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# 19 Applicative constructions in Mayan languages: An overview with special focus on Chontal

**Abstract:** This chapter describes applicative constructions in Mayan languages, one of the largest and most well-known Native American language families. Mayan languages abound in valency-altering verb affixes that produce passive, antipassive, causative, and applicative constructions. The first part of this study presents the relevant features of Mayan morphosyntax using Kaqchikel, a Guatemalan language from the Eastern branch, and Chontal, a Mexican language from the Western branch. The second part of the study reviews the published data to examine examples of applicative and applicative-like constructions in the four branches of the family. This overview is followed by an in-depth analysis of applicative constructions in Chontal Mayan; these examples are from the author's field work with the Project for the Documentation of the Languages of Mesoamerica. The final part of the paper briefly summarizes the morphosyntactic and semantic properties of applicative construction across the Mayan language family.

## 1 Introduction

This chapter describes applicative constructions in Mayan languages, one of the largest and most well-known Native American language families. The commonly accepted grouping of the thirty languages in this family posits four branches (Campbell 2017: 44). The Eastern Branch languages are found in Guatemala; this grouping includes several large languages (e.g. Q'eqchi', K'iche', and Kaqchikel) with speakers numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Languages in the Western Branch are spoken in southern Mexico. The northernmost Mayan language, Huastec, comprises its own group and is thought to have split off first from the other languages. The fourth branch, Yucatecan, comprises several languages, among which is Yucatec, the most-spoken Mayan language of Mexico. Languages in the Mayan family have a rich inventory of valency-altering verb affixes that produce passive, antipassive, causative, and applicative constructions. Applicatives and applicative lookalikes are found throughout the Mayan language family.

## 2 The basics of Mayan verbal morphosyntax

In this section I will describe relevant Mayan morphosyntax using examples from an Eastern Mayan language, K'aqchikel, and a Western Mayan language, Chontal.<sup>1</sup> Unless stated otherwise, all Chontal data comes from my own fieldwork with the Project for the Documentation of the Languages of Mesoamerica (PDLMA), and all K'aqchikel data comes from my teaching material at the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Kansas.

### 2.1 Basic verb morphology

Mayan languages are agglutinating, and verbs consist of roots with affixes that express person as well as tense, aspect, mood, and voice. Verb roots are either transitive or intransitive. Person marking has an ergative rather than an accusative alignment. The labels Set A and Set B are used with Mayan languages for the two sets of affixes: transitive verb subjects take the ergative Set A affixes, and objects and intransitive verb subjects take the absolutive Set B affixes. Table 1 shows the Set A forms from the two languages alongside the reconstructed Proto-Mayan forms (Mora-Marín 2009: 103).

**Table 1:** Set A person affixes.

	Chontal	Proto-Mayan	K'aqchikel
1SG	<i>kā- (k-)</i>	*nu	<i>nu- (i-, in-, w-)</i>
2SG	<i>a- (aw-)</i>	*aa	<i>a- (aw-)</i>
3SG	<i>u- (uy-, y-)</i>	*ru	<i>ru- (r-, u-)</i>
1PL	<i>kā-...laj/ t'oko'</i>	*qa	<i>qa- (q-)</i>
2PL	<i>a-...laj</i>	*ee	<i>i- (iw-)</i>
3PL	<i>u-...laj</i>	*ki	<i>ki- (k-)</i>

K'aqchikel has only undergone slight change from the reconstructed proto-Mayan forms. Chontal, on the other hand, has undergone serious innovation of its person-marking paradigm. For example, it has used the former first-person plural marker as its first-person singular marker. To fill in the gap this creates in the plural, it uses the new singular form plus the morpheme *laj*, the grammaticalized word for 'all.' Moreover, Chontal has

<sup>1</sup> Languages from Guatemala, including K'aqchikel, follow orthographic conventions laid out by the Guatemalan Academy of Mayan Languages, known as the Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (ALMG). Languages from Mexico, including Chontal, follow orthographic conventions laid out by the National Indigenous Languages Institute, known as the Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI). For ALMG the letter <ā> represents the phoneme [e]; INALI uses the letter <ā> to represent [ə]. Stress in Chontal is unpredictable, and I represent it with an accent; stress is typically not represented in the various orthographies.

an inclusive/exclusive distinction: the exclusive is formed with *t'oko'*. As described by Law (2014: 84–92), this distinction is an areally spread innovation that is also found in Yucatecan, Chol, Tojolabal, Tseltal, and Tsotsil. In Chontal, the second- and third-person singular affixes look similar to the proto forms, but their plural counterparts have been simplified; they are the singular form with the *laj* morpheme (“all”) added. The Set B affixes have singular markers similar to the proto forms; once again, however, we see that Chontal bases the plural form on the singular and adds a new inclusive/exclusive distinction. Another important difference is that in Chontal the Set B affixes come after the verb, whereas in Kaqchikel they precede it. Table 2 shows the Set B forms from the two languages alongside Proto-Mayan reconstructed forms (Mora-Marín 2009: 103).

**Table 2:** Set B person affixes.

	Chontal	Proto-Mayan	Kaqchikel
1SG	<i>-on</i>	*iin	<i>in-</i>
2SG	<i>-et</i>	*at	<i>at-</i>
3SG	∅	*∅	∅
1PL	<i>-on-...laj/ t'oko'</i>	*o'n	<i>oj-</i>
2PL	<i>-et-...laj</i>	*ex	<i>ix-</i>
3PL	<i>∅...laj</i>	*ob'	<i>e-</i>

In the verbal systems of the two languages there is a sharp contrast in their expression of tense and aspect. Kaqchikel uses a relatively straightforward system where aspect is marked by a prefix on the verb. There are three aspectual prefixes: *x-* for completive, *y-* for incompletive (the allomorph *n-* is used before the Set B third person singular marker), and *xk-* for future. These aspect prefixes are the same whether the verb is transitive (1a) or intransitive (1b–c).

(1) Kaqchikel

- a. *x-in-a-to'*  
COMPL-B1-A2-help  
'You helped me.'
- b. *x-∅-kos*  
COMPL-B3-get.tired  
'She got tired.'
- c. *xk-e-wär*  
FUT-B3.PL-sleep  
'They will sleep.'

In Chontal, markers placed before the verb help to indicate tense and aspect. There is no verbal tense in Chontal; the particles, together with aspect markers, serve to specify the time frame. For example, the aspectual marker *mu'* is used with the incompletive suffix

to indicate a present progressive time frame, while *ja* is used with the completive status marker to indicate the immediate future. As many other Mayan languages, Chontal has two distinct classes of verbs: root verbs and derived verbs. The aspect suffixes differ depending on the verb's classification as transitive or intransitive, root or derived. A root transitive verb has an incomplete *-e'* suffix (2a), whereas a root intransitive has an incomplete *-e* suffix (2b).

(2) Chontal

- a. *kä-män-é'-Ø*  
A1-buy-INC-B3  
'I buy it.'
- b. *kä-bix-é*  
A1-go-INC  
'I go.'

Derived verbs use the suffix *-n* to indicate incomplete aspect on both transitive (3a) and intransitive verbs (3b).

(3) Chontal

- a. *u-pok'má-n*  
A3-become.fat-INC  
'He becomes fat.'
- b. *u-láchä-n-Ø*  
A3-scratch-INC-B3  
'She scratches it.'

The completive suffix is always the same regardless of the verb being root or derived, transitive or intransitive. It can, however, change according to person. The third person Set B suffix is not phonetically expressed and the completive is *-i* (4a). When a Set B suffix is phonetically expressed—first or second person—then it is the completive aspect that is zero-marked (4b and 4c).

(4) Chontal

- a. *a=t'äb-í-Ø*  
ASP=go.up-COMPL-B3  
'He went up.'
- b. *a=t'äb-Ø-ón*  
ASP=go.up-COMPL-B1  
'I went up.'
- c. *a=t'äb-Ø-ét*  
ASP=go.up-COMPL-B2  
'You went up.'

Kaqchikel, like other Mayan languages, has ergative alignment for person-marking on verbs. Set A prefixes index transitive subjects (5a), and Set B prefixes index objects (5a) and intransitive subjects (5b).

(5) Kaqchikel

- a. *x-in-ru-chäp*  
COMPL-B1-A3-grab  
'She grabbed me.'
- b. *x-in-jalon*  
COMPL-B1-get.dressed  
'I got dressed.'

Chontal has developed a pattern of split ergativity. Intransitive verbs that are positive incomplete follow an accusative pattern and use Set A prefixes to index the subject (6a). Intransitive verbs that are complete (6b) or negative incomplete (6c) follow an ergative pattern and use Set B prefixes to index the subject.

(6) Chontal

- a. *kä-wäy-é*  
A1-sleep-INC  
'I'm sleeping.'
- b. *a=wäy-Ø-ón*  
ASP=sleep-COMPL-B1  
'I slept.'
- c. *mach jul-Ø-ón      tä otót*  
NEG come-COMPL-B1 to house  
'I didn't come to the house.'

A common feature of Mayan languages is a robust system of valency-changing constructions. In Kaqchikel a root verb forms a passive by changing the vowel (7). The demoted subject in the passive is indicated by a Set A prefix on the relational noun *-uma*.

(7) Kaqchikel

- a. *x-e-ki-chäp*  
COMPL-B3.PL-A3.PL-grab  
'They grabbed them.'
- b. *x-e-chap      k-uma      ri      ixoq-i'*  
COMPL-B3.PL-grab.PASS A3.PL-by DET woman-PL  
'They were grabbed by the women.'

In Chontal the passive is formed by adding a suffix to the verb. A typical active to passive operation is in (8). In (8b) the demoted subject is part of a prepositional phrase.

## (8) Chontal

- a. *kä-k'ux-é'-Ø*  
 A1-eat-INC-B3  
 'I eat it.'
- b. *u-k'ux-ká-n*      *k'a*    *no'on*  
 A3-eat-PASS-INC    by    1PRO  
 'It is eaten by me.'

Passivization in Chontal also distinguishes between root and derived verbs: a root verb takes the suffix *-ka* (9a) and a derived verb takes the suffix *-int* (9b). Occasionally a verb takes both (9c).

## (9) Chontal

- a. *u-k'ech-ká-n*  
 A3-grab-PASS-INC  
 'It is grabbed.'
- b. *u-tsäms-ínt-e*  
 A3-kill-PASS-INC  
 'It is killed.'
- c. *uy-ä'-k-ínt-e*      *tan*    *lówen*  
 A3-put-PASS-INC    in    hole  
 'It is put in the hole.'

## 2.2 Basic noun morphosyntax

In Mayan languages, some nouns are always possessed (e.g. body parts), while other nouns never are. Moreover, some nouns alter their form and/or meaning to some extent when possessed. Mayan languages are head-marking, and the Set A prefix is attached to the possessed noun rather than the possessor noun. In the Kaqchikel example in (10), 'hand' is possessed with a first-person singular prefix, and 'corner' is prefixed by the third-person prefix *ru-*; this prefix indicates the following noun is its possessor.

## (10) Kaqchikel

- x-Ø-i-jös*                      *ri*    *nu-q'a'*    *ch-wäch*    *ru-tzaltamal*    *ri*    *tz'alän*  
 COMPL-B3-A1-scratch    DET    A1-hand    PREP-front    A3-corner    DET    table  
 'I scratched my hand on the corner of the table.' (Macario et al. 1998: 301)

In the Chontal example (11), 'house' is possessed by third person singular prefix; the possessor 'Daria' follows 'house.'

## (11) Chontal

*t-uy-otót ix-dach' u-x-é tä ajtä lotoj-es-yá*  
 PREP-A3-house FEM-Daria A3-go-INC PREP be marry-CAUS-NMLZ  
 'In Daria's house there's going to be a wedding.'

Nouns in Mayan languages are not marked for case; core arguments are marked on the verb, and the relationship of a non-core noun to the verb is expressed through prepositions and relational nouns. A relational noun is a grammaticalized noun bearing a Set A prefix that cross-references a non-core argument. For example, the Set A prefix on the Kaqchikel relational noun *-ichin* indexes 'my mother' (12a); in (12b) the Set A prefix appears on the relational noun *-uma* to index the demoted agent of a passive construction. In (12c) the recipient of the verb 'give' is not expressed on the verb, but rather with a following relational noun. Relational nouns perform the role of prepositions but are possessed nouns that have acquired a preposition-like meaning. Some relational nouns are based on body parts, while for others the original meaning has been lost.

## (12) Kaqchikel

- a. *x-i-loq'on r-ichin nu-te'*  
 COMPL-A1-shop A3-with A1-mother  
 'I shopped with my mother.' (Brown, Maxwell, and Little 2006: 175)
- b. *x-in-qetëx k-uma*  
 COMPL-B1-hug.PASS A3.PL-by  
 'I was hugged by them.'
- c. *n-Ø-in-ya' chawe chwa'q*  
 INC-B3-A1-give PREP.A2 something  
 'I give you something.'

The two true prepositions in Kaqchikel are distinguished from relational nouns by their inability to take a Set A prefix. These two prepositions are grammaticalized from words indicating parts of the body. *Chi* comes from *chi'aj* 'mouth' and *pa* from *pamaj* 'stomach.' An example with *pa* is in (13).

## (13) Kaqchikel

*jantape' y-øj-ch'on pa Kaqchikel*  
 always INC-B1.PL-speak in Kaqchikel  
 'We always speak in Kaqchikel.'

In Chontal we see a similar use of relational nouns and prepositions. As in Kaqchikel, some possessed body parts have become grammaticalized as relational nouns; for example, 'back' (14a) and 'mouth' (14b). In both these examples the possessed body part is used with one of the handful of true prepositions, in this case a shortened form of *tä* 'in, on, at.' Prepositions can also appear by themselves (14c).

## (14) Chontal

- a. *ni yum+ká-jo' u-che-n-Ø-jo' ch'úyu t-u-pat té'*  
 DET lord+earth-PL A3-do-INC-B3-PL whistle PREP-A3-back tree  
 'The *duendes* whistle behind the tree.'
- b. *kol-Ø-ón kā-pítā-n-et t-u-ti' ch'uj*  
 remain-COMPL-B1 A1-wait-INC-B2 PREP-A3-mouth church  
 'I stayed waiting for you in front of the church.'
- c. *ixkúne uy-äl-é'-Ø tä kraxtán t'an*  
 what A3-say-INC-B3 in Spanish language  
 'What does it mean in Spanish?'

### 3 The Mayan applicatives

#### 3.1 Mayan comparative data on the applicative

The definition of applicative construction (AC) and base construction (BC) used in this study is from Zúñiga and Creissels (this volume). An applicative verb construction indexes a participant that, in the BC, either has different verb indexing or is not indexed at all. The applicative verb itself is derived from a base verb. The applied phrase is not a subject or agent in either construction. A canonical applicative construction treats the phrase as a core argument. Some Mayanists use the term “registration applicative” to indicate an applicative lookalike construction that focuses the phrase but does not have verb indexing different from the BC (Smith-Stark 1994); in this paper I will refer to such constructions as oblique registration constructions.

Dixon (2012: 336–337) lists eight areas that need to be addressed when describing the applicative construction (AC): 1) the formal marking for the application construction, 2) whether a corresponding base construction (BC) for the applicative construction exists (if not, it is not a canonical applicative construction), 3) if there are factors that determine when the applicative construction is preferred or required (e.g., a human applicative argument), 4) whether the applicative argument can only be expressed in an applicative construction (if so, the construction is a quasi-applicative), 5) the semantic roles coded by the applicative construction, 6) whether the construction applies to intransitive verbs, transitive verbs, or both, 7) the status of the original object from the BC after the AC has licensed the applied argument (i.e. is it equal in status to the new object, or has it lost some of its primary object properties), and 8) the origin of the applicative marker.

Bearing in mind these criteria, I have found that the current published research does not allow us to describe satisfactorily applicative constructions and applicative lookalikes across the Mayan language family. In the published descriptions that do exist, the applicative is illustrated with but a few examples; often these cursory descriptions fail to make it clear if the AC has a corresponding BC. For any given language,



we would need to analyze many examples from varied discourse contexts in order to attain a true understanding of this construction. The most detailed descriptions of the applicative are my own inadequate description of its manifestation in a single Mayan language (Montgomery-Anderson 2010) and Mora-Marín's 2003 diachronic study of the Mayan language family. Given these limitations, I will endeavor in this chapter to give an account of what is currently known about this construction by summarizing the available data for each of the four branches: Eastern (§ 3.2), Huastecan (§ 3.3), Yucatecan (§ 3.4), and Western (§ 3.5).<sup>2</sup>

## 3.2 Eastern Mayan

### 3.2.1 Mamean

The Mamean subbranch of Eastern Mayan consists of four languages: Mam, Tekitek, Awakatek, and Ixil (Campbell 2017: 44). Mam, the largest language, has no applicative construction (England 2017). Ixil is the only language in this subgroup of Eastern Mayan where we have evidence of an applicative-like construction. Mora-Marín reports that the AC advances an instrument (15a) that in the BC is in an oblique phrase with a relational noun (15b). The applicative morpheme is *b'e*, by far the most common applicative morpheme across the Mayan language family and the topic of Mora-Marín's diachronic study (2003). The applicative morpheme has focused the instrument, but it has not marked it as a core argument; in neither the AC nor the BC does the verb index it with person affixes.<sup>3</sup>

(15) Ixil (Mora-Marín 2003: 207)

- a. *uula a-k'oni-b'e=in*  
sling A2-shoot-APPL=B1  
'With a sling you shot me.' AC
- b. *a-k'oni=in t'-an uula*  
A2-shoot=B1 A3-RN sling  
'You shot me with a sling.' BC

<sup>2</sup> For many examples I have slightly altered the parsing abbreviations and symbols to make them more consistent with those used in the paper. I have also standardized some of the letters used for the languages themselves; for example, I have replaced any instances of <\$> with <x>, a letter used in many Mayan languages to represent a voiceless post-alveolar fricative. Any mistakes are my own.

<sup>3</sup> In (15a) the instrument phrase is not introduced by a relational noun, so this construction is not a typical oblique registration construction.

### 3.2.2 K'iche'an

The K'iche'an subbranch consists of nine languages: Q'eqchi', Uspantek, Poqomam, Poqomchi', K'iche', Kaqchikel, Tz'utujil, Sakapultek, and Sipakapense (Campbell 2017: 44). For some of these languages we have evidence that the applicative morpheme *b'e* appears on a transitive verb when an instrument is focused. In the BC in (16b) the instrument follows the verb and is introduced by a relational noun. In (16a) the instrument is in focus position, is not introduced by a relative noun, and is indexed on the verb by the Set B prefix; the argument that was indexed by the Set B prefix in the BC is now introduced by a relational noun.

(16) K'iche' (Campbell 2000: 278)

- a. *ch'iich' x-Ø-u-rami-b'e-j lee achih r-eeh lee chee'*  
 metal COMPL-B3-A3-cut-APPL-TR DET man A3-GEN DET tree  
 'The man used a machete to cut the tree.' / 'A machete is what a man used to cut a tree.' (AC)
- b. *x-Ø-u-rami-j lee chee' lee achih ch-eeh jun ch'iich'*  
 COMPL-B3-A3-cut-TR DET tree DET man to.3POSS-to DET metal  
 'The man cut the tree with a machete.' (BC)

In (17a) the demoted object is a local person; this argument is expressed as a Set A prefix on a relational noun.

(17) K'iche' (Campbell 2000: 278)

- a. *chee' x-Ø-in-ch'aya-b'e-j aaw-eej*  
 wood COMPL-B3-A1-hit-APPL-TR 2POSS-GEN  
 'I used a stick to hit you.' (AC)
- b. *x-at-in-ch'ay chi chee'*  
 COMPL-B2-A1-hit with wood  
 'I hit you with a stick.' (BC)

Henderson reports instances in Kaqchikel where the *b'e* applicative morpheme allows the verb to index comitatives (18a), locatives (18b), datives (18c), and themes / topics of speech (18d). Unfortunately, I do not have examples of corresponding BCs, so it is not known if these instances of *b'e* are lexicalized or represent true applicative constructions.

(18) Kaqchikel (Henderson 2007: 10)

- a. *x-Ø-u-samaji-b'e-j w-achb'il*  
 COMPL-B3-A3-work-APPL-TR A1-friend  
 'He worked with my friend.'

- b. *x-Ø-u-pal-b'e-j*                      *jun pop ri ixtän*  
 COMPL-B3-A3-stand-APPL-TR    DET   mat   DET   girl  
 'The girl stood on a mat.'
- c. *x-Ø-u-ch'o-b'e-j*                      *ri ixöq*  
 COMPL-B3-A3-speak-APPL-TR    DET   woman  
 'He spoke to the woman.'
- d. *x-at-ru-tzijo-b'e-j*                      *ri ixöq*  
 COMPL-B2-A3-say-APPL-TR    DET   woman  
 'The woman talked about you.'

Kaqchikel uses the *b'e* to focus an instrument in an oblique registration construction (England 2001: 139). In (19) *ikäj* 'axe' is fronted and its former position is marked by the particle *wi*; however, it is still part of an oblique phrase and it is not indexed on the verb.

- (19) Kaqchikel (England 2001: 139)  
*chi ikäj x-Ø-u-choyo-b'e-j*                      *wi ri che' ri achi*  
 PREP   axe   COMPL-B3-A3-cut-APPL-TR    FOC   DET   tree   DET   man  
 'With an axe the man cut the tree.'

Kaqchikel uses prepositions and relational nouns to introduce an instrument (20a), a beneficiary (20b), a recipient (20c), and a target (20d).

- (20) Kaqchikel
- a. *aPala's x-Ø-u-paxij*                      *ri b'oyo' chi ab'äj*  
 Francisco   COMPL-B3-A3-break   DET   pot   PREP   stone  
 'Francisco broke the pot with stones' (García Matzar et al. 1992: 103)
- b. *x-Ø-ch'ajon*                      *k-ichin ru-ch'utit-e*  
 COMPL-B3-wash.clothes   A3.PL-for   A3-aunt-PL  
 'She washed clothes for her aunts.' (Brown, Maxwell, and Little 2006: 175)
- c. *yin x-Ø-in-tz'ib'aj*                      *el jun wuj chre jun w-ach'al*  
 1PRO   COMPL-B3-A1-write   DIR   DET   paper   PREP.A3   DET   A1-friend  
 'I wrote a letter to a friend.' (Macario et al. 1998: 383)
- d. *yin x-Ø-in-q'eb'a'*                      *jun che' pa ru-wi' raqänya'*  
 1PRO   COMPL-B3-A1-lay.across   DET   wood   on   A3-top   river  
 'I laid a plank across the river.' (Macario et al. 1998: 263)

Stout argues that Kaqchikel has an adnominal strategy where the third argument of the verb appears as a possessor of one of the verb's core arguments. In both (21a) and (21b)

the Set A prefix on the noun can be interpreted as both a possessor and a recipient. In (21c) the Set A possessor is a maleficiary, an interpretation reflected in the Spanish translation (the English translation reflects more literally the Kaqchikel).

(21) Kaqchikel

- a. *Juan x-Ø-u-ya' jun nu-wuj*  
 Juan COMPL-B3-A3-give DET A1-book  
 'Juan gave me a book.' (Lit. 'Juan gave my book.') (Stout 2015: 71)
- b. *x-Ø-u-taq pa jun nu-tzibanik*  
 COMPL-B3-A3-send PREP DET A1-letter  
 'She sent me a letter.' (Macario et al. 1998: 436)
- c. *jun achin x-Ø-r-eleq'aj jun w-ikäj*  
 DET man COMPL-B3-A3-rob DET A1-axe  
 'A man robbed my axe.' / 'Un señor me robó un hacha.' (Macario et al. 1998: 83)

Tz'utujil and several varieties of K'iche' use the *-b'e* suffix. In (22b) the addressee 'his wife' is marked with the relational noun *-uk'iin* 'with' and is not marked on the verb; in (22a) the applicative allows 'his wife' to be indexed by the Set B prefix.

(22) Tz'utujil (England 2001: 140)

- a. *x-u-tzijo-b'eej ja r-ixoxil jar aachi chi r-ij jar uleew*  
 COMPL-A3-speak-APPL DET A3-wife DET man PREP A3-back DET land  
 'The man spoke with his wife about the land.' (AC)
- b. *x-Ø-tzij-oon-i jar aachi r-uk'iin ja r-ixoxil chi*  
 COMPL-B3-speak-ANTIP-PFS DET man A3-with DET A3-wife PREP  
*r-ij jar uleew*  
 A3-back DET land  
 'The man spoke with his wife about the land.' (BC)

In (23a) the applicative form of the K'iche' verb allows the Set B prefix to index 'me'; in the non-applicative construction in (23b) the Set B prefix indexes 'the money.'

(23) K'iche' (England 2001: 140)

- a. *x-in-u-tzaqi-b'eej ri nu-chaaq'*  
 COMPL-B1-A3-APPL DET A1-brother  
 'My brother lost it for me.'
- b. *x-Ø-u-tzaq ri nu-pwaq ri nu-chaaq'*  
 COMPL-B3-A3-lose DET A1-money DET A1-brother  
 'My brother lost my money.'

Both Poqomam and Poqomchi' have an applicative construction that indexes an instrument. The applicative suffix *'i* allows the instrument to be fronted for questioning; in (24a) the patient 'me' is still expressed on the verb with a Set B prefix, while in (24b) the same patient is demoted to a relational noun phrase and the instrument is indexed on the verb with the Set B prefix.

(24) Poqomam (Dayley 1981: 33)

- a. *hila' x-in-a-q'at-'i-eh*  
 what COMPL-B1-A2-cut-INS-TR  
 'What did you cut me with?'
- b. *hila' x-Ø-a-q'at-'i-eh w-ihchin*  
 what COMPL-B3-A2-cut-INS-TR Al-to  
 'What did you cut me with?'

### 3.3 Huastecan

The Huastecan branch split off first from the other Mayan languages and is the most divergent; this branch is comprised of one living language (Campbell 2017: 44). There are three varieties of Huastec; the description of the variety from Xiloxúchil (in the state of Veracruz) does not contain much information on ditransitive constructions, but we can find an example of an AC (25a) and a corresponding BC (25b). In this language transitive verbs are marked with the morpheme *ch(i)* (reduplicated as *chinch*) to form the AC.

(25) Xiloxúchil (Ochoa Peralta 1984: 68)

- a. *Ø in t'aj-ch-al*  
 B3 A3 do-APPL-INC  
 'He does it to him.' (AC)
- b. *hahaa' Ø in t'aj-al*  
 3PRO B3 A3 do-INC  
 'He does it.' (BC)

This applicative morpheme can license a beneficiary (26a), recipient (26b), or maleficiary (26c).

(26) Xiloxúchil (Dayley 1981: 55)

- a. *Ø u nuj-chinch-al*  
 B3 Al B3 sell-APPL-INC  
 'I sell it for him.'
- b. *Ø u nuj-ch-al*  
 B3 Al sell-APPL-INC  
 'I sell it to him.'

- c.  $\emptyset$  in *kwe'-ch-al*  
 B3 A3 rob-APPL-INC  
 'He robs him of it.'

This applied argument can be passivized (27).

- (27) Xiloxúchil (Dayley 1981: 55)  
 a. in *kwe'-chi-n-al*  
 Bl rob-APPL-PASS-INC  
 'I am (being) robbed of it.'  
 b. in *núj-chinch-aab'*  
 Bl sell-APPL-PASS  
 'I am being sold it.'

Kondić (2012) provides much more detail about applicative constructions for Southeastern Huastec. The applicative in this variety has several distinctive features that make it unlike the applicative in the other Mayan languages. Southeastern Huastec uses two applicatives, both of which are etymologically unrelated to the morpheme *b'e* found in the other branches of the Mayan languages. Kondić refers to the morpheme *-tx* as a dative applicative; this morpheme appears on transitive verbs and references recipients and beneficiaries. As demonstrated in (28), this construction is not obligatory. In the base construction the beneficiary/recipient is indexed with a preposition (28b); in the dative applicative construction the direct object of the base construction is demoted while the applied object is treated as a core argument (28a).

- (28) Southeastern Huastec (Kondić 2012: 250)  
 a. *u núj-tx-iy an ti kwita' na josee*  
 A1 sell-DAT.APPL-TRC DET PREP chicken HUM José  
 'I sold José the chicken.' (AC)  
 b. *u núj-uw an kwita' baal na josee*  
 A1 sell-TRC DET chicken to/for HUM José  
 'I sold the chicken to/for José.' (BC)

A unique feature of the dative applicative in this variety of Huastecan is the role of definiteness. If the direct object in the base construction is indefinite (29b), it is not demoted with a preposition in the corresponding applicative construction (29a).

- (29) Southeastern Huastec (Kondić 2012: 250)  
 a. *tu ch'a'-tx-iy juun i maango*  
 1>2 buy-DAT.APPL-TRC DET NM mango  
 'I bought you a mango.' AC

- b. *u ch'a'-iy juun i maango baal tataa'*  
 A1 buy-TRC DET NM mango for you  
 'I bought a mango for you.' BC

Kondić demonstrates that Southeastern Huastec has a distinct morpheme *-n* for instrumental applicative constructions. An intriguing feature of this morpheme is that it is only used on intransitive and detransitivized verbs. As shown in (30), this instrumental applicative construction is not obligatory. In the base construction the instrument is introduced with a preposition (30b); in the applicative construction the direct object of the base construction is demoted while the applied object is treated as a core argument (28a).

(30) Southeastern Huastec (Kondić 2012: 256)

- a. *in t'ak-ax-n-a' axee' i kwaa'txim*  
 A3 wash-ANTIP-INS-TRC DEM NM cloth  
 'He washed (things/it/him) with this cloth.'
- b. *na martiin in t'ak-a-al n-in chikaam-il*  
 HUM Martin A3 wash-TR-INC DEM-A3 child-POSS  
*k'aal juun i kwaa'txim*  
 with DET NM cloth  
 'Martin washes his child with a cloth.'

The instrumental applicative construction seems to be the most productive with the antipassive. Kondić does report uses of the instrumental on intransitive verbs, but she is unsure how productive such constructions are. She does give an example where the instrumental applicative and dative applicative appear together (31); she even reports instances where the dative morpheme appears twice on the same verb (32).

(31) Southeastern Huastec (Kondić 2012: 259)

- a. *ne'ech k-u t'aj-a' juniil axee' i te'neel*  
 FUT IRR-A1 do-TR again DEM NM food  
 'I am going to make that dish again,
- b. *jaach n-u ne'ech ay-tx-ix-n-a-al taam ch'ejel*  
 that REL-A1 HAB wait-DAT.APPL-ANTIP-INS-TR-INC when half  
*k'iitxaaaj*  
 day  
 'It is what I usually wait (for my family) with at noon.  
 (=offer to my family for lunch)'

## (32) Southeastern Huastec (Kondić 2012: 260)

*axee' i kwitx in*  
 DEM NM wrap A1  
*nuy-tx-in-tx-in-al k'aal n-u atk'imaath*  
 sell-DAT.APPL-EP-DAT.APPL-MID-INC by DEM-A1 neighbor  
 'My neighbor sells (to people) these wraps for me.'  
 (lit: I am sold (to people) these wraps by my neighbor.)

Kondić notes that the instrumental construction is much less common than the dative construction; she also suggests that, in many instances, the instrumental may represent lexicalization.

### 3.4 Yucatecan

The Yucatecan branch consists of four languages: Yucatec Maya, Lacandón, Itzaj, and Mopan (Campbell 2017: 44). So far, no evidence has been found of an applicative construction in any of the Yucatecan languages (Mora-Marín 2003: 199). To express a third argument, Itzaj can use an adnominal strategy. In (33a) the recipient is part of a prepositional phrase, while in (33b) the possessive construction expresses the same event without the preposition.

## (33) Itzaj

- a. *k-in-ts'(ah)-ik-Ø in-ts'on ti'ih in-suku'un*  
 INC-A1-give-PPM-B3 A1-gun PREP A1-brother  
 'I give my gun to my older brother.' (Hofling 1990: 550)  
 b. *k-in-ts'(ah)-ik-Ø u-ts'on in-suku'un*  
 INC-A1-give-PPM-B3 A3-gun A1-brother  
 'I give my brother's gun (to him).' (Hofling 1990: 551)

We see in Itzaj that the two semantic roles most commonly indexed by the applicative in Mayan languages—recipients (34a) and instruments (34b)—are introduced with relational nouns.

## (34) Itzaj

- a. *b'a'ax ki-b'el ki-k'ub'-u' t-a' winik ka' tak-ej*  
 what A1.PL-go A1.PL-deliver-DTS to-DET man when come/DIS-TOP  
 'What are we going to deliver to the man when he comes?' (Hofling 2000: 316)  
 b. *u-chun a' che'-ej b'äk'-a'an et-e sum*  
 A3-trunk DET tree-TOP wind-PTCP with-POSS rope  
 'The trunk of the tree is wound with rope.' (Hofling 2000: 317)



### 3.5 Western Mayan

#### 3.5.1 Q'anjob'alan

The Greater Q'anjob'alan subbranch consists of six languages: Q'anjobal, Akatek, Jakalteq, Mocho', Chuj, and Tojolabal (Campbell 2017: 44). There is not clear evidence of an applicative construction in these languages. Tojolabal does have a serial verb construction; the verb *i'* 'to carry' has been lexicalized to introduce a third argument as part of a dative construction (35). The verb 'to carry' can appear in the same clause with its lexicalized counterpart (35b).

(35) Tojolabal (Ramírez del Prado 2017: 586)

- a. *oj wa-le' jan y-i' jun s-k'u' ja=k-ijts'n=i*  
 IRR A2-look.for DIR A3-DAT DET A3-blouse DET=A1-younger.sibling=TOP  
 'Will you look for a blouse for my little sister when you come back?'
- b. *oj=b'i y-i' jan y-i' gancho ja=karla=i*  
 IRR=REP A3-carry DIR A3-DAT hair.clip DET=Karla=TOP  
 'They say, she's going to bring hair-clips to Karla.'

#### 3.5.2 Cholan-Tzeltalan

The Cholan-Tzeltalan subbranch consists of six languages: Ch'ol, Chontal, Cholti, Ch'orti', Tzeltal, and Tsotsil (Campbell 2017: 44). I will discuss Chontal separately in Section 3.5.3, as I have much more data on the applicative for this language.

Tzeltal—as well as Tsotsil—uses a *be* morpheme to derive an AC from a BC; i.e. a canonical applicative construction (36a). This morpheme is used only on transitive stems and licenses the expression of a recipient, beneficiary, or external possessor. The applicative object is available for passivization (36b). This applicativization is obligatory; i.e. there is not an alternate non-applicative means to express this argument.

(36) Tzeltal (Polian 2017: 627)

- a. *la j-pas-b-at 'ul*  
 PFV A1-make-APPL-B2 atole  
 'I made atole for you.'
- b. *Ø-pas-b-ot-at 'ul*  
 PFV-make-APPL-PASS-B2 atole  
 'You were made atole.'

Tsotsil uses the suffix *-be* on transitive verbs to license the semantic role of recipient (37); this suffix also licenses an addressee, beneficiary, maleficiary, and instrument (Mora-Marín 2003: 211).

(37) Tsotsil (Mora-Marín 2003: 211)

'a li Xun=e ba y-ak'-be chitom li 'ants=e  
 TOP DET Xun=ENCL go A3-give-APPL pig DET woman=ENCL  
 'Xun went to give the pig to the woman.'

The other extant member of the Cholan family is Ch'orti', a language spoken in Eastern Guatemala. This language has lost the applicative morpheme and replaced it with a prepositional phrase strategy (38).

(38) Ch'orti'

- a. *in-man-i-Ø e b'ujk twa' ni-maxtak*  
 A1-buy-SF-B3 DET clothes for A1-children  
 'I bought clothes for my children.' (Pérez Martínez 1994: 48)
- b. *inw-ajk'-u-Ø ingojr muy a-tu'*  
 A1-give-SF-B3 medlar.fruit to A2-mother  
 'I gave medlar fruit to your mother.' (Pérez Martínez 1994: 142)<sup>4</sup>

In Ch'ol the applicative licenses the expression of the same semantic roles as those found for Tsotsil; i.e. beneficiary, maleficiary, addressee, recipient, and goal (Vázquez Álvarez 2002: 287). We can find pairs of sentences exemplifying a canonical applicative construction in this language (39).

(39) Ch'ol (Vázquez Álvarez 2002: 53)

- a. *mi k-p'is-b-eñ-Ø waj x-ixik*  
 IPFV A1-weigh-APPL-INC-B3 tortilla CL-woman  
 'I weigh tortillas for the woman.' AC
- b. *mi k-p'is-Ø waj cha'añ x-ixik*  
 IPFV A1-weigh-B3 tortilla PREP CL-woman  
 'I weigh tortillas for the woman.' BC

<sup>4</sup> To segment and gloss the Ch'orti' examples I use the conventions found in Dugan (2013).

### 3.5.3 Chontal Mayan

Because my own field work has focused on Chontal—a language of the Cholan-Tzeltalan subbranch of Western Mayan with a productive applicative construction—I will devote more space to an exposition of the applicative in this language.

Chontal forms the applicative by using the *be* morpheme that we have already seen with several other Mayan languages. It appears only on transitive verbs. As described at the beginning of this chapter, Chontal root and derived verbs take different aspect and voice marking. For the applicative suffix there is no distinction, and the resulting construction takes the aspect suffixes used for derived verbs; for example, the transitive root verb *ts'ä* 'to light' (40a) and the transitive derived verb *chän* 'to look at' (40b) both form the applicative by adding *be*.

(40) Chontal

- a. *kä-ts'ä-bé-n-Ø*            *ni*   *beladóra*   *ni*   *kä-páp-la*  
 A1-light-APPL-INC-B3   DET   candle   DET   A1-father-PL.INCL  
 'I light the candle to Our Lord.'
- b. *n-ix-ts'ak*                    *u-chäm-bé-n-Ø*                    *u-ni'ok*   *che'án*   *xelkóm*  
 DET-FEM-medicine   A3-look.at-APPL-INC-B3   A3-toe   if.be   uneven  
 'The healer looks to see if the toes are uneven.'

The *be* morpheme attaches to the CVC transitive verb root; it is preceded by causative, versive, assumptive and/or depositive suffixes if those suffixes are present.<sup>5</sup> A verb with both a causative and an applicative is in (41a). (41b) shows the applicative preceded by a versive—a suffix that transforms an adjective into an intransitive verb—and a causative. In (41c) the applicative is preceded by an assumptive—a suffix that transforms a positional root into an intransitive verb—and a causative. In (41d) the applicative follows a depositive, a suffix that transativizes an intransitive positional verb.

<sup>5</sup> The terms 'assumptive' and 'depositive' are terms that Terrence Kaufman suggested to me specifically for Chontal; I do not know of their use for any other language. The assumptive suffix transforms a positional root into an intransitive verb (e.g. 'to assume X position'), and a depositive suffix transforms an intransitive positional verb into a transitive verb (e.g. 'to put something in X position').

## (41) Chontal

- a. *ní kóya' u-chäk-es-bé-n-Ø u-k'a'*  
 DET tomato A3-red-CAUS-APPL-INC-B3 A3-soup  
 'The tomato makes the soup red.'
- b. *dáli a-mux-m-es-bé-n-on tan ní semét*  
 ASP A2-toasted-VRS-CAUS-APPL-INC-B1 in DET comal  
 'You are going to toast it for me in the comal.'
- c. *jink'in u-tsäms-i-Ø-jo' jol-wän-es-b-ínt-i-Ø y-ak'*  
 when A3-kill-COMPL-B3-PL pull-ASM-CAUS-APPL-PASS-COMPL-B3 A3-tongue  
 'When they kill it, its tongue is pulled out.'
- d. *p'ul-jats'-bé-n-Ø u-näk' t'ok k'élán k'ux*  
 puffed.up-DPS-APPL-INC-B3 A3-belly with much food  
 'Puff up his belly with a lot of food.'

The applicative morpheme has the allomorph *b* before a vowel; for example, before a Set B suffix (42a) and before a passive suffix (42b).

## (42) Chontal

- a. *k-äl-b-Ø-ét ke' máchin ní yíchu'*  
 A1-say-APPL-COMPL-B2 that NEG DET dog  
 'I told you that it's not the dog.'
- b. *chín-wän-Ø-ón tä úk'-e ká xuch'-b-ínt-Ø-on*  
 sit-ASM-COMPL-B1 PREP cry-INC because steal-APPL-PASS-COMPL-B1  
*kä-tak'in*  
 A1-money  
 'I sat down and cried because my money was stolen.'

Chontal has a canonical applicative; i.e. the applicative construction (43a) has a corresponding non-applicative base construction (43b) that codes the applied phrase differently from that of the AC. Because the possessor of the direct object in the BC (43b) is interpreted as a third argument beneficiary, we could translate it as "My sister went to Nacajuca to buy a shirt for me." This is the adnominal strategy described previously for Kaqchikel and Itzaj.

## (43) Chontal

- a. *ní kä-chich x-i-Ø tä yäxtúp u-män-bé-n-on kä-búk*  
 DET A1-sister go-COMPL-B3 to Nacajuca A3-buy-APPL-INC-B1 A1-shirt  
 'My sister went to Nacajuca to buy a shirt for me.' AC
- b. *ní kä-chich x-i-Ø tä yäxtúp u-män-é'-Ø kä-búk*  
 DET A1-sister go-COMPL-B3 to Nacajuca A3-buy-INC-B3 A1-shirt  
 'My sister went to Nacajuca to buy my shirt.' BC

The verb ‘to follow’ is used with the possessed body part ‘back’ and can be used with the applicative (44a) or without it (44b).

(44) Chontal

- a. *ni äjín u-tsäk'-bé-n-Ø u-pát ni yinik-o'*  
 DET alligator A3-follow-APPL-INC-B3 A3-back DET person-PL  
 ‘The alligator follows the people.’
- b. *u-ts'äk-é'-Ø kä-pát*  
 A3-follow-INC-B3 A1-back  
 ‘It follows me.’

The applicative can license the expression a third argument that is a beneficiary (45a), maleficiary (45b), recipient (45c), or addressee (45d).

(45) Chontal

- a. *u-jäk-sä-b-Ø-ón u-cho'án*  
 A3-lower-CAUS-APPL-COMPL-B1 A3-price  
 ‘They lowered the price for me.’
- b. *k-uch'-b-i-Ø u-buk'á kä-lot*  
 A1-drink-APPL-COMPL-B3 A3-pozol A1-friend  
 ‘I drank my friend’s pozol.’
- c. *kä-x-é k-ä'-bé-n-et a-tak'ín*  
 A1-go-INC A1-give-APPL-INC-B2 A2-money  
 ‘I’m going to give you money.’
- d. *aw-äl-bé-n-Ø adyós*  
 A2-say-APPL-INC-B3 goodbye  
 ‘You say goodbye to him.’

The semantic roles of target (46a) and instrument (46b) are not expressed by means of an applicative strategy; instead, these semantic roles are placed in an oblique phrase. (NB: the applicativized positional root in (46a) is indexing a beneficiary or maleficiary.) The semantic roles of accompaniment (46c) and location (46d) likewise are not indexed on the verb. Note that in both these examples the verb is the transitive verb *chen* ‘to do, make’; this verb is used as a light verb, a common construction discussed later in this section. In Chontal, the applicative is never formed on an intransitive base.

(46) Chontal

- a. *pok'-jats'-bé-n-Ø u-nok' tä ka'*  
 thrown[wet]-DPS-APPL-INC-B3 A3-clothing on ground  
 ‘Throw his wet clothes on the ground.’

- b. *ajchojó' u-low-é'-Ø te' t'ok y-ej*  
 woodpecker A3-make.hole-INC-B3 branch with A3-beak  
 'The woodpecker makes a hole in the branch with its beak.'
- c. *kä-che-n-Ø chukbá t'ok ixík*  
 A1-do-INC-B3 lovemaking with woman  
 'I make love with the woman.'
- d. *n-aj-tiburón u-che-n-Ø bidajlé tan nap'*  
 DET-MASC-shark A3-do-INC-B3 living in sea  
 'A shark lives in the sea.'

When the *be* morpheme is present, the Set B suffix indexes the applied argument. The direct object of the BC is no longer indexed with an affix on the verb. The applied argument is available for passivization; the applicative verb uses the same passive suffix used for derived verbs (47). Since Chontal has split-ergative morphology, the passive applied argument can be indexed by a Set A prefix (47a) or a Set B prefix (47b).

(47) Chontal

- a. *a-top'-jäts'-b-ínt-Ø-on kä-choj*  
 ASP-sound.with.mouth-DPS-APPL-PASS-COMPL-B1 A1-cheek  
 'I was slapped in the cheek.'
- b. *ané aw-äl-b-ínt-e aj-täl-täl-nál-et*  
 2PRO A2-say-APPL-PASS-INC MASC-touch-touch-AND-B2  
 'You are called "Mr. Touchy".'

The applied object can also be questioned (48a) and relativized (48b).

(48) Chontal

- a. *ixkuné aw-ä'-b-i-Ø tak'in*  
 who A2-give-APPL-COMPL-B3 money  
 'Who did you give the money to?'
- b. *ni chéwa jin ni*  
 DET dough DEM DET  
*buk'a ke' mach uy-ä'-b-ínt-i-Ø ni kákaw*  
 pozol that NEG A3-give-APPL-PASS-COMPL-B3 DET cacao  
 'It's the white pozol that you don't put the cacao in.'

In Chontal a transitive verb has two strategies to express a third argument. The first is the AC with the *-be* suffix (49a); the second is a non-applicative adnominal construction. This second strategy is used when a possessed noun is present. The possessed noun itself is indexed on the verb with a third person Set B suffix; the possessor of the noun denotes the third argument and is not cross-referenced on the verb. In (49) both objects are third person singular.

## (49) Chontal

- a. *yech-bé-n-Ø*      *n-u-be'tá*      *ni*      *kóko*  
 take-APPL-INC-B3    DET-A3-meat    DET    coconut  
 'Take the meat out of the coconut.' (AC)
- b. *yech-é-Ø*      *n-u-be'tá*      *ni*      *kóko*  
 take-INC-B3    DET-A3-meat    DET    coconut  
 'Take the meat out of the coconut.' (BC)

In (50) one of the arguments is a local person. In the applicative construction (50a) it is indexed by the Set B suffix, while in the non-applicative (50b) it is not expressed on the verb, but as the possessor of the noun.

## (50) Chontal

- a. *kä-tu'-bé-n-et*      *aw-ok*  
 A1-spit-APPL-INC-B2    A2-foot  
 'I spit on your foot.' (AC)
- b. *kä-túbä-n-Ø*      *aw-ok*  
 A1-spit-INC-B3    A2-foot  
 'I spit on your foot.' (BC)

The applicative is not used when the possessor and the subject are coreferential. Both non-applicative verbs in the sentence (51) illustrate this.

## (51) Chontal

- jindá*    *untu*    *ixík*      *ya'án*    *u-jok'-é'-Ø*      *u-lot*  
 DEM    one    woman    be    A1-call-INC-B3    A3-friend  
*ke'*    *ya'án*    *nat*    *uné*    *uy-äk'-é'-Ø*      *u-k'ä'*      *u-ti'*  
 that    be    far    3PRO    A1-put-INC-B3    A3-hand    A3-mouth  
 'This is a woman who is calling her companion who is far away, she puts her hand to her mouth.'

With the applicative construction the demoted object is no longer indexed on the verb with a Set B prefix; it is, however, available for relativization (52a), questioning (52b) and focus (52c). The lengthier fourth example (52d) shows that the demoted object 'bel-ladonna' is available for passivization; it is the topic of a description for curing angina.

## (52) Chontal

- a. *kä-k'ajti'y-n-Ø*      *ni*      *primer*    *ts'uts'óm*    *ke'*    *kä-b-Ø-et*  
 A1-remember-INC-B3    DET    first    kiss      that    A1-give.APPL-COMPL-B2  
 'I remember the first kiss that I gave you.'

- b. *kuné a-kä-cher-b-Ø-ét*  
 what ASP-A1-do-APPL-COMPL-B2  
 'What did I do to/for you?'
- c. *a-t'ox-bé-n-on ni tak'in=da*  
 A2-break.down-APPL-INC-B1 DET money=FOC  
 'You make change for me from this money.'
- d. *u-ts'äkäl-ká-n t'ok ix-beyadóna*  
 A3-cure-PASS-INC with FEM-belladonna  
*u-num-s-ínt-e pan k'ak' k'a k'äs-chäj-má-k-Ø*  
 A3-pass-CAUS-PASS-INC in fire so.that half-cooked-ASM-SUBJ-B3  
*yá'i u-täk'-b-ínt-e t-u-choj n-aj-yaj*  
 then A3-put.in-APPL-PASS-INC PREP-A3-cheek DET-MASC-sick  
 'It is cured with belladonna. It is passed through the fire so that it cooks halfway, then it is put in the cheek of the patient.'

The most common verb base for the applicative is *äk'* 'to give.' The *be* morpheme is obligatory on this verb to express a recipient. The addition of *be* causes a predictable phonological change to the verb root, and the derived applicative form is *ä'* (53a). Although this verb with the meaning 'to give' typically has a recipient and therefore an applicative suffix, we do see non-applicative uses of it (53b).

(53) Chontal

- a. *n-aj-chon+ye'é namás un-tsul ye'é uy-ä'-b-Ø-ón*  
 DET-MASC-sell+meat only one-NC meat A3-give-APPL-COMPL-B1  
 'The meat seller gave me only a little piece of meat.'
- b. *ajbits' jin um-p'e te' ke' uy-äk'-é'-Ø u-jut ka' bujté'*  
 cochite DEM one-NC tree that A3-give-INC-B3 A3-fruit like quinquil  
 'The *cochite* is a tree that gives fruit like the *quinquil*.'

This verb also commonly has the meaning 'to put, place,' and the applicative appears in this usage to express a target semantic role.<sup>6</sup> Since the Chontal applicative normally does not index a target semantic role, I assume that the verb has extended the meaning 'to give to someone' to signify something like 'to give to a location'. In (54) the applied argument is clearly not the first-person beneficiary (who is coreferential with the subject and therefore not available for applicative promotion), but rather the third-person target; i.e. the place where the lotion is applied.

<sup>6</sup> Polian (2013: 274–275) describes similar meanings for the verb *ak'* in Tseltal; i.e. the verb can indicate a change of owner ('to give') as well as change of location ('to put, place').



## (54) Chontal

*kä-x-é k-ä'-bé-n-Ø bapurú bajká u-k'ux-Ø-ón apixk'ok'*  
 A1-go-INC A1-put-APPL-INC-B3 VapoRub where A3-sting-COMPL-B1 wasp  
 'I'm going to put on VapoRub where the wasp stung me.'

The meaning of 'to put, place' also appears in non-applicative constructions with the target semantic role in an oblique phrase (55). This alternation is unexpected and seems to be particular to this verb.

## (55) Chontal

- a. *uy-äk'-í-Ø n-aj-báyu tä ja' tuba u-k'ech-é'-Ø sits'ák*  
 A3-put-COMPL-B3 DET-MASC-trap in water to A3-catch-INC-B3 turtle  
 'He put the trap in the water to catch the turtle.'
- b. *ya'í=ba ka'án äk'-bitá a-x-é aw-äk'-é'-Ø a-xänäk'*  
 there=FOC where put-NMLZ A2-go-INC A2-put-INC-B3 A2-shoe  
 'There is the place where you leave your shoes.'

Other transitive verbs with a target semantic role do not use the applicative to index this role (56).

## (56) Chontal

*kä-x-e kä-t'um-jul-é'-Ø ni tak'in tä ja'*  
 A1-go-INC A1-AFF-throw-INC-B3 DET money in water  
 'I'm going to throw the money in the water.'

In (57) the pair of sentences express the same event with applicative morpheme (57a) and without the applicative morpheme (57b); neither sentence, however, is an applicative construction.

## (57) Chontal

- a. *ni ixík uy-ä'-bé-n-Ø xápum tan ni nók'*  
 DET woman A3-put-APPL-INC-B3 soap on DET clothing  
 'The woman puts soap on the clothing.'
- b. *ni ixík 'uy-äk'-é'-Ø xápum tan ni nók'*  
 DET woman A3-put-INC-B3 soap on DET clothing  
 'The woman puts soap on the clothing.'

The applicative form of the verb *äk'* also appears in more complex sentences with the meaning 'to cause someone to do something' (58a) or 'to allow someone to do something' (58b). In the negative, this verb can mean 'to prevent' (58c).

## (58) Chontal

- a. *uy-ä'-bé-n-Ø*                      *ak'ojná-k-Ø*  
 A3-give-APPL-INC-B3    dance-SUBJ-B3  
 'He makes her dance.'
- b. *k-ä'-bé-n-Ø*                      *uy-uch'é-n-Ø*  
 A1-give-APPL-INC-B3    A3-drink-INC-B3  
 'I make him drink.'
- c. *n-ajlo'*    *mach*    *uy-ä'-b-i-Ø*                      *u-che-n-Ø*  
 DET-boy    NEG    A3-give-APPL-COMPL-B3    A3-do-INC-B3  
 'The boy prevented it (lit. that he/she/it do it).'

The verb can be used with this meaning without the applicative (59). It is unclear why an AC is not used; the inanimate nature of the agent may be a factor.

## (59) Chontal

- uy-úts'u*    *ni*    *k'ux*    *mu'-uy-äk'-é'-Ø*                      *kä-xéjā-n-Ø*  
 A3-smell    DET    food    ASP-A3-cause-INC-B3    A1-vomit-INC-B3  
 'The smell of the food makes me vomit.'

For some speakers the verb *äk'* has a special shortened applicative base for the completive (60a) and imperative (60b); the base appears to consist entirely of the applicative morpheme.

## (60) Chontal

- a. *kä-b-Ø-et*                                      *ni*    *yentax*  
 A1-give.APPL-COMPL-B2    DET    necklace  
 'I gave you the necklace.'
- b. *bé-n-Ø*                      *um-p'é*    *jek'óm*    *de*    *ixím*    *n-ajló'*  
 give.APPL-INC-B3    one-NC    pile    of    corn    DET-boy  
 'Give a little bit of corn to this boy.'

The applicative form of *äk'* has become lexicalized for some meanings. For example, in both sentences in (61) it is unclear what the applied object is since the target semantic role is part of a relational phrase.

## (61) Chontal

- a. *u-k'än-ká-n-Ø*                      *tuba*    *b-int-ik-Ø*                                      *tamá*    *ni*    *tsajel*    *ja'*  
 A3-have-PASS-INC-B3    to    put.APPL-PASS-SUBJ-B3    in    DET    sweet    water  
 'It is used to put in sweet water.'
- b. *k-äk'-bé-n-Ø*                      *tan*    *kä-pa'*    *bú'u*  
 A1-put-APPL-INC-B3    in    A1-CL    bean  
 'I put it in my beans.'

A lexicalized applicative on the verb ‘to give’ is the usual way to talk about the weather events of rain (62a) and wind (62b). With such examples I was unsure to gloss it with the Set B suffix as there seems to be no third (or even second) argument for this verb.

(62) Chontal

- a. *ixkak'in u-x-e tä xup-ó uy-ä'-bé-n-Ø(?) ja'*  
 when A3-go-INC PREP stop-INC A3-give-APPL-INC-B3(?) water  
 ‘When is it going to stop raining?’
- b. *mu'-uy-ä'-bé-n-Ø(?) noj re'í ik'*  
 ASP-A3-give-APPL-INC-B3(?) big very wind  
 ‘It’s very windy.’

Two common verbs form the applicative with an irregular base. The verb *ch'* ‘to take’ uses its historic CVC root *ch'äm* as the applicative base (63a). The verb *chen* ‘to do’ uses the stem *cher* as a base. In (63c) verb base *cher* with the applicative is nominalized.

(63) Chontal

- a. *ni sántu-jo' u-ch'äm-bé-n-Ø u-ch'új-le ni ye'é*  
 DET saint-PL A3-take-APPL-INC-B3 A3-holy-POSS DET meat  
 ‘The images [of saints] absorb the spirit of the meat.’
- b. *aj-toch u-cher-b-í-Ø ts'ak ix-pet*  
 MASC-Antonio A3-do-APPL-COMPL-B3 medicine FEM-Petrona  
 ‘Antonio made Petrona medicine.’
- c. *u-xoy-í-Ø-jo' n-u-cher-b-int-e u-jobäle*  
 A3-surround-COMPL-B3-PL DET-A3-make-APPL-PASS-INC A3-party  
 ‘They surrounded “she-for-whom-the party-is-made”.’

In Chontal *chen* is frequently used in light verb constructions (64a). A semantically “light” verb (i.e., a verb not very specific in meaning) relies on an accompanying noun to form a more specific meaning (compare the semantically specific English verb ‘to shower’ with its light verb counterpart in the construction ‘to take a shower’). The object of *chen* is a noun or a nominalized verb; a shortened form of the Spanish infinitive can also act as the object (64b). Use of the light verb construction has probably increased through contact with Spanish as it is a productive means of incorporating Spanish verbs into the language (Montgomery-Anderson 2006).

(64) Chontal

- a. *tä ch'uj ya'an u-ché-n-Ø-jo' ch'uj+t'an t'ok yéntax*  
 in church be A3-do-INC-B3-PL holy+word with rosary  
 ‘The rosary is being prayed in the church.’

- b. *mu-'u-ché-n-Ø u-ba prekupá n-ajlo' jini*  
 ASP-A3-do-INC-B3 A3-REFL worry DET-boy DEM  
 'The boy is worrying.' (cf. Sp. *preocuparse* 'to worry')

The light verb construction frequently uses an applicative; in these instances, the applicative morpheme attaches to the base cher. In this construction the demoted object is a shortened Spanish infinitive (65a) or a non-specific noun (65b), i.e., a noun without a determiner.

(65) Chontal

- a. *si a-be-n-ón ts'itá ixim kä-cher-bé-n-et agrade sé*  
 if A2-give.APPL-INC-B1 a.little corn A1-do-APPL-INC-B2 thank  
 'If you give me a little corn, I will thank you.' (cf. Sp. *agradecer* 'to thank')
- b. *n-ajló' y-o kä-cher-bé-n-Ø t'an*  
 DET-boy A3-want A1-do-APPL-INC-B3 word  
 'The boy wants me to write to him.'

More work needs to be done on the Chontal applicative. The Chontal I encountered in my own fieldwork was full of Spanish borrowings, particularly of the kind using the light verb construction. Spanish is lacking in the Mayan type of complex verb morphology that marks objects; instead, it employs prepositions. Modern Chontal may be borrowing from a Spanish syntactic template by expanding its use of prepositions. The example in (66a) has such a preposition marking the beneficiary 'San Lázaro' instead of the expected applicative construction. In the longer example in (66b), the first light verb construction with the Spanish infinitive does not have the applicative, while the second such construction does. The use of the preposition in (66c) seems unnecessary.

(66) Chontal

- a. *kä-ché-n-Ø cherajbuk'á chäm-p'é k'in t-aj-láchu*  
 A1-make-INC-B3 offering four-NC day PREP-MASC-Lázaro  
 'I made an offering of four days to San Lázaro.'
- b. *jink'in kä-ché-n-Ø t'an t'ok n-aj-yokt'án-o' tä makuspána*  
 when A1-do-INC-B3 word with DET-MASC-Chontal-PL of Macuspana  
*nadamás kä-cher-bé-n-Ø entendé la mitá u-t'án-o'*  
 only A1-do-APPL-INC-B3 understand the half A3-word-PL  
 'When I speak with the people of Macuspana, I only understand half their words.' (cf. Sp. *entender* 'to understand')
- c. *ni yíchu' mu-'u-käm-é'-on tāk wok*  
 DET dog ASP-A3-bite-INC-B1 PREP.A1 leg  
 'The dog is biting my leg.'

My own field work on Chontal was on one specific dialect around Nacajuca and Mazateupa. There are examples in the literature from other dialects where the applicative

is used (or not) in ways that are different from what I have encountered. For example, Osorio May (2005) describes a variety in Tecoluta in which a local-person argument that I would expect to be applicativized is introduced with a preposition (67b). Note that *ta'a* 'your, yours' is a contraction of the preposition with the Set A affix. The Chontal speaker I worked with from Mazateupa thought this sentence sounded odd. The sentence with the non-local person (67a) is the same applicative construction encountered in the variety I studied.

(67) Chontal (Osorio May 2005: 26–27)

- a. *kä-män-bé-n-Ø*      *nok'*      *ix-ch'upim*  
 A1-buy-APPL-INC-B3 clothes FEM-old.woman  
 'I buy clothes for the old woman.'
- b. *kä-män-í-Ø*      *buk*      *t'a'a*  
 A1-buy-COMPL-B3 clothes PREP.A2  
 I bought clothes for you.'

It should be emphasized just how common the applicative is in Chontal. The following relatively short description of a cure for an ear infection contains six such constructions (68).

(68) Chontal

*n-ajts'ak*    *u-kol-bé-n-Ø*      *un-ts'itá'*    *ch'ú'ul*    *ja'*      *tan*    *u-chikin*  
 DET-healer    A3-put-APPL-INC-B3    one-little    holy    water    in    A3-ear  
 'The healer puts a little holy water in the ear;  
*ya*    *ke'*    *tikw-Ø-í=ba*  
 now    that    heat-B3-COMPL=FOC  
 after it has heated up,  
*u-chel-bé-n-Ø*      *u-pam*    *k'a*      *pas-ík-Ø*      *n-u-pujú*  
 A3-tilt-APPL-INC-B3    A3-head    so.that    leave-SUBJ-B3    DET-A3-pus  
 he tilts the head so that the pus comes out,  
*yá'i*    *t'ok*    *pits'*      *u-suk-bé-n-Ø*  
 then    with    cotton    A3-dry-APPL-INC-B3  
 then he dries it with cotton  
*yá'i*    *u-ju'-bé-n-Ø*      *yok*    *k'uts*  
 then    A3-put.in-APPL-INC-B3    DIM    tobacco  
 then he puts in it tobacco  
*k'o-pa'-sä-bé-n-Ø*      *ni*    *ik'*  
 so.that.A3-leave-CAUS-APPL-INC-B3    DET    air  
 so that it takes out the air,  
*u-pa'-sä-bé-n-Ø*      *u-péte*    *puju*  
 A3-leave-CAUS-APPL-INC-B3    A3-all    pus  
 in order to take out all the pus.'

## 4 Conclusion

In this overview, we have seen that applicative constructions and applicative lookalikes are found across the Mayan language family, with three of its four branches showing evidence of these constructions. It must be emphasized that in most cases the amount of applicative data we have on any given Mayan language is quite small; this construction has not been methodically and comprehensively investigated in most of the Mayan languages. For future investigations, it will be especially important to test the known applicative structures to see if they are obligatory or optional. This overview should thus be taken as a starting point for research rather than as a conclusive and comprehensive study. According to the data that is available, Mayan applicative constructions can be characterized as follows:

### Morphology

- There are four branches in the Mayan family. The morpheme *be* appears in the Eastern branch and the Western branch; these two groupings contain the largest number of languages as well as speakers.
- The Yucatecan branch is the only branch that has no evidence of an applicative morpheme.
- The fourth and most divergent branch of the Mayan languages—Huastecan—has developed two distinct applicative morphemes etymologically unrelated to the applicative morpheme in the other branches.
- This paper focuses on data from Chontal Mayan, a language in the Western branch. In Chontal the *be* morpheme has the allomorph *b* before vowels. This morpheme can be used with other valency-changing suffixes (passive, causative, and depositive).

### Syntax

- In the Eastern Mayan branch *be* appears in both true applicative constructions as well as in lookalike oblique registration constructions. Kaqchikel, for example, uses the *b'e* to focus an instrument in an oblique registration construction.
- In the Mamean subbranch of Eastern Mayan, Ixil is the only language with an applicative-like construction. In this language the AC advances an instrument that in the BC is in an oblique phrase with a relational noun. The applicative morpheme focuses the instrument, but it is not marked as a core argument.
- In the Western branch we have the most evidence of *be* used in true applicative constructions, i.e., the AC has a corresponding BC and the AP is a core argument. Cholan-Tzeltalan languages use the *be* morpheme extensively.
- Although the Yucatecan branch is the only branch that has no evidence of an applicative morpheme, there is evidence that Itzaj uses an adnominal strategy to index a third argument.

- In at least one variety of Huastecan, the applicative construction is not obligatory. Demotion of the BC object is affected by the definiteness of the object.
- Except for Southeastern Huastec, the applicative construction seems to be only formed on transitive verbs, not intransitive verbs. In Southeastern Huastec, the instrumental applicative is found only on intransitive and detransitivized verbs.

### Semantics

- In all the Mayan languages except Huastec, the applicative morpheme is semantically underspecified; that is, the morpheme does not vary based on the semantic role it indexes.
- The Huastecan branch has applicative morphemes distinct from the other Mayan languages; these morphemes license recipients, beneficiaries/maleficiaries, and instruments.
- In the Western branch, Cholan-Tzeltalan languages use *be* to index a recipient, addressee, beneficiary, maleficiary, and instrument.
- We have data showing that Kaqchikel uses the *b'e* applicative morpheme to index comitatives, locatives, datives, and themes / topics of speech. These examples need to be tested for corresponding BCs to show that these instances of *b'e* represent true applicative constructions.
- In Chontal, lexicalized applicatives are used for some high frequency utterances such as weather events.
- In one variety of Huastecan there are two distinct applicative morphemes: one for beneficiaries and recipients and the other for instruments.
- For many Mayan languages further research needs to be done to determine if applicative constructions are obligatory; if they are not obligatory, the pragmatic and discursive implications of the applicative construction need further explanation.

## Abbreviations

A	set A affix
AC	applicative construction
AFF	affect root
AND	andative
APPL	applicative
ASM	assumptive
ASP	aspect
ANTIP	antipassive
B	set
B	affix
BC	base (i.e. non-applicative) construction
CL	classifier

CAUS	causative
COMPL	completive
DAT	dative
DAT.APPL	dative applicative
DEM	demonstrative
DET	determiner
DIM	diminutive
DIR	directional
DIS	dependent intransitive status
DPS	depositive
DTS	dependent transitive status
EP	epenthesis
ENCL	enclitic
FEM	feminine
FOC	focus
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
HAB	habitual
HUM	human
IPFV	imperfective
INC	incompletive
INCL	inclusive
INS	instrumental
IRR	irrealis
MASC	masculine
MID	middle voice
NC	numeral classifier
NEG	negative
NM	nominal modifier
NMLZ	Nominalization
PASS	passive
PFS	phrase-final suffix
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
PPM	proximal patient marker
PRO	pronoun
POSS	possessive
PREP	preposition
PTCP	participle
REFL	reflexive
REL	relative
REP	reportative
RN	relational noun
SF	stem formative
SG	singular
SUBJ	subjunctive
TOP	topic
TR	transitive
TRC	transitive completive



- default affix boundary
- = clitic boundary
- + compounding boundary

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