processes in the interpretation of identities constructed in narrative, and
the consequences of institutional pressure on narrative performance pro-
duced by migrants and displaced communities.

Dreams of Blood
Zinacantecs in Oregon

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Dreams of Blood

A young Zinacantec man was telling me his dream. The date was June 26, 1988. His voice cracked with tension.

(1) Chep's dream of blood

1 vo'one animal yan xal vayuk samel
   As for me, I had an awful sleep last night.
2 syempre k'alal ta jvaychin yech chk li'e
   Whenever I have this kind of dream,
3 syempre oy anima
   someone always dies.
4 na'tik kusi palta ta jnatik
   Who knows what has gone amiss back home.
5 lek ran ti mi mu ichi ilikuk o kusi apase
   It will be good if perhaps it is not one of our relatives who has
   suffered a misfortune.
6 k'alal oy kusi ta jvaychin yech chk li'e
   Whenever I dream something like this,
7 syempre chlok' anima
   someone always ends up dead.
8 ijtzk jkot vakax
   I was holding a cow.
9 ismi jkot vakax
   They were slaughtering a cow.
10 vex is-
   They were---
11 te ta kok yilel
   It was there at my feet, it seemed.
12 isjis ti vakaxe
   They were cutting the beef into strips.
13 te va'alon jkeloj
   I was standing there watching.
14 iaj skotol li vakaxe
   The whole cow was finished off.

1 From Tape Z8812b, December 1988.
The received anthropological wisdom forty years ago was that Chiapas Indians were less peasant than Maya; that while Indians in other parts of Mexico had been robbed of their land, turned into peons and proletarians, Chiapas was a "refuge region", where indigenous forms of social and cultural life had persisted since before the arrival of Cortéz.

But were Zinacanteces and their neighbors really 'taking refuge' from the rest of Mexico? Though they appeared quintessentially corn farmers (no meal was complete without a tortilla, no divination possible without 13 grains of corn), what was one to make of autobiographical tales in which old men never touched a hoe, never grew a single elote, but instead hauled beer, salt, coffee, and cotton between their highland homes and the steamy lowlands? Although land and waterhole rituals, prayers to ancestors and the Earth Lord in caves soot-blackened from apparent centuries of witch offerings, bespoke a timeless occupancy of these mountains, how was one to understand the stories of my compadre Petul, whose grandfather talked about opening the land, clearing the forest, and selling house plots to landless relatives returned from the lowlands after being 'freed' from debt-servitude by Carranza's troops during the Mexican Revolution? What of Petul's father who boasted of capturing a mule in the ensuing counter-revolutionary battles in Chiapas? Despite appearances to the contrary, Zinacanteces had clearly been deeply engaged with non-Zinacantec worlds both before and after the Conquest.

Still, unlike other Mexican Indians it was only recently that Zinacanteces began to think about crossing la linea into the United States. Mixtecs of Oaxaca, for example, have for decades abandoned their arid homeland for contract labor, picking cotton in Chiapas, tomatoes in Sinaloa and Baja California, and in recent years bringing in the strawberry, grape and apple harvests in California and the Pacific Northwest. And Oregon fields are routinely tended by Indians and non-Indians alike from Yucatan, Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Michoacán, some of whom arrived as braceros in the 1950s, others who make the seasonal migration from year to year. As far as I know, no Zinacanteces attempted to join them until the late 1980s.

Still, the inhabitants of Nabenchauck were not immune to the changes that afflicted all Mexican peasants. The economic crises of the 1980s had various expressions, among them changes in the social organization of corn farming\(^1\) and a proliferation of alternative forms of making a living.

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\(^1\) Among other things the government promoted dependence on chemical fertilizers, the costs of transport, and the resulting capitalization of all forms of agriculture. (see Collier (1990)).
including the cultivation and sale of flowers, as well as other somewhat more sensitive commodities such as illegally cut timber, bootleg liquor, and marijuana. They also engaged in wage labour, especially in construction and government projects (at least in epochs when money was available to fund such projects), and above all in transport of goods and people. These alternative economic activities also grew out of the demographic profile of communities like Nabiencauk which experienced an explosion in the population of people from 15-30 years of age. At the same time important changes in the cost of corn production took place that were related to reliance on chemical fertilizers and relative increases in the cost of gasoline with concomitant rises in transport costs, without corresponding rises in the price of corn on the newly globalized market. Local social structure, coupled with these changes, determined the typical profile of a Zinacantec who in the 1980s found it necessary to sa'abel, that is leave the village to ‘look for work’: a young man of 15-25, bachelor or newly married, without extensive highland property, sometimes with a few years of primary schooling, and often with urgent monetary needs or accumulated debts.

By the mid 1980s, the national economic crisis had eliminated nearly all sources of work on government funded public works projects, and intensive commercialization of agriculture had profoundly altered the social structure of the Indian communities of Chiapas. At this time, on the eve of the 1994 Zapatista rebellion that responded to the same factors, there were widespread across the state, many young Zinacantecs were leaving for Tabasco, Veracruz, and Mexico City in search of work, usually as unskilled peones on construction sites. All that was missing was the next logical step in the migratory process – in a real sense, a discursive step: an idea, a conceptual presence, a body of information about the ‘North’ where one could go in search of work. To be sure, there already existed a few such discursive ghosts. There was talk about a man from the neighbouring hamlet of Nachij who had gone to live in some part of the United States – Texas, it was sometimes rumoured – who had sent fabulous quantities of dólares home to his parents. Word of mouth had it that there was an enganchador or labour contractor from Ocosingo who offered a salary of three dollars an hour (more than many were then earning for a day’s work) for picking cotton, after a long trip in a pickup truck for which he would charge people 200,000 pesos (of the old variety – about US$300) to be ‘delivered in Texas’. Several Chamulas, Tzotzil speakers from a neighbouring highland community, who had long travelled throughout Mexico and who could make a reasonable living selling handicrafts and clothing in the commercial district around Correo Mayor in Mexico City, had been bringing to their countrysmen that they had ‘dared to cross the line’ to the North.

The first confirmed steps in a Zinacantec transnational diaspora were taken quite recently. A godchild of mine, the fabled Chep Tzotzil ‘Joe Pine-trees’, left Nabiencauk in the late 1970s after abandoning two wives, spent a year in a Oaxacan jail reputedly for mistreating a third, and then was heard to have taken up with drug runners he had met in jail, moving first to Culiacán, and later, it was rumoured, to Jalisco. The first ordinary Zinacantecs from Nabiencauk, in search of ordinary (though, they hoped, fabulously well-paid) jobs, as best I can tell ventured north of the border in June 1988 when my compadre Petul’s son Chep and his cousin crossed at Tijuana and made their way to the strawberry fields of Oregon. Chep, the young man who had dreamed of blood, returned to the village almost immediately in a pine box. His surviving cousin remained in the United States while I accompanied the deceased’s cadaver home for burial. That cousin – joined in 1994 by a nephew who entered the country illegally and then recently, in the first months of the new millennium, by his eldest son – lives still in Salem, Oregon.

Since then, the emigration of Tzotziles to the United States has mushroomed. In the introduction to a collection from 1995 of the testimonial accounts of three Chamulas then working in California, Jan Rus writes:

Tan recientemente como en 1987 se empezaron a escuchar las primeras noticias de chamulas y zinacantecos que habian alcanzado por su propia cuenta los estados de Texas, California y Oregon. Aun en 1991 ... el encontrar a tzotziles en los Estados Unidos era todavía una novedad. Pero ahora, apenas cuatro años más tarde, en las comunidades de los alrededores de San Cristóbal, parece que casi todos tienen algún amigo o familiar trabajando en ‘el norte’; en total, deben de ser ya miles. Tan es así que según las últimas noticias, ahora circulan nuevos coyotes en las colonias de San Cristóbal – los ‘polleros’ – que ofrecen un ‘servicio completo’ desde Chiapas a los Estados Unidos, con llegada garantizada, por sólo 500 dólares. (Rus and Guzmán López, 1996:2)4

4 As recently as 1987 one began to hear the first news of Chamulas and Zinacantecos who had managed through their own efforts to reach the states of Texas, California, and Oregon. Still in 1991 ... it was unusual to find Tzotzil speakers in
Rumors abound of Chamula traffickers in illegal workers from Chiapas and Central America – called ok'il ‘coyote’ in Tzotzil, or, as Rus and Guzmán note, more commonly by the Mexican slang pollero ‘chicken farmer’ – with cellular telephones, and sometimes disguised as non-Indian ladinos, driving the Pan American highway with trailer trucks filled with desperate people in search of work, on the northern journey, and returning with TVs, stereo sets, gold chains, and thick bundles of dollars, hidden in their shoes and leather briefcases.

As is the case with other aspects of the black market economy which operates in a quasi-legal or declaredly illegal shadow, the undocumented emigration of Tzotziles and others to the USA, despite its undeniable existence, remains a poorly understood and understudied (indeed, barely studiable) phenomenon. There exist no reliable statistics about the migrants, their demographic characteristics, their jobs or salaries or working conditions, the amount of money they return to their communities, or about other social and political impacts of the migratory process. Nor is there even an adequate model of what sort of research or ‘field investigation’ might be up to the job of filling in these descriptive gaps, since such research would also have to exist in a similar kind of legal shadow.5

My aim in this short paper is not to try to give a more complete account of Tzotzil migration to the United States. Even the story of this first Zinacanteco migration – how the cousin who stayed behind settled accounts with the family of the dead man (who blamed him for the death), how his relations with family and friends have changed, how his fortunes in the village have altered – although fascinating and analytically telling, is much too long and complex to present here. A related overarching theoretical theme – the reworking of notions of ‘place’ in such transnational contexts – is also more than I can deal with in this chapter.

Instead I will track a much smaller, discursive and grammatical residue of the parts of the process I have been able to understand with some precision and confidence. Over the past fifteen years there have sprung up new discourses linking the Zinacanteco men in Oregon with their families and friends in Zinacanteco. Cassette tapes, letters, phone calls, notes, photographs, videotapes, money orders, banknotes and other gifts are carried in both directions and serve as the medium for long distance conversations. Ironically it is often the ethnographer, free to cross the border in both directions and regularly shuttling between southern Chiapas village and northern Oregon city, who acts as middleman. I am also the Zinacantecos’ most available interlocutor, answering distress calls and offering therapeutic talk all along the transnational Zinacanteco chain. The most salient conversations, whether mediated or dyadic, and those on which I largely rely in this paper, are those between the expatriate Zinacantecos and parents, siblings, estranged wives, children, and friends ta jnajik ‘in our [inclusive] home’. I will focus on a couple of tiny linguistic details in the disassembly and reassembly of Zinacanteco ‘identity’, mostly drawn from the surviving cousin’s communications with home.

The cousin is a fascinating and not altogether trustworthy man, as one could perhaps guess from his nicknames in the village: Mamal (a kind of clown active in Zinacanteco New Year ritual, translated ‘duke’ by Laughlin, 1977), or sometimes Troni (short for electrónico ‘electronic’). He has a reputation in the village for telling lies. Still, the content of the communications between Mamal and his town is intense, affectively charged, and of special interest to an ethnographer like me with an abiding fascination with ‘gossip’ as an anthropological resource (Haviland, 1977). At the same time, the details of his matrimonial circumstances, his fights with relatives about money and the responsibility for bringing up his five children back in the village, the family scandals (one of his sisters is an unwed mother, another made a bad marriage), his excuses and self-justifications, his anger at details perhaps too personal for treatment in this forum, and they would occupy too much space. Instead I shall concentrate on the complex dance of approach and avoidance, between ‘here’ and ‘there’, the endpoints [or end-‘places’] in the chain of migration, through which Mamal gives constant signals of an ambivalence about where he belongs and where his loyalties lie in the world – probably an ambivalence to which migrants are all too susceptible.

The Language of Self and Place

It would be possible to study the transnational discourses between Oregon and Nabenchaum with respect to their content. What are they about?
What worries the interlocutors? How and in what contexts are different positions and affective stances expressed? What about the ‘dreams of blood’? Dreams, indeed, appear with regularity as a theme in the communications between Mamal and home and in his conversations with me: a symptom, no doubt, of the fragile and precarious state of a Zinacantec soul which finds itself so far away from the protection of the ancestors who occupy the mountains surrounding the village, and of the patron saint fotik santorenso, Our Father St. Lawrence.

(2) “I had the same dream as the deceased”

ji animal yan x’elan xtal jvayich tajmek
Yes, I had a terrible dream.

Damn!

I felt that I was seeing the same thing (as he did).

the same thing the deceased told me about when he was still alive.

eso
[

Was it that...

taj icham ya’el li vakaxe
they were killing a cow?

[ stot vakax
It was a bull.

(3) “I always dream with you all”

mi chyabal kusi apasojik
Has nothing happened to you all?

mi’un lekoxuk akotolik porke
Are all of you OK? because

oy ta jvay-
l... have dreamed—

4 Tape 89.22a20 telephone conversation between Mamal and the author.
5 Tape 90.03b.

966 chajvaychink tajmek. li imuy tal k’ak’ale
... have dreamed with you a lot these days

967 oy-

968 oy lek oy chopol li jvayich jujun k’ak’ale pero
And sometimes they are good dreams, and sometimes bad,
every day, but

969 mu’k bu onox ta xak’ta ko’on mi o kusi chopol
I don’t pay them much attention if they are bad

970 mi o kusi palta pero
if there is some problem

971 ta’jean chka’i mi-
But I want to know if—

972 k’usi

973 mu k’usi a-

974 mu k’usi: apasojik
-if nothing bad has happened to you all.

975 mi lekoxuk akotolik
if you are all well.

(4) Mamal tells (his parents) about a dream that preceded a car crash (9631a)

vaychinemon chka’i
I think I had dreamed something.

mi’ja ta chhay xa onox xka’i kusitik ta jvaychín
I’m not sure, I don’t remember exactly what the dream was

963

964 about.

965 k’ex xa onox ti jvayiche
These days I am dreaming all the time.

966

967 k’ex xa onox oy vayiche
I always have dreams

968

969 k’ex onox chvaychin
I always dream..

970

971 ja’ ti kusi tal kian ta jvayiche
Whatever I happen to see in my dreams—

972 kum mi onox bu chkic’ ma muk’epwes- bneno
Although I don’t pay much attention. but well, —

973 te onon man kusi chat timi’n chayich’ ma muk’t uno
I guess it always is trying to say something if you pay atten-

974 tion to it

975 pwses achi’ach’ to’ ox jvay- vaychinemon
Because I had just recently been dreaming

976

977 mu jaa kusi ta jvaychin
Although I don’t know what I dreamed.
The substantive theme that runs through the material I will present is the ambivalence suggested by these dreams, the contradictory mixture of closeness and distance, the complex dance between one place or one home and another, which is clearly expressed in the type of relationship Mamal, in emigrant's exile, has established with his town and his relatives there. The signals of Mamal's ambivalence about his Chiapas home come in many guises — perhaps most obviously the fact that he has returned to his village for a total of no more than about eight months in the fifteen years since he left. The visits he has made have been different as well as short. Approach and avoidance characterize his scant — now perhaps non-existent — money orders home to wife and children, his ways of referring both directly and obliquely to kinsmen, his apparent indifference to the affairs of his town, and even his choice of remote or proximate determiners.

In particular in this chapter, I focus on Mamal's use of deictic verbs. Much recent work in linguistic anthropology has been dedicated to deixis, most notably in the Mayan context, the work of William Hanks on Yucatec (Hanks 1990; 1996). Deixis is perhaps the most transparent nexus between language and the full context of speaking, equipped with interlocutors, bodics, socio-historical scenery, etc. Deictic categories at once penetrate and permeate both linguistic and contextual structures, making them potent conceptual and sociocultural mechanisms as deictic elements tend to be obligatory in speech. The methodological starting point of a study of 'migration' through a close attention to deictically anchored verbs is that, through these apparently small lexical symptoms, it is possible to diagnose attitudes and perspectives, in particular what I will call an ambivalent 'socio-centric' perspective on the part of this Tzotzil emigrant. Such an approach reaffirms the value of situated 'discourse' as an ethnographic resource, but it also implies rather minute attention to the details of linguistic structure.

Briefly, here are the formal details. The deictic centre, or 'HERE' is denoted by a proximal locative predicate LI', which contrasts with the distal locative TE 'there'. Like most of its sister Mayan languages, Tzotzil additionally has four ubiquitous deictically marked verbs of motion: tal 'COME [marked]' vs. bat 'go [unmarked]', and yul 'ARRIVE HERE' vs. 

*There is a basic contrast in Zinacantec Tzotzil between li 'the' (relatively close things), and ni 'the' (relatively distant things), as well as taj (truly remote things, beyond normal perceptual ranges).

Figure 1: Tzotzil deictic verbs and directionals

k'ot 'arrive there'. These roots are frequent in Tzotzil conversation, surfacing as independent motion verbs, as auxiliaries, and as post-verbal directional particles. Specifically, Tzotzil uses two directional particles, themselves derived from verbs of motion, which can add to an otherwise unspecified predicate a perspective indicating a deictically anchored vector. The directional tal(el), derived from tal, indicates marked motion towards the deictic centre, whereas ech'el (< ech 'pass by') indicates direction away from the deictic centre.

When interlocutors share a deictic centre — a common 'here' — the perspective afforded by these paradigmatic alternates is straightforward and insistent, though subject to characteristic transpositions (Haviland, 1996), for example in quotation. In effect, a trajectory that sets out towards the deictic centre (where the speaker is) is described with tal; a trajectory setting out in any other direction requires bat. The 'arrival-verb' yul denotes a trajectory whose salient endpoint is the deictic centre ('here'); by contrast, k'ot denotes arrival at some other unmarked locus. There is rarely any choice in the matter (although the extent or scope of the deictic centre — how much conceptual area it encompasses — may be contextually determined in familiar ways). The perspective for calculating 'here' and 'there'
is normally anchored in the immediate speech context. ‘Here’ is where the speaker is, though it is sometimes decoupled from the speaker onto the interlocutor. When I overtake you on the path, I will say ‘la ‘come along’ and you will reply ‘batik ‘let’s go’.9

The unmarked perspective is often adopted even in a more marked situation, for example in long-distance communications like those between Oregon and Chiapas, when the ‘speaker’ finds his or her self in one place and an interlocutor in another.

unmarked situation: speaker and hearer in the same place

marked situation: speaker and hearer in different places

Figure 2

9 One apparent exception may be observed in the following situation. You summon me, say, to a meal. If I mean to delay only a moment, I will say “te chital ‘I’m coming’”. If I do not intend to accompany you on the way, however, I must reply “te chihal ‘I’m going’”, thereby signalling that I expect to be there after you have left. Tzotzil conventions thus more resemble English than, say, Spanish where one virtually never abandons an egocentric perspective: Tu vienes? Ahi voy. And see below.

DREAMS OF BLOOD

(5) “Return home, son!”
Mamal’s father advises him to return home (1994)
203 mu xkatik mi chepel tatake
We won’t argue that you have piles of money.
204 pero solamente ya el
But only—
205 ti hux nox ya el ti ooy xaxnam o tal jizujeke
—enough for you to come walking back this way a little bit
206 mas oxon lek ya el
It would be better
207 timi chasut tate xun
if you return in this direction, Juan.
208 mas lek ya el
It would be better
209 kano tal permiso ku sjalituk
Ask for permission (to come home to here) for some length of
time.
210 mas lek tal kopo no lachamal take
It would be better for you to come and speak properly to your
children.

“come speak to your children”
“ask for permission to come”

Figure 3

(6) “I’m going to send a paper” (Mamal offers to send a letter, and asks for a reply (1988)
2 pero mu jna' kusi jali tel
I don’t know how long he [referring to the ethnographer] will be there
3 ta jatke eech tel jlik vn
I’ll send a piece of paper [i.e., a letter] along with him to there.
chich'tal li vune

And he will bring a paper [i.e., a reply] back with him.

ak'o strîba tal jiljkuk

Have him write me a letter (and send it here).

chich'tal li xun laati tzaat tal ta orae

And Juan [the ethnographer] will bring it, since he is returning here soon.

li xune, li' xha chistakbon tal ta mejikoe

Juan will send it on to me here from Mexico (City).

The village

there

ECHEL

TEY—"he will be there"

Mexico

TAL

"He will send it to me here"

Oregon

here

"I will send a message to there"

Figure 4

In all of these fragments of talk the speaker maintains his or her own deictic centre, representing his or her location, and calculates deictics accordingly, regardless of the fact that the interlocutor is in a distant place and may thus have a different perspective.

Mamal, talking by telephone to his relatives at home the day after the death of his cousin Chep, also adopts this unmarked, untransposed, interactively disjointed perspective—locating himself bleakly but firmly in Oregon.

(7) "We got work here on arrival"

li`taalal liyulotikoki kine

When we arrived here.

yul abtejotikokik ta orae

We arrived and got jobs right away.

Maintaining this separated perspective, he indirectly blames the jealousy of others in the village at home for what happened when he and his companion 'came' to the United States.

(8) "They're jealous because we came"

ak'skak'qilik yo'onik tajnek

They are very jealous of us,

xel'oy xitalotikokik

because of the fact that we have come.

And despite the urgings of his countrymen and a nagging moral certainty that he really ought to return with his cousin's body, he maintains his distance from home and expresses his intention to stay on in the north.

(9) "I'll steal my heart to stay here"

ta xkalbe ko'x' or ya'el ti li' chikome

I will steal my heart to stay here.

pero yu' yu' yu' yu' yu' —

but then-

ja' ta xkalbe pwersa ya'el ti-

I will make a serious effort

ja' jea' ech'el jizu' tak'in

to take a bit of money (away from her—i.e., back home).

The village

there

Oregon

"I'll stay here."

"I'll take the money here"

Figure 5

To return to Nabenchaik now would be to admit defeat and to expose himself to further financial ruin, since he had to borrow heavily to make the initial trip.
"I would return there just as poor as when I left for here"
19
20
21
altik ya'el
That would be no good.

I would arrive (there) just the same as when I left (here).

No.
The village

"as poor as when I set out this way."

"I'll arrive there"

"KOT"

TAL

here

Oregon

Figure 6

Transposition of Deictic Perspective

Expressive Conventions

Deictic perspectives must, of course, be shiftable or 'transposable' (see Haviland, 1991). The prototypical 'trigger' for such a shift is quoted speech, in which the values for those indices anchored in the speech situation must be recalculated from the perspective of the quoted or reported (putative) speech event. "John said, 'I'm hungry'", requires us to recalculate the referent of 'I' – the hungry one – as John. Such 'quoted' perspectives predictably surface in Mamal's communications with home.

(11) "If they ask you, 'When is he coming?'…"
1
2
3

mi oy stak' tal mantal
"Has he sent any messages here?
ku ora xtal
"¿When will he come?"
mi oy yal tal
"¿Has he told you (here)

Figure 7

Conventional 'alterocentric' perspective.

When speaker and hearer do not share the same deictic perspective, deictically anchored verbs present a conceptual and interactive problem amenable to different sorts of solution. The familiar case is illustrated by the verbs *come* and *go* in English and, say, their Spanish 'equivalents' *venir* and *ir*. In a situation in which a person (the 'speaker') is inside a room, and someone else (the 'interlocutor') knocks on the door, the speaker in English is obliged to say 'I'm coming', thereby apparently adopting an *alterocentric* perspective, where the deictic centre to which he will 'come' is that of the knocker. In Mexican Spanish, by contrast, the speaker is obliged to say something like *ve voy*, literally, 'I'm going now', firmly anchored in his or her own deictic centre. The two languages completely
conventionalize the choice of anchoring but in opposite ways.\footnote{Of course, matters are considerably more complex than this, and the conditions under which alterocentering is permitted or required involve differences in perspective, questions of complex trajectories, considerations of what has been called ‘home base’ (not where one is now but where one belongs or can be expected to be) etc. See the classic studies of Fillmore (1966, 1975).}

It appears that in Zacatec Tzotzil, in recent years when long distance communication – for example by letter or by telephone – has produced situations in which the deictic centres of speakers and hearers are geographically separated, one convention has developed in which a directional element attached to a verb of speaking reflects the recipient’s perspective. Although the speaker, located in Chiapas in the following extract, refers with the deictic li ‘here’ to his own location, the directional tal attached to the verbs of speakers represents a perspective in which the words will be ‘coming’ in the direction of the recipients, in this case in Oregon.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure8}
\caption{Figure 8}
\end{figure}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(12)] “I send you a greeting” (19715a1) LR \rightarrow XR
\begin{verbatim}
4     I’on taljobel
  Here I am in San Cristobal
6     li’ ta nsa li. jhrul tot jorje
  Here I am in the house of my godfather George.
9     k’elavil . xun
  Look, Juan—
10    li’ chakalbí
  Here I am telling you
11    chjakabé tal jun chabanuk
  I send you (coming) a greeting.
345   muk’ kusi te chakalbí tal
  I have nothing much to tell you (coming) yet.
346   chabalo bu taj- chajk’opon tal ta telefone
  I am not going to call you (in this direction) yet.
347   ta jk’etik kusi ora junuk ali . rominkol
  We’ll see whether one of these Sundays...
  chajk’opon tal ta teléfono noxtok
  I will call you (coming) again on the telephone.
\end{verbatim}
\end{enumerate}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(13)] Expressions conventionally altero-centered
\begin{verbatim}
chjakabé tal “I send you”
chajk’opon tal “I speak to you”
chik’opon tal “I am going to speak [with you]”
chjakalbí tal “I am going to tell you [something]”
ta jitzak tal, ta jitz’iba tal, ta jpas tal grabar “I will inscribe, write, or record [something for you]”
\end{verbatim}
\end{enumerate}

The implicit logic here is similar to that of English; there is an implied directionality inherent in the motion (of communication), where the end point or destination of the message resides with the recipient. As a result it is apparently the recipient’s perspective that must be adopted to produce the correct directional element.

Of course, the same logic implies the possibility of a change of perspective. If I am talking about sending you a message, I adopt your perspective as the recipient of the message. But if on the other hand, you are going to send something to me, by the same logic the appropriate perspective on the action should be mine. Such shifts of perspective in directional elements occur in Tzotzil long-distance communication.

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(14)] Switching perspective in the use of the directional tal\footnote{Telephone conversation, from tape 19715a1, LR talking to XR.}
\begin{verbatim}
211   te chajk’opon tal ta teléfono
  I’m going to talk (here=to where you are) by telephone.
\end{verbatim}
\end{enumerate}
212 ati mi o kusi cavale 
*and if you have something to say to me...*
213 timi a kusi cavale tal mantale
if you want to send me (here = to where I am) a message
214 ak'o mi ja' xavai ble li ali jkumpa xune
you can tell my compadre John.

Similarly, Mamal asks his father back in the village for advice using the same kind of rapid shift of perspective.

(15) "I tell you, and you tell me" 13
343 kusi nox tzotz tzotz ta jcan chk-
What is very very important for me...
344 chkal tal ava'iik lavie ti-
is to tell you (*in this direction* = to where you are) so that you will know
...

One way of understanding these apparent ‘switches’ of deictic perspective is to analyze the directional cues attached to verbs of speaking (and perhaps to verbs of giving) as having lost their deictic force, that is, as being decoupled from the deictic center of the speech event and re-semantized with a different sort of perspective. Zinacantec Tzotzil exhibits a number of partially frozen or idiomatic expressions which contain verbs or directional cues normally deictically anchored but whose meanings are partly conventionalized and emancipated from such anchoring.

(16) Frozen expressions with pseudo-deixis

- tlel batej ojol = my thoughts are anarchic (lit., my head is coming and going)
- chtal vo' = it's going to rain (literally, the rain is coming)
- ta jyules ta ojol = it occurs to me that ... (lit., I make arrive [here] to my head)
- chk'ot ta jichkin = I hear [rumours] (lit., they arrive there at my ears)
- yu'un chabat ta abtel, yu'us ja' to chasut tal ta xmal = if you go to work, you will only return here to your house late (here = your house, where you started from) [said from somewhere not ‘home’]
- yak'oij tal kajaltik = what Our Lord has given to here, that is, our destiny, our fortune

In these expressions the deictic center of the speech act in which they occur is submerged, cancelled, or substituted by a more abstract, ‘virtual’ deictic center. This is, in other words, a conventionalized deictic transposition

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13 From tape 90.03 side B.
in which what begins as a deictically anchored perspective is harnessed for other – here semi-grammatical – purposes.

**Deictic Transposition in the Discourses of Emigration**

There is another kind of deictic transposition in the communications between Oregon and the village back in Chiapas, which involves shifts in and out of what I have been calling a ‘sociocentric’ perspective. There are two notable features to such switching that give it special interest in the discourses of emigration and dislocation. First, rather than being obligatory it seems to be optional and thus expressive; second, it is asymmetric, involving changes in Mamal’s perspective from his distant location in Oregon, and never appearing in communications to Mamal from his home village – a tacit recognition of the fact that it is the emigrant who ‘moves’, whereas his ‘home’ stays fixed. In his long-distance conversations between Oregon and Chiapas, Mamal can choose between perspectives, between the physical ‘here’ of Oregon and the sociocentric ‘here’ of ‘home’, a choice that enables considerable expressive play.

Indeed, it is highly likely that Mamal will adopt the village of Nabenchauk as his rhetorical deictic centre rather than the distant place where he physically finds himself when he invokes images, people, and activities bound up with his activities and obligations ‘at home’. In the following segment he asks his parents whether they have been to visit his father-in-law (where his wife and children are living), knowing that the father-in-law had been away from the village. His use of yul ‘arrive here’ posits him conceptually back home in the village.

(17) “Has my father-in-law arrived?”
47   li jin’ mole mi iyul xa...
     Has my father-in-law arrived (here)?
48   mi muk bu ay ak’opon
     Haven’t you been to talk to him?

Similarly, a central concern for the dead cousin on his arrival in Oregon, and subsequently for the dead man’s relatives at home, was the debt that he had left behind in Nabenchauk. Mamal knew that as the lucky survivor he would be expected to make good on his former companion’s obligations and debts, and so he arranged to borrow money and have me deliver it to the village. ‘Ta xich’ ta’, he tells a distraught uncle, ‘he’ll bring it’. He continues with a description of my forthcoming movements which is, from the point of view of normal Tzotzil conversation, deictically bizarre, having transposed the perspective to the village while himself remaining physically distant from it.

(18) “I want to come, and he’s coming tomorrow” (transposed version)
57   bweno vo’one kil ko’on xital pero kusi
     Well, as for me, I would like to come, but the thing is...
58   ta x- ta xtal
     He’s - he’s coming
59   chok’ tal ok’ob
     He’s going to set out (for here) tomorrow,
60   ta x(y)tal ta marax ta- ta mejiko ali
     He’ll arrive (here) to Mexico City on Tuesday,
61   te la chivy jum ak’ubal ta- ta mejike
     and he says he’ll sleep overnight in Mexico City.
62   ja’ ta yok’omal szak tal jkot avyon li chyul =
     Then on the next day he’ll catch an airplane in this direction
     and arrive here,
63   =tal- chyul- ...
     He’ll arrive to here.
Figure 11: Xun is coming, he’ll arrive.

Then, as he professes a desire to return to Nabenchauk, he places himself there deictically even as he reaffirms his intention not to make the trip.

(19) “How shall I come with no money?”

69 ak'o' k'i' on talikon lavi ya'el uke
Suppose that I really wanted to come now, too.

70 pero k'u'si chital o
But how could I come?

71 chabal to tak'in
I still have no money.

Over the next few years, Mamal established a pattern in his talk about ‘returning’ to the village. He would set a date for making such a trip but then continue to postpone it. He would talk about his supposed trip as if he were already in the village, transposing his imagined perspective to that of his interlocutors at home who were expecting him.

(20) “I was going to come for the festival of the patron saint”

44 chital ox ta mayo yu'un ta j'k'an ox ju' ox .
I was going to come in May, because I had wanted already

45 li'on ta pwersa ta k'ine
to be here for the fiesta.

46 pero muk' bu li'tal ta k'ine
But I didn’t come for the fiesta.

47 solel i-
only.

48 i:

49 ta j'mala to ox jaybuk k'ak'al
I was going to wait for just a few days

50 chilok' ox tal . tzajeb xa (li'aksamene?)
Before setting out for here, after my exams [in English classes]
were over.

51 tzajeb xa ox li mayoc
At the end of May.

52 tzajebk’l nan mayo chilok’ ox tal
It was going to be about the end of May when I set out for
here.

On this occasion Mamal had hatched the plan to make the long trip from Oregon to Chiapas with a small Toyota pickup truck, planning to leave the vehicle behind in the village as a kind of payment to his father-in-law for the several years he had by then invested in the care and feeding of Mamal’s five sons. Once again, in his deictic transposition, he adopts the perspective of those in the village eagerly awaiting their new truck.

(21) “Perhaps I'll bring a truck”

163 ati chitale:
If I come

164 buena
Well.

165 ta onox x:yul ku’un li karo a’a
I will surely be able to bring the truck, indeed.

166 porke ak'o' onox jnk xital
Because even if I come by myself

167 yu' nox ta xyul ta bati'z -
Certainly I’ll be able to get it here in...

168 ta jayib to tajmek k'ak'al
in a few days [of driving]

169 pero ta ono nan xyul
but it will certainly arrive here sooner or later.

By 1996 the transposed perspective in Mamal’s discourse is firmly entrenched, perhaps even conventionalized, not only with the verb ‘chap’k'o’opan’ ta’ ‘I speak to you (in your direction, towards here)’ but also in all talk about trips and movements of others (in the following case, of the ethnographer himself, as I was travelling to and from the village much more regularly than was Mamal who only sent messages).
The option to adopt this altercentric or sociocentric perspective, as I have remarked, affords Mamal a delicate expressivity. Moreover, the possibility of so switching to the diegetic stance of the village from which he is patently absent makes it possible that the other possible perspective—that of his actual geographic location as speaker, which is normally unmarked and unremarkable, an automatic reflex of the speech situation—can suddenly itself acquire an intentional and contrastive communicative character. That is, if he customarily transposes himself discursively to the perspective of the village, occasionally NOT doing so allows Mamal to anchor himself consciously and expressively in faraway Oregon.

(24) "I am going to come [to Oregon] one last time"
822 timi jia ech'el jpermiso li toc
If I get permission to leave away from here...
823 mu onox nan.
Perhaps I won't
824 masik jal chijoktazaj ta na:
stay very long at home
825 mu jna:
I don't know
826 mu to stak' na'el
There is no way to know yet
828 ti'nan bazi'mase
At the very longest
829 te ro nan cibuk u oibuk u k'yu cha'al
I would stay there perhaps two or three months, whatever
830 yu'non kalobetik ko'on ti chisu tal otro jtena
Because I have been thinking (lit., telling my heart) that I would return here one more time
831 pero jten xa nox
But just one more time
832 slajeb xa jten chital
That would be the last time I would come
833 timi'n tzk'an kajvaltike
if God wills it
834 entonse
So then
835  chisut echel un
    I would return to there
836  i mu xa bu chisut tal
    and afterwards I wouldn’t return here again.

Ambivalence
Switching Deictic Perspectives

More delicate still in this ambivalent two-step dance are the deictic switches in which Mamal transposes himself discursively between the village and the distant Norte, moving with sometimes dizzying speed from one stance to another, almost as if he dares not anchor himself too firmly in one or the other. When his cousin died he was in the terrible dilemma of knowing that moral expectation in the village would have him accompany his deceased companion home, but at the same time feeling that he had to stay on in the USA to earn some money after months of planning and expense. For example, in his initial communications with home, he warned people in the village that the dead man’s cadaver, subjected by gringo law to the horror of an autopsy, had been prepared ‘here’ for its ‘coming home’. He jumps from the firm anchoring of the ‘here’ of Oregon to the ambivalent anchoring of the ‘here’ of the village to which the body will return.

(25) “The body is prepared” (1988)
108  mi tsikel yael li krixkanotik much’u c’atine =
    If the people who wash (the body, i.e., at the Zinacantec funeral) look at him
109  =pves
    well...
110  ali na’tik mi- mi lek van
    Who knows if they’ll be pleased (by what they see)
111  mi chopol yael
    or if they’ll be unhappy.
112  ali porke li’ toche e
    Because here.
113  tzakieni xa chtal
    He will already have been prepared (and dressed) when he comes

Acutely aware of the scandal that will be caused by the fact that he doesn’t return to the village himself with his former companion, Mamal pleads with his father – who may expect certain hostility from the deceased’s immediate family – to attend the funeral. But he switches between the verbs ‘go’ and ‘come’ in a tortured dance of ambivalence and uncertainty, metaphorically flying back and forth from distant exile to home.

(26) “Please go to the burial”
114  ali abulanganik un
    Well, please
115  batanik me- batanik me ta pwersa ba amukik ur.
    Go, go, you must go to bury him.
116  batanik me batanik me ta pwersa li chik
    Please go: please come, you must-
117  chattal amukike li ali chepe
    -come and bury Chep.

Finally, in the same telephone conversation, he declares his intention not to return to the village, withdrawing even further from the suggestion that he ‘come home’ by recalling the crushing debts from which he fled to the United States in the first place.

(27) “What shall I come to do?” (switching version)
118  ej i’i nan
    Eh, probably I will not come home now.
119 pero kusi tal jpas un  
But what will I come (i.e., back to the village) to do?  
120 yech- yip onox il ta xtal jik’ jba nosta;  
I’ll just come and get myself stuck in great debts  
121 kusi ta jch’amun tal jpasaje nan i  
First I borrow the money to come (i.e., to the north).  
122 i luego oy to kiltikotik te yoe’  
And then I have debts there (i.e., in the village).

Most ambivalent of all, perhaps, is Mamal’s relation with his immediate family: his children and ‘their mother’. He is willing to have letters ‘brought’ to her, but he himself maintains his distance – his distinct origo – for her possible reply.

(28) “A letter for the mother of the kids, and her reply” (switching version)  
78 albo ya’el li sme’ li unetike  
Tell the mother of the children  
79 te ta jakbe to jik’ vun  
I’m going to send her a letter.  
80 te- te chichi’ tal li xunae  
John will bring it (here—i.e., to the village).  
81 ali xun une  
But as for John [the ethnographer],.  
82 muk’ jal tey to jnatik  
He won’t be there in our village for long.  
83 ta ssut tal ta ora.  
He is returning right away (to here—i.e., to Oregon).

Sometimes it appears that Mamal simply does not know how to locate himself in the deictic world the language enforces on his choice of verbs and directional particles. Is he aligned with his village or with his exile in a foreign land? Note, for example, how he speaks about the fabled truck that he has promised to – bring? take? – to the village.

(29) “I will take the truck (of which you have a photo) to here? there?”  
187 oy te slokol nan chib nan chka’i li  
There you have a few photos, I think, perhaps two or three  
189 ali jk’ox pikop li-  
of the little pickup truck

190 li chkik’ ech’el ta na timi’n yu’un ikich’ talel  
that I am going to take (in that direction), if I manage to  
bring it (in this direction).

In a similar way, he appears to be confused about perspectives when he thinks about the chance that the letters his parents will send him in response to his requests coincide with his own trip back to Mexico. In the following fragment, for example, in lines 630-631 Mamal appears to jump from his deictic centre in Oregon to that of his parents sending their letter from the village, all within the same utterance.

(30) “Sending replies – but to where?”  
626 timi’n muk’ bu atakik tal ta ora  
If you don’t send me (the reply) to here right away.  
627 entonces  
then  
628 yik’al nan . mas tz’akal to chyul a-  
perhaps it will arrive here to me afterwards  
629 chyul li vune  
the letter will arrive here  
630 mas nan ba’yi chik’ot . ta na vo’on timi yeche  
But I will have already arrived there at home, If so  
631 pero yan timi atak ech’el ta ora  
On the other hand, if you send it away now.
mas lek
that would be better.

Mamal also sent large sums of money to the village to finance the construction of a new, separate house for his children. Again, Mamal presents himself as firmly intending to return to the village to work himself on the construction, but he does so always with a little deictic play that first brings him close and then distances him from the village.

(31) "I am coming (or going?) to work on the new house"17
138 kil to’ox ko’on ya’el sutikon tal
Before I was feeling like returning to here.
139 ta j’el ya’el
I wanted to see
140 timin chtal . chbat stam xa onox abtel le‘ ta na
If they were coming—going to start work there on the house.
141 tza taj kemotike
on the house of the boys
142 yulem ox ta jjol mi cibat van xici.
It had occurred to me—“Should I go?” I thought.

Short Summary of Deictic Switches over a Decade of Exile

It is possible to quantify the changes in deictic perspective over the first ten years of Mamal’s emigration to Oregon during which he was in more or less constant, if sporadic, communication with ‘home’. If one looks only at MARKED deictic forms (those specifically linked to the ‘here and now’), and eliminating what I have characterized as conventionalized non-deictic uses (those associated with verbs of speaking, basically), we can see a progression in the use of ‘sociocentric’ deictics that take the village as the deictic origo as opposed to those in which ‘here’ is anchored in Mamal’s true geographic location far from the village. Compiling such marked usages across the full collection of tape recorded telephone conversations and cassette-letters, the statistics are as follows.

In more qualitative terms, we can analyze Mamal’s communications with his family as a progression of phases or stages. In the earliest exam-

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<td>67%</td>
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Table 1: proportion of sociocentric uses of deictically marked verbs and directionals

By 1990 he seemed, on the other hand, to have settled on a stance of closeness to home; his references to ‘here’ routinely project him as talking from the perspective of the village, as in the following extended passage which sustains a sociocentric perspective throughout.

(32) "I sent money with your compadre"18
86 ijtakbe tal jlik yun
I sent a letter (to here).
87 chi’uk li- chi’uk lakumpa xune
with your compadre John [the ethnographer].
88 i ali takin k’u yepal avalojbon to’ox ti
and the amount of money that you had told me before
89 skopjal cha- chajtakbe tal
that I should send (to here)
90 omi chkich ox tal ti k’alal- k’al ti tatikon ta =
or that I should bring you if I were to come.
91 =mayoe
in May
92 te ijtakbe tal li- lakumpa xune
I have sent it along (to here) with your compadre John.
93 te chayak’be
And he will give it to you.

In 1994-95 Mamal seemed to have fallen into a patterned distance and indifference, in which he emphasized his separation from the village with a higher proportion of deixis centred on his faraway locsle.

17 From tape 95.15 side A.
18 From tape 90.03 side B.
(33) "I sent these words with the wife of your compadre"

20 jay pel nox kusi chakalbeik tajmek
I am going to say a few words to you
21 timin o kusi, a yatel avo' onik chakan chavalbeik tale
And if any of you has any worries, and you want to tell them
to me (here)
24 ijk'anbe eckel vokol li yajnil li takumpareik xun
I asked a favour of the wife of your compadre John (in that
direction)
25 yu'un chet yakbeik li sinta livi
and she will arrive there to give you this tape recording
26 timin oy onox k'u ca'al, tak tal avu'unike
and if you want to send something back to here
27 rakbekon tal
send it to me (in this direction).

Finally, after about a decade in the United States, with only a couple of short visits home, Mamal seems to have adopted again a kind of conventionalized ‘closeness’ in his deictic usage, talking about his planned and frequently postponed visits to the village as if he were empathetically already there. Indeed, his final remark in this last illustrative segment (34) is a perfect, apparently self-contradictory, expression of his ambivalence about home versus exile — the village versus the adopted world of a foreign land. "(Were it not for the latest of my excuses for NOT returning home) I should be here now", says Mamal in line 90.

(34) "I would be here [in the village] were it not for . . .

82 ti k'u cha'al kalojbeik- lakalbeik komel ava' iik
As I told you (when I left there)
83 ti k'alai ti litale
when I came
84 ta ox tz'kan chisut tal lavi jabile
I had wanted to return here again during this year
85 ti manshuk li x'elan kusi jipase
if it were not for what happened to me [a back injury at work]
86 i: ti manshuk i x'elan jipase
And if it weren't for what happened to me
87 lital ox yech
I would have come as planned

Postscript

The mechanics of deictic centring may seem a most trivial expression of the negotiation of ‘place’. Nonetheless, just as Mamal’s movements — both physical and rhetorical — between Chiapas and Oregon are complex, so too his verbs are a sensitive index to his attitudes. We are familiar with the dual face of other indexical signs — T vs. V pronouns, for example, and other markers of deference and social distance and their opposites — both presupposing certain aspects of social context to mark pre-existing relationships and attitudes, and also creatively producing those relationships by, in use, altering and producing contexts. The once novel circumstances of the Zinacantec emigrant, suddenly unimaginably removed from home but at the same time intimately linked to the village, forced Mamal to adapt even the ordinarily most highly presupposing deictic indexes — those having to do with spatial proximity — to the changed communicative circumstances of remoteness and separation. Spatial deixis became a creative vehicle for discursive shifts in virtual location and alliance.

In his later interactions with home, Mamal established somewhat more firmly his distance and indifference: he brought a truck back to Nabenchaun and abandoned it there, but now it is 'his father-in-law's business'. He had a house built in the village for his children (but not for 'their mother'). His sister back home lived through a scandal, but 'what's it to me?' Little by little the telephone calls, the letters and hand-delivered cassettes, and even the money orders began to dry up, and no longer pass through the ethnographer's hands. Mamal was joined in Oregon by another cousin, then most recently by his eldest son, and now other Zinacantecs have begun to make the long and dangerous trek north. People in the village no longer ask after their lost village mates, or do so only rarely, as though the contradiction of being at once 'here' and 'there' is less remarkable, less interesting, less problematic, and perhaps less important than it was when Mamal left with his deceased, dreaming cousin. The next chapters of the history of this Indian emigration must await another telling, as I have here tried only to show that not only bodies and lives are dislocated in the process, but also the indexical devices of grammar itself.
References


Dislocations/Relocations
Narratives of Displacement

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Encounters

A new series on language and diversity
Edited by Jan Blommaert, Marco Jacquemet and Ben Rampton

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