On the mass/count distinction in Ojibwe

Eric Mathieu
University of Ottawa

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

Upshot: echoing Plural inflection is classifier inflection ~ The singularitive 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’. Nbiish 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 (Witschko 2007, 2008, see also Davis and Matthiewson 1999 for Lillooet Salish).

(3) a. tsel kwéï-t-l-exw te/ye th’exth’éxet
   1SG.S see-TRANS-3O DET/DET.PL gravel.PL
   ‘I saw a lot of gravel.’

b. tsel kwéï-t-l-exw te/ye wíisíqíq
   1SG.S see-TRANS-3O DET/DET.PL snow.PL
   ‘I’ve seen a lot of snow.’ (Witschko 2008:669)

Claim 1: Although Halkomelem Salish and Ojibwe share the property of systematic noun pluralisation, this property arises independently from the parameter setting proposed by Witschko (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, 1995 for the distinction between contextual and inherent inflectional morphology).1

(4) a. n-gii-waabam-aa-g mikom-iig. c. n-gii-waaband-aa-nan azhashki-in.
   1SG.PAST-see-3-PL.AN ice-PL.AN
   ‘I saw pieces of ice.’

b. n-gii-waabam-aa-nan manoomin-an. d. n-gii-waabam-aa-g mandaamin-ag.
   1SG.PAST-see-3-PL.AN rice-PL.AN
   ‘I saw chunks of mud.’

• unit readings are not (necessarily) conventionalized. In most cases, the measure reading has pseudo-partitive/measure import that is independent from conventions.
• I will also show that Ojibwe has both pluralia tantum and singularia tantum.


Chinese
(5) a. three CL cat
d. three portions of meat

English
b. three MS meat

Mass/count workshop, University of Toronto, February 7-9, 2009

Hypothesis: The hypothesis that I develop is that Ojibwe has three different number systems. Number system #1 is English: the plural is a divider rather than a counter; Number system #2 is like Chinese: numeral classifiers are used as dividers; Number system #3: the singular. All three options are encoded on a Classifier head in complimentary distribution.

(6)
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{CIP} \\
\text{Cl} \\
\text{A} & \text{plural (Number system 1)} \\
\text{B} & \text{numeral classifier (Number system 2)} \\
\text{C} & \text{singular (Number system 3)} \\
\end{array}
\]

Pluralisation of mass nouns in Ojibwe is claimed to be a reflex of a singularative number system that is correlated to gender shift, but which has become less transparent in the modern language. Another value for the singularative 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, Witschko 2008). According to Greenberg (1972:16): “there are a considerable number of Amerind languages […] which do not have measure constructions [including Ojibwe, Greenberg 1974]. Numeral 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. Witschko 2008)

2.1 Plural marking is obligatory in Ojibwe

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

(10) a. te thíxw swíweles
    (11) a. qex te s-th’im
    DET three boy
    many DET NOM-berry
    ‘the three boys’
    ‘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 can sing.   c. *These boy can sing.
    b. *This boy can sing.   d. This boy can sing.

(15) a. The men are singing.
    b. *The man are singing.

‘The men are singing.’   ‘The man is singing.’

(Wiltschko 2008:643)

No agreement elsewhere: subject-verb agreement does not include number, only person. In the case of 3rd person, where the same subject agreement marker (-es) is used for both singular and plural subjects, as illustrated in (16).

(16) a. The men are helping the women.’
    b. *The man are helping the women.’

‘The men are helping the women.’   ‘The man is helping the women.’ (Wiltschko 2008:654-655)

(17) a. the AN boy
    b. these AN boy
    c. *these AN boy

(18) a. the AN nut
    b. these AN nuts-PL
    c. *these IN nuts-PL

2.3 Plural marking is not possible inside compounds in Ojibwe

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

(21) a. time-water PL   ‘high water time’
    b. time-frog.PL    ‘frog’

(22) NOM-stripe.PL-back   ‘stripes’ (Galloway 1980:63)

(23) a. bee-sugar      fire-car
    b. *bee-PL-sugar     fire-PL-car

(24) a. fire-car-PL   ‘trains’

(25) ishkode-daaban-an (Ojibwe)
    fire-car-PL

2.4 Plural marking is not possible inside derivational morphology

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

In contrast, plural marking in Halkomelem Salish is possible inside of derivational morphology. As shown in (27), plural reduplication ignores the nominalizing prefix s-:

(27) a. white  NOM-white
    b. be sore  NOM-sore.PL

(28) a. bread-NOM-PL   ‘breads’
    b. nest-NOM-PL  ‘nests’

(29) a. wazas-win-an  (Ojibwe)
    nest-NOM-PL

In English, the situation is unlike that of Halkomelem Salish, but similar to English.
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. biwikedamaamgan ‘wood shaving’ (W)  
b. bootsan ‘boots’ (from English boots, Odawa)  
c. e-baazobjigemgakin ‘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.

(a) tsel kw’ets-l-exw *(te) {swíyeqe/sí:wí:qe} 1SG.S see-TRANS-3O DET man/man.PL

‘I saw the man/the men.’/ ‘I saw a man/man.’

(b) t’it’elem *(te) {slhálì/slhelhlálì} singing DET woman/woman.PL

‘The woman/women is/are singing.’/ ‘A woman/women is/are singing.’

2.7 Intermediate summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plural marking</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Halkomelem</th>
<th>Ojibwe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>obligatory</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inside compounds</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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>

(32)  
a. i saw.  
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‘I saw the man/the men.’/ ‘I saw a man/man.’

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‘The woman/women is/are singing.’/ ‘A woman/women is/are singing.’

2.8 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 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), ‘nights’ means ‘more than one night’ and the same goes for bagaan versus bagaanag in Ojibwe. (35b) and c are other examples of animate nominals while (36) introduces a list of inanimate nouns (IN).

(35)  
a. bagaan ‘nights’ – bagaan-ag ‘nights’ AN  
b. miigwan ‘feathers’ – miigwan-ag ‘feathers’ AN  
c. maandaamin ‘corn’ – maandaamin-ag ‘corn’ AN

(36)  
a. akwaandaagan ‘ladder’ – akwaandaagan-an ‘ladders’ IN  
b. ishkwaandem ‘doors’ – ishkwaandem-an ‘doors’ IN  
c. makizin ‘moccasins’ – makizin-an ‘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-ag AN  
b. waabigan ‘clay’ – waabigan-ag AN  
c. aninaatig ‘maple’ – aninaatig-oog AN  
d. mashkosiw ‘grass’ – mashkosiw-ag AN  
e. semaa ‘tobacco’ – semaa-g AN  
f. zoongiyaa ‘money’ – zoongiyaa-g AN  
g. mikom ‘ice’ – mikom-tig AN  
g’. mikwan ‘ice’ – mikwan-tig AN

(38)  
a. (a)ki ‘earth’ – (a)ki-in IN  
b. manoomin ‘rice’ – manoomin-an IN  
c. azhashki ‘mud’ – azhashki-in IN  
d. bkwezhgan ‘bread’ – bkwezhgan-an IN  
e. aasaakamig ‘moss’ – aasaakamig-oog IN  
f. maagan ‘cream’ – maagan-an IN  
g. ziizibaakwad ‘sugar’ – ziizibaakwad-oog IN  
h. bagdanaaamowi ‘air’ – bagdanaaamowi-an IN  
i. ziiqwebinigan ‘garbage’ – ziiqwebinigan-an IN  
j. zhiwaaboo ‘vendage’ – zhiwaaboo-an IN  
k. zaawaa-mide ‘butter’ – zaawaa-mide-yin IN  
l. nenaabgaa ‘porridge’ – nenaabgaa-yin IN  
m. naapaane ‘flour’ – naapaane-yin IN  
n. baashkiminasigan ‘jam’ – baashkiminasigan-an IN  
o. giziibiigahigan ‘soap’ – giziibiigahigan-an IN  
p. wiyaas ‘meat’ – wiyaas-an IN  
q. minishkoonh ‘hay’ – minishkoonh-yin IN  

(34)  
a. giin ‘you’ (SING) – giinwaa ‘you (PL)’  
b. wiin ‘he – they’  
c. maanda ‘this (one) IN proximal – these (ones) IN proximal’  
(d) -xiim (d) -xinaan ‘my – our (excl)’

‘his – their’

b. giiwe ‘go home (PRES, 1/2/3 SG) – go home (PRES, 3PL)’
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. dodooshaaboo  ‘milk’  – *dodooshaaboo-n  IN
   d. miskwi  ‘blood’  – *miskwi-n  IN
   e. aamoo-zinziibaawad  ‘honey’  – *aamoo-zinziibaawad-an  IN
   f. bangwi  ‘ash’  – *bangwi-n  IN
   g. nbish  ‘water’  – *nbish-in  IN
   h. negwìki  ‘sand’  – *negwìki-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 mìkon  a’. n-gii-waabam-aa bezhig mìkon.
   b. n-gii-waaband-aa manoomin.  b’. n-gii-waabam-aa bezhig manoomin.
   c. n-gii-waabam-aa azhashkii.  c’. n-gii-waabam-aa bezhig azhashkii.

In English, while count nouns can be modified by cardinal numerals three nuts, mass nouns cannot *three mud(s). 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 mud(s), 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 
   b. niizh baagan

(42) a. bezhig azhashkii 
   b. niizh azhashkii

(43) a. gakina baagan 
   b. gakina gwìzens

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/les neiges éternelles
   b. le(e) xà ‘du Nil ont débordé de leur lit
   c. Des viandes avaries gisaient sur la table.
   d. n-gii-waabam-aa manoomin.  b’. n-gii-waabam-aa bezhig manoomin.

(50) Iarad  harbe  feleg/šlagim
   b. (a)niibiishaaboo  ‘tea’  ~ *(a)niibiishaaboo-n  IN

(51) A  čeňat  múlata  čałđa  anul  āsta.
   3sg.3sg  fall.3sgPast  a lot  snow-sg/m  snow-pl.m
   c. n-gii-waabam-aa bezhig mandaamin.

(52) āba-e/āb-ā-ye  daryā  bālā  umad-an.
   3sg.3sg  fall.3sgPast  a lot  snow-sg/m  snow-pl.m
   h. negwiki  ‘sand’  ~ *negwiki-n  IN
   i. mini  ‘pu’  – *mini-n  IN

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) 3sg.3sg  see-trans-3o  Q  det  water/water-pl
   1sg.s  see-trans-3o  Q  det  water/water-pl
   I have seen lots of water.

(47) 3sg.3sg  see-trans-3o  Q  det  tree-pl
   I saw lots of trees.

(48) 3sg.3sg  see-trans-3o  two  sand-pl
   1sg.s  see-trans-3o  two  berry/berry-pl
   I have seen two berries.

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

• most obvious case: sciicxors (so-called pluralia tantum). Then there are lexically idiosyncratic plural forms, like pence from penny.
• she’s got the brains for the job.
• Modern Greek has many mass plurals like sárkeas ‘flesh’, hálēs ‘salt’ and kỳa ‘wood’, the singulars 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 singularative.

• Many/much

• Every/Each

• Few/Many

• Some

• A lot of
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) DP

(54) DP

(55) a. n-gii-waabnaag nenwag.

1SG-PAST-see-3PL men-3PL

‘I saw men.’

b. nenwag n-gii-waamn-igoog.

men-3PL 1SG-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 θ-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.

Whereas English and Ojibwe use number marking in order to divide undivided stuff, Chinese 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) san ge ren

three CL people

‘three persons’ (Cheng & Sybesma 1999:514)

(57) san ba na mi

three handful rice

‘three handfuls of rice’ (Cheng & Sybesma 1999:514)

In fact, Ojibwe has numeral classifiers too. They attach to numerals to indicate measure: –aaitig is used for wooden, pole-like elements, –eg for cloth-sheet-like elements, –aahik for metal, glass, plastic or stone and –aahig for string like elements. Other classifiers include –nangoms ‘cupful’, -aahkik ‘bagful’, -aanog ‘boatload’, –aahning ‘handful’, -aag ‘barrelful’, etc. 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: 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. nizhwaatig nibi nizhwaatig misi
two-CL water two-CL firewood

b. nizhwaeg zenibaa
two-CL silk

‘two pieces/sheets of silk’

c. nizh-naang zizibakkwad
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.

The pluralia tanti cases are not the only cases where number is encoded on n. The cases in (49)-(52) all seem to correspond to a special lexical use of number. The variety of uses that Corbett (2000) describes in his book are also all good candidates: the plural of modesty (Greek, Latin, Russian), the exaggerative plural (Finnish), the hyperbolic plural (Russian, French), the approximative plural (Finnish, Dogon), the anti-associative (West Greenlandic) and the plural of abundance. The cases in (49)-(52) and the interpretation that pluralised mass nouns receive in Halkomelem Salish appear to be cases of the plural of abundance, showing that this plural must be available independently of whether or not the language has inflectional number.

(61) root: bracc-

Noun 1: braccio – bracci (masc., class –o/i) Noun 2: braccia (fem., pl.)
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. buzHugh ‘worms’ – buzHugh-enn ‘a worm’
b. kraon ‘walnuts’ – kraon-enn ‘a walnut’
c. per ‘pears’ – per-enn ‘a pear’
d. logod ‘mice’ – logod-enn ‘a mouse’

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

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

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’).

4.4 The singulative in Ojibwe

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.

(67)  
a. dōur ‘earth, ground’ – dōur-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 ‘wisp of straw’
f. ed ‘wheat’ – ed-enn ‘stick of wheat’

(68)  
a. ḍam’h ‘wheat’ –  ḍam’-h-e ‘a grain of wheat’
b. etsb ‘grass, weeds, herbs’ – etsb-e ‘a blade of grass, a weed, a herb’
(Cowell 2005:298)

As reported by Acquaviva (2008:245), the precise sense of ‘X-unit’ also appears to vary within the same word. Trépos (1956:269) mentions a textual example where trae-zenn 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’.

(69)  
a. ŋum ‘garlic’ – ŋum ‘a garlic bulb’
b. śćnbār ‘pine’ – śćnbār ‘a pine tree’
(Cowell 2005:298)

Instead of using special partitive phrases, Ojibwe then simply uses number to encode measure and individualisation. The language does not use partitive phrases so much: it resorts to the use of number instead. I thus propose that on the measure reading in Ojibwe arises from the use of a singulative-like form that is first encoded in n, but departing from Lecarme’s (2002) and Acquaviva’s (2008) respective proposals, that it is then encoded on a Classifier head. That classifier head is exactly the same as the classifier head introduced in (53), except that in this case it hosts not the plural, but the singulative marker, which in Ojibwe looks like it remains empty (but see below).

However, since Ojibwe makes use not only of the singulative, but also of regular number and numeral classifiers the Classifier head can have three values as shown in (71).
4.5 The diminutive as singulative

On its most basic use, the diminutive process turns nouns such as *mksin* ‘shoe’ into *mkoons* ‘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’ – *sinims* ‘pebble’
   b. *ziibi* ‘river’ – *ziibins* ‘brook, creek’
   c. *mikana* ‘road’ – *miknaans* ‘path’
   d. *waagakwaad* ‘axe’ – *waagaktaoons* ‘hatchet’
   e. *mbill* ‘Bill’ – *mbiliins* ‘Billy’ (Rhodes 1990:152)

(79) a. *mikwa* ‘bear’ – *mkoons* ‘bear cub’
   b. *nimosh* ‘dog’ – *nimoons/nimshens* ‘puppy’
   c. *bhiki* ‘cow’ – *bhikiins* ‘calf’
   d. *binoojinng* child – *binoiijinng* ‘baby’ (Ot)
   e. *kwe* ‘woman’ – *kweenzs* ‘girl’ (Rhodes 1990:152-153)

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

(80) a. *mitig* ‘wood’ – *mitgoons* ‘stick’
   b. *mkwam* ‘ice’ – *mkwamiins* ‘icicle’
   c. *goon* ‘snow’ – *goonens* ‘snowflake’
   d. *ziisbaakwad* ‘sugar’ – *ziisbaakdoons* ‘a piece of candy’
   e. *msihiki* ‘medicine’ – *msihikiins* ‘pill’
   g. *bkwezhgan* ‘bread’ – *bkwezhgaans* ‘donut, sweet roll, cookie’
   h. *bigw* ‘gum, pitch’ – *bigiins* ‘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) A = plural (Number system 1)
    B = numeral classifier (Number system 2)
    C = singulative (Number system 3)

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c}
\hline
\text{Singular} & \text{Plural} & \text{Cl} \\
\hline
\text{a.} & \text{nika} & \text{nika} \text{ 'goose'} \text{ AN} \\
\text{b.} & \text{makwa} & \text{makwa} \text{ 'bear'} \text{ AN} \\
\text{c.} & \text{mi} & \text{misin} \text{ 'piece of firewood'} \text{ IN} \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

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-partitives (Stavrou 2003) than with the predicational approach (Den Dikken 2006).

4.5.1 Special cases of diminutives

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, Andersen & Yatsuhiro 2005; Bale 2006).

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Many of the data used in this article are taken from fieldwork undertaken with members of The Chippewas of Nawash First Nation at Cape Croker (Neyashiinginini). I wish to thank Philomine Chegahno, Berdina Johnston, Donald Keeeshig, Joanne Keeeshig, Isabel Milllette, Juianta Plesnant, Ernestine Proux and Elisa Wynake for teaching me Ojibwe. Special thanks to Joanne Helena Keeeshig for all her help and for welcoming us in the community; Sheila Keeeshig for welcoming Bethany Locbihishel and myself to Cape Croker Elementary School and for letting us speak with the teachers. Thanks also to Shirley Ida Williams from Trent University for sharing her knowledge with me.