

The subject clitics of Chipaya

In this paper, I will discuss the subject clitics of Chipaya, an endangered language of the south-western Bolivian highlands (Adelaar 2007: 19). I will argue that the Chipaya subject clitics indicate the degree of activation and identifiability of the subject referent. The Chipaya language is the last surviving member of the isolated Uru-Chipaya language family, used by approximately 1,800 speakers in the community of Santa Ana de Chipaya (Chipaya Documentation Project). The Chipaya corpus on which the following is based consists of oral texts, recorded between 2002 and 2006 and transcribed and translated by Chipaya native speakers.

The Chipaya subject clitics can occur as single clitics; i.e. without a co-referential subject noun or pronoun, or in clitic doubling constructions; i.e. with a co-referential subject noun or pronoun. Single clitic constructions are restricted to first and second person subject referents (Example 1). With respect to clitic doubling I further distinguish between anaphoric doubling, where the co-referential subject is expressed by a pronoun (Example 2), and lexical doubling, where the doubled subject is represented by a lexical noun phrase (Example 3) (see Belloro 2007: 117).¹ Clitic doubling of first and second person subject referents is necessarily anaphoric, as these are speech act participants. The Chipaya subject clitics are not obligatory and it is possible to have long stretches of discourse without them. The subject clitics have variable hosts, although they never attach to the finite verb or to an element carrying the topic marker.

- (1) *chheri=m lul-aki=cha*
food=S.CL eat-FUT=DECL
'You will eat food.' ('Telephone call to Chipaya')
- (2) *werh=ki anacha=l ni qhaya-nti-kiſtan chip-u=cha*
1SG=TOP very=S.CL DEM.PRON.DIST.M buy-NMLZ-SEP satisfy-PRES.1SG=DECL
'I am very satisfied about these purchases.'
(‘Mercado’)
- (3) *nuſkiſ kerka=ſ na tura-tan ſal-ſhi-ki*
then armadillo=S.CL DEM.PRON.DIST.F girl-COM marry-PST-REP
'Then, the armadillo married this girl.'
(‘El kirkincho y el zorro’)

Cerrón-Palomino (2006: 172–173) characterises the Chipaya subject clitics as “focalising” their host, but this does not capture their complexity adequately. Instead I argue that the subject clitics are used to either re-activate subject referents from a previous part of the discourse or else to introduce new subject referents. As such, the Chipaya subject clitics relate to the degree of activation and identifiability of the subject referent. Identifiability has “to do with a speaker’s assessment of whether a discourse representation of a particular referent is already stored in the hearer’s mind or not” (Lambrecht 1994: 76; also Chafe 1994: 93), while activation relates to “the speaker’s assessment of the status of the representation of an identifiable referent as already ‘activated’, as merely ‘accessible’, or as ‘inactive’ in the mind of the hearer [...]” (Lambrecht 1994: 76). The degree of activation and identifiability of a

¹ Instead of lexical doubling, Belloro (ibid.) uses the term “non-anaphoric doubling”.

subject referent is assessed by measuring the “referential distance” from its current to its previous mention in the discourse (Givón 1983: 13–14; see also Chafe 1976: 32–33). From this, the following distribution of the Chipaya subject clitics evolves.

Identifiability	Activation	1 st and 2 nd person subject		3 rd person subject	
		anaphoric doubling	single clitic	lexical doubling	anaphoric doubling
Unidentifiable	Brand-new	---	---	X	---
Identifiable	Inactive	---	---	X	---
	Accessible	X	X	X	?
	Active	X	X	?	X

Table 1: Distribution of Chipaya subject clitics²

(497 words, exclusive of examples)

Abbreviations

COM = comitative; DECL = declarative; DEM.PRON.DIST.F = demonstrative pronoun distal feminine; DEM.PRON.DIST.M = demonstrative pronoun distal masculine; FUT = future tense; NMLZ = nominalizer; PRES.1SG = present tense first person singular; PST = past tense; REP = reportative; S.CL = subject clitic; SEP = separative; TOP = topic marker; 1SG = first person singular

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² Positions marked by ‘?’ are currently under investigation.