

Reduplication and the Difference between Little and Plural

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Reduplication means copying part of a word. It's used in Nleʔkepmxcín grammar in several ways. Two of these uses are to make words plural and to make words “little”.

	(1) ʔlémn	“feather ¹ ”	(2) spém	“fire”	(3) snúyeʔ	“money”
plural	ʔemʔlémn	“feathers”	spempém	“fires”	snunúyeʔ	“amounts of money”
little	ʔéʔmn	“little feather”	spéʔpm	“little fire”	snúʔyeʔ	“a little money”

What's the difference?

Plural One way to make a word plural is to repeat part of the front of the word. (Also called *augmentative* in Nleʔkepmxcín. It can also mean greater distribution in space or time.)

(4) c'iyéh “basket” → c'iyec'iyéh (plural) “baskets”

but don't include prefixes

(5) s-pém “fire” → s-pempém (plural) “fires”
(not spemspém)

Little One way to make a word “little” (called *diminutive* by linguists) is as follows:

- Find the vowel with the stress mark
- Find the sound just **before** that vowel
- Copy that sound just **after** the vowel

(6) c'ékʷm “to light (on fire)” → c'éc'kʷm (little) “pitch-lamping”

(7) ʔaʔxáns “to eat” → ʔaʔxáxns (little) “(baby/animal) eats”

When a w or y follows the copied sound, it often becomes a vowel + ʔ: y→iʔ, w→uʔ

(8) smyéw “lynx²” → smyéyuʔ (little) “baby lynx”

(9) sméyx “snake” → smémix (little) “little snake”

In addition to reduplicating, little versions of words often contain a glottal sound³.

- If the copied sound is a glottal sound, usually nothing changes (1,6).
- If not, the copied sound can become glottal (3), or a nearby sound can (7).
- Sometimes more than one thing changes (2,9).

Bev and Noah are studying this pattern and more!

¹ Maybe also “fur” or “body hair”.

² Two lynxes in the area: Canadian lynx and bobcat. Nkətúpaʔ might be the one with a shorter tail.