Choapan Zapotec Relational Nouns

Erin Donnelly
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Mesoamerica as a Linguistic Area (Campbell, Kaufman, and Smith-Stark 1986): relational nouns are an areal feature of Mesoamerica. Relational nouns “express locative and related notions, but composed of a noun root and possessive pronominal affixes” (545).

**Pipil** (545):

- **nu-wan** ‘with me’ (nu- ‘my’)
- **mu-wan** ‘with you’ (mu- ‘your’)
- **i-wan** ‘with him/her’ (i- ‘his/her’)

A similar important characteristic shared by many Mesoamerican languages (though perhaps not indicative of the linguistic area) is having locatives derived from body parts. These are “locative constructions which maintain their nominal character but involve semantic associations not usually found in other parts of the world, e.g. ‘stomach’ for ‘in’, ‘tooth’ for ‘to, at’ etc.” (549).

**Mixtec** (Alexander, 79)

- **clhi** ‘stomach; in(side), under’
- **ini** ‘heart; in, inside’
- **nuu** ‘face; to, at, from’
- **sini** ‘back; behind’

Body part locative words in Zapotec languages are analyzed in two different ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In certain Valley Zapotec languages, body part locatives (BPLs) are <em>prepositions</em></td>
<td>In certain Southern (MacLaury) and Isthmus (Pérez Báez) Zapotec languages, body part locatives are <em>relational nouns</em></td>
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In his 2007 grammar of Choapan Zapotec, a Northern Zapotec language, Lyman wrote that body part locatives were *prepositions*, but provided no syntactic evidence.

Here, I focus on the categorical status of Choapan Zapotec body part locatives: are they nouns or prepositions? I use syntactic diagnostics from Lillehaugen and Sonnenshein (in press) to determine the categorical status of body part locatives.
Choapan Zapotec Basic Locative Construction (BLC)

(1) benne r-e-ge? lo siyà
   person HAB-be-3sresp. insides chair
   The person is sitting on the chair.

(2) r-bedzi-bi? fko?odzo yó?ò
   HAB-cry-3s back house
   The baby is crying behind the house.

(3) làw mesa zó gyèsò?
   face table STAT pot
   The pot is on the tabletop.

(4) gyeso zó-n làw mesa
   pot STAT-3inan. face table
   The pot is on the tabletop.

Noun Possession in Choapan

(5) fko?odz-a?
   back-1s
   my back

(6) rwa?a lehandrà
   mouth Alejandra
   Alejandra’s mouth

(7) rwa?a-ge?
   mouth-3s.resp
   her mouth

(8) yo?o kye-ró
   house of-1p.incl
   our house

(9) *yo?oró
   house-1p.incl
   our house

Inventory of Body Part Locatives (BPL) in Choapan Zapotec

All of these words are inalienably possessed (exs. 5-7 above).

C-selection versus S-selection

Lillehaugen and Sonnenshein (in press)
Categorial-selection (c-selection):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choapan</th>
<th>Body Part Meaning</th>
<th>Locative Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le?e-</td>
<td>‘side, belly’</td>
<td>‘beside’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fko?odzo-</td>
<td>‘back’</td>
<td>‘behind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gitfo-</td>
<td>‘head’</td>
<td>‘on top: roof’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lo?o-</td>
<td>‘insides’</td>
<td>‘in(side), at’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>law-</td>
<td>‘face’</td>
<td>‘in, at, on, on top’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nya?a-</td>
<td>‘foot’</td>
<td>‘under, leg’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rwa?a-</td>
<td>‘mouth’</td>
<td>‘door, edge of’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3an-</td>
<td>‘buttocks’</td>
<td>‘under’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ability of verbs to require the complement they select to be of a certain grammatical category.

Semantic-selection (s-selection):
The ability of verbs to require the complement they select to be of a certain semantic type.

(10) r-bedzi-bi? lo kwartò
HAB-cry-3s insides room
He is crying in the room.

(11) *r-bedzi-bi? kwartò
HAB-cry-3s room
He is crying in the room.

BPLs are sometimes essential to grammaticality and to indicate location.

(12) r-bedzi-bi? lo nisa daw? 
HAB-cry-3s insides water huge
She is crying in the ocean.

(13) ?r-bedzi-bi? nisa daw? 
HAB-cry-3s water huge
The ocean is crying.

Without locatives, some sentences can be semantically infelicitous.

(14) r-bedzi-bi? lo yàw 
HAB-cry-3s insides river
He is crying in the river.

(15) r-bedzi-bi? yàw 
HAB-cry-3s river
He always cries in the river.

Regular nouns can sometimes take the place of BPLs, with identical or near-identical meaning.
The necessity of a BPL can change based on the following NP.

Regular nouns that are not body part terms can also act as locatives. The necessity of BPLs varies based on the nouns and verbs in a sentence (the differences between 16-17 and 18-19, for example). This is closer to s-selection than c-selection. If s-selection is at play, then the fact that nouns can act as locatives suggests categorical similarity between nouns and body part locatives.

**Coordination Tests**

Only like constituents can be coordinated- can body part locatives be coordinated with syntactic prepositions in Choapan Zapotec?

Tlacolula de Matamoros Zapotec: (Lillehaugen and Sonnenshein in press)

(22) da bēe’ecw zuu làa’any me’es ne tráhsdeh gyezh’illy PL dog NEU.is.standing stomach/in table and behind chair
The dogs are (standing) under the table and behind the chair.

**Choapan Zapotec:** preposition lēn ‘with’

(23) *yakka bekko ná? r-e’ë-ba zán mesa ná? za-bá lēn many dog there HAB-sit-3anml. buttocks table there stand-3anml. with
The dogs sit under the table and (others) are with the boy.

many dog there HAB-sit-3anml. buttocks table there with child  
The dogs are under the table with the boy(s).

The difference between these examples is zabá, ‘it stands’. Coordinating BPLs and other locatives is impossible with zabá, but has the unintended meaning in (24) without it.

many dog there HAB-sit-3anml. buttocks table there others-3anml. with-3s  
The dogs are under the table and the others (are) with the boy.

Using mazarába? introduces the intended meaning, but shows that another subject NP is needed before ‘with’.

(26) yakka bekko na? r-e?e-ba ʒán mesa na law mesa  
many dog there HAB-sit-3anml. buttocks table and face table  
The dogs are under the table and on the table.

(27) yakka bekko na? r-bedzi-ba? ʒán yàgà na(?) yàw  
many dog there HAB-bark-3anml. buttocks tree and river  
The dogs bark under the tree and in the river.

Body part locative phrases can be coordinated with other BPLs and with nouns, but not with the preposition ‘with’. This suggests that BPLs are dissimilar to prepositions, and are more similar to nouns.

**Modification of BPLs in Choapan Zapotec**

**Numerals**

Numerals come before the nouns they modify.

(28) benne r-e-ge? law tsonna siyà  
person HAB-sit-3s.resp. face three chair  
The person is sitting on three chairs.

(29) benne r-aw-ge? tjioppa law mesa  
person HAB-eat-3s.resp. two face table  
The person is eating on two tables.

Sentences (28) and (29) show that numerals can modify regular nouns and body part locatives. Semantically, the meaning changes very little: if there are three chair seats, so there
must be three chairs. Likewise, three chairs means three seats.

(30) bginni zó-ba zitò? gà-n zó yàgà
    bird stand-3anml. far where-3inan. stand tree
    The bird is far from the tree.

(31) *bginni zó-ba tjoppa zitò? yàgà
    bird stand-3anml. two far tree
    The bird is far from the trees (two?).

(35) and (36) show that prepositions cannot be modified by numbers in the same way that BPLs can (see section Non-Body Part Locatives below). This suggests that BPLs are not the same as prepositions, since they can be modified in ways that prepositions can’t. In fact, numerals can only be used as noun modifiers.

Adjectives

Color adjectives must come after the nouns they modify:

(32) *góto zó-ba law yá?a mesa
    cat stand-3anml. face green table
    The cat is standing on the green tabletop.

(33) góto zó-ba law-n yá?a
    cat stand-3anml. face-3inan. green
    The cat is standing on its (the table) green face.

Ungrammaticality of (32) could come from ungrammatical possession (see above). Since (33) has a pronominal enclitic, -n, it can be modified by ‘green’.

(34) *bekko r-e-ba mesa nya?a gàtsì
    dog HAB-sit-3anml. table foot yellow
    The dog is sitting at the yellow table leg.

(35) bekko r-e-ba nya?a mesa nya?a gàtsì
    dog HAB-sit-3anml. foot table foot yellow
    The dog is sitting at the yellow table leg.

It seems that the repetition of ‘foot’ in (35) allows for the second instance to be unpossessed. However, it is unclear why sentence (36) should be grammatical:

(36) mesa nya?a gàtsì n-àtsò-n
    table foot yellow STAT-break-3inan.
    The yellow leg of the table is broken.
Body part locatives can be modified by adjectives, but this is more complicated than modification by numerals. One possible explanation for this is that adjectives come after the nouns they modify, and that BPLs must always be possessed, and the possessing noun must come directly after the BPL. Thus, if a certain adjective only applies to a certain part of an object, it becomes difficult to modify the part of a whole.

There are other instances where inalienable possession causes issues of clarity. These are usually solved with the same construction as in (33):

(37) ʃko?odzo-n kyé hwan zó yó
   back-3inan of Juan stand flower
   The back (of Juan’s chair) has a flower.
   Juan’s chair back [the rest is someone else’s] has a flower.

(38) ʃko?odzo-ba? kyé hwan
   back-3anml. of Juan
   The animal’s back is Juan’s.
   The back of Juan’s animal.

(37)-(38), show double possession: to refer to a component part of an object that is owned by a person, possession has to be marked once on the stem, and once with kye ‘of’. This is the same strategy used in (33), where the component part was marked for possession with an enclitic, and then modified with a color term.

Using kye ‘of’ drastically changes meaning from inalienably possessed constructions:

(39) ʃko?odzo hwan zó yó
   back Juan stand flower
   There’s a flower on Juan’s back.

(40) ʃko?odzo kyé hwan zó yó
   back of Juan stand flower
   There’s a flower behind Juan.

In sentence (39), ʃko?odzo is normally possessed, with ‘Juan’ immediately following it. Sentence (40), however, uses the word ‘of’, and this cannot mean that there’s a flower on Juan’s back, even though Juan is still the possessor in the sentence.

(40) has a similar meaning but different construction to Tlacolula Valley Zapotec (Lillehau- gen and Munro 2008):

(41) Mnnàaa’ zuu zh:ààa’n bzeiny
    woman NEU.stand behind deer
    The woman is standing behind the deer.

Notice that this Tlacolula example, unlike sentence (40) in Choapan Zapotec, does not have an intervening word between ‘back’ and ‘deer’. However, in order to get the sense that the flower is behind Juan, and not on his back, sentence (40) is the only grammatical construction for Choapan. The two require different locative constructions.
Numeral modification shows that BPLs pattern with nouns, not with prepositions. Adjective modification is less straightforward for Choapan Zapotec. However, sentences like (32)-(33) suggest that inalienably possessed body parts should be marked with pronominal enclitics if they are to be directly modified. Sentences (37)-(40) show that this strategy is used in similar modification constructions, with double possession.

**Open or Closed Class?**

Since there are limited number of body parts, there are only so many body part terms. Can body part terms not normally used as locatives in Choapan Zapotec still apply in limited contexts?

- `spíro kámara`
  bellybutton camera
  ‘camera lens’

- `span motʃila`
  tail backpack
  ‘end of backpack strap’

- `yéro ʒan kámara`
  hole buttocks camera
  ‘hole at bottom of camera’

**Non-Body Part Locatives**

How do prepositions or non-body part locatives function in Choapan Zapotec? What can this tell us about BPLs?

(42) bekko zó-ba bago ga zó tsonna yàgà
dog stand-3anml. near where stand three tree
The dog is near where there’s three trees.

(43) *bekko zó-ba tsonna bago yàgà
dog stand-3anml. three near tree
The dog is near three trees.

As shown in the section on numerals above, non-body part locatives in Choapan Zapotec cannot be modified for number. BPLs can be modified in this way.

(44) bginni zó-ba zitò?
bird stand-3anml. far
The bird is far away.

(45) *bginni zó-ba bago-n
bird stand-3anml. near-3inan.
The bird is nearby.
Non-body part locatives cannot take pronominal enclitics, unlike body part locatives.

All of the noun-like things that body part locatives can do, other locatives in Choapan Zapotec cannot do. They seem to function only as prepositions, and have no obvious derivation from body parts. These non-body part locatives should certainly be classified as prepositions.

**Discussion**

In Choapan Zapotec, nouns are inalienably marked for possession, and can be modified by adjectives, numerals, and quantifiers. Body part locatives are also inalienably possessed, and can be modified by adjectives, numerals, and quantifiers (though in a more restricted way than regular nouns).

Body part locatives are not always required by verbs in locative constructions: bare nouns, like ‘house’ and ‘river’, etc. can act as locatives in certain contexts.

Body part locatives cannot be coordinated with syntactic prepositions, but they can be coordinated with nouns (acting as locatives)- this suggests a dissimilarity of BPLs and prepositions, but a similarity between BPLs and nouns.

BPLs do not act in the same ways as true prepositions in Choapan Zapotec. BPLs in Choapan likewise pattern differently from body part prepositions in Valley Zapotec languages. Choapan body part locatives clearly act differently from regular prepositions in non-Zapotec languages. Thus, in Choapan Zapotec, body part locatives should be classified as nouns, not prepositions.

**Further Research**

Even within Lillehaugen and Sonnenshein’s diagnostics, there are several questions I have to test for: how many types of basic locative questions are there? Are there differences between positional verbs with an individual subject and a group subject?

More work can also be done to expand and improve current data: can you coordinate words like ‘far’ and ‘near’ with BPLs? Can a BPL ever be unpossessed if it’s modified by an adjective?

There are many semantic questions to be dealt with, but only some were mentioned here. For example, what makes a BPL necessary in a sentence? A single VP might not consistently require a BPL, and neither does a single NP- it seems that a semantic interaction between the noun and the verb governs BPL necessity. Perhaps these are most important for reasons of clarity and processing, and a locative phrase without a BPL would be very rare in discourse data.

Since different Zapotec languages have BPLs in different grammatical categories, it would be interesting to see how closely these categories related to the sub groupings within the Zapotec family. A historical study of the semantics of body part locatives in proto-Zapotec might prove to be interesting, too.
References


