

Introduction. Condition C effects (Chomsky, 1981; Lasnik, 1989; Reinhart, 1983, *et seq.*) have been argued to hold in Kanien’kéha (Mohawk; Northern Iroquoian) (Baker, 1996). As expected under standardly-assumed argument structure, Kanien’kéha matrix *pros* (indexed by verbal agreement) may be coreferential with R-expressions in sentential adjuncts (1a) but not with R-expressions in complement clauses (1b).

- (1) a. *Teiakohwishenhé:ion ne tsi Katerí iah teiakotà:’on.*
pro_i te-iako-hwishenhei-on ne tsi Katerí_i iah te-iako-ita’-on
 DUP-FIP-tired-STAT because Catherine NEG NEG-FIP-sleep-STAT
 ‘She_i is tired because Catherine_i didn’t get any sleep.’
 b. *Wa’è:ron tsi Sosén: teiekahrí:ios.*
*pro_{*i/j} wa’-ie-ihron tsi Sosen_i te-ie-kahr-iio-s*
 FACT-FIA-say.PUNC C Susan DUP-FIA-eye-nice-HAB
 ‘She_{*i/j} said that Susan_i has nice eyes.’

However, Baker (1996) suggests that clause-internally Kanien’kéha exhibits violations of Condition C, arguing that examples like (2) are parsed as in (3). The allowed coreference under such a parse is unexpected under standard proposals where the subject asymmetrically c-commands the object.

- (2) *RBC_{hne} thá:iens (ne) Wíshe raohwísta’.*
RBC-hne t-ha-ien-s ne Wíshe rao-hwíst-a’
RBC-LOC CIS-MSGA-have-HAB NE Michael MSGP-money-NSF
 ‘Michael_i keeps his_i money at RBC.’
 (3) *RBC_{hne} [pro_i]_{SUBJ} thá:iens [(ne) Wíshe_i raohwísta’]_{OBJ}*

Given Condition C’s relevance to the adjunct-complement clause asymmetry, Baker argues that sentences like (2) require Kanien’kéha to deviate extensively from standard argument structure proposals, suggesting that all overt nominals are high-adjoined, with different orderings of adjunction bleeding expected violations.

Proposal. I concur with Baker (1996) in assuming that Condition C is active in Kanien’kéha. Nevertheless, I argue that Condition C applies across the board in Kanien’kéha. I propose that **discourse configurationality allows for apparent new options for binding through structural ambiguity**, allowing two parses of examples like (2): a Condition C-violating parse like Baker’s (3) and a Condition C-abiding parse like (4).

- (4) *RBC_{hne} thá:iens [(ne) Wíshe_i]_{SUBJ} [pro_i raohwísta’]_{OBJ}*

The availability of an abiding parse enables speakers to always accept coreference for these sentences, effectively rendering Condition C effects moot. I show that novel data from conjoined possessed objects teases these parses apart: structurally ambiguous strings allow the same coreference possibilities as (2), while strings that are not structurally ambiguous show that Condition C effects operate as expected of a standard view of argument structure in which the subject asymmetrically c-commands the object.

Against Baker’s (1996) account. Baker (1996) discusses multiple tests suggesting that the R-expression in apparent Condition C-violating sentences is truly part of the object constituent, which would rule out a Condition C-abiding parse like (4). I suggest that these tests are not sufficient to rule out abiding parses. For one, the determiner-like *ne* does not diagnose constituency as it is not required between nominals that verbal agreement shows are separate constituents, while it may appear between possessors and possessa that occupy the same constituent (again diagnosable via agreement). Additionally, Baker suggests that polar questions demonstrate that the R-expression must be object-internal because the polar question particle *ken* is a second-position particle following only a single constituent. Nevertheless, recent work (Sophia Flaim, p.c.) has found cases of *ken* in third-position, specifically when the question involves a topicalized and a focused element. Baker’s tests therefore do not rule out a Condition C-abiding parse.

Evidence from conjoined objects. In Baker’s parse of (2), the R-expression serves as the object possessor.

In Kanien’kéha, possessors may precede or follow their possessa. Under Baker’s account, there is no reason any change in linear order between possessor and possessum should affect coreference. However, I show that there is an **asymmetry in coreference** between subjects and (putative) R-expression possessors of an object conjunct **based on the ordering of the R-expression and its putative possessum**. Coreference between the subject and a putative R-expression possessor of an object conjunct is disallowed when the R-expression appears **after the first** conjunct (5a) or **before the second** conjunct (5b).

- (5) a. *Wahó:ti ne raonhotónkwa Kó:r tánon’ raò:sere.*
*pro_{*ilj} wa-ho-ati ne rao-nhotonkwa Kor_i tanon’ pro_? rao-’sere*
 FACT-MSGP-lose[PUNC] NE MSGP-key Paul and MSGP-car
 ‘He_{*ilj} lost Paul_i’s keys and his_? car.’
- b. *Wahó:ti ne raonhotónkwa tánon’ Kó:r raò:sere.*
*pro_{*ilj} wa-ho-ati ne pro_{*ilj} rao-nhotonkwa tanon’ Kor_i rao-’sere*
 FACT-MSGP-lose[PUNC] NE MSGP-key and Paul MSGP-car
 ‘He_{*ilj} lost his_{*ilj} keys and Paul_i’s car.’ (SUBJ ≠ OBJ poss’r)

On the other hand, coreference between the subject and a (supposed) R-expression object possessor is restored when the R-expression appears **before the first** conjunct (6a) and **after the second** conjunct (6b).

- (6) a. *Wahó:ti ne Kó:r raonhotónkwa tánon’ raò:sere.*
wa-ho-ati ne Kor_i rao-nhotonkwa tanon’ pro_i rao-’sere
 FACT-MSGP-lose[PUNC] NE Paul MSGP-key and MSGP-car
 ‘Paul_i lost his_i keys and his_i car.’
- b. *Wahó:ti ne raonhotónkwa tánon’ raò:sere Kó:r.*
wa-ho-ati ne pro_i rao-nhotonkwa tanon’ rao-’sere Kor_i
 FACT-MSGP-lose[PUNC] NE MSGP-key and MSGP-car Paul
 ‘Paul_i lost his_i keys and his_i car.’ (SUBJ = OBJ poss’r)

In other words, if the putative R-expression possessor is on the “inside” edges of the conjoined possessed objects, coreference does not obtain, but when the putative possessor is on the “outside” edges of the conjoined possessed objects, coreference is accessible. This pattern, while unexpected under Baker’s proposal, is **expected under a standard configuration where the subject c-commands the object**. In (5), the R-expression is trapped inside the conjoined objects; an attempt to parse the R-expression outside of the conjoined objects fails since Kanien’kéha observes the Coordinate Structure Constraint (Boles, 2024). This string is therefore unambiguous, and the only licit parse forces a *pro* subject which c-commands the R-expression, hence the observed Condition C violation. In cases like (6), the discourse configurationality of Kanien’kéha is able to “bleed” an apparent violation by providing the structural ambiguity required for alternative parses. All six orders of S, V, and O are generally allowed in the language, and all arguments (including possessors) may be *pro*-dropped. Since in (6) the R-expressions are on the “outside” edges of the conjoined objects, the string is structurally ambiguous and the R-expression may instead be parsed as a subject, with both object conjuncts having *pro*-dropped possessors. Such a parse does **not** lead to a Condition C violation. The same structural ambiguity between possessor and subject found in (6) is found in (2), straightforwardly accounting for the coreference effects there. Importantly, the discourse configurational properties of Kanien’kéha allow both sentences abiding by Condition C and those apparently violating it to both be accepted by speakers because **both are parsable in a Condition C-abiding way**. This contributes to a growing body of work (e.g., Royer, 2023) that languages with apparent Condition C violations can exhibit straightforward binding effects, but that these effects are bled by other factors. The Kanien’kéha data provides an additional way to “bleed” Condition C: the structural ambiguity provided by discourse configurational word order. The other crucial benefit of this analysis is that no new argument structure proposals are required to account for Kanien’kéha; the simple power of discourse configurationality does the trick.

References

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