Lushootseed Copular and Wh- Deixis in a Government and Binding Model of Grammar

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0.0 Introduction

This squib represents a first attempt, to my knowledge, at the description of Lushootseed syntax in the government-binding (GB) framework. Lushootseed is a Coast Salish language of the Puget Sound region.

A forthcoming canon of Lushootseed literature compiled by Lushootseed Research also contains grammatical notes by Thorn Hess, which include a discussion of the general form of the syntax, based in part on earlier work, and on current analysis. This description of the syntax uses notions of "predicate head", "direct complement", "oblique complement", and "locative augment", among others. These notions greatly simplify the analysis of a Lushootseed sentence, the only obligatory constituent being the head of the predication. The choice of names for these constituents facilitates easy description of the constituents' syntactic and semantic relationships.

In many cases, these traditional Salishan terms translate with relative ease into GB and X'-syntactic notions, such as "verb (phrase)" <predication>, "theme" (direct complement), "external argument" (agent), "adjunct" (locative), etc. In other cases, however, things are not so straightforward. Many different lexical categories, for instance nouns and pronouns—not just verbs—can head predications; "verbal" elements can, in turn, act as complements. Because of the complexity of the problem, a complete and adequate description of Lushootseed syntax in the Government and Binding framework is far beyond the scope of this paper.

Of concern here, then, is the relationship of the copular deictic construction (X ti?il/ti?e? "that/this is X") and its corresponding Wh-deictic question (stab/gwat ti?il/ti?e? "what/who is that/this") to the deictic NP <ti?il/ti?e? X "that X").

1.0 Representing the Lushootseed sentence

As noted above, the only obligatory category in a grammatical Lushootseed sentence is the predication (V). In such cases, the reference of the argument is generally default third person (as in lc), and specified in discourse. Arguments of simple predicates can also be lexical, in the form an NP (1a) or clitic (1b).
Since Lushootseed lacks a copula, the expressions corresponding to the English "that is (NP)" are rather interesting. They come out as stulek~ ti?e? "this is a river" and be~~eb ti?il "that is a mink".

The nouns "river" and "mink" in the above sentences may be analyzed as predicates, and "this" and "that" as arguments of those predicates. Thus, in our terms, be~~eb ti?il would have a structure as in (4).

       VP / \        V / \       SPEC N' / \ SPEC N'
       V / \     V / \    stulek, SPEC N' / \ N'  
       \ \     \ \       be~~eb ti?il / \ ti?il

The analysis in (4), however, ignores the obvious relationship between the copular deictic be~~eb ti?il and its corresponding NP.

With respect to this criticism, I propose that copular deictic sentences (VP's) are in fact derived from sentences containing only their corresponding deictic NP's via a movement I will refer to as Raising to Predicate. Under this analysis, the derivation would proceed as in (5).

       VP / \        V / \       SPEC N' / \ SPEC N'
       V / \     V / \    stulek, SPEC N' / \ N'  
       \ \     \ \       be~~eb ti?il / \ ti?il

The noun, be~~eb, raises to the V node (and acts as the predicate), leaving a trace. Under the Binding Theory (Principle A), as an NP trace, it is [+anaphor] and must be bound. Since be~~eb has been raised to be the head of VP, it governs NP, satisfying the binding principle."

Major lexical categories (N, V, A) are questionable or ambiguous in Lushootseed, as has long been noted in the literature on Salishan languages. Even were this not the case, there being, to my knowledge, no general principles prohibiting movements between categories, Raising to Predicate should be allowable. The crucial lack of a copula to occupy V suggests that a look at similar constructions in non-copular languages may reveal similar structures.

3.0 Deictic Wh-questions

I now turn to a discussion of Wh-constructions in Lushootseed; specifically, those related to the copular deictic construction. These are questions of the form "what (or who) is that" and are answered by the copular deictic.

In general, Wh-Questions in Lushootseed are Wh-initial, even those which are clearly "adjunct" (6c,d):

(6) a. stab ti?il
    b. g~at ti?il
    c. ~ad ti sqig~ec
    d. ?eselSid k~(i) adex~estaq~u?

For this reason, I posit a COMP node, as in (2). In non-GB treatments, these Wh-words may be described as predicates. Note that the complement adex~estaq~u? "your thirst" is preceded by a determiner w~"conjectural/distant" and thus behaves like a noun, even though it is derived from the verb estaq~u? "be thirsty". Thus "your thirst" serves as the argument for a predicate "why is there __". In the GB model of grammar, Wh-words are considered to be logical operators under COMP, licensing empty variables under S (or rather, VP).

If the Wh-word has indeed been moved into COMP, as I assume under the GB model, the question becomes, where was it moved from? The obvious place is the predicate position, the head of VP. Thus, a deeper representation for Wh-deictic questions, ignoring for the moment intermediate X' levels, would be as in (7):
The presence of stab in COMP licenses the Wh-trace under V, satisfying Binding Principle C. We now are in a position to take this analysis one step further, in light of the discussion in Section 2.0 of copular deixis.

Note that Vb-words like stab "what" and g-at "who" are no more (and no less) "verb-like" than their nominal counterparts in (6). Note as well that the "demonstrative" ti?i1 is in the same relative configuration to V in (7a), the putative Deep-structure representation of the question stab ti?i1, as it was in (6b), the output of Raising to Predicate. Thus, I propose that the representation in (7a) is itself an intermediate representation, and that the Wh-deictic expression is directly related to the copular deictic construction, and ultimately to the deictic NP.

The correct deep structure and subsequent derivation of "what is that..." questions is given in (8):

Note that now the Wh-trace of stab under V is free from its governor, but that the NP-trace under N is still bound, now by the Wh-trace.

4.0 Conclusion

Three things are gained by this analysis of Wh-Deixis in Lushootseed. It captures a relationship among Wh- and Copular Deixis and the Deictic NP. It captures as well the dual nature of the Wh-form, as both logical operator and predicate. And finally, it makes use of general principles (the Binding Theory) to account for these serial relationships.

This analysis further suggests that it may be possible to prohibit deictic determiners (demonstratives) from heading NPs. It provides as well some insight into the definitions, in Government-Binding, of NP- and Wh-traces. This analysis crucially makes use of a derivational definition of the traces: they are the results of particular kinds of movement. They are not defined intrinsically by the nature of their antecedents, thus avoiding a circularity which exists in the GB literature.

By limiting discussion only to (one-place) deictic expressions, I have only scratched the surface of the problems that Lushootseed syntax presents for the theory of Government and Binding. Lushootseed sentences are generally far more complex than those discussed here, and the structure of these constructions (specifically with regard to the two-place predication and its concomitant morphology) may be troublesome for the state of GB theory. In short, Lushootseed, while possessing a fairly straightforward syntax, may provide a number of interesting questions for the GB theorist. This discussion is only the merest beginning.

References

Hagiwara, Robert (in preparation). "Lushootseed Lacks INFL"


Untitled canons of Lushootseed literature, with accompanying grammatical notes, glossary, and notes to text, forthcoming from Lushootseed Research.
Notes

I wish to express my gratitude to Sharon Hargus and Dawn Bates (both of the University of Washington) for reading earlier versions of this paper. Vl (taq)obilu Hilbert (University of Washington) for introducing me to the Lushootseed language and culture, Thom Hess (University of Victoria) for his immeasurable contribution to my understanding of Lushootseed grammar, and those unfortunate who have tried to teach me generative syntax: Anne Lobbeck (now at the University of Alabama, Birmingham), Fritz Newmeyer, and especially Helen Contreras (both of the University of Washington). I alone must be held accountable for any errors or oversights in this paper.

In this paper, I will be using a modified version of the standard orthography adopted for use in the forthcoming canon of literature from Lushootseed Research. Modifications, made for typographical ease, were the replacement of swha with "e" and glottal stop with "ʔ". ASP refers to aspectual prefixes; in (la-c), the prefix is Ty "selective aspect".

For motivation for this structure within the GB framework, see Hagiwara (in preparation), where it will be argued that Lushootseed lacks an INFL node, and thus cannot express tense or agreement per se. In languages with INFL nodes, expands to CP (COMP Phrase), in languages without INFL nodes, expands to COMP and IP (INFL Phrase), in the absence of IP, CP takes as its complement some other maximal projection, namely VP.

The notion "governing category" of the Binding Theory is defined by van Riemsdijk and Williams (1986) with respect to a particular NP or S. In more recent analyses, S has been reanalyzed as IP.

In Hagiwara (in preparation), the phrasal notion S, with respect to the Binding Theory, will be redefined structurally, in terms of "that maximal projection which CP takes as its complement. In most languages, this will be IP. In Lushootseed, it will be VP. The alternative is to posit an intervening S or IP node between CP and VP.

This is the opposite of what would be expected by case theory.

The complexity of these constructions is increased by the g in the subordinate clause of the first example, which in Hess and Hilbert (1976) is described as a "nominalizer".

I have purposely avoided discussion of forms such as gəət təəl stubs "who is that man", as it requires an adjunct NF, daughter of VP and sister to V. The exact relationship of the Wh-form of these constructions to the copular deictic is unclear to me at this time, though it seems likely that these are instances of two-place predications, the two D-structure arguments being gəət "who" and təəl stubs "that man".

"For instance, the standard order for a two-place predication involves the use of a preposition, as below:

tuk-wa-təəb ʔə ti dəstaləl təəl asf-uy
ASP-help-pas/erg PREP DET my-nephew DET my-mother
"My nephew helped my mother"

In this passive/ergative construction, the standard order is V - ʔə ti - NP - NF. While it is possible to invert the PP and the NF, the unmarked order is with the PP apparently dominated by VP, and the second NF, again apparently, sister to VP (not sister to PP). This is the opposite of what would be expected by case theory.