A Brief Look at Infinitives in Nłeʔkepmxcín*

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Abstract: Infinitives are rare in Salish. Only two of the 23 Salish languages have them: Nłeʔkepmxcín (Thompson River Salish) and St'át'imcets (Lillooet), both from the Northern Interior sub-branch. As a result, the construction is understudied. Only Kroeber (1997:416–417; 1999:220–223) has investigated their distribution in Nłeʔkepmxcín. In this paper, I introduce and explain two new findings that add to the understanding of the distribution of infinitives in Nłeʔkepmxcín, and in the process, shed some light on an understudied area of Salish syntax.

Keywords: Nłeʔkepmxcín, Salish, St'át'imcets, infinitives, syntax

1 Introduction

Only two of the 23 Salish languages are reported to have infinitives: Nłeʔkepmxcín (Thompson River Salish) and St'át'imcets (Lillooet), both from the Northern Interior sub-branch. Davis and Matthewson (1996) identified infinitives as a subordinate clause type in St'át'imcets, and Davis (2020) further investigated their syntactic behavior. To my knowledge, the discussions of infinitives in Nłeʔkepmxcín by Kroeber (1997:416–417; 1999:220–223) are the only published records of infinitives in the language.

In this paper, I provide original data from fieldwork as evidence of two new findings that add to the understanding of the syntactic behavior of infinitives in Nłeʔkepmxcín. First, contrary to Kroeber (1999:222), I show that intransitive predicates are able to take an infinitival complement; and second, that infinitives are able to contain a predicate with transitive suffixes, as shown for St'át'imcets by Davis (2020).

The paper is separated into five sections. Section 2 explains the methodology used to gather the data used in the paper. Section 3 provides an overview of non-relative subordinate clauses, including what is already known about the distribution of infinitives in Nłeʔkepmxcín. Section 4 introduces new data and compares them to Davis' (2020) analysis for St'át'imcets. Section 5 concludes.

2 Methodology

The data used here are from fieldwork conducted by the author, mostly with a speaker of the Lytton dialect of Nłeʔkepmxcín, as part of a UBC field methods class taught by Lisa Matthewson in 2022–

* This work would not be possible without the patience and hard work of consultants *k̓ʷəɬtèzetkʷu* (Bernice Garcia), Marty Aspinall, and Bev Phillips. *ném kʷukʷstéyp*. 'Thank you.' Bernice is a Kamloops Indian Residential School survivor, re-learning her language. She introduces herself thus: *ʔes ʔúməcms kʷəɬtèzetkʷuʔ təw ɬe c̓əɬétkʷu wéʔe ncitxʷ. l̓uʔ wéʔec ʔex netíyxs scwew̓xmx, l̓uʔ tékm xéʔe ne nɬeʔképmx e tmixʷs*. 'My traditional name is *kʷəɬtèzetkʷuʔ*, my home is in Coldwater of 'Nicola' of Nlaka'pamux lands.' The UBC Department of Linguistics and the Kinkade Language and Culture Foundation both provided funding for this research. I would also like to thank the UBC field methods class 2022–2023 taught by Lisa Matthewson, the Nłab, and especially Henry Davis.

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2023. The primary methodology employed involved judgment tasks since translation tasks tended to yield other forms of subordinate clauses.

Davis' (2020) overview of infinitives in St'át'imcets was used as a reference point for this investigation. In that paper, Davis makes a distinction between three major classes of predicates that can take an infinitival complement: evaluative (e.g., 'It is good to…'), epistemic (e.g., 'I know how to…'), and approximative (e.g., 'It seems like…'). Examples of each are given below in (1) to (3) for St'át'imcets, with the predicate of each of the different classes and the infinitive structure both in bold.

(1) *Evaluative Predicate*:

x̌aƛ̓ [**kʷa** qʷəz-ən-táli kʷu=k̓əƛ̓h-áɬc̓aʔ
hard [**D/C+IPFV** use-DIR-NTS DET=rock-flesh
l=ki=ʔats-ank-áɬxʷ=a].
on=PL.DET=attached-lower.surface-place=EXIS]
'It's hard to use gyprock on the ceiling.'[1] (Davis 2020:46)

(2) *Epistemic Predicate*:

plán=ƛ̓uʔ ʔaz kʷas **zəwát** [**kʷa**
already=EXCL NEG D/C+NMLZ+IPFV+3POSS **be.known** [**D/C+IPFV**
mays-ən-táli ʔi=sqʷl̓íp=a].
fix-DIR-NTS PL.DET=black.tree.moss=EXIS]
'It's no longer known how to prepare black tree moss.' (Davis 2020:46)

(3) *Approximative Predicate*:

c̓íla=ƛ̓uʔ [**kʷa** ʔixʷɬ-əm-nún-al̓ap
like=EXCL [**D/C+IPFV** different-CTR.MID-DIR-2PL.ERG
ta=səsq̓ʷəż-láp=a].
DET=younger.sibling-2PL.POSS=EXIS]
'It's like you're treating your younger sibling as a stranger.' (Davis 2020:51)

While a cognate of the approximative predicate, shown in (3), exists in Nłeʔkepmxcín (i.e., *c̓íy*), I leave discussion of it aside for this paper and focus only on evaluative and epistemic predicates.

In the next section, I provide an overview of the two major types of non-relative subordinate clauses and review what is known about the syntactic behavior of infinitives in Nłeʔkepmxcín.

[1] The St'át'imcets data are transcribed as presented by Davis (2020) using the variant of (N)APA employed by van Eijk (1997). The Nłeʔkepmxcín data are transcribed using the form of (N)APA employed by Thompson and Thompson (1992; 1996). Abbreviations: I follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules with the following additions: AUT = autonomous, CTR = control, D/C = determiner/complementizer, DIR = directive, EXIS = existential, HYP = hypothetical, IMM = immediate, MID = middle, NCT = noncontrol transitivizer, NTS = nontopical subject, REM = remote, RLA = relative agent marker, RLT = relational transitivizer, VF = volunteered form (sentence created by a speaker), VG = volunteered gloss (speaker's translation). Phonologically omitted segments are marked with ( ). Infinitives are marked with brackets [ ] to highlight their syntactic structure.

3 An overview of subordinate clauses in Nłeʔkepmxcín

There are two major classes of non-relative subordinate clauses in Nłeʔkepmxcín: nominalized and subjunctive (conjunctive). Nominalized clauses are always subordinate and are often complements of a predicate, as in (4) to (7), but can also be adjuncts, such as causal clauses, as in (8), and adverbial clauses. They are defined by the presence of the nominalizer proclitic *s=* and, in some cases, associated possessive subject clitics. These clitics attach to intransitive predicates or auxiliaries if one is present, shown below in (4) and (5). Transitive predicates maintain their ergative subject suffixes, as in (5) to (8). These clauses are typically introduced by the determiner/complementizer *k* for complement clauses whose truth is not presupposed or entailed by the matrix predicate (Kroeber 1999:207; see also (4)–(6)). *cúkʷ* 'finish', as in (7), introduces a complement with the determiner/complementizer *(h)e* unless the entire construction is found in an irrealis context (i.e., under negation); in these cases, the clause is introduced with a determiner/complementizer *k* (Kroeber 1999:209). Causal clauses also use *(h)e*, though the oblique preposition is attached and the */h/* is omitted as in (8).

(4) xʷóxʷst-m̓-cm-s [**k**=**n**=**s**=nés].
want-RLT-1SG.OBJ-3ERG [**D/C**=**1SG.POSS**=**NMLZ**=go]
'He wants me to go.' (*Literally*: 'He wants me that I go.') (Kroeber 1999:81)

(5) **k**=**s**=xʷúy̓=**s** ce-**t-éne**
D/C=**NMLZ**=FUT=**3POSS** put-**TR-1SG.ERG**
'...that you will put it there.' (Kroeber 1999:105)

(6) təteʔ [**k**=**s**=cu-**t-éne**].
NEG [**D/C**=**NMLZ**=do-**TR-1SG.ERG**]
'I didn't do it.' (Thompson & Thompson 1992:167)

(7) cúkʷ [**e**=**s**=pékʷ-**e-s**].
finish [**D/C**=**NMLZ**=split-**DIR-3ERG**]
'S/he finished splitting them.' (Kroeber 1999:209)

(8) y̓é xéʔe t= [**e**=**s**=n-q̓íx̌c-**n-xʷ**].
good DEM OBL= [**D/C**=**NMLZ**=LOC-lock-**DIR-2SG.ERG**]
'It's good that/because you locked it.' (Kroeber 1999:211)

Subordinate subjunctive (conjunctive) clauses are used for things like temporal adjuncts, as in (9) and (10), and conditionals, as in (11). They are defined by the presence of the subjunctive subject enclitics which typically attach to the auxiliary if one is present overtly, as in (12), or covertly, as in (13). If no auxiliary is present, the clitics attach to the predicate, as in (9) to (11). Transitive suffixes are retained in subjunctive clauses, as is the case with nominalized clauses; however, the third-person subjunctive clitic *=us* is attached in addition, as in (15) and (16). Subjunctive clauses can be introduced by the complementizer *(ʔ)e* (termed "anticipatory" by Thompson & Thompson 1992; 1996; and "hypothetical" by Kroeber 1997; 1999) for conditionals or future temporal adjuncts, as in (11), (15), and (16). For non-future temporal clauses, the determiner/complementizers *(h)e* or *ɬ* can introduce the clause.

(9) ʔúpi-t-m ɬ=s-wéwɬ [**ɬ**=q̓ʷíy-t=**us**].
eat-TR-1PL.ERG DET=NMLZ-fish [**D/C.REM**=cook-IMM=**3SBJV**]
'We ate the fish when it was cooked.' (Kroeber 1999:196)

(10) *ɬ meɬix un wíkm kn te snḵ̓ʸép.*
[**ɬ**=méɬ-ix=**un**] wík-m=kn t=e=s-n-ḵ̓ʸép
[**D/C.REM**=rest-AUT=**1SG.SBJV**] see-CTR.MID=1SG.INTR OBL=DET=NMLZ-LOC-coyote
ʔex c̓ítəm̓ w=e=ze-cín.
IPFV direction to=DET=edge-mouth(of.river)
'While resting, I saw a coyote who was walking towards the river.' (VF, VG)

(11) ʔe=c̓ʔeq̓ʷ=kʷ [**ʔe**=tekɬ=**us**].
HYP=wet=2SG.INTR [**HYP**=rain=**3SBJV**]
'You will get wet if it rains.' (Kroeber 1999:194)

(12) wʔéx xeʔ ʔes-ḵ̓ʷén̓-s-t-sm-s ɬ=n-s-núḵ̓ʷeʔ
IPFV DEM STAT-look-CAUS-TR-1SG.OBJ-3ERG DET.REM=1SG.POSS-NMLZ-friend
[**ɬ**=uʔéx=**us** zík-ə-ne ɬ=s-yə́p].
[**D/C.REM**=IPFV=**3SBJV** fall-DIR-1SG.ERG DET.REM=NMLZ-tree]
'My friend was watching me while I was chopping the tree down.' (Koch 2005:129)

(13) ḵ̓n-t-éne [**h**=**Ø**=**us** cw-ə́m].
help-TR-1SG.ERG [**D/C**=IPFV=**3SBJV** do-CTR.MID]
'I helped him when he was working.' (Kroeber 1999:196-197)

(14) *təteʔ ks y̓és ʔe p̓émsm uxʷ e c̓łoẋʷ us.*
təteʔ k=s=y̓é=s [**ʔe**=p̓ém-s-m=**uxʷ** [**e**=c̓lóẋʷ=**us**]].
NEG D/C=NMLZ=good=3POSS [**HYP**=kindle-fire-CTR.MID=**2SG.SBJV** [**D/C**=hot=**3SBJV**]]
'It's not good if you make a fire when it's hot.' (VF)

(15) *keʔ ks ḵ̓ə́sts ʔe ḵ̓éxnxʷ us e smíyc w e sʔúɬxʷ.*
keʔ k=s=ḵ̓ə́s-t=s [**ʔe**=ḵ̓éx-nxʷ=**us** e=s-míyc
Q D/C=NMLZ=bad-IMM=3POSS [**HYP**=dry-2SG.ERG=**3SBJV** DET=NMLZ-deer
w=e=s-(ʔ)úɬxʷ].
to=DET=NMLZ-inside]
'It is bad if you dry deer meat inside?' (VF)

Infinitives are described by Kroeber (1999:220–223) as subordinate clauses distinct from both nominalized and subjunctive clauses. They are introduced by the determiner/complementizer *(h)e*, for "realis" contexts or *k* for "irrealis" contexts, much like with complements of *cúkʷ* 'finish'. Kroeber calls these introductory elements "articles" and notes that *(h)e* is sometimes omitted. The determiner/complementizer is followed by an imperfective auxiliary ("progressive") *(wʔé)x* and the main predicate. The construction is defined by the fact that it crucially lacks nominalization and subject clitics (either possessive or subjunctive).

All of the data Kroeber provides to support his claims contain transitive predicates in the matrix clause taking an intransitive infinitival complement, expect for (20) which has a transitive infinitive with what Kroeber (1997) calls the "relative agent" as the subject suffix.[2]

(16) cu-nwéṅ-ne [**x**=n-qáy-ix].
do-NCT-1ERG [**IPFV**=LOC-swim-AUT]
'I learned to swim.' (*Literally*: 'I managed to do swimming.') (Kroeber 1999:220)

(17) ẏe-mín-ne [**he**= [**ʔx**=ċq̇^{w}-ə́m]].
good-RLT-1ERG [**D/C**= [**IPFV**=write-CTR.MID]]
'I like writing.' (Kroeber 1999:221)

(18) təlx^{w}-mín-ne xéʔe [**ʔx**=ƛ̓q^{w}ʔ-úm].
reluctant-RLT-1SG.ERG DEM [**IPFV**=sew-CTR.MID]
'I'm reluctant to sew.' (Kroeber 1999:221)

(19) peʔx^{w}-mín-ne xéʔe [**(ʔe)x**=ƛ̓q^{w}uʔ-t-émus e=siłċʔúy].
tired.of-RLT-1SG.ERG DEM [**IPFV**=sew-TR-RLA DET=moccasin]
'I'm tired of sewing moccasins.' (Kroeber 1997:417)

Kroeber claims that "[i]ntransitive forms of the stems involved do exist, but apparently not with infinitivelike complements" (1999:222). In the following section, I introduce new data that counter-exemplify this claim.

4 Findings

4.1 Intransitive predicates with infinitival complements

Contrary to Kroeber's claim, intransitive predicates can take infinitival complements; more specifically, evaluative predicates are able to do so:

(20) *təteʔ ks ẏés k x x^{w}esít wéʔe.*
təteʔ k=s=**ẏé**=s [**k**= [**x**=x^{w}esít wéʔe]].
NEG D/C=NMLZ=**good**=3POSS [**D/C**= [**IPFV**=walk DEM]]
'It's not good to walk there.' (VF)

(21) *ƛ̓éƛ̓zm e x záq̇m.*
ƛ̓é<ƛ̓>**z**-m [**e**= [**x**=záq̇-m]].
easy<DIM>-MID [**D/C**= [**IPFV**=bake.bread-CTR.MID]]
'It's easy to bake bread.'

[2] Kroeber (1997; 1999:300–301) claims that this suffix is a combination of the passive ("agent demotion") suffix *-(e)m* and the third person subjunctive clitic *=us* that is synchronically analyzable as monomorphemic and not indicative of a subjunctive subordinate clause. See Kroeber (1997; 1999:300–301) for further discussion.

(22) *ḵ̓ᵊ́st e x p̓émsm.*
kᵊ́s-t [**e**= [**x**=p̓ém-s-m]].
bad-IMM [**D/C**= [**IPFV**=kindle-fire-MID]]
'It's bad to make a fire.'

The subordinate clauses in these examples count as infinitives on the criteria laid out above: they are not nominalized and lack any kind of clitic subject. Similar cases are found in St'át'imcets (Davis 2020; see (1)).

Evaluative predicates can also occur in attributive structures where the infinitive is the argument of a complex nominal predicate. For example, in (23) below, the noun *s-cúw* 'doing, work, task' is modified by *q̓íx̣-t* 'hard', and the resulting nominal predicate 'hard task' takes the infinitival clause ***ʔex***=*p̓ém-s-m* 'to make a fire' as its complement.[3]

(23) *q̓íxt xéʔe tk scúw e ʔex p̓émsm ʔe c̓əq̓ʷ us e súypm.*
[**q̓íx̣**-t xéʔe **t**=**k**=**s-cúw**] [**e**= [**ʔex**=p̓ém-s-m]]
[**hard**-IMM DEM **OBL**=**DET**=**NMLZ-do**] [**D/C**= [**IPFV**=kindle-fire-CTR.MID]]
ʔe=c̓əq̓ʷ=us e=súyp-m
HYP=wet=3SBJV DET=firewood-MID
'It's hard work to make a fire if the wood is wet.' (VF)

(24) *ƛ̓é̓ƛ̓zm xéʔe tk scúw e záq̓m tuw e píx̣m.*
[**ƛ̓é**<ƛ̓>z-m xéʔe **t**=**k**=**s-cúw**] [**e**=záq̓-m]
[**easy**<DIM>-CTR.MID DEM **OBL**=**DET**=**NMLZ-do**] [**D/C**=bake.bread-CTR.MID]
tuw= [**e**=píx̣-m]
than= [**D/C**=hunt-CTR.MID]
'It's easier to bake bread than to hunt.' (VF)

As with (20) to (22), the data in (23) to (24) count as infinitives because they lack the nominalizer and an associated possessive or subjunctive subject clitic: these are the criteria which Davis (2020) and Kroeber (1999:220) both argue to be indicative of non-finiteness.

4.2 Infinitives with transitive predicates

A second finding of this study is that infinitival clauses seem to allow transitive subject morphology besides the relative agent marker found by Kroeber (1997; see also (20)).

(25) *x̣əkstés e x záq̓es e səpəlíl ɬ Brent.*
x̣ək-s-t-és [**e**= [**x**=záq̓-**e**-**s** e=səpəlíl]]
know-CAUS-TR-3ERG [**D/C**= [**IPFV**=bake.bread-**DIR**-**3ERG** DET=bread]]
ɬ=Brent.
DET.REM=Brent
'Brent knows how to bake bread.' (VF)

[3] In (24), there is no imperfective, or at least I did not hear one when transcribing, in either infinitival clause, even though Kroeber (1999:220) argues it is "always present". Nonetheless, I propose that these cases are indeed infinitives, since they are missing the nominalizer, possessive subject clitics, and subjunctive clitics.

(26) *x̣əksténe e x q̓ʷəyténe e sqyéytn.*
x̣ək-s-t-éne [**e**= [**x**=q̓ʷəy-**t-éne** e=s-qyéytn]].
know-CAUS-TR-1SG.ERG [**D/C**= [**IPFV**=cook-**TR-1SG.ERG** DET=NMLZ-salmon]]
'I know how to cook salmon.'

(27) ? *x̣əksténe e x záq̓ne e səpəlíl.*
x̣ək-s-t-éne [**e**= [**x**=záq̓-**n-e** e=səpəlíl]].
know-CAUS-TR-1SG.ERG [**D/C**= [**IPFV**=bake.bread-**DIR-1SG.ERG** DET=bread]]
Intended: 'I know how to bake bread.'
Consultant's comment: "You probably could… *x̣əksténe e x záq̓ne e səpəlíl*…I don't know… I mean I've heard people say it. I guess you could, yes."

The data in (25) to (27) seem to show that infinitives are able to have transitive subject suffixes in environments where the infinitive is selected by a transitive epistemic predicate. This is permitted in St'át'imcets (Davis 2020; see (2)).

It is worth noting that the intransitive forms of these infinitives are possible, though with oblique marked objects as is typical of objects of intransitive predicates:

(28) *y̓é e x záq̓m te səpəlíl.*
y̓é [**e**= [**x**=záq̓-**m** **t**=e=səpəlíl]].
good [**D/C**= [**IPFV**=bake.bread-**CTR.MID** **OBL**=DET=bread]]
'It's good to bake bread.'

(29) *x̣əksténe e x záq̓m te səpəlíl.*
x̣ək-s-t-éne [**e**= [**x**=záq̓-**m** **t**=e=səpəlíl]].
know-CAUS-TR-1SG.ERG [**D/C**= [**IPFV**=bake.bread-**CTR.MID** **OBL**=DET=bread]]
'I know how to bake bread.'

(30) *cunwén̓ne xéʔe e x k̓ətníḿ te swéwł.*
cu-nwén̓-ne xéʔe [**e**= [**x**=k̓ətní-**ḿ**
do-NCT-1SG.ERG DEM [**D/C**= [**IPFV**=fish.with.line-**CTR.MID**
t=e=s-wéwł]].
OBL=DET=NMLZ-trout]]
'I'm able to fish for trout.' (*Literally:* 'I managed to fish for trout.')

However, Kroeber (1999:208) notes that the complements of "predicates of cognition" (e.g., *x̣ək-* 'know') can sometimes allow indicative clauses (clauses with inflection found in matrix clauses) without an introductory element for some speakers. He provides a single piece of data to support this claim. See (31) below. I have run into this same construction in my elicitations. See (32) below.

(31) ʔes-x̣ək-s-t-éne [kn-t-éxʷ].
STAT-know-CAUS-TR-1SG.ERG [help-TR-2SG.ERG]
'I know that you helped him.' (Kroeber 1999:208)

(32) *x̱əkpsténe q̓ʷəyténe e sqyéytn.*
x̱ək-p-s-t-éne [q̓ʷəy-t-éne e=s-qyéytn].
know-INCH-CAUS-TR-1SG.ERG [cook-TR-1SG.ERG DET=NMLZ-salmon]
'I know how to cook salmon.' (VF)

I propose that the cases (25) to (32) are infinitives because they lack the nominalizer, even though they have transitive subject inflection. This follows Davis (2020) who argues that the only criteria for non-finite clauses in St'át'imcets are the lack of the nominalizer and of the possessive subject enclitics. Therefore, transitive subject suffixes are permitted in infinitives. Davis (2020) distinguishes between finite nominalized clauses and infinitives in St'át'imcets by postulating a functional projection between CP and TP with the feature [±Finite]. Under this analysis, the lack of the nominalizer and possessive subjects is what makes the clause non-finite.

If this analysis is extended to Nłeʔkepmxcín, the simple lack of nominalization in these cases is what makes the complement clause an infinitive. Since the three subordinate clause types generally have the same syntactic behavior in Nłeʔkepmxcín, there is no reason why the analysis cannot be extended to account for the behavior of infinitives in both languages, making the lack of the nominalizer and subject clitics enough for the data in (25) to (32) to be true infinitives.

5 Conclusion

In this short paper, I have presented new data that show that (contrary to Kroeber 1999) intransitive predicates in Nłeʔkepmxcín are able to take infinitival complements, and that transitive predicates in infinitival complements permit transitive subject suffixes. This is consistent with the finding in Davis (2020) on St'át'imcets that the only things necessarily missing in infinitives are the nominalizer and associated possessive clitic subjects.

For future work, one thing to look at is whether or not the approximative predicate in Nłeʔkepmxcín is able to take an infinitival complement like its cognate in St'át'imcets and if so, whether it shows the same syntactic behavior in both languages. Further study is also needed to determine whether evaluative predicates permit infinitives with transitive subject suffixes, and whether the some of the data presented can be replicated with speakers of other dialects of Nłeʔkepmxcín.

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