The published texts in Algonquian languages which appeared in the early part of the 20th century have only recently begun to attract the attention of Algonquianists that they deserve.\(^1\) They contain a wealth of information of all sorts beneath the frequently inaccurate transcriptions that put off the better part of two generations of Americanists. Hidden in them is information on the state of the language from a day when, by virtue of constant use, speakers spoke a variety less influenced by the intrusion of English thought patterns and the background of white culture, and when there were many who, for the same reasons, were masters of their language not just speakers. But we can also find information on matters of culture lying behind the words. It is to the confluence of these concerns that I want to focus my attention in this brief paper.

In the Ojibwa of the texts collected by William Jones around the turn of the century from speakers in the western Great Lakes area (Jones 1919), we can find much information of the kind just alluded to. The current state of our knowledge of Ojibwa grammar, lexicon, and dialectology puts us in a good position to do so. Careful attention to the details of polite usage in these texts sheds light on what appears at first blush merely to be an idiom, but in the last analysis reveals something previously unreported about the nature of Ojibwa society. In this paper I want to tie the linguistic facts together with two independent strands of evidence to elucidate observations about the nature of Ojibwa society. These other types of evidence are ethnographic and lexical. Let us turn first to the texts.

Of primary interest to us here are those usages which reflect politeness strategies. We will focus on requests. The most common way of getting

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someone to do something is to tell them to do it using a plain imperative:  

(1)  

a. Ozhitoon nimakizinan gaye nindaasangaye  
literally: ‘Make my shoes and socks.’  
force: ‘Make a pair of shoes and socks for me.’  
situation: young man to older sister  
(Jones 1919:196, lines 14–15)  

b. Noos, nawaj giiniboozh igiwindeshkanag  
literally: ‘Father, file my horns sharper.’  
force: same  
situation: boy to father  
(Jones 1919:524, lines 5–6)  

The form of the sentences in (1) is typical of the majority of neutral requests. Such requests may have their force adjusted by the addition of an adverbial particle which resists direct translation into English, as in (2):  

(2)  

a. Daga naazikan!  
literally: ‘daga go and get it.’  
force: ‘Do go and get it.’  
situation: young woman to Wolverine  
(Jones 1919:154, lines 20–21)  

b. Shkomaa zaagahigaans ozhitooyok jiigibiig gichi-gamiing  
literally: ‘shkomaa make a small lake by the shore of the sea.’  
force: Now make a small lake by the shore of the sea.’  
situation: chief to villagers  
(Jones 1919:240, lines 14–15)  

c. Nindawaa ningoji izhiwishin  
literally: ‘nindawaa take me away somewhere.’  
force: So please take me away somewhere.’  
situation: wife to husband  
(Jones 1919:135, lines 4–5)  

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2 We will leave aside for these purposes the consideration of urgent situations (‘Help!’ ‘Look out!’) and minor requests (‘Come in’, ‘Have a seat’), which cross-culturally have imperative form (see Brown and Levinson 1978:100–103.) Here and throughout this article I have changed Jones’s transcription of Ojibwa to a modern practical orthography. See Rhodes (1985:xxvii–liii).
d. Ambe sa noo, ayaangwaamiziyok  
literally: ‘ambe sa noo be careful.’  
force: Do be careful.  
situation: Fisher to other animals  
(Jones 1919:135, lines 4–5)  

Because the meanings of the morphemes responsible for adjusting the force of requests are not independently analyzable at this time, sentences like those in (2) contribute little here to the present inquiry into how requests are mediated in Ojibwa culture. On the other hand the requests in (3) are of great interest:  

(3) a. Giin idash, Amik, abwiin giga-babaa-biigwandaanan  
literally: ‘And you, Beaver, will go around and chew up the paddles.’  
force: ‘And, Beaver, why don’t you go around and chew up the paddles.’  
(Jones 1919:478, lines 19–20)  

b. Giga-nandookomaanin  
literally: ‘I will pick your lice.’  
force: ‘Let me pick your lice.’  
situation: woman to prospective lover  
(Jones 1919:33, line 17)  

c. Daga pakon! Ninga-okonaasinan  
literally: ‘taga skin it. I will have it for a robe.’  
force: ‘Do skin it, then can I have it for a robe?’  
situation: young man to older sister  
(Jones 1919:358, lines 18–19)  

The form of these requests is typical of the vast majority of polite requests. As shown in (4), such requests can be further adjusted in force by the use of adverbial particles like those used with the imperatives exemplified in (2):  

(4) a. Ambe sa, ga-wiidigeman  
literally: ‘ambe sa, we will marry.’  
force: ‘Come on, why don’t we get married.’  
situation: woman to Ruffed-Grouse  
(Jones 1919:450, line 16)
b. Giga-nandookomaanin daga
   literally: ‘I will pick your lice, daga.’
   force: ‘Let me pick your lice.’
   situation: woman to prospective lover
   (Jones 1919:30, line 10)

c. Aanii-sh, gigad-izhaamin
   literally: ‘aanii-sh, we will go (there).’
   force: ‘Well, let’s go (there).’
   situation: old man to his son-in-law
   (Jones 1919:180, line 27)

To an outsider it appears that requests, phrased as in (3) and (4), are rude rather than polite. But to Ojibwas they are conventionally polite.

At this point I need to interrupt the line of reasoning briefly to lay out the morphology of the crucial morphemes. Ojibwa has a tense system which employs a two-way contrast in futures, volitional versus consequential (Rhodes 1985). The volitional future is marked by wii-, and the consequential by ga-. The full system of tense contrasts is laid out in (5):

(5) past present intentive predictive modal
    future future
    -gii- 0 -wii- -ga- ~ -gad- -daa-

The single preverb which marks modality, -daa-, marks the full range of modality from possibility/permission through probability/necessity. Some examples showing the contrasts in meaning among these are given in (6):

(6) Consequential future
      ‘Be careful. My father will say to you . . .’
      (Jones 1919:30, line 16)
   b. Ningoding idash gaye giin giga-nib.
      ‘Some day you too will die.’
      (Jones 1919:586, line 23)

(7) Volitional future
   a. Gaa, niwii-kiihigoshim.
      ‘No, I (only) intend to fast.’
      (Jones 1919:360, line 1)
‘He wants to sleep with you that’s why he’s sick and will feign death.’
(Jones 1919:462, line 18)

(8) Modal
‘My daughter, you would not be doing the proper thing to pursue him.’
(Jones 1919:420, line 10)

b. Ozaam gidaa-banaajihin, giishpinnisigooyaan.
‘I would be doing you very much harm if I got killed.’
(Jones 1919:274, line 15)

The preverb which appears in the polite request construction is the predictive future -ga-. This morpheme has two complexities. First it has a complex and irregular allomorphy, and second some of its allomorphs are easily confused with allomorphs of the modal -daa-.³

The allomorphies of both -ga- and -daa- are partly conditioned by whether the verb form they appear on is independent, conjunct, or changed conjunct. Both -ga- and -daa- have allomorphs specific to conjunct verbs: -ga- behaves regularly in the changed conjunct, but -daa- borrows a form involving -ga- to form its changed conjunct; -ga- also has allomorphs sensitive to the presence of person prefixes. The full range of the allomorphs of -ga- and -daa- are given in (9).⁴

(9) independent independent conjunct changed
   (non-initial) (initial) conjunct conjunct
- ga- - ga- ~ - gad- - da- - ji- - ge- ~ - ged-
- daa- - daa- - daa- - da- - ge- - ban

Now let us return to the problem at hand. As noted above, the data in (3) and (4) appear to be problematic in terms of our current understanding of indirectness. As far as we know the norm for conventionally polite forms is to derive their politeness through indirectness. The logic of indirectness for the form of these Ojibwa polite requests is that a hearer-based felicity condition is asserted—the one which says that the proposition is a future act of the hearer. It is widely held that politeness grounded in hearer-based felicity conditions arises by questioning them rather than asserting them (see

³ No less a light than Bloomfield (1957:262) confused -ga- and -daa-.
⁴ A full discussion of the source of this allomorphy can be found in Rhodes (1985). The Algonquin dialects of Ojibwa have -giji- rather than -ji-. Only some dialects of Ojibwa have special prevocalic allomorphs of -ga- with final -d.
Brown and Levinson 1978:137ff). The assertion of hearer-based felicity conditions should, at best, constitute heavy-handed hinting. Nonetheless to Ojibwas requests like those in (3) and (4) are conventionally polite. The critic of current theories might say that this is because Ojibwas do not use indirect strategies. But this is not the case. Ojibwas do use indirectness strategies that are perfectly comprehensible in terms of the current understanding of how indirectness works. Indirectness is used in pleading as in (10):

(10) a. Gaawiin ina gidaa-wiidigemisii?
literally: ‘Can’t you marry me?’
force: ‘Won’t you please marry me?’
situation: young man proposing to woman
(Jones 1919:252, line 4)

b. Gaawiin ina gegoo gidaa-izhichigesiihiw ji-bakizhwadiban?
literally: ‘Can’t you do something to cut him loose?’
force: ‘Won’t you please do something to cut him loose?’
situation: woman pleading with her younger brother
(Jones 1919:364, lines 11–12)

suggesting as in (11):

(11) a. Gidaa-nibaa gosha go gaazhigakin.
literally: ‘You should sleep during the day sometimes.’
force: same
situation: man to wife
(Jones 1919:120, line 14)

literally: ‘Why did you marry two women? You shouldn’t have.’
force: same
situation: friends to Moose
(Jones 1919:496, lines 11–12)

and hinting as in (12):

(12) Niinimoog gashkigwaadamowaad imaagii-dakwamid aw mikinaak mii iw ji-noojimoyaan.
literally: ‘Should my sisters-in-law sew me up where I was bitten, then I will be healed.’
force: same
situation: Otter to his sisters-in-law
(Jones 1919:121, lines 1–2)

However, in Brown and Levinson’s theory there lies an answer to how the assertion of future acts of the hearer can be polite. One of the strategies
they present has this form, although they do not report it to be conventional. The strategy in question is classified as one they call “Be optimistic” (1978:131). The logic of the general type of strategy to which “Be optimistic” belongs is based on cooperation of various types between the speaker and hearer. Politeness based on cooperation is called “positive politeness” (1978:107). An outline of the logic of positive politeness can be summarized as in (13):

(13) Redress a threat to face by conveying that the speaker wants what the hearer wants by:
   a. Claiming common ground (speaker and hearer are part of same in-group)
   b. Conveying that speaker and hearer are cooperators (speaker and hearer have the same wants)
   c. Fulfilling hearer’s want for something

Strategies based on the cooperation of positive politeness contrast with another general class of strategies based on non-intervention, and called “negative politeness”. There is much more to this system, but this much is enough for our purposes here.

The strategy of asserting future acts of the hearer (Brown and Levinson’s “Be optimistic”) is an instance of (13b): convey that the speaker and hearer are cooperators. The difference is that in Ojibwa this strategy is conventionalized. That is, Ojibwas assume rather than convey that the speaker and hearer are cooperators. That Ojibwas assume cooperation on the part of their interlocutors is further borne out in other conventional strategies of Ojibwa conversation. In leave-taking one assumes reflexivity: if the speaker wants A, then hearer wants A, and uses another version of “Be optimistic” as in (14):

(14) A. Niwii-ani-maajaa.
    ‘I want to leave.’
   B. Haaw.
    ‘OK.’

In giving minor apologies one assumes reflexivity: giving a suitable reason will suffice to excuse an action (Brown and Levinson’s “Give reasons”, 1978:134) as in (15):

(15) Gaa onjida.
    ‘(I did)n’t (do it) on purpose.’

Spielmann and Chief (1986) and Spielmann (1987) report that among Ojibwas speaking the Algonquin dialect refusal avoidance strategies are

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5Brown and Levinson’s examples under “Give reasons” are rather different, but I would claim that this is the different between needing to establish reflexivity (as in the cases they cite) and being able to assume it (as in Ojibwa).
the norm for dealing with requests. Refusal avoidance is another type positive politeness specified by Brown and Levinson under the strategy "Claim common ground".

The fact that Ojibwas have conventionalized positive politeness over negative politeness reflects a cultural assumption that speakers form a co-operative in-group. Unlike Brown and Levinson's English, Tzeltal, and Tamil speakers, Ojibwas do not have to establish in the speech act the grounds for the use of positive politeness; they simply assume them.

There is evidence of other sorts to support the view that Ojibwas hold the cultural assumption that Ojibwas speakers form a single, cooperative in-group. The ethnographic literature of Ojibwa culture, both implicitly and explicitly, indicates extensive overt cooperation in Ojibwa society. For example, Landes (1937:1) states: "[The Ojibwa village] was held together by little more than the consciousness of neighborhood, for no official activities characterised its existence", implying that villages must be cooperatively organized. More explicitly, Hallowell (1955:277-278) observes: "To the casual observer, cooperation, laughter, harmony, patience, and self-control appear to be the keynotes of Saulteaux interpersonal relations." He goes on to characterize this overt cooperative attitude thus: "If I have more than I need I share it with you today because I know that you, in turn, will share your surplus with me tomorrow." Hallowell (1955:281) even observes that cooperation is enjoined in face-to-face situations between hostile in-group members: "But when I meet [the object of my sorcery] face to face I will give no evidence of my hostility by gesture, word, or deed. I may even act with perfect suavity and kindness toward him and share the products of my hunt with him."

However, next to these comments on cooperation, the ethnographers of Ojibwa culture say relatively little about Ojibwa speakers as a single in-group, though occasional mentions do appear, mostly in reference to complementary kinship. Landes (1937:11) notes: "The term [indaakoomaagan, 'relative'] is also used towards any non-relative who behaves kindly." Hallowell (1955:279-280) notes: "The Saulteaux kinship system is centripetal in tendency in the sense that everyone with whom one comes in social contact not only falls within the category of a relative, but a blood relative, through the extension in usage of a few primary terms . . . There is considerable emphasis laid, for instance, upon the solidarity of brothers and, in fact, of all relatives in the male line."

More cogently, however, the view that Ojibwa speakers form a single in-group is supported by lexical evidence. There are only two general terms in Ojibwa for categories of people with respect to membership in Ojibwa society: inawemaagan 'relative', and meyaagizid 'foreigner' or mayaag-inini 'foreign man', mayaag-ikwe 'foreign woman'. Notably absent are separate
categories of unrelated cultural insiders which would correspond to English 'friend' and 'stranger'.

The lack of categories for 'friend' and 'stranger' are also seen in terms used in addressing non-relatives, as Hallowell mentioned. Unrelated adult insider males of not of a generation old enough to be classified as 'old men' (akiwenziiyag), are called 'brother' (niikaanis, niijikiwenh) by other males. Unrelated adult insider females with the same age restriction are called 'sister-in-law' (ndaangwe) by other females. There are no terms for unrelated insiders of opposite sexes in the same generation. Similarly unrelated insider children are called by grandchild terms (or more rarely by parallel niece-nephew terms) and unrelated insider elders are called by grandparent terms. This is summarized in (16):

(16) nimishoomis 'my grandfather' (voc. nimishoo)
nikaanis 'my brother'
niijikiwenh 'my friend' (voc. niiji)
noozhishenh 'my grandson/daughter' (voc. noozhis)
noozhim(is) 'my parallel nephew/niece'
nindoozhim 'my parallel friend' (voc. nindoozhim)
nookomis 'my grandmother' (voc. nookoo)
ndaangew 'my sister-in-law'

The existence of the vocative niiji, meaning 'my friend,' reflects the fact that the Ojibwa language does recognize a category of complementary relative distinct from true relative. But just as in the case of classificatory kin, Ojibwa society transfers some of the treatment accorded true relatives to those bearing that relationship complementarily.

That Ojibwas assume in-group membership is further evidenced in the way they refer to people in the category of complementary relative. While they do not use kin term, they use locutions based on mutual group membership of other sorts. Thus today one frequently hears expressions like those in (17), which, among others, are also attested in Baraga (1878):

(17) a. niij-anishinaabe 'my fellow Indian'
b. niij-ikwe 'my fellow woman'
c. niij-gwiwizens 'my fellow boy'
d. niij-biboonishimaagan 'my fellow winterer'
e. niiji-bimaadizi 'my fellow being'

The lexical evidence that there is an assumption of in-group membership in Ojibwa culture is clear, even though this has not been well documented elsewhere. In addition to the lexical evidence for assuming in-group membership, there is the experience that many of us who work among the Ojibwa have had the experience of unexpectedly finding ourselves treated like insiders, of being silently adopted by our informants' families, of wak-
ing up one morning and finding that we have privileges we never expected and obligations we never bargained for.

Thus there is independent evidence for the view that Ojibwas make the cultural assumptions regarding in-group membership and cooperation necessary to employ positive politeness strategies conventionally, and thus to interpret requests with -ga-, like those in (3) and (4), as conventionally polite.

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