Deriving the definiteness effects in Nuu-chah-nulth locatives

Rachel Wojdak
UBC
rasusann@interchange.ubc.ca

Florence Woo
UC Santa Cruz
flwoo@ucsc.edu

1. The problem

- locatives in Nuu-chah-nulth are expressed by affixal predicates which describe a relationship between a location argument and a locatum argument (Wojdak in prep; see also Rose 1981, Davidson 2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>predicate</th>
<th>location</th>
<th>locatum (theme)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ʔu-čuu-ʔiś</td>
<td>niisıyak-ʔi</td>
<td>haʔum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔu-ʔaq-ʔiś</td>
<td>čaʔnaqʔak-ʔi</td>
<td>ciixsac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOC-inside-3.IND</td>
<td>oven-DET</td>
<td>frying.pan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) There’s a frying pan in the oven.

- depending on what the morphological host for the locative affix is, there seems to be two different kinds of definiteness effects in locatives:

  (i) an *indefiniteness* restriction on a bare locatum argument when the predicate suffixes to the expletive morpheme ʔu-.

(2) ʔu-čuu-ʔiś niisıyak-ʔi haʔum

LOC-in-container-3.IND pot-DET food

There’s food in the pot.  (# The food is in the pot.)

(ii) a *definiteness* restriction on a bare locatum argument when the prediates suffixes to the locative morpheme ʔi-.

(3) hiʔ-čuu-ʔiś haʔum niisıyak-ʔi

LOC-in-container-3.IND food pot-DET

The food is in the pot.  (# There’s food in the pot.)

1 Nuu-chah-nulth is a Southern Wakashan language spoken on Vancouver Island. We would like to thank our Nuu-chah-nulth consultants for sharing their language & insights with us: Mary Jane Dick, Katherine Fraser, Christine Nicolaye, Barbara Touchie, Barney Williams Jr. and Sarah Webster. The data presented here are from the Ahousaht dialect, but to the best of our knowledge the generalisations also hold for the other dialects we’ve worked with (Kyuquot, Ucluelet, Clayoquot). Thanks to Sandra Chung, Henry Davis, Rose-Marie Déchaine, Lisa Matthewson & Martina Witschko for their feedback & suggestions. Fieldwork on Nuu-chah-nulth was supported by a UBC Hampton Fund Research Grant in the Humanities and Social Sciences awarded to Henry Davis.

QUESTION 1: why is a bare locatum argument obligatorily interpreted as

1. indefinite in ʔu-locatives
2. definite in hiʔ-locatives

- bare nominal in Nuu-chah-nulth are generally ambiguous between indefinite and definite interpretations

(4) a. ḥaʔaqʔ-ʔiś čiistuup long-very-3.IND rope

The/some rope is very long.

b. ḥaʔaqʔ-ʔiś čiistuup-ʔi long-very-3.IND rope-DET

The rope is very long.

QUESTION 2: why are ʔu-locatives ruled out when the locatum is pro?

(5) Q: waas-ak-k ciixsac

where-POSS-2.Q frying.pan

Where’s your frying pan?

A1: hiʔaʔqʔ-ʔiś čaʔnaqʔak

hiʔ-ʔaq-ʔiś čaʔnaqʔak

LOC-inside-3.IND oven

It’s in the oven.

A2: # ʔu-čuu-ʔiś čaʔnaqʔak

ʔu-ʔaq-ʔiś čaʔnaqʔak

LOC-inside-3.IND oven

1.1. The proposal

THE PROPOSAL: the definiteness effects are linked to subject-raising (see Freeze 1992)

-both ʔu-locatives and hiʔ-locatives share the same underlying structure (see Freeze 1992).

-**hiʔ-locatives:** the locatum raises to subject position

-**ʔu-locatives:** the locatum remains in object position

- a bare locatum argument in object position is subject to VP-level existential binding (Diesing 1992)
Underlying structure for the locative predicate—čiuu “inside a container” (Wojdak 2004)

(6) VP
location niisỵ̀k “pot” V čiuu “food”
locatum haʔum

in hiri-locatives, the locatum argument raises to subject position and escapes VP-level existential binding (Diesing 1992).

(7) IP
locatum, VP
locatum ti

hiri-čiuuʔil šaʔum niisỵ̀kʔi
LOC-in-container-3.IND food pot-DET
The food is in the pot. (# There’s food in the pot.)

(8) hiri-čiuuʔil šaʔum niisỵ̀kʔi
LOC-in-container-3.IND food pot-DET
The food is in the pot. (# There’s food in the pot.)

in ḥa-r-locatives, the locatum remains below VP and is existentially bound.2
A bare nominal is obligatorily indefinite in ḥa-r-locatives.

(9) IP
locatum VP
locatum ti

(10) ḥa-r-čiuuʔil niisỵ̀kʔi šaʔum
jectory-in-container-3.IND pot-DET food
There’s food in the pot. (# The food is in the pot.)

• in both types of locatives, there is movement of the predicate to a position higher than the subject, yielding the VSO word order of the language.

(11) hiri-locatives: predicate locatum, VP [location ___ ti]

(12) ḥa-r-locatives: predicate VP [location ___ locatum]

2. Predictions of the analysis

1. The locatum satisfies subject diagnostics in hiri-locatives
   a. word order (§2.1)
   b. possessor-raising clausal inflection (§2.2)
   c. clausal inflection (§2.3)

2. The locatum satisfies object diagnostics in ḥa-r-locatives
   a. word order (§2.1)
   b. incorporation (§2.4)

3. The indefiniteness restriction in ḥa-r-locatives is not absolute (§2.5)

2.1 Word order: VSO

• VSO is the preferred word order in Nuu-chah-nulth. VOS is ruled out in potentially ambiguous contexts:

(13) ḥa-r-vukʔil [+R]-3.IND Ken Kay
Ken is crying for Kay.
(unavailable interpretation: Kay is crying for Ken)

• the analysis of the definiteness effects predicts a word order difference between hiri-locatives (locatum=subject) and ḥa-r-locatives (location=subject).

• In hiri-locatives, there is a preference for the locatum to precede the location:

(14) hiri-čiuuʔil ciixsac čaʔmaq’ukʔi
LOC-inside-3 frying.pan oven-DET
The frying pan is inside the oven.

2 For explicitness, we assume that the location has not raised out of the VP in ḥa-r-locatives, and instead occupies its theta-subject position. This corresponds to the availability of indefinite bare nominal locations, eg. ḥa-r-čiuuʔil niisỵ̀kʔi “A woman is wearing a hat” (ex. 26).
2.2 Possessor-raising corresponds to subject

- possessor-marking on a predicate corresponds to the subject (Davidson 2002, Ravinski in prep)

(16) ʔu-yaʔatuk-šiš  hupkum[+]  ʔiniix
Ω find-POS-1sg.IND  ball  dog
My dog found the ball.  (possessor=subject)

(unavailable interpretation: The dog found my ball.)

- In hiri-locatives, the possessor-marking on a predicate matches the locatum

(17)  hiri-ʔum-ʔak-ʔiš  háʔum  niisiyak
LOC in-container-POSS-3.IND  food  pot
His food is in the pot.  (possessor=locatum)

(unavailable interpretation: The food is in his pot.)

- in hiri-locatives, the possessor-marking on a predicate matches the location

(18) ʔu-ʔaʔatuk-ʔiš  ʔimtiit  Lucy  č’upčupšum[+]
Ω on-surface-POSS-3.IND  name  Lucy  sweater
There is a name on Lucy’s sweater.  (possessor=location)

(consultant’s comment: "could be ANY name, like a team name")

(unavailable interpretation: Lucy’s name is on a sweater.)

- this pattern is predicted if the locatum is the subject of hiri-locatives, and the location is the subject of hiri-locatives.

2.3 Clausal inflection corresponds to subject

- Clausal agreement in Nuu-chah-nulth is triggered by subjects.

(19)  naatsi-čit-šiš  John  ʔuʔimutʃi
see-PERF-PST-1sg.IND  John  yesterday
I saw John yesterday.

- in hiri-locatives, the subject inflection matches the locatum, not the location.

(20)  hiri-ʔiis-šiš  ʔahkuu
LOC on-ground-1sg.IND  DEIC
I’m sitting over here.

(21)  hiri-ʔiis-šiš
LOC on-beach-1sg.IND
I’m on the beach.

- in hiri-locatives, the subject inflection matches the location, not the locatum.

(22) a. ʔu-čitum-šiš  sačkalхаʃ
Ω on-side-of-head-1sg.IND  comb
I’ve got a comb on the side of my head.

b.  čiʔumuxsisiš
kuxsiš  straw.hat  on.head-1sg.IND
I’m wearing a straw hat.

c. ʔu-qaum-šiš  sačkalхаʃ
Ω on.head-1sg.IND  comb
I have combs in my hair.

2.4. Incorporation of objects

- in Nuu-chah-nulth, affixal predicates show an alternation between suffixation to the expletive morpheme ʔu-, and suffixation to an object:

(23) a. ʔuʔamitʃiš  čakup  maʔiʃi
Ω buy-PST-3.IND  man  house
A man bought a house.
A man bought a house.

- suffixation to an object has been analysed as incorporation (Davis and Sawai 2001, Wojdak 2003). There is a subject-object asymmetry in this incorporation which rules out suffixation of the predicate to its subject:

(24) * čakup-¿aq-mit-¿š mahšii
mahšii-¿aq-mit-¿š čakup
man-buy-PST-3.IND man
house-buy-PST-3.IND house
A man bought a house.

- the incorporation pattern in ¿-locatives diagnoses the locatum as the object. Only the locatum argument can incorporate; the location argument cannot incorporate.

(25) a. KI3-¿š qaʔuc-¿š haʔum
in.container-3.IND basket-DET food
There's food in the burden basket.

b. haʔum-¿u-¿š qaʔuc-¿š
food-in.container-3.IND basket-DET food
There's food in the burden basket.

c. * qaʔuc-¿u-¿š haʔum
basket-in.container-3.IND food

(26) a. KI3-¿š tsukma xiičum+t
on.head-3.IND woman straw.hat
A woman is wearing a straw hat.

b. xiičum+t-uxs-¿š tsukma
straw.hat-on.head-3.IND woman
A woman is wearing a straw hat.

c. * tsukma-xi3-¿š xiičum+t
woman-on.head-3.IND straw.hat

- this pattern is predicted if locatum arguments are the object of ¿-locatives.

- this test is inapplicable for híʔ-locatives: this type of locative does not show an incorporation alternation.

### 2.5 The indefiniteness restriction in ¿-locatives is not absolute

- under the analysis of ¿-locatives, the locatum remains within the VP.

(27) ¿-locatives: locatum is subject to existential binding

- The implication of (27) is that if a (bare) locatum is indefinite, it must be in the object position.

- however, the analysis predicts that definite locatum arguments should be possible in ¿-locatives, provided that they are bound by a definite determiner.

- the prediction holds: the ban on definite locata in ¿-locatives is not absolute. In restricted contexts, the definite locata are possible in ¿-locatives:

(28) KI3-¿š čiʔaʔqāq-ʔak ciixsacʔi
on.top-PST-3.IND shirt POSS-2sg.POSS pants POSS-3.P Ken
Your shirt is on top of Ken's pants.

(consultant's comment: this is "telling where it is")

b. KI3-¿š čiʔaʔqāq-ʔak ciixsacʔ-ʔi
on.top-PST-3.IND shirt POSS-2sg.POSS pants POSS-3.POS Ken
Your shirt is on top of Ken's pants.

(consultant's comment: this is "telling what it is")

- both híʔ-locatives and ¿-locatives allow possessed locatum arguments, for example:

(29) a. híʔ-čuʔ-¿š kihiʔaʔqāq-ʔak-uk-ʔitk kiškiiqāq-ʔak-ʔi Ken
LOC-on.top-POSS-3 shirt POSS-2sg.POSS pants POSS-3.P Ken
Your shirt is on top of Ken's pants.

(consultant's comment: this is "telling where it is")

b. KI3-¿š kihiʔaʔqāq-ʔak-ʔitk kiškiiqāq-ʔak-ʔi Ken
on.top-POSS-3 shirt POSS-2sg.POSS pants POSS-3.POS Ken
Your shirt is on top of Ken's pants.

(consultant's comment: this is "telling what it is")

### Question:

but if definite locatum arguments are freely allowed in ¿-locatives, then why don’t we see more of them?
why are $\alpha$-locatives banned with pro locatum arguments, for example?

(30) Q: waasîh niis-çuu-ţi where-3.Q boiled-result-DET Where’s the boiled fish?
A1: hit-çuu-ţi $\alpha$hii niis$\alpha$-ţi LOC-in.container-3.IND DEIC pot-DET It’s in the pot.
A2: * $\alpha$-çuu-ţi $\alpha$hii niis$\alpha$-ţi $\ominus$-in.container-3.IND DEIC pot-DET

idea: Subjects in Nuu-chah-nulth are linked to topichood.

the topic of a sentence, being discourse-old information, necessarily entails familiarity/definiteness in some sense (Chafe 1975).

This would explain why $\alpha$-locatives (necessarily with a location subject) are banned in contexts where the locatum is the topic.

(31) Q: waasâåukhâs lâatñaâs waas-å$k$-uk-šs lâatñaâs where-TEMP-POSS-1sg.Q children Where’s my kids? (kids = topic)
A1: hiyîhâ$s$a$b pro ma$h$$\ddagger$-ak$i$ Ken
hih-å$h$-t$a$b pro ma$h$$\ddagger$-ak$i$ Ken LOC-inside-3.IND-PL pro house-POSS-3 Ken They’re inside Ken’s house. topic/subject MATCH
A2: * $\alpha$-t$a$b ma$h$$\ddagger$-ak$i$ Ken pro $\ominus$-inside-3.IND-PL house-POSS-3 Ken pro topic/subject MISMATCH

This would also predict a restricted set of contexts where $\alpha$-locatives with definite locata can occur.

under the idea that topics=subject, this means that when both locatum and location are familiar in the discourse context, an $\alpha$-locative is used only when the location is more salient than the definite locatum.

prediction: subject topic location locatum [+def]

(32) $\alpha$-çii-ţi $\alpha$hâq$\ddagger$-uk-ţi Ken $\alpha$hînaq$\ddagger$-uk-iti Ken $\ominus$-on.top-POSS-3 pants-POSS-3.POS Ken shirt-POSS-2sg.POS Your shirt is on top of Ken’s pants.

this prediction corresponds to the following context for an $\alpha$-locative with a definite locatum:

context: Mary Jane and I went out berry-picking, and we had a few burden baskets with us. We got a basket of salal, a basket of blackberries, and a basket of cranberries. We take the berries home & we start to clean them. I fall asleep & in the meantime Mary Jane finishes with the blackberries & the cranberries. All of a sudden I wake up & then I ask whether there’s anything left for me to clean. Mary Jane answers with (33).

subject topic location locatum [+def]

(33) $\alpha$-çuu$\ddagger$-t$\ddagger$-b-a$a$b qa$\ddagger$-uc yâma$\ddagger$ $\alpha$-çuu-yaq$\ddagger$-t$\ddagger$-b-a$a$b qa$\ddagger$-uc yâma$\ddagger$-i Ken $\ominus$-inside-on.floor-3.IND basket salal.berries-DET In the basket over there on the floor is the salal.

3. Conclusion

our analysis of locatives accounts for a range of data (definiteness effects, word order, possessor-raising pattern & subject inflection) with one story: the locatum raises to subject position in hit-locatives but not $\alpha$-locatives.
For future research:

- an analysis of the origin/function of the locative morpheme *hiʔ*. Is it the same morpheme as the *hiʔ*- that appears in predicative contexts (34) and in relative clauses (35)?

(34) *hiʔ-ʔiš makuwas*  
LOC-3.IND store  
She’s at the store.

(35) č̱uptuuqsmíʔiš  *hiʔʔitqsuuʔaʔ*  waʔie  
smell-inside-3.IND  *hiʔʔitqsuuʔaʔ*  waʔie  
It smells where you always sleep.

- further investigation into the topic/subject link in Nuu-chah-nulth, with locatives & elsewhere. Are subjects and topics inherently linked in Nuu-chah-nulth?

References


