

Bloomfield's "Menomini Morphophonemics"

The purpose of "Menomini Morphophonemics," unlike the last few papers that we've read that refer to it, is to describe data rather than to describe a theory.

Although Bloomfield presents ordered rules, only one paragraph is devoted to explaining the theoretical basis for the analysis in this paper. He does not make any arguments to support his method of description. The only thing that hints that Bloomfield is an innovator is where he specifies that "...basic forms are not ancient forms... and our statements of internal sandhi are not historical but descriptive" (106). Since the use of ordered rules to describe synchronic phonology was new when he wrote this, this is a natural clarification to make. Bloomfield treats rule ordering as a tool to produce a good descriptive grammar, and nothing more.

Descriptive grammar vs. grammar of I-language

Bloomfield's goal was to produce an accurate and efficient description of Menonimi's morphophonology, not to describe a speaker's knowledge of its morphophonology. One instance where he writes his rules in a way that demonstrates that fact can be seen in paragraph 16. 16 lists a rule where the first of two semivowels is deleted after a consonant. Bloomfield uses this rule by adding a /w/ in between /t/ and /y/ in some basic forms, to block the otherwise applicable palatalization rule in paragraph 13.

13: t ~ č before y

(1) /pēnt-ēkon-āhtwy-/ ~ [pēhčēkonāhtyan] (pl.)

Since Bloomfield's intention was to produce an algorithm, this works well. If a grammar for I-language was the goal, then it would be necessary to ask how likely it is that speakers' internal representations have a semivowel in these cases, but as it stands that isn't an issue.

Menomini pronouns and prefixes

Menomini has four inflectional prefixes, all of which indicate person:

- 1st person: Ne-
- 2nd person: ke-
- 3rd person: we-
- indefinite personal possessor: me-

(If those of you who went to the first talk on Yurok last week remember Yurok's pronominal prefixes, these should look extremely familiar.)

These prefixes are only used in some inflections. Many of the examples of conjugated verbs in this paper are in conjugations that indicate person in other ways.

inclusive and exclusive first person plurals:

The formation of inclusive and exclusive "we" should be addressed briefly, because a typo in this paper prevents readers from being able to determine it themselves from the data provided.

The exclusive "we" is formed by using the first person prefix, while the inclusive "we" uses the second person prefix. The inclusive "we" and the second person plural are differentiated by different plural suffixes; both first person plurals use the same plural suffix, whereas the second person plural has its own plural suffix. Bloomfield's description of Menomini pronouns in Language works this way, as does the system in Fox.

Menomini personal-definite pronouns: (Bloomfield 1933: 256)

	singular	plural
1 st person	nenah	(inclusive) kena? (exclusive) nena?
2 nd person	kenah	kenua?
3 rd person	wenah	wenua?

The prefixes in the examples Bloomfield gave conflict with this in *menēhkenawan*, “our (exclusive) hands,” but this almost certainly contains a typo, as Amy Dahlstrom confirmed, and should be *nenēhkenawan*.

Although Bloomfield gives the underlying first segment as /N/, not /n/, neither of those morphophonemes becomes [m] (/n/ → [s] in certain environments, but /N/ is always [n] on the surface). If *nenēhkenawan* did begin with [m], the prefix would have to be analyzed as *mε-*, the indefinite personal possessor, which is extremely unlikely, given the meaning.

Morphophonemic vs. morpholexical alternations

Bloomfield draws a distinction between morphophonemic alternations and morpholexical alternations (i.e., allomorphs). He avoids discussing morpholexical alternations here as much as possible, since they aren’t the focus of the paper, but he does demonstrate his view of their place in a grammar in spite of that.

Paragraph 15 describes how common occurrences of vowel hiatus are resolved in Menomini: one of the vowels, or moras, is generally deleted. Where epenthesis is used, it is a semivowel that is inserted.

$\bar{V}-V \sim \bar{V}$ (where $V \dots \circ$)

$\bar{a}-o \sim \bar{o}$

$\bar{e}-o \sim y\bar{a}$

$\bar{a}-\bar{a} \sim \bar{a}$

elsewhere: $\bar{V}-\bar{V} \sim \bar{V}y\bar{V}$

In paragraph 7, Bloomfield describes another case of vowel hiatus, which is usually resolved by adding a /t/ between the two vowels instead of deleting one of the vowels. Since this exceptional case only occurs with the inflectional prefixes, Bloomfield analyzes it as morpholexical

variation in order to keep the morphophonemic rules simpler. Accordingly, he says that the prefixes have variants that end in /t/.

1st person: *Nε-* / *Net-*

2nd person: *kε-* / *kεt-*

3rd person: *wε-* / *wεt-*

indefinite personal possessor: *mε-* / *met-*

Dependent nouns and zero roots

The term “dependent nouns” refers to the set of nouns that grammatically require a possessor. Either the possessor must be stated, or *mε-* must be used to satisfy that requirement. Bloomfield says that dependent nouns do not contain roots, but that is a result of his categorization of the stem morphology.

Algonquian primary verb stems may contain up to three morphemes, called initials, medials, and finals. While all verb stems are analyzed as having an initial morpheme, that morpheme is not always the most important to the meaning of the verb, so it is not a given which, if any, of the three components should be analyzed as the root. (Amy Dahlstrom chooses not to refer to the morphemes in any of the three positions as roots.)

Bloomfield considers the initials the roots. He implies this in this paper when he says, “In primary formation suffixes are added to a root,” (108). Using this guideline, the root must be the first non-inflectional morpheme of a word.

Bloomfield also analyzes the stems of dependent nouns as medials, not initials/roots. The prefixes are not part of the stem, so they are not roots, either. Accordingly, dependent nouns “have no roots” in Bloomfield’s analysis, even though other analyses of the data may conclude otherwise.

The verbs with zero roots, however, have genuinely null allomorphs. (At least, this is true for *en-*, “say so to,” which also occurs in Fox and behaves the same way.) When the null allomorph is used, the affixes are present but there is no root, or anything that could be called one.