

## Background

- The function of a projective locative statement is to define a search region in which an object (*the figure*) can be found (Levinson, 2003).
- Typically, this search region is defined through the imposition of an asymmetry (or frame of reference) on a reference object (*the ground*), as in figure 1.
- As a result, it is implicitly assumed throughout the literature that the ability to state arbitrary ground objects is a core property of basic projective locative statements in general.

*[The ball]<sub>figure</sub> is to the east of [the box]<sub>ground</sub>*

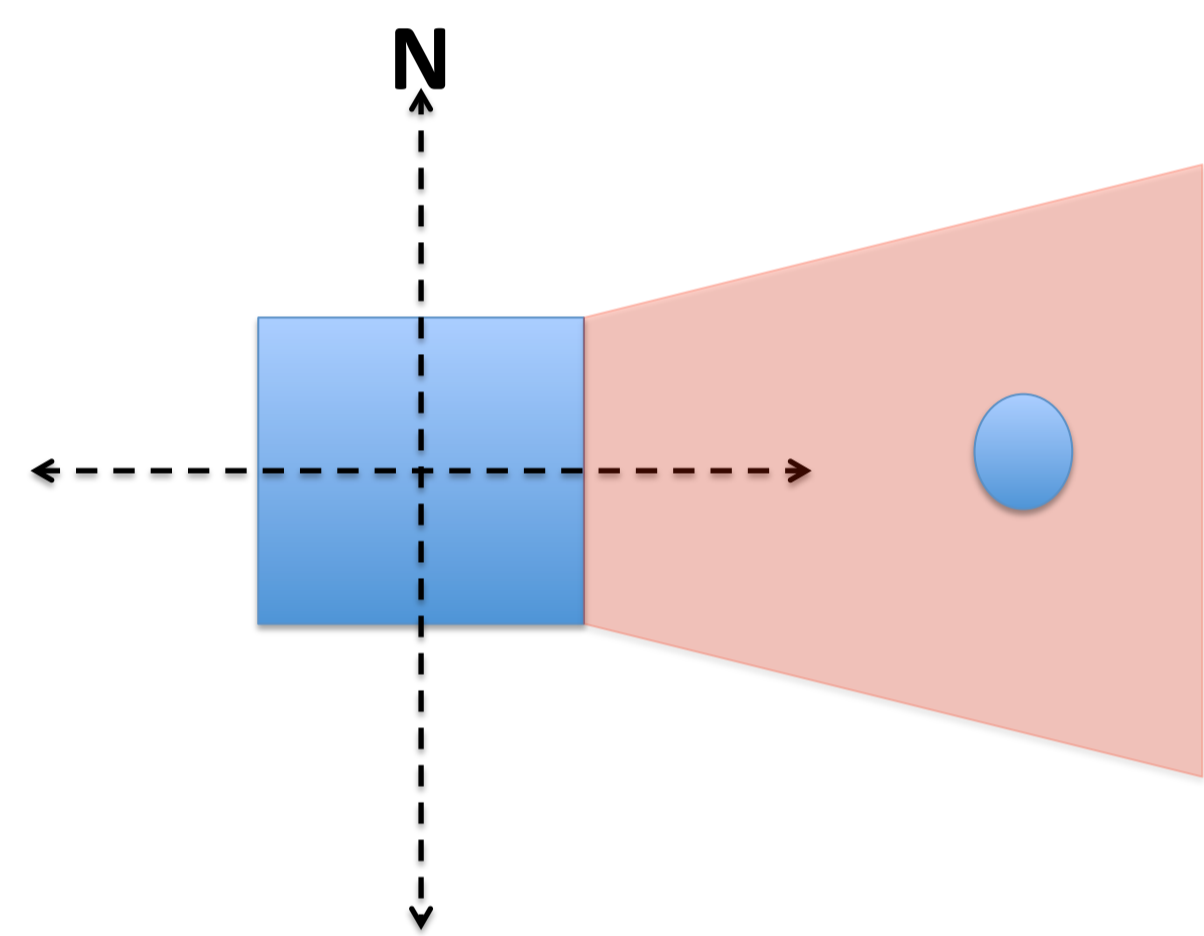
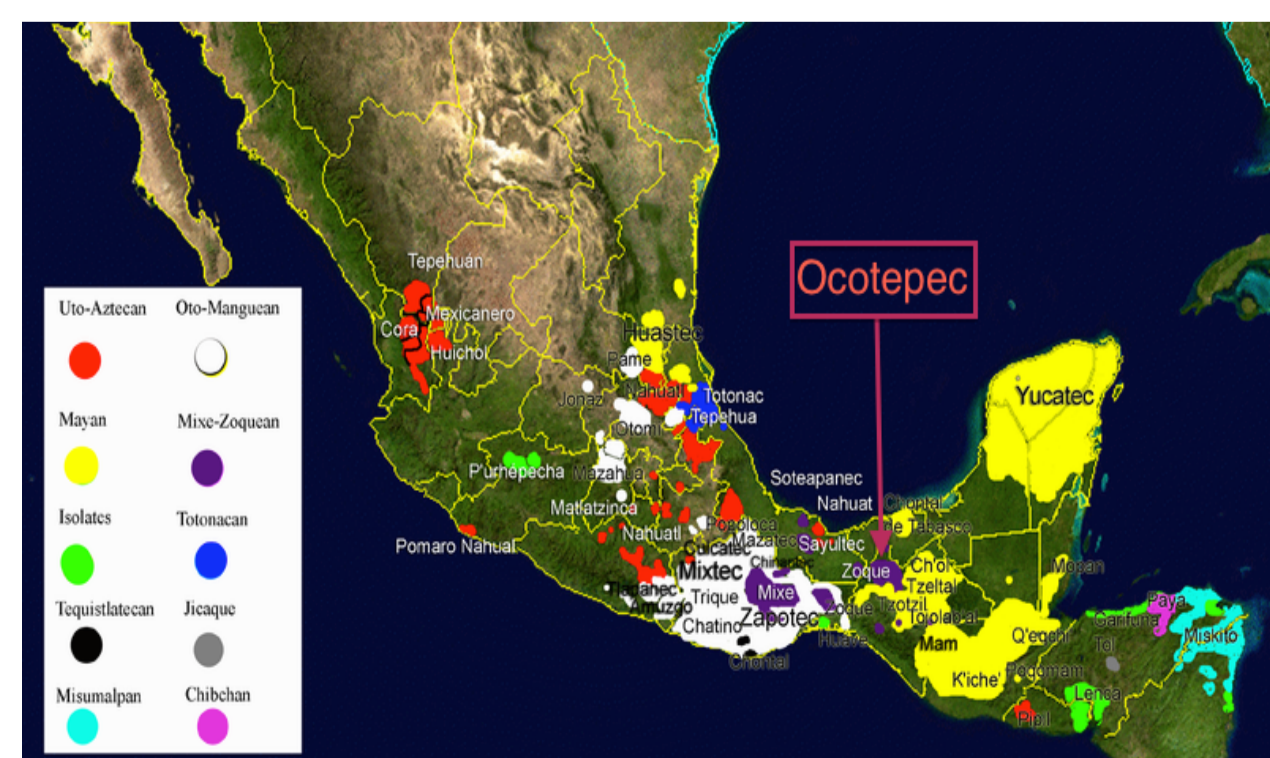


Figure 1: A schematic representation of the conceptual structure of the projective locative statement above

- I present the case of Chiapas Zoque, a language in which ground objects can only be explicitly stated in locative statements featuring the intrinsic frame of reference (i.e. one based on the asymmetry of the ground object).
- The use of extrinsic frames of reference (those based on asymmetries external to a ground object), however, necessitate the use of *groundless* constructions
- Despite this, extrinsic frames play a key role in the description of location in Chiapas Zoque.

## Chiapas Zoque (CZ)

- Member of the Mixe-Zoque language family
- Spoken in northwest of southern Mexican state of Chiapas
- Endangered and under-described
- Data collected over 4 months of fieldwork conducted during 2015 and 2016
- Fieldwork conducted in the town of Ocoatepec, where CZ is the community language



## Explicitly stating a ground in CZ

- In order to explicitly state a ground in a CZ projective locative statement it is necessary to use either a projective postposition (exclusive to the vertical plane) or a relational noun possessed by the ground object (as in (1)).

(1) teʔ poʔkstək=ʔis j-tseʔɣna=ʔomo ø-ʔit-u tumə pelota  
DET chair=GEN 3PSR-side.region=in 3B-EXITS-CMP one ball  
'A ball is to the side of the chair'

- Therefore, in order to use an *extrinsic* frame, these relational nouns must be assigned to the ground object on the basis of an external asymmetry rather than the intrinsic asymmetry of the ground (see below).

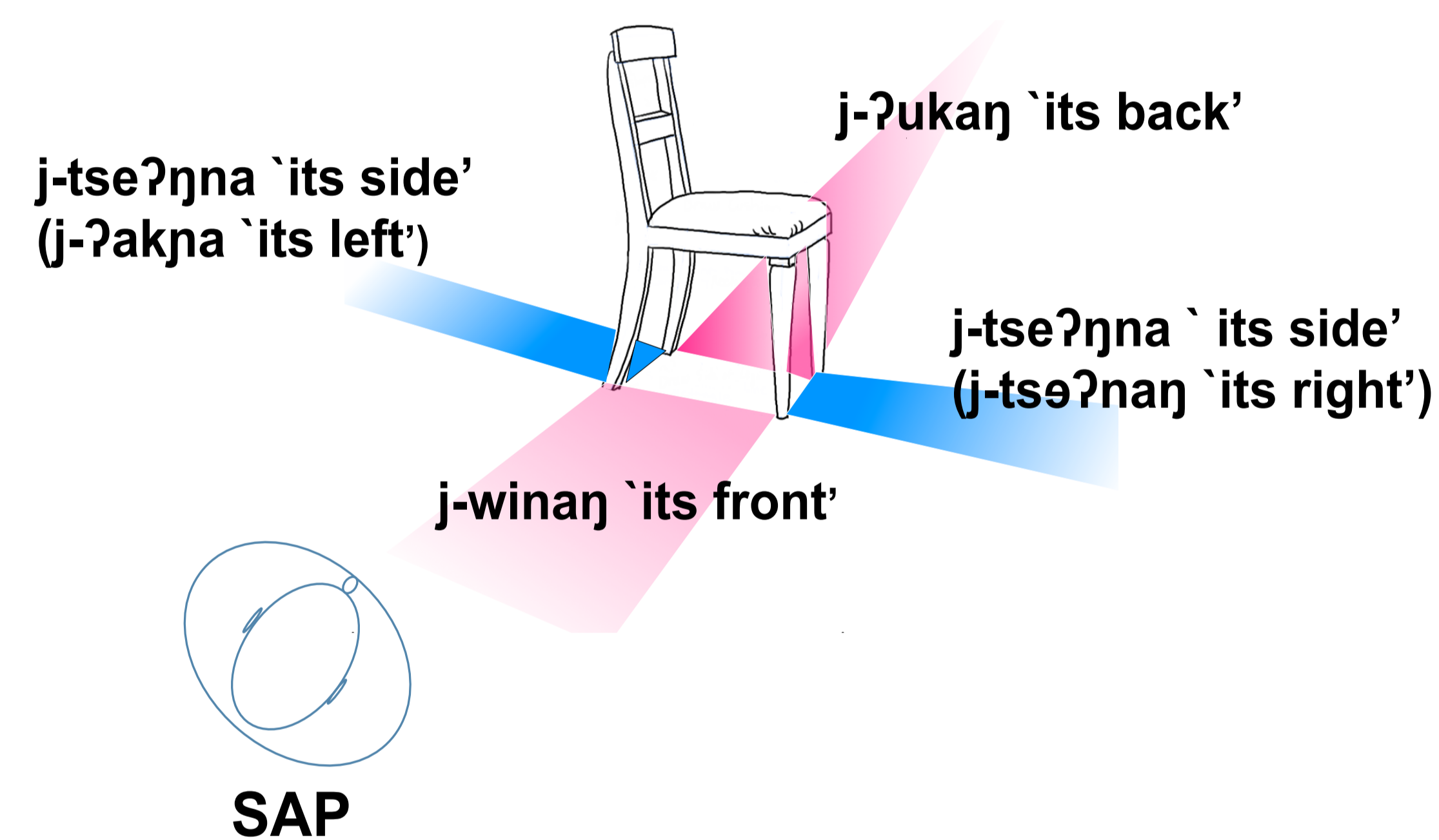


Figure 2: Relational nouns assigned to a chair based on the perspective of a speech act participant (SAP). This would constitute a *relative* frame of reference: an egocentric extrinsic frame

- The assignment of relational nouns on an extrinsic basis (such as that above) is marginal in CZ descriptions of location and rejected entirely by many speakers

## Extrinsic locative statements

- In extrinsic locative statements, the apparent *'ground phrase'* is in fact occupied by the object that is the basis for the frame of reference: the *anchor* (where sun goes down in (2))
- The *'true'* ground of the statement is left unspecified

(2) jəʔmə təʔp-pa=mə hama ø-ʔit-u teʔ pelota  
here to.be.hidden-ICP=LOC sun 3B-EXIST-CP DET ball  
'Here, the ball is to the west'

## Uses of Groundless statements

- Groundless statements featuring *allocentric* extrinsic FoRs have an implicit ground taken from context; by default this is the deictic centre as in 8(3).

(3) teʔ karo ø-ʔit-u kəhsmə  
DET truck 3B-EXIST-CP above  
'The truck is further up the hill'

- In contrast, *'groundless'* statements featuring egocentric FoRs make use of a *hybrid* ground, comprising the deictic centre and an external reference point taken from context, to divide space into two parts; this is schematised in figure 3.

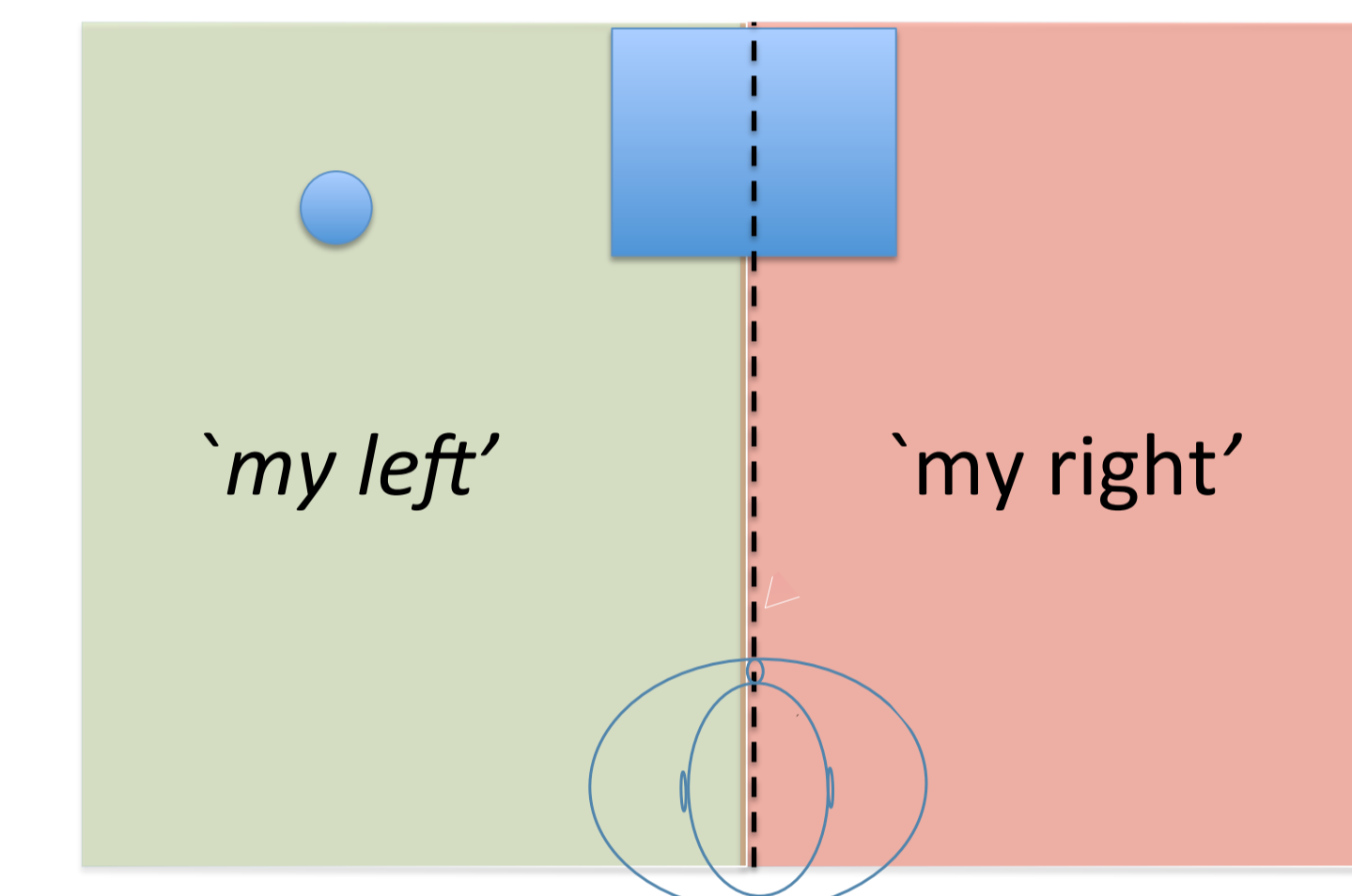


Figure 3: A schematic representation of the conceptual structure of the locative statement given in (4), which was given in the context of the Ball and Chair communicative task (Bohnmeyer, 2008)

(4) n-ʔakɣa=ʔomo ø-ʔit-u tumə pelota  
1PSR-left.region=in 3B-EXIST-CP one ball  
'A ball is to my left'

- Vitaly, CZ speakers reject the use of (4) to describe the location of the ball in figure 3 if the external reference point (the chair above) is not present: *'in front of me'* is used instead

## Discussion

- The ability to explicitly state an arbitrary ground is not, as is often assumed, an obligatory feature of basic locative statements.
- Instead, CZ speakers use groundless statements freely with either the deictic centre as an implicit ground or, *if context allows*, a hybrid ground comprising the deictic centre and a second ground object
- The use of hybrid grounds causes issues for the current categorization of statements featuring egocentric frames (those based on the body of the SAP)
- Statements such as (4) explicitly state the SAP to be the ground, but their use relies on the presence of a second, external object
- They can not, therefore, easily be classified as *direct* (egocentric intrinsic) or *relative*
- I propose that these hybrid statements represent an intermediate stage between the direct and the relative frames of reference so far not discussed in the literature

## References

- Bohnmeyer, J. (2008) Elicitation task: frames of reference in discourse, Mesospace Field Manual, Buffalo University  
Levinson, S.C. (2003) *Space in language and cognition: Explorations in cognitive diversity*, Cambridge University Press