Aspectual classification of verbs in Sənčáθən

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In this paper, I show that most English based standard tests (Vendler 1967, Dowty 1979, Smith 1997, among others) to distinguish aspectual classes of verbs are not applicable to Sənčáθən, a dialect of Northern Straits Salish. Since the standard tests do not work for this language, I propose an aspectual verb classification for the language based on results of three language-internal diagnostics, interpretations of out-of-the-blue tenseless sentences, interpretations of a particle kʷɬ when it occurs with various verbs, and availability/unavailability of the stative prefix *s-* with different kinds of verbs. The proposed verb classification for Sənčáθən, which is different from that of English, is evidence that the classification of verbs can vary from language to language.

1 Introduction[1]

Much previous work in the aspectual classification of verbs has proposed four or five classes for verbs based on English facts. Smith (1997), for example, distinguishes five types of aspectual classes or situation types: Sates, Activities, Accomplishments, Semelfactives, and Achievements. These classes differ in the temporal properties of dynamism, durativity, and telicity as shown in (1).

(1) a. States: static, durative
know, believe, have, desire, love
b. Activities: dynamic, durative, atelic events
laugh, walk, sing, stroll in the park
c. Accomplishments: dynamic, durative, telic events
Paint a picture, make a chair, draw a circle
d. Achievements: dynamic, instantaneous, telic events
Recognize, spot, find, lose, reach, die
e. Semelfactives: dynamic, instantaneous, atelic events
Tap, knock, kick

[1] I would like to thank my Sənčáθən consultant Stella Wright in sharing the Sənčáθən language with me. Thanks also to Timothy Montler, Lisa Matthewson, Henry Davis, Martina Wiltschko, and Leora Bar-el for helpful support and useful suggestions and comments. All the Sənčáθən data are from my fieldwork. This research is supported by SSHRCC grant #410-2002-1715 to Lisa Matthewson. All errors are my own.

These five different classes of English verbs are distinguished by many standard tests in the previous literature. For instance, the *progressive test* is used to distinguish statives from non-statives. The *almost test* is invoked to examine distinctions between accomplishments and activities. However, this picture does not hold true for verbs in Sənčáθən[2]. First, the standard tests usually used for English verbs do not work or cannot be applied to the verbs in this language. Thus some language-internal diagnostics to determine the classification of the verbs are required. I have found at least three diagnostics which make it possible for us to classify different aspectual classes of Sənčáθən verbs. Based on the results of the three different tests, I propose that Sənčáθən verbs are divided into four aspectual classes as shown in (2).

(2) Aspectual classes of Sənčáθən predicates

Class I:	Stative-like verbs
Class II:	Achievement-like and accomplishment-like verbs
Class III:	Semelfactive-like verbs
Class IV:	Activity-like verbs

Stative-like verbs are grouped as one class (Class I), while achievement-like verbs and accomplishment-like verbs together form another class (Class II). Two other classes are a class of semelfactive-like verbs (Class III) and that of activity-like verbs (Class IV).

This paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I apply some of the standard tests used to distinguish English verbs to my Sənčáθən data, and show that they are not applicable to the language. In section 3, I examine Sənčáθən verbs with three language-internal diagnostics, and I propose an aspectual classification of verbs for this language based on the results of these tests.

2 Standard tests and Sənčáθən verbs

In this section, the English-based standard tests are applied to Sənčáθən data and it is shown that these tests do not work for the language[3].

[2] Sənčáθən is generally know as Saanich, a dialect of North Straits, a Central Coast Salish language, traditionally spoken on the Saanich Peninsula north of Victoria and neighbouring islands in British Columbia (Montler 1986).

[3] See also Bar-el (2003a) for similar facts in Squamish (Coast Salish), and Matthewson (2004) on similar facts in St'át'imcets (Interior Salish).

The progressive form test

The first test to examine is the progressive test which is meant to distinguish stative verbs from non-stative ones. It is a common understanding that only non-stative verbs can occur in the progressive in English as in (3).

(3)	a.	*John is knowing the answer.	STATE
	b.	John is running.	ACTIVITY
	c.	John is building a house.	ACCOMPLISHMENT

In Sənčáθən, however, even stative-like verbs can occur in the progressive[4] forms. There are three primary forms for the Sənčáθən progressive: Cə reduplication as shown in (4), ʔ-infix (or glottalization of resonants) as shown in (5), and metathesis (or stress shift). The example in (4a) contains the non-progressive form of t'áčəq (be mad) and the one in (4b) shows its progressive form t'ət'áy'əq[5] with the Cə reduplicant as a progressive marker.

(4)	a.	t'áčəq	tə	Jack	kʷə	tálnəxʷs	tə	sqʷálqʷəl
		be mad	D	Jack	SUB[6]	find.out	D	news
		"He was/got mad when he found out the news"						
	b.	kʷłəw'	t'ət'áy'əq		tə	Jack	ʔiʔ	
		already	PROG-be mad		D	Jack	ACC[7]	
		tálnəxʷs	tə	sqʷálqʷəl				
		find.out	D	news				
		"He was already mad when he found out the news."						

The sentence in (5a) is also an example of a non-progressive form of a stative verb, łčikʷəs 'be tired', and (5b) shows its progressive counter-part łčíw'əs, which is a case of glottalization of stem resonants (it is /w/ here).

(5)	a.	łčíkʷəs	sən
		be tired	1sg.SUBJ
		I am/got tired (situation: I am walking, and tell you ....)	

[4] The form I call "progressive" for the present paper is the "actual" of Montler (1986), the "continuative" of Galloway (1990), and the "imperfective" of Hukari (1978). I borrowed the term 'progressive' from Suttles (2004) originally from Comrie (1976) for comparable aspects.

[5] According to Montler (1986), the obstruents kʷ/ č are underlyingly the resonants w / y respectively for some words, thus the progressive aspect results in the glottalized resonant in this case. The progressive from in (5b) is also another example of this pattern.

[6] SUB stands for 'subordinator'.

[7] ACC stands for 'accompanying' which indicates that the activity or situation referred to in the predicate head which follows it actually or conceptually accompanies some other activity or situation (Montler 1986).

b. ɬčíw'əs sən
be tired.PROG 1sg.SUBJ
"I am already tired (situation: I am sitting here already tired and say to you)"

Both (4) and (5) show that stative-like verbs can be in the progressive form in sənčáθən unlike English statives.

The in/for adverbial phrase test

The second standard test to examine is the in/for adverbial test which is in general used to see if a verb is an activity or an accomplishment. In English, accomplishment verbs can take adverbial prepositional phrases with an *in-phrase*. However, this class of verbs can only very marginally take adverbial phrases with a *for-phrase*. This contrast is illustrated in (6).

(6) a. ? John painted a picture for an hour.
b. John painted a picture in an hour.

By contrast, activity verbs allow only for-phrases as shown in (7).

(7) a. John walked for an hour.
b. * John walked in an hour.

For Sənčáθən the in/for test is not applicable since there is no word corresponding to English *in* on the one hand, or *for* on the other. In other words, this language does not have different words for *in* and *for* as the examples in (8) illustrate.

(8) a. ye? lə? štéŋ ti?ə Jack ?ə k^{w}s
go PAST walk D Jack OBL D
čésə sk^{w}éčəl
two days
"Jack walked for two days"

b. ye? lə? štéŋ ti?ə Jack ?ə k^{w}s
go PAST walk D Jack OBL D
čésə sk^{w}éčəl ?ə k^{w}s town
two days OBL D town
"Jack walked to the town in two days"

The sentence in (8a) has an interpretation as an activity predicate, and the adverbial phrase *for two days* is expressed with ?ə k^{w}s časə sk^{w}əyčəl. On the other hand, the example in (8b) which has an accomplishment interpretation uses exactly the same phrase for *in two days*. This makes it impossible for us to distinguish the two classes by applying the in/for adverbial test.

The stop / finish tests

The next two standard tests are also used to examine differences between accomplishment verbs and activity verbs in English. The first one involves a word *stop*: we find a distinction in entailment when accomplishment and activity verbs appear as the complement of *stop* as shown in (9).

(9) a. John stopped painting the picture.
b. John stopped walking.

The sentence in (9b) entails that John did walk, but the sentence in (9a) does not entail that John did paint a picture. Furthermore, only accomplishment verbs can normally occur as the complement of *finish* in English.

(10) a. John finished painting a picture.
b. *John finished walking.

Do these tests work for Sənčáθən? No, they do not since there seems to be only one phrase kʷɬ *hay*[8] which can mean either 'finish' or 'stop' depending on the context as shown in (11).

(11) a. kʷɬ hay t'ət'íl'əm' ti?ə Jack
REAL finish PROG-sing D Jack
"Jack finished singing a song / stopped singing (a song)."
b. kʷɬ hay šə́təŋ ti?ə Jack
REAL finish walk(PROG) D Jack
"Jack stopped walking."
c. la?ə tə kʷɬ hay kʷs Jack
here D REAL finish D Jack
čé?əy ?ə tsə latem
making OBL D table
"Jack finished /quit making a table."

The example (11a) can either mean "Jack finished singing a song", "Jack stopped singing a song", or "Jack stopped singing". In the sentence (11b), the predicate means "stopped walking". The one in (11c) can also mean "Jack finished making a table" or "Jack quit making a table." These facts suggest that the stop/finish tests do not work to distinguish accomplishments and activities in sənčáθən either.

[8] This must be checked again since there is also an expression kʷɬ šəq which means 'finish doing something or complete" in Montler (1991). I have tried to obtain data with this expression but I have not been successful.

The almost test

The last standard test to examine is the so-called *almost test*. In previous literature, it is often discussed that the adverb *almost* has different effects on activities and accomplishments.

(12) a. John almost painted a picture.
b. John almost walked.

It is obvious that the sentence in (12b) entails that John did not walk. On the other hand, the one in (12a) has two readings: (i) John had the intention of painting a picture but changed his mind and did nothing at all, or (ii) John did begin work on the picture and he almost but not quite finished it.

How about Sənčáθən? In this language, a word xʷeləq is usually used as a word corresponding to *almost* in English. However, I found that this word does not have different effects on activity-like verbs and accomplishment-like verbs as illustrated in (13).

(13) a. xʷeləq sən ʔiʔ štə́ŋ
almost 1sg.SUB ACC walk
I almost walked.
Entailment: √I didn't start walking / *I started but didn't finish.

b. xʷeləq sən ʔiʔ t'íləm
almost 1sg.SUB ACC sing
I almost sang.
Entailment: √I didn't start singing / *I started singing but didn't finish.

c. xʷeləq sən ʔiʔ xə́ləṯ tə nə-sné
almost 1sg.SUB ACC write D 1sg.POSS-name
I almost wrote my name.
Entailment: √I didn't start writing my name / *I started writing my name, but didn't finish.

d. xʷeləq sən ʔiʔ leʔt ʔə tᶿə latem
almost 1sg.SUB ACC repair OBL D table
I almost fixed the table.
Entailment: √I didn't start fixing the table / *I started fixing the table, but didn't finish.

For all the examples in (13), there is no ambiguity: the only entailment is "I haven't done anything." Thus this test cannot be a diagnostic to distinguish accomplishments and activities in sənčáθən.

In summarizing the results of applying the standard tests to sənčáθən are shown in (14). As shown in the table, none of the standard tests are applicable to distinguish sənčáθən verbs in terms of aspectuality.

(14) Summary of the standard tests

Criterion	English	Sənčəθn
1. Progressive test	YES	NO
2. In/for-phrase test	YES	NO
3. Stop/finish tests	YES	NO
4. Almost test	YES	NO

3 Language-internal diagnostics for Sənčáθən verbs

In the previous section, it is shown that the standard tests cannot work to test verbal aspects in sənčáθən, which raises very interesting questions for us. Are there any differences in Sənčáθən predicates? If there are, how can we classify them? Are there any language-internal diagnostics in the language? This section deals with these questions. I first show that there are at least three language-internal diagnostics to distinguish different verb classes. Second I propose an aspectual classification Sənčáθən, based on the results of the tests.

In order to examine different classes of verbs in Sənčáθən, I invoke three language-internal diagnostics: (i) the interpretation of out-of-the-blue tenseless forms, (ii) the interpretation with kʷɬ *Realized* and (iii) the prefixation of the stative prefix s-.

Test I: Interpretation of tenseless forms (Demirdache 1997, Matthewson 2004)

I found that the interpretation of out-of-the-blue tenseless sentences shows differences between different types of verbs. I presented tenseless sentences to my consultant and asked her to volunteer an English gloss for each sentence. The result of this test shows that sentences with states are interpreted as present states, while the ones with achievement-like, accomplishment-like, and semelfactive-like verbs are interpreted as past events. Activity-like predicates are interpreted as present progressive events; hence no past interpretation is available.

First, stative-like verbs are normally interpreted as present states as illustrated in (15).

(15) a. łčíkʷəs tə Jack
be tired D Jack
"Jack is tired."

b. híləkʷ tə Jack
be happy D Jack
"Jack is happy."

c. téčəq ti?ə Jack
be mad D Jack
"Jack is mad."

The data in (16) show that achievement-like predicates are immediately interpreted as past events.

(16) a. q'^{w}áy tə Jack
die D Jack
"Jack died."

b. k^{w}ɬ téčəl sən
already arrive 1.sg
"I arrived."

c. x̣áɬ tə nə–q'^{w}álən̓
get hurt D my-ear
"I hurt my ear / my ear got hurt."

d. ɬít'$^{\theta}$ t'$^{\theta}$ə nə–séləs
get cut D my-hand
"I cut my hand / my hand got cut."

e. q'^{w}és t$^{\theta}$ə nə–sélas
get burnt D my-hand
"I burned my hand / my hand got burned."

f. la?ə k^{w}ə təkʷ t'$^{\theta}$ə nə–sx̣ənə?
there SUB get.broken D my-feet
"I broke my feet / my feet got broken."

Accomplishment-like verbs are also unambiguously interpreted as past events as shown in (17).

(17) a. la?ə sən k^{w}ə lət'$^{\theta}$át t$^{\theta}$ə nə–sq^{w}átən
there 1-sg SUB fill-TR D my-bucket
"I filled up my bucket."

b. la?ə sən k^{w}ə lé?t t$^{\theta}$ə nə–snəx^{w}əɬ
there 1-sg SUB fix-TR D my-canoe
"I fixed my canoe."

c. la?ə sən k^{w}ə q'ép'ət t$^{\theta}$ə laplaš
there 1-sg SUB tie-TR D lumber
"I tied the lumber."

d. la?ə sən k^{w}ə t'$^{\theta}$ék^{w}ət t$^{\theta}$ə nəɬəx̣ənəptən
there 1-sg SUB wash-TR D my-floor
"I cleaned my floor."

e. la?ə ɬta k^{w}ə čánət k^{w}s Jack
there 1.pl SUB bury-TR D Jack
"We buried Jack."

Likewise, semelfactive-like predicates are automatically interpreted as past events as illustrated below.

(18) a. xʷʔítəŋ tə Jack
jump D Jack
"Jack jumped."

b. hésəŋ tə Jack
sneeze D Jack
"Jack sneezed (just once)."

c. ləmét sən tə Jack
kick-TR 1.sg D Jack
"I kicked Jack."

Among the non-stative verbs, only activity-like verbs behave differently from other kinds of non-stative verbs. My basic observation is that the past reading is not available for the out-of-the-blue utterances without the past marker or some signal of past event. Although Montler (1986) suggests that the past marker particle /ləʔ/ is not obligatory and usually used for the emphatic past tense, my field notes indicate that past readings are not available for activity-like verbs without the past particle. Consider examples in (19).

(19) a. ləʔə tə tʼʔíləm tə Jack
there D sing D Jack
"Jack is singing. / *Jack sang."

b. qékʷəŋ tiʔə Jack
rest D Jack
"Jack is resting. / *Jack rested."

c. kʷənéŋət sən kʷθə nətén
help 1.sg D my-mother
"I am helping my mother. / *I helped my mother."

All the three sentences were interpreted as present progressive events, and a past interpretation was not available to my consultant.[9]

The result of the first language-internal test is summarized below. For out-of-the-blue tenseless forms, stative-like verbs are interpreted as present states. Achievement-like, accomplishment-like, and semelfactive-like verbs, on the other hand, pattern with each other: they are all interpreted as past events. As for activity-like predicates, they are interpreted as present progressive events and a past interpretation is not available without the past marker.

[9] Montler (p.c.) pointed that there are number of cases where activity-like verbs without the past marker can reasonably be translated with the English past tense. However, my consultant has never translated them as past events.

(20) Summary of test #1: Interpretation of tenseless forms

- Stative-like verbs: Present state
- Achievement-like verbs: Past
- Accomplishment-like verbs: Past
- Semelfactive-like verbs: Past
- Activity-like verbs: Present progressive

Test #2: Interpretation with the particle k^{w}ɬ

I also found that a pre-predicate particle k^{w}ɬ can be used as a diagnostic to classify verbs in terms of aspectuality. According to Montler (1986), this particle is called *Realized* and he suggests that it is interpreted as 'already' in most cases. I have confirmed that interpretation of sentences with this particle varies depending on the aspectuality of the predicate it modifies. It is translated as "getting ~" with stative-like predicates and "start to ~" with activity-like and semelfactive-like predicates. With achievement-like predicates and accomplishment-like predicates, it is translated as "already ~".

(21) Stative-like predicates: getting ~

a. k^{w}ɬ ɬčík^{w}əs tə Jack
REAL be.tired D Jack
"Jack is getting tired / Jack is tired."

b. k^{w}ɬ t'éčəq tiʔə Jack
REAL be.mad D Jack
"Jack is getting mad / Jack is mad."

c. k^{w}ɬ čə́qsət t'$^{\theta}$ə nəsqéx̣əʔ
REAL big-REFL D my-dog
"My dog is getting big."

d. ʔeɬ tiʔ šnáw'əs
here D cloudy
"It is getting cloudy."

(22) Activity-like verbs: start to ~

a. ləʔə tə k^{w}ɬ nə́čəŋ
there D REAL laugh
"He began to laugh."

b. ʔəɬ tiʔ k^{w}ɬ x̣^{w}ə́ŋ
here D REAL cry
"He began to cry."

c. ləʔə tə k^{w}ɬ čéy tiʔə nəsnə́x^{w}əɬ
there D REAL work D my car
"He started to work on my car."

(23) Semelfactive-like verbs: start to ~

a.	ləʔə	tə	kʷɬ	xʷítəŋ		
	there	D	REAL	jump		
	"He began to jump."					
b.	ʔəɬ	tiʔ	kʷɬ	hésəŋ		
	here	D	REAL	sneeze		
	"He began to cry."					
c.	ləʔə	tə	kʷɬ	tákʷəŋ	tə	Jack
	there	D	REAL	cough	D	Jack
	"Jack started to cough."					

(24) Achievements and accomplishments: "already" or simple past reading.

a.	kɬ	hay	šə́təŋ		tiʔə	Jack	
	REAL	finish	walking		D	Jack	
	"Jack stopped walking."						
b.	kʷɬ	téčəl	sən				
	REAL	arrive	1.sg				
	"I (already) arrived."						
c.	ləʔə	sən	kʷə	kʷɬ	léʔt	tᶿə	nəlátem
	there	1.sg	SUB	REAL	fix	D	table
	"I have already fixed my table."						
d.	kʷɬ	lətʼᶿát		sən	tᶿə	nəskʷátən	
	REAL	fill		1.sg	D	my-bucket	
	"I filled up my bucket already."						

The result of the second language-internal diagnostic is summarized in (25).

(25) Summary of test #2: interpretation of kʷɬ:

- States: getting ~
- Activities / Semelfactives: start to ~
- Achievements / Accomplishment: already ~

Test #3: Stative prefix s-:

The last language-internal test that I examine here is the availability or unavailability of the stative prefix *s-* with different verb classes. This prefix indicates that the subject is in a state characterized by or the result of that which is indicated in the stem (Montler 1986)[10].

[10] This prefix (abbreviated as STAT) often occurs with durative -əɬ (DUR) and/or resultive which is marked with reduplication and change of /ə/ to [a] or [e] (RES). Analysis of these morphological processes is not within the scope of this paper.

This prefix occurs most commonly with achievement-like verbs.

(26) Achievement-like verbs

a. la?ə kʷə s-nə́w'-əɬ
there D STAT-enter-DUR
"He is inside."

b. s-x̣éɬ-əɬ kʷs Jack
STAT-hurt-DUR D Jack
"Jack is sick."

c. s-xʷə́y-əɬ ti?ə Jack
STAT-wake.up-DUR D Jack
"Jack is awake."

d. s-tákʷ-əɬ tə sčéya?
STAT-get.broken-DUR D stick
"The stick is broken"

e. kʷɬ s-məlyí? ti?ə Jack
already STAT-get.married D Jack
"Jack is married"

f. ?eɬ ti? s-ɬáɬəqʼʷ
here D STAT-RES-strip.off
"He is naked."

This prefix also occurs with accomplishment-like verbs although I have found only two examples from my fieldwork.

(27) Accomplishment-like verbs

a la?ə tə kʷɬ slélə? tə látem
there D REAL STAT-RES-fix D table
"The table is fixed"

b. la?ə kʷə slétʼ$^{\theta}$əɬ tʼ$^{\theta}$ə neskʷátən
there D STAT-fill-DUR D my-bucket
"My bucket is full"

All three other types of verbs, activity-like, semelfactive-like and stative verbs cannot take this prefix[11].

(28) a. ɬčíkʷəs kʷs Jack
'Jack is tired.' *s-ɬčíkʷəs kʷs Jack
Consultant's comment: We never say the word with the prefix.

[11] Although I have not tested semelfactive predicates with the stativizer, there are no examples in Montler (1986) or Montler (1991), suggesting that semalfactive-like predicates do not take this prefix.

b. q'ʷiliš tiʔə Jack
'Jack is dancing' *s-q'ʷiliš tiʔə Jack
Consultant's comment: It doesn't make sense to say s-q'ʷiliš.

The outcome of the language-internal test is summarized as follows.

(29) Summary of test #3: Stative form possible?

- Achievements Yes
- Accomplishments Yes
- States: No
- Activities: No
- Semelfactives No

In this test, achievement-like verbs and accomplishment-like verbs pattern with each other: both of them can take the stativizer s-, while three other verb groups pattern with each other: all of them cannot take this prefix.

The summary of the three language-internal diagnostics is shown in (30).

(30) Summary of the three language-internal diagnostics:

Verbs	Tenseless	kʷɬ	Stative prefix
Stative-like	Present state	Getting ~	No
Achievement-like	Past	Already	Yes
Accomplishment-like	Past	Already	Yes
Semelfactive-like	Past	Start to ~	No
Activity-like	Present progressive	Start to ~	No

As shown in the table, achievement-like verbs and accomplishment-like verbs pattern with each other for all the three tests. Stative-like predicates behave differently in terms of the interpretation of tenseless forms and the interpretation of the particle kʷɬ although this group patterns with semalfactive-like and activity-like verbs in terms of the unavailability of the stative prefix. Semelfactive-like verbs and activity-like verbs pattern with each other with regard to the interpretation of *kʷɬ* and the unavailability of the stative form. However, they behave differently concerning the interpretation of tenseless forms.

Based on the results of the language-internal tests and their consideration thereof, I propose the following aspectual classes of Sənčáθən verbs.

(31) Aspectual classification of Sənčáθən verbs

Class I:	Stative-like predicates
Class II:	Achievement-like and accomplishment-like verbs
Class III:	Semelfactive-like verbs
Class IV:	Activity-like verbs

4 Conclusion

In this paper, I showed that the standard tests to distinguish different verb classes based on English facts were not applicable to classify the Sənčáθən verbs, hence called for language-internal diagnostics. It was shown that there were at least three language-internal diagnostics to classify Sənčáθən verbs: (i) interpretation of tenseless forms, (ii) interpretation of the particle $k^{w}ɬ$, and (iii) affixation of the stative prefix. Based on the results and consideration of these tests, I proposed that there are four verbal classes in Sənčáθən as shown in (31).

However, this study must further be continued in many ways. For one thing, I grouped achievement-like predicates and accomplishment-like predicates together as one class, which can be interpreted that Sənčáθən does not have accomplishments as a primitive verb class. This analysis is possible because accomplishment-like predicates are usually derived from achievement-like (unaccusative) roots (See Matthewson 2004 for similar facts in St'át'imcets). It is also important to consider if there are differences between individual-level states and stage-level states. Finally, this study must be extended to develop a formal analysis of event structures for each aspectual class in Sənčáθən.

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