

Chapter 2: Grammatical Overview

MIG Zoque is an ergative, polysynthetic language with an abundance of highly-productive word formation processes including verb stem compounding and noun incorporation. It is a head-marking language (Nichols, 1983): pronominal agreement markers that agree with actor and undergoer arguments appear at the left edge of the verb complex. (A table of agreement markers appears in section 5.1. Discussion of agreement appears in section 6.2.) Dependents of the verb are not case-marked; nor are nouns, adjectives or determiners marked for agreement with one another in any way. Word order of constituent phrases inside a clause is free, except that the actor NP must precede the undergoer NP if it is possible to confuse them (if they are both human, for example).

This language exhibits many features of typological interest. Phonologically, it is typical of a MesoAmerican language (discussed in chapter 3). Its morpheme classes include a set of body-part prefixes, which is more common among languages north of the MA area (chapter 7). There is also a class of positional verb roots that identify particular shapes or postures of the human body, and of inanimate objects. This feature is shared by other MZ languages and also Mayan languages (England, 1983), but is otherwise unusual, at least in MesoAmerica. Positional verbs are discussed in chapter 4; a set of positional suffixes is discussed in chapter 7.

MIG Zoque has a set of auxiliary verbs, similar to those found in other

MZ languages. This is another connection with Mayan languages, which also have auxiliary verbs with similar semantic and syntactic properties. (See Zavala, 2000 for a discussion of auxiliaries as an areal feature.) Auxiliary verbs can be compounded with a main verb root in complex lexical constructions in MIG Zoque, as in the other MZ languages. However, in MIG Zoque these constructions exhibit a range of expressive power that goes far beyond the simple associated motion constructions described for Mayan languages, or the serial verb constructions described in West African and South Asian languages (Foley & Olson, 1985). Auxiliaries and verb compounds are discussed in chapter 8.

MIG Zoque, like other MZ languages, exhibits a phenomenon known as ergative, or dependent, shift in dependent verb constructions. This is not an example of the split ergativity found in some Mayan languages (Kaufman, 1996), but appears to be a peculiarity of the MZ language family. Ergative shift is also discussed in chapter 8. Another feature of the MIG Zoque agreement system shared generally with other MZ languages is inverse role-marking, in which first and second person patients are marked on the verb in preference to third person agents. This situation is discussed in chapter 6. External possession is another result of the person hierarchy (that prefers first and second persons to third). In these constructions, the verb is marked to agree with a first person possessor of the patient, rather than with a third person agent. External possession is also discussed in chapter 6.

An affix template is a handy way to provide an overview of the components of a verbal word. There are eleven slots or positions for clitics and

affixes in a MIG Zoque verb, shown in the table below. Position 1, Negative, is better classified as a word rather than a clitic, but since it functionally belongs to the verb complex it is included here for convenience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Neg	Pers	Caus	Pre	V	Suf	Adv	Pl	Rcp	(T)AM	Post
ya	(5.1)	yak	ʔaŋ	l1	ʔəm	keʔt	tam	A	wə	ʔam
ʔu			həʃ	l2	ʔoy	pə	ʃuk		pa	ʃtaʔ
yakkə			win	T1	hay				Aʔ	
			ʔok	T2	Anəm				E	
			ho	T3	ney					
			ko	P	wəy					
			kə		na					
			ni		ten					
			nik		ʔəy					
			yuk							

Table 2.1. Verbal affix positions

Phonologically, the negative and personal agreement morphemes (positions 1 and 2) are not part of the verb word; that is, there is no morphophonological interaction between these elements and the verb stem, and there may be pauses between them. They are functionally part of the verbal complex, however, and nothing can intervene between the negative morphemes and the personal agreement markers (which usually will be cliticized onto a preceding negative). The only element that can appear between a personal

agreement marker and the verb word to which it belongs is an incorporated noun or adjective. Thus, although I place a space between position 1 and 2 morphemes and the rest of the verbal complex in writing, to indicate their phonological status as separate words, they are considered part of the verbal complex in every other respect.

Of the eleven position classes, only 2, Pronominal agreement markers, and 10, (Tense) Aspect Mood, are obligatory. Thus, the **minimal** MIG Zoque verb consists of three positions, Pron + V + Infl (2 + 5 + 10), as illustrated in the following examples.

(2.1)

(i) ?ən wanpa
?ən+ wan-pa
1E+ sing-INC
'I sing it.'

(ii) ?əm cəkə?
?əm+ cək-A?
2E+ do-IMPV
'Do it!'

(iii) nəkkə ?əy pəki
0 nək-wə ?əy+ pək-E
3A go-COM 3E+ grasp-dCOM
'He went to get it.'

(iv) də nəktammə
də+ nək-tam-wə
1A+ go-1/2Pl-COM
'We went.'

As the preceding examples show, it is not necessary for overt nominal expressions to appear as the arguments of verbs, although it is possible. When nouns do appear in core argument roles, if more than one role is played by a human referent, the actor argument will come first; otherwise, word order is free.

(2.2)

(i) ?əy hayhayyə bi pən bi yomá? tum toto?
?əy+ hay.hay-wə bi pən bi yomaa? tum toto?
3E+ write.APPL-COM DEF man DEF woman one paper
'The man wrote the woman a letter.'

(elicited)

- (ii) bi mecaŋ maŋkuypəʔk ʔəy hupwanakkə ʔəy tuhkuyʔ
 bi mecaŋ maŋ.kuyʔ+pəʔk ʔəy+ hup=wanak-wə ʔəy+ tuh.kuyʔ
 DEF two step.INSTR1.REL 3E+ pull=go_down-COM 3E+ shoot.INSTR1
 'The two-legged one drew his gun.' (ZOH1R26 122)

A **maximal** MIG Zoque verbal complex would consist of one member from each of the position classes. Although the corpus does not contain any word in which all the position slots are filled, there is no reason in principle why such a word could not exist; indeed, there are surprisingly few co-occurrence restrictions among the classes or among specific members of the classes. One of the most complete examples in the corpus is given below. In addition to the obligatory person agreement marker (ʔəy+, position 2) and inflectional suffix (-wə, 10), this verb complex has a causative (yak-, 3), a directional prefix (win-, 4), compounded verb roots (ten=cəy, 5), the antipassive suffix (-ʔoy, 6), and a post-inflectional clitic (+ʔam, 11).

- (2.3) bi pəndəkkay yakwintencəyyoyyám
 bi pən+dəkkə ʔəy+ yak.win.ten=cəy.ʔoy-wə+ʔam
 DEF man+NPL 3E+ CAUS.FACE.hit=get_stuck.ANTIP-COM.NOW
 'The men now intercepted him.' (ZOH1R6 021)

2.2. Theoretical sketch

My goal in this grammar is to present the facts of MIG Zoque with as little theoretical machinery as possible. The only theory that I found that applies well to this language without significant modification is the functionalist theory of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG). In this section, I will give a very brief sketch of this framework, touching only on those parts of it that are used in this description. The basis of this sketch is Van Valin and La Polla (1997). Other relevant works are Van Valin 1993b; Van Valin and Foley, 1980; and Foley and Van Valin 1984.

Clauses are analysed into three layers: the nucleus, which contains only the predicate; the core, which contains the nucleus and the arguments lexically specified by the predicate; and the periphery, which contains all non-core arguments and adjunct expressions. Predicates are typically verbs, but they may also be adjectives or nouns, in languages like MIG Zoque that do not require a copular verb in predicating expressions such as 'Mary is an astronaut.' This division of the clause is illustrated in the following figure.

CORE			PERIPHERY
Germán	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"> told NUCLEUS </div>	a story	in the patio.

Figure 2.1. The layered structure of the clause

Core arguments are those that are specified by the lexical entry for a verb root or other predicate. The set may be increased or decreased by derivational processes, such as the addition of affixes such as causatives or passives. In MIG Zoque, the subject of a verb (either transitive or intransitive) and the object of a transitive verb are realized by the pronominal agreement marker. Any core argument may be referenced by a plural suffix on the verb (section 6.2). Noun phrases that co-reference core arguments are optional; their appearance is governed by discourse considerations such as focus and recency.

According to Foley and Van Valin (1984:79), "The main coding feature distinguishing core from peripheral arguments is that core arguments tend to occur in unmarked morphological or syntactic forms and peripheral arguments in marked, often adpositional, codings." In English, core arguments are syntactically marked by their position with respect to the verb. In a simple transitive clause, the subject is that argument that occurs to the left of the verb, while the object appears to the right. Additional arguments, such as time or place, will typically be marked by a preposition. In MIG Zoque, noun phrases co-referenced with core arguments are not marked by case endings¹, position in the clause, or adpositions. Oblique arguments, such as locations and instruments, are marked by postpositions (section 4.7).

¹ MAR Zoque has case markings for core arguments: +ʔis, ergative, and +kə, absolutive (Kaufman, p.c.).

RRG employs the useful notion of *semantic macroroles* for the description of the argument structure of verbs (Dowty, 1979; Van Valin and LaPolla, 1997:141 ff). Cross-linguistically, subjects of verbs tend to be selected from a restricted set of possible semantic roles: agent, experiencer, instrument, recipient, source, and force. Objects are similarly restricted to a small set of roles: patient, theme, recipient, source and location. These sets can be generalized under the headings *actor* and *undergoer*, respectively, greatly simplifying discussions of sets of predicates with essentially similar argument structures, but slight differences in the precise role played by the most prominent arguments². In MIG Zoque, the sets are actually more restricted, since only animate or quasi-animate entities (like the wind) can be actors. English sentences with non-animate actors, such as 'the rock hit the wall' or 'the knife cut the bread' would have to be paraphrased along the lines of '(someone) threw the rock at the wall' or 'the bread was cut with a knife'³. This restriction is similar to that described for Jacalteco Mayan by Craig (1977).

² There appears to be a sort of thematic hierarchy operating in MIG Zoque, in that the texts show a strong preference for volitional (human) entities as subjects, either as actors or agents, and for inanimate entities as patients. I did not study this systematically, and so have none of the negative evidence that is necessary to fully demonstrate the idea.

³ Expressions of this kind are acceptable in MAR Zoque (Kaufman, p.c.).

Operators are elements "which are qualitatively different from predicates and their arguments" (Van Valin and LaPolla, 1997:40). These include clausal elements such as tense, aspect, negatives, etc. These modify different layers of the clauses in which they appear; thus, aspect is a nuclear operator, mood (deontic modals expressing such notions as obligation) is a core operator, and tense is a clausal operator. Operators may be affixes (e.g., the progressive suffix *-ing*), function words (e.g., English auxiliary verbs), or content words (e.g., adverbs like 'frankly' that affect the illocutionary force of a clause).

Clauses are combined into complex sentences by means of junctures at the various levels: nuclear, core, and clause (including the periphery). Causative constructions in English are an example of a nuclear juncture, as in "The woman made the child eat." Although there are two predicates, 'make' and 'eat', they function together as a single, complex predicate. Most verb stem compounds in MIG Zoque are nuclear junctures. In the example below, *haʔk-* 'to drown' and *kaʔ-* 'to die' are compounded inside the verb complex, forming a single complex predicate.

- (2.3.) *gə tyempu mae haʔkkapa rroberta*
gə tyempu maeʔ 0 haʔk=kaʔ-pa rroberta
 that time REM 3A drown=die-INC roberta
 'That time Roberta nearly died by drowning.' (ZOH1R15 075)

Core junctures combine two cores, each with its own set of arguments. An example from English (from Van Valin and La Polla, 1997:444) is "I ordered Fred to force the door open." The two cores are 'I ORDER Fred' and 'Fred

FORCE the door open'. Some verb stem compounds in MIG Zoque are core junctures. In example (2.4), the two cores are 'I HELP my mother' and 'my mother WASH clothes'.

- (2.4) ʔən cekocoŋŋə ʔən mama bi yote?
 ʔən+ ceʔ=ko.coŋ-wə ʔən+ mama bi yote?
 1E+ wash=OTHR.join-COM 1E+ mother DEF clothes
 'I helped my mother wash the clothes.' (elicited)

Clause junctures combine two clauses, including separate sets of peripheral elements. Coordinated and subordinated clauses are typical clause junctures, as in "Because the woman fed the pigs earlier, now she can go to the river with her friend." An example of clause juncture in MIG Zoque is shown in (2.5).

- (2.5) də kahʔukpaštəm də nəkpam gó?
 də+ kahwe=ʔuk-pa+štəəʔ +ʔam də+ nək-pa+ʔam goo?
 1A+ coffee=drink-INC+ONLY+NOW 1A+ GO-INC+NOW PURP
 'I'll just drink some coffee now so I can go.' (ZOH1R10 151)

2.3. The Spanish invasion and Zoque grammar

The Spanish invasion of Mexico began in 1519. The Oaxacan Zoques were isolated in their vast, high, Chimalapan wilderness, and perhaps suffered less intrusion than lowland groups of indigenous people. However, every level of Zoque grammar has been affected by contact with Spanish to some degree.

Borrowing from Spanish into Zoque appears to range from category (2) to category (3), on the borrowing scale of Thomason and Kaufman (1988:74-75). Content words, of course, have been and continue to be borrowed freely. A contrast between an early and later borrowing can be seen in the words for 'cattle', animals that were not known in MesoAmerica before the Spanish brought them. One consultant had given us the word *ganadu*, which is simply Spanish *ganado* with the final vowel raised (a regular rule of transforming a Spanish word into a Zoque one). Sr. Sánchez objected to this word as being just Spanish again, and offered us a Zoque word: *wakaš*. This is clearly the Spanish *vacas* (note the plural ending), which was doubtless borrowed long before the reach of even Sr. Sánchez's capacious memory, and completely converted to Zoque phonology. Note that both words can be used as either singular or plural forms, whereas in Spanish *ganado* is a mass noun - 'cattle' - and *vaca* is a count noun - 'cow'.

These examples illustrate two effects of borrowing at the phonological and morphological levels. Neither /g/ nor /d/ are phonemes in MIG Zoque (apart from the result of intervocalic voicing); these and other phonemes, such as /s/, are generally confined to the borrowed words. Spanish inflectional morphemes, like the plural /s/ of *wakaš*, *vacas*, are also confined to loan words. There are no derivational morphemes borrowed from Spanish into MIG Zoque.

Spanish verb stems are 'Zoque-fied' by being incorporated with the root *cək-*, 'to do' (section 7.3.1), illustrated in example (2.6). Spanish verbal inflections never appear in Zoque sentences, although the negative words *no* and *ni* are sometimes used in addition to the MIG Zoque negative *ya* (section 5.5.3). Spanish pronouns only appear in relative clause constructions: *?el ke X*, *él que X*, 'he who X'.

- (2.6) *dəš miš respaldacəkpa*
dəš miš+ respaldar=cək-pa
 1Prn 1>2+ support=do-INC
 'I will support you.'

(ZOH1R24 402)

Many Spanish function words have been borrowed, most notably the conjunctions *y*, 'and', *o*, 'or', and *pero*, 'but'. Discourse markers like *entonces*, 'then', and *de ahí*, 'from there' have been borrowed, as have words for times and places that apparently were not part of the pre-Hispanic culture, like *?ora*, *hora*, 'hour', and *parke*, *parque*, 'park'. Where there is a Zoque word, it tends to be preferred. I seldom see the word *mañana*, 'morning', in place of *?aṇnamcu?*, for example.

So far we have a case of category (2) borrowing: phonology and morphology restricted to the loan words with which they are associated, and function words that had no native equivalents. Category (3) borrowing includes adpositions and a more extensive set of function words. The Spanish prepositions *de*, 'of' and *para*, 'for', appear in MIG Zoque sentences, preceding the nouns in accordance with Spanish syntax, as shown in example (2.7). The Zoque way to say this would employ the applicative suffix *-hay* to reference the recipient.

- (2.7) ke ?iwə ?əy manak ci?oba para yədə pən
 ke ?iwə ?əy+ manak 0 ci?.?oy-pa para yədə pən
 that who 3E+ child 3A give.ANTIP-INC for this man
 'Who will give his daughter to this man?' (ZOH1R18 221)

Function words that do have MIG Zoque equivalents are also common in the texts, such as the pronoun *?otro*, *otro*, 'other' (MIG Zoque *?eyá?k*), the subordinator *si*, *si*, 'if' (MIG Zoque *bi?t*), and relative pronoun *ke*, *que*, 'that' (MIG Zoque *+V?k*, REL) which appears at the start of the relative clause, as opposed to the MIG Zoque clitic which attaches to the end of the relative clause's verb complex. This sort of borrowed function word frequently appears in tandem with the native form, with the Spanish word on the left and the Zoque morpheme on the right. This behavior is discussed in chapter 11, where examples are given of expressions with just the MIG Zoque subordinator, just the Spanish subordinator, and both forms together in one clause.