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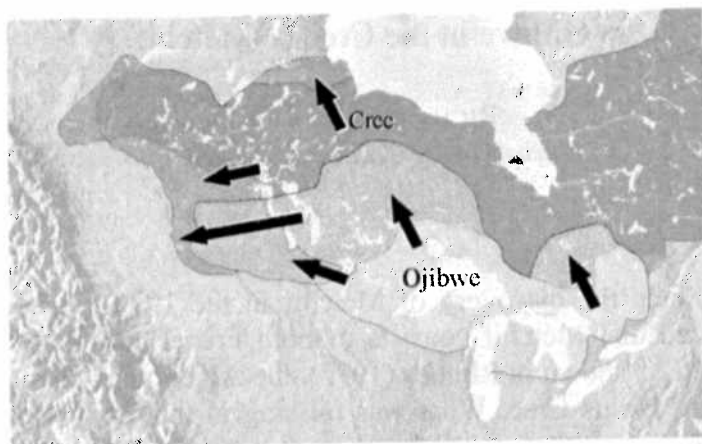
Ojibwe in the Cree of Métchif

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INTRODUCTION

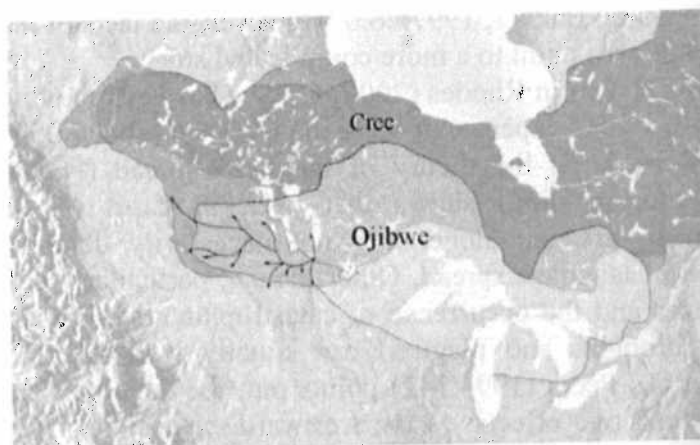
Since the discovery of Métchif in the 1970's it has been recognized that Métchif consists of both French and Algonquian elements. As shown in Rhodes (1977), the Algonquian element is a variety of Plains Cree. What was missing in that early work was the recognition that there was another important Algonquian source. The missing piece was the significant Ojibwe influence on the Cree in Métchif. Bakker (1991, 1997) showed how extensive the influence is. That influence has been thought to be that of a substrate effect because the historical record is unambiguous that Cree was the prestige language of the area and the *lingua franca* (Rhodes, 1982, Bakker, 1997:265). However, the facts of language shift in this area point to a more complicated story.

As shown in Rhodes (2006) Ojibwe has been moving north and west at the expense of Cree dialects for about 250 years. Ongoing work on the theory of language spread (Nichols and Rhodes, forthcoming) shows that even in cases of shift by recruitment, prestige alone does not necessarily determine the direction of language spread. Other factors, particularly economic differences and the occurrence of catastrophic singularities (most notably droughts and plagues) can equally well determine the outcome. As Peers (1994:142) points out, the smallpox epidemic of 1837 had two effects: 1) the westward expansion of Cree and Ojibwe groups in the southern plains area that would end up being Saulteaux speaking, and 2) the formation of mixed Cree-Assinaboine-Ojibwe bands. This is the area in which Métchif arose. Steinbring (1981) cites sources that indicate mixed Cree-Ojibwe communities date back to the 1790's.



Map 1: Cree & Ojibwa Spread, 1750-1980

Of particular interest to us in this discussion is the fact that in the last 150 years the line between Plains Cree and Sauleaux has moved through most of the area of the Métis diaspora, as shown in



Map II: Métis Diaspora & Ojibwe Spread

All of this suggests that the Ojibwe influences in Métchif may not be substrate effects at all, but rather superstrate effects on the part of Cree speakers learning Ojibwe. Let us turn to the data to see what features are available to distinguish between these two

hypotheses. I will begin the inquiry by reviewing and, in some cases, refining Bakker's observations about Ojibwe-isms in Métchif.

PHONOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

There are two significant ways that the Cree element of Métchif reflects Ojibwe influence, the presence of voiced obstruents and nasal vowels.

Obstruent voicing

One of the significant differences between varieties of Cree and varieties of Ojibwe is that Ojibwe dialects have been voicing simple obstruents. Voicing has been spreading northward for at least 200 years, but it is not very advanced in the areas in which Ojibwe has been replacing Cree. Nonetheless, the first environment in which obstruents voice in Ojibwe dialects is following nasals. So it is an Ojibwe influence in Métchif that nasal plus stop clusters, all of which are derived by vowel deletion, show voicing (Bakker 1997:260).

(1)

Plains Cree	Métchif	
<i>pimipahtâw</i>	<i>pimbahtâw</i>	'he runs'
<i>tânitê</i>	<i>tândê</i>	'where (to)'
<i>konita</i>	<i>konja</i>	'in vain'

This voicing extends to first person independent prefix, which in Ojibwe is *(n)in-*. In Sauleaux that is contracted to *n-*. Métchif once had the Sauleaux form of the prefix, but has systematically lost the word initial nasal.

(2)

Plains Cree	Saulteaux	Métchif	proto-Métchif	
<i>nipimohtân</i>	<i>mbimose</i>	<i>bimohtân</i>	* <i>m[b]imohtân</i>	'I walk'
<i>nikî-tahkwamik</i>	<i>ngii-dakwamig</i>	<i>gî-tahkwamik</i>	* <i>n[g]î-tahkwamik</i>	'he bit me'
<i>nititêhyitên</i>	<i>ndinendam</i>	<i>dêyihitên/ditêyihitên</i>	* <i>n[d]itêyihitên</i>	'I think (so)'
<i>nisipin</i>	<i>nzhiibii</i>	<i>zhîpin</i>	* <i>n[ʒ]îpin</i>	'I stretch'

Nasal vowels

Ojibwe and Plains Cree differ in that Ojibwe has nasalized vowels and Cree does not. Métchif has nasal vowels in words of Cree origin. The most pervasive instance is the low front vowel *ê*, which is optionally nasalized after *m* or *n*, as shown in (3).¹

(3)

Plains Cree	Métchif	
<i>mêkiw</i>	<i>m[ɛ:]kiw ~ m[æ:]kiw</i>	'he gives a donation'
<i>mêtawêw</i>	<i>m[ɛ:]tawêw ~ m[æ:]tawêw</i>	'he plays'
<i>nêmow</i>	<i>n[ɛ:]mow ~ n[æ:]mow</i>	he growls'
<i>nêpêwisiw</i>	<i>n[ɛ:]pêwisiw ~ n[æ:]pêwisiw</i>	'he is ashamed/embarrassed'
<i>ashamêw</i>	<i>asham[ɛ:]w ~ asham[æ:]w</i>	'he feeds him'
<i>mâhpinêw</i>	<i>mâhpin[ɛ:]w ~ mâhpin[æ:]w</i>	'he groans'
<i>ohpimê</i>	<i>ohpim[ɛ:] ~ ohpim[æ:]</i>	'to the side'
<i>tahkinê</i>	<i>tahkin[ɛ:] ~ tahkin[æ:]</i>	'always'

This is clearly Ojibwe influence. Ojibwe dialects have progressive nasalization of low vowels. This weak nasalization is secondary and is only contrastive word finally and in short words in some dialects.

(4)

19 th century Ottawa	Modern Ottawa	
<i>imaa</i>	<i>maanh</i> [mã:]	'there'
<i>memengwe</i>	<i>memengwenh</i> [mẽ:mẽ:ngwẽ:]	'butterfly'

Métchif progressive nasalization also affects words of French origin. This is discussed fully in Rhodes (2009).

Additionally there are a few function words and adverbs which have irrationally nasalized vowels in Métchif. This is also a trait of southern Plains Cree (Wolfart, p.c.), but it is likely that southern Plains Cree is under the same Ojibwe influence as Métchif.

(5)

Plains Cree	Métchif	
<i>ciy</i>	[tʃi:]	<i>yes-no question</i>
<i>ôhi</i>	[ô:hî]	'these (inan.)/this (obv.)'
<i>anihi</i>	[ənîhî]	'those (inan.)/that (obv.)'
<i>sêmâk</i>	[ʃæ:mɑ:k]	'immediately'

MORPHOLOGY

Various minor points of Métchif inflectional morphology show Ojibwe reflexes rather than Cree.²

Inclusive plural

Métchif retains the inclusive-exclusive contrast in independent verb inflection (Rhodes, 1977), but it differs from Plains Cree in that the first person plural marker has only one allomorph, paralleling Ojibwe number marking in inclusive plural.

(6)

Plains Cree	Métchif	SW Ojibwe	
<i>nikikishkênân</i>	<i>gishkênân</i>	<i>ingigishkaanaan</i>	'we (excl.) wear it'
<i>kikikishkênaw</i>	<i>kikishkênân</i>	<i>gigigishkaanaan</i>	'we (incl.) wear it'

Third plural allomorphy

Cree and Ojibwe secondary animate plural marking differ in that Ojibwe has *-naan-ig* while Cree has *-nân-ak*. Métchif has the Ojibwe vocalism.

(7)

Plains Cree	Métchif	SW Ojibwe	
<i>niwâpamânânak</i>	<i>niwâpamânânik</i>	<i>niwaabamaanaanig</i>	'we (excl.) see them'

Dependent future marking

Cree and Ojibwe future markers are reflexes of the Proto-Algonquian verb **kataw-* 'want' (Rhodes, 1985). The reflexes in both languages show some irregular developments. But the two languages differ in where the irregularities are. Métchif shows a uniquely Ojibwe reflex for the unchanged conjunct allomorph *chi-*. Some Métchif speakers have *shi-*, a lenition of *chi-*.

(8)

Plains Cree	Métchif	SW Ojibwe	
<i>ka-itohtâyân/</i> <i>ta-itohtâyân</i>	<i>chi-tohtâyân/</i> <i>shi-tohtâyân</i>	<i>ji-izhaayaan</i>	'(in order) to go [there]'

LEXICAL PARALLELS

There are a number of lexemes in the Métchif lexicon which show Ojibwe influence in one form or another. A few examples were cited in Bakker (1997:263), but without any examination of their significance. Bakker also claims that Métchif nouns from Algonquian sources are often Ojibwe, but in my

database of 113 Algonquian nouns only 7 are unambiguously Ojibwe in origin.³ Only a few examples of each are cited in this section. The argument here for Ojibwe influence is more complex than Bakker acknowledges. The speakers clearly understand correspondences between Cree and Ojibwe at some level. They regularly substitute Métchif *hC* for Ojibwe fortis *C* and voiceless *C* for Ojibwe lenis (and therefore voiced) *C*, and they substitute Métchif *sh* for all sibilants. The result is that almost all forms with Ojibwe influence or origin are still pronounced as if they were Plains Cree. In my whole database only one word, *ênikôns* 'ant', is pronounced with something close to an Ojibwe accent, but it lacks the voicing of the Ojibwe medial consonant.

(9)

Métchif	SW Ojibwe	Plains Cree
[ɛ:ni:kô:s]	[ɛ:ni:gô:s]	<i>êyikos</i> 'ant'

This quirky pronunciation of *ênikôns* is more consistent with a Cree speaker trying to imitate Ojibwe, than with an Ojibwe speaker trying to say it in Cree.

Ojibwe vocalism

There are a few forms which display Ojibwe vocalism. In some cases southern Plains Cree has the Ojibwe vocalism as an option, but even in these cases Métchif has only one option and it is the Ojibwe one. Examples are given in (10).

(10)

Plains Cree	Métchif	SW Ojibwe	
<i>apwêsiw</i>	<i>apwêshow</i>	<i>abwezo</i>	'he sweats'
<i>nikamiw</i> [N] ⁴ / <i>nikamow</i> ~ <i>nakamow</i> [S]	<i>nakamow</i>	<i>nagamo</i>	'he sings'
<i>kohkôs</i> [N]/ <i>kohkôs</i> ~ <i>kôhkôs</i> [S]	<i>kôhkôsh</i>	<i>gookoosh</i>	'pig'

Ojibwe consonantism

There are a few Métchif forms which display Ojibwe consonantal reflexes. Because there are not many places where reflexes differ enough not to be swept up in the correspondence adjustment that I mentioned above, there are only two clear examples and they both involve reflexes of PA *l. They are given in (11).

(11)

Plains Cree	Métchif	SW Ojibwe	
<i>isiyihkásow</i>	<i>ishinikáshow</i>	<i>izhinikaazo</i>	'he is named'
<i>éyikos</i>	<i>énikôns</i>	<i>enigoons</i>	'ant'

Ojibwe construction

There are a number of verbs and deverbal nominals in Métchif which are constructed like Ojibwe rather than Plains Cree.

(12)

Plains Cree	Métchif	SW Ojibwe	
<i>nîmihitow</i>	<i>nîmiw</i>	<i>nîmi</i>	he dances'
<i>masinahikêw</i>	<i>oshipêhikêw</i>	<i>ozhibii'ige</i>	'he writes'
<i>otamêw</i>	<i>wihkwamêw</i>	<i>owiikwamaan</i>	'draw on [a pipe]'
<i>mîsahikêwin</i>	<i>pakwahikan</i>	<i>bagwahigan</i>	'patchwork, mending'
<i>pîwisikan</i>	<i>ishkoshikan</i>	<i>ishkozhigan</i>	'remnant (from cutting)'

In the case of the word for writing, *oshipêhikêw*, the constructional logic is extended to neologisms within Métchif.

(13)

Plains Cree	Métchif	
<i>kwêskipayin</i>	<i>kwêshkipayin</i>	'it changes'
<i>kwêskéyitam</i>	<i>kwêshkéyitam</i>	'he changes his mind'
<i>kêhtwâmasinahikêwin</i>	<i>kwêshkipêhikêwin</i>	'revision, re-write'

Ojibwe forms missing or rare in Cree

There are at least two Métchif forms which are constructed like Ojibwe and refer to concepts for which there are no ordinary Plains Cree words.

(14)

Plains Cree	Métchif	SW Ojibwe	
[by epithet]	<i>kashkischikêwin</i>	<i>gashkichigewin</i>	'earnings, wages'
<i>amatisow</i> [rare]	<i>amatishow</i>	<i>amaniso</i>	'he perceives a ghost'

DIRECTION OF INFLUENCE

As pointed out above the conventional wisdom regarding the influence of Ojibwe on Métchif is that the influences are substrate influences because Plains Cree is the prestige language. But the picture of spread outlined in the maps above is that Saulteaux has been encroaching on Cree areas, including the area in which Métchif is spoken. This leads one to question whether the facts might run the other way. Plains Cree speakers, in spite of the prestige factors, are learning Ojibwe. If so what would be the linguistic evidence for the direction of influence. There are two significant indications in the data we have just presented.

Nasalization

There is a significant difference between Ojibwe progressive nasalization patterns and those of Métchif. Ojibwe nasalizes *aa* and *e*. Métchif only nasalizes *e*. If nasalization were a substrate effect one would expect that the pattern would be imported whole. The fact that Métchif only nasalizes *e* suggests imperfect learning, i.e., what might be expected of Cree speakers learning Ojibwe.

Rare words

The next argument that Cree is substrate is that there is one form which is rare in Plains Cree which occurs commonly in Métchif used as it is in Ojibwe. But in Métchif it has the Cree reflex for PA * θ , viz. *t*. It is given in (15) (repeated from [14]).

(15)

Plains Cree	Métchif	SW Ojibwe	
<i>amatisow</i> [rare]	<i>amatishow</i>	<i>amaniso</i>	'he perceives a ghost'

If these were Ojibwe speakers learning Cree, how would they know the correct reflex for a rare word? On the other hand if it is Cree speakers learning Ojibwe, they recognize that Ojibwes use their cognate of a rare morpheme more commonly and use the form with the Cree reflex.

CONCLUSION

Both of these details of Métchif point to the same picture that the history gives. The Ojibwe influences on the Plains Cree in Métchif are part of an early wave of contact induced change that preceded a language shift to Saulteaux.

POSTSCRIPT

Let me take this opportunity to argue for a controversial point of onomastics. Many speakers in the northern and western areas where Ojibwe has spread at the expense of Cree call themselves (and their language) Cree, even though to the trained eye it is demonstrably Ojibwe, whether Saulteaux or Oji-Cree. This is a good indication of a Cree substrate. A similar "misidentification" occurs throughout southern Ontario where speakers of Ottawa identify themselves and their language as Chippewa (Rhodes, 1982), if their ancestors came from areas in the United States that, at the time, spoke "standard" Ojibwe (in contrast to Ottawa). The only people who identify their language as Ottawa are ethnic Ottawas. It appears to be an Algonquian strategy to link the naming of the language one speaks to the name of one's ethnic identification (cf. Costa, 2007 on Illinois).

ENDNOTES

¹ Bakker (1997:258) claims that Métchif Tl's in *-am* have nasalized final vowels in place of expected *-ên*. I have never heard this. None of the speakers I have worked with, nor any of those that are in the SIL database have this feature in their grammar. It is possible that Bakker misread Laverdure and Allard (1983). They use the spelling {*aen*} ambiguously to represent both [æ:] and [ɛ:n], the latter transcription only as part of Tl inflection.

² Bakker's Table 9.3 has a number of mistakes, mostly in the Minnesota Ojibwe line. Those mistakes make Southwestern Ojibwe look Cree-like.

³ Bakker cites one Algonquian noun that is not in my data, *ikwezens* 'girl'. I have no Métchif Ojibwe borrowings pronounced exactly as in Ojibwe, including *ênikôns*. Bakker also lists two forms which do not say anything about Ojibwe influence on Métchif: 'bee' M *yâmô*, PC *âmow*, Oj. *aamoo*, and 'my namesake' M *gwêmê*, PC *nikwêmês* (voc. *nikwêmê*), Oj. *niiyawen'enh*.

⁴ Northern forms are cited from LeClaire and Cardinal (1998).

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