A Brief Sketch of Nez Perce Syntax

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0. Introduction.

Several individuals familiar with my publications dealing with Nez Perce syntax have expressed a desire to see a more purely structural description of the fundamentals of the system — the Nez Perce subject and direct object. That is the purpose of this paper.

While my purpose here is not a description within any currently popular theoretical framework, it is nevertheless hoped that those of any persuasion will find this paper valuable. Nez Perce is a language, it would seem, just made for syntactic theoreticians.

Relational Grammar (Perlmutter [1983-1984]) considers subject and object as syntactic primitives completely definable on a non-semantic, non-functional basis. Hopper and Thompson (1980), on the other hand, propose several semantic/pragmatic criteria involved in the morphology and syntax of transitivity.

Let us assume that languages develop transitive structures, as opposed to intransitive structures, in order to encode propositions with both agent and patient. And then let us also recognize that this encoding almost never operates on a purely logical basis (see Givón [1982]). The prototypical transitive event involves not only an agent and a patient, it involves a high degree of volitionality and affectedness, as well as participants which have some relevance in a discourse. Quite often in the world’s languages, transitivity marking is predicated more on these pragmatic factors than on the mere logical presence of an agent and a patient.

Now while there is probably no way to separate these syntactic units (S and O) from the semantic/pragmatic functions they serve, a purely structural description of them and their interaction within a larger syntactic context is nevertheless interesting.

Nez Perce is a highly inflected language. NPs are case marked, and there is verbal agreement with both subject and direct object for both person and number. In addition, Nez Perce possesses an elaborate voicing system for which this inflectional morphology is highly sensitive. These Nez Perce inflectional morphemes, in other words, are not mere semantic or pragmatic markers. They are all part of an interconnected whole in which a modification in one part will have consequences throughout the system. There is a difference between grammatical morphemes like, for example, most prepositions in English for which there is a more independent existence than, say, the direct object NP suffix -ne in Nez Perce. In Nez Perce the ergative NP suffix -nim, and the verbal prefixes pē-, -e-, and pēe- (as well as other morphology) are all dependent on the existence of a syntactic direct object which, if coded by an NP, will be case marked with -ne.

Such a situation provides an excellent opportunity to investigate the meaning of grammaticalization, syntacticization, syntactic processes and/or rules.

1. Three way system.

Subjects and objects are classified within a three way system in Nez Perce. The subjects of transitive verbs are not treated the same as the subjects of intransitive verbs, and in addition Nez Perce uniquely categorizes its direct object. The system is as defined by NP case marking, verbal agreement for person, and certain behavioral characteristics. This three way system includes

1.1. NP case marking.

Nez Perce case marks NPs within a three way system such that the subject of an intransitive verb is unmarked, as in the following.

1) hitn'6xne hłama
   he died
   'The man died'

The subject NPs of intransitive verbs are always unmarked, even when highly volitional, as in example 2 below.

2) hi6xlayan hłama
   he arrived
   'The man arrived'

In a transitive clause, however, both agent and patient NPs are case marked. In example 3 below the ergative marker -nm is suffixed to the agent NP, while the direct object marker -ne is suffixed to the patient NP.

3) wew'diyne pē'wiye hłama-nm
   elk-DO
   he shot it man-ERG
   'The man shot an elk'

The suffix -nm (and its allomorphs -nim, -is, -m) is not purely an agent marker. This is because it is only found in transitive clauses, never in intransitive clauses no matter how agentive or volitional the subject. The suffix -nim thus marks the ergative case in Nez Perce.
1.2. Subject-verb agreement for person.

Now, in addition to the distinction in NP case marking, the verb in Nez Perce agrees with the subject of transitive verbs via a different set of morphemes than those which function in verbal agreement with an intransitive subject. The verbal prefixes *hi-*(for 1st/2nd person) and *bi-*(for 3rd person) mark subject agreement in intransitive clauses, as in examples 4-6. The pronoun NPs are employed only for emphasis or contrast.

4) *'i-pǎy-na* ('fin)
   1/2NON-arrive-ASP
   'I arrived'

5) *'i-pǎy-na* ('tim)
   1/2NON-arrive-ASP
   'You arrived'

6) *'i-bí-pǎy-na* ('api)
   3NON-arrive-ASE he/she/it
   'He/she/it arrived'

In transitive clauses, as illustrated in examples 7-9, subject-verb agreement is accomplished by prefixing *'e-*(for 1st/2nd person) and *pē-* (for 3rd person).

7) *'i-mē-ne 'e-"wi-ye* ('fin)
   deer-DO 1/2TR-shoot-ASP
   'I shot a deer'

8) *'i-mē-ne 'e-"wi-ye* ('tim)
   deer-DO 1/2TR-shoot-ASP
   'You shot a deer'

9) *'i-mē-ne pē-"wi-ye* qlema-im
   deer-DO 3TR-shoot-ASP old man-ERG
   'The old man shot a deer'

2. Nominative subject.

On the basis of what we have seen so far, Nez Perce has not just one but two categories of syntactic subject: an intransitive S and an ergative S. However, other factors in Nez Perce define a broader category of nominative subject.

2.1. Number agreement.

Subject-verb agreement for number is accomplished via three different systems in Nez Perce, depending on verbal aspect or mood.

2.1.1. The number markers *-es* and *-ii*.

In the progressive and habitual aspects, as well as in what Aoki (1970:114-115) calls "conditional" (with meanings 'can, could, would,' etc.), subject-verb agreement for number is encoded via the suffixes *-es* (singular) and *-ii* (plural). In the present progressive these take the form *-e*(-e by vowel harmony) and *-ii/-ii*. Examples 10 and 11 illustrate this contrast with 3rd person subjects.

10) *hi-pǎy-c-e* ḥhāma
   3NON-arrive-PROG-SGNON man
   'The man is arriving'

11) *hi-pǎy-c-ii* ḥhāma
   3NON-arrive-PROG-PLNOH man
   'The men are arriving'

That Nez Perce subject-verb agreement for number is not sensitive to person can be seen in the following two examples where the same contrast (*-e* versus *-ii*) is made with 1st person subjects.

12) *'i-pǎy-c-e* ('fin)
   1/2NON-arrive-PROG-SGNON
   'I am arriving'

13) *'i-pǎy-c-ii* ('fin)
   1/2NON-arrive-PROG-PLNOH
   'We are arriving'

Subject-verb agreement for number operates on a nominative basis where the agentive subjects of transitive verbs are treated the same as the subjects of intransitive verbs. This is illustrated in the following four examples with the transitive verb *tama* 'hit'. In 14 and 15 the subjects are 1st person, while in 16 and 17 they are 3rd person nouns.

14) *'a-tama*-c-e* ('fin)
   1/2TR-hit-PROG-SGNON
   'I am hitting him/her/it'

15) *'a-tama*-c-ii* ('fin)
   1/2TR-hit-PROG-PLNOH
   'We are hitting him/her/it'

16) *pē-tama*-c-e* ḥāma-ma
   3TR-hit-PROG-SGNON man-ERG
   'The man is hitting him/her/it'

17) *pē-tama*-c-ii* bahāam-sim
   3TR-hit-PROG-PLNOH man-ERG
   'The men are hitting him/her/it'
2.1.2. The plural prefix pe-.

In the perfective, the perfect (present relevance), and future aspects plural subject-verb agreement is encoded via the prefix pe- (pe- by vowel harmony). The absence of pe- indicates a singular subject. Examples 18 and 19 illustrate this contrast in the perfective aspect with 1st person subjects.

18) Œ-pa-ala (tin)
   1/2MOM-arrive-PERF
   'I arrived'

19) Œ-pe-ala (ndun)
   1/2MOM-PLHOM-arrive-PERF we
   'We arrived'

Once again number agreement via pe- is completely separate from person marking, as examples 20 and 21 (contrasted with 18 and 19 above) show. In the two examples below the subject is the 3rd person noun sik'tem 'horse'. Non-human nouns, in contrast with human nouns such as in 16 and 17 above, normally have no plural forms, their plurality being marked only in the verb.

20) pi-ala sik'tem
   3NOM-arrive-PERF
   'The horses arrived'

21) pi-pa-ala sik'tem
   3NOM-PLHOM-arrive-PERF
   'The horses arrived'

Subject-verb agreement for number with pe- also operates on a nominative basis. Examples 22 and 23 illustrate this contrast with 3rd person subjects and the transitive verb pe-ka 'eat' in the perfective aspect.

22) pe-ka sik'tem
    3TR-eat-PERF
    'The horse ate it'

23) pe-pe-ka sik'tem
    3TR-PLHOM-eat-PERF
    'The horses ate it'

2.1.3. The imperative plural suffix -tx.

In the imperative a plural subject is marked by the verbal suffix -tx. The imperative with a singular subject is marked by various suffixes, -1, -2, -3, -4, all predictable on the basis of phonology and verb stem type. The following provides a contrast between singular and plural subjects with the verb klium 'come'. Structurally, 24 is identical to klium 'I you have come', while 25 is unambiguously an imperative because of the suffix -tx.

24) Œ-klium-ndun
    1/2MOM-go-hither-SGIMP
    'Come!'

25) Œ-klium-tx
    1/2MOM-go-hither-PLIMP
    '(You all) come!'

Number marking with the verbal suffix -tx also operates on a nominative basis, as the following two examples (contrasted with 24 and 25 above) show. In example 25 -tx marks plural the subject of an intransitive verb, while in example 27 the same suffix -tx marks plural the subject of a transitive verb.

26) 'a-šëna-ka
    1/2TR-carry-hither-SGIMP
    'Bring it!'

27) 'a-šëna-ka-tx
    1/2TR-carry-hither-PLIMP
    '(You all) bring it!'

2.2 First and 2nd person NPs.

One more structural criterion defines a nominative subject in Nez Perce, and that is the form of 1st and 2nd person independent pronouns. Third person NPs in Nez Perce are case marked within a three-way system (as described in 21 above), and this three-way distinction holds for 3rd person independent pronouns, as can be seen in table 1. Table 1, however, gives no ergative forms for any of the non-3rd person independent pronouns. This is because 1st and 2nd person NPs are never case marked ergative in Nez Perce. With them the contrast is nominative accusative, as illustrated in the following three examples. In 28 'tin 'I' is the subject of an intransitive verb and in 29 the subject of a transitive verb, while in 30 the accusative form 'tin 'me' occurs.

28) 'tin Œ-to-ši-ka
    1/2NOM-go downstream-PERF
    'I went downstream'

29) 'tin Œ-ši-ye
    1/2NOM-shoot-PERF
    'I shot the whitman'

Table 1. Independent pronouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unmarked</th>
<th>Ergative</th>
<th>Direct Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>'fin</td>
<td>'fin</td>
<td>'fin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>'fin</td>
<td>'imenš</td>
<td>'ipnim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>'ipš</td>
<td>'ipš</td>
<td>'ipš</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>nùšun</td>
<td>nùšune</td>
<td>nùšune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>'imš</td>
<td>'imunš</td>
<td>'imunš</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>'imš</td>
<td>'imunš</td>
<td>'imunš</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Direct object.

In this section the structural description of the Nez Perce direct object is divided into a consideration of morphological and behavioral characteristics. In addition, this section also considers the semantic and clausal scope of the direct object.

3.1. Morphological characteristics.

The existence of a direct object is marked by affixes in various parts of the clause; on the NP (both subject and direct object), in the verb and on certain adverbials.

3.1.1. The NP suffix -ne.

The direct object NP, noun or pronoun, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person, singular or plural, human or non-human, is case marked with the suffix -ne (sometimes -y after 1 or 3). Some examples:

33) pit'fini-ne 'e-hēz-ne girl-DO 1/2TR-see-ASP
   'I saw a girl'

34) 'fin-g he-'swi-m tiišēqa-m 1SG-DO 3MON-shoot-ASP enemy-ERG
   'The enemy has shoot me'

35) 'su-'nikš-a-m əbog-na hipinwē-see-pe 1/2TR-put-ASP-3GMON spoon-DO table-LOC
   'I am putting the spoon on the table'.

The only exception to case marking NPs as direct object involves the indeclinable pronouns 'ē' you' (SG), 'ēxš' you' (PL), kiy 'we/us', and kiy 'they'. These, unlike the other pronouns listed in table 1, are never case marked at all. Usually other NPs (as in example 36 below) or subject-verb agreement (as in examples 37 and 38) disambiguates the subject or direct object status of these indeclinable pronouns.

36) 'fin-g 'ēxš-'swi-yu'
   1SG-DO you 1/2TRN-shoot-ASP
   'You will shoot me'

37) 'ēxš-he-'swi-yu'
   you 3MON-shoot-ASP
   'He/she will shoot you'

38) 'ēxš-'swi-yu'
   you 1/2TR-shoot-ASP
   'You will shoot him/her/it'.

Sometimes, however, there is structural ambiguity, as in example 39.

This of course is typically resolved by context.
39) 'le *-lew-yu'
you 1/2NOM-shoot-ASP
'I will shoot you' or 'You will shoot me'

3.1.2. The NP suffix *-nim.

The ergative NP suffix *-nim serves two functions. One is to identify the NP subject of a transitive verb. For example, in 40 below
*nim marks *katway 'old woman' as the subject. By contrast, in 41 *-na
marks the same noun as direct object.

40) pëe-*'ui-ye *katway-*nim
3TR-shoot-ASP old woman-ENG
'The old woman shot him/her/it'

41) pëe-*'ui-ye *katway-na
3TR-shoot-ASP old woman-DO
'He/she shot the old woman'

The other function of *-nim (the one which most concerns us here) is to mark transitivability. In example 43 below, the only marker of transitivability
—and thus the only indication that there is a direct object — is
*nim. This is because the intransitive *hi- (besides 3rd person subject
agreement) indicates one of two things when prefixed to a transitive
verb: either that there is no implied direct object, as in example 42
below, or that the direct object is 1st or 2nd person (which will be
considered in greater detail in §3.2.1, below). In example 43, the
ergative NP suffix *-nim is the only overt indicator of the fact that
there is a direct object.

42) hi-*mc'it-ya hëama
3NOM-listen/hear-ASP man
'The man listened/heard'

43) hi-*mc'it-ya hëama-*nim
3NOM-listen/hear-ASP man-ENG
'The man heard/listened to me/you'

The ergative NP suffix *-nim/*-na is a syntactic marker in Hix Prence, one of
the morphological markers of transitivability.

3.1.3. The verbal prefixes *-e- and pëe-.

We have already encountered the verbal prefixes *-e- and pëe-,
beginning with §1 above. They are here presented in table 2, where they
are contrasted with the intransitive verbal person markers *-a- and *hi-.
Suffice it to say that *-e- and pëe- are markers of transitivability,
sometimes the only overt indicators of transitivability in a clause, as is
illustrated by the following two examples with the transitive verb
mic'it 'hear/listen'. In 44 the intransitive prefix *hi- can imply the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Subject-verb person markers.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>INTRANSITIVE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st/2nd person 0-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person hi-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRANSITIVE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st/2nd person *e-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person pëe-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44) *hi-*mc'it-ya
3NOM-listen/hear-ASP
'He/she heard/listened'

45) pëe-*mc'it-ya
3TR-listen/hear-ASP
'He/she heard/listened to him/her/it'

3.1.4. The plural direct object verbal prefix *nae*-.

The number marking strategies described above (in §2.1) all
indicate a nominative subject. Plural direct objects, on the other
hand, are marked by the verbal prefix *nae*- in example 46 below, *nae-
refers to one of three markers of transitivability, together with the transitive
subject-verb person agreement marker *-a- and the direct object NP
suffix *-na. Also, in this example *nae- is the only marker of the plural
status of the direct object. The NP *nae-*-*sik'ees- 'horse' is
itself not marked plural.

46) *sik'ees-*hee-*nae-*sik'ees-ns
1/2TR-PLDO-see-ASP horse-DO
'I saw the horses'

Sometimes *nae- also is the only marker of transitivability in a clause.
For example, consider the following: in 47 there is no marker of
transitivability, which indicates the suppression of the patient, while in
48 the only indicator of the fact that there is a direct object is the
verbal prefix *nae-*. It should also be noted that *nae- marks only
the plurality of a direct object, not person. The reason for the 2nd
person direct object in 48 will be discussed in §3.2.1, below.
Table 3. The pronounal clitics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive</td>
<td>ñ</td>
<td>-ñ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee only</td>
<td>-m</td>
<td>-perm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td>-ma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47) ø-néx-c-e 'fin
   1/3Nom-see-ASP-SGNom I 1 'I see'

48) ø-néx-hex-c-e 'fin
   1/2Nom-VLbō-see-ASP-SGNom I
   'I see you all'

3.1.5. The prounominal suffixes.

In Nez Perce, the subordinating particle ke and various adverbials inflect for agreement with both subject and direct object within the clause. There is agreement only with 1st and 2nd person, never 3rd person arguments, and only 2nd person (the hearer) has a special plural form (for 1st person, plurality is indicated only in the verb). The morphemes are presented in table 3 (for other details, see also Aoki [1970:127-131], and Hopper (1985:134-139)). The inclusive suffix -m no doubt decomposes into the prounominal formative -m 'I' and -m 'you'. These suffixes agree with either subject or direct object, as the following contrast shows. Note how it is the verbal prefix that disambiguates. Also, note that in example 50 the prounominal suffix -m is the only marker of transitivity. In example 51 the absence of -m (or other prounominal suffix) indicates no direct object.

49) 'éete-æ 'a-héx-ne
   surely-you /2TR-see-ASP
   'Surely you see him/her/it'

50) 'éete-æ he-héx-ne
    surely-you 3Nom-see-ASP
    'Surely he/she sees you'

3.2. Behavioral characteristics.

In this section are discussed the various behavioral characteristics of the direct object in Nez Perce, rather than the specific morphemes that mark transitivity.

3.2.1. Detransitivization by 1st/2nd person direct objects.

As was shown in 3.2. above, 1st and 2nd person subject NPs of transitive verbs are never marked ergative. Conversely, direct object NPs are case marked with -m no matter what their person. However, when a direct object is 1st or 2nd person, the verb is treated as though intransitive. That is, subject-verb agreement is accomplished via the same set of prefixes (ø- for 1st/2nd person), h- for 3rd person) as in intransitive clauses. In example 52 below the verbal prefix h- agrees with a 3rd person subject in an intransitive clause, while in example 53 the verbal prefix pae- marks a 3rd person subject in a transitive clause. However, in example 54 where the direct object is 1st person, the verbal prefix h- (the same as is prefixed to the intransitive verb in example 52) marks a 3rd person subject.

52) h-π̄e-π̄a-ne b̄ām̄a
    3Nom-arrive-ASP man
    'The man arrived'

53) π̄e-tām̄a-ne b̄ām̄a-ne
    3tr-hit-ASP man-DO
    'He/she hit the man'

54) h̄-t̄ām̄a-ne 'f̄īn-m
    3Nom-hit-ASP Sg-DO
    'He/she hit me'

From now on in this article 'e- will be glossed 1/2/3 and pae- 3p, thus indicating the fact that both verbal prefixes not only mark the person of the subject, they also mark the 3rd person status of the direct object. Nevertheless, it must be noted that these are the only verbal markers of the person of the direct object. Both ø- and h- , which in a transitive clause can indicate 1st or 2nd person direct object, are also person markers in intransitive clauses. Hopper and Thompson (1980) have noted, the prototypically transitive event involves a 3rd person patient object.

3.2.2. Detransitivization by plural direct objects.

According to Hopper and Thompson (1980) the prototypically
transitive event also involves an "individuated", that is a singular, object. This factor may be reflected in Nez Perce by the fact that the verbal prefixes pâg- and nax-pâg- cannot co-occur; when both subject and direct object are 3rd person, a plural direct object detransitivizes the verb in that the transitive pâg- must be replaced by the intransitive hi-. The result is the ambiguity of example 57. In 55 and 56 the person of the direct object is indicated by the prefixes ñ- versus e-, but in 57 where the subject is 3rd person and the direct is plural, the person of the direct object cannot be indicated in the verb.

55) ñ-nax-pâg-ñe 'ñim
1/ZHM-FLDO-see-ASP I
'I saw you all'

56) e-nax-pâg-ñe 'eim
1/2-3-FLDO-see-ASP I
'I saw him'

57) hi-nax-pâg-ñe
3HOM-FLDO-see-ASP
'He/she saw them' or 'He/she saw us'

3.2.3. The antipassive of coreferential possession.

The Nez Perce antipassive has been described in Rude (1982, 1985, etc.), where its primary motivation is discourse/pragmatic. This function is applicable here, since one of the behavioral characteristics of the direct object is that it be pragmatically salient. A patient object must have some degree of importance in discourse before the morphology of transitivity discussed in §3.1. will occur. The sentence below is an example of the Nez Perce antipassive voice construction. Note that, even though example 58 encodes a proposition with both agent and patient, neither HP is case marked and the verbal person prefix is the intransitive hi-.

58) ññwî-e hi-nax-pâg-ñe hâama
rop ññwî-3HOM-bring-ASP man
'The man brought rope'

The main point of this subsection, however, is one particular function of the Nez Perce antipassive which is not specifically determined by discourse/pragmatic factors. In Nez Perce, when a possessor of the direct object is coreferential with the subject, the antipassive is used. For example, the transitivity of 59 below precludes the interpretation that the child belongs to the man. If the child does belong to the man, this can only be coded by the antipassive, as in example 60. See Heath (1976) for a typology of antipassive constructions.

Table 4. Reflexive verbal prefixes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>PLURAL</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>'inâh-</td>
<td>namâh-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>'image-</td>
<td>'image-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>'ipâh-</td>
<td>'ipâh-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

59) miya'hâ-na pâg- 'nax-pâg-ñe hâama-ñe
child-DO 3-3-bring-ASP man-ERG
'The man brought a child'

60) miya'hî-ñe 'nax-pâg-ñe hâama
child 3HOM-bring-ASP man
'The man brought his child'

3.2.4. Reflexivization.

Reflexivization is marked in Nez Perce by the verbal prefixes given in table 4. These are, for the most part, the objective forms of the independent pronoun of table 1. Unlike the reflexive HPs of English (myself, yourself, himself, etc.), the reflexive verbal prefixes of Nez Perce function only to encode direct objects coreferential with the subject. Thus one of the behavioral characteristics of the Nez Perce direct object is that it is always non-coreferential with the subject. And the Nez Perce reflexive is used only when a direct object would be coreferential with the subject. The following are two examples of the Nez Perce Reflexive. Note that the reflexive is an intransitive construction, as the unmarked HP 'sâvat 'woman' in example 62 shows.

61) 'inâh- 'i-yê
1/SGREFL-shoot-ASP
'I shot myself'

62) 'ipâh-ñe-ñe 'sâvat
1/3SGREFL-see-ASP woman
'The woman saw herself'

3.2.5. Reciprocals.

The same that was said above of the Nez Perce reflexive can also be said of the reciprocal, which in Nez Perce is marked by the verbal
prefix pfi-. The reciprocal prefix pfi-, which conveys the notion 'each other', is indifferent to person and never co-occurs with any of the Nez Perce person markers. While English permits each other as an oblique object (e.g. with/for/by each other), Nez Perce allows pfi- to mark reciprocal action only between a subject and what would otherwise be a direct object. Thus one of the behavioral characteristics of the Nez Perce direct object is that if there is reciprocal action between it and the subject, there is a detransitivization (as with the reflexive) and the verb is marked by the prefix pfi-. Human subjects of reciprocals have plural agreement in the verb, but only in those aspects where it is marked by -i(l)x, as in examples 63 and 64 below. In examples 64 and 65 are lat person reciprocals, and 65 illustrates the lack of plural agreement in the perfective aspect.

63) pfi-vaspcti'yaw-c-ix hâhâm
   RECIP-kill-PROG-PLNUM men
   'The men are killing each other'
64) nûm pfi-x-ix
   we RECIP-sea-PROG-PLNUM
   'We see each other'
65) nûm pfi-x-ix
   we RECIP-see-PERF
   'We saw each other'

3.2.6. Passivization.

Another behavioral characteristic of the Nez Perce direct object is that it becomes a subject in its counterpart passive construction. The following two sentences illustrate this contrast. Example 66 is a basic transitive construction in which both NPs are case marked, and the verb contains the transitive morphology, which here is the plural direct object marker nêc- (nêc- before the glottal stop). Example 67 is the passive equivalent of 66. The Nez Perce passive happens to be very similar to the English passive in that the verb occurs in a stativized form with agreement and tense/aspect marked in the copula. There is in Nez Perce, however, no equivalent to the English agentive "by-phrase". While the semantic patient in 66 is a direct object with its NP case marked by -ge and plurality marked by the verbal prefix pe-, the NP of the semantic patient in 67 is unmarked and its plural number is marked by the verbal prefix pe-, all of which are features of the subject of an intransitive verb.

66) lepît-ne wëwëkiye-ne hi-nêc- 'wi-yë hâhâm
   +DO two-DO elk-DO 3NOM-PLDUM-shoot-ASP man-ENK
   'The man shot two elk'
67) lepît-wëwëkiye 'nëy-fiq hî-ge-udak-e
   two elk shoot-STAT 3NOM-PLDUM-be-ASP
   'Two elk were shot'

3.3. Semantic scope of the direct object.

The Nez Perce direct object is much more a syntactic than a semantic entity. Patient objects are not always direct objects (for which refer to §3.2.3. above), and sometimes other semantic roles are direct objects (the topic of §3.3. of this paper). Although this paper will not dwell on it, it is discourse/pragmatic that is the determining factor in the selection of the Nez Perce direct object.

3.3.1. Bitative.

In Nez Perce the dative goal of a ditransitive verb is always the direct object. The patient never is; its NP is never case marked, it never controls verbal agreement, and it has none of the behavioral properties of the direct object. Since all ditransitive clauses the dative has all the properties of the direct object it is the syntactic direct object. And therefore Nez Perce has no syntactic dative (indirect object). The following is an example.

68) hâhâm-nâm pû-m'yan-ye 'kâyôtô-nâm til'âms
   man-ENK 3-j-give-ASP woman-DO book
   'The man gave the book to the woman'

For all verbs of speaking only the addressee (the dative goal) is candidate for direct object. Just as the patient in the ditransitive clause in 68 above has no grammatical marker, so in the ditransitive clause in 69 below there is no grammatical marker. Nez Perce has no indirect quotation.

69) hâhâm-nâm pû-û-nâm 'kâyôtô-nâm, tâ'c mëyâwî'
   man-ENK 3-j-say/tell-ASP woman-DO good morning
   'The man told the woman, "Good Morning!"'

3.3.2. Non-patient/dative direct objects.

In Nez Perce, non-patient arguments (benefactives, associatives, various goals, etc.) become direct objects when of sufficient discourse-pragmatic importance (as outlined, for example, in Rude [1985a: Chapter VI]). Both of the following sentences contain the intransitive verb play/pay 'arrive' plus a semantically oblique locative object. In the first example the locative NP is case marked by the suffix -ge, the subject NP is unmarked, and the verb agrees with it via the intransitive prefix hi-. In the second example both NPs are case marked: the locative with the direct object suffix -ne and the subject with the ergative suffix -më. The verb agrees with both subject and direct object via the transitive prefix pfe- (here pe- due to vowel harmony and
loss of stress), while the semantic role of the non-patient direct object is marked in the verb by the suffix -m60.

70) 'infit-pe hi-play-na hack6o
    lodge-LOC 3NOM-arrive-ASP man
    'The man arrived at a lodge'

71) 'infit-ne pa-pay-m60-ya hack6o
    lodge-DO 3=3-arrive-LOC-ASP man-ENG
    'The man arrived at a lodge'

The following contrastive pair of examples are given to illustrate the same phenomenon of direct object selection, but in this case with the transitive verb 'inakak6aak 'bring'. In the first example the patient kasp6o 'coat' is the direct object, but in the second example the locative 'infit 'lodge' is the direct object and the patient kasp6o has lost all such status.

72) p6a-'naxpayk-a kasp6o-na 'infit-pe
    3=3-bring-ASP coat-DO lodge-LOC
    'He/she brought the coat to the lodge'

73) pa-'naxpayk-a'k6o-ya 'infit-ne
    3=3-bring-LOC-ASP coat lodge-DO
    'He/she brought the coat to the lodge'

Nez Perce non-patient direct objects have all the characteristics (both structural and behavioral) of patient direct objects. The selection of a non-patient direct object can be thought to feed such structures as reflexives, reciprocals, the co-referential antipassive, the passive, etc. But, since the selection of a non-patient argument for direct object marks discourse/pragmatic importance, and since the antipassive typically marks the unimportance of an object, then one would not expect the selection of a non-patient argument for direct object to feed the antipassive. However, the first sentence below is an example of the Nez Perce antipassive construction, and one where the verbal suffix -m60 marks a locative direct object. This sentence, therefore, has to be an example of the coreferential antipassive. (Note that the no of 'iw6epne 'wife' is not the direct object NP suffix.)

74) 'iw6epne hi-'naxpayk-60-ya kasp6o
    wife 3NOM-bring-LOC-ASP coat
    'He brought the coat to his wife'

The following sentence is an example of the selection of a non-patient direct object feeding the passive construction.

75) kasp6o 'inaxpayk-60-ya hi-iwek-e 'sayat
    coat bring-LOC-STAT 3NOM-he-ASP woman
    'The woman was brought a coat'

Thus another of the behavioral characteristics of the Nez Perce direct object is that if it is not a patient or dative goal, its semantic role will be coded by a verbal suffix. And for all such examples there is possible a semantically equivalent (at least roughly so) structure where the non-patient is not a direct object.

3.3.4. Genitive direct objects.

Whenever the direct object controls a genitive argument, the genitive argument becomes the direct object. The only way to avoid this is by way of the antipassive, as in example 76 below. Otherwise, if a transitive construction is used, the genitive becomes the direct object, as in example 77. Its genitive case role is marked in the verb by the same suffix that also marks benefactive direct objects, and thus example 77 can also mean 'He/she brought the coat for the woman'. Note that example 76 does not share this meaning.

76) hi-'naxpayk-a 'sayat-m kasp6o
    3NOM-bring-ASP woman-GEN coat
    'He/she brought the woman's coat'

77) p6a-'naxpayk-a'k6-ya 'sayat-ma kasp6o
    3=3-bring-BEN/GEN-ASP woman-DO coat
    'He/she brought the woman's coat' or 'He/she brought the coat for the woman'

The selection of non-patient direct objects feeds this obligatory objectification of a genitive. For example, in the first sentence below there is a genitive argument in the oblique locative NP. Were this locative NP to selected as direct object, as is the case in the second example, then the genitive in turn becomes the direct object.

78) hi-play-na 'sayat-m 'infit-pe
    3NOM-arrive-ASP woman-GEN lodge-LOC
    'He/she arrived at the woman's lodge'

79) pa-pay-m60-ya-an-ya 'sayat-ma 'infit
    3=3-arrive-LOC-BEN/GEN-ASP woman-DO lodge
    'He/she arrived at the woman's lodge'

Thus another characteristic of the Nez Perce direct object is that it cannot govern a genitive argument. Such a genitive argument must itself be made the direct object, or else the antipassive is employed. For further details, see Rude (1986).

3.3.4. Causatives.

There is no paraphrastic causative in Nez Perce. There is instead a causative construction marked by the verbal prefix kapa-. In it...
there is complete clause merger, the subject of the embedded predicate being the direct object. In the causative construction in example 80 the direct object pit'finne 'girl' is also the subject of the embedded intransitive verb REn 'go'.

80) 'satay-nim pëe-sepeck-ku-ye pit'fin-ne 'infinitive old woman-ENG 3=3-CAUSE-go-ASP girl-DO lodge-to
'The old woman made the girl go to the lodge'

The embedded predicate in example 81 contains the transitive verb hi-pf 'eat'. Its subject is also the direct object (pit'finne 'girl') in the causative construction. Note that the patient 'bread' of the embedded predicate is not the direct object; its NP is not case marked, and it has none of the characteristics of the Nez Perce direct object.

81) 'satay-nim pëe-sepeck-p-ye pit'fin-ne 'infinitive old woman-ENG 3=3-CAUSE-eat-ASP girl-DO bread
'The old woman made the girl eat the bread'

The semantic range of the Nez Perce direct object thus includes the embedded subject in a causative construction.

3.3.5. Subject to object raising.

Verbs of cognition with object complements are optionally treated as transitive in Nez Perce. In the first example below the verb c6ukwe 'know' is treated as though it were intransitive, even though it has an object complement. Nez Perce has no indirect discourse (for which refer to §3.3.1. above), and this extends to object complements. As long as object complements are separate clauses in Nez Perce, they are treated as direct discourse, as in example 82 below.

82) hâma hi-c6ukwe-c-e 'layat hi-pfay-n
man 3NOM-know-ASP-SGMOM woman 3NOM-arrive-ASP
'The man knows, 'The woman has arrived'"

in the following sentence the same verb c6ukwe 'know' occurs with the same object complement as in 82 above. In 83, however, this main verb is treated as transitive (as marked by the verbal prefix pëe- and the NP ergative suffix -na). Though I have tried to emulate the Nez Perce structure in the translations of 82, etc., I am not aware of any semantic difference between them, and consider their contexts to be determined by discourse/pragmatic factors.

83) hâma-nim pëe-c6ukwe-c-e 'layat hi-pfay-n
man-ENG 3=3-know-ASP-SGMOM woman 3NOM-arrive-ASP
'The man knows her, 'The woman has arrived'"

When the main verb in a complex sentence with an object complement happens to be transitive, as in 83 above, the verb agrees with the subject in the complement. This is illustrated by the following example in which the main verb expresses direct object agreement (via the plural prefix -ne-1) with the plural subject hêàoqan 'people' in the complement. And in the direct discourse complement the verb agrees with its plural subject by the nominative plural prefix -v-

84) hâma-ni hi-neò-c6ukwe-c-e hêàoqan hi-pfay-n
man-ENG 3NOM-PLU-know-ASP-SGMOM people 3NOM-PLU-MOM-arrive-ASP
'The man knows them, 'The people have arrived'"

In Nez Perce, subject raising to direct object is optional and possible by degrees. Although the main clause is transitive in examples 82-84 above, the subject NP in the direct discourse complement nevertheless is not case marked as a direct object. This, however, possible in Nez Perce. For example, the following sentence is identical to 83 above except for the fact that the NP which is the subject of the verb in the direct discourse complement is there case marked as the direct object of the main verb.

85) hâma-ni pëe-c6ukwe-c-e 'layato-ni hi-pfay-n
man-ENG 3=3-know-ASP-SGMOM woman-DO 3NOM-arrive-ASP
'The man knows the woman, 'She has arrived'"

With object complements of verbs of perception total clause merger is also an option. The main verb of perception, however, is always transitive. The following examples illustrate this range of possible constructions. In 86 the NP 'layat 'woman' is still treated as the subject within the direct discourse complement, while in 87 it is case marked as the direct object of the verb in the main clause. And in example 88 the verb in the complement has been nominalized (by -v-) and thus no longer carried tense nor agrees with its subject. Example 88 is one syntactic clause.

86) pëe-ve 'layat hi-pfay-c-a
3=3-see-ASP woman 3NOM-arrive-ASP-SGMOM
'He/she saw her, 'The woman is arriving'"

87) pëe-ve 'layato-ni hi-pfay-c-a
3=3-see-ASP woman-DO 3NOM-arrive-ASP-SGMOM
'He/she saw the woman, 'She is arriving'"

88) pëe-ve 'layato-ni pfay-c-a
3=3-see-ASP woman-DO arrive-ASP
'He/she saw the woman arrive'"

Nez Perce also has constructions where the arguments of nominalized verbs may be genitives. In the following is an example the subject of the nominalized verb pfay 'arrive' is a genitive argument. But since it is also the direct object of the main verb its NP must be case marked as a direct object with its genitive status marked in the main verb via the
suffix -ne'n (see §3.3.4. above).

89) pēe-ze-neye 'ləyato-ne pəyə-n
3-3-see-GEN-ASP woman-DO arrive-N
'He/she saw the woman's arrival'"

Although these stages of clause merger and subject to direct object raising may be "optional" in the sense that the context is not entirely explainable by syntax/semantics, that is not to say that there is no determining context. It is, however, not completely clear at this time exactly what discourse/pragmatic parameters are involved.

For greater detail on the subject of complementation in Nez Perce, Rude (1985b) should be consulted.


Grammaticalization/syntacticization involves more than the creation of affixes, more than a change from lexical to grammatical meaning/function. Often, as in this paper, grammaticalization involves a network of relationships and dependencies among affixes (and/or word orders, prosodies, etc.). And thus the linguist is faced with two problems. One is the description of these syntagmatic relationships and dependencies, the other is to seek some explanation. In Rude (1985a, 1986, etc.) the explanations involve discourse/pragmatic context. In this paper I have endeavored to more fully describe the syntagmatic relationships that accrue between the Nez Perce direct object and its accompanying inflectional morphology. It is hoped the reader will be able to translate this information into his/her own preferred structural model or formalism.

Notes

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2Zukon (1979) considers three fundamental kinds of subject/object arguments: the subject of an intransitive verb (S), the subject of a transitive verb (A), and the object of a transitive verb (O). The Nez Perce evidence does not argue against this. For one level of structure, namely NP case marking and verbal agreement for person, Nez Perce requires this three way distinction. But, as we shall see, on another level of analysis Nez Perce classifies basic arguments on a two way — nominative-accusative basis.

Also see Comrie (1978), the various studies in Plank (1978), and Gooreman, Fox, and Givón (1984) for further discussions of ergativity. The more semantic based active-stative typology is discussed in Klimov (1976).

3This distinction between intransitive and transitive subjects is also maintained by several behavioral characteristics in Nez Perce syntax. For example, it is maintained in the behavior of subjects that govern genitive arguments. The genitive argument is optionally made subject in Nez Perce (called "possessor ascension" in the literature of Relational Grammar), but only in intransitive clauses. In the first example below, the verb agrees with pət 'father' via the 3rd person prefix b-.

In the next example, however, the verb agrees with məunəm 'our' via the 1st/2nd person prefix n- and the plural prefix pə- (see §2.1.2.). For further information on Nez Perce genitives, see Rude (1986).

a) hɨ-pəyə-na məun-im pət
3OWN-arrive-ASP we-GEN father
'Our father arrived'

b) n-ə-pəyə-na məun-im pət
1/2-PLOWN-arrive-ASP we-GEN father
'Our father arrived'

4For this person split in Nez Perce ergativity and the hierarchies which predict it, see Hawkins and Hyman (1974), Givón (1976), Silverstein (1976), and DeLancey (1981).

5A plural direct object marker like nəes- is evidently quite rare in the world's languages. Fransen (1983:96), for example, proposes
that "if the number of the patient is encoded in the verbal system, then the subject of the intransitive will also be encoded by the same device." Nez Perce nêe- clearly violates this proposal, as it never encodes subject agreement of any kind. In addition, according to Fräjsnygier nêe- should also mark plural adjectives, which it doesn't. Number marking in general in Nez Perce violates Fräjsnygier's proposals in that, although it is marked primarily by verbal affixes, it also happens to provide the principal morphological distinction for the nominative-accusative basis of Nez Perce syntax. On this subject, see also Durie (1986).

Word order never disambiguates the agent/patient status of arguments in Nez Perce. In a sentence like 56, this is accomplished by the hearer's knowledge of the nature of the world. A sentence like 'The rope brought the man' would not be expressed by the antipassive. And in a sentence like 60 where both arguments are equally capable of agentivity, it is clear that the antipassive construction is due, not to the lack of pragmatic importance of the patient, but its possession by the subject. And here again, one's knowledge of the world disambiguates: 'his child' is a more natural an interpretation than 'his man'. A genitive pronoun can also function to show which argument is possessed and thus the patient in an antipassive construction, as in the following.

'ipmî pist hi-'nâpâyâ-mi yî'c
his/her father 3MOO-bring-ASP child
'The child brought his/her father'

The '1', '2', and '3' relations of Relational Grammar begin as abstract syntactic primitives (see Perlmutter [1983-1984]). It is thus worth noting here that the universality of the '3' relation is not supported by the Nez Perce evidence, where a separate surface dative is completely lacking. There it would seem reasonable not to postulate an underlying structure for which there is never any surface manifestation.

Languages which have a syntactic dative typically use it to encode the subject of the embedded predicate in causative constructions of one syntactic clause (see Comrie [1976]). In Tzotzil, just as in Nez Perce, there is no syntactic dative. Nevertheless the same verbal affix that occurs in dative/benefactives in Tzotzil also occurs in causatives (see Aissen [1983]). However, no such feature of dative/benefactives can be found in the Nez Perce causative construction.

References


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