

Explaining an Unusual Agreement Pattern in Maliseet-Passamaquoddy

In a comitative construction in Maliseet-Passamaquoddy (MP; New Brunswick and Maine), AI+O VERBS OF JOINT ACTIVITY (‘sing with’, ‘play with’, etc.) are inflected in a typologically unusual fashion (LeSourd 2006, 2013). Like other AI+O verbs, they (optionally) agree with the secondary object in the independent indicative, but they take “subject” inflection for the COMBINED features of the subject and the secondary object, as illustrated in (1).

- (1) Nil n-wit-ayya-né-**nuu-k** n-uhsimís-ok.
I 1-with-play-N-1PL-PROX.PL 1-younger.sibling-PROX.PL
‘I play with my younger siblings.’

The syntactic subject here is *nil* ‘I’, but first-person plural subject inflection *-nnu-* is determined jointly by this subject and the secondary object *nuhsimísok* ‘my younger siblings’, also indexed here by *-k*.

LeSourd (2013) situates verbs of joint activity within the larger class of AI+O verbs in MP, but offers no analysis of the seemingly aberrant agreement pattern seen in (1). The present contribution bridges this gap. It offers a formal analysis of the lexical argument structures of MP verbs of joint activity in the framework of Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar from which their agreement properties follow directly by general principles.

References

- LeSourd, Philip S. 2006. Problems for the pronominal argument hypothesis in Maliseet-Passamaquoddy. *Language* 82:486–514.
- LeSourd, Philip S. 2013. On split coordination in Passamaquoddy. In Karl S. Hele and J. Randolph Valentine (eds.), *Papers of the Forty-First Algonquian Conference*, 120–142. London, ON: University of Western Ontario.