

Marking ‘possessive’ relations in the Vaupés: areal features and diffusion

Category: oral

Abstract

This paper investigates the marking of ‘possessive’ relations in languages from the three major families in the Vaupés region: Eastern Tukanoan, Arawak, and Nadahup. These languages share a number of typological tendencies in NPs, among others, that modifiers generally precede nouns, and that a variety of noun-noun relations (those usually referred to as indicating ‘inalienable’ possession, including part-whole noun combinations or combinations indicating the social relations between individuals) can be expressed by simple juxtaposition of constituents (in ET and NA languages) or by direct prefixation of the ‘possessed’ noun (in AR languages).

ET	NA	AR
(1) Kotiria/Wanano (Stenzel 2004:197)	Yuhup (Ospina Bozzi 2002:242)	Baniwa (Ramirez 2001:105)
<i>to</i>	<i>ɣâp íp</i>	<i>Ji-naápa</i>
3SG.POSS wife-SG	3SG father	3NFSG-arm
‘his wife’	‘his/her father’	‘his arm’

However, in languages from all three families we also find instances of noun-noun relations (those most often identified as expressing ‘alienable’ or non-obligatory possession) marked by constructions including specific morphemes that tend to occur between the two related nouns. Such morphemes are alternately analyzed as genitive case markers (Barnes 1999; Miller 1999), postpositional particles (Epps 2005) or determiners (Ospina Bozzi 2002), or compounded/serialized verb or noun roots (Ramirez 2001; Stenzel 2004).

ET	AR	NA
(2) Desano (Miller 1999:48)	Tariana (Aikhenvald 2003:135)	Hup (Epps 2005:193)
<i>ĩgĩ ya wi’i</i>	<i>pu-ya-ku</i>	<i>pedú nĩh cug’ăt</i>
3MS GEN house	2SG-POSS-CL:extended	pedro POSS book
‘his house’	‘your hammock’	‘pedro’s book’

I compare these forms and their synchronic functions in order to explore two hypotheses and address some related questions. First, I investigate the possibility of areal diffusion of a cognate form *ya(a) /dzaa* among speakers of ET and AR languages, and consider evidence that confirms or counters Aikhenvald’s (2003:135) views as to its origin and the directionality of diffusion. Second, I consider whether or not the recent development of the non-cognate, but functionally similar form *nĩh/~dăh* in the NA languages (Epps 2005) can be attributed to general areal influence. Finally, with these specific cases in mind, I further evaluate general claims proposed in Aikhenvald 2002 as to the nature of diffusion in this region of intense linguistic and cultural contact.