

Salishan

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One of the earlier applications of lexicostatistical methods, Swadesh (1950), made use of comparative data collected by Franz Boas on languages in the Salishan family, resulting in a five-way division of the family into major sub-groups. Subsequent manual work on classification has refined the classification proposed by Swadesh, though substantial disagreement has arisen as to the organization of the family at the highest level. While it is generally agreed that one of Swadesh's first-level divisions, Tillamook, belongs within the Coast Salish group (Kroeber 1999), the position of Bella Coola is disputed. Kinkade (Czaykowska-Higgins and Kinkade 1998; Kroeber 1999) follows Swadesh in treating Bella Coola as an isolate subgroup, while Kuipers (2002) classifies it with the Coast languages.

Preliminary results based on 40-word ASJP list lexical comparison give equally ambivalent results, the NJ algorithm siding with Swadesh and Kinkade and the UPGMA siding with Kuipers. Interestingly, both algorithms produce novel results with respect to the internal organization of the Coast division, grouping the languages Lushootseed and Twana (designated by Swadesh, following Boas, as the Puget Salish subgroup of Coast Salish) with the Tsamosan languages rather than within the Central Salish group where they are placed by both Kinkade and Kuipers. This paper will discuss in some more detail some of the implications of these results for the phylogenetic organization of the family.

References

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