

How to covertly move: Evidence from Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey*

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1. Introduction

There are, broadly speaking, two kinds of analyses of covert movement:

- **LF movement:** Covert movement is syntactic movement on the LF branch of a Y model of syntax (Huang 1982, Chomsky 1995, a.m.o.).
- **Lower copy pronunciation:** Covert movement occurs in the narrow syntax in a single-output model of syntax, and involves privileging a lower copy of a movement dependency at PF, rather than the highest copy (Bobaljik 2002, a.m.o.).

These two options differ crucially in the timing of covert movement. LF movement occurs late in the syntactic derivation, and under this analysis covert movement cannot feed narrow syntactic phenomena or PF phenomena (as might be expected, due to its covertness). Lower copy pronunciation is just a normal instance of movement, only with a different PF outcome—thus, under this analysis, covert movement *could* in principle feed other narrow-syntactic phenomena, as well as PF and LF phenomena.

Here, I argue for the second option. It goes like this: first, I introduce a particular long-distance agreement (LDA) construction in Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey (Eastern Algonquian) which has been understudied in the literature (though see Grishin 2022), and I argue that it involves (potentially covert) raising to object (RtO). Then, I show that covert RtO in Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey can feed the narrow-syntactic operations of agreement and A movement, as well as obviative marking (which is also likely syntactic). Thus, covert movement must be derived by lower copy pronunciation, rather than LF movement.

**Pol kci woliwon Margaret Apt, Edwina Mitchell, Grace Paul, naka Roger Paul, eli kehkimiyeq kto-latuwewakonuwa naka mecimi-te asitemiyeq tan eci mili-qecimulleq. Nopal wicuhketomoq nihkanawsuwiw Peskotomuhkati naka Wolastogewi latuwewakonol.* I also thank Will Oxford, David Pesetsky, and Norvin Richards for helpful discussion. Blame me for any mistakes or misrepresentations.

2. Background

Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey is an Eastern Algonquian language that is generally divided into two mutually intelligible dialects: Passamaquoddy, spoken in eastern Maine in the communities of Sipayik (Pleasant Point) and Motahkomikuk (Indian Township), and Wolastoqey,¹ spoken in several communities along and near the Wolastoq (St. John River) in New Brunswick. Uncited data comes from fieldwork with two Passamaquoddy and two Wolastoqey speakers carried out over Zoom and in person throughout 2020–2023; the two dialects don't seem to differ in the data presented here.

The construction of interest is found under verbs like *'pawatomon* 'want', *'kisehtun* 'make', *'kiseltomon* 'make', *'kolahmon* 'prevent, forbid', *'nokatomon* 'fear', and *'piyemitahtatomon* 'prefer', which can embed clauses containing verbs inflected in the SUBORDINATIVE MODE, a particular verbal inflectional paradigm found in clauses lacking a CP layer (Grishin 2022, 2023a). These verbs participate in an LDA construction that involves the addition of the applicative marker *-uw* and agreement with the embedded subject as if it were the applied (indirect) object (and unmarked inanimate singular agreement for the direct object, presumably with the embedded clause):²

- (1) a. Makolit 'pawatom-uw-a-n ['qasqi-li-n **Piyel-ol**
Margaret 3-want_{TI-APPL-3OBJ-N} 3-run_{AI-OBV-N} **Peter-OBV.SG**
sepawonu].
tomorrow
'Margaret wants **Peter** to run tomorrow.'
- b. N-kiseht-uw-a-ne-n [**Can** 't-olintu-n].
1-make_{TI-APPL-3OBJ-N-1PL} **John** 3-sing_{AI-N}
'We made **John** sing.'
- c. Ma=te=hc n-kiseltom-a-ku-w-one-wi-n [n-macaha-ne-n].
NEG=EMPH=FUT 1-let_{TI-APPL-INV-NEG-N-NEG-1PL} 1-leave_{AI-N-1PL}
'They won't let **us** go.'
- d. Susehp 'kolahm-uw-a-n ['tus-ol 't-amkekh-a-n
Joseph 3-forbid_{TI-APPL-3OBJ-N} 3-daughter-OBV.SG 3-play_{TA-3OBJ-N}
tolehp-`].
card-OBV.PL
'Joseph forbids **his daughter** to play cards.' (Bruening 2001:203)

¹ Also known as Maliseet/Malecite, an exonym deriving from Mi'gmaq *mali'sit* 'speak weakly, lazily'.

² Abbreviations: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, AI = animate intransitive, AJDZ = adjectivizer, APPL = applicative, CJ = conjunct, EMPH = emphatic, FUT = future, HAB = habitual, IC = initial change, II = inanimate intransitive, IN = inanimate, INV = inverse, N = N formative, NEG = negative, OBJ = object, OBV = obviative, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, PROG = progressive, PROX = proximate, RECIP = reciprocal, REFL = reflexive, SG = singular, TA = transitive animate, TI = transitive inanimate, X = unspecified subject.

- e. Piyel Ø-nokatom-uw-a-n [**Tihtiyas-ol** 'poneqiya-li-n].
 Peter 3-fear_{TI}-APPL-**3OBJ-N** **Tihtiyas-OBV.SG** 3-fall_{AI}-OBV-N
 'Peter is afraid that **Tihtiyas** will fall.'
- f. Roger 'piyemitahatom-uw-a-n [**Tihtiyas-ol** Ø-mici-li-n
 Toger 3-prefer_{TI}-APPL-**3OBJ-N** **Tihtiyas-OBV.SG** 3-eat_{TI}-OBV-N
 mus-ey wiyuhs].
 moose-AJDZ meat
 'Roger prefers for **Tihtiyas** to eat moose meat.'

See [Grishin \(2022\)](#) for more detail regarding this syntax of this construction.

3. Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey RtO involves (potentially covert) A movement

Here I argue that this construction involves raising to object, and cannot be analyzed as object control (contra what [Bruening 2001](#) assumes) or “true” LDA (agreement directly into the complement clause).

3.1 Against object control

Under an object control analysis, the matrix verb would take a thematic DP object, which controls PRO in subject position in the embedded clause:

- (2) ... V DP_i [PRO_i ...] *Object control*

If this is the right structure, then we predict that these verbs should not be able to embed avalent weather predicates and that the matrix thematic object could participate in argument structure alternations like verbal reflexivization. In fact, true object control verbs like *'taskuywal* ‘wait for’ and *mihkuluwemal* ‘remind’ behave exactly in this way:

- (3) a. *Nt-otol-askuwahtu-n [**psan-Ø**].
 1-PROG-wait.for_{TI}-N **snow_{II-3}**
 Intended: ‘I’m waiting for it to snow.’
- b. N-mihkuluwem-s [nt-oli-ya-n ihtol-okehkim-ti-mo-k].
 1-remind_{TA}-REFL 1-to-go_{AI}-N IC.HAB.there-teach_{TA}-RECIP-X-CJ
 ‘I reminded myself to go to school.’

In (3a), we see that object control verbs cannot embed weather predicates like *psan* ‘snow’, and in (3b) we see that object control verbs can be reflexivized with the verbal reflexive marker *-(o)s(i)*, creating a derived intransitive.

In contrast, *'pawatomon* ‘want’ and *'kisehtun* ‘make’ can embed weather predicates (4), and cannot be reflexivized (5):

- (4) a. Motewolon '-pawatom-on [**psan-Ø**].
 sorceror 3-want_{TI}-N **snow_{II}-3**
 'The sorceror wants it to snow.'
- b. Motewolon '-kisehtu-n [**wisoki= psan-Ø**].
 sorceror 3-make_{TI}-N **very= snow_{II}-3**
 'The sorceror made it snow a lot.'
- (5) *Sapet '-pawatom-a-si-n ['-tus-ol Ø-wicuhkem-ku-n].
 Elizabeth 3-want_{TI}-APPL-REFL-N 3-daughter-OBV.SG 3-help_{TA}-INV-N
 Intended: 'Elizabeth wants herself to be helped by her daughter.'

Thus, this particular construction does not involve object control.

3.2 Against “true” LDA in favor of RtO

With object control out of the way, there's another kind of analysis one might entertain, which we can call TRUE LDA: the embedded clause is transparent for agreement, and the matrix verb agrees into the embedded clause (6a). If the embedded subject does appear in the matrix clause, that would then be due to some later independent movement operation. This analysis stands in contrast to a true raising to object derivation, in which the embedded subject first moves out into the matrix clause (potentially covertly) before agreeing (6b), and there is no agreement into the embedded clause.

- (6) a. ... V [... DP ...] True LDA

 b. ... V DP [... t ...] RtO


I provide two arguments in favor of raising to object (6b): it makes the right predictions for the agreement on the matrix verb, and it makes the right predictions for the behavior of obviative marking.

For agreement, we can focus on three agreement slots in the verbal template: the person prefix, the THEME SIGN (object agreement) in Voice (Bruening 2001, Béjar and Rezac 2009, Coon and Bale 2014, Oxford 2019, a.m.o.), and PERIPHERAL AGREEMENT in C (Halle and Marantz 1993, Branigan and MacKenzie 1999, Bliss 2013, Oxford 2017, a.m.o.). Looking first at the person prefix, we first note that it indexes the highest ranked accessible argument on the hierarchy 2>1>3 (Bloomfield 1946, Sherwood 1986, a.m.o.). Under the true LDA analysis, where the embedded clause as a whole is transparent for agreement, we would expect the matrix person prefix to agree with the embedded *object* in an embedded 1→2 scenario, as that would be the highest-ranked accessible argument. However, under the RtO derivation, only the embedded subject (which has raised out) is accessible to agreement—thus, in an embedded 1→2 scenario, we would only get prefixal agreement with the first person subject. The prediction of the RtO derivation is verified: the prefix indexes the embedded subject, not the embedded object in 1→2 scenarios:

- (7) a. Sapet {**n**-,***k**-}pawatom-a-ku-n ['-kinolu-l-on].
Elizabeth {**1**-,***2**-}want_{TI}-APPL-INV-N 2-praise_{TA}-2OBJ-N
'Elizabeth wants **me** to praise you.'
- b. Roger {**n**-,***k**-}kiseht-a-ku-n [tehpu k-uskicinu-westuwam-ol-on].
Roger {**1**-,***2**-}make_{TI}-APPL-INV-N only 2-Indian-speak_{TA}-2OBJ-N
'Roger made **me** only speak to you in Passamaquoddy.'

Turning now to Voice and C, we first note the following locality properties: Voice agrees with the highest animate object (Bruening 2001, a.m.o.), and C agrees with the lowest third person (Grishin 2023b). In this particular construction, Voice is what agrees with the embedded subject, and C always shows inanimate singular agreement, likely with the embedded clause. This suggests that the embedded clause is the lowest third person, and that the embedded subject is the highest object—in other words, that the embedded subject c-commands the embedded clause. This is the right c-command configuration under the RtO analysis (6b), but not the right c-command configuration under the true LDA analysis (6a), where the clausal complement dominates the embedded subject. Thus, the pattern of agreement on the matrix verb verifies the predictions of the RtO derivation, and not those of the true LDA derivation.

Obviation provides another argument for the RtO derivation. In Algonquian languages, third person DPs are either PROXIMATE or OBVIATIVE, subject to the following two “unbreakable rules” (as Goddard 1990 puts it): (i) at most one of the (syntactic) arguments of a verb can be proximate; and (ii) an animate noun possessed by a third person must be obviative.³ Furthermore, as Bruening (2001: 121) notes, the proximate-obviative distinction is remarkably similar to nominative-accusative case, except restricted to third persons: the highest third person will be proximate (~nominative), and the rest will be obviative (~accusative), whether this is within the clausal or nominal domain.

When the matrix verb doesn't agree with the embedded subject, in certain cases the embedded subject is able to be both proximate (more common) or obviative (under the influence of a matrix proximate):

- (8) a. **Laca** '-pawatom-on [**Wini** nt-olayyem-ku-ne-n].
Roger 3-want_{TI}-N **Winnie** 1-play.with_{TA}-INV-N-1PL
'**Roger** (PROX) wants **Winnie** (PROX) to play with us.'
- b. **Laca** '-pawatom-on [**Winiw-ol** nt-olayyem-ku-ne-n].
Roger 3-want_{TI}-N **Winnie-OBV.SG** 1-play.with_{TA}-INV-N-1PL
'**Roger** (PROX) wants **Winnie** (OBV) to play with us.'

In (8a) the embedded subject *Wini* is proximate, whereas in (8b) it's obviative—the choice here is licensed because we're not breaking either of the two unbreakable rules.

³See Grafstein (1984) and Rhodes (1990, 1994) for detailed discussion of the syntax of obviation in Ojibwe, and Bruening (2001), LeSourd (2004), and Reintges et al. (2006) for some brief discussion of obviation in Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey specifically.

However, once we agree with the embedded subject, then there is a preference for ensuring that the embedded subject is obviative:

- (9) a. ??**Laca** 'puwatom-uw-a-n [**nutsihpiluwe-t** n-kikuh-uku-n].
Roger 3-want_{TI}-APPL-3OBJ-N **IC.be.doctor**_{AI}-3CJ 1-heal_{TA}-INV-N
 Intended: '**Roger (PROX)** wants **a doctor (PROX)** to heal me.'
- b. **Laca** 'puwatom-uw-a-n [**nutsihpiluwe-li-c-il**
Roger 3-want_{TI}-APPL-3OBJ-N **IC.be.doctor**_{AI}-OBV-3CJ-OBV.SG
 n-kikuh-uku-n].
 1-heal_{TA}-INV-N
 '**Roger (PROX)** wants **a doctor (OBV)** to heal me.'

The version with proximate *nutsihpiluwet* 'doctor' (9a) is not judged to be very good, in contrast to the obviative version (9b). We can conclude from this that (9a) is breaking some rule of obviation—in this case, since there are no possessors anywhere, it must be the rule banning multiple proximate coarguments. Thus, the embedded subject *nutsihpiluwelicil* 'doctor.OBV' must actually have moved into an A position the matrix clause to become a (syntactic) coargument of the matrix subject *Laca* 'Roger.PROX', forcing it to be obviative. In sum, then, agreement and obviative marking both tell us that this particular construction involves a true RtO derivation.

4. Covert RtO feeds narrow syntax

Now that we've established that this construction is a true RtO construction, we can now turn to the question of covert movement. Here, I'll show that even covert RtO can feed (narrow-)syntactic processes like agreement, obviation, and movement. Thus, covert movement must involve true narrow syntactic movement followed by lower copy pronunciation on the PF branch (Bobaljik 2002 a.m.o.), rather than LF movement (contra Huang 1982, Chomsky 1995, a.m.o.).

While the position of the raised subject is often ambiguous, there are cases where we can clearly tell that it's in either the matrix or the embedded clause:

- (10) a. **Ma=te weni-l Sapet** 'pawatom-uw-a-wi-n [
 NEG=EMPH **who-OBV.SG** Elizabeth 3-want_{TI}-APPL-3OBJ-NEG-N
 'peciya-li-n sepawonuk].
 3-come_{AI}-OBV-N tomorrow
- b. **Ma=te Sapet** 'pawatom-uw-a-wi-n ['peciya-li-n
 NEG=EMPH Elizabeth 3-want_{TI}-APPL-3OBJ-NEG-N 3-come_{AI}-OBV-N
weni-l sepawonuk].
who-OBV.SG tomorrow
 Both: 'Elizabeth doesn't want **anyone** to come tomorrow.'

No matter whether the raised subject is in the matrix clause (10a) or the embedded clause (10b), verbal agreement and obviation marking remains the same. Thus, covert RtO must be able to feed the syntactic processes that govern agreement and obviation (Reintges et al. 2006) make a similar argument from \bar{A} agreement with heads of long-distance internally-headed relative clauses in Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey).

Additionally, covert movement can feed further instances of A movement. The clearest example of A movement in Algonquian is the third person inverse, which occurs when a third person internal argument outranks a third person external argument on the hierarchy $\text{PROX} > \text{OBV} > \text{IN}$. When this occurs, the inverse marker *-(o)ku* replaces object agreement in Voice, and the internal argument A-moves over the external argument (diagnosable by variable binding, weak crossover, scope, and the locality of RtO; Bruening 2001, 2005, 2009, Grishin 2022). The relevant observation is that covert RtO can feed matrix inversion:

- (11) a. Piyel w-ikuwoss-ol ’-pawatom-a-**ku**-n [’-pehkihtu-n **nekom**
 Peter 3-mother-OBV.SG 3-want_{TI}-APPL-INV-N 3-tidy_{TI}-N 3SG
 ’t-olamsoku-m-uwa].
 3-room-POSS-3PL
 ‘Peter’s mom wanted **him** to tidy up their room.’
 (lit. ‘He_i was wanted by Peter’s_i mom to tidy up their room.’)
- b. Piyel w-ikuwoss-ol ’-kiseht-a-**ku**-n [’-pehkihtu-n **nekom**
 Peter 3-mother-OBV.SG 3-make_{TI}-APPL-INV-N 3-tidy_{TI}-N 3SG
 ’t-olamsoku-m-uwa].
 3-room-POSS-3PL
 ‘Peter’s mom made **him** to tidy up their room.’
 (lit. ‘He_i was made by Peter’s_i mom to tidy up their room.’)

In both these examples, the embedded subject *nekom* ‘he’ remains inside the embedded clause.⁴ Nevertheless, we can still get inverse marking on the matrix verb *’pawatomakun* ‘he was wanted by her’, indicating that *nekom* ‘he’ has first (covertly) raised to object, and then (covertly) A-moved over the obviative external argument. Note that Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey seems to lack Condition C effects (Bruening 2001, LeSourd 2019), so A-moving *nekom* ‘he’ across the coindexed R-expression *Piyel* ‘Peter’ wouldn’t trigger a Condition C violation. Thus, covert RtO must be able to derivationally precede other instances of A movement, indicating that it occurs in the narrow syntax.

As a final observation, recall that I argued that Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey RtO predicates do not take thematic DP objects (5). This has consequences for the scopal possibilities of embedded subjects, as Deal (2018) notes. Deal (2017, 2018) shows that Nez Perce has a similar covert RtO construction, which she proposes involves the embedded subject A-moving into a thematic object position to become a true semantic argument of the ma-

⁴These sentences were elicited with contrastive focus on *nekom* ‘he’ to allow for it to be overt, in the following context: it’s Peter’s turn to clean him and his sister’s room, and so their mother wanted Peter (and not his sister) to tidy their room. For whatever reason, having a null pronominal possessor upstairs and *Piyel* downstairs wasn’t accepted, perhaps indicating some kind of dispreference for cataphora.

trix verb—for her, a Heimian *res* argument (Deal 2018). A consequence of this is that the (covertly) raised subject cannot reconstruct into the embedded clause without a failure of composition (see Deal 2018 for details)—and indeed, Deal shows that the raised object in Nez Perce can only have matrix scope, only allowing for *de re* readings.

If Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey RtO predicates truly differ from Nez Perce RtO predicates in lacking this extra argument slot, then we predict that raised arguments can indeed reconstruct for scope. This prediction is verified: Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey (covert) RtO allows for both *de re* and *de dicto* readings, in contrast to Nez Perce:

- (12) a. Context: Elizabeth is planning a party for tomorrow, and there is one particular person that she invited that she really hopes will not come. I can't remember who that person is.

Ma=te Sapet '-pawatom-uw-a-wi-n ['-peciya-li-n
 NEG=EMPH Elizabeth 3-want_{TI}-APPL-**3OBJ**-NEG-N 3-come_{AI}-OBV-N
weni-l sepawonuk], ma=te kenu n-wewitahatom-uw-on wen.
who-OBV.SG tomorrow NEG=EMPH but 1-remember_{TI}-NEG-N who
 'Elizabeth doesn't want someone to come tomorrow, but I don't remember
 who.' *de re*, $\exists \gg \text{want} \gg \neg$

- b. Context: Elizabeth has three children, and they're all participating in the school race. She wants one of them to win, but she doesn't care which one.

Sapet '-pawatom-uw-a-n ['-tomhuwa-li-n **pesku-wol**
 Elizabeth 3-want_{TI}-**3OBJ**-N 3-win_{AI}-OBV-N **one-OBV.SG**
Ø-nican-ol sepawonu]. Ma=te kenu Ø-wotomitahatom-uw-on
3-child-OBV.SG tomorrow NEG=EMPH but 3-worry_{TI}-NEG-N
 tan wot.
 which this
 'Elizabeth wants **one of her children** to win tomorrow. She doesn't care
 which one it is.' *de dicto*, *want* \gg *one*

In both examples, the embedded subject is squarely inside the embedded clause, and the matrix verb is agreeing with it—a covert RtO configuration. We have a specific, *de re* reading in (12a), with the quexistential *wenil* 'who, anyone, someone (OBV)' scoping over both negation and the intensional verb. However, in contrast to Nez Perce, we can also get a nonspecific, *de dicto* reading, as illustrated in (12b), where the embedded subject *peskuwol nicanol* 'one of her children' scopes inside the embedded clause. In this respect, covert RtO in Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey behaves like covert raising to subject in Adyghe, which can also reconstruct for scope (Potsdam and Polinsky 2012). This behavior falls out naturally from the analysis presented: the embedded subject raises in the narrow syntax to a non-thematic position in the matrix clause, which can then freely reconstruct for scope at LF (resulting in a *de dicto* reading) as well as undergo "PF reconstruction" (i.e. lower copy pronunciation). These examples are thus prime examples of Bobaljik's (2002) LOWER RIGHT

CORNER effects, where the lower copy of a particular movement dependency is privileged both at PF and LF, resulting in covert movement and scope reconstruction.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I closely examined the properties of a particular kind of LDA construction found with verbs like *'pawatomon* 'want' and *'kisehtun* 'make' in Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey. I showed that it must be analyzed as a raising-to-object derivation, arguing against an object control analysis (on the basis of data from embedded weather predicates and matrix reflexivization) and against a true LDA analysis (on the basis of agreement and obviation data). With that much established, I then turned to the covert version this construction to examine its consequences for the analysis of covert movement. I demonstrated that covert RtO feeds agreement, obviation, A-movement, and scope reconstruction, all indicating that covert movement must occur in the narrow syntax. Thus, covert movement is lower copy pronunciation, and it cannot be true LF movement.

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