

the non-perfective suffix(es) of Columbian (salish)

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I. Non-perfective aspect

Columbian is a language belonging to the Interior of the Salishan language family of northwestern North America. It was originally spoken in an area of central Washington State along the Columbia River and its tributaries approximately from the site of Priest Rapids Dam north to the mouth of the Methow River. Present-day speakers reside primarily on the Colville Indian Reservation of north-central Washington, and have intermarried heavily with other peoples, particularly Colvilles. At the present time, there are fewer than ninety speakers of Columbian, all over fifty years of age. The phonological system includes the following contrasting segments: **p p' t t' c c' ʔ k k' k^w k^w' q q' q^w q^w' ʔ s ʃ x x^w ʂ ʂ^w h h^w h m m' n n' l l' r r' y y' w w' ʕ ʕ' ʕ^w ʕ^w'**; **i u ə a i u ə a** (i u ə a are pronounced with retracted tongue root, and cause retraction of neighboring consonants, notably **s c l l'**, which are otherwise somewhat palatal; **c c' ʔ** are affricates). The most important morphological categories of Columbian are aspect and person.

In attempting to come to grips with the aspect system of Colombian¹, it is crucial to achieve an understanding of two suffixes, **-míx** and **-əx^w**. These had long seemed to me to be intransitive middle and active, respectively, non-perfective markers. The situation became very unclear, however, when it was 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 **-míx** and **-əx^w** is largely phonologically conditioned, and that **-əx^w** is derived historically from **-míx**, 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 reasonably accounted for.

1. Circumstances of occurrence

Either **-míx** or **-əx^w** 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 **kał-s-**). The perfective middle suffix **-m** is lost (or is not used alternatively, it fuses with the **m** of **-míx**) before these suffixes, hence non-perfective intransitives are not marked for middle.

1.1. Variants and distribution

The stress status of **-míx** is somewhat unusual in terms of stress assignment in Colombian. Normally, a suffix will either be strong, weak, or variable in terms of stress assignment to a root or suffix, and unstressed vowels are deleted. But **-míx** 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 **-əx^w**) with a vowel, **-mɔx**. The basic distribution of **-míx** is following weak stems the stressed vowel of which (in perfective forms, where no strong or variable suffix occurs) is **ǎ**. After other stressed vowels, i.e. after strong stems, **-əx^w** occurs, and

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1.3. -míx

-míx occurs primarily when the stressed vowel of the perfective stem is *ǿ*; these are all weak stems.

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|------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|
| (9) | t'ǿpm | "it thundered" | / | kast'ǿpmíx | "it's going to thunder" |
| (10) | xǿllkm | "it spun, it turned" | / | cxǿllkmíx | "it's spinning, it's turning" |
| (11) | lǿmm | "he stole" | / | kaslǿmmíx | "he's going to steal" |
| (12) | tǿmx^w | "it's worn, it's ragged" | / | stǿmx^wmíx | "it became worn out" |
| (13) | mǿx^wt | "he laughed" | / | sacmǿx^wtmíx | "he's laughing" |
| (14) | c'ǿx^wǿx^w | "it leaked out" | / | kasc'ǿx^wǿx^wmíx | "it's going to spill" |
| (15) | ?ǿh^wa? | "he had a cold" | / | kas?ǿh^wa?míx | "he's catching a cold" |

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

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|------|-------------------------|------------------------|---|------------------------------|------------------------|
| (16) | k^wíym | "he hunted" | / | kask^wíymíx | "he's going to hunt" |
| (17) | c'íyt | "he paddled, he rowed" | / | kasc'íytmíx | "he's going to paddle" |

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

- | | | | | | |
|------|---------------|-----------------|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (18) | ?acwí? | "it's finished" | / | kaswi?míx | "it's going to grow (of a plant)" |
|------|---------------|-----------------|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|

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

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|------|-------------------------|------------------|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| (19) | cǿxp | "it caught fire" | / | kascǿxpmíx | "it's going to burn" |
| (20) | hǿmp | "it wore out" | / | kashǿmpmíx | "it's going to wear out" |
| (21) | lǿx^wp | "he got hurt" | / | slǿx^wpmíx | "he's getting hurt" |

However, **-p** is only one variant of the inchoative morpheme -the one that occurs after weak roots (mostly with *ǿ*). With strong roots (usually, but not always, with vowels other than *ǿ*), the variant is **-?**- infixes between the (stressed) vowel and the following consonant (i.e. C₂ of the root). Since these strong-root inchoatives have vowels other than *ǿ*, one would expect their non-perfectives to take **-ǿx^w**. But they do not, they take **-míx**. The explanation for this apparent exception in the distribution of **-míx** is that the infixes **-?**- 'inchoative' converts strong stems to weak².

² I owe this insight to Laurence C. Thompson, who notes that this is precisely the effect of infixes **-?**- in Thompson.

- (22) **yáʔk'** "it burned" / **kasyaʔk'míx** "it's going to burn"
 (**yák'**- "burn up")
- (23) **p'íʔq** "it's ripe, it's cooked" / **sp'íʔqmíx** "it's getting ripe"
 (**p'iq**- "cook")
- (24) **nak''úʔt** "it's empty" / **snak''uʔtmíx** "it's becoming empty"
- (25) **náʔq'** "it rotted" (meat, etc.) / **snaʔq'míx** "it's rotting"
 (**náq'** "rotten meat or fish, bad odor")

1.4. -əx^w

-əx^w 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) **k'íʕ^wm** "he prayed" / **kask'íʕ^wwəx^w** "he's going to pray"
- (27) **ʔaʔác'x^wm** "he watched" / **sʔaʔác'xəx^w** "he was watching"
- (28) **h^waw'iyáltm** "she gave birth" / **kash^waw'iyáltəx^w** "she's about to give birth"
- (29) **ʔac'ítx** "he's asleep" / **sac'ítxəx^w** "he's sleeping"
- (30) **yúp'aʔ** "he played" / **kasyúp'aʔəx^w** "he's going to play"
- (31) **tk'íwix** "he climbed up" / **kastk'íwixəx^w** "he's going to climb"
- (32) **ʔáyx^wt** "he's tired" / **sac'áyx^wtəx^w** "he's getting tired"
- (33) **ʔq'íl'x** "he lay down" / **kasʔq'íl'xəx^w** "he's going to lie down"
- (34) **c'əlíx** "he stood up" / **kasc'əlíxəx^w** "he's going to stand"
- (35) **p'íqncút** "she cooked" / **kasp'íqncútəx^w** "she's going to cook"
- (36) **k^wənkst^wáx^w** "they got married" / **kask^wənkst^wwáx^wəx^w** "they're going to be married"
- (37) **xəst^wíl'x** "he got well" / **kasxəst^wíl'xəx^w** "he's going to get better"
- (38) **wəlq^wátk^w** "he drank" / **kaswəlq^wátk^wəx^w** "he's going to drink"

1.5. Apparent exceptions

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) **ʔúp^wm** "he sucked up liquid" / **kasʔúp^wmx** (sic) "he's going to suck up liquid"
kasʔúpəx^w

(40) **çúşkştm** "it rattled" / **kaşçuşkştmíx** (sic) "it's rattling"
kaşçuşkştəx^w

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) **h́aw'iym** "he worked" / **kashaw'iymíx** "he's going to work"

(42) **h́aw'w'i** "he was born" / **kashaw'w'imíx** "he's going to be born"

(43) **h́al'x^w** "it's frozen" / **kashal'x^wmíx** "it's going to freeze"

(44) **yáŋ'ŋ'** "they gathered,
they met" / **scyaŋ'ŋ'míx** "they're gathering,
assembling"

(45) **ʔacq'áʔxn** "he has his shoe on" / **sq'aʔq'aʔxnmíx** "he put his shoes on"

(46) **tl śəc'éc's** "he got whipped" / **śəc'éc'səx^w** "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 **-əx^w** 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**.

II. Historical development

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 **-úl'əx^w** "ground, earth!" (from ***ulm'x^w**, and probably earlier ***-ul-m'ix^w**; cf. Colville **-úlaʔx^w**, where **ə** has lowered to **a** by regular development, Kalispel **-úleʔx^w**, Coeur d'Alene **-ul'əmx^w**, Shuswap **-úl'əx^w**, Thompson **//-uyəm'x^w//**, and Lillooet **-úl'm'əx^w**) and in **-əx^w** "person, people" (cf. Shuswap **-mx**, **-míx**, and the discussion below). Rather than being compensatory, the labialization of the final **x** might be by analogy with the development of ***-ulm'x^w** to **-úl'əx^w**, but there are problems in the reconstruction of **-x^w** in the source of both **-úl'əx^w** "ground, earth" and **-əx^w** "person, people".

III. Parallel developments

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

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| (47) sq'iy'míx | "school children" | (q'iy' - | "write") |
| (48) stəqmíx | "midwife: 'touch-doctor'" | (təq- | "touch") |
| (49) speqmíx | "gray jay" | (páq- | "gray"?) |
| (50) scəl'ámx | "Chelan people" | (cəl'án | "Lake Chelan") |
| (51) spuqímx | "Spokanes" | | |
| (52) sk^wáxcnəx^w | 'person of the Moses band" | (k^wáxcn | "Rock Island";
wáx- "live, reside") |
| (53) sháptnəx^w | "Nez Perce Indians" | | |
| (54) skícəʔəx^w | "Coeur d'Alenes" | | |
| (55) sc^wan'áytəx^w | "Stick-Indian" | | |
| (56) stk'ənłəʔálq^wəx^w | "Canadian" | (k'ənłúʔ | "over there"
-alq^w "tree, something long, line") |

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

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|--|-------------------------------------|
| (57) sqəl'tmíx | "man" |
| (58) yəlmíx^wm | "chief" |
| (59) nək^w'tmíx^w | "Fraser Valley Indians (Thompsons)" |

IV. Cognates in related languages

-míx and **-əx^w** 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 Colombian 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 **-aʔx** or **-x** alternating with **-míx**:, 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 **-m'š**, but their function is unclear (although certainly analogous to Colombian 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 Lillooet³ 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 **//-m'ix//** "definitive"; it "indicates an expert, extreme or full application, or emphasizes the essence of something". In Lillooet **-m'ix** 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 got its semantic development.

³ information on Lillooet is from Jan Van Eijk.

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