Halkomelem has four denominal verb prefixes: c- ‘have, get, make, do’, l-‘ingest, partake’, tx ‘buy’, ã ‘go to’. These prefixes attach to nominal bases to form intransitive verbs. The noun to which the prefix attaches is usually unspecified, generic, or non-individuated and can be doubled with a free-standing nominal of more specific meaning. Syntactically, this nominal is an oblique object, parallel to patients of antipassive or applicative constructions. Denominal verb constructions are widely used, especially for denoting possession. As in the case of denominal verbs in other languages, they can be formed quite freely, as long as the situation allows for an interpretation.

1 Denominal verbs

Some intransitive verbs in Halkomelem are composed of a noun base, such as stiqiw ‘horse’, ñimel ‘store’, or sqew6 ‘potato’, together with a verbalizing prefix. These forms appear in a denominal verb construction, where the derived form serves as an intransitive verb.

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2 The nominal prefix s- disappears after c- and l- but not after tx and ã-. Thus we conclude that a phonological rule of cluster simplification is at work in the former cases rather than a morphological restriction that requires the base to be a root.

‘Do you suppose your grandparents still have horses?’

‘Your father went to the store to get potatoes.’

There are four verbalizing prefixes in Halkomelem.4

4 Other Salish languages have denominal verb prefixes, as discussed in Gerdts and Hukari (2002). See also Kroeber (1999:12) on suffixes meaning ‘have’ in various languages.
The first of these prefixes c- is used quite productively, as there is no free-standing verb for 'have' in Halkomelem. The other prefixes are heard quite commonly, except for tx- 'buy', which seems to have declined in use recently.

The verbalizing prefixes can attach to nouns of all sorts. These include nouns of native origin (7) and borrowed words (8):

(7) Native words:
leləm 'house' c-leləm 'build a house'
spəlxəm 'smoke' l-əlxəm 'smoke a cigarette, pipe'

(8) Borrowed words:
put 'boat' c-put 'make a boat'
kapi 'coffee' l-kapi 'drink coffee'

The nouns can be plural (9) or diminutive (10), and they can contain lexical suffixes (11):

(9) Plurals:
a. snəxʷəɬ 'canoe' c-snəxʷəɬ 'make, have a canoe'
sənixʷəɬ 'canoes' c-ənixʷəɬ 'make, have canoes'
b. ?iməθ 'grandchild' c-ʔiməθ 'have a grandchild'
ʔəmiməθ 'grandchildren' c-ʔəmiməθ 'have grandchildren'
c. qeq 'baby' c-qeq 'have a baby'
qəлеʔəq 'babies' c-qəleʔəq 'have babies'

(10) Diminutives:
siʔə 'grandparent' c-siʔə 'have a grandparent'
sisəɬ 'little grandparent' c-sisəɬ 'have a little grandparent'
maʔə 'son/daughter' c-məʔə 'have a son/daughter'
mimneʔ 'little son/daughter' c-mimneʔ 'have a little son/daughter'
snəxʷəɬ 'canoe/car' c-snəxʷəɬ 'have a canoe/car'
snɪ́nxʷəɬ 'little canoe/car' c-snɪ́nxʷəɬ 'have a little canoe/car'

(11) Nouns with lexical suffixes:
s-cqʷəʔə 'earring' c-cqʷəʔə 'have an earring'
pəθ-ʃə-ʔən 'mat' c-pəθəʔən 'have/make mats'
qʷtəʔ-ʃən 'shoe' txʷ*-qʷtəʔən 'buy shoes'

5 In fact we see some cases below with code-switching: the base is actually an English noun phrase in (69) and an English noun in (70).
Thus, all sorts of nouns can serve as bases for denominal verbs. Note that verbs generally do not serve as bases for denominal verbs.

(12) qiq 'be tied up' *c-qiq ('get tied up', 'make an arrest')
    q"aqwqw 'being clubbed' *c-q"aqwqw ('do clubbing')

However, we know of one verb root \(\sqrt{k \cdot \alpha n}\) 'get taken' that forms a denominal verb \(c\cdot\alpha\cdot n\) 'make a grab' (big house term). Furthermore, some roots designating psychological or cognitive events may occur with \(c\)-, for example:

\(c\cdot haq^\#\) 'smell, catch a whiff' (cf. \(haq^\#\cdot \alpha m\) 'smell') and \(c\cdot le\)m 'look, catch a glimpse' (cf. \(le\)m-\(\cdot \alpha m\) 'look at it'). The categorial status of such roots is unclear, and thus they do not straightforwardly contradict the claim that denominal verb prefixes attach to nouns.

In fact, modified nouns can form denominal verbs. In this case the prefix appears on the first word of the phrase, i.e. the adjective.\(^6\)

(13) ?i: c ?\(\omega \)w c-p\(\omega \)q \(\lambda m\)\(\epsilon\)tu\(\iota\)q\(\omega\)n?
    AUX:Q 2SUB LNK VBL-white wool
    'Do you have any white wool?'

(14) ?i: c ?\(\omega \)w c-\(c\cdot\epsilon\)q\(\gamma \)xw sce:\(\iota\)t\(\alpha\)n?
    AUX:Q 2SUB LNK VBL-dry salmon
    'Do you have any dried fish?'

(15) ?i: c ?\(\omega \)w c-\(\epsilon\)eq\(\iota\) x \(\lambda\)m?
    AUX:Q 2SUB LNK VBL-long rope
    'Do you have a long rope?'

(16) ?i: c ?\(\omega \)w c-\(\epsilon\)w's s\(\alpha\)qi\(\iota\)s?
    AUX:Q 2SUB LNK VBL-new pants
    'Do you have a new pair of pants?'

The prefix does not appear on the noun.

(17) *?i ?\(\alpha \) c ?\(\omega \)w p\(\omega \)q c-s\(\omega\)t\(\alpha\)?
    AUX Q 2SUB LNK white VBL-sweater
    'Do you have a white sweater?'

Phrases with multiple adjectives are possible, with the prefix on the leftmost adjective.

\(\text{---}^6\) Most of our examples of phrases serving as bases for denominal verbs involve the prefix \(c\)-, which is the most common of the prefixes. For an example with \(tx\cdot\alpha\). see (59) below.
(18) ʔi ʔə čʔəw c-ʔəq swetə?
AUX Q 2SUB LNK VBL-white sweater
‘Do you have a white sweater?’

(19) ʔi ʔə čʔəw c-ʔət ʔəq swetə?
AUX Q 2SUB LNK VBL-thick white sweater
‘Do you have a thick, white sweater?’

(20) ʔi ʔə čʔəw c-ʔəw c-ʔəq swetə?
AUX Q 2SUB LNK VBL-new thick white sweater
‘Do you have a new, thick, white sweater?’

(21) ʔi ʔə čʔəw c-ʔəq swetə?
AUX Q 2SUB LNK thick VBL-white sweater
‘Do you have a thick, white sweater?’

Such data show that it might be more appropriate to think of the deverbal forms as left-edge clitics rather than prefixes.

The form resulting from the addition of the prefix is clearly a verb. Among other things, we see that denominal verbs can appear in the continuative (imperfective) aspect typical of verbs, as seen by the forms in the third column of the following example.

(22) a. put c-put c-pupət
‘boat’ ‘make a boat’ ‘making a boat’

b. telə c-telə c-telə
‘money’ ‘have/get money’ ‘earning money’

c. s-wetə c-wetə c-weətə
‘sweater’ ‘have/get a sweater’ ‘making a sweater’

d. s-nəxʷəl c-nəxʷəl c-hənxʷəl
‘canoe’ ‘have/make a canoe’ ‘making a canoe’

Further evidence for the verbal status of the denominal verb is given in the following section.

2 The syntax of denominal verbs

The placement of clitics shows that denominal verbs behave like a single word. Sentential clitics, for example the question particle and the subject clitics, appear in second position in Halkomelem, after the first word.

(23) ʔi ʔə čʔənəxʷəl?
AUX Q 2SUB VBL-canoe
‘Do you have a canoe?’
That such clitics appear after the denominal verb gives evidence that it constitutes a single word:

(24) c-nəxʷəʔ qə cə ceʔʔ?
VBL-canoe Q 2SUB FUT
'Will you make a canoe?'

(25) *c-ʔə cə ceʔʔ (s)nəxʷəʔ?
VBL-Q 2SUB FUT canoe
'Will you make a canoe?'

When used in embedded clauses, denominal verbs host subordinate subject suffixes:

(26) ?ewe:c ʔ-ti-əxʷʔ?
not:Q:2SUB VBL-tea-2SSUB
'Won’t you take tea?’

(27) qəl-stəxʷ-əs kʷ-s ʔ-tawən-s.
bad-CS-3ERG DT-NM VBL-town-3SSUB
'He doesn’t want to go to town.’

Furthermore, denominal verbs can serve as bases for the causative suffix:

(28) niʔ c-ʔəleʔ-ʔəxʷəʔ təʔə səšiyəʔ-s.
AUX VBL-heart-CS-3ERG DT elder.sibling(PL)-3POS
'He made hearts for his older brothers.’

(29) nəm c-ʔəltən-ʔərn̓! go VBL-pencil-CS:1OBJ
'Go get me a pencil!’

(30) niʔ txʷ-ʔəspləl-ʔəxʷəʔ tə sləniʔ kʷθə məmənə-s.
AUX VBL-bread-CS-3ERG DT woman DT child(PL)-3POS
'The woman bought bread for her children.’

As discussed in Gerdts (1988) the ability to take the causative suffix is generally a property of intransitive verbs of the unergative class.⁷ Note that the causative suffix when added to a denominal verb yields a form with benefactive semantics. Also, the limited control reflexive - namət can be attached to a

⁷ Nouns can also serve as bases for the causative, although with very different semantics, meaning ‘make into N’:

(i) xʷiʔ sləniʔ-ʔəm kʷsəs s-ʔiʔəʔəm tə swəʔqeʔ-əll.
now woman-CS-PAS DET:N:3SSUB NM-dress(STA) DT man-young
'They have the boy dressed as a girl.’

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denominal verb yielding the meaning ‘manage to’, as typical of intransitive verbs of the unergative class (Gerdts 1991, Gerdts and Hukari 1998, 2000):

(31) ʔəwə kʷənəs c-yays-namət.
not DT IPOS:NM VBL-work-LC.REF
‘I couldn’t manage to find a job.’

(32) təs ʔə kʷə ʃxʷ-yəxʷ-s tə s-qʷse'yən.
arrive OBL DT NM-open-3POS DT NM-gillnet
yəl-ʔəs ʔə c-tələ-namət.
before-3SSUB again rather VBL-money-LC.REF
‘When the salmon gillnet season opened, you made a few dollars.’

This construction also works with noun phrases, as seen in example (34), in which case the suffix appears, like the verbalizing prefix, on the adjective.

(33) niʔ ʔə č c-wətə-namət?
AUX Q 2SUB VBL-sweater-LC.REF
‘Did you manage to get a sweater?’

(34) niʔ ʔə č c-pəq-namət swətə?
AUX Q 2SUB VBL-white-LC.REF sweater
‘Did you manage to get a white sweater?’

Halkomelem in general allows verb serialization (or verb chains) and it is also possible to have more than one denominal verb in a row, as in (2) above or the following example:

(35) niʔ tə sləntəniʔ c-wəʔ c-yays kʷ-s
3-PRO DT woman(PL) VBL-own VBL-work DT-NM
nəm-s ʔəl xe:m ʔə tə spe:nxʷ.
go-3POS collect OBL DT camas
‘It’s the ladies who have the job of collecting camas.’

In sum, the positional evidence shows that denominal verbs are intransitive. Furthermore, the derivational evidence shows that they are unergative verbs and thus take an agent for the subject.

3 The syntax of denominal verb constructions

Evidence for the surface intransitivity of denominal verb constructions comes from transitive marking and ergative agreement. Transitive clauses such as (36) exhibit both of these phenomena, but denominal verb constructions (37) do not:

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Furthermore, as discussed in Gerdts (1988), many Island Halkomelem speakers do not allow proper nouns to be subjects of transitive clauses (40), but proper nouns are allowed as subjects of denominal verb constructions (41), providing evidence that these are absolutes and not ergatives in the surface syntax.

Thus the denominal verb constructions are intransitive; the thematic object of the transitive serves as the head of the denominal verb. Nevertheless, denominal verbs can take a doubled "cognate" object in the oblique case.

'Go and have the blackberry pie that's on the table.'
True doubling is not possible, as this would be semantically vacuous. Rather, the oblique NP gives some more precise detail about the N serving as the verb base. For example, in (42), the determiner in the oblique NP specifies that the grandparent in question is female, the modifier in (43) stipulates that it is a blackberry pie, and the NP in (44) gives the name of the store.

In some cases, the relationship between the noun base and the oblique NP is one of semantic overlap, similar to a classificatory function. For example, in (45) the base noun ?aθ-a?qw is formed with compounding lexical suffixation and literally means ‘baked head’, where ‘head’ refers to round items (see Gerdts et. al 2002). This could refer to potatoes, apples, popovers, etc. The oblique NP in (45) specifies the baked thing as potatoes.

We see the opposite effect in (46), where the base noun of the denominal verb specifies ‘cup’ and the oblique NP contains a noun formed with compounding lexical suffixation meaning a big container of some type.

The generalization is that the form containing the lexical suffix (either the base of the denominal verb or the doubled NP) will have classificatory semantics.

Other types of modification are possible as well. In (47) the oblique phrase is an emphatic possessive.

Note that possessed nominals do not directly form denominal verbs.

In (49) and (50) the NP in the oblique phrase is a determiner-headed relative clause.

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"They are clearing the field where the cars will be parked for the potlatch."

"Did you get the stinging nettles that you said you were going to make rope with?"

There are several types of oblique-marked NPs in Halkomelem, including true obliques and also oblique-marked themes of antipassive and applicative constructions ("oblique objects"). Extraction facts, however, differentiate them.

Extraction in Halkomelem (wh-questions, relative clauses, clefts, pseudo-clefts)

a. No special morphology
   • ergatives (ergative agreement is deleted), absolutes
b. Nominalization with s-
   • oblique objects (patients of antipassives, patients of applicatives)
c. Nominalization with ś(x*)-
   • obliques (location, direction, instrumental, manner, stimulus)

As noted in (51b), patients of antipassives (cf. 52) and patients in applicatives (cf. 53) extract via nominalization with the prefix s-.
Similarly, the oblique NP serving as the cognate object in the denominal verb construction in (54a) is questioned as in (54b), with an s- prefix on the embedded verb.

AUX  1SUB  VBL-payment  OBL  DT  orange(PL)  
‘I got paid in oranges.’

b. stem  kœ  ni?  ?œn-s-c-qew?  
what  DT  AUX  2POS-NM-VBL-payment  
‘What was your payment?’

The following shows another example of the extraction of the cognate object:

(55) stem  kœ  ni?  ?œn-s-c-šukœ?  
what  DT  AUX  2POS-NM-VBL-sugar  
‘What did you use for sugar?’

In sum, the nominal base of the denominal verb can “double” with an oblique NP, which tests to be an oblique object syntactically. Semantically, there is often some overlap, but not complete identity, between the base of the denominal verb and the oblique NP.
The semantics of denominal verbs

As seen in the translations of the above examples, the nominal base of the denominal verb is often unspecified, generic, or non-individuated. Nevertheless, the nominal can be referred to anaphorically:

(56) nem i-pay ?i? təən sqeʔeq. ni?
go VBL-pie and DT:2POS y. sibling AUX
sčəčəʔ? ʔə tə ʔətem.
on OBL DT table.

“You and your younger brother, go have some pie. It’s on the table.’

(57) ʔeʔət xʷʔi? c-mənəqəʔ təə skəlʔəqəl. nəʔə-əʔ-əs
here now VBL-snow(CONT) DT children. use-TR-3ERG
če ʔə kʷθə s-θiməʔ-ələ.
hearsay OBL DT NM-ice-container

‘The children are making snowballs and putting them into the freezer.’

So, the denominal verb can in fact refer to something specific. Probably the most accurate description of the semantics of denominal verbs in Halkomelem is that it matches their use in English, formulated as the following principle by Clark and Clark (1979:797):

(58) Principle of Specificity:
The kind of situation that an innovation denotes is intended to be as specific as the circumstances warrant.

A further issue that arises concerning the semantics of denominal verbs is whether or not they are lexicalized. Discussing denominal verbs in Bella Coola, Mithun (1997:367) claims: “Like the suffixes, the prefixes represent elements of meaning that are frequently combined with others to create lexical

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8 We will not present a formal treatment of the semantics at this time. We simply note that Johns (2003) is doing interesting work on the semantics of denominal verb constructions (noun incorporation in her terms) in Inuktitut. She points out similarities in the semantics of the Halkomelem and Inuktitut constructions, suggesting that in both instances these have the semantics of light verbs. She follows a line of research proposed by Harley (2001) and bases her analysis on an HPSG approach by Koenig and Davis (2001), in which they divide up the semantics of verbs into two parts—a modal part, which can be modified by semantic operators such as deontic or epistemic modality, negation and so on, and a situational core, in effect the verb’s core argument structure. Under Johns’ approach, verbalizing affixes are light verbs whose semantics forms the modal part and the noun provides the situational core.
items, names for recognizable, recurring activities.... Speakers have created names for the concepts they have discussed the most.” It is true that there are some frequently used expressions such as c-tele ‘have money’, l- patham ‘have a smoke/cigarette’, and ḵ-ta-wan ‘go to town’. However, in many examples, denominal verbs are used in rare or even unique situations, and certainly in situations that are not part of traditional culture. For example in (57) above, making snowballs and freezing them is not a usual activity. Also, buying a power saw was not an everyday occurrence:

(59)  nə-s-niwiw  xʷiʔ  txʷ-*power saw,
  LPOS-NM-AUX:LNK  now  VBL-power.saw

nə-s-niwiw  xʷiʔ  c-qʷleiy.
  LPOS-NM-AUX:LNK  now  VBL-log

‘...and I went out and bought a power saw and I went out logging.’

In fact, both of these examples contain the particle xʷiʔ ‘now, next’, which denotes that something has suddenly happened, possibly contrary to speaker’s expectation (Gerdts and Hukari to appear). Other examples of activities that are not recurring activities or part of the cultural heritage include getting a pension, which happens once in a lifetime, or marketing flowers.

(60)  sis ʔəw  c-penšən-steləm,  nə-s-niwiw  hay
  and  VBL-pension-CS:1PAS  LPOS-NM-AUX:LNK  finish

kʷə-nə-s-yaʔəs.
  DT-1POS-NM-work(CONT)

‘...and I got my pension and I quit working.’

(61)  niʔ  yəxʷ ʔa:  xʷən  c-peqəm  kʷəθə  peqəm-ewtxʷ?
  AUX  SUP  EMPH  still  VBL-flower  DT  flower-house

‘I wonder if the flower shop still has some flowers.’

Flowers, since they were not eaten, had little significance in native culture as seen by the fact that there is one generic word meaning ‘bloomer’ covering all non-bush wildflowers. So, while lexicalization may indeed be an important factor in the use of lexical suffixes, it seems irrelevant in the case of denominal verbs. Again, the most accurate generalization of when denominal verbs are allowed in Halkomelem is that it matches their use in English, as posited by Clark and Clark (1979:787):

(62)  The Innovative Denominal Verb Convention:
The speaker means to denote the kind of situation that he/she has good reason to believe that on this occasion the listener can readily compute uniquely on the basis of their mutual knowledge in such a way that the parent noun denotes a role in the situation...
Although further research may reveal some of the factors determining the choice of a denominal verb construction over a phrasal construction with a verb and an NP, we can conclude at this point that denominal verb constructions are used for a variety of situations in Halkomelem including when the base nominal is specific or non-specific, unique or common, novel or culturally salient. The use of denominal verbs, which we note is on the decline, is the type of polysynthetic construction that is considered the mark of a fluent speaker of the language.

References


