes needed; this issue will not be taken up here.
3. The following abbreviations appear in examples: 0 = inan (in verb agreement), 21 = first person plural inclusive, 3’ = obliative, ADR = aorist (prefix or verb paradigm), DMIN = diminutive, EMPH = emphatic particle, FUT = future, HSYS = hearsay evidential, IC = initial change (ablaut process), IMP = imperative, INAN = inanimate, IND = independent indicative, LOC = locative, NEG = negative, O = object, O2 = second object, OBL = oblique, PART = participle, POT = potential, SG = singular, X = unspecified subject. An en dash (--) is used to separate a preverb and a verb, as opposed to the hyphens marking morpheme boundaries. In the glosses for transitive verbs, ‘>’ separates subject and object features. Verbs in relative clauses are inflected in the participle paradigm, and bear an additional suffix agreeing with the head of the relative clause, indicated after a slash. Textual sources: W = Kiyana (1913); M = text in Dahlstrom (2003).
Oblique arguments (in the LFG inventory of grammatical functions) are ones in which a thematic role is explicitly encoded, perhaps by choice of preposition, as in English, or by semantic case marking, as in Finnish. In Algonquian languages it is the relative root morphology in verb stems and preverbs which typically encodes the thematic role associated with particular oblique arguments, as will be seen below.

Other syntactic types of arguments, such as subject, object, second object and complement clauses, appear to the right of the verb unless they are in topic or focus position. (3) is an example with both first object and subject expressed by overt NPs to the right of the verb.

(3) 'nike 'hipineko e havatawa e1 wi-sahke hani meteno he ha Adv VO S
ini=ke=hi=pi=meko e 'h-awataw-a'esi wi'sahke='h-ani meteno'h-e'hi
then=and=HR=SY=EMPH AOR-take.O2 to=3>3/AOR W-5G old.woman-DIM-8G

'And right then, it's said, the old woman took it to Wisahkeha' (W925)

The initial constituent in (3) is an adverb (the template of (1) does not address possible positions for adverbs), which serves as the host for three enclitic particles.

In contrast to the generalizations that can be made about relative order of elements to the left of the verb, it is difficult to predict the relative order of the right-hand elements, if more than one argument follows the verb. The template in (1) indicates only that any number of constituents may occur in post verbal position, and that they may be associated with the grammatical functions listed in the curly brackets.

The arguments labelled oblique are the ones typically indexed on the verb by means of an overt morpheme known in the Algonquianist literature as a RELATIVE ROOT. The relative roots are a conspicuous feature of all the Algonquian languages, making the oblique relation an especially significant one in Algonquian syntax. (4) lists some of the relative roots in Meskwaki, giving the form seen in stem-initial position, the preverb form, and a characterization of the relative root's semantics:

(4) Some types of obliques and their associated relative roots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem-initial form</th>
<th>Preverb</th>
<th>Semantic type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. tan-</td>
<td>taši</td>
<td>stationary location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. in-</td>
<td>iši</td>
<td>goal of motion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. in-</td>
<td>iši</td>
<td>manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. ot-</td>
<td>oči</td>
<td>source (of motion); cause or reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. ahpi'h-</td>
<td>ahpi'hči</td>
<td>'to such an extent, such degree'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. tasw-</td>
<td>taswi</td>
<td>'so many, so much'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. ahkw-</td>
<td>ahkw</td>
<td>'so long'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is well known, the verbs which bear a relative root as the initial morpheme in the stem require an argument of the semantic type indexed by the relative root. For example, in (5) taneka- 'dance (there)’ is a two-place verb, requiring both a subject and an oblique expressing stationary location. The relative root initial is in boldface.

(5) taneka- 'dance (there)’

A verb stem such as wi-tamaw- 'tell, explain,' which is not itself subcategorized for an oblique argument, may be compounded with the appropriate relative root to add a requirement for an oblique. In this context the preverb form of the relative root is employed, as shown in (6), with the preverb taši in boldface, and its associated oblique argument ayo’hi ‘here’ to the left of the verb:

(6) ayo’hi ki htasi-wi tamaw ne
ayo’hi ke-i’haši-wi-tamaw-ene
here 2-FUT(-there)-explain-1>2/IND
‘I will explain it to you here’ (W859)

Although the relative root morphology plays a prominent role in indexing semantic types of oblique arguments, it is important to note that Algonquian languages also contain verbs which require oblique arguments even though they do not contain an overt relative root. A few Meskwaki examples are listed in (7).

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4. Rhodes (2006) on Ojibwe uses different terminology than that employed here. The arguments here labeled oblique are called “relative root complements” in Rhodes (2006); what Rhodes calls “obliques” are here considered adjuncts (e.g., temporal expressions).

5. AI = Animate Intransitive verb stem class, TA = Transitive Animate, TI = Transitive Inanimate.
Finally, note that the frequency of oblique syntax in Algonquian is in part due to the fact that all the verbs of quotation—the ones framing direct quotes—require an oblique argument. It is the quoted speech or thought which functions as the oblique argument of the quoting verb. (8) lists the basic quoting verbs for Meskwaki:

(8) a. awi-  ‘be (there)’ AI
b. (ih)a-  ‘go (thither)’ AI
c. pya-  ‘come (thither)’ AI
d. to’aw/to’aw-  ‘treat (thius), do (thus) to’ TA/TI

FORMAL REALIZATIONS OF OBLIQUE ARGUMENTS

We now turn to a separate question: if a verb requires an oblique argument of some semantic type, how is that requirement fulfilled in the clause? Recall that the framework assumed here states subcategorizational requirements in terms of grammatical relations such as subject, object, or oblique, rather than in terms of constituent structure. This approach works well for the analysis of obliques in Meskwaki since a wide range of formal categories may instantiate an oblique argument.

For example, obliques may be noun phrases. A noun in an oblique noun phrase is often inflected with the locative case ending -eki as in meneseki ‘from the] island’ in (9). Note, however, that the locative case in (9) does not specify source: it is the relative root initial on the verb that contributes the semantic gloss of ‘from.’

(9) meneseki e hočiwenekoči,
    menes-eki e h-očiwen-ekoči
    island-LOC AOR-carry.O.from.(there)-3>3/AOR
    ‘It (an eagle) carried him from the island’ (M15B)

Another variety of an oblique NP is a locative deictic, as in (10), illustrating an oblique of goal:

(10) ma’hi ke-i-har-Ø
    ‘yonder 2-FUT-go.(there)-2/IND
    ‘You should go over yonder’ (W853)

A demonstrative pronoun may also function as an oblique, such as i’ni ‘that, that way,’ in (11), where the oblique is an oblique of manner:

(11) i niča hmeke ki hio tawa-waki
    i’ni=iča hmeke ke-i-h-to-taw-a-waki
    that=so=EMPH 2-FUT-treat.(thius)-2>3p/IND
    ‘So you should do that to them indeed’ (W991)

Another way in which an oblique of manner can be expressed is by an adverb, such as mahkwa-či ‘quietly’ in (12):

(12) mahkwačimeko  ki hanam–išite-he
    mahkwači=meko ke-i-h-anemi–išite-he-Ø
    quietly=EMPH 2-FUT-go.along-think.(thius)-2/IND
    ‘Your thoughts should be peaceful as you go along’ (W861)
    [lit. ‘You should go along thinking quietly’]

As mentioned in the previous section, verbs of quotation take a direct quote as an oblique argument expressing manner. (13) illustrates this with an extremely short quote:

(13) “hao,” e hineči
    “hao,” e h-in-či
    all.right AOR-say.(thus).DIR-X>3/AOR
    ‘‘All right,” he was told’ (M120)

The quoting verbs can also be used with indirect quotes, which are ordinary subordinate clauses shifted for person and obviation. Indirect quotes appear not to the right of the matrix verb, which is the unmarked position for complement clauses in general (cf. (1)), but rather to the left, in the typical position of obliques, since they function as the manner oblique argument of the matrix verb.
Particples such as the one in (16), however, are different. There is
inflectional morphology on the verb which indicates that the oblique
argument is the head; moreover, an overt oblique CANNOT appear as an argu-
ment of the verb in the relative clause. The verb's requirement for an oblique
argument is satisfied by the relative clause construction, in which the head
of the relative clause is specified as binding the oblique of the lower verb.

Particples may appear in many different contexts. The specific form
given in (16) is taken from a question-word question, given in (17) below.
The syntax of (17) is representative of the majority of Meskwa'ki question-
word questions.

(17) ta'tepi=ya'-pi  we'di:yani?
ta'tepi=ya'-pi  IC-o'ci':yani
where=may.I.ask IC-come.from.(there)-2/PART/OBLIQUE:HEAD
‘Where did you come from?’ (W851)

Since the question word in (17), ta'tepi ‘where?’ appears to the left of the
participle, one might be tempted to analyze ta'tepi as the oblique argument
of o'ci': ‘come from (there).’ This, however, would be incorrect. The struc-
ture here is that of an equational S with a zero copula. The question word
is equated to the participle ‘the place from which you came.’ In terms of
the word order template in (1), the question word is in focus position and
the participle may be considered to be a subject, which would put them on
either side of a zero copula verb.

Particples are not only found in equational sentences, of course: they
can also function as an argument of an overt verb. Consequently, to our list
of the possible formal realizations of the oblique relation we must add that
an oblique may be expressed as a participle, as in (18):

(18) e'simeko-natawe'netaki  e hi'si-ketemina'ko'di
e'simeko-natawe'netaki  e hi'si-ketemina'ko'di
IC-i'si':meko  -natawe'netaki  e hi'si-keteminaw-eko'di
IC-thus=EMPH  -seek-3=0/PART/OBL  AOR-thus-bless-3>3/AOR
‘[the spirit] blessed him, just the way he wanted.’ (M2P)

In (18) the verb on the right is the matrix verb, i'si-keteminaw-‘bless
<object> in such a way,’ and the oblique specifying the manner of blessing
is the participle verb form on the left. The participle is a relative clause
formed on an oblique argument of the lower verb, i'si-natawe'net- ‘seek,
want (thus)’ so the gloss for the participle is ‘the way that he wanted.’
A final possibility for expressing an oblique is that in certain cases a preverb can itself satisfy the verb's requirement for an oblique. In (19) the preverb menwi ‘good, well’ specifies the manner in which the subject treats the object.

(19) wi'henwito tamo kima hi
   owa'wa'wi
  wih-menwi-t'–t’–amo'–ki=ma'hi
  ow–iyaw'waw–wii
FUT-well–treat.(thus)-3P=0/IND=you see
3-body–3P-INAN
'They will do well for themselves' (W237)

In other words, the stem to–t ‘treat (thus)’ needs an oblique of manner (cf. (11) above), but this requirement is satisfied in (19) within the verb complex by a preverb, not by any element in an external position. There are many tokens of the particular compound menwi–to–t(a)w–, so it perhaps should be considered to be lexicalized; indeed, in the Meskwaki syllabary no word boundary symbol is written after menwi in the examples I have checked.

(20) is another example of a preverb satisfying the requirement for an oblique argument, here an oblique expressing degree or extent. Note that the relative root is itself instantiated by a preverb, ahpi–hei to (such) extent’ and that no word boundary symbol appears between the two preverbs.

(20) kekinesimeko keche'wahi hei–kehe'neta pena
   kekimesi=meko ke–che'wi–ahpi–he'–kehe'net-a pena
everyone=EMPH 2-equally–to,(such),extent–know-21–0/IND
'All of us have the same knowledge' W842

VERBS WITH MORE THAN ONE OBLIQUE ARGUMENT

Let us now consider the verbs which require more than one oblique argument. A preverb which requires an oblique may be added to a verb stem already subcategorized for an oblique, as in the following example:

(21) awitameko keko'hi ishi– ateška wi –šawihkapa
   awita=meko keko'hi ishi– ateška'wi –šawih-hkapa
nol,POT=EMPH any.way thus– with.delays –thus.happen.to.S–2/POT
'You would not have experienced delays in any way' W1992

In (21) ateška'wi ‘with delays’ is the oblique argument associated with the verb stem šawih– ‘do, fare thus; have thus happen to one.’ The verb complex also contains the preverb ishi– ‘thus,’ which requires its own oblique argument, satisfied by keko'hi ‘something/anything; some.way/any.way.’ The preverb is discontinuous from the remainder of the verb complex, allowing each of the oblique arguments to be immediately to the left of the associated relative root.

Examples like (21), with two lexical NP obliques associated with a single verb, are relatively rare in the Meskwaki textual corpus. A more common context in which the multiple oblique valence obtains is when the preverb oči– ‘from, for such a reason’ is added to a verb already subcategorized for an oblique and the entire compound verb is inflected as a relative clause headed by the oblique of source/reason. The result is a participle glossed ‘the reason why such-and-such happened.’ The examples below are all of this form. We may therefore say that one of the obliques, the one associated with oči ‘from,’ is expressed by the morphology indicating that it is coreferential with the head of the relative clause. The question of interest here is how is the second oblique argument expressed?

In some cases, the second oblique is not expressed at all—in other words, we find cases of zero anaphora, parallel to the construction seen in (15) above. This is illustrated in (22), again with the verb pya– ‘come.’

(22) nahi, mani we čina'koči–pya'ya'ni:
   nahi, mani ič-oči–ma'koči —pya'ya'ni:
well this ič-from—again —come–1/PART/OBLIQUE.HEAD
'Well, this is why I have come again.' (W906)

(23) is another example in which the second oblique is expressed by zero anaphora. Here the verb šawih– ‘do (thus), fare (thuus), have (something) happen to <subject>’ is used with no overt oblique—the event that happened is simply known from the previous context.

(23) manamekohο mi'kona we'čišawiyani
   manam=mekeho mi'kona ič-oči–šawih-yani
nol,=EMPH feather-SG ič-from-fare.(thus)-2/PART/OBLIQUE.HEAD
'this very feather is why [that] happened to you.' (W47G)

Another possibility for the multiple-oblique constructions is for the preverb oči to be separated from the remainder of the verbal complex, resulting in a discontinuous compound verb. The second oblique is expressed by an overt argument; by displacing oči, the overt oblique appears immediately
adjacent to the main verb stem, the portion of the verb which requires the second oblique. For example, in (24) the quote ki‘hna-kwa ‘you should leave’ is immediately to the left of the stem in- ‘say thus to’; in (25) the demonstrative i‘ni ‘that’ is immediately to the left of to‘taw- ‘treat <object> in such a manner’; in (26) the deictic ayo‘hi ‘here’ is immediately to the left of ako‘t- ‘hang,’ which requires a locative oblique.

(24) i‘niça hi we‘či- ‘ki‘hna kwa’ – inenani
that=so IC-from– 2-FUT-leave-2/IND – say.(thu),to-1>2/PART/OBL.
‘So that is why I said to you, “You should leave.”’ (W929)

(25) i‘ni we‘či– i‘ni – to to nakowe
i‘ni IC-oçi– i‘ni – to‘taw-enakowe
that IC-from– that – treat.(thu),1>2/PART/OBL/Oblique,Head
‘That is why I treat you in that way.’ (W943)

(26) we‘či– ayo‘hi – ako‘t-ya‘ni
IC-oçi– ayo‘hi – ako‘t-o‘ya‘ni
IC-from– here – hang.O,(there)–1>0/PART/OBL/Oblique,Head
‘The reason why I am hanging it here.’ (W857)

Although the preverb oći is frequently separated from the remainder of its verb in these cases of multiple oblique arguments, it is also possible to leave oći in place, without creating a discontinuous compound verb. An example of this is (27), where the direct quote appears to the left of oći and is thus not immediately adjacent to the verb stem in- ‘say thus to.’ (28) is a similar example, again with a direct quote and the verb stem in-.

(27) i‘ni ‘hawo’ we‘či-inaki
i‘ni ‘hawo’ IC-oçi-in-aki
that all,right IC-from–say.(thu),to-1>3/PART/OBL/Oblique,Head
‘That is why I said, “All right,” to him.’ (W135)

(28) iśewena mani ‘kesanakowe’ we‘či-inenani;
iśewena mani ‘ko-sanakowe ‘O’ IC-oçi-en-ani;
but this 2-say,hard.proposition-2/IND IC-from–say.(thu),to-1>2/PART/OBL
‘But this is why I tell you, “What you say is a hard proposition.”’ (W921)

(29) is a little more complicated: the demonstrative i‘ni ‘that’ appears twice. At first glance it seems to be another example of the construction seen in (27) and (28), where the speaker chooses not to separate the preverb from the rest of the verb. But perhaps because the quoted material is a bit longer, the demonstrative i‘ni appears again after the quote. A possible analysis might be that the second i‘ni is the one equated to the participle which follows, and the oblique associated with the quoting verb should be taken to be zero anaphora, referring to the quote which precedes.

(29) i‘niça hi ‘ahpene čimeko nenelhe neti ko’
i‘ni=ča‘hi ‘ahpene-či=meko nenelhe=neti-ko’
that=so always=EMPH think.of.each.other-2P/IMP
i‘ni we‘či–inenakowe
i‘ni IC-oçi–inenakowe
that IC-from–say.(thu),1>2/PART/OBL.
‘So that is why I tell you, “Always think of each other.”’ (W865)

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined a particularly robust portion of the Meskwaki word order template given in (1): the relative position of oblique arguments and the verb. It has been shown that Meskwaki verbs subcategorized for a single oblique argument overwhelmingly prefer to express the oblique with an overt argument immediately to the left of the verb—even, in a few cases, in the preverb position preceding a relative root. In certain contexts, however, zero anaphora is also possible for obliques. The use of the preverb oći– ‘from; for such a reason’ in relative clauses expressing cause or reason entails that many verbs in such relative clauses require more than one oblique argument. The preference for expressing the oblique immediately to the left of the portion of the verb indexed for that argument seems to be the motivation for discontinuous preverb-verb constructions in this class of multiple-oblique verbs.

REFERENCES

Micro-Variation in Agreement, Clause-Typing and Finiteness: Comparative Evidence from Blackfoot and Plains Cree

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INTRODUCTION: SYNTACTIC MICRO-VARIATION

We address the following question: how can one model syntactic variation between languages? The theoretical literature approaches this question in two ways. On one view, a change in the value of large-scale macro-parameters has dramatic consequences for the grammar as a whole; this approach often models differences between (usually unrelated) language types irrespective of the merits of the macro-parametric approach—which remains controversial—it is not a useful analytic tool for modeling syntactic variation between related languages. In contrast, the micro-parametric approach posits that incremental differences in grammars of closely related languages reflect small-scale, fine-grained changes. A hallmark of micro-parametric syntactic analyses is that the syntactic properties of cognate morphemes are subject to variation. Consequently, the mapping between morphology and syntax is a primary source of variation. In this context, our goal is to explore micro-variation in agreement, clause-typing and finiteness in Blackfoot and Plains Cree. While Blackfoot (together with Cheyenne and Arapaho) is part of the geographic Plains subgroup, Plains Cree is the westernmost member of the Cree-Montagnais-Naskapi continuum, itself part of the Central Algonquian sub-group.

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