

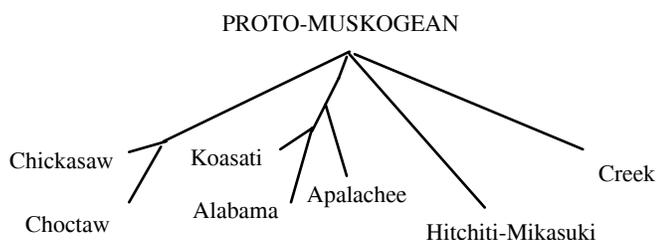
Notes on Switch-Reference in Creek

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1. The goal of this paper is to give a brief description of switch-reference (SR) in Creek and to explore specific issues arising in the description of the phenomenon. Some of these issues appear to receive a simple structural solution while others resist understanding in such terms.¹ Like many other phenomena in grammar, a full description of SR appears to require reference both to linguistic structure and to discourse.

Creek is a member of the Muskogean family of languages of the southeastern U.S.:



The basic word order in Creek is Subject-Object-Verb. Verbs may occur in several grades affecting the length and pitch of key syllables. Verbs agree with first and second person arguments in person and number, generally using one series of agreement markers for arguments that act deliberately (Type I) and another series (Type II) in most other instances:

- (1) a. *latêyk-ey-s*
fall:SG:Hgr-1sI-IND
'I fell (deliberately).'
- b. *ca-latêyk-is*
1sII-fall:SG:Hgr-IND
'I fell (accidentally).'

A third series (Dative) is usually confined to a wide range of 'indirect' arguments.

¹. I am grateful to Margaret Mauldin, George Bunny, and the late Helen Bunny for their help with the Creek data and to the organizers of WAIL at UCSB. Mary R. Haas kindly made copies of her texts available. The phonemes of Creek are /i i· a· o o· c f h k l l̥ m n p s t w y/. /c/ is an alveo-palatal affricate. /e/ is an allophone of /a/. The following abbreviations are used: 1s, 2s, etc.=first person singular, second person plural, etc.; I=type I agreement marking; II=type II agreement marking; DUR=durative; Fgr=falling grade; Hgr=h-grade; IND=indicative; Lgr=level grade; N=DS or oblique (non-nominative); SG=singular; T=SS or nominative.

Types I and II agreement markers serve to identify the agent and patient in first and second person forms. There is no agreement in the third person. When a noun phrase appears in a clause, however, it may be marked with *-t* or *-n*:

- (2) a. *pósi lást-i-t ássi c-ís*
 catblack-DUR-T chase:Lgr-IND
 ‘A black cat is chasing him/her/it.’
- b. *pósi lást-i-n ássi c-ís*
 catblack-DUR-N chase:Lgr-IND
 ‘She/He/It is chasing a black cat.’

As these examples suggest, *-t* is found on subjects and *-n* is found on objects. The suffix *-n* is also found on ‘oblique’ noun phrases, however, including those expressing location, time, or manner:

- (3) *ifá-t fitta-n hōyt-is*
 dog-T outside-N stand:SG:Fgr-IND
 ‘A dog is standing outside.’

It thus appears that *-t* is only used for subjects while *-n* may be used for any nominal constituent of a clause other than the subject.

The suffixes *-t* and *-n* also appear at the ends of chained and subordinate clauses:

- (4) a. *ifá-t wo'hki-t pósi-n ássi c-ís*
 dog-T bark:Lgr-T cat-N chase:Lgr-IND
 ‘The dog is barking and chasing the cat.’
- b. *ifá-t wo'hki-n pósi-t ássi c-ís*
 dog-T bark:Lgr-N cat-T chase:Lgr-IND
 ‘The dog is barking and the cat is chasing him.’

As these examples suggest (and as Nathan 1977 has noted), *-t* is used when the subject of the clause it attaches to extends to the next higher clause, while *-n* is used when the next higher clause has a different subject. In their use at the ends of clauses, then, *-t* and *-n* can be described as a form of SWITCH-REFERENCE marking (see, among others, Haiman and Munro 1983, Stirling 1993). I will henceforth refer to *-t* as a SAME-SUBJECT MARKER (SS) and to *-n* as a DIFFERENT-SUBJECT MARKER (DS). Clause-final suffixes like the indicative that do not determine same- or different-subject will be said to be OPEN. This yields the following classification of clause-final markers in Creek:

Creek clause-final markers	SS	DS	Open
'and', 'and then'	- <i>t</i>	- <i>n</i>	
'when'	- <i>ofa-t</i>	- <i>ofa-n</i>	- <i>of</i> ²
'the one who/time when/place where'	- <i>ati-t</i>	- <i>ati-n, -an</i>	- <i>at</i>
'if'			- <i>n om-at</i>
'though'			- <i>eys(in)</i>
'because'			-(<i>i</i>) <i>ka</i>
indicative			-(<i>i</i>) <i>s</i>
imperative			- <i>as</i>
interrogative			- <i>a, -a', -ha ks</i>

Note that *-t* appears on all the SS forms and *-n* appears on all the DS forms. In general, SS and DS markers are associated with clause-final markers that are likely to be close in time to the following clause. As the two clauses become more independent in tense, the clause-final suffixes tend to become open. Thus, the indicative, imperative, and interrogative suffixes are all sentence-final markers and are always open with regard to the subject of the next clause.

The chart above also shows that open forms are sometimes contracted from SS or DS forms. The forms *-ofa-t*, *-ofa-n*, *-ati-t*, and *-ati-n* are rare in modern texts, generally being replaced by the shorter forms *-of*, *-at*, and *-an*.

2. A preliminary description. Creek *-t* is used when a narrator is interested in the closely linked activities of a single agent:³

(2) <i>ohháhkopānít</i> playing on it	Playing on it SS,
<i>ohpálpakít</i> rolling on it	rolling on it SS,
<i>tapiⁿksosin</i> <i>hayít</i> flat making it	making it really FLAT SS,
<i>óhholanít</i> defecating on it	crapping on it SS,

2. I have placed *-of* in the open category because it does not include a SR marker. Out of 17 instances examined, however, all 17 were DS. I suspect this is not a grammatical feature, however.

3. Creek morphology is so complex that full glossing of examples can sometimes impede understanding on the part of readers. I will therefore resort to word-by-word glosses unless more detail is needed.

- (6) *hɔːspafõ pkin apéyci céyɫ* I'll go along the wall
near the wall I go along SS
- hõyɫickat ʔóláti toːk* and get to where you
where you stand because I will reach are standing (1939:57)

In (6), SS marking is used at the end of the first clause because the complement clause ('where you are standing') is lower and thus irrelevant to the determination of SR.

There are occasionally a few challenges to a description of SR in terms of same- and different-subject, however. Consider the following example:

- (7) *sata-lákkon nihsit* (a man) bought an
big persimmon he bought apple SS,
- sata-lákkon homéypit* ate the apple SS,
big persimmon he ate
- 'noti-lákkot inhi ckati s* and found a big tooth
big tooth appeared to him OPEN. (1992)

The last clause in (7) is an idiom: to express the idea that a man found a big tooth, Creek uses an expression meaning 'a big tooth appeared to him'. For the purposes of SR marking, however, the animate nominal counts as a subject for this speaker. In this instance, SR reflects the greater topicality of the experiencer than the grammatical subject.

In the following section I examine a few further issues arising in the description of SR in Creek.

3. Descriptive problems.

3.1 SR in 'if' clauses. One difficulty in the description of Creek SR involves examples in which a main verb occurs with the verb *om-* 'be':

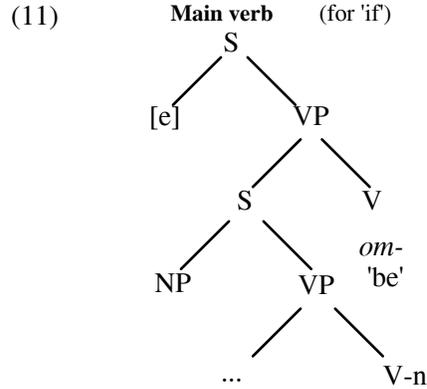
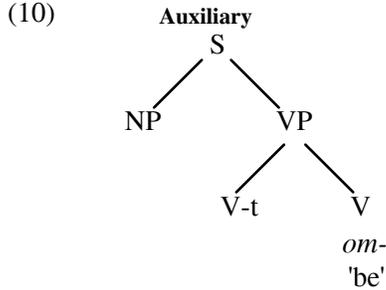
Verb-SR *om-*

In this configuration, SS *-t* is usual (8), though DS *-n* is also found (9):

- (8) *alít omâːt* as he is going around
going about being (1939:3)
- (9) *αlín omâːt* if he is going about
going about being (1939:87)

In (8), the subject of ‘going about’ is taken to be the same as the subject of the auxiliary verb. In (9), DS marking implies that the subjects of the two verbs are different. This second use of *-n* with *om-* is limited to a specific construction translating as ‘if’, however.

I believe the best account of SR in (8-9) is to posit the different structures in (10-11), respectively:



In (10) (=8), *om-* is an auxiliary verb and so shares a subject with the main verb. In (11) (=9), *om-* is a main verb without a referential subject. A literal translation in English of (9) would then be ‘it being that he is going about’.

In fact, there is independent evidence for the distinction posited in (10-11): in auxiliary uses of *om-*, agreement may be found on just the auxiliary (12) or on both the auxiliary and the main verb (13):

(12) *hìntin ahicéycit om-íck-at-i-s* “You will watch him
 well watching be-2sI-will-DUR-IND WELL... (1939:15)

(13) *léyk-ey-t om-éy-s* I am sitting (1939:9)
 sit-1sI-T be-1sI-IND

In ‘if’ clauses, *om-* never agrees with the subject of the preceding clause:

(14) *hìc-éy-n omât* if I see
 see-1sI-N being (1939:49)

The distinction observed between (13) and (14) is consistent with the claim that ‘if’ clauses have a nonreferential third-person subject.

3.2 SR in overlapping contexts. While the appearance of DS marking in ‘if’ clauses appears to have a structural explanation, there are other phenomena that appear to elude such simple treatments. What counts as ‘same’ and ‘different’ for SR is not always obvious, for example. I will consider two cases of OVERLAP between clauses in this section: the first is where one subject is a part of another subject; the second is where one subject is a subset of another subject.

In Creek, subjects in a part/whole relationship are considered to be different with respect to SR:

- (15) *inki hámka t isnâ fka n* When (Rabbit) hit it
his hand other when he hit it with with his other paw DS,

inkíta t istahá kin alokpíhpin that paw stuck to the
his hand figure it got stuck to doll DS... (1939:5)

In (15), DS marking is used at the end of the first clause even though the subject of the second clause is a part of the subject of the first clause.

Subjects in a set/subset relationship are given more freedom with respect to SR. In some instances SS marking is used:

- (16) *a_b=ab*
coha wí ska ways ways ma kí n the towhee says ‘ways
towhee ways ways says ways’ DS

tásit tasiká ya teyns teyns ma kí t the bluejay says
bluejay tasiká ya teyns teyns says ‘tasikaya teyns teyns’ SS

wila kô f when they (2) were
when they (2) are going about going about... (1939:35)

In (16), the singular subject of the second clause is counted as the same as the plural subject of the third clause. The following passage is similar in this regard:

- (17) *a=ab=abc*
hompí ko k, ” ma kí t since we haven’t
because we haven’t eaten he says eaten,” he says SS

hokkô la t ’timakasáhmi t and the two of them
the two agreed together agreed SS

ma cáto tímpin apô kí t and they all (3) sat
that rock near they (3) sat close SS (1939:19)

In (17), the subject of the first clause merges with the subject of the second clause, and these merge with the third.

In other instances, DS marking is used in set/subset relationships:

- (18) *a_ab_b*
haláhteyn I grabbed him DS,
I grabbed him

hì nti mâ hin tinciyalhóhyi n and we struggled
good very we struggled together together hard DS,

yi cíhyika
because he entered

he went in there, so
(1939:17-19)

In (18), DS marking is used between the first clause and the second clause and again between the second clause and the third clause even though ‘we’ here includes ‘I’ and ‘he’.

The following examples are similar in this regard:

(19) a_abc

ahĩti mànhin fiksômkit ałĩn
good very got scared goes about

he got really scared
there DS,

follatĩs
they went about

and they went about.
(1939:51)

(20) abc_a

ma cáton oponayĩca'kít o mĩn
that rock they talking about were

(three men) were
talking about that rock DS...

hámkit okâ t
one saying

One said,
(1939:47)

The context of (19) makes it clear that the subject of the second clause includes the subject of the first clause, though DS marking is used. DS marking is also used in (20) even though there is clear overlap between the subjects.

Data of this sort suggest that the use of DS or SS marking in set/subset contexts is determined not by grammatical rule but by subtle judgments on the part of speakers regarding the separateness of entities and the activities they perform. More specifically, SS marking appears to be used when subjects blend together (as in (16-17)), while DS marking appears to be used when actions or responses serve to distinguish individuals from their groups (as in (18-20)).

This type of phenomenon requires more research, but the data presented above make it clear that a simple structural account of SR in overlapping contexts is lacking.

3.3. SR with impersonal plurals. Creek has what I call an ‘impersonal plural’ that is often used to translate the English passive. The basic grammatical properties of the construction are:

- a. A transitive or intransitive clause becomes impersonal (i.e., cannot have a overt, referential nominal in subject position);
- b. The verb or auxiliary has an infix *-ho-* (which has plural uses in some other contexts, but may have singular reference in impersonal uses);
- c. The subject is given less prominence and an object (if present) given greater prominence;
- d. There is no syntactic ‘promotion’: objects continue to be marked with *-n*.

Because the object receives greater prominence and because impersonal clauses appear to lack subjects, a question arises as to how impersonal plural clauses might be treated with respect to SR.

In fact, impersonal plurals are treated as though they have a subject for SR:

(21)	<i>istahákin</i>	<i>kolówan</i>	<i>isháhyit</i>	having made a doll out of tar SS,	
	figure	tar	having made with		
	<i>inninín</i>	<i>imohhoyleyhócin</i>		they (impers.) stood it on his path DS,	
	its trail	they stood it up on			
	<i>noksitá</i>	<i>kómi</i>	<i>ayí</i>	<i>atât</i>	when he was going about trying to sneak in... (1939:3)
	to sneak in	trying	going	was about	

In (21), the second clause is an impersonal plural: in the context of the story, the subject of this clause is singular (referring to a specific farmer). Note that SS marking is used between the first and second clauses, suggesting that the impersonal plural subject is counted for SR. Because this subject differs from the subject of the third clause, DS marking appears on the impersonal clause.

Different impersonal plural clauses can pick out different referents within the discourse, however:

(25)	<i>ísti</i>	<i>hámkin</i>	<i>ahákan</i>	<i>'safashotáta níñ</i>	they (impers.) will apply the law to one person DS
	person	one	law	they will apply	
	<i>mahókít</i>	<i>ónka</i>			they (impers.) said, so... (1939:55)
	they say	because is			

In (25), DS is used between these two impersonal plural clauses because two different non-specific subjects are intended. If the same reference were intended, SS marking would be used at the end of the first clause and *-ho-* would only appear on the second clause.

Examination of the impersonal plural data confirms that knowledge of both grammar and discourse are necessary to understand specific uses of SR marking: the fact that the backgrounded subjects 'count' for SR marking shows that the phenomenon is tied to a grammatical notion of subject; the fact that the reference of entities must be known to determine use of SR shows that SR is not determined by grammar alone.

3.4 Recapitulation clauses. Stirling (1993:17) observes that many languages with SR have a special device for connecting a sentence to a preceding discourse once a full stop has been made:

[S]witch-reference does not appear to cross sentence boundaries. Rather, the widespread device of the **recapitulation clause** allows the switch-reference marking to be carried over from one sentence to the next.

The recapitulation clause in Creek is usually *mo'mín* or *mo'mít*, from *má* 'that' + *om-* 'be, be like' + SR. When the same subject is resumed in a new sentence, *mo'mít* is used:

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| (26) <i>hica'kít</i>
they saw them | <i>follatí's</i>
they were about | They saw them
and were going
about OPEN. |
| <i>mo'mít</i>
being like that | | Being like that SS, |
| <i>akítteycít</i>
thinking about it | | they thought about it
SS, |
| <i>oponayí'ca'kít</i>
they talked about it | <i>follatí's</i>
they were about | talked about it SS, and
were going about.
(1939:79) |

The first sentence in (26) is in the indicative (an open marker) and represents a full stop. In beginning the next sentence, a recapitulation clause (*mo'mít*) is added to inform the audience that the same subject is continuing.

When the next sentence has a different subject, *mo'mín* is used:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| (27) <i>ma ísti</i>
that person | <i>a'latí's</i>
went about | That person went
about OPEN. |
| <i>mo'mín</i>
being like that | | Being like that DS, |
| <i>aha'kaká'ca</i>
law breaker | <i>'toká'fa'a'natí</i>
to be whipped | they have still not
done it to the |
| <i>momi'hocíkon</i>
they didn't do it still | <i>ismónkatit</i>
it is | lawbreaker who was
to be whipped.
(1939:61) |

Of course, this strategy only works because the subject of the recapitulation clause is conventionally taken to be the subject of the preceding clause. With this convention, the recapitulation clause serves to help identify the subject of a new sentence.

3.5 Variation in SR. My description of SR in the preceding sections was intentionally restricted to a limited corpus (a single volume of texts transcribed by Mary R. Haas in

1939). In my own recordings of modern, mostly bilingual speakers, I find a number of examples that appear to follow different principles:

(29)	<i>nokósit</i>	<i>łató</i>	<i>yàⁿcit</i>	<i>ónt</i>	<i>o'wâ tin</i>	The bear really wanted fish DS
	bear	fish	wanting	was	being	
	<i>ifán</i>	<i>inhoyhkín</i>	<i>łô tin</i>			and calling the dog DS reached him DS:
	dog	he called to	he reached			
	<i>istôñwín</i>	<i>łató</i>	<i>sòⁿlkit</i>	<i>cinhîckit</i>	<i>o'wá`</i>	“How did you get so many fish?”
	how	fish	many	appeared to you		
	<i>kéyhç[in]</i>					he (the bear) asked DS... (1992)
	he said					

In (29), we find DS marking in the first three instances where I would have expected SS marking. It is difficult to know what to make of these examples: a) my understanding of SR may be wrong; b) modern speakers may have a different system of SR than older speakers; or, c) being tape recorded may have caused the modern speaker to be nervous and to lead to errors. My current impression is that (b) is correct and that some speakers employ *-n* as an open marker. The situation cannot be resolved without further research, but I have attempted to show that there is variation within the Creek speaking community on the use of SR. The import is that studies of SR must survey a range of individuals before definitive statements can be made.

4. Conclusion. I began researching this paper convinced that a standard account of Creek SR marking in terms of SS and DS would fail. This judgment was based on my own experience recording modern speakers where I had observed numerous problems for statements of this kind.

In examining older texts, I find that an account of SR in terms of SS and DS works remarkably well, even in describing recapitulation clauses. My revised view is that SR in these older texts refers to grammatical features of language like ‘subject’ and ‘higher clause.’ Grammar alone is insufficient to understand specific uses, however, as in overlapping contexts where reference must be made to the particular scene the speaker has in mind. What is now needed is a more detailed study with a broader range of materials.

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