A Note on ʔə Constructions in Lushootseed

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While preparing a Lushootseed Reader,[1] we came across two difficult sentences in a fascinating text on how to play the Bone Game, sləhal. The sentences are:

(1) kʷaʔ ləcux̌əčadadid dxʷʔal tiʔəʔ sʔacuss (h)əlgʷəʔ dəxʷx̌əbil ʔə tiʔəʔ.

Instead he is sending-his-power-of-thought-over-them to their faces so that these (opponents) become heavy.

(2) x̌əčadadid tiʔəʔ stabtablax̌əd ʔə tiʔəʔ də(xʷ)xʷak̉ʷils, dəxʷgʷəƛ̉əlads ʔə tiʔəʔ sudᶻigʷicuts.

He directs-his-thoughts to the arms of these (opponents) so that they become tired, so that they stop their back-and-forth-movement.

Students are troubled by the fact that the verb in dəxʷ- clause (1) does not have an -s suffix while in clause (2) it does:

(1) ... dəxʷx̌əbil ʔə tiʔəʔ ... *so that they become heavy.*

(2) ... dəxʷgʷəƛ̉əlads ʔə tiʔəʔ sudᶻigʷicuts. ... *so that they stop their swaying back and forth.*

Both sentences were grammatical, but why?

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[1] The name Lushootseed is now being used instead of Puget Salish. Lushootseed is based upon the Indian name for the language, dxʷləšucid.

The problem lies with the several uses of ʔə. Phrases beginning with this particle look the same but fit into the rest of the sentence in several different ways. Some other Salish languages have a similar ʔə word, so its use in Lushootseed and the explanation for the difference above may have general interest.

The ʔə in Lushootseed links six different types of phrase and clause to the rest in the sentence. These six are:

I   Phrases of manner and instrument:[2]

(3)   ʔuʔəɬəd ʔə tə qa.   *He ate a lot.*

(4)   ʔuyayus ʔə tə tib.   *He worked hard.*

(5)   ʔupusud ʔə tə čƛaʔ.   *He threw a rock at someone.*
                                   (He threw at someone with a rock.)

II   Phrases expressing patient of verbs that do not have a transitive suffix:

(6)   ʔugʷəč̓əb ʔə ti x̌ʷubt.   *He looked for the paddle.*

(Compare (7)   ʔugʷəč̓əd ti x̌ʷubt.   *He looked for the paddle.*

         The - d is a transitive suffix; therefore no ʔə precedes ti x̌ʷubt.)

(8)   ʔutəqalikʷ ʔə tə səpləl.   *She made bread.*

III   Phrases expressing agent of "passive" verbs:[3]

(9)   ʔukʷax̌ʷatəb ʔə tsi dsqa tsiʔiɬ sk̓ʷuyčəɬ.
      My older sister helped our mother.

(10)   ʔux̌əƛtəb ʔə tə sqʷəbayʔ.   *A dog bit someone.*

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[2] Similar to ʔə is the word ʔal which introduces phrases of location and time. Often, ʔə replaces ʔal in both of these, especially in phrases of location.

[3] The term passive is not particularly appropriate for Lushootseed. More precisely, we mean those verbs that end with a transitive suffix plus {b}.

IV   Phrases following benefactive verbs that express the item transferred:[4]

    (11) ʔutagʷyic tsiʔił ʔə tiʔəʔ x̌aẃs qʷ(ə)łiʔšəd.

          She bought me <u>a new (pair of) shoes</u>.

    (12) ʔuqadayic tiʔił ʔə ti x̌ʷubt.

          He stole <u>the paddle</u> from me.

    (13) ʔułilc tsiʔił sładəyʔ ʔə tə səpləl.

          That woman gave me <u>some bread</u>.

V   Phrases expressing possessor:

    (14) ti sqʷəbayʔ <u>ʔə tiʔił stubš</u>.   *That man's dog. (The dog <u>of that man</u>.)*

    (15) tə səpləl <u>ʔə tsi dsk̓ʷuy</u>.   *My mother's bread. (Bread <u>of my mother</u>.)*

    (Compare (16) ti sqʷəbayʔs *his dog*; (17) tə səpləls *her bread*)

VI   Subordinate clauses expressing manner, means, (or sometimes location
     (instead of ʔal). This is an extension of I.)

    (18) ʔukʷaxʷatəb ʔə tsi dsqa ʔə ti šutəqalikʷs.

          My older sister helped <u>with her (someone else's) bread-making</u>.

    (19) ʔušudub ʔə tə sqʷəbayʔ ʔə ti suʔigʷəłs.

          A dog saw <u>it climb</u> (the tree).

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[4] Here *benefactive* is a cover term designating verbs having the secondary suffix
-yi- and verbs of giving like łil-. The action may be to one's detriment (*cf.* 12)
as well as benefit.
    It may well be that, from the Lushootseed point of view, phrases I, II, and IV
state the same type of information and are grammatically equivalent. It would
be interesting to compare the grammatical formations that related languages use
to express these concepts. Do any other Salish languages convey all of these
concepts with the same grammatical structures as does Lushootseed?

Subordinate clauses have one characteristic that bears upon the problem, *viz.*, the agent of the verb is expressed by the same affixes that denote possession. For third person that affix is the suffix -s; and like possessive constructions, the -s can be replaced by an ʔə phrase. (Compare (16) and (17) with (14) and (15).) Therefore, it is possible to make explicit who was helped with the bread-making in (18) and who (or what) climbed (the tree) in (19) by replacing -s with ʔə ... as in (20) and (21).

(20) ʔukʷaxʷatᵊb ʔə tsi dsqa ʔə ti sutᵊqalikʷ ʔə tsiʔił sk̓ʷuyčəł.

        My older sister helped our mother make (bread). (My older sister helped with the bread-making of our mother.)

(21) ʔušudub ʔə tə sqʷəbayʔ ʔə ti suʔigʷəł ʔə ti x̌aʔx̌əlus.

        A dog saw a raccoon climb (a tree). (A dog saw the climbing of a raccoon.)

Sentence (9) can be expanded with this type of subordinate clause giving (22):

(22) ʔukʷaxʷatᵊb ʔə tsi dsqa tsiʔił sk̓ʷuyčəł ʔə ti sutᵊqalikʷs.

        My older sister helped our mother make (bread). (My older sister helped our mother with her bread-making.)

Sentences (20) and (22) are synonymous, but in (20) tsiʔił sk̓ʷuyčəł *our mother* is patient in the independent clause while it is agent of the subordinate clause in (22).

In most situations t̓əqalikʷ refers to making bread. (Literally, it means *patterned or organized plastering, stroking* - note st̓əqxʷ *beaver*, the animal that plasters its home with its tail.) Nevertheless, there are times when, either for clarity or style, we choose to mention səpləl *bread* (or *flour*) specifically as in sentence (8). Including mention of tə səpləl in (22) gives the following:

(23) ʔukʷaxʷatᵊb ʔə tsi dsqa tsiʔił sk̓ʷuyčəł ʔə ti sutᵊqalikʷs ʔə

        tə səpləl.

        My older sister helped our mother make bread.

Contrasting (23) with (20) and (18) provides the explanation needed for the problem raised concerning the presence of -s in (2) and its absence in (1). (Subordinate clauses with dəxʷ- and s- pattern identically.)

(15) ... ti sutəqalikʷ **ṣ.**   *agent*

     ... ti sutəqalikʷ ʔə tsiʔiɫ skʷuyčəɫ. ← *agent*

     ... ti sutəqalikʷ s ʔə tə səpləl.
         agent   *patient*

The ʔə phrases are different; even though they look the same, they represent a different grammatical facet of the language. In (1) there is no agent of the verb in the subordinate clause, dəxʷx̌əbil *so (they) become heavy*; and ʔə tiʔəʔ *this* (*these opponents* in this case) is patient as in II. In (2) there is an agent expressed by -s as in VI and the following ʔə phrase is another subordinate clause expressing manner. It is treated grammatically much like II. (The -ad of gʷəx̌əlad *stop* is not a transitive suffix inspite of its similar shape to a large class of transitives.)

(2) ... dəxʷgʷəx̌əlads ʔə tiʔəʔ sudᶻigʷicuts.

     ... *so they* (-s) *would stop their* (-s) *swaying back and forth.*

(23)... ti sutəqalikʷs ʔə tə səpləl.

     ... *her* (-s) *baking bread.*

While it would seem easier to learn the single word ʔə in place of a variety of terms like *for, with, of, by,* etc. as in English, the many uses of ʔə constructions prove instead to be a stumbling block around which the teacher must carefully guide the student.

Upper Chehalis

I.   ʔit yúsmixʷ tat stiqíws ɬ t x̣íwič. He worked his horse hard. p.134.35-38

II.   ʔit ʔə́x̣mɬ ɬ t swáwaʔ. I saw a cougar. p.165.19

      ʔit ƛ̓á·mɬ t sx̣ʷás. He looked for blackberries. p.164.17

      ʔit sá·mɬ t sáčmɬn̓. He made a wedge. p.164.16

III. ʔit ƛ̓ə́x̣ʷtm čn ɬ tat číčs. I was stung by the bee.

IV.   tit čáɬtuxʷt čn spatáln. I gave him a rock. p.50.87-92

V.   tit yə́mcišs tat qílitn the fat of the elk   WO only

VI.   ?

Cowlitz

I.   sʔíɬann ɬ t qiy̓áluqʷs. He's eating soup. J11.185

      but ƛ̓ə́x̣ɬ tit sʔíɬani. He ate fast. J12.76

II.   sƛ̓ám̓ɬ t sə́x̣tkʷlx looking for spirit power M5.145

      ~~ɬ~~ sám̓ln ɬ t yax̣áw̓t. He's making a fish trap. M4.155

III. ʔit tə́kʷtm ɬ t psáyq. He got bitten by a mosquito. M9.56

IV.   ʔit sášn kn ɬ t wíɬ. I made a boat for him. J14.43

      but ʔit yáy̓txʷc stúkʷali. He told me his dream. J16.42

V.   sčə́txʷn̓ ɬ k̓axʷóʔ bear grease M4.289

VI.   ?