SUBJECT AND OBJECT IN NEZ PERCE

Noel Rude

0. Introduction. In Nez Perce there is a three way distinction in the syntactic function of NP's. The subject of a transitive verb suffixes nim (which also marks the genitive), the subject of an intransitive verb is unmarked, and the object of a transitive verb suffixes ne. Nez Perce is of special interest to syntacticians and typologists, not only because of this three way distinction, but also because transitivity, case marking, and word order are governed by differing semantic and pragmatic criteria. This paper is intended as a brief description of some of these criteria with reference to simple sentences. Basic uses of verb and NP inflections will be shown first, and then certain restrictions on the use of these inflections will be considered.

In this paper the term ergative (ERG) means simply the subject of a transitive verb, nominative (NOM) means the undifferentiated subject of either a transitive or intransitive verb, and accusative (ACC) means the syntactic object of a transitive verb. This use of ergative does not imply that Nez Perce has a corresponding absolutive case, but merely that an inflection marks the syntactic subject of a transitive verb. S symbolizes the subject of an intransitive verb.

1.0 Verb inflection. Separate morphemes index person and number in the verb, as can be seen in Table 1.
Table 1. Syntactic functions of verb agreement prefixes

- The prefix ʔe indexes first or second person for both the ergative and accusative cases. The ergative pe (third person) and ʔa (first or second person) are obligatory markers. But ʔa as accusative (first or second person) seems to be an optional marker. The plural markers pe and nees are apparently obligatory whenever plurality is not marked directly on the associated NP. Although ʔe, pe, etc., are listed in this paper with an e, because of vowel harmony they actually occur in verbs as either ʔe or pe or pe or pe etc.

Table 2. Person indexing in the Nez Perce verb.
objec person agreement markers paradigmatically. The
horizontal rows represent the person of the subject;
vertical columns indicate the person of the
object, if any. Note that there are several potential
sources of ambiguity here; some of them are resolved
by directional suffixes, cf. examples (5) and (6).

1.2. Transitive prefixes. As can be seen in Table
2, and pé occur exclusively with transitive verbs.
The single morpheme pé indicates simultaneously a
third person subject and a third person object, as in
examples (1) to (3).

(1) típla?-nim pé-"ewi-ye wéwúkiye-ne
ERG-shoot-PAST* elk-ACC
Típla? shot an elk'

(2) é-yóxo?-ce pélept lekiín-ne
ERG-wait-PRES four o'clock-ACC
He/she is waiting for four o'clock'

(3) vàaço pé-ko-saqa
already go-PAST
He/she already did it to him/her'

The prefix ?E serves three functions. The following
three examples illustrate its use in referencing a
first or second person accusative. See Table 4 for
independent pronouns.

(4) 'tímené? e-hii-yóxo?-cix
you+ACCL 3HOM-wait-PRES+NOMPL
'They are waiting for you all'

(5) ?e-"e-yóxo?-nu'
3HOM-1,ERG-wait-FUTURE
'I will wait for you' (the most natural meaning)

(6) ?e-"e-yóxo?-nu?kum
3HOM-ERG-wait-FUTURE+hither
'You will wait for me'
The prefix ʔe serves three functions. The following examples illustrate its use in referring to a first or second person object.

(7) ḟmené ʔe-hii-yóxoʔ-cix
you+PL+ACC ʔ2ACC-3NOM-await-PRES+NOMPL
They are waiting for you (plural)

(8) ʔ-e-yóxoʔ-nuʔ
2ACC-1,2ERG-await-FUTURE
I will wait for you' (the usual meaning)

(9) ʔ-e-yóxoʔ-nuʔkun
ACC-2ERG-await-FUTURE+hither
You will wait for me'

A second syntactic function of ʔe is to agree with a first or second person ergative NP, as can be seen in (8) and (9) above, and in (10) to (12) below. (Note that ʔe → ʔew / __ _, h)

(10) ʔew-ʔni-me walc
1,2ERG-give-PAST+hither knife
'You gave me the knife'

(11) ʔew-ʔni-ye wóolac-na
1,2ERG-give-PAST Woolac-ACC
'I/you gave it to Woolac'

(12) waáqo ʔin ʔe-síwe-ce
already I 1ERG-cut-PRES
'I am already cutting it'

1.11. Intransitive prefixes. The third syntactic function of ʔe that we will consider is its agreement with a possessed third person subject of an intransitive verb. Compare the following.

(13) haama hii-kóomay-ca
man 3NOM-hurt-PRES
'The man is injured'

(14) haama-nim húusus ʔa-kóomay-ca
man-GEN head 3S-hurt-PRES
'The man's head hurts'
(15) `íñim o-wa-s tíimës
my 3SG-be-PRES book
'it is my book'

(16) háama-nim ciqáamqal pé-konip-e wóolac-na
man-GEN dog 3ERG-bite-PAST Woolac-ACC
'the man's dog bit Woolac'

Intransitive verbs are unmarked for agreement with
first or second person subjects. The prefixe ¿ and
¿í determine transitivity even in imperatives, cf.
examples (19) and (20).

(17) `íin o-wáa-s sooyáapoo
I IS-be-PRES white man
'I am a white man'

(18) ĉalawí `íim o-khu-s
if you 2SG-go-PRES
`íin-ku? tayí o-kí-yú
I also surely IS-go-PUTURE
'If you go, I will surely go too'

(19) ¿e-ciwikíí-n (20) ?e-sepé-wii-n
2SG-return-IMP 3ERG-CAUSE-cry-IMP
'Go home!' 'Make him/her cry!'

The prefix hií references in the predicate third
person nominative subjects as long as there is no
third person object.

(21) tìpsa's hií-we-s nimíipun
Tìpsa's 3NOM-be-PRES Nez Perce
'tipsa's is Nez Perce'

(22) hií-kí-e wewúkiye-nim
3NOM-see-PRES elk-ERG
'the elk sees me(you, us)'

(23) mée hií-háama
where 3NOM-man
'where is the man?'

(24) tìpsép-pe hií-we-s
Lapway-in 3NOM-be-PRES
'he is in Lapway'
1.2 Number agreement. The aspectual suffix often encodes direction ('hither' or 'thither') as well as number agreement with a nominative subject. Compare the following.

(25) ?ew-?ni-se
1,2ERG-give-PRES+NOMSG
'I am giving it to him/her/you'

(26) ?ew-?ni-siix
1,2ERG-give-PRES+NOMPL
'We are giving it to him/her/you'

(27) bii-wii-ce
3NOM-cry-PRES+NOMSG
'He/she is crying'

(28) bii-wi-?iix
3NOM-cry-PRES+NOMPL
'They are crying'

(29) go'c bii-w?e-ce-siga
kaa bii-kuu-ye
'still 3NOM-dance-IMPERF+NOMPL and 3NOM-go-PERF
'They were still dancing when he/she left.'

When singular and plural forms of an aspect are available then number agreement with the subject is obligatory. For those aspectual suffixes that do not encode number the prefix pe agrees with a plural subject. The third person ergative pe and the nominative plural pe are distinguished by position, co-occurrence, and stress.

(30) bii-wii-siga
3NOM-cry-IMPERF+NOMPL
'They were crying'

(31) bii-pe-wi-ne
3NOM-NOMPL-cry-PERF
'They cried'

(32) kaa ?itú 2-pe-kuu-ye
and what 2S-NOMPL-do-PAST
'Then what did you guys do?'

(33) kaa ?itú pe-kuu-ye
and what 3ERG-do-PAST
'Then what did he/she do to him/her?'

(34) bii-pe-wecé-yu
3NOM-NOMPL-dance-FUTURE
'They will be dancing'

(35) bii-pe-héx-ne
3NOM-NOMPL-see-PAST
'They saw me/you'
A plural object is indexed in the verb by nées. Verbs
with nées must be subject marked with pe, ?e, or hii.
The order of verbal person inflections is object-
subject, as already seen in examples (4) to (9). But
the order for number markers is subject-object, as
shown in examples (38) and (39) below.

(36) wéet ʔa-náas-midi-sa
   QUESTION 2ERG-ACCPL-hear-PRES
   'Do you hear them?' (possibly us)

(37) woolac-nim pe-née-s-nil-ye       tii'nes
   Woolac-ERG 3ERG-ACCPL-give-PAST book
   'Woolac gave them a book'

(38) kaa konáa hii-pe-nees-hex-ne
    and there 3NOM-NOMPL-ACCPL-see-PAST
    'Then they saw us there'

(39) kaa konáa pe-pe-nees-hex-ne
    and there 3ERG-NOMPL-ACCPL-see-PAST
    'Then they saw them there'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>p?e</th>
<th>(?e)</th>
<th>hii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(pe) (nees)</td>
<td>Stem (Suffix)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACC ERG/NOM</th>
<th>NOM ACC</th>
<th>Aspect Number (NOM)</th>
<th>Direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Inflectional slots in the Nez Perce verb

2.0 Conditions on case markers. In this section we
will discuss briefly some criteria that decide
transitivity and case marking in Nez Perce simple
sentences. These criteria include person, number,
possession, whether the object is effected or affected,
totally or partially affected, inanimate or human, and
whether the subject is new or old information.
Table 4. Independent pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Ergative/Genitive</th>
<th>Accusative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?im 'you'</td>
<td>?imim</td>
<td>?ime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?ip 'he/she/it'</td>
<td>?ipniém</td>
<td>?ipné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>núw 'we'</td>
<td>núunim</td>
<td>núune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?im 'you(PL)/they'</td>
<td>?iméém</td>
<td>?imené</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1. Person. The non-third person ergative verbal inflection ²a, of course, specifies a verb as transitive. The third person ergative pé, however, is used only if the object is also third person. Thus verbs with third person subjects are undifferentiated as to transitivity unless the object happens also to be third person. The referencing of ergative subjects in the Nez Pierce verb is thus split by person, since third person subjects with non-third person objects do not have ergative agreement. NP's, however, are quite the opposite. Both ergative ?im and accusative ?ód mark third person, but while first and second person independent pronouns have accusative forms, they do not have ergative forms (such forms serve only as genitives). The following examples show that when a transitive verb does not specify an ergative subject the NP does, and when the NP is not marked ergative a transitive verb is. These different conditions on the ergative marking of verbs and NP's thus complement each other. (Note that ?i 'say, tell' has allomorphs ²a and ?, and is transitive only with a human object.)
(40) woolac hii-hi-ce tácw méywi
    Woolac 3NOM-say-PRES good morning
    'Woolac is saying "Good Morning"'

(41) woolac-nim pé-Ø-ne tácw méywi
    Woolac-ERG 3ERG-say-PAST good morning
    'Woolac told him/her "Good Morning"'

(42) woolac-nim hii-hi-ne tácw méywi
    Woolac-ERG 3NOM-say-PAST good morning
    'Woolac told me/you "Good Morning"'

(43) iin 2ew-i-ne tácw méywi
    I 1ERG-say-PAST good morning
    'I told him/her/you "Good Morning"'

2.2. Number. NP's are not case marked when they are
made plural either by verbal agreement or the plural
suffix me. The plurality of subjects seems always to
be indexed in the verb, either by suffix or the prefix
pe. But example (45) shows that nées normally does not
occur when the object NP is marked plural.

(44) hii-pe-héx-ne wewúkiye(-me)(-nim)
    3NOM-NOMPL-see-PAST elk(-PL)(-ERG)
    'The elk(PL) saw me/you'

(45) 2e-ki-ce wewúkiye-me(-ne)
    1,2ERG-see-PRES elk-PL(-ACC)
    'I/you see the elk(PL)'

2.3. Possessed arguments. When a speaker possesses
the object then the verb is treated as intransitive,
cf. examples (46) and (47). Subject- and object NP's
are not case marked if they are possessed. Possession
does not affect the use of postpositions other than
nim and ne, however, as seen in example (53).

(46) 2e-ki-ce yáaxos tewlíikt-ne
    1,2ERG-see-PRES green tree-ACC
    'I see a green tree'
(47) ... see my horse. 18-see-PRES
And I see my horse.

(48) ... dog ERG 3ERG-bite-PAST
that dog bit him/her/it.

(49) ... dog(-ERG) 3ERG-bite-PAST
that man's dog bit him/her/it.

(50) ... dog(-ERG) 3ERG-bite-PAST
That man's dog bit me.

(51) holac pe-x-ne si:kem-ne
holac 3ERG-see-PAST horse-ACC
holac saw a horse.

(52) holac pe-x-ne tipsa's-nim si:kem(-ne)
holac 3ERG-see-PAST Tipsa's-GEN horse(-ne)
holac saw Tipsa's horse.

(53) holac ti:inim ?iniit-pe hii-we-s
knife my house-at 3NOM-be-PRES
The knife is at my house.

2.4. Semantic conditions. In Nez Perce most two
argument verbs, including those involving the senses,
are transitive.

(54) ti:mi:i-ya kiw?kiwi?lec-ne
ERG-hear-PAST drum-ACC
he/she heard (listened to) the drum.

(55) holac-nim ipé-muksi-ye cuu?yem-ne
holac-ERG 3ERG-smell-PAST fish-ACC
holac smelled the fish.

There are some two argument verbs, however, which are
not treated as transitive. These include the copula
wéé speak 'receive', ?awyawx 'find', wéwlug 'want
something', maníi 'make', etc. One aspect of this
semantic split seems to involve distinguishing verbs that effect (produce) the object from those that affect it.

(56) háama híi-we-s nimíipuu
man 3NOM-be-PRES Nez Perce
'The man is Nez Perce'

(57) háama hii-wéwluq-se ?ípt
man 3NOM-want-PRES food
'The man wants food'

(58) háama híi-npí-se kúus
man 3NOM-receive-PRES water
'The man is receiving water'

(59) háama híi-wyáwx-na ?iníit
man 3NOM-find-PAST house
'The man found the house'

(60) háama hii-tii?me-ne tíi?mes
man 3NOM-write-PAST book
'The man wrote a book'

(61) háama hii-hí-ne táºc méywi
man 3NOM-say-PAST good morning
'The man said "Good Morning"'

(62) háama hii-hañí-ya wálc
man 3NOM-make-PAST knife
'The man made a knife'

(63) háama-nim pá-sapiik-a walás-na
man-ERG 3ERG-sharpen-PAST knife-ACC
'The man sharpened the knife'

(64) háama-nim pá-nik-e wálc na hiipinwíws-pe
man-ERG 3ERG-put-PAST knife-ACC table-on
'The man put the knife on the table'

If a human goal is intended then the verb becomes transitive. Dative objects are case marked with the accusative suffix ne and benefactive goals with the benefactive suffix ?aym. Here hañí 'make' requires a suffix (?ení 'give').
(65) ama-nim pé-?hi-me-ne wóolac-na
r-ERG-pi-ERG-eat-PAST Woolac-ACC
'the man ate the meat'

(66) ama-nim pé-?ne wóolac-na
r-ERG-sky-PAST Woolac-ACC
'the man told it to Woolac'

(67) ama-nim pé-?ni-ye wóolac-na
r-ERG-give-PAST Woolac-ACC
'the man gave it to Woolac'

(68) ama-nim pé-?nya-?ny-a wálc wóolac-?ayn
r-ERG-make-for-PAST knife Woolac-for
'the man made a knife for Woolac'

To show that the object is totally affected ne is
omitted. Compare the following.

(69) -hip-e nukú-ne
RG-eat-PAST meat-ACC
'she ate (some of) the meat'

(70) -hip-e la'äm? nukú-ne
RG-eat-PAST all meat-ACC
'she ate (one each of) all the (kinds of) meat'

(71) -hip-e nük
RG-eat-PAST meat
'she ate the meat (all of it)'

(72) -hip-e la'äm? nük
RG-eat-PAST all meat
'she ate all the meat'

2.5. *agmatic conditions.* A third person ergative NP
is usually marked with nim only if it involves new
information, as for example in answer to *esinim
'Who?' or in counterassertion.

(73) pia²-nim pé-hip-e nukú-ne
pia²-ERG 3ERG-eat-PAST meat-ACC
ipia² ate the meat'

(74) pia² pé-hip-e nukú-ne
pia² 3ERG-eat-PAST meat-ACC
ipia² ate the meat'
3.0 **Word order.** Word order is conditioned by aspect. If only one NP argument is present word order seems very free. But when two arguments are present then only SVO and SOV are permitted. For past aspects SVO is obligatory, but for non-past either SVO or SOV are permitted. Older speakers, however, seem to prefer SOV.

(75) **wéětuu típsa?š-nim pé-hip-e**
    no **Tipsa?š-ERG ʒERG-eat-PAST**
    'No, Tipsa?š ate it'

(76) **típsa?š-nim pé-hip-e nukú-ne**
    **Tipsa?š-ERG ʒERG-eat-PAST meat-ACC**
    'Tipsa?š ate the meat'

(77) **típsa?š-nim nukú-ne pé-hip-se**
    **Tipsa?š-ERG meat-ACC ʒERG-eat-PRES**
    'Tipsa?š is eating the meat'
I wish to thank Elaine and Anton Mithorn for providing the bulk of the data for this paper, and James Ward for his many helpful suggestions. Haruo Suki's Nez Perce Grammar (University of California Press, 1970) has been of immense value.

2 Corre Aoki, pp 105-108, for verb inflection, and p 71-83, for substantive inflection. In this paper I do not discuss particle inflection (see Suki, pp 127-131), or the reciprocal and reflexives (pp 90-92).

3 Aoki, p 196, describes ?e as the "third person object prefix" when the subject is either first or second person. My informant prefixes ?e to all transitive verbs with first or second person subject, regardless of the person of the object. This particle is occasionally suffixed: "tewing?ee 'I love you', hikeliqa?ee 'I saw you'. My informant also allows ?e to be prefixed both to itself and to hic (third person nominative), such uses ?e agrees with a first or second person object. This paper does not attempt to distinguish Aoki's "pronatural particle" ?ee (see Aoki, pp 127, 131, and 137) from his "third person object prefix" ?a (p 196).

5 See Suki, p 90, for the benefactive verbal suffix.