PROXIMATE DP, OBVIATIVE KP: BALANCING THE MORPHOSYNTAX AND PRAGMATICS OF OBVIATION*

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Obviation is a well-known feature of the Algonquian languages, but in the theoretical literature there is no consensus regarding its nature (see e.g. Grafstein 1984; Aissen 1997; Branigan and MacKenzie 1999; Brittain 2001; Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002; Bruening 2005; Quinn 2006; Piriyawiboon 2007; Muehlbauer 2008, 2012; Richards 2010; Bliss 2013). This paper proposes a theoretical approach to obviation that is intended to capture not only its morphosyntactic properties but also the crucial role that discourse factors play in its patterning. The analysis combines two existing ideas: Richards' (2010) proposal that proximate nominals are DP while obviatives are KP and Branigan and MacKenzie's (1999) proposal that the reference of proximate nominals is controlled by an operator in CP.

The main proposal is that the Algonquian clause includes an operator in CP that binds all DPs in its domain unless a KP layer intervenes. There are thus two kinds of third-person nominals in Algonquian: proximate nominals, as DPs, are obligatorily coreferent with the CP operator, while obviative nominals, as KPs, have independent reference. By connecting the DP-KP distinction to the CP level, we gain a unified account of the pragmatics and morphosyntax of obviation: the discourse-governed properties reflect the choice of referent for the topic operator in CP, the morphosyntactic properties follow from the DP-KP asymmetry, and the link between discourse and morphosyntax lies in the referential properties of the nominals: if a nominal is coreferent with the CP operator, it must have DP morphosyntax; if it is disjoint, it must have KP morphosyntax.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 1 gives a brief description of Algonquian obviation. Section 2 surveys some existing theoretical ideas. Section 3 presents the proposal that the obviation system reflects a DP-KP asymmetry that is tied to an operator in CP. Section 4 shows how this analysis derives the descriptive facts.

1. A brief description of Algonquian obviation

In Algonquian linguistics, the term OBVIATION (Bloomfield 1946:94) refers to an inflectional contrast between PROXIMATE and OBVIATIVE third persons, illustrated for Oji-Cree by the inflected nouns in (1) and the inflected verbs in (2). (All Oji-Cree examples in this paper are from the author's fieldwork.)

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(1) a. awaasihs
    awaasihs -Ø
    child   -PX.SG[1]
    'a/the child.PROX'

    b. awaasihsan
    awaasihs **-an**
    child   **-OBV**[2]
    'a/the child.OBV'

(2) a. kaa-takohshihk
    kaa-   takohshin -k
    IC.PST- arrive   -3
    'when s/he.PROX arrived'

    b. kaa-takohshininic
    kaa-   takohshin **-ini** -c
    IC.PST- arrive   **-OBV** -3
    'when **s/he.OBV** arrived'

Proximate is the distributionally unmarked member of the contrast: if a clause contains only one third-person referent, the inflection that marks this referent is normally proximate, as in (3a). When a clause contains multiple third-person referents, only one, usually the most topical, may be proximate; any others must be obviative. In (3b), for example, the third-person actor is proximate and the third-person undergoer is obviative.

(3) a. Niwaapamaa awaasihs.
    ni- waapam -aa   awaasihs -Ø
    1-   see   -DIR child   -PX.SG
    'I see the child.PROX'

    b. Owaapamaan awaasihsan.
    o- waapam -aa -n   awaasihs **-an**
    3- see   -DIR -OBV child   **-OBV**
    'S/he.PROX sees **the child.OBV**'

The proximate-obviative contrast does not align with particular thematic roles. When a transitive verb has two third-person arguments, either argument may be designated as proximate. In (4a), a proximate acts on an obviative, while in (4b), an obviative acts on a proximate. The proximate argument in such examples is accorded special pragmatic and morphosyntactic prominence. In the pragmatics, the proximate is normally interpreted as the discourse topic (e.g. Rhodes 1990 for Ojibwe; Thomason 2003 for Meskwaki). In the morphosyntax, the proximate occupies a higher structural position than the obviative, regardless of its thematic role (Rhodes 1976, 1994 for Ojibwe; Bruening 2001, 2005, 2009

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[1]The following abbreviations occur: DIR = direct; FUT = future; IC = initial change; INV = inverse; NON3 = non-third-person; OBJ = object; OBV = obviative; PL = plural; POSS = possessor; PROX, PX = proximate; PST = past; SG = singular; SUB = subordinator; SUBJ = subject.

[2]In Oji-Cree, the proximate nominal suffix distinguishes number (-Ø PX.SG, -ak PX.PL) while the obviative suffix does not (-an OBV). Oji-Cree obviatives are thus number-neutral, although I will regularly translate them with an English singular to save space. Note that number-neutrality is not an inherent feature of Algonquian obviation: some of the languages show a number contrast for obviative nominals (Proto-Algonquian, Meskwaki, Shawnee, Miami-Illinois, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Mi'kmaq, Arapaho) while others do not (Cree, Ojibwe, Menominee, Delaware, Massachusett, Cheyenne) (Bliss and Oxford 2017).

for Passamaquoddy; Bliss 2005 for Blackfoot; Quinn 2006 for Penobscot; Hamilton 2015 for Mi'kmaq). The morphosyntactic prominence of the proximate is reflected in various diagnostics such as default word order, variable binding, weak crossover, cross-clausal agreement, and control of "central agreement" morphology (Goddard 1969) such as the circumfix *o-. . . -waa* '3PL', which indexes the proximate argument in both (4a) and (4b).

(4) a. Awaasihsak owaapamaawaan mahkwan.

awaasihs -ak	o- waapam -aa -waa -n	mahkw **-an**
child -PX.PL	3- see -DIR -3PL -OBV	bear **-OBV**

    'The children.PROX see **the bear.OBV**'

   b. Awaasihsak owaapamikowaan mahkwan.

awaasihs -ak	o- waapam -iko -waa -n	mahkw **-an**
child -PX.PL	3- see -INV -3PL -OBV	bear **-OBV**

    '**The bear.OBV** sees the children.PROX'

The higher structural position that hosts the proximate may be regarded as a structural subject position, as Bloomfield (1962) states for Menominee: in proximate-on-obviative examples such as (4a), "the actor corresponds to what in an Indo-European language would be the subject," but in obviative-on-proximate examples such as (4b), "it is rather the object which . . . would correspond to the subject of an Indo-European verb" (p. 45, fn. 1).

Rhodes (1990) identifies four main triggers for the appearance of obviative marking in Ojibwe; similar observations can be made for most Algonquian languages. In CLAUSE-MATE OBVIATION, a third-person structural subject, defined as in the preceding paragraph, obligatorily triggers obviation of any other third persons in its clause, as in (4) above. In POSSESSOR OBVIATION, a third-person possessor obligatorily triggers obviation of its possessee, as in the Oji-Cree example in (5b) (compare (5a), where a first-person possessor does not trigger obviation of its possessee).

(5) a. nitayihsh   b. otayihshan

ni- tayihsh -Ø		o- tayihsh **-an**
1- dog -PX.SG		3- dog **-OBV**
'my dog.PROX'		'his/her.PROX **dog.OBV**'

In CROSS-CLAUSAL OBVIATION, a third person in a matrix clause optionally triggers obviation of a third person in an embedded clause, as in the Oji-Cree example in (6a). The optionality of cross-clausal obviation is shown by the minimally different example in (6b), where obviation is not triggered in the embedded clause.

(6) a. Ahpii Tepitan kaa-takohshininic, Menii kii-maacaa.

[ahpii Tepit **-an**	kaa- takohshin -ini -c]	Menii -Ø	kii- maacaa
[when David **-OBV**	IC.PST- arrive -OBV -3]	Mary -PX.SG	PST- leave

    'When **David.OBV** arrived, Mary.PROX left.'

b. Ahpii Tepit kaa-takohshihk, Menii kii-maacaa.
[ahpii Tepit -Ø   kaa-   takohshin -k] Menii -Ø   kii- maacaa
[when David -PX.SG IC.PST- arrive   -3] Mary -PX.SG PST- leave
'When David.PROX arrived, Mary.PROX left.'

Finally, in SENTENCE CLUSTER OBVIATION, a third person optionally triggers obviation of a third person in a neighbouring sentence, if the two sentences form a tight-knit discourse unit. In the Innu sentence in (7) (Hasler 2002:56), for example, 'he' in the embedded clause is obviative despite the fact that no other third persons are present in either the embedded clause or the matrix clause. This sentence is preceded by a span of narrative in which the character Hare is coded as proximate and the character Porcupine is coded as obviative. The obviation of 'he' thus serves to indicate that 'he' refers to Porcupine rather than Hare.

(7) Tshika nakatitin takushiniti.
tshi- ka- nakat -it   -in   [takushin -it **-i**]
2-   FUT- leave -2OBJ -NON3 [arrive   -3 **-OBV**]
'I will leave you behind when **he.OBV** arrives.'

A distinction is sometimes drawn between SYNTACTIC OBVIATION (clausemate and possessor obviation), which is obligatory and is computed within a single clause, and PRAGMATIC OBVIATION (cross-clausal and sentence cluster obviation), which is optional and is computed across clauses. Goddard (1984:285) and Rhodes (1990:101) both argue, however, that a unified characterization of obviation is necessary, given that the same morphology and similar links to topicality are attested across all of its functions. Goddard concludes that such a unified characterization must be expressed in pragmatic rather than syntactic terms, but Rhodes shows that it can indeed be seen as a matter of syntax, as long as certain pragmatic influences on syntactic structure are recognized.

Finally, it should be noted that the existence of a second degree of obviation, known as the FURTHER OBVIATIVE, is sometimes asserted (e.g. Hockett 1966). The putative further obviative inflection is restricted, however, to appearing on nouns in contexts of possessor obviation; it never appears on nouns in clausemate obviation contexts. Wolfart (1978) argues convincingly that the further obviative inflection is in fact just agreement with an obviative possessor (cf. Bloomfield 1946:96), parallel in form to the obviative subject agreement that appears on intransitive verbs. The further obviative is thus a spurious category and has no role to play in a theoretical analysis. There is only one obviative.

2.   Some existing theoretical ideas

Space limitations make it impossible to review all existing theoretical work on Algonquian obviation in this paper. I focus here on three points: the inadequacy of positing a feature [proximate] (§2.1), the DP-KP proposal in Richards 2010 (§2.2), and the CP operator analysis in Branigan and MacKenzie 1999 (§2.3).

2.1   Against a [proximate] feature

To capture the morphosyntax of obviation, Lochbihler (2012) builds on Béjar and Rezac's (2009) analysis of Algonquian person features by positing a feature [proximate], which is specified on first, second, and proximate third persons, but not on obviatives or inanimates:

(8)   First and second persons   [person, proximate, participant]
      Proximate third person   [person, proximate]
      Obviative third person   [person]
      Inanimate third person   (no person features)

This analysis, which I have adopted in earlier work (Oxford 2014), provides a straightforward account of the syntactic prominence of proximates discussed in Section 1 above. If the subject agreement probe on T seeks [proximate] in addition to [person], a proximate nominal—regardless of its thematic role—will be a better match than an obviative nominal. If T attracts the nominal that it agrees with, the result is that proximates rather than obviatives will consistently be attracted to subject position. We thus derive Bloomfield's (1962:45) generalization that in both proximate-on-obviative and obviative-on-proximate contexts, the proximate is the structural subject.

There are reasons to doubt the validity of positing a [proximate] feature, however. First, on conceptual grounds, this feature is ad hoc: its semantic contribution is unclear and there is little crosslinguistic support for its existence. Second, the specification of first and second persons as [proximate]—which is required in order for the analysis in Lochbihler 2012 and Oxford 2014 to work—finds little empirical support, as first and second persons do not participate in the proximate-obviative contrast and thus, if anything, ought to be unspecified for [proximate]. Third, the proposal that inanimate nominals lack person features predicts that the obviation contrast should not apply to inanimates, since obviation, under the analysis in (8), is a sub-feature of person. But this is incorrect: inanimates can indeed be either proximate or obviative (see e.g. Wolfart 1978:259).

In addition to the above points, the strongest evidence against a [proximate] feature comes from markedness. The proposal that proximates are specified as [proximate] while obviatives are unspecified entails that proximate is the marked member of the proximate-obviative contrast, but this is incorrect: in terms of both distribution and morphology, it is in fact the obviative, not the proximate, that is marked (Wolfart 1978:269–270). The distributional markedness of the obviative is indicated by the fact that the obviative appears only when it contrasts with the proximate, as in (3b) above; when there is no contrast, as in (3a), it is the proximate that appears, not the obviative. The morphological markedness of the obviative is indicated by the fact that obviative third-person agreement has the same form as proximate third-person agreement, *plus* an additional marker to "obviate" the third person. This is shown for Plains Cree in (9) and (10). Both of the intransitive forms in (9) contain the third-person subject suffix *-t*, and both of the transitive forms in (10) contain the first-on-third suffix *-ak*. When these suffixes occur on their own, as in the (a) examples, the third person is understood to be proximate. To mark the third person as

obviative, the *-t* and *-ak* suffixes must be supplemented by a special obviative suffix, as in the (b) examples (*-iyi* 'obviative subject', *-im* 'obviative object'). There is thus no dedicated proximate morphology in these examples: proximate is simply the unmarked reading when third-person morphology is unaccompanied by overt obviative marking.

(9) a. ê-nipât
    ê-   nipâ -t
    SUB- sleep -3
    'that <u>s/he.PROX</u> sleeps'

    b. ê-nipâyit
    ê-   nipâ **-iyi**   -t
    SUB- sleep **-OBV.SUBJ** -3
    'that **s/he.OBV** sleeps'

(10) a. ê-wâpamak
    ê-   wâpam -ak
    SUB- see   -1SG:3
    'that I see <u>him/her.PROX</u>'

    b. ê-wâpamimak
    ê-   wâpam **-im**   -ak
    SUB- see   **-OBV.OBJ** -1SG:3
    'that I see **him/her.OBV**'

An analysis of the morphosyntax of Algonquian obviation must capture two basic facts: (1) proximate is favoured over obviative in the determination of the structural subject, as we saw in Section 1, and (2) proximate is the unmarked member of the proximate-obviative contrast, as we have seen in this section. Attributing the contrast to a [proximate] feature allows us to capture the first fact but fails to capture the second.

2.2 Proximate DP, obviative KP

Richards (2010) proposes that the linearization of syntactic structures is subject to a Distinctness condition under which two DPs cannot be linearized within the same phase. Violations of this condition can be circumvented, Richards shows, by adding a layer of KP structure to one of the two DPs. This analysis accounts for the patterning of case particles in Chaha, Spanish, Hindi, and Miskitu. In a brief discussion, Richards (2010:137–138) suggests that this approach can be extended to account for Algonquian obviation: "like Case, obviation fixes potential Distinctness violations" by means of "a functional head of a particular type be[ing] attached to one or the other of the two DPs". Richards does not identify this functional head, but given his preceding proposals, the obvious candidate is K.

A DP-KP analysis of obviation has significant benefits. First, unlike an ad hoc [proximate] feature, the idea of a KP layer on nominals is well-established in the crosslinguistic theoretical literature. Second, the DP-KP analysis captures the distributional markedness of the obviative: a nominal is marked as obviative only when it contrasts with a proximate because a KP layer is added to a DP only when it co-occurs with another DP. Third, the DP-KP analysis captures the morphological markedness of the obviative: general third-person morphology that appears with both proximates and obviatives can be associated with D, which is present on all third person nominals, while dedicated obviative morphology can be associated with K, which is present only on obviative nominals.

The DP-KP analysis also lets us maintain an explanation for the morphosyntactic prominence of proximates. The main benefit of the [proximate] feature in Lochbihler's

(2012) and Oxford's (2014) analyses was that it allowed us to explain why proximates are more morphosyntactically prominent than obviatives: if the structural subject position is filled by the nominal that T agrees with, and if T seeks to agree with [proximate], then it follows that proximates rather than obviatives will be attracted to subject position. Under a DP-KP analysis, a similar account is possible: if we assume that the extra KP layer that is added to an obviative DP makes it a poorer target for agreement than a bare proximate DP, then it follows that T will show a preference to agree with proximates rather than obviatives. In fact, this account is preferable to the [proximate] account, as it is not tied to any particular feature: regardless of which features T seeks to agree with, they will be more accessible on a bare DP than they would be on a DP that is embedded within a KP.

For all of the above reasons, a DP-KP analysis of the proximate-obviative contrast is compelling. Distinctness alone, however, may not be sufficient to account for all the contexts in which obviation appears. In fact, Richards himself states that the role of obviation in preventing Distinctness violations "may not predict anything about its other syntactic properties" (p. 137). When we consider additional Algonquian data, problems arise for a Distinctness account. First, as Fry (2014) points out, when a ditransitive verb takes three third-person arguments, two of them will be obviative, as shown for Ojibwe in (11).

(11) Mary ogii-miinaan gwiizesan waabiminan.
     Mary -Ø   o- gii- miin -aa -an   gwiizes **-an**   waabimin **-an**
     Mary -PX.SG 3- PST- give -DIR -OBV   boy   **-OBV**   apple   **-OBV**
     'Mary.PROX gave the boy.OBV an apple.OBV.' (Fry 2014:10)

If KPs are subject to the same Distinctness condition as DPs, the presence of two obviatives, i.e. two KPs, is problematic. If the two KPs are in the same linearization domain, we have a Distinctness violation. Alternatively, if the 'apple' KP is alone in a separate, lower linearization domain, there is no reason why it should be a KP rather than a DP, since there are no other DPs in its domain from which it must be distinguished.

Further problems for an analysis motivated solely by Distinctness come from the optional "pragmatic" uses of obviation discussed in Section 1. Particularly problematic is the phenomenon of sentence cluster obviation illustrated in (7) above, repeated in (12). Here, the subject of the embedded clause is obviative despite the absence of any other third persons in both the embedded clause and the matrix clause. (The broader textual context does contain another third person, but Distinctness is a syntactic condition that applies only within a particular spellout domain and thus has no access to surrounding sentences.)

(12) Tshika nakatitin takushiniti.
     tshi- ka- nakat -it   -in   [takushin -it **-i**]
     2-   FUT- leave -2OBJ -NON3 [arrive   -3 **-OBV**]
     'I will leave you behind when he.OBV arrives.' (Innu; Hasler 2002:56)

I conclude that while a DP-KP analysis of obviation is desirable, the analysis cannot be motivated by Distinctness—or, at least, this cannot be the sole motivation.

2.3 Obviation and coreference

An alternative motivation for a DP-KP analysis of obviation emerges when we consider the behaviour of the proximate-obviative contrast with respect to coreference. Although it is often stated that only one third-person nominal per clause can be proximate, the more accurate generalization is that only one third-person *referent* per clause can be proximate. Multiple proximate nominals in a clause are fine as long as they share the same referent. The obligatory coreference of clausemate proximates can be observed in cases of apposition, such as the Meskwaki sentence in (13), where both *ataška:ha* 'the kingfisher' and its appositive *nesi:me:ha* 'my younger brother' are proximate. (Brittain (2001) has formalized this coreference requirement as the "One Proximate *pro* per Derivation" condition.)

(13) Ataška:ha nesi:me:ha ni:h=nawiha:wa.   (Bloomfield 1927:181)
      ataška:h -a̱   ne- si:me:h -a̱   ne- i:h= nawih -a: -w   -a
      kingfisher -PX.SG   1- sibling -PX.SG   1- FUT visit   -DIR -1SG -PX.SG
      'I shall visit the kingfisher.PROX$_i$, my younger brother.PROX$_i$.'

The coreference requirement on clausemate proximates plays a key role in possession constructions, explored in detail for Innu by Branigan and MacKenzie (1999). The crucial contrast is shown in (14) using data from Oji-Cree. Both sentences can be translated as 'David sees his dog,' and in both sentences the referent 'David' is proximate. The difference lies in the possessor inflection on *tayihsh-* 'dog', which has a proximate possessor in (14a) (*o-* '3') and an obviative possessor in (14b) (*o-...-ini* '3.OBV'). This formal difference is paralleled by a difference in reference: the proximate possessor in (14a) must be coreferent with the proximate noun *Tepit* ('David sees his own dog') while the obviative possessor in (14b) must have disjoint reference ('David sees someone else's dog').

(14) a.   Tepit owaapamaan otayihshan.
            Tepit -Ø̱   o- waapam -aa -n   o- tayihsh **-an**
            David -PX.SG   3- see   -DIR -OBV   3- dog   **-OBV**
            'David.PROX$_i$ sees his.PROX$_i$ dog.OBV$_j$' (= David's own dog)

      b.   Tepit owaapamaan otayihshiniin.
            Tepit -Ø   o- waapam -aa -n   o- tayihsh **-ini**   **-an**
            David -PX.SG   3- see   -DIR -OBV   3- dog   **-OBV.POSS -OBV**
            'David.PROX$_i$ sees his.OBV$_j$ dog.OBV$_k$' (= someone else's dog)

Note that no parallel coreference requirement exists for obviatives: while the two proximates in (14a) must corefer, the reference of the two obviatives in (14b) is disjoint not only from the proximate, but from each other.

Why must proximate nominals corefer? Branigan and MacKenzie (1999), henceforth BM, propose that a Polysynthesis Condition requires all overt DPs to raise to the specifier of CP. A raised DP with the feature [proximate] functions as a pseudo-operator that binds all instances of proximate *pro* in the clause. In (14a), the possessor *pro* is specified as

[proximate], so it is bound by the raised proximate DP *Tepit* and thus must be coreferent with *Tepit*. In (14b), the possessor *pro* is not [proximate], so it is not bound by *Tepit* and may thus have independent reference.

I consider BM's binding analysis to be essentially correct: without some sort of binding mechanism it is impossible to account for the obligatory coreference of proximate nominals, which does not follow from standard binding theory. We might, however, wish to revisit the mechanics of BM's analysis in light of subsequent developments in our understanding of Algonquian syntax. The Polysynthesis Condition was consistent with other work on Algonquian at the time (e.g. Russell and Reinholtz 1995), and it is no doubt the case that many overt DPs do move to clause-peripheral positions (e.g. Dahlstrom 1995), but it now seems likely that at least some DPs remain in their A-positions (see especially LeSourd 2006). How can we capture the coreference of proximates if we no longer assume that overt DPs raise to the specifier of CP to become pseudo-operators? Questions also remain about the status of the [proximate] feature. BM propose that *all* overt DPs raise to the specifier of CP, but, as we have seen, the coference requirement applies only to *proximate* DPs. What makes proximates special in this regard? And how does this analysis capture the pragmatic link between proximates and topicality?

2.4 Summary

After highlighting some problems with positing a [proximate] feature, this section has reviewed two existing proposals regarding the Algonquian proximate-obviative contrast: Richards' (2010) proposal that proximates are DP while obviatives are KP and Branigan and MacKenzie's (1999) proposal that the obligatory coreference of proximates arises due to binding by a CP-level operator. Questions remain for both of these proposals. The DP-KP analysis is desirable in many ways, but is in need of motivation, as Distinctness alone does not account for the distribution of obviative marking. The binding analysis seems to be the only way to capture the obligatory coreference of proximates, but it is unclear what the binder might be (if we abandon the Polysynthesis Condition) and why only proximates are subject to binding. The solution to these issues, I propose, lies in combining the two ideas. The next section sketches an approach to Algonquian obviation that links Richards' DP-KP distinction to Branigan and MacKenzie's binding analysis.

3.   Proposal: DP, KP, and their relation to CP

Branigan and MacKenzie (1999) note that the referential properties of Algonquian proximate and obviative nominals are parallel to those of third-person "n-pronouns" and "O-pronouns" in Abe (Koopman and Sportiche 1989). An Abe O-pronoun, like an Algonquian obviative, must be disjoint from a c-commanding n-pronoun, while an Abe n-pronoun, like an Algonquian proximate, must corefer with a c-commanding clausemate n-pronoun. Koopman and Sportiche account for the obligatory coreference of n-pronouns by analyzing them as logical variables that must be bound by an operator in an A-bar position.

The parallel between Algonquian obviation and the existing literature on A-bar binding can be taken even further. Huang (1984) proposes that Chinese *pro*, which obligatorily refers to the discourse topic, is a variable whose interpretation is determined through binding by a null topic operator in the specifier of CP. Huang takes the availability of a null topic operator as a parameter that distinguishes two types of languages (as identified by Tsao 1977): DISCOURSE-ORIENTED languages, such as Chinese and Japanese, have a null topic operator that can bind empty-category variables, thus allowing null arguments to be identified by discourse factors, while SENTENCE-ORIENTED languages, such as Spanish and English, lack a null topic operator and thus permit null arguments only if they can be identified by grammatical factors such as agreement.

I propose that Algonquian languages, like Chinese, are discourse-oriented: a null topic operator is present in CP. I further propose that an Algonquian third-person DP patterns as a referential variable regardless of whether it is a null pronoun (as in Chinese), an overt pronoun (as in Abe), or a DP headed by a lexical noun. These proposals predict that *all* third-person DPs in an Algonquian clause should be bound by, and thus coreferential with, the null topic in CP, as schematized in (15).

(15) $Op_i \ldots DP_i \ldots DP_i \ldots DP_i$

This prediction is, of course, too strong: it accounts for the obligatory coreference of proximate third-person DPs (and their topical interpretation), but what about third-person DPs that should have disjoint reference from the null topic? I propose that a DP can escape binding by the topic operator through *the addition of a KP layer*, as schematized in (16).

(16) $Op_i \ldots DP_i \ldots DP_i \ldots [_{KP} \textbf{K DP}_j]$

Why should adding KP insulate a DP from binding by the topic operator? Given that the KP layer of a nominal is sometimes argued to be parallel to the CP layer of a clause (e.g. Bittner and Hale 1996), we might imagine that K, like C, introduces some sort of referential operator. A DP in the scope of K would then be bound by the closer KP operator rather than the more distant CP topic operator, and would thereby be disjoint from the CP topic. Alternatively, we could take the KP node to be a phase boundary, with phase impenetrability then preventing the operator in CP from binding the DP complement of the phase head K. I will not attempt to develop either of these alternatives any further here; for now I simply assume that a DP within a KP cannot be bound by an operator in CP.

Under this analysis, Algonquian nominals fall into two types. The first type, bare DPs, are bound by the topic operator in CP; all bare DPs in a clause are thus obligatorily coreferent with each other and with the discourse topic. This is exactly the behaviour of an Algonquian proximate nominal. The second type, DPs contained within a KP, are not bound by the topic operator and may thus have independent reference (and are not interpreted as topics). This is exactly the behaviour of an Algonquian obviative nominal. To connect the syntactic structures in (15) and (16) to the observed morphology, we need only assume that D on its own is spelled out with proximate morphology (i.e. de-

fault third-person morphology, given the unmarked status of the proximate) while D in the environment of K, or the D+K combination, is spelled out with obviative morphology.

This analysis—which admittedly remains sketchy with respect to many details—allows us to unify the proposals of Richards (2010) and Branigan and MacKenzie (1999). The binding dynamics provide a motivation for the addition of a KP layer to obviatives but not proximates, which was proposed by Richards but could not be motivated by Distinctness alone. And the DP-KP asymmetry provides a more explanatory replacement for Branigan and MacKenzie's [proximate] feature: proximate nominals have special properties with respect to coreference and topicality not because they bear a particular feature, but because their structure inherently forces them to be bound by the CP-level topic operator.

The analysis also shows a strong parallel with that proposed for Algonquian obviation by Déchaine and Wiltschko (2002), henceforth DW, who also take proximates to be structurally smaller than obviatives. In DW's analysis, proximates are PhiP while obviatives are full DPs. In terms of binding theory, DW propose that PhiPs are variables while DPs—even DP-pronouns—are R-expressions that are subject to Condition C. Under this analysis, obviatives are obligatorily disjoint from proximates because, as R-expressions, obviatives cannot be bound. This is similar to my proposal that, as KPs, obviatives cannot be bound by the CP topic operator. A further prediction of DW's analysis is that obviatives should be obligatorily disjoint not only from proximates, but also from *other obviatives*: if a clause contains two obviatives, i.e. two R-expressions, Condition C should rule out their coreference. This prediction is incorrect, as shown by the Plains Cree sentence in (17), which contains two obviative nominals that do corefer: 'the chief's son' and 'his'.

(17) Okimâw okosisa wâpamêyiwa otêmiyiwa.   (Wolfart 1978:260)

okimâw -Ø		o- kosis **-ah**	wâpam -ê	-iyi	-w -ah
chief	-PX.SG	3- son **-OBV**	see	-DIR -OBV	-3 -OBV

o- têm	**-iyi**	**-ah**
3- horse	**-OBV.POSS**	**-OBV**

'The chief's.PROX son.OBV sees his.OBV horse.OBV.' (his = the son's)

A Condition C anaysis of obviation is thus too strong. An obviative must be disjoint from the proximate, but it may or may not be disjoint from other obviatives. Obviation thus cannot be characterized as a marker of disjoint reference *tout court*, but rather more specifically as a marker of reference that is disjoint from the proximate. This follows if obviatives are defined by their immunity to binding by a topic operator, as in my analysis. It does not follow if obviatives are defined by their immunity to all binding, as in DW's analysis.

4.   Deriving the patterning of obviation

This section briefly shows how the proposed analysis can account for the description of the Algonquian obviation system that was given in Section 1. Clausemate obviation follows straightforwardly from the requirement that the two arguments of a transitive verb must

have disjoint reference.[3] If both arguments were bare DPs—i.e. both proximate—they would corefer, as in (18a). To prevent coreference, a KP layer must be added to one or the other of the DPs, as in (18b–c), with obviative inflection being the surface result.[4] (In order to make these schematic representations slightly less abstract, I have replaced the indices 'i' and 'j' with the arbitrary concrete referents 'Irene' and 'John'; structure that is not relevant to the determination of reference has been omitted.)

(18) a.   *$[_{CP}$ Op$_{Irene}$ $[_{TP}$ … DP$_{Irene}$ … DP$_{Irene}$]]

        b. $[_{CP}$ Op$_{Irene}$ $[_{TP}$ … DP$_{Irene}$ … $[_{\mathbf{KP}}$ **K DP$_{\mathbf{John}}$**]]]

        c. $[_{CP}$ Op$_{Irene}$ $[_{TP}$ … $[_{\mathbf{KP}}$ **K DP$_{\mathbf{John}}$**] … DP$_{Irene}$]]

This analysis captures the obligatoriness of clausemate obviation as well as the fact that obviation may apply freely to either the external argument or the internal argument.

Variation in whether obviation applies across clauses can be derived from variation in the reference of the topic operator. If the matrix and embedded operators are coreferential, as in (19a), there can be only one proximate; any disjoint third-persons must be obviative. If the operators are disjoint, as in (19b), there can be two disjoint proximates, one per clause.

(19) a. $[_{CP}$ Op$_{Irene}$ $[_{CP}$ Op$_{Irene}$ … $[_{\mathbf{KP}}$ **K DP$_{\mathbf{John}}$**]] … DP$_{Irene}$]

        b. $[_{CP}$ Op$_{Irene}$ $[_{CP}$ Op$_{John}$ … DP$_{John}$] … DP$_{Irene}$]

Sentence cluster obviation, in which a third person is marked as obviative because it is disjoint from the proximate topic of a preceding sentence, can be derived if the topic operator continues to refer to the established topic even in a sentence in which the topic is not realized by a nominal argument. For example, imagine that a discourse span in which 'Irene' is the topic contains one sentence in which no nominal refers to 'Irene'. If the operator in CP, in keeping with the topic structure of the discourse span, continues to refer to 'Irene', any other third persons in the sentence will have to be obviative (i.e. KP) in order to have disjoint reference, as in (20).

(20) $[_{CP}$ Op$_{Irene}$ … $[_{\mathbf{KP}}$ **K DP$_{\mathbf{John}}$**] …]

Under this analysis, sentence cluster obviation arises when a clause contains two third-person *referents* even though it does not contain two third-person *nominals*.

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[3]Reflexives in most Algonquian languages are expressed using a derivationally detransitivized verb form that takes only a single argument (Bloomfield 1946:108).

[4]Nothing in principle prevents a KP layer from being added to *both* nominals. The result would be a clause in which both arguments are obviative, which is possible in certain circumstances:

(i)   Okimâw wâpamêw okosisa kinosêwa ê-nipahâyit.

okimâw -Ø	wâpam -ê -w	[o- kosis **-ah**	kinosêw **-ah**	ê-	nipah -â -iyi -t]
chief -PX.SG	see -DIR -3	[3- son **-OBV**	fish **-OBV**	SUB-	kill -DIR -OBV -3]

    'The chief.PROX sees [his son.OBV killing a fish.OBV].' (Plains Cree; Wolfart 1978:260)

Possessor obviation is the most difficult obviation context to account for. We have seen that in a clause such as 'the chief sees the child', there is flexibility: obviation may apply to either of the two arguments. In a possession structure such as 'the chief's son', however, there is no flexibility: a noun that has a third-person possessor *must be obviative*. The obligatory obviation of nouns with third-person possessors does not follow from referential considerations alone. The key, I suggest, is that the two DPs in a possessor obviation context are not only contained within the same clause, but are in fact merged with each other, as in (21a). If the resulting [DP DP] structure is problematic—which could be the case for reasons of linearization (Richards 2010) or labeling (Chomsky 2013)—a plausible repair strategy would be to move the specifier DP into a higher functional projection, as in (21b). Since this projection takes a DP as its complement, its most plausible identity is KP.

(21) a. $[DP_{chief} \; DP_{son}]$

b. $[_{KP} \; DP_{chief} \; K \; [_{DP} \; \text{DP}_{chief} \; DP_{son} \;]]$

The result is a structure in which the possessed noun 'son' projects to a KP (= obviative) while the possessor 'chief' is a bare DP (= proximate). Since the movement in (21b) is motivated by structural rather than referential considerations, this result will obtain regardless of the reference of the two DPs. The analysis in (21) thus captures the fact that the patterning of possessor obviation is more rigid than that of the other types of obviation.

5. Conclusion

This paper has proposed that Algonquian syntax is discourse-oriented in the sense of Tsao (1977) and Huang (1984): a null topic operator binds all accessible variables in its domain. By default, all third-person DPs will be bound by this topic operator. This accounts for the obligatory coreference and topicality of proximates. DPs that are disjoint from the topic operator must occur with a KP layer, realized as obviative morphology. The KP layer has two structural consequences: it prevents binding by the operator in CP, thus allowing obviative nominals to have disjoint reference from the topic, and it makes obviative nominals less accessible to agreement than proximate nominals are, thus accounting for the consistent attraction of proximates rather than obviatives to the structural subject position.

The identification of Algonquian languages as discourse-oriented allows us to fill a gap in the classic typology of sentence-oriented versus discourse-oriented languages (Tsao 1977; Huang 1984), as shown in (22). While there are well-known examples of sentence-oriented languages with both impoverished agreement (English) and rich agreement (Spanish), the classic examples of discourse-oriented languages all have impoverished agreement (Chinese, Japanese, Korean). Algonquian provides an example of a system that simultaneously shows both discourse-orientation and rich agreement.

(22)

	sentence-oriented	discourse-oriented
impoverished agreement	English	Chinese
rich agreement	Spanish	**Algonquian**

The proposed analysis of Algonquian obviation unifies existing insights in the literature (Richards 2010; Branigan and MacKenzie 1999; cf. Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002). It also provides a unified account of "syntactic" and "pragmatic" obviation: all instances of obviation reflect the relationship between the reference of the topic operator in CP and the reference of the third-person nominals in the clause. "Syntactic" obviation occurs when a single clause contains two disjoint third persons. In such cases it is unavoidable that obviation must apply to one of the two third persons. "Pragmatic" obviation occurs when the topic structure of the discourse causes the reference of the topic operator to remain fixed across neighbouring clauses or sentences, thus forcing non-topical third person nominals to be marked as obviative even in the absence of a proximate clausemate nominal.

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