The function of Salish applicatives[1]

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Many syntactic analyses of applicative constructions concentrate on their formal structure: the properties of the arguments associated with the NPs and the internal structure of the verb complex. But what formal analyses fail to capture is the way applicatives function. Sometimes grammatical factors do not determine the choice between the applicative construction and its non-applicative counterpart. In this paper, we discuss applicative constructions in Salish languages. We find that the applicative almost always adds an extra semantic "kick" not present in the non-applicative. Often the applied object is affected by the action. Also there is a tendency for animate NPs to be expressed as applied object rather than oblique. The applied object often appears to be highly topical or central to the story. In sum, applicative constructions have semantic and discourse as well as a syntactic functions.

1   Salish applicatives

Salishan languages, a family of 23 languages spoken in the Pacific Northwest, are known for their polysynthetic structure. They exhibit a large number of affixes (prefixes, suffixes, and infixes) and reduplications that encode grammatical notions such as agreement and transitivity. In this paper, we discuss constructions formed with one type of suffix—applicatives. There are twelve different applicative suffixes in Salish languages. Each Salish language has from two to six suffixes. These suffixes signal the semantic role of the applied object in an applicative construction.

As previously shown in Kiyosawa (1999, 2000, 2002), Salish languages have two types of applicative constructions—redirective and relational. In redirective applicative constructions, the direct object role is redirected to a non-theme nominal—the applied object. The verb stem is usually

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transitive, and the semantic role of the applied object is usually goal, malefactive, possessor, or, as in (1), benefactive.[2]

(1)   a.   niʔ   ləkʷ-at-əs   kʷθə   sċešt.   *Halkomelem* (f.n.)
             AUX   break-TR-3ERG   DET   stick
             'She broke the stick.'

    b.   niʔ   ləkʷ-**əłc**-t-əs   tθə   swiẃləs   ʔə   kʷθə   sċešt.
             AUX   break-BEN-TR-3ERG   DET   boy   OBL   DET   stick
             'She broke the stick for the boy.'

In relational applicative constructions, the verb stem is usually intransitive, and the semantic role of the applied object is usually goal or direction of motion as in (2), stimulus of a psychological or perceptual event as in (3), goal of a speech act, source, or undergoer of an adverse event.

(2)   a.   niʔ   neṁ   kʷθə   swiẃləs.   *Halkomelem* (f.n.)
             AUX   go   DET   boy
             'The boy went.'

    b.   niʔ   nəʔeṁ-**nəs**-əs   kʷθə   John.
             AUX   go-DIR-3ERG   DET   John
             'He went up to John.'

(3)   a.   ni   cən   siʔsiʔ   ʔə   kʷθə   snəxʷəł.   *Halkomelem* (f.n.)
             AUX   1SUB   frighten   OBL   DET   canoe
             'I was frightened at the car.'

    b.   ni   cən   siʔsiʔ-**meʔ**-t   kʷθə   sqʷəmeẏ.
             AUX   1SUB   frighten-REL-TR   DET   dog
             'I was frightened at the dog.'

       We have previously discussed the morphosyntax of Salish applicatives. (See especially Gerdts 1988b, Gerdts and Kiyosawa 2005.) However, there has been little research concerning the reasons for using applicative constructions. In fact, in some cases there is no obvious difference between using an applicative

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[2] The following abbreviations are used in glossing the data: ABS.DET: absent determiner, ART: article, AUX: auxiliary, BEN: benefactive applicative, CMPL: completive enclitic, CS: causative, DAT: dative applicative, DET: determiner, DIM: diminutive, DIR: directional, ERG: ergative, EXIS: existential enclitic, FOC: focus, FUT: future, IM: immediate, IMP: imperative, IMPF: imperfect, INCHO: inchoative, IND: indirective applicative, INT: introductory, IRR: irrealis, LCTR: limited control transitive, LNK: linker, NEG: negative, NOM: nominalizer, OBJ: object, OBL: oblique, PASS: passive, PERF: perfect, PL: plural, POS: possessor applicative, POSS: possessive marker, PREP: preposition, Q: interrogative, RDP: reduplication, RDR: redirective applicative, REFL: reflexive, REL: relational applicative, SER: serial, SG: singular, SSUB: subordinate subject, SUB: subject, TOP: nontopical subject marker, TR: transitive.

construction and its non-applicative counterpart. We hope to shed light on this topic by discussion some of the functions that applicative constructions play in Salish languages.

2   Extra semantic "kick"

In Salish languages, applicatives almost always have an extra semantic kick. For example, in the possessive applicative in (4), the applied object is not only a possessor of the theme, but also semantically implied as a benefactive.

(4)   Mary   ʕác-ɬ-t-s   iʔ   ttw̓it   iʔ   kəwáp-s.
           Mary   tie-POS-TR-3ERG   ART   boy   ART   horse-3POSS
           'Mary tied the boy's horse (for him).' *Okanagan* (N. Mattina 1993:265)

Also, in the malefactive applicatives (5), 'tea' does not appear with a possessive marker, yet the English translation indicates that 'tea' belongs to the sufferer—'me'.

(5)   ʔúqʷeʔ-**x**-cm-s   tə   tíy.
           drink-RDR-TR:1SG.OBJ-3ERG   OBL   tea
           'She drank my tea up on me.' *Thompson* (Thompson & Thompson
               1980:28)

The applied object is thus both a possessor and malefactive. Note that NPs expressed simply as possessors in non-applicative constructions do not carry this extra semantic force:

(6)   neʔ   xʷuyst   xʷe   gʷeɬ   hncəcíy̓eʔ.
           neʔ   xʷuy-st(u)-Ø-Ø   xʷe   gʷeɬ   hn-cciy̓eʔ
           IRR   go-CS-3OBJ-IMP   DET   PL   1POSS-sister
           'You can take my sisters (with you).' *Coeur d'Alene* (Doak 1997:137)

The sentence is neutral with respect to the effect on the speaker.
        Also, several Salish languages use relational applicative morphology to express adversatives:

(7)   θeʔc-**me**ʔ-t
           dark-REL-TR
           'get dark on him/her' *Halkomelem* (Gerdts & Kiyosawa 2005)

Usually these appear in the passive:

(8)   tékɬ-**m**-t-i-t
           rain-REL-TR-PASS-1PL
           'We get rained on.' *Thompson* (Thompson & Thompson 1992:74)

(9) č'əł-**ni**-θay-əm
     rain-IND-TR:1OBJ-PASS
     'I got rained on.' *Sliammon* (Watanabe 2003:257)

Montler (1986) and Gerdts (2004) note that directional applicatives are much more acceptable when a rationale or purpose for the motion is given.

(10) ʔáx̌ʷ-**nəs**   sən.
      go-DIR   1SG.SUB
      'I went over there (for some specific purpose).' *Saanich* (Montler 1986:168)

(11) nem̓ ʔə č   ceʔ t̓icəm-**nəs**   t�axθə qʷłey̓ *(q̓ep̓-ət).
      go   Q   2SUB FUT swim-DIR   DET   log   tie-TR
      'Are you going to swim to the log and tie it?' *Halkomelem* (Gerdts 2004)

The example in (11) is regarded as ungrammatical without the rationale. Furthermore, note that the clause in (13) with a stated purpose but without applicative morphology was judged ungrammatical, in contrast to its applicative counterpart (12):

Halkomelem (Gerdts 2004)

(12) nem̓ cən   wəł   cam-**nəs**   kʷθə sməyəθ
      go   1SUB already go.uphill-DIR   DET   deer

      niʔ   q̓ay-nəxʷ-e:n̓.
      AUX   die-LCTR:3OBJ-1SSUB

      'I'm going up the mountain for the deer that I killed.'

(13) *nem̓ cən   wəł   cam   ʔə   kʷθə sməyəθ
      go   1SUB already go.uphill   OBL DET   deer

      niʔ   q̓ay-nəxʷ-e:n̓.
      AUX   die-LCTR:3OBJ-1SSUB

      'I'm going up some mountains for the deer that I killed.'

This extra semantic kick is not unusual in applicative constructions cross-linguistically, as noted by Peterson (1999:38) in his study of 50 languages, though he notes that discourse factors are more common. As we show below, Salish applicatives in fact have both types of functions.

3   Person/animacy effects

The fact that the applied object is affected by the action could account in part for generalizations concerning its person and animacy. For example, as

noted by Gerdts (1988a, 1988b) for Halkomelem psych applicatives, animate NPs like 'priest' in (14) are better applied objects than inanimate ones like 'words of the priest' in (15).

Halkomelem (Gerdts 1988a)

(14) niʔ   cən   q̇eƛ̇-meʔ-t   kʷθə   ləplit.
     AUX   1SUB   believe-REL-TR   DET   priest
     'I believed the priest.'

(15) ??niʔ   cən   q̇eƛ̇-meʔ-t   kʷθə   sqʷaqʷəƛ̇-s   kʷθə   ləplit.
     AUX   1SUB   believe-REL-TR   DET   word-3POSS   DET   priest
     'I believed the words of the priest.'

In contrast, inanimate NPs are preferably oblique NPs (16), while animate nouns are dispreferred as obliques (17).

Halkomelem (Gerdts 1988a)

(16) niʔ   cən   q̇eƛ̇   ʔə   kʷθə   sqʷaqʷəƛ̇-s   kʷθə   ləplit.
     AUX   1SUB   believe   OBL   DET   word-3POSS   DET   priest
     'I believed the priest's words.'

(17) ?*niʔ   cən   q̇eƛ̇   ʔə   kʷθə   ləplit.
     AUX   1SUB   believe   OBL   DET   priest
     'I believed the priest's words.'

However, as Gerdts and Kiyosawa (2005) show, if some context is provided, the acceptability of inanimate applied objects improves greatly. After all, a stimulus can play a central role, even if it is inanimate. For example 'the fog' is crucial in (18).

(18) ʔeʔət   xʷiʔ   siʔsiʔ-meʔ-t-əs   tθə   speʔxʷəm   kʷs
     AUX   INCHO   frightened-REL-3ERG   DET   fog   DET:NOM

       nem̓-s   ƛ̇əƛ̇im̓-t-əs   tθə   snəxʷəɬ-s.
       go-3SSUB   steer-TR-3ERG   DET   canoe-3POSS

     'He's scared of the fog when he drives his car.' *Halkomelem* (Gerdts and Kiyosawa 2005)

Sometimes the applicative can be used to highlight a participant of a complement clause:

(19) ʔi   cən   wəɬ   štəʔe:wən̓-meʔ-θət   k̓ʷə-nə-s   hay
     AUX   1SUB   PERF   think-REL-TR:REFL   DET-1POSS-NOM   finish

       ʔə   kʷθə   nə-sya:ys.
       OBL   DET   1POSS-job

     'I was thinking about quitting my job.' *Halkomelem* (Gerdts and Kiyosawa 2005)

The importance to me of my quitting my job is highlighted by expressing 'me' as the applied object of the verb 'think', resulting in a reflexive.

Similarly, when an intransitive construction with an oblique NP is used even though the stimulus is animate, there is a downplaying of the participation of the stimulus. This is illustrated in (20):

(20) niʔ ʔə č   wəł   kʷiɬəm̓ ʔə   kʷθə ʔi
      AUX Q   2SUB PERF fed.up OBL DET   AUX

      hiw̓aȽəm̓   sƛ̓əȽiqəł?
      playing   children

'Are you fed up with the playing children?' *Halkomelem* (Gerdts and Kiyosawa 2005)

Presumably, it is the disturbance made by the playing children that is annoying, not the children themselves.

To test the role of person and animacy in the use of applicatives, Gerdts and Kiyosawa (2005) compared applicative and non-applicative psych constructions in their elicited data from Halkomelem. As the distribution in Table 1 shows, whether the NP appears as an applied object or an oblique correlates with its person and animacy.

	1/2 PERSON	PROPER	HUMAN	ANIMAL	INANIMATE	CLAUSE
APPLIED OBJECT	100%	95%	90%	63%	46%	38%
OBLIQUE	0%	5%	10%	37%	54%	62%

Table 1. Applied object vs. oblique NP in Halkomelem psych constructions

Basically, we can see that, while there is no absolute grammatical condition on the expression of NPs in psych constructions, the higher the animacy of the NP, the more likely that the NP will appear as an applied rather than an oblique object.[3]

4   The promotional function of applicatives

Cross-linguistically, applicatives often serve the function of promoting the NP so that it acquires "object" properties, such as pronominalization, relativization, reflexivization[4], and passivization (Peterson 1999:38ff.). From the Salish perspective, promotion to object is especially important as a step to subjecthood. Topics in Salish languages are usually limited to subjects (Beck 1996a, 1996b, 2000; Davis 1994; Kinkade 1990), and passive is the most

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[3] Data from Salish texts shows similar results (Gerdts and Kiyosawa to appear).

[4] Only direct objects reflexivize in Salish languages. For an example of a reflexive applicative, see (19) above.

common means for expressing non-agentive NPs that are topical (Kinkade 1987).

The following is an example of a passive applicative construction; the person referred to as "him" (the young hunter left behind in the eagle's nest) is the main character and on-going topic in the story, and appears as the subject of a passive applicative.

EAGLE (*Halkomelem*—Tom Hukari, p.c.)

(21) ʔəwə kʷsəs ƛ̓eʔ siʔsiʔ-meʔ-t-əm tᶿəẃniɬ ʔə
     NEG DET:3SSUB too be.afraid.of-REL-TR-PASS that.one OBL

     tᶿəẃ θiθə, niʔ təl̓-n-əm kʷsəs ʔəẃ
     DET big-PL AUX know-LCTR-PASS DET:3SSUB LNK

     ċeċəẃ-ət-əs ʔal̓ tᶿey̓ m̓əmən̓ɬ, x̌əɬəs-t-əs.
     help(IMPF)-TR-3ERG just DET little-(PL) feed(IMPF)TR-3ERG

'The big adult eagles were not afraid of him anymore, they got to know him, that he was just helping them feed the young ones.' (176)[5]

The Halkomelem data illustrate a typical pattern found in Salish languages. Gerdts and Kiyosawa (to appear) point out that, in a survey of applicative constructions taken from Salish texts, 20% of the sample were passive.

Although topics are usually subjects, several languages have an object topic construction, which uses specialized morphology to mark a topical object (Davis 1994; Kinkade 1987, 1989, 1990). For example, in Lillooet a relational applicative (indicated by the suffix –*min*) can be used to promote an NP to object so that it can be topicalized (indicated by the suffix –*talí*).

KAYÁM (*Lillooet*—Davis 2001:331)

(22) …nʔʔn̓was s-yəqy̓qcaʔ ni=naq̓ʷ-min-talí=ha=tuʔ
     …two.human NOM-women(RDP) ABS.DET=steal-REL-TOP=EXIS=CMPL

     ni=qáck-sw=a…
     ABS.DET=older.brother-2SG.POSS=EXIS…

'…it was two women who stole your older brother…' (137)

Promotion to applied object also allows the NP to be the head of a cleft construction (23) or preverbal focus (24):

PUSH-BACK-SIDES-OF-HIS-HAIR (*Thompson*—Thompson & Egesdal 1993:301)

(23) ʔe s-cú-t-s "ʔe xeʔe xʷuy̓ nəs-m-ne."
     INT NOM-say-IM-3POSS INT nearby FUT take-REL-1SG.SUB
     'He said: "That's the one I'm going to get."' (207)

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[5] The number in parenthesis after the translation indicates the line or sentence number in the story.

GHOST CATCHING (*Nooksack*—Galloway 2004:154)

(24) te   q̓ó:y   xochém(w)esnítchxw   kwém   ílh   kw   néch'o
     [tə]   q̓o:y   xwč̓ə́m(ʷ)əs-nít-čx̌ʷ   kwə́m   íɬ   kʷ   nə́č̓o
     ART   dead   meet-IND-2SG.SUB   will   PREP   ART   one

        xonánat.
        xonǽ:næt
        night

'the dead you will meet one night,' (3b)

In sum, applicative constructions serve the function of promoting the object so that it can then participate passive, topical object, or cleft constructions.

5   Centrality to the story

While primary topics in Salish languages are usually subjects, objects NPs often have discourse prominence with some degree of foucs (Gerdts and Hukari 2003). They serve as secondary topics: they are the co-star of a story, or an item or place of interest to the story). Secondary topics get added to and subtracted from the topics list as the story progresses.

Gerdts and Kiyosawa (to appear) show that applied objects that appear in Salish texts are often NPs that are central to the story. For example, wren is the co-star of the Sechelt story "The Wolf and the Wren" and appears as the applied object of the verb 'hear':

THE WOLF AND THE WREN (*Sechelt*—Beaumont 1985:194)

(25) qánám-mít-ásit   ɬe   sté̓míe̓m   t̓i̓tilím   ní   ʔe   te
     hear-REL-3PL.SUB   DET   wren   singing   there   OBL   DET

        tátímixʷ.
        other.side

'They hear Wren singing across the water.' (11)

Grandmother is a central character of the Halkomelem story "Wren" and appears as the applied object of both the verb 'go' and the verb 'tell' in the following example.

WREN (*Halkomelem*—Tom Hukari, p.c.)

(26)   ʔi   ʔəw̓   ʔəwə   ʔəw̓   yə-hənəm̓-nəs-əs   θə
       AUX   LNK   NEG   LNK   SER-go(IMPF)-DIR-3ERG   DET

siʔlə-s   s-əw̓   yə-həẏθ-əs-t-s
grandparent-3POSS   NOM-LNK   SER-tell(IMPF)-DAT-TR-3POSS

yə-ƛ̓iƛ̓ələm̓.
SER-sing(IMPF)

'But he continued and went closer to his granny and told her in song.' (31)

As, Donohue (2001) notes in his study of the Austronesian language Tukang Besi, 'discourse-prominent references are more likely to appear as applied objects than as oblique phrases.' Gerdts and Kiyosawa (to appear) show that this is true in Salish languages as well. They conclude that the applied object is highly topical in most Salish applicatives.

6   Conclusion

This paper is a brief exploration into the semantic and discourse factors that determine when applicatives are used in Salish languages. Salish languages are rich in applicative morphology and thus provide an important resource for the study of the functions of applicative constructions. Sometimes grammatical factors per se do not determine the choice between the applicative constructions and their non-applicative alternatives. Nevertheless, speakers often have strong preferences, and thus the alternatives are not perfectly synonymous.

Applicatives serve certain functions with respect to the applied object. First, we see that an applied object is regarded as being affected by the verbal action, hence the use of applicatives as benefactives, malefactives, adversatives, and purposives. Since affectedness often implies sentience, NPs higher on the person/animacy hierarchy tend to be expressed as applied objects rather than obliques.

Applicatives serve a promotional function: object NPs have privileges that oblique NPs lack. Objects can serve as secondary topics. Also passive applicatives can be used to promote the NP to subject, the usual position of the primary topic in Salish languages. Notably, NPs that are topical are likely to be speech act participants and higher animates. Thus, topicality may also contribute to the person/animacy effects noted for Salish applicatives.

None of these functions are unexpected, given the uses described for applicatives in other language families (see especially Donohue 2001 and Peterson 1999). However, applicatives are rarely discussed in semantic or discourse terms. Instead the emphasis is often placed on the syntactic properties of applied objects and the formal analysis of applicative constructions. Therefore, we hope that this paper, although brief, contributes to the growing literature on the functions of applicatives.

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