LEXICALIZATION VERSUS LEXICAL LOSS IN WASCO-WISHRAM LANGUAGE OBSEOlSENCE

ROBERT E. MOORE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1. Introduction. Recent fieldwork1 with remaining speakers of Wasco-Wishram Chinookan at the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in central Oregon shows that, within the community, several well-known patterns of language obsolescence can be seen operating at the same time, side by side. One group of speakers, aged seventy-five and over, displays what Jane Hill (1983:269ff.) has called the “Latinate” pattern, in which the language survives quite intact, but only in more elevated usages such as myth and tale recital (cf. French 1958 and Hymes 1981), being abandoned in favor of English for day-to-day communication. A larger group of younger speakers and “semispeakers” (Dorian 1977; 1981), aged fifty to sixty, displays a very different pattern, using Wasco within the home to communicate with young children and domestic pets, and less frequently outside the home in interaction with their Wasco-speaking peer group. Because of a delicate pattern of social and linguistic avoidance, interaction between the younger and older speakers is infrequent; when it does occur, English is the preferred medium of communication.

This generational split in genres, “fashions,” and contexts of speaking Wasco has been unfolding within a reservation community that includes speakers of four languages: English, Warm Springs Sahaptin, Wasco-Wishram Chinookan, and Northern Paiute. Virtually everyone at Warm Springs knows and uses English, and it is clear that English is replacing

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the Indian languages, but at varying rates—Wasco and Paiute quite rapidly, Sahaptin somewhat less rapidly. While English is the dominant language, the dominant "Indian culture" on the reservation is clearly Sahaptin in origin, or "Sahaptinizing" in its ethnic style (see French 1961).

Northern Sahaptins and their descendants have long been "culturally" dominant in this way, defining in some sense the style of "Indianness" in the local community, and they continue to be the most numerous. Chinookans and their descendants, on the other hand, have always been the wealthiest (and "most industrious") group, and have always had a disproportionate share of political and administrative power within the reservation system. The small group of Northern Paiutes has long been a stigmatized "out-group" for both Sahaptins and Chinookans (cf. French 1961).

The purpose of this paper is to give a characterization in linguistic terms of the "broken Wasco" (i-ła-p'ap'á Kikšít) displayed much of the time in the speech of younger speakers and semispeakers, and to explore the cultural dimensions of language knowledge and use in the contemporary situation. The data presented and discussed in this paper all come from elicitation interviews, a fact which becomes especially salient to the discussion in 4.2 below.

Briefly put, it turns out that these exemplifications of "broken Wasco," when compared with the unusually rich available documentation² of the best Chinookan speech of previous decades, display a strong tendency toward lexicalization. The lexicalizing processes discussed here all involve linguistic forms of some internal morphosyntactic complexity, which are reanalyzed and treated as unitary noncompositional stems open for (re)inflection.

After a brief summary of Chinookan verb morphology in 2, the lexicalizing processes characteristic of "broken Wasco" are examined with reference to two Chinookan inflectional schemata, inverse transitives and complex themes (in 3.1 and 3.2, respectively); the derivational process of rank-shifting is examined in 3.3. The facts about linguistic structure are summarized and discussed in 4.1; a discussion of the cultural value of words in 4.2 attempts to contextualize the grammatical facts in a local ideology that centers on the nature of linguistic knowl-

² In addition to Boas (1911), Dyk (1930; 1933), and Sapir (1909), I have been able to consult the Wishram-Wasco lexical files begun by Dyk (Dyk et al., ms.), as well as the field notes of David and Kathrine French ([1950-]) and Michael Silverstein ([1966-74]); the generosity of these scholars is noted here.
edge and the conditions for its proper display in use. The pervasive tendency toward grammatical reanalysis and lexicalization—common enough in situations of language obsolescence—is shown here to participate in a wider cultural reanalysis of language itself, in which lexical forms, words, are objectualized in a particularly Chinookan fashion.

2. Chinookan verb morphology. An outline of the form-order classes of the Chinookan verb (taken from Silverstein 1984a) is given in figure 1. The order-classes labeled with subscripts 2, 3, and 4, and enclosed in brackets, are the cross-referencing pronominals which express predicate arguments obligatorily in this prefixed or “incorporated” fashion on verbs—the Ergative in order-class \([-\text{Ergative}]_2\)-coding typically the syntactic agent, the Absolutive in order-class \([-\text{Absolutive}]_3\)-coding the direct object in a transitive, or the subject in an intransitive, and the Dative in order-class \([-\text{Dative}]_4\)-coding a variety of syntactic roles, including ‘indirect objects’ of various sorts, ‘subject’ in certain mediopassive and reflexive inflectional types, ‘experiencer’ in others, and so on.

The inflected verb in Chinookan, then, is the equivalent of a complete finite sentence; the prefixed pronominals on the verb, moreover, express the syntactic relations of all arguments of the predicate and “are characterized both by distinct arrangements in order-classes and, within order-classes, by distinct forms” (Silverstein 1976:130). Chinookan languages display a split-ergative case-marking schema that has been termed complex, global, and multi-way (Silverstein 1976).

Hence, in a typical simple transitive verb, positions \([-\text{Ergative}]_2\)- and \([-\text{Absolutive}]_3\)-are filled by inflectional pronominals for Agent (in Ergative case) and Patient (in Absolutive), respectively; in a typical basic intransitive, the subject only is coded in Absolutive in \([-\text{Absolutive}]_3\); in a ditransitive or benefactive verb of the ‘give’ class, all three positions are filled inflectionally, the Agent in \([-\text{Ergative}]_2\), the thing given in \([-\text{Absolutive}]_3\), and the recipient in \([-\text{Dative}]_4\), with an obligatory Postposition element specifying the nature of the relation to the indirect adjunct, as ‘to5 \([-\text{Dative}]_4\)’ , ‘toward5 \([-\text{Dative}]_4\)’, ‘along-the-edge-of5 \([-\text{Dative}]_4\)’, etc. For fuller treatment of Chinookan case marking and verb morphology, see Boas (1911), Dyk (1930), and Silverstein (1976).
3. Lexicalizing processes in “broken Wasco.”

3.1. Inverse transitives. It becomes interesting, in such a morphologically rich language, to investigate some of the more unusual inflectional types, one of which is the inverse transitive inflectional schema, an archaic two-place transitive formation which codes the Agent in the Dative (-[ ]4-) form-order class, and the Patient in the Absolutive (-[ ]3-). As an example, I give in (1) the lexical template for the inverse transitive verb ‘smell’.

(1) [ ]3-[ ]4-15-√/ta7 ‘[ ]4 smell [ ]3’ (lit., ‘[ ]3 waft7 toward5 [ ]4’)

Notice that this formation is relatively difficult to “parse”; not only are the syntactic roles coded in unusual forms (i.e., Dative rather than the more usual Ergative for Agent), the arrangement of forms into order-classes is anomalous, since only in inverse transitives does Patient precede Agent in the left-to-right ordering of prefixed pronominals. Furthermore, this verb, like all inverse transitives, is a kind of heteroclite and displays a partial or “defective” paradigm.3

Elderly fluent speakers are able to use inverse transitives productively in both elicitation sessions and narratives. Inverse transitives are extremely rare in the narrative speech of the younger speakers and can only be elicited with difficulty. The most interesting of the “semispeaker” responses to my request for a way to say ‘I smell him’ came from Mrs. KV, who offered, and then disclaimed, the form given in (2), rather than the expected form in (3).

(2) n-i-u6-√/ta7-nan8.2 ‘I(-n-) smell him (-i-’ (KV [disclaimed])
(3) i3-n4-15-√/ta7 ‘I4 smell him3’
(4) i3-u6-√/ta7-nan8.2 ‘he3 stinks’ [present-continuative of intrans.]

Clearly, in producing (2), she built on the present-continuative form of the intransitive ‘he stinks’ given in (4), simply tacking on a 1st sg. pronominal (-n-) for ‘I’, producing a kind of nonce form, probably on the model of a canonical simple transitive.

Interestingly, however, the same form was given at Warm Springs in 1953 to Morris Swadesh by the late Loreen Pachito [Tufti], who served as Swadesh’s Chinookan informant for a 200-word vocabulary list; in response to a query for ‘smell’, Mrs. Tufti gave a form transcribed by

3 Because of ergative shift under inverse-global inflection—see the discussion of inverse transitives in Silverstein (1976:135ff.); inverse transitives are also treated as important historical evidence in Silverstein (1977).
Swadesh as *nyulānan*, undoubtedly the same as the form in (2), given in 1986 by Mrs. KV.  

3.2. Complex themes: ‘cry’. In (5) below a basic lexical representation is given for the complex theme-verb ‘cry’, an intransitive that belongs to a special class of verbs showing fossilized pronominal elements (see Silverstein 1984a).

(5) $\delta_3[ ]_4 \cdot x + l_5\sqrt{g}i(l)x_7 \quad \text{‘[ ]}_4 \text{cry, bawl’}$

Here the syntactic subject is coded in the Dative$_4$ form-order class, and there is a constant, frozen Absolutive$_3$ dual pronominal -$\delta$-, which makes allusion to the eyes from which tears flow. In a complex theme such as this, the dual Absolutive pronominal is actually part of the lexical entry for the verb, invariant and syntactically inactive (i.e., non-cross-referencing).

As (6) shows, all informants knew and were able to give the expected form for ‘she’s crying’, and corresponding forms for the rest of the pronominal paradigm. Mrs. KV, however, had much difficulty producing a form for ‘he’s crying’ and, after a long disquisition on Wasco as a language of and for women, gave the form in (8); in (7) is the expected form for ‘he’s crying’.

(6) $\delta_3\cdot a_4\cdot x + l_5\sqrt{git}x_7\cdot a_8.2$ ‘she$_4$ is crying’ (all inf.)
(7) $\delta_3\cdot i_4\cdot x + l_5\sqrt{git}x_7\cdot a_8.2$ ‘he$_4$ is crying’ (all inf. except KV)
(8) $a_1\cdot i\cdot \delta + a + x\cdot i + gitx + al\cdot ma_1$ ‘he(-i-) is crying/will cry’ (KV [disclaimed])

In (8) it appears that Mrs. KV has simply tacked onto the already fully inflected word given in (6) a future tense circumfix (in perfectly correct morphophonemic shape—$a_1$- prefix before consonants, $al_1$- before vowels, $-a_1$ suffix following consonants, $(m)a_1$ following potentially word-final resonants), and a masculine singular pronominal -$i$-. Forms like (8) illustrate the most extreme form of lexicalization that one can observe in contemporary Chinookan speech, one in which whole utterances are treated as unitary stem-forms open for inflection.

By contrast, we can examine the way in which syntactic derivational processes that add arguments to a predicate often produce the opposite result in the speech of the younger group. Causativization, for example, acts on the lexical base given in (5), adding a new inflectional slot to be

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4 Copy of M. Swadesh manuscript, “Wasco of Loreen Pachito [Tufti] 7/14/53” in the possession of D. French, Portland, Oregon.
filled (in the Ergative2 form-order class), removing the ‘reflexive’ element 
-x- from the postposition (so that -x+l5- becomes -l5-), and adding a 
Causative suffix -m(a)+i78.1; all of this is schematized in item (9).

(9) [[ ]2-83]-[ ]4-l5-√gli(l)lx7-m(a) + it78.1 ‘[ ]2 make, cause [ ]4 (to) cry’

Elderly fluent speakers were able to provide causativized forms upon
demand, as (10) below shows; younger speakers, on the other hand,
provided no causative formations, and gave instead one or another
variant of the sentence in (11), and without disclaimers. (The forms in 10
and 11 are in the immediate past tense, with prefix i1- before consonants,
ig1- before vowels.)

(10) i1-n2-83-i4-l5-√gli(l)x7-mit8.1 ‘I2 made him4 cry’ (SL, TG, SH)

(11) c'il i1-n2-l3-u5-√x7 qidau#ngi 83-i4-x + l5-√gli(l)x7-al8.2
hurt I2 did him3 thus-INSTR he4 is crying
‘I hurt him and that’s why he’s crying’. (MM, SE)

There is, of course, nothing “ungrammatical” about (11); the verb in the
higher clause is composed of an uninflcted particle (c’il) and a simple
transitive “auxiliary” (cf. Boas 1911) based on the verb root -√x ‘be,
make, do’, while the lower verb is simply the form given above in (7).
Interestingly, the matrix clause (‘I hurt him’) describes a situation which
meets the conditions for the correct and appropriate utterance of the
causative form that has apparently been forgotten. Speakers, moreover,
appear to consider (11) and forms like it inferior; Mr. SE, after pro-
viding a sentence nearly identical to (11), allowed as how there was
“probably another way to say it.”

3.3. Rank-shifting in lexical derivation: ‘work’, ‘work for’. Silverstein
(1984a) describes an important lexical derivational process which he
calls “rank-shifting”; in (12), taken directly from Silverstein’s paper, one
can observe how a two-place verb meaning ‘work for’ is derived from a
one-place intransitive verb ‘work’.

(12) [[ ]2-83]-[ ]4-x + gmz-{0/t}6-√ga7-√ba9 ‘[ ]4 work’

[[ ]3-[ ]4]-l5-{0/t}6-xma-√ga7-√ba9 ‘[ ]3 work for5 [ ]4’

The two-place form is derived by treating the Postposition-plus-stem
configuration of the one-place verb as if it were a unitary stem, rank-
shifting it in the manner indicated by the single-shafted arrow in (12),
thus opening the Postposition slot for a new inflection (with -l5-) and creating a new pronominal slot for inflection coding the person for whom work is done (in [-14-]).

All informants can produce the simple one-place intransitive form ‘work’ in any number of pronominal inflections, and the future and present-continuative tense forms are sampled in (13) and (14).

(13) a1-n4-xm5-√ga7-√ba9 ‘I4 will work’ (all inf.; future tense form)
(14) n4-xm5-√ga7-√p9-x10 ‘I4 am working’ (all inf.; pres.-contin. form)

The characteristic present-continuative form of this verb (like others with subordinate motion roots) shows a durative aspect suffix -x10, and the vowel-zero grade of the motion root -√ba- in -√p-.

When asked for a way to say ‘I’m working for him’, fluent elderly speakers gave the expected rank-shifted forms, exemplified in (15), without hesitation.

(15) n3-i4-l5-lxma-j/√ga7-j/p9-x10 ‘I3 am working for5 him4’ (SL, TG, SH, FA)
(16) n-i-j xm-x/√ga7-v/p9-x10 ‘I(-n-) am working for him(-i-)’ (SE only)
(17) n4-xm5-√ga7-√p9-x10 yaxka#bama
   I4 am working him-for
   ‘I’m working for him’ (SE, MM, BM, KV; SL)

Contrast the expected rank-shifted form in (15) with the form preferred by all younger speakers and semispeakers, and given in (17); the latter, obviously, is a sentence composed of the simple intransitive form given in (14) and an independent pronoun yaxka, which itself shows a Sahaptin-derived clitic #bama ‘for’. The sentence-form given in (17) was offered without hesitation or disclaimers by all younger speakers and semispeakers.

Mr. SE, a younger speaker, first gave the construction in (17), but later, after much silent deliberation, offered (16) and a set of corresponding forms, saying that they were “more right.” Comparing (16) with the rank-shifted form in (15) we can see how his characterization is quite precise in its way. Forms like (16) are “more right” than the sentence in (17), but not quite “as right” as the rank-shifted form in (15), since they lack any specification of the inflected Postposition -l5- added in the derivation of such rank-shifted forms.

More interesting still were the responses of Mrs. SL, a very fluent elderly speaker. Her first response was the stereotypically “semispeaker”
formation given in (17). Later in the conversation, however, she backtracked to introduce a correction, rectifying her earlier response with the rank-shifted form in (15) and other corresponding forms that demonstrated her control of the “real” way to say it. But in the course of this demonstration she also volunteered (18).

(18) $n_3$-aw$_4$-i$_5$-xma-$\sqrt{ga}_7$-$\sqrt{p}_9$-x$_{10}$ ‘I$_3$ am working for them$_4$’

[{-t-}$_4$, sc., it-xlxam,’people’] (SL)

(19) $n_3$-aw$_4$-i$_5$-xma-$\sqrt{ga}_7$-$\sqrt{p}_9$-x$_{10}$ ‘[idem.]’

As can be seen, (18) shows an overspecification of the Postposition; the same Postposition, in fact, is given twice in (18), once as -i- and once as -l-. The expected form is given in (19).

4. Discussion.

4.1. Lexicalization and linguistic structure. Now, (18) may indeed be a hapax legomenon from this otherwise impeccable speaker; in any case, it reveals an extremely important fact about the directionality of morphological change in Wasco during its last actively spoken phases. The important difference between “real” and “broken” Wasco seems largely to turn on matters of inflectional morphosyntax, i.e., order-classes 2 through 5 (see fig. 1), in relation to elaborate lexical-derivational sets in the lexicon.

As (18) dramatically shows, the point of very great difficulty in the inherited system is clearly in the inflection versus derivation of Postpositions, those elements specifying the relation of the predicate to the occupant of the Dative form-order class (whether this be ‘Agent/Experiencer’ as in 1–4, ‘Subject’ as in 6–8, or ‘Indirect Object’ as in 15–18). Faced with these problems of inflectional versus derivational morphosyntax, speakers tend either to produce lexicalized formations like those discussed above, or to construct sentences like those in (11) and (17), which show the parallel development of a rather analytic, “dependent-marking” (Nichols 1986) phrasal structure.

Indeed, such Sahaptin-derived enclitics as appeared in (11) and (17) seem increasingly to be performing the functions once given to Postpositions in the verbal complex (cf. Sapir 1911:650–54). Sapir himself (1911:651) noted the occurrence of the construction $ga$-$l$-$u$-$ya$ yaxka#ba ‘he[-l$_3$-] went up to him’ in his Wishram Texts (Sapir 1909:20.10) corpus,

5 By a perfectly regular rule of Chinookan morphophonemics, an underlying {t} ‘plural’ pronominal surfaces as -aw- in Dative$_4$ form-order class, and the following Postposition$_5$ -l- surfaces as -l-.
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remarking that “one can also say ga-[-i-4-]gl-u-ya ‘he[-l-3-] went up to him[-i-4-]’ with local prefix [=Postposition3] gal-.”

Many of the lexicalized formations given here as examples of the reduced complexity of “broken Wasco” show the effects of processes closely analogous to derivation by rank-shifting (discussed in 3.3 above). Rank-shifting itself, however, has clearly been operating in the language for a very long time, producing large numbers of lexical stem- and root-forms (Silverstein 1984a).

One native speaker’s typification, in 1956, of the difference between “real” and “broken Wasco” is given below in (20), which reproduces the contents of a slip from the Wishram-Wasco lexical file; this entry was taken down by Hymes from the Wishram Philip Kahclamat.

(20a) \(d_3-m_4-x + l_5-u_6-\sqrt{kdi}_7\ id_3-m_4-gi\,kba\) ‘put your moccasins on’
(20b) \(d_3-m_4-x + l_5-u_5-\sqrt{x}_7\ [id_3-m_4-gi\,kba]\) To ‘make them on you’.

When we restore the possessed noun in (20b), we have a minimal pair. Notice that the difference seized upon by this informant—a native speaker of remarkable linguistic sophistication—is a difference in verb ROOTS, and not a difference in inflectional or postpositional morphology. Both verbs are inverse transitives (discussed in 3.1 above). The preferred form in (20a) shows a root \(-\sqrt{kdi}-\) (itself rank-shifted from older \(-t_7\)) which has the specific denotational content of putting on an item of clothing. The stigmatized form in (20b), also an inverse transitive, shows rather the verb root \(-\sqrt{x}-\) ‘be, make, do’.

Kahclamat’s minimal pair presents in crystalline form a native-speaker ideology that is propounded often and forcefully at Warm Springs, an

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6 As Sapir (1911:651) notes, these Sahaptin-derived clitics (which he called “Postpositions”) are utilized “in the building up of subordinate clauses.” Subordinate clauses of this type, interestingly, are quite common in the conversational speech of younger semi-speakers, less common in the speech of older fluent speakers, and extremely rare in the texts recorded by Sapir (1909) around the turn of the century (cf. Hill 1973).

7 This lexical file was started by Sapir in Ottawa ca. 1913, greatly expanded by Dyk and Kahclamat in the early 1930s, supplemented further by David and Kathrine French and Dell Hymes in the 1950s, and further still by Michael Silverstein in the 1960s–70s.
ideology that fetishizes verbal and nominal stems and their specific denotations, seeing "language loss" as the process by which such lexical forms are forgotten. In an important way, this is just the opposite of what linguistic analysis reveals about the morphology of "broken Wasco."

Figure 2 shows how this difference between local ideology and linguistic analysis can be mapped onto the complex morphological terrain of the Chinookan verb (cf. fig. 1). Postpositions, which for centuries have participated both in productive morphosyntactic inflection and in the lexical derivation of new stems (e.g., by rank-shifting), are clearly the source point for the lexicalized formations characteristic of "broken Wasco."

Quite clearly, Wasco speakers' own notion of language obsolescence involves the loss ("forgetting") of lexical items, specifically what are describable in morphologic terms as root- and stem-formations (i.e., order-classes 5–11 in verbs). The linguistic description of "broken Wasco," on the other hand, reveals the loss not of roots and stems ("words") but of the ability to manipulate productively the complex morphological machinery of inflection and derivation (i.e., order-classes 2–5).

In a sense, the recent period of Wasco-Wishram language obsolescence has been characterized by the rapid and increasingly generalized application of principles analogous to derivational rank-shifting, with concomitant reduction in vocabulary. It is in terms of reduced vocabulary that native speakers conceptualize the nature of language obsolescence,
as we shall see below; the linguistic characterization of the language that they do speak, on the other hand, must make reference not to absent vocabulary items but to the retention of remembered root- and stem-forms in newly lexicalized constructions.

This opposition, ultimately grounded in perspectival issues of a much broader sort (see Silverstein 1979, building on Whorf), can be illuminated locally through an examination of the social value of linguistic knowledge, and of words specifically as items of inherited wealth with certain “objectual” qualities (cf. Silverstein 1984b). The elicitation interview, as one possible event-structure within which language knowledge can be displayed, emerges as a “cultural” episode in its own right.8

4.2. The cultural value of words. Contemporary Wasco speakers and semispeakers clearly understand language obsolescence as a process in which words are “lost” or “forgotten” and are replaced in memory by English words that “mean the same thing.” And it is clear that the speech of younger speakers and semispeakers is lexically impoverished when compared with that of older fluent speakers (as the vocabulary of today’s fluent speakers is when compared to the best speakers of previous decades). The point is that it is this aspect of the objective linguistic situation that speakers have seized upon, and around which they have built a complex “culture of language.”

For contemporary Wasco speakers and semispeakers, “words” have taken on certain objectual qualities, and “language,” seen as a collection of words, has become a special kind of property. Especially for younger speakers, the act of speaking Wasco has become an act of display, in which items of inherited wealth (words) are brought out, their worth—and the legitimacy and prestige of the speaker—validated in the display, or so it is hoped (cf. Silverstein 1984b). Accordingly, then, the event-structure of occasions of use/display must be constituted in an appropriate way. The standard elicitation-interview protocol constitutes one appropriate event-type, but only for some speakers, and for them only some of the time.

Wasco has become inherently the most esoteric of the three codes available to members of the community, and events of using Wasco have at the same moment become inherently “formal” in any of a limited variety of ways, because of a remarkable analogically driven cultural “generalization” at the level of speech-genres.

One younger speaker, for example, treats all connected speech in Wasco as “mythological” or “myth-recital-like”: she has often refused

8 For an illuminating discussion of the methodological issues here, see Briggs (1986).
to provide anything more than single words during our summer conversations, claiming that Wasco should be spoken only in wintertime; to give any sort of recounting in Wasco during the summer might bring bad weather, even snow. She is citing a seasonal restriction on myth-performance that is well attested in the ethnographic record (Spier and Sapir 1930, Hymes 1966, and French 1958). The prohibition on full myth-performance during summertime, and the belief that violation could bring the onset of winter, in fact applied only to a specific set of myths (qanučk-max) that depicted a prehuman "myth era" (see the discussion in Hymes 1966).

This speaker has thus generalized from the event-structure of narrative speech in a specific genre (myth) to all events of narrative discourse in Wasco. Everyday talk in the obsolescent language has thus been "mythologized" in a (culturally) specific fashion.

If narrative discourse of any sort in Wasco corresponds (for this speaker at least) to traditional myth-recital along the cultural dimension of event-structure, then the individual words provided (or not) in the course of an elicitation interview clearly are treated analogously to the personal names of the traditional society. Traditionally, "the name itself had a title-like character, and a certain socio-cultural content (or set of connotations). . . . More importantly, a name was necessarily obtained by transmission along kinship lines. It was a social property, maintained in the group, and this continuity was explicitly stressed in the ceremony of conferral. In Wishram social theory, the set of names endured, and particular lives passed through them" (Hymes 1966:145). Names, then, were "explicitly like what we call antiques," items which could be "displayed, brought out like an object of value from the trunk where it has been stored, and index the ordinal position of the bearer in an economy of total worth" (Silverstein 1984b:1–2).

The ceremony at which names were bestowed (or "invested," to use Silverstein’s 1984b apt term) was "without doubt the greatest event in a Wishram’s life" (Spier and Sapir 1930:258), "the most impressive ceremony available to the society for constituting something as a social fact" (Hymes 1966:153). The structure of the naming ceremony, which involved the distribution by the sponsoring family of very valuable gifts to the invited public, has been described elsewhere (Spier and Sapir 1930 and Hymes 1966). The important point here again involves event-structure: according to traditional practice, these name-titles were never to be used in events of reference outside of the ceremony of bestowal. Indeed, Spier and Sapir (1930:258) noted for the Wishram[-Wasco] "a marked objection to telling names, one’s own or another’s," adding that the restrictions "were strictly adhered to."
The reluctance of contemporary younger speakers and semispeakers to provide Chinookan noun and verb forms under standard elicitation-interview conditions has already been remarked upon; interestingly, their refusal to "cooperate" is often accompanied by their insistence that the investigator must wait for an "actual utterance." Many speakers, for example, insist that they must have an object (e.g., bird, plant, or animal; or, in the case of verbs, an event) before them in order to remember its "name." If the investigator waits long enough, and the referent turns up, the speaker will "automatically" remember the name and utter it. It is interesting, then, that "in native theory, . . . persons not present at the [naming] ceremony could learn of the identification [of a title/name with its current bearer] only from contexts of address" (Hymes 1966:145).

The social position of the ethnographer is thus exactly analogous to the position of someone who was not present at the ceremony of bestowal, but who is curious about the identification of a name; such a person would have to wait for Mr. X to be addressed by name by someone who was present at the ceremony, rather than asking "what is Mr. X's name?" Yet it is questions of just this form that comprise the speech of the investigator in the elicitation interview, and that helpful informants back-translate into Chinookan as "qangi a-m-pgna-ya X?"—"'how would you call/'pronounce' (the name of) X?'"9

When they do respond to elicitation questions, speakers are often heard to ask "How would Auntie so-and-so call it?"; in providing forms, such speakers very often provide the requested form within quotation marks, as it were: "Grandma would say '...'" As Hymes points out, events of address using personal names in the traditional society were constituted as events of quotation, implicitly quoting from the ceremony of bestowal (1966:154).

The traditional system of name-taboo following death operates along the same lines: the name-title of the deceased was withdrawn for five years following death, and for shorter periods so also were the names of family members, as well as a whole "set [of personal names (and words in general?)] whose use had implicated the deceased person both as addressee AND AS ADDRESSOR within the family" (Hymes 1966:143, emphasis in original). It is quite clear that the forms being requested in the elicitation interview are words whose use implicates a deceased older relative as speaker ("addressor" indeed, since the informant in the interview is usually depicted as the addressee in quoted dialogues).

9 See Hymes (1966:146–47) for discussion of this verb root -√pgna, which he glosses as 'to call by name, to call out, to address, to pronounce'.

All the words that are “rememberable” according to the local ideology are by definition words that implicate a deceased relative as speaker or addressee. Knowledge of the language is thus constituted in memories of its proper, socially contextualized use. The ceremony of name-bestowal, in which the display of name-titles is “capitalized” through an elaborate distribution of gifts, becomes emblematic of the proper use of “words,” just as myth-recital becomes emblematic of the socially contextualized use of the language in “sentences” and narrative recounts of whatever sort.

Lexicalized forms like those discussed above in 3, it will be recalled, appear to be forms of some internal complexity that have been treated as though they were unitary, unanalyzable stems open for inflection. “Semispeakers,” it was suggested, may have lost the ability to “parse” the internal structure of certain forms, or to control the morphological machinery of inflection and derivation. Chinookan personal names, as linguistic forms, are and have always been unanalyzable and completely devoid of semantic content: they have no “sense” apart from their ordinal positions in a ranked inventory of titles, and the use of them in reference, of course, is prohibited outside the ceremony of bestowal. Speakers, moreover, have consistently shown no inclination to folk-etymologize these names, or to “read meanings into them,” as Spier and Sapir (1930:258) and Hymes (1966:145) have noted. And yet:

the names are all polysyllabic, and they frequently contain phonemic material that resembles known affixal material in the language, although it cannot be identified as such. . . . Any word or stem of such length would normally be analyzable into two or more meaningful elements. Similar uses of polysyllabic forms not analyzable or translatable (or at least no longer translatable) occur in myths, especially in the song in myths. There may be here an appreciated, or even cultivated, connotation of hidden, archaic meaning (Hymes 1966:148–49).

Contemporary speakers and semispeakers, while they show no interest in speculating about the internal structure and/or “meaning” of names, often assert that the names at one time had meanings, but that the meanings have been forgotten: “that shows you how much of our culture we’ve lost, I guess,” added one young semispeaker. Personal names, then, are explicitly treated in native theory as “words” whose internal complexity and meaning are now long forgotten.

Most of the grammatical processes described here as characteristic of the “broken Wasco” of younger speakers and semispeakers—e.g.,

10 The personal names of at least some Northern Sahaptin speakers and descendants, by contrast, are usually analyzable and translatable, a fact of considerable significance here (see French 1961 and 1 above).
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analogically driven grammatical reanalysis, lexicalization, vocabulary reduction—have been reported for situations of language obsolescence elsewhere. The specifically linguistic point here has been to show how these garden-variety language obsolescence effects can be contextualized within the grammar of Chinookan, which has for centuries formed new lexical stems essentially by processes of lexicalization (e.g., by rank-shifting, discussed in 3.3).

The elicitation session—the immediate context for the forms discussed here—can be contextualized more broadly in a local ideology of language that treats “words” as valued objects, apparently on the model of the personal name-titles of the traditional society. Remarkably, the event-structures within which these personal name-titles were displayed (and the restrictions on their “use”/display) form the basis for generalization to the event-structures—including elicitation—within which “words” are displayed.

Finally, there is a connection between names and lexicalized forms at the most intimate level of linguistic form: the apparent “unanayzability” and unitariness of the stems formed by lexicalizing processes suggests an analogy to the semantic and grammatical opacity of names, so that ordinary words begin to take on a culturally valued connotation of “hidden, archaic meaning.” In some real sense, the most extreme semi-speaker forms, e.g., (2) and (8) above, take a complete utterance, treat it as a stem, and add affixal material of various sorts, thus fashioning a “word” that can be “brought out” and displayed, one which fits the specifications of the investigator’s question.

In this particular fashion, then, words become “objectualized” as things of value. Great care must be taken in the display of such valued objects, in order that their worth be maintained and validated anew with each use. This poses a set of cultural problems for contemporary survivors and descendants who have some command of the language, and forms the cultural background to the linguistic “production problems” of today’s speakers and semispeakers.

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