Anchoring Events to Utterances without Tense

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1. The Anchoring Condition

In this paper we assume without further discussion that in main declarative clauses of all natural languages **events must be anchored to the utterance** or some other salient **reference point** – we refer to this as the **Anchoring Condition** (cf. Enç 1987: 642). In particular, we follow Stowell 1995 and Zagona 1990, among others in assuming that anchoring proceeds temporally via the syntactic category tense and its **temporal arguments**. That is, the event time (EvT) is anchored to the utterance time (UttT) or some other reference time (RefT) (Enç 1987). In this paper we focus on root sentences where events are anchored to the utterance. When we talk about such events, we relate them to the utterance by asserting **when,** relative to the utterance, the event happened.

We further follow Demirdache and Uribe-Etxebarria 2000 in assuming that tense is a **temporal predicate of (non-)coincidence** (in the sense of Hale 1986). According to this view, a sentence in the present tense (1)a can be represented as in (2)a, where present tense corresponds to a predicate of coincidence asserting that the event time coincides with the utterance time (i.e. it happens *now*).[1] In contrast, a sentence in the past tense (2)a can be represented as in (2)b, where the *past tense* corresponds to a predicate of non-coincidence, asserting that the event time does not coincide with the utterance time (i.e., it happens not now but *then*, which is interpreted as past [2]).
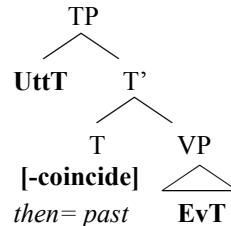
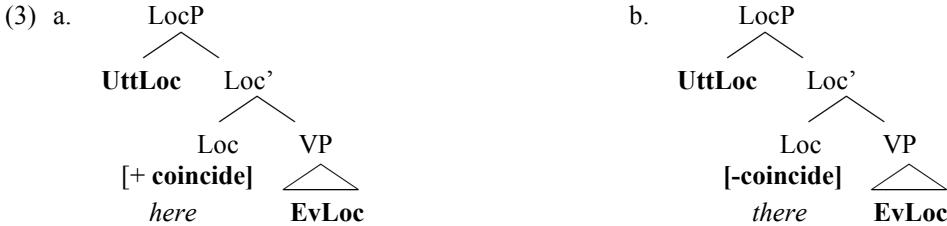(1) a. Konrad is playing the guitar.   b. Mika danced.

(2) a.
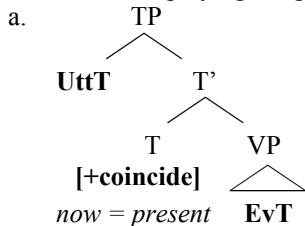
The problem we are addressing in this paper is what happens if there is no tense? In particular, it has been argued that certain superficially tenseless languages lack the syntactic category tense (Ritter and Wiltschko 2004, Shaer 2003, Wiltschko 2003). If this approach to tenselessness is on the right track (at least for some languages), then the question needs to be addressed as to how events are anchored to the utterance in the absence of tense. While we take the Anchoring Condition to be a universal of natural language, we argue that event anchoring does not need to proceed temporally. We propose that there are two other ways to anchor events to utterances: spatially or personally (via participants).

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[1] For the purpose of this paper, we abstract away from aspect.

[2] Strictly speaking, the future would also express non-coincidence between the event time and the utterance time. However, we assume that future is more complex in that it introduces a modal component (Enç 1996), which can be interpreted as assertion of non-coincidence between event world and utterance world.

We argue that in Halkomelem[3] anchoring proceeds **spatially** via the syntactic category **Loc(ation)** and its **spatial arguments**. That is, the event location (EvLoc) is anchored to the utterance location (UttLoc) or some other reference location (RefLoc). In other words, instead of establishing a relation between the event and the utterance by asserting *when* it happened, this relation can equally be established by asserting *where* it happened. We further argue that, like T, Loc is a **predicate of (non-) coincidence**. Accordingly, a sentence can assert that the event location coincides with the utterance location (i.e., the event happens *here*) as in (3)a or that the event does not coincide with the utterance location (i.e. it happens not here but *there*) as in (3)b.

(3) a.

LocP

UttLoc   Loc'

Loc   VP
[+ coincide]   EvLoc
here

b.

LocP

UttLoc   Loc'

Loc   VP
[-coincide]   EvLoc
there

In Blackfoot[4] event anchoring proceeds via **participants** of the utterance (or discourse) and event (i.e., via nominal arguments). That is, event participants are anchored to utterance participants, or some other reference participants. In other words, it is asserted *who* participated in the event with respect to who participated in the utterance. We argue that this relation is achieved via a third type of predicate of (non)-coincidence, which we call δ (discourse).[5] If δ is a predicate of coincidence the event participant is asserted to coincide with the utterance participant (for example actor = speaker) as in (4)a. If however δ is a predicate of non-coincidence then the event participant is asserted to not coincide with the utterance participant as in (4)b:

(4) a.

δP

UttPart   δ'

δ   VP
[+coincide]   EvPart

b.

δP

UttPart   δ'

δ   VP
[-coincide]   EvPart

In the remainder of this paper we discuss evidence for Loc instead of T in Halkomelem, and δ instead of T in Blackfoot.

2. Spatial Anchoring in Halkomelem Salish

To begin, we briefly discuss some properties of Halkomelem that lead to the claim that Halkomelem lacks tense (see Wiltschko 2003 for details).[6] First, Halkomelem does not have obligatory tense inflection. As illustrated in (5), a sentence without overt tense morphology can receive either a past or a present interpretation:

[3] Halkomelem is a Central Coast Salish language, spoken around the Vancouver area of British Columbia. There are three dialects: Upriver, Downriver and Island Halkomelem. The data from the Upriver dialect appear in the official orthography of the language. Other data appear in whatever form they appear in their sources. We thank the elders Elizabeth Herrling and the late Rosaleen George for teaching us about their language.

[4] Blackfoot is a Plains Algonquian language spoken in northern Montana and southern Alberta. We thank Beatrice Bullshields and Rachel Ermineskin for teaching us about their language. We also thank our students Heather Bliss, Clare Cook and Jeff Muehlbauer for help with collecting and analysing the data, and for discussion of its significance.

[5] There are several labels for δ, in the literature on Algonquian languages: H (Bruening 2001), PoV (Point of View, Bliss 2005, Ritter and Rosen to appear), D(iscourse)P (Déchaine 2000).

[6] In this paper we assume the T-less analysis of Halkomelem, but, see Matthewson 2004 for a different view.

(5)   Yéthe-st-éxw-chexw   *Upriver Halkomelem*
        tell-caus-3o-2sg.s
        i)   'You told him.'
        ii)   'You tell him.'   Galloway 1993: 317

An important correlate of the presence of tense distinctions is the presence of infinitives. Strikingly, Halkomelem does not have infinitives. For example in (6), a context where English requires an infinitive, Halkomelem makes us of a finite subordinate clause (with subject agreement). Another prediction of the claim that Halkomelem lacks tense is that it should also lack temporal deictics. Preliminary evidence suggests that this is indeed borne out. For example, the word for *now* is best translated as 'a little while' as illustrated in (7):

(6)   L-stl'i   kw'-el-s   t'it'elem   *Upriver Halkomelem*
        1sg.poss-want   C/det-1sg.poss-nom   sing.redup
        'I want to sing.'

(7)   a.   **qéy'əs** cən ni? təl'-ləx^w ti?í   *Downriver Halkomelem*
             recently   I   aux be.understood   this
             'I just found that out now.' (lit.: For a short time I have known this.)
        b.   ?élməy' cx^w k'^{w}ə   we-**qey'əs**   ?al'
             wait   you   det/C   est-recently   just
             'Wait a little while.'   Suttles 2004: 432

Finally, an important consequence of the presence of tense is the presence of nominative case and its effects, such as passivization. Crucially, Halkomelem lacks such effects (Wiltschko 2003).

Assuming that the syntactic category tense is absent in Halkomelem it follows that tense cannot be utilized in anchoring events to utterances. Rather as briefly introduced in section 1, we argue that in Halkomelem the Anchoring Condition is satisfied spatially via the syntactic category Loc. We argue that Loc (like T) is occupied by predicates of (non-)coincidence resulting in a "here" vs." "there" (rather than a "now" vs. "then") dichotomy, as schematized in (3) above. In the remainder of this section, we provide evidence for the presence of Loc in Halkomelem.

2.1 Spatial predicates of coincidence: Locative auxiliaries

In English, T is instantiated by obligatory tense inflection, which is absent in Halkomelem. However, Halkomelem declarative clauses are (almost always) introduced by "locative or directional auxiliaries", such as *i/?i* and *li/ni?* which we argue to instantiate Loc. The claim that these auxiliaries instantiate Loc, and that Loc in Halkomelem serves the same function as T in English, is reminiscent of the view found in the descriptive grammar of Musqueam (Downriver Halkomelem) according to which "[t]he auxiliaries serve as pegs on which to hang subject […] person markers and non-personal particles. They also serve to set the predicate within a spatial context." Suttles 2004: 35. On our analysis the locative auxiliary *i/?i* is analyzed as a spatial predicate of coincidence asserting that the event location coincides with the utterance location (i.e., that the event takes place *here*) as in (8). In contrast, the auxiliary *li/ni?* is analysed as a spatial predicate of non-coincidence, asserting that the event location does not coincide with the utterance location (i.e., that the event takes place not here but *there*), as in (9).

(8)   a.   ?**i** cən   c'éc'əw-ət   *Downriver Halkolmelem*
             aux 1sg.s   be.helping-trans
             'I'm helping him.'
        b.   ?**i** cən t'ecəl
             aux 1sg.s arrive.here
             'I arrived here.'   Suttles 2004: 35 a/b

(9) a. **niʔ** t'ít'əl'-əm' *Downriver Halkomelem*
aux be.singing-intrans
'There is someone singing.'

b. **niʔ** kʷəc-n-él-əm
aux look-trans-1pass-intrans
'I am seen./They see me.' Suttles 2004: 36 h/j

The description of the phenomenon in Suttles 200: 35 clearly captures the dichotomy between spatial coincidence and non-coincidence: "The auxiliary ʔi 'be here' locates the phenomenon or event (whether real or hypothetical, present, past or future) near the speaker at the time of utterance. The auxiliary *niʔ* 'be there' locates it somewhere else." According to the present analysis, the locative auxiliaries of Halkomelem serve exactly the same function as English tense morphemes: they anchor the event to the utterance. This is summarized in (10):

(10) Locative Auxiliaries:[7]

Upriver	Downriver	Analysis	translation	English equivalent
i	*ʔi*	**EvLoc = UttLoc**	'be here'	EvT = UttT (*present)*
li	*niʔ*	**EvLoc • UttLoc**	'be there'	EvT • UttT (*past*)

It is worth noting that as a result of spatial anchoring, information about time is sometimes conveyed as a byproduct (Davis and Matthewson 1996, Suttles 2004). Consider for example (11):

(11) niʔ cən c'éw-ət *Downriver Halkomelem*
aux 1sg.s help-trans
'I helped him.' Suttles 2004: 35

A temporal interpretation of this example is conveyed as follows: The speaker must be at the utterance location at the time of the utterance, and since there is a 1st person subject the speaker is the agent of the helping event. The auxiliary *niʔ* asserts that the utterance location does not coincide with the event location. Therefore, it must be the case that the helping event took place at a different time, namely in the past. Again, this fits nicely with the view of Suttles who claims that "[t]he auxiliaries ʔi 'be here' and *niʔ* 'be there' may appear to refer to time, but […] this is only because 'the here' is more often 'now' and 'the there' more often 'then'. (Suttles 2003: 508). In other words, although it is not asserted when with respect to the utterance the event happened temporal information can often be inferred.

Evidence that the auxiliaries under investigation are indeed spatial (rather than temporal) stems from the fact that they have other uses which are all unambiguously spatial in nature. For example, the same forms can be used as spatial prepositions (12) and as spatial main predicates (13):

(12) a. kw'áts-et-es [**lí** kwtha lálem]$_{PP}$ *Upriver Halkomelem*
see-trans-3erg there det-2sg.poss house
'He saw it in your house.'

b. le lhókw' te moqw [**i** te-l stselh-ólwelh]$_{PP}$
aux fly det bird here det-1sg.poss high-body
'The bird flew over me'

c. le lhókw' te móqw [**lá** te thqát]$_{PP}$
aux fly det bird go.to det bird
'The bird flew to the tree.' Galloway 1993: 340

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[7] There is also a second set of auxiliaries, namely the directional auxiliaries. For reasons of space we cannot provide an analysis for these, however we note that these directional auxiliaries can successfully be analyzed as predicates of **terminal (non-)coincidence** (in the sense of Hale 1986). That is, instead of asserting (non-)coincidence between the utterance location and the event location these predicates assert (non-)coincidence between the utterance location and the **end of the event** location.

(13)   a.   ʔi   ʔi   b.   ni   niʔ   *Downriver Halkomelem*
            aux   be.here   aux   be.there
            'He's here.'   'He's there.'   Suttles 2004: 38

According to the present analysis, regardless of whether they are used as auxiliaries, prepositions or main predicates, these elements are interpreted as predicates of spatial (non-)coincidence. This supports the claim that the primary meaning of the auxiliaries is indeed spatial, rather than temporal.

2.2 Absence of spatial anchoring

It is a fact about Halkomelem that in certain environments the absence of an auxiliary triggers a future (irrealis) interpretation (Bar-el et al. 2003)

(14)   a.   álhtel-tsel   b.   t'ílem-tsel   *Upriver Halkomelem*
            eat-1 SG.S   sing-1 SG.S
            'I am going to eat.'   'I am going to sing.'   Bar-el et al: 13 (2)
(15)   a.   éwe-chap   t'ílem-ap   b.   éwe-tset   t'ílem-et
            neg-2pl.s   sing-2pl.ss   neg-1pl.s   sing-1pl.ss
            'You folks won't be singing.'   'We won't be working.' Bar-el et al: 20 (21)

The present analysis, allows us to understand this pattern. If the event is asserted not to be *here* or *there*, the event cannot have occurred in the real world. Consequently, the event must occur in a possible world (i.e., the future).

Another environment where events are not anchored to the utterance is found in contexts where English would use an infinitival clause. In order to understand the Halkomelem pattern, it will be useful to briefly state our assumptions regarding English infinitives like *I want to eat.* We follow Portner 1992: 155 in assuming that infinitives denote sets of situations. Translated into our analysis this amounts to saying that infinitives do not anchor events to utterances. The present analysis predicts that in contexts in which event anchoring is not possible (e.g. contexts where English requires infinitives), Halkomelem should lack locative auxiliaries. This prediction is indeed borne out: In embedded clauses which express irrealis situations, i.e., situations that don't hold in the real world, locative auxiliaries are excluded, as illustrated in (16). See also Kroeber 1999: 171.

(16)   a.   el-stl'í   [kw'-el-s   (**li/*i)**   élhtel]   *Upriver Halkomelem*
            1sg.poss   det/C-1sg.poss-nom   aux   eat
            'I want to eat.'
       b.   stl'í-s   [kw'e-s   (**li/*i)**   élhtel   tú-tl'ò]
            want-3poss   det/C-nom   aux   eat   det-3indep
            'He wants to eat.'

These data illustrate that the absence of spatial auxiliaries in Halkomelem performs the same function as infinitives in English. Consequently, we will call these constructions **INLOCATIVES**.[8]

2.3 Spatial anchoring in the nominal domain

Lastly, we address the question of nominative case and its effects. A system with tense has nominative case. If Loc and T perform the same function, the question arises as to why there are no effects of nominative case in Halkomelem. We suggest that this has to do with the nature of nominative case. In particular, we adopt the claim of Pesetsky and Torrego 2004 that nominative case is the result of an uninterpretable T feature on D. Since uninterpretable features must be checked, a DP must move to T, resulting in the effects of nominative case. Crucially in Halkomelem the feature is not T but Loc and Loc is interpretable on D. The examples in (17) illustrate that location with respect to the utterance is a crucial meaning component of determiners in Halkomelem. As Suttles (2004) puts it,

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[8] Thanks to Strang Burton (p.c.) for this term.

"[i]n reference to location in space, *tə* and *ᵏʷə* contrast in distinguishing simply what is visible to the speaker and what is invisible, around in back, around the corner, and so on." Suttles 2004: 344.
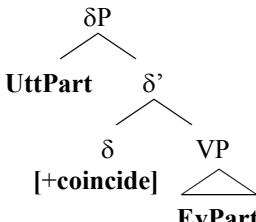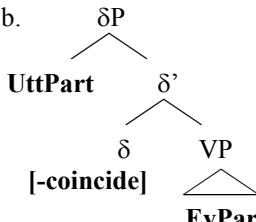
(17) a. némʼ   cən [ʔə] **tə**   spə́ɬχən   *Downriver Halkomelem*
      go   I   obl art(mp) prairie/pasture
      'I'm going to the pasture (not far and visible).'
   b. némʼ cən[ʔə] **kʷə**   spə́ɬχən
      go   I   obl det (mr) prairie/pasture
      'I'm going to the pasture (not far and visible).' Suttles 2004: 344

If Loc is interpretable on D it follows that Loc on D does not need to be checked. Consequently we do not expect any effects of nominative case in Halkomelem.

 This concludes our discussion of event anchoring in Halkomelem, which proceeds via Loc rather than via T. Next we turn to the third strategy of event anchoring, namely via participants.

3. Participant Anchoring in Blackfoot

 In this section we present our analysis of Blackfoot.[9] Recall that our hypothesis is that the Blackfoot counterpart of T is δ (discourse), a predicate that serves to anchor an event to the utterance via the participants. We propose that δ has the same semantically interpretable content as LOC and T, i.e. [± coincidence]. In this case [± coincidence] indicates whether an event participant coincides with an utterance participant, both being realized as nominal arguments. For example, the agent may coincide with the speaker, or not. This would set up a contrast between "us" and "not us/them," parallel to the contrasts between "now" and "then" for T, and "here" and "there" for Loc.

(18) a.   δP   b.   δP
          UttPart   δ'   UttPart   δ'
                  δ   VP   δ   VP
             [+coincide] △   **[-coincide]** △
                      EvPart   **EvPart**

3.1 Nominal predicates of coincidence: Theme markers

In section 2, we argued that Halkomelem Loc is instantiated by spatial auxiliaries. For Blackfoot, we propose that δ is instantiated by theme markers. These are verbal suffixes that appear on transitive verbs, and provide information about the relative discourse saliency of the thematic arguments. A DIRECT theme marker indicates that the external argument is more discourse salient than the internal argument (i.e. 1/2/3prox acts on 3 obv); an INVERSE theme marker indicates that the internal argument is more discourse salient than the external argument (3 obv acts on 1/2/3prox).[10] On our analysis, theme markers indicate the thematic role of the anchoring utterance participant. In (19), for example, the verb contains an initial 1st person marker *nit-*. The suffix *-a* tells us that this participant is the external argument of the verb, the agent (or in the Algonquianist tradition, the actor). Following Déchaine 1999, we analyse *nit-* as a person proclitic. As this proclitic spells out the anchoring utterance participant, we propose that it is merged in Spec, δ and is asserted to coincide with the actor:

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[9] Like Halkomelem, Blackfoot seems to lack evidence of a syntactic category T. Specifically, there is no tense morphology (though verbs may be inflected for aspect or mood), no nominative case morphology, or evidence of case-motivated A-movement (see Ritter & Wiltschko 2004, Ritter and Rosen to appear for discussion).
[10]When there are two or more 3rd person arguments, the one which is most salient or central to the discourse is designated as the PROXIMATE (prox) 3rd person argument; all other 3rd persons are considered OBVIATIVE (obv); See Bliss (this volume) for discussion.

(19)   Nitsikákomimmawa   nitána.
       nit-ik-waakomimm-**a**-wa   n-itan-wa
       1-intns-love(TA)-dir-3sg   1-daughter-3sg
       'I love my daughter.'   Frantz 1991: 51 (a)

(20)

δP

UttR   δ'
nit-

1   δ   vP
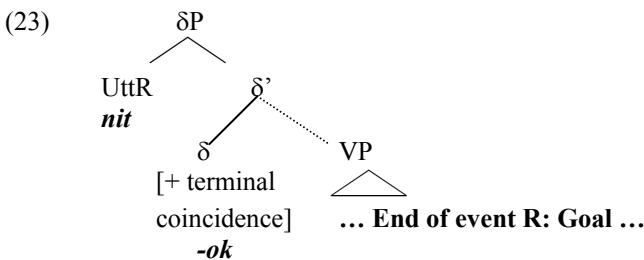   **[+ coincide]**
          -a   **EvR (Actor) …**
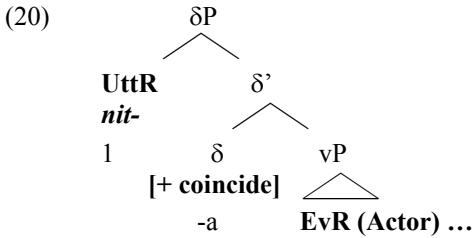
When the anchoring participant is 3rd person, there is no proclitic on the verb (21). Here, the direct theme marker *-yii* indicates that the agent/actor is a salient 3rd person DP, i.e. a proximate rather than an obviative 3rd person. In this case, we propose that a null pronominal is merged Spec, δ:

(21)   ikákomimmiiwa   nohkówa   kitáni
       ik-waakomimm-**yii**-wa   n-ohkó-wa   k-itan-yi
       intns-love(TA)-dir.3sg   1-son-3sg.prox   2-daughter-3sg.obv
       'My son loves your daughter.'   Frantz 1991: 53 (1)

The hypothesis that the anchoring argument in Spec, δ is characterized by its discourse role leads to the prediction that it will not correlate with either the argument's thematic role or its grammatical relation, and this is borne out by the data. Compare (22) to (19) above: As in (19), the proclitic on the verb is *nit-* because the utterance anchor is the speaker (1st person). However, in (22) δ is realized as *ok-* and not *a-*. We analyse *-ok* as a predicate of terminal coincidence, which indicates that the anchoring utterance participant coincides with the event GOAL.[11] This is shown in the tree in (23), where the anchoring utterance participant in Spec, δ is asserted to coincide with the internal argument.

(22)   Nitsikákomimmoka   nitána.
       nit-ik-waakomimm-**ok**-wa   n-itan-wa
       1-??-love(TA)-**inv**-3sg   1-daughter-3sg
       'My daughter loves me.'   Frantz 1991: 55 (c)

(23)

δP

UttR   δ'
nit

     δ   VP
   [+ terminal
   coincidence]   **… End of event R: Goal …**
       -ok

In the table below, we have listed the set of theme markers for the independent verb paradigm in Blackfoot, annotated with their interpretable content. In all cases one event participant coincides with the anchoring utterance participant. Note that while both events and utterances can have more than one participant, in a given clause only one from each set is used to satisfy the Anchoring Condition:

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[11] Here we are adopting the traditional Algonquianist term GOAL, which refers to a range of internal theta roles including patient, theme and goal.

Theme-marker			Function	Predicate Content
-a	direct	**EvPart(Actor) = UttPart**	1/2 acts on 3	**central coincidence**
-(y)ii			3 prox acts on 3 obv	
-ok	inverse	**EvPart(Goal) = UttPart**	3 acts on 1/2	**terminal coincidence**
			3 obv acts on 3 prox	
-oki	---	**EvPart(Actor) = UttPart**	2 acts on 1	**central coincidence**
-o	---	**EvPart(Goal) = UttPart**	1 acts on 2	**terminal coincidence**

3.2   Utterance (speech act) Role instead of Utterance Time

In this section we briefly discuss two consequences of this proposal that Blackfoot events are anchored via δ, and not T, both of which are concerned with deictic expressions, i.e. expressions whose interpretation requires direct reference to the utterance. First, if utterance time is not grammaticalized, temporal deictic elements should be impossible. This seems to be born out by the data. For example, Frantz and Russell (1995: 124) list *matónni* (transcribed below as *matúnnii*) as an intransitive verb meaning "be yesterday". However, our data shows that its interpretation is not necessarily tied to utterance time, since it also can be used felicitously with the meaning "the previous day".

(24)   Namyááni   náínooyiwai   **matúnnii**
        na-myaani   na-inoo-yi-wa-i   matunnii
        DEM-Mary   DEM-see-OBV-PROX-??   day.before
        'Mary saw him yesterday.' OR
        (I saw John one day last week and…) Mary saw him the day before'

Second, we predict that in a language where discourse participants serve to anchor the event to the utterance they might also serve to anchor entitites to the utterance. Even the most cursory review of the Blackfoot demonstrative system indicates that this is indeed the case. As shown in (25) different demonstrative stems express degrees of proximity to the speaker, the addressee or both. The stems in (25) are combined with the suffixes in (26), whose semantic content also seems to be determined by the speaker and addressee, and not the time or location of the utterance, based on Frantz's characterization of them, reproduced below:

(25)   a.   *amo*   =   proximity to speaker but not to addressee
        b.   *om*   =   proximity to neither speaker nor addressee
        c.   *anno*   =   proximity to the speaker and proximity or familiarity to the addressee
        d.   *ann*   =   proximity or familiarity to the addressee but no proximity to the speaker
        e.   *am*   =   proximity and familiarity to the speaker   Frantz 1991: 63
(26)   a.   *-ma*   =   stationary
        b.   *-ya*   =   moving, but not towards speaker
              "This gloss is in need of revision. Current research seems to indicate that if motion is
              involved in the meaning of this suffix it is **not necessarily taking place at the time of
              the speech act** […] or even at the time of the process, event or state being described."
              Frantz 1991: 66 Fn 72 (emphasis ER&MW)
        c.   *-hka*=   not visible to the speaker
              "the apparent use of this suffix to mark words referring to entities which are not visible
              is a consequence of the <u>discourse function of this suffix which has to do with
              saliency</u>." Frantz 1991: 66 Fn 73   (emphasis ER&MW)
        d.   *-ka* =   proximity information in the demonstrative is relative to <u>location of
              the speaker or addressee at a time other than the time of the speech act </u>(emphasis
              ER&MW) Frantz 1991: 66

(27)   a'-o'tahkayi-iniki   am-yi-**ka**   n-ookóówa-yi-**ka**…
        when-arrive.home-1s(subjunctive) this-inan.sg-**ka**   1-home-inan.sg.-**ka**
        …nit-yáak-a'p-á-sok-Istotsi-'p-wa
          1-fut-PREF-dur-well-build-theme-3sg
        'When I get home, I'll fix my house up .'   Frantz 1991: 66(n)

4. Conclusion

We have argued that while the Anchoring Condition is a language universal, languages differ in the strategies they employ to satisfy this condition. Anchoring may proceed temporally via a grammatical category of tense, as in English, spatially via Loc, as in Halkomelem or personally via δ as in Blackfoot. The choice of the anchoring category will have a broad range of syntactic and semantic consequences. T determines its relationship with other functors, including Comp and Aspect, and with the subject in Spec, T. Loc and δ will impose different constraints on the categories around them resulting in languages with very different grammatical properties.

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Proceedings of the 24th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics

edited by John Alderete, Chung-hye Han, and Alexei Kochetov

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Ritter, Elizabeth and Martina Wiltschko. 2005. Anchoring Events to Utterances without Tense. In *Proceedings of the 24th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*, ed. John Alderete et al., 343-351. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project. www.lingref.com, document #1240.