DISCOURSE FUNCTIONS OF PARTICLE *TES* IN GREEN HMONG

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1. Introduction

Particles are generally known as one of areal features of Southeast Asian Languages. They are ubiquitous in speech in Hmong and many other languages in the area such as Thai, Vietnamese, and so on. Hmong has a variety of particles serving various types of functions. Thereby linguists working on Hmong spoken discourse definitely confront overwhelming particles and they certainly have to overcome the difficulty in clarifying the function of particles, especially the utterance-final ones. Lyman (1974) collects 41 particles including their tonal variants in the Dictionary of Mong Njua: A Miao (Meo) Language of Southeast Asia. These particles show either syntactic or discourse functions as well as communicative or pragmatic functions such as *le* showing possessive, *los* connecting clauses or *nawj* used at end of a statement emphasizing something the other person does not know. Apart from that, a group of particles are multifunctional in which two or more functions are found according to their occurrences. Of those, interesting ones are *es, los, le, mas, nab, nev, nua, tes*, as they play significant roles in discourse; for example, connecting two clauses or more, showing the illocutionary force of the speaker when preceded by an intonation unit or reducing the illocutionary force of the speaker and so forth.

Previous analysis of particles, especially final ones (cf. Lyman 1974), is nothing but showing the attitude of the speaker or intensifying preceding assertion. In my previous research (Somruedee 1998), however, shows that the particle *le* does not appear only in the final position. From the discourse analysis, *le* has two major functions. In a narrative *le* is a cohesion marker appearing between the subject and the main verb, indicating cause and effect as well as temporal

sequencing of an event. In conversation *le* is a final particle that increases the illocutionary force of the utterance. Its major function when dealing with speech act is to assert the propositional content of the utterance.

In this paper I focus my attention to *tes*, a particle I assume to be multifunctional, just like *le,* but in different aspects. An occurrence shows somewhat a type of connective function as same as *le* but others occur after phrases—in nominal expressions and interclausally. With the latter occurrence, it is assumed that *tes* is plausibly a topic marker. I will, therefore, investigate the functions of the particle *tes* whose usage domain is in the discourse especially in spoken discourse such as conversation, story telling, interviewing and so on.

Most of the data given here are from my own field notes and recordings, except where noted. The data from my field notes are excerpt from a tale narrated by the 65-year-old male informant. They are shown in Roman-based orthography system or so-called Romanized Popular Alphabet[1]. The data are divided into intonation units as they represent the flow of thought of the speaker. The intonation unit is defined by Chafe (1987:22 quoted in Tao 1996:9) as a minimal discourse unit. Chafe gives the following definition for the intonation unit:

> An intonation unit is a sequence of words combined under a single, coherent intonation contour, usually preceded by a pause.

Tao (1996:52) points out that in natural discourse, one finds that particles correlate to an overwhelmingly large degree with the end of intonation units. We cannot claim that particles are a defining property of the Mandarin intonation unit, because the absolute majority of the intonation unit in Mandarin discourse does NOT end with a particle. It is safe; however, to say that particles constitute a useful cue for identifying Mandarin intonation unit boundaries, although Mandarin particles do not mark intonation boundaries per se,

they correlate highly with intonation unit boundaries, constituting an important feature of the terminal point of the Mandarin intonation unit. Considering the correlation between intonation units and particles in Hmong, I find out that they are, it is safe to say, in some way analogous to those of Mandarin. We can somewhat, therefore, claim that Hmong particles constitute a feature of the boundaries of the Hmong intonation unit.

After data analysis, I find that *tes* has two major functions, i.e., cohesion marker and topic marker.

2. *tes* as a cohesion marker

As a cohesion marker, *tes* can further divided into functions as follows:

A. *tes* indicates cause and effect

Tes is regarded as a connective particle that occurs in the medial position of a sentence (Lyman 1974). *Tes* is listed as a variant of *tais*, a connective particle when it occurs at the medial position of a sentence. Lyman translates this particle as 'then, in that case, since...then, but if...then' as shown in the following examples.

(1) koj   noj   taag   lawm   **tes**   sawv
    you   eat   all PF^2 PRT   leave
    '(Since) you have finished eating, then (you can) leave (us, if you want).'

(2) koj   tsw   saav   sawv   **tes**   ca le
    you   not   wish   get up   PRT   never mind
    '(But if) you don't wish to get up, then never mind.'

(Adapted from Lyman 1974:311)

(1) and (2) are coordinate sentences each of which consists of two independent clauses. *Tes* connects two clauses into a coordinate sentence showing a temporal sequence rather than a consequence of an event as in the translation.

However, the examples drawn from my personal note below show more clearly other relationships expressed by *tes*.

(3) a …nplaj teb   tuab neeg   tuas tuas
         earth   people   die die
    b …**tes**[3]   paa   lwj tsw   nto   ntuj   lawm   **tes**
         PRT   smell   rotten   to   sky   PF   PRT
    'Many people on earth had died, the rotten smell
    reached to the sky.'

Tes occurs interclausally in a narrative. It connects two clauses showing a vague relationship between them.   It is interpretable as indicating the cause and effect of an event or simply showing the temporal sequence of an event. But in (3)b *tes* clearly shows the consequence of an event and thus, the clause after *tes* is the result of the previous one.

B. *tes* indicates temporal sequencing of events
    In addition to cause and effect, *tes* indicates temporal sequencing of events. In (4), *tes* does not overtly show cause and effect of two clauses. Rather, it connects two clauses in chronological order in a narrative. Thus, *tes,* in the case of obscurely expressed relationship, simply indicates the temporal sequencing of an event, as same as 'then' in English.

(4) a …(zaaj   laug) moog thov thov faaj tim **tes**
          Naga old   go   ask   ask   PN   PRT
    b …faaj tim tas
          PN   say
    c …ab
          EXC
    d …kuv pov   tsw   tau   koj   taub hau   es
          I   protect not   able   you   head   PRT
    'The old Naga went to ask Fang Ti (to protect his head)
    Fang Ti said (that) I cannot protect your head.'

Therefore, in (5)b, *tes* shows the temporal sequencing of an event *faaj tim tshaug tshaug sus* 'Fang Ti felt asleep'; in other words, (5)b is a subsequent of an antecedent clause in

(5)a whereas in (5)c, *tes* after *faaj tim ib nyuas ncawg* 'Fang Ti nodded' clause indicates the effect of an antecedent.

(5) a ...yawm   zaaj   laug   thov thov
        grandfather Naga   old   ask   ask
   b ...tau   peb   nub   peb   mos   **tes**
        PF   three day   three night PRT
   c ...faaj tim tshaug tshaug sus   **tes**
           PN   sleepy sleepy rest PRT
       faaj tim ib   nyuas ncawg   **tes**
           PN   one   nod   PRT
   'The old Naga kept asking Fang Ti, on the third day
   Fang Ti felt asleep then he nodded.'

(6) shows several interesting functions of *tes* depending on its occurrences. Clark (1992) points out that since two grammatically independent clauses are connected by the particles, the status of connected sentence is in question as to whether or not subordination is involved. Although such sentence is frequently translated into English with subordinate clauses, in this structure they appear to be grammatically independent with a coordinate relationship. Then (6) comprises four clauses but in five intonation units, connected by *tes* to be coordinate construction.

(6) a ...faaj tim nci   tsum   yuav   noj   mov   **tes**
           PN   reach   table FUT   eat   rice PRT
   b ...hej leej pov sw tsaam
                 PN
   c ...txhawg   poob   ntshoog   **tes**
        chopsticks drop   suddenly   PRT
   d ...faaj tim tas   ca   muab   tus   tshab **tes**
           PN   say let   bring CLF   new   PRT
       hej leej pov sw tsaam   tas
               PN   say
   e ...ca kuv muab tus   nuav   lob
        let I   have CLF   this   PRT
   'Fang Ti reached the table to eat rice, suddenly the
   chopstick of Hey Leng Po Sue Tsang dropped from

the table. Fang Ti said (that) let me bring you the
new ones, Hey Leng Po Sue Tsang said (that) let I have
these ones.'

This example allows us to determine *tes* in (6)a as a
conjunction connecting (6)a and (6)b-c to be a coordinate
construction, and indicating the temporal sequential part of an
event. In (6)c-d, *tes* shows different relationship of clauses. In
(6)c, *tes* indicates effect of the antecedent clause, i.e. (6)b-c, in
the sense that because the chopsticks dropped from the table,
Fang Ti will bring another one for Hey Leng Po Sue Tsang. In
the third occurrence, (6)d, *tes* shows the sense of contrastive
meaning to the antecedent event.

In brief, Hmong has a group of particles functioning as
a cohesion marker such as *tes*, *le,* or *los*. These particles have
nonrestrictive and inexplicit meaning. Since they show several
meanings even when appear in the same position, their
meanings depend on the relationship of the connected clauses.
If that relation is vague, these conjunctions simply indicate the
temporal sequencing of an event that is expressed in the
chronological order in a narrative—the nature of narrative
discourse.

Thus, *tes* and *le* are similar in the function of
connecting. While *le* is regarded as a conjunctive marker in
the language whenever it occurs between the subject and the
main verb, *tes* is a conjunctive marker as well whenever it
appears interclausally. *Tes* seems to have less restricted
meaning than *le* as the former is somewhat able to express the
contrastive meaning while the latter is not.

3. *tes* as a topic marker

Previous research of topic and comment in White
Hmong shows that *mas* and *ces* are topic markers whereby *mas*
is more clearly a topic marker (Fuller 1988:77). After noun
phrases and prepositional location phrases as well as time
clauses and conditional clauses, *mas* is used much more than
ces, and these clauses can be interpreted as topical. Two
independent clauses which have a 'then' or 'so' relationship

are much more likely to be joined by *ces* than *mas*, and the time relationship is typically joined by *ces*.

From Fuller's research we can see that the functions of topicalizing and connecting are in some degree involved. Fuller points out that *mas* marks the less 'topic-like' constituents that are noun phrases and integral dependent clauses. *Ces* marks the less 'topic-like' constituents, loosely connected dependent clauses, and coordinate clauses. Fuller does not, however, explicitly claim that these particles are multifunctional particles that serve as topic markers and in different occurrence they could serve as cohesion markers. Clark (1992) overtly claims that, from a different aspect, discourse function of these conjunctions, namely *thi* in Vietnamese, *ko* in Black Tai and *los* in Hmong is of a topicalizing one, a kind of topicalization process. The conjunctions highlight a usually contrastive aspect of the background discourse as a given for new information. Interestingly, Clark claims that the particles *mas* and *ces* are inchoative conjunctions as topicalizers which *mas* is a regular topicalizer of NPs and clauses while conjunction *ces* occurs interclausally.

In this section I will show that another discourse function of *tes* is to mark the topic phrases and clauses. This function can be divided into three categories due to the constructions of topic, i.e., noun phrase, temporal and location phrase and clause.

A. *tes* with Noun Phrase

According to Keenan and Schieffelin's (1976 quoted in Fuller 1988) categorization of discourse topics, the categorization makes a primary division of continuous topics, which occur in previous sentence, and discontinuous topics, which do not. Continuous topics include collaborating topics, in which the topic is the same as the topic of the previous sentence, and incorporating topics, in which the topic is part of the comment of the previous sentence. Discontinuous topics include re-introducing topics, in which the topics appear in the previous discourse, and introducing topics, in which the topic is new in the discourse.

Tes preceded by noun phrases occurs frequently in the double-subject constructions in which that noun phrases are both topic and subject of the clause--since it has argument with the predicates of the clauses. The most frequent use of *tes* with noun phrases is to encode entitles that have been introduced in the previous sentence and have been incorporated into the present sentence as a topic. Examples of these noun phrases topics are given in the following:

(7) a ...ab   kuv   pov   tsw   tau
      EXC   I   protect   not   able
   b ...yog   yuav   pov   tau   tes
      if   FUT   protect   able   PRT
   c ...yuav   yog   faaj tim   es
      must   COP   PN   PRT
'I could not protect (your head) the one who could protect was Fang Ti only.'

(8) ...faaj tim **tes**   yog   kaav   teb   kaav chaw   tes
      PN   PRT COP   rule   earth   rule   place   PRT
'Fang Ti was the ruler.'

(9) ...faaj tim **tes**   faaj tim   has   pov   tau
      PN   PRT   PN   CP   protect   able
'Fang Ti could protect.'

(7) is the preceding clauses to show the context of (8)-(9). In (8) *faaj tim* is mentioned in the predicate of (7), i.e. in (7)c, and becomes topic in (8) and (9). Thus *faaj tim* is the incorporating topic.

(10) a ...lis seeb seeb   tas   faaj tim   txhus   nuav   teg
           PN   say   PN   reach   this   PRT
    b...eb   yuav   ncaim   kiv   hov
        we   FUT   split   way   PRT
'Li Seng Seng said (that) Fang Ti we reached here then we both would have to split up.'

(11)…kuv **tes** kuv yuav thaus kiv nuav moog **es**
    I   PRT I   FUT along way this go   PRT
'I would go along this way.'

(12) …koj   **tes**   koj moog txuj kiv   ntawv
    You PRT   you   go   CLF way   that
'You must go to that way.'

(10) is the preceding sentence to show the context of (11) and (12). *Eb* in (10) is the first dual pronoun for *lis seeb seeb* and *faaj tim,* the main characters of the story. The pronoun *kuv* for *lis seeb seeb*, is mentioned again and marked by *tes* as a topic and also subject of (11) since it has an argument with its predicate as well as *koj* in (12) is marked as a topic by *tes* as well. *Es* in (11) is other particle—cohesion marker shows temporal sequencing of an event as well.

B. *tes* in Temporal and Location Phrase[4]
Temporal and location phrases in Hmong are mostly shown in nominal expressions and some in prepositional expressions if prepositions clearly occur[5]. Temporal phrases with *tes* are shown in (13)-(14). Location phrases with *tes* are shown in (15)-(16). Temporal and location expressions are topics of the following clauses in which they are in parallel to the use of *mas* in (17)-(18).

(13) a …txhus nub **tes**
        reach day PRT
   b …ntshaug ntshuas moog nuv   tes
         orphan   go   to fish PRT
'Reaching that day, the orphan man went to fish.'

(14) …nws nuav **tes** toj-sab   naag lug lug
      time this   PRT high hill rain   fall fall
'Now, the rain had fallen onto the high hill.'

We can see that both temporal phrases in (13)-(14) are marked as topic by *tes.*

(15) a ...pes   roob   **tes**
     upon   mountain   PRT
   b ...lus   tau   peb   hli   naag   es
     fall   already   three   month   rain   PRT
   'Upon the mountain, the rain had fallen for three
   months already.'

(16) a ...chaav   chaw   qhe   **tes**
     area   place-location   low   PRT
   b...tshaav   tshaav   ntuj   es
     shine   shine   sky   PRT
   'At the low area, the sun was very shiny.'

The followings are the usage of *mas* marking the temporal and location phrases as topics, respectively.

(17) a ...ab   xyoo   nuav   **mas**
     EXC   year   this   TOP
   b ...toj sab   **mas**   yuav   tshaav   peb   hli   ntuj
     plateau   TOP   FUT   shine   three   month   sky
   'Oh this year, at the plateau, the sun would shine for
   three months.'

(18) ...chaw   qhe   **mas**   yuav   lus   peb   hli   naag
     place   low   TOP   FUT   fall   three   month   rain
   'At the low area, the rain would fall for three months.'

In my text, it seems that the narrator obviously uses *tes* much more frequently than *mas*. The usage of both particles *tes* and *mas* – topic markers I have come to believe that they are varied from speaker to speaker. Even the usage of topic markers in Hmong varies from person to person, *tes* is ultimately a topic marker.

C. *tes* with Clausal Construction

Clausal topics in Green Hmong can be divided into three types and they all can be marked by *tes* as follows.

(i) *tes* in Temporal Clause

The use of *tes* in temporal clauses is parallel to the use in temporal phrases that is in the form of nominal expressions. As same as temporal phrases, temporal clause is topic as in the following.

(19) a ...muaj ib   nub **tes**
         have one day PRT
    b ...hej leej pov sw tsaam
               PN
    c ...yaa qog phlawg tuaj   tes   khuam daaj
         fly   rapid   come PRT carry sword
         ntoo mom
         wear hat
    'There is one day, Hey Leng Po Sue Tsang, carrying
     a sword and wearing a hat, flied rapidly (to kill
     the old Naga).'

(ii) *tes* in Conditional Clause

According to Haiman (1978 quoted in Fuller 1988) conditionals are topics with the argument that the meanings of conditionals and topics are similar because they are both 'given' with respect to a following clause. Conditionals in my data are marked with *tes* and *mas* with the most frequent use of *tes*.

(20) a ...yog   koj   tsw   paab **mas**
         If   you   not   help TOP
    b ...kuv muaj tsw   tau
         I   take not   able
    c ...zaaj   laug taub hau
         Naga   old   head
    'If you did not help me, I could not take the old
     Naga's head.'

(21) a ...yog yuav pov   tau   koj   taub hau **tes**
          if   FUT   protect able you   head   PRT
     b ...yuav yog   faaj tim es
          must COP   PN   PRT
     'If there was the one who could protect your head, it
     must be Fang Ti.'

(22) a ...yog hej leej pov sw tsaam **tes**
          if   PN   PRT
     b...kuv has tsw   laib   lawm   es
         I   say not   able   PF   PRT
     'If it was Hey Leng Po Sue Tsang, I could not ask
     him.'

(23) a ...yog koj   yuav   moog muaj   yawm   zaaj
          if   you   FUT   go   take   grandfather Naga
         laug   taub hau   **tes**
         old   head   PRT
     b ...koj ntshus kuv noj   ib   plhuas xu   tsaiv
         you   and   I   eat   one   CLF   lunch before
     'If you would go to take the old Naga's head, you
     and I should have lunch before.'

Mas marks conditional topic and noun phrase topic in
the same way as *tes*, thus, *tes* is a topic marker. When
occurring after subordinate clauses such as adverbial clause of
temporal and conditional clause, *tes* functions as a topic marker
rather than a cohesion marker.

However, it is to be considered that whenever *tes*
appears interclausally and indicates vague meaning of the
clauses in between, as to whether function *tes* does—a
cohesion marker showing temporal sequencing of an event or a
topic marker. The next part will show more clearly answer of
that problematic occurrence.

(iii) *tes* with other Clausal Constructions
In these constructions, the particle *tes* marks the
incorporating clausal topics in which the topic is part of the
comment or the predicate of the previous sentence. The

examples below are serial clause construction. Clauses preceding *tes* in (24)-(27) can be analyzed as clausal topics. They are continuous topics in which topics are the predicate or comment of the previous clauses. This usage provides the contrastive functions of *tes* that occurs interclausally between the function of topic marker and cohesion marker—showing chronological order of a narrative. Since the previous comment or predicate is mentioned again in the presence clause and becomes a topic.

(24) a ...hej leej pov sw tsaam nyo   ntshws **tes**
               PN   bend down PRT
      b ... hej leej pov sw tsaam   nov qaab hlas   lus
                  PN   faint   come
      'Hey Leng Po Sue Tsang bent down then he fainted.'

(25) a ...nov qaab hlas   lawm   **tes**
               faint   PF   PRT
      b ...hej leej pov sw tsaam
                  PN
      c ...ib   ci   hws   taag
           one CLF sweat all
      '(Hey Leng Po Sue Tsang) fainted, he sweated all over
      his body.'

(26) a ... ib   ci   hws   tuaj   **tes**
           one   CLF sweat come PRT
      b ...faaj tim   tshu hlo   tus   ntsuaj   lus
            PN   bring   CLF fan   come
      '(He) sweated all over the body, Fang Ti
      brought out a fan.'

(27) a ...peb   ntsuaj **tes**
             three fan   PRT
      b ...hej leej pov sw tsaam
                  PN
      c ...seev   plhawv lus   tes
           regain again   come   PRT
      '(Fang Ti) fan (toward Hey Leng Po Sue Tsang)

three times, Hey Leng Po Sue Tsang recovered'

Generally, in the simultaneous discourse, repetitive may signal something the speaker wishes to, such as he wishes to highlight the content of the repetitive proposition; or the repetition of the speaker reflects his narrative style as he would like to delay the next proposition so as to attract the attention of the addressee(s); or even he merely does not remember the next proposition but does not want to be silent; or in conversation, he simply wants to keep the floor or the turn— the repetition is to continue or advance the discourse. However, no matter what the intention of the speaker in using repetitive clauses is, they are most likely, in my examples, topics marked by *tes.*

3. Conclusion

In sum, I have shown that, after looking at the data in the discourse level, *tes* is a multifunctional particle whose two major functions are cohesion and topic markers. In a narrative, *tes* is a cohesion marker connecting two independent clauses or more to form a coordinate construction. In this case, it indicates cause and effect as well as shows the temporal sequencing of events. The former has the meaning of 'then, so, thus, consequently, but' in English. After noun phrases, temporal and location phrases and conditional clauses, *tes* is claimed in this paper, a topic marker.

The functions of clauses connecting and topic marking of *tes* are believed being related. Clark (1992) claims that the conjunction conveying inexplicit meaning is developmental or inchoative conjunction to suggest that the conjunction introduces a new development with respect to an element topicalized by the conjunction. This type of conjunction is unique in that it conveys nonrestrictive and inexplicit meaning about the relationship being expressed. Such conjunctions are *thì* in Vietnamese, *los* in Hmong and *kò* in Black Tai. Clark states that ideas in SEA languages tend to be expressed in coordinate, in a linear fashion rather than in clause-within-clause constructions. They are often unmarked by conjunctions; therefore, when conjunctions are used they signal

that the speaker wishes to make some point about the relationship between clauses or phrases involved with that conjunction.

Clark (1992) may be right that ideas in SEA languages are expressed in a linear construction. The data from my field notes, however, reveal that ideas or propositions are often marked by particles indicating various functions. And whenever the cohesion markers are used they do always signal points the speaker wishes to make but rather they merely show the chronological order of ideas or propositions in the discourse[6].

Notes

1.   The RPA system uses VV for nasal vowels and final consonant for tones:

-b	high level	-g	low falling breathy
-j	high falling	-s	low level
-v	mid rising	-m	low with final glottal
-ø	mid level		

2.   Abbreviations and symbol used in this paper:

CLF	classifier	PF	perfective
COP	copular	PN	proper name
CP	conjunctive particle	PRT	particle
EXC	exclamation	TOP	topic marker
FUT	future marker	....	pause

3. It is a well-known fact that particles cannot be glossed in the conventional way; hence no glosses are given in this paper.

4. Generally, the temporal and location phrases can be regarded as adverbial phrases in accordance with their functions of modifying of the whole clause. However, I use the term 'temporal and location phrase', in lieu of adverbial phrase, according to their functions in a narrative discourse as they are settings of events.

5. Determining the nominal expressions or prepositional expressions depends simply on the surface structure occurrence or non-occurrence of preposition. The status of the preposition in Hmong is not at all clear such as *txhus* 'reach' in (13), can

be translated as preposition or verb, or others can be translated as nouns of location.

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