The Oto-Manguean language family is large (177) and diverse (8 language groups) with segmental inventories ranging from 14 to 30 consonants and four to nine vowels (Suárez, 1983). Strategies in word structure complexity vary greatly among languages. Some such languages like Huautla Mazatec (HM) and Xochistlahuaca Amuzgo (XA) employ different suprasegmental approaches (nasalization, voicing contrasts, the ballistic-controlled distinction) to complexify (and enrich) otherwise simple syllable structures.

In this paper, I will apply the model proposed by Golston and Kehrein (1998) to XA using the corpora from Zeferino (2004) and the Endangered Language Alliance (2010, 2011, 2013) in order to do away with the bulkiness of the account in Fig. 2. Though XA has different strategies from those of HM in their field of application (primarily to non-plosives, except for laryngealization, and the ballistic-controlled contrast) and actually fills the post-nasalization inventory gap from Fig. 1 (one of the motivations of Golston and Kehrein’s model), application of the Golston and Kehrein model allows for a simpler account of some of the otherwise complex series of features. This gives us an immediate retranscription as shown in Fig. 3 and 4.

While the model from Fig. 3 is able to simplistically represent complexity in the HM features, Fig. 4 is somewhat less effective: the post-nasalization and the ballistic-controlled series (in bold) are not immediately subsumable and require further examination. This paper will address this using further evidence both from the phonetics (Silverman (1994) and Herrera (2000)), the phonology (Mugele 1982), and the morphology thereby examining motivations of ‘simplexity’ over complexity.
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