

## The expression of NPs in Halkomelem texts<sup>1</sup>

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This paper discusses overt versus zero NPs in transitive clauses, based on data from two Halkomelem texts. Transitive clauses with two post-verbal NPs are relatively rare. The most common clause type is one in which the sole post-verbal NP is the object. This follows from the previously noted facts that topics are often subjects, and topics tend to be zero. Overt NPs are used to refresh or re-establish a topic and also to end a section. This helps explain the residue of examples where the sole post-verbal NP is the subject. Non-topic NPs, including objects, tend to be overt, even when they closely follow an overt expression of the same NP. Certain verbs though, like *lemət* ‘look at it’ seem to prefer zero objects, thus largely accounting for clauses with no overt NPs.

### 1 Introduction

In a growing body of literature, researchers on Salish languages have presented analyses of texts from discourse, narrative, and rhetorical viewpoints. A common picture regarding the expressions of NPs in Salish languages has emerged. Here are the central features, which have been succinctly summarized in Czaykowska-Higgins and Kinkade (1998: 37–43) and Kroeber (1999: 37–40). 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 third-person objects can be zero, though (some) subjects license agreement. This leads to potential ambiguities. However, there is a strong tendency, especially in texts, to avoid clauses with two post-verbal NPs. So, for example, Burton et al. (2001) note that in the sixty pages of Lillooet texts in van Eijk and Williams (1981), there are only six transitive sentences with two overt NPs. While in most languages this is a soft constraint, in Lushootseed at least, it is a hard constraint (Hess 1973, Hukari 1976b).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, many languages prefer a single post-verbal NP to be the object, not the subject. This has been shown, for example, in Halkomelem

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<sup>2</sup> We use hard and soft constraints in the sense of Bresnan et al. (2001).

(Hukari 1976b), Lillooet (van Eijk 1997: 227), and Squamish (Kuipers 1967: 172). This has become known as the One NP Interpretation (ONI) condition (following Gerdt 1988b).<sup>3</sup> This condition is correlated with the topic effect: an on-going topic in a discourse tends to be zero (Beck 1998a, 2000a, Davis 1994, Kroeber 1995).<sup>4</sup> Topics in Salish languages are usually the subject (Beck 1996a, 1996b, 2000a, Davis 1994, Kinkade 1990).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, objects do not make good topics in Salish languages. Non-agentive NPs that are topical are usually expressed in clauses with alternative morphology—passive (Boelscher 1990, Kinkade 1987, van Eijk 1997: 237), non-topical ergative (Doak 1991, 1997: 262ff, Kroeber 1995, Mattina 2001), or topical object constructions (Davis 1994, Kinkade 1987, 1989, 1990).

In this paper, we explore some fundamental questions concerning the expression of NPs: When and why do overt NPs appear in texts? When and why do they not appear? How do voice and case aid in the presentation of NPs? We seek to contribute to this research by discussing the expression of NPs in Halkomelem, drawing on examples from texts. Over the years, we have collected over one hundred Halkomelem texts of all sorts—legends, historical accounts, cultural descriptions, autobiographies, and lectures—from dozens of speakers. Much of what we say is impressionistic based on our experience of working with these texts.<sup>6</sup> But, here we hope to give some more concrete results by referring in detail to two particular texts collected by Tom Hukari.

The first text is “*tʰə swiwləs ni? x wəʔesx*”: The Young Man that Turned into a Seal” (MTS), told by Wilfred Sampson on March 25, 1976. The 303-sentence story tells of a young man who is captured by the seals he is hunting, lives with them, and eventually 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 second text, “*qen tʰə qʷəni ʔə tʰə səmšaθət*: Seagull Steals the Sun” (SSS), was told by Ellen White on May 8, 1977. This 310-sentence story tells of how Seagull tricks 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) and, since we do not have space to repeat all relevant examples here, we encourage readers to obtain a copy of this text in order to follow our discussion. All references to this text refer to line numbers in the published version.

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<sup>3</sup> Among the other languages of the world that have been noted to have this effect are Chamorro (Chung 1984), Navajo (Platero 1982), and Tz’utujil (Aissen 2003).

<sup>4</sup> The topic is the entity that the speaker intends to give further knowledge about. The topic is a protagonist who continues as the center of attention over stretches of discourse. (Gundell 1988, Lambrecht 1994, Reinhart 1981, etc.). The correlation of topics with zero or weak pronouns is well-established. See Gundel et al. (1993) and references therein.

<sup>5</sup> Cross-linguistically, the topic in unmarked cases tends to be the subject (Givón 1979, Lambrecht 1994: 132).

<sup>6</sup> This paper is part of an on-going attempt to analyze and understand the structure of texts. Two earlier papers in this vein were Gerdt (2001, 2002).

Both texts were transcribed and translated by Ruby Peter and edited by Tom Hukari. They both 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 NPs. We will focus on NPs in transitive clauses, limiting the discussion to clauses in which both the subject and the object are third person.<sup>7</sup> We have identified 52 clauses of this type in MTS and 29 in SSS. Given the overall length of the texts, we see that transitive clauses are not all that common. Intransitive clauses far outnumber transitives and passive clauses are also quite frequent.<sup>8</sup>

Details concerning the expression of NPs in each text are given in Table 1.

	MTS		SSS		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Subject and object are overt NPs	4	8%	3	10%	7	9%
Only overt NP is subject	2	4%	1	3%	3	4%
Only overt NP is object	28	54%	15	52%	43	53%
Both subject and object are zero	18	35%	10	35%	28	35%
Total 3 <sup>rd</sup> person/ 3 <sup>rd</sup> person	52	100%	29	100%	81	100%

Table 1. Expressing NPs in Transitive Clauses

Overall, our findings are not surprising given what other researchers have said about Salish syntax. We find few clauses with two overt NPs. Also a single overt NP is usually the object. We develop our thoughts on the expression of NPs in three stages. Section 2 discusses clauses with two overt post-verbal NPs, section 3 discusses clauses with one overt post-verbal NP, and section 4 discusses clauses in which neither the subject nor the object is expressed as a post-verbal NP. Section 5 sums up our results.

## 2 Two post-verbal NPs and how to avoid them

Active transitive clauses are common in sentences that arise through elicitation via English or through sentence construction tasks, where we ask for a sentential example to illustrate a verb form. Such examples show that the basic word order is VSO (occasionally VOS), and subjects and objects appear as simple determiner phrases, without any overt case marking.

<sup>7</sup> We exclude examples where a subject or object NP appears in the sentence-initial focus position. See §2.2.3.

<sup>8</sup> See Tables 2 and 3 below for the frequencies of active versus passive clauses.

- (1) niʔ kʷən-ət-əs kʷθə swəyqeʔ kʷθə θəqiʔ.<sup>9</sup>  
 AUX take-TR-ERG DT man DT sockeye  
 ‘The man took the sockeye.’

However, as can be seen in Table 1 above, active transitive clauses with two post-verbal NPs are extremely rare in Halkomelem texts (9%). In this section we examine clauses with two post-verbal NPs to try to determine when they are used. Also, we explore alternative means of expressing transitive clauses with two explicit NPs.

## 2.1 When are two post-verbal NPs used?

There are four examples of transitive verbs with two post-verbal NPs in the MTS. The following is the most straightforward example:<sup>10</sup>

- (2) ʔəwə kʷəʔeł niʔ-əs cə-stəxʷ-əs tʰəw̃nił  
 not indeed AUX-3SSUB do-CS-3SUB this.one  
 səʔasəqʷt tʰə ʃəyət-s-ət.  
 younger.sibling DT older.sibling-3POS-PST  
 ‘The younger brother didn’t do anything about his older brother.’  
 (MTS101)

This example occurs at a point in the story where the two plot lines concerning the younger brother and the older brother come together. There also may be an element of contrast or emphasis of the relationship of the brothers to each other.<sup>11</sup>

There are three examples of VSO sentences with two overt NPs in SSS; these are found in lines 111–114, 137, and 161–162. In all three examples, the agent is the topic of the previous section, but the sentence or two immediately before the VSO clause focuses on another entity. So the VSO clause is used to re-establish the agent. Furthermore, the patient is often elaborated, so both the agent and patient are worthy of mention.

<sup>9</sup> Abbreviations for grammatical categories used here are as follows. AUX: auxiliary, COMP: complementizer, CON: connective, CONF: confirmative (‘it is said’), CONT: continuative (imperfective), CS: causative, DT: determiner, EMPH: emphatic, ERG: ergative, FUT: future, INC: inchoative, INS: instrumental, LCTR: limited control transitive, MID: middle, NM: nominalizer, OBJ: object, OBL: oblique, PAS: passive, PRO: pronoun, PST: past, PL: plural, POS: possessive, REFL: reflexive, RES: resultative, SER: serial, SSUB: subordinate subject, STA: stative (+resultative reduplication), SUB: subject, TR: transitive.

<sup>10</sup> In one example, the agent is the third person plural pronoun ʔe:Itən. Two examples involve constructions of the type, X calls Y Z.

<sup>11</sup> In examining sentences with two overt post-verbal NPs in St’át’imcets, Davis (2001: 302) says they are triggered by the presence of more than one potential antecedent for the subject.

For example, examine the section of SSS in lines 110–114. The first sentence (3a) shifts away from ‘the people’ to ‘the door’ and (3b) comments on the darkness. Sentence (3c) shifts back to the agent ‘people’ and elaborates on the patient ‘torches’.

- (3) a. s-əw̄-š̄tewəñ-s t<sup>θ</sup>ə məstiməx<sup>w</sup>, “ni<sup>ʔ</sup> yəx<sup>w</sup>  
 NM-CON-think-3POS DT person AUX perhaps  
 x<sup>w</sup>teq-t-əṁ k<sup>w</sup>θə šeɬ.  
 close-TR-PAS DT door  
 ‘And the people thought, “the door must have been closed.’
- b. ṅa-a-an ʔəw̄-ħec.”  
 very CON-dark  
 It is so dark.”’
- c. yəq̄w-t-s t<sup>θ</sup>ə məstiməx<sup>w</sup> t<sup>θ</sup>eý ʃ̄eləqt s̄cešt  
 burn-TR-3POS DT person that long(PL) stick  
 --ni-i-i<sup>ʔ</sup> s̄te ʔəw̄-ni:s sk<sup>w</sup>ənš̄ətən-s  
 AUX like CON-AUX:3SSUB lantern-3POS  
 k<sup>w</sup>s (s-)neṁ yə-ʔi<sup>ʔ</sup>məš ni<sup>ʔ</sup>  
 COMP (NM-)go SER-walk(CONT) AUX  
 yə-s-t<sup>θ</sup>e<sup>t</sup>ə<sup>k</sup><sup>w</sup> t<sup>θ</sup>ə yə-š̄ləñe-s.  
 SER-STA-illuminated DT SER-way-3POS  
 ‘The people burned long sticks—like lanterns shining where they were going.’ (SSS 110–114)

The other two examples involve third-person demonstrative pronouns (4) rather than full NPs in subject position, but arise in similar circumstances.<sup>12</sup>

- (4) yaθ ʔəw̄-sew̄q̄-t-əs t<sup>θ</sup>əw̄ne<sup>ʔ</sup>əl̄ t<sup>θ</sup>eý k̄<sup>w</sup>i<sup>ʔ</sup>x<sup>w</sup> syaɬ.  
 always CON-seeK(CONT)-TR-3ERG this.one(PL) that pitch wood  
 ‘They always looked for the pitch wood.’ (SSS 137)

This section talks about ‘the old people’ segues onto ‘smoke’ and then returns to people in example (4).

In sum, it is easy to see how sentences with two post-verbal NPs arise. Narration often switches back and forth among participants, giving rise to potential ambiguities. But as we see from (3b) and (4) above, some examples contain inanimate objects, so ambiguity is impossible. So other factors must also be at work. We discuss this further in §3.2.3.

<sup>12</sup> These complex demonstratives consist of a determiner, a connective, and a third-person predicative pronoun. See Wiltschko (2002) for a formal analysis of the structure of the equivalent form in the Upriver dialect of Halkomelem.

## 2.2 How to avoid using two post-verbal NPs

Considering how rare VSO clauses are in texts, we might surmise that Halkomelem has a low referential density (Bickel 2002). Referential density is an index of the number of overt NPs that occur in argument positions versus the number of argument positions that are licensed by the verbs in a text.<sup>13</sup> Given the number of zero NPs (Bickel excludes agreement affixes in the count), we would expect that referential density in Halkomelem is low, despite the large number of intransitive clauses.

However, as we discuss in this section, Halkomelem has various strategies for expressing NPs referring to agents and patients without making them post-verbal arguments of a transitive verb. Thus, there really is no sense of NP-deprivation.<sup>14</sup> We surmise that further study will reveal that, leaving auxiliary verbs aside, the Halkomelem ideal approximates a ratio of one verb to one NP.

### 2.2.1 NPs inside of NPs

One way to increase the number of overtly expressed NPs without increasing the number of NP arguments is by using complex NP constructions that allow NPs inside of NPs, such as modification, coordination, apposition, and possession. For example, the single subject argument of the intransitive verb in (5) is composed of three NPs:

- (5) s-əw̄-łe:l                      [θəw̄nił      q̄emiʔ                      staləs-θ  
 NM-CON-go.ashore            this.one      young.woman            spouse-3POS  
    t̄əw̄nił      swiwləs].  
    that.one      young.man  
 ‘So the young man's wife went to shore.’ (MTS 45)  
 Literally: This young woman, this young man’s spouse, went to shore.

The use of possessors, since they are arguments of a noun, not a verb, allows overt NPs without increasing the number of verb arguments. Common noun possessors follow the head, which is cross-referenced with possessive agreement. Overt possessors are fairly common and are used for a variety of

<sup>13</sup> A more detailed study needs to examine VSO clauses in a large set of texts, since so few show up in one text. Factors such as the semantics of the verbs and NPs involved should be studied. For example, we think it is no accident that two of the three examples of VSO clauses in SSS involve the NP *məstiməx* ‘people’. This is often used as a kind of “light”, generic noun.

<sup>14</sup> Actually, the situation in Halkomelem is probably a less extreme version of what Watkins (1990: 410) says about Kiowa: “In some cases there is no noun phrase in a sequence of as many as twenty clauses, whereas in others nouns naming participants are repeated in clause after clause.”

functions, including NPs that would be considered benefactives (or malefactives) in other languages.<sup>15</sup>

- (6) *neim̩ ct ʔaləχ̌-ət kʷ sʔəɫtən-s tʰəñ sʔəleləxʷ.*  
 go 1PL.SUB select-TR DT food-3POS DT:2POS elder-PL  
 ‘We will get some food for our elders.’  
 Literally: ‘We will hunt your elders’ food.’ (MTS 8)

We can see the effectiveness of using possession to decrease the number of overt NP arguments in clauses like the following, which involve backward pronominalization into subject position:

- (7) *nəcaʔ skʷəyəl s-əw̌-qʷəl-mə-t-s [θə stələs-θ tʰəw̌niɪ*  
 one day NM-CON-say-to-TR-3POS DT spouse-3POS this.one  
*swiʷləs]...*  
 young.man  
 ‘One day, this young man said to his wife...’ (MTS 7)  
 Literally: ‘One day, he<sub>i</sub> said to this young man’s<sub>i</sub> wife...’

The agent is expressed as an overt possessor NP embedded within the object NP.<sup>16</sup>

So we see that the lack of VSO clauses in Halkomelem is not due to an “allergy” to NPs per se. The use of alternative devices increases the number of NPs while avoiding two direct post-verbal NP arguments.

### 2.2.2 Verb chaining

Verb chaining constructions provide another means of reducing the number of overt NPs.<sup>17</sup> Having several verbs in one sentence is extremely common, especially in the action/adventure genre. A verb chain arises when a series of verbs share a single subject, as in (8).<sup>18</sup>

- (8) *mi ct ceʔ kʷəʔeɫ ʔəw̌-qʷaɫ-ət ceʔ lem-ət.*  
 come 1PL.SUB FUT indeed CON-wait-TR FUT look-TR  
 ‘We will come and look again.’ (MTS 75)

<sup>15</sup> Croft (1985), citing examples from several languages, calls this indirect object ‘lowering’.

<sup>16</sup> Backwards pronominalization with apparent Binding Condition C violations is well-attested in Halkomelem (Hukari 1996, Wiltschko 2002) and other Salish languages (Gardiner 1993, Matthewson et al. 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Davis (2001) has noted the St’át’imcets equivalent pointing out its usefulness for avoiding two post-verbal N. See his example (36).

<sup>18</sup> The shared argument is not always a subject throughout. Chains in which the first verb is a motion verb often have a passive as the second verb link agent to agent (Gerds and Hukari 2001a, 2001b).

The first-person plural subject clitic *ct*, which appears in second position in the clause, serves as subject for all three verbs. An example with an overt NP subject is given in (9).

- (9) həyeʔ tʰəw̃niɪ ʔesxʷ nɛm̃ qʷsə-θət ʔə tʰə qaʔ.  
 depart this.one seal go submerge-REFL OBL DT water  
 ‘And the seal left, going into the water.’ (MTS 21)

Any combination of verbs is allowed in a chain—intransitive, active, or passive.<sup>19</sup> In (10) the NP *θəw̃niɪ q̣em̃iʔ* is the subject of both the preceding intransitive verb and the following transitive verb; the object NP follows the transitive verb.

- (10) stəʔe-e-e hɛw̃qʷ θəw̃niɪ q̣em̃iʔ  
 be.as drift(STA) this.one young.woman  
 ʔaɪm̃əc-t-əs kʷə stəɪəs-θ...  
 wait(CONT)-TR-3ERG DT spouse-3POS  
 ‘Then she drifted around waiting for her husband...’ (MTS 43)  
 Literally: ‘Then the young woman drifted around waiting for her husband.’

The following is an example of the subject sandwiched between two transitive verbs:

- (11) ... he-e-eʔ ɕim̃əɪ-nəxʷ-əs tʰəw̃niɪ swiʋləs  
 yes-s-s get.close-LCTR-3ERG this.one young.man  
 ləm-nəxʷ-əs tʰə hay ʔəɪ θi ʔesxʷ.  
 see-LCTR-3ERG DT most just big seal  
 ‘...as the young man approached (the seals) he saw the biggest one.’  
 (MTS 18)

In some examples the chained verbs are synonymous (12), or even identical (13).

- (12) s-əw̃-qʷal-s tʰəw̃niɪ saʔsəqʷt yəθəs-t-əs  
 NM-CON-speak-3POS this.one younger.sibling tell-TR-3ERG  
 tʰə ʃxʷʔaɪəqʷaʔ-s ...  
 DT sibling(PL)-3POS  
 ‘The younger brother then told his cousins...’ (MTS116)

<sup>19</sup> Davis (2001) says the first verb is intransitive in the equivalent construction in St’át’imcets.

- (13) s-əw̄-kʷən-nəxʷ-əs      **tʰəw̄niɪ** kʷən-nəxʷ-əs      tʰə tɛləw̄-s  
 NM-CON-take-LCTR-3ERG    this.one take-LCTR-3ERG    DT arm-3POS  
 tʰeɣ̄      šxʷʷaɣ̄ʷaʷ-s.  
 DT      sibling-3POS

‘He managed to get a hold of his cousin’s arm.’ (MTS 158)

We see then that verb chaining is an effective means of distributing NPs through a sentence, so that each verb has at most one post-verbal NP. Verb chaining is a very prolific construction in Halkomelem texts and, because the NP arguments are shared across the verbs, the use of verb chains lowers the referential density. However, since many chains involve sequences of V NP V NP, verb chains promote an overall ratio of one verb to one NP.

### 2.2.3 Preverbal NPs

An obvious means for avoiding two post-verbal NPs would be to place one of the NPs before the verb in sentence-initial position.<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere we have discussed the syntax of various extraction phenomena, including clefts, pseudo-clefts, topicalization, WH-questions, and relative clauses (Gerdts 1988b, Hukari 1977, 1994, 1995). We will not elaborate on them here.

In the two texts under study, we see many examples of these constructions. And in the case of transitive clauses with third-person subjects and objects, NPs appear in preverbal positions 18% of the time in MTS (11 out of 62 examples) and 12% in SSS (4 out of 33 examples). We find that focus constructions are used early and late in texts during the descriptive set-up and the denouement.<sup>21</sup> For example, take the first line of the story in MTS, the fronted NP is in boldface:

- (14) **kʷə nañəçaʷ swiwləs** [ʷaʷləχ̄-ət      tʰə sʷəltən-s].  
 ART one.person young.man select(CONT)-TR DT food-3POS  
 ‘There was a young man who hunted for food.’ (MTS 4)

The embedded clause in (14) is transitive. The agent is in sentence-initial focus position. This is an extraction, as seen by the anti-agreement: there is no third-person ergative agreement suffix on the transitive verb *ʷaʷləχ̄ət*.

Such focus constructions are fairly rare in the action portion of the text. However, they may arise when participants are being contrasted. For example, MTS 138 (15) discusses ‘the young men’ as a whole. MTS 139 (16) sets up the sub-group of the fastest runners among them. MTS 140 (17) contrastively focuses on sub-group by the use of a cleft with a predicative pronoun in sentence-initial position.

<sup>20</sup> Island Halkomelem does not allow SVO clauses without extraction effects.

<sup>21</sup> This point is also made in Gerdts (2002).

- (15) s-əw̄-na-a-anəm tʰəw̄neʔəlɪ swaw̄ləs.  
 NM-CON-discuss this.one(PL) young.man(PL)  
 ‘The young men discussed the problem.’ (MTS 138)
- (16) θəy-θət — ʃətə-st-əṁ k̄ʷay-θət  
 prepare-REFL say(CONT)-CS-PASS preparation.bathe-REFL  
 θəy-θət k̄ʷθə hay ceʔ ʔəl ʃw̄əm  
 prepare-REFL DT most FUT just fast  
 k̄ʷs (s-)ʃw̄čənəm-s.  
 COMP (NM-)run-3POS  
 ‘Then the fastest runners had the preparation baths.’ (MTS 139)
- (17) niɪ ceʔ neṁ k̄ʷən-ət ceʔ k̄ʷθə ʃx̄ʷaḳ̄ʷaʔ-s.  
 be.3PRO FUT go take-TR FUT DET sibling-3POS  
 ‘They were the ones that were going to catch their brother.’ (MTS 140)

There is also a strong tendency for NPs quantified by *mək̄ʷ* ‘all’ to appear in sentence-initial position. We found several examples like (18) in each story.

- (18) **mək̄ʷ stem ʔesx̄ʷ** [ʔəw̄-s-ʃeʔɪnəm-s].  
 all what seal CON-NM-hunt.in.water(CONT)-3POS  
 ‘They got all kinds of food from the sea, even the seal.’ (MTS 6)

Preverbal NP constructions deserve further attention, but suffice it to say that these constructions always carry special discourse functions, which motivate their use. They are not used with neutral meaning simply as a means of avoiding post-verbal NPs.

#### 2.2.4 Passive

In Halkomelem passives, the agent appears as an oblique NP and thus there is no confusion between agent and patient, even though they both appear post-verbally.<sup>22</sup>

- (19) niʔ k̄ʷən-ət-əm ʔə k̄ʷθə swəȳqeʔ k̄ʷθə θəqiʔ.  
 AUX take-TR-PAS OBL DT man DT sockeye  
 ‘The man took the sockeye.’

Furthermore, passive seems to be much more frequent in Halkomelem than in English, as can be ascertained by contrasting the English translation of Halkomelem passive clauses, which are frequently translated in the active

<sup>22</sup> Either order of NPs—agent and patient—is permissible in passive constructions and the conditions under which one order or the other is preferred should be studied.

voice.<sup>23</sup> Both stories contain many passives—90 in MTS and 61 in SSS—and the number of active transitive versus passive clauses is given in Table 2.<sup>24</sup>

	Active		Passive		Total
	#	%	#	%	#
MTS	124	58%	90	42%	213
SSS	88	59%	61	41%	149

Table 2. Actives vs. Passives

The number of active clauses in these stories is rather high compared to what we have found in other texts. However, both stories contain a considerable amount of dialogue involving first- and second-person subjects in both stories, and these are always expressed as agents in the active voice. Halkomelem disallows first- and second-person passive agents (Gerdts 1988a, b). If we compute the totals again, using only clauses with third-person agents and patients, we arrive at the numbers in Table 3.<sup>25</sup>

	Active		Passive		Total
	#	%	#	%	#
MTS	77	46%	90	54%	167
SSS	33	35%	61	65%	94

Table 3. Actives vs. Passives/third-person agents and patients only

So passives are relatively frequent in Halkomelem, and, in the case of third-person agents, more frequent than actives.

Given its popularity, passive would be a likely strategy for avoiding two post-verbal direct NPs.<sup>26</sup> Recall that the passive agent appears with an oblique preposition. However, it is in fact very rare to have a passive with both an overtly expressed agent and patient. In MTS there were no examples, and in SSS there were 3 examples, or 5% of the total.

<sup>23</sup> See Dingare (2001) and Thompson (1987) for frequency and use of passive in English discourse. See Darnell (1997), Forrest (1994), and Jacobs (1994) for text counts of passive (a.k.a. ‘inverse’) in Salish languages. Gerdts (2002) shows that passives outnumber active transitives in a Halkomelem text. See Bresnan et al. (2001) for comparison of passive in English and Salish languages.

<sup>24</sup> We do not give a full discussion about the interaction of voice and NPs here. As Gerdts (2002) notes, factors concerning NP type (such as person, common vs. proper noun, etc.) always override discourse considerations. The interaction of these two systems yields a complex of rules governing the occurrence of actives and passives in texts. Thomason and Thomason (2002) have also made this point. See Aissen (1999) for an Optimality Theory analysis of Salish person hierarchy effects.

<sup>25</sup> These numbers include sentences with an NP in sentence-initial focus position.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Lushootseed uses passives rather than actives in this context. (Hess 1973).



segment of the text. We speculate that the passive is used here because the patient, and not the agent, is the topic of the subsequent discourse.<sup>28</sup> The following section of text from SSS illustrates this:

- (21) cəs-ət-əṁ            čə    tʰəw̃neʔəlɪ məstiməxʷ ʔə  
 tell(CONT)-TR-PAS    CONF    this.one(PL)    person            OBL  
 tʰə ʃe:ɫs,    “kʷukʷəyəkʷ    ce:p,    yaθ    ce:p  
 DT    changer    fish(CONT)    2PL.SUB    always    2PL.SUB  
 ʔəw̃-kʷukʷəyəkʷ    ʔən-s-əw̃-qəʃəm-š-ələp  
 CON-fish(CONT)            2POS-NM-CON-come.off-TR-2PL  
 tʰə    čəlč-s            tʰə    sce:ɫən.  
 DT    scale-3POS    DT    salmon

‘The Creator told the people, “You please fish, always fish and take the salmon scales off. These will be your guard, they will guard your house.” So they would fish, arrive home and take the salmon scales off.’ (SSS 5–7)

This is in fact the only mention of the Creator in the story.<sup>29</sup> But the people are referred to periodically. Other examples of passive being used to introduce a new topic—albeit without an overt passive agent—can be found in SSS 12 and SSS 73.

Overall, the passives, like their active counterparts, are not used for introducing two new overt post-verbal NPs in Halkomelem.<sup>30</sup> Passives are used in examples in which two already established participants come together (like actives) or, less frequently attested, where a new topic is being introduced.

### 2.3 Summary

Clauses in either active or passive voice with an overtly expressed agent and patient are not common in Halkomelem texts. Other constructions, including NP fronting (which is reserved for special discourse functions) and especially verb chains commonly occur instead. Also, there are many ways of including NPs in the sentence without making them arguments of a verb, for example as an appositive element or a possessor. So speakers have many alternatives for expressing agent and patient without using a clause with two post-verbal NPs.

We have very little data with two overt post-verbal NPs in the two

<sup>28</sup> Since the NP is appearing for the first time, this is probably not technically topic maintenance. Gerdt (2002) points out other examples of this.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Creator’ is not expressed as a proper noun here, as indicated by the use of the article tʰə after the oblique preposition ʔə. The proper noun oblique determiner is ʃ.

<sup>30</sup> We disregard antipassives in this paper. Gerdt (1988a) suggests antipassive as a means for circumventing surface constraints. However, as shown in Gerdt and Hukari (2000), antipassives evoke special verb semantics.

texts. However, our impression is that active transitive clauses with two post-verbal NPs are used when both NPs are already established in the text. Sometimes the two NPs are being contrasted or related in some way. Other times the subject is being re-introduced and the object is somehow significant in its own right. If a syntactically transitive clause is used as the first utterance in the text or in a section of the text, the subject is likely to appear in sentence-initial focus position, as seen in the first line of the story in MTS (14).

Passive clauses with overt agents and patients also arise under these circumstances. In addition, they can be used when the agent and patient are introduced for the first time. In this case, the patient is topical.

### 3 One post-verbal NP

Halkomelem is a verb-initial language, and subject and object NPs are not marked for case. Thus, a clause such as (22) is potentially ambiguous.

- (22) ni?      ləm-ət-əs      kʷθə      swəy̓qe?  
 AUX    look-TR-ERG    DT        man  
 ‘He/she/it looked at the man.’  
 \*‘The man looked at him/her/it.’

However, as Gerdts (1988b: 57–59) notes, speakers judge such sentences to have only one meaning. This led her to propose the following generalization:

- (23) In the absence of marking for other persons, a single third person nominal is interpreted as the absolutive.

She shows that this condition, which has become known as the One NP-Interpretation (ONI) condition, holds even when the result is pragmatically odd.

- (24) !!ni?      q̓ʷəl-ət-əs      ɬə      sɬeni?  
 AUX    bake-TR-3ERG    DT        woman  
 !! ‘He baked the woman.’  
 \* ‘The woman baked it.’

So the ONI condition is part of the formal grammar of Halkomelem and not just a random result of the pragmatics of transitivity.

Looking back at Table 1, we see that data from texts show ONI effects: post-verbal NPs in transitives are overwhelmingly the object, not the subject, of the clause. In both texts, the most frequent type of transitive clause is one in which the subject is zero and the object is an overt NP. However, there are also some examples—two in MTS and one in SSS—where the subject is an overt NP while the object is zero.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Gerdts and Hukari (to appear) discuss this clause type based on a larger sample of data.

In this section, we look at clauses with one overt NP in some detail. First, we discuss exceptions to the ONI condition. Then we discuss strategies for circumventing the condition. Then we pose the question: why should Halkomelem have such a condition on the expression of NPs, rather than the opposite—that a single NP should be the subject? This leads us to consider the discourse function of subjects as topics.

### 3.1 Working around the ONI condition

First off, we should note that there are systematic violations to the ONI condition. They occur both in texts and elicited data. Hukari (1979) has noted that an NP that contains a third-person demonstrative must be interpreted as a transitive subject, even if it is the sole post-verbal NP.<sup>32</sup>

- (25) niʔ le m-ət-əs tʰəw̃nił swəỹqeʔ.  
 AUX look-TR-ERG this.one man  
 ‘This man looked at him/her/them.’  
 \* ‘He/she/they looked at this man.’

We see three examples of solo NPs interpreted as subjects in our texts.

- (26) kʷən-nəxʷ-əs tʰəw̃nił swiwləs.  
 take-LCTR-3ERG this.one young.man  
 ‘The young man caught what he was after.’ (MTS 287)
- (27) s-əw̃-χłas-t-s tʰəw̃nił spa:l  
 NM-CON-dine-TR-3ERG this.one raven  
 ‘And the raven fed them.’ (SSS164)
- (28) ɪə́kʷ-stxʷ-əs tʰəw̃neʔəlł tən̄niʔ ʔə tnanəł  
 go.home-CS-3ERG this.one(PL) be.from OBL DT  
 xʷəl məxʷ sliyə mən.  
 Indian.person Sliammon  
 ‘It was the Indian people from Sliammon that took him home.’  
 (MTS 293)

In the first two examples, the object is obvious from the preceding discussion. The subject is being reintroduced as the topic. In (28) the subject NP is a heavy NP, so it sounds best in sentence-final position.

The most popular way of expressing a subject when the object is zero is as the first NP in a verb chain.

<sup>32</sup> This is discussed in more detail in Gerdts and Hukari (to appear). Suttles (in press) has also noted this for the Downriver dialect of Halkomelem.

- (29) ne-e-em-s ʔəw-ctem t<sup>θ</sup>əwniɪ swiwləs nem  
 go-3POS CON-crawl this.one young.man go  
 lem-ət-əs.  
 look-TR-3ERG  
 ‘And so he crawled toward them to see.’ (MTS 90)
- (30) həye-e-eʔ-s t<sup>θ</sup>əwniɪ swiwləs nem ʃiç-ət-əs.  
 depart-3POS this.one young.man go sneak-TR-3ERG  
 ‘So the young man went on to sneak up to them.’ (MTS 94)
- (31) ʃ<sup>w</sup>çenəm t<sup>θ</sup>əwniɪ s-əw-ʃəyqəs-t-əs.  
 run this.one NM-CON-pin.down-TR-3ERG  
 ‘The young man ran to him and held him down with his foot.’  
 (MTS 284)

In these verb chain examples, the subject appears after an intransitive verb and also before, not after, the transitive verb.<sup>33</sup>

We also see some instances of passive clauses in which the agent and not the patient is expressed. As noted in Table 4, MTS and SSS each have 7 examples. If we compare this to their occurrence in active clauses (Table 1), we see that MTS has only 2 examples while SSS has only 1. Thus, the passive construction might be used as a strategy for avoiding the ONI condition.<sup>34</sup> For example, see SSS 198:

- (32) ni-i-iʔ ʔəw-ʃiʔʃləm-ət-əm ʔə t<sup>θ</sup>ə çəmçəyi.  
 AUX CON-watch(CONT)-TR-PAS OBL DT ant  
 ‘The ants were watching him.’ (SSS198)

The unexpressed object ‘him’ referring to Seagull is the overtly expressed agent in the preceding and following sentences. Moreover, we see some examples in which the agent is further elaborated with a relative clause.

<sup>33</sup> We know the NP is in a verb chain and not in some preverbal extraction site because of the presence of the ergative agreement suffix. Extracted ergatives in Halkomelem have anti-agreement; the ergative agreement suffix does not appear when an ergative is extracted, as exemplified in (14) above.

<sup>34</sup> çəmçəyi ‘ant’ is a common noun, as seen by the presence of the plain determiner, not the proper noun oblique determiner after the oblique preposition. So this sentence could have theoretically been expressed in the active. But given the overall popularity of passives, some clauses could be passives for other reasons, for example topic maintenance (Gerds 2002).

- (33) niʔ    p̥eʔ    kʷən-ət-əm    ʔə    tʰeý    niʔ    yaθ-əl  
 AUX    EMP    take-TR-PAS    OBL    DT    AUX    always-PST  
 ʔəw̃-ǰeʔtənəm-t-əs.  
 CONT-hunt.on.water-TR-3ERG

‘He must have been captured by the ones he always kills for food.’  
 (MTS 74)

- (34) ləm-n-əm    ʔə    tʰə    swaw̃ləs    ǰəw̃    heʔkʷəlǰš-t  
 see-TR-PAS    OBL    DT    young.man(PL)    also    shoot(CONT)-TR  
 tʰeý    ʔesx̃.  
 DT    seal

‘It was some young seal hunters that saw him.’ (MTS 183)

Such sentences would not be good candidates for verb chaining or a sentence-initial focus construction since the NPs are so heavy.

To summarize, we see that one direct post-verbal NP in an active transitive clause is overwhelmingly interpreted as the object. However, systematic exceptions to this generalization occur if the agent NP contains a third-person demonstrative. This brings up the question of why the ONI condition holds most of the time. We turn to this in the next section.

### 3.2 The zero topic effect

How do we account for ONI effects? Why is the sole NP preferentially the object. To answer this, we must flip the question around and ask: When are subjects zero? The preliminary answer to this question is: when they are topics (Beck 2000a, Davis 1994, Kroeber 1995). We explore the relationship between topics and zero in this section.

The key concept in our discussion will be the term “continue”, which we borrow from Centering Theory (Walker et al. 1998). Centering theory focuses on pairs of utterances (i.e. sentences) and examines them for their local coherence. The flow of one sentence to the next is called a transition. A continue is a transition type that arises when the topic of the previous sentence is the same as the topic in the current sentence. For example, if sentence one is: *John is sick* and sentence two is *He should eat some chicken soup*, then the transition type is continue, because NPs with the same referent are topics in both.

Continues are the universally preferred transition type within a discourse segment, since they lead to much greater coherence than other sorts of cross-sentential transitions, such as topic shifts. Topics following the continue transition (we will call this NP a “continue” for short) are universally expressed in the weakest form available in a language, a weak pronoun (*he* in our English example above), or, if possible, a zero NP (Brennan et al. 1987, Gundel 1998).

It is easy to see how this concept will play out in Salish discourse. Texts tend to have long discourse segments. Continues are the preferred transition within a segment. Continues are zero universally. Topics are subjects

in Salish. Therefore, the majority of subjects in a Salish text will be zero continues.

Our aim in this section is to try to bring some clarity to the concept of topic and to the status of zero NP. We depart from our discussion of transitive clauses to engage in an exploration of the fit between continues and zero. In §3.2.1, we illustrate continues that are zero. In §3.2.2, we look at zeros and note that they sometimes are not continues, at least as formally defined. In §3.2.3, we discuss continues that are not zero, suggesting some strategies that would result in the topics being overt NPs. In §3.2.4, we explore the relationship between non-topics and zero. Since non-topics are not continues we do not expect them to occur as zero very readily. If they were zero, this could obscure the role of zero as a signal for a continue, thus reducing coherence.

### 3.2.1 Continues are zero

In examining Halkomelem texts, we find that continues expressed as a zero subject are extremely frequent. For example, in MTS 105–108, the man who turns into a seal is set up as the topic in (35), and then is a zero continue in (36), where he is the subject of three chained verbs and the verb in the relative clause. The next line shifts the topic to the younger brother in (37), and then in (38) we see a zero continue: the younger brother is zero subject of the main verb and also of the subsequent chain of three verbs.<sup>35</sup>

- (35) s-əw̄-łx̄iləš celqəm t̄əw̄nił swiwləs ni?  
 NM-CON-stand follow this.one young.man AUX  
 x̄w̄ə-s-đəđa? ʔə t̄eý ʔesx̄.  
 INC-STA-gather OBL DT seal  
 ‘The young man who was with the seals stood up to follow.’  
 (MTS 105)

- (36) s-əw̄-ł̄č̄enəm q̄sə-θət yə-s-đəđa? ʔə t̄ə ʔesx̄  
 NM-CON-run go.in.water-REFL SER-STA-gather OBL DT seal  
 ni? k̄w̄ən-n-əm ʔə t̄ə ʔesx̄.  
 AUX take-LCTR-PAS OBL DT seal  
 ‘He ran into the water along with the seals he was captured by.’  
 (MTS 106)

- (37) ł̄iʔł̄əm t̄əw̄nił sqeʔeq-s.  
 watch(CONT) this.one younger.sibling-3POS  
 ‘The younger brother just watched.’ (MTS 107)

<sup>35</sup> There is much evidence for topic maintenance in Salish languages, see especially Beck (1996b, 1998b, 2000) and Kinkade (1989b).

- (38) s-əw̄-x<sup>w</sup>əʔaləṁ    ʔə    t<sup>θ</sup>ə    snəx<sup>w</sup>əɬ-s    s-i-s  
 NM-CONT-return    OBL    DT    canoe-3POS    NM-AUX-3POS  
    ʔəw̄-ʔəšəl    ɬak<sup>w</sup>    nɛṁ    ʔə    t<sup>θ</sup>ə    si:yeʔə-s.  
    CONT-paddle    go.home    go    OBL    DT    relative(PL)-3POS  
 ‘He returned to his canoe and paddled home to his relatives.’  
 (MTS 108)

Often in texts, there is a whole section where the same protagonist is the subject in a series of sentences. This leads to a chain of continues and in Halkomelem this most often results in zero subjects. For example, examine SSS lines 18–38. ‘Sun’ *səmšaθət* is established as the protagonist in line 18 and more or less remains the on-going backward center through the next 13 sentences, with a couple of brief asides, until seagull is introduced in line 38. Rather than presenting the data, we summarize the section starting with line 18 in the Table 6. The first column details the presentation of ‘sun’, with capital letters standing for overt occurrences of *səmšaθət*. We also give the number of times ‘sun’ is subject of a verb (or if not subject, possessor) in each sentence. The second column gives the NP that is the subject of the main clause (that is, the topic), of the current sentence. The third column gives the type of transition that exists between the current sentence and the previous one. We have adopted a hybrid set of terms here, defined as follows: **Start** is used at the beginning of a section. **Continue** is when the topic of the previous sentence is the same as the current one. **Shift** is where the topic of the previous sentence is not the same as the current one. And **resume** is where we go back to the overall topic of the section, *səmšaθət*.

#	Sun =	Topic	Transition
1	SUN x 1; Ø x 2	sun	start
2	Ø x 4	sun	continue
3	Ø x 3	sun	continue
4	Ø x 4	sun	continue
5	possessor x 1	fish scales	shift
6	Ø x 2 <sup>36</sup>	house	shift
7	Ø x 1	sun	resume
8	SUN x 1	sun	continue
9	possessor x 1	his eyes	continue
10	Ø x 2 <sup>37</sup>	you	shift
11	none	things that burn	shift
12	none	you	shift
13	THAT SUN x 1, Ø x 1	sun	resume
14	Ø x 1	sun	continue
15	none	seagull	start

Table 6. Lines 18–38 in SSS

We can see in sentences 2, 3, 4, and 14, that zero is used when ‘sun’ is the topic in a continue. Furthermore, we see that a shift away from ‘sun’ as topic, results in an overt mention of *səmsəθət* in the sentence when ‘sun’ resumes as topic (see sentence 8) or shortly thereafter (sentence 13).

### 3.2.2 Zeros that are not continues

So we see, as expected, an association of zero subjects with the continue transition type. However, some zero subjects arise even when the transition is not a continue.

First, it is possible to interrupt a chain of continues with a brief aside and then switch back to the protagonist without using an overt NP.

<sup>36</sup> While ‘house’ is the subject of the main clause, and thus is considered the topic, ‘sun’ continues as the zero subject of a subordinate clause. Obviously, a more careful study would have to address the issue of clauses within clause and how they effect the flow of discourse. Hedberg and Dueck (1999) also bring up this issue.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Sun’ is the covert agent of a passive with a second person patient in the first main conjoined clause of the sentence (and also the zero subject of two subordinate clauses). The subject of the second conjunct is second person.

- (39) mǐ yə-saǰ-θət tʰə skʷeyəl ʔiʔ niʔ wəl niʔ  
 come SER-break(CONT)-REFL DT day and AUX then AUX  
 kʷ-s-ə-s s-ʃiʃəc-stxʷ-əs.  
 DT-NM-AUX-3POS STA-sneak-CS-3ERG

‘At the break of dawn he sneaked up and camouflaged himself.’  
 (MTS 87)

- (40) nem cakʷ tʰə qaʔ nem xʷcəkʷcəkʷ.  
 go far DT water go low.tide

‘The tide was going out and was at its lowest point.’ (MTS 88)

- (41) niʔ wəl ʃeləm-ət-əs kʷi qəxʷ ʔesxʷ ʔəw-qʷalqʷəl  
 AUX then hear-TR-3ERG DT many seal CON-talk(CONT:PL)  
 ʔəw-ʔənaŋxʷəm.  
 CON-bark(CONT:PL)

‘He then heard many seals barking and making noises.’ (MTS 89)

Another example of this type can be found in SSS line 99, where Sun is expressed as a zero subject, even though the previous two sentences contain an excursus on the box that Sun is being kept in. Most of these brief diversions contain references to the natural setting or involve the elaboration of the object.

Second, sometimes an NP is set up as protagonist over a whole section (or even a whole text) and it is expected that the listener will be able to figure out the referent without overt mention.<sup>38</sup> A dramatic example of this sort is from MTS. The title character, the young man who turns into a seal, is often expressed as zero, even when other NPs have been more recent topics. In one section of the text, he is overtly mentioned in sentence 128 as ‘older brother’ and is expressed by zero in sentence 130. Then he is not mentioned again until sentences 134 ( (42)) and 135 ( (43)), where he is expressed as a zero object and subject respectively:

- (42) xʷeləq cən ʔiʔ n-əw kʷən-nəxʷ ʔiʔ  
 almost 1SG.SUB and AUX-CON take-LCTR and  
 niʔ qʷsə-θət.  
 AUX go.in.water-REFL

‘I almost caught him before he went into the water.’ (MTS 134)

- (43) niʔ xʷʃenəm ʃelqəm ʔə kʷθə niʔ ʃ-s-ǰəqʷaʔ-s.  
 AUX run follow OBL DT AUX INS-STA-gather-3POS

‘He ran along following the ones he was with.’ (MTS 135)

<sup>38</sup> Perhaps this accounts for the zero subordinate clause subjects in sentences 6 and 10 in Table 6, where the topic shifts away from ‘sun’, and also sentence 7 where ‘sun’ resumes as topic, but overt mention is not made until line 8.



to occasionally re-establish the referent. There may be an upper limit of how long a speaker will go without mentioning the NP.<sup>40</sup> A typical example of this is in SSS lines 175–191, which we have summarized in chart form in Table 7.

#	Ants =	Topic=subject	Transition
1	ANTS	ants	start
2–4	‘we’	ants	continue
5	ANTS	ants	continue
6	THOSE ONES, Ø x 3	ants	continue
7	THOSE ONES	ants	continue
8	Ø x 1	ants	continue
9 <sup>41</sup>	Ø x 2	ants	continue
10	THOSE LITTLE ONES, Ø x 1	ants	continue
11	Ø x 1	ants	continue
12	Ø x 3	ants	continue
13	Ø x 3	ants	continue
14	Ø x 3	ants	continue
15	THOSE ONES	ants	continue
16	Ø x 1	ants	continue
17	THOSE ONES ANTS	ants	continue
18	none	seagull	shift

Table 7. Lines 175–191 in SSS

The central character throughout this passage is the ‘ants’, and they are mentioned overtly at the start in sentence 1 and re-established in sentence 5 after the dialogue in sentence 2–4. It apparently takes a couple of more mentions to get them established as the central character, see the deictic pronouns in sentences 6 and 7. Then the continues mostly result in zero subjects, except for the deictic pronouns in 10 and 15. We take these to be examples of “refreshing” the referent, borrowing the term from Hedberg (2000).<sup>42</sup> Finally, the full NP is overtly mentioned in line 17, the last line of the section. We often see this phenomenon—the repeating of the overt NP in the last line of the section.<sup>43, 44</sup> So

<sup>40</sup> Darnell (1997) measures referential persistence in Squamish.

<sup>41</sup> In lines 9 and 14, the agent of the motion verb is linked to the agent in the passive. See Gerdts and Hukari (2001a, 2001b) for a discussion of this type of chaining.

<sup>42</sup> Hedberg (2000: 898) points out that “demonstrative pronouns are most typically used to introduce a focus shift, to refresh a discourse topic, to draw attention to a discourse segment boundary or to point out something in the external context.” As you see from the use of THOSE ONES in Table 1, demonstratives are used for these purposes in Halkomelem. See Gerdts and Hukari (to appear) for more discussion of this phenomenon.

<sup>43</sup> The tendency to wrap up a section by putting a full NP in the last line has also been noted by Hedberg and Dueck (1999).



- (50) s-əw̄-χə́tə-s                      θəw̄nił “niʔ    p̄eʔ    kʷələš-t-əs  
 NM-CON-say(CONT)-3POS    this.one    AUX    EMPH    shoot-TR-3ERG  
 kʷθə    ʔesxʷ    s-i-s                      ʔəw̄-p̄əkʷ  
 DT       seal    NM-AUX-3POS       CON-surface  
 kʷθə    ʔesxʷ    niʔ    ʔə    kʷθə    cəw̄cəw̄.  
 DT       seal    AUX    OBL    DT       middle  
 ‘And she said, “He killed/shot the seal, and it floated up above the  
 water far away.” ’ (MTS 55)

The on-going topic of this section is the title character. In another example of this type, ‘seal’ is in an oblique phrase and then it is also the passive agent of the chained clause modifying itself.

- (51) s-əw̄-χ̄čənəm    qʷsə-θət                      yə-s-đəđəʔ    ʔə    tʰə ʔesxʷ  
 NM-CON-run       go.in.water-REFL    SER-STA-gather    OBL    DT    seal  
 niʔ    kʷən-n-əm                      ʔə    tʰə ʔesxʷ.  
 AUX   take-LCTR-PAS       OBL    DT    seal  
 ‘He ran into the water along with the seals he was captured by.’  
 (MTS 106)

The repetition of the overt NP ‘seal’ solves a quandary for the speaker. The title character, as the on-going topic, should be the pivot of the embedded passive. But, unlike the English translation, passive agents in Halkomelem cannot extract in relative clauses. The speaker resorts to stringing together two clauses with two overt NPs.

Repetition of subject NPs is also possible. ‘Smoke’ is mentioned twice in a row in SSS lines 135 (52a) and 136 (52b). But this is just a brief excursus on smoke, not enough to establish it as a topic. Line 136 returns to the topic ‘people’, which is expressed as a zero subject.

- (52) a. yaθ    ʔəw̄-niʔ    tʰeý    s̄pałəm.  
 always    CON-there    DT    smoke  
 ‘The smoke was always there.’
- b. yaθ    ʔəw̄-yəw̄eñ    tʰə    s̄pałəm    kʷs  
 always    CON-ahead       DT    smoke       COMP:NM  
 yə-ʔiʔməš-s                      kʷ-ə-s  
 SER-walk(CONT)-3POS       COMP:NM-AUX-3POS  
 yə-kʷəñe-t-əs                      tʰeý    həýq̄w    syał.  
 SER-hold-TR-3ERG       DT       burn(CONT)    wood  
 ‘The smoke was always in front of them as they walked because they  
 held the burning wood.’

- c. yaθ      ʔəw̄-sew̄q̄-t-əs                      t<sup>θ</sup>əw̄neʔəli      t<sup>θ</sup>eyʔ  
 always    CON-look(CONT)-TR-3ERG      this.one(PL)    DT  
             k̄wiʔx<sup>w</sup>    syaɬ.  
             pitch    wood

‘They always looked for the pitch wood.’ (SSS 135–137).

Other examples of this sort are SSS 37–39 and 94–98, where the NPs ‘Seagull’ and ‘box’ respectively are repeated in close succession.

Sometimes the exact NP is not repeated, rather a synonymous NP or slightly varied NP is used. We see this effect in example (52) above with the two object NPs ‘burning wood’ (52b) and ‘pitch wood’ (52c). Another example of this occurs in SS 124–126, where *st<sup>θ</sup>aq<sup>wi</sup>ʔ* ‘spring salmon’ is repeated as *sce:ttən* ‘salmon’.<sup>46</sup> This use of a synonym allows the overt mention of the NP without the redundancy involved in a full repetition of it.<sup>47</sup>

### 3.3 Summary

This section presented a study of data involving just one post-verbal NP. Overwhelmingly, this is the object, not the subject, and thus examples from Halkomelem texts by-and-large obey the ONI condition. Two factors are simultaneously at work.<sup>48</sup> First, that the subject NP is frequently zero is no surprise, especially from the point of view of Centering Theory. The subject is often the topic in a continue. The continue transition cross-linguistically results in the least marked form of the NP, i.e. pronouns or, in languages like Halkomelem, zero NPs. Moreover, the subject can be zero even after brief interruptions in the story. However, when there is a long string of continues, the subject is occasionally refreshed with an overt NP. The other force at work is that non-topics, including objects, tend not to be zero.<sup>49</sup> We see cases of the overt expression of an NP in adjacent sentences, or even within the same sentence, contrasting markedly with the English translations, where such repetition is impermissible. We return to the interaction of these two factors in §5.

We nevertheless do find examples of sentences in which the sole post-verbal NP is the subject. Since there are only three examples in total from both

<sup>46</sup> Usually the NP expressed first is more specific and the subsequent NP is more general.

<sup>47</sup> Gerdtz (2001) also points out that sentences at the end of sections often finish with increments, where an appositive NP doubles the last NP of the sentence, e.g. *t<sup>θ</sup>ə snəx<sup>w</sup>əɬ, θi snəx<sup>w</sup>əɬ* ‘the canoe, big canoe’ or *t<sup>θ</sup>ə snəx<sup>w</sup>əɬ, t<sup>θ</sup>ə q̄xəw̄ɬ* ‘the canoe, the war canoe’. In this case the second NP is usually more specific.

<sup>48</sup> Roberts (1994), in his study of St’át’mcets subject and topic, arrives at the same viewpoint, and states it in a much more elegant fashion.

<sup>49</sup> Passive agents and patients in antipassives, which are frequently omitted, are of course an exception to this.



- (55) a. *neṃ*    *čə*    *tʰəw̃niṭ*    *qwaṇi*,  
 go    CONF    this.one    seagull  
*s-əw̃-kʷəṇ-əm-s*    *ʔə*    *tʰeý*    *sce:ɬtəṇ*.    *ʃeʔ*  
 NM-CON-take-MID-3POS    OBL    DT    salmon    also  
*s-əw̃-kʷəṇ-əm*    *ʔə*    *tʰeý*    *čəɬʔč*.  
 NOM-CON-take-MID    OBL    DT    scale  
*neṃ-əstxʷ-əs*    *ʔə*    *tʰə*    *ʃeɬ-s*.  
 go-CS-3ERG    OBL    DT    door-3POS

‘The seagull went and took some of the salmon. He also took some of the scales. He put them by his door.’ (SSS 51–53)

Again we see a parallelism effect. Other examples of this sort can be seen in SSS lines 277–279 and 328–332.

One spectacular example of an extended section with many cases of transitives with zero subject and object occurs in SSS lines 300–302, where four of the ten transitive verbs of this sort in this text occur. This section describes Raven’s ruse of pretending not to be able to see the splinters in Seagull’s foot so that he can trick Seagull into letting him open the box where Sun is being kept. This passage contains four vision verbs without overt subjects and objects — *tikʷətəs* ‘he squints at it’ (twice), *ləmənəxʷəs* ‘he sees it’ (once), and *lēmətəs* ‘he looks at it’ (once). Prior to this, Raven is overtly mentioned in 295, and the NP that is being looked at, ‘that which pierced his foot’, is overtly mentioned in line 298.

- (56) a. *ʃeʔ*    *wəɬ*    *neṃ*    *tikʷ-ət-əs*,  
 too    then    go    squint-TR-3ERG  
 ‘He went to squint at it.’
- b. *tikʷ-ət-əs*.    *lēm-ət-əs*.  
 squint-TR-3ERG    look-TR-3ERG  
 ‘He squinted at it. He looked at it.’
- c. *sḱʷey*    *kʷs*    *(s-)ləm-nəxʷ-s*.  
 cannot    COMP    (NM-)look-LCTR-3POS  
 ‘He could not see it.’
- d. *ʃətə*    *kʷs*    *sḱʷey-s*    *kʷs*    *(s-)ləm-nəxʷ-s*  
 say(CONT)    COMP    cannot-3POS    COMP    (NM-)look-LCTR-3POS  
           *ḱʷə*    *niʔ*    *s-čəqʷ-ʃeṇ-s*  
           DT    AUX    STA-pierce-foot-3POS  
 ‘He said that he could not see the slivers.’

Data such as these bring up a further point that should be studied. Certain classes of verbs, for example, perception verbs, may preferentially take

zero objects. We see that ‘look’ and ‘speak’ expressed as transitive verbs with zero objects occur frequently in MTS. Take (57) for example:

- (57)   ʔe-e-eʔ                   ʔəw̄-niʔ-əs                   ceʔ           ləm-nəx<sup>w</sup>-əs.  
   COMP-AUX-3SSUB           FUT           look-LCTR-3ERG  
           ‘Then he saw them.’ (MTS 93)

The last mention of the object ‘seals’ was in MTS 89, but nonetheless no overt mention is made in MTS 93. Another set of ‘look’ verbs appears shortly thereafter in MTS 96:

- (58)   s-i-s                   nem̄   ʔəw̄-čiməl̄           tʰəw̄nił̄           swiwləs  
           NM-AUX-3POS       go       CON-approach       this.one       young.man  
                                   s-əw̄-le-m-ət-əs                   ləm-nəx<sup>w</sup>-əs.  
                                   NM-CON-look-TR-3ERG           look-LCTR-3ERG  
           ‘When the young man got close he looked and saw them.’ (MTS 96)

We would need a larger corpus of data to explore this more thoroughly. However, it does appear that certain verbs allow or maybe even prefer zero objects, even when the distance to the last occurrence of overt mention is great.<sup>53</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the expression of NPs in Halkomelem, based on data from two texts. The picture that emerges from the above discussion is that overt NPs appear as often as necessary to allow the listener to track the various NPs in a text. For example, 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. However, we see that overt post-verbal ergative NPs are not used to introduce new topics. Intransitive clauses, clefts, or passives get used for this function instead. Non-topic NPs, including object NPs, tend to be overt, even when they closely follow an overt expression of the same or similar NP.<sup>54</sup> They express information relating to the topic.

Countering the need for the clarity provided by overtly expressed NPs is the need for parsimony.<sup>55</sup> Constant repetition of the same NPs detracts from the action of the story related by the verbs. So there is pressure to reduce the number of NPs. The obvious candidate to be a zero NP is the subject, when it is continued as the center of attention through a section of text. Also, the title

<sup>53</sup> Darnell (1997) measures referential distance in Squamish texts.

<sup>54</sup> The first part of Grice’s (1975) maxim of quantity—be as informative as required—may account for the appearance of many overt NPs.

<sup>55</sup> Gundel (1998) notes that the first part of the quantity maxim predicts that for ‘in focus’ referents an unstressed personal pronoun or zero will be preferred over a demonstrative or stressed pronoun.

character can act as a default topic and appear as zero even if it has not been mentioned recently. In addition, it is possible to have a zero object. 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.<sup>56</sup> Most often this is within a chain of events with a continuing topic. Parallelism effects govern the interpretation of the zero NPs. Since, at least one zero NP in the clause will be the topic, and this is predictable on the basis of parallelism effects, zero NPs can be used to good effect for discourse cohesion.

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

- (59) a. Subjects should be zero.  
 b. Objects should be overt.

We can see how these principles relate to the data discussed in this paper, cited in Table 1. We have reformatted the results, as in Table 8:

	zero subject	overt subject	Total
zero object	35%	4%	38%
overt object	53%	9%	62%
Total	88%	12%	100%

Table 8. Overt vs. zero NPs

The principle in (59a) is stronger: transitive clauses have zero subjects in 88% of our data; while (59b) is weaker: overt objects appear in only 62% our data. Putting it another way, we can see how the two principles relate to each clause type.

	1 NP = object 53%	No overt NPs 35%	2 NPs 9%	1 NP = subject 4%
Zero subject	yes	yes	no	no
Overt object	yes	no	yes	no

Table 9. Two principles

The preferred construction will be the one that satisfies both principles. This would be a 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 (59a), the stronger one, is preferred over one that violates it. Clauses with no overt NPs appear in 35% of the data. In contrast, the

<sup>56</sup> Within Centering Theory, the Pronoun Rule (Grosz et al. 1986) says that if anything is referred to with a pronoun, the backward center (i.e. topic) will be. So a modification of this is that other NPs can be pronominal (or zero) if the topic is as well.

clauses that violate (59a) but satisfy (59b), that is, clauses with two overt NPs, appear in only 9% of the data. Finally, clauses that violate both of the principles are rare, and we find them in only 4% of the data.

Furthermore, we see how the two principles together derive ONI effects.<sup>57</sup> Clauses in which the sole NP is the object are the most preferred construction while clauses in which the sole NP is the subject are the least preferred of the clause types. Why should we find overt subjects at all? Because, as we mentioned above, there is pressure to refresh or re-establish the topic, and this is strong enough to override principle (59a). Proof that the topicality of the NP is relevant comes from the fact that our examples frequently involve a third-person demonstrative. This is discussed in detail in Gerdts and Hukari (to appear).

Other data that show overt subject NPs contra principle (59a) are clauses with two overt NPs. However, we see in our data that such clauses, because they satisfy principle (59b) are slightly more frequent than clauses in which the sole NP is the subject, since the latter violate both principles. Again, we can see the effect of topicality at work. As mentioned above, clauses with two overt NPs do not arise in out-of-the-blue contexts, but rather when the subject is being re-established or reinforced as the topic, sometimes with an element of contrast to the object.

At this point, it should be obvious to anyone who has read Davis (1994) that we have arrived at the same conclusion as this seminal work on the discourse role of topical objects in St'át'imcets. Our count of clause types fits perfectly with the theory of topic mapping that he develops (see pages 120–125). This is not surprising given the general patterns of Salish structure that are shared by both languages and the similarity in our underlying assumptions.

There is one small (or maybe not so small) difference between his methodology and ours that leads to different empirical predictions. In our research, we have tried to establish what the topic of the sentence is first, and then see whether it is expressed by an overt or zero NP. Since continuers are universally the most preferred transition type, and since topics in continuers are associated with the weakest forms, i.e. a zero pronoun in Salish languages, topics are preferentially zero. However, we have suggested above that topics can be overt NPs, for example, when the topic is being refreshed or re-established. Overt ergative NPs do not arise in out-of-the-blue contexts.

In contrast, Davis (1994) starts from the point of view of zero pronouns and how they are to be interpreted. He uses the term discourse topic (d-topic), which corresponds to the protagonist(s) of a given discourse. This discourse topic will have the ability to be the antecedent of a zero pronoun. So far, this is parallel to our approach, and his use of d-topic is similar to our use of topic.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> This point was previously made by Roberts (1994).

<sup>58</sup> Though, since a clause can have more than one zero pronoun, there can be more than one discourse antecedent (in Davis' terms, more than one d-topic). We have been using the Centering Theory approach and limiting the sentence to one topic. This means, of

However, his connection between d-topics and zero pronouns is bidirectional. He says: “a d-topic is represented in the syntax as the index binding an empty pronominal” (p. 123). Consequently, overt NPs by definition are not d-topics. But this does not correspond with what we found in our data: topics can be overt NPs, for example, when they are being refreshed or contrasted.

To conclude, the differences in our methodologies, especially in how we define and use the notion topic, raise some interesting questions about the discourse functions of clauses with overt ergative NPs. We clearly cannot answer them on the basis of the few examples that we found in our two texts. As more texts become available, especially in searchable electronic form, and as we develop better discourse theories, we can address these questions in a more sophisticated way. In the meantime, we hope that our exploration of the expression of NPs in Halkomelem contributes to an understanding of the intricacies of discourse structure in Salish languages.

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course, that there are zero NPs that are not topics, as discussed in section 4 above. Clearly, further research on secondary protagonists is in order.

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