# 12 The structural consequences of language death

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## 1. Introduction

In this chapter we are concerned with structural changes in obsolescing languages attributable to the language death process. On the basis of our experience with a number of dying languages we propose hypotheses about the characteristic structural developments within the languages concerned. These hypotheses can be confirmed, or contradicted and refined, as additional understanding of dying languages accumulates from the rapidly growing sources.

The languages of our experience upon which we base our observations are set forth below, presented with information on their geographic location, genetic affiliation, and number of speakers. Speakers' linguistic ability or structural knowledge of the obsolescing languages of this list varies greatly, and many communities exhibit a proficiency continuum ranging from fully competent speakers to individuals with very little knowledge at all. For purposes of exposition only, to give an idea of the kinds of speakers in each of the situations with which we worked, we characterize speakers roughly as *S* for "strong" or "(nearly) fully competent"; *I* for "imperfect", i.e. for reasonably fluent so-called "semi-speakers"; *W* "weak semi-speakers" with more restricted speaking competence (perhaps akin to Elmendorf's [1981] "last speakers"); and *R* for so-called "rememberers" who know only few words or isolated phrases ("word-inserters" may belong to this group: see Voegelin and Voegelin 1977b). Language communities with the full proficiency continuum from *S* to *W* and/or *R* are presented as *PC*.

American Finnish *PC*. (Campbell 1980)

Cacaopera: El Salvador, Matagalpan branch of Misumalpan; 2 reasonably extensive *R*; extinct. (Campbell 1975a and b)

Chiapanec: Chiapas, Mexico, Chiapanec-Mangue branch of Otomanguean; 3 *R* (one had memorized an entire religious text for recital on

ritual occasions: though he had no understanding of the constituents of the text). (Campbell in press)

Chiapas dialects of Mam: Mamean branch, Mayan; data from several locations in Chiapas representing two major dialects; Tuxtla Chico 1 *W*; *PC* in other villages; no young speakers. (Campbell in press)

Chicomuceltec: Chiapas, Mexico, Huastecan branch, Mayan; few *R*; extinct. (Campbell and Canger 1978; Campbell in press)

Jicaque dialects of Yoro: Honduras, Jicaque; few *S/I* (all elderly), few *W*. (Campbell and Oltrogge 1980)

Honduran Lencan: Honduras, Lencan; 1 *W*; now extinct. (Campbell, Chapman and Dakin 1978)

Salvadoran Lenca: El Salvador, Lencan; 1 *S*; no *I*, *W*, few *R*; now extinct. (Campbell 1976a)

Ocuilteco: Central Mexico, Oto-Pamean branch of Otomanguean; ca. 400 speakers in four small towns; approximately 175 in Gustavo Baz; *PC* (all over 45 years) (Muntzel 1982a and b, 1985, in press)

Pipil: El Salvador, Nahua branch of Uto-Aztecan; only few *S* (none under 60), in several towns, very few *I*, very rare *W*; Comapa, Guatemala: 1 *R*. (Campbell 1985)

Southeastern Tzeltal: Chiapas, Mexico, Tzeltalan branch, Mayan; only older *S* speakers (none under 55) in several towns, some villages with *PC*. (Campbell in press)

Chiquimulilla Xinca: Southeastern Guatemala, Xincan; 1 *S*, 3 *I*, 2 *W*; now extinct. (Field notes: Campbell)

Guazacapan Xinca: Southeastern Guatemala: Xincan; Weak *PC*, 1 *S*, 6 *I*. (Field notes: Campbell)

Jumaytepeque Xinca: Southeastern Guatemala, Xincan; 5 reasonably fluent *I*, 1 *W*. (Campbell 1976a)

Yupiltepeque Xinca: Southeastern Guatemala, Xincan; extinct, 2 *R* (Campbell 1976a)

## 2. Kinds of language death situations

We begin by considering the different types of language death and their linguistic characteristics.

*"Sudden death"*. The case where a language abruptly disappears because almost all of its speakers suddenly die or are killed (e.g. Tasmanian) leaves,

by definition, no obsolescing state to investigate structurally, and is therefore outside our examination.

*"Radical death"*. "Radical language death" is like "sudden death" in that language loss is rapid and usually due to severe political repression, often with genocide, to the extent that speakers stop speaking the language out of selfdefense, a survival strategy. This is illustrated in our sample by the languages of El Salvador. In 1932, after a peasant uprising where the insurgents were thought to be "communist-inspired Indians", those identified as Indians by either dress or physical features were rounded up by Salvadoran soldiers and killed, 25,000 of them in an event called the *matanza* ('massacre'). Even three years later, radio broadcasts and newspapers were still calling for the total extermination of El Salvador's Indian people to prevent a repetition of the revolt (see Adams 1957; Anderson 1971; Marroquín 1975). Many simply stopped speaking their native languages to avoid being identified as Indians. The result was that Lenca and Cacaopera were abandoned and became extinct; Pipil was severely curtailed, with hardly any new speakers after 1932.

The situation in the early 1970s, when linguistic salvage work was being done, illustrated the process.

Cacaopera was, in effect, already extinct, though a few so-called rememberers could be found. Two of these produced a considerable corpus as rememberers go, one remembering forms from his grandfather, the other from his grandmother, who had raised him. Rememberers in this situation do not seem to differ much from those at the terminal stage of gradual death, save that the extent of their knowledge in the Cacaopera case was considerably larger (roughly five hundred words between the two best rememberers, as opposed to the handful perhaps more typical of others). So-called rememberers were never competent speakers, but are characterized by having learned and remembered isolated words and fixed phrases of the language, which in many cases may otherwise be extinct. Their renditions of these "remembered" forms rarely, if ever, contain phonetic material inconsistent with their native/dominant language, Spanish in these instances.

Salvadoran Lenca also had a few rememberers, though no one with more than a half-dozen or so items to offer. However, there was still one surviving once-fully-competent speaker. We believe that his language may typify the radical language death situation, and we hypothesize general features based on it. For such a speaker, once fluent but not having made active use of his or her language in many years, recall is bound to be limited (see Elmendorf's [1981] "former speakers", Dorian's [1982b] "formerly fluent"). Typically the phonology is intact, with few if any deviations from the former native model, but much of the lexicon is forgotten or only recalled after strained

pondering, more frequent and salient vocabulary items being retained better than others. The grammar, as well, may be largely the same as the native model in its fully viable state, although actual production is characterized by fairly simple constructions and phrases, with reduced access to stylistic or pragmatic variants and complex sentences; such speakers are unable (at least initially) to produce a normal discourse. Situations which give rise to such a speaker may or may not produce so-called semi-speakers; in the case of Salvadoran Lenca, which we have treated as potentially typical of radical death, there are none (see also Elmendorf 1981). However, in the case of East Sutherland Gaelic there are a good number. Perhaps parallel to our "radical language death" situation is Dorian's (1982b:51–3) "exile", who, however, made some mistakes even though her phonology and morphology were intact. More examples of "exiles" and "radical language death" are needed to explore other characteristics which these situations may have in common.

This further exploration would seem to be all the more important in this case. Not only is Dorian's exile different, but Andersen makes an assumption quite at odds with ours; he expects erosion in general, seemingly including radical death cases, rather than the preservation of grammar which we expect in such cases:

> when . . . linguistic input and linguistic interaction become inadequate . . . to maintain . . . distinctions in that language, . . . there will be a hierarchy of linguistically marked distinctions ranging from early erosion of these distinctions to full maintenance . . . (Andersen 1982:92)

Thus, more study is required to determine what is typical, if anything, of radical language death cases.

Pipil in El Salvador was spoken by a much larger and less acculturated number at the time of the *matanza*; nevertheless, it comes close to conforming to radical death in many instances. It has an age-based profiency continuum in some communities, but with very few representatives outside the older, more fully competent speakers (few in numbers and spread through a number of towns), with very few weaker semi-speakers. There are occasional rememberers in villages where the language is otherwise already extinct, one in Panchimalco, near San Salvador, and one in Comapa, in southeastern Guatemala.[1]

In effect, radical death can lack the age-gradation proficiency continuum more typical of gradual language death situations. Since for the most part the structure of the dying language may be intact, but production ability in it is atrophied for once-competent speakers, radical death situations, too, may be less relevant to our interest in the structural consequences for dying languages.

*"Gradual death"*. Most cases in the literature on dying languages deal with

completely viable Tzeltal dialects also had great difficulty in attempting to translate these, in part due to the dialect differences, but principally because the form of ritual language was no longer used by them. The SE Tzeltal situation is not completely parallel to Hill's "latinate" pattern, since it also offers a limited proficiency continuum more typical of other cases of gradual language death (Campbell in press).

Our concern here is with kinds of changes in the structure of languages that are in this process of being lost. Whereas some manifestations of change seem natural and likely to be widespread, others may be less so. We draw on our experience with this variety of dying languages to illustrate some of each sort.

## 3. Change processes in dying languages

The most obvious prediction one can make about dying languages is that their structure is very likely to undergo a certain amount of change, and in all components at that: phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical. Nevertheless, it is much harder to predict the precise nature of the changes which may occur. We attempt to present examples of various sorts of change, giving preference to phonological examples only because they take up less space, though syntactic and other phenomena also illustrate many of these kinds of change and some examples are included.

### *3.1. Predictable or expected changes*

For phonology, Andersen (1982:95) proposes three hypotheses; they represent generalizations with which few would quarrel, given what has long been reported for language-contact situations: (1) the bilingual speaker of a threatened language (dying, for purposes of our discussion) will make fewer phonological distinctions in his or her use of the language than a fully competent (dominant or monolingual) speaker of the same language would. (2) However, he or she will preserve distinctions common to both his/her languages even while making fewer of the distinctions found only in the threatened language. (3) Distinctions with a functional load which is high (in terms of phonology and/or morphology) will survive longer in the speaker's use of his/her weaker language than distinctions which have a low functional load. The cases we have dealt with tend to support these generalizations, though the first is most obvious (see also Dorian 1977b:24).

For example, many Pipil speakers have lost contrastive vowel length, merging long vowels with short counterparts; the contrast is not found in Spanish, the dominant language. Chiltiupan Pipil in its moribund state has merged the affricate *ts* with the fricative *s* (Campbell 1985). Tuxtla Chico Mam, very nearly extinct, has merged the postvelar (uvular) *q* of viable Mam with velar *k* (Campbell in press), thus eliminating a contrast not found

gradual death, the loss of a language due to gradual shift to the dominant language in language-contact situations. Such situations have an intermediate stage of bilingualism in which the dominant language comes to be employed by an ever increasing number of individuals in a growing number of contexts where the subordinate language was formerly used. This situation is characterized by a proficiency continuum determined principally by age (but also by attitude and other factors). Younger generations have greater proficiency in the dominant language and learn the obsolescing language imperfectly, if at all. Some terms employed in discussions of such language death situations are: imperfect learning, partial learning, restricted code, semi-speaker, last speaker, healthy speaker/preterminal speaker/terminal speaker, better/worse terminal speakers, 'best' speakers/fluent speakers of single sentences/inserters of words/understanders, passive bilinguals, hybrid language, intermediate bilingualism, interlanguage, creolization in reverse, deacquisition, language decay, linguistic obsolescence, broken-down or eroded language, linguistic atrophy, language attrition, etc. Not accidentally, these different terms suggest different beliefs about and theoretical orientations toward the process of language death. We do not attempt to evaluate these general approaches, but rather limit ourselves to what we believe may be general characteristics of language death as perceived in our material.

*"Bottom-to-top death"*. Another kind of language death in which the repertoire of stylistic registers suffers attrition from the bottom up has been dubbed the "latinate pattern"; here "the language is lost first in contexts of family intimacy and hangs on only in elevated ritual contexts" (Hill 1980). We have no pattern-perfect examples of this type; however, two come close. Our principal Chiapanec informant recalled a memorized Chiapanec religious text, called an *alabanza* ('hymn of praise'). It had been performed publicly on ritual occasions until recently, but was no longer presented because it required the interchange of two participants and the other fellow who had also memorized his part had recently died. Our informant did not know the meaning of the text in anything other than a very general way and he was unable to segment it into constituents, and in fact spoke no other Chiapanec, save a handful of isolated, "remembered" words (Campbell in press). Southeastern Tzeltal, very nearly extinct, with only a few older speakers in scattered villages, perhaps offers a better case. We recorded four prayers; one in particular, the *rezo tzeltal*, is quite important locally, since speakers of Tojolabal (a neighboring, healthy Mayan language) require this SE Tzeltal prayer in their own ceremonies and pilgrimages. This long prayer (45 minutes) employs typical Mayan ritual structure (paired couplets, much metaphor, etc.). Only four men, each a reasonably good semi-speaker, could recite the prayers, but they were unable to translate them in anything other than broad paraphrases; speakers from geographically isolated, but

in dominant Spanish. Semi-speakers of American Finnish also often fail to produce the vowel length contrast, merging to short vowels; also they often reduce geminate consonants to nongeminates; and they produce a variety of substitutions for the front rounded vowels ranging from *yu* or *u* for /y/ ([ü]) to retroflexed schwas for /ö/ (Campbell 1980). These contrasts are missing from dominant English.

### 3.2. *Changes of uncertain predictability*

We have noted other kinds of structural changes which may or may not also be typical of dying languages; evidence from a much larger number of languages, distributed over more parts of the world, will probably be needed in order to determine how characteristic these may be of language death situations in general. The particular cases we discuss here are of interest precisely because of the open-question nature of their generalizability; we will suggest, where we feel there is some basis for it, the principles which we suspect may be involved.

*Overgeneralization of unmarked features.* There appears to be a tendency for marked forms to be replaced by less marked ones (see Campbell 1976c; Rankin 1978; Dressler 1981a). This observation is naturally related to Andersen's hypothesis (1) considered above, that bilingual speakers of a threatened language will make fewer phonological distinctions than will fully competent speakers. Reference to markedness, however, suggests some refinement of this hypothesis, potentially predicting that when distinctions are lost, it is the marked member of opposition which is lost. Thus, in the case of the Tuxtla Chico Mam merger of *q* with *k*, lost *q* is the marked member of the opposition, as is the lost vowel length in Pipil and American Finnish, short vowels being less marked.

Nevertheless, these two hypotheses are not necessarily completely compatible; the tendency to reduce markedness is not necessarily subsumed under Andersen's tendency to reduce oppositions not found in the dominant language. Loss of markedness may include some things not covered by Andersen's generalization. Thus, marked phenomena which do not involve contrasts, but rather subphonemic, allophonic variants, may also be covered by the latter hypothesis. For example, some moribund Pipil dialects have completely eliminated the marked noncontrastive voiceless variants of sonorants ([l̥, w̥, y̥]) which occur word-finally in viable Pipil, merging them with the unmarked voiced counterparts ([l, w, y]), which do not occur in final position in viable Pipil (see Campbell 1985). Moreover, the observation may also extend to nonphonological phenomena (see the Ocuilteco case below of failure to make the dual/plural contrast, with merger to unmarked plural).

The two hypotheses differ, however, not only in substance but in spirit.

That is, Andersen's generalization seems to suggest that it is something to do with the structure of the dominant language which lies behind loss of oppositions in the threatened language (i.e. an "external" motivation). The markedness proposal, while partially in sympathy with Andersen's view, suggests that it is another factor, namely the nature (marked or unmarked) of the linguistic phenomena in the structure of the dying language, which leads to loss (i.e. "internal" factors). Thus, in the case of Tuxtla Chico Mam, Andersen's approach seems to emphasize the lack of *q* in dominant Spanish as the causal factor in its loss through merger with *k*; the markedness view, on the other hand, suggests that the marked nature (unnaturalness, difficulty of pronunciation) of uvular *q* may contribute to its merger with unmarked *k*.

Some might be disturbed that the same case (e.g. merger of *q* with *k*) could be thought of as illustrating two separate and perhaps competing "hypotheses". This need not, however, be distressing. On the one hand, since the phenomenon under discussion seems to fit both hypotheses, it suggests that much greater work is required in this area in order to resolve any logical conflicts and to determine to what extent these different hypotheses may be valid or valuable. In our present state of knowledge, however, both are valuable as working hypotheses to be tested against further cases.

Another way out of the seeming conflict is to appeal to "multiple causation", a notion becoming increasingly more standard in other areas of historical linguistics. To illustrate, we consider an analogy. Suppose a list of potential causal factors in automobile accidents contains such varied things as excessive speed, bad road conditions, impaired driver (e.g. blurred vision, drunkenness, etc.), mechanical malfunctions, etc. Now suppose a car crashed against a tree, where it is dark, the road is icy, the driver is drunk, a tire blew out, and the driver was speeding. It can be presumed that any single factor may have been sufficient to cause the accident, but that it is also possible, even probable, that these factors combined, working in concert, contributing multiply to cause the wreck. So it is with linguistic change. Thus, in our example, the lack of the *q* vs. *k* contrast in dominant Spanish and the tendency to reduce markedness (*q* being marked) conceivably could have worked in concert, jointly leading to the loss in Tuxtla Chico Mam. Given multiple causation, we have the potential for reconciling the seeming difficulty of a single case exemplifying differing hypotheses. As will be obvious, some other examples discussed in this chapter also exemplify more than one hypothesis. We take these to be indications of either "multiple causation" or unsubstantiated hypotheses to be rectified in light of reports from other language death cases.

*Overgeneralization of marked features.* Marked forms may be used excessively. While there may often be a tendency to reduce or eliminate marked

forms (as discussed above), the reverse also appears to be common. That is, things that are marked or "exotic" from the point of view of the dominant language may not be completely mastered by imperfect learners, and not knowing exactly where they belong, these speakers sometimes go hog-wild, as it were, employing the "exotic" version with great frequency in ways inappropriate for the healthy version of the same language. For example, Jumaytepeque Xinca has a complicated rule which glottalizes consonants in particular morphological environments; one Jumaytepeque speaker glottalized nearly every possible consonant, having failed to learn the rule, but using excessively the striking feature of glottalization. A few speakers of Guazacapan Xinca also used an excessive amount of otherwise inappropriate glottalization of consonants. Teotepeque Pipil in its moribund state has overemphasized voiceless *l*, employing it everywhere, not just word-finally as it was formerly (Campbell 1985).

These changes are internal to the structure of the obsolescent language in that they appear to have no direct analog in the dominant language. Hill (1980:4), without calling upon markedness, refers to such cases as "acts of creation". Thus, the overgeneralization of voiceless *l* in Teotepeque Pipil or the excessive glottalization in some Xinca speakers are "internal acts of creation" in that they appear to stem from imperfect learning of the moribund language and have nothing to do with Spanish.

*Development of variability.* Obligatory rules may come to apply optionally, fail to apply (i.e. be lost), or show substitutions. For example, American Finnish speakers sometimes fail to apply the consonant gradation rules. Thus, in Standard Finnish *t* gradates to *d* in closed syllables, e.g. *äiti* 'mother', *äidille* 'for mother': but frequently *äitille* is the form in American Finnish (Campbell 1980). In Ocuilteco, the native rule voicing stops after nasals fails to apply sometimes in the language of nonperfect speakers, producing free variations (e.g. *nd* alternating with *nt*; see Muntzel 1982a). In Cuisnahuat Pipil the formerly obligatory rule of final devoicing of sonorants (see above) has become optional, resulting in free variation between, for example, final [l] and [l̥]. (For similar claims about morphology, see below.)

*Development of irregularity by extremes of regularization.* There is sometimes failure to learn (i.e. imperfect learning of) rules by overgeneralization and/or undergeneralization. For example, fully viable Pipil had a rule in which final sonorants (l, w, y) were devoiced word-finally (l̥, w̥, y̥); Teotepeque Pipil, however, has overgeneralized voiceless *l*, devoicing all *l*'s, not just final ones. In contrast, it has undergeneralized the portion of the rules dealing with *w* and *y*, not devoicing them anywhere, even in original final position. In effect, then, through overgeneralization (e.g. of [l̥]) and undergeneralization (of [w̥] and [y̥]), the rule of final devoicing of sonorants was lost. One speaker of Jumaytepeque Xinca illustrates a similar case. He

failed to learn the rule of glottalization in various phonological and morphological environments and through overgeneralization (glottalizing all possible consonants) in his language the rule is lost. This phenomenon is connected to the overextension of marked ("exotic") features and to the tendency to reduce markedness, discussed above. The best way to view such cases and to test the validity of these partially overlapping proposals will depend on the findings from other language death situations.

Another example is the failure of consonant gradation to apply in American Finnish, which appears to reflect failure to learn the rule by undergeneralization. It might be noted that this case could fit Andersen's first generalization, since dominant English has no gradation rule. Again, then, we are faced with two alternatives, either of hypotheses yet to be tested properly or of multiple causation, as discussed above. Andersen's proposal, however, is not compatible with the overextension, for example, of voiceless *l* in Teotepeque Pipil, since local Spanish here has no voiceless *l* ([l̥]), finally or elsewhere.

*"Acts of reception".* Some changes in moribund languages may be "externally" motivated; that is, some structural changes in dying languages may be the result of influence from linguistic aspects of the dominant language, i.e. "acts of reception" (Hill 1980:4). A probable example is the change in Teotepeque Pipil of *š* to *r̄* under the external influence of sociolinguistic evaluation of these sounds in Spanish. The change is apparently motivated by the fact that in local Spanish, the dominant language, /r̄/ has a strongly stigmatized variant [s̱] (Campbell 1976c). The negative sociolinguistic evaluation of this variant in Spanish has apparently caused the native Pipil sound to shift to the Spanish prestige variant, producing an unnatural sound change, externally induced due to Spanish norms. Several grammatical changes in American Finnish can only be attributed to the external influence of English. Some examples follow.

The so-called "passive" in Finnish is an impersonal verb form which permits no overtly specified agent (as in the English *by* phrases), but American Finnish (AF) of non-first generation speakers now permits the agentive phrases, especially when the agent is a service organization such as church, funeral home, etc., employing the cases *-stA* 'from (within)' or *-ltA* 'from (without)' or the postposition *kautta* 'through'. Some examples are:

**(1)** häne-t hauda-ttiin kirko-sta
he-ACC bury-PAST.PASS church-FROM
'he was buried by the church'

**(2)** hautajaiset pide-ttiin 30 päivä heinäkuu-ta kirko-lta
funeral hold-PAST.PASS 30 day July-PRT church-FROM
'the funeral was held the 30th day of July by the church'

(3) polttohautaus Lake Side kappeli-n kautta toimite-ttiin
cremation Lake Side chapel-GEN through perform-PAST.PASS
'the cremation was performed by/through the Lake Side Chapel'
(See Eskola 1977:117–20)

In another example, Standard Finnish (SF) does not normally permit infinitival complements of nouns or adjectives to have subjects; however, AF has changed to be equivalent to English:

(4) tämä oli ensimmäinen kerta mei-lle men-nä tä-llä
this was first time us-TO/FOR go-1.INF this-ON/BY
laiva-lla Milwaukee-seen
ship-ON/BY Milwaukee-INTO
'this was the first time for us to go on this ship to Milwaukee'

An equivalent SF form would be, e.g.:

(4′) tämä oli ensimmäinen kerta, kun oli-mme matkusta-neet
this was first time, when had-WE travel-PAST.PART
tä-llä laiva-lla Milwaukee-seen
this-ON ship-ON Milwaukee-INTO
(See Eskola 1977)

These changes appear to be due to the impact of English on the structure of the AF of imperfect speakers. They involve not loss of material from the threatened language, as in Andersen's phonology examples, but additions to AF grammar due to impact from English. (For details and several other examples, see Campbell 1980.)

## 4. Changes outside phonology

### *4.1. Morphological reduction*

Language death may be accompanied by some degree of morphological reduction (in which we include the reduction of allomorphy and the leveling of paradigms). While we have several examples in our data, since this is reasonably well established (see Dorian 1977b; Andersen 1982:97), we present only two examples here. In Ocuilteco, imperfect speakers often leave out the dual and plural markers, as indicated in the following examples by the material in parentheses:

(5) kit-kwe-p-tyii (-nkwe(-bi))
FUT-1PL-EXCLUS-sing (-DUAL(-EXCLUS))
'we (two, but not you) will sing'

**(6)** kit-kwe-p-tyɨɨ (-hñə(-bi))
FUT-1PL-EXCLUS-sing (-PL(-EXCLUS))
'we (all, but not you) will sing'

Our second example is from American Finnish. While Standard Finnish requires adjectives to agree in case (and number) with the nouns they modify, AF shows a tendency for case endings on adjectives to be lost, e.g.:

**(7)** sai-n kirja-n vanha miehe-ltä
got-I book-ACC old man-FROM
'I got the book from the old man'
Compare: SF:
sai-n kirja-n vanha-lta miehe-ltä
. . . old-FROM man-FROM

**(8)** vanha miehe-n hevonen on valkoinen
old man-GEN horse is white
'the old man's horse is white'
Compare SF:
vanha-n miehe-n hevonen on valkoinen
old-GEN man-GEN ...
(See Larmouth 1974; Eskola 1977.)

These examples appear to conform to Andersen's hypotheses concerning morphological reduction, in particular to:

> A [semi-speaker] will exhibit a smaller number of morphologically-marked categories . . . than will a [fully competent speaker] of that language. Moreover, . . . the [semi-speaker] will tend to exhibit variability, the [fully competent speaker] categorical marking of that category. (Andersen 1982:97)

(See also Dorian 1973, 1977a, 1983; Dressler 1981; Elmendorf 1981.)

### *4.2. Syntactic reduction*

Dying languages also exhibit modification of syntactic resources, a point well established in the language death literature (see Hill 1973, 1978; Andersen 1982). We consider only a few cases of several in our material.

In present-day Pipil the "future" suffixes of older texts are unused and almost unknown, replaced by periphrastic constructions, e.g.:

**(9)** ni-yu ni-k-chiwa
I-go I-it-do
'I'm going to do it'

The "future" suffixes of formerly viable Pipil, *-s* 'singular' and *-s-ke-t* 'plural', e.g. *ni-panu-s* 'I will pass', *ti-panu-ske-t* 'we will pass', now do not occur even in traditional texts, though they can still be elicited with difficulty from some speakers (Campbell 1985).

Another Pipil example is the once-productive passives (signaled by *-lu,*

*-lw,* and *-ua*); these are now found only in frozen verb forms. The only current equivalent is an impersonal construction formed of "3rd person plural" verbs (i.e. with the suffix *-t* '3rd person plural'), e.g.:

**(10)** yaha ki-tahtan se: konse:hoh wan ki-maka-ke-t
he it-asked an advice and it-give-PRET-PL
'he asked for advice and then they gave it (to him)' = 'he asked for advice and was given it'

**(11)** k-ilwih-ke-t ma: ki-ma:walti chi:l
him-tell-PRET-PL that her-smear chili
'They told him to anoint her (with) chili' = 'He was told to smear chili on her'

**(12)** nech-ilwih-ke-t ka nu-siwa:-w bru:hah
me-tell-PRET-PL that my-wife-POSS witch
'They told me that my wife [was a] witch' = 'I was told my wife is a witch'

Pipil has lost its original, morphological passives, but the 3rd person plural impersonal verb forms have come to function in context as agentless passives. Sentences (10)–(12), from a text about a supernatural being, have a specific discourse agent: it is the priest who gives the advice, tells him to smear chili on his wife, and tells him she is a witch, but the priest as agent is clear from the context and the impersonal is used to put other features in focus. This usage of 3rd person plural forms for impersonal utterances replaced the former passive constructions.

These two cases may well exemplify Andersen's hypotheses:

> A [semi-speaker] will use a smaller number of syntactic devices . . . than a [fully competent speaker] of the same language.
> The [semi-speaker] will preserve and overuse syntactic constructions that more transparently reflect the underlying semantic and syntactic relations.
> Where there is more then one possible surface structure for a given underlying relation . . ., the [semi-speaker] will tend to collapse the different surface structures into one. (This will be evidenced by a smaller variety of surface structures for the [semi-speaker] as compared to a [fully competent speaker].)
> (Andersen 1982:99)

If both the morphological and periphrastic "future" and "passive" constructions were once available, then Pipil in its moribund stage shows a "smaller number of syntactic devices", having eliminated the morphological constructions for the analytic, periphrastic ones. These periphrastic constructions have been "overused" – do they "more transparently reflect the underlying semantic and syntactic relations"? The different "surface structures" have "collapsed into one", periphrastic constructions winning at the expense of the morphological ones.

Not all examples, however, conform to or illustrate Andersen's hypotheses about syntactic reduction, as is seen in some examples from AF. The

SF so-called "second infinitive" is a gerundial form which permits no overtly specified subject. On the English model of appositive gerunds in *-ing*, AF now permits such subjects, even when they are not coreferential with the subject of the main clause:

**(13)** vainaja syntyi Duluthi-ssa, vanhemmat oll-en Mr ja Mrs Matt Salo
deceased was born Duluth-IN, parents be-ING Mr and Mrs Matt Salo
'the deceased was born in Duluth, his parents being Mr and Mrs Matt Salo'

**(14)** entinen Hilda Paavola ja Frank Andersen vihi-ttiin,
former Hilda Paavola and Frank Andersen marry-PAST.PASS,
pastori Mänttä vihki-en heidät
pastor Mänttä marry-ING them
'the former Hilda Paavola and Frank Andersen were married, pastor Mänttä marrying them' (see Eskola 1977)

SF might employ e.g.

**(15)** vihki-en heidät, pastori puhui hitaasti
marry-ING them the. pastor spoke softly

Here *vihkien* can have no overt subject in the same clause; the AF extension to permit such subjects, as with *pastori Mänttä* in (14), is due to English influence, an "act of syntactic reception" (see Hill 1980:4), unlike Andersen's "reductions".

The final example involves AF word order. SF has relatively free (pragmatically determined) word order with respect to subject (S), verb (V), and object (O), but for some semi-speakers of AF it has become more rigidly SVO as case endings are being elided, mirroring English:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(16)** | AF: | poika | syö | omena | |
| | | boy. NOM | eats | apple | 'the boy is eating |
| | SF: | poika | syö | omena-a | an apple' |
| | | boy. NOM | eats | apple-PRT | |
| **(17)** | AF: | mies | osti | talo | 'the man bought |
| | | man | bought | house | the house' |
| | | SF: | mies | osti | talo-n |
| | | | man. NOM | bought | house-ACC |

While loss of object cases is a kind of grammatical reduction, the compensating increase of rigid word order is an added aspect of AF grammar, conforming to the model of dominant English. (See Puromies 1966; Larmouth 1974:358; Vilkko 1974; Eskola 1977).

### *4.3. "Stylistic shrinkage"*

Dying languages exhibit "stylistic shrinkage". This noncontroversial point is also illustrated in our examples; only two Pipil speakers were found who are proficient at telling tales with the traditional oral literary devices (e.g. paired couplets; Campbell 1985). Certain options useful for discourse have also been curtailed, for example, the original passives have been lost (see note 1). Similarly, there may no longer be any Ocuilteco speakers competent in the formulaic ritual language employed in religious ceremonies and marriage petitions; the last speaker competent in this style may well have been our ritual-language informant, who died in the mid 1970s (Muntzel 1979). (See also Hill 1973, 1978, 1980; Dorian 1980b.)

## 5. Language death vs. other kinds of contact

It is worth drawing attention to the fact that in some cases it may be difficult to distinguish some changes due to the language death process from the consequences of other kinds of language contact. For example, in Pipil *wan* 'with' was originally a "relational noun" (structurally like a noun root, bearing possessive pronominal prefixes), e.g. *nu-wan* 'with me', *mu-wan* 'with you', *i-wan* 'with him/her/it'. *Wan* (together with a few other relational nouns) has lost the relational-noun requirement of occurring only with possessive prefixes, thus becoming a preposition just as in Spanish, e.g.:

**(18)** nin nemi nu-chan ti-se:n-nemi-t *wan* se: nu-amiguh
here I-am my-house we-together-are-PL with a my-friend
'here I am at my house, sitting together with my friend'
(Formerly, . . . i-wan se: nu-amiguh [his-with a my-friend])

Similarly, *pal* 'in order to, so that', was a "relational noun", (*nu-pal* 'for me, mine'), but now functions as a subordinate conjunction, which formerly did not exist, similar to Spanish *para* 'in order to', e.g.:

**(19)** ni-mu-kets-ki ni-k-tatia ti-t *pal* ni-mu-tutu:nia
I-REFLEX-arise-PRET I-it-burn fire-ABSOL so. that I-REFLEX-heat
'I got up to light (the) fire in order to warm myself'

One might suspect that these Spanish-influenced structural mutations away from relational nouns reflect the kind of change that would only take place in Pipil's moribund state. However, completely parallel changes have taken place in other completely viable Nahua dialects, Pipil's sister languages (see Suárez 1977), showing the difficulty of distinguishing normal contact-induced changes from changes due to the language death situation.

For other proposals concerning general structural features of decaying

languages not discussed here, see, among others, Dorian (1980b, 1982b, 1983); Hill (1980); Dressler (1981); and Andersen (1982).

## Notes

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Abbreviations employed in the examples cited are common ones; but note that here we use PRT for 'partitive' and PART for 'participle'.

1. In most of our cases "remembering" words of an otherwise extinct language seems to have no greater function than entertainment or mild amusement, and implies very little for one's identity. This appears to be the case with rememberers of Cacaopera, Chicomuceltec, Salvadoran Lenca, and Yupiltepeque Xinca. The most typical attitude in this area is quite negative toward indigenous languages; most are ashamed to speak an Indian language, while Spanish is held in esteem. This state of affairs no doubt has contributed to the obsolescence of these languages. The case is somewhat different in Pipil; that is, it suffers for the most part the same negative stigma as other languages, an attitude held particularly by its more fluent remaining speakers. At the same time, however, there was something of a reversal in the 1970s among non-Indian Salvadorans, many of whom came to lament their lost cultural heritage and began placing value on the Pipil past as a symbol of national pride, akin to Mexico's pride in its Aztec antecedents. In this situation, rememberers and terminal speakers received considerable prestige. The rememberers from Panchimalco and Comapa were revered in their villages as "real" Indians who spoke the now-vanishing language. The one surviving elderly woman rememberer in each of the two towns was held in esteem as a symbol of the Indian past; in both cases, the women attempted to fake or create words they did not know on our interview questionnaire, presumably in order to maintain their local status, which each seemed to enjoy, and perhaps to save face. We also encountered faking rememberers posing as full-fledged speakers in one other Pipil town and in one SE Tzeltal village. These two men seemed not to enjoy any particular status in their communities, but rather were apparently interested in payments we might make for informant services. The faked or created forms did not violate Spanish phonetics except in the case of the man in SE Tzeltal territory, who salted his forms with some glottalized consonants, apparently learned from growing up around Indian speakers without ever having learned more than a handful of real words.

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