

BORROWED WORDS AND PREHISTORY ALONG THE STRAITS OF JUAN DE FUCA

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A careful study of the sorts of words that one language has adopted from another sometimes gives important clues as to the sorts of influence one group of people has had on another. In English, for example, the specialized vocabularies of ballet and the sport of mountain climbing are replete with words introduced from French. In fact, a dancer would find it impossible and a mountain climber difficult to talk about their respective specialities without recourse to many words borrowed from French. Consider *pas de deux*, *pilé*, *jeté en tournant*, and the word *ballet* itself; or, in the case of mountain climbing, *rappel*, *glissade*, *court d'echelle*, and *verglas*. These words attest to the important influence the French had upon our own culture in these two areas (to say nothing of the culinary arts). Our music terminology reveals an equally pervasive influence from Italian. Such words as *opera*, *piano*, *soprano*, and *adagio* come quickly to mind.

On the other hand, when two quite similar cultures have been in close contact, we do not find whole sets of borrowed words that reflect particular domains of thought, activity, or skill as in the above examples from French and Italian on English. Instead we find a heterogeneous assortment of terms reflecting the give and take of everyday life. Those of you who remember early English history will recall the Danelaw and how Scandinavians went to England first as invaders and later as settlers in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries. The English and Scandinavians of that period had relatively similar cultures; and the Scandinavians did not permanently alter the English life style in any special sphere of activity so far as we can judge by Old Norse words that entered English at that period. Note what a mixed bag of concepts these Old Norse loans express: *birth*, *egg*, *sister*, *flat*, *weak*, *get*, *give*, *take*, and our Canadian political division *riding*. There are many, many more; but no one semantic domain stands out.

Thus it is that detecting loan words in a vocabulary along with their language of origin (and relative time of adoption) can provide a glimpse into the past of a people. At the very least, these words tell us who was in contact with whom; and sometimes they point to what sort of influence one group has had on another. Such glimpses of the past become especially important for cultures having no recorded history.

A few linguists, in addition to their purely grammatical studies, have begun to examine the vocabularies of British Columbian languages for just this sort of historical information. The speakers of which languages borrowed which words from whom? What historical inferences can be made once these borrowings are discovered and their origins determined?

In this research the linguists are immeasurably assisted by numerous Native elders who are not only fluent speakers of one or more of the indigenous languages but several of whom have become accomplished scholars - colleagues upon whom the non-Native linguists depend greatly!¹

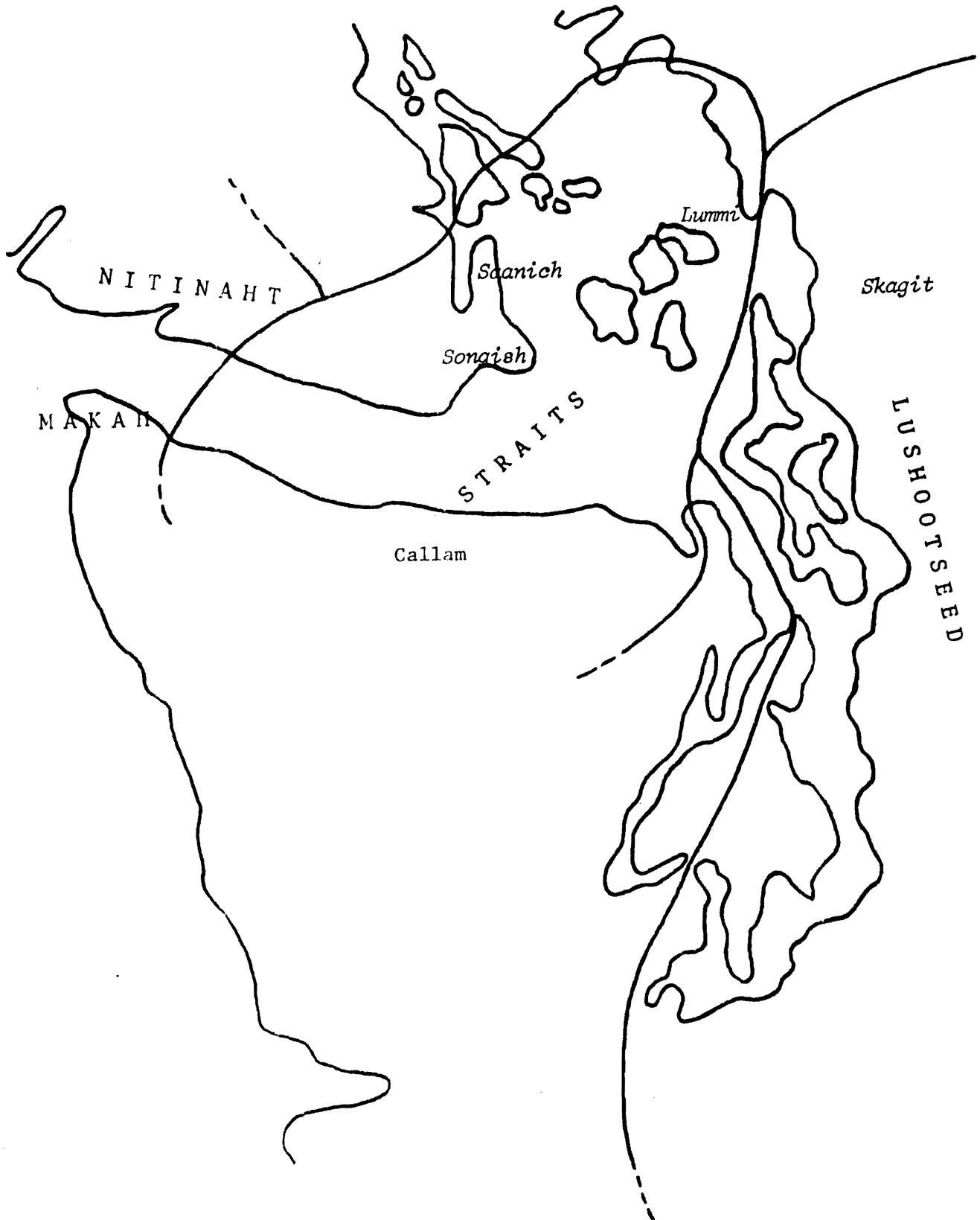
Unfortunately, the task is vast, the time is short, and the number of researchers pathetically small. Ideally, there should be complete dictionaries from every single village because each village has its unique language forms and usages. We will be lucky, however, to get a six or seven thousand word list from one or two people per inhabited reserve because those engaged in this work are so few and none is able to devote full time to the task. Furthermore, several of the languages are nearly extinct; and even for those that are viable, much of the rich dialect differentiation has already disappeared due to various pressures of post-European contact life.

To date, there are insufficient word lists collected and made available to the scholarly community for anyone to endeavor the sort of lexical-historical study envisioned here. Instead, the bulk of this paper explains the principles and concepts linguists use in determining the direction of word borrowing among languages. Following the explanation of principles, a short list of borrowings among three local languages is briefly examined applying the principles where sufficient information permits.

In this discussion numerous language and dialect names appear. The reader should consult the map below.

Principle One: If a word is analyzable in one language but the related term is not analyzable in a second language, speakers of the latter are assumed to have borrowed the word from the former. For example, in Skagit, the northern most dialect of Lushootseed, the word for coho or silver salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) is *qéčqs*. In two varieties of Straits, Lummi and Clallam, coho is also named *qéčqs*. Only in Skagit, however, does the word have meaning beyond its reference to that particular salmon. In

¹ For the progress of my own lexical-historical studies I should like especially to thank the following elders who have patiently given me of their time and knowledge over the years: Mrs. Louise Cisx^uisał George, a speaker of Skagit Lushootseed; Mr. Ernie Olsen, a speaker of Saanich Straits; and Mr. John Xi^usal Thomas, a speaker of Nitinaht.



Skagit and other dialects of Lushootseed, $\acute{q}\acute{o}\acute{x}$ means *curve* or *bend* while *-qs* is a suffix referring to *nose* or *point*. Hence, in Skagit a coho is literally named *bent nose*, describing the appearance of the spawning males. While *-qs*,² also occurs throughout Straits with the same meaning as Skagit, the root (or core of the word), $\acute{q}\acute{o}\acute{x}$ does not - apart from this one combination with *-qs*. Speakers of Lummi and Clallam are typically unaware of the literal meaning of $\acute{q}\acute{o}\acute{x}qs$ while all speakers of Lushootseed are. Therefore, we conclude that the Skagit created the word out of Lushootseed verbal material and the neighboring Straits groups borrowed it.

In northern dialects of Nootka the word for *Caucasian* is *mamə́ña*. In the neighboring Kwakiutl the equivalent term is *mamə́tə*. Similarly, further to the east in the Comox language³ the word for *white man* is *mamə́tə*. Each of these three words is identical in meaning and almost the same in form. Nootka has an *ñ*-sound lacking in the other two; otherwise they match perfectly. Clearly all three originate from the same source; but where is that? It is Nootka, for only there can the word⁴ be analyzed: *ma-* means *dwelt*, *-mañ* *move about*, and *-ña* *at/on the sea*. The first whites to reach these shores came in large ships, houses moving about on the sea; and the Nootka aptly named them for their mode of travel.

On the other hand, in neither Kwakiutl nor Comox can *mamə́tə* be literally interpreted. It has no meaning to the speakers of these languages beyond the one referent, *Caucasian*.⁵

Principle Two: If the etymon⁶ in question occurs in only one language of a particular family of languages, but related words are heard in numerous languages of a neighboring family, the first case is judged to be a borrowing from the second. The word for *lake* in the Wakashan language Kwakiutl and in Coast Salish languages illustrates this principle.

In two dialects of Kwakiutl, Alert Bay and Kingcome Inlet, the word for *lake* is $d^z\acute{e}l\acute{a}\acute{t}$. In the neighboring Salish language, Comox, there is a related term meaning *lake*, $\theta\acute{a}\acute{y}e$ in Island Comox

² And in nearly every other Salish language as well.

³ Which subsumes Sliammon and several other dialects on the mainland as well as Comox proper on Vancouver Island. Comox is Salish. The other two are Wakashan.

⁴ More precisely if somewhat technically, *etymon* should be used here instead of *word*. There are three words, one in each language; but they are all related - all one etymon.

⁵ The historical record also suggests that the Nootka were donors because the whites arrived in Nootka territory first. The Kwakiutl and Comox did not at first know about the whites and their ships except as they heard about them from the Nootka.

⁶ See footnote 4.

and *sáʔyaɪ* in Sliammon Comox. By studying sound correspondences among Salish languages, linguists know that *θáʔye* and *sáʔyaɪ* evolved from an earlier word which was something like **caɫaɪ*. The relationship between *dʒəɫaɪ* and *caɫaɪ* is evident, especially when it is pointed out that the Kwakiutl usually render voiceless sounds (like *c*) as voiced (like *dʒ*). (Compare English *Peter* with its Kwakiutl pronunciation *Beeda*.)

Once it is established that Kwakiutl *dʒəɫaɪ* and Comox *θáʔye/sáʔyaɪ* are related, we must try to establish the direction of borrowing. Who borrowed from whom? Words related to *θáʔye/sáʔyaɪ* turn up in seven other very widely distributed Coast Salish languages extending from Bella Coola in British Columbia all the way south to Tillamook in Oregon. Conversely, related words in Wakashan are limited to *dʒəɫaɪ* of Alert Bay and Kingcome Inlet. Nothing like it occurs in other Wakashan languages nor even all the other dialects of Kwakiutl itself.⁷ Therefore, we conclude that the Salish, probably the Comox, were the donors in this

Table 1. Table Corresponding to Principle Two.

	<u>Salish</u>		<u>Wakashan</u>
<i>cəɪ</i>	Bella Coola		
<i>sáʔyaɪ/θáʔye</i>	Comox	<i>dʒəɫaɪ</i>	some dialects of Kwakiutl
<i>cəlʔaɪ</i>	Sechelt		
<i>cáyʔaɪ</i>	Clallam		
<i>caləɪ</i>	Southern Lushootseed		
<i>calɪ</i>	Upper Chehalis		
<i>caʔlaɪ</i>	Tillamook		
<i>caláɪ</i>	Lillooet		

⁷ So far as currently available data attests.

case.

Principle Three: If two languages are related⁸ and they share a common etymon,⁹ that etymon is a borrowing in one of the languages if it manifests sounds which otherwise occur only in the second language. This principle is clearly illustrated with the words for *periwinkle* in Nitinaht and some varieties of Nootka.

By means of certain techniques in historical linguistics, scholars have been able to prove that both modern Nitinaht and Nootka evolved from a single ancient language. Furthermore, linguists also have a fairly complete knowledge of the sound system of that ancient tongue. They know that the ancestor language had m and n sounds but no b nor d. It had an ɣ-sound but no ɥ.

As the daughter languages evolved from the ancestor speech, speakers of Nitinaht changed the pronunciation of every m to b and every n to d.¹⁰ Speakers of the evolving Nootka retained the nasals but came to substitute ɥ for original ɣ. These shifts in

Table 2. Table Corresponding to Principle Three.

<u>Ancestor</u>	<u>Modern Nootka</u>	<u>Modern Nitinaht</u>
m	m	b
n	n	d
ɣ	ɥ	ɣ

pronunciation are summarized in Table 2.

Therefore, wherever Nootka words have m or n, Nitinaht words have b or d; and wherever Nootka has ɥ Nitinaht has ɣ except in cases of borrowing! In modern Nootka the word for *periwinkle* is maɥmu· and, knowing that, one would expect the Nitinaht word to be baɣbu· on the basis of the above correspondences. However the

⁸ That is, if two languages have evolved out of the same ancient language as did Italian and French from (vulgate) Latin.

⁹ Or, less technically, share a common word. See footnote 4.

¹⁰ Note that Nitinaht, as pronounced in the language itself, is di·ti·daʔ.

expected *baɣbu* does not exist. The modern Nitinaht word for *periwinkle* sounds just like the Nootka word complete with nasals and *h*, viz., *maɣmu*. Clearly, the Nitinaht speakers gave up their original term for *periwinkle* and adopted the Nootka word.

Principle Four: When a place name is not analyzable in the region where it is found, but is completely understandable to speakers of a nearby dialect or language, the parts that make up the name (its morphemes) are assumed to have been part of the original inhabitants' vocabulary. Either the people who first gave the site its name changed part of their vocabulary or people speaking a different language moved into the area but retained the original place name.

The map of Europe marks many large and famous cities whose names bear testimony to earlier inhabitants of a different native tongue. The German city names Berlin, Leipzig, and Dresden are all originally Slavic words; they indicate the former Slavic habitation of what is now German territory. Similarly, the earlier widespread domain of the Celts is remembered in such city names as London, Paris, and Vienna.

By noting which Makah¹¹ place names are interpretable by the Makah speakers themselves and which are intelligible only to their southern neighbors, the Quileute,¹² Professor William Jacobsen (1976) has tentatively suggested that the Makah territory along the open ocean is a later expansion from locations on the Strait of Juan de Fuca at the expense of earlier Quileute speaking territory. The scholars Edward Sapir and Morris Swadesh (1939) compiled a glossary of Nootka vocabulary as spoken in the vicinity of Port Alberni. This glossary contains many place names of this region which are Salish rather than Nootkan, indicating again the changing language territories.

It should be noted that the shifting of language boundaries does not necessarily imply the shifting of populations. It was not uncommon for the people of a small village or group of villages to gradually give up their own language in favor of a neighbor's speech - especially if the neighbors were held in high esteem and there was already considerable intermarriage between the two language groups and hence a high degree of bilingualism.

It also happens at times that a people neither moves nor changes languages but does, nevertheless, lose the meaning of one of its own place names. There are several instances of this phenomenon in Lushootseed. For example, in the northern part of the Lushootseed speaking territory there is a village on the shores of a lake named *ɕəláɬəbš*. Everyone knows that *-əbš* means

¹¹ Makah is a Wakashan language spoken in extreme northwest Washington State. It is quite similar to Nitinaht.

¹² Quileute does not belong to the Wakashan language group.

people of, but no one understands the significance of *cəlát-*. However, over one hundred miles to the south in the most southerly Lushootseed dialects the word for lake is *cələɪ*. Lushootseed speakers of the southern area fully understand the meaning of *cəlátəbš*, namely, *People of the Lake*, even though it is not their village. (*cələɪ* lake becomes *cəlát-* when a suffix is added.¹³) In the north, the original word for lake came to be replaced by a new term, *ɣáčuʔ*. With the passing of time, *cələɪ* was completely forgotten in the north; but the new term, *ɣáčuʔ*, did not penetrate to the southern region where *cələɪ* remained.

Principle Five: When the speakers of one language excel in a particular skill or craft, commonly their neighbors borrow their word for that specialized activity or artifact. Such an outstanding skill is held by the Straits Salish people. They are the reef netters par excellence in the Pacific Northwest.

In some dialects of Straits, Saanich for example, the word for reef net is *sɣʰáləʔ*; and derived from this is *sɣʰəlíʔəɬč* willow tree or, more literally, reef net tree because the branches of willow trees are woven about rocks used as anchors for the nets.¹⁴

The Southern Lushootseed word for willow tree, *sčápac*, sounds nothing like the Straits term. However, in Northern Lushootseed dialects, the very ones which border on Straits territory, the word for willow tree is *sɣʰáluʔac*, which closely resembles Straits *sɣʰáləʔ/sɣʰəlíʔ-*. (The final *-ac* in Lushootseed means tree.) The Straits people, renowned for their reef netting skill, have provided their nearest Lushootseed neighbors with a word derived from that skill.

Further evidence for the direction of borrowing in this case comes from Principle One. In Straits both parts of *sɣʰəlíʔəɬč*, the stem and suffix, are meaningful whereas the speakers of Lushootseed recognize only the suffix *-ac* in their term *sɣʰáluʔac*. The stem alone is meaningless to them.

A subpoint to the fifth principle concerns artifacts. If an artifact has some feature used by speakers of one language but merely imitated in design but not used by the speakers of a second language, the place of origin for the artifact is probably among the former.

An example of such an artifact is the small projection on the underside of the bow of the canoe type known in English as

¹³ Note related terms listed at the end of the discussion of Principle Two. See also Hess 1977 for a fuller discussion of this phenomenon in Lushootseed.

¹⁴ *-əɬč* is a suffix meaning tree. *sɣʰəlíʔ-* is a variant of *sɣʰáləʔ* reef net resulting from a change in stressed syllables caused by the addition of a suffix.

Chinook. The Chinook canoe was used for whaling by the three Southern Wakashan groups, the Nootka, Nitinaht, and Makah; and the projection served an important function. When the hunter stood to hurl the harpoon, a rope to steady him looped around his back and under the bow hooking on the projection to keep it in place.

The Salish neighbors along the Straits of Juan de Fuca, Puget Sound, and Hood Canal also used the Chinook canoe. The Salish, however, were not whalers and made no use of the projection; nevertheless their Chinook canoes always had it.

This Salish retention of an unused feature points to the Southern Wakashan as originators of the Chinook canoe and strongly suggests that the Salish were the borrowers. Linguistic evidence of the sort discussed in Principle One confirms the hypothesis. All groups using this canoe share a related name for

Table 3. Table Corresponding to Principle Five.

<u>Canoe name</u>	<u>(Dialect)</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Language family</u>
ʔuʔu·taḥ(s)ac	(Ahousaht)	Nootka)	Southern Wakashan
ʔuʔu·taḥsc		Nitinaht)	
ʔátḥəs	(Sooke))	Northern Straits)	Salish
ʔátḥəs	(Songese))		
ʔuʔutḥs		Clallam)	
ʔəʔútḥs		Lushootseed)	
ʔuʔútḥs		Twana)	

this canoe type. Only in the Wakashan languages can the name be analyzed. It consists of a reduplicated root ʔu, the suffix -(a·)t(a)ḥ/-(a·)taḥ meaning *pursue, try to get*, and the suffix -s(a)c meaning *vessel*. The words are not analyzable in any of the Salish languages.

It is ironic that the Salish borrowed both the name for the canoe and the, for them, useless projection on the underside of the bow piece, but did not also adopt one of the Wakashan words for that projection as well. Instead they gave it their own names. Whereas the Ahousaht Nootka call it tu·čma *heart* and the

Makah *qadado uvula* (Waterman 1920), the Lushootseed name it *bəlálgwəʔ* *navel* and the Twana *cəbúl* *Adam's apple* (Elmendorf 1960).¹⁵ All four words, however, do share a common component, viz., each designates a part of the body.

In lieu of any other criterion, one can resort to the following principle for at least a tenuous hypothesis: if a word has a more general meaning in one language, but the related term has a more narrow or specialized meaning in a second language, the latter is assumed to have been borrowed from the former.

Consider the Japanese words *guroobu*, *batto*, and *sutoraiku*. Each of these is borrowed from English - specifically from *glove*, *bat*, and *strike* respectively; however, in each case the Japanese words are limited in application to the game of baseball.

A similar case is the Lushootseed word *təʔwáʔs* which means *random star* or *unpatterned star* as opposed to *sčúsad* which designates a *star belonging to a constellation*. The source for *təʔwáʔs*, however, is not ancient Salish speech (as is the case for *sčúsad*), but rather one of the Wakashan languages, perhaps the Nitinaht *ta·tawáʔsiʔ* which means simply *star*. The Lushootseed speakers have added a second *star*-word to their vocabulary limiting the meaning of the ancient native word and taking in the Wakashan term but with a more specialized meaning.

(There is no doubt about the direction of borrowing in this case for words related to the Nitinaht *ta·tawáʔsiʔ* occur in widely dispersed Wakashan languages but in only two Salish languages - Lushootseed and Clallam.¹⁶ See Principle Two.)

With these six principles in mind, it is instructive to attempt their application even though the available word lists are both few and brief. The vocabularies of two Salish languages, Lushootseed and Straits (especially Saanich), are contrasted with the lexicon of a Wakashan language, Nitinaht. (See map.) Related forms shared by either one of the Salish languages with Nitinaht are necessarily borrowings because the languages belong to different families.¹⁷ These particular languages are selected because they are spoken in adjacent territories, and they happen to be the three with which I am most familiar.

¹⁵ The Ahousaht and Lushootseed terms are from my own fieldnotes. I do not have information about the name of this feature in Nitinaht, Clallam, or Northern Straits.

¹⁶ As far as linguists are presently aware.

¹⁷ Therefore, a pair of related words shared by Nitinaht and Lushootseed or Nitinaht and Straits is not the result of developments from a common parent language spoken long ago.

Thus far, twenty-one borrowings have been found between Nitinaht and one or the other Salish language or both.¹⁸ These are listed and glossed in Table 4 below. All Straits forms are Saanich except where otherwise noted. The Nitinaht words are from Mr. John Xišal Thomas, the Saanich vocabulary is from Mr. Ernie Olsen of Tsartlip Reserve, and the Lushootseed forms come from Hess 1976 and Hess/Hilbert 1980. Information from other sources is credited in footnotes at the end of the table.

At this point, our knowledge of the indigenous vocabularies is usually still too limited to enable us to ascertain precisely from which language out of a group of closely related tongues a word was borrowed. However, in eleven of the twenty-one related sets above we are able to tell whether an etymon originated in Wakashan or Salish. Borrowings numbered 2, 3, 4, 6 and 19 probably entered Salish from Wakashan, while those numbered 5, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12 probably come to Nitinaht from Salish. Evidence in support of sets 2 through 6 rests upon the fact that the Nitinaht words are analyzable while the Salish words are not, i.e., Principle One, and the distribution of these etyma is widespread in Wakashan but limited in Salish, i.e., Principle Two. Principle Two also applies to set 19 (along with Principle Six in the Lushootseed case).

Evidence for the Salish origin for sets 5 and 9 through 12 rests upon Principle Two. These etyma occur in many Salish languages spoken far beyond the region considered here but are unique to Nitinaht in Wakashan (or limited to Nitinaht and an immediate Wakashan neighbor). Set 7 is analyzable in Salish but not in Nitinaht.

None of the principles can be applied to the remaining sets until more information is learned about them. It should be noted, however, that many of these etyma are very widely distributed in both Salish and Wakashan, and some of these, e.g., 13, 20 and 21 are encountered in other Northwest language families as well.

Most of these twenty-one borrowings fall into three semantic groups, namely, artifacts, small plants, and fauna - especially fish. In part, these groupings probably reflect the accident of elicitation. In particular, vocabularies from the spiritual domain are meagerly represented in the present lexical collections. Terms for social activities are also quite poorly attested (although set 21 is an outstanding exception). As remarked above, much more research is urgently needed.

¹⁸ This number excludes the many words designating items introduced by European contact which these three languages share from Chinook Jargon.

Table 4. Borrowings Among Nitinaht, Straits and Lushootseed.

<u>English gloss</u>	<u>Nitinaht</u>	<u>Straits^a</u>	<u>Lushootseed</u>
1. basket	puku? <i>cosmetics basket</i>	spčá? <i>cedar-root basket</i>	spčú? (Snohomish only) <i>cedar-root basket</i>
2. basket	łapa·t <i>storage basket for fish</i>	łápétł <i>box hewed from one block</i>	
3. packbasket	qaʔawc	qaʔawc (Clallem) ^b	
4. box	łaxí·qs	łəwəqs (Clallem) ^c	łúiqs (Lower Skagit only)
5. shovelnose canoe	łala·ý	łláy? (Lummi) ^c	łəláy?/łóláy?
6. Chinook canoe	ʔuʔu·taxsc <i>whaling canoe</i>	ʔátxəs (Songese) ^d	ʔəʔútxs
7. fishknife	kʷíčtíʔd	škʷíwətʰ kʷíłʰ <i>butcher</i>	kʷíč(i) <i>butcher</i>
8. horsetail <i>Equisetum telmateia</i>	baʔax	méʔəxʷ	bubxəd
9. licorice fern <i>Polypodium glycyrrhiza</i>	łaxasíp	łəsíp	
10. soapberry <i>Shepherdia canadensis</i>	xu·sim	sxʷésəm	sxʷúsəb/sxʷásəb
11. strawberry	łuʔulq	łíləqʷ	łíləqʷ (Southern only)
12. meat	bi·c	sméyəθ <i>deer</i>	biác/báyəc
13. periwinkle	małmu·	małmu·ý (Beecher Bay Clallam) ^e	
14. rat fish	ku·ma	skʷáməʔ	

Table 4 (continued).

	<u>English gloss</u>	<u>Nitinaht</u>	<u>Straits</u>	<u>Lushootseed</u>
15.	seagull	q"ini·	q"əní	q"əná <i>how seagulls talk; seagullese</i>
16.	humpback salmon	hadiʔd <i>freshwater phase</i>	həneń	hədú/hédu
17.	spring salmon	saćup <i>freshwater phase</i>		sáčəb (Southern only)
18.	steelhead	qi·waǎ		qíwǎ (Northern only)
19.	star	ťa·ťawaʔsiʔ	ťatawusna (Clallam) ^d	ťəťəwáʔs <i>random star</i>
20.	four	bu	ńás	búus
21.	bone game	lahal	sləhél	sləhál

a Saanich unless otherwise noted.

b Fleisher 1976.

c Laurence C. Thompson, personal communication.

d E. Olsen.

e Barry F. Carlson, personal communication.

Of the artifacts, four sets are originally Wakashan, two are Salish and one is undetermined. The Wakashan seem to have influenced their Salish neighbors in the area of containers while canoes are tit for tat. Three plant names are originally Salish and one is undetermined. If more plant names are found to be borrowings and the clear majority remains Salish, there would be some small evidence for Nitinaht expansion at the expense of Salish territory (assuming also a relatively stable distribution of flora over the period in question). Unfortunately, the provenance of fish words cannot be established. Because so many of the borrowings are widely spread in both Salish and Wakashan, they are probably quite old - possibly occurring before the present language distribution. Therefore, they tell us little about contact between the Nitinaht and the two Salish groups.

On the basis of this limited data, it seems that social exchange was not particularly intense between Salish and Wakashan speaking peoples living along the Straits of Juan de Fuca and the waterways to the east. The Straits did not serve to forge a greater link among the groups living here than their linguistic cousins achieved elsewhere.

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