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1 Introduction

Innu-aimun (Montagnais) is a Central Algonquian language spoken in Labrador, in north-eastern Canada. It belongs to the Cree-Montagnais-Naskapi language continuum, and has syntactic properties which for the most part are similar to those found in other Central Algonquian languages, such as Plains Cree or Ojibwa.

This is a partially polysynthetic language, in the sense of Baker (1995), which allows *pro*-drop of all arguments, licensed by the rich agreement inflection on verbs and nouns. (Unlike Mohawk, Innu-aimun does not require all lexical DPs to be adjoined to the clause (at Spell-Out) (Branigan and MacKenzie, 1998), although all the types of DPs which we discuss here are either raised to Spec-CP or adjoined to the clause.) This paper presents a description of the interpretation of animate 3rd person *pro* in Innu-aimun. We show that *pro* is obligatorily interpreted as a variable bound by an A-bar element attached to the root. In sentences with multiple, non-coreferent, 3rd person *pro*s, a multiple-operator structure is motivated which determines the range of possible interpretations.

We make the following assumption, to begin with. As Innu-aimun is partially polysynthetic, lexical DPs which originate in an A-position—not adjoined to the clause—must raise to an A-bar position within the CP system at some point prior to the LF interface. We take no stand on how this result can best be derived from axiomatic principles—i.e. on Baker's Morphological Visibility Condition—but merely stipulate it, as the valid descriptive generalisation (1).

(1) **Polysynthesis Condition**
All lexical DPs must appear in an A-bar position at the LF interface.

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A consequence of the Polysynthesis Condition is that word order tests will be of little use in determining the internal structure of clauses in Innu-aimun. Word order is quite free, and even the so-called 'unmarked' word order is difficult to distinguish from other possible permutations in our experience.

2 The issue

The particular problem of reference in Innu-aimun is to explain the following pattern. The referential and anaphoric use of all animate 3rd person DPs in the language is controlled by the 'proximate/obviative' distinction. Non-3rd persons are not distinguished in this way.[2] Animate 3rd person DPs in Innu-aimun are either obviative or proximate, and can be identified as such by the local agreement morphology. Non-null proximate nouns are unmarked, while obviative nouns bear an *-a* suffix. The proximate or obviative features of *pro* can be identified by the agreement inflections on verbs and possessed nouns. Nouns possessed by proximate DP are themselves obligatorily obviative. (We discuss the reason for this further on.) Nouns possessed by obviative DPs bear an obviative agreement suffix: *-inu/-nua* (Clarke, 1982). The verbal inflections are sensitive to the proximate or obviative features of subjects and objects, too. We indicate the proximate or obviative status of DPs with subscript *p* or *o* in the examples provided. A gloss of *obv* indicates nominal or verbal agreement with an obviative argument.

All proximate DPs within a simple sentence are obligatorily coreferent; obviative *pro*s are coreferent with other obviatives and cannot be coreferent with a proximate DP.

(2) a. Mânî$_p$ mûpishtueshapan [$_{DP}$ *pro*$_p$ utshimâma$_o$]
Marie$_i$ visited her$_{i/*j}$ boss

b. *Mânî$_p$ mûpishtueshapan [$_{DP}$ *pro*$_o$ utshimâminu]
Marie$_i$ visited her$_{*i/j}$ boss-obv

(3) a. [$_{DP}$ Mânî$_p$ ukâuia$_o$] mûpishtueshenîpanî [$_{DP}$ *pro*$_p$ ushîma$_o$]
Marie$_i$ mother$_j$ visited her$_{i/*j}$ sister

b. [$_{DP}$ Mânî$_p$ ukâuia$_o$] mûpishtueshenîpanî [$_{DP}$ *pro*$_o$ ushîminu]
Marie$_i$ mother$_j$ visited her$_{*i/j}$ sister-obv

Principle B holds in Innu-aimun. Although two proximate pronouns are coreferent when separated by a clausal or DP boundary, they cannot be used as subject and object in a single clause.

(4) a. Mânî$_p$ tshîtâpâtamueshapan mashinaikannu *pro*$_p$ ka-aiâumuât *pro*$_p$
Marie read book bought-for
umânitema$_o$.
visitor.
'Marie$_i$ read the book that she$_i$ bought for her$_i$ visitor.'

b. *Mânî$_p$ uâpameu *pro*.
Marie saw her

[2] We might suppose that the feature [±obviative] is dependant on a gender feature [+animate] which is found only in 3rd persons, in some morphological feature tree.

'Marie$_i$ saw her$_i$(self).'

A proximate object can, however, be coreferent with a higher proximate which does not c-command it.[3]

(5) Mânî$_p$ ukâuia mûpîshtâkû *pro.*
Marie mother$_o$ visited her

Even though Principle B is active in the grammar, it does not provide any account of obligatory coreference which spans binding domains, or of obligatory disjoint reference in which c-command does not connect the phrases involved.

No obvious functional account of the proximate/obviative character of DPs appears likely to fully resolve the question. Although the Algonquianist literature has shown that this distinction is implicated in the topic-comment structure of sentences and larger units of discourse, we have found that there are limits to the explanatory force of purely functional approaches. For one thing, it appears that the grammar allows a free selection of either obviative or proximate forms in certain complex sentences.

(6) a. Mânî$_p$ pîkutâuâtshî Ânîua$_o$ utishkîtûminû Pûn$_p$ tshika-ueueshitâu *pro*.
Marie wrecks Annie skidoo Paul FUTURE-*fix*
'If Marie wrecks Annie's skidoo, Paul will fix it.

b. Mânî pîkutâuâtshî Ânîua$_o$ utishkîtûminû Pûna$_o$ tshika-ueueshitânua *pro*.
Marie wrecks Annie skidoo Paul FUTURE-*fix*
'If Marie wrecks Annie's skidoo, Paul will fix it.

The (6) sentences appear to be fully synonymous, which could not be the case if the proximate/obviative distinction were associated rigidly with any functional roles.

These obligatory coreference relations can be distinguished from those in switch-reference systems, too. Under switch-reference, the subject of an embedded clause is coreferent or disjoint with a higher subject depending on the inflection of the verb in the embedded clause (Finer, 1985; Hale, 1992; Johns, 1996). In Innu-aimun, though, the obligatory coreference is not confined to subjects of embedded clauses; objects, indirect objects, and other oblique DPs are equally susceptible. Thus, no approach which relies on a specific property of an embedded subject is likely to provide illumination.

3 The proposal

Since A-binding relations are evidently insufficient to allow us to characterise coreference in Innu-aimun, we turn to the A-bar system. Specifically, we make the following proposal:

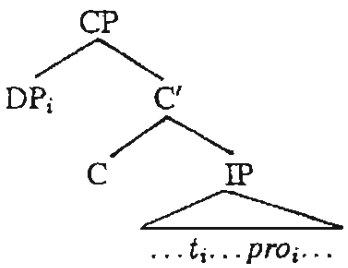
(7) **Rule for Innu-aimun pronominal reference:**
Innu-aimun 3rd person animate *pro* must be interpreted as a logical variable, bound by a DP pseudo-operator in CP.

[3]This description presupposes an analysis of inverse voice in which the subject does not end up lower than the object. Little turns on this somewhat controversial supposition, however.

This is not an entirely novel proposal. Koopman and Sportiche (1989) make essentially the same claim about the *n*-series of 3rd person pronouns in Abe. Innu-aimun and Abe both have cases of obligatory coreference in pronouns which cannot be attributed to the standard binding principles. In Abe, however, the pronouns which are interpreted in this way coexist with other 3rd person pronouns which have their own independent referential abilities. In Innu-aimun, we maintain, all 3rd person animate pronouns, whether proximate or obviative, are logical variables.

We now explain the coreference relations as follows. Every root clause containing 3rd person DPs is merged at some point in the derivation with an A-bar head—call it C—which attracts the closest DP argument into its checking domain, where it obligatorily checks a proximate feature. Where this attracted argument is a lexical DP, movement to Spec-CP allows the Polysynthesis Condition to be satisfied. Where this attracted argument is *pro*, movement creates a chain where the *pro* head may be interpreted as a pseudo-operator and the trace may be interpreted as a variable.

(8)



DP-checking by C is reflected in the agreement morphology of the verb, which also raises to C (at some point). [4] With singular proximates, the verb ends in zero; with plural proximates, the verb ends in *-at.*

(9) a. Nipâu *vs.* Nipâuat
sleep-sg *sleep-pl*
'He sleeps'. *vs.* 'They sleep.'

b. Nimûpishtuâu *vs.* Nimûpishtuâuat.
1st-visit-sg. *1st-visit-pl*
'I visit him.' *vs.* 'I visit them.'

We tentatively suppose this type of agreement to be the same as that found in Dutch/German complementiser agreement dialects, where C-agreement appears on the complementiser in simple embedded clauses and on the finite verb in topicalisation structures (Zwart, 1997; Goeman, 1980; Branigan, 1996).

(10) a. da-t-j ij komt (West Flemish, from Zwart (1997))
that-3sg he comes

b. da-n-ze zunder komen
that-3pl they come

[4] See Halle and Marantz (1993) and McGinnis (1995) for similar suggestions for Potawotami and Ojibwe agreement, respectively.

Unlike what takes place in Germanic, the agreeing complementiser in Innu-aimun may attract subjects, direct objects, or indirect objects freely, as long as the pertinent [proximate] feature is part of the attracted argument.

Clauses lacking any 3rd person arguments need not be merged with C, and must not, for fear of a derivational crash when the proximate features of C fail to be checked. Clauses with multiple lexical proximate nouns are also excluded, because C can check the [proximate] feature only once, so that no second lexical DP will find a way to satisfy the Polysynthesis Condition.

Once raised to Spec-CP, the proximate operator then must bind all remaining proximate *pro* arguments which it c-commands, because proximate *pro* lacks any referential value otherwise. Thus, example (2-a) is interpreted according to the LF-representation (11).

(11) $[_{CP}$ Mânî$_i$ C $[_{IP}$ t_i mûpishtueshapan $[_{DP}$ *pro*$_i$ utshimâma]]]

Possessors are freely extracted from DP in Innu-aimun, and often appear somewhere to the left of the DP in which they originate. When a proximate possessor is attracted by C, it then binds any remaining proximate *pro*s. Example (5) then has the structure (12).

(12) $[_{CP}$ Mânî$_i$ C $[_{IP}$ $[_{DP}$ t_i ukâuia mûpîshtâkû *pro*$_i$]]].

As shown above, obligatory coreference in this language is not restricted to clause-mate *pro*s. Example (13) illustrates this point once again.

(13) Tshân$_p$ tshissenitam e-uîmitshît *pro*$_p$ ushîma$_o$ nenu Shûshepa$_o$
John knows lent-1pl sister that Joseph
upâssikanissîminû.
rifle-obv
'John$_i$ knows that we lent his$_i$ sister Joseph's rifle.'

Obligatory coreference of proximates in (13) does not follow immediately from our proposal. Verbs agree with plural proximates in embedded clauses, as they do in root clauses. We have claimed that such agreement involves a C attractor, so the structure of the complement clause in (13) must be (14).

(14) $[_{CP}$ *pro*$_p$ C $[_{IP}$ e-uîmitshît $[_{DP}$ t_p ushîma$_o$] nenu Shûshepa$_o$ upâssikanissîminû]]

It would be thought that this structure should allow an interpretable operator-variable chain to be formed in the complement clause. But unlike what happens in root clauses, Spec-CP in a complement clause does not appear to function as an A-bar position (for reasons which remain mysterious). A proximate DP in an complement clause can trigger object agreement on a matrix verb, for example, in a well-known Algonquian variety of ECM ('subject-to-object copying') construction.

(15) a. Nitshissenim-â-nân-at $[_{CP}$ mûpishtuât Shûshepa$_o$ Tshân$_p$ mâk Mânî$_p$.
know-ANIM.OBJ.-*1pl-3pl visited Joseph John and Marie*
'We know that John and Mary visited Joseph.'

b. Tshitshissenim-â-tût-â e-uîkâu Tshân$_p$ mâk Mânî$_p$ nitashâma$_o$.
know-ANIM.OBJ.-*3pl*/PAST-*Q lent John and Marie 1sg-snowshoes*
'Did you know that I lent John and Marie my snowshoes?'

Since the embedded Spec-CP is not an A-bar position in (13), it cannot serve as the head of an operator-variable chain, so that proximate *pro* finds no binder internal to its own clause. It must therefore be bound by a higher operator, i.e. *Tshân*, to have an interpretation.

Interestingly, at least some non-complement embedded clauses behave more like root clauses in this respect, so that the use of non-coreferent proximate DPs is allowed, although obviatives may appear as an acceptable option. This is the case in the (6) examples discussed above, for example.

4 Obviation

With obviative *pro*, similar coreference effects are found. We propose an extension of the treatment of proximates. Like proximates, obviative arguments are subject to A-bar movement: lexical obviatives must raise to satisfy the Polysynthesis Condition, while obviative *pro* must raise if it is not bound by an obviative operator. This means that a second operator is raised to a root Spec-CP position, forming a multiple-operator construction.

(16) [$_{CP}$ Mânî Shûshepa C [$_{IP}$ *t* mûpishtueu *t*]]
Marie Joseph visited

Such multiple operator structures must be formed by an initial movement of a proximate DP—to check the features of C—followed by subsequent movement of any number of obviative DPs. We assume, following Richards (1997), that the multiple specifier structures have the second and subsequent specifiers attracted into position below the first specifier, so that the proximate will be the leftmost operator in a multiple operator structure. This ensures that proximate operators will continue to c-command their traces within complex obviative operators.

The coreference in (3-b) now follows from the structure in (17).

(17) [$_{CP}$ Mânî$_p$ [$_{DP}$ *t* ukâuia$_o$] C [$_{IP}$ *t* mûpishtueshenîpanî [$_{DP}$ *pro*$_o$ ushîminu]]]

The structure is derived as follows. First, root C attracts the closest proximate DP, the possessor *Mânî*. Then root C attracts the obviative subject DP, [$_{DP}$ *t ukâuia*]. The second attraction operation is not required in order for the derivation to converge, but is possible anyway if an appropriate attracting feature of C is not deleted when the proximate DP is checked.

It is also possible to have multiple lexical obviatives in a single sentence, as in example (13). In these cases, we suppose that each lexical obviative noun raises independently into the checking domain of an appropriate C, producing an even richer multiple operator structure.

Disjoint reference need not be derived in structures like (17) or (4-b)—Principles C and B ensure that the DPs found these sentences will not be coreferent—but obviative *pro* cannot be coreferent with a proximate DP in larger domains, as seen in the (18) examples.

(18) a. Uâkâtam Pûn$_p$ [$_{CP}$ mupishtuenitshî Mânîua$_o$ [$_{DP}$ *pro*$_p$ utshimâma]]
it bugs Paul$_i$ visits Mari$_j$ his$_i$ boss

b. Tshishuâikû Mânî$_p$ [$_{CP}$ kâtshî itâshaimutshit [$_{DP}$ *pro*$_p$ umashinaikan] neta
it angers Marie$_i$ that we sent her$_i$ book that
Tshâna$_o$ umâniteminu.]
John$_j$ visitor-obv

This follows directly from the multiple operator structure. Each *pro* in the (18) examples must be bound by an operator with matching proximate/obviative features. It is then interpreted as a logical variable. Were *pro* to happen to be coreferent with the operator which does not match its features, it would then be bound by two operators at once. A single variable cannot be bound by more than one operator, or no coherent semantic interpretation can be provided. It follows that *pro* in (18-a) cannot be coreferent with *Mânî* and *pro* in (18-b) cannot be coreferent with *Tshân*.

5 Possessed DPs

Obviative DPs may serve as possessors for other nouns, just as proximate DPs may. Obviatives which are possessed by 3rd person proximates need not be coreferent with other obviatives in the clause. This is expected under the approach we have just sketched out, since all lexical obviatives can raise independently to an A-bar position to satisfy the Polysynthesis Condition. Nouns possessed by obviative DPs are also free from the obligatory coreference found with proximates. But these nouns have a different morphology, and are subject to different derivational requirements than obviative DPs themselves are—in certain contexts, the position they occupy in a sentence is rigidly fixed, unlike all other DP arguments. To our mind, it is less likely that C ever attracts nouns of this type. The question arises then how these DPs are able to satisfy the Polysynthesis Condition. Inspired by Kayne (1995), we suggest that such possessed DPs are derived from complex structure in which the possessor originates as the subject of an internally-headed relative clause, and the possessee originates as the object in the same clause.

In (19), for example, the phrase *Shûshepa utashâminû* will be derived from the underlying structure (19-b), where an abstract *have*-verb associates subject and object with their respective thematic roles.

(19) a. Shûshepa$_o$ utashâm-inû
Joseph snowshoes-obv
'Joseph's snowshoes'

b. [$_{DP}$ D [$_{CP}$ [$_{IP}$ Shûshepa V utashâm-inû]]]

Both arguments of the abstract 'have' verb undergo movement from within IP to a position in DP. The possessor becomes Spec-DP, and must then have its interpretation established within the matrix clause. The possessum is incorporated into C, presumably via a series of head-movement operations, and can be interpreted within DP.

(20) [$_{DP}$ Shûshepa D [$_{CP}$ *t* utashâminû-C [$_{IP}$ *t e t*]]]

Given this derivation, the obviation marking on the possessed noun is determined within the relative clause, where movement of the possessum to C is required to satisfy the Polysynthesis Condition. The possessor, in contrast, is unable to raise to an A-bar position within the relative clause, so it must either be *pro* or a lexical DP which raises to an A-bar position in the higher clause.

6 Cross-linguistic variation and consequences

We have shown that pronominal coreference effects in Innu-aimun follow from three factors:

(21) a. the Polysynthesis Condition, requiring lexical DPs to undergo A-bar movement,
b. the logical variable interpretation of *pro*, and
c. the checking requirements and A/A-bar status of C.

These factors belong to independent 'modules' of the grammar; we could easily imagine other grammars in which one or two of these properties were found, but not all three. In that case, we would expect to find a different constellation of pronominal coreference effects. In the remainder of this paper, we show that some of these imaginable differences can plausibly be identified in other typologically distinct language families.

6.1 Mohawk (Iroquian)

The clearest contrast comes from Mohawk, as described by Baker (1995). Mohawk, like Innu-aimun, is a polysynthetic language, so lexical DPs cannot appear in their base position at Spell-Out. Like Innu-aimun, lexical DPs can appear either adjoined to the clause, or in Spec-CP, when displaced by wh-movement. However, pronominal reference is generally free in Mohawk, subject to the binding principles A and B. Thus in the (22) examples, the subject of the complement clause may be coreferent with the matrix subject, or it may refer independently to someone else.

(22) a. Sak wa-ha-ate'nyvtv-' (rauha) a-ha-nhotuko-'.
Sak fact-MsS-try-punc him opt-MsS-open-punc
'Sak tried that he open it.'

b. Tyer tehotvtsoni (rauha) aha'wahrake' ne kweskwes o'waru.
Tyer dup-MsO-want/stat him opt-MsS-meat-eat-punc NE pig meat
'Tyer wants that he eat pork.'

This follows from the different nature of *pro* in Mohawk. *pro* need not be interpreted as a logical variable—although it may be, when wh-movement occurs—so it does not rely on any A-bar operator to limit its reference.

6.2 Dogrib (Athapaskan)

Consider now the case of Dogrib, as discussed by Saxon (1986). Unlike Innu-aimun and Mohawk, Dogrib is not subject to the Polysynthesis Condition. Lexical DPs in this language can apparently remain in their A-positions at the end of a derivation. Dogrib does allow *pro* to appear in all argumental positions, however, like the other languages considered here. One *pro* in particular is of interest in this discussion: the 'disjoint anaphor', which is identified, and licensed, by an agreement prefix *ye-*.

(23) a. John *pro* ye-ʔį ha.
John ye-*see future*
'John is going to see him.'

As Saxon shows, this *pro* can appear only in clauses with another non-coreferent third person argument.

(24) a. John *pro* ye-gha lidì ehtsį ha.
John ye-*for tea make future*
'John$_i$ is going to make tea for him$_j$.'
b. John *pro* ye-mǫ e?į.
John ye-*mother see*
'John$_i$ is going to see his$_j$ mother.'
c. *pro pro* ye-t'à?at'į.
ye-*wears*
'She$_i$'s wearing it$_j$.'
d. **pro pro* ye-t'à?anet'į.
ye-*2nd-wears*
'You are wearing it.'

Saxon claims that the distribution of the *ye*-marked *pro* is a consequence of its peculiar status in the binding theory. Under her analysis, *ye-* must be bound by an antecedent, but binding for this *pro* is interpreted as disjoint reference.

The account of binding relations we have developed for Innu-aimun suggests an alternative approach to Saxon's data. Suppose that the *ye*-marked *pro* is like *pro* in Innu-aimun in requiring binding by an A-bar element, i.e. it is a logical variable. In that case, it will be interpreted only if either it raises itself to an A-bar position, or if another phrase with similar features raises to bind it. But everything other than the *ye-pro* has distinct features in Dogrib, so it must be *pro* itself which raises. Suppose further that the Dogrib *pro*, like the Innu-aimun obviative *pro*, cannot be the first element to raise to a Spec-CP position—a 'proximate'-like expression must raise first. In that case, the structure of Dogrib (24-a) will be (25).

(25) [$_{CP}$ John$_i$ *pro*$_j$ [$_{IP}$ *t t* ye-gha lidì ehtsį ha]]

Once again, obligatory disjoint reference between two 3rd person arguments follows from the presence of a multiple-operator structure required for interpretation of the appropriate

types of pronouns.

7 Conclusions

Much of the interest in the study of *pro* and other empty categories comes from taking seriously Bouchard's (1984) claim that empty categories provide us with a window on some aspects of universal grammar. Empty categories are remote from the immediate experience of a child, so their properties must be deduced primarily on the basis of information provided by UG.

We have argued in this paper that Innu-aimun animate *pro* must be interpreted as a logical variable which lacks independent referential force. We have shown that other polysynthetic languages may have *pro* with similar properties, as well as other varieties of *pro* which behave more like English pronouns. The latter, of course, may always be interpreted as logical variables, when an appropriate operator can be found to bind them.

(26)

	referential *pro*	distinct logical variable *pro*
Innu-aimun	no	yes
Dogrib	yes	yes
Mohawk	yes	no

The question then arises how we can best characterise the state of affairs which underlies this constellation of properties, and in particular how we should describe the initial state UG provides in the acquisition of *pro* by speakers of these languages. Familiar poverty-of-the-stimulus reasoning indicates that Innu-aimun children must be equipped with an initial predisposition to take 3rd person *pro* to be always a logical variable. In other words, the default interpretation of *pro* has to be the logical variable interpretation. It is difficult to see how the absence of a referential *pro* would be acquired otherwise.[5] This entails further that the use of *pro* as an expression with independent reference is contingent on the availability of positive evidence in the child's environment. What the Dogrib evidence discussed here seems to show is that the interpretation of *pro* even in a single language is established on a case-by-case basis, with some flavours of *pro* left in their default state, and others revised to allow for their use as independantly referential expressions.[6] The Mohawk case then illustrates the far end of the continuum, in which all types of *pro* are interpreted as referentially independant.

[5]Mark Baker (p.c.) suggests that the presence of a pronoun interpreted as a logical variable might be contingent on there being more than one 3rd person pronoun in the language. In Innu-aimun, the proximate/obviative distinction might then serve as a trigger for postulating the logical variable interpretation. As Baker notes, this is consistent with the Abe data, as well. Unfortunately, the basic problem for acquisition remains in place, since the *absence* of a non-variable interpretation for at least one of the proximate or obviative *pros* must still be stipulated. The problem is deferred under this alternative, but must still be resolved by supposing that a default logical variable interpretation for *pro* is supplied by UG.

[6]The same may be true of inanimate *pro* in Innu-aimun; the proximate/obviative distinction is lacking with inanimate nouns, so there is no evidence that the reference inanimate *pro* is restricted in the way animate *pro* is.

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