

Another Component of Meaning for {-nəx^w}

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One of the frustrating if not maddening aspects of studying a moribund language is the discovery years after the deaths of one's most knowledgeable consultants unexpected uses of morphemes that had been thought to be fairly well understood. One such case involves the Lushootseed verb suffix {-dx^w}.

Cognates of this suffix occur in at least seven of the nine other Central Salish languages. (The two uncertain cases are Pentlatch and Nooksack for which there are no morphological descriptions available.) In the remaining seven the cognate suffixes are characterized in much the same ways, and all of these descriptions could stand as fairly adequate accounts of the Lushootseed suffix. A brief summary of these descriptions follows.

Comox (as described by Davis): {-nW}, /-n(əx^w), -nu-, -nəg-, ənx^w/ *responsibility or success* p. 214. "...[it] implies an accomplished action, with or without intent." p. 238.

Comox (as described by Hagège): Hagège identifies this suffix with a paradigm labelled B which is a *transitivite faible*. It is the unmarked member of a pair of transitive endings both of which sometimes involve control or intent, but the marked member always does and the unmarked (our {-nəx^w}) often does not. p. 71.

Sechelt: {-nəx^w}, /-nəx^w, -nu-/. Writing for the language learner, Beaumont labels this suffix as the *subject-not-in-control causative* and uses such phrases as "happen to ...[do] by accident" and "manage to ...[do] after some effort." pp. 123-125.

Squamish: {nəx^w} *non-volitional*. This is a process or state resulting from that process independent of the will of the actor. Kuipers. p. 69 ff.

Halkomelem (Cowichan): {-nəx^w}, /-n(əx^w), -nəx^w/ (and possibly /-nā-/ p. 20) *responsible*. "[This suffix] designates an entity that is responsible for an action, but does not have complete control over it. In some lexical items inflected with {-nəx^w}, it is implied that the action is difficult to execute ... In most lexical items, however, ... {-nəx^w} simply expresses an unintentional or accidental outcome." Leslie. p. 27.

Straits (Saanich): {-nəx^w}, /-nā(x^w), -n(əx^w)/ *non-control transitive*. "This suffix implies a patient object and agent subject but the subject does not exert conscious control over the activity expressed in the predicate." Montler. p. 164.

Clallam: {-n}, /-nəx^w, -(ə)n-/ *responsibility*. "[This suffix means that] an entity is responsible in at least some measure for a situation or activity, but is not in control ... [It] seems to be a matter of accidental or unintentional effect {-n} opposed to intentional effect {-t}. However, there are also many forms with {-n} in which intention is quite clear ... Clearly different degrees of effective

control are involved." Thompson and Thompson. p. 281.

Twana: {-dəx^w}, /-dəx^w, -dx^w/ *general intention, responsible*. Drachman. p. 267.

These descriptions agree that {-nəx^w}¹ marks an act as either unintentional or, if intentional, as one achieved with difficulty of special effort. These characterizations also fit the vast majority of examples in the Lushootseed corpus. Here are a few typical examples.

(1) ʔuʔūcutəb čəd čəda ʔūčdub tət. *They shot at me and they surely hit me.*
shot-at me and-me shot true

(2) ʔukʷəʔc čəd čəda ʔūčdx^w tiʔit dđiđilʔbid. *I missed and hit my little canoe.*
missed I and-I shot that my-little-
canoe

(3) ʔūdx^w *see something* versus ʔuuc *look at something*

(4) hāydx^w *know something* versus hāyad *learn something*

In (1) the act is intentional and successful, in (2) it is accidental while in (3) and (4) instead of an agent there is an experiencer, an entity somewhat but not largely in control.

With two stems, however, this suffix does not seem to carry the above meanings and nuances. Its role appears to be to provide for the raising of an instrumental phrase from an oblique complement (introduced by a preposition) to a direct complement (characterized by the absence of a preposition). Compare (5) with (6) and (7) with (8).

(5) ʔupūsil ʔə tiʔə? čʔá? *[Someone] threw the rock.*

(6) ʔupūsdx^w tiʔə? čʔá? *Same gloss.*

(7) ʔuđil dx^w?al tiʔə? sdəx^w?t. *[Someone] loaded the hunting canoe.*

(8) ʔuđildx^w tiʔə? sdəx^w?t. *Same gloss.*

In both (6) and (8) the instrument is expressed by a direct complement and the predicate bears {-dx^w}. No other examples are known; but these two were carefully checked and found

¹{-nəx^w} is intended as a collective representation of these suffixes and is not intended as a reconstruction.

acceptable by several native speakers.

Those of us with English as a mother tongue would expect the stem *túčil* *shoot* to behave like *púsil* *throw, toss* on the basis of glosses as well as stem shapes. In fact, one fairly young speaker does at least accept *túčildx^w* but others do not. For these others the closest correspondence to (6) is (10) below in which the predicate carries the causative suffix {-tx^w} instead of {-dx^w}.

(9) ?u^túčil ?ə ti?ə? úsəd. [Someone] shot the arrow.

(10) ?u^túčiltx^w ti?ə? úsəd. Same gloss.

Number (10) with {-tx^w} *causative* is, in fact, the suffix one might have expected to occur in (6) and (8) instead of {-dx^w}. However, there is a contrasting verb *púsiltx^w* which is glossed as *throwing [someone] in wrestling or throwing [something] away, tossing [it] out*. (Unfortunately, no attempt was ever made to elicit either *qíiltx^w* or *qíliltx^w*.)

With so little data available one cannot do much more than speculate about this construction. There is the possibility that the suffix in (6) and (8) is simply a homonym of the more widely occurring {-dx^w} which marks responsibility but questionable control. Such a possibility is not, however, very plausible. It is unlikely that the language would maintain distinct suffixes having the same form in the same grammatical category.

More likely, the identical glosses for (5) and (6) and for (7) and (8) are deceptive; but what that difference is remains allusive. In what way does the raising of an instrumental from oblique to direct complement (*i.e.*, from satellite to argument) relate to notions of responsibility and control?

Unless more such constructions come to light, there is probably nothing one can do but footnote this anomaly and hope meanwhile that either more such formations turn up in Lushootseed texts or that a cognate formation be discovered in another Salish language which helps to account for the Lushootseed phenomenon.

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