

Seneca Kinship: Hints

<http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~gawron/semantics>

Jean Mark Gawron

San Diego State University, Department of Linguistics

January 2, 2014

- 1 Iroquoian kinship concepts
- 2 Useless features

1 Iroquoian kinship concepts

2 Useless features

haʔnih	father	F, FB, FMSs, FFBs, FMBs, FFSs, FFFBss, etc.
hakhnóʔsěh	uncle	MB, MMSs, MFBs, MMBs, MFSs, MMMSds, etc.
noʔyěh	mother	M, MS, MMSd, MFBd, MMBd, MFSd, MMMSdd, etc.
ake:hak	aunt	FS, FMSd, FFBd, FMBd, FFSd, FFFBsd, etc.

These are all GEN⁻¹ kinship types. We can hypothesize that all four words have the feature GEN⁻¹. But what **distiguishes** them?

hatsiʔ	my elder brother	B, MSs, FBs, MMSds, FFBss, MFBds, FMSss, MMBds, etc. (older)
akyá:ʔse:ʔ	my cousin	MB(s/d), FS(s/d), MMSs(s/d), FFBd(s/d), MFBs(s/d), FMSd(s/d), MMBs(s/d)

These are all GEN⁰ kinship types. We can hypothesize that all both words have the feature GEN⁰. But what feature **distiguishes** them (**contrastiveness principle**)? Note: It's not the feature Male or the feature **being older than ego**. For example, the word *akyá:ʔse:ʔ* is used for a MBs even though he is male and older than ego.

1 Iroquoian kinship concepts

2 Useless features

A non solution

haʔnih
father

LIN	DIRECT
SEX	MALE
GEN	-1

hakhnóʔsēh
uncle

LIN	COLLAT
SEX	MALE
GEN	-1

hatsiʔ
eld. brother

LIN	DIRECT
SEX	MALE
GEN	0
AGE	+

akyá:ʔse:ʔ
cousin

LIN	COLLAT
GEN	0

Violating the subset principle

- 1 Look at the features for haʔnih in the proposed solution.

$$\llbracket \text{MALE} \rrbracket \cap \llbracket \text{DIRECT} \rrbracket \cap \llbracket \text{GEN}^{-1} \rrbracket = \{F\}$$

So these features do NOT capture $\llbracket \text{haʔnih} \rrbracket$:

$$\llbracket \text{haʔnih} \rrbracket \neq \llbracket \text{MALE} \rrbracket \cap \llbracket \text{DIRECT} \rrbracket \cap \llbracket \text{GEN}^{-1} \rrbracket$$

- 2 The problem is the LIN feature:

$$\llbracket \text{haʔnih} \rrbracket \not\subseteq \llbracket \text{DIRECT} \rrbracket$$

There are only two DIRECT GEN^{-1} kinship types: M, F. But many of the kinship types listed under haʔnih are NOT DIRECT :

FB, FMSs, FFBs, FMBs, FFSs, FFFBss

- 3 The problem is that $\llbracket \text{haʔnih} \rrbracket$ is neither a subset of $\llbracket \text{DIRECT} \rrbracket$ NOR a subset of $\llbracket \text{COLLAT} \rrbracket$. The feature LIN plays **no role** in the conceptual system of Seneca kinship!

Non-solution 2: Capturing disjointness

akyá:ʔse:ʔ
cousin

hatsiʔ
eld. brother

$$\left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{LIN} & \text{COLLAT} \\ \text{SEX} & \text{MALE} \\ \text{GEN} & 0 \end{array} \right]$$
$$\left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{LIN} & \text{DIRECT OR COLLAT} \\ \text{SEX} & \text{MALE} \\ \text{GEN} & 0 \\ \text{AGE} & + \end{array} \right]$$

The problem is that hatsiʔ and akya:ʔse:ʔ don't just have different extensions; they have **disjoint** extensions. No relative can be both a hatsiʔ and a akya:ʔse:ʔ. So there needs to be at least one feature that assigns them distinct disjoint values. No feature here does that. What should I say for a MMBss who is older than me? He is male, collateral, and older than me, so both feature sets are true of this relative. But in fact for a Seneca speaker, he is a cousin, not an elder brother.

Looking for the contrasting feature

hatsi?	my elder brother	B, MSs, FBs, MMSds, FFBss, MFBds, FMSss, MMBds, etc. (older)
akyá:ʔse:ʔ	my cousin	MB(s/d), FS(s/d), MMSs(s/d), FFBd(s/d), MFBs(s/d), FMSd(s/d), MMBs(s/d)

Consider case of an elder male cousin. What would distinguish such a relative from an elder brother? Compare most similar kinship types belonging to each word.