# Introduction to Tariana

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# 1   Introduction

Tariana is an Arawak language spoken in the multilingual area of the Vaupés basin in north-western Brazil. All data, examples, and generalizations presented here come from Aikhenvald (2003).

# 2   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.

## 2.1   Details on Pragmatic Ordering

- 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.

- 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.

- There are also specific case markings for topicality of a non-subject constituent, specific and/or definite referents, and focussed and contrastive subjects.

- There are a few constructions that maintain a fixed constituent order. These are,
    - position of the copula component with respect to the copula
    - position of interrogative words
    - position of clause connectors
    - position of the predicate in dependent clauses
    - imperatives and apprehensives
    - double S-clauses

- A unique feature of Tariana compared to other Arawak languages is that in possessive constructions, the possessor always precedes the possessed noun.

# 3 Order of words in Noun Phrases

A noun phrase consists of a head plus one or more modifiers.

## 3.1 NP HEADS

- NP heads can be a noun, adjective, or a member of certain closed classes (demonstratives, specifier articles, quantifier, and deictics).
- The head of an NP forces classifier (or animacy) agreement on any modifier that is present on the head.

## 3.2 NP MODIFIERS

- Modifiers can be adjectives, members of certain closed classes, and some nouns.
- 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 must 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 1), 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 1: (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.
- 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 2), 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 2: (Aikhenvald 2003 page 482)