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[1] during the summer of 1981, I found it was crucial to achieve an understanding of two suffixes, -mí̓x and -əxʷ, 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 -mí̓x and -əxʷ is largely phonologically conditioned, and that -əxʷ is derived historically from -mí̓x, 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 -mí̓x or -əxʷ 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 kaɬ-s-). The perfective middle suffix -n is lost (or is not used; alternatively, it fuses with the m of -mí̓x) before these suffixes, hence

non-perfective intransitives are not marked for middle.

1.1. The stress status of -mí̓x 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 -mí̓x 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 -əxʷ) without a vowel, -mx. The basic distribution of -mí̓x is following weak stems the stressed vowel of which (in perfective forms, where no strong or variable suffix occurs) is ə́. After other stressed vowels, i.e. after strong stems, -əxʷ occurs, and stress remains on the stem. Either -mx or -əxʷ 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) ɬwə́m they went, they walked / kasɬwə́mx they're going (to go)

(2) ckʷnə́m he got something / kasckʷnə́mx he's going to bring something

(3) nkʷnə́m he sang / sacnkʷnə́mx 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 -mx rather than -mín must occur. But the n-m merger is optional, some speakers preferring one, some the other variant. Without merger, -əxʷ must occur.

(4) nkʷaʔncínm he sang a song / kankʷaʔncínmx
kankʷaʔncínəxʷ he started to sing

(5) cəqqcín he landed on the shore / kascəqqcínmx he's going
kascəqqcínəxʷ to land

(6) luʔpcín he's thirsty / kasluʔpcínmx he's going to get
kasluʔpcínəxʷ thirsty

(7) stəʔqín he's deaf / stəʔqínmx
stəʔqínəxʷ he's getting deaf

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

(8) lɑ́xʷcnm he cried / saclɑ́xʷcnmx
saclɑ́xʷcnəxʷ he's crying

1.3. -mín occurs primarily when the stressed vowel of the perfective stem is ə́; these are all weak stems.

(9) ʔtə́pm it thundered / kasʔtəpmín it's going to thunder

(10) xə́llkm it spun, it turned / cxəllkmín it's spinning, it's turning

(11) lə́ʔmm he stole / kasɬəʔmmín he's going to steal

(12) tə́mxʷ it's worn, it's ragged / stəmxʷmín it became worn out

(13) mə́xʷt he laughed / sacməxʷtmín he's laughing

(14) čə́xʷəxʷ it leaked out / kasčəxʷəxʷmín it's going to spill

(15) ʔə́ɬʷaʔ he had a cold / kasʔəɬʷaʔmín he's catching a cold

Stems like the following with í appear to be exceptions, but Columbian regularly developed ə́ to í before y, and these have underlying ə́:

(16) kʷíym he hunted / kaskʷiymín he's going to hunt

(17) číyt he paddled, he rowed / kasčiytmín he's going to paddle

Even (18) is regular, if derived from *wə́y (and note Colville wáy 'goodbye', also from *wə́y by regular sound shift):

(18) ʔacwíʔ it's finished / kaswiʔmín it's going to grow (of a plant)

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

(19) cə́xp it caught fire / kascəxpmín it's going to burn

(20) ɬə́mp it wore out / kasɬəmpmín it's going to wear out

(21) lə́xʷp he got hurt / sləxʷpmín he's getting hurt

However, -p is only one variant of the inchoative morpheme--the one that occurs after weak roots (mostly with ə́). With strong roots (usually, but not always, with vowels other than ə́), the variant is -ʔ- infixed between the (stressed) vowel and the following consonant (i.e. C_2 of the root). Since these strong-root inchoatives have vowels other than ə́, one would expect their non-perfectives to take -əxʷ. But they do not, they take -mín. The explanation for this apparent exception in the distribution of -mín is that the infixed -ʔ- 'inchoative' converts strong stems to weak.[2]

(22) yáʔǩ it burned (yáǩ- burn up) / kasyaʔǩmíx it's going to burn

(23) p̓íʔq it's ripe, it's cooked (p̓iq- cook) / sp̓iʔqmíx it's getting ripe

(24) naǩʷúʔɬ it's empty / snaǩʷuʔɬmíx it's becoming empty

(25) náʔq̓ it rotted (meat, etc.) (náq̓ rotten meat or fish, bad odor) / snaʔq̓míx it's rotting

1.4. -əxʷ occurs only after stems with á, í, or ú, i.e. strong stems. It does not matter whether the stressed vowel is in the root or in a suffix.

(26) kíʕʷm he prayed / kaskíʕʷəxʷ he's going to pray

(27) ʔaʔác̓xm he watched / sʔaʔác̓xəxʷ he was watching

(28) ɬaẃiyáltm she gave birth / kasɬaẃiyáltəxʷ she's about to give birth

(29) ʔac̓ítx he's asleep / sac̓ítxəxʷ he's sleeping

(30) yúp̓aʔ he played / kasyúp̓aʔəxʷ he's going to play

(31) ʔáyx̣ʷt he's tired / sac̓áyx̣ʷtəxʷ he's getting tired

(32) tǩíwlx he climbed up / kastǩíwlxəxʷ he's going to climb

(33) ɬq̓íl̓x he lay down / kasɬq̓íl̓xəxʷ he's going to lie down

(34) c̓əlíx he stood up / kasc̓əlíxəxʷ he's going to stand

(35) p̓iqcncút she cooked / kasp̓iqcncútəxʷ she's going to cook

(36) kʷənksntwáxʷ they got married / kaskʷənksəntwáxʷəxʷ 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) ɬúpm he sucked up liquid / kasɬúpmx *(sic)* he's going to kasɬúpəxʷ suck up liquid

(40) ç̓ṣ̓kṣ̓tm it rattled / kaṣ̓ç̓ṣ̓kṣ̓tmíx *(sic)* it's rattling kaṣ̓ç̓úṣ̓kṣ̓təxʷ

Only six other forms have been found with other than the expected suffix variant, 41-45 with -míx after á, and 46 with -əxʷ after é:

(41) ḥáẃiym he worked / kasḥaẃiymíx he's going to work

(42) ḥáẃẃi he was born / kasḥaẃẃimíx he's going to be born

(43) ḥálx̣ʷ it's frozen / kasḥalx̣ʷmíx it's going to freeze

(44) yáʕʕ they gathered, they met / scyaʕʕmíx they're gathering, assembling

(45) ʔacq̓áʔxn he has his shoes on / sq̓aʔq̓aʔxnmíx he put his shoes on

(46) tl sɬəc̓éc̓s he got whipped / sɬəc̓éc̓səxʷ 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 é to á, and forms such as 26 and 28 show that -əxʷ can occur with stems containing pharyngeals (although 28 involves another variable suffix). Nevertheless, 41-46 probably all derive from weak stems with é. The Thompson cognates for 44 and 45 are weak, and Columbian does automatically lower é to á before ʔ.

2. Once the distribution of -míx, -mx, and -əxʷ is seen, it can also be explained how the variants developed. They are all derived from *-míx. -mx is simply the form without its vowel,

although this variant can only occur immediately following a stressed vowel. -əxʷ developed by vocalizing m to ə with compensatory labialization of the x. The shift of m to ə is not unique to this suffix, but also occurred in -úɬəxʷ 'ground, earth' (from *-ulm̓xʷ, and probably earlier *-ul-m̓ixʷ; cf. Colville -úla?xʷ, where ə has lowered to a by regular development, Kalispel -úle?xʷ, Coeur d'Alene -uɬəmxʷ, Shuswap -úɬəxʷ, Thompson //-uyəm̓xʷ//, and Lillooet -úlm̓əxʷ, and in -əxʷ 'person, people' (cf. Shuswap -mx, -mí̓x, and the discussion below). Rather than being compensatory, the labialization of the final x might be by analogy with the development of *-ulm̓xʷ to -úɬəxʷ, but there are problems in the reconstruction of -xʷ in the source of both -úɬəxʷ 'ground, earth' and -əxʷ 'person, people'.

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

(47) sq̓iy̓mí̓x school children (q̓iy̓- write)

(48) stəqmí̓x midwife: "touch-doctor" (təq- touch)

(49) spəqmí̓x gray jay (páq- gray ?)

(50) scəɬámx Chelan people (cəɬán Lake Chelan)

(51) spuqí̓mx Spokanes

(52) skwáxcnəxʷ person of the Moses band (kwáxcn Rock Island; wáx- live, reside)

(53) sḥáptnəxʷ Nez Perce Indians

(54) skí̓cə?əxʷ Coeur d'Alenes

(55) sc̓waṅáytəxʷ Stick-Indian

(56) stk̓ənɬa?álqʷəxʷ Canadian (k̓ənɬú? over there; -alqʷ tree, something long, line)

This suffix should be reconstructed as *-mix (cf. Okanagan -mí̓x, Shuswap -mí̓x, -mx [Kuipers 1974], Coeur d'Alene -mš [Reichard 1938]), but there was also apparently a similar suffix *-mixʷ in Proto-Salish, meaning perhaps 'a group, cluster', but came to have meanings similar to *-mix in various languages. *-mixʷ also seems to occur in only a small number of forms in modern Interior Salishan languages, and I have only three instances in Columbian, one of which is likely a borrowing:

(57) sqəɬtmí̓xʷ man

(58) yəlmí̓xʷm chief

(59) nək̓ʷtmí̓xʷ Fraser Valley Indians (Thompsons)

4. -mí̓x and -əxʷ 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 Columbian is not clear (kas- and sac- would be enough), at least its history is clear. Cognates are harder to find than for -mí̓x 'person, people', but they exist at least in Colville, Kalispel-Spokane, and Coeur d'Alene. Colville has -a?x or -x alternating with -mí̓x, also functioning as some sort of non-perfective (Mattina 1973). In Kalispel, Vogt

identifies -i or -mí as a continuative suffix (Vogt 1940:30). Carlson (1972:75, 122) finds similar forms in Spokane. Coeur d'Alene has only -mš or -m̓š, but their function is unclear (although certainly analogous to Columbian non-perfective usage); Reichard (1938:576-588) 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[3] may 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 //-m̓íx// 'definitive'; it "indicates an expert, extreme, or full application, or emphasizes the essence of something." In Lillooet -m̓íx 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 -ʔ- in Thompson.

3. Information on Lillooet is from Jan van Eijk.

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