

## In the mood for status: subjunctive and irrealis in Yucatec

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**1. Goals** – This paper sketches the semantics of the so-called 'status' system of Yucatec Maya. The theoretical goals are, first, to explore a possible treatment of the semantics of subjunctive and irrealis moods in at least one language; secondly, to explore a possible explanation for why viewpoint aspect and mood are conflated in a single functional category in Mayan languages and why their expressions are more generally frequently paradigmatically related across languages, and thirdly, to clarify and further develop the notion of 'event realization' introduced in Bohnemeyer & Swift 2004 in the process.

**2. Uses of the subjunctive** – At the center of my attention in this presentation is the subjunctive status subcategory. The subjunctive is triggered by the remote future, recent past, and remote past AM markers and by a counterfactual AM marker roughly translating as 'almost'. The subjunctive also occurs in jussives; complements of predicates of desire, fear, attempt, and motion path verbs (in what Aissen 1987 calls a 'motion-cum-purpose' construction), time focus constructions with past-time reference, and in the antecedents of counterfactual conditionals (see (4) below). In combination with negation, it has a negative perfect interpretation. It is also governed by the irrealis subordinator *kéen*, which occurs in (embedded or adjoined) relative clauses and focus constructions with (deictic or anaphoric) future time or habitual/generic reference.

**3. Possible situation semantics** – I assume Kratzer's (1989, 1990, 1998, 2002) possible situation semantics, in which possible worlds are maximal situations and propositions are sets of situations. Propositions may be true in situations, but the logical relations such as entailment and equivalence are defined over worlds. Following Kratzer (2002: 660), a possible situation  $s$  is a **fact exemplifying a proposition**  $p$  iff (1) holds:

$$(1) \forall s' \in D_s. (s' \leq_s s \ \& \ s' \notin p) \rightarrow \exists s''. s' \leq_s s'' \leq_s s$$

where  $D_s$  is the domain of possible situations,  $\leq_s$  symbolizes a mereological relation among situations, and  $s''$  is a minimal situation in which  $p$  is true. I treat Davidsonian events as situations that have parts that are stages in time and assume that facts that exemplify a proposition must be part of a world in which the proposition is true and that worlds do not contain future situations. It follows that the future is non-factual.

**4. Realization** – All and only propositions that contribute to the **question under discussion** (QUD, Roberts 1996; similarly the *quaestio* in Klein & von Steutterheim 1987, 2002) are **at issue** in a given context. Suppose the QUD necessarily concerns a **topic situation** (Austin 1950) and the **topic time** (Klein 1992, 1994, etc.) is simply the temporal trace of the topic situation (see also Kratzer 2011). Then an event predicate  $P$  is realized in a given situation  $s \in D_s$  iff  $s$  has a part  $e \in D_e$  that instantiates  $P$  and thereby exemplifies  $P(e)$ . It follows from the assumptions in this and the preceding section that a fact that realizes a given event description can only be introduced as a part of the topic situation.

**5. The analysis** – I analyze the subjunctive as entailing realization of the event predicate outside the topic situation:

$$(2) \llbracket SUBJ \rrbracket^c = \lambda P. \exists e. \neg(e \leq_s s_{topic}) \ \& \ P(e)$$

where  $s_{topic}$  is the topic situation at contextual index  $c$ . There are three ways of satisfying (2) in Yucatec: (i) possible realization in the future of  $s_{topic}$  - this occurs with the remote future

marker, with complements of predicates of desire, fear, attempt, and path, and with irrealis subordinate clauses and negation; (ii) realization outside the utterance world, in an alternate reality – with counterfactuals; (iii) non-at-issue realization in the past of *stope* – with the recent and remote past markers and in the time focus construction. This distinction seems to be driven by the construction and the semantics of the trigger. Crucially, since new facts can only be asserted as part of the topic situation, the entailment in (2) cannot survive at the discourse level except in the form of a presupposition. This is illustrated for the recent past marker in (3): the continuation in (3b) contradicts the presupposition of realization and therefore is considered infelicitous.

- (3) Ma' sáam sùunak le=kòombi=o';...  
 NEG REC turn\ATP:SUBJ(B3SG) DET=van=D2  
 'It's not a while ago that the bus returned;...'
- a. ...inw=a'l-ik=e', h-ts'o'k mèedyà òora.  
 A1SG=say-INC(B3SG)=TOP PRV-end(B3SG) half hour  
 '...I think it was half an hour ago.'
- b. ??...tuméen ma' sùunak=i'.  
 CAUSE NEG turn\ATP:SUBJ(B3SG)=D4  
 '...because it hasn't returned yet.'

**6. Counterfactuals** – Iatridou 2000 argues that counterfactual conditionals are asserted over topic worlds that exclude the utterance world. In Iatridou's language sample, subjunctives only occur in counterfactual antecedents in languages that distinguish past and non-past subjunctives. Iatridou suggests that the element of counterfactuality is contributed, not by the subjunctive, but by the past tense morphology in such cases. Yucatec counterfactual conditionals (see (4)) contradict this generalization – Yucatec is a tenseless language (Bohnenmeyer 1998, 2000, 2002, 2009).

- (4) Mu'm bèey-tal in=botàar,  
 NEG:A3 like.this-INCH.INC A1SG=vote  
 'I can't vote,'  
 méen ma' way-il-en=i'.  
 CAUSE NEG(B3SG) here-REL-B1SG=D4  
 'because I'm not from here.'
- Pero wáah káa bèey-lak in=bóotare',  
 but ALT SR like.this-INCH.SUBJ(B3SG) A1SG=vote  
 'But if I were able to vote,'  
 hi'n=bóotar-t-ik Pablo=e'.  
 ASS:A1SG=vote-APP-INC(B3SG) Pablo=D3  
 'I'd vote (for) Pablo.'

On the analysis sketched above, there may be an alternate typological route to counterfactuality: not in terms of the tense-like relation between topic world and utterance world, but in terms of the aspect-like relation between topic world and realization.

**7. Discussion** – On the proposal sketched here, the functional categories of mood and viewpoint aspect are so tightly connected as to be complementary in some languages and orthogonal in others. Both determine the realization of a described situation by mapping it to the topic situation of the discourse. Viewpoint aspect does so in terms of contrasts between different types of overlap between topic situation and described situation, whereas mood does so in terms of contrasts between overlapping and non-overlapping realization vis-à-vis the topic situation.