Teotitlan del Valle Zapotec (TdVZ)

The Zapotec language in TdVZ is spoken in Teotitlan del Valle, a town located in the Valley of Oaxaca (Mexico), 18 miles from the city of Oaxaca. This language is part of the Otomi-Mazahua family, and within the Zapotec family it is considered among the central group (Smith-Stark 2007).

Phonological and morphosyntactic features

- Fortis vs Lenis consonants
- Three-way distinction in phonation (modal, creaky, and glottalized vowels)
- Five contrastive tones (low /a/, mid /á/, high /é/, falling /í/, and rising /ú/)
- Due to its prominence, syllables are categorized in Tonic vs Non-tonic. In Tonic syllables any phonation and tone type can occur while in non-tonic, only modal phonation and level tones occur. In addition, a vowel lengthens in word final position in a tonic syllable or when followed by a lenis consonant; in non-tonic syllables this does not occur.
- VSO word order
- Nominative-accusative alignment

| Phonological and morphosyntactic features | TdVZ | Zapotec
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Clausal negation in TdVZ

Dahl (1979), Payne (1985), and Dryer (2013) present all classifications of negative constructions focusing on the status of the negative markers according to the following three way classification: 1) affixal negation; 2) negative particles; or 3) negation verb. The first type is categorized a morphological construction, while the last two are a syntactic construction.

Another type of classification for clausal negation is proposed by Miestamo (2000), who distinguishes between symmetric and asymmetric negations. That is, whether there are structural differences (asymmetries) between the affirmative sentences and their negative counterpart.

In TdVz, clausal negation occurs with the markers: kēd̪ and ri (1). Both elements are obligatory in indicative monosyllabic constructions and in interrogative polar questions (2).

1) Kēd̪-bixax-ri ‘It didn’t tremble yesterday.’

The negation marker is not a clitic, but it is phonologically and morphosyntactically in addition. In TdVZ, type (1) is the most natural form, the form in which the negation occurs.

2) Klō-gātx (i-aw) ‘You do not eat that.’

In the following cases, a negative construction is negated as the indicative of an alternative statement (4).

3) Kēd̪-rē ‘NEG=HAB=eat=2SG.IF that ‘Do not eat that.’

Also, ri becomes optional in some context (5), and in several subordinate constructions that denote irrealis modalities (6). In addition, there are subordinate clauses in which ri triggers ungrammaticality (7).

4) Kēd̪-rē-aw-ri ‘NEG=HAB=eat=2SG.IF that ‘You do not eat that.’

Negation of potential mood clauses (A subtype of Clausal negation)

- Simple structural and functional characteristics as (main)clausal negation.
- Negation of potential mood clauses

Existential negation in TdVZ

Veselinova (2013) develops a cross-linguistic study on the strategies to negate existential predicative. The main findings of this author in relation to negation of existential predicates and clausal negation are the following:

- Negation in existential predicates is different from clausal negation.
- Negation in existential predicates and clausal negation are formally identical, but phonologically and contextually different constructions.
- Clausal negation or a negative quantifier alternate for the negation of existential.
- No special negation is used to negate existential predicates.

In TdV, this type of negation occurs with the negative marker kēty. The most relevant feature of this negative construction is that the affirmative counterpart has a verb that is deleted in the negative, as noticed in (10) vs (11).

Also, this negative marker is not a clitic but a phonological and morphosyntactic element. In addition, kēty can be inflected (12). Thus, kēty has a more verbal status.

10) Kēty ‘nīs ‘nna=3SG.IF NEG.EX water today ‘There is no water (service) today.’

11) ˈyɪ ‘nī ‘nna=3SG.IF yū ‘nī ‘nna=3SG.IF EST.exist water today ‘There is water (service) today.’

12) Kēty ‘nā ‘gwā ‘kēty ‘nā ‘gwā NEG.EX=3SG.IF COM-go=1SG ‘He was (not somewhere) (when I went).’

Future Directions

Explore other negative constructions such as constituent negation (13) and the negation of indefinites (14). In both of them ri is a recurrent element.

In TdVZ there is syntactic and asymmetric clausal negation. The negator kēd̪ri require the enclitic ri post-verbally in monosyllabic constructions, this clitic may have indicated or emphasized the asymmetry, but it is not so present in the other TdVZ.

The existential negation in TdVZ resembles the clausal negator but is not identical to it, a not common pattern in the typology for these type of negation (Veselinova 2013). kēd̪ and kēty are historically related, kēd̪ may be an evolved form of kēty.

References