Conference on the Languages and Linguistics of Middle and Central America

Totonacan

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• approx. 253,000 speakers
• divided into two branches: Totonac and Tepehua
• 3 Tepehua languages:
  • Pisafloros
  • Tlachichilco
  • Huehuetla
• Totonac has traditionally has 4 divisions
  • Misantla
  • Northern
  • Sierra
  • Lowland
• number of languages in divisions is unknown
Typological profile

- highly agglutinative or polysynthetic languages
  ‘They didn’t want to be coming by and paying us all (they owed us) again because of that.’

- constituent order very flexible, governed by information structure

- unmarked VS & VO (as per Dryer 1997)

- nominative/accusative alignment, no nominal cases

- prefixal numeral classifiers, transnumeral nouns

- one to no adpositions, body part terms used as locatives

- body part prefixes used on verbs to express locative and configurational meanings

- valency regulated by multiple causatives and applicatives

- agreement with subject and one or two objects
Current issues

- field has reached the critical mass for the beginning of bitter internecine warfare
  - there are almost 10 of us
- currently, there is a lot of discussion around
  - internal reconstruction
    - Totonac internal relations
    - glottalic features in proto-Totonacan
  - primary and symmetrical objects
Totonac internal relations

- Tot is often split into 4 symmetrical groups
- but division Misantla vs. others is stark
  - phonological, morphological, lexical evidence
- Brown et al. (2011) propose Central group
- within Central, different sources suggest different sub-groupings
  - Northern-Sierra vs. Lowland (García Rojas 1978)
  - Northern vs. Lowland-Sierra (Ichon 1969; Davletshin 2008; Brown et al. 2011)
  - Sierra vs. Northern-Lowland (MacKay & Trechsel, to appear)
- of these three scenarios, only the latter two seem to be much in play

Northern: Upper Necaxa, Apapantilla, Coahuitlán
Sierra: Zapotitlán, Coatepec, Coyutla, Olintla, Ozelonacaxtla
Lowland: Cerro del Carbón, Escolín
Uncertain: Filomeno Mata, Cerro Xinolatépetl
Phonological evidence

- not many regular sound changes to divide up the Central group
- the back fricative is /h/ in Lowland and Sierra, /x/ or /χ/ in Northern
  - Papantla may have weak phonological evidence for underlying /x/ (Levy, p.c.)
  - Coatepec McQuown (1990) and Ozelonacaxtla (Román Lobato 2008) are reported to have both /x/ and /h/
  - Brown et al. (2011) and Davletshin (2008, 2014) reconstruct *x and *h for proto-Totonacan (disputed by MacKay and Trechsel 2013)
- Northern has **5-vowel** systems, Sierra and Lowland typically have **3-vowel** systems
- **laryngealized vowels** in Northern occur in all syllable-types
  - Lowland lacks laryngeals following sonorants and seems to have lost them in many syllables following fricatives
  - a cluster of languages in the Sierra (Coatepec, Olintla, Huehuetla) appear to have lost laryngealization
Morphological evidence

- Sierra is distinguished by 3 features (MacKay & Trechsel, to appear):
  - suffix -qː becomes a generalized plural-participant marker
    - -qː is totalitive/terminative in N, L, Filomeno Mata, and Cerro Xinolatépetl
    - ta- ‘3pl.sub’, ka- ‘pl.obj’ in these languages
  - use of compositional 2 > 1 forms (when 1 and/or 2 is plural)
    - other Totonacan languages use non-compositional syncretic forms
    - identical syncretic pattern shared by N, L, and Filomeno Mata
  - preserves the /y/ of the imperfective suffix -yaː in ultimate final position
    - Zapotitlán taštúy ‘s/he goes out’ vs. Upper Necaxa taštú ‘s/he goes out’
    - suffix completely elided in N, L, Filomeno Mata, and Cerro Xinolatépetl

- MacKay & Trechsel use these traits to suggest (not very strongly) a Northern-Papantla grouping
  - however, equally possible Sierra innovated after the Lowland-Sierra vs Northern split
  - lexical evidence indicates that these are recent innovations
Lexical evidence

- clearly groups Lowland-Sierra against Northern
- some of the isoglosses:
  - ‘water’: Tep, M, N škaːn, L-S čucut
  - ‘leaf’: N (various), L-S tywaːn
  - ‘negative’: N (various), L-S niː
- supported by cognate sets in Kondrak et al. (2007), Brown et al. (2011)
- ASJP (Müller et al. 2009)
  - essentially, fails to recognize Lowland vs. Sierra split at all
  - puts Filomeno Mata and Cerro Xinolatépetl (Ozumatlán) with S-L

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Conclusions

❖ likely the basic division is N vs. S-L
❖ distinctive morphological features of S are late innovations
❖ happened after Cerro Xinolatépetl was split off from S-L group by Nahuatl (mid- to late-15th Century?)
❖ lexical similarity between S and CX can’t be explained by contact
❖ some N features in CX may be due to contact
   ❖ dorsal back fricative
❖ Filomeno Mata also appears to be morphologically “conservative” but is lexically closer to L-S than to N
   ❖ may be due to contact (?)
Glottalic features in pTn

- the Totonac and Tepehua branches are distinguished by a regular correspondence, Tot CV̰ ~ Tep C’V
- two possible diachronic pathways
  - pTn *CV̰ → Tep C’V
  - pTn *C’V → Tot CV̰
- either seems largely consistent with the facts
- first has been favoured (e.g., Arana Osnaya 1953; Levy 1987; Davletshin 2008; Brown et al. 2011, 2014; Watters 2013)
- MacKay & Trechsel (2013) have argued for the second
Glottalic features in Totonac

- CV is found throughout the Tot branch, though not in all languages
  - non-modal phonation
  - post-vocalic glottal closure
    - following stops and affricates in Zapotitlán (Aschmann 1946)
  - pre-vocalic glottal closure
    - following stops and affricates in Papantla and Upper Necaxa
    - results in ejective-like stops and affricates in Papantla (Alarcón Montero 2008)
- across the family, CV is found in all syllable types
- less frequent to varying degrees following voiced segments and fricatives
  - Northern and Cerro Xinolatépetl have CV in all syllable types
  - in Lowland less frequent after fricatives and never after voiced consonants
  - Sierra shows variable distribution
    - Zapotitlán and Coyutla in all syllable types
    - Olintla, Coatepec, Huehuetla Totonac have lost laryngeals altogether
Glottalic features in Tepehua

❖ C’ in Tepehua found in all three varieties
  ❖ Tlachichilco: p’, t’, k’, (q’), ts’, č’
  ❖ Huehuetla: b, d, k’, ts’, č’
  ❖ Pisaﬂores: b, d, ɠ ~ k’, ts’, č’
    ❖ ts’V ~ tsV, č’V ~ čV (MacKay & Trechsel 2008)

❖ C’ restricted in distribution
  ❖ restricted to stops and affricates (T)
  ❖ C’ only found in syllabic onsets

❖ Laryngealized vowels also found in some contexts in Tepehua
  ❖ viz., Pisaﬂores alternations above; also ɠV ~ k’V ~ kV (MacKay & Trechsel 2008)
  ❖ regressive laryngealization of vowels in second-person subject forms (Watters 1994)
    ❖ Laryngealization also triggers C → C’ (MacKay & Trechsel 2008)
      paš- ‘bathe’ + -ta ‘PFV’ + -t’iti ‘2PL.SUB’ → ɓashiqadjiti (MacKay & Trechsel 2013)
# Competing hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PTn *C(\text{-})V → Tep C’V, Tot CV</th>
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1. **Diachronic shift**
   - glottalization moves V → C_
   - synchronically attested in family
   - Ź̧ unusual, but common in MA
   - glottalization moves C → _V
   - typologically common process
   - C’ typologically common, Ź̧ rarer

2. **Lack of Tep glottalized resonants (R) and fricatives (F)**
   - R/F\(\text{-}\)V̧ → R’/F’ blocked
   - blocking F\(\text{-}\)V̧ → /F’ seen in Papantla
   - R’ and F’ absent in pTn
   - F’ and R’ typologically uncommon

3. **Ź̧ in Tot syllables with resonant (R) and fricative (F) onsets**
   - pTn *Ź̧ not restricted
   - varies due to family-internal shifts
   - spontaneous generation of R’ and F’
   - sporadic process accounts for variation
## Competing hypotheses

| PTN *CV → Tep C’V, Tot CV | PTN *C’V → Tot CṼ, Tep C’V |

### 4. Tep C’ found in onsets only
- pTn *ṼC not context for shift
- C’# → C via phonotactic constraint
- C’ in coda typologically marked

### 5. Final T’ in Tep CVT verbs
- All roots ending in a stop/affricate (T) surface as CVT’a in the imperfective
  - *ktasp’it’a* ‘I’m returning’
  - *tasp’itli* ‘he returned’ (Kung Smythe 2007)
- Due to allomorphy of IMPF suffix:
  - *ʔa* / T__, *-ya* / elsewhere
  - (Watters 1988; Smythe-Kung 2007)
- Underlyingly these are CVT’ roots
- Other coda T’ removed by phonotactics
  - All T-final verbs underlyingly CVT’
  - No CVplain-T verbs in the lexicon
Conclusions?

- on the balance of things, it seems like the facts support reconstructing pTn *CV
  - relies on a phonological process synchronically attested in both branches of the family
  - does not require unexplained spontaneous generation of Tot V in syllables with fricative and resonant onsets
  - does not require all Tep CVT verb roots to have glottalized codas
- there are some remaining questions about the nature of the pTn glottalic feature
  - it seems to behave like a “mobile” suprasegmental feature
  - it may be linked to “glottalic” vowels as suggested in Brown et al. (2011), or
  - it may be a genuinely free phonemic element (Davletshin 2014)
Primary and symmetrical objects

- Totonacan languages have a number of typological features that make sorting out grammatical relations challenging
  - lack of nominal case
  - lack of prepositions
  - valency-increasing morphology that allows up to five objects
- languages in the family appear to vary as to how this is handled
Symmetrical objects in Misantla

- MacKay & Trechsel (2008) argue Misantla is a “symmetrical object language”
- all objects of a multi-valent clause can control agreement

\[ \text{swáan kíláalfímáakutunín (hɔŋkučára)} \]
\[ \text{swaan } \text{kin–lää–lii–maa–kutu–ni–na} \quad (\text{hun–kučara}) \]
Juan 1OBJ–3PL.OBJ–INST–CAUS–feed–DAT–2OBJ DET–spoon

‘Juan made me feed you with them (the spoons)’
‘Juan made you feed me with them (the spoons)’
‘Juan made him/her feed us with them (the spoons)’
‘Juan made us feed her/him with them (the spoons)’
‘Juan made them feed us with it/them (the spoons)’
‘Juan made us feed them with it/them (the spoons)’ (MacKay & Trechsel 2008: 244)

- multiple interpretations correspond to agreement with up to three objects in any of three available semantic roles
- combination of *kin-* ‘1obj’ and -*na* ‘2obj’ can mean:
  - ‘1pl.obj’
  - ‘1sg.obj’ ‘2sg.obj’
Symmetrical objects in Misantla

任何形式的对象都可以成为间接的或互换的

kít ḗiklakaswáŋnikán hómPedro
kit ik–lakaswaŋt–ni–kan hun–Pedro
I 1SUB–shave–DAT–REFL DET–Pedro
‘I shave myself for Pedro’
‘I shave Pedro for myself’

ʔuτún taláalakaswáŋnikán hómPedro
utun ta–laa–lakaswaŋt–ni–kan hun–Pedro
they PL.SUB–RCP–shave–DAT–REFL DET–Pedro
‘they shave each other for Pedro’
‘they shave Pedro for each other’

(MacKay & Trechsel 2008: 248)

MacKay & Trechsel argue that no object properties distinguish among the multiple objects of Misantla verbs
Objects in Upper Necaxa

- Upper Necaxa distinguishes between primary and secondary objects
  - objects are generally symmetrical with respect to control of agreement
    
    \[
    \text{kinkaːliːʩtkuyáːn 时代中国 yǔtín ?ǒtnǐ}
    \]
    
    \[
    \text{kin–kaː–liː–ʩtkú–yaː–n 时代中国 yǔ–tin ?ǒtnǐ}
    \]
    
    \[
    \]
    
    ‘A drunk stabs us with it/them.’
    ‘A drunk stabs it/them with us.’ (knives speak)
  - agreement with two SAP objects in either semantic role is possible
    - affixes \textit{kind- ‘1obj’, kax- ‘pl.obj’, and -n ‘2obj’ must} be interpreted as a unit ‘1pl.obj’
      - rules out other possible interpretations:
        *‘A drunk stabs me with you\textsubscript{pl}.’ or *‘A drunk stabs you\textsubscript{pl} with me.’
        *‘A drunk stabs us with you\textsubscript{sg}.’ or *‘A drunk stabs you\textsubscript{sg} with us.’
        *‘A drunk stabs us with you\textsubscript{pl}.’ or *‘A drunk stabs you\textsubscript{pl} with us.’
  - unlike Misantla, agreement with a third argument is ruled out
  - verbs must agree with SAP arguments, irrespective of semantic role
any object can be target of reciprocal*

nalaːšapamiyaːum
naːlaː–šapa–nį–yaː–m
FUT–RCP–massage–BEN–IMPF–1PL.SUB
‘Let’s massage him/her/them for each other.’
‘Let’s massage each other for him/her/them.’

unlike Misantla, no further object agreement is possible

the reciprocal suffix seems to block additional objects

*UNT reflexives are formed differently than in Misantla.
Objects in Upper Necaxa

❖ only primary objects are suppressed in the object-suppressive voice

nəkmaški:nín kistánkù (*əʔtí tí regálú)
na–ʔik–maški:–nin  kin–stánkù (*əʔ–tí tí regálú)
FUT–1SG.SUB–give–OBJ.SUPP 1PO–sibling CLF:GEN–one present)
‘I’m going to give my younger sister away (in marriage).’
*‘I’m going to make gifts/a gift to my younger sister.’

❖ the suffix -nin suppresses the expression of an object

❖ in underived ditransitives, it targets the RECIPIENT or non-THEME

❖ UNT is thus a “primary object language” in the sense of Dryer (1986)

❖ there is a property pertaining to primary objects that does not pertain
to other objects

❖ UNT is not a “symmetrical object language”
Objects in Upper Necaxa

- testing shows that Upper Necaxa opposes a unique primary object to a repeatable secondary object
  - primary objects are
    - objects of monotransitives
    - non-THEMES of underived ditransitives
    - CAUSEES in causatives
    - basic objects in applicative constructions
  - secondary objects are
    - THEMES of underived ditransitives
    - applied objects (UNT applicatives are non-direct applicatives—Beck 2009)
- this shows a split in the family between symmetrical languages (Misantla) and primary-object languages (UNT)
- the latter group probably includes other Northern languages and Papantla (Levy, n.d.), as well as Tepehua (Jim Watters, p.c.)
Totonacan studies have gone through a boom in the last decade or so. The number of theoretical publications and basic documentary sources has grown substantially. A number of dissertations/theses have been written, several more are in the works. Native-speaker linguists in training. Recent work may be significant for the field of Mesoamerican linguistics.

- Brown et al. (2011) suggest genetic links between Totonacan and Mixe-Zoque (Totozoquean)
- Brown et al. (2014) suggest links between Totozoquean and Chitimacha, a language spoken in the southern U.S.

Stay tuned for more …
References


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❖ the usual disclaimers apply