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+ Linguistic News Lines

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JAKALTEK DIRECTIONALS: 
THEIR MEANING AND DISCOURSE FUNCTION
Colette G. Craig (University of Oregon)

Jakaltek has an extensive system of directionals which includes three different subsets of suffixes. This paper first describes these directionals and the spatial and aspectual semantics attributed to them, then argues that rather than movement of a figure, they trace the line of a trajectory in space between critical points considered from a particular point of view. A question is then raised about the actual discourse function of these directionals in light of the fact that their use seems "optional". Based on a narrative text count, the directionals seem limited to about a third of the predicates. Sample text excerpts are shown to introduce the idea that directionals are used to create imagery and describe specific, individuated events. Drawing a parallel between the structure of the verb and that of NPs, it is suggested in conclusion that the individuating role of directionals is not unlike the individuating role of noun classifiers in the language.1

1. Description of the Jakaltek directional system2
1.1. Overview of the Jakaltek directional system

There are ten directionals in Jakaltek, each of which co-exists in the language with the motion verb from which it has evolved. The inventory, shown in Table I, was first given in Craig (1979:35).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECTIONALS</th>
<th>MOTION VERBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-toj</td>
<td>toyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tij</td>
<td>tita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-(a)h</td>
<td>ahi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-(a)y</td>
<td>ayi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-(o/e/i)k</td>
<td>oki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-(e/i)l</td>
<td>eli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-(e/i)k'</td>
<td>ek'i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pax</td>
<td>paxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kan</td>
<td>kani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kanh</td>
<td>kanh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Directionals may be used on verbal predicates of action (1), static predicates (2), and non-verbal predicates, such as positionals (3a), adjectives (3b), and participles (3c).

(1) a. sirnih-ay-toj sb'a naj sat pahaw A3.E3.threw-DIR-DIR E3.REFL NCL/he E3.in.front cliff
    b'et wichen
    into gully

1. This paper was originally presented at the 1992 meetings of the American Anthropological Association in San Francisco, and subsequently at a meeting of Mayan linguists that took place at Reed College in May 1993. I would like to acknowledge here the comments I received from linguists at both meetings, and would like to thank in particular Roberto Zavala and Tom Larsen for their help in getting this and other talks on directionals into shape and in publishable manuscript form.

2. The analysis of Jakaltek presented here is based primarily on my own fieldnotes collected in Jacaltenango during field trips that took place between 1969 and 1980. Besides my own, the material available to me is from Day (1966, 1973), Mendez (1967), Lansing (1967) and Datz (1980). Two of the three narrative versions of the folktale used as the primary database for this paper come from Datz (1980) and one is from my own text collection. The data was rechecked and some direct elicitation examples were gathered from a native speaker, Victor Montejo, on the occasion of two brief encounters in June of 1991 and November of 1992.
The position of the arc on the disk of the solar eclipse was measured in degrees from the center of the disk. The observations were made during an eclipse on March 29, 1961, at the solar observatory in Turin, Italy. The sun was observed through a series of filters to determine the degree of obscuration during the eclipse. The arc was measured at different phases of the eclipse and the data was recorded.

The observations were compared with theoretical predictions of the solar eclipse, made by astronomers at the solar observatory. The results showed a good agreement between the observed and predicted positions of the arc. The eclipse was observed by astronomers from various locations around the world, and the data was used to improve the accuracy of future solar eclipse predictions.

The study also included a review of previous observations of solar eclipses and the development of new methods for measuring the position of the arc. The results of this study have been used in subsequent research on solar eclipses, and continue to be of interest to astronomers studying the behavior of the sun and its environment.
the directional threshold

Table 3.2: Predictive frequency of directional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Predictive with</th>
<th>Predictive without</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 3.2 reveal that the predictive frequency of directional orientation is highest in the East direction and lowest in the South direction.

3.1.1. The use of directional

The use of directional orientation in the predictive frequency of directional orientation is important in the overall frequency of the directional threshold.

3.1.2. Predictive frequency of directional

However, there is a marked difference in the frequency of use of directional orientation, as shown in Table 3.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Predictive with</th>
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<td>21</td>
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The results in Table 3.2 reveal that the predictive frequency of directional orientation is highest in the East direction and lowest in the South direction.

3.1.3. The use of directional

The use of directional orientation in the predictive frequency of directional orientation is important in the overall frequency of the directional threshold.
motion, based on various examples involving directionalities with non-motion predicates. It also showed that
the construction of the trajectory necessitates locating several points in space: that of the initiator of the
event, that of the endpoint of the event, and that of the point of view taken to frame the event in space
from which directionality is calculated. Contrastive chunks of narrative text highlighted the discourse
function of directionalities as that of creating the imagery
of spatially specified events.

In an interesting way, one could conceive of the discourse function of directionalities as parrallel to what is
understood as the major discourse function of noun classifiers in the same language, i.e. in terms of their
encoding the individuation of a nominal (although the parallel may not hold for referentiality). The role of
Jalakte classifiers as individuation markers was described in Craig (1986a, b) and the general role of
individuation of the various classifier systems found in the languages of the world was further discussed
in Craig (1992). The general idea of a parrallelism in the structures of predicates and noun phrases is more
amply discussed in Rijkhoff (1990).

This paper was only meant to outline some lines of inquiry and initial working hypotheses than need to be
further developed. In particular, this preliminary study of a corpus of narrative texts indicates that the use
of directionalities in discourse might be a very promising area for future research.

Abbreviations

A Absolutive, AP antipassive, AUX auxiliary, COM completive, DIR directional, E ergative, EV evidential, EXIST
existential, FOC focus, INC incoompletive, IRR irrealis, NCL Nominal classifier, NEG negation, PL plural, REFL
reflexive, 1 first person, 2 second person, 3 third person.

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