Tariana Paper 1

Skylar Litz
February 22, 2021

All data, examples, and generalizations presented here come from *A Grammar of Tariana, from Northwest Amazonia* by Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (2003).

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of Tariana

Tariana is an Arawak language spoken in the Vaupés basin in northwestern Brazil. In the past, Tariana was a "dialect continuum" spoken by over 1500 people living in settlements along the Vaupés river. The different subdialects of Tariana were about as different as the Romance languages are and constituted a strict hierarchy. When Catholic missions began to expand into the region, the groups that spoke the dialects of Tariana in the upper hierarchy abandoned the language and switched to Tucano. Now, the language is spoken by around 100 adults and all of them speak the previously lowest-ranking dialect, Wamiarikune.

The Vaupés basin area is a multilingual area. All languages spoken in the area (besides Tariana) belong to the East Tucano subgroup of the Tucano family. There is a principle of linguistic exogamy in the region, meaning that you must marry someone who speaks a different language than you. Though this may imply lots of mixing between Tariana and local languages, there is a strong cultural inhibition against language mixing. Over time Tariana has inherited a few features from Proto-Arawak and East Tucano, though much of the language remains unique.

2 Word Classes

Tariana has three open word classes, two semi-closed classes, and twelve closed classes.

2.1 Open word classes

The three open word classes in Tariana are verbs, nouns, and adjectives. Verbs are prototypical predicates, nouns are prototypical heads of noun phrases, and adjectives are prototypical modifiers.

2.1.1 Verbs

Verbs can be divided into two categories, those which take prefixes and those which do not. Active verbs must take a cross-referencing prefix to mark the subject constituent. Stative verbs and verbs of physical state do not take any cross-referencing markers.

Tariana has ambitransitive verbs, meaning that some verbs can be either transitive or intransitive. In fact, every transitive verb in Tariana can be used in intransitive clauses. Most verbs are agentive ambitransitive verbs which means that the object NP can be omitted if desired. The example in Figure 1 shows an ambitransitive verb, where the object NP of 'pepper' is optional in the phrase.

```
(ãsi)      nu-ñha-ka
(pepper)   1sg+A-eat-REC.P.VIS
'I eat/have eaten (pepper).'
```

Figure 1: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 67)

2.1.2 Nouns

Nouns in Tariana have grammatical categories of gender, noun classification, possession, number, case, nominal tense, and extralocality.

Nouns usually bear no gender marking, instead gender is expressed in person-number cross-referencing on verbs and obligatorily possessed nouns. Noun classification is shown through classifier agreement on modifiers in head-modifier NPs. Nouns can be divided into inalienably possessed (prefixed) and alienably possessed (prefixless). Number distinctions on nouns include singular, plural, unmarked, and associative. Nouns have three-fold tense distinction (past, future, and unmarked) and they can also be characterized for extralocality (if the participant referred to is in a different place or is not the one to do something).

The only nouns that can take a prefix are obligatorily possessed nouns which must take a possessive prefix. There is a closed subset of nouns called kinship nouns which must have a human (or animal) referent. There is also a closed class of 'names of blessing' containing eleven members. These names are used very rarely, only on special occasions.

Vocative forms of personal names can be created by omitting the final syllable of a name and shifting the stress onto the last remaining syllable. For example, the vocative form of *Olívia* is *Olí*. Vocative forms of nouns with a human referent can be created in the same way. For example, in Figure 2 a vocative form *miná* of *mínaɾi* meaning 'master of' is used.

```
hĩ               nu-kesi-pe              y-api
DEM:ANIM         1sg-blood.relative-PL   INDF-with
nu-wha-ni-pusita                  alia-mha              diha  kanapada,
1sg-sit-TOP.ADV-CL:CLEARING       EXIST-PRES.NONVIS  he    this.many,
pani-si                  miná            nu-kesi-ni
house-NPOSS              master:VOC      1sg-blood.relative-MASC
'Here, where I live with my blood relatives, on the clearing where I live, so many
(relatives) there are, oh master of the house, my relative.'
```

Figure 2: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 71)

2.1.3 Adjectives

Any adjective in Tariana can be used without a nominal head in a noun phrase. For example, *inaɾu matʃi:te* means 'bad woman' while *matʃi:te* just means 'bad one.' Adjectives can be underived or derived. Underived adjectives form a class of around twenty items. There are no specific adjectives that refer to form (such as 'round' or 'hollow'), instead those meanings can be conveyed using classifiers.

The underived adjectives can be split into semantic groups of dimension, age, value, color, and physical properties. There is one further adjective that does not belong to any of those semantic groups which is *keninite* meaning 'loved (by women).' This adjective is not used very frequently.

All adjectives require classifier agreement with the head noun. For adjectives with an inanimate referent, number agreement is optional. For human and higher animates, number agreement is required. Adjectives have most nominal grammatical categories, except an adjective cannot have a tense or extralocality value that is different from the head noun. The example in Figure 3 illustrates classifier agreement with an underived adjective, *hanu*. In Figure 4, classifier agreement on an adjective derived from a verbal phrase is shown.

```
heku-na            hanu-na
wood-CL:VERT       big-CL:VERT
'a big tree'
```

Figure 3: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 73)

```
tʃãri        di-thi-sedite
man          3sgnf-eye-NEG.EX+NCL:ANIM
'an eyeless man'
```

Figure 4: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 74)

Adjectives share the following properties with nouns:

1. They can be used as NP heads without special word class-changing morphology

2. They can be used as copula complements

Adjectives share the following properties with stative verbs:

1. When used as predicates they take the same morphology as stative verbs

2. They can be used in some imperative clauses similarly to stative verbs

3. Underived adjectives can never take cross-referencing prefixes

Finally, there are some properties which are unique to adjectives (not shared with nouns or verbs). These include:

1. Classifiers of all types are used as agreement markers with adjectives

2. Plurality is an agreement category for adjectives (unlike nouns) but adjectives do not have some of the plural forms that nouns have

2.2 Semi-Closed Classes

2.2.1 Manner Adverbs

Most manner adverbs in Tariana arise from a reinterpretation of serial verb constructions. Adverbs cannot take case marking, their function is to modify a verb or a predicate. The roots of underived adjectives can be used as value adverbs. Figure 5 illustrates the simple adverb *some* meaning 'a lot'.

iya	some	di-wha
rain	a.lot	3sgnf-fall

'The rain was falling a lot (it was raining heavily).'

Figure 5: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 78)

2.2.2 Time Words

Unlike manner adverbs, time words can take the non-subject case enclitic *-nuku* when they are typical. They can also take the locative case *-se*. They cannot take any other noun morphology and cannot be used as arguments of verbs. Figure 6 shows *desu* meaning 'tomorrow' when it is not topical, while 7 shows *desu* when it is topical, thus is marked with *-nuku*.

desu	wa:	wa-ma	ñapu-se
tomorrow	1pl+go	1pl-poison.fish	spring-LOC

'Let's go poison fish in the spring tomorrow.'

Figure 6: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 79)

nu-enipe	kwaka-da	na-ñha	ka:whi
1sg-children	what-DOUBT	3pl-eat	wake.up
desu-nuku			
tomorrow-TOP.NON.A/S			

'What will my children eat when they wake up tomorrow?'

Figure 7: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 79)

2.3 Closed Classes

The closed word classes that can be used as NP heads and as modifiers are personal pronouns, specifier articles, interrogative-distributive *kwa/kwe*, demonstratives, gestural deictic *khi*, distributive individualizer *napada*, general

indefinite *pa-*, numerals, and quantifiers. Adpositions are also a closed word class and can only be used as NP heads.

2.4 Overview of Word Classes

Figure 8 summarizes the relationships between major word classes and functional slots.

	VERB	ADJECTIVE	NOUN	MANNER ADVERB	TIME WORD
HEAD OF INTRANSITIVE PREDICATE	yes (all)	yes	yes	yes	yes
HEAD OF TRANSITIVE PREDICATE	yes (some)	no*	no*	no	no
HEAD OF NP	no*	yes	yes	no	no
MODIFIER IN NP	no*	yes	no*	no	no
MODIFIERS OF A VERB	no	no	no	yes	yes (some)

Figure 8: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 81)

3 Clause Types

Independent clauses can be declarative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamatory. The different types differ in their ability to express verbal categories, especially tense-evidentiality.

3.1 Declarative Clauses

Declarative clauses have variable constituent order and their predicate has the full set of tense-evidentiality distinctions.

3.1.1 Copula Clauses

Copula clauses can express existence, location, and possession; identity and equation; physical and mental state; becoming; similarity and appearance; and naming. Though different types of copula clauses employ different copula verbs and have different structures, the range of copulas covered by this paper is limited.

The prefixless copulas *alia* and *sede* can appear with one argument which usually indicates existence. An example of this is shown in Figure 9 where the copula clause is in brackets and the copula is underlined.

payape-se-peni-ka   [maɾu   alia-ka]
old.time-LOC-PL:ANIM-SUB   dance.master   EXIST-SUB
hĩ-kayu-sina   di-a   di-ɾapa-ka
DEM:ANIM-thus-REM.P.INFR   3sgnf-say   3sgnf-sing-DECL
'In the old days, when there was a dance master, this is how he sang.'

Figure 9: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 488)

3.1.2 Verbless Clauses

Verbless clauses are used to express existence, location, identity and equation, mental and physical state, as well as attribution and evaluation. Some of these clauses are allowed to also contain a copula, in which case there is a difference in meaning. Verbless existential clauses only appear at the beginning of narratives to introduce participants. Verbless locational clauses are frequent and can be used anywhere as long as the location is clear from context. In identity and equation clauses which are verbless, the copula is only used if the copula complement is focussed or unexpected. An example of this is provided in Figure 10 where the speaker is introducing a piece of focussed piece of information that he is the local school teacher.

4

```
nhua        aĩ-naku              alia-naka
I           here-TOP.NON.A/S     EXIST-PRES.VIS
[professor   alia-naka           nhua]
teacher      EXIST-PRES.VIS      I
'I live here, I am a school teacher.'
```

Figure 10: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 498)

3.1.3   Intransitive Clauses

Intransitive clauses can be divided into three types: strictly intransitive, double S-clauses, and extended intransitive. Strictly intransitive clauses contain an intransitive verb as their predicate and can contain obliques such as a beneficiary. An example of this is shown in Figure 11.

```
diha-ne-nha         di-kawana-pe    kaika-pidana        di-na
he-FOC.A/S-PAUS     3sgnf-leg-PL    ache-REM.P.REP      3sgnf-OBJ
'As for him, his legs were aching to him.'
```

Figure 11: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 500)

Double S-clauses are a subtype of intransitive clauses that refer to emotional states and contain an inalienably possessed body part preposed to the predicate. Extended transitive clauses contain prefixless verbs and two obligatory arguments, one of which is the subject, the other of which can take non-subject case-marking.

3.1.4   Transitive and Ditransitive Clauses

Transitive and ditransitive clauses contain a transitive or a ditransitive verb as a predicate. All verbs of these types mark their non-subject arguments with the non-subject case. The constituent order in these clauses follows the descriptions provided in Section 4.

3.2   Imperative Clauses

In imperative clauses, the predicate must contain a verb in an imperative form. These clauses have a higher pitch and a stronger intensity on the stressed syllable of the predicate.

3.3   Interrogative Clauses

Interrogative clauses have a different set of tense-evidentiality markers compared to declarative clauses. Content questions contain a question word while polar questions do not, instead they are distinguished by rising intonation and the choice of an evidential marker. Questioning more than one constituent is not allowed, nor is questioning constituents in subordinate clauses. It is not culturally appropriate to ask too many questions in Tariana as when a question is asked, it is often seen as the asker doubting the addressee.

3.4   Exclamatory Clauses

Exclamatory clauses have no tense-evidentiality specifications and usually consist of one word, one NP, or just a predicate. They often have a slightly rising intonation and the stressed syllable is pronounced with more intensity. An example of this is seen in Figure 12 when the speaker reacts surprisedly to a large baby. In this example, the underlined vowel ú is stressed.

```
hanú-ite!
big-NCL:ANIM
'It's a big one!' or 'How big it is!'
```

Figure 12: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 506)

3.5 Structure of Noun Phrases

A noun phrase consists of a head plus one or more modifiers. There is no basic order for NPs, the ordering is always pragmatically conditioned. NP heads can be a noun, adjective, or a member of one of the closed classes mentioned in Section 2.3. The head of an NP forces classifier (or animacy) agreement on any modifier that is present on the head. Animate NP heads also force number agreement. NP Modifiers can be adjectives, members of closed classes, and some nouns.

3.5.1 Position of Modifiers in Noun Phrases

Adjectives or closed class modifiers can be used in either the prehead or posthead position, except for specifier articles, demonstratives, and the quantifier *kanapada*, which always precede the NP head. The placement of modifiers prehead or posthead depends on the definiteness and specificity of the head noun. If a noun is definite or specific, modifiers tend to be placed before the noun. Indefinite or non-specific nouns usually have modifiers placed after the noun. For example (Figure 13), in a story being told about a well-known naughty tapir who destroys gardens, the modifier adjective 'bad' is placed before the head noun, 'tapir.'

ne	[ma:tʃite	hema-yana]	di-swa-nhi-na
then	bad+NCL:ANIM	tapir-PEJ	3sgnf-lie-ANT-REM.P.VIS

'Then a naughty (well-known) bad tapir was lying (there).'

Figure 13: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 476)

An NP can contain only one prehead modifier, so if one modifier is required to appear before the noun, the rest will appear after. For example, though demonstratives precede the head of an NP, if the prehead position contains an interrogative modifier in an interrogative clause, they will follow the head of the NP instead. In Figure 14, the noun phrase in brackets contains both a prehead and posthead modifier. The adjective 'bad' could not appear before the head in the NP because the prehead modifier slot is filled with the demonstrative.

[hĩhi	nawiki	ma:tʃi-peni]
DEM.PROX.EMPH	people	bad-PL:ANIM
tali-nuku		na-ñha-ka
aracú.fish-TOP.NON.A/S		3pl-eat-REC.P.VIS

'These bad people eat aracú fish.'

Figure 14: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 479)

3.5.2 Discontinuous Noun Phrases

A split NP occurs when the head occurs before the predicate and the modifiers occur after it or when the head occurs after the predicate and the modifiers occur before. Afterthoughts and discontinuous NPs are distinguished by the presence or lack of a pause before the modifier. If there is a pause, it is an afterthought. If there is no pause, it is a discontinuous NP. One use of split NPs is to introduce a referent whose identity is supposed to be unknown to the speaker but is important. The example in Figure 15 is from a story of a man looking for women. Once he found one, he presented her to his mother saying the phrase in 15.

nhua	[inaɾu]	nu-keta-ka	nhua	[pa:-ma]
I	woman	1sg-encounter-REC.P.VIS	I	one-CL:FEM

'I encountered a woman.'

Figure 15: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 480)

3.5.3 Appositional Constructions

Appositional constructions consist of a noun modifying another noun. Nouns which can modify other nouns are proper names, kinship terms, and generic nouns. Proper nouns and kinship terms follow the head noun and there

is no pause between the head noun and the modifier. The generic noun *yaphini* meaning 'thing' occurs before the noun it modifies when it means '(what) kind of thing' such as in Figure 16.

```
.kuite                      yaphini    itʃiɾi-nha
INTER+NCL:ANIM              thing      animal-PRES.VIS.INTER
'What sort of animal (is this)?'
```

Figure 16: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 482)

Only the time words (see 2.2.2) *heku* meaning 'yesterday', *ikasu* meaning 'today', and *desu* meaing 'tomorrow' can occur in an appositional construction with another time word. For example, *heku hekwa* meaning 'yesterday noon' is allowed.

3.5.4 Headless Noun Phrases

In narratives and conversations, full NPs are not very frequent. Instead, headless NPs are used in which a classifier is used to identify the referent. For example (Figure 17), the man who lives alone with his children is introduced in a headless NP with a numeral and a classifier.

```
upitha-peɾi-se                      nu-a-ka             nhua  alia-pidana
long.time.ago+FR-COLL-LOC           1sg-say-SUB         I     EXIST-REM.P.REP
niya-nhi             phepa                              dinipe-ne
3sgnf+stay-ANT       one+NUM.CL:HUMAN                   3sgnf+children-COM
'Long time ago, I am saying, there lived one (man) alone with his children.'
```

Figure 17: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 482)

4 Constituent Order

Tariana is a *pragmatically ordered* language so establishing a basic constituent order is not possible. In both texts and conversations, any constituent order is possible and all different organizations are used.

There are a few situations when Tariana may appear to have a fixed constituent order, or at least a prevalent constituent order. Sentences that are translated from the nearby language Tucano are generally *verb-final* while sentences translated from Portuguese are often *verb-medial*. For this reason, when studying Tariana it is important not to rely on translated material to understand constituent order. Aikhenvald notes that she followed this principle throughout the grammar, thus the data presented should be representative of how native speakers speak.

Instead of having a set constituent order, pragmatic parameters are used to order constituents in main clauses. These parameters include new vs. old information, relative topicality, definiteness, specificity, and contrast.

4.1 Pragmatic Parameters

4.1.1 Clause-Initial and Pre-Predicate Positions: Topicality

A newly introduced or continuous topic that is a subject occupies the clause-initial position. If a subject that has just been introduced as a future topic of a narrative is present in the next clause, the subject will again occupy the clause-initial position. This can be seen in Figure 18 and 19. In 18, a jaguar is introduced as the subject at the beginning of the clause. Then, in the following sentence in Figure 19, the same jaguar is mentioned again at the beginning of the clause as well, this time with the specifier article "diha."

If a new topic is unexpected and important, it can be marked with the focussed A/S case *-nhe/-ne*.

Any constituent that is more topical than the subject of a clause can occupy the clause-initial position. In Figure 20, 'this' refers to the content of the story, the topic of the preceeding conversation.

Normally, the A/S and O constituents are omitted once they have been introduced as they are clear from context. However these constituents can be repeated to create a comic effect, as if 'overstating' the situation.

yawi	dhepu	wika-se	di-wha-pidana
jaguar	he+CL:BUNDLE	on.top-LOC	3sgnf-sit-REM.P.REP

'A jaguar was sitting on top of the bundle (of caraná leaves).'

Figure 18: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 205)

diha	yawi	di-wapa-pidana	punepu
ART	jaguar	3sgnf-wait-REM.P.REP	caraná+CL:BUNDLE

wika-se
on.top-LOC

'The jaguar was waiting (for the man, to eat him up) on top of the bundle of palm leaves.'

Figure 19: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 205)

hĩ	nhua	nu-kalite-de
this	I	1sg-tell-FUT.CERT

'This I am going to tell.'

Figure 20: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 563)

There is also a specific case marking, *-nuku*, for topical non-subjects.

4.1.2 Post-Predicate Positions: Contrast and/or Disambiguation

The post-predicate position is filled by contrastive or unexpected participants. If the subject constituent is placed in this position in an introductory clause, it creates unexpectedness. For example, in Figure 17, a man who lives with his children is a subject that occupies the postpredicate position. The man is unexpected as a man living with his children is rare in Vaupés society. A postponed subject like in this example is usually separated from the predicate by a short pause.

The *-nhe/-ne* case discussed earlier can be used on an A/S constituent after the predicate if it is strongly contrastive. Generally constituents marked with the contrastive *-se* are preposed to the predicate if topical, but can occupy the post-predicate position if they are an unexpected participant. For example, in Figure 21, a man looks at a woman who is unexpected and the constituent of the woman with the *-se* marker is in the post-predicate position.

di-kapuku	di-ka	di-mare-pidana
3sgnf-turn	3sgnf-see	3sgnf-go.down+CAUS-REM.P.REP

duhua-se-nuku
she-CONTR-TOP.NON.A/S

'He turned and looked down at her (a woman who unexpectedly appeared).'

Figure 21: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 191)

Verb-initial clauses followed by two NPs (either VAO or VOA) are rare and only occur if both A and O are contrastive. In this case, the constituent that is the most contrastive, or is used for clarification, occupies the clause-final position. Either A, O, or both must be marked with the topical non-subject marker *-nuku* or the focussed A/S marker *-nhe/-ne*.

Constituents which are used as afterthoughts or as clarifications also appear in the post-predicate position and are signaled by a preceding phrase-final falling intonation. Any constituent can be an afterthought.

4.1.3 Unmarked Non-Subject Immediately Before the Predicate

The only time an indefinite and non-specific non-subject noun unmarked for the *-nuku* case is places immediately before the verb is when the whole construction is used to describe an activity. For example, Figure 22 describes a man going fishing.

```
kuphe        dinu           di-emhani-pidana
fish         3sgnf+kill     3sgnf-walk-REM.P.REP
'He went around fishing (lit. he walked-killed fish).'
```

Figure 22: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 567)

4.2 Constructions with Fixed Constituent Order

There are only a few cases when strict ordering principles apply in Tariana. These are,

1. **Position of the Copula Complement.**
   Copula components were discussed in 3.1.1. The copula itself can generally only be clause-final or clause-medial, but the existential copula can be clause-initial. The copula complement cannot be separated from the copula *alia* in identity and equation classes. A copula complement used to describe physical and mental states can occupy the clause-initial topical position and allow another constituent to intervene between the complement and the copula. An example of this can be seen in Figure 23.

```
mhãisiki              na-na        alia-sina
hunger/be.hungry      3pl-OBJ      EXIST-REM.P.INFR
'They were hungry (lit. hunger to them existed).'
```

Figure 23: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 492)

2. **Position of Interrogative Words**
   Interrogative words occupy the initial position in a content question. When used in relative clauses or complement clauses they also tend to occupy the clause-initial position. When the subject is expressed with an overt NP, the preferential order is Interrogative-Predicate-A/S. A topical constituent can be preposed to the interrogative, as in Figure 24 where the subject *nuɾi* comes before the interrogative word *kani*.

```
nuɾi       [PAUSE]      kani-nihka              di-a        diha
1sg+son    [PAUSE]      where-PAST.VIS.INTER    3sgnf-go    he
'My son [PAUSE], where is he gone?'
```

Figure 24: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 313)

3. **Position of Connectors**
   Clause and sentence connectors occupy the sentence-initial position. Examples of connectors include *diwese, diwesew(h)ya* meaning 'then', *kayumaka* meaning 'so, thus', and *kay di-ni* meaning 'so he did'.

4. **Position of the Predicate of Dependent Clauses**
   Dependent clauses and nominalizations exhibit strictly predicate-final constituent ordering. The only exception to this is the discourse-organizing phrase *nu-a-ka nhua* (1sg-say-SUB I) meaning 'I am saying' or 'as I am saying.' This phrase is extremely common in narratives of all genres.

5. **Subjects of Imperatives and Apprehensives**
   If the subject of an imperative is stated, it follows the predicate. One exception is when a subject of a detrimental imperative is highly topical, in which case the subject can precede the predicate.

6. **Double S-clauses**
   Double S-clauses always follow the order of body part followed by predicate.

4.3 Ellipsis

Narratives and conversations in Tariana are highly elliptic. This means that participants are often left unspecified and must be identified using cross-referencing, classifiers, and context (see 3.5.4). In Figure 25, a man meets two ducks and the NP meaning 'they' is omitted.

In Figure 26, it is clear from context that strength is missing, so the NP for strength is omitted.

ñama-kapi	kumada	di-keta-pidana,	pi-nu
two-hand	duck	3sgnf-meet-REM.P.REP	2sg-come
na:-pidana		di-na	
3pl+say-REM.P.REP		3sgnf-OBJ	

'He met two ducks, "Come", (they) said to him.'

Figure 25: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 573)

sede-mhana	wha-ne-nha
NEG-REM.P.NONVIS	we-FOC.A/S-PAUS

'There was no (strength left), as far as we were concerned.'

Figure 26: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 573)

Due to ellipsis as well as cross-referencing on transitive and active intransitive verbs, only around 10 per cent of transitive clauses in Tariana have two NPs.