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Object agreement in the Halkomelem Salish Passive: a morphological explanation

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Abstract

Davis (1980) and Gerdts (1981) point out that in two Coast Salish languages the Passive construction involves a nominal which tests syntactically to be the final subject but, in the case of pronominals, surfaces as an objective suffix. Here I provide an explanation for this phenomenon which correctly predicts two types of Coast Salish languages — those with objective passive subjects (e.g. Sliammon, Halkomelem, Sechelt) and those with subjective passive subjects (e.g. Straits, Squamish, and Lushootseed). Crucially, the Coast Salish passive is formed from a transitive stem; transitivity is overtly marked in Coast Salish. In the former group of languages — but not the latter — the transitive suffixes have fused with the objective suffixes making it impossible to mark transitivity without also marking the person and number of the object. The morphological requirements of stem formation take priority over the syntax thus interfering with the syntactic conditioning of case.

1. The Halkomelem "funny" passive¹

In Halkomelem, as in other Central Coast Salish languages, passive morphology involves an overtly marked transitive verb form followed by an intransitive suffix, as in (1 a), the Passive corresponding to (1 a):^{2,3}

- (1 a) ni q^wal-at-as θa steni[?] ^ʔa sce:ʃian
aux bake-tr-3erg det woman det salmon
'The woman baked the salmon.'
- b) ni q^wal-at-am ʔa θa steni[?] ^ʔa sce:ʃian
aux bake-tr-intr obl det woman det salmon
'The salmon was baked by the woman.'

Other than this rarity, the Halkomelem Passive seems straightforward: the passive agent is presented in the oblique case and the clause is finally intransitive, as seen by the lack of 3rd person ergative agreement in (1 b).

However, in Halkomelem (and two other Coast Salish languages [cf. section 2.2]), a 1st or 2nd person final subject in the Passive is represented by an object suffix, as in (2) and (3).⁴

- (2) *ni lam-əðelam* ?ə ?ə *stəni?*
 aux look-tr+1obj+intr obl det woman
 'I was looked at by the woman.'
- (3) *ni lam-əðam* ?ə ?ə *stəni?*
 aux look-tr+2obj+intr obl det woman
 'You were looked at by the woman.'

This last property is strange since a final subject is expected to be represented by a subject — not object — marking; subjects are represented as clitics and objects as suffixes, as seen in (4).

- (4) *ni can lam-əðama*
 aux 1sub look-tr+2obj
 'I looked at you.'

However, the passive subject cannot be represented by subject marking, as exemplified in (5) and (6).

- (5) **ni can lam-əi-am*
 aux 1sub look-tr-intr
 ('I was looked at.')
- (6) **ni ɛ lam-əi-am*
 aux 2sub look-tr-intr
 ('You were looked at.')

The purpose of this paper is to provide an explanation for object marking in the Passive. First, some alternative analyses involving a revised syntactic analysis or agreement rule are rejected. Then a proposal is made: object marking is present because it is fused to the transitive marker which is required in the Halkomelem Passive.

1.1 Syntactic approaches

Two attempts (Hukari 1980, Gerdts 1981) have been made to reconcile a syntactic analysis of Halkomelem Passives to the morphology. Hukari (1980) posits Spontaneous Demotion; that is, Halkomelem Passives involve demoting the subject without promoting the object. Gerdts (1981) suggests Impersonal Passive following Perlmutter (1978): an inserted (invisible) dummy, which places the passive nominal en chomage, is the

final subject. Under these analyses the object suffix in (2) and (3) would be representing a final object or object-chomeur. However, there are two ways in which the passive nominal behaves like a subject.

First, although subject marking in a main clause Passive is not acceptable (see *(5)–(6)), if the Passive is embedded as a nominalization, the nominal may also be represented as a possessor, the case used for subjects in nominalizations.

- (7) *sk^{ne}ey k^{ne}a na -s -c^{ew} -əðe.li*
 impossible det 1pos -nom -help -tr+1obj+st
 'It's impossible for me to get helped.'

Second, as Gerdts (1981) discusses, the passive nominal can raise to object, as exemplified in (8b); Raising to Object is a property of subjects and not objects in Halkomelem.⁵

- (8a) ?*i can xəxci -i* [?u ?i -?as *le?lam?*
 aux 1sub wonder-tr lnk aux-3ssub look
 -əðam?^l
 -tr+2obj+intr
 'I'm checking out to see if you are being watched.'
- b) ?*i can xəxci -əama* [?u ?i -?as *le?lam?*
 aux 1sub wonder -tr+2obj lnk aux -3ssub look
 -əðam?^l
 -tr+2obj+intr
 'I'm checking you out to see if you are being watched.'

Since possessive marking in nominalizations and raising-to-object are subject properties, analyses involving Spontaneous Demotion or Impersonal Passive are less than satisfactory.^{6,7} Therefore, I take Halkomelem Passives to be Personal — that is, the passive nominal advances from object to subject — and turn to the problem of explaining why a syntactic subject should be represented by object morphology.

1.2 Case/agreement approaches

Other cases of passive subjects appearing as objects have been cited, albeit rarely. A quick look at two other examples — Icelandic and Kashmiri — shows that the solutions posited for non-nominative subjects in these languages are inadequate as an explanation of the Halkomelem "funny" Passive.

Icelandic Passives, as Zaenen et al. (1985) discuss, involve "quirky" case: objects whose case is lexically determined by the verb (see (9a)) retain this case in the Passive (see (9b)) even though they are final subjects.

- (9a) *Ég hjálpaði honum.*
 1 helped him (DAT).
 b) *Honum var hjálpað.*
 'Him (DAT) was helped.'

Their explanation is that "quirky" case is assigned lexically and nominals assigned lexical case do not undergo further case marking via the normal rule assigning NOM to final subjects, ACC to final object, etc. It would be difficult, however, to posit a "quirky" case analysis for Halkomelem, since *all* 1st and 2nd person subjects of Passives, not just those of a lexically determined class of verbs, appear as object suffixes.

In Kashmiri (Altaha 1985), the subject of a Passive, although it determines subject agreement and in other ways tests to be syntactic subject, appears in the Accusative case [in the present tense], as seen in (10).⁸

- (10) *mardas cū yiwān hīnawne māstārni sindi zcrvī*
 man-ACC aux coming teach-pass teacher-obl of by
 3. m. sg.
 'The man is taught by the teacher.'

Alaha posits a metastratal case rule (that is, a rule which does not refer to a specific syntactic level) where ACC case takes precedence over NOM case. Although the passive nominal, being both a subject and object (at different levels) would qualify for either case, it is first marked ACC making further case marking unnecessary. The case rule applies generally: final subjects of Unaccusative and Inversion constructions also take ACC case, for example, the Unaccusative in (11).⁹

- (11) *larkas cū log*
 boy-ACC aux hurt
 3. m. sg.
 'The boy is hurt.'

However, formulating a metastratal agreement rule along these lines would be difficult for Halkomelem. The subjects of Unaccusatives (Gerds 1981) are represented by subject clitics — not object suffixes — as in (12):

- (12)
- | | | | |
|-----------|------------|---|------------------|
| <i>ni</i> | <i>can</i> | { | <i>hiak*</i> |
| | | | <i>wacəʔ</i> |
| | | | <i>c'iwaʔ</i> |
| aux | 1sub | { | happy |
| | | | fall |
| | | | annoyed |
| | | { | '1 was happy.' |
| | | | fell.' |
| | | | '1 was annoyed.' |

Although the above solutions are inappropriate for Halkomelem, the general approach is useful. What is required is a reason for object marking to occur before subject marking in Passives but not Unaccusatives.

1.3 A morphological explanation

My explanation hinges on the morphological fact that Coast Salish languages form Passives — but not Unaccusatives — from a transitive base. I claim that in Halkomelem the transitive marker is "fused" to the object marker, what I refer to as T-obj fusion, making it impossible to meet the morphological condition of having a transitive base without also including the object suffix. Sections 2 and 3 argue for this viewpoint. Evidence comes from comparative data and from various syntactic constructions from within Halkomelem.

As section 4 discusses, the object agreement in Passives takes priority over subject agreement. Once the subject of the Passive is represented by the object suffix, subject agreement is unnecessary.

2. T-obj Fusion

This section gives phonological evidence for T-obj Fusion and discusses the implications of Fusion for the distribution of "funny" Passives in Coast Salish.

2.1 The phonology of the T-obj

Evidence for Fusion comes from the unexpected phonology of the T-obj in Halkomelem. The transitive suffix is clearly -ʔ (often preceded by an epenthetic schwa), as is obvious in forms with 3rd person objects.

Comparative evidence (cf. Newman 1979) allows us to posit the base forms for the Halkomelem object suffixes as in column (a) which combine with the transitive suffix to give the forms in (b).

(13)		(a) objects	(b) T-objs
1 sg.		-samʔs	-θamʔs
2 sg.		-sama	-θama
3 sg./pl.		∅	-t
1 pl.		-aʔxʷ	-taʔxʷ
2 pl.		-ala	-tala

In 1st and 2nd sg. forms, the θ which arises from the sequence of $-t$ and $-s$ is unexpected, since this sequence is allowed elsewhere in Halkomelem, for example, in (14).

(14)	$k^w\theta a$	s	$-amas-t$	$-s$
	det	nom	-give-tr	-3pos
	'what he gave him'			

I take the fact that the transitive and object markers "share" a consonant as evidence that the forms are closely associated in the morphology. Once this merger takes place, the form functions as a unit in the morphology; the elements are not available independently but must appear in tandem.

2.2 Fusion and "funny" Passives in Coast Salish

Some support for this view comes from a comparison of Halkomelem to other Central Coast Salish languages. The prediction is clear. Since these languages all form a Passive from a transitive base, if a language has a T-obj, as evidenced by phonological fusion, then, it should have a "funny" Passive.¹¹

Although the available data is sparse, it appears that three Coast Salish languages have "funny Passives" — Halkomelem, Siammon (Davis 1978, 1980) and Sechelt (Beaumont 1985). Two of these — Halkomelem and Siammon — clearly have phonological fusion. Davis uses S to represent an s which fuses with the transitive suffix $-t$ in his paradigm for object and Passive suffixes.

(15)		object suffixes	passives suffixes
1st person		-S	-S α t-
2nd person		-S \dot{t}	-S \dot{t}

The Siammon data in (16) [from Davis (1978)] illustrates fusion and "funny" Passive.

(16)	active	passive
	'to give me'	$\dot{x}ana\theta$ 'someone gives it to me'
	'to know you'	$t'aga\theta$ 'someone sees you'
		$k^w\theta im$

In contrast, Lushootseed and Squamish do not have "funny" Passives; rather the passive subject is represented as a subject clitic, as illustrated in the Lushootseed data in (17) (from Hess 1973); the nominal in the passives is marked like the subject in (18) and not like the object in (19):

(17)	$\eta a \dot{t}ax^w a-t-b \dot{c}ax^w \eta a \eta i \dot{t}a\dot{c}'as$
	'You were helped by the boy.'

(18)	$k^wax^w a-t-s \dot{c}ax^w$
	'You helped me.'

(19)	$\eta a \dot{t}ax^w a-t-sid \eta i \dot{t}a\dot{c}'as$
	'The boy clubbed you.'

In these languages a fused form does not occur. The regular phonological reflex of a sequence of /t/ and /s/ in these languages is /c/. The Straits languages (e.g. Saanich and Lummi) also have subject clitics in the Passive. In these languages, the sequence of $-t$ and $-s$ does not occur; rather $-t$ is deleted. Information concerning Passives in Pentlatch, Nooksack, and Twana was not available to me.

Table 1 summarizes the survey of Coast Salish languages below; the table shows subgroupings as posited by M. Dale Kinkade and Laurence

Table 1. Fusion and Passives in Coast Salish

	Fusion	Funny Passive
Comox/Siammon	yes	yes
Sechelt	no	yes
Pentlatch	no	no
Squamish	no	no
Halkomelem	yes	yes
Straits (Saanich)	no	no
(Lummi)	no	no
Nooksack	no	no
Lushootseed	no	no
Twana		

C. Thompson (p. c.) and basically gives the languages from north to south.¹²

Thus, the comparative data support the T-obj analysis. Shiammon – the only other Coast Salish language with phonological fusion – also has “funny” Passives.

3. The syntax of the T-obj

That the transitive and object suffixes form an inseparable unit is observed in several syntactic situations besides the Passive. Both or neither of the T-obj elements are present in all constructions even if the presence of the object suffix is semantically redundant or the transitive marker would be otherwise expected. Two cases – Extraction and Object Cancellation constructions – are given here.

3.1 Extraction

Halkomelem allows the direct extraction of subjects and objects, as seen in the cleft constructions in (20)–(23):¹³

- (20) *stɛniʔ θa ni qʷal-ai θa sce:tan*
 woman det aux bake-tr det salmon
 ‘The woman is the one who baked the salmon.’
- (21) *nawa ni qʷaqʷ -ai (*-axʷ)*
 2emph aux club -tr (*2ssub)
 ‘It’s you who clubbed it.’
- (22) *sce:tan θa ni qʷal-ai-as ta stɛniʔ*
 salmon det aux bake-tr-3erg det woman
 ‘The salmon is what the woman baked.’
- (23) *nawa ni lam-θama -ʔe.nʔ*
 2emph aux look-tr+2obj -1ssub
 ‘It’s you that I looked at (you).’

When subjects are extracted, as in (20) and (21), subject agreement is not present in the embedded clause. The subject agreement remains when the object is extracted, as in (22) and (23).^{14,15} In contrast, when objects are extracted, a copy is left in the embedded clause, as in (23).

What is the motivation for the object copy? It is semantically redundant since potential ambiguity is resolved by the presence (or absence) of subject agreement. T-obj fusion provides an explanation. The embedded

clause is finally transitive and so transitive marking is required. It is impossible to mark transitivity without also giving the person marker due to T-obj fusion, hence *(24).¹⁶

- (24) **nawa ni qʷaqʷ -ai-ʔe.nʔ*
 2emph aux club -tr-1ssub
 ‘It’s you that I clubbed.’

An alternative account which would stipulate that extracted objects leave copies while extracted subjects do not runs afoul of the Passive data. When the subject of a Passive is extracted, as in (25), it leaves a copy.¹⁷

- (25) *nawa ni lam-θamaɪ*
 2emph aux look-tr+2obj+st
 ‘It’s you who was looked at (you).’

The parallelism between the extraction of objects and passive subjects is captured under this account since both involve T-obj fusion.

3.2 Object cancellation

T-obj fusion also provides a solution to another mystery in Halkomelem. In periphrastic causatives with the predicate *cseɪ* ‘tell someone to do something’, if the object of the embedded clause refers to the subject of *cseɪ* as in (26a), then it may be deleted, as seen in (26b); the general intransitive marker *-am* replaces the object suffix.

- (26a) *cse-i can ceʔ ta stɛniʔ ʔu qʷal -aɬc -θamʔɛ*
 tell-tr 1sub fut det woman lnk bake -adv -tr+1obj
 -as ʔa kʷθa sce:tan
 -3ssub obl det salmon
 ‘I’m telling the woman to bake the salmon for me.’
- b) *cse-i can ceʔ ta stɛniʔ ʔu qʷal -aɬc -am -as*
 tell-tr 1sub fut det woman lnk bake -adv -intr -3ssub
 ʔa kʷθa sce:tan
 obl det salmon
 ‘I’m telling the woman to bake the salmon for me.’

The transitive marker is also omitted in the complement clause, even though the clauses are clearly based on transitive forms. This follows from T-obj fusion: if the object suffix does not appear neither will be transitive suffix.¹⁸

A curious feature of object cancellation is that it appears not to effect 3rd persons. While 1st and 2nd persons make good deletion targets, as in the above data, 3rd person does not, as is seen by comparing (27a) and (27b).

- (27a) *cse -θamʔs -as ʔu q^wa1 -aʔc -t -ʔe.nʔ ʔa k^w0a*
 tell -tr+1obj -3erg lnk -bake -adv -tr -1ssub obl det
sce.fian
 salmon
 'He's telling me to bake the salmon for him.'
- b)?? *cse -θamʔs -as ʔu q^wa1 -aʔc-am -ʔe.nʔ ʔa k^w0a*
 tell -tr+1obj-3erg lnk bake -adv-intr -1ssub obl det
sce.fian
 salmon
 'He's telling me to bake the salmon for him.'

This would be mysterious under a view of object cancellation as a syntactic phenomenon. However, if what is involved is an ellipsis of the redundant person marking, it makes sense that 3rd person objects would be exempted, as they are \emptyset anyway.

4. The Halkomelem agreement rule

The previous sections presented arguments for the unitary structure of the T-obj: the transitive and object markers are phonologically fused and they function in tandem in various syntactic situations, one of which is the Passive. T-obj fusion provides an explanation for object agreement in the Halkomelem Passive: since Passives must be marked transitive, and since the transitive suffix is fused with an object suffix, object marking is obligatory.

What remains to be accounted for is the presence or absence of subject marking in the Passive. As discussed in section 1, simple clause Passives have only object marking; subject marking is not possible, as (28) shows:

- (28) *ni (*can) lam -θβelam*
 aux 1sub look -tr+1obj+intr
 'I was looked at.'

However, when the Passive is embedded as a nominalization, the subject may be doubly represented by possessive and object marking.

- (29) *sk^wey k^wa [na -s [c^{ew} -θβe.li]]*
 impossible det 1pos -nom -help -tr+1obj+st
 'It's impossible for me to get helped.'

The first case, where doubling is not possible, is consistent with a principle for agreement put forth by Davies (1986: 168).

- (30) Given a set of agreement rules making a predicate agree with the same set of properties a, b, ... n of nominals, the rules apply disjunctively to any given nominal.

The Halkomelem subject clitics, the object suffixes, and the possessive prefixes reference the same semantic features (person and number), so (30) requires them to be mutually exclusive in a local environment (in the domain of the same predicate), hence the ungrammaticality of (28).

However, in a non-local environment, (30) is not relevant and doubling is possible. For example, in (29) above, the agreement locality of the object suffix is the passive predicate "be helped" and that of the possessive prefix is the entire nominalized clause.

The Personal Passive analysis together with the agreement principle in (30) make the right range of predictions. The passive subject will agree like a subject only outside of the domain of object agreement.

5. Conclusion

The approach of this paper has been to seek a morphological rather than a syntactic explanation for the presence of object marking in the Halkomelem Passive. The benefit of such an approach is that it allows a maximally simple grammar. Passives in Halkomelem may be analyzed as run-of-the-mill Personal Passives. The final subject, after all, behaves like a subject in all respects except agreement.

The approach taken here also allows a straightforward view of agreement. Basically, objects cue agreement whenever there is transitive marking, as T-obj fusion necessitates. Final subjects cue subject marking as constrained by the putatively universal agreement principle (30), that is, except in the domain of object agreement.

Finally, an explanation should be given for why transitive marking and hence object marking takes priority over subject marking. If morphological ordering reflects the levels of syntactic analysis (as stipulated by

the Satellite Principle (Gerdts 1981)), then transitive marking, which references an early level of the Passive, has precedence over subject marking, which would reference the final level.

Notes

1. The Halkomelem data herein are from the late Arnold Guerin of the Musqueam Reserve, Vancouver, British Columbia. My research has been supported by the Melville and Elizabeth Jacobs Research Fund, the Phillips Fund, and the National Museum of Man, Ottawa.
2. The following abbreviations are used in the glosses of the Halkomelem data:

adv	advancement suffix
aux	auxiliary
del	determiner
emph	emphatic person forms
erg	ergative
fut	future
intr	intransitive
lnk	linker
obj	objective
obl	oblique marker
pl	plural
sg	singular
sub	subordinate clause subjective
ssub	stative
st	stative
tr	transitive
1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
3. See Gerdts 1981 for a general description of Halkomelem. Halkomelem is a verb initial language (predominantly VSO). Subjects, objects, and common noun possessors are unmarked for case. Other nominals — obliques, chomeurs, possessors — are flagged by the all purpose preposition 'ə. Pronominal subject agreement is presented by clitics which appear in 2nd position in main clauses. Pronominal object agreement is suffixed to the verb. Halkomelem is a "pro-drop" language: independent pronouns are used only for emphasis. Halkomelem is a split ergative language: ergative agreement is marked only for 3rd person ergatives in main clauses (in all tense/aspects).
4. Throughout this paper, I have limited the data to examples involving the transitive suffix -ə, the marker for control [Newman's neutral paradigm]. Discussion of data with limited control forms and causatives forms has been excluded due to space limitations. There is not a perfect match between the object suffixes (which are given in (13) and the passive paradigm, which I give in (i) below. Furthermore, main clause passives, which have the intransitive suffix -əm are different from subordinate passives, which have the stative suffix -ət.

(i)	Passive Suffixes	Subordinate Passive Suffixes
1sg	-əlam	-ə:lɪ
2sg	-əam	-əamɪ
3	-lam	-ləwɪ
1pl, 2pl	-alam	-alam

The major difference is with the 1sg, where the object suffix in the active is -əam'ə. As Newman (1979) points out, there are several Salish languages with two forms for the neutral object so apparently two forms can be reconstructed for Proto-Salish: the Halkomelem Passive form is clearly a reflex of one of these. The Halkomelem active object is a reflex of a Causative object form in Proto-Salish.

The passive paradigm shows a neutralization of 1st and 2nd plural object forms.

A common phonological change of a sequence of vowel + resonant + vowel + consonant changes to long vowel + resonant + consonant can be seen in the forms for 2sg and 1sg subordinate.

5. This argument was first given for Shiammon by Davis (1980). Hukari (1980) discovered the phenomenon in Halkomelem with the verb *cseł*. Gerdts (1981) points out that passive agents also raise.
6. Hukari gives an argument based upon extraction in support of his analysis. An alternative account of this phenomenon is presented in section 3.1 below. See note 17.
7. Gerdts (1981) suggests a treatment of the doubling phenomenon within an Impersonal Passive analysis in terms of brother-in-law agreement (see Perlmutter 1978). However, such a device would be inappropriate for Raising phenomena.
8. The case rule used by Alaha parallels Davies' treatment of Choctaw, a language which does not appear to have a Passive.
9. According to the Unaccusative Hypothesis (Perlmutter 1978), the nominal in Unaccusative Advancement constructions is an initial object which advances to subject. Since the ACC case rule takes priority over the NOM case rule in Kashmiri, and since agreement is blind to syntactic level, the nominal in the Unaccusative construction, since it is an object, qualifies for ACC case.
10. An analogous situation would be the merger of subject and object prefixes into a synchronically unanalyzable unit as in Iroquoian or Karok.
11. Of course, it would be possible for a language to have T-obj fusion without showing the phonological effects. Sechelt may be such a language.
12. Halkomelem is neither geographically adjacent nor genetically subgrouped with the other Coast languages with "funny" Passive making an areal or historical source for this phenomenon unlikely.
13. Also, irreverently, certain possessors extract directly. Other nominals, if they can extract, must extract via nominalization. See Gerdts (1981) and references therein for discussion.
14. Since Halkomelem is a VSO language which does not differentiate subject and object via nominal case, a potentially ambiguous situation arises in extraction. This is resolved by the deletion of subject agreement in the embedded clause in the case of subject extraction, as seen by the absence of -əs in (20).
15. This dichotomy between subjects and objects complicates the agreement rules. Subject agreement is with a "surface" nominal while object agreement is with a "final" object. See Gerdts 1981 for discussion.
16. If the explanation I have given here is correct, it suggests that Coast Salish languages without T-obj fusion, e.g. Squamish or Lushootseed, will not require a copy when a

- pronominal object is extracted. The information necessary to check this prediction was not available to me.
17. This fact that Passive subjects pattern with objects and not with other subjects with respect to copying in extraction led Hukari to argue that they actually are objects. The T-obj fusion account given here provides a reply within a Personal Passives analysis to that argument.
18. In fact, a sentence like (26) but with -i rather than -*gamʔ* on the embedded verb is possible, but it would have the meaning "I'm telling the woman to bake the salmon for him/her."

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