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Motion Deixis, Home Base and Social Indexicality among the P’urhepecha

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Anthropology by Shane McClain

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Professor Rupert Stasch

2011
The thesis of Shane McClain is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2011
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Motion Deixis, Home Base and Social Indexicality among the P’urhepecha

by

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Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of California, San Diego 2011

Professor John B. Haviland, Chair

In this thesis I analyze the category of deictic motion in the P’urhepecha language to better understand how language may provide insights into social relations and sense of belonging. I begin by outlining theoretical issues relating to deixis, focusing on the social implications. Next, I present the verbs and suffixes that speakers of P’urhepecha utilize to talk about coming and going. I then describe two suffixes that function to index the goal of motion as a home base. Through examples of home base suffix usage, I make the case that, in talking about motion, speakers index a range social factors that reveal their attitudes towards people and the spaces they inhabit. I show how the category of motion in P’urhepecha covers a wide semantic range through metaphor and semantic bleaching, revealing cultural schemas of motion and returning that underlie speakers’ conceptualization of cosmological order and the unfolding of everyday events. Subsequently, I look at linguistic structures that emerge in changing contexts, specifically
among people who have migrated. It is my thesis that speech practices in novel
circumstances reflect migrants’ subjective experiences of continuity and change. That is,
the variable use of the home base suffixes in reference to motion towards goals that may
or may not be conceptualized as ‘home’ provides a running commentary on speakers’
own shifting sense of place, identity and belonging. I conclude by proposing how this
work may provide a point of departure for further research on the immigrant experience.
Introduction: Adiós California

Goodbye California
Goodbye California, I’m leaving now.
I’m going home, I’m going home
To see my friends.
I don’t know if I’ll return
I don’t know if I’ll return again.

In the opening verse of Los Rayos del Sol’s “Adios California,” a popular pirekwa, a traditional song form sung in the P’urhepecha language, the author Daniel Bravo tells a story of chasing the American dream from the point of view of a P’urhepecha migrant returning home. The author’s choice of verbs to describe the trip to his natal home and the possibility of returning to California betray the migrant’s sense of a fleeting existence in California. This is reflected in the contrast of the verbs nínt’ani ‘go home’ in line three and kw’anhatśik’a ‘return’ in lines five and six, and the absence of the verb junkwani ‘come home’ in the characterization of the return trip. Such linguistic markers make a clear distinction between motion towards the culturally salient home village, on the one hand, and a retracing of the author’s steps back to the temporary residence, on the other. Such asymmetrical patterns of usage to refer to going and coming reflect differing concepts of the goal of motion, suggesting that the migrant’s short time in the U.S. was not sufficient to develop a sense of home and belonging.
In my thesis I examine the paradigm of deictic motion verbs and deictic directional suffixes in the P’urhepecha language. In doing so I hope to shed light on cultural models of motion as embedded in the grammatical structures that make up local discourses of P’urhepecha speakers. An understanding of the semantic and pragmatic elements of the system of deictic motion will provide a basis for further research among members of the diaspora population in the United States. P’urhepecha migrants continue to engage in longstanding linguistic practices that organize physical and social space, extending the linguistic expressions that had characterized their experiences in their home village while adapting them to the new circumstances in the U.S. Often an important aspect of the immigrant experience is that of uprootedness and shifting senses of belonging (Chambers 1994; Blommaert 2005; Kirby 2009; De Fina 2009; Baynham 2009). In this work I focus on a specific domain of linguistic utterances in order to lay the foundations for future work focusing on the linguistic practices of migrant communities. I ultimately aim to show how patterns of speech reflect a tension between long-standing cultural practices and changing geo-social realities. The use of deictic motion verbs and directional suffixes in everyday talk provides an ever-present orientation of speakers in their cultural context. These ubiquitous lexical and grammatical items anchor narratives and conversational discourse within indexical webs of meaning by linking the speech event to socio-centric landmarks that function as home bases. Future descriptions and analyses of this specific domain of language in use should provide further insight to the larger cultural implications of the immigrant experience.

In a volume focusing on space and cultural change in the Pacific Islands, Wassmann and Keck discuss the fate of long-standing cultural models in new localities:
Are one’s own concepts of space ‘exported’ or are they adapted to new localities? The Yupno in Papua New Guinea ‘take along’ their geometric system of orientation with ‘upriver/downriver’ to the town of Madang and there equate the main road leading to the sea (downriver) with the Yupno river – but turned by approximately 180 degrees (Wassmann 1994). And there exist many more examples where other Pacific people either duplicate or adapt their system of orientation when abroad. [2009:9]

It is my thesis that language should be approached as a culturally constituted practice that evolves hand in hand with cultural processes of stabilization and change. It is both embodied in physical interaction with the environment and mediated through culturally specified practices. In studying grammatical form, the investigator is not simply identifying specific substantiations of preexisting mental structures. Rather, language structures constitute what Pennycook calls “sedimented action.” Quoting Hopper, he notes, “the apparent structure or regularity of grammar is an emergent property ‘that is shaped by discourse in an ongoing process. Grammar is, in this view, simply the name for certain categories of observed repetitions in discourse’” (Pennycook 2010:46, quoting Hopper 1998:156). In order to understand discourse about motion, one must take into account speakers’ experiences of habitual movement in the world and the social networks in which they are immersed. This may be illustrated by looking carefully at how P’urhepecha talk about coming and going. As will become clear, the vantage point of the speaker and/or addressee and the relative location of home bases of the person in motion are made salient through sedimented discourse. That is, in referring to motion, speakers obligatorily employ lexical and grammatical items that encode these subtle distinctions within larger indexical frameworks.
Background Information

P’urhepecha is the contemporary name for the indigenous group and their language in the state of Michoacán in west-central Mexico. The Spanish Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagún (1992 [1576]) used the term “tarascos,” most likely originating from the P’urhepecha word tarasku. This word, which means “son-in-law,” most likely caught on as the Spaniards increasingly heard it used as a form of address due to intermarriage. In recent decades many P’urhepecha have rejected this name and asserted their right to self-denomination by officially adopting the term P’urhepecha. Nevertheless, many people of the older generations still call themselves tarascos, and the term Tarascan continues to alternate with P’urhepecha in the literature. Estimates indicate that in 1500, before the Spanish Conquest, approximately 200,000 P’urhepecha inhabited the region of what is now the state of Michoacán (Mendizábal 1939). Within fifty years the population had decreased to approximately 92,000 due to warfare, genocide, illness, migration and the introduction of new crops and livestock (West 1948). Numbers continued to decline and reached their lowest in 1921 with a population of approximately 33,000 (Zolla and Rubio 2000). However, the population has since steadily increased, with the 2010 census counting 117,221 P’urhepecha in the state of Michoacán. (INEGI 2010). This number does not reflect the significant number of P’urhepecha living in other states in Mexico and in the U.S. The first wave of modern migrations occurred between 1940 and 1964, when half of the adult male populations of some towns left to work in the U.S. at least once. The current levels of immigration are significantly higher, with up to 65% of male heads of household in some communities currently absent due to migration to other regions of Mexico and the U.S. (Argueta Villamar 2008).
The P’urhepecha language is generally recognized as a language isolate, unrelated to any other indigenous language in Mexico. Although some linguists have proposed a distant relationship to Quechua, Zuni, Totonaco and Maya, the data are inconclusive and remain speculative (Friedrich 1981). By 1940 various social factors threatened the survival of the language, such as modern modes of transportation, diffusion of radio transmissions, migration from home villages due to educational opportunities, government-sponsored Spanish literacy programs, and inter-marrying with mestizos. Although it is not currently endangered, the status of P’urhepecha is categorized by UNESCO as unsafe (UNESCO 2009). There is large demographic variability within the cultural group, and language attrition often seems to vary on a village-by-village basis rather than according to predictable regional patterns based on access to larger cities and transportation routes. However, a recent trend is that many children growing up as migrants or in more assimilated communities are not learning the language with high proficiency.

Structurally P’urhepecha is an agglutinating language that utilizes dependent marking, with a morphological case system of the nominative-accusative type. All affixes in the language are suffixes, with a strict ordering of morphemes. A majority of the lexical roots in the language are verbal roots, which are morphologically derived to create nouns and modifiers. The language has a set of three classificatory verbal roots that indicate shape and position of objects. In addition to the motion suffixes, P’urhepecha has a complex set of twenty-eight spatial suffixes that are used to characterize the localization of objects in space (Friedrich 1971; Nava 2004; Chamoreau 2009).
Deixis and Motion

In this paper I present a brief analysis of deictic motion in the P’urhepecha language. I aim to show that in order to account for the variation in use of verbs of coming, going, arriving and returning, it is essential to understand how a specific set of linguistic expressions have come to embody a wide range of cultural practices. Starting from the truism that speech is meaningful social behavior (Silverstein 1976), I hope to show how linguistic expressions denoting motion along a path also index a wide range of shared notions of how space is socially constructed. In doing so, I hope to understand what speakers, in talking about motion events, are implicitly and explicitly saying about themselves and the spaces they inhabit.

The word *deixis* has its roots in the Greek verb *deiktikós*, meaning ‘to point.’ (Finegan and Besnier 1989:193). In the pioneering work *Sprachtheorie* (1990[1934]), Bühler states that language consists of two overlapping fields made up of *Symbolwörter*, or symbolic lexemes, and *Zeigwörter*, or deictic words. In contrast to the symbolic field, which assumes the arbitrary pairing of form and meaning, the deictic field is grounded in the experiential present of the origo, or zero point, which characterizes the I/here/now of the speech event (1934[1934]:80-81). Bühler thus lays out the three traditional categories of deixis: spatial, temporal and person deixis. More recently, in his classic work on linguistic semantics, Lyons has defined deixis as:

the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatiotemporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically, of a single speaker and at least one addressee. [1977:637]
The grammatical structure of P’urhepecha has conventionalized subtle tools for making reference to the location of the speaker and addressee when talking about motion, as well as indexing the location of the goal of motion. Studying the linguistic form of specific utterances provides concrete data that help to understand wider social dynamics that have coevolved with such structures. Deixis is a particularly salient domain of research, as it allows the researcher to analyze linguistic data that is tied inextricably to the context of utterance. Indeed, Levinson states: “The single most obvious way in which the relationship between language and context is reflected in the structures of language themselves, is through the phenomenon of deixis” (1989:54). Haviland notes, “Deictic categories at once penetrate and permeate both linguistic and contextual structures, making them potent conceptual and sociocultural mechanisms as deictic elements ten to be obligatory in speech” (2005:100). In writing about deixis and migration among the Tzotzil, Haviland continues:

The methodological starting point of a study of ‘migration’ through a close attention to deictically anchored verbs is that, through these apparently small lexical symptoms, it is possible to diagnose attitudes and perspectives, in particular what I will call an ambivalent ‘socio-centric’ perspective of this Tzotzil emigrant. Such an approach reaffirms the value of situated ‘discourse’ as an ethnographic resource, but it also implies rather minute attention to the details of linguistic structure. [2005:100]

By applying this approach to P’urhepecha, I attempt to provide a glimpse of how linguistic practices might come to be adapted to changing worlds.

Like Haviland, Hanks emphasizes the “sociocentricity” of deictic reference, stating, “deixis, both as a linguistic subsystem and as a kind of act, is a social construction, central to the organization of communicative practice and intelligible only in relation to a sociocultural system” (1990:5, italics in original). Thus, in order to
interpret an utterance that utilizes spatial deixis, one must do more than calculate the orientation of co-participants and with respect to referents in physical space. Indeed, in making sense of P’urhepecha motion deixis, it is often necessary to posit a relational mapping between socially significant landmarks and shifting deictic centers. Thus, for P’urhepecha speakers, a motion description is a specific kind of speech event that frames social space. Only by looking at the larger spheres of social life can the analyst make sense of the grammatical structures that embody such knowledge and behavior through the routinization of speech acts. As Haviland notes, “It is the link between utterance form, situated activity, and local knowledge, that puts linguistic pragmatics at the heart of ethnography (and vice versa)” (1996:282). Hanks points out that while deictic practice among the Maya usually grounds experience in the egocentric here-and-now of the speech event, it makes reference to the larger world. That is, rather than drawing attention to the egocentric ‘I’ as the object of reference, in deictic usage the corporeal space of the speaker functions as shared social space for directing shared attention:

The entire cultural construction of the body, which I have likened to Merleau-Ponty’s schéma corporel, gives substantive content to the idea of ‘egocentricity’ in Maya, because it constitutes the individual body in motion that we posit in the central role of speaker. But it is already evident that body space so defined is culturally saturated, and that through social interaction, it is routinely occupied by groups of coparticipating agents. [1990:94]

Hanks (1990, 2005) refers to this space of interaction as a deictic field. It requires more than co-presence, for it involves active bodies, both perceived and perceiving, involved in interactional relationships that bring together speakers’ common sense about linguistic knowledge and their immersion within the larger social context. He notes that social
knowledge underlies unreflective patterns of common sense and habit, what Bourdieu calls ‘habitus,’ which “orients and naturalizes action” (1990:7).

When P’urhepecha talk about coming and going, the speech event is embedded in a matrix of cross-cutting relationships. On the one hand, in speaking about moving objects or persons, interlocutors make evaluations about the relationship from their vantage point, whether grounded in the place of utterance or displaced to another locale. Such motion is represented by the deictic COME and GO verbs\(^1\), or by a set of deictic directional suffixes attached to non-deictic verbs. On the other hand, speakers simultaneously assume a stance with respect to the knowledge of the spaces those movers typically inhabit, which is indexed by the presence or lack of ‘home base’ suffixes. These two suffixes indicate that the goal of motion is a home or home away from home. The obligatory category of motion in the P’urhepecha verb thus accrues indexical meanings through habitual patterns of usage that reflect meaningful relations between actors and socially significant spaces. Motion deixis not only indexes the relative physical locations of the figure and the speaker, but also maps the social relationships involving place and a sense of belonging in which speech practices are embedded.

\(^1\) The capitalized terms COME and GO are employed as a shorthand to label the class of ten deictic motion verbs, formed from a set of lexical roots and derivational suffixes, that characterize motion toward the deictic center and not toward the deictic center, respectively. Following Wilkins and Hill (1995), the reader is cautioned that the diversity of semantic characterization of COME and GO verbs in the languages of the world precludes any pretense of positing that these terms represent universal semantic primes. Rather, this terminology simply serves as a heuristic metalanguage for characterizing in its entirety the fairly large set of deictic motion verbs in P’urhepecha, whose deictic features can be glossed by the more prototypical uses of the English verbs “come” and “go.”
Embodiment and Spatial Experience

In order to understand deixis, it is helpful to reflect on how people come to make sense of space through lived experience. In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty describes the pre-objective body as a body in motion that reaches out towards lived experience. He emphasizes the primacy of the body in the articulation of subjective experience, due to the grounding in the here and now of the body of the observer: “The word ‘here’ applied to my body does not refer to a determinate position in relation to other positions or to external coordinates, but the laying down of the first coordinates, the anchoring of the active body in an object, the situation of the body in the face of its tasks” (2002:243). For Merleau-Ponty, objectivity is thus derived from this direct bodily experience of oriented motion: “The truth is that homogeneous space can convey the meaning of oriented space only because it is from the latter that is has received that meaning” (2002:245). However, the question arises as to how differing cultural modes of representation and being-in-the-world can proliferate from a shared biological experience in the physical environment. Indeed, as Carlson notes:

Human beings share a common spatial experience, defined by living in a three-dimensional world, being subject to the forces of gravity, having our perceptual apparatuses and our direction of locomotion oriented in a given direction and so on (Clark 1973; Fillmore 1971). Nevertheless, there is considerable variability across languages in the way in which we talk about space. [2010:157]

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus provides an effective tool for understanding the power of cultural patterning in shaping human experience. Bourdieu takes many of Merleau-Ponty’s ideas concerning orientation and intentionality of the individual body and applies them to the embodied practice within the social body. Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on individual habitual action is transformed to the unconscious habitus underlying the social
world, where the trajectories taken by social groups are modeled on the patterns and practices of the past: “The principle of the differences between individual habitus lies in the singularity of their social trajectories” (Bourdieu 1992:60). Bourdieu thus views social life as rooted in dynamic embodiment, where social patterning reflects the movement of bodies imbued with sense. Spearheading a recent theoretical interest in embodiment, Csordas (1990, 1994) has called for a phenomenological approach to understanding culture. He advances embodiment as a paradigm that circumvents traditional dichotomies between subject and object by locating the body as the existential ground of culture. This framework provides a good starting point for a study of deixis as the embodiment of human intentionality through engagement in culturally meaningful space.

**Description of Motion Events in P’urhepecha**

The morphological structure of the P’urhepecha verb includes a variety of verbal bases and suffixes that allow for a very detailed characterization of motion events. Following is a description of the grammatical elements utilized to characterize deictic motion. It is included so the reader may better understand how the subtleties of motion description underlie everyday talk about coming and going. Talmy (1972, 1975, 1985, 2000) provides a typology of motion events composed of four basic variables: figure, motion, path, and ground. Figure refers to the entity that is displaced. Motion refers to the movement itself. More specifically, it denotes motion along a path, or translational motion, resulting in a change in location of the figure, as opposed to self-contained
motion such as spinning or trembling. The path refers to the trajectory of the figure, which may be specified by landmarks including the source (or origin) and goal (or endpoint). And lastly, the ground refers to the reference object to which the motion is related. Note the following example sentence describing a motion event, with each of the four variables labeled:

(1) The bottle moved into the cove.
    [figure]    [motion]    [path]    [ground]

In addition to these four variables, the expression of a motion event may also include manner of motion:

(2) The dog ran out of the house.
    [figure]   [manner+motion]    [path]    [ground]

It also may include causation:

(3) The boy hit the ball over the fence.
    [manner/cause+motion]    [figure]    [path]    [ground]

While not included in Talmy’s (1972, 1975, 1985) earlier characterizations of the motion event, his (2000) reformulation of the framework added the feature of deixis. For Talmy, deictic motion verbs are a special type of path-conflating verbs that have a unique specification of path and ground. He writes, “the Deictic component of Path typically has only the two member notions, ‘toward the speaker’ and ‘in a direction other than the speaker’” (2000:56).

All uses of the term ‘motion’ in this thesis refer to translational motion. Such motion may be characterized as motion that is construed by an observer as motion along a path, during which the physical location of the figure changes position in space. Such construal of motion thus relates to the point of view of the observer, specifically the scale or resolution of the figure’s displacement with respect to an overall gestalt image as picked out in the visual field. This distinction is illustrated by P’urhepecha motion verb mana, which contrasts with the translational motion verbs. This verb would not be glossed in English as ‘go’ or ‘travel’, but rather as ‘tremble’ or ‘shake’.
They came.  

For Talmy, deixis thus provides further elaboration of a motion event by taking into account the perspective of the speaker. In the description of deictic motion, the deictic center functions as the zero-point for the motion event. That is, it serves as the locus for the speaker or addressee’s point of view of the figure’s displacement.

Talmy (1985, 2000) and Slobin (1996a) note that languages vary greatly in the way that the features of the motion event are expressed in the grammatical structure of an utterance. This is illustrated in the following contrast between English, Spanish, and P’urhepecha:

(5)  

a. The dog is running this way.  

b. El perro viene corriendo.  

c. wichu wirhia -pu -xa-ti

In the English example the verb indicates manner and the deictic marker, which specifies path and ground, consists of an adverbial phrase. In Spanish the verb indicates the deictic information and the manner is expressed by the participle ‘running.’ In P’urhepecha the verbal root indicates manner, while the deictic information is encoded in the verbal suffix. Thus the deictic information is expressed in three different grammatical categories in the three languages: adverbial phrase in English, main verb in Spanish, and directional suffix in P’urhepecha.
Talmy’s typology provides a good starting point for the characterization of the variables involved in the linguistic description of a motion event in P’urhepecha. However, Talmy’s framework suffers from its marginalization of the phenomenon of deixis in motion descriptions. That is, deixis is relegated to a special feature of the representation of a motion event, rather than an element that is central to those ubiquitous grammatical constructions that are part and parcel of everyday reference to motion. Furthermore, such a theoretical stance does not take into account the centrality of wider indexical frameworks in the description of motion events. Ultimately, such a narrowly defined typology lacks the necessary tools for elaborating the wider cultural implications inherent to making reference within fields of social actors and culturally salient places. In this work I aim to show how motion events are expressed within a broader social matrix. Indeed, the grammar of P’urhepecha requires speakers to make explicit indexical distinctions between social actors, resulting in a culturally specific schema of motion events.

**Deictic Motion Verbs**

Below are the ten most common verbal constructions used to express deictic motion in P’urhepecha:

---

3 Note that the -rha and -ra are two distinct, mutually exclusive formative suffixes. That is, the dependent verbal roots ju and ni must occur in concatenation with these suffixes in order to receive inflection. Nava (2004) identifies both of these formative suffixes as members of a fairly large class of middle voice markers. However, in order to avoid the complexities and as yet unresolved inconsistencies in the behavior of these derivational suffixes, I have opted for the more neutral term of formative suffix. Note that when the roots ju and ni receive the home base suffixes -nkwa and -nt’a, respectively, they no longer require the formative suffixes in order to receive inflection.
These deictic motion verbs show a clear delineation between what I term the COME and GO verbs. However, Wilkins and Hill (1995) point out that it is important to determine the exact nature of COME and GO verbs, in order to avoid conflating the English glosses with the inherent semantics of a particular language’s deictic motion verbs. They note that the characterization of COME and GO verbs may vary significantly from language to language, writing “verbs that depict COME and GO scenes vary crosslinguistically in their base semantics so much that there is no useful sense in which COME and GO may be considered universal notions” (1995:242-243). For example, in some languages the use of COME requires path boundedness. In such cases the endpoint of the path must coincide with the deictic center for the motion to be characterized as “coming.” On the other hand, other languages only require path orientation toward deictic center, regardless of the endpoint or distance from speaker (1995:249).
In P’urhepecha, COME and GO may be characterized in the following way:

COME, realized by the verbal bases *ju* ‘come’, *jano* ‘arrive here’ and *jwa* ‘bring’, describes motion oriented towards the deictic center and GO, realized by the verbal bases *ni* ‘go’ and *pa* ‘take, carry’, describes motion **not** oriented towards the deictic center. COME is the marked form, for its semantic characterization covers a more limited spatial configuration, that in which the figure is moving towards the deictic center. The GO form is unmarked, and thus its meaning is determined through pragmatic implicature (see Levinson 1983; Ariel 2010). That is, an addressee, upon hearing the GO form, does not depend on a specific semantic specification in order to calculate the direction of motion. Rather, she or he must deduce the orientation of motion being referred to through its opposition with the COME form. Thus in P’urhepecha the deictic motion verbs cannot be characterized in the simple dichotomy of “towards the deictic center” and “away from the deictic center.” For this reason, in the following descriptions and morpheme-by-morpheme glosses I have opted to forgo the use the common terms *centripetal* and *centrifugal*, which imply a dualistic semantic division of labor. I have instead employed the terms *venitive* “towards the deictic center” and *andative* “not towards the deictic center,” respectively.⁴ Furthermore, the COME and GO verbal bases and deictic suffixes do not encode any inherent path boundedness. That is, whether or not the figure ends the trajectory at a specific point in the path does not affect the choice of COME or GO verbal bases. However, other suffixes such as the arrival and home base suffixes do in fact encode path boundedness in their semantics, which is especially pertinent with respect to motion toward home bases.

⁴ Other terms for venitive and andative in the literature include ‘cislocative’ and ‘translocative,’ ‘hither’ and ‘thither,’ and ‘ventive’ and ‘itive,’ respectively.
Home Base Suffixes

The verbal stems of deictic motion ju ‘come,’ jano ‘arrive here,’ and ni ‘go,’ and the verbs of caused deictic motion jwa ‘bring’ and pa ‘carry, take’ combine with the suffixes -nkwa and -nt’a to mark the goal of motion as the origin or home base of the mover. Such bases may be permanent locations, such as one’s natal home or village, or may be new or fleeting spaces of occupation, such as school, church, workplace, temporary habitation, et cetera. These home base morphemes can be diagrammatically represented in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>deictic orientation</th>
<th>venitive (towards origo)</th>
<th>-nkwa</th>
<th>HB.VEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>andative (not towards origo)</td>
<td>-nt’a</td>
<td>HB.AND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Home base suffixes

P’urhepecha is not unique in having formal markers in its motion verbs that encode motion toward home bases. In a description of Texmelucan Zapotec motion verbs, Speck and Pickett note that the COME, GO and ARRIVE verbs come in pairs. The pair is differentiated by whether the motion described is “toward a Base” or “away from a Base.” That is, the language has one set of verbs that indicate motion towards home base and another set of verbs that represent motion not towards home base. The authors state, “Base is the place where the person in motion normally or expectedly returns” (1976:61). It is important to note that in such a verbal system the culturally circumscribed space of home base is represented within the structure of the verb itself. That is, it is an inherent property of the paradigm of motion verbs and does not require further specification.
through additional lexical items referring to ‘home’ or ‘house.’ In contrast to Texmelucan Zapotec, P’urhepecha marks this distinction with suffixes rather than in the verbal root. However, the verbal morphology of P’urhepecha clearly provides a marking of home bases that plays a prominent role in the paradigm of motion verbs.

**Directional Suffixes of Associated Motion**

In addition to the deictic verbal bases representing COME and GO, there are four directional suffixes that may be added to a non-motion verbal base to indicate that the action indicated by the base is realized in transit with respect to the deictic center. These suffixes, which express ‘associated motion,’ are -pa, -pu, -ma and -mu⁵:

(7)  a. *María pire-\textit{pu}-s-p-ti*
    María sing-\textit{VEN}-PRF-PST-3.IND
    ‘*María cantaba, viniendo para acá*’
    ‘*María sang coming this way*’

    b. *María pire-\textit{pa}-s-p-ti*
    María sing-\textit{AND}-PRF-PST-3.IND
    ‘*María andaba cantando*’
    ‘*María went along singing*’

    c. *María t’ire-\textit{mu}-s-p-ti*
    María eat-\textit{VEN.DISC}-PRF-PST-3.IND
    ‘*María comió de paso en camino para acá*’
    ‘*María ate (somewhere) on the way here*’

---

⁵ These examples were elicited using a combination of Spanish phrases describing real and hypothetical actions, as well as with human figurines representing the location of the figure with respect to the language consultants. Unless otherwise specified, examples in this work were elicited from native speakers of P’urhepecha and then rechecked with speakers from multiple villages. Further research will include corpora analyses and the collection of a larger body of naturalistic data in order to corroborate these findings and to make finer distinctions in the distribution and relative frequency of different grammatical structures.
Friedrich analyzes the semantic compositionality of these suffixes, providing the following glosses for each of these elements:

- **-p** (general directional, specifically, en route somewhere)
- **-m** (en route transiently, intermittently)
- **-a** (motion away or round about)
- **-u** (motion coming, especially homeward, into a home) (1984:70)

He notes that these four elements are combined to yield four suffixes, which “for most purposes are units” (1984:70). He does not elaborate on what he means by “most purposes” and provides no further evidence of compositionality of morphemes in the language. However, his glosses of the composite elements of these morphemes are useful for understanding the morphological and semantic transparency of these suffixes.\(^6\)

The category of associated motion was first coined by Koch (1984) and proved to be a useful term for researchers working with Australian languages that have elaborate systems for characterizing diverse kinds of motion (Koch 1984, Tunbridge 1988, Wilkins 1992).

---

\(^6\) As can be observed in Figure 2, I employ the terms ‘continuous’ and ‘discontinuous’ rather than Friedrich’s terms ‘general directional’ and ‘transient/intermittent’, respectively.
Wilkins notes that associated motion “is used to indicated that the verb-stem action happens against the background of a motion event with a specific orientation in Space” (2006:28). The paradigm of associated motion in P’urhepecha occupies two slots in the verbal morphology, consisting of the deictic directional suffixes and the home base suffixes, in that order. In addition to following the verbal bases indicating deictic motion, the home base suffixes -nkwa and -nt’a may also occur in concatenation with the directional suffixes of associated motion:

(8)  a. Juanu pire-pu-nkwa-xa-Ø-ti  
     Juan sing-VEN-HB.VEN-DUR-PRS-3.IND  
     ‘Juan is singing coming back (home)’

  b. Juanu t’ire-mu-nkwa-s-Ø-ti  
     Juan eat-VEN.DISC-HB.VEN-PRF-PRS-3.IND  
     ‘Juan has eaten on his way back (home) here’

  c. Juanu pire-pa-nt’a-xa-Ø-ti  
     Juan sing-AND-HB.AND-DUR-PRS-3.IND  
     ‘Juan is singing going back (home)’

  d. Juanu t’ire-ma-nt’a-s-Ø-ti  
     Juan eat-AND.DISC-HB.AND-PRF-PRS-3.IND  
     ‘Juan has eaten on his way back (home)’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nature of motion with respect to action and trajectory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>venitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(towards origo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>andative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(not towards origo)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Complete paradigm of deictic motion suffixes
Combined, these two groups of suffixes provide an economic morphological marking of two relational systems: the shifting I/here/now of the deictic center that grounds the speech act in the perspective assumed by the speaker and the indexing of the culturally salient landmark that functions as a home base of the figure. This creates a triangulation of dynamically intersubjective space that simultaneously maps relations between the locations of the speaker, addressee, figure, and the home base of the figure, a space he or she naturally inhabits. The description of a figure moving towards his or her home base necessitates some knowledge by the speaker of that person’s identity, history, familial property, habitual trajectories, et cetera. Use of the home base suffixes thus indexes the possession of privileged knowledge, for to use them implies that one is familiar with the figure and the spaces he or she habitually occupies. In making reference to a given figure in motion, not just anybody can use the home base suffixes. By using such structures, the speaker asserts a high level of social knowledge and affiliation. As part of the cultural schema of motion, this grammatical feature provides habitual indexical marking that specifies important pragmatic information inherent to this particular kind of speech act.

**Obligatory Indexes of Home Base**

The suffixes -nkwa and -nt’a usually only appear directly after a deictic morpheme, whether it is a verbal base or one of the directional suffixes. These home base suffixes function to further elaborate the description of deictic motion, contextualizing the path of the figure within the larger socio-centric matrix of primary residential landmarks. In this way, the deictic morphemes and home base suffixes form a formal cluster in the verbal morphology characterizing motion events, tying together the
embodied here-and-now of the speech event to the culturally salient spatial attractors that mark socially constructed spaces as primary goals of motion.

The manner of motion verb *wirhia* ‘to run’ cannot receive directly the home base suffixes, due to the lack of deictic information in the lexical root:

(9)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. *wirhia-*nkwa-*ni</th>
<th>b. *wirhia-*nt’a-*ni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>run-HB.VEN-INF</td>
<td>run-HB.AND-INF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended: ‘to run coming home’</td>
<td>Intended: ‘to run going home’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated by the question mark, example (9b) is actually a grammatical form, but the *-nt’a* suffix does not function as a home base marker. Rather, this *-nt’a* is a grammaticalized form, repeated in (9c) with the correct gloss:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>c. *wirhia-*nt’a-*ni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>run-FREQ-INF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘to run again, like always’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this construction, what appears to be the home base suffix *-nt’a* actually functions as a frequentive suffix. Having lost its deictic character through a process of grammaticalization, this suffix refers only to a temporal “return” to a repeated or habitual action rather than marking the goal of motion as a home base.7 I thus analyze the two forms as distinct morphemes: the home base suffix is glossed as HB.AND and the frequentive as FREQ, as demonstrated in the contrast of examples (9b) and (9c). This analytic convention is motivated as much by the suffixes’ distinct structural distribution as by their semantic variance (In addition to example (9c), see the last line of example (21) for an illustration of the simultaneous ordering of a home base suffix and the grammaticalized frequentive suffix in a single verb). Again, while having a clear

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7 I follow Bybee et al (1994) in glossing the grammaticalized form as frequentative. The authors distinguish frequentative from iterative in that, unlike the latter, “frequentative implies that the situation occurred on different occasions” (1994:165).
semantic relationship to the home base suffix, the unique formal characteristics of the
frequentive suffix necessitates its analysis as a distinct morpheme. This process of
grammaticalization will be illustrated with further examples below.

Returning to the manner of motion verb wiria: once having been elaborated by the
deictic directional suffixes of associated motion, this non-deictic verb stem may then
receive the derivational home base suffixes -nkwa and -nt’a, indicating that the motion is
oriented towards a home base:

(10) a. wirhia-pu-nkwa-ni  b. wirhia-pa-nt’a-ni
run-VEN-HB.VEN-INF run-AND-HB.AND-INF
‘to run coming home’  ‘to run going home’

It is evident that the two home base suffixes exist in complementary distribution,
reinforcing the opposition of the deictic morphemes they co-occur with. If a speaker is
making reference to a motion event using deictic verbs or directional suffixes, the
presence or absence of the home base suffixes further elaborates this motion, indexing the
goal of the mover’s path with respect to a home base. Thus, while taking leave of
someone upon embarking on a trajectory towards one’s residence, the following would
be infelicitous:

(11) ?ni-wa-ka ya
  go-FUT-1.IND  already
  Intended: ‘I’m going now’

That is, in the absence of the home base suffix, the addressee would generally assume
that the speaker were headed somewhere other than home. Only the explicitly stated form
is felicitous if the figure is homeward bound:

(12) ni-nt’a-a-ka ya
  go-HB.AND-FUT-1.IND  already
  ‘I’m going home now’
Likewise, if the speaker were in the home of the figure, the following would be infelicitous:

(13) \(?Agustín ju-rha-xa-Ø-ki ya?\)
Agustín come-FORM-DUR-PRS-Q already
Intended: ‘Is Agustin coming?’ (uttered at Agustin’s home)

The use of `-nkwa` in this case would be expected:

(14) \(Agustín ju-nkwa-xa-Ø-ki ya?\)
Agustín come-HB.VEN-DUR-PRS-Q already
‘Is Agustin coming home?’

Again, it is important to note that the home base suffixes can only occur directly after the deictic motion verbal bases and the deictic directional suffixes. The strict occurrence of these semantic elements in consecutive morphological slots provides structural evidence for a coherent subcategory of motion within the verbal morphology of the language (See Bybee 1985 for a discussion of iconicity and the ordering of morphological segments).

The following description of a complex event of associated motion shows the strict ordering of morphemes in P’urhepecha:

(15) \(Juanu ja-xi-tsi-ta-kurhi-pu-nkwa-xa-Ø-ti\)
Juan intense-PRED-ground-CAUS-REFL-VEN-HB.VEN-DUR-PRES-3.IND
‘Juan is coming back leaving a mess in his path.’

The verbal morphology is schematized in the following table, adapted from Nava (2004):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE</th>
<th>DERIVATION</th>
<th>INFLECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREDICATIVE</td>
<td>SPATIAL</td>
<td>PARTICIPANT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ja</td>
<td>-xi</td>
<td>-tsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intense</td>
<td>PRED</td>
<td>ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Verbal morphology of P’urhepecha
While I have classified the category of associated motion as a slot within the template of derivational suffixes, it is evident that these suffixes occur at the intersection of the derivational and inflectional suffixes. The associated motion verbs in fact do not drastically alter the basic semantics of the verb, but rather elaborate the action or state over the background of a motion event. In his discussion of the Arrernte verb, Wilkins uses the term “quasi-inflectional suffixes” (Wilkins 2006:28) to refer to the unique character of the associated motion suffixes. Indeed, while associated motion overlays a motion event onto the lexical semantics of the verb, it also shares many characteristics with the more inflectional category of aspect. However, it must be remembered that the associated motion suffixes ground actions along the trajectory of a figure with respect to a deictic center, and thus cannot be reduced to the feature of temporality, as is the inflectional category of aspect.

**Indexicality of Shared Space in the Verbs of Motion**

Through patterns of use, the suffix -nkwa takes on connotations that index affinities between the speaker and the figure. That is, the use of this suffix presumes that the speaker is located in the residence, village, or other home base towards which the person whose motion is being described is oriented. This usually implies a pattern of habitually shared space. In his discussion of the deixis of COME verbs, Fillmore has discussed the culturally salient phenomenon common in many languages in which the

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8 Derivational suffixes are suffixes that alter the basic concept encoded in the root, such as changing grammatical category, valence, or other semantic variables. Inflectional suffixes, on the other hand, refer to more productive, often obligatory morphemes that “ground the concept expressed by the root according to place, time, participant reference, etc.” (Payne 2002:26). Inflectional categories include tense, aspect, and mood.
‘home base’ reference point functions as a kind of habitualized primary landmark that is the typical goal of motion, the place one naturally ‘comes to’ (Fillmore 1997). In P’urhepecha, the use of -nkwa is reserved for a special kind of relationship between speaker and figure, which most prototypically indicates co-habitation. Once, after Juan’s wife Margarita had gotten off the phone with Carlos, a close family friend, he asked her:

(16) ju-rha-xa-Ø-ki?
come-FORM-DUR-PRS-Q
‘Is he coming?’

Knowing that his friend visited often and spent a great deal of time at their house, I asked him why he hadn’t used the form with -nkwa, i.e., junkwasïnti? Juan stated that he couldn’t say that because Juan didn’t live there. His mother, yes, she junkwasïnti ‘comes home’. His brother, yes, he junkwasïnti (comes home). His wife, yes, she junkwasïnti (comes home). But his friend Carlos…he doesn’t junkwasïnti (come home), he just jurhasïnti (comes).” Not only does -nkwa index a relationship with the figure, but it also indexes the kinds of relationships that exist between interlocutors with respect to traveling, familial relations and identification with home. The suffix -nkwa, through habitual use to refer to cohabiting family members who have ventured away from the home base, indexes their spatial anchoring to the shared home base and their regular and inevitable trajectory towards this stable landmark. This principle extends to include cases where the deictic center has expanded to include the entire village. In such cases -nkwa indexes a privileged, shared village identity of those who have ventured outside the community.
It is not uncommon for the deictic center to be transposed from the actual location of the speaker at the moment of utterance to another point. An example is the following response commonly emitted when someone knocks at the door:

(17)  **ju-ra-xa-Ø-ka ya**
**come-FORM-DUR-PRS-1.IND already**
‘I’m coming!’

The deictic center is shifted to the location of the addressee knocking at the door if the speaker is actually moving toward the addressee or sufficiently close to initiating the motion. This contrasts with the following example where the speaker states by telephone his or her future plans to go to the home of the addressee, where the addressee is currently located.

(18)  **witstintikwa ni-wa-ka chínio**
**tomorrow go-FUT-1.IND home.2SG**
‘Tomorrow I’ll go to your house.’

The contrast of these two examples demonstrates that the transposition of the deictic center to the location of the interlocutor reflects the level of involvement of the speaker in the motion event at the moment of speaking. In the first example, the speech event and the narrative event coincide. This provides a spatiotemporal linkage that allows the speaker to take the point of view of the addressee as the zero-point of deictic reference. That is, the intersubjective involvement of the speaker as the figure in motion towards the addressee motivates the shift in perspective. On the other hand, if the motion event is conceptualized as an event distinct from the moment of speech, the deictic does not shift, as evidenced by the use of the **GO** verb in the second example. Another example shows how the deictic center can be transposed within a single utterance. The following narrated
event occurred at a friend’s house, where the speaker was not located at the moment of utterance:

(19) **wámpa ni-a-nt’a-s-p-ti kawirini**
husband go-center-HB.AND.PRF-PST-3.IND drunk
‘Her husband **arrived back (there)** drunk,

**no sési a-pu-nkwa-ni**
no well say-VEN-HB.VEN-INF
cursing at her (lit: talking badly **coming home**).’

In this utterance the deictic center is transposed from the outside perspective of the narrator, indicated by the unmarked form *ni-a-nt’a* ‘arrive back there,’ to that of the female protagonist, as encoded in the morpheme pair *-pu-nkwa* ‘while coming home.’

Thus there has been a deictic shift from an external location in the first clause to the goal and home of the figure in the second, coinciding with the perspective of the narrator’s hapless friend. This example illustrates the flexibility of shifts in deictic center as a possible intersubjective identification with her friend, assuming the other’s point of view with respect to the motion event that embodied the more dangerous and thus more salient aspects of the scene.

The verbal morphology of P’urhepecha allows speakers to transpose the deictic center not only within the same clause, but even the same word. Such shifts afford the narrator the ability to characterize the complex paths of what Slobin (1996b) terms a ‘journey’ from multiple vantage points. Observe the following narrative describing a ritual parade at a traditional fiesta, in which a group of young women go in single-file formation to the houses of the *marikwas* ‘the young princesses’ to formally invite them to the fiesta:
They go to the Marhikwas, inviting them (coming towards them).

The oldest daughter of the carguero goes in front, and she

say-and-subj where rel how by go-fut-subj indicates (going) on which streets they will go and where

and where rel go-center-form-ven-subj

they will arrive there / (coming).’ (Torres Sánchez 2001:51-52)

Twice the associated motion suffix -pu is used, reflecting a shift in the deictic center toward the houses of the marikwas (notice the contrast with the use of the verb ni ‘go’ verb and the associated motion -pu suffix). Once again, the saliency of the approaching parade formation in motion towards the home of the marikwas takes precedence, as the arrival points briefly become the zero-points of the narrated motion event. Particularly interesting in the last verb is the seemingly conflicting semantics of the GO verb and the venitive suffix. At this point the event is simultaneously being framed from two vantage points, whereby the motion indicated by the verbal base is expressed from a perspective distinct from that of the directional suffixes.

The next example is taken from a novel written in P’urhepecha. The narrator describes what happens to people who migrate from their home village to the U.S. The associated motion encoded in the final word shows how the action of bragging is associated with the motion back home, whereby the negative behaviors are transferred from their origin in the exterior back home. Note that the action of speaking, indicated in the verbal base, does not actually occur in transit, as would normally be the case with the
suffixes of associated motion. However, the underlying schema of motion is ever present in the wider sociocultural context indexed by the construction:

(21) \( Ka \ ji\begin{array}{l} ni \ y\begin{array}{l} a \ \¿ampe=ksï \ \isï \ \ú=k’i?, \text{and} \ DEM.\text{remote} \ \text{already} \ \text{what}=3.\text{PL} \ \text{EMPH} \ \happen=\text{SUBJ.Q} \end{array} \end{array} \\)

‘And what happens to them there?’

\( meni \ \text{ts’}unapiti \ ire\begin{array}{l} \text{kwa} \ \ma \ \text{exe-nt’a-ni} \ \text{enka} \end{array} \\)

‘Well, they find a tough life’

\( no \ \text{má-k’u-e-ni} \ \jás=\text{ka} \ \énka \ \text{máru=teru} \\)

‘that doesn’t resemble what the other’

\( \text{pendeju-echo} \ \text{wanta-nt’a-pu-nkwa-k’a}^{9} \\)

‘jerks come back bragging about.’ (García Marcelino 2004:68-69)

Markedness and Semantic Bleaching

The COME verbs and venitive directional suffixes represent the marked forms for deictic motion. This is due to the fact that the deictic center coincides with the goal of the path, thus providing strong anchoring of a motion event to the moment of utterance. Any motion along a path that is not oriented toward the speaker, or motion whose path is unknown by the speaker, will by pragmatic implicature take the unmarked GO verb and the andative directional suffixes. Similarly, the venitive -\( nkwa \) is the marked form the home base suffixes, for it also anchors the motion event in the goal of motion, as well as in the home base of the figure. Any motion along a path towards a home base that is not coterminous with the deictic center will take -\( nt’a \). The fact that -\( nkwa \) retains a strong

\(^{9}\) Note that -\( nt’a \) in the final word is the grammaticalized frequentative form of the suffix and thus appears in a context unconditioned by the deictic morphemes that would be required for the home base suffix -\( nt’a \).
anchoring in the moment of the speech event is reflected in a small set of phrases that generally refer to natural, cyclical events in cosmological space-time:

(22)  
\[
tata \; jani-kwa \; sóntku \; jano-nkwa-aka
\]
HON rain-NMLZ soon **arrive.here-HB.VEN-FUT-3.IND**
‘The rains will arrive soon’ lit: will come back

(23)  
\[
purhu \; ja-pu-nkwa-s-Ø-ti \; ya
\]
squash be-VEN-HB.VEN-PRF-PRS-3.IND already
‘the squash harvest has arrived’ lit: has come back

(24)  
\[
\text{jano-nkwa-s-Ø-ti} \; jimbahani \; wéxurhini
\]
**arrive.here-HB.VEN-PRF-PRS-3.IND** new year
‘the new year has arrived’ lit: arrived back

(25)  
\[
mántani \; wéxurhini \; warhir-icha \; ménk’u-ksí \; ju-nkwa-sín-Ø-ti
\]
each year dead-PL always-3.PL **come-HB.VEN-HAB-PRS-3.IND**
‘every year the dead come back’ (for the Day of the Dead)

Events such as the arrival of a new year, the coming of annual rains and other predictable natural events characterize a more loosely defined deictic center, whereby the “here” can be defined as a wider cosmological space rather than narrowly defined physical proximity. What remains crucial to the persisting characterization of the event as moving towards the deictic center is the fact that the “here” of the speech event is never disassociated from the “here” of one’s family, household, village, or universe. That is, it is submerged in larger spatio-temporal processes that define an “abstract ‘virtual’ deictic center,” what Haviland terms “pseudo-deixis” (2005:111).

In contrast, the deictically unmarked andative home base suffix -n ’ta has become thoroughly grammaticalized through a process of metaphorical extension and semantic bleaching, whereby it has variously come to refer to reported events separable from the speech event, such as a return to a previous state, a habitual event, or a repeated action. Note the following examples, which contain verbs that are presented in order of
increasing grammaticalization from the spatial domain, characterizing a spatial return to a home base, to the temporal domain of frequently or habitually repeated actions\(^\text{10}\):

(26) a. \textit{intsiku-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} give-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to give’ \\
\hspace{1em} b. \textit{intsiku-nt’a-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} give-FREQ-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to give back’

(27) a. \textit{weko-rhi-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} fall-FORM-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to fall’ (from the sky) \\
\hspace{1em} b. \textit{weko-rhi-nt’a-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} fall-FORM-FREQ-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to fall’ (back to the earth)

(28) a. \textit{ampa-ki-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} good-MID-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to be healthy’ \\
\hspace{1em} b. \textit{ampa-ki-nt’a-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} good-MID-FREQ-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to return to good health’

(29) a. \textit{exe-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} see-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to see’ \\
\hspace{1em} b. \textit{exe-nt’a-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} see-FREQ-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to find’

(30) a. \textit{u-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} do-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to do’ \\
\hspace{1em} b. \textit{u-nt’a-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} do-FREQ-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to do something again, esp. to cook’

(31) a. \textit{p’iku-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} cut-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to cut’ \\
\hspace{1em} b. \textit{p’iku-nt’a-}\textit{ni} \\
\hspace{1em} cut-FREQ-INF \\
\hspace{1em} ‘to harvest’

None of these examples have explicit deictic information in the semantic content of the verb. Evidence points to the fact that through repeated use in contexts in which the deictic center does not coincide with the goal/home base of the mover, \textit{-nt’a} has undergone a de-

\(^{10}\) Note that examples (26b) and (27b) indicate a return to an original location; examples (28b) and (29b) indicate a return to a physical or perceptual state; and examples (30b) and (31b) indicate a return to a frequent or habitual action. These examples suggest that the polysemy of \textit{-nt’a} lies along a cline from a more concrete, physical meaning at one end to a more abstract, aspectual meaning at the other. I have chosen to gloss all of the grammaticalized forms as ‘frequentative’ rather than ‘home base,’” based on their structural distribution with respect to deictic motion morphemes. Thus, while the (b) examples from (26) to (29) retain much of the spatial characteristics inherent to a path schema, they are not deictic in the narrow sense, for they do not depend on the laying down of any specific spatial coordinates with respect to a deictic center or home base landmark for their interpretation.
spatialization and metaphorical extension to more purely temporal semantic domains.

This has resulted in the fact that -nt’a is currently a highly productive morpheme that may be added to practically any verbal base to indicate that the action is repeated or routinely carried out. The semantic change is indicated by the morpheme-by-morpheme gloss of -nt’a as ‘frequentative’ rather than ‘home base.’ This analysis is borne out by the fact that substituting the venitive home base suffix -nkwa for the andative home base suffix -nt’a results in ungrammaticality:

(32) a. intsku-nt’a-ni
   give-FREQ-INF
   ‘to give back’

b. *intsku-nkwa-ni
   give-HB.VEN-INF
   intended: ‘to give back (this way)’

(33) a. weko-rhi-nt’a-ni
   fall-FORM-FREQ-INF
   ‘to fall (back to the earth)’

b. *weko-rhi-nkwa-ni
   fall-FORM-HB.VEN-INF
   intended: ‘to fall (back here)’

However, it must be noted that the distinction between the home base and frequentative meanings of -nt’a is not clear-cut. For example, in the verbs intsku-nt’a-ni ‘to give back’ and weko-rhi-nt’a-ni ‘to fall back to earth,’ -nt’a retains some inherent spatial meaning, despite the fact that the verbs do not contain deictic information. On the other hand, even in cases where the spatial nature of -nt’a has been neutralized, the more abstract semantic property of a home base as a natural resting place has in some sense been preserved. Thus -nt’a represents a kind of metaphorical “returning home” or “returning to the natural state of affairs.” Therefore, -nt’a can serve the function of elaborating fairly abstract verbs such as ‘cut’ and ‘do’ into the more culturally specific meanings ‘harvest’ and ‘cook,’ respectively. Such forms attest to the saliency of motion in the encompassing cultural schemas that underlie the talk about everyday life. Such schemas share with the spatial representations of the motion verbs an underlying conceptualization of a path, one that
leads people through the natural course of events in the cyclical routines of daily and seasonal life.

**Returning Versus Going Home**

It is important to note that the morphemes -nkwa and -nt’a mark more than just a return trip, for the goal of the movement must be conceived of as a socially significant home base. This can be observed in the following examples. The first example describes a return trip using the non-deictic motion verb *kw’anha* ‘to return.’ In this example the figure is simply retracing her steps, in this case returning for a book she has left at school.

Note that since the verb is non-deictic, it does not index any pragmatic information about the speech event, such as the location of the speaker or home base of the figure:11

(34)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>María</th>
<th><em>kw’anhati</em>-s-Ø-ti</th>
<th><em>jorhe-nkwarhi-kwa-rhu</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>return-PRF-PRS-3.IND</td>
<td>teach-REFL-NMLZ-LOC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘María went back to school’ (to get her book)

The next two examples frame a different kind of event in which the motion is characterized as directed towards a home base, in this case the school of the student. In this case the figure is returning to a “home away from home” after a period of time away during summer vacation:

(35)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>María</th>
<th><em>ni-nt’a</em>-s-Ø-ti</th>
<th><em>jorhe-nkwarhi-kwa-rhu</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>María</td>
<td>go-HB.AND-PRF-PRS-3.IND</td>
<td>teach-REFL-NMLZ-LOC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘María went back to school’ (i.e., after summer vacation)

---

11 Examples (34), (35), and (36) were elicited by asking speakers to characterize return trips to locations that could alternately be conceptualized as home bases or non-home bases, such as school, workplace, or church. In naturally occurring speech there is some overlap between the deictic and non-deictic verbs when making reference to return trips. Further research will aim to clarify with more precision their distribution within the context of the speech event.
As the previous examples show, it is possible for -nt’a and -nkwa to be used to describe motion with respect to more than one home base. In fact, Juan, whose family emigrated to Baja California twenty years ago, announced one day that he would be “going back home” to his natal village for a visit and “coming back home” to Baja California a few weeks later:

(37) pawani ni-nt’a-a-ka=ni juchinio japonta-rhu ka
    Tomorrow go-HB.AND-FUT=1.IND home.1SG lake-LOC and
    ‘Tomorrow I’m going back home to Janitzio (at the lake) and
    ju-nkwa-a-ka=ni ma témbini juriteka-rhu máyu-ni
    come-HB.VEN-FUT=1.IND=1.SG one ten day-LOC May-OBJ
    I will come back on the tenth of May.’

The GO verb and the COME verb are obligatorily marked with the -nt’a and -nkwa suffixes. In this statement Juan explicitly marks his trip to his natal village with the word juchinio ‘my home.’ However, the use of -nkwa with the verbal root ju to make reference to the return trip indexes his current home in Baja California as a home base as well.

Such back and forth movement between two home bases as encoded in the deictic motion verbs is also commonly used at the local village level by married women in transit between their current home and that of their parents, which continues to serve as a home base after they have moved out to live with their husbands’ families. The linguistic marking of multiple home bases are also common for P’urhepecha who have moved to nearby cities to work, but who often return to their villages on the weekends. Such identification with multiple home bases contrasts with a more lopsided sense of
belonging, poetically rendered in the voice of an immigrant far from home in the *pirekwa*

“Adiós California,” presented in the opening epigraph:

(38)  

a.  

\[ \text{adiosu kalifórnia} \quad \text{goodbye California} \]

‘goodbye California’

b.  

\[ \text{adiosu kalifórnia ji ni-ra-sín-ka ya.} \]

\[ \text{goodbye California 1.SG go-FORM-HAB.PRS-1.IND already} \]

‘goodbye California, I’m leaving now.’

c.  

\[ \text{ji ni-ra-sín-ka ni-nt’a-ni,} \]

\[ \text{1.SG go-FORM-HAB.PRS-1.IND go-HB.AND-INF} \]

‘I’m going home,’

d.  

\[ \text{ji ni-ra-sín-ka ni-nt’a-ni,} \]

\[ \text{1.SG go-FORM-HAB.PRS-1.IND go-HB.AND-INF} \]

‘I’m going home’

e.  

\[ \text{jucheeti amigu-echa-ni sáni exeni.} \]

\[ \text{POSS.1SG friend-PL-OBJ a.little see} \]

‘to see my friends.’

f.  

\[ \text{nántika=ni kw’anhatši-k’a} \]

\[ \text{maybe=1.SG return-SBJV} \]

‘maybe I’ll return,’

g.  

\[ \text{nántika=ni kw’anhatši-k’a ménteru ya} \]

\[ \text{maybe=1.SG return-SBJV again already} \]

‘maybe I’ll return again.’

The return home, as dramatized in the *pirekwa*, is marked by the verb *ni* ‘to go’ with the home base suffix *-nt’a*, in lines c and d, while the return back to California is characterized by the non-deictic verb *kw’anhatši*, in lines f and g, which lacks any home base suffix. Accordingly, if the singer wished to convey a level of identification with California, one would expect the last two lines of the stanza to include the verb *junkwa* ‘come home’ rather than *kw’anhatši* ‘return.’
Coming Back Home to Oregon

At the turn of the P’urhepecha New Year, a flyer was sent out as an attachment on an email list subscribed to by a significant number of people in the P’urhepecha community. The flyer reads:

\[(39)\]  
\[\text{ju-nkwa-Ø} \quad \text{je} \quad \text{iemindu-echa} \quad \text{ero-nt’a-ni}\]  
\[\text{come-HB.VEN-IMP} \quad \text{PL.IMP} \quad \text{every-PL} \quad \text{wait-FREQ-INF}\]  
‘Everyone come (home) to await

\[\text{jimbanh-erha-nt’a-ni} \quad \text{jucha-ri} \quad \text{Tata} \quad \text{Chijpirhi-ni}\]  
\[\text{new-FORM-FREQ-INF} \quad \text{I.PL-POSS} \quad \text{HON} \quad \text{fire-OBJ}\]  
the rekindling of our Father Fire’

\[\text{Les hacemos un llamado a vivir la renovación del abuelo-padre fuego}\]  
‘We invite everyone to experience the rekindling of the Grandfather-Father Fire’

This statement was emitted from a member of an immigrant enclave living in the state of Oregon, over two thousand miles from his home community in Michoacán, Mexico. The verb \text{junkwa} ‘come home’ explicitly refers to motion directed towards one’s home or place of origin. The flyer presumably was targeted to friends, families and acquaintances living in other migrant communities within the vicinity in the Pacific Northwest and California. However, the e-mail list on which the flyer was sent includes a large membership among the home communities in Michoacán. As the message is directed towards “everyone,” the statement implies that the location of utterance would be host to a festive homecoming, drawing the local P’urhepecha communities together back to a common origin. It is worth noting that the Spanish gloss included on the flyer does not include any deictic information. Assuming that the same person wrote both renderings of the announcement, one might deduce that the P’urhepecha usage reflects a framing of the event that is not salient in the coding of the same event in Spanish. It is my thesis that
routine fields of activity in P’urhepecha society embody a socio-spatial framework that would make such a statement quite apt, despite the historical and geographic novelty of the conditions of the speech utterance (electronic mail communication, trans-continental pathways, et cetera). Such a convergence of migrant P’urhepecha might be metonymically tied to the temporal metaphor of the arriving “coming new year” as is grammatically encoded in socially significant cyclical events. Pan-P’urhepecha celebrations may widen the scale of the home base beyond the village level to an all-encompassing deictic center characterizing a shared spatio-temporal origin. The social identity that binds members to a common origin, together with sense of cyclical motion, both spatial and temporal, anchored in the new year ritual, creates a sense of “coming back.” Much of this information does not lie within the domain of purely referential function of the language, but rather relies on nuanced indexical relationships that bind together families and villages to a common past and long-term, interweaving trajectories.

The category of deictic motion in the P’urhepecha verb provides a rich source of indexical expressivity. On the one hand, home base markers index social identity, for they establish and maintain links between the identities of figures in motion and the people who find themselves at their home bases. On the other hand, home base markers index temporal relations inherent to social actors’ trajectories. For example, the indexical anchoring of one’s birthplace spans a lifetime while adopted residences become imbued with such value through repetition and habit. Thus motion deictics do not simply make a distinction between motion towards speaker or not towards speaker. Rather they provide a spatial framework, enmeshed in habitual talk through the ubiquity of the home base indexicals that consistently code the socially significant space as a primary reference
point. Thus any motion along a path is simultaneously indicated with respect to two reference points, both the location of the speaker and the origin of the figure, whether permanent or temporary. I argue that this grammatical feature indexes the wider social relationships between speaker and figure. This grammatically encoded expression of privileged knowledge relating to another’s origin or home plays an important role in defining a sense of self within the social body, defining where one is in relation to another’s natural place, family and community.

**Home and Movement**

It has been shown that P’urhepecha grammar reflects a cultural schema that characterizes home base landmarks as prototypical goals of motion through deictic motion verbs. That is, reference to movement towards a goal construed as a habitually lived space is obligatorily marked with deictic motion verbs or suffixes, in concatenation with a home base suffix. But how relevant is speaking about motion to the more encompassing social construction of home and belonging among P’urhepecha speakers? In a discussion of Korowai landownership and belonging in Papua New Guinea, Stasch stresses that in order to understand experiences of dwelling it is necessary to understand it within the context of movement. He writes, “their (the Korowai’s) lives and social networks are histories of motion,” and that “dwelling and movement are mutually implicated correlates, rather than mutually exclusive opposites… there is an internal relation between practices of people living on land of their own and people living on places where their sense of belonging is limited or tenuous” (2009:33). Similarly, Westman notes that the concept of home is not a static concept, but rather is established
through repetition of movement that becomes ritual. He writes, “home is a complex concept dealing with movement… The geographical space is connected to the social space with the help of the mythic-ritual system, where the social becomes spatial – the spatial becomes social. The home is what takes place for a time, and thus, essentially, it is to dwell in the movement” (1995:73). The temporal dimension also plays an important role, as the sense of home accrues significance through patterns of repetition: “it is in the relation to time that cultural subjectivity appears, or perhaps it is in the ‘work up’ of the relation between time and space that culture shows its face. The ritual of home is the ‘place’ of action where this work finds its manifestation, the intersection of events in time and places” (2009:74, italics in original). Indeed, the home base, as a constant place of belonging grounded within dynamic trajectories of movement, can often take on a quality of familiarity that is difficult to distinguish from the subjective I/here/now of the deictic center. For example, Schiffrin writes, “For some scholars, nouns like neighbor have a deictic component simply because they evoke someone who lives close to one’s home base” (2006:336). The conflation of home and self becomes reinforced through language patterns that make explicit the social relationships underlying reference to motion.

Linguistic practices form a part of larger cultural processes, and even the representation of seemingly abstract categories such as time and space cannot be divorced from patterns of use in context. Thus, as Agha notes, deictic reference is a culturally mediated practice that ties the moment of utterance to larger historical and social patterns of usage: “a categorical interpretation of deictic forms is, invariably, a sociologically centered model of their construal in use. All linguistic categories, and therefore all deictic categories, are categories-for a particular social domain of language users (a
sociohistorical population of users)” (2007:47). Thus, language patterns employed in everyday talk are formed out of larger historical discourses rooted in the experiences of real people in real places through time. By examining specific details of grammatical structure, investigators may make empirical observations and theorize based on concrete habitual patterns of shared representations that reflect the social processes that motivate them. For language functions not only as a representation of thought, but also as a tool for semiotic action. As sedimented action, grammar consists of perduring structures useful for making the kinds of distinctions that a community of language users habitually employs in order to get things done. Du Bois writes, “Grammars provide the most economical coding mechanisms (the highest ‘codability’, the least marked forms) for those speech functions which speakers most often need to perform. More succinctly: Grammars code best what speakers do most” (1985:361-363).

P’urhepecha can be seen to have developed an elaborate coding mechanism for representing subtle distinctions of movement. In fact, the morphological slot reserved for the encoding of associated motion as a basic verbal category provides an economical way of including such information without the need to resort to further lexical specification outside the verb. And importantly, the indexing of home base is an integral part of the category of deictic motion in the P’urhepecha language. Munnich et al note, “Slobin (1996) has argued that as we speak, the dominant patterns of our languages cause us to attend to certain aspects of the world and not to others – ‘thinking for speaking’” (2001:174). The evolution of the P’urhepecha grammatical category of deictic motion has resulted in an economic encoding of the culturally pertinent aspects of the world that form implicit conceptual maps in spoken discourse. These maps permeate everyday talk
and perpetuate the saliency of motion with respect to physical and social space, both at the micro level of the speech event, via deictic morphemes, and the macro level of the speech community, via home base morphemes. Thus, when viewed within fields of indexical relations, it becomes clear that grammatical structures making up the category of deictic motion do much more than make reference to objects moving through space. Rather, they provide a mechanism for tracking the trajectories of people to and from those inhabited spaces that make up the primary nodes of the social worlds they share.

Physical and Social Space

Levinson attributes the special role that spatial cognition plays in more general cognitive faculties to our evolution as embodied beings in the physical world. He writes that spatial cognition must be the “evolutionarily earliest domain of systematic cross-modal cognition: any animal needs to relate what its eyes, ears and limbs tell it about the immediate structure of the world around it – foraging, avoiding predators and finding home-base require this” (2003:xvii). Indeed there is evidence that utilizing allocentric frames of reference for wayfinding that rely on environmental landmarks is a more basic evolutionary strategy than egocentric frames of reference. Experiments with lower primates and young children have shown that they primarily rely on environmental cues of allocentric frames of reference for orientation (Haun et al 2006). However, language has provided humans with the capacity to represent multiple systems of spatial orientation simultaneously, including deictic relations. Dirven et al state,

Given the universality of human bodily experience, it is not astonishing that corporeal deixis should constitute the default case (of spatial cognition). But as a more refined conception of embodiment, the notion of
situated embodiment incorporates and integrates man’s physical and social environment in his or her holistic bodily experience. [2006:1217]

The combination of deictic and home base markers in everyday talk about motion provides P’urhepecha speakers shared mental maps that simultaneously integrate egocentric (or shifting person-centric) frames of reference and frames of reference centering around fixed landmarks. Furthermore, the multivariate mapping of physical and social space is also achieved through the formal distinction of two home base markers, whereby the suffixes -nkwa and -nt’a simultaneously index the mover’s home base and the perspective of the interlocutors at the moment of utterance.

While much has been written on a wide range of issues concerning space, language and cognition, I argue that there is more to be said about language and motion within the context of the cultural patterning of everyday experience. Thus, relations of movement, while more complex than static spatial relations in purely abstract terms, may actually play a more primary role in the complex of embodied cultural practices that includes language. Filipi and Wales write:

Recently, a number of researchers have pointed to the gaps in the traditional distance parameter and a view of the indexical framework as fixed...Although the interests of these researchers differ, they share a consensus that it is necessary to ground analyses of deixis within a social context by examining speaker attitudes to both referent and addressee as speakers interact. These are features that have been marginalized in traditional geographical and temporal accounts of deixis. [2009:58]

Filipi and Wales cite Kataoka (2004), noting that in his study of the Japanese COME and GO verbs, the deictic verbs of motion provide both indexical cohesion, in a Hallidayan sense (Halliday and Hasan 1976), and interactional cohesion.\textsuperscript{12} That is, deictic verbs not

\textsuperscript{12}“Cohesion,” write Halliday and Hasan, “occurs where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another” (Halliday and Hasan 1976:4).
only function to maintain narrative coherence in a text, they actually play an active role in the unfolding speech event itself. They not only ground the speech in a shared sociocultural context, but also tend to “reflect speakers’ emergent social stances to each other in the ongoing exchange” (2009:58). An approach to understanding reference to motion that focuses on dynamic processes at both the level of the speech event and the wider social domain will be useful in future studies of immigrant P’urhepecha speakers. This research could potentially show how novel spatial and social circumstances surrounding the immigrant experience are reflected in language practices.

**Conclusion and Future Directions**

In my thesis I have provided a general outline of how P’urhepecha index physical and social conceptions of space through quotidian linguistic practices. Future work will determine with more precision how these practices are adapted to new physical and social spaces. As people come to inhabit new spaces, they are confronted with contexts and situations that are very different from those in which traditional linguistic practices evolved. It will be important to determine how discourse practices may reflect these changes. Haviland states, “As people’s lives change, as their senses of self evolve and their worlds shift, they leave discursive tracks” (2005:92). Talking about motion is an everyday activity that is grounded in the physical, conceptual and social worlds people inhabit. Linguistic practices based on habitual patterns of deictic verb and home base suffix usage are thus closely tied to relationships between the place of utterance and

The authors identify several textual devices employed in order to maintain coherence and create meaning, both at the level of grammatical structure and lexical content. These devices include lexical cohesion, reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction.
zones of owned territory, as well as relationships between interlocutors and those whose motion they describe. The elements of a scene that form the context of a linguistically encoded description of motion may become drastically altered in the context of the immigrant experience. Wassmman and Stockhouse write:

In nonroutine situations, meaning new or unforeseen, problem solving involves finding new solutions to the given task, yet this necessarily depends on the use of preexisting cognitive resources, and, therefore, on cultural schemata and other aspects of the habitus. Thus, creativity and innovation under novel cultural circumstances always involves the use and transformation of preexisting cognitive resources. By the logic of the relationship between habitus, personhood and place, the creative reconstitution of place leads to a reconfiguration of the habitus. [2007:8]

For P’urhepecha immigrants, centuries-old patterns of movement between nested relations of household, barrio, village and region have transformed within a generation into transnational networks of movement. In his study of P’urhepecha in Cobden, Illinois, Anderson (2004) notes that the extended family and the close relations between multiple generations allows for patterns of home base networks in the diaspora. However, he notes, “features of P’urhépecha life in Cobden form a cluster of amenities that, with effort, could be re-created elsewhere – but not without time and a sedentariness that runs counter to migrant cycles” (2004:376). Preliminary fieldwork with P’urhepecha immigrants in California has pointed to some interesting possibilities for research. Widely contrasting attitudes of speakers toward their existence in the U.S. has been observed. Such attitudes most likely color their sense of belonging, which might result in interesting comparative data in the distribution of the home base suffixes. Other factors, such as the amount of time spent in the U.S., the frequency of return trips to Mexico, the extent of family networks in the U.S., and the level of mobility as seasonal agricultural laborers may all play a role. Ultimately, examining how immigrant P’urhepecha talk
about motion and home bases should be a fruitful area of research, providing an increased understanding of the relationships between language, space and social relations.

It has been shown that analyses of everyday talk about coming and going may provide insights into how such talk reflects privileged knowledge, such as where someone lives and the level of identification with places of habitation. Specifically, I have shown how an analysis of a few verbal roots and suffixes provides a wealth of empirical data that may be used to quantify the kinds of attitudes speakers with respect to the people and places in their environment. This study has attempted to lay the groundwork for future work among immigrants living far from their home villages. A comparison of the distribution of these verbal roots and suffixes will reflect emerging discursive strategies, providing a litmus test for changing cultural models of place and belonging. P’urhepecha migrants continue to engage in traditional cultural practices that organize physical and social space, while at the same time adapting to changing conditions. In this work I have shown that the grammar of the P’urhepecha language provides a window into the P’urhepecha culture, for the use of deictic motion verbs and directional suffixes in everyday talk provides a running commentary on underlying cultural schemas that structure speakers’ lives. Future descriptions and analyses of this specific domain of language in use should provide further insight to the larger cultural implications of the immigrant experience. It is hoped that such work will elucidate both how language reflects such changes and how it serves as a mediating force for P’urhepecha as they negotiate uncharted territory.
Appendix A: List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>first person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>second person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>third person</td>
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<td>AND</td>
<td>andative</td>
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<td>future</td>
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<tr>
<td>HAB</td>
<td>habitual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB</td>
<td>home base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HON</td>
<td>honorific</td>
</tr>
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<td>negation, negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>VEN</td>
<td>venitive</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Transcription Conventions

The practical orthography in this text is based on a combination of Latin based characters and indigenous innovations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonants</th>
<th>Vowels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</table>

Stress marking follows the following convention: words with no accent markings carry stress on the second syllable. Accent marks represent stress realized on a different syllable, usually the first.
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Bourdieu, Pierre
Bühler, Karl

Bybee, Joan.

Bybee, Joan, Revere Perkins, and William Pagliuca

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Chambers, Iain

Chamoreau, Claudine

Clark, Eve V.

Csordas, Thomas J.


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