Putting Pronouns in Proper Perspective in Proposals
of Remote Relationships among Native American Languages

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1. Introduction. It is claimed (cf. Greenberg 1987) that there is a widespread pattern of \( n \) 'first person' and \( m \) 'second person' in pronouns which is characteristic of American Indian languages. Proponents of Greenberg's classification believe that evidence based on the distribution of these pronouns is totally convincing as an argument in favor of Greenberg's controversial "Amerind" proposal, which links most of the languages of the Americas -- with the exception of Eskimo-Aleut and so-called Na-Dene -- in a single large language family (cf. Fleming 1987:196, Ruhlen in press a:13, 1990:9), and they repeat this argument with great frequency. For example:

The enormously widespread \( n \) first person and \( m \) second person in the Americas as against \( n \) first person and \( t \) second person in Europe and Northern Asia is powerful evidence which requires explanation.

(Greenberg 1990:19.)

One of the most salient traits of the Amerind family ... is the presence of 'first-person' \( n \) and 'second-person' \( m \) throughout the languages of North and South America. Furthermore, not only does this trait connect all eleven Amerind subgroups, it also serves to distinguish the Amerind family from the world's other language families. (Ruhlen 1989b:2.) [Emphasis mine, LC.]

Given the emphasis the pronoun argument has received and how misleading it has been, it is important to take it up in some detail, in order to set the record straight and to put the matter in clearer perspective. This is the intention of this paper.

2. Some history. Greenberg is by no means the first to have observed pronoun similarities among American Indian (and other) languages; it will be helpful to review some of this history in order to put the claims concerning these pronouns in context and to show the various sorts of explanations that have been offered to account for them. Though a number of earlier reports could be cited, let me begin with Brinton, who was fully aware of how common the \( n \) of first person forms was in American Indian languages and in languages generally around the world:

the N sound expresses the notion of the ego, of myself-ness, in a great many tongues, far apart geographically and linguistically. It is found at the basis of the personal pronoun of the first person and of the words for man in numerous dialects of North and South America. Again, the K sound is almost as widely associated with the ideas of otherness, and is at the base of the personal pronoun of the second person singular ... (Brinton 1890[1888]:396.)

Boas (1917:5) knew the American Indian pronoun facts, but thought they would submit to "psychological explanations" (and here Boas is cited also by Ruhlen [1987:222] and Haas [1966:102]). Boas cited Gatschet before him, who Boas says was already aware
of the widespread phonetic similarities among the pronouns in American Indian languages before him, but also did not attribute these necessarily to genetic inheritance (cf. Haas 1966:102).

Kroeber, too, was well aware of the American distribution of the n/m pronominal markers (stating that this was a well-known example), but realized that a genetic explanation was not necessarily required; he opted for diffusion/language contact as the probable explanation (on which more below):

Throughout the field of linguistic structure in the whole continent, there are abundant examples of the operation of the principle of territorial continuity of characteristics, and of the underlying one that even the most diverse languages affect each other, and tend to assimilate in form, if only contact between them is intimate and prolonged. Such are the exceedingly common occurence [sic] of n and m to designate the first and second person pronouns; the geographical localization of families expressing sex gender; the prevailing tendency for pronominal elements, especially the possessive ones, and instrumental elements in verbs, to be prefixes rather than suffixes, as already mentioned for California. It is needless to multiply examples which are either familiar to the Americanist or readily compilable by him. (Kroeber 1913:399.)

The alleged n/m pronoun pattern in the Americas was cited by Trombetti (1905) and it became very well-known through the Sapir-Michelson debates (Michelson 1914, 1915, Sapir 1915a, 1915b). In 1920 Sapir listed "persistence of n- 'I' [and] m- 'thou" as "Proto-American possibilities" (Sapir 1990[1920]:86; Golla 1984:452). Widespread n for 'first person’ was talked about widely:

Getting down to brass tacks, how in the Hell are you going to explain general American n- "I" except genetically? It's disturbing to know but (more) non-committal conservatism is only dodging after all, isn't it? (Letter from Sapir to Speck in 1918, Darnell 1990:122; cf. also his letter to Kroeber in October of 1920, Golla 1984:316; also cited by Darnell and Sherzer 1971:27, Goddard 1986:201-2, and Ruhlen 1987:222.)

In fact, Greenberg's claim sounds very much like Swadesh's before him:

At least two short elements, n for the first person pronoun and m for the second ... are so numerous as to virtually eliminate the chance factor despite their brevity. In fact, even if one disregarded the cases which have one or the other and included only the languages which have both n and m for first and second person respectively, and if one holds to the restriction that both forms must belong to the same functional type [a restriction not imposed by Greenberg] -- whether independent pronoun or subject, object or possessive affixes -- the list of language groups would still be fairly impressive. It would include families of the Penutian and Hokan-Coahuiltecan phyla, Aztecan, Chibchan, and Mapuche. (Swadesh 1954:311-12.)

As an aside, it is interesting to note that here Greenberg and Ruhlen (see quotes above) conveniently forget the 'first-person' m which they find in several "Amerind" groups (Greenberg 1987:276; Ruhlen 1989b:1) and do not acknowledge the widespread *ta/to 'thou’ offered by Swadesh (1960:909) as Proto-American. That is, if the n/m
pattern distinguishes Amerind from Europe and Northern Asia with its alleged m/t pattern, then why do several Amerind groups exhibit pronoun forms (m/t) that Greenberg attributes to Europe and Northern Asia? This makes the pronoun claim less 'powerful', but no less in need of an 'explanation'.

Others, not even Americanists, had also noticed such similarities among the pronouns of diverse languages of the world, but denied the genetic explanation, e.g. Wundt (1900:33) and Trombetti (1905:44).

In short, these observations concerning pronouns are not new arguments, for example, for Greenberg's classification (as some mistakenly take them to be), but rather are old controversies (cf. Ruhlen 1987:222, Sapir 1917:184).

3. Possible explanations for the pronoun pattern. Since Greenberg and Ruhlen take this pronoun argument to be compelling, it is important to consider the matter in greater detail. Greenberg (1989:113) asserts of the alleged pronoun pattern "that a highly improbable event should have occurred more than a hundred times exceeds the bounds of credibility ... [it] cannot be explained plausibly except as the result of genetic inheritance." However, the assumption of genetic inheritance is by no means necessary nor is it the only explanation available (as the scholars cited above pointed out). There are strong reasons for believing that other factors are involved in explaining the sounds found to recur in these pronouns. Boas (1917:5, mentioned above) asked whether the pronoun pattern could be "due to obscure psychological causes rather than to genetic relationship." The following are a few factors which have been proposed which may make Boas' "psychological causes" less "obscure".

(1) Certain sounds, especially nasals, are to be expected in grammatical morphemes, in particular in pronoun markers. As pointed out in Goddard and Campbell (in press:16-7; cf. also Campbell in press):

The repeated appearance in different languages of the same consonants in grammatical functions is a real phenomenon of human language and as such requires an explanation. One contributing factor is the well known general linguistic trait that a single language typically uses only a fraction of its full complement of consonants to form its primary grammatical morphemes and hence must use the same consonants over and over in different functions (Floyd 1981). The consonants that are used tend to be the ones that are least marked ... specifically, the least marked consonants of the languages of the world include m, n, t, k, and g (cf. Ruhlen 1987:11). As a result of this economy and, so to speak, lack of originality in the use of consonants, there is a much greater than chance agreement among the languages of the world on what consonants are used in grammatical elements. It is thus to be expected a priori that these consonants will show up again and again in different languages and language groups marking, say, first or second person, and many languages will therefore come to have similar pronominal systems by this factor alone.

German inflectional endings are constrained such that the only vowel found is schwa, the only consonants /d, m, n, r, s t/. Of Latin's 15 or more consonants, only /b, d, m, n, r, s, t, w/ occur in inflectional endings; Hebrew permits only 8 of 22; and English has similar limits. Of Ancient Greek's 15 consonants, only /t, th, k, m, n, r, s/ occur in inflectional
morphemes (Floyd 1981). Even Trombetti (1905:89) had realized something of the limited sounds encountered in pronominal forms in the world’s languages:

In all these old pronominal forms only the vowels a, i, u, the stop consonants k, t and the nasals n, m are found. These are certainly primordial sounds ... [my translation, L.C.]

(Cf. also Matisoff 1990:9.)

(2) Nasals in particular are found in grammatical morphological markers precisely because they are the most perceptually salient of all consonants (Maddieson 1984:70). "[T]he more distinctive speech sounds ... achieve the most successful transmission of a message." Nasals "are rarely subject to confusion with other types of consonants," and "there is value in incorporating such sounds [nasals] into any language (Maddieson 1984:70)." The dental/alveolar nasal (n) is most common, with the bilabial (m) also common; most languages have both (Maddieson 1984:60, 69). These facts would seem to explain why nasals, especially n and m, show up in markers of pronouns so frequently in languages everywhere. This is borne out in, for example, Ruhlen’s (1989b) survey of first- and second-person pronouns in the world’s languages. Among the forms he lists for 40 different genetic units (some of which are very long-range and more controversial than others), for ‘I’ one finds 29 exhibiting a nasal consonant, and only 11 with no nasal; similarly for ‘thou’ (i.e. ‘you singular’) one finds 26 with n or m, and only 15 with no nasal. For ‘I’, 13 exhibit n. (Incidentally, the other consonants exhibited in the 11 non-nasal cases for ‘I’ are predominantly l, s, and k; for ‘thou’, among the 15 lacking nasals, the predominating consonants are l, s, c, and w. These recurrent sounds in the world’s pronoun systems are not accidental, but are predicted based on the perceptual saliency of the sounds employed (see (1) above).

(3) Some consider the possibility of areal diffusion, including pronouns, among the various early groups which came into America, borrowing from one another either before they crossed the Bering Straits, or after, or both (cf. Bright 1984:15-6, 25; Milewski 1960; Kroeber 1913:399). Diffusion of pronouns in such a situation is not so unusual as some might prefer to think (for examples, see Everett in press, Matisoff 1990:113, Newman 1977:306-9, 1979a:218-23, 1979b:305-7, 1980:156, Rhodes 1977:9, Thomason and Kaufman 1988:219-20, 223-8, 235). Even Ruhlen (1989b:4) allows for the possibility that Nahali borrowed ‘thou’ from Dravidian, and several of the cases just cited involve Native American languages which have borrowed of pronouns. It is well-known that English they, their, them is borrowed from Scandinavian (replacing Old English he, hera, him, respectively; cf. for example Baugh 1957:120, 194). Surely we cannot deny the borrowing of pronouns elsewhere, when we have clear examples in our own on linguistic backyard.

Perhaps more to the point, there are a number of cases of borrowed pronouns documented in Native American languages. For example, Miskito borrowed its independent personal pronouns from Northern Sumu in relatively recent times: Miskito yan ‘I’ (cf. Sumu yan), man ‘you’ (cf. Sumu man). Another example of pronominal diffusion is particularly revealing, since it involves a Native American language, Mednyj Aleut, which has borrowed its verb morphology, including pronominal endings, from Russian. Some of the pronominal verbal paradigm is:
It will be noticed that not only is the Russian pronominal system borrowed pretty much lock, stock, and barrel, but even these borrowed pronominal affixes afford parallels which match up with forms postulated by Greenberg as representative of American Indian languages. Thus Mednyj Aleut’s second person singular -iš can be compared with Greenberg’s (1987:278-9) -a ‘second-person marker’ (with various different shapes in a number of different languages). The -im of ‘first person plural’ apparently fits Greenberg’s (1987:276) -m ‘first person’, since he cites Miwokan -m, me ‘first-person plural subject of verbs’ and Takelma -am ‘first-person plural object marker’, among others, as evidence. The Mednyj Aleut ‘first person singular’ forms with -ju and ja appear to match Greenberg’s (1987:273) ‘first-person’ i which he sees widely in South American languages, where he cites as related such forms as Payagua ja- ‘my’, i(-am) T, Mataco ji- ‘my’, and Moseten je T. As for Mednyj Aleut’s -it ‘third person singular’, one easily sees parallels to Greenberg’s (1987:279) South American third-person elements where, for example, he says that i- and t- alternate in several of his groups of languages; here one sees both the i and the t in the Mednyj Aleut form. Since these morphemes are clearly borrowed into Mednyj Aleut from Russian (and therefore cannot have any direct historical connection to other New World languages), the fact that they parallel forms postulated by Greenberg as widespread among American Indian languages illustrates how fragile Greenberg’s pronominal argument is in general and also how weak his postulated grammatical evidence is on the whole. They show how easy it is to find accidentally similar forms that are as persuasive as those he listed. In particular, however, the Mednyj Aleut forms demonstrate that one cannot rule out the possibility of borrowing as an explanation for some of the similarities among pronouns that Greenberg asserts as genetic evidence for Amerind. 9

Lest anyone suspect that cases of pronoun borrowing, as in Mednyj Aleut, might require European colonialism, I hasten to mention the existence of such examples as Alsea (Oregon). Kinkade (1978) found that while Alsea (often tentatively assigned to putative Penutian) has no discernible genetic relationship with Salishan (only a few loan words), it has undergone a remarkable convergence with Salish in the pronouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alsea</th>
<th>Proto-Salishan</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-an</td>
<td>-n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ax</td>
<td>-xw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ø</td>
<td>-ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-a±x</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ap</td>
<td>-p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-a±x</td>
<td>(lx)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I point out here in conjunction with cases of pronominal borrowing that Haas...
(1976:358) concluded from her comparison of languages in northern California that the \( n/m \) pattern is widely borrowed:

There are clear evidences of diffusion in pronominal forms in northern California ... belonging to a single diffusion area ... The most prominent feature is \( n^- \) in the first person paired with \( m^- \) in the second person ... But the total picture of diffusion of \( n^- \) and \( m^- \) in the first and second persons goes beyond the area being studied in this paper [Haas 1976] and so the problem really needs to be attacked on a larger scale. [Emphasis added, L.C.]

While not all scholars today would agree that these are diffused in the way Haas sees it, from her report it is clear again that the pronoun pattern was well-known before it became so associated with Greenberg's claims and the explanation for it was not assumed automatically to be a genetic one.

(4) Another explanation that has been offered is child language; child-language expressions around the world abound in self-directed and other-directed words containing nasal consonants. The ultimate reason for this is the universal physical fact that a gesture equivalent to that used to articulate the sound \( n \) is the single most important voluntary muscular activity of a nursing infant. As Goddard (1986:202) pointed out, possibly this factor and the tendency for primary grammatical morphemes to consist of a single, unmarked (phonetically commonplace) segment account for the widespread appearance of \( n^- \) in 'first-person' pronouns. Incidentally, in many societies, particularly among hunting and gathering groups, infants may continue to nurse until the age of five, sometimes longer, well into and beyond the age of language-acquisition. (Cf. Goddard and Campbell in press.)

4. Is the claim valid? More to the point, the claim for the ubiquity of 'first-person' \( n \) and particularly for 'second-person' \( m \) in "Amerind" is grossly overstated. To keep proper perspective, we need to ask also about all the American Indian languages which lack 'first-person' \( n \) or 'second-person' \( m \), or both. And what of all the non-American Indian languages which have one or both of these? The second-person \( m \) is not nearly so common among American language groups as asserted by Greenberg and Ruhlen. To wit, in spite of the claimed generality for 'first-person' \( n \) and 'second-person' \( m \) (cf. Greenberg 1987:113), Greenberg finds South America typified by \( i \) 'first person', a 'second person', \( i \) 'third person' (Greenberg 1979, 1987:44-9, 273-5, 277-81; cf. Swadesh 1954:312) -- a totally distinct pattern, with second-person \( m \) particularly absent. If the \( i/a/i \) pattern is the hallmark of South America, then the \( n/m \) pattern is not as diagnostic for Amerind as a whole, as claimed (Greenberg 1979 notwithstanding). Moreover, Greenberg (1987:276) presents among his grammatical cases an Amerind 'first-person' \( m \) as characteristic of several Amerind groups (recall this is what he expects of Eurasian, claimed to be almost absent from America!), while several other groups have 'second-person' \( ka \) or \( g \) (Greenberg 1987:278; cf. Ruhlen 1989b). In brief, the distribution of pronouns in American Indian languages has been grossly overstated.

Furthermore, to round out the picture, it is important to keep in mind that in many languages outside the Americas 'first-person' \( n \) abounds, and it is not difficult to find non-American languages with both Greenberg's 'first-person' \( n \) and 'second-person' \( m \) pattern. I have undertaken no systematic search, but cite the following readily
available examples:
(1) Mbugu (Cushitic): ni 'first person sg', mu 'second person pl' (Goodman 1971:246).
(2) Proto-Munda *in 'I', *me 'you'. Some individual Munda languages have, for
example: (a) Santali: in 'I' (absolute), -in (subjective), -in' (direct object), -an
(indirect object); am 'you' (absolute), -a me (subjective); (b) Mundari: (a)in 'I'
:absolute), -in (subjective); am 'you' (absolute), -am, me (subjective), am, me (direct
object), am (indirect object); (c) Kurku in 'I' (absolute), -n (affixed); am 'you'
:absolute), -mi, min' (affixed); (d) Gubor in 'I' (absolute, oblique); maai 'you'
(3) Dravidian pronominal affixes (oblique):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>you (pl)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kui</td>
<td>na-</td>
<td>mi-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonda</td>
<td>na-</td>
<td>mi-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurukh</td>
<td>en-</td>
<td>nim-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahui</td>
<td>kan-</td>
<td>num-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>en-</td>
<td>nim-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Old Kanada | en-     | nim-     | (Bloch 1954).

(4) Leuangu (Soloman Islands): ?anau: na?u 'I', ma?oe 'you'
(Lanyon-Orgill 1944).
(5) Kusaian: nga 'I'; kom 'you', solum 'below you', iyom 'of you' (Lee 1976).
(6) Gilbertese: n 'I' (subjective); m 'you' (sg), mi (pl)
'possessive' (Cowell 1951).
(7) Sonsorol (SW Micronesia): na:n 'I'; m 'you' (possessive)
(Capell 1969).
(8) Tanga (Melanesia): ng 'I' (possessive), m 'you' (possessive) (Bell 1977).
(9) Wagay (Australian): an 'I' (bound), imb 'you' (Breen 1976).13
(For other cases and discussion, see Trombetti 1905:80-90.)

Perhaps most convincing of all, Dryer (in as yet unpublished work, personal
communication) found in his sample of 333 languages that 7% of the languages
(excluding Amerind; i.e. 17 out of 252 languages) had both an n in first person and an m
in second person. With both either singular or both plural. These include (in addition to
some cited above) Enga, Chauve (Papuan); Chrau (Mon-Khmer); Akan (Niger-Congo);
seven Bantu languages; Tamazight (Berber); and Hebrew, Arabic, and Tigrinya
(Semitic). In Dryer's research, only 17% of the languages from Greenberg's Amerind
(14 out of 81 languages) had this pattern. He found further from pronoun data on 289
languages, that 118 had more nasals in first person singular than in third person singular,
128 had the same number of nasals in both, and in only 47 were there more nasals in
third person singular than in first person singular. At the same time, 74 of these
languages had more nasals in second person singular than in third person singular, while
48 had more nasals in third person singular than in second person singular.14

For other examples and discussion of non-American pronoun systems similar to
those claimed by Greenberg for Amerind, see also Benjamin (1976), and Matisoff (1990).

The repetition of consonants from the set n/m/l/k/s in pronom forms around the
world, as in the cases just cited, reflects the likelihood of these sounds occurring in
grammatical morphemes, specifically pronouns. These sounds are selected from the set
of least marked, most perceptually salient consonants.15 In this context it is sobering to
recall Callaghan’s (1980:337) presentation of the accidental coincidences in the Miwokan and Indo-European pronominal affixes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Eastern Miwok</th>
<th>Late Common Indo-European</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declarative Suffixes</td>
<td>Secondary Affixes (Active)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 sg *m</td>
<td>*-m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 sg *-s</td>
<td>*-s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 sg *-Ø</td>
<td>*-t &lt;**Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pl *-maš</td>
<td>*-me(s)/-mo(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pl *-to-k</td>
<td>*-te</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If it is conceded that Proto-Eastern Miwok and IE can accidentally share so much in the paradigm of pronominal affixes, where the sounds involved are selected from a set of highly unmarked consonants, then what is to prevent such a coincidence from arising in other languages elsewhere, including in different American Indian languages?

In light of the examples listed here, it is interesting to recall the claims about the purported Amerind n/m pattern:

In a recent survey of pronominal patterns around the world [Ruhlen 1989b] I found that the Amerind pattern, so pervasive in the Americas, was virtually absent elsewhere in the world. (Ruhlen 1989a:5.) I collected the first- and second-person pronouns for all the world’s major linguistic families ... I did not find a single family anywhere else in the world that shared the Amerind pattern, which turns out not only to define the Amerind family, but at the same time to differentiate it from the world's other language families. (Ruhlen 1990:9)

Perhaps this illustrates how easy it is to see only what one is looking for; there are abundant cases of the n/m pattern outside the Americas.

Greenberg's case is also not helped by languages which behave in ways opposed to his claims, e.g. such Amerind cases as those with n 'second person', e.g. Cayuse -n, Cherokee nihi, Atakapa na, Tonkawa na', Siuslaw -nx, Cheyenne ne, Proto-Guahibo *nichi, Guambiano ni, Tupinamba ené, Proto-Tupi-Guarani *ne, etc. (see also additional cases with m 'first person': Tunica ʔima, Yana waʔma, Alsea -em-ts 'first person object', Tacana ema, Catio mi-, etc.), and cases with the reverse of expectations, i.e. n 'second person / m 'first person' as in Lakota miye 'first person singular', niye 'second person singular' (cf. ʔive 'third person singular') (Matthew Dryer, Personal communication, Matteson 1972:65, 89). Greenberg's case is also not helped by Amerind languages which have neither n nor m first or second person forms (e.g. Zuni, Kuikuro, etc.). Proto-Muskogean, with *a 'I', *x 'you' (and *p or *l 'we'), is such a case, in spite of Greenberg's misanalysis of specific Muskogean languages.

5. Other criticisms. Finally, Nichols (in press: 37-40) criticizes the Amerind pronoun argument on the basis that it lacks the "paradigmaticity" found in "stock after stock and language after language", when 'first' and 'second person' 'singular' and 'plural' are compared in the Nostratic hypothesis. That is, Nostraticists find in the various component families that they believe make up Nostratic a recurring pronoun system with different but paradigmatically related forms for first- and second-person, singular and plural, subject and object pronouns. This is exemplified in Shevoroshkin's (1989:3-4) Nostratic reconstructions of *mi 'I' / *minV 'oblique form of first person singular', *ri 'thou' / *rinV 'oblique form of second person singular'. There is no such paradigmatic
pattern to the n/m of Greenberg’s pronominal argument.  

6. Conclusion. Whatever the explanation for the frequency of ‘first-person’ n, and for the recurrence of ‘second-person’ m, it will not do to look only at American languages which contain them, ignoring at the same time the dual fact that many American tongues lack them while their presence in non-American languages is amply attested. The n ‘first person’ / m ‘second person’ is by no means unique to, diagnostic of, or ubiquitous in American Indian languages. Moreover, several explanations in addition to genetic inheritance have been proposed by various scholars, with some new possibilities also presented here.  

In short, then, the pronoun evidence has been misleadingly simplified and vastly overstated.

Footnotes

1. For example, Gilij already was aware of widely shared pronominal similarities: La semejanza de las partículas de persona antepuestas, y a veces también postpuestas a los nombres y a los verbos, es conocida de todos. Pero estas partículas en algunos lenguajes muy diferentes entre sí son algunas veces semejantes, otras veces son distintas, pero poco. De la primera clase son por lo común las de los maipures y de los mojos, como uno puede ver claramente poniéndolas en comparación entre sí: De la segunda clase son las de los mejicanos y de los maipures en las partículas de primera persona. Lo que puede verse en la palabra mejicana nócal [no-kal] casa, puesta en comparación con la maipure nupaná. Las de los chiquitos convienen con las tamanacas en los signos de segunda persona. Mata campo, amatari tu campo, son voces tamanacas. Poos casa, apoo tu casa, son chiquitas. La lengua tamanaca conviene con la mejicana en los signos de tercera persona: ical su casa es voz mejicana, itéuti, del mismo significado, es tamanaca. (Gilij 1965[1782]:274).  

[The similarity of the person particles, preposed, and sometimes also postposed to the nouns and verbs is well known by all. But these particles in some languages which are very different from one another are sometimes similar, other times distinct, but only slightly so. In the first class are commonly those of the Maipures and the Mojos, as one can see clearly putting them in comparison with each other. In the second class are those of the Mexicans [Nahuatl] and the Maipures in the first-person particles. That can be seen in the Mexican word nócal [no-kal] ‘house’ placed in comparison with Maipure nupán. Those of the Chiquitos correspond to the Tamanacos in the second-person signs. Mata ‘field, country’ [and] amatari [a-mata-rí] ‘your field, country’ are Tamanaco forms. Poos ‘house’ [and] apoo ‘your house’ are Chiquito. The Tamanaco language corresponds with Mexican in the third-person signs: ical [i-kal] ‘his/her/its house’ is a Mexican form; itéuti, with the same meaning, is Tamanaco.]  

Edwards (1783) observed similarities between Mohegan and Hebrew first and second person pronouns reminiscent of forms Greenberg (1987) claims as strong
evidence for his Amerind hypothesis (Edwards 1823[1787]:18). Gallatin (1836:161) reported:

The pronouns of the first and second person belong also in the Indian languages to the class of primitive words ["that class, which has generally been considered as so absolutely necessary in any state of society, that the words of which it consists must have been in use everywhere in its earliest stages, and could not have been borrowed by any nation from any other"]. By 1874, the widespread n of 'first person' in various American Indian languages was well known, as we see in Sayce's (1874:216) matter-of-fact discussion of 'grammaticalization' (not his term):

[There] is the phenomenon which meets us in several of the North American dialects, where the pronoun na, ni, or nu, "my," has become an inseparable and meaningless affix of numberless words, just as in the Continental "milord".

2. Note that Greenberg (1987:278) also presents a second-person singular pronoun akin to Brinton's K forms in a wide variety of American languages (with forms ka, ikia, aki, ka-, -ke-, -ga, etc. in Greenberg's list).

3. Fleming (1987:196) both asserts the strength of Greenberg's pronoun argument and declares a misleading position regarding pronouns in linguistic change that is, alas, harbored by a good number of linguists:

While pronouns are not the only good evidence in the world [of genetic relationship], I agree with the Semiticists and Nostraticists that pronouns really do not get borrowed very much, nor do they change easily. This is an empirical matter for me, not a matter of faith in one kind of evidence. When pronouns have changed, by replacement, or seriously disguised phonetic change, as in the Chadic and Omotic sectors of AA [Afro-Asiatic], then everything becomes more difficult. (Fleming 1987:196.)

Indeed, it is an empirical matter, and the facts are quite plain. As shown later in the text of this paper, the borrowing of pronouns, while not frequent, is not at all uncommon, and several examples are mentioned. Those who feel that pronouns "do not change easily" ought to take heed of the well-known shifts, for example, involving second person pronouns throughout Europe (as in a raw comparison of you/Sie/usted/vous, etc.), or the changes among forms for first person pronouns across languages of South and East Asia in honorific language. The empirical reality is that pronouns can and do change, and as discussed later in this paper, there are good reasons why pronouns often share similarities.

4. This could explain such observations as, "Thus, word-initial nasal consonants such as m- and n- often remain intact for millennia" (Ruhlen 1989a:2), and "the old n of proto-Indo-European [was] retained in English practically intact" (Swadesh 1960:898).

5. Collinder had observed that -m for 'first person' is common in many different and unrelated languages (Callaghan 1980:39).

I suspect that the perceptual salience of nasals and the importance in
communication of being able successfully to distinguish negative utterances from affirmative ones combine to help explain why negative markers in language around the world so typically have \( n \) or \( m \), why \( ma \) and \( n\tilde{v} \) or something very similar are so frequent.

6. Similar facts have not gone unnoticed by other linguists. Callaghan (1991:53), reporting David Stampe's observation, points out:

the frequency of dentals and sonorants [including nasals] in the verbal paradigms of unrelated languages, possibly because of the ease with which these types of consonants enter into clusters with other consonants. Such a tendency would greatly increase the possibilities of chance resemblance. It is noteworthy that Greenberg places heavy emphasis on pronouns and pronominal paradigms in "Grammatical Evidence for Amerind" (1987, Chapter 5).

(Cf. also Callaghan 1980:39.)

7. These findings are, of course, in sharp contrast to the assertion that "pronominal affixes are among the most stable elements in language: they are almost never borrowed" (Greenberg and Ruhlen 1992:97). Moreover, it is well established that certain aspects of pronominal systems are quite easily influenced by contact from other languages, e.g. the widespread diffusion of the inclusive/exclusive pronominal category in a number of languages of Western North America (Jacobsen 1980), and the shift from independent plural pronominal affixes to ones structurally composed of the singular pronominal marker plus a plural affix (cf. Robertson 1992). In particular, pronominal systems seem to be subject to analogical reformations, and many believe that they are also dominated by tendencies towards iconic symbolization, as other deictic markers are.

8. Miskito \( ba \) 'third person, that (one)' appears to be in origin a demonstrative pronoun. Southern Sumu (Ulwa) pronouns differ, and in general Miskito owes much to diffusion from and convergence with Northern Sumu. I owe these Miskito and Sumu observations to Kenneth Hale (personal communication).

9. It could also be mentioned that since Mednyj Aleut pronominal affixes fit "Amerind" forms, then by definition Russian pronominal affixes fit equally as well, since the Mednyj Aleut forms were taken over directly from Russian.

10. Kinkade does not rule out entirely a possible genetic relationship between Alsea and Salish, but notes that the conclusions in his investigation are negative (Kinkade 1978:5), and he adds further that at present it is not possible to answer the question, "how much of this Alsea pronominal system is originally Alsea and how much borrowed?" (Kinkade 1978:6).

11. Greenberg's (1990:11) only response to the battery of negative evidence and alternative explanations which have been offered and which severely challenge his Amerind pronoun claims, presented at the Boulder conference and mostly represented in this section, was to single out of this one concerning child language acquisition ("a minor case, certainly not the most serious") for ridicule:
In a remark at the Boulder Conference Campbell attributed such a preponderance of nasals [in the pronouns] to the phonetic nature of infant sucking reflexes!

Greenberg has repeated this misrepresentation in a variety of interviews and papers; he implies this is an unreasonable hypothesis without stating why. However, his "infant sucking reflexes' is not an accurate account of what was said. What he alludes to appears in a list of explanations (some my own, many from other scholars) which have been offered to explain the putative n/m pronoun pattern -- this one comes originally from Ives Goddard (1986:202), where the matter of nursing is only a part of the story, where Greenberg's is a garbled caricature of it. The text he is citing actually reads (Campbell in press):

Another explanation [not my own in this case, rather originally from Ives Goddard] that has been offered is child language; child-language expressions around the world abound in self-directed and other-directed words containing nasal consonants ... [It] is [a] universal physical fact that a gesture equivalent to that used to articulate the sound n is the single most important voluntary muscular activity of a nursing infant. As Goddard (1986:202) points out, possibly this factor and the tendency for primary grammatical morphemes to consist of a single, unmarked (phonetically commonplace) segment account for the widespread appearance of n- in 'first-person' pronouns. Incidentally, in many societies, particularly among hunting and gathering groups, infants may continue to nurse until the age of five, sometimes longer, well into and beyond the age of language-acquisition.

Greenberg failed to mention the other more relevant and damaging facts, repeated in this paper.

12. Actually, Swadesh (1954:312) goes even further than Greenberg in that he derives the South American pattern from what he assumes to be the more general American n/m pattern:

In parts of Aztectanoan and Chibchan, and in Arawakan, second person m gives way to p or b, and it is at least possible that the bilabial stop may be somehow derived from the nasal. In much of South America, first person n is replaced by y; in certain areas one finds ñ. The palatalized b may be a transition form, which could have easily arisen as the result of a preceding front vowel. That is, jina could give tita, and the latter could have developed into yiya. In fact, forms approximating all stages of this transition can be attested, thus Sahaptin jin, Esselen jene, Yuman ña, Chontal jiya. If we can thus derive first person y from n, then the n-m pronominal set extends from Chinook (naika 'I', maika 'thou') in northwestern United States to ona (ya 'I', ma 'thou') on the Straits of Magellan.

13. Some very clear evidence of the non-uniqueness of n 'first person' and m 'second person' in "Amerind" comes from controversial sources, from the remote comparisons proposing very, very far-flung genetic relationships involving large segments of the
world's languages which exhibit these. Moreover, the m 'first person' and t 'second person' pattern, which Greenberg and Ruhlen assert to be diagnostic of their Eurasianic grouping, is documented also in "Amerind" by several of these comparisons:

(1) Swadesh (1960:907-908) reconstructed *(2e)m, often *(2i)ni 'I' for Proto Ancient American, noting such "interhemisphere linguistic connections" as, e.g. Malayan *i-na(w) T', Polynesian *na-ku 'I', Basque ni-k T, Hebrew ni 'I', Somali-Galla ŋani 'I'. For 'thou, thy' he reconstructed *ma/mu and related it to such Old World forms as: Melanesian *mu, Malay-Bugis mu, and Dayak ma. Swadesh (1960:909) also presented a number of American Indian languages to illustrate his *ta/ta 'thou/thy', together with Old World comparisons (e.g. IE *te(w) 'thou', Hebrew Tataa, Uralic *-t, Avar dun, Kvarshi do, etc.)

(2) Shevoroshkin (1989:19) presents as cognates of his Proto-proto-language **ni 'I': Nostratic *ni 'I', Nivkh i 'I', Khoisan *ni 'I' (also *an 'I': cf. Dravidian *vān 'I', Austronesian *NV T', Indo-Pacific *ni 'I', Amerind *ni 'I'. These he relates to Nostratic *nAH 'we exclusive', Dene-(Sino-)Caucasian *nV 'we', Amerind *nAH 'we'. He presents similar evidence for a Western group of this Proto-proto-language (including Amerind, Austric, and Indo-Pacific) for *m[i] 'thou' (also *KV 'thou') (Shevoroshkin 1989:20). He also presents, however, evidence for Proto-proto-world **mi 'I', apparently *'I and you', in which he includes "Amerind": 'cf. Nostratic *mi 'I', Dravidian *ma/-m- 'we' (< Nostratic *mā 'we inclusive'), Khoisan *mi 'I' (also *me 'my'), Dene-(Sino)-Caucasian *nV 'I', Amerind *mi 'I' (preserved as archaism in different Amerind languages: see Greenberg 1987, Chapter 5) (Shevoroshkin 1989:19). Shevoroshkin also gives evidence of a widespread ** t 'you' (see Shevoroshkin 1989:4 for supporting forms).

(3) It is worth pointing out that while both the m and t versions for second person are widely attested in American Indian languages (and elsewhere), a widespread pattern with k has also been proposed. For example, early in American Indian linguistic studies Michelson (1914) reported it in in Wiyot k-, Yurok ge- 'thy', and in Molala k'i.

Greenberg (1987:277-8) cites for 'you' among his grammatical sets Kaliana ka(-be), Auake kai(-kite), Proto-Ge *ka, Eriksatsa ikia, Bororo aki, Coroadu ga, Allentiac and Millayac xa, Xinca ka*, etc. 'second person singular pronoun', and, under grammatical set 8, Quechua kam, Gennaken kemu, Aymara huma, and Kahuapan këma, kem, huma, këma 'second-person singular independent pronoun'. One could easily associate these with Shevoroshkin's (1989:19) forms for Western Proto-proto-world *KV 'thou': Nostratic *k/gV 'thou', Dene-(Sino)-Caucasian *KV 'thou', Amerind *KV 'thou', Austronesian *kev/*keH 'thou', Indo-Pacific *KV 'thou'.

14. Dryer (personal communication) cautions that, while the overall numbers support his test hypotheses about nasals in pronouns, the nature of the sample precludes applying statistics to test for significance. He also is inclined to believe that the n/m pattern in American Indian languages may suggest genetic relationship, but points out that if Hokan and Munda can share n/m due to chance, then why can't Hokan and Penutian?

15. Also, cases should not go unnoticed which have n in both 'first' and 'second' person forms (e.g. Proto-Salish *n: 'first person possessive', *ʔən: 'second person possessive; Newman 1979a:211); or a case such as Chimane which has nasals in the pronouns for all three persons, singular and plural (Martí and Pérez Diez 1990:576). Greenberg's case is also not helped by Amerind languages which have neither n nor m in
16. Manaster Ramer (1992:2) points out that in this regard Tonkawa, with its sa- ‘I’ and na- ‘you’ is more similar to putative Na-Dene (cf. Navajo shi/ni, Chipewyan si/ten) than putative Amerind.


18. Proto-Siouan had *w- and *l- respectively for these, reflected in Sioux as wa-/m-w- ‘I’ and ya-/n-w- ‘you’. Note how Lakhota and Sioux are dead opposites of what Greenberg expects to find. (Goddard 1988.)

19. That is, Greenberg (1987:53) gave Creek un-e ‘I’, a misreading of the orthography for what should be an-e, and "Apalachee" an-i, a non-existing form erroneously copied from Creek sources. However, Muskogean independent pronouns attach prefixes to -ni/-n or bases, cf. an-i ‘I’, hasno ‘you’, pihno ‘we’; it is a- that is ‘I’, not the n as supposed by Greenberg (Kimball 1993:448-9).

20. DeLancey (in press) argues that paradigmatically related matching pronominal forms support the hypothesis of a genetic relationship between Klamath and Sahaptian. He goes on to show similar patterns in some other languages from both North and South America. However, when compared among themselves, DeLancey's cases illustrate basically a recurring pattern of n ‘first person’ and m ‘second person’, but no paradigmaticy among distinct ‘first person’ forms or differing ‘second person’ markers. DeLancey argues that such a recurrent matching pattern in different American Indian language groups is unlikely to be due to diffusion or chance. True. However, as pointed out here, a number of other possible explanations still remain in addition to the possibility of genetic inheritance. Given the extreme frequency of first person pronouns with n in the world’s languages, as explained above, we cannot at present determine whether the frequent first person n in American languages has genetic status. When we set aside n, we are left with recurrent m alone (which is not as general in American languages as Greenberg claimed), and m by itself is not a paradigm (or a pattern). DeLancey notwithstanding, the possibility of diffusion also cannot be ruled out either (as argued earlier in this paper).

21. Even in American cases where Greenberg finds the highly touted n/m pronoun pattern, it is clear that its presence is not always due to inheritance from an ancestor which had it. That is, even in cases where the documentable history demonstrates that some currently existing ‘first-person’ n- or ‘second-person’ m- actually derives from some other sound as the result of recent change, such cases are, nevertheless, taken by Greenberg as positive evidence for his claims (see Campbell 1988 for examples, see Goddard and Campbell in press for additional discussion).
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REPORT 8

SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA AND OTHER INDIAN LANGUAGES

Proceedings of the Meeting of the Society for the Study of the Indigenous languages of the Americas
July 2-4, 1993
and the Hokan-Penutian Workshop
July 3, 1993

both held at the 1993 Linguistic Institute at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio

Margaret Langdon, Volume Editor
Leanne Hinton, Series Editor
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Margaret Langdon
Volume Editor

Leanne Hinton
Series Editor
This volume is dedicated to

JAMES E. REDDEN

on the occasion of his retirement

for his enduring commitment to the publication

of the results of research on Yuman, Hokan, Penutian and

other American Indian languages

and also

for his contributions to the

documentation of the Hualapai language
INTRODUCTION

This volume includes a number of papers presented in conjunction with the 1993 Linguistic Institute at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, at two conferences on American Indian Languages: the meeting of the Society for the Study of the Indigenous languages of the Americas, held July 2-4, 1993, and the meeting of the Hokan-Penutian Workshop, held on the morning of July 3, 1993.

This continues a tradition initiated during the Linguistic Institute at the University of Arizona in 1988, of offering conferences on American Indian languages during the summer Linguistic Institute of the Linguistic Society of America, which is held every two years on the campus of the host institution. The interaction thus afforded between students and faculty of the Institute and specialists in American Indian languages has proved mutually profitable.

We gratefully acknowledge the dedication of Catherine Callaghan in making these meetings thoroughly enjoyable, as well as the hospitality of Ohio State University.

The Hokan-Penutian Conference has a tradition of meetings dating as far back as 1970, when the first Hokan Conference was hosted by Margaret Langdon at UCSD. Since 1976, the Hokan (and later Hokan-Penutian) Conference proceedings were published most years by James Redden, as part of the series Occasional Papers on Linguistics, out of the department of Linguistics at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Beginning this year, with James Redden's retirement, the reports of these conferences are being published as part of the Survey Reports out of the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages at the University of California at Berkeley.

Margaret Langdon
Volume Editor

Leanne Hinton
Series Editor
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