

# Practical Uses of Typological Semantics

## *Mi'gmaq Indefinite Pronouns*

Gretchen McCulloch, McGill University

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### 1 Why use a semantic map?

- Indefinite pronouns, like English ‘someone’ and ‘anything,’ often have several overlapping meanings or uses, making them difficult to translate.
- Common research methods for overlapping meaning: translating English or another metalanguage, or proposing a unified abstract meaning for a particular distinction.
- Semantic map: diagram of which meaning categories are predicted to be expressed by the same indefinite pronouns cross-linguistically.
- Haspelmath’s (1997) semantic map for indefinites uses data from 140 different languages but no Algonquian languages.
- In this presentation, I provide a first glance at an attempt to apply his implicational map to indefinite pronouns in Mi’gmaq (Eastern Algonquian).<sup>1</sup>
- Creating a map involves enumerating the contexts in which different indefinite pronouns are found in Mi’gmaq, which is useful when trying to teach English-native students.

### 2 What do indefinites look like in Mi’gmaq?

**Series:** a type of indefinite meaning, such as English ‘some,’ ‘any,’ and ‘no.’

**Ontological Category:** an entity that can be indefinite.

The seven most common are person, thing, place, manner, property (kind), amount, and determiner, although some may be expressed through circumlocution or larger expressions instead of paradigmatically.

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<sup>1</sup>I’d like to thank Janine Metallic for working with me on Mi’gmaq, as well as Luis Alonso-Ovalle, Jessica Coon, Alan Bale, and Conor Quinn for comments and suggestions. Any errors that remain are mine.

(1) Table of Mi'gmaq indefinite pronouns

	null/interrogative	<i>nat-</i>	<i>tampas</i>	<i>ta'n</i>	<i>mo/mu</i>
Person	wen	natawen	tampas wen	ta'nwen	mowen
Thing	goqwei	natgoqwei	tampas goqwei	tangoqwei	moqwei
Place	tami	natami	tampas tami	tan tet tami	mutami
Manner	tal	natal	?tampas	<i>may not be possible</i>	mutal
Property	talamu'g	natalamu'g	tampas talamug	tan telamu'g	?mutalamu'g
Amount	tasig	*natasig	*tampas tasig	*tantasig	?mutasig

## 2.1 Origins of Indefinite Markers

Haspelmath (1997) also notes that indefinite pronouns are generally derived from either interrogatives or from category nouns. The indefinite series markers are etymologically related to other words in Mi'gmaq (Conor Quinn, p.c.).

- (2) natawen => na-tan/te-wen  
EXISTENTIAL-which/evidential-PERSON  
'someone'
- (3) tampaswen => tan-pa-s('g)-wen  
which-INTENSIFIER-only-PERSON  
'anyone'

Other contexts in which we see these discourse particles are for example in connected speech as in ?? and in the words *pasna* 'but' and *paseg* 'except'.

- (4) 'lpa            na            teju-gispane  
INTENSIFIER EXISTENTIAL so.much-tired.1sg  
'Oh and I'm so tired'

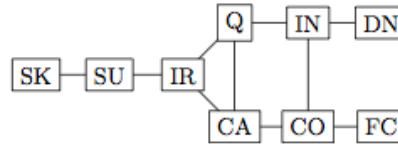
## 3 Implicational Map

In the map in ??, the nodes are different types of meaning that can be expressed by indefinite pronouns, and the lines between them describe meanings that can be expressed with the same word in some language.

These implicational universals suggest, for example, that if a language uses one construction for both a specific known indefinite, as in 'someone called,' and an irrealis non-specific indefinite, as in 'try *somewhere* else,' then it must also use the same expression for a specific unknown, as in 'I heard *something*.'

- (5) Haspelmath's implicational map, graphics from Guevara et al. (2010)

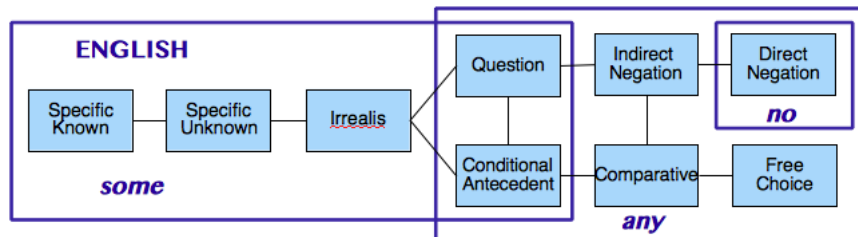
*Haspelmath's map*



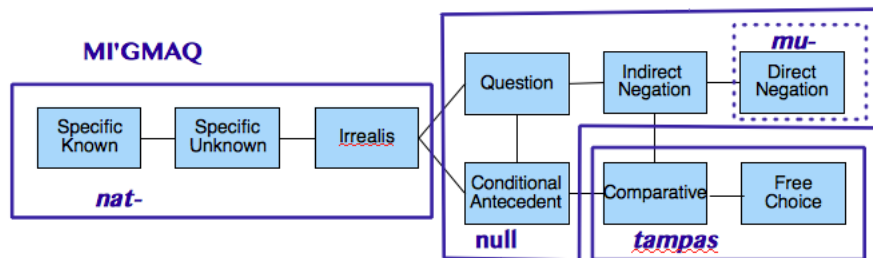
*Functions on the map*

	Abbr	Label	Example
a.	SK	specific known	<i>Somebody</i> called. Guess who?
b.	SU	specific unknown	I heard <i>something</i> , but I couldn't tell what it was.
c.	IR	irrealis	You must try <i>somewhere</i> else.
d.	Q	question	Did <i>anybody</i> tell you anything about it?
e.	CA	conditional antecedent	If you see <i>anybody</i> , tell me immediately.
f.	CO	comparative	John is taller than <i>anybody</i> .
g.	IN	indirect negation	I don't think that <i>anybody</i> knows the answer.
h.	DN	direct negation	John didn't see <i>anybody</i> .
i.	FC	free choice	You may kiss <i>anybody</i> .

- (6) Haspelmath's map for English



- (7) Haspelmath's map applied to Mi'gmaq



### 3.1 *nat-* series

- (8) natu-wen pegising'p  
INDEF-PERSON arrived  
'Someone arrived.' (specific known)
- (9) natu-wen nutaqap  
INDEF-PERSON I.heard  
'I heard someone.' (specific unknown)
- (10) na-tami amujpa-liedis  
INDEF-PLACE have.to-you.go  
'You'll have to go somewhere (else).' (irrealis)

### 3.2 Null series

- (11) wen telim'sg's?  
PERSON tell.you?  
'Who told you?' (wh-question, no indefinite)
- (12) telim'sg's wen?  
tell.you PERSON  
'Did anyone tell you?' (question)
- (13) nemij wen, tlimitis  
if.you.see PERSON, tell.me  
'If you see anyone, tell me.' (conditional antecedent)
- (14) Ma'li mu nemiagup'n wen  
Mary not see.neg PERSON  
'Mary didn't see anyone.' (indirect negation)

#### 3.2.1 Negative

The dotted lines indicate the phonological changes that can apply to *mu-* only in this environment. However, this seems to be very much related to the general negative marker which also becomes *ma* in the future.

- (15) mo-wen pegisinug'p  
NEG-PERSON arrived.neg  
'No one arrived' (direct negation)
- (16) mu pegisinug'p wen  
NEG arrived.neg PERSON  
'No one arrived' (direct negation)
- (17) ma wen 'pgsinug  
NEG PERSON arrive.future.3sganim.neg  
'No one will arrive'

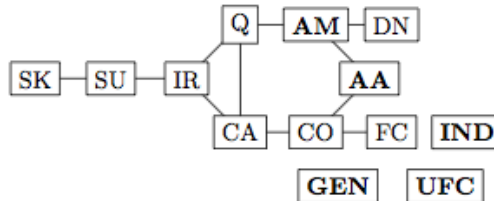
### 3.3 *tampas* series

- (18) Ma'li me misgilg aq *tampas* wen  
 Mary more big than INDEF PERSON  
 'Mary is bigger than anybody (else)' (comparative)
- (19) gis tlimatis *tampas* wen  
 able.to you.tell INDEF PERSON  
 'You may tell anyone.' (free choice)

## 4 Extended Implicational Map

- (20) Guevara et al.'s (2010) extended implicational map

*Our extended map*



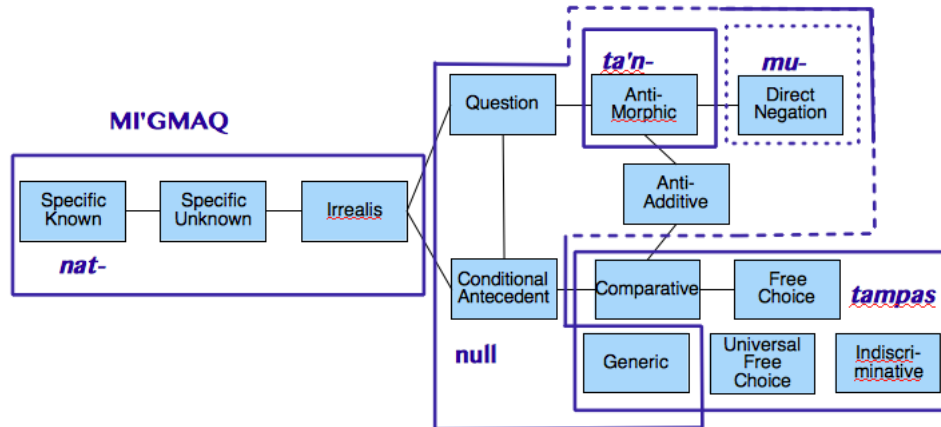
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f.	CO	comparative	John is taller than <i>anybody</i> .
g.	DN	direct negation	John didn't see <i>anybody</i> .
h.	AM	anti-morphic	I don't think that <i>anybody</i> knows the answer.
i.	AA	anti-additive	The bank avoided taking <i>any</i> decision.
j.	FC	free choice	You may kiss <i>anybody</i> .
k.	UFC	universal free choice	John kissed <i>any</i> woman with red hair.
l.	GEN	generic	<i>Any</i> dog has four legs.
m.	IND	indiscriminative	I don't want to sleep with just <i>anybody</i> anymore.

The new nodes in the extended map, based on data from English, German, Dutch, Czech, Italian, and Spanish are anti-morphic and anti-additive, which replace Haspelmath's indirect negation, as well as universal free choice, generic, and indiscriminative.

A tentative extended map for Mi'gmaq is shown in ??, where dashed lines represent areas that are still subject to revision. Ideally the dashed lines would be filled in, since then we would not have the problem of discontinuous nodes.

(21) Extended Mi'gmaq map



The universal free choice, generic, and indiscriminative categories are unproblematically expressed by *tampas*. It is interesting that the same morpheme expresses free choice and universal free choice (with and without a modal), which is not the case for many European languages.

- (22) Ma'li egitg'p tampas tig'n wigatig'n  
Mary read INDEF WHICH book  
'Mary read any book' (universal free choice)
- (23) tampas wen amujpa-nepat  
INDEF PERSON have.to-sleep  
'Anyone (= all people, people in general) has to sleep' (generic)
- (24) amujpa wen nepat  
have.to PERSON sleep  
'A person (= all people, people in general) has to sleep' (generic)
- (25) mu tampas wen getu-gelulaq (paseg n-gigung)  
not INDEF PERSON want-talk.to.3sg (except my-parents)  
'I don't want to talk to just anyone (except my parents)' (indiscriminative)

The anti-additive and anti-morphic constructions are rather more complicated.

- (26) **Anti-morphic:**  $P(A \text{ or } B) = P(A) \text{ and } P(B)$  and  $P(A \text{ and } B) = P(A) \text{ or } P(B)$
- (27) **Anti-additive:**  $P(A \text{ or } B) = P(A) \text{ and } P(B)$

One valuable contribution of Guevara et al.'s extended map is that the anti-morphic construction provides a means of eliciting the *ta'n* series, which was not required to account for the nodes in the simple Haspelmath map. However, it is unclear whether the *ta'n* is required only in embedded clauses or whether it is more productive.

- (28) mu teltet'mu eig tan-wen getoq  
 not I.think.neg there.is INDEF-PERSON knows.it  
 'I don't think that there is someone who knows it, I don't think that anyone knows it' (anti-morphic)
- (29) ?Ma'li mu teluwegup pegising'p wen  
 Mary not say.neg arrived PERSON  
 (indended) 'Mary didn't say anyone arrived' (anti-morphic)
- (30) me'si-nemi'g'p wen  
 fail-saw.1sg PERSON  
 'I had difficulty seeing anyone' (?anti-additive/anti-morphic)

I have had some difficulty eliciting the anti-additive construction, because Mi'gmaq does not have many verbs with built-in negative scope like 'refuse' and 'avoid,' although the preverb *me'si* 'fail to, have difficulty with, be unable to' may be promising.

Another problem is that while normally, subjects and objects require number agreement on the verb, disjunct subjects and objects, as shown in ??, are questionably grammatical both with and without plural agreement. This suggests that disjunctive meanings of this nature are probably expressed by default using an entirely different construction, so this is an area for further investigation.

- (31) me'si-nemi'g'p Mali  
 fail-saw.1sg Mary  
 'I had difficulty seeing Mary'
- (32) me'si-nemi'g'p-ni'g Mali aq Sara  
 fail-saw.1sg-3pl.obj Mary and Sarah  
 'I had difficulty seeing Mary and Sarah'
- (33) me'si-nemi'g'p-\*(?\*ni'g) Mali gisna Sara  
 fail-saw.1sg-(3pl.obj) Mary and Sarah  
 'I had difficulty seeing Mary or Sarah'

## 5 Teaching Category Variation

Haspelmath establishes that languages vary in how they group indefinite meanings. How do current second-language textbooks explain these differences?

*'In Spanish, sentences frequently contain two or more negative words. Once a sentence is negative, all indefinite ideas must be expressed in the negative.'* (Donley 2010).

- (34) Ella **no** tiene **ninguna** idea. (Donley 2010)  
'She doesn't have any idea'
- (35) **Tampoco** me despido de **nadie**. (Donley 2010)  
'I don't say goodbye to anyone either'

However, Spanish *algún* and English *any* are also not completely identical in distribution, even though this is rarely mentioned in textbooks. It may be helpful to explain relevant differences between the learners' first and second languages.

## 6 Conclusions

- Semantic maps provide a useful means of eliciting and organizing data from relatively difficult-to-describe categories such as indefinites, and are worth further investigation.
- The categories in Haspelmath's and Guevara's extended map have different theoretical predictions: while Haspelmath's categories such as "conditional antecedent" tend to confine themselves to predicting syntactic environments, Guevara and Aloni's categories such as "anti-additive" are semantic environments. The complexity of an environment is another factor to consider when deciding whether to use or accept a semantic map.
- Although semantic maps themselves may overly complicated for teaching, the categories that they illuminate may provide an easier means of explaining why certain indefinite expressions are used in certain contexts.

## 7 References

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