

Multiple Instances of Agreement in the Clausal Spine: Evidence from Algonquian

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1. Introduction

There have been several recent proposals that what appears to be object agreement is often—or always—clitic doubling of the object instead (e.g. Arregi & Nevins 2008; Woolford 2008, 2010; Preminger 2009; Nevins 2011; Kramer forthcoming). These proposals suggest the principle in (1).

(1) There can be only one instance of true phi-agreement in the clause, namely, subject agreement.

This paper presents an argument that (1) is too strong, and that syntactic theory should continue to allow for the occurrence of more than one instance of true phi-agreement in the clausal spine. The argument is based on synchronic and diachronic data from the Algonquian languages. It will be shown that in these languages, the verb displays both object agreement *and* object clitic doubling, thus preventing us from explaining away Algonquian object agreement as clitic doubling. Furthermore, the diachronic development of the Algonquian object markers helps to explain *why* the putative principle in (1) cannot be maintained: due to morphosyntactic change, phi-agreement probes can accumulate over time, thereby ruling out any strict grammatical limit on the number of such probes.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 sets out the theoretical background by surveying recent proposals regarding the status of object agreement. Section 3 describes the basic Algonquian agreement pattern. Section 4 examines the Algonquian agreement morphemes more closely in order to determine which morphemes are true agreement and which are clitics, concluding that the Algonquian verb displays both subject and object agreement and subject and object clitic doubling. Section 5 discusses the significance of the diachronic development of this morphology.

2. Theoretical context

Much recent work has argued that particular instances of object agreement are better understood as object clitic doubling (e.g. Arregi & Nevins 2008; Woolford 2008, 2010; Preminger 2009; Nevins 2011; Kramer forthcoming). In the context of this work, the term ‘clitic’ refers more specifically to a PRONOMINAL clitic—that is, a morpheme of category D—while true agreement is taken to involve the valuation of phi-features on a clausal functional head (e.g. Nevins 2011:961). This definition of clitic-hood is morphosyntactic, as it hinges solely upon the grammatical category of the relevant morpheme rather than upon its phonological properties. Since a morphosyntactic clitic could, in principle, be realized phonologically as either a clitic or an affix, the morphosyntactic properties of any apparent agreement affix must be carefully considered in order to ascertain whether it is truly agreement or is instead a clitic. Kramer (forthcoming) illustrates the application of such considerations to Amharic object agreement.

Since such work often reveals that apparent object agreement is instead clitic doubling, we may wonder whether there are *any* apparent cases of object agreement that truly do involve agreement. Woolford (2008) suggests that there are not, and that only subject agreement is true agreement. Nevins (2011) tentatively endorses this suggestion and notes that it “would bring a vast number of elements previously analyzed as agreement affixes into the fold as clitics” (960–61). It would also bring these elements out of the fold as agreement—a significant development, as agreement plays a central role in

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contemporary syntactic theory and it is thus important for us to know whether or not the many examples of apparent object agreement are relevant to agreement theory.

The existence of true object agreement is also brought into question by the work of Preminger (2009), who proposes that if it is ever possible for a given verbal phi-indexing morpheme not to appear, then that morpheme is likely to be a clitic rather than true agreement.¹ Baker (2012:264, fn. 10) observes that “[i]t is an open question whether Preminger’s criterion as formulated will ever identify object marking as agreement rather than clitics”, since all languages have intransitive verbs in which, presumably, an object marker does not appear, thus preventing any object marker from being regarded as agreement. Baker (2012, 2013) rejects such a conclusion and defends the more traditional view in which multiple instances of true agreement can occur in the clausal spine, including true object agreement.

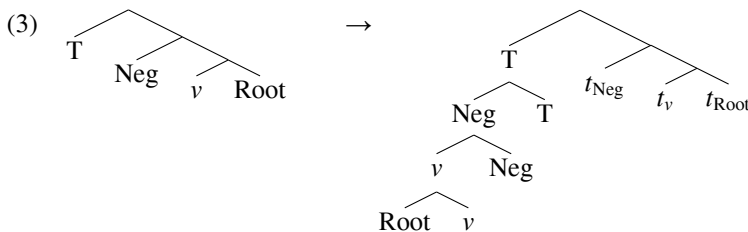
3. Agreement in Algonquian

This section describes the basic agreement pattern of the Algonquian transitive verb. The remainder of the paper will consider the significance of this pattern for the issues discussed above.

To begin, the order of morphemes that do *not* index phi-features is shown in (2). This order is reconstructed for Proto-Algonquian (Pentland 1999) and occurs in many of the daughter languages.²

(2) Root + *v* + Negation + Tense/Modality

This order is amenable to a Mirror Principle-style analysis (Baker 1985) in which the underlying head-initial structure surfaces in the reverse order due to iterated head movement, as shown in (3).



In addition to these morphemes, four phi-indexing morphemes also appear. I will refer to these morphemes as the PREFIX, the THEME SIGN, the INNER SUFFIX, and the OUTER SUFFIX. This terminology is intended to be theoretically neutral. The position of each morpheme is indicated in (4), along with the argument it indexes, the features it is sensitive to, and its exponents. In brief, the prefix and inner suffix agree with the subject while the theme sign and outer suffix agree with the object.

(4) Proto-Algonquian phi-indexing verb morphology (Independent Indicative TA direct form)³

Morpheme:	Prefix	Root <i>v</i>	Theme Sign	Neg	Inner Suffix	T	Outer Suffix
Argument:	SUBJECT		OBJECT		SUBJECT		OBJECT
Features:	[person]		[person]		[pers/num]		[num/gen]
Exponents:	1 <i>ne-</i>		1 <i>-i</i>		1/2/3s \emptyset		ANIM SG <i>-a</i>
	2 <i>ke-</i>		2 <i>-eθ</i>		1p <i>-enān</i>		ANIM PL <i>-aki</i>
	3 <i>we-</i>		3 <i>-ā</i>		21p <i>-enaw</i>		INAN SG <i>-i</i>
			INV <i>-ekw</i>		2/3p <i>-wāw</i>		INAN PL <i>-ari</i>

¹ Except when the morpheme’s failure to appear can be analyzed as null default agreement (Preminger 2009:623).

² *v* represents the morpheme known as a FINAL (see e.g. Brittain 2003; Hirose 2003; Quinn 2006; Mathieu 2007).

³ Key to abbreviations: 1, 2, 3 = first, second, third person; 1p = exclusive first-person plural; 21p = inclusive first-person plural; ANIM = animate; INAN = inanimate; IND = Independent Indicative; INV = inverse; PA = Proto-Algonquian; PL = plural; POSS’R = possessor; PRES = present; PST = past; SG = singular; TA = Transitive Animate.

The Ojibwe negative preterit example in (5) exemplifies all the inflectional slots of the above template.

- (5) nwābmāsīminābanīg
 n- wābm -ā -sī -minā -bany -ag
 1- see -3 -NEG -1p -PAST -3p
 ‘we did not see them’ (Ojibwe, from Valentine 2001:292; see p. 275 for allomorphy)

For simplicity, examples in this paper will use the affirmative present form, illustrated in (6) for Proto-Algonquian (Goddard 2007:266), Ojibwe (Valentine 2001:287), and Innu (Clarke 1982:69–70).

- (6) PA ne- wāpam -ā -wenān -aki
 Ojibwe n- wābm -ā -nāny -ag
 Innu n- uāpam -ā -nān -at
 1- see -3 -1p -3p
 ‘we see them’ (affirmative present)

The morpheme known by Algonquianists as a ‘theme sign’ (realized as *-ā* above) normally agrees with the object for person (1st *-i*, 2nd *-eθ*, 3rd *-ā* in Proto-Algonquian), a pattern that is particularly evident in the more archaic verb inflection known as the CONJUNCT ORDER. Importantly, however, there is also a special INVERSE THEME SIGN *-ekw*, which appears in certain contexts in which the person of the object is more local than that of the subject, such as when a third-person subject acts on a first-person object. The inverse theme sign is thus sensitive to the *relative status of the two arguments*. Since this paper is concerned only with the formal status of the morphemes involved (agreement or clitics), we can safely abstract away from the complicated details of the direct-inverse alignment system (see Béjar & Rezac 2009 for a Cyclic Agree analysis). However, it should be borne in mind that the inverse theme sign is sensitive to the person features of both arguments, as this will be important below.

For the benefit of readers who are familiar with Algonquian, four caveats about the picture sketched above should be noted. First, the paper focuses on DIRECT (i.e. non-inverse) forms, abstracting away from the inverse for simplicity. Second, the description applies to the Independent Indicative inflection of the Transitive Animate verb. Other paradigms exist. Third, the description ignores the OBLIATIVE forms, which index a less salient third person. Finally, in (6), I have not divided the PA inner suffix *-wenān* into the FORMATIVE *-w* plus the inner suffix *-enān*, although such a segmentation is possible (Pentland 1999:239–42). Since the formative is sensitive to properties of third-person arguments, it may in fact constitute a fifth agreement morpheme, lending further support to the argument of this paper. However, as its status is disputed (see Goddard 2007:231–2), I have chosen to leave it unsegmented.

4. Status of phi-indexing morphemes

The previous section identified four phi-indexing morphemes on the Algonquian verb: the prefix and inner suffix, which index the subject, and the theme sign and outer suffix, which index the object (in a direct Independent Indicative form). Given the theoretical background discussed above, the goal of this section is to determine the status of each of these morphemes with respect to the clitic-agreement distinction. The conclusion will be as shown in (7).

- (7) Status of Algonquian phi-indexing verb morphology (Independent Indicative TA direct form)

Morpheme:	Prefix	Root <i>v</i>	Theme Sign	Neg	Inner Suffix	T	Outer Suffix
Argument:	SUBJECT		OBJECT		SUBJECT		OBJECT
Features:	[person]		[person]		[pers/num]		[num/gen]
Status:	<i>clitic</i>		<i>agreement</i>		<i>agreement</i>		<i>clitic</i>

The status of the prefix and theme sign is relatively straightforward, so these morphemes will be discussed first, before turning to the inner and outer suffixes.

4.1. Prefix as a clitic

There is consensus in the literature that the prefix is in fact a clitic (e.g. Halle & Marantz 1993; McGinnis 1995; Déchaine 1997; Brittain 2001; Richards 2004; Mathieu 2007; Cook 2008; Branigan 2012). The main evidence is the well-known tendency for the prefix to be separated from the root by intervening material. For example, in the Meskwaki form in (8) (Michelson 1925:136.8-9, cited in LeSourd 2009), the second-person prefix *ke-* is separated from the root *wītamō* ‘tell’ by the adverb *peshikwi* ‘straight’, the discourse particles *chāh* and *meko*, and the demonstrative *mani* ‘this’.⁴

- (8) **ke-** peshikwi =chāh =meko mani **wītamō** -ne -pwa...
 2- straight =so =EMPH this **tell** -1/2p -2p.IND
 ‘I have told you (pl.) this in an upright manner...’ (Meskwaki)
 (cf. uninterrupted *kewītamōnepwa* ‘I have told you this’)

4.2. Theme sign as true agreement

As discussed above, the theme sign normally agrees with the object for person (1st *-i*, 2nd *-eθ*, 3rd *-ā* in Proto-Algonquian), a pattern that is particularly evident in the more archaic conjunct verb inflection, but a special INVERSE theme sign *-ekw* appears in certain contexts in which the person of the object is more local than that of the subject. This sensitivity to the *relative status of the two arguments* indicates that the theme sign can access the person features of both arguments in at least certain contexts. Agreement can display such a pattern: in the Cyclic Agree analysis proposed by Béjar and Rezac (2009), for example, the theme sign first probes downward to agree with the object and then, in some circumstances, probes upward to agree with the subject. If the theme sign were a clitic, however, this pattern would be unusual, as a pronominal clitic is a D category that doubles one argument or the other, not some combination of the two arguments.

4.3. Inner and outer suffixes

The status of the inner and outer suffixes is less obvious at first glance, but upon closer inspection, the two suffixes turn out to have strikingly different properties with respect to four criteria: (1) position, (2) form, (3) conditioning, and (4) tense-variance.

4.3.1. Criterion 1: Position

The inner suffix appears between two inflectional suffixes (Neg and T/Mod). Clitics normally appear outside of inflectional morphology (Zwicky & Pullum 1983) or adjacent to the stem (Woolford 2010; Nevins 2011), but not between inflectional suffixes, so the position of the inner suffix is more consistent with agreement than clitic doubling.⁵

The outer suffix always appears in absolute word-final position. This position is consistent with either clitic doubling or agreement.

4.3.2. Criterion 2: Form

The outer suffix appears on nouns as well as verbs, as discussed in Section 5 below. Goddard (2007:265) suggests that in Pre-Proto-Algonquian, the nominal outer suffix functioned as a definite article.⁶ The verbal outer suffix thus originally had the same form as a nominal definite D element. This is reminiscent of clitic doubling, as there is a crosslinguistic tendency for clitics and definite articles to be homonymous (Corver & Delfitto 1999:813), as, for example, in the case of French *le, la, les*.

⁴ In this form, the prefix indexes the second-person object rather than the first-person subject. Such forms are conventionally described as inverse, although the inverse theme sign (the reflex of PA *-ekw*) does not appear.

⁵ But see the ‘endoclitics’ of Harris 2002.

⁶ By the time of Proto-Algonquian proper, however, the nominal outer suffix had been bleached of its definite meaning and occurred on all nouns.

The inner suffix, on the other hand, has no identity with any D elements. This is compatible with either agreement or clitic doubling.

4.3.3. Criterion 3: Conditioning

The appearance of the outer suffix is conditioned by definiteness. In Proto-Algonquian forms in which the outer suffix indexes an object (i.e. transitive direct forms), the suffix appears only when the object is definite, a pattern continued in Delaware, Western Abenaki, and Mahican (Goddard 1974, 2007). Algonquianists use the terms OBJECTIVE and ABSOLUTE to refer to this distinction, illustrated in (9).

(9) Proto-Algonquian objective and absolute forms

- a. 3rd-person definite object: outer suffix appears (OBJECTIVE form)

newāpamāwenānaki aθemōki
 ne- wāpam -ā -wenān -aki aθemw -aki
 1- see -3 -1p -3p dog -3p
 ‘we see the dogs’

- b. 3rd-person indefinite object: no outer suffix (ABSOLUTE form)

newāpamāhmenā aθemōki
 ne- wāpam -ā -hmenā aθemw -aki
 1- see -3 -1p dog -3p
 ‘we see dogs’

Such a pattern is consistent with object clitic doubling, which is often conditioned by referentiality (e.g. Suárez 1988; Dobrovie-Sorin 1990; Anagnostopoulou 2006).

The appearance of the inner suffix, on the other hand, is conditioned by number: the inner suffix appears only when the indexed argument is plural (1/2/3s -Ø, 1p -enān, 21p -enaw, 2/3p -wāw in PA). While null singular agreement is unremarkable (e.g. French /ekut/ ‘listen (1/2/3s)’, /ekutō/ ‘listen (1p)’, /ekute/ ‘listen (2p)’), it would be somewhat unusual for clitic doubling to apply only to plural DPs.

4.3.4. Criterion 4: Tense-variance

Nevins (2011) proposes the following diagnostic for clitic-hood: clitics, as D elements, cannot display allomorphy conditioned grammatically by tense, while affixes can. It is generally the case across the Algonquian languages that the inner suffix is tense-variant while the outer suffix is tense-invariant, as illustrated for Ojibwe and Innu in (10). In both languages, the inner suffix has suppletive allomorphs in the present and the past while the outer suffix does not.

(10) a. Ojibwe (Valentine 2001:291–2)⁷

	PFX	STEM	T.S.	NEG	INNER	T	OUTER	
Present	n-	wābm	-ā	-si	-wānāny	-Ø	-ag	‘We don’t see them’
Past	n-	wābm	-ā	-sī	-minā	-bany	-ag	‘We didn’t see them’
	1-	see	-3	-NEG	-1p	(PRES/PST)	-3p	

b. Innu (Clarke 1982:69, 73)

	PFX	STEM	T.S.	INNER	OUTER	
Present	n-	uāpam	-ā	-nān	-at	‘We see them’
Past	n-	uāpam	-ā	-tān	-at	‘We saw them’
	1-	see	-3	-1p (PRES/PST)	-3p	

⁷ In addition to the grammatically-conditioned allomorphy of the inner suffix, phonologically-conditioned allomorphy of the outer suffix is also possible: in the Ojibwe past-tense form, the outer suffix -ag is realized as -īg following the past suffix -bany. However, the conditioning of this allomorphy is phonological (coalescence of bany + ag → banīg; Valentine 2001:275), not grammatical, and is thus not relevant to Nevins’s diagnostic.

4.4. Conclusion: Status of phi-indexing morphemes

The properties of the inner and outer suffixes are summarized in (11).

Criterion	Inner suffix	Outer suffix
Position	Between suffixes	Word-final
Form	Distinct from article	Shared with article (in Pre-PA)
Conditioning	Number	Definiteness
Tense-variance	Tense-variant	Tense-invariant

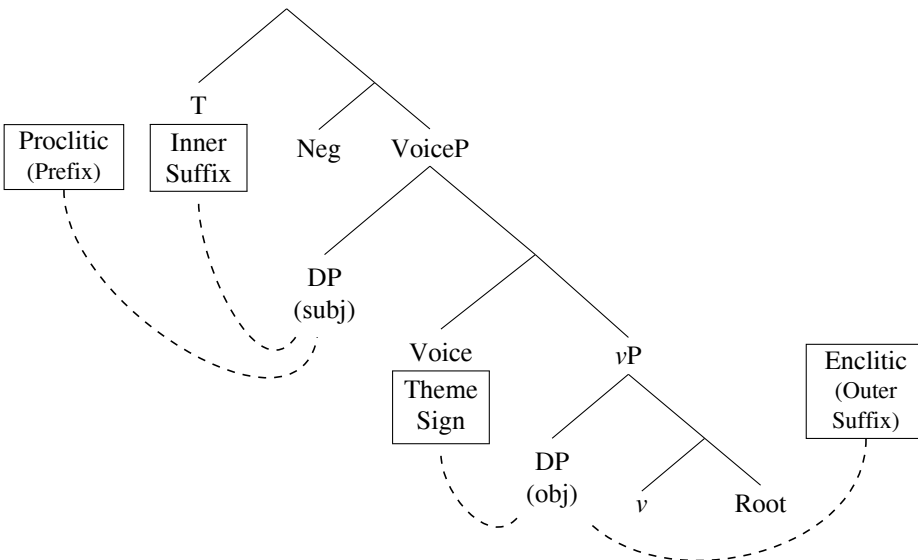
The properties of the two suffixes are clearly different. If we posit that the inner suffix is true agreement and the outer suffix is a clitic, the differences in (11) follow, as the properties of the inner suffix are all consistent with true agreement while those of the outer suffix are all consistent with clitic doubling. We thus arrive at the classification of phi-indexing morphemes shown in (12).

(12) Status of Algonquian phi-indexing verb morphology (Independent Indicative TA direct form)

Morpheme:	Prefix	Root <i>v</i>	Theme Sign	Neg	Inner Suffix	T	Outer Suffix
Argument:	SUBJECT		OBJECT		SUBJECT		OBJECT
Features:	[person]		[person]		[pers/num]		[num/gen]
Status:	<i>clitic</i>		<i>agreement</i>		<i>agreement</i>		<i>clitic</i>

This classification leads to the relatively straightforward model of Algonquian clause structure in (13), in which the subject and object are each indexed by an agreement morpheme and a clitic double. (I make no particular proposal about the syntactic position of the clitics.)

(13) Algonquian clause structure (Independent Indicative TA direct form)



Under this analysis, the Algonquian verb bears true subject agreement (in T) and object agreement (in Voice) in addition to clitic doubling of both the subject and object. Since the verb displays both object clitic doubling and object agreement, it is only consistent with theoretical models that allow the possibility of true object agreement in addition to object clitic doubling. The Algonquian facts thus provide an argument that syntactic theory must continue to allow for the possibility of more than one instance of true phi-agreement in the clausal spine, and that object agreement can indeed be true agreement.

5. The significance of diachronic changes in Algonquian agreement

While the synchronic Algonquian facts alone are significant, their diachronic development is also of interest, as it helps to illustrate why the number of phi-probes in the clausal spine cannot be restricted to one. In particular, the diachronic facts demonstrate that verbal phi-indexing morphology can *accumulate* over time. This section discusses two such examples: (1) the origin of the Independent Indicative morphology in Proto-Algonquian, and (2) a reanalysis of the outer suffix in Innu.

5.1. Origin of the Independent Indicative morphology

As shown above, the transitive Independent Indicative verb in Algonquian bears an unusually full set of phi-indexing morphology. The diachronic origins of this morphology are well-documented in the philological literature. In particular, it has been established that much of the Independent Indicative inflection in fact originated as *noun inflection* that was transplanted onto the verb in Pre-Proto-Algonquian (Goddard 1967:87, 1974:325–27, 2007:251–65; Proulx 1982). This development was caused by the reanalysis of nominalized verbs as simple verbs, a reanalysis pathway that has also been documented by Gildea (2008) for various South American languages.⁸

The origins of the Independent Indicative morphemes are indicated in (14). Of the four phi-indexing morphemes discussed in this paper, only the theme sign was inherited from the original verb inflection (which still persists in subordinate clauses, where it is known by Algonquianists as the CONJUNCT ORDER of inflection). The prefix, inner suffix, and outer suffix were all transplanted from the noun.

(14) Sources of Algonquian phi-indexing verb morphology (Independent Indicative TA direct form)

Morpheme:	Prefix	Root <i>v</i>	Theme Sign	Neg	Inner Suffix	T	Outer Suffix
Source:	<i>noun</i>		<i>original verb</i>		<i>noun</i>		<i>noun</i>

The examples in (15) illustrate the resulting parallelism between noun and verb inflection in PA.

- (15) a. **ne-** šihš **-enān** **-aki**
1- uncle **-1p** **-3p**
 ‘our uncles’
- b. **ne-** wāpam **-ā** **-wenān** **-aki**
1- see **-3** **-1p** **-3p**
 ‘we see them’

The relationship between the nominal inflectional morphemes and their innovative verbal functions is summarized in (16). In brief, when the nominal inflection was transferred to the verb, possessor agreement became subject agreement while the article-like outer suffix, which marked features of the head noun, became an object marker.⁹

(16) Development of the Independent Indicative direct verb morphology in Pre-Proto-Algonquian

Noun morpheme:	Prefix	Root <i>n</i>			Inner Suffix		Outer Suffix
Argument:	POSS’R				POSS’R		HEAD NOUN
Features:	[person]				[pers/num]		[num/gen]
	↓				↓		↓
Verb morpheme:	Prefix	Root <i>v</i>	Theme Sign	Neg	Inner Suffix	T	Outer Suffix
Argument:	SUBJECT		OBJECT		SUBJECT		OBJECT
Features:	[person]		[person]		[pers/num]		[num/gen]

The reanalysis that gave rise to the pattern in (16) had the effect of layering nominal agreement morphology atop the existing verbal agreement morphology. The possibility for phi-indexing morphology

⁸ As pointed out to me by Conor Quinn, the reanalysis is also reminiscent of the concept of ‘insubordination’ developed by Evans (2007), though it applies to nominalized verbs rather than clausally subordinated verbs.

⁹ I follow Goddard’s (2007:265) suggestion that the outer suffix functioned as a definite article during the stage of Pre-Proto-Algonquian at which the Independent Indicative morphology was innovated.

to accumulate in this way makes it difficult to maintain that a clause can only ever contain one instance of true agreement.

5.2. *Reanalysis of the outer suffix in Innu*

A less dramatic cause of the accumulation of phi-indexing morphology is the reanalysis of clitics as true agreement, a well-known phenomenon (e.g. Fuss 2005). A possible Algonquian example involves the outer suffix, which was argued above to be an object-doubling enclitic. Two signs of its clitic status were its conditioning—it originally occurred only with definite third-person objects—and its lack of tense-dependent allomorphy. In some of the daughter languages, however, the outer suffix has lost these clitic-like properties. In Innu, for example, the outer suffix *-at* (3p) is no longer sensitive to definiteness and occurs with both definite and indefinite objects. It has also developed the suppletive allomorphs *-tshē* and *-tī* (varying by dialect) in the subjective mode (Baraby 1999).

The Innu changes raise the possibility that the outer suffix has been reanalyzed as true agreement in this language. If such a reanalysis has indeed occurred, the placement of the outer suffix at the right edge of the verb, following T (the inner suffix), suggests that it would occupy a high syntactic position, possibly C. The presence of object agreement in C raises issues of locality and intervention, but in support of such an analysis, note that the outer suffix occurs only in main clauses, thus displaying a sensitivity to clause type that would be unsurprising for a C element.

6. Conclusion

The synchronic Algonquian facts indicate that syntactic theory should allow the possibility of more than one instance of true phi-agreement in the clausal spine. The diachronic facts illustrate one reason why this is the case: morphosyntactic change can result in the accumulation of agreement probes, either through dramatic structural reanalysis, as in the transfer of nominal morphology to the verb in Pre-Proto-Algonquian, or through gradual morphological change, as in the possible shift of the Innu inner suffix from clitic to agreement.

A consequence of this view is that the distribution of phi-agreement probes is essentially random: while the probe-goal mechanism itself is fixed by the grammar, phi-probes can be hosted by various clausal functional heads, with their position and featural content often resulting from nothing more than historical accident, leading to situations such as the possible presence of object agreement in C in Innu. This departure from rigid cartography likely reflects the fact that, unlike other features, phi-agreement lacks any semantic content. (Consider the difficulty of locating agreement in Cinque's (1999) functional hierarchy.) This makes the distribution of agreement affixes an element of the grammar that is particularly susceptible to evolutionary factors rather than purely structural principles.

The Algonquian facts thus support models of agreement that allow more than one probe in the clausal spine as well as flexibility in the location of probes. One such approach is that of Baker (2013), who proposes that object agreement can be true agreement and can occur in either *v* or T.

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