# TWO TYPES OF OBLIQUE ARGUMENTS IN EASTERN ALGONQUIAN AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON CASE*

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This paper shows two types of oblique arguments and their different availability of participating in agreement using the data from Eastern Algonquian languages (Unami Delaware and Maliseet-Passamaquoddy). The first type are the NPs that bear a locative case suffix (Proto-Algonquian *-enki) and the other type are the NPs that are selected by a small set of preverbs known as RELATIVE ROOTS (Rhodes 1990, 2010). The RR type can trigger agreement indicated by a collocation of morphemes known as N-ENDINGS (Goddard 1979:103-106) and PERIPHERAL ENDINGS (Goddard 1979:38) on the verb while the case type cannot trigger this collocation. I show that the variability of the oblique arguments for verb agreement provides us important implication on how Case is assigned and interferes subsequent derivation.

## 1.     Background: core arguments and oblique arguments in Eastern Algonquian

In typological research, grammatical relations can be divided into two general categories: core arguments and oblique arguments (Comrie 1989:66, 179; Dixon 1994:122-3).[1] Core arguments are noun phrases that have close associations with semantic roles determined by predicates (for a much more detailed discussion see Andrews 2007:152, 157) while oblique arguments are noun phrases that provide additional circumstances such as location, time, and manner, and most importantly, their form or meaning usually is not determined by predicates. Subject, direct object, and indirect object are instances of a core argument. In English, the core arguments often are bare NPs or pronouns, whereas the oblique arguments usually are nominals preceded by a preposition, such as the instrumental *with a hammer* and the locative *in the box*. Furthermore, oblique arguments sometimes behave like adjuncts because they can be dropped.

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[1] Morpheme glosses follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules, with these additions: 3 = third proximate person, 0 = inanimate, 3´/OBV = obviative, AI = intransitive animate, AI+O = transitivized intransitive animate, AN = animate, II = intransitive inanimate, IN = inanimate, PRET = preterite, PTCL = particle, RR = relative root, TA = transitive animate, TA+O = ditransitive with animate goal, TI = verb transitive inanimate.

Sometimes the situation is not always as this simple, because the oblique argument may be obligatory for the predicate rather than being optional like adjuncts.[2] As noted in Rhodes (1998:1), the English verb *put* requires three arguments: a subject, a direct object, and a locative oblique argument. As exemplified below, the example in (1a) containing all three arguments is permissible. In contrast, the example in (1b) lacking the PP phrase and the example in (1c) missing the NP object are impermissible.

(1)  a.   Alice put the key in the box.

    b.   *Alice put the key.

    c.   *Alice put in the box.

In Algonquian languages, verbs have an elaborate morphological distinction subcategorizing the requirement on the arguments. A derivational morpheme termed FINAL (Bloomfield 1946:104-111; Goddard 1990) specifies the transitivity of the verb as well as the gender of the argument. Four basic verb classes are thus distinguished by finals. As shown in Table 1, intransitive verbs (i.e. AI and II) are categorized by the animacy of their subjects, and monotransitive verbs (i.e. TA and TI) are categorized by the animacy of their objects.

**Table 1.** Verb classes and stem shapes (examples from Unami Delaware, Goddard 2021:48-49)

| Class | Stem (final bolded) | Meaning: *maxk-* 'red', *pak-* 'hit' |
|---|---|---|
| **AI** (animate intransitive) | *maxkəsi·*- | 'something.AN is red' |
| **II** (inanimate intransitive) | *maxke·*- | 'something.IN is red' |
| **TA** (transitive animate) | *pak**am**-* | 'to hit someone/something.AN' |
| **TI** (transitive inanimate) | *pak**ant**-* | 'to hit something.IN' |

Beyond the basic four-way distinctions, two additional verb classes, AI+O verbs (Goddard 1979) and TA+O verbs (Goddard 1979), may select an object. The former is a transitive verb taking two core arguments (a subject and an object) and the latter is a ditransitive verb requiring three core arguments (a subject, an indirect object, and a direct object). However, these two verb classes do not employ special derivational morphology but use the same set of finals of the AI or the TA. In addition, the object argument selected by these two classes are not specified for gender and therefore can be animate or inanimate.

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[2] The research on subcategorization (Chomsky 1965; Kaplan and Bresnan 1982) and the valency theory (Tesnière 1965) contribute to explaining the number as well as the type of arguments required by the predicate.

Focusing on the object arguments, they are further distinguished by two kinds: primary object and secondary object (Goddard 1979; Rhodes 1990). The former refers to the object of a TA/TI verb or the goal of a TA+O verb while the latter refers to the object of an AI+O verb or the theme of a TA+O verb. Because in Algonquian ditransitives, the goal patterns with the object of the monotransitive verb (i.e. primary object), while the theme (i.e. secondary object) patterns differently. The Unami Delaware examples provide evidence that all three types of core arguments can be indexed by peripheral agreement (bolded): subject as in (2a), primary object as in (2b), and secondary object as in (2c).

(2)    a.    kəntəké·yɔk                              subject
                kəntka·-ẅ-**ak**
                dance-3-**3PL**
                '**They** (AN) dance.' (Unami Delaware, Goddard 1979:167)

        b.    nəmi·lá·ɔk                           primary object
                nə-mi·l-a·-w-**ak**
                1-give-3.OBJ-1SG-**0PL**
                'I give to **them** (AN).' (Unami Delaware, Goddard 1979:171)

        c.    nəmi·lá·na                          secondary object
                nə-mi·l-a·-**n-a**
                1-give-3.OBJ-1SG-**0PL**
                'I gave **them** (IN) to him/her.' (Unami Delaware, Goddard 2020:104)

Looking closer to the last two examples in (2), peripheral agreement is preceded by the suffix called CENTRAL ENDINGS (Goddard 1979:38) which consists of a formative element and a number morpheme (unmarked for singular participants, -*əna·n* for 1 PL participant, and -*wa·w* for 2 PL or 3 PL participants). The central suffix may inflect for one of the three sets given the formative element it contains: M-ENDINGS, W-ENDINGS, and N-ENDINGS (Goddard 1979:103-106). The selection of the formative element actually correlates with the behavior of peripheral agreement (Goddard 2007:264). As exemplified in (2b), the w-ending is used when peripheral agreement indexes a lower-ranked animate primary argument. However, the use of n-endings is not conditioned by gender. As put forth by Goddard (2020), the n-endings appear in a much broader contexts in that they are not only used in the inflection involving an inanimate argument (the TI inflection and the TA inanimate subject inflection) but also in cases where peripheral agreement indexes the secondary object of either gender, or other nominal elements (oblique arguments, relative root complements, and adjuncts). Following Goddard (2007), I analyze the central suffix -w in (2b) and that of -n in (2c) as a singular suffix, specifying the number of the primary participant (its person feature is expressed by the prefix, here *nə-* 1).[3]

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[3] Despite the similarity in their phonological forms, the -*w* suffix in (2a) is distinct with the -*w* suffix in (2b) and is categorized as one of the m-endings by Goddard. Two most noticeable differences can tell apart these two w-suffixes. Firstly, the m-ending -*w* never co-occurs with the prefix, while the w-ending one always does. Secondly, the m-ending gives rise to umlaut to the stem, while the w-ending does not.

Returning to the discussion of peripheral agreement in terms of its ability to index various grammatical functions, Goddard (2020) showed that it is capable of indexing oblique arguments in Unami Delaware. The example of an instrumental oblique is provided in (3). Focusing on verb morphology, the oblique agreement is indexed by the peripheral suffix (morphologically zero for the inanimate 0SG category) accompanied by the n-ending central suffix.

(3)     pɔ́k·ama·n
        wə-pakam-a·-**n-Ø**
        3-hit-3.OBJ-3SG-**0SG**
        'He struck him/her **with it**.' (Unami Delaware, Goddard 2020:106)

Maliseet-Passamaquoddy, the other Eastern language under investigation, patterns with Unami Delaware. The example in (4) provides clear evidence of oblique triggering agreement because of the co-occurrence of the n-ending *-nénənw* and the peripheral suffix *-ak* indexing the animate 3PL argument 'my younger siblings'.

(4)     nìl n-wit·ayyanénuuk nuhsimísok
        nìl       n-wit-ayya-**né**nənw-**ak**       n-uhsimís-ok
        I         1-with.RR-play-1PL-**3PL**       1-young.sibling-3PL
        'I play **with my younger siblings**.' (Maliseet-Passamaquoddy, LeSourd 2020)

Above all, peripheral agreement in the Eastern languages is versatile for indexing various kinds of grammatical functions: subject, primary object, secondary object, and oblique argument. When verb allows agreement with secondary objects and oblique arguments, the same collocation of the n-endings and peripheral agreement is used.

## 2.     Two types of oblique arguments

Four morphological strategies can be employed to code an oblique argument in Algonquian languages. The nominal element regarded as the oblique argument may be unmarked, appearing as a bare NP, or it could be morphologically indicated by three means: via case marking (Dahlstrom 2013), a relative root (Bloomfield 1946:120; Rhodes 1990), or both at the same time. The bare type was illustrated by Unami Delaware in (3). To save space, the Maliseet-Passamaquoddy bare type example is omitted here but will be brought later in (8a). In what follows, section 2.1 presents examples of the oblique arguments introduced by a relative root, section 2.2 illustrates the strategy manifesting the case type, and section 2.3 provides examples of case-marked oblique arguments co-occurring with relative roots.

## 2.1     Relative Root (RR) type

The oblique NP may be introduced by a relative root. I will refer to this type as the RR type. Relative roots (glossed as 'RR') are preverbs that obligatorily make a reference to a nominal element in the clause (Bloomfield 1946:120; Wolfart 1973:66; Rhodes 1998,

2010). Relative roots can be understood as an adposition-like morpheme that is morphologically part of the verb but takes a freestanding phrase as its complement. The previous Maliseet-Passamaquoddy example seen above in (4), repeated below as (5), illustrates a comitative oblique. The relative root *wit-* 'with' selects nuhsimísok 'my younger siblings' as its complement.

(5)     nìl n-wit-ayyanénuuk nuhsimísok
        nìl     n-**wit-**ayya-**né**nənw-**ak**        n-uhsimís-ok
        I       1-with.**RR**-play-1PL-**3PL**       1-young.sibling-3PL
        'I play **with my younger siblings**.' (Maliseet-Passamaquoddy, LeSourd 2020)

The Unami Delaware example in (6) illustrates the use of the relative root *əli·-* which expresses manner, 'in a certain way', and therefore is glossed as 'so'. The relative root complement is the emphatic demonstrative *ná=nə*. Apparently, in these two Eastern Algonquian languages, the RR obliques trigger the n-endings as well as peripheral agreement.

(6)     ná=nə ntə́li-kí·spwi·n
        ná=nə            nət-**əli·-** ki·spwi·-**n-Ø**
        FOC=that         1-so.**RR**-be.full-1SG-**0PL**
        'I got full **on it**.' [lit. 'I got full that way.'] (Unami Delaware, Goddard 2020:105)

## 2.2     Case type

As opposed to the previous two types, the third type – the case marked oblique argument – is no longer available for agreement in Eastern Algonquian. Using Maliseet-Passamaquoddy for instance, the NP *katkohk* 'pot' in (7) bears the case suffix *-ək*. In this example, *epahka-* is an AI (animate intransitive) verb. It is important to point out that the combination of the central suffix *-n* and the peripheral suffix *-əl*. This inflection in fact demonstrates that the agreement is with the plural secondary object *pəcetesəl* 'potatoes' the object rather than the locative *katkohkək* 'in the pot' because of the plural agreement morpheme. Therefore, the locative oblique does not give rise to agreement.

(7)     ntepahkanəl pəcetesəl katkohkək
        nt-epahka-**n**-**əl**        pəcetes-əl        katkohk-**ək**
        1-throw-1SG-**0PL**          potato-0PL        pot-**LOC**
        'I throw **potatoes** in the pot.' (Maliseet-Passamaquoddy, Sherwood 1983:121)

The convincing evidence clarifying the unavailability for peripheral agreement with case marked oblique arguments is given in Sherwood (1983:122-3). The contrast shown in (8) lends support that the key to agreement with obliques lies in whether or not the NP is marked by the locative suffix -ək. The bare NP *wik* 'house' in (8a) triggers the n-suffix and peripheral agreement. However, the NP *wikək* 'in the house' in (8b) takes the locative case, the same agreement morphemes are disallowed.

(8)    a.    məwin kwəssəyotan məcəyehsəwəl wik                              bare type
            məwin          w-kəssəyota-**n-Ø**        məcəyehsəw-əl        wik
            bear            3-move.in-3SG-**0SG**    Partridge-3′          house.0SG
       'Bear moved in **into Partridge's house**.'

       b.    *məwin kwəssəyotan məcəyehsəwəl wikək                          case type
            məwin          w-kəssəyota-**n-Ø**        məcəyehsəw-əl        wik-**ək**
            bear            3-move.in-3SG-**0SG**    Partridge-3′          house-**LOC**
       Intended: 'Bear moved in into Partridge's house.'
                                    (Maliseet-Passamaquoddy, Sherwood 1983:122)

Alternatively, if the case marked *wikək* has to be maintained, as given in (9), the grammatical form must use the AI inflection. Namely, the central suffix *-w̆* as well as the zero peripheral suffix together agrees with the subject *məwin* 'bear'. As a result, oblique agreement is disallowed.

(9)    məwin ksəyote məcəyehsəwəl wikək                                    case type
       məwin          kəssəyota-w̆-Ø        məcəyehsəw-əl        wik-**ək**
       bear            move.in-3-**3SG**    Partridge-3′          house-**LOC**
       '**Bear** moved in into Partridge's house.' (Sherwood 1983:123)

## 2.3    Mixed type

The mixed type is attested in the Eastern languages. As given in (10a) for Unami Delaware, the case marked NP *mux·ó·link* 'in/to the boat' is linked to the relative root *əli-* 'to'. In the Maliseet-Passamaquoddy example in (10b), the locative NP *qospemok* 'in/to the lake' is the complement for the relative root *oloq-* 'to, that way'. Crucially, both oblique arguments again cannot be indexed by peripheral agreement. In Unami Delaware, the verb in (10a) shows the AI inflection agreeing with the subject. The Maliseet-Passamaquoddy verb in (10b) use the TA inflection: the proximate subject is indexed by central agreement and the obviative object is indexed by peripheral agreement *-l*. Again, agreement is not found for the mixed type obliques.

(10)   a.    mux·ó·link lí-pó·s·o·p
            mux·ó·l-**ink**    **əli**-po·si·-w̆-əp-**Ø**
            boat- **LOC**       **to.RR**-embark-3-PRET-3SG
            '**He** went aboard a boat.' (Unami Delaware, Goddard 2021:45)

b.    'toloqaphal oloqiw qospemok
't-**oloq**-aph-a-Ø-**l**                                    oloqiw         qospem-**ok**
3-**that.way.RR**-track-3.OBJ-3SG-**3ʹ**    that.way       lake-**LOC**
'She tracked **him** (OBV) toward the lake.'

(Passamaquoddy, Bruening 2001:169)

Taken together, an interesting split regarding oblique agreement is found within the two Eastern Algonquian languages. As summarized in Table 2, obliques identified as the bare type and the RR type can be indexed by the collocation of the n-endings and peripheral agreement, whereas obliques identified as the case type and the mixed type are not available for the same combination of agreement suffixes.

**Table 2.** Eastern Algonquian: agreement with types of oblique arguments

| Oblique type | Bare type | RR type | Case type | Mixed type |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| agreement | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ |

## 3       Morphological marking and Case

At this point, the question arises out of the split pattern in the Eastern languages: why do case marked obliques block agreement? In this section, I focus on the case type and the relative root (RR) type, proposing that their morphological markings shed light on the divergence in participation of agreement. I will argue that the variability of the oblique arguments for verb agreement can be captured by different Case assignments (Chomsky 1981).

In the literature of Case theory (Chomsky 1981; Vinokurova 2005; Legate 2008; a.o.), arguments must be licensed, thematically by the assignment of theta-roles, and syntactically by abstract Case (Lochbihler 2012:13). There are two ways for nominals to be assigned Case, either via lexical Case by appearing in "Cased positions" (Polinsky and Preminger 2014:9), such as English PPs, or via structural Case by moving to a position where they can receive Case, such as the EPP (Extended Projection Principle) requirement demanding the overt nominative subject in English. In what follows, I argue that the case type oblique reflects the dependent marking and thus is licensed by means of lexical Case, whereas the RR type oblique reflects the head marking and therefore is licensed by virtue of structural Case.

When it comes to indicating grammatical relations, Nichols (1986) identifies that the argument is either marked on a dependent constituent as case markers or on the head as agreement affixes, and accordingly, the former is known as dependent marking and the latter is known as head marking. The Chechen example shown in (11) exemplifies dependent marking because the core arguments, the subject, the direct object, the indirect

object, bear morphological cases (ERG, DAT, NOM), but the head, the verb, does not use agreement affixes.

(11)  da:-s           woʕa-na        ur-Ø            tü:xira
      father-ERG      son-DAT        knife-NOM       struck
      'The father stabbed the son.' (Chechen, Nichols 1986:61)

On the contrary, the Abkhaz example in (12) embodies head marking strategy given that the grammatical relations (subject, indirect object, and direct object) are indexed by agreement affixes on the verb.

(12)  a-xàc'a          a-pħºə̀s   a-šºqºʼə̀    Ø-lə̀-y-te-yt'
      the-man          the-womanthe-book    it-to.her-he-gave-FINITE
      'The man gave the woman the book.' (Abhkaz, Nichols 1986:61)

     Returning to Algonquian oblique arguments, the previous Maliseet-Passamaquoddy example is repeated as (13). The case type exactly follows the dependent marking morphology because the locative argument is indicated by the morphological case -ək on the noun phrase *wik* 'house'. Furthermore, no agreement with the locative argument appears on the head.

(13)  məwin ksəyote məcəyehsəwəl wikək                                         case type
      məwin           kəssəyota-ẅ-Ø          məcəyehsəw-əl        wik-**ək**
      bear            move.in-3-**3SG**       Partridge-3ʹ         house-**LOC**
      '**Bear** moved in into Partridge's house.' (Sherwood 1983:123)

     As for the RR type, relative roots can be understood as the adposition-like morpheme that is marked on the head and its complement occurs as a freestanding phrase. The previous Maliseet-Passamaquoddy comitative example is repeated as (14). Similar to the way that the benefactive argument 'the woman' being licensed by the prefix *lə̀-* 'to her' in Abhkaz as in (12), the comitative NP appears in the caseless form, and crucially, the corresponding relative root is precisely a prefix appearing on the head and licenses the argument 'my younger siblings'.

(14)  nìl n-wit-ayyanénuuk nuhsimísok
      nìl       n-**wit-**ayya-**né**nənw-**ak**       n-uhsimís-ok
      I         1-**with.RR**-play-1PL-**3PL**          1-young.sibling-3PL
      'I play **with my younger siblings**.' (Maliseet-Passamaquoddy, LeSourd 2020)

     After recognizing that the two types of obliques result from distinct morphological markings, let us return to the question: why do case-marked oblique NPs block agreement? I propose that these two types in the Eastern Algonquian languages can be formally captured by different Case (i.e., Abstract Case e.g. Chomsky 1981; Vinokurova 2005; Legate 2008). It is worth noting that both types of obliques enter the derivation inside the VP and below the core arguments in that, cross-linguistically, oblique

arguments are c-commanded by other core arguments (Marantz 1993).[4] Due to the scope of this paper, I leave the complete clausal structure as well as the explanation about the linear sequence of the fronted relative root for future research.

In short, there are two ways for nominals to be assigned Case, either via lexical Case by appearing in "Cased positions" (Polinsky & Preminger 2014:9), such as English PPs, or via structural Case by moving to a position where they can receive Case, such as the EPP (Extended Projection Principle) requirement demanding an overt nominative subject in English. Tying together, the case type oblique arguments can be regarded as appearing in the Cased position as the complement of PP, whereas the RR type oblique can be regarded as receiving abstract Case structurally from Root.

As schematized in (15), the dependently marked oblique arguments appear in the Cased position as the complement of PP. Consequently, the head P assigns the locative case to its complement. Therefore, Algonquian locatives bearing the suffix *-enki receive Case lexically. Considering that PP is considered as a phase (Abels 2012:202-220; Bošković 2014), the inability of case-marked obliques to trigger the agreement suffixes is due to being blocked by the PP-shell.

(15)    Case type oblique: lexical Case
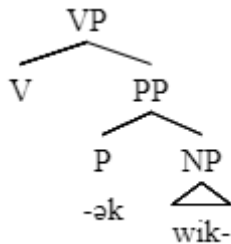


On the other hand, the head marked oblique receives abstract Case structurally from V. Following Bruening (2001:170), I assume relative root complement is introduced by the relative root phrase (RRP) as schematized in (16). Significantly, the RR oblique *nuhsimísok* 'my younger siblings' is merged at the position in which structural Case is assigned. Therefore, the relative root complements are assigned Case structurally. As for why the RR obliques are accessible for agreement, this is due to the fundamental difference in Case assignment: the RR oblique argument (i.e. relative root complement) is not being deactivated by the PP-shell.

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[4] In Passamaquoddy, subjects at least c-command into locative phrases that are added by a relative root (Bruening 2001:170).

(16)    RR type oblique: structural Case
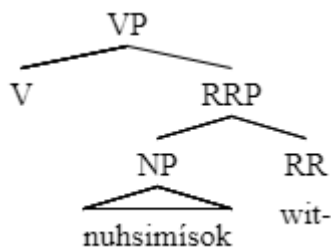


Because of the difference in receiving Case, the distinct behaviors of these two oblique arguments for agreement are explained: the inability of the case type giving rise to agreement is explained by the interference of the PP-shell in derivation. In contrast, the RR obliques are accessible for agreement due to not being deactivated by the PP-shell.

## 4    Conclusion

This paper explores the agreement patterns of oblique arguments in whether they trigger agreement collocation of the n-endings and peripheral agreement, in two Eastern Algonquian languages. We have seen, even though n-endings and peripheral agreement in Eastern Algonquian languages can index the oblique arguments, an important restriction is revealed. That is, overt case marker blocks NPs from being accessed by peripheral agreement.

In accounting for the divergence regarding oblique agreement examined, the case type and the RR type are considered to reflect distinct morphological markings, which fundamentally differ in receiving Case in the syntax. Despite lacking robust overt case markers in nominals, Algonquian languages sheds light to the application of abstract Case and lexical Case in a "case less" language. This paper therefore offers a novel analysis in connecting differential availability of oblique arguments for agreement more profoundly with the way that they are derived in the grammar.

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