LESSON 7

POSSESSION: DEPENDENT AND IRREGULAR STEMS

DIALOGUE

I. *Nûkumish ume.*   Here is my uncle.

   Nûtâu(i) nenua ushtesha.   He is my father's older
                                           brother.

   Umenua utishkuema mâk utauâssîma: Here are his wife and
   nishtinua ukussa mâk nîshinua   children: (he has) three sons
   utânisha.   and two daughters.

II. Ântane mâk Pien

   A. *Tân eshpanîn?*   How are you?

   P. *Tânite tekuâk atâuitshuâp?*   Where is the store?

   A. *Miâm nete meshkanât.*   Just over there, on the path.

   P. *Tshîn â Uniâm ushtesha?*   Are you William's older
                                           brother?

   A. *Mâuât, ushîma.*   No, his younger brother.

VOCABULARY

mâk	(indecl part*)*	and
miâm	(indecl part)	just, exactly
muk^u	(indecl part)	just, but
tân eshpanîn?	(question phrase)	how are you?
ûkumisha	(dep an noun*)*	his/her uncle
ukussa	(dep an noun)	his/her son
ushîma	(dep an noun)	his/her younger brother or sister
ushtesha	(dep an noun)	his/her older brother
utânisha	(dep an noun)	his/her daughter

POINTS OF GRAMMAR

I.   Dependent Stems[1]

Certain nouns – called DEPENDENT – can never occur without a
possessive prefix, whether lst person *ni-*, 2nd person *tshi-,* 3rd
person *u-*,
or the indefinite 3rd person *mi-* ('somebody's'). Such nouns include
names of body parts, relatives and family members, and a number of
other miscellaneous nouns such as *mîûsh* 'box', *mitâsh* 'sock'. Note that
the possessive marker *-im* is not usually found with dependent stems,
although it does occasionally occur.

The following list contains dependent nouns designating names of
relatives. These nouns would normally appear in a dictionary with a 3rd
person possessor. Here, the 1st person form is also provided in brackets.

umûshûma	his/her grandfather, his father-in-law[2]	*(nimûshûm)*
ûkuma	his/her grandmother, his mother-in-law	*(nûkum)*
utânisha [odãyʃa][3]	his/her daughter	*(nitânish)*
ukussa	his/her son	*(nikuss)*
ukâuia	his/her mother	*(nikâu(i))*
ûtâuia	his/her father	*(nûtâu(i))*
ushtesha	his/her older brother	*(nishtesh)*
umisha	his/her older sister	*(nimish)*
ushîma	his/her younger brother or sister	*(nishîm)*
ûkumisha	his/her uncle	*(nûkumish)*
utûssa	his/her aunt	*(nitûss)*
utûshima	his/her nephew	*(nitûshim)*
utûshimishkuema	his/her niece	*(nitûshimishkuem)*
uîkânisha [wigãyʃa]	his/her cousin (m or f), relative(s), family	*(nîkânish)* [nigãyʃ]
unâtshima	his/her son-in-law	*(ninâtshim)*

---

[1] The term 'stem' represents the part of the word to which endings may be added;
the first part of the stem is referred to as the 'root'. See the Glossary of Linguistic
Terms for examples of both stems and roots.

[2] Because of the rules of the Innu cross-cousin kinship system the terms
umûshûma 'his father-in-law' and *ûkuma* 'her mother-in-law' are only used to
refer to persons of the same sex.

[3] When a vowel is followed by *-nish*, the *n* disappears, and all that remains is a
nasalized vowel, as noted in the phonetic transcription.

unâkanishkuema	his/her daughter-in-law	*(ninâkanishkuem)*
uîtimua	her brother-in-law, his sister-in-law[4]	*(nîtimᵘ)*
uîshtâua	her sister-in-law, his brother-in-law	*(nîshtâu)*

All of the above (animate) nouns take the obviative marker -*a*, which is found when the possessor is a 3rd person, but not when the possessor is either 1st or 2nd person.

Dependent nouns which represent body parts include the following (here presented with the unspecified possessive prefix *mi-* 'somebody's'):[5]

mishkât	a leg	*(nishkât)*
mîtshikun	a knee	*(nîtshikun)*
mitîtshî	a hand	*(nitîtshî)*
mîpit	a tooth	*(nîpit)*
mishpishkun	a back	*(nishpishkun)*

II. Irregular Forms

Several nouns display an irregular shape or form. Among these are words whose root ends in -*sh*, which alternates with a root in -*t*. These include *ûsh* 'boat, canoe'[6] and the dependent noun *mîûsh* '(somebody's) box/suitcase', which change -*sh* to -*t* before adding any possessive suffixes. Thus while 'my canoe' is translated as *nitûsh*, 'our (excl) canoe' is *nitûtinân* rather than *nitûshinân. Note that the -*t* form appears before other inflectional suffixes as well, so that 'boats' and 'suitcases' will be translated as *ûta* and *mîûta*, respectively.

1	*nitûsh*	my boat/canoe
2	*tshitûsh*	your boat/canoe
3	*utûsh*	his boat/canoe

---

[4] In this lexical item, and the next one, what is again crucial is the identity or lack of identity of the sex of the two individuals involved. Thus for *uîshtâua* the two persons involved are of the same sex; for *uîtimua* they are of the opposite sex.
[5] Other body parts may also occur with the *mi-* prefix, but are less common, in that these forms represent an object detached from its body. They include *mipuâm* 'a thigh', *mishakai* 'skin', *mishkan* 'a bone', and *mishpitun* 'an arm'.
[6] The root *ûsh* is irregular in that it does not behave like other nouns in initial *û* with respect to the possessive prefix. Rather, it takes the prefix forms *nit-, tshit-* and *ut-*, as in *nitûsh* 'my boat'.

lp	*nitûtinân*	our (excl) boat/canoe
21p	*tshitûtinân(u)*	our (incl) boat/canoe
2p	*tshitûtuâu*	your (pl) boat/canoe
3p	*utûtuâu*	their boat/canoe

The noun **atim**ᵘ 'dog' has an irregular possessed form *-**tem***, as in **nitem** 'my dog' and **utema** 'her/her dog(s)'. Elsewhere the stem is regular, as in the plural **atimuat** 'dogs'.

EXERCISES

I.   Translate the following sentences into Innu-aimun:

    1.   Where is your uncle?
    2.   This is my daughter.
    3.   Is that your dog?
    4.   Our (incl) boat is in the water.
    5.   I am Peter's older brother.
    6.   Are you John's mother?
    7.   Yes, I am John's mother.
    8.   My mother is over there near the store.