

Using the Subordinate Mode in Lenape

We've come a long way in learning the Lenape language. We have learned about the importance of whether things are living or non-living, what they are doing, whether they are doing something to another, and whether that other is living or non-living. But when we want to start relating two ideas to each other and showing how they relate in time or logic, we are not sure how. At this point, the time has come to look at **Subordinate forms**. What is the Subordinate?

A **subordinate clause** is usually introduced by a subordinating element such as a subordinating conjunction or relative pronoun. It depends on the rest of the sentence for its meaning. **It does not express a complete thought, so it does not stand alone.** It must always be attached to a main clause *that completes the meaning*. (The English Plus+ Website, <http://englishplus.com/grammar/00000010.htm>)

In English, the verb in a subordinate clause looks just like it would in the main clause. The only way you know the clause is subordinate is by looking at the **subordinate conjunction** (*that, because, when, if, etc.*).

In Lenape, however, the verb in a subordinate clause changes its form. This difference is considered one of *mood* (or *mode*), and it “indicates whether a verb expresses fact, command, wish, conditionality, etc.” (Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com>.) The most common mode is indicative, as in stating a simple fact such as *I buy groceries every day*. But in many languages, a verb in the subordinate mode (or mood) shows that the speaker is not sure that the action being talked about actually happened or will happen. Of course there are different uses of mode. In some languages, it primarily serves a *grammatical function* with little affect on the meaning of a verb. In addition, while conjunctions like *when, if, where* are considered subordinating in English, the subordinating conjunctions in Lenape are:

na – then: “*I ate a fish. **Then** I went to the store.*”¹

teli – so that; that; in order to; as; oneself (second meaning/usage): *I run **so that** I am fit.*

Another very important thing is that you don't need to say *na* or *teli* before a verb for it to be subordinate. You must look at **contextual clues** in order to know the mode. There can be long strings of sentences whose main verbs are all in the subordinate. **Why is this?** Perhaps only more time with the language will help to explain this one. Though there are some clues, which we'll see more of later, it may have to be a bit of an intuitive thing.

Let's recap those clues we've identified so far. So far, we've seen that:

- The subordinate mode comes after *na* and *teli*, and these **trigger words** are sometimes only implied, but not actually said.

¹ NOT “*If I cut a tree, then I will have wood.*”

This is only the beginning. The subordinate mode comes up in other contexts as well. Let's try to get an idea of what those contexts are and how their meaning plays a role in triggering the subordinate mode. We'll also take note of when to use each of the three main trigger words.

Alemi- / Tolemi-

Sometimes, *alemi-* / *tolemi-*, prefixes meaning 'begin', trigger the subordinate. The use of the subordinate here appears to be **optional**, based on many examples from the Lenape Talking Dictionary and C. F. Voegelin's transcriptions of stories told by the late elder Willie Longbone. On the LTD, you will find both:

- (1)
- (a) Alemtunhe – he starts to talk (independent form)

And:

- (b) Alemtunhen – he starts to talk (subordinate form)

Here, neither *na* nor *teli* is used; *alemi-* / *tolemi-* does the trick. Be warned that there may be other cases of a **preverb** triggering the subordinate. However, since we've seen it to be optional, in your own writing and speaking, don't worry about whether or not to use the subordinate.

When...then* 'Enta...na' Statements: *na

According to the Complex sentences PDF, "In the case of complex sentences involving the use of the word '*if*'...it is possible to form the general rule that *independent phrases are used rather than subordinate phrases.*" (Emphasis added.) This is because in Lenape, *if* triggers the **subjunctive**, which does not go with the **subordinate**, and *when* triggers the **conjunct** mode, which does go with the subordinate. (See footnote 1.) **Thus, *enta* + *na* go together.** HOWEVER, as we'll see over and over, the Subordinate mode seems to be optional in many cases in Lenape, so even if a clause begins with *enta*, the one following may not be in the subordinate.

Let's look at some examples of using the subordinate after *enta*.

Example 2:

- (a) Nek lenuwak enta mitsihtit **winkipuktineyo**.²
When those men eat, they like to fart.

² This sentence was generated by the author.

(b) Nekelomewe enta chinkhahtit nisha xkweyok na **weneyoneyo** chulensa shenkixin.

Long ago when they were disobedient, two women then saw a bird lying down.³

(c) Enta piskek na lapi na manetu ika **pon**.

When it was night time, then the spirit went there again.⁴

Notice some things about the meaning of this sentence in 2(a). The first clause (“When those men eat”) implies that those men do not always eat; there are specific occasions on which they do. And because these occasions of eating are not **established facts** (like in the sentence *I buy groceries every day*), anything else that comes along with them can’t be, either. So remember that an *enta* (conjunct) clause calls for a *na* (subordinate) clause. (Also, of course, remember that *na* doesn’t need to be said.)

Of course, there are plenty of examples where the first clause includes *enta* and the second one uses an independent, not subordinate, verb.

Example 3:

(a) Tataкта enta menet apchi **weneyoo** nel wewtenuwesa.

When(ever) he was about to drink, he always saw that mermaid.⁵

(b) Enta ika pat piskewenikishuxunk, **telao**, “nkatatam tentay.”

When he went there to the moon, he said to her [the moon], “I want fire.”⁶

In summary, *na* + subordinate can be used in “When...then” statements.

Wish, Expectation, and Possibility: *teli*

In certain contexts, a verb conjugated in the Subordinate mode can tell the listener something about how the action in question relates to reality, as in whether it’s likely to happen, definitely will happen, or even what the speaker’s opinion is on whether it will happen or not. This is where the use of the phrase “verbal mood” might make more sense.

Teli is used in those contexts where it’s not certain an action has happened or will happen. In these cases, the verb it precedes is conjugated in the Subordinate mood to help convey this uncertainty.

Example 4:

³ Voegelin, *Delaware Texts*: “3. mhuwe” (“The Cannibal”), sentence 1. The translation provided has been altered slightly to better fit the purpose of learning the Subordinate mode, but it remains faithful to the meaning.

⁴ Voegelin, *Delaware Texts*: “3. mhuwe” (“The Cannibal”), sentence 18. As before, the translation provided has been altered slightly to better fit the purpose of learning the Subordinate mode, but it remains faithful to the meaning.

⁵ Voegelin, “2. Disbelief in Mermaid”, sentence 2. Again, reasonable modifications applied.

⁶ Voegelin, “1. wewtenuwes” (“The Mermaid”), sentence 12. Modified slightly.

- (a) Na pilaechech **pwehao** tilich **machin** nel uxo.
The boy waited for that father (of his) to come home.⁷

Tilich is a modified form of *teli*.

Here, **pwehao** is in the independent—indicative—mode because there is no question that the boy waited; that is a given, something the listener and speaker both take for fact. However, **machin** is subordinate because it is not a proven fact of reality, a *fait accompli*, that the father will or has come home. This example shows the effects of wish, expectation, and possibility on modality.

This might be confusing because Example 4(a) in English would use the infinitive: *The boy waited for that father of his to come home.*” Why can’t we just use the infinitive in Lenape, too? The simple answer is that that’s just not how the language works. We need to have both verbs conjugated.

Summary

Uses and clues to the Subordinate Mode in Lenape:

- The subordinate mode comes with *na*, *eli*, and *teli*, and these **trigger words** are not always necessary.
- *Alemi-* / *tolemi-* optionally triggers the subordinate.
- A dependent clause beginning in *enta* and using the conjunct mode can be complemented by an independent clause whose verb is in the subordinate mode.
- An introductory clause showing a wish, expectation, or possibility must be followed by a clause in the subordinate mode.
- Weather terms, though translated as verbs, do not change form after trigger words.

Forming the Subordinate Mode in Lenape

Now that we’ve gotten an idea of when to use the subordinate and what meaning it can contribute to a sentence, let’s look at **how to conjugate verbs in the Subordinate mode**. We will try to break things down in a simple, clear manner, looking first at examples of Intransitive verbs; then Transitive Inanimate verbs; and finally, Transitive Animate verbs.

Intransitive Verbs

Let’s start easy by looking at a regular Intransitive verb: *misti* ‘to eat’. The independent forms of *mitsi* are as follows:

nemitsi ‘I eat’
nemitsihena ‘we (exclusive) eat’

⁷ Taken from the Lenape Talking Dictionary and modified slightly.

kemitsihena ‘we (inclusive) eat’

kemitssti ‘you eat’

kemitsihemo ‘you all eat’

mitsu ‘he eats’

mitsuwak ‘they eat’

With a little examination, we can see that the structure is, basically, **person.marker-ROOT-number.marker**, with the exception of the 3rd person, where both person and number are marked after the root—i.e., they are **suffixes**. The Subordinate forms will follow this same pattern. The difference is two things. *First* we add suffix, **-n**, that marks **subordination**. *Second*, we use number markers different from the ones shown above. Instead of *-hena* for 1st person plural, we simply use **-en**; instead of **-hemo** and **-wak** for 2nd and 3rd person plural, we use **-eyo**. To illustrate, the subordinate forms of *mitsi* are as follows:

nemitsin ‘I eat’

nemitsinen ‘we (exclusive) eat’

kemitsinen ‘we (inclusive) eat’

kemitsin ‘you eat’

kemitsineyo ‘you all eat’

mitsin ‘he eats’

mitsineyo ‘they eat’

We will find that this pattern more or less holds for Intransitive verbs with a few small irregularities. Let’s look next at *pa* ‘to come’:

mpa ‘I come’

mpahena ‘we (exclusive) come’

kpahena ‘we (inclusive) come’

kpa ‘you come’

kpahemo ‘you all come’

pe ‘he comes’

peyok ‘they come’

The subordinate forms are not too different:

mpan ‘I come’

mpanen ‘we (exclusive) come’

kpanen ‘we (inclusive) come’

kpan ‘you come’
kpaneyo ‘you all come’

pon ‘he comes’
poneyo ‘they come’

The irregularity here is that in the 3rd person forms, the *a* changes to an *o*. We will see this again in *kaihela* ‘to fall down’. The independent forms are as follows:

nkaihela ‘I fall down’
nkaihelahena ‘we (exclusive) fall down’
kaihelahena ‘we (inclusive) fall down’

kaihela ‘you fall down’
kaihelahemo ‘you all fall down’

kaihele ‘he falls down’
kaiheleyok ‘they fall down’

And the subordinate forms:

nkaihelan ‘I fall down’
nkaihelanen ‘we (exclusive) fall down’
kaihelanen ‘we (inclusive) fall down’

kaihelan ‘you fall down’
kaihelaneyo ‘you all fall down’

koihelan ‘he falls down’
koihelaneyo ‘they fall down’

Again, Intransitive verbs generally follow this simple pattern. Notice that there is some irregularity in the 3rd person: the last vowel before the subordinate suffix does not stay *-u*, as in *mitsu* ‘he eats’, or *-e* as in *kaihele* ‘he falls down’. Rather, it reverts back to the original vowel in the root/infinitive: *mitsi* and *kaihela*. The *-a* in the verb *pa* ‘to come’ does not follow this pattern while it is the last vowel before the subordinate suffix is added, it is also the *first* vowel in the verb, and—remember—if the first vowel in a verb is *a*, it changes to *o* in the subordinate mode.

Transitive Inanimate Verbs

Quite happily, Transitive Inanimate Verbs undergo no change in the subordinate mode. That was easy!

Transitive Animate Verbs

Transitive Animate Verbs make up for the above simplicity, but still they are not too complicated. A Transitive Animate Verb in the subordinate is marked as such: **person.marker-ROOT-THEME-SUBORDINATE**. **3rd person suffixes do not appear**. Let's look at a few examples.

1. *nehl* 'to kill someone'

tolemi-nhil-kw-eneyo⁸: 'she began to kill them'
begin-kill-INVERSE-3RD SUBJECT.PLURAL.SUBORDINATE

Although the subordinating suffix *-eneyo* can be broken into smaller pieces, for the purposes of understanding how the subordinate works with Transitive Animate Verbs, it's easier for us to treat it just as one piece.

Subordinate form: toleminhilkweneyo
Independent form: toleminhilkwoo

We've seen how to break down the subordinate form of this verb. Now let's break down the independent form and compare them:

toleminhilkwoo 'she began to kill them'
tolemi-nhil-akw-wa-a
begin-kill-INVERSE-3RD OBJECT.PLURAL-OBVIATIVE

In essence, the two-part suffix *-uwoo*, which holds the meaning of the **object** and the **obviative**, gets traded out for *-eneyo*, which holds the meaning of the **subject** and **subordination**.

2. *wishal* 'to frighten someone'

wishalawoo
wishal-a-wa-a
frighten-DIRECT-3RD SUBJECT PLURAL-OBVIATIVE
they frightened him

wishalaneyo
wishal-a-neyo
frighten-OBVIATIVE-3RD SUBJECT.PLURAL.SUBORDINATE
'they frightened him'

So, it is a little confusing because there aren't yet enough examples documented to give a full picture of how to form Transitive Animate Verbs in the subordinate mode, but we have made

⁸ Voegelin, "1. wewtenuwes" ("The Mermaid"), sentence 4.

the important observation of switching out 3rd person object information for information about the subject and subordination.

Irregularities in the Subordinate Mode in Lenape

We've already seen plenty of irregularities as to *when* to use the subordinate mode; we've seen that it is basically optional any time, except perhaps after *teli*. There are a few other irregularities we should touch on at this time.

Pronunciation

One last thing to take note of is verbs that start with *l* or a vowel. In the subordinate mode of the 3rd person, a *t-* can be inserted before vowels (with the *a* → *o* rule still applying) and *te-* before *l*. **This is not obligatory; whether or not it happens is a choice of the speaker.** Some examples follow.

The independent forms of *luwe* 'to say, tell' are:

nteluwe 'I say'
nteluwenehena 'we (exclusive) say'
kteluwehena 'we (inclusive) say'

kteluwe 'you say'
kteluwehemo 'you all say'

luwe 'he says'
luweyok 'they say'

And the subordinate forms are:

nteluwēn 'I say'
nteluwēnen 'we (exclusive) say'
kteluwēn 'we (inclusive) say'

kteluwēn 'you say'
kteluwēneyo 'you all say'

(te)luwēn 'he says'
(te)luwēneyo 'they say'

Weather words

Weather verbs (*kshaxen*, *shelante*, etc.) don't change after *na* or *teli*. For example:

Skapixekene na mwekane eli **sukelan**.
The dog's fur is wet because it is raining.

As you can see, **sukelan** takes the same shape as always.

Summary

We've learned quite a bit about the Subordinate Mode in Lenape by now. To summarize, we see the subordinate mode in:

- *Enta...na* 'When...then' statements
- *Teli* statements regarding wish, expectation, or possibility of an action taking place
- After *alemi-* / *tolemi-* and, possibly, other preverbs

And we see it formed by adding *-n*, *-nen* and *-n*, *-neyo* to the ends of verbs. There is still yet a bit more to be done; Transitive Animate Verbs aren't fully understood yet, though we are getting a stronger grasp of how they work. Hopefully this has been helpful in explaining the subordinate in Lenape.