



Marking focus in Sà'án Sàvĩ ñà ñuù Xnúvíkó (Mixtepec Mixtec)

Guillem Belmar, Eric W. Campbell & Jeremías Salazar



This presentation

- The language
- Basic Syntax
 - Relative clauses
- Cleft-constructions
- *(k)wan*: focus marker
- Conclusions



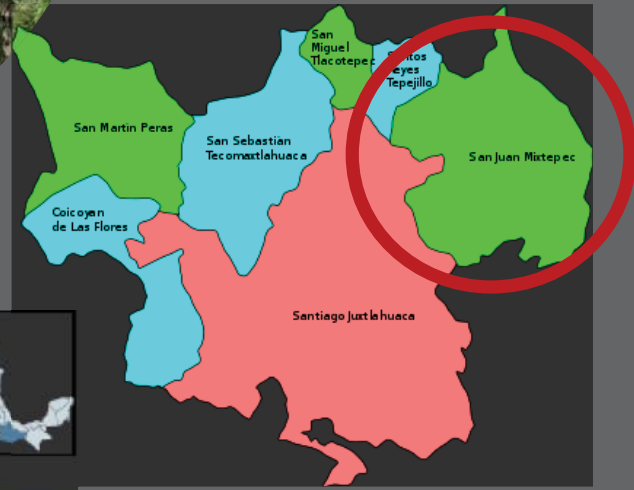
SÀ'ÁN SÀVĪ ÑÀ ÑUÙ XNÚVÍKÓ (MIXTEPEC MIXTEC)

Mixtec (Otomanguean) variety spoken in the municipality of Mixtepec (district of Juxtlahuaca, Oaxaca, Mexico)

About 9,000 speakers (Eberhard et al. 2019)

One of the main branches of Mixtec (Josserand 1983)

Little information on this variety, almost nothing on discourse (Belmar & Jeremías forthcoming)



BASIC SYNTAX: VSO

(1) *Kúu ne'ě lóchí-ka ñà katsí-à.*

kúu	ne'ě	<u>lóchí=ka</u>	<i>ñà</i>	<i>katsí=à</i>
IPFV.be_able	IRR.get	<u>vulture=ANA</u>	<i>RLZ</i>	<i>IRR.eat=3GNR</i>

‘The vulture can get food.’ [Lochi_tsi_ntikuntu1; JS; 03:38]



BASIC SYNTAX: VSO

(2) *Ntsă'nchĩ-tí tavà nìkuu ñàà ntavă-kue-ì-tĩ.*

ntsă'nchà=í=tí	tavà	nìkuu	ñàà
PFV.cut=3F=3ZOO	so_that	PFV.be_able	disc

ntavă=kue=ì=tí
PFV.take_out=PLZ=3GNR=3ZOO

‘She cut it (the hen) so that they could take it out.’ [Ntsatsi_ntivau_chuun; JS; 02:53]



Subjects are always expressed...

(3) *Meé-ní ra tsîni-kà-nĩ istórià (...)*

meé=**ní** ra
INT=**2FORM** TOP

tsîni=kà=**ní** istórià
IPFV.know=more=**2FORM** story

‘You, you know the story better.’ [Ntavi_ntixi; CBL; 06:57]



Subjects are always expressed...

(4) *Né'ě-tǎ xǔ'un luu ntakuáán ñà tsátsǎ.*

né'ě=tà=H xǔ'un
IPFV.get=EMPH=**1PL.INCL** money

luu ntakuaan=H ñà tsátsí=ó
small IRR.buy=**1PL.INCL** RLZ IPFV.eat=**1PL.INCL**

'We do get a bit of money to buy food.' [Ta_tsaa_naa_Yukunani; HVL; 02:04]



...except in Relative Clauses

(5) *Kuà'ă nchuà'a **kue** nà tsíkanuu nùŷ yà'vi-ka ntsìkà kánkúun-nà ñùñŷ luu (...)*

kuà'ă	nchuà'a	kue	nà
many	very	PLZ	REL.PL.HUM

tsíkanuu _____	nùŷyà'vi=ka
IPFV.stroll	square=ANA

ntsìkà	kánkúun=nà	ñùñŷ=lu
PFV.ask_for	specially=3PL.HUM	bee=DIM

‘Many **that** were strolling in the square asked particularly for a small bee (...)’
[Sachuun_tsi_nunu; GML; 06:18]



...except in Relative Clauses

(6) *Ntixì ñà kána ñàà nùǔ yavĩ.*

ntixì	ña	kána	—	ñaà
pulque	RLZ	IPFV.sprout		DISC

nùǔ	yavĩ
OBL	maguey

‘The pulque **that** comes out of the maguey.’ [Ntavi_ntixi; FVM; 03:32]



Cleft-constructions: FOC + *kúu* + Rel. Clause

(7) *Tsàà yachi nchá yó'o (k)úu nchá tsá'a iin ánimò tónó.*

tsàà_yachi nchá yó'o
almost CL.LIQ PROX

kúu **nchá** tsá'a _____ iin ánimò tónó
COP **REL.LIQ** IPFV.give one courage like

‘This (liquid) almost **was what** gave one courage.’ [Ntavi_ntixi; CBL; 06:36]



Cleft-constructions: FOC + kúu + Rel. Clause

(8) *Nà-ka-ni kúu nà ntátú'un xèě-kà tsi-kuê.*

nà=ka=ni	kúu	nà	ntátú'un
CL.PL.HUM=ANA=EMPH	COP	REL.PL.HUM	IPFV.chat

xèě=kà █	tsi=kue= ^L
much=more	COM=PLZ=1

'They are the ones **that** chat the most with us.' [Ntanchiko_Yukunani; A; 14:11]



Relativizer & Relative pronouns

RLZ/REL	Gloss
ñà	generic relativizer
chà	male human relative pronoun
ñá	female human relative pronoun
tí	animal relative pronoun
tú	relative pronoun for trunk-like objects
nchá	relative pronoun for liquids
nà	plural human relative pronoun
su	human child relative pronoun
tí	relative pronoun for round objects
yà	relative pronoun for deities
nùŭ	relative pronoun for location and time

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(k)wan: merger of kúu + ñà

(9) *Tá ntsikà-nà-yù kwàn ntsìnì-yù.*

tá	ntsikà=nà=yù	kwàn	ntsìnì=yù
when	PFV.ask_for=3PL.HUM=1	FOC	PFV.know=1

‘It’s when they asked for me (my hand) **that** I found out.’ [Tantaa-na_Yukunani; A; 05:08]

Marking what is uttered before *kwàn* as the *portion of the utterance that is, to the best of the speaker’s knowledge, unknown by their interlocutors* (Lambrecht 1994: 58).

*Conventionally spelled as *kúu-ñà* in our materials



(k)wan: merger of kúu + ñà

(10) *Ntuvà wàn tá'àn nchuà'a inì-tĩ.*

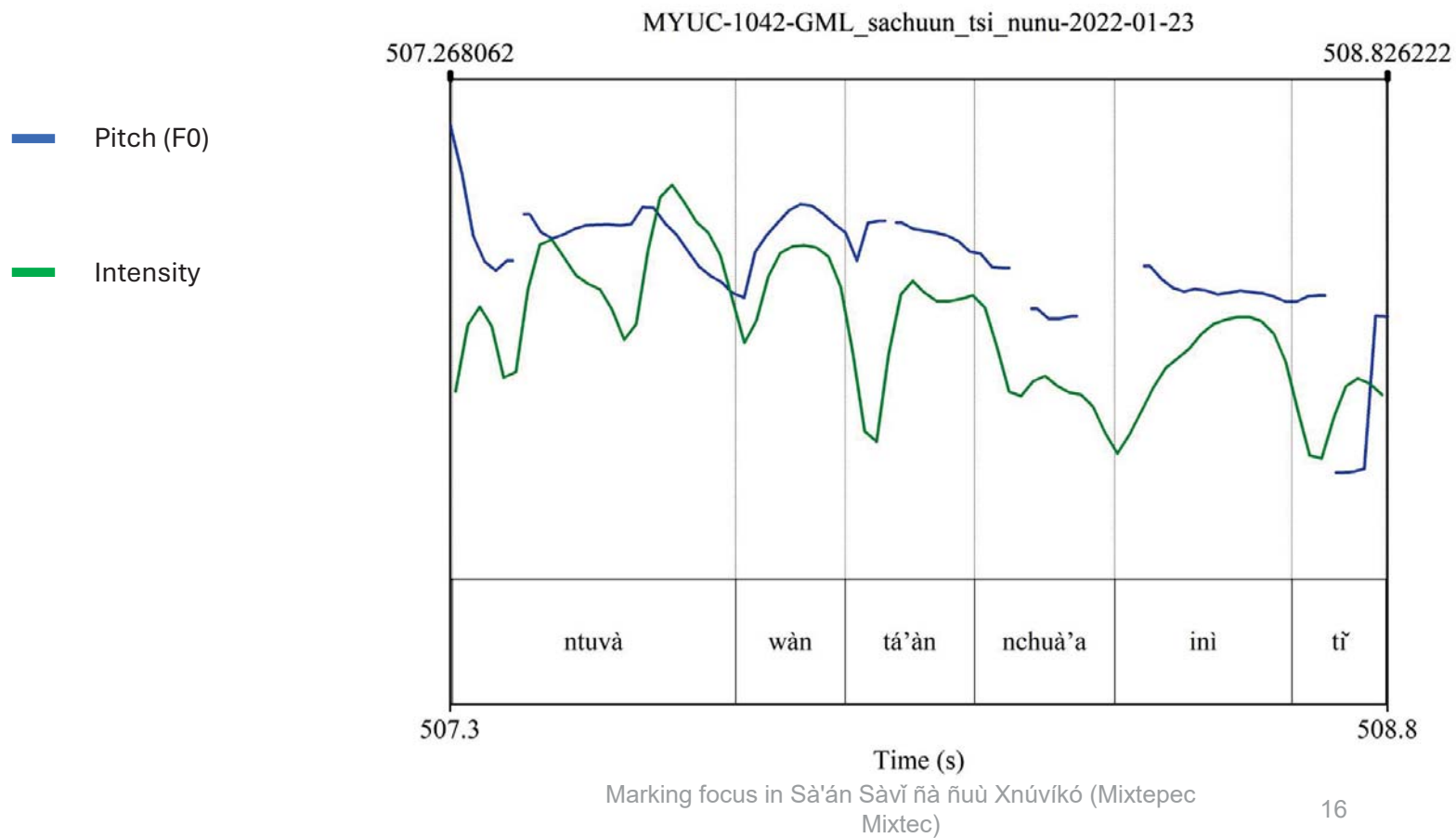
ntuvà	wàn	tá'àn	nchuà'a	inì=tí
edible_herb	FOC	IPFV.touch	very	core=3ZOO

‘It is edible herbs **that** they like a lot.’ [Sachuun_tsi_nunu; GML; 08:27]

The use of *wan* here is isolating the argument ‘edible herbs’ as the only correct alternative (Krifka 2008)



Post-focal compression?



(k)wan: merger of kúu + ñà, still a cleft?

(11) Sè'ê **wàn** nìntòo-ka.

sè'e=L **wàn** nìntòo=ka —
offspring=1 **FOC** PFV.stay=ANA

‘It’s my sons **that** stayed there.’ [Ntanchiko_Yukunani; A; 07:36]

The speaker isolates the argument ‘my sons’ as the only correct answer to the question who stayed there?

No subject pronoun! = typical of relative clauses. Still a cleft?



(k)wan: becoming its own thing

(12) *Español luu kwàn ntàsămî sà'án (...)*

español=lu	kwàn	ntàsăma=i	sà'án
Spanish=DIM	FOC	PFV.change= 3GNR	language

‘It is Spanish **that** changed the language (Spanish changed the language spoken in Tlaxiaco)’ [Kue_nivi_yata; NHG; 00:30]

Resumptive pronoun! (3GNR)



(k)wan: becoming its own thing

(13) *Ñà skuá'a-nà wàn tavà ná kúu chaa-nà.*

ñà	skuá'a=nà	wàn	tavà	ná	kúu
SUB	IRR.learn=3PL.HUM	FOC	so_that	DEO	IRR.be_able

chaa=nà
IRR.write=3PL.HUM

‘To study (it), so that they can write (it)’

***(k)wàn* to introduce answers to questions (what’s this for?),
without introducing a Rel. Clause
Co-occurring with other types of subordinate clauses (purpose)**



(k)wan: becoming its own thing

(14) *Tù'un tsàà na'á wàn nti'i ñà snà'â-nà nùŭ-kó tsàà na'á.*

tù'un	tsàà	naá	wàn	nti'i	ñà	s-nà'â=nà
word	IAM	early	FOC	all	RLZ	CAUS-remember=3PL.HUM

nùŭ=kó	tsàà	naá
OBL=1PL.INCL	IAM	early

‘The ancient knowledge is **everything that** they taught us.’
[Ntanchiko_Yukunani; A; 09:31]

It may precede (light-)headed relative clauses (Citko 2004)



RECAP

- Pre-verbal position is marked
- Cleft constructions (ARGUMENT + COP + REL. CLAUSE) used to mark focus, or *the portion of the utterance that is, to the best of the speaker's knowledge, unknown by their interlocutors* (Lambrecht 1994: 58)
- Common strategy to isolate an argument as the only correct alternative (Krifka 2008)

RECAP

- In cleft constructions, the combination of the copula (*kúu*) and the generic relativizer (*ñà*) merged phonologically into (*k*)*wàn* [*k^wã¹*] or [*wã¹*] → segmental erosion
 - This did not happen with other relative pronouns, possibly an effect of frequency (see Bybee 1985)
- This new form still works, for the most part, as a cleft construction = It marks the preceding element as the focus of the sentence and it is followed by a relative clause
 - Function = marking focus
 - Syntactically, a relative clause

RECAP

- But, some evidence points at an ongoing process whereby *(k)wan* is no longer just parsed as COP + RLZ (*kúu + ñà*), rather as a single unit
 - It can appear with resumptive pronouns
 - It does not always introduce a relative clause
 - It co-occurs with other types of subordinate clauses (not introducing them)
 - It co-occurs with light-headed relative clauses (not introducing them)
- But it still marks focus!
- **Its function as a *focus marker* has become independent from the cleft-construction**

CONCLUSION

- The function of *(k)wan* (*kúu-ñà*) as a focus marker has become independent from the cleft-construction
- Emergence of a focus marker (rather than a syntactic structure used to mark focus)

Acknowledgements



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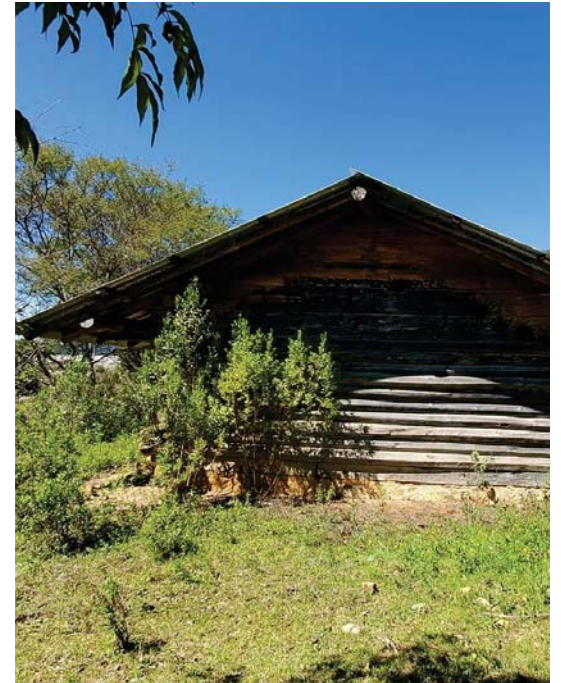
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¡Tá tsà'vĩ-kue-ní!

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¡TÁ TSÀ'VĬ-KUE-NÍ ÑÀÀ
CHÁA SÒ'O-NÍ!

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