

Subject and object NPs in a Lillooet text collection*

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Abstract: The presence of full subject and object complements to a transitive predicate (or an intransitive one where this still implies reference to a patient) in Salish has been the subject of a considerable amount of literature. In this paper we investigate the presence of such constructions in Lillooet (St'át'imcets), with regard to the main dialects of this language, and to the possible provenance of such constructions in Salish in general.

Keywords: Lillooet (St'át'imcets), predicate, subject, object, NP (nominal phrase)

1 Introduction

In his well-known and highly insightful survey of topics in Salish linguistics, Thompson 1979:740–741 makes the following observation on Salish syntax:

There are important problems concerned with the adjunct phrases by which predicates can be modified. Hess (1973) has explored some of these, drawing on Lushootseed, Straits, and Halkomelem materials. The type of English transitive sentence in which both agent and patient are indicated by noun phrases (e.g. Bill killed the bear) seems atypical of at least many Salish languages, and is actually impossible in Lushootseed, where only the patient can be so specified. In fact, such sentences as do occur in elicited material may represent one of the ways bilingual speakers tend to modify the tradition of their Indian languages in adaptation to the English model to please assiduous linguists. Even in languages which appear to permit such sentences, they are rare or nonexistent in spontaneous conversations and traditional texts (noted most recently by Hukari 1976[.]).

*This is an expanded version of a paper that I had planned to deliver (but was prevented from doing so due to personal circumstances) at the 4th Prairies Workshop on Language and Linguistics, University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon), March 18, 2017. I gladly take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my Lillooet consultants and to my fellow-linguists, for their time, wisdom, and patience, which they so generously shared with me over so many years. The responsibility for the contents of this paper remains mine alone. (This also holds for where my translations of Lillooet sentences in Section 3 are less fluent than those in the original stories, because in my paper the sentences are quoted outside their original context.)

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As for the order of subject and object NPs where they occur, Kroeber 1999:40 mentions that “[t]he languages vary as to how flexible the order of participant expressions is,” and notes that while Bella Coola and the Coast Salish languages prefer predicate-subject-object (PSO) order, the Coast Salish languages also allow instances of predicate-object-subject (POS), and that other languages are even more flexible in this respect.

Kroeber’s observation for the languages other than Bella Coola and Coast Salish is supported by data from Lillooet (St’át’imcets) as presented in Van Eijk 1997:227–228 (the published version of my Ph.D. dissertation defended in 1985), in which, as per fn. 5 on p. 267, the ratio PSO:POS in texts is roughly 4:1. However, data made available to me after 1985 (presented in Van Eijk 1995, 2001) give eleven sentences with POS, and only one with PSO. This caused me to presume that POS represented a shift in progress to POS from PSO. On the other hand, later research, in particular Davis 1999, has shown that while POS is generally preferred in the northern (Upper) dialect of Lillooet, PSO is preferred in the southern (Lower) dialect. Interestingly, in two recent Lillooet text collections recorded from a speaker of a central dialect (Callahan et al. 2016, and Alexander et al. 2016) PSO and POS constructions are in a relatively equal balance, with 15 PSO phrases vs. 10 POS. In what follows, I repeat the data from Van Eijk 1995 and 2001 in Section 2, and the PSO and POS constructions that I collected from Callahan et al., and from Alexander et al. in Section 3, while Section 4 gives some preliminary conclusions about the possible origin of PSO and POS constructions.

2 Lillooet PSO vs. POS

As is mentioned in Section 1 above, the ratio PSO:POS in Lillooet texts analysed up to 1985 is roughly 4:1, so PSO is the more common order in the data at my disposal at that time. However, in 1995 I was asked to check the first proofs of a northern Lillooet dialect dictionary for the primary grades which was in the process of being composed by a committee of native speakers of Lillooet (Upper St’át’imc Language, Culture and Education Society 1995), and this dictionary contains 11 examples of transitive predications which show POS order and only one which shows PSO order. These twelve sentences are given below, with references to the pages where they occur, and in the practical orthography used in the primer (with the added orthographical devices of hyphens to introduce (third person) subject suffixes, and the equal sign to mark various clitics, including articles and the ‘reinforcing’ enclitic *a* which is required by certain articles – for a far more detailed morphological breakdown see Callahan et al. 2016). For brevity’s sake I omit *nilh* or the combination *nilh=t’u7* ‘and then’ (also requiring factualization with the prefix *s* in the following clause) where these occur, as these have no bearing on the focus of this paper.

The examples of POS are:

- (1, p. 6) wa7 qixexs-twítas i=ntsqústn=a i=wa7=nts'áv'cal
 'the ones washing dishes (nts'áv'cal) are banging (qíxexs) the pots (ntsqústen)'
- (2, p. 6) pápt=t'u7 wa7 wáz'an-as i=káoh=a ti=nsqáx7=a
 'my dog (sqáxa7) always (papt) barks at (wáz'an) cars (kaoh)'
- (3, p. 22) t'útsun'-as ti=sráp=a ti=sqáycw=a
 'the man (sqaycw) is chopping (t'útsun') the tree (sráp)'
- (4, p. 22) wa7 nzanmán-as i=sráp=a ti=wa7=pél'p
 'the one who is lost (pel'p) is going in circles around (nzanman) the trees (sráp)'
- (5, p. 23) nq'ixtsán'-as ti=sk'ém'ts=a ti=sk'úk'wm'it=a
 'the child (sk'úk'wm'it) closed (nq'ixtsan') the door (sk'em'ts)'
- (6, p. 86) ts'áts'qn'-as ti=sm'úm'tm'=a ti=nskícez7=a
 'my mother (skícza7) plucked (ts'áts'qen') the grouse (sm'úm'tem)'
- (7, p. 96) wa7 steqs-ás ti=nqépktn=a ti=twíw't=a
 'the young boy (twiw't) is holding (steqs) the saddle-blanket (nqépkten)'
- (8, p. 104) kelhn-ás ti=t'ímin=a ti=nsís7=a
 'my uncle (sísqa7) took the sinew (t'ímin) of' (kélhen 'to take off')
- (9, p. 114) naq'wtsán'-as i=sts'wán=a ti=míxalh=a
 'the bear (míxalh) is stealing (nák'wtsan') the dried salmon (sts'wan)'
- (10, p. 129) lhnvns-ás ti=tsítcw=a ti=xzúm=a kém'cwyeqs
 'the big (xzum) truck (kém'cwyeqs) made the house (tsítcw) vibrate' (lhnvns 'to make vibrate')

The lone example of PSO is:

- (11, p. 87) kwezen-ás kw=sBill ti=káohs=a
 'Bill shined (kwézen) his car (kaoh)'

Interestingly, the dictionary also gives one sentence which allows both a POS and a PSO reading:

- (12, p. 4) t'axilmín-as ti=qwílqn=a ti=staníy7=a
 'the moose (staníya7) attacked (t'áxilmin) the wolverine (qwílqn);'
 'the wolverine attacked the moose'

In a draft of a reworked version of the same dictionary (Frank and Whitley 2000), the second translation is crossed out by one of the editors, with a note to delete it (see Figure 1).

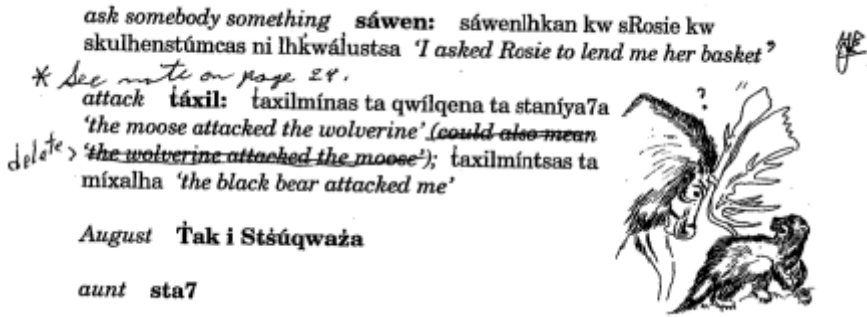


Figure 1 Example (12) in northern Lillooet dialect dictionary draft

The reworked version also contains a number of additional sentences with an object and a subject complement which are given here, with references to the pages on which they occur. As the examples show, the order, although based on only six examples, is again predominantly POS (13–16), with only two cases of PSO (17–18).

- (13, p. 4) wa7 k'úl'em ta=tsepalína ta=nskícez7=a
'my mother (nskícez7) is making (k'úl'em) a baby basket (tsepalín)'
- (14, p. 7) wa7 xelentsám' ku=sk'wíhal'ts ta=nsqáx7=a
'my dog (nsqáxa7) is begging for leftovers (sk'wíhal'ts)'
- (15, p. 9) wa7 xet'nás ta=áopvls=a ta=ts'qáx7=a
'the horse (ts'qáxa7) is taking a bite of the apple (áopvls)' (xét'en 'to take a bite of s.t.')
- (16, p. 42) wa7 cwíl'em ku=ts'éts'qwaz' ta=ts'icwts'icw=a
'the fishhawk (ts'icwts'icw) is looking for (cwíl'em) trout (ts'éts'qwaz)'
- (17, p. 17) tecwp kw=sCharlie ta=káoh=a
'Charlie bought (tecwp) a car (kaoh)'
- (18, p. 82) az' kw=sCharlie ta=káoh=a
'Charlie paid for (az') a car (kaoh)'

The two PSO sentences above are paralleled by sentence (11) *kwezen-ás kw=sBill ta=káohs=a* ‘Bill shined his car,’ where we also have PSO and also a proper noun as the subject.

The ambiguity shown by sentence (12) is also discussed by Kuipers with regard to Squamish, a language which also allows both PSO and POS, though with preference for the former (Kuipers 1967:169, section 245). Of course, this ambiguity only arises where the subject and object noun phrases could conceivably switch roles. (In a case like ‘wash-father-car’ it is obvious who does the washing, and this sentence could allow any order, but in a case like ‘bite-cat-dog’ both the dog and the cat could do the biting, and the order becomes important.) As is mentioned in Van Eijk 1997:267, fn. 5 to section 36, when I read sentences with two noun phrases that could be both subject and object back to my consultants, confusion arose as to the role of the participants.

3 PSO vs. POS: recent insights

Callahan et al. 2016 contains a number of texts provided by *Qwa7yán’ak* (Carl Alexander), now residing at Bridge River (northern Lillooet area), but originally from *Tsal’álh* (anglicized Shalalth), a community between the northern and southern Lillooet dialect areas (see the maps in Callahan et al. 2016:ix–xvi). As could be expected, Mr. Alexander’s speech shows features of both the northern and southern dialect varieties, and to those discussed by Callahan et al. (2016:xxv–xxvi) we can add the fact that the ratio POS:PSO is in a roughly equitable balance (10 vs. 15) in the texts provided by Mr. Alexander. Instances of POS are given first:

(19, p. 5) tsún-as láti7 ta=kwámáts=a ti=smúlhats=a
 ‘the woman (smúlhats) said (tsun) to her husband (kwámáts)’¹

(20, p. 6) qv[ʌ]-ás t[a=]sxilhtum’=a áti7 ta=skícza7s=a
 ‘her mother (skícza7) disliked (qv[ʌ]) what he had done to her (daughter)’ (sxilhts ‘what s.o. has done to s.o.’ with regular dropping of the transitivizer before *t* in *sxilhtum*’)

¹ When given by itself and outside the context of the story, the Lillooet sentence can also mean ‘s/he told the husband of the woman’ (where ‘she’ and the ‘woman’ cannot be coreferential, see Davis 2009). Similarly, sentences (21) and (29) can also mean ‘they invited the daughter of the man and the woman,’ and ‘they tried to see the mother and the husband of the young woman.’ In fact, in *lhq’aw’sen-itas áku7 ta=c.wálhts=a i=ucwalmícw=a=tú7=a* ‘they widened (lhq’aw’sen) the road (c.walh) of the Indians (úcwalmícw) of old (=tu7)’ (Callahan et al., p. 83), we do have the ‘to X the possession of Y’ reading. Of course, the translations given by Callahan et al. for (19), (21), and (29) are entirely correct, as they truly represent *Qwa7yán’ak*’s St’át’imcets account. See also fn. 7.

- (21, p. 48) xlitén-ítas láti7 ta=skuz7ih=a láti7 ta=sqáycw=a múta7
ta=smúlhats=a
‘the man (sqaycw) and (múta7) the woman (smúlhats) called (xlitén)
their daughter (skúza7)’
- (22, p. 48) wegen-ás láti7 ku=xát’min’-as láti7 ta=sm’ém’lhats=a
‘the girl (sm’ém’lhats) will choose (wégen) the one she wants
(xát’min)’²
- (23, p. 69) kem’em-wít ku=skwenkwín i=smelhmúlhats=a
‘the women (smelhmúlhats) were digging (kém’em) wild potatoes
(skwenkwín)’
- (24, p. 125) kwán-as láti7 ta=sílhts’7=a sP’xus
‘P’xus took (kwan) a shoe (sílhts’a7)’
- (25, p. 152) qúsen-as láti7 na=míxalh=a ta=nsqatsza7lhkálh=a
‘our father (sqátsza7) shot (qúsen) a bear (mixalh)’

Embedded in a longer sentence we have:

- (26, p. 390) átsxen-em aylh múta7 láti7 na=réppqwtens=a láti7
l=tsá=k’a cwíl’em ku=sqláw’
i=sám7=a
‘we also (múta7) saw (áts’xen) a claim stake (nréppqwtén) where
(l=tsa) the White people (sáma7) looked for (cwíl’em) gold (sqlaw)’

The instances of PSO are:

- (27, p. 4) zeq’zaq’ilmín-as láti7 ta=skalúl7=a ta=sm’ém’lhats=a
‘the owl (skalúla7) peeked at (zeq’záq’ilmin) the girl (sm’ém’lhats)’
- (28, p. 5) kwán-as=ku7 láti7 ta=skalúl7=a ta=skúza7s=a
ta=smúlhats=a
‘the owl (skalúla7) took (kwan) the woman’s (smúlhats) daughter
(skúza7)’ (=ku7 reportative marker, ‘as I was told’)

² The future tense is implied by *nílh=t’u7* (which is not repeated here) in the original sentence.

- (29, p. 5) t'iq séna7 ats'xen-ítas láti7 ta=skícza7s=a múta7
 ta=kwátamtss=a ta=sm'ém'lhats=a
 'the young woman's (sm'ém'lhats) mother (skícza7) and her (i.e.,
 the mother's) husband (kwátamts) tried to come (t'iq) see (áts'xen)
 her'³
- (30, p. 5) áoz=t'u7 kwas úlhcws-as láti7 ta=skalúl7=a
 i=slalíl'tems=a láti7 ta=sm'ém'lhats=a
 'the owl (skalúla7) did not (aoz) admit (ulhcws) the girl's
 (sm'ém'lhats) parents (slalíl'tem)'
- (31, p. 6) áoz=t'u7 aylh kwas kaklhal'usmín-as=a láti7
 ta=skalúl7=a ta=sm'ém'lhats=a
 'the owl could not (aoz) take his eyes off (kاكلhal'usmín-as=a) the
 girl (sm'ém'lhats)'⁴
- (32, p. 6) t'ak q'weláw'em-wit láti7 i=slalíl'tems=a
 ta=sm'ém'lhats=a láti7 i=qwal'ilh=a
 'the young woman's (sm'ém'lhats) parents (slalíl'tem) went (t'ak)
 gathering (q'weláw'em) pine pitch (qwal'ilh)'
- (33, p. 6) kwán-as=ku7 láti7 ta=sqáycw=a i=qwal'ilh=a
 'the man (sqaycw) took (kwan) the pitch (qwal'ilh)'
- (34, p. 48) ets'7áts'xen-as láti7 ta=sm'ém'lhats=a i=sqáyqeycw=a
 'the young woman (sm'ém'lhats) inspected (ets'7áts'xen) the men
 (sqáyqyecw, with regular metathesis in *i=sqáyqeycw=a*)'
- (35, p. 82) kwán-itas i=sám7=a lhláta7 ta=t'láz'7=a
 'the White people (sáma7) took (kwan) the boat (t'láz') from there
 (lhláta7)'
- (36, p. 83) k'úl'em i=smelhmúlhats=a káti7 i=skwenkwín=a múta7
 i=skím'ut=a... qweláw7=a
 'the women (smelhmúlhats) gathered (k'úl'em) wild potatoes
 (skwenkwín) and (múta7) tiger lilies (skím'ut)... and wild onions
 (qweláwa7)'

³ For a very insightful discussion of the 'against expectation' function of *séna7* (which here indicates that the parents were not allowed to see the girl) see Davis and Matthewson 2016.

⁴ I follow Van Eijk 1997:51 in classing final *a* in *kاكلhal'usmín-as=a* as an enclitic, while Callahan et al. 2016 class it as a suffix.

(37, p. 199) láni7 i=tsicw-as áku7 i=sám7=a qwal'uts-twítas
ta=nsqátsez7=a
'it is then (láni7) when (i=) the White people (sáma7) came (tsicw)
to talk to (qwal'úts) my father (sqátza7)'

(38, p. 332) xliten-ítas i=plísmen=a ta=ncwelpék=a
'the policemen (plísmen) called for (xliten) a helicopter (cwelpék)'⁵

(39, p. 390) q'weláw'em-wit i=núkw=a i=tsítsl=a ri7p láti7
'some picked (q'weláw'em) new (tsítsl) growth (ri7p) there (láti7)'

Embedded in longer sentences (the latter one with the cataphoric marker *niłh*) we have:

(40, p. 391) áts'xenem lati7 na=wa7=tsún-ítas i=ucwalmícw=a áku7
xzúm=a stswaw'cw
'we saw (áts'xen) what the people (úcwalmicw 'person, human
being, Indian') there (áku7) used to call (tsun) "Big (xzum) Creek
(stswaw'cw)."'

(41, p. 391) niłh=k'a=ti7 wa7 tsún-ítas i=sám7=a cá7=a tmicw
'that (ti7) is apparently (=k'a) what the White people (sáma7) call
(tsun) Heaven' (ca7 'high,' tmicw 'land, earth')

Alexander et al. have two examples of POS, both on p. 7:

(42) maysen-ítas i=n7ú7sa7tens=a i=haláw'=a
'the eagles (haláw') make (máysen) their nests (n7ú7sa7ten)'⁶

(43) maysen-ítas nqwaxqtenih=a i=haláw'=a
'the eagles (haláw') made (máysen) their aeries (nqwáxqten)'⁷

⁵ Later on the same page, the word for 'helicopter' is twice given as *ta=ncwelelpék=a*, and once as *ta=cwelelpék=a*.

⁶ With reference to fn. 1, sentences (42) and (43) could also mean 'they made the nests (aeries) of the eagles' but not within the context of this story, and the translations given by John Lyon are the only correct ones in this context.

⁷ The transcription of the word for 'aerie' (also the name for the geographical spot that is the focus of Mr. Alexander's account) is problematic in that on p. 7 the name for the location is given as *nqwáxwqten* (also sic on Callahan et al. 2016:x, with reference to the map on p. xv, and on pp. 121, 151 and 157). A check against the on-line sound files (to which Henry Davis has kindly referred me) proves that (*n*)*qwáxwqten* is indeed the correct transcription for the location (and then must also be for the meaning 'aerie'). The transcriptions *nqwáxwqten* (with variants *nqwáxqwen* and *nqáxqten*, the latter admittedly

4 Preliminary conclusions

While the data in Section 2 most probably result from elicitations by and from the editors of the volume from which these examples are taken, the data in Section 3 come from running texts provided by a fluent speaker of the language. As such, Thompson's conclusion that constructions with two overt DPs mostly result from prompting by "assiduous linguists" and do not reflect original Salish grammatical patterns can no longer be maintained. As Davis 1999:22, notes, the presence of such constructions is thus a reflection of the structure of the texts, not of the grammar. (It is in this respect significant that in Callahan et al. the incidence of both POS and PSO drops rather sharply in texts 5 through 8, which deal with personal reminiscences and reflections where one of the participants is in the first person singular and the occasion for two overt third person DPs rarely arises.) This still leaves the questions of why northern Lillooet prefers POS, while the southern dialect prefers PSO, and also how old constructions with two overt DPs are in Salish.

The fact that the southern dialect area of Lillooet shows a preference for PSO may reflect the fact that the communities in this area were in frequent contact with Coast Salish communities, where PSO is preferred, while the northern area was in more frequent contact with Interior Salish communities, where POS is in stronger competition with PSO. (For trade contacts of the northern (Upper) and southern (Lower) Lillooet not only with each other, but also with respectively the Interior and Coastal groups, see Teit 1906:231–233.)

As for the origin of constructions with both a subject NP and an object NP, it is possible that such constructions go back to Proto-Salish, but in that case, it is puzzling that they do not (or did not) occur in Lushootseed (as noted by Thompson, referring to Hess). If they do now, it may be possible that they have risen under influence from English after Hess did his research on Lushootseed. After all, there are convincing examples of languages rearranging their syntax under foreign influence, even across language families: Arlotto 1972:193–195 mentions the replacement of the "X has" construction in Russian with "at X is," under influence of neighbouring Finno-Ugric or Altaic, and the rise of the *izafet*-construction in Turkish under Persian influence. With regard to Salish, the influence of omnipresent English seems not only plausible, but in this case perhaps even unavoidable. On the other hand, Davis 1999 makes a strong case for classing constructions with two overt DPs as deeply embedded in Lillooet syntax, and his observations certainly deserve careful consideration.

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a very probable transcription error) in Van Eijk 2013:293 will have to be corrected accordingly.

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quantity and quality of the additions made by the USLCES are such that they should be listed as the author of the dictionary.]

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