

Wh-Words as Indefinites: Passamaquoddy-Maliseet Versus Mi'kmaq

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1 Passamaquoddy-Maliseet and Mi'kmaq

Two closely related Eastern Algonquian languages spoken in adjacent territories:

- Passamaquoddy-Maliseet: Maine and New Brunswick, Canada;
- Mi'kmaq: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec.

Facts about the languages:

- Both are polysynthetic, head-marking languages with fairly free word order and complex verb morphology.
- Examples without citations come from my own fieldnotes: Passamaquoddy speakers in Indian Township, Maine; Mi'kmaq speakers in Eskasoni, Nova Scotia.

Topic of this talk: wh-words used in non-interrogative contexts.

- **Difference #1:** Passamaquoddy-Maliseet uses bare wh-words as indefinites in all contexts, but bare wh-words are polarity items in Mi'kmaq and require an additional morpheme to be used in non-affective contexts.
- **Difference #2:** Passamaquoddy-Maliseet uses pairs of wh-words in Chinese-style conditionals, but Mi'kmaq does not.

2 Wh-Questions

Both languages have obligatory fronting of question word:

(1) Passamaquoddy-Maliseet

- a. **Wen** kisi tomahqalwehtah-at mahtoqehsu-wol?
who Past cut.off.tail-3/ObvConj rabbit-Obv
'Who cut off the rabbit's tail?'
- b. Ma yaq ote 'koscihitu-w-on [**keq** oc ol-luhke].
Neg Quot Emph 3-know-Neg-Inan what Fut thus-do.3
'He didn't know **what** to do.' (Newell 1974b, 2)
- c. Itom yaq, "**Tama** nil nt-i?"
say.3 Quot where 1 1-be
'He said, "**Where** am I?'" (Newell 1974b, 2)

(2) Mi'kmaq

- a. **Wen** wejku'we-t?
who approach-3S
'Who is coming over?'
- b. **Koqowey** kisu-n?
what make-2S/Inan
'What did you make?'

- c. **Tami** wiki-jik kitpu-k?
 where live-3P eagle-3P
 ‘Where do the eagles live?’

If wh-word is not fronted, can only be interpreted as an indefinite:

- (3) Passamaquoddy-Maliseet
 Mahtoqehs **wen** ’-kisi tomahqalwehtah-a-l.
 rabbit who 3-Past cut.off.tail-Dir-Obv
 ‘Someone cut off the rabbit’s tail.’
 *‘Who cut off the rabbit’s tail?’

- (4) Mi’kmaq
 Kisitu-n **koqowey?**
 make-2S/Inan what
 ‘Did you make anything?’
 *‘What did you make?’

Note: Yes-no questions in both languages seem to be distinguished from declaratives solely by intonation.

3 Universal Quantifiers

Both languages add a quantifier to wh-words to make universal quantifiers:

- (5) Passamaquoddy-Maliseet
- Msi=te=hc wen** nuto-k, wolsotom-on.
 all=Emph=Fut who hear-3Conj (3)-like.sound-Inan
 ‘Everyone that hears it will like its sound.’ (Mitchell 1921/1976a, 14)
 - Tokec olu **msi=te keq** ’-kiwacehtu-n.
 now Emph all=Emph what 3-make.lonely-3
 ‘But now, he makes everything feel lonely.’ (Mitchell 1921/1976a, 7)
 - Kehtaqs kahk **psi=te tama** kisi yali-ye, peci te lampeq.
 ghost Foc all=Emph where able around-go.3, even Emph underwater
 ‘A ghost can go anywhere—even under water.’ (Newell 1979, 21)
- (6) Mi’kmaq
- aqq **msit wen** miamuj elukwe-s kisa’tu-n kwitn nikan-a’si-n.
 and all who for.sure work-Supp.3S fix-3S/Inan canoe ahead-walk-Inan
 ‘and everyone worked to keep the canoe moving forward.’ (Trottier and MacAulay-MacKinnon 1995, p.5)
 - Oqono-ltukwa’ti-jik wape’k-ik waisis-k **msit tami** al-ta’-jik.
 cover-?-3P white-3P animal-3P all where around-move-3P
 ‘Fluffy white animals wandered everywhere.’ (Trottier and MacAulay-MacKinnon 1995, p.10)
 - msit koqowey** ‘everything’

Both languages have at least one other strongly distributive universal quantifier:

- (7) Passamaquoddy-Maliseet
 On **yatte wen** ’t-oloqi-ya-n ’t-utene-k.
 then each who 3-that.direction-go-Subord 3-village-Loc
 ‘Then each one goes toward his own village.’ (Mitchell 1921/1976a, 18)
- (8) Mi’kmaq
E’tasu wen ketapekie-t.
 each who sing-3S
 ‘Each one is singing.’ (not together)

4 Free Relatives

Both languages use a morpheme *tan/ta'n* with the wh-words 'who' and 'what' (but not 'where') to form something like an English free relative:

(9) Passamaquoddy-Maliseet

- a. **Tan** kahk **wen** piluwitposi-t, (')-nokomasi-tahatom-on tahalu eli acehtasi-k loqtewakon-ol.
TAN Emph who have.power-3Conj 3-easy-think-Inan like C change-IIConj clothing-InanP
'He who possesses supernatural powers thinks it an easy task to change mere clothing.' (Mitchell 1921/1976b, 7)
- b. **Tan** te **keq wen-il** yah-a-htit, nit te=hc eley-ik.
TAN Emph what who-Obv say.to-Dir-3PConj then Emph=Fut IC.happen-IIConj
'[Whatever they told someone, it would happen.]' (Newell 1979, 3)

(10) Mi'kmaq

- a. **Ta'n wen** nemiy-at'l jipji'j-'l ne'tapi-t.
TAN who see-3S/Obv bird-Obv be.sharp.sighted-3S
'Whoever sees a bird has good eyesight.'
- b. aqq ma' elam we'jitu'-n **ta'n koqoey** ali-kwilm-n.
and Neg.Fut ever find-2S/Inan TAN what around-seek-2S/Inan
'and never find what it is you are looking for.' (Trottier and MacAulay-MacKinnon 1995, p.1)

The morpheme *TAN* has many uses in both languages. In Mi'kmaq, *ta'n* + wh-phrase can imply lack of knowledge or concern with what the indefinite is:

(11) Mi'kmaq

- Uti, piltuwaptm **ta'n koqowey**.
friend, it.looks.strange.to.me TAN what
'Friend, it looked strange to me, whatever it was.' (DeBlois 1990, p.4 line 9)

TAN + 'only' + wh-phrase is used as a free-choice item in both languages:

(12) Passamaquoddy-Maliseet

- Tan tehpu keq** mil-in, muck otehp 'samaqan.
TAN only what give-2/1Imp, even only water
'Give me anything, even plain water.' (Newell 1979, line 26)

(13) Mi'kmaq

- Ta'n pasik wen** ksiputuwa-tal Sa'n-al.
TAN only who defeat?-3S/Obv John-Obv
'Anyone can beat John.'

5 Indefinites: Affective Contexts

Both languages use bare wh-phrases as indefinites in affective contexts:

5.1 Negation

(14) Passamaquoddy-Maliseet

- a. On saku kcihku-k [']t-oloqi-ya-ni-ya, weci **skat wen** nomiy-a-hq.
then therefore forest-Loc 3-that.way-go-Subord-3P so.that Neg who see-Dir-3ConjNeg
'They therefore went that way through the forest, so that **no one** would see them.' (Newell 1974b, 5)
- b. Ahtoli wikuwamke-t mamote **ma=te keq** n-kisi ol-luhke-w sepay.
keep.on visit-3Conj finally Neg=Emph what 1-Past thus-do-Neg morning
'She kept visiting so I never did get **anything** done this morning.'

- c. **Ma=te tama** k-nomiy-a-w mahtoqehs yut t[u]ciye-w?
 Neg=Emph where 2-see-Dir-Neg rabbit here go.by.3-Neg
 ‘Haven’t you seen a rabbit **anywhere** going by here?’ (Newell 1974a, 3)

(15) Mi’kmaq

- a. **Mu wen** wejkuwe-k.
 Neg who approach-3SNeg
 ‘**No one** is coming over.’
- b. aqq tepknuset eta **ma’** elam tlue-k **koqoey**.
 and moon Emph Neg.Fut ever tell-3SNeg what
 ‘and the moon, of course, tells **nothing**.’ (Trottier and MacAulay-MacKinnon 1995, p.11)
- c. Uti, kawaskulapa:’ij, wikma:qa **mu tami** eym’likwik.
 friend when.he.turned.his.head.backwards his.chums not where they.were.not.there
 ‘When he turned his head around backwards, his mates were **nowhere** in sight.’ (DeBlois 1990, p.39 line 225)

5.2 Yes-No Questions

(16) Mi’kmaq

- a. Me’ **wen** wejkuwe-t?
 still who approach-3S
 ‘Is anybody coming?’
- b. Kisitu-n **koqowey**?
 make-2S/Inan what
 ‘Did you make anything?’

Also wh-question:

(17) Mi’kmaq

- Wen** pekisitoq **koqowey**?
 who bring-3S what
 ‘Who brought anything?’ or ‘Did anyone bring anything?’

5.3 Protasis of Conditional

(18) Mi’kmaq

- Peml̥ka-j **wen**, tepa’la-t̥s.
 along-walk-3SCond who put.aboard-1SFut
 ‘If anyone is walking along, I’ll pick them up.’

6 Indefinites: Non-Affective Contexts

Passamaquoddy-Maliseet still uses bare wh-words as indefinites, but Mi’kmaq requires an additional morpheme, *na’t*:

(19) Passamaquoddy-Maliseet

- a. Kesq yaq pemaqim-a-htit otuhk-ol, on **keq** (’)-nutom-oni-ya.
 while Quot drag-Dir-3PConj deer-Obv then what 3-hear-Inan-3P
 ‘While they were dragging the deer they heard **something**.’ (Newell 1974b, 5)
- b. On yaka wesuwiy-apasi-htit, wot yaq **wen** pemi sakhiya-t.
 then then.Fut going.back-walk.away-3PConj this.An Quot who IC.along come.into.view-3Conj
 ‘Then, on their way back, **something** [animate] came into sight.’ (Newell 1979, 25)
- c. **Keq** (’)-nomihtu-ni-ya etoli-macetutomuwi-k kci ponapsku-k **tama** al tekkapimok.
 what 3-see-Inan-3P IC.there-move-IIConj big rock-Loc where Uncertain as.far.as.one.can.see
 ‘They see **something** moving on a big rock [**somewhere**] near the horizon.’ (Mitchell 1921/1976b, 22)

(20) Mi'kmaq

- a. **Na't wen** wejkuwe-t.
NA'T who approach-3S
'Someone is coming over.'
- b. Klapis newkte'jk eksitpu'k Malsikws nemit-oqsip **na't koqoey**.
finally one morning Wood.Duck see-3/Inan.Def NA'T what
'Finally one morning Wood Duck saw **something**.' (Trottier and MacAulay-MacKinnon 1995, p.6)
- c. K'listo:po:q etli-pkisink kis-setta:newimk, **na: tami** semiselewimk.
Christopher he.was.arriving after.St.Anne's.Day NA'T where in.September
'Christopher arrived after St. Anne's Day, **sometime** in September.' (DeBlois 1990, p.3, line 4)

Wh-words cannot be used without *na't* in a non-affective context:

(21) Mi'kmaq

- Ki's-'m-ap ***(na't) koqowey**.
finish-cook-1SPast *(NA'T) what
'I cooked something.'

7 Wh-Conditionals

Passamaquoddy-Maliseet uses pairs of wh-words in conditionals, one in each clause, like Chinese (see Cheng and Huang 1996):

(22) Passamaquoddy-Maliseet

- a. Naka **wen** mahqalsi-t wapahkuhs-is-ol **wen** 'kotuw-akomitehtu-n micuwakon.
and who borrow-3Conj bucket-Dim-Obv who 3-will-boil-Inan food
'and—whoever borrows a cooking-pot will be boiling food.' (Francis and Leavitt 1995)
- b. **Tama** etoli-nomiy-ot qapit, cu **tama** k-toli-nomihtu-n kpihikon.
where IC.there-see-2Conj beaver surely where 2-there-see-Inan dam
'Wherever you see a beaver you'll see a dam.'
- c. Nekom **keq** kisi-ht-aq, **keq** woli-kon.
3 what Past-make-3Conj what good-be.II
'If he makes X, X is good quality.'

Mi'kmaq does not:

(23) Mi'kmaq

- a. Pemi~~l~~ka-j **wen** tepa'la-tis.
along-walk-3SCond who put.aboard-1SFut
'If anyone is walking along, I'll pick them up.'
- b. *Pemi~~l~~ka-j **wen** tepa'la-tis **wen**.
along-walk-3SCond who put.aboard-1SFut who
'If who is walking along, I'll pick who up.' (comment: "Too many *wen*'s.")

8 Scope of Indefinites

In Passamaquoddy-Maliseet, wh-indefinites may not take scope over negation, and they may only take narrow scope in a conditional:

(24) Passamaquoddy-Maliseet

- a. **Ma=te wen** 'kisi-tomh-a-wiy-il Piyel-ol.
Neg=Emph who 3-Past-beat-Dir-Neg-Obv P.-Obv
'No one beat Piyel.' (*'There is someone who didn't beat Piyel.')

- b. Komac op n-ulitahas **wen** peciya-t etolimawiyayek.
 very would 1-be.happy who come-3Conj gathering
 ‘I’ll be happy if anyone comes to the party.’ (nonspecific only)

Bare wh-words are also clearly low-scope in Mi’kmaq, like English *anyone/anything*. However, it might be possible for wh-words with *na’t* to take wider scope:

(25) Mi’kmaq

- a. Pemiłka-j **wen** tepa’la-tis.
 along-walk-3SCond who put.aboard-1SFut
 ‘If anyone is walking along, I’ll pick them up.’ (low scope)
- b. Pemiłka-j **na’t wen** tepa’la-tis.
 along-walk-3SCond NA’T who put.aboard-1SFut
 ‘If someone is walking along, I’ll pick them up.’ (scope unclear, but I believe it can be a specific referent)

Wh-words with *na’t* can certainly refer to a specific referent in the mind of the speaker:

(26) Mi’kmaq

- a. **Na’t wen** aw’n-intoq.
 NA’T who poorly-sing.3S
 ‘Someone (not naming names) can’t sing.’
- b. Menuwaqal-ul welteskuwan **na’t wen**.
 want-1/2 meet.up.with-2/3 NA’T who
 ‘I want you to meet someone.’ (can use like English, have person in mind)

9 The Beginnings of an Analysis

Summary of data:

Passamaquoddy-Maliseet	Mi’kmaq
Wh-words obligatorily fronted in wh-questions	same
Wh-words combine with Qs to form \forall	same
Wh-words combine with <i>TAN</i> to form free relatives	same
Wh-words used bare as indefinites, no polarity sensitivity	Wh-words are affective polarity items when bare, indefinites with additional morphology
Wh-words used in wh-conditionals	Wh-words NOT used in wh-conditionals
Wh-indefinites cannot take wide scope	(Wh-indefinites with additional morphology can take wide scope?)

9.1 Hamblin Semantics for Questions

Following Kratzer and Shimoyama (2002), based on original idea of Hamblin (1973):

- Wh-words are sets of individuals;
- NOT properties, though; they are individual alternatives (type e).
- Alternatives expand via pointwise functional application.

- (27) a. $\llbracket \text{wen} \rrbracket^{w,g} = \{x: \text{animate}(x)(w)\}$
 b. $\llbracket \text{keq/koqowey} \rrbracket^{w,g} = \{x: \text{inanimate}(x)(w)\}$
 c. $\llbracket \text{tama/tami} \rrbracket^{w,g} = \{x: \text{location}(x)(w)\}$

(28) Mi’kmaq

- a. **Wen** wejku’we-t?
 who approach-3S
 ‘Who is coming over?’

- b. $\llbracket \text{wejku'wet} \rrbracket^{w,g} = \{ \lambda x \lambda w'. \text{approach}(x)(w') \}$
- c. $\llbracket \text{wen wejku'wet} \rrbracket^{w,g} = \{ \lambda w'. \text{approach}(x)(w') \mid x \in D_e \ \& \ \text{animate}(x)(w) \}$

9.2 Indefinite Uses

- Indefinites are created by merging an existential quantifier with the wh-word;
- This existential quantifier can be null or overt:
- (I've stopped talking in terms of sets, since after combination with \emptyset_{\exists} everything is a singleton set.)

(29) Passamaquoddy-Maliseet

- a.
$$\begin{array}{c} \text{NP} \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \emptyset_{\exists} \quad \text{wen/keq/tama} \end{array}$$
- b. $\llbracket \emptyset_{\exists} \rrbracket^{w,g} = \lambda x \lambda P \lambda w'. \exists y \subseteq x \ \& \ P(y)(w')=1$
- c. $\llbracket \emptyset_{\exists} \text{wen} \rrbracket^{w,g} = \lambda P \lambda w'. \exists y \subseteq \{x: \text{animate}(x)(w)\} \ \& \ P(y)(w')=1$

Mi'kmaq:

- Null existential quantifier also induces domain-widening as a conventional implicature;
- So it is limited to affective contexts, where domain-widening results in a stronger statement (see Kadmon and Landman 1993, Chierchia 2006).
- Overt existential quantifier (*na't*) does not induce domain-widening.

9.3 Haspelmath's Generalization

Haspelmath (1997):

- (30) Many languages: Question = wh-word; Indefinite = wh-word + morpheme;
 No language: Indefinite = X; Question = X + morpheme.

Theory above accounts for Haspelmath's generalization:

- Wh-words as questions are basic: denote individual alternatives;
- To get an existential quantifier, have to add a morpheme.

However, there is another generalization that I believe to be true that this theory does not account for:

- (31) If a language has two indefinites based on wh-phrases, one with domain widening and one without, the one with domain widening is bare while the one that does not induce domain widening has additional morphology.

I know of no counterexamples to this generalization, but I also don't have a lot of data.

- Note: It is not clear that the lack of wh-conditionals in Mi'kmaq should be related to the polarity status of wh-words in Mi'kmaq;
- Chinese wh-words are polarity items, and yet Chinese has wh-conditionals.

10 Historical Development

Which pattern was prior, Passamaquoddy-Maliseet's or Mi'kmaq's?

- Very little data; I am told that Penobscot and Western Abenaki are very much like Passamaquoddy-Maliseet, but I haven't seen the full range of data;
- All the examples I have been able to find from Wampanoag have wh-words under the scope of negation or in conditionals (and only the antecedent clause of the conditional);
- Swampy Cree seems to have wh-words as indefinites in non-affective contexts (Reinholtz and Russell 1995);
- But Blackfoot appears to have different items for wh-words and indefinites.

Any data on other Algonquian languages greatly appreciated!

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