Algonquian unergative subjects: Voice or *v*?

1. Introduction. Much recent work has drawn a distinction between the verbalizing head *v* and the agent-introducing head Voice (e.g. Pylkkänen 2002; Harley 2013; Legate 2014). This distinction raises a question: in which position does the subject of an unergative originate? If we follow Hale & Keyser (1993) in regarding unergatives as concealed transitives, we would expect unergative subjects to originate in the specifier of Voice, like transitive subjects. Massam (2012), however, has argued that this is not the case in Niuean: VoiceP introduces transitive subjects only, while unergative subjects originate in *v*P (see also Tollan 2015). In this presentation we argue that data from the Algonquian languages strongly supports a model in which unergative subjects originate in *v*P rather than VoiceP (as in Massam 2012).

2. Algonquian transitivity marking. We begin by introducing the two transitivity markers that occur in Algonquian verb forms: a derivational FINAL and an inflectional THEME SIGN. We also introduce a class of defective "pseudo-transitive" stems that will be relevant to our argument.

Final. A minimal Algonquian verb stem consists of an acategorial root plus a verbalizing suffix known as a final, which carries light-verb meanings and determines the transitivity of the stem (Bloomfield 1946; Goddard 1990). For example, the Plains Cree transitive stem *miyon-* 'to hold someone well' consists of the root *miyo-* 'good' plus the transitive final *-n* 'do to someone by hand' (i.e. 'hold'). Finals are widely analyzed as *v*, as in Brittain 2003 and Hirose 2003.

Theme sign. The theme sign is an inflectional suffix that immediately follows the stem. It is responsible for both object agreement, as in (1a–b), and passive marking, as in (1c). No theme sign appears in intransitives, as in the unaccusative in (1d). Given its role in object agreement and passive marking and its absence from unaccusatives, we analyze the theme sign as Voice, the head that introduces the external

(1)

	Root *v*	**Voice**	T	
a.	*ki-* [*miyo-n*]	**-i**	-n	'you hold **me** well'
	2- good-hold-**1.OBJ**-NON3			
b.	[*miyo-n*]	**-ê**	-w	'she holds **him** well'
	good-hold-**3.OBJ**		-3	
c.	[*miyo-n*]	**-â**	-w	'she **is held** well'
	good-hold	-PSSV	-3	
d.	[*miyo-si*]	—	-w	'she is good'
	good-be		-3	(Plains Cree)

argument and agrees with the internal argument (Bruening 2005; Oxford 2014; cf. Legate 2014).

Pseudo-transitives. Algonquian languages have a small class of transitive stems (Bloomfield's (1946) "pseudo-transitives") that are defective in three ways: (1) they inflect without a theme sign, like intransitives; (2) they cannot be passivized (Rhodes 1990 for Ojibwe); and (3) their object cannot be a Speech Act Participant (SAP), i.e. 1st/2nd person. An example is Plains Cree [*kimot-i*]-*w* 'she steals him/it', which inflects like the intransitive verb in (1d) above despite taking an object. We can explain all three properties if we take pseudo-transitives to lack a VoiceP layer, with the external argument instead introduced in *v*P. The absence of Voice directly predicts the absence of a theme sign and the impossibility of an active-passive contrast. Furthermore, since Voice is the locus of object agreement (see (1a–b) above), the ban on SAP objects follows from Béjar & Rezac's (2003) Person Licensing Condition, which requires SAP arguments to be licensed by agreement. With Voice absent from pseudo-transitives, object agreement will not take place, thus making it impossible for SAP objects to be licensed.

3. The status of unergatives. We now assess the transitivity of unergatives. Inflectional, syntactic, and derivational diagnostics show that unergatives pattern with unaccusatives and pseudo-transitives rather than full transitives. We conclude that unergatives, like pseudo-transitives, lack a VoiceP layer, with the external argument instead being introduced in *v*P.

Transitivity in inflection. If Algonquian unergatives were concealed transitive structures with the external argument in VoiceP, we would expect the inflection to include an overt realization of Voice, as in transitives such as (2a) (theme sign *-am*). This is not the case. As shown in (2b), an unergative stem does not take a theme sign and must be followed directly by the agreement suffix *-w*, exactly like the unaccusative in (2c). The absence of a theme sign indicates that unergatives lack a VoiceP layer.

(2) a. TRANSITIVE   b. UNERGATIVE   c. UNACCUSATIVE
    [*miyo-n*] **-am** -w   [*nîm-i*] (***-am**) -w   [*miyo-si*]-w
    good-hold-**IN.OBJ**-3   dance-do(-**IN.OBJ**)-3   good-be -3
    'She holds it well.'   'She dances.'   'She is good.'

Transitivity in syntax. Further evidence regarding the structure of unergatives comes from their ability to take cognate objects. The examples in (3) are from the authors' fieldwork on Oji-Cree. In (3b) the unergative verb *niim-i-* 'dance' occurs with a cognate object. Note that the object carries the obviative suffix *-ini*, which occurs obligatorily in Oji-Cree to mark an inanimate object as disjoint from a third-person subject. The appearance of obviation indicates that the object is indeed fully integrated into the clausal morphosyntax. Crucially, however, the addition of an overt object in (3b) does not change the morphology of the verb: even with an object, there is still no theme sign (= no VoiceP). The absence of a theme sign in unergatives therefore cannot be attributed to the lack of an overt object as a target for object agreement.

The morphosyntax of the Oji-Cree cognate object construction matches that

(3) a. [*niim-i*]-w   b. [*niim-i*]-w   *niimiwin-ini*
      dance-do-3   dance-do-3   dance.NOM-OBV
      'She's dancing.'   'She's dancing a dance.'

of the pseudo-transitive verbs (cf. section 2): the verb lacks a theme sign (and thus a VoiceP layer) but nevertheless takes an object, which must be third person. The unergative cognate object construction can thus be regarded as a special case of the pseudo-transitive construction. The identity of the two constructions adds further weight to our proposal that unergatives lack a VoiceP layer and introduce their external argument in *v*P, since we have already presented independent evidence that pseudo-transitive constructions involve exactly this configuration.

Transitivity in derivation. The conclusion that Algonquian unergatives align with pseudo-transitives rather than full-fledged transitives is reinforced when we consider the derivational transitivity marker known as the "final" (i.e. *v*): the unergative verb stem *nîm-**i**-* 'dance' in (3) contains the same final *-i* 'do' that occurs in the pseudo-transitive verb stem *kimot-**i**-* 'steal something/someone'. Unergatives and pseudo-transitives thus share not only the same inflection, but also the same derivation. We analyze the *-i* final as a flavour of *v* that introduces the "doer" argument (cf. Massam 2012) in unergatives, cognate-object unergatives, and pseudo-transitives. This *v* is entirely distinct from Voice, which introduces the agent argument of a full-fledged transitive, agrees with the object, and is spelled out as an inflectional theme sign.

4. Conclusion. Rather than being concealed transitive structures, Algonquian unergatives are better analyzed as concealed *pseudo*-transitive structures, in which the external argument is merged in *v*P rather than VoiceP. Evidence from inflection, syntax, and derivation converges on the conclusion that Algonquian unergatives lack a VoiceP layer.

SELECTED REFERENCES: **Béjar & Rezac 2003.** Person licensing and the derivation of PCC effects. *Romance Linguistics*. ● **Bruening 2005.** The Algonquian inverse is syntactic: Binding in Passamaquoddy. ● **Hale & Keyser 1993.** On argument structure and lexical expression of syntactic relations. *The View from Building 20.* ● **Harley 2013.** External arguments and the Mirror Principle. *Lingua*. ● **Legate 2014.** *Voice and v: Lessons from Acehnese.* MIT Press. ● **Massam 2012.** The structure of (un)ergatives. *AFLA 16*. ● **Pylkkänen 2002.** *Introducing Arguments*. MIT thesis. ● **Tollan 2015.** Unergatives and split ergativity in Samoan. *NELS 46.*