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A unique grammatical relation in Algonquian syntax

It is very probably the case that every human language contains some pattern of applicative syntax, i.e., that pairs of synonymous clauses can be found in which one contains an object that corresponds to an oblique nominal in the other. For example,

(1)   (a)   *He bought a latté for me.*   (unmarked syntax)
       (b)   *He bought me a latté.*   (applicative syntax)

Most of the syntactic complexity in applicative constructions centers around the nature of the grammatical relation borne by the nominal corresponding to the object in the unmarked syntax, or that applicative syntax is obligatory, i.e., no unmarked syntax is possible with certain semantic classes of obliques.

     Algonquian languages are no exception to this generalization. They all have garden variety applicative constructions, like the Ottawa (Ojibwe) example in (2).

(2)   *Wdoozht**amw**aan waa-gwinid.*   'She is making it for her so she can wear it.'

        od_i=ozhit-**amaw**-aa$_j$-an$_j$ CHANGE-*wii-agwi-ini$_j$-d$_j$.

        3ERG$_i$ =make-**APPL**-AN P OBJ$_j$-OBV$_j$ REL-FUT=wear-OBV$_j$-3SUBJ(C)$_j$

The syntactic questions in Algonquian languages for the type of construction exemplified in (2) are: 1) that the applicative construction is obligatory, i.e., there is no non-applicative construction, and 2) that the displaced object shows the syntax of a secondary object. (Algonquian languages are all primary-secondary object languages in the sense of Dryer [1986].)

     What makes Algonquian languages unique is that they all have a second, and much more common, construction which brings notionally oblique nominals into a closer grammatical relation with the verb, but leaves original objects, if any, unchanged in grammatical relations. An Ottawa example is given in (3).

(3)   ***Niniing-**sh go naa wgii-**naabm**aan niwi mnidoon.*   'He saw <u>the spirit</u> **in the form of a man**.'

     aniniw$_i$-ing   *=sh go naa*   *o-gii=**in**$_i$-aabam-**aa**$_j$-an*   *niwi manidoo$_j$-an.*

     man$_i$-LOC   EMPH   3ERG-PAST=**like**$_i$-see-<u>AN P OBJ$_j$-OBV</u>   <u>this</u> [<u>OBV</u>] <u>spirit$_j$-OBV</u>

Algonquianists have a terminology for describing this phenomenon. The verbal morpheme involved is called a relative root. The nominal that fills the slot licensed by a relative root is called a relative root complement.

     The bulk of this paper will be devoted to showing that relative root complements (RRCs) bear a unique grammatical relation that is halfway between that of true obliques and that of secondary objects (sOBJ). The class of facts that I will address is summarized in Table I.

	Subj	pObj	sObj	RRC	Obl
Full verb agreement	+	+	-	-	-
Allow 1/2 person pronominals	+	+	-	-	-
Gender/number agreement	+	+	+	-	-
Understood definite reading	+	+	+	+	-
Target of advancement	+	+	+	+	-
Accessible for relative clause formation	+	+	+	+	+/-

Table I
Syntactic properties of Algonquian grammatical relations

The data will be drawn primarily form the Ottawa dialect of Ojibwe, but examples will be given from other Algonquian languages to show that the relative root phenomenon is family wide.