

## OŠPÁYE 3

### WORDS

Dakota is a language very different from English, even down to the level of word formation. While Dakota words may appear to be very long and complex at times, this is often just due to the fact that in many situations where English would use a phrase or even a short sentence, a single word suffices in Dakota. Many longer Dakota words are built out of much smaller components which modify and make more precise their meaning. This often happens in the conjugation of verbs

wašpáŋwičhawečičiye

I cooked it for them.

which is a compound made out of the following components

wa	špaŋ	wičha	wa	kiči	khiyA
things	to be cooked	them	I	to benefit	to cause

but also is an important feature of noun-creation in Dakota: many complex nouns are built out of the same basic building blocks (cores) as sentences themselves

wátakiŋyaŋ-oínažiŋ

airport

which breaks up as follows:

wata	kiŋyaŋ	o	inažiŋ
boat	it flies	location	it stands still

This type of descriptiveness occurs in English from time to time as well: consider the word *lightbulb*, which literally means *light+the pear-shaped root of a tulip*

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This construction of large descriptive words from smaller, more basic components is a very characteristic feature of Dakota, and gives the language the ability to be extremely flexible and descriptive.

## BASIC WORDS

Most of the rest of this book is concerned with exactly the processes mentioned above; the creation of larger more complex words from the simpler, basic components. So, here towards the beginning is as good a time as any to take a brief look at the smaller words of Dakota—what are they like?

In fact, most basic words in Dakota are only one or two syllables long, here are some examples of each

ská	mní	wí	phá	čháj	i
white	water	sun	head	tree	mouth
sápa	šúŋka	até	napé	čhápa	iná
black	dog	father	hand	beaver	mom

Basic words almost always end in a vowel (as they are constructed out of one or two syllables, and almost all syllables end in a vowel); however basic words in Dakota fall into two different classes, which we will call *contracting words* and *non-contracting words*.

All one syllable words are non-contracting and two or more syllable words can be of either class. Here's some examples of two-syllable words from each class, the first row are non-contracting and the second row contract:

aphé	thaŋní	iná	manúŋ	ištá
He hit it.	It is old.	mom	He stole it.	eye
šúŋka	púza	chépa	kháta	hóta
dog	It is dry.	It is fat.	It is hot.	It is gray.

Note that non-contracting words can end in any vowel whatsoever, whereas all of the contracting words end in an unstressed a. In

reality the term *contracting* word is a bit of a misnomer, as these words actually end in a consonant, and the final *a* is added to the end of the word to help conform better to the rules of grammar. So, when this *a* does not appear (such as in various compounding processes) the word appears to contract. For example;

šúnka+thánka	šúnk:thánka	kháta+ye	khád:ye
dog+big	wolf	hot+to cause	to heat up

This is much like how an *n* is added to the English word *a* in expressions like *an apple*.

When forming such compounds with non-contracting words, the final vowel is not dropped as it is intrinsic to the word itself.

ištá+máza	ištámaza	thí+ikčéka	thíikčeka
eye + metal	glasses	live + common	tipi

Another spot where the difference between contracting and non-contracting words is immediately apparent is reduplication: non-contracting words reduplicate one of their syllables (of the form *CV*), whereas contracting words lose their final *a* and reduplicate the entire remaining *CVC* portion. Thus, the final reduplicated form of non-contracting words looks like *CVCVCV*, whereas the reduplicated form of contracting words looks like *CVC:CVCV*. For example;

NON-CONTRACTING WORDS		CONTRACTING WORDS	
manúnj	záptanj	čhépa	hóta
manúnjnunj	záptanjptanj	čheb:čhépa	hód:hóta

Unfortunately, while noting that the final vowel of a word is an unstressed *a* is a good indicator that it may in fact be a contracting word, this is not enough. Which words contract and which words don't must be learned, as the following non-contracting words (which nevertheless end in an unstressed *a*) show.

NON-CONTRACTING WORDS ENDING IN A			
čhéya	sáka	hánjska	záptanj
He cries.	It is dry.	She is tall.	There are five.

However, there is a relatively reliable rule of thumb to follow: words that end in the following syllables usually contract, and furthermore words that do not end in these syllables *do not* contract. Furthermore, when they do contract the consonant undergoes a change, the result of the contraction is also given below.

CONTRACTIBLE SYLLABLES							
pa	ta	ka	ča	za	ža	ğa	
b	d	g	d/g	s	š	ň	

## COMPLEX WORDS

Now that we've seen the main division of basic words into two classes, contracting and non-contracting, we can quickly touch on the themes the rest of this book will expound upon: how Dakota words are built out of these basic building blocks!

Dakota relies on two main processes for word-building, compounding and affixation. Compounding is the process that takes two full words and smashes them together to make a new, bigger word: think back to the English example of *light+bulb=lightbulb*. We've already seen a Dakota example of this above, *šúnjka+thánjka=šunj:thánjka*, some other examples are below.

háŋpa+ikčéka	čhánj+čhéğa	pheží+ňóta	makhá+oňdóka
shoe+ordinary	wood+kettle	grass+gray	earth+hole
haŋpíkčeka	čhánjcheğa	phežíňota	makhóňdoka
moccasin	drum	sage	cave

The second process, affixation, is where a small little word-bit, only a syllable or so, is attached to a full-fledged word to modify its meaning in some way. English has two different types of affixes, which we call prefixes and suffixes, depending on where in the word they are attached and in addition to these two Dakota has a third class, called infixes. These are all described below.

Suffixes attach to the end of a word, two very common examples of suffixes in English are the past tense suffix *-ed*, and the plural suffix *-s*, as can be seen in the examples *shop+ed=shopped*, *cat+s=cats*. One particularly important Dakota suffix is the causative suffix *-ya*, which means 'to cause *X* to happen'.

špáj	špájye	ičáǵe	ičáh:ye
It is cooked.	He cooked it.	It grew.	He grew it.

Prefixes on the other hand, are little word-bits which stick to the front of the word to modify its meaning. An English example is the prefix *un-* meaning *not*, as in *un+believable=unbelievable*. Dakota has many different prefixes, one of which is *wó*, which takes a sentence core, and turns it into a noun; the precise meaning of which is easiest to see via example.

yúte	wóyute	waš'áke	wówaš'ake
He eats it.	food	She is strong.	strength

As suffixes attach to the end of a word and prefixes to the beginning, the final class of affixes that Dakota uses is infixes, which get inserted right into the middle of a word. Across the worlds' languages infixes are much rarer than either suffixes or prefixes, English for example does not use them (unless you count the 'f'-word in expressions such as *abso-f'in-lutely*). In Dakota, most of the personal pronouns used in cores are infixes, for example

wa+máni	ya+éhnake	wičha+wók'u	uŋ+sdodyé
I+walk	you+put it down	them+to feed	we+ to know it
mawáni	éyahake	wówičhak'u	sdodúnye
I walk.	You put it down.	He fed them.	We know it.