

## Inter-subjectivity in time reference: a case study of Lakandon Maya

The paper discusses how temporal reference is made in Lakandon Maya, the least studied of the four existing Yukatekan languages. The data for the analysis was collected by the author in the field from 2003-2006.

In Lakandon Maya, other conceptual parameters than temporality are salient to the semantics of forms that have previously been described as temporal distance markers, a shift in meaning that also is accompanied by a shift in grammatical status.

This grammatical and semantic change can most clearly be illustrated by the adverbial marker <sup>1</sup>*7uhch* ('before', 'previously'). Although it retains its function as a pre-verbal time distance marker, it also functions as a post-positioned adverb that appears to be more frequently used than its pre-positioned counterpart. Compare examples (1) and (2):

- (1) *7uhch-ik*    *saj-ak-Ø*                    *ma7*    *mahk*    *k-u-na7k-ar*                    *7ich*  
 before-ADV    afraid-DEP-3SG.B    NEG    person    INC-3SG.B-go\_up-PLN.IV in  
           *uy-atooch*    *ik-nuukir-o7*  
           3SG.A-house    1PL.A-great-DIST  
 'Long ago, they were afraid, no one entered the house of the ancestors (Yaxchilan).'
- (Bergqvist 2006: 5, ex. 1 [HB040922\_1EChK\_4])

- (2) *aw-eer*            *mana7*            *ch'upraj*            *7uhch*  
 2SG.A-know    NEG.EXIST    woman            before.excl  
 'You know, there were no women before'
- (Bergqvist 2008: 183, ex. 4.29 [HB040917\_1EChK\_12])

*7uhch* as a pre-positioned adverbial marker requires that the verb take the dependent status (DEP), which in Lakandon Maya also results in an absolutive (i.e. set B) person-number inflection of the intransitive verb, as seen in (1).

In (2), *7uhch* adverbially modifies the entire phrase and can be present regardless of status since it is only loosely connected to the verb itself and syntactically mobile.

Together with this grammatical difference, there are also decisive semantic differences in the two functions of *7uhch*. As a post-verbal particle, *7uhch* signals a **knowledge asymmetry** between the speech participants and thereby excludes the addressee from the past event/state that the speaker is talking about. In using *7uhch*, the speaker considers the addressee to be previously unaware of that event/state.

The opposite case, where a past event/state is **symmetrically accessible** to the speaker and the addressee, is signalled by using *kuhch* or *ka7ch(ik)*, which share many of the grammatical properties of *7uhch*.

The existing knowledge asymmetries are signalled by using these and other forms in both past and present contexts. Semantically, knowledge asymmetry appears conceptualized in terms of temporal distance with symmetric access equalling temporally close events and asymmetric access viewed as more distant. A historical explanation from comparisons to Colonial Yukatek is also attempted both with regard to grammatical status and semantic content.

<sup>1</sup> The orthography used for Lakandon Maya was developed by Terry Kaufman for the PDLMA. It is almost identical to the Official Mayan orthography save for marking high tone (/h/) and the glottal stop (/ʔ/).