CHAPTER II

Number and noun categorisation

A view from north-west Amazonia

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A combination of number marking, on the one hand, and genders, animacy and classifiers of various sorts on the other, may form the basis for semantic subcategorisation of nominal referents, in addition to further such devices. The paper investigates number as a noun categorisation device in a selection of languages in north-west Amazonia, each with a system of classifiers used in several morphosyntactic contexts. Number is shown to be prone to areal diffusion in situations of language contact.

1. Introducing the topic

Number is a referential property of an argument of the predicate, typically realised as an NP (which may have as head a noun, a free pronoun, a demonstrative etc.), and/or by a bound pronoun. Number can be coded either through lexical modifiers (including quantifiers of various sorts, lexical numerals, etc.), or through a grammatical system (see Dixon 2010: 158–59, 2012: 47–9, 85–6, for an overview). The expression of number may interact with reference classification (Aikhenvald & Dixon 1998): that is, the choice made in a number system may depend on the choices made in the domain of classification of noun referent based on gender, animacy or any other parameters used in classifier systems. Number can also be expressed in a ‘non-canonical’ way, for instance, within the predicate (an overview is in Dixon 2012: 362–6; Aikhenvald & Dixon 2011 focus on correlations between number marking and types of core arguments).

1. Sincere thanks go to Anne Storch and Gerrit Dimmendaal, for organising the Workshop at which this paper was presented. I am indebted to my Tariana family for teaching me their remarkable language. R.M.W. Dixon provided incisive comments and suggestions; thanks are equally due to him.

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A combination of number-marking, on the one hand, and animacy and classifiers of various sorts on the other, may be the basis for semantic subcategorisation of nominal referents, in addition to gender and other classification devices.

We focus on the number, and reference classification in Tariana, an endangered Arawak language spoken in north-west Amazonia. The language has a complex system of genders and classifiers as independent categories, in addition to an elaborate system of number marking. Neighbouring languages spoken within the same linguistic area share similar properties. The ways in which number is deployed as an additional device for referent categorisation can be explained as emanating from intensive areal diffusion.

2. Number and reference classification in north-west Amazonia: A bird’s eye view

Lowland Amazonian languages are a locus of considerable linguistic diversity: estimated c. 300 languages, at least 15 unrelated families, and a fair number of isolates (see the overview in Aikhenvald 2012). The six major linguistic families of the Amazon basin are Arawak, Tupí, Carib, Pano, Tucanoan and Macro-Jê; smaller families include Makú, Witotoan, Harakmbet, Arawá, Chapacura, Tacana, Nambiquara, Guahibo and Yanomami.

Typical number values involve singular and plural, or singular, dual and plural. Dual number is scattered across the continent: it is hardly ever found in Arawak languages, but is a feature of Witotoan, Guahibo and of Tacana languages (an overview, and references, in Aikhenvald 2012:152–5). Amazonian languages do not have trial or paucal number (generally, a trait of Oceanic languages).

Different ‘degrees’ of plurality can be expressed through other means. In Warekena, a North Arawak language (Aikhenvald 1998), the number marker -pe is used with terms for animals and kinship nouns. Marker -nawi, ‘emphatic plural’, can be used with animates and inanimates, and typically refers to a large number of referents. Humberto Baltazar, my main teacher of the language, gave me the following ‘hierarchy’ to illustrate the meaning of simple plural -pe, ‘emphatic plural’ -nawi and ‘double emphatic plural’ -pe-nawi:

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2. This paper is based on more than twenty years of fieldwork on Tariana. My Tariana corpus contains over 1500 pages of texts (plus further materials). The paper is based on further information, examples and insights, adding to the reference grammar (Aikhenvald 2003), in-depth studies of classifiers and genders in Amazonian languages (Aikhenvald 2000b:204–41, 2007, 2010, 2012: Chapter 10) and a study of the impact of language contact (Aikhenvald 2002). It elaborates on the conceptual framework for multiple classifier systems in north-west Amazonia, and beyond it, first proposed in Aikhenvald (2000b) and Aikhenvald and Green (1998). No examples in this paper, as in my other work, are elicited: they come from texts, conversations, or pedagogical materials produced by the speakers.

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(1)  

abida-\textit{pe}  \quad \text{‘many pigs, about 2–6’}  
abida-\textit{nawi}  \quad \text{‘very many pigs, about 40–50’}  
abida-\textit{pe-nawi}  \quad \text{‘very many pigs indeed, so many one cannot count them’}  

In Warekena, as in many other Amazonian languages, overt number marking is optional for inanimate and lower animate referents. It is obligatory for humans and also higher animates, thus agreeing with the hierarchy for overt number marking depending on animacy, first formulated by Smith-Stark (1974). This is one of the ways in which number marking and reference classification of the noun interrelate.

Amazonian languages, and especially languages spoken in north-west Amazonia, are rich in elaborate systems of genders, and classifiers of all types (Aikhenvald 2012: 279–300). Small gender systems are a feature of Arawak, Witotoan, Tucanoan and Arawá languages. There are two or three genders – typically, masculine and feminine – realised through agreement on an adjective or a verb (and can be marked on noun itself).

In addition to a small gender system, there can be a set of classifiers of a variety of types, depending on the morphosyntactic context (for the typology of classifiers, see Aikhenvald 2000b, 2006 and references there):

- **Numeral classifiers** occur with numerals and quantifiers. They categorise the referent in terms of its animacy, shape and other inherent properties. Numeral classifiers are typically used just with small numbers. This fits in with the profile of most Amazonian languages: they often have a limited set of number words.
- **Possessive classifiers** occur in possessive constructions, categorising the possessed noun, in terms of its inherent properties.
- **Verbal classifiers** occur on verbs categorising the intransitive subject (S) or the transitive object (O) in terms of its inherent properties (see Aikhenvald & Dixon 2011, for some explanations of why this is so).
- **Noun classifiers** occur on noun itself or accompanying a noun, categorising the noun referent.

The same set of forms may appear in several of these contexts, creating a multiple classifier system. The existence of languages with multiple classifiers points confirms the intrinsic unity of noun categorisation devices as one linguistic phenomenon.3

3. Earlier generalisations concerning classifiers and other categories have been proven inadequate. For instance, it was once claimed that a language with numeral classifiers does not have obligatory number distinction (see Greenberg 1972). This is not the case in many languages have both, including Dravidian languages, and numerous languages of Amazonia (Warekena among them). Gender can be expressed in a way independent from numeral and other classifiers in numerous Amazonian languages – some of them discussed here.
Multiple classifier systems are a recurrent feature of many languages of north-west Amazonia, found in numerous Arawak languages (e.g. Tariana, Baniwa of Íçana/Kurripako, and Resigaro), Tucanoan languages, Witotoan languages (including Bora and Ocaina), Guahibo languages, and also Yagua from the Peba-Yagua family (see Aikhenvald 2000a,b, 2006, 2007; Seifart 2004, 2007; Payne 2007; Peterson de Piñeros 2007). In these languages, the same (or almost the same) set of classifier morphemes also occurs on adjectival modifiers, marking noun classes. That noun classes (whose semantics reflects natural gender, shape, consistency, and so on) are expressed differently from small pronominal genders is a feature found in a few other languages in Amazonia, including Paumari, an Arawá language (Dixon 1999; Aikhenvald 2010).

Small gender systems, on the one hand, and noun classes and classifiers of various types, on the other, are independent grammatical systems. They occur under different conditions, and are different in their meanings.

Example (2), from Tariana, a North Arawak language spoken in the Vaupés River Basin in north-west Amazonia, shows how this works (Aikhenvald 2000a, 2003: 87–121). Pronominal genders in Tariana and many related, and neighbouring, languages are expressed in pronominal cross-referencing on verbs and nominalisations, and in personal pronouns (including third person pronouns which can be used as articles). There are two genders in singular: non-feminine and feminine; no gender distinctions are expressed in pronominal prefixes in the plural (for number and its interactions with pronominal gender in Tariana, see Tables II.4 and II.5, and Section 3.2).

In (2), the classifier -da ‘small round object’ appears in multiple contexts: on a demonstrative, a numeral, an adjective, a possessive, a verb and as a derivational suffix on a noun. Pronominal gender is expressed through a prefix di- ‘third person singular non-feminine’.

Table II.1. Classifiers in Tariana (a selection) (adapted from Table 5.1 in Aikhenvald 2003: 89–92)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTICS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
<th>NOUN CL SG</th>
<th>NUM CL</th>
<th>POSS CL</th>
<th>VERBAL CL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HUMAN</td>
<td>ṭāri ‘man’, ḫnar ‘woman’</td>
<td>-ite</td>
<td>-hipa</td>
<td>ite</td>
<td>-ita</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Multiple classifier systems have also been described for Arawak languages in southern Amazonia, e.g. Michael (2008), and see the survey in Aikhenvald (1999).
2. Classifiers used just in two morphosyntactic contexts: on adjectives as noun classes, and on nouns themselves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTICS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COLLECTIVE</strong></td>
<td><em>pumeni-peri</em> ‘sugar’, <em>u:ni</em> ‘water’, <em>saña-peri</em> ‘sweat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ABSTRACT NOUNS, PLACES, NATURAL PHENOMENA</strong></td>
<td><em>ehkwapi</em> ‘day, weather, world’, <em>iya</em> ‘rain’, <em>panisi-wani</em> ‘place where home is’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Classifiers with the same forms in all classifier contexts

A. Gender classifier (not used with specifier article)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSIFIER</th>
<th>SEMANTICS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ma</td>
<td>feminine</td>
<td><em>inaru</em> ‘woman’, <em>kabueta-ma</em> ‘female teacher’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Shape and Form classifiers (a selection)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTICS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF NOUNS WITH WHICH USED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-da</td>
<td>round objects: <em>mawina</em> ‘pineapple’, <em>dithi</em> ‘eye’, *heku-da’fruit’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-hiwi</td>
<td>thin long objects: <em>isa</em> ‘hair’, <em>nu-thiwi</em> ‘eye-lash’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ipa</td>
<td>big open space: <em>dikaka-pua</em> ‘cheek’, <em>yupitsi</em> ‘sieve’, <em>hipa</em> ‘land’, <em>kaidoko</em> ‘beach’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ipu</td>
<td>long, hollow, bundle-like: <em>haiku-pu</em> ‘log’, <em>nawiki-pu</em> ‘grave’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ita</td>
<td>inanimate object, instrument: <em>mesapita</em> ‘a turi stick’, <em>marie</em> ‘knife’, <em>kanari</em> ‘mirror’,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>hekuta</em> ‘paddle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ku</td>
<td>folded cloth: <em>ama-ku</em> ‘hammock’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kwa</td>
<td>flat surface: <em>âda</em> ‘grater’, <em>enu-kwa</em> ‘sky’, <em>hipa-kwa</em> ‘stony surface’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kwana</td>
<td>plain: <em>maka-kwana</em> ‘plain’, <em>hipa-kwa</em> ‘stony surface’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kwema</td>
<td>flat and round: <em>karapi</em> ‘(round) plate’, <em>marawi-kapari</em> ‘plate of snuff’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kha</td>
<td>curvilinear: <em>kule-kha</em> ‘fishing line’, <em>hewya-pi-kha</em> ‘rainbow’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-khi, -ki</td>
<td>thin curved (rope, tape): <em>maka-khi</em> ‘rope’, <em>kare-khi</em> ‘road of the wind thin as a rope’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-maka</td>
<td>extended cloth: <em>yarumakasi</em> ‘cloth’, <em>hitisi-maka</em> ‘funeral mask’ (lit. mask of tears)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-mapha</td>
<td>completely covered: <em>di-tisuna</em> ‘his beard’, <em>itisima</em> ‘mane of hair’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-na</td>
<td>long vertical: <em>heku-na</em> ‘tree’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pa</td>
<td>largish and long: <em>deri</em> ‘banana’, <em>pesanini-pa</em> ‘ladder’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-peku</td>
<td>thin stretch: <em>leka-peku</em> ‘a broken longish piece’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pi</td>
<td>long, thin, vertical; cycle of time: <em>hirina</em> ‘manioc squeezer (tipiti)’, <em>deri-pi</em> ‘banana tree’,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>keri, keri-pi</em> ‘month’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
### Classifiers referring to arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSIFIER</th>
<th>SEMANTICS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-(i)tsi</td>
<td>bundle</td>
<td>manakatsi, manaketsi 'bundle of açai', deritsi 'bundle of banana'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ima</td>
<td>a paired object; one side of two</td>
<td>diphema 'wing (of an insect)', diaranima '(bird’s)wing'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-iphina</td>
<td>a quarter</td>
<td>pethe-iphina 'a quarter of manioc bread'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pada</td>
<td>piece (evenly cut)</td>
<td>maka-pada 'half'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-piu, -pio, -pia</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>pa:-piu, pa:-pio, pa:-pia 'once'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-sawa</td>
<td>group</td>
<td>marc-sawa 'a group of birds'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Classifiers referring to function

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSIFIER</th>
<th>SEMANTICS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-dapana</td>
<td>habitation</td>
<td>panisi 'house', ditape-dapana 'hospital'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-whya</td>
<td>canoe, transport</td>
<td>ita-whya 'canoe', ka-koloka-whya 'car'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-anhi</td>
<td>line of a song</td>
<td>makanhe 'line of a song'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Specific classifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSIFIER</th>
<th>SEMANTICS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-depita</td>
<td>night</td>
<td>kadawa-depita 'dark night'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-hipita</td>
<td>land</td>
<td>wa-ya-hipita 'our land'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ithi</td>
<td>seed</td>
<td>ithi 'seed', iwi 'grain of salt'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-iwai</td>
<td>trap, wall</td>
<td>nehpaniwaí 'a made up trap', panisiwai 'house-wall'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kada</td>
<td>a day</td>
<td>pa:-kada 'one day'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kaiaithe</td>
<td>heap of stones</td>
<td>hipada-kaiaithe 'heap of stones'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kawa</td>
<td>leg, handle, anything</td>
<td>sidu-kawa 'the long part of an arrow', huni-kawa 'manioc trunk'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Classifier Semantics Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSIFIER</th>
<th>SEMANTICS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-kena</td>
<td>branch</td>
<td>heku-kena ‘tree branch’, di-kawana-kena ‘his leg’ (e.g. crab’s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ki</td>
<td>manioc</td>
<td>kaini-ki ‘manioc’, de:ri-ki ‘manioc of banana type’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kuye, -kye</td>
<td>island</td>
<td>kewere ‘island’, maka-kye ‘a big island’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kuda</td>
<td>trunk</td>
<td>heku-kuda ‘tree trunk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kuya</td>
<td>extended part</td>
<td>maka-kuya ‘extended part of a river’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kuthe</td>
<td>manioc bread</td>
<td>pethe, paithe ‘manioc bread’, kao-kuthe, sirulphiwa ‘types of manioc bread’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kuu</td>
<td>mist, smoke</td>
<td>hari-a-ku ‘white smoke’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-nai</td>
<td>lake</td>
<td>maka-nai ‘lake’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-naki</td>
<td>long handle</td>
<td>papiuni-naki ‘a broom’, di-kawana-naki ‘broom-like part of the leg’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-numa(na)</td>
<td>word, language</td>
<td>pa:-numa(na) ‘one word, one language’, wali-numa ‘new word’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ñapi</td>
<td>bone</td>
<td>di-weda-ñapi ‘his jaw, his chin-bone’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-nhe</td>
<td>verse, line</td>
<td>parapanipe ‘singing’, pamuña-nhe ‘a verse in the middle (of a song)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-patawa</td>
<td>gorge</td>
<td>maka-patawa ‘gorge’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-peda</td>
<td>low bush, small heap</td>
<td>kanaperi-peda ‘grassy bush’, panaphe-peda ‘small heap of leaves’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pida</td>
<td>crown and branches of a tree</td>
<td>heku di-pha-ni-pida ‘fallen crown and branches of a tree’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pina</td>
<td>swamp</td>
<td>maka-pina ‘swamp’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pua</td>
<td>river</td>
<td>u:ni ‘river’, ñapu ‘spring’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-purikuda</td>
<td>mountain</td>
<td>kadidoko-purikuda ‘sand-mountain’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pukuda</td>
<td>bush</td>
<td>hunay-pukuda ‘a bush of manioc’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pukupe</td>
<td>turn</td>
<td>u:ni-pukupe ‘turn of a river’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pusita</td>
<td>clearing</td>
<td>pusisi ‘clearing’, neritsirpusita ‘large clearing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-taku</td>
<td>endpoint</td>
<td>mawali-taku ‘point of snake’ (a placename)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-turapa</td>
<td>cone</td>
<td>maka-turapa ‘cone’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) **ha-da** pa-da haiku-da hanu-da  
nu-ya-da di-pe-karu-da-ka  
1SG-POS-CL:ROUND 3SGNF-throw-purpose-CL:ROUND-REC.P.Vis  
‘That one big fruit of mine is for him to throw’ (from pedagogical materials, compiled by speakers)
shape, consistency, arrangement and functional properties. Table II.1 offers a selection of classifiers in Tariana. As we will see below, classifiers interact with number in a way different from pronominal genders.

Classifiers are highly frequent in all genres of narratives and conversations. One of their many functions is disambiguating different meanings of a polysemous noun. Classifiers in Tariana also have anaphoric functions (see Aikhenvald 2000a, 2003). For example, anything to do with water, or a waterway can be referred to, in Tariana, with uni ‘water, waterway’. Different classifiers help distinguish fruit juice (‘sweet water’) from a river, lake, bay or a bend or a stretch of a river – this is shown in Table II.2.

Similar semantic functions of classifiers have been described for other languages with classifiers (cf. Becker 1975, on classifiers in Burmese; and discussion in Aikhenvald 2000b:319–20).

Table II.2. How classifiers help disambiguate a polysemous noun in Tariana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uni hanu-pua</td>
<td>(big-cl:waterway) ‘big river’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uni pumeni-peri</td>
<td>(sweet-coll) ‘sweet water’, ‘juice, soft drink’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uni hanipa</td>
<td>(big+cl:large.space) ‘big, large river; large pool of water’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uni hanu-kha</td>
<td>(big-cl:curved) ‘big, curved river’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uni hanu-wani</td>
<td>(big-cl:abstr.places) ‘big river (as a location)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uni hanu-nai</td>
<td>(big-cl:lake) ‘big, lake-like river’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uni hanu-dawa</td>
<td>(big-cl:corner) ‘big bay in a river’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uni hanu-pina</td>
<td>(big-cl:swamp) ‘big, swampy river’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uni hanu-puna</td>
<td>(big-cl:road) ‘big river (roadlike) for canoe to travel’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uni hanu-kwa</td>
<td>(big-cl:flat.surface) ‘big river (with flat surface and no rapids)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uni hanu-peku</td>
<td>(big-thin.stretch) ‘narrow stretch of a river’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We now turn to the ways in which inherent properties of noun referents interrelate with number marking, offering a further dimension to noun classification.

3. Number, animacy and reference classification in Tariana

Tariana has two or three number values (singular and non-singular, or singular, plural and collective) depending on the properties of the noun referent. Number distinctions depend, inter alia, on whether the referent is inanimate, animate, or just human. They interrelate with pronominal genders, and are also reflected in the agreement within a noun phrase and on the verb. Number can be marked more than once within a grammatical word.
We start with a discussion of the categorisation of nominals in terms of number distinctions, and number marking, in Section 3.1. In Section 3.2, we turn to the correlations between number and pronominal gender, and number agreement. Multiple number marking is briefly addressed in Section 3.3.

### 3.1 Number distinctions and the categorisation of nominals

Tariana nominals can be divided into several groups depending on their number oppositions and overt number marking. In each case, number marking is obligatory.

A tripartite number system – with the unmarked ‘collective’ term – is a feature of nouns with an inanimate referent (A below). A few nouns referring to dwellings and artefacts have a singular-plural distinction with an option for an emphatic plural (B). Nouns with animate reference, including kinship terms have singular and plural (the marking varies depending on the semantic group) (C), and so do derived adjectives (D) and some types of kinship terms (E). Nouns with human collective reference have a tripartite number system with each term formally marked (F). Personal names (and kinship terms) have associative plural (G). This is summarised in Table II.3.

#### Table II.3. Number distinctions, and number marking in Tariana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTICS</th>
<th>NUMBER SYSTEMS</th>
<th>NUMBER MARKING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Inanimate referents</td>
<td>collective</td>
<td>zero-marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>marked with a classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>plural</td>
<td>marked with classifier plus -pe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. A few names for</td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>zero-marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dwellings and artefacts</td>
<td>plural</td>
<td>plural marker -pe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>emphatic plural</td>
<td>plural marker -pe-pã 'all'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Animate referents</td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>zero-marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>plural</td>
<td>plural marker -pe: most nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>subtraction: 'woman', 'shaman'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>plural marker -pã 'all'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>emphatic plural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Derived adjectives</td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>-ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>plural</td>
<td>-peni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Kinship nouns</td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>zero-marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>plural</td>
<td>plural markers -pe, -kanape, -nipe, -sini depending on noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>associative plural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Human collective</td>
<td>collective</td>
<td>-na, -ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>referents</td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>-seri, -ne-seri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>plural</td>
<td>-seni, -ne-seni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Personal names</td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>zero-marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>associative plural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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A. Nouns with an inanimate referent have a tripartite number system, reminiscent of Western Nilotic (Storch 2005), Eastern Nilotic (e.g. Turkana: Dimmendaal 1983), further Nilo-Saharan languages (Dimmendaal 2000) and also Cushitic (Zaborski 1986).

The number distinctions cover:

i. ‘general’ or collective: unmarked;

ii. non-plural: singular, marked with a classifier on the noun itself;

iii. plural: marked with a suffix -pe added to the classifier

The noun *haiku* without a classifier means ‘wood, trees in general as a collective entity’. If accompanied with the classifier -da ‘small round object’, it refers to ‘fruit’. Haiku without a classifier cannot take the plural marker. When accompanied with a classifier, it can: *haiku-da-pe* means ‘many fruit, many types of fruit’:

(3) a. *haiku*  
   ‘wood, trees in general’

b. *haiku-da*  
   *wood/trees-CL:ROUND*  
   ‘a fruit’

c. *haiku-da-pe*  
   *wood/trees-CL:ROUND-PL*  
   ‘many fruit, types of fruit’

d. *haiku-pe*

With the classifier -na ‘vertical object’, the form *haiku* ‘wood, trees in general’ acquires the meaning of ‘tree’. The principles of number marking, and the meaning of number markers, are the same as in (3):

(4) a. *haiku*  
   ‘wood, trees in general’

b. *haiku-na*  
   *wood/trees-CL:VERTICAL*  
   ‘a tree’

c. *haiku-na-pe*  
   *wood/trees-CL:VERTICAL-PL*  
   ‘many trees, types of trees’

With the classifier -pi ‘long and palm-like’, *haiku* refers to ‘palm tree’:

(5) a. *haiku*  
   ‘wood, trees in general’

b. *haiku-pi*  
   *wood/trees-CL:PALM.LIKE*  
   ‘a palm tree’
c. *haiku-pi-pe*  
**PLURAL**

\[\text{wood/trees-CL:Palm.likE-PL}\]  
‘many palm trees, types of palm trees’

Along similar lines, *deri* means ‘bananas’, or ‘banana in general (as a kind of fruit)’; *deri-pa* (banana+CL:LARGE.CONCAVE) means ‘a banana (a fruit)’, and *deri-pa-pe* means ‘many bananas’. Along the lines of (3–5), *papera* means ‘paper’, *papera-phe* (paper-CL:Leaf.likE) means ‘sheet of paper’, *papera-phe-pe* means ‘sheets of paper’. Note the ungrammaticality of *haiku-pe*, *deri-pe* or *papera-pe*: nouns with collective referent cannot be pluralised. This reflects their inherent uncountability: they refer to one collective entity.

Textual Examples (6) and (7) contrast the forms *haiku*, with a collective referent, and *haiku-na* ‘(individual) tree’. In (6), people were looking into the trees as a collective entity, or as a mass of trees:

\[\text{(6) na-ka na-pe-pidana haiku yewhe-se} \]  
\[3PL-see 3PL-throw-REM.PREP trees.in.general middle-LOC\]  
‘They looked in the middle of the trees (to see if the spirit was there)’

In (7), they were looking inside a tree as an individual entity:

\[\text{(7) na-ka na-pe-pidana haiku-na yewhe-se} \]  
\[3PL-see 3PL-throw-REM.PREP tree-CL:Vert middle-LOC\]  
‘They looked in the middle of the tree (to see if the sloth was there).’

The collective and the singular nouns require singular agreement in pronominal gender. Plural nouns require plural agreement (where no gender distinction is made).

The formally unmarked term in this three-term number system is collective. This is similar to a system Zaborski (1986: 3) reports for Beja. The plain noun has a collective meaning, with suffixes added for what Zaborski calls ‘singulative’ (a term used for morphologically-marked singular) and ‘plural’:

\[\text{(8) Collective } tå\{wig } \text{‘mosquitoes in general’}\]  
\[\text{Singulative } tå\{wig-ay } \text{‘a mosquito’}\]  
\[\text{Plural } tå\{wig-ey } \text{‘a few mosquitoes’}\]

We can conclude that, in Tariana, classifiers with inanimates can be considered exponents of singular number, in a three-term number system.

B. About a dozen nouns with an inanimate referent which include names for dwellings and artefacts – e.g. *panisi* ‘house’, *panisaru* ‘abandoned settlement’, *yakare* ‘village, community’, *amaku* ‘hammock’, *puari* ‘frying pan’ – have two number distinctions: singular (unmarked) and plural (marked with -pe), e.g. *panisi-pe* ‘houses’, *yakare-pe* ‘villages’, *amaku-pe* ‘hammocks’. To emphasise their plurality or to express a collective meaning, a clitic *på* ‘all’ can be added after the noun marked for plural, e.g. *yakare-pe-på* ‘(very) many villages’; ‘a set of villages’.
C. The majority of nouns with animate reference (other than kinship terms) have a singular versus plural system, with plural marked with:

- suffix -pe for most nouns, e.g. yawi ‘jaguar’, yawi-pe ‘jaguars’, pedalie ‘old man’, pedalie-pe ‘old men’;
- subtraction for two nouns: na-ru ‘woman’, pl. na ‘women’; maliè-ri ‘shaman’, pl. maliè ‘shamans’;

To emphasise their plurality, a clitic pà ‘all’ can be added after the noun marked for plural, e.g. yawi-pe-pà ‘(very) many jaguars’.

D. Adjectives with an animate referent can be derived from a noun or a verb with the singular suffix -ite. The corresponding plural marker is -peni, e.g. ma-thi-ite (NEG-eye-cl:anim) ‘the one without eyes’, ma-thi-peni (NEG-eye-pl:human) ‘the ones without eyes’;

E. Kinship nouns form their plural in a variety of ways, depending on the noun.5

- -pe, e.g. nu-sa-niri (1sg-spouse-masc) ‘(my) husband’, nu-sa-niri-pe ‘(my) husbands; my marrigeable cousins’;
- -kanape: nu-itu ‘my daughter’, nu-itu-kanape ‘my daughters’;
- -nipe, e.g. ha-niri ‘father’, pl. ha-niri-nipe ‘classificatory fathers’; ha-du (or ha-do) ‘mother’, pl. ha-du-nipe, ha-dua-nipe ‘classificatory mothers’
- -sini, e.g. paidua-i ‘female ego’s brother’s son’, pl. paidua-i-sini; nu-nami ‘my father’s younger brother’, pl. nu-nami-sini.

The suffix -nipe is the one most frequently used by those younger speakers who are not sure of the correct number form, and can replace any other number marker.

All kinship nouns can form associative plural with the suffix -sini (see Moravcsik 2003), e.g. nami-sini ‘father’s younger brother and whoever is with him’.

F. Nouns with human collective reference have a tripartite number system reminiscent of the one in A, but with each term having formal marking (the choice between each pair of terms is lexical):

5. The kinship system in Tariana and neighbouring East Tucanoan languages across the Vaupés River Basin is of the Dravidian type, with cross-cousin marriage; see Aikhenvald (2003).
The tripartite number marking applies to names of ethnic groups, as in (10)–(11).

(10) Taria-na Taria-seri Taria-seni
Tariana-COLL:PEOPLE Tariana-SINGL Tariana-HUMAN:PL
‘Tariana people’ ‘Tariana person’ ‘Tariana individuals’

(11) Yase-ne Yase-ne-seri Yase-ne-seni
toucan-PL toucan-PL-SINGL toucan-PL-HUMAN:PL
‘Tucano people’ ‘Tucano person’ ‘Tucano individuals’

The same principle applies to any group of humans, or human-like beings, defined by belonging to a totem, or sharing a property, as in (12):

(12) mawari-ne mawari-ne-seri mawari-ne-seni
‘snake people’ ‘one of the snake people’ ‘individuals of the snake people’

Importantly, -seri ‘singulative’ and -seni ‘plural of singulative’ are only number markers, and not classifiers. They never occur on modifiers, or numerals, or in any other classifier contexts. They are also not gender-sensitive.

In addition, a singulative -seri may refer to a unit of time, or space:

(13) keri-seri
moon/sun-SINGL
‘for a month’ (e.g. ritual seclusion of a girl menstruating for the first time)

(14) ņama-kapi-kada-pe-seri
two-hand-CL:DAY-PL-SINGL
‘for ten (days)’ (duration of the ritual seclusion of parents after the birth of a child)

The plural counterpart -seni is not used this way.
The suffix -sini is polysemous: as we saw in E above, it also occurs as a plural marker with some kinship terms. A homophonous clitic =sini means ‘also’. We offer an explanation in Section 5.6.

3.2 More on number agreement

Number agreement in Tariana is expressed through agreement prefixes on verbs and possessed nouns. These prefixes mark agreement with subject of the transitive and intransitive stative subject (A/Sa), reflecting the traces of the Proto-Arawak split-S system in the language (Aikhenvald 1999). The same set of prefixes marks possessor on the possessed nouns (see Aikhenvald 2012: 168–9, for a pan-Amazonian perspective). Two gender distinctions -feminine and non-feminine – are expressed in third person singular. The markers are shown in Table II.4.

Table II.4. Personal agreement markers in Tariana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NON-FEMININE</td>
<td>FEMININE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1ST</td>
<td>nu-</td>
<td>wa-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ND</td>
<td>pi-</td>
<td>i-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3RD</td>
<td>di-</td>
<td>du-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same combination of genders and numbers are expressed in free personal pronouns. In addition, a special set of feminine plural pronominal forms contains the feminine classifier -ma – see Table II.5.

Table II.5. Personal pronouns in Tariana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MASCLINE</td>
<td>FEMININE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1ST</td>
<td>nuha</td>
<td>waha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ND</td>
<td>piha</td>
<td>iha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3RD</td>
<td>diha</td>
<td>duha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. The collective suffix -na is found in many Arawak languages, and can be reconstructed to the proto-language. The suffix -ne goes back to Proto-Arawak *-nai ‘plural marker; plural: belonging to a group’ (Aikhenvald 1999; Payne 1991). This function of -ne is shared by its cognates in related languages Baniwa and Piapoco where -nai is an exponent of associative plural (see below, §5). The suffix -pe is also of Proto-Arawak origin.

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Number agreement on the verb and on adjectives and other agreeing modifiers within a noun phrase is obligatory with humans and high animates (following the principle first identified by Smith-Stark 1974) – as shown in (16) and (17):

(16)  
\[
\text{tsinu ma:tsi-ite} \\
\text{dog bad/angry-CL:ANIM} \\
\text{'an angry dog'} \\
\]

(17)  
\[
\text{tsinu-pe ma:tsi-peni} \\
\text{dog-PL bad/angry-CL:ANIM:PL} \\
\text{'angry dogs'} \\
\]

Human collective referents (discussed under F in Section 3.1) require plural agreement:

(18)  
\[
\text{naha Ta} \text{\| iana na-nu-na thuya} \\
\text{they/specific.article:PL Tariana:COLL 3PL-COME-REM:PL VIS all/already} \\
\text{'The Tariana have come already'} \\
\]

As shown in (15), associative plurals also require plural agreement. Inanimate collective referents trigger singular agreement (19).

(19)  
\[
\text{haiku di-swa-ka di-dia} \\
\text{wood/trees 3SGNF-STAY-REC:PL VIS 3SGNF-RETURN} \\
\text{'Trees/wood was (staying there) again'} \\
\]

Nouns with inanimate referent marked for plural agreement can trigger plural agreement, if the referent displays a sizeable quantity:

(20)  
\[
\text{hanupe haiku-da-pe na-hwa-pidana na-ruku} \\
\text{many wood-CL:ROUND:PL 3PL-FALL-REM:PREP 3PL-GO.DOWN} \\
\text{'Very many fruit fell down'} \\
\]

The semantic effect of number agreement in this instance is reminiscent of the emphatic plural in Warekena, a related language (see Example (1)).

3.3  Multiple number marking

Number can be marked more than once within a grammatical word. We saw in Table II.5 that number is marked twice in the feminine plural forms of personal pronouns. Each of diminutive, augmentative, pejorative and nominal past clitics also require multiple number marking; each of them warrants a number marker of its own. Example (21) illustrates the plural form of the noun *pedalie* ‘old or grown up person’ accompanied with the pejorative clitic =yana ‘poor thing’. This clitic always attaches to the noun, and does not display any mobility within the clause; it bears a
secondary stress which is indicative of its clitic status (Aikhenvald 2003: 54–60). The plural marker -pe occurs twice: once on the noun itself, and once on the clitic:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{pedalie}=\text{yana} & \text{pedalie-}\text{pe-}\text{yana-}\text{pe} \\
\text{old.person}=\text{poor.thing} & \text{old.person-}\text{pl-}\text{poor.thing-pl} \\
\end{array}
\]

\( \text{‘poor old person’ (we are sorry for)} \) \( \text{‘poor old people’ (we are sorry for)} \)

The principles regulating the choice of singular or plural form of the multiple-number-marking clitics are the same as for number agreement (Section 3.2). Multiple number agreement is one of the features of languages with highly synthetic noun morphology (see the survey in Mattisen (2011)).

4. Interim summary: What is special about the Tariana number system?

We can now recapitulate significant features of the Tariana number system. The choice of terms within the number system, their formal markedness and formal marking, depend on a combination of animacy, humanness and semantic subgroups of nominals. The choice of number distinctions reflects principles of subcategorisation of nominals which only partly overlap with semantic principles for the assignment of pronominal genders (feminine versus non-feminine) and classifiers in multiple contexts.

To recapitulate:

i. Nouns with inanimate reference have a tripartite number system (collective, singular, plural) with collective unmarked and classifiers as exponents of singular number.

ii. Nouns with human collective referents have a tripartite number system (collective, singular, plural) with every term marked.

iii. Other nouns with animate reference have a two-way number system (singular and plural), with an option of emphatic plural marker expressing large quantity or number of referents.

iv. Kinship nouns have a plethora of plural markers whose choice is lexical.

v. Kinship nouns and personal names have a tripartite number system: singular, plural, and the associative plural marked with a suffix also used for plural of some kinship nouns and homonymous with the clitic ‘also’.

Number agreement provides a further basis for noun categorisation by animacy. Animate nouns require number agreement, and inanimate ones do not. Plural number agreement for inanimates indicates high quantity and is tantamount to emphatic number.
5. Tariana and its areal context

Tariana is the only extant North Arawak language in the linguistic area of the Vaupés river basin. The area is known for its institutionalised multilingualism based on the language group exogamy operating between speakers of Tariana and of languages belonging to the East Tucanoan subgroup (including Tucano, Piratapuya, Wanano and Desano). One is only allowed to marry someone who identifies with a different language group. (Language group identity is inherited through one’s father.)

There is a cultural inhibition against ‘language mixing’, that is, against any loan forms, especially from Tucano or any East Tucanoan languages. However, many patterns, including sounds, intonation, and constructions, are shared with East Tucanoan languages. Nowadays, Tucano is the major source of contact-induced change in Tariana. This is due to its rampant spread as the major language of the area (Aikhenvald 2002). Desano occupies a special position with respect to Tariana: the two groups do not intermarry (despite belonging to different language groups). They consider each other classificatory ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’. According to some reports, the Desano used to speak an Arawak language which they subsequently lost.

Data from closely related Arawak languages – Baniwa of Içana and Piapoco – spoken just outside the Vaupés area help us detect Arawak and non-Arawak features in Tariana.

East Tucanoan languages have multiple classifier systems. Classifiers are attested in combination with numerals, adjectives, demonstratives, possessive constructions, and on nouns themselves (see, for instance, Ramirez 1997a). Features (i)-(iv) of the number system in Tariana – in Section 4 – are shared with East Tucanoan languages, and bear their imprint.

A tripartite number system for nouns with inanimate reference – (i) in Section 4 – is absent from North Arawak languages related to Tariana. Table II.6 provides a comparison between number values for inanimates in Tucano – as a representative of the East Tucanoan languages with which Tariana is in most intensive contact – and in Tariana.

7. A comprehensive analysis of areal diffusion in the Vaupés River Basin linguistic area, and the impact of Tucanoan languages onto Tariana is in Aikhenvald (2002; Chapter 2 of 2012).

8. Multiple classifier systems are also found in Baniwa of Içana (Aikhenvald 2007) spoken in the Içana River Basin adjacent to the Vaupés River Basin, and can be considered a property of a larger Vaupés-Içana linguistic area.
Table II.6. Number values for inanimates in Tucano and in Tariana: an illustration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TUCANO</th>
<th>TARIANA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>banana in general</td>
<td>ohô</td>
<td>deri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>banana fruit</td>
<td>ohô-paro</td>
<td>ohô-paro-ri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL:LARGE</td>
<td>banana-</td>
<td>banana-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>banana palm</td>
<td>ohô-yôo</td>
<td>ohô-yôo-ri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL:PALM. LIKE</td>
<td>banana-</td>
<td>banana-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LIKE</td>
<td>LIKE-PL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The structural parallelism between Tariana and Tucano is rather striking. However, the forms themselves are different, in agreement with a general inhibition against borrowing grammatical and lexical forms.

A tripartite number system, with each term marked, and the singular formed on the plural, is shared by Tariana and by East Tucanoan languages. In Tariana, such number system is restricted to nouns with human reference which refer to groups of people (feature (ii) in Section 4, and Examples (10–12). The tripartite system in Tucano applies to all animates, and not just humans.

This is illustrated in (22), from Tucano (Ramirez 1997a: 207):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{piko-ro} & \quad \text{piko-ro-á} & \quad \text{piko-ro-á-wí} \\
\text{larva.type-coll} & \quad \text{larva.type-coll-pl} & \quad \text{larva.type-coll-pl-singl} \\
\text{‘larva (as a mass)’} & \quad \text{‘many individual larvae’} & \quad \text{‘individual larva worm’}
\end{align*}
\]

In Tariana nouns with animate reference have a two-way number system (singular and plural). Kinship nouns have a plethora of plural markers, depending on the kinship noun. These principles, (iii–iv), are shared with East Tucanoan languages. Subtraction and addition of vowel in plural formation (see C in Section 3.1) are not shared with East Tucanoan languages (these are archaic features inherited from Proto-Arawak).

As noted in (v) of Section 4, kinship nouns and personal names in Tariana have a further tripartite number system: singular, plural, and associative plural. The latter is shown with a suffix which marks plural for some kinship nouns and is homonymous with the clitic ‘also’.

Baniwa and Piapoco (North Arawak languages closely related to Tariana) use the plural marker -nai to express associative plural, e.g. Piapoco, Baniwa *Marina-nai* ‘Marina (an indigenous leader) and her team’ (see Note 5, on the origin of this suffix).

Associative plural construction in some East Tucanoan languages involves a morpheme meaning ‘also’. This is the case for Desano -sā (Miller 1999: 53–4). This morpheme marks associative plural with a proper name or a kinship term in (23):
In (24), it means ‘also’ (Miller 1999: 163):

(24) ɪ̱ɡ̱-sɑ̱ kɑ̱ṟi ọyə-bɪ̱
    3MASC.SG-also sleep lie-3MASC.SG.PRES.VIS

‘(Like the other animals mentioned) he also lies down to sleep’

Tucano has a morpheme kёra (Ramirez 1997a: 250) meaning ‘also’:

(25) Peduru  kёra baə siɹri-mi
    Pedro also eat want-3SGNF+PRES.VIS

‘Pedro, too, wants to eat’

In Tucano, kёra ‘with’ also marks plural of a selection of kinship terms, including ‘nephew’ (female ego’s sister’s son or male ego’s brother’s son): paάkаhаrа ‘nephew’, paάkаhаrа kёra ‘nephews’ (Ramirez 1997b: 313). Some (but not all) kin terms whose plural is expressed with kёra in Tucano also take the plural marked with -sini in Tariana. The term for ‘nephew’ (female ego’s sister’s son or male ego’s brother’s son) is one of these: Tariana paidua-rı ‘nephew’ (C in Section 6), paidua-rı-sini ‘nephews’.

The morpheme -sа in Desano marks plural of female relatives. The way in which Desano -sа is used to mark associative plural on kinship terms and personal names is very similar to the use of -sini as an exponent of associative plural in Tariana (15), and as a plural marker for some kinship terms. The exact terms which employ this marker differ in the two languages. The same segmental form =sini (but as a clitic) in Tariana means ‘also’. In Tucano, the same form is employed in the meaning ‘also’, and as an exponent of plural for the same kinship terms as those in Tariana which mark their plural with -sini.

The category of associative plural is shared with North Arawak languages, but the principles of expressing it, and polysemy of forms, bear an imprint of East Tucanoan influence.

6. Looking further afield

We have seen that number provides additional dimensions to noun categorisation in Tariana, and East Tucanoan languages, alongside multiple classifier and gender systems.

For inanimate referents, classifiers on nouns can be considered additional exponents of singular number: they transform nouns with a collective referent into a unit which can be pluralised. A similar principle has been described for two further
language families in north-west Amazonia, Witotoan and Guahibo. Both have multiple classifier systems.

In Witotoan languages, classifiers occur on nouns, numerals, adjectives, demonstratives, and predicates (Seifart 2004, 2007; Peterson de Piñeiro 2007). Classifiers in Guahibo languages occur on numerals, demonstratives, adjectives, on nouns themselves and in possessive constructions (see Queixalos 1999 on Sikuani; Kerr 1995 on Cuiba; and individual sketches in González de Pérez & Rodríguez de Montes 2000). Unlike Tucanoan and Arawak languages, Witotoan and Guahibo have a dual number.

A four-term number system has collective as a separate, and formally unmarked, term (26a) (Thiesen 1996: 29; Weber & Thiesen ms: 165–6; 146; also Seifart 2004, 2007; Peterson de Piñeiro 2007). Adding a classifier creates a singular noun (26b) which can then be made into a dual (26c) or a plural (26d). Examples are from Bora, a Witotoan language:

(26) a. mútsiítsi
   ‘pear apple in general’

   b. mútsiítsi-ba
   star.apple-cl:thick.long.round
   ‘pear apple fruit’

   c. mútsiítsi-ba-acu
   star.apple-cl:thick.long.round-du
   ‘two pear apple fruit’

   d. mútsiítsi-ba-ane
   star.apple-cl:thick.long.round-pl
   ‘many pear apple fruit’

A similar principle applies to animate nouns (however, they occur with a different set of number markers). Guahibo languages, further to the north-west, operate on a similar principle – see (27a–d), from Sikuani, a Guahibo language (Queixalós 1998: 52, 58, 64–5):

(27) a. emairi
   ‘yam in general’

   b. emairi-bü
   yam-cl:round
   ‘a yam’ (a tuber)

   c. emairi-bü-behe
   yam-cl:round-du
   ‘two yams’

9. The only exception is Resígaro, a North Arawak language closely related to Tariana, Baniwa of Ícana and Piapoco, which underwent areal impact from Bora (see Allin 1975; discussion in Aikhenvald 2001).
Nouns with human referents have the same kind of four-term system. The collective term is the one formally unmarked, as shown in the following Sikuani examples:

(28) a. deha
   ‘Piapoco Indians as a class’
   \[ \text{collective} \]

b. deha-wa
   Piapoco-cl:fem
   ‘a Piapoco Indian woman’
   \[ \text{singular} \]

c. deha-wa-behe
   Piapoco-cl:fem
   ‘two Piapoco women’
   \[ \text{dual} \]

d. deha-wa-nü
   Piapoco-cl:fem
   ‘many Piapoco women’
   \[ \text{plural} \]

Witotoan and Guahibo languages have only one kind of four way number system (collective, singular, dual, plural), with classifiers as exponents of singular. In addition, Witotoan languages have different number markers depending on the animacy of the referent.

That classifiers function as exponents of singular number (as opposed to collective and plural in Tariana and East Tucanoan languages, and to collective, dual and plural in Witotoan and Guahibo) is hardly surprising. In many languages of the world, classifiers have individuating functions (Aikhenvald 2000b: 318–20). However, in Tariana and in East Tucanoan this function interacts with referent’s animacy, and thus offers an additional dimension to the classification of nominals.

7. To sum up

In a number of languages with multiple classifiers number is an additional device for classification of referents. Such systems have been described for Tariana, and for neighbouring (but unrelated) East Tucanoan languages.

Tariana differs from East Tucanoan languages in that it has two kinds of tripartite number systems:

- for inanimates, with classifiers as exponents of singular and collective form unmarked;
- for humans, with collective form marked, and singulative following the collective marker.
Areal diffusion has resulted in creating additional complexity within Tariana. The tri-partite number system in Tariana bears a strong areal impact of East Tucanoan languages. However, the systems are not identical.

Associative plural operates on similar principles in East Tucanoan, Tariana and other Arawak languages (where it follows general typological tendencies). The meanings of the marker bear the impact of East Tucanoan languages onto Tariana.

Irregular and only partly predictable number marking in Tariana kinship nouns is mirrored by similar principles in East Tucanoan languages, and especially Tucano. In all likelihood, this shared irregularity has been enhanced by shared kinship system and pervasive intermarriage between these two groups.

To conclude: a number system can be considered a reference classification device, additional to genders and to classifiers. Just like genders and classifiers, it is susceptible to contact-induced change.

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Number and noun categorisation


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