0 Language Overview – Tojol’ab’al

- spoken by approx. 35,000 indigenous Mayan Indians in Southern Mexico, in the State of Chiapas near the Guatemalan border
- Tojol’ab’al = tojol ‘correct’, ‘right’ + ‘ab’al ‘language’
- stable but endangered (highly endangered or extinct in some communities)
- member of the Mayan family of around 32 languages, but genetic affiliations still disputed: morphosyntactically resembles neighbouring Tseltal and Tzotzil languages (member of the Tseltalan branch, thesis of Robertson 1977, 1992), but lexically closer to neighbouring Chuj and other Q’anjob’alan languages such as Popti’, Q’anjob’al, Akateko (member of the Chujean sub-branch of the Q’anjob’alan branch, thesis of Campbell and Kaufmann 1985)
- under-described – one highly formalist “grammar” focusing on derivational morphology and phonology (Furbee-Losee 1976) and ongoing work on discourse organisation in the 80s and 90s (Brody 1982 etc.)

1 The data

- collected over six weeks of fieldwork in June and July of 2007 – a relatively small data set
- transcribed and glossed (Toolbox) recordings plus some elicitation work
- some data from other researchers who have worked or are working on the language (Alejandro Curiel, Lounna Furbee, Jill Brody)
2 Directionals in Tojol’ab’al

- have been inventoried and described superficially (Brody 1982, Lenkersdorf 2002[1994], Peake 2007)
- have never been the focus of any detailed study
- were not elicited for directly or worked on explicitly during fieldwork; this preliminary study based essentially on recorded data and some limited published data

2.1 Inventory of directionals

- eight (ten?) directionals identified in the literature (Brody 1982, Lenkersdorf 2004[1979], 2002[1994])
- six seen so far in my spontaneous recorded data (shown in bold)
- grammaticalised from intransitive verbs of motion, which they resemble formally (except for jan, whose diachronic source is unclear)
- have an optional final vowel which sometimes appears when the directional occurs at the end of an intonational phrase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>directional</th>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>source verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jan(i)</td>
<td>towards a deictic point</td>
<td>jaki ‘come’ ??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’ot(e)</td>
<td>away from a deictic point</td>
<td>k’oti ‘arrive there’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ko’(e)/ko’n(e)</td>
<td>down (seen from below/above)</td>
<td>ko’i ‘go down’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’e’(i)/k’e’n(i)</td>
<td>up (seen from below/above)</td>
<td>k’e’i ‘go up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kan(e)</td>
<td>at rest, immobile</td>
<td>kani ‘stay’, ‘be at rest’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>och(e)</td>
<td>into, through</td>
<td>ochi ‘enter’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>el(e)</td>
<td>passing (through)</td>
<td>eli ‘leave’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ek’(e)</td>
<td>repeated or continuous action</td>
<td>ek’i ‘pass through’, ‘happen’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Inventory of directionals in Tojol’ab’al*
As with many other Mayan languages, Tojol’ab’al has a system of **pre-verbal auxiliaries** that have also grammaticalised from some of these same verbs of motion (and others), representing two different “chains of grammaticalisation” (Zavala 1993) from the same lexical source.

### 2.2 Formal properties

Formally directionals in Tojol’ab’al:

- appear after the main verb (as with most Mayan languages)
- are phonologically independent words and not clitics (cf. Jakaltek Popti’, Craig 1993) because *second position clitics* can intervene between the verb and the directional (according to Brody 1982:232) – *however no examples were found in the data and this needs to be confirmed*
- appear to be mutually exclusive (i.e. not combinable as in Jakaltek Popti’) – *no examples were found but again needs to be confirmed with elicitation*
- can occur with transitive or intransitive verbs:

```
(2-1) Ø- jak-tikon och b’a chonab’
CMP-come-B1.PL.EX DIR:enter LOC Comitán
‘We came here, to Comitán’ (we entered Comitán)’
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(2-2) mi x-b’ob’ j-ta’-Ø-tik k’ot
NEG ICP-AUX:can A1-find-B3-A1.PL.INC DIR:away
‘We couldn’t find it there’
```

- as yet undetermined as to whether they can occur with *stative verbs* or *non-verbal predicates* (no examples found in the data)
- can also occur after non-finite verb forms:

```
(2-3) wa x-ajy-i el-el k’e sok resal so wajab’al
ICP ICP-be-ITV leave-NF DIR:up with prayer with drum
‘They leave with prayer and drums’ (they are there, leaving…)
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1 *chonab’* literally means the place where buying takes place, but is used almost exclusively to refer to Comitán, the principal (ladino) village in the Tojo’al’ab’al region where the Tojol’ab’ales come to sell and buy goods at the market, get medical attention, deal with local administration etc.
2.3 Semantics of directionals

2.3.1 Expression of motion events in Tojol’ab’al

- in general, MOTION and MANNER are encoded in the verb, whereas PATH is framed in the directional (satellite-framed language, as in English)
- GROUND is normally encoded with the locative preposition b’a or with a relation noun
- FIGURE appears to be the absolutive argument (subject of intransitive verbs, object of transitive verbs) – but maybe not always (requires further investigation)

Unlike Jakaltek Popti’ (Grinevald, to appear), directionals in Tojol’ab’al do not appear to be involved in expressions of static location, as this example demonstrates:

(2-4) ja= nan ixaw=a man b’a y-oj ja’=i
DET= mother moon=TERM LOC LOC A3-RN:in eau=TERM

‘It’s the shadow of the moon that is in the water’

Directionals can be divided into two subclasses according to their semantic content:

2.3.2 Deictic directionals

- as with the deictic directionals identified by Craig (1993) in Jakaltek Popti’, the directionals jan(i) and k’ot(e) express a PATH which extends towards and away from (respectively) some deictic point of reference
- with a motion verb, these directionals may express direction of movement of the FIGURE with respect to the deictic point:

(2-5) mi b’i x-el-Ø k’ote a tyempo
NEG REP INC-go.out-B3 DIR:away on time

‘They didn’t leave on time (it is said)’

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2 a possessed nominal form expression a similar range of functions to those expressed by prepositions in western European languages
Directionals in Tojol’ab’al, a Mayan language of Mexico

Marc Peake

(2-6) kwando waj ko’-Ø jan=a ye’ni

when AUX:go go.down-B3 DIR:towards=TERM PRON3

mi=xa b’ay jun mo’och ja= s-pera

NEG=no.longer LOC.EXIST DET basket DET= A3-pear

‘When he came down (off the ladder) the pear basket was gone’

However, when used with non-movement predicates, directionals can “trace a trajectory line in space between two points viewed from a particular perspective” as Craig (1993) has argued for Jakaltek Popti’:

(2-7) spetsanil ja= b’a ch’ak=ta k-al-Ø jani

everything DET= REL AUX:FIN=already A1-say-B3 DIR:towards

‘Everything that I have just finished saying…’

It appears that the speaker in this example has chosen the addressee as the deictic point of reference, and imagines a path (of information flow?) going from himself towards the addressee.

(2-8) ti wa x-wa’-i-ye’ k’ot tiwi

then CMP CMP-eat-ITV-B3PL DIR:away there

‘Then they eat there (where they arrive)’

Here the speaker is narrating a traditional religious ceremony. In the previous sentence, the protagonists leave their current location with coffee and tortillas in hand. The directional expresses therefore a PATH going away from the location where the narrative was previously situated (the deictic point), before the narrative is resituated at the new location.

(2-9) ka’ax, ’i’-aj jani ja= ju’un=i

go.IMP bring/take-ITV DIR:towards DET= book=TERM

‘Go, bring (me) the book!’

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‘Go, bring (me) the book!’
Directionals in Tojol’ab’al, a Mayan language of Mexico

(2-10) oj y-i’-Ø ’och si’ [ti b’a snaj]  
IRR A3-bring/take-B3 DIR:into firewood [to her house]  
‘She’s going to take firewood to her house’

2.3.3 Path directionals

- Following Craig’s (1993) analysis of Jakaltek Popti’ again, the remaining directionals appear to be associated with the “orientation of movement with respect to fixed points in space”, or at least a PATH oriented to fixed points in space.
- Two (four?) associated with a path oriented on a vertical axis: k’e’(i) ‘up’, ko’(e) ‘down’ and their possible semantic variants\(^3\) k’e’n(i) ‘up’ (seen from above) and k’o’n(i) ‘down’ (seen from above).
- One associated with a path traversing an enclosed space: och(e) ‘into’ (entering).
- One associated with a stationary FIGURE (lack of movement): kan(i) ‘at rest’, ‘still’.
- One possibly associated with a path oriented on a horizontal axis: el(e) ‘passing (through)’.
- One possibly associated with repetitive or ongoing actions (according to Lenkersdorf 2004[1979]): ek’(e)\(^4\)
- As with the deictic directionals, some of these may occur with non-movement predicates.

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\(^3\) Brody (1982) contrasts k’e’n and k’o’n with k’e’ and k’o’ as placing the speakers perspective of seen from above vs. seen from below, more on this below.

\(^4\) I did not find examples of ek’(e) used as a directional in my data. Lenkersdorf (2004[1979]) claims it expresses a repetitive or continuous action. However, given its source verb eki’ means to ‘exit’ it would not be surprising to find it used to express movement ‘out of’ - this needs to be investigated.
2.3.3.1 Vertical axis directionals k’e’/k’e’n(e) and ko’(i)/ko’n(i)

- When used with verbs of motion, the path of the figure is understood to go from a lower geographical point to a higher geographical point or vice versa.
- In one community (Chib’tik) studied, ‘up’ and ‘down’ usually correspond to absolute cardinal points, identified by the natural flow of the creek through the village (‘up’ = ‘upriver’, ‘down’ = ‘down river’) irrespective of local changes in elevation in the path.
- In the other community studied (Napité), these directionals appear to refer to local changes in elevation and not cardinal points!

Examples:

(2-11) yajni kwando wa la-‘el-tik k’e’ b’a sb’ejlal=i

- When ICPl.12-leaveB1P.Inc DIR:up Loc path=Term
- ICP ICP-A3-MOT-TTV DIR:up drum,
- ICP ICP-A3-MOT-TTV DIR:up prayer

- ‘When we go out on the path (from the church), they play drums (and) they say prayers’

In this example (from Napité), we see an initial movement verb (‘el, ‘leave’, ‘go out’) combined with the path directional k’e’ as the path taken leads to a higher geographical point. However, this is then repeated twice with the verb i’ ‘take/bring’ for the drums and the prayers. Is this meant to imply simultaneous movement, or simply situate the actors on a (perspectivised) path?

(2-12) ja b’a desbiyo, oj b’ejy-an ko’ jun jo’ winik-uk metro

- Det Loc turn-off IRR walk-B2 DIR:down a five man-IRR metre

- ‘At the turn-off, you’re going to walk (down) 100\(^5\) metres’

\(^5\) winik ‘man’ is also a traditional counting unit meaning ‘20’, it is rarely used in daily speech though
Compare these examples with the following, in which the directional k’e’ occurs with the perception verb k’el ‘watch’ (from Lenkersdorf 2004[1979]:404):

(2-13)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ti</th>
<th>Ø-s-(k’el)-Ø-a</th>
<th>k’e’=e</th>
<th>ja=</th>
<th>satk’inal=i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>then</td>
<td>CMP-A3-<strong>watch</strong>-B3-<strong>TTV</strong></td>
<td><strong>DIR:up</strong>=<strong>TERM</strong></td>
<td><strong>DET=</strong></td>
<td>**sky=**<strong>TERM</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘He watched the sky’

In this example, there is clearly no motion involved. However, there is a clear PATH traced from the subject to the object of the perception verb.

Brody (1982) claims that the variants k’e’n(e) and ko’n(e/i) mean that the terminating point of the PATH is ‘seen from above’ rather than below. This is difficult to verify without knowing the speakers particular discourse perspective. The examples above are not inconsistent with this hypothesis, but the following example appears to call it into question (from Lenkersdorf 2004[1979]:365)

(2-14)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ø-k’on-Ø=ta</th>
<th>ko’ni</th>
<th>ja=</th>
<th>k’anal=i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMP-<strong>fall</strong>-B3=<strong>already</strong></td>
<td><strong>DIR:down</strong></td>
<td><strong>DET=</strong></td>
<td>**shooting.star=**<strong>TERM</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘The shooting stars fell (from the sky)’ (seen from above, from the perspective of the shooting stars?)

Could it simply be free variation? Requires more investigation!

2.3.3.2 Enclosed space directional och(e) ‘into’

Apart from its (unusual) use with the verb i’ of caused motion, meaning take (away), och(e) normally expresses a PATH which moves from outside an enclosed space into that space

The GROUND may an enclosed space where the speaker currently is (in which case och often occurs with the verb jak ‘come’), or another enclosed space away from the speaker:

(2-15)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ja’ it</th>
<th>Ø-jak-tikon</th>
<th>och</th>
<th>b’a chonab’</th>
<th>ja=</th>
<th>eke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOC</td>
<td>CMP-<strong>come</strong>-B1.PL.EX</td>
<td><strong>DIR:into</strong></td>
<td><strong>LOC Comitán</strong></td>
<td><strong>DET=</strong></td>
<td><strong>yesterday</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘That’s why we came (in)to Comitán yesterday’
(2-16) wa x-cho waj-Ø och toj b’a pokoe gelseiya
ICP ICP-SEQ go-B3 DIR:into straight LOC old church

‘Then go straight, into the old church…’

- How to interpret the following example? It suggests a PATH out of an enclosed space!

(2-17) i tarde=xa Ø-el-y on oche ili
and late=already CMP-leave-ITV-B1 DIR:into here

‘…and it was already late when I left here’

- As with other directionals, och(e) may occur with non-motion predicates, such as perception predicates, in which case the PATH expressed goes from the experiencer and enters an enclosed space (in this example a pool of water):

(2-18) i ti, Ø-y-il-Ø-a och ja= s-b’ankil ok’ili
and then CMP-A3-look-ITV-B3 DIR:into DET= A3-brother coyote

‘…and then his ‘uncle’ the coyote looked into it (the pool of water)’

2.3.3.3 Stationary directional kan(i) ‘stay, ‘at rest’

- The last directional I will look at here is unusual in that the focus is not on the PATH (if at all), but the notion that the FIGURE remains still and does not (continue to) move once it reaches the end point of the PATH

(2-19) i Ø-waj cha’i s-lap-Ø kan ja= s-pisolom=i
and CMP-AUX:go SEQ? A3-put.on -B3 DIR:stay DET= A3-hat=TERM

‘and then he went to put on his hat’ (his hat stayed on his head)

- This can also refer to metaphorical rather than physical movement:

(2-20) ja= k-ajwal-tik dyos=i y-a’ on-e’ kan ja= s-ju’un
DET= A1-lord-PL god=TERM A3-give-B1-A3PL DIR:stay DET= A3-word

‘…the lord God left us his word’
(2-21) egelesiya ja b’a y-a’-unej kan ja= ajwalal=ia
  church DET= REL A3-leave-PERF DIR:stay DET= lord=TERM

‘…(the) church that the landowner has left (us)’

- Another semantic extension appears to be to the temporal realm – not sure yet how to analyse the semantics of kan in this case (where is the PATH, what is staying at rest?)

(2-22) wa x-cho ch’ak-x-i-Ø kan sok resal sok wajab’al
  CMP CMP-SEQ finish-PASS-ITV-B3 DIR:stay with prayer with drums

‘then it (the ceremony) finishes with praying and drums’

2.3.4 Non compositional semantics

- When some directionals combine with certain verbs, it seems that the resulting semantics are not directly predictable from the verb and the directional alone (example from Brody 1982:323):

(2-23) Ø-y-a’-aw-on kan ja= j-nan j-tat =i

‘My parents abandoned me’

- A relexification of some verb-directional pairs? Movement away from a syntactic system back to a lexical system? Need to find more examples
3 Conclusions

- As with other Mayan languages, directionals in Tojol’ab’al consistently express PATH information, and not MOTION (except for possibly kan(i) ‘stay’?)
- Fairly pervasive in the language, but perhaps not as much as in some other Mayan languages
- kan(i) ‘stay’ an interesting member of the paradigm – formally occupies the same slot as other directionals, but how to account for its unusual semantics?
- Still need to:
  - investigate possibility of co-occurrence (two or more directionals at once?)
  - determine whether directionals are used with non-verbal predicates as well, such as statives and positionals
  - investigate further the semantics of och(e) ‘enter’ and kan(i) ‘stay’
  - look at distribution and semantics of el(e) and ek’(e) for which I have very little data (and no spontaneous examples)
  - look at discourse functions of directionals in Tojol’ab’al
- Methods: a much bigger corpus! + elicitation and stimulus-response

Abbreviations

A1/2/3(PL) 1st/2nd/3rd person ergative (set A) marker (plural), AUX auxiliary verb,
B1/2/3(PL.INC/EX) 1st/2nd/3rd person absolutive (set B) marker (plural inclusive/exclusive), CMP completive aspect, DET determiner (article), DIR directional,
EXIST existential, FIN terminative aspect, ICP(12) incompletive aspect (1st/2nd person),
IMP imperative, IRR irrealis, ITV intransitive theme vowel, LOC locative preposition,
NEG negative, NF non-finite verb form, PASS passive, PERF perfective aspect, PRON personal pronoun, REL relative pronoun, REP reportative, RN relational noun, SEQ sequential auxiliary, TERM terminal vowel, TTV transitive theme vowel
Bibliography


