

8 Obviation in Potawatomi

8.1 Introduction

Obviation is an aspect of Potawatomi grammar worth examining in this study, since, like the use of independents, conjuncts, and the preverb *é-*, it has different uses in syntax and discourse. In Chapter 10, I will argue that these uses are related to each other. The goal of this chapter is to describe obviation in Potawatomi in some detail, since this is an important topic in Algonquian studies, and its use in Potawatomi has not been given much attention in the descriptive literature. Potawatomi also provides an important case study, since its use of obviation places it between such languages as Fox, with significant discourse obviation, and Ottawa, with predominantly syntactic obviation. Based on a detailed study of a traditional narrative, I present a mechanism that would allow a language with discourse obviation to become reanalyzed as a syntactic obviation language, and argue that Potawatomi is an example of this change in progress.

8.2 Background

Obviation is a grammatical phenomenon found in Algonquian languages that signals disjoint reference in third persons.¹ In a given context, one third person will be designated *proximate*, and others are marked *obviative*.² The marking of obviative status

¹ Kutenai (a linguistic isolate spoken in British Columbia, Idaho and Montana) also has obviation (involving first and second as well as third persons) and inverse marking (see Dryer, 1992). Some Algonquianists speculate that Kutenai was a source of diffusion for obviation in Algonquian.

² The earliest use of the term ‘obviative’ is in Cuoq (1866).

occurs on nouns, and is co-indexed by verbal agreement marking. The obviative is the marked category; proximate nominals do not receive special marking on nouns or verbs.

Obviation has been compared to switch-reference systems (see Jacobsen, 1967), and within third person, both indicate disjoint reference.³ As Jacobsen points out, though, switch reference relates participants within a narrated event at a local level (across clauses, or adjacent sentences) without reference to the speech context.⁴ Obviation, on the other hand, also encodes information about the relative status or importance of a referent in a narrative, which indirectly references the speech context, that is, the narrator's ranking of participants.

Rhodes (1985) argues against obviation being a property of person marking in part because it is not illocutionary, perhaps in Jespersen's sense of person 'proper' being about distinguishing speech act participants from non-speech act participants (Jespersen, 1924), and also, perhaps, in order to encourage non-Algonquianists to avoid the use of 'fourth person.'⁵ This terminology is indeed misleading and confusing, however rather

³ Switch reference systems also indicate coreference, often having paired markers for 'same subject' / 'different subject'.

⁴ In this sense, switch reference is not deictic, although it is cohesive. Switch reference therefore does not belong to the grammatical category 'person'. One is also less likely to make this claim than for obviation, since the markers of switch reference are generally aspectual suffixes, whereas obviation in Algonquian languages is bound up with person/number inflections.

⁵ The earliest reference to obviation as 'fourth person' seems to have been Uhlenbeck (1909). Algonquian researchers in the 1960's and 70's commonly used the term: Frantz (1966) for Blackfoot (probably after Uhlenbeck), Rhodes (1976) for Ojibwa, although Wolfart (1973) avoids it. Although the terminology has been abandoned by Algonquianists, it can still be found in general descriptions of obviation, as in Mithun (1990).

than avoid treating it as a person, I will continue the practice of the majority of Algonquianists in calling it a distinction within third person.⁶ In any case, it seems that obviation is at least in part illocutionary, in the sense that within discourse it references the speech context.

Several researchers have provided descriptions of obviation in various Central Algonquian languages. Contemporary descriptions include Wolfart (1973), and Dahlstrom (1988) for Cree, Goddard (1984; 1990) and Dahlstrom (1986) for Fox, and Rhodes for Ojibwa, the Ottawa dialect, in particular (1976; 1985; 1990a; 1992; 1993; 1994). Earlier, more limited descriptions of the basic phenomena include Michelson (1921; 1925) for Fox, Bloomfield for Eastern Ojibwa (Bloomfield, 1958), and Hockett for Potawatomi (1939a; 1939b; 1948a-d; 1966).

The basic distribution of obviation is as follows: within sentences, there are two contexts for obligatory obviation: third person possessors control obviation of possesseees, and when third persons are clausemates, one must be proximate, and the others obviative. There is some control of obviation across clauses, and at least in some languages, across pairs of sentences that have a close semantic relationship. Within discourse, in many languages, obviation is used to mark the relative status of nominals: the higher ranked nominal (usually the “hero” of the discourse) will be marked as proximate, and other third persons will be obviative.

⁶ Arguments against the use of the term ‘fourth person’ are mostly made on the basis of negative evidence. Rhodes (1985) brings up the point that there is no distinction made within the pronoun system that would support a fourth person, and Goddard (1990) notes that “it is either not intended literally or not supported by any morphological or syntactic arguments” (p. 317).

The organization of this chapter is as follows. Section 8.3 contains a description of obviative inflection on nouns, demonstratives and verbs. Section 8.4 describes syntactic contexts of obviation. Section 8.5 describes uses of obviation in discourse, using a glossed text *Crane Boy* which is provided in Appendix C.

8.3 Obviative inflection

Obviation is a property of nominals.⁷ Nouns in Potawatomi bear obviative inflections, and verbs inflect for obviative agreement.⁸ Both animate and inanimate nominals participate in obviation, however, only animate nouns bear obviative inflection. Both animates and inanimates trigger obviative agreement marking on verbs. The examples below show two sentences with possessed subjects. Possessee with third person possessors are obligatorily obviative, so both subjects are obviative. (1) shows a possessed animate where the obviative inflections are on both the noun and the verb. In (2) the possessed inanimate does not take obviative inflection, but its obviative status is registered in the agreement marker on the verb. (In the free translation, “P” stands for proximate and “O” for obviative.):

- (1) I je mdadsopon wesmé é-byat mégwa niw
 iw jE mEdadEsopon EwEsEmé é - bya/é -d mégwa niw
 and ten.years more FCT- come\AI -3C still that.OBV

⁷ Not in the sense of intrinsic properties, such as (logical) animacy, or plurality, but comparable to number, that is, a deictic property.

⁸ As Potawatomi is a ‘pro-drop’ language, referents may be expressed by inflections on the verb as well as NPs. We follow the practice of Rhodes (1990a) in referring to both inflections and NPs as ‘nominals’.

osen é-yenet.
 os -En é - EyE -EnE -d
 father -OBV FCT- be.in.a.place\AI -OBV -3.C

Ten years later, he (P) came back and his (P) father (O) was still there.

- (2) Mskwane i wbiskewagen
 mEskwa -EnE -w iw wE- bisEkEwagEn
 be.red\II -OBV -0.I that.INAN 3- clothing

His(P) jacket (O) is red. (JT3:63:17)

The next two examples show the use of obviative agreement when the subject is not possessed. (3) and (4) show obviative agreement with an AI and II verb, respectively:

- (3) Bama zhe na gete gigabéyen
 bama zhE na gEtE gigabé#y -En
 soon EMPH EMPH for.sure boy -OBV

é-nemsénet.
 é - EnEmOsé -EnE -d
 FCT- walk.off\AI -OBV -3.C

Soon the boy had begun to walk off. (AS.2.3.18)

- (4) Jak bkwézhgasen wa-mijet zhiw
 jag bEkwézhEgas -En CH.wi- mij -Ed zhiw
 all cracker -PL CH.FUT- eat.s.t\TI -3.C there

gi-téne.
 gi- té -EnE -w
 PST- be.in.a.certain.place -OBV -0.I

All the crackers for her to eat were there. (JS.4.2.048)

8.3.1 Obviative markers on nouns

Obviation is marked on animate nouns with the suffix {En}₁.⁹ This appears as /en/ after consonants as in (5) and /n/ after vowels as in (6). (7) shows its use in marking the obviation of a possessee.

⁹ This is one of three very similar obviative suffixes, as discussed immediately below. The use of curly brackets around a form in the main text indicates a morphophonemic representation.

- (5) ni gwakwadéy_n. ‘the grasshopper (obv.)’
niw gwakwadé#y -En
that.OBV grasshopper -OBV
- (6) ni amon ‘the bee (obv.)’
niw amo -En
that.OBV bee -OBV
- (7) niw wmezodanen ‘his parents (obv.)’
niw wE- mEzoda_n -En
that.OBV 3- parent -OBV

This suffix is the same as the plural inflection on inanimate nouns:¹⁰

- (8) mzen'egen 'book'
mEzEn' EgEn
book
- (9) mzen'egnen 'books'
mEzEn' EgEn-En
book -PL

In addition, nouns that inflect for obviation are ambiguous with respect to number. (10) and (11) show the grammatically animate noun *dabyan* ‘car’ possessed by a first person. In the second example, the possessee is plural, which is indicated on the noun by the use of the animate plural suffix {Eg}. In (12) however, the third person possessor requires that the possessee be obviative, and here number of the possessee is not distinguished:

- (10) ndodabyan *'my car'*
nEd-Odabyan
1- car
- (11) ndodabyanek *'my cars'*
nEd-Odabyan-Eg
1- car -PL

¹⁰ This suggests that on the animacy hierarchy, obviative nominals have a lower animacy status than proximate nominals, similar to the status of inanimates.

and *-ini* respectively in the Ottawa dialect of Ojibwa).¹¹ Because Potawatomi has merged short *-a* and *-i* to schwa, the two are now homonymous, and the difference between them and the third is slight. Given two related morphophonemic processes involving schwa—insertion between consonants and syncope—the fact that there are three different suffixes is easily overlooked. The following briefly outlines the evidence demonstrating their synchronic distinctness:

{-En}₁ from *-ali:

Sequences of **wa* contract to /o/ (historically short o, but short and long o have merged in Potawatomi). So verbs in {-shEnw} ‘stand, lie, fall’ end in /-on/ in the obviative, as in the independent verb *wjeshnon* ‘he (OBV) lies beneath’, which is morphophonemically {OjEshEnw -En}.

{-En}₂ from *-ili₁

*i induces palatalization of a preceding consonant. This suffix is found on the obviative form of the AI participle, as in *majinjen* ‘he (OBV) who leaves’, which is morphophonemically {maji -EnE -d -En}

{-EnE} from *-eli- / *-ili₂:

¹¹ The final obviative marker in this list is either *-eli- or *-ili-. Fox, which would provide the necessary evidence for deciding between them, is ambiguous with respect to these two forms. Also note that *-ili₁, and *-eli- / *-ili₂- occupy different positional slots, *-eli- / *-ili₂- occurring inside of -ili₁.

The attestation of this suffix is found in Independent II verbs, where the final schwa is retained due to a deleted final glide *-w* as in *wangoyane* ‘it (OBV) is a hole’ which is morphophonemically {wanEgoya –EnE –w} .

In many cases, the form of the obviative suffix is ambiguous in surface forms. For example, without respect to the historical origins of the suffixes, one might analyze the sequence /net/ in *é-nemsénet* ‘he/she walked off’ as {En}₁ or {En}₂ followed by {d} (devoiced) with a connective schwa {E} inserted between them, or even {EnE} followed by {d}. As one can see by my morphemic glosses throughout this chapter, I assume a somewhat abstract analysis: that the use of the obviative suffixes in Potawatomi are consistent with the use of the cognate suffixes in Ottawa, as described by Bloomfield (1958) and Rhodes (1976).

{-En}₁ besides agreement on nouns, is also used to mark obviation of an animate absolutive in the Independent paradigm. Example (15) shows an obviative subject of an intransitive (AI) verb, and (16) shows an obviative object of a transitive (TA) verb. In both cases, the weak vowel {E} in the suffix is deleted following a strong vowel {i} or {a}:

- (15) majin *'he (O) leaves'*
 maji -En
 leave -OBV
- (16) wgi-wabman *'he (P) saw him (O)'*
 wE-gi- wabEm -a -En
 3- PST- see.s.o.\TA -DIR -OBV

When there are two third persons within a clause, as in this example, one must be obviative. When a direct form (here glossed as –DIR) is used, the subject must be proximate and the object obviative. In his tabulation of the TA paradigm, Hockett (1948c

p. 142) lists forms with first and second person subjects and obviative agreement with a third person object. These are ungrammatical for modern day speakers, as they are for Ottawa speakers as well (Rhodes, 1976 p. 204). Since they do not show up anywhere in the corpus, I suspect that they may have been ungrammatical for Potawatomi speakers in the 1940's as well.

The suffix {En}₂ is used to mark obviative agreement on participles. AI participles take two markers of obviation, the first one shows agreement as an obviative with respect to the participle itself ('internal obviation'), and the second obviative suffix indicates obviation with respect to the rest of the sentence ('external obviation'). The first marker is {EnE} and the second marker is {En}₂, which induces palatalization on the preceding consonant:

- (17) ni amon zazbakdokénjen
niw amo -n CH.zizEbakuEdOké -EnE -d -En
that.OBV bee -OBV CH.make.sugar\AI -OBV -C -OBV.I

the bees who were making honey (AS.2.2.032)

The suffix {-EnE} is the most common obviative suffix; it shows up in both independent and conjunct inflections. In transitive verbs, there are obviative inflections in the Independent paradigm. These, as noted above, use {En}₁:

- (18) wwabman
 wE-wabEm -a -En
 3- see.s.o.\TA -DIR -OBV.I
- ‘he (P) sees him (O)’
-
- (19) wwabmegon
 wE-wabEm -EgO -En
 3- see.s.o.\TA -INV -OBV.I
- ‘he (O) sees him (P)’

In the Conjunct paradigm, however, obviation is marked on transitive verbs solely by the use of theme signs:

(20) wabmat *'he (P) sees him (O)'*
 wabEm -a -t
 see.s.o.\TA -DIR -3.C

(21) wabmegot *'he (O) sees him (P)'*
 wabEm -EgO -t
 see.s.o.\TA -INV -3.C

8.3.4 Obviative agreement in participles

Participles agree with their head noun in obviative status, as shown by the following examples:

(22) Ngodek me se gwakwadé é-ndo-mdagwayet
 nEgOd -Eg mE sE gw akwadé é- nEdo- mEdagwayE -d
 one -LOC EMPH EMPH grasshopper FCT- try- have.fun\AI -3C

 é-yabtenibek, é-bme-nkwéshkwat
 é- YabEtEnibEn -g é- bEmE- nEkwéshkEw -ad
 FCT- midsummer -0.C FCT- along- meet.s.o.\TA -3/3'.C bee -OBV

 [amon zazbakdokénjen]
 amo -n CH.zizEbakWEdOké -EnE -En
 CH.make.sugar\AI -3'.P -OBV -OBV.P

Once a grasshopper was going along, having fun in the middle of summer, and he (P) met [bees (O) who were making honey]. (AS:2:2:001)

(23) wgi-gkeno'mowan [neshnabén
 wE- gi- gEkEno'EmEw -a -n EnEshEnabé -n
 3- PST- teach.s.o\TA -DIR -OBV person -OBV

 wa-zhi'enet].
 CH.wi- Ezhi' -EnE -d
 CH.FUT- be.in.a.certain.place?\AI -OBV -3.C

... he (P) taught [the people (O) who (O) were there]. (JS.4.3.029)

(24) wgi-sawan [niw
 wE- gi- sa -wan niw
 3- PST- put.s.o.in.a.certain.place\TA -35/3'.I that.OBV

 gokoshésen ga-gizswawajen]
 gokosh -és -En CH.gi- gizEswa -wa -d -En
 pig -DIM -OBV CH.PST- cook.s.o.\TA -PL -3C -OBV.P

...he set (P) out the roast pig (O) (JS.4.2.40)

8.3.5 Second Obviative

Hockett, (1939b; 1966) describes the use of a second obviative in Potawatomi. The example he gives is shown in (25) which has a doubly possessed nominal. Both nominals are obligatorily obviative, because they are possessed by third persons. The first possessee, *okmesen* ‘his grandmother’ takes one obviative marker, and the second possessee *dennimnen* ‘her husband’ takes two in succession:

- (25) nos okmesen dennimnen
 n-#os #okEmEs -En wEdE-EnEnE -Em -En -En
 1- father grandmother -OBV 3- man -POSS -OBV -OBV

my father's grandmother's husband

He notes however, that in most contexts, two non-coreferent obviatives receive only single obviative marking, as in the following example, where the tree, fellow raccoons, and man are all marked as obviative:

- (26) Iw je o ésben é-gdegozit
 iw jE ow ésEbEn é- EgEdEgOzi -d
 and that.AN raccoon FCT- climb.up\AI -3.C
- neko mtegwén, wich- ésbenen
 nEko mEtEg#O -En w#ij- ésEbEn -En
 used.to tree -OBV 3.fellow raccoon -OBV
- é-mkewat, é-niswébnemwat
 é - mEkEw é- nisEwébEnEmEw -ad
 FCT- find.s.o.\TA -3/3'.C FCT- throw.down.to.s.o.\TA -3/3'.C
- niw neshnabén, neko é-nsat
 niw EnEshEnabé -n nEko é- nEs -ad
 that.OBV man -OBV used.to FCT- kill.s.o.\TA -3/3'.C
- o neshnabé.
 ow EnEshEnabé
 that.AN man

The raccoon (P) would climb a tree (O), find his (O) fellow raccoons (O), and throw them (O) down to the man (O); and the man (P) would kill them (O).
 (HO.005)

Here is another example where there are three referents, and one of the referents is possessed. Neither of the two obviatives, however, is inflected as a second obviative:

- (27) Ni je wgyéywan gi
 ni jE wE- #gyé#y -wa -En giw
 and so 3- mother -35.POSS -OBV those.AN
- gigabésesek gi-majingon
 gigabé#y -s -Eg gi- majin -EgO -En
 boy -DIM -PL PST- take.s.o.away\TA -INV -OBV.I
- nenwen.
 EnEnE#w -En
 man -OBV

'And so a man (O) had taken away the boys' (P) mother (O).' (JS.4.1.002)

Hockett (1966) remarks that second obviative forms are “rare, and perhaps avoided as ‘awkward’” (p. 64). He also notes that there are no instances where a possessor is obviative and the possessee second obviative (related dialects such as Ottawa have forms for obviative possessee). Second obviative forms and possessee obviatives appear to be no longer in use today, at least, there are no instances in the present corpus.¹² Since they were falling out of use in the 1940's when the speech community was still quite robust, and since younger speakers of other close dialects like Ottawa (Rhodes, 1993), modern Potawatomi speakers' use of first obviatives only seems to be the completion of this natural change, although attrition as a factor cannot be ruled out.

¹² The expected form for an obviative possessee would be the suffix {EnEw}, based on the Ottawa suffix as cited in Bloomfield (1958), so ‘his (obv) book’ should show up as *wde-mzenegne*. Hockett’s ‘second obviative’ may in fact be a spurious /-n/, reflecting a strategy used in Ojibwe to avoid final vowel deletion.

8.4 Syntactic obviation

There are several syntactic domains for the control of obviation. These include two obligatory contexts for obviation: within the phrase (obviation of possessees), and within the clause. Across clauses, subjects of main clauses often control the obviation of subjects in subordinate clauses, however the control here is less strong. One additional context is that of ‘sentence clusters’. Each of these contexts is discussed below using data from Potawatomi.

8.4.1 Within phrases

At the level of the phrase, the obviation of a noun possessed by an animate third person is obligatory. The example in (28) shows this obligatory obviation when the possessor is third person, whereas in (29) and (30), first and second person nominals do not trigger the obviation of the possessee.

- | | | |
|------|--|---------------------------|
| (28) | wmeshom <u>sen</u>
wE- mEshomEs -En
3- grandfather -OBV | <i>‘his grandfather’</i> |
| (29) | nmeshomes
nE- mEshomEs
1- grandfather | <i>‘my grandfather’</i> |
| (30) | gmeshomes
gE- mEshomEs
2- grandfather | <i>‘your grandfather’</i> |

Obviative possessees trigger agreement when they are the subject of intransitive verbs. (31) shows this with an animate subject and (32) with an inanimate subject (marked on the verb, but not the NP):

- (31) Wgwesen me ni gi-ntawén.
3.son=OBV EMPH that.OBV PST-make.a.kill\AI=OBV.I

'His son must have made a kill.' (JT.3.41.12)

- (32) Mskwane i wbiskewagen.
be.red\II=OBV.I that.INAN 3.clothing

'His jacket is red.' (JT.3.63.17)

Note that when a possessee is incorporated (in this case, a car), it is not accessible to control:

- (33) Wgi-bigwdabanéshka o Lucy.
3- PST- have.one's.car.break.down\AI.I that.AN

Lucy's car broke down. (JT.1.44.9)

Lastly, conjoined NPs agree in obviative status:

- (34) Iw je zhe zeshpi é-gi-myanénmat
and EMPH a.while.later FCT-PST-dislike.s.o\TA=3/3'.C

[niw kewéziyen mine niw gigabéyen].
that.OBV old.man=OBV and that.OBV boy=OBV

Within a short time, she (P) disliked the old man (O) and the boy (O). (JS.4.2.006)

8.4.2 Within Clauses

Within clauses, when there is more than one third person, only one may be proximate; others are obviative, as in the following example:

- (35) Iw je zhe zeshpi é-gi-myanénmat
and EMPH a.while.later FCT-PST-dislike.s.o\TA=3/3'.C
- niw kewéziyen mine niw gigabéyen.
that.OBV old.man=OBV and that.OBV boy=OBV

Within a short time, she (P) disliked the old man (O) and the boy (O). (JS.4.2.006)

Rhodes argues that beyond this statement of distribution, we can say that control of obviation follows the relational hierarchy, where subjects > primary objects > secondary objects¹³ > possessors of obliques. The following sentences demonstrate control of obviation in Potawatomi, in accordance with this hierarchy:

(36) Subject > Primary object:

I je kezhyép ogeman é-gi-widmowawat
 and early leader=OBV FCT-PST-tell.s.o\TA=35/3'.C
 "Wabozo se wi o ézhchegét."
 rabbit EMPH EMPH that.AN CH.do.things.a.certain.way\AI=3.P

Early in the morning they (P) told the leader (O), "Rabbit is doing that."
 (JS.4.1.006)

(37) Subject > Primary object (benefactive):

Iw je o nene é-gi-wzhekwat
 and that.AN man FCT-PST-build.for.s.o\TA=3/3'.C
 niw kewéziyen mine niw gigabéyen
 that.OBV old.man=OBV and that.OBV boy=OBV
 waj-danet.
 CH.together-live.in.a.certain.place\AI=OBV=3.C

The man (P) built a place for the old man (O) and the boy (O) where they could live together. (JS.4.2.007)

(38) Subject > Primary object (ditransitive verb):

É-gi-dkobdot wéwéne
 FCT-PST-tie.s.t.\TI2=OBJ=3/0.C carefully
 é-gi-majidot é-gi-minat
 FCT-PST-take.s.t.\TI=OBJ=3/0.C FCT-PST-give.to.s.o\TA=3/3'.C
 niw ogeman, "Ode," é-nat.
 that.OBV leader=OBV this FCT-say.to.s.o\TA=3/3'.C

He (P) tied it good, took it and gave it to the chief (O). "Here," he (P) said to him (O). (JS.4.1.017)

¹³ For an analysis of primary and secondary objects in Ojibwe see Rhodes (1990b).

- (39) Primary object > Secondary object (optional for modern-day older speakers):

Nbégwzemwa niw gigosen.
 1-dry.for.s.o.\TA-DIR.I those.OBV fish-OBV

I'm drying those fish for him. (POEX00287)

Li séma(n) wgi-minan Biliyen.
 Lee tobacco=OBV 3.PST-give.to.s.o\TA=DIR=OBV.I Billy=OBV

Lee (P) gave Billy (O) tobacco ((O)). (MD.245)

- (40) Subject > Possessor of oblique

Zhiw wbekwnanek niw
 there back=PL=LOC that.OBV

gagtanagoyen [é-]ne-pepegwzot
 crocodile=OBV FCT-start.to-DUP.leap\AI=3.C

é-ne-gwagwashkze'ot.
 FCT-start.to-DUP.jump\AI.3I=3.C

So he (P) began to leap and jump there on the backs of the crocodiles (O).
 (MD.1.1.043)

Within this statement of distribution, however, lies some controversy. The disagreement centers on the analysis of inverse verbs. Briefly, Potawatomi (and other Algonquian languages) have verbal morphology which indicates whether the inflections for person/number agreement on some transitive verbs are the properties of the subject or the object. In (41) below, the verbal prefix {nE-} in both (a) and (b) is an agreement marker for first person. The direct suffix {-a} in (a) indicates that the prefix agrees with the subject, and the inverse suffix {-EgO} in (b) indicates the prefix agrees with the object.

- (41) a) Ngi-wabma o Njan.
 nE-gi- wabEm -a ow njan
 1- PST-see\TA -DIR.I that.AN John

'I saw John.'

- 'John saw me.'*

(42) a) Wgi-wabman wgwesen.
wE-gi- wabEm -a -En w#gweS-En
3- PST- see.s.o.\TA -DIR-OBV.I 3-son -OBV

*'He_i (P) saw his_i son_j (O).'*¹⁴

- 'His_i son_j (O) saw him_i (P).'*

¹⁴ Rhodes (1993) argues that these examples illustrate the Possessor Constraint, the goal of which is to avoid of conflicts in obviative marking. This constraint rules out as ungrammatical cases those readings in which a subject would be possessed by an object, or where a primary object would be possessed by a secondary object

8.4.3 Sentential (cross-clausal) obviation

In cross-clausal obviation, a third person subject of a main clause controls the obviation of a third person subject in a subordinate clause. In general, this holds for complement, relative, and adverbial clauses:

- (43) Complement clause. (a) and (b) show ‘copying to object’ where the verb in the main clause inflects for the subject of the subordinate clause. So (a) would more literally read ‘he-saw-him a squirrel running along’. In (c) there is a logical relation of subordination, however the second clause is grammatically an adjunct. Note in all three cases, the lower clause verb inflects for agreement with its obviative subject:

- (a) Bama zhe na mine é-wabmat (kwekséyen
later EMPH EMPH again FCT-see.s.o\TA=3/3'.C squirrel=OBV
é-bmebtonet].
FCT-run.along\AI=OBV=3.C

Later on, he (P) saw a squirrel (O) running along. (AS:2:2:021)

- (b) I je o gigabé é-gi-nsaknek
and that.AN boy FCT-PST-open.s.t.\TI=3/0.C
é-gi-mkowat [niw ndemozéyen zhiw
FCT-PST-find\TA=3/3'.C that.OBV old.woman=OBV there
é-jibdebnet].
FCT-sit\AIO=OBV=3.C

So the boy (P) opened it and found the old lady (O) sitting in there... (JT:4:2:046)

- (c) Wika zhe é-gi-bigé-yéket o wizhok
ever EMPH FCT-PST-tired-be.tired\AI=3.C that.AN whale
[zhiw pené é-chikaznet niw gigabéyen].
there always FCT-play.a.game\AI=OBV=3.C that.OBV boy=OBV

The whale (P) got tired of the boy (O) always playing there. (AS:2:1:020)

(44) Adverbial locative clauses

(a) licensed by a relative root, animate subject

I je wsezéyma é-zhyat
and 3.older.brother FCT-go.there\AI=3.C

[éje-nim'edinet].
CH.where-dance\AI=OBV=3.C

So the older brother (P) would go to dances [where they (O) dance]. (JS:4.2.003)

(b) adjunct, animate subject

I je é-byat [ibe angonoyen éje-odankwénet]
and FCT-come\AI=3.C there ant=OBV CH.where-have.a.town\AI=OBV=3.C

When he(P) got to the ant hill...[where they (O) have a town] (JS:4:1:013)

(c) ...é-gi-majinat niw ndemozéyen
FCT-PST-take.s.o.away\TA=3/3'.C that.OBV old.woman=OBV

[ibe wigwamek ga-je-yenet].
there house=LOC CH.PST-where-be.in.a.place\AI=OBV=3.C

...he took the old lady [to the house where she (O) stayed]. (JS:4.2.068)

(d) Ode gigabé é-gi-majit é-gi-byat
this boy FCT-PST-leave\AI=3.C FCT-PST-come\AI=3.C

[odanek neshnabén éyenet]...
town=LOC Indian=OBV CH.be.in.a.place\AI=OBV=3.C

*This boy left and came [to where there was an Indian village]. More literally:
he (P) left / he (P) came to a town / Indians (O) were there* (JS:4:3:029)

(e) adjunct; inanimate subject

Bama zhe na é-byawat [wigwam
soon EMPH EMPH FCT-come\AI=35.C house

ga-ténék]...
CH.PST-be.in.a.certain.place=OBV=0.C

Soon they came to where the house (O) was... (AS:2:3:022)

(f) adjunct, inanimate subject

Ibe zhe na ga-wje-byat
there EMPH EMPH CH.PST-where-come\AI=3.P

é-zhe-gche-majit é-byat ibe
FCT-in.a.certain.way-really-leave\AI=3.C FCT-come\AI=3C there

jajibdebet é-ne-wabet bzhe ibe
sit\AI=3.C FCT-start.to-see\AI=3.C EMPH there

éje-gdegankodnek.
CH.there-be.spotted.clouds\II=OBV=0.P

He ran to the place where he had come from, and when he arrived, he sat down and he (P) began to see spotted clouds (O) there! [AS:1:3:101]

(45) Temporal clause:

Iw je i ga-nakwnegét
and that.INAN CH.PST-plan.things\AI=3.P

é-wi-débmát [pi bwamshe
FCT-FUT-grab.s.o\TA=3/3'C then before

gwabtonet].
run.to.shore\AI-OBV-3.C

The one (P) that planned it would grab him (O) [before he (O) reached land].
(MD:1:1:046)

(46) Manner clause:

"Jo wika weye gkénmasi é-mbot
not never someone know.s.o\TA=DIR= NEG.I FCT-die\AI=3.C

[é-wi-jigwgadénet]."
FCT-FUT-lift.one's.leg\AI=OBV=3.C

"No one was ever known to die with his legs sticking up." (JS:4:1:030)

In general, cross-clausal control of obviation is much weaker than within the phrase or clause. The following examples show cases where clausal obviation fails to hold. In general, temporal clauses referring to time of year as in (47) are not obviative. These types of clauses always have inanimate subjects.

(47) Temporal clause:

I me se ngodek jejakok
that.INAN EMPH EMPH one-LOC crane-PL

é-gche-wzhenwiwat é-nme-dgwagek
FCT-really-get.ready\AI-35.C FCT-getting.to.be-be.autumn-0.C

wéch-gzhaték
CH.towards-be.hot.weather\II-0.P

é-we-bbonsheawat
FCT-go.and.spend.the.winter.in.a.certain.place-35.C

Once when it was getting close to Autumn, cranes were preparing for spending the winter in the south... (AS.1.3.001)

It is also possible for the subjects of complement clauses not to be controlled by obviation. This may be more likely to happen if the complement clause subject is highly topical in the discourse. In (48), for example, *wégwéndek* ‘somebody’ turns out to be Rabbit, the ‘hero’ of the narrative.

(48) Complement clause:

Iw je nish wshkabéwsen é-gi-nokanawat
and two helper=OBV FCT-PST-have.s.o.do.s.t.\TA-35/3'.C

é-wi-kewabmawat [wégwéndek o
FCT-FUT-watch.out.for.s.o.\TA-35/3'.C whomever -DUB that.AN

ézhchegét].
CH.do.things.a.certain.way\AI-3.P

So they (P) had two scouts (O) watch out for [whomever (P) might be doing that]. (JS:4:1:002)

8.4.4 Sentence clusters

The last type of syntactic context for obviation is what Rhodes (1990a) refers to as ‘sentence clusters’. In such cases, adjacent sentences “encode a few very specific semantic relationships, viz. temporal proximity, immediate cause-effect, paraphrase, and a few others” (p. 109). I have found what appear to be analogous constructions in

Potawatomi, although Hockett punctuates them as single sentences.¹⁵ In (49), the clauses are linked by temporal proximity. Just as the old woman approaches the lake, the boy begins to walk off. The third person pronominal subject of the first clause referring to an old woman controls the obviation of the subject of the second clause *gigabéyen* ‘boy (OBV)’.

- (49) Ibe é-byat jik-gchegem; bama zhe
 there FCT-come\AI=3.C next.to-big.lake soon EMPH
 na gete gigabéyen é-nemsénet.
 EMPH for.sure boy=OBV FCT-walk.off\AI=OBV=3.C

She (P) came there to the big lake; soon the boy (O) had started to walk off.
 (AS.2.3.018)

In (50) the first clause provides an example of general behavior, referred to in the second clause. The pronominal subject in the main clause controls obviation of the object, and also of the subject of the second clause.

- (50) É-wabmawat kojésen é-bshkobnanet;
 FCT-see.s.o\TA=35/3'.C bean=OBV FCT-pull.out.s.o.\TA=3/3'.C
 jak zhe na é-zhechgénet.
 all EMPH FCT-do.things.a.certain.way\AI=OBV=3.C

They (P) saw him (O) pulling out beans (O); he (O) was doing all kinds of things. (JS.4.1.004)

8.5 Discourse obviation

Apart from the restrictions on obviation as noted above, particularly as generated by obligatory contexts such as possessee and clausemate obviation, there is choice

¹⁵ Hockett was very particular about his use of punctuation, and in my translations, I have nearly always preserved his sentence punctuation, although have added semicolons within sentences where I have felt the need to mark a clause boundary.

involved in designating the obviation status of nominals. That is, whenever a clause has more than one third person, there is the choice of which nominal to make proximate, and which others will therefore be obviative. For example, given a narrative about two characters, a raccoon and a wolf, it would be grammatical to say either of the following:

- (51) a) The raccoon (PROX) saw the wolf (OBV).
b) The wolf (OBV) saw the raccoon (PROX).

Which form will be used depends on whether the language makes use of discourse obviation. A language with discourse obviation will use it for reference tracking, maintenance of a default ranking of characters to highlight the actions of a “hero”, and for narrative-internal viewpoint (this is done with a temporary reordering of the default ranking known as a ‘proximate shift’) (Dahlstrom, 1988; Goddard, 1984; Goddard, 1990).¹⁶ So given a language (or dialect) with discourse obviation, the expected obviation status of the two nominals would be as in (51a) if the raccoon is the main character in the narrative. If the speaker uses (51b) where the main character is obviative, we would expect to find some kind of focus on the secondary wolf character which prompts the status shift.

While Central Algonquian languages in general have syntactic obviation, not all make significant use of obviation for discourse/stylistic purposes. Rhodes (1985) points out that while some languages maintain proximates for large stretches of discourse (known as “proximate spans”), others have spans approximately equal to a sentence. Examples are reproduced below of Fox, which has discourse-level spans, and Plains

¹⁶ Internal viewpoint is used to shift focus to a character, or to represent the narrative as coming from a particular character’s point-of-view. (See Chapter 6 for a discussion.)

Cree, which has sentence-level spans. In the Fox example all of the proximate references refer to a man, and the obviative references refer to his son. In the second sentence, the son remains obviative, even though there is nothing in this sentence to induce syntactic obviation.

(52) Fox, cited in Dahlstrom (1996):

i·nina·h=_a·hi='pi e·ha_ka_ipwi·ha·_i, me_e·='nah=meko peno·_i
e'h=i_ikhawe·ni_i, i·ya·h e·h=o_i-pemi-kohkihawe·ni_i.
“i·ya·h=_a·h=ye·hapa ki·_i-pye·hapa!” e·h=i_ite·he·_i.

So then, it is said, he (P) got tired of waiting for him (O), and he (P) followed his (P) son's (O) trail leading away. His (O) footprints led pretty far away, and over there his (O) footprints turned back and continued on. "He must have gotten back already!" he (P) thought.

In this Plains Cree example, the proximate referent is reset for each sentence. In the third sentence, the proximate referent resets at the clause level.

(53) Plains Cree, cited in Rhodes (1985)

Ekwa máci-nikamow. Nímihitówak ekwa sísipak; máka pasakwápiwak.
Ekwa pasików Wísahkecáhk; ati-nipahew óhi sísípa, e-ati-tahkamát
oscikwanisiyihk. Kekác e-mescihát, peyak awa apisísisiw napate piko
pasakwápiw. Wápamew. (PCT 44:283, 46)

'So he_i (P) began to sing. So the ducks_j (P) danced, but they_j (P) had their eyes closed. So Wísahkechahk_i (P) got up, went and killed those ducks (O) by stabbing them_j (O) in their_j (O) little heads. When he_i (P) was almost done with them_j (O), one little one_k (P) opened one eye. He_k (P) saw him_i (O).

Dahlstrom (1988) describes narrative uses of obviation in Plains Cree using a glossed example text, and argues convincingly for some discourse uses for internal viewpoint. However, Plains Cree spans are decidedly short, so by looking through any given text, it is easy to find examples where proximate shifts happen relatively quickly. I suspect that this is such an example. Rhodes (1985), however, also gives Ottawa as a

language that has only sentence-level spans, and here it seems to be more clearly the case:

(54) Ottawa, cited in Rhodes (1985)

Bezbig nini gii-mkadekegban. Aw kiwenzii gii-zhitood wiigwaamens waa-dzhi-mkadekenid niw wgwisan. Gaa-giizhtood dash mii gii-webi-mkadeked aw shkinwe. Pane biindig gii-yaa, gye go gii-wezhho gkizhe wmaanwaang. Niibna dsogon gii-yaa maa wiigwaamensing, gii-baabiidood iw gegoo ji-naabndang. Endso-ggizheb dash gii-zhaa maaba kiwenzii ko gii-ggwejmaad niw wgwisan nmanj iidig gaa-naabndamnigwen. Wgii-gnahmawaan niw wgwisan gaa wii nkwetwaasik niw bi-ggwejmigod mandaagninwan iw ji zhwenmigod. (EO 31:1-6).

[Long ago] a man_i (P) fasted. An old man_j (P) having built a little hut where his_j (P) son_i (O) would fast. After he_i (P) got ready, the young man_j (P) started to fast. He_i (P) went into the hut, and painted his_i (P) cheeks with charcoal. He_i (P) spent many days in the hut, waiting to see something. Every morning, the old man_j (P) came to ask his_j (P) son_i (O) if he_i (O) had seen anything. He_j (P) warned his (P) son_i (O) not to answer the well-dressed man_k (O) coming to ask him_i (O) if he_k (O) might bless him_i (O).

If Ottawa represents one end of the spectrum, with only sentence-level obviation, and Fox the other, with copious use of obviation in discourse, then languages like Plains Cree seem to occupy a middle ground.

As will be shown below, Potawatomi also occupies this middle ground.

Obviation in Potawatomi is decidedly syntactic, with spans approximately equal to the sentence. However some narrators make limited use of discourse obviation, with clear efforts made at maintaining proximates, and some legitimate cases of proximate shifts. I will demonstrate the difference by first briefly examining a Potawatomi text with syntactic obviation, *Raccoon and Wolf* in Section 8.5.1. In Section 8.5.2, I examine in detail a text with more complex obviation, *Crane Boy* (the full glossed text of *Crane Boy* is provided in Appendix C).

The analysis of Crane Boy shows that while transitive verbs reflect the use of discourse obviation, intransitive verbs follow the syntactic discourse pattern, and generally have proximate subjects. I argue that a possible bridge between the transitive and intransitive uses of obviation are quote frames (see Section 6.3.2), where intransitive verbs of speech that bracket the direct speech of characters nearly always have a proximate third person subject. Because quote frames in Potawatomi are frequently used to register internal viewpoint (see Section 6.3 for a discussion of internal viewpoint), it seems they have become grammaticalized proximate shifts. I will argue that such cases can provide the means of reanalysis of obviation from discourse-level uses, to obviation only at the level of the sentence and below.

8.5.1 *Raccoon and Wolf*, a text with syntactic obviation

Example (55) below comes from a text that has only syntactic obviation. (This example is reproduced from Chapter 6, example 29; the glossed version can be found in Appendix B.). In each sentence, the proximate nominal shifts so that the subject of the transitive verb of speech is always proximate, and the primary object is always obviative:

(55)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 5 | Gété zhená <u>é-gi-nkwéshkwat</u> mwén. | Sure enough, he (Raccoon, O) <u>met</u> Wolf (P). |
| 6 | "Nshi, <u>gde-ton</u> ne gégo <u>wa-mijyan?</u> "
<u>é-nat</u> éspenen. | "Brother, do you <u>have</u> anything <u>to eat?</u> " he (P) <u>said</u> to the Raccoon (O). |
| 7 | "Jo zhe kwéch bkéji <u>nde-ton</u> <u>wa-mijyan</u>
<u>nawkwék</u> ," <u>é-nat</u> éspen. | "Not much, I just <u>have</u> a little <u>to eat</u> for my own dinner," the Raccoon (P). <u>said</u> to him (O). |
| 8 | Mwé <u>é-natewat</u> , "Wégni je <u>étuyen?</u> " | Wolf (P) <u>asked</u> him (O), "What do you <u>have?</u> " |

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>9 <u>Éspen é-nat</u>, "Mteno zhe na bkéji
gokosh-wzhey <u>ndesa</u>," <u>é-nat</u>.</p> | <p>Raccoon (P) <u>said</u> to him (O), "I <u>have</u>
just a little meat-rind," he (P) <u>said</u> to
him (O).</p> |
| <p>10 <u>Mwé é-nat</u>, "Mojma <u>shemshen</u> o wzhey."</p> | <p>Wolf (P) <u>said</u> to him (O), "Please
<u>feed</u> me that rind."</p> |
| <p>11 I je o éspen msach <u>é-gi-minat</u>.</p> | <p>So the Raccoon (P) finally <u>gave</u> it to
him (O).</p> |
- (AS.4.2)

This is the pattern found throughout the text. Main clause intransitive verbs have proximate subjects, and all main clause transitive verbs are direct, with proximate subjects and obviative primary objects.¹⁷

8.5.2 *Crane Boy*, a text with discourse obviation

The narrative discussed in this section, *Crane Boy*, was told by the wife of the narrator in (55) above (the glossed text is provided in Appendix C). While this narrative shares the same syntactic obviation pattern in main clause intransitive verbs as Raccoon and Wolf, the treatment of main clause transitive verbs is very different, following the principles of discourse obviation. In Section 8.5.2.1, I examine the discourse obviation features of this text. In Section 8.5.2.2, I show that the use of syntactic obviation with intransitives, which are numerically preponderant, tend to mask these discourse obviation features.

8.5.2.1 Discourse obviation features

¹⁷ I am specifically referring to main clauses intransitives here, since subordinate clause intransitives can have obviative subjects by virtue of cross-clausal obviation.

Narrative Summary. A summary of the text is as follows: The story begins with cranes preparing for their winter migration. While the adult cranes plan and prepare for their journey, some of their boys begin roughhousing. One boy breaks his arm, and so his parents must leave him behind, provisioned only with one rabbit, fully expecting that he will succumb to the harsh northern winter. After the cranes leave, an old woman hears the Crane-Boy crying and takes pity on him, bringing him to her house to live as her adopted grandson, and to be taken care of until the boy's parents return. The old woman takes care of another boy, but he talks back and misbehaves, abusing her benefaction. After an incident, Crane-Boy evicts him. In the next episode of the story, the Crane Boy rids the old woman of a pesky big wooden spoon that steals their food. Spring returns, and the boy watches for the cranes. Soon they return and Crane-Boy's parents find their son and are overjoyed that he is still alive.

Ranking of nominals. Several researchers have argued that discourse obviation is determined by rankings of participants in a narrative, and suggest rankings for the discourses they analyze (Dahlstrom, 1988; Dahlstrom, 1996; Goddard, 1984; Goddard, 1990; Rhodes, 1985).¹⁸ So, based on the summary given above, I will assume a ranking of participants as follows (using a cinematic metaphor of stars, leads, supporting cast, and extras¹⁹):

¹⁸ Aissen (1997) chooses not to analyze the ranking of referents in discourse, which she says "is a psychological or cognitive task, not a linguistic one, though some of our best information about this ranking may come from linguistic evidence" (p. 710). As linguistic evidence for cognitive constructs forms the basis of this study, we believe this ranking to be well worth examining from a linguistic perspective.

¹⁹ The fact that I have a ready metaphor to hand demonstrates that participant rankings are natural for narration, and show up for narratives told using other types of media.

Starring role: Crane-Boy. Crane-Boy is the “hero” of the story, that is, the character with whom we empathize the most. He emerges as a character very early in the narrative and remains throughout the rest of the narrative. Much of the narrative is told from his point-of-view.

Lead: Old woman. The old woman is introduced shortly after Crane-Boy, and is a character throughout the rest of the narrative. We also strongly empathize with the old lady as Crane-Boy’s adopted grandmother and benefactress, although she is somewhat distant and mysterious as well: she seems to have mystical powers (she is something of a culture hero), and for part of the narrative, holds the secret of the curse of the Big Spoon.

Supporting cast: Crane-Boy’s parents, the Bad Boy, the Big Spoon. These characters occur only in the periphery of the narrative, or else in single episodes. The parents are introduced briefly at the beginning of the narrative and do not re-appear until the very end. The Bad Boy shows up briefly, for part of an episode. The Big Spoon, although certainly a memorable character, also belongs to a single episode. All of these characters, are, in one way or another, the ‘bad guys’, and serve mainly to highlight the heroics of Crane Boy.

Extras: the other cranes, crane children (boys), rabbit (for food). These characters show up only briefly, and are usually in the plural (showing their non-individuation). They are essentially props.

This ranking can be summarized as follows:

(56)

Crane Boy	>	Old Woman	>	Crane Boy's Parents	>	the other cranes
				Bad Boy		crane children
				Big Spoon		rabbit

If this ranking bears out, we should expect that much of the time, Crane Boy will be proximate, and that he should rarely be obviative. Characters that are less important, or less central, should be proximates less of the time, and occur more frequently as obviative. And this is the case. If we look at NPs, we find that the most important character, the Crane Boy, gets mentioned as a full NP the most (50 references), and *none* of these are obviative. Out of 34 references to the old woman, nearly half are obviative (14, and 13 of these are possessee obviatives—which will be explained below). The meager three NP references to Crane Boy's parents are always possessee obviative.

In main clause transitive verbs, the ranking in (56) generally holds; the highest ranked nominal on this scale is assigned proximate status. In order the proximate status of highly-ranked nominals, which I will refer to as *proximate maintenance strategies*. These include the use of possessed NPs, passive verb forms, and inverses. Each of these is discussed below.

Possessed NPs. One such device commonly found in this text is the use of possessed NPs. For example, the narrator alternates between referring to the old woman

as *mdemozé* ‘old woman’ and *okmesen* ‘his grandmother (OBV)’. *Okmesen*, like many kinship terms and terms for parts of the body, is a dependent noun, which means that is obligatorily possessed. Possessed NPs are obligatorily obviative when the possessor is third person. Since the possessor of ‘grandmother’ in this text is always a third person, Crane-Boy, *okmesen* is always obviative. Similarly, Crane-Boy’s parents are always referred to as *wmezodanen* ‘his parents (OBV)’.

One virtue of using these possessed NPs in a clause with a more topical NP, is they will not interfere with the proximate status of the hero, that is, they do not prompt a proximate shift. In addition, these possessed NPs allow for the maintenance of Crane-Boy’s as the central character in other respects. Consider, for example, that the narrator might have referred to the parent cranes simply as *gi jejakok* ‘those cranes’ and the Crane-Boy as *ni wgweswan* ‘their son (OBV)’. Yet this is not the case; we are told about the actions of Crane-Boy’s grandmother and his parents; not her grandson, or their son.

As an interesting comparison, Dahlstrom (1996) finds that for the text she is analyzing, the narrator appears to *avoid* using possessed NPs, as well as various transitive forms. However, in this case the narrator is trying to maintain multiple proximates (multiple proximates are used when a secondary character shares the status of the main character), so using either a possessed NP or a transitive verb would create obligatory contexts for obviation, and disrupt the dual-proximate status. This means that narrators are not at the mercy of obligatory contexts of obviation, but rather, use obligatory contexts selectively in support of their stylistic goals.

Passive verb forms. Passive verb forms are also used in the maintenance of a proximate. Goddard (1990) notes that passives, as well as detransitivized intransitives,

are a means of suppressing a potential proximate. The most common passive verb in this text is a speech verb: *é-nayek* ‘he/she was told’. Crane Boy is maintained as a proximate from the end of line 51 to line 56, with three uses of this passive in lines 52, 54 and 56. The point of maintaining Crane Boy as a proximate here seems to be so that we will experience the old woman’s reprimands from his perspective.

The use of the passive is also noteworthy in line 35, where there is another instance of a reprimand, this time, though, the recipient is the Bad Boy. First there is a proximate shift from the old woman (who is proximate from lines 31-35) to the Bad Boy at the end of line 35, where the passive is used. At this point, the grandmother becomes a kind of culture hero, cursing the Bad Boy by turning him into a turtle, inventing the creature we know today. This shifts our focus to the Bad Boy, whose new role is introduced in the next line, in an aside to the listening audience: ‘and that’s why the turtle (P) doesn’t know his parents (O).’

Inverse verb forms. A third device used in the maintenance of a proximate is inverse verb forms. According to Dahlstrom (1988), inverses are commonly used “to continue tracking the one salient third person throughout an episode”. There are three types of situations where inverses are used in this narrative: when the subject is a possessed NP, when the subject is pronominal, and in sentences with references to the Big Spoon.

In the first type, which is the most common, the subject is a possessed NP, which is obligatorily obviated. Since the subject is obviative and the object proximate, an inverse verb must be used. As argued above, these instances represent a particular viewpoint by virtue of the NP that is used, and because they are obviative, do not

interfere with maintaining the hero as proximate. The example shown here is uses *ni okmesen* ‘his grandmother’. Other examples with possessed NPs as subjects of inverse verbs occur in lines 6, 8, 43, 58, 77 and 100.

- (57) **Iw se é-yayajmo'got**
 that.INAN EMPH FCT-tell.stories.to.s.o.\TA=3'/3.C
é-bkonyak ni okmesen.
 FCT-be.night\II=0.C that.OBV 3.grandmother=OBV
So his grandmother told him stories at night. (AS:1:3:24)

The second type has inverses with pronominal subjects. This is less common; there are only three such instances in the text; lines 25, 39 and 42. While it is not immediately clear why the narrator chose to use inverses in lines 25 and 39, we will note that the obviative character is in both cases the old woman, and the proximate, is the expected Crane Boy. Line 42 is discussed in the next section.

The third type of inverse occurs when the secondary character, the Big Spoon, is the subject of the sentence. There are seven references to the Big Spoon in the text, five of which have transitive verbs (line 42 with a pronominal reference, and lines 46, 58, 78, and 85). *All* of these are in the inverse. This makes sense as a proximate-maintenance strategy, considering that the object in all of these sentences is the Crane-Boy, the hero of the story, and the Big Spoon is only a supporting character. The narrators use of references to the Big Spoon has a number of subtleties, which will be discussed next.

Big Spoon references. Line 42 is the first reference to the Big Spoon, and he is introduced only as a obviative pronominal, with an inverse verb:

- (58) **I me je wi zhe pené**
 that.INAN EMPH but EMPH EMPH always

So it must be that he would always talk to the boy. (AS:1:3:42)

(59) É-nme-gisékwet mdemozé,
 FCT-getting.to.be-finish.cooking\AI=3.C old.woman
 é-byé-bidgëshkak gche-émkwan.
 FCT-come-enter.with.body\II=0.C big-spoon

When the old lady is almost through cooking, in comes a big spoon. (AS:1:3:51)

²⁰ Interestingly enough, I am no longer a good judge of such things in Potawatomi. I didn't realize the oddness of this sentence until it was pointed out to me by several English speakers who read the translation.

²¹ Another interesting strategy used by this narrator to create suspense is the interleaving of episodes. Events involving encounters with the Big Spoon are interwoven with descriptions of the old woman and boy going about their routine, and of the boy learning how to anticipate his parents' return. This lasts until the climax of the episode in line 99 where Crane-Boy destroys the Big Spoon.

In line 58, the Big Spoon is again referred to as ‘someone’, but unlike line 46, this time the NP *weye* is proximate. However, the verbal agreement marker shows it has obviative status:

- (60) **É-nme-zag'ek**
 FCT-in.the.process.of-go.outside\AI2=3.C
- é-kenongot** **mine** **weye,** **"Wégni**
 FCT-talk.to.s.o.\TA=3'/3.C again someone what
- wa-mijyék** **jejakos?"**
 CH.FUT-eat.s.t\TI=25.P crane=DIM

When he went out, again someone spoke to him, "What are you going to eat, little crane?" (AS:1:3:58)

A parallel case can be found in line 85.

Line 78 raises the animacy status of the Big Spoon by referring to it as *ni nenwen* ‘that man’:

- (61) **Gete** **ga-gish-gwap'ek** **i** **mbish,**
 for.sure CH.PST-finish-scoop.s.t.up\TI=3/0.C that.INAN water
- é-nnatagot** **ni** **nenwen,**
 FCT-ask.s.o.\TA=3'/3.C that.OBV man=OBV
- "Wégni wa-mijyék** **jejakos,"**
 what CH.FUT-eat.s.t\TI=25.P crane=DIM
- é-nayek** **gigabé.**
 FCT-say.to.s.o.\TA=PASS=3.C boy

After he dipped into the water, that man asked him "What are you going to eat, little crane?" (AS:1:3:78)

In the last reference to the Big Spoon in the narrative (lines 98), the NP *iw gche-émkwan* ‘the big spoon’ is used. In direct comparison with line 51 (example (59) above), however, this time the verbal agreement marker is obviative:

- (62) **Bama zhe na é-byé-bidgëshkannek**
 soon EMPH EMPH FCT-come-enter.with.body\II=OBV=0C

iw **gche-émkwan.**
 that.INAN big-spoon

That big spoon came reaching in. (AS:1:3:98)

The following table summarizes the references to the Big Spoon:

Line 42	he (O)
Line 46	someone (O), marked as (O) in verbal agreement
Line 51	big spoon, marked as (P) in verbal agreement
Line 58	someone (P), marked as (O) in verbal agreement
Line 78	that man (O)
Line 85	someone (P), marked as (O) in verbal agreement
Line 98	big spoon, maked as (O) in verbal agreement

Throughout this episode, the narrator gradually increases the salience of the Big Spoon character in several ways. First, by the type of reference: first pronominal, then indefinite, then full NP. Secondly by choice of NP: in one instance, the Big Spoon is referred to as *nene* ‘man’ which is grammatically animate, as opposed to *gche-émkwan* ‘big spoon’ which is grammatically inanimate. Lastly, through subtle and clever use of obviation.

The first interesting use of obviation is with indefinite pronouns. In line 46, the indefinite pronoun is obviative, as are the ones in lines 58 and 85, although here the obviative inflection on the indefinite NP is suppressed. This has the effect of making the indefinite seem slightly more like a proximate. Another use is with definite NPs. As an inanimate, *gche-émkwan* is itself never marked as obviative, its obviative status would only be registered in verbal agreement. In nearly parallel syntactic contexts (an intransitive verb in a main clause), lines 51 and 98 show a contrast in the obviative status of the nominal. In line 51, the verb has proximate agreement suffix, but in line 98, the

agreement suffix is obviative. Although this may seem counterintuitive, I would argue that this use of an obviative agreement marker in fact increases the salience of the referent: it is ‘animate’ enough to not only to trigger an obviative agreement on the verb, but to do so even in the absence of another clausal third person that might trigger obviation. This is a logical place for the spoon to have a relatively high salience, since this is the moment when he reaches to steal their food (we clearly view this from the perspective of the people inside the house), and Crane-Boy splits him in two.

Proximate shifts. While the ranking given in (56) generally holds for transitive verbs, there are a couple of cases where the Old Woman is proximate, and the Crane Boy is obviative. Such instances, where a secondary character is assigned proximate status, are known as “proximate shifts”. According to Goddard (1984), proximate shifts serve to shift our attention or “focus” to a secondary character, or to represent that character’s point of view.

There are two proximate shifts in the Crane Boy narrative. The first takes place in lines 15-18, when the Old Woman discovers Crane Boy. During this span of sentences, the narrative is told from her perspective. She hears someone crying and approaches the sound. The use of the proximate shift has the effect of adding cinematic vividness, but also represents her epistemic stance as being different from our own (a common effect of narrative-internal viewpoint, as discussed in Chapter 6), since we, the audience know this is Crane-Boy, but the Old Woman does not.

The only other example in the text where the default nominal ranking does not hold in a main clause transitive is in line 38, where the Old Woman is proximate, and the Crane Boy is obviative. Since this instance is very short (only one sentence), it is more

difficult to say for certain that it has the function of a proximate shift, however there are reasons to think this is the case. This sentence introduces the Big Spoon episode by pointing out that the Old Woman is behaving oddly, telling the boy every day what she will cook for their main meal. Although, at this point, the audience may suspect something strange is going on, we don't find out until later that this is an effect of the Big Spoon 'curse'. This is therefore a likely instance of epistemic distancing, which is a plausible context for the use of a proximate shift.

8.5.2.2 Syntactic obviation features

Outside of main clause transitive verbs, this text behaves as if it were only governed by syntactic obviation. Main clause intransitives, for instance, are always proximate. The result is that proximates tend to shift very frequently; if there is a sequence of main clause intransitives with alternating subject referents, proximates will shift every sentence. Because main clause intransitives are numerically preponderant, the overall effect is to mask the discourse obviation behavior of main clause transitives.

Most of the rapid proximate shifts that take place accompany the verb of speech *é-kedot* 'he/she said'. Verbs of speech are very common in Potawatomi narrative, and tend to accompany, or bracket every instance of direct speech (see the discussion of Section 6.3.2). The intransitive verb *é-kedot* is by far the most common verb of speech used for this purpose.

I suspect that the regular use of a proximate subject with *é-kedot* is a result of grammaticalization of discourse obviation. That proximates would become obligatory in this context makes sense, based on the fact that proximate shifts reflect narrative-internal perspective, and we have already established evidence that verbs of speech are used in

Potawatomi to mark narrative-internal perspective (generally the narrator's evaluation of the quoted speech—see Section 6.3.2)

Since Potawatomi narratives are frequently short on description and lengthy on conversation, the rapid shift of proximates in intransitives, particularly intransitive verbs of speech, tends to obscure discourse obviation effects. There are many ways that the discourse ranking of nominals is maintained, as we have seen above, but because of the high frequency of this construction, the opposite may appear to be true. Constructions such as these may act as pivots, paving the way for a language with discourse-level obviation such as Fox, to become reanalyzed as a Cree/Ottawa-type with short spans. Potawatomi seems to be in the process of such a shift.

8.6 Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to describe obviation in Potawatomi, including obviative inflection, as well as syntactic and discourse contexts for its use.

While Potawatomi has relatively short proximate spans, I have provided evidence that it has some discourse-level uses of obviation: highly ranked characters tend to be referred to with proximate NPs, speakers use a variety of devices to maintain the hero's proximate status, and beyond this show subtle control of obviation to represent viewpoint and relative character salience.

I have argued that these strategies are largely obscured by the fact that there is an abundance of reported speech in narrative, and that this is a context where obviation has largely grammaticalized to only take proximates. The result is that rapid proximate shifts seem to be characteristic of Potawatomi narrative. It may be that such grammaticalized contexts provide a means of reanalysis of obviation, providing the missing link between

languages of the Fox-type, with significant discourse-level uses of obviation, to an Ottawa-type, where the domain of obviation is more strictly syntactic.

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