

Describing the Accent System of Mi'gmaq

This presentation aims to give a general description of the accent system of Listuguj (QC) Mi'gmaq. Although some preliminary descriptions have been put forth by Fidelholz (1963) and Bragg (1976), a more comprehensive description has not yet been introduced. This presentation will cover how stress is realized in Mi'gmaq, as well as how stress is assigned to syllables in the language within the framework of Metrical Theory (Hayes 1995).

Once the general system is established, some of the idiosyncrasies of that system will also be detailed – namely, the role of schwa. In general, as it is in Passamaquoddy and Maliseet (LeSourd 1993), schwa does not count for stress placement in Mi'gmaq, unless it meets one of the following criteria:

- It is the first or last vowel of a word.
- It follows a string of two consonants.

Additionally, some schwas *do* count for stress placement, a characteristic that is assigned on a morpheme-by-morpheme basis. In a similar vein, there are other vowels in certain morphemes that do not count for stress placement, also mentioned by LeSourd (1993).

By examining the behaviour of schwa in relation to the system in general, it will become apparent that while Mi'gmaq has a similar system to other Eastern Algonquian languages (Passamaquoddy and Maliseet), it also has its own innovations. Notable among these is the establishment of a distinction between heavy and light syllables due to the presence of a length distinction within vowels, a distinction not present in other Eastern Algonquian languages. This system will also be briefly examined in relation to other Algonquian languages with such a vowel distinction (Ojibwe).

References

- Bragg, R. A. 1976. *Some Aspects of the Phonology of Newfoundland Micmac*. Master's Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
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- Hayes, B. 1995. *Metrical Stress Theory: Principles and Case Studies*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago
- LeSourd, P. S. 1993. *Accent and Syllable Structure in Passamaquoddy*. Routledge, London.