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Irreality in Q'eqchi' (Mayan)

ABSTRACT: This paper discusses the semantic domain of irreality and the grammatical means of its expression in Q'eqchi', a Mayan language from Guatemala. Three morphosyntactic devices are examined in detail: the prefix *t-* from the tense/aspect/mood paradigm, the "status" suffix *-q/-aq* and some second-position clitics. Due to the significant structural and functional diversity of the irreality markers, it is argued that Q'eqchi' does not distinguish a morphologically homogeneous grammatical category of "reality status", traditionally postulated in some American indigenous languages. The respective semantic functions are not encompassed in a sole category, but are rather distributed among different grammatical and lexical items. However, the importance of the semantic domain of irreality in Q'eqchi' grammar should not be completely discarded. The morphosyntactic interconnection between certain grammatical elements (like the suffix *-q/-aq*, which is triggered on intransitive verbs by the prefix *t-*) and the diachronic semantic change of some clitics (for example, the enclitic *ta* changed its meaning from optative to counterfactual) are arranged according to semantic principles within the irreality domain.
KEYWORDS: Q'eqchi'; Mayan languages; Irrealis; Modality; Guatemala.

RESUMEN: En este escrito se examina el dominio semántico de irrealidad y los medios gramaticales de su expresión en q'eqchi', un idioma de la familia maya que se habla en Guatemala. Se describen tres elementos morfosintácticos: el prefijo *t-* del paradigma de tiempo/aspecto/modo, el sufijo de "estatus" *-q/-aq* y algunos clíticos de segunda posición. Considerando la gran diversidad estructural y funcional de los marcadores de irrealidad, se argumenta que la gramática q'eqchi' no distingue morfológicamente homogénea categoría de "estatus de realidad" ("reality status", en inglés). Las respectivas funciones semánticas no están abarcadas por una sola categoría, sino se distribuyen entre distintos elementos gramaticales y léxicos. Sin embargo, la importancia del dominio semántico de irrealidad en la gramática q'eqchi' no debe ser descartada por completo. La interconexión morfosintáctica entre algunos marcadores gramaticales (como el sufijo *-q/-aq* que aparece en los verbos intransitivos siempre y cuando está el prefijo *t-*) y el cambio diacrónico de algunos clíticos (por ejemplo, el enclítico *ta* cambió su significado del optativo a contrafactual) se realiza conforme con principios semánticos dentro del marco del dominio de irrealidad.
PALABRAS CLAVE: Q'eqchi'; Lenguas mayas; Irrealis; Modalidad; Guatemala.

1. The Q'eqchi' language

Q'eqchi' is a Mayan language of the K'ichean branch. It is spoken by approximately one million people in Guatemala,[1] mainly in the departments of Alta Verapaz, Petén, Izabal, Baja Verapaz and El Quiché, as well as in the Toledo District in Belize. This is a huge territory that includes Central and Northern Guatemala, just in between the mountainous highland area in the central part of the country and the low-lying rainforest plains in the extreme north.

In spite of its large number of speakers and territorial extension, Q'eqchi' has not received thorough linguistic attention, unlike some other Mayan languages like Yucatec, Tzotzil or K'iche', for instance. The primary reason for this is the peripheral geographical position of the Q'eqchi' area, too close to the sparsely populated territories around the frontier between Mexico and Guatemala and too far from the main transport corridors. Nevertheless, there are some grammatical descriptions of Q'eqchi' (Stewart 1980, Cu Caal 1997), several studies of dialectical variation (DeChicchis 1989; Caz Cho 2007) and a number of vocabularies (Sedat 1955; Haeserijn 1979; Cú Cab 1998, among others). Besides that, there are some documents from the colonial epoch (ranging from the 16th to 18th centuries) written in Q'eqchi', including two grammatical descriptions; cf. Vinogradov (2017). Apart from analyzing the information provided in the abovementioned sources, the present study is based on the author's own field work data obtained during three research stays in the Q'eqchi'-speaking area between 2014 and 2016.[2]

2. The category of reality status: a cross-linguistic "standard"

The category of reality status has been one of the most debated linguistic categories in the last few decades. Some authors (for instance, Bybee 1998 and de Haan 2012) reject its validity as a cross-linguistically comparable concept for typological studies, restricting its applicability only to purposes of individual language description. Meanwhile, some other authors (for instance, Mithun 1995; Elliott 2000; Palmer 2001 and Plungian 2005) present arguments in favor of the validity of this category for cross-linguistic comparison, particularly when one is dealing with indigenous languages of the Americas (cf. Mithun 1999; Müller 2013 and Danielsen & Terhart 2015).

There are some languages with a clear binary opposition between two types of verb forms; the semantic difference between them is somewhere in the neighborhood of the concept of the (ir)reality of the described situation. This grammatical opposition is commonly labeled "reality status", and the two members comprising the paradigm are "realis" and "irrealis". The main problem here is an absence of strict definitions of reality

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and irreality. Mithun (1999: 173) proposes the following method of defining the "irrealis" member of the opposition: it "portrays situations as purely within the realm of thought, knowable only through imagination". Thereby, it is opposed to the "realis" member, which "portrays situations as actualized, as having occurred or actually occurring, knowable through direct perception". Elliott (2000: 66-67) defines the same concepts in other words: "a realis proposition prototypically asserts that an event or state is an actualized or certain fact of reality", while "an irrealis proposition prototypically implies an event belongs to the realm of the imagined or hypothetical, and as such it constitutes a potential or possible event but it is not an observable fact of reality".

The category of reality status appears to be an "over-category", imposed upon a wide range of other categories, constructions and grammatical meanings. Bugenhagen (1993), for example, provides the following, highly heterogeneous list of meanings that may (or may not) belong to the semantic scope of the irrealis in the languages of New Guinea: future tense, purpose, obligation, apprehensive, habitual, hypothetical condition, desire, imperative, uncertainty, present tense, counterfactual condition, possibility, prohibitive, negation and past tense. Elliott (2000: 70) provides another list of "frequent targets for irrealis marking", which is also notably heterogeneous: "potential events, events whose occurrence is dependent on certain conditions being fulfilled (conditionals), including counterfactuals, events which are qualified by modality, and commands". She also adds some other semantic contexts to this list "where, in at least some languages, irrealis marking has saliency": negation, habituals and interrogatives. Some authors prefer not just to list the irrealis meanings and sometimes distinguish between more and less common ones, but also postulate semantic implications; cf. Bowern (1998) for a hierarchy of irrealis meanings. One way or another, the resulting semantic description is not universal. Moreover, as de Haan (2012) shows, the realis in one individual language may encode meanings which are encoded by the irrealis in some other individual languages, and vice versa; that is to say, the categories labeled "irrealis" in two different languages may semantically have nothing in common.

Concerning the languages of the Mayan family, the category of reality status is almost never identified, and neither are the markers of "realis". However, the "irrealis markers" are constantly reported in language-specific descriptions and in cross-family comparative studies; cf. Sachse & Dürr (2016) and Henderson (2016). For example, Hofling (1998) speaks about "dependent (irrealis) status" suffixes in Itza' (Ex. 1), Becquey (2014) identifies the suffixes of the "irreal mood" in Ch'olan languages (Ex. 2), Robertson (1992) analyzes pan-Mayan dependent status suffixes as markers of the "optative mood" and Polian (2007) deals with the category of irrealis in Tzeltal in a diachronic and comparative perspective, but without contrasting it with the category of realis.

(1) Itza' (Hofling 1991: 76, #12-13)[3]

t-in-wa'al-ah	ti'ih	ka'	meyah-n-**ak**	ka'	p'e	k'in
COM-1SG-say-DPM	3IO.PR	SUB	work-DETRAN-**IRREAL**	two	INAM	day

'I told him to work two days.'

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[3] In examples (1)-(4), I intentionally retain the interlinear glosses proposed in the cited sources even though they do not correspond to the abbreviations I use in this paper hereafter. The translations of (2) from French and (4) from Spanish into English are my own.

(2) Ch'orti' (Becquey 2014: 590)

akta-n	u-pak'-**i'k**	ixim
let-IMP[-3B]	3A-plant-**IRR**[-3B]	maize

'Let him plant maize!'

The enclitic *ta* (*taj* or *taq* in some languages), which is typical of the Mayan languages of the K'ichean subgroup, and which is mostly (but not uniquely) used in negative contexts, is sometimes also analyzed as an irrealis marker; see (3) and (4).

(3) K'iche' (Can Pixabaj & England 2011: 18)

are	r-in-taat	x-i'l-ow-ik	in	na	x-ø-inw-il	**taj**
EMPH	DET-A1s-father	CPL-B3P+see-AP-SS	1SPRO	NEG	CPL-B3s-A1s-see	**IRR**

'…it was my parents who saw it, I didn't see.'

(4) Sakapulteko (Mó Isém 2006: 86)

k-at-r-a'n	**ta**	respetar
INC-A2s-E3s-do	**IRR**	respect

'S/he does not respect you.'

In both cases, whether one is dealing with a suffix (1, 2) or an enclitic (3, 4), what is called "irrealis" is not opposed with any other morphological element (overt or non-overt) that could function as a marker of "realis". In this respect, Q'eqchi' is of particular interest within the Mayan family, since it has at least five different morphemes which, with a greater or lesser degree of reserve, may be treated as irrealis markers; some of them may also have a "realis" counterpart. In addition, the verbal system of Q'eqchi' is sometimes analyzed as primarily modal system (cf. DeChicchis 1996), as opposed to most Mayan verbal systems which are traditionally considered as either primarily aspectual – see Kaufman (1974: 62) and Campbell et al. (1986: 551) – or as semantically mixed systems including meanings from the domains of both aspect and relative tenses; cf. Vinogradov (2016). This fact makes Q'eqchi' even more important when studying grammatical expressions of reality and irreality in a Mayan language.

3. Possible irrealis markers in Q'eqchi'

This section describes at some length the morphemes that could be considered as "candidates" for irrealis markers in Q'eqchi'. These morphemes are:

- the tense/aspect/mood prefix *t-*/*ti-*/*taa-* (Section 3.1);

- the cross-categorial suffix *-q*/*-aq* (Section 3.2);

- some second-position clitics: *raj*, *na*, *xaq* and *ta* (Section 3.3).[4]

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[4] By glossing the examples in this section, I do not provide any labels for the abovementioned morphemes. A discussion of their possible semantic interpretation is offered in Section 4. The list of abbreviations can be found at the end of the paper.

All of these morphemes convey meanings that usually feature among frequent targets of irrealis marking in cross-linguistic studies.

3.1. The tense/aspect/mood prefix t-/ti-/taa-

The prefix *t-* is one of the tense/aspect/mood prefixes attached to every finite verb form, both transitive and intransitive. Depending on the following absolute or ergative personal marker, this prefix may also appear as *taa-* or *ti-*.[5]

This grammatical marker has been the subject of a considerable variety of (sometimes quite contradictory) semantic interpretations in different works on the Q'eqchi' verb, and remains a challenge for further investigations. Stewart (1979: 188) labels this prefix "future definite" and attributes to it three main functions. According to this author, this prefix indicates "(1) a non-immediate future time as opposed to an action which will take place immediately; and/or (2) an aspect of definiteness or certainty that the action will take place; and/or (3) an attitude of intention or purpose on the part of the agent of the verb". DeChicchis (1996: 62-63) describes the semantics of this prefix as being determined by "the speaker's prediction of a future event"; he adds that "this prediction may be either an indication of the speaker's intention to do something […] or an indication of the speaker's assessment of the possibility of doing something". Kockelman (2006: 72), on the contrary, analyzes this prefix as a simple future tense operator that does not encode modality (unlike the set of post-verbal clitics discussed below in Section 3.3). Finally, Caz Cho (2007: 71) labels the same marker "proximate potential", apparently referring to both the modal and temporal components of its meaning. Some examples of the use of the prefix *t-* are presented in (5).[6]

(5) a. anaqwan   **t**-in-k'e   aw-e   li   isb'   a'in
         now   *t*-1SG.ERG-give   2SG.POSS-DAT   DEF   jacket   DEM
         'Now, I will give you this jacket.'

     b. **t**-aa-sib't-es   aaw-ib'   r-e   naq
         t-2SG.ERG-fumigate-CAUS   2SG.POSS-REFL   3SG.POSS-DAT   CONJ
         t-at-k'ir-aq
         t-2SG.ABS-get.better-*aq*
         'Fumigate yourself so that you will get better.'

When the verb is intransitive, as is the second verb form in (5b), the prefix *t-* triggers the suffix *-q/-aq* (see Section 3.2 below for more details), which is absent when the verb is transitive, as in (5a). The prefix *t-* and its allomorphs are in complementary distribution with other tense/aspect/mood markers of the same paradigm, such as *n-/na-/nak-* "present habitual" or "incomplete", *k-/ki-* "past remote" or "remote completive", *ch-/chi-* "optative" or "remote potential", and others; see Stewart (1979) and Vinogradov (2015) for a more detailed discussion of the members of the tense/aspect/mood paradigm in Q'eqchi'.

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[5] Caz Cho (2007) analyzes the vowels of these allomorphs as epenthetic and considers the prefix *t-* as an invariable morpheme.

[6] If no source is indicated for an example, this means that it comes from my own field work data.

3.2. The cross-categorial "status" suffix -q/-aq

The notion of "status" was introduced into the Mayan linguistic tradition by Terrence Kaufman (cf. Kaufman & Norman 1984; Kaufman 1990), but it has been reasonably criticized for being too vague and semantically obscure. However, an alternative term, the "category suffix" (used in Caz Cho 2007, for instance), seems to be even less adequate. The same set of suffixes in K'iche' is sometimes called "modal markers" (cf. Dürr 1987) or "phrase final markers" (cf. Romero 2006). In what follows, I will speak about "status", expecting not to confuse it or equate it with the term "reality status", which was introduced in Section 2.

In Q'eqchi', the suffix -q/-aq is in opposition with the other suffix -k/-Vk within the grammatical status distinction. They are mutually exclusive and cannot both appear on the same verb form.[7] However, these suffixes differ with respect to their morphosyntactic behavior: the latter suffix may sometimes be omitted depending on the syntactic and phonological position of the verb form, while the former may not; see Henderson (2012) for more discussion on this phenomenon, which apparently embraces all the K'ichean subgroup.

With respect to finite verbs, the choice between two status suffixes is primarily conditioned by the tense/aspect/mood prefix. As was shown in the previous section, the prefix *t-* triggers the suffix -q/-aq on intransitive verbs (6a). The same is true for the prefix *ch-/chi-* ("optative" / "remote potential"), even when the verb is transitive (6b). But, for example, the prefix *nak-* ("present" / "incompletive") is always only combined with the other suffix, -k/-Vk (6c).

(6) a. wi **t**-oo-k'anjel-**aq**   t-oo-wa'-aq
         if *t*-1PL.ABS-work-*aq*   *t*-1PL.ABS-eat-*aq*
         'If we work, we eat.'

     b. **ch**-in-e'-kuy-**aq**
         OPT-1SG.ABS-2PL.ERG-forgive-*aq*
         'Forgive (pl.) me.'

     c. wan-k=eb' ajwi'   li   kok'-al   **nak**-e'-k'anjel-**ak**
         exist-*k*=PL also   DEF   little-AGT   PRES-3PL.ABS-work-*ak*
         'There are also children who work.'

In (6), the status suffixes seem to (almost) lack their proper semantics, being just a kind of morphosyntactic "supplement" to the tense/aspect/mood prefixes. Nevertheless, when the predicate is non-verbal, and consequently has no tense/aspect/mood inflection, the same suffixes become significant. This contrast is illustrated in (7).

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[7] Note, however, that Stewart (1979: 194) reports that some non-verbal predicates can take the suffixes -*kaq* and -*qaq*. DeChicchis (1996: 69) analyzes them as combinations of two suffixes: -*k* + -*aq* and -*q* + -*aq*, respectively.

(7) a. wan-**k**=in   arin
         exist-***k***=1SG.ABS   here
         'I am here.'

     b. ti-x-choy   x-junes   malaj   wan-**q**   r-ochb'en
         t-3SG.ERG-finish   3SG.POSS-alone   or   exist-***q***   3SG.POSS-companion
         '[The owner of the field decides whether] he finishes [harvesting] alone or with companions.'

The situation described by the existential predicate *wan* in (7a) is taking place at the moment of utterance, and the predicate receives the suffix *-k*. In (7b), the same predicate describes a possible and somewhat doubtful situation that does not belong to the real world at the moment of utterance; consequently, the suffix *-k* changes into *-q*. Stewart (1979) interprets the semantic contrast between these two suffixes in terms of a temporal opposition of "future" vs. "non-future". DeChicchis (1996: 69) argues that the main factor in deciding which of two suffixes to use is the semantic component of a change of state; the suffix *-k/-Vk* carries no indication of this, whereas the suffix *-q/-aq* is used to indicate change of state. According to this author, the greater use of the latter suffix in statements about future events may be explained by pragmatic factors.

As well as in the case of finite verbs, depending on the particular type of non-verbal predicate, the suffix *-k/-Vk* may sometimes be omitted, as in (8a) contrasting with (8b).

(8) a. arin   sa'   li   tenamit   Kob'an   **wan**   li   ha'   Kaab'on
         here   PREP   DEF   town   Coban   **exist** DEF   river Cahabon
         nak-e'x-yee   r-e
         PRES-3PL.ERG-say   3SG.POSS-DAT
         'Here in the town of Coban, there is a river, which name is Cahabon.'

     b. **wan-k**   jun   imul   sa'   li   b'e
         exist-*k*   INDEF   rabbit   PREP   DEF   road
         'There is a rabbit on the road.'

This phonosyntactic property may be explained from the perspective of markedness: the meaning of the suffix *-k/-Vk* is apparently less specific than that of the suffix *-q/-aq*, and therefore the first suffix appears less marked on a morphosyntactic level. However, it is obligatory to use this suffix with some predicates when they are followed by another morpheme, usually a plural or personal clitic. This is the case in (7a), for example, where the form *wan=in* instead of *wan-k=in* would be ungrammatical. This feature is exactly opposite to what has been observed with verbal predicates, which lose the suffix in a non-final position. In addition, in the case of non-verbal predications, this suffix does not display the allomorph *-Vk* (with a vowel). These are two reasons for considering the suffix *-k*, used with non-verbal predicates and the suffix *-k/-Vk*, accompanying verbal predicates, as two different and, at least synchronically, unrelated morphemes.

Another structural difference between the suffixes *-k/-Vk* and *-q/-aq* concerns the possibility of using the suffix *-q/-aq* with non-predicative syntactic constituents, as in (9).[8]

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[8] Strictly speaking, one is dealing with the suffix *-aq* in (9). It has no allomorph *-q* when used with non-predicates.

(9) a. wi   wan   jun-**aq**   li   tz'i'   moko   yal   nak-e'x-lap
        if   exist   INDEF-***aq*** DEF   dog   NEG   only   PRES-3PL.ERG-beat
        ta   chi   r-oq
        ta   PREP   3SG.POSS-foot
        'If there is a dog, they do not kick it.'

    b. na-ru   na-qa-yee   wib'-**aq**   oxib'-**aq**   li-x
        PRES-can   PRES-1PL.ERG-say two-***aq***   three-***aq*** DEF-3SG.POSS
        sume-n-kil
        answer-AP-NMLZ
        'We can offer two or three answers.'

    c. na-x-k'ale   jun   moqoj-**aq**   sa'   kaaxukuut
        PRES-3SG.ERG-weed   one   arm.distance-***aq*** PREP   square
        '[The owner of the field] weeds approximately one square arm.'⁹

    d. naq   num-e'   jarub'-**aq**   kutan   chi   r-ix   li
        CONJ   pass-INTRZ   how.much-***aq*** day   PREP   3SG.POSS-back   DEF
        aw-k
        SOW-NMLZ
        'In a few days after the sowing…'

    e. moko   t-at-ruu-q   ta   ab'an-**aq**   maak'a'   aa-xik'
        NEG   *t*-2SG.ABS-be.able-*q* *ta* but-***aq*** NEG.EXIST   2SG.POSS-wing
        'You will not be able to fly, because you do not have wings.'

In (9a), the suffix *-q/-aq* is attached to the numeral stem denoting 'one' (also used as an indefinite article), apparently to emphasize the indefiniteness and unspecified character of the referent.[10] Other examples in (9) demonstrate that the same suffix may also occur on numeral, nominal and pronominal stems for roughly the same purposes. In (9b)–(9d), it apparently conveys the idea of the approximateness of a measure. In (9e), this suffix is added to the conjunction *ab'an* 'but', possibly denoting some kind of modal semantics in the context of non-existence. The suffix *-q/-aq* can occur on different parts of speech;[11] this cross-categorial nature does not characterize its counterpart *-k/-Vk*.

In sum up, three types of context have been identified in which the suffixes under discussion have different semantic functions and different morphological representations or morphosyntactic behaviors: verbal predicates, non-verbal predicates and non-predicates. The suffix *-q/-aq*, when used with verbal predicate, seems to be devoid of its proper semantics, serving simply as a "slot filler", triggered by the tense/aspect/mood prefix. With non-predicates expressing quantity or amount, the use of this suffix has a very particular function, namely for indicating approximation, which is normally incompatible with predicates.

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⁹ Cú Cab (1998: 110) translates the word *moqoj* into Spanish as "brazada". This is a linear measure equal to the length of a human arm.

¹⁰ Polian (2007) describes similar semantic functions of the suffix *-uk* in Tzeltal.

¹¹ Since the morpheme *-q/-aq* is not selective with respect to the class of host, it can be also considered as a clitic, rather than as a suffix (see Haspelmath 2011, for instance). On the other hand, the cross-categorial uses may also be interpreted as manifestation of a higher syntactic autonomy of an agglutinative affix, as opposed to a flective one (cf. Plungian 2001).

3.3. Second-position clitics

Q'eqchi', as well as many other Mayan languages, distinguishes a special group of enclitics, which are added to the first element in the clause irrespective of the morphological class or syntactic role of this element. Such morphemes are commonly labeled "second-position" clitics; cf. Anderson (1993) and Bošković (2000), among others. In Q'eqchi', a significant number of these clitics convey some kind of modal semantics, and are therefore worthy of some attention in this section.

The group of second-position clitics in Q'eqchi' is rather wide and includes, for example, the following elements (this list is not claimed to be exhaustive):[12]

- *pe'*, 'factive';
- *raj*, 'counterfactual';
- *tana*, 'potential';
- *b'i'*, 'well, then';
- *taxaq*, 'optative';
- *le* or *len*, 'reportative'; and
- *ta*, 'negative' or 'irreal'.

Below, only four clitics from this list, the semantics of which seem to be closer to the cluster of "irrealis meanings", will be considered: *raj*, *tana*, *taxaq* and *ta*. According to the verbal-initial clause structure of Q'eqchi', these clitics normally occur after the predicate (verbal or non-verbal) or after the focalized constituent placed at the beginning of the clause.

Kockelman (2004: 141) defines the meaning of the clitic *raj* as follows: "the counterfactual clitic *raj* signals that the commitment world is in another world (i.e., a world other than the speech event)". However, this definition seems to be too narrow, since not all of the uses of this clitic satisfy this counterfactual interpretation; compare (10) and (11), for example.

(10) a. k-e'r-aj   **raj**   x-chap-b'al   li   xul   ab'anan
       PAST-3PL.ERG-want *raj*   3SG.POSS-catch-NMLZ   DEF   animal   but
       'They wanted to catch the animal, but… [something had happened].'

   b. wi   eq'la   **raj**   x-at-k'ulun   x-in-k'e   **raj**
      if   early   *raj*   PAST-2SG.ABS-come   PAST-1SG.ERG-give   *raj*
      aa-wa
      2SG.POSS-meal
      'If you had come earlier, I would have given you a meal.'

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[12] Some labels below are from Kockelman (2002, 2004, 2006).

(11) a. n-in-k'a'uxla   naq   us   **raj**   o'-laju   x-ka'-k'aal
         PRES-1SG.ERG-think CONJ   good   ***raj***   five-ten   3SG.POSS-two-twenty
         k'aam   tz'aqal   t-in-b'aanu
         furrow   exactly   *t*-1SG.ERG-make
         'I think it is good if I make exactly 35 furrows.'

b. li   tzakahemq   ok   **raj**   r-e   chi   k'at-k
    DEF   meal   enter   ***raj*** 3SG.POSS-DAT   PREP   burn-NMLZ
    'The meal is about to burn.'

The situation described in (10a) is counterfactual: it was planned in the past relative to the moment of utterance, and it is evident at that moment that it has not happened. The same is true for (10b), which represents a counterfactual unreal condition, and the clitic *raj* appears in both the protasis and apodosis. However, both situations in (11) are not strictly counterfactual, although they may be characterized as (un)desired, optative or possible, i.e., unreal. In (11a), at the moment of speech it is still possible to make 35 furrows, and there is no mention of any other situation or state of affairs that could prevent this. The sentence (11b) can be interpreted apprehensively as a warning directed to the addressee, so that s/he can take precautionary measures to avoid the undesirable (but still perfectly probable) situation of the meal burning. This means that the meaning of the clitic *raj* is not limited to counter factuality, but also embraces adjacent semantic domains.

The manuscript "Arte de Lengua Cacchi para Bien comun", containing a colonial Q'eqchi' grammar from around the 17th century, also mentions this clitic and states that it denotes "imperfection" (Berendt 1875: 13, 73). The examples provided in that grammar illustrate the counterfactual meaning (12).

(12) *ex rah hul in loƐon* (Berendt 1875: 73)
     ex   **raj**   ul   in-loq'on
     [PAST]2PL.ABS   ***raj***   come   1SG.ERG-love
     'I came to love you (pl.).'
     Translation in the original source: 'Vine á amaros mas no quisisteis.'

The Spanish translation provided in the grammar also includes the second part, which is not reflected in the Q'eqchi' version: "but you (pl.) did not want". This context makes it clear that we are dealing with a counterfactual situation that had been planned for some time in the past but that had never occurred.

Haeserijn (1979: 278) analyzes the semantics of the clitic *raj* as hypothetical or of a condition that is difficult to realize. He also proposes a possible etymology: the combination of the pre-vocalic ergative prefix of the third person singular *r*- and the verb root *aj* 'to want'. A literal translation would thus be 'it wants', without specifying temporal, aspectual or modal properties. This origin seems to be semantically closer to optativity than to counter factuality.

Kockelman (2002, 2004, 2006) discusses two other clitics, *tana* and *taxaq*, from the group of modal markers in Q'eqchi'. He calls the first "afactive" and says that the situation characterized by this clitic belongs to some "possible world"; the second is labeled "optative" and the situation belongs to a "wish world". Below, I will consider three clitics instead of two. I will argue that both of the abovementioned clitics are in fact combinations of two individual morphemes: *ta + na* and *ta + xaq*, respectively. The main reason for doing so is the occurrence of the morphemes *na* and *xaq* separately from *ta* (13); see also the entries "na", "xaq" and "tana xaq" in the dictionary by Haeserijn (1979: 232, 313, 363).

(13) a. t-in-xik   **na**
         t-1SG.ABS-go   ***na***
         'Maybe, I will go.'
         Original translation: 'Quizá voy a ir'. (Haeserijn 1979: 232)

     b. t-in-xik   **ta**   **na**   **xaq**
         t-1SG.ABS-go   ***ta***   ***na***   ***xaq***
         'It is very probable that I will go.'
         Original translation: 'Es muy probable que me vaya'. (Haeserijn 1979: 313)

Another Q'eqchi' dictionary, Cú Cab (1998: 157, 158), offers similar translations: "tal vez" ('maybe') for *ta na* and "ojalá" ('I wish') for *ta xaq*, which generally coincide with Haeserijn's (1979: 313) interpretation of the same clitics. Therefore, the clitics *na* and *xaq* (or perhaps, the combinations of the clitics *ta na* and *ta xaq*; a discussion on the semantics of *ta* is provided below in this section) may be labeled "dubitative" and "optative", respectively.

These clitics are sometimes accompanied by the suffix *-aq* (see Section 3.2) attached to their host, as in (14).

(14) a. maak'a'-**aq**   **ta**   **xaq**   li   ch'a'aj-kil-al
         NEG.EXIST-***aq***   ***ta***   ***xaq***   DEF   difficult-NMLZ-ABSTR
         'There are no problems, I wish.'

     b. us-**aq**   **ta**   **xaq**   t-in-waar-q
         well-***aq*** ***ta***   ***xaq***   *t*-1SG.ABS-sleep-*q*
         'I wish I will sleep well.'

This fact may be considered as evidence of the intersection of the semantic scopes of the enclitics *ta*, *na* and *xaq*, on the one hand, and that of the cross-categorial suffix *-q/-aq*, on the other. Combinations of these clitics with the counterfactual enclitic *raj*, discussed at the beginning of this section, are also possible (15).

(15) a. ink'a'   **raj**   **ta**   **na**-aq   x-ee-b'aanu   a'an
         NEG   ***raj***   ***ta***   ***na***-*aq* PAST-2PL.ERG-do   DEM
         'Perhaps you should not have done that.' (Kockelman 2006: 70)

b. t-in-k'ul   **raj**   **ta**   **xaq**
   t-1SG.ERG-receive   *raj*   *ta*   *xaq*
   'If only I were to receive it.' (Kockelman 2006: 70)

Examples (15) illustrate that second-position clitics in Q'eqchi' are not mutually exclusive on a semantic level. Semantic combinations of, for instance, counterfactuality and optativity or dubitativity, are perfectly possible; this feature manifests itself in the absence of a paradigmatic structure. Second-position clitics do form a set of morphemes, but not a paradigm. When second-position clitics co-occur with each other, the resulting group has a strict order, and the total number of clitics may easily come to three or four elements. This feature is not unique for Q'eqchi'; there are other Mayan languages with second-position clitics characterized by similar syntactic behavior; see examples (16) and (17) from Poqomchi' and Chol, respectively.

(16) Poqomchi'
   ma'ru-req   **ta**   **b'ila'**   **wo'_hoq**
   NEG3SG.ERG-find   *ta*   REP   also
   'S/he also did not find [her], it is said.'

(17) Chol
   buch-ul-oñ=**tyo**=**ku**=**la**
   seat-STAT-B1=still=AFFR=PL.INC
   'Yes, we are still seated.' (Vázquez Álvarez 2011: 45)

The most interesting second-position clitic is *ta*. In various works on K'ichean Mayan languages, it may be labeled "irrealis" (Mó Isém 2011) or "subjunctive" (Barrett 1999). This clitic evidently has a very broad meaning and can be easily combined with other clitics, as in the Poqomchi' sentence (16). Haeserijn (1979: 313) claims that it "gives an optative sense to the verb", apart from being a member of the (mostly non-verbal) negative construction with the prepositive particle *moko*. Its prevalent use in negative contexts backs up Kockelman's (2004, 2006) labeling of the clitic *ta* as "nonactive" (in combination with the particle *moko*), as in (18).

(18) a. ab'anan a'in   **moko**   yal-aq   b'ar   **ta**   wan-k=eb'
      but   DEM   **NEG**   only-*aq* where   *ta*   exist-*k*=PL
      'But these do not exist in every place.'

   b. li   jal-an-ik   a'an   **moko**   chaab'il **ta**
      DEF   change-AP-NMLZ   DEM   **NEG**   good   *ta*
      'This change is not good.'

However, this clitic can be used outside of this particular negative construction with *moko*, and is not restricted to explicitly negative contexts. One possible example includes unreal conditions (19), but see also (13b) and (15), for instance.

(19) wi **ta** raj x-at-k'anjel-ak chi chaab'il terto raj
if *ta* *raj* PAST-2SG.ABS-work-*k* PREP good costly *raj*
t-at-e'x-toj
t-2SG.ABS-3PL.ERG-pay
'If you worked better, they would pay you more.'

There is strong evidence that in the colonial Q'eqchi' of the 16th and 17th centuries, the clitic *ta* was even less restricted to contexts of counterfactuality, non-existence and negation. The grammatical description, entitled "Arte de Lengua Cacchi para Bien comun" and written by an unknown author, provides several examples of the use of this morpheme (20).

(20) a. *vzilta chinatih* (Berendt 1875: 38)
　　　usil **ta** ch-in-a-tij
　　　well *ta* OPT-1SG.ABS-2SG.ERG-teach
　　　'Teach me well.'
　　　Translation in the original source: 'Enséñame bien.'

　　b. *chin achapaƐta* (Berendt 1875: 39)
　　　ch-in-a-chap-aq **ta**
　　　OPT-1SG.ABS-2SG.ERG-hold-*aq* *ta*
　　　'You will hold me, I wish.'
　　　Translation in the original source: 'Ojalá me agarres.'

　　c. *qui vil ta yruch rah qui vah* (Berendt 1875: 21)
　　　ki-w-il **ta** i r-uch raj ki-w-aj
　　　PAST-1SG.ERG-see *ta* DEF 3SG.POSS-face *raj* PAST-1SG.ERG-want
　　　'I wish I had seen his face.'
　　　Translation in the original source: 'Quisiera haberle visto la cara.'

Of these examples, only (20c) can be interpreted as counterfactual, and there the marker of counterfactuality is obviously the clitic *raj*, rather than *ta*. In general, all three examples have a clear optative interpretation.

4. Discussion and conclusions

There is no morphologically homogeneous category of reality status in Q'eqchi'. The semantic domain of irreality has no unified grammatical representation, but is rather split into individual meanings, such as counterfactual, optative and dubitative, which receive specific morphosyntactic marking within the Q'eqchi' grammar; see the description of the clitics *raj*, *xaq* and *na* in Section 3.3. None of these markers belongs to an obligatory grammatical paradigm, and none of them enter into opposition with another element whose meaning could be characterized as "realis".[13] The enclitic *ta*, which is the vaguest from a semantic point of view, has exactly the same morphosyntactic properties as the rest of the set of second-position clitics, which do not permit it to be considered as a grammatical marker of irrealis.

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[13] The enclitic *pe'*, labeled "factive" in Kockelman (2002, 2004, 2006), could be a possible candidate; however, it is not opposed to other enclitics, but just belongs to the same set of items.

The tense/aspect/mood prefix *t-/ta-* discussed in Section 3.1, unlike second-position clitics, does form part of a grammatical paradigm, which is obligatory for some classes of word forms (namely, for finite verbs), but this paradigm is composed of more than two members. If one considers this paradigm as a candidate for being a category of reality status in Q'eqchi', the latter feature obviously contradicts the cross-linguistic tendency of this category to be based on a binary grammatical opposition. Moreover, other members of the same paradigm convey meanings from temporal and aspectual domains, and do not deal with the idea of reality or irreality.

The suffix *-q/-aq* introduced in Section 3.2 is the best candidate for being labeled as an "irrealis marker". Its semantic scope includes contexts of potentiality, futurity, optativity, indefiniteness and approximation, which are common cross-linguistic targets for triggering irrealis marking (as opposed to the realis). This suffix is a member of a binary opposition along with its counterpart, *-k/-Vk*. Nevertheless, there is a considerable lack of semantic and morphosyntactic uniformity, which does not allow for the postulation of the grammatical category of reality status in Q'eqchi' based on this suffixal opposition. First, these suffixes have a clearly distinct meaning depending on the syntactic construction in which they are involved. The suffix *-q/-aq* conveys meanings of approximateness and indeterminacy when used with non-predicates, and when used with predicates it does not have the same meaning. Second, these suffixes have very different phonological and syntactic restrictions. The suffix *-k/-Vk* is omitted in a non-final position with verbal predicates, but the suffix *-q/-aq* is not; the suffix *-q/-aq* can appear on non-predicates, but the suffix *-k/-Vk* cannot. These are some differences among others described in Section 3.2 in more detail. This lack of uniformity leads to the conclusion that these two suffixes can hardly be considered as a paradigm and, consequently, can hardly be considered as members of the same morphosyntactic category.

Note that this disunity of the semantic domain of irreality among distinct grammatical categories and lexical items observed in Q'eqchi' is not exceptional in the Mayan family. Martin (1998) analyzes the same problem in Mocho, a Mayan language belonging to the Q'anjob'alan subgroup, and eventually comes to similar conclusions. She analyzes three unrelated strategies for the expression of irrealis meanings in Mocho (a "status" suffix, a preverbal particle and a sentential particle), and states that "all aspects of the grammar, including especially the free particle system, are mobilized to handle the complexities of meanings associated with irrealis conditions" (Martin 1998: 210). However, the argument provided above concerning Q'eqchi' and Mocho does not affect the cross-linguistic validity of the realis/irrealis distinction. These are just individual-language facts that only say that this distinction is not universal across the languages of the world.

Martin (1998: 198) also notes on the basis of Mocho data that the semantic domain of irreality "may be a particularly productive locus of linguistic change". This statement finds support in material from K'ichean languages. Romero (2012) discusses the transition of the clitic *ta/taj* in K'iche' from a counterfactual marker in colonial times to the only marker of negation that replaced the original preverbal negative particle in the modern language. The diachronic data briefly discussed in Section 3.3 also show at least two cases of semantic change within the domain of irreality that have occurred in Q'eqchi' over the last five hundred years. The enclitic *ta* changed its meaning from optative to counterfactual, but did not follow the steps of its K'ichean cognate *ta/taj*, and did not go further to negation. The semantics of the enclitic *raj* is apparently changing in the opposite direction: there is some (relatively weak) evidence that the initial counterfactual meaning is blurring and additional optative shades being added. An in-depth diachronic study of this issue is still needed.

The linguistic phenomena that in particular language descriptions of Q'eqchi' and other Mayan languages, or in cross-family comparative works like that of Henderson (2016), are labeled "irrealis" may, in fact, have nothing in common with the similarly named cross-linguistic category. In Mayan linguistics, this label is rather used for certain grammatical, semi-grammatical or lexical markers, which convey some kind of irreal meaning but which still require semantic study to be determined in a more typologically appropriate way.

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Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	first, second and third person
ABS	absolutive
ABSTR	abstract
AGT	agentive
AP	antipassive
CAUS	causative
CONJ	conjunction
DAT	dative
DEF	definite
DEM	demonstrative
ERG	ergative
EXIST	existential
INDEF	indefinite
INTRZ	intransitivization
NEG	negative
NMLZ	nominalization
OPT	optative
PAST	past
PL	plural
POSS	possessive
PREP	preposition
PRES	present
REFL	reflexive
SG	singular