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Psychological depth is the internalization of dialogical breadth: Modal clitics and mental states in Q'eqchi'-Maya

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Abstract

This essay provides a detailed account of the morphosyntax, semantics, and pragmatics of modal clitics in Q'eqchi'-Maya. It builds on previous arguments that status, or epistemic modality, is a shifter that marks the speaker's commitment to a narrated event relative to the speech event; and that commitment should be understood as a kind of participant role. It details the complicated types of commitment events that are encoded and implicated in various contexts. It shows the ways in which multiple commitment events—inhabited by the speaker, addressee, and actor—combine in various contexts to serve complex functions, ranging from satiatives and dubitives to bluffatives and suprisitives. And it shows the ways in which these complicated, overlapping commitment events may be understood in terms of intentional states—from desire and worry to belief and hope. In this way, it grounds the 'possible worlds' of logicians and the 'intentional worlds' of psychologists in terms of participant roles; and it thereby reinterprets logical and psychological presumptions in terms of social and semiotic practices. In short, it shows the ways in which we are merely minding language when we talk about mind. Finally, while focused on the forms and functions of Q'eqchi'-Maya, it provides an analytic typology that may be used to analyze other languages (and other minds).
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Keywords: Modality; Status; Intentionality; Shifters; Desire; Internalization; Counterfactuals; Mind; Q'eqchi'-Maya

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1. Introduction

This essay provides a detailed account of the morphosyntax, semantics, and pragmatics of modal clitics in Q'eqchi'-Maya. It builds on previous arguments (Kockelman, 2002, 2003b, 2004) that status, or epistemic modality, is a shifter that marks the speaker's commitment to a narrated event relative to the speech event; and that commitment should be understood as a kind of participant role. It details the complicated types of commitment events that are encoded and implicated in various contexts. It shows the ways in which multiple commitment events—inhabited by the speaker, addressee, and actor—combine in various contexts to serve complex functions, ranging from satiatives and dubitives to bluffatives and suprisitives. And it shows the ways in which these complicated, overlapping commitment events may be understood in terms of intentional states—from desire and worry to belief and hope. In this way, it grounds the 'possible worlds' of logicians and the 'intentional worlds' of psychologists in terms of participant roles; and it thereby reinterprets logical and psychological presumptions in terms of social and semiotic practices. In short, it shows the ways in which we are merely minding language when we talk about mind. Finally, while focused on the forms and functions of Q'eqchi'-Maya, it provides an analytic typology that may be used to analyze other languages (and other minds).

Section 2 provides an overview of the form and function of modal clitics in Q'eqchi'-Maya. It is designed to give the reader a sense of how their morphosynatic, semantic, and pragmatic properties interrelate. Section 3 discusses the morphosyntax of the modal clitics in great detail, showing their grammatical distribution and logical scope, their interactions with each other, and their interactions with other obligatory grammatical categories (such as tense and mood). And Section 4 provides a detailed account of usage for each of the modal clitics in turn, analyzing their indexical objects and pragmatic functions, as well as speakers' interpretations of their meaning.[1]

2. Overview of grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic properties

In this section, I provide an overview of the modal clitics.[2] In Section 2.1, I discuss their grammatical distribution and informational scope. In Section 2.2, I discuss the semantic features they encode. These first two sections are adapted from Kockelman (2003b). Finally, Section 2.3 discusses the contexts these modal clitics index, the

[1] This essay is part of a larger project (Kockelman, 2002, 2003a,b,c, 2004) which examines *stance*, or the semiotic means by which we indicate our orientation to states of affairs, usually turning on evaluation and intentionality. Moveover, it instantiates an overarching argument that 'subjectivity in language' is not at issue; and that research should instead focus on the relation between formal structures and discursive practices that seem to mark modes of subjectivity, and speakers' understandings of and strategies with these structures and practices (Kockelman, 2004).

[2] Grammars that mention, but do not analyze the modal clitics in Q'eqchi'-Maya are Berinstein (1985), Carlson and Eachus (1980), and Stoll (1896).

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