A Note on Case Marking of Subordinate Clauses in Thompson Salish

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In Thompson, expressions that translate as English subordinate clauses and expressions that translate as English noun phrases are closely similar in form: both kinds of expression are likely to contain a head that is morphologically marked as nominal (by Nominalizer s- and by Possessive affixes) and are even more likely to be introduced by a member of the determiner system. Nevertheless, the two kinds of expression differ in fine details of morphosyntax.

I consider here especially expressions that appear to function as subcategorized arguments of predicates, and adverbial expressions of time and reason. Conditional protases and some other expressions will not be discussed, since they are never introduced by determiners; nor will I treat relative-clause-like constructions.

The determiner and core case-marking systems of Thompson are quite similar to those of Shuswap (Kuipers 1974: 56f.), though with differences of detail. There are three determiners, all phrase-initial: e Actual (he or Ø after vowels and occasionally elsewhere), ł Past (sometimes łe), and k Unrealized. The last is used especially in reference to entities that the speaker is presenting as not existent or identifiable--a category familiar in other Salish languages. Demonstratives (xéʔe "this", łúʔe "that", etc.) do not belong to the determiner system and are not considered here.

There are two core cases: Direct, without overt mark, used for subject and for surface direct object (1); and Oblique, marked by preposition tə, used for agents of passive clauses, for instruments (2), and for patients that are not surface direct objects--this includes patients of active intransitive predicates (3) and of ditransitive predicates (1). Determiner and case marker interact morphophonologically: the Actual determiner e is almost always reduced to Ø after Oblique tə, while on the other hand Oblique tə is omitted before the Past determiner ł (4, 5).[1]

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(1)  né-x-c           e  ƛ̓iʔsqáyxʷ  e  skʷʼəzeʔ-s  tə  skʷiʔʔúy   (G 32.4)
     give-Ditr-Tr+3TSu Act man      Act son-3Po     Obl bow/arrow
     "The man gave his son a bow and arrow"
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(2)  nik-ne       tə  k̓əĺk̓əlmín
     cut-1sTSu    Obl scissors
     "I cut it with the scissors"
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(3)  łaʔxáns  e     n-céceʔ                   tə  sq̓ʷíyt     (G 32.4)
     eat      Act   1sPo-younger.sister       Obl berries
     "My younger sister ate some berries"
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(4)  poʕʷ-t-és    ekʷu     n  łe  s?úłxʷ  Ø  ł  túłkist-s   (G 33.11)
     pound-Tr-3TSu Hearsay on Past inside Obl Past hammer-3Po
     "He pounded it on the inside with his hammer"
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(5)  ʔe  s-cu-xi-t-m                Ø  ł  sƛ̓ək̓ye-s      (GT 217f.)
     then Nom-make-Ditr-Tr-Pass    Obl Past lunch-3Po
     "Then they made his lunch for him"
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NPs that are neither surface subjects nor surface direct objects are always given Oblique marking (or else are in other sorts of prepositional phrases). In particular, note that NPs with the Unrealized determiner k receive Oblique case marking when they are not surface subjects or direct objects.

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(6)  łaʔxáns kn   ekʷu     tə  k  sq̓ʷíyt      (G 33.2)
     eat     1sISu Hearsay Obl Unr berries
     "They tell me I ate some kind of berries (I do not remember)"
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(7)  n-łém-sip-e-cm-e             tə  k  súypm      (G 33.2)
     in-putin-wood-Tr-1sOb-Imv    Obl Unr wood
     "Bring me in some wood"
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(The sequence tə k, or sometimes just tə, has also become a fixed mark of attribution within the NP and apparently of certain kinds of adverbial expressions.

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(8)a.  ẏe  tək  ƛ̓uʔsqáyxʷ      (G 34.1)
       good Att man
       "a good person"
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  b.   cu-t-ét-uze      xeʔ nèʔe tək ẏe      (D tə)
       make-Tr-Imv-ImvPl Dem there Att good
       "Do it well now, you people"
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I will have little to say of these uses here.)

Subordinate clauses in Thompson are of various types. The predicate of temporal ("when") clauses is inflected with the Conjunctive subject clitics: w-n 1st sing., u-s 3rd, etc. (Transitive predicates simply add invariable u-s to their ordinary personal inflection.) Nearly all semantic types of complement clause are nominalized: the predicate is marked with the Nominalizer prefix s-, and intransitive subject clitics are replaced by Possessive affixes. In addition, all these clause types are introduced by

determiners acting as complementizers. Temporal clauses are introduced by Actual e (~ ∅) or Past ł, the latter confined to past-time contexts.[2]

(9) ?éył ?e s-wəl-qin-t-íyxs ł nłémmn-s ł q̓áyt   u-s   (GT 304f.)
     now then Nom-open-top-3p Past craft-3Po Past reach.top Conj-3
     "Now they opened his craft when it had reached the top"

(10) kń-t-éne   h u-s   cw-əm
     help-Tr-1sTSu Act Conj-3 make-Intr
     "I helped him when he was working / I helped him work"

Complement clauses can be divided into two types. (i) Complements of predicates of manner (11) and quantification (12) and of the aspectual predicate cúk^w "stop" (13) are introduced by the Actual determiner e.

(11) mús e s-nik̓-ne
     four Act Nom-cut-1sTSu
     "I cut it four times"

(12) zoˤ^w-zóˤ^w-t e s-cw-əm-s
     Rdp-hard-Asp Act Nom-make-Intr-3Po
     "He's working hard"

(13) cúk^w e s-q̓^{w}in-cút-kt
     stop Act Nom-speak-Refl-1pPo
     "We quit talking"

It appears that e can be replaced by Unrealized k if the time reference is future.

(14) ýé w-s³ k e?-s-k̓^{w}eń-s-cút   (D k̓^{w}eń)
     good Conj-3 Unr 2sPo-Nom-watch-Tr-Refl
     "Be careful" (lit. "watch yourself well")

(ii) On the other hand, complements of the negative (15), of s-x^{w}áwk^w "desire" (16), of command (17), and of propositional attituded (18,19), as well as various other complements whose time reference is future or potential with respect to the matrix clause, are all introduced by the Unrealized determiner k.

(15) tə-te? k s-cu-t-éne   (G 35.31)
     Rdp-not Unr Nom-do-Tr-1sTSu
     "I didn't do it"

(16) x̌u?e s-x^{w}áwk^w-s   k s-xək-p-st-és   . . .   (GT 13)
     then Nom-desire-3Po Unr Nom-know-Inch-Tr-3TSu
     "and so it was his desire to find out . . ."

(17) cún-cm-s   k n-s-nés
     tell-1sOb-3TSu Unr 1sPo-Nom-go
     "He told me to go"

(18) cút k s-zóq^w-s e sqáqxa?   (D zoq^w)
     say Unr Nom-die-3Po Act dog
     "He says/believes that the dog is dead"

(19) ?es-xək-st-és   k n-s-nés
     Stv-know-Tr-3TSu Unr 1sPo-Nom-go
     "He knows I went"

The choice of determiner to introduce subordinate clauses thus matches fairly reasonably the semantics of determiners in NPs: the Actual determiner, used in reference to known or presupposed entities, introduces clauses that are presupposed true; while the Unrealized determiner, used in reference to hypothetical entities, introduces clauses whose truth is not presupposed. The match is not complete, however: the Past determiner ł never introduces complement clauses, regardless of their time reference; and predicates meaning "know" take complement clauses introduced by k, even though the truth of the complement clause is presupposed. (Cross-linguistically it is the case that "know" patterns with propositional-attitude predicates rather than with factive--presupposing--predicates (Noonan 1985: 119).) Thus, complement clauses at least probably already need to be distinguished from canonical NPs in order to account fully for the distribution of determiners.

The same conclusion emerges when one considers the case marking of subordinate clauses. Complements of predicates of manner and quantification, of cúk^w "stop", of the negative, and of s-x^{w}áwk^w "desire" can reasonably be interpreted as subjects of these predicates: in these constructions, the matrix predicate has invariable 3rd person subject inflection (zero, as is normal for intransitives in Thompson) and never allows an overt NP that could be a subject. Thus it is quite in order that these complement clauses are not marked as Oblique by tə. However, temporal clauses (9, 10) cannot be interpreted as subjects or objects of the matrix clause, nor can many instances of k complements of predicates of command or propositional attitude --namely those instances (17, 18, 20-23) in which the subject and object slots of the matrix clause are filled by overt NPs or by pronominal affixes, or in which no object slot is available since the matrix predicate is intransitive.

(20) x^{w}úý kt cəs?eył x̌éyi k s-cw-əm-kt
     Fut 1pISu now   stop Unr Nom-make-Intr-1pPo
     "we're going to stop working now"

(21) łep-nwéłn   kn k n-s-k^{w}né-m   t k n-súp   (G 33.13)
     forget-NC.Intr 1sISu Unr 1sPo-Nom-get-Intr Obl Unr 1sPo-soap
     "I forgot to get my soap"

(22) kəc-kəc-s-cém-s   k n-s-q^{w}c-íyx   (D kəc)
     Rdp-willing-Tr-1sOb-3TSu Unr 1sPo-Nom-leave-Motion
     "He was willing for me to go"

(23) ẃét-ń-cm-s   k   xʷuẏ s-mlát-x-ne   (D ẃét(n))
    hire-Tr-1sOb-3TSu Unr Fut Nom-make.medicine-Ditr-1sTSu
    "He hired me to make medicine for him"

It is therefore unexpected that these clause types are not marked as Oblique
by tə.[4]

    One may note that there are non-clausal time expressions which are
marked with tə.

(24) wîk-c-n   xe? tə k syéxt
    see-2sOb-1sTSu Dem Obl Unr two.days.removed
    "I'll see you the day after tomorrow"

If such expressions have past time reference they are usually marked simply
with Past ɫ (before which Oblique tə is regularly dropped); this shows that
tə k in (24) should not be regarded as the fixed Attributive particle tək,
since the determiner can vary with the time reference of the expression.

(25) x̌e?kmîx tək siẋt e s-cw-ə́m-s   ɫ spəńpánze   (D pánze)
    always Att day Act Nom-make-Intr-3Po Past one.year.removed
    "He worked every day last year"

Temporal clauses are distinct in their case-marking behavior from these
expressions too.

    It is not obvious how deep a grammatical fact one ought to take the
distinctive case-marking of subordinate clauses to be. One might suppose,
for instance, that complement and temporal clauses bear grammatical functions
of a sort that canonical NPs can bear, and differ from NPs simply in the
surface morphological marking of those functions. On the other hand, one
could suppose that the reason temporal and complement clauses fail to
receive Oblique marking is that they bear some special grammatical function
or functions which ordinary NPs do not bear, and which do not require Oblique
marking. At present I have no clear evidence that would distinguish between
these (and other conceivable) alternatives.[5] But whichever one picks, some
kind of distinction must be drawn between subordinate clauses and NPs in
order to account for the surface morphosyntactic facts of case marking and,
perhaps, determiner choice.[6]

    Finally, one should note that reason clauses (nominalized) do receive
Oblique marking.

(26) xʷuẏ kʷ   n ?ey(e) w?èx n e?-sk̓ʷóz tə s-zòqʷ-s s-xáẏwi-s
    Fut 2sISu at here be at 2sPo-aunt Obl Nom-die-3Po Nom-husband-3Po
        (D n)
    "You will be here with your aunt because her husband died"

(27) qʷnóx̌ʷ n-s-x̌ʷáwkʷ   tə s-qʷc-îyx-s
    sick 1sPo-Nom-mind Obl Nom-leave-Motion-3Po
    "I'm sorry that he left"

This seems consistent with the case marking pattern of NPs, since in (26,27)
the reason clause cannot be subject or object of the matrix predicate (w?èx
and qʷnóx̌ʷ respectively). To be sure, a couple of instances have turned up
of reason clauses that one might wish to interpret as subjects of the matrix
predicate and yet are marked Oblique.

(28) ẏé t e s-n-q̓éx̌c-n-x̌ʷ
    good Obl Act Nom-in-lock-Tr-2sTSu
    "It's good that you locked it"

(29) ẏé ne? tə x-kt   s-cw-ə́m   .   (D tə)
    good Dem Obl Prog-1pPo Nom-make-Intr
    "It's nice that we're working there"

I am not quite sure how to interpret these; perhaps they indicate that
Oblique marking has simply become a device for distinguishing reason clauses
from other sorts of nominalized, non-k clauses. Examples (28, 29) aside, it
does seem that NP-like case marking occurs with a subset of subordinate
clauses that are presupposed as true--not including temporal clauses and
complements of "know", however.

    It has been noted for other Salish languages that subordinate clauses
display only partial similarity to NPs. Kuipers (1967: 183f.) notes that
Squamish nominalized clauses introduced by the determiner kʷi fail to receive
Oblique marking, for instance. The Thompson facts are more complex than those
of Squamish, since Thompson subordinate clauses display a more flexible
choice of initial determiner, whose selection is governed by principals
closely resembling those that apply in NPs. Nevertheless even in Thompson
one cannot simply conflate the class of subordinate clauses with that of
NPs; distinctions must be drawn among argument types.

Notes

    D = Thompson and Thompson 1985ms (followed by headword under which
        example occurs)
    G = Thompson and Thompson forthcoming (followed by section number)
    GT = the analyzed text at the end of G (followed by line number)

I have sometimes altered the segmentation, glossing, or free translation of examples for expository purposes; I am responsible for any errors thus introduced. Abbreviations used in the glosses are as follows: 1, 2, 3 = first, second, third person; s, p = singular, plural; Act = Actual, Asp = Aspect, Att = Attributive, Conj = Conjunctive, Dem = Demonstrative, Ditr = Ditransitive, Fut = Future, Imv = Imperative, ImvPl = Imperative Plural, Inch = Inchoative, Intr = Intransitive, ISu = Intransitive Subject, NC = Noncontrol, Nom = Nominalizer, Ob = Object, Obl = Oblique, Po = Possessive, Prog = Progressive, Rdp = Reduplication, Refl = Reflexive, Stv = Stative, Tr = Transitive, TSu = Transitive Subject, Unr = Unrealized.

[1] The preposition tə also has a local sense "around, by way of"; in this use it is retained before ɬ.--The analysis here of determiners and case marking is different from, but largely interconvertible with, that of Thompson and Thompson (forthcoming). Nothing of what I have to say below crucially depends on this difference of analysis.

[2] Actually, temporal clauses are not yet as well attested in Thompson as they might be; but the facts of closely-related Shuswap seem similar (cf. Kuipers 1974: 85).

[3] The Conjunctive here is used as a sort of optative (Thompson and Thompson forthcoming, section 21.3).

[4] This difference in the case marking of k expressions according to whether they are NPs or complement clauses helps clarify a point noted by Thompson and Thompson (forthcoming, section 33). They find that tə Oblique is often, but not always, omitted before k. Inspection of their data indicates that tə is retained before k NPs, omitted before complement clauses with k. (An occasional instance of a k NP unexpectedly lacking tə does turn up, but the statistical trend is quite clear.)

[5] It is hard to determine whether complement clauses fill the same slots in the subcategorization frames of predicates as NPs do, since it is hard to find nouns that would be semantically suited to head NPs in the same syntactic positions as complement clauses. (Hence the interest of the time expressions discussed in the preceding paragraph.) Nor is it easy to come up with other tests for the grammatical functions of subordinate clauses--such as whether they are subject to relation-changing rules.

[6] I have said nothing here about headless relative clauses, which occur in Thompson as in other Salish languages. I would expect headless relative clauses to receive case marking as NPs do, although there is little evidence bearing on the point to date.

References

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