Matthew Windsor

Two Standard Negation Constructions in Oji-Cree

Oji-Cree (a northern variety of Ojibwe) has two standard negation constructions that encode the same semantic content, but occur in different discourse-pragmatic contexts. This paper illustrates the form and function of each construction from a 4,600-word collection of nine narrative texts (mainly from Mamakwa & Windsor, forthcoming) and select elicited examples.

The *-hsii* negation construction uses negative particle *kaawin* plus a set of negative inflections on the verb which are common to all varieties of Ojibwe. It has the widest distribution, and typically denies information that is already salient in communicative context. It is used to explicitly disagree, contradict, challenge or correct.

In contrast, *ci-* negation is pragmatically "neutral" in that its primary function is merely informative. It is typically used for reporting new (inactive) information, occurring frequently in past narrative and in "out of the blue" statements. The construction is composed of negative particle *kaawin* plus a verb inflected with irrealis *ci-* and conjunct (typically dependent) inflection. It is nevertheless formally distinct from negative dependent clauses, which use the particle *ekaa*.

Neither *-hsii* negation nor *ci-* negation depends on scope or any grammatical category such as tense, and either is considered grammatical in a sentence elicited out of context. While recent research in linguistic typology has focused on formal asymmetries in standard negation (Miestamo 2005), there are few well-described cases of alternations based on discourse-pragmatic factors (Schwenter 2005). This research documents an area of linguistic innovation within the Ojibwe complex and is part of a larger community-based initiative by Kingfisher Lake First Nation & Mishamikoweesh Corp. to document and revitalize local knowledge for future generations.

References

Mamakwa, Lydia and Matthew Windsor, (forthcoming). *ᑲᑭᐱᒪᑦᑯᓯᔭᐣᑭᐸᐣ ᒥᓴᒥᐦᑯᐃᐧᓱᐣ: When we moved from Mishamikoweesh.* Kingfisher Lake, ON: Lulu Press.

Miestamo, Matti. 2005. *Standard negation: The negation of declarative verbal main clauses in typological perspective.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Schwenter, Scott. 2005. The pragmatics of negation in Brazilian Portuguese. *Lingua* 115:1427-1456.