

**Hul'q'umi'num' Numeral Classifiers:  
A Study in Salish Language and Culture**  
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**Most Salish languages have 100—200 lexical suffixes:**

- human/relational terms (*people, children*)
- cultural items (*canoe, net, house, clothing*)
- basic physical/environmental concepts  
(*earth, fire, water, wind, tree, rock, berry*)
- body parts (*hand, foot, heart, nose*)

**Verbal uses of lexical suffixes**

|                |                    |                                 |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| qws=ey'un      | go.into.water=net  | 'set a net'                     |
| suw'q'=iw's    | seek=body          | 'search for a lost person'      |
| lhst'=ul=qun   | cut=hair           | 'shear wool'                    |
| p'tth'=ul=muhw | wring out=breast   | 'milk a cow'                    |
| q't=athun      | go along=mouth     | 'walk along (a shore etc.)'     |
| q'ut=nuts      | go along=bottom    | 'go around end of lake'         |
| q'a'=shin=t    | add=foot-tr        | 'accompany s.o.'                |
| q'p=as-um      | gather=face-middle | 'assemble, gather face to face' |

**Two uses of lexical suffixes (Gerdts & Hinkson 1996)**

**Classifying lexical suffixation**

|                          |                 |     |         |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----|---------|
| nem'                     | kwahw=uw't-hw=t | thu | lelum'. |
| go                       | knock-house-TR  | DT  | house   |
| 'Go knock on the house.' |                 |     |         |

**Classifying lexical suffixation**

|                                |        |                 |                  |               |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|
| nem' ch                        | shqu=t | hw=xt'akw'=us=t | tthu             | shts'uluhwus. |
| go                             | 2.SUB  | end-TR          | PR-carve=face-TR | DT mask       |
| 'You finish carving the mask.' |        |                 |                  |               |

The grammaticalization cline: (Gerdts and Hinkson 1996)

noun > compounding lexical suffix > classifying lexical suffix > numeral classifier

## Numeral classifiers

Lexical suffixes are used as numeral classifiers in Salish languages. Of the approximately 120 lexical suffixes, around 30 are used as classifiers. They attach to numerals and quantifiers but not to articles or demonstratives.

### Classifying Suffix:

|                     |       |
|---------------------|-------|
| lhq'etss=umutth'    | shelh |
| five=long           | road  |
| <i>'five roads'</i> |       |

### sortal:

|                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| lhihw=uqun           | xthum |
| three=container      | box   |
| <i>'three boxes'</i> |       |

### mensural:

|                                  |        |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| lhihw=uqun                       | sqewth |
| three=container                  | potato |
| <i>'three sacks of potatoes'</i> |        |

**Not all suffixes that appear on numerals are classifiers.**

### Compounding Suffix:

|  |         |           |
|--|---------|-----------|
| t-hw=lhihw=shun 'ul'                   | tthu    | snuhwulh. |
| only-three=foot                        | only DT | canoe     |
| <i>'The car only has three tires.'</i> |         |           |

## Key questions

What gets classified?

What numeral classifier is used to classify a particular noun?

How does this relate to the meaning of the noun?

Where do numeral classifiers come from?

**Some things are not classified.**

**Some suffixes never appear as numeral classifiers.**

## Four key elements of material culture

=*uw't-hw* “house”

=*uwulh* ‘canoe’

=*eel'wus* “paddle”

=*ulwut* “blanket, garment”

## HOUSE

*theew't-hw* ~ *thi lelum'*

thi + *uw't-hw*

## CANOE

xuthin=*uwulh*      snuhwulh      'i      tetsul.

four=canoe canoe AUX arrive

*'Four canoes arrived here.'*

## CANOE > AUTOMOBILE

kw'in=*uwulh*      snuhwulh      ni'      'un'nehw

how.many=canoe canoe AUX stopped

ni'      'u      kwthun'      lelum'?

AUX OBL DT.2POS house

*'How many cars were parked in front of your house?'*

## CANOE > CONVEYANCE

**This suffix is also used when counting other vehicles, including wagons, buggies, planes, trains, trailers, scooters, bicycles, and skateboards.**

## CANOE > VESSEL

'um'i-stuhw xuthin=*uwulh*      la'ul'thun

come-CS      four=canoe plate.PL

'i'      thum=*uhwulh*      qwthalus!

and      two=canoe      platter

*'Bring four plates and two platters!'*

## SHAPE & FUNCTION

Most inanimate objects are classified on the basis of their shape or function.

- The key parameters are dimension (flat vs. spherical) and consistency (rigid vs. flexible).
- Secondary features are size and length.

### Classifying Loops and Cylinders =*alus*:

t-hw=yusul=alus-stuhw      ch      tthun'      syaays 'i'      'uy' .  
 one-two=loop-CS:3OBJ      2SUB DT:2POS      work      and      good.

*"It will be better if you do two more rounds in your knitting."*

### Classifying Loops and Cylinders =*alus*:

yusul'=alus      tthun'      xul'tun.  
 two=loop      DT:2POS      pen  
 'You have two pens.'

kw'in=ulus      tthu      luplash?  
 how.many=loop      DT      board  
 'How many boards are there?'

### Classifying Long Objects =*emutth'*:

lhq'etss=emutth' shelh  
 five=long      road  
*'five roads'*

### Classifying Long Objects =*emutth'*:

lhihw=emutth'      qwlhey'  
 three=long      log  
*'three logs'*

### Classifying Long Objects =*emutth'*:

xuthun=emutth'      kwthu      qequn'

four=long.object DT house.post  
 'four house posts'

### **Mandarin**

san 'three' hua 'flower'

zhi = elongated objects  
 san zhi hua 'three flowers'  
 (flowers on their stalks)

duo = round objects  
 san duo hua 'three flowers'  
 (flower part of the plant)

### **Summary**

Specific lexical suffixes classify key elements of the culture, including people, fish, waterfowl, plants, houses, and canoes.

Most inanimate objects are classified on the basis of their shape or function.

Some things are not classified (counted with plain numerals).

New items get added to the system according to their shape or function.

The lexical suffix =*as* originally meant 'face'

*sh=lhul'p'=us* 'facial wrinkles'

PR=wrinkled=face

*hw=lhaqw'=us=t* 'slap him/her on the face'

PR=slap=face-TR

*sh=yat'qw'=us-um'* 'face cloth'

PR=rub=face-middle

*kw'u'=as* 'facing up'

climb=face

### **FACE > ROUND OBJECTS**

*liim=us* 'April' [cf. *sliim* 'sandhill crane']

*lhum'ts'=us=t* 'pick them (berries)'

*thith=us* 'big rocks'

*qw'umxw=us=-t* 'wind it (wool) into balls'

wawa'      ni'    yusa'l=us      lhqel'ts' 'i'  
 perhaps    AUX two=round      moon    and

tl'e'      wulh      nem'    tsam.  
 again    already    go      go.up.

*'It was maybe two months later and he again went up into the mountains.'*

FACE > ROUND OBJECTS > COINS > MONEY

tskw'sh=as      i'      kw'      lhq'atss=us  
 twenty=round    and      DT      five=round

u      tthun'    telu?  
 Q      DT:2POS    money

*'Do you have twenty-five dollars?'*

## CONCLUSION

- Salish lexical suffixes have their origin as nouns.
- They derive their classificatory functions through semantic extension.
- Because body part lexical suffixes are especially prone to semantic extension, they are excellent sources for classifiers.