

THE NOMINATIVE SHIFT IN HAWAIIAN CREOLE PRONOMINALISATION*

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0. INTRODUCTION

Some child speakers of Hawaiian Creole (HC) use accusative pronouns (hr, him, as, dem) in subject position, e.g.:

1. Hr no let mi.¹
She didn't let me.
2. As tu smawl.
We're too small.

Preliminary evidence from both informants' accounts and several different types of text² indicates that:

- a. There is a strong 'nominative shift' gradually replacing accusative subject pronouns with their nominative counterparts in the lexicons of HC speakers as their grammars develop.
- b. The 'nominative shift' has at least one apparent constraint: Subjects of copular sentences such as 2 above retain the accusative form longest.
- c. Accusative subject pronouns are representative of basilectal³ HC, child HC, and 'plantation' pidgin.⁴

1. HYPNO-ELICITATION IN LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

It is pertinent here to call to the reader's attention the novel elicitation technique - 'hypno-elicitation'⁵ - which provided the author with a relatively instantaneous longitudinal analysis. One major goal of this paper is to demonstrate the effectiveness of hypno-elicitation and its promise for the creolist and general linguist alike. Through

* This paper was presented at the Pidgin and Creole Conference in Honolulu in 1975.

the use of hypnotic age-regression, texts were elicited from Teresa Makuakane (hereafter S) - 21 years old; born and raised in Hilo, on the island of Hawaii and a polylectal speaker of Hawaiian English. The unique aspect of these texts is that they represent successive points on the developmental continuum. The average length of utterance increases from 3.10 in session one, then up to 3.88 in session two and 3.87⁷ in session three, and then up to 4.18 in session four. In the first session, S was regressed to about age three, in the second and third to about four, and in the fourth to about five.

2. THE NOMINATIVE SHIFT

Table IA below shows that in successive texts, S uses increasing numbers of nominative shi as subject pronoun versus accusative hr. Table IB and IC below show an apparently similar increase in percentage of shi use in direct relation to age for the three HC-speaking siblings from Kalihi (on Oahu) in 1971 and from the two HC-speaking siblings from Punaluu (also on Oahu) in 1951. This increase in shi percentage is tentatively labelled a 'nominative shift'.

'HR' TOTALS

TABLE IA

Tokens from S at Different Regressed Age-levels

| Session # | Suggested Age | #Hr | #Shi | %Shi |
|-----------|---------------|-----|------|------|
| 1 | 3 | 32 | 6 | 16 |
| 2 | 4 | 21 | 5 | 19 |
| 3 | 4+ | 16 | 6 | 27 |
| 4 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 75 |

TABLE IB

Tokens from Kalihi Siblings (1971)

| Subject | Age | #Hr | #Shi | %Shi |
|---------|-----|-----|------|------|
| Bo. | 3 | 3 | 1 | 25 |
| Do. | 4 | 11 | 5 | 30 |
| Cl. | 5 | 4 | 4 | 50 |

TABLE IC

Tokens from Punaluu Siblings (1951)

| Subject | Age | #Hr | #Shi | %Shi |
|---------|-----|-----|------|------|
| A. | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| D. | 7 | 9 | 9 | 50 |

It is especially significant that the older children in both the Kalihi (Table IB) and Punaluu (Table IC) samples use more *shi* than the younger ones. This suggests that differences in the data obtained from *S* at different regressed age-levels correspond to differences observed between siblings of various ages both in 1971 and 1951. While data are still very limited, this correspondence between the data obtained from *S* under age-regression and that obtained from actual children does seem to lend credence to the hypothesis of nominative shift. It is also interesting that the Punaluu children, who were born only a few years before *S*, supply evidence that nominative shift may have existed at the time that *S* was regressed to and earlier. This provides tentative support for the reality of the hypno-elicited texts.

The third person singular feminine subject pronoun (*hr/shi*) was chosen here for comparison, due mainly to the absence of enough tokens of the other forms in the texts from the Kalihi and Punaluu children. The Kalihi children produced only one first person plural subject pronoun and that was the accusative *as*. The Punaluu children produced 20 tokens of first person plural subject, all of them being *as*. For the Punaluu children then - at least for the first person plural - there is no nominative shift apparent. This could suggest that the process moves faster in some environments than others. This possibility is explored further below, on the basis of the hypno-elicited data. But in any case, there being no other tokens for the Punaluu and Kalihi siblings, we now turn to the richer hypno-elicited data.

As Table II below shows, *S* produces enough tokens of *as* and *wi* to demonstrate an apparent nominative shift quite like that observed for all subjects in Tables IA-C.

'AS' TOTALS

TABLE II

(All Tokens from *S* at Different Regressed Age-levels)

| Session # | Suggested Age | #As | #Wi | %Wi |
|-----------|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 50 |
| 2 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 56 |
| 3 | 4+ | 4 | 39 | 91 |
| 4 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 100 |

Again there is a rising percentage of the nominative *as* in direct relation to age, from 50% to 100%. There is still question whether there is any significance in the distinctions between the less-populated cells of sessions 1 and 4 and the more populated cells of sessions 2 and 3. Yet the fact *S* uses considerably greater percentages of *wi* in sessions 3 and 4 than in sessions 1 and 2 is quite clear.

S uses virtually no third person plural subject pronouns (dem/dei), there are enough third person singular masculine subject pronouns (him/hi) to make analysis interesting. Table III indicates an increase in nominative pronoun use relative to age similar to Tables IA and II, yet there are some marked differences.

'HIM' TOTALS

TABLE III

(All Tokens from S at Different Regressed Age-levels)

| Session # | Suggested Age | #Him | #Hi | %Hi |
|-----------|---------------|------|-----|-----|
| 1 | 3 | 3 | 16 | 16 |
| 2 | 4 | 0 | 10 | 100 |
| 3 | 4+ | 0 | 7 | 100 |
| 4 | 5 | [1] | 17 | 94 |

Though the percentages of nominative hi are the same as those of nominative shi in session 1 (See Table IA for shi percentages), they jump all the way to 100% for sessions 2 and 3, and to 94% for session 4. Again, it is far too early to attempt any conclusive analysis, but these figures do suggest that nominative shift moves much more rapidly for the masculine than for the feminine third person singular. There is one anomaly in Table III: the appearance of a single him subject (bracketed in Table III) in session one. There does seem to be an explanation for this, which is presented in part 3, page 156 below.

3. CONSTRAINTS ON THE NOMINATIVE SHIFT

There is an apparent constraint on the nominative shift in S's texts. It seems that there are consistently fewer nominative subject pronouns used just in case the sentence is copular, 2 above and 3 below.

3. Hr oni smawl.
She's only small.

Note that there is no copular in either 2 or 3. This absence of English copula in copular sentences is a dominant feature of basilectal HC (see Day 1973), especially in sentences like 2 or 3, where the predicate is adjectival. It seems that the pressure to nominativise subject pronouns is somehow reduced in such sentences.

Table IV below suggests most strongly (though not conclusively, of course, due to the small amount of data) that there is the following constraint on nominativisation based upon sentence type: Copular sentences do not allow as many nominative subject pronouns, nor do they allow them as soon in development.

TABLE IV

(All Tokens from S at Different Regressed Age-levels)

| Session # | Suggested Age | HR | | SHI | |
|-----------|---------------|------|------|------|------|
| | | +Cop | -Cop | +Cop | -Cop |
| 1 | 3 | 11 | 21 | 0 | 6 |
| 2 | 4 | 10 | 11 | 0 | 5 |
| 3 | 4+ | 5 | 11 | 0 | 6 |
| 4 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| | | AS | | WI | |
| 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| 2 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| 3 | 4+ | 2 | 2 | 1 | 40 |
| 4 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | | MI | | AI | |
| 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 35 |
| 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 37 |
| 3 | 4+ | 1 | 0 | 0 | 27 |
| 4 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 38 |
| | | HIM | | HI | |
| 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 11 |
| 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| 3 | 4+ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| 4 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 15 |

Looking first at the figures for HR vs. SHI at the top of Table IV, in session 4, all +Cop sentences and about 80% of -Cop sentences require HR. In session 3, all +Cop sentences and about 68% -Cop sentences require HR. In session 2, all +Cop and about 65% -Cop have HR. But in session 1, only half of the +Cop and none of the -Cop sentences require HR. What conclusions can be drawn from this? It is apparent that although nominative shift is observable, for both + and -Cop sentences, it is more rapid and earlier in -Cop than in +Cop sentences.

Tokens of the other pronoun pairs are again nowhere nearly as numerous as those for HR-SHI, but they do indicate considerable support for the hypothesised copular sentence constraint. Notice especially 4, 5, and 6 below from session 1.

4. Mi oni smawl.
I'm only small.

5. Mi mo big.
I'm more big (bigger).
6. Mi mo-a-mi mo big.
I'm more-a-I'm more big.

that the only occurrences of accusative subject pronoun *mi* are in +Cop sentences, and that there are always high numbers of nominative *ai* (35, 37, 27, and 28 tokens, respectively) in -Cop sentences. That is, there are sufficient opportunities for the appearance of the accusative in -Cop sentences, and the fact that it does not appear at all in the texts seems one of the strongest supports for the hypothesis. As for the pronoun pair AS-WI, the data are really too scanty to contribute much support to the argument. They have been included in the table mainly to show that they do not harbour any counter-evidence.

There is one point of interest in the HIM-HI figures in Table IV, however. In session 4, there is a single *him*. It is suggestive that this single token occurs in a +Cop sentence. (See 7 below)

7. Ai skeed... Mai brada him no skeed.
I'm scared (of dogs)...My brother he's not scared.

This could provide an explanation for the anomalous appearance of a *him* in session 4 when there were no *hims* in sessions 2 or 3. Notice that there are no +Cop sentences at all in sessions 2 and 3. All environments are favourable for the nominative (*hi*) and unfavourable for the accusative (*him*). It is perhaps only because there are 3 +Cop sentences in session 4 that the single accusative subject appears.

4. ACCUSATIVE SUBJECTS IN PIDGINS AND NOMINATIVE SHIFT IN DE-CREOLISATION

Accusative subject pronouns seem to be a general feature of the pidginisation process. Accusative pronouns are used as subjects by many, if not all, English-based pidgins and creoles the world over (Derek Bickerton, personal communication). It is only when de-creolisation has begun that the nominative-accusative distinction begins to be strongly established in the lexicon.

This general feature of English-based pidgins and creoles is supported by the HC evidence.

It seems that as de-creolisation began in HC, there was a 'phylogenetic' nominative shift which is in some sense recapitulated ontogenetically in the linguistic development of the child. In the extensive texts (200+ tapes of 300+ speakers) collected by the Non-Standard Hawaiian English Project, only true pidgin speakers use accusative pronouns as

subject with any frequency. Four pidgin speakers' texts were analysed for accusative subject pronouns with the following results: Two speakers - a 60 year old Japanese woman and a 73 year old Filipino man - had obligatory *as*, but no other apparent accusative subjects. The other two - a Japanese couple of 77 and 70 who came to Hawaii together in their teens - had slightly over 40% *mi* (vs. *ai*), but no other apparent accusative subjects. It is possible that the semi-formal atmosphere of the NHEP interview created a somewhat distorted picture for these speakers of pidgins in Hawaii. It may well be that they use much more accusative subject when monitoring less, but their texts do provide clear evidence that they at least use the accusative forms of some pronoun sets. This is not at all the case for HC speakers.

In even the most casual settings obtainable, speakers born and raised in Hawaii use very little accusative subject pronoun. A group of four plantation workers on Kauai (perhaps the second most basilectal island, based on preliminary findings) produced only one accusative subject pronoun in over three hours of casual, beer-drinking interaction (at least half of which took place without the presence of anyone outside the peer group):

8. *If mi was da gal hu get jab awredi, al no kam baek.*
If I were the guy who had a job already, I wouldn't (have come/come) back.

(The speaker was a 50 year old man of Filipino ancestry.)

Another group of middle-aged plantation workers from the Big Island of Hawaii (perhaps the most basilectal island) produced no accusative subjects. The most careful listening revealed only one or two possible tokens of the feature in another beer-drinking session with a group of plantation workers in rural Oahu (generally-speaking the most decreolised island).

The major point of all this is clear: Accusative subjects are - synchronically-speaking - features of pidgins and child speech in Hawaii, although they may be used infrequently by adults in the most informal atmosphere in certain as yet undetermined environments. It may well be that the picture has changed over the years in a diachronic nominative shift. Further investigation will compare older speakers of HC with pidgin-speaking counterparts - as well as with younger speakers of HC - through use of both the usual elicitation techniques and hypno-elicitation. Hopefully, this further study will determine whether there actually was such a diachronic shift and if so, how it was constrained - by a copular sentence constraint or otherwise.

5. CONCLUSION

To summarise briefly, though no conclusions may be drawn at this point, it seems that the data support the hypotheses of nominative shift and its copular sentence constraint. Both the texts from Ms. Makuakane and those from the two sets of siblings concur in supporting nominative shift, and on the basis of this concurrence, the author feels some confidence in using the more numerous hypno-elicited data in the argument for the copular sentence constraint. As for diachronic nominative shift, there is no solid support in the data yet, though there are indications that it is at least a valid hypothesis.

The analysis of nominative shift in this paper does suggest, however, that longitudinal analysis of a specific feature through hypno-elicitation is both feasible and valuable. The reader is referred to a forthcoming paper by Bickerton, Peet, and Steadman for detailed discussion of the techniques and promise to linguistics of hypno-elicitation.

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N O T E S

1. All HC examples here are written in a broad phonetic transcription (devised by Carol Odo) with a rough gloss in Standard English (SE) below.
2. 'Text', as used in this paper, means a sample of tape-recorded speech, elicited either in an interview, in peer interaction, or through hypnotic age-regression.
3. By 'basilectal' here is meant, as commonly used in the literature, most creole or least standard.
4. By 'plantation pidgin' here is meant the contact language of immigrant labourers who retain their mother tongue for home and peer interaction.
5. 'Hypno-elicitation' is a technique conceived by this writer and developed under the auspices of the Non-Standard Hawaiian English Project (NHEP) in collaboration with NHEP's Principal Investigator Derek Bickerton, and psychotherapist Clarence Steadman. It involves regression of hypnotised subjects to earlier times in their lives, at which point speech is elicited in much the same way as in normal elicitation.
6. 'Polylectal' here means capable of using several different lects from the creole continuum - specifically, in Ms. Makuakane's case, mesolectal HC lects and Standard English.

7. The difference in average length of utterance ALU between sessions 2 and 3 is obviously insignificant, yet there is an overall increase in ALU in the four sessions. This is the important point here. ALU is introduced here as a gross verification of increasing age in the successive sessions. There are other more sophisticated techniques currently being used (repetition tests courtesy of Richard Day and Kamehameha Schools and analysis of other features related to nominalisation) but as yet unavailable for scrutiny.

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