

SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE OF K'ICHEE' MAYAN

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The majority of Mayan language research, including K'ichee'an, was effected from the sixties to the late nineteen eighties. The research was almost exclusively descriptive in nature, with the literature concentrating on phonology, historical linguistics, or epigraphy. Pedagogical grammars typically covered a broad spectrum of grammatical description, concentrating mainly on phonology and morphology, some pragmatics, and elementary morphosyntax and clause structure. At best, analysis was speculative and pre-theoretical. Since the early 1990s, however, more contemporary analytical research based on formal theories of syntax have surfaced (Aissen 1987, 1992, 1996, 1999a,b, 2000; Broadwell 2000, 2001, 2005; Woolford 1991, 1997). My dissertation adds to this list, using theoretical analyses based on the formal architecture of OT-LFG. Previous proposals on the syntactic structures of the sister K'ichee'an languages of Tz'utujil (Aissen 1992; King 1995) and Kaqchikel (Broadwell 2000), and K'ichee' itself (Larsen 1988) are reviewed and their proposals analyzed for comparative purposes. The abundant interlinear-glossed data include cited material drawn from a variety of published sources. Nevertheless, the data on which the analyses are based are taken overwhelmingly from the author's fieldwork, elicited from first language K'ichee' Mayan speakers. Hence a substantial resource of never-before-seen data of an endangered language is now made available. In addition, the official Mayan language orthography is used exclusively in the dissertation. This has facilitated tracking Mayan language because much of the cited Mayan data in the dissertation was published previous to standardization, and employed a variety of inconsistent and confusing orthographies.

In brief, K'ichee' is an ergative-absolutive, pro-drop, head-marking language that marks agreement on the finite verb with ergative and absolutive agreement markers. Possessed nouns agree in person and number with their possessors. Complex prepositions agree in person and number with their object complements. The dissertation begins with the nominals, examining, for example, the bi-determiner DP, which I argue, is a type of demonstrative, with no pragmatics involved, as is usually claimed. The nominals use three distinct forms of pluralization, one morphological, the other two free morphemes, and are analyzed accordingly. After a literature review, I consider in detail the predicate-initial clause, in effect expanding on Aissen (1992). But contra Aissen's VP proposal, I argue for a predicate-initial, non-endocentric S(ENTENCE), with canonical word order as [_S V⁰ XP*]. Incontrovertible evidence is presented using finite predicates that conclusively proves that the VP is not universal, as the derivational generativists assume from first principles. Argument word order is determined by lexical properties like animacy, definiteness, and phrasal weight. I include an OT-LFG analysis for predicate-initiality in K'ichee'. OT-LFG remains indispensable on this account because phrase-structure rules or generalized linear precedence rules are insufficiently fine-grained to capture the natural variation of argument distribution in the predicate-initial clause.

After reviewing sentential topics, I argue contra Aissen (1992) that the so-called external topic adjoins to CP, while the internal topic is located at the left edge of Spec,IP. I contend that the i-topic position is always blocked in non-verbal predicates. If any one of the focus positions in Spec,IP is occupied, the i-topic position, excluding relative pronouns, is blocked in the finite predicates as well.

Two types of predicates occur in K'ichee', finite predicates and non-verbal predicates, the latter of which include the perfect aspect as a special case. Aspect, not tense, is morphologically-marked on the verb, and is the foremost identifier of non-perfect finite predicates. Hitherto little-known structural correspondences are identified between non-verbal predicates and other linguistic constructions, in particular the non-finite

perfect aspect and the various mix of actor focus constructions. K'ichee' evidences five types of non-verbal predicates. The nominal and adjectival predicates, which are clearly zero-copula, and the existential, possessive, and locational predicates, which require the predicating non-verbal copula *k'oolik* 'exist.' I contest the single-tier analysis as the default for verbless clauses (Nordlinger and Sadler 2007), preferring instead the double-tier analysis using 'null be' (Dalrymple et al. 2004) for zero-copula and VCop for *k'oolik*. Following Butt et al. (1999), I reject the generalizing principle that adjectives and nominals can also function as clausal heads, which select for subjects, thus requiring additional equations in their lexical entries. Following Attia (2008) and Rosén (1996), I argue that agreement should be specified in phrase-structure rules, not in lexical entries. I depart, however, from the above approaches in rejecting Butt et al.'s (1999) closed grammatical function (GF) PREDLINK. Because K'ichee's non-verbal predicates are morphologically-marked with non-bound intransitive absolutive agreement markers, the non-verbals are thus intransitive requiring SUBJ-only f-structure semantic forms. The PREDLINK argument is thus infelicitous.

I propose instead an intermediate argument-non-argument category called function thematic (FN_{Θ}), a GF that is thematically-selected for but is *not* syntactically-selected for. In a binary feature array, FN_{Θ} fills an obvious gap in a two-feature, four way division: arguments are [+syntactic, +thematic], non-arguments are [-syntactic, -thematic], expletive subjects/objects of raising verbs are [+syntactic, -thematic], and FN_{Θ} is [-syntactic, +thematic]. Hence FN_{Θ} is not part of the f-structure's semantic form but is listed as a thematic role in a-structure. F-structure's completeness requirement is thereby satisfied, although accounting for coherency is somewhat more involved. Additional candidates for FN_{Θ} include head-adjoined incorporated nouns of detransitivized periphrastic noun incorporation constructions, nominal complements in copula inversion constructions in the Romance languages (cf. Alsina 2007), and even Rákosi's (2006) thematic adjunct (ADJ_{Θ}), which describes circumstantials in Hungarian. Because the binary argument-non-argument distinction (Bresnan 1982) is axiomatic in the strategic design of LFG, expanding the inventory of GFs will undoubtedly raise some objections. Notwithstanding this, I maintain that FN_{Θ} is well-founded and empirically motivated.

Contrastives, interrogatives, and negatives are also considered, and in each of these—except clausal negation—the argument is always focused. Focus is located in Spec,IP, and ordered such that INTFOC < CONFOC < NEGFOC. Crucially in all cases focused arguments represent non-verbal predicates. In that sense, K'ichee' clauses with focused arguments resemble English clefts without relative pronouns. The clause's primary predicate is determined on the focused argument's grammatical category. If an object, the transitive predicate remains unaltered. But if a subject, the actor focus construction is required. Actor focus is an intransitive predicate with an obligatorily preverbal focused actor and with agreement determined according to argument salience on the participant hierarchy. Although a morphological intransitive, the actor focus verb obligatorily retains both semantic roles of the transitive verb. Nevertheless the syntactic-thematic mismatch, I argue, can be accounted for by positing FN_{Θ} as the non-actor argument.

What triggers actor focus? Again all focused arguments in Spec,IP manifest as non-verbal predicates. As such, focused arguments form sentences with two predicates—the non-verbal predicate and the finite predicate. I maintain that when the subject of the non-verbal predicate co-indexes the subject of the primary predicate, the actor focus is triggered. The actor focus is not triggered when the subject of the non-verbal predicate does not co-index the subject of the primary predicate. I conclude that all clauses with focused arguments form complex predicates. The actor focus presents, therefore, as a subject-sharing complex predicate.