

Insubordination in interaction: the Cha'palaa counter-assertive

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The Cha'palaa language (Barbacoan) of northwestern Ecuador features rich verbal morphology for both finite and subordinate clauses, and in some cases formally identical morphemes can occur in both contexts, hinting that processes of insubordination may have helped create finite markers out of non-finite ones through different pragmatic usage practices. This paper will review a number of potential cases of insubordination in Cha'palaa, (some familiar, like “infinitive > future”, and some less so, like “different-referent > inferential evidential”), and will then focus on the example of a specific morpheme *-ba*, the “counter-assertive”, asking how pragmatic and social-interactional factors can help explain the relationship between its usage in main and dependent clauses. A number of Cha'palaa finite verbal morphemes, including *-ba*, neutralize all other marking on predicates (specifically, the finite egophoric morphology, a kind of epistemic marking), and the resulting finite clauses formally resemble dependent clauses. In main clauses, *-ba* marks trans-sentential contrast, somewhat like a concessive:

- (1) ña-a coriente-chi nenña-a pu'-ka-nu, bateriya-chi ne ju-u-ba
2-TOP electricity-INSTR why-TOP put-get-INF battery-INSTR just be-CL:be-CNTR.ASR
'Why are you going to plug it in (even though) it should be with batteries?'

In subordinate clauses, *-ba* generally contrasts with a clause by the same speaker, like in (1). However, in main clauses *-ba* takes on a specific interactional meaning that can contrast two clauses by different speakers, like in (2). Specifically, the proposition with *-ba* contradicts or complicates a proposition or presupposition from the previous speaker's turn, and blocks it from entering the common ground in the progressivity of the interaction.

- (2) L: Ju-tyu-shee chinkña-a ju-tyu, ju-tyu
be-NEG-INTS banana.type-TOP be-NEG be-NEG
'There is no chinkña bananas, there is none, there is none.'
- B: In-che-e ju-ba
1-POSS-TOP be-CTR.ASR
'Mine is there (even though you found none).'

The Cha'palaa data raises the question of whether some cases of insubordination can be understood as originally not cases of ellipsis (as it is usually understood) but rather of cross-speaker and cross-turn syntactic dependencies. Asking this question means looking for ways to combine grammatical concepts like concessive clauses with concepts of interactive practices like disagreeing and disconfirming. The paper will use the example from Cha'palaa as a starting point from which to explore some of these questions regarding the relevance of interactive structures for understanding insubordination.