SOME ERGATIVE PHENOMENA IN HALKOMELEM*

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The terms subject and object are often referred to in grammars of Salish languages. In this paper, I suggest that the terms ergative and absolutive are also relevant in the grammar of Halkomelem, a Salish language spoken in southwestern British Columbia. 1

First, drawing upon data from Island Halkomelem, I show four rules that are best formulated in terms of ergative and absolutive -- 3rd person agreement marking, one-nominal interpretation, quantifier assignment, and possessor extraction. I point out the interaction of the latter two rules with the antipassive.

Second, I discuss split ergativity. Of three common types of split ergativity -- based on person, clause-type, and aspect--Halkomelem exhibits the first two types.

The following definitions are used in this paper:

a) Transitive: a clause with both a subject and an object.

b) Intransitive: a clause which is not transitive.

c) Ergative: the subject of a transitive clause.

d) Absolutive: the subject of an intransitive clause and the object of a transitive clause.

The relationship among these terms can be summarized in the following diagram:
In Halkomelem, verbs in transitive clauses are suffixed with one of a set of transitive markers. Throughout this paper, transitive verbs are suffixed with -t, the marker of controlled transitivity. The sentences in 2-4) are examples of transitive sentences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERGATIVE</th>
<th>ABSOLUTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2) ni q'véletes</td>
<td>tē sǐeni? tē sē·iten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aux bake-tr-erg</td>
<td>det woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'The woman baked the salmon.'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 3) ni q'wáq'ités | tē swagger?qē tē spēʔεʔ |
| aux club-tr-erg | det man | det bear |
| 'The man clubbed the bear.' |

| 4) ni ḋíc'eties | tē sǐeni? kʷθθε̌ sphíl |
| aux cut in two-tr-erg | det woman | det bread |
| 'The woman cut the bread.' |

The subjects of the above transitive sentences are ergatives while the objects are absolutes, as labelled above the nominals in 2).
Sentences 5-7) are examples of intransitive sentences:

ABSOLUTIVE

5) ni ?ímeš te sténi?
aux walk det woman
'The woman walked.'

6) ni ?éétən kwə sqwəmék?
aux eat det dog
'The dog ate.'

7) ni q'wól kwə scé étən
aux bake det salmon
'The salmon baked.'

In 5-7), there is a subject nominal but no object. The subject nominal is the absolutive, as labelled above the nominal in 5).

1. Rules referring to ergative/absolutive.

In this section, I discuss four rules of Halkomelem which are stated most simply by making reference to the terms ergative and absolutive rather than to subject and object. These rules are: 3rd person agreement marking, one-nominal interpretation, quantifier assignment, and possessor extraction. The data on which the first two rules are formulated have been discussed by Hukari (1976) (and others) although reference was not made to ergative and absolutive in these discussions. The data concerning quantifiers have been discussed in Gerdts (1980).

1.1 3rd person agreement marking.

There is an important contrast between 2-4) and 5-7) above—while the verbs in 2-4) are suffixed with -əs, the 3rd person
agreement marker, the verbs in 5-7) lack this suffix.
Here, I discuss the formulation of the rule for 3rd person agreement marking.

The suffix -es in 2-4) is signalling the presence of a 3rd person subject. Notice in 8-9) below, the object is 1st person sg. and pl. respectively while the subject is 3rd person. Notice the presence of the suffix -es.

8) ni kwenétam?es kwéo swý?qe?
aux grab-tr-l-obj-erg det man
'The man grabbed me.'

9) ni kwenétal?xes kwéo swý?qe?
aux grab-tr-l-pl-obj-erg det man
'The man grabbed us.'

Thus, whenever the subject of a transitive clause is 3rd person, the verb is suffixed with -es.

In contrast, verbs in intransitive clauses, e.g. 5-7), with 3rd person subjects do not have the suffix -es. Furthermore, as can be seen in 10-11), this suffix does not occur in sentences in which the only 3rd person is object.

10) ni cæn kwénét têo swý?qe?
aux 1-sbj grab-tr det man
'I grabbed the man.'

11) ni cê kwénét têo swý?qe?
aux 2-sbj grab-tr det man
'You grabbed the man.'

These data concerning the occurrence versus the absence of the suffix -es, the 3rd person agreement marker, can be summarized in 12).
It is clear from 12) that the relevant distinction is ergative versus absolutive, as given in 13).

Thus, -es, the 3rd person agreement marker, is suffixed to all verbs in clauses with 3rd person ergatives.

1.2 One-nominal interpretation.

In the examples given in 2-4) above, both the subject and the object were expressed by nominals. Note that in Halkomelem, subject and object nominals are not differentiated by case marking. That is, both subjects and objects are preceded by one of a set of determiners. As can be seen in 2-4), these determiners are the same for subject and object.

The question arises: In sentences where only one nominal is expressed, is that nominal interpreted as the subject or the object?

Observe the following transitive sentences:

14) ni q̕wátes t̓ə sc̓eːtən
aux bake-tr-erg det salmon
'He baked the salmon.'
*'The salmon baked him.'
15) ni qʷáqʷətəs tə swóʔqə?
aux club-tr-erg det man
'He clubbed the man.'
*'The man clubbed him.'

16) ni kʷánətəs tə sténi?
aux grab-tr-erg det woman
'He grabbed the woman.'
*'The woman grabbed him.'

In each example, only one 3rd person nominal is expressed. In each case, the nominal is unambiguously interpreted as the object.

In intransitive sentences, e.g. 5-7), only one interpretation is available for the nominal, i.e. subject. A generalization can be made concerning the interpretation of 3rd person nominals. In transitive sentences, the 3rd person nominal is interpreted as object; in intransitive sentences, it is interpreted as subject. Thus, in the absence of other person marking, a single 3rd person nominal is interpreted as absolutive.

1.3 Quantifier Assignment.

One way of expressing quantification in Halkomelem involves the quantifier mókʷ 'all' as a higher predicate followed by a complement clause. In the examples in 17-19), the clause following the quantifier is intransitive and the quantifier refers to the subject of the intransitive clause.
In formulating a rule for quantifier assignment the relevant notion is absolutive, i.e. subject of intransitive and object of transitive. When the quantifier mák'w 'all' is a higher predicate, it refers to the absolutive of the complement clause.
1.4 Possessor Extraction.

A fourth rule in Halkomelem where the ergative/absolutive distinction is relevant is possessor extraction. I am using extraction as a cover term for three parallel processes: relativization, clefting, and focus. An example of each process follows:

23) ni kwénétas kʷθə swéʔqe? ɬə siéstni?
   aux grab-tr-erg det man det woman
   'The man grabbed the woman.'

24) Relativization:
   státəlestəw ɬən ɬə siéstni? ni kwénétas kʷθə swéʔqe?
   know l-sbj det woman aux grab-tr-3- det man
   'I know the woman who the man grabbed.'

25) Clefting:
   nɪɬ ɬə siéstni? ni kwénétas ɬə swéʔqe?
   be-3 det woman aux grab-tr-3- det man
   'It's the woman who the man grabbed.'

26) Focus:
   siéstni? ɬə ni kwénétas kʷθə swéʔqe?
   woman det aux grab-tr-3- det man
   'A woman is who the man grabbed.'

In each of the above examples, the object is extracted; that is, it is the head of the relative clause, cleft, or focus construction. An exposition of the above processes is beyond the scope of this paper; relevant to this discussion is the condition placed on the extraction of possessors.

In certain cases it is possible for a possessor to be extracted. Observe the following sentences; in the a) sentences, the possessive phrase is the subject of an intransitive clause; in the b) sentences, the possessor is extracted.
27 a) ni ṣčéñem kʷə sqé?eqs ʔə siʔéni?
aux run det y. brother- det woman 3-pos
'The woman's younger brother ran.'

b) státelstsəx can ʔə siʔéni? ni ṣčéñem kʷə sqé?eqs
know l-sbj det woman aux run det y. brother- 3-pos
'I know the woman whose younger brother ran.'

28 a) ni t’iləm kʷə sqé?eqs ʔə siʔéni?
aux sing det y. brother- det woman 3-pos
'The woman's younger brother sang.'

b) státelstsəx can ʔə siʔéni? ni t’iləm kʷə sqé?eqs
know l-sbj det woman aux sing det y. brother- 3-pos
'I know the woman whose younger brother sang.'

29 a) same as 28a)

b) ní t’ey? siʔéni? ni t’iləm kʷə sqé?eqs
be-3 det woman aux sing det y. brother-3-pos
'It's that woman whose younger brother sang.'

Note in the above examples that, although the possessor is extracted, the possessed nominal is suffixed with a possessive suffix.

Extraction of the possessor is also possible in the following examples; as can be seen in the a) sentences, the possessive phrase is the object of a transitive clause.

30 a) ni qʷálełəs kʷə sqé?eqs ke siʔéni?
aux bake-tr-erg det salmon-3- det woman pos
'He baked the woman's salmon.'

b) státelstsəx can ʔə siʔéni? ni qʷálełəs kʷə sqé?eqs
know l-sbj det woman aux bake-tr- det salmon-3- 3-sbj pos
'I know the woman whose salmon he baked.'
31 a) ni č q'á:yta kwə sqeʔeqs te stení?
    aux 2-sbj kill-tr det y. brother-3- det woman pos
    'You killed the woman's younger brother.'

    b) státelstəw cən te stení? ni q'á:yta kwə sqeʔeqs
       know 1-sbj det lady aux kill-tr- det y. brother-2-ssbj 3-pos
       'I know the woman whose younger brother you killed.'

32 a) same as 31a)

    b) stení? te ni q'á:yta kwə sqeʔeqs
       woman det aux kill-tr- det y. brother-3-pos
       'A woman is whose younger brother you killed.'

In contrast, the possessor in the following examples cannot be extracted; note that the possessive phrase is the subject of a transitive clause.

33 a) ni q'wələtəs kwə sqeʔeqs te stení? kwə scəʔiten
    aux bake-tr-erg det y. brother- det woman det salmon 3-pos
    'The woman's younger brother baked the salmon.'

    b) *státelstəw cən te stení? ni q'wələtəs kwə sqeʔeqs
       know 1-sbj det woman aux bake-tr- det y. brother-3-ssbj 3-pos
       kwə scəʔiten
       det salmon
       'I know the woman whose younger brother baked the salmon.'

34 a) ni q'á:yta kwə sqeʔeqs te stení? kwə sqwəməy?
    aux kill-tr-erg det y. brother- det woman det dog 3-pos
    'The woman's younger brother killed the dog.'

    b) *státelstəw cən te stení? ni q'á:yta
       know 1-sbj det woman aux kill-tr-3-ssbj
       kwə sqeʔeqs kwə sqwəməy?
       det y. brother- det dog 3-pos
       'I know the woman whose younger brother killed the dog.'
In formulating the condition on Possessor Extraction the relevant notion is **absolutive**; that is, when the possessive phrase is the subject of an intransitive clause or the object of a transitive clause, the possessor can be extracted. When the possessive phrase is the subject of a transitive clause, i.e. an **ergative**, the possessor cannot be extracted.

1.5 The Antipassive in Functional Perspective.

In the discussion above, I have pointed out four rules that are formulated in terms of ergative and/or absolutive. First, third person agreement marking is -as for ergatives and 0 for absolutes. In the other rules discussed--one-nominal interpretation, quantifier assignment, and possessor extraction--the rule in each case makes reference to **absolutes** to the exclusion of **ergatives**.

That absolutes are preferred over ergatives in these three rules suggests that absolutes in some sense **outrank** ergatives; in other words, absolutes are more accessible than ergatives, as represented by the following hierarchy:

```
 | Absolutive
|---
| Ergative
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As is often the case in languages where the ergative/absolutive distinction is relevant, Halkomelem has a process whereby a logically transitive sentence (i.e. a sentence with an 'agent' and a 'patient') can be expressed in a grammatically intransitive construction—called the antipassive or middle [cf Gerdts (1980) and references therein]. In Halkomelem, the logical object (if it appears) is expressed by an oblique phrase, introduced by the oblique marker ?ə. Examples of transitive sentences (37-38a) and their antipassive counterparts (37a-b) follow:

37 a) ni qʼwálates te sámni? kwə scé·ṣtn
aux bake-tr-erg det woman det salmon
'The woman baked the salmon.'

b) ni qʼwámam te sámni? ?ə kwə scé·ṣtn
aux bake-intr det woman obl det salmon
'The woman baked the salmon.'

38 a) ni qá?qa?tas te sámni? kwə qa?
aux drink-tr-erg det woman det water
'The woman drank the water.'

b) ni qá?qa? te sámni? ?ə kwə qa?
aux drink det woman obl det water
'The woman drank the water.'

Because the antipassive is an intransitive construction, the subject nominal is not an ergative but rather an absolutive. I suggest here that antipassive in Halkomelem has the function of making subjects accessible to rules which apply only to absolutes. This function is clearly seen in the interaction of antipassive with two of the rules discussed above—quantifier assignment and possessor extraction.
As discussed in §1.3 above, when the quantifier mak'w is a higher predicate, it refers to the absolutive of the complement clause. In sentences like 20-22) where the complement clause is transitive, the quantifier refers to the object and not the subject. Example 20) is repeated here as 39).

39) mak'w niw q'wélates tə sə'el'ʔqət kʷəə səplíl
all aux-comp bake-tr- det children det bread

   erg

   'The children baked all the bread.'
   '*All the children baked the bread.'

In contrast, the complement clause in 40) is an antipassive; in this case the quantifier refers to the subject, which is the absolutive of the clause. (cf. 21-22)

40) mak'w niw q'wélem tə sə'el'ʔqət ʔə kʷəə səplíl
all aux-comp bake-intr det children obl det bread

   'All the children baked the bread.'
   '*The children baked all the bread.'

Additional examples of quantification of the subject of an antipassive complement are given below:

41) mak'w niw q̓a'q̓a'? kʷəə səwsw̓əʔqə? ʔə kʷəə q̓a'
all aux-comp drink det men obl det water

   'All the men drank the water.'
   '*The men drank all the water.'

42) mak'w niw ʔə́tən ə sənənən? ʔə kʷəə scə́tən
all aux-comp eat det women obl det salmon

   'All the women ate the salmon.'
   '*The women ate all the salmon.'

A function of the antipassive, then, is to make subjects accessible to quantifier assignment.
As discussed in §1.4 above, when the possessive phrase is an **ergative**, the possessor cannot be extracted. Example 33b) is repeated here as 43).

43) *státelstaxʷ cən ḫə stí'ni? ni qʷéłətes kʷθə
   know 1-sbj det woman aux bake-tr- det
   sqéʔeqgs kʷθə scé'stan
   y. brother- det salmon
   3-sbj

   'I know the woman whose younger brother baked the salmon.'

However, when the possessive phrase is subject of an antipassive, and thus an absolutive, the possessor can be extracted, as seen in 44).

44) státelstaxʷ cən ḫə stí'ni? ni qʷéłəm kʷθə
   know 1-sbj det woman aux bake-intr det
   sqéʔeqgs ḥə kʷθə scé'stan
   y. brother- obl det salmon
   3-pos

   'I know the woman whose younger brother baked the salmon.'

An additional example of possessor extraction from the subject of an antipassive follows:

45) státelstaxʷ cən ḫə stí'ni? ni qáʔqaʔ kʷθə
   know 1-sbj det woman aux drink det
   sqéʔeqgs ḥə kʷθə qáʔ
   y. brother-obl det water
   3-pos

   'I know the woman whose younger brother drank the water.'

Thus, the antipassive allows subjects to be accessible to possessor extraction.
1.6 Summary.

In this section, I have shown four rules that are best formulated in terms of ergative and absolutive--3rd person agreement marking, one-nominal interpretation, quantifier assignment, and possessor extraction. The presence of such phenomena suggests that the terms ergative and absolutive are relevant in the grammar of Halkomelem.

In the latter three rules, the rule makes reference to absolutes to the exclusion of ergatives. This suggests that absolutes are more accessible to grammatical processes than ergatives are. I have briefly discussed the interaction of the latter two rules with antipassive. Because the antipassive is an intransitive construction, the subject of an antipassive is an absolutive. Thus, antipassive has the function of making subjects accessible to rules referring to absolutes.
2. **Split Ergativity in Halkomelem.**

In the linguistic literature, it is common to divide languages into two types: nominative/accusative and ergative. The assignment of a language to one type or the other is based on person agreement, pronominal forms, and/or nominal case marking.

In English, a nominative/accusative language, pronouns are chosen according to the distinction subject/object. Subjects of transitives and subjects of intransitives are expressed by the same pronominal set. Objects of transitives, however, are expressed by a distinct set of object pronouns. Observe the following English sentences:

46) I ran.
47) I hit John.
48) John hit me.

The subject form of the 1st person pronoun is I while the object form is me.

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subject                      object
I                            me
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In contrast, in Quiche, an ergative language, person marking is chosen according to the distinction ergative/absolutive. Subjects of intransitive sentences and objects of transitives, i.e. absolutes, are expressed by the same person marker.
Subjects of transitives, i.e. ergatives, are expressed by a distinct person marker. Observe the following Quiche sentences:

50) K - ox - kan - ik.
   aspect-1 Pl. -die-punctual
   'We die.'

51) K - ox - a cuku - x.
   aspect-1 Pl. - 2 Sg. - seek - actual
   'You seek us.'

52) K - at - ka - cuku - x.
   aspect-2 Sg. - 1 Pl. - seek - actual
   'We seek you.'

The absolutive form of the 1st person plural agreement marker is ox while the ergative form is ka.

53) ergative absolutive
    1st person pl. ka ox

Thus, the crucial difference between a nominative/accusative and an ergative agreement system is in the patterning of the subject of intransitives. As is seen in the chart in 54), in a nominative/accusative system, the subject of an intransitive patterns with the subject of a transitive; in an ergative system, the subject of an intransitive is the same as the object of a transitive.
Some languages, referred to as split ergative, do not fall consistently into one of the two types—nominative/accusative or ergative. In split ergative languages, some person marking, pronominal forms, and/or nominal case marking may refer to subject/object while others refer to ergative/absolutive. There are three common types of split ergative systems—based on person, clause-type, and aspect. Below, I discuss each of these with respect to Halkomelem.

2.1 **Person.**

In §1.1 above, I pointed out that 3rd person marking is formulated in terms of ergative/absolutive; -as marks 3rd person ergative, and Ø marks 3rd person absolutive. Interestingly, 1st and 2nd persons do not distinguish ergative/absolutive but rather subject/object. Observe the following sentences; 55-56) are transitive while 57-58) are transitive:

55) *ni can *se̓y̓ęt kwəə scé̓itən*
   *aux l-sbj eat-tr det salmon*
   'I ate the salmon.'
56) ni can kwónat
aux 1-sbj grab-tr
'I grabbed it.'

57) ni can ?ímeš
aux 1-sbj walk
'I walked.'

58) ni can t’ílem
aux 1-sbj sing
'I sang.'

In each case the 1st person subject is expressed by the subject clitic can. In contrast, the 1st person object of a transitive is expressed by an object suffix, as seen in 59-60):

59) ni ?œ č q’waq’wëøám?š
aux int 2-sbj club-tr-l-obj
'Did you club me?'

60) ni č kwënëøám?š
aux 2-sbj grab-tr-l-obj
'You grabbed me.'

Thus, the relevant distinction for 1st person is subject/object and not ergative/absolutive. As can be seen in 61-62), which are intransitive, and 59-60) above, which are transitive, the 2nd person subject is also expressed by a subject clitic, while a 2nd person object, as in 63-64), is expressed by an object suffix.

61) ni ?œ č ?ímeš
aux ni 2-sbj walk
'Did you walk?'

62) ni č t’ílem
aux 2-sbj sing
'You sang.'
Thus, 1st and 2nd persons distinguish subject/object, while 3rd persons distinguish ergative/absolutive, as summarized in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>subj of trans</th>
<th>subj of intrans</th>
<th>obj of trans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>can</td>
<td>can</td>
<td>-θamʔʃ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>˒s</td>
<td>˒s</td>
<td>-θam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>-ʔes</td>
<td>θ❓</td>
<td>θ</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Because the person system is neither completely nominative/accusative nor ergative, we must recognize Halkomelem as a split ergative language.

2.2 Clause Type.

In the data involving person marking discussed above, all examples were taken from main clauses. In these examples, we have seen that 3rd persons distinguish ergative/absolutive while 1st and 2nd persons distinguish subject/object. In subordinate clauses, however, this is not the case. All persons distinguish subject/object, regardless of the transitivity of the clause.
Observe the following sentences; the subordinate clauses in 66-67) are intransitive while they are transitive in 68-69):

   look-cont int2-sbj fut lnk run-3-ssbj
   'Will you be watching when/if he runs?'

   look-cont int2-sbj fut lnk sing-3ssbj
   'Will you be watching when/if he sings?'

   look-cont int2-sbj fut lnk club-tr-l-obj-3-ssbj
   'Will you be watching when/if he clubs me?'

   look-cont int 2-sbj fut lnk grab-tr-l-obj-3-ssbj
   'Will you be watching when/if he grabs me?'

   The 3rd person marked is -es in each case. In contrast, 3rd person objects in subordinate clauses are unmarked, as can be seen in 70-71):

   look-cont int2-sbj fut lnk club-tr-l-ssbj
   'Will you be watching when/if I club him?'

   look-cont int2-sbj fut lnk grab-tr-l-ssbj
   'Will you be watching when/if I grab him?'

Thus, in subordinate clauses, 3rd person marking distinguishes subject/object.

The contrast between 3rd person marking in main clauses and in subordinate clauses is summarized in the chart in 72):

72) 3rd person marking

<table>
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<tr>
<th>main clause:</th>
<th>subj of trans</th>
<th>subj of intrans</th>
<th>obj of trans</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-es</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subordinate clause:</th>
<th>subj of trans</th>
<th>subj of intrans</th>
<th>obj of trans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-es</td>
<td>-es</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ergative absolutive absolutive
Thus, Halkomelem exhibits a 2nd type of split ergativity. All subjects of subordinate clauses pattern alike regardless of person or transitivity.

2.3 Aspect.

In a third type of split ergativity, the choice of ergative/absolutive versus subject/object is affected by aspect or tense. It seems that Halkomelem lacks this type of split ergativity. In 73-74), the a) sentences are in the completive aspect while the b) sentences are in the continuative.

73 a) ni Ɂey̓x̑təs Ɂə sʔéniʔ kʷəə səč'ətən
    aux eat-tr-erg det woman det salmon
    'The woman ate the salmon.'

    b) ?i Ɂey̓x̑təs Ɂə sʔéniʔ tə səč'ətən
    aux eat-cont- det woman det salmon
    tr-erg
    'The woman is eating the salmon.'

74 a) ni səč'ətən Ɂə sʔéniʔ
    aux eat det woman
    'The woman ate.'

    b) ?i səč'ətən Ɂə sʔéniʔ
    aux eat-cont det woman
    'The woman is eating.'

In the transitive sentences in 73) the third person agreement marker occurs. It does not occur in the intransitive sentences in 74).

We can conclude from such examples that the completive/continuative aspectual distinction has no affect on the patterning of the ergative/absolutive distinction in main clauses in Halkomelem.
2.4 Summary.

One of the ergative phenomena discussed in §1 was person agreement. Because person agreement serves as a diagnostic for nominative/accusative versus ergative languages, I have discussed it further in §2. Looking at person marking in terms of person, clause-type, and aspect, I have pointed out that the ergative/absolutive distinction is relevant only to 3rd persons in main clauses. It appears that aspect does not affect 3rd person marking in Halkomelem.

Because person marking in Halkomelem does not behave consistently as nominative/accusative or ergative, we can conclude that Halkomelem is a split ergative language.

3. Conclusion.

In this paper, I have shown four rules that are best formulated in terms of ergative and absolutive—3rd person agreement marking, one-nominal interpretation, quantifier assignment, and possessor extraction. Person agreement was discussed in terms of split ergativity.

The presence of such phenomena suggests that the terms ergative and absolutive are relevant in the grammar of Halkomelem. I am not implying that the description of all phenomena in the language should refer to the ergative/
absolutive distinction. There are certainly a few phenomena that should be described in terms of subject and object (e.g. 1st and 2nd person pronominal forms, c.f. §2.1). In addition, there are some phenomena in the language where subjects and objects are alike to the exclusion of other nominals (e.g. nominal case marking, c.f. §1.2) and other distinctions are, of course, possible.

However, there appear to be more ergative phenomena than I had suspected. Perhaps this explains in part the apparent paucity of rules referring to subject and object. Certainly, the presence of ergative phenomena in Halkomelem leads to interesting speculation concerning the frequency of ergative phenomena in earlier stages of this and other Salish languages.
These data on Halkomelem are from Arnold Guerin of the Musqueam Research, Vancouver, B.C. Mr. Guerin, who is a teacher and researcher of the Halkomelem language, speaks a dialect from Kuper Island, B.C. I sincerely thank him for his patience and understanding. I would also like to thank Wayne Suttles for discussing these data with me and for making many useful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

Responsibility for any mistakes in data or analysis is my own.

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These abbreviations are used in the glosses of the Halkomelem:

- aux auxiliary
- comp complementizer
- cont continuative
- det determiner
- erg ergative
- intr intransitive
- lnk linker
- obj objective pronominal suffixes
- obl oblique marker
- pos possessive pronominal affixes
- pl plural
- sbj subjective pronominal clitics
- ssbj subordinate subject suffixes
- tr transitive

1 At least a couple of other people have made mention of the term ergative in discussing Salish languages--Davis (1974) and Kuipers (1967, p. 173).

2 The transitive marker -t is probably best described as the unmarked form. Some of the other transitive markers are: -nax⁴, -nax, and -g. Data with these suffixes parallels the data discussed here.

3 For discussion of ergativity, cf. Dixon (1979), Silverstein (1976), and the sources therein.

4 These data are from Dixon (1979).
References.


