The grammar of time reference in Yukatek Maya.
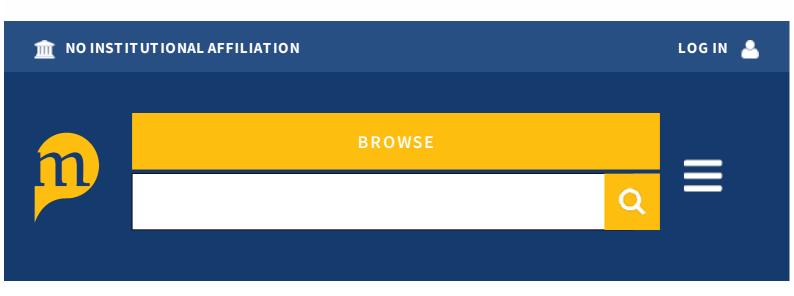
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🔒 **The Grammar of Time Reference in Yukatek Maya (review)**

Judith Tonhauser

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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Judith Tonhauser

The grammar of time reference in Yukatek Maya. By Jürgen Bohnemeyer. (LINCOM

This book consists of revised versions of the nine main chapters of Bohnemeyer's Ph.D. thesis (written at the Max Planck Institute at Nijmegen and Tilburg University, The Netherlands), plus references and an index. As the title suggests, the book provides a detailed description of the expression and interpretation of temporality in Yukatek Maya (YM), a Native Mesoamerican language spoken on Mexico's Yucatán peninsula. The main claims are that YM has neither tense nor temporal-order adverbs (like English *before* and *after*) and that temporal event order is mainly expressed with the rich aspect-mood system of the language and conversational implicatures.

Ch. 1, 'Introduction' (1–19), gives an overview of the empirical, typological, and theoretical issues that are addressed in the book. The theoretical background to the description of temporality is laid out in Ch. 2, 'Some concepts of time semantics' (20–56), where B discusses a number of approaches to temporality and temporal interpretation with respect to Aktionsart, tense, aspect, and temporal-order adverbs. Ch. 3, 'Methodological issues' (57–80), provides some geographic, social, and ethnographic background of YM speakers and outlines the methodologies by which the data were gathered and analyzed. **[End Page 1000]**

Chs. 4–8 are the heart of the book. Ch. 4, 'The environment of temporality grammar' (81–152), consists of an overview of YM grammar and the way in which temporality manifests itself at each level of grammar (morphosyntax, clausal syntax, and discourse structure). In particular, B introduces the complex aspect-mood marking system, which consists of fifteen preverbal aspect-mood (AM) markers and five inflectional aspect-mood verb suffixes (called statuses). In Ch. 5, 'Predicates' (153–215), the temporal properties of the two main classes of YM predicates are discussed. Dynamic predicates (verbs) must be realized with aspect-mood marking and B argues that this aspect-mood marking fully determines the aspectual and modal meaning of a

construction, whereas telicity is not reflected in YM grammar. By contrast, stative predicates (e.g. nouns and adjectives) do not occur with aspect-mood markers, and the eventuality they realize is interpreted imperfectively by default (but this interpretation can be overridden by contextual information). Ch. 6, 'Status inflection and AM marking' (216–344), examines in detail the semantic and pragmatic contributions of each of the aspect-mood and status markers. In Ch. 7, 'Further operators' (345–433), B discusses the contribution of temporal adverbials and conjunctions as well as phase verbs (like English *begin*, *stop*, and *continue*) to temporal interpretation in YM. In Ch. 8, 'The use of borrowed time relators' (434–44), B explicates that Spanish event-order relators (like *hasta* 'until' or *después* 'after'), when borrowed into YM, are semantically and formally different from their use in Spanish discourse. B attributes the low frequency of these operators and their altered interpretation to the fact that temporal information is organized very differently in YM.

Ch. 9, 'Discussion and conclusions' (445–56), summarizes the system of temporal interpretation of YM and situates various aspects of YM grammar in a typological context. In addition, B discusses the implications of his findings for a theory of temporality and general linguistic theory.

The empirical scope and theoretical contributions of B's book are breathtaking. Anyone interested in temporality in natural languages will appreciate B's exceptional insights into the grammar of temporality in this Mayan language and the theoretical implications of his analysis. The discussion of the syntax and semantics of YM clauses and constructions (e.g. gerundial, motion-cum-purpose, focus constructions, content and polar questions, and relative clauses) makes this book an excellent introduction to YM grammar in general. I also highly recommend this book to any linguist as a model of the kind of contribution that theoretically informed linguists can make when doing fieldwork.

Judith Tonhauser
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the German-speaking world will also be able to make use of this invaluable resource. The editors and contributors are to be commended for their effective collaboration, and the publisher for the daring adventure of the series 'Handbooks of linguistics and communication science', now over twenty years in existence, of which this set is vol. 2. For German historical linguistics, there is nothing like this magnificent 'handbook'. [JOHN M. JEEP, *Miami University*.]

A grammar of Ma'di. By MAIRI BLACKINGS and NIGEL FABB. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003. Pp. xvi, 734. ISBN 3110179407. $189.60 (Hb).

Blackings and Fabb have written a very interesting and useful grammar of Ma'di, a Central Sudanic language of northern Uganda and southern Sudan. Matti Miestamo in a LinguistList review (LinguistList 14.3264, November 28, 2003) rightly calls it a reference grammar, but it is also a practical grammar. It is written by linguists and based on good analysis, but it describes in understandable language the way Ma'di people speak. It could be the basis of a course in spoken Ma'di, or a student could go straight to it for answers to questions and examples for practice. It is packed with examples, owing to the fact that B is a native speaker of Ma'di and a linguist.

Following a broad introduction to the Ma'di people and language, B&F give an overview of the language from phonetics to sentence structure. Then they take up each part in greater detail from the phonology of ATR vowel harmony and tone to the syntax of three different clause types and three subject pronoun sets. In the midst of much clear description, parts read like a puzzle with solutions still in question. For example, what previous linguists described as two word orders—SVO for perfective and SOV for imperfective—B&F reject in favor of uninflected verbs expressing past tense, inflected verbs expressing nonpast, and a 'directive' type used in commands, prohibitions, and wishes. This last type has the SVO order of the uninflected clause, but resembles the inflected verb type if one assumes that its low-tone prefix floated back onto the subject pronouns at some point. To the outsider, the uninflected verbs appear to be the most inflected, having a full set of subject pronouns bound like single-vowel prefixes, but described as 'short' pronouns. These are the most grammaticalized pronouns, while the subjects of the other types can be separated from their verbs or cliticized to them. Independent 'nonsubject' pronouns as well as other noun phrases that precede what the authors call the 'true pronominal subjects' are called 'adjoined subjects'.
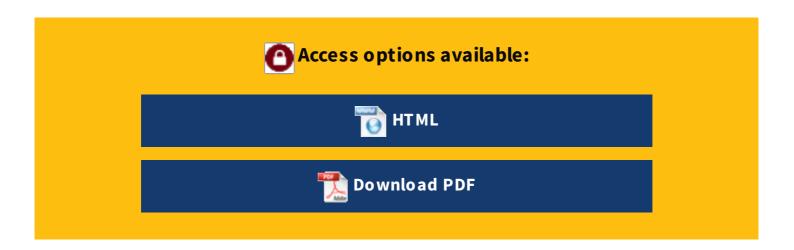
Ma'di grammar has a variety of particle-sized complexities as well. For example, definite markers, specific markers, and focus markers can occur in different positions and combinations, resulting in different meanings or subtle nuances of meaning. B can discuss these details from the vantage point of native-speaker insight as well as on the basis of analysis and acknowledges the many interpretations that the grammar allows which can only be disambiguated in discourse or in a wider context.

The grammar of Ma'di is well covered in this book with descriptions of the phonology and morphology, word classes, noun and postposition phrases, clausal complements and their verbs, modals and negations, adverbials, focus, and questions. This volume is invaluable for its descriptions of grammatical differences among the three main dialects. Finally, there is a lexicon containing a word list and special lexical classes of verbs, nouns, and color adjectives. There are four interlinearized texts, references, and an index. [RICHARD WATSON, *Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics*.]

The grammar of time reference in Yukatek Maya. By JÜRGEN BOHNEMEYER. (LINCOM studies in Native American linguistics 44.) Munich: LINCOM Europa, 2002. Pp. xvii, 490. ISBN 3895863459. $93.60 (Hb).

This book consists of revised versions of the nine main chapters of Bohnemeyer's Ph.D. thesis (written at the Max Planck Institute at Nijmegen and Tilburg University, The Netherlands), plus references and an index. As the title suggests, the book provides a detailed description of the expression and interpretation of temporality in Yukatek Maya (YM), a Native Mesoamerican language spoken on Mexico's Yucatán peninsula. The main claims are that YM has neither tense nor temporal-order adverbs (like English *before* and *after*) and that temporal event order is mainly expressed with the rich aspect-mood system of the language and conversational implicatures.

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