From deixis to discourse: the development of focus marking in dialects of Chiapas Zoque

1 Introduction

- introductory remarks: relationship between dialectology and historical linguistics
- dialects often represent different stages of historical development in specific grammatical domains (here, focus marking)
- useful for languages for which no or few historical records are available
- development of teʔ in Chiapas Zoque: demonstrative → copula → focus marker → other discourse functions
- Chiapas Zoque (Mixe-Zoquean, Zoquean): spoken in the (southeastern) Mexican state of Chiapas
- data from dialects of Tecpatán (Colonial), Copainalá, Francisco León, Ocotepec, Tapalapa

Gómez Domínguez (2003: 23)
The starting point: Colonial Tecpatán Zoque

- according to the written records available, Colonial Zoque (Tecpatán dialect) had no copula (though there was an existential predicate *it*):
  “En esta lengua no ay *sum, es, fui* […]” (González 1672: 35)
- nominal predication is expressed by juxtaposition/cliticization (PRED-ARG):¹

(1) *alcald* = ?ʌh
  mayor=PRO1ABS
  ‘I am the mayor.’ (González 1672: 35)

(2) *mis-kapay = ha?*
  2POSS-sister.in.law=Q
  ‘Was it your sister in law (you sinned with)?’ (González 1672: 294)

(3) *anima-tis tuksipa tuka?y-pa: …

  soul-GEN enemy three-ATTR
  ‘There are three enemies of the soul: …’
  (lit.: ‘The enemies of the soul are three: …’) (González 1672: 286)

Teʔ in Copainalá Zoque

3.1 From pronoun to copula?

- like Colonial Tecpatán Zoque, (contemporary) Copainalá Zoque is generally described as not having a copula (Wonderly 1951c, Harrison et al. 1981)
- use of pronouns/pronominal clitics in non-verbal predication (Harrison et al. 1981: 449)
- pronominal clitics (absolutive):
  - ?ʌh ‘I’
  - mih ‘you’
  - teʔ ‘s/he, it’ (often also empty/Ø)

(4) a. *pan = ?ʌh*  (> paʔnʌh, by metathesis)
  man=PRO1ABS
  ‘I am a man.’

b. *NY-pan = mih*  (> mbyamih)
  2ABS-man=PRO2ABS
  ‘You are a man.’

c. *pan = teʔ*  (> pandeʔ)
  man=PRO3ABS
  ‘He is a man.’
  (Harrison et al. 1981: 499)

- predicative adjectives:

(5) *maha  [teʔ taka]*
  big DET house
  ‘The house is big.’ (Harrison et al. 1981: 450)

- nouns and attributive adjectives:

(6) *[NP  maha-pa  taka] = teʔ*
  big-ATTR house=PRO3
  ‘It is a big house.’ (Harrison et al. 1981: 450)

¹ González (1672) does not indicate glottal stops, nor does he differentiate in all cases between the phonemically distinct vowels /ʌ/ (central, open) and /a/ (central, close).
(7) [NP teʔ tʌk] maha-pa = teʔ
DET house big-ATTR=PRO3ABS
‘The house is (a) big (one).’ (Harrison et al. 1981: 450)

- indications of development from pronoun to copula: teʔ is used with non-third person pronouns (cf. (8)) and with demonstratives (cf. (9))

(8) ?ah = teʔ
PRO1ABS=DEM/COP
‘It is me.’ (Wonderly 1952a: 40)

(9) Yαʔwa = teʔ teʔ as une, kamatoʔhay-tam-a Y-neʔka
DEM=DEM/COP DET my son listen.to-PL-IMP 3POSS-PRO3
‘This is my son, listen to him!’ (Harrison et al. 1981: 417)

- teʔ was originally a demonstrative (cf. Wichmann 1995: 460); it is also used as a definite article in Copainalá Zoque

- processes of change:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>demonstrative</th>
<th>definite article</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pronoun</td>
<td>copula</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- development from pronoun to copula:

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the house, big it
TOP, [COM PRED SUBJ]
SUBJ PRED COP
the house big is
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- comparable developments have happened in many other languages
- Mandarin Chinese shì (cf. Li & Thompson 1977)

(10) shì as a demonstrative determiner
Fuzi zhiyu shì bang ye.
master arrive at this nation PRT
‘The master arrived at this nation.’ (5th cent. BC; from Chang 2006: 133)

(11) shì as a demonstrative pronoun
Fu yu gui shì ren zhi suo yu ye.
wealth and nobility this person GEN thing want PRT
‘Wealth and nobility, these are things for which everyone longs.’
(4th-3rd cent. BC; from Chang 2006: 133)

(12) shì as a copula (Contemporary Mandarin)
Kongzi shì xian ren
Confucius is virtuous person
‘Confucius is a virtuous person.’ (contemporary; from Chang 2006: 132)
3.2 From copula to focus marker?

- cleft constructions in Copainalá Zoque

\[(13)\] \(Te\?w\?a\? = te\? yomo \ iwa\-hi\?y = mih \ NY\-mang\-pa \ Kuñama\)

\[This = \text{COP the woman who-with=you 2ABS-go-ICP Coapilla}\]

‘This is the woman you (will) go to Coapilla with.’ (Harrison et al. 1981: 420)

- use of \(te\?) with question words (no relativizer → no cleft)

\[(14)\] \(Hutip\? = a?m = te\? \ te\? \ makškuy\-?ohmo \ na \ Y-suhts-u?\)

\[which = \text{PERF=COP DET four-in CNT 3ERG-lie-DEP}\]

‘Which of the four is (the one who is) lying?’ (Harrison et al. 1981: 420)

- further process of change:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>demonstrative</th>
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- similar development: Irish English, presumably as a result of language contact with Gaelic (cf. Harris 1991: 199)

- clefts have a wider distribution than in Standard English (type of clefted constituent, discourse environment)

- relativizer is usually omitted; \([\text{expletive } + \text{copula}]\) can be regarded as a focus marker

\[(15)\]

a. It’s flat it was.

b. It is looking for more land a lot of them are.

c. It’s badly she’d do it now. (Harris 1991: 199)

4 Te in the dialect of Ocotepec

- grammaticalization of \(te\?) is more advanced than in Copainalá Zoque

- three processes of reduction (cf. Faarlund 2005)

  o loss of final gottal stop:
    \(te\?(\text{pronoun, article}) \rightarrow te\ (\text{copula, focus marker})\)
  
  o change in phonological status: from independent word (\(te\?\)) to clitic (=\(te\))
  
  o omission of relativizer/nominalizer \(-p\)

- moreover, generalization of copula to first and second person even in cases of pronominal cliticization (≠ Copainalá dialect):

\[(16)\] \(aqmayobya\?a = ?tsi = te\)

\[teacher = \text{PRO1ABS=COP}\]

‘I am a teacher.’ (Faarlund 2005)
• cleft-constructions with relativizer -pʌ (te glossed as COP)

(17) background > focus (‘pseudo-cLEFTs’)

a. \[NP \text{te} ηa Y-sʌŋ-u -pʌ \] tumin = te
that CNT 3ERG-shine-DEP -REL money = COP
‘That which is shining is [money]{F}.’ [PTD]\(^2\)

b. \[NP \text{a}ht \etaa t sʌt-n-u -pʌ \] kayu = te
PRO1ERG CNT = 1ERG want- DEP - REL horse = COP
‘What I want is [a horse]{F}.’ [PTD]

(18) focus > background

a. Hudam = te m-pat-u-pʌ te tumin?
where = COP 2ERG-find-CP-REL the money
‘Where exactly did you find the money?’ (Faarlund 2005)

b. Y-mukin = te ηa Y-nuʔ-k-u-pʌ
3POSS-brother = COP CNT 3ABS.DEP-come-DEP-REL
‘It was [her brother]{F} who was coming.’ [PTD]

• omission of relativizer/nominalizer –pʌ (te glossed as FOC); cf. (19) vs. (18a)

(19) Hudam = te m-pat-u te tumin?
where = FOC 2ERG-find-CP the money
‘Where exactly did you find the money?’ (Faarlund 2005)

(20) teʔ-koda = te hin = am miw-ʌ tʌn-tam-e
that-CAUSE = FOC not = PERF come-DEP see-1PL-DEP
‘That’s why they don’t come to see us.’ [PTD]

• in some cases the scope of the focus marker seems to change: (18a) vs. (19)

(18a) Hudam = te m-pat-u-pʌ te tumin?
where = COP 2ERG-find-CP-REL the money
‘Where was it that you found the money?’ (Faarlund 2005)

(19) Hudam = te m-pat-u te tumin?
where = FOC 2ERG-find-CP the money
‘Where exactly did you find the money?’ (Faarlund 2005)

• further semantic development: context extension of te (generalization); te is used in
more syntactic and semantic environments (‘contrastiveness condition’ originally
associated with clefts is weakened)

(21) Y-ʔihs-u = ?m = ʔuy = te ke suʔi-mʌ iht-u
3ERG-see-CP = PERF = EVP = FOC C beautiful-LOC.SUB exist-CP
‘Then he saw that he was at a beautiful place.’ [PTD]

(22) i mak-u = m = ʔuy = te teʔ pʌt
and go-CP = PERF = EVP = FOC DET man
‘and the man left.’ [PTD]

\(^2\) PTD: Pekatsamedam, a corpus of stories written in the dialects of Ocotepec and Tapalapa dialect compiled by
J.T. Faarlund (still under construction).
moreover: tendency towards lexicalization of specific elements typically associated with focus (question words and negation):

\[ ti \rightarrow ti=te (> tide) \text{ ‘what’, } hiʔn \rightarrow hiʔn=te \text{ or } hin=te (> hinde) \text{ ‘it is not the case that’} \]

(23) \[ maka =?t \ n?-ʔhs-i \ tide \ iht-u \ teʔ-omo \]
\[ \text{FUT=PRO1ERG 1ERG-see-DEP what(FOC) exist-CP PRO3-LOC} \]
‘I will see what is in it.’ [PTD]

(24) \[ hinde \ y-wa-pa \ wa’ Y-yahksahk-yah-u \ tsame-pa=n=tam \]
\[ \text{NEG(FOC) 3ERG-good-REL COMP 3ERG-mistreat-3PL-DEP old-people=PL} \]
‘It is not good that they mistreat old people.’ [PTD]

• further phonological change: te is integrated into the paradigm of clitics:
  - o =ʔuŋ evidential
  - o =naʔahk past tense
  - o =ʔt 1st person ergative pronoun
  - o =ʔtsi 1st person absolutive pronoun
  - o =tam plural
  - etc.

(25) \[ te \text{ as a copula} \]
\[ y=\text{metsa} \ pa=n=tam \ kompagre=‘uŋ=te=na’ahk=tam \]
\[ \text{DEM two man=PL compadre=EV=COP=PAST=PL} \]
‘(people say that) those two men were compadres.’ [PTD]

(26) \[ te \text{ as a focus marker} \]
\[ poy-u=aʔm=uŋ=te \ numchudí \]
\[ \text{run-CP=PERF=EV=PRED secretly} \]
‘They ran secretly.’ [PTD]

• placement of clitics: the ‘clitic block’ tends to attach to the highest/first constituent of the predicate complex (AUX > V > N \text{PRED} > X)
• therefore, te (as a copula or focus marker) is often not a sister of the predicate or focus

(27) \[ pero \ te? \ tsami \ nimeke=uŋ=te \ hemets-pa \]
\[ \text{but DET load very=EV=PRED heavy-REL} \]
‘But the load was very heavy.’ (lit.: ‘The load very=they.say=was heavy.’)

4.2 \text{ Te in Francisco León Zoque}

• similar to Ocotepec
• phonological reduction of te?to =te/=ete (after consonants/vowels)
• additional focus marker: =e (from another demonstrative stem he)
• example of a contrastive focus in Francisco León

(28) \[ pero \ hiʔn=te \ keso \ sino \ hama=ti=ŋ=e \ saʔŋ-pa \ maхи \]
\[ \text{but NEG=FOC cheese but sun=EM=EVD=FOC shine-ICP above} \]
‘but it’s not cheese, it’s the sun what is shining above.’ Engel et al. (1987: 398)

• =\text{(e)te} is often used in thetic sentences

(29) \[ he \ Y-vahs-kat-pa-pa =ti=ŋ=ete. \]
\[ \text{this 3ERG-well-lick-ICP-REL=EMP=EVD=FOC} \]
‘(they say) he was just licking (without eating)’ Engel et al. (1987: 395)
(30) Pokyâht-\(u\)-\(p\)\(a\) = \(ti\) = \(te\).
run.pass-CP-ATTR=EMP=COP
‘(the fact is that) he passed running.’ Engel et al. (1987: 395)

4.3 Contextual extensions of \(te\) in the dialect of Tapalapa

- \(te\) often indicates a ‘topic shift’

(31) rey-\(?i\)s = \(a\)?m = \(te\) yaktzoŋ-\(u\) maks\(k\)y\(u\) ora-seq\(?-omo\)
king-ERG=PERF=TOP answer-CP four hour-SIM-at
‘the king answered: at four o’clock.’

te \(\text{pan}\)-\(?i\)s = \(a\)?m = \(te\) yaktzoŋ-\(u\) = \(n\) = \(te\) homi t\(uh\)k-pa \(te\) yoškuy
DET man-ERG=PERF=COP answer-CP=PERF=COP tomorrow happen-ICP DET work
‘the man answered: “tomorrow the work will be done.”’

\(y\)-hobi-k = \(a\)?m = \(te\) \(\text{pat}\) nu\(?k\)-\(u\) \(wa\) \(y\)-ho\(?k\)-yah-\(u\)
3POSS-foll.day-TEMP.SUB=PERF=COP DET man arrive-CP to 2ERG-wait.for-PL-CP

te kuhmy\(a\)
DET near.tree
‘the following day, the man arrived at the tree to wait (for the giants).’

- \(te\) seems to be almost devoid of meaning
- change from focus marker to topic marker: via ‘contrastive topics’ (cf. Büring 1997)?
- further processes of change?

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</tr>
</thead>
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<td>topic marker</td>
<td>etc. ?</td>
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5 Summary and conclusions

- dialect variation provides clues to processes of historical change
- function of \(te\) in dialects of Chiapas Zoque mirrors geographical location of the dialects (grammaticalization cline from west to east)
- spread of linguistic innovations through dialect continuum
- more dialect research needs to be carried out in under-described languages
Abbreviations

ABSolutive  FUTure
ATTRibutive  GENitive
CAUSitive  InComPletive
ComPletive aspect  LOCative
CoNTinuative  LOCative SUBordinative
COPula  NEGative
DEMonstrative  PERFective
DEPendent verb  POSSessive
DETerminer  PROnoun
EMphasis  Question
ERGative  RELative
EVidential  SIMilative
FOCus  TOPic

References

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