

An agentive suffix in Lushootseed

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This paper details the syntactic, aspectual, morphological and discourse properties of the Lushootseed suffix *-alik^w* ‘creative activity’. The discussion touches on important questions within the study of Salish languages, including issues of transitivity and the distinction between lexical and grammatical affixes.

1 Introduction

This paper discusses several qualities of the Lushootseed agentive suffix *-alik^w*, as in *ʔáb-alik^w*, an intransitive predicate glossed ‘to give things away as at a potlatch’, which contrasts with a transitive form containing the same root: *ʔab-š* ‘give something’. Bates, Hess and Hilbert (1994:28) follow their major source (Hess, 1976) in glossing *-alik^w* as ‘creative activity’; the later dictionary adds a grammatical comment that *-alik^w* is a lexical suffix forming agent oriented stems with iterative meaning.

Hess (1998:114) downplays the earlier claim that *-alik^w* is a lexical suffix and describes it as an “agent oriented suffix with iterative meaning”; in related work, Hess (1995:28) contrasts (1a-b), which he notes are synonymous.¹

- (1a) ʔu-šab-alik^w tsi lu² ʔə ti sʔuladx^w.
pnt-dry-ag D-f elder P D salmon
‘The old woman dried the salmon.’
- (1b) ʔu-šaba-t-əb ʔə tsi lu² ti sʔuladx^w.
pnt-dry-tr-pass P D-f elder D salmon
‘The old woman dried the salmon.’

¹ Abbreviations: 1 (first person); 2 (second person); 3 (third person); ADV(erb); Ag(ent); APPL(icative); ASP (any of several aspect morphemes); D(eterminer); DIR(ectional prefix); CAUS(ative); COS (change of state); EMPH(atic); F(eminine); FUT(ure); INCEP(tive intransitive); INSTR(ument, instrumental); INTR (detransitivizing suffix); NEG(ative); NOM(inalizing prefix); O(bject); P(reposition); PASS(ive); PL(ural); POSS(essive, possessor); PST (past); PNT(punctual); Q(uantifier); RED (uplication); REP(etitive); S(ubject); S(ingular); st (something); so (someone); ST(ative); SUBJUNCT(ive); TR(ansitivizing suffix).
Boundary symbols: - (affix); = (lexical suffix); + (reduplication).

Hess (1995:29) goes on to add a comment indicating that perhaps a more technical way to capture the synonymy of (1 a-b) would be to say that they can be used to describe the same event: “To say that [1a] and [1b] are synonymous, however, is not to say that they are identical.”

Hess notes that in (1a), attention in the discourse centers on the agent’s activity, “which is typically performed with his/her own ends paramount.” In contrast, (1b) has the typical structure of a transitive stem plus passive $-\text{əb}$, where the patient direct complement (subject) is of central importance in the discourse.²

The foregoing short review of our previous work on $-\text{alik}^w$ points out three potentially fruitful areas of investigation with regard to this suffix and its relationship to other affixes in the Lushootseed lexico-grammatical and lexico-semantic system:

- Is $-\text{alik}^w$ a lexical suffix or a grammatical suffix?
- What are the details of the aspectual qualities of $-\text{alik}^w$?
- What is its distribution in third person narrative texts?

These questions are addressed in turn in the sections below.

2 A lexical suffix?

Our current analysis of $-\text{alik}^w$ is that it is grammatical, rather than lexical. Czaykowska-Higgins and Kinkade (1998:25) give the following brief description of the properties of Salish lexical suffixes.

Lexical suffixes (also known as substantival, referential, or etymological suffixes) are affixes with lexical referents. Most of them refer to nominal concepts (body parts, common items such as ‘blanket’ or ‘house’, geographical entities such as ‘water’, and so on), and they can have concrete senses ... or more metaphorical senses... Included in this class is a pan-Salish morpheme $-\text{tn}$ ‘instrumental’ which serves as a kind of nominalizer. Lexical suffixes may also be used as classifiers or to refer to general categories rather than specific items...

If Lushootseed $-\text{alik}^w$ is truly a lexical suffix, then it fits more with Czaykowska-Higgins’ and Kinkade’s description of $-\text{tn}$ ‘instrumental’ than with the concrete nominals they rightly claim are central to the category of lexical suffix. We suggest that the meaning and function of $-\text{alik}^w$ is even less typical of lexical suffixes than those of $-\text{tn}$. Unlike an instrumental, which often names an implement or instrument (nominal concepts), $-\text{alik}^w$ forms are predicates, with the activity semantics common in predicates. Moreover, $-\text{alik}^w$ seems to

² Bates (1997) argues, with most of the literature on Salish, that $-\text{əb}$ is a passive marker; Bates and Hess (in prep) adopt this position, contra the pedagogical approach taken in Hess (1995, 1998).

be a detransitivizer, forming semantically transitive yet syntactically intransitive predicates. Finally, constructions with *-alik^w* consistently realize an agent in subject position. The following examples illustrate these verbal characteristics of *-alik^w*.

- (2) gəlġ-*alik^w* 'knit'
compare gəlġ-ə*d* 'wind something around something'
- (3) ʔu-gəlġ-*alik^w* čəd ʔə k^wi s-ʔaʃ^wu=alc
fut-wind-ag 1sS P D nom-clam=container
'I am going to make a clam basket (from this that I already have here.)'
- (4) ʔil-*alik^w* dx^w-ʔal k^wi dx^w/ləʃ=ucid
sing/repeat/interpret-ag toward D Lushootseed
'Translate into Lushootseed.'

Examples (1a) and (3-4) show that *-alik^w* renders a predicate intransitive; its patient or theme is relegated to an oblique phrase. More examples appear below.

- (5) cilyi-(a)*lik^w* 'serving up food for others at a feast'
compare *cili-d* 'place something in/on a receptacle'
- (6) dʔub-*alik^w* 'dance'
compare dʔubu-*d* 'kick something'

Not all forms in *-alik^w* are as clearly verbal as (3-6), however. Perhaps the second meaning of (7) and the form in (8), which contains an optional derivational prefix denoting someone who has a proclivity for the action named by the root, argue for lexical suffix status for *-alik^w*.

- (7) bəč-*alik^w* '1. bet, wager 2. clipboard'
compare bəč-*á-d* 'set something down'
- (8) (dx^ws-)sʃay=qs-*alik^w* 'a barber'
compare saʃa-*d* 'scrape something'

The iterative aspect imparted by *-alik^w* seems more verbal than nominal, however. The next section explores this further.

3 Iterative aspect

The forms in (9-14) illustrate the iterative semantics of forms in *-alik^w*.

- (9) *čaʔ-alik^w* 'dig for edible roots and the like'
 compare *čaʔ-əd* 'dig something up (patient oriented)'
čaʔ-əb 'dig st up / dig it out (agent oriented)'
- (10) *g^wəč³-alik^w* 'so regularly seeks something'
 compare *g^wəč³-əd* 'look for so/st (patient oriented)'
g^wəč³-əb 'someone seeks something (agent oriented)'
- (11) *k^wəd-alik^w* 'take again and again (as in fishing)'
 compare *k^wəd-a-d* 'take something, grab so/st'
- (12) *k^wɬ-alik^w* 'serve liquid repeatedly (as to all the guests)'
 compare *k^wɬ-əd* 'pour something'
- (13) *čiχ-alik^w* 'frying'
 compare *čiχi-d* 'fry something'
- (14) *čs-alik^w* 'pecking at something, nailing something'
 compare *čəsə-d* 'peck something, nail something'

The examples in (15-18), however, are less obviously iterative in their aspect.

- (15) *ɬač³-alik^w* 'fight a fire'
 compare *ɬač³a-d* 'put fire out'
- (16) *čəl-alik^w* 'win, prevail'
 compare *čəl-d* 'defeat someone'
- (17) *huy-alik^w* 'create something'
 compare *huyu-d* 'prepare st, do st, make st'
- (18) *tul-alik^w* 'read, translate'
 compare *tulu-d* 'interpret'

Although many forms in *-alik^w* are iterative, (15-18) show that more study is needed on the semantics of this form.

4 Textual distribution

Finally we discuss the distribution of *-alik^w* in a text. The following excerpt, from the scene-setting introductory passage from a long traditional story, shows that *-alik^w* marks an agent that is topic in the discourse. The storyteller introduces the characters in turn. Each character is the topic of the discourse until the next character is introduced. The suffix *-alik^w* appears in line 12.

(19) An excerpt from Martha Lamont's Seal Hunters story (Bierwert 1996:238-9)

1. ʔəs-ʔaʔlil tiʔiʔ ʔi sg^wəlub ʔi
 st-dwell D conj pheasant conj

 tiʔiʔ ʔəʔ+ʔəʔtəd-s, tiʔəʔ ʔiʔ-k^wəlq
 D red+inlaw-3poss D part-other
 'Pheasant dwelled [there] and his brothers-in-law
 [and] others.'
2. dx^ws-x^wiʔ+x^wiʔx^wiʔ.
 procliv-red-hunt
 'They were hunters.'
3. ʔu-x^wiʔx^wiʔ əlg^wəʔ dx^w-ʔaʔk^w.
 asp-hunt 3pl toward-seaward
 'They would hunt out on the water.'
4. ʔu-x^wiʔx^wiʔ əlg^wəʔ dx^w-ʔəʔt.
 asp-hunt 3pl toward-mountainward
 'They would hunt up in the forest.'
- 5-7 ... (more on hunting brothers)
8. g^wəl cədiʔ
 conj pronoun
 'And as for him,'
9. g^wəl ʔu-ʔəyəq.
 conj pnt-hew
 'he just made canoes.'
10. ʔu-ʔəyəq.
 pnt-hew
 'He made canoes.'

11. ʔu-p̄ayəq.
 pnt-hew
 ‘He made canoes.’
12. (c)k̄ʷaqid ʔu-huy-alikʷ ʔə tiʔəʔ d̄ilʔbid.
 always pnt-make-ag P D canoe
 ‘He always crafted canoes.’

Line 8 introduces a character into the narrative, a canoe-maker. This character is the referent for the subject constituent in every clause 9-12. Each clause 9-12 is syntactically intransitive; the oblique phrase in line 12 is the first overt mention of the canoes this character creates.

A note about topic maintenance in Lushootseed discourse can clarify Hess’s (1995) comment about the role assigned by *-alikʷ* its importance in the discourse. The predicate in *-alikʷ* in line 12 assigns agent to the discourse topic and subject, the carver. Lushootseed discourse topics in third person narratives tend to appear in subject position; Lushootseed is similar in this respect to many other languages. Forms in *-alikʷ* behave like other intransitive predicates in this respect.

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