

# Topic, Focus, and Point of View in Blackfoot<sup>1</sup>

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Languages vary in the ways in which they express various notions of discourse prominence, such as topic, focus, and point of view. In the Algonquian language family, such notions are grammaticalized via two morphosyntactic mechanisms: obviation and direct/inverse. Obviation and direct/inverse are typically conceived of as working together as a single concerted system, both marking the same type of discourse prominence. This paper argues that, in Blackfoot (Plains Algonquian: Alberta and Montana), obviation and direct/inverse are in fact distinct, each marking a different type of discourse prominence.

§1 highlights properties of the obviation and direct/inverse systems of Blackfoot and §2 offers evidence for distinguishing obviation from direct/inverse. In §3, direct/inverse in Blackfoot is argued to grammaticalize the pragmatic notion of point of view and in §4, obviation is argued to grammaticalize information structuring, or topic and focus. In §5 is the conclusion.

## 1. Obviation and Direct/Inverse in Blackfoot

In Blackfoot, both obviation and direct/inverse appear to fulfill similar pragmatic functions. Obviation distinguishes third persons on the basis of their relative discourse prominence. Within a clause containing multiple third persons, the most prominent is designated as PROXIMATE and all others are designated as OBLVIATIVE. An example is given in (1).

- (1) *Ana póókaawa inoyii ani imitááyi*  
an-(w)a pookaa-wa ino-yii an-(y)i imitaa-yi  
DEM-PROX child-PROX see-DIR DEM-OBV dog-OBV  
'The child saw the dog'

In (1), the argument *ana póókaawa* 'the child' is marked proximate by virtue of the suffix *-wa*, which appears on both the demonstrative determiner and on the head noun. In contrast, the argument *ani imitááyi* 'the dog' is marked as obviative by virtue of the suffix *-yi*, which again, appears on both the determiner and the head noun.

The proximate third person holds a distinct status from the obviative third person. First, only one third person may be marked as proximate within a stretch of discourse (typically the duration of a clause); all other third person DPs are marked obviative. Additionally, only animate arguments may be marked as proximate. Inanimate arguments are always marked as obviative in Blackfoot. Finally, the proximate third person is thought to be, in some way, discourse prominent. In Algonquian linguistics, this notion of prominence, and its role in both obviation and direct/inverse, is not well understood. Previously, the proximate argument was said to represent *both* the topic and/or focus of discourse, and the person whose point of view is represented in a clause (Bloomfield 1962; Dahlstrom 1991; Hockett 1966). More recently, the proximate category has been argued to mark either topic/focus (Russell 1996; Junker 2004), or point of

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view (Oshima 2004). Importantly, in each of these claims, obviation and direct/inverse are assumed to both mark the same type(s) of prominence.

Direct/inverse maps arguments to thematic roles, functioning analogously to active/passive voice systems (Givón 1994; Klaiman 1991) or case systems (Fabri 1996) in other languages. The crucial distinction between direct/inverse and other types of mapping systems lies in its reliance on an animacy hierarchy that ranks arguments according to their inherent discourse salience. The hierarchy that is typically assumed for the Algonquian languages is given in (2).

- (2) Direct/Inverse Hierarchy  
 $1^{\text{st}} / 2^{\text{nd}} > 3^{\text{rd}} \text{ PROX} > 3^{\text{rd}} \text{ OBV}$

In the hierarchy in (2), first and second persons rank above third proximate persons, which in turn rank above third obviative persons. Importantly, the proximate/obviative contrast is encoded directly into the hierarchy in (2), with proximate third persons ranking above obviative ones. This particular ranking demonstrates the implicit assumption made in the Algonquianist tradition that obviation and direct/inverse work together as a concerted system.

The role that the hierarchy in (2) plays in Blackfoot's direct/inverse system is to rank arguments in a clause with respect to one another. When the higher ranking argument on the hierarchy is the agent<sup>2</sup>, then the clause is direct, and a direct suffix appears on the verb. Conversely, when a lower ranking argument is the agent, the clause is inverse, and an inverse suffix appears on the verb. These suffixes are referred to as THEME markers in Algonquian linguistics, and examples are given in (3).

- (3)  $1^{\text{st}} / 2^{\text{nd}}$  :
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a. <i>Kitááwayakio</i><br>kit-aawayaki- <b>o</b><br>2-hit-1:2<br>'I hit you' | b. <i>Kitááwayakioki</i><br>kit-aawayaki- <b>oki</b><br>2-hit-2:1<br>'You hit me' |
|--|---|
- $1^{\text{st}} > 3^{\text{rd}}$  :
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| c. <i>Nitááwayakiaa</i><br>nit-aawayaki- <b>a</b> -(w)a<br>1-hit-DIR-PROX<br>'I hit him' | d. <i>Nitááwayakioka</i><br>nit-aawayaki- <b>ok</b> -(w)a<br>1-hit-INV-PROX<br>'He hit me' |
|--|--|
- $2^{\text{nd}} > 3^{\text{rd}}$  :
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| e. <i>Kitááwayakiaa</i><br>kit-aawayaki- <b>a</b> -(w)a<br>2-hit-DIR-PROX<br>'You hit him' | f. <i>Kitááwayakioka</i><br>kit-aawayaki- <b>ok</b> -(w)a<br>2-hit-INV-PROX<br>'He hit you' |
|--|---|
- $3^{\text{rd}} \text{ PROX} > 3^{\text{rd}} \text{ OBV}$  :
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| g. <i>Ááwayakiiia</i><br>aawayaki- <b>(y)ii</b> -(w)a<br>hit-DIR-PROX<br>'He hit her' | h. <i>Otááwayakioka</i><br>ot-aawayaki- <b>ok</b> -(w)a<br>OBV-hit-INV-PROX<br>'She hit him' |
|---|--|

Distinguishing the examples on the left hand side from those on the right are the direct and inverse theme markers. Considering first examples (3a/b), these examples are identical in form, with the exception of a suffix that indicates the direction of action of the verb. In (3a), the suffix *-o* indicates that a first person is acting on a second person, and in (3b), the suffix *-oki* indicates that a second person is acting on a first person. Similarly, in examples (3c/d) and (3e/f), the direction of the verb is indicated by the direct and

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the term AGENT will be used to refer to the external argument of transitive and unergative clauses. Within the minimalist framework, it is assumed that this is the argument that is merged in Spec, vP.

inverse theme markers. In (3c) and (3e), the direct theme marker *-a* indicates that a higher-ranking first or second person is acting on a lower-ranking third person, yielding a meaning of ‘I/you hit him.’ Conversely, in (3d) and (3f), the inverse theme marker *-ok* indicates that a lower-ranking third person is acting on a higher-ranking first or second person. Finally, in examples (3g/h), a direct theme suffix *-yii* is used when a proximate third person acts on an obviative one, and an inverse suffix *-ok* is used when an obviative third person acts on a proximate one. Additionally, in (3h), the prefix *ot-* is employed to indicate that an obviative argument is the agent.

The paradigm in (3) demonstrates Blackfoot’s critical reliance on a discourse-based animacy hierarchy for the mapping of arguments to thematic roles. Obviation contrasts are thought to be directly encoded into this hierarchy, with proximate arguments ranking above obviative ones. However, in §2, I argue that the relevant distinction for the ranking of third persons in the direct/inverse hierarchy is not one of obviation.

## 2. Counterexamples to the Hierarchy: Distinguishing Obviation from Direct/Inverse

Although obviation and direct/inverse are typically assumed to mark the same type of discourse prominence, a closer investigation of Blackfoot’s animacy system reveals that obviation and direct/inverse are in fact distinct systems. In this section, I demonstrate that the relevant distinction for the ranking of third persons in the direct/inverse hierarchy is not one of obviation, but is one of sentience. A revised version of Blackfoot’s direct/inverse hierarchy is given in (4).

- (4) Direct/Inverse Hierarchy (*Revised*)  
 $1^{\text{st}} / 2^{\text{nd}} > 3^{\text{rd}}_{\text{SENT}} > 3^{\text{rd}}_{\text{NON-SENT}}$

The difference between the traditional hierarchy in (2) and the proposed hierarchy in (4) is that in (4), the ranking of third persons is sentient over non-sentient, as opposed to proximate over obviative.

SENTIENCE is a term referring to rationality or consciousness, or the ability to sense, perceive, and respond (Hanson 2003). Sentient referents form a natural class including anything to which thoughts or emotions can be ascribed. This would include human beings (but perhaps not infants), deities, and some, but not all, animals. For instance, domesticated animals, such as horses or dogs, may be thought of having thoughts or emotions, and can therefore be considered sentient. Amoebas or insects, on the other hand, are not typically conceived of as sentient.

Sentience is similar to, but is fact distinct from, grammatical animacy. Grammatical animacy plays an important role in Blackfoot’s grammar, and nouns in Blackfoot are lexically specified as animate or inanimate. The animacy of a particular noun is marked on both the noun phrase and the verb, as in the examples that follow:

- (5) *Nitáákomimmayi aniksi imitááiks*  
 nit-aakomimm-a-yi an-iksi imitaa-iks(i)  
 1-love-DIR(ANIM)-PL DEM-ANIM.PL dog-ANIM.PL  
 ‘I love those dogs’
- (6) *Nitáákomimmo ’pi anistsi niitóyisistsi*  
 nit-aakomimm-o’p-(y)i an-istsi niitoyis-istsi  
 1-love-DIR(INAN)-PL DEM-INAN.PL tipi-INAN.PL  
 ‘I love those tipis’

In (5), the noun *imitaa* ‘dog’ is animate, and the animacy of this argument is marked on the verb by means of a direct theme marker *-a*. This particular direct suffix is used only with animate nouns. Similarly, the plural marker *-iksi*, which appears on both the demonstrative determiner and on the head noun, is employed only with animate nouns. In contrast, the noun *niitoyi* ‘tipi’ in (6) is inanimate. A distinct direct theme marker *-o’p* appears on the verb to reflect the (in)animacy of this noun, and a distinct plural marker *-istsi* also appears on the demonstrative and the noun.

Importantly, sentience and animacy need not overlap, and in Blackfoot, a small class of nouns are grammatically animate, yet semantically non-sentient. Representative examples are given in (7).

- (7) *áto'ahsim* 'sock'  
*isttoán* 'knife'  
*pokón* 'ball'  
*po'táá'tsis* 'stove'

The nouns in (7) are grammatically animate, and they trigger animate concord and animate agreement. However, these nouns cannot generally be thought of as sentient. These types of nouns form their own class, distinct from sentient animate nouns and non-sentient inanimate nouns. Each of these three classes has its own unique clustering of properties in the Blackfoot grammar.

With respect to the proximate/obviative distinction, although inanimate nouns are always obviative, animate nouns (whether sentient or non-sentient) may be proximate. An example of a non-sentient animate noun being marked as proximate is given below:

- (8) *Amo po'táá'tsisa iki ksiistóyi*  
 amo po'taa'tsis-(w)a iki ksiistoyi  
 DEM stove-PROX COP hot  
 'The stove is hot'

In (8), the non-sentient animate noun *po'táá'tsis* 'stove' is marked with the proximate suffix *-wa*. This indicates that what is relevant for inclusion in the proximate category is grammatical animacy, and not sentience.

However, the opposite is true with respect to agentivity. In Blackfoot, only sentient nouns may appear as agents. Non-sentient nouns (whether animate or inanimate) may not be agentive. In a context where a language like English would permit a non-sentient noun (such as *knife* or *stove*) to be agentive, Blackfoot employs what is referred to as the 'unspecified-subject' construction (Frantz 1976; 1991). An example is given in (9).

- (9) *Amo isttoána iksikisálikin iih'táístini'pa ani i'ksisakoyi*  
 amo isttoan-(w)a ik-sikisaiikín iih't-a-iístini-(o)'p-(w)a an-(y)i i'ksisako-yi  
 DEM knife-PROX COP-sharp MEANS-DUR-cut-UNSPEC-PROX DEM-OBV meat-OBV  
 'The knife is sharp; someone cut the meat with it'

In (9), the non-sentient argument *amo isttoána* 'the knife' is not the logical subject, or the agent. Instead, the agent is an unspecified person, as indicated by the theme suffix *-o'p* (glossed as UNSPEC). This suffix is employed whenever an unspecified person acts on an inanimate object.<sup>3</sup> The inanimate argument, acting as the direct object, is *ani i'ksisakoyi* 'the meat.' The non-sentient animate argument, *amo isttoána* 'the knife' is treated as an adjunct, as indicated by the *iih't-* 'means' prefix on the matrix verb. Thus, this sentence does not yield an interpretation of 'the knife cut meat,' but rather an interpretation of 'Someone (unspecified) cut the meat by means of the knife.' Non-sentient nouns, like *isttoán* 'knife' cannot be agentive in Blackfoot.

To summarize, there are three distinct classes of nouns in Blackfoot: sentient animate, non-sentient animate, and non-sentient inanimate. These three classes of nouns have differing grammatical properties, as demonstrated above and summarized in the table in (10).

(10) Three Types of Nouns in Blackfoot

	Sentient Animate	Non-Sentient Animate	Non-Sentient Inanimate
Potential Proximate	✓	✓	✗
Potential Agent	✓	✗	✗

<sup>3</sup> In fact, the range of *-o'p* is broader than indicated here. This suffix is used for local (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or inclusive) persons acting on inanimate objects, as in (6) above. In Blackfoot, like other Algonquian languages, inclusive *we* forms are used whenever the referent is unspecified, not unlike the use of French *on*.

As can be seen from the table in (10), in addition to the basic animate/inanimate distinction, a third class of nouns, non-sentient animate nouns, has its own distinct clustering of properties in the Blackfoot grammar. The non-sentient animate class is the ideal testing ground for determining the ranking of third persons in the direct/inverse hierarchy. Because it is much smaller than the class of sentient animate nouns, proximate DPs are most often sentient. What this means, then, is that in most contexts, the ranking of third person proximate over third person obviative is indistinguishable from the ranking of third person sentient over third person non-sentient. In other words, in most contexts, the underlying ranking cannot be determined. However, mismatches between obviation and sentience are possible with non-sentient animate nouns. Because non-sentient animate nouns may be proximate but not agentive, a possible Blackfoot sentence may consist of a sentient obviative DP acting on a non-sentient proximate DP. Importantly, the non-sentient proximate DP must be grammatically animate. The question is which theme marker (direct or inverse) is employed in this context?

Recall from §1 that direct theme marking appears when the agent is the higher-ranking argument and inverse theme marking appears when the agent is the lower-ranking argument. Based on this, two hypotheses can be formulated, on the basis of the two direct/inverse hierarchies that have been proposed.

The first hypothesis is that, if the ranking of third persons is proximate over obviative, as is typically assumed, then when a sentient obviative DP acts on a non-sentient proximate DP, inverse theme marking is expected to appear, because the agent is the lower-ranking obviative DP.

However, if the ranking of third persons is sentient over non-sentient, as is argued here, then direct theme is predicted, because a higher-ranking sentient DP is the agent.

In fact, the evidence supports the second of these hypotheses. A sentient obviative DP acting on a non-sentient proximate DP yields direct, and not inverse, theme marking. This is shown in (11) below:

- (11) *Ana pokóna ani otáíspaapiksistii máóhksinaa*  
 an-(w)a pokon-(w)a an-(y)i ot-a-(y)iispaapiksist-(y)ii maohksinaa  
 DEM-PROX ball-PROX DEM-OBV OBV-DUR-throw-DIR be.red  
 ‘The ball that he is bouncing is red’

Although the sentence in (11) has been glossed as ‘The ball that he is bouncing is red,’ it does not in fact contain a relative clause. A more accurate translation could be given along the lines of ‘The ball, he is bouncing it, it is red.’ The reason why this is important is to establish that the verb *otáíspaapiksistii* ‘(he) is bouncing (it)’ is actually a matrix verb, and not an embedded, or conjunct<sup>4</sup>, verb. The two arguments of this verb are *ana pokóna* ‘the ball’ and *ani* ‘he.’ The first of these is a non-sentient proximate DP, and here it is the object of the verb. The second, *ani*, is a sentient obviative DP, and it is the subject of the verb. What is particularly important about this example is the verbal morphology. The matrix verb bears the prefix *ot-*, which indicates that an argument (here *ani* ‘he’) is the agent. Crucially, however, the verb bears the direct theme suffix *-yii*, indicating that a higher-ranking third person is acting on a lower one. Thus, although the direction of the verb is obviative acting on proximate, because a sentient DP is acting on a non-sentient, the verb is direct, and not inverse. In other words, what this example demonstrates is that direct/inverse morphology is spelled out on the basis of sentience, and not obviation.

Given that obviation is not directly encoded into the direct/inverse hierarchy, it is clear that obviation and direct/inverse encode different types of discourse prominence. The question is which pragmatic notions do these two mechanisms respectively encode? In §2, it was stated that, in the literature, obviation and direct/inverse have been argued to mark either topic/focus, or point of view, or both. In what follows, I will argue for the third view; both topic/focus and point of view are grammaticalized in Blackfoot. However, my claim differs from the more traditional one by asserting that obviation and direct/inverse each encodes a different pragmatic distinction. In §3, I argue that direct/inverse grammaticalizes point of view, and in §4, I argue that obviation grammaticalizes information structuring, or topic and focus.

<sup>4</sup> Conjunct verbs in Blackfoot, like in other Algonquian languages, show different morphology than matrix verbs, and as such do not always take direct and inverse marking.

### 3. Direct/Inverse is Point of View

The analysis in this section builds on a framework for direct/inverse laid out in Bruening (2001), who looks primarily at Passamaquoddy, a related Algonquian language. Bruening claims that the Algonquian direct/inverse is syntactic, with the highest argument along the direct/inverse hierarchy moving to the Specifier of a functional projection that he calls HP. Under this framework, when the verb is direct, the logical subject, or the agent, moves to the Specifier of HP. When the verb is inverse, the logical object, or the patient, moves to Spec, HP.

Bruening chooses not to specify what the semantic or pragmatic content of HP may be. Here, Bruening's treatment is assumed, but the analysis is extended to suggest that HP, where the highest argument on the direct/inverse hierarchy is realized, is in fact POVP, or Point of View Phrase.

In their seminal work on the linguistic notion of point of view (or *empathy*, in their terms), Kuno and Kaburaki (1977: 628) define point of view as follows:

(12) Point of View

*Speaker's identification with a person who participates in the event/state described in a clause*

Speas and Tenny (2003) propose that the referent whose point of view is represented in a clause is realized in the Specifier position of a Point of View Phrase, or POVP<sup>5</sup>. POVP functions as something of a lens through which the proposition expressed in a clause is evaluated. Spec, POV is occupied by the argument that bears the point of view pragmatic role, i.e. the argument whose referent is evaluating the proposition.

Based on other studies investigating the nature of pragmatic roles (Mitchell 1986; Smith 2002; Stirling 1993), Speas and Tenny identify two fundamental properties of point of view. The first of these is that the referent whose point of view is reflected in a clause is necessarily sentient. Secondly, point of view privileges first over second over third persons. In both of these respects, HP in Blackfoot, where the highest argument on the direct/inverse hierarchy is realized, patterns like POVP.

The requirement that Spec, POVP select only sentient referents is based on the assertion that the concept of point of view is rooted in properties of perception or consciousness, precisely those properties that define sentience. The fact that, in Blackfoot, non-sentient nouns cannot be agentive is straightforwardly accounted for in a POVP framework.

Recall from §2 that an unspecified-subject construction is employed in Blackfoot in contexts where languages like English would permit agentive non-sentient referents:

(13) *Amo isttoána iihstíistini 'pa amo i'ksisakoyi*

amo isttoan-(w)a **iiht-iistini-(o)'p**-(w)a amo i'ksisako-yi  
 DEM knife-PROX **MEANS-cut-UNSPEC-PROX** DEM meat-OBV  
 '(Someone) cut the meat with the knife / \*The knife cut the meat'

In (13), the non-sentient noun *isttoan* 'knife' cannot appear as an agent, but rather, is treated as an adjunct. The fact that non-sentient nouns cannot be agentive can be interpreted as a requirement on transitive clauses in Blackfoot that they must contain at least one sentient argument. By assuming that, in transitive clauses, the highest argument along the direct/inverse hierarchy moves to Spec, POVP, and that Spec, POVP is reserved for sentient referents, it becomes clear as to why transitive clauses require a sentient argument.

Regarding the second property of POVP, here too, HP in Blackfoot patterns like POVP. It is typically assumed that the point of view adopted in a clause is most often that of the speaker, and if not of the speaker, than that of the addressee, as in interrogatives. Finally, if the speaker chooses to adopt neither their own point of view, nor that of the addressee, s/he may adopt the point of view of a third person. In a formal syntactic treatment, this suggests that POVP privileges first over second over third person, and person hierarchy effects are observable for DPs that move to the Specifier of this phrase.

<sup>5</sup> Speas and Tenny (2003) actually refer to this projection as an Evaluative Mood Phrase, or EvalP. Following Ritter and Rosen (2004), I refer to it as POVP.

Blackfoot's direct/inverse hierarchy, as it was presented in (4), is a partial person hierarchy, with local (first and second) persons ranking above third persons. However, the ranking of first person over second person is also observable in the Blackfoot direct/inverse<sup>6</sup>, as reflected in the revised hierarchy in (14).

(14) Blackfoot Direct/Inverse Hierarchy (*Revised*)

1<sup>st</sup> > 2<sup>nd</sup> > 3<sup>rd</sup> SENT > 3<sup>rd</sup> NON-SENT

Evidence supporting the proposed ranking in (14) is found in Blackfoot's inverse paradigm. To illustrate this point, the direct and inverse morphemes for animate nouns are given in the table in (15).

(15) Blackfoot direct and inverse morphemes

Direct		Inverse	
1 : 2	-o	2 : 1	-oki
1, 2 : 3	-a	3 : 1, 2	-ok
3 : 3	-yii	3 : 3	-ok

Focusing only on the direct morphemes in (15), no morphological evidence supports a first-over-second person ranking; the morpheme -o, which is used when a first person acts on a second person, bears no phonological similarity to the other direct morphemes in the table.

However, turning to the inverse morphemes, it is clear that the morpheme used for second person acting on first person, -oki, is strikingly similar in form to the other inverse morphemes in the paradigm. Examples of the inverse morphemes in context are given below:

- (16) a. *Kitááwayakioki*      b. *Kitááwayakioka*  
 kit-aawayaki-oki      kit-aawayaki-ok-(w)a  
 2-hit-INV(2:1)      2-hit-INV-PROX  
 'You hit me'      'He hit you'

The two forms in (16) are similar in form, and in fact, due a regular process of word-final devoicing, these two forms are very nearly identical on the surface. This suggests that the morpheme used for second person acting on first person is indeed an inverse morpheme, and that the ranking of local persons is first over second. In short, then, the full person hierarchy is observed in Blackfoot's direct/inverse, and this is consistent with a POVP analysis.

#### 4. Obviation is Information Structuring

In §2, it was argued that obviation and direct/inverse mark different types of discourse prominence, and §3 demonstrated that direct/inverse marks point of view. In §4, obviation will be shown to mark information structuring, or topic and focus.

Although in some syntactic models of information structuring, topic and focus are clearly distinguished, each projecting distinct phrasal nodes (e.g. Rizzi 1997), in Blackfoot, the line between topic and focus is not particularly clear. Proximate DPs may be either topical or focal, as in the following examples:

(17) *Proximate = Topic* ('given' information)

*Myániwa, ana inoyiiwa ani aakiikoani*

Maryi-wa an-(w)a ino-yii-wa an-(y)i aakiikoan-(y)i

Mary-PROX DEM-PROX see-DIR-PROX DEM-OBV girl-OBV

'Mary, she saw that girl'

<sup>6</sup> The same cannot be said for all Algonquian languages. Déchaine 1999 argues that the direct/inverse hierarchy ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> above 1<sup>st</sup> person in Potawatomi and Plains Cree. However, to my knowledge, no other Algonquian languages besides Blackfoot show transparent morphological similarities between different direct and/or inverse morphemes.

(18) *Proximate = Focus* ('new' information)

*Ama ninaawa annohk ááwayakiwahk ani*

am-(w)a ninaa-wa anno-hk aawayaki-(yi)i-wa-hk an-(y)i

DEM-PROX man-PROX DEM-REL hit-DIR-PROX-REL DEM-OBV

'It was this man who hit him' (...not that other one)

In (17), the proximate argument *Myániwa* 'Mary' is topicalized and in (18), the proximate DP *ama ninaawa* 'this man' is contrastively focused. What this demonstrates is that proximate forms can be used to refer to either topical or focal constituents. For this reason, it is unclear whether topic and focus are realized under distinct phrasal projections or not in Blackfoot. In this paper, I refer to the CP-layer projection in which topic and/or focus are realized as InfoP. My claim regarding obviation in Blackfoot is that proximate DPs are realized in the Specifier position of InfoP. Two characteristics of proximate arguments are consistent with this analysis. First, proximate DPs are typically realized at the left periphery of the clause, and second, proximate DPs trigger cross-clausal agreement.

Regarding first the tendency for proximate arguments to be realized at the left edge, Blackfoot's word order is relatively free, and the order of subjects and objects with respect to the verb is largely unrestricted. However, one restriction on word order is that proximate DPs precede obviative DPs, as shown below:

(19) *Ama ninaawa iistinim ani i'ksisakoyi* (**PROX – V – OBV**)

am-(w)a ninaa-wa iistini-m an-(y)i i'ksisako-yi

DEM-PROX man-PROX cut-DIR DEM-OBV meat-OBV

'The man cut the meat'

(20) *\*Ani i'ksisakoyi iistinim ama ninaawa* (**\*OBV – V – PROX**)

an-(y)i i'ksisako-yi iistini-m am-(w)a ninaa-wa

DEM-OBV meat-OBV cut-DIR DEM-PROX man-PROX

'The man cut the meat / The meat was cut by the man'

The examples in (19) and (20) demonstrate not only the requirement that proximate DPs precede obviative DPs, but also their tendency to appear preverbally, at the left edge of the clause. This tendency is consistent with an analysis that places proximate DPs in the Specifier of a topic/focus phrase, or InfoP.

Also consistent with an InfoP analysis of obviation is the fact that proximate DPs in Blackfoot are targeted for Cross-Clause Agreement, or CCA. CCA is a well-documented phenomenon in Algonquian linguistics, and has been compared to raising or ECM-type constructions in other languages (Branigan and MacKenzie 2002; Bruening 2001; Frantz 1978). In CCA constructions, the matrix verb checks an embedded subject or object in a complement clause. CCA is optional and results in topicalization of the embedded argument (Branigan and MacKenzie 2002; Bruening 2001; Dahlstrom 1986).

With respect to the proximate/obviative distinction, only proximate, but not obviative DPs, may trigger CCA. This is demonstrated in (21) and (22).

(21) *Nitsiksstaatawa ana mááhksinohsi iniksi imitááiks*

nit-iksstaat-a-wa an-(w)a maahk-ino-hsi in-iksi imitaa-iks

1-want-TA-DIR-PROX DEM-PROX might-see-CONJ DEM-PL dog-PL

'I want him to see the dogs'

(22) *\*Nitsiksstaatayi ana mááhksinohsi iniksi imitááiks*

nit-iksstaat-a-yi an-(w)a maahk-ino-hsi in-iksi imitaa-iks

1-want-TA-DIR-PL DEM-PROX might-see-CONJ DEM-PL dog-PL

'I want him to see the dogs'

In (21), the proximate subject of the embedded clause, *ana* 'him,' triggers CCA, as evidenced by the transitive form of the matrix verb, as well as the direct theme marker, and proximate agreement marker. Essentially, in this sentence, the proximate argument has "raised" out of its base position to a topic position

in the embedded clause. In (22), it is the obviative object of the embedded clause, *iniksi imitááiks* ‘the dogs,’ that triggers CCA, as evidenced by the plural agreement marker on the matrix verb. This sentence is ungrammatical, demonstrating that obviative DPs cannot trigger CCA if a proximate argument is also present in the embedded clause. The fact that proximate, but not obviative, DPs are targeted for CCA is consistent with an analysis that places proximate DPs in the Specifier of a topic or focus phrase, or InfoP.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has argued that obviation and direct/inverse in Blackfoot, although typically conceived of a single concerted system, in fact grammaticalize different types of discourse prominence. Direct/inverse was demonstrated to grammaticalize the pragmatic notion of point of view, and obviation was demonstrated to grammaticalize topic and focus. From a typological perspective, the fact that obviation and direct/inverse are distinct suggests that what has been viewed as an apparent case of double-marking (Nichols 1986) is in fact not double marking at all, but is indeed two distinct mechanisms.

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