Resolving Hierarchy Conflict:
Local Obviation in Blackfoot[*]

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Algonquian languages, including Blackfoot, are renowned for their failure to directly follow the Universal Animacy Hierarchy, which privileges first person over second person. In at least certain aspects of the Blackfoot grammar, it is typically assumed that second person is privileged over first. Even more surprising is that this apparent [2>1] hierarchy is not the sole one operative within this language. Rather, elsewhere within the grammar, the Universal Animacy Hierarchy appears to be obeyed, with the first person being privileged over the second. In this paper we argue that this apparent hierarchy conflict in Blackfoot can be resolved by reconsidering the nature of person marking and the role of obviation in the verbal complex. Specifically, we propose extensions to Harley and Ritter's (2002) morphosyntactic feature geometry to include obviation. This is represented within a Stage node which, along with Participant, is a dependent of Sentience. Further to this, we argue that Proximate and Obviative features are not limited to non-local referents as is typically assumed. Rather, local persons can also express obviation contrasts. We treat the Blackfoot person prefixes as exemplifying precisely such specification, in contrast with previous proposals which identify them as first and second persons. Recognizing these prefixes as participating in the obviation system provides insight into seemingly problematic phenomena within Blackfoot's verbal morphology. Crucially, our account facilitates a resolution of the apparent hierarchy conflicts present in other analyses and reaffirms the centrality of the Universal Animacy Hierarchy in Blackfoot.

1. Introduction

It has been widely proposed that, cross-linguistically, animacy is a key determinant in accounting for various morphological and syntactic phenomena. These effects are typically enunciated within the framework of an Animacy Hierarchy, which not only distinguishes animate from inanimate, but also identifies degrees of animacy amongst discourse participants. First person is thus treated as "more animate" than second person, which, in turn, is deemed "more animate" than third person. Many assume that this hierarchy, given in (1), is universal (Chiat 1986, Croft 1990, Silverstein 1976, Zwicky 1977).

(1)   Universal Animacy Hierarchy
        1st person > 2nd person > 3rd person animate > 3rd person inanimate

This being said, Algonquian languages are renowned for their failure to directly follow this hierarchy as it pertains to the local persons. Instead, in at least certain aspects their grammars, languages within this family are typically assumed to privilege the second person over the first. Even more surprising is that this apparent [2>1] hierarchy is not the sole one operative within these languages. Rather, elsewhere in these same Algonquian grammars, the Universal Animacy Hierarchy appears to be obeyed, with the first person being privileged over the second. Blackfoot is one such language in which both hierarchies appear to play an important role in determining person and number, and theme-marking in the verbal complex. This raises a number of important questions about the nature of person marking in these languages as well as about the role of the Universal Animacy Hierarchy more generally.

In this paper we address the problem of the existence of two conflicting hierarchies within Blackfoot verbal morphology. Specifically, we propose that what appear to be the effects of two distinct hierarchies governing person marking are, in fact, the results of the single Universal Animacy Hierarchy acting in concert with an obviation system whose effects extend beyond what has previously been proposed. In particular, we argue that the local person prefixes in Blackfoot are specified for obviation status instead of for speech act participant features. Our proposal makes use of the morphosyntactic feature geometry proposed by Harley and Ritter (2002), and extends their framework to include obviation.

Section 2 provides basic background on person and number morphology in Blackfoot, including person and number marking and direct / inverse marking. Section 3 presents our basic proposal and Section 4 demonstrates how it is able provide insights into facts of Blackfoot person and number morphology which have been problematic for previous approaches, including the issue of hierarchy conflict and the morphological characteristics of inclusives. Section 5 summarizes our arguments and speculates on the implications of this proposal for other Algonquian languages.

2. Person and Number in Blackfoot

Blackfoot is an Algonquian language spoken in southern Alberta and in northern Montana. Four primary dialects exist: Siksiká, Kainai (Blood), Aapátohsipikani (North Piikani), and Aamsskáápipikani (South Piikani) (Frantz 2004). The analysis presented in this paper is based on fieldwork conducted on the Siksiká dialect.[1]

In this section we describe the basic person and number marking in Blackfoot. In Section 2.1 the morphological means of signaling local persons (first and second) in the verbal complex is discussed, and in Section 2.2 focus is directed toward the obviation system observed in non-local persons. Section 2.3, for its part, introduces the direct / inverse system as it is implemented in Blackfoot. Finally, in Section 2.4, the interaction between these various systems is explicated.

2.1 Local Persons

The most basic marking of local persons in the Blackfoot verbal complex comes in the form of the prefixes[2] *n(it)-* and *k(it)-*, which are associated with first and second persons, respectively. Such marking with intransitive verbs is straightforward, as illustrated in (2) and (3).[3]

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[1] Our grammatical description differs in certain respects from that presented by Frantz (1991); some of this may be due to dialectal differences between Siksiká and the other dialects upon which Frantz primarily bases his description.

[2] Déchaine (1999) maintains that the person prefixes are, in fact, proclitics. This point, while likely justified, is not crucial to our argument; we will therefore use the term 'prefix,' as does Frantz (1991).

[3] Unless otherwise indicated, all examples used in this paper were collected by the authors during fieldwork sessions with our consultant Rachel Ermineskin. Abbreviations used in this paper: 1=first person, 2=second person, 3=third person, ANIM=animate, INAN=inanimate, PROX=proximate, OBV=obviative, LOC=local, NLOC=non-local, PL=plural, SG=singular, INCL=inclusive, EXCL=exclusive, DIR=direct, INV=inverse, DUR=durative, DEI=deictic, INS=invisible

(2)   a.   nitsipááwani

            nit-ipááwani

            1-flew

            'I flew'

       b.   nitsipááwanihpinaan

            nit-ipááwani-hpinaan

            1-flew-1PL.EXCL

            'We (excl.) flew'

(3)   a.   kitsipááwani

            kit-ipááwani

            2-flew

            'You (sg) flew'

       b.   kitohkanaipááwanihpoowawa

            kit-ohkana-ipááwani-hpoowawa

            2-all-flew-2PL

            'You (pl) all flew'

As is evident from these examples, *nit-* and *kit-* mark person, not number. Thus, the prefixes are employed regardless of whether the relevant argument is singular, as in (2a) and (3a), or plural, as in (2b) or (3b).

        Crucially, these two prefixes occupy the same morphological position within the verbal complex, making it impossible for *nit-* and *kit-* to appear together. This proves relevant in the case of transitive verbs that reference both first and second persons. In such cases, despite the presence of a first person argument, only the second person *kit-* appears, again regardless of number.[4]

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[4] The direct/inverse system, which maps arguments to thematic roles, is discussed in Section 2.3.

(4)   a.   kitsiinoo

        kit-iino-o

        2-saw-DIR

        'I saw you(sg)'

     b.   kitsiinoki

        kit-iino-oki

        2-saw-INV

        'You saw me'

As is evident in (4), the hierarchy within the person prefix system is one where second person takes precedence over first. This is formalized in (5).

(5)   Local Person Hierarchy in Blackfoot Prefixes

     2nd person > 1st person

Even where a first person prefix could potentially appear, it is precluded from so doing when a second person argument is present. Within this prefix slot, then, the second person outranks the first person.

     Local person is also encoded on the number suffixes *–(hp)inaan* and *–(hp)oowawa* as seen in examples (2b) and (3b) above. As is evident from this data, *-(hp)inaan* encodes first person as well as plural number and *–(hp)oowawa* encodes second person as well as plural. As in the case of the person prefixes, these two suffixes cannot co-occur. Interestingly, unlike the case of the prefixes where second person outranks first, within the number suffixes the first person *–(hp)inaan* takes precedence over the second person *–(hp)oowawa*. This is evidenced in the following examples.

(6)   a.   nistónaan kitohkanáyohtohpinaan

        nistónaan kit-ohkana-á-yohto-o-hpinaan

        1EXCL   2-all-DUR-heard-DIR-1PL.EXCL

        'We (excl.) heard you (pl.) all'

     b.   kistówawa kitohkanáyohtokihpinaan

            kistówawa kit-ohkana-á-yohto-oki-hpinaan

            2PL   2-all-DUR-heard-INV-1PL.EXCL

            'You (pl.) all heard us (excl.)'

This ranking of first person plural marking above second person plural marking has the effect, in some cases, of leading to ambiguity with respect to whether the second person argument is singular or plural. Thus, in a sentence like (6a), where there is no independent second person pronoun, the number of the second person argument would be obscured were it not for the quantifier *ohkana* 'all'. The person hierarchy for these suffixes follows that in (7), the same basic configuration held to be universal.

(7)   Local Person Hierarchy in Blackfoot Person / Number Suffixes

       1st person > 2nd person

That the conflicting hierarchies in (5) and (7), both of which govern person-marking affixes, are operative within the verb complex of a single language is surprising and presents a challenge to the universality of the Animacy Hierarchy. In Section 3, we return to this issue and propose a solution to this apparent conflict. First, however, we turn to the verbal morphology associated with the marking of non-local persons.

2.2 Obviation in Non-Local Persons

      Blackfoot, in parallel to other Algonquian languages, distinguishes between what has been referred to as proximate and obviative, or third and fourth, non-local persons. The proximate designation is reserved for a single non-local animate argument within a discourse span (consisting minimally of a single clause) whose reference is "closer to the focus of interest" (Anderson and Keenan 1985: 262). In this same discourse span, all other non-local animates are marked as obviative. The choice to designate a particular argument as proximate or obviative is dependent upon a number of both linguistic and extralinguistic factors (cf. Aissen 1997).

In Blackfoot, the designated proximate argument is indicated by the suffix *–wa*, which appears on the noun or pronoun, and the demonstrative determiner. On the other hand, obviative arguments are marked with the suffix *–yi,* also on the noun or pronoun and determiner.

(8)   amá náíínoyii ami ááattsistayi

am-wa   ná-iino-yii   am-yi   ááattsista-yi

DEI-PROX DEI-saw-DIR   DEI-OBV rabbit-OBV

'He (prox) saw the rabbit (obv)'

In (8) *he* is marked with the proximate *–wa* on the independent pronoun. The obviative argument *the rabbit* is marked with the suffix *–yi* on the determiner, and on the noun itself.

Blackfoot's obviation system has important implications for the grammar. This is reflected not only in the nominal morphology, but also in the direct/inverse system of the language, which is discussed in the following section.

2.3 Direct / Inverse System

It has been widely argued that not all languages treat structural subjects and objects as syntactic primitives in the same way that languages like English do (Anderson 1997, Ritter and Rosen 2000). Rather, for some languages the more relevant distinction is one of animacy or agentivity. This is arguably the case in Blackfoot, requiring the use of alternative means of mapping thematic roles to the various arguments within a given clause. As in other Algonquian languages, this mapping is achieved by way of what is traditionally referred to as direct and inverse theme marking. Theme marking in Blackfoot is suffixal, generally appearing immediately after the verb stem.

Direct theme maps the most agentive argument in a clause to that which is the most animate. In Blackfoot, the direct theme marker selected is dependent upon the specific relationship between the relevant arguments.[5] Thus, when both arguments in a clause are local

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[5] Which arguments are deemed the relevant ones for the selection of direct / inverse theme markers is actually more complex than is portrayed in this paper. In particular, where more than two arguments are involved, it is typically the 'subject' and the 'indirect object' which are considered the relevant arguments for the purpose of the direct / inverse system (cf. Hardy 1989). Within this paper we will be concerned primarily with basic monotransitive verbs, but expect that more complex clauses could be explained within the framework we provide without significant adjustments.

persons, and the first person is the agent, the direct theme marker employed is *–o*. This is illustrated in (9).[6]

(9)   a.   kitáyohtoo

          kit-á-yohto-o

          2-DUR-heard-DIR.LOC

          'I heard you'

      b.   nistónaan kitohkanaáyohtoohpinaan

          nistónaan   kit-ohkana-á-yohto-o-hpinaan

          1PL.EXCL   2-all-DUR-heard-DIR.LOC-1PL.EXCL

          'We (excl) heard you (pl)'

As is evident from the examples above, the *–o* theme suffix is used with first person on second person interactions where the first person is the agent, regardless of number.

     In contrast, when a local person (either first or second) acts on a non-local animate person, direct theme is indicated by the suffix *–a*. This is illustrated below.

(10) a.   nistó nitóhtowa (a)na kakkoowáhk

          nistó nit-yohto-a-wa   an-wa   kakkoo-wá-hk

          1SG   1-heard-DIR-PROX DEI-PROX pigeon-PROX-INS

          'I heard the pigeon'

      b.   kitohtowa (a)na

          kit-yohto-a-wa   an-wa

          2-heard-DIR-PROX DEI-PROX

          'You heard him'

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[6] The presence of this morpheme is difficult to detect in the verbs considered here, precisely because the verb stems themselves end with the segment /o/. Nonetheless, it is clear that the direct suffix *–o* is present in example (9a) based on the observation that the final segment does not undergo the regular process of word-final sonorant devoicing.

In (10a), we see a first person acting on a third person animate, and in (10b), a second person acting on third person animate. In both cases, the suffix *–a* marks the direct theme.

In contrast, when both arguments are non-local, the suffix *–yii* is used:

(11)   ostóyi nááyohtoyiiwa (a)ní kakkóóyi

ostoyi ná-á-yohto-yii-wa   an-yi   kakkoo-yi

3SG   DEI-DUR-heard-DIR.NLOC-PROX DEI-OBV pigeon-OBV

'He heard the pigeon'

In (11), a third person proximate (animate) argument *he* is acting on a third person obviative argument *the pigeon*. This interaction is marked with the direct theme suffix *–yii*.

Where there is an inanimate argument, however, a different direct theme marker is required. Thus, when first or second persons act on an inanimate argument, the direct theme marker -*'p* is employed:[7]

(12)   a.   nitsísstsinni'p ani owáíyi

nit-ísstsinni-'p an-yi   owai-yi

1-cut-DIR.INAN DEI-OBV egg-OBV

'I cut the egg'

     b.   kitohkanáííini'poowawa

kit-ohkana-iini-'p-oowawa

2-all-see-DIR.INAN-2PL

'You (pl) all saw it (inan)'

Analogously, interactions between non-local persons only, where an animate third person acts on an inanimate, are marked with the theme suffix *–m*, as in the example below.

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[7] Typically, an inanimate form of the verb stem will also be employed in Blackfoot whenever an inanimate argument is involved. The precise details behind the selection of such verb stems, however, are beyond the scope of the current paper.

(13)   náíínima ani owáíyi

na-iini-m-(w)a   an-yi   owai-yi

DEI-see-DIR.INAN-PROX DEI-OBV egg-OBV

'He saw the egg'

    The direct theme suffixes outlined thus far directly map the most animate argument to the agent role. In a parallel manner, inverse theme suffixes map the less animate argument to the agent role. Blackfoot employs two such inverse suffixes. The first of these is restricted to purely local interactions, in which a second person acts on a first person, as seen in (14):

(14)   a.   kitsiinooki

        kit-iino-oki

        2-see-INV.LOC

        'You saw me'

     b.   kistówawa kitohkanáyohtookihpinaan

        kistówawa kit-ohkana-yohto-oki-hpinaan

        2PL   2-all-heard-INV.LOC-1PL.EXCL

        'You (pl) all heard us (excl)'

In (14a), the inverse marker *–oki* indicates that the second person argument (marked by *kit-*) is acting upon a more animate argument, namely a first person. In other words, the only possible interpretation, given the absence of number marking, is that given in the gloss; the use of the inverse suffix *–oki* guarantees that this sentence can only refer to a situation in which a second person acts on a first person. The presence of a first person argument in such constructions is particularly clear in (14b), where the first person plural is overtly marked by the suffix *–hpinaan*.

    The second inverse suffix employed in Blackfoot is the morphologically related *–ok*. This suffix is the more general of the two, and is employed in all other circumstances where inverse marking is required.

(15) a. ostóyi nitóhtok

ostoyi nit-yohto-ok

3SG 1-heard-INV

'He heard me'

b. ostóyi kitáyohtok

ostóyi kit-á-yohto-ok

3SG 2-DUR-heard-INV

'He heard you'

The example in (15a) illustrates that *–ok* is used when a third person argument acts on a first person argument, and (15b) demonstrates that this same suffix is used when a third person acts on a second person. The theme marker *–ok* is also used when an obviative third person acts on a proximate third person (Frantz 1991: 56).

The direct / inverse system of Blackfoot thus utilizes four direct theme markers and two inverse theme markers. These are summarized in the following table.

(16)	Type of Interaction	Direct		Inverse	
	Local	1 / 2	*-o*	2 / 1	*-oki*
	Local / Non-Local Animate	1, 2 / 3ANIM	*-a*	3ANIM / 1, 2	*-ok*
	Non-Local Animate	3PROX / 3OBV	*-yii*	3OBV / 3PROX	*-ok*
	Local / Inanimate	1, 2 / 3INAN	*-'p*	3INAN / 1, 2	--[8]
	Non-Local Animate / Inanimate	3ANIM / 3INAN	*-m*	3INAN / 3ANIM	--

Collectively, the data in this section point to a hierarchy such as that in (17) below for direct / inverse theme marking.

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[8] Interactions wherein an inanimate argument acts on an animate argument (or, indeed, another inanimate) are of questionable grammatical status in Blackfoot, as in other Algonquian languages (see, for example, Bruening 2001 on Passamaquoddy).

(17)   Blackfoot Hierarchy for Direct / Inverse Marking

1st person > 2nd person > 3rd person anim prox > 3rd person anim obv > 3rd person inan

This hierarchy clearly conforms to the Universal Animacy Hierarchy, providing further evidence for its importance in Blackfoot.

2.4 Summary

This section has summarized the relevant components of person and number marking in the Blackfoot verbal complex. As has been illustrated, two conflicting hierarchies operate within this system. The first of these is the typologically surprising hierarchy in which second person is ranked higher than first person. This hierarchy governs the distribution of the person prefixes *nit-* and *kit-*. The second hierarchy ranks first person above second person, and governs both person / number suffixation, and the direct / inverse system. Both hierarchies rank local persons above non-local, and proximate third persons above obviative third persons and inanimates. The alignment of the two hierarchies is depicted in (18).

(18)   person prefixes: | 2   >   1 | >   3PROX   >   3OBV
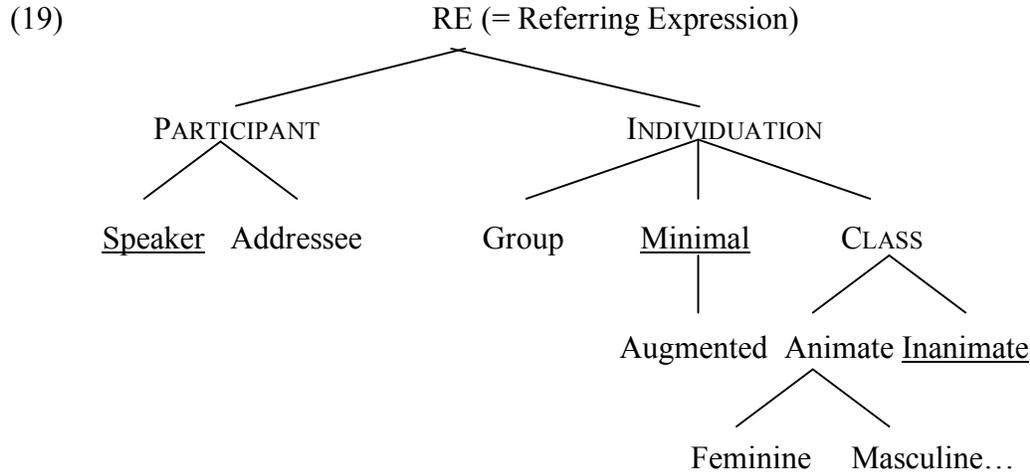   number & inverse suffixes: | 1   >   2 | >   3PROX   >   3OBV

In the next section, we present an analysis that aims to unify this apparent contradiction and to demonstrate that the clashing hierarchies illustrated in (18) are the effect of the single Universal Animacy Hierarchy in combination with an elaborated obviation system.

3. The Structure of Obviation and its Role within the Local Persons

3.1 The Framework

Following Harley and Ritter (2002), we assume that pronoun and agreement systems are characterized by a universal set of morphosyntactic features that are systematically organized. In particular, we adopt the feature-geometric representation proposed in Harley and Ritter (2002: 486) and replicated in (19).

(19)   RE (= Referring Expression)

PARTICIPANT   INDIVIDUATION

Speaker Addressee   Group   Minimal   CLASS
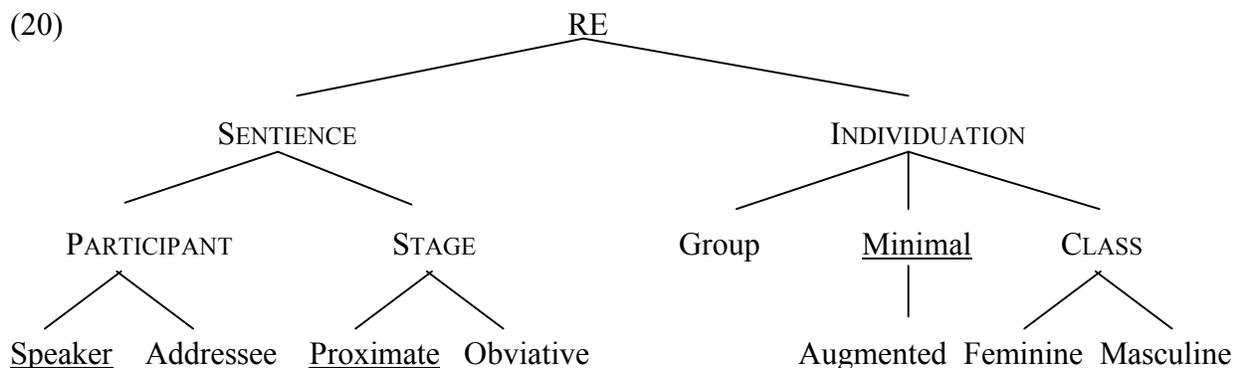
Augmented Animate Inanimate

Feminine   Masculine…

A crucial division in this geometry is between the Participant and Individuation nodes, which mirror a cognitive distinction between those elements which are discourse dependent (Participant) and those, such as number and grammatical class, which are fixed within the discourse (Individuation). Drawing on this distinction, Harley and Ritter (2002), represent local persons under the Participant node, with Speaker for first person, and Addressee for second person. Non-local persons, on the other hand, are represented exclusively under the Individuation node, by the absence of a Participant node. This fundamental distinction builds on the notion that local person reference is dependent on changing discourse roles, whereas non-local reference is generally fixed (cf. Benveniste 1971; Forchheimer 1953; Jakobson 1971).

One type of distinction not addressed by Harley and Ritter (2002) is that of obviation, the morphology of which is described for Blackfoot in Section 2.2. Notably, obviation is not only found in Algonquian languages; rather its effects are attested in languages as diverse as Tzotzil (Mayan), Chamorro (Austronesian), and Inuktitut (Eskimo-Aleut) (Aissen 1997, Hewson 1991). In each case, the assignment of proximate or obviative status to animate non-local persons is in part determined by discourse considerations (cf. Oshima 2004, Russell 1996). Despite the fact that these distinctions are typically made for third persons, then, obviation clearly cannot be structurally represented beneath the Individuation node, which is reserved for elements that are fixed in the discourse.

Building on the work of Hanson (2003), who posits the need for a Sentience feature within the feature geometry, we therefore suggest that obviation, as well as Participant, is represented under a Sentience node. This captures the fact that the assignment of proximate or

obviative status to non-local persons is restricted to animate referents. The structure we thus propose is illustrated in (20).

(20)

```
                                      RE
                    ┌──────────────────┴──────────────────┐
               SENTIENCE                              INDIVIDUATION
            ┌──────┴──────┐                     ┌──────────┼──────────┐
      PARTICIPANT       STAGE                 Group     Minimal      CLASS
        ┌──┴──┐        ┌──┴──┐                            │        ┌──┴──┐
    Speaker Addressee Proximate Obviative            Augmented Feminine Masculine
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This expands upon Harley and Ritter's (2002) basic structure by including a Sentience node under which the Participant and Stage nodes fall. Stage[9], for its part, dominates Proximate and Obviative features.

Citing cross-linguistic evidence from the acquisition of pronouns, Harley and Ritter (2002) further postulate default interpretations for bare nodes in their geometry. For example, Speaker is the default interpretation of the Participant node (defaults are underlined in the geometry). Based on the simple observation that within a discourse span one of any third person animate arguments must be designated as proximate, as well as the fact that, in the typical case, an argument can be designed as obviative only if a proximate argument is also identified, we will assume that Proximate is unmarked in relation to Obviative (cf. Aissen 1997, Russell 1996). As such, we further assume that Proximate is the default interpretation of the Stage node.

This being said, inanimate arguments in Blackfoot are marked with the obviative suffix *–yi*, but never with the proximate suffix *–wa*. The absence of the proximate suffix is predicted under the approach adopted here, given that the lack of Sentience node for inanimates distinguishes them from animate non-local arguments. As such, inanimates do not have access to the default Proximate interpretation of the Sentience node. The appearance of the *–yi* with inanimates appears to reflect a general constraint within the language which precludes inanimate
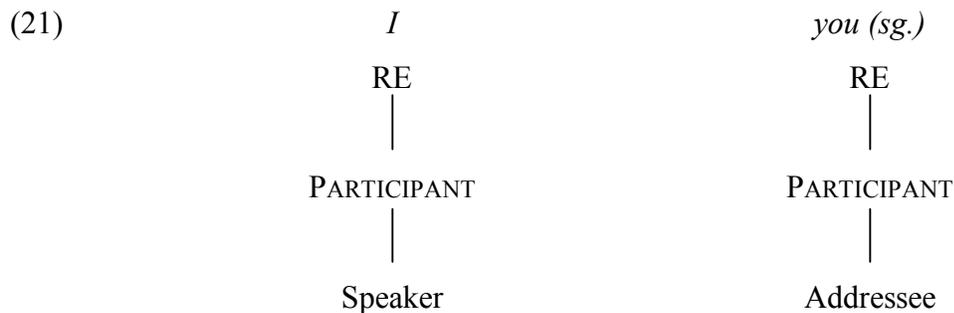
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[9] The term Stage captures the idea that choice amongst actors in a discourse for assignment of proximate or obviative status is analogous to spotlighting an individual in a stage production.

arguments from being the focus of discourse attention. The optional selection of obviative *–yi*, then, is likely driven by semantic factors.

By expanding the Harley and Ritter (2002) geometry to include a Stage node, we are able to capture the properties of obviation observed in the third person animates of languages such as Blackfoot. As we will demonstrate in the next section, the activation of the Stage node also enables us to account for certain idiosyncratic properties of the Blackfoot person prefixes.

3.2 Featural Representations of *nit-* and *kit-*

In a language like English, first and second persons are represented solely through the Participant node (Harley and Ritter 2002).

(21)　　　　　　　　　　*I*　　　　　　　　　　　　*you (sg.)*

　　　　　　　　　　RE　　　　　　　　　　　　　RE
　　　　　　　　　　|　　　　　　　　　　　　　　|

　　　　　　　　PARTICIPANT　　　　　　　　PARTICIPANT
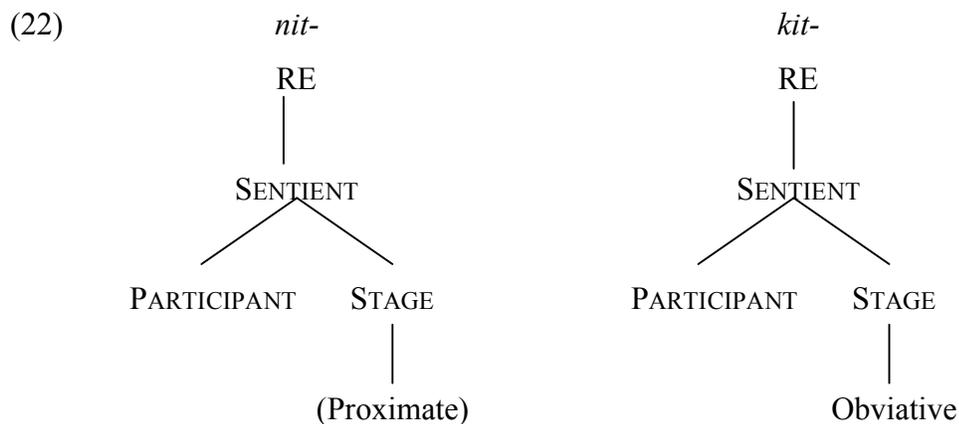　　　　　　　　　　|　　　　　　　　　　　　　　|

　　　　　　　　Speaker　　　　　　　　　　Addressee

In this section we propose that Blackfoot person prefixes are fundamentally different in their structure than the English personal pronouns in (21) and instead make use of the Stage node.

Given Blackfoot's obviation system, the Stage node is clearly activated in this language. Furthermore, there is no inherent characteristic of the Stage node or of its dependents which limits its referents to third persons. We therefore predict that the Stage node could potentially enter into interaction with the Participant node. This would essentially involve a situation of obviation contrasts within the local persons. What would this entail?

At the most basic level, the activation of the Stage node within the local persons can be taken to encode a distinction between the local person which is most central to the discourse (i.e., proximate) and that which is relatively removed (i.e., obviative). This contrast is subtly distinct from the contrast between Speaker and Addressee, which explicitly refer to first and second persons, respectively. However, given discourse considerations, the system is such that a

proximate local person is readily interpreted as first person while an obviative local person is readily interpreted as second person. This type of specification is precisely what we propose for the Blackfoot person prefixes. As such, the structures of *nit-* and *kit-* are depicted below.

(22)   *nit-*   *kit-*
                             RE   RE
                              | |
                          SENTIENT   SENTIENT
                         /   \   /   \
                  PARTICIPANT   STAGE   PARTICIPANT   STAGE
                                   | |
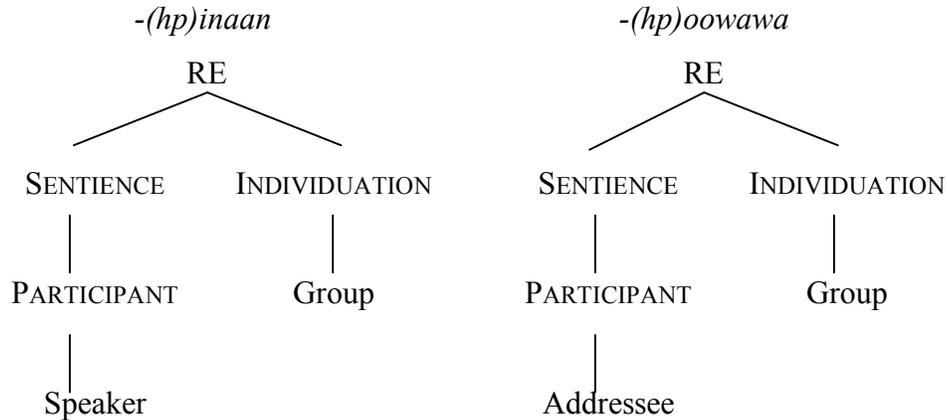   (Proximate)   Obviative

In (22), *kit-* is represented by a bare Participant node and an activated Obviative feature. In parallel, *nit-* is represented by a bare Participant node and a default Proximate feature (bracketed in (22), but in fact underspecified). Crucially, Speaker and Addressee features are not activated in the representations of *nit-* and *kit-*. The default interpretation of the Participant node (i.e., Speaker) is overruled for *kit-* by the more elaborated structure evident under the Stage node. Indeed, we assume that these interpretations are fully grammaticalized, such that it would be impossible for a Proximate Participant to be interpreted as a second person or for an Obviative Participant to be interpreted as a first person. The prefixes *nit-* and *kit-* are therefore distinguished from true first and second persons through their structural representations.

3.3 Other Featural Representations

All of this is not to say that Blackfoot does not make use of the Speaker and Addressee features elsewhere within its verbal morphology. We propose that, in fact, the person / number suffixes *–(hp)inaan* and *–(hp)oowawa* make active use of these features, as per the representations below.

(23)   *-(hp)inaan*   *-(hp)oowawa*

```
            RE                          RE
           /  \                        /  \
   SENTIENCE  INDIVIDUATION    SENTIENCE  INDIVIDUATION
       |          |               |          |
  PARTICIPANT   Group        PARTICIPANT   Group
       |                          |
    Speaker                   Addressee
```

These representations of *–(hp)inaan* and *–(hp)oowawa* are not unlike those of first and second person plural pronouns in languages like English, and are fundamentally different from those suggested for the prefixes *nit-* and *kit-*. In Section 4 we demonstrate how the configurations in (22) and (23) are able to account for a number of characteristics of Blackfoot verbal morphology, including the problem of the apparently conflicting hierarchies, the distribution of direct / inverse theme markers, and the nature of inclusive marking.

4. Implications of Local Obviation

In this section we will address three distinct phenomena in Blackfoot which have frequently been considered problematic, namely, the nature of hierarchy conflict, the direct / inverse system, and the verbal morphology associated with inclusive person marking. As will be demonstrated, the proposal outlined in Section 3 is able to elegantly account for all three of these issues.

4.1 Resolving Hierarchy Conflict

As outlined in Section 2.4, Blackfoot person prefixes operate on a different hierarchy than do the person / number suffixes and direct / inverse theme marking. This conflict was summarized in (18), and is repeated here in (24):

(24)   person prefixes: | 2 > 1 | >   3PROX   >   3OBV
       number & inverse suffixes: | 1 > 2 | >   3PROX   >   3OBV

As is evident, while both direct / inverse marking and number suffixation follow the Universal Animacy Hierarchy, the prefixes *nit-* and *kit-* diverge in that they appear to privilege second person over first. This well-known fact of Algonquian morphology has been problematic for previous accounts. In this section we will first outline the implementation of our specific proposal, and then briefly discuss two other approaches and comment upon areas in which our proposal offers insight.

As is evident in the representations given in (22), *kit-* is more structurally elaborated than *nit-*. Assuming a late insertion model of morphology (cf. Halle and Marantz 1993), it follows that the more specified morpheme kit- is inserted over the less specified morpheme nit- whenever the two are in competition for the prefix slot. In other words, *kit-*, having more structure, must be inserted whenever a local obviative argument is required. The prefix *nit-* will only be inserted where an argument bearing Participant and Stage nodes is required, but no Obviative feature is specified. As such, these representations demonstrate that what has been assumed, by, for example, Bruening (2001) and Déchaine (1999), to be the effect of a [2>1] hierarchy is simply the result of a more elaborated featural representation for *kit-* than for *nit-*.

Bruening (2001) addresses the issue of agreement within the Algonquian verbal complex, proposing that, at least for Passamaquoddy, obviation features play an important role in determining direct and inverse marking. The problem is that his assumption that the verbal prefixes map directly to subjects or objects forces him to stipulate a [2>1>3] disjunctive hierarchy to account for the person prefixes, thereby losing the insights provided by the Universal Animacy Hierarchy. This approach is particularly problematic when extended to Blackfoot where the Universal Hierarchy is clearly active in direct / inverse marking and person / number suffixation. It seems, then, that while Bruening (2001) is correct in proposing an enhanced role for obviation features in Algonquian verbal morphology, this role can bear even further extension into the featural specification of the verbal prefixes, as we have proposed.

Déchaine (1999) takes a different approach. Unlike Bruening (2001), who simply stipulates such a hierarchy, she attempts to derive a [2>1] ranking for Algonquian languages based on their nominal morphology. As such, Déchaine (1999) contends that languages must parametrize their person system as either 1 / non-1 (which is considered to be less marked) or 2 / non-2 (which is the situation hypothesized for Algonquian languages). The existence of the 2 / non-2 system is said to account for the appearance of second person agreement in prefix position

even in situations where a first person argument is involved. This is held by Déchaine to be equally true of Blackfoot, where she claims that within the nominal paradigm second person outranks first. However, she also claims that in the Blackfoot verbal paradigm, first person outranks second. Of course, this approach is not able to reconcile the existence of two simultaneous hierarchies governing person inflection within a single language. As such, Déchaine's (1999) approach calls into question any sort of cognitive reality associated with animacy effects cross-linguistically.

Our approach has the advantage of separating out true animacy effects from the influence of an elaborated obviation system. In particular, we propose that the Universal Animacy Hierarchy governs the selection of the person / number suffixes, as well as the organization of the direct / inverse system in Blackfoot. Conversely, we suggest that the person prefixes are not selected on the basis of animacy, but rather on the basis of obviation, such that the more highly specified Obviative Participant marker *kit-* will always be selected over the less specified Proximate *nit-* when the two compete. In so doing, we are able maintain a single animacy hierarchy which aligns with that proposed to be universal by Zwicky 1977 (and others). This approach also proves enlightening in considering the Blackfoot direct / inverse system.

4.2 Direct and Inverse

As mentioned in Section 2.3, while languages like English are primarily sensitive to structural categories such as subject and object, languages like Blackfoot are fundamentally different and instead show greater sensitivity to semantic categories such as animacy and agentivity. This property of Blackfoot is particularly evident in the direct / inverse system, whose most basic function is to map arguments to thematic roles. In this way, direct / inverse systems can be compared to active / passive voice systems, which also function to alter the mapping of arguments to thematic roles (cf. Givón 1994, Klaiman 1991). Comparisons have also been drawn to case systems, given that these too serve to morphologically identify the thematic roles associated with individual arguments (cf. Fabri 1996). The essential difference between active / passive or case and direct / inverse systems is that while the former are based on structural positions, the latter are instead based on animacy distinctions.

In conceiving of direct / inverse systems as serving a mapping function along these lines, the relative ranking of degrees of animacy in Blackfoot (and other languages with direct / inverse

systems) becomes critical. This is true not only for the morphology of direct and inverse, but also for the syntactic configuration assigned to arguments. As such, the direct / inverse system in Blackfoot cannot satisfactorily be described as operating along a different hierarchy than other means of marking arguments, namely person prefixes. By unifying the two apparently disparate hierarchies in the language, we not only avoid this type of inconsistency but also reaffirm the primacy of the Universal Animacy Hierarchy in Blackfoot.

Further to this, our revised version of the Harley and Ritter feature geometry (given in (20)) allows for a coherent account of the various distinct direct and inverse theme suffixes used in Blackfoot. A summary of these suffixes was provided in (16) and is repeated below.

(25)

Type of Interaction	Direct		Inverse	
Local	1 / 2	*-o*	2 / 1	*-oki*
Local / Non-Local Animate	1, 2 / 3ANIM	*-a*	3ANIM / 1, 2	*-ok*
Non-Local Animate	3PROX / 3OBV	*-yii*	3OBV / 3PROX	*-ok*
Local / Inanimate	1, 2 / 3INAN	*-'p*	3INAN / 1, 2	--
Non-Local Animate / Inanimate	3ANIM / 3INAN	*-m*	3INAN / 3ANIM	--

The table in (25) details the types of interactions that are represented by the various direct and inverse theme markers in Blackfoot. In each case, the interaction represents an opposition at some level in the feature geometry. For instance, local interactions are between arguments bearing features represented under the Participant node, namely Speaker and Addressee. Local / non-local animate interactions take place under the Sentience node, with one argument bearing a Participant feature and the other not. Non-local animate interactions operate exclusively under the Stage node, between proximate and obviative arguments. In the final two interactions, an argument represented under Sentience (in one case with a Participant dependent, and in the other a Stage dependent) is in opposition with an argument represented solely under Individuation (i.e., one which does not have a Sentience node). In conceiving of the different morphological markers for direct and inverse themes as representing basic oppositions in the feature geometry, we are able to elegantly account for their distribution. In the next section, we demonstrate that our revised feature geometry also makes the correct predictions for inclusive morphology.

4.3 Inclusive Morphology

Harley and Ritter (2002) represent inclusive pronouns through the simultaneous activation of both Speaker and Addressee features, as depicted in (26).

(26)　　　*inclusive*

RE
|
PARTICIPANT
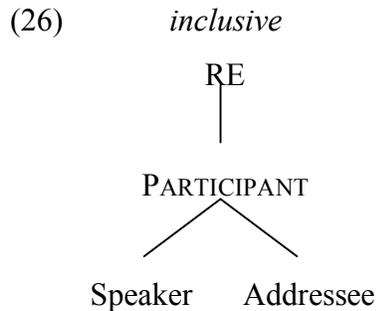
Speaker　Addressee

Individuation need not be activated, given the inherent non-singleton reference associated with a representation which includes both Speaker and Addressee. Furthermore, this type of representation clearly identifies inclusives as simultaneously first and second persons, with neither the Speaker nor the Addressee feature being privileged over the other (cf. McGinnis 2003).

In Blackfoot, inclusive arguments prefix neither *nit-* nor *kit-* to the verbal complex, as evidenced below:

(27)　kistónoon áyo'ko'p

　　　kistónoon á-yo'k-o'p

　　　INCL　　　DUR-slept-INCL

　　　'We (incl) slept'

The inclusive person is, however, marked with the suffix *–o'p*.[10] From this, we deduce that Blackfoot inclusive arguments are represented as per the geometry in (26), utilizing the Participant features Speaker and Addressee, rather than the Stage node. This is not unlike the representations of the suffixes *–(hp)inaan* and *–(hp)oowawa*, which are also specified for

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[10] The suffix *–o'p* appears to be required with inclusive arguments in Blackfoot, except in cases where the verb is transitive and takes an animate object. In those cases, the proximacy of the object is instead optionally marked with the suffix *–wa*. In addition, the proclitic *na-* may appear.

Speaker and Addressee, respectively. We speculate that these three suffixes are in complementary distribution. However, in either case, because *–(hp)inaan* and *–(hp)oowawa* are also specified for Individuation (i.e., number), they are not expected to mark inclusive arguments, precisely because inclusives lack Individuation in Blackfoot. Furthermore, because inclusives activate both Speaker and Addressee, the more closely specified *–o'p* will always be inserted over *–(hp)inaan* and *–(hp)oowawa* when an inclusive argument is being referenced.

For its part, the absence of *nit-* and *kit-* with inclusive arguments is straightforwardly explained by the absence of a Stage node in the representation of such arguments. As such, neither the proximate *nit-* nor the obviative *kit-* is predicted to appear. This is indeed borne out in the data. Déchaine (1999) cannot capture these facts as easily. Having posited simultaneous [2>1] and [1>2] rankings within Blackfoot, she claims that the incompatibility of the two nullifies any person marking that could appear for inclusives. Our approach not only avoids postulating two incompatible rankings within a single language, but also predicts the lack of prefixation in inclusives in a more principled manner, through recourse to the structural representation of inclusivity.

4.4 Summary

In this section we have demonstrated that by treating the Blackfoot prefixes *nit-* and *kit-* as being representative of proximate and obviative participants rather than of Speaker and Addressee, certain typologically unusual characteristics of the language's verbal morphology are readily accounted for. Rather than two conflicting hierarchies, then, only the one Universal Animacy Hierarchy is seen to be active in Blackfoot, governing person / number suffixing and the direct / inverse system. The apparent [2>1] effects within the verbal prefixes stem from the nature of the obviation system within the local persons.

5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper we have argued that apparent hierarchy conflict in Blackfoot can be resolved by reconsidering the nature of person marking and the role of obviation in the verbal complex. Specifically, we have proposed extensions to Harley and Ritter's (2002) morphosyntactic feature geometry to include obviation. This is represented within a Stage node which, along with Participant, is a dependent of Sentience. Further to this, we have argued that Proximate and

Obviative features are not limited to non-local referents as is typically assumed. Rather, local persons can also express obviation contrasts. We treat the Blackfoot prefixes *nit-* and *kit-* as exemplifying precisely such specification, in contrast with previous proposals which identify them with first and second persons, respectively. Recognizing these prefixes as participating in the obviation system enables us to account for seemingly problematic phenomena within Blackfoot's verbal morphology. Crucially, our account facilitates a resolution of the apparent hierarchy conflicts present in other analyses and reaffirms the centrality of the Universal Animacy Hierarchy in Blackfoot.

Although other Algonquian languages exhibit notable differences in their verbal morphology as compared to Blackfoot, we anticipate that our model can provide insight into these languages as well. In particular, we speculate that in these languages the role of obviation may be even greater than it is in Blackfoot, but that, at the same time, the Universal Animacy Hierarchy continues to wield influence.

With this in mind, it is worth noting first of all that, unlike Blackfoot, most Algonquian languages appear to make use of a [2>1] hierarchy in their direct / inverse systems (Déchaine 1999, Hewson 1991). We suggest that in these languages the influence of obviation extends to encompass not only the so-called person prefixes, but also theme marking. This is not particularly surprising, given that obviation and direct / inverse systems often co-occur (Klaiman 1991, Oshima 2004) and that obviation can also play a role in determining other aspects of the syntax, such as word order, in these languages (see, for example, Junker 2004 on East Cree).

Second, it is crucial to note that other Algonquian languages also make use of the Universal Animacy Hierarchy in elements of their verbal morphology. For example, in Plains Cree the person / number suffixes privilege first person over second, just as in Blackfoot (Déchaine 1999: 60). This suggests, then, that the apparent [2>1] ranking for which Algonquian languages are so well known is not absolute. Rather, the Universal Animacy Hierarchy plays a crucial role even in these languages which are reputed to be exceptional.

Algonquian languages are marked by the extent to which they grammaticalize degrees of animacy, as well as by their obviation systems. Blackfoot is particularly notable in this regard in its extension of obviation contrasts to the local, as well as non-local, persons. What appears, therefore, on the surface, to be the reliance on two conflicting animacy hierarchies within a

single language derives instead from the primacy of obviation within the grammar in conjunction with the Universal Animacy Hierarchy.

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