

Chapter 4 Nouns

1. Introduction

A few basic concepts that affect the form of nouns in Menominee were introduced in the last chapter, for example animacy and obviation. In this chapter we take a more in-depth look at those topics, as well as at number, locatives, diminutives, and possessives.

talk about what counts as a noun? Participles??? Defining nouns touched on in last chapter.

2. Number

Nouns in Menominee can be singular or plural. The singular does not have any suffixation (although see §5 for an exception to this), but the plural does carry a suffix. There are a number of forms that the plural can take, which are spelled out below.

2.1. Regular Plural Suffixation

The plural suffix for animate nouns is *-ak*, and the suffix for inanimate nouns is *-an*:

(1) Animate nouns:

āmōw ‘bee’; āmōwak ‘bees’
 mēqsemen ‘apple’; mēqsemenak ‘apples’
 netān ‘my daughter’; netānak ‘my daughters’

(2) Inanimate nouns:

maeqtekomen ‘acorn’; maeqtekomenan ‘acorns’
 mēn ‘blueberry’; mēnan ‘blueberries’
 nesēt ‘my foot’; nesētan ‘my feet’

2.2. Plural Suffixation with /o/

Some animate nouns end in *-ok* when they’re pluralized, and some inanimate nouns end in *-on*:

(3) Animate nouns:

anāēm ‘dog’; anāēmok ‘dogs’
 nekāētek ‘my knee’; nekāētekok ‘my knees’
 pawāhekanāhtek ‘ricing stick’; pawāhekanāhtekok ‘ricing sticks’

(4) Inanimate nouns:

sūniyanikamek ‘bank’; sūniyanikamekon ‘banks’

āyosawāhkwat ‘carrot’; āyosawāhkwaton ‘carrots’
 wāweyakaeqnen ‘tornado’; wāweyakaeqnenon ‘tornados’

You can think of this as just a variant form of the suffix, or you can think of it as having to do with the noun itself. We’ll talk about obviatives and locatives further below, but one of the things that Bloomfield noticed was that nouns that have plurals with /o/ instead of /a/ also have locatives and (for the animates) obviatives with /o/ instead of /a/. That led him to say that it wasn’t a fact about the suffixes, but rather about the nouns.

He analyzed such nouns as ending in a consonant plus a /w/. In the singular, because of the rule of final cluster simplification (discussed in Chapter 2), the /w/ drops. But in the plural, the /w/ stays, and the combination of the /w/ plus the /a/ of the suffix creates an /o/. (5) schematizes this analysis (read the arrow as “becomes”):

(5) Bloomfield’s analysis of suffixation with /o/:

Singular: anāēmw → anāēm ‘dog’ (because of final cluster simplification)

Plural: anāēmw + -ak → anāēmok ‘dogs’ (because of merger of the /w/ and the /a/)

2.3. Plural Suffixation with an Extra Consonant

Sometimes when the plural suffix is added to a noun, an extra consonant pops up. As (6) and (7) show, /k, n, s/, and /y/ seem to be the only possible consonants in such examples:

(6) Animate nouns:

kēsaeh ‘cedar boughs, cedar leaves’; kēsaehkak ‘cedar boughs, cedar leaves’¹

kēsoq ‘moon, month’; kēsoqnak ‘moons, months’

metāēmoh ‘woman’; metāēmohsak ‘women’

ohpāēn ‘potato’; ohpāēnyak ‘potatoes’

(7) Inanimate nouns:

nenāēh ‘my hand, arm’; nenāēhkan ‘my hands, arms’

nēnaeq ‘my hair (a single one)’; nēnaeqnan ‘my hair (all of it), my hairs’

nemūtīh ‘my bag’; nemūtīhsan ‘my bags’

onākes ‘sausage, baloney’; onākesyan ‘sausages, slices of baloney’

Again, Bloomfield treats these extra consonants as part of the noun rather than as part of the suffix. So he would provide an analysis like the following:

(8) Singular: metāēmohs → metāēmoh ‘woman’

Plural: metāēmohs + -ak → metāēmohsak ‘women’

¹ It looks like the singular and plural mean the same thing here, but there’s probably some difference that we don’t have information on. Also note that this is a word that can be animate or inanimate.

In other cases these nouns have an extra consonant as well as the *-ok* and *-on* forms of the plural, as in §2.2 above:

(9) Animate nouns:

maeqnakwah ‘badger’; maeqnakwahkok ‘badgers’
 nētekaeh ‘my sister, (girl) cousin’; nētekaehkok ‘my sisters, (girl) cousins’ (girl speaking)
 otāēqciah ‘crane’; otāēqciahkok ‘cranes’

(10) Inanimate nouns:

enāēnāpaeh ‘axe’; enāēnāpaehkon ‘axes’
 mahkāh ‘box’; mahkāhkon ‘boxes’
 napākāpaeh ‘shovel, spade’; napākāpaehkon ‘shovels, spades’

Just like the nouns we saw in §2.2, these plural forms can be analyzed as due to the basic form of the noun rather than the suffix – but in these cases we would say that the nouns have not two, but three final consonants:

- (11) Singular: maeqnakwahkw → maeqnakwah ‘badger’
 Plural: maeqnakwahkw + -ak → maeqnakwahkok ‘badgers’

To the best of my knowledge, these only occur with the sequence /hkw/ at the end of the word.

2.4. Plural Suffixation with the Extra Syllable /on/

A small number of inanimate nouns make their plurals with *-onan*:

(12) Inanimate nouns:

enāhpes ‘skirt, dress’; enāhpesonan ‘skirts, dresses’
 tāēnāhpes ‘dress’; tāēnāhpesonan ‘dresses’
 pakuahtaeh ‘belt’; pakuahtaehonan ‘belts’
 wīweniyāēhpes ‘apron’; wīweniyāēhpesonan ‘aprons’

There are about ten of these in Bloomfield’s *Lexicon*, and they are all inanimate. He does say (1962:115), however, that *pakuahtaeh* ‘belt’ can be either animate or inanimate, but does not provide the animate plural. Speakers I have asked about this word say that it is inanimate.

2.5. Plural Suffixation of Diminutives

Diminutives will be discussed below, in §5, but for now suffice it to say that they are forms that indicate that the noun in question is small or cute or beloved. Their formation is somewhat

irregular, but in the singular, many end in *-aeh*. When these nouns are pluralized, that *-aeh* drops off, and the regular plural suffix is attached:

(13) Animate diminutive nouns:

awāētokēhsaeh ‘worm’; awāētokēhsak ‘worms’
 maskūcīhsaeh ‘bean’; maskūcīhsak ‘beans’
 mēkaehsēhsaeh ‘bead’; mēkaehsēhsak ‘beads’

(14) Inanimate diminutive nouns:

pakāhcekāehsaeh ‘small hammer’; pakāhcekāehsan ‘small hammers’
 mēcemēhsaeh ‘meat’; mēcemēhsan ‘pieces of meat’
 nesētēhsaeh ‘my toe’; nesētēhsan ‘my toes’

This is explained below, in §5.

2.6. Other Patterns

Bloomfield (1962:114-117) has a section on what he calls “irregularities” in the formation of noun plurals. One irregularity that he comments on is no longer present in the speech of current-day speakers:

(15) Bloomfield (1962:114):

Singular: maeqtekw → maeqtek ‘tree, stick, wood’
 Plural: maeqtekw + -ak → maeqtekwak ‘trees, sticks, wood’

Apparently when Bloomfield was transcribing Menominee words, the speakers exceptionally did not reduce the /w/ of the noun and the /a/ of the suffix to /o/ in this particular word, but now they do:

(16) Modern-day speakers:

Plural: maeqtekw + -ak → maeqtekok ‘trees, sticks, wood’

A small number of nouns are analyzed by Bloomfield as having a consonant cluster /hs/ at the end, but instead of reducing it to /h/ (as we would expect from the rule of final cluster simplification), the cluster reduces to /s/:

(17) kōhkōs ‘pig’; kōhkōhsak ‘pigs’
 mōs ‘moose’; mōhsok ‘moose (pl.)’

The next word has a plural that looks like it might be built on a diminutive, but the singular does not have regular diminutive form:

(18) nemāehsoh ‘my grandfather’; nemāehsohmāehsak ‘my grandfathers’

And finally, there are two words which were borrowed from English that have completely irregular plurals:

- (19) panāēnas ‘banana’; panāēnas ‘bananas’ (no change between singular and plural; both seem to have an *-s* suffix on them)
 tamāētōh ‘tomato’; tamāētōhs ‘tomatoes’ (an *-s* suffix, presumably also borrowed from English)

However, it’s important to note that there is a lot of speaker variation on these two words, so some elders may pronounce both the singular and plural differently.

3. Obviation

obviation in possessives here or below?

4. Locatives

5. Summary: Classes of Nouns

We can summarize the major classes that nouns fall into as shown in Table 1, where “C” stands for ‘consonant’. *do locs fit in here? if not, move section to above §4*

	EXAMPLE		PLURAL	OBV.
regular	mēqsemen, maeqtekomen	apple, acorn	<i>-ak, -an</i>	<i>-an</i>
<i>w</i> -nouns	anāēm, sūniyanikamek	dog, bank	<i>-ok, -on</i>	<i>-on</i>
CC-nouns	metāēmoh, nenāēh	woman, my hand	<i>-Cak, -Can</i>	<i>-Can</i>
CC <i>w</i> -nouns	maeqnakwah, enāēnāpach	badger, axe	<i>-Cok, -Con</i>	<i>-Con</i>
<i>on</i> -nouns	pakuahtaeh	belt	<i>-onan</i>	n/a
diminutives	awāētokēhsaeh, mēcemēhsaeh	worm meat	<i>-ak, -an</i> replace <i>-aeh</i>	<i>-an</i> replaces <i>-aeh</i>

Table 1: Inflection Classes for Nouns

6. Diminutives

7. Possessives

Menominee nouns fall into two classes with respect to possession, the regular ones (which make up the vast majority), and the dependent ones (a much smaller class). We'll look at the regular set first, and then consider the dependent nouns.

7.1. Regular Possessives

7.2. Dependent Nouns