

Three alignment subsystems in Chol, a Mayan language

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Languages of the Cholan branch of the Mayan language family have been characterized as ergative languages with nominative/accusative split based on aspect. In addition to this characterization, Chol also exhibits all the major characteristics proper of agentive languages (Gutiérrez 2004 and Vázquez Alvarez 2002). Intransitive predicates are divided in two major groups. Events that include an agent as its only semantic argument are encoded as transitive verbs where the main predicate functions as a complement of a light verb. Agentive predicates mark their subject with an ergative marker. On the other hand, events that include a patient as its only semantic argument are encoded as intransitive verbs marking their subject with the absolutive marker. Each major class of predicate includes several subclasses that can be established on the basis of their morphosyntactic behaviour. Chol, similar to most of the Mayan languages, have voice operations such as passive and antipassive that detransitivize transitive verbs. Chol also exhibits ambivalent verbs whose intransitive subject can be expressed either with an ergative or an absolutive proclitic. The selection of the subject is conditioned by the degree of volition and control of the only participant of the event. In this paper we will present all the major morphosyntactic tests that have been found in Chol that divide the verbs in two major subclasses and we will compare the Chol agentive system with similar alignment systems attested in two other languages of the same branch (Chontal and Chorti).