

## SPLIT INTRANSITIVITY IN OTLALTEPEC POPOLOCA

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This paper will examine the semantic relationships holding between predicating elements (verbs, nouns) and their arguments in Otlaltepec Popoloca (OTL).<sup>1</sup>

In coming to grips with data on Popoloca, I have had to abandon the previous explanations in which the morphology of verbs is said to code grammatical relations. Instead, I will suggest here that they assign generalized semantic roles ultimately grounded in the lexicon.

### 1. OTL Pronominal Suffixes and Intransitive Verbs

The single arguments of intransitive verbs appear with two different sets of pronominal suffixes, here called class I and II (shown in Table 1).

**Table 1:** OTL Pronominal Suffixes

	I	II
1	-a(7)	-nà
2	-ā	-7ā
3	Ø	-7è

Examples of intransitive verbs taking the class I suffixes are shown in (1) and of intransitive verbs taking set II are shown in (2). Verbs taking the class I suffixes also may demonstrate complex tone alternations according to person, which I won't deal with here. Third person forms, for both class I and II, must be accompanied either by a full nominal argument or a pronoun enclitic.

(1)

t-à<sup>n</sup>w-ā  
 H-plow-2I  
 "You're plowing."

w-hánū-Ø=č7ā<sup>n</sup>  
 C-laugh-3I=MAN  
 "He laughed."

w-ēyā-Ø=wā  
 C-moo-3I=ANL  
 "The animal mooded."

t-hāākà-Ø=wā  
 H-fly-3I=ANL  
 "The animal is flying."

cáhī<sup>n</sup>-Ø=thà<sup>n</sup>  
 whistle-3I=WOMAN  
 "She whistles."

ndá=šátá-Ø=č7ā<sup>n</sup>  
 already=shut up-3I=MAN  
 "He shut up."

chāngā-Ø # čhà<sup>n</sup>  
 cry-3I # child

théngā-Ø # čhà<sup>n</sup>  
 cough-3I # child

<sup>1</sup> OTL (Otomanguan, Mexico) is spoken primarily by elders in the community of San Felipe Otlaltepec. It is one of several Popoloca variants, all of which are used primarily in communities of southern Puebla, Mexico. There are perhaps as many as 10,000 speakers of Popoloca, though only a few hundred of OTL. Fieldwork on which this analysis was based was carried out as a member of the Project for the Documentation of the Languages of Mesoamerica.

“The child cries.”

ndá=ríkà-Ø=č7ā<sup>n</sup>  
already=jump-3I=MAN  
“He already jumped.”

rààkwhà<sup>n</sup>  
//rààkhù<sup>n</sup>-a//  
be afraid-1I  
“I’m afraid.”

(2)

w-īhm7ā  
//w-īhmā-7ā//  
C-wash-2II  
“You drowned.”

c-úyéè-nà  
P-rest-1II  
“I will rest.”

ché # nánú # w-āng(ā)-7è # č7í=à  
many # year # C-be put-3II # man=that  
“That man lived many years.”

“The child coughs.”

t-yh-à  
//t-hī-à//  
H-go-1I  
“I’m going.”

twhā<sup>n</sup>  
//thú<sup>n</sup>-ā//  
sneeze-2I  
“You sneeze.”

t-úchīkw7è<sup>n</sup>=thà<sup>n</sup>  
//t-úchīkū<sup>n</sup>-7è=thà<sup>n</sup>//  
H-worry-3II=WOMAN  
“She worries.”

w-īngásáy(ā)-7è=č7ā<sup>n</sup>  
C-light up-3II=MAN  
“He woke up.”

ky7è<sup>n</sup>=thà<sup>n</sup>  
//kī<sup>n</sup>-7è=thà<sup>n</sup>//  
be cold-3II=WOMAN  
“She is cold.”

Verbs taking class I morphology constitute over 70% of my data set. Class II might therefore be called the “minority lexical subset”.

These same two suffix sets are used to mark possessors of nouns in the possessed state (formed for Class II nouns by a suffixed high tone and prolongation of the final vowel). Here however Class II is the most common, while class I is restricted to body parts.

(3)

ámánáà	“my mom”	kw7ā <sup>n</sup>	“my face”
ámáā	“your mom”	kwā <sup>n</sup>	“your face”
áméè=č7ā <sup>n</sup>	“his mom”	kū <sup>n</sup> =č7ā <sup>n</sup>	“his face”

According to the data available to me, the two classes of suffixes do not correspond to any difference in the syntactic behavior of intransitive verbs’ single arguments. Like all Popolocan languages, OTL has a verb-initial basic constituent order, with the typological correlates of prepositions and noun-adjective, noun-relative clause and possessed-possessor orders. When a pragmatically marked core argument is preposed, it must corefer to an enclitic pronoun appearing after the verb if in the third person. A focus marker (M) often follows the preposed argument.<sup>2</sup> This then recovers the canonical verb-initial order (v. Veerman 2001 for a historical discussion). This preposed core argument may be either a full nominal argument or an emphatic pronoun, a partial set of which is shown in Table 2. In the third person, the emphatic pronouns also must take an enclitic pronoun. In the third person both the pronoun and the verb must take the same enclitic pronoun.

<sup>2</sup> The properties of this focus marker require further investigation (but see Veerman, 1991 for an overview of its major functions in another Popoloca variant).

**Table 2:** Principal OTL emphatic pronouns

	<b>sg</b>	<b>pl</b>
1	h7à <sup>n</sup>	h7à=ná (EXC) h7è=nī (INC)
2	h7ā	h7ā=ndá
3	h7è=thā <sup>n</sup> (WOMAN)	h7è=sí <sup>n</sup>
	h7è=č7ā <sup>n</sup> (MAN)	
	h7è=wā (ANIMAL)	

(4)

h7è=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # c-úye-7è=č7ā<sup>n</sup>  
3=MAN # P-rest-3II=MAN  
“He will rest.”

č7í=rūwértu7=nà # thú<sup>n</sup>-Ø=č7ā<sup>n</sup>  
man=Roberto=M # sneeze-3I=MAN  
“Roberto, he sneezes.”

kūmíši7 # rīkà=wā  
cat # jump=ANIMAL  
“The cat jumps.”

In other constructions (cleft constructions, subordinates) I have not been able to discern any difference between verbs taking class I and those taking class II morphology.

It would seem that OTL exhibits a typical case of a two-way (agent/patient) split intransitivity, where the single argument of an intransitive verb is expressed in two morphologically distinct ways according to some semantic basis (control, affectedness). That is, S<sub>a</sub> is coded as class I and S<sub>o</sub> is coded as class II.

Intransitive verbs for which the argument would be characterized semantically as inanimate, low control, low volition (e.g. washed clothes) take no pronominal morphology.

(5)

ndá=w-a7ché # nīnū-Ø=č7ā<sup>n</sup>  
already=C-come out # tooth-3I=MAN  
“His tooth already came out.”

w-ātāngā # rīnda7  
C-melt/dissolve # ice  
“The ice melted.”

w-āhe7 # ndy7à  
C-end # path  
“The path ended.”

t-a7rēngí # kà  
H-be pulled up # grass  
“The grass is (being/usually) pulled up.”

w-a7nge7 # nda7šà  
C-finish # mole  
“The mole is finished.”

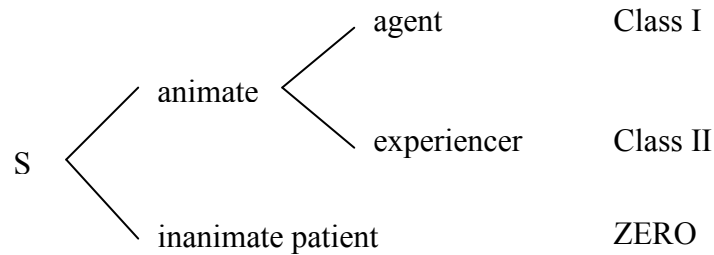
w-āyē # či7  
C-break # pot  
“The pot broke.”

t-īhmā # nīnū-Ø=thā<sup>n</sup>  
H-wash # tooth-3I=WOMAN  
“Her teeth are (being/usually) washed.”

c-īngásáyā # ngwí  
P-light up # everything  
“Everything will be lit up”

In other words, there would seem to be three possibilities for the coding of an intransitive verb’s argument, diagrammed in (6). It should be pointed out however that the class I and the inanimate zero (always in the third person) have no explicit morphology distinguishing the two (other than the possibility to take animate pronouns).

(6)



To date, I know of no fluidity between class I and class II for intransitive verbs. However, as a comparison between (2) and (5) shows, there exists some fluidity in verbs coding between class II experiencer and the inanimate zero morphology. Still, this “fluidity” generally appears rather lexicalized. In other instances, intransitives usually taking class I suffixes are attested with inanimate arguments, though involving a certain degree of personification (7).

(7)

rīkà # šw7i  
jump # fire  
“The fire sparks.”

chāngā # ndda7chū<sup>n</sup>-Ø=č7ā<sup>n</sup>  
cry # ear-3I=MAN  
“His ear is ringing.”

ndéé<sup>n</sup> # ndéé<sup>n</sup> # ndéé<sup>n</sup> # rū # čìikà  
ding # ding # ding # say # metal  
“Ding ding ding says the bell.” (vt)

## 2. OTL Transitive Verbs

How do these three coding strategies play out in transitive verbs? In my data set there are no examples of identical double coding (i.e. agent-agent, experiencer-experiencer, inanimate-inanimate) for any of these three. The most common transitive verb constructions are agent (class I) with no other explicit verbal morphology. In all instances, the basic constituent order is VAO, where the A corresponds to the agent (class I) morphology.

(8)

t-hàncā=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # tthā=thà<sup>n</sup>  
H-ask=MAN # hand=WOMAN  
“He is asking her hand (in marriage).”

w-e7-tw7ā<sup>n</sup>=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # yūū # kāhu<sup>n</sup>7 # nùwà  
C-order=MAN # two # crates # corn  
“He ordered two crates of corn.”

t-àsīta7ngí=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # nča7  
H-hang=MAN # basket  
“He hangs the basket(s).”

w-ēé=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # čìikà  
C-steal=MAN # metal  
“He stole the metal (tool).”

Oblique arguments, such as locatives or instruments, are placed either initially or finally. Instruments (NST) are licensed on the verbal predicate with the highly productive suffix -šī<sup>n</sup>.

(9)

w-e7khē<sup>n</sup>=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # šùū<sup>n</sup> # mēsa7  
C-throw=MAN # paper # table  
“He threw the paper(s) on the table.”

tthā=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # t-àchētūún-šī<sup>n</sup>=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # nčè  
hand=MAN # H-take out.NST=MAN # earth  
“He takes out the earth with his hand.”

w-e7nga7=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # nddàšà # nddàkùčhì  
C-put=MAN # basket # wheeled thing  
“He put the basket on the bus.”

If an animate complement is needed either nominal argument or clitic pronouns are used and follow the VAO constituent order described above.

(10)

t-7īkwā<sup>n</sup> # kūčihnū  
// t-7īkū<sup>n</sup>-ā # kūčihnū//  
H-see-2I # burro  
“You see the burro.”

h7è=thà<sup>n</sup> # w-íngē=thà<sup>n</sup> # čhà<sup>n</sup>  
3=WOMAN # C-takes care of=WOMAN # child  
“She took care of the child.”

w-àsīrwe2=č7ā<sup>n</sup>=wā  
C-tie up=MAN=ANIMAL  
“He tied it (the animal) up.”

č7īitē=č7ā<sup>n</sup>=thà<sup>n</sup>  
disturb=MAN=WOMAN  
“He disturbs her.”

Less common are transitive verbs with experiencer (class II) suffixes and no other explicit verbal morphology. In these cases the experiencer is the syntactic subject.

(11)

h7è=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # k-únd(ā)-7è=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # nu7  
3=MAN # C-have-3II=MAN # rope  
“He needed rope.”

nw-7è=thà<sup>n</sup> # ng7ē # hínā # cáhī<sup>n</sup>=č7ā<sup>n</sup>  
know-3II=WOMAN # that # good # whistle=MAN  
“She knows that he whistles well.”

w-ītha7y(ā<sup>n</sup>)-7è<sup>n</sup>=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # kūni1y(á)-éè=č7ā<sup>n</sup>  
C-forget-3II=MAN # dog-POS3II=MAN  
“He forgot his dog.”

Another possibility is transitive verbs with agent (class I) and experiencer (class II) morphology. An example is the verb “to reproach”, shown in (12). Such transitive verb morphology has been described as taking port-manteau suffixes coding for both A and O; however, historically and/or synchronically they are the result of suffixing the agent to the experiencer.

(12)

		Agent		
		1	2	3
Experiencer	1	--	nč7ēsàt7ēnā	nč7ēsàt7ēnà=č7ā <sup>n</sup>
	2	nč7ēsàt7á	--	nč7ēsàt7ā=č7ā <sup>n</sup>
	3	nč7ēsàtēa7	nč7ēsàt7éē	nč7ēsàt7è=č7ā <sup>n</sup>

In these cases the agent is the A and the experiencer is the O.

(13)

kūčīhnū # hú-n(ē)7ēnà=wā  
burro # C-eat-1II/3I=ANIMAL  
“The burro bit me.”

hú-nč7ēkītha7y-7ēnà=č7ā<sup>n</sup>  
C-make forget-1II/3I=MAN  
“He forgave me. (He made me forget.)”

There seems to be some fluidity in transitive verbs as to coding the O.

(14)

c-hàčīngí-Ø=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # šínddàkhā  
P-ask-3I=MAN # authority  
“He’s going to ask the authority.”

c-hàčīng(i)e-7è=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # šínddàkhā  
P-ask-3II/3I=MAN # authority  
“He’s going to ask the presidente.”

w-ēé=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # čìikà  
C-steal=MAN # metal  
“He stole the metal (tool).”

w-e(é)-7ē=č7ā<sup>n</sup>=thà<sup>n</sup>  
C-steal-3II=MAN=WOMAN  
“He robbed her.”

Nouns may also take the agent/experiencer morphology, in possessive predicates.

(15)

h7ā<sup>n</sup> # tíyw7éènà=thà<sup>n</sup> I am her uncle.  
h7è=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # tíyw7éè=č7ā<sup>n</sup>=thà<sup>n</sup> He is her uncle.  
h7è=č7ā<sup>n</sup> # tíyw7áā= č7ā<sup>n</sup> He is your uncle.

### 3. Ditransitive Verbs

Ditransitive verbs are uncommon in my data set, while paraphrastic constructions like that in (16) are more frequent.

(16)

w-7è=thàn # šu7 # čhē=thàn # kūnáyá  
C-throw=WOMAN # stone # hit=WOMAN # dog  
“She threw the stone; she hit the dog.”

An important exception concerns benefactive type constructions.

(17)

w-e7ng(ā)-7è=č7ā<sup>n</sup>=thà<sup>n</sup> # nddù # ttha7  
C-put in-3II/3I=MAN=WOMAN # meat # oven  
“He put meat in the oven for her.”

w-e7k(ī)y-7e2=č7ā<sup>n</sup>=thà<sup>n</sup> # čūhní  
C-account-3II/3I=MAN=WOMAN # story.  
“He told her a story.”

### Subject Selection

Subject selection (either A or S) may be accounted for easiest by means of the hierarchy:

Agent > Experiencer > Patient