Semantic and pragmatic functions in Plains Cree syntax
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Chapter 1

Plains Cree, Grammar, and Cree Grammar

This is a dissertation on the linguistic structure of a First Nations language of Canada. Narrowing the scope somewhat, it deals with the morphosyntax of the Cree language. Even more specifically, it surveys word order variation in the Plains Cree dialect, and discusses the reasons behind and limits to this variation. The discussion following this introduction takes several features of linguistic analysis, as well as features of the Cree language, for granted. As such a reader without a specialized knowledge of linguistics may initially find many of the topics somewhat opaque, if not downright confusing. And yet, it is hoped that the contents of this work will be largely accessible to anyone with an interest in the Cree language, regardless of specific training. For this reason, the introduction will seek to provide a necessary, if very basic background to the main topics of this dissertation: the Cree language, grammar, and Cree grammar.

1.1 nēhiyawēwin: The Cree Language

Language is a universal human tool of communication. Virtually all of us as human beings learn at least one spoken language as a matter of course and learning that language is, barring disability, as natural to us as learning to walk. But though “language” in general is universal, the exact surface details can vary greatly, and this has given rise to a vast diversity in human languages which, despite the current endangerment and loss of so many languages, still number in excess of 6,000 worldwide. The universality of language means that any normal human can and will learn the language(s) that he or she is exposed to as a child. The mutability of language entails that speech changes and diversifies over time and space. Those who grow up hearing Cree spoken will learn to speak Cree. The exact form of Cree that one can learn is dependent on the location in which you experience the “Cree language”.
Figure 1.1
Cree Language and Dialect Continuum

1 Map prepared by Diane Perrick, Canadian Plains Research Center, Regina, Saskatchewan. Sources include Ahenakew (1987b:x), Wolfart and Carroll (1981:xvi), and the Brock University Map Library (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Crimapo.png).
1.1.1 Geographic and Genetic Location

The exact boundaries of the Cree language are difficult to map due to the difficulty in defining what exactly is meant by “Cree”. The name itself is not a traditional indigenous name, but rather appears most likely to be a shortening of French Cristenaux (“like Christians”) to Cris and hence Cree. In its broadest application, “Cree” is the term applied to a wide dialect continuum ranging from northeastern British Columbia and communities in the southwestern Northwest Territories, through much of north and central Alberta, south-central Saskatchewan, central Manitoba, and northwestern Ontario across James Bay and Hudson’s Bay on into central and northern Quebec and Labrador (see Figure 1.1 on the preceding page). The Cree language, thus broadly defined, is part of the much larger Algonquian language family and shares a genetic affinity with Ojibwa, Fox, Menominee, Blackfoot, Micmac, and many other languages similarly descended from their common ancestor language known only through reconstruction as Proto-Algonquian (see Figure 1.2, on the two pages following).

Within the Cree language continuum, those groups occupying the easternmost territories are generally treated as separate, both culturally and politically if not always linguistically, from Cree proper. The names Montagnais and Naskapi have both been used for the Innu of Quebec and Labrador, such that these names are most commonly (mis)understood as dialects of innu-aimun, a language separate from, albeit closely related to, Cree. The less commonly delineated “East Cree” or “East Main Cree”, as spoken in western Quebec along the east coast of James Bay, is similarly part of this eastern dialect continuum. All three share the feature of /k/-palatalization. In contrast, the Attikamekw of south-central Quebec, which do not share /k/-palatalization with the other easternmost dialects, have most recently also been listed as a distinct language group (cf. Canada census data, 1996: http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/ index-eng.cfm), but have historically been referred to as the “R-dialect” of Cree (cf. Rhodes and Todd 1981). All “Cree” groups to the west of Quebec are consistently referred to as dialects of a single Cree language, though subdivided by features of the sound system and rough geography. The primary feature used to differentiate these Cree dialects is the reflex of Proto-Algonquian */ɾ/ which has five main variants including the /ɾ/ of Attikamek, as well as /l/, /n/, /ð/ and /y/. ²

² Bloomfield (1925a) had originally reconstructed this segment as */l/, and this had long been the prevailing view. More recently, Goddard (1994) has convincingly argued that */ɾ/ would seem the likelier candidate. I follow this latter interpretation, though nothing in the current work hinges on the distinction.
### Figure 1.2
Algonquian Language Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Language Group or Language</th>
<th>Dialect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackfoot</td>
<td>Blackfoot (Siksika)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blood (Kainai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peigan (Piikani)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheyenne</td>
<td>Tse-tsehese-staestse Northern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Southern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So’taa’e (ex)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arapaho</td>
<td>Nákasisine’na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Náwunena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aä'ninena (Atsina/Gros Ventre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Básawunena (ex)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hánahawuuna (ex)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cree-Montagnais-Naskapi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cree</td>
<td>Plains Cree [y]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woods Cree [ð]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swampy Cree [n]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moose Cree [l]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atikamekw [r]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Innu [l/n]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>East Cree [y]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montagnais-Naskapi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ojibwe-Potawatomi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ojibwe</td>
<td>Saulteaux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Southwestern Ojibwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Odawa (Ottawa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Ojibwe (Missisauga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nipissing Algonquin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Algonquin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northern Ojibwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Severn Ojibwe (Oji-Cree)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued on next page)

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3 In this table, (ex) indicates that the language is extinct and no longer spoken by any speakers – a situation that could include language loss among speakers or the complete extermination of the people who did once speak the language. Sources for this representation of the Algonquian language family include Campbell 1997, Rhodes and Todd 1981, Valentine 2001 and the following websites dedicated to the Blackfoot, Cheyenne, and Arapaho respectively:

http://www.native-languages.org/blackfoot.htm
http://www.everyculture.com/North-America/Cheyenne-Orientation.html
http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/arapaho/arapadiv.htm
Speakers of the “L-dialect” or Moose Cree (*iliilimowin*) occupy a relatively small area around Moose Factory and Moosonee on the southwest coast of James Bay (cf. Ellis 1995:xii-xiv). To the north and west through much of northwestern Ontario and central Manitoba even unto Cumberland House in Saskatchewan is the large area occupied by the Swampy Cree or speakers of the “N-dialect” (*ininimowin*). However, additional features of dialect divergence, by no means always well-documented, are evident throughout this vast territory. For instance, Ellis (1995:xiii-xiv) indicates that “Kashechewan Cree” appears to be a sub-dialect of “mixed n-l usage” spoken at Albany Post, intermediate between the Moose Cree to the south
and the Swampy Cree across the river and to the north.\(^4\) Additionally, a very important sound feature which differentiates eastern and western Cree dialects bisects Swampy Cree territory. Eastern dialects, including Montagnais-Naskapi, Attikamek and Moose Cree, as well as Eastern Swampy Cree as spoken in the more easterly Swampy Cree territory, make a distinction between \(/s/\) and \(/ʃ/\) as distinct phonemes. In the western dialects, however, including Western Swampy Cree, this contrast has been lost, so that no distinction is made and both sounds have merged to western \(/s/\), usually pronounced as [s] but with variation between [s] and [ʃ] not infrequent.

To the north of the Swampy Cree in Manitoba, and westward through central Saskatchewan, the “TH-dialect” (nîhîdawîwin) is spoken. This dialect, delineated by the use of \(/ð/\), is commonly referred to as Woods or Woodland Cree, though in Manitoba and some areas of northeastern Saskatchewan the term Rock Cree is often preferred. To the south of the Woods Cree in Saskatchewan, on the Plains and in the Parkland, the “Y-dialect” or Plains Cree (nêhiyawâwin) is spoken, and this dialect stretches furthest westward also spreading throughout central Alberta and even into northeastern British Columbia and the Northwest Territories. Over this large territory, Plains Cree can be found in many regional forms which have not been exhaustively surveyed. For instance, Plains Cree as spoken at White Bear First Nation in southeastern Saskatchewan appears to be influenced somewhat by Saulteaux (or Plains Ojibwa) speech (cf. Bakker 1991, 1997; Rhodes 2008) and this is not surprising, for White Bear is a multilingual and multicultural reserve shared by the descendants of Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota, and Dakota speakers. In contrast, the Cree of Nekaneet First Nation in the Cypress Hills of southwestern Saskatchewan does not share this influence while exhibiting certain features of its own (Doreen Oakes, personal communication). Slightly different again is the Plains Cree speech of west-central Saskatchewan, such as in the Battleford area, and on into Alberta, as among the Hobbema bands. Furthermore, many of the northwesternmost areas of Plains Cree speech in both Saskatchewan and Alberta are characterized by a sound change not otherwise found in Plains Cree but, in fact, shared with the Woods Cree dialect. The merger of \(/ɛ/\) and \(/ɪ/\) to \(/ɪ:/\) alone thus unites some speakers of the “Y-dialect” with speakers of the “TH-dialect” in opposition to other Plains Cree speech. Areas in which Plains

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\(^4\) Oji-Cree is another language or dialect that has commonly been cited as a mixed dialect, but in this case a mixture of two distinct Algonquian languages: Cree and Ojibwa. Most recent accounts place this as a dialect of Ojibwa, with Cree influences, and hence it will not be included in the current discussion of Cree dialects.
Cree speech (*nīhiyawīwin*) exhibits this sound change are referred to as “Northern Plains Cree” in Saskatchewan, but merely as “Northern Cree” in Alberta (cf. Waugh 1998:xix).

Despite the sub-dialectal variation that is evident across the Plains Cree area, and which still requires detailed description, it is the “Y” or Plains Cree dialect, *nēhiyawēwin*, that will be central to the discussion of Cree morphosyntax in this work. Data will be drawn from a number of sources, both oral and published. Language consultants include fluent speakers of Cree from a number of Saskatchewan First Nations and these have been recognized in the acknowledgements to this text. Published data is primarily taken from the text collections of Freda Ahenakew and H.C. Wolfart, in particular Ahenakew’s (1987b) first major edition of collected texts, *wāskahikaniwiniw-ācimowina / Stories of the House People*, as narrated by two fluent male speakers from the Ahtahkakoop (*atāhkakohp*) and Mistawasis (*mistawāsis*) First Nations in central Saskatchewan (see Figure 1.1). Examples from this and other written sources will be cited as appropriate.

1.1.2 Typological Background

Cree, as mentioned above, is an Algonquian language and as such it shares many of the typological features which characterize Algonquian languages in general and mark them in many ways as unique.

1.1.2.1 Phonology

The sound systems of Algonquian languages tend to have fairly restricted numbers of phonemes, and Cree certainly displays a very small phonemic inventory. The Plains Cree dialect has just 17 phonemes, ten consonants and seven vowels, as illustrated in Table 1.1 and Figure 1.3. The IPA symbols are given here, but they differ little from the standard roman orthography (SRO), a phonemically-based writing system now in increasingly common use throughout much of western Cree territory and advocated by First Nations University and the Saskatchewan Cree Language Retention Committee among other education authorities.
### Table 1.1
**Plains Cree Consonants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>manner of articulation</th>
<th>place of articulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bilabial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stops</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affricates</td>
<td>ts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fricatives</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasals</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liquids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 1.3
**Plains Cree Vowels**

As it is the SRO which is used in all Cree data given in this work, Table 1.2 is included to provide a conversion of the IPA symbols to the Cree SRO.
1. Plains Cree, Grammar, and Cree Grammar

Table 1.2
Plains Cree Phonemes as represented in the SRO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>SRO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>m</td>
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<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
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<td>j</td>
<td>y</td>
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<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>w</td>
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<tr>
<td>i:</td>
<td>ĭ</td>
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<tr>
<td>e:</td>
<td>ā</td>
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<tr>
<td>u:</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o:</td>
<td>ō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʌ</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a:</td>
<td>ā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The affricate /ts/ ("c") is generally alveolar in Plains Cree, though it can fluctuate to a more alveopalatal [tʃ] pronunciation, which is its usual form in most other Cree dialects. The vowels appear in long and short pairs (with the exception of /e:/), and length is the main contrast, though there is also a quality difference with the short vowels pronounced somewhat lax. There is also some fluctuation in the pronunciation of /oː/, which can be heard closer to /uː/ at times, though again this is more common outside of the Plains Cree dialect area.

The same phonemic inventory applies for Western Swampy Cree, and though Woods Cree adds interdental /ð/, this is balanced by its loss of the vowel /eː/. Only Northern (Plains) Cree has an even smaller inventory, having neither /ð/ nor /eː/. Eastern Cree dialects all add alveopalatal /ʃ/, as well as sometimes having a liquid, /l/ or /ɾ/, corresponding to Woods Cree /ð/. Among the consonants, obstruents are phonemically voiceless (and unaspirated) while sonorants are voiced. This briefest of descriptions is meant only to provide a rough guide to the pronunciation of cited Cree examples while more detailed information on the Plains Cree sound system can be sought in appropriate reference works (e.g. Okimāsis 2004; Okimāsis and Wolvengrey 2008; Wolfart 1996; Wolvengrey 2001).

1.1.2.2 Morphology

Morphologically, the Cree language exemplifies the complex, head-marking patterns that characterize the Algonquian family as a whole. Despite the somewhat reduced complexity in Plains Cree as compared to the more eastern dialects, Plains Cree word formation remains a daunting challenge to English speakers attempting to learn the Y-dialect. As many of the most important features of Cree morphology will be vital to the topic of this dissertation, much fuller treatments will be found in subsequent sections and chapters with only the barest outlines offered here.
1. Plains Cree, Grammar, and Cree Grammar

1.1.2.2.1 Animacy

The most important grammatical distinction to be found in Cree, and throughout the Algonquian family of languages, is the “gender” or noun classification distinction between “animate” and “inanimate”. Much has been written concerning the elusive semantic basis for this distinction (cf. Goddard 2002 for a summary of selected “descriptions of Algonquian gender, 1634-2000”), with a fairly common theme being the anthropologically-based attribution of spiritual power to the animate at the apparent expense of the inanimate (e.g. Darnell and Vanek 1976). Even more basic is the use of the terms “living” vs. “non-living” as an oversimplified starting point for animate and inanimate, and this may yet hold more truth than expected focussing as it does on the importance of “life”, but more will be said about this in the next chapter. Regardless of the ultimate basis of the animacy distinction, the importance of this difference to the grammar of the Algonquian languages and certainly to Cree is beyond doubt. In fact, it could (and will) be argued that the animacy distinction has become even more important to Cree grammatical distinctions than throughout the remainder of the Algonquian family (see Chapter 2).

1.1.2.2.2 Person

The division of referents into animate and inanimate naturally has a large impact on the domain of person-marking, which in Cree occurs not only in the form of independent pronouns, but also possessive inflection on nouns and participant cross-reference on verbs. These are exceptionally important head-marking patterns of the Algonquian languages. The basic person distinctions made in Plains Cree are as displayed in Table 1.3 on the following page.

In contrast to the traditional division of singular versus plural, the table reflects a clear distinction in the Cree verbal reference system between speech act participants and third person referents. First (1) and second (2) persons occur in both singular (s) and plural (p) (exclusive) forms. First person plural exclusive (1p) excludes the addressee and second person plural exclusive (2p) excludes the speaker. First and second person plural inclusive (21) can refer minimally to speaker and addressee and optionally others.  

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5 It is not traditional to refer to the second person plural as “exclusive”, nor to the “first person plural inclusive” as “first and second person plural inclusive”. This is done here to minimize the inherent bias in favour of a first person perspective. As will be seen in section 2.2.2.3, a first person bias is inappropriate for the Cree referential system.
Table 1.3
Person Distinctions in Plains Cree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1s</td>
<td>first person singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2s</td>
<td>second person singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1p</td>
<td>first person plural exclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>first and second person plural inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2p</td>
<td>second person plural exclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3s</td>
<td>animate third person proximate singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3p</td>
<td>animate third person proximate plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3’</td>
<td>animate third person obviative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0s</td>
<td>inanimate third person proximate singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0p</td>
<td>inanimate third person proximate plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0’s</td>
<td>inanimate third person obviative singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0’p</td>
<td>inanimate third person obviative plural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In ways quite distinct from the speech act participants, third person reference is subdivided by several features. In addition to the basic singular versus plural dichotomy, two exceptionally important Algonquian divisions involve animacy and “obviation”. Given the importance of the animacy distinction, there is naturally a subdivision of third person reference into animate and inanimate third persons, though no further subdivision by natural gender is made. It has become traditional in Cree grammatical literature to reserve the abbreviation 3 for animate third person reference, while inanimate third person reference is abbreviated 0. Personal pronouns exist in Cree for the first, second and basic animate third person reference, as given in Table 1.4, but no personal pronouns exist for inanimate referents, nor for the special animate distinction of the “obviative”.

1. Plains Cree, Grammar, and Cree Grammar

Table 1.4
Plains Cree Personal Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>person</th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>person</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1s</td>
<td>niya</td>
<td>1p</td>
<td>niyanān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2s</td>
<td>kiya</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>kiyānaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3s</td>
<td>wiya</td>
<td>2p</td>
<td>kiyawāw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3p</td>
<td>wiyawāw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1.2.2.3 Obviation

The phenomenon of “obviation” has received a great deal of attention in the literature, concentrating on one or both of its apparent functions (cf. Goddard 1984, 1990; Aissen 1997; Russell 1996; etc.). Though more will be said about this in section 2.2.1 of the following chapter, here we can note that it serves to provide clausal disjoint reference between two distinct third person referents, known as the “proximate” and “obviative” respectively. At least as important is the role obviation plays in allowing for referent tracking in cross-clausal discourse (cf. Russell 1991; Cook and Mühlbauer 2006; Mühlbauer 2008). When two or more distinct third person referents are present in a clause or unit of discourse, only one of these referents can typically retain the privileged and unmarked “proximate” status while all others must be marked as “obviative”. Many attempts have been made to characterize the exact function of proximate versus obviative assignment, with such terms as topic, focus, and point-of-view all having been resorted to, usually with a cautionary note that this is a sort of answer, but not the complete picture. However, I would argue that using a term like “topic” and equating the proximate with the more prototypically topical third person referent is exactly the function conveyed by this Algonquian phenomenon. Hence, obviative marking is used to show which elements are prototypically less topical, less given, less likely to be of current central interest in the discourse, or whose point-of-view we are not, at that precise moment, going to take. Essentially, the proximate picks out the third person referent highest in topicality or discourse saliency. In some instances, assignment of proximate/obviative status is open to the free choice of the speaker (based on
context, assessment of addressee’s perspective, etc.), while in other instances the assignment of obviation is dictated by overriding grammatical principles.

One such instance of grammatical principle occurs in possessive marking when one third person is indicated as the possessor of another third person referent. When this occurs, the possessor must always outrank the possessum in topicality. It is possible for both to be marked as obviative, but only the possessor can ever occur as proximate. Examples (1) and (2) illustrate this with a first person possessive in (1) contrasting with a third person possessive in (2). With no other third person referent to compete with, the third person possessum in (1) remains proximate, and can be marked as singular (a) or plural (b).

(1) a) nimosōm
   ni- mosōm
   1 NDA.3s
   grandfather
   “my grandfather”

   b) nimosōmak
   ni- mosōm -ak
   1 NDA 3p
   grandfather
   “my grandfathers”

In competition with the third person possessor in (2), the third person possessum must be marked with the obviative suffix -a (as in 2a) which neutralizes number-marking and leaves the animate obviative referent ambiguous between singular and plural. (2b) and (2c) show that as an animate obviative, neither the singular or plural forms are acceptable.

(2) a) omosōma
   o- mosōm -a
   3 NDA 3’
   grandfather
   “his/her grandfather(s)”

   b) *omosōm
   o- mosōm
   3 NDA.3s
   grandfather
   “his/her grandfather”

   c) *omosōmak
   o- mosōm -ak
   3 NDA 3p
   grandfather
   “his/her grandfathers”

In situations like this when an animate possessum is obligatorily marked as obviative, the person represented and introduced by the kinship term may well be the ultimate topic of the entire conversation. However, the fact that this participant must first be introduced by means of his or her relationship to another person, is indicative that this other person (i.e. the proximate) is at
first treated as more topical, more salient, well-known or given, and necessary to setting the proper reference. In other words, the proximate possessor, who may be destined to be utterly ignored for the remainder of the conversation, is initially more well-known to the speech act participants (SAPs), or at least assumed by the speaker to be more well-known to the addressee(s). Hence, the proximate possessor may be used to establish the reference of the ultimate topic (3b), which begins as a less-salient obviative participant that must be defined in terms of his or her more topical kin (3a).

(3)  

a)  

\textit{nikī-wāpamimāwa anihi otānisa mēriy kā-kaskitēwāniskwēyit.}  
\textit{I saw that daughter of Mary’s with the black hair.”}

b)  

\textit{ēwako cōniy istiyihkāsow. wī-pē-ay-atoskēw kihci-kiskinwahamātowikamikohk.}  
\textit{“That one’s called Joanie. She’s coming to work at the University.”}

In the conversation that follows (3), mēriy need never be mentioned again. Her daughter, cōniy, after being introduced, immediately becomes the proximate and the topic of the conversation. However, for the brief period that her identity was not sufficiently defined for the addressee(s), cōniy had to be treated as a less-salient obviative participant whose existence needs to be defined in terms of reference to someone whose identity was more salient to the addressee(s). In prototypical terms, the proximate is the more topical participant, the obviative less so. The pragmatic discourse status of the proximate versus obviative will prove important in Chapter 3.

Another instance in which a grammatical principle applies is when an animate third person obligatorily outranks an inanimate referent, so that the inanimate must always be treated as obviative. This is simply one small part of an overarching hierarchical alignment system that will be treated in much greater detail in Chapter 2. It is mentioned here to emphasize a recurring theme in the following grammatical analysis of Cree: the importance of being (grammatically) animate.

Concluding the current discussion, we can note that, although the category of obviation is important for both animate and inanimate referents, there are slight differences in how it manifests itself in animate and inanimate reference. Although some Algonquian languages retain a singular/plural distinction for obviative referents (e.g. Ojibwa, at least in some contexts), animate obviative referents in Cree, as demonstrated in (2) above, are never marked for number, and thus require context to disambiguate between singular and plural. This holds for both nominal and
verbal animate obviative reference, and is why the abbreviation 3’ is used, devoid of any marking for number. In contrast, inanimate reference does retain the number distinction for proximate and obviative alike. Plains Cree is actually exceptional among the Cree dialects in having lost the obviative marking on inanimate nouns and pronouns, such that the proximate and obviative have syncretized (i.e. 0s and 0’s have syncretized as a singular form; 0p and 0’p have syncretized as a plural form). However, the distinction is retained in verbal cross-reference in the inanimate intransitive verbal paradigms (see section 2.3.1.1). Table 1.5 illustrates some of these distinctions and syncretizations in the demonstrative pronouns of Plains Cree, which further incorporate a three-way division of distance from the speaker.

Table 1.5
Plains Cree Demonstrative Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animate</th>
<th>Inanimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3s</td>
<td>3p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proximal</td>
<td>awa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medial</td>
<td>ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distal</td>
<td>nāha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the aforementioned neutralization of proximate and obviative among inanimate demonstratives and nouns, the columns for the third person animate obviative and the inanimate plural have been highlighted (in grey) to draw attention to their formal identity. This feature, common in Algonquian demonstrative systems, is at times cited in favour of complete neutralization of the animate obviative with the inanimate, but since these categories are still kept distinct in verbal paradigms, their formal syncretism is taken here to be an indication only that they are functionally similar in that both share a position lower on a topical person hierarchy than proximate animate referents. Again, this will be more fully explored in section 2.2.

1.1.2.2.4 Verb Classification

While grammatical gender is generally a linguistic feature of nouns and
pronouns, the animacy of Cree referents has far-ranging consequences throughout Cree grammar with agreement patterns required between nouns and modifiers such as demonstrative pronouns. The most important gender agreement pattern is to be found in the verbal system.

The linguistic classification of verbs in Cree has followed the traditionally identified Algonquian pattern of a four-way division based on the criteria of Transitivity and Animacy. This has been the standard interpretation since at least the works of Bloomfield (cf. 1946, 1958, 1962), but Fidelholtz (1999:95, fn. 1) notes that this approach was implicit as early as Jones (1911). The presentation of Algonquian transitive and intransitive verbs, each in pairs based on altering the animacy of one participant, is also a feature of many missionary documents dating from much earlier (cf. Howse 1844 for an early Cree example). The system which has been so consistently recognized allows for the division of verbs into four distinct classes. This four-way division can be represented as in Table 1.6.⁶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitivity</th>
<th>Intransitive</th>
<th>Transitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inanimate</td>
<td>VII</td>
<td>VTI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animate</td>
<td>VAI</td>
<td>VTA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁶ Often the abbreviations are shortened to omit the V (i.e. II, AI, TI, TA), or the V is added to the end as a direct acronym of the spoken classification (i.e. IIV, AIV, TIV, TAV). However, the V-initial abbreviations will be preferred here marking first the important fact that we are, in all cases, referring to verbs.
In this representation, the class of verbs (V) as a whole is divided on the basis of transitivity creating two distinct subsets which are then further divided on the basis of the animacy of one of the participants. In the case of intransitive verbs, it is of course the animacy of the sole participant (S) that determines the classification. If the sole participant is inanimate, the verb is an inanimate intransitive verb (VII). If the sole participant is animate, the verb is an animate intransitive verb (VAI). In the case of transitive verbs, the first argument or “actor” is always taken to be sentient or volitional as it must be capable of acting upon an object, experiencing a stimulus, etc.\(^7\) Thus, it is the animacy of the second argument (the object, patient, or what has been traditionally referred to as the “goal” in Algonquianist literature) which determines the verbal classification. If the second argument is inanimate, the verb is a transitive inanimate verb (VTI), and if the second argument is animate, the verb is a transitive animate verb (VTA).

Another way in which this can be displayed in order to demonstrate the classification, as well as to teach the terminology involved, is as in Table 1.7.

### Table 1.7
**Algonquian Verb Types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Class</th>
<th>Animacy of First Participant</th>
<th>Transitivity of Verb</th>
<th>Animacy of Second Participant</th>
<th>Verb Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>Inanimate</td>
<td>Intransitive</td>
<td></td>
<td>VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>Animate</td>
<td>Intransitive</td>
<td></td>
<td>VAI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>Animate</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
<td>Inanimate</td>
<td>VTI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>Animate</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
<td>Animate</td>
<td>VTA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here we first specify the word class (V) being introduced, then the animacy of the first participant (A or I). The first participant has certainly been linked to the term “subject” as appropriate to the context of teaching, but this terminology is avoided here in anticipation of the subsequent discussion of grammatical roles in Chapter 3. Table 1.7 further shows that the animacy of

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\(^7\) It is possible to code an inanimate actor, but this requires a secondary derivation from the basic verb type with animate actor; see section 2.2.5 for further discussion of the inanimate actor.
the first participant is only an issue for intransitive verbs and the transitivity distinction must actually be made first in order to know which participant’s animacy determines the classification. When the verb is transitive, it is the second participant (i.e. “patient”, “object” or “goal”).

It is interesting to note that these traditional abbreviations do not keep the specification of transitivity in a consistent place (e.g. immediately after the verb), but have the animacy specified before transitivity for intransitive verbs and after for transitive verbs, as in Table 1.7. Substituting the traditional English (or French) terms “subject” and “object” for first and second argument in the above chart would even more forcefully suggest a possible source for this in the English (or French) word order of SV(O).

Thus, a system is in place for cross-referencing the animacy of participants on the verb and this system is vital for an understanding of Cree morphosyntax, functioning as it does to differentiate participants, much as do “word order” and/or “case-marking” in other languages. With the introduction of these two terms we are stepping firmly into the territory of morphosyntax, requiring some theoretical background before resuming our discussion of the specific syntactic features of Plains Cree.

1.2 Some Important Components of Morphosyntax

Linguistics, or the study of language, comprises many subdisciplines. Among these, the core areas of study are: Phonetics and Phonology or the study of sound and sound systems; Morphology or the study of word structure; Syntax or the study of phrase, clause and sentence structure; Semantics or the study of meaning, and Pragmatics or the study of language in linguistic and socio-cultural context. As these hasty definitions indicate there is often an apparently firm line drawn between Morphology (or the structure of words) and Syntax (or the combination of words into larger combinations such as phrases or clauses). However, such a division is dependent on a uniform definition of the concept “word” across languages, and this should by no means be taken for granted.

For those familiar first and foremost with the English language, the word “word” might well be taken for granted as always representing a single unit of meaning within the language. Even when we admit to ourselves that English words can contain more than one meaning (e.g. words being made

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8 It has been noted, in discussions of the potentially ergative nature of Algonquian languages, that the combination of the intransitive participant and the transitive object is reminiscent of an ergative pattern (cf. Hewson 1987, Campana 1989; see section 1.2.2 below). Though the classification of Algonquian languages as ergative is generally rejected, the presence of ergative patterning is certainly important, as will become evident in section 2.2.1.
up of our original word plus plural inflection -s, or worker being derived from the verb root work and the agentive suffix -er) adding bound elements (“affixes”) to our basic English words somehow doesn’t count for much. After all, instances of these types of word formation (inflectional and derivational morphology) are relatively restricted in English when compared to many languages of the world. In fact, English tends towards the “isolating” end of a word-formation spectrum, otherwise best exemplified by the Chinese languages (see Figure 1.4).

**Figure 1.4**
**Word Formation Classification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morpheme/Word Ratio</th>
<th>1:1</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>2:1</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>3:1</th>
<th>...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agglutinative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolating</td>
<td>←</td>
<td></td>
<td>Synthetic</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>Polysynthetic</td>
<td>→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fusional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Isolating languages are those which demonstrate limited word-formation strategies as measured by a ratio of meaningful elements (or “morphemes”) per word. As word-formation complexity increases so that the average morpheme/word ratio approaches an average of 2:1, the term “synthetic” begins to be applied. Additionally, synthetic languages can exhibit two subtypes of synthesis, depending on the type of morpheme predominantly found within a given language. When the morphemes present within a word each represent a single meaning (e.g. the English “plural” -s), then a string of such morphemes is referred to as “agglutinative”. In contrast, when a high percentage of morphemes are themselves complex in their inner structure, containing more than one element of meaning (e.g. the English “third person singular, present tense” -s), the term “fusional” is applied. Turkish is often cited as a prime example of an agglutinative language, while Latin is the prime fusional example. However, it is more common for both patterns to be found among non-isolating languages so that at best any synthetic language can merely be classified as having agglutinative or fusional tendencies. Finally, the occurrence of many languages in which word-formation is
consistently complex (with perhaps an average morpheme-to-word ratio of 3:1 or higher), regardless of agglutinative or fusional morphology, has lead to the use of the term “polysynthetic”. In demonstrating the complexity of polysynthetic languages, examples are often drawn from numerous North American First Nations languages including the Inuktitut dialects or the Algonquian language family.

Given this range of word formation complexity across language, it stands to reason that the definition of “word” cannot be uniform across language. Hence, it is harder to maintain a uniform boundary between morphology and syntax across language and thus a uniform definition of syntax is also problematical. In the following sections, the most essential components of morphosyntax cross-linguistically will be discussed with an aim to introducing those elements most salient for the subsequent discussion of Cree morphosyntax.

1.2.1 Word Order

Because so much of our linguistic knowledge has been based on the study of English, assuming an Anglocentric or isolating definition of the word, syntax is often reduced simply to word order. For isolating languages this is a safe strategy, and there is no single language, no matter how complex its word-formation processes, that does not use the order of words to some purpose. However, the purposes to which word order can be utilized are many, as are the phrasal categories which can be investigated through syntactic analysis. Beginning with the basic word level categories found in a language, each can act as head of a phrase which is expanded by the addition of modifiers, the position of which with respect to the head constitutes word order.

Word level categories can be divided in a number of ways in the description of any individual grammar. One basic distinction is between lexical or open word classes and functional or closed word classes. Nouns (N) and Verbs (V) are universal lexical word classes, while other classes may not occur in every language. English, for example, adds the classes of Adjective (A) and Adverb (Adv). Some languages do not have a distinct class of Adjectives, but do have a distinct class of Particles (P; including what might otherwise be classed as adjectives, adverbs, adpositions and other elements). Within the class of Particles, we cross the line between lexical and function words where we might find restricted subclasses of the lexical categories, such as Pronouns and Auxiliary Verbs, as well as additional function words like Coordinators, Subordinators, Interjections, etc. Word order syntax primarily seeks to describe the phrases that are built
around each lexical head word, and the clauses and sentences that are built with these phrases and function words.

The most important cross-linguistic typological classification built on word order involves the clause-level constituency of the verb (or predicate) and its arguments (or terms). While the constituency of arguments or noun phrases (NP) can be described in its own right, it is the position of the arguments with respect to the verb that is frequently used to classify a language. Furthermore, it is the transitive verb, requiring two arguments (often referred to as “subject” and “object”), that is determinative of a language’s word order classification. Given these three elements - the verb (V), the subject (S) and the object (O) - we might expect six logically possible word orders, as shown in Table 1.8 (cf. Givón 1984:190-198).

Table 1.8  
Typological Word Order Variation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Order of Constituents</th>
<th>Example Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOV</td>
<td>S O V</td>
<td>Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVO</td>
<td>S V O</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>V S O</td>
<td>Jacaltec (Mayan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOS</td>
<td>V O S</td>
<td>Malagasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVS</td>
<td>O V S</td>
<td>Hixkaryana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSV</td>
<td>O S V</td>
<td>Warao</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In actual fact, these six types do not all occur with equal frequency among the world’s languages suggesting that the factors for choosing one order over another are not random, though neither are they universal. While the subject-initial SOV and SVO types are extremely common, the object-initial OVS and OSV are virtually unattested and even the language examples given in Table 1.8 are questioned by some linguists. Verb-initial patterns are intermediate in occurrence. Another way to view this classification is to note that the first three types, in which the subject always precedes the object regardless of the verb’s position, are predominantly favoured among the world’s languages. Orders in which the object precedes the subject are simply rare.

Despite its frequent use as a syntactic classification of the world’s languages, there are two problems with this word order typology. Not all
languages use a consistently rigid word order and not all languages necessarily make use of the grammatical concepts of “subject” and “object”. Even in languages where it is possible to delineate grammatical subjects and objects, considerable variation in word order placement is possible. Thus, not all languages can be fit into the neat six-way word order typology suggested in Table 1.8. Some languages, such as Ute, may have a predominant word order, but nevertheless exhibit considerable variation (Givón 1983). What such variation demonstrates is that word order is not always bound completely to the syntactic roles of subject and/or object, or conversely that syntactic roles are not always determinative of word order. Instead, Givón (1984:204-206) demonstrates that word order variation in Ute is due in large part to pragmatic factors and accounts for that variation by means of a pragmatic ordering principle (emphasis as in original):

(4) “more surprising/disruptive/new information precedes” more continuous/predictable/old information

However, this is not meant to be a universal principle, and Givón (1984:206-207) also shows that the opposite ordering principle seems to hold for Mandarin. Thus, ordering variation dictated by pragmatic factors is something that can be present in the grammar of any language, but the exact form it takes is language-specific.

The potential for this type of variation is captured well by the Placement Rules of Functional Grammar, where constituents are given their surface word order by means of language-specific rules which can be based on syntactic, semantic and/or pragmatic functions of the underlying clausal structure (cf. Dik 1997a:391-394). These rules make use of word order templates such as the following from Moutaouakil’s (1989:10) analysis of Arabic.9

(5) (P4) P2, P1 PØ V S N/A O X, P3 (P4)

Within such a template, we find the representation of pragmatically important positions (P), clause-internally or externally. One such position is the commonly occurring “P1” which constitutes a clause-initial position which can then be filled by a specific constituent (e.g., subject or topic, in a rigid word order language) or a range of different constituents (in a flexible word order language). Exactly what constituent(s) can occur in P1 or in other

9 The Functional Grammar word order template, and positions, cited here will be modified as per advances in Functional Discourse Grammar (Hengeveld and Mackenzie 2008) when we come to discuss Cree word order in Chapter 4.
special clausal positions, or even if such positions are utilized at all, is a language-specific matter, though it is quite common to find pragmatic functions such as topic and focus (and many refinements of these pragmatic roles) occupying special clausal positions, and the grammaticalization of such pragmatic functions to “subject” and “object” gives rise to the word order typology cited above in Table 1.8.

Many syntactic frameworks, such as Transformational Grammar and Relational Grammar and their successors, take the grammatical relations of subject and object as universal for grammar, but this is by no means a universally held view in linguistics. From the perspective of Functional Grammar, these syntactic functions provide an optional third level of structure in addition to obligatory pragmatic and semantic functions and as such it is perfectly plausible that the grammar of a language will not make use of syntactic functions at all. This possibility will not only prove very important for our subsequent investigation of Cree morphosyntax, but it relegates the typology in Table 1.8 to one which characterizes only those languages which do make use of syntactic functions. The absence of syntactic functions (or grammatical relations) from the grammars of even a small percentage of the world’s languages will ultimately require the introduction of a broader word order typology.

Finally, associated with the factors which may determine word order in language are grammatical features which allow for greater variation. For instance, if a language has an alternative means of tracking syntactic or semantic functions, then word order will not need to be utilized for this purpose. Thus, working side-by-side with clausal position to indicate important functions is a means of indexing particular functions morphologically. The predominant means by which such indexing is achieved is referred to as “case-marking”.

### 1.2.2 Case-Marking

Traditionally, case-marking has been defined as nominal inflection indicating the syntactic role which the noun has in a clause. Such a definition is fairly limiting since it restricts the constituent being marked to nominal status and suggests that the only means of marking is by the attachment of a bound morpheme. In actual fact, the range of formal marking patterns is somewhat broader than this, while the number of functional strategies achieving this same purpose is considerably greater.

For instance, given just our initial definition, English would be completely devoid of a case-marking system since English nouns are not marked for their role in the clause. As exemplified in (6), the noun phrase
“the cat” can be the subject (6a) or object (6b) of an English sentence, and its form does not change despite an important change in its role.

(6)  a) The cat chased the dog.
      b) The dog chased the cat.

For English nouns, it is solely the word order position which functions to indicate role. However, English pronouns often (though not always) do take special forms which indicate role (7a-b), while also adhering to word order position (as indicated by the ungrammatical examples (7a’-b’)).

(7)  a) I help her.  a’)*Her help I.
      b) She helps me.  b’)*Me helps she.

This allows us to broaden the definition of case-marking in two ways. First, pronouns (as substitutes for entire noun phrases) can also be case-marked so that case-marking is not limited to nouns. Second, case-marking itself need not take the form of a simple bound morpheme but can instead be bound up in a complex or “portmanteau” morpheme. With respect to this second observation, English pronouns do not occur as invariable stems with case-marking affixes added to indicate role. Instead, each pronoun serves the multiple functions of indicating person, number and syntactic function with no internal synchronic morphological analysis possible.

Neither of these extensions of case-marking are novel or controversial and English is certainly recognized as having the remnant of a once richer case-marking system, the kind which is still evident in German. Nevertheless, the traditional definition of case-marking has continued to be restricted to marking on nouns and independent pronouns even as observations on pronominal form have broadened the definition of pronoun. From Jelinek’s (1984) “Pronominal Argument Hypothesis”, even formal syntacticians have recognized that bound pronominal elements found as part of the verbal complex - particularly in so-called “pro-drop” or “null-subject” languages which do not require independent pronouns - cannot be relegated to a role of “verb agreement” and must instead be analyzed as pronouns in their own right. However, this revelation has not always led to a concomitant expansion of the formal definition of case-marking to include bound pronominal inflection of the verb. Functionally, though, systems such as found in Dakota, where verbal person prefixes may provide the only indication of person and role, can and certainly should be included in a typology of case-marking (cf. Givón 1984). The problem has perhaps merely been one of formal terminology and what has been needed is a fuller
typology of “role-indexing” into which all formal means of fulfilling the important function of indicating participant role (including both word order and case-marking) can be fit (see section 1.2.3 immediately below). This also will prove very important in the subsequent discussion of Cree role-indexing and syntax.

An additional aspect of case-marking that must be recognized is the range of case-marking types, even traditionally defined, to be found cross-linguistically. Again taking English as a point of departure, the remnant of case-marking found in English points to the importance of the division of the grammatical relations “subject” and “object”. Thus, English subjects exhibit both preverbal position and, pronominally, subject (or nominative) case, while non-subject pronouns, including direct objects, indirect objects and objects of prepositions, take object (or accusative) case and follow their verbs or prepositions. The terms nominative and accusative, borrowed from Latin grammar, indicate that English has an “Accusative” system in which “subjects”, whether transitive or intransitive, are treated alike, and objects are marked differently. Such a system may be so familiar that it comes as a surprise to many English students of linguistics that it is not the only possible system. As illustrated in Table 1.9 and Figure 1.5 (on the following page), however, other systems do exist. At the heart of case-marking typology is the recognition that the terms “subject” and “object” are not necessarily equivalent across all languages and are, in fact, no more universal for case-marking than they are for word order. The abbreviations found in Table 1.9 are those, as found in more recent typological studies, which allow us to avoid the use of the English or Accusative-biased terms Subject (S) and Object (O). While S has been retained, it is limited in reference to the sole intransitive participant. Among the two core relations in a monotransitive construction, the abbreviations A (for agent, actor, etc.) and P (for patient) are used.

Table 1.9
Case-Marking Typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitive Participant</th>
<th>Intransitive Participant</th>
<th>Transitive Participant</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agent/Actor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>Accusative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ergative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sa</td>
<td>Sp</td>
<td>Split-Intransitive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The key feature of this typology is that it recognizes that there is no necessary relationship between the sole intransitive participant (S) and either of the two main participants of a transitive clause: the agentive or actor-like one (A) and the patient-like one (P). Thus, an Accusative language like English (or Dutch or Latin, etc.) groups S and A together as if they are the same type of constituent (nominative or “subject”) and treats the P constituent as the odd one out. But this is by no means a universal pattern. In contrast, “Ergative” languages like Inuktitut (or Basque or Tibetan, etc.) make the opposite choice, grouping the S and P constituents (“absolutive”) together as similar and treating the A constituent (the “ergative”) abnormally. Though these two systems appear to be diametrically opposed, both are motivated at least in part by pragmatic features. Accusative languages group A and S together due to their prototypical topicality, while Ergative languages group P and S together due to prototypical focality as evidenced through discourse pragmatics (cf. Du Bois 1987). When both motivations are given some attention in the grammar of a language, it is even possible for both Accusative and Ergative patterns to be found, creating a so-called “Split-Ergative” system (cf. Silverstein 1976). This is another important point to be kept in mind when investigating the potential indexing system present in Cree.

Furthermore, both Accusative and Ergative systems treat all intransitive participants as if they are similar, but even this is not a universal pattern as demonstrated in “Split-Intransitive” languages. In languages of this type, such as Dakota (or Choctaw or Kamayura, etc.), semantic roles take precedence and at a bare minimum, agent-like or active intransitive participants (Sa) are differentiated from patient-like (or “stative”) intransitive participants (Sp). In a split-intransitive system, each of these subtypes of S is then grouped with its semantic counterpart transitive participant, so that Sa and A are marked similarly as agent-like participants

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10 Split-Intransitive languages are also often referred to as “Active-Stative” languages.
and Sp and P are marked similarly as patient-like participants.

Thus, case-marking, even traditionally defined, provides us with a variety of patterns which can serve one of the same functions as word order can, namely the indication of semantic or syntactic role within the clause. Once the range of means by which roles can be indicated is expanded, including recognition of the number of different case-marking types found in the world’s languages, this provides us with a much better understanding of this important functional domain. In turn, this will put us in a better position to analyze the roles, if any, that word order and case-marking have in Cree morphosyntax.

1.2.3 Alignment

Reference was made above to the need for a more encompassing typological classification of “role-indexing” systems, and in recent years this has begun to emerge in the recognition of “alignment”. Thus, the patterns discussed in the preceding section on case-marking have been found to be relevant to a number of strategies beyond the strict traditional definition of case-marking itself. Our earlier discussion of word order highlighted its common, though not universal, role in differentiating grammatical relations or syntactic functions. Often word order and case-marking are complementary in this domain, such that a language without case-marking will require a strict word order bound to role identification, while a language with a strong case-marking system may have freer word order or, at the very least, order dictated by factors other than grammatical relations.

Word order and case-marking are thus two strategies for role-indexing across languages. Just as we can identify an Accusative or Ergative pattern among case-markers, such a pattern can also manifest itself in word order, and we have already explicitly recognized this in the accusative pattern of English word order. This is not accusative case-marking, but can be referred to as an instance of accusative alignment in which the word order systematically treats A and S as similar (i.e. through preverbal placement) while P receives different coding (i.e. through postverbal position). These patterns can be recognized in a number of other strategies as well. Alongside the word order of languages like English, we can find that the order of bound pronominals attached to verbs (or “slot assignment” as in Swahili; van Eijk, personal communication) can reflect one or another alignment pattern. Similarly, we can use the notion of alignment to extend the traditional definition of case-marking from affixes at the level of the word (i.e. noun or pronoun) to the function of adpositions at the phrasal level as signals of role-indexing. All such strategies can be used to indicate the semantic and/or
syntactic role of participants, and all can (at least theoretically) follow alignment patterns equivalent to the major case-marking types.

At this point, we can expand alignment beyond the comparison of one-place intransitive and two-place monotransitive constructions illustrated in Table 1.9 and Figure 1.5. Another comparison that is now commonly made is between two-place monotransitive and three-place ditransitive constructions. Figure 1.6 thus extends the number of roles which might be tracked in alignment systems by adding the third participant in ditransitive structures.

**Figure 1.6**  
Identification of Participants in 1-, 2- and 3-Place Predications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intransitive</th>
<th>Monotransitive</th>
<th>Ditransitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, the abbreviations have been chosen to treat each of the participants as maximally distinct, with the exception of A for the agent of monotransitive and ditransitive constructions alike, which are commonly held to align with one another.\(^{11}\) Given this identity of A, the question then becomes one of the alignment of the monotransitive patient (P) with either the ditransitive patient or theme (T) or the ditransitive recipient, benefactive or goal (R), as illustrated in Figure 1.7.

**Figure 1.7**  
Direct-Indirect versus Primary-Secondary Objects

\(^{11}\) Sometimes even agents of monotransitive and ditransitive constructions are differentiated by the use of A1 and A2, but these abbreviations will be used elsewhere in this work to represent semantic arguments of the predicate, such that all three types illustrated in Figure 1.6 will have an A1 and both transitive subtypes will have an A2.
The former alignment, in which the semantically similar constituents P and T (as patients or themes of their respective constructions) are marked similarly, as exemplified in languages like French, is the more common system cross-linguistically. This is also often assumed to be the basic or most normal situation in English where objects are commonly divided into “direct” and “indirect”. However, as the examples below illustrate, English can choose either option, again using the word order position (emphasized here by underscore) to treat the ditransitive patient (in (9)) or recipient (in (10)) like the object of a monotransitive (in (8)).

(8) She wrote the letter.
   A      V         P

(9) She sent the letter to her friend.
   A     V       T                  R

(10) She sent her friend the letter.
    A     V        R              T

Note in all examples that the agent is similarly treated in this accusatively aligned language as the preverbal “subject”. In (9), the theme the letter is chosen as the “direct” object, with the recipient coded by the preposition “to”. In (10), the recipient has been placed in the important postverbal position as direct object, in which case it no longer requires a prepositional marker. Many languages, such as French, only allow constructions as in (9), where the monotransitive patient and ditransitive theme are obligatorily treated alike. Others, like English, allow for a choice of direct object assignment. A smaller set of languages only allow the alignment choice of example (10), treating the ditransitive R like monotransitive P obligatorily. In contrast to the “direct-indirect” object terminology traditionally used for languages like English (or, more properly, French), Dryer (1986) introduced the terms “primary” and “secondary” object, and these terms, sometimes in the form “primative-secundative”, are now becoming standard in expressing this alignment pattern.

Again, we must recognize that alignment can be reflected in a wide array of strategies. Thus, while word order indicates the choice of a direct or primary object in English, this can also be accomplished cross-linguistically by case-marking, adpositional marking, and verbal cross-referencing. Regardless of the morphosyntactic device(s) in use in a language, they all function to signal important relationships between participants. The notion of alignment will prove very important to the investigation of Cree
morphosyntax.

1.2.4 Intonation

An additional and often overlooked means by which grammatical structure is indicated is through the use of intonation and intonational contours. The dismissal of prosodic features as integral to syntax has less to do with their obvious contribution to syntactic structure as to a formal compartmentalization of syntax as completely independent and autonomous of such other linguistic domains as phonology or semantics. Functionally, any device, whether primarily classified as phonological, morphological, or syntactic, which helps us determine the relationship and meaning of words within phrases, clauses and sentences, must also be recognized as contributing to morphosyntax. Another reason why prosodic features are overlooked in formal syntactic analyses is that intonation tends to mark pragmatic functions like topic and focus, rather than delineating grammatical relations, and only fairly recently are these phenomena receiving increased attention.

It is clear, however, that prosodic features can serve the same function as otherwise accomplished by word order. For instance, two options for indicating the difference between declaratives and interrogatives in English are to change word order (as in (11)) or to change the intonational contour (as in (12)).

(11) a) She is reading. b) Is she reading?

(12) a) She is reading. b) She is reading?

In (11), the statement in (a) can be turned into a question by reversing the order of subject pronoun (*she*) and auxiliary verb (*is*). The question mark (?) in (11b) primarily indicates the new interrogative force introduced by the word order change. In (12), rather than using a word order change, it is merely a change in the intonation which signals a difference between the declarative in (12a), with falling intonation, and the interrogative in (12b), with rising intonation. In these examples, the falling or rising intonation is indicated graphically by the addition of an overposed line, but in standard English writing only the presence of the question mark indicates that an interrogative is intended. Since word order provides us with syntactic information, and intonational contours provide us with the same information, it follows that intonational contours handle some of the work otherwise done by syntax.
Another important use of intonation, again often contrasted with word order change, is in focus-marking. In English, a word order change, via a special cleft-focus construction, can be used to place contrastive focus on an element. In (13b), the object *a wolf* is fronted, among other changes required, and no longer occurs in its normal postverbal position, as in (13a). A similar effect can be induced without a word order change, but by simply adding extra emphasis (or intonation) to the object noun (as indicated in (14b) by boldface and small caps).

(13)  
\begin{align*}
\text{a) } & \text{Peter saw a wolf.} \quad \text{b) It was a wolf that Peter saw.} \\
& \quad \text{(i.e. in contrast to a lion, or a sunset, etc.)}
\end{align*}

(14)  
\begin{align*}
\text{a) } & \text{Peter saw a wolf.} \quad \text{b) Peter saw a WOLF.} \\
& \quad \text{(i.e. in contrast to a lion, or a sunset, etc.)}
\end{align*}

Again, intonation provides us with the same information that word order does. Both strategies contribute to our understanding of the pragmatic and/or semantic import of an utterance. Thus, intonation can be an important part of the grammatical structure of a language and of languages in general. Ideally, intonation, word order, and case-marking (or any other morphological strategy serving the same function in an alignment system) must all be taken into account to provide a complete picture of the grammatical structure of a language.

### 1.3 Some Potential Components of Cree Morphosyntax

The Cree language, particularly the Plains dialect, is among the most well-studied of all North American First Nations languages. Long before detailed linguistic analyses were begun, the importance of the Cree as one of the groups most relied upon by French and English traders and missionaries in Canada ensured that word lists, ecumenical translations and even grammars began to appear shortly after contact. Interestingly, despite many of the early contacts being with the more northern and eastern groups, it was Plains Cree that ultimately received the most attention, apparently due to the fact that it was used as a lingua franca on the Canadian Plains and even further eastward, a fact not lost on those preparing Bible and hymnbook translations. By the time that works which are classified as truly linguistic in nature were begun in the early 1900s, including the classificatory work of Michelson (cf. 1912, 1939) and the recording and analysis of texts by
Bloomfield (cf. 1930, 1934), Plains Cree had become the focus of almost all attention, at least among the western dialects. Plains Cree was one of the four main “central” Algonquian languages studied by Bloomfield, although his concentration and contribution here was in the collection of texts, the compilation of a lexicon, and the use of the phonology and morphology in his reconstructions of Proto-Algonquian. Though he compiled grammatical sketches of Fox (1925b, 1927), Menomini (1962) and Eastern Ojibwa (1958) (the latter two published posthumously under the editorship of Charles F. Hockett), Plains Cree was not so treated. It was left for H.C. Wolfart (1973) to produce the first extensive linguistic description of Plains Cree grammar. In this 80-page work, both dense and concise, Wolfart situates the language geographically and genetically, discusses aspects of the Phonology, and details much of the Morphology of noun, pronoun, particle, and verb, before concluding with a sample text. Thus, there is no space whatsoever devoted to phrasal or clausal Syntax. The description concentrated on the extremely rich morphology, as did subsequent work of the 1970s and early 1980s, including teaching materials such as the revision of Edwards (1982), and Okimāsis and Ratt (1984). Despite a growing bibliography of materials on Plains Cree by the mid-1980s, very little attention had as yet been given to syntax, beyond general statements or unanalyzed examples of utterances to be found in non-technical language teaching materials.

This slowly began to change with the work of Wolfart’s student, a fluent Plains Cree speaker, Freda Ahenakew. In Ahenakew’s (1987a) M.A. thesis, a small but significant portion, the final chapter, was dedicated specifically to syntactic matters. However, an even more important contribution was made through Ahenakew’s subsequent work in collecting oral texts. The publication of a series of text compilations, edited and translated by Ahenakew and Wolfart, stimulated much interest and work on Plains Cree, leading to an increasing concentration on the syntax of the language. The following sections will briefly review some of this more recent work on Cree morphosyntax with respect to the main components of grammar introduced previously.

### 1.3.1 Word Order

Since syntax is essentially equated with word order, we will begin our survey of previous studies of Cree morphosyntax with what has been written concerning Cree word order. As already indicated above, earlier linguistic materials dealing with Cree and the Algonquian languages in general tended quite naturally to be preoccupied with the extremely rich morphological patterns in evidence. As classic examples of polysynthetic languages, the
Algonquian family exhibits intensely complex verbal structures and Cree is certainly no exception to this. The verb, in all its glory, was early observed capable of standing in place of an entire English sentence, as in (15).  

\[(15) \quad \text{niki-} \text{nọ́htē-} \text{nitawi-} \text{kiyokawāw.} \]

\[
\begin{array}{llllll}
\text{nī} & \text{IPV} & \text{nōhtē-} & \text{IPV} & \text{VTA} & \text{DIR} \\
1 & & & & 3s \\
\text{PST} & \text{want} & \text{go to} & \text{visit} & 1s-3s \\
\end{array}
\]

“I wanted to go visit him/her.”

As will be further explicated in Chapter 2, a verb stem like kiyokaw in (15) is classified as a VTA stem which requires two arguments and will be marked separately for person (nī:- -w) and theme (direct -ā). Additionally, it can take a number of “preverbs” which, as in this example, indicate such categories as tense (kī-), modality (nōhtē-) and direction (nitawi-). Examples such as this exhibit a very strict word-internal morpheme order, but it is what occurs outside the verb that has drawn the attention of syntacticians. Associated with the verb’s morphological complexity, observations have long been made that the participants need not be lexicalized (i.e. do not occur as nouns or independent pronouns, as in (15)). Furthermore, if they were to be lexicalized, then there is an apparent freedom of placement such that word order does not serve the same purpose as in strict word order languages like English. There simply does not seem to be any preferred word order along the lines of the important placement of subject, verb, and object. This phenomenon, observed in an increasing number of “exotic” languages gave rise to the use of the phrase “free word order language”. Cree has long been included under this description and has been described as such in works as late as Dahlstrom (1991:1-2), Reinholtz (1995:396), and Wolfart (1996:391-392).

This terminology may never have been meant to be understood as literally “free”. Nevertheless, it is an awkward way to state that Cree does not put word order to the same use that English does and to admit to a lack of understanding of the principles behind the actual use of word order in

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12 Here and throughout this work, Cree examples will frequently be represented in a five-line analysis:

1) the actual Cree example, italicized and represented in the standard roman orthography (a (morpho)phonemic system rather than phonetic (cf. Okimásis and Wolvengrey 2008));
2) a morpheme-by-morpheme analysis;
3) a grammatical gloss of each morpheme;
4) a lexical or further grammatical gloss or, in the case of direction markers, a further explication of the person interaction, as appropriate;
5) English translation(s).
Cree. Therefore, it is heartening to see, in the most recent literature, an increasing awareness that grammatical relations are not the only means by which to judge or describe Cree word order.

In her introduction to the discussion of discontinuous constituents in Swampy Cree, Reinholtz (1995) lists some salient features of Cree syntax which characterize it as a “nonconfigurational” language in the sense of Hale (1982, 1983), particularly its “comparatively free word order”. However, in subsequent papers, similarly introducing “comparatively free” word order variation, Reinholtz (1997:1; 1999a:201) adds a footnote in which it is acknowledged that preferences of word order could be attributable (in yet to be explicated ways) to such notions as “focus” or “discourse-related constraints”. Though much subsequent work (e.g. Blain 1997, Déchaine 1999, Hirose 2003, etc.) has concentrated on attempts to formalize verb structure and word order variation, few as of yet have truly attempted to explain the variation in terms of features of discourse pragmatics and to replace “free word order” with “pragmatically-conditioned word order”. In other words, we know that variation exists, and we know that it is not free, but beyond vague notions of “focus”, few contributions to the linguistic literature have really paid much attention to the contexts under which certain word order choices are made.

Exceptions to this can be found in Reinholtz and Wolfart’s (2001) discussion of the clitic properties of the emphatic particle ani (as well as the Cree question particles: Plains cī and Swampy nā (cf. Reinholtz and Wolfart 2001:430, fn.7)) as marking elements under contrastive focus in sentence-initial position. Wolvengrey (2003), in responding to Reinholtz (1997), similarly points to a number of uses of demonstrative pronouns including immediate post-initial position in which the function is one of marking (contrastive) focus. Thus, an example such as (16) clearly illustrates that the various functions of what otherwise seem to be three identical formal occurrences of the Cree demonstrative pronoun awa are differentiated in the word order: namely predicative, focussing and referential (Wolvengrey 2003:24).

(16) aw āw āwa.
    awa awa awa
    PRED FOC REF
    (be) the one here this
    “This (animate) one here is it” / “It is this one here!”

Most recently, Junker (2004) has discussed the role of focus in East Cree word order and Mühlbauer (2005) has, in an unpublished paper, presented an
interesting representation of constituent order in Plains Cree which, though couched in formal Minimalist terms, nevertheless explores the discourse function that word order plays in the interpretation of nominals. In studies of related Algonquian languages, such an approach is also becoming more frequent, beginning even earlier with such works as Tomlin and Rhodes (1992) on Ojibwa, and the influential paper by Dahlstrom (1995a) presenting a word order template for Fox/Meskwaki which has since provided others with a model to test within the Algonquian family. This latter work will prove particularly important for the current study of Plains Cree. Other notable Algonquian studies include but are not limited to Valentine (2001) on Nishnaabemwin (Ojibwa) and Shields (2004) on Menomini.

The primary focus (if I may use the term) of the latter half of the current work (Chapters 4 through 6) will continue these recent attempts to uncover the semantic and pragmatic contexts under which certain word order choices are made. Preliminary to this, however, will be a reanalysis and explication of the Algonquian, and specifically Plains Cree, system which is in place allowing for the word order to be, if not free, then free of the need to indicate semantic and/or syntactic roles. The most common means to circumvent such a need for rigid word order is typically to be found in the use of case-marking cross-linguistically.

1.3.2 Case-Marking

This section, dedicated to a discussion of case-marking as identified in Cree (or in Algonquian in general) could be kept exceptionally brief. Following the traditional definition of case-marking (as attached to nouns and/or independent pronouns), Cree has been almost universally described as devoid of case-marking. Nouns and independent pronouns are simply free of any morphological variation indicating the familiar grammatical relations (i.e. subject, object, indirect object or even possessor). The only possible candidate for a case-marker on nouns is marking for obviation, but this is consistently and accurately demonstrated to function on the levels of clausal disjoint reference and discourse tracking and cannot be tied to any particular semantic or syntactic roles (see also Chapters 2 and 3). Concomitantly, independent personal pronouns, in addition to being optionally inserted into a structure, can represent the sole intransitive subject/actor (S, as in (17)), a transitive agent/actor (A, as in (18)), a transitive patient/object (P, as in (19)), a transitive recipient/“goal” (R, as in (20)), and a possessor (POSS, as in (21)), all without any change in form, as demonstrated with the first person singular pronoun, niya.
(17) ... ē-kī-wičihisoyān niya, ...  (Lafond and Longneck 1992:272-273)
ē- kī- wičihi -yān niya
IPV IPV VAI 1s PR.1s
CNJ PST help.oneself I/me/mine
“... I helped myself, ...”

(18) niy ānima ē-kī-osīhtāyān ...  (Lafond and Longneck 1992:270-271)
niya anima ē- kī- osiht -yān
PR.1s PR.0s IPV IPV VTI 1s(-0)
I/me/mine that CNJ PST make
“I had built that too, ...”

(19) “hāw, niya ōma kā-āyimōmit,” ta-ītēyihtam.13
hāw niya ōma kā- āyimōm -it
IPC PR.1s IPC IPV VTA INV
o.k. I/me/mine ! CNJ speak.about 3s-1s
  ta- itēyiht -am
  IPV VTI 3s(-0’)
FUT think.of
“He will think, ‘He’s talking about me!’ ”

(20) awa niya ē-kī-miyit ōhi.  (Lafond and Longneck 1992:310-311)
awa niya ē- kī- miy -it ōhi
PR.3s PR.1s IPV IPV VTA INV PR.0’p
this I/me/mine CNJ PST give 3s-1s these
“He gave me these [sc. glasses].”

(21) niya cī ōma?14
niya cī ōma
PR.1s Q PR.0s
I/me/mine this
“Is this mine?” (e.g. asking whether drink or food is meant for me)
or “Is this me?” (e.g. asking about an unrecognized picture)

13 This example comes from a story narrated by Elder John Moosomin (as originally published in Moosomin, et al. 1989:5), but was retranscribed from the original tape by Jean Okimāsis for an as-yet unpublished revision.
14 A textual example of an independent pronoun used as a possessive, in this case second person kiya, can also be cited:
  (e.g.) kiya, ē-nisitohtahkik. (F. Ahenakew in Lafond and Longneck 1992: 302-303)
  kiya ē- nisitoht -ahkik
  PR.2s IPV VTI 3p(-0’)
you/yours CNJ understand
  “Yours (i.e. children), they understand it (i.e. Cree).”
Thus, case-marking has been rejected as a feature of Cree. Despite this, it has been noted that nouns can be marked as locatives, as in (22b) and (23b).

(22) a) sākahikan
NI.0s
“lake”

b) sākahikanihk
sākahikan -ihk
NI LOC
lake in/on/at
“in/on/at the lake”

(23) a) niki-wāpahtēn sākahikan.
ni- kī- wāpaht -ēn sākahikan
1 IPV VTI 1/2(-0) NI.0s
PST see lake
“I saw a lake.”

b) niki-wāpahtēn sākahikanihk.
ni- kī- wāpaht -ēn sākahikan -ihk
1 IPV VTI 1/2(-0) NI LOC
PST see lake in/on/at
“I saw it in/on/at the lake.”

With the locative suffix interpreted as an inflectional suffix on nouns, the example in (23b) illustrates that the presence of the locative prevents the noun from being interpreted as a core constituent (e.g. object) of the verb. Since this means the locative suffix would then be telling us something about the role of the noun in the sentence, it should logically be considered case-marking. Even so, the general attitude towards this can be summed up by paraphrasing one leading Cree scholar who simply stated that, even if we interpret the Locative as an instance of case-marking, we cannot build a case system on a single case (Wolfart: personal communication).

However, it might not be just a single case. Although it is becoming archaic in many areas, special address or vocative forms remain in use, especially in the use of a distinct plural suffix. (24) illustrates the difference between a regular plural and a vocative plural, and again this has the effect, in (24b), of eliminating the vocative noun from being construed as a core referent of the verb (in this case, the object/patient).
Here, then, for those subdialectal areas in which these forms persist, we have a second candidate for nominal case-marking. But though both the locative and vocative indicate that a noun is not one of the core arguments of the verb, this alone does not seem to have qualified as case-marking for Cree or Algonquian scholars since no nominal marking can be found that is specific to the identification and differentiation of the core arguments. Thus, a rather narrow definition of case-marking has been maintained, at least among Algonquianists. Among more functionally-oriented analysts, the definition of case-marking has long been expanded to include a variety of strategies (cf. Givón 1984), and some recent typological works have even included Direct-Inverse under the title of case-marking (cf. Song 2001).

1.3.3 Alignment

In the current work, I advocate the recognition of an overarching functional classification of all such devices that serve to indicate, directly or indirectly, the role that the participants have in the clause. As a preliminary step, we can permit the Cree locative and vocative to be recognized as nominal case-marking in the traditional sense. In much the same way, English prepositions act as functional heads to indicate the role of the noun for many oblique cases (but notably not subject and object!). Formally, English prepositions are not affixed to the noun and so this may not fit the narrow definition of case-marking, but functionally these are all indicators of the role or semantic function of participants. One possibility, therefore, is to extend the definition of case-marking to all strategies other than word order that serve to indicate semantic role, and this has at least been implied in some functionally-based literature (cf. Givón 1984; Song 2001). Conversely, if the traditional definition of case-marking is deemed inviolable, then we...
simply need another term which encompasses all strategies within this important functional domain: word order, morpheme order, case-marking, adpositional strategies (phrase-level rather than word-level “case-marking”), and any other forms possible. As introduced above, and in the most recent literature, the term that has come into use is “alignment”. Sections of Chapter 2 and 3 will be devoted to portraying the Direct-Inverse system among Transitive Animate Verbs (VTAs), as an alignment system which is functionally equivalent to case-marking. This is the system that allows for the “comparatively free word order” through its disambiguation of the role of participants. It can thus be interpreted as either a fourth major type of case-marking, alongside accusative, ergative, and active-stative, or as a unique strategy that joins word order and case-marking as a third major type of role-indexing alignment.

Finally, it must be noted that in addition to the current analysis, one other contemporary interpretation of Direct-Inverse as case-marking has been championed by Déchaine and Reinholtz (cf. 1998, 2007). Their interpretation does bear some resemblance to the view to be forwarded in this work, but from the very different perspective of the Minimalist Program. As such, their analysis is tied very much to the structural definition of subject and object, whereas the functional approach espoused in Chapter 3 will reject the necessity for referring to a separate level of grammatical relations or syntactic functions whatsoever.\(^{15}\)

1.3.4 Intonation

Despite the acknowledged necessity to include information on intonation (emphatic stress, phrasal and clausal intonational boundaries, etc.) in any full treatment of the grammar of a language, extremely little is currently known about phrasal and clausal stress and intonational patterns in Cree. And it is an unfortunate fact that the current work will not add a great deal to this understanding. Intonationally, declarative utterances in Plains Cree end in a falling tone (25), but so also can yes-no (26) and content questions (27).

\[(25)\] \[ninōhtē-sēwēpitamawāw nīwa.\]
\[ni- nōhtē- sēwēpitamaw -ā -w n- ĭw -a\]
\[1 IPV VTA DIR 3s 1 NDA 3s\]
\[want phone 1s-3s wife\]
\[“I want to phone my wife.”\]

\(^{15}\) The current functionalist interpretation of direct-inverse received its earliest preliminary formulation in a paper delivered at the 25\(^{th}\) Algonquian Conference in Montreal, Quebec (Wolvengrey 1993).
In the case of yes-no questions, however, it is also possible to omit the question particle \( c\i \) and simply indicate the interrogative status of the utterance with a rising intonation, as in (28).

\[
(28) \quad \text{kimihtātāw?} \\
\text{ki- mihṭāt -ā -w cī} \\
2 \quad \text{VTA DIR 3s Q} \\
\text{miss 2s-3s} \\
\text{“You miss her?”}
\]

A practical application of such observations allows for a more accurate rendering of certain boundaries in running speech, but far more detail is still required. In practice, certain boundaries (such as between clausal and extraclausal constituents) will be marked in data analyzed within the current work, but the phonological or intonational cues that lead to such identification will not be codified or referred to specifically. It is hoped that rare works on Cree prosody such as Wolfart (1989) and Cook (2006) will soon be joined by additional in-depth studies of Cree intonation.

1.4 Algonquian Studies, Functional Grammar and the Current Work

Having just stated one of the outstanding issues in Cree syntax that will not be specifically addressed in the current work, we will return now to our introduction of topics that will be important in the coming chapters. As stated above, this is a study of an Algonquian language and as such it falls within the tradition of Algonquianist work and terminology. However, it is also among the first in-depth studies of an Algonquian language to be placed
with the framework of Functional (Discourse) Grammar (cf. Wolvengrey 2005 on Cree, and Genee 2009 on Blackfoot), and as such it must necessarily fall within a tradition of functional studies. Though these two things are by no means incompatible, the terminology of these traditions do occasionally clash, and some further issues particular to Algonquian languages will require introduction before we can move forward.

1.4.1 Terminological Preliminaries

One of the more distinctive aspects of the description of Algonquian languages is to be found in Bloomfield’s use of “actor” and “goal” as names roughly synonymous with “subject” and “object”. The actor is essentially the first argument in verbal constructions indexing one (intransitive), two (monotransitive) or three (ditransitive) semantic roles. This term has no real semantic equivalent in Functional Grammar (FG), but does correspond quite directly with the macro-role Actor as utilized in Foley and Van Valin’s (1984) Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) and adopted into Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG; cf. Hengeveld and Mackenzie 2008). Thus, its use here would not be inappropriate and certainly it will appear in the names of such typically Algonquian constructions as the “inanimate actor” (see Chapter 2) and the “unspecified actor” (see Chapters 2 and 3). Outside of this context, however, the phrase “first argument” (A1) will be preferred for reasons that hopefully will be made clear in the following chapters. Ultimately, Bloomfield’s choice of the term “actor” may tie it too closely to the semantic role of “agent”, but either term is certainly preferable to the term “subject”, biased as that is towards accusative case-marking systems.

The term “goal” provides a different set of problems, as it has been used to mean a great variety of things in linguistic theory in general. Within Functional Grammar, Dik (1997a:120-121) uses “Goal” to refer essentially to the semantic patient which he treats as the most common candidate for the second argument (A2) and, in fact, the obligatory second argument of ditransitive constructions. In the latter sense alone, this matches perfectly Bloomfield’s use of “goal” for Algonquian languages, since Bloomfield’s “goal” indeed refers to the obligatory second argument of Algonquian ditransitives. However, as we will see in Chapter 2, this is not the semantic patient, but rather the recipient or beneficiary. Furthermore, in Functional Discourse Grammar, Dik’s use of “Goal” has been replaced by Role and Reference Grammar’s use of “Undergoer” for the macro-role most commonly associated with the patient or affected object, while the term “Goal” is relegated to specifying the destination as a subtype of a third important macro-role, the “Locative” (Hengeveld and Mackenzie 2008).
While the FDG concept of Locative includes both recipient and goal, neither are the typically preferred choice for the second argument of a ditransitive. Conversely, as we have already seen in section 1.3.2 above, the locative is quite important for Cree, but from an Algonquian perspective, locatives and recipients can in no way be equated. Hence, we have a terminological impasse. The Algonquian use of “goal” is not completely compatible with FG and less so with FDG, while the FDG use of “Undergoer” simply does not fit the facts of Cree and the Algonquian languages. Additionally, the term “object” is just as inappropriately biased in linguistic typology as “subject”. Thus, all three terms will be avoided in favour of simply referring to the second argument (A2), unless the precise semantic role is important to the discussion.

From the interpretation and identification of the arguments of verbs, we can turn to the variety of ways in which arguments can be marked in Cree and Algonquian verbal constructions. The category of person was introduced earlier in section 1.1.2.2.2, but person cross-reference manifests itself in three distinct verbal Orders (each with numerous subdivisions of “mode”, “tense”, “submode” and “inflection”; cf. Ellis 1970) in Algonquian. These are the Independent, Conjunct and Imperative Orders. In Plains Cree, because of the near or complete loss of certain “Modes” (i.e. the first level of subcategorization of the basic “Orders”) rendering “Order” and “Mode” virtually interchangeable, the practice has often been to conflate the Orders and Modes into a single category of “Mode”16. This practice is not followed here, however, where the superordinate terminology of “Order” is preferred in reference to the most common or sole Mode of each Order.

This is not meant to introduce confusion to the discussion of these Algonquian verbal divisions, but rather to avoid the confusion that the term “mode” might otherwise introduce within the general context of linguistic terminology. In the sense that “mode” is sometimes used interchangeably with “mood” to refer to the rough equivalent of illocutionary force and therefore the common cross-linguistic distinction between declarative, interrogative and imperative, only the Cree Imperative fully fits this description. Interestingly, in Ellis’ (1970:83) categorization of Cree verbal paradigms, the Imperative is the only Order which contains no distinctions of Mode, showing that mood was not intended, but merely a neutral division of different “modes” or ways of marking each Order. The Imperative Order

16 For example, following the apparent loss of the Dubitative Mode of the Independent Order, the Indicative Mode of the Independent Order is the sole remaining Mode and is thus typically referred to simply as the Independent Mode (cf. Ahenakew 1987a; Okimâsis 2004) or the Indicative Mode (Okimâsis and Ratt 1999). This latter usage is in turn made possible by reference to the Indicative Mode of the Conjunct Order as simply the Conjunct Mode.
(IMP) also only permits a subset of the person category, limited to second person forms and the first and second person inclusive, and thus represents both true imperatives and hortatives.

In contrast, the Independent (INDP) and Conjunct (CNJ) Orders cannot be equated directly with mood/mode or illocutionary force since both are declarative and both can occur in interrogatives (as in (29); see also Chapter 6).\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{align*}
\text{(29) a) } & \quad \textit{kinōhtēhkatān cī?} \\
& \quad \text{ki-} \quad \text{nōhtēhkatē} \quad -n \quad \text{cī} \\
& \quad \text{2.INDP} \quad \text{VAI} \quad 1/2.\text{INDP} \quad \text{Q} \\
& \quad \text{be.hungry} \quad \text{“Are you hungry?”} \\
\text{b) } & \quad \textit{ē-nōhtēhkatēyan cī?} \\
& \quad \text{ē-} \quad \text{nōhtēhkatē} \quad -yan \quad \text{cī} \\
& \quad \text{IPV} \quad \text{VAI} \quad 1\text{s.CNJ} \quad \text{Q} \\
& \quad \text{CNJ} \quad \text{be.hungry} \quad \text{“Are you hungry?”}
\end{align*}

Though these Orders have been roughly equated with main and subordinate clause structure, their actual distribution and function varies across Algonquian languages and has proven particularly opaque in Cree (though see Cook 2008 for an excellent recent analysis of Plains Cree clause typing). It is true that the Independent is most closely associated with the main clause, but the Conjunct also appears to function in main clauses, and thus a distinction of mood/mode seems inappropriate. Furthermore, the distinction between Independent and Conjunct Order verbs appears to have little to no bearing whatsoever on clausal word order, which forms the important topic of investigation of the latter half of the current work. Thus, we only require a neutral term which distinguishes these verb forms, and Order will suffice.

\subsection*{1.4.2 The Shapes of Things to Come}

This brings us back around to the actual topics of the remainder of this work. Chapter 2 begins by furthering our earlier discussion of animacy and illustrating its pervasive importance throughout Plains Cree grammar. This

\textsuperscript{17} These examples were originally supplied by Solomon Ratt (personal communication) to demonstrate the difference in discourse status (not indicated here) between the Independent and Conjunct. After sharing these examples during a discussion at the 38th Algonquian Conference (2006), they were also cited by Cook (2008:156).
includes its role in the pragmatic and semantic hierarchies which allow for the function of the direct-inverse system which will be described in detail. In turn, this leads us to two important observations. Chapter 2 concludes with a lengthy discussion of the role of animacy in the entire verbal system of Plains Cree, while Chapter 3 picks up on the important interaction of the semantic hierarchy and pragmatic discourse status which obviate the need for a third level of syntactic functions. Together, Chapters 2 and 3 thus also demonstrate the systems which allow for “comparatively free word order” in Cree. Chapters 4 through 6 then seek to dispel the myth of free word order through a careful look at word order tendencies, primarily through an examination of data from narrative text. As mentioned earlier, the primary source for this study will be the ten texts from wâskahikaniwîyiniw-âcimowina/Stories of the House People, as narrated by two fluent male Plains Cree elders, Peter Vandall and Joe Douquette (Ahenakew 1987b).

Chapter 4 begins by demonstrating word order variability before introducing a framework within Functional (Discourse) Grammar for the description of Plains Cree clausal word order. The chapter then concludes with an examination of some semantic constraints on word order and a look at constituent order in postverbal position. In Chapter 5 and 6, we turn our attention to the more complex constituency of preverbal positioning. Chapter 5 concentrates on syntactically-motivated positions, including one that highlights another prominent, pragmatically-motivated clausal position. This provides the link to Chapter 6 and the investigation of the importance of pragmatic functions within Plains Cree word order. In addition to an examination of many patterns in clausal word order, pragmatic functions also allow us to account for a large number of extra-clausal constituents.