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' k k' k" k"' q q' q" q"' s s x x" x x" h h" h m m' n n' l l' r r' y y' w w' ŋ ŋ' ŋ" ŋ"'; i u a a (i u a a are pronounced with retracted tongue root, and cause retraction of neighboring consonants, notably s c 1 l', which are otherwise somewhat palatal; c c' k' are affricates). The most important morphological categories of Columbian are aspect and person.
In attempting to come to grips with the aspect system of Columbian1, it is crucial to achieve an understanding of two suffixes, -míx and -əxw. 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 farms, 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 -əxw is largely phonologically conditioned, and that -əxw 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 -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 kaš-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 -əxw) with a vowel, -mx. 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 ə. After other stressed vowels, i.e. after strong stems, -əxw occurs, and

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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

-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. 2. -mx

(1) ĭwám "they went, / kasîwámx "they are going (to go)"
they walked"
(2) ck’nám "he got something" / kaskc’námx "he's going to bring
something"
(3) nk’nám "he sang" / sacnk’námx "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 m of -mx. After this has happened, stress is stem-final, and -mx rather than -míx must occur. But the n-m merger is optional, some speakers preferring one, some the other variant. Without merger, -əxʷ must occur.

(4) nk’an’cínm "he sang a song" / kank’an’cím’x "he started to sing"
kank’an’cín’əxʷ
cascəqqcím x "he's going to land"
kascəqqcínəxʷ
cascəqqcínəxʷ
cascəqqcínəxʷ
(6) lu?pcín "he's thirsty" / kaslu?pcímx "he's going to get
thirsty"
kaslu?pcínəxʷ
(7) stəm’qín "he's deaf" / stəm’qímx "he's getting deaf"
stəm’qínəxʷ

Perhaps expectedly, this allowed variation results in some confused foams 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) láx’cnm "he cried" / sacláx’cnmx "he's crying"
sacláx’cnəxʷ
1.3. -míx

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

(9)  t'əpm  "it thundered"   / kast'əpmíx  "it's going to thunder"
(10) xəllkm  "it spun, it turned"   / cxəllkmíx  "it's spinning, it's turning"
(11) ləmm  "he stole"   / kasləmmíx  "he's going to steal"
(12) təmx  "it's worn, it's ragged"   / stəmxmíx  "it became worn out"
(13) máxət  "he laughed"   / sacməxtmíx  "he's laughing"
(14) c'əxəx  "it leaked out"   / kasc'əxəxmíx  "it's going to spill"
(15) əsəaʔ  "he had a cold"   / kasəəʔəmíx  "he's catching a cold"

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

(16)  kəiyəm  "he hunted"   / kaskəiyəmíx  "he's going to hunt"
(17)  c'iyət  "he paddled, he rowed"   / kasc'iyətmíx  "he's going to paddle"

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

(18) əcwíʔ  "it's finished"   / kswíʔmíx  "it's going to grow (of a plant)"

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

(19)  cəxp  "it caught fire"   / kascəxpíx  "it's going to burn"
(20)  həmp  "it wore out"   / kashəmpíx  "it's going to wear out"
(21)  ləxp  "he got hurt"   / sləxpíx  "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 -ʔ- 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 -əx". But they do not, they take -míx. The explanation for this apparent exception in the distribution of -míx is that the infixed -ʔ- 'inchoative' converts strong stems to weak².

² I owe this insight to Laurence C. Thompson, who notes that this is precisely the effect of infixed -ʔ- in Thompson.
(22) yá?k' "it burned" / kasya?k'míx "it's going to burn"  
(yák'- "burn up")

(23) p’i?q "it's ripe, it's cooked"/ sp’i?qmíx "it's getting ripe"  
(p’i?q- "cook")

(24) nak’ú?tl "it's empty" / snak’u?tmíx "it's becoming empty"

(25) ná?q' "it rotted" (meat, etc.) / sna?q'míx "it's rotting"  
(nóq' "rotten meat or fish, bad odor")

1.4. -əx"  

-əx" 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’íc"m "he prayed" / kaskíc"wəx" "he's going to pray"

(27) ?a?ác'xm "he watched" / s?a?ác'χəx" "he was watching"

(28) ʰaw'iyáltm "she gave birth" / kashaw'iyáltəx" "she's about to give birth"

(29) ?ac'ítx "he's asleep" / sac'ítxəx" "he's sleeping"

(30) yúp'a? "he played" / kasyúp'a?əx" "he's going to play"

(31) tk'íwx "he climbed up" / kastk'íwixəx" "he's going to climb"

(32) ?áyχ"t "he's tired" / sac'áyχ"təx" "he's getting tired"

(33) ʰq'il'x "he lay down" / kashq'il'əx" "he's going to lie down"

(34) c'əlix "he stood up" / kasc'əlìxəx" "he's going to stand"

(35) p’iqcncút "she cooked" / kasp’iqcncútəx" "she's going to cook"

(36) k"ə̃nsənt'áx" "they got married" / kask"ə̃nsəntvíəx" "they're going to be married"

(37) ʰə̃st'íl'x "he got well" / kashə̃st'íl'əx" "he's going to get better"

(38) wəlq’átk" "he drank" / kasməlq’átkəx" "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) ʰúpm "he sucked up liquid" / kashúpmx (sic) "he's going to suck up  
kashtúpməx" liquid"
(40) čuškštm "it rattled" / kashačuškštmíx (sic) "it's rattling"
    kashačuškšťxw

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 ə:

(41) háw'íym "he worked" / kasháw'íymíx "he's going to work"
(42) háw'w'i "he was born" / kasháw'w'imíx "he's going to be born"
(43) hál'x" "it's frozen" / kashál'x"míx "it's going to freeze"
(44) yáš'y' "they gathered, they met" / scyaš'y'míx "they're gathering, assembling"
(45) ?acq'áʔxn "he has his shoe on" / sq'aʔaʔxmníx "he put his shoes on"
(46) tl słač'óč's "he got whipped" / słač'óč'səxw "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 ə 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 ə. The Thompson cognates for 44 and 45 are weak, and Columbian does automatically lower ə to á before ?.

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" "ground, earth!" (from *ulm'x", and probably earlier *-ul-m'ix"; cf. Colville -uláʔx", where ə has lowered to a by regular development, Kalispel -uleʔx", Coeur d'Alene -ul'əmx", Shuswap -úl'əx", Thompson //úlamxʷ//, and Lillooet -úlm'əx") and in -əxw "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" to -úl'əx", but there are problems in the reconstruction of -x" in the source of both -úl'əx" "ground, earth" and -əxw "person, people".
III. Parallel developments

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

(47) \text{sq’iy’míx} "school children" (\text{q’iy} - "write")
(48) \text{stəqmíx} "midwife: 'touch-doctor'" (\text{taq} - "touch")
(49) \text{speqmíx} "gray jay" (\text{páq} - "gray"?)
(50) \text{scəl’ámx} "Chelan people" (\text{cəl’án} "Lake Chelan")
(51) \text{spuqímx} "Spokanes"
(52) \text{sk"ácxnəxw} 'person of the Moses band" (\text{k“ácxn} "Rock Island"; \text{wáx} - "live, reside")
(53) \text{sháptnəxw} "Nez Perce Indians"
(54) \text{skíceəxw} "Coeur d'Alenes"
(55) \text{se’ən’áytəxw} "Stick-Indian"
(56) \text{stk’ən’əxalq’əxw} "Canadian" (\text{k’əntú} "over there" -\text{alq} - "tree, something long, line")

This suffix should be reconstructed as *-\text{míx} (cf. Okanagan -\text{míx}, Shuswap -\text{míx}, -\text{mx} [KUIPERS, 1974], Coeur d'Alene -\text{mš} [REICHARD, 1938]), but there was also apparently a similar suffix *-\text{mix} in Proto-Salish, meaning perhaps "a group, cluster", but came to have meanings similar to *-\text{mix} in various languages. *-\text{mix} 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:

(57) \text{sqəl’tmíx} "man"
(58) \text{yəlmíx’m} "chief"
(59) \text{nak’tmíxw} "Fraser Valley Indians (Thompsons)"

IV. Cognates in related languages

-\text{míx} and -\text{əx} 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 -mix:, 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's, 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 Lilloet -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.
REFERENCES


