Word Order and Discourse in Menominee[*]

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine surface word order in Menominee, and to identify which factors, if any, are correlated with surface variations. In order to do this I conducted a preliminary text-based study tracking the position of overt nominals relative to their clause-mate verbs. I also conducted an elicitation experiment with two native speakers from the Menominee Reservation. The scope of the study is limited to the positioning of arguments (subjects, objects, and second objects) relative to the verb. The results indicate that NPs are most frequently postverbal in Menominee. Furthermore, preverbal occurrence of NPs is correlated with factors associated with discourse focus: indefiniteness and emphasis. A weaker correlation between preverbal position and verb and clause type was also observed.

2 Previous claims about word order in Menominee/other Algonquian languages

2.1 OVS: Bloomfield (1962)

Bloomfield (1962) makes some observations about Menominee word order, which he states in terms of violable tendencies. He lists the types of arguments which tend to be pre- or postverbal as follows:

Preverbal:
- pronouns
- numerals
- objects
- obviative subjects
- heads of relative clauses

Postverbal:
- non-obviative subjects
- objects of a TA inverse verb, if the obviative subject is preverbal

In other words, he claims that the most neutral orders are OVS (TA direct, TI), SVO (TA inverse), and VS (AI, II).

2.2 Free: Guile (2001)

Guile (2001) notes that many permutations of major constituents (S, V, O) are accepted by his informants, and concludes that word order in Menominee is essentially free.

[2.3 SVO: Bruening (2001)

Bruening (2001) found that SVO was the predominant word order in Passamaquoddy for TA direct verbs. He suggests that this is due to A-movement of the

[*] Abbreviations used: TA - transitive animate, TI - transitive inanimate, AI - animate intransitive, II - inanimate intransitive, AN - animate, INAN - inanimate, PRED - predicative, CONJ - conjunct.

proximate argument to some functional head above the surface landing site of the verb. Bruening's analysis predicts that the default word order should be OVS for TA inverse, but the number of inverse clauses in his corpus is insufficient to allow for evaluation of this hypothesis. Note that this is essentially the opposite of what Bloomfield observed in Menominee.

2.4 Obviative inside proximate: Boling (1981) and Junker (2000)

It has been claimed by Boling (1981) for Shawnee and Junker (2000) for Cree that obviative arguments are always closer to the verb than proximate arguments, if both are present (cited in Bruening 2001). This makes predictions only for clauses that contain two overt animate arguments which are both either preverbal or postverbal. Such sentences are few in my corpus, but there are nevertheless several counterexamples in which a proximate occurs closer to the verb than an obviative argument. Therefore I do not consider this issue further.

The consequences of the present study for the other claims above is discussed in section 3.4.]

3 Discourse correlates of word order

3.1 Details about the study

The corpus for the text-based study is four stories told by native speakers of Menominee in 1920-21, recorded by Leonard Bloomfield. Three of the texts were published in Bloomfield (1928): "Tales of the Ancient Time" (#51), "Me'napus Goes A-Visiting" (#74), "The Frog-Prince" (#119). One text is unpublished, taken from Bloomfield's notebook S73-81: "The Bead Man" (from the Smithsonian Archives, provided by fieldwork of Marianne Milligan). The stories are told by different narrators, and represent various styles of Menominee story-telling. The corpus contained a total of 297 clauses with at least one overt NP.

The study tracks the order of three types of arguments relative to the verb:

S: subject of an AI, II, TA, or TI verb

O: object of a TA, TI, or AI verb (the argument that determines animacy in the case of TA or TI; the so-called "implied object" of an AI)

O2: second object of a ditransitive TA verb, e.g. the thing being thrown in *wāēpenamowaew* 's/he throws it to him/her.' This is the object that does not determine animacy of the verb. Note that O2 usually corresponds to the direct object in an English translation.

3.2 Data excluded from this study

There were a number of clauses with overt NPs which I did not include in the counts. I excluded TA passive sentences, as it is not clear to me whether the argument should be treated as a subject or object. I also did not include clauses which displayed the word order V NP V, where the NP was a semantic argument of both verbs, as in this case it was impossible to determine which clause contained the NP. In general, I counted only NPs which were presumably in the same clause (CP/IP) as their verb. Specifically, I excluded from the corpus NPs in clauses which appear to display a left-dislocated structure of the form NP, (optional intervening clauses) V, as in (1), as well as sentences

which have predicative pronouns that take verbal complements in conjunct order, as in both (1) and (2) (excluded nominals in bold).[1] Left-dislocated elements occur at the left edge of the utterance, usually separated from the main clause by initial particles or predicative pronouns and a pause (indicated by a comma in the texts). Predicative pronouns always appear to the left of their complement clause.

(1) **mēkaehsīqneniw**, **enoq** kāēh nāētonaehakeh.
Bead.Man that.one.AN.PRED at.any.rate we.seek.TA.CONJ
'The Bead Man, he's the one that we're looking for.'

(2) **anewen** taeh wāēhtawakapit.
those.INAN.PRED and he.have.earrings.AI.CONJ
'And it is those that he had as earrings.'

3.3 Findings

3.3.1 Text-based study

Word orders encountered:
SV, VS, OV, VO, O_2V, VO_2,
VSO, SVO, OVS, SOV, OSV,
VO_2S, VOO_2, VO_2SO, O_2OV.

Possible correlates of word order that were tracked:

1) NP type
- 1st mention (new discourse referents in the sense of Heim 1982).
- change in discourse status (a previously proximate argument is becoming obviative or a previously obviative argument is becoming proximate)
- pronominals (both personal pronouns and bare demonstratives such as *eneh* 'that.INAN' were counted as pronominals)
- quantified phrases (e.g. 'one girl,' 'someone,' 'everyone')
- obviation value (obviative, proximate, inanimate)

2) Verb or clause type
- verb type (TA, TI, AI, II)
- direct/inverse (TA verbs only)
- relative clause
- clause type (Independent, Conjunct, Imperative)[2]

[1] I have suppressed various details in the examples that are irrelevant to the discussion at hand.
[2] Only one clause in Negative order occurs in the corpus (VO), so this data was not included in this table.

Table 1: Word order by verb type

	AI	II	TA	TI	totals	percent
SV	55	6	17	5	83	42%
VS	80	4	23	7	114	58%
total overt S	135	10	40	12	197	
OV	4	-	21	8	33	33%
VO	6	-	47	15	68	67%
total overt O	10	-	68	23	101	
O_2V	-	-	2	-	2	22%
VO_2	-	-	9	-	9	78%
total overt O_2	-	-	11	-	11	
total each type	145	10	119	35	309	

- Arguments tend to be postverbal, especially objects and subjects of AI verbs, also (but weaker) subjects of transitive verbs.

Table 2: Sentences containing 2 or more overt arguments

	AI	TA direct	TA inverse	TI	totals
VSO		2		1	3
VOS					0
SVO	2	2		2	6
OVS	1	2		1	4
SOV	2	3	1		6
OSV		1			1
VOO_2		1			1
O_2OV		1			1
VO_2S			1		1
VO_2SO			1		1

- Small number of multiple-argument clauses makes conclusions impossible

Table 3: TA Direct/Inverse comparison

	TA direct	percent	TA inverse	percent
SV	11	50%	6	33%
VS	11	50%	12	67%
total overt S	22		18	
OV	20	30%	1	50%
VO	46	70%	1	50%
total overt O	66		2	
O_2V	1	14%	1	25%
VO_2	6	86%	3	75%
total overt O_2	7		4	

- Weak correlation between TA direct subjects and preverbal position.
- Inconsistent with Bloomfield's (1962) observation that non-obviative subjects tend to be postverbal

Table 4: Word order by clause type (Independent, Conjunct, Imperative orders)

	Indep.	percent	Conjunct	percent	Imper.	percent
SV	33	51%	41	34%	0	-
VS	32	49%	78	66%	0	-
total overt S	65		119		0	
OV	13	42%	12	20%	5	45%
VO	18	58%	48	80%	6	55%
total overt O	31		60		11	
O_2V	2	50%	1	10%	0	-
VO_2	2	50%	9	90%	0	-
total overt O_2	4		10		0	
total preverbal	48	48%	54	29%	5	45%
total postverbal	52	52%	135	71%	6	55%

- Greater tendency for Independent order arguments to be preverbal as compared to Conjunct order.

Table 5: Word order by argument type (proximate, obviative, inanimate)

	proximate	percent	obviative	percent	inanimate	percent
SV	52	36%	11	52%	5	45%
VS	93	64%	10	48%	6	55%
total overt S	145		21		11	
OV	10	38%	9	21%	12	36%
VO	16	62%	34	79%	21	64%
total overt O	26		43		33	
O_2V	2	100%	0	0%	2	29%
VO_2	0	0%	2	100%	7	71%
total overt O_2	2		2		9	
total preverbal	64	37%	20	30%	19	36%
total postverbal	109	63%	46	70%	34	64%

- Weak correlation between obviative subjects and preverbal position.
- Confirms Bloomfield's (1962) observation.

Table 6: Word order by discourse factors (new discourse referent, change in discourse status)

	1st mention	percent	new proximate	percent
SV	27	71%	49	43%
VS	11	29%	66	57%
total overt S	38		115	
OV	19	58%	13	28%
VO	14	42%	34	72%
total overt O	33		47	
O_2V	3	50%	2	50%
VO_2	3	50%	2	50%
total overt O_2	6		4	
total preverbal	49	64%	64	39%
total postverbal	28	36%	102	61%

- Strong correlation between new information and preverbal position, especially for subjects.
- No correlation between change in discourse status and preverbal position (cf. Table 1)

Table 7: Word order by argument type (pronominal, quantifier, relative clause)

	pronominal	percent	quantifier phrase	percent	head of relative clause	percent
SV	13	93%	3	100%	9	100%
VS	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%
total overt S	14		3		9	
OV	4	67%	8	89%	1	100%
VO	2	33%	1	11%	0	0%
total overt O	6		9		1	
O_2V	0	-	1	100%	0	-
VO_2	0	-	0	0%	0	-
total overt O_2	0		1		0	
total preverbal	17	85%	12	92%	10	100%
total postverbal	3	15%	1	8%	0	0%

- Strong correlation between pronominals, quantifiers, and relative clause heads and preverbal position.

3.3.2 Elicitation experiment

To test the hypothesis that new discourse referents tend to be in preverbal position, I conducted an experiment with two native speakers of Menominee. Speakers were given a short narrative in English, and were then asked to translate each sentence of the narrative into Menominee. For each sentence, the speakers were asked to identify which (if any) word order sounded best within the context of the story. The story was as follows, with new discourse referents indicated in bold, definite referents in italic. Word orders preferred by speakers for these sentences are given to the right.

1) **Marianne** arrived here. **S**V
2) She made **coffee**. **O**V
3) She got out **cups**. **O**V
4) She poured the *coffee*. V*O*
5) There aren't enough *cups*. V*O*
6) She got out **cookies**. **O**V
7) She had made *apple cookies* yesterday. V*O*, *O*V
8) Then **someone** came in. **S**V, V**S**
9) *Marianne* said hello to him. V*S*
10) And then *Marianne* left. V*S*

We predict that the bold words (new discourse referents) may be preverbal, while the italicized words (presupposed referents) should be postverbal. The experiment confirms this hypothesis, except for the sentence in 7). However, the translation given by the speakers for the OV order was 'and they were apple cookies that she must have made yesterday', indicating that this sentence is in fact a relative clause.

3.4 Conclusions

Motivations for preverbal NPs in Menominee:

1) Unclear
    - independent order (matrix clause) arguments
    - subjects of TA direct verbs

The role of verb- and clause-type in determining word order in Menominee is not clear. Since the correlations found here were weak, it is not clear from the present study whether these are independent factors affecting word order, or whether there is an interaction of syntactic and discourse factors at work here. It is plausible that arguments of the matrix verb would be more "prominent" in some sense, and thus more likely in general to be focused than arguments of an embedded clause. Given the very high correlation of postverbal arguments and conjunct order, one may also want to explore an explanation involving V-to-C raising in conjunct order.[3] However, since it is possible for elements to appear preverbally in the conjunct as well, it seems that obligatory syntactic movement is not the best way to characterize this phenomenon. One feasible speculation is that the verb occupies a higher surface position in the conjunct than in independent order, and that there are several distinct focus positions – at least one of which is to the left of the conjunct verb (call it F1), and at least one to the right of the conjunct verb but to the left of the independent verb (call it F2). This predicts that NPs have more opportunity to raise to above independent order verbs as compared to conjunct verbs. If this is true, however, we expect there to be a difference in meaning between F1 and F2, such that the meaning associated with either is available for preverbal arguments of independent verbs, but only the meaning associated with F1 should obtain for conjunct arguments. The present study does not provide evidence that bears on these questions, and so they are left for future research.

2) Phrase structure
    - relative clause heads

The fact that relative clause heads are preverbal follows from an assumption about Menominee syntax: if Menominee is a head-initial language, the complement to a head (in this case the CP complement of the N head) is always to the right. This assumption is consistent with the clause-structure of Menominee more generally: complement phrases of a verb appear to the right.

3) Discourse focus: indefinites (in the sense of Heim 1982) and focused definites
    - new discourse referent – indefinite
    - quantified phrase – indefinite
    - pronominal – definite focused element
    - obviative subjects – often indefinite

[3] cf. Brittain 2001.

These data are consistent with the findings of other researchers for a range of languages, who have argued that apparent optional variations in surface word order are due to obligatory occurrence of focused elements in a focus position FP (scrambling).[4]

Both new discourse referents and quantified phrases are *indefinite* in the sense of Heim (1982). They require a new discourse referent to be added to the Domain of Discourse, and may not be presupposed. Presupposed information is in general incompatible with focus, unless it is receiving contrastive focus. New information, by contrast, may be (but is not necessarily) focused. Furthermore, Menominee seems to pattern with a subset of the languages which manifest word order focus effects in that focused elements appear to the left of the surface position of the verb, but to the right of wh-phrases or left-dislocated elements.[5] Thus, it seems likely that focused elements in Menominee occur in a position near the edge of the clause, but not above CP – call it Spec, FP for concreteness. (I do not take up the issue of base-generation vs. movement approaches here). Discourse focus is licensed under constrained circumstances, e.g. only indefinite nouns or contrastive definites (e.g. pronouns) may be focused.

The correlation between obviative subjects and preverbal position might also be subsumed under this same phenomenon. Bloomfield (1962) states that the proximate argument "represents the topic of discourse, […] or the person earlier spoken of and already known" (2.34). The obviative, by contrast, is whatever is not proximate, i.e. referents that are not currently the discourse topic. Obviative arguments, then, may be (but are not necessarily) new discourse referents, whereas proximate arguments are necessarily definite. (Note that since proximate arguments can appear preverbally as well, there must be some other way for them to receive focus, perhaps the same type of contrastive focus that emphatic pronouns receive). It seems clear that the proximate/obviative distinction is not identical to the notions definite/indefinite, as (morphological) obviation is defined only for animate nouns in Menominee, and as only one noun per clause may be proximate.

Data for all indefinites, pronominals, and relative clauses:

- 73% of all preverbal arguments (118) are either new discourse referents, quantifiers, pronominals, or heads of relative clauses
- 7 of the remaining preverbal arguments are in exclamatory or emphatic contexts, meaning 79% of preverbal arguments are focused

In conclusion: upon closer examination, word order in Menominee does not appear to be entirely "free"; rather, we have seen that discourse and syntactic factors largely determine at least the position of arguments relative to the verb.

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[4] See e.g. Miyagawa (1997) for Japanese, É. Kiss (2003) for Hungarian.

[5] See Hale et al. (2003). This is in contrast to Slavic languages like Russian in which the focused elements appear at the right periphery of the utterance.

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