On the mass/count distinction in Ojibwe

Eric Mathieu
University of Ottawa

The classifier is an individualizer which performs the same function as a singulative affix in languages with the collective/singulative opposition (Greenberg 1972:26)

Upshot: echoing Plural inflection is classifier inflection ~ The singulative is classifier inflection

1. Introduction

1) “Or consider the Algonquian language Ojibway (Richard Rhodes 1990:153-4, and personal communications). Nouns which might be expected not to have a plural do in fact form plurals freely, interestingly with the unit reading and not with the sort reading. Thus mkwam 'ice' or 'piece of ice', mkwamig (plural) 'pieces of ice'. Rhodes is unable to find a noun that cannot be pluralized in Ojibway.” (Corbett 2000:87)

2) “In Ojibwa there is no grammatical distinction like the mass/count distinction of Indo-European. Thus mkwam can equally mean ‘ice’ or ‘a piece of ice’. Nihish can mean ‘water’ or ‘an amount of water.’” (Rhodes 1990:153)

Clear morphosyntactic effects in English, but not in Ojibwe? The case of Halkomelem Salish, a language which, like many other Native North American languages (Mithun 1988), has been argued to lack a grammaticized mass/count distinction (Wälchli 2007, 2008, see also Davis and Matthewson 1999 for Lillooet Salish).

Claim 1: Although Halkomelem Salish and Ojibwe share the property of systematic noun pluralisation, this property arises independently from the parameter setting proposed by Wälchli (2007, 2008). Although it is tempting to conclude from the fact that mass nouns can systematically be the target of pluralisation in Ojibwe that the language has no grammaticized mass/count distinction, this conclusion would be too premature.

Claim 2: Number in Ojibwe, although clearly inflectional, can also be used inherently (see Booij 1993, 1999 for the distinction between contextual and inherent inflectional morphology).1

Another value for the singulative is shown to be the diminutive. […]

2. Number as an inflectional category in Ojibwe

7) “In the vast majority of North American languages … only certain nouns have plural forms. In most of these, only nouns referring to human beings have plurals, or only some nouns referring to humans, often kin terms. (Multiple animals that are considered ‘sentient things,’ such as pets or characters in legends, are also often referred to by plural nouns) (…) The plurals that do exist are used only on some occasions, not every time multiple participants are discussed.” (Mithun 1988:212)

Plural marking is either split (e.g. Slave, an Athabaskan language spoken in parts of the Northern Territories, British Columbia and Alberta, Canada, Rice 1989) or it is totally optional (Halkomelem Salish, Wälchli 2008). According to Greenberg (1972:16): “there are a considerable number of Amerind languages […] which do not have measure constructions [including Ojibwe, Greenberg 1974]. Numerals occur directly both with nouns designating mass as well as countable objects.” Although the lack of a grammaticized mass/count distinction appears widespread in Native North American languages, there are notable exceptions. Mithun (1988) asserts that all nouns in Taos, Kiowa, Zuni, and the Algonquian languages are inflected for number.

8) a. English
b. Halkomelem Salish (cf. Wälchli 2008)

Claim 1: Although Halkomelem Salish and Ojibwe share the property of systematic noun pluralisation, this property arises independently from the parameter setting proposed by Wälchli (2007, 2008). Although it is tempting to conclude from the fact that mass nouns can systematically be the target of pluralisation in Ojibwe that the language has no grammaticized mass/count distinction, this conclusion would be too premature.

2.1 Plural marking is obligatory in Ojibwe

9) a. the three boy-s b. *the three boy

10) a. te thíxw swíweles DET three boy many DET NOM-berry 'the three boys’ b. qex te s-th’im ‘many berries’
2.2 Plural marking triggers agreement

Another pervasive property of inflectional plural marking is its ability to trigger agreement. (14)

a. These boys
b. *This boy

c. *These boy can sing.

d. *This boy can sing.

(15)

a. *niizh gwiizens
b. *niibina miin

c. *niizh gwiizens
b. *niibina miin

(16)

a. máy-t-êes
b. *mây-t-êe

c. *mây-t-êe
b. *mây-t-êes

(17)

a. maaba
gwinzens

b. maamig
gwinzens-ag

c. *maamig
gwinzens

(18)

a. maanda
baagan

b. maamin
baagan-an

c. *maamin
baagan

2.3 Plural marking is not possible inside compounds in Ojibwe

(20) a. baby-sitting #babies-sitting
b. key-ring #keys-ring

(21) a. tem-qoqo:
qo

b. tem-welëxes
wëxes

c. *tem-qoqo:
qo

(22) s-xep':i-tsel
xep

(23) a. aamoo-zinzibakwad
b. *aamoo-g-zinzibakwad

(24) a. ishkode-daaban
(25) a. ishkode-daaban

b. *iskode-n-daaban

(26) a. dog-ish #dog-s-ish
b. mother-ese #mother-s-ese

2.4 Plural marking is not possible inside derivational morphology

(27) a. p'eq' s-p'eq' s-
p'eq' (Halkomelem Salish)
white NOM-white NOM-white.PL
‘white’ ‘white spot on skin’ ‘white spots on skin’

b. th'ekw' s-th'ehk' s-
th'ekw' (Halkomelem Salish)
be sore NOM-CONT.sore NOM-sore.PL
‘be sore’ ‘sore’ ‘lots of sores’


(28) a. bkwenzh gan-ag
(29) a. wazas-win-an

b. *bkwenzh gan-ag

b. *wazas-win-an

4
2.5 Ojibwe has pluralia tantum
Wiltschko (2008) argues that, since number is not a grammatical category in Halkomelem Salish, no mismatches between form and meaning can arise.

(30) a. biwke DMAAGNAN ‘wood shaving’ (W)
   b. bootSAN ‘boots’ (from English boots, Odawa)
   c. e-baasgobjigamkIN ‘spring-tooth harrows’, a farm implement.
   (Valentine 2001:182)

2.6 Ojibwe has bare plurals
Since on Wiltschko’s (2008) analysis plural marking in Halkomelem is merged as a modifier, it is predicted that in that language the plural marking does not change the category of the noun it merges with. The HS noun is smaller than an #P. If the presence of some functional structure (such as #) is sufficient to turn a nominal predicate into an argument (Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002), bare nouns will be possible. This is the case in English.

(31) a. I saw bears.
   b. Bears saw me.

(32) a. tsel kw’ets-l-EXW *(te) {swiyeqe/di:wi:qe} (HS)
   ‘I saw the man/the men.’/ ‘I saw a man/man.PL
   b. t’it’e lem *(te) {slháli/síhléhláli}
   singing DET woman/woman.PL
   ‘The woman/women is/are singing.’/ ‘A woman/women is/are singing.’

(33) a. n-gii-MAAAG NENWAG. (Ojibwe)
   1SG-PAST-see-3PL men-3PL
   ‘I saw men.’
   b. NENWAG n-gii-MAAAM-IGOOG.
   men-3PL 1SG-PAST-see-3PL
   ‘Men saw me.’

2.7 Intermediate summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Halkomelem</th>
<th>Ojibwe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>obligatory plural marking</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obligatory agreement</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural inside compounds</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural inside derivational morphology</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bare plurals</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(34) SINGULAR PLURAL GLOSS
a. giin giinwaa ‘thou (SG) – you (PL)’
   wiin wiimwaa ‘he – they’
   maanda NANDA ‘this (one) IN proximal – these (ones) IN proximal’
   m- – -im m- – -nAAN ‘my – our (excl)’
   .... ‘his – their’
   b. GIiwe GIiweWAG ‘go home (PRES, 1/2/3 SG) – go home (PRES, 3PL)

Paradox: on the one hand, everything points to the view that in Ojibwe, number is a functional head rather than a modifier (number marking is obligatory, it triggers agreement, and it is not possible inside compound or derivational morphology). On the other, the fact that many mass nouns can be pluralised might be taken as evidence that number in Ojibwe is not an inflectional category and that a grammaticized mass/count distinction is absent in the language.

3. The status of the plural in Ojibwe
In the simplest cases, pluralisation in Ojibwe thus creates a series of discrete individuals. In (35a), ‘nuts’ means ‘more than one nut’ and the same goes for bagaan versus bagaagm in Ojibwe, (35b) and c are other examples of animate nominals while (36) introduces a list of inanimate nouns (IN).

(35) a. bagaan ‘nut’ – bagaagm ‘nuts’ AN
   b. miigwan ‘feather’ – miigwam ‘feathers’ AN
   c. maanadikoshens ‘goat’ – maanadikoshens ‘goats’ AN
   d. kwaawdawaaagan ‘ladder’ – kwaawdawaaagm ‘ladders’ IN
   e. ishkwandaam ‘door’ – ishkwandaam ‘doors’ IN
   f. makinin ‘moccasin’ – makinin ‘moccasins’ IN

3.1 Pluralised mass nouns in Ojibwe
In Ojibwe, mass nouns can easily be pluralised. This is true for animate nouns (37) and for inanimate nominals (38). In English, the pluralisation of these nouns is simply not possible. Some nouns in this list are collective rather than mass nouns. This is the case, for example, of (38i).

(37) a. maandaamin ‘corn’ – maandaamin ‘corn’ AN
   b. waabigan ‘clay’ – waabigan ‘clay’ AN
   c. annaatin ‘maple’ – annaatin ‘trees’ AN
   d. meshkosing ‘grass’ – meshkosing ‘grasses’ AN
   e. semaa ‘tobacco’ – semaa ‘tobacco’ AN
   f. zhooniya ‘money’ – zhooniya ‘money’ AN
   g. mikon ‘ice’ – mikon ‘ice’ AN
   h. mikon ‘ice’ – mikon ‘ice’ AN

(38) a. (a)ki ‘earth’ – (a)ki-in IN
   b. manoomin ‘rice’ – manoomin ‘rice’ AN
   c. azhashki ‘mud’ – azhashki ‘mud’ IN
   d. bikwesgah ‘bread’ – bikwesgah ‘breads’ IN
   e. assakamig ‘moss’ – assakamig ‘mosses’ IN
   f. maagan ‘cream’ – maagan ‘cream’ IN
   g. ziniibaakwad ‘sugar’ – ziniibaakwad ‘sugars’ IN
   h. bagianaanowi ‘air’ – bagianaanowi ‘airs’ IN
   i. ziipwebinga ‘garbage’ – ziipwebinga ‘garbages’ IN
   j. zhiwaabo ‘vinegar’ – zhiwaabo ‘vinegars’ IN
   k. zaawaa-mide ‘butter’ – zaawaa-mide ‘butter’ IN
   l. nenaabgaa ‘milk’ – nenaabgaa ‘milk’ IN
   m. naapaane ‘flour’ – naapaane ‘flour’ IN
   n. naapaane ‘flour’ – naapaane ‘flour’ IN
   o. baashkquinwag ‘jam’ – baashkquinwag ‘jams’ IN
   p. wiiyaas ‘meat’ – wiiyaas ‘meat’ IN
   q. miskhooon ‘hay’ – miskhooon ‘hay’ IN
   r. wiiyaas ‘meat’ – wiiyaas ‘meat’ IN
   s. giziibiigah ‘soap’ – giziibiigah ‘soaps’ IN
   t. giziibiigah ‘soap’ – giziibiigah ‘soaps’ IN
   u. wiiyaas ‘meat’ – wiiyaas ‘meat’ IN
   v. wiiyaas ‘meat’ – wiiyaas ‘meat’ IN
   w. miskhooon ‘hay’ – miskhooon ‘hay’ IN
   x. miskhooon ‘hay’ – miskhooon ‘hay’ IN
   y. wiiyaas ‘meat’ – wiiyaas ‘meat’ IN
   z. wiiyaas ‘meat’ – wiiyaas ‘meat’ IN
In Ojibwe, despite what is claimed in the quotes introduced in (1) and (2), not all mass nouns can be pluralised. My informants rejected pluralization of the nominals in (39). When prompted to pluralize ‘oil’ one speaker even protested, “but it’s a mass noun!”

(39) a. bimide ‘oil’ – *bimide-n IN
b. (a)niibiishaaboo ‘tea’ – *(a)niibiishaaboo-n IN
c. doodooshaaaboo ‘milk’ – *doodooshaaaboo-n IN
d. miskwi ‘blood’ – *miskwi-n IN
e. aamoo-ziznibaawad ‘honey’ – *aamoo-ziznibaawad-an IN
f. bangwi ‘ash’ – *bangwi-n IN
g. nbish ‘water’ – *nbish-in IN
h. negwiki ‘sand’ – *negwiki-n IN
i. mini ‘pu’ – *mini-n IN

3.2 Combination with numeral and quantifiers
Section 3 would not be complete if we did not briefly discuss the case of singular nouns that are interpreted not only as mass, but also as singular measure units.

(40) a. n-gii-waabam-aa mikom a’. n-gii-waabam-aa bezhig mikom.
  1SG-PAST-see-3 ice 1SG-PAST-see-3 one ice
  ’I saw ice/a piece of ice.’
  ’I saw a (specific) piece of ice.’
b. n-gii-waaband-aa manoomin b’. n-gii-waaband-aa bezhig manoomin.
  1SG-PAST-see-3 rice 1SG-PAST-see-3 one rice
  ’I saw rice/a portion of rice.’
  ’I saw a (specific) portion of rice.’
c. n-gii-waabam-aa azhashki. c’. n-gii-waabam-aa bezhig azhashski.
  1SG-PAST-see-3 mud 1SG-PAST-see-3 one mud
  ’I saw mud/a chunk of mud.’
  ’I saw a (specific) chunk of mud.’
  1SG-PAST-see-3 corn 1SG-PAST-see-3 one corn
  ’I saw a piece of corn.’
  ’I saw a (specific) cob of corn.’

In English, while count nouns can be modified by cardinal numerals three nuts, mass nouns cannot *three muds*. Also, English count nouns can be modified by quantifiers such as many, few, every and each: many/few nuts, every/each nut. On the other hand, mass nouns cannot be modified by such quantifiers: *many/few muds, every/each mud*. In Ojibwe, nouns denoting substances ontologically can, not only be pluralized – see examples in (37) and (38) – they can, just like count nouns (41), also be modified by cardinals (42) and can be modified by the same quantifiers used for count nouns. Compare (43) with (44).

(41) a. bezhig baagan one nut
    one ‘nut’
  b. niizh baaganaan two nuts
    two ‘nuts’
(42) a. bezhig azhashski one mud
    ‘one piece of mud’
  b. niizh azhashski two muds
    ‘two pieces of mud’
(43) a. gakina baagan every nut
    ‘every nut’
  b. gakina gwizens every boy
    ‘every boy’
(44) a. gakina azhashski every mud
    ‘every piece of mud’
  b. gakina ziznibaawad every sugar
    ‘every piece of sugar’

Not surprisingly, HS behaves exactly like Ojibwe in this regard. The quantifier qex (many/much) can be used with nouns denoting substance (45) as well as with nouns denoting individuals (46). It is also possible to combine numerals with both types of nouns as shown by (47) and (48).

(45) a. tsel kw’etslexew qex (te) qóqóqo
    1sg.s see-trans-3o Q det water/water.pl
    ’I have seen lots of water.’
  b. tsel kw’etslexew qex (te) theqí/theqíqat
    1sg.s see-trans Q det tree/pl
    ’I saw lots of trees.’
(46) a. tsel kw’ets-ts-l-ixw qisale siyitsem
    1sg.s see-trans-3o two sand.pl
    ’I saw two pieces of kind of sand.’
  b. tsel kw’ets-ts-l-ixw qisale sht’im/sht’th’im
    1sg.s see-trans-3o two berry/berry.pl
    ’I have seen two berries.’

3.3 The abundance reading versus the measure reading
Let me now give some examples of plural mass nouns in more familiar languages: French (49), Hebrew (50), Romanian (51), and Persian (52) (and also Biblical English).

(49) a. La fonte des neiges des neiges éternelles
    les eaux du Nil ont débordé de leur lit
    ’The melting of the snow’s’/’The eternal snow(s)’
  b. Des viandes avares gisaient sur la table.
    les eaux du Nil ont débordé de leur lit
    ’I have seen two berries.’
  c. Les violandes avares gisaient sur la table.
    ’I have seen lots of trees.’
(50) a. n-gii-waabam-aa mikom a’. n-gii-waabam-aa bezhig mikom.
  1SG-PAST-see-3 ice 1SG-PAST-see-3 one ice
  ’I saw ice/a piece of ice.’
  ’I saw a (specific) piece of ice.’

This plural of abundance is one of the many cases discussed in Acquaviva (2008).

- most obvious case: scissora (so-called pluralia tantum). Then there are lexically idiomatic plural forms, like pence from penny.
- she’s got the brains for the job.
- Modern Greek has many mass plurals like xírkeia ‘flesh’, hális ‘salt’ and κύλι ‘wood’, the sinulars of which occur with the meanings ‘piece of flesh’, ‘grain of salt’ and ‘plank of wood’. All these examples involve the use of what is called in the linguistic literature the singulative.
4. The account

4.1 The background theory

Borer (2005) proposes that all nouns in all languages are mass by default, and are in need of being portioned out before they can interact with the count system. This portioning-out function is realized either through the projection of classifiers (Chinese) or through plural inflection (English). Plural inflection is classifier inflection (Sanches & Slobin 1973, Doetjes 1996, 1997).

(53)  
\[ \text{DP} \begin{array}{l}
D \langle \epsilon \rangle \\
\text{nizh} \ 
\langle \theta' \rangle \\
\text{‘two’} \ 
\end{array} \]  
\[ \text{CT} \langle \phi \rangle_{\text{CIP}} \]  
\[ \text{gaazh-(div)} \]  
\[ \text{‘cat’} \]  
\[ \text{NP} \langle \delta \rangle \]  
\[ \text{ziitigan} \ 
\langle \theta \rangle_{\text{N}} \\
\text{‘salt’} \]  
\[ \text{NP} \langle \theta \rangle_{\text{N}} \]  

(54)  
\[ \text{DP} \begin{array}{l}
D \langle \epsilon \rangle \\
\text{nibina} \ 
\langle \theta' \rangle \\
\text{‘much’} \ 
\end{array} \]  
\[ \text{CT} \langle \phi \rangle_{\text{CIP}} \]  
\[ \text{niizhwaatig} \ 
\langle \theta \rangle_{\text{N}} \]  
\[ \text{Mis} \ 
\langle \theta \rangle_{\text{N}} \\
\text{‘water’} \]  
\[ \text{NP} \langle \theta \rangle_{\text{N}} \]  

(55)  
\[ a. \text{ n-gii-waabnaag menwag.} \ 
\text{ISG-PAST-see-3PL men-3PL} \]  
\[ ‘I saw men.’ \]  
\[ b. \text{ nenwag n-gii-waabm-igoog.} \ 
\text{men-3PL ISG-PAST-see-3PL} \]  
\[ ‘Men saw me.’ \]  

It thus must be the case that a Num phrase is projected (Ritter 1991). Assuming a minimalist theory of agreement, the \( \epsilon \)-features associated with \( v \) come in the derivation unvalued (they are uninterpretable).

Number system #1 (ordinary number): The representations in (53) and (54) are relevant for both English and Ojibwe, since the two languages behave exactly the same in many respects when it comes to the use of number marking. Ojibwe uses classifiers (Number system #2). Some examples appear in (56). These are used with count nouns (they are called count-classifiers, cf. Cheng & Sybesma 1999).

(56)  
\[ \text{san ge ren} \ 
\langle \theta \rangle_{\text{CT}} \]  
\[ \text{three CL people} \]  
\[ \text{nibina} \ 
\langle \theta \rangle_{\text{CT}} \\
\text{‘much’} \]  
\[ \text{niizhwaatig} \ 
\langle \theta \rangle_{\text{CT}} \]  
\[ \text{Misi} \ 
\langle \theta \rangle_{\text{CT}} \\
\text{‘water’} \]  
\[ \text{NP} \langle \theta \rangle_{\text{CT}} \]  

(57)  
\[ \text{san ba ni mi} \ 
\langle \theta \rangle_{\text{CT}} \]  
\[ \text{three handful rice} \]  
\[ \text{nibina} \ 
\langle \theta \rangle_{\text{CT}} \\
\text{‘much’} \]  
\[ \text{niizhwaatig} \ 
\langle \theta \rangle_{\text{CT}} \]  
\[ \text{Misi} \ 
\langle \theta \rangle_{\text{CT}} \\
\text{‘water’} \]  
\[ \text{NP} \langle \theta \rangle_{\text{CT}} \]  

In fact, Ojibwe has numeral classifiers too. They attach to numerals to indicate measure: –aatig is used for wooden, pole-like elements, –eg for cloth-sheet-like elements, –aabik for metal, glass, plastic or stone and –aaabiig for string like elements. Other classifiers include –naaangons ‘cupful’, –ooshkin ‘barrelful’, –sag ‘boatful’, –oomag ‘boatload’, –aatig ‘handful’, –aatig ‘handful’, –aan ‘self’, –aaabiig for string like elements. Some of these are listed as rare in dictionaries (e.g. ‘beautful’ in Rhodes 1985). Valentine (2001:502) also notes that their use has diminished in recent years.

4.2 Contextual versus inherent inflectional morphology: \( \text{Num versus } n \)

My proposal involves the claim that number in Ojibwe is inflectional, but that it can be used contextually as well as inherently. This distinction was introduced by Booij (1993, 1995) who shows that in certain languages (he concentrates on Dutch), in addition to the traditional use of number where a verb agrees with a nominal subject, it is possible to use number in a derivational fashion. It nevertheless remains syntactically based.

(58)  
\[ a. \text{ niizhwaatig nibi niizhwaatig misi} \ 
\text{two-CL water two-CL firewood} \]  
\[ ‘two bottles of water’ \]  
\[ b. \text{ niizhwaatig zemiba  zemiba} \ 
\text{two-CL silk two-CL silk} \]  
\[ ‘two pieces/sheets of silk’ \]  
\[ c. \text{ niizh-naaangs ziiibaakwad} \ 
\text{two-cupfuls sugar} \]  
\[ ‘two cupfuls of sugar’ \]  

The claim that I am making about Ojibwe is that it has not only Number system #1 (ordinary number) and Number system #2 (classifiers), but a third number system, call it Number system #3. In that system, number is used as a massifier. The use of number in Ojibwe is thus dual: on the one hand, it helps to mark ordinary singulars and plurals (count nouns); on the other, it helps to divide mass and collective terms. While the former use corresponds to the contextual use of number, the latter corresponds to the inherent use of number. The latter is akin to the singulative system best known for languages such as Breton or Arabic.
4.3 The singulative

Singulatives are individuating morphological forms that are indifferent to the grammatical number of the bases they attach to: what counts is that the entities denoted by the base are not individuals, in the technical sense of being neither discrete nor identifiable.

(64) a. buzhuq ‘worms’ – buzhuq-enn ‘a worm’
    b. kraon ‘walnuts’ – kraon-enn ‘a walnut’
    c. per ‘pears’ – per-enn ‘a pear’
    d. logod ‘mice’ – logod-enn ‘a mouse’

Plurals can also be the target of the singulative. For example, ster-ed the pluralised form of ster, can be singulativised giving ster-ed-enn ‘a star’ (a form which has in fact replaced the obsolete ster according to Trépos 1956 and Hemon 1975, cited in Acquaviva 2008).

As reported by Acquaviva (2008:243), the precise sense of ‘X-unit’ also appears to vary within the same word. Trépos (1956:269) mentions a textual example where traez-enn means ‘a grain of sand’ rather than ‘a beach’. I note that while Acquaviva (2008) gives ‘a shoe’ as a translation for the singulative form botez-enn in (68a), Stump (2005:62) gives the translation ‘a kick’.

(65) a. botez ‘shoe’ – botez-enn ‘shoe’
    b. lod ‘part’ – lod-enn ‘part’
    c. karreg ‘rock’ – karreg-enn ‘rocks’

This shift in meaning is also apparent when mass nouns are the target of the singulative operation ((67a,b) are from Stump 2005:62, (67c,d) from Acquaviva 2008:245) while (67e,f) are from Trépos 1980:67). These are the most interesting examples for us, since they show that, like Ojibwe, the function of the singulative consists not only in turning abstract object types into identifiable objects, but also picking discrete entities out of undifferentiated mass.

(66) a. c’hoant ‘a want’ – c’hoant-enn ‘birthmark’
    b. lost ‘tail’ – lost-enn ‘skirt’

As is the case in Breton (as suggested by Stump 2005, see above), the singulative is not productive with all mass nouns. In Syrian Arabic, a few mass nouns designating plants, for example, either have no unit derivative at all, or have one that appears very rarely. In such cases, a periphrastic phrase is used instead (rās means ‘head’).

(69) a. tūm ‘garlic’ – rās tūm ‘a garlic bulb’
    b. šnībār ‘pines’ – saẓaret šnībār ‘a pine tree’ (Cowell 2005:298)

4.4 The singulative in Ojibwe

As reported by Acquaviva (2008:243), the precise sense of ‘X-unit’ also appears to vary within the same word. Acquaviva (2008) gives ‘a shoe’ as a translation for the singulative form botez-enn in (68a), Stump (2005:62) gives the translation ‘a kick’.

(67) a. douar ‘earth, ground’ – douar-enn ‘plot, terrier’
    b. geot ‘grass’ – geot-enn ‘blade of grass’
    c. glav ‘rain’ – glav-enn ‘a drop of rain’
    d. traez ‘sand’ – traez-enn ‘a beach’
    e. plouz ‘straw’ – plouz-enn ‘a wisp of straw’
    f. ed ‘wheat’ – ed-enn ‘a stick of wheat’

4.4.1 The singulative in Ojibwe

Plural: See (67) above.

Singular: See (64) above.

As reported by Acquaviva (2008:245), the precise sense of ‘X-unit’ also appears to vary within the same word. Acquaviva (2008) gives ‘a shoe’ as a translation for the singulative form botez-enn in (68a), Stump (2005:62) gives the translation ‘a kick’.

(66) a. c’hoant ‘a want’ – c’hoant-enn ‘birthmark’
    b. lost ‘tail’ – lost-enn ‘skirt’

Instead of using special partitive phrases, Ojibwe then simply uses number to encode measure and also individualisation. The language does not use partitive phrases so much: it resorts to the use of plural contexts according to which “plural formation has a mixed inflectional and derivational nature is hardly new in Cushitic studies.” (Lecarme 2002:119).
(71) CIP
A = plural (Number system 1)
B = numeral classifier (Number system 2)
C = singularive (Number system 3)

\{A; B; C\}

Contrary to Borer (2005), I do not assume that pseudo-partitive constructions involve a lower projection. On her account, measure phrases in English or Hebrew Grocerese can undergo division and then be counted. Although, that seems to work for English, since measure phrases can be pluralised, e.g. six pieces of sugar and for Hebrew (see footnote 5) in Chinese count-classifiers and mass-classifiers are in complimentary distribution as seen in (72).

(72) *si liàng gè qīchē
tour Cl Cl car

four

This indicates that count-classifiers and mass-classifiers target the same head. This must be the case also in Ojibwe, since numeral classifiers are singular in form (cf. (58)). The structure in (71) has more in common with the so-called mono-projectional approach to pseudo-partitivities (Stavrou 2003) than with the predicational approach (Den Dikken 2006).

Number system 1: singular as “default” (although technically this is not so, cf. see Borer 2005 and Acquaviva 2008, since the plural is not about counting, but dividing and since a plural form may not have a corresponding singular).

Number system 3: plural as default. The idea that the plural is the default has been a popular idea in recent semantic work (Sauerland 2003, Sauerland, Anderssen & Yatsushiro 2005, Bale 2006).

(73) Singular Plural

a. nika a’. nikaŋ ‘goose’ AN
b. makwa b. makwag ‘bear’ AN
c. mijb c. myän ‘piece of firewood’ IN

Case of zhoonya ‘money’ in (74). It is often listed in dictionaries as an inanimate nouns (although it ends in –a). As a singular inanimate it is clearly a mass-collective noun. The structure in (71) has more in common with the so-called mono-projectional approach to pseudo-partitivities (Stavrou 2003) than with the predicational approach (Den Dikken 2006).

(74) zhoonya ‘money’ IN zhoonyag ‘coins’ AN
mitig ‘wood’ IN mitig ‘tree’ AN

Fox: Goddard (2002).

(75) a. šo niya-hi (IN) ‘silver, money’ – šo niya-ha ‘a coin, a bill’
b. mi čpe-hi (IN) ‘game (collective)’ – mi čpe-ha ‘a game animal’
c. owiyi he-hi (IN) ‘animals, small game (coll.)’ owiyi he-hi ‘a (small) animal’ (Goddard 2002:213)

(76) a. owi ya si (IN) ‘meat, flesh’ – owi ya sa (AN) ‘a piece or cut of meat’
b. owi nemwi (IN) ‘fat (generic)’ – owi nemwa (AN) ‘a piece of fat, bear fat’
c. anake-ikwi (IN) ‘bark’ – anake-ikwa (AN) ‘a piece of bark used (or intended for use) as lodge covering’ (Goddard 2002:213)

(77) a. aseni (IN) ‘stone’ – asenya (AN) ‘stone used in sweatlodge’
b. apeekwe’šimo ni (IN) ‘head support’ – apeekwe’šimo na ‘mattress’

c. mehtekwi (IN) ‘stick, tree’ – mehtekwa (AN) ‘tree that is inviolable’
d. nehka či (IN) ‘my foot’ – ohka-ta (AN) ‘(animal) foot (as food)’ (Goddard 2002:214)

4.5 The diminutive as singularive
On its most basic use, the diminutive process turns nouns such as mksin ‘shoe’ into mksoons ‘little shoe’. “The highly lexicalized English diminutives frequently used to gloss these forms belie this productivity. Any concrete Ojibwa noun can form a diminutive up to the limits of semantic compatibility. This extends even to borrowings.” Rhodes (1990:152).

(78) a. sin ‘stone’ – simis ‘pebble’
b. zibi ‘river’ – zibiins ‘brook, creek’
c. miku ‘road’ – mikuans ‘path’
d. waagaakwa ‘axe’ – waagaakdoons ‘hatchet’
e. mBill ‘Bill’ – mBiliins ‘Billy’ (Rhodes 1990:152)

(79) a. mkwa ‘bear’ – mkoons ‘bear cub’
b. nimos ‘dog’ – mimos/mimshens ‘puppy’
c. hzhiki ‘cow’ – hzhikiins ‘calf’
d. binoojinh chiel – binoojins ‘baby’ (Or)
e. kwe ‘woman’ – kweens ‘girl’ (Rhodes 1990:152-153)

The diminutive can also help individuate nouns denoting substances as shown in (80).

(80) a. mitig ‘wood’ – mitigoons ‘stick’
b. mkwam ‘ice’ – mkoons ‘icecube’
c. goon ‘snow’ – gooons ‘snowflake’
d. ziisakwa ‘sugar’ – ziisakdoons ‘a piece of candy’
e. mshikki ‘medicine’ – mshikkins ‘pill’
f. semaas ‘toacco’ – semaans ‘cigarette’ (Rhodes 1990:153-154)
g. bigw ‘gum, pitch’ – bigwens ‘chewing gum’

The lexical distinctions achieved by the use of the diminutive show great cross-dialectal variation. Valentine (2001) reports that while goon means ‘snowflake’ at Walpole Island, it otherwise means ‘fallen snow, chunk of snow’.

(81) CIP
A = plural (Number system 1)
B = numeral classifier (Number system 2)
C = singularive (Number system 3)

\{A; B; C[ab]\}

a = \{a, a\}
b = dim

References


