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The lexical category debate in Salish and its relevance for Tagalog*

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11 *Abstract*

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13 *We review some morpho-syntactic contexts where, parallel to data in Tagalog, Salishan languages famously fail to distinguish the categories noun and verb. Nevertheless, we then show that Salish languages do distinguish noun from verb, both lexically and syntactically, and suggest how similar analyses might perhaps be applicable to Tagalog.*

18
19 **1. Introduction**

20
21 Kaufman offers a novel approach to the apparent lack of lexical category
22 distinctions in Tagalog. Assuming that roots are precategorial and that
23 the categories noun and verb are created in the syntax by *n* and *v* heads,
24 Kaufman suggests that Tagalog lacks the syntactic category *v* altogether,
25 and thus that the grammar lacks the capacity to create verbs. This claim
26 of category neutrality is strong, and should result in new research on Aus-
27 tronesian morpho-syntax, just like the category neutrality claim did in an-
28 other language family: Salishan.

29 In this response, we offer a view on the Tagalog data from the Salish
30 perspective. The 23 Salish languages were or are spoken in the Pacific
31 Northwest of North America. As Kaufman notes (see also Foley 1998,
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1 Kroeger 1998), they share several typological features with Tagalog.
 2 Moreover, scholars of Salish languages have had their own lexical cate-
 3 gory debate (see references in Davis and Matthewson in press). While sev-
 4 eral researchers famously argued that noun and verb were not distin-
 5 guished in Salish (e.g., Kuipers 1968, Kinkade 1983, Jelinek and Demers
 6 1994, Jelinek 1995), it is now generally accepted that noun and verb are
 7 distinguished both by morphology and syntax, albeit much more subtly
 8 than in languages like English (e.g., van Eijk and Hess 1986, Demirdache
 9 and Matthewson 1995, Davis and Matthewson 1999, Montler 2003).

10 As Salishanists, we are naturally skeptical of some of the morpho-
 11 syntactic evidence that Kaufman adduces to support his claim that Taga-
 12 log lacks a verbal category. This is because some of the same evidence
 13 holds in Salishan, yet Salish languages systematically *do* distinguish
 14 noun and verb at both lexical and syntactic levels. Precisely because the
 15 noun/verb distinction is so subtly marked in some languages, we feel it
 16 is a robust universal phenomenon.

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18

19 **2. The lack of a noun/verb distinction in Salish?**

20

21 *2.1. Morphology*

22

23 Like Tagalog, Salish inflectional morphology does not generally distin-
 24 guish lexical roots as nouns or verbs (e.g., Kuipers 1968, Kinkade 1983).
 25 What appear to be prototypical nouns can be inflected with tense (1b),
 26 transitivity and subject/object agreement (2b), clause type markers (3b),
 27 and aspectual modifiers (4b).¹

28

(1) a. t'ləm=lə'=sx^w (Straits, Jelinek 1995)

29

sing=PAST=2SG.NOM

30

'You sang.'

31

b. swi'qoał=lə'=sx^w (ibid)

32

young.man=PAST=2SG.NOM

33

'You were a young man.'

34

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36

37 ¹ Salish data are given in the orthographies of the original sources.

- 1 (2) a. q^wəl-nt-sém-s (Shuswap, Gibson 1973: 60)
 2 talk-TRANS-1SG.OBJ-3SUBJ
 3 ‘S/he talked to me.’
 4 b. meʔ xméy-nt-s-t (Shuswap, Kinkade 1983: 28)
 5 expectation fly-TRANS-2SG.OBJ-PASSIVE
 6 ‘You’ll be flied (i.e. covered in flies).’
 7 (3) a. λ’íq=as (Squamish, Kuipers 1968: 622)
 8 arrive=3SUBJ.SUBJUNCTIVE
 9 ‘if he/she/it arrives’
 10 b. púš=as (ibid)
 11 cat=3SUBJ.SUBJUNCTIVE
 12 ‘if he/she/it is a cat’
 13 (4) a. ʔit ʔín=č (Upper Chehalis, Kinkade 1964: 33)
 14 COMPLETEIVE sing=2SG.SUBJ.COMPLETIVE
 15 ‘You sang.’
 16 b. ʔit q^walán’=č (Upper Chehalis, Kinkade 1983: 28)
 17 COMPLETEIVE ear=2SG.SUBJ.COMPLETIVE
 18 ‘You’re all ears.’
 19

20 However, below we will show that Salish roots *do* maintain the distinc-
 21 tion between noun and verb; these inflectional data therefore do not con-
 22 stitute definitive evidence for the absence of categorical distinctions in the
 23 languages.
 24

25 2.2. *Syntax*

26
 27 Like Tagalog, Salish languages are famous for predicate-argument flexi-
 28 bility. Compare Kaufman’s (19) to (5), where the verb ‘go’ and the noun
 29 ‘coyote’ alternate between the initial predicate position, and the argument
 30 position following the determiner:
 31

- 32 (5) a. ʔùx^w ti sbiáw (Lushootseed, van Eijk and Hess 1986: 324)
 33 go DET coyote
 34 ‘The coyote goes.’
 35 b. sbiáw ti ʔùx^w (ibid)
 36 coyote DET go
 37 ‘The one who goes is a coyote.’

1 Even prototypical referential items such as emphatic pronouns or proper
2 names can occupy the predicate position:

- 3 (6) a. ... ?us nówi=kn (Cowlitz, Kinkade 1983: 28)
4 ... if 2SG.PRONOUN=1SG.SUBJ
5 '... if I were you.'
6 b. Rose=lhkacw=ha (Lillooet, Demirdache and
7 Rose=2SG.SUBJ=YES-NO Matthewson 1995: 81)
8 'Are you Rose?'

9
10 Canonical NP positions, such as the final constituent in a complex DP,
11 can seemingly be occupied by either nouns (7a) or inflected verbs. In (7b),
12 the verb *pupn* 'find' is inflected with clausal nominalization morphology
13 (cf. Kaufman's 21–24). We will show below that, unlike in Kaufman's
14 analysis of Tagalog, relative clauses in Salish are headed by a nominal,
15 which is null in (7b).²

16 (7) Context: The speaker was hungry and looked for something to eat in
17 the fridge.

- 18 a. ʔaʔxáns=kn [ʔ [c'ʔá] † [NP sqyéytn]]
19 eat=1SG.SUBJ DET cold.INCH LNK salmon
20 'I ate some cold salmon.' (Thompson)
21 b. ʔaʔxáns=kn [ʔ [c'ʔá] [NP Ø] †
22 eat=1SG.SUBJ DET cold.INCH Ø LNK
23 [n=s=púpñ n=e=npáɿ^wmn]]
24 1SG.POSS=NMZ=find in=DET=fridge
25 'I ate something cold that I found in the fridge.' (Thompson)

26 Again similar to Tagalog, cleft constructions allow both prototypical
27 nominal (8a) or verbal arguments (8b) in final position (cf. Kaufman's
28 26–27):

- 30 (8) a. c'é=xe? [e=Jánet Wébster] [e=k^wúk^wpi n=ʔ=ʔ'q'emcín]
31 CLEFT=DEM DET=Janet Webster DET=chief in=DET=Lytton
32 'Janet Webster is the chief in Lytton.' (Thompson)

34
35 ² We use LNK to mark functional elements between modifiers and NP, paralleling Kauf-
36 man's gloss. See Kroeber (1997, 1999), Davis (2004), Koch (2008) for discussion. As in
37 Tagalog, there is much overlap between determiners, complementizers and relative pro-
nouns in Salish.

1 specified in their lexical representation. (Otherwise, the introduction of a
 2 “timeline” looks to us just like a disguised categorial distinction.) And
 3 since all roots merge with *n*, which lacks the capacity for an event vari-
 4 able, we are unclear how Tagalog could have any aspectual morphology
 5 at all under Kaufman’s analysis.

6

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8 3.1. *Morphological evidence in Salishan*

9

10 A common pan-Salish prefix is the stative, an aspectual marker recon-
 11 structed as proto-Salish **ʔac-*/**ʔas-* (Kroeber 1999: 11). Stative prefixes
 12 can only attach to verbs, and their aspectual reading targets the event
 13 variable.

14 (9) a. *míceʔq* ‘sit down’ (Thompson)

15 b. *ʔes-míceʔq* ‘sitting down’ (Thompson)

16

17 Yet, in several Salish languages, a homophonous prefix can also attach
 18 to nouns (10). This can give the appearance of category neutrality.

19 (10) a. *cítx^w* ‘house’ (Thompson)

20 *ʔes-cítx^w* ‘have a house’ / *‘sheltered’

21 b. *t’át’ak^ws* ‘gun’ (Sechelt, Beaumont 1973,

22 *s-t’át’ak^wis* ‘have a gun’ / *‘armed’ cited in Kroeber 1999: 36)

23

24 However, it is clear we are actually dealing with two prefixes, which dis-
 25 tinguish noun and verb. First, when attached to nouns, the prefix in (10)
 26 produces a ‘have a N’ reading, rather than an aspectual interpretation.
 27 Secondly, their distribution differs: in Lillooet, for example, possessive
 28 *es-* attaches to the first element of a complex nominal predicate, while sta-
 29 tive *es-* always attaches to a verb stem (Davis 2006). Thirdly, compara-
 30 tive evidence shows that the stative prefix cannot attach to nouns. In
 31 Okanagan, Lushootseed, Northern Straits, Kalispel and Shuswap, the
 32 ‘have a N’ reading is produced with a distinct prefix which may *only* at-
 33 tach to nouns (11a) (Kroeber 1999: 12, 35). The proto-Salish stative,
 34 meanwhile, may only attach to verbs (11b).

35 (11) a. *kn=kł-p’ínaʔ* (Okanagan, Mattina 1996: 166f.,

36 1SG.SUBJ=have-basket cited in Kroeber 1999: 35)

37 ‘I have a basket.’

- 1 b. ʔəs-ʔítut (Lushootseed, van Eijk and Hess
2 STAT-sleep 1986: 322)
3 ‘asleep’

4 More broadly, van Eijk and Hess (1986) argue for Lillooet and
5 Lushootseed that a whole range of aspectual morphology targets only
6 verbs, and does not attach to nouns. Since aspectual morphology targets
7 properties of the event, an inherent component of verbs, we take this
8 morphological distinction to indicate that Salish languages do distinguish
9 nominal and verbal roots.
10

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12 3.2. *Relevance for Tagalog*

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14 In Tagalog, a reduplicative prefix induces an ‘imperfective’ aspectual in-
15 terpretation. We repeat Kaufman’s (27) here:

- 16 (12) Ito ang=dalawa (ŋ#na) nag-tú~túrò
17 this NOM=two LNK AV.BEG-IMPRF~teach
18 ‘these are the two (who are) teaching’
19

20 If bare roots, as Kaufman argues, are entity-denoting, then how does the
21 IMPRF prefix in (12) induce an aspectual reading, especially since it at-
22 taches directly to the bare root? We would like to know if the IMPRF prefix
23 can attach to prototypical nouns like *bato* ‘rock’, and if so, what interpre-
24 tations are possible.

25 Kaufman also notes a root doubling construction with an iterative
26 reading (his fn. 17):

- 27 (13) Súlat=siya nang=súlat.
28 write=3S.NOM GEN=write
29 ‘S/he’s writing and writing’
30

31 Again, if bare roots are entity-denoting, why must this construction be in-
32 terpreted aspectually, that is, targeting properties of the event variable?
33 According to De Guzman (1996), this predicate doubling is only possible
34 with verbs, and not nouns (or adjectives), suggesting that roots are speci-
35 fied for lexical category.

36 Finally, several of Kaufman’s examples include a ‘stative’ prefix *ma-*
37 (his 35). Himmelmann (2008) notes that *ma-* induces a ‘have a N’ reading

1 with nouns, but yields a ‘become X’ reading with adjectives. What hap-
 2 pens when *ma-* combines with apparently prototypical verbs like *takbo*
 3 ‘run’? Does it distinguish nouns and verbs like the Salish stative?

4 Based on the available evidence, we suggest that Tagalog roots may
 5 not be precategoryal (see De Guzman 1996 and Himmelmann 2008).
 6 Rather, they are specified as nominal and verbal, and verbal roots have
 7 an event variable in their denotation.

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10 4. Syntactic evidence for a noun/verb distinction

11

12 We will review three contexts which show that there is also a *syntactic*
 13 category distinction between noun and verb in Salish. Two environments
 14 select only for the category noun, while the third cannot select for nouns.
 15

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17 4.1. *Syntactic evidence in Salishan*

18

19 Relative clauses must be headed by an NP. This is shown in (14) for a
 20 head-final relative clause (Demirdache and Matthewson 1995; Matthew-
 21 son and Davis 1995 for head-initial relatives, and Davis 2002, 2004 for
 22 both).

23

- 24 (14) a. ... ti=zác-al’qwem’-Ø=a [NP sqaycw] (Lillooet)
 25 ... DET=long-appear-3ABS=DET man
 26 ‘... the man who left’
 27 b. *... ti=sqáycw-Ø=a [VP zác-al’qwem’] (Lillooet)
 28 ... DET=man-3ABS=DET long-appear

29

30 Similarly, the head of a complex nominal predicate must be a root of
 31 the category noun (*smúlhats* ‘woman’ in 15a); complex NPs are head-final
 32 in Lillooet (see Montler 2003: 129 for identical facts in Klallam and
 33 Straits Salish, and Davis et al. 1997 for Shuswap and Lillooet).

34 (15)

- 35 a. [án’was [NP smúlhats]] [i=qwatsáts=a] (Lillooet, Demirdache
 36 two woman PL.DET=leave=DET and Matthewson 1995)
 37 ‘The ones who left were two women.’

- 1 b. * [án'was [vP qwatsáts]] [i=smúlhats=a] (ibid)
 2 two leave PL.DET=woman=DET

3
 4 Thirdly, Salish languages have a range of auxiliaries which typically
 5 precede the main predicate, and select for the category verb (16a). Mon-
 6 tler (2003) shows for Klallam and Straits Salish that certain classes of
 7 auxiliaries may not select for the category noun (or adjective) (16b).

- 8 (16) a. húy=cn [vP t'iyim] (Klallam, Montler 2003: 116)
 9 finish=1subj sing
 10 'I finished singing.'
 11 b. * húy=cn [NP n-ʔáʔiŋ] (ibid)
 12 finish=1subj my-house

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 15 4.2. *Relevance for Tagalog*

16
 17 Since Tagalog has both head-initial and head-final relative clauses, as well
 18 as complex nominal predicates (e.g., Kroeger 1998), the above tests may
 19 be applicable in Tagalog. We treat one case from Kaufman's paper here.
 20 In Kaufman's (28), repeated below, we see a difference in grammaticality
 21 between a possessed DP with an overt nominal head, and one with only
 22 an overt resultative. In out-of-the-blue contexts, the form without an
 23 overt nominal is infelicitous, and Kaufman takes this to mean that there
 24 is no null nominal head in (17a).

- 25 (17) a. ang=basag (*nang=babáe)
 26 NOM=break/RSLT GEN=woman
 27 'the (*woman's) broken one'
 28 b. ang=basag na bentána nang=babáe
 29 NOM=break/RSLT LNK window GEN=woman
 30 'the woman's broken window'
 31

32 We would like to offer a different interpretation, based on parallel evi-
 33 dence in Thompson and Lillooet. On our account, the acceptability differ-
 34 ence derives from the out-of-the-blue context of (17a); it is pragmatically
 35 infelicitous to omit an overt referent out-of-the-blue. In (18a), we see
 36 a complex DP with an initial resultative modifier, like in Tagalog.
 37 The modifier is followed by the noun and a restrictive relative clause.

1 However, in out-of-the-blue contexts, removing the overt noun phrase
2 results in rapidly degraded judgements, parallel to Kaufman's (28a).⁴

3 (18) Out-of-the-blue (Thompson)

4 a. ... ʔ əs-k'wúç' ʔ [NP n-seʔlís] ʔ ex
5 ... DET STAT-bend LNK 1SG.POSS-knife LNK PROG
6 n=s=tx^wúp n=ʔ=ʔ'q'əmcín.
7 1SG.POSS=NMZ=buy in=DET=Lytton

8 '... the bent knife that I bought in Lytton.'

9 b. *... ʔ əs-k'wúç' [NP Ø] ʔ ex
10 ... DET STAT-bend Ø LNK PROG
11 n=s=tx^wúp n=ʔ=ʔ'q'əmcín.
12 1SG.POSS=NOM=buy in=DET=Lytton

13 intended: '... the bent (one) that I bought in Lytton.'

14 Consultant's comment: "You have to have the knife in there.
15 You can't say 'the bent thing' or you don't know what it
16 was."

17
18 Since relative clauses must be headed by a noun (see 14 above), there
19 must be a null nominal head in (18b). The acceptability difference arises
20 because it is pragmatically infelicitous to omit the overt referent in out-of-
21 the-blue contexts. The acceptability of (7b) above and (19) shows that it *is*
22 pragmatically felicitous to omit the overt nominal head *given the appropriate context*.
23

24 (19) Context: Speaker is watching cars going by with friends.
25 (Thompson)

26 y'e-mín-ne ʔ [NP Ø] [ʔex ʔ'ék té?
27 like-TRANS-3OBJ.1SGSUBJ DET Ø PROG arrive there
28 pm-áp]]
29 fast-INCH

30 'I like that one that was going by fast.'

31 We wonder if a similar pragmatic explanation can account for the Tagalog
32 distinction in (17).
33

34
35 ⁴ See Davis (2003) for discussion of similar constructions in Lillooet. Davis argues that
36 while headless relatives are acceptable in out-of-the-blue contexts, DPs involving adjectives
37 and an elided noun are not.

1 **5. Differences in root interpretation**

2

3 In spite of the many parallels between Tagalog and Salish, there does
4 seem to be a striking difference in bare root interpretation in the two lan-
5 guage types. While Tagalog bare roots seem overwhelmingly to have
6 nominal properties, the same claim has never been made for Salish. We
7 can only offer brief speculations here about the source and implications
8 of this difference.

9 The difference between Tagalog and Salish bare roots may correlate
10 with a difference in nominalizing vs. verbalizing functional morphemes.
11 Salish languages all possess a pervasive nominalizing prefix *s-*, which ap-
12 pears on a large proportion of lexical nouns but also serves productively
13 as a syntactic nominalizer. Salish also possesses overt verbalizing affixes
14 (e.g., the transitivizer in (2b) above), correlating with a basic lexical dis-
15 tinction between N and V. Tagalog, on the other hand, overwhelmingly
16 seems to start with nominal roots and add voice/aspect morphology
17 in the syntax. We might suppose that Tagalog possesses a null nominal-
18 izer, and that in the absence of overt voice/aspect morphology, all roots
19 are interpreted as nominalized. However, we still need to assume that
20 Tagalog roots can be lexically specified for event semantics (cf. Sec-
21 tion 3). We realize that this directly contrasts with Kaufman's view of
22 voice-inflected forms as nominal, but we offer it as a suggestion to be
23 considered.

24

25

26 **6. Conclusion**

27

28 We have reviewed some of the morphosyntactic contexts where the noun/
29 verb distinction fails to be made in Salish, as in Tagalog. Nevertheless, we
30 then showed that Salish languages do distinguish noun from verb, both
31 lexically and syntactically, and suggested how similar analyses might per-
32 haps be applicable to Tagalog.

33 On a syntactic level, we have seen that two typological properties ap-
34 pear to correlate with the illusion of category neutrality: the ability of
35 any lexical category to act as a predicate without needing a copula, and
36 the ability to employ headless relative clauses. Both Salish and Tagalog
37 have these properties.

1 On the other hand, good syntactic diagnostics for nounhood appear to
 2 be the heads of relative clauses (see also Baker 2003), and the final position
 3 in complex nominal predicates. Similarly, selectional restrictions of
 4 auxiliaries in complex verbal predicates seem to be a good diagnostic for
 5 verbhood (Montler 2003).

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