Nominal predication and verb morphology in Innu-aimun

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Pronouns in the Algonquian language Innu-aimun have a surprising property: they can carry tense and modality suffixes normally found on verbs. This paper describes and analyzes this interesting phenomenon. After showing that pronouns can carry verb morphology only when they serve as predicates, I formulate an analysis that builds upon Déchaine’s (1997) treatment of nominal predication in Plains Cree. In particular, I propose that Innu-aimun allows the T head in a nominal clause to contain an overt tense/modality affix, just as in a verbal clause. The ability of this affix to appear on certain restricted nominal elements follows from established constraints on syntactic movement. The implications of this phenomenon for the syntax of Algonquian wh-questions are discussed, and the Innu-aimun patterns are compared with data from East Cree.

1 Introduction

This paper discusses an interesting property of Innu-aimun, a member of the Cree-Montagnais-Naskapi dialect continuum with approximately 10,000 speakers in Quebec and Labrador (Thorburn 2005). In Innu-aimun, pronouns in certain syntactic contexts have the surprising ability to inflect for tense and modality just as verbs do. Although this intriguing phenomenon is known to linguists who work on the language (Marguerite MacKenzie, p. c.), it has not, to my knowledge, been documented in the literature. In this paper, then, my primary goal is to formulate an initial description and analysis of the Innu-aimun “tensed pronoun construction,” as well as considering some of its broader implications.

Perhaps the most fundamental property of this construction is that it is possible only when the pronoun functions as a predicate. For context, therefore, the paper begins by examining “typical” cases of nominal predication in Innu-aimun—that is, cases in which verb morphology does not appear (§2). After developing an analysis for such cases based on the work of Déchaine (1997) and Blain (1997), I then describe the surprising tense-bearing examples and extend the analysis to account for them (§3). This is followed by a discussion of two related constructions in which the predicate nominal is unable to inflect for tense: DP predicates and locative predicates (§4). With the description and analysis now complete, I subsequently turn to consider the implications of the Innu-aimun facts for an ongoing discussion regarding the nature of Algonquian wh-questions, addressed most recently by Johns (2008) (§5). The final section of the paper takes a comparative perspective, drawing insight from similar patterns in East Cree, a neighbouring dialect (§6).

2 Typical (tenseless) nominal predication structures in Innu-aimun

This section provides a description and analysis of the simplest type of Innu-aimun nominal predication structures: those in which tense does not appear. The description is divided into three sections based on the type of nominal functioning as the predicate: (1) a DP containing a noun, (2) a pronoun, and (3) a copula-like element that I will refer to as a “presentative.”

* This paper is based partly on work completed while I was an MA student at Memorial University of Newfoundland, supervised by Phil Branigan and Marguerite MacKenzie. Aside from WSCLA 15, versions of this work have been presented at the LGCU Welcome Workshop, Toronto; the 41st Algonquian Conference, Montreal; and the Advanced Syntax seminar at U of T. I am particularly grateful for helpful feedback from Diane Massam, Alana Johns, Phil Branigan, and Lynn Drapeau. Special thanks go to José Mailhot for sharing her excellent example sentences.
2.1 Nominal predicates involving a DP

When the predicate is a DP such as a possessed noun or a proper name, the general pattern is as shown in (1): the predicate nominal occurs in sentence-initial position, followed by a demonstrative which appears to function as the subject.

(1) a. *Shûshep ume.*
   Joseph this
   ‘This is Joseph.’ (WO)

b. *Nîshîm ne.*
   1.younger.sibling that
   ‘That’s my younger sister/brother.’ (WO)

Since demonstratives frequently occur in nominal predication structures, the basic Innu-aimun demonstratives are given in (2) for reference. Demonstratives inflect for number, gender, and obviation.

(2) *ume ‘this’, an ‘it/that’, ne ‘that’, nânâ ‘that (absent)’*

Reversing the noun-demonstrative order shown in (1) results in an argument-type nominal, not a clause:

(3) a. *ume Shûshep ‘this Joseph’*

b. *ne nîshîm ‘that younger sibling of mine’*

2.2 Nominal predicates involving a pronoun

Personal and interrogative pronouns both participate in the same predication pattern as DPs, as shown in (4) and (5), respectively: the predicative element occurs sentence-initially, followed by the subject. Although the subject is typically a demonstrative, a personal pronoun can occur as the subject of an interrogative pronominal predicate, as in (5a).

(4) a. *Tshîn an.*
   you that
   ‘It’s you.’ / ‘It’s yours.’ (WO)

b. *Nîn an.*
   me that
   ‘It’s me.’ / ‘It’s mine.’ (WO)

(5) a. *Au en tshîn?*
   who you
   ‘Who are you?’ (WO)

b. *Tshekuân ne?*
   what that
   ‘What is that?’ (WO)

Any nominal predication structure can be “augmented” to form a cleft by the addition of a relative clause, as shown in (6) for an example involving a pronominal predicate. Two facts make it clear that the additional material in such cases is a relative clause. First, as in subordinate clauses in general, the lexical verb is inflected using affixes from the paradigm known as the CONJUNCT ORDER (glossed as CONJ), rather than the INDEPENDENT ORDER affixes that occur in simple main clauses. Second, the initial vowel of the verb complex typically undergoes an ablaut process known as INITIAL CHANGE (glossed as IC), which also typically occurs in relative clauses (Clarke 1982: 139).

(6) *Tshîn an [kâ tûtâman].*
   you that [IC.PERF do.CONJ.2S]
   ‘You’re the one who did it.’ (WO)

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1 Examples marked with “WO” are from my fieldwork, while those marked with “LITP” are from the Labrador Innu Text Project (Mailhot and collaborators 1999). Morphemic glosses use the following abbreviations: 1,2,3 = 1st, 2nd, 3rd person; 3′ = obviative; CONJ = conjunct; DUB = dubitative; EVID = evidential; IC = initial change; LOC = locative; PERF = perfective; P/PL = plural; PRET = preterit; Q = question particle; REL = relative clause marker; S = singular.
2.3 Nominal predicates involving a presentative

In addition to DPs and pronouns, nominal predication structures may involve one other class of items: the PRESENTATIVES eukuan ‘this is’ and namaieu ‘it’s not.’ Unlike DPs and pronouns, which also regularly function as argument-type nominals, eukuan and namaieu only ever occur in nominal predication structures. Likely for this reason, Clarke and MacKenzie (2007) refer to them as “verb-like pronouns.” Simple examples involving presentatives follow the familiar sentence-initial predication pattern:

(7) a. **Eukuan an.**
    that.is that
    ‘That’s it.’ (WO)

b. **Namaieu an.**
    it’s.not that
    ‘It’s not him.’ (LITP 2-4)

The similarity of eukuan to French *voici/voilà*, commonly known as “presentatives,” is the source of the term.2 Presentatives differ from predicative DPs and pronouns in that they may occur with what appears to be a DP complement, as in (8) and (9). In such cases, the predicate is syntactically discontinuous: the presentative is sentence-initial and the complement DP follows the demonstrative subject.

(8) a. **Eukuan an Shūshep.**
    that.is that Joseph
    ‘That’s Joseph.’ (WO)

b. **Eukuan nenua nimassina.**
    that.is.PL those 1.shoe.PL
    ‘Those are my shoes.’ (WO)

(9) a. **Namaieu an Shânüt.**
    it’s.not that Charlotte
    ‘It’s not Charlotte.’ (WO)

b. **Namaieu ne nikâu.**
    it’s.not that 1.mother
    ‘That’s not my mother.’ (WO)

As shown for predicative pronouns above, a cleft can be created by adjoining a relative clause:3

(10) a. **Namaieu an Shūshep [tūtamūpan].**
    it’s.not that Joseph [do.PRET.3s]
    ‘It’s not Joseph that did it.’ (WO)

b. **Namaieu nín [nipikanet i ne miûsh ka-pikupaua].**
    it’s.not me [1.break.PRET that box REL-be.broken]
    ‘It’s not me that broke the box that’s broken.’ (Mailhot 2006)

2.4 Summary of typical nominal predication structures

We have seen that all examples of nominal predication in Innu-aimun involve the same basic pattern. In sentence-initial position, there is a predicative element, which may be a DP, a pronoun, or a presentative. This is followed by the subject, which is usually a demonstrative. When the predicative element is a presentative, it may be accompanied by a sentence-final complement DP. In all cases, a relative clause may be added in order to create a cleft.

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2 Thanks to Lynn Drapeau and Anne-Marie Baraby for pointing this out to me. In previous work (Oxford 2007, 2008) I had used the awkward (and rather loaded) label “clefting words.”

3 In the two examples in (10), note that the verb does not carry the conjunct inflection that we would expect to find in a subordinate clause, as in example (6) above. However, there is a principled reason for the absence of conjunct inflection in (10): Innu-aimun lacks an indicative preterit paradigm in the conjunct order, so independent indicative preterit forms are substituted for the missing conjunct indicative preterit forms. This substitution also occurs in *wh*-questions, which otherwise require conjunct forms (Clarke 1982: 127). The absence of conjunct morphology therefore does not weaken the claim that such examples involve biclausal cleft structures.
2.5 **Analysis of typical nominal predication structures**

Innu-aimun nominal predication structures appear quite similar to those reported for Plains Cree by Déchaine (1997), and can easily be accounted for by her analysis. Déchaine proposes that a nominal predication structure has the underlying configuration in (11a), with the surface word order derived by the predicate fronting operation shown in (11b).

(11) a. Underlying non-verbal predication structure (with “T” for Déchaine’s “I”):

\[
TP \\
| SUBJECT T PREDICATE
\]

b. Predicate fronting derives obligatorily predicate-initial word order:

\[
CP \\
| PREDICATE C TP \\
| SUBJECT T PREDICATE
\]

The application of this analysis to the Innu-aimun examples is shown in (12).

(12) a. Predicate is a noun: *Shûshep an.* ‘It’s Joseph.’

\[
CP \\
| Shûshep ‘Joseph’ C TP \\
| DP ‘that’ T DP ‘Joseph’
\]

b. Predicate is a pronoun: *Tshîn an.* ‘It’s you.’

\[
CP \\
| tshîn ‘you’ C TP \\
| DP ‘that’ T Ø tshîn ‘you’
\]

c. Predicate contains a presentative: *Namaieu an Shânût.* ‘It’s not Charlotte.’

\[
CP \\
| nanaieu ‘not’ C TP \\
| DP ‘that’ T XP \\
| Ø X DP ‘not’ Shânût ‘Charlotte’
\]

In (12c), I have assumed that the presentative takes the predicate nominal as its complement and subsequently undergoes predicate fronting.\(^4\) I have represented the category of the presentative simply as

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\(^4\) Note that the movement operation shown in (12c) is problematic, as the presentative—a head—undergoes phrasal movement. The revised analysis proposed in the following section removes this problem.
“X,” and will leave aside the question of whether it is best characterized as a copula or as some sort of functional nominal. Although this may seem like a strange sort of ambiguity, note that the same question arises in regard to the Hebrew present-tense copula (e.g. Falk 2004).

The cleft constructions formed upon nominal predication structures can be analyzed as involving the adjunction of a clause to the nominal predication TP, as shown in (13), based on Blain’s (1997) analysis of Plains Cree wh-questions.

(13)  
\[ Tshin \ an \ [kā \ tūtaman]. \ ‘It’s you that did it.’ \]

3  Nominal predication with verb morphology

With the canonical nominal predication construction described and analyzed, I now turn to the rather surprising appearance of verb morphology in such constructions. I will revisit the classes of nominal predication discussed above, this time presenting examples involving verb morphology. I begin with presentatives, since such examples are the most numerous, before turning to pronouns and DPs. For reference, a simplified overview of Innu-aimun tense/modality inflection is provided in (14), based on Clarke 1982 and Clarke and MacKenzie 2007. (Indicative modality and present tense are the default, unmarked values, and will not be noted in glosses.)

(14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODALITY</th>
<th>TENSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRESENT/NEUTRAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDICATIVE</td>
<td>nipāu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘s/he is asleep’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUBITATIVE</td>
<td>nipāshe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘s/he is probably asleep’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVIDENTIALLY</td>
<td>nipātak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘s/he seems to be asleep’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1 Verb morphology on presentatives

The examples involving eukuan and namaieu in (15) and (16) are parallel to those shown earlier, with one difference: the presentative carries a verb suffix. As the glosses indicate, the suffixes contribute the expected notions of tense and modality to the clause.
(15) a. *Eukuanitshe ne Shûshep.*
    that.is.DUB that Joseph
    ‘That’s probably Joseph.’ (WO)

    b. *Eukuannîshapâni nenua Pân ukussa.*
    that.is.PRET.EVID.3’ that.3’ Paul 3.son.3’
    ‘That was obviously Paul’s son.’ (WO)

(16) a. *Namaieunîtshenî nenua ukâûta.*
    it’s.not.DUB.3’ that.3’ 3.mother.3’
    ‘That’s probably not his/her mother.’ (WO)

    b. *Namaietak nishâm [nâhî ka-pîmîtetaka].*
    it’s.not.EVID 1.younger.sibling [over.there REL-walk.EVID]
    ‘It seems not to be my younger brother walking over there.’ (Mailhot 2006)

    c. *Namaieunîkupan nenû [nenatuenitâ].*
    it’s.not.PRET.DUB.3’S that.3’S [IC.ask.for.CONJ.3S]
    ‘It probably wasn’t that one that s/he asked for.’ (WO)

In (17), each of the above presentatives is compared with a corresponding verb form (based on Clarke 1982 and Clarke and MacKenzie 2007). As can be seen, the suffixes are identical.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESENTATIVE</th>
<th>INFLECTION</th>
<th>CORRESPONDING VERB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eukuanitshe</td>
<td>AI 3S PRES DUB</td>
<td>nipâtshe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘perhaps s/he is asleep’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eukuannîshapâni</td>
<td>AI 3’ PRET EVID</td>
<td>nipânîshapâni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘it turns out that s/he (3’) was asleep’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namaieunîtshenî</td>
<td>AI 3’ PRES DUB</td>
<td>nipânîtshenî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘perhaps s/he (3’) is asleep’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namaietak</td>
<td>AI 3 PRES EVID</td>
<td>nipâtak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘s/he seems to be asleep’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namaieunîkupan</td>
<td>II 3’ PRET DUB</td>
<td>uâpânîkupan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘perhaps it (3’) was white’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the above, the most obvious conclusion may seem to be that presentatives are, in fact, verbs. However, I argue that this is not the case. Aside from their ability to inflect for tense and modality, presentatives differ significantly from verbs: they have no conjunct forms, they do not take preverbs, and they are subject to rigid word order, occurring only sentence-initially. It seems, then, that presentatives are not verbs, but, rather, are some other category that shares only certain properties with verbs.

### 3.2 Verb morphology on pronouns

The preceding point—that tense morphology alone does not entail that a category is a verb—gains strength when we consider that pronouns, too, may carry verb suffixes, as in (18), where the personal pronouns *niñ ‘me’* and *uîn ‘him/her’* carry the present dubitative -(*i*)tshe suffix.

(18) a. *Niñitshe [kâ utinakûu tshitashtishat].*
    me.DUB [IC.PERF take.CONJ.1>3 2.mitten.PL]
    ‘It must be me that took your mittens.’ (Mailhot 2006)
Verbal tense/modality suffixes can appear on interrogative pronouns as well:

(19) a. *Tshekuenitshe nânâ [kâ uâpamâkI utâkushîl]? 
   who.DUB that.absent [IC.PERF see.CONJ.21P>3]  
   ‘Who can it be that we saw yesterday?’ (Mailhot 2006)

   b. *Tshekuënnitshe [net ekâ uî tshîütet]?  
   what.DUB.3'S [IC.from not want leave.CONJ.3S]  
   ‘Why could it be that she doesn’t want to go?’ (LITP 2-2)

Note that this is not a case of “nominal tense” in the sense of Nordlinger and Sadler (2004), “nominal temporal marking” in the sense of Tonhauser (2007), or “tense on D” in the sense of Wiltschko (2003), because the tense/modality suffixes can appear only on predicative nominals. The link to predication suggests that the Innu-aimun examples involve regular clausal tense, which is apparently able to manifest itself on nominals under certain syntactic circumstances.

### 3.3 Verb morphology on nouns

Unlike presentatives and pronouns, predicative nouns cannot bear verb inflection.\(^5\) We never find a noun inflecting for tense/modality and acting as a clause, as in the following ungrammatical dubitative-inflected nominal predicates:\(^6\)

(20) a. *nikâutshe… ‘It might be my mother that…’

   b. *Shushepitshe nânâ. ‘That might be Joseph.’

### 3.4 Analysis of tensed nominal predicates

The central question raised by the Innu-aimun data is how it is possible for a verb morpheme to occur in a nominal predication structure. Interestingly, this possibility is in fact predicted by the structure proposed by Déchaine (1997) for nominal predication in Plains Cree. Recall from above that Déchaine analyzed such structures as involving a null T.\(^7\) The only difference in Innu-aimun, then, seems to be that this T position is allowed to host overt material—exactly as it does in a normal finite clause. The “underlying” structures in (21), which ignore the effects of movement, illustrate how this proposal applies to two representative examples, one involving a predicative pronoun and one involving a presentative.

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\(^5\) For clarification, note that it is possible for the past-tense suffix -(i)pan to appear on a noun, as discussed by Clarke (1982: 35). However, in this case, -(i)pan acts as a derivational suffix, deriving a noun meaning ‘the last X’ (e.g. nikâu ‘my mother’ + (i)pan = nikâupan ‘my late mother’). That this is derivation, not inflection, is indicated by the fact that the -(i)pan suffix can be followed by the nominal obviative marker -a, as in ukâupana ‘his/her late mother.’ Furthermore, the resulting noun in -(i)pan still behaves like a normal noun (i.e. it can be a subject or an object); it does not obligatorily form a non-verbal predication structure.

\(^6\) Lynn Drapeau (p. c.) reports that she has, in fact, very occasionally encountered such dubitative-inflected nouns, but that they occur as single-word utterances rather than forming a clause such as *Shushepitshe an. She indicates that this process is not productive, since she found each such rare occurrence to be surprising and memorable—a clear difference from the productive, clausally-integrated use of verb inflection on pronouns and presentatives.

\(^7\) As mentioned above, Déchaine’s structures actually involve I rather than T, but this is only a notational difference. In any case, my “T” should actually be understood as shorthand for a sequence of functional heads such as Tns (Tense) and Mod (Modality), as in Cinque 1999.
In essence, then, it seems that Innu-aimun has taken what was originally an abstract predication structure and made it more concrete by the addition of verb morphology.

Given the structures in (21), how does the pronoun/presentative (which will subsequently be fronted) end up carrying the tense morpheme? If fronting is XP-movement, as in Déchaine’s analysis, the pronoun will move directly to Spec-CP, bypassing the affix in T. Instead, it seems that predicative pronouns and presentatives—which are, arguably, both heads—undergo HEAD-MOVEMENT via T, where they pick up the tense suffix, as schematized in (22).

Recall that DPs, unlike pronouns and presentatives, cannot inflect for tense. This fact is predicted by the head-movement analysis. Since DPs are phrases rather than heads, there is no way for a DP to undergo head-movement to T—it can only raise to Spec-CP by XP-movement, skipping T.8 The tense suffix is therefore inaccessible to a DP predicate, as indicated by the structure in (23).

To conclude, it appears that Innu-aimun nominal predication structures differ from those of Plains Cree in two ways: (1) an overt T is permitted, and (2) head-movement via T may occur. This analysis captures the fact that DPs, unlike pronouns, cannot be tensed.

8 It would appear, then, that C in a nominal predication structure has some type of left-edge requirement that can be satisfied either by head-movement to C (as for pronouns and presentatives) or by XP-movement to Spec-CP (as for DPs). Some authors have proposed that the EPP can be satisfied either by XP-movement or X0-movement (e.g. Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1998). This may be the case here.
4 Additional nominal predication patterns

Now that the core properties of Innu-aimun nominal predication structures have been described and analyzed, I turn to two slightly more complicated patterns, involving DP predicates (§4.1) and locative predicates (§4.2).

4.1 DP predicates

We have seen that examples such as (23) above, in which the DP carries verb inflection, are ungrammatical. However, the structure in (23) has what appears to be a conceivable meaning. Is it possible for such structures to be grammatically realized? Consider the TP from (23), repeated in (24).

(24) ‘That might be Joseph’

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} \\
\downarrow \quad \downarrow \\
\text{DP} \quad \text{T} \quad \text{DP} \\
\text{n'ànà} \quad \text{-itše} \quad \text{Shûshep} \\
\text{‘that’} \quad \text{Joseph’}
\end{array}
\]

As we have seen, the DP Shûshep cannot undergo head-movement to support the affix in T. However, there is still a way to save this structure: it is possible to insert what appears to be a dummy morpheme \(e\) to support the suffix in T, creating the form \(etshe\), as in (25).

(25) \(Etše\) nànà Shûshep.

\[\text{e.DUB that Joseph} \]

‘That might be Joseph.’ (WO)

As evidence that \(e\) is indeed a meaningless dummy morpheme, consider that it cannot occur in a morphologically unmarked form:

(26) a. \(Etše\) nànà Shûshep. ‘That might be Joseph.’
    b. \(*E\) nànà Shûshep. ‘That’s Joseph.’ (must say Shûshep nànà.)

Also note that \(e\) can be prefixed to a conjunct verb in lieu of initial change; in this context, it has been called a “dummy prefix” by Clarke (1982). Wolfart (1973: 46) describes the parallel Plains Cree \(e\) as “nothing but a ‘vehicle’ for initial change.” It seems, then, that \(e\) may be a general dummy prefix that serves to “fill out” incomplete verb complexes.

Interestingly, when \(e\)-insertion occurs, two word orders are possible: either the \(e\)+T complex or the predicate DP can be fronted, as shown in (27).

(27) ‘That’s probably Joseph.’ (WO)

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Etše nànà Shûshep. (T-to-C head-movement)} \\
\text{e.DUB that Joseph} \\
\text{Shûshep nànà etshe. (movement of DP to Spec-CP)} \\
\end{array}\]
The word-order variation in (27) is striking, because in all other examples, it is always the tensed presentative or pronoun that is obligatorily fronted. For example, the sentences in (28) are identical to those in (27) except that they contain the presentative eukuan ‘that is’ rather than the dummy e-. In this case, as shown in (28b), we do not have the option of fronting the DP; only the tensed presentative can be fronted.

(28) ‘That’s probably Joseph.’ (WO)
   a. *Eukuanitshe nânâ Shâshep. (T-to-C head-movement)
      that.is.DUB that Joseph
   b. Shâshep nânâ eukuanitshe. (movement of DP to Spec-CP)
      Joseph that that.is.DUB

It seems clear, then, that the presence of the dummy prefix has the side-effect of “loosening up” the word order. It is less clear why this should be the case; for the time being, I leave this as an unsolved problem. In general, the phenomenon of e-support appears to be an interesting parallel to do-support in English. This parallel may be another manifestation of Déchaine’s (1997) observation that nominal predication clauses in Cree actually have configurational syntax, in contrast to the otherwise non-configurational nature of Algonquian word order.

4.2 Locative predicates

Innu-aimun presentatives and wh-words are paralleled by a series of locative equivalents carrying the derivational locative morpheme -ite/-ita (Oxford 2008: 75):

(29) | NON-LOCATIVE       | LOCATIVE        |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eukuan</td>
<td>ekute / ekuta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘that is’</td>
<td>‘that’s where’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namaieu</td>
<td>namaieute / namaieuta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘it’s not’</td>
<td>‘that’s not where’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tshekuân</td>
<td>tânite / tânita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘what (is)’</td>
<td>‘where (is)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Locative presentatives occur in syntactic structures that are broadly similar to those we have seen for predicative pronouns and presentatives. As shown in (30), the following lexical verb must be in the conjunct order, suggesting that the overall structure is a cleft; also, just as we have seen above for their non-locative equivalents, locative presentatives are often followed by a demonstrative “subject” (bolded).

(30) a. Ekuta anîte [nânitam epît Pûn],
      that.is.LOC that.LOC [always 1C.sit.CONJ.3 Paul]
      ‘That’s where Paul always sits.’ (WO)
   b. Namaieute anîte [uiâtshiht],
      it.is.not.LOC that.LOC [1C.live.CONJ.3P]
      ‘That’s not where they live.’ (WO)
   c. Tânite anîte [Tânien niânataut mâǹ],?
      what.LOC that.LOC [Daniel 1C.REDUP.hunt.CONJ.3S often]
      ‘Where is it that Daniel often hunts?’ (WO)

Similar examples in Plains Cree are discussed by Déchaine (1997: 120–121).

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9 One possibility is that the dummy e- may be inserted either in the syntax (in which case it will subsequently undergo head-movement) or at PF (in which case the left-edge requirement of C will be satisfied in the syntax by the only other alternative: raising of the DP).
Locative presentatives differ from their non-locative equivalents in one important way, however: they cannot carry verb inflection. This is not particularly surprising, since locatives also do not carry nominal inflection such as number and obviation. As obliques, they apparently lack access to the clausal tense-case-agreement inflectional system (cf. Pesetsky and Torrego 2001, 2004, 2007). Since the syntax of locative and non-locative presentatives seems identical in all other respects, it would be interesting to investigate the structural ramifications of this difference.

5 Implications for Algonquian wh-questions

I now turn from description and analysis to a somewhat different topic: the implications of Innu-aimun tensed pronouns for the syntax of Algonquian wh-questions. I first outline two competing analyses of wh-questions and then discuss the relevance of the Innu-aimun data to this issue.

5.1 Two analyses of Algonquian wh-questions

Analyses of Algonquian wh-questions fall into two basic groups: biclausal and monoclausal. Under a typical biclausal analysis, the wh-word is seen as a predicate that may be followed by a dependent clause containing a lexical verb. In essence, then, wh-questions are clefts. This is the traditional view (Bloomfield 1946: 116; Wolfart 1973: 34), and it has been echoed in several generative analyses (Johns 1982; Reinholtz and Russell 1995; Blain 1997). This analysis has the benefit of neatly accounting for the appearance of conjunct morphology in wh-questions—since the lexical verb is in a dependent clause, the conjunct is expected.

The monoclausal analysis, in contrast, regards a wh-question as a single clause; wh-words are regular nominals that undergo wh-movement, as in English. This analysis has been proposed in recent work in the Minimalist paradigm (Brittain 1999, 2001; Bruening 2001, 2004). In such an analysis, conjunct morphology arises from other factors, such as the presence of a C head in the structure.

The structures in (32) and (33) illustrate, in simplified form, the application of each analysis to the Innu-aimun wh-question in (31).

(31) *Tshekuànnù eìtit?*
what.3′ ic.do.CONJ.3s
‘What is s/he doing?’

(32) **BICLAUSAL ANALYSIS,** literally ‘What is it [CP that s/he is doing]?’
(based on Blain’s (1997) analysis of Plains Cree, with I changed to T)

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{CP} \\
& \quad \text{tshekuànnù,} \\
& \quad \text{TP} \\
& \quad \text{TP} \\
& \quad \text{pro} \ O \ \text{tshekuànnù} \ \text{‘it’} \\
& \quad \text{TP} \\
& \quad \text{CP (adjunct to TP)} \\
& \quad \text{OP, pro eìtit OP,} \\
& \quad \text{‘s/he’ ‘do’ operator}
\end{align*}
\]
MONOCLAUSAL ANALYSIS, literally ‘What is s/he doing?’ (based loosely on Brittain’s (2001) analysis of Western Naskapi)

5.2 Implications of the Innu-aimun facts

After examining the theoretical debate summarized above, Johns (2008) concludes that the question is still open, and that further research is needed. The appearance of tense on Innu-aimun pronouns, I contend, constitutes one such further piece of evidence—in fact, a rather significant one. Consider the predictions that the two analyses would make regarding the appearance of tense morphology. The biclausal analysis regards the wh-word as occupying a nominal predication structure, so, like other predicative pronouns in Innu-aimun, it should be able to carry verb inflection. The monoclausal analysis, on the other hand, regards the wh-word as a regular nominal, so verb inflection should not be possible. As we have already seen, it is the biclausal analysis that makes the correct prediction: Innu-aimun wh-words can indeed carry verb suffixes, as shown in (34).

(34) a. Tshekuenëtshe nänë [kâ uùpamâk' uùkushît]? who.DUB that.absent [IC.PERF see.CONJ.21P>3 yesterday]
   ‘Who can it be that we saw yesterday?’ (Mailhot 2006)

b. Tshekuânnëtshe [uet êkâ uù tshitûtet]? what.DUB.3’S [IC.from not want leave.CONJ.3S]
   ‘Why could it be that she doesn’t want to go?’ (LITP 2-2)

The Innu-aimun data therefore seems to favour an analysis along the lines of Blain 1997 (shown in (32) above), though with head-movement of the wh-word to account for the innovative tense/modality inflection. In general, the occurrence of verb inflection seems to be a new and compelling piece of evidence that Innu-aimun wh-words are predicates, which, in turn, is strong evidence that Innu-aimun wh-questions are biclausal.10

5.3 Challenges for both analyses

Although I feel that the Innu-aimun data, at face value, seems to strengthen the case for a biclausal analysis of wh-questions, my main goal here is simply to present the data, not to argue for one analysis over other.

10 As Phil Branigan (p. c.) points out, however, it is not conclusive evidence for the biclausal approach. We could, for example, propose that only those wh-questions that involve verb morphology are formed from clefts—wh-questions without verb morphology could still be monoclausal, formed by standard wh-movement. If it can be shown that the clefting analysis cannot account for all Innu-aimun wh-questions, then a split analysis such as this would be necessary, but other things being equal, it does not seem preferable, since we would then require two separate explanations for the appearance of conjunct morphology in wh-questions (it follows naturally in a cleft, but requires other motivation in a monoclausal structure).
the other. Indeed, both analyses face empirical challenges. Any attempt to propose a monoclausal analysis of Innu-aimun wh-questions should address two empirical issues: (1) the appearance of verb morphology on the wh-word, and (2) the “extra” demonstrative that often appears in nominal predication clauses. Wh-questions containing such demonstratives are shown in (35).

(35) a. Tshekuen an [shâšh tšîi shâšhuâpatamûshapan umennua unaikana]? who that [already PERF go.to.see.PRET.EVID.3S these traps]
   ‘Who is it that already checked these traps?’ (WO)

b. Tshekudûnû nenû [Shûshep mînepan Mânîua]?
   what.3’S that.3’S [Joseph give.PRET.3>3’ Mary.3’]
   ‘What is it that Joseph gave Mary?’ (WO)

Under the biclausal analysis, this demonstrative is straightforwardly accommodated as the subject of the nominal predicate. Under a strictly monoclausal analysis, it is not clear what the structural position of this demonstrative could be.

Conversely, a biclausal analysis—if applied to other related dialects—must address the fact that in Western Naskapi, multiple-wh-questions are grammatical (Brittain 1999, 2001). It is not obvious how a cleft analysis could deal with two wh-phrases, since a cleft normally has only a single focus.11 Further challenges for the biclausal view are given in the appendix to Bruening 2004.

One important point, however, is that from a cross-linguistic perspective, there is nothing strange about positing that wh-questions are clefts. The proposal has been made for a diverse range of languages, including various Austronesian languages such as Palauan (Georgopoulos 1991), Tagalog (Richards 1998; Aldridge 2002), Niuean (Massam 2003), and Malagasy (Potsdam 2006); the Niger-Congo language Yorubá (Manfredi 1995 and Déchaîne 2002, cited in Cook 2005); Egyptian Arabic (Cheng 1997); the Dravidian language Malayalam (Jayaseelan 2008); the Tibeto-Burman language Meitei-lon (Bhattacharya and Devi 2004); Yucatec Maya (AnderBois 2009); and Coast Salish and Northern Interior Salish (Kroeber 1991, 1999, Davis et al. 1993, and Jelinek 1998, all cited in Baptiste 2001).

As a footnote to this discussion, it is interesting to consider that there have been some recent proposals that clefts are actually monoclausal (Meinunger 1998; Grohmann 2007; Reeve 2008). This idea is no doubt somewhat radical, but if it turned out to be correct, it could provide a means of reconciling the biclausal and monoclausal approaches to Algonquian wh-questions.

6 Comparison with East Cree

In this section, I compare the Innu-aimun patterns with those of East Cree, a neighbouring dialect in the Cree-Montagnais-Naskapi continuum. The East Cree facts shed light on two issues: the availability of verb morphology in nominal clauses (§6.1) and the historical development of presentatives (§6.2).

6.1 Availability of verb morphology in nominal clauses

In East Cree, there is a limited parallel to the ability of Innu-aimun pronouns to carry verb inflection. Southern East Cree wh-words can carry dubitative inflectional suffixes (Junker and MacKenzie 2004), but Junker and MacKenzie list only present/neutral-tense dubitatives—no past/pastër forms. It appears, then, that East Cree wh-words can inflect for modality, but not for tense.

Interestingly, José Mailhot (p. c.) reports that Innu-aimun elders reject preterit inflection on pronouns as well, although younger speakers readily supply such forms. Taken together, these facts suggest

11 It would be interesting to find an Innu-aimun example in which both multiple-wh-movement and tense/modality inflection co-occur. If such examples are possible, they would be an interesting challenge for both approaches.
that Innu-aimun pronouns did not gain access to the entire set of verb suffixes all at once. Rather, it seems that the phenomenon began with modality alone (as is still the case in Southern East Cree), and has more recently expanded to include tense. This trajectory is perhaps not surprising if, as in Cinque 1999, epistemic and evidential modal heads are structurally higher than tense, and thus more distant from the verb—plausibly making them less strongly “verb-like” than tense, and consequently more amenable to combining with a non-verbal category.

6.2 Historical development of presentatives

Regarding the historical development of the presentative eukuan ‘this/that is’, Southern East Cree displays what appears to be an earlier state of affairs. The SEC equivalent of eukuan can appear in either fused or non-fused forms (Junker and MacKenzie 2003: 212–213), as shown in (36). (Eukw is a particle that seems to have focusing properties, while an is a demonstrative, as in Innu-aimun.)

(36) a. Eukw an. ‘That’s the one.’
   b. Eukun. ‘That’s the one.’

We might therefore speculate (as in Oxford 2008: 80) that Innu-aimun eukuan arose from the fusion of the discourse particle euk and the following demonstrative an. At some point, the original position of an must have been reanalyzed as being truly vacated, opening the door for a second an to appear, as in modern Innu-aimun eukuan an ‘that’s the one.’

Interestingly, in present-day Innu-aimun (at least in Sheshatshiu, Labrador), there are signs that another cycle of the same kind of fusion is occurring. Speakers often write sequences involving a presentative plus a demonstrative as a single word, as in (37). (In fact, I have been corrected for using a space in such examples.)

(37) a. eukuan an ‘that’s the one’ → eukuanan
   b. tshekuânû (ne)nû ‘what is that?’ → tshekuânûnû
   c. ekute anite ‘that’s where…’ → ekutenite or even ekutete

More evidence that fusion might be occurring comes from the fact that some speakers place the second-position question particle ã after eukuan an, as in (38a), which indicates that eukuan an is being treated as a single word. However, this is not always the case, as shown in (38b), where ã intervenes between eukuan and an. This variability suggests that we may be seeing a change in progress.

(38) a. Eukuan an ã Shâshep uiûûnàt?
    that.is that Q Joseph 1C.talk.about Conj.2s>3
    ‘Is that the Joseph you’re talking about?’ (WO)
   b. Eukuan ã an tsûtûu?
    that.is Q that 2.father
    ‘Is that your father?’ (WO)

Based on the apparently strong tendency for demonstratives to fuse with the preceding presentative, it seems that something in the syntactic or prosodic nature of this “post-fronted-predicate” position particularly encourages cliticization and eventual reanalysis as a single word. Ideally, a fully worked-out analysis of Innu-aimun non-verbal predicate clauses should capture this fact.

On a more general level, it is interesting to note that the presentative eukuan ‘this/that is,’ the presentative nàmaieu ‘it’s not,’ and the interrogative pronouns all arose from different sources. As we have seen, eukuan seems to be derived from the fusion of a particle and a demonstrative. Nàmaieu, on the other
hand, appears to have originally been a verb that became defective (Reinholtz 2005). Finally, interrogative pronouns clearly originated as nominals, and still function as regular nominals outside of sentence-initial position (in which case they are interpreted as indefinites). Despite these different origins, the three items have converged in present-day Innu-aimun to the point that their morphosyntax appears identical—all three occur sentence-initially, can carry tense and modality suffixes, can be followed by a demonstrative, and require a following lexical verb to be in the conjunct order. The fact that three once-distinct items have all converged toward this common set of properties suggests that “presentative” (i.e. “quasi-nominal predicate”) has become a true grammatical category in Innu-aimun.

7 Conclusion

This paper has focused on an interesting property of Innu-aimun pronouns (and presentatives): in their predicative function, they can inflect for tense and modality just as verbs do. This phenomenon fits well with existing analyses of Algonquian nominal predication (Déchaine 1997; Blain 1997), requiring only the addition of an overt morpheme in the T position; the distribution of this morpheme follows from well-established constraints on syntactic movement. A related pattern of “dummy e-insertion,” which occurs with DP predicates, provides an interesting parallel with do-insertion in English. Beyond their inherent interest, the Innu-aimun facts also have implications for the syntax of Algonquian wh-questions. Finally, I have shown that cross-dialectal comparison provides a deeper insight into the properties of such “presentative” constructions.

References


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