The emergence of new grammatical categories in language death

Language death: Progress of decay

Chapter 10

1. THE PROBLEM

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2. MORPHOLOGICAL ENRICHMENT IN TANANRA

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The basic rule of language choice throughout the Vaupés area is that one should speak the interlocutor's own language. Descent is strictly patrilocal, and consequently, one identifies with one's father's language. According to the language 'etiquette' of the area, one is supposed to speak the language one identifies with — that is, one's father's language — to one's siblings, father and all his relatives, and mother's language to one's mother and her relatives. However, during past decades the traditional language transmission in the Brazilian Vaupés has been affected by a number of factors. When Salesian missionaries established in the area in the early 1920s, they imposed Western-style schooling on the Indians, forcing children into boarding schools where they were made to speak just one language of the area, Tucano. Salesians aimed at 'civilising' Indians. This implied not only making them into 'good Christians'. Salesians also used to consider traditional multilingualism of the area a 'pagan' habit, and strived to make Indians monolingual 'like other civilised people in the world'. The Tucano language was chosen because it was, numerically, the majority language. Salesian missionaries also practiced forceful relocation of Indian settlements closer to mission centres — where the Indians could be more easily controlled — and amalgamation of different settlements, eliminating the traditional longhouse system and introducing European-style nuclear family houses. Another reason for the disintegration of traditional multilingualism was a break-down of traditional father-child interaction: with the need for cash-flow, all the able-bodied men would go off to work for Brazilians — such as rubber, tree-sap ('sorva'), and gold-mining — and as the result children would have a considerably reduced degree of exposure to their father's language. This resulted in the spread of Tucano, and, to a lesser extent, of other East-Tucano languages, to the detriment of Tariana.

Tariana is an obsolescent language. It is not being learnt by children. The younger generation of Tariana speakers prefer to use Tucano when speaking among themselves or to their wives. They consistently use Tariana only when speaking to the members of their father's families. A number of phenomena discernible as due to language attrition can be pointed out (see the list in Aikhenvald 1996). These include obsolescence of grammatical categories not found in Tucano, e.g. morphological reflexive-reciprocal derivation, aspect markers, and spread of Tucano-like syntactic devices, e.g. discourse organisation, introductory and resumptive phrases, and clause chaining strategies (with the predicate of subordinate clause in participle form). Lexical obsolescence and loss differ from one speaker to another. Younger speakers have difficulties in remembering kinship terms, especially the suppletive and semi-suppletive vocative forms.

Morphological enrichment of the obsolescent Tariana spoken by younger generation goes along two lines. Creation of new morphemes by loan-translation from Tucano, now a dominant language, is discussed in section 2.2. In section 2.3 I discuss the process of 'grammatical accommodation'. The creation of new terms in an already existing system of evidentials is dealt with in section 2.4.

2.2 Loan translation from Tucano as a source of morphological enrichment

Similarly to other genetically related North Arawak languages of the area, Tariana has productive verb serialisation (Aikhenvald 1999b) and incipient verb compounding. In contrast, verb compounding is very productive in East-Tucano languages — where it yields aspect markers, valency changing markers and markers of Aktionsart — whereas verb serialisation is almost nonexistent. Verb compounds in Tariana and in East-Tucano languages show striking similarity in all respects but productivity.

Verb compounding in Tariana appears to be expanding, and to involve more and more verbs as the result of grammatical calquing (loan translations). Verb roots get spontaneously used as second components of verb compounds where they follow the fully inflected verb; they subsequently acquire Aktionsart meanings. The loss of prefixes follows the general tendency to lose non-Tucano categories from Tariana and to conform to a general suffixing tendency of the Tucano type.
2.4 Reanalysis and creation of a series of new evidentials

Tariana has a fully grammatical system of evidentials. (cf. discussion of Tuyuca by Barnes 1984 and Malone 1988); similar to Tucano, there are visual, nonvisual sensory, inferred and reported evidentials. The situation ‘The dog bit a man’ can be described in the following four ways depending on how the speaker learnt about this. (3) will be used if they saw this happen. If they just heard a noise, (4) would be used, while (5) would be appropriate if all they had seen was a man with a wound (inferring that he must have been bitten); (6) would be used if they got the information from somebody else. Omitting an evidential results in an ungrammatical sentence.

(3) t'iu niwu-a-ka di-na
dog 3sgn+f-bite-REC.P.VIS 3sgn-OBJ
‘The dog bit him (we have seen it).’

(4) t'iu niwu-mahka di-na
dog 3sgn+f-bite-REC.P.NON.VIS 3sgn-OBJ
‘The dog bit him (we have heard the noise).’

(5) t'iu niwu-sika di-na
dog 3sgn+f-bite-REC.P.INFR 3sgn-OBJ
‘The dog (apparently) bit him (he has a wound).’

(6) t'iu niwu-pidaka di-na
dog 3sgn+f-bite-REC.P.REPR 3sgn-OBJ
‘The dog bit him’ (someone has told me).’

Visual, nonvisual and reported evidentials distinguish present, recent past and remote past, while inferred does not have a present specification. This is perfectly understandable: an inference has to be made post factum, based on something that has occurred previously, and thus is not compatible with present. Tucano has the same restriction. Both in Tucano and in Tariana the inferred evidential is used when inference is based on the direct observation of the results and/or on a common sense assumption.

A new series of evidential markers is also being developed in Tariana as the result of reanalysis of an erstwhile combination of the anterior aspect marker -ni & visual evidentials.

The anterior aspect marker -ni described an action (a process or a state) which started before the time-frame of the narrative, or the speech act, and continues to be relevant, thus setting the scene for the narrative. In (7) — the beginning of a story about the origins of the night — -ni is used to set the scene. Previously, before the story started, there was no night; and as the result of this — within the time-frame of the story established by the remote past reported — people could not get any rest.

(7) ehekapi di-kepá-ri-se de:pi sede-pidana
day/world 3sgn-start-REL-LOC night NEG.EXIST-REM.P.REP
di-yá-ni ke: ri-mia-pidana aria
3sgn-stay-ANT moon/sun-ONLY-REM.P.REP EXIST
di-na-ni kayu-maka átja ka:-pidana
3sgn-stay-ANT thus-AFF man:PL like.that-REM.P.REP
nehpani nema-niki
3pl-work 3pl+stay-COMPL

‘In the beginning of the world there had been no night, there had been only moon/sun, and thus people stayed working just like that.’

Unlike other aspectual markers, when -ni does cooccur with recent past and remote past visual evidentials, it forms non-compositional combinations -ni:ka (from -ni-ka) and -ni:na or -ni:na (from -ni-na). These are used to confirm the action, process or state for which ‘visual’ evidence is available, as in (8), from a story about a man who went fishing and saw a huge catfish enter the weir. He has seen the fish, and reported this to his wife as (8).

(8) katu-ni:ka dihe-niki me:puku-se
piraiba-ANT+REC.P.VIS 3sgn-enter-COMPL weir-LOC
‘A catfish has indeed entered the weir.’
SUMMARY

The second interest in the situation is an interesting one. The two factors that are important in the situation are (a) the effect of the stimulus on the organism and (b) the effect of the organism on the situation. The second interest in the situation is an interesting one. The two factors that are important in the situation are (a) the effect of the stimulus on the organism and (b) the effect of the organism on the situation.
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(1999) demonstrated how speakers of Jingulu, an Australian language, appear to have developed focus-marking functions for erstwhile nominal case markers.

These facts provide new insights into the fate of morphological complexity in language attrition. Different processes are expected to operate depending on language attitudes — such as a cultural inhibition against lexical loans in the Vaupés area, areal diffusion, and the degree of language attrition itself.

REFERENCES


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MAINTENANCE LANGUAGE
AND ENDANGERMENT LANGUAGE