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LEXICOGRAPHY OF TWO AMUZGO DICTIONARIES

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Introduction

This paper looks at two recent dictionaries for the Amuzgo language spoken in San Pedro Amuzgos, distrito de Putla, Oaxaca. Amuzgo is part of the Otomanguan linguistic stock. One dictionary is the work of Fermín Tapia (Tapia 1999), the other of Cloyd and Ruth Stewart (Stewart 2000).

Tapia is a native speaker who produced his dictionary as an MA thesis for CIESAS; it includes terminology from previous publications on trees, bushes, vines and plants (Tapia 1978, 1980, 1985). He also incorporates bird names from (Cuevas 1985) and terms for things made from wood (Cruz Hernández 1993). In addition to these particular semantic domains, he has excellent coverage of lexical items in other domains, showing extensive reflection on his language and culture. He lists personal names and place names; he gives possible etymologies for Amuzgo place names, often with references to a manuscript by Cloyd Stewart for Guerrero Amuzgo (Cloyd Stewart 1949). There are also minor entries for plurals and for present tense of verbs. Grammatical treatment in the dictionary profits from co-authored papers with Thomas Smith-Stark (Smith-Stark y Tapia 1984, 1990). The dictionary is from Amuzgo to Spanish; a Spanish to Amuzgo dictionary is planned for the not too distant future. There is a good bibliography for SPA language and culture.

Stewart and Stewart are SIL linguists, who previously studied the Amuzgo of Xochistlahuaca, Guerrero, and then turned their attention to that of San Pedro Amuzgos, Oaxaca.

They worked closely with some young Amuzgo speakers in the compilation of the dictionary. The goal was to get good coverage of the most frequently used words and to carefully explore the different senses and the usage of each item. This dictionary excels in the illustrative sentences, constructed by the native speaker associates, which present each entry word in its cultural and grammatical context. It is also strong in the identification of grammatical information for each entry and in the accompanying grammatical sketch written by Marjorie Buck in consultation with the Stewarts. Cloyd Stewart is responsible for the grammatical paradigms for nouns and verbs. Ruth Stewart is responsible for the compilation of the dictionary. There is a Spanish to Amuzgo index for entries on the Amuzgo side; it does not attempt to be a Spanish to Amuzgo dictionary. There are appendices for numerals, personal names, expressions of feelings and emotions, names related to back strap weaving, place names and maps. There is also a bibliography covering Xochistlahuaca, Gro., and San Pedro Amuzgos, Oax.

The paper compares the treatment of phonology and orthography, verb morphology, sense discriminations versus synonyms, and finally noun compounds and classifiers.

Phonology and Orthography

The phonological analysis is essentially the same for the two dictionaries; both have reliable phonemic transcriptions (see Bauernschmidt 1965 and 1973 ms.). Orthography decisions by Stewart reflect in part the recommendations of SIL for using Spanish conventions where possible. Those made by Tapia reflect the proposals of the ethnolinguist program to use k instead of c/qu. There are the inevitable preferences on the part of each for handling some of the phonemic facts. In the following charts where there is a difference I give first the Stewart symbol and following the diagonal / I give that of Tapia. The parentheses indicate that the voiced stops are normally preceded by a nasal.

Consonants

p	t	ty	ts/tz	ch	c,qu/k	cy/ki	cü/kw	'
	(n)d	(n)dy			(n)g			
f			s	x				j
m			n	ñ				
b/v			l, r	y				

Palatal **ty** contrasts with alveolar **t** (which is velarized); palatal **ch** contrasts with alveolar **ts** (velarized); palatal **x** contrasts with alveolar **s** (velarized). The velarized consonants produce a slight lowering and backing of the front vowel /i/ [ei]. S usually writes **ei**; T writes the phonemic vowel /i/.

Each of the Amuzgo consonants can be aspirated or glottalized. Both dictionaries write aspiration with /j/ and glottalization with /'/.

T and S recognize /kw/ as a phoneme, S writes {cü}; S writes the cluster **ky** {cy} but T considers the “y” to be the /i/ onset of a diphthong: S **ntyeyu** T **nntykiu** “veinte”.

The labial semivowel phoneme /w/ is apparently a voiced bilabial fricative [β]. S uses the symbol {v}, which for an English speaker is always fricative, instead of {b} which is always a stop in English. T is not under those constraints because the Spanish /b/ phoneme has fricative and stop allophones and there is no difference between the letters **b** and **v** in Spanish pronunciation. He chooses to write {b}. The difference shows us in the common word “house” /w'a/: S **v'aa**, T **b'a**.

T writes the grapheme {tz} for /ts/; S writes {ts}.

There is an elusive epenthetic vowel at the beginning of some words: [‘i]. The vowel is very brief and has a high pitch. A prevocalic glottal stop is not normally found at the beginning of a stem but is characteristic of the prefix ‘i- which is one of the markers of present tense in third person. S writes the vowel /i/ for such verbs; T writes the glottal stop /'/, interpreting it as a

syllabic glottal stop with high tone.

S **ico'** (b) *vt* 7 Cö 1. picar 2. poner (*un poste en un hoyo*) 3. dar comezón

T '**kò'** [5.1] V. TR. PRES. picar, parar (*poste*) [fut. **ntko'**]

Some bound clitic pronouns begin with a vowel and tend to merge with the final vowel of the stem. S: uses {**h**} to separate 2nd person singular, and 3rd person pronouns from the stem (but word space before **o'** "animal"). T: Writes word space before such clitics.

Examples: (Compare T **a"** with S **-han'** "inanimate".)

T. **Nngati ndia xko ya nndoaⁿ a"**. "Una tela nueva se encoge cuando se lava."

S. '**Ndyo v'aava' conaanhan' yo nt'öv'aa t'manhan'**. "Esa puerta se puede abrir con la llave grande."

Vowels:

In addition to the five vowels found in Spanish, there is a low front vowel written *ẽ* in both dictionaries and a low back vowel written *ö* in both.

	<i>Front</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Back</i>
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
Low	æ {ẽ}	a	ɔ {ö}

Nasalization is written by S. with n following the vowel; T writes a superscript ⁿ. There is no nasal u. There is no contrast between oral and nasal vowels after a nasal consonant; S writes Vn, T writes a simple vowel in that position.

	<i>Front</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Back</i>
High	in i ⁿ		
Mid	en e ⁿ		on o ⁿ
Low	ën ë ⁿ	an a ⁿ	ön ö ⁿ

Diphthongs begin with /i/ or /u/. There are no combinations of onset /i/ and a front vowel,

nor of onset /u/ and a back vowel. T in his introduction cites variants for vowel clusters in which the onset high vowel is lowered to /e/ or /o/.

ia				io	iö	iu
ua	ue	uë	ui			

ian				ion	iön
uan	uen	uën	uin		

Tones

The two analyses recognize the same number of tone contrasts. The Stewart analysis (following that of Bauernschmidt for Xochistlahuaca) distinguishes ballistic and controlled syllables (written with a double vowel in most cases; length is less noticeable in pre-stress syllables). Each syllable type has high, mid and low tones and one contour tone. The Tapia (with Smith-Stark) analysis writes several contour tones in addition to the high, mid and low level tones [Low tone is 1; high tone is 5].

Controlled	Stewart	Tapia
alto	(a) jndë “polvo”	5 jndë “polvo”
medio	(m-m) ve “rojo”	34 be “rojo”
bajo	(b-b) ndëë “monte, maleza”	12 jndë “bosque”
deslizamiento medio-alto	(m-a) jnoon “cigarro”	35 jno “tabaco”
Ballistic		
alto	(a-m) ch’i “mantis religioso”	53 ch’i “campamocha”
medio	(m) chu ãño”	3 chu ãño”
bajo	(b) jndë “zacate”	1 jndë “pasto”
deslizamiento alto-bajo	(a-b) jnan “pecado”	31 jna “pecado”

Both dictionaries give the phonemic tones for the entry word. S does not write tone on the examples. T has a simplified diacritic system which writes [á] for 5 (high); [â] for 31 (falling); [à] for 1 (low) and leaves the other tones unmarked.

It isn’t clear to me the criteria T has for tones he leaves unmarked; in his dictionary there are a number of tone pairs or tone sets which his diacritic system doesn’t distinguish. Maybe he is writing those that are noticeably different from Spanish.

Verb morphology

Verbs stems in Amuzgo are modified for plural subject and for tense or aspect. S gives the plural form for active and stative verbs in brackets at the end of the entry; process verbs do not have a distinct plural form.

Verbos activos (transitivos, intransitivos e impersonales)

ica (b) vi 7 A barrer [pl.: **cota** (m) 5 A]
incyaa (a) vt 9 A dar [pl.: **concyā** (b) 9 A]
tsijnda (a b) vt 3 A comprar [pl.: **conan'jnda** (b b) 2 A]
ico'yahan' (b b b) v impers 7 componerse

Verbos de estado

ntyjo (m) ve 1 Aō estar puesto en [pl.: **ntyjo** (m) 1 Aō]
minntyjee' (m m-a) ve 13 Dē estar parado
[pl.: **comin'ntyjee'** (b m-a) 13 Dē]

Verbos de proceso

cocya (a-m) vp 7 dispersarse
cojndyii' (m-a) vp 1 despellejarse
condinton (a m) vp 23 ponerse negro

T does not give plural forms for verbs, choosing rather to give other tense forms.

T uses the future as the citation form for verbs and gives other tenses which are somewhat unpredictable in brackets. He sometimes has minor entries for those other tense forms.

Nntzko [5.34] V.TR. FUT. quemar [algo que se está cociendo] [Pas. **sko** [34]; pres. **'tzko** [5.34]]

Nntka [5.1] V. TR. FUT. barrer, cortar, cosechar [Pres. **'ka**]

He doesn't have a cross reference entry for either of the present tense forms. He does have minor entries for present tenses which have lost a syllable with respect to the future form: **'tzo** [5.3] V. TR. PRES. decir [fut. **nngítzo** [5.5.3]].

In this case he does not have a minor entry for past tense. He does list those which begin with {t}, but not those which begin with {j}, {s} or {x}. He doesn't have a minor entry for the present tense, perhaps because it may be deduced by removing the future prefix {nn-} and adding the present tense prefix {'-}.

S. uses the present as the citation form and gives a code number for the paradigm set listed at the end of the verb section of the grammar. Plural forms are cited in brackets.

ica (b) *vi 7 A* barrer [pl.: **cota** (m m) 5 A]

There are no minor entries for the other tenses. Tom Smith-Stark (1983a, 1983b) made the observation that the preterite form of the verb has the same morphophonemic changes going on as those going on in the plural.

Notice that the plural has a different paradigm type from the singular.

	<i>Present</i>	<i>Preterite</i>	<i>Future</i>	<i>Subjunctive</i>
<i>3rd. sing. (7)</i>	ica	tca	ntca	ca
<i>3rd. pl. (5)</i>	cota	ta	ngita	quita

Senses, synomous gloss, homonyms

T does not try to distinguish different senses of the entry word; he lists the translation equivalents in a single string. In the case of more discrete senses he will usually give brief examples of each gloss.

Both dictionaries have entries for plural forms as well as singular. Tapia also notes when the same form can be either singular or plural. Stewart has full treatment for the singular (citation) form and a briefer crossreference entry for the plural form.

<i>Tapia</i>	<i>Stewart</i>
Jñ'o [12] asunto, noticia, palabra, plática	jñ'oon (b-b) 1. palabra, noticia 2. asunto
Ndi [34] ADJ. PL. verdes, tiernos, crudos frutas verdes o tiernas carne cruda	ndei (m-m) [pl. de tsi (m-m)] crudos; verdes
Ntzue [3] SUST hule, leche de árbol,	ntsue (m) 1. savia

plástico [sing. y pl.] hule para huaraches bolsa de plástico	2. hoja de plástico
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T sometimes uses parenthetical comments to distinguish senses:

Tzi [34] ADJ crudo (de carne), verde (de fruta)	tsei (m-m) 1. crudo (no bien cocido) 2. verde (fruta que no está en sazón; fresca, no seca)
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T also does not put homophones in separate entries, but does distinguish between them by indented examples. S uses separate entries.

Tzjö [5] cántaro, caña <i>Tzjö koñjo ndá</i> cántaro para agua <i>Tzjö nndë tzá'</i> caña para mascar	tsjö (a) cántaro tsjö (a) caña de azúcar
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Noun compounds and classifiers.

A large number of noun entries are complex: some are a head noun followed by a modifier, others are compounds in which the first item is a dependent noun or classifier.

A construction of head noun plus modifier is used for members of the same class as the head noun:

ts'a "chile"

ts'a chi	chile ancho
ts'a guajillo	chile guajillo
ts'a tē	chile jalapeño
ts'a ndëë	chile maduro
ts'a tcan	chile seco
ts'a tsei	chile verde
ts'a quitsaa'	chile piquín

Most of the nomenclature for flora and fauna is introduced by a generic noun or a dependent

noun. Tapia usually has a longer list of such lexical items than Stewart. Tapia had done research projects on trees, bushes, vines, grasses, herbs; so his listings in these areas are nearly exhaustive. Cuevas (1985) did a study on bird names, which Tapia includes in his dictionary; that listing should also be quite complete. In addition, he includes words from a study of the uses of wood by Cruz Hernández (1993).

The dependent nouns are phonemically simpler and are prefixed to the specific noun as a classifier.. The prefixed forms are inflected for plural parallel to the independent noun.

NOUN	MEANING	CLASSIFIER	ABSTRACT SEMANTICS
ndaa (a)	agua “water”	nda- (a)	“liquid”
ts’an (m)	gente “person”	tsan-, pl. nan- (m)	“human”
ts’oon (a)	árbol “tree” madera “wood”	tson-, pl. non (a)	“kind of tree” “made of wood”
tsua’ (b)	jícara “gourd”	tsö’, tsö-; pl. ndö’- (b)	“kind of gourd” “made of gourd” “shaped like a gourd: concave or ovular”

Most of the items they introduce never occur without their classifier. Some classifiers do not have independent noun status. This is true of **ki-** “animate” and is nearly true of **të** “fruit/spherical”. The classifier **ki-** in addition to classifying animals and insects also occurs with names of sounds and smells (perhaps because they displace themselves through space).

The reduced form of the noun may be written with word space if the following item can also occur alone. It is written as a prefix if the item does not occur independently. There is some inconsistency regarding the writing of word space, even by native speakers.

In both dictionaries there are clusters of entries for a generic noun and its compounds. For

clusters where the first element is independent, T has a longer list than S; for those whose first item is dependent, the list is pretty much the same. The dependent form of the generic noun has become lexicalized as part of the word.

It is interesting that some Spanish loan words require a preceding “classifier”: metal-campana “bell”, fruit-chayote “chayote”, young-escuela “school children”, etc.

The independent noun “person” followed by a modifying word or phrase has 9 entries in S, but 124 entries in T. The prefix classifier for “person” has 39 entries in S and 37 in T. I suggest that because the reduced form of the noun has been gramaticized as a classifier, the items containing it are established lexical items, whereas the full form of the noun plus a modifier is still syntactic in nature and can be very productive but the combinations do not necessarily rank as lexical items.

What constitutes a classifier?

Jorge Suárez discusses classificatory notions in his book *The Mesoamerican Indian Languages* (Suárez 1983). After talking about numeral classifiers in Mayan languages, Totonac and Nahuatl, he says, “A different type of classifier is found in Otomanguean languages. To some extent its characteristics have to be inferred since in most languages these elements are completely fossilized, although they are certainly detectable under over-analysis, e.g. in Zapotec languages, in which most nouns designating animals begin with the same consonant; the same is true of those designating plants. In Amuzgo they are more easily identifiable because in some cases the noun also occurs without the classifier. {...} the classifiers are few in number and make distinctions largely parallel to those found in the pronominal system; that is to say they resemble a gender system. In Amuzgo the following distinctions are made: ‘animate’, ‘thing’, ‘person’, ‘feminine’, ‘masculine’, ‘fruit’, ‘familiar person’, ‘human’, ‘house.’” (Suárez 1983. 89)

Suárez was referring to an article by Helen Long Hart (1957) which lists 11 noun classifiers for Xochistlahuaca Amuzgo. They are reproduced in the following table (1 is high tone.):

ka ⁴	“animate”
na ³	“thing, nominalizer”
na ¹ m-	“feminine”
ne ²	“masculine”
tai ¹	“fruit”
ti ²	“masculine” (man speaking)
tsā ²	“person”
tso ³	“familiar person, relative”
tyo ²	“masculine”
w ² a ⁴	“house”
yu ²	“human”

The classifiers she lists are part of the noun word rather than an independent part of a noun phrase as in some generic nouns that form close-knit phrases. Hart says that many nominal elements never occur without the classifier **ka⁴** “animate” or **tai¹** “fruit”, but there are some parallel examples in which the second element does occur alone:

ka⁴tsa¹⁻⁴m fly (<**ka⁴** animate, **tsa¹⁻⁴m** fire); **ka⁴tsua⁴m** wasp, witch (<**ka⁴** animate, **tsua⁴m** cactus); **ka⁴so¹** horse (**ka⁴** animate, **so¹** hair), etc.” (Hart 1957.155).

It should be observed that there is not much correlation between the noun classifiers and the pronoun categories although there is a separate pronoun for “animal”. The free noun **ts’an** “person” is used pronominally in general statements where Spanish might use an indefinite pronoun. I believe this is true for Xochistlahuaca though the following example is from SPA dictionary entry for “ponerse pálido”:

Ya na aa mioon jndyi vaa na iquity’ue ts’an,
iquenhan’ ts’an ndo’ condichioo ts’an condë.

Quando *uno* se espanta mucho, (*uno*) se enferma y (*uno*) se pone pálido.

Marjorie Buck in her grammar for Amuzgo of San Pedro Amuzgos (in Stewart and Stewart

2001.391) lists nine noun classifiers:

cha- ; pl. ncha-(m) <chcya (a)	“hecho de tortillas”
nda- (a) < ndaa (a)	“agua, líquido”
qui- (a)	“animales” (e insectos)
tě- (b)	“frutas”, “esferas”
tsan- ; pl. nan-(m) <ts’an (m)	“personas”;
tson, tson-; pl. non (a) ts’oon (a)	“árboles; hecho de madera”
tsö’, tsö-; pl. ndö’ (b) <tsua’ (b)	“jicaras; hecho de jícara”
xjo-; pl. ncjo- (b) < xjo (b)	“metal; hecho de metal”
yu-; pl. yo- (a)	“joven”

Note that there is overlap of only four items in the two lists (people, human, animals, fruit); the other proposed classifiers differ considerably. Those Hart lists for masculine or feminine occur in very few words, mostly kinship terms; they are pretty well fossilized. The items listed by Buck appear in more lexical items but some might better be considered independent words, such as **cha** “made of tortilla” which is parallel to the kinds of tamales or breads based on the word **tyoo’** “tamal”. **Cha** is phonetically simplified from the independent noun **chkya**. Semantically it identifies items composed of tortillas (or masa), but doesn’t have the same generality that the other classifiers have.

The item **yu-** “young” appears in very few nouns, but it appears to be a bound item with abstract meaning, a fossilized classifier except that it occurs also with the Spanish word for school to indicate school children. In T, there are also entries beginning with **yu-** with meanings not obviously related to “young”: “meztizo”, “indígena”, “demonio”, “diablo”.

The classifiers in Buck’s list usually have an abstract semantic features. “Person” introduces nouns which describe different kinds of people; “water” introduces nouns naming different “liquids”; “tree”, which also means “wood”, introduces names of trees and also things made of wood; “gourd” identifies things made of gourds or shaped like gourds “concave” or “ovular”; “metal”, things made of metal”. All these have a configurational or compositional semantics, as

well as the taxonomic value of naming items belonging to the same class as the generic noun.

T. does not talk about noun classifiers as such, but gives a long list (81) of phrases introduced by **na** “cosa” [cf. na³ “thing” in Hart 1957], in some ways parallel to the agent nouns introduced by **tzaⁿ**-, but these are mostly longer phrases which suggest syntax rather than lexicon. They are productive and provide a way of naming things introduced from the outside. The word **na** “thing” serves as a nominalizer.

For the prototypical classifiers, **ki**- “animate” and **të**- “fruit/round”, the number of entries in each category is almost the same for each dictionary. This is also true of the classifier **tsan-/tzaⁿ**- “person”, but for the entries introduced by the full noun **ts’an/tz’aⁿ** “person” modified by a word or a longer expression, S lists only 9, whereas T lists 124. The following table gives the number of entries in S, and following the diagonal, the number in T.

CATEGORY	STEWART/TAPIA	S ENTRIES/T ENTRIES	SEMANTICS
Animate	qui-/ki-	146/141	Taxonomic
Fruit, Spherical	të-/të-	68/75	Taxonomic Configurational
Human	tsan-/tza ⁿ -	39/37	Taxonomic
Tree, Wood	tson-/tzo ⁿ -	45/180 37/66 (wood)	Taxonomic Compositional
Liquid	nda-/nda-	60/50	Configurational
Gourd, Concave	tsö’-/tzö’-	14/25	Configurational
Metal	xjo-/xjo-	14/53	Compositional
Young	yu-/yu-	11/15	Taxonomic

Hart lists “house” as a classifier, but it doesn’t have the same dependency as the others in her list; this is probably why it doesn’t appear in Buck’s list. There are clusters of entries in both dictionaries with “house” or the possessed “its house” as first item. T has more entries than S, especially for the possessed form:

House	v'aa/b'a	6/16
	vaa'/ba' (pos.)	10/43 (pos.)

Amuzgo **ba' tz'ia** (lit.: its house, work) means “palacio, oficina municipal”. T proceeds to list several of the offices: “oficina ejidal, oficina del Registro Civil, oficina de la asociación ganadera”, using relative clauses to distinguish between them.

The word for “store”, **b'a kondijnd'a**, is a “house” where they sell things; T lists 13 kinds of stores found in SPA, include one that sells caskets (**b'a kondijnd'ua kiton nd'ó**) and another that sells sound equipment (**b'a kondijnd'ua'na ya kotja'**). Some of the store names are longer periphrastic expressions and seem out of place as lexical items. However, SIL colleague Amy Bauernschmidt says that in Xochistlahuaca periphrastic expressions are the normal way of talking about things from the outside (personal communication).

In fact, some names for introduced items are based on “house”. For example, T lists: **ba'nhò** “cárcel” (“its house”, “metals”) and S lists **v'aandaa** “boat” (“house”, “water”).

The more abstract meaning in some compounds of “house” is perhaps what influenced Hart to consider it a classifier.

The noun “bone” is a candidate for classifier though it does not appear in either list. It occurs as first element in a large number of lexical items in both dictionaries. The word tsei'/tzi' means “egg” as well as “bone”. Some of the entries list kinds of bones or kinds of eggs. Others list things made of bone, such as “needle”, “guitar”, “fish hook”, “button”, “ring”. Quite a few body parts have “bone” as obligatory first element, even when not referring specifically to the bone in that body part (S 15/T 11). Not all body parts have the tsei'- prefix; those that do seem to refer to a body part that is oblong in shape, except for “knee” and “elbow”. Bones of particular animals or of a dead person are probably noun phrases based on the independent noun. But the use of “bone” as first element of certain body parts is more classificatory in nature.

Suárez suggests that the number of classifiers in an Otomanguean language is small and correlates with pronoun gender categories. In Amuzgo, the number may be larger, and there may be little correlation with pronouns. But the kind of semantic extensions (taxonomic, compositional, configurational) are similar to those described for languages of Brazil which have very complex classificatory systems. (Aikhenvald and Green 1998).

Classifiers in other Otomanguean languages.

Otomanguean languages in Oaxaca have first elements in NP and certain compounds which seem to classify the lexical entries for that category. Some are very productive and semantically transparent. Others are more lexicalized, occur in a closed list, and are semantically more generic or with some extended or figurative meaning.

Many of the Otomanguean languages of Oaxaca, Zapotec for example, have an animal “prefix” and require the “animal” subject marker or object marker on the verb (Suárez 1983). Yatzachi Zapotec requires a generic noun in a predicate adjective construction (Butler 1980.227). The most common generic nouns are “thing”, “person” (2 forms), “child” and “animal”. These are also distinctions made in third person pronouns. See also Long (1999) and Stubblefield (1991).

Chatino, a Zapotecan language, also makes extensive use of generic nouns which are obligatory to the names of many animals and plants. These generic nouns have phonological independence. The generic noun “bone” used in several body part terms is sometimes omitted.

In Atzingo Popoloca the most common generic nouns listed are: plant (and cloth), animal, metal, rope, earth, tortilla, tree (and wood or bone), liquid, leather, fruit (or spherical), flower, and stone (or glass). The generic noun is often used anaphorically to refer to the specific item of that class which is old information or which is clear in the immediate context (Austin, Kalstrom y Hernández 1995.305-8).

Chiquihuitlán Mazatec (Jamieson 1996) has generic nouns as first element of tree names and of some plant and herbs. The names of the various “cats” and of the “snakes” have a generic noun, but other animals and insects do not have a classifying generic element.

In some languages the erstwhile modifier may become an independent noun and the classifier become optional, as in Chinantec of Lealao (Rupp and Rupp 1996:392-50. “Head (body part) ”is listed with classifier **mī** in the grammar, and without it in the Spanish index. There are only four classifiers: fruits (and round objects), long narrow objects, half (of something; also something flat, or the length of something), and something woven.

In Usila Chiantec (Skinner and Skinner 2000), there is a list of 7 classifiers, some of which are homophonous. Classifiers are optional, especially in compounds. A noun with a classifier can be the base (generic noun) for a number of lexical items which consist of generic noun plus a qualifier. This may be a case of different historical layers of “classifiers”, one which is older and opaque semantically, and one which is recent and transparent semantically as well as being productive.

Mixtec languages have few elements that can be considered noun classifiers, but pronominal enclitics distinguish “masculine (sg. and pl.)”, “feminine (sg. and pl.)”, “human plural”, “fruit (and round objects)”, “wooden object (also machine)”, “thing,” and “other objects” (Stark, Johnson y González 1999:115-6). A list of insects in the appendix (Stark, Johnson y González 1999:152) shows **tī-** as first element of most nouns in the list; **tī-** (with low tone) appears in the list of roundish vegetables. The pronouns refer to covert categories for the most part, rather than overt classifiers.

However, in Wistrand’s dictionary for Mixtec of Acatlan, Puebla, (Wistrand 1997 ms.) there is an extensive list of trees, all beginning with **nu-**, and the corresponding bound pronoun **-nu** for “wooden article (including tree), large machine, vehicle, pen”. He also lists a **te-** “liquid classifier”

(13 items) and a homophonous **te-** classifier for people (43 items); these are echoed by homophonous bound pronouns –**te** for “liquid” and for “he (non-respectful)”.

There are articles in *Anthropological Linguistics* on classifiers in Uzbek and in Palikur (Brazil). The first article distinguishes between configurational classifiers (referring to some salient physical characteristic of a noun) and taxonomic classifiers (which group certain specific nouns under a generic class noun). The configurational ones are related to specifiers, especially quantifiers (e.g. numeral classifiers in Mayan and Tarascan). The taxonomic classifiers are related to folk taxonomies. The theoretical basis is in Craig 1986. Apart from the classifiers in African languages, there are noun classifiers in Asian languages, Athabaskan verbs (classificatory stems). I suppose there are also classificatory stems in Mexican languages where the object of a transitive verb has to have the salient physical characteristic.

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