Expressing Future Certainty in Comox¹

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Abstract: In addition to the normal future enclitic *sem* in Comox, there is a sequence of the two enclitics *sem* plus *t*. The difference is simple future versus a more emphatic future expressing the speaker's certainty that an event is sure to happen. When the simple future is contrasted with the sequence *sem* plus *t*, the rhetorical force of the simple future becomes seemingly tentative or hypothetical.² Also addressed are the Salish voiced stops and the origin of the name Comox.

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1 The simple future

The future is regularly expressed by the enclitic *sem* as follows:

- (1) a. qwel' chian sem $[q^w \Lambda l? \quad \check{c}^y \epsilon n \quad s \ni m]$ come 1SG.SBJ FUT 'I will come.'
- b. qwel' chiat sem
 [qwAl? čyet səm]
 come 1PL.SBJ FUT
 'We will come.'
- c. qwel' chiawh sem
 [q^wΛl? č^yεç^w səm]
 come 2sG.SBJ FUT
 'You'll come.'
- d. qwel' chiap sem $[q^w \land l?$ $\check{c}^y \epsilon p$ səm] come 2PL.SBJ FUT 'You'll come.'
- e. qwel' sem
 [qwal? səm]
 come FUT
 'He/she/it/they will come.'

These full form pronominal enclitics occur after one-syllable predicates. Reduced forms occur after polysyllabic predicates as well as in historically frozen forms. Here are the reduced forms.

¹ The earliest documentation of this language was in 1857 by George Gibbs. See Section 6 of this paper.

² The data given herein were not elicited, but gleaned from interactions with native speakers from 1969 to 1980. Indeed, these data may not be amenable to elicitation.

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- (2) a. zem³ b. shtem 4 ho ho t^θəm] [ho [ho štəm] 1SG.SBJ.FUT 1PL.SBJ.FUT go go 'I will go.' 'We will go.'
 - c. ho chwhem d. ho chiap sem ſho čc^woml ſho č^yεp səml 2sg.sbj.fut 2PL.SBJ FUT go go 'You will go.' 'You (PL.) will go.'
 - e. ho sem
 [ho səm]
 go FUT
 'He/she/it/ they will go.'

The form *zem* is historically the */n/ of the first person singular marker /-an/ plus the future enclitic /səm/, yielding the first person future enclitic /t θ -am/. This historical */n/ combines with the pan-Salish nominalizer /s/ to yield the first person singular possessive /t θ /.⁵

2 The future expressed by the two enclitics *sem* plus t

From 1969 to 1980, one of the methods that Mary George and I had for her to teach me her language was as follows. I would describe a hypothetical situation to her and she would tell it back to me in Sliammon. This is not the more common sentence by sentence elicitation, but is meant to obtain a Sliammon description of various scenarios. One description was of a non-existent fire on Harwood Island, a part of the Sliammon reserve. The description that Mary George gave contained the following sentence:

sem ch'elh (3) 'iv tl'agw sem t te q'aq'twh [?ot səm čɪl ?εy λaqw səm t tə qaqtç^w] if FUT rain and extinguish FUT [t] the (ongoing) fire 'If it rains, then the fire will go out.'

In this sentence, the plain future marker [səm] is opposed to the enclitic sequence [səm t] indicating certainty, higher likelihood. Mary George was definite that the

³ This transcription system is based on Davis (2005) and on Davis (2012) Section 11 *Spelling and Pronunciation*.

⁴ Here [č] becomes [š] syllable initially before [t]. The same phenomenon is seen in Slavic languages.

⁵ This analysis was initially noted by Wayne Suttles (personal communication). The ejective affricate $/\mathring{t}^{\theta}/$ comes from historical $/\mathring{t}^{s}/$ but the plain affricate $/t^{\theta}/$ comes from historical */n+s/. The n+s is first person singular plus /s/ in the future suffix /səm/ or historical /s/ nominalizer : [ns] \rightarrow [d^s] \rightarrow [t^{θ}]. This change reflects the areal phenomenon of nasals being realized as voiced stops.

consonant [t] was indeed present. This is an example of the two constructions being contrasted in the same sentence.

When my wife and I left in 1972 to be gone for a year, Mary George told us

(4a) chia'at 7em k'wenanapi ekw chîanas⁶ [č^ye?et t^θəm k^wonanape Э kw čénnas short.time 1SG.SBJ.FUT see-RESULT.TR-2PL PREP ART some sem z'ok'w ťθokw] səm FUT day 'I'll see you (PL) someday.'

Then she repeated this more emphatically, expressing intent rather than simple future

(4b) chia'at zem t k'wenanapi e kw chîanas sem t z'ok'w
[ĕyɛʔɛt tθəm t kwonanapɛ ə kw ĕéʌnʌs səm t tθokw]

One time Mary George, my wife, and I were about to go into town. Mary George said

(5) 'ewk'w shtem t thoho [?uokw štəm t θ oho] all 1PL.SBJ.FUT [t] are-going

and then repeated in English "we'll all go together", meaning that we will surely be together.

Other examples include:

- (6) chianey kiapey-s sem t tho xana-t te. [č^yeniy k^yæpiys] səm t θ o γan∧t Э tə FUT [t] CLEFT give-him OBL coffee-his the go 'I will (be the one to) give him his coffee.'
- (7) nesh a chwhem t lhawumot [niš a čç^wom t lawumot] here Q 2SG.SBJ.FUT [t] stay 'Are you going to stay (behind)?'
- (8) thamshia' qomay ey gajît zem tl'alhsem t [θamš^yλ? t^θəm λałsəm] qomay iy gajit twenty vears and still 1sg.sbj.fut [t] strong 'In twenty years I'll still be strong.'

These would be equally grammatical without [t], but the addition of [t] makes each one more a statement of certainty.

⁶ This word *chîanas* was used by Tommy Paul in many of his explanations. Mary George translated it into English as 'some' when she said it and when Tommy Paul said it.

Although the [t] is not grammatically required, some situations seem to require [t] for their rhetorical force:

- (9) hiya zem t tho [hɛyʌ t $^{\theta}$ əm t $^{\theta}$ o] immediate 1SG.SBJ.FUT [t] go '1'll go right now.'
- (10) hiya zem t qwel' e kw tl'i [hɛyʌ t $^{\theta}$ əm t qwal? ə kw $\mathring{\lambda}$ ɛ] immediate 1SG.SBJ.FUT [t] come PREP ART fast 'I'll come right away.'
- (11)kwekwtem es chia'at. qwayigan 'iyajem sem t [kwokwtəm q^wayeg∧n ?єулўіт əs č^yε?εt səm t] STAT right.now sick opinion get.better FUT [t] 'He's sick right now, but he'll (surely) get better.'
- (12) ho ga, qi-qiy-t-h-em sem t [ho gA qeqey θ əm səm t] go suggestion CV-beat-TR-you-PASS FUT [t] 'Go, they'll (surely) beat you up.'
- (13)ganigan ch 'i 'ilhtenstomayît, chianey kwes sem t [ganegAn č kwəs ?e?eltənstomayit, č^yεniy səm t give.up they.feed.me SUBORD I FUT [t] 'a 'iemithot 'i 'lhten ?a?aymεθot ?e?eltən] by.myself eating

'I give up (having) them feed me, I'll be feeding myself.'

In the data collected from 1969 to 1980, this enclitic t does not occur in a clause introduced by 'ot or ga (see example (3) above).

Talking about the story of T'al

- (14a) 'ot⁷ chiap wha' wha'ap xigap,8 sem xigap, ga [?ot č^yεp səm ç^wa? χεgλρ gΛ ç^wa?ap γες Αρ] if 2PL.SBJ FUT not warning if not.you warning 'If you guys don't (take the) warning, if you guys might not (take the) warning, ...'
- (14b) qwel' sem t q'wit t'al ey ma'tanapim sem e kw ni's [qwal? səm t qwet tal iy ma?tanapem səm ə kw ne?s] come FUT [t] beach t'al and take.you FUT PREP ART place.his 'T'al will surely come down and take you to his place.'

More recently, I have said goodbye on the phone to Marion Harry by saying

(15) chia'at zem qwey-qway-sto-mi [$\xi^y \epsilon$? ϵt t^θ ϵ m qweqwaystome] short.time 1SG.SBJ.FUT CVC-talk-CAUS¹⁰-you 'I will talk with you soon.'

and she has replied with the more emphatic

(16) chia'at zem t qweyqwaystomi [č^yε?εt t^θəm t q^wεq^waystomε] 'I will (certainly) talk with you soon.'

3 Hagège recorded another instance of the enclitic t

Hagège (1981:162) gives the following two sentences:

(17) saysay t ch ga¹¹ lhaw-th-awh
[saysʌy t č gʌ lawθʌçʷ]
fear [t] I that leave-me-you
'j'ai peur que tu ne me quittes'

Taking into account that the enclitic [t] occurs here, a fuller translation is 'I really fear that you might leave me'.

⁸ The intransitive *xigap* means 'be warned' or 'heed a warning' and can be transitivized, just as other predicates in Coast Salish languages are intransitive until a transitive suffix is added, even though they must be translated into European languages by transitive verbs, English et cetera not having morphologically or syntactially intransitive equivalents.

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⁷ For an explanation of 'ot and ga as subordinators, see Davis (2012).

⁹ This is from the common coastal story about the basket ogress. However, when Noel George Harry (born circa 1890) told the story, along with its moral and present-day origin of mosquitoes and horseflies, he was definite that this was a basket ogre, a male.

¹⁰ The causative includes some situations which can only be considered comitative.

¹¹ For an explanation of this use of ga, see Davis (2012).

 s^{12} (18)qwayigan xatl'-s kw- th^{13} tho chγaλs $k^w \ni \theta$ [qwayegan t č θ 0 S opinion [t] 1SG.SBJ that desire-3SG.SBJ ART-2SG.POSS go 'je pense que tu veux partir'

Hagège's translation is 'I think you want to go'; the grammar indicates that the literal translation is '[I] really think that it is desirable that you go', meaning that I really think you want to go. Unlike the previous sentence, in this sentence the second matrix predicate $[\chi a \lambda]$ is seemingly impersonal, with the suffix [-s] being required by the nominalizing proclitic [s]. Compare the following;

- (19a) th xatl' kwe-th tho $[\theta \quad \chi a\dot{\lambda} \quad kw \theta \quad \theta o]$ 2SG.POSS want ART-2SG.POSS go 'You want to go.'
- (19b) xatl' kwe-th tho $[\chi a \lambda kw \theta \theta \theta o]$ want ART-2SG.POSS go 'You want to go.'

Here both sentences have the same meaning and intent, but when the second sentence is further subordinated by the nominal proclitic, a subject marker is required. Subjects of nominalized clauses are expressed by possessive affixes. In the absence of the 2sg.poss the 3.poss is added, but does not mean that a third person wants you to go.

Example (18) shows that this [t] is an enclitic, not a suffix. Compare *yəmigan-t-as* 'kick-ribs-INTENT-TR-AGENT' where the /n/ of the lexical suffix disappears before the intent transitive suffix to yield [yɪmegʌtʌs] 'he kicked him in the ribs'.

4 Hagège noted another expression of emphasis in Comox

Hagège (1978) presents examples of a number of lexical suffixes, among them

(20) 'ah-lhalh ch [?ahlʌl č] sore-throat I 'I have a sore throat.'

He then contrasts this sentence with the same description without a lexical suffix

¹² This s is not a prefix, but a proclitic nominalizing an entire subordinate clause.

¹³ This *th*, or $[\theta]$, hides the underlying *s* nominalizing proclitic by occupying the same syntactic slot.

He then writes "... the opposition between synthetic solution (lexical suffixation) and syntactic solution in Comox ... marks rather, the relation of ordinary to emphatic. In my texts, the syntactic solution is statistically less frequent than the synthetic one."

5 Emphasis and the Salish change of nasal to voiced stop

Among the varieties of Coast Salish, those spoken in the Puget Sound area are noted for having the voiced stops /b/ and /d/ where other varieties have /m/ and /n/. One explanation of this sound shift can be found in the emphatic pronunciation of Noel George Harry, who was born circa 1890 in Church House but lived in Sliammon during the last years of his life. Examples include /j̄ədis/ for /j̄ənis/ 'tooth' and /baj̄aθ/ for /maj̄aθ/ 'meat'. Noel George Harry regularly pronounced the nasals, but when he wanted to emphasize what he was saying, he would substitute the voiced stops.

Ronald Beaumont says that the /b/ and /d/ pronunciations were used in Sechelt for baby talk (personal communication).

6 Origin of the name Comox

The earliest documentation of this language was written in 1857 by George Gibbs and published in 1877. In his introduction, Gibbs notes that "Their own name is S'tlaht-tohlt-hu; that of S'ko-mook is the one given them by the Uguultas." Here Gibbs (or the typesetter) gives a second spelling for the name. This word list is then a vocabulary of Thalholhtwh [θałołtç^w], or Island Comox. (nota bene: The last speaker of Island Comox substituted [s] for $[\theta]$, unlike what my teachers resident at Sliammon said 1969–1974. Franz Boas recorded the name as Catloltq, using c to represent $[\theta]$.) The spelling Ko-mookhs may be Gibbs' attempt to write /qayməçws/ [qaymoçws] which would mean 'person of' = 'person' /qayməçw/ plus 'of' /s/. This, then, would be the first word of a two-word phrase which remains incomplete. It is probable that the speaker said the two syllables of this word slowly and separately as Gibbs wrote them down. Assuming that Gibbs was an English-dominant speaker, the spelling "ko" would approximate the sound of /qa/ and the spelling "mookhs" would approximate the sound of /məç ws/ with the /y/ being lost during the attempt to pronounce in such a way as to satisfy an unfamiliar white man

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