

The Agent-Patient Restriction in Puget Sound Salish
A Call for Further Research

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The purpose of this note is to make known the existence of counterexamples to the following restriction proposed by Hess (1973:89, 91), which we will refer to as the Agent-Patient Restriction (henceforth APR):

1) The Agent-Patient Restriction

A Puget Sound Salish clause cannot have both an agent and a patient noun phrase except where the verb contains the passive suffix *-b* and the preposition $?^{\wedge}$ introduces the agent.

Counterexamples to the APR are important because a number of authors have relied on it in discussing the language and in drawing further implications (Hukari 1974, Thompson 1979, Jelinek and Demers 1983, Hess 1995, van Eijk 1995, Beck 1996). We briefly illustrate the APR, then cite a number of counterexamples. We end with a call for a thorough reexamination of the issue.

The APR has to do with data of the following kind. One can express the proposition 'The policeman took the boy off (the bus by force)' by using (2a) or (2b), in which the verb has the passive suffix *-b* and the agent is introduced by the preposition $?^{\wedge}$ 'by'. But active sentences (2c) and (2d), in which the agent and patient are expressed as simple NPs, are said to be ungrammatical.

- 2a) $?uQWi'bi-t-b$ $?^{\wedge} ti$ $dxWsqiQalikW$ ti $CHaCHas$.
 b) $?uQWi'bi-t-b$ ti $CHaCHas$ $?^{\wedge} ti$ $dxWsqiQalikW$.
 c) $*?uQWi'bi-t$ ti $dxWsqiQalikW$ ti $CHaCHas$.
 d) $*?uQWi'bi-t$ ti $CHaCHas$ ti $dxWsqiQalikW$.

'The policeman took the boy off (the bus by force).' ((a) and (b) Hess 1973:91)

A brief review of the literature has yielded a number of counterexamples to the APR. Snyder (1968a:44-45) gives the following sentences in which the aspectual clitic $=axW$ occurs.¹

- 3) $tul'a?bdub=axW$ $?^{\wedge} du'kWibahL$ $scHda'txW$.
 'Salmon happened to be seen by Creator.'

¹ We have retranscribed examples from Snyder and Haerberlin to approximate Hess's notation.

4) *tu?a'bitb=axW ?^ sqigW^tS ti?ihL cHa'lisHs.*
'Deer gave him his hands.'

5) *tu-kW^d=axW ?^ skW^t^hL ti?ihL sCHa'sHid.*
'That limb was taken then by Chipmunk.'

In (3) and (4) =*axW* cooccurs with the passive *-b*, but (5) is active and thus a counterexample to the APR. It is only weakly so, since the restriction can simply be revised to read either *-b* or =*axW*, or both, and an agent introduced by ?^.

However, note in (6), another =*axW* sentence, that while the verb stem #*tSut-t-ab* is transitive (Bates et al. 1994:48), the agent appears without the preposition ?^.

6) *gW^l=axW tSu'tab ti?ihL a'tSihLtalbixW ti CHa'CHasH gW^l ayaya'sH.*
'Well, those people have reason for wanting to say the child was dumb.' (Snyder 1968a:52)
Literally, '...tell the child that he is dumb.'

Does *ti CHa'CHasH* 'the boy' count as a patient for the APR, so that (6) should be ungrammatical? Regardless of the exact status of this example with respect to the APR, others exist in which there are unquestionably agent and patient roles expressed by NP arguments in a structure with no prepositions. Consider (7) and (8).

(7) *tuqWi'?ad=axW ti?ihL du'kWib^hL CHa'CHasH: "..."*
'Transformer yelled at the child: "...' (Jerry Kanim, Snyder 1968b:30-31)

(8) *xti'h=axW yo'yo'QWa?Y kWl d?i'ibatS.*
'My grandson looks like rotten wood.' (Snoqualmi Jim/Haeberlin n.d.)

Still, one could argue that the APR just needs further "fine tuning" (i.e., the agent NP in a passive clause marked only by *-b* must be introduced by ?^; in =*axW* clauses the agent is optionally marked by ?^). But consider examples (9-11), each a simple transitive structure without =*axW* but having both an overt NP agent and patient in the same clause with no preposition. These are among the strongest counterexamples to the APR that we currently know of.²

9) *tukW^d^d ti stu'bsH ti?ihL CH^?iTLa.*
'The man took this rock.' (Jerry Kanim, Snyder 1968b:26-27)
Literally, 'The man grabbed the rock.'

² The suffix marks the verb stems in (9) and (11) as transitive according to Bates et al. but in (10) there is no suffix.

10) *TLuwi'liqW ti?ihL sCHa'tX sb^kWa.*
'Kingfisher would ask Heron.' (Jerry Kanim, Snyder 1968b:68)
Also, 'Kingfisher would question Heron.'

11) *asla'?bad tSi shLa'day ti?ihL dba'd.*
'My father is looking at this woman.' (Amelia Sneatlum, Snyder 1968b:102-3)

And note, especially, the following ditransitive.

12) *hLucH^hL sXa'lyaXad tsi?^? cH^gWa'ss ti?^? Xa'?Xalus.*
'His wife would have (contrasting) borders made from these raccoons.' (Susie Sampson Peter, Bates et al. 1994:64)

It seems likely to us that a thorough review of the literature will uncover counterexamples to the APR in embedded structures as well. One such possible counterexample is (13), whose subject is a nominalized clause having two NPs and a transitive verb stem #X^cH-b-i-d 'think about' (Bates et al. 1994:260).

13) *sa? ti?ihL X^cHbi'ds ti?ihL ?i'isH^ds ti?^? CHa'cHas.*
'Dark were this youngster's thoughts toward his people.' (Susie Sampson Peter, Bates et al. 1994:261)

We have given a number of counterexamples to the APR, some relatively weak--examples (5-8)--and others very strong--(9-12). Like all true counterexamples, they are a warning flag that we don't really understand what we think we do, i.e. they challenge us to further research. As we reexamine the APR and the linguistic resources at various speakers' disposal, one possibility is that use of the transitive structure V NP NP to express a proposition involving an agent and a patient might be limited to a particular Puget Sound Salish subdialect. We leaned toward this hypothesis for a time when all the counterexamples that we had found came from Snoqualmie speakers. However, the data in (11-13) show that the phenomenon is more widespread. Thus, a concerted effort to reevaluate the situation is clearly needed.

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