

Sociopragmatic influences on the development and use of the discourse marker *vet* in Ixil Maya

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In this paper we explore the functions of the particle *vet* in Ixil Mayan and argue that it is a discourse marker used to perform both structural and pragmatic functions. *Vet* serves as a structural marker indicating temporally or causally interdependent items; it also has socio-pragmatic functions, allowing speakers to present an evaluation of a discourse that invites interlocutors to also take a stance both on the information presented and on their roles in particular sociocultural activities. These functions of managing negotiations among interlocutors range from agreements on descriptive terms to calls for social action among entire groups, in all cases highlighting the social nature both of discourse and of group activity. The overlapping of the structural and pragmatic functions of *vet* demonstrates the grammaticalization cline ranging from adverb to discourse marker proposed by Traugott (1997). Our examination of *vet* in a range of genres produced by the *Mujeres por la Paz* of Nebaj, El Quiché, Guatemala, a cooperative formed in 1997 by Ixil Maya women who were widowed or left fatherless during the Guatemalan civil war, suggest that the effects of the individual and group identities and motivations of participants outweighs anticipated genre effects.

1. INTRODUCTION. The twenty-nine members of the *Grupo de Mujeres por la Paz* live in Nebaj, El Quiché, Guatemala, a bustling town in the Cuchumatanes Mountains, seven hours by bus from Guatemala City. The *Grupo* is an unofficial agricultural and weaving cooperative formed in 1997 by Ixil Maya women who were widowed or left fatherless during the Guatemalan civil war. In the early 1980s, over four hundred highland Mayan villages, many in the Ixil area, were destroyed and over a million people were displaced within the country or forced to move into Mexico. Thousands of them took up hiding in refugee communities in the mountains where they lived until the mid-1990s in a state of constant flight from government troops (Sanford 2003, Falla 1998, Manz 1988). Many women returned to Nebaj from the mountains with their children and formed cooperatives such as the *Grupo de Mujeres por la Paz* to provide themselves with support and sustenance as they began rebuilding their lives and as they struggled to support their families.

The members of the *Grupo de Mujeres por la Paz* have been working with us for six years to produce a multimedia corpus of texts, photographs, videos and audio files that document their wartime experiences and their efforts at recovering or reconstituting their



communities and families in the post-war years of the past decade.¹ Their recorded narratives describe the progress of the *Grupo*'s weaving and agricultural cooperative, and they document the women's emerging literacy. In 2002, they agreed to help with the transcription of the audio portion of a video of their initial planning meeting for the construction of a greenhouse. At that time, we established a process that continues to work well for all of us. As there are three of us on the academic team, we invited the women to come to elicitation and transcription sessions in groups of three, a format with which they have been quite comfortable. Patiently, they participated in the work of *repitiendo palabras*, repeating what they heard on tape slowly so that we could write it down. In order to more fully participate in the transcription work, they decided they wanted to learn to read and write Ixil. Two members of the *Grupo* who are proficient writers of both Spanish and Ixil organized bi-weekly classes where the others learned to hold and manipulate pencils and pens, then to sign their names, then to write the Ixil alphabet and, eventually, words and phrases. Then they hired a professional teacher and took first-grade general education classes which included not only literacy lessons, but also civics, math, and general health studies.

The women took control of the transcription sessions, learned to use computers to play back audio files, and worked to transcribe their own narratives, to put their own words into writing. Currently (Spring 2008), some of them are learning to use computers to type the transcriptions from the notebooks they have painstakingly produced over the past two years. This entire process was carefully video or audio recorded, as were a great number of meetings, transcription sessions, personal histories, story-book narrations, and, of course, parties.

As we transcribed, bilingual members of the *Grupo* provided translations into Spanish, translations that were often negotiated by the women who began to wonder at the functions of individual words. These discussions led to the general interest in grammar and, specifically, to our investigation of the particle *vet*. The recordings gathered for the multimedia database provide the data for this paper and the many hours the women spent in negotiating meaning provide the impetus and the context for analysis.

2. DISCOURSE MARKERS. As we were observing the members of the *Grupo de Mujeres por la Paz* in a multitude of social contexts where interpretation of the purpose of their activities and the negotiation of process were the conversational tasks, we began to focus on linguistic elements used by the women to accomplish those tasks. In this paper we explore the functions of the particle *vet* and argue that it is a discourse marker used to perform both structural and pragmatic functions.

Fraser (1999:950) defines discourse markers as

a pragmatic class, lexical expressions drawn from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbials, and prepositional phrases. With certain exceptions, they signal a relationship between the segment they introduce, S2, and the prior seg-

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ment, S1. They have a core meaning which is procedural, not conceptual, and their more specific interpretation is ‘negotiated’ by the context, both linguistic and conceptual.

Schiffrin also defined discourse markers in terms of their use to link segments of discourse. She called them “sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk” (1987:31) and listed such defining characteristics as syntactic detachability and occurrence in initial position as well as their ability to occur with a range of prosodic contours and ‘levels’ of function within the discourse. Her later work (Schiffrin 2001:66) highlights the fact that they are multifunctional elements that also index the discourse to the discourse participants. They are

indices of the underlying cognitive, expressive, textual, and social organization of a discourse ... [and that it is] ultimately properties of the discourse itself (that stem, of course, from factors as various as the speaker’s goals, the social situation, and so on) that provide the need for (and hence the slots in which) markers appear.

Redeker describes this indexing function as one that serves to bring to the listener’s attention “a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context” (Redeker, 1991:1168). Thus, in addition to linking propositions, that is, to providing coherence within a discourse, discourse markers have an important metatextual function of linking the discourse to its producers and interpreters. As Traugott (1997) puts it, discourse markers “allow speakers to display their evaluation not of the content of what is said, but of the way it is put together; in other words, they do metatextual work.” Crismore et al (1993) describes metatextual devices as strategies that allow speakers or writers to draw attention to the “act of discoursing,” and help interlocutors to organize, classify, interpret, and evaluate propositional material.

It is this metatextual function of discourse markers that allows manipulation of the alignments and of the roles and responsibilities of participants in the interaction. Discourse markers used metatextually allow speakers to present an evaluation of a discourse that invites interlocutors to also take a stance regarding the information presented.

What we will see in the analysis of the data is the duality of function of this discourse marker. It serves as a structural marker indicating temporally or causally interdependent items; it also indicates metatextual comment on the discourse itself and, importantly, on the interlocutors’ roles in particular sociocultural activities. We find that the occurrences of *vet* thus include structural adverbial functions that often co-occur with the sociopragmatic functions of managing negotiations among interlocutors. These sociopragmatic uses range from agreements on descriptive terms to calls for social action among entire groups, in all cases highlighting the social nature both of discourse and of group activity. This use of *vet* is similar to the notion of indexical ‘shifter’, which Hanks (1987:682) defines as items that “relate utterances to their speakers, addressees, actual referents, place and time of occurrence. Indexical centering is a primary part of the interpretation of discourse because it connects the evaluative and semantic code with the concrete circumstances of its use.” The overlapping of the structural and pragmatic functions of *vet* demonstrates the grammaticalization cline ranging from adverb to discourse marker proposed by Traugott (1997).

3. ADVERBIAL USES OF VET. The only previous analysis of *vet* is that of Ayres (1991), who focuses on the use of *vet* as an adverbial that “means something like *ya* [‘already’], *entonces* [‘then’], or *luego* [‘soon, later’]. It is used after the verb, before the directional that follows the verb” (our translation from the original Spanish).² Ayres’ definition indicates that adverbial *vet* encodes action concluded prior to the speaking moment, or an action or event that occurs concurrently with or sequential to another event, as in the following examples from Ayres (1991:150):

- (1) *Kat taq’cha vet ok.*
 ‘**Ya** lo llevó otra vez para adentro.’
 ‘He’s already taken it inside again.’
- (2) *As max inima vet unq’a mama’la tenam u Jesus ta’n viyol chajnaj.*
 ‘**Entonces** muchos del pueblo creyeron en Jesús por las palabras de ellos.’
 ‘Then many in the town believed in Jesus because of his words.’

According to England (2007), aspect or mood markers are used in Mam, a closely related Mayan language, to signal a shift from the time frame of the narrative to the actual moment of speech in a commentary on the narrative or to signal the narrative’s completion. Time, she says, “is inferred from aspect, unless it is indicated directly by time adverbs, which are, however, not very frequent. ... Temporal overlap or simultaneity is shown by the use of conjunctions” (2007:20). Ixil likewise relies heavily on the use of aspect and subordinating conjunctions to indicate temporal sequencing while having relatively few temporal adverbs. Nonetheless, *vet* occurs quite frequently in Ixil discourse, a fact which we attribute to its double role as both an adverb and a discourse marker. We will suggest that this pattern of use of *vet* reflects a process of grammaticalization of *vet* from adverb to discourse marker currently taking place in the language.

4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY. We began our analysis with a simple count of occurrences of *vet* in four texts in our data set representing three genres. Two of the texts were retellings of the captionless stories *Frog, Where are You?* (Mayer, 1969) and *Pancakes for Breakfast* (diPaolo, 1978). The other two texts were transcriptions of the proceedings of two business meetings of the full membership of the *Grupo de Mujeres por la Paz*, the first a speech at a meeting and the second a portion of discussion between meeting participants. The use of data from different genres of discourse was key to our analysis. As Hanks (1987:670) points out, “viewed as constituent elements in a system of signs, speech genres have value loadings, social distributions, and typical performance styles according to which they are shaped in the course of utterance.” We anticipated that differences between the styles of discourse we examined would be reflected in differences in the use of *vet*, but as we will show, genre was only one of the factors involved in the distribution of

² “Esta palabra significa algo como *ya*, *entonces*, o *luego*. Se usa después del verbo, antes del lugar del direccional que sigue al verbo” (Ayres 1991:150).

the discourse marker *vet*. Hanks (1987:687) argues that “discourse genres are part of the linguistic *habitus* that native actors bring to speech, but that such genres are also produced in speech under various local circumstances.” The data examined here revealed a wealth of such local circumstances that altered our initial expectations about genre in accounting for the use of *vet*.

Definitions of discourse markers commonly refer to their use in linking units or segments of discourse, so it is appropriate here to comment on the nature of these kinds of units. Discourse units have been defined in a variety of ways in the literature. Units of analysis have included grammatical units, such as clauses or phrases, and also intonation units (IUs). IUs do not necessarily coincide with grammatical structures and are usually defined by such prosodic cues as pauses, acceleration and deceleration, pitch levels, terminal pitch contours, and voice quality (Chafe 1994:58-9). According to Chafe (1994:63-4), intonation units can be *fragmentary*, or truncated, or they can be successful; these latter units can be classified as either *substantive*, conveying “ideas of events, states or referents,” or *regulatory*, serving to regulate “interaction or information flow.” Other candidates for discourse units that appear in the literature include turns (e.g., Ford, Fox, and Thompson 2002), semantic/pragmatic propositions (e.g., Fraser 1999), and narrative episodes (e.g., Johnstone 1990, 2002).

Our analysis is based on oral interactions which have been transcribed in lines corresponding to IUs, and we have examined all material on both sides of each instance of *vet* in the transcriptions. This means that our analysis considers the local context for *vet*, within the IU and across adjacent IUs, as well as the more global context across the wider span of the discourse (Schiffirin 2001:57).

We transcribed, analyzed, and numbered the IUs in the texts. We then made a record of all of the occurrences of *vet* in IUs 101-200 in each text, skipping over the first hundred IUs which contained much introductory or ‘set-up’ information that might not genuinely reflect the generic usage of *vet*. Counting the occurrences in those hundred IUs of each text yielded the results in Table 1:

TABLE 1: Occurrences of *vet* in clauses 101-200 in four texts

<i>Frog, Where are You?</i>	26
<i>Pancakes for Breakfast</i>	4
<i>Literacy Meeting</i>	12
<i>Thesis Meeting</i>	5

We determined from this small sample that the frequency of usage of *vet* is not predictable by genre alone and that other factors in the discourse situation influenced the use of this discourse marker.

Given Ayres’ analysis of *vet* as an adverb, our expectation was that we would find speakers using *vet* to advance the plot in story retellings where the order of activities is essential to moving a plot forward. For other genres, our hypothesis was that adverbial *vet* would serve a corresponding function of ordering discourse units within a larger discourse.

We also expected that *vet* would take on the functions of indexing the discourse and its participants to understood and expected social organization in meetings and discussions where negotiation required such a linkage. In other words, we expected the use of *vet* to vary according to genre, with stories containing more instances of *vet* with structural and adverbial functions only and other talk containing more instances of *vet* with pragmatic functions. Our hypothesis was that the use of *vet* would be linked to particular syntactic and discourse functions that meet particular pragmatic needs of the speakers in each context.

We begin our discussion with an example of the kind of storytellings that we had expected would contain the most adverbial and structural uses of *vet*: narratives based on the stories depicted in the captionless books *Frog, Where Are You?* (Mayer 1969) and *Pancakes for Breakfast* (diPaolo 1978). We will see that there are indeed adverbial uses of *vet* in the narrative based on *Frog*. The uses of *vet* in *Pancakes* are particularly interesting, as they vary in function according to the women's understanding of the book: the uses of *vet* are more metatextual in nature until the women realize that the pictures represent a narrative structure. At that point, we see an increase in the use of *vet* to signal that structure.

In Sections 4.3 and 4.4, we examine two other genres: a speech by one woman to the group, and a sample of discussion at a meeting.

4.1. Occurrences of *vet* in a *Pancakes for Breakfast* narrative. The retelling of *Pancakes for Breakfast* we analyze here is very typical of many of the Ixil retellings of this book in that there is very little use of the expected use of *vet* to provide coherence or to signal sequencing in the first seventy of the hundred IUs selected for analysis, as reflected in Table 1 above. This analysis comes from a session in which the three speakers, Nan R,³ Nan Xh, and Nan P, were baffled by the pictures in the book presented to them and struggled to interpret and then describe what they were seeing, clearly unaware that a story could be extracted from these pictures. *Pancakes* is the story of an older woman who decides to make pancakes one morning but realizes that she does not have all of the ingredients she needs. She goes to her barn and fetches some eggs and then, when she finds she has no milk, has to return to the barn to milk her cow. She has no syrup so she leaves her pancake batter and walks to a shop to buy some. While she is gone, her cat and her dog spill the batter on the floor and she returns to find the mess that means she will not have pancakes. But the smell of pancakes wafts to her from her neighbors' house and she goes to have breakfast with them.

The group began their 'narrative' by pointing to and discussing the things they saw in the pictures, naming the dog and the cat, asking about an item they could not identify, a dress hanging from a coat rack on a hanger. They interpret a washbasin full of soapy water as a basket of tortillas, presumably because the thought bubble over the woman's head contains a stack of pancakes that have the size, shape, and color of a stack of fresh corn tortillas. They are not sure at first if this is a man or a woman, but upon seeing her earrings decide that she is a woman, study the picture a bit longer and proclaim that she is pregnant.

³ *Nan* is an Ixil honorific used when addressing or talking about a woman who is middle-aged or older. In our texts, we have assumed this convention of using *Nan* plus the initial of a woman's first name to identify speakers.

One of the researchers suggests that she is an older woman and, looking carefully again, they agree that she is old and therefore not pregnant but fat. One member of the group, Nan P, ends this discussion by first stating in sentence (3a) that the woman is old, then explains immediately in (3b) how she recognizes this. The women continue describing the activities they see in the pictures.

(3) (Nan P)

a. *Qestu chit vet-e'*
 qestu chit **vet-e'**
 old very DM-FV⁴
 'Está grande (de edad) ya.'
 'She's very old.'

b. *Qestu chit vet aaki ni vile'*
 qestu chit **vet** aaki n-i v-il-e'
 old very DM person.of.respect.FV INCOMP-EV 1S.ERG-see-FV
 'Yo veo que está anciana.'
 'I see she's old.'

Notice the use of *vet* in sentences (3a) and (3b). Sixty-four IUs of the one hundred IUs analyzed intervene between the use of *vet* in (3b) and the next use of *vet* in (4a-c) below. The intervening clauses are further attempts at decoding five pages of pictures. Eventually, one of the women, Nan R, refers to the woman in the pictures as a *patoja* 'young girl' (4a), immediately asks herself if it is a girl or a woman (4b), and finally responds to her own question (4c) that the woman is old. The use of *vet* in (4c) links her comment to the previous discussion of the woman's age.

⁴ The first line of each example represents an Intonational Unit of spoken Ixil, the second line contains the morphological parsing, the third contains grammatical category labels for each morpheme, the fourth is a Spanish translation provided by the speakers, and the fifth is an English translation provided by the authors. Abbreviations used: 1P.ABS='1st person plural absolutive'; 1S.ERG='1st singular ergative'; 1P.ERG='1st plural ergative'; 3S.ERG='3rd person singular ergative'; 3P.ERG='3rd person plural ergative'; COMP='completive aspect'; CPZ='complementizer'; DM='discourse marker'; DET='determiner'; DET.PL='plural determiner'; DIR='directional'; EMP='emphatic'; EV='epenthetic vowel'; FOC='focus particle'; FV='final vowel'; INCOMP='incompletive aspect'; INST='instrument'; LOC='locative'; NEG='negative'; PART='particle'; PAS='passive'; PL='plural subject'; POT='potential aspect'; PP='past participle'; REL='relativizer'; RN='relational noun'.

- (4) (Nan R)
- a. *Kol ch'unumal ta'n tal xuak.*
 kol ch'unumal ta'n tal xuak
 basket carry by small girl
 'Una patoja lleva una canasta.'
 'A young girl is carrying a basket.'
- b. *Xuak mo señora?*
 xuak mo señora
 girl or woman
 'Una patoja o una señora?'
 'A girl or a woman?'
- c. *Qes vete'.*
qes vet-e'
 old DM-FV
 'Ya está anciana.'
 'She's already old.'

The uses of *vet* in this narrative reflect the descriptive nature of the task. In sentences (3a) and (4c), *vet* is not used as a way of indicating the sequencing of activities, but rather to mark the end of a sequence of talk and also to highlight the conclusion that has been drawn in the negotiative process of interpreting the pictures. The use of *vet* in (4c) functions both as an adverb and as a metatextual marker of the speakers' recapitulation of the negotiated descriptions. This is an important function that will be discussed further in sections 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 below.

It is while describing pages 12 and 13 of the book that Nan R, Nan Xh, and Nan P discover that the pictures constitute a sequence that tells a story. Together they describe the picture on page 12 of the woman in the barn milking her cow with her cat watching. They describe the woman on the following page pouring water into a bowl for the cat. When asked if it was water or milk, Nan R looks back to the picture on page 12 and then to the liquid being poured on page 13, then covers her mouth and gasps. She excitedly points at page 12 and then at page 13, claps her hands with glee, and explains to Nan Xh and Nan P that the woman is milking the cow on page 12 and then bringing the milk into the house to give it to the cat, and that the pictures tell a story. With this revelation, all three women clap and exclaim.

This discovery changed the women's activity from giving separate descriptions of the pictures on the pages to telling a story in which the activity of one page leads to the activity on the next. Accordingly, it is at this point that we see that the use of *vet* to indicate the sequencing of activities emerges, as in (5a-c) where the story protagonist's cleaning activities are described:

- (5) a. *Aa ni tx'aa vet aak tul b'aj.*
 aa n-i tx'aa **vet** aak tul b'aj
 FOC INCOMP-3S.ERG wash DM person.of.respect inside well
 'Está lavando (la parte de) adentro, pues.'
 'She is washing inside then.'
- b. *Ni taq' kuu aak*
 n-i t-aq' kuu aak
 INCOMP-EV 3S.ERG-put DIR:downwards person.of.respect

s-t-ul la qal vete'.
 stul la q-al **vet-e'**
 RN-3S.ERG-inside POT 1P.ERG-say DM-FV
 'Ella lo está echando adentro, digamos.'
 'She is putting it inside let's say.'
- c. *Il chan ile' at je' vi' u meexha.*
 il chan ile' at je' vi' u meexha
 see PART there.it.is exist DIR:upward on.top.of DET table
 'Allí está encima de la mesa.'
 'See, it is on top of the table.'

The moment of recognition of the sequential nature of the story in the book represents the women's shift from a pre-iconographic to an iconographic interpretation of the printed page (Panofsky 1972).⁵ A pre-iconographic interpretation is a recognition of 'pure forms', the association of the visual experience of the drawings with memory of those items. Because many of the items were foreign to the women or did not occur in situations recognizable to them, they required identification before they could become representatives of things or actors within a narrative. *Iconographic* interpretation is the recognition of shared cultural contexts, the shared themes, concepts, and conventions that give the graphic representation a cultural meaning. After it had been identified by the researchers, one of the women labeled the dress on a hanger as a *chik*, the Ixil word for the wrap skirt the women wear, thus putting it into a meaningful context for her partners. It was only at this iconographic stage in the interpretation of the drawings on the printed page that the women could begin to construct a narrative. And it was only with the start of a narrative that sequencing adverbs and discourse markers became relevant contributors to the structuring of the discourse. This explains the paucity of tokens of *vet* in any function in the preceding IUs of the hundred clauses we analyzed from this narrative and, because this sequence occurs close to the end of those hundred clauses, it also accounts for the low number of occurrences of *vet* found in this sample overall.

⁵ We are grateful to Michael McDuffie who directed us to this literature.

4.2. OCCURRENCES OF *VET* IN A *FROG, WHERE ARE YOU?* NARRATIVE. *Frog, Where are You?* was the first book that several of the members of the *Grupo de Mujeres por la Paz* had ever held in their hands, and these women were visibly nervous when they were asked to look at the book and tell each other the story of what they saw in it. Many of them initially declined the task because they did not know how to read, but agreed to participate when they were told that the book contained only pictures, not words. The pictures in *Frog, Where are You?* tell the story of a boy and his dog who have captured a frog and put him in a jar. On the first page of the book, it is nighttime and the boy and the dog are lying on the floor in a bedroom, looking at the frog in the jar. When the frog escapes overnight, the boy and the dog set off to find the frog, encountering a number of adventures along the way. The dog falls out of the bedroom window, is chased by bees, and finds a groundhog in a hole. The boy climbs a tree, is frightened by an owl and falls to the ground, falls off a cliff and is carried away on the horns of a large deer. In the end, they find the frog, which has reunited with its family.

Like the drawings in *Pancakes for Breakfast*, those in *Frog, Where are You?* contained cultural items and activities that were unfamiliar to the members of the *Grupo*. The first page was confounding for many of them as some thought that the four-poster bed was an altar, an interpretation that was reinforced by the bell-shaped lamp hanging over the bed. Some of the women thought that a striped tee shirt lying on the floor was a pile of firewood, which would be, for them, an appropriate thing to have on the floor, whereas a tee shirt would not. They thought that the cross-hatching used by the artist to indicate the darkness of nighttime outside the window and the shadow inside the room was barbed wire. Some were annoyed that a dog had been allowed in the house and those who recognized the bed as a bed were concerned that a child was sleeping alone. Only a few recognized the frog as a frog.

The three women who participated in the narrative analyzed here are Nan M, MB, and MM. Nan M is a grandmother, the matriarch of a large family and a successful business-woman who has no formal education. MB and MM are unmarried young women in their late teens, the youngest and two of the most fluently bilingual in Ixil and in Spanish of the members of the *Grupo*. They have both had a few years of formal education.

Frog, Where are You? is clearly a story in which reporting the sequencing of events is important and we had expected that these retellings would require more use of adverbial *vet* to move the story line forward and to move the characters in the story from one activity to another. With the two younger women who had had some experience not only with writing but with drawings, this expectation was fulfilled. MM and MB used the adverbial *vet* to indicate the temporal order of activities, as illustrated in (6a-c), and in these cases, the Ixil women have translated *vet* as the adverb ‘now’:

- (6) a. *Koxhle'l* *vet* *naj*.
 koxhle'l **vet** *naj*
 pos:lying.down now he
 ‘Él ya está acostado.’
 ‘Now a boy is lying down.’

- b. *Il naj ile'*;
 il naj ile'
 look he there.it.is
 'Allí está él;'
 'There he is;'
- kat imujluj vet tib'*.
 kat i-mujluj **vet** t-ib'
 COMP 3S.ERG-hide now 3S.ERG-RN
 'ya se escondió.'
 'now he has hidden.'
- c. *Ile' ta'*;
 ile' ta';
 there.it.is EMP
 'Allí está;'
 'There he is;'
- ni sik'in vete'*.
 n-i sik'in **vet-e'**.
 INCOMP-3S.ERG shout now-FV
 'ya está gritando.'
 'now he is shouting.'

In addition to using *vet* to situate activities in a sequence of activities, there were also several instances where *vet* was used to mark the beginning of a sequence after a set of background observations. In the following example, the first IU (7a) opens the sequence that provides the context for the last IU (7d), where *vet* is used to indicate the end of one activity in the story and the beginning of the next. In the pages prior to this one, an owl has frightened the boy, who then falls from the tree to the ground. At the same time, the dog has disturbed a beehive and is being chased off by the bees as the boy is falling. The boy gets up, climbs up on a rock, and calls his dog. A deer emerges from behind the rock and lifts the boy onto his antlers. At the same moment, the dog comes back and goes behind the rock where the deer is. The dog is found just as a new adventure is beginning.

(7) (MM)

- a. *Aa kat jee kat ch'u'l u chee ti u k'ub'e'*.
 aa kat jee kat ch'u'l u chee ti u k'ub'-e'
 FOC COMP go.up LOC DIR DET dear on DET rock-FV
 'Allí sale el venado detrás de una piedra.'
 'There the deer comes out from behind a rock.'

- b. *Vatz naj kat oon kat vet u txooe'.*
 vatz naj kat oon kat vet u txoo-e'
 front.of he COMP arrive LOC now DET animal-FV
 'En frente de él llegó el animal.'
 'The animal came in front of him.'
- c. *Il naj ile' tul vete'.*
 il naj ile' t-ul **vet-e'**
 there.it.is he there.it.is 3S.ERG-come DM-FV
 'Allí ya viene él.'
 'There he comes.'
- d. *Il tal itx'i' naj ile.*
 il t-al i-tx'i' naj ile'
 there.it.is small 3S.ERG-dog he there.it.is
 'Allí está su perrito (de él).'
 'There is his little dog.'
- e. *Il naj ile' tul vete'.*
 il naj ile t-ul **vet-e'**
 there.it.is he there.it.is 3S.ERG-come DM-FV
 'Allí está él, ya viene.'
 'There he is, he's coming.'

Here we have *vet* performing one of the primary functions of discourse markers, the bracketing or sequencing of units of talk (Schiffrin 1987:31). It serves a dual function here as the adverbial meaning of temporal sequencing extends to also fulfill the pragmatic discourse function of signaling to the listener that a new item introduced into the discourse is sequentially connected to the previous one, thus building coherence in the storytelling.

The proficient storytelling of the younger women who easily interpret the things and the activities in the pictures accounts for the relatively large number of occurrences of *vet* in a sequencing function in the one hundred IUs of the Frog narrative. By contrast, most of Nan M's contributions to this *Frog* narrative were made in the absence of an iconographic sense of characters and items participating in a storyline, just as we saw in the *Pancakes for Breakfast* narrative. The majority of her utterances are questions and repetitions of what the two younger women have said, repetitions often made with several intervening utterances from the other two women as she studies the pictures. MM, MB, and Nan M also use *vet* to perform some of the same metatextual functions used by the women who narrated *Pancakes for Breakfast*, that is, to highlight agreement with a previous speaker's contribution or to highlight the achievement of consensus among group members as they are explaining to Nan M what is happening in the pictures.

In (8a-e) below, Nan M is asking again for identification of something in the picture.

(8) a. (Nan M)

Kam vet unq'a vi'le' q'i?
 kam vet unq'a vi'le' q'i
 what DM DET.PL those DM
 '¿Qué son estes pues?'
 'What are these?'

b. (MB)

Ch'i'mal.
 ch'i'mal
 pretty
 'Son bonitos.'
 'They're pretty.'

c. (Nan M)

Kam uve'?
 kam uve'
 what that
 'Eso, qué es?'
 'What is that?'

d. (MM)

Ch'i'mal.
 ch'i'mal
 pretty
 'Son bonitos.'
 'They're pretty.'

e. (MM)

Tan ni sik'in vete'.
 tan n-i sik'in **vet-e'**
 because INCOMP-3S.ERG shout DM-FV
 'Porque está gritando.'
 'Because he's shouting.'

f. (MM)

Ni sik'in vet naj ti' vitx'i'e'.
 n-i sik'in **vet** naj ti' vi-tx'i'e'
 INCOMP-3S.ERG shout DM he for 3S.ERG-dog
 'El está gritando por su perro.'
 'He is shouting for his dog.'

In (8a), Nan M is asking her partners to explain what is happening in the picture. Immediately following Nan M's question, MB comments on something in the picture: "Pretty." MM repeats her comment, and then responds to Nan M, first saying that the boy is shouting, and then expanding on this by repeating that he is shouting and adding "for his dog." Nan M's question and MM's two answers are both marked with *vet* which here serves the function of aligning one's question with the other's response.

To explain the greater number of total occurrences of *vet* in the Frog telling than in the other texts, we must take into account not only the storytelling genre, but also these three participants and the work they must do to collaborate in the storytelling process. Two of the women understand the task and have very little trouble interpreting the pictures, while the third member is inexperienced with both this particular type of narration behavior and the prop. All three must then work harder at performing the task and assuring that they are all performing it together. Thus, *vet* is required to fill its adverbial sequencing function and to serve the metatextual functions of overtly recognizing each participant's contributions and maintaining each woman's stance as a participant.

4.3. OCCURRENCES OF VET IN A SPEECH. In Sections 4.1 and 4.2, we alluded to the *metatextual* functions of *vet*, those instances in which *vet* is used as an overt comment on the discourse itself. In (3a) and (4c) from *Pancakes* and (8a, d, and e) from *Frog*, *vet* was used as a way of agreeing with or referring back specifically to something said earlier in the telling. Further evidence of the metatextual use of *vet* can be seen in a speech given by one of the members of the *Grupo de Mujeres por la Paz* during a meeting to discuss the possibilities of beginning literacy training among the women. The speaker here, Nan Ja, is telling of a woman in another group who has learned to read and write. The woman struggled, according to Nan Ja, but achieved her literacy through that struggle. Seven of the twelve occurrences of *vet* in the hundred analyzed clauses of the speech are used to emphasize the accomplishments of this woman, as the listeners are urged to be like her. The sequence in (9a-f) provides five of those uses of *vet*.

- (9) (Nan Ja)
- | | | | | | |
|----|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| a. | <i>Pero</i> | <i>ni</i> | <i>vil</i> | <i>vet</i> | <i>vitz'ib'</i> |
| | pero | n-i | v-il | vet | vi-tz'ib' |
| | CONJ | INCOMP-EV | 1S.ERG-see | DM 3S.ERG | letter |
- aake'*
aak-e'
 person.of.respect-FV
 'Pero ya veo la letra de ella.'
 'But now I see her writing.'

- b. *Cheel il lab' ile'*
 cheel il lab' ile'
 now look that.thing there.it.is
 'Ahora mira eso,'
 'Now look at that,'
- c. *ni tx'ol vet aaki.*
 n-i tx'ol **vet** aak-e'
 INCOMP-3S.ERG can DM person.of.respect-FV
 'ella ya puede.'
 'she can do it now.'
- d. *Aal b'a'n vet vitz'ib' aake'.*
 aal b'a'n **vet** vi-tz'ib' aak-e'
 EMP good DM 3S.ERG-letter person.of.respect-FV
 'Ya es buena su letra de ella.'
 'Now her writing is good.'
- e. *Aan chit aak kat vil vet cheel.*
aan chit aak kat v-il **vet cheel**
 just.now only person.of.respect COMP 1S.ERG-see DM now
 'Hasta ahorita que yo la veo.'
 'It's just now that I see her (notebook).'
- f. *Aan chita' cheel ve ni tx'ol vet aak cheel.*
 aan chita' cheel ve' n-i tx'ol **vet** aak cheel
 just.now only now REL INCOMP-3S.ERG can DM person.of.respect now
 'Ella puede hasta ahorita ya.'
 'It's just now that she can do it.'

That *vet* is performing both an adverbial and a discourse function in the sentences in (9) is clear from its patterns of occurrence with temporal adverbs *cheel* and *aan*. In sentence (9a), *vet* alone marks the temporal frame of current ongoing activity, bracketing it as a new activity by its occurrence with the conjunction *pero* 'but'. In (9b), the adverb *cheel* occurs in the exhortation clause *Cheel il lab' ile'* 'Now look at that,' while *vet* continues as the temporal marker of the writing activity in (9c) and (9d). In (9e), Nan Ja emphasizes the evidence of the woman's recent accomplishment through the use of the temporal adverb *aan* 'just now' with the particle *chit* 'only', which serves here as an emphatic. The verb *vil* 'I see' is the focus here, with further emphasis of the recentness of her achievement given by use of the collocation *vet cheel* 'now'. This form is used again in (9f) as modification within the nuclear sentence. In this instance the speaker focuses the subject by inserting it between *vet* and *cheel*. Throughout this sequence, *vet* does not simply function as an

adverb indicating temporality. In (9a), it also marks an evaluative statement, strengthening the exhortation to the women of the *Grupo*, making a metatextual comment to highlight her point and request agreement.

In (9d), *vet* highlights how good the woman's writing is. In (9e) the speaker asserts that she, herself, has seen the notebook, has seen the improvement, and inserts herself as a witness, thereby asserting her authority to comment on the virtues and outcomes of the writer's efforts. The conclusion in (9f) returns the focus to the woman and her accomplishment. *Vet* has the further metatextual function of inviting listeners to participate in the evaluation of the benefits of writing and to aspire to those benefits for themselves. This use of *vet* is similar to the use in (4) from the *Pancakes* narrative in that in both cases *vet* is used to reinforce not only the proposition itself but, more importantly, the speaker's testimony about the state as something that is already the product of agreement.

4.4. OCCURRENCES OF *VET* IN A MEETING DISCUSSION. The last genre of discourse to be examined here is group discussion at a meeting called by the *Grupo* directive board to explain and discuss the Master's thesis García was planning to write on the stories told by members of the group (García 2005). Although there were very few instances of *vet* in the 100 IUs extracted for review from the recording of the meeting, the examples we focus on here come in combination with another frequent discourse marker in Ixil Maya, *la qale'*. We thus begin here with a discussion of *la qale'* before presenting the examples of *vet* from the meeting transcript.

4.4.1. THE DISCOURSE MARKER *LA QALE'*. *La qalchaj* or *la qale'*, is translated by the women as 'digamos' in Spanish and by the researchers as 'let's say' in English. It consists of the potential aspect marker *la* and the verb root for 'say', *-al*, plus the first person plural ergative prefix *q-* and the final vowel suffix *-e*.⁶

La qale' has several functions that are extensions of its literal meaning of 'digamos' or 'let's say'. One of these functions is to pose hypothetical situations, as in (10).

(10) (Nan Mt)

<i>Kam tatin</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>gruupoe'</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>qale'</i>
kam t-atin	u	grupo-e'	la	q-al-e'
how 3S.ERG-way.of.being	DET	group-FV	POT	1P.ERG-say-FV
'Cómo es el grupo, digamos,'				
'How the group is, let's say,'				

⁶ Ayres (1991: 162) describes the suffix *-e'* as a 'final suffix' occurring only in phrase-final position and having several functions, among them the marking of an intransitive verb when it occurs in sentence-final position. Because it occurs on many non-verbal words in the Nebaj dialect of Ixil, we are currently analyzing this phrase-final *-e'* as a phonological rather than a morphological feature and have, therefore, labeled it as a 'final vowel'.

la tale' chi ni tal ixoj.
la t-al-e' chi n-i t-al ixoj
 POT 3S.ERG-say-FV they.say INCOMP-EV 3S.ERG-say she
 'ella va a explicar lo que ella está diciendo.'
 'she's going to explain what she's saying.'

In (11), we see *la qal* participating in a fixed phrase meaning 'for example'.

(11) (Nan Mt)

Porque la qal b'en sti' kat ich'oti ixoj.
porque la q-al b'en s-t-i' kat i-ch'oti ixoj
 because POT 1P.ERG-say DIR RN-3S.ERG-RN COMP 3S.ERG-ask she

kam ixet' u gruupoe'.
kam i-xe't u gruupo-e'
 how 3S.ERG-begin DET group-FV
 'Porque digamos preguntó ella que cómo empezó el grupo.'
 'Because let's say that she asked how the group began.'

It is also used to unify group members in their experiences and their evaluations of those experiences, as in (12):

(12) (Nan Mt)

- a. *Kam sti' nuk'el kat qib' la qale'.*
kam s-t-i' nuk'el kat q-ib' la q-al-e'
 why RN-3S.ERG-RN unite LOC 1P.ERG-RN POT 1P.ERG-say-FV
 '¿Por qué estamos reunidos, digamos?'
 'Why are we united, let's say,'
- b. *tan ti u txumleb'ale'*
tan ti u txumb'leb'al-e'
 for to DET great.sadness-FV
 'solo por la gran tristeza'
 'just because of the great sadness'
- c. *at tu vas tename' la qale'.*
at tu vas tenam-e' la q-al-e'
 exist in [PART] town-FV POT 1P.ERG-say-FV
 'que hay en el pueblo, digamos.'
 'that there is in town, let's say.'

And *la qale'*, or its variant *la qalaj*, is also used to encourage interlocutors to participate in the evaluation of current situations, inviting them to share the speaker's stance rather than presenting that stance as fact, as in (13a-b):

(13) (Jac)

- a. *Ye' ni qab'i ve kam ni*
 ye' n-i q-ab'i ve kam n-i
 NEG INCOMP-EV 1P.ERG-listen CPZ what INCOMP-EV
- talaxe' ve la qalaj.*
 t-al-ax-e' ve la **q-al-aj**
 3P.ERG-say-PAS-FV CPZ POT 1P.ERG-say-FV
- 'Ya no escuchamos lo que están hablando, digamos.'
 'We don't hear what they're saying, let's say.'
- b. *Pes tzitzi ta' kat tz'ejxi kat o' la qale'.*
 Pes tzitzi ta' kat tz'ej-x-i kat o' **la q-al-e'**
 well there EMP COMP lose-PAS-FV LOC 1P.ABS POT 1P.ERG-say-FV
- 'Pues allí es donde ya nos perdimos, digamos.'
 'Well that's where we've lost our way, let's say.'

While the many functions of *la qale'* as used by the women could be further demonstrated, the preceding examples suffice to indicate that it is used to elicit participation from interlocutors in a statement of purpose by giving examples of desirable behaviors or outcomes or an evaluation of a situation. The relationship and co-occurrence of *la qale'* and *vet* as discourse markers will be examined in 4.4.2 below.

4.4.2. OCCURRENCES OF *VET* IN THE THESIS MEETING. The hundred clauses of the *Thesis Meeting* recording selected for analysis are highly representative of the rest of the meeting discussion for their remarkable lack of usage of *vet* in any of its functions. During this meeting, Nan Mt, a member of the *Grupo* board of directors explains what a Master's degree thesis is, what author García's thesis will be about, and why the members of the *Grupo* have become the subject of this work. No sequencing of activities is involved in the straightforward explanation that a thesis is like a book and that this book will be about their activities during and after the war. The following translation into English from the Ixil contains (10) above and the description of their task:

(14) (Nan Mt)

‘We’re going to write a book of information, she says, about how the *Grupo* began, why the *Grupo* was formed. What the *Grupo* is like, let’s say. She’s going to explain what she’s saying (what she means). And she says that you can speak in Ixil because “Ixil interests me,” she says. We are not going to think that our language has no value, but instead that it is good that we say it in Ixil. How the *Grupo* is, let’s say, because that is what people want, so that people know how the *Grupo* is here. Why we are united, let’s say, is what we’re going to teach them. They’re going to give her a little money and that is how she comes so often.’

While *vet* as a sequencing discourse marker is not found in these lines from the thesis meeting, *vet* does appear with metatextual function, in the lines that immediately follow, (15a-c):

(15) (Nan Mt)

- a. *La kub’an vet tuch unq’a u’uje’.*
 la ku-b’an **vet** tuch unq’a u’uj-e’
 POT 1P.ERG-do DM prepared DET.PL paper-FV
 ‘Los vamos a preparar los papeles.’
 ‘We’re going to prepare the papers.’
- b. *Tu yolb’al la qal kat vet lab’.*
 tu yol-b’al la **q-al** kat **vet** lab’
 in word-INST POT 1P.ERG-say LOC DM it
 ‘En Ixil lo vamos a decir.’
 ‘We’re going to tell it in Ixil.’
- c. *Li tal vete’ kam ixet’ u grupoe’.*
 li t-al **vet-e’** kam i-xe’t u grupo-e’
 POT 3.ERG-say DM-FV how 3S.ERG-begin DET group-FV

la qal vete’.
 la **q-al** **vet-e’**
 POT 1P.ERG-say DM-FV
 ‘van a decir cómo empezó el grupo, digamos,’
 ‘it’s going to say how the Group began, let’s say,’

kam ni taq’oma u grupoe’.
 kam n-i t-aq’oma u grupo-e’
 what INCOMP-3S.ERG 3S.ERG-work DET group-FV
 ‘qué trabajo hace el grupo.’
 ‘what work the group does.’

In (15), Nan Mt gives the description and explanation as a frame for the project the group is about to embark upon, framing the shared commitment and collective action expected of the women (Benford and Snow 2000, Goffman 1959). Such framing acts are “intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (Snow and Benford 1988:198). The resulting collective action frame is presented through a discussion of shared activities and memories that, as Gamson puts it, “are not merely aggregations of individual attitudes and perceptions but also the outcome of negotiating shared meaning” (Gamson 1992:111). Similarly, (15b-c) shows *vet* used to frame discourse as communal, and it is here that we see *vet* co-occurring with *la qal/la qale*.

The use of *vet* here has the same metatextual force as its usage in the previous examples, that is, *vet* highlights the proposition as one that is the result of collective agreement as in (4c) and (8a-f) or as one that the speaker is posing as likely to be received with collective agreement as in (13a-b). The use of *la qal vete* in (15c) exhorts the women as a group to participate through the imposition of a logical sequence of activities that will end with their agreement with the negotiation. The use of *vet* in this instance has the same force as its use in the description of the woman’s writing; that is, it highlights the description of something already accomplished by means of group negotiation, and thus serves as a marker of group consensus.

5. CONCLUSIONS. In the analysis of the four interactions we can see that *vet* has both adverbial and pragmatic functions. As an adverb it allows the structural sequencing of activities although it seems to be temporally fluid, as it occurs with the completive aspect, with the potential and incompletive aspects, and with states-of-being that are uninflected for aspect. It has the significance of ‘now’, ‘then’, ‘already’, and ‘still’. This temporal fluidity points to the pragmatic function of directing the listeners’ attention to the relationship between activities, allowing for its use in showing the relationship of activities to the external as well as the internal discourse context.

This range of meaning, from adverbial to pragmatic, is in line with Traugott’s (1997) hypothesis about the development of discourse markers. She proposes the following grammaticalization cline for discourse markers:

Adverbial > Sentence Adverbial > Discourse Particle (including DM)

Grammaticalization refers to those “linguistic changes through which a lexical item in certain uses becomes a grammatical item, or through which a grammatical item becomes more grammatical” (Hopper and Traugott 1993:2). Along with grammaticalization comes a “parallel semantic change” in which a concrete item becomes more abstract and, with that abstraction, comes a bleeding of the concrete meaning (Traugott 1997:2). We hypothesize that the adverbial use of *vet* as an indicator of the sequential relationships between activities, has developed into the more pragmatic and less semantically concrete function of drawing the listeners into complicity with the speaker by emphasizing prior consensus on a particular point, and further, indicating a consensus that is only assumed to prevail.

The absence of *vet* in the pre-iconographic attempts at descriptions in the *Pancakes for Breakfast* text reveals the importance of this adverbial function. Once the women have

decoded the pictures and recognized their sequential, storytelling nature, their narration is more story-like, thus requiring temporal connections through adverbial uses of *vet*. The important pragmatic functions of *vet* are revealed when it is used to signal acceptance of the negotiation of description in the picture book retellings. And just as the women signal descriptions that have been agreed upon by using *vet*, they also use *vet* to express a particular evaluative stance, that is, that the expression is judged by the speaker as truthful and is likely to be received by the group with agreement.

As we have seen with *vet*, various stages of change can co-exist in the grammaticalization process. The period of overlap in which older and newer meanings co-exist is referred to as 'layering' (Hopper 1991, Hopper and Traugott 1993), with the original meaning remaining in use separately or concurrently with the grammaticalized meaning(s). Throughout our analysis, we have seen instances of *vet* serving an adverbial function of marking the sequential relationships between clauses while at the same time performing the pragmatic function of drawing the listeners into complicity with the speaker by accepting the results of negotiated meanings.

We began this paper with a summary of the women's social and historical background because we believe that this kind of context is crucial to the development and use of discourse markers like *vet*. We also began with hypotheses about the nature and number of the usage of *vet* as factors of genre. What we see throughout the analysis is the importance of the effects of the individual identities of the participants in each discourse outweighing the effects of the genre of the discourse. One of the most relevant facts of our fieldwork in Nebaj is the varying levels of literacy skills among the women and the correspondence of those skills with the differentials in experience the women have had with printed materials. This fact has determined how transcription and elicitation sessions will be arranged and now it is clear that it is also a factor in shaping how, and how frequently, the discourse marker *vet* is used by the women in their speech.

But each of the women with whom we work also has an identity as a member of the *Grupo de Mujeres por la Paz*. The external context surrounding all four of these texts have crucially to do with the women's membership in a group formed to support each other in their struggles to recover from the wartime losses of family, land, and community that they all experienced. In the six years we have been working with the *Grupo de Mujeres por la Paz*, we have seen them work *as a group*, making plans and decisions as a group, caring for the sick among them as a group, learning to read and write as a group (in their initial discussions about the literacy classes, the question about participation of the older women arose and they agreed that *all* of the women would participate together with the younger women helping the older women, as necessary). No significant decision is made without a general meeting that includes input from all who wish to speak. It is important to the success of any of their enterprises that they negotiate meanings before they make decisions, and it can be hypothesized that these negotiations contribute to construction and maintenance of their solidarity. That this motivation will be expressed and recreated in their discourse practices and reflected grammatically is to be expected.

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