The role of directionals in positional and locative constructions in Chuj

Proposal: This paper argues that directional particles are used to distinguish between stage-level vs. individual-level non-verbal predicates in Chuj and more specifically, they are needed in stage-level positional and locative constructions. Roots in Chuj have been found to have a CVC structure for the most part and according to Coon (2017), these can be classified into four main classes: transitive, intransitive, positional and nominal roots (see also Haviland (1994) on Tzotzil and Lois (2011) on Yucatecan languages). While none of these root classes correspond directly to surface lexical stem categories, the former can be diagnosed based on the morphology needed to form surface stems (Coon 2017). Unlike both transitive and intransitive roots, positional roots require special morphology to appear within transitive or intransitive stems. Additionally, positional roots are most commonly found within non-verbal predicates, which lack tense/aspect marking and status suffixes. The following examples show the contrast between a positional root within a verbal predicate (1) and a positional root within a non-verbal predicate (2). Note that in (1), the root appears with a perfective aspect marker and a final intransitive status suffix -i, while in (2), the positional root is only accompanied by the stative suffix -an.

(1) Ix-onh-k’ox-n-aj-i.  
PFV-A1P-seated-STAT-DIV-IV 'We sat down.' (Coon 2017)

(2) Ch’uy-an ek’ s-ti’.  
twisted-STAT DIR.pass A3S-mouth 'His mouth is twisted.'

Note also that in example (2), the presence of a directional particle (in this case, ek’) along with the predicate is obligatory. Similarly to positional roots, locatives present an interesting case in Chuj for they require the presence of a directional particle in order to be differentiated from existential constructions. I argue that in both of these cases, the directional is what differentiates between stage-level and individual-level predicates. As for directionals, in Chuj like in many other Mayan languages, these are formed from a subset of intransitive verb roots, and may appear after a main verb to specify the direction in which the predicate takes place (e.g. ‘fly up, fly down’). However, with the positional and locative expressions examined here, the directional is required even when it does not clearly contribute directional semantics. Rather, I propose it is required here for a stage-level interpretation.

Stage-level positionals: Positional roots and the stems they form have been studied by Martin (1977), Knowles (1984), England (1988), Kaufman (1990), Bohnemeyer & Brown (2007), Gómez (2010), Tummons (2010) and Henderson (2017), among others. In Chuj, the distinction is magnified by the fact that positional roots require a directional particle in certain predicative constructions. Unlike other root classes (e.g., verb roots and adjectival roots), positionals in Chuj need to be derived into stems that will often require reduplication or the addition of a directional particle in order to appear as non-verbal predicates. The examples in (3a) and (4a) show instances of non-verbal predicates (formed from positional roots and the stative suffix -an) that are followed by a directional, while the non-verbal predicates in (3b) and (4b) are composed of reduplicated positional roots and the stative suffix (-an).

(3) a. Ch’ob’-an ek’ s-ti’.  
open-STAT DIR.pass A3S-mouth 'His mouth is open.'

b. Ch’ob’-an ch’ob-an lum chen.  
open-STAT open-STAT CLF pot 'The pot is open.’ (like an open hole)

(4) a. Nhoj-an em nok tz’i’.  
crouched-STAT DIR.down CLF dog 'The dog is crouched down.’

b. Nhoj-an nhoj-an nok tz’i’.  
crouched-STAT crouched-STAT CLF dog 'The dog is crouched down (permanently).’
The key difference between the sentences in (a) and those in (b), is the fact that the former make reference to transient states, while the latter refer to the actual nature of the entity that is being described. For example, in (4a) the speaker describes a dog that is crouched down, while in (4b) the dog is permanently in a crouched configuration, perhaps due to a deformity.

**Locatives:** Another common place to find these directional particles in Chuj is within locative constructions, as in examples (5a) and (6a) below.

(5) a. Ay ek’ heb’ ix ix t’a pat.  
   EXT DIR.pass PL CLF woman PREP house  
   ‘The women are in the house.’

b. Ay heb’ ix ix t’a pat.  
   EXT PL CLF woman PREP house  
   ‘There are women in the house.’

(6) a. Ay hin t’a pat.  
   EXT B1S PREP house  
   ‘I live in my house.’

b. Ay hin ek’ t’a pat.  
   EXT B1S DIR.pass PREP house  
   ‘I am in my house.’

Essentially, the (b) sentences, show an existential construction and the only difference between the two sentences in (a) and those in (b), is the presence or absence of the directional. More specifically, locative constructions like (5a) and (6a) require the directional particle *ek’*, while existentials like (5b) and (6b) do not. The distinction between locative and existential constructions has been previously studied by Freeze (1992) in a variety of languages as well as Coon (2010) in the Mayan language of Ch’ol. However, the role of directionals in this distinction in Chuj presents a clear deviation from the common pattern.

**Summary:** The goal of this paper is to explore the semantic contribution of directionals in both positional and locative constructions and in fact, I argue that what directionals contribute in both of these cases is stage-level meaning. In order to justify this claim, I make reference to the contrast between two different types of positional constructions (one that I argue denotes stage-level properties and another which I present as an individual-level predicate) as well as the contrast between existentials and locatives. Lastly, through future work I hope to extend the analysis of directionals’ contribution to or function in these two types of constructions.