The Non-Perfective Suffix(es) of Columbian (Salish)

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0. In attempting to come to grips with the aspect system of Columbian during the summer of 1981, I found it was crucial to achieve an understanding of two suffixes, -mx and -ax", which I had long thought were intransitive middle and active, respectively, non-perfective markers. The situation became very unclear, however, when I observed that both occurred on non-perfective forms based on either perfective middles (marked by -m) or perfective actives (with no overt marking). Upon checking further, it turned out that the distribution of -mx and -ax" is largely phonologically conditioned, and that -ax" is derived historically from -mx, and further that this distribution is exactly paralleled by a pair of lexical suffixes with the same shapes. There are several minor complications (all explainable), but virtually no exceptions that cannot be reasonable accounted for.

1.0. Either -mx or -ax" must occur suffixed to any intransitive predicate not in the perfective aspect. The two non-perfective constructions that require these suffixes are imperfectives (prefixed by sac- or s-, or their variants) and unrealized forms (prefixed by kas-, which is derived from kal-s-). The perfective middle suffix -u is lost (or is not used; alternatively, it fuses with the n of -mx) before these suffixes, hence non-perfective intransitives are not marked for middle.

1.1. The stress status of -mx is somewhat unusual in terms of stress assignment in Columbian. Normally, a suffix will either be strong, weak, or variable in terms of stress assignment to a root or a suffix, and unstressed vowels are deleted. But -mx is variable in terms of stress, yet appears to take stress from some strong roots (which it should not), and does not cause deletion of the preceding stem-vowel. And it does have an unstressed variant (other than -ax") without a vowel, -mx. The basic distribution of -mx is following weak stems the stressed vowel of which (in perfective forms, where no strong or variable suffix occurs) is retained. After other stressed vowels, i.e. after strong stems, -ax" occurs, and stress remains on the stem. Either -mx or -ax" may be used following the lexical suffixes -cin 'mouth' and -qin 'head'. I will discuss each of these three variants in turn, starting with -mx, which has the most restricted environment.

1.2. -mx occurs only on stems ending in a stressed vowel. There are few such stems in Columbian, and I have only three illustrating this variant (all with middle -m in the perfective):

(1) kawem they went, they walked / kas-kawem they're going (to go)
(2) cashirm he got something / kaskashirm he's going to bring something
(3) kakhirm he sang / sac-kakhirm he's singing

The instances of -mx after -cin and -qin are a little different, in that they require a merger of the final n of these two suffixes with the n of -mx. After this has happened, stress

...
is stem-final, and -ax rather than -áx must occur. But the n-m merger is optional, some speakers preferring one, some the other variant. Without merger, -ax must occur.

(4) nk'uhcín he sang a song / kank'uhcínax he started to sing
kank'uhcínax

(5) caqqcín he landed on the shore / kaskaqqcínax he's going
kaskaqqcínax to land

(6) lu?cín he's thirsty / kasu?pcínax he's going to get
kasu?pcínax thirsty

(7) stákqín he's deaf / stákqínax he's getting deaf
stákqínax

Perhaps expectedly, this allowed variation results in some confused forms in which the merger of n-m does not occur before -ax or the variation occurs after an unstressed variant of -cin or -qin (or both these possibilities together):

(8) lâx'cm he cried / sãlax'cmañx he's crying
sãlax'cmañx

1.5. -áx occurs primarily when the stressed vowel of the perfective stem is ə; these are all weak stems.

(9) lâx'pm it thundered / kastašpmáx it's going to thunder
(10) xâllkn it spun, it turned / caâllânx it's spinning,
caâllânx it's turning

(11) lâx'pm he stole / kastâmpáx he's going to steal
(12) tâx'm it's worn, it's ragged / stâx'máx it became worn out
(13) lâx'mt he laughed / sacâx'mámix he's laughing

(14) čâx'ax' it leaked out / kaskâx'ax' it's going to spill
(15) ?ak'y'á he had a cold / kaskây'á it's catching a cold
Stems like the following with 1 appear to be exceptions, but Colville regularly developed ə to 1 before y, and these have underlying ə:

(16) kâ'łym he hunted / kaskây'máx he's going to hunt
(17) čâyt he paddled, he rowed / kascâytmáx he's going to paddle
Even (18) is regular, if derived from *wây (and note Colville wây 'goodbye', also from *wây by regular sound shift):

(18) ?akw? it's finished / kaswi'máx it's going to grow (of
a plant)

An important group of stems with ə are those with the suffix
-p 'inchoative':

(19) čâxp it caught fire / kascašpmáx it's going to burn
(20) hâxp it wore out / kashašpmáx it's going to wear out
(21) lâx'np he got hurt / slâxpáx he's getting hurt

However, -p is only one variant of the inchoative morpheme—the one that occurs after weak roots (mostly with ə). With strong roots (usually, but not always, with vowels other than ə), the variant is -ə? infixed between the (stressed) vowel and the following consonant (i.e. C₂ of the root). Since these strong-root inchoatives have vowels other than ə, one would expect their non-perfectives to take -ax'. But they do not, they take -áx. The explanation for this apparent exception in the distribution of -áx is that the infixed -ə? 'inchoative' converts strong stems to weak.
(22) γακ it burned / kasya'ìalix it's going to burn
(23) ψι它 it's ripe, it's cooked / ψιτ'qmix it's getting ripe
(24) na kal it's empty / na'kalix it's becoming empty
(25) Ϝα it rotted (meat, etc.) / nqalix it's rotting

1.4. -ox' occurs only after stems with  å,  ], or ü, i.e. strong stems. It does not matter whether the stressed vowel is in the root or in a suffix.

(26) κιηα it's empty / kasi'liox' he's going to pray
(27) α'αηααηα he watched / s'αηαηαηα he was watching
(28) ψαηιηα'αηα she gave birth / kashψαηιηα'αηα she's about to give birth
(29) sαηα he's asleep / sa'liox' he's sleeping
(30) γιηαα he played / kasyγιηαα he's going to play
(31) γααηαηα he's tired / salγαηαηα he's getting tired
(32) ταηιηα he climbed up / kastαηιηα he's going to climb
(33) ταηιηα he lay down / kashiηιηα he's going to lie down
(34) ςαηιηα he stood up / kasa'liox' he's going to stand
(35) ριιηαηα she cooked / kashριιηαηα she's going to cook
(36) καηακ'αηα they got married / kashκαηακ'αηα they're going to be married

1.5. Apparent exceptions to the distribution of these three suffixes are very few in number. Two which occur in my data may be errors, since another speaker gave the expected forms:

(39) ιηααηα he sucked up liquid / kashηααηα (sic) he's going to suck up liquid
(40) κιηιηα it rattled / kashιηιηα (sic) it's rattling

Only six other forms have been found with other than the expected suffix variant, 41-45 with -ax' after å, and 46 with -ax' after  å:

(41) ιηιηα'αηα he worked / kashιηιηα'αηα he's going to work
(42) ιηιηα'αηα he was born / kashιηιηα'αηα he's going to be born
(43) ιηιηα'αηα it's frozen / kashπαηιηα'αηα it's going to freeze
(44) ιηιηα'αηα they gathered, they met / scyaηιηα'αηα they're gathering, assembling
(45) ιηιηα'αηα he has his shoes on / scyaηιηα'αηα he put his shoes on
(46) ιηιηα'αηα he got whipped / stαηα'αηα he's getting whipped

The presence of pharyngeals in 41-44 is striking, but does not seem to explain the irregularity. Other forms with pharyngeals, such as 20, show that the pharyngeal does not cause lowering of å to å, and forms such as 26 and 28 show that -ox' can occur with stems containing pharyngeals (although 28 involves another variable suffix). Nevertheless, 41-46 probably all derive from weak stems with å. The Thompson cognates for 44 and 45 are weak, and Columbian does automatically lower å to å before  å.

2. Once the distribution of -mix, -mx, and -ox' is seen, it can also be explained how the variants developed. They are all derived from *-mix. -ox' is simply the form without its vowel,
although this variant can only occur immediately following a stressed vowel. "-ax" developed by vocalizing u to a with compensatory labialization of the x. The shift of a to x is not unique to this suffix, but also occurred in "ulax" 'ground, earth' (from "ulax" and probably earlier "ul-diix"; cf. Colville -ulax", Coeur d'Alene -ulax", Shuswap -ulax", Thompson //-uluax//, and Lillooet -ulax", and in -ax" 'person, people' (cf. Shuswap -ux, -üx, and the discussion below). Rather than being compensatory, the labialization of the final x might be by analogy with the development of "ulax" to "ulax", but there are problems in the reconstruction of -x in the source of both "ulax" 'ground, earth' and -ax" 'person, people'.

3. The three variants of -mix/-ox" 'non-perfective' have exact parallels in lexical suffixes for 'person, people'. All three variants occur (-üx, -mx, -ax") with exactly the same conditioning factors (but only the third variant is common):

(47) sqüläx school children (qi? write)
(48) staqläx midwife: "touch-doctor" (taq- touch)
(49) spoqläx gray jay (päq- gray?)
(50) scälax Chelan people (calän Lake Chelan)
(51) spoqläx Spokanes
(52) sbäxcmix" person of the Moses band (kwäxcn Rock Island; wäx- live, reside)
(53) shäptmx" Nez Perce Indians
(54) skicə?ax" Coeur d'Alenes

(55) skwulñtəx" Stick-Indian
(56) stkoniə?alq"ax" Canadian (šantə? over there; -alq" tree, something long, line)

This suffix should be reconstructed as *-mix (cf. Okanagan -míx, Shuswap -míx, -mx [Kuipers 1974], Coeur d'Alene -mə [Reichard 1933]), but there was also apparently a similar suffix *-mix" in Proto-Salish, meaning perhaps 'a group, cluster', but came to have meanings similar to *-mix in various languages. *-mix" also seems to occur in only a small number of forms in modern Interior Salishan languages, and I have only three instances in Crowian, one of which is likely a borrowing:

(57) sqiqmix" man
(58) yałänx"m chief
(59) nək'tənix" Fraser Valley Indians (Thompsons)

4. -mix and -ox" are so different phonologically that they must be perceived as two morphemes. But their complementary distribution, their traceable historical development, and the parallel between these morphemes for 'non-perfective' and 'person, people' show clearly that they were originally a single morpheme each. Although the reasons for its entirely redundant marking of 'non-perfective' in Crowian is not clear (kas- and sac- would be enough), at least its history is clear. Cognates are harder to find than for -mix 'person, people', but they exist at least in Colville, Kalispel-Spokane, and Coeur d'Alene. Colville has -əx or -x alternating with -üx, also functioning as some sort of non-perfective (Mattina 1973). In Kalispel, Vogt
identifies -i or -ní as a continuative suffix (Vogt 1940:30). Carlson (1972:75, 122) finds similar forms in Spokane. Coeur d'Alene has only -n̓s or -á̱s, but their function is unclear (although certainly analogous to Columbian non-perfective usage); Reichard (1958:576-588) mentions them largely in passing, and gives them no isolated treatment. Although the function of these suffixes in these four languages is not entirely parallel, the notion of non-perfective seems present in all three. Thompson and Lillooet have cognate suffixes, but if so, their function is quite different, and they appear to be strong suffixes in both languages. In Thompson, Thompson and Thompson (forthcoming) call //'-mix// 'definitive'; it "indicates an expert, extreme, or full application, or emphasizes the essence of something." In Lillooet -á̱x means 'to get carried away doing something, to go too far, to do to excess'. Clearly, the history of this suffix needs further study. Its forms now seem clear, but not its semantic development.

FOOTNOTES

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2. I owe this insight to Laurence C. Thompson (personal communication) who notes that this is precisely the effect of infixed -? in Thompson.

3. Information on Lillooet is from Jan van Eijk.

REFERENCES


