Subject preference and object attraction in Algonquian conjunct central agreement

Yadong Xu
University of Manitoba

Algonquian person-number agreement pattern differs in clausetyping. In contrast to the hierarchical alignment attested in the well-known independent (main clause type) inflection, the least-studied conjunct (subordinate clause type) inflection shows a preference for subject agreement, but such a default pattern can be overridden when the subject is obviative or when the object is local plural. This paper argues that the default subject agreement is due to the Activity Condition (Chomsky, 2000) resulting from the less articulated person probe features. The violations to the subject-agreement pattern can be accounted for by satisfaction of the probe features (i.e. [uPers, uProx, uPl])–the probe can be attracted to target the object once i) the proximate object meets probe [uProx] which the obviative subject lacks; or ii) the local plural object better matches [uPl] that is missing in non-plural arguments.

1 Introduction

This paper argues that the primary person-number marking, that is, central agreement (Goddard, 1979), in Algonquian conjunct transitive animate (TA; transitive verb with an animate object) inflection is subject agreement by default and is subject to violations to the object agreement (cf. Bhatia et al., 2016; Xu, 2016). The central agreement is being called “central” mainly for two reasons: first, it indexes the primary participant in transitive clauses while the peripheral agreement indexes the secondary participant; second, its position is closer to the verb stem compared to that of the peripheral agreement, see Algonquian verb template, prefix-stem-theme sign-central suffix-peripheral suffix, shown in Table 1. The makeup of the central agreement in two types of clauses is different: in the “conjunct order” inflection, which appears in subordinate clauses, it is fusional and shows portmanteau agreement, while in the “independent order” inflection, which occurs in main clauses, it is discontinuous and does not contain portmanteau agreement.

To illustrate the discontinuous vs. non-discontinuous difference, in the example of “we (exclusive) see them” shown in Table 1, in addition to different shapes of morphemes that are used, we can observe that the prefix ni- and the central suffix -nân together index the subject argument “we” in the independent inflection, because ni- indicates first person without specification to number and -nân further reveals plurality being first person plural. However, in the conjunct inflection, the subject argument “we” is manifested solely by the central suffix -yâhk. Therefore, when I mean central agreement in this paper, it

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1 The abbreviations used in this paper are: 1, 2, 3 = first, second, third person, 3´OBV = obviative person, 1P = first person plural exclusive, 21 = first person plural inclusive, ADDR = addressee, CONJ = conjunct, FTV = formative, IND = independent, PART = participant, PERS = person, PL = plural, PROX = proximate, SG = singular, TA = transitive verb with an animate object, SAP = speech art participants, TS = theme sign, *indicates Proto-Algonquian, > indicates two arguments in portmanteau, >> indicates the prominence in the hierarchy.
The previous analyses (Béjar, 2003; Béjar & Rezac, 2009; McGinnis, 2008) approaching the issue of Algonquian central agreement have been exclusively based on the independent inflection, assuming that the conjunct inflection should be treated the same way as the independent inflection. In addition, that all the analyses are based on one language (Béjar, 2003; McGinnis 2008; and Bhatia et al., 2016, all for Ojibwa) cannot truly capture Algonquian as a whole because of cross-linguistic variations for the patterning of the conjunct central agreement. Thus, the conjunct central agreement deserves a separate account.

I surveyed ten languages (Proto-Algonquian, Plains Cree, Ojibwa, Kickapoo, Menominee, Meskwaki, Miami-Illinois, Shawnee, Massachusetts, and Delaware) from a diachronic perspective on both the conjunct inflection and the independent inflection. I show that the conjunct prefers to target the subject and I argue that the Activity Condition (AC) accounts for this default subject patterning. But I will show that AC can be overridden by the presence of the [Proximate] feature or the [Plural] feature in the object.

This paper is organized as follows: I first describe three patterns displayed in the conjunct central agreement: the subject agreement, the object agreement, and the portmanteau agreement (§2). Next, I set out what the Algonquian nominal’s features are and I show two Agree probe heads, Voice0 and Infl0, that are relevant to person-number agreement (§3). Then I present my analyses to account for the subject agreement patterns to the Activity Condition, the object agreement and portmanteau agreement as the result of object feature attraction (§4). Last, I briefly conclude that the conjunct Infl0 differing from the independent Infl0 essentially is due to [uPlural] feature (§5).

## 2 Three patterns of the conjunct central agreement

Other than different morphology and makeup in two different types of inflections as demonstrated in Table 1, the central agreement is also distinct for targeting different arguments in the two orders. The example (1) and (2) show that the central agreement targets the subject in the conjunct inflection as seen in (1a) and (2a), whereas it targets the object “you” in the independent inflection as seen in (1b) and (2b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>prefix</th>
<th>stem</th>
<th>theme sign</th>
<th>central suffix</th>
<th>peripheral suffix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ni-</td>
<td>wâpam</td>
<td>-ā</td>
<td>-yâhk</td>
<td>-ik (Conjunct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wâpam</td>
<td>-ā</td>
<td>-nân</td>
<td>-ak (Independent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>see</td>
<td>3OBJ</td>
<td>1P</td>
<td>3P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### (1) 1s—2s inflection in Proto-Algonquian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>*wa-pam-eθ-an-i</td>
<td>see.TA-TS-1S-mode ‘I see you (SG).’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>*ke-wa-pam-eθ-ehm</td>
<td>see.TA-TS-FTV ‘I see you (SG).’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### (2) 3s—2s inflection in Proto-Algonquian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>*wa-pam-eθ-k-i</td>
<td>see.TA-TS-3S-mode ‘He sees you (SG).’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>*ke-wa-pam-ekw-w-a</td>
<td>see.TA-TS-FTV-3S ‘He sees you (SG).’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most importantly, what has been manifested in (1) and (2) is: we cannot simply transfer the analysis of the independent to that of the conjunct as it is the opposite arguments that are indexed by the central agreement in the two inflections. In the following, I focus on presenting three patterns exhibited in the

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2 The symbol asterisk (*) in this paper indicates a reconstructed form, not ungrammaticality.
conjunct order, where the central agreement can target the subject, the object, or both in the form of portmanteau agreement.

2.1 Subject agreement

The conjunct central agreement targets the subject as long as the object is not local plural. This implies two cases that meet the non-local plural condition: i) when the object is local (i.e., a speech art participant (SAP)) singular, or ii) when the object is a third person regardless of number.

When the object is local singular, whatever the subject may be, we expect the subject agreement by default. Although examples in (3a) and (3b) have different subjects, whether third person singular in (3a) or second person plural in (3b), the central agreement indexes the subject given that their objects, first person singular, meet the “non-local plural” condition.

(3) Local singular object, Proto-Algonquian conjunct (Oxford, 2014: 298)
   a. 3S—1S form
     *wa·pam-i-t-i
     see.TA-TS-3S-mode
     ‘He sees me.’
   b. 2P—1S form
     *wa·pam-i-ye·k·w-e
     see.TA-TS-2P-mode
     ‘You (PL) see me.’

When the object is a third person regardless of its number, as example (4) illustrates the subject agreement remains. No matter if the subject is third person singular in (4a) or second person plural in (4b), the central agreement still targets the subject. Note that the plural number for the third person is marked separately in the peripheral suffix position shown in (4b) (also see Table 1 for both the independent and the conjunct inflection). Since the concern of this paper is central agreement, I leave the discussion of third person plural agreement in the peripheral suffix for future studies.

   a. 3S—3’S form
     *wa·pam-a-t-i
     see.TA-TS-3S-mode
     ‘He sees him (OBV).’
   b. 2P—3P form
     *wa·pam-Ø-e·k·w-wa·w-i
     see.TA-TS-2P-3P-mode
     ‘You (PL) see them.’

Above all, when the object is either a singular local person or a third person, the conjunct central agreement displays the subject agreement patterning summarized in (5).

(5) Summary: subject agreement in Algonquian conjunct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL SET</th>
<th>NON-LOCAL SET</th>
<th>MIXED SET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2S—1S</td>
<td>3S—3’</td>
<td>3S—1S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1S—2S</td>
<td>3P—2’</td>
<td>3S—2S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P—2</td>
<td>3P—3’</td>
<td>1P—3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2P—1S</td>
<td></td>
<td>2P—3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21—3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Object agreement

The object agreement overrides once a plural local object is involved, the reverse of the condition for the subject agreement described in §2.1. The examples in (6) and in (7b) illustrate that when the object is local plural, the central agreement indexes the object instead, regardless of person or number of the subject.
First person plural object, Delaware conjunct (Goddard, 1979:185, 186)

a. 3S—1P form
   mi·l-kw-enk
give.TA-TS-1P
   ‘He sees us (EXCL).’

b. 2—1P form
   mi·l-i-yenk
give.TA-TS-1P
   ‘You (SG/PL) see us (EXCL).’

2p and 3s object, Delaware conjunct (Goddard, 1979:185, 186)

a. 3’S—3S form
   mi·l-kw-ək
give.TA-TS-3S
   ‘He (OBV) sees him.’

b. 3S—2P form
   mi·l-kw-e·kw
give.TA-TS-2P
   ‘He sees you (PL).’

The central agreement also exhibits the object agreement pattern when an obviative subject acts on a proximate object as in (7a). The pattern of (7a) seems unexpected since the third person object is not local plural and thus should have satisfied the “non-local plural” for the subject agreement. I will explain why local plural objects as well as obviative subjects can violate the default subject agreement under my analysis in §4 — the violation is due to the probe feature attraction. The object agreement patterning is summarized below in (8).

Summary: object agreement in Algonquian conjunct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL SET</th>
<th>NON-LOCAL SET</th>
<th>MIXED SET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 — 1P</td>
<td>3′ — 3S</td>
<td>3 — 1P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1S — 2P</td>
<td>3′ — 3P</td>
<td>3 — 2P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 — 21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 The variation: portmanteau agreement

Subject agreement and object agreement are not the whole story of the pattern for Algonquian conjunct central agreement. There is a cross-linguistic variation where the central agreement targets both arguments rather than just the subject or the object. Across ten languages, only Delaware, Massachusett, and Plains Cree index the plural argument, the rest of languages use portmanteau agreement. In Table 2, I show this cross-linguistic variation in which Proto-Algonquian displays portmanteau agreement, while Delaware targets the plural arguments. For simplicity, I omit the verb stems and only keep the inflection for theme sign and central agreement.

Table 2: Cross-linguistic variation of portmanteau and plural argument agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROTO-ALGONQUIAN</th>
<th>DELAWARE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1S — 2P</td>
<td>*V-eθ-akokw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TS-1S&gt;2P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3S — 2P</td>
<td>*V-eθ-a·kw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TS-3S&gt;2P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3S — 1P</td>
<td>*V-i-yament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TS-3S&gt;1P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P — 3S</td>
<td>*V-Ø-akent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TS-1P&gt;3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above all, the conjunct central agreement can target either the subject or the object. When it involves a local plural argument, cross-linguistic variation occurs. Unlike Delaware targeting the plural argument, Proto-Algonquian displays a different pattern using portmanteau agreement. How do we account for the
great flexibility of the central agreement, for allowing three patterns targeting the subject, the object, or both?

3 Nominal features and Agree probes

Before I present my analysis to the patterning of the central agreement, let me first explain what nominal features and Agree probes are involved in Algonquian inflection. I set out a model of the features of each person-number combination. Then I start from Oxford (2014, 2017) to regard the theme sign as Voice^0 and central agreement as Infl^0. Specifically, Voice^0 explains why the subject and the object can be accessible by the central agreement due to an equidistant configuration. I further argue that conjunct Infl^0 probe hosts [uPerson, uProximate, uPlural].

3.1 Algonquian nominal features

I consider the relevance of the person hierarchy (PH) 2 >> 1 >> 3 >> 3’ to the person feature specification. I further propose a double-person feature for first person plurals (Xu, forthcoming) that is significant in accounting for a seemingly conflicting plural hierarchy. The PH 2 >> 1 >> 3 >> 3’ is famously established by the independent order in which the central agreement always targets the higher ranked argument in this hierarchy. For instance, in both 1S—2S and 2S—1S forms, the central agreement always targets 2S as second person is ranked higher than first person. It is the theme sign that clarifies the grammatical relation in each form. However, their plural counterparts show the reversed hierarchy in which 1P always wins over 2P as seen in (9) (the example in (6b) here is repeated as (9b)). My analysis explains why the plural hierarchy displays the opposite hierarchy 1P >> 2P without overthrowing 2 >> 1 PH.

(9) 1P >> 2P plural hierarchy (examples from Delaware, Goddard, 1979: 186)
    a. 1P—2 form
        mi-l-əl-enk
give-TS-1P
        ‘We (EXCL) sees you (SG/PL).’
    b. 2—1P form
        mi-l-i-yenk
give.TA-TS-1P
        ‘You (SG/PL) see us.’


(10) Algonquian singular person features (cf. Béjar & Rezac, 2009; Lochbihler, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd person</th>
<th>1st person</th>
<th>3rd person PROX</th>
<th>3rd person OBV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[π]</td>
<td>[π]</td>
<td>[π]</td>
<td>[π]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[PROX]</td>
<td>[PROX]</td>
<td>[PROX]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[PART]</td>
<td>[PART]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ADDR]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see, all the animate persons have a person node (abbreviated as [π]). Singular number is unmarked. In addition, obviative person has the least specified feature for [Person] only, while second person has the most specified features as [Person, Proximate, Participant, Addressee]. Under this model of

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3 The independent inflection follows the patterning 1p >> 2p, same as shown in (9).
person features, the Algonquian person hierarchy \((2 \gg 1 \gg 3 \gg 3')\) is a reflection of the degree of articulation of the features of each person.

As argued in Xu (forthcoming), Algonquian plurals cannot simply involve the addition of a \([\text{Plural}]\) feature to the specifications in (10), because this would not explain why \(1 \text{P} \gg 2 \text{P}\) plural hierarchy (PLH) is the opposite of the PH \((2 \gg 1)\). Previously, first-person inclusive plurals (notated “21”) have been proposed to contain both \([1]\) and \([2]\) features (cf. Cowper & Hall, 2004; McGinnis, 2005). This approach can be extended to first-person exclusive plurals \((1 \text{P})\) as well. According to the associative nature of the first-person plurals, while \(3 \text{P}\) denotes multiple third persons, \(1 \text{P}\) does not denote multiple speakers (Mühlhäusler 2001), but the speaker and some third person(s). The representation of \(1 \text{P}\) then can be modified to contain two person-features under the \(\pi\)-node, \([1]\) and \([3]4\), parallel to the representation of inclusive 21, \([1] + [2]\):

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Algonquian plural person features} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\pi \\
*ke- \quad -enaw \\
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\pi \\
[1] \\
ne- \quad ena-n \\
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\pi \\
[2] \\
*ke- \quad -wa-w \\
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\pi \\
[3] \\
*we- \quad -wa-w \\
\end{array}
\end{array}\]

The double-person feature to first person plurals can be best manifested by the independent morphology in which prefix discharges the person feature, and central suffix discharges the remaining feature, such as the \([\text{Plural}]\) feature in \(2 \text{P}\) and \(3 \text{P}\) as \(*-wa-w\). That is why the central suffixes of 21 and 1P differ from 2P and 3P in that they are discharged by the remaining additional person feature \([1]\) or \([3]\), rather than the \([\text{Plural}]\) feature. The double-person feature for 1P nicely follows that the spellout of the additional \([3]\) will take priority in forms that involve both 1P and 2P (assuming a hierarchy of person >> number as in Noyer, 1992), thus deriving the \(1 \text{P} \gg 2 \text{P}\) plural hierarchy while leaving the \(2 \gg 1\) PH intact.

3.2 Agree probes: Voice\(^0\) and Infl\(^0\)

I start from Oxford (2014, 2017) to regard the theme sign as Voice\(^0\) and central agreement as Infl\(^0\) as shown in (14). I agree to treat theme signs as object agreement (Oxford, 2014; cf. Rhodes, 1976; Brittain, 1999) and inverse theme sign as the elsewhere case (Oxford, 2017). I modify the probe feature of the conjunct Infl\(^0\) to contain \([u\text{Person}, u\text{Proximate}, u\text{Plural}]\), compared to \([u\text{Person}, u\text{Proximate}, u\text{Participant}]\) of the independent Infl\(^0\) shown in (12). I will show that conjunct Infl\(^0\) significantly differs from independent Infl\(^0\) because the articulated \([u\text{Plural}]\) feature substitutes \([u\text{Participant}]\) (cf. Xu, 2016).

\[\begin{array}{c}
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{InflP} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Infl} \\
u\text{Pers} \\
u\text{Prox} \\
u\text{Part} \\
\end{array} \\
\text{VoiceP} \\
\text{OBJ} \\
\text{SUBJ} \\
\text{cP} \\
\text{Root} \\
\end{array}\]

\[4\] I use \([1]\), \([2]\) and \([3]\) as abbreviations for the relevant \(\pi\)-features explained in (10).
What’s significant about the Voice\(^0\) is that it also contains an [EPP] feature which triggers the object to move to [Spec, VoiceP] position, thus resulting in the object being in equidistance with the subject as both are specifiers of VoiceP.

The equidistance means that Infl\(^0\) is not restricted to locality (contra Béjar, 2003). Reviewing other analyses, neither the morphological account of feature specification by McGinnis (2008), nor the syntactic account of cyclic Agree model by Béjar & Rezac (2009) can explain why the conjunct prefers targeting the subject in (13), repeated from (2), since second person obviously is more articulated than third person in terms of person feature specification.

(13) 3s—2s inflection in Proto-Algonquian (Oxford, 2014: 298)

\begin{align*}
a. & \quad *wā-pam-eθ-k-i (CONJ) \quad \text{see.TA-TS-3S-mode} \\
& \quad \text{‘He sees you (SG).’}

b. & \quad *ke-wa-pam-ekw-w-a (IND) \quad \text{2s-see.TA-TS-FTV-3S} \\
& \quad \text{‘He sees you (SG).’}
\end{align*}

4 Analyses

I regard that the subject preference of the conjunct central agreement is due to the Activity Condition (Chomsky, 2000). I propose that the conjunct Infl\(^0\) hosts \([\upsilon \text{Person, } \upsilon \text{Proximate, } \upsilon \text{Plural}]\) features. I show when the features of the object are more specified than those of the subject, the AC can be overridden due to the attraction to the object features in order to better match the probe features in Infl\(^0\).

4.1 Activity Condition

I argue that Infl\(^0\) targets the subject by default. It is the Activity Condition that explains the subject preference of the conjunct even though both arguments are being equidistant. According to Chomsky’s (2000: 123) AC: “a goal must bear some uninterpretable feature [otherwise it is frozen in place].” In other words, the AC prevents a probe from targeting a goal that has already been agreed with. Recall the syntactic structure of the Algonquian transitive clause shown in (12), where Voice\(^0\) is object agreement. Since Voice\(^0\) has already agreed with the object, the AC should prevent Infl\(^0\) from agreeing with the object as well.

If the conjunct Infl\(^0\) simply agreed with whichever argument is more articulated for its probe as in the independent inflection, we would expect to find the conjunct central agreement indexing second singular person *-an in (13a) as its independent counterpart did in (13b). On the contrary, Infl\(^0\) targets the third person subject -k instead. Again, we also observe that Infl\(^0\) prefers the subject in conjunct 1s—2s inflection shown in (14), repeated from (1a), in the local set despite the second person having the more specified [Addreree] feature.

(14) 1s—2s inflection in Proto-Algonquian (Oxford, 2014: 298)

\begin{align*}
a. & \quad *wā-pam-eθ-an-i (CONJ) \quad \text{see.TA-TS-1S-mode} \\
& \quad \text{‘I see you (SG).’}

b. & \quad *ke-wa-pam-eθ-ehm (IND) \quad \text{2s-see.TA-TS-FTV} \\
& \quad \text{‘I see you (SG).’}
\end{align*}

The default subject agreement in the conjunct inflection is illustrated in (15). The arguments here, whether local or non-local, all contain at least [Person, Proximate] features. Even if the person features of the object are more specified than those of the subject, Infl\(^0\) still prefers to target the subject, revealing that the active status of the argument is important. Because the object has been valued once, despite the subject and the object being equally accessible to the probe, Activity Condition determines the more active argument, namely, the subject to be valued.
Conjunct $\text{Infl}^0$ agrees with the subject if object is singular

- **a.** $3S-1/2S$ forms
  
  $\text{PROBE}$
  
  $\begin{array}{c}
  \text{Infl}^0 \\
  \{u\text{Pers}, u\text{Prox}, u\text{Pl}\}
  \end{array}$
  
  $\text{ARGUMENTS}$
  
  $\begin{array}{c}
  \text{DP}_{[\text{SUBJ}]} \\
  \{\text{Pers}, \text{Prox}, \text{Part (Addr)}\}
  \end{array}$

- **b.** $1S-2S$ or $2S-1S$ forms
  
  $\text{PROBE}$
  
  $\begin{array}{c}
  \text{Infl}^0 \\
  \{u\text{Pers}, u\text{Prox}, u\text{Pl}\}
  \end{array}$
  
  $\text{ARGUMENTS}$
  
  $\begin{array}{c}
  \text{DP}_{[\text{SUBJ}]} \\
  \{\text{Pers}, \text{Prox}, \text{Part (Addr)}\}
  \end{array}$

### 4.2 Object attraction

The Activity Condition can be overridden when $\text{Infl}^0$ is attracted to target the goal that better matches the probe features. As we saw previously in (7), the subject preference can be relaxed when the subject is obviative or the object is local plural. I argue that [Proximate] in the proximate object person features attracts $\text{Infl}^0$ skipping over the obviative subject. I propose that $[u\text{Plural}]$ is crucial in terms of violating the subject preference when involving with local plural objects. In the following, I present two pieces of evidence to support that the conjunct $\text{Infl}^0$ contains $[u\text{Plural}]$ feature by looking at the inflection involving i) a local plural object, and ii) the portmanteau agreement.

First let us begin with the inflection that violates the subject preference involving an obviative subject in the non-local form. As we can see in both (16a), repeated from (4a), and (16b), the central agreement indexes third proximate argument $^*\cdot t$.


- **a.** $3S-3S$ form
  
  $^*\text{wa-pam-a-t-i}$
  
  see.TA-TS-$3S$-mode
  
  ‘He sees him (OBV).’

- **b.** $3S-3S$ form
  
  $^*\text{wa-pam-ekw-et -e}$
  
  see.TA-TS-$3S$-mode
  
  ‘S/her (OBV) sees him.’

The reason why (16b) is exempted from the subject agreement is because comparing to the proximate person, the obviative person lacks the [Proximate] feature. Recall that $\text{Infl}^0$ bears $[u\text{Person}, u\text{Proximate}, u\text{Plural}]$. When two arguments equally meet the probe feature as explained in (15), the probe targets the subject. However, the obviative argument does not satisfy $[u\text{Proximate}]$ in the probe feature, $\text{Infl}^0$ therefore can override the AC and target the object instead, as illustrated in (17).

#### (17) $\text{Infl}^0$ targets the better matched goal: third proximate object in non-local form

Now let’s move to the forms involving a local plural object. The straightforward evidence is that once the local singular object exhibiting the subject agreement becomes plural, the central agreement immediately indexes the object. As we have seen earlier, the forms involving a singular local object, for example, $3S-2S$ in (13a) and $1S-2S$ in (14a), show subject agreement. Examples in (18) below, repeated from (6), demonstrate that the central agreement immediately indexes the object $-enk$ 1P as in (18a) and $-e-kw$ 2P as in (18b) when the object is local plural.
SUBJECT PREFERENCE AND OBJECT ATTRACTION IN ALGONQUIAN CONJUNCT CENTRAL AGREEMENT

(18) First person plural object, Delaware conjunct (Goddard, 1979: 185, 186)
a. 3S—1P form 
   \textit{mi-l-kw-enk} 
   give.TA-TS-1P 
   ‘He sees us.’
b. 2—1P form 
   \textit{mi-l-i-yenk} 
   give.TA-TS-1P 
   ‘You (SG/PL) see us.’

As (19) shows, although the third person proximate subject and first-person object both satisfy \{\textit{u}Person, \textit{u}Proximate\} of the probe features, it is the \{Plural\} feature of the object that attracts Infl\textsuperscript{0} thus leading to the AC being violated.

(19) Infl\textsuperscript{0} targets the better matched goal: local object in mixed form

Recall the three patterns of the conjunct central agreement that we have seen in §2—subject agreement, object agreement, and variation of portmanteau agreement such as in Proto-Algonquian (cf. Table 2). I argue that the appearance of portmanteau agreement in Proto-Algonquian is also due to [Plural]-attraction. For instance, in the inflection of 3S—2P illustrated in Table 3, slightly different from the object agreement pattern in Delaware, Proto-Algonquian Infl\textsuperscript{0} is not only attracted by the [Plural] in the 2P object but maintains valuing the subject.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Table 3: Cross-linguistic variation of 3S—2P conjunct inflection}
\end{center}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROTO-ALGONQUIAN</th>
<th>DELAWARE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3S—2P</td>
<td>*V-eθ-a\textit{kw}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TS-3\textgreater{}2P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Multiple Agree (i.e., a single probe that can agree with two goals) makes portmanteau agreement possible. According to van Koppen (2005), Multiple Agree operation is restricted to goals that are equidistant, which is exactly the circumstance in Algonquian. I propose that Proto-Algonquian, as well as other languages showing portmanteau agreement, is subject to a Multiple Agree Constraint, namely, the Contiguous Agree Constraint (Nevins, 2011). Under this constraint, the valuation of the probe with a certain feature cannot skip over any of the argument along its path (Nevins, 2011: 941). Which is to say, as shown in (20), Infl\textsuperscript{0} wishes to value its [\textit{u}Plural] by agreeing with the object, but cannot skip over the subject on its way.
Even though both subject and the object here are equidistant, valuing [Plural] of the goal cannot skip over any arguments in the path no matter if it is higher or in the same domain with the goal.

As for the question of why portmanteau agreement does not apply to languages such as Delaware, Massachusett, and Plains Cree, it is because the change of the theme sign. Notice that in the mixed form in Table 3 the change from portmanteau agreement to object agreement has been accompanied by the appearance of the inverse theme sign -əkw. Recall that I follow Oxford (2016, 2017) to treat theme signs as Voice₀ and the central agreement as Infl₀. Oxford (2017) argued that when Voice₀ agrees with the object, theme signs usually are spelled out as the object marker. Infl₀ is more flexible, when it also targets the object, the object agreement on Voice₀ then is replaced by the inverse marker due to feature impoverishment. Such impoverishment is parallel to the Spanish spurious se effect (cf. Nevins, 2007) prohibiting features of the adjacent heads from being identical. Under the impoverishment analysis, the appearance of -əkw in Delaware, Massachusett, and Plains Cree indicates that in these forms, the syntactic Agree operation on Infl₀ must target only the object, as this is the only way for inverse marking to be triggered. In order for Infl₀ to agree with only the object in these forms, the Contiguous Agree constraint must have been relaxed in these languages. This proposal suggests that the Contiguous Agree constraint is a microparameter along which an agreement system can vary.

In sum, the plural feature plays a vital role in the patterning of the conjunct inflection. The conjunct central agreement is determined by Infl₀ which carries an articulated probe [uPerson, uProximate, uPlural]. This probe shows a default preference for targeting the subject until the feature of the object overrides, i) when the subject is obviative and the object is proximate, or ii) when the object is local plural. Furthermore, the portmanteau agreement arises because of the Contiguous Agree Constraint and it further supports that the conjunct Infl₀ contains [uPlural] feature.

5 Conclusion

I conclude that the asymmetry of subject-object agreement patterning in the conjunct inflection is a result of interactions of various modules of grammar. In terms of features, the person hierarchy (2 >> 1 >> 3 >> 3’) is well captured by the specification of person features; the unique double-person features of 1P and 21 explains the deep connection of the Algonquian person hierarchy with the plural hierarchy. In addition, the Agree probes, Voice₀ and Infl₀, explain how the arguments are licensed. Of the concern of the central agreement, Infl₀ differs in probe features in different clauses—the independent Infl₀ hosts [uPerson, uProximate, uParticipant], while conjunct Infl₀ contains [uPerson, uProximate, uPlural]. The profound effect of the conjunct probe is that the less articulated person features [Person, Proximate] together with the presence of [Plural] feature result in the subject agreement and its violations being permissible. Furthermore, the Agree operations, the Activity Condition and the Contiguous Agree Constraint of the Multiple Agree operation, respectively accounts for the default subject preference and portmanteau agreement involving a local plural argument. The primary contribution of this paper is its comparative and diachronic approach to
the patterning of the central agreement, seeking connections across the variations and providing the analysis to capture the commonalities.

References


