

Tessa Scott

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

# Dialectal Variation in Mam Syntax

Tessa Scott

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# Overview

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

1. Mam displays many properties that are unique within Mayan languages.
  - ▶ Marking person features on verbs and nouns
  - ▶ Unique pattern of split ergativity
2. In addition, Mam is the most internally diverse Mayan language (England 1983a, 1989, 2017)
  - ▶ Mam dialectal differences I'll discuss today:
    - ▶ form and distribution of person enclitics
    - ▶ alignment patterns (case marking on verbs)
    - ▶ (transitive person restrictions)
    - ▶ (repair strategies for the extracting the ergative argument)

## Mayan - syntactic basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

## Mam

Mam data

## Person Marking

## Verbal agreement

## Split ergativity

## Summary

# Mayan Languages (Campbell 2017)

**TABLE 3.1 CLASSIFICATION OF THE MAYAN LANGUAGES**

Huastecan	Huastec, Chicomuseltec
Core Mayan (Central Mayan)	
Yucatecan	Maya (Yucatec Maya), Lacandón Itzaj (Itzá, Itza'), Mopan
Western Mayan	
Cholan-Tzeltalan	
Cholan	Ch'ol, Chontal (Yokot'an) Cholti (extinct), Ch'orti'
Tzeltalan	Tzeltal, Tsotsil
Greater Q'anjob'alán (Q'anjob'alán-Chujean)	Q'anjob'alán Q'anjob'al, Akatek, Jakalteq (Popti') Mocho' (Motozintlec) (with Tuzantec)
Chuj-Tojolabal	Chuj, Tojolabal (Tojol-ab'al)
K'ichean-Mamean (Eastern Mayan)	
K'ichean	Q'eqchi' Uspantek Poqom Poqomam, Poqomchi' Central K'ichean (K'ichean Proper) K'iche' Kaqchikel, Tz'utujil Sakapultek Sipakapense
Mamean	Mam, Tektitek (Teko) Awakatek, Ixil

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

# Mayan Languages

## Basic syntactic characteristics

- ▶ Word order
  - ▶ Mayan languages are generally verb initial, with both VOS and VSO attested discourse neutral orders (England 1991).
  - ▶ However, two factors make these orders relatively rare: i) pro drop and ii) fronting elements for information structure (see Aissen 1992 for discussion of topic and focus in Mayan).

# Mayan Languages

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

## Basic syntactic characteristics

### ▶ Basic alignment

- ▶ Dixon (1979) makes the observations that all Mayan languages exhibit an ergative/absolutive alignment.
- ▶ In Mayan, nominals are not cased marked themselves. Instead, the verbal agreement shows the ergative alignment pattern.

### (1) San Ildefonso Ixtahuacán Mam (Ixta Mam; England 1983)

- a. Ma chin b'et=a  
PROX B1SG walk=HR  
'I walked.'
- b. Ma chin ok t-tzeeq'an=a.  
PROX B1SG POT A2SG-hit=HR  
'You hit me.'
- c. Ma tz'=ok n-tzeeq'an=a.  
PROX B2SG=POT A1SG-hit=HR  
'I hit you.'

# Set A

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- ▶ As we saw, Set A morphology is used to mark the transitive subject (England 1983a:63).

(2) Ma tz'=ok n-tzeeq'an=a.  
PROX B2SG=POT A1SG-hit=HR  
'I hit you.'

Ixta Mam

- ▶ Set A is also used to mark possessors (England 1983a:66):

(3) n-k'uj=a  
A1SG-mask=HR  
'my mask'

Ixta Mam

- ▶ Set A morphology always appears as a prefix to the verb/noun stem across Mayan (Coon 2017).

# Set B

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- ▶ We saw in Ixta that Set B morphology referenced the absolutive arguments (S and O).
- ▶ The placement of the Set B marker in Ixta represents one of two positions for Set B across Mayan (Bricker 1977, Tada 1993), in this case it is marked before the verb stem and is referred to as 'high-absolutive' (Coon et. al 2014).

(4) Ma chin ok t-tzeeq'an=a.  
PROX B1SG POT A2SG-hit=HR  
'You hit me.'  
Ixta Mam (England 1983a:63)

- ▶ **Mayan high-absolutive languages:**  
Q'anjob'al, Akatek, Popti', Chuj, Q'eqchi', Uspantek,  
Poqomchi', Poqomam, K'ichee',Kaqchikel, Tz'utujil,  
Sakapultek, Sipakapense, Mam, Awakatek



# Set B

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- ▶ In other Mayan languages, Set B is marked at the end of the verb stem and referred to as 'low-absolutive'.

(5) Tyi **y**-il-ä-**yety**.  
ASP **A3SG**-see-TV-**B2SG**  
'**She** saw **you**.'

Chol (Coon et. al 2014:190)

- ▶ **Mayan low-absolutive languages:**  
Yucatec, Ixil Lakantun, Mopan, Itzaj, Chol, Chontal, Tseltal,  
Tojol-ab'al

# Extraction

## ✓ Absolutive extraction

- ▶ Absolutive arguments can be extracted to initial position for focus.

(6) [ aa cheej ] ma Ø-kub' ky-tzyu-'n xiinaq  
[ DEM horse ] PROX B3SG-DIR A3PL-grab-DIR man  
'The men grabbed *the horse*.' Ixta Mam (England 1983a:227)

(7) [ xiinaq ] s-uul  
[ man ] DEP.PROX.B3SG-arrive  
'*The man* arrived here.' Ixta Mam (England 1983b:4)

# Extraction

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

**Ban on ergative extraction**

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

## Ergative extraction

- ▶ Ergative arguments cannot be extracted in the same way.

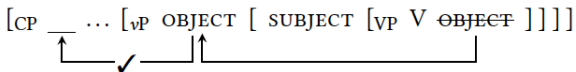
(8) \*[ Aa xiinaq ] ma chi kub' ky-tzyu-'n cheej.  
[ DEM man ] PROX B3PL DIR A3PL-grab-DIR horse  
Int: 'The men grabbed the horses.' Ixta Mam (England 2017:517)

- ▶ Coon et. al (2014) call this restriction the Ergative Extraction Constraint (EEC)

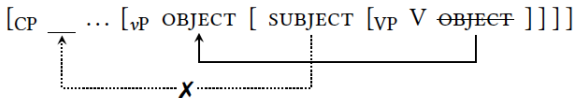
# The Mayan absolutive parameter

- ▶ The **high-absolutive** languages are the ones with the EEC.
- ▶ This connection has inspired a family of analyses in which the object shifts above the subject, account for the high-absolutive morphology and the EEC (Tada 1993, Coon et. al 2014, Assmann et. al 2015, Coon et. al 2020).
- ▶ In this position, the object blocks extraction of the subject.

*Object can extract*



*Subject cannot extract*



(Coon et al 2020:15)

- ▶ Repair constructions ensure that the object does not intervene (Coon et. al 2014, Coon et. al 2020).

Tessa Scott

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

**Mam**

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

# Mam

# Data

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- ▶ *Reference grammars*: England 1983a on **Ixtahuacán Mam**, and Pérez and Jiménez 1997 on **Cajolá Mam**.
- ▶ *Dialectal surveys and sketches*: Pérez et al. 2000 and Godfrey and Collins 1987
- ▶ *Dictionaries*: Maldonado Andrés et al. 1986 and Pérez Alonzo 2007 on **Ixtahuacán Mam**
- ▶ *Masters and doctoral theses*: Pérez Vail 2014 on **Cajolá Mam**; Canger 1969 on **Todos Santos Mam**; Munson 1984 and Godfrey 1981 on **Tacaná Mam**; Collins 2005 and Peck 1951 on **Comitancillo Mam**.
- ▶ *Academic articles*: Nora England 1976a, 1976b, 1978, 1980, 1983b, 1988, 1989, 2009, 2013a, 2017 on **Ixtahuacán Mam**, Collins 2)07 on **Comitancillo Mam**

# Mam in Oakland

- ▶ I primarily work with Henry Sales, a speaker of Mam from **San Juan Atitán**, Guatemala.
  - ▶ Henry has lived in the U.S. for 9 years. (Age 0-18 in Guatemala, age 18-27 in Oakland)
  - ▶ Henry is trilingual: Mam, Spanish, English.
  - ▶ Data collection has taken place since the fall of 2017 through the present.
- ▶ None of the published works focus on **San Juan Atitán Mam**, or give more than a few data points (for example, in the dialect survey of Godfrey and Collins 1987).

# Mam data

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

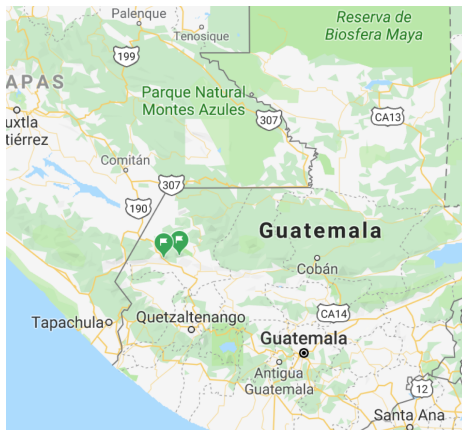
Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- ▶ In this talk, I will mostly compare Ixta Mam with SJA Mam





# Mam data

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

**Mam data**

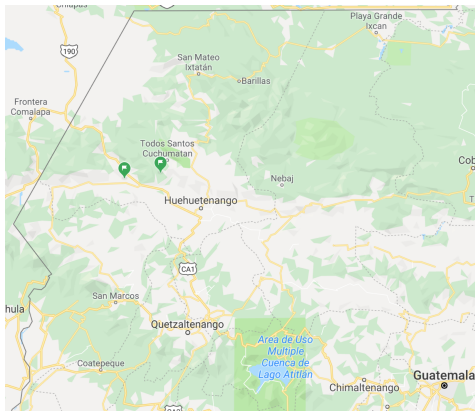
Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- ▶ In this talk, I will mostly compare Ixta Mam with SJA Mam
- ▶ These two towns are 30km apart



# Person marking

- ▶ Person marking across Mayan, an example from Ch'ol (Coon 2017).

(9) Set A

Ch'ol		
	<u>  </u> C	<u>  </u> V
1	<i>k-/j-</i>	<i>k-</i>
2	<i>a-</i>	<i>aw-</i>
3	<i>i-</i>	<i>iy-</i>

(10) Set B

Ch'ol		
	Set B	Pron.
1	<i>-oñ</i>	<i>joñoñ</i>
2	<i>-ety</i>	<i>jatyety</i>
3	$\emptyset$	$\emptyset$

- ▶ While the forms vary across Mayan, it is typical to differentiate 1st/2nd/3rd person in Set A and Set B morphology.

# Person marking

- ▶ Person marking in Mam: **first / non-first person split**

(11) Set A

	SJA Mam	
	SG	PL
1	n-/w-	q-
2	t-	ky-
3	t-	ky-

(12) Set B

	SJA Mam	
	SG	PL
1	chin	qo
2	∅/tz-	chi-
3	∅/tz-	chi-

- ▶ There is little variation in the forms of these markers across Mam dialects (England 1989).

# Person marking

! A third set of agreement morphemes in Mam

- ▶ In order to differentiate second and third person, Mam employs an enclitic not used for 3rd person:

(13) Enclitic in SJA Mam

	SG	PL
1 excl	=i	=i
1 incl	-	∅
2	=i	=i
3	∅	∅

# Person marking

This enclitic allows you to distinguish the full set of arguments:

- ▶ Possessed nouns take Set A prefixes and the =*i* enclitic

(14) The possessed noun *wixh* 'cat' in SJA Mam

	SG	PL
1 excl	n-wixh=i	q-wixh=i
1 incl	-	q-wixh
2	t-wixh=i	ky-wixh=i
3	t-wixh	ky-wixh

# Person marking

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

## Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- ▶ An analysis of Mam person marking (Scott 2020).
  - ▶ Little 2018
    - ▶ Little analyzes the first person “inclusive” in Chol as the *general first person* which lacks an addressee/hearer specification.
    - ▶ This contrasts with first person exclusive which specifically *excludes the addressee/hearer*.

### (15) Enclitic in SJA Mam

	SG	PL
<b>First person exclusive</b>	=i	=i
General first person	-	∅
<b>Second person</b>	=i	=i
Third person	∅	∅

- ▶ Now, what does =i reference? What is the common feature shared by the bolded rows?

# Person marking

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

## Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- ▶ Since *general* first person does not specify an addressee/hearer, I argue in Scott 2020 that the presence of a [HEARER] ([HR]) feature *regardless of value* will trigger =i:

### (16) Mam feature specification

	SG	PL		
1 excl	[+SPKR] [-HR]	[+SPKR]	[-HR]	[+PL]
<i>General 1</i>	-	[+SPKR]		[+PL]
2			[+HR]	[+PL]
3				[+PL]

- ▶ =i  $\longleftrightarrow$  [HEARER] ([HR])

# Person marking

## Dialectal variation in the =HR enclitic

- ▶ Ixta Mam (and Comitancillo Mam (Collins 2007)) have the same distribution of the enclitic, but it is =a

(17) Ixta Mam (England 1990)

	SG	PL
1 excl	=a	=a
1 incl	-	∅
2	=a	=a
3	∅	∅



## Dialectal variation in the =HR enclitic

(18) Osuncalco (England 1990)

	SG	PL
1 excl	=e'	=e'
1 incl	-	∅
2	=a	=e'
3	∅	∅

(19) Tacana (England 1990)

	SG	PL
1 excl	∅	=o'
1 incl	-	∅
2	=a	=e'
3	∅	∅

(20) Todos Santos (Lemon 2019)

	SG	PL
1 excl	∅	(=i)
1 incl	-	∅
2	=i	=i
3	∅	∅

(21) Todos Santos (Canger 1969)

	SG	PL
1 excl	∅	=e'
1 incl	-	∅
2	=e	=e
3	∅	∅

# Verbal agreement

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- ▶ Recall the ergative pattern of agreement on verbs in Ixta Mam:

- (22) Ixta Mam (England 1983)
- Ma chin b'et=a  
PROX B1SG walk=HR  
'I walked.'
  - Ma chin ok t-tzeeq'an=a.  
PROX B1SG POT A2SG-hit=HR  
'You hit me.'
  - Ma tz'=ok n-tzeeq'an=a.  
PROX B2SG=POT A1SG-hit=HR  
'I hit you.'

# Verbal agreement

- ▶ Every person/number combination can be in each spot (although some can't co-occur. (see England 1983a:63, 1990:234 for paradigms, see

Scott 2019 for an analysis of Ixta Mam)

- (23) Ixta Mam (England 1983a:63)
- Ma chin ok t-tzeeq'an=a.  
PROX B1SG POT A2/3SG-hit=HR  
'You hit me.'
  - Ma tz'=ok n-tzeeq'an=a.  
PROX B2/3SG=POT A1SG-hit=HR  
'I hit you/him/her/it.'
  - Ma qo ok ky-tzeeq'an.  
PROX B1PL POT A2/3PL-hit  
'They hit us (incl).'
  - Ma ch=ok q-tzeeq'an=a.  
PROX B2/3PL=POT A1PL-hit=HR  
'We (excl) hit you all/them.'

## Tripartite agreement

- ▶ A quote from England (1989:288): “All dialects of Mam mark direct arguments ergatively through verbal cross referencing...”
- ▶ However, in SJA Mam, objects of transitive verbs always receive B2/3SG:

### (24) SJA Mam

- a. Ma chin b'et=i  
PROX B1SG walk=HR  
'I walked.'
- b. Ma tz'=ok t-b'yo-'n=i a qin.  
PROX B2/3SG=DIR A2SG-hit-DIR=HR a 1SG  
'You hit me.'
- c. Ma tz'=ok n-b'yo-'n=i ay.  
PROX B2/3SG=DIR A1SG-hit-DIR=HR 2SG.PRO  
'I hit you.'

- ▶ Objects must be expressed as full pronouns following the verb.

# Tripartite agreement

- This pattern is found throughout the entire paradigm:

- (25) a. Ma tz'=ok t-b'yo-'n=i a qin.  
PROX B2/3SG=DIR A2SG-hit-DIR=HR a 1SG  
'You hit me.'
- b. Ma tz'=ok n-b'yo-'n=i ay.  
PROX B2/3SG=DIR A1SG-hit-DIR=HR 2SG  
'I hit you.'
- c. Ma tz'=ok n-b'yo-'n=i a q'a.  
PROX B2/3SG=DIR A1SG-hit-DIR=HR a 3SG.M  
'I hit him.'
- d. Ma tz'=ok t-b'yo-'n=i a qoy.  
PROX B2/3SG=DIR A2SG-hit-DIR=HR a 1PL.EXCL  
'You hit us.'
- e. Ma tz'=ok n-b'yo-'n=i a qi.  
PROX B2/3SG=DIR A1SG-hit-DIR=HR a 2PL  
'I hit you all.'
- f. Ma tz'=ok n-b'yo-'n=i a qa.  
PROX B2/3SG=DIR A1SG-hit-DIR=HR a PL  
'I hit them.'

# Tripartite agreement

Does this data constitute counter example to Dixon's (1979) claim that all Mayan languages exhibit an ergative alignment?

- ▶ Yes because S, A, and O are all marked differently on the verb.
  
- ▶ Next: split ergativity

# Split ergativity

- ▶ Factors conditioning split ergativity (Dixon 1994:70)
  1. semantic nature of the core nominal arguments (“person split”)
  2. tense or aspect or mood of the clause (“TAM split”)
  3. semantic nature of the main verb (“Split-S”)
  4. grammatical status of the clause (i.e., main or subordinate)

# Split ergativity

- ▶ Factors conditioning split ergativity (Dixon 1994:70)
  1. semantic nature of the core nominal arguments (“person split”)
  2. **tense or aspect or mood of the clause (“TAM split”)**
  3. semantic nature of the main verb (“Split-S”)
  4. grammatical status of the clause (i.e., main or subordinate)



## Split ergativity in Chol

- ▶ In the perfective, Chol shows an Erg/Abs alignment

- (26) a. Tyi a-k'el-e-yoń.  
PRFV A2-watch-TV-B1  
'You watched me.'
- b. Tyi ts'am-i-yoń.  
PRFV bath-ITV-B1  
'I bathed.'

- ▶ In the progressive, Chol shows a Nom/Acc alignment (Erg=Nom)

- (27) a. Mi a-k'el-oń.  
IMPF A2-watch-B1  
'You watch me.'
- b. Mi a-ts'am-el.  
IMPF A2-bath-NML  
'You bathe.'

- ▶ Dixon (1979) calls this pattern – where the ergative marker is extended to certain intransitives – 'extended ergative'.

# Split ergativity

- ▶ Factors conditioning split ergativity (Dixon 1994:70)
  1. semantic nature of the core nominal arguments (“person split”)
  2. tense or aspect or mood of the clause (“TAM split”)
  3. semantic nature of the main verb (“Split-S”)
  4. **grammatical status of the clause (i.e., main or subordinate)**

# Split ergativity in Ixta Mam

In Ixta Mam, split ergativity works a little differently (England 1989).

- ▶ First, recall that intransitive subjects are marked absolutive.

(28) Ma chin b'et=a  
PROX B1SG walk=HR  
'I walked.'

- ▶ England (1983b, 1989, 2013a, 2013b, 2017) shows that some temporally dependent clauses show an extended ergative pattern.

(29) N-chi ooq' [ n-poon=a ].  
IMP-B2/3PL cry [ A1S-arrive-HR ]  
'They were crying when I arrived'.

# Split ergativity in Ixta Mam

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- Transitive clauses: both arguments get marked ergative (England

1983b:14)

- (30) a. Jaw q'oj-l Luuch  
dir anger-ITV Pedro  
'Pedro got mad
- b. aj t-jaw ky-tx'ee'ma-n xjaal  
when A2/3SG-DIR A2/3PL-cut-DIR person  
t-tzee'.  
A2/3SG-tree  
when **the people** cut down **his tree**.'
- (31) a. O chin ooq'=a  
PFV B1SG cry=HR  
'I cried
- b. aj n-kub' t-tzeeq'a-n=a  
when A1SG-DIR A2/3SG-cut-DIR=HR  
when **you** hit **me**.'

# Split ergativity in SJA Mam

- Like Ixta Mam, we see extended ergative on intransitives:

- (32) a. Ma **chn**-u'l=i.  
PROX **B1SG**-arrive.here=HR  
'I arrived.'
- b. Taj **w**-u'l=i ...  
when **A1SG**-arrive.here=HR ...  
'When I arrived... '

# Split ergativity in SJA Mam

- Extended ergative on transitives: **transitive objects get Set A 2/3sg**

- (33) a. O chin jaw o'=y  
PFV B1SG DIR cry=HR  
'I cried
- b. taj t-ok t-b'yo-'n=i a qin  
when A2/3SG-DIR A2/3SG-hit-DIR=HR a 1SG  
when **you** hit me.'
- (34) a. O qw-o'=yi  
PFV B1PL-cry=HR  
'We cried
- b. taj t-ok t-b'yo-'n Pey a  
when A2/3SG-DIR A2/3SG-hit-DIR Pedro a  
qoy  
1PL.EXCL  
when **Pedro** hit us.'

# (Split) ergativity in Mam

SETB/ABS, SETA/ERG, 2/3SG,

S = itv subj, A = tv subj, O = tv obj

## (35) Intransitives

	Main	Subordinate
Ixta Mam	S-V	S-V
SJA Mam	S-V	S-V

## (36) Transitives

	Main	Subordinate
Ixta Mam	O-A-V	O-A-V
SJA Mam	OSETB-A-V OBJ	OSETA-A-V OBJ

# Theoretical questions

- ▶ Why do intransitive subjects behave 'normally' in SJA Mam (full agreement) but transitive objects do not? What makes transitive objects special?
- ▶ Why do transitive objects in SJA show case marking (Set A/ Set B) on the verb but not person/number features?
- ▶ How does the object in subordinate clauses in Ixta and SJA Mam get ergative case?



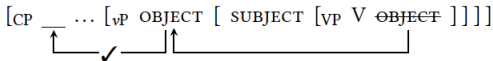
# One “last” puzzle

- ▶ In SJA Mam, the ergative argument cannot be extracted:

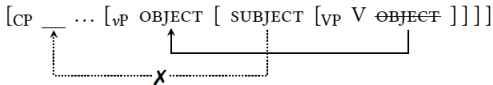
(37) \* $[\text{ay}]_o$  tz'-ok t-b'yo-'n=i a qin.  
 $[\text{2SG}]$  PFV B2/3SG-DIR A1SG-hit-DS=HR a 1SG  
 Intended: *You* hit me.

- ▶ Recall the analysis of this restriction:

*Object can extract*



*Subject cannot extract*



- ▶ Why is the transitive object blocking ergative extraction but not controlling person/number agreement?

# Summary

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- ▶ Mam syntax differs in substantial ways from that in other Mayan languages
  - ▶ Mam makes a first/non-first split in person marking, as well as has an enclitic which contributes to full person marking
  - ▶ Mam has an interesting pattern of split ergativity where both arguments get ergative case in split contexts.
- ▶ Within Mam dialects, there is quite a bit of variation
  - ▶ The form and distribution of the person enclitic
  - ▶ Basic verbal agreement patterns: SJA Mam always marks transitive objects with 2/3sg form, which persists in split ergative environments.

# Summary

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

- ▶ Other dialectal variation:
  - ▶ Several dialects show a transitive person restriction (England 1983a,2017, Perez Vail 2014).
    - ▶ I analyze this restriction as a syntactic restriction which is relativized to the [HEARER] feature (Scott 2019).
    - ▶ An observation: the dialects that have the restriction have full person/number object agreement while SJA Mam lacks the restriction and lacks full object agreement
  - ▶ The repair strategies for the ban on ergative extraction
- ▶ This variation can shed light on analyses of the assignment of ergative and absolutive case, the nature of split ergativity, and analyses of the inability to extract ergative arguments.

# Chjonte kyiy!

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Tessa Scott

Mayan - syntactic  
basics

Word order

Basic alignment

Agreement morphology

Ban on ergative extraction

Mam

Mam data

Person Marking

Verbal agreement

Split ergativity

Summary

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