

## TRANSITIVITY IN SÉLIŠ-QL'ISPÉ

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### ABSTRACT

Séliš-Ql'ispé, an Interior Salishan language spoken in northwestern Montana, has a verbal system that seems at first glance to distinguish transitive constructions from intransitive ones in a quite straightforward way: transitive verbs have a transitive suffix and a characteristic set of subject and object markers, while intransitive verbs have no transitive suffix or object markers and have a completely different set of subject markers. In addition, the two constructions differ systematically in their marking of adjunct (or argument) noun phrases. Initial appearances are deceiving, however. It turns out that morphologically intransitive verbs can take object noun phrases, and that certain transitive constructions, most notably monotransitive continuatives, lack part of the transitive morphology. The goal of this paper is to explore the morphosyntactic means by which different degrees of transitivity are signalled in Séliš-Ql'ispé, and to propose an analysis that pulls apparently disparate facts together in a unified way.

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## 1. Introduction

Not surprisingly, Salishan languages show both similarities and differences in their morphosyntactic patterns relating to transitivity. Many or most of these patterns have been described, of course, but as far as we know, comprehensive discussions of the patterns we focus on in this paper are still rather rare for a Southern Interior Salishan language.<sup>1</sup> Since Séliš-Ql'ispé transitivity differs from that of other Southern Interior languages in certain respects, a description of this system should be of interest to Salishanists.<sup>2</sup> More

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<sup>1</sup>see e.g. Mattina 1982, Kinkade 1981, Carlson 1980, and Doak 1997 for descriptions of the morphology of transitive verbs in Colville-Okanagan, Moses-Columbia, Spokane, and Coeur d'Alene, respectively, and Kroeber 1999 for insightful comments on parts of the transitivity systems in various Salishan languages. Relevant analyses of parts of transitivity systems are found in e.g. L. Thomason 1994, Mattina 1994, 2004, Diltz 2006, Gerdts & Hukari 1998, and Sobolak 2020; there is some overlap between several of these analyses and ours, but none of them makes the same claims we do.

<sup>2</sup>The language called Séliš-Ql'ispé today is primarily a merging of Bitterroot Salish (formerly known as Flathead), spoken by people whose homeland was the Bitterroot valley south of Missoula, MT, with Ql'ispé

generally, the Séliš-Ql'ispé system is of potential interest to theoreticians concerned with types and degrees of transitivity, because of the wide variety of constructions — some of them rather unusual — in which transitivity plays a role. Our account is strictly synchronic and specific to Séliš-Ql'ispé; we have not carried out any systematic study of the diachronic sources of the current structures, or any systematic comparison with partially cognate structures in other Salishan languages.

The bulk of this paper consists of a description of nine relevant constructions (§§2.1-2.9): ordinary transitives; ditransitives; unsuffixed intransitives; intransitives with the ANTIPASSIVE suffix  $-(\acute{e})m$  (often called “middle” in the Salishan literature); transitives with the BACKGROUNDED AGENT suffix  $-(\acute{e})m$  (often analyzed as “passive” and/or “indefinite agent” in the literature); TRANSITIVE CONTINUATIVES in  $-m$ ; DERIVED TRANSITIVES in  $-m\acute{u}(n)$ ; intransitives with lexical suffixes; and transitives detransitivized by the reflexive suffix  $-c\acute{u}t$ . These nine constructions do not exhaust the list of relevant patterns; we have not yet explored all the constructions that have some connection with transitivity. We omit a few detransitivizing constructions, notably the reciprocal, because they behave basically like reflexive forms with respect to transitivity. We also omit discussion of the so-called “intransitive reflexives”. A more significant omission is the lack of any specific consideration of interactions between control and transitivity (see e.g. Thompson 1985); we have as yet too little information on control features in Séliš-Ql'ispé to comment on them here. Another major transitivity-related topic that is largely omitted from our account is the patterning of the various constructions in discourse. We will mention interactions between discourse and transitivity occasionally, but we have not yet studied enough textual material to draw many systematic conclusions in this domain.

After presenting the data, we will discuss ways in which the various constructions reflect differing degrees of transitivity, and we will offer preliminary suggestions for an overall treatment of these differences (§3). We adopt, with modifications, the common view of transitivity in which the prototypical transitive construction involves a completed transfer of action from a definite agent to a definite patient (see e.g. Hopper & Thompson 1980). Some modification of this view is necessary for Séliš-Ql'ispé because here the two main variables that correlate with transitivity alternations turn out to be ASPECT and FOCUS ON THE AGENT vs. FOCUS ON THE PATIENT. Definiteness per se is not as important a

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(formerly known as Upper Pend d'Oreille), as spoken by people whose homeland was the Jocko River area north of Missoula. Both tribes now live on the Flathead Reservation north of Missoula. Séliš-Ql'ispé belongs to a dialect complex that also includes Spokane and Kalispel; these dialects comprise a single language, but there is no language name that covers all three. The data in this paper comes from Thomason's field notes, from materials compiled by the Flathead Culture Committee (now renamed as the Séliš-Ql'ispé Culture Committee), and from the thousand-page 19th-century Jesuit dictionary of the language (Mengarini et al. 1877-1879).

variable in Séliš-Ql'ispé as it is said to be in some other Salishan languages, though it does play a role in determining the use of two non-prototypical constructions, the antipassive and the backgrounded agent, and it plays a minor role in the marking of patient noun phrases in ordinary transitive sentences. As we will show in the following descriptions, the ordinary transitive represents the prototypical transitive type in Séliš-Ql'ispé, while other transitive-related forms deviate from the prototypical model in various ways. Although we will not explore them in any detail in this paper, the Séliš-Ql'ispé facts have interesting implications for theories of transitivity and for the concept of the morpheme.

Our primary goal is to understand the interactions between the morphology and the sentence-level syntax of the relevant constructions. A secondary goal, one that we can only sketch in this paper, is to establish the circumstances under which the different constructions are used. One significant departure from most previous analyses of these phenomena in Salishan languages is our proposal that three of the constructions contain a suffix  $-(\acute{e})m$  which has the effect of reducing transitivity in a stem to which it is added — either reducing transitivity in (paradoxically) a morphologically intransitive bivalent stem (antipassive) or reducing transitivity in a morphologically transitive bivalent stem (backgrounded agent, continuative aspect). (See §2.4 for a brief explanation of valency in Séliš-Ql'ispé.) That is, we will argue that, for Séliš-Ql'ispé, it is reasonable to treat all these occurrences of  $-(\acute{e})m$  in transitive-related constructions in a unified way. The construction in which Séliš-Ql'ispé seems to differ most sharply from other Salishan languages is the transitive continuative; here our account diverges from previous analyses of this language, notably those of Kroeber (1999) and Vogt (1940), in that we analyze these forms as transitives, not intransitives (§2.7).

## 2. Nine relevant construction types

In its basic morphological patterns, Séliš-Ql'ispé appears to make a straightforward distinction between transitive and intransitive predicates.<sup>3</sup> First- and second-person subjects of intransitive verbs are proclitic particles that appear at the left edge of the verb complex, and third-person intransitive verbs have no overt subject marking; by contrast, the morphological transitive apparatus appears at the right edge of the verb complex in the order TRANS-O-S — that is, first a transitive suffix, then an object marker, and finally the transitive subject.

There are three exceptions to this basic transitive pattern. First, the sole 1sg object

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<sup>3</sup>In this paper we will use the terms ‘verb’ and ‘predicate’ interchangeably, and we will also talk about ‘nouns’ and ‘noun phrases’. We use this terminology for convenience; we do not mean to take a firm position on the question of whether Séliš-Ql'ispé and other Salishan languages have a clear lexical distinction between nouns and verbs (see e.g. Kinkade 1983 and van Eijk & Hess 1986 for discussion of this issue).

marker is a proclitic. Second, all 1pl forms have a proclitic component *qe/q<sup>w</sup>o*, which in transitive constructions occurs in conjunction with a 1pl suffix in the usual subject or object suffix position. And third, transitive continuative predicates have completely different sets of subject and object markers; these will be discussed in §2.6. Third-person objects, like third-person intransitive subjects, have no overt marking.<sup>4</sup> Except for the 1pl proclitic, non-trans.cont predicates in the basic system are divided cleanly into transitive and intransitive forms according to their pronominal markers.

## 2.1. Ordinary transitive verbs

Ordinary transitive verbs, illustrated in exx. 1-6, are aspectually noncontinuative. They consist of a transitive stem to which a transitive (+ control) suffix, either *-nt* or *-st*, is added.<sup>5</sup> All of the transitive stems in exx. 1-6 are bare roots, with the exception of 6. Ex. 6 consists of a root *púk<sup>w</sup>* ‘spill, pour round objects’ preceded by two prefixes and followed by a lexical suffix =*ús* ‘fire, face’.

Note, crucially, the marking of full-word agents and patients in 2 and 3: patients are marked optionally by the subordinator *lu*, and agents are marked obligatorily by the oblique particle *t*.<sup>6</sup> Kroeber (1999:52-53) observes that Colville-Okanagan, Kalispel [including Séliš-Ql’ispé], and Coeur d’Alene are unique in Salish in making this distinction between the case marking of transitive agent noun phrases (NPs) and that of patient NPs, and that this distinction is obligatory in Kalispel only. We have found no exceptions to the case marking of full-word agents of transitive verbs. We do have example sentences in which an indefinite patient NP is marked by *t* rather than by *lu*, but since most patients of

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<sup>4</sup>This pattern naturally leads some specialists to posit split ergativity in various Salishan languages. We do not follow their lead, but we will not address the question in this paper.

<sup>5</sup>These two suffixes differ functionally in some Salishan languages, such that the former is noncausative and the latter causative. Semantically causative verbs usually have *-st* in Séliš-Ql’ispé, but some verbs with this suffix are not causative, and in fact we have not found a systematic functional difference between the two suffixes in the basic transitive system (although the data in Mengarini et al. 1877-1879 indicates that *-st* is used consistently for habitual actions). In accordance with the Salishan literature more generally, as in e.g. Mattina & Montler 1990:23-24, we consider these two suffixes to be transitivizers.

<sup>6</sup>We will not consider in this paper the question of the status of full words other than the main predicate (typically the first word) in the Séliš-Ql’ispé sentence. In particular, we do not address the issue of adjunct vs. argument status for noun phrases that are translated in English as agents and patients. It is clear that some noninitial full words are adjuncts, and some of these adjuncts are regularly marked by optional *lu*. Moreover, the oblique marker *t* is attached to words other than agent noun phrases (NPs), e.g. time adverbials. These facts do not necessarily mean that the NPs under consideration here are **not** arguments of the verb; still, their syntactic behavior does resemble the behavior of full words that are certainly not arguments. In any case, the status of the “agent” and “patient” NPs is not crucial for our present purposes. For convenience, and without prejudice, we will refer to them simply as agents (or subjects) and patients (or objects).



(6) *Ełčpq<sup>w</sup>ósntx<sup>w</sup>*. ‘You pour(ed) them on the fire again.’

eł-č-púk<sup>w</sup>=ús-nt-0-éx<sup>w</sup>

back/again-LOC:on-pour.round.objects=fire-TRANS-3.OBJ-2sg. TRANS.SUBJ

## 2.2. Ditransitives

Exx. 7-10 illustrate the second relevant construction type, noncontinuative ditransitive verbs. These differ from simple transitives in that they have a RELATIONAL (+ control) suffix, either *-łt* or *-šít*, in place of a transitive (+ control) suffix *-nt* or *-st*. The two relational suffixes differ semantically — *-šít* is a benefactive suffix, as in 7-9 (assuming that the recipient wanted a cat!), while *-łt* has a neutral or negative connotation, as in 10 (see Carlson 1980 for discussion) — but they are often used interchangeably. Exx. 7-10 are all formed to bare roots, *x<sup>w</sup>íc* ‘give’ and *máw* ‘break, destroy’.

It is rare for all three NPs to appear together in a ditransitive construction, but when they do appear, as in 7, *łu* optionally marks the recipient of the action and *t* obligatorily marks the patient, the “direct” object.<sup>8</sup> The agent NP is obligatorily case-marked as an oblique, either by the simple oblique marker *t*, as in 7, or by the preposition *tl’* ‘from’. The general pattern resembles that of the monotransitives: one NP, in this case the recipient, is closely tied to the verb and has no obligatory overt case marking; the other NPs are obligatorily set off by oblique markers. Predictably, when the recipient is expressed by a pronominal (as in 8-10), the usual object pronominal form is used. There is, moreover, some variation in the case marking of the patient NP in ditransitive constructions when the recipient is a pronoun rather than a full-word NP: in this case the patient NP sometimes appears with zero case marking, as in 10, ‘He wrecked my car’ (but this does not seem to be possible with the verb ‘give’). The general rule still holds — at most one full-word NP is nonoblique, i.e. lacking overt case marking — but the zero-marked position may be filled by a full-word patient NP when there is no full-word recipient NP. Note that the verb codes directly for only two pronominal arguments; the third, usually the recipient of the action, is indicated only by the relational suffix.

There may be some dialect difference between Séliš-Ql’ispé and Spokane in the case marking of patient NPs in ditransitive constructions: according to Carlson (1980:24), in

<sup>8</sup>It is in a sense misleading to specify *łu* as marking one object in a transitive construction, because this particle also occurs sometimes before the oblique marker *t*, as well as before certain subordinate clauses and other adjuncts. But the particle is especially frequent with an object NP, and in any case the point is that the main object of a verb is normally the only NP in a transitive construction that may be preceded by this particle alone, whether the main object is the so-called direct object of a monotransitive verb or the so-called indirect object of a ditransitive verb.

Spokane the marking described here is valid only for ditransitives with the relational suffix *-šǵ*; for ditransitives with relational *-t*, Spokane marks the recipient NP with a preposition and the patient (“direct object”) with optional *lu*. In Séliš-Ql’ispé, the normal case marking is the same with both relational suffixes.

- (7) *X<sup>w</sup>íc’šts lu Malí t pús tl’ Čoní*. ‘Johnny gave Mary a cat.’

<i>x<sup>w</sup>íc’-šít-0-és</i>	<i>lu</i>	<i>Malí</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>pús</i>	<i>tl’</i>	<i>Čoní</i>
give-REL.TRANS-3.OBJ-3.TRANS.SUBJ	2ndary	Mary	OBL	cat	from	Johnny

- (8) *X<sup>w</sup>íc’štmn t pús*. ‘I gave you a cat.’

<i>x<sup>w</sup>íc’-šít-úm-én</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>pús</i>
give-REL.TRANS-2sg.OBJ-1sg.TRANS.SUBJ	OBL	cat

- (9) *K<sup>w</sup>u x<sup>w</sup>íc’štx<sup>w</sup> t pús*. ‘You gave me a cat.’

<i>k<sup>w</sup>u</i>	<i>x<sup>w</sup>íc’-šít-éx<sup>w</sup></i>	<i>t</i>	<i>pús</i>
1sg.OBJ	give-REL.TRANS-2sg.TRANS.SUBJ	OBL	cat

- (10) *K<sup>w</sup>u maw’łts inp’ip’úyšn*. ‘He wrecked my car.’ (“He wrecked me my car.”)

<i>k<sup>w</sup>u</i>	<i>máw-łt-és</i>	<i>in-p’uy-p’úy=šn</i>
1sg.OBJ	break-REL.TRANS-3.TRANS.SUBJ	1sg.POSS-REDUP:plu.-wrinkle=foot

### 2.3. Plain intransitive verbs

Plain intransitive verbs, illustrated in exx. 11-13, stand in sharp contrast to simple monotransitive and ditransitive constructions. First- and second-person subject pronominals are proclitics; third-person intransitive subjects are not overtly marked. Full-word subject NPs pattern exactly like a definite main object of a transitive verb: they lack obligatory case marking, being marked, if at all, by the optional particle *lu*. Unlike indefinite objects of transitive verbs, full-word subjects of intransitive verbs never take the oblique marker *t*. Simple intransitives do not, of course, have a transitive suffix. (Some complex intransitive constructions do have a transitive suffix, but it is always followed by a detransitivizing suffix; see, for instance, reflexives, as discussed in §2.9 and illustrated in exx. 41-44 below.)

- (11) *K<sup>w</sup> ?ím’š*. ‘You moved.’

<i>k<sup>w</sup></i>	<i>?ím’š</i>
2sg.INTR.SUBJ	move(camp)



(12) *Čn q<sup>w</sup>oyúlex<sup>w</sup>*. ‘I am rich.’

čn                      q<sup>w</sup>éy=úlex<sup>w</sup>  
1sg.INTR.SUBJ    be.rich=land

(13) *?ocqé? (tu) Čoní*. ‘Johnny went out.’

0                      ?ocqé? (tu)      Čoní  
3.INTR.SUBJ    go.out    2ndary    Johnny

#### 2.4. Intransitives with ANTIPASSIVE *-ém*

So far the constructions we have discussed are morphosyntactically and semantically straightforward: the morphology and syntax of the transitive constructions reflect prototypical transitive semantics, with completed transfer of action from a definite agent to a (usually) definite patient, and the plain intransitives lack any such transfer. (The semantic patterns are not, of course, completely transparent throughout the language; as in all languages, the general semantic categories leak.) With the antipassive construction, illustrated in exx. 14-17, we see more complicated relations between morphosyntax and semantics. The form we call antipassive (a term used by, among others, Kroeber 1999:31, Darnell 1990, Gerdts 1993, and, with reservations, Thompson & Thompson 1992:102) is often called ‘middle’ in the Salishan literature, and Newman (1980:158) posits a Proto-Salish suffix *\*-m* ‘middle’. If this suffix has a genuinely middle function in some other Salishan languages, with action that reflects back on and/or affects the verb’s subject, then Séliš-Ql’ispé has diverged from the rest of the family in this respect. The primary grammatical function of the suffix in Séliš-Ql’ispé is to force an active interpretation of an intransitive bivalent verb. Perhaps its most notable function in discourse is to highlight a switch from one agent to another (see the discussion in §3 below). The antipassive also serves as the usual citation form for bivalent verbs. For example, if one asks an elder what the word for ‘scrape’ is, the answer will most likely be an antipassive *?áx<sup>w</sup>m* ‘he scrapes something’. It might perhaps be *?áx<sup>w</sup>is* (= *?áx<sup>w</sup>-nt-és*) ‘he scrapes it’, but it will never be a suffixless *es?áx<sup>w</sup>* ‘it is scraped’.

At this point we need to introduce the topic of valency in Séliš-Ql’ispé because of its crucial interactions with transitivity, especially in this construction. All roots in this language are intransitive, but they fall into three valency classes. MONOVALENT verbs, e.g. *x<sup>w</sup>úy* ‘go’, have one lexically specified argument — an actor, an experiencer, or some other semantic category, but not a patient; and BIVALENT verbs, e.g. *wíč* ‘see, find’, have two lexically specified arguments, an agent and a patient. Monovalent verbs are agent-oriented; bivalent verbs are patient-oriented. The third and smallest root class, AMBI-VALENT,

comprises agent-oriented verbs with two lexically specified arguments, agent and patient; an example is *ʔiʔn* ‘eat’. Ambi-valent verbs do not differ significantly from bivalent verbs with respect to transitivity interactions, so we will ignore them in the rest of this discussion. The largest root class by far, at least for action verbs, is the bivalent class.

A monovalent verb that occurs alone or with just an aspect affix has an active (or at least a non-passive) reading, e.g. *čn x<sup>w</sup>úy* ‘I go, I went’ and *čn x<sup>w</sup>éy-t* ‘I’m lazy, I have no energy’. By contrast, a bivalent verb that occurs with just an aspect affix has a stative passive reading, e.g. *čn es-wíč* ‘I am seen’. This is the most salient diagnostic for identifying a root as monovalent or bivalent; see Thomason et al. 1994 for other diagnostics and further discussion, including reasons for not classifying bivalent roots as unaccusatives as some other Salishanists have done (e.g. Gerdts 1991).

The Séliš-Ql’ispé antipassive fits the standard definition of antipassive by promoting the subject of a bivalent verb to agent and, in effect, backgrounding or eliminating the lexically specified patient that is part of a bivalent verb’s argument structure. The stem to which the antipassive suffix is added may be either a simple root, as in 14-16, or a root with one or more affixes, as in 17; but the antipassive suffix is never added to a stem transitivized by the derived transitive suffix *-mí(n)*, a fact that is relevant to our overall analysis of these two patterns (see §3 below).

It is crucial to our analysis that stems with the antipassive suffix — unlike intransitive stems with no *-ém* — have two arguments in their syntactic frame. That is, the antipassive suffix adds a second syntactic argument, in spite of the fact that it is morphologically intransitive. In addition to the syntactic behavior of antipassives (see below), further evidence for this interpretation lies in the fact that an antipassive added directly to a monovalent stem (that is, with no intervening derived transitive suffix *-mí(n)*) produces a bivalent causative stem, with a second agent. So, for instance, *k<sup>w</sup> x<sup>w</sup>úym* means ‘you cause someone to go’. Compare the corresponding morphological transitive, also with a causative reading and without a DER.TRANS suffix, *x<sup>w</sup>úy-nt-x<sup>w</sup>* ‘you cause her to go’. Compare also the same verb root in a non-causative transitive bivalent construction with the DER.TRANS suffix, e.g. *č-x<sup>w</sup>úy-m-nt-x<sup>w</sup>* ‘you visited him’ (with the locative prefix *č-* ‘to’).

Bivalent verbs appear most frequently in discourse in straightforward transitive constructions, as in exx. 1-6 above. Antipassives, by contrast, are bivalent but morphologically intransitive. Accordingly, the subject pronominals for antipassives are the usual intransitive proclitic particles, and full-word subject NPs are marked by optional *tu*, as in ex. 16 (for which the free translation is ‘I skinned it and my wife sliced it’, ‘it’ being deer meat). But since, unlike monovalent intransitives, these are semantically transitive constructions, they also have notional objects — usually indefinite but sometimes definite,

as in ex. 16. When the object is overtly expressed, as in 14 and 15, it is marked obligatorily by the oblique proclitic *t*. Antipassives thus have the opposite marking from ordinary transitive constructions with two arguments: in antipassives a subject NP is marked by optional *lu* and an object NP by obligatory *t*, while in transitive constructions a subject NP is marked by obligatory *t* and an object NP by optional *lu*.<sup>9</sup> Note that in 17 the oblique marker precedes an instrument NP, not an object NP; this common type of adjunct phrase underlines our point that the oblique marker indicates a phrase that is less closely linked to the verb, and thus arguably less important, than the “main” NP.

(14) *Čn k<sup>w</sup>eʔém t nłámqe*. ‘I bit a black bear.’

čn	k <sup>w</sup> eʔ-ém	t	nłámqe
1sg.INTR.SUBJ	bite-ANTIPASSV	OBL	black.bear

(15) *Ha k<sup>w</sup>wíčm t smxé?* ‘Did you see a grizzly bear?’

ha	k <sup>w</sup>	wíč-ém	t	smxé
Q	2sg.INTR.SUBJ	see-ANTIPASSV	OBL	grizzly.bear

(16) *X<sup>w</sup>cntén u t’élm lu innóx<sup>w</sup>n<sup>x</sup>*. ‘I skinned it and my wife sliced it.’

x <sup>w</sup> íc-nt-0-én	u	t’él-ém	lu	in-nóx <sup>w</sup> -n <sup>x</sup>
skin-TRANS-3.OBJ-1sg.TRANS.SUBJ	and	slice-ANTIPASSV	2ndary	1sg.POSS-wife-REDUP

(17) *M k<sup>w</sup>čx<sup>w</sup>éycpm t anłn’í*. ‘You’ll cut off the hair with your knife.’

m	k <sup>w</sup>	č-x <sup>w</sup> éyc-p-ém	t	an-ł-n’íč’
FUT	2sg.INTR.SUBJ	LOC:to-cut.off.hair-INCH-ANTIPASSV	OBL	2sg.POSS-DIM-cut

Although the antipassive is clearly an intransitive construction, its two-argument syntactic frame and its ability to include a syntactic patient as well as an agent places it on the transitivity gradient: it is less transitive than a prototypical transitive construction (as in §2.1) semantically because it typically has an indefinite patient, and in any case its agent is the main focus. As we will argue in §3, this transitivity-reducing function unites the antipassive suffix with the backgrounded agent suffix (§2.5) and the transitive continuative suffix (§2.6).

## 2.5. Backgrounded agent constructions

<sup>9</sup>Formally marked antipassives are not the only verbs that participate in this pattern; ambi-valent stems also do so. An example is the ambi-valent verb *čłíp* ‘hunt’, as in intransitive *čn čłíp t nłámqe* vs. transitive *čłípnén lu nłámqe*, both meaning ‘I hunt(ed) black bear’.

The next construction in our list is the one typically characterized in the Salishan literature as a passive or indefinite-agent construction. In many or most other Salishan languages this characterization is accurate (see e.g. Kroeber 1999:25-28 for discussion and for a characterization of this construction as Agent Demotion), but the cognate construction in Séliš-Ql'ispé is clearly active and transitive, and quite often the agent is definite (though indefinite agents are much more common with this construction). Morphosyntactically, the construction differs from ordinary transitives only in that the backgrounded agent suffix  $-(\acute{e})m$  (or its allomorph  $-t$ ; see below) replaces the usual transitive subject suffix. That is, the suffix  $-(\acute{e})m$  is the subject suffix, and it is always preceded by a transitive suffix —  $-nt$ ,  $-st$ , or relational (ditransitive)  $-lt$  or  $-šit$ .<sup>10</sup> The case marking of subject and object NPs, as in 18, 19, 21, and 22, is identical to that of any other transitive sentence, with the object optionally marked by  $lu$  and the subject obligatorily marked by  $t$ . (Ex. 18 means ‘One-Night told Qeyqeyši’, not vice versa. Zero marking of the patient in 21 is permitted because the recipient, the “indirect object”, is pronominal.)

No overt object suffixes occur between the transitive suffix and the backgrounded agent suffix allomorph  $-(\acute{e})m$ . This means that only the 1sg object proclitic  $k^wu$  and a zero-marked third-person object can occur with this allomorph. However, these forms are functionally identical to and in complementary distribution with backgrounded agent forms with the suffix allomorph  $-t$ , which does permit a preceding overt object marker; examples are in 22 and 23. That is, the forms with  $-t$  occur always and only with 1pl and 2nd-person objects. We therefore treat this  $-t$  as an allomorph of the backgrounded agent suffix, an analysis also found elsewhere in the literature (see e.g. Kroeber 1999:25-28, with reference to Interior Salish generally, and Thompson & Thompson 1992:63, with specific reference to Thompson; Kroeber considers the construction to be a true passive, while Thompson & Thompson treat it as an indefinite-agent construction).

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<sup>10</sup>But see §2.6 below: there is some evidence that the transitive continuative suffix  $-m$  is sometimes followed by an unstressed backgrounded agent suffix  $-(\acute{e})m$ , and that the two contiguous  $m$  suffixes coalesce phonologically into a single [m]. This hypothesized coalescence distinguishes this pair of  $m$  suffixes from the suffix sequence unstressed  $-m(in)$  ‘derived transitive’ +  $m$  ‘transitive continuative’, in which both  $m$ ’s are always pronounced, either as a long [m:] or (more often) as [məm].



is story-telling about a prominent tribal member named Qeyqeyši, specifically about his wild younger days when he and his friend One-Night repeatedly got into trouble. The particular story in which 18 occurs follows one in which Qeyqeyši himself is the major character; but in this later story, One-Night is the main instigator of the prank. In spite of One-Night's greater prominence in this context, however, transitive verbs referring to his actions consistently have the backgrounded agent suffix throughout this rather lengthy story. The reason surely is that Qeyqeyši himself is the primary character in the overall discourse environment, so that One-Night's agent role is consistently downplayed by means of the backgrounded agent construction. Although this story sequence is an especially clear example of the participant-tracking function described by Kinkade, the same phenomenon recurs in Séliš-Ql'ispé texts. The point that needs to be underlined here is that there is nothing indefinite about One-Night. It is of course true that indefinite agents are typically less prominent than other participants in discourse, e.g. when the patient is 1st or 2nd person (19, 22) or when no particular agent is specified (20, 21); but the common factor in these (and other) examples is backgrounding of the agent, not indefiniteness.

The backgrounded agent construction, like the antipassive and the transitive continuative construction, falls below a prototypical transitive construction on a gradient scale of transitivity, thanks to its typically (though not universally) indefinite agent. We will return to this topic in §3.

## 2.6. Transitive continuatives

The transitive continuative construction is the most interesting of all the Séliš-Ql'ispé transitivity-related constructions, thanks to the complications it presents. We will describe and illustrate the construction before discussing the complications.

The transitive continuative suffix *-m* does not co-occur with the transitive apparatus in monotransitive forms (e.g. exx. 24-28). Instead, it occurs after a bivalent stem — i.e. after a bivalent root (24, 28) or a bivalent stem produced by the derived transitive suffix *-mí(n)* (25-27) — and it is never preceded (or followed) by an object suffix or an agent suffix. A transitive continuative verb is always preceded by a prefix that varies between the shapes *es-* and *s-*, and this variation is problematic. Treating this prefix as basically *es-* would mean that the prefix is an 'actual' aspect marker and would make transitive continuatives parallel to the regular intransitive continuative monovalent form *es-STEM-mí*, as in e.g. *es-lap-mí* 's/he's traveling by boat'<sup>12</sup> — an appealing symmetry. But analyzing the basic

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<sup>12</sup>In spite of their shared /m/ segments, the intransitive continuative suffix and the transitive continuative suffix are not morphologically related either synchronically or diachronically. The parallelism consists of the aspect prefix combined with a continuative suffix.

form of the prefix as the nominalizer *s-* is also appealing because, as we will see, the subjects of transitive continuative verbs are expressed by possessive affixes, which (elsewhere) can only be added to nominal stems. If the basic form of the prefix is *s-*, however, it is difficult to account for the variation phonologically: the *s-* variant occurs most often after a particle or full word ending in a vowel, and a regular rule deletes a word-initial vowel in this context; but there is no phonological rule that inserts a prothetic vowel *e* before a word-initial *s*. As others have pointed out (notably Kroeber 1999), there has been some conflation of these two prefixes in Séliš-Ql’ispé, and this partial conflation might have contributed to the relatively recent development of the construction in its current form. We provisionally analyze the basic form of the prefix as *es-* and consider it to have properties of both the ‘actual’ aspect prefix and the nominalizer.

The agent of a transitive continuative verb is expressed by a possessive affix — a prefix (1sg, 2sg), a preposed particle (1pl), or a suffix added after the TRANS.CONT suffix *-m* (2pl, 3). The patient is expressed in two different ways: either it is a normal object marker (1sg) or it is an intransitive subject particle (2sg, 2pl). In Séliš-Ql’ispé, 1pl and third-person patients provide no evidence for the “basic” marking of notional patients in this construction, because third-person objects and third-person intransitive subjects are all zero-marked, and the preposed part of the 1pl object is invariant *qe* and thus identical to the 1pl intransitive subject particle.

In ditransitive continuative constructions the transitive suffix does appear, specifically a relational transitive suffix *-lt* or *-šít*, which immediately precedes the TRANS.CONT suffix (ex. 29). Otherwise the ditransitive forms are morphologically identical to the monotransitive forms.

Syntactically, the transitive continuative is identical to an ordinary transitive construction: subject NPs are obligatorily marked by oblique *t* (26, 28) and object NPs are optionally marked by *lu* (24, 27-29). (In 29, the fact that the recipient of the action is a pronominal is what allows the patient NP to receive optional *lu* marking.)

(24) *Iesχ’eʔém ululím*. ‘I’m looking for money.’

in-es-χ’eʔ-m	ululím
1sg.POSS-ACTUAL/NOM-look.for-TRANS.CONT	money

(25) *K<sup>w</sup>u esáy’mtmms*. ‘He’s mad at me.’

k <sup>w</sup> u	es-ǵáy’m-t-mí(n)-m-s
1sg.OBJ	ACTUAL/NOM-angry-STATV-DER.TR-TRANS.CONT-3.POSS

(26) *P esáy'mtmms t Čoní.* ‘Johnny’s mad at you guys.’

p	es-ŷáy'm-t-mí(n)-m-s	t	Čoní
2pl.INTR.SUBJ	ACTUAL/NOM-angry-STATV-DER.TR-TRANS.CONT-3.POSS	OBL	Johnny

(27) *Iesŷáy'mtmm lu Čoní.* ‘I’m mad at Johnny.’

in-es-ŷáy'm-t-mí(n)-m	lu	Čoní
1sg.POSS-ACTUAL/NOM-angry-STATV-DER.TR-TRANS.CONT	2ndary	Johnny

(28) *Esx<sup>w</sup>épms lu síc'm t isq<sup>w</sup>sé?* ‘My son is spreading the blanket.’

es-x <sup>w</sup> ép-m-s	lu	síc'm	t	in-s-q <sup>w</sup> sé?
ACTUAL/NOM-spread-TRANS.CONT-3.POSS	2ndary	blanket	OBL	1sg.POSS-NOM-son

(29) *K<sup>w</sup> iesčéx<sup>w</sup>łtm lu asíc'm.* ‘I’m drying your blanket for you.’

k <sup>w</sup>	in-es-č'éx <sup>w</sup> -łt-m	lu	an-síc'm
2sg.INTR.SUBJ	1sg.POSS-ACTUAL/NOM-dry-REL.TRANS-TRANS.CONT	2ndary	2sg.POSS-blank

As mentioned above, our analysis of this continuative construction as transitive differs from previous analyses, in particular those of Kroeber (1991) and Vogt (1940), who treat the construction as intransitive. In later work Kroeber distinguishes the history of the construction (definitely nominalized and intransitive) from its synchronic status in Séliš-Ql'ispé, which may indeed be transitive (1999:357). According to Kroeber, a transitive verb ‘is one that contains a Transitive or Ditransitive suffix, or at least inflects with Object pronominals. All other predicates are intransitive’ (1991:29). This definition straightforwardly excludes monotransitive continuative constructions from the transitive category; however, as we will try to show, the definition is too restrictive, in part because it does not take relevant syntactic patterns into account.

The construction has two properties that suggest intransitivity. First, and most obviously, it lacks the transitive suffix in the monotransitive form; and second, the use of the 2sg and 2pl intransitive subject proclitics for second-person notional patients makes the construction look intransitive. A form like *k<sup>w</sup> iswíčm* (*k<sup>w</sup> in-es-wíč-m*, lit. 2sg.INTR.SUBJ 1sg.POSS-ACTUAL/NOM-see-TRANS.CONT) would be glossed by Vogt and Kroeber as ‘you are my seeing’, whereas for us the translation is literally as well as freely ‘I am seeing you’. The construction has two properties that are compatible with either a transitive or an intransitive analysis: the ambiguity in the marking of 1pl and third-person notional patients, already mentioned above, and the optional *lu* case marking on the notional object NP, as in 24 and 26. The sentences in 24 and 27 could be glossed either as ordinary



transitives, ‘I’m looking for money’ and ‘I’m mad at Johnny’, respectively, or literally in the Vogt/Kroeber style, ‘money is my looking-for’ and ‘Johnny is my being mad at’.

However, the construction has four properties that make it look transitive. First, the 1sg object proclitic appears where the notional object is ‘me’. Second, a full-word agent NP is obligatorily marked by oblique *t*, as expected in a transitive but emphatically not in an intransitive sentence; this marking in turn shows that the apparently ambiguous optional *lu* marking on the other possible full-word NP must indicate the object, not an intransitive subject, because notional full-word subject NPs are invariably marked by *t* in this construction. Third, as noted above, the transitive suffix appears obligatorily in two-goal transitive continuative forms (e.g. 29). And fourth, given the crosslinguistic links between possessive and agentive marking, the expression of the notional subject by possessive pronominals suggests that they are, indeed, agents (compare, for instance, English *I wrecked his car* and *my wrecking of his car*). This property is suggestive, but it cannot be considered diagnostic for the analysis of any particular language. A possibly relevant fifth property is the fact that the transitive continuative suffix *-m* occurs immediately after the derived transitive suffix *-mí(n)*, which otherwise precedes only a transitive suffix. (However, this property might perhaps be dismissed on the ground that the co-occurrence of these two suffixes could mean simply that what we’re calling the transitive continuative suffix has a detransitivizing effect, an analysis that would fit with the Vogt/Kroeber interpretation.)

The two intransitive-like properties, the absence of a transitive suffix in monotransitive continuative forms and the use of 2nd-person intransitive subject proclitics, are balanced by two of the transitive-like properties, the presence of a transitive suffix in ditransitive continuative forms and the use of the 1sg object proclitic. The crosslinguistic tendency toward linking of transitive agents and possessives does not provide solid evidence for our analysis. That leaves us with one property which, in our view, argues strongly for a transitive analysis, namely, the case marking of full-word subject and object NPs. As we have seen in §§2.1-2.5 (and will see below in §§2.7-2.9), this case marking is consistent throughout the language in identifying subject NPs and object NPs in both transitive and intransitive constructions. If the transitive continuative construction is not to be viewed as transitive, there is an inconsistency in case marking NPs that has no explanation.

By contrast, we do have an explanation for at least one of the two intransitive-like properties of this construction — the use of 2sg and 2pl intransitive proclitic pronominals to indicate the notional patient. Since, in monotransitive continuative forms, there is no transitive suffix, there is nothing to attach an object suffix to. In fact, the TRANS.CONT suffix replaces the entire transitive apparatus, so there is also no agent suffix, which must follow an object suffix in a normal transitive form. Obviously, then, patients must be expressed by some other means. This presents no problem for the 1sg object, which is a

proclitic already, or for a third-person object, which has no overt marking, or for a 1pl object, which in ordinary transitive forms has both proclitic and suffixed components (so that the proclitic can take over the entire function). But how are 2nd-person objects to be expressed, given that the usual suffix position is not available? There are three other sets of person markers: transitive subject suffixes, possessive affixes, and intransitive subject proclitics. The transitive subject suffixes are unavailable for the morphological reason just given, even aside from the poor notional fit. The possessive affixes are unavailable because that set is already in use for the subject of the verb. This leaves only the intransitive subject proclitics, if a 2nd-person marker is to be used at all; and so that is what we find. Notice, moreover, that an analogous explanation will not account for the use of the 1sg object proclitic if the construction is viewed as intransitive: since both the 1sg object and the 1sg intransitive subject are proclitics, both are available — in contrast to the second person, where only the intransitive subject particles can be pressed into service as object markers in this construction.<sup>13</sup>

The other intransitive-like property of the transitive continuative, the lack of a transitive suffix in monotransitive forms, is what it appears to be: a signal that the forms in question are less transitive than their completive counterparts. On our analysis, adding the transitive continuative suffix does not change the valency of the transitive stem, but it does reduce the degree of transitivity associated with the action. Unlike the antipassive and the backgrounded agent construction, the transitive continuative construction does not serve to focus attention on the agent or the patient. Instead, its role is to signal a change in aspect, a change that reduces the transitive force of the verb in that the action is not completely transferred from the agent to the patient. We will discuss this further in §3.

## 2.7. Derived transitives

The derived transitive suffix *-mí(n)* is added to a monovalent stem, either a root or a derived stem. Its function is to add an argument, a patient, to the verb's argument structure; it thus effects a change in valency. This suffix is followed immediately by the

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<sup>13</sup>Tony Mattina (p.c. 1992) has suggested a different analysis of the transitive continuative forms, as a 'genitive' construction. He points out that in Séliš-Ql'ispé, as in Colville-Okanagan, there are constructions like (Séliš-Ql'ispé) *k<sup>w</sup> in̄xménč* 'I like you' and *k<sup>w</sup>u an̄xménč* 'you like me', with pronominal marking identical to that of the transitive continuative forms — possessive affix for notional agent, 2sg proclitic intransitive subject vs. 1sg object for notional object — but with no actual/nominalizer prefix and no *-(é)m* suffix. Vogt (1940:32) also comments on links between transitive continuative verbs and possessed nouns. Exploring these connections is beyond the scope of the present paper, but they obviously must be considered in a complete analysis of the phenomena. We do not believe, however, that they will require a change in our analysis of the transitive continuative construction.



analysis of it is complicated (and made somewhat unclear) by his treatment of Kalispel transitive continuative forms as intransitives (see our ex. 25 above for a typical co-occurrence of the derived transitive and transitive continuative suffixes). Kinkade treats the cognate Moses-Columbia suffix as an intransitive suffix, specifically the middle suffix *-m*; the resulting stem is then transitivized, in his analysis, by the addition of the causative suffix (1981:105). Gerdts' 1993 analysis of the analogous construction in Halkomelem looks very similar to Kinkade's, except that his middle category is her antipassive (see e.g. her ex. 45). The Kinkade/Gerdts approach does not at first glance seem well suited to the Séliš-Ql'ispé facts. The Séliš-Ql'ispé transitive suffixes, including the so-called causative *-st* as well as *-nt* and the relational ditransitive suffixes, are normally added to stems that are already bivalent; bivalent roots are lexically specified, while lexically monovalent roots, together with stems that are detransitivized by lexical or other detransitivizing suffixes, normally appear with the transitive apparatus only after the derived transitive suffix *-mí(n)* has been added. (There is also no obvious preference for *-st* over *-nt* after this suffix in Séliš-Ql'ispé.)

This generalization requires a caveat, however, because there is evidence in Séliš-Ql'ispé that the transitive suffixes can indeed add a syntactic argument directly to a monovalent verb stem. As we have seen, the derived transitive suffix followed by a transitive suffix increases the valency of the stem by adding a patient to its argument structure. But a transitive suffix added directly to a monovalent stem also increases the valency of the stem, in this case by adding a second agent – that is, it produces a causative stem, as we saw in §2.4. As a reminder of that discussion, compare exx. 35-37:

(35) *čn x<sup>w</sup>úy* 'I go'

*čn*                      *x<sup>w</sup>úy*  
1sg.INTR.SUBJ    go

(36) *čx<sup>w</sup>úymn* 'I visit her' (lit. 'I go to her')

*č-x<sup>w</sup>úy-mí(n)-nt-én*  
LOC:to-go-DER.TRANS-TRANS-1sg.TRANS.SUBJ

(37) *x<sup>w</sup>úyn* 'I make him go'

*x<sup>w</sup>úy-nt-én*  
go-TRANS-1sg.TRANS.SUBJ

Ex. 35 is a plain intransitive monovalent verb. In 36 a derived transitive suffix, and thus a patient, has been added to the verb's argument structure, producing a bivalent stem; and the further addition of the transitive suffix *-nt* forms a verb with two syntactic arguments,

an agent and a patient. Ex. 37 contrasts with 36 formally in that 37 lacks the derived transitive suffix; instead, the addition of the transitive suffix forms a causative verb by adding a second syntactic agent/actor to the verb. Moreover, as we also saw in §2.4, a form *čn xwúym* ‘I make someone go’ is also possible: in this case the antipassive suffix *-ém* also adds a second agent to the verb’s argument structure and thus produces a bivalent verb. Both this antipassive construction and transitive constructions like 37 are rare in Séliš-Ql’ispé discourse, unlike derived transitive constructions, which are common.

Note, finally, that the derived transitive suffix may appear either after a lexical suffix, thus increasing the valency of a monovalent stem (e.g. ex. 33), or before a lexical suffix, in which case the potentially transitive stem formed by this suffix loses its syntactic patient (e.g. ex. 39 below).

## 2.8. Transitive-prone stems detransitivized by lexical suffixes

The remaining two constructions that we want to illustrate are two types of verbs in which stems that are usually followed by transitive suffixes or the antipassive are detransitivized. This section concerns the effect of certain lexical suffixes, as in exx. 38–40. These suffixes may be added to bivalent roots, as in 38, or to stems that have had their valency increased by the addition of the derived transitive suffix, as in 39 and 40. In other words, a lexical suffix is added to the stem instead of a more usual transitive suffix. There are no morphosyntactic problems here: the derived stems take intransitive subject particles, as expected in an intransitive construction; a subject NP is marked by optional *tu* (40); and an object NP is marked by obligatory *t* (38–39).

(38) *K<sup>w</sup> plsqé t šmén’*. ‘You killed an enemy.’ (lit. ‘You person-killed an enemy.’)

<i>k<sup>w</sup></i>	<i>púls=sqé</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>šmén’</i>
2sg.INTR.SUBJ	kill=person	OBL	enemy

(39) *Ntṭ<sup>w</sup>msqá t xṭ’cís*. ‘He turned his horse around.’

<i>n-tóṭ<sup>w</sup>-mí(n)=sqá</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>xṭ’cín-s</i>
LOC:in-straight-DER.TR=domestic.animal	OBL	horse-3.POSS

(40) *Čx<sup>w</sup>imsqé tu Malí*. ‘Mary visited someone.’

<i>č-x<sup>w</sup>úy-mí(n)=sqé</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>Malí</i>
LOC:to-go-DER.TR=person	2ndary	Mary

These constructions resemble antipassives syntactically in that the lexical suffix does not co-occur directly with transitive suffixes; instead, it is added either to a lexically bivalent

root or to a derived bivalent stem. But where the antipassive is formed by a semantically empty suffix *-ém*, the constructions of interest here are formed by a lexical suffix with (often) concrete semantic content. A more significant difference between the two construction types is that a stem modified by a lexical suffix may become transitive-ready again by the addition of the derived transitive suffix, as in ex. 33 above. As we have seen, this is not possible with an antipassive.

A common proposal in the Salishan literature is that verbs like those in 38-40 contain an incorporated noun — that is, that the lexical suffixes are in fact incorporated noun stems. Such an analysis would of course account for their monovalent status, and a few of the 100+ lexical suffixes in Séliš-Ql'ispé have full-word nominal counterparts; the lexical suffix *-sqé*, for instance, is obviously related to the noun *sqélix<sup>w</sup>* ‘person, Indian’. In order not to expand the present paper beyond reasonable bounds, we will not consider the implications of this interpretation here, in spite of its (indirect?) relevance to the general topic of transitivity.

## 2.9. Transitive-prone stems detransitivized by the reflexive *-cút*

The final construction we will consider is the reflexive in *-cút*, which — like reflexives in many other languages — detransitivizes the potentially transitive stem to which it is added. As with verbs detransitivized by lexical suffixes, these reflexives are straightforward intransitives: the pronominal subject is the usual intransitive subject proclitic (41, 43), and a full-noun subject NP is marked optionally by *lu* (42). For obvious semantic reasons, the reflexive takes no overt object NP. The reflexive construction differs strikingly from two of the four transitivity-reducing constructions we saw above: unlike the antipassive and lexical-suffix constructions, instead of replacing the usual transitive apparatus, the reflexive suffix is added to it, immediately after the transitive suffix.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the reflexive suffix replaces the (object and) transitive subject suffix(es). Like lexical-suffix constructions, but unlike the antipassive, a reflexive may be re-transitivized by the addition of the derived transitive suffix, as in 44.

(41) *Čn ct'ipmncú tl' esšít*. ‘I came down from the tree.’

čn	c-t'yí-p-mí(n)-nt-cút	tl'	esšít'
1sg.INTR.SUBJ	LOC:hither-fall-INCH-DER.TR-TRANS-REFLXV	from	tree

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<sup>14</sup>The backgrounded agent suffix *-ém* also follows a transitive suffix, as does the transitive continuative suffix *-m* if the verb is ditransitive.

(42) *Qsncú lu Čoní.* ‘Johnny scratched himself.’

qs-nt-cút                      lu              Čoní  
scratch-TRANS-REFLXV   2ndary   Johnny

(43) *Čn esplscúti.* ‘I am killing myself.’

čn                      es-púls-st-cút-mí  
1sg.INTR.SUBJ   ACTUAL-kill-TRANS-REFLXV-INTR.CONT

(44) *K<sup>w</sup>u čta<sup>w</sup>lmncútmntm.* ‘He came up to me.’

k<sup>w</sup>u              č-ta<sup>w</sup>l-mí(n)-nt-cút-mí(n)-nt-ém  
1sg.OBJ   LOC:to-start-DER.TR-TRANS-REFLXV-DER.TR-TRANS-BACKGRND.AG

This completes our survey of nine Séliš-Ql’ispé constructions that are relevant to an analysis of the language’s transitivity system. The next step is to try to pull the various constructions together into a less fragmented system.

### 3. An analysis of transitivity in Séliš-Ql’ispé

In this section we will propose an analysis in which several of the transitivity-related constructions illustrated in §§2.1-2.9 fit together in a coherent overall picture. We should begin by noting that plain intransitives — those without an antipassive suffix or another suffix that derives an intransitive verb — fall outside the transitive system entirely; they are included only to show what a basic intransitive construction is like, with its subject proclitics and its full-word subject NP marked only by optional *lu*.

As we said in our introduction, two main variables turn out to correlate interestingly with transitivity alternations in Séliš-Ql’ispé. First, there is a systematic morphosyntactic distinction between semantically transitive constructions with a FOCUS ON THE AGENT and those with a FOCUS ON THE PATIENT; and second, ASPECT plays a role in conditioning transitivity alternations. On our analysis, the ordinary (noncontinuative) transitive construction carries no particular emphasis on agent or patient, and no special marking of aspect: it is the neutral transitive construction, and the closest to a prototypical transitive construction that involves a completed transfer of action from a definite agent to a definite patient. The object NP is most closely linked to the verb, as indicated by its lack of obligatory case marking; in a ditransitive form, only one object NP, usually the recipient (the “indirect object”), may lack case marking. A full-word subject NP in a transitive construction is marked obligatorily by oblique *t*. This neat picture is complicated by the influence of definiteness, a feature that often affects transitivity in other

languages (including elsewhere in Salish): an indefinite patient NP may be marked with oblique *t*. This alternative marking, though it is not at all consistent in Séliš-Ql'ispé, indicates in effect a reduction in the transitive force of the verb — a deviation from the prototypical transitive.

The next three constructions are all characterized by a suffix  $-(\acute{e})m$ . We propose to treat all three of these suffixes as a single morpheme *-em* with one general function and with specific interpretations linked to the various morphological environments in which it occurs: the antipassive  $-(\acute{e})m$  occurs in absolute final position, without a preceding transitive suffix and without an actual aspect/nominalizer prefix plus possessive agent; the backgrounded agent  $-\acute{e}m$  occurs in absolute final position after a transitive suffix and without a nominalizing prefix plus possessive agent; and the transitive continuative *-m* occurs word-finally except for a possessive agent suffix, and it always co-occurs with an aspect/nominalizer prefix plus a possessive agent. In other words, the three specific functions (designated by our three labels) of these three  $-(\acute{e})m$  suffixes are predictable from their morphological context within a particular verb form; the three allomorphs of our proposed *-em* morpheme are in complementary distribution.

The primary function of the proposed *-em* morpheme is to signal a reduction of transitivity — a deviation from the prototypical transitive as represented by the neutral Séliš-Ql'ispé transitive construction. The  $-(\acute{e})m$  suffixes reflect two different kinds of deviation from the prototypical transitive: they indicate either a focus on one of the two main participants in the action — i.e. the agent or the patient (or perhaps, in a ditransitive verb, the recipient) — or a change in aspect that affects the transitive force of the verb. The transitive continuative is the sole member of the aspect-changing category. In the focus category, the participant that is highlighted is predictable from the morphological context in which the suffix occurs.

The antipassive  $-(\acute{e})m$  emphasizes the agent — so much so that it removes the patient argument from the verb's morphology. The result is that the sole argument in the verb itself is the agent, though the stem remains bivalent. The resulting intransitive construction is partly analogous to transitive stems that are detransitivized by a lexical suffix; these too highlight the agent and have no pronominal patient marking in the verb. The reflexive in *-cút* also fits here functionally and syntactically, its formation differing from the other two agent-focusing constructions only in that it retains the transitive suffix. Example 16 illustrates one use of the agent-highlighting antipassive construction. This sentence, which means 'I skinned it and my wife sliced it', has an antipassive (*t'élm* 'sliced') preceded by an ordinary transitive verb. With the second verb comes a change of agent, a switch that is highlighted by the use of the antipassive. Note that Vogt's characterization of what we call the antipassive as occurring with an indefinite object



(1940:31) would not capture this usage, since the ‘it’ in question refers to the same deer throughout the sentence; the difference is the switch in agents. Vogt was partly right, because antipassive constructions very often do include indefinite patients, but definiteness is not (in our view) the primary factor.

In the backgrounded agent construction, the *-ém* focuses on the patient. This is evident, for instance, throughout the particular Qeyqeyši tale from which ex. 18 is taken: as described above, Qeyqeyši is the main character in all the stories about him, even this one, where his friend One-Night is the instigator of the prank and the agent of most of the transitive verbs. Qeyqeyši’s more prominent overall status is highlighted by the use of the backgrounded agent construction throughout for all verbs in which One-Night is the agent.

As mentioned above, the transitive continuative construction does not participate in the argument-focusing functions of the other two manifestations of the proposed *-em* morpheme. Instead, its role is to signal an aspectual deviation from prototypical transitivity: this construction reduces transitivity by indicating that the action is not completely transferred from an agent to a patient. The reduced transitivity of this construction is reflected morphologically in its one clear intransitive-like feature, the lack of a transitive suffix in monotransitive continuative forms.

All three *-(é)m* formations, then, can be viewed as deviating from a prototypical ordinary transitive to a form that is lower on the transitivity gradient — either with unbalanced emphasis on one participant or with a deviation from the prototypical completive aspect. It is interesting to note that only the patient-highlighting formation, the backgrounded agent construction, remains straightforwardly transitive morphologically. By contrast, the agent-highlighting antipassive is morphosyntactically intransitive, and the transitive continuative construction, though transitive, is morphologically peculiar for a transitive verb.

We were initially tempted to combine all four constructions with *m* suffixes into a single morpheme — the three just discussed and also the derived transitive construction in *-mĩ(n)* (see Thomason & Everett 1993). The derived transitive construction might also be viewed as highlighting the patient, since it adds a patient to the verb’s argument structure. But because it increases the valency of a verb root or derived stem, it is difficult to argue that it reduces transitivity; moreover, it is incompatible with the other three *m* constructions phonologically. All four suffixes surface frequently, perhaps most frequently, simply as *-m*, which is their predictable form unless they are stressed. But the stressed allomorph *-ém* of our proposed *-em* morpheme cannot be reconciled with the stressed allomorph of the derived transitive.

The idea of combining two or more of these *-(é)m* suffixes into one morpheme is of course

not new, although our particular interpretation and our grouping of all three into a single morpheme are, as far as we know, unique. For instance, some authors connect the antipassive and the backgrounded agent suffixes; examples are Kuipers 1967 (Squamish), Darnell 1990 (Squamish, with an analysis that, like ours, involves de-emphasis of one argument in each case), and Gerdts (1989:185, Halkomelem). Other authors, e.g. Vogt (1940:32, Kalispel), Newman (1980:158-59), and Kroeber (1991:294), group the antipassive and the transitive continuative suffixes together. Still others, e.g. Kinkade (1981:105, Moses-Columbia), consider the antipassive and the derived transitive suffix to be the same.

The remaining two constructions discussed above, the effect of certain lexical suffixes on transitivity and the detransitivization of stems by the reflexive suffix *-cút*, are obviously morphologically distinct from our *-em* morpheme, but they share the function of reducing the transitivity of stems to which they are added. These two constructions therefore contribute to the overall picture of gradient transitivity in Séliš-Ql'ispé.

Our analysis ends here: this is as far as we have proceeded in our effort to work through the complex Séliš-Ql'ispé facts related to transitivity. We should close by emphasizing again that our analysis is necessarily incomplete. Aside from remaining gaps in our understanding of the constructions we have already examined, there are still other constructions that must be studied before we can aim at a complete analysis of the system. But we hope to have shown, at least, that there are interesting interrelationships among transitivity-related constructions that seem at first glance to be quite disparate.

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