

A Distributed Morphology view of Kaqchikel Mayan Ergativity

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Mayanists and others have discussed the ergative nature of Mayan verbal and nominal morphology, and many others have claimed (Marantz 1984, Johns 1996, Woolford 1999) that ergativity is not a unitary problem. One of the problems arises on many different levels when adhering strictly to the mirror principle (Baker 1985), linearization (Chomsky 2005) and anti-symmetry (Kayne 1994) as well as other principles used in Distributed Morphology. For several Mayan languages, and specifically Kaqchikel, the morpheme order violates principles of c-command where the object c-commands the subjects. Campana (1992) and Murasugi (1992) claim that Mayan syntax is 'up-side-down' where the object in spec AgrS, and the subject in spec AgrO. This reverse command is not only an issue for Kaqchikel, but for other languages such as Karbardian, for example:

- (1) Yatinwajo'
y-at-inw-ajo'
pres-you-I-love
I love you Kaqchikel
- (2) λəhem se səqaλayas
λə-he-m se sə- qe- y- he-ə- λayə-γə- s
Man-pl-obl me 1sA-hor-3E-pl- non.pres-see- past-aff
They saw me (Colorusso 2006:28)

Using Distributive Morphology, I will illustrate that Kaqchikel's verbal morphology can be explained without putting into question many accepted principles, such as the ones mentioned nor suggesting new principles to account for ideas such as EPP, as is the case of Campana (1992) and Murasugi (1992). I will show that the order of the morphemes is in fact a representation of existing principles that can be reanalyzed in light of recent developments and better understanding of the data with regards to syntactic principles. The Kaqchikel data are from my personal fieldwork Jan-Feb 2005 in Patzizia, Guatemala, and were elicited and given through conversations to me by Martin Per, my principle consultant. I will follow Woolford (1999), where under the beginnings of an OT analysis of ergativity, she suggests that Jacaltec makes use of both agreement affixes, which often called ergative markers, and clitic pronouns, traditionally called the absolutive. Where this study furthers the hypotheses is in the theory of structural positions explaining the placement ergative morphemes and the traditional anti-passive morpheme, both of which can be accounted for as representations of a x[CAUSE] following Miller (ms). This in turn opens up the way for further syntactic investigation of the anti-passive morpheme in other Mayan languages.