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**Language Attrition in the Verbal Complex of Ch'orti' (Mayan)**  
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### Language Attrition

#### Language attrition studies:

Language attrition studies show certain trends in language loss (the following characteristics are recorded in various studies; see Dorian 1989, Lambert and Freed 1982, Seliger and Vago 1991, Schmid 2011, Thomason and Kaufman 1988):

- 1) Loss of inflection
- 2) Reliance on modal verbs for tense/aspect/mode
- 3) Loss of marked structures
- 4) Loss of redundancy
- 5) Loss of subordination
- 6) Loss of synthetic structure (gain of analytic structure)
- 7) Stylistic shrinkage

#### Studies on creoles:

The following features are typical of **creoles**, according to various studies (see, Bickerton 1981, Givón 1979, Thomason and Kaufman 1988):

- 1) Lack of inflection
- 2) Lack of markedness
- 3) Juxtaposition of verbs; serial verbs
- 4) Analytic structures

### The main historical trends in Ch'orti' have been:

- 1) Loss of synthetic structure
  - a) Loss of tense/aspect markers on the verbs
  - b) Loss of contrastive subordinate marking on embedded verbs
- 2) Gain of analytic structure
  - a) Increase reliance on auxiliaries and particles to mark tense/aspect
  - b) Increase in types of subordinating conjunctions (some developed in Ch'orti'; some borrowed from Spanish)
- 3) Increased reliance on juxtaposition of verbs
  - a) Verbs of motion in verb-verb (serial verb) constructions
  - b) Complement constructions of purpose, desire, result, and others
- 4) Stylistic shrinkage

Some of the language reductions can be directly attributed to the influence of Spanish structure on Ch'orti', particularly the borrowing of subordinate conjunctions. The other changes are less obviously related to contact with Spanish, but because of their similarity to that which happens in language attrition due to bilingualism or other language contact, I am claiming here that the changes are not due as much to internal pressures, as to external ones.

Overall, the changes have resulted in an *increased leveling of structure (or reduction of embeddings)* such that many constructions in Ch'orti' can be interpreted ambiguously as involving subordination, coordination, or serial verbs.

**Ergativity and Split Ergativity****Ch'orti'**

1. uw-ir-a-et  
E3-see-Vtr-A2s  
'he saw you'
2. k'ax-i-et  
eat-Vin-A2s  
'you fell'
3. aw-ir-a-Ø  
E2s-see-Vtr-A3  
'you saw him'
4. i-way-an  
S2s-sleep-Vin  
'you sleep' (incompletive)

**Ch'olti'** (Robertson, Law, and Haertel 2010):

5. u-muk-u et u-kohko et (96)  
E3-bury-trns A2s E3-keep A2s  
'he covers (protects) you, he watches over you'
6. wask'a et t-aw-otot ... a-tzakla aw-al (64)  
return A2s prep-E2s-house ... E2s-look.for E2s-son  
'you returned from your house ... to look for your son'
7. iyuwal-Ø in-pakxi-el (170)  
ongoing-A3s E1s-return-nom  
'I am returning'

**Chol** (Vázquez Álvarez 2011):

8. tyi a-käy-ä-y-oñ (91)  
perf E2-abandon-trns-ep-A1s  
'you abandoned me'
9. ya' tyi kol-i-y-oñ ya'i (79)  
there perf grow-intrn-ep-A1s there  
'I was born there'
10. tyi k-män-ä-Ø ixim... (174)  
perf E1-buy-dt-A3 corn  
'I bought the corn (...that the woman is selling)'
11. mi k-wäy-el (65)  
impf E1s-sleep-nom?  
'I sleep'

**Chontal** (Knowles-Berry 1984)

12. 7u häç-e7-on (78)  
E3s hit-impf-A1s  
'he hits me'
13. 7a t'äb-Ø-on 7a ... -Ø = perf. in intrans verbs (80)  
perf go.up-perf-A1s  
'I went up'
14. kä k'uš-e7-Ø (76)  
E1s eat-impf-A3  
'I eat it'
15. kä k'uš-n-an (150)  
E1s eat-anti-impf  
'I dine'

## Main Clause Verb Structure

### Ch'orti':

16. uw-ir-a-en  
E3s-see-stem-A1s  
'he sees/saw me'
17. k'ax-i-en  
eat-stem-A1s  
'I fell'                   cmpl.asp.
18. in-k'ax-i  
S1s-fall-stem  
'I fall'                   incmpl.asp.
- [i]k 'subjunctive, irrealis' (used with negatives)
19. matuk'a ka-tar-es-Ø pero ma'chi k'an-ik uy-ub'-i-on (F28:1123)  
nothing E1p-here-cause-A3but not want-subjn E3-hear-Vtr-A1p  
'we haven't brought anything, but he can't hear us.'

### Ch'olti' (Robertson, Law, and Haertel 2010):

20. a-lok'-se            Ø                                   (168)  
E2s-leave-caus A3  
'you took them out' ('you rescued them')
21. och-oy            et                                   (162)  
enter-incho A2s  
'you entered'
22. x-tali-k            naik            aw-ahaw-il           (173)  
fut-come-opt?    hopefully E2s-lord-V<sub>L</sub> (abst?)  
(may it come your kingdom) 'thy kingdom come'

23. ux-tul            a            hatz'-pa                                   (172)  
three-class hab    divide-medpass  
(three it gets divided) 'it consists of three parts.'

### Chol (Vázquez Álvarez 2011):

24. tyi    k-il-ä-y-et                                   (70)  
perf E1-see-dt-ep-A2  
'I saw you.'
25. mi    k-wäy-el                                   (65)  
impf A1s-sleep-nom  
'I sleep'

### Chontal (Knowles 1984):

26. kä    män-e'-Ø                                   (80)  
E1 buy-impf-A3  
'I buy it.'
27. kä    män-i-Ø                                   (80)  
E1 buy-perf-A3  
'I bought it.'
28. 7a    t'äb-Ø-on    7a .... -Ø = perf in intrans verbs (81)  
perf climb-perf-A1  
'I climbed'

### Tzotzil (Aissen 1999):

29. k'usi    I-a-s-ti'                                   (25)  
what    cmpl-A2s-E3s-bite  
'what bit you?'

Subordination in Ch'orti'

## Marked with Subordinators

Ch'orti' (Wisdom, 1930's data, 1950):

30. a-xin ta Kamotan **twa'** u-jajp-i-Ø (395)  
S3-go to Camotán in order E3-seize-Vtr-A3  
'he goes to Camotán to seize him'
31. u-k'an-i-Ø **twa'** a-b'or-o u-tuno'r (378)  
E3-wish-Vtr-A3 that S3-increase-Vin E3-property  
'he wishes his property to increase'
32. kone'r in-na'ta-Ø **twa'** intaka u-majres-en-ob' ani (385)  
now E1s-know-A3s that only E3-lie-A1s-pl past  
'now I know that they just lied to me'
33. u-k'ani **twa'** in-xin inw-ira-Ø **tin** u-b'et-en-ob' (248)  
it-necessary that I-go I-see-him who he-owe-me-pl  
'it is necessary for me to go see those who owe me'
34. u-chab'e-Ø **twa'** b'an-en **kocha** ja'xir (245)  
he-know-it that good-A1s as he  
'he knows that I am as good as he is'
35. uy-ak'ta-Ø u-nichir **tya'** war (383)  
E3-leave-A3 E3-flower where is  
'he leaves its (the tree's) flower where it is'

Ch'orti' (Fought, 1960's data, 1972):

36. **konda** uw-ir-a-Ø **ke'** a-lok'-oy a-xan-a (18:19)  
when E3-see-Vtr-A3 that S3-leave-Vin S3-walk-Vin  
'when he saw that they were leaving...'

37. ja'xob' a-tza'y-ob' **porke'** k'a'b'a uy-ajk'-y-et-ob' (11:185)  
they S3-happy-p because finish E3-beat-Vtr-A2s-p  
'they were happy because they beat you up'

## No Subordinators (Verb-Verb Structures)

Ch'orti' (Wisdom, 1930's data, 1950):

38. **u-che-'n-ob'** **u-toy-Ø-ob'** e tujrur (239)  
E3-make-pass-3p E3-pay-A3-3p the fine  
'they were made to pay the fine'
39. **in-xin in-chon-i-Ø** ta chinam (240)  
S1s-go E1s-sell-Vtr-A3s in town  
'I go to sell them in town'
40. **a-lok'-oy** **u-b'ajk'-u-sy-on** (242)  
S3-go.out-Vin E3-afraid-Vin-caus-A1p  
'he goes out to frighten us'
41. k'ani **in-num-uy in-wis-i-Ø** ni-wakax (244)  
wish S1s-pass-Vin E1s-watch.over-Vtr-A3 E1s-cows  
'I wish to go along to see to my cows'
42. **in-na't-a-Ø** **in-pat-na** (245)  
E1s-know-Vtr-A3 S1s-work-Vin  
'I know how to work'

Ch'orti' (Fought, 1960's data, 1972):

43. **k'ot-oy-Ø u-b'ut'-i-Ø** tama in - gojr b'ujr (117:135)  
arrive-Vin-A3 E3-fill-Vtr-A3 into one-class jug  
'he came and filled a jug' or 'he came to fill a jug'

44. k'ani ani **a-ixin u-ch'ak-i-ob'** u-nej **a-lok'-oy** (80:208)  
 want past S3-go E3-chop-Vtr-pl E3-tail S3-leave-Vin  
 'they wanted to go chop off its tail'
45. **a-ixin u-sajk-a-Ø-ob'** **a-nujb'-i-ob'** takar (77:93)  
 S3-go E3-search-Vtr-A3s-3p S3-mate-Vin-3p with them  
 'they go searching to mate with (their women).'
46. b'an-ix-to **k'ot-oy-Ø** **ket-pa-Ø** e ijmach (152:68)  
 thus arrive-Vin-A3 remain-mp-A3 the raccoon  
 'and thus, they remained raccoons'
47. **sut-pa-Ø** **uw-ir-a-Ø** e winik-ob' yaha' (175-6:130)  
 turn-mp-A3 E3-see-Vtr-A3 the man-3p those  
 'he looked back at those men' or 'he looked again at those men'

#### Nominalizations in Ch'orti' (Fought 1972)

48. ayan **ka-chuk-p-a'r** tama e tumin,  
 exist E1p-grab-pass-nom in the money,  
 'we have hardship in the money,
- ayan e **chuk-p-a'r** tama e wi'-n-ar,  
 there is the grab-pass-nom in the food,  
 there is hardship in the food,
- ayan e **chuk-p-a'r** tama e pus-pus-ir.  
 there is the grab-pass-nom in the nakedness.  
 there is hardship in the nakedness.' (F14:215)

49. "Wato'x taka **u-tzurtz-a'r-ir i-wajn-er,**  
 "You come with its trembling your running,

**u-tzurtz-a'r-ir i-xan-b'ar,**  
 its trembling your walking,

**u-chan-len b'ak-er-ir i-xan-b'ar,**  
 its vein-distension your walking,

**u-chan-len b'ak-er-ir iw-ajn-er;**  
 its vein-distension your running;

**taka u-sus-te'-yr b'ak-ir i-xan-b'ar...**  
 with its impaling your walking...

(F20:43)

#### Progressive in Ch'orti'

50. e winik **war** u-b'uy-i-Ø e si'  
 the man prog E3-cut-Vtr-A3 the firewood  
 'the man is cutting the firewood'
51. e ixik **war** a-ch'ab'-s-an  
 the woman prog S3-lie-caus-anti  
 'the woman is making tortillas'

(Ch'orti' does not use a subordinator in progressive constructions.)

### Subordination in Ch'olti' (Robertson, Law, and Haertel 2010)

#### Marked with Subordinators

52. iyuwal aw-ak'tan tuyanil a-tahnal **ti** ma x-a-kale-n xa..(176-7)  
ongoing E2s-leave all E2s-sin sub neg fut-E2s-make-fut again  
'you are abandoning all your sins to not do them again...'

#### No Subordinators (Verb-Verb Constructions)

53. lopa-Ø **uy-ala-Ø** t-a-ba (57)  
come-A3s E3s-say-A3s prep-E2s-self  
'he came to announce it to you'
54. u-pat ne pa' a **xel-pa-Ø** a **hat-pa-Ø** (51)  
E3s-back the bread hab break-mp-A3s hab split-mp-A3s  
'the bread's crust that gets divided, split up'

#### Nominalized Verbs

55. lopa-Ø uy-ala-Ø t-a-ba **u-lopah-el** aw-al (57)  
come-A3 E3-tell-A3 prep-A2s-self E3-come-nom E2s-child  
'he came to tell you that your son was coming' or 'he came to  
announce the coming of your son'
56. a-kuch-u-Ø ne crus **t-a-lok'-el** t-uy-otot Pilatos (69)  
E2s-carry-trns-A3 the cross prep-E2s-leave-nom prep-E3-house  
Pilate  
(you carried the cross at your leaving the house of Pilate)  
'you carried the cross when you left the house of Pilate'
57. u-k'at-pah-el in-tahnal chum-ul **t-u-kal-n-ah-el** confesar (91)  
E3-destroy-medpass-nom E1s-sin be-pos prep-E3-make-pt-  
pass-nom confession  
(the destruction of my sins is in the making of confession)  
'the forgiveness of my sins comes through confession'

### Progressives

58. iyuwal **in – pakxi – el** (170)  
ongoing E1s-return-nom  
'I am returning'

### Subordination in Chontal (Knowles-Berry 1984)

#### Marked with Subordinators

59. 7u häb-i-Ø ti7 7otot **k'a** 7u čik-i-Ø 7ik' (340-1)  
E3 open-perf-A3 mouth house so that E3 reflect-perf-A3  
wind  
'he opened the door so that the air circulated'

#### No Subordinators (Verb-Verb constructions)

60. 7u **h – e** 7u – ir – an – et (352)  
E3 go-impf E3-see-impf-A2  
'he is going to see you'
61. 7a **h – Ø – on** k – ir – an – et (353)  
asp go-perf-A1 E1-see-impf-A2  
'I went to see you'

#### Nominalizations with Subordinators

62. 7a h-e **tä wan-e** (354)  
E2 go-impf sub jump-impf(nom?)  
'I am going shopping'
63. 7a h-e **tä čum-te** (353)  
E2 go-impf sub seat-Pimpf(nom?)  
'you're going to sit down'

**Progressives**

64. 7an-on **tä çäm-s-a** (354)  
 be-A1 sub die-caus-nom  
 ‘I am killing’
65. muk’ **7u t’äb – o** (228)  
 prog E3 climb-impf  
 ‘he is climbing’

**Subjunctive verbs (with –ik suffix)**

66. k-o kande ba **p’iš-ik-et** ka çe’ da **k’ot-ik-on** i’sapan (342)  
 E1-want I cls wake-opt-A2 so that arrive-opt-A1 early  
 ‘I want to wake you so that I arrive early’

**Subordination in Chol (Coon 2013 and Vázquez Álvarez 2011)****Subordinators**

67. tyi k-äl-ä **che’** ma’añ mi k-majl-el (CExp6)  
 perf E1-say-Vtr sub not.exist impf E1-go-nom  
 ‘I said that I wouldn’t go’

**No Subordinators (Verb-Verb constructions)**

68. **tyi wäy-i-y-oñ** **tyi k’oty-i-y-oñ** (V369)  
 perf sleep-Vin-ep-A1 perf arrive.there-Vin-ep-A1  
 ‘I slept, I arrived there’ or ‘I arrived sleeping’

**Nominalizations**

69. mi k-xik’-ety **lok’-el** (V402)  
 impf E1-make-A2 exit-nom  
 ‘I ask you to go out’

70. mi **y-ujty-el** **k-tsep-Ø** tye’ (V207)  
 impf E3-finish-nom E1-cut-A3 tree  
 ‘I finish cutting the tree’

71. mi k-il-añ-ety **tyi uk’-el** (V398)  
 impf E1-see-dt-A2 sub cry-nom  
 ‘I see you crying’

**Progressives**

72. choñkol y-ujty-el **k-ts’äm-el** (CVbN20)  
 prog E3-finish-nom E1-bathe-nom  
 ‘I’m finishing bathing’

73. choñkol **k-yajl-el** (CVbN23)  
 prog E1-fall-nom  
 ‘I’m falling’

**Aspectless embedded verbs**

74. tyi k-äl-ä mach **majl-oñ** (CExp6)  
 perf E1-say-Vtr not go-A1  
 ‘I said I wouldn’t go’

**Subordination in Tzotzil (Aissen 1987)****Marked with Subordinators**

75. liyalbe li Xun-e **ti** taxtal li Petul-e (TF68)  
 he.told.me det Xun-enc sub comes det Petul-enc  
 ‘Xun told me that Petul was coming’

76. ta s-jak' mi ch-tal vo' (15)  
 incpl E3-ask Q incpl-come water  
 'he asks if it's going to rain'

### Non Subordinators (Verb-Verb constructions)

77. mu s-na' x-k'opoj (14)  
 not E3-know asp-speak  
 'he doesn't know how to speak'

### Nominalizations

78. mi x-a-na' y-uch'-el kajve (16)  
 Q asp-E2-know E3-drink-nom coffee  
 'do you drink coffee?'

79. 'a li chon-e, mu s-k'an mil-el (16)  
 topic the snake-cl not E3-want kill-nom  
 'the snake doesn't want to be killed'

80. 'i-s-k'al s-ba 'och-el (78)  
 cml-E3-squeeze E3-self enter-nom  
 'he squeezed in'

### Progressives (no special form?)

81. ta x-i-bat (44)  
 incpl nt-A1-go  
 'I am going'

### Subjunctive verbs (with –uk/–ik suffix)

82. l-i-y-ak' kom-ik-on (215)  
 cml-A1-E3-let stay-subjn-A1s  
 'he let me stay'

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