



## Summer Institute of Linguistics *in Mexico*

### Work Papers

#### **The Zapotec Grammar Files**

Edited by

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#### **General introduction**

This website presents a work in progress: a general grammatical description of Zapotec, which is part of the large Otomanguean language family in Mexico (Campbell 1997:158). Zapotec and Chatino form the Zapotecan family which is a single genus by Dryer's (1989, 2005) criteria since the speech varieties in it are quite closely related.

There is considerable diversity within Zapotec. This description attempts to present data from many of the more than 50 geographical varieties of Zapotec to accurately present both the similarities as well as the differences between these varieties.

No claim is made about whether the varieties presented are dialects of a single language or are closely related languages or (what seems to be the case) a combination of these alternatives. There is no clear political consensus within Zapotec communities that makes the decision possible at this time, and in fact it is irrelevant for the concerns of this presentation. By the criteria of mutual intelligibility testing (done by recorded text testing, see Egland, Bartholomew & Cruz Ramos (1983:66)) — despite any inadequacies of that method — and by the criteria of adequacy of local literacy programs and materials, the variation is quite significant. The differences may or may not show up in particular grammatical structures since lexicon and phonology have important roles to play as well.

Appendices to individual papers include tables that list the varieties listed in the Ethnologue in alphabetical order by the ISO 639-3 code that they were assigned. Examples throughout the papers are identified as to variant (by the ISO code, written to the left under each example number) and as to source (written to the right at the end of each example).

The papers presented here are working papers that will be revised periodically (see the date in the footer of the first page of each document).

Citation information for each paper is included in each paper.

Comments, questions and suggestions may be sent to [steve\\_marlett@sil.org](mailto:steve_marlett@sil.org). Contributions of papers and ideas for papers are welcome. Each paper will have similar characteristics, aiming at breadth as well as depth in a limited domain, with an emphasis on straightforward description.

#### **References**

Campbell, Lyle 1997. *American Indian languages: The historical linguistics of Native America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dryer, Matthew S. 1989. "Large linguistic areas and language sampling." *Studies in Language* 13.2:257-292.

Dryer, Matthew S. 2005. "Genealogical language list." In: Martin Haspelmath, Matthew S. Dryer, David Gil & Bernard Comrie (eds.) *The world atlas of language structures*, 584-644. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## General Outline

(Topics will be added and rearranged as needed.)

<b>General</b>		Sources of data, Transcription conventions
<b>Lexicon</b>	<b>Word classes</b>	Demonstratives; Nouns; Verbs; Prepositions; Adverbs; Adjectives; Personal pronouns: inventory; Personal pronouns: distribution; Interrogative pronouns; Numbers; Quantifiers
	<b>Vocabulary</b>	Basic vocabulary; Phonological innovations; Kinship
<b>Syntax</b>	<b>Phrases</b>	Noun phrase; Possession; Verb phrase; Prepositional phrase; Counting; The <i>le'e</i> phrase: structural aspects; The <i>la'a</i> 'Base' plus enclitic pronoun phrase.
	<b>Clauses</b>	Basic word order; Equative clauses; Intrasentential coreference
	<b>Sentences</b>	Polar questions; Alternative questions; Variable questions; Tag questions; Rhetorical questions Vocatives Intersentential coreference
<b>Morphology</b>		Verb morphology; Noun morphology (see Nouns)
<b>Discourse</b>		The <i>la'a</i> phrase: discourse uses

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Cheryl A. Black, H. Andrew Black and Stephen A. Marlett (eds). 2009. The Zapotec grammar files. SIL International.  
On-line: <http://mexico.sil.org/resources/archives/35298>.