OBJECT AND ABSOLUTIVE IN HALKOMELEM SALISH

Donna B. Gerdts

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DONNA B. GERDTS

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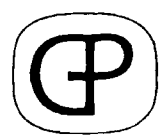
Donna B. Gerdts



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PREFACE

This study treats aspects of the syntax of Halkomelem, a Salish language spoken in southwestern British Columbia, specifically those constructions which involve objects. Working in the theory of Relational Grammar, I find evidence for the following constructions: advancements to object -- indirect object, benefactive, causal, and directional to object advancements; object resignations -- antipassives, reflexives, reciprocals, and object cancellations; and passives. Evidence for the above constructions is based on several rules which I have formulated for Halkomelem: Nominal Case, Pronominal Case, 3rd Person Agreement, and Transitive Marking. Also, data involving conditions on extractions, possessor extraction, quantifier extraction, causative clause union, and raising provide evidence for the structure of the above constructions.

There are several interesting results of this investigation apropos the description of Halkomelem and the theory of Relational Grammar. First, I point out that several phenomena -- 3rd Person Agreement, One-Nominal Interpretation, possessor extraction, quantifier extraction, and a surface constraint on proper nouns -- make reference to the distinction ergative/absolutive. This is the first evidence that this distinction is necessary for the syntactic description of Salish languages.

Second, although 3-2 and Ben-2 advancement clauses have no corresponding constructions without advancement, I am able to provide evidence for advancement. I argue that conditions on four constructions -- reflexives,

limited control marking, antipassives, and object cancellations -- distinguish initial from non-intial objects, thus providing evidence for advancement.

Third, I provide evidence from raising that passives in Halkomelem involve the advancement of object to subject; thus, they do not, as has been claimed, constitute a counterexample to the universal formulation of passive. Furthermore, the ability of passive agents to raise argues for their initial subjecthood and thus provides support for the Relational Grammar view of passives over analyses which posit that passive agents are prepositional phrases in initial structure.

Finally, giving evidence based on a condition on causative clause union, I argue for the initial unaccusativity for some clauses in Halkomelem. In discussing passives of clauses involving clausal to object advancement, I point out that such constructions violate a law proposed as a universal in Relational Grammar -- the 1-Advancement Exclusiveness Law.

This study seeks to accomplish two goals. First, it provides natural language fodder for the debate concerning the nature of grammatical relations and their place in syntactic theory. Second, by showing that Halkomelem draws from a familiar class of universal constructions and organizes its syntax around some simple and common parameters, I have brought Salish languages, which due to their phonological and morphological complexity seemed particularly fearsome, into cross-linguistic perspective. Nevertheless, I hope this study conveys, that despite its being so revealed, Halkomelem, like all natural languages, remains mysterious and wonderful.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

These abbreviations are used in the glosses of the Halkomelem data:

act	activity
adv	advancement marker
aux	auxiliary
cn	connective
cont	continuative
cs	causative
det	determiner
emph	emphatic pronouns
erg	ergative
evid	evidential
imp	imperative
int	interrogative
intr	intransitive
l.c.	limited control
lnk	linker
neg	negative
nom	nominalizer
obj	objective pronominal suffixes
obl	oblique marker
pas	passive person markers
pl	plural
pos	pronominal possessive affixes
pst	past tense
rec	reciprocal
ref	reflexive
ser	serial
sub	subjective pronominal clitics
sup	suppositive
st	stative
tr	transitive
1	1st person
2	2nd person
3	3rd person

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INTRODUCTION

0 Introduction

This study treats aspects of the syntax of Halkomelem, a Salish language spoken in southwestern British Columbia. Until quite recently, descriptive work on Halkomelem was unavailable. For this reason, I have chosen a topic which allows the presentation of analyses for constructions comprising a significant portion of the syntax of Halkomelem.

The data on which this study is based are from my fieldwork with speakers on Vancouver Island and from the area of Vancouver, B.C. Largely, the data are from Arnold Guerin, Musqueam Reserve, Vancouver, B.C., but most aspects of the data have been checked with other speakers on Vancouver Island and in the Vancouver area.

0.1 Focus of the Investigation

This study focuses on constructions which involve objects. Working in the theory of Relational Grammar, I find evidence for the following constructions: advancements to object -- indirect object, benefactive, causal, and directional to object advancements; object resignations -- antipassives, reflexives, reciprocals, and object cancellations; and passives. For each construction, I give:

a. evidence for the changes of grammatical relations

b. conditions on the construction

c. verbal morphology correlated with the construction.

I discuss these constructions with respect to the rules of Nominal Case, Pronominal Case, 3rd Person Agreement, and Transitive

Marking. I also discuss the interaction of these constructions with nominalizations, causatives, extractions, possessor extraction, and quantifier extraction.

Not only do these constructions and rules comprise a significant portion of Halkomelem syntax, but these are certainly some of the most common syntactic processes in the language.

Because of the focus of this thesis, many topics of interest have been set aside. These include: aspect, auxiliaries, particles, coordination, deixis, word order, modals, adverbs, and the discourse uses of constructions. Furthermore, certain issues of importance to linguists working on Salish languages--such as control, the validity of the noun/verb distinction, and the peripheralness of noun phrases -- are not addressed here. I hope the careful treatment given to the constructions and rules I do consider will justify my exclusion of these important topics.

0.2 Why Relational Grammar?

I show below that the constructions and rules dealt with in this study are best treated by referring to the grammatical relations of the nominals (i.e., subject, object, oblique) and not to linear order or semantic role. For this reason, I chose to write in a framework which takes subject, object, and certain other grammatical relations as central concepts -- Relational Grammar. Also, I discuss certain rules of Halkomelem which do not make reference to subject and object but rather to ergative and absolutive. Because nominal case in Halkomelem does not distinguish ergative and absolutive, I needed a framework, such as Relational Grammar, that provided a definition of these concepts independently of case marking.

Since many readers interested in this study primarily for the discussion of the Halkomelem data are unfamiliar with Relational Grammar, I use a slightly modified version of the framework (cf. §0.3.5). I rely on evidence internal to Halkomelem and avoid basing arguments upon universals and laws proposed within the theory. I also discuss areas such as nominalization which are important to the grammar of Halkomelem but which have not been given characterizations in Relational Grammar. I feel justified that the loss of some theoretical preciseness is offset by the accessibility gained.

0.3 Outline of Relational Grammar

I present here a summary of the basic concepts of Relational Grammar (RG) needed to comprehend the analyses presented below. For a more thorough discussion and justification of these concepts, cf. Perlmutter and Postal (1977, to appear c) and Perlmutter (1980).

The basic claim of RG is that the following information is needed in the syntactic characterization of a clause:

(i) the grammatical relations which each element bears in the clause (cf. §0.3.1)

(ii) the level at which each element bears grammatical relations to the other elements.

This information is represented in RG by means of a relational network (cf. §0.3.2).

The use of relational networks (RNs) to characterize clauses has an immediate consequence; because RNs reference grammatical relations rather than word order, case marking, etc., it is possible to compare grammatical constructions in different languages. Linguistic theory can be conceived of as the task of characterizing the set of well-formed RNs for natural languages. The task of grammars of individual languages is to state which subset of the set of well-formed RNs are well-formed in that language. In addition, a grammar of a language must stage various language particular rules and generalizations, e.g., case marking, word order.

0.3.1 Grammatical Relations

Among the grammatical relations (GRs) used in RG are: predicate (P), subject (1), object (2), indirect object (3), Oblique [locative (Loc), benefactive (Ben), instrument (Instr), etc.], and chomeur (Cho). The chomeur relation (from the French 'unemployed') is borne by nominals that bear no other nominal-clausal relation at that level. For further discussion of the chomeur relation and its importance to linguistic theory, see Perlmutter (1980).

The GRs are organized into classes; of relevance here are two classes: nuclear terms, consisting of 1s and 2s, and non-terms, consisting of chomeurs and Obliques.

The nominal-clausal GRs are also conceived of as being organized hierarchically, as follows:

(1) 1 > 2 > 3 > non-terms

Although it is not entirely clear what principles would determine the assignment of the GRs at initial level, Perlmutter and Postal (1977, p. 402) suggest the following:

(2) Our ultimate claim is that the justification for [the assignment of GRs at initial level] is universally determined by principles referring to the semantic role of the nominal. Thus, as traditionally recognized, agent nominals are initially 1s, (although, of course not <u>all</u> 1s represent agents), patients 2s, etc.

In the present study, I use semantic role as an expedient means for introducing the data in a way that is not biased towards my solution. I make no claims as the the usefulness or definability of such notions. However, I have found it possible to present analyses which are consistent with the claim in (2). In several instances (cf. §3.3, §5.5, §5.6.2) I give evidence for initial grammatical relations which is independent of any assumptions concerning semantic role. In each case, this independent evidence confirms the initial grammatical relation assigned by a principle such as (2).

0.3.2 Relational Networks

The relational networks involves three types of primitive elements:

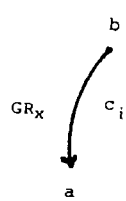
(i) a set of nodes, which represent linguistic elements of all sorts, including morphemes and abstract elements such as clauses or phrases.

(ii) a set of R-signs, which are the names of the grammatical relations that elements bear to other elements.

(iii) a set of coordinates, $c_1 \ldots c_n$, which indicate the level at which the elements bear grammatical relations to other elements.

The information that an element bears a grammatical relation at a certain level can be captured by means of an <u>arc</u>, as in (3).

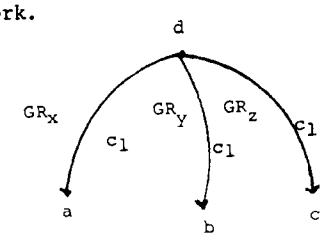
(3)



The arc in (3) is interpreted to mean that element a bears relation GR_x with respect to element b at the c_i level.

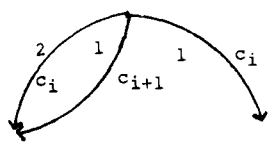
A relational network is a set of arcs meeting certain conditions. A clause (d) with 3 elements (a,b,c) bearing grammatical relations (x,y,z respectively) at the c_1 level can be represented by the following relational network.

(4)



In some grammatical constructions, a nominal bears different relations at different levels of the same clause. Speaking informally and figuratively, I say that such constructions involve 'changes in grammatical relations.' For example, in advancements, a nominal bearing a GR at the c_i level, bears a GR that is higher on the hierarchy given in (1) at the c_{i+1} level. For example, passive has been universally characterized by Perlmutter and Postal in terms of the following sub-network:

(5)

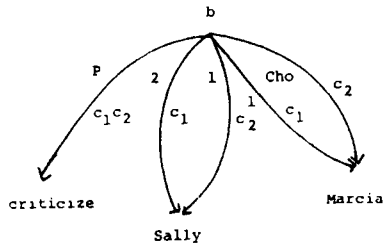


That is, a nominal bearing the 2-relation in the c_i stratum, in which there is also a nominal bearing the 1-relation, bears the 1-relation in the c_{i+1} stratum.

The passive clause in (6) is represented by the relational network in (7):

(6) Sally was criticized by Marcia.

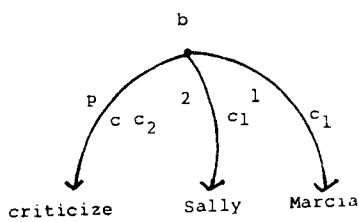
(7)



As can be observed in (7), (6) has two levels of structure (c_1 and c_2). The notion of level can be re-stated formally in terms of the concept of stratum, exemplified as follows: the c_{ith} or i^{th} stratum of b, where b is a node and c_i is an arbitrary coordinate, is the set of all arcs with tail b and coordinate c_i.

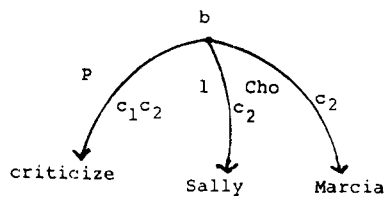
Thus, in the c_1 stratum of (6), 'criticize' heads a P-arc, 'Marcia' heads a 1-arc, and 'Sally' heads a 2-arc, as represented in (8).

(8)



In the c_2 stratum of (6), 'criticize' heads a P-arc, 'Sally' heads a 1-arc, and 'Marcia' heads a Cho-arc, as represented in (9).

(9)



The strata are more clearly seen in an alternative representation of the relational network--the stratal diagram. The stratal diagram of (6) is given in (10).