

# EVIDENTIALITY IN MI'GMAQ\*†‡

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45th Algonquian Conference

October 2013

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\*This work was made possible by the SSHRC grant award to Alan Bale, Jessica Coon, Gail Metallic, and Michael Wagner. All data is my own except when otherwise marked. I take full responsibility for any mistakes, errors, or misprints.

†All Mi'gmaq text has been adapted to the Listuguj orthography. For example, an apostrophe (') is used to mark length and represent a schwa (ə); 'g' is used to represent the velar stop, in place of the 'k' seen in other orthographies, etc.

‡I would like to thank the following people for all the help they have graciously given me: Alan Bale, Jessica Coon, Mike Hamilton, Yuliya Manyakina, Gretchen McCulloch, Janine Metallic, Mary Ann Metallic, Roger Metallic, Janice Vicaire, & Joe Wilmot.

## 1 Introduction

- It has been argued that Mi'gmaq has three evidentiality markers : direct, indirect, and deferential evidential markers (Inglis 2003; Loughran, 2012). In this study, I argue that that the Mi'gmaq evidential system consists primarily of two evidentials—the direct and indirect. I argue that the third evidential marker posited by Inglis (2003) and discussed by Loughran (2012), the deferential, is probably not a separate evidential category, but the indirect evidential marker.
- **EVIDENTIALITY**– "grammatical category whose primary meaning is information source" (Aikhenvald 2004: 1)

Estonian (Aikhenvald 2004: 33)

- (1) a. ta on aus mees  
he is honest man  
'He is an honest man.'
- b. ta olevat aus mees  
he be.REP.PRES<sup>1</sup> honest man  
'He is said to be an honest man'.

- It has also been shown that many Algonquian languages have evidential markers (Cheyenne (Murray, 2010); Cree, Montagnais and Naskapi (James et al., 2001) etc. ...).

## 2 The Evidentiality System in Mi'gmaq

### 2.1 Direct

**DIRECT** marker (this is also referred to in the literature as attestive) is used when the speaker has witnessed the information directly via any of the senses or the speaker is certain about the information. This is marked by *-p(n)*. This only occurs in past environments (Loughran, 2012).

<sup>1</sup>1=first person; 2=second person; 3=third person; DU=dual; EVID.DIR=direct evidential; EVID.INDIR=indirect evidential; FIRSTH=firsthand evidential; NONFIRSTH=non-firsthand evidential; REP.PRES=reported present; VAI=verb animate intransitive; VII=verb inanimate intransitive; VTA=verb transitive animate

- (2) nemi'-g-'p ji'nm gesnugwa-**p**  
 see.VTA-3-EVID.DIR man BeSick.VAI-EVID.DIR  
 'I saw the man and he was sick.'
- (3) gesnugwa-i-**ap**  
 BeSick.VAI-1-EVID.DIR  
 'I was sick.'
- (4) wape'g'-**p**  
 BeWhite.VII-EVID.DIR  
 'It was white.'
- (5) getapegiei-eg'-**p**  
 sing-1 DU-EVID.DIR  
 'We sang.'

## 2.2 Indirect Evidential

**INDIRECT EVIDENTIAL**—also referred to in the literature as suppositive—marks information acquired through other means than having direct evidence. This could be hearsay, quotative etc. . . . This is marked by *-s(n)*

- (6) nutma-i-ap gesnugwa-**ss**  
 Hear.VTI-1-EVID.DIR BeSick.VAI-EVID.INDIR  
 'I heard he was sick.'
- (7) gesnugwa-i-**ass**  
 BeSick.VAI-1-EVID.INDIR  
 'I was sick (but I don't remember).'
- (8) wape'g-'**s** (to'q)  
 BeWhite.VII-EVID.INDIR (apparently)  
 'It was white (apparently).'
- (9) getapegiei-eg-'**s**  
 sing.VAI-DU-EVID.INDIR  
 'We sang (so we were told).'

Note that the indirect evidential is often times used in questions: “**Evidentials in an interrogative clause reflect the information source of the speaker**” (Aikhenvald 2004: 244). Compare the two data in 10. In example 10a intonation is raised to signify a question. In example 10b intonation is more flat to signify a statement.

- (10) a. mijji-**ss** (negm)?  
eat.VAI-**EVID.INDIR** (3)  
'Did he eat?'
- b. mijji-**ss** (negm).  
eat.VAI-**EVID.INDIR** (3)  
'He ate (so I heard).'

Inglis (2002) hypothesizes that the indirect evidential, *-s(n)*, surfaces in the future, thus reflecting the lack of source of direct source of information. Example 11 shows how the parsing could be. Note that in the further third person the ending is *-tew* which does not reflect the indirect evidential. More data is needed to corroborate this.

- (11) altasm-i-te-**s** sapo'nug.  
rest-VAI-FUT-**EVID.INDIR** tomorrow  
'I will rest tomorrow.' (Adapted from Inglis 2002: 93)

See Inglis (2002) for a further discussion of this.

### 3 Deferential?

Inglis (2003) posits a third evidential, the **deferential**, as a third evidential. In Mi'gmaq it is marked by the *-s'p(n)* form

The definition given states that the deferential is **similar to a tag question "to confirm with the addressee whether a statement is true or false, and/or elicit information"** (196)

The following examples are adapted from Inglis (2003)

- (12) a. i'wape'**gs'p**?  
'It used to be white, was it not?'
- b. panta'tegs'**p** tuop'ti.  
'The window, it was open, wasn't it?' (said while looking at a closed window in

a room which is cold)

In Listuguj Mi'gmaq the *-s'p(n)* form is usually found in only second person singular.

- (13) a. mijji'-s'p?  
eat.VAI-EVID.INDIR  
'Did you eat?'  
b. nemi'-s'p?  
see.VTA-EVID.INDIR  
'Did you see him/her?'

- Note that in the above examples with *-s'p(n)* and second person they are translated as a question to reflect the source of information of the speaker (cf. 10)
- Unlike in 10a, intonation does not need be raised in 13 to signify a question. The *-s'p(n)* encodes this already.
- Some speakers have noted that *-s'p(n)* seems like an older form of the *-s(n)*, or indirect evidential, in certain cases

### 3.1 Deferential does not fit into evidential categories

- Recall the definition of the deferential: confirm with the addressee whether a statement is true or false, and/or elicit information
- Aikhenvald (2004) gives six categories that evidentials of the world fit into. Note that some evidentials in some languages encompass more than one category i.e. direct evidential can encompass non-visual sensory and visual
  - VISUAL– covers information acquired through seeing.
  - NON-VISUAL SENSORY– covers information acquired through hearing, and is typically extended to smell and taste, and sometimes also to touch.
  - INFERENCE– based on visible or tangible evidence, or result.
  - ASSUMPTION– based on evidence other than visible results: this may include logical reasoning assumption, or simply general knowledge.
  - HEARSAY– for reported information with no reference to those it was reported by.
  - QUOTATIVE– for reported information with an overt reference to the quoted source.

- The direct evidential easily fits into the visual and non-visual sensory categories
- The indirect evidential falls neatly into the inference, assumption, hearsay, and quotative categories
- Deferential does not conform to any of the above categories

### 3.2 What is it?

- *s'p(n)* is another form of the indirect evidential
  - Inglis (2003: 195) 'Eleanor Johnson's comment (Inglis 2002:65) contrasting (2) and (a) is explicit: . . . if I tell you l'-wape'kɨp, I'm telling you that it used to be white and [I know for sure because I saw it.] But l'-wape'ksɨp, that means I might be **getting my information from somebody else to tell you that it used to be white.**' (bolding is my own)
  - James, Clarke, and MacKenzie (2001) on Cree, Montagnais, and Naskapi paper shows that the indirect form that is cognate to the Mi'gmaq indirect, there is no difference in meaning in Montagnais: "In addition in Sheshatshiu and the Lower North Shore, a shorter form *-sha* occurs alongside *-shapan*" (pg 231)
  - James, Clarke, and MacKenzie (2001) also state that: "*-shapan* and *-sha* derive from two forms in Proto-Algonquian which took the forms *\*(e)sapan* and *\*(e)san* (Goddard 1979: 189; 1995:133). According to Goddard and to Proulx these two forms appear to have had the same function; there is no evidence of a contrast in meaning between them." This could also be the case for Mi'gmaq
  - "In Micmac, *-s'n* and *-sɨp'n*<sup>2</sup> are rhythmic variants..." (Proulx 1990: 105).
- *s'p* seems to be obligatory in some environments in order to distinguish the person (see the minimal pair in example 14)

- (14) a. nemi'-g-'s  
       see.VTA-3-EVID.INDIR  
       'I must have seen him/her.'
- b. nemi'-g'-s'p  
       see.VTA-3-EVID.INDIR  
       'We must have seen him/her.'

<sup>2</sup>Listuguj orthography: *-s'p(n)*

## 4 Conclusion

### 4.1 Summary

The data suggest...

- Mi'gmaq has evidential markers (direct and indirect marker)
- the deferential evidential is not an evidential marker: it is another form of the indirect evidential

### 4.2 For further research

#### MIRATIVITY

- covers speaker's 'unprepared mind', unexpected new information and concomitant surprise (DeLancey 1997 via Aikhenvald 2004: 195);
- indirect evidential used with first person can have tones of surprise or accidental realization

Mi'gmaq (Adapted from Inglis 2003)

(15) nepa-i-**ass**  
 sleep.VAI-1-**EVID.INDIR**  
 'I fell asleep, accidentally.'

(16) nepa-i-**ap**  
 sleep.VAI-1-**EVID.DIR**  
 'I fell asleep.'

This is similar to the evidential -mIs in Turkish

(17) uyu-**mus**-um  
 sleep-**NONFIRSTH**-1SG  
 'I must have fallen asleep!'

(Aikhenvald, 2004: 197)

(18) uyu-**du**-m  
 sleep-**FIRSTH**-1SG  
 'I slept.'

**Another evidential?**

Loughran (2012) reports that there is a possibility of there being another evidential in Mi'gmaq. The following examples from Loughran (2012).

- (19) a. etugjel negm gmutnal-a-**tuguna**  
 maybe 3 steal.VTA-3obj-?  
 'He must have stolen it.'
- b. tlim-a-**tuguna**  
 say.VTA-3obj-?  
 'He must have told him.'
- c. nmi-a-**tuguna**  
 see.VTA-3obj-?  
 'He must have seen him.'

This may be another evidential that relates to Aikhenvald's INFERENCE or ASSUMPTION categories. This could be the dubitative evidential.

Looks promising but need more data on this. . .

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