YUP'IK ROOTS AND AFFIXES

Marianne Mithun

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Marianne Mithun
University of California, Santa Barbara

Most of us have expectations about the kinds of meanings that are typically expressed in roots and those that are likely to be expressed in affixes. We expect roots to carry such meanings as 'hunt', 'eat', 'catch', and 'hit', and affixes to indicate such distinctions as number, tense, causation, and nominalization. To some extent our expectations reflect traditional dichotomies between content and function, or lexical and grammatical meaning. It has even been suggested that the dichotomy is so sharp as to be innate, and that the concepts expressible by grammatical markers constitute a specific, universal set. An insightful critique of this view is in Slobin to appear.

Certain languages indigenous North America, however, appear to contain affixes with root-like meanings, such as the Central Alaskan Yup'ik -ssur- 'hunt', -tur- 'eat', -te- 'catch' and -car(ar)te- 'hit'. The existence of forms such as these could lead us in several directions. One, taken by Baker and Allen in work on other Eskimo languages, would be simply to classify these morphemes as roots on the basis of their translations. A second would be to conclude that the functions we normally associate with affixes are not universal after all. A third would be to examine the functions of the morphemes in question more closely to see whether they are in fact perfectly equivalent to those of roots. This is the direction that will be taken here.

The uses of forms of this type will be investigated in Central Alaskan Yup'ik Eskimo. Material will be taken from conversations among members of the Charles family of Bethel and their friends, especially Mr. Nick Charles, Mrs. Elena Charles, their son Mr. George Charles, and their daughter Mrs. Elizabeth Charles Ali. I am particularly grateful to Mrs. Ali for her help in transcribing, translating, and discussing the material. An additional important resource has been the magnificent dictionary in Jacobson 1984a. It will be shown that though the closest English translations of the suffixes may be full verb roots, the Yup'ik forms serve specific functions that are distinct from those of roots.

1. Yup'ik word structure

The basic morphological structure of Yup'ik is straightforward. All nouns and verbs consist of a single root (traditionally termed a base), optionally followed by one or more derivational suffixes (postbases), and closing with an inflectional suffix complex (ending).
Formal differences between roots and suffixes are clear in Yup’ik. Roots always appear word-initially, while suffixes never do. Roots can serve as words alone or as the basis of longer words, while suffixes never stand alone nor serve as the basis of words. Roots constitute an open class of morphemes, while suffixes constitute a closed class. The root class has in fact been augmented regularly with borrowings, first from Russian (kass’aq ‘white person, priest’, kuuniq ‘horse’, kelipaq ‘bread’) and more recently from English (milek ‘milk’, püpiq ‘baby’, esip’uq ‘zipper’). Modern speakers even bring English roots into their Yup’ik as they speak.

(1) Yup’ik borrowed root: Nick Charles, speaker

\[ \text{tiiparuga-t-wa} \quad \text{imailngut} \]
\[ \text{tiipar-ngur-t}=\text{wa} \quad \text{ima-ite-ngur-t} \]
\[ \text{tape-many-PLURAL}=\text{evidently} \quad \text{contents-lack-PARTICIPIAL-PLURAL} \]

'It's obvious that the many tapes are empty.'

The class of suffixes, by contrast, contains no obvious loans.

Semantically, Yup’ik roots show meanings typical of roots cross-linguistically.

(2) Some typical Yup’ik root meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neqa</td>
<td>‘fish, food’</td>
<td>nere-</td>
<td>‘eat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qilak</td>
<td>‘sky, heaven, ceiling’</td>
<td>tallegte-</td>
<td>‘scratch’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atmak</td>
<td>‘backpack’</td>
<td>iter-</td>
<td>‘enter’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nayiq</td>
<td>‘seal’</td>
<td>naspaa-</td>
<td>‘try’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keggun</td>
<td>‘tooth’</td>
<td>qaner-</td>
<td>‘say’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equk</td>
<td>‘wood’</td>
<td>elli-</td>
<td>‘put’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angyaq</td>
<td>‘boat’</td>
<td>arrar-</td>
<td>‘descend’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irug</td>
<td>‘leg’</td>
<td>ivar-</td>
<td>‘look for’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ciun</td>
<td>‘car’</td>
<td>kipute-</td>
<td>‘buy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iglaq</td>
<td>‘esophagus’</td>
<td>kuime-</td>
<td>‘swim’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many Yup’ik suffixes show just the kinds of functions we expect of affixes.

(3) Some typical Yup’ik suffix meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-cuaraq</td>
<td>DIMINITIVE</td>
<td>-car-</td>
<td>CAUSATIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-sta</td>
<td>AGENTIVE NOMINALIZER</td>
<td>-u-</td>
<td>VERBALIZER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-k</td>
<td>DUAL NUMBER</td>
<td>-li</td>
<td>OPTATIVE MOOD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some suffixes appear only with noun stems, some only with verb stems, and some with either. The diminutive -cuaraq, for example, always follows noun stems (angyaq 'boat', angya-cuaraq 'little boat'). The causative -car- always follows verb stems (elit- 'to learn', elit-car- 'to teach'). The former past suffix -lleq can follow either noun or verb stems (angyaq 'boat', angya-lleq 'former boat'; nere- 'eat', nere-lleq = nerrleq 'the one who ate'). Some suffixes yield nouns, and others yield verbs. Thus the diminutive -cuaraq derives nouns from nouns ('boat' > 'little boat'), and the agentive nominalizer -sta derives nouns from verbs (cali- 'to work', calista 'worker'). The causative -car- derives verbs from verbs ('to learn' > 'to teach'), and the verbalizer -u- derives verbs from nouns (asveq 'walrus', asveru- 'to be a walrus').

There are a number of Yup'ik suffixes, however, that show somewhat unexpected meanings. (A full list of suffixes appears in the dictionary in Jacobson 1984a.)

(4) Less typical suffix meanings

- hur- 'hunt, check, look for'
- tur- 'eat, wear, use'
- ar- 'say'
- ci- 'buy'
- ninarqe- 'smell or taste like'
- liqe- 'catch a lot of ...'
- liur- 'work, play with, cook'
- miuyaar- 'speak the language of'
- gguir- 'go by way of ...'
- ngqerr- 'possess, have'
- kite- 'supply with'
- ksagute- 'acquire'
- ngqerr- 'have'
- kegeci- 'have good'
- (ng)ir- 'remove, deprive of'
- (ng)ite- 'lack'

- tur- 'fetch, gather'
- te- 'obtain, catch game'
- car(ar)te- 'hit on the ...'
- ir(ar)te- 'hurt'
- ngirar- 'have cold ...'
- ite- 'encounter'
- liyar- 'participate in'
- kuar- 'go by way of'
- virte- 'go to ...'
- li- 'make'
- kluute- 'have, claim'
- nge- 'acquire'
- lir- 'have lots of ...'
- (ng)illige- 'to lack'
- (ng)i:rite- 'lack'

Their meanings seem distinctly root-like. Yet they clearly qualify as suffixes on structural grounds. They always follow roots, never occur in isolation, and never serve as the basis of words. A closer look at their uses shows that they differ from roots functionally as well. They express elements of meaning that are routinely combined with others into single concepts represented by single words. This packaging of meaningful elements into words occurs for both cognitive and communicative reasons. The suffixes may function on a lexical level to create vocabulary, labels for recurring, nameworthy concepts. They may also function on a discourse level to manage the flow of information through time.
2. Lexical function: semantic components of nameworthy concepts

Certain semantic elements converge so often in the experience of speakers that they come to be processed as a single idea rather than a series of details. Speakers of American English, for example, tend to process a term like *dishwasher* all at once as a label for a single concept, rather than moving mentally through a sequence of individual thoughts of dishes, general scrubbing, and appliances. Since the inventory of recognizable concepts in a culture can change rapidly over time, speakers need devices for creating new labels for new ideas. Many of the verb-like suffixes of Yup’ik serve this purpose.

The special lexical function of suffixes can be seen by comparing their uses with those of full roots of similar meaning. Among the Yup’ik suffixes, for example, is -ar- ‘say’.

(5) Yup’ik suffix -ar- ‘say’: Elizabeth Ali, speaker

cama-i-arpek’naku
camai-ar-peke-na-ku
hello-say-not-subordinative-/3sg
‘he didn’t greet him’

The combination ‘hello-say’ is readily conceivable as a single idea ‘greet’, appropriately expressed by a single word in both Yup’ik and English. Yup’ik also contains a number of verb roots for speaking. The use of the root *qaner*- ‘say, speak’ can be seen in (6).

(6) Yup’ik root *qaner*- ‘say’: Elena Charles, speaker

‘[When I was going to cook,]
iatiin
tiiti-\n
daddy-2sg/3sg
your Dad,

qanuettlruaqawaten
qaner-ute-llru-ar-ka waten
say-to-past-indicative-1sg/3sg like this
I said to him,

["Well then those people, will they be coming?"]'
It is easy to see why a full root was used in (6) rather than the suffix: it would hardly be appropriate to conflate all of the material I said to him, "Well then those people, will they be coming?" into a single word. This is not a recurring concept that needs a name.

The same vocabulary-building function can be seen with suffixes to verb roots. Both the suffix -caar- and the root naspaa- can be translated 'try'. The suffix -caar- is used when the trying is packaged as an element of a larger idea. In (7), part of a narrative prompted by the film 'The Pear Story', the suffix constitutes part of a complex verb stem 'trying to do well', translated into the single English word 'carefully'.

(7)  Yup'ik suffix -caar- 'try': Elizabeth Ali, speaker

'[A man in a tree was picking fruit,]

issratmuni,  elliliuki,  pingegcaarluki.
issrate-mun  elli-lu-ki  pi-nqegg-caar-lu-ki.
basket-ALLATIVE  put-SUBORDINATIVE-3SG  do-well-try-SUBORDINATIVE-3SG
putting it carefully into a basket.'

The root counterpart naspaa- 'try', by contrast, is used when the speaker deems the trying worthy of individual attention. On a hunting trip, Mrs. Charles was faced with the task of bringing a moose down a considerable distance to the boat. The task was daunting, since her husband could not do heavy work due to a heart condition, and she is a small person. She used the full root naspaa- to highlight the trying, necessitated by the challenge.

(8)  Yup'ik root naspaa- 'try': Elena Charles, speaker

Naspaalua  atrauaurtatua
naspaa-lu-a  atraarte-gur-taratua
try-SUBORDINATIVE-1SG  descend-with-repeatedly-going-to-INDICATIVE-1SG
'I would try to bring it down.

[And, just as I was going to take it,
I began to pray.
Since I am not strong,
Mary would assist me.]

What constitutes a nameworthy concept is of course often culture-specific. We might expect, for example, that a language like Yup'ik would contain a large inventory of vocabulary items pertaining to hunting. It is not surprising that a suffix should exist for deriving labels for hunting and gathering activities. The suffix -ssur-/cur- 'hunt' can be seen in (9) in the term for 'moosehunting'.

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(9) Yup'ik -ssur- ‘hunt’: Elena Charles, speaker

Tuntuvagcurqamta     anglanilarth,
tuntuvag-cur-qa-mta     anglani-lar-tu-a
mooose-hunt-contingent-1.pl have.fan-customarily-INDICATIVE-1SG
'I enjoy myself when we go moosehunting.'

A survey of the range of words in which this suffix occurs points to a subtle but important semantic difference between Yup'ik roots and suffixes. Although the Yup'ik suffixes may often be translated with English verb roots, the meanings of the suffixes are often less specific and more diffuse than those of roots. As can be seen in (10), the suffix -ssur-/cur- means not only 'hunt', but also 'seek' and 'check (game capturing implements)' (Jacobson 1984a:44).

(10) Generality of meaning of -ssur-: Jacobson 1984a: 449

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kayangussurtuq</td>
<td>'he's looking for eggs'</td>
<td>kayangu</td>
<td>'egg'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nayircurtuq</td>
<td>'he's seal-hunting'</td>
<td>naviq</td>
<td>'seal'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nequrtuq</td>
<td>'he's fishing'</td>
<td>neqa</td>
<td>'fish'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuvyassurtuq</td>
<td>'he's checking the fishnet'</td>
<td>kuvya</td>
<td>'fishnet'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kapkaanarcurtuq</td>
<td>'he is checking traps'</td>
<td>kapkaarnaq</td>
<td>'trap'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other suffixes show similar ranges of meanings. From the examples in (11), one might conclude that the suffix -liur- is translatable as 'brush', 'cook', 'chop', 'work', and 'cut'. In fact its meaning is considerably more general, along the lines of 'deal with'.

(11) Generality of meaning of -liur-: Jacobson 1984a: 485

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kegguteliurtuq</td>
<td>'he's brushing his teeth'</td>
<td>keggun</td>
<td>'tooth'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qusngiliurtuq</td>
<td>'she's cooking reindeer meat'</td>
<td>qusngiq</td>
<td>'tinder'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eqiurtuq</td>
<td>'he's chopping wood'</td>
<td>equk</td>
<td>'wood'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kipusviliurtuq</td>
<td>'she's working at the store'</td>
<td>kipusvik</td>
<td>'store'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neqeliurtuq</td>
<td>'she's cutting fish'</td>
<td>neqa</td>
<td>'fish'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The suffix -tur- appears to be translatable as 'eat', 'wear', 'take', 'smoke', and even 'think'. The suffix actually contributes relatively little semantic content of its own to the verbs in which it occurs beyond verbalization. A closer approximation to its meaning might be 'have', as in 'have some ice cream', 'have a jacket', 'have Communion', 'have a smoke', or 'have a thought'.

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(12) Generality of meaning of {-tur-}: Jacobson 1984a: 576

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Affix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>akutarturtuq</td>
<td>'he’s eating Eskimo ice cream'</td>
<td>akutaq</td>
<td>tur-</td>
<td>'mixture'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atkugurtuq</td>
<td>'he’s wearing a parka'</td>
<td>atkuk</td>
<td>tur-</td>
<td>'parka'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>augurtuq</td>
<td>'he’s taking Communion'</td>
<td>auk</td>
<td>tur-</td>
<td>'blood'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puyurturtuq</td>
<td>'he’s smoking'</td>
<td>puyuq</td>
<td>tur-</td>
<td>'smoke'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>umyuurturtuq</td>
<td>'he is thinking'</td>
<td>umyuq</td>
<td>tur-</td>
<td>'mind'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This generality, abstractness, and diffuseness of meaning are exactly what we should expect of suffixes in light of what we know about processes grammaticization, by which independent roots evolve into grammatical affixes over time. As is well known, the roots that are most likely to undergo grammaticization in the first place are those that tend to occur frequently in speech. The more general the meaning of a root, the more contexts in which it will appear. This frequency of use leads to the routinization of complex forms, the essence of grammaticization. Once complex forms are created, the individual semantic identities of the constituent morphemes become less salient. They absorb some of the meaning of the roots with which they are associated, which in turn leads to their semantic diffuseness.

Unlike roots, these suffixes serve primarily to create lexical items. They vary widely in productivity. Some occur with large numbers of roots and are easily used to derive new labels, while others occur with only a few. The labels are lexicalized: learned, stored, and used as units. Speakers tend to know not only whether a new combination could be formed, but also whether a particular combination already exists or not. The suffix -tur- 'eat', for example, would seem to be easily combinable with a root like neqa ‘fish’. Yet when Mr. Charles was asked whether he had ever heard the word nequrturtuq, he gave an interesting answer.

(13) Lexicalization: -tur- ‘eat, wear, use’

*Nequrturtuq.

neq-e-tur-tu-q

fish-eat-indicative-3sg

? ‘He’s eating fish.’

George Charles: "Eating fish ... That’s the impression I’m getting. It almost could be. You know, it sounds pretty right to me for some reason. That’s one thing about Yup’ik, you can create new words."

In later discussion, the family noted that the word probably did not exist because speakers would normally choose to be more specific, identifying the particular kind of fish eaten. The root neqa ‘fish’ is also used for ‘food’. The combination in (13) would be akin to an English construction ‘he’s food-eating’.
3. Discourse function: pragmatic subordination

Yup’ik suffixes also serve functions beyond the creation of lexical items. Many are used to regulate the flow of information through discourse.

A substantial proportion of the Yup’ik verb-like suffixes have meanings like ‘exist’, ‘be absent, ‘have’, and ‘lack’.

(14) Yup’ik suffixes of presence and absence

-\text{tar}- & ‘exist’ & -\text{llite}- & ‘encounter’  
-\text{ngqerr}- & ‘have’ & -\text{lir}- & ‘have lots of’  
-\text{nge}- & ‘acquire’ & -\text{ksagute}- & ‘acquire’  
-\text{kiute}- & ‘have taken possession of’ & -\text{li}- & ‘make’  
-\text{kiur}- & ‘prepare’ & -\text{kite}- & ‘supply’  
-\text{ngir}- & ‘be deprived of, remove’ & -\text{igr}- & ‘take along’  
-\text{ngicag}- & ‘lack, need’ & -\text{ngite}- & ‘have no’

These suffixes provide little information beyond indicating the presence or absence of the referents of the noun roots they follow: their existence or coming into existence, arrival on the scene, absence, or departure. In themselves, they are hardly worthy of special attention. As has been noted by Chafe (1994: 108-119) and others, speakers tend to present one significant new idea at a time. It makes perfect sense to package reference to an object and its presence together in a single word.

The discourse function of these suffixes can be seen by comparing their occurrence in connected speech with that of roots of similar meaning. Both the suffix -\text{ngqerr}- and the root \text{pike}-, for example, can be translated ‘have’. The suffix appears in (15). Mrs. Charles had reported that their outboard motor would not start, and they were wondering how to cross the river. The purpose of the sentence was to remind listeners of another boat.

(15) Yup’ik suffix -\text{ngqerr}- ‘have’: Elena Charles, speaker

\text{Icugg}, \quad \text{Frankie} \quad \text{angyang\text{ngqerr}-}  
\text{icugg} \quad \text{Frankie} \quad \text{angya-\text{ngqerr}-lu-ni}  
\text{remember} \quad \text{Frankie} \quad \text{boat-\text{have}-subordinative-3sg}

‘Remember, Frankie had a boat.’

A use of the root counterpart can be seen in (16). Mrs. Charles was describing a family trip along the Holitna river, where they had come upon a beautiful pair of land otters. Her husband asked their son to shoot them.
Yup'ik root *pike* ‘to have, own’: Elena Charles, speaker

'[And Frankie was asked to shoot. He did not want to shoot them. He said that they were a family. He did not want to shoot them. He did not want to cause grief for their relatives.]

wii  piksugyaaqlukek  cakneq
wii  pike-yug-yaaqe-lu-kek  cakneq
I own-want-actually-subordinative-r/3du  very.much
I very much wanted to have them.'

The full verb stem *pike*- in the last line focuses attention on the ownership. The birds had already been established as part of the scene.

The subordinate status of these suffixes has an interesting consequence in the domain of reference. Roots of morphologically complex constructions are usually assumed to be opaque to reference. The English word *garden-er*, for example, does not imply reference to a specific garden. Similarly, if I said The roast was drying out so I grabbed a turkeybaster and moistened it, it would not be concluded that I had basted a turkey. Interestingly, the Yup’ik suffixes do not necessarily block reference in this way. The verb in the first line in (17), for example, ‘cross-make’, brings into existence a cross. The cross, mentioned for the first time here, was referred to twice in the following line with the pronominal suffix -ku ‘it’.

Yup’ik reference: Elena Charles, speaker

kelistacuairilua
kelistar-cuarar-li-lu-a
cross-little-make-subordinative-1sg
'I made a little cross.

qelengluku-ll’  elliluku  tua-vet
qelengte-lu-ku=llu  elli-lu-ku  tua-vet
put-subordinative-r/3sg=too  there-to
pleat-subordinative-r/3sg=too  put-subordinative-r/3sg  there-to
After bending it, I placed it there.'

The grammatically subordinate status of Yup’ik suffixes is also exploited to adjust the flow of information dynamically over the course of speech, as ideas become established and familiar. Information may be backgrounded in suffixes once it has become an established, accessible element of the scene and is no long worthy of a special focus of attention at each mention. The passage in (18) below, like others cited here, was transcribed with one intonation unit per line. Mrs. Charles first introduced the idea of beginning or starting out
with the full root *ayagnir*- in line b. In the following line she carried this now established idea along simply with the suffix -nge-, subordinate to the stem expressing making objects to sell.

(18) Yup’ik root *ayagnir-* and suffix -nge- ‘begin’: Elena Charles, speaker

a       tua-i               wani-wa-gguq
        tua-i               wani=wa=gguq
        so                   here=EMPHATIC=EVIDENTIAL
‘Right now,

b       *ayagnirhua,*        
       *ayagnir-lu-a*       
       begin-SUBORDINATIVE-1SG
       I’m getting started.

c       *akikiungeqatartua.* 
       *aki-kiu-nges-qatar-tu-a.*
       money-prepare-begin-FUTURE-INDICATIVE-1SG
       I’m going to start making objects to sell.’

In light of this understanding of the potential backgrounding effect of suffixes, one set of Yup’ik constructions seems at first perplexing. These are verbs in which the main meaning is contributed by suffixes, such as *pi-te-* ‘thing-catch’ = ‘take game’, or *pi-qerre-* ‘do-suddenly’. The roots *pi* ‘thing’ and *pi-* ‘do’ have almost no semantic content. Constructions such as these actually serve to confirm the necessity of distinguishing the two kinds of functions suffixes may serve: lexical and pragmatic. The suffixes in ‘take game’ and ‘do suddenly’ are functioning on the lexical level to build vocabulary, rather than on the discourse level to background information.

We might wonder why members of a society such as that of the Yup’ik should use a derived construction with a dummy root (*pi-te-* ‘thing-get’) for something as important as hunting. The answer probably lies in identification of basic level concepts. Presumably when Yup’ik speakers talk about catching game, they usually specify the kind of game obtained: *nayirtuq* ‘he seal-caught’, *neqtuq* ‘he fish-caught’. If a hunter got a moose, he would not simply say that he had caught game. General game catching is not a basic-level concept. It is derived, a generalization over various kinds of catching. The verb *pite-* in fact normally appears in expressly general contexts.

Tang pitesciigananuk
tang pi-te-sciigate-na-nuk
see thing-catch-unable-SUBORDINATIVE-3.DU
‘You see, we could not catch anything.’

Individual suffixes are not necessarily confined to just the lexical or just the discourse function. Some suffixes do tend to serve primarily as vocabulary building devices, such as -cur- 'hunt', -tur- 'eat/wear/use', -ninarg- 'smell or taste of', -car(ar)te- 'hit on the N', and -miyaar- 'speak the language of the inhabitants of N'. Others tend to function primarily to regulate the flow of information in discourse, such as -tar- 'exist' and -ngqerr- 'have'. Some suffixes can function either way, however, such as -li- 'make'. Many nameworthy activities involve making things: kuvviaaliuq 'she is making coffee', maqiuq 'she is taking a steam bath' (maqag 'warmth'), negliuq 'she is preparing fish for the winter (neqa 'fish') (Jacobson 1984a: 481). At the same time, the making of an object can serve to introduce it onto the scene, as we saw in example (17) with the making of the cross: ‘I made a little cross. After bending it, I placed it there.’

A particular suffix may function on both levels at the same time or be ambiguous in its function. Being quick can be expressed in Yup’ik with either a suffix such as -arte- ‘fast, quickly, suddenly’ or a root such as cuka- ‘be fast, quick’. One day Mrs. Charles described a time when the family had been unable to catch any game. As they sat outside eating, a son suddenly noticed some moose across the way. The men grabbed their guns and rushed down to their boat, leaving Mrs. Charles behind. She raced down after the men, but failed to catch up to them. As she related the incident, she used the suffix -qerte- ‘quick’ in one line but the full root cuka- ‘be quick’ several lines later.

(20) Yup’ik suffix -qerte- and root cuka- ‘quick’: Elena Charles, speaker

Wiinga-ll’ atragercaaqlua
wiinga=llu atrar-qerte-yaqeq-lu-a
I=too descend-quickly-in.vain-SUBORDINATIVE-1sg
‘And I raced down to no avail,

[trying to catch up with them.]
I stared at them.
They went the shallow way,
operating the outboard motor,]

cukaluteng ayakpalrit.
cuka-lu-teng ayag-pag-lrii-t
quick-SUBORDINATIVE-3PL go-large-PARTICIPIAL-3PL
They were very fast, covering a great distance.’
The motivation behind her choice of the full verb root *cuka*—‘be quick’ in the last line is clear. Mrs. Charles wanted to focus specifically on the speed of the men, the reason for her failure to catch up to them. Her choice of the suffix *qerte*—‘quick’ in the first line could have been motivated by lexical considerations, discourse considerations, or both. The complex verb *atrar-qerte*—‘descend–quickly’ does package the action of rushing down as a single concept. Since the quickness was already part of the scene, having been introduced first with the sudden perception of the moose then the quick descent of the men, the suffix could also be serving to background accessible information.

4. Roots and affixes

The Yup’ik morphemes described here clearly qualify as suffixes on formal grounds. They never serve as words alone nor as the bases of words. They never occur word-initially, but always follow roots. They constitute a closed class. They differ from roots on functional grounds as well. Though they seem to have relatively concrete, root-like meanings, their meanings are in fact somewhat more general and diffuse than those of their root counterparts. The meanings are, furthermore, far from random. They serve specific functions in the packaging of information on the lexical level, the discourse level, or both. On the lexical level, they are used to create labels for name-worthy concepts. On the discourse level, they serve to background information that is low in semantic content or established.

Interestingly, the inventories of suffixes in the Eskimoan languages are strikingly similar to inventories of affixes in languages of the unrelated Tsimshian, Salishan, and Wakashan families, where they serve the same kinds of functions. They either represent elements of recurring concepts, such as ‘catch’, ‘make’, and ‘eat’, or indicate simply the presence or absence of an entity, such as ‘have’, ‘come’, or ‘lack’. All show the same generality and diffuseness of meaning.

(21) Nisgwa (Tsimshian) prefixes: Tarpent (1987:572-582)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>so-</td>
<td>‘pick/harvest/catch/process/make’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sin-</td>
<td>‘chase, go after, try to catch’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu-</td>
<td>‘get/claim’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>til-</td>
<td>‘be in charge of’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hi-</td>
<td>‘go to .. [a place]’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kim-</td>
<td>‘buy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sa-</td>
<td>‘make, cause’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ksa-</td>
<td>‘to remove’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x-</td>
<td>‘eat, drink, consume’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yu-</td>
<td>‘wield’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(22) Bella Coola (Salish) prefixes: Nater 1981:93-94

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tam-</td>
<td>‘make, construct’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tutu-</td>
<td>‘prepare, work on’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tun-</td>
<td>‘go to (place)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?us-</td>
<td>‘crave’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iix-</td>
<td>‘catch’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kat-</td>
<td>‘gather, collect, pursue, hunt’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?is-</td>
<td>‘gather, take in, consume’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?asi-</td>
<td>‘to consider the taste of’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
?un-  ‘be fond of’
?it-  ‘wear’
?as-  ‘have, contain, use’
kit-  ‘lack’
?anus-  ‘be deprived of’

?itt-  ‘speak the language of’
?us-  ‘don, put on’
XL-  ‘have, possess’
Kul-  ‘have much’

(23) Nootka (Wakashan) suffixes: Rose 1981

-ca·q  ‘prepare’
-i·c  ‘eat’
-‘(‘)inl  ‘serve’
-taq  ‘work on’
-‘(t)u·c  ‘be clothed in’
-pu·qs  ‘smelling of’
-′i·(x)  ‘come into the house’
-ni  ‘come home, arrive’
-(c)u·hta  ‘come out of woods’
-wita  ‘come out of vessel’
-a·wi·(x)  ‘find’
-ip  ‘get, obtain’
-(y)ini·p  ‘leave behind’
-k′a·(y)l  ‘absent, lacking’

-ci·h  ‘use as fuel’
-i·h  ‘try to get, catch’
-na·h  ‘seek’
-ka-p  ‘be sore in (body part)’
-pa·l  ‘tasting of’
-na:·l  ‘give a potlatch for’
-in  ‘come’
-wis  ‘come up to surface of water’
-h·wink  ‘use’
-na·k′  ‘have’
-ma·s  ‘bring home’
-ya·ta  ‘lacking’
-sim  ‘needing’

In all of the languages, the affixes contrast functionally with roots in similar ways. Some serve a primarily cognitive function, allowing speakers to package a single, recognizable concept in a single word. Others serve a primarily communicative function, allowing speakers to regulate the flow of information as they speak. Classifying these morphemes as roots simply on the basis of their English translations would obscure not only their special functions but also the discourse structures they create.

Notes

1I am grateful to Osahito Miyao and Steven Jacobson for helpful comments on this work.

The transcription system used here is the Yup’ik orthography developed at the Alaska Native Language Center in Fairbanks and used in most modern publications in and on the language. The plain voiceless stops p, t, k, q have their expected IPA values. The affricate c patterns with the stops and ranges between alveolar and palatal (č). There are two series of fricatives, voiced (v, l, s, y, g (ɣ), r (r̥), u (u̥), ur (u̥r) and voiceless (v̥ (f), ll (l̥), ss (s̥), gg (x̥), rr (x̥r), w (x̥w), urr (x̥r̥r)). Fricatives are automatically devoiced adjacent to another voiceless sound. There are also two series of nasals, voiced m, n, ng (ŋ) and the rarer voiceless m̥, n̥, ng (ŋ̥). There are three full vowels i, a, u, plus schwa (ø), written e.
Jacobson (1984b) points out interesting implications of the semantic emptiness of these roots. Various principles interact in Central Alaskan Yup'ik to ensure that roots are always stressed. The Yup'ik roots pi- ‘thing’, do-, ca- ‘what, something’, ‘do what, do something’, and kl-, however, constitute exceptions, and are classified as ‘stress-repelling’. As he notes, ‘These three bases are semantically the most abstract in the language, carrying little meaning of their own and serving merely as empty stems for the suffixes which follow them. Thus, the stress conspiracy keeps stress on the stem when the stem is semantically the most important part of the word, but if the stem is not semantically important, then stress is allowed to pass to the suffixes.’ (1984b:320)

References


