

Does anything go in Salish? Issues in Upper Chehalis phonotactics

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Among phonologists, Salish languages are famous for their remarkably complex consonant clusters. In the celebrated case of Bella Coola (Nuxalk), sequences of 5-7 consonants in a row are common and words can even consist of consonants only, e.g. *sk^wχ'tp* 'seed' (s-NOMINALISER; *k^wχ* 'to plant'; *-tp* 'tree, plant') and *xtp'x^wttptts* 'he had had in his possession a bunchberry plant' (*x't* 'to have, possess'; *p'x^wt* 'bunchberry'; *-tp* 'tree, plant'; *-tt* PLUPERFECT; *-s* POSSESSIVE) (cf. Bagemihl 1998: 74). The question arises if any phonotactic restrictions are in fact operative in this language family.

I will discuss the following issues in the phonotactics of Upper Chehalis, an extinct Tsamosan Salish language:

- the prosodic status of schwa: stressed vs. unstressed schwa in open and in closed syllables
- the clustering properties of obstruents and of sonorants
- patterns in the distribution of consonants in vowelless (or, schwa-only) roots
- the evidence for maximally 'CVC' syllables.

I will then present an analysis of the Upper Chehalis syllable structure within a version of Strict CV framework (cf. Rowicka 1999, 2001) and compare it to an analysis within a moraic framework (cf. Bagemihl 1991, Shaw 1993), pointing out the similarities and differences between the two approaches.

References

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