Obviation and Information Structure in Meskwaki

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The Algonquian phenomenon of OBVIATION is a discourse-based opposition within third person. Unmarked PROXIMATE forms are used for the third person most central to the discourse; more peripheral third persons are referred to with marked OBVIATIVE forms. In Meskwaki, for animate gender, obviation can be observed in noun and demonstrative inflection and in verb agreement, while for inanimate gender, obviation is covert, visible only in intransitive subject agreement. The examples below illustrate proximate and obviative marking, with noun and demonstrative inflection in boldface and the verb agreement underlined.

(1) a·kwi wi·to·hkawa·čini i·tepi wi·ha·niči owi·wani i·na neniwa

a·kwi	wi·to·hkaw-<u>a·čini</u>	i·tepi	wi·h-a-<u>·niči</u>	ow-i·w-**ani**
not	allow-3>3'/NEG	there	FUT-go.thither-3'/AOR	his-wife-OBV

i·n-a	neniw-a
that-SG	man-SG

'That man (prox) doesn't allow his wife (obv) to go there.' (Goddard 2006:71)[1]

(2) mo·hči no·sa ne·tamwa mi·ša·mi we·nekwi·kani·mikateniki,

    mo·hči   n-o·s-a   ne·t-<u>amwa</u>   mi·ša·m-**i**

    even   my-father-SG see-3>0/IND   sacred.pack-INAN.SG

    IC-onekwi·kani-·<u>mikateniki</u>

    IC-have.wings-0'/PART/0

    'Even my father (prox) saw the sacred pack (obv) which had wings.'

    (Dahlstrom 2003b:46)

In (1) the subject *i·na neniwa* 'that man' is proximate, evident from the use of unmarked third-person singular suffixes on the demonstrative and noun, and the object *owi·wani* 'his wife' is obviative, bearing the obviative suffix *–ani*. The underlined verb inflection likewise indicates that the subject of 'allow' is proximate and that the subject of 'go thither' is obviative. In (2) the subject is proximate and the object is obviative and that the subject of 'go thither' is obviative. In (2) the inanimate object *mi·ša·mi* 'sacred pack' does not have overt obviative morphology on the noun itself, but the verb agreement on 'have wings' reflects the obviative status of the inanimate noun.

In an effort to sharpen the characterization of proximate status, some Algonquianists have proposed that proximate can be equated with the information structure relation of TOPIC. Wolvengrey has a particularly clear statement: "I would argue that using a term like 'topic' and equating the proximate with the more prototypically topical third person referent is exactly the function conveyed by this Algonquian phenomenon" (Wolvengrey 2011:14).

A similar claim is made by Junker (2004:345): "Algonquian languages have a way to grammatically encode (non)topicality, a phenomenon traditionally called 'obviation.'" Russell (1996:379) suggests that obviative marks the absence of topic: "It may well be that the proximate . . . merely functions as the unmarked member in opposition to the obviative category, which might positively mark non-topicality."

In the present paper, however, I argue that although topics are often proximate, proximate status cannot be equated with the information structure relation of topic. I will first make explicit what I mean by the terms TOPIC and FOCUS before turning to evidence against equating proximate with topic.

Information Structure Definitions

I assume the constructional framework for information structure developed by Lambrecht (1994, 2000, 2001).[2] Some basic assumptions of this approach are listed in (3):

(3) a. PRAGMATIC PRESUPPOSITION: The set of propositions lexico-grammatically evoked in a sentence that the speaker assumes the hearer already knows or believes or is ready to take for granted at the time the sentence is uttered.

    b. PRAGMATIC ASSERTION: The proposition expressed by a sentence that the speaker expects the hearer to know or believe or take for granted as a result of hearing the utterance.

    c. FOCUS: That component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the pragmatic assertion differs from the presupposition. The focus component is by definition an unpredictable part of the proposition. (Lambrecht 2001:474)

    d. TOPIC: A referent is interpreted as the topic of a proposition if in a given situation the proposition is construed as being about this referent, i.e., as expressing information which is relevant to and which increases the addressee's knowledge of this referent. (Lambrecht 1994:131)

It is important to note at the outset that Lambrecht is not talking about semantics in the narrow sense but rather about a pragmatic level of information structure. Given that, we can recognize that in the midst of connected discourse the speaker and hearer already have mental representations of what has been said earlier. These propositions are what Lambrecht calls the PRAGMATIC PRESUPPOSITION (3a). As a result of the following utterance in the conversation or narrative, another proposition is added to the set of what the addressee knows. This added proposition is what Lambrecht calls the PRAGMATIC ASSERTION (3b). The pragmatic assertion usually contains some part that is already established in the pragmatic presupposition. The remainder, the unpredictable part, is what Lambrecht calls FOCUS (3c). (Lambrecht goes on to propose three basic types of focus constructions, but his typology is beyond the scope of the present paper; see Dahlstrom 2003a

for discussion.) (3d) states Lambrecht's definition of TOPIC, which is based on an aboutness relationship between the topic and the following comment.

The relation of topic and the relation of focus are mutually exclusive. If a topic is the starting point for the following comment to be about, it cannot also be the unpredictable element bearing a focus relation to the proposition. The incompatibility of topic and focus will be important when we examine Meskwaki examples below.[3]

Another important point is that the relations of topic and focus are quite different in nature from the discourse statuses of ACTIVATION (also called GIVENNESS) and IDENTIFIABILITY (or DEFINITENESS). Topic and focus are relations to a proposition as defined in (3). Activation and identifiability, on the other hand, are properties of discourse referents in the interlocutors' mind (Lambrecht 1994:160). In particular, activation or givenness is not a sufficient criterion for identifying what is the topic. Likewise, focus need not be inactive or new information. For example, expressions referring to the speaker and addressee are necessarily given information—they are active in the consciousness of the interlocutors.

(4)   Who needs a ride to the airport? I do!

The question in (4) presupposes that "x needs a ride to the airport." The answer "I do!" asserts that the value of x is "I". The first person pronoun is active in terms of its discourse status, but functions as focus in this context, in terms of the pragmatic articulation of the utterance's information structure.

Examples of Topic and Focus in Meskwaki

Having established general definitions of topic and focus, let us now look briefly at ways in which Meskwaki encodes these relations. (See Dahlstrom 2003a for more discussion, especially of Lambrecht's typology of focus constructions.) A template that accounts for much of Meskwaki word order (Dahlstrom 1993, 1995) is given in (5):

(5)   [s· TOPIC [s NEG FOCUS OBL V {SUBJ, OBJ, OBJ2, COMP}]]

An overt topic, if present, appears at the left edge of the utterance, before a negative element, if present, as in (6), where a new topic is announced with the first person pronoun *ni·na*.

(6)   ni·nayo a·kwi kosetawakini kemeso·ta·naki

| ni·na=iyo | a·kwi | kosetaw-akini | ke-meso·ta·n-aki | Top Neg V O |
| I=of.course | not | fear-1>3P/NEG | your-parent-PL | |

'As for me, I'm not afraid of your parents.' (Goddard 2006:78)

An element in focus, on the other hand, would appear to the right of a negative element if present. Immediately before the verb is the unmarked position for syntactic oblique arguments expressing location, manner, or measure phrases. All other grammatical relations appear to the right of the verb if not functioning as topic or focus.

Topic

In the template in (5) notice that the topic position is outside the core S consituent, while all other elements are daughters of S. This structural difference between overt topics and other elements has a number of consequences. For example, Meskwaki displays numerous second position enclitics expressing a range of evidential, aspectual, and other notions. (7) illustrates the tendency for a string of enclitics to appear attached to the first phonological word of the clause:

(7)   o·sanike·hipimeka·pehe wi·te·mekočini.

| o-o·s-ani=<u>ke·hi</u>=ipi=meko=a·pehe | IC-wi·te·m-ekočini. |
| his-father.OBV=and=hrsy=EMPH=always | IC-go.with-3'>3/PART/3' |

'It was his father, you see, who would always go with him, it's said.' (Dahlstrom 2003b:11)

When an overt topic is present, however, there are two possible locations for second position enclitics to attach to a host. They may appear after the first phonological word of the topic, after the first phonological word of the comment, or in both the topic and the comment. (8) is an example where both the topic and the comment host enclitics: the first word of the topic is the host for =*ke·hi* 'and, moreover', which often appears on new or shifted topics, while the first word of

the comment hosts an emphatic, =*meko*, the hearsay enclitic =*ipi*, and a cliticized form of *i·ni* 'then'.

(8) i·niye·kake·hi ki·h–kočawičiki wi·hča·kiha·wa·či apeno·hahi,
     i·niye·ka=ke·hi   ki·h–kočawi–čiki   wi·h–ča·kih-a·wa·či   apeno·h-ahi,
     those.ABSENT=and   PERF–try-3P/PART/3P   FUT-kill.all-3P>3'/AOR   child-OBV.PL

waninawemekopi·ni e·hinohinote·wa·či.
waninawe=meko=ipi=i·ni   e·h-inoh-inote·-wa·či.
all.directions=EMPH=HRSY=then   AOR-REDUP-move.thither-3P/AOR
'As for those aforementioned ones (prox) who had tried to kill all the children (obv), they (prox) then moved away in all directions, it's said.' (Kiyana 1913:250DE)

Recognizing that the comment forms a constituent separate from the topic provides an explanation for the occurrence of the enclitics attaching to *waninawe* 'all directions'. If no left edge of S is posited to occur there, it would be hard to explain why these enclitics occur on the fifth word of the sentence.

Regarding the pragmatic function of topics, once a topic is established with an overt NP in topic position, that topic will often be maintained over several clauses or sentences, with only pronominal reference referring back to the topic in the later clauses. The passage in (9) illustrates an introduced topic sustained over a span of several clauses.

(9) a. o·ni·na oškinawe·he·ha
         o·ni=i·na   oškinawe·he·h-a
         and.then=that   young.man.DIM-SG
         'And then that young teenage boy,

     b. "nahi, natawi–po·ni–mahkate·wi·no," e·hineči e·hina·hpawa·či.
         "nahi,   natawi–po·ni–mahkate·wi·no,"   e·h-in-eči
         okay,   time.to–stop–fast-2/IMP   AOR-say.thus.to-X>3/AOR

         e·h-ina·hpawa·-či
         AOR-dream.thus-3/AOR
         "Okay, it's time for you to stop fasting," he dreamed he was told.

     c. "wi·kiya·peki=meko pe·hki ki·hawi," e·hineči.
         "wi·kiya·py-eki=meko   pe·hki   ke-i·h-awi-Ø,"
         house-LOC=EMPH   really   2-FUT-be.[there]-2/IND

         e·h-in-eči
         AOR-say.thus.to-X>3/AOR
         "You should be in the main house," he was told.

     d. pye·ya·niči o·sani,
         IC-pya·-niči   o-o·s-ani,
         IC-come-3'/CH.CONJ   his-father-OBV
         When his father came,

     e. e·ha·čimoha·či e·na·hpawa·či.
         e·h-a·čimoh-a·či   IC-ina·hpawa·-či.
         AOR-tell-3>3'/AOR   IC-dream.thus-3/PART/OBL
         he told him what he had dreamed.' (Dahlstrom 1996:130)

In (9) the NP *oškinawe·he·ha* 'that young teenage boy' is announced in line (a) as a new topic, and the subsequent verbs in lines (b, c, e) are inflected for a third person proximate argument, referring to the boy. In (d) the possessor inflection on 'his father' refers to the boy as well. (The elements inside the quotes can be ignored for our purposes here, since the quoted material is a representation of a separate world of discourse.)

In both examples of overt third person topics seen so far (8–9) the topics are proximate. As stated earlier, such convergence of topic and proximate status is common. We will see, however, in a later section that topics are not necessarily proximate.

Focus

Let us now look briefly at focus (Lambrecht's (1994) ARGUMENT-FOCUS). (10) is an example of contrastive focus:

(10) ki·nawe·na ki·hnepe   Foc V

     ki·na=we·na   k-i·h-nep-e

     you=rather   2-FUT-die-2/IND

     Rather, <u>you</u> will die.' (Jones 1907:68.16)

(10) presupposes that "x will die." The assertion is that it is the addressee, *ki·na* 'you', who will die. The second person pronoun is therefore expressing focus, since it is the component whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition.

Focus can also be seen with additive expressions, such as *ni·na=ne·hi* 'I too' in (11), with focus particles such as *mo·hči* 'even' in (12) and (2) or *še·ški* 'only', with question word questions, as in (13), and often with indefinite pronouns such as *owiye·ha* 'someone, anyone' in (14) or *ke·ko·hi* 'something'.

(11) nahi, nekwi·hi, ni·nane·hi ne·tama·ne

     nahi,   nekwi·hi,   ni·na=ne·hi   ne·t-ama·ne

     well   son.VOC   I=also   see-1>0/SUBJUNCT

     'Well, son, if I see it too . . .' (Dahlstrom 2003b:34)

(12) a·kwi mo·hči nekoti nesakečini

     a·kwi   mo·hči   nekoti   nes-akečini

     not   even   one   kill-1P>3/NEG

     'We didn't kill even one.' (Dahlstrom 2003b:43)

(13) ke·swiča·hi i·nahi awiwaki?

     ke·swi=ča·hi   i·nahi   awi-waki?

     how.many=so   there   be.[there]-3P/IND

     'How many [people] were there?'

(14) a·kwi owiye·hani ki·wi·wi·te·ma·wa·čini.

     a·kwi   owiye·h-ani   ki·wi–wi·te·m-a·wa·čini.

     not   someone-OBV   around–accompany-3P>3'/NEG

     'They didn't travel with anyone else.' (Dahlstrom 2015:153)

In the negated examples of (12) and (14) notice that the focus element follows the negative word *a·kwi*, as expected by the template in (5).

Evidence against Equating Proximate with Topic

I now turn to data that shows that we cannot equate proximate status with topic; the following section argues that we also cannot equate proximate status with focus.

Recall that the pragmatic relations of topic and focus are in complementary distribution. If an element is focused, it cannot be a topic. It is easy, however, to find examples of focused elements exhibiting proximate status, as in the question word of (15).

(15) we·ne·hča·h ne·sa·ta neto·kima·mena·nan?

     we·ne·h-a=ča·h   IC-nes-a·ta   ne-okima·m-ena·n-an?

     who-SG=so   IC-kill.3>3'/PART/3   1-chief-1P-OBV

     'Who (prox) killed our (exclusive) chief (obv)?' (Jones 1907:26.13)

(2), repeated here, is another example of a proximate element functioning as focus: the focus particle *mo·hči* 'even' appears with the proximate third person *no·sa* 'my father'.

(2) mo·hči no·sa ne·tamwa mi·ša·mi we·nekwi·kani·mikateniki,

     mo·hči   n-o·s-a   ne·t-<u>amwa</u>   mi·ša·m-i

     even   my-father-SG   see-3>0/IND   sacred.pack-INAN.SG

     IC-onekwi·kani-·<u>mikateniki</u>

     IC-have.wings-0'/PART/0

     'Even my father (prox) saw the sacred pack (obv) which had wings.'

     (Dahlstrom 2003b:46)

(16) and (17), taken from the same long text about the culture hero Wisahkeha, form a minimal pair with overt topics. In (16) Wisahkeha, referred to by his personal name in proximate form, is an overt topic, followed by the enclitic =*ke·hi* 'and, moreover', which often co-occurs with a new or shifted topic. In (17) the overt topic again refers to the character of Wisahkeha, but here he is identified as the grandson of the character currently proximate, with an obviative NP. The overt topic in (17) likewise displays the enclitic =*ke·hi*, attached to the first phonological word of the topic. The comment about the topic is the same in (16) and (17): Wisahkeha was peacefully sound asleep. The only difference between the

comments in (16) and (17) is the agreement on the verb *nepa·-* 'sleep', proximate in (16) and obviative in (17), agreeing with the overt topics.

(16) wi·sahke·hake·hi wa·natohkameko e·hkehči—nepa·či
      wi·sahke·h-a=ke·hi   wa·natohka=meko   e·h-kehči—nepa·-či
      W-sG=and   peacefully=EMPH   AOR-greatly—sleep-3/AOR
      'As for Wi·sahke·ha (prox), he was peacefully sound asleep.' (Kiyana 1913:163)

(17) i·ninike·hi o·šisemani wa·natohkameko e·hkehči–nepa·niči
      i·n-ini=ke·hi   o-o·šisem-ani
      that-OBV=and   her-grandchild-OBV

      wa·natohka=meko   e·h-kehči–nepa·-niči
      peacefully=EMPH   AOR-greatly–sleep-3'/AOR
      'As for her grandson (obv), he was peacefully sound asleep.' (Kiyana 1913:10)

It might be objected that examples like (17) are not strong counterexamples to the claim that topics are always proximate. Since the topic in (17) is a noun possessed by a third person, it is obligatorily marked obviative: it cannot be expressed in the proximate status. However, notice that the speaker/writer of such examples has in fact chosen to identify the topic not with an independent name or description but rather with a kinship term, a relational form: that is, the character of Wisahkeha is identified here with a specific link to the proximate character of the grandmother. Wisahkeha is the topic of both (16) and (17), but the version in (17) reminds the hearer that the grandmother's point of view is still present in the scene. (See the discussion of (21) below for another example of expressed point of view.)

A property of topic constructions in many languages is that an overt topic can be followed by a comment that contains no gap or anaphoric element co-referential to the topic. A well-known example of this from Li and Thompson (1976) is the Japanese example in (18), where the comment is understood as about the announced topic.

(18) sakana   wa,   tai   ga   oiishi
      fish   TOPIC   red.snapper   SUBJ   delicious
      'As for fish, red snapper is delicious.' (Japanese; Li and Thompson 1976)

Constructions similar to (18) are also possible with overt topics in Meskwaki. (19) is an example with an obviative topic, 'his wife'. The following quote is understood as being spoken by the wife, even though the wife is not marked as an argument on the quoting verb following the quote.

(19) owi·wani: "kašina·kwa, kaši=ča·h ina·čimowa?" e·hineči.
      ow-i·w-ani:
      his-wife-OBV

      "kašina·kwa,   kaši=ča·h   ina·čimo-wa?"   e·h-in-eči.
      well.what.happened? how=so   tell.thus-3/IND   AOR-say.to-X>3/AOR
      'His (prox) wife (obv):
      "Well, what happened? What did he say?" he (prox) was asked.' (Dahlstrom 1996:134)

The verb is inflected for an unspecified agent acting on the proximate third person, the woman's husband. Again, such a syntactic structure is possible with overt topics; and here, the topic is obviative.

As stated earlier, most third person topics in Meskwaki narratives enjoy proximate status, though the examples above demonstrate that topics are not obligatorily proximate. Another common pattern is for an overt topic introduced as an obviative NP to shift to proximate status in the immediately following clause. The passage in (20) is an example of this pattern.

(20) a. i·nike·hipi·na o·sani e·ha·nawapwi·hekoči.
          i·ni-ke·hi=ipi=i·na   o-o·s-ani   e·h-a·nawapwi·h-ekoči.
          then=and=HRSY=that.ANIM   his-father-OBV   AOR-fail.to.wait.for-3'>3/AOR
          'And then, it's said, that [boy (prox)]'s father (obv) got tired of waiting for him (prox).

      b. i·tepi e·ha·či.
          i·tepi   e·h-a·-či.
          there   AOR-go.thither-3/AOR
          He (prox) went there.

c. e·hanemimeko–a·hkwe·wite·he·či,
   e·h-anemi–=meko–a·hkwe·wite·he–·či,
   AOR-away–=EMPH–feel.angry-3/AOR
   He (prox) went off feeling angry,

d. "ne·wake, ni·hkehči–neškima·wa," e·hina·či owi·wani.
   "ne·w-ake,   n-i·h-kehči–neškim-a·wa,"   e·h-in-a·či
   see-1>3/SUBJNCT   1-FUT-greatly–scold-1>3/IND   AOR-say.to-3>3'/AOR

   ow-i·w-ani.
   his-wife-OBV
   telling his wife (obv), "When I see him, I'm really going to scold him.'"
   (Dahlstrom 2003b:18)

In the (a) clause of (20) the new topic is *o·sani* 'his father', an obviative NP. The following clauses (b–d) relate actions of the father, but in those clauses the father is referred to with proximate inflection on the verb. Such a shift in status is another reflection of the frequent co-occurrence of proximate status and topichood, but proximate shifts are not obligatory. For example, the obviative topic seen in (17) is not followed in the narrative by a proximate shift.

The next textual excerpt illustrates a different pattern found in narratives. In (21) the obviative subject of the verbs is a young man who has been fasting. These lines report that the young man's footprints show that he had almost returned to his camp, that he then took off running, and that he was joined by some other creature.

(21)   i·ya·hmeko ašiči pye·čihkawe·niči e·howi·kiniči,
        i·ya·hi=meko   ašiči   IC-pye·čihkawe–·niči   e·h-owi·ki-niči,
        there=EMPH   near   IC-S's.tracks.come-3'/CH.CONJ   AOR-live-3'/PART/OBL

        kapo·twe e·hkehči–penowi·hka·šiniči.
        kapo·twe   e·h-kehči–penowi·hka·ši-niči.
        at.some.point AOR-greatly–appear.to.go.fast-3'/AOR

        kapo·twe e·hpemi–takwihkawe·niči owiye·hanimeko
        kapo·twe   e·h-pemi–takwihkawe–·niči
        at.some.point AOR-along–S's.tracks.together.with-3'/AOR   owiye·h-ani=meko
                                                                   someone-OBV=EMPH
        'When his (obv) footprints came almost to the place where he (obv) was camping,
        at a certain point it looked like he (obv) took off really fast.
        At a certain point his (obv) footprints were joined by the tracks of some creature (obv).' (Dahlstrom 1996:139)

I would argue that the lines in (21) are about the young man: in other words, that we have here another example of an obviative topic, referred to pronominally by the inflection on the verbs. The young man remains in obviative status, however, without a shift to proximate status comparable to that seen in (20). Instead, the proximate third person during this episode is the young man's father, who has come out to look for his son. Sustaining the young man's obviative status in this episode conveys a particular stylistic effect in the text: we are seeing the action from the point of view of the proximate character.

Evidence against Equating Proximate with Focus

The previous section argued that it is incorrect to equate proximate status with the pragmatic relation of topic. It is also not possible to equate proximate status with the other major pragmatic relation, that of focus. For example, question words are prototypical members of the category of focus elements. It is possible to have a question word like *we·ne·ha* 'who' in an obviative form:

(22)   we·ne·haniyo we·wi·hka·ničini no·sa?
        we·ne·h-ani=iyo   IC-owi·hka·ni-čini
        who.OBV=of.course IC-have.O2.as.friend-3/PART/3'   n-o·s-a
                                                            my-father-SG
        'Who [obv] did my father have as a friend?' (Kiyana 1913:914)

A further example of a focused element with obviative status was seen above in (14), repeated below:

(14) aˑkwi owiyeˑhani kiˑwi-wiˑteˑmaˑwaˑčini.

aˑkwi	owiyeˑh-ani	kiˑwi–wiˑteˑm-aˑwaˑčini.
not	someone-OBV	around–accompany-3P>3'/NEG

'They didn't travel with anyone else.' (Dahlstrom 2015:153)

In other words, the discourse-based opposition of proximate and obviative third persons must be recognized as distinct from the information structural relations of both topic and focus.

Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that topics in Meskwaki are often proximate but need not be: in other words, the definition of proximate cannot be reduced to that of topic, nor to that of focus. The relationship between topic and proximate is similar to the well-known relationship between topic and activation or givenness: topic cannot be defined solely in terms of activation, though topics are frequently active or given information (cf. Lambrecht 1994). Instead, we must recognize that the proximate vs. obviative opposition can be sensitive to a variety of other factors as well, such as empathy, agency, and point of view.

NOTES

1. Abbreviations in examples: 0 = inanimate, 0' = obviative inanimate, 1P = first person exclusive plural, 3P = third plural, 3' = obviative, ABSENT = absentative, ANIM = animate, AOR = aorist conjunct, CH.CONJ = changed conjunct, EMPH = emphatic, FUT = future, HRSY = hearsay, IC = Initial Change, IMP = imperative, INAN = inanimate, IND = independent indicative, LOC= locative, NEG = negative, O2 = second object, OBL = oblique, OBV = obviative, PART = conjunct participle, PL = plural, REDUP = reduplication, S = subject, SG = singular, SUBJNCT = subjunctive, VOC = vocative, X = unspecified subject. '>' separates subject and object in the gloss of transitive verbs. The first line of textual examples presents the Meskwaki sentence without clitic boundaries or morpheme boundaries, following the convention in recent texts edited by Dahlstrom (e.g., Dahlstrom 2015). Examples without a text citation are elicited.

2. See Dahlstrom 2003a for more extensive discussion of Lambrecht's framework.

3. It should be noted, however, that not all approaches to information structure agree that topic and focus are in complementary distribution. For example, Skopeteas et al. (2006) posit separate dimensions of topic-comment and focus-background in which it is possible for topic and focus to overlap.

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La sémantique de l'accord à longue distance en algonquin

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Abstract

In this paper, we argue that long-distance agreement (LDA) in Algonquin Ojibwe does not express topicality, as is generally claimed in the Algonquian literature, but rather that it correlates with evidentiality and belief ascription. In this sense, LDA resembles, in its semantics, ECM (Exceptional Case Marking) constructions. However, we show that LDA does not bear ECM's syntactic properties.

Dans ce chapitre, nous proposons que l'accord à longue distance (ALD) en algonquin n'exprime pas la topicalité, comme il est généralement proposé dans la littérature pour les langues algonquiennes, mais plutôt l'évidentialité ainsi que l'attribution de croyances. Dans ce sens, l'ALD ressemble, selon nous, dans son aspect sémantique, à une construction ECM (Exceptional Case Marking). Toutefois, nous démontrons que l'ALD ne partage pas avec la construction ECM ses caractéristiques syntaxiques.