Integrating head-marking and dependent-marking properties:
An RRG analysis of Halkomelem ditransitive constructions

Valeria Generalova
Heinrich Heine University of Dusseldorf

Halkomelem is a Salish language which is subject to various typological studies. It is claimed to be head-marking, however, it's index of markedness according to Nichols (1986) is -2 (while prototypical head-marking languages can score up to -7). In other words, although Halkomelem is predominantly head-marking, it demonstrates dependent-marking properties in some constructions.

The present paper focuses on ditransitive constructions in Halkomelem (as defined in Gerdts, 2010). These constructions comprise three semantic arguments, which can be realized as RPs or verb affixes. In order to license the presence of three arguments, a verb must comprise a transitivizing and a dative (or beneficiary) suffix. An example of a ditransitive construction is shown in (1) (taken from Gerdts, 2010, 577).

(1) = (66a)

ni?	?am–əs–θaṁš–əs	łə	słeni?	?ə	kʷθə	pukʷ
AUX	give-DAT-TR.1S.OBJ-3ERG	DT	woman	OBL	DT	book

'The woman gave me the book.'

Example (1) demonstrates a combination of different argument-marking patterns present in Halkomelem. The Theme argument 'the book' is realized as an independent RP without being marked by a verb affix (although the transitivizer on the verb is present and opens a valence for this argument). In contrast, the Recipient argument 'me' is realized as a verb suffix only. Meanwhile, third person Recipients occur as independent RPs. Interestingly, a third-person Agent is doubled: it is realized as a verb affix (glossed *3ERG*) and as an RP 'the woman'.

Different combinations of persons for the three arguments lead to a large variety of syntactic templates. It appears that they cannot be analyzed consistently neither in the traditional RRG way, nor with use of specific structures for head-marking languages (as suggested in Van Valin, 2013).

The present paper aims to describe Halkomelem ditransitive constructions using the RRG framework and suggest a novel analysis, combining various RRG decisions.

Our analysis is based on a formalized version of RRG by ? and makes use of various features in order to perform the syntactic analysis and link the syntactic structure to the logical one.

The novel idea is to use a "request–response" feature scheme. Affixes on the verb licensing the presence of arguments (–TR and –DAT) are treated as features that request the filling of argument slots. Argument suffixes and RPs are syntactic constituents that bear the response values of respective features. Argument suffixes are part of the $CORE_W$ structure, which, respectively, is a descendant of the CORE. Feature values from $CORE_W$ are propagated to the CORE. All arguments must be filled within the CORE. If there are RPs that specify arguments that have already been filled, they appear in extra-core slots [ECS] (see Van Valin, 2013).

As a result, sentence (1) will be parsed as shown in Fig. 1. The Recipient is filled within the $CORE_W$, the Theme is filled within the CORE, but outside of the $CORE_W$. The Agent is filled with an affix within the $CORE_W$ and specified with an RP, which is moved to the ECS.

In other words, the necessary information must be filled at the CORE level, while optional argument specification is done within the CLAUSE. It is in line with the principles of the formalization by ?. The $CORE_W$ and the CORE are specified in the metagrammar, and ECS are added to the trees through the operation of sister adjunction.
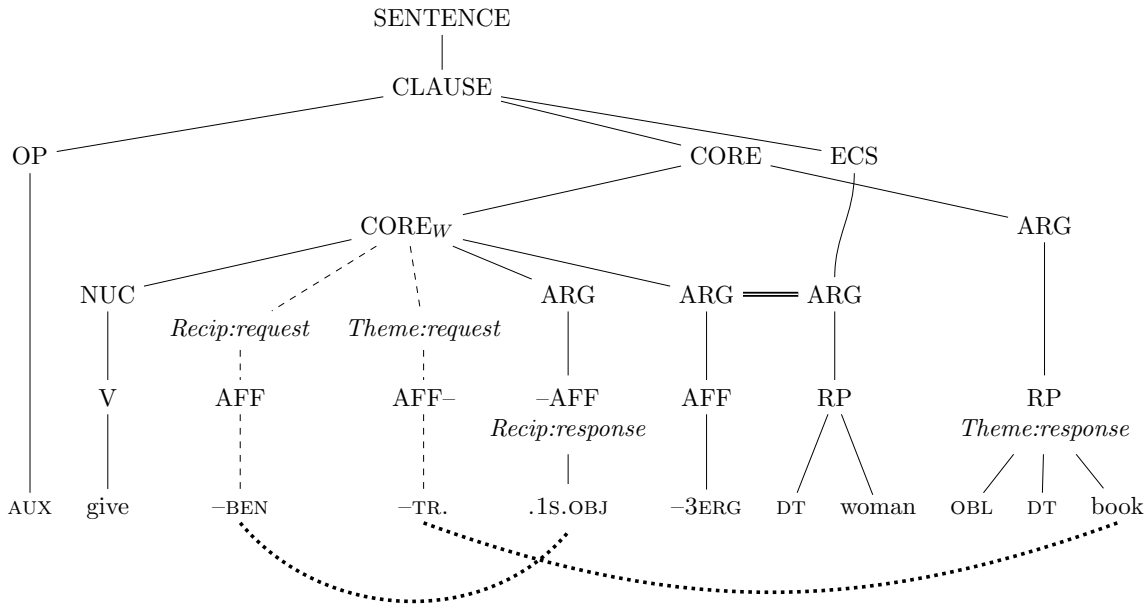
Figure 1: Suggested analysis of Example 1.

Another phenomenon is the lack of overt marking of certain arguments as in (2) (Gerdts, 2010, 576). Within the CORE$_W$ there are two features "requesting" for arguments. But only one of those arguments is filled: the Recipient is expressed with a first plural pronoun-like verb affix.

(2)   = (60)

ni?   x^{w}ayəm–əs–t–aĺx^w–əs
AUX   sell-DAT-TR-1PL.OBJ-3ERG

'He sold it to us.'

The Theme is not filled neither within the CORE$_W$ with an affix, nor within the CORE with an RP. For these cases, we postulate the presence of a null element "responding" the request of the feature. Although RRG does not encourage null syntactic elements, they are undoubtedly present in some morphological paradigms. Postulating a null element in (2) would help to keep the metagrammar compact and unified without inserting additional trees for sentences like (2).

The conference talk is going to comprise more detailed information about our analysis and more examples of Halkomelem ditransitive constructions. This abstract shows that our analysis is able to deal with head-marking and dependent-marking trends encountered in Halkomelem ditransitive constructions. Although we considered only Halkomelem so far, we anticipate this approach to be adequate for other languages demonstrating both head-marking and dependent-marking properties.

References

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