

PERSON LICENSING: THE ALGONQUIAN-ROMANCE CONNECTION*

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1. Introduction

In this paper I argue for an analysis of Person licensing to account for some of the complex verbal morphology in Algonquian. This proposal interestingly draws a close connection between the Algonquian family and phenomena in Romance languages, for example with the Strong Person-Case Constraint in French. Person licensing is introduced in contrast to Case licensing, and I show that Person licensing has unique properties which cannot be easily or directly linked to Case phenomena.

2. Argument licensing in Algonquian

It has been argued by Ritter & Rosen (2005) that Algonquian languages lack A-phenomena/-movement, showing an absence of Case related constructions. The Inverse System (IS, described below) in Algonquian shows that verbal agreement with arguments does not have a one-to-one correspondence with grammatical function, separating the phenomenon from standard Case systems. The workings of IS support a type of Argument Licensing distinct from Case, which I argue is Person licensing.

2.1 The Algonquian Inverse system

In the Inverse System (IS), the person proclitic on the verb agrees with the highest ranking person feature in the clause (where $2 > 1 > 3$), and does not correspond to a fixed grammatical role. The theme-sign suffix then relays the relative argument structure – if the proclitic corresponds to the external argument, the theme-sign is direct, and if the proclitic corresponds to the internal argument, the theme-sign is inverse. Consider the data in (1).

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- (1) a. n-waabm-aa (Ojibwe)
 1-see-DIR(NL)
 ‘I see him.’
- b. n-waabm-ig
 1-see-INV(NL)
 ‘He sees me.’ (Valentine 2001:270)

In (1), with 1st person versus 3rd person constructions, the proclitic always agrees with the higher ranking 1st person features. (1a) has a direct theme-sign since the higher ranking 1st person argument (encoded in the proclitic) is also the external argument. (1b) has an inverse theme-sign since the internal argument is 1st person, which outranks the 3rd person external argument, which is not encoded in the proclitic. (1) demonstrates the use of the non-local theme-signs, used when at least one of the arguments are 3rd person.

I argue that the theme-sign suffix alone actually encodes person features from both the internal and external arguments. This is made clear by the local theme-signs which are used when both arguments are speech act participants (SAPs, 1st or 2nd) (2). This is in contrast to the non-local set of theme-signs used in (1).

- (2) a. g-waabam-i (Ojibwe)
 2-see-DIR(L)
 ‘You see me.’
- b. g-waabm-in
 2-see-INV(L)
 ‘I see you.’ (Valentine 2001:270)

Since 2nd person outranks 1st, the proclitics in the examples in (2) are g- ‘2’. (2a) uses the local direct theme-sign since the 2nd proclitic agrees with the external argument and because both arguments are SAPs. (2b) gives the local inverse case where 1st person is instead the subject. Local theme-signs only occur when both the clausal arguments are SAPs, and if either one is 3rd, the non-local theme-signs are used. This means the head which spells-out as the theme-sign must acquire the person features of the internal and external arguments (at the very least, to know if there is a 3rd person present) so that the correct vocabulary item can be chosen at spell-out.

It is clear that IS does not create a direct one-to-one correspondence between the person features of the clausal arguments and their grammatical function. However, the argument structure of the clause is always made clear by the conjunction of the proclitic and the theme-sign suffix – the person features of one argument are given by the proclitic, and the person features of the other argument are encoded in the theme-sign (i.e. non-local means 3rd, and local SAP). The relative grammatical function is also indicated by a direct or inverse theme-sign.

Since the theme-signs come in two sets – local and non-local – it is the case that these morphemes must be able to see the person features of both arguments in a transitive clause in order to obtain the correct form. It cannot be predicted from just the internal or just the external argument whether the construction is local or non-local since it is the combination of person features that matters. Similarly, the theme-sign needs information from both arguments to determine whether its form should be direct or inverse. At this point, we can see that the Inverse System displays sharp distinction from common Case systems since one morpheme/syntactic head must Agree with two unique argument goals. This property will be discussed further below.

In the next section I will present the principle of Argument Licensing and explain how arguments are Person licensed in the Inverse System.

2.2 Properties of Person Licensing

Chomsky's Minimalist Program (1993) describes case assignment as [D]-feature licensing.¹ An argument DP is licensed when it enters into an Agree relation with a probe (e.g. T, ν) bearing [uD], constituting abstract Case assignment. It is my proposal that in certain languages Person licensing is also relevant, where arguments must check their [π]-features against probe bearing [u π] to be licensed. These types of licensing can be collapsed into the general principle of Argument Licensing, stated in (3).

(3) Argument Licensing

An argument is licensed if it bears a (certain type of) feature, [F], and enters into an Agree relation with a head bearing [uF].

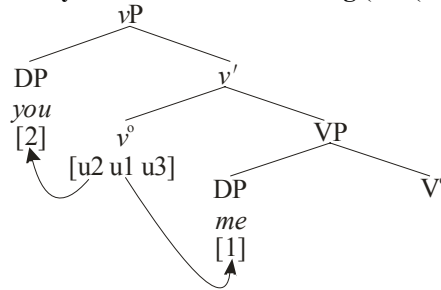
The properties associated with licensing can then differ based on what feature is relevant for licensing in a given language. In English arguments must be Case licensed (i.e. they must check their [D]-features), so each argument checks against one Case assigning head and is associated with a specific grammatical role (seen most clearly in the pronoun system).

Person licensing exhibits a few different properties from Case licensing which can be found in the Inverse System, introduced in the previous subsection. First, there appears to be a many-to-one licensee-licensor relationship (as opposed to a one-to-one relationship found in typical Case systems) in Algonquian where a head bearing a [u π] probe can license more than one argument. As mentioned, the theme-sign suffix must be able to enter into an Agree relation with both the internal and external arguments (Bruening 2001, 2005; Béjar & Rezac 2005) in order to obtain the correct form, which relies on the person features of both. Suppose the theme-sign is actually the spell-out of a little ν head. Then the internal argument will appear within the complement of ν and the external argument in its specifier – both arguments are visible to the ν

¹ Chomsky discusses NP-feature licensing, but the case remains identical if [D] features are used instead (fn. 35).

head for Agree. The Person licenser, v , bears a complex $[u\pi]$ probe which can check first with the internal argument, and then with the external argument when it is merged into spec vP . This set-up is displayed in (4).

(4) **Many-to-one Person Licensing** (see (2a))



Alongside this configuration where both arguments are visible to v , what makes this many-to-one licensing possible is the structure of the $[u\pi]$ probe on v . It is not a simplex of uninterpretable features, but rather a set of $[uF]$ s (e.g. $[u2\ u1\ u3]$) that can check with different person specifications on unique arguments. For example, in (2a) *gwaabmi* ‘You see me,’ v first Agrees with the 1st person internal argument and then Agrees with the 2nd person external argument, checking off two separate features from the probe, as in (4) (see Béjar & Rezac 2005; Lochbihler 2008 for fine grained approaches to this kind of checking, labeled “Cyclic Agree”).

Under this analysis, both arguments in a transitive clause in Algonquian are Person licensed by the same head. This allows the theme-sign morpheme to gather information from both arguments so that it is able to achieve the correct surface form, encoding either a local/non-local environment in a direct or inverse context. I claim that this many-to-one relation between licensees and licensors is a property of Person licensing which is not shared with Case licensing where it can be assumed that each Case assigning head licenses a total of one argument.

A second property of Person licensing, and in fact, of any type of Argument Licensing following (3), is that all arguments must be licensed: unlicensed arguments cause ungrammatical derivations (cf. the Case Filter). In the examples in (1) and (2) all arguments are properly licensed since they can all check against v , a fact which is made overt by the morphology. The ungrammaticality caused by unlicensed arguments is apparent in ditransitive constructions. Ojibwe, for example, does not allow 1st or 2nd person direct objects (DOs) in the presence of an indirect object (IO) (5), but only 3rd person DOs (6).

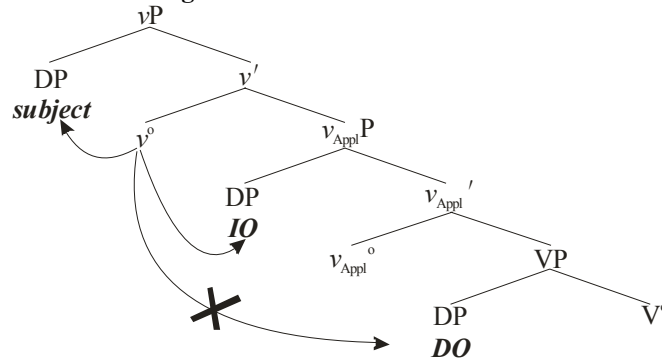
- (5) a. *ni-gi:-min-a: giin (Ojibwe)
 1-pst-give- DIR(NL) you
 ‘I gave you to him/her.’

b. * gi-gi:-min-a: niin
 2-pst-give- DIR(NL) me
 ‘You gave me to him/her.’

(6) n-gii-miin-aa emkwanes wiin (Ojibwe)
 1-pst-give-DIR spoon him
 ‘I gave a spoon to him.’

This data can be accounted for in terms of Person licensing, maintaining that v is the locus of Person licensing in Algonquian. Suppose we have the structure in (7) for Ojibwe ditransitives, likening them to the Double Object Construction in English (following Pytkänen 2002; Cuervo 2003 for Low Applicatives).

(7) **Person licensing in a ditransitive**



As seen in (7), v can only license the external argument and the IO (structurally higher than the DO in the Double Object Construction), but not the DO since the IO intervenes between it and v . The examples in (5) with a 2nd and 1st person DO are ungrammatical because these person features cannot be licensed in the derivation. Conversely, (6) is grammatical with a 3rd person DO. One option is that 3rd person is actually personless in the language (as per Kayne 2000) and therefore does not need to be licensed if 3rd is actually the absence of a feature.² At any rate, there is a sharp division between SAPs and 3rd person that is found cross-linguistically. Thus, the contrastive behaviour of the two types of DOs in these ditransitive constructions is somewhat expected. Since the DOs in (5)

² Relegating 3rd person to personless status has many consequences, especially in Algonquian where there are different types of 3rd person (proximate, obviative, inanimate) which must somehow be differentiated by featural content. Nevins (2007) argues that 3rd cannot be cross-linguistically personless since there is evidence in certain languages that shows that 3rd has person features. This is a problem in the literature, and one which requires further research and fine tuning. My thanks to Elizabeth Cowper for making this issue clear to me.

cannot be Person licensed by *v*, Argument Licensing (3) is violated and these constructions are ruled out.³

A third property of Person licensing is that an argument can be licensed/checked by more than one person licenser (i.e. a one-to-many licensee-licenser relationship). We see this property in Cross-Clausal Agreement (CCA), a phenomenon found in Algonquian languages where a matrix verb can optionally Agree with a topic argument from an embedded clause. The data in (8) show optionality of CCA in Innu-aimûn, where there can be no CCA (a), CCA of the embedded subject (b), or even CCA of the embedded object (c).

- (8) a. Ni-tshissenitamu-ânân mûpishtuât Shûshepa (Innu-aimûn)
 1PL-know-TI-1PL visit Joseph
 Tshân mâk Mânî.
 John and Marie
 ‘We know that John and Marie visited Joseph.’
- b. Ni-tshissenim-ânân-at mûpishtuât Shûshepa
 1PL-know-1PL-3-PL visit Joseph
 Tshân mâk Mânî.
 John and Marie
 ‘We know that John and Marie visited Joseph.’
- c. Ni-tshissenim-ânân mûpishtuât Shûshepa Tshân mâk Mânî.
 1PL-know-1PL-3 visit Joseph John and Marie
 ‘We know that John and Marie visited Joseph.’
 (Branigan & MacKenzie 2002:388)

I adopt Branigan & MacKenzie’s (2002) view that CCA is A'-agreement (not A-) since it is Long Distance Agreement (which is not clause bound), and is used as a discourse *topic* device. They argue that CCA is not like ECM because of its optionality, the lack of change in finiteness, the ability to CCA a non-subject and because the embedded clause appears to be a CP, not a TP.

CCA is interesting here since it shows that both the matrix and embedded verbs can Agree with a single argument (A'-moved from the embedded clause to a position visible to the matrix clause), thereby licensing that argument twice. This is shown in (9) for CCA in Ottawa.

- (9) **gi**-gikenim-ini gii-baashkizw-**ad** (Ottawa)
 2-know-INV(L) pst-shoot.CONJ-**2subj**
 ‘I know that you shot him.’ (Lit. ‘I know you that shot him.’)
 (Rhodes 1994:438)

³ As we will see in section 3, other languages exhibit similar restrictions in ditransitives. Many of these languages have repairs for unacceptable constructions, but Ojibwe does not. This is also the case for Chinook (Silverstein 1986).

In (9) the 2nd person embedded subject has undergone CCA, and Agrees with the embedded verb, shown by *-ad* ‘2nd subject’, as well as the matrix verb, shown by the proclitic *gi-* ‘2nd’. It is a unique property of Person licensing that one argument can Agree with two separate licensors. We do not find a parallel property in Case licensing where arguments are typically assigned a single instance of Case.

2.3 Section Summary

In this section I have introduced the universal principle of Argument Licensing, which is more familiarly realized as Case licensing, but can also be realized as Person licensing. Person licensing displays a few unique properties not found in languages that solely employ [D]-feature checking to license their arguments. These properties include a many-to-one licensee-licensor relationship seen in the theme-sign of the Inverse System, as well as a one-to-many licensee-licensor relationship displayed by Cross Clausal Agreement. As is the case in [D]-feature licensing, [π]-feature licensing languages require that all arguments be properly licensed, as we saw for ditransitives in Algonquian.

Up to this point the Person licensing properties appear to be very language family specific, being based solely on Algonquian data. However, this is not actually the case. I argue in the next section that Romance languages are also Person licensing languages in which Person licensing properties can be found as well.

3. Person Licensing in Romance

As argued in the previous section, Algonquian verbal morphology is sensitive to the person specification of arguments. This led to the proposal that Person licensing is one realization of Argument licensing (alongside the Case licensing option) to account for the Algonquian data. In this section it is my claim that there is a close connection between how Algonquian arguments are licensed and how arguments in some Romance languages are licensed.

3.1 The Strong PCC in French

French is language that, like Algonquian, is sensitive to the person specifications of its arguments. This sensitivity is clearly seen in the Strong Person-Case Constraint (PCC) which is found in French (also labeled the *me-lui* constraint since that clitic cluster is banned in the language). The Strong PCC is formulated in (10).

(10) Strong PCC: If DAT then ACC-3rd. (Bonet 1994:36)

(10) states that, in languages subject to the Strong PCC, if there is a dative clitic present, then the accusative clitic must be 3rd person. If the accusative clitic is

not 3rd person in this environment, the construction is ungrammatical, seen for French in (11).

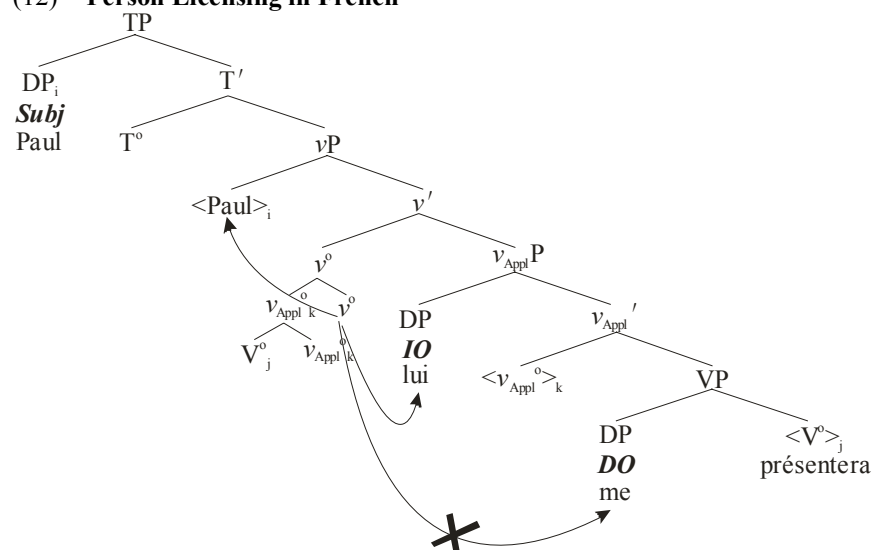
- (11) a. *Paul **me lui** présentera. (French)
 Paul **1-ACC 3-DAT** will.introduce(3rd)
 ‘Paul will introduce me to him.’
- b. Paul me présentera **à lui**.
 Paul 1-ACC will.introduce(3rd) **to him**
 ‘Paul will introduce me to him.’ (Anagnostopoulou 2005:16)

(11a) is ungrammatical since there is a 1st person accusative clitic in the presence of a dative clitic (violating the Strong PCC). (11b) is the repair for (11a) where the syntactic structure of the sentence is changed from a Double Object Construction to a Dative PP construction where the IO is placed in a prepositional phrase.

I argue that this person restriction reveals something about argument licensing in French, namely that arguments (here clitics⁴) must be Person licensed (as well as Case licensed). Person licensing can proceed here just as it did for Algonquian ditransitives in (7). Suppose that 3rd person is actually personless in French, and that the underlying argument structure of (11a) is that of a Double Object Construction. The accusative argument must be 3rd person because it cannot be licensed by v in a ditransitive since the presence of IO blocks it from being licensed. The failed derivation of (11a) is schematized in (12).⁵

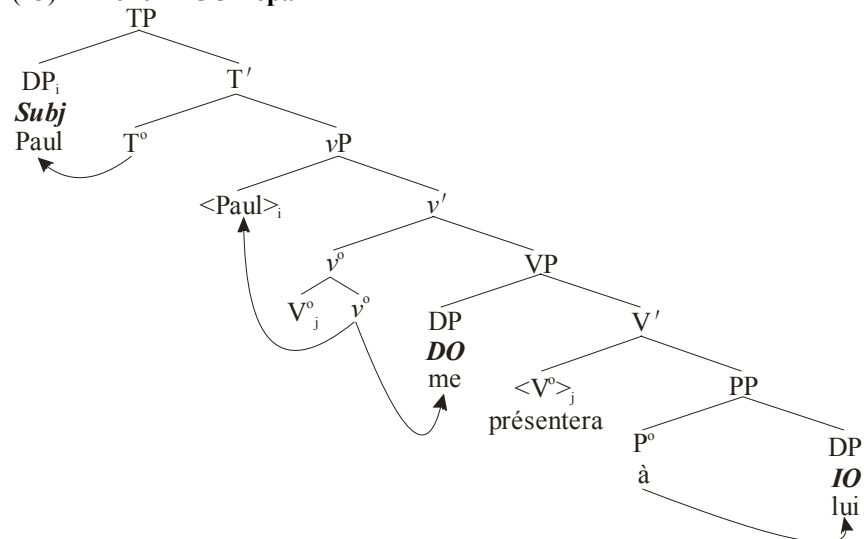
⁴ The literature on the Person-Case Constraint is careful to note that this is a restriction on “weak pronouns”, like clitics and agreement morphemes.

⁵ This analysis may be compared with that of Béjar & Rezac (2003) who account for PCC effects using “cyclic agreement”. However, the type of agreement they are using in that paper is comparable to “Multiple Agree” as proposed by Anagnostopoulou (2003, 2005) which involves the splitting of phi-features into person and number, so that person enters Agree first and number second to license arguments. SAPs must check with the person probe while 3rd person arguments can check just with the number probe if necessary. The type of cyclic agreement that I am using here is akin to Béjar & Rezac (2005), who give a proposal of the Inverse System and certain other person restrictions, where a probe bears a set of person features that can be checked separately, and which entail each other. My proposal is significantly different from their proposals which present a modified version of Person licensing.

(12) **Person Licensing in French**

Under this analysis of the Strong PCC in French, arguments are Person licensed by v , exactly as they are in Algonquian. In this way, French also exhibits the many-to-one licensee-licensor property of Person licensing introduced in section 2.2 – this property is therefore not Algonquian specific. It is important to note that French is also a Case licensing language, and therefore has all the properties associated with Case as well. This situation is predicted by the formulation of Argument Licensing in (3) since Case and Person licensing are not mutually exclusive, but a language can require arguments to check both their [D] and [π] features. When Case and Person licensing properties contradict each other, we expect to find the more restrictive or conservative property surfacing in the data.

Another advantage of the Person licensing approach to the Strong PCC in French is that the repair for (11a) given in (11b) can be explained. The key difference between the two sentences is that the former is a Double Object Construction, and the latter is a Dative PP construction. The Dative PP construction has a different syntactic structure than the Double Object Construction; importantly the IO is not in the specifier of $v_{Apppl}P$, but is lower in the structure as the complement of a prepositional phrase, illustrated in (13).

(13) **French PCC Repair**

Until now the only possible Person licenser mentioned was v , which created intervention effects between the two objects in ditransitive constructions. Now I expand the set of Person licensers to include prepositions such that the IO *lui* in (11b) can enter an Agree relation with the preposition *à*, and can be Person licensed in that position. The structure in (13) allows the DO to be licensed by v since the IO is no longer an intervener. This repair of the Strong PCC is expected under my analysis of Person licensing.

French and Algonquian have now been shown to be related in terms of Person licensing. Note that it is not only in the context of ditransitives that Person licensing is important since the Inverse System in transitive constructions is also subject to the restrictions of Person licensing. One important difference between Algonquian and French involves the status of Case. Algonquian languages do not display Case related phenomena (such as the passive, unaccusatives, A-binding and ECM, see Ritter & Rosen 2005) and can be analyzed as lacking Case altogether. However, it is not disputed that French is a Case based language, using different Case based constructions. French will then show Case properties that could be absent from Algonquian languages.

3.2 Section summary

This section has proposed a direct link between Person licensing in Algonquian languages and the Person-Case Constraint in Romance, namely French. There are other types of person restrictions found in the literature on Romance languages, such as the Weak Person-Case Constraint, stated in (14), found in languages such as Spanish, Catalan and Italian.

(14) Weak PCC: If DAT-3rd then ACC-3rd. (Bonet 1994:41)

The data in (15) and (16) show the Weak PCC in Catalan. Like the Strong PCC, combinations of a 1st DO (accusative) and 3rd IO (dative) are illicit (15a). This construction can be repaired in Catalan by impoverishing the person specification of the 3rd dative clitic, replacing it with a locative *hi* (15b).

- (15) a. *Me **li** ha recomanat la senyora Bofill. (Catalan)
 1st-ACC 3rd-DAT has recommended the Mrs. Bofill
 ‘Mrs. Bofill has recommended me to him/her.’
- b. M’ **hi** ha recomanat la senyora Bofill
 1st-ACC LOC has recommended the Mrs. Bofill
 ‘Mrs. Bofill has recommended me to him/her.’
 (Bonet 1994:48)

Unlike the Strong PCC, Weak PCC languages allow combinations of SAP DOs and IOs.

- (16) **Te’m** van recomanar per a la feina (Catalan)
 2nd 1st recommended(3rd-pl) for the job
 i) ‘They recommended me to you for the job.’
 ii) ‘They recommended you to me for the job.’
 (Bonet 1991: 179)

Another Romance person restriction is the so-called Spurious “se” effect in Spanish that restricts constructions with two third person arguments. In future research I hope to explore the effects that the proposed notion of Person Licensing has on the varied types of Person restrictions found in Romance as well as in other unrelated languages. The workings of less strict restrictions, like the Weak PCC, should reveal more properties of person licensing and suggest which syntactic heads are responsible for licensing arguments. Also, the connection between the narrow syntax and PF restrictions might be important to the problem of Person licensing since certain repairs involve morphological impoverishment, like in (15). The division of labour between the two levels of the derivation and the role of the interface are important issues both for Person licensing and current linguistic theory.

Many analyses of the PCC in Romance have been extended to account for the Inverse System in Algonquian languages (Anagnostopoulou 2005, Bianchi 2006, for example). Although it seems clear that the two phenomena are related, one must be careful to note their differences. I argued in Lochbihler (2007) that IS and the PCC are at least partially separate phenomena since IS deals with argument organization while the PCC rules out certain constructions in a given language. It is interesting to see that the Algonquian language of Ojibwe is actually a Strong PCC language, seen from the data in (5) and (6) where only 3rd person direct objects are grammatical in the context of an indirect object (see (10)). Perhaps a more explanatory link between IS and the PCC can be obtained if we look first at the IS data and then extend it to the PCC, contrary

to previous attempts. IS is a system of complex agreement associated with transitive and ditransitive paradigms which, I claim, displays cyclic syntactic checking (Béjar & Rezac 2005) where two arguments must be licensed against one head. The PCC involves ditransitive constructions, i.e. those that add another argument to a construction, and restrictions arise because of the licensing configuration.

Person licensing extended to Romance makes some interesting claims about the underlying structure of languages like French and Ojibwe, connecting them closely, but in the underlying structure.

4. Conclusion

This paper has presented an analysis of Person licensing which exhibits certain properties that are not also associated with Case licensing. Person licensing is one form of Argument Licensing and accounts for the distribution of arguments and verbal agreement in Algonquian languages. It is my claim that this version of Person licensing draws an interesting connection between argument licensing in Algonquian and Romance, looking at, for example, the Strong Person-Case Constraint in French. Further research is required to explore how Person licensing extends to other person restrictions and to work out exactly why this type of licensing exhibits certain properties unique from Case licensing. Case has been given a heavy workload in the literature, but there may be more elegant accounts of certain phenomena outside the realm of Case, possibly involving Person licensing.

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