Subordinating Prefixes in Anihshininiimowin
from Grammar to Discourse

Matthew Windsor (Mishamikoweesh, SIL, Leiden University)

matthewww@mishamikoweesh.ca

The literature on Ojibwe notes that many northern varieties use subordinating prefixes in distinct ways (e.g. Valentine 1994: 561). This paper describes the system of subordinating prefixes in Anihshininiimowin (Oji-Cree) based on a corpus of natural texts and discussion with speakers. Subordinating prefixes combine with the expression of tense, aspect and modality (TAM) in construction-specific ways, as well as interacting with information status. In particular, the two most commosn subordinating prefixes, *kaa-* (a relativizer) and *eh-* (the general subordinator) share many contexts of overlap where they are associated with different kinds of information status. The factors motivating the choice of *kaa-* vs *eh-* will be illustrated in five contexts: noun modification, time adverbials, place and reason adverbials, focus constructions, and complementation.

Taking noun modification as an example, *eh-* subordinate clauses only modify non-identifiable referents (1), while *kaa-* clauses are associated with identifiable ones (2).

(1) ᐯᔑᐋᑊ ᐊᔕ ᐄᓂᐨ ᑮᐦᐊᔭ ᓵᑲᐦᐃᑲᐣ ᐁᐦᒥᔕᒃ.
Pehshonc hsha wiin iko kiih-ayaa saakahikan eh-mihshaak.

Pehshonc	hsha	wiin	iko	kiih-ayaa	saakahikan	[*eh*-mihshaa-k.]
nearby	ASRT	EMPH	PRT	PST-be.there.II	lake	**SUB**-be.big.II-CJ.SG

'Nearby, there was **a** big lake.' (SW01-27)

(2) 'And even the U.S. had their own store.'

ᑳᒥᔕᐠ ᒥᓂᐦᑎᐠ ᐊᐦᑯ, | Kaa-mihshaak minihtik ahko,

[***Kaa**-mihshaa-k.*]	minihtik	ahko,
SUB.REL-be.big.II-CJ.SG	island	HAB

'At **the** big island,' (SS02-03.117)

But *kaa-* relative clauses may also modify a non-identifiable referent – only if it is specific and highly (discourse) topical. Example (3) comes from an interview on traditional medecine where the speaker, Ina Mamakwa, discusses her treatments sequentially according to each type of patient ('someone with an injury', 'someone who gets thirsty while walking', 'someone with a urinary infection'). Example (3) is a typical way of introducing a new topic.

(3) 'And then another thing:'

ᐊᐄᕁ ᑳᑌᐚᐱᑌᐨ. | Awiya kaa-tewaapitec.

Awiya	[***kaa**-tewaapite-c.*]
someone	**SUB.REL**-have.a.toothache.AI-CJ.3SG

'Someone who has a toothache.' (Ina M, LP01.36)

Overall, the use of *kaa-* reflects properties associated with prototypical functions of relative clauses: it anchors referents, events, time periods and so on to familiar knowledge, and is associated with identifiability, specificity, topicality and narrow focus. *Eh-* clauses are, taken together, unspecified, but within each context they may contrast with *kaa-* to signal new information, non-identifiability, or clausal focus. This research contributes to community

efforts to document and rejuvenate the use of Anihshininiimowin on northwestern Ontario.

References

Valentine, Rand. 1994. *Ojibwe dialect relationships*. University of Texas at Austin PhD Thesis.