

# Topological Relations in Chiapas Zoque

Luke McDermott

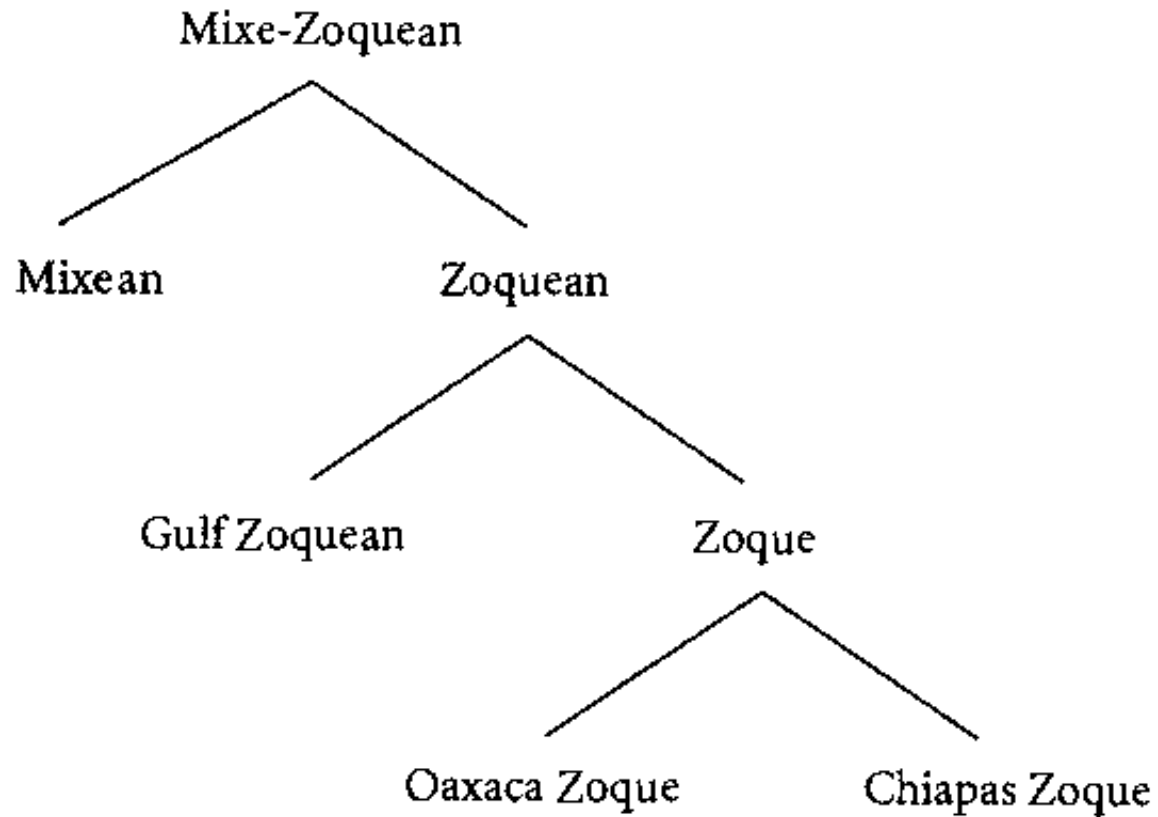
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Chiapas Zoque

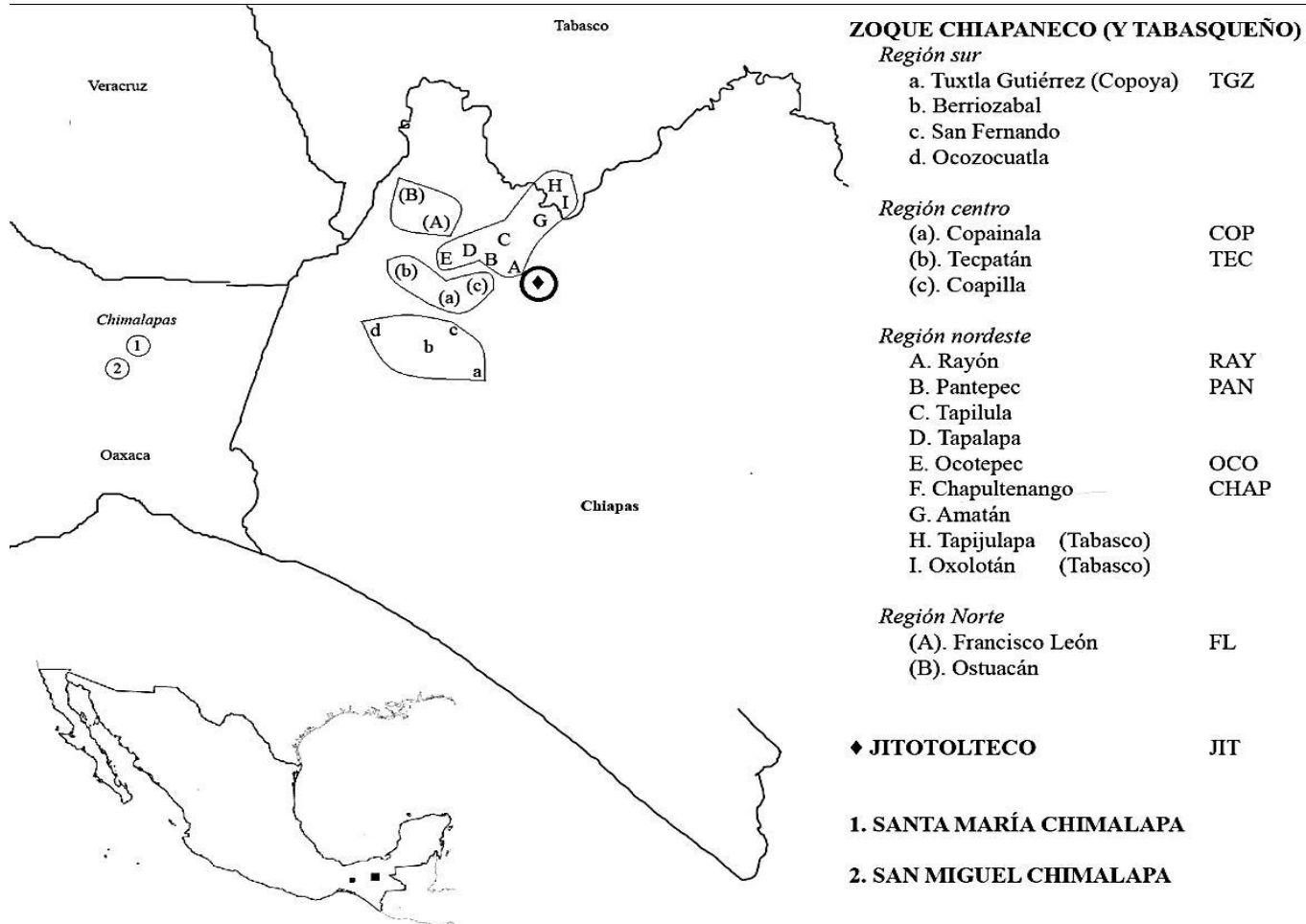
# Chiapas Zoque



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# Existing Research

- Colonial descriptions of the language (16<sup>th</sup> century)
- Collection of articles approximating a grammar (Wonderly, 1940s)
- Dictionaries of Central (Harrison & Harrison, 1981) and Northern (Engels & Engels, 1987) varieties
- A small number of articles covering phonology, morphology (Zavala) and clause structure (Faarlund)
- Recent short grammar (Faarlund, 2012)

# Methodology

# Fieldwork

- Based in Ocoteppec
- Municipality population ~ 10,000
- CZ is the community language
- Bilingual population in town – monolinguals in communities
- Strong indications of language shift in process





# Methodolgy

- Staged Communication Events (SCEs)
- Non-verbal stimuli
  - Topological Relations Picture Series (TRPS) [Bowerman & Pedersen, 1992]
  - Picture Series for Positional Verbs (PSPV) [Ameka, de Witte & Wilkins, 1999]
- *“where is the ....”*
- Spontaneous responses given primacy in analysis

# Data

- 3 complete sets of PSPV and TRPS data each
- Mostly one-on-one, but two interviews involved multiple speakers
- All speakers were bilingual and interviews were conducted in Spanish (except the where-question)
- In total 6 women and 5 men took part
- Aged 22 – 65

# Research Questions

# Topological Relations

- Spatial relationships between two or more objects that do not require the selection of a coordinate system to describe. e.g. **ON, IN, UNDER, NEAR, ABOVE** etc
- “The most fundamental part of spatial language and cognition” (Levinson & Wilkins, 2006)
- Considerable cross-linguistic variation recently discovered (Levinson & Meira, 2003; Levinson & Ameka, 2007)

# The basic locative construction (BLC)

- *“the predominant construction that occurs in response to where-questions” (Levinson and Wilkins, 2006) e.g.*
- ***NP BE PP in English***  
***“the cat is on the mat”***

# Aims

1. Identify the BLC in CZ
2. Establish the structure of the BLC in CZ
3. Determine the number of verbs necessarily used in predication of BLC in CZ (Levinson & Ameka, 2007)
4. Determine the extension of the BLC in CZ (Levinson & Wilkins, 2006)

# Aims

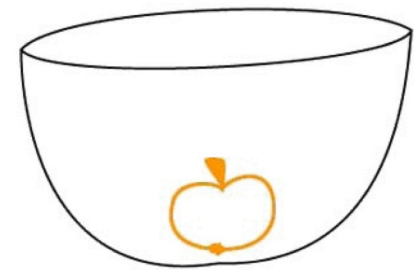
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# 1. Identify the BLC in CZ

(1) te?  $\widehat{t}$ simā iht-u meʃa=kʌsi  
DEF cup be:3-CP table=on  
*'the cup is on the table'* (TRPS 01)

(2) te?  $\widehat{t}$ simā meʃa=kʌsi iht-u  
DEF cup table=on be:3-CP  
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(3) tasa-ʔomo iht-u te? tʌp  
bowl-LOC be:3-CP DEF fruit  
*'The cup is on the table'* (TRPS 02)



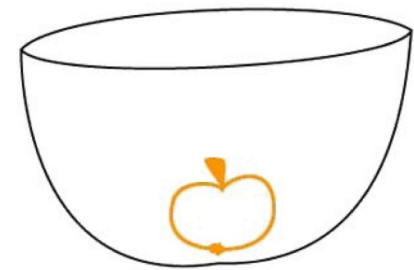


## 2. Establish the structure of the BLC in CZ

(1) *te?* *tsima* *iht-u* *meja=kasi*  
DEF cup be:3-CP table=on  
*'the cup is on the table'* (TRPS 01)

(2) *te?* *tsima* *meja=kasi* *iht-u*  
DEF cup table=on be:3-CP  
*'the cup is on the table'* (TRPS 01)

(3) *tasa-?omo* *iht-u* *te?* *tap*  
bowl-LOC be:3-CP DEF fruit  
*'The cup is on the table'* (TRPS 02)



# How many verbs?

- Typology of BLCs developed by Levinson and Ameka (2007) focuses on number of verbs *necessarily* used in BLC
- 4 basic categories:
  - I. 0 verbs
  - II. A single verb (copula or locative verb) e.g. English, Yucatec Maya
  - III. Large set of *positional verbs* (9-200) e.g. German, Tzeltal
  - IV. Small contrastive set of postural/positional verbs (3-5) e.g. Dutch

# Summary of BLC

- Free word order? – to be confirmed
- **NP NP<sub>oblique</sub> ihtu** – marginally predominant
- Single verb used in predication
- Can be used for all types of scenes apart from those containing **AROUND**



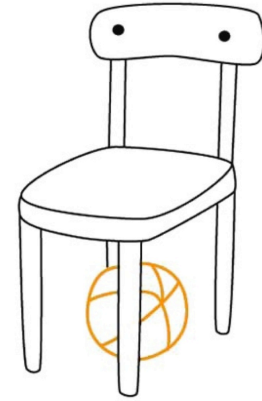
# TRM Semantics

- Topological relation markers (TRMs) carry topological semantics
- Long thought restricted to adpositions and with English-like semantics (Landau & Jackendoff, 1993)
- TRMs in CZ: case, `positional clitics'
- Analysis of semantics of TRMs and pragmatic factors affecting meaning

# Aims

1. Determine the inventory of TRMs in CZ
2. Determine their semantics
3. Look at any pragmatic factors that affect their meaning

# The case of kü'mü

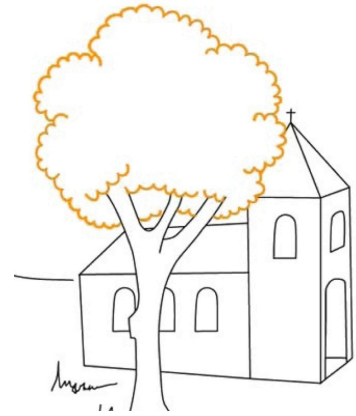


- (7) poʔkstΛhκΛʔmΛ iht-u pelota  
chair:under be:3-CP ball

*'the ball is under the chair'* (TRPS 16)

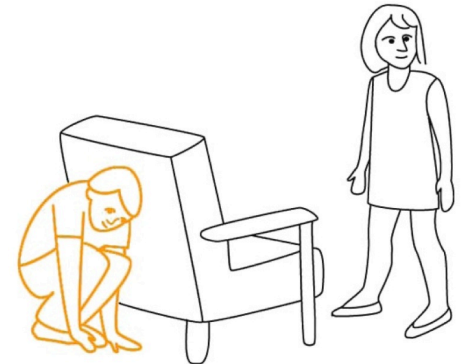
- (8) masandΛκΛʔmΛ iht-u teʔ kuy  
church:beside be:3-CP DEF tree

*'the tree is beside the church'* (TRPS 49)



- (9) poʔkstΛhκΛʔmΛ κΛʔΛn-u teʔ une  
chair:behind hide-CP DEF child

*'the child is hidden behind the chair'* (TRPS 64)



# (provisional) User's Guide

- **Underneath** - If the Ground has a *salient* `underneath' and kü'mü used alone
- **Beside/behind** – if kü'mü used alone with a Ground without an `underneath'
- **Collocation** – if used in conjunction with a spatial nominal (back, front etc)

If in doubt, go with **underneath**

# Remaining tasks

- Try and find evidence for positionals
- Statistical analysis of data
- Write dissertation



# References

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# Which scenes can be described using the BLC?

- Semantic hierarchy (Levinson & Wilkins, 2006)
  1. Figure is impaled by Ground
  2. Figure is stuck to Ground
  3. Figure is `damage' or negative space
  4. Figure is part of whole (Ground)
  5. Figure is adornment or clothing
  6. Figure is inanimate, movable entity contiguous with Ground

# Which scenes can be described using the BLC?

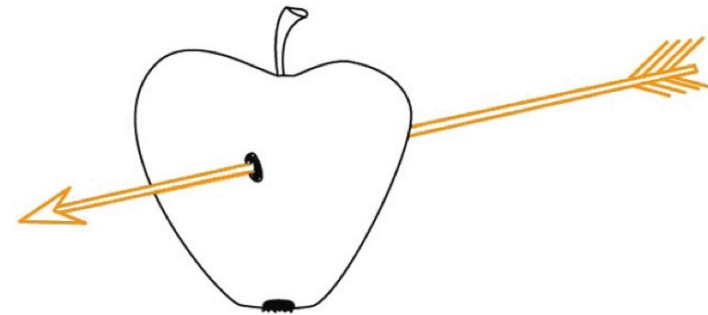
- Most of them

(4) fletʃa=ʔis kʲuhktʌp-u tumʌ mantʃana  
arrow=ERG 3A-skewer-CP one apple

*'the arrow skewered the apple'* (TRPS 30)

(5) teʔ tʌhpodʲʌk tʌjpomo iht-u  
DEF arrow fruit=LOC be:3-CP

*'the arrow is in the fruit'* (TRPS 30)



# Which scenes can be described using the BLC?

- But not all



(6) teʔ t̂sahp<sup>j</sup>ik niwid<sup>j</sup>ah-u teʔ t̂sa  
DEF rope:INSTR wrap:3:PL-CP DEF rock  
*‘They wrapped the rock with a rope’ (PSPV 15)*

# How many verbs?

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