Morphosyntax of Muinane:  
Typological Remarks

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Muinane speakers have their settlements in the Colombian Amazon. This paper presents some typological features of the Muinane language. It displays a morphosyntactic and phonological typology similar to some genetically related languages like Bora itself and Miraña. Other languages spoken in the Amazon area share morphosyntactic features with Muinane. The syntactical alignment in the Muinane language is nominative accusative and the constituent order in a sentence is variable, while the noun phrase has a fixed order. The morphology is polysynthetic. The language displays a pattern of head marking in possessive constructions. The predicative verbal relations show head marking in particular cases and dependent marking in others. The noun classification patterns of the language are of three types: the number-gender system, the set of 32 class morphemes and the set of “class terms”.

1. The Muinane people

The Muinane people are a group of the “People of the Centre”. This denomination identifies the people living in a specific area of the Northwest Amazon and using similar shamanic and medical practices

associated with particular sacred plants. These groups are distinguished by the different languages which they speak. These languages are Muinane, Miraña, Bora, Andoque, Nonuya, Resígaro, Uitoto and Ocaina. In spite of the linguistic differences, the above-mentioned groups share a set of rituals and beliefs. Dancing rituals are important festivities in the regulation of power and social relations between two or more different groups. For the Muinane, language differentiation is a particularly interesting social variant in interethnic relationships. Traditionally, each man marries a woman who speaks a language different from his own. This intercultural and social strategy is widespread among quite a number of populations in the Amazon region (Gómez-Imbert 2000, 1982).

2. Geographic location

A considerable variety of small groups of indigenous populations are present throughout the region and display great linguistic variety and cultural richness in practices and traditions. Muinane settlements are located in the Northwest Amazon, at El Predio Putumayo in Colombian territory, and particularly to the west and east of the village Araracuara on the Caquetá River, and in the Sabana of Cahuinarí.

3. History of the Muinane and Historical Remarks on the Endangered Status of the Language

The Muinane is one of the indigenous groups most affected by processes of social change in the northwest Amazon. The endangered status of the culture is due to different variables, which form part of certain historical processes and are related to the expansion of globalization. Recent population movements and these populations’ economic activities have variously affected the tradition and language of the indigenous communities. These movements are due to the extraction of rubber during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rubber dealers have practiced extensive ethnocide among the Amazon population. Other factors are the colonization of the area by non-indigenous people and the arrival of missions and evangelisation. The presence of Colombian guerrillas in the region, during the last decade, has been part of the process too. The illegal activities of the cocaleros (those who grow and process the coca leaf) and the presence of private armed groups also constitute new factors of endangerment.

4. The language

The language will be described in terms of its endangered status, its genetic classification and in terms of typology.
4.1 Endangered status

Muinane is an endangered and little-documented language spoken in the Colombian Amazon by a total number of sixty-six people. These people belong to the Muinane group on the one hand and to the Nonuya group on the other hand. Sociolinguistic and linguistic criteria are relevant to considering Muinane as an endangered language. The sociolinguistic criteria are: number of speakers in relation to the total population and distribution of the fluency per age of speakers. In line with the linguistic criteria proposed by Crystal (2000: 21), Muinane certainly shows a reduction of the ranges of functions for language use, code-switching with Uitoto and Spanish languages, the use of simple grammatical and discursive forms by young people and a decline in vocabulary knowledge among young speakers. The language is spoken principally by men within the Muinane settlements because of marriage patterns. Women in the Muinane settlements speak their own languages fluently (Andoque, Uitoto, Bora, Miraña, etc.). These languages are different from their husbands’ language. A child is normally able to understand the language of her/his mother and part of the language of her/his father but most of them speak Spanish fluently. Two men born before 1945 speak Spanish but their knowledge of this language is limited. They speak other indigenous languages of the area fluently, like Muinane, Uitoto, Bora, Miraña and Andoke. One of the two men in this sociolinguistic situation participated in the documentation of Muinane, but he died some years ago. Other men born after 1945 and 1950 speak Spanish fluently.

4.2 The family

Muinane is a language of the Bora linguistic family, a local stem widespread in the northwest Amazon between Colombia and Peru (Landaburu 2000). Some authors discuss today whether Bora is a group of languages with a common origin in the Uitoto family (Aschmann 1993). The discussion will have to be reconsidered once a plausible description of the Muinane and Miraña languages has been achieved. Linguists like Aschmann (1993) and Seifart (2003) take into account grammatical or lexical similarity. Using criteria to decide the dialectal or independent language status of cognate languages in the Amazon also requires careful ethnological observation on the one hand and study of the existent linguistic and ethnological literature on the other hand. This literature has been written mostly in Spanish and Portuguese. These criteria are needed in the current scientific and interdisciplinary analysis of languages and of course in documentation practices. Ethnic identification patterns and the internal social strategies of communities, like kinship systems, are of great relevance for establishing the status of the languages of the area.
4.3 Typological features

Remarks on phonological typology, on morphosyntactic typology and on the typology of Muinane nominal classification patterns are outlined below.

4.3.1 Phonological remarks

The phonological analysis of the language shows supra-segmental traits and segmental units. Distinctive supra-segmental traits are: tone and vowel length. Tones are high and low\(^1\). Vowels are basic\(^2\) and long. Syllables consistently and with few exceptions present the structure CV. Distinctive segmental units are: consonants and vowels.

- **Consonants:** 10 stops and 6 continuants for a total of 16 consonants.

\textbf{Table 1}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point Mode</th>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Postalveolar</th>
<th>Palatal retroflex</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stops</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>ts</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>dz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuants</td>
<td>φ</td>
<td>s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>h</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>m</td>
<td>η</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Vowels}

Two vowel subsystems: basic and long. The unrounded non-palatal /α/ and /αː/ vowels are written /a/ and /aː/ respectively.

\textbf{Table 2}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vowels</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Non-palatal, unrounded</th>
<th>Non-palatal, rounded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>basic</td>
<td>long</td>
<td>basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>iː</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>uː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>eː</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>aː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>aiː</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The morphophonology is rich and shows suprasegmental processes: tonal alternation, vowel harmony including progressive and regressive palatalization. Because of the complex morphophonology displayed by the language, in the present state of our research we are using the IPA to

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1. The examples show diacritics for high tones.
2. Basic is used here instead of “short”. In phonological analysis these units are different from long ones.
In phonetic analysis Muinane presents quite “short” realization of the basic vowels.
handle the data and diacritics. In the examples only high tones are marked. The phonological transcription reflects the phonology of the language after morphophonological processes have been carried out.

4.3.2 Morphological Typology

Muinane is a language with a polysynthetic morphology. Word formation depends on the organization of grammatical and/or lexical morphemes. Morphemes in the language are mostly related with one semantic unit. Only a few, non-segmentable morphemes are related with more than one semantic unit. Bases support a considerable number of suffixes and a few prefixes. The part of the word that an affix is attached to is here called base (Haspelmath 2002: 19). Composition is a productive process in noun formation. The incorporation of morphemes of classification into the verb form also manifests a certain productivity. Other incorporation processes take place in words. The language displays a high rate of synthesis (cf. e.g. 14, 15, 16, 20).

A. Word classes

The existing word classes in Muinane are: noun, pronoun, numeral (all liable to be heads in noun phrases), verb, and adverb. Nouns can also be attributes of other nouns or pronouns. The discussion about the existence of adjectives is open. Some words which appear exclusively in texts are connectors.

i. Nouns

The noun in Muinane displays various structures based on three principles: lexical morphemes existing in a free form which can also appear in a bounded construction, morphemes appearing always in a bounded form, and the combination of the last two constructions.

a. The first group of nouns are characterized by the existence of one or more lexical morphemes, which can exist also in a free form in the language:

Noun formed by a single lexical morpheme. These words display generic meaning:

1. ɡí:si
   stone (generic)

Noun structure formed by the succession of two lexical morphemes:

[Lexical morpheme] + [lexical morpheme]
2. \[\text{he:\textbeta}a\] + \[\text{húku}\]
   macaw+jaguar
   macaw jaguar.

Nominal structure consisting of the succession of three lexical morphemes:

2nd. Structure: [Lexical morpheme] + [lexical morpheme] + [lexical morpheme]

3. \[\text{ʔudzé}\] + \[\text{ʔudzé}\] + \[\text{ʔino}\]
   thorn+thorn+palm
   Palm sp. cananguichillo

b. The second structural principle forms nouns which display at least two morphemes, one or both of which never display a free form in the language3:

Noun formed by a lexical morpheme and a class morpheme. This noun shows discrete meaning:

4. \[\text{ɡí:si-βa}\]
   stone–CL:dense.massive
   stone (discrete)

Noun formed by a grammatical morpheme and a class morpheme. The meaning is specific.

5. \[\text{ʔi:–hu}u\]
   GM1–CL: cylinder
   1. mouth / your 2/3SG.PL mouth
   2. language / your 2/3SG.PL language

Noun formed by a grammatical morpheme and a lexical morpheme. The meaning is specific.

6. \[\text{ʔái-kuqai}\]
   GM2– daughter4
   1. Your daughter/your granddaughter
   2. daughter / granddaughter

c. The first and the second groups compose new nouns as in the following:

   Noun with the structure: [lexical morpheme] + [lexical morpheme – class marker]

7. \[\text{midʒa+muña-ʔa}\]
   true+people–CL:human.collective
   Amerindian people

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3 Monosyllabic morphemes are always bounded.
4 GM1 is a grammatical morpheme. It is used in the formation of a few nouns, which denote body parts.
   GM2 is a grammatical morpheme in nouns belonging to the class of kinship reciprocals.
Noun: [lexical morpheme + class marker] + [lexical morpheme]

8. [ka:haʔo] + [húku]
rubber–CL:long.rigid+jaguar
Rubber-tree jaguar

Noun: [lexical morpheme] + [Possessive pronoun + class marker]

9. [ɡí:si] + [ʔi:-βa]
stone+POSS.1/2P–CL:dense.massive
stone+gut
Head of the rapids

The grammatical categories of the noun are case with 14 morphemes, number-gender with eight morphemes and nominal tense with one morpheme. The categories of case, number-gender and nominal tense are suffixes in nouns. Nouns can also use one of the four possessive markers as prefixes.

The noun carries a possessive marker

10. mo-téʔi
POSS.1PL–stream
our stream

The noun takes a number-gender morpheme:

11. ɡí:si-βa-no
stone–CL:dense.massive–IN.PL
stones

Noun which carries a case morpheme

12. téʔi-dzi
stream-PROSEC
stream

Derivation

Nouns can be derived with the addition of a diminutive:

Derivation which changes the meaning of the word

Nouns can also be derived by the addition of affixes expressing diminution and affection.

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5 The meaning of each one of the words in the composition is: [stone]+[gut], or gut of stone. The head of the rapids is formed by a great number of stones in a deep well.

6 Caducity is a label used here for “nominal tense”. This category has been reported in studies of some Amerindian languages like Tikuna (Montes 2004a), and those mentioned by Nordlinger & Sadler 2004: Kwakiutl (Boas 1947), Guaraní (Guasch 1956 and Gregores and Suárez 1967).
Derivative: diminution

13. té:i-gadʒu
    stream–DER:diminutive
    little stream

*Derivation of noun into verb*

Some nouns have the possibility of changing word class, from noun to verb. The nominal morpheme needs a denominal morpheme, that is to say, a derivative morpheme added to the base. The following example shows a nominal lexical morpheme, marked for derivation from noun into verb:

14. mV7-βāku-nu-hi(-ʔi)
    1/2PL–bone–VERB–PROS–(P1)8
    We will put bones (to someone).

- *Derivation of noun into adverb*

Some nouns accept the derivative morpheme {-maino} and assume an adverbial function in clauses:

15. gāi-go-maino
    cluster9–CL:fem–DER:way
    Woman’s way (of saying or doing something)

**ii. verbs**

Verb roots consist of one or more lexical morphemes. Verbal roots can be extended with morphemes attached as prefixes for person and with morphemes attached as suffixes for modality, actancy, aspect, voice10, polarity, and predication (imperative vs. non imperative). The simplest form of the verbs is the one presented in imperative clauses. Verbs in non-imperative clauses have a complex form.

*Verbs in imperative clauses* are the simplest ones and consist of one of the following structures:

**First structure: lexical morpheme**

16. matʃu
    eat it!

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7 Vocalic harmony.
8 The P1 morpheme can be elided.
9 The apparition of this form as a lexical item means “cluster”. People are born from women and people are related in clusters of relatives. This morpheme is used also at the end of some words with the meanings *cluster* or *bunch*.
10 The set of morphemes for “voice” need more data and research.
Second structure: Personal prefix11 + lexical morpheme

17. di-ʔu-ʔo12
   2SG–walk
   Walk!

Verbs of non-imperative clauses present two different basic structures and can take affixes for more grammatical categories. The general structure is:
\[ V = \pm \text{Person} \pm \text{Verbal root} + \text{Verbal root} \pm \text{Modality} \pm \text{Voice} \pm \text{Aspect} \pm \text{object} \pm \text{Polarity} + \text{Predication Morpheme} \]

First structure: verb base + mode morpheme P1

First structure: \( \pm \text{Verbal root} + \text{Verbal root} + \text{Mode morpheme}: \text{morpheme for non-imperative verbs} \{ -ʔi \} \) or P1

18. ʔu-ʔo máfũ-ʔi
    2SG eat–P1
    You eat

19. ʔu-ʔi:ka-ʔi
    look+be–P1
    I am looking.

Second structure: verb base + mode morpheme P2

These verbal forms carry a “class morpheme” or a “gender/number marker”, or a class term, that is to say a P2 mode morpheme, instead of P1 morpheme \{ -ʔi \}, in the last morphological verb slot. These two types of morphemes: P1 versus P2 seem to occupy complementary positions in the last verb slot. The use of P2 morphemes is not obligatory and they appear in pragmatic marked sentences. When the P2 morphemes are in this position in verbs, they represent the subject of the clause and they imply a specific characteristic of the subject (Vengoechea 2001, 1995).

Second structure: \( \pm \text{Verbal root} + \text{Verbal root} + \text{Mode morpheme} \) P2

20. máfũ-βo
    eat– CL:masc.P2
    He eats

21. ʔu-ʔi:ka-ʔo
    look+be–CL:fem.P2
    She is looking.

22. ʔu-ʔi:-mũːe
    The women (dual) looked (at something).

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11 In cases of second-person singular subjects and verb roots beginning with glottal /ʔ/, the /h/ person prefix is obligatory. Verbs beginning with other consonants do not carry the prefix for 2SG.
12 2SG is attached for verb forms beginning with glottal /ʔ/ or /h/. 
Person. Verbs can carry the prefix for the category of person only for intralocutives (or 1/2 P). The 2SG presents phonological restrictions: 2SG is marked only for verb roots beginning with glottal consonant /h/ and /ʔ/:

23. díʔáitumeʔi
   2SG–look–P1
   You look (at someone or somewhere).

No personal prefix is possible for third-person subjects. In this case, person is expressed by an obligatory noun phrase outside the verb:

24. gái-goʔáitumeʔi
   cluster-CL:fem look–P1
   The woman looks

Actancy is restricted to prototypical and some transitive verbs, which can affix a patient morpheme {−ku} to the base:

25. ø-pupú-kuʔi
   1SG–hit–PAT–P1
   I just hit (something).

Modality. Epistemic Modality inflexions in non-imperative verbs are real and virtual:

26. hí:βi-nu-heʔi
    coca–VERB–REAL–P1
    He (arrived) from picking coca leaves\(^{13}\).

27. hí:βi-nu-toʔi
    coca–VERB–VIRTUAL–P1
    They (are going) to pick coca leaves.

Aspect presents the following inflexional categories: prospective 1, prospective 2, contra-factive, imperfective, telic, progressive, habitual, accomplished, remote, non-durative and perfective. The examples below illustrate the expression of aspect.

The following morphemes show the imperfective aspect in the second paradigm:

28. ø-fágí-ko táhuβá-hé-βu:-ʔi
    1SG–farm–AKK order–REAL–IPFV–P1
    I was ordering (people) to work on the farm.

29. ø-ʔáitumeʔu:-ʔi
    1SG–look–PFV–P1
    I have looked

\(^{13}\) The leaves of the *Erythroxylaceae* or coca plant are used for medical and ritual traditional practices among “the people of the centre”.

Polarity. The verbal base carries a suffix of negation:

30. \( mV-?i:ka-no-tu-?i \)
    \( 1/2\text{PL–be–CL:general}^{14}–\text{NEG–P1} \)
    You cannot go on living this (in this way)

Voice. Some suffixes are not yet well identified and seem to be part of a voice paradigm (cf. e.g. 40). The following clause comes from a traditional text. Below we have a sentence showing the verb with the causative morpheme \( \{-su\} \):

31. \( ?i-t\u{u}k\u{u}nu-tu \quad m\u{r}:?ai \quad mV-\phi:i:bo-tu-su-mi \)
    \( \text{POSS.2/3P–origin–GEN} \quad 1\text{PL} \quad 1/2\text{PL–create–NEG–CAUS–CL:collective} \)
    We were not engendered from the beginning.

The same clause can be expressed without the above-mentioned morpheme:

32. \( ?i-t\u{u}k\u{u}nu-tu \quad m\u{r}:?ai \quad mV-\phi:i:bo-tu-mi \)
    \( \text{POSS.2/3P–origin–GEN} \quad 1\text{PL} \quad 1/2\text{PL–create–NEG–CL:collective} \)
    We were not created from the beginning

4.3.3 Syntactic typology

Constituent order, argument alignment and nominal classification are particularly interesting issues for syntactical typology in Muinane. The typology of nominal classification is focused on in 4.3.4 because of its essential role in the language.

A. Constituent Order. The order of constituents in the clause depends mostly on pragmatic purposes in Muinane. Only nominal phrases have a fixed order: the last word at the right is always the head of the noun phrase.

i. Verbal clauses. The order of constituents is not fixed in verbal sentences and probably requires more analysis in order to establish dominant trends. The appearance of constituents and their subsequent order are related with the affixation of subject prefixes to the verbal clauses. The language shows a tendency to affix personal prefixes to first-and-second-person verbs (intralocutives). In finite forms of verbs including personal prefixes (1st/2nd-person) or personal suffixes (3rd-person), the sentence does not require an obligatory noun class identifying the subject.

ii. Nominal clauses. The order of constituents in nominal clauses is mostly the following, the opposite order being also possible in pragmatic marked clauses.

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{subject} & \text{predicate} \\
33. \text{nik\u{e}he} & \text{\u{g}\u{i}\u{g}\u{i}\u{f}ano} \\
\text{sky} & \text{gray} \\
\text{The sky (is) gray.}
\end{array}
\]

\(^{14}\) The class morpheme represents an actant different from the subject.
iii. *Noun phrase*. The order of constituents in noun phrases is fixed. 

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Phrase</th>
<th>determined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determiner</td>
<td>noun, pronoun, demonstrative, numeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determined noun</td>
<td>noun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each noun can be head of the phrase. Thus we have the following two possibilities for nominal phrases:

Noun Phrase = \( \pm \) modifier (noun, pronoun, demonstrative, numeral) + noun

Nominal phrase \( \pm \) modifier (noun, pronoun, demonstrative, numeral) + noun, or pronoun, or demonstrative, or numeral

34. \[ \text{saʔósadzo} \quad ?umóʔono]^{15} \quad ?áketeʔinuíʔi \]

Indefinite pronoun: all Trees fell down
All the trees fell down

B. **Alignment system**: It is possible to describe the Muinane language alignment as a nominative-accusative one. This framework for syntactic typology uses the criteria of prototypical association of semantico-syntactic roles (Comrie in Payne T. 1997: 133–167).

**B.1 Intransitive sentences** display two different structures. The first one is a verb phrase with a single verbal phrase as constituent. The subject prefix appears in the verb exclusively for intralocutive (or 1\textsuperscript{st}/2\textsuperscript{nd}-person) subjects. The second structure corresponds to clauses with two obligatory constituents: a noun phrase functioning as the subject and a verbal phrase as the predicate. The verb in this case does not display a subject prefix. This second structure is used with extralocutives (or 3\textsuperscript{rd} persons) as subjects and in limited cases with 2SG as subjects.

i. **One-phrase clause structure**. These sentences present a verbal phrase as their only constituent. The verb includes an index of the subject.

\[
\text{Sen} = \quad \text{VP} \\
\text{VP} = \quad \pm \text{ADV} + V \\
\]

**Intralocutives**: An intransitive sentence with a 1\textsuperscript{st} person singular, or a 1\textsuperscript{st}/2\textsuperscript{nd} person plural as subject and agent, presents the following structure:

35. \( mV\text{-ʔúːː-ʔuː-ʔi} \)
\( 1/2\text{PL--walk--PFV--P1} \)
We walked.

36. \( ʔ\text{-ʔúːː-ʔuː-ʔi} \)
\( 1\text{SG--walk--PFV--P1} \)
I walked (I cross once)

\(^{15}\) The noun phrase in brackets.
An intransitive sentence with a 2\textsuperscript{nd}-person singular subject shows the prefix of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} person only when the verbal root begins with a glottal or with an alveolar consonant:

37. \texttt{di:ʔí:ʔu:ʔí}
\textsuperscript{2SG– walk–PFV–P1}
You walked

\textit{ii. Two-phrase clause structure}: these sentences require the noun in the function of the subject outside the verb.

\begin{align*}
\text{Sen} &= \quad \text{NP} + \text{VP} \\
\text{NP} &= \quad \text{Noun or pronoun or numeral with or without modifier(s).} \\
\text{VP} &= \quad \pm \text{ADV} + \text{V}
\end{align*}

\textit{Intralocutives}: An intransitive sentence with a 2\textsuperscript{nd}-person singular subject is not always able to show subject prefix \{ \texttt{dí–} \} inside the verbal base. This is the case when the verbal root begins with a consonant different from glottal /h/, /ʔ/ or the voiced alveolar /d/:

38. \texttt{ʔúhó:qágá:se-ʔí}
\textsuperscript{2SG dance–P1}
You dance/danced

\textit{Extralocutives}. The structure of the sentence exhibits two obligatory phrases: a noun or a pronoun functioning as the subject. An intransitive sentence with a 3\textsuperscript{rd}-person subject does not show the subject prefix in the verbal base. The subject is represented by a noun or pronominal word. The structure of the sentence consists of two phrases:

39. \texttt{qái-go ga:se-ʔí}
\textsuperscript{Cluster–CL:fem Dance–P1}
The woman dances

Intransitive sentence with a 3\textsuperscript{rd}-person subject. The subject is a patient:

40. \texttt{di:go gihé-βó-ʔí}
\textsuperscript{3P–CL:fem die–VOICE–P1}
She died

\textbf{B.2. Transitive sentences}. The following transitive sentences exhibit three different structures. The first one has one word as a minimal structure, the second one, one verbal phrase as a minimal structure, and the third one, a two-phrase clause as a minimal structure. One of these different structures is chosen by speakers in particular speech situations:
i. **one word as minimal structure.** The structure is possible for clause structures in which the subject attached as a prefix is first-or second-person (intralocutives). The sentence is a verb.

   The following example shows a prototypical transitive verb with the prefix of the subject and the morpheme of the object inside the word.

   41. menéheku:ʔi
      mV-nehe-ku:-ʔi
      1/2PL–eat flesh –PAT–P1
      We eat it.

ii. **One verbal phrase as minimal clause structure.** The first structure is a clause constituted by a verb phrase. The verb phrase includes a verb and a noun phrase marked for case. The subject is indexed within the verb and is identified with the agent.

   Sen = VP
   VP = NP± ADV + V

   *Intralocutives.* In a specific story, a transitive sentence shows a non-obligatory noun phrase represented by a 1st-person pronoun, and a verbal phrase constituted by a verb indexed for subject and a noun marked with the accusative case:

   42. há:-βo ø-ʔátumé-ʔinu-ʔi me:ni-mui-kο
      (This one (TOP)) saw pigs.

   In the hunting story the same accusative case marking appears in typical transitive verbs as in the following sentence constituted by a verb and its dependent numeral, representing the patient, and by a local adjunct:

   43. to:-no:-βtu ø-ʔainu-ʔi sa-ϕi-kο
      I shot one there.

iii. **Two-phrase clause as minimal clause structure.** The second structure is a clause with an obligatory noun phrase functioning as the subject and a verb phrase as predicate. The verb phrase includes a verb and a noun marked for case. The subject is identified prototypically with an agent. These clauses need to express the subject in a noun phrase and do not mark the person within the verb. They are used for 3rd-person subjects and for some verbs with 2SG subjects:

   Sen = NP₁ + VP
   VP = NP₂ ± ADV+ V
Intralocutives. The clause with the 2SG subject needs the presence of a 2nd-person singular pronoun. The verb stem does not accept an index of person:

44. ʔɯ́ hó ʔ ʃ k ɯ́-m ɯ-ʔa-ʔi
    2SG monkey.sp–AKK hunt–P1
    You hunted a monkey (sp. churuco).

Extralocutives. The next example shows a transitive clause, with an obligatory 3rd-person plural subject:

45. sé:me ʔétáβéhiʔu:ʔi ʔikagaκo
    sé:me ʔétáβo-hé-βu:-ʔi ʔika-ga-κo
    childhood make–REAL–IPFV–P1 chair-CL:dense.massive-AKK
    Children were making a chair.

In the following example, the transitive sentence has two obligatory phrases: a nominal phrase constituted by a 3rd-person pronoun, and a verbal phrase formed by a verb indexed with the subject and a noun marked for case.

46. di:-go má:ʔu-ko máťfu:-ʔi
    3P–CL casabe–AKK eat–P1
    She eats casabe

4.3.4 Typology of nominal classification

To describe the typology of nominal classification patterns we use the following criteria proposed by Grinevald (2000): location of the classification morphemes; inventory and semantics and use of the system(s) or pattern(s). Another criterion used by Petersen (2003) consists in the analysis of the morpheme phonological structure. This is a particularly interesting issue in the languages of the area for determining different kinds of classification morphemes. In the following paragraphs we describe first the classification patterns. Muinane presents different patterns of classification: Gender-number (8 morphemes), noun class morphemes (32 morphemes) and class terms (open class).

A. Classification Patterns. The most grammatical pattern is the system of gender. Gender is fused with number and shows two primary categories: animate and inanimate. It is obligatory in pronouns. In nouns it appears when number is expressed. There are eight number-gender morphemes and they are independent from other patterns of classification inside the language. The second pattern of classification is the set of 32 class morphemes. This set is probably on the way to becoming a grammatical system of noun classes. It is used as part of the reference in nouns in lexical form and as a grammatical system in particular syntactic constructions. It also fulfils a variety of discursive functions in the language. The third pattern, which is not yet grammatical, is the set of class
terms. These terms are productively used as parts of compounds. The semantics of the class terms is variable and it comes from spatial notions, plants or body parts, or nouns of animate entities.

i. Gender–number: The gender-number category is marked grammatically. Gender corresponds here to the semantic categories: animate and inanimate. Each one of these categories has morphemes of dual and plural. It is then possible to affirm that in this paradigm, number and gender are fused. The system displays the distinction feminine/masculine for the animates. Inanimate referent nouns show a different set of morphemes for plural and for dual. The set of gender-number morphemes consists of eight morphemes. There is no mark for the singular in this paradigm. The system is obligatory when number requires to be expressed in nouns, pronouns, and numerals. Verbs can also carry these morphemes to represent extralocutive subjects. The following word corresponds to a body part: the eyes. It takes a gender-number morpheme as a suffix:

47. \( \ddot{a} \ddot{d} \ddot{z} \ddot{u} \cdot \dddot{t} \ddot{u} \cdot \dddot{k} \ddot{u} \)
above \( ^{16} \cdot \text{CL:roll-IN.DUAL} \)
eyes

The following verbal sentence shows an interrogative word carrying a class morpheme and one gender-number form at the end:

48. \( \ddot{k} \ddot{\phi} \ddot{\ddot{i} \cdot g} \ddot{\ddot{h}} \ddot{e} \)
tuma: \( ^{-} \ddot{\ddot{t}} \ddot{i} \)
INT-CL:individual-CL:fem-AN.PL.fem cook-P1
Which one of the women cooks?

Table for gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number/Gender</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PLURAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td>-mu:ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fem</td>
<td>-he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(restricted for pronouns)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masc</td>
<td>-mu:ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(restricted to 3P pronoun)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(restricted to 3P pronoun and demonstratives)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inanimate</td>
<td>Neuter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{16}\) The morpheme glossed as “above” is used in various functions: noun, adverb and verb.
**ii. class morphemes:** There are thirty-two class morphemes, and they present different semantic values according to whether the reference expressed by the noun is collective or individuate, abstract or discrete. Twenty-six of these forms are used almost always for inanimate referents. Class morphemes present in words which designate exclusively animate referents are used on the one hand for collective referents and on the other hand for individual referents. The noun class morphemes for collective animate referents are: {ʔʔa} human, {ho} kin, {mo} group or herds; and the noun class morphemes for individual animate referents are {bo} masculine, {go} feminine, {φi} individual. The twenty-six noun class morphemes used in words mostly for inanimate referents can also be used for animate referents in particular cases. The semantics of this system is divided primarily into nouns expressing collective and abstract reference versus nouns expressing individual and discrete reference. The following words, which come from a taxonomy survey carried out a few years ago by the present researcher, show the position of two paradigms: number-gender and the set of class morphemes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>animate</th>
<th>inanimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49. ta:βa</td>
<td>53. ?ūmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish (generic concept)</td>
<td>Salt (generic concept)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. ta:βabo</td>
<td>54. ?umóʔo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ta:βa-bo</td>
<td>?umóʔo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish–CL:masc</td>
<td>salt–CL:long.rigid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male fish (discrete concept)</td>
<td>tree¹⁷ (discrete concept)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. ta:βabomuu</td>
<td>55. ?umóʔono</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ta:βa-bo-mu</td>
<td>?umóʔo-no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male fishes (plural.discrete)</td>
<td>trees (plural.discrete)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. ta:βamuusu</td>
<td>56. ?umóʔokuu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ta:βa-mu-su¹⁸</td>
<td>?umóʔo-kuu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish–(CL:masc)–AN.DUAL.MASC</td>
<td>salt–CL:long.rigid–IN.DUAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male fishes (dual.discrete)</td>
<td>Trees (dual.discrete)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When masculine and feminine act as class morphemes, they are related with an individual referent: a man or a woman, but this is not a marker of the singular. Up to this point in the research, the existence of two different sets of morphemes—class morphemes on the one hand and number-gender markers on the other—is supported by three criteria. The first one is formal: the language shows two different sets of morphemes. The second criterion is formal too: their recurrent appearance together in separate positions in nouns, numerals and pronouns (cf. e.g. 51, 55, 56).

¹⁷ Salt is produced from palms and trees in the community.
¹⁸ The morphemes for CL can be elided.
The third criterion considered is a logical semantic criterion: the appearance of a class morpheme as a singular and the subsequent gender morpheme as a plural or dual is not logical. A word with a reference including a class morpheme is a discrete concept but this morpheme does not mean “singular”. The singular is simply unmarked in the number-gender paradigm.

iii. class terms. The recurrent use of specific words like /húku/, “jaguar”, as the head of a compound not only originates the formation of class morphemes by a probable process of grammaticalization, but also represents a lexical pattern of noun classification. These heads are called “class terms” (Grinevald 2000: 59). These morphemes can also appear as nouns alone. In the following example the word {–húku} is a class term. This word can appear alone or as the head of a compound. /húku/ is a disyllabic word. Disyllabic lexical morphemes carrying basic vowels are not segmentable. These indications lead us to consider the word as a class term.

57. [ka:haʔ-o] [húku]
   rubber–CL:long.rigid + jaguar
   rubber–tree jaguar

58. [kúmeʔ-i] [húku]
   milpeso palm–CL:filiform + jaguar
   milpeso–palm jaguar

B. Languages in the area with nominal classification devices and related research issues: As in other languages spoken by indigenous communities in an extensive area of the northwest Amazon, the Muinane language studied by the researcher presents a system (or systems) of nominal classification. Studies of nominal classification in the languages of the northwest Amazon began with the input made by researcher Gómez-Imbert in the Tukano languages spoken in Colombia from the 80’s until now. Doris Payne has written representative proposals about the classification in Yagua, a language of the Pebal-Yagua family. Jon Landaburu (1993) proposed the fusion of number and gender in Andoque. Grinevald has studied classification systems in Meso-America and proposes a morphosyntactical typology and analysis of these phenomena. At the same time, Alexandra Aikhenvald has studied the systems of two Arawakan languages (1998, 2000). Vengoechea (1995) argues the existence of such systems in the Muinane language. Estrada works on the noun classification system of Sáliba (1995, 2001). Seifart also researches the nominal classification of Miraña (2002). Nowadays, new representative studies are being initiated thanks to the collective work of the regional team CLANLINC, a group of researchers and scholars working mainly on Nominal Classification in the indigenous languages spoken in Colombian
territory, and principally in the Colombian Amazon. The group has established the insufficiency of the research on “classification phenomena” in Colombian Amazon languages, and the necessity of comparative studies. Each one of the scholars is working on a language spoken in the Colombian Amazon region, and characterized by the omnipresence of nominal classification devices.

Conclusion

Generalization and comparison are impossible in descriptive studies of a single language; they continue to be so when comparing two or three languages which are not yet well described (cf. Grinevald & Seifart 2004). To pursue the research it is necessary to take into account previous studies in the regional linguistics, and that regional linguists should also continue to do their studies. Researchers in Colombia have done quite interesting work in the description, documentation and analysis of a great number of unknown languages, including those of the above-mentioned area. Many more opportunities are needed to document, research and compare the languages spoken in a broad area of the Colombian Amazon and the Colombian Andean borders, if plausible typological generalizations are to be reached.

CONVENTIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY


