A comparison of theme marking in Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin

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This paper has three goals. The empirical goal is to compare and contrast the morphology and syntax of the direct/inverse systems of two Algonquian languages, Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin, with an aim to demonstrating that direct/inverse is not a natural class. The analytical goal is to account for the variation observed in the direct/inverse paradigms by proposing that direct/inverse markers are distributed across different syntactic positions. The theoretical goal is to situate our analysis within the context of the parametric substantiation hypothesis, which states that UG supplies a fixed set of functional categories, organized along a universal clausal spine. We argue that direct/inverse marking in Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin occupies the functional categories of Inner and Outer Aspect, and show how it is functionally equivalent to Viewpoint and Situation Aspect in a Tense-based language like English.

1 Introduction

This paper has three goals: an empirical goal, an analytical goal, and a theoretical goal. Our empirical goal is to compare and contrast the morphology and syntax of the direct/inverse systems in two Algonquian languages, Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin. Our analytical goal is to argue that direct and inverse markers do not form a natural class, and are distributed across different syntactic positions. Finally, our theoretical goal is to situate our analysis in the context of the parametric substantiation

¹ Blackfoot is a Plains Algonquian language spoken in Southern Alberta, and Nishnaabemwin is a Central Algonquian language spoken in Southern Ontario. Unless otherwise cited, Blackfoot data are from the authors’ fieldwork with native speakers of the Siksiká and Kainaa dialects, and Nishnaabemwin data are from Valentine (2001). Sincere thanks to Rachel Ermineskin and Beatrice Bullshields for sharing their language with us, and to the audience at the pre-WSLCA 15 Algonquian Syntax Workshop for helpful feedback. All errors are our own.
hypothesis (Ritter and Wiltschko 2009), and to argue that core instances of
direct/inverse marking in both languages are the functional equivalent to
Aspect in Tense-based languages such as English.

This paper is organized as follows: In §2, we outline our
theoretical assumptions about universal categories and the clausal spine. In
§3, we give a comparison of the morphology of the direct/inverse systems
of Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin. Our analysis is in §4, and §5 concludes
the paper.

2 Background

Our starting assumption in this paper is that Universal Grammar
(UG) supplies a fixed set of functional categories that are ordered along a
fixed clausal spine, as in (1).

\[(1) \quad [CP\ COMP\ [IP\ INF\ [AspP\ AspVw\ [\_P\ v\ [AspP\ AspSit\ [VP\ V]]]]]]\]

We adopt the parametric substantiation hypothesis (Ritter and Wiltschko
2009, henceforth R&W), which states that languages vary in the content
they associate with functional categories. For example, R&W argue that
whereas in English, the category of INF is occupied by Tense, this is not
necessarily the case for all languages. Halkomelem (Central Salish) and
Blackfoot constitute two alternatives, having Location- and Person-based
INF, respectively. The consequence of such a model is that function is
independent of content, and this allows for a novel formal typology of
categories. In this paper, we adopt this view in our analysis of the
Algonquian direct/inverse system, and specifically, we claim that the
direct/inverse markers of Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin instantiate the
functional categories of Inner and Outer Aspect, and are functionally
equivalent to Viewpoint and Situation Aspect in Tense-based languages
such as English.

\[(2)\quad \text{English: } [IP\ INF_{-Tns}\ [AspP\ AspVw\ [\_P\ v\ [AspP\ AspSit\ [VP\ V]]]]]
\quad \text{Bf/Nsh: } [IP\ INF_{-Pers}\ [AspP\ Asp_{Dir/Inv}\ [\_P\ v\ [AspP\ Asp_{Dir/Inv}\ [VP\ V]]]]]\]

3 Case studies

In this section, we compare the morphology of the direct/inverse
systems in Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin. Not only do the two languages
differ in their marking of direct/inverse, but language-internal variation is
observed across orders, or clause types, indicating that direct/inverse is not
a natural class.
In the core instances, direct/inverse refers to the marking of interactions between local (1st or 2nd) and non-local (3rd) persons in a transitive verb paradigm. Direct marking is used when a local person is the logical subject or actor and a non-local person is the logical object or goal. Inverse marking is used when the roles are reversed, that is when a non-local person is the actor, and a local person is the goal.

(3) Core instances: \{1,2\}/3 interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal → Actor ↓</th>
<th>1,2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>inverse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This description is consistent with Klaimann (1992: 227), who defines inverseness as “...a variety of structural organization in which a transitive, non-reflexive predication is specially marked in case a first or second person referent corresponds to a non-subject logical role.”

A source of variation in direct/inverse systems is found in extensions to the core pattern observed in (4). Direct/inverse may extend into exclusively local interactions, between 1st and 2nd persons, or exclusively non-local interactions between multiple 3rd persons.¹

(4) Extensions of the core pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal → Actor ↓</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>3’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>direct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>inverse</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>inverse</td>
<td></td>
<td>direct</td>
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<tr>
<td>3’</td>
<td></td>
<td>inverse</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How these extensions are marked differs not only across languages, but also within a given language, across orders, or across clause types. In what follows, we look first at direct/inverse in the independent order, which is used in matrix clauses, and then in the conjunct order, which is used in subordinate clauses.

¹ Algonquian languages distinguish between multiple 3rd persons morphologically, with the more prominent 3rd person being marked “proximate,” and less prominent 3rd persons being marked “obviative.” We use the shorthand of 3 and 3’ to refer to proximate and obviative 3rd persons, respectively.
3.1 Comparing independent orders

In the independent order, Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin use cognate morphemes to mark the core instances of the direct and the inverse, as shown in (5) and (6).

(5) Blackfoot
a. nitsinóáwa
   nit-inó-aa-wa
   1-see.TA-DIR-3S
   ‘I see her/him.’

b. nitsinóóka
   nit-inó-ok-wa
   1-see.TA-INV-3S
   ‘S/he sees me.’

(6) Nishnaabemwin
a. nwaabmaa
   n-waabm-aa
   1-see.DIR
   ‘I see her/him.’

b. nwaabmig
   n-waabm-igw
   1-see-INV
   ‘S/he sees me.’

Looking now to the local interactions, we observe that neither Blackfoot nor Nishnaabemwin employs the core morphology for interactions between a 1st person actor and a 2nd person goal:

(7) a. Blackfoot
    kitisinóó
    kit-inó-o
    2-see.TA-1:2
    ‘I see you.’

b. Nishnaabemwin
    gwaabmin
    g-waabm-in
    2-see.TA-1:2
    ‘I see you.’

However, Blackfoot seems to use a complex form, consisting of the core inverse –ok plus a suffix –i, in instances with a 2nd person actor and a 1st person goal.

(8) Blackfoot
    kitisinóóki
    kit-inó-ok-i
    2-see.TA-INV-2:1
    ‘You see me.’

Nishnaabemwin marks this same interaction with a simplex form, -i, identical to the second part of the complex form used for Blackfoot 2:1 interactions.
Thus, core marking is partly extended to local interactions in Blackfoot, but not Nishnaabemwin. The opposite is true of the non-local extensions where Nishnaabemwin employs the core direct marker for 3:3' interactions, but Blackfoot employs a unique form, -yiì.

Note that, in addition to the difference in direct theme marking, Nishnaabemwin, but not Blackfoot, has a 3rd person prefix, as shown in (10). This differs from the inverse, where both languages mark 3rd person with a prefix. Both languages also use the core inverse marker, as shown in (11).

The final difference to be noted is that, whereas Blackfoot does not permit inanimate actors, Nishnaabemwin does. Here, too, the core inverse marker is used, as shown in (12):
The complete transitive animate paradigms for independent order verbs in Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin are given in (13) and (14) below, where yellow indicates that the morphological marking differs from the core instances.

(13) **Blackfoot TA independent order paradigm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3prox</th>
<th>3obv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal →</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor ↓</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>i</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3prox</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td></td>
<td>yli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3obv</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td></td>
<td>ok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3inan</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(14) **Nishnaabemwin TA independent order paradigm**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3prox</th>
<th>3obv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal →</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor ↓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>iN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>i</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3prox</td>
<td>igw</td>
<td>igw</td>
<td></td>
<td>aa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3obv</td>
<td>igw</td>
<td>igw</td>
<td>igw</td>
<td>aa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3inan</td>
<td>igw</td>
<td>igw</td>
<td>igw</td>
<td>igw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing these two paradigms, we see that the languages pattern similarly in the core pattern, but differ with respect to the extensions to the core pattern. In particular, the core marking is extended to 2:1 and 3:3 interactions in Blackfoot, but to all non-local interactions in Nishnaabemwin. Furthermore, whereas Nishnaabemwin marks 3rd person prefixally in all non-local interactions, Blackfoot does so only in the non-local inverse. Nishnaabemwin also permits inanimate actors, whereas Blackfoot does not. In the following section, we compare the TA paradigms in the conjunct order, which differs in significant ways from the independent order.

### 3.2 Comparing conjunct orders

Whereas independent order clauses are used in matrix contexts, conjunct order clauses are used in subordinate contexts in both Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin. Both languages show differences between the independent and conjunct orders in the exponent of direct/inverse.

First considering interactions between local and non-local participants, Blackfoot uses the same core direct marker found in the
independent order. Nishaabemwin, on the other hand, has a null morpheme for the direct theme in the conjunct order.

(15) a. Blackfoot
   ...nitsinowaahsi
   nit-ino-aa-his
   1-see.TA-DIR-CONJ
   ‘(when) I see her’

   b. Nishnaabemwin
   ...waabmag
   waabm-∅-ag
   see-DIR-3S
   ‘(if) I see her’

Note also that the person prefix is retained in the conjunct order in Blackfoot, but not Nishnaabemwin. Further, Blackfoot has a dedicated conjunct order morpheme, but Nishnaabemwin does not. These two differences are found throughout the conjunct paradigms.

Neither language uses the core morphology to mark the inverse in the conjunct order. In Blackfoot, the same suffix that marks 3:3’ interactions in the independent order marks the core inverse in the conjunct (i.e. 3:2/1), and in Nishnaabemwin, the two suffixes that mark local interactions are used for the core inverse, with the form varying depending on whether the goal is 1st or 2nd person.

(16) Blackfoot
   ...nitsinoyssi
   nit-ino-yii-hsi
   1-see.TA-3:1-CONJ
   ‘(when) s/he sees me’

(17) Nishnaabemwin
   a. ...waabmid
      waabm-i-d
      see-3:1-3S
      ‘(if) s/he sees me’

   b. ...waabmik
      waabm-iN-g
      see-3:2-3S
      ‘(if) s/he sees you’

Turning to the local extensions, we see that, in both languages, they are marked with the same morphology as in the independent order.

(18) Blackfoot
   a. ...kitsinoohsi
      kit-ino-o-hsi
      2-see.TA-1:2-CONJ
      ‘(when) I see you’

   b. ...kitsinookssi
      kit-ino-0k-i-hsi
      2-see.TA-INV-2:1-CONJ
      ‘(when) you see me’
In the non-local extensions, the core direct marker is used to mark non-local direct in both Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin. However, there are differences in the inverse: the non-local inverse is marked with the core inverse marker in Nishnaabemwin, whereas in Blackfoot it is marked with \(-yii\), the same suffix used to mark non-local direct in the independent order.

The paradigms for TA conjunct order verbs are given in (22) and (23).
3.3 More variation

In the preceding subsections, we observed that Algonquian direct/inverse marking varies both across languages and across clause type (i.e. order). In addition to variation in direct/inverse marking, there is variation in the distribution of person prefixes, as summarized in (24).

(24) Distribution of person prefixes in Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Blackfoot</th>
<th>Nishnaabemwin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>conjunct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>kit-</td>
<td>kit-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>kit-</td>
<td>kit-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:3</td>
<td>kit-</td>
<td>kit-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:2</td>
<td>nit-</td>
<td>nit-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>ot-</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>ot-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>ot-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, there is variation in the morphological marking of order, or clause type; Blackfoot marks both conjunct and independent orders overtly, whereas Nishaabemwin does not. First regarding the conjunct, the examples in the preceding section showed the Blackfoot conjunct being marked with the complex morpheme –hsi (–hs + -yi, Frantz 1991, p.110), with no counterpart in Nishaabemwin. Independent order is evident in Blackfoot’s TI paradigm and in its TA paradigm with plural arguments, but not in its TA paradigm with singular arguments, as shown in (25).

(25) a. Bf sg. independent – TA

kit-sinooki
kit-ino-ok-i-∅
2-see.TA-INV-2:1-IND
‘You see me.’

b. Bf sg. independent - TI

kitsinihp
kit-ini-hp
2-see.TI-IND
‘You see it.’
c. Bf pl independent – TA
   kitinookihpinnaan
   kit-ino-ok-i-hp-innaan
   2-see.TA-INV-2:1-IND-1PL

   ‘You see us (excl).’

d. Bf pl conjunct - TA
   kitinookssinnaani
   kit-ino-ok-i-ss-innaan-yi
   2-see.TA-INV-2:1-CONJ-1PL-CONJ

   ‘…(when) you see us’

To summarize, the direct/inverse systems of Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin do not form a natural class. We have shown that the formal properties of direct/inverse differ both across languages and within a given language. This variation tells us that the morphological template is misleading, because it leads to an illusion of uniform function. Direct/inverse is standardly defined as signalling the mapping from a hierarchy of semantic roles (e.g. AGENT) to a hierarchy of participant roles (PERSON). However, if we accept that these hierarchies are not grammatical primitives, then this function cannot be a primitive either. In the next section, we develop an account of the variation we have observed here.

4 The sources of variation in the Algonquian direct/inverse

The starting point for our analysis is the claim that direct/inverse markers are not a natural class, and that they are distributed across different syntactic positions. This itself is not a new idea; Brittain (1999) claims that direct marking in Western Naskapi is associated with AgrS and inverse with AgrO, and Déchaine and Reinholtz (1997) argue that in Plains Cree, the direct theme sign associates with the VP and the inverse theme sign associates with the IP.

Although similar in spirit, our analysis diverges from those of Brittain and Déchaine and Reinholtz by focusing on the division between the core pattern of direct/inverse (interactions between local and non-local participants) and the extensions to this pattern (exclusively local or non-local participants, or in the case of Nishnaabemwin, interactions involving inanimate actors). Specifically, we claim that the core pattern involves Point-of-View (POV), which we analyse as an aspectual head located above vP and that the extensions to the core pattern are agreement morphemes realized elsewhere.

In section 3 we observed uniformity in the core pattern and variability in the extensions. In subsection 4.1, we develop an analysis of the theme marking as the expression of POV for core instances, i.e. for local-non-local interactions. In subsection 4.2, we develop analyses for instances where theme marking is used to signal other types of interactions.
We propose that these extensions realize one of the functional heads below POVs – either v or a vP-internal Aspect.

(26)a.  
\[ IP \text{ Spec INFL } [\text{Asp} \text{ Spec Asp}_v \text{ [vP Actor } v [\text{Asp} \text{ Asp}_v [\text{VP V Goal }]]]] \]

b.  
\[ IP \text{ Spec INFL } [\text{Asp} \text{ Spec Asp}_v \text{ [vP Actor } v [\text{Asp} \text{ Asp}_v [\text{VP V Goal }]]]] \]

For reasons of space, we cannot provide an analysis of all non-core instances here, as the patterns vary depending on person, order and language.

4.1 Core Pattern: theme marker is POV

The core pattern of theme marking occurs in the Independent Order in both Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin: A direct theme (–aa in both Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin) signals an interaction between a local (1st or 2nd person) actor and a non-local (3rd animate) goal; an inverse theme (Blackfoot –ok, Nishnaabemwin –igw) signals an interaction between a non-local actor and a local theme. De Lancey (1981: 653) suggests that this pattern constitutes a type of viewpoint aspect that alternates with the more familiar temporal-based system:

The two endpoints of an event vector are simultaneously points in space, points in time, and entities in the universe of discourse. The EH-split [empathy hierarchy; HB, BR, MW] pattern assigns viewpoint on the basis of the identities of the occupants of the two endpoints of the event vector; the typical pattern is one in which viewpoint placement is deixically constrained, so that it must be placed at the endpoint occupied by a SAP [speech act participant; HB, BR, MW] if possible. The aspectual split pattern assigns viewpoint with respect to the temporal aspect of the event vector, with terminal viewpoint corresponding to the attainment of the terminal point by the actors in the event.

We propose to formalize this insight as follows: Core direct/inverse marking is realized in the functional head, Point-Of-View Aspect (POV), which is located immediately above v. This is the same category that realizes temporal viewpoint aspect. As POV, this category indicates whether the actor role coincides with a discourse role, i.e.
whether the same entity bears both roles. Direct marking indicates that the actor coincides with a local discourse role while inverse marking indicates that it does not.

4.2 **Extended patterns: theme marker is agreement**

From a morphological perspective, extended patterns of theme marking are similar to core patterns. They use the same forms, and compete with core theme marking for a single affix position within the verb. Nevertheless, we propose that they have different functions, and consequently realize categories other than POV. More specifically, we analyse extended patterns as instances of agreement expressed as functional categories below POV. We focus here on several cases that clearly support this view.

4.2.1 **Extension #1: theme markers as Inner Aspect or v in Nishnaabemwin Conjunct Order**

We consider first the Nishnaabemwin TA conjunct order paradigm. In this paradigm, a 1st person goal requires the theme marker –i, and a 2nd person goal requires the theme marker –iN). Thus, these two morphemes are clearly instances of object agreement. We propose that –i and -iN are realizations of an ‘inner’ aspectual head below v, which we label Asp₂ (cf. Travis 1991). In tense-based languages, Asp₂ signals telicity, i.e. whether the event has an inherent endpoint, expressed as a grammatical object. In a person-based language Asp₂ indicates whether the goal bears a local (1st or 2nd person) discourse role. In the Nishnaabemwin conjunct order Asp₂ checks features of a 1st or 2nd person goal; otherwise it is not activated.

What about 3rd person goals? In the Nishnaabemwin conjunct order, if the goal of a TA verb is 3rd person, choice of theme marker depends on the actor: If the actor is local, then the theme marker is null; if the actor is 3rd proximate, then the theme marker is –a and if the actor is 3rd obviative, the theme marker is –igw. This is clearly not a case of object agreement, and hence not Asp₂. The fact that the core instances involving a local actor and non-local goal have no overt theme marker suggests that it is also not POV. We propose that these instances are expressions of subject agreement in v, the light verb that selects the external argument of the verb.

In short, theme marking in the Nishnaabemwin conjunct order realizes either Asp₂ or v, depending on the person specification of the

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2 There is one exception to this generalization: Theme marking is always –igw if the actor is inanimate. See 4.2.3 for discussion and analysis.
object (goal). We attribute this to a spell-out restriction that prohibits the co-occurrence of goal and actor agreement. This restriction is implemented as follows: If theme marking can express 1st or 2nd person goal agreement, then it must do so, otherwise it signals actor agreement, as shown in (27):

(27) Nishnaabemwin Conjunct Order

\[
\begin{array}{c}
[IP \ Spec \ INF \ [ASP \ Spec \ ASP_{POV} \ [\_V \ ASP \ Asp_2 \ [VP \ \_V \ \_V \ \_V \ Goal]]]] \\
\_i [local] \\
-aa [prox] \\
-igw [obv]
\end{array}
\]

Implicit in this analysis is the assumption that POV is simply not available in a clause with a conjunct order verb. We attribute this to the fact that conjunct order verbs are only used in embedded clauses. Recall that the function of POV is to relate event roles to discourse roles, and as such it is activated in root clauses, where reference of the event is calculated relative to the utterance (discourse), but not in embedded clauses, where the reference of the event is dependent on a higher clause.

4.2.2 Extension #2: theme markers as Inner Aspect or \( v \) in Nishnaabemwin Independent Order

Next we turn to the Nishnaabemwin independent order paradigm with strictly local interactions. As in the conjunct order, the choice of theme marking depends on the person specification of the goal, and in fact the same forms are used in both paradigms, i.e. theme marking for a 1st person goal is consistently \(-i\) and for a 2nd person goal, \(-iN\). Extending the analysis developed in the last subsection, these are the same object agreement markers, realized in Asp_2 rather than POV.

Similarly, the Nishnaabemwin TA independent order paradigm, theme marking for strictly non-local interactions takes the same form as in the conjunct order, i.e. if the actor is 3rd proximate, then the theme marker is \(-a\), and if the actor is 3rd obviative, the theme marker is \(-igw\). Again, we extend the analysis of the last subsection, proposing that these are the same subject agreement markers, and that they are realized in \( v \), rather than POV.

Comparing the two paradigms we observe that only local: non-local interactions in the independent order exhibit the core pattern of theme marking, and, thus, that only these interactions are realized by theme marking in POV. All other instances of theme marking in Nishnaabemwin are realizations of agreement in \( v \) or Asp_2. Spell-out restrictions block multiple theme marking on a single verb, and choice among the three
options (POV, v and Asp2) depends on both order and person specification of the actor and goal.

4.2.3 Extension #3: Inanimate Actor agreement in Nishnaabemwin (but not Blackfoot)

One of the striking differences between Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin is that only the latter permits inanimate actors. We assume that POV is present whenever there are two potential point-of-view holders, i.e. two animate participants to be ordered. In order to account for this contrast, we now propose that the distribution of POV is different in the two languages: In Blackfoot, POV is always projected in the context of TA verbs, and as a consequence, TA verbs require both animate goals and animate actors.

In Nishnaabemwin, on the other hand, POV is optional in the context of TA verbs, and is in fact not projected if the actor is inanimate. As noted in section 3, in both the independent and conjunct orders, theme marking is –igw whenever there is an inanimate actor and an animate goal. This cannot be POV because the referent of an inanimate DP can never be a point-of-view holder. Similarly, it is clearly not Asp2 because the form does not vary with person specification of the goal. The only logical conclusion to be drawn is that –igw must be the realization of inanimate subject agreement in v. This constitutes an exception to the generalization that the form of theme marking in the Nishnaabemwin conjunct order is always -i if the goal is 1st person and –iN if it is 2nd person.

We propose to account for this exception as follows: Suppose that both aspectual categories, POV and Asp2 are optional in Nishnaabemwin, and that they are only included in the structure when there are two potential point-of-view holders. Since inanimate actors are not potential point-of-view holders, neither will be available in this context. This leaves only v, which realizes actor agreement, and if the actor is inanimate, then the form of this agreement is –igw.

4.2.4 Extension #4: theme markers as Inner Aspect in Blackfoot

Evidence in support of the hypothesis that POV is obligatorily projected in Blackfoot may be gathered from the investigation of strictly local interactions. As we saw in section 3, the extended patterns of theme marking in Blackfoot consistently differ from those of Nishnaabemwin. With respect to interactions between 1st and 2nd person participants, there is no difference between the independent and conjunct orders: Events involving a 1st person actor and a 2nd person goal require the theme marker
-o in both paradigms; events involving a 2nd person actor and a 1st person goal require –oki. Extending our analysis of Nishnaabemwin local interactions, we analyse these theme markers as realizations of Asp₂, the aspectual category which indicates whether the goal bears a local (1st or 2nd person) discourse role. In Blackfoot, as in Nishnaabemwin, Asp₂ checks features of a 1st or 2nd person goal; otherwise it is not activated.

We note that the theme marker –oki appears to consist of the inverse marker -ok and a cognate of the Nishnaabemwin 1st person goal theme marker –i. However, the evidence suggests that in fact this is best analysed as a single morpheme which simply marks 1st person goal agreement, rather than a bimorphemic element consisting of both POV and Asp₂. While it is tempting to treat -oki as having these two constituents, this would comprise the only exception to what is otherwise a strict ban on the co-occurrence of POV and Asp₂, and then the question is why this should be. More significantly, this would constitute the only exception to the generalization that inverse marking in POV is impossible in the context of a local actor. Given our assumption that local actors are inherent point-of-view holders, such an exception is highly problematic, leading us to reject this possibility.

4.2.5 Extension #5: theme markers as v in Blackfoot

As in Nishnaabemwin, Blackfoot uses v to express agreement with non-local (3rd person) actors. In the conjunct order, v is realized as yii in two contexts: (i) when the actor is 3rd person and the goal is 1st or 2nd, and (ii) when the actor is 3rd obviative and the goal 3rd proximate. The fact that goal agreement is not expressed in these contexts indicates that there are spell-out restrictions, as in Nishnaabemwin. However, the content of this restriction is different in Blackfoot: If theme marking can express 3rd person actor agreement, then it must do so; otherwise it signals goal agreement.

There is an exception to this generalization: The theme marker –aa, which is also found in the core paradigm with a local actor and a 3rd person goal, is used in the conjunct order when the actor is 3rd person proximate and the goal 3rd person obviative. Can this also be analysed as a case of subject agreement? We leave this question for future research.

4.3 Summary

In short, our analysis of theme marking as either viewpoint aspect or related agreement marking provides insight into both the uniformity and variability observed within and across the two Algonquian languages in this case study. We observed uniformity in the ‘core patterns’ of theme
marking involving a local actor and a non-local goal. On our analysis, all are realizations of POV (viewpoint aspect). We also observed variability in the ‘extended patterns’ of theme marking both between Nishnaabemwin and Blackfoot and within each language. The extended patterns are not POV, but alternate between subject agreement in \( \nu \) and object agreement in inner aspect. The variation in the extended patterns is due to choice between these two options, which we attribute to different spell-out restrictions, and to optionality or obligatoriness of the category POV.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper develops an analysis of the Algonquian direct/inverse that situates it within the context of a universal clausal spine, with direct and inverse morphology being distributed across different syntactic positions. The evidence suggests that core instances of direct-inverse marking are participant-based viewpoint aspect (POV), while extensions are agreement and are realized in lower functional heads – either \( \nu \) or inner aspect. Thus, the morphological template is misleading, because it leads to an illusion of uniform function among the different direct/inverse markers, all of which occupy the same position in the inflected verb.

The categorization of core direct/inverse marking as viewpoint aspect also provides additional support for the parametric substantiation hypothesis (Ritter and Wiltschko 2009), in that the content of viewpoint aspect is participant-based in Blackfoot and Nishnaabemwin, rather than temporally-based, as in English. The methodological implication of this approach is that if a language appears to lack a certain category, then we cannot assume that it lacks the functional head typically associated with it. Rather, we can seek a category with the same function but different substantive content.

References


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