

Noun Determination in Ixcatec: Definite and Demonstrative Clitics

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The goal of this talk is to explore the status of a few noun determiners found in Ixcatec (Otomanguean, Mexico). Namely, I will focus on the proclitic definite article $sa^{1(or\ 2)}$ and the two enclitic demonstratives, ra^2 'distal' and ri^2 'proximal'. All of them have adnominal uses and may form pronominal demonstratives when combined with another morpheme (sa^2la^2 , mee^1ri^2 , mee^1ra^2) but they cannot be used as free morphemes.

Canonically, $sa^{1(or\ 2)}$ attaches phonologically to the postposed noun it modifies. It can appear in sentence initial position given that Ixcatec (contrary to other Otomanguean languages) has a rigid SVO order for transitive clauses and that (similarly to other Otomanguean languages) intransitive subjects are fronted when topicalized. Very frequently though, in natural speech, when there is a pause between the determiner and the noun, $sa^{1(or\ 2)}$ attaches to the *preceding* prosodic word, regardless of its syntactic function (and this with no obligatory vowel lengthening). Such syntactic and phonological mismatch is discussed in detail for the K^wak^wala noun determiners by Anderson (2005) following Boas (1947). The necessity of the proclitic Ixcatec noun determiner to attach prosodically to a host offers a decisive criterion for classifying it as a 'phonological clitic' (Anderson 2005).

In order to examine the status of the Ixcatec demonstrative morphemes ri^2 and ra^2 , different criteria need to be addressed. In her work on two related Popolocan languages, Veerman-Leichsenring (1991, 2000) defines clitics as units that have no accent of their own and do not modify the location of stress of their host, as opposed to affixes which affect the location of stress of their host. Though such criteria are known to be language specific (Anderson 2005) it could be useful to discuss their validity for Ixcatec and for Otomanguean in general. Furthermore, in the case of the Ixcatec demonstratives ri^2 and ra^2 , combinatory restrictions (Zwicky & Pullum 1983) seem to corroborate their status as clitics, given that they can't be combined with the possessive morphemes (which can be qualified as affixes).

References

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