

Bella Coola su

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0.0 In this paper we are concerned with the semantics of a single particle of Bella Coola. Formally, particles occur as loosely bound elements restricted to the Comment constituent of a sentence.<sup>1</sup> The function of particles in general is to indicate the relationship between the participants of the Speech Act and the Narrated Event.<sup>2</sup> Each particle indicates a specific relationship. The particles as a group systematically mark a deviation from or a suspension of the normal relationship that exists between the Speaker and Hearer and the Narrated Event. Our purpose here is to concentrate on one particle--- su--- in order 1) to explicate the semantics of su and 2) to illustrate a method for dealing with the semantic difficulties that particles present.<sup>3</sup>

0.1 Sentences 1-9 are typical examples of the use of su.

1. a talaws-c su

i 'I just got married for the fun of it.'  
ii 'I didn't expect to get married, but I did.'

b kułulik-c su ?ał-?imu

'I was (sitting) behind you and you didn't know it.'

2. a qup'-cx<sup>w</sup> su

'You punched me last night when you were drunk.'

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| b   | talaws-nu su                              | ' <u>You know what?</u> You got married<br>(last night.)'           |
| 3.a | c'Xln-is su snac ti-<br>q'Xumtimut-nu-tx  | 'Snac <u>just</u> kicked your car <u>for</u><br><u>no reason.</u> ' |
| b   | tix su ta-snac ti-cp+<br>ti-q'Xumtimut-tx | 'It was Snac who <u>unexpectedly</u><br>wiped the car.'             |
| 4.a | qup'-cinu a su                            | 'Did I punch you (last night)<br><u>when I was drunk?</u> '         |
| b   | cp-ic a su ti-q'Xumtimut-tx               | ' <u>Do I have</u> to wipe the car?'                                |
| 5.a | cp-ix <sup>W</sup> a su ti-q'Xumtimut-tx  | 'Did you wipe the car <u>on your own?</u> '                         |
| b   | staltmx-am-nu a su                        | 'Did you <u>really</u> become a chief?'                             |
| 6.  | qup'-is a su snac tapis                   | 'Did Snac <u>just up and</u> punch Davis?'                          |
| 7.a | ?nc su puq' <sup>W</sup> s                | 'It's me, Puq' <sup>W</sup> s, <u>again.</u> '                      |
| b   | kma-ak-c su                               | 'My hand is hurting <u>again.</u> '                                 |
| 8.  | cp-ix <sup>W</sup> a su ti-q'Xumtimut-tx  | 'Are you wiping the car <u>again?</u> '                             |
| 9.a | tix su snac ti-cpt ti-<br>q'Xumtimut-tx   | 'It is <u>again</u> Snac who is wiping the<br>car.'                 |
| b   | cituma su stipin                          | 'Steven is sleeping <u>again.</u> '                                 |

The problem presented by su is its apparent polysemanticity. We have elicited for this particle over thirty different glosses including several antonymic pairs. The sentences 1-9 are representative of this variety. The problem can be divided into a series of questions. First, is there a single underlying or basic meaning of the particle from which the entire range of surface glosses can be predicted? Second, if the answer to the first question is yes, then what is the basic meaning of the particle? Third, what is the relationship among the various glosses? Are they in free variation or

contextually determined? Fourth, if the glosses are contextually determined, what are the contextual determinants?

In section 1 we examine the glosses of sentences 1-9 and determine that in some instances glosses directly express the meaning of su, while in others the glosses are expressions of the Speech Act contexts appropriate to the use of su, i.e., the glosses are histories within which the Narrated Event has or will occur such that the use of su may be appropriate within the Speech Act. Given this distinction between two types of glosses, we then isolate the variant meanings of su within the context of differing Speech Acts. In section 2 we determine the basic meaning of su and show how this interacts with the Speech Act to specify the variant meanings of su.

1.0 The sentences of items 1-9 can be arranged into a matrix (Fig.1) where the columns represent different combinations of Speaker and Hearer ignorance and knowledge of the Narrated Event and the rows represent the person of the Agent of the sentence. Rather than transfer sentences 1-9 into the cells of the matrix, we have transferred only the underlined portion of the gloss of each sentence; it is the underlined portion that distinguishes the gloss of a sentence with su from the gloss of the (otherwise) same sentence without su.<sup>4</sup>

Fig.1

		I	II	III
		Sp=K <sup>n</sup> ;H≠K <sup>n</sup>	Sp≠K <sup>n</sup> ;H=K <sup>n</sup>	Sp=K <sup>n</sup> ;H=K <sup>n</sup>
1st Person	lai	'just for the fun of it.'	4a 'when I was drunk.'	7a 'again.'
	laii	'didn't expect to...but did.'	4b 'Do I have to...'	7b 'again.'
	lb	'and you didn't know it.'		
2nd Person	2a	'when you were drunk.'	5a 'on your own.'	8 'again.'
	2b	'You know what?'	5b 'really.'	
3rd Person	3a	'just for no reason.'	6 'just up and...'	9a 'again.'
	3b	'unexpectedly.'		9b 'again.'

1.1 In sentences la-b the Speaker volunteers information concerning Narrated Events in which he was the Agent. Additionally, the Speaker has knowledge of the Narrated Event, and the Hearer lacks knowledge of that Event. In lai-ii we find two glosses for the same form. The gloss of lai, however, is not a direct gloss of the particle su; it represents the Speaker's expression of the circumstances which motivate the use of su. The gloss fragment 'just for the fun of it' represents the Speaker's judgement that a person's getting married without motivation or without his motivation being known in advance to the Hearer constitutes an unexpected, hence surprising piece of information. We emphasize that lai cannot constitute a response to a question concerning the Speaker's marital status. That is, it cannot be an answer to the question talaws-mu a 'Are you married?' It is either a volunteered

sentence or an answer to a general question such as 'What's new?' etc. Even as an answer to the latter type of question there are constraints for its appropriate usage; namely, the Hearer cannot have any knowledge or expectation that the Speaker had indeed become married. The Hearer is completely ignorant of the Narrated Event. The gloss fragment of lai likewise provides a representation of the condition for the use of su. Here the Speaker is saying that he had no expectation that he would get married, the implication being that if he lacked such an expectation the Hearer would now lack it during the Speech Act. In both lai and lai1 the Speaker considers his sentence a piece of surprising information for the Hearer; the different gloss fragments represent two sets of conditions which constitute the basis for his judgement that the information would be surprising to his interlocutor.

In lb the gloss fragment "...and you didn't know it." represents an explicit statement of one of the conditions for the appropriate use of su. The story from which this sentence is taken involves the Speaker entering a theatre after the movie has begun and by chance finding a vacant seat behind the Hearer-to-be. For whatever reason, he does not make his presence known, but as they meet in the aisle coming out of the theatre, the Speaker utters lb. From this story we can extract the element of Hearer ignorance ( he didn't know that the Speaker was seated behind him) and the element of Hearer surprise or unexpectedness (the Speaker took whatever vacancy presented itself and the Hearer could not possibly have expected that it would have been the seat behind him.) The pertinence of the element of surprise or

unexpectedness for the appropriate use of su is demonstrated by a slight change in the story, namely where the Speaker and Hearer make plans for such a seating arrangement prior to the movie. Otherwise the events (including the Hearer-to-be's ignorance of the Speaker's entrance) remain unchanged, and occasions a sentence such as kułulik-c tu ?al-?imu 'I was (sitting) behind you like we planned.' rather than sentence 1b.

From both 1a and 1b we extract the common elements of Speaker knowledge, Hearer ignorance, and the Speaker's judgement that his sentence contains information of a surprising nature for the Hearer.

In sentences 2a and 2b, the Hearer is involved as a participant in the Narrated Event but remains ignorant of the Narrated Event while the Speaker has knowledge of it. Ignorance of and participation in a single Narrated Event by the same person requires that the participant have no memory of his participation. This explains his ignorance of the Narrated Event. Here in 2a, the Speaker has judged that the Hearer, although the Agent of the event, was so drunk that he does not remember and therefore does not know what he did at the time; hence the information of 2a is a surprise to him. If the Hearer has been sober at the time of the assault, sentence 2a would simply not be appropriate. The sentence that would be appropriate is the same sentence, 2a, without the particle su. The gloss of 2a is similar to the glosses of 1a and 1b in that it also represents a Speech Act constructed so that the occurrence of su is appropriate.

Sentence 2b has the gloss fragment 'You know what?' that explicitly represents the element of surprise that remains implicit in 1a-b and 2a.

This sentence is appropriate to the following Speech Act. The Hearer has indulged himself in a drinking bout in the company of a lady friend. He awakes the next morning to find his lady friend sitting up in bed aside of him waiting to tell him a surprising piece of information; viz., they were married the previous evening while he was drunk.

In both these sentences, what the Speaker judges to be the basis for his/her assumption that the information contained therein will be surprising to the Hearer is the Speaker's knowledge of the Hearer's mental condition during participation in the Narrated Event, specifically some state which would account for the Hearer's lack of a memory of the Event.

In sentences 3a and 3b the Agent of the Narrated Event is a third person. The distribution of ignorance and knowledge is unchanged: Speaker knowledge and Hearer ignorance of the Narrated Event. In 3a, the gloss fragment 'just... for no reason.' represents the Speaker's basis for assuming his utterance will be surprising to the Hearer; 'just...for no reason' is not a gloss of su. The lack of motivation described by 'just ... for no reason' constitutes one set of conditions underwhich it may be assumed that the Narrated Event will be an unexpected and hence surprising piece of information to the Hearer. In sentence 3b, the gloss fragment 'unexpectedly' expresses the condition for the appropriate use of su as well as more directly expressing the meaning of su itself. The Speech Act that is the context of 3b concerns the Speaker's car. Both Speaker and Hearer know that the car has been wiped. The Hearer knows that the Speaker does not himself wipe the car, but pays someone else to do it for him. He does not, however, know the identity of the person who wipes

the Speaker's car and asks wa-l-ks ti-cp-l-t ti-q'Xumtimut-nu-tx 'Who wiped your car?' This question can be answered in a number of ways, several of which involve other particles. In this case, the Speaker chooses to use the particle su because the actual wiper of the car, Snac, is not particularly friendly with the Speaker and the Hearer knows this fact. If he had asked the Hearer to guess the wiper, he judges that Snac would not be on the Hearer's list of probable wipers of the car. That is, the enmity between Snac and the Speaker as known by the Hearer account for the Speaker's judgement that the news that Snac was the wiper of the car would be a surprise to the Hearer.

The sentences of 1-3 occur in circumstances where the Speaker has knowledge of the Narrated Event and the Hearer is ignorant of that Event. The constant semantic content of the particle su in 1-3 is Hearer Surprise. The variety in the glosses of these sentences results from the informants' attempts to describe the Speech Act context in which the Speaker may justifiably assume the Hearer will be surprised to learn of the Narrated Event. Sentences 1-3 without su demonstrate that lack of knowledge is not to be equated with Surprise. Such sentences maintain the Speech Act property of Hearer ignorance, but the Surprise element is absent.

1.2 Sentences 4a-b again involve the Speaker as participant in the Narrated Event. But here knowledge of the Narrated Event is reversed, and it is the Speaker who is ignorant of the Event while the Hearer has knowledge of it. It is a condition for the use of 4a that the Speaker was either drunk or in such a mental state that he lacks a memory of the Event itself. The Speaker



must nevertheless have some basis to facilitate his questioning of the Narrated Event. In 4a, he will have heard from someone other than the Hearer that he did indeed punch the Hearer the previous evening. That is, the Speaker remains ignorant of the Narrated Event but is the recipient of a Narration concerning it.<sup>5</sup> Sentence 4a is a request for confirmation of an Event in which the Speaker was a participant but of which he has no memory, and hence which contains an element of surprise for the Speaker. Where the Hearer is the source of the Speaker's information, 4a may still be employed, but the question is then rhetorical rather than a request for confirmation; it does not require a response.

Sentence 4b also exhibits this reversal from Hearer Surprise to Speaker Surprise. In this case the Speaker has just been told that he is to be the one who will wipe the car this time, when he had had no expectation that such would be the case. His question is then a request for confirmation of what to him is a surprising piece of information.

In sentences 5a and 5b, the Hearer is involved as a participant in the Narrated Event; as before, the Speaker alone is ignorant of the Narrated Event, while the Hearer has knowledge of it. In 5a, the gloss fragment 'on your own' represents one condition that may occasion surprise on the part of the Speaker. That is, it is surprising to him that the Hearer wiped the car when in fact he was not responsible for doing it. 5a is then a request for confirmation. In 5b, the gloss fragment 'really' is a direct manifestation of the Speaker's surprise. Here the Speaker has been told that the Hearer became a chief; and having had no expectation that the Hearer even wanted

to become a chief, the Speaker is asking for confirmation of the surprising news. As noted above, sentences such as 5a-b may also be used as rhetorical questions given the appropriate circumstances.

Sentence 6 involves a third person as Agent of the Narrated Event. Speaker ignorance and Hearer knowledge is the same as for sentences 4a-b and 5a-b. In 6 the gloss fragment 'just up and...' indicates that Snac's act was sudden and unpremeditated and that the Speaker was surprised to hear that the Event occurred.

Sentences 4-6 have a common distribution of Speaker ignorance and Hearer knowledge of the Narrated Event. They all occur only in the form of questions, specifically requests for confirmation of recently acquired and somewhat surprising information. The meaning of su in column II of the matrix is Speaker Surprise. This contrasts with the sentences in column I where Hearer Surprise is the common semantic element.

1.3 Sentences 7-9 differ from the preceding sentences 1-6 in that the Speech Act context for 7-9 is characterized by Speaker and Hearer knowledge of the Narrated Event. In addition to this, sentences 7-9 require that an established pattern be involved and known to both. The gloss 'again' that expresses that pattern appears to be a direct manifestation of su rather than a description of the Speech Act context appropriate to its use. In 7a the referent of the Agent Puq'<sup>w</sup>s is the Speaker. At the time of the Speech Act he is visible to the Hearer. He is also known to the Hearer so the sentence is not functioning to provide the Hearer with his identification. Rather the

sentence has a quasi-ritual function, sort of a verbal token given as a greeting. The gloss fragment 'again' expresses the pattern of reappearance required for the use of su here. In order to employ su appropriately, the Speaker must be a frequent and regular visitor of the Hearer's. The 'again' refers then to the current instance of this regular pattern of visits, rather than a random or sporadic reappearance. For example, one could not use su if the Speaker was making his second ever visit to the Hearer. Nor could he use it if he first came into the Hearer's house, identified himself and then left for some reason and then reappeared later the same day. In 7b the Speaker's aching hand is chronic, and a fuller gloss of the sentence would be 'My hand is hurting again like it always does from time to time.' That is, the Speaker does not have continuous pain in his hand, but rather pain which appears from time to time. In 7b, both are aware of the Speaker's chronic hand pain. The gloss fragment 'again' calls notice to the pattern underlying the present appearance of the Event. Neither sentence of 7 is appropriate to a Speech Act context in which the pattern exists but is known only to the Speaker; knowledge by both Speaker and Hearer is required.

In sentence 8 we have the same distribution of knowledge as in the sentences of 7. Sentence 8 is in the form of a question, but it is not a request for information nor a request for confirmation. It requires no response although one can be made. It is rather sort of a verbal acknowledgement of yet another instance of a pattern known to both Speaker and Hearer.

Sentences 9a and 9b have the same distribution of Speaker and Hearer knowledge as 7a-b and 8 do; however, a third person occurs as Agent of the

Narrated Event. As in the preceding sections, the gloss fragment 'again' notes the current instance of a pattern of behavior associated with the Agent. In 9a it refers to Snac's habit of regularly wiping the car. It would not be an appropriate use of su here if, say, Snac wiped the car completely one time and then rewiped it the same day. In 9b 'again' refers to Steven's habit of sleeping during the day. It would not be appropriate to refer to the usual nocturnal pattern of sleeping with a sentence containing su.

1.4 The constancy of Surprise explicit as in 'you know what?' or implicit in the examples of columns I and II as contrasted with the numerous and unlimited explanations (e.g. 'for the fun of it', 'didn't expect to...but did', 'when you were drunk,' etc.) justifies the distinction between two types of glosses: those that truly gloss su and those that explain its occurrence. Examination of sentences 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9 has shown that the person of the terms of a Narration is not a determinant of the meaning of su. We may then simplify the matrix of Fig.1 substituting more precise glosses for su within each column.

Fig.2	I	II	III
	$Sp=K^n; H \neq K^n$	$Sp \neq K^n; H=K^n$	$Sp=K^n; H=K^n$
	Hearer Surprise	Speaker Surprise	Again

It is to be noted that there is no column in which the Speaker and Hearer lack knowledge of the Narrated Event. We have found no utterances that illustrate this possibility and, indeed, it is difficult to imagine

a context where the Narration of a completely unknown Narrated Event might occur.<sup>6</sup>

2.0 In the preceding sections 1.0-1.4 we have elucidated the variant meanings of su, but the basic emic meaning remains to be determined. Examination of columns I and II within Fig.2 shows that Hearer Surprise and Speaker Surprise correlate with Hearer ignorance and Speaker ignorance (i.e.,  $H \neq K^n$  and  $Sp \neq K^n$ ) respectively. We may extract those elements from the glosses and predict the variation in terms of the Speech Act context of the Narration containing su. This yields Surprise and Again as variant meanings. The remaining problem is to establish the basic meaning of su, of which Surprise and Again are variants.

We first note that Again lacks the Surprise element of columns I and II. Further, the requisite observed pattern associated with column III implies expectation of the Narrated Event. Surprise is then the complement of Again and the use of su in 1-6 denotes that the Narrated Event is unexpected (to either Speaker or Hearer) at the time of the Narration. Expected and Unexpected are alternative specifications of the semantic element common to both. We suggest that this element is Expectableness. We use this term independently of positive or negative specifications in the same way that 'size' may be related to 'big' and 'small.' It will be factors of the Speech Act context in which su is employed that specify the positive or negative values. Where both Speaker and Hearer have knowledge of the Narrated Event, the presence of su in the Narration is interpreted as Expected (= Again). Where either Speaker or Hearer lacks such knowledge, su is interpreted as Unexpected (= Surprise) on the part of the ignorant interlocutor. Fig. 2 may be further refined as Fig.3.

Fig.3

	I	II	III
	$Sp=K^n; H \neq K^n$	$Sp \neq K^n; H=K^n$	$Sp=K^n; H=K^n$
Expectableness	Unexpected to Hearer	Unexpected to Speaker	Expected

In Fig.3, the single row represents the distinctive, emic meaning of su. The columns represent the three relevant portions of Speech Acts that determine the nondistinctive variant meanings that are listed at the intersections of the columns and rows.

The questions posed in section 0.1 are now answered. The assumption that the use of su is patterned is justified to the extent that 1) we have shown there is a single distinctive meaning of su and 2) there exists a systematic set of determinant contexts to specify the variant nondistinctive meanings. The particular choice of Expectableness as the distinctive meaning of su is justified by the plausibility (In the absence of an explicit scale of semantic similarity the appeal to plausibility remains intuitive.) of the relationship between Expectableness and the variant meanings. This description receives further support in that it additionally accounts for the explanations that are often given by informants in lieu of direct glosses.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For discussion of the term 'Comment' and for details of Bella Coola as a VSO language, cf. Davis and Saunders (Forthcoming).

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<sup>2</sup> We will employ a distinction between Speech Act, Narrated Event, and Narration. Speech Act includes the Speaker and Hearer, the knowledge of the world they share especially as speakers of Bella Coola, and the Narration. The Narration is the utterance performed by the Speaker. The Narrated Event is the actual manifestation of the Narration independent of the formulation and expression of the Narrated Event as a Narration within the Speech Act. The Narrated Event is the thing reported; the Narration is the report.

<sup>3</sup> Su is one of approximately sixteen particles in Bella Coola.

<sup>4</sup> The 'equals' sign is used to abbreviate 'has'; the 'does not equal' sign abbreviates 'does not have';  $K^n$  abbreviates 'knowledge of the Narrated Event.'

<sup>5</sup> We obtain here a more definite characterization of 'knowledge' as knowledge derived from direct observation and not hearsay.

6 One might imagine a circumstance from II of the matrix in which the Speaker was mistakenly informed. For example, given 4a, the Speaker may have been erroneously informed that he has struck the Hearer, while in fact he has not. In this Speech Act context, both Speaker and Hearer would lack knowledge of the Event; but sentence 4a would, however, continue to be construed as if the Event were actual, and the Speaker would assume the Hearer had knowledge of the Event. Confusion then ensues until the matter is resolved.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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