UNSPECIFIED-SUBJECT PHENOMENA IN ALGONQUIAN

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O. INTRODUCTION

A number of surface morphological and syntactic facts in languages reflect the semantic non-specification of a logical subject for underlying predicates. The purposes of this paper are to pull together such facts from representative Algonquian languages, attempt to characterize both typical and atypical Algonquian treatment of unspecified logical subjects, and to discuss theoretically controversial analyses of these phenomena such as the claim that certain forms are or are not "passives". In addition, I hope to stimulate other Algonquianists to look for syntactic evidence for their analyses.

I shall first (1.) discuss structures involving predicates which allow no logical subject ("impersonal" verbs), then (2.) intransitive predicates with subject unspecified, then (3.) transitive predicates with subject unspecified. The final section (4.) will discuss theoretical treatment of these phenomena.

1. IMPERSONAL VERBS

These reflect underlying predicates which take no logical subject. They never have plural inflection, and where the languages distinguish AI inflection from II, such verbs have the singular II affix.²
Examples:

Menomini: keqsiw 'it is cold' (Bloomfield 1962:45)
Kickapoo: weepenaawi 'it rained' (Voorhis 1974:54)
Plains Cree: ki:sika:w 'it is day' (Wolfart 1973:38)
Blackfoot: aoxpottawa 'it is snowing'
Micmac: wicu:saq 'it is windy'

Bloomfield (1962:45) says that such verbs are II in Menomini, though in the singular there is no difference between third person animate and inanimate subject inflection; this is true in Blackfoot and seems to be true in Cree as well. (Bloomfield was probably influenced by Fox which has -wa for third person animate subjects but -wi for inanimate subjects, and so impersonal verbs are clearly II in that language, as in Kickapoo.) And of course the fact that impersonal verbs cannot be inflected for other than third person also places them in a class with II verbs.

We should not be content to rely upon strictly morphological evidence to decide such questions, however. If there are syntactic processes in the language which are sensitive to the categories at issue, in this case whether a verb has an animate or inanimate syntactic subject, they can serve as tests to decide the question. Blackfoot, for example, exhibits a process of copy-raising from complements (Frantz - in press), as exemplified in (2), which is synonymous with (1).

(1) nits-iksstaa m-aaxk-sooyi-xsi
    1- want(AI) 3-might-eat-conj

    'I want him to eat'
The only difference between (1) and (2) is that the matrix verb 'want' of (1) is inflectionally intransitive, while that of (2) is transitive animate(TA), having as its object the third person which is also subject of the complement verb 'eat'. Thus a copy of the complement subject has been added as object of the matrix as part of the derivation of (2).

Now, by putting an impersonal verb in a complement, we can determine whether the impersonal verb has an animate or inanimate subject on the basis of whether copy-raising produces a TA or TI (transitive inanimate) matrix verb. And we find that (4), which is synonymous with (3), has a TI verb. Thus the complement verb 'snow' must have third person inanimate as a subject, in order to account for the inanimate copy in (4).

(3) nits-iksstaa m-aaxk-oxpotta-xsi
   1- want(AI) 3-might-snow-conj

(4) nits-iksstatoo-xpa m-aaxk-oxpotta-xsi
   1- want(TI)-3

(We can rule out the possibility that the entire complement of 'want' is being treated as an inanimate object, because we see in (5) that complements of 'want' cannot themselves trigger verb agreement:

(5) *nits-iksstatoo-xpa m-aaxk-sooyi-xsi
   1 -want(TI)-3 3-might-eat-conj.

2. INTRANSITIVE PREDICATES WITH UNSPECIFIED SUBJECTS

Every language provides a way for speakers to avoid specifying
the logical subject of a predicate, though of course the very use of that predicate presupposes that it has a logical subject, whether specified or not. In the case of intransitive predicates with subject unspecified, we find that there is not uniformity among the Algonquian languages.

According to Rogers (1960) the resultant verbs are II in Mistassini: *pi'hto-na:niw* 'there is smoking' (Rogers 1960:107). Thus the suffix -na:niw in Mistassini is derivational in that it derives II stems from AI stems. This is clearer in the conjunct, where third person is marked differently for II and for AI: *e-pi'htona:niw-c* 'that there is smoking'; cf. epi'hto-t 'that he is smoking'.

Plains Cree uses a similar derivational suffix -na:niwi in the independent order (*pici-na:niwi-w* 'camp is moved' [Wolfart 1973:62]), but not in the conjunct. Wolfart assigns the conjunct forms to the AI paradigm: *e1-w1i:h-pici-hk* 'when camp is moved' (p.62). However, if one were to segment an -h as the conjunct allomorph of -na:niwi, what remains in such forms is the regular II suffix. Here we need more than inflectional evidence. I suggest that research needs to be directed into the search for syntactic evidence to decide whether these "indefinite subject" forms are II or not in Plains Cree.

Menomini has suffix -n in the independent order and -h in the conjunct, where Delaware has -n and -nk. Neither Bloomfield (1962) nor Goddard (1969) say that these verbs are II; I think they intend the reader to understand that they are AI. But here again there is a need to look for possible syntactic evidence that these verbs are superficially II rather than simply sub-
jectless AI verbs.

Kickapoo (Voorhis 1974) has a suffix -pi in the independent, and -ek in the conjunct: iihwiihii9enipi 'one will eat' (p.61), eehpenoki 'when one went home' (p.79). Here it is at least possible that the i of -pi and the k of -ek are the regular II suffixes. But again one should look for syntactic evidence either way.

In Blackfoot, unspecified subject forms of AI (and TI) verbs are homophonous with the 12 ('we' inclusive) forms of those verbs, i.e. have suffix -p; cf. aipasskaa-wa 'he's dancing' and aipasskaa-o'pa 'there's dancing'/'we(12) are dancing'. And as far as I am able to determine, no II stem ever occurs with this suffix; AI stems may be used without implying that the unspecified subject is animate.

Now, to practice what I preach, we should look for evidence for or against the unspecified subject form being superficially II as seemed to be the case in Mistassini. As with the impersonal verbs of 1., we can put one of the verbs which are in question here into a complement and observe whether subject copy-raising is applicable to give a TI matrix verb. Thus we first look at (6), which is ambiguous as shown, and if the complement with the unspecified subject meaning is syntactically II, then (7) should be possible. However, as the asterisk indicates, (7) is not an acceptable Blackfoot sentence. (Incidentally, (8) is acceptable and unambiguous as shown.)

(6) iiksstaa-wa aaxk-aipasskaa-o'si
    want-3 might- dance-unspec/12
    'he wants [ there to be dancing ',
    [ us (12) to dance']

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Thus as far as this particular test is concerned, unspecified subject forms of AI verbs are not superficially II as they seem to be in Mistassini and may be in the other Algonquian languages polled.

Finally, Micmac uses periphrasis to avoid AI subject specification: amalkewaqan pemiaq 'dancing is going on.'

3. Lack of specification of the subject of a transitive predicate involves the most interesting and most controversial forms. I will attempt to avoid theoretical discussion until the next section, here summarizing what various investigators have reported.

Looking first at TI verbs, most of the languages treat these identically to AI verbs in regard to lack of subject specification, as we might expect since AI and TI inflectional paradigms are the same or very nearly the same in most Algonquian languages. Of the languages mentioned in 2., my cursory check indicates that only Delaware, Mistassini, and Micmac TI verbs need to be dealt with separately from AI verbs in this section. Delaware unspecified subject TI verbs are inflected the same as AI unspecified subject verbs in the conjunct, but only rarely so in the independent, where they usually form a "derived passive" with suffix -asi (Goddard 1969:133,4). According to Rogers (1960),
Mistassini adds a suffix -kani to TI verbs, and the result is an II verb. The Micmac unspecified subject forms for a TI verb appear to be a potpourri of forms from other paradigms, including three from the corresponding TA forms, three from the regular TA paradigm, and three apparently unique suffixes.

Of more theoretical interest is the question of whether these TI verbs with unspecified subject are inflectionally II because of the near identity of AI and TI paradigms, or because the logical object of the TI verb has become the syntactic subject of these verbs. This we will touch on in 4.

Turning now to the TA verb, we find that just about all the languages have unspecified subject paradigms which can be analyzed as the usual AI affixes attached to the TA stem plus a formative. The languages differ in the number of variants this formative has in the paradigm. In Micmac it is constant through the paradigm (-uksi) while in Blackfoot it has three forms (-ot, -okoo, and -a). In most of the languages we find but two; e.g. Cree has -ikawi and -ai. Compare these three paradigms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>logical object</th>
<th>Micmac (carry)</th>
<th>Plains Cree (see)</th>
<th>Blackfoot (bite)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 pemal:uksi-Ø</td>
<td>ni-wapm-ikawi-n</td>
<td>nit-siksip-okoo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1p1 pemal:uksi-yek</td>
<td>ni-wapm-ikawi-nam</td>
<td>nit-siksip-ot-ixpa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pemal:uksi-n</td>
<td>ki-wapm-ikawi-n</td>
<td>kit-siksip-okoo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pl pemal:uksi-yok</td>
<td>ki-wapm-ikawi-naw</td>
<td>kit-siksip-ot-ixpoaw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 pemal:uksi-ikw</td>
<td>ki-wapm-ikawi-namaw</td>
<td>isiksip-ot-ixpa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 pemal:uksi-t</td>
<td>wapm-ai-w</td>
<td>isiksip-ai-ya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl pemal:uksi-icik</td>
<td>wapm-ai-wak</td>
<td>isiksip-ai-yi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 pemal:uksi-initil</td>
<td>wapm-im-ai-wa</td>
<td>isiksip-ai-yini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4pl [same as 3pl]</td>
<td>[same as 4]</td>
<td>isiksip-ai-yi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Compare the corresponding AI affixes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>ni-</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>-yek</td>
<td>ni-</td>
<td>nam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-n</td>
<td>ki-</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pl</td>
<td>-yok</td>
<td>ki-</td>
<td>namaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>-ikw</td>
<td>ki-</td>
<td>namaww</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl</td>
<td>-icik</td>
<td></td>
<td>-wak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-initil</td>
<td>-yiva</td>
<td>-yini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4pl</td>
<td>[same as 3]</td>
<td>[same as 4]</td>
<td>-yi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observe that -uksi runs throughout the Micmac unspecified subject paradigm, and the suffixes which follow are identical to the AI set below. Hence there would be little reason to question an analysis which said that -uksi derives AI stems from TA stems. In Plains Cree, however, things are not so straightforward. An analysis such as that just stated for Micmac is complicated for Cree by the necessity to say that there are two forms of the derivational suffix (-ikawi and -ai), and furthermore that the suffix for 4th person is different from that found in the AI paradigm. These facts, plus the identity of shape of this ai with the direct theme sigr of the TA paradigm, led Wolfart to say that the non-third portion of this paradigm is a separate paradigm, and that the remainder belongs to the basic TA paradigm (Wolfart 1973:62). Finally, Blackfoot, has three different formatives after the stem, and further complicates the analysis in that the 12 suffix is not identical to that of the AI paradigm.

But here again we should look for syntactic evidence. Wolfart's decision to split this paradigm is fine if we are concerned only about morphological inflection. But if this split has validity within the grammatical system of the language, we expect
to find syntactic evidence for it as well. We will discuss this further in 4.

Most of the other Algonquian languages I have checked follow roughly the Plains Cree pattern in having two variants of a formative added to the Ta stem and adding to this the regular Al affixes. Fox and Kickapoo additionally have a P (apparently the reflex of Goddard's \*Hm [1974:322]) throughout this paradigm for independent verbs; the corresponding forms in the conjunct have a distinctive morphological character (Voorhis 1974:82-83).

4. It is virtually impossible to discuss analysis of these phenomena without assuming some sort of theoretical framework. In what follows I will be working within a Relational Grammar (RG) framework, an outgrowth of generative theory which makes the methodological assumption that the grammatical relations 'subject of', 'direct object of', and 'indirect object of' are of primary importance to the syntactic systems of natural language.

Within the RG framework, then, we cannot remain neutral regarding questions about whether something is subject or object of a given verb, or even whether impersonal verbs have a subject or not. And within RG, there are proposed universal "laws" regarding the syntactic effects of derivational processes commonly found in languages investigated within some variant of generative grammar. These laws, along with independently supported facts about the language under investigation, can help investigators answer the questions mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph. (While these laws won't play an important role in this paper, I mention them here as part of my intent to encourage re-
4.1 We saw in 1. that impersonal verbs are II in surface structure, and furthermore Blackfoot subject copy-raising indicates that these verbs do have an inanimate subject at the point where copy-raising takes place. So I suggest that an abstract dummy subject is added to these logically subjectless verbs, and subsequent copy-raising and agreement rules are sensitive to the presence of this inanimate singular dummy.

4.2 Normally AI verbs with unspecified subjects appear to be II on the basis of surface inflection in several of the languages, though apparently are not II in Blackfoot (see 2.). For those where such verbs are II, if we can find syntactic support for an inanimate subject then we would also want to say here that an abstract dummy subject has been inserted, and at the same time a derivational formative (e.g. -naimiw in Mistassini) is added to the verb. If, on the other hand, no syntactic evidence is found that these verbs have an inanimate syntactic subject, then the derivational formative is added simply to mark lack of a specified subject and the subjectless verb is then inflected for the most unmarked category, inanimate singular.

4.3.1 As for normally TI verbs with unspecified subject, we saw in 3. that most of these appear to be II in surface structure. As we said at the end of section 3., this would be explained if we could find additional evidence that the logical (inanimate) object of these verbs has been advanced to become subject. In Mistassini, then,
this analysis would account for the addition of the derivational suffix \(-\text{kani}\) to the TI verb as a marker that the underlying object has been advanced to subject.

As for Delaware's use of the suffix \(-\text{a\text{i}si}\) in the independent order, the fact that Goddard calls it a "derived passive" suggests that the underlying object has been advanced to subject; if this is the case, then it is likely that the underlying object of corresponding conjunct order verbs is also a surface subject, despite the difference in morphological treatment.

4.3.2 Finally, we come to the most controversial set of forms: TA verbs with unspecified subjects. I promised in the introduction to discuss whether or not these are "passives". Of course, if "passive" simply means "logical subject is unspecified", then all the forms we have discussed in this paper are passive; that is exactly how Bloomfield (1958:33) used the term in his description of Eastern Ojibwa. On the other hand, if "passive" refers to a focussing or topicalization process which makes an object more prominent than a subject, then it would be more appropriately used in Algonquian to describe obviation of subjects with proximate objects (see e.g. Frantz 1966:51 or Hockett 1966:61).

But within RG, the term 'passive' generally has a technical meaning, defined as advancement of an object to become subject. So in the discussion that follows, this will be the main point at issue: what evidence is there that the logical object of TA verbs with unspecified subject has been advanced to subject status?
One consequence of passivization is that the resultant verb is intransitive, the underlying object having been advanced. And there is some evidence that the verbs under discussion here are intransitive on the surface. First of all, in all the languages, affixes may be segmented which are identical or very nearly identical to those of the regular AI paradigm. In particular, some of the languages have the reflex of Goddard's (1974:322) *Hm in their AI paradigm but not in their TA paradigm, and these same languages have the reflex of *Hm in the TA unspec. subj. paradigm. One piece of evidence in Eastern Ojibwa which can be used to argue that these forms are intransitive is the secondary derivation of an intransitive verb with unspecified subject. That is, the putative passive of a TA verb can subsequently be marked as having no specified subject in the same way that normally AI verbs are (see 2.). Bloomfield (1958:44) says that -iwa:n marks unspecified subject of AI verbs, with the accompanying implication of plurality of actors. And then (p.47) he lists what he terms an "impersonal passive" form of a TA verb, which has -iwa:n attached to the unspecified subject form of a TA verb: ki1-noippenanuwain 'there was pursuing of animate objects'. Note that my analysis here requires that passivization first replaces the unspecified subject of the TA verb with the unspecified logical object. While this may sound a bit bizarre, observe that the passivization rule would have to be more complicated to prevent this happening. Also, the ordering application of these rules is that predicted either by the principle of maximal "feeding" or by allowing rules to apply whenever their conditions of applica-
tion are satisfied; thus there would need to be no statement of extrinsic ordering of these two rules. The point of most relevance here, however, is that there would be no reason to expect the rule that adds -iwa₂ to apply to a verb with unspecified object, which is what we would have to claim has happened if we deny that 'be pursued' is passive in Menomini.

Goddard (1969:120) is the only investigator I am aware of to present syntactic evidence that we cannot simply say that the logical object of an unspecified-subject TA verb remains an object. I will not use his Delaware examples here, but instead will use Blackfoot examples which are parallel to Goddard's. The argument will be based on the independently demonstrable fact that as in all other Algonquian languages, there are preverbs which must be understood as having the same logical subject as the verb to which they are attached. Thus the logical subject of iito- 'go (to do_)' must be the same as that of the verb to which it is attached, as in (9):

(9) nits-iito-oyi 'I went and ate'

And when attached to a transitive verb, the logical subject of iito- must be understood as coreferential with the subject of the transitive verb, not with the object:

(10) nits-iito-yinoawa

'I went and saw him_j'

*'he_j went and I saw him_j'

Treating preverbs like iito- as higher predicates which take a proposition as argument, as shown in (11), we can require that only when the 'upstairs' and 'downstairs' subjects are coreferential can we form a 'clause union' with a complex surface verb made up of the upstairs and downstairs verbs, as shown in (12),
which would ultimately lead to (10).

(11)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
V \quad \text{I:NP} \\
\text{GO-TO} \quad i \quad V \quad \text{I:NP} \\
\quad \text{SEE} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{II:NP} \\
\text{II:NP} \\
\text{SEE} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Equi-Subject Union} \\
\end{array}
\]

(12)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
V \quad \text{I:NP} \\
\text{GO-TO} \quad V \quad i \quad j \\
\quad \text{SEE} \\
\end{array}
\]

But when such complex verbs have the unspecified subject form, as in (13), we find that they are ambiguous:

(13) iito-yinoawa

\[
\begin{cases}
(a) & \text{'he}_j \text{ was gone to be seen (i.e. unspecified subject went and saw him)'} \\
(b) & \text{'he}_j \text{ went and was seen'}
\end{cases}
\]

I.e., the subject of 'go' may be understood to be either the logical (unspecified) subject of 'see' or the logical object of 'see'. To explain how this verb can have the (b) meaning and maintain the constraint regarding equi-subject union, we must say that the downstairs verb has \( j \) as its subject when union takes place; i.e. that the downstairs clause has been passivized. We can diagram the relevant steps of the derivation as (14)-(16):
So we see that the fact that (13) can be derived from (14) is support for a rule of passivization.\footnote{7}

Now, to explain how (13) can have the (a) meaning we must have a plausible derivation of (13) from (17); I propose that shown in (17) - (19):
The alert reader may ask what prevents passivization of $S_2$ before clause union, as we would expect if, as RG claims, rules which affect grammatical relations are always cyclic. The only answer I can suggest is that its application is blocked by a global constraint against any process which would ultimately prevent Equi-subject Union from applying to configurations containing equi-subject predicates like GO-TO. This would seem less ad hoc if space permitted my including derivations with Micmac predicate WANT. The latter has two surface realizations, one when Equi-Subject Union has applied and the other when it has not applied. Since Equi-subject Union is not obligatory for
this predicate, Micmac does allow passivization to apply downstairs in a configuration like (17) with WANT in place of GO-TO.

I am relatively certain that the same kind of ambiguity can be found in every Algonquian language as that seen in (13) above, having seen examples in both Delaware and Micmac. Thus the same kind of argument presented above for Blackfoot can be constructed for each of the languages.

In 3. we saw good inflectional evidence that Micmac transitives with unspecified subject are AI verbs. Now we will attempt to support this with syntactic evidence that the logical object has become subject.

Micmac has a rule which raises copies of subjects up to become objects of certain higher predicates. Unlike Blackfoot, in Micmac this rule applies only to subjects. Thus (21) is synonymous with (20), but (22) is bad because it would result from object copy-raising:

(20) puail-im-∅ negim pmail-nin
    want(TI)-1 3 carry-2
    'I want him to carry you'

(21) puail-k (negim) pmail-nin
    want(TA)-[1-3]

(22) *puail-ul negim pmail-nin
    want(TA)-[1-2]

Applying this test to a sentence like (23) with a putative passive in the complement, we find that (24) is good, supporting the claim that the logical object of the complement is a subject in (23):
In conclusion, I have shown there is evidence that transitive predicates with unspecified subjects are passives in Eastern Ojibwa, Blackfoot, and Micmac. This evidence is certainly not overwhelming, and it is my hope that other investigators will assist in the search for evidence to confirm or falsify the hypothesis that Algonquian unspecified subject forms for transitives are passive.

NOTES

1 This research was supported in part by a National Museum of Canada contract, which help I gratefully acknowledge.

2 For readers not familiar with terminology and abbreviations which have become standard in Algonquian literature, four main verb types are distinguished: AI = intransitive verb with animate gender subject; II = intransitive verb with inanimate gender subject; TA = transitive verb with animate object; TI = transitive verb with inanimate subject. The term "conjunct" refers to an inflectional paradigm used for most subordinate clauses.

3 Where no source is indicated for language examples, they are from my own notes; in the case of Micmac, the data were collected with the help of Watson Williams, and Mistassini data were collected through the cooperation of Rod and Lieselotte Bartlett. In quoting published data, I have kept the original author's transcription, except that for ease of typing I have substituted the colon for a raised dot or macron. In Rogers' Mistassini data I have made the following substitutions: i for l; u for v; a for A; a: for a; i: for i; and u: for .

4 Except that he didn't apply the term to the 'impersonal' verbs of 1.

5 Greg Thomson originally pointed out to me the value of this constraint as a test for subject-hood, in arguments he construct-
ed against the claim that obviative-on-proximate verb forms are passive.

Abbreviations in these diagrams include: V = predicate; S = proposition; NP = nominal argument; I = subject; II = direct object; i = referential index for speaker; j = arbitrary index for some third-person; x = unspecified index.

Contrary to my previous analysis (Frantz 1971:40, 41).

For readers who are familiar with the terminology, the 'like-subject' constraint on predicates like GO-TO makes reference to 'cyclic subjects.'

REFERENCES CITED


