

Focus Constructions in Sliammon

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Sliammon is a Salishan language, spoken now by just a few speakers as their first language on the Northwest Coast of North America. Its morphology is fairly complex, and it has often been characterized as a polysynthetic language. It is a verb-initial language. Nominal arguments and other adjuncts follow the predicate. There are, however, two constructions in which a nominal argument is fronted before the predicate with which the argument is semantically associated. The fronted nominals can be considered as in focus. In the first type of construction, the fronted constituent is followed by a relative clause. The fronted constituent is understood to be coreferential with the participant for which the relative clause is relativized. In the second type, the fronted constituent is preceded by an introductory copula-like constituent. There is no particle which specifically indicates focus in either type of fronting constructions. In the second type, there are at least three different introductory constituents used: 'it is' (the most unmarked copula-like element), 'only', and 'even'.