

## Word, clitic and sentence in Lillooet<sup>1</sup>

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This paper deals with the status of 'word' within the over-all formal structure of Lillooet grammar. It is shown that the entity that we designate as 'word' can be demarcated against 'sentence', although single words may often function as complete sentences. Words may contain several affixes, which then fall within the same stress-contour. However, this contour may also encompass clitics, which on syntactic grounds can be shown to be different from affixes. Thus, the only criterion by which we can define 'word' is a morphological one, and neither syntactic nor phonological criteria are in themselves sufficient to define 'word' on formal grounds.

### 1 Introduction

Both the definition of the term 'word,' and its demarcation versus other linguistic constituents, have often bewildered linguists. Reichling (1935:367) recognises three criteria on the basis of which we can distinguish words from other linguistic constituents: (1) separability (in Reichling's term 'scheidbaarheid'), (2) switchability ('omstelbaarheid'), (3) replaceability ('vervangbaarheid'). Of these three criteria, Reichling addresses the first two in great detail. Summarizing Reichling's discussion and extrapolating it to English (at the risk of unintentionally distorting Reichling's points) we could say that the separability criterion states that words can be separated by other words, as in 'I bought a coat' > 'I bought a nice new coat.' Bloomfield (1933:232) uses essentially this same criterion to distinguish between the single-word compound 'blackbird' and the two-word phrase 'black bird' in that only the latter can be broken up by an inserted phrase, as in 'black—I should say, bluish-black—birds.' Switchability, in Reichling's discussion, does not only refer to inversion with accompanying meaning change ('you can do it' > 'can you do it?'), but also to (if we again extrapolate his discussion to English) cases like the unsplit vs. the split infinitive ('too young to be really in love' > 'too young to really be in love'), where there is perhaps a sociolinguistic shift but not a semantic one. In Dutch we have the case whereby the auxiliary and main verb in a dependent clause may switch without apparent switch in meaning (Dutch *je weet dat ik hem gisteren gezien heb* > *je weet dat ik hem gisteren heb gezien* 'you know that I saw him yesterday')

Bloomfield (1933:232) admits that the separability criterion is not airtight in that, for example, Fox allows the phrase *ne-pječi-wa:pam-a:-pena* 'we have come to see him (her, them),' which—as Bloomfield demonstrates—is a single word, to be broken up by *keta:nesa* 'thy daughter' in *ne-pječi-keta:nesa-wa:pam-a:-pena* 'we have come to see her, thy daughter.' As Russell (2000:6) makes clear, Fox does allow extensive incorporation of this kind. Similarly, Cree allows the incorporation of adverbial elements, as in *...ta-kakwê-mitoni-wicihisoyêk* '...for you to study it in earnest' (*mitoni* 'a lot') vs. the non-incorporated position in *kitimâkêyimêw mitoni* 'she is very kind to him' (Russell 2000:3). However, Russell (p. 6) also adds that "The kinds of 'loose incorporation' found in Fox are judged ungrammatical in Cree, but still occasionally occur in discourse (perhaps as speech errors)." This latter observation ties in with another made by Russell, in a preceding paragraph, viz., "In Cree, the boundary between the last preverb and the verb stem is an extremely common point for hesitation and self-correction." This raises an important point in that we indeed must make a distinction between grammatically sanctioned insertions on the one hand and interruptions with a shift in information on the other. For example, the English lexeme 'mother-in-law' allows regular insertion of plural 's' to form 'mothers-in-law,' while phrases of the type 'my mother—no, my father-in-law' are cases of hesitation and self-correction. In the same way, Jespersen

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(1965:28-29) points out that the apparent ungrammaticality caused by 'a better way' in the following segment from *King Lear*, IV.3, can be explained by pointing out that the speaker here is a rather foppish courtier "constantly on the look-out for new similes and delighting in unexpected words and phrases."

Patience and sorrow strove,  
Who should express her goodliest[.] You have seene,  
Sun shine and raine at once, her smiles and teares,  
Were like *a better way* those happie smilets,  
That playd on her ripe lip seeme[d] not to know,  
What guests were in her eyes which parted thence,  
As pearles from diamonds dropt[.] In briefe,  
Sorrow would be a raritie most beloued,  
If all could so become it.

(The emphasis is mine.) As Jespersen points out, we obviously have a self-interruption here, after which the speaker changes the course of the sentence. Jespersen indicates this by a simple typographical adjustment:

Were like—a better way: those happie smilets,

It is perhaps possible that a number of incorporations in, for example, Fox, can be shown upon closer examination to be in fact self-interruptions. However, such an enterprise can best be undertaken by (or with the help of) a native speaker, while paying close attention to the intonational contours in the sentences in question. (The latter point is moot in cases where we have to work with older sources that do not indicate the intonational patterns.)

Even where we have grammatically correct incorporations (as certainly seem to be allowed in Fox), it may be that these have a grammatically determined upper limit, whereas the insertions in 'black bird' etc. are not so much limited by grammatical criteria but by the extent of the hearer's attention span. (To make a comparison: there is no grammatical upper limit to the amount of times we may repeat 'Bertha says that' in front of 'John is crazy,' but the hearer will soon tire of such an exercise.) If the insertions in Fox do have a grammatically determined upper limit, this could then indicate that the interrupted strings are indeed words (as opposed to sentences), which allow a kind of "compounding after the fact." Again, when it comes to Fox or other Native American languages the cooperation of a fluent speaker and a careful study of intonation contours is essential.

The switchability criterion distinguishes sequences of words from sequences of constituents within words, in that 'unkindly' can not be replaced with \*'kindlyun' or \*'unlykind,' while 'blackbird' cannot be replaced with \*'birdblack.'

Having described the word, somewhat impressionistically, in morphosyntactic terms, we will now briefly turn our attention to the prosodic status of words, and their relationship to sentences.

Prosodically, words can be said to have one main stress per word, in that one syllable within the word is pronounced with the greatest loudness (plus accompanying features, see MacKay 1987:155-56 for details). Details of stress-assignment vary greatly from language to language, and we leave tone languages out of our consideration here. A particular problem is posed by clitics, which may be classed as words, but do not have their own stress and fall within the stress-contour of another word. (Thus 'am' can be classed as a word by the separability criterion and by having its own stress, as in 'I am sick of it' > 'I certainly am sick of it,' but its clitic counterpart 'm' loses its stress and its separate status in 'I'm sick of it,' besides which we do not have \*'I certainly'm sick of it.')

Syntactically, many words may constitute a well-formed sentence by themselves, as in 'Help!,' 'Fire!,' 'No!,' or the dialogue 'Coffee?'—'Coffee!' Essential to the formation of an acceptable sentence is the presence of an intonational contour (see Uhlenbeck 1980:22-27). Typically, only lexical words (nouns, verbs, adjectives) and their pronominal substitutes may form one-word sentences, together with exclamations and interjections. So-called function words generally do not serve this purpose, except in self-name functions ('What is the definite article in English?'—'The').



## 2 Lillooet

Lillooet employs a rich and complex morphology that allows the incorporation of pronominal subjects and objects, nominal objects and other notions into a single verbal form. Such forms may be used by themselves as fully grammatical sentences, although in normal discourse they are usually accompanied by ‘validation of statement’ markers that take the form of enclitics and indicate the degree to which the speaker is certain about the information in his/her statement (see Van Eijk 1997:199-216 for details). Lillooet can therefore be described as having an essentially polysynthetic structure, as exemplified by the following form:

c’aw’-ús-en-c-as

Root-lexical suffix-transitivizer-pronominal object-pronominal subject

WASH-FACE-transitive-me-he

‘he washes my face’

We may describe the above construct as a word in that (a) the above sequence may not be interrupted by sequences of in principle interminable strings (as in the ‘black—I should say, bluish-black—birds’ quoted above) and in that (b) the constituents may not be switched (for example, -c and -as may not trade places). With regard to separability, Lillooet does allow interruptions and self-corrections (like every language), but it does not allow the rather massive (but grammatically correct) insertions that Fox allows.

By contrast, sentences that are composed of several words (i.e., roots with or without affixes) will allow interruptions by other words, according to regular syntactic rules, as in ?ác’xən+kan ti\_cítx<sup>w</sup>\_a ‘I see the house (cítx<sup>w</sup>)’ > ?ác’xən+kan ti\_ǰzúm\_a\_cítx<sup>w</sup> ‘I see the big (ǰzum) house.’ (For the movement of the enclitic \_a see below.)

Word order in Lillooet is rather rigid, so that we have few cases of switchability. Enclitics, which regularly follow the first full word in a sentence, occasionally occupy a different slot in the sentence if they are needed to comment on a preceding word that is not the first word in a sentence (see Van Eijk 1997:206). In sentences that contain both a direct object and a subject, the preferred order in the southern dialect is Predicate-Subject-Object (PSO) while POS also occurs. In the northern dialect the PSO/POS ratio is the reverse of that in the southern dialect (see Van Eijk 1997:228-29 and Van Eijk 1995).

Phonologically, Lillooet words fall within a stress-contour in which one syllable (vowel) takes primary stress, with secondary stresses assigned according to the following rule:

Place primary stress on the first strong vowel (usually a non-schwa, i.e., any vowel other than ə or ɐ). In the absence of non-schwas, the first schwa is stressed. From the basis thus established move the stress by two vowels at a time, as long as it does not fall on the last vowel of the word. Vowels that receive primary stress before yielding it to the next candidate receive secondary stress. Remaining vowels are unstressed.

Marking the primary stress with an acute (and leaving secondary stress unmarked) we may illustrate the stress rules with the following examples:

téqən ‘touch it!’ first schwa is stressed (no non-schwas in the word)

təqən-+kán ‘I (-+kán) touch it.’ first non-schwa is stressed

cútun’ ‘point at it!’ first non-schwa is stressed

cútun’-+kan ‘I point at it.’ stress-move not allowed (stress would fall on last vowel)

cu+un’-túmu+ ‘point at us!’ stress moves two vowels

cu+un’-tumut-kál’ap ‘you folks point at us!’ stress moves two more vowels

Exceptions to the basic rules occur (for example, the passive suffix -əm acts as a strong syllable and some non-schwas are weak, e.g., the a in c’aw’- ‘to wash,’ see above).

In contrast to full words, which by themselves provide the kernel of a stress-contour in that they provide the syllable on which the (original) primary stress is placed, clitics cannot occur by themselves but

need the presence of a full word with which they enter into a stress-contour. In contrast to affixes, whose place is morphologically determined in that they are attached to a stem and remain with that stem regardless of its position in a sentence, the position of clitics is syntactically determined in that they will occupy a certain syntactic slot. For example, enclitics typically occupy the second slot in a sentence (and then enter into a stress-contour with the word they follow), as in:

nuk<sup>w?</sup>-an-cih-as<sub>ha</sub>

Root-transitivizer-pronominal object-pronominal subject<sub>enclitic</sub>

HELP-transitive-you (object)-he<sub>question marker</sub>

'does he help you?'

> wá<sub>ha</sub> nuk<sup>w?</sup>-an-cih-as 'is he helping you?' (wa<sup>?</sup> 'to be busy with, engaged in')

As the example shows, the suffixes -an, -cih and -as stay with the root nuk<sup>w?</sup>, while the enclitic <sub>ha</sub> moves to the second slot in the sentence. In the same way, the "reinforcing" enclitic <sub>a</sub> (which is required by a number of articles) will remove itself from a word when that is preceded by another word and attach itself to that preceding word, see ti<sub>cítx<sup>w</sup></sub><sub>a</sub> > ti<sub>žzúm<sub>a</sub></sub> citx<sup>w</sup> above.

### 3 Conclusions

Lillooet words fall into full words (which may form the kernel of a stress-contour) and clitics (which may not, but enter into a stress-contour with full words). Since clitics (in contrast to affixes) may be removed by syntactic rules from one word and attached to another (with which they then enter into another stress-contour) we may not use the presence of a stress-contour as automatically demarcating a word. Thus, the concept of 'word' in Lillooet cannot be defined prosodically.

Full words, whether or not combined with clitics, may form grammatically correct sentences by themselves. These sentence-words allow the incorporation of many notions that would have to be expressed by separate full words in less synthetic languages. However, the constituents (root and affixes) within such a word follow a strict order that does not allow interruptions. As such, words (including sentence-words) are different from sentences in that in the latter we may have a sequence of words interrupted by a word or a sequence of words.

In light of the above, 'word' in Lillooet is best defined morphologically and not phonologically or syntactically.

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