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Pre-publication Draft  
Age and Cultural Environment of Informants as  
Relevant to Current Phonemic Change in  
Poploca

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The phonemic system of Poploca,<sup>1</sup> (a language of the Mazateco-Popoloca family of Mexico) is in a state of noticeable change and flux. Within one village, San Felipe Otlaltepec, Puebla, the same morphemes were recorded as having different phonemic shape in the speech of different informants. The phonemic differences were emphasized by the informants' criticism of each other's idiolects. They sometimes remarked that written material "spoke with an accent." The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that there is a high degree of correlation between the age and cultural environment of an individual and the specific phonemic system that he uses.

The variation of idiolects may be seen in the following examples; the alternate forms are from the speech of a different individual:

- (1) Those varying by lenition - thàgínda/thà'índà 'daughter-in-law'; kùníyá/gùníyá 'dog'; rù'wàá/rù'áá 'mouth'; nì'yù/nì'ù 'firewood'; dza/tsa 'he is dressing'.
- (2) Those showing fluctuation between u and o - nìthú/nìthò 'moon'; víkú/víkò 'he saw'; tó/tù 'wide'; nù'/nò' 'rope'.
- (3) Those showing voiced sounds replacing voiceless ones, ndžèdžòo/ndžètšùu/džèdžòo 'dust'. Some idiolects allow d, dž, and g only after nasals, while others permit them elsewhere -
- (4) Variation in vowel clusters - gà'ó/gò'ó 'she ground (it)'; khòq/khàq 'tomorrow'; šò'/šò/šào 'dew'; wáyà/gúyà 'he got up'; gù'áwhà/kùáwhà/gáwhà 'he slept'; ndatšìsù/ndua'tšìsù/nduatšìsù 'jail'; wasáyáa/guasáyáa 'many thanks'.
- (5) Fluctuation between i and e - víkì/vèkì 'he said'; hùndžekhi/hùndžikhi 'he sold'; víkhé'/vekhé' 'he closed'.
- (6) Retroflexion of phoneme - tšúnda/tš'únda 'he has'.
- (7) Change of w to v - ngivà/ngiwà 'idiom'; thúwé/thuvé 'new'.

The specific evidence for the thesis of this paper (namely that there is a high degree of correlation between the age and cultural environment of an individual and the specific phonemic system that he uses), is restricted herein to a study of consonants of the past-tense prefixes.

In Popoloca, past tense is indicated by a prefix consisting of a consonant (khw, kw, kh, hw, gw, k, w, g, f, v, ' ) plus a vowel. Certain forms, namely kw, khw and k or kh appear only in the speech of those of the oldest generation. These are considered as the basic forms as they are used only by the older generation or by those who are in a completely monolingual environment; they are lost from the idiolect of persons who have had more contact with a Spanish community of his own. It is postulated that the forms hw and f are progressively weaker forms of khw; that gw, w and v are weaker forms of kw; and that k, g, and ' are weaker forms of kh. (This is not a completely neat picture and there may be analogical levelling present.) The weaker forms in general are used by the younger people and f and v specifically are used by those with considerable Spanish contact. In general, the postulated order of development is as follows:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \text{khw} & \rightarrow & \text{hw} & \rightarrow & \text{f} \\ \text{kw} & \rightarrow & \text{gw} & \rightarrow & \text{w} \rightarrow \text{v} \\ \text{kh} / \text{k} & \rightarrow & \text{g} & \rightarrow & ' \end{array}$$

From this chart it can be seen that if the kw basic form were accompanied by an h, the form f resulted; if it were not accompanied by an h, the v form resulted. However in the k basic form the presence or absence of h made no noticeable difference in the development. It also seems evident that at an earlier stage of Popoloca there existed alternant past-tense forms which were two or more of the basic forms posited above.

The specific data upon which these conclusions are based consist of some 175 past-tense forms elicited from nine individuals as follows:

- Cr - man, over 70 years of age, able to converse adequately in Spanish.
- V - woman, probably between 65 and 70 years of age, knows considerable Spanish.
- N - woman, 55-60 years, fairly monolingual, knows small amount of Spanish.
- M - man, 55-60 years, has good knowledge of Spanish.
- E - woman, 55-60 years, knows little Spanish.
- S - woman, 40-45 years, monolingual, knows very few Spanish words.
- A - woman, 25-30 years, converses adequately in Spanish.
- Ca - girl 20-25 years, had two or three years schooling in a large Spanish-speaking city. Her husband and mother are both monolingual.
- Ch - girl, 14 years, had 6 months schooling in a Spanish speaking city. Only Popoloca is spoken in her home.

Those with kw as the basic form:

'he went out'	kwaťše	>	waťše	>	vaťše
	V		Cr, M, N, S, F		A, Ch
'he smelled (it)'	kwêhê	>	gwêhê	>	vêhê
	Cr, V, E, Ca		F		S, N, A, Ch
'he fell down'	gwitsínga	>	kwitsínga	>	vitsínga
	Cr, M, N		V		Ch

'he fell (from above)'	kwáàthè V,M	>	wáàthè F	>	váàthè S,C,Ch		
'he bought'	kwè'ná Cr,V	>	gwè'ná M	>	wè'ná F	>	vè'ná S,N,A,Ca,Ch
'he gave'	gwahq Cr,M	>	kwahq V	>	wahq F,S,Ch	>	vahq A,Ca
'he planted'	kwe'nga' Cr,V	>	we'nga' N	>	ve'nga' M,S,F,A,Ca,Ch		
'he sat down'	kwáng'e V	>	wáng'e Cr,M,N,S,F	>	váng'e A,Ch		
'he ran'	kwingá V	>	vingá Cr,F,M,N,S,A,Ch				
'he helped'	kwingihna' V,Cr	>	vingihna' M,F,S,A,Ch,Ca				
'he entered'	kwís'e V	>	gwís'e M	>	vis'e N,S,A,Ca,Ch		
'he moved'	kwiingi V	>	wiingi Cr	>	viingi S,M,F,A,Ca		
'he touched'	gwágoó Cr,M,N	>	kwágoó V	>	gwáguú F	>	vágoó S,A,Ch
'he received'	gwáyé' Cr,M	>	kwáyé' V	>	wáyé' N,F	>	váyé' S,A,Ch

Those with khw/kw as basic forms:

'he knew'	hwátsu'q F,N,Cr	>	kwátsu'q V	>	fátsu'q S,Ch	>	vátsu'q A
'he answered'	hwát'e Cr,F,S	>	kwát'e V	>	fáte A,M,N,Ch		
'he grabbed hold of'	kwatsé V	>	watsé N	>	hwáatsé F	>	fáataé S,Ch
'he tied up'	hwásiru'yé V	>	gwásiru'yé M	>	vásiru'yé F,S	>	wásiru'yé A,Ch
'he changed'	kwingí V,M,F,	>	fingí N,S,A,Ch				
'he pricked himself'	hwítu V	>	wítu N	>	fítu M,S,F,A,Ca,Ch		
'he went up'	kwí'inda Cr,F	>	fí'inda V,M,S,N,F,A,Ch				

Those with k as basic form:

'he played (an instrument)'	Cr,V,M	>	k'ukhá A	>	gu'ukhá S,F,Ch
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'he bathed'	kúundi Cr,V,F,N	>	gúundi M,S,Ch
'he got married'	kút'e Cr,V,S,M,N	>	gút'e F,A,Ca,Ch
'he opened'	kusithé' V	>	gusithé' > 'usithé' Cr,N,S,M,A Ch,F
'he cut'	kúrihi V	>	gúrihi > 'úrihi Cr,S,M,A,Ca F,Ch
'he shelled'	kuúnda V	>	guúnda > 'uunda F,S,M,N,Ca,A Ch
'he hit'	k'úka V,A	>	gúka > 'úka N Cr,M,S,N ,A,Ca,Ch
'he got tired'	gútsé' Cr,M,N,F,A, Ca,Ch	>	kútsé' S,V

Those with khw as basic form:

'he asked for'	kwhânja Cr,V,M	>	hwânja > fânja F S,N,A,Ca,Ch
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Those with k/kw as basic form:

'he twisted'	gu'é N,V,S,F	>	ku'é > v'é M A,Ch
'he carried'	kwáamá Cr,V	>	gáamá > gwáamá > káamá M F S,N
	váamá Ca,A,Ch		

Those with k and khw as basic forms:

'he got wet'	káta V	>	hwáta > fáta N,M,F S,A,Ca,Ch
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Those with kh and kw as basic forms:

'he felt'	giš'ę Cr,V,A,Ch	>	khíš'ę > viš'ę M N,S
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From the preceding data it can be seen that those of the oldest generation tend to use the basic forms khw, kw and kh almost exclusively with only an occasional modification. The youngest informants almost exclusively gave an f or v or ' form, with one or two older forms. Those of the middle age group gave forms used by either their elders or the younger generation.

Since, in Popoloca, the present and future tenses are relatively regular (usually t- for present and ts- or tš- for future), it is possible that the prefixes indicating these tenses are recent developments in the language. The past-tense forms show such a

variety of phonemes that it may be possible to deduce that these are the oldest of all the tense-aspect forms now present in the languages. On looking over this data, Robert Longacre suggested that syncretism may be present here. It is possible that these various past-tense forms are combinations of different tenses in an earlier stage of Poploca. Mr. Longacre in his proto-Mixtecan gives the following reconstructed tense-aspect forms for proto-Mixtecan; the consideration of these forms is pertinent here in that the Mixtecan and Popolocan families seem assuredly to be related:

\*k<sup>w</sup> - potential, future

\*x-/xi/w-/y- - continuative present

\*k- - completive, past

\*nd-/n- - stative, past preterite.

Popotecan (common parent of Mixtecan and Popolocan) prototypes of proto-Mixteco potential and completive have syncretized into Popolocan past-tense. These suggestions of Longacre are most interesting and appear to provide a fruitful field for further study.

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Footnotes

1 Phonemes of Popoloca are:

p, t, k, d, g, ʔ, ts, tš, tṣ̌, dž, v, s, š, ṣ̌, dz, h, m,

n, l, r, w, y, a, e, i, o, u, ɛ, ɛ̣, ɪ, ɔ, ʊ.

Tones ˈ, high and ˌ, low with mid unmarked. There is also a one mora glide mid, low, not occurring in this paper.