Determiners in Tojol-ab’al [toj] Mayan

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Outline

1. Introduction
2. The language
3. Formal inventory
4. Nominal domain
5. Corpus data
Introduction

- Tojol-ab’al has different formal devices comparable to the functions of definite, indefinite and demonstrative articles in other languages.
- Their behavioral properties are however different.
- The particularities of the determiners in Tojol-ab’al are better explained considering at least two factors:
  - i. the nature of the nominal domain
  - ii. the nature of the phonological phrases
The language

- Tojol-ab‘al is a Western Mayan language spoken in the Southeastern Mexican State of Chiapas, Mexico.
- There are at least 40000 Speakers.
- Previous controversy regarding its exact place within the Maya family: Kaufman (1969) and Schumann Gálvez (1981) placed it together with Chuj in the Q’anjob’alan sub branch while Robertson (1977) put it together with Tseltal in the Tseltalan sub branch.
- Law (2011, 2013) and Gómez Cruz (2017) have both concluded, that it is a mixed language.
Typological profil I

- **Head marking language**
- **Aspect based temporal coding**
- **Mesoamerican traits** Campbell et al. (1986): no verb final, vigesimal number system, relational nouns rather than adpositions, possessive construction NG
- **VOS/SVO language** Furbee-Lose (1976), Brody (1982), Curiel 2007
- **VO and VS language** Curiel 2007 with Dryer’s 2007 predictions
- **Morphological ergativity**
- **No syntactic ergativity but a neutral alignment is possible regarding Equi-NP deletion**
- **Low absolutive language** Coon et al. (2014)
- **No agent focus** Stiebels (2006) and no restrictions on extraction
Formal inventory

- definite determiner: ja
- indefinite determiner: jun
- circumclitic determiner: ja...=i'
- proximal demonstrative: it
- distal demonstrative: jaw
The determiners *ja* and *jun*

- There is no particular selection with respect to natural sex or animacy.

(1) \( ja \) winik / \( ja \) ixuk / \( ja \) ts’i’ / \( ja \) ton

  DET man / DET woman / DET dog / DET stone

  ‘the man’ / ‘the woman’ / ‘the dog’ / ‘the stone’

(2) \( jun \) winik / \( jun \) ixuk / \( jun \) ts’i’ / \( jun \) ton

  INDF man / INDF woman / INDF dog / INDF stone

  ‘a man’ / ‘a woman’ / ‘a dog’ / ‘a stone’
The determiners \textit{ja} and \textit{jun}

The first mention of a nominal in a text tend to be with \textit{jun}.

\begin{align*}
\text{(3) } & \text{Jun yal kerem sok jun ts’i’ ti ay-e’ b’a s-kwarto.} \\
& \text{INDF DIM boy INST INDF dog EXPL EXIST-PL LOC A3-room} \\
& \text{‘A little boy and a dog are in his room.’} \ [\text{Frog_IRL.001}] 
\end{align*}
The determiners \textit{ja} and \textit{jun}

This is the second mention of the nominal \textit{kerem} in the same text:

(4) \begin{align*}
\text{Ja} & \quad \text{yal} \quad \text{kerem}=i' \quad \text{wan}=\text{xa} \quad \text{way-el} \quad i \quad \text{ja'xa} \\
& \quad \text{DET} \quad \text{A3-little} \quad \text{boy}=\text{DEF} \quad \text{PROG}=\text{DISC} \quad \text{sleep-VN} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{T.SHIFT} \\
& \quad \text{ja} \quad \text{tan} \quad \text{wo'}=i' \quad \text{el-um}=\text{xa} \quad \text{el} \quad \text{ja} \\
& \quad \text{DET} \quad \text{MASC} \quad \text{frog}=\text{DEF} \quad \text{go.out-AGEN}=\text{DISC} \quad \text{go.out} \quad \text{DET} \\
& \quad \text{b'a} \quad \text{ak'-ub'al} \quad \text{och} \quad \text{kan}=i'. \\
& \quad \text{LOC} \quad \text{give-PRF.PASS} \quad \text{enter} \quad \text{stay}=\text{DEF}
\end{align*}

‘The boy is sleeping and as for the frog, it is coming out of where it was put’[Frog_IRL.003]
The circumclitic determiner ja...=i’

Several Mayan languages present a phenomenon in which nominal phrases are wrapped up by a determiner at the beginning and a final enclitic.

(5) Tseltal

te winik=e’
DET man=DEF
‘the man’

(6) Tojol-ab’al

ja winik=i’
DET man=DEF
‘the man’
The circumclitic determiner ja...=i’

- Curiel 2007 considers the final enclitic to be a grammaticalized topic marker. According to him, there is a topic ex situ at the beginning of the sentence and a topic in situ at the end of the sentence. However, it is possible to have two enclitics in the same sentence.

(7) \( S\text{-}mil\text{-}a [ja \ mut] [ja \ winik=\text{i’}] \).

A3-kill-VT DET chicken DET man=DEF
‘The man killed the chicken.’

(8) \([Ja \ \text{winik}=\text{i’}] s\text{-}mil\text{-}a [ja \ \text{mut}=\text{i’}] \).

DET man=DEF A3-kill-VT DET chicken=DEF
‘The man killed the chicken.’
The circumclitic determiner *ja...=i’*

- The enclitic *=i’* attaches only to nominal constituents.
- Relative clauses are within the circumclitic determiner.

(9) \( Cham-ta \ ja \ winik \ [\emptyset \ jul \ eke’=i’]_{\text{RC}}. \)

\begin{align*}
\text{die-already} & \quad \text{DET} \quad \text{man} \quad \text{REL} \quad \text{come yesterday}=\text{DEF} \\
\text{‘The man that came yesterday died already’}
\end{align*}
The circumclitic determiner ja...=i’

- The enclitic =i’ attaches only to phonological phrases.
- There is a drop in the F0 after the enclitic.
The demonstratives

- There are two demonstratives in Tojol-ab’al: a distal jaw and a proximal it.
- They are suffixes and cannot appear alone.

(10)  

a. \( ja \ ixuk \ it=i' \)  
   DET woman PROX=DEF  
   ‘this woman’

b. \( ja \ ixuk \ jaw=i' \)  
   DET woman DIST=DEF  
   ‘that woman’

c. \( *ja \ ixuk \ it=a' \)  
   ‘this one’

d. \( ja \ ixuk \ jaw=a' \)  
   ‘that woman’ (situational and social deixis)
The demonstratives

- They need the circumclitic determiner for their most basic reading as deitic or anaphoric devices

(11) a. \( ja \ it=i' \)
\[
\text{DET PROX=DEF}
\]
‘this one’

b. \( ja \ jaw=i' \)
\[
\text{DET DIST=DEF}
\]
‘that one’

c. \( *ja \ it=a' \)
‘this one’

d. \( ja \ jaw=a' \)
‘that one’
Characteristics of the noun

- A shared trait with other Mayan languages is the fact that the nouns in Tojol-ab’al are transnumeral, i.e. their default interpretation is not an individuated entity.

- Schumann Gálvez (1993) citing Zavala 1990 says that the function of classifiers in these languages is to erase the property of being non verbal predicates.

- It is commonly stated that Mayan languages (and other Mesoamerican languages) are weak in the dimension of number.

- However, number must be understood as a category realized by different means (Gómez Cruz, 2017).
Characteristics of the noun

- Nouns are divided in several possession classes with respect to alienability.
- Some nominal roots (inalienability reading with body parts, cloths and kinship terms) must occur with possessive inflection in their most simple form.
- If they occur without possessor, then they have to take an -Vl affix (inalienability reading).
- Other nouns can occur without possessor in their most basic form. They can optionally take the -Vl affix to get a particular meaning.
Expansion of the nominal phrase  
Gómez Cruz (2010)

Table: Projections of the nominal phrase

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- 1. the collective plural jumasa’
- 2. the demonstratives jaw and it
- 3. a possessor nominal phrase
- 4. a relative clause
- 5. the final position clitics =a’ and i’
Corpus data

- Out of a corpus of 27,599 word tokens we get:
  - 4,497 nouns
  - 2,885 determiners ja
  - 861 determiners jun
  - 1,963 enclitics =i’
  - 147 nominal classifiers tan (3%)
  - 58 nominal classifiers men (1.3%)
  - 338 diminutives yal (7.5%)
Corpus data

- Out of 4497 nouns we get:
  - 511 phrases ja N=i’ (11%)
  - 1118 POSS-N (25%)
  - 538 ja POSS-N
The presence of the indefinite article helps to individuate the referent of the noun. It is the first occurrence of the noun ts’i in this story.

(12)  *Ja’ k-i’-oj jun j-ts’i*

FOC  A1-take-TR  DET  A1-dog

‘I brought one of my dogs (partitive)’

‘It is my dog that I brought (presentational cleft)’

[Story_CLC.012]
Indefinite article with possessor

Indefinite article, diminutive and possessor on the first mention of the bear *oso*.

(13)  \(\text{ti} \quad s\text{-}ta\text{'-}a \quad \text{jun} \quad yal \quad s\text{-}’oso\)

\[\begin{array}{llll}
\text{EXPL} & \text{A3-find-TR} & \text{INDF} & \text{little A3-os}o \\
\text{‘He found a bear’} & \end{array}\]
Definite article with possessor with kinship term

(14)  Ti y-al-a ja s-tatam=i’...
    EXPL A3-say-TR DET A3-husband=DEF
    ‘Then, her husband said...’[Story_CLC.002]
Partitive reading. The set was previously presented.

(15) \( ja \quad jun \quad s-k’ab’=i’ \quad ja \quad s-yam-unej \quad ja \)

\[ \text{DET \ INDF \ A3-arm=DEF \ DET \ A3-take-PERF.TR \ DET} \]

\[ \text{s-top} \quad ja \quad baso \]

\[ \text{A3-bottom \ DET \ baso} \]

‘One of his arms is grabbing the bottom of the glass.’ [NijCutBreak_IRL.137]
Definite and indefinite article

- Distributive reading. The set was previously presented.

(16) \text{ja} \quad \text{jun-e'} \quad \text{ja} \quad \text{winik}=i' \quad \text{ay} \quad \text{s-pistola}

\text{DET} \quad \text{INDF-CL} \quad \text{DET} \quad \text{man}=\text{DEF} \quad \text{EXIST} \quad \text{A3-gun}

‘Each one has a gun’ [Scope_{OSR171}]

\[\]
Other uses of $ja...=i'$

- The circumclitic determiner can wrap all kind of syntactic phrases: adverbial phrases, prepositional phrases and can also function as complementizer.

(17) $ja\ b'a\ ak'-ub'al\ och\ kan=i'$.

DET LOC give-PRF.PASS enter stay=DEF
‘of where it was put’[Frog_IRL.003]
References I


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References II


