

Semantics of Temporal Deictics in Lakandon Maya

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1. Introduction

The investigation consists of a semantic interpretation and analysis of *7uhch* ('before', 'long ago'), a lexeme found in Lakandon Maya. For other Yukatekan languages such as Itzaj and Yukatek, *7uhch* has been described mainly as an adverbial aspectual marker indicating *anteriority* and *temporal distance* (Blair 1964, Hofling 2000, Bohnemeyer 1998).

The results suggest that *7uhch* has another function as a modal-epistemic adverb and that the motivations for its use, in addition to parameters of temporality, are the symmetries between speech participants (*participant frames*), and the relation between the speaker and the object referred to (*speaker's footing*).

The investigation draws on the theory of reference introduced by William Hanks (1990) as a method to interpret the meaning and use of deictics in Yukatekan languages. Data that constitutes the basis for the proposal has been gathered in the field by the author as a requirement for PhD work on the ELAP programme at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. Additional data has been provided by Una Canger at the University of Copenhagen (Canger 1970) who worked on Lakandon more than 35 years ago.

2. Interpreting deictics

William Hanks has thoroughly explored the deictic system for person and space in Yukatek Maya (e.g. Hanks 1984, 1990). He argues that to understand the meaning of Yukatek deictics, one has to consider more than the distance between an object and the speaker, which traditionally has been the preferred method. One needs to look at speech practices involving the use of deictics and take into consideration the relationship between the participants and the social context of the discourse. Hanks introduces several concepts to assist him in such an exploration and a some of them will be utilised here.

Participant frames explores the conventionalized symmetry relations between the speaker and other speech participants, most commonly the addressee. Participant frames are schematic forms of interaction and can be exemplified by a speech genre relevant to the current investigation such as *personal narrative*. In that genre the speaker potentially has unique access to the conveyed information, compared to the addressee.

The actual realization of a participant frame such as personal narrative is performed in a *frame work* which is the creative performance within the conventionalized frame that constitutes the backdrop for the speech act. The framework allows for variation and creativity which means that a *personal narrative frame work* in actuality has several different possibilities with regard to information access between the speaker and the addressee.

The speaker can also take different *footings* which place him/her in relation to what is being said. Examples of footings are *quotation*, *transposition* and *evidential strategies*. They all serve to define the speaker's relation to the referred object of discourse. The choice of a particular footing is often diagnostic of certain discourse genres.

One *footing* with special relevance for the present investigation is *evidentiality*. According to Aikenwald (2004: 365), evidentiality is the grammatical marking of information source. This means that speakers of languages that have a set of evidential markers are (more or less) forced to indicate where information come from. If it is something they saw, heard, or inferred, a statement is expected to be accompanied with one of the available markings. Yukatek languages have the simplest form of evidentiality system, namely reported information, indicated by *b'in*, in contrast to any other source of information. However, evidentiality can be present in a sub-system of a language even if it is not pervasive in the language as a whole. Evidential parameters are according to Hanks present in the ostensive deictics of Yukatek Maya:

Table 1. *Ostensive deictics in Yukatek Maya*

This one (tactual)	That one (visual)	Assurative	That one (sensory)
<i>je7r-a7</i>	<i>je7r-o7</i>	<i>je7r-e7</i>	<i>je7-b'e7</i>

The ostensive deictic forms presented in Table 1 point to a thing or a person in relation to the speaker and the addressee. They are made up of two parts, one initial deictic (ID) component, *je7-*, that indicates the ostensive nature of the form, and one terminal deictic (TD), *-a7*, *-o7*, *-e7*, *-b'e7*, that indicates the relation between the object or person referred to, and the speaker and addressee.

Traditionally, *-a7*, and *-o7* have been regarded as proximal and distal markers indicating the distance from the speaker to the object. Through careful systematic observation of their use and by a thorough familiarity with the socially conditioned practices of Yukatek speakers, Hanks concludes that other parameters than distance contrast need to be drawn upon to accurately describe these deictics in Yukatek.

Typically, *je7ra7* is used to present someone with something that the speaker has either in his hand, or within reach and therefore indicates *tactual* accessibility. It also refers to something in the shared field of attention of the speech participants.

Je7ro7 points to something *visually* accessible to the speaker. It does not necessarily mean that it is distant to the speech participants. *Je7ro7* also shifts the perspective towards the addressee and has a wide range of communicative uses. It introduces *new information*, or a new element, to the attention of the speech participants.

Je7re7 is separate from the other forms both in function and meaning. It is not a deictic form as such, but is used as an auxiliary adverbial in a verb phrase or as a

freestanding adverbial to indicate agreement or certainty. It can nevertheless be regarded as being part of the paradigm for reasons that will be discussed below.

Lastly, *je7b'e7* points to something that is *accessible by smell or hearing* but that is outside the visual field of the speaker and the addressee.

Hanks' conclusion is that there is an *evidential core* in the ostensive deictics of Yukatek. *Tactual-*, *visual-*, and *olfactory* or *sensory access* are salient features of deictics that previously were described only in terms of proximity and distance. The evidentiality present in the ostensive deictics corresponds directly to the *footing* of the speaker, namely the speaker's relation to the referred object.

At the same time, the symmetric relationship between the speaker and the addressee is expressed in the choice of the TD's, *-a7* or *-o7*, to indicate the relation between the object and the speech participants. If the speaker wants to point to an object that he expects is a new element in the attention of the addressee, he uses *-o7*, but if both the speaker and the addressee has the object in the focus of their attention, *-a7* is preferred.

The present investigation means to show how non-temporal aspects, such as the symmetry of knowledge between the speaker and the addressee, and the footing of the speaker, are important features of temporal deictics in Lakandon. Previously, they have been described one-dimensionally with regard to temporal distance alone in other Yukatekan languages (see Blair 1964, Hofling 2000, Bohnemeyer 1998). A brief presentation of the three most common temporal deictics and how they can be interpreted in terms of temporality follows in the next section.

3. Temporal deictics in Lakandon Maya

Some languages divide the temporal distance between a speaker and an event in its tense forms relating to the past and sometimes also to the future (Dahl 1984, Comrie 1985). One such division consists of three tense forms: 'now', 'previously today' and 'previous to today'. The latter form encompasses all 'pastness' as long as it is previous to the day of the utterance, or the deictic center.

Lakandon Maya does not have morphological tense but uses time adverbials as aspectual-like markers that locate an event or a state with reference to the deictic centre of the moment of speech. Table 2 shows the three-way basic temporal distinction found in Lakandon Maya:

Table 2. *Basic temporal distinctions in Lakandon Maya*

'now', 'today'	'a while ago', 'recently'	'long ago', 'previously'
<i>b'aje7re7</i>	<i>Sahm</i>	<i>7uhch</i>

The table contains two aspectual adverbials (*sahm*, *7uhch*) and one free standing adverb (*b'aje7re7*). The forms can be compared to the three-way distinction found in some tense languages in that *b'aje7re7* makes reference to the immediate present, *sahm* prototypically refers to events that happened earlier on the same day, or on the previous day to speech time. *7uhch* is used for all other previous time reference, extending from a couple of days ago to several years.

As stated, *b'aje7(re7)* typically denotes an immediate present within the day of utterance, but it shares the same relative semantic function that *now* has in English. As such its semantic scope can be extended to contrast to any event or state even when it has little to do with the present diurnal day, such as 'nowadays' in contrast to 'hundreds of years ago'.

B'aje7(re7) is separated morpho-syntactically from *sahm* and *7uhch*. Whereas *b'aje7(re7)* is a time deictic, pure and simple, both *sahm* and *7uhch* have their origin as stative predicates (Bohnemeyer 1998: 230, for Yukatek). However, they also function as temporal adverbs and can be placed alongside *b'aje7(re7)* as such. A more detailed presentation and discussion of *7uhch* is found below.

The use and distribution of *7uhch* in narratives and everyday conversation warrants an investigation of its precise meaning and function since it appears that a temporal interpretation is insufficient. The gloss provided traditionally is not misleading or wrong but it is insufficient to understand the conveyed meaning of *7uhch* with regard to its function and distribution in my sample. Although the extra-temporal semantics of an expression such as *7uhch* may be present in temporal deictics in a more general sense, they are morphologically and syntactically salient in Lakandon Maya. They also fit into a greater schema of function and meaning with regard to the deictic system as a whole in Yukatekan languages, as demonstrated by Hanks.

4. Data and genres

Some of the data used as a basis for the analysis as presented here has been collected by the author during ongoing fieldwork that began in August of 2004. Another part of the material was collected by Una Canger¹ (1970c) during a two month period in November through January 1969-70. Because of the short duration of field work done so far by the author and the relatively recent collection and analysis of the data, any results or conclusions presented here must be regarded as preliminary, awaiting a more comprehensive study.

Altogether twelve speakers representing both dialects of Lakandon are represented in the collection of texts, eleven males and one female. Ten of the speakers are still living in Lacanjá and two are deceased. The recordings are all available in a digital format (.wav-files) and were transcribed using the Transcriber software and later put into a Shoebox file format. The total amount of speech that has been transcribed and translated is close to fifteen hours. However, only about two hours of that material has constituted the basis for the present proposal.

A basic division, following Hofling (1991), has been applied to classify the recordings into speech genres: 1) *personal narrative* is speech that reflects the speaker's direct personal experiences. It may be anything from a recent trip to a nearby village to a distant childhood memory 2) *traditional stories and folk tales* encompasses mythological tales, fables, and semi-fictional accounts of more recent events that the speaker have been told, or heard of 3) *expository discourse* is more or less an explanation of how something

¹ Una Canger has generously made the material she collected available to me and has no other part in the present investigation. The ideas and interpretations are all my own. Canger's recordings were made as a part of a project initiated by Terence Kaufman that involved making root dictionaries of Mayan languages.

is done, how one builds a house or makes a bow and arrows, 4) *conversation* is spontaneous face-to-face speech between two (or more) speakers about any subject or topic. Thus, if two speakers are present while one is telling a traditional story, then that story may also be labelled a semi-conversation depending on how much interaction there is between the two during the telling of the story. Naturally, this goes for the other speech genres too.

A preliminary categorisation according to the above division has been made of the available data and it has a certain importance for the analysis, as will be demonstrated in section 5, below.

5. *7uhch* as an aspectual marker and an adverb

Of the three temporal forms introduced in section 3, only *7uhch* will be considered in detail here. Two basic functions of *7uhch* are identified: 1) as an aspectual marker in conjunction to a verb compound and 2) as an adverb. The differences between the two are morphological, syntactic, and above all semantic.

5.1 *7uhch* as an aspect marker

As in Yukatek, *7uhch* in the function of an aspect marker is used only with verbs in the dependent status. Two forms of *7uhch* are identified as aspect markers, *7uhch* and *7uhchik*. The latter form is possibly a focused adverbial construction, as suggested by Hofling (2000), which uses the suffix *-ik* with intransitive verbs and particles. According to Hofling, *-ik* indicates “previous completion of action” (ibid: 162). Examples of *7uhch(ik)* in a verb complex in the dependent status is found in 1 and 2 (The source of the example within the available corpus is indicated in brackets directly following the example):

- (1) *7uhch-ik* *saj-ak*² *ma7* *mahk* *k-u-na7k-ar* *7ich*
before-ADVR afraid-DEP NEG person INC-3SG.B-go_up-INC 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).
[HB040922_1EChK_4]
- (2) *7uhch* *k'uch-k-een* *te7* *ich* *Lakanja7*
before arrive-DEP-1SG.B here in Lacanja
We have lived here in Lacanja for a long time. / We came to Lacanja long ago.
[time phrases EChK (in time questions.txt)]

Jürgen Bohnemeyer argues that *7uhch* in Yukatek is a distance marker belonging to a small set of aspectual markers including *sahm* (‘recently’) and *tahnt* (‘just’) which all have been attested for Lakandon. According to Bohnemeyer, they function as stative predicates or inactive verbs that take the verbal core as an argument (Bohnemeyer 1998:

² The abbreviations used in this paper are: COM=marcador de aspecto completivo, E=ergativo, P=persona plural, VI=verbo intransitivo, I=primera persona.

230, 311). There are several features that define *7uhch* as an aspect marker and separate it from its function as an adverb.

As an aspect marker, *7uhch* must always be placed immediately in front of the main verb of the phrase. The main verb must also be in the dependent status. It cannot take any affixes (apart from the adverbial focus marker *-ik*) such as determiners or topic markers. Semantically there is also a decisive difference. The temporal distance indicated by the aspect marker can be modified by inserting particles in front of it. Significantly, when the negation marker *ma7* is placed in front of *7uhch* ('long ago'), the meaning becomes that of a somewhat shorter time period than *7uhch* standing by itself, i.e. 'not so long ago'. Other particles like *jach* ('very', 'indeed') and *ne* ('much'), also modifies the time depth of *7uhch*, but to indicate a longer time span.

The characteristics pertaining to *7uhch* as an aspectual marker clearly separate it from *7uhch* as a temporal deictic adverb, to which we now turn.

5.2 *7uhch* as an adverb

In this section *7uhch* is defined in its function as an adverb. To label the form nominalised, as suggested by Bohmeyer for Yukatek, indicates a shift of class from a stative verb to a nominal-like form, but it does so without displaying any obvious morphological marking related to the nominalisation itself. In Lakandon, *7uhch* is defined by its function as an adverb and not a noun.

7uhch can modify members of any word class, such as a noun (phrase) (3), a pronoun (4), a demonstrative (5), and a verb phrase (6).

For the sake of clarity, examples 3-5 are in a topicalized form (i.e. circumscribed by affixes) which removes any doubt that *7uhch* is a separate phrase from the lexeme or phrase that it modifies:

- (3) b'axik 7a-mahk 7uhch-o7...
 like_this DET-person before-DIST
 In this way, **the people** used to...
 [De los dioses]
- (4) ma7 in-weer, 7a-teen uhch-o7 chich(i)n-een
 NEG 1SG.A-know, DET-1SG.IND before-DIST little-1SG.A
 I didn't know, before when **I** was little
 [Cuando murió mi mama]
- (5) b'axik 7a7-je7 7uhch-a7 t-uy-a7r-aj mahk-o7b'
 like_this DET-OST before-PROX COM-3SG.A-say-COM person-PL
This is what the people used to say
 [De los dioses]
- (6) in-suku7un k-u-tahr-ik-een 7uhch,
 1SG.A-eBr INC-3SG.A-come-INC-1SG.B before
 k-u-yuhm-t-ik-een 7uhch ich k'aan
 INC-3SG.A-rock-TR-INC-1SG.B before in hammock

My older brother taught me how to play, he rocked me in the hammock.
[HB050211_1KYYM_1]

Bohnemeyer (1998) gives three syntactical positions for adverbs within a phrase in Yukatek. The defining position for adverbs is the *core-final position* (or following the main verb). An example of this is seen in example 6 (repeated below). The *topicalized position* is usually first in a phrase and is indicated by attaching the determiner *-7a* and/or a TD marker, usually *-e7* or *-o7* (example 7). Finally, the *focus position* precedes the main verb, but then *7uhch* occurs without any additional morphological elements (example 8).

Neutral position:

- (6) in-suku7un k-u-tahr-ik-een 7uhch,
1SG.A-eBr INC-3SG.A-come-INC-1SG.B before
k-u-yuhm-t-ik-een 7uhch ich k'aan
INC-3SG.A-rock-TR-INC-1SG.B before in hammock
My older brother taught me how to play, he rocked me in the hammock.
[HB050211_1KYYM_1]

Topic position:

- (7) 7a-7uhch-o7 chich(i)n-een 7a-b'aje7r-e7 kareem 7a-teen-o7
DET-before-DIST little-1SG.A DET-now-TOP big DET-1SG.IND-DIST
I used to be small, but now I am a grown up
[Cuando murió mi mama]

Focus position:

- (8) 7uhch-ik k-u-tzikh'a-t-ik 7in-miim
before-ADVR INC-3SG.A-tell-TR-INC 1SG.A-grandmother
My grandmother used to tell (me).
[HB040922_1EChK_4]

The following section deals with the semantics of *7uhch* as an adverb and the argument that temporal distance is insufficient to understand the meaning of *7uhch* and what motivates its use.

6. The semantics of *7uhch* as an adverb

There are several reasons for thinking that a purely temporal interpretation of *7uhch* is insufficient. Evidence is gathered from the semantics and the morpho-syntax of *7uhch*, and most important, from the distribution of *7uhch* in texts.

The question we set out to answer is if the meaning of *7uhch* with regard to morphology, syntax and indeed its distribution is best understood from temporal, or other semantic parameters.

6.1 *7uhch*, tense, and temporal distance

Since *7uhch* originally must have been a temporal distance marker (given that this function is attested for both Yukatek and Itzaj), we will first consider time parameters as the best way to understand the meaning of the adverb *7uhch*.

Tense is absent from the verb morphology of Lakandon as it is in the other Yukatekan languages, so for *7uhch* to mark tense for all word classes would be surprising. Supporting this suggestion is the fact that the marking of nouns and verbs with the adverb *7uhch* is non-obligatory (as is the case for other adverb-particles). In a section of discourse that has the same temporal perspective, only some predicates are marked with *7uhch*.

7uhch can not be modified by *ma7* (NEG) or *jach* ('very') or *ne* ('much'). Negating the adverb *7uhch* results in a negation of the event *7uhch* modifies, not a lessening of temporal distance.

7uhch is also used regardless if something happened a month ago or a lifetime ago, 23 days ago:

23 days ago:

- (9) *ma7 7inw-a7raj raj-i7 [ka7] yäx juhntaj 7uhch*
NEG 1SG.A-say-COM this-REF [then] first meeting before
I didn't say that at the last meeting.
[HB041023_1EChK_7]

Two generations ago (+70yrs):

- (10) *b'ik 7u-ya7rik ik-nuukir 7uhch ti7 yahn yatooch*
what 3SG.A-say-INC 1PL.A-great-NOM before LOC EXIST house
ik-yuhm ti7 yahn yatooch yejer ikna7
1PL.A-lord LOC EXIST house with 1PL.A-mother
Like the ancestors said, the sun had a house with the moon
[HB050211_1KYYM_1]

Summarizing so far; we have a deictic adverb, that modifies words and phrases from all classes, but it does not appear to consistently function as a tense marking adverb, nor as a temporal distance marker. Other semantic features must be drawn upon for us to be able to understand what motivates the use of *7uhch*.

6.1 *7uhch* and non-temporal semantics

7uhch indicates *an asymmetry of knowledge* between the speaker and the addressee. It expresses the *footing* of the speaker to mark *personal knowledge* and an *assertive* attitude towards the conveyed information. Temporal meaning of anteriority is present by default in *7uhch* but it is, as suggested above, not enough to understand the motivations for its use.

7Uhch is used less, or not at all, when the addressee knows something about what is being said:

- (11) entonces 7a-teen ka7 ruhk'-een ich Naja b'in-een yaan taar-een
 then DET-1SG.A when rise-1SG.A in TP go-1SG.A EXIST come-1SG.B
 7in-chahn t-u-k'ahx-ir
 1SG.A-small LOC-3SG.A-forest-NOM
 So when I left Najá, I went to see what the forest was like
 [HB040905_2EChK_2]

Example 11 describes events that took place over 15 years ago. *7Uuch* is nowhere to be seen because the speaker addresses his son who was present when I was recording the story. Although I asked the speaker to tell me about the move to Lacanjá, he chooses to tell the story to his son who already knows all about the events leading up to the move. Example 12 reveals the intended addressee:

- (12) ma7 taj ti7 junaj yaan taar-een ma7 taar-i 7a-nä7
 NEG true LOC alone EXIST come-1SG.A NEG come-COM DET-mother
 So, it is true that I went on my own, your mother didn't go
 [HB040905_2EChK_2]

In 13 the situation is reversed in the sense that the subject of the story is much closer in time but has *7uhch* present since the speaker addresses me, who arrived in Lacanjá only a few days earlier. The speaker expects me to know very little or nothing about the fishing trip he describes and uses *7uhch* to mark the asymmetry between us.

- (13) **7uhch** b'in-in[-een] t-in-chiiman ich Peetja7
 before go-1SG.B COM-1SG.A-walk in TP
 (Before) I went walking to the lake
 [HB040905_2EChK_4]

On another occasion the speaker EChK told me his version about a trip to his home village that I had made with him a few weeks earlier. As expected, *7uhch* is absent, whereas yet another story containing previously acquired memories from his home village, that were new to me, are accompanied by *7uhch(ik)*.

7uhch also lends a *personal perspective* to information presented by the speaker in addition to indicating an asymmetry of access. In these cases, *7uhch* flags the information as personal knowledge:

- (14) **7a-lacanja7-Ø-o7** t-u-kihns-o7b' 7u-b'äj yejer mahskab'
 DET-Lacanja-[ZERO]-DIST COM-3SG.A-kill-PL 3SG.A-REFL with machete
 täk-i7 mahska7b' k-u-k'än-ik
 only machete INC-3SG.A-use-INC
 At Lacanja they killed each other with machetes, they only used machetes
 [HB050211_1KYYM_1]

- (15) **a7-xohkraj uhch-o7** k-u-räk-k'än-ik yejer järär kir
 DET-lake before-DIST INC-3SG.A-all-use-INC with arrows for
 u-kihn-s-aj tahn-b'aj-o7b'

3SG.A-die-CAUS-COM front-REFL-PL
 At Lake Miramar, they used arrows to kill and fight with each other
 [HB050211_1KYYM_1]

In examples 14 and 15, uttered right after one another, the name for the place where the speaker KYYM lived and knew people had been killed has *7uhch* attached to it (15) while in the name for the place where neither the speaker, nor his father lived at the time (14), and thus had no first hand information about what had actually happened, *7uhch* is absent (-Ø- marking). An identical time period is called upon in both instances during which the supposed killings took place.

In example 16 both persons referred to are long deceased, and none of them changed their name, so it is not a question of indicating that the speaker's mother's name used to be one thing and then changed or that one person is alive while the other is the "late" grand-mother of the speaker. The difference in marking lies elsewhere:

(16) 7in-chaan maam 7u-k'aab'a7 7u-k'aab'a7 B'oor,
 1SG.A-small FBr 3SG.A-name 3SG.A-name PN
 [...] 7a-in-chiich 7u-k'aab'a7 **7uhch** Naj B'oor-a7
 DET-1SG.A-eZ 3SG.A-name before PN-PROX
 My grandfather's name, his name was Bor, my grandmother's name was Naj Bor
 [HB050211_1KYYM_1]

Only the name of the person who the speaker had known about to any degree is marked with *7uhch*, namely the speaker's grandmother. The speaker's grandfather was never known to the speaker and he also hesitates when trying to remember his name whereas the name of his grandmother comes to him without pause.

6.2 Information source

There is an obvious connection between claiming personal knowledge of something and having witnessed it personally. A couple of weeks after the speaker KY had gone with his father EChK to buy a stereo in a nearby town, EChK told me the following:

(17) y-a7r-aj k'uch yir-ej yaan k'ootaj **7uhch-ik**
 3SG.A-say-COM come see-DEP EXIST stereo before-ADVR
 He said (KY), he went to look (for the stereo) where they used to have a stereo.
 [HB041023_1EChK_3]

In example 17, the function of *7uhch* as an indicator of personal knowledge is related to stating information source.

In personal narratives, *7uhch* may accompany *almost* every phrase of the story for the reasons discussed above. Whereas in traditional stories and folk tales, *7uhch* usually only occurs occasionally. The scarceness of *7uhch* in this genre is interpreted as being part of the participant frame of traditional stories. Traditional stories are well known and there is very likely a symmetry between the speaker's and the addressee's knowledge of the contents.

However, the absence of *ʔuhch* co-occurs with the presence of information source that in traditional stories and folk tales often is stated at the beginning of the story. The source of information in this genre is usually a *kinship term*, like *miim* in example 19, which is commonly repeated throughout the rest of the story at various points, much like the distribution of *ʔuhch* in personal narratives:

- (18) ʔuhch-ik k-u-tzikh'a-t-ik **ʔin-miim**
 before-ADVR INC-3SG.A-teell-TR-INC 1SG.A-MM
 My grandmother used to tell me...
 [HB040922_1EChK_4]

Instead of saying that the story took place ‘a long time ago’ or ‘once upon a time’, it is simply stated that the story was told by a certain relative of the speaker (or of the addressee, if he is a relative).

My present understanding is that speakers believe traditional tales to have happened, but that one cannot really know for certain. The footing that the speaker chooses by indicating a different information source (often a deceased one), suggests that the content of the story simply is out of reach from anyone’s personal experience and knowledge. Here the temporal perspective is completely lost together with personal access to the event.

As mentioned in section 2, Lakandon has the simplest form of system for marking information source. It consists of one particle, *b'in*, which means that the information is reported by someone else. *B'in* is, as expected, diagnostic to traditional stories and folk tales but can of course be found in all speech genres. It can be paraphrased in many ways, such as ‘it was said’, ‘your grand mother told me’, or ‘the ancients said’. The practice to paraphrase evidentiality markers by less grammaticalized expressions meaning the same thing is frequent in languages that have them (Aikenwald 2004: 3). Aikenwald also states that evidential markers can acquire secondary meanings of epistemic character (e.g. assuredness) but that epistemic meaning never is the main semantic property of evidentiality markers.

ʔuhch does not qualify as an evidentiality marker although it has some distributional features in common with them. It is better understood in terms of modality like the discussion above indicates.

7. Comparing deictics in Yukatek and Lakandon

There are correlations between the ostensive deictic *je7re7* in Yukatek and *ʔuhch* in Lakandon. Some support for the present analysis can be drawn from Hanks’ interpretation of *je7re7*. While there is an evidential core in the ostensives of Yukatek, there is no evidential content in neither *je7re7* nor *ʔuhch*. However, Hanks remarks that: “In the present context, an analysis of the OSTEVEV [ostensives] series suggests that the expression of Spkr [speaker] certainty is linguistically related to the individuation of referents by their perceptual availability.” (Hanks 1990: 264).

The assurance of the speaker, indicated by the use of *ʔuhch*, should be understood in connection to evidentiality since it represents a *footing* chosen by the speaker to indicate his position in relation to what he is saying. In this sense *ʔuhch* has an *expressive*

function (see Hanks 1990: 287), namely to assure the addressee of the validity of the event referred to. Asymmetrical access to the personal experience of the speaker, requires an assurance that is expressed in the meaning of *7uhch*.

Much like the expression *je7re7*, *7uhch* fails to “relate any referential object to the indexical ground” (ibid. 287). Hanks continues: “Nonetheless, it does relate the proposition to the indexical frame to the extent that it conveys the speaker’s current evaluation of it. It is significant that this certainty is never based on current perceptual evidence but rather on background knowledge or expectation.”

This last quote sums up the semantic features of *7uhch* in the sense that the temporal parameter of anteriority, or the temporal distance to the deictic centre, is overshadowed by the speaker’s own relation to the referent in terms of knowledge and personal memory, and the addressee’s expected access to the same referent.

8. Conclusion

To understand the meaning of *7uhch* one only has to look at the original gloss for the stative verb that the adverb is derived from, namely ‘happen’. Something “happened” that the speaker vouches for personally, but that he in turn expects the speaker to be unfamiliar with. The participant frame, i.e. the (a)symmetry between the speaker and the addressee together with the speaker’s footing, i.e. the relation between the speaker and what is being talked about, motivates the presence or absence of *7uhch* in conversation, personal narratives, and traditional stories.

Symmetrical access seems to be the default case in the (non-)making of objects and events in Lakandon (i.e. zero marking), comparable to conversation as the default speech genre. Narrative is a less symmetrical speech genre and *7uhch* is used to flag information that is judged as inaccessible to the addressee. This marking can also be compared to direct speech versus reported speech, i.e. zero marking versus *b'in*.

In a community without any written records, almost no coordinated social activities outside the household, and very few culturally salient, countable events that correspond to celebrations or commemorations that we use to keep track of the passage of time, it is perhaps not surprising that measurement of temporal distance is a less salient feature than indicating information access and speaker perspective. The Lakandon Maya are not culturally deviant or exceptional in this case, nor are they incapable of measuring time periods, but I would rather suspect that evidential and modal parameters are common semantic features in time adverbs in many other languages as well.

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