NOMINAL POSSESSIVES IN THE EHE DIALECT OF KURRIPAKO: MORPHOLOGY, PHONOLOGY AND SEMANTICS[*]

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In this paper I present data from the Ehe dialect of Kurripako on nominal possessives. I explore different possessive paradigms in order to fully explain the phenomena and draw on the fields of morphology, phonology and semantics to understand the data.

1.   Introduction

Kurripako is a Maipurean-Arawakan language spoken by approximately 2000 people in the upper Rio Negro region of Venezuela, 6000 in the Colombian Dpts. of Guainia, Vichada and Vaupes and 3000 in the northern Brazilian Amazon. The classification of Kurripako as Arawakan is not controversial and has been attested since 1783 when Father Gilii (1965) presented the first study of part of the language family. Kurripako is sometimes considered a dialect of Baniwa of Içana and at other times is considered independent of it. There has been little work on the Kurripako language per se; most of the literature on Kurripako is anthropological rather than linguistic. One of the few articles, Ortiz (1998), gives a brief introduction to the phonology of the Kurri dialect and identifies five others: Karro, Eje, Uju, Ñiame and Ñame. Other classifications point to as many as ten dialects when Baniwa of Içana and Kurripako are fused. The data presented in this paper is from the dialect identified as Ehe by the speakers and spoken in the village of Victorino, on the Guainia River in Venezuela[1]. It is hoped that this will in some way contribute to the description of this language and ultimately be used to clarify the internal relationships between these Arawak languages.

I first present an exemplary paradigm of possession in order to provide a general idea of possession. Next, I present an analysis of the structure, followed by a presentation of each of the elements involved in possession and its alternations. In order to understand all of the elements involved in possession, it will be necessary to look at phonological, morphological, and semantic aspects of the language.

2.   Exemplary Paradigm

Examples (1) ~ (12) present a paradigm of the word 'field' with nominal and pronominal, singular and plural possessors in order to exemplify possession in Kurripako-Ehe.   The different elements presented in this paradigm will be discussed throughout the paper.

(1)   field   keŋke[2]
(2)   my field   nu-keŋke-rrʲe
(3)   your field   pi-keŋke-rrʲe
(4)   his field   ri-keŋke-rrʲe
(5)   her field   rrʲu-keŋke-rrʲe
(6)   the woman's field   iːna rrʲu-keŋke-rrʲe
(7)   Juan's field   huan   i-keŋke-rrʲe
(8)   Maria 's field   maria   i-keŋke-rrʲe
(9)   our field   wa-keŋke-rrʲe
(10) your (pl) field   i-keŋke-rrʲe
(11) their field   na-keŋke-rrʲe
(12) the women's field   ina-pada i-keŋke-rrʲe

3.   Basic structure

The structure of the possessives will be presented as a linear structure.

3.1   Linear Structure

The linear structure is the one presented by the elements in speech. This can be structured as follows:

(13) Person Cross-Referencing Marker — Root — Possessive Marker
      (Nominal PCRM)

4.   Person Cross-Referencing Markers

Nominal prefixes are basically the same as the independent pronouns and the verbal cross-referencing prefixes for Subject/Agent.   It is clear when comparing these different markers that the verbal and nominal person markers are not different.

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[2] The Spanish word for this gloss is 'conuco' which refers to the cultivated field with multiple species practiced by small-scale farmers.

Table 1. Person markers

Person and Number	Independent Pronouns[3]	Bound Pronouns (verbal prefixes)	Possessives (nominal prefixes)
1st sing	^{h}nua[4]	nu-	nu-
2nd sing	p^{h}ia	pi-	pi-
3rd sing –fem	^{h}ria	ri-	ri-
3rd sing +fem	şoa	rr^{j}o-	rr^{j}o-
3rd sing (nominal)	----[5]	i-	i-
1st pl	^{h}waa	wa-	wa-
2nd pl	p^{h}aa	Φa- / i-	Φa- / i-
3rd pl	^{h}naa	na-	na-

5.   Alternations in Person Cross-Referencing Markers

There is an alternation that is not unique to the possessives but which follows a general phonological rule: h-metathesis at morpheme boundary.   This alternation is clear when the odd-numbered examples are compared with the even-numbered ones.

(14) rock   hi:pada   (15) louse   tuida
(16) my rock ^{h}n-upada-te   (17) my louse   no-tuida-n
(18) your rock   p^{h}i-pada-te   (19) your louse   pi-tuida-n
(20) his rock ^{h}ri-pada-te   (21) his louse   ri-tuida-n
(22) her rock   şo-pada-te   (23) her louse   rr^{j}o-tuida-n
(24) Juan's rock   huan hi-pada-te (25) Juan's louse   huan i-tuida-n
(26) Maria's rock   maria hi-pada-te (27) Maria's louse   maria i-tuida-n
(28) our rock   Φu-epada-te   (29) our louse   wa-tuida-n
(30) your (pl) rock   hi-pada-te   (31) your (pl) louse   i-tuida-n
(32) their rock ^{h}ne-pada-te   (33) their louse   na-tuida-n

Taylor (1991) explains this phenomenon as the outcome of a Sandhi rule involving the phoneme /h/ in internal morpheme boundary. In Granadillo (1999) I propose that this is better understood as a phonological constraint where the segment [h] at morpheme boundary will align to the left edge of the prosodic word

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[3] The independent pronouns are the result of the combination of the person marker and the morpheme /-ha/ which triggers h-metasthesis (See section 5).

[4] The vowels [u] and [o] are allophones, but people claim that they are fixed in some words. This is probably the beginning of a split in these vowels.

[5] The 3rd sing (nominal) prefix is used when the NP is an overt noun except when the noun is feminine (but not for personal names).

and use Correspondence Theory to account for the presence of the segment as a feature.

6. Alternations in Possessive Markers: Noun Classes

In Kurripako-Ehe there are 5 possessive suffixes: -Ø, -rr^{j}e, -re, -te, -n(i). These correspond to a division between inalienable nouns and alienable nouns, and furthermore, to morphologically assigned classes of alienable nouns.

6.1. Inalienable Nouns

According to Aikhenvald (1999), all Arawak languages distinguish inalienable and alienable possession with similar suffixes, though the details vary in different languages. She further claims (1999:82) that "many Arawak languages distinguish body-part and kinship possession in the following way. Body parts have an 'unpossessed' form marked with the suffix *-t^{h}i or *-hVi while kinship nouns do not have such forms..." I will now present evidence that Ehe follows this general pattern of distinguishing inalienable and alienable possession but that the distinction between body parts and kinship terms is not made, all of them having the unpossessed form marked with the suffix -ti. Examples (34) ~ (37) present the unpossessed and possessed forms of alienable nouns.

(34) keŋke   **nu**-keŋke-**rr^{j}e**
   'field'   1sg-field-poss 'my field'

(35) i:tsa   **nu**-i:tsa-**re**
   'fishing hook'   1sg-fishing hook-poss 'my fishing hook'

(36) itamana   **pi**-tamana-**te**
   'cloud'   2sg-cloud-poss 'your cloud'

(37) i:ta   **nu**-ta-**n(i)**
   'canoe'   1sg-canoe-poss 'my canoe'

Notice that the unpossessed nouns do not have any phonological realization of a particular marker, contrasting with the possessed form which carries a suffix for possession. The differences between the alienable suffixes will be addressed in section 6.2. Compare example (34) ~ (37) to (38) ~ (40). The next set of examples are constituted by inalienable nouns.

(38) it^{h}i-**ti**   **no**-t^{h}i-**Ø**
   eye-unposs 'eye'   1sg-eye-poss 'my eye'

(39) pʰeːrrʲi-**ti** **nu**-pʰeːrrʲi-**Ø**
 older brother-unposs 1sg-older brother-poss
 'older brother' 'my older brother'

(40) pan-**ti** **noː**-pana-**Ø**
 house-unposs 'house' 1sg-house-poss 'my house'

In this set there is a suffix –*ti* in the unpossessed forms and none in the possessed forms. Furthermore, the suffix is present in body parts, kinship terms and other nouns considered inalienable such as house. So far, the only noun that is not a kinship term or a body part that is considered inalienable is house. This is an area that needs further investigation. Now the question is what this suffix -*ti* is. It is clear that it is distinguishing inalienable nouns versus alienable nouns by the fact that it is present only in inalienable non-possessed nouns. Payne (1991:379) refers to it as "absolute" which is probably related to the fact that these terms are only used in abstract ways. I prefer to label it as the unpossessed form, making it clear that it is only used with inalienable nouns that are not possessed. This refers to the fact that generally these nouns would be present in a possessed form and exceptionally they are not, which then needs a way to be marked.

Aikhenvald (nd: section 6 pg. 17) remarks that "the way possession of obligatorily possessed nouns is marked in Tariana differs from the typical Arawak pattern (found in Baniwa of Içana, Bare, and Warekena (...)) In all these languages, kinship possession is distinct from body part possession (...)" As presented in this paper, Kurripako-Ehe does not follow the general pattern of Baniwa of Içana and this may be one of the characterizing differences in this dialect continuum.

6.2   Alienable Nouns

Alienable nouns are further divided into noun classes marked by the possessive marker that the noun is assigned to. There are 4 markers which are exemplified in (41) ~ (44).

(41) keŋke **nu**-keŋke-**rrʲe**
 field 1sg-field-poss   'my field'

(42) iːtsa **nu**-iːtsa-**re**
 hook 1sg-fishing hook-poss   'my fishing hook'

(43) amana **no**-mana-**te**
 dolphin 1sg-dolphin-poss   'my dolphin'

(44) i:ta   **nu**-ta-**n(i)**
       canoe   1sg-canoe-poss 'my canoe'

In Table 2, below, I present a summary table of the items present in each class.

Table 2. Possessive Noun Classes

Class	Items
-rrʲe	field, seje (wild fruit), caiman, sweet potato.
-re	fishing hook; fishing line, thread; trees; sebucan, cacure, mat, budare, stove, bow (manufactured products); ajicero, cuajado (prepared foods).
-te	dolphin, some snakes, some fish, some monkeys, turtles, rock, spider, some wild fruits, water.
-ni ~ -n	most numerous class: "default" and loan words

       I explored a variety of possibilities to explain membership in these classes. It is clearly not phonologically determined; since there are items that end in the same syllable that belong to different classes. For example, in the *-re* class there are words that end in /pa, na, ri, da/ ; in the *-rrʲe* class there is also a word that ends in /ri/; in the *-ni* class there are also words that end in /pa, na/; and in the *-te* class there are also words that end in /na, ri, da/. Another possibility was to look at membership in other nominal classes in the language. Numeral classifiers have been attested in this language, though there is no material available for this particular dialect.   According to Hill (1988) the Curricarro dialect presents a series of numeral classifiers that are used only with the numerals one, two and three. Classifiers are assigned on a variety of semantic principles as well as incorporating principles of myth-and-belief and marking reversals. I present the noun sets classified in Table 3.

Table 3. Sets from Numeral Classifiers (adapted from Hill 1988)

Set	Nouns Classified
I.	Children; all turtle species; caribe, anchoa, palometa and bagre (small catfish); peccary and agouti species; stones; pineapples and manioc tubers; grasses; bees; motors
II.	adult men; groups of objects counted in sets of five or twenty
III.	adult women
IV.	large catfish; all vine species; machete fish; anaconda and all snake species; fishing lines
V.	all species of fish except those listed before

VI.	all species of birds; bananas and most species of cultivated trees
VII.	jaguars; tapir, deer and squirrels; dogs and cats; wild fruit species
VIII.	tobacco; arrows, awls, hooks and darts
IX.	flutes that come in male-female pairs; pairs of any objects
X.	pairs of flutes taken singly; any single thing that usually comes in pairs
XI.	groups of people or phatries
XII.	small bunches of fruits; bunches of fish (captured); bushes or plants of cultivated vegetables or fruits except manioc
XIII.	large bunches of fruits; large bunches of any objects
XIV.	manioc gardens; trees; blowguns and shotguns; bowls
XV.	canoes; coups and gourds (as quantities)
XVI.	houses
XVII.	manioc ovens; village places
XVIII.	leaves or fronds
XIX.	man-made fire

As is attested by comparing Tables 2 and 3, the items in the different classes do not match. In spite of the difference in number of classes, there are elements that are in the same class in Hill's classifiers that are in different classes in the possessive markers. For example, manioc gardens and trees are both in set XIV in Hill but they belong to two different groups in the possessives. Therefore, this cannot be considered to be a principle for this classification and a morphological assignment of classes must be concluded.

According to Aikhenvald (1999) alienable possession in Proto-Arawak can be characterized as follows.

"Alienable or optionally possessed nouns mark possession with a cross-referencing prefix and with one of the suffixes *-ne (the most frequent), *-te, *-re, *-i/-e and also *-na.... the suffix *-re is often used with artifacts ... *-ne is the unmarked form, often used with loan words..." (Aikhenvald 1999:82)

Kurripako-Ehe conforms to the general pattern of Proto-Arawak in which the –n(i) class is the default unmarked class and the -re class is for artifacts.

7. Alternations in roots

There are several alternations in the roots that are morphologically determined. Phonological conditioning was explored to explain all of these changes, but the presence of similar roots that do not alternate made this possibility not feasible.

The first alternation of initial vowel deletion is presented in examples (45) ~ (47) and (51) ~ (53). These are contrasted with examples (48) ~ (50) and (54) ~ (56) which also start with the same vowel but do not undergo deletion.[6]

(45) canoe **i:ta**
(46) my canoe nu-**ta**-n(i)
(47) your canoe pi-**ta**-n(i)

(48) hook **i:tsa**
(49) my hook nu-**i:tsa**-re
(50) your hook p-**i:tsa**-re

(51) dolphin **amana**
(52) my dolphin no-**mana**-te
(53) your dolphin pi-**mana**-te

(54) aji[7] **ati**
(55) my aji nu-**ati**-te
(56) your aji pi-**ati**-te

The second alternation of vowel fusion is presented in examples (57) ~ (59). These are contrasted with examples (60) ~ (62) which also start with the same vowel combination but do not undergo fusion.

(57) tree h-**aiko**
(58) my tree ʰnu-**eko**-re
(59) your tree pʰi-**eko**-re

(60) wasp **aini**
(61) my wasp un-**aini**-n
(62) your wasp pi-**aini**-n

There are other alternations in the roots which also seem to be morphologically determined since they do not seem to have any other explanation. This is exemplified by the word 'house' in which the root alternates between the unpossessed and the possessed form.[8]

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[6] More study needs to be done in the phonology to determine what other factors (stress, underlying forms, word template requirements etc) may be influencing this.
[7] This is a small fruit similar to a chili.
[8] This form is a candidate for a minimal word constraint but until further research in this area is done, this cannot be determined.

(63) house (inalienable)   **pan** -ti
(64) my house   no:-**pana**-Ø
(65) your house   pi:-**pana**-Ø

8.   Conclusions

Possession in Kurripako-Ehe follows the general pattern of other Arawak languages. The basic structure is: (Nominal) Person Cross-Referencing Marker — Root — Possessive Marker. Alienable and inalienable possession is marked differently. Alienable possession has different possessive markers which divide the nouns into morphologically determined classes which are different from the noun sets for numeral classifiers. There is an array of phonological phenomena present in this paradigm which affects all elements except the overt nouns.

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