Nominal, verbal, and idiomatic uses of –nukʷ in Kwak’wala

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The suffix –nukʷ has a curious synchronic distribution in Kwak’wala. In addition to its productive use in nominal possession constructions, it can be used on verbal stems along with passive suffixes to form indefinite object constructions with agentive subjects. These agentive subjects are puzzling given the presence of passive morphology on the verb. In this paper I document the syntactic and semantic properties of –nukʷ constructions in the synchronic domain and discuss some changes that have occurred in the distribution of this suffix since the generation of speakers consulted by Boas.

1 Introduction

This paper explores the curious distribution of the suffix –nukʷ in Kwak’wala. In addition to being a ‘fossilized’ component of certain frequent lexical items (e.g. gigəʔoʔtukʷ ‘parents’), –nukʷ is productively applied to nominal stems to produce ‘possessor of’ nominals (e.g. wa ‘river’; wanukʷ ‘owner of a river’). When suffixed to nominal stems and used as a predicate, the suffix –nukʷ means ‘to have x’ where ‘x’ is a member of the set denoted by the nominal stem, as shown in (1). These constructions involve asserting both possession over and existence of something:

(1) Nominal predicates with –nukʷ mean ‘to have x’:

a. ʔabəls-nukʷ=ənoχʷ
   apple(s)-nukʷ=1.PL.EXCL
   ‘We [EXCL] have apples.’ (VF)

b. k’atomeʔ?-nukʷ=i=da  c’ədaq
   picture-nukʷ=D3=DET  woman
   ‘The woman has a picture.’ (VF)¹

¹ I would like to give a walas thank-you to my consultant RDC for all her hard work and patience teaching me Kwak’wala. I also owe a lot of thanks to Jen Abel for her help eliciting data on –nukʷ, to the Kwak’wala field methods 2009-2010 cohort at UBC for their ongoing help and collaboration, and to Henry Davis and Gary Holland for commenting on earlier drafts of this work. Support for fieldwork has come from the Jacobs Research Fund.
When used with transitive verbal predicates, -nukʷ co-occurs with a passive suffix to form a construction that asserts the existence of an indefinite object. The puzzling thing about these ‘indefinite object constructions’ is that their grammatical subjects are semantically AGENTS: yet given the presence of the passive suffix and the behaviour of passive suffixes elsewhere in the language, we would expect the AGENT in these sentences to be demoted and potentially omitted altogether. The examples in (2)-(5) provide an illustration: (2) shows a regular transitive verb tapa ‘to break’ together with an accusative-marked object; (3) shows that when the passive suffix –suʔ is present on the predicate, the object is promoted to subject position, in which case the subject is demoted though optionally expressed in an agentive by-phrase; (4) shows an indefinite object construction, where a passive suffix and –nukʷ are present and the AGENT subject remains, showing no sign of being demoted; finally (5) confirms that the subject is being interpreted as an AGENT by showing that this interpretation is not easily overcome by real-world knowledge when an inanimate object is placed in subject position:

(2) A basic transitive sentence:

```
tap-ʔid=ox̂ babagʷəm=ex̂=is  qʷəʔsta     
break-BEC=D2 little.boy=VIS=ACC=3.CO.POSS cup
```

‘The little boy broke his cup.’ (VF)

(3) A transitive sentence with passive suffix, ‘promoted’ object, and ‘demoted’ agent:

```
tap-ʔid-suʔ=i=da  qʷəʔsta (=sa babagʷəm)     
break-BEC=O.PASS=D3=DET cup (=OBL little.boy)
```

‘The cup was broken (optional: by the boy).’ (VF)

1 The glossing conventions used in this paper include the following: 1 - first-person subject; 1.OBJ - first-person object; 2 - second-person subject; 2.OBJ - second-person object; 1.POSS - first-person possessor; 2.POSS - second-person possessor; 3.POSS - third-person possessor (not coreferent with subject); 3.CO.POSS – (coreferent with subject); AUX - auxiliary verb; ACC - =x̂ case marker (accusative); OBL - =s case marker (genitive, instrumental, agentive by-phrases); 4.D1 - copula, here near speaker; be.D2 - copula, around speaker; be.D3 - copula, not around speaker; BEC – become/ inchoative aspect; CAUS - causative; COMPL - completive suffix; D1 - (he/she/they/it) here; D2 - (he/she/they/it) around; D3 - (he/she/they/it) not around; DET - ostensive marker; EMPH - emphatic suffix; empty.root - referential root (semantically-null); FUT - future tense; INVIS - invisibility clitic; JF - judged form in elicitation; Ol – Old information; O.PASS - object passive suffix; I.PASS - instrumental passive suffix; INTR – interrogative; INST - instrumental preposition; L.PASS - locative passive suffix; NM – nominalizing suffix; pro - little pro; PST - past tense; PREP - preposition; R.PST - recent past tense; T.ADJ – temporal adjunct introducer; TF - translated form in elicitation; VIS - visibility clitic; VF - volunteered form in elicitation; ~ - reduplication.
An indefinite object construction:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tap-ʔid-su?-nuk}^\text{ʷ}=i=da & \quad \text{baba}^\text{ʷ}m \\
\text{break-BEC}=O.PASS-nuk^\text{ʷ}=D3=DET \quad \text{little boy}
\end{align*}
\]

The boy broke something. \text{(VF)}

Strong reading of the subject as an agent:

\[
\begin{align*}
\# \text{tap-ʔid-su?-nuk}^\text{ʷ}=i=da & \quad q^\text{ʷ}ʔsta \\
\text{break-BEC}=O.PASS-nuk^\text{ʷ}=D3=DET \quad \text{cup}
\end{align*}
\]

Translation: \# ‘The cup broke something’ \text{(TR)}

In this paper I document the synchronic properties of \(-nuk^\text{ʷ}\) constructions and discuss historical changes in the distribution of \(-nuk^\text{ʷ}\) that have occurred since the generation of speakers represented in Boas’ (1911, 1947) grammars and the Boas and Hunt’s (1902) \textit{Kwakiutl Texts}.

Section 2 introduces the Kwak’wala language and major features of its grammar that will be important to know in order to understand later sections. Then in Section 3 I document the synchronic uses of \(-nuk^\text{ʷ}\) in three domains: on nominal stems, in idiomatic constructions, and on verbal stems. I will also discuss historical changes that have occurred involving \(-nuk^\text{ʷ}\). Section 4 concludes.

2 Kwak’wala Language Overview

Kwak’wala is a Wakashan language spoken on the central coast of British Columbia, Canada, by members of the Kwakwaka’wakw nation. Though the language is spoken today as a first language by less than 200 speakers, there is growing community interest and involvement in its revitalization. There are at least five dialect areas of Kw’a’wala (Anonby 1997): the field data cited in this paper is from a speaker from Gwa’yi (Kingcome Inlet).

Kwak’wala is a member of the Wakashan language family which consists of seven languages split into two branches, Northern and Southern. While the two branches are clearly reconstructable in the domain of derivational morphology, they have undergone significant changes relative to each other. In the Northern Branch, such changes include the development of inflectional clitics (Fortescue 2006) as well as prepositions and morphological case-markers (Sardinha 2011). The Northern Branch includes Haisla, Heiltsuk, Oowekyala and Kwak’wala, and the Southern Branch includes Nuu-Chah-Nulth, Ditidaht, and Makah. The language family is summarized below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Wakashan Language family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haisla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heiltsuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oowekyala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwak’wala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Kwak’wala has been the focus of a number of descriptive and theoretical studies (e.g. Boas 1911, Boas et al. 1947, Grubb 1997, Levine 1980, 1984, Anderson 1984, Chung 2007, Nicholson and Werle 2009). However, many aspects of its syntax and semantics await comprehensive study.

Basic word order in Kwak’wala is VSO, though main predicates may be preceded by auxiliaries, in which case the subject may also move to the left of the main predicate. Kwak’wala has a complex system of inflection involving many enclitic determiners. Subject agreement is marked by a set of second-position enclitics, with first and second person subjects =ən ‘1’, =əns ‘1.PL.INCL’, =ənəx ‘1.PL.EXCL’ and =əs ‘2’; third-person subjects, whether expressed as overt NPs or omitted, are marked by a locative deictic clitic which encodes a three-way distinction of PROXIMAL, MEDIAL and DISTAL. The ‘distance’ meaning of these deictic clitics encodes both concrete and abstract distance relative to the speaker (Nicholson & Werle 2009). In what follows I adopt the convention of Nicholson & Werle (ibid.) in glossing these determiners as D1, D2 and D3 respectively. Third-person nominal arguments are placed within by complex strings of enclitic determiners marking case, deictic status, definiteness, and visibility (Chung 2007, Nicholsen & Werle 2009). In particular the categories of case, location, and definiteness are encoded by enclitics which prosodically attach to an element preceding the NP, while clitics indicating an NP’s visibility attach to its left edge. Case-markers precede the arguments they introduce and include zero-marked nominative case, =χ accusative case (‘ACC’) and =s oblique case (‘OBL’).

The following examples illustrate basic sentences with nominal (6), adjectival (7) and verbal (8) predicates. These sentences contain a third-person, second-person possessor, and first-person subject, respectively:

(6) c’əqʷan=ən=da  təf=εχ
   bird=D2=DET  dead.thing=VIS
   ‘That dead thing is a bird’     (VF)

(7) t’exstuw=us  ǧəyəgəs
   brown=2.POSS  eye
   ‘Your eyes are brown.’     (VF)

(8) mənxʷ=ən
   smile=1
   ‘I am smiling.’     (VF)

Example (9) illustrates how a complex sentence with two expressed arguments is formed. The predicate c’əw ‘to give’ marks its first object with oblique =s and places its second argument in a prepositional phrase where it is accusative-marked with =χ. Temporal adjuncts, if present, typically occur at the right edge of the sentence.
Though there is considerable flexibility in the use of stems as either predicates or arguments, the claim that the language lacks categories of noun and verb is too strong. In what follows we will see that the suffix –nukʷ behaves differently when attached to what we might want to refer to ‘nominal’ versus ‘verbal’ stems; therefore, I will be using these category labels in my discussion.

3  The synchronic distribution of –nukʷ in the modern language

In this section I provide an overview of the synchronic uses of the suffix –nukʷ. Broadly, this suffix occurs in three grammatical domains:

• In the nominal domain both as a fossilized component of some ‘possessor-of-x’ nouns and kin terms and productively suffixed to nominal stems to form ‘possessor-of-x’ constructions; when used as predicates, these constructions are translated as ‘to have x’;
• As a component of idiomatic constructions expressing emotions and psychological states;
• Productively suffixed to transitive verbal stems, along with passive suffixes, to form indefinite object constructions.

The following sections 3.1 – 3.3 will document the major features of –nukʷ in each of these grammatical domains.

3.1  Uses of -nukʷ with nominal stems

The suffix –nukʷ attaches freely to most nominal stems in the language. There is also a small set of lexical items where –nukʷ has apparently become reanalyzed as a permanent part of the stem; a few examples are given in (10). The words in (11) are similar-sounding but probably contain the numeral classifier –ukʷ ‘person’ (Boas 1947: 280).

(10)  Examples of lexical items containing –nukʷ.
   a.  xʷənakwʷ    ‘child’
   b.  gigaʔoʔnakwʷ ‘parents’
   c.  wanukʷ     ‘owner of a river’
   d.  kanukʷ     ‘owner of a car’
   e.  mameχəlamasnakwʷ ‘sleeping pill’

(11)  Similar-sounding lexical items with –ukʷ ‘person’ (classifier)
   f.  nəmukʷ     ‘friend; other’
   g.  wəʔokʷ    ‘follower, friend, companion’
   h.  ?iksukʷ    ‘beautiful, attractive’
The degree to which words like those in (10) are ‘fossilized’ as independent words, as well as how many words belong to this class, probably varies across different speakers and is not predictable.

In its productive use, -nukʷ can be suffixed to any nominal stem. When it attaches to a nominal stem, it takes the meaning ‘possessor-of-x’ where ‘x’ stands for a member of the set denoted by the nominal stem. In general, nominal stems in Kwak’wala may be used as either predicates or arguments depending on their syntactic position; this generalization applies also to nominal stems hosting -nukʷ. Thus when a nominal stem with -nukʷ occurs in argument position, it serves syntactically as a noun or a relative clause. The example words in (10), for instance, can occur in argument position as illustrated in (12-b) with the nominal+nukʷ stem shown in (12-a):

(12) Nominal stems with -nukʷ can be used in argument position:

a. ma~meχəla-mas-nukʷ
   RED~sleep-CAUS-nukʷ
   ‘sleeping pill’  (VF)
   [lit. “the one that makes you sleep”]

b. meχʔid-amas=oχ=da ϖʔāmp=ωχ=χ=is xʷənukʷ=sa
   sleep-BEC-CAUS=D2=DET mother=VIS=ACC=1.POSS child=OBL
   mameχəlamasnukʷ
   sleeping.pill
   ‘The mother made her kid sleep with a sleeping pill.’  (VF)

When a nominal stem with -nukʷ occurs in predicate position, the resulting construction is usually translated into English as ‘to have a(n) x’ where ‘x’ is a member of the set denoted by the nominal stem. Examples (13)-(15) illustrate these basic have–nukʷ constructions:

(13) gukʷ-nukʷ=oχ Connor
    house-nukʷ=D2 Connor
    ‘Connor has/owns a house.’  (VF)

(14) hənλəm-nukʷ=as
    gun-nukʷ=2
    ‘You have a gun.’  (VF)

(15) (nugʷaʔəm) ka-nukʷ=ən
    (it.is.I) car-nukʷ=1
    ‘I have a car.’  (VF)

The semantics of have-nukʷ constructions is fairly specific: used declaratively, these constructions are used to simultaneously assert both possession of and existence of an individual or set of individuals denoted by the nominal
A basic sentence with a nominal predicate plus −nukʷ therefore means the following: *Y exists and X has Y*, where *X* denotes a possessor subject and *Y* denotes a non-specific member (or members) of the set denoted by the nominal predicate. Because these have-nukʷ constructions always assert existence of some possessed object or objects, they always involve the introduction of a referent into the discourse. The contextualized examples in (16)-(18) illustrate how the semantics of these constructions involve both an assertion of possession and an assertion of existence:

(16) *Context: Answering the question - Do you have any siblings?*

\[
\text{c’ay’a-nuk”=ən} \\
\text{younger.sibling-nuk”=1} \\
\text{‘I have a younger brother.’}^{3} & (VF)
\]

(17) *Context: A little girl is trying to trick her mom into buying her candy. She tells her mom that they should stop in at a grocery to get some food, but her mom replies...*

\[
\text{hóíne?-e-nux”-m=əns} \\
\text{food-but-nuk”-O=1.PL.INCL} \\
\text{‘No, we have food.’} & (VF)
\]

(18) *Context: You don’t own a car, but you’re borrowing your brother’s car to drive to the grocery store.*

\[
\text{ka-nuk”=ən} \quad \chi”a \quad nala=\chi \\
\text{car-nuk”=1} \quad \text{T.ADJ day=VIS} \\
\text{‘I have a car today.’} & (VF)
\]

The suffix −nukʷ is also volunteered in positive questions about whether something both exists and is possessed, as illustrated in (19)-(20):

(19) *Context: A border guard is questioning you about what you have.*

\[
\text{hóíne?-nuk”-mas-e} \\
\text{food-nuk”-Q-INTR} \\
\text{‘Do you have any food?’} & (VF)
\]

---

2 A plural possessum may be indicated by reduplication on the nominal predicate, as in the example wíwac’nuk”ọçda bibib”anam “They have dogs” (VF) where both the initial predicate and the nominal subject shows reduplication. Plurality is often left unmarked in Kwak’wala, and thus plural reduplication is often optional in the language; this seems to be the case for −nukʷ constructions as well (e.g. see (1-a)) but I have not investigated this systematically.

3 This sentence can also mean ‘I have a younger sister.’
(20) Context: Asking someone questions about themself.

a.  
\[\text{wac'i-nuk”-mas-e} \]
\[\text{dog-nuk”-Q-INTR} \]
Do you have a dog?  (VF)

b.  
Possible responses:

i.  
\[\text{k’iyos=ən wac'i} \]
\[\text{NEG=1.POSS dog} \]
‘I don’t have a dog.’ (VF)

ii.  
\[\text{wac'i-nuk”=ən} \]
\[\text{dog-nuk”=1} \]
‘I have a dog.’ (VF)

The suffix \(-nuk”\) is not used when asserting that something either exists or does not exist when that thing is not possessed. The following pair of sentences illustrates a different possible construction for asserting existence (21-a) or non-existence (21-b) of a non-possessed entity:

(21)  
\(-nuk”\) is not used to assert simple existence or non-existence:

a.  
\[\text{gudan=əχ=da } \]
\[\text{ʔəχ=e’əχ=ə} \]
\[\text{χ=la=} \]
\[\text{χ=əns haŋisila’as} \]
‘There is a horse in our kitchen!’ (VF)

b.  
\[\text{gəgas, nuŋama=əʔ=as. k’iyos gudan la=} \]
\[\text{χ”a haŋisila’as} \]
‘Grandma, you’re crazy. There isn’t a horse in the kitchen.’ (VF)

The suffix \(-nuk”\) is also not used to assert that something is possessed when that thing is presupposed to exist or has a definite referent in context. In these situations other possessive constructions are used. Since possession is a very large topic on its own right, I will only show examples of two possible constructions which may be used in these instances – constructions with possessive enclitics (22), and constructions involving independent possessive predicates (23):

(22) Possessive enclitics

a.  
\[\text{ƛ’əχʷstu=əχ t’ibayu=sa c’ədaq} \]
\[\text{red=D2 shoe=3.POSS lady} \]
‘The lady’s shoes are red.’ (VF)

b.  
\[\text{ʔəχ-ʔala=i=χ=ən dzəmba} \]
\[\text{empty.stem-use=D3=ACC=1.POSS pants} \]
‘He’s wearing my pants.’ (VF)

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Independent possessive predicates

a. nus=οχ=(da)
   mine=D2=DET
   ‘It’s mine.’ (pointed to) (VF)

b. qus-ƛ=οχ=da kacənaq
   yours-FUT=D2=DET spoon
   ‘This spoon will be yours.’ (VF)

The suffix \textit{-nukʷ} is not used to simultaneously assert absence and lack of possession, as we see in (24). This is also evident in example (21-b) above.

(24) \textit{Context: You’re being asked at a border crossing if you’re carrying any weapons.}

\begin{verbatim}
k’i…k’iyos=ən k’awayu
no NEG=1 knife
‘No, I don’t have knives.’ (VF)
\end{verbatim}

Because have-\textit{nukʷ} constructions assert both existence and possession, they are rarely used with inalienable items such as body parts which almost always exist and are inherently possessed; nonetheless, exceptions may be coerced, such as in (25) with səya ‘hair’:

(25) səya-nukʷ=ən. k’iyos=da səya=sa bəγʷənəm
    hair-nukʷ=1 NEG=DET hair=OBL man
    ‘I have hair. That man doesn’t have hair.’ (VF)

The suffix \textit{-nukʷ} may also occur on adjectival stems. This is possible if one is asserting that something exists and is owned when that something is only identifiable by a property:

(26) w’alas-dzi-nukʷ=ən
    big-large-nukʷ=1
    ‘I have a big thing.’ / ‘I have something big.’ (VF)

Since adjectives are usually used to ascribe a property to something that is already known to exist, \textit{-nukʷ} does not occur in most instances of adjectival predication.

The semantic features of \textit{-nukʷ} in have-\textit{nukʷ} constructions are summarized in (27):
(27) Semantic features of –nukʷ in nominal constructions

nominal stem + -nukʷ:
Y exists and X has Y, where
X denotes a possessor
subject and Y denotes a non-
specific member of the set
denoted by the nominal
predicate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>-nukʷ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assert existence &amp; assert possession;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question existence &amp; possession</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assert existence; not possession</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assert possession; not existence</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assert absence and/or non-possession</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In its productive use, the suffix –nukʷ is subject to a number of morphological and phonological constraints, though these constraints appear to have undergone recent changes in the modern language. In order to understand the morpho-phonological distribution of –nukʷ we will need to consider it along with another suffix it interacts with: the suffix –ad, which is glossed in Boas (1911, 1947) with the same meaning, ‘having’. Boas could not find a difference in meaning between the two suffixes, though he cited different phonological and morphological constraints on their distribution. We will also see below that the distribution reported in Boas’ grammars has changed somewhat in the modern language.

Regarding morphological distribution, Boas classified the suffix –nukʷ as a ‘word suffix’ which attaches to the right of ‘formal, completive’ endings, including derivational suffixes’ (1911). For example, -nukʷ attaches to nouns containing the nominalizing suffix –iʔ/-eʔ. The suffix –ad on the other hand he classified as a ‘stem suffix’: it attaches directly to the right edge of word stems without ‘formal, completive endings’ (1911: 446).

Boas also characterized these suffixes as having different phonological effects on the base to which they attach. The suffix -ad belongs to the class of ‘weakening’ suffixes which result in lenition of certain preceding consonants. For example, the stem for ‘child’ is xʷənkʷ- which becomes xʷəngʷad ‘to have a child’ (c.f (10-a), xʷənukʷ). The suffix –nukʷ on the other hand is classified as ‘indifferent’ – that is, as having no effect on the base to which it attaches.

In terms of phonological distribution, Boas noted that –ad is not added to stems ending in m, n, l. In these cases, -nukʷ is added instead (e.g. gilnukʷ ‘ancestors’). The suffix –nukʷ occurs freely in all phonological environments.

The phonological and morphological distributional differences between the two suffixes as reported in Boas (1911, 1947) are summarized in Table 1:
Table 1: Distributional differences between –ad and –nukʷ reported in Boas (1911, 1947):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-ad</th>
<th>-nukʷ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morphological distribution</td>
<td>‘Stem suffix’: attaches to the right edge of word stems without their ‘formal, completive endings’</td>
<td>‘Word’ suffix’: attaches to the right of ‘formal, completive’ endings, including derivational suffixes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonological restrictions</td>
<td>Not added to stems ending in m, n, l. In these cases, -nukʷ is added instead.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonological effects on the base</td>
<td>‘Weakening’ suffix: results in lenition of certain preceding consonants.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some notable changes to the generalizations in Table 1 have occurred in the modern language. First, the suffix –nukʷ has been extended to new potential bases – thus it freely attaches to stems regardless of whether or not the stems have ‘completive or formal’ endings, and as such takes over much of the productive function that was once the domain of –ad.

Second, the use of –nukʷ is phonologically conditioned in what may or may not be a new way. Namely, it appears to be subject to a tendency in the language to avoid sequences of identical syllable such as (n)ukʷnukʷ. This haplology effect becomes evident with words where –nukʷ appears to have fossilized, such as gigəʔoʔnukʷ ‘parents’, and indeed with any word ending in –ukʷ, such as namukʷ ‘friend’. Thus example (28-a) shows us that when namukʷ is used predicatively as a possessed nominal, it occurs with –ad instead of –nukʷ. The form with –nukʷ is judged as meaning the same thing, but is not the preferred or readily-volunteered form.

(28) With the word namukʷ ‘friend’:

a. namugʷ-ad=ən. hed=ɨ le Bankuba
   friend-ad=1 be.D3=D3 AUX Vancouver
   ‘I have a friend. She is in Vancouver.’ (VF)

b. namukʷ-nukʷ=ən. hed=ɨ le Bankuba
   friend-nukʷ=1 be.D3=D3 AUX Vancouver
   ‘I have a friend. She’s in Vancouver.’ (JF)

   Speaker: “Yeah you can say that too...”

It is not always case, however, that –ad is used in place of –nukʷ as the preferred haplogogy-driven repair strategy. Another strategy for avoiding sequences of –(n)ukʷnukʷ is simply to let the existing –nukʷ assume the meaning of have. This is realized in example (29) with gigəʔoʔnukʷ ‘parents’.
In (29-a), \(-\text{nuk}^w\) seems to do ‘double work’ as the ending of the word for gigəʔołnukʷ ‘parents’ and in meaning have; (29-b) shows us that a construction with \(-\text{ad}\) is possible, whereas (29-c) shows us that a construction with a sequence of similar syllables ‘sounds funny’:

(29) With the word gigəʔołnukʷ ‘parents’

a. gigəʔoł-nuxʷ-men=ən
   parents-nukʷ-OI=1
   ‘I have parents.’
   (VF)

b. gigəʔołnugʷ-ad=ən
   ‘I have parents.’
   Speaker: “Yeah, you could say that.”
   (JF)

c. Katie: Could you ever say...
   ? gigəʔołnukʷ-nuxʷnən
   (JF)
   Speaker: “Yeah. Sounds funny though, nuxʷnuxʷ [laughter].”

Another frequently encountered example is the word xʷənukʷ ‘child’. The examples in (30) show this form taking \(-\text{ad}\):

(30) With the word xʷənukʷ:

a. xʷənugʷ-ad=əx
   child-ad=O2
   Sid
   ‘Sid has a kid.’
   (VF)

b. xʷənugʷ-ad=ən
   namukʷ
   child-ad=1.POSS
   friend
   ‘My friend has a kid.’
   (VF)

It is not clear whether particular lexical items involve consistent repair strategies (i.e. using \(-\text{ad}\) versus letting \(-\text{nuk}^w\) do ‘double-work’), though I find it more likely that variation occurs. In any case, these constructions appear to be a locus of variation and change in the modern language. Sentences like (29-a), for example, are a potential site for re-analysis of \(-\text{nuk}^w\) as part of the stem in words like gigəʔołnukʷ.

The morpho-phonological constraints on \(-\text{nuk}^w\) in the modern language are summarized in Table 2. We can see that in general, the distribution of \(-\text{nuk}^w\) has been extended.
Table 2: Distribution of –nukʷ on nominal stems in the modern language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>–nukʷ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morphological distribution</td>
<td>Not constrained: attaches directly to stems or to stems with ‘completive’ endings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonological restrictions</td>
<td>Tends to not attach to stems ending in –(n)ukʷ (haplology constraint)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonological effects on the base</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Word lists containing examples with –nukʷ and –ad are included in an Appendix to this paper.

There is an interesting gap in the use of –nukʷ on nominal predicates. In all of the have–nukʷ constructions we have seen thus far the possessum has been indefinite. Nonetheless, the nominal stem has served to restrict the reference of the possessum by ascribing a property to it. In fact it is impossible to use a simple have–nukʷ construction to assert existence and possession of a totally indefinite object – that is, to say a sentence like ‘X owns something’. In order to form this construction using –nukʷ it is necessary to use the form ?əχ(ə)nugʷad ‘to be an owner’ which involves both –nukʷ and –ad. As noted in Boas (1947), this is the only instance of both suffixes occuring in the same word. Examples of constructions involving ?əχ(ə)nugʷad are given in (31)-(33):

(31)   ?əχ-nugʷad=ən
          empty.stem-own=1
       ‘I have something.’ / ‘I am an owner.’  (VF)

(32)   ?əχ-ə-nugʷad=ən  χa  ka
          empty.stem-?=own=1  ACC  car
       ‘I own a car.’  (JF/TR)

(33)   ?əŋʷ=ɨ=da  ?əχ-ə-nugʷad=ɛ=s=ge  ka
          be.who=D3=DET  empty.stem=?=own=INVIS=OBL=D1  car
       ‘Who is the owner of this [here] car?’  (VF)

Compare the following sentences, in which –nukʷ occurs without –ad and ungrammaticality results:

(34)   *?əχ-𝑛ukʷ=ən
          empty.stem-nukʷ=1
       [intended: I own something.]
       (JF)

(35)   *?əχ-𝑛ukʷ=ən=sa  kac’ənaq
          empty.stem=nukʷ=1=OBL  spoon
       [intended: I own a spoon.]
       (JF)
In the examples above we have seen use of the ‘empty’ stem ʔəχ-. This stem can be used with a nominal ending ʔəχʔ to mean ‘thing, someone’ (36). Oftentimes ʔəχ- can alternate with an incorporated object, as we can see in (37) with the lexical affix –[g]ila ‘to do, make’:

(36) meχ=οχ ʔəχ=ʔ=χ la=χ qʷʔaʔlas=ος Nancy
sleep=2 empty.stem=NM=VIS PREP=ACC bed=3.POSS Nancy
‘Speaker: “We don’t know who it is.”’

(37) The empty stem ʔəχ- alternates with an incorporated object:

a. qʷʔaʔsta-gil=οχ=da  cʔdaq
cup-make=2=DET woman
‘The woman was making a cup’

b. ʔəx-ʔil=οχ=da  cʔdaq=εχ=χʷa  qʷʔaʔsta
empty.stem-make=2=DET woman=VIS=ACC cup
‘The woman made a cup’

However, ʔəχnugʷad cannot incorporate an object:

(38) *ka-nugʷad=οn
car-own=1
[Intended: ‘I own a car.’]

To summarize, we have seen that -nukʷ in the nominal domain is used productively to form ‘possessor of x’ constructions which may be used as nominal arguments or predicatively. We have also seen that the semantics of have-nukʷ constructions involves asserting existence of and possession over a possessum, where the possessum in these constructions is restricted to being a member of the set denoted by the predicate. The suffix –nukʷ cannot be added to the semantically-empty stem ʔəχ- to assert possession and existence of a completely ‘indefinite’ possessum – for that we must use the complex form ʔəχnugʷad ‘to be an owner’. We will see below that there are many similarities between the semantics of –nukʷ in the nominal and the verbal domain; but first, we will consider a few idiomatic uses of –nukʷ.

### 3.2 Idiomatic uses of –nukʷ

The suffix –nukʷ is used idiomatically with a few predicates, many of which relate to emotions and psychological states. The examples in this

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4 Though the word ʔəχʔʔ can be the subject of a sentence, it is never used to mean ‘something’ or ‘someone’ in constructions containing an indefinite object.
section are not meant to be exhaustive, but are meant to illustrate the propensity of this suffix to be used idiomatically.

The following sentence with –nukʷ is used to express a meaning of being afraid of something; this constructions involves a nominal stem, kaləm ‘fear; to be a scary thing’. Together with –nukʷ, this constructions mean ‘to have a fear’ or ‘to be afraid’ (to express that one is afraid of something in particular, the predicate kəɬəla is typically used):

(39) kaləm-nukʷ=da c’ədaq
   be.scary-nukʷ=D3=DET lady
   “The lady’s scared of something.”  (JF/TR)
   [lit. ‘The lady has a fear.’]

One way of expressing pain or sadness is with the complex predicate c’əxəlanukʷ:

(40) c’əxəlaγ-nukʷ=i da c’ədaq la-ında qʷ’asa
   in.pain-nukʷ=D3=DET woman AUX-and.so cry
   ‘The woman’s feeling sad so she’s crying.’ (VF)

The predicate c’əxəla on its own means ‘to be aching, to be in pain’ and is often used to express a state of enduring aches and pains (e.g. c’əxc’ola ‘to have a headache’).

While the canonical verb meaning ‘to love’ is ɬakʷəla, this concept may also be expressed with the complex prediate lakʷəlanukʷ. This is the only case I have seen of –nukʷ occurring on an apparently verbal stem without a passive suffix:

(41) ɬakʷəla-nukʷ=ən=χ=us
       love-nukʷ=1=ACC=2.POSS
       ‘I love you.’ (VF)

(42) ɬakʷəla-nukʷ=ən χa=ən wac’i
       love-nukʷ=1 OBJ.PHR=ACC=1.POSS dog
       ‘I love my dog.’
       [The sentence is also okay with the oblique case: ɬakʷəlanukʷən χasən wac’i. ]

Nonetheless, this complex predicates behaves in a verbal fashion with regards to indefinite object constructions: in order to refer to an indefinite loved one in the sentence, the passive appears on the predicate:

(43) ɬakʷəla-su?-nukʷ=oχ=da bog*anam
       love-O.PASS-nukʷ=D2=DET man
       ‘The man loves someone.’ / ‘The man has someone to love.’ (VF)
Usage of \( -nuk^w \) is not fully productive with psych/emotion predicates, however. For example, the predicate \( \text{kawis} \) ‘to be angry (at x)’ does not involve it.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(44) } * & \text{kawis-nuk}^w=i=da & \text{c’\text{\text{"o}}daq} \\
& \text{angry-nuk}^w=D3=\text{DET} & \text{lady} \\
\text{Context: out-of-the-blue.} & & (\text{JF})
\end{align*}
\]

Rather, this verb behaves just like an transitive verb with an optional goal argument:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(45) } & \text{A transitive verb \text{kawis} ‘to be angry at’:} \\
\text{a. } & \text{kawis}=i=da & \text{c’\text{\text{"o}}daq} & \text{\l\-\text{\text{"o}}mis} & \text{\t\=i=}\chi_\text{a} & \text{q”\text{\text{"o}}sta} \\
& \text{angry=D3=DET} & \text{woman} & \text{AUX-\text{\text{"o}}nd.\text{\text{"o}}} & \text{break=D3=\text{ACC} cup} \\
& \text{‘The woman was mad and broke the cup.’} & (\text{VF}) \\
\text{b. } & \text{kawis}=i=da & \text{b\text{"o}g\text{\text{"o}}\text{\text{"o}}} & \text{\=i=}\chi_\text{a} & \text{c’\text{\text{"o}}daq} \\
& \text{angry=D3=DET} & \text{man=} & \text{VIS=\text{ACC}} & \text{woman} \\
& \text{‘The man is angry at the woman.’} & (\text{JF/TF}) \\
\text{c. } & \text{kawis-\text{\text{"o}}d-su?\text{-nuk}^w=\text{\text{"o}}\chi=da} & \text{c’\text{\text{"o}}daq} \\
& \text{angry-BEC-O.PASS-nuk}^w=D2=\text{DET} & \text{\text{\text{"o}}\text{\text{"o}}} & \text{lady} \\
& \text{‘The lady’s mad at something.’} & (\text{VF})
\end{align*}
\]

These and other idiomatic uses of \( -nuk^w \) are probably marginally productive in the language.

**3.3 Indefinite object constructions**

In the verbal domain the suffix \( -nuk^w \) can be attached to transitive verbal stems to productively form ‘indefinite object constructions’. In such instances, a passive suffix must also be present. Kwak’wala has a set of passive suffixes which enable the promotion of non-subject arguments to subject position; when a passive suffix is present, the original AGENT of the sentence can be expressed optionally in an agentive by-phrase. Different passive suffixes are used to promote constituents depending on their semantic role. The three most commonly-occurring passive suffixes are illustrated in (46) below.\(^5\) These include the ‘object passive’ \( -su? \) which promotes THEMES/PATIENTS, GOALS, and some SOURCES; the ‘instrumental passive’ \( -\text{ayu} \)

\[^5\] Other passive suffixes include the ‘experiencer passive’ \(-t\) occurring on psych predicates, another instrumental passive \(-\text{am}\), and \(-k^w\), used in the formation of certain participles. See Levine (1980, 1984) for discussion of a lexical analysis of the passive in Kwak’wala.
which promotes INSTRUMENTS, and the `locative passive' -ʔas which promotes LOCATIONS and some SOURCES.

(46)  
Promotion of arguments with passive suffixes:

-suʔ passivizes themes/patients and goals:

a. kolxʷa-suʔ=ox=da ƛətm=eh=sa  dagʷada=s=is  Ṽayas
buy-O.PASS=D2=DET  hat=INVIS=OBL  doctor=OBL=1.CO.POSS  sweetheart
‘The doctor’s hat was bought by his sweetheart.’ (VF)

b. doɬ-ʔid-suʔ=ox=da  dagʷada
laugh-BEC-O.PASS=D2=DET  doctor
‘The doctor was laughed at.’ (JF)

-ayu passivizes instruments:

c. hed=i=da ƛ’iŋə ʔals-ayu=sa  cʔdaq
be.D3=D3=DEF  grease  paint-I.PASS=OBL  woman
‘It was (eulachon) grease that she was using for paint.’ (JF/TF)

-ʔas passivizes sources and ambient locations:

d. hed=i=da  dalaʔelas  ʔalut-ʔid-ʔas-s=ox  (Bill)
bε.D3=D3=DET  bank  steal-BEC=OBL=DET=D2  (Bill)
‘It was the bank that he (Bill) stole from.’ (VF)
[lit. ‘It’s the bank that’s the stolen-from place of Bill.’]

e. ƛ’isala-ʔas=ox=da  Bankuba
sun.shine-O.PASS=D2=DET  Vancouver
‘It’s sunny in Vancouver.’ (JF)
[lit. ‘Vancouver is the sun-shined-on place.’]

When –nukʷ is added to these same passivized verbs and the object is made indefinite, the result is an indefinite object construction where the object is ‘absorbed’ and the agent subject remains:

(47)  
Indefinite object constructions:

-suʔnukʷ absorbs themes/patients and goals:

a. kolxʷa-suʔʷ-nukʷ=i=da  babاغʷəm  qe=ʔes ʔbəmŋ
buy-O.PASS-nukʷ=D3=DET  little.boy  BEN=3.CO.POSS  mother
‘The boy bought something for his mother’ (VF)
b. əɬəla-suʔ-nukʷ=οχ=da  babaʔ-əm=χ
    laugh-O.PASS-nukʷ=D2=DET  little.boy=VIS
    ‘The little boy is laughing at something/someone.’  (VF)

-ayunukʷ absorbs instruments:

c. əɬəlsʔ-id-ayu-nukʷ=ən
    paint-BEC-1.PASS-nukʷ=1
    ‘I painted with something.’  (VF)

-ʔasnukʷ absorbs sources and ambient locations:

d. əɬəluʔ-ʔid-əʔ-as-nukʷ=i  Bill=εχ=χa  dala
    steal-BEC-ʔ-O.PASS-nukʷ=D3  Bill=VIS=ACC  money
    ‘Bill stole money from somewhere.’  (VF)

e. əɬəisalaʔ-ʔas-nukʷ=οχ
    sun.shine-O.PASS-nukʷ=D2
    ‘It’s sunny somewhere.’  (VF)

This is a puzzling pattern. Passive suffixes on predicates usually demote the agent, but in the constructions in (47) the agent remains as subject. Indeed, the suffix –nukʷ cannot occur on verbal stems if a passive suffix is not also present:

(48)  *əɬəhəʔ-ʔid-nukʷ=οχ=da  bagʷ-anəm
    eat-BEC-nukʷ=D2=DET  man
    Speaker’s note: Need to have the ‘suʔ’ in there.  (JF)

Since –nukʷ must co-occur with a passive suffix, its distribution on verbal predicates is constrained. More generally, the distribution of –nukʷ appears to mirror the distribution of passive suffixes exactly in that it can be used to absorb any and only those constituents that can be passivized. It follows that verbs that do not take arguments and thus do not co-occur with passive suffixes, such as unaccusatives, cannot be used to form indefinite object constructions. An illustration is given in (49)-(51) with the verb meχa ‘to sleep’; (49) shows a basic sentence with this predicate and (50) shows that the predicate is ungrammatical with a passive suffix. In (51) a sentence with a passive suffix and –nukʷ is also ungrammatical.

(49)  meχaʔ-ʔid=οχ  busi
    sleep-BEC=D2  cat
    ‘The cat fell asleep.’  (VF)

(50)  *meχaʔ-ʔid-suʔ=οχ  busi
    [lit. The cat was slept.]  (JF)
(51) Context: Nancy is a new nurse, and it’s her first day working in the hospital. What did she do?

a. *meχʔ-id-suʔ-nukʷ=όχ Nancy
  sleep-BEC-O.PASS-nukʷ=D2 Nancy
  [lit. ‘Nancy slept someone.’] (JF)

It should also be noted that passivization and absorption by indefinite object constructions in Kwak’wala is a symmetrical process: either constituent in a ditransitive may be passivized (52) or absorbed (53), with any resulting ambiguities in interpretation being resolved by context and real world knowledge:

(52) Symmetrical passivization of objects:

a. k’ak’adoxsila-suʔ=όχ-da bukʷ
  read-O.PASS=D2=DET book
  ‘A book is being read.’ (VF)

b. k’ak’adoxsila-suʔ=όχ-da ɡənanəm=χ
  read-O.PASS=D2=DET kid=VIS
  ‘The little kid is being read to.’ (VF)

(53) Symmetrical absorption of objects:

a. k’ak’adoxsila-suʔ-nukʷ=όχ-da ɡəganəm=χ
  read-O.PASS-nukʷ=D2=DET man BEN=D2=DET kid=VIS
  ‘The man is reading something to his kid.’ (VF)

b. k’ak’adoxsila-suʔ-nukʷ=ι Bill=ο=sa bukʷ
  read-O.PASS-nukʷ=D3 Bill=INVIS=OBL book
  ‘Bill is reading a book to someone.’ (JF)

Note that the constituents promoted by passive suffixes and absorbed in indefinite object constructions are not necessarily subcategorized ‘arguments’ of a verb in the lexical semantics sense: the promoted location arguments in (46-e) and (47-e) are clear examples of non-core constituents. Therefore indefinite object constructions cannot be used to distinguish subcategorized arguments from adjuncts.

Significantly, the fact that indefinite object constructions and passive constructions mirror each other in this way suggests that synchronically these constructions are related. Yet whereas passive suffixes usually result in the demotion of agent subjects, indefinite object constructions maintain the agent subject, even though passive suffixes are present.
Turning now to some more fine-grained properties of indefinite object constructions, examples (54)-(55) show that the ‘absorbed’ argument cannot also be overtly expressed:

(54) *haṃ-xʔid-suʔ-nukʷ=χaʔabols
    eat-BEC-O.PASS-nukʷ=1=ACC apple
    [lit. ‘I ate something (an) apple.’]
    Speaker: “You’d just say haṃ’xʔidən χaʔabols – I ate an apple”

(55) *laχala-suʔ-nukʷ=i=da basgʷanəm=e=sa t’əmyayu
    sell-O.PASS-nukʷ=D3=DET man=INVIS=OBL phone
    [lit. ‘The man is selling something phones.’]
    Speaker: “No… because we know that it’s phones that he’s selling…”

Noticing that these predicates appear to lack an internal theta-role, Levine (1984) argued that indefinite object constructions, which he labelled as instances of ‘pseudoincorporation’, are derived by a process in the lexicon which renders the base predicates intransitive. Whether or not we adopt Levine’s lexical analysis, what the data in (49)-(50) do clearly show is that indefinite object constructions are not a type of anti-passive construction.

While indefinite object constructions cannot co-occur with an overt expressed argument, they do in fact introduce a referent into the discourse which can be referred back to by a pronoun later in the discourse. This is shown by the examples (56) and (57) below, where the pronoun in the second sentence (=s in (56), =oχ in (57)) refers to the indefinite object introduced by the first clause.

(56) dala-suʔ-nukʷ=οχ=da c’ədaq
    carry-O.PASS-nukʷ=D2=DET woman
    la-mis c’əw=s la=χ=is xʷənukʷ
    AUX-and.then give=OBL PREP=ACC=3.CO.POSS child
    ‘The woman carried something. Then she gave it to her kid.’ (VF)

(57) quta-suʔ-nukʷ=οχ=da laχeʔ. Walas=οχ.
    full-O.PASS-nukʷ=D2=DET basket big=D2
    ‘The basket is full. It’s big.’
    Speaker: “Whatever it is. Is it a big rock?”
    Katie: “It’s big, does that mean that the basket is big…or that the thing inside of it is big?”
    Speaker: “The thing inside of it is big. When you say walasəoχ, whatever is inside it is big.”

The semantic properties of indefinite object constructions are similar (though not identical) to those outlined above for nominal have-nukʷ constructions, suggesting that a unified analysis of –nukʷ constructions may be warranted. Indefinite object constructions are volunteered just in those
contexts where an object is known to exist, but its nature is unknown to the speaker. Just like have constructions formed from –nukʷ on nominal stems, then, indefinite object constructions involve the assertion of existence of an indefinite object. The following examples in (58)-(60) illustrate these constructions in context:

(58)  
**Context:** You can hear one of your neighbours a few apartments over singing a love song to someone, but you don’t know who is being sung to.

\[
dəŋχala-suʔ-nukʷ=ọχ=da \ bągʷanöm=sa \ səłəm
\]

sing-O.PASS-nukʷ=D2=DET  man=OBL  love.song

‘The man is singing a love song to someone.’  (JF)

(59)  
**Context:** You come in looking a little green in the face and have to explain yourself.

\[
həʔxʔid-suʔ-nukʷ=ən. \ laʔmis=ən \ cəʔa-xʔid=aʔ
\]

eat-BEC-O.PASS-nukʷ=1  AUX-and.so=1  sick-BEC=VIS

‘I ate something and now I feel sick.’  (VF)

(60)  
\[
kəlχʷa-suʔ-nukʷ-xənt=i \ la=χ \ Ted
\]

buy-O.PASS-nukʷ-must=D3  PREP=ACC  Ted

‘He must have bought something from Ted.’  (VF)

Indefinite object constructions can’t be used when the nature of the object is known to the speaker. If the nature of the object is known, it may either be overtly expressed or indicated pronominally by the presence of an appropriate case-marker. The example in (61) demonstrates that this construction cannot be used to comment on an object when the object is apparent:

(61)  
**Context:** We look out the window and see Alexis. We can see she’s eating an apple.

\[
*haʔmai-suʔ-nukʷ=ọχ  Alexis
\]

eat-O.PASS-nukʷ=D2  Alexis

*Speaker:* “We gotta say the apple. haʔmai=ọχʷ=χə ?abəls.”  (JF)

Rather than merely encoding the presence of an indefinite object per se, indefinite object constructions are most readily volunteered when the existence of the indefinite object in particular is what is being discussed. In the following example, the speaker is expressing the fact that she is not hungry because she already ate (something) at home. What is salient is not the fact that the speaker ate something, but rather that eating already occurred. In this context, it is odd to use an indefinite object construction with –nukʷ, as shown in (62):
Context: You come to my house and I ask if you’re hungry, but you already ate at home before you came.

a. k’is=ən pusqa. la-ʔomd=ən ʰəm=xʔid əa ɡukʷ
NEG=1 hungry AUX-DISC=1 eat-BEC PREP=ACC house
‘I’m not hungry. I had something to eat at home.’ [ate at home](VF)

b. # ʰəm-xʔid-suʔ-nukʷ=ən
eat-bec-o.pass-nukʷ=1
[lit. ‘I ate something.’]

It is possible, however, that this effect of marking the salience of the indefinite object is present only with predicates like ʰəm-xʔid ‘to eat’ which are optionally transitive. With strongly transitive predicates that require the overt expression of an object, objects that can’t be named somehow must be expressed using an indefinite object construction. It is not clear whether these cases also express salience of the indefinite object, given that syntactic expression of the object is obligatory. An example of a strongly transitive predicate is ʰəpa ‘to break’, as shown in (63):

(63) Strongly transitive predicate ʰəpa ‘to break’

a. Ungrammatical without any expression of the object:

* ʰəp-ʔid=i=da  babaɡʷəm=ɛχ
  break-BEC=D3=DET  little.boy=VIS
  Speaker: ‘Need to know what he broke.’

b. Grammatical with omitted object, if object is known or pointed to:

  ʰəp-ʔid=i=da  babaɡʷəm=ɛχ=ɛχ=ɔχ
  break-BEC=D3=DET  little.boy=VIS=ACC=D2
  ‘The boy broke it.’ [object is known or pointed to]

C. Unknown objects require indefinite object constructions:

  ʰəp-ʔid-suʔ-nukʷ=i=da  babaɡʷəm
  break-BEC=O PASS-nukʷ=D3=DET  little.boy
  ‘The boy broke something.’

Recall that in addition to asserting existence, nominal have-nukʷ constructions involve an assertion of possession over an indefinite object. Indefinite object constructions do not involve an assertion that the indefinite object is owned by the subject. Subjects are, rather, simply AGENTS and EXPERIENCERS. This is shown in the examples below. In (64), the subject ‘Katie’ is afraid of something, but she need not be afraid of something she owns – she could be
afraid of ghosts. In (65) the subject ‘Katie’ smells something, but similarly, this need not be something in her possession. Similarly in (66), it clearly cannot be the case that an expletive subject ‘owns’ a place. In these examples, there is no entailment that the subject possesses the indefinite object.

(64) əɬəla-suʔ-nukʷ=oχ Katie=γγχ
scared-O.PASS-nukʷ=D2 Katie=VIS
‘Katie’s afraid of something.’ (VF)

(65) misala-suʔ-nukʷ=i Katie
smell-O.PASS-nukʷ=D3 Katie
‘Katie smells something.’ (VF)

(66) yugʷaʔas-nukʷ=oχ
rain-L.PASS-nukʷ=D2
‘It’s raining somewhere.’ (JF/TR)

It is possible that historically a relationship of possession did hold between the agent subject of these sentences and the indefinite object – that is, that these constructions were originally ‘indefinite possessed object constructions’. Consider a sentence like c’əwinuxʷənλoƛ ‘I’ll give you something.’ (stem: c’əwɨʔ) which was cited in Boas (1947: 368) and is represented below in (67). The predicate in (67) involves the word c’əwɨʔ which contains a nominalizer –iʔ signaling that it is a noun. This construction therefore is not built on a verbal stem at all; this sentence is, rather, structured just like any nominal have-nukʷ construction, with –nukʷ suffixed to a nominal predicate meaning something like ‘giving’. Literally, the sentence in (67) must mean something like: ‘There is in my possession a future giving to you.’ Note that in this sentence both an assertion of existence and an assertion of possession are part of the meaning of the utterance, just as we have seen in relation to have-nukʷ constructions generally. The assertion of possession in this instance is overdetermined, however, by also being inherent to the change-of-possession meaning of the predicate ‘give’ itself.

(67) A have-nukʷ construction with ‘to give’ (Boas 1947: 368)

a. əwinuʔkʷənλoƛ
c’əwɨʔ-nukʷ=ən=λoƛ
give.NM-nukʷ=FUT=1=2
‘I’ll give you something.’

In a sentence like (67-a), then, a possessor-relation between the subject and the indefinite object is simultaneously indicated by the suffix –nukʷ and by an entailment of the verb ‘give’ as a change-of-possession verb. The presence of ambiguity about where to attribute the ‘possessive’ meaning in these sentences makes them a possible locus of reanalysis. Imagine the following scenario:
speakers, hearing a sentence like (67-a), could have attributed the possession entailment between the subject and the indefinite object entirely to the verb, thereby allowing the suffix –nukʷ to be bleached of its possessive meaning in these sentences and left with only its other entailment, namely its assertion of existence of an indefinite object. Following this reanalysis, the use of –nukʷ to assert the existence of an indefinite object was extended to verbal predicates other than change-of-possession verbs to form indefinite object constructions. In other words, ‘indefinite possessed object constructions’ became simply ‘indefinite object constructions’ in two steps: first, the possessive meaning of –nukʷ on change-of-possession verbs was reanalyzed as solely attributable to the verbal semantics of the host verbs, thereby bleaching the suffix of its possessive meaning in these contexts; next, the use of –nukʷ to signal the existence of an indefinite object was extended to verbs other than those entailing a change of possession, becoming a fully generalized and productive verbal construction.

To make this hypothesis about semantic change seem a little more familiar, we can compare it to the grammaticalization of have in English past participle constructions. The verb have is still used as a contentful verb to assert possession in English, as in sentences like ‘I have a dog and three cats’. Nonetheless, have has lost its possessive entailments in constructions where this verb has grammaticalized as an auxiliary, such as in sentences like “Gill has broken her mother’s vase.” In this example Gill broke a vase, but it was not hers – it was her mother’s. Readings of metaphorical ‘closeness’ between Gill and the vase aside, a possessive meaning is not entailed by the verb have when it is used as an element of a participle, just as the subject of indefinite object constructions in Kwak’wala is not entailed to be a ‘possessor’ of the indefinite object. Nonetheless, in the early stages of this construction, these entailments may have been present.

Data from an earlier stage in the language show that indefinite object constructions have become generalized, productive constructions relatively recently. Thus in his 1911 and 1947 grammars, Boas provides us with a few examples of words and sentences containing –nukʷ which resemble indefinite object constructions. Unlike the indefinite object constructions we see today however, these constructions did not consistently contain passive suffixes, suggesting that the construction had not fully generalized. Boas describes these examples as being ‘idiomatic’. He comments:

“-nukʷ is used idiomatically to mean ‘something’ or ‘someone’. In such cases it is frequently, but not always, added to a verbal form: Ṭəxidnukʷ ‘someone takes’; Ṭəxəłənukʷ ‘one of them is working’; dogwəɬənukʷ ‘something that has been discovered’; gəxə̨nlənukʷ ‘some came out’; c’əwinuxʷəɬəłəɬqʷ ‘I’ll give you something.’ (c’əwił).” (1947: 348).

Some, but not all of the examples Boas provides do contain passive suffixes. Of the examples given in the cited passage, the form dogwəɬənukʷ ‘something that has been discovered’ includes the experiencer passive suffix -t. Elsewhere he gives examples which apparently involve the locative passive
-ʔas and the instrumental passive –shake, as shown in examples (68) and (69) below. The presence of examples like these suggests that passive suffixes were a possible, though not obligatory, occurrence in indefinite object constructions at this stage in the language:

(68) laasnukʷ
laʔas-nukʷ
go-L.PASS-nukʷ
‘being gone somewhere (having a going place)’
(Boas 1947: 348)

(69) maʔunuxʷənəsiockey
mas-ayu-nukʷ-ʔas=as
ʔis=s=ʔas
what-L.PASS-nukʷ-FUT=2 with-OBL=D2
‘What are you going to do with it?’
(Boas 1947: 348)

In the modern language, the predicates cited by Boas in the passage above cannot occur alone with –nukʷ like we see in those examples – they require a passive suffix. Examples of indefinite object constructions as they constructed today are given in (70)-(71) for c’əw ‘to give’, and ʔiʔəxəla ‘to work’; both examples contain passive suffixes on the verb.

(70) c’əw-suʔ-nukʷ=ʔas=da c’ədaq la=ʔas=is
nəmukʷ
give-O.PASS-nukʷ=D2=DET woman PREP=ACC=3.POSS friend
‘The woman gave something to her friend.’
(JF/VF)

(71) ʔiʔəxəlaʔsunukʷən
work-O.PASS-nukʷ=1
‘I’m working on something’
(VF)

In (72) the sentence we saw earlier from Boas’ generation (72-a) is compared to the form of this sentence that would be used today (72-b). The sentence in (72-b) has lost the nominal ending on the stem and contains a passive suffix in its place:

(72) Comparison of a sentence from Boas (1947) (a) and its modern expression (b)

a. c’əwinuxʷənəloƛ
b. c’əwsuʔnukʷənəloƛ
c’əw-iʔ-nukʷ-ʔas=ən=ʔənəloƛ
give-NM-nukʷ=FUT=1=2
give-O.PASS-nukʷ-FUT=1=2
‘I’ll give you something.’
‘I’ll give you something’

The differences between the examples given in Boas’ grammars and data obtained from recent fieldwork therefore suggests that the generalized form of indefinite object constructions, including the obligatory use of passive suffixes on verbal stems, is a relatively recent development.
We have already seen in section 3.1 that sometime after the generation of speakers consulted by Boas, the distribution of \( \text{nuk}^* \) widened so that this morpheme was no longer constrained to attach solely to ‘words’ with completive endings but could also attach directly to stems, thereby taking over much of the former function of the synonymous suffix \( \text{ad} \). We have also already encountered a potential clue about what drove this change. In particular, Boas’ observation that \( \text{nuk}^* \) attaches to stems ending in m, n, l (where \( \text{ad} \) fails to apply) means that the stem/word generalization was not consistent in the language. When used in have-\( \text{nuk}^* \) constructions, words such as \( \text{sasom} \) ‘children’ appear as \( \text{sasom-nuk}^* \) rather than \( \text{sasom-ad} \). This phonological constraint on \( \text{ad} \) may itself have resulted from a sound change, or it could have been stable in the language for a long time. In any case, such conditioning could have had very significant repercussions for the status of \( \text{nuk}^* \) in the language. Hearing words like \( \text{sasomnuk}^* \), speakers learning the language would have learned a pattern whereby \( \text{nuk}^* \) attached to both ‘words’ and ‘stems’, thus removing the former constrains on this suffix and paving its path for possible generalization to other stems. To the extent that the frequency of constructions in Boas and Hunt’s (1902) Kwakiutl Tales are any indication of the frequency of constructions in everyday use, assertions of possession over kin are indeed one of the most common uses of have constructions; forms such as \( \text{sasomnuk}^* \) ‘having children’ may therefore have had a significant effect on learners’ reanalysis of \( \text{nuk}^* \) as a potential ‘stem’ suffix. However it began, the result of the historical reanalysis of \( \text{nuk}^* \) is a grammar in which \( \text{nuk}^* \) can be applied to stems – including, potentially, verbal ones, which today always co-occur with passive suffixes where nominalizing suffixes were present historically.

To summarize, we have seen that \( \text{nuk}^* \) is used in the verbal domain along with passive suffixes to form indefinite object constructions which assert the existence of an indefinite object. The properties of modern indefinite object constructions have become regular and generalized relatively recently in history and have been conditioned by the argument structure and the semantics of \( \text{nuk}^* \). Relevant to the genesis and of these constructions is the historical reanalysis of \( \text{nuk}^* \) as a suffix which may attach directly to stems, as well as generalization of constructions with indefinite possessed objects to predicates other than change-of-possession verbs, involving a loss of ‘possessor’ entailments. Passive suffixes occur where nominalizing suffixes were present historically, and the particular passive suffix used to ‘absorb’ a given indefinite argument is the same passive suffix that would be used to promote that argument to subject were it not indefinite. In terms of the timing of these changes, the reanalysis of the suffix \( \text{nuk}^* \) as a stem suffix and subsequent extension to apply directly to new stems must have occurred sometime between the generation of speakers consulted by Boas and today’s speakers.

\[ ^{6}\text{The speakers consulted by Levine (1980, 1984) also appear to construct indefinite object constructions in the ‘modern’ sense discussed in this paper, indicating that the changes under discussion also occurred before this time.} \]
5 Conclusion

This paper has explored the curious synchronic distribution of the suffix –nukʷ in Kwak'wala and has discussed how this distribution relates to historical changes that have taken place after the generation of speakers consulted by Boas. The syntactic and semantic features of –nukʷ was discussed in three domains: in the nominal domain occurring in both fossilized words and in productive ‘have’ constructions; in idiomatic constructions relating to psychological states; and in the verbal domain where it attaches to verbal stems with passive suffixes to form indefinite object constructions. These indefinite object constructions are particularly interesting from a synchronic point of view given the co-occurrence of passive suffixes and agentive subjects. A unified synchronic analysis of –nukʷ must account for the syntactic and semantic features documented in this paper.

A synchronic analysis of –nukʷ constructions will require one more ingredient that is generally lacking in most analyses of Kwak’wala – namely, an assumption of lexical categories. Throughout this paper we have seen that the suffix –nukʷ consistently differentiates between stems which denote a set and stems which denote an event/function – i.e. between nominal (and adjectival) versus verbal stems. While the language has ample derivational resources for deriving nouns from verbs, and while it is capable of using nouns and adjectives predicatively, it does not seem to be the case that all stems are considered equal from the perspective of the syntax. The data in this paper should therefore be taken as evidence that Kwak’wala does not in fact lack a category distinction between nouns and verbs.

Appendix: Word Lists

Below are lists of words containing the suffixes –nukʷ and –ad from two external sources. The first two word lists are from the First Voices online database (http://www.firstvoices.ca/), accessed May 2013; the list presented here has been transliterated into APA orthography and only includes lexical items we can be fairly sure contain the suffixes in question. The remaining word lists include examples combined from Boas’ two grammars (1911, 1947).

Words containing –nukʷ (First Voices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dalanukʷ</td>
<td>‘money, has or to have’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gonuk²</td>
<td>‘how many persons’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gigəʔolʔnukʷ</td>
<td>‘parents’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>həmʔəʔnukʷ</td>
<td>‘has food to eat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kanuk²</td>
<td>‘owns a car’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’adayunukʷ</td>
<td>‘pencil or pen, owns/has a’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’awayunuk²</td>
<td>‘knife, owns or has a’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’əbayunuk²</td>
<td>‘scissors, has’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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kʷ‘dayunukʷ ‘glue/tape/ bandaids, has’
ləʔasʔnukʷ ‘went somewhere or had somewhere to go’
nanukʷ ‘worried about someone who hasn’t arrived’
pípəłə̥nukʷ ‘angel’
sasənnukʷ ‘having children’
siqə̥sə̥ʔlasʔnukʷ ‘to have a place to paddle through’
cəʔyanukʷ ‘female has a younger sister, male has a younger brother’
cə̥ʔdəzisʔnukʷəmeʔ ‘New Vancouver’
waqʷ’anukʷ ‘older/younger sibling of the opposite sex, to have an’
χʷənukʷ ‘child, (your)’
ʔnulanukʷ ‘female has older sister, male has older brother’
qʷənəqagaʔnukʷ ‘awaken by crying’

Words containing –ad (First Voices)
ʔəbayad ‘mother, has a’
λə̥igid ‘name, having a’
dzawadə̥nuyə̥ “Kingcome Inlet, person or people from’
[c.f. dzaxʷə̥do̥ ‘oolichan’]
dzawadi ‘Knight Inlet’ [c.f. dzaxʷə̥do̥ ‘oolichan’]
eʔayad ‘female friend, female has a’
gə̥wə̥ldad ‘has a lunch or provisions (e.g. for a journey)’
ɡi̊gad ‘chief, those who have a’
gugʷad ‘house, owns a house’
ɡə̥gad ‘wife, has a’
ɡə̥gə̥gadə̥xid ‘get a wife, man gets married’
ɬə̥awadə̥xid ‘to get a husband’
əgə̥dad ‘wise, having wisdom’
χʷə̥nəngʷə̥d ‘child, (someone) has a’
əmə̥mugʷə̥d ‘friend, someone has a’

Words containing –nukʷ (Boas 1911: 506, 1947: 348)
sasənnukʷ ‘having children’
wə̥də̥mə̥nukʷ ‘to have a word, i.e. to talk to’
də̥xwə̥łə̥nukʷ ‘one who has seen things’
gilnukʷ ‘belonging to ancient times, ancestors’
ə̥sə̥nukʷ ‘to have a dead one (i.e. one of a number dies)’
wanukʷ ‘having a river’
ʔə̥nə́ʔnukʷ ‘creator’
bə̥kʷə̥linukʷ ‘creator’ (someone who made human beings)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>λaxʷʔnukʷ</td>
<td>‘seat owner’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q’uliʔnukʷ</td>
<td>‘one who has an uncle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’isʔonukʷ</td>
<td>‘crest owner’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laasnukʷ</td>
<td>‘being gone somewhere (having a going place)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yeʔwinʔnukʷ</td>
<td>‘having a reason for giving a winter ceremonial’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔasabalanukʷ</td>
<td>‘owner of southwest wind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yugʷalanukʷ</td>
<td>‘owner of rain wind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔaʔidnukʷ</td>
<td>‘someone takes’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔiʔaχalanukʷ</td>
<td>‘one of them is working’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔaχʔnukʷ</td>
<td>‘something that has been discovered’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laʔnukʷ</td>
<td>‘overhanging (λəʔid ‘to turn over a flat thing’)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words containing –ad (Boas 1911: 506, 1947: 316)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>k’əlad</td>
<td>‘place for shaking off huckleberries’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q’iq’ed ~ q’iq’iad</td>
<td>‘having’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yagʷad</td>
<td>‘to have a gift’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q’əmdad</td>
<td>‘having a song’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noʔad</td>
<td>‘song leader’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>szəmyad</td>
<td>‘having a mouth’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔawəwad</td>
<td>‘having large ones’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nawalagʷad</td>
<td>‘having supernatural’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>λəgad</td>
<td>‘having a name’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qayadzad</td>
<td>‘having a walking place’ (i.e. song words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dzawad</td>
<td>‘having olachen (Knights Inlet)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cəlwad</td>
<td>‘having crabapples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔoyad</td>
<td>‘having a father’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔabayad</td>
<td>‘having a mother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nəgʷəmbad or nəgʷayad</td>
<td>‘having parents-in-law’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xəngʷad</td>
<td>‘having a child’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔawad</td>
<td>‘having a husband’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’idad</td>
<td>‘to have a chief’s daughter’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xungʷadʔid</td>
<td>‘to become possessed of a child’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abayad</td>
<td>‘havinga mother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔigad</td>
<td>‘having a wife’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cəxmodad</td>
<td>‘having sea-egg shells’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>məmxcaladzad</td>
<td>‘to have shame’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mədzidzad</td>
<td>‘having whistles’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qayadzad</td>
<td>‘having a walking place, words of a song’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qʷəled</td>
<td>‘life owner (saver)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c’ayawad</td>
<td>‘ready to make up mind’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Words containing –id instead of –ad: “This suffix [-ad] has a secondary form in –id which seems to be more nominal in character than the form –ad. It is used in forms of address.” (Boas 1911: 507)

- q’ag”id ‘slave-owner’ (i.e. O master!)
- wadzid ‘dog-owner’ (i.e. O master! [who has me for a dog]).
- Hamdzid ‘food-owner’ (Name)

Synonyms containing either suffix:
- ḥwad, ḥwiʔnukʷ ‘to have a mat’ (fixʷ-)
- q’ag”ad, q’akonukʷ ‘to have a slave’ (q’akʷ-)
- ḏxməmd, ḏxməmʔnukʷ ‘to have owl mask’

Both suffixes together in a single word:
- ḥəχnugʷad ‘owner’

References


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