Determiners and Transitivity in Halkomelem Texts

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1. Introduction.[1] When we think of the contributions made by Dale Kinkade to the study of Salish languages, what comes to mind is his important work on comparative Salish phonology and morphology, and his thorough documentation of several languages. But another topic of on-going interest for him has been the structural and narrative properties of texts. In a series of papers (Kinkade 1984, 1989, 1990; Kinkade and Mattina 1996), he has presented research on the central issues—what concepts do we need in order to understand the complexities of Salish texts and what can data from texts tell us about the structure of Salish languages? Other researchers have followed his lead, and a body of literature on Salish discourse has emerged. The central features common to Salish languages are succinctly summarized in Czaykowska-Higgins and Kinkade (1998:37–39).

All Salish languages are verb initial. Some are basically VSO and others are VOS, though many languages allow either order. Direct arguments are unmarked for case. Both third-person subjects and objects can be zero, though (some) subjects and objects license agreement. In theory, this leads to potential ambiguities. However, in practice, various strategies come into play that limit the range of possibilities. For example, there is a strong tendency, especially in texts, to disallow clauses with two overt post-verbal NPs. Furthermore, in many languages a single post-verbal NP is interpreted as the object, not the subject, as illustrated by the Halkomelem data in (1):[2]

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[2] Abbreviations for grammatical categories used here are as follows. ACT: activity, AUX: auxiliary, CON: connective, CONF: confirmative ('it is said'), CS: causative, DT: determiner, EMPH: emphatic, ERG:

(1) niʔ lem-ət-əs k̓ʷθə swəy̓qeʔ.
AUX look-TR-ERG DT man
'He/she/it looked at the man.'
not: 'The man looked at him/her/it.'

This has become known as the One NP Intepretation (ONI) condition (following Gerdts 1988b). This condition is correlated with the topic effect: an on-going topic in a discourse tends to be zero (Beck 1998a, 2000; Davis 2001; Gerdts and Hukari 2003; Kroeber 1995; Roberts 1994). Topics in Salish languages are usually the subject (Beck 1996a, 1996b, 2000; Davis 1994; Kinkade 1990). Furthermore, objects do not make good topics in Salish languages (Beck 1998b; Gerdts and Hukari 2003; Kinkade 1989, 1990; Roberts 1994). The object position is used to provide information about the event pertaining to the topical subject. Non-agentive NPs that are topical are usually expressed in clauses with alternative morphology—passive (Boelscher 1990, Kinkade 1987), non-topical ergative (Doak 1991, 1997:262ff.; Kroeber 1995; Mattina 2001), or topical object constructions (Davis 1994; Kinkade 1987, 1989, 1990). Nevertheless, zero objects are fairly common. They occur in clauses in which the subject is also zero and where there is a parallelism effect between the two NPs and their recent expression in other clauses (Davis 1994, Gerdts and Hukari 2003, Roberts 1994).

In practice, then, we see there are means of limiting the occurrence of NPs and this helps to disambiguate reference to subjects and objects in transitive clauses. In this paper, we discuss another means of distinguishing subject and object NPs—determiners. Hukari (1979) has noted that an NP modified by a determiner based on the third-person pronoun *niɬ* must be interpreted as a transitive subject, even if it is the sole post-verbal NP.[3]

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ergative, FUT: future, IMPF: imperfective, INC: inchoative, LCTR: limited control transitive, NM: nominalizer, OBJ: object, OBL: oblique, PAS: passive, PST: past, PL: plural, POS: possessive, REC: reciprocal, REFL: reflexive, RES: resultative, SER: serial, SSUB: subordinate subject, ST: stative, TR: transitive. Rhetorical lengthening is indicated by the symbol — after the vowel.

[3] Suttles (in press) has also noted this effect for the Downriver dialect of Halkomelem.

(2) niʔ lem-ət-əs tᵊəẇniɬ[4] swəẏqeʔ.
AUX look-TR-ERG this.one man
'This man looked at him/her/them.'
not: 'He/she/they looked at this man.'

Thus, the determiner in (2), which we refer to as a *niɬ*-determiner, forces a different interpretation than the plain determiner in (1). This results in a systematic violation of the otherwise inviolable ONI condition. We demonstrate, on the basis of data from texts, that phrases containing a *niɬ*-determiner occur almost exclusively as subjects. Thus, in transitive clauses, they are an important signal of ergatives versus objects. As a result, Halkomelem determiners function as a *de facto* case system, allowing NPs in transitive clauses to be easily interpreted.

In developing our case, we will first review the evidence concerning the overt expression of ergatives in Halkomelem, in section 1. Next, we will briefly describe Halkomelem determiners, focusing on the function of *niɬ*-determiners, in section 2. *Niɬ*-determiner phrases appear in a variety of argument positions, though their use as objects is quite limited, as shown in section 3. Overt ergative NPs almost exclusively appear with *niɬ*-determiners. The exceptions are discussed in section 4. The overall pattern of subject and object marking is summarized in our conclusion.

2. The expression of NPs in three Halkomelem texts. To make clearer the scope of the phenomena we are dealing with, we refer to three texts in the Island dialect of Halkomelem collected by Tom Hukari. The first text, "*qeṅ tᵊə qʷəni ʔə tᵊə səṁšaθət:* Seagull Steals the Sun" (Seagull), was told by Ellen White on May 8, 1977. This 310-sentence story tells of Seagull's tricking Sun into a box, darkening the world, and the efforts of Raven and his sidekicks to get Sun released. This text is published as Hukari et al. (1977). Citations refer to line numbers in the published version. The second text is "*tᵊə swiẇləs niʔ xʷəʔesxʷ:* The Young Man that Turned into a Seal" (Seal), told by Wilfred Sampson on March 25, 1976. This 303-sentence story tells of a young man who is captured by the seals he is hunting, lives with them, and eventually

[4] We have glossed this form as 'this.one' since it is composed of a determiner and emphatic third person form.

becomes a seal. The story details the various unsuccessful attempts of his family and friends to rescue him. Eventually, they kill him and bring him home. The third text is *"ċəsqəṅ:* Golden Eagle" (Eagle) told by Wilfred Sampson on August 5, 1977. This 828-sentence saga tells of a young man abandoned to die on a cliff by a deceitful friend and saved by eagles, who become his faithful companions. It is also a story of renewal. After briefly returning home to assure his parents that he is alive, he returns with his eagle friends to the mountains on a spirit quest. He encounters people who train him as a shaman and provide him with shamanic tools. He returns home to defeat his deceitful friend and to become a wealthy and powerful shaman.

All three texts were transcribed and translated by Ruby Peter and edited by Tom Hukari. They are action/adventure stories with many different third persons entering and exiting, and thus are excellent for the purpose of a study on the expression of ergative and object NPs. We have identified 29 transitive clauses in which both subject and object are third persons in Seagull, 52 in Seal, and 109 in Eagle. Given the overall length of the texts, we see that such transitive clauses are not all that common. Intransitive clauses far out number transitives, and passive clauses are also quite frequent, outnumbering active clauses in certain contexts.[5] Details concerning the expression of NPs in each text are given in Table 1.[6]

[5] See Gerdts and Hukari (2003) for a comparison of the frequencies of active vs. passive clauses in the first two texts.

[6] For the counts of data represented in this table, we did not include pre-verbal NPs, including NPs in sentence-initial focus position and NPs within verb chains (Gerdts and Hukari 2003).

	Seagull		**Seal**		**Eagle**		**Total**	
	#	**%**	**#**	**%**	#	**%**	**#**	**%**
Subject and object are overt NPs	3	10%	4	8%	18	17%	31	13%
Only overt NP is subject	1	3%	2	4%	11	10%	18	7%
Only overt NP is object	15	52%	28	54%	57	52%	125	51%
Both subject and object are zero	10	35%	18	35%	23	21%	73	30%
Total 3rd person/ 3rd person	29	100%	52	100%	109	100%	247	100%

TABLE 1. NPs in Transitive Clauses in Three Halkomelem Texts

Overall, our findings are not surprising given what other researchers have said about Salish syntax. We find relative few clauses with two overt NPs.[7] If there is pressure to reduce the number of NPs, then the subject NP is a good candidate to be zero, especially when it is a continued topic through a section of text. Also, a single overt NP is usually the object. Non-topic NPs, including object NPs, tend to be overt, even when they closely follow an overt expression of the same or similar NP.[8] We see this, for example, with the overt expression of *siyeyə* 'friends' in the pair of sentences (3) and (4):

(3) s-əẇ-əyeʔ-s ťakʷ tᵊə spal̓
NM-CON-depart-3POS go.home DT raven
s-əẇ-ʔa·-t-s tᵊə siyeyə-s.
NM-CON-call-TR-3POS DT friend(PL)-3POS
'And so the raven went home. And he called his friends.'
(Seagull 160–161)

[7] Clauses with two overt NPs are discussed in Gerdts and Hukari (2003). That 13% of the total clauses in Table 1 are of this type shows that avoidance of two NPs is a tendency, but not a hard constraint.

[8] See Gerdts and Hukari (2003) for further examples.

(4) niʔ yaθ ʔəẇ-x̌əɬəs-t-əs tᵉəẇniɬ tᵉeẏ
AUX always CON-dine(IMPF)-TR-3ERG this.one DT
təẇ si·yeẏə-s.
sort.of friend(PL)-3POS
'He always fed his friends.' (Seagull 161–162)

The objects in these examples express information relating to the topic, that is, they form part of the comment on the topic and, as such, they frequently serve as overt elaborations.

Based on the above discussion, we can form two idealized principles concerning the expression of subjects and objects in transitive clauses.

(5) a. Topic effect: Ergatives should be zero.
b. Comment effect: Objects should be overt.

We can see how these principles relate to the data in Table 1. We have reformatted the results, as in Table 2:

	Zero subject	Overt subject	Total
Overt object	51%	13%	64%
Zero object	30%	7%	37%
Total	81%	20%	100%

TABLE 2. Overt vs. Zero NPs

The topic effect is stronger: transitive clauses have zero subjects in 81% of our data; while the comment effect is weaker: overt objects appear in only 64% our data. Putting it another way, we can see how the two principles relate to each clause type.

	1 NP = object 51%	No overt NPs 30%	2 NPs 13%	1 NP = subject 7%
Zero subject	yes	yes	no	no
Overt object	yes	no	yes	no

TABLE 3. Two Principles

The preferred construction will be the one that satisfies both principles. This will be the clause in which the sole NP is object, and over half of the data is of this clause type. Among the clause types that satisfy one of the principles, the clause type that satisfies the topic effect is preferred over one that violates it. Clauses with no overt NPs appear in 30% of the data. In our sample of third-person on third-person transitive clauses, zero objects most commonly appear when the subject, i.e. the topic, is also zero. In

this case, interclausal parallelism links subjects to subjects and non-subjects to non-subjects (Gerdts and Hukari 2003). This happens most often within a chain of events with a continuing topic. Thus, zero NPs can be used to good effect for discourse cohesion.

In contrast, the clauses that violate the topic effect but satisfy the comment effect, that is, clauses with two overt NPs, appear in only 13% of the data. Finally, clauses that violate both of the principles are rare; we find them in only 7% of the data. In total, overt ergative NPs appear 20% of the time. When are overt ergatives used? As discussed in Gerdts and Hukari (2003), NP topics, though usually zero, are periodically refreshed in a long section, or re-established after dialogue. Also, sections tend to end with an overt expression of the topic.[9]

The following are some typical examples of overt ergative NPs. Example (6) shows an overt ergative in a clause in which the object is also overt and (7) and (8) show clauses with zero objects:

(6) yaθ ʔəẇ-seẇq̇-t-əs tᵊəẇneʔəlɬ
always CON-seek(IMPF)-TR-3ERG this.one(PL)
tᵊeẏ kʷ̓iʔxʷ syałˑ
DT pitch wood
'They always looked for the pitch wood.' (Seagull 137)

(7) kʷ̓ən-nəxʷ-əs tᵊəẇniɬ swiẇləs.
take-LCTR:3OBJ-3ERG this.one young.man
'The young man caught what he was after.' (Seal 287)

(8) s-əẇ-x̌ɬas-t-s tᵊəẇniɬ spa·l̓.
NM-CON-dine-TR-3ERG this.one raven
'And the raven fed them.' (Seagull 164)

In working with examples like these, one thing became clear to us: there is an overwhelming propensity for the overt ergative to be expressed with a *niɬ*-determiner. This led to a more systematic study of determiners, as reported below. First, we give a brief overview of the Halkomelem determiner system.

[9] Hedberg and Dueck (1999) report similar findings in Cakchiquel (Mayan).

3. Determiners: An overview. Halkomelem has several types of determiners, including articles and demonstratives. We discuss three types of determiners in this paper. All NPs, even proper nouns, appear with determiners, within determiner phrases (DPs), when they are arguments of a verb or preposition.

Semantically, articles refer to definite and indefinite NPs indiscriminately, as is general in Salish languages (Matthewson 1998). Syntactically, articles must be followed by an NP.[10] Halkomelem has a large set of articles, but the key ones used in this paper are:

	NEUTRAL	FEMININE
PROXIMAL	*tᵉə*	*θə*
DISTAL	*kʷθə,* *kʷə*	*ɬə*

TABLE 4. Some Halkomelem Articles

Neutral articles are used with nouns referring to men and things, and with plural NPs. Feminine articles are used with singular nouns referring to a woman or the possessions of a woman, e.g. *θə sɬeni?* 'the woman', *θə kəpu* 'the coat'. They are also commonly used with NPs referring to money, houses, and vessels (ships, canoes, etc.). Diminutive NPs also commonly take feminine articles. Articles distinguish proximal and distal. Proximal articles mark NPs that are in the speaker's perceptual space, and distal articles mark NPs that are out of the speaker's perceptual space. In story telling, proximal articles register the cognitive space of the protagonists, and thus they are quite common.[11]

The articles are used as a basis for a set of demonstratives, generally translated 'that':

	NEUTRAL	FEMININE
PROXIMAL	*tᵉeẏ*	*θeẏ*
DISTAL	*kʷθeẏ*	*ɬeẏ*

TABLE 5. Some Halkomelem Demonstratives

In contrast to articles, demonstratives can stand alone without an NP head. So both *θeẏ sɬeni?* 'that woman (in view)' and *θeẏ* 'that

[10] Determiner-headed relatives are discussed in Gerdts (1988b), Hukari (1977), and Kroeber (1999:258ff.).

[11] See Bates (1999) for a discussion of the use of determiners in a Lushootseed text.

(female, in view)' are possible. We refer to the articles in Table 4 and the demonstratives in Table 5 with the cover term "plain determiners".

Plain determiners contrast with complex demonstratives, which are formed from articles, the connective particle *ʔəẇ,* and the third-person emphatic pronoun *niɬ* (or its plural *neʔəlɬ*).[12]

	NEUTRAL		FEMININE
	SINGULAR	PLURAL	SINGULAR
PROXIMAL	*tᵊəẇniɬ*	*tᵊəẇneʔəlɬ*	*θəẇniɬ*
DISTAL	*kʷθəẇniɬ*	*kʷθəẇneʔəlɬ*	*ɬəẇniɬ*

TABLE 6. *Niɬ*-Determiners

Niɬ-determiners are used alone, e.g. *θəẇniɬ* 'that one (female, in view)', or with an NP, *tᵊəẇniɬ swəẏqeʔ* 'that man (in view)'. Sentential examples of both types of uses were given in section 2 above. We refer to these two uses collectively as *niɬ*-DPs, having found no difference in their syntactic range of occurrence.

Although they are not common in elicited or conversational data, *niɬ*-DPs are fairly frequent in texts—for some speakers, extremely frequent. They are anaphoric in the sense that they link to information introduced previously in discourse (or in the common ground of culturally shared information).[13] Thus, they refer to a participant that is already "activated" in the story, and thus are often translated in English as pronouns.[14, 15] Examples like the following show that, like pronouns in English, more than one *niɬ*-DP can appear referring to the same referent in a single sentence:

[12] Wiltschko (2002) gives a formal analysis of the structure of the corresponding demonstratives in the Upriver dialect of Halkomelem.

[13] See Gerdts et al. (in prep.) for a detailed discussion of the discourse function of *niɬ*-DPs.

[14] Gundel et al. (1993) define an activated referent as one that is represented in current short-term memory or one that can be retrieved from long-term memory. They discuss the relationship of activation and pronominal forms and also the demonstrative pronoun *that* in English.

[15] The notion of activated noun is similar to d(iscourse)-topic, as used by Davis (1994).

(9) s-əẇ-θk̓ʷə-θət tᵉəẇniɬ s-əẇ-ɬaq̓ə-θət,
NM-CON-stretch-REFL this.one NM-CON-lie-REFL
ni—xʷ c̓ə ʔəẇ-ʔiʔtət ʔəl̓ tᵉəẇniɬ.
AUX:perhaps CONF CON-sleep(IMPF) just this.one
'Stretching himself out, he lay down, he then just fell asleep.' (Eagle 216)

(10) s-əẇ-xʷəṅ netəɬ, xʷəṅ netəɬ ʔiʔ wəɬ
NM-CON-become morning become morning and then
k̓ʷənətəs tᵉəẇniɬ tᵉey̓ yəsel̓ə c̓əsqəṅ,
take-TR-3ERG this.one DT two golden.eagle
s-ə-s ʔəẇ-ɬx̌iləš tᵉəẇniɬ .
NM-AUX-3POS CON-stand this.one
'So when morning came, very early in the morning, he grabbed the two golden eagles and stood up.' (Eagle 206)

In all of the above examples, the *niɬ*-DP serves as subject (and also usually as topic) of its clause. However, other examples show *niɬ*-DPs in other syntactic positions, as discussed in section 3 below. In example (11), we see one *niɬ*-DP as the subject and the other as a possessor within the appositive construction:

(11) s-əẇ-ɬe·l θəẇniɬ q̓eṁiʔ
NM-CON-go.ashore this.one young.woman
stal̓əs-θ tᵉəẇniɬ swiẇləs.
spouse-3POS this.one young.man
'This young woman, this young man's spouse, went to shore.' (Seal 45)

In (12) the intransitive subject, which is a *niɬ*-DP is conjoined with another NP that is possessed by a *niɬ*-DP:

(12) məkʷ ʔəncə š-neẇ-s tᵉəẇneʔəlɬ
all where NM:OBL-go-3POS this.one(PL)
swaẇləs ʔiʔ tᵉə (ʔ)əẇ (w)əɬ
young.man(PL) and DT CON then
sʔəl̓eləxʷ ʔiʔ tᵉə mens tᵉəẇniɬ
elder(PL) and DT father-3POS this.one
swiẇləs.
young.man
'They all looked everywhere, the young men, the elders, and the young man's father.' (Seal 66)

In sum, *niɬ*-DPs can refer to any nominal that has been activated in the text and thus should not be equated with topic or focus. However, as we discuss below, activation naturally associates *niɬ*-DPs with subjects, including ergatives, which are ongoing topics. First, we turn to a more detailed examination of the syntactic contexts in which *niɬ*-DPs appear.

4. The distribution of *niɬ*-DPs. In examining our three texts, we find that *niɬ*-DPs occupy a variety of argument positions. Table 7 summarizes their occurrence:

	Seagull		**Seal**		**Eagle**		**Total**	
	#	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
intransitive subject	27	75	53	75	174	62	254	65
passive subject[16]	3	8	7	10	38	13	48	12
ergative	4	11	5	7	37	13	46	12
possessor	2	5	4	6	28	10	34	9
oblique object	0	0	1	1	3	1	4	1
object	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	1
total	36	99	70	99	282	100	388	100

TABLE 7. Distribution of *niɬ*-Determiners in Three Texts

[16] We use the term 'passive subject' here for the grammatical role of the passive patient, side-stepping the debate concerning the syntactic structure of passives in Halkomelem (Gerdts 1988b, Gerdts and Hukari 2001, Wiltschko 2001.).

The majority of *niɬ*-DPs are subjects and possessors; 98% of their use in our data.[17] By far the most common use is as subject of an intransitive clause, as in (13) and (14).

(13) ʔaʔmət tᵉəẇniɬ s-q̇əq̇aʔ ʔə tᵉeẏ
sit(IMPF) this.one ST-gather(RES) OBL DT
qa—x̌ ʔesxʷ.
many seal
'He was sitting amongst many seals.' (Seal 100)

(14) həyeʔ tᵉəẇniɬ ʔesxʷ neṁ qʷsə-θət ʔə
depart this.one seal go submerge-REFL OBL
tᵉə qaʔ.
DT water
'And the seal left, going into the water.' (Seal 21)

However, as illustrated above, *niɬ*-DPs can be ergatives. See, for example, (6), (7), and (8). We find this in 12% of our data.

Since an activated noun in a text is frequently a higher animate (including personified story characters), often there are possessed parts or items associated with it, and thus we frequently see *niɬ*-DPs used as possessors:

(15) x̌ə l̓əc̓ c̓ə θə celəš-s tᵉəẇniɬ səṁšaθət,
short(PL) CONF DT hand-3POS this.one sun
ʔəwə x̌el̓əqtəs.
not long(PL)
'The sun's hands were short, they were not long.' (Seagull 85–86)

[17] As in many languages of the world, subjects and possessors in Halkomelem share many properties. For example, they both appear as direct case NPs and license agreement on their heads (the verb or the possessum).

(16) ƛ̓əẇ ni? tᵊə sqeʔeq-s tᵊəẇniɬ
too:CON AUX DT younger.sibling-3POS this.one
swiləs ni? ʔikʷ̓.
young.man AUX lost
'The younger brother of the lost man was there too.' (Seal 78)

In only a handful of examples do we find the *niɬ*-DP occupying a position other than subject or possessor. In (17), we see a *niɬ*-DP in object position.

(17) s-əẇ-qʷals tᵊə naṅəċaʔ sʔeləxʷ, tᵊeẏ
NM-CON-speak DT one.person elder DT
naṅəċaʔ sʔeləxʷ nəẇ leƚəṁ-ət
one.person elder AUX:CON look(IMPF)-TR
tᵊəẇniɬ…
this.one
'So this elder speaks, this elder that has been looking after him…' (Eagle 431)

In this example, the ergative NP is in a clause-initial focus position. It is extracted as evidenced by the lack of third-person ergative agreement on the verb *leƚəṁət* 'looking after him': extraction constructions based on ergatives trigger anti-agreement on the verb. When the object rather than the ergative is extracted, the third-person agreement remains on the embedded verb:

(18) məkʷ̓-stem sʔəɬtən ʔiʔ ʔəẇ-ʔaʔləx̌-ət-əs
all-what food and CON-select(IMPF)-TR-3ERG
tᵊəẇniɬ swiẇləs kʷ̓əṅa-təl ʔə tᵊə
this.one young.man take-REC OBL DT
šxʷʔaq̇ʷaʔ-s.
sibling-3POS
'This young man got all kinds of food with his brother.' (Seal 5)

The following example parallels (17) in that the ergative subject of *ɬəyx̌-t* 'eat' is in clause-initial focus position while the *niɬ*-DP refers to the object.

(19) “ʔəẇ-həli-t-eṅ ʔiʔ xʷə-ʔəwə-teʔ ceʔ ste—m
CON-save-TR-1SSUB and INC-not-exist FUT what
šxʷ-ʔəẏ-s, ʔəẇ-meʔ-š-eṅ kʷθə
NM:OBL-good-3POS CON-remove-TR-1SSUB DT
niʔ xʷə-kʷəṅ-elṡ ʔə tᵉəẇniɬ ʔəẇ-sweʔ-s
AUX INC-take-ACT OBL this.one CON-own-3POS
tᵉəẇniɬ kʷθey, kʷeẏ niʔ ɬəyx̌-t tᵉəẇniɬ,
this.one DT DT AUX eat-TR this.one
kʷθey ʔəẇ-sweʔ-s.”
DT CON-own-3POS

‘“If I save him he won't be good for anything, if I take off what holds him, what has him, what eats him, that which has him, which is his own.”’ (Eagle 780)

It is probably no coincidence that both of our examples of a *niɬ*-DP in object position involve the extraction of the ergative. Since anti-agreement clearly signals that the pre-verbal DP is the ergative, the *niɬ*-DP is free to refer to a non-subject argument.

Example (19) also contains a *niɬ*-DP as the oblique object of the antipassive verb *kʷəṅ-elṡ* ‘hold’ (Gerdts and Hukari 2000). Another example of an oblique object of an antipassive is seen in (20):

(20) s-əẇ-iθx̌ʷa—-t-əs tᵉeẏ niʔ neṁ kʷu·ns
NM-CON-wash-TR-3ERG DT AUX go stuck.to
ʔə tᵉəẇniɬ.
OBL this.one

‘And he washed off what was stuck to him.’ (Eagle 528)

The oblique *niɬ*-DP in (21) is an object of comparison.

(21) k̓ʷən-n-əm tᵉə naṅəċaʔ swiẇləs
take-LCTR-PAS DT one.person young.man
sƛ̓iʔƛ̓qəɬ niɬ hay-ʔəl̓ wəɬ x̌ʷəm
child 3EMPH only-just then fast
ʔə tᵉəẇneʔəlɬ niʔ ʔə tᵉeẏ xʷəlməxʷ.
OBL this.one(PL) AUX OBL DT Indian.person
'They then found one young man that was the fastest runner among their Indian families.' (Seal 146)

Examples (17), (19), (20), and (21) are the only cases that we have found in which the *niɬ*-DP is not the subject or possessor. The presence of the oblique preposition or anti-agreement in the case of the extraction examples leaves no doubt about the grammatical relational of the *niɬ*-DP.

5. Determiners, subjects, and objects. In the previous section, we have shown that *niɬ*-DPs in transitive clauses predominantly appear as ergatives and not objects. This brings up the question: are other determiners besides *niɬ*-determiners used on ergatives? To answer this we take one of our texts—Eagle, since it has the greatest number of overt NPs—and note the determiner appearing on each ergative or object DP.[18] The data are summarized in Table 8.

	tᵉə (NP)		**tᵉeẏ (NP)**		**tᵉəẇniɬ (NP)**	
	#	**%**	#	**%**	#	**%**
ergative (48)	6	13	3	6	39	81
object (98)	67	68	31	32	0	0

TABLE 8. Determiners on Ergatives and Objects in Eagle

A clear pattern emerges. *Niɬ*-DPs are commonly used as ergatives, but not objects, as discussed above. Moreover, overt ergatives are overwhelmingly expressed as *niɬ*-DPs. Plain determiners (e.g. *tᵉə* and *tᵉeẏ)* are used less than 20% of the time in ergative DPs. In

[18] In order to increase our sample size, we included NPs in verb chains and also in clauses with first- and second-person subjects and objects. We excluded NPs in sentence-initial focus position, and thus the data discussed above in examples (17) and (18) are not reflected in these numbers.

contrast, plain determiners rather than *niɬ*-determiners are consistently used in object DPs.

What this means is that determiners can be used to good effect when there is only one DP to tell whether it is ergative or object. Also, if there are two direct-case DPs, in whatever word order, ergative can be easily distinguished from object, even if both nouns are animates. Example (22) illustrates this point: the ergative takes a *niɬ*-determiner while the object takes a plain determiner:

(22) ʔəwə k̓ʷəʔeɬ niʔ-əs cə-stəx̓ʷ-əs tᵉəẇniɬ
not indeed AUX-3SSUB do-CS:3OBJ-3ERG this.one
səʔasəqʷt tᵉə šəyəɬ-s-əɬ.
younger.sibling DT older.sibling-3POS-PST
'The younger brother didn't do anything about his older brother.' (Seal 101)

See (4) above for another example.

In sum, we can see how *niɬ*-determiners function like case markers since they are used in ergative but not object DPs. What remains, however, is an examination of the data involving an ergative DP with a plain determiner. As seen in Table 8, there are nine examples of ergatives of this type in Eagle.

Since *niɬ*-DPs are used to refer to already activated nouns, they are not appropriate when there is a topic shift with new information in ergative position. Transitive clauses are generally not used for this function, as noted in Gerdts and Hukari (2003), and no examples were found in Seal and Seagull. However, one example of this type appears in Eagle:[19]

(23) s-əẇ-q̓pə-t-əs tᵉeẏ naṅəċaʔ swiẇləs
NM-CON-gather-TR-3ERG DT one.person young.man
tᵉə niʔ šəṅcəs ʔeɬtən s-ə-s
DT AUX catch-3POS 3PL NM-AUX-3POS

[19] We do not have enough data in these texts to make further claims, but there may be a relative ranking of demonstratives *(tᵉeẏ,* etc.) versus articles (*tᵉə,* etc.) as well, with the former being preferred on ergatives when the latter is used on objects.

ʔəẇ-tʼəḵʷ-stəxʷ-əs.
CON-go.home-CS:3OBJ-3ERG

'The other young man gathered their catch and went home.' (Eagle 150)

The last mention of the young man was in line 136. Sentences 137–149 focus on his partner, who has been left in the eagle's nest. (It is a clever story-telling device, emphasizing the partner's sense of uncertainty, to not make reference to the young man who has left him.) Thus the duplicitous partner is re-introduced in this passage by the deictic determiner *tᵊeẏ̓*.

Another typical use of a plain DP as an ergative is when the noun carries a generic meaning such as 'people', 'elders', or 'natives'.

(24) yəqw-t-s tᵊə məstimәxʷ tᵊeẏ̓ ƛ̓eɬ̓əqt sc̓ešt
burn-TR-3POS DT person that long(PL) stick
—ni—ʔ sťe ʔəẇ-niˑs sḵʷənšətən-s
AUX like CON-AUX:3SSUB lantern-3POS
ḵʷ-s neṁ yə-ʔiʔməš niʔ
DT-NM go SER-walk(IMPF) AUX
yə-s-t̓ᶿeɬ̓ᶿəḵʷ tᵊə yə-šɬəṁe-s.
SER-ST-illuminate(RES) DT SER-way-3POS

'The people burned long sticks—like lanterns shining where they were going.' (Seagull 110–114)

(25) x̌əťə-stxʷ-əs tᵊə sʔəɬ̓eləxʷ neṁ
tell(IMPF)-CS:3OBJ-3ERG DT elder(PL) go
ḵʷay-θət.
ritual.bathe-REFL

'He went to take the ritual bath, as the elders called it.' (Eagle 347)

Use of a generic ergative in our texts does not occur in examples with potential ambiguity. The object is usually inanimate and also sometimes fronted.

In sum, any time the ergative is not marked with a *niɬ*-determiner, there are other means for disambiguating ergative from object. These other strategies do not diminish our results, however, since *niɬ*-determiners often appear on ergatives even

when other strategies would have sufficed. For example, the post-verbal NP in (18) above, is necessarily the ergative, since it is clear from the verbal morphology that the object is extracted. Furthermore, inanimate NPs cannot be ergatives (Gerdts 1988a), yet examples like the following with an ergative *niɬ*-DP and an inanimate object are common:

(26) s-əẇ-k^{w}ən-ət-əs tᵊəẇneʔəlɬ tᵊeẏ.
NM-CON-take-TR-3ERG this.one(PL) DT
'So they picked it up (the rope).' (Eagle 28)

(27) s-əẇ-yə-θəy-t-əs tᵊəẇneʔəlɬ tᵊə leləm̓-s,
NM-CON-SER-fix-TR-3POS this.one(PL) DT house-3POS
x̌əťə-st-əm̓ sʔi·ltəẇtx^{w}.
call(IMPF)-CS-PAS lean.to
'But first they fixed themselves a shelter, called a lean-to.' (Eagle 38)

The above discussion leads to the following conclusion. The use of a *niɬ*-DP is triggered by discourse considerations (Gerdts et al. in prep.). Thus, some ergatives are not expressed as *niɬ*-DPs and, furthermore, some objects are. Nevertheless, the strong correlation between activated NP and topic, which in Salish languages is the subject, means that *niɬ*-DPs in transitive clauses are almost exclusively the ergative. Unless there is evidence to the contrary, such as fronting or oblique marking, the speaker can use the determiner as a default strategy for signaling the subject.

6. Conclusion. In verb-initial languages, there is potential confusion in the interpretation of two post-verbal arguments. In general, Salish languages avoid two NPs and interpret the sole DP in a transitive clause as the non-topical object. However, we have found in Halkomelem that there is occasionally a need to express an overt ergative DP. Overt subjects are used to refresh or re-establish an on-going topic or to begin or end a section. One set of determiners—the *niɬ*-determiners—is used to express already activated DPs in the story. *Niɬ*-DPs are predominantly used for subjects, including ergatives, and possessors. In rare examples, we also see object or oblique object *niɬ*-DPs. Because of this range of occurrence, the *niɬ*-determiner cannot be considered a case marker *per se*. However, since, in practice, ergatives and objects are

usually marked by different types of determiners, Halkomelem has a *de facto* case system, which can be used to help distinguish ergative from object DPs.[20]

To our knowledge, this is the first evidence to suggest that determiners are used in this way in Salish languages. This discovery never could have been made through elicited data alone. Speakers have a wide range of judgments concerning the acceptability of combinations of DPs marked with various determiners in various word orders. However, the study of examples from texts has revealed a systematic pattern. We hope that our exploration of determiners and transitivity in Halkomelem contributes to an understanding of the intricacies of discourse structure in Salish languages.

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[20] Case-marking strategies have been noted for other uses in Salish languages. See discussion of non-topical subject marking in Doak (1991, 1997), Kroeber (1995), and Mattina (2001).

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