# Ergativity and Information Structure: Comparing Chibchan languages (CHIBERGIS)
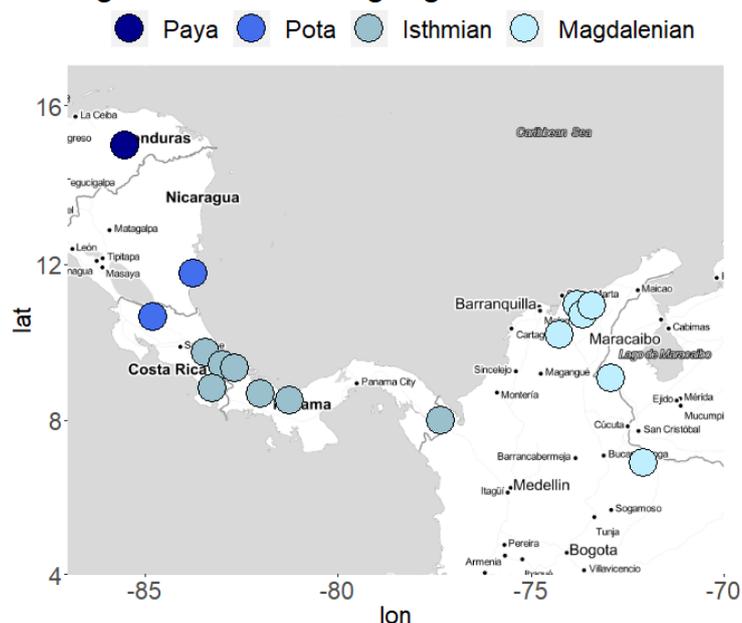
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## Summary

Linguistic research in the last decades has established substantial knowledge about complex grammatical phenomena at several layers of the grammar. A challenge for the current linguistic research is to understand the linking between these layers of linguistic structure. This project investigates two layers of clause structure: alignment and information structure as well as the interaction between these layers. The project targets are motivated by the current research and collaboration of a network of French and German linguists sharing a common interest in the creation of empirical and analytical tools for the description of endangered languages. It will provide deeply annotated corpora and empirical studies on a language family that is understudied and underrepresented in linguistic research, namely Chibchan (the members being dispersed in the geographical area from Honduras in Central America to Colombia and Venezuela in South America). The core team of the project will examine three languages in detail (Pesh, Cabécar, Ika) and the project partners will conduct comparative studies in further languages, in order to obtain a detailed picture of the micro-variation within this language family. The methodological approach combines exploratory research based on corpora and confirmatory research through field experiments. This combined approach will provide insights into the different types of field data and will yield a sustainable resource for future study of the Chibchan languages. The research goals include (a) a detailed structural investigation of the syntactic and semantic properties of ergativity, (b) a study on information structure focusing on the role of microvariation in word order possibilities, and (c) a precise examination of the role of information structure in languages with optional ergative marking, which is a phenomenon that has been observed for several languages but is not yet studied or understood in detail. The project teams integrate a large group of linguists in France and Germany and will enhance their existing collaborations with cooperative measures in research and in the qualification of PhD students that will lead to collaborative products and will create a scientific network.

Fig. 1. Chibchan languages

The core team of the project (Claudine Chamoreau, Stavros Skopeteas, Lisa Verhoeven, Jana Barjorat Marie Benzerrak, Roberto Herrera, Natalia Caceres) will examine five languages in detail (Pesh, Cabécar, Ika, Boruca, Maleku) and the project partners (Enrique Palancar, Katharina Haude, Lisa Brunetti, Isabelle Bril, Amina Mettouchi, Kortula De Kuthy, Stefani Dipper, Anke Lüdeling, Arndt Riester) will conduct comparative studies in further languages, in order to obtain a detailed picture of the micro-variation within this language family.

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