

Chapter 10

Managing epistemicity among the Yucatec Mayas (Mexico)

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Introduction

In recent years, many researchers have maintained that human interaction is primarily based on the principle of cooperation and joint action (Grice, 1957; Tomasello, 2008; Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne & Moll, 2005; Tomasello, Kruger & Ratner, 1993). What this implies is that everyday cognition is predominantly socially motivated (Enfield & Levinson, 2006). For instance, Grice considers sharing information to be the basis of interaction: interlocutors are expected to meet the informational need of their interactional partner(s); i.e., if a speaker has access to the information required by the hearer, then he is expected to communicate that information to the hearer (Grice, 1975, p. 45). What I show in this chapter, using the example of the Yucatec Mayas of Mexico, is that it might indeed be the case that a speaker is expected to share the information, but this does not mean that (s)he will willingly share that information. I will consider the management of epistemicity among the Yucatec Mayas, and while I will explain some principles of knowledge transmission, I will place emphasis on the importance of the cultural context into which they fit. My argument will rely on the analysis of various linguistic and ethnographic examples to explain what constitute rules for knowledge acquisition and evaluation among the Yucatec Mayas, both children and adults.

I focus on several issues that are directly related to the management of epistemicity among the Yucatec Mayas. First, I present an overview of the main concepts used in this chapter: conversational practices, the concept of epistemicity and the notion of evidentiality (as a grammatical marker). Then, I briefly present the Mayan context, for which further information will be provided throughout the text.

I describe two main Yucatec conversational maxims: “be vague” and “withholding information is safe.” I also focus on conversational and ethnographic examples, and then on some socialization practices that involve children. Finally, I focus on the linguistic strategies of speakers of Yucatec Maya that allow them to report secondhand knowledge (reportative verbs and evidentials), mark epistemic sources, and take some distance with respect to the truth of the information being conveyed. More importantly, I discuss how these linguistic markers can be used strategically in social interactions. I conclude with a summary and some open questions regarding the impact of linguistic and cultural

strategies regarding Yucatec Maya management of knowledge on children's development and theory of mind.

Conversational practices, epistemicity, and evidentiality

Several older and more recent works have argued that human interaction is based on the principle of cooperation and joint action (Grice, 1968; Tomasello et al., 2005; Clark, 2006). What this implies is that everyday cognition is primarily socially motivated (Enfield & Levinson 2006) and that culture acquisition is attained mainly through everyday micro-(conversational)-interaction. Although some cultural ideologies can be clearly spelled out and described, most fail to be transmitted through words; this is especially true with the Yucatec Mayas, among whom there are no formal knowledge transmission procedures or forms of apprenticeship (Lave & Wenger 1991). I will come back to this issue later in the chapter.

Cooperation and joint action are based on the principle of "sharing" (Tomasello et al., 2005; Tomasello, 2016). But what does "sharing" really refer to? Sharing of goods or money already involves a highly established social structure. For interactionalists, sharing is located at a much more basic level, and refers to sharing of information in conversation and multimodal interaction. Grice considers that, in conversation, moves or turns are negotiated and each conversational partner is expected to share the information required by the hearer: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this the "Cooperative Principle" (Grice, 1975, p. 45).

If we can agree with Grice that cooperation is a default aspect of human social interaction (which would otherwise just not be possible), and that it might be the case that speakers are expected to share information, we can nevertheless argue that it is not always the case that they are always willing to do so (at least when they think they have the choice not to).

Considering that this primary constraint might not be respected in certain cultural situations is crucial, since it modifies Grice's conversational maxims, especially the *maxim of quantity* (i.e., that one should provide the most relevant and helpful amount of information) and the *maxim of quality* (i.e., that one should provide quality information and not say what one believes to be false). I will demonstrate that Yucatec Maya speakers, in certain cases (more often than Westerners) show an explicit refusal to share information, even minimally, and often (but, of course, not always) expect to be lied to, for some Yucatec Maya principles of conversation clearly state that lying is a safe strategy in many interactional settings.

Sharing knowledge and cooperating involve certain ways of evaluating knowledge, crucial in daily life. People, especially when engaging in joint action, have to know if what they believe and what other people believe is valid, or at least to what extent it is trustworthy, in order to make decisions and act. While implicit metacognition deals with the evaluation of one's own knowledge (Proust, 2010, 2008), I will concentrate on

how Yucatec Mayas deal with the information they share and what strategies they use to detect or anticipate knowledge validity (or lack of it, when they think they are being deceived).

Importantly, decision-making and action-planning are never limited to single independent actions, but often result from a series of conversational turns or moves (Enfield, 2013), meaning that evaluation of knowledge is rarely carried out using direct evaluative questions (“Are you sure you know this or that?”), but through a series of turns in micro-interaction (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977; Tannen, 1987; Schegloff, 2000; Enfield, Stivers & Levinson 2010; Stivers et al., 2009; Hayashi, Raymond & Sidnell, 2013).

Many recent cross-cultural studies in non-Western industrial cultures (i.e., non-WEIRD people; see Henrich et al., 2010) have challenged some “basic” conversational principles: in Madagascar (Ochs Keenan, 1976), in the Pacific (Duranti, 1992; Robbins & Rumsey, 2008; Rosaldo, 1980; Rumsey, 2013; Schieffelin 2008; inter alia), and in Mesoamerica (see Brown (2002) and Groark (2013) for the Tzeltal Mayas in Mexico, and Danziger (2006, 2013) for the Mopan of Belize4C (i.5.g.5.4 (t)-6 (h2u(e M)97 (es)50 9t)-5 Im[(2013) (o)i)6 (h)3 ur”(ura)9 (n) (t



Fig. 10.1 A view from Kopchen.

Two Yucatec Maya conversational maxims

As I mentioned earlier, I will be describing the landscape of epistemic management among the Yucatec Mayas. In this section, I will consider two conversational maxims relevant to the issue at stake. I gloss the first as “be vague” and the second as “withholding information is safe.” These maxims are not completely conscious for the Mayas, and only the second is sometimes explicitly expressed. I consider these maxims to be productive principles in everyday conversation, and I will provide examples of both, using data collected from various speech genres.

“Be vague”

As already mentioned, the “be vague” maxim is not an explicit Mayan concept but my gloss of an organizational conversational principle among the Mayas. One could argue that this is just the way Mayas talk because of some properties and/or the use of the language. However, several pieces of data suggest that there is some degree of intentionality regarding how they use linguistic vagueness. Among Yucatec Mayas, it is acceptable, and even recommended, to be vague not only when one is talking about sensitive issues (as Westerners would also do), but also in everyday talk. I consider three cases: (a) reference to people and entities in the world, (b) the use of passive constructions, and (c) multi-modal communication (in particular facial expressions of emotion).

Person reference

In this subsection, I discuss what is known in conversational analysis as “person reference” (Enfield & Stivers, 2007), although I will deal not only with references to humans, but also with references to supernatural entities and animals.

Among the Yucatec Mayas, it is common to refer to supernatural entities in a generic fashion. For instance, although Yucatec Mayas recognize numerous types, the guardians of space, of rain, of animals, etc. are all referred to in everyday conversation as *yuumtsiloob*, “the masters.” Only in certain circumstances, ritual discourse for instance, are their names specified (on the avoidance of naming, see Vapnarsky and Le Guen, 2011).

The same applies to dangerous animals. People in everyday conversation and narratives tend not to refer to a snake, scorpion, or spider as such, but with the generic term *chi’ibal* or *chi’ichi*, “thing(s) that bite” (see Le Guen, 2012). It is important to point out the difference with, say, Western students only using “tree” instead of “oak” or “red mahogany” because they ignore the specific label (López et al., 1997). Yucatec Mayas, as well as many other cultures who live in and by the forest, are able to (and usually do) refer to animals and vegetal species using the generic species level and below (Atran, Medin & Ross 2004), and hence the use of a very unspecific label is a marked strategy, especially for references to animals.

One justification for this vagueness in referring to supernatural entities and dangerous animals is based on the idea of performativity (Austin, 1975). For the Mayas, uttering the name of an entity is like calling it, and can make it come. This is particularly problematic in the case of entities like spirits or dangerous animals who can either bring illness or bite the caller.

For people, it can be equally problematic to refer to someone using his or her real name (although it is not taboo), which is one reason why many people (although not all) have surnames and are very careful about revealing their real name, sometimes only known to close kin (see Hanks, 2007). For Yucatec Mayas, exposing one’s real name makes it subject to witchcraft. Based on the idea of vagueness, some people, usually “new” to the village, are only referred to in a very generic fashion, such as *le máako*, “this person, the guy.” To cite one anecdotal example, a friend of mine, a French linguist who actually managed to speak good Yucatec and visited the village several years in a row, was called by almost everyone (who knew his real name) *le máako*, “that guy.” Although, after the first year, he expressed his discontentment, people kept referring to him like this, even in his presence.

Use of passive constructions

In Yucatec Maya, as well as many other Mayan languages, there is a clear preference for the passive construction for nonmarked statements. Moreover, non-agentive constructions, where the subject or the utterance is the object being acted upon, are also favored.

For instance, let us consider an event like “a hunter killed a deer.” Instead of using a transitive formulation as in English, Yucatec Mayas would rather describe the same event as *ts’ona’abij*, “it got shot.” Not only is the subject of the sentence, the deer (only referred with the third-person marker), not the hunter, but the hunter cannot even be mentioned.

and is only pragmatically inferred (if it has been mentioned earlier in the discourse). The same applies when describing an event where a man frightens a bug: Yucatec Maya participants would rather use a passive construction and only introduce the agent with a conjunction as in the following example (this and other examples are extracted from a task where people had to explain causal interactions; see Le Guen et al., 2015):¹

- (1) *ja'as* *uy-óol-i'* *tumen* *e* *máak-o'*
 afraid.PAS 3A-vital.energy-REL CONJ DET man-DEIC
 He got afraid by the man [=The man frightened him]

However, it would be a mistake to think that Yucatec Mayas are not very precise in their everyday talk. One important factor to take into account is that in such small-scale societies, stories are told repeatedly. So, even if people do not get all the elements the first time, they will usually have multiple opportunities to gather more elements later. It is true, however, that placing emphasis on the action instead of the actor is a common strategy, and this is explained by the fact that transitive or focus constructions imply a high degree of control and agency from the agent. More specifically, transitive constructions tend to imply responsibility and sometimes even culpability of the subject. For instance, in a story where a boy broke a window by kicking a ball, even if the story mentioned that he did not do it on purpose, one participant described the event as follows, using a focus construction:

- (2) *paal* *top-eh*
 child break-SBJ
 It is the child who broke it [= on purpose, he is accountable]

In contrast with previous examples, the subject here is focalized, and this transitive construction implies a high degree of control. In using *this* construction, the speaker wants to put emphasis not only on the fact that “the child broke the window,” which in English could be considered a neutral construction, but also on the fact that the child did it on purpose will be held accountable for his action.

Note that, as mentioned by Danziger (2006) among the Mopan, intentionality does not have much weight in the face of the consequences of one's action, and this is visible linguistically in Maya. If one has committed a wrongful action, there are no real ways to express it. For instance, there is no word or expression in Yucatec Maya for a simple “(I am) sorry.” What would be an equivalent is reserved for very dramatic situations: *sa'ates ten*, “forgive my sins,” or *tink'áatik diskuulpa*, “I ask for an apology” (using the Spanish loan). As a piece of anecdotal evidence, the third time I came back to the village, I realized

¹ Abbreviations: 3 = 3rd person; A = ergative marker of set A; CONJ = conjunction; DEIC = deictic; DET = determinant; EVIC = evidential; IMP = imperative; PAS = passive; REL = relational; SBJ = subjunctive.

I forgot some photographs I was supposed to bring. When I asked my friend how I should tell people “I’m sorry” (using the Spanish expression *disculpa/perdón/lo siento*), he just translated it as (and advised me to just say) “I forgot” (*tu’ub ten*, literally “it has been forgotten in relation to me”), explaining that whatever my thinking is or was, it will not make the pictures less forgotten.

In sum, because nonmarked statements are the norm while transitive utterances are loaded with agentivity, vagueness in Yucatec Maya can be considered the default usage.

Multimodal communication (emotion)

Finally, another dimension where Yucatec Mayas are “vague” in everyday interaction is in their display of emotion, or more precisely their lack of emotional display. Hanks (1993, p. 221) has pointed out that:

“Among Yucatec Mayas, individuals of the same group don’t allow themselves to prejudge another’s mental state based on their expressions or behavior (seen as never completely transparent). This is linked to the fact that the individual must be able to master, hide or manipulate these outer expressions.”

The rules for display of facial emotions are highly restricted socially, according to various interactional spaces: public versus familial versus individual spheres. More importantly, for Yucatec Mayas, display of emotion is problematic and potentially dangerous, as it can (unconsciously) give information to one’s interlocutor. This is why people try, as much as they can, to control their facial expressions. Many non-indigenous people who visited the communities where I have been working repeatedly made the comment that Yucatec Mayas are “inexpressive.” Although we could expect foreigners not to be able to discern subtle emotional display, it is more surprising that people from the same community think that fellow members are not able to read these signs from each other. For Yucatec Mayas, there is an a priori impossibility of reading another person’s mind or detecting

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“Withholding information is safe”

Another crucial maxim in Yucatec Mayas’ everyday interactions is that withholding information is safe. Not telling the truth in many contexts is considered to be a secure strategy, not just when talking to strangers, but also if the interlocutor is not considered competent (a child, for instance).

Results from a task as well as interviews conducted with several participants have shown that, although lying is considered a bad thing, not telling the truth is in many contexts considered a safer strategy. For instance, a 50-year old woman mentioned in an interview that her parents explicitly told her when she was younger to lie to any people from outside the village if she did not know them, since revealing any information could be harmful to her or her family.

Because lying or withholding information is permitted among Yucatec Mayas, it is clear for them that it is easy to be lied to (*ma’ yaj utúusul máak*) and this supports the reason why nobody should believe someone at face value, or any information, without having another source of knowledge (or not marked linguistically, for instance with an evidential; see the subsection later in this chapter on the evidential particle *bin*). When people are lied to or misinformed, the speaker is often not accountable, especially if this person is known not to be trusted (a child, for instance). Because, as indicated already, people are able to hide their emotions, trusting people’s words only is not always an option. For matters of importance, Yucatec Mayas thus place great emphasis on trying to decipher even small clues from emotional expressions, tend to infer, from people’s behavior, alternate versions of the same event, and perform a kind of repetitive interrogation to see if the speaker sticks with his or her story. Inconsistencies in stories or behavior or changes of mind are seen as proof of lying. Furthermore, as I will explain later in the section on epistemic markers, the use of certain deictics or forms of reported speech are strategies for evaluating epistemic sources within people’s speech.

I could provide multiple examples, but for the sake of space I will just cite a narrative, told to me and my colleague Lorena Pool Balam, that can be viewed as a cautionary tale. In this story, which is said to have happened in the remote past, a woman says that on the following day, she will go gather some berries known in Maya as *chi’* (Nance). But the devil hears her and comes the next morning, after he has changed his appearance to look like an acquaintance, in order to accompany her to the forest and eat her. Finally, at the last minute, she is rescued and is told that, from now on, she should never tell anyone where she will be going the next day. The narrator explains that in ancient times, people were so careful that they would not even say what they would eat on the next day:

ma’atak e úucho ma’ wa’alik, mix awa’alik ba’ax ken ajant sa’ama, mix ta wa’alik. Chen ken sa’asake’ awóoje ba’ax ken ajantej. Wáa kawa’ale’, ma’ utsi’ [2008-07-21_0939-utsikbalilmolchi]²

You see, in the remote past, you did not tell (anything), you did not even say what you will eat on the next day, you (just) did not say it. On the morrow, you know what you’ll eat. If you were to tell it, it was not good!

² All references in brackets after the examples refer to the name of the archive in my database, specifying if it is a video reference (only date and title or with the mention of K7), a field note (NT), or an audio recording (MD).

Although this narrative is somewhat extreme and real people do sometimes say what they are going to do a bit ahead of time, Yucatec Mayas frequently express their anxiety and hesitation about revealing unnecessary information. When I started doing fieldwork, people would tell me to stop revealing so much about my intentions or where I would go (things I would normally say in France). Also, asking people to tell me in advance (i.e., a few days before) how rituals would unfold was always answered very reluctantly, with unspecific answers, or not at all. It is also customary to ask people on the street where they are going, and it is totally permitted (even recommended) to be vague (e.g., “over there”), to lie (mention another village instead of the one you are actually going to visit), and, even better, to joke (for instance, because I am French, and going on foot or bike, I would answer “to France” or “Paris”). Regularly, people, when engaging in gossip even for trivial issues (like taking medicine, having bought new clothes, or planning on visiting a relative in the village), would explicitly ask people who overheard them *not* to repeat what they heard, even (and especially) if they were asked.

In sum, although we cannot say that the Yucatec Mayas do not comply with Grice’s maxim of quantity or quality, they do bend this rule quite frequently, when they judge that information is or could be compromising, even for trivial (from their point of view) interactions.

Status of new information and reality check

This section will present some everyday ethnographic examples to indicate the cultural context in which information is dealt with among the Yucatec Mayas.

The routine of everyday life

Traditional everyday life in a Yucatec Maya village is extremely routine and highly predictable, especially in a small village like *K’òòpchéèn* (Vapnarsky, 2001; Hanks, 1990; Le Guen, 2006). What this means is that people can easily infer what one is doing or might be doing. Men usually go to their fields during the day, while women clean the house, take care of their domestic animals and their children (when they come back from school), and prepare food. New information is rare, often leading to inferences from what others say, mainly through gossip.

Ochs Keenan (1976) has already made this observation in a small village of Madagascar and has pointed out how much new information is prized and actually becomes a kind of capital for the people who have it. The same applies among the Yucatec Mayas. Also, because the context is so predictable, withholding information or even lying becomes easier to detect (in contrast with an extended urban context, for instance).

A single individual’s claim can never be trusted

Among the Yucatec Mayas, a single person’s statement is often considered hard to believe, and is usually discarded because it is unprovable and epistemically irrelevant. Additionally, no further discussion is possible if a common ground of shared knowledge has not

previously been established (Hanks, 1990). As anecdotal evidence, I could mention all my attempts to explain things about France during my stays in the village. Typically, the many times I talked about facts, events, or places that people could not check, they would get bored and, while I was still talking, just change the subject, and start talking among themselves, remorselessly ignoring my speech. This continued until my friend Delio, a man from *K'òopch'èen*, came back from France, to which he had been invited by another anthropologist, Valentina Vapnarsky, who had also worked in the same village for the last 20 years. I was surprised that, when we were together with his family, he started telling them about his experience in France and would regularly ask me to tell if what he was saying was correct. People now were fascinated and curious, but also reassured to hear me confirm what my friend Delio was saying. In fact, after Delio had returned from France, several men from the village came to me and were curious to know if what my friend told them was true or just things he had invented. Apparently, one person's claim cannot be trusted until confirmed or verified.

The same applies to parents who have children working outside the village. They are never curious about what their children do, and never ask many questions concerning their whereabouts or work, and the children do not say much either. Apparently, not having engaged in the same experience prohibits common ground and hence conversation.

In Yucatec Maya, there is one linguistically encoded way to ask for informational verification: the tag question *máasimáa'*, "isn't it the case?!" However, this tag question is not used to ask for new information, but rather functions as a turn-taking device designed to select the next speaker to validate what one has just said, i.e., to verify the accuracy of the information just provided by the first speaker. For instance, in Delio's talk about France, he would finish many of his statements with *máasimáa Olíibye*, "isn't it so Olivier?", turning to me to validate information that was new to or less likely to be believed by his audience.

Conversational ways of accessing or hiding knowledge

Because everyday conversation implies some distrust of the addressee's intention(s) and speech, the Yucatec Mayas have some ways of trying to either access (when one is the interlocutor) or hide (when one is the speaker) knowledge. I refer to these conversational practices as a "conversational chess game."

Let us first consider how people try to access knowledge through a series of questions (sometimes very codified) that are used to lead (indirectly) to the main goal of the interaction. This strategy is also a form of politeness, to avoid saying things too explicitly or in one go. For instance, one night I came back to the village by taking a taxi. Because I look like a foreigner, drivers always charge me more than they do my Maya friends, and this time was no exception. The next morning, my neighbor came, knowing perfectly how much I paid, but instead of just asking me "Why did you pay that much for the taxi last night!," he simulated a conversation that would lead to this issue. Also, because he first acquired this information through gossip, asking me straightforwardly could put him in an awkward position (I could respond: "Why do you believe everything you're told?"), leaving me with the option of denying the validity of his source of information and hence

shutting down the conversation. Instead, he designed the conversation in such a way that it would be expected, at some point in the conversation, for him to ask how much I paid. Our conversation went something like this:

(3) Expensive taxi trip:

JKC: When did you come back yesterday?

OLG: I don't know, around 11 pm.

JKC: How did you come back?

OLG: I took a cab, there was no combi anymore

JKC: And how much did you pay?

OLG: 190 pesos

JKC: That much!!! Why would you pay that price!?

Obviously, everything above the last line was just a way to get to express his indignation about me paying so much money for a cab to get home (usually, locals can negotiate the same ride for around 120 pesos).

People also use the same strategy to predict future turns in conversation, but the goal is to avoid problematic issues. In everyday conversation, people are constantly aware of wanting to avoid getting onto dangerous ground or being forced to display information, especially when they do not want to. In the following example, a Maya student (ST) did not want to tell her supervisor (SP) that she had not finished her thesis. A few days before she went abroad, her supervisor called, and the conversation went something like this:

(4) Not telling date

SP: *Ba'ax k'iin abyaaajar?*

When do you travel (abroad)?

ST: *minwóojli'i'*

I don't know.

As I witnessed the conversation, I was surprised to hear her telling her supervisor she did not know her travel date when it was only a couple of days ahead. She then explained to me that, in telling the correct date, the next question from her supervisor would have been whether she was finished with her work. The following is the alternate version of the same conversation, which the student wanted to avoid:

(5) Alternate version

SP: *Ba'ax k'iin abyaaajar?*

When do you travel (abroad)?

ST: *diya 17*

On the 17th

SP: *ts'òoka'anáa túun ameyaj?*

Is your work finished then?

ST: *ma'*

No

People regularly engage in linguistic jousts in which several turns are planned ahead. This kind of conversational chess game is particularly common for jokes, for instance.

Reality checking in everyday talk

For Yucatec Mayas, a direct source of information is highly valued, and this is transparent, or at least constantly referenced in people's everyday talk and expressions. One common idiomatic formulation is the use of negative questions (with the negation marker *ma'* blended with the interrogative *wáa*). Typical cases are offers (6), or answers to information questions (7), with the object directly available for both speakers:

- (6) A visitor comes to the house and her host offers a seat to sit down on.

Host: *kulen, máa yaan le siiyaa'*

Sit down, **isn't** there a chair?

((presenting a chair))

- (7) Several women are preparing food. A is looking for a knife, and another woman B points to it on the table.

A *tu'ux yaan e kuchiyoe'*

Where is the knife?

B *máa ti' yaan te'ela'?*

Is it not over here?!

((pointing to the knife on the table))

This idiomatic expression is a form of politeness, but it also lets the recipient judge by him/herself if the real state of the world is as described by the interlocutor, and it functions as a constant reminder to speakers that reality is not always what it appears to be (something clear in narrations where supernatural entities are involved, as described in the next section).

To deceive and not to be deceived

Although this is not the main argument of this chapter, the notion of a lie in Maya is crucial for understanding how epistemicity is managed.

The world is not always what it appears to be

For Yucatec Mayas, there is a cultural premise that the world is not always as it seems, and there are culture-specific premises about how it really is and how to deal with this. Many traditional narratives as well as narrations of personal experiences point to the fact that, in certain contexts, trusting people (even familiars) is not safe and that direct access (visual or auditory) cannot suffice for knowing how the world really is (as in the narrative of the devil and the woman who went to collect Nance).

Many narratives deal with someone encountering what seems to be a familiar person in the forest. However, this encounter is not as straightforward as it seems; it often turns out that the person is actually an evil entity (like the devil or the *x Tábáy*, a female being who kills men in the forest) that has assumed the form of a human being.

One common traditional narrative tells the story of a male child who is “stolen” by supernatural entities in the forest who have taken on the appearance of his father, or people he knows, in order to bring him to their house (one usually not visible to humans, who just see geographical anomalies). In many cases, the child is taken off to be taught esoteric knowledge that, when he is brought back among humans, will help him become a ritual specialist (Le Guen, 2006).

What these narrations imply is that one should always be evaluating information with respect to multiple external signs in the world and not just one source (like seeing someone familiar), for instance the spatial context (whether it happens in the village versus the forest), the person’s attitude (Does it fit usual patterns?), some features of the body (Are both legs visible or not?), etc.

One day, a friend of mine from the village explained to me that if I were to encounter an unknown person in the forest and this person asked the way to *kòopchèen*, I should not, in any situation, give him an honest answer. Given the conditions—being in the forest, not knowing my interlocutor—I would not have enough knowledge to determine whether this person was human or an avatar of *Kisin* (the Maya version of the devil). My friend added that, as a *weero* (from the Spanish *huero*, “white person”), if I ever were to ask for directions from children in a Maya village where no one knew me, they would certainly indicate a wrong path to me [NT_TC-26.04.04].

Socialization practices designed to warn children against trusting the world and people

For the Yucatec Mayas, children are limited in their cognitive capacities (theory of mind) to lie, but also in recognizing the truth. Because of this, they are thought to be weak in a dangerous world where appearances can be deceiving, so they must be protected, and

they are taught to distrust people as a general rule of thumb. Yucatec Mayas, in order to teach children not to take the world as it appears or to take other people's words at face value, use two strategies. The first is explicit, telling children to deceive people they do not know. In particular, people are very concerned about sexual abuse (which in fact I never heard of) and often explicitly warn children about being tricked by adults: *bik tuus(u) kèex!*, "be careful not to be deceived!"

The second strategy is unconscious and takes the form of what Briggs (1998) called a "drama," which she defines as an interactional sequence in which a problem is dealt with that directly involves a child. It is limited in time and considered not to be serious for adults. A drama can be short, and take the form of a lie. For instance, if a person wants a child to come to her, it is quite common for her to say something like *kóóten waye', yan intsa'ik tech duulse*, "Come here, I will give you sweets." When a child reaches the age of five or six, if a mother really needs something and has to send the child and the child does not want to go, she will trick her with a sweet or offer another fake reward. However, Yucatec Mayas consider that when the child reaches consciousness (*na'at*), (s)he will go by himself/herself (see Gaskins, 1996). As an example of a drama provoked to make the child aware that she can be lied to, consider the following example (Figure 10.2). We are at the home of *Suus*. One of her children (R) is with his nephew (M). R decides to lie to M, saying that he will give him a sweet if the boy insults other people present. R begins by targeting me, but the boy does not say anything. He then targets *Ini* (*Suus's* husband) and the same thing happens. Finally, R asks the boy to insult his own sister (P), and he does this (line 2). When the boy is done insulting his sister, R says he will not give the candy to the little boy. No-one feels pity for the child, but he is not left alone, and takes refuge with his aunt.

(8) A sweet for an insult:

1. R: *kux túun e x la' Perla'a'*

What about the ugly Perla here? [Will you insult her too?]

2. Boy: *NA'!*

CU::UNT

3. Girl: *NA'!*

CU::UNT

4. R: *Tinwa'aláa tech?*

³ In Yucatec Maya, traditionally *na'* means "mother"; however, this word is now considered as the short version of the expression *u-peel a-na'*, "the vagina of your mother," a common insult in this culture. Adults encourage children to use this insult as it shows that they are *kébanóob*, "sinners" (i.e., properly humans) and if they die, their soul will not go into limbo. I decided to translate the Maya expression as "cunt" to render the meaning in (British) English.

Did I tell you to?

5. *aál ti'!*

Say it to her!

6. *Mints'a'ik teečh!*

I won't give it to you! [x3]

During this scene, *Suus* is very proud to say the following: *ma' upochik je' máaxake'!* “He does not insult anyone (indiscriminately)!” For his aunt, the boy shows signs that he has reached consciousness (*yan utəukul/unaát*), since he is now able to differentiate social relations (discriminating between people he can and cannot insult) and knows the basic rules of respect and politeness. However, he is still too young to recognize a lie, obvious to everyone else. This drama is taken as a lesson for him to distrust familiar people (in this case, his uncle) acting outside of normal patterns (asking him to insult people and giving sweets as a reward for it).

Socialization processes directly affect the self-confidence of children about what and whom they should trust. Dramas are very effective, and children are terrified of unknown

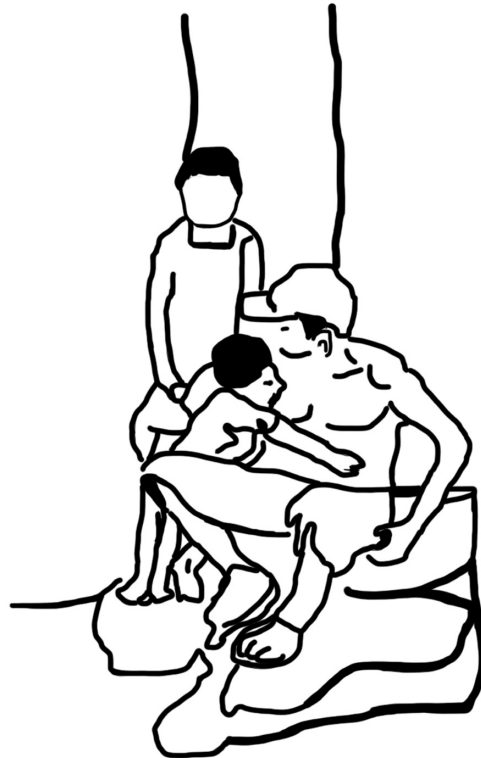


Fig. 10.2 R. holding the candy in his left hand and not letting the boy reaching for it saying *mints'a'ik teečh!* “I won't give it to you!”

people (there are dramas specialized for making children fear people they do not know; see Le Guen, 2012), and as a result they do not easily trust new information.

After having examined some ethnographic examples, I will now turn to the analysis of linguistic phenomena used to mark epistemicity in Yucatec Maya.

The use of epistemic markers among the Yucatec Mayas

In Yucatec Maya, as well as in many languages of the world, there are several forms for reporting knowledge and epistemic access or sources (Aikhenvald, 2004; Willett, 1988; Holt & Clift, 2010; Tannen, 1987). Previous approaches to epistemicity and many studies of evidentiality are essentially based on short linguistic and often elicited examples with little contextualization, which tends to be a problem for understanding where and how evidentials fit into the cultural management of epistemicity. In this section, I will show how epistemic markers are used in conversation and how they can be used strategically in everyday talk.

The use of terminal deictics

In Yucatec Maya, sentences and noun phrases are almost always marked by a set of discontinuous deictics equivalent to English “this,” “that,” “here,” “there,” etc. One of the constituents of the deictic system is the set of terminal deictics that mark right-end boundaries of a noun phrase or an utterance, and which also encode the perceptual access of the speaker, and sometimes of the interlocutor, to the scene described. William F. Hanks (1990, 2005) has extensively described this system for Yucatec Maya.

Different terminal deictics encode various types of access: *-a'* encodes direct access (i.e., visual or tactile) as in (9), *-o'* distant access as in (10), *-e'* generic or neutral access, and *-be'* indirect access (i.e., olfactory or auditory):

- (9) *jeél le waaj-a'*

Here is the tortilla (right here)

- (10) *jeél le ch'uupal-o'*

Here is the girl (over there)

In (9), both speaker and interlocutor have perceptual access (in this case visual and possibly tactile), while in (10), the speaker used the distant terminal deictic, pointing to the spatial distance between him and the girl, but at the same time letting his interlocutor know that the girl is also perceptually available to him.

But spatial distance is not the only criterion, and old or new information, falling under the same paradigm of proximal or distant perceptual access, is encoded by the deictics, as in the following examples:

- (11) *le ba'al kinwa'ik tee-ch-a'*

What I am telling you

(12) *le kweento suka'an utsikabtik-o'*

The narrative he is used to telling

In (11), the speaker points to the novelty of the information, while in (12), on the contrary, the message is that it is something that has already told; this is also clarified by the fact that it is something habitual (and for which the use of the terminal deictic *-a'* would be inadequate).

(13) *le kaamyon-be'*

(Listen to) this truck!

(14) *ki' le book-be'*

(Smell) this odor, it's nice!

In (13), the deictic *-be'* indicates that the truck is audible but not visible, while in (14), it indicates olfactory access. In both cases, the speaker and interlocutor have peripheral perceptual access to the scene. The deictic here points directly to which sense should be used to read the world. The default reading of *-be'* is "an audible source"; more information, contextual or linguistic, is usually necessary to have an olfactory reading such as with the use of *ki'*, "good" (for taste, smell, or touch), and *book*, "odor," in (14). As an example of such use, one day, as we went hunting with a Maya friend, he suddenly stopped in the middle of the forest and said *je' le kitam-be'*, "here is a wild boar, (smell it)!", looking in the air and inhaling through his nose. It was obvious in this case (as he explained later) that a wild boar had just passed by and left its odor, meaning it was still near.

Unlike English, where these deictics can only be translated by a paraphrase (e.g., "don't you hear/smell/see it"), the terminal deictic in Yucatec Maya is an obligatory grammatical feature that encodes epistemicity, i.e., a source of knowledge about the world. In virtually every sentence, some aspect of the point of view of the interlocutors with respect to the world is encoded, which is the reason why Hanks (2005) considers Yucatec Maya deictics to be "sociocentric."

Forms of reported speech

In many, if not all languages, epistemicity also appears in the use of reported speech. Much of what we know about the world comes from what other people say to us. What is interesting is that different languages (and hence cultures) have multiple and distinct ways of reporting secondhand information. Yucatec Maya is very productive in this respect, given that it has several linguistic strategies for reporting a secondhand epistemic source. I will look at three of them, starting with the simple form using the verb "to say," and then consider a more specific form (less widespread in languages worldwide), the quotative (used for direct reported speech), to finally examine the special case of evidentials, words designed only to report a specific source of information (Aikhenvald, 2004; Willett, 1988).

Forms involving the verb *a'al*, “to say”

In Yucatec Maya, as in many languages of the world, there is a verb “to say.” However, it is usually used in narratives and everyday discourse to mark several types of epistemic sources. When used in a transitive form, as in (15a), it indicates the source of the knowledge—to put it simply, “Who said it.” In contrast, when the verb is in the passive, as in (15b), it suggests that the information could just have been said “in the air” or that it might be general knowledge or even an unsecure source of information.

(15a) *tuya'alaj ten Jwaan yan ubin máatan*

Juan told me he was going to the ritual.

(15b) *bey uya'ala'*

Thus it is said.

In many cases, the context of the discourse makes it clear who was in fact the source of information, although it can also remain vague, as in the following, where it is just “the elders”:

(16) Non-expert discourse:

OLG: *Pero ba'axten kusa'ata'a' máak?*

But, why do people get lost?

W: *Pòos kuya'ako'obe' komoke chi'up bin máak beyo', kunáaka' yóol bin e'...*

Well, **they say** that since women are involved like that, so they say they [the Supernatural Entities] get irritated, **so they say** . . . , the

bweeno, utsikbatko'ob inwu'uyik bey yaan e maas chan nukuch máako'obo'.

Well, this is what I heard from the narrations of the people who are more elderly.

kunáaka' tun bin uyóol uyuumil le k'áaxo', inwa'ik teene' le te' Nukuch Báalmo'obo'.

The guardians of the forest get, **so they say**, irritated, I think these are the Great Jaguars.

Kunáakal uyóol uyi(li)ko'ob umáan chi'up yáanal k'áaxo' beyo'.

They get irritated from seeing women going in the forest like that.

kuk'aaskuntko'ob máak.

They hurt people.

Teene', bey inwu'ik kuya'ako'obo'.

As far as I'm concerned, it's what I heard from what they say.

[2005-06-4_MD2_TD-03]

In (16), the source of what is reported is mentioned, i.e., the *nukuch máakoob*, ‘the elders (literally, the great people),’ referring to the ancestors or living people of great experience. In this case, the formulation points to some common knowledge among the community.

However, use of the verb ‘to say’ would not seem of great importance for the management of epistemicity if it were not in contrast with other forms of reported speech, and also with cases where there is no use of a form for reported speech. To illustrate this point, let us compare the example in (16), which was uttered by a non-expert, with the following extract from an expert talking about the same issue:

(17) Expert discourse without reported speech:

O: *Kux tun ich k'áax, ken yaanak x too'lok kusatkech?*

And, regarding the forest, what about the lizard that gets you lost?

DC: *aah Sip too'lok! (. . .). Jaaj kusatik wáa pero tyeempo wáa noókoy,*

Ah, The Sip too'lok. It really gets people lost, but if the weather is cloudy (. . .)

DC: *jach bey usáatal máak!*

This is how people get lost?

O: *pero ba'anten kusatik máak beyo'?*

But why is it (the lizard) getting people lost like that?

DC: *pwees chéen . . . u'èestel u . . . usiipil too'lok tumen le'ti'è' tunk'aaskuntk awich,*

Well, it is just . . . that . . . it is the mistake lizard, it is altering your view,

chen tunbaasilarkech beyo', pwees, chen kumeetik ujuugado tech beyo'.

It just takes you for a ride [humorous sense], well, it is playing with you like that.

[2003-08-07_K7_Esp_TC-02(2)]

What is interesting when we compare the two examples in (16) and (17) is that they basically deal with the same issue, but the expert uses no explicit mark to mention the source of his knowledge (as in example (17)), implying that it is first hand. Although the verb ‘to say’ can be used simply to report common knowledge, it is also employed to strategically downgrade the degree of certainty, and, most of all, accountability of the speaker, as in the case of the non-expert in (16).

The use of the quotative *K-*

In Yucatec Maya, as in other languages, there is a special word, in this case a particle, used to specifically report direct speech. In Yucatec Maya, it is a particle base on the root *k-*⁴ with the person marker of set B; see Table 10.1.

⁴ I disagree with Lucy's (1993) analysis of it being with the root *ki-*. His explanation is that the root is actually *kil* and gets phonologically reduced with the markers of the set B (John Lucy, personal

Table 10.1 Forms of quotative with person markers

Maya form	Person	Translation
k-en	1st	"I say"
k-ech	2nd	"You say"
k-ij	3rd	"(S)he say"
k-o'on	1st plural	"We say"
k-e'ex	2nd plural	"You (pl.) say"
k-ij-o'ob	3rd plural	"They say"

I will not go into the details of the analysis of the quotative (see Lucy, 1993), but it allows reporting of direct speech (retaining the original deixis) and thus adds vividness and expressivity, and, more relevantly for this chapter, an appearance of truthfulness. The citation in direct speech, as in English (for instance with the expression "and she was like: ". . ."), authorizes the use of effects of voice, gestures or on-verbal behavior, emotional display, etc., that are attributed to the original speaker. Interestingly, in many cases, the reported speech is not "reported" but rather reinterpreted or even invented (Holt & Clift 2006).⁵ These aspects have been described extensively in previous studies on various languages, and I would like to focus here on a more specific function of the quotative in Yucatec Maya, namely, the way speakers can "put words into the mouth" of another speaker present. This strategy relies mostly on the use of the quotative with the third person (*kij*, "(s)he says") or, more often, the second person: *kech*, "you say," and *kech ti'*, "(you) say/say this to someone."

Consider the following example, an extract from a socialization drama with a nonverbal child (taken from Petatillo Chan, 2017). This interaction is a lying session (similar to the one presented in the earlier subsection on socialization practices designed to warn children). The aunt (G) tries to convince the baby to come to her in order to hug her and see her walking. She lies to the baby, and the grandmother, also present, points to this lie and puts some word into the child's mouth using the quotative.

communication). This does not hold, since there are no other phenomena known in this language where the vocal and the last consonant disappear this way. His analysis also seems to derive from the fact that, in the plural, the form can be *kiloob*; however, the *-il* is a phonetic reinterpretation of the third person and the plural marker, as in *k-ih-o'ob*, "they say." The interpretation I propose is more elegant, since it allows us to consider all the morphemes in each case without implying any reduction or disappearance of any part of the root. I follow Lucy's analysis of the use and semantic of the quotative.

⁵ See also the next subsection, on the evidential particle *bin*, in which the quotative is used for speech that is designed to be uttered.

(18)

1. Aunt *Alma ko'oten waya'*
Alma, come here.
2. *ko'ox maanaj!*
Let's go to the grocery store!
3. *ko'ox tun te' maanlo!*
Let's go shopping!
4. Gdm: *ma' bin néene' chen tun tuskech*
Don't go baby, she is just lying to you.
5. Aunt: *chula máax kun taaj tin paach?*
Cutie, (so) who will go with me?
6. Gdm: *"mix máax" kech ti'*
"No-one," **say to her**
7. Aunt: *jaaj? (.) tene' mika'ajen maanal KO'OX!*
Sure? Me, I'm going to the shop now, LET'S GO!
8. *ko'ox yo'osal inmanik tech junpéel sabriita*
Let's go so I can buy you a sabrita (snack).
9. *ja' taale'? KO'OX ... je' kinbina'!*
Are you coming? LET'S GO ... I'm going!
10. ((changes her position as if going to the grocery shop))

The use of the quotative *k-* with the preposition *ti'* (creating a ternary relationship between the speaker, the person who is supposed to say the words, and the interlocutor) in line 6 allows the grandmother to put words into the baby's mouth, as it were, even though she cannot talk, and hence have her say things she did not say. However, this strategy is frequent even among adults, especially for joking purposes. Typically, in a group of men (or women), a more competent speaker will use this strategy with less competent ones and have them participate, even though the less competent person might not say a single word during the interaction.

We see that in (18), the aunt is lying to the girl in order to change her behavior, and the grandmother, through the use of the quotative, makes the girl conscious of this lie, at the same time helping her to respond to it. The grandmother's response is particularly clever and points to several interesting issues regarding the management of epistemicity among the Yucatec Mayas. First, although the grandmother states that the

aunt promise's is a lie (line 4), she does not abandon the interaction but keeps playing along with the verbal game of the aunt, providing an appropriate response to the invitation; the question "who will go with me?" gets a satisfactory answer: "no one." The expectation from the grandmother is that the child would, in time, provide such an answer, hence showing her expectation that the child will come to have a theory of mind and the ability to recognize a lie. Actually, when children are older they are specifically asked to repeat the answer provided to them with the quotative in these types of drama (and the person to whom the answer is directed usually pretends not to hear or acknowledge the first utterance with a quotative).

The quotative is used in Maya to report not only secondhand knowledge, but also invented or modified direct speech. More interestingly, it can also use the speaker's voice as a substitute for the comment or utterance of another speaker, pointing to what (s)he could have said. Although it can give the illusion of truthfulness, the quotative, like the verb "to say," does not always provide a reliable epistemic source, unlike the evidential *bin*.

The evidential particle *bin*

The term "evidential" refers to a grammatical category of words, morphemes, or particles that indicate an epistemic source. Following Aikhenvald (2004, p. 3), the primary meaning of evidential is to indicate "the way the information was acquired, without necessarily relating to the degree of speaker's certainty concerning the statement or whether it is true or not." Although evidentials can be paraphrased, for instance a visual evidential can be rephrased as "I saw it," the difference with other languages that lack them is that they are obligatory.

Yucatec Maya has only one evidential, *bin*, that belongs to the type "reported evidential" indicating indirectly heard information. It is present in various speech genres, such as narrative, everyday conversation, requests, and orders, but not in ritual speech for instance. The evidential *bin* can be paraphrased as follows: "so they say" or "they told me." I propose, however, a more detailed description of the core meaning of the evidential in Yucatec Maya as follows:

(19) Core meaning of *bin* (reportative evidential)

1. This information was acquired through someone who (verbally) told it to me.
2. I'm not revealing who this person is.
3. Although I can if asked to.

As a so-called "reportative evidential," *bin* points to verbally acquired information. However, this information is not gossip, or from an unidentified source (as we saw, this could be the case with the verb "say"), but always from an identified or identifiable person. The specificity of the evidential is that it does not indicate who the person is, although

that is always possible.⁶ In many cases, the source of the information is obvious from the context, or from previous mention in discourse. To save space, I will just translate the evidential in English as “they say.”

Let us consider the following example of the use of the evidential in Yucatec Maya:

(20) Use of the evidential in an answer:

1. R: *maa::n hacháa las dyees tun ken taakoó'*

Mom, is it true they'll arrive at ten?

2. S: *las dyees bin*

At ten, **they say**

3. R: *las dóose k'ána'an inbin x Ja'asi*

I have to go the Hazil at noon.

Here, R is asking her mother S to confirm if her friends (from a nearby village) are really coming at 10 a.m. The mother was, moments ago, on the phone with someone from this group. In her answer, instead of just mentioning that they will indeed come at ten, she uses the evidential (line 2). Although the source of the information is not mentioned, it is fairly obvious from the context that it was the person on the phone who will come at ten. Interestingly, the evidential in her answer complies with two functions: in using the evidential, the mother clearly states that she is not just making the time up and that someone did tell it to her. At the same time, she also distances herself from the commitment of the original speaker; if they come later or do not come, she was just the messenger and is not responsible.

Although the evidential is a complex linguistic tool, it is present early on in children's speech. For instance, a small girl uses it correctly and abundantly in a narrative she told at age six. Also, quite early on, we notice it in reported commands (in the form of imperatives). Children commonly act as a spokesperson for their parents, in many cases reporting an order to other people (Gaskins & Lucy, 1986). One typical instance is the utterance in the following, where a child (five years old) correctly uses the evidential in reporting an order:

(21) Use of the evidential with the imperative:

1. Mother => others: *koóten hana::*

come.IMP eat

Come to eat!

⁶ To test this hypothesis, during a fieldwork season, I systematically asked people who use the evidential in their speech from whom they acquired the information. Most of the time (unless it was in a narrative), people could always point to a precise source of information—most of the time a specific individual.

2. Daughter => others: *KO'OTEN BIN ~~H~~ANA::!*
 come.IMP EVID eat
 Come, **they say**, to eat!

In this example, even more clearly than in (20), the evidential distances the current speaker from the illocutionary force of the utterance. Among the Yucatec Maya, it would not be proper for a child to give an order (using a bare imperative) to an adult. The use of the evidential allows softening of the order, giving the current speaker the role of messenger.

In Goffman's terms, the use of the evidential allows the speaker to be just the animator. Goffman (1981) considers that behind one utterance there are three possible roles, usually fulfilled by a sole speaker:

1. *e animator*, the person who verbally pronounces the utterance (although it can also be some piece of technology).
2. *e author*, the individual who originally composed or pronounced the words uttered by the animator.
3. *e principal*, the person whose "beliefs and viewpoint are represented by the words uttered"—to put it simply, the person who has authority or the legitimacy for the words uttered.

Let us consider again our examples (20) and (21). In both cases, the person who uttered the phrase containing the evidential is just assuming the role of animator and is leaving the responsibility, commitment, and truthfulness of the utterance to the original speaker (who is the author and principal). Although this analysis is not new, it leaves aside some pragmatic uses of evidentials and the complexity with which an evidential can be used to distance oneself from the epistemic source and, at the same time, to legitimize it.

Consider the following extract from a conversation between men preparing ritual food. At some point, someone realizes that the pot they are about to use has a flat base and that a rounded base would be much better. The men know that there is such a pot at the church and decide to send the youngest of them (R), an adolescent (around 18 years old), to get it. I is the father of R, and C and P are co-workers.

(22) Strategic use of the evidential in direct reported speech:

1. R: *ti' yaan te' igléesyajo'*
 There's one at the church.
2. I: *xen ak'exe Ros bisej ka' wa'a ti'*
 Go and change it, Ros, take and say.
3. *pero a'a ti' "je'e tintáas e páayla bin*
 But you say (to him): "here is the pot I brought, **they say**

4. *je'ela' ma' bin ma'alobi' "*
 Here it is, it is not good, **they say**"
5. *katáaske dee. . .*
 And bring one like . . .
6. C: *i chen a'ake' ti' máatam*
 And say it's for a ritual.
7. P: *lete' wóolis ufóondojo'*
 One with a rounded base.
8. I: *"le te' chéen de wóolis bin ken inchi'ao' " kech ti'*
 Say to him: "I will only take one with a rounded base, **they say**".

This example is particularly rich, since it is based on reported speech using all three strategies mentioned so far: the verb "to say," the quotative for direct speech, and the evidential. In this extract, the father is putting words into his son's mouth in order for him to talk to the person in charge at the church and fetch a round-based pot. The father is using direct speech, not to report a previous utterance but instead to indicate to his child exactly what he will have to say to the person at the church, word for word. Direct speech is either introduced by the verb "to say" (*a'al*) (lines 2 and 3) or the quotative (*k-*) (line 8). Interestingly, in the speech the father has prepared (acting as the author and principal, following Goffman), the reportative evidential (*bin*) is used (lines 3, 4, and 8). The thinking of the father is based on the assumption that, in using the evidential with the person at the church, the child will show that he has no responsibility for what he is uttering and, as a consequence, no power to negotiate. This is because he is only reporting his father's speech and the men are preparing the ritual (which the man at the church will pragmatically assume). Following the same logic, the use of the evidential will also give more weight to the request, because it is assumed to come from a superior authority.

In sum, the evidential in Yucatec Maya is not merely a tool limited to determining a perceptual source of information—in this case "heard from someone"—but has deeper pragmatic implications. The evidential states that the knowledge comes from someone else (in general a superior source of epistemic authority), and that although this source is not always named, it can be ~~entailing~~ an asymmetric relation in knowledge: the speaker has more information than the receiver. Finally, the use of the evidential can function to increase the effectiveness of the utterance (especially in certain speech acts like requests or commands). The analysis proposed also allows us to understand how Yucatec Mayas can manage epistemic sources, dissociating themselves from the source of the knowledge (not assuming responsibility for it) and, at the same time, using the reported speech as a tool for legitimizing the reported knowledge, particularly in the case of narratives where

the use of the evidential implies that the information was uttered by some reliable source (a grandfather, for instance).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how different the Yucatec Maya setting can be from those of other cultures, especially the so-called WEIRD one; see Grice (1975), but also Stivers, Mondada & Steensig (2011). For instance, in contrast to Grice's maxim stating that speakers should share information when possible, we have seen that the Yucatec Maya prefer to be vague (or less precise), and even that, in doubt, withholding information is considered a safer strategy. Information, and especially new information, is then taken as a capital (Ochs Keenan, 1976) that should be shared with caution, using the adequate form to report speech. However, my claim is not that Grice's maxim of quality does not apply and that Yucatec Mayas never share information, since this would mean the end of social life. It is, rather, that there is a cross-cultural tolerance in how this rule applies. And although a policy of not sharing sensitive information or lying is expected in every culture, Yucatec Mayas apply it to more everyday nonsensitive types of information and prepare their children to lie as part of their socialization process.

Because, for Yucatec Mayas, the world can be deceiving and is never considered readily decipherable, even in contexts that might seem obvious from an epistemic point of view, Yucatec Maya speakers constantly indicate linguistically from which point of view they describe the world, taking also into account the viewpoint of their interlocutor, sometimes leaving it to the interlocutor to decide whether what they describe (even if present) is the truth. A consequence of that, I argue, is that there are strategies for confirming a statement made by one individual with the support of another person who is present and can support the legitimacy of the claim. Indicating the source of information and knowledge is a linguistic and a cultural requirement in Yucatec Maya. This is also carried out through the use of terminal deictics and forms of reported speech. In particular, the evidential is an obligatory grammatical tool that indicates the source of knowledge, and, used strategically, it can either (or concomitantly) allow the speaker to distance him/herself from the illocutionary force of the utterance (the responsibility or truthfulness) and to legitimize the knowledge transmitted (at the same time pointing to some asymmetry in knowledge).

Because of their cultural premises regarding the status of knowledge, Yucatec Mayas tend to be much more accurate linguistically in stating and, to some extent, evaluating sources of knowledge (theirs and others), constantly monitoring what others are sharing (based on the idea that others can be lying or withholding information), and always cautious about what information they should or not share.

One interesting issue, which this chapter in a sense was meant to raise and could be the subject of future research, regards what is implied in the use of evidentials, especially from a developmental point of view. Determining the epistemic source of a claim requires

that the speaker has to be careful to weigh his/her personal responsibility for each utterance (i.e., whether to use an evidential or not, since it is an obligatory marker) and to decide whether (s)he presents herself/himself as the author and principal of the claim or just the animator. As we have seen, use of an evidential may be crucial in some speech acts (especially requests).

On an external epistemic view, knowledge is formed between the believer and the world (online), hence the necessity for Yucatec Mayas to always evaluate information about the world not only on the basis of others' claims, but also of external signs. In a sense, the use of evidential forms of reported speech along with other cultural strategies mentioned in this chapter (see the section "Status of new information and reality check") are ways for the speaker and the hearer to take some distance from the simple verbal information that would otherwise only be taken at face value (that is, the evidential can help in the evaluation of the truthfulness of propositional content even if it is not part of that content). This is also one reason why attention to multimodal communication, monitoring one's emotional display, and constantly checking and evaluating others' behavior patterns are so crucial among the Yucatec Mayas.

Our observations about Mayan ways of communication raise additional important questions, associated with hypotheses on theory of mind (ToM). Several researchers have recently considered this issue cross-culturally and cross-linguistically, especially with respect to what is considered the hypothesis of opacity of other minds, or the "opacity doctrine" (Danziger, 2006; Danziger & Rumsey, 2013). This hypothesis states that other minds are not readable, and thus mental states are not a tool to predict or comprehend others' behavior and intentions. If this is particularly true in the Pacific, it is also true to some extent in Mesoamerica (Danziger, 2013; Groark, 2013). In considering the Yucatec Maya case presented in this chapter, and specifically children's acquisition of a ToM, we can envisage two possibilities:

1. *e Yucatec Maya ToM is more developed.* From a very early age, children might be able to represent others' mental states, the reason being that, because of acquired cultural premises regarding epistemicity, they pay more attention to others' state of mind (since they are constantly trying not to be deceived). Thus, children might pass the ToM earlier.
2. *e Yucatec Maya ToM is limited.* On this view, the opacity doctrine requires children not to pay too much attention to others' internal and mental states, and to focus instead on external cues, a process that does not require mentalization. In this case, Yucatec Maya children might pass the ToM test much later than children in some other cultures.

As of now, this question remains empirically open, and several kinds of tests need to be developed and adapted to explore the question among Yucatec Mayas. I hope that this chapter will be of help in such a project and that it will provide a useful view of what is implied when we talk about epistemicity management, at the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive levels.

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