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Interjections in Kashaya

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INTERJECTIONS IN KASHAYA

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In the Kashaya language of northern California, as in all natural languages, there are certain forms which are primarily atactic; that is, they enter into only a limited number of constructions with other words, notably as a direct quotation and object of a verb 'to say': "*t'op' cedu.*" "It said 'pop'. It went 'pop.'" In Kashaya there are several classes of such atactic forms:

Inanimate Imitatives are attempts to capture in the phonemes of the language sounds emitted by inanimate objects. In Kashaya these are predominantly of the shape CVC. They can all be converted by morphological processes into verbs meaning 'emit the sound indicated by the base form':

t'op' > t'o?bo?o?bo- 'be popping' (Oswalt 1971)

Animate Imitatives are attempts to capture the sounds emitted, usually from a larynx or syrinx, by an animate being. These are of more diverse forms. The animate imitatives can be the source of a noun naming the creature that produces the sound – *t'owin?* 'call of the towhee' > *t'owi?na* 'towhee'. (Note the close congruence of the forms in Kashaya and English.)

Baby Talk is a diverse set of atactic forms distinguished by their situational use in speech to and by young children just beginning to talk (Oswalt 1976). The forms may be derived as simplifications of adult words, or may be quite unrelated to any standard Kashaya word. An example of the latter is *ta-š* 'Come!' Usually repeated in a series to encourage a toddler to walk toward the speaker. The standard word is *wa-du*.

Interjections constitute the remainder of the (nearly) atactic forms, an extremely heterogeneous class of forms. The class is subdivided into several overlapping groups for presentation below. Not included are constructions of ordinary Kashaya vocabulary which may yield common phrases of Directive or Emotive meanings. Thus, for English, 'Alas!' would be included, but 'Woe is me!' would not. The forms presented here have no known cognate relationship with the ordinary vocabulary or with each other, except as noted.

Phonologically the Interjections are not bound by the canon of the ordinary words, which begin CVC-; that is, a single consonant, followed by a single vowel, followed by one or more consonants. Interjections may consist of a single consonant with no accompanying vowel or may begin with two successive consonants.

Social Interchange:

camá-y, 'Hello!' Known and used by all the Kashaya, although the older ones might use it and add, "It's not our language." It turns out that it is a loanword from Yupik Eskimo dating from the days when the Russians brought Alaskan natives to their colony at Fort Ross to hunt sea otter. There is no complementary form to be said on departure; the one leaving would simply say, in Kashaya, 'I am leaving.'

há-y, begins with a high pitch which falls. It corresponds to English 'Yo' or 'What?' or 'What do you want?'. It is the appropriate response to someone who calls another's attention by a nickname or some other means (but not by the "real" name).

húhu~, with a high pitch on the first syllable and a second syllable that starts low and rises. 'I don't know' is one possible response to a question or request for factual information. In English, one can suppress all the segmental phonemes of the sentence, 'I don't know,' and express only the intonation, the melody, and be understood. However, in Kashaya, there is no known sentence or phrase of any similar meaning underlying the melody of *huhu*. Similar forms of the same meaning, with the same segmental phonemes *huhu*, but with slightly different melodies, exist in the neighboring Southern and Central Pomo languages.

ʔak', with a short falling tone is 'I just remembered (the previously forgotten answer to a question)'.

da·, with a falling tone, is 'No!'; a negative response to a yes-no question. The Kashaya were first colonized by the Russians at Fort Ross, and one might wonder if there were any serious misunderstandings brought about by the similarity of Kashaya 'No!' and Russian 'Yes'.

hu~ʔ, with a long falling then rising tone and a long vowel terminated by a glottal stop, is 'Yes!', an affirmative response to a yes-no question.

yow, with a short vowel and falling tone, is 'OK! All right!', giving assent to a request for help or for some action. Similar forms are in the neighboring Pomoan languages, although the equally common forms *da·* 'No' and *hu~ʔ* 'Yes' are unique to Kashaya.

yahwiy, 'Thank you!' Cognates are widespread among various Pomoan languages. There is a derivative verb: *yahwiyam*- 'be thankful'.

hoʔway, 'That's embarrassing to me!'

hay, 'That's a touchy subject!' A warning to a speaker to change the subject. Failure to do so could lead to hurt feelings but not the enmity of the following situation.

way, 'That's disrespectful!' A warning to someone who has spoken the name of a recently deceased that a relative is nearby and may overhear and be offended. Such disrespect could lead to a major break in friendly relations.

wa·y, 'Funeral cry of a woman.' It may be repeated many times, each with a long mournful falling tone. In songs *wa·y* is used to express longing or desire.

ʔu:y, ʔu:yʔ, 'Funeral cry of a man.'

how, ho····w, 'Bravo!' can be spoken or shouted, short or variably long. It is the equivalent of clapping and expresses appreciation for a just completed singing or dancing performance. It is known and used by hundreds of non Indians, as Kashaya singers and dancers, at public performances, teach the audience not to clap but to shout *ho····w*.

ʔow, Uttered at intervals during a story-telling performance to express appreciation and to encourage the narrator to continue. If an insufficient number of 'ʔow's' are uttered the narrator may quit. Stories are told in winter evenings and, as listening children fall asleep, the number of *ʔow*'s dwindles until there are none or too few for the narrator to feel like continuing.

ʔe 'That's so!' When someone is telling of some happening, one of the listeners might say this at intervals, thereby giving corroboration of the account's accuracy.

neniʔ, 'Uh, Let's see now.' When speakers pause to think about what to say next, they often fill the silence with this form.

ʔini, ni, ʔin, ʔi·n, 'Watch out! Be careful!' Usually spoken on a high sustained note, but the expression can vary and with it the interpretation.

hele, ?ele, 'Uh oh!' After a minor mishap said by an observer, not by the one inconvenienced; occasionally said by the perpetrator. Compare the following entry.

?op..., 'Oops!' The Kashaya and the English perhaps have similar forms from the iconic nature of the interjection. When one says something meant to be a secret – lets the cat out of the bag – a hand might be clapped over the mouth to signify that the remark should not have escaped from the mouth. Or one could simply say *?op...*, with a very long tight *p*, to symbolize the firm shutting of the lips. The Kashaya form appears to be fairly restricted to the use illustrated above, while the English has a wider range of applications, including after minor mishaps of all kinds. The Kashaya word can be extended with the syllable *-ala* (of no known meaning) to form *?op...ala*, with a meaning like that of *?op...*. It is intriguing that there are parallels in other languages of somewhat similar forms having a second syllable *-la*. For example, the German interjection *hoppla*, which appears to be used, not so much after any minor accident, as after the particular mishap of stumbling or nearly falling. Without the *-la*, the German interjection *hopp* means something more like English 'Hop to it'.

?eldu, 'I'm only kidding!' When the butt of some joking begins to take it seriously and get angry, the joker can say this to turn away the bad feelings.

tuyyu, 'It serves you right.' When some joker makes fun of another's impediment or deformity and then develops the same impediment, others could say this to the joker.

Calls associated with games and gaming and the organization of various events may be taken as either social or as communicating with spirits, as many also have an undertone of calling for luck.

iyi, yi-y, ?iyi-yiyi, 'Hip hip hurray!' Before starting to play shinny (a lacrosse-type game), the team huddles together and yells *yi(·)y* in unison four times, each time raising four bats. During the game, different players may yell *?iyi-yiyi*. The syllable *yi* may be provided with the Instrumental Prefix *p^hi-* 'with a long object moving sideways' to form a verb *p^hiyi-* 'to play a game (shinny or baseball) in which a bat or stick is swung sideways.'

ya-hahahaha, 'Get set to dance!' When he wants the dance group to get ready to dance the male dance leader shakes his split stick rattle and says this.

iyi he, At the end of the dance the dancers huddle together and yell this four times, followed by a whoop.

tɛp^h and *wiy* are calls in the grass game. One small bone is held in each of four hands in a row; two bones are marked with a band; two are unmarked. One call is a guess that the marked bones are in the outside hands; the other call that they are in the inside hands. These calls are widely spread in northern California and even appear in the Dena'ina language of Alaska [Kari 1977]. This came about when the Russians brought Alaskan natives with them as hunters of the sea otter, who learned the grass game from the Kashaya and took back with them when they returned home both the game and the calls.

Directives are attempts by the speaker to bring about certain acts by the addressee. The first three below have limited properties of the Imperative form of a verb, most notably *..ʔ*, a glottal stop that becomes detached from the verb and appears after intervening material and at the end of an Imperative phrase. Illustrated in the sixth and seventh examples below.

hic'i!, 'Get away! Scram!' Addressed usually to a child. The Kashaya word occurs only in the Imperative. In that respect, the English 'Scram!' is a good rendition, for it too is missing most of its verb forms.

te..ʔ, de..ʔ, 'Gimme!' an impolite request. One could postulate the alternate forms derive from Spanish *De!*, but the likelihood of that is reduced because the Russian Kostromitonov [1839] recorded the form before the Kashaya had much contact with Spanish speakers.

c^hi..ʔ, 'Gee!, Boy!, Hey!' Expresses a certain degree of amazement with, apparently, little more meaning than the English 'Gee!' It has the mark of an Imperative in the detached *..ʔ* that comes at the end of the sentence. It often appears with other Interjections, and with Explanatory clauses, as with the third and fourth examples below.

ʔe., 'Look!' Calls attention to something unusual that was just seen. *ʔe· numi móma·y!* 'Look! A rabbit just ran into (the brush).'

ʔo, ʔo., 'Hark! Listen!' Calls attention to something unusual that was just heard but not seen.

ʔe· c^hi· wa·da ʔ, 'Look! He's coming!'

ʔo· c^hi· wa·da ʔ, 'Listen! He's coming!'

yo, 'Here! Take this!' Spoken short and snappy while holding out an object to a recipient.

yuk^h, 'Please!' Probably not so much a polite word as an Interjection that turns a request into an entreaty too strong to refuse:

yuk^h cahnom mul q'o?o! 'Please sing that song!'

yohwey, 'Ready! Let's start! Let's go! Let's do it!'. A very common exhortation to action.

šw..., 'Shh! Be quiet!' A labialized sibilant of variable length. A common development throughout the world. Some Kashaya connect the form with the first syllable of the verb *šuhkem*- 'be quiet'.

ša, 'Hurry up!' Spoken short and snappy. It is perhaps derived by taking the first syllable of *šahya* 'fast, quick'.

ša-, 'Shoo!' Of variable length, it is mainly addressed to animals.

Supernatural Directives are attempts by the speaker to influence the actions of certain natural and supernatural entities (God, Spirits, Spiritual Power, Heaven, Nature, Luck).

?o...., a very long sustained syllable that over a period of 10 or more seconds reaches a crescendo and then fades away. It is used at the beginning of prayers to summon spiritual power.

sw...., labialized hiss of a second or so in duration that is repeated four times at the end of a prayer or wish to empower it; 'May it happen!' This sound is known as the *yuhsuwe*, or *suwe* for short.

tutu, 'May it not happen!' When some bad event – storm, accident, death – is predicted or expected, someone might repeat these syllables indefinitely – *tutututututututu* – to ward off the unwanted happening. The screech owl is a bearer of bad news – if it approaches and gives its call, one should say *tutu* to avert trouble.

ʔil ʔil, 'Fog go away!' To this day girls may be sent outside to cause the fog to retreat by mooning it while slapping their buttocks and chanting *mihšewa ʔil ʔil* 'It stinks ʔil ʔil.' The fog is said to be a woman who is repelled by this view of other females. If the fog were a man he would advance for a closer look.

yey. When a humming bird zooms down overhead, one must say *yey* or else boils will invade the buttocks.

Emotives express the attitude or emotional reaction of the speaker toward what has been said, or what has happened. Often the meaning is carried mainly by the expression put into the utterance and only partly by the segmental phonemes.

t', t' t', 'tsk tsk!' In Kashaya, the vowelless sound is a dental which is usually sucked and injective but may also be made ejective. The comparable form in English is usually made injective and is spelled tsk tsk. It has apparently arisen independently in many different languages, perhaps from an imitation of a baby sucking at a nipple. The English form appears to have a wider range of applications than the Kashaya. The Kashaya is confined more to expressing commiseration (Oswalt 1976). The English can express commiseration and also dismay at hearing unsettling news.

c^hic^hi, 'Imagine!' A mild expression of doubt in what someone else is saying, or surprise that it could be true.

k', q', A glottalized stop which may be either velar or uvular, positions of articulation that usually contrast phonemically in Kashaya. It is a strong expression of disbelief in what someone else is saying. It verges on being insulting and is thus not said to the one being doubted but to a third party and out of the hearing of the one doubted.

šey, 'What a bother!'

šwa?, 'Sheesh! Not again!'. It expresses exasperation at being repeatedly bothered.

ba, 'Oh no!' Said on hearing bad news. It has several other unclear uses.

?ay, 'Ouch!' The pain can be either physical or that of hurt feelings. The form is often compounded with *to* 'me, my' in a manner quite analogous to English and Spanish associations: *?áyto* 'Oh me! Oh my!'; Spanish *aymé!*

The Interjections presented herein are by no means all that are in the language. They do include most of the common ones plus several of the more unusual types. The origins of the Interjections, as of the other parts of speech, are inheritance from earlier generations of speakers, iconic creation, and acceptance of forms from other languages. Borrowing has taken place both from other native American languages into Kashaya (*camá-y* 'Hello') and from Kashaya into other native languages (*wiy* 'gambling call'). Borrowing has even taken place from Kashaya to English (*ho····w* 'Bravo!'). Interjections can give insight into the culture of the speakers of the

language (consider the uses of *hay* and *way* in warding off social conflict), but too often are only sketchily collected.

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REPORT 12

SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA AND
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PROCEEDINGS OF THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

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