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Studies in the
Syntax of Mixtecan Languages

C. Henry Bradley
and
Barbara E. Hollenbach
Editors

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1988
To Kenneth L. Pike
in recognition
of his pioneering studies
in Mixtec and in syntax
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Preface

This volume represents the initial installment of a collection of syntactic sketches of Mixtecan languages. Two more volumes are projected for future publication.

Most of these sketches were drafted during a workshop on Mixtec syntax that took place during the spring (February through April) of 1978. This workshop was sponsored by the Summer Institute of Linguistics at its Linguistic Center “Jaime Torres Bodet” in Mitla, Oaxaca, Mexico. It was directed by C. Henry Bradley, who lectured on Mixtec structure, developed the overview and general organization of the material, and consulted with all of the participants at one time or another. He was assisted by three consultants, Charles H. Speck, Julie Blom King, and Barbara E. Hollenbach, all of whom worked with various participants. Hollenbach also played “devil’s advocate.” After the close of the workshop Hollenbach consulted with all the authors in the preparation of revised drafts and edited the final manuscripts.

At the beginning of the workshop session, three objectives were adopted by the group: (1) to gain a better understanding of the syntactic structure of the languages represented (analysis), (2) to report these structures (description), and (3) to discover and record the grammatical similarities and differences among them (comparison). The present volume includes descriptions of three Mixtec languages, one each from the Highland, Lowland, and Coastal areas. Several more descriptions of Mixtec and one of Trique are in preparation, and also a syntactic comparison for inclusion in the final volume.

In an attempt to make the sketches as uniform and comparable as possible, a number of features were standardized: the outline, the categories employed, the abbreviations, and the transcription system. A few notes about this transcription system may be in order here. It can be typed on a standard Spanish keyboard, and it represents the phonological units unambiguously, but it is a compromise that probably does not wholly satis-
fy any of the authors. Further details about the value of symbols are given in section 0.2 of each sketch. One convention that all the authors have followed is to mark major phonological and grammatical breaks within a sentence by a solidus. In examples containing more than a single sentence, the break between sentences is marked by a double solidus (see sect. 6.4). In the literal translation line, a colon links English words that together gloss a single word or morpheme.

For those interested in Mixtec tone systems, a word of caution is in order. Even though the authors have gone to considerable effort to write tone accurately, it has not always been possible to check it with native speakers as carefully as we would have liked. Also, different authors have followed different guidelines in writing tone: some have written underlying tones, and others have written surface tones, i.e., those that result from the application of various tone rules. For these reasons, the tone transcription in these sketches may be misleading as a basis for historical work on tone. In spite of this caveat, however, it seems better to write tone imperfectly than to omit it from the transcription altogether.

I would like to acknowledge all who have contributed to these volumes. First, there are those Indian friends who have shared their lives and their languages with us, both in their villages and at the workshop. Their diligence, hard work, and interest have made these sketches possible. Then, there are those who contributed in other ways: Cathy Marlett, who drew the maps in the Introduction; Betty Forshaw and Ann Church Lloyd, who provided editorial assistance; Diane Bothof López, who typed some of the manuscripts; and Carol Zylstra and Emily Stairs, who edited corrections onto computer disks. Third, it is obvious that without the special skills brought by the consultants, Charles Speck, Julie King, and Barbara Hollenbach, this work could not have been completed. Finally, I want to acknowledge each of the participants, whose willingness, cooperation, and determination have in the long run produced these sketches.

CHB
February 1987