

processes in the interpretation of identities constructed in narrative, and the consequences of institutional pressure on narrative performance produced 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 blood¹

- 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 k'usi palta ta jnatik
Who knows what has gone amiss back home.
- 5 lek nan ti mi mu jchi`iltikuk o k'usi spase
It will be good if perhaps it is not one of our relatives who has suffered a misfortune.
- 6 k'alal oy k'usi ta jvaychin yech chk li`e
Whenever I dream something like this,
- 7 syempre chlok' anima
someone always ends up dead.
- 8 ijtzak jkot vakax
I was holding a cow.
- 9 ismil jkot vakax
They were slaughtering a cow.
- 10 tey 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 jk'eloj
I was standing there watching.
- 14 laj skotol li vakaxe
The whole cow was finished off.

¹ From Tape Z8812b, December 1988.

- 15 este
Um,
16 k'alal ta jvaychin yech chk li'e
whenever I dream like this,
17 o bu chkil bek'et
if I see meat,
18 oy bu chkil ch'ich'el
or if I see blood,
19 yu'un syempre chlok'anima
someone ALWAYS dies.

Two days later this same man was dead, succumbing, as one says in Tzotzil, to *vovil-chvay* 'crazy sleeping' – a journey in which his *ch'ulel* 'soul' leaves behind his sleeping body and is then unable to return. In the lives of many Zinacantecs dreams carry messages, powerful visions, and often perils. In the case of my friend Chep, son of a *compadre* from the village of Nabenchauk in Zinacantán, in the highlands of Chiapas, México, the dream of blood was an omen of his own death. The dream was narrated to me far from Chiapas. It was told to me in my house in Portland, Oregon, a few blocks from Reed College. Two days later the dreamer's body awoke soulless on the floor of a rented apartment that was shared with some twenty other undocumented Mexican workers in Salem, Oregon, about 80 kilometres away.

My research in Zinacantán has centred on discourse, usually the face-to-face small talk of quotidian interaction. Charles Taylor cites language as the crucial "locus of disclosure" of the person, with an aphorism: "I become a person and remain one only as an interlocutor" (1985:276). To an ethnographer who spends the bulk of his time in conversation with acquaintances in bush, field, and village, this is congenial methodological ratification. As people's lives change, as their senses of self evolve and their worlds shift, they leave discursive tracks. I shall try to exhibit some of the footprints to be traced in recent, tentative, and largely pioneering Zinacantec treks north, across the border into the United States.

The Field Comes to Me

The First Footsteps in a Zinacantec Diaspora

Most of my anthropological career has been spent working with Mayan peasant corn farmers in south-eastern Mexico. For most of the past two decades, since I started teaching in Oregon, although I still go regularly 'to the field' in Chiapas, 'the field' has, of its own accord, come to me.

The received anthropological wisdom forty years ago was that Chiapas Indians were less peasants 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 Zinacantecs and their neighbours really 'taking refuge' from the rest of Mexico? Though they appeared quintessential 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, Zinacantecs 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 Zinacantecs began to think about crossing *la línea* into the United States. Mixtecs of Oaxaca, for example, have for decades abandoned their arid home country for contract labour, 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 Yucatán, 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 Zinacantecs attempted to join them until the late 1980s.

Still, the inhabitants of Nabenchauk 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 farming² and a proliferation of alternative forms of making a living,

² 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,³ 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 Nabenchauk 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'abtel*, 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 capitalization 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 writ large 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 \$US300) to be 'delivered in Texas'. Several Chamulas, Tzotzil speakers from a neighbouring highland

³ See Haviland (1993).

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 bragging to their countrymen 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 Tojtik* 'Joe Pine-trees', left Nabenchauk 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 *Jaliwud*. The first ordinary Zinacantecs from Nabenchauk, 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 habían 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 Zinacantecs 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

Rumours 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, stereos 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 Zinacantec 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

the United States. But now, only 4 years later, in the communities that surround San Cristóbal [de las Casas, Chiapas] it seems that almost everybody has a friend or relative working in 'the North'; all in all, there must now be thousands. This is so much the case that according to the latest news, there are new coyotes working in the poor neighbourhoods of San Cristóbal – the 'chicken raisers' – who offer 'full service' trips from Chiapas to the United States, with delivery guaranteed, for only US\$500".

⁵ When the two Tzotzil cousins from Nabenchauk were in Tijuana waiting to cross into the United States, I was uncomfortably aware of the legal ambiguities surrounding my own inquiries into the possibilities for finding *coyotes* who might help them. But that's another story.

of the parts of the process I have been able to understand with some precision and confidence. Over the last fifteen years there have sprung up new discourses linking the Zinacantec men in Oregon with their families and friends in Zinacantán. 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 Zinacantecs' most available interlocutor, answering distress calls and offering therapeutic talk all along the transnational Zinacantec chain. The most salient conversations, whether mediated or dyadic, and those on which I largely rely in this paper, are those between the expatriate Zinacantecs and parents, siblings, estranged wives, children, and friends *ta jnatik* 'in our [inclusive] home'. I will focus on a couple of tiny linguistic details in the disassembly and reassembly of Zinacantec '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 Zinacantec New Year ritual, translated 'dude' 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 angers are 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 Nabenchauk 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 *Jtotik santorenso*, Our Father St. Lawrence.

(2) "I had the same dream as the deceased"⁶

207 ji animal ya:n x'elan xtal jvayich tajmek
Yes, I had a terrible dream.

208 j; ijo
Damn!

209 x; i ika'i ikil ya'el ti k'u cha'al este:
I felt that I was seeing the same thing (as he did).

210 k'u cha'al liyalbon li anima k'alal mu to`ox chame
the same thing the deceased told me about when he was still
alive.

211 j; eso

212 x; i: ja`
yes

213 j; [a taj ali:
Was it that...

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

215 x; [stot vakax
It was a bull.

(3) "I always dream with you all"⁷

963 mi ch'abal k'usi apasoji:k
Has nothing happened to you all?

964 mi'n lekoxuk. akotolik porke
Are all of you OK? because

965 oy ta jvay-
I... have dreamed—

966 chajvaychinik 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 muk' bu onox ta xkak' ta ko'on mi o k'usi chopol
I don't pay them much attention if they are bad

970 mi o k'usi palta pero
if there is some problem

971 ta jk'an 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)

328 vaychinemon ehka'i
I think I had dreamed something.

329 mu jna` ch'ay xa onox xka'i kusitik ta jvayichin
I'm not sure, I don't remember exactly what the dream was
about.

330 k'cx xa onox ti jvayiche
These days I am dreaming all the time.

331 k'ex xa onox oy vayiche
I always have dreams

332 k'ex onox chivayichin
I always dream..

333 ja` ti k'usi . laj .kilan ta jvayiche
Whatever I happen to see in my dreams—

334 komo mu onox bu chkieh' ta muk'e pwes- bweno
Although I don't pay much attention, but- well..—

335 te ono nan k'usi chal timi'n chavich' ta muk' une
I guess it always is trying to say something if you pay atten-
tion to it

336 pwes ach'`ach' to`ox jvay- vaychinemon
Because I had just recently been dreaming

337 mu jna` k'usi ta jvayichin
Although I don't know what I dreamed.

⁶ Tape 89.22a20 telephone conversation between Mamal and the author.

⁷ Tape 90.03b.

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 diffident 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.⁸

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, bodies, 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.

⁸ There is a basic contrast in Zinacantan Tzotzil between *li* 'the' (relatively close things), and *ti* 'the' (relatively distant things), as well as *taj* (truly remote things, beyond normal perceptual ranges).

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.

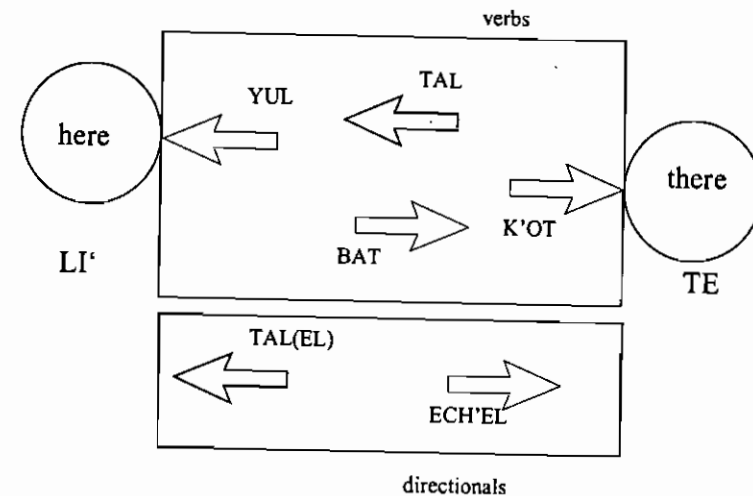


Figure 1: Tzotzil deictic verbs and directionals

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.

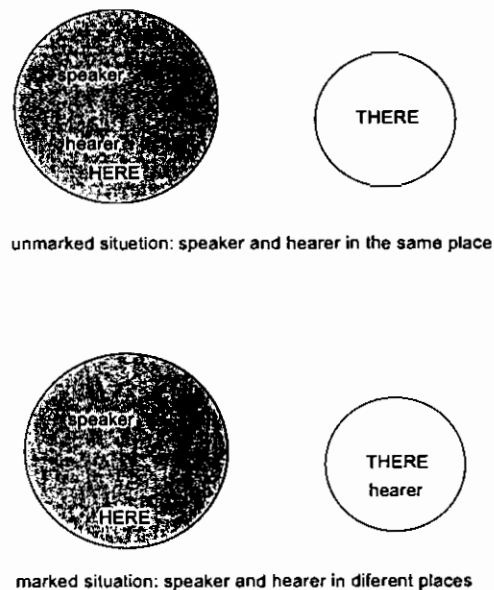


Figure 2

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 chibat '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: *Tú vienes? Ahí voy*. And see below.

(5) "Return home, son!"

Mamal's father advises him to return home (1994)

- 203 mu xkaltik mi chepel tatak'ine
We won't argue that you have piles of money.
- 204 pero solamente ya'el
But only—
- 205 ti bal nox ya'el ti . oy xaxanav o tal jtz'ujuke
—enough for you to come walking back this way a little bit
- 206 mas onox lek ya'el
It would be better
- 207 timi chasut talel xun
if you return in this direction, Juan.
- 208 mas lek ya'el
It would be better
- 209 k'ano tal permiso k'u sjaliluk
Ask for permission (to come home to here) for some length of time.
- 210 mas lek tal . k'opono lach'amaltake
It would be better for you to come and speak properly to your children.

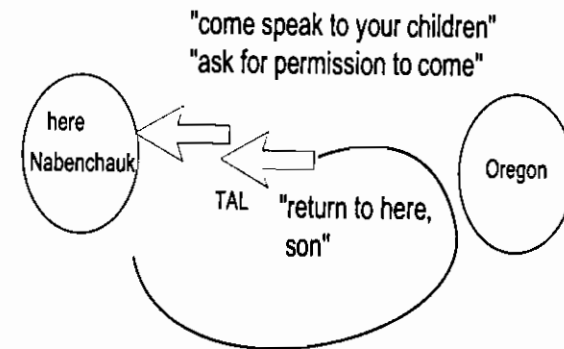


Figure 3

(6) "I'm going to send a paper" (Mamal offers to send a letter, and asks for a reply (1988)

- 2 pero mu jna' k'usi jalil tey
I don't know how long he [referring to the ethnographer] will be there
- 3 ta jtakbe ech'el jlik vun
I'll send a piece of paper [i.e., a letter] along with him to there.

- 4 chich' tal li vune
And he will bring a paper [i.e., a reply] back with him
- 5 ak'o stz'iba tal jlikuk
Have him write me a letter (and send it here).
- 6 chich' tal li xun lavi tztut tal ta oraē
And Juan [the ethnographer] will bring it, since he is returning here soon.
- 7 li xune, li' xa chistakbon tal ta mejikoe
Juan will send it on to me here from Mexico (City).

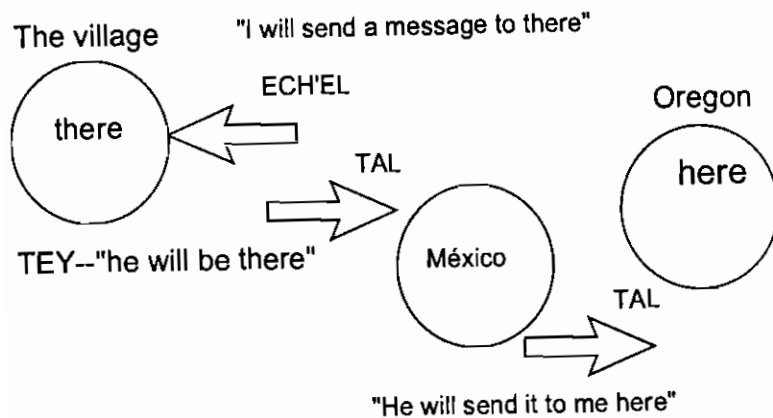


Figure 4

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"

- 23 ali k'alal liyulotikotike
When we arrived here,
- 24 yul abtejkotikotik ta ora
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"

- 13 o sk'ak'alik yo'onik tajmek
They are very jealous of us,
- 14 x'elan oy xitalotikotik
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 steel my heart to stay here"

- 15 ta xkalbe ko'on ya'el ti li' chikome
I will steel my heart to stay here,
- 16 pero yu'un yu'un yu'un —
but then-
- 17 ja' ta xkak' o pwersa ya'el ti-
I will make a serious effort
- 18 ta jsa' ech'el jtz'uj tak'in
to take a bit of money (away from her -i.e., back home).

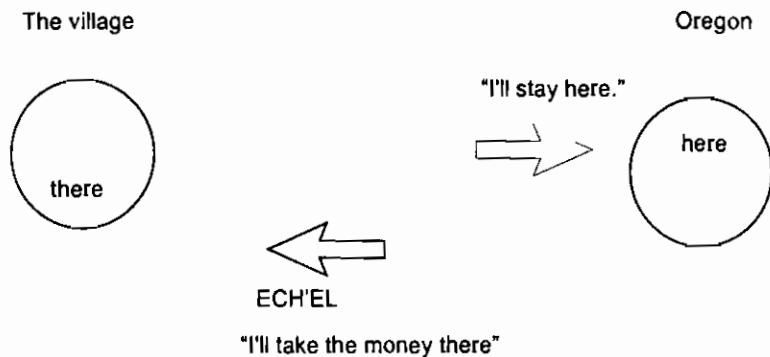


Figure 5

To return to Nabenchauk 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.

(10) "I would return there just as poor as when I left for here"

- 19 i xchi'uk k'usuk i solet timi xik'ot ya'ele
and what's more, if I were only to arrive (there)
- 20 mismo onox yech chik'ot k'u cha'al lilok' talel =
I would arrive (there) just the same as when I left (for here).
- 21 =i'i
No.
- 22 altik ya'el
That would be no good.

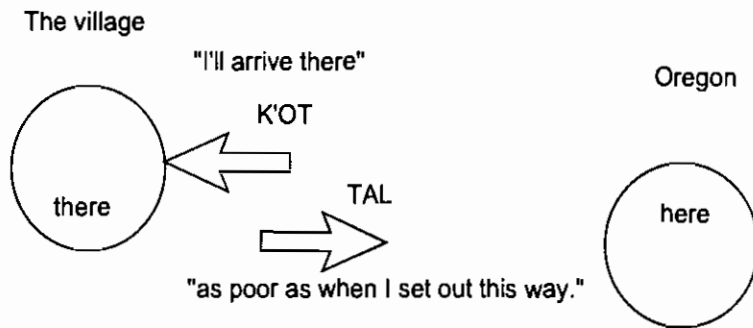


Figure 6

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

- 4 k'u ora chul,
"when he will arrive here?"
- 5 tzsut tal
"when will he return here?"
- 6 timi xayutike
suppose they ask you that ...

Conventional 'altero-centering'

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 *ya voy*, literally, 'I'm going now', firmly anchored in his or her own deictic centre. The two languages completely

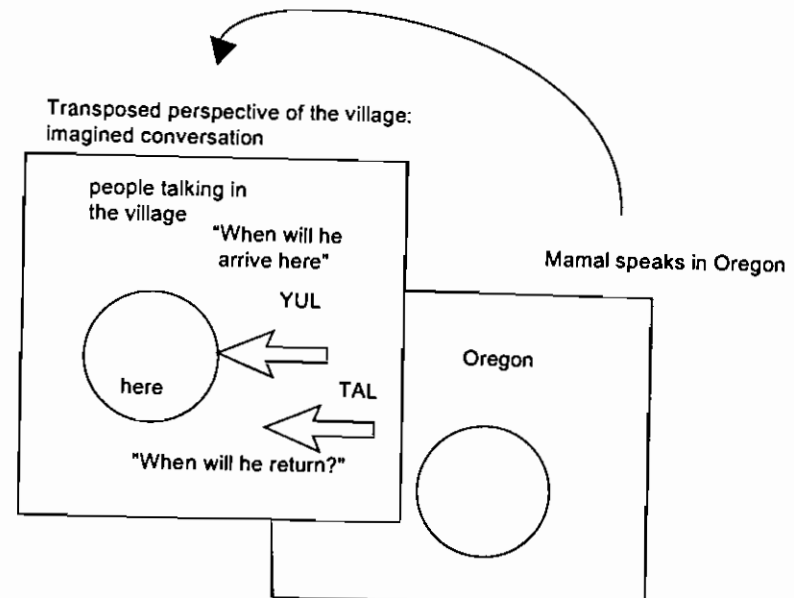


Figure 7

conventionalize the choice of anchoring but in opposite ways.¹⁰

It appears that in Zinacantec 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.

(12) "I send you a greeting" (t9715a1) LR -> XR

- 4 li'on ta jobel
Here I am in San Cristóbal
- 6 li' ta sna li . jch'ul tot jorje
Here I am in the house of my godfather George.
- 9 k'elavil . xun
Look, Juan—
- 10 li' chakalbee
Here I am telling you
- 11 chajtakbe tal jun chabanuk
I send you (coming) a greeting.
- 345 muk' k'usi to chakalbe tal
I have nothing much to tell you (coming) yet.
- 346 ch'abal to bu ta j- chajk'opon tal ta telefono
I am not going to call you (in this direction) yet.
- 347 ta jk'eltik k'usi ora junuk ali . rominkoal
We'll see whether one of these Sundays..
chajk'opon tal ta telefono noxtok
I will call you (coming) again on the telephone.

Mamal, in his communications by telephone or tape recording, tends to adopt the same convention: he takes the perspective of his *recipient* when he uses a verb of speaking, in expressions like the following:

¹⁰ 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).

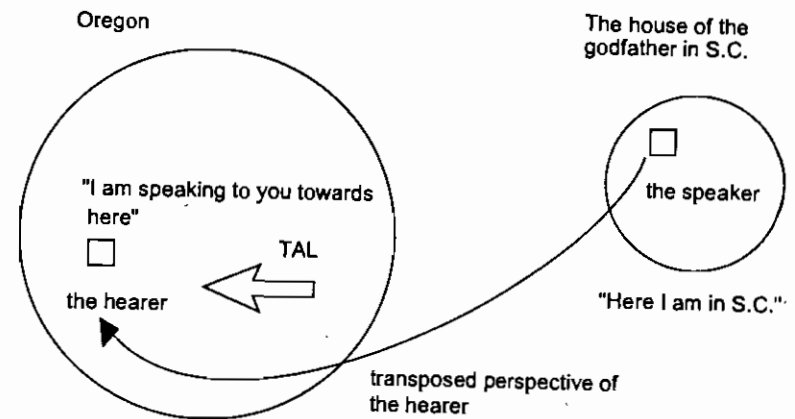


Figure 8

(13) Expressions conventionally altero-centered

- chajtakbe tal "I send you"
chajk'opon talel "I speak to you"
chik'opoj talel "I am going to speak [with you]"
chakalbe tal "I am going to tell you [something]"
ta jtzak tal, ta jtz'iba tal, ta jpas tal grabar "I will inscribe, write, or record [something for you]"

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.

(14) Switching perspective in the use of the directional tal¹¹

- 211 te cajk'opon talel ta telefono
I'm going to talk (here=to where you are) by telephone.

¹¹ Telephone conversation, from tape t9715a1, LR talking to XR.

- 212 ati mi o k'usi cavale
and if you have something to say to me...
- 213 timi o k'usi catak tal mantale
if you want to send me (here=to where I am) a message
- 214 ak'o mi ja' xavalbe 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"¹²

- 343 k'usi nox tzotz tzotz ta jk'an 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
...

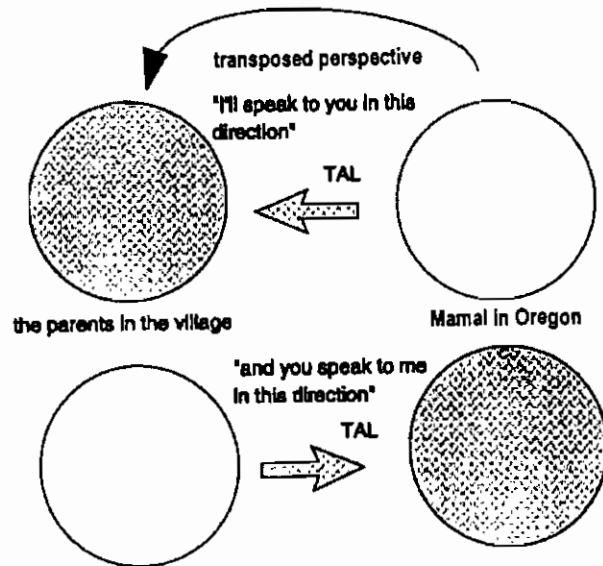


Figure 9

¹² From tape 90.03 side B.

- 347 timi chak avalbekon tal jay p'eluk ya`el mi-
if you want you can tell me (coming = to where I am) a few
words
- 348 mi: mi lek omi chopol
(of advice) about whether (what I propose) is good or bad.

One way of understanding these apparent 'switches' of deictic perspective is to analyze the directionals 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 centre of the speech event and re-semanticized with a different sort of perspective. Zinacantec Tzotzil exhibits a number of partially frozen or idiomatic expressions which contain verbs or directionals normally deictically anchored but whose meanings are partly conventionalized and emancipated from such anchoring.

(16) Frozen expressions with pseudo-deixis

- imuy tal k'ak'al = the days are passing (lit., the day ascends in this direction)
- talel batel jjol = 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 jjol = it occurs to me that ... (lit., I make arrive [here] to my head)
- chk'ot ta jchikin = I hear [rumours] (lit., they arrive there at my ears)
- yu`un chabat ta abtel, yu`un 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'oj tal kajvaltik = what Our Lord has given to here, that is, our destiny, our fortune

In these expressions the deictic centre of the speech act in which they occur is submerged, cancelled, or substituted by a more abstract, 'virtual' deictic centre.¹³ This is, in other words, a conventionalized deictic transposition

¹³ In Mam (England 1976) what may be analyzed historically as directionally anchored directional particles meaning 'toward here' or 'toward there' have taken on related but more abstract functions indicating, among other things, pronominal arguments to transitive verbs (a "to here" clitic marks a 1st person direct object, for example). Mam has thus carried further than modern Tzotzil a process of conventionalized abstraction from an original deictic perspective to a more grammatical function.

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' places him conceptually back home in the village.

(17) "Has my father-in-law arrived?"

- 47 li jni' 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 to this end he arranged to borrow money and have me deliver it to the village. 'Ta xich' tal', 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

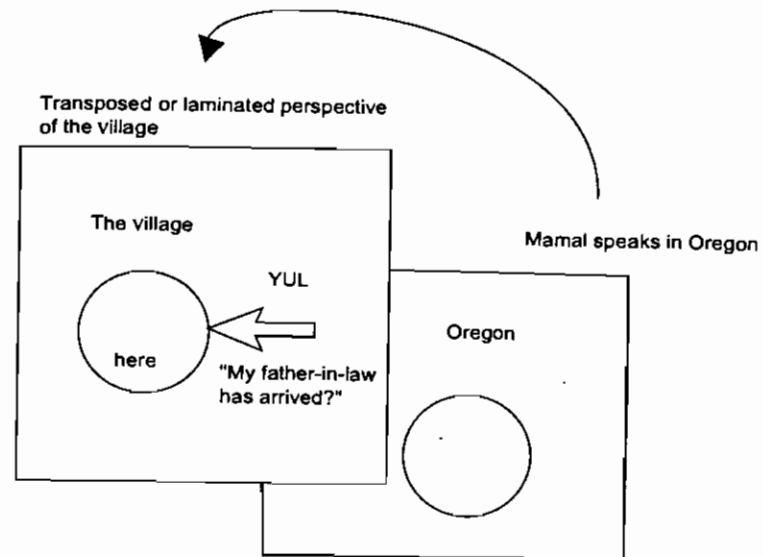


Figure 10: Has my father-in-law arrived?

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 chlok' tal ok'ob
He's going to set out (for here) tomorrow.
 60 ta x(yul) ta martex ta- ta mejiko ali
He'll arrive (here) to Mexico City on Tuesday,
 61 te la chvay jun ak'ubal ta- ta mejikoe
and he says he'll sleep overnight in Mexico City.
 62 ja' to ta yok'omal stzak 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.

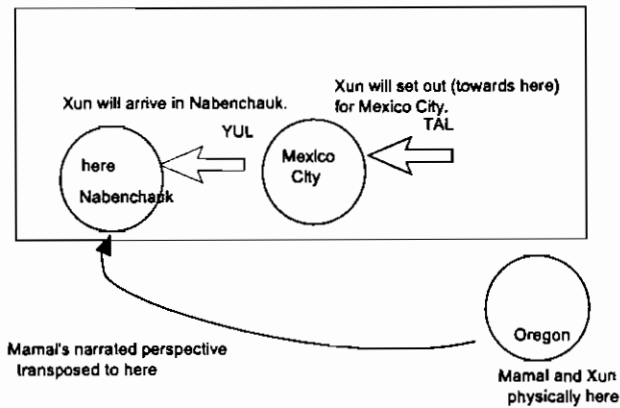


Figure 11: Xun is coming, he'll arrive.

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- kil ko'on talikon lavi ya'el uke
Suppose that I really wanted to come now, too.
 70 pero k'usi chital o
But how could I come?
 71 ch'abal 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!"¹⁴

- 44 chital ox ta mayo yu'un ta jk'an ox ja' ox .
I was going to come in May, because I had wanted already
 45 li'on ta pwera 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.

¹⁴ From tape 90.03 side B.

- 47 solel i-
only . . .
 48 i:
 49 ta jmla to ox jayibuk k'ak'al
I was going to wait for just a few days
 50 chilok' ox tal . tzlajeb xa (li eksamene?)
Before setting out for here, after my exams [in English classes]
were over.
 51 tzlajeb xa ox li mayoc
At the end of May.
 52 tzlajebtik 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 chitalc:
If I come
 164 bueno
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 jtuk xital
Because even if I come by myself
 167 yu'nox ta xyul ta batzi -
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 'chajk'opon tal' '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).

(22) "Your compadre [i.e., the ethnographer] is travelling frequently"¹⁵
(96.31a)

- 21 ja` to chajk`oponik tal lavie
Today I am finally talking to you (in this direction)
- 23 jk`anbe vokol j`ich` la.kumpareik xun
This one time I asked a favour of your compadre John
- 24 x`elan ja` chyulilan onoxe
given that he is arriving here all the time..

The option to adopt this alterocentric or sociocentric perspective, as I have remarked, affords Mamal a delicate expressivity. Moreover, the possibility of so switching to the deictic 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.

(23) "I have come here forever, supposedly"¹⁶

- 769 taj kajnile chi`uk nan . mas
My wife, and perhaps others... ..
- 771 yu`no nan kapemik . nan
perhaps they are angry with me
- 772 chi`uk nan stot sme` xkaltik porke
and perhaps her parents, too, as we say, because
- 773 muk` k`usi
nothing—
- 774 mu k`usi xka`i ta jmoj
I have heard nothing from them at all
- 775 ali
uh..
- 776 ti yu`un muk` bu ta j-
perhaps because I haven't...-
- 777 mu xa bu ta jtakbe ech`el stak`in li jch`amaltake
lately I haven't sent them any money (in that direction) for my children

¹⁵ From tape 96.31 side A.¹⁶ From tape 90.03 side B.

- 778 na`tik
who knows?
- 779 yu`un nan lital o la
because people are saying that I have come forever.

Here the normally unmarked perspective, that of the place where the speaker is, because of its contrast with the possible metaphoric re-centring of perspective on the village at home, begins to sound emphatically marked. 'I am HERE, and NOT there in the village'. Mamal distances himself, with his deictics, from both the village and the hearsay gossip of his in-laws.

He also displays constant ambivalence in his travel plans: while on the one hand reiterating his intention to return to the village, he nonetheless continues to mention the possibility that afterwards he will again travel to Oregon. Whenever he speaks of such a subsequent journey to the USA, he remains firmly anchored in his actual location abroad

(24) "I am going to come [to Oregon] one last time"

- 822 timi jta ech`el jpermiso li` toe
If I get permission (to leave away from) here...
- 823 mu onox nan .
Perhaps I won't
- 824 masuk jal chijok`tzaj 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`n batz`i mase
At the very longest
- 829 te no nan ehibuk u oxibuk u k`u cha`al
I would stay there perhaps two or three months, whatever
- 830 yu`nox kalojbetik ko`on ti ehisut tal otro jtene
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 ech'tel u:n
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 tzk'el ya'el li krixchanotik much'u ch'atine =
If the people who wash (the body, i.e., at the Zinacantec funeral) look at him
- 109 =pwes
well...
- 110 ali na'tik mi- mi lek van
Who knows if they'll be pleased (by what they see)
- 111 mi chopol ya'el
or if they'll be unhappy.
- 112 ali porke li'to che'e
Because here,
- 113 tz'akiem 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 abulajanik un
Well, please
- 115 batanik me- batanik me ta pwersa ba amukik un
Go, go, you must go to bury him.
- 116 batanik me talanik me ta pwersa li chk
Please go; please come, you must-
- 117 chatal 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.

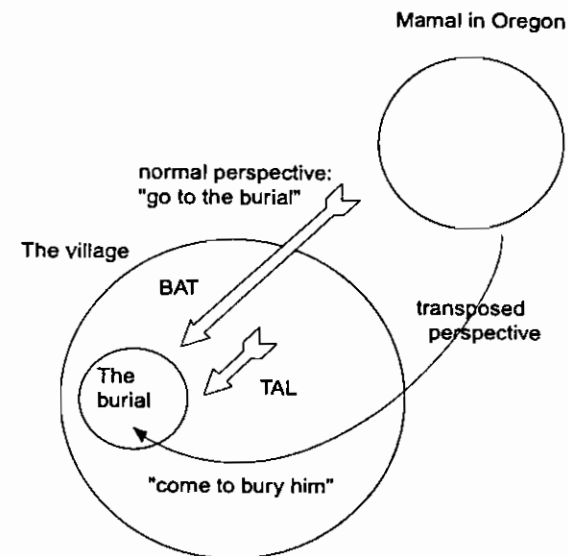


Figure 12

(27) "What shall I come to do?" (switching version)

- 118 ej i'i nan
Eh, probably [I will] not [come home now].

- 119 pero k'usi tal jpas un
But what will I come (i.e., back to the village) to do?
 120 yech- yip onox il ta xtal jtik' jba noxtok
I'll just come and get myself stuck in great debts
 121 k'usi 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 yo'e
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 jtakbe to jlik vun
I'm going to send her a letter.
 80 te- te chich' tal li xune
John will bring it (here—i.e., to the village).
 81 ali xun une
But as for John [the ethnographer],
 82 muk' jal tey ta 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 slok'ol nan chib oxib 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).

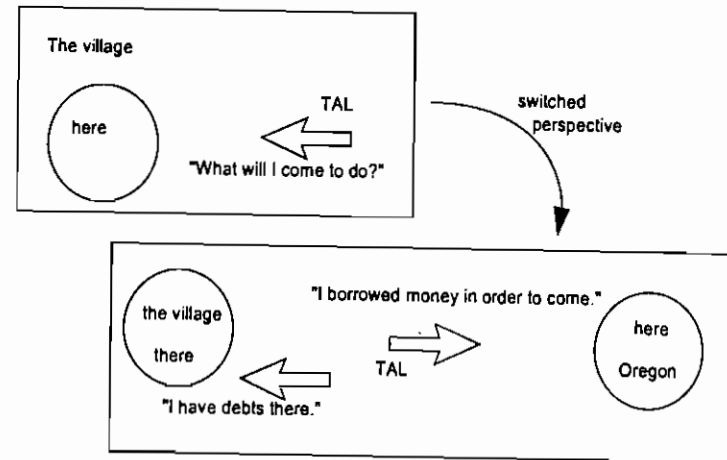


Figure 13: Switching perspectives

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.

- 633 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 jk'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 tzna taj kremotike
on the house of the boys
142 yulem ox ta jjol mi cibata 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-

¹⁷ From tape 95.15 side A.

ples, from 1988, directly after his arrival in Oregon and the sudden death of his cousin, Mamal was highly ambivalent and uncertain of where he was in the world, or at least of how to represent his position vis-à-vis the village (see examples 25-27). His usage switched back and forth between anchoring his 'here' in the village and in his new surroundings in Oregon.

1988	1990	1994	1996
67%	100%	60%	91%

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 vun
I sent a letter (to here).
87 chi'uk li- chi'uk lakumpa xune
with your compadre John [the ethnographer].
88 i: ali tak'in k'u yepal avalojbon to'ox ti .
and the amount of money that you had told me before
89 sk'oplal cha- chajtakbe tal
that I should send (to here)
90 omi chkich' ox tal ti k'alal- k'al tin talikon 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 locale.

¹⁸ From tape 90.03 side B.

(33) "I sent these words with the wife of your compadre"¹⁹

- 20 jay p'el nox k'usi chakalbeik tajmek
I am going to say a few words to you
- 21 timin o k'usi . a yatel avo`onik chak'an chavalbeik tate
And if any of you has any worries, and you want to tell them
to me (here)
- 24 ijk'anbe ech'eI vokol li yajnil li lakumpareik xun
I asked a favour of the wife of your compadre John (in that
direction)
- 25 yu'un chk'ot yak'beik 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 tak'bekon 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 . . ."²⁰

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

¹⁹ From tape 95.15 side A.²⁰ From tape 96.31 side A.

- 88 lital ox ta . jto b xchi`uk vaxakib li. li novyembre
I was going to come on the 28th of November
- 90 li`on xa yechuke
I should be here now.

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 Nabenchauk 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 telephonic 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.

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Dislocations/Relocations

Narratives of Displacement

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