

TWO PLURACTIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN MI'KMAW^{*}

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1. Introduction

Newman (2012: 185) describes pluractionals as “verb forms whose function was to indicate plurality of action or event.” In some Algonquian languages, repeated actions are encoded by reduplication (Junker 1994, Dahlstrom 1997, Conathan 2005, Goddard 2011, Mattiola 2019). In contrast to the situation in other Algonquian languages, pluractional actions in Mi'kmaw do not involve reduplication in the verb but instead are composed of a construction of three verbal morphemes: LITTLE *v*, ANIMACY agreement, and VOICE (cf. Paul et al. 2019).

Mi'kmaw has at least two pluractional constructions, bolded in (1) and (2). The first line is the example written using the Francis-Smith orthography (Francis and Hewson 2016). Morphemes are parsed in the second line, the third provides morpheme glosses, and the fourth line is the English translation.¹

- (1) **Pesko'tu** nusapon.
pesk-**o'-t-u-Ø** n-usapon
pluck-*v*-AN-VOICE-1S 1SPOSS-hair
'I am plucking my hair.'
- (2) **Kweso'tm** npitn.
kwes-**o'-t-m-Ø** n-pitn
favour-*v*-AN-VOICE-1S 1SPOSS-hand
'I am favouring my hand.'

* We appreciate the expert guidance, insights, and encouragement of Friesen's doctoral committee: Drs. Leslie Saxon, Heather Bliss, Charlotte Loppie, and Barbara Sylliboy. Friesen also appreciates Dr. Stephanie Inglis for her work and teaching on the Mi'kmaw verb stem morphology and her mentorship when Friesen began working in the area. This work is partially supported by a SSHRC doctoral fellowship.

¹ Abbreviations include 1 = first person, 3, third person, AN = ANIMACY morpheme, APPL = applicative, DFLT = default morpheme, LOC = locative, OBJ = object, POSS = possessive prefix, S = singular, TI = transitive verb with inanimate object, TS = theme sign, TLE = Ta'n L'nuey Etl-mawlukwatmumk, the Curriculum resource centre for the Mi'kmaw immersion school.

(1) and (2) express the plural events of plucking hairs and favouring an injured hand. Two different LITTLE *v*-ANIMACY-VOICE constructions are employed; (1) is *-o'-t-u* and (2) is *-o'-t-m*. This study concentrates on verbs expressing pluractional actions with inanimate internal arguments, leaving animate internal arguments to future research. We describe these constructions and ask, what are the syntactic and semantic differences between the two forms?

We find that the pluractional construction comprised by the sequence *-o'-t-u* yields multiple actions of the same type on multiple internal arguments and the *-o'-t-m* sequence yields multiple different actions on one internal argument, see Table 1.

Table 1. Pluractional constructions

<i>-o'-t-u</i>	<i>-o'-t-m</i>
Same action on <u>multiple</u> internal arguments	Multiple <i>different</i> actions on <u>one</u> internal argument

We conclude that *-o'* (LITTLE *v*) together with *-u* and *-m* (VOICE) produce different types of pluractionals and illustrate a dependency between the two categories. This dependency occurs despite an intervening ANIMACY agreement morpheme.

Section 2 describes our methodology, section 3 identifies the three categories that make up the construction, section 4 illustrates the two pluractional constructions, and section 5 concludes.

2. Methodology

The first three authors of this paper are speakers of Mi'kmaw as their first language and the fourth is a learner. Our research is done in the context of developing curriculum for the Mi'kmaw immersion program and Friesen's language learning, using the Indigenist research paradigm (Wilson 2007) and following the guidelines for semantic fieldwork provided by Matthewson (2004). Clauses expressing pluractional actions comprise part of a larger study of 150+ verb stems in 1200+ sentences (Friesen, forthcoming). We elicit as many different sentences as possible with the same verb stem, focusing our attention on the morphemes between stem and inflection in different transitivity contexts. We use these as a base for further discussions to investigate the functions of the morphemes in the verb and how they relate to the participants in the clause. In each pluractional context, we discuss what makes the event pluractional, describing the type(s) of action involved and the plurality of internal arguments. We consider only verbs in present indicative tense (Francis and Hewson 2016) / realis mood (Inglis 2002). Generative terminology is employed to be consistent with much Algonquian work.

3. Three categories

Our earlier work (Paul et al. 2019) proposed three morphemes between the stem and inflection in Mi'kmaw verbs. Our analysis is different from that of previous researchers, who have treated similar sequences in Mi'kmaw in three different ways. Inglis (1986) considers the sequence as two morphemes. (3) is an example from Inglis (1986:290) where she parses *-o't* as a suffix on a transitive verb with an inanimate object² meaning 'do something bit by bit' (as opposed to *-a't* which indicates 'do something in one continuous motion') and *-m* as another type of suffix found on transitive verbs with an animate subject and inanimate object.³ We bolded the sequence in each of the examples.

- (3) *wel-o't-m*
 'take good care of' (Inglis 1986: 290)

In contrast, Fidelholtz (1999) parses a similar sequence as stem plus the morpheme *-tm-*, with *oo* being part of the verb stem. His example is reproduced here as (4). Note that Fidelholtz (1999:97) writes long vowels as doubled symbols.⁴

- (4) *anʔkoo- -tm-*
 'look after' (Fidelholtz 1999: 102)

Hamilton (2015) includes no pluractional examples but considers a similar sequence in Mi'gmaq⁵ as one morpheme (5), glossed as 'default' (cf. Bruening 2001 for Passamaquoddy).

- (5) *elugw-atm-u-i-t*
 fix-DFLT-APPL-1OBJ-3
 'S/he fixes it (IN) for me.' (Hamilton 2015: 34)

In contrast to these, we identify three sets of morphemes between the stem and the person/number inflection. This is within the Algonquian tradition of recognizing that the verb suffixes called 'finals' are not a homogeneous category (Bloomfield 1946, Goddard

² Called a 'TI verb final' using Algonquianist terminology.

³ These suffixes are called 'TI Theme signs' using Algonquianist terminology. McCulloch (2013) also parses in the same way for Mi'gmaq;

<i>wissugw</i>	-at	-m	<i>-ap</i>
cook	-TI	-TS	-PAST

'I cooked it.'

(McCulloch 2013: 34)

⁴ Fidelholtz also writes a phonetic glottal stop.

⁵ 'Mi'kmaw' and 'Mi'gmaq' represent different dialects and orthographies of the same language found in different regions. The orthography that Mi'gmaq uses writes stops as if they are voiced.

1974, Denny 1978, Inglis 1986, Valentine 2001, Quinn 2006, Mathieu 2008, Armoskaite 2011, Oxford 2014, Hamilton 2015) and reflects the intuitions of these previous linguists who parsed them differently. (6) illustrates the three stems shown in (3)-(5) in full clauses.

- (6) a. **Welo'tm** wasuek.
 wel-**o'**-**t-m**-∅ wasuek
 good-*v*-AN-VOICE-1S flower
 'I keep the flower good.'
- b. **Anko'tm** npitn.
 ank-**o'**-**t-m**-∅ n-pitn
 good-*v*-AN-VOICE-1s 1sPOSS-hand
 'I am taking care of my hand.'
- c. **Elukwatmuit** Pie'l paysikl.
 elukw-**a-t-m**-u-it Pie'l paysikl
 work-*v*-AN-VOICE-APPL-3S>1S Peter bicycle
 'Peter fixes the bicycle for me.'

Considering three distinct sets of morphemes allows us to isolate the function of each morpheme. We argue that Mi'kmaq has an expanded VP; we propose a *vP*, ANIMACYP, and VOICEP since members of each of the distinct morpheme sets display functions appropriate to each category. The sequence *o'tu* is composed of the LITTLE *v* morpheme *-o'* that indicates pluractional aspect (section 3.1), the ANIMACY morpheme *-t* that indicates the internal argument is inanimate (section 3.2), and the VOICE morpheme *-u* which indicates an animate subject and third person object (section 3.3). The three categories are illustrated in Figure 1, which shows (6a).

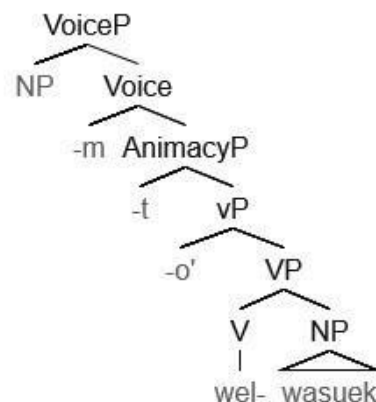


Figure 1. Three categories illustrated

We assume head movement from *V* to *v* to VOICE to derive the observed morpheme order. Considering these three distinct sets of morphemes enables us to discern the differences between the two pluractional constructions.

3.1 LITTLE *v* Aspect

In (6a), we consider *-o'* as a LITTLE *v* morpheme (cf. Paul et al. 2019). The generative Algonquian literature characterizes all abstract finals as LITTLE *v* (Plains Cree, Hirose 2001; Naskapi, Brittain 2003; Penobscot, Quinn 2006; Ojibwe, Mathieu 2008, Lochbihler 2012, Riccomini 2019; Blackfoot, Ritter and Rosen 2010; Mi'gmaq, McCulloch 2013, Hamilton, 2015; and Northern East Cree, Brittain and Acton 2014). LITTLE *v* morphemes cross-linguistically are often associated with aspectual features (Kratzer 1997, Arad 2002, Harley 2017).

3.2 ANIMACY agreement

The ANIMACY morpheme agrees with the animacy of the internal argument. In (6), *-t* agrees with the inanimate internal argument. The agreement of verb suffixes with the animacy of the internal argument is well-documented in the literature in the context of the Bloomfieldian parsing of the verb stem (cf. Inglis 1986 and Sylliboy et al. 2016 for Mi'kmaw). We interpret this morpheme as an ANIMACY category morpheme, adapting Brittain (1999: 40) who posits an animacy phrase between the verb root and object/subject agreement categories.⁶

It has long been noted that the verb suffixes called ‘finals’ occur in pairs (Jones and Michelson 1911, Bloomfield 1946, Inglis 1986, Mathieu 2008). This reflects an implicit recognition that the finals are composed of distinct morphemes, with at least one carrying features for animacy. The members of the pairs are distinguished by the common *t* for the inanimate-indicating morphemes and the sonorant for the animate-indicating morphemes. Paul et al. (2019) proposed that the animacy-indicating portion be split from the rest of the suffix.

3.3 VOICE

-m and *-u* we classify as VOICE in (6) and (7), respectively, following McCulloch (2013), who argued that *-asi* and *-eke*, like other valency changing suffixes termed ‘finals’ and ‘TI theme signs’, are VOICE. The VOICE category restricts the animacy features of the subject

⁶ Brittain (1999: 41) proposes that the head of the Animate Phrase checks the feature [+Animate]. She treats only direct and inverse forms which always have animate internal arguments. We adopt this category since the Animate Phrase is situated between the VP and TP. Future study investigates the relationship between the Animate Phrase as described by Brittain and that shown in our work.

and person features of the object and works in combination with ANIMACY to yield grammatical voice; together they map semantic roles onto grammatical roles (Paul et al. 2019). The VOICE category that we are proposing fits Kratzer’s (1996: 120) comment that the category “VOICE is truly at the heart of a theory of voice” and Harley’s (2013: 37) characterisation, “[a]s suggested by its name, Voice^o should be the locus of traditional voice morphology.” The *-t-m* and *-t-u* combinations both express active voice.

4. Two pluractional constructions

We illustrate the two pluractional constructions with inanimate internal arguments in sections 4.1 and 4.2.

4.1 *-o’-t-u*: Same type of action on multiple internal arguments

Verb stems with the morpheme sequence *-o’-t-u* express a pluractional where the subject performs the same type of action on plural internal arguments. The clauses in (7) only differ in that the stem contains *-o’* in (7a) and *-a’* in (7b).

- (7) a. **Kuto’tu** pitewey kops-iktuk.
 kut-**o’-t-u**-∅ pitewey kops-iktuk
 pour-*v*-AN-VOICE-1S tea mug-LOC
 ‘I am pouring tea into the mugs.’
- b. **Kuta’tu** pitewey kops-iktuk.
 kut-**a’-t-u**-∅ pitewey kops-iktuk
 pour-*v*-AN-VOICE-1S tea mug-LOC
 ‘I am pouring tea into the mug.’

The stem *kut-* ‘pour’ with *-o’* expresses a pluractional action of pouring tea into many mugs (7a); with *-a’* (7b), the verb stem expresses the single action of pouring tea into one mug. Unlike the English translation, *kops* ‘mug’ isn’t pluralised in (7a). Note that there is neither plural marking on the syntactic object, the verb, nor the oblique in either (7) and (8).⁷

Similarly, (8) shows the verb stem *ke’s-* ‘put in the fire’ with *-o’* in (a) and with *-a’* in (b). The clauses are otherwise identical.

⁷ The syntactic objects in these clauses are non-count nouns. Count nouns must be pluralised for pluractional actions and the verb has corresponding plural morphology.

- (8) a. Ke'so'tu kmu'j.
 ke's-o'-t-u-Ø kmu'j
 put.in.fire-v-AN-VOICE-1S wood
 'I am putting wood into the fire.'
- b. Ke'sa'tu kmu'j.
 ke's-a'-t-u-Ø kmu'j
 put.in.fire-v-AN-VOICE-1S wood
 'I am going to put a stick into the fire.'

(8a) expresses the same type of action distributed over plural internal arguments (many pieces of firewood) and (8b) the single action of putting one stick of firewood into the fire. Our corpus of over 150 verb stems in over 1200 clauses includes 20 stems of this type.

4.2 -o'-t-m: Different actions on one internal argument

In contrast to -o'-t-u, verb stems with -o'-t-m express events where the subject performs many different actions on the same internal argument. (9) and (10) illustrate two different stems.

- (9) Anko'tm wasuek.
 ank-o'-t-m-Ø wasuek
 care-v-AN-VOICE-1S flower
 'I am taking care of the flower.'

Through discussion we observed that (9) expresses the multiple actions that make up the overall event of caring for the flower. The subject puts the flower in an appropriate place, repeatedly waters it, takes off dead leaves, etc.

- (10) Nujo'tm amakkaltimk wlo'nuk.
 nuj-o'-t-m-Ø amakkaltimk wlo'nuk
 manage-v-AN-VOICE-1S dance tonight
 'I am going to look after the dance tonight.'

Likewise, the subject in (10) is in charge of the MC, the band, the caterers, and is chaperone at the event to make sure everything runs well. Our data includes eight stems with the same character.

Note that *-a'-t-m is ungrammatical (11).

- (11) *wel-a'-t-m-Ø wasuek
 good-*v*-AN-VOICE-1S flower
 Intended: 'I did a good thing to the flower.'

In contrast to the situation with the *-o'-t-u* pluractional, the *-o'-t-m* pluractional cannot be contrasted with a non-pluractional activity.

5. Conclusions and remaining questions

In conclusion, pluractional aspect in Mi'kmaw is expressed through the LITTLE *v* morpheme *-o'*. The difference in the two pluractional constructions is achieved by the two different VOICE morphemes (*-u* and *-m*): *-o'-t-u* expresses the *same* activity on *different* objects while *-o'-t-m* expresses *different* activities on the *same* object (Table 2).

Table 2. Pluractional constructions

	<i>-t-u</i>	<i>-t-m</i>
<i>-a'</i>	Single action on <u>one</u> internal argument	*
<i>-o'</i>	Same action on <u>multiple</u> internal arguments	Multiple <i>different</i> actions on <u>one</u> internal argument

The fact that the *v* and VOICE morphemes work together to express the type of pluractional indicates a dependency between LITTLE *v* and VOICE. The ungrammaticality of **-a'-t-m* indicates another type of dependency. Future work investigates the *v*-VOICE connection that controls these contrasts. This dependency between *v* and VOICE is apparently without regard to the intervening ANIMACY morpheme (the inanimate-indicating *-t* in all our examples).

Only one stem in our corpus (*tel-* 'thus') collocates with both *-o'-t-u* and *-o'-t-m* (12).

- (12) a. Na telo'tu; ankami.
 na tel-o'-t-u-Ø ankami
 DEM thus-*v*-AN-VOICE-1S watch.me
 'This is how I do it; watch me.'
- b. Telo'tm na ketu' ksinukway.
 tel-o'-t-m-Ø na ketu' ksinukway
 thus-*v*-AN-VOICE-1S DEM want.to I.am.sick
 'I think that I am going to be sick.'

A speaker would employ (12a) in a situation where she is demonstrating a pluractional action such as braiding hair or fluting the crust on a pie. She would use (12b) in a context where she is expressing an opinion. The fact that only one stem collocates with both types of pluractionals suggests that features of the stem correlate with pluractionality (cf. Armoskaite 2011, Piggott 1989). Future investigation is invited to study what the role of the stem is in these constructions.

Another question for future study relates to the role of animacy in pluractional constructions. We demonstrate a clear pattern with inanimate internal arguments; all our examples have the ANIMACY morpheme *-t* which indicates an inanimate internal argument. Preliminary investigation demonstrates a different pattern with animate internal arguments.

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