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REDUCTION RATIO: 12
Tones

in

Aguacatenango, Tzeltal

by

Nicholas A. Hopkins

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TONES IN AGUACATENANGO TZELTAL.

Working with an Aguacatenango informant (Felix Aguilar Juárez) checking a list of plant names collected in Tenejapa Tzeltal, Brent Berlin noticed a number of peculiar stress and pitch patterns in the informant's speech. I heard the tape the following day, and Brent and I decided there was enough consistency to the patterns to bear checking them out. Brent had treated them as stress; because of the apparent resemblance to San Bartolo Tzotzil patterns and the fact that most of the peculiar phenomena occurred in syllables where San Bartolo would have high tone (syllables with -h-), I preferred to think of phonemic tones. Brent set up a second session to try to elicit pairs contrasting only in tone or stress, and to elicit repetitions of the same item in different contexts. I transcribed the tape of the first and second sessions. Both Brent and I are of the opinion that the evidence requires setting up tones for Aguacatenango Tzeltal, at the very least for this one idiolect. The high tones occur most often in those morphemes which have CVhC patterns or CVC₂ where \( C₂ = /s s h? m n b w l/ \), where internal -h- could be expected to have been lost. However, some items which have \( C₂ \) a glottalized consonant have high tone and no internal -h-: múKul, ñKìt, CHbìla?. We did not have at hand a list of *PTz reconstructions or a list of San Bartolo items marked for tone, but I suspect there is a large amount of convergence in the distribution of tones in the two dialects, if not identical distributions. The major importance of this is that it invalidates the former explanation for San Bartolo tones: that they are the result of compensatory change for loss of internal -h-. Here is a dialect with both tones and internal -h-.
The tape was transcribed in a 4-pitch frame, (0) lowest through (3) highest. Pitch (0) was introduced to account for low final pitch probably associated with a terminal contour, occurring in final syllables only (cf. pp. 4, 34, 35).

Stresses ('') primary and (,) secondary are often interchanged in successive repetitions of the same stretch of segmental phones and pitch line. No alternation of ('') or (,) with weak stress (unmarked) was noted. A two-way stress contrast is therefore postulated; this contrast is probably lexically phonemic if loans are considered, and may be involved in distinctive patterns on an utterance level.

A number of morphemes were found to take pitch (2) in non-final position, while others consistently took (1). Final syllables of all pitches were observed, but (1) occurred in hesitations of items which normally had (1) in non-final position, (2) and (3) occurred with items which normally had (2) in non-final position, and (0) occurred in variation with final (3), presumably as a terminal contour.

One minimal tonal pair was found, mail 13 calabaza contrasting with mail 23 listón. Other morphologically parallel constructions were found to differ significantly in pitch patterns.

The differences have been analyzed here as manifestations of a system of two phonemic tones, with the following allotones:

- **low tone**: /unmarked/
  - (3) in phrase-final syllables ~ (0) terminal contour
  - (1) elsewhere;

- **high tone**: /f/
  - (3) in phrase-final syllables ~ (0) terminal contour
(2) - (3) in penultimate syllables (before (3))
(2) elsewhere.

Phrases ending in (1) were analyzed as hesitations of forms ending in low tone. The tones are neutralized in final syllables as (3) or (0), so the phonemic tone of syllables which only occurred finally in the list cannot be ascertained.

Examples of tone sequences with page references to the transcription are:

p.62 pénkát 23
p.62 čin pénkát 123
p.62 műkúl pénkát 2133 - 2123

p.17 műkúl 21ĥ (hesitation)
p.59 núhkúl pat 213
p.59 műkúl núhkúl pat 21213

p.4 níak táhtam 2133
p.4 níak ≠ táhtam 21ĥ 23
p.3 níak pám cámp pulyok 212113

p.3,4 maõëësíbel wámal 121233
p.5 'íhkál șılõl wâh' 21113
p.6 bâkal nič wámal 11133

p.6 'íhkál 21ĥ
p.5 čin 'íhkál 121ĥ

p.34 čin cemenetik 11110 ľ
p.34 čin cemenetik 11113

p.35 'íhkál șőmenetik 212113
p.36 'íhkál șőmenetik 212110 ľ
Some assimilation of low tone to high was observed in the suffix -etik (normally 13):

p.34  čin cemenetik 11113, but

p.42,43 čin ðínkal mésteetik 1212323. This last sequence should probably be written čin ðínkal mésteetik.

Items having high tone are the following:

péhpen            ðínkal
péhkat            ðó'kol(te?)
páhčam(pulyok)    ðóhkoc
pohetá(čiš)       -ðó'tan
páskil             k-ðó'tan
púhul              y-ðó'tan(te?)

táhtam
tó'koy (tókoy ?)  báh(te?)
túñkul            bél(ʔak)
túñqué            bíkit
tílu?

cílahan            ðéman
cóhooll             ðábil
cúncum            ðý

ðó?               ðámal
ðábek(te?)       ðá(1)ðál(te?)
ðánbálam          ðúðála?
ðáwuk

kášan              sisim
kóhtom             síbil(ʔak)
k-ðó'tan             sáben
sábal
Some questionable items are the following which occurred at least once with pitch (1) or pitch (2) where it was not expected from other occurrences:

Tone is marked where it occurred when it occurred.

pî?ku
táñat
cúnum
cúnkum
dâben
śâné(te?)
mûkul
yó¡kes
-étik
The minimal pair that was found is mail liston versus mail calabaza. Near-minimal pairs are as follows:

táhtam: čitam
táhtam: tanal
máhtas: makum
bélak: cicak
čéman: cemen
cúnkum: čučum
wámal: wakaš
čánte?: čište?
hínte?: činte?.

Nicholas A. Hopkins
San Cristóbal de las Casas
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