

Clitics, Clauses, Closure, and Discourse in Easter Pomo

Author(s): Sally McLendon

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CLITICS, CLAUSES, CLOSURE, AND DISCOURSE  
IN EASTERN POMO<sup>1</sup>

Sally McLendon  
Hunter College and the Graduate Center  
of the City University of New York

Eastern Pomo, a Hokan language spoken around the western end of Clear Lake in northern California, makes use of a number of clitics in natural discourse, the precise meaning and function of which can not usually be defined by native speakers. One in particular, the hearsay evidential clitic xa, seems not only opaque in meaning and function but redundant since it always occurs with the hearsay evidential suffix -le to mark the evidential mode.<sup>2</sup> The evidential mode would, of course, be distinctively marked by the hearsay evidential suffix alone, and sometimes, in fact, is. Not only does the hearsay evidential suffix appear without the hearsay clitic xa, but the hearsay clitic xa may appear repeatedly in a sentence. At first glance, then, the hearsay clitic xa seems both to have little or no communicative function and to be used variably, perhaps idiosyncratically and unpredictably by speakers. A systematic examination of its distribution in recorded natural discourse, however, reveals a number of pervasive patterns.

In non-complex sentences, the hearsay evidential particle xa consistently appears after the first constituent of the sentence, to which it is phonologically bound. This is most commonly a sentential adverb as in Example 1, but may be a substantive, i.e., a noun, pronoun, kinship term, proper name, or demonstrative, indicating

- 1) yu            xa    ku·nú·la-bù·'cike            má·l·'le.  
perfective            coyote-old man            go around-they say  
'Old Man Coyote had been going around' (1st sentence of text).

the agent, patient, source, etc., as underlined in Example 2. (In Example 2, the agent is expressed with the third person clitic khi,

- 2) káwwa            xa    khi            ba·'tá·yake·le.  
house-from            3rd p.            call-plural-they say  
'They called from the house.'

which may not occur sentence initially, so it is the phrase indicating source, kawwa 'house from,' which the hearsay clitic follows.)

In complex sentences, the first constituent may be, and almost always is, a dependent clause subordinated with one of the four pairs of switch-referencing suffixes which 1) indicate that the suffixed clause is syntactically dependent, 2) distinguish semantic relations of sequentiality, prior necessity, or simultaneity between the suffixed clause and the matrix clause, and 3) indicate that either the case roles remain the same in the two clauses (co-referentiality) or there is a switch in case roles between the two clauses (hence the name switch-reference suffixes). These suffixes



occur in juxtaposed or apposed independent clauses following the matrix clause, even when the main verb of these clauses is also suffixed with *-le*. Thus, in Example 4, the independent clause ma·ká·yiNal kál-uhò·le 'they came home to their grandfather' is juxtaposed following the matrix clause (which is on the first line) 'Then from there they went home alone' and does not include an occurrence of the hearsay clitic *xa*, while in Example 5, one must recognize that the two independent clauses: báy xa bə·si·qá·lmanke·le 'they were screaming inside' and xa·ʔá·qan xa ku·mú cò·m·le 'Next morning they were all gone (dead)' belong to two separate sentences,

5) bá-y xa ba· si·qá·l-ma-nke·le, qu·már-he?  
 that- that screaming-extensive pl. ground squirrels-  
in agents-personal percep- specific  
 tion-they say

si·qá·l-ma· xa·ʔá·-qan xa ku·mú ǒ·m·le.  
 screaming-exten- dawn-then, S-R all gone-they say  
 sive pl. agents

'They were screaming inside, the ground squirrels were screaming.  
 Next morning, they were all gone (dead).'

since each contains an occurrence of the hearsay clitic *xa*. The occurrence of *xa*, thus, marks the matrix clause.

The hearsay clitic does not appear in dependent clauses such as the sentence-initial dependent clause dá·yawal yó·qay 'having become a young woman' in Example 3 (and neither does the hearsay evidential suffix *-le*). It can, however, appear repeatedly within a matrix clause. In the examples of natural discourse examined so far, the hearsay clitic appears repeatedly in the same matrix clause only if a number of internally complex constituents (embedded clauses) are incorporated into the matrix clause, as in Examples 6 and 7 below, in which several dependent clauses (underlined) are followed by *xa*.

6) xa·ʔá·-qan xa khi yáka-Mi Wíl-he? ma·ká-y xa  
dawn-then, S-R 3rd p. right away abalone look  
shell- for-then,  
specific Co-R

khi dúyeqal·-le  
 3rd p. make (some)-they say  
 'Next morning, first thing, he looked for that abalone shell and made some (shell pendants).'

7) bá yu ká·y-di·lè· xól-uhù-day xa khi  
 then perfec- middle towards-go-then 3rd p.  
tive

qóy-he? khi bi·xé·t·ki-qan xa . . . dáqa·rà  
 neck- 3rd p. twist to one side- old lady<sub>2</sub>  
 specific S-R

|           |                     |                               |   |                               |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| <u>xa</u> | xá-xa·m<br>water-in | ba·kú·-y<br>fall-then<br>Co-R | xa·bé-ʔbà·-Mak<br>rock(s)-that-<br>with | ba·kú·-y<br>fall-then<br>Co-R |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|

xa      ka·lé·l      ti·šǐ·ti·šǐ-kh·le.  
 simply      make a hissing noise-distributively-they say  
 'Then when the bear had gone across to the middle (to that hot rock) he suddenly twisted his neck to one side and (the) old lady fell in the water together with those rocks, making a hissing sound (like a hard wind).'

However, not every internally complex constituent (embedded or dependent clause) of a matrix clause is followed by an occurrence of the hearsay clitic xa, as Examples 8, 9, and 10 indicate.

|         |           |           |              |            |            |
|---------|-----------|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|
| 8) mí·n | ʔí·-day   | <u>xa</u> | qa·wí·-heʔè  | xów-iday   | má·l-in,   |
| like    | was-then, |           | boy-specific | outside-in | go around- |
| that    | S-R       |           |              |            | while Co-R |

|      |               |                |           |            |
|------|---------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| ba·  | ma·ʔáy-heʔ    | qa·wá·l-in,    | bá·-Mak   | tḥá·l·le.  |
| that | food-specific | eat/chew-while | that-with | play -they |
|      |               | Co-R           |           | say        |

'It was like that and then after awhile the youngest boy was outside, eating the meat while playing around.'

|         |        |      |                 |      |        |
|---------|--------|------|-----------------|------|--------|
| 9) bá·y | khǐ    | mí·n | ki·yá-yk,       | mí·n | khǐ    |
| that-   | 3rd p. | like | do-distributive | like | 3rd p. |
| in      |        | that | plural          | that |        |

|                 |            |                   |           |
|-----------------|------------|-------------------|-----------|
| ki·yá-yk,       | yu         | xa·ʔá·-yaq-aday   | <u>xa</u> |
| do-distributive | perfective | dawn-future when, |           |
| plural          |            |                   |           |

khǐ      ba·qó·le  
 3rd p.      find out (what they are singing about)-they say  
 'In there they kept doing like that and doing like that, and finally towards morning he found out.'

|          |           |            |                              |
|----------|-----------|------------|------------------------------|
| 10) ʔí·y | <u>xa</u> | ku·mú·la·  | bi·ʔém-aki-y                 |
| was-then |           | everybody- | many to cling-plural agents- |
| Co-R     |           | agent      | then, Co-R                   |

|              |                          |           |        |
|--------------|--------------------------|-----------|--------|
| šū·múk-aki-y | šū·múšū·mù-yk-iy         | <u>xa</u> | khǐ    |
| pull-plural  | pull-distributively-     |           | 3rd p. |
| agents-then  | distributive plural con- |           |        |
| Co-R         | tinuative-then, Co-R     |           |        |

ʔu·wá·-heʔ      šū·qúp<sup>h</sup>-ki-yake·le  
 arm-specific<sub>2</sub>      pulled off-semelfactive-plural agents-they say  
 'So everybody got on his hand and they all pulled and each one pulled and pulled continuously and pretty soon they pulled his arm of'

In Example 8, the first internally complex constituent, mí·n ?í·day 'it was like that then,' is followed by the hearsay clitic xa, but not the subsequent two internally complex constituents: qa·wí·he?è xówiday má·lin 'the boy was outside' or ba· ma·?áyhe? qa·wá·lin 'eating the meat.'

In Example 9, the first two internally complex constituents, báy khi mī·n ki·yáyk 'in there they kept doing like that' and mí·n khi ki·yáyk 'kept doing like that' are not followed by the hearsay clitic xa. Only the third internally complex constituent xa·?á·yaqaday 'towards morning' is followed by the hearsay clitic xa.

In Example 10, the first constituent, which is a dependent clause, ?iy 'was-then', is followed by xa, but the next two dependent clauses:

- (1) ku·múla· bi·?émakiy  
everybody clung (to his hand)
- (2) šu·múkakiy  
they all pulled

are not; only the last dependent clause:

- (3) šu·múšu·mùykíy  
each one pulled and pulled continuously

is.

Examination of all such examples collected so far suggests that the variable repetition of xa is associated with a distinction in the sorts of semantic relations which pertain between the successive clauses. The repeated use of xa signals that the actions or events described by a sequence of dependent clauses are discrete, not inter-related or dependent, and happen sequentially (or are "logically" sequenced), as in Example 6:

It was dawn  
he right away looked for abalone shell  
he made (some shell pendants)

or Example 7:

When (the bear) got to the middle  
he twisted his neck  
the old lady fell in the water  
making a hissing sound.

The lack of xa signals that one clause expands the preceding clause or describes an action that co-occurs with that described by the preceding clause. In Example 7, there is no xa after xáxa·m ba·kú·y 'fell in the water' because the following dependent clause xa·bé?ba·Mak ba·kú·y 'fell with those rocks' expands informationally on the preceding clause, but, in fact, describes the same event.

In Example 8, the first clause 'It was like that then' refers back to the events described in the preceding sentence--in this case, that Bear's Son was keeping the good game for himself and his wife and children, and giving his mother, Bear, the least desirable game--and the occurrence of xa following this first clause signals a disjunction, a switch to a new discrete event that is sequentially later. The subsequent clauses, however, all describe co-occurring, overlapping events:

The boy was going around outside  
while the boy was eating food  
while the boy was playing

that is, the boy was simultaneously outside, eating, and playing, and the absence of xa after either of the two dependent clauses marks this.

In Example 9, the first two clauses refer to the same event (that the ground squirrels are continuously singing a song (in fact, insulting to Coyote) while dancing), while the third dependent clause, which is followed by xa, describes the nearness of morning, at which point Coyote finally understands what the ground squirrels are singing.

In Example 10, the first dependent clause refers back to the preceding sentence and is followed by xa marking the discreteness of the preceding sentence's activities from this one's. The next clauses:

ku·múla· bi·témakiy  
everybody clung (to his hand)

šu·múkakiy  
they all pulled

šu·múšu·mùykíy  
each one pulled and pulled continuously

all describe co-occurring events, and expand on the description of that event: they got on/clung to the hand and pulled while clinging, each one pulling continuously while clinging. xa follows the fourth and last dependent clause and signals the discreteness and temporal lateness of the events described by the matrix verb. Compare Example 8, where the events described by the matrix verb co-occur with those described by the dependent verbs: the boy is simultaneously outside, eating, and playing, and no xa intervenes between the final dependent clause and the remainder of the matrix clause.

Since the hearsay clitic occurs after a constituent of the matrix clause which may be, and frequently is, a dependent clause itself, the presence of the hearsay clitic simultaneously identifies the matrix clause, the initial constituent of a matrix clause, and the closure of certain dependent clauses. Recognition of the sensitivity of the hearsay

clitic to types of clauses, the semantic relations that pertain between clauses as well as types of internally complex constituents of matrix clauses provides an explicit, non-impressionistic device for identifying both sentence boundaries and the internal organization of complex sentences in Eastern Pomo.

Understanding this aspect of the clitic also makes more comprehensible the Eastern Pomo tendency to pause after xa, if there is to be a mid-sentence pause.

Thus, the redundancy of the hearsay evidential clitic on closer examination proves to be only apparent. In fact, the hearsay clitic is a discourse tracking device that signals semantic sequencing relations between clauses, identifies the matrix clause and helps to mark off subordinate structure, while constantly reminding the listener that what is being described is known not from personal experience or observation, but from hearsay.

#### Postscript on the Stylistic Function of xa

Dell Hymes (1975, 1976, 1977) has suggested that oral literary discourse could be more effectively reduced to writing if the similarity of much of native North American oral literature to measured verse were emphasized in the presentational format, by breaking sentences into lines on the basis of recurrent patterning within them--patterning frequently involving particles or clitics.

Hymes has focused so far on organizing the English translation of native American texts as measured verse based on the structuring present in the native American originals. During fieldwork with an NEH Summer Stipend last summer to explore what sorts of presentational formats Eastern Pomo might prefer for their oral literature, I showed the most gifted myth narrator alive some of the possibilities which had been suggested by Tedlock (1972) for Zuni. The odd punctuation and spacing conventions employed by Tedlock neither fazed him nor impressed him. He read it through and then commented: "I wonder why they would want to leave the Indian out." Further discussion revealed that for him the text primarily existed in Eastern Pomo. An English translation was just that--a translation--and he was mystified as to why anyone would want to present a native American myth solely in English. I have been experimenting with presentational formats for Eastern Pomo, breaking Eastern Pomo sentences into lines on the basis of recurrent patterning within them, and it seems to work out well to use an occurrence of xa as one marker of the end of a line.<sup>4</sup>

The first three sentences of an already published Eastern Pomo myth "Bear Kills Her Own Daughter-in-Law, Deer" (McLendon, 1977) are given here in a presentational format which organizes sentences into lines based on syntactic and intonational structure used by the narrator in his oral performance of that sentence. For myths this involves breaking sentences up into lines which either 1) end with an occurrence of xa or the evidential suffix -•le, or 2) are marked off in the actual performance by intonational features--primarily pauses. Such a presentational format would be more expensive to

print, taking as it does more room (although in these days of camera-ready copy, that is probably not such a problem). It does, I think, give some feeling for the rhythm and pacing in the oral performance, and as Hymes (personal communication) has pointed out, "It slows the eye and hence feeds appreciation of the words."<sup>5</sup>

- (1) yu xa . . . .  
perfective they say

na·p<sup>h</sup>ó·le,  
dwelt plurally-they say

bu·ráqal-dáqa·ràqay  
bear-old lady<sub>1</sub>-and

qa·wíkiykàya, má·yawala xóçh;  
have children-after young ladies<sub>2</sub> two

šé·laqay káli.  
young man<sub>3</sub>-and one

- (2) bá· mí·n ?í·day xa  
then like was-then they say  
that switch ref.

khí bi·šé·dàyawal dá·kh·le;  
he<sub>3</sub> deer-young lady<sub>4</sub> married-they say

bu·ráqal qa·wé·lep  
bear<sub>1</sub>('s) son<sub>3</sub>

- (3) bá· mí·n na·p<sup>h</sup>ók<sup>h</sup>kíliday xa  
then like dwelt plurally habitually- they say  
that then switch ref.

mí·p  
he<sub>3</sub>

ma·?áy ba·bíl-du·lè·le;  
food gather (i.e., run trapline)  
durative-constantly-they say

çi·yá kál-khí·dìkhkìl·le.  
bird(s) home-carried-punctual  
habitually-they say

- (1) Already, they say  
       they were living there, they say  
       And Bear Old Lady  
       then had children, two young ladies,  
       and one young man.
- (2) It was like that, they say  
       [i.e., time passed]  
       then he married Deer Young Lady, they say  
       Bear's son did.
- (3) They all continued living there like that, they say  
       he  
       trapping all the time, they say  
       bringing home birds, they say.

## FOOTNOTES

1

This is a revised version of a paper read at the 1978 annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association in Los Angeles. I am grateful to the audience there and Ives Goddard, William Gage, Michael Silverstein and Paul Friedrich for stimulating discussion and comments---not all of which are reflected in the present form of the paper. Research on Eastern Pomo has been carried out since 1959 with the much appreciated support of the Survey of California and Other Languages, NIMH Grant R01 MH22887-01, a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1975-76, and an NEH Summer Stipend in 1978.

2

The evidential mode is consistently used throughout most performances of one genre of Eastern Pomo discourse, ma·rú· 'myth', although it is used whenever appropriate in all types of discourse. Examples cited in this paper have all been drawn from performances of ma·rú· recorded between 1959 and 1978.

3

It is therefore useful to maintain a distinction between clauses and sentences, since sentences can, and often do, include several independent clauses as well as dependent clauses. Eastern Pomo is a strict verb last language in terms of clause structure, but the main inflected verb of the matrix clause is often not last within a sentence (as the first and second sentence of the text fragment given at the end of this paper illustrate).

4

I am grateful to Dell Hymes for pointing out this line marking function of xa when he re-drafted the English version of this myth in terms of lines of measured verse, in response to my complaint that I did not see any verse inherent in the material.

5

During the oral presentation of this paper it became clear that such a format has a practical utility for linguists as well. The taped performance of the first three sentences of myth presented below was played to illustrate the presentational format's ef-

fects. The audience of largely professional linguists seemed agreed that the tape could be much more easily followed, and the language understood, when the written text was organized in this way. It would seem to be a useful format for preserving transcripts of taperecorded oral literature in a way that makes them maximally accessible to future scholars, without requiring great prior knowledge of the language.

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