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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

Región I

1. Tecpatán
2. Copainalá
3. Francisco León

Región II

4. Chapultenango
5. Tapalapa
6. Ocotepec

Chiapas

Región III

7. Pantepec
8. Rayón
9. Tapilula

Región IV

10. Jitotol
11. Simojovel

Gómez Domínguez (2003: 23)

2 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) *alcalde = ʔʌh*
mayor=PRO1ABS
'I am the mayor.' (González 1672: 35)

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

(3) *anima-ʔis tuksipʌ tukaʔy-pʌ*: …
soul-GEN enemy three-ATTR
'There are three enemies of the soul: …'
(lit.: 'The enemies of the soul are three: …') (González 1672: 286)

3 *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 (absolute): *ʔʌh* 'I'
  mih 'you'
  teʔ 's/he, it' (often also empty/Ø)

(4) a. *pʌn = ʔʌh* (> *pʌʔnʌh*, by metathesis)
man=PRO1ABS
'I am a man.'

b. *NY-pʌn = mih* (> *mbyʌnmih*)
2ABS-man=PRO2ABS
'You are a man.'

c. *pʌn = teʔ* (> *pʌndeʔ*)
man=PRO3ABS
'He is a man.'
(Harrison et al. 1981: 499)

- predicative adjectives:

(5) *mʌha* [*teʔ tʌk*]
big DET house
'The house is big.' (Harrison et al. 1981: 450)

- nouns and attributive adjectives:

(6) [NP *mʌha-pʌ tʌk*] = *teʔ*
big-ATTR house=PRO3
'It is a big house.' (Harrison et al. 1981: 450)

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[1] González (1672) does not indicate glottal stops, nor does he differentiate in all cases between the phonemically distinct vowels /a/ (central, open) and /ʌ/ (central, close).

(7) [$_{NP}$ *teʔ*   *tʌk*]   *mʌha-pʌ = 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))
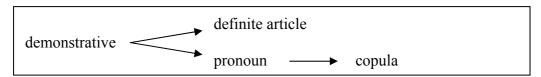
(8) *ʔʌh = teʔ*
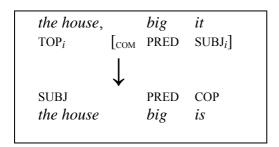 PRO1ABS=DEM/COP
  'It is me.' (Wonderly 1952a: 40)

(9) *Yʌʔwʌ=teʔ*   *teʔ* *ʌs* *une,* *kʌmatoʔŋʌy-tam-ʌ*   *Y-neʔkʌ*
  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:

- development from pronoun to copula:

- comparable developments have happened in many other languages
- Mandarin Chinese *shì* (cf. Li & Thompson 1977)

(10) *shì* as a demonstrative determiner
  Fuzi   *zhi*   *yu*   *shi*   *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*   *shi* *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)

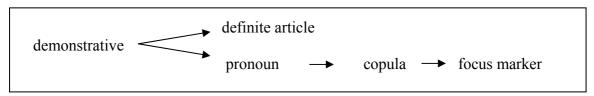(12) *shì* as a copula (Contemporary Mandarin)
  Kongzi   *shi*   *xian*   *ren*
  Confucis is   virtuous person
  'Confucius is a virtuous person.' (contemporary; from Chang 2006: 132)

3.2 From copula to focus marker?

- cleft constructions in Copainalá Zoque

(13) *Teʔwʌʔ=teʔ teʔ yomo   iwʌ-hiʔŋ=mih NY-mang-pa Kuñʌmʌ*
　　 this=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 *teʔ* with question words (no relativizer → no cleft)

(14) *Hutipʌ=aʔm=teʔ teʔ makškuy-ʔohmo nʌ   Y-suhts-uʔ*
　　 which=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:

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                              ┌──→  definite article
demonstrative  ──────<
                              └──→  pronoun  ──→  copula  ──→  focus marker
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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; [expletive + 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 *teʔ* is more advanced than in Copainalá Zoque
- three processes of reduction (cf. Faarlund 2005)
  - loss of final gottal stop:
    teʔ (pronoun, article) > *te* (copula, focus marker)
  - change in phonological status: from independent word (*teʔ*) to clitic (=*te*)
  - omission of relativizer/nominalizer *-pʌ*
- moreover, generalization of copula to first and second person even in cases of pronominal cliticization (≠ Copainalá dialect):

(16) *aŋmayobyabʌ=ʔtsi=te*
　　 teacher=PRO1ABS=COP
　　 'I am a teacher.' (Faarlund 2005)

- cleft-constructions with relativizer *-pʌ* (*te* glossed as COP)

(17) background > focus ('pseudo-clefts')

    a.   [NP *teʔ nʌ 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 *ʌht   nʌ = t   sutn-u   -pʌ*] *kayu = te*
          PRO1ERG CNT=1ERG want-DEP -REL horse=COP
          'What I want is [a horse]F.' [PTD]

(18) focus > background

    a.   *Hudʌm = te m-pat-u-pʌ   te tumin?*
          where=COP 2ERG-find-CP-REL the money
          '[Where]F was it that you found the money?' (Faarlund 2005)

    b.   *Y-mukin = te   nʌ   Y-nuʔk-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) *Hudʌm = 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   tun-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) *Hudʌm = 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) *Hudʌm = 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 = ʔm = ʔuŋ = te   ke suñi-mʌ   iht-u*
    3ERG-see-CP=PERF=EV=FOC C beautiful-LOC.SUB exist-CP
    'Then he saw that he was at a beautiful place.' [PTD]

(22) *i   mak-u = m = ʔuŋ = te te? pʌt*
    and   go-CP=PERF=EV=FOC DET man
    'and the man left.' [PTD]

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[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 → *ti=te* (> *tide*) 'what', *hiʔn* → *hiʔn=te* or *hin=te* (> *hinde*) 'it is not the case that'

(23) *maka=ʔt   n-ʔihs-i   tide   iht-u   teʔ-omo*
FUT=PRO1ERG   1ERG-see-DEP what(FOC) exist-CP PRO3-LOC
'I will see what is in it.' [PTD]

(24) *hinde   y-wʌ-pʌ   wa'   Y-yahksʌhk-yah-u   tsame-pʌn=tam*
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:
    - *=ʔuŋ*   evidential
    - *=naʔahk*   past tense
    - *=aʔm*   perfect, resultative
    - *=ʔt*   1ˢᵗ person ergative pronoun
    - *=ʔtsi*   1ˢᵗ person absolutive pronoun
    - *=tam*   plural
    - etc.

(25) *te* as a copula

  yʌ   metsa   pʌn=tam   kompagre='uŋ=te=na'ahk=tam
DEM two   man=PL   compadre=EV=COP=PAST=PL
'(people say that) those two men were compadres.' [PTD]

(26) *te* as a focus marker

  poy-u=aʔm=uŋ=te   numchudi
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~PRED~ > X)
- therefore, *te* (as a copula or focus marker) is often not a sister of the predicate or focus

(27) *Pero teʔ   tsʌmi   nimeke=uŋ=te   hemets-pʌ*
but DET load   very=EV=PRED   heavy-REL
'But the load was very heavy.' (lit.: 'The load very=they.say=was heavy.')

4.2   *Te* in Francisco León Zoque

- similar to Ocotepec
- phonological reduction of *teʔ* 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   sʌʔŋ-pa   mʌhi*
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)

- *=(e)te* is often used in thetic sentences

(29) *He   Y-vʌhʌ-kʌt-pa-pʌ=ti=ŋ=ete.*
this 3ERG-well-lick-ICP-REL=EMP=EVD=FOC
'(they say) he was just licking (without eating)'   Engel et al. (1987: 395)

(30) *Pokyʌht-u-pʌ = 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-ʔis = aʔm = te   yaktzoŋ-u   makškuy   ora-seŋ-ʔomo*
king-ERG=PERF=TOP   answer-CP   four   hour-SIM-at
'the king answered: at four o' clock.'

te   pʌn-ʔis = aʔm = te   yaktzoŋ-u = n = te   homi   tuhk-pa   te   yoškuy
DET   man-ERG=PERF=COP answer-CP=PERF=COP tomorrow happen-ICP   DET   work
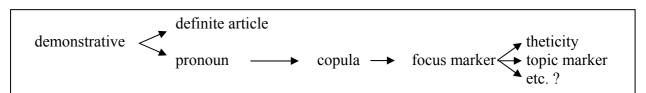'the man answered: "tomorrow the work will be done."'

y-hobi-k = aʔm = te   te   pʌt   nuʔk-u   wa   y-hoʔk-yah-u
3POSS-foll.day-TEMP.SUB=PERF=COP DET   man   arrive-CP   to   2ERG-wait.for-PL-CP

te   kuhmyʌ
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?

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

ATTRibutive

CAUSative

ComPletive aspect

CoNTinuative

COPula

DEMonstrative

DEPendent verb

DETerminer

EMphasis

ERGative

EVidential

FOCus

FUTure

GENitive

InComPletive

LOCative

LOCative SUBordinative

NEGative

PERFective

POSSessive

PROnoun

Question

RELative

SIMilative

TOPic

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