

CHAPTER SIX

NOUNS

Nouns in Wyandot are less frequent than verbs in occurrence in the texts as well as making up a smaller proportion of the lexicon. They are also far simpler in morphological structure. There are two primary structural categories, analyzable and unanalyzable. Within the analyzable category there are a small number of subgroups.

Unanalyzable nouns are words that cannot be broken down into smaller morphemes. They primarily are animal terms, and are often onomatopoeic. The terms for 'rabbit' and 'wolf' are monomorphemic:

(405) ta·n̄óñh̄ə
ta:nyónyɛha
'a rabbit'
TN:17:131:22

(406) narí·skwa
narí:skwa
'wolves'
TN:12:113:51

The word for 'owl' is also unanalyzable, as well as being onomatopoeic:

(407) h̄ih̄i^c
h̄ih̄ih̄
'horned-owl'
TN:24:191:40; TN:24:193:48

Sometimes an unanalyzable form can be shown to be a borrowing. The word for 'soldier' is clearly a borrowing from the English equivalent:

(408) sùdár^c
 sùdárh
 'soldiers'
 TN:40:307:36

6.1 Analyzable Nouns

Analyzable nouns are of two basic types, with some exceptions. The structure of a typical noun is shown in chart 99:

Pronominal Prefix	Nominal	Nominal Suffix
Agent Patient	Noun Root Verb Root + Nominalizer	Noun Suffix Locative

Chart 99: Noun Structure¹⁰⁰

Nouns normally consist of a pronominal prefix,¹⁰¹ a nominal slot, and a nominal suffix. The pronominal prefix can be either agent or patient, and is generally feminine-zoic. The nominal slot is either a noun root (the most frequent case) or a nominalized verb root. The suffixes are the simple Noun Suffix (NOUN) and the Locative (LOC). The Noun Suffix can appear

¹⁰⁰Note that the information is in one row, not two. There is no correlation between which prefix is used and the complexity of the nominal, or the choice of suffix.

¹⁰¹Iroquoian languages differ as to whether pronominal prefixes on nouns are the same as or slightly different from those on verbs. In Wyandot they are the same.

as *-aʔ*, *-ah*, or *-a*. Example 409 shows the allomorph *-aʔ* attached to the noun root *-dyaruʔt-* 'canoe, trough':

- (409) a^hgarú^hta^h
adyarúʔtaʔ
a-dyaruʔt-aʔ
FEM.ZOIC,sg,AGT-canoe-NOUN¹⁰²
'canoe'
WD:NR:009

The form *-ah* is shown by *-daʔts-* 'kettle':

- (410) yǎ^hdá^htsa^h
yadáʔtsah
ya-daʔts-ah
FEM.ZOIC,sg,AGT-kettle-NOUN
'kettle'
TN:23:170:24

The allomorph *-a* is demonstrated with *-wed-* 'land':

- (411) yāwé·dǎ
yawé:da
ya-wed-a
FEM.ZOIC,sg,AGT-land-NOUN
'country'
TN:36:290:19

¹⁰²Recall from chapter 3: *Pronominal Prefixes* that since there is no formal distinction between feminine-zoic and neuter except for a small subset of the transitive prefixes, they are treated as the same, and glossed as feminine-zoic.

It is possible that the allomorph *-a* is simply an inconsistency in transcription, and that the Noun Suffix always ends in *h* or *ʔ*. Another possibility is that *-a* is the suffix, and final *h* and *ʔ* are simply phonetic, since the distribution appears random. The most frequent of the forms is *-aʔ*.

Both agent and patient prefixes can be used with nouns. Agent prefixes can be seen on the previous examples. Example 412 shows a patient prefix with the root for 'meat', *-ʔwahts-*:

- (412) ũwáʔtsaʔ
 uwáhtsaʔ
 u-ʔwahts-aʔ
 FEM.ZOIC,sg,PAT-meat-NOUN
 'meat'
 TN:02:065:43; TN:17:132:33

The same prefix can be seen with *-hskwir-* 'switch':

- (413) uʔskwì:ráʔ^a
 uhskwì:ráʔ
 u-hskwir-aʔ
 FEM.ZOIC,sg,PAT-switch-NOUN
 '(with) a switch'
 TN:23:170:29

The distinction in use between agent and patient prefixes on nouns is not straightforward in the other languages, although a vague tendency to use patient for natural items and agent for artificial items has been noted in the other languages (cf. Michelson

1991:137, footnote 15 for Oneida)¹⁰³. The choice is generally considered lexical. Not enough examples of basic nouns have been found in Wyandot to ascertain what the distinction, if any, here is. Although pronominal prefixes on verbs are arguments, on nouns they have no similar function.

Nouns may also be followed by the Locative instead of the Noun Suffix.¹⁰⁴ There are three allomorphs of the Locative, *-ʔyeh*, *-yeh* and *-deh*. Example 414 shows the *-ʔyeh* allomorph with the noun root *-qtar-* 'lake':

- (414) *yòtărăʔye*^c
yòtărăʔyeh
y-qtar-a-ʔyeh
 FEM.ZOIC,sg,AGT-lake-JOIN-LOC
 'the lake in' ('in the lake')
 TN:29:272:12

The *-deh* form appears in 415 with *-duʔwɛ-* 'mother':

¹⁰³Typical minimal pairs in related languages include 'body' (patient) versus 'doll' (agent); 'face' (patient) versus 'mask' (agent); and 'extended family' (patient) versus 'nuclear family' (agent).

¹⁰⁴Note that analyses of Iroquoian languages differ as to whether certain morphemes are stative verbs or nominal suffixes. For example, Chafe (1967) treated the Internal Locative as a nominal suffix, whereas it is currently usually treated as a stative verb 'be in'. Conversely, Chafe (1967)'s stative verb *be genuine* is currently treated as a suffix, the Typicalizer.

- (415) **sà^hn̄dūm̄ɛ·de^h**
sàʔduw̄ɛ:deh
sa-duʔwɛ-deh
 2,sg,PAT-mother-LOC
 'thine mother to' ('at your mother's')
 TN:02:071:39

The form *-deh* appears twice in the texts, both times with *-duʔwɛ-*. The glosses are 'to' and 'at'. The other two allomorphs appear far more frequently, with glosses ranging from 'on' and 'in' (the most frequent), to 'up', 'down', 'around', 'behind', '-wards', 'into', 'to', and 'at'. Due to the lack of *-deh* examples it is not clear why this allomorph may be chosen in stead of *-ʔyeh*.

The allomorphs *-ʔyeh* and *-yeh* are in free variation, as seen in 416:

- (416) a. **haá^hta^hye^h**
haáʔta^hyeh
ha-Yaʔt-a-yeh
 MASC,sg,AGT-body-JOIN-LOC
 'his body on' ('on his body')
 TN:22:160:16; TN:29:257:04
- b. **háá^hta^hye^h**
hááʔta^hʔyeh
ha-Yaʔt-a-ʔyeh
 MASC,sg,AGT-body-JOIN-LOC
 'his body on' ('on his body')
 TN:24:192:18

An exceptional form of noun is one which is partly analyzable. For example, the term for 'dog' has the feminine-zoic singular agent pronominal prefix *yə-*, but lacks any suffix:

- (417) **yãñé·nq^c**
yanyé:nqh
ya-nyenqh
FEM.ZOIC,sg,AGT-dog
'dog'
TN:31:273:48

An alternative is to consider such forms as monomorphemic, having an initial string which coincidentally is the same as that for a pronominal prefix.

The last type of complex noun is derived from a verb. Instead of a noun root, the core of the noun contains a verb root followed by the nominalizer (NOM). In the following example the verb *-qte-* 'live' is followed by the Nominalizer *-hšr-*.

- (418) **ütöte'crá'ye^c**
utötehšrá'ÿeh
u-at-qte-hšr-a-ÿeh
FEM.ZOIC,sg,PAT-SEMI-live-NOM-JOIN-LOC
'her heart on' ('into her heart')
TN:23:178:25

The Nominalizer converts the verb into a noun, allowing the Locative to be added.

6.2 Possession

Possession is indicated by the person, number and gender of the pronominal prefix.

When the prefix is not feminine-zoic singular it indicates the possessor. For instance, the general word for 'doll' uses a feminine-zoic singular agent pronominal prefix:

(419) agwahiʔtsaʔ
adwahiʔtsaʔ
a-ʔdwahiʔts-aʔ
FEM.ZOIC,sg,AGT-doll-NOUN
'doll'
WD:NR:009

The prefix is changed to masculine patient *-hu-* when discussing a male's dog effigy:

(420) hugwáhiʔtsá·
hudwáhiʔtsá·
hu-ʔdwahiʔts-a
MASC,sg,PAT-doll-NOUN
'he dog has' ('his dog-shaped doll')
TN:23:174:45

The use of the masculine patient indicates possession by a male. Although in 420 the relation marked by the pronominal prefix changed from agent to patient, this is not necessary.

The word for 'kettle' normally has the feminine-zoic singular agent prefix:

(421) yà·nɛ·ú^c
yà:nɛ:úh
ya-nɛu-h
FEM.ZOIC,sg,AGT-kettle-NOUN¹⁰⁵
'kettle'
TN:23:171:26

When possessed by a first person the prefix remains agent, but changes to first person:

¹⁰⁵This is an anomalous Noun suffix in *-h*. The following example has another anomalous Noun suffix in *-ʔ*. Instead of an anomalous Noun suffix, 'kettle' may simply be a semi-analyzable noun.

(422) yeŋǣúʷ
yeŋǣúʷ?
ye-ŋǣu-ʷ
1,sg,AGT-kettle-NOUN
'I kettle have' ('my kettle')
TN:23:171:28

In 422 the first singular agent prefix is used to indicate possession. Although both agent and patient can be used to indicate possession, agent prefixes appear with far more frequency. The few examples with patient prefixes do not clearly point to a motivation for their choice.

With possession by females the situation is less clear. Since simple nouns normally have the feminine-zoic singular prefix already, using the feminine-zoic singular to indicate possession is ambiguous. In 423 the noun root *-rihšr-* 'legging' has a feminine-zoic singular patient pronominal prefix. It is not clear whether the sense of possession is by context or through another means (such as choice of agent or patient).

(423) ūríʷca
urí:hša
u-rihš(r)-a
FEM.ZOIC,sg,PAT-legging-NOUN
'her leggings'
TN:04:089:04

This ambiguity can be further shown by 424, where the masculine singular agent is used on *-Yaʔt-* 'body' to indicate a male's body:

(424) ...nɔ́má^{no}de^o hùjǎtǒñó^o
 nɔ́wá^ode^o hùžatɔnyó^o
 hu-žatɔ-nyɔ-?
 MASC,sg,PAT-mark-DISTR-STAT
 'this time he has marks several

haá^otáye^o
 haá^ota^oyeh
 ha-Ya^ot-a-yeh
 MASC,sg,AGT-body-JOIN-LOC
 his body on

ũnò ^o dá ^o	hũwěrá ^o *te ^o ...
unò:dá ^o	huwera ^o ?te ^o
u-nɔ́d-a ^o	hu-Yera ^o ?t-i ^o
FEM.ZOIC,sg,PAT-paint-NOUN	MASC,sg,PAT-use-STAT
Indian paint	he has used'

[Another time], the same one [the trickster] decorated his body with Indian paint.
 TN:22:160:14-18

The feminine equivalent uses the feminine-zoic singular prefix:

(425) yáá^otáye^o
 yaá^ota^oyeh
 ya-Ya^ot-a-yeh
 FEM.ZOIC,sg,AGT-body-JOIN-LOC
 'her body on'

around her body
 TN:22:161:39

However, this same word can also be glossed without a sense of possession:

(426) **yaá'tāye'**
yaá'tayeh
ya-Ya't-a-yeh
FEM.ZOIC,sg,AGT-body-JOIN-LOC
'the body around'

from her body
TN:22:162:02

In 426 no possessive is indicated in the gloss, but both free translations have 'her body'. Since the feminine-zoic singular is used both for possession by a female and for genericity, there is ambiguity.

In other Iroquoian languages alienability is important in determining whether the possessor is marked by agent or patient prefixes. However, the lack of morphological nouns in the corpus, and the lack of possessed nouns among those few that do appear, does not allow an analysis. What little that can be said can be seen by looking at the examples of possessed nouns that occur in this chapter: agent prefixes are used for 'body' and 'kettle', while patient prefixes are used for 'mother', 'doll', and 'leggings'.