Some Lexical Sets in Puget Salish Orientation Vocabulary, a paper for the Seventh International Conference on Salish Languages

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In compiling a Northern Puget Salish lexicon, several criteria are being used to define roots. These include English glosses, the inflectional and derivational potential of each entry, and the semantic sets to which each belongs on the basis of its antonyms and synonyms. This paper derives from that lexicon. It defines three locative axes, upstream/downstream, seaward/landward, and center/periphery of a room, in terms of the oppositions of the words in each set.

The importance of coastal waterways, not only as a source of food, but also as a means of travel has lead to rich marine vocabularies in the languages of the Northwest Coast. Included in these vocabularies are words that indicate direction or location by specific reference to river or sea.

Four terms designate points upstream/downstream, two indicating direction of travel and two marking locations. A second set of four refers to a seaward/landward axis. (Seaward is intended to mean toward (or out into) a river or lake as well as toward the Sound.) Again two words designate directions and two specify locations. The following chart sets out these oppositions:
### Locative vs. Dynamic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locative</th>
<th>Dynamic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. díxʷ 'located upstream'</td>
<td>teyíl 'go upstream'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. álłxad 'located downstream'</td>
<td>qʷíč 'go downstream'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locative</th>
<th>Dynamic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. tádt 'located away from shore, up landward'</td>
<td>čúbe 'go up from shore, go up river bank'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. čáʔkʷ 'located toward the river/sound or out in the river, lake, or sound.'</td>
<td>kʷíč 'go down to shore, go down river bank'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**II.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locative</th>
<th>Dynamic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. čáʔ 'in the water, down river.'</td>
<td>čúbe 'go up from shore, go up river bank'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. táliči 'in the water, down river.'</td>
<td>kʷíč 'go down to shore, go down river bank'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In group II, both lekʷíč 'I'm going down to the water' but the latter can also mean 'I'm going on out from shore' whereas kʷít stops at the water's edge. Similarly, both lečúbe čad and ledwxʷtádt čad signify 'I'm going up from shore', but the first always begins at the water's edge while the second can be used if someone is out from shore and heading back to the beach (or to the river bank) and also if he is already on land (and not neces-
sarily right on the shore) and heading toward the mountains away from the water.

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water     shoreline     land
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>čúbe</td>
<td>k'wit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dxʷdádt</td>
<td>dxʷčaʔkʷ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
begin at any point
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Locative roots can also take a variety of lexical suffixes which add a second parameter to the site. For example, locatives having the suffix {-alatxʷ} 'house, building' mark a place in terms of both the water and a particular building:

- dxʷáletxʷ² 'upstream side of house'
- ṭedtáletxʷ 'landward side of house'

The above two sets of eight 'aquatic' locatives and direction terms are, of course, only a subgroup in the total vocabulary of orientation words. They differ from most such terms because they have an absolute frame of reference, a body of water, in terms of which the locus is stated. There is, however, one other set of 'absolute' roots, the antonymous pair súla and ṭáldʷ.

### III. súla 'at the center, in (the) front'

This set is used inside a longhouse (or, today, in any single room) and specifies locations in terms of the center (especially the fire) versus the walls. Since people ordinarily sit facing the fire, súla also means in front of someone and, by extention, in front of any...
assembly regardless of seating arrangement.

The pair in III do not have a corresponding set of dynamic words. Compensation for this lack is achieved by a greater variety of possible inflectional suffixes. In other words, the dynamic/locative distinction is sometimes lexical and sometimes grammatical.

The following chart illustrates this difference:

1. **súla** 'located in the center of a room'  
**díx** 'located upstream'

   **súlad** 'place it in the center of the room'

2. **súlatx** 'bring it out from the wall'
   **teyíltx** 'take it upstream'

3. **súlacut** 'go to center of room, go to front of room'  
**teyíl** 'go upstream (by boat or swimming)'
   **dx** 'go upstream'

4. **désúlabid** 'it is toward the center of the room from me'
   **dédíx** 'it is on the upstream side of me'

The meaning of the roots out of which these orientation terms are formed is not simple. In addition to the three lexical axes described here, each form belongs to a variety of other semantic fields. For example, a transitive form of **tálld**, **tálld** 'take it away from the fire', is a synonym for **álá** 'take it off/out of the fire'. These two words belong to an extensive set of cooking and heating terms. The same root also occurs in a second group of orientation terms which mean 'rearward, behind' (illustrated with
the reflexive suffix sequence).

-5-

The words $g^wic$ 'go downstream' and $tayil$ 'go upstream' refer to particular types of water travel and, therefore, belong to a class meaning to proceed by water.

-6-

Each of these can be performed either $g^wic$ or $tayil$. In turn, $tayil$ opposes $tiba$ 'travel on land' and includes a variety of specific boating terms such as $tisil$ 'paddle (vb)', $xhalap$ 'steer with paddle over stern', $ddahab$ 'pole a canoe/boat', and so on. The word $tisib$ contrasts with $g^wacil$ 'wade/stand in shallow water'. An etymological connection exists between $tisil$ and $tisil$. They are formed from the same root which perhaps means something like 'proceed submerged'.

Similar examples of multiple semantic class membership can be given for each of the ten orientation forms discussed above.

These webs of lexical relationships wind throughout the dictionary. Knowledge of them is important for what they reveal about the culture. However, the vocabulary is vast and the remaining truly fluent speakers are few. It is sheer folly for one person to attempt to prepare an adequate grammar, dictionary, and a collection of texts well analyzed from both the literary and cultural side as well as the grammatical. This is true for any language, but folly becomes tragic when the language is nearly extinct. Perhaps one or two at this
Conference would be willing to devote themselves to an earnest study of some aspects of Puget Salish. Time is short, much remains to be learned, and the research is highly stimulating.

Notes

2. With the suffix {-alatxʷ}, the roots {diːxʷ}, {ta(mt)}, and {caʔkʷ} are heared in their reduced forms /dᵊxʷ/ /teqt-/ and /caʔkʷ/.

The word čegʷáłatxʷ '(anywhere) outside a house' shows a shift of reference. Etymologically, it is {caʔkʷ} 'seaward' plus {-alatxʷ} 'building', the expected opposite of taqdtáłatxʷ 'landward side of house'. In precontact times the door of a house was on the water side, so 'outside' necessarily meant going first to the sea or river side. Today, two terms are required to designate the front or water side of a house, čegʷáłatxʷ čegʷádiʔ 'outside house (on) water side'. (Like the unmodified locatives, čegʷáłatxʷ has a corresponding dynamic term, sejál 'go outside'.)