

NOMINALS IN BELLA COOLA

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The analysis of sentential units of the Salishan language of Bella Coola is presented, as far as the expression of nouns in them is concerned. The author concludes that the archaic language of Bella Coola gives opportunity to trace that verbals were diachronically prior to nominals in the development of parts of the speech system.

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Nuxálk, also known as Bella Coola is a Salishan language spoken in the vicinity of the Canadian town Bella Coola, British Columbia by approximately 20–30 elderly people. We consider this language to be archaic according to the criteria defining the archaic language type [Ikonnikova]. We suppose that archaic languages can throw light on the pre-grammatical stage of the language, mainly on the genesis of the parts-of-speech system.

One of the controversial problems in the parts-of-speech diachrony is the genesis of the nouns and verbs. The formation of opposition between the major word classes nominals and verbals has been the subject of speculation throughout the history of linguistics. To this day linguists haven't been able to establish the relative chronology in the emergence of nominal and verbal categories with some degree of certainty, mainly because of the absence of sufficient diachronic evidence. The analysis of the nominal forms in Bella Coola is to the point and the main aim of the paper.

H. Nater presents the parts-of-speech system of Bella Coola in the following way: there are verbo-nominal stems that fall into 2 classes of stems: transitive and intransitive ones. The intransitive stems are subdivided into intransitive verbals and nouns, the verbals comprise intransitive verbs, adjectives, numerals [Nater, p. 33].

A Bella Coola sentence consists of a predicate followed by relata. For the latter, nominal forms are used, in which case it is usually accompanied by an article, and often also by one or more deictic elements. Marked nouns typically contain one or more nominalizing affixes. [Nater, p. 52]. There are restrictions to the nominal use of verbal forms: not all passives can be used nominally, nominally used intransitive verbs do not allow pronominal suffixation [Nater, p. 54]. Moreover a great number of suffixes

have a semantically additive, rather than grammatically modifying, character. These are the lexical suffixes, most of each are translated into English as nouns.

We've analyzed the nominals extracted from the Bella Coola text that describes the roles of Bella Coola men and women in obtaining and preparing food fish, and more in particular the process of smoke-drying salmon. The text consists of 50 sentential units. In the paper we'll present the sentential units or parts of the sentential units as far as the expression of nouns in them is concerned.

1) First, we get the net ready so that they can use it when they will be drifting down the river.

*Nacliwa + tu + lh + lu:*

Ready + causative suffix + causative ending + yet, still

*ti + kw'puts + t'ayc*

Non-female article + fishing net + non-female deictic

*kasi + 7ay + ak + aw*

in order that + to manifest oneself, be thus + work (manual, hand) + 3pl. intransitive-possessive

*tc + s + ka + 7uqw + aw*

non-female pronoun + co-referential embedder + to drift downriver + 3pl. intransitive possessive

*7ala + tmcw + 7ats*

Plural article + river + pl. deictic

The notion of 'net' is expressed by *kw'puts/* cf. *'kw>p* – straight, *-uts* – orifice → mesh, net, where *-kw'p* and *-utsare* lexical suffixes.

The word 'river' is expressed by the nominal stem *'tmcw'*.

2) They keep casting out the net, these two (men) on this one boat.

*qtsamtsamk + a + naw + ts'*

to cast out net + intransitivizer + 3 pl. intransitive-possessive + now, then

*a + nulhnu:s + 7ats*

pl. particle + two persons + pl. deictic

*7alh + ti + mawah*

Preposition static-centripetal + non-female article + one boat

*ti + lhalas + t'ayc*

non-female article + boat + non-female deictic

The notion of 'net' is expressed by the adjunct-incorporative in the verbal *'qtsamtsamk'* – to cast out net <*qtsamt* – to extend, *-amk* – adjunct-incorporative.

The combination 'two persons' *nulhnu:s* expressed by a prefix and an intransitive, as cardinal numerals are stative intransitive verbs: <*nu* – prefix meaning 'human' found in combination with numerals – *lhnu:s* – 'two'.

The word combination 'one boat' *mawah* is expressed by the intransitive stative verb – numeral *maw* 'one' and a lexical suffix *-ah* 'boat', while the notion of the 'boat' as a kind is expressed by the nominal stem *lhalas* 'boat'.

3) Well, when their catch is plentiful, somebody picks them up again in a car....

*kamalh + slax + 7its'ik + wa + tl'apamk*

if, when + much / many + and, subsequently + pl. article + a catch

*s + kwn + tim + tuts*

embedder non-co-referential + to take, bring something + 3 pl. passive ending + again

*c + ti + qw'xwmttimut + t'ayc*

Preposition static – centrifugal + non-female article + car + non-female deictic

The notion 'catch' *tl'apamk* goes back to the intransitive base *tl'ap* 'to go' + *-amk* – adjunct incorporative.

The word *qw'xwmttimut* 'car' is formed from *qw'xwm* 'to be moving' (*qw'xw* 'to move something' – *m* – 'medium') and *-timut* 'causative reflexive suffix'. We can discern that the noun 'car' is expressed by an intransitive stem 'to be moving' and two suffixes and means something that is caused to move by itself.

4) 'in old tubs'

*7ula + nuscuuksta + lhn + 7ats*

Preposition static centripetal + bath tube + 'ex, dead' + pl. deictic

'Nuscuuksta': cf. *nu* 'inside', *s* – nominalizer, *cuk* / *cuuk* 'to bathe somebody, something' and *-sta* – 'implement' → bathtub

5) The notion 'dawn, morning' *xim* is expressed by the lexical suffix *xi* 'light, bright' and a grammatical suffix *-m* – 'medium'.

6) 'Fridge, freezer' - **nusk'liik**

The notion of a freezer, container is expressed with the help of the intransitive verbal stem *skl'* 'cold' and the instrumental prefix-suffix frame: *nu ----iik* – 'container'.

7) We fix our food in many ways, take the fish stew (for instance).

*7ays7ay + s + ti + 7umatak + ilh*  
any+ 3sg. transitive-possessive+ non-female article + where one takes the result of one's work + transitive ending

*ti + snknic + ilh + ti + sliixw + t'ayc*  
non-female article + food + 1pl. intransitive-possessive + non-female article + fish stew+non-female deictic

In the first example the notion of 'food' is expressed by the lexical suffix – *ak* 'finished product'. In the second example the word 'food' *snknic* is formed from *knic* – 'to eat something' and *-s* nominalizer.

The word 'fish stew' *sliixw* is formed from *sl-* 'to slice something' and the lexical suffix *-ixw* 'head, fish head'.

8) That is all about the fish.... about the smoked fish.

*cwplxs + tax + 7ala + smlhk + 7ats*  
the end of a story + non-female pronoun + preposition static-centripetal + fish salmon + pl. deictic

*7ala + knum + 7ats*  
Preposition static – centripetal + smoke-dried fish + pl. deictic

The phrase 'The end of the story' *cwplxis* formed from *cwpl* 'to be dropped off, left' and a lexical suffix *-lxs-* 'terminus, end'.

So we can infer that most nominal forms are intransitive verbals with lexical suffixes attached to them or nominalized lexical suffixes. The deictic elements and articles are the markers of the nominal character of the stem. It is a productive way of forming the nominal forms.

There are, however, some nominal roots which etymology is not traced. These are the words that are often used in discourse and are connected with everyday activities of the Bella Coola natives: 'woman' *cnas*, 'salmon fillets' *slaq'k*, 'person' *tl'msta*, 'fishbone' *sqwh*, 'children' *qipqip*, 'smoke-dried fish' *knum*, 'dog salmon' *ti'li*, 'dinghy' *lhalhlaas*. Such nominal constitute a rather closed class.

S. Katsnelson states that 'the first operation accomplished by thinking

is to single out the event or a course of events which are actual and with the help of successive segmentations sequentially reveal the participants with the help of special actualizers [Katsnelson, p. 377, 405]. We consider that Bella Coola gives source to trace the diachronic development of the nominal: from the 'event' expressed by the predicative verbal → to the participants of the event – arguments. The verbals serving predicative function were diachronically prior to nominals.

**References:**

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