1974

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Recommended Citation

West, David (1974) "Number in the Mikasuki verb stem," *Work Papers of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of North Dakota Session*: Vol. 18, Article 15.

DOI: 10.31356/silwp.vol18.15

Available at: <https://commons.und.edu/sil-work-papers/vol18/iss1/15>

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Number in the Mikasuki Verb Stem

David West

1. Number Marking

Mikasuki verb stems may be marked for number by affixation or by suppletion. Verb stems are unmarked for number or are marked in various manners and fall into three groups: (1) those that have only one stem for all numbers; (2) those that have two distinct stems, indicating singular and multiple; and (3) those that have three distinct stems, indicating singular, dual and plural. (Note: Modifiers, which may be considered a sub-class of verbs, behave as group two.)

Dual and multiple stems are formed by suppletion or by the addition of $-s \sim -C_1o:$ to the singular stem. ($-C_1o:$ occurs between two consonants, $-s$ elsewhere. Both allomorphs will be hereafter subsumed under $-S$.) The affix occurs immediately preceding the last consonant of the root, $-ka/-li$ suffix, or the causative voice--as far to the right as possible.

Plural stems are formed by suppletion or by adding the suffix $-c(i)$ to the singular stem or to the dual stem. If the vowel before the last consonant of the stem was long, it becomes short when the pluralizing suffix is added. The $-i$ of the suffix occurs before consonants but not before vowels.

The chart below shows the theoretically possible ways of forming dual/multiple stems and plural stems in relation to singular stems. References in parentheses refer to the outline section where the respective combinations are illustrated. Lower case letters w-z indicate combinations that have not been found.

dual/mult. formed by	plural formed by				
	sg. + $\emptyset$	dl. + $\emptyset$	sg. + $-:ci$	dl. + $-:ci$	suppletion
sg. + $\emptyset$	(2a)		w		x
sg. + $-S$	y	(2b)	(2d)	(2e)	(2f)
suppletion	z	(2c)	(2g)	(2h)	(2j)

Note that neither a singular/dual stem nor a singular / plural stem occurs.

2. Sub-classes

Verb stem sub-classes may be determined by the manner in which the three numbers (singular, dual, plural) are marked. Number sub-classes do not correspond with transitivity sub-classes.

a. Many verbs are not marked for number.

hi:c-omi-li	I see (it)	hi:c-om-i:ka	we dl./pl. see (it)
hak-l-om	he/they hear		
camo:-k-om	he/they swim		

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- b. The multiple stem is formed by adding -S to the singular.

yatap-l-om he hit (it) yata,s,p-om they dl./pl. hit (it)

(The commas inclose an infix. The form *yataspom does not occur, since the cluster *spl is not permitted. I just noticed that the rule stated on the previous page would permit *yatapyoolom; I do not know why it does not occur.)

hi:l-u good sg. hi:,s,l-i good mult.

hamp-i bad sg. ham,ho:,p-i bad mult.

- c. The multiple stem is formed by suppletion.

il-om he died oks-om they mult. died

ili-:c-om he killed (it) oksi-:c-om they mult. killed (it)/
he killed (them)

(-:c is the causative, homophonous with the pluralizer -:c.)

co:b-i big sg. ho:t-i big mult.

- d. The dual stem is formed by adding -S to the singular; the plural stem is formed by adding -:ci to the singular.

go(es)

he they dl. they pl.

a:l-iy-om a:l-i,s,y-om a:la-:c-om

(The function of -iy is not clear, as it occurs with only a few roots. It appears to be a part of the stem, but does not occur in the plural form of this verb.)

- e. The dual stem is formed by adding -S to the singular; the plural stem is formed by adding -:ci to the dual.

walk I we dl. we pl.

cayah-l-omi-li cayah-co:-l-om-i:ka cayah-co:-li-:c-om-i:ka
want (it)

ca-ba:n-om po-ba:,s,n-om po-ba,s,na-:c-om

know (it)

ata:l-omi-li ata:,s,l-om-i:ka ata,s,la-:c-om-i:ka

- f. The dual stem is formed by adding -S to the singular; the plural stem is formed by suppletion.

enter	you sg.	you dl.	you pl.
	caka:y-om-icka	cika:,s,y-om-a:cka	aci:k-om-a:cka

- g. The dual stem is formed by suppletion; the plural stem is formed by adding -:ci to the singular.

arrive(s) here	he	they dl.	they pl.
	i:l-om	itaw-k-om	ila:-c-om
come(s)	ont-om	ola:w-om	onti:-c-om

- h. The dual stem is formed by suppletion, the plural stem is formed by adding -:ci to the dual.

stand(s)	he	they dl.	they pl.
	haca:-l-om	loko:-k-om	loko:-ka:-c-om
lie(s) (intrans.)			
	tala:-k-om	sal-k-om	sal-ka:-c-om
lay(s) (trans.)			
	tala:-l-om	sal-l-om	sal-li:-c-om

- j. The dual stem is formed by suppletion; the plural stem is formed by suppletion.

run(s)	he	they dl.	they pl.
	ini:-k-om	pala:-k-om	mota:-k-om
sit(s)			
	coko:-l-om	wi:-k-om	i:i-om
cause(s) (it) to sit			
	coko-li:-c-om	wi-li:-c-om	i:i:-c-om

3. Uses of the Stems

The choice of a number-marked verb stem depends on: (1) the number of the subject (and in transitive verbs, the object) as indicated by verbal affixes, noun and modifier affixes, and the context; (2) in a few cases, single versus repeated action; (3) limited classificatory usage. (1) is the ordinary use, while (2) and (3) are special uses. (The last was reported earlier for a related language by Mary R. Haas in *Classificatory Verbs in Muskogee*, *International Journal of American Linguistics* 14.244-246. This usage has not been previously reported for Mikasuki.)

When a number-marked intransitive verb stem occurs, singular, dual, and plural subjects require the corresponding stem. If the verb is transitive, singular, dual and plural objects require the corresponding stem.¹ In the case of a few verbs, repeated action requires the dual stem. Floppy, cloth-like items (e.g. shirt, banana leaf, uninflated rubber inner tube) require a dual stem; and liquids require a plural stem, just as in Muskogee. (Haas reported for Muskogee that "intransitive verbs generally treat liquids as being in the singular number." And this sometimes occurs in Mikasuki, e.g. ok-ot koko:-l-om, water sits/there is water--as in a lake or pond.) When more than one of the above criteria (subject, object, or special usage) apply, the highest required number prevails in the stem.¹ Many verb forms are ambiguous as to number when taken out of context.

Examples:

a. The dual indicates repeated action:

yatap-l-omi-li	I struck (it) once	sg.
yata,s,p-omi-li	I beat (it)/struck (it) repeatedly	dl.
yata,s,p-om-i:ka	we struck (it) once/we beat (it/them)	dl.
tala:-l-omi-li	I laid (it) down	
sal-l-omi-li	I laid (them) down/I laid (it) down	repeatedly dl.

b. The dual used with a cloth-like item as direct object or subject, in comparison with ordinary usage:

fala:sk-on	pi:k-omi-li	I threw away (the) bottle	sg.
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1. There appear to be exceptions to these statements. The rules remain to be refined.

fala:sk-i (tokla-ka-n) famhk-omi-li I threw away (two)
bottles dl.

foksi:k-on famhk-omi-li I threw away the shirt dl.

foksi:k-on famhk-om-i:ka we dl. threw away (one or two)
shirt(s) dl.

i:f-ot tala:-k-om the dog lies down sg.

foksi:k-ot sal-k-om the shirt is lying dl.

- c. The plural used with a liquid as direct object or as subject, in comparison with ordinary usage:

fala:sk-i (toci:na-ka-n) pila:-l-omi-li
I threw away (three) bottles pl.

ok-on pila:-l-omi-li I threw away/spilled (the) water pl.

palast-ot sanc-on afoks-om Some bread is in (the)
basket sg.

ok-ot ha:l-on ali:t-om Some water is in (the) cup mult.

(It may be useful to consider cloth-like objects as intrinsically dual and liquids as intrinsically plural.)

- d. Ordinary usage is charted below. In the intransitive column, baby/babies is/are lying. In the transitive section, x number of women, each with a baby, lays it down; the total number of babies involved is singular, dual or plural. Subjects are first person.

	Object			
Subject	intrans.	sg.	dl.	pl.
sg.	tala:komili	tala:lomili	sallomili	salli:comili
dl.	salkomi:ka	tala:lomi:ka	sallomi:ka	salli:comi:ka
pl.	salka:comi:ka	tala:lomi:ka	sallomi:ka	salli:comi:ka

Notes

1. The following should be recognized for their parts in making this paper possible. Henry Cypress, Junior Billie, John Cypress and many other speakers of Mikasuki helped to teach me their language; the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Bureau of Indian Affairs allowed us to live at Big Cypress Reservation for an extended period; Virginia E. West helped to gather and analyze the data.
2. For an explanation of the orthographic symbols, see "Mikasuki Verb Prefixes."
3. A concordance of about 9200 words of Mikasuki text was useful in preparing this paper. It was made possible by the National Science Foundation under Grant GS-270 and was processed on the IBM 1410 computer at the University of Oklahoma.