

# What Algonquian teaches us about third person: Syntactic visibility and the direct-inverse alternation

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This talk addresses the morphosyntactic status of the third person, contrasting the Invisibility principle (3noP), which treats it as an absence of person features, with the Targeting principle (3yesP), which claims it is explicitly visible to syntax. I evaluate this divide by analyzing the direct-inverse alignment system of Algonquian languages, focusing on the tension between feature-geometric models and structural size-based approaches.

I contrast feature-based approaches, such as Bondarenko (2020)'s Feature Gluttony account (Coon & Keine, 2021), which relies on a specified [NON-PART] feature, with the nominal-size alternative proposed by Oxford (2023). Oxford attempts to eliminate third-person features by deriving the direct-inverse hierarchy through structural asymmetry, positing that third persons are full DPs while speech act participants (SAPs) are structurally reduced  $\phi$ Ps.

While size-based accounts elegantly capture certain structural asymmetries, I present critical theoretical and empirical challenges to this view. I also show that feature-geometric models like Bondarenko's face empirical challenges in obviative-obviative (OBV-OBV) constructions. Consequently, I argue that Algonquian direct-inverse alternations cannot be reduced to pure structural size. I conclude the talk with open questions and future directions to dig deeper into more person-sensitive phenomena.

## References

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