

Root method

A way to look at words and their parts of meaning -a brief introduction

What is the root method?

- Successfully used in Mohawk territory for the teaching and learning of Iroquoian languages

<https://kanienkeha.net/forums/topic/root-word-method/>

- In Halq'méylem, just like in Mohawk, one word can be composed of many elements.¹
- We can learn from the methodology to see what kinds of parts of meaning we find in Halq'méylem. This might help you with your own language learning, as well as your language teaching. Note that it is not necessary to have a name for, or even consciously know about these parts of meaning when you are learning a language (for example when you do Mentor Apprentice program you don't really think about learning language this way. You just immerse yourself, and 'get' this knowledge without explicitly learning it as we do here. When kids learn language, they also don't need this type of knowledge in order to learn any language well. However, explaining it explicitly can be an extra tool in your language learning toolbelt 😊)

Difference between Halq'méylem and English verbs

Notice the difference between the English and Halq'méylem verbs. What do you notice?

He is walking.	í:mex	
The man is walking	í:mex	te swí:qe
He is walking it	í:mexstexw	
The man is walking the dog	í:mexstexw	te sqwemáy te swí:qe
He is walking around	ímexósem (or ímexyósem)	
The man is walking around	ímexósem	te swí:qe
(...going for a walk)		

He is looking at him/her/it/them	kw'átsetes
He saw him/her/it/them	kw'étslexwes
I saw him/her/it/them	tsel kw'étslexw

¹ Linguists call a language like that "polysynthetic", meaning there are many parts of meaning all in one word.

1. Verbs in Halq'méylem are at the beginning of the sentence- the word order is different
2. A verb that doesn't change in English has **more elements** in Halq'méylem, depending on context (e.g. walk vs walk someone). We need these **elements** (also called **inflections**) to make a grammatical sentence.
3. A single verb can express what a whole sentence in English expresses

e.g. kw'étslexwes
 he/she/it/they see him/her/it/them

What are all the elements we can find on the verb? Note again that these elements are not in the same order as we find them in the English translation.

kw'étslexwes

kw'éts	-l	-exw	-es
verb root(see)	non-control marking ²	Object	Subject
he/she/it/they	see	him/her/it/them	

Many elements make a 'good' word

For verbs in particular, we need **inflections** to talk about:

- **who** is doing something to **whom** (we need inflection for **subject** and **object**)
- **IF** there is an object or not
- **Control** of the action (that's **l**²)
- Action **for someone**, for **oneself**, to **each other**
- **Continuing** or not
- Action occurs **by itself** or to **a body part**

² -l is a "non-control transitivizer". It indicates that an event or action happens accidentally or not on purpose. There are many more of these special inflections (transitivizers), which will be discussed in a separate handout.

How do we put these verb inflections together?

The general pattern for a verb with an object is like this³

ROOT- marker- Object⁴ -Subject

kwets I

Inflection Object	
-ox	me
-óme	you
-exw	him/her/it
-ólxw	us
-óle	you folks
-exw	them

Inflection Subject	
-tsel	I
-chexw	you
-es	he/she/it
-tset	we
-chap	you folks
-es	they

	me	you	him/her/them	us	you folks
I	--	kw'etslómettsel	kw'etslexwttsel	--	kw'etslólettsel
you	kw'etslóxchexw	--	kw'etslexwchexw	kw'etslólxwchexw	--
he/she	kw'etslóxes	⁵	kw'etslexwes	kw'etslólxwes	⁵
we		kw'etslómetset	kw'etslexwtset	--	kw'etslóletset
you folks	kw'etslóxchap	--	kw'etslexwchap	kw'etslólxwchap	--
they	kw'etslóxes	⁵	kw'etslexwes	kw'etslólxwes	⁵

The general pattern for a verb without an object is like this

³ This is a very broad generalization. The patterns can be more complex, and the table at the end shows you some of these complications. For example, the inflection can look like a vowel change on the verb root itself, and the **subject** inflections can change depending on the **type of transitive marker**. What I show here is the pattern for the marker 'I'.

⁴ The brackets around Object here mean that we don't always have an object, so we don't need an object marker. Like in the word *sleep*.

⁵ Halq'méylem has a restriction for not allowing a subject in a 3rd person (he/she/ it/they) and an Object in a second person (you, you folks). Instead of saying "he saw you", the Elders say 'you were seen by him'

ROOT (marker⁶)-Subject

Note that for verbs without an object, we don't need a subject marker for the third person (the 'he/she/it/they')

I am walking	í:mextsel
You are walking	í:mexchexw
he/she/it is walking	í:mex
We are walking	í:mextset
You folks are walking	í:mexchap
They are walking	í:mex

⁶ Not all of the verbs without an object have to have an inflection marker.