10 Languages of the Pacific Coast of South America
Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald

10.1. Linguistic diversity in South America

The degree of linguistic diversity in South America is comparable only to that in New Guinea (see Ch. 13, this volume). This genetic diversity is reflected in the sheer number of language families and isolates, many of which are now extinct or on the verge of extinction. In his classification, Loukotka (1968) established 117 languages families besides a large number of unclassified isolates, while Tovar and Tovar (1984) postulated over 170 groups.

Many of the linguistic families are discontinuous. For instance, Arawak languages are spoken in over ten areas north of the river Amazon, and over ten to the south. Even though there is no doubt as to the genetic relationship between Arawak languages, the geographic diversity, and the extensive and prolonged language contact with genetically unrelated groups, have by and large created a situation whereby languages became restructured to various extents, and their subgrouping within the family—using conventional

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historical-comparative methodology—is problematic (see Aikhenvald 2001). The impact of long-term areal diffusion often makes it next to impossible to unequivocally state whether languages are related or not. This makes any attempts at establishing long-distance genetic relationships especially dubious.¹

Since Columbus’s first explorations of Venezuela’s coast in 1498, the numbers of languages and of their speakers have been drastically reduced (see Adelaar 1991, 2004; Rodrigues 1986; Dixon and Aikhenvald 1999, and references therein). Many languages have disappeared without leaving more than a name, or perhaps a few place names. This is the case for Taino, the language of the first native American peoples encountered by Columbus (in 1492) in the Bahamas, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico, who became extinct within the first hundred years of invasion (Rouse 1992; Hill and Santos-Granero 2002; Payne 1991); its Arawak affiliation is based on a mere handful of lexical comparisons. Other Arawak languages suffered a similar fate. Just under twenty words were recorded from Caquetio, once spoken on two islands near the Venezuelan coast, extinct since the mid-sixteenth century (Loukotka 1968: 128; Oliver 1989: 54–5); just fifteen words are known from Shebayo, once spoken on the island of Trinidad. Our ideas concerning the genetic affiliation of these and many other languages are bound to remain mere hypotheses.

With its large number of discontinuous families and isolates, the linguistic map of indigenous South America resembles a patchwork quilt. The Amazon basin comprises over three hundred languages which include about fifteen well-established families as well as numerous isolates. (The six major linguistic families of the Amazon basin are Arawak, Tupí, Carib, Panoan, Tucanoan, and Macro-Jê; smaller families include Makú, Guahibo, Yanomami, Bora-Witoto, Harakmbet, Arawá, Tacana, and Chapacura. Macro-groupings or “stocks” suggested by Greenberg 1987, Kaufman 1994, and others are almost without exception illusory and otiose.)

The degree of genetic diversity on the continent is, however, not even. The linguistic map of the coastal areas of the Pacific, on the one hand, and the Atlantic, on the other, look impoverished. No indigenous languages survived on the east coast of Brazil (hence the term “linguistic wilderness” coined by

¹ The so-called “Arawakan” phylum is a prime example of a dubious grouping of demonstrably unrelated languages which includes Arawak proper (also known as Maipuran), Arawá, Chapacura, Harakmbet, and a few more (see Aikhenvald 1999; Payne 1991). We urge scholars who wish to adhere to proper comparative procedures in South American linguistics to employ the term Arawak to refer to a well-established genetic family.
Rodrigues 1986), as a result of the rapid European invasion and mass extinction of indigenous population. The relatively poor degree of linguistic diversity of the west coast compared to the neighbouring area of Amazonia—including the eastern slopes of the Andes—is due to a combination of factors. Apart from the effects of the European invasion—which resulted in language extinction and continuous language endangerment—the arid coastal area was not conducive to any large-scale migrations of population. That is, even prior to the invasion, the degree of genetic diversity in the Pacific coastal area appears to have been lower than that on the eastern slopes of the Andes. In § 10.2, I discuss the known languages in the Pacific coast area of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, their documentation and endangerment (languages spoken further south are discussed in Ch. 11, this volume).

The typological diversity of South American languages is also noteworthy. Unusual, often unique, features include the obligatory expression of information source known as evidentiality, a variety of classifier types, and fascinating patterns of marking grammatical relations. How the extant languages of the Pacific coast compare with the two broad linguistic types recognized for South America—Lowland Amazonian and Andine—is addressed in § 10.3. The last section, § 10.4, contains a brief summary.

10.2. Languages of the Pacific Coast of South America: Past and Present

The two major language families extending from inland areas to the Pacific coast of Colombia and Ecuador are Choco and Barbacoan (see Figure 10.1).2

10.2.1. Choco Family

Languages of the Choco family are spoken by over 60,000 people in the northern parts of the Department of Choco, Colombia, on the tributaries of the Atrato river and the rivers flowing directly into the Pacific ocean, and along the Pacific coast from the Darien jungle in Panama to the southern Department of Nariño. Recently, the Choco-speaking peoples have expanded

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2 The Kuna people speak a Chibchan language known as Kuna, Cuna, or Tule (see Aguirre Licht 1993: 311; Mejía Fonnera 2000a: 56). The majority of the Kuna (about 43,000 people) live in Panama. About 700 live in Colombia, in the area of the Gulf of Uraba on the Atlantic Coast. In the Colombian linguistic tradition, the Cuna-Tule language is geographically grouped together with the languages of the Pacific coast (see Mejía Fonnera 2000a; Llerena Villalobos 2000).
eastwards, into the departments of Antioquia, Córdoba, and Risaralda in Colombia.

The family consists of Waunana on the one hand and the Embera dialect continuum with five distinct dialect areas, on the other (also see Adelaar 2004: 56–61). The latter fall into two subgroups. Southern Embera dialects include Chamí or Embera (in Alto San Juan), the epera, or Saija (on Costa Sur Buenaventura), and the epera or Baudó (in Bajo Baudó). Northern Embera dialects are Embera-Katío (north of Antioquia and Córdoba) and the Embera Proper (in Atrato, Alto Baudó, and in Panamá) (Pardo Rojas and Aguirre 1993; Aguirre, p.c.). The Southern Embera varieties can be viewed

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3 Also known as Waunán, Wounaan (autodenomination: literally, “people”), Waunné, or Waun Meu “people’s language” (Mortensen 1999) and Noanamá (term employed by other groups) (Mejía Fonnera 2000b: 85).

as a continuum of dialects spoken on San Jorge, Verde, and Sucio rivers (Harms 1994). Most Waunana live in Colombia, with a few settlements extending into the Pacific coast of Panama. The current estimate for the Waunana in Colombia is of about 4,000 people. The Embera languages and Waunana are not mutually intelligible (according to Mejía Fonnegra 2000b: 85, they share about 50 per cent cognates); while most Embera varieties are (Pardo Rojas 1997: 337). The present consensus is that Choco languages form an independent family which cannot be demonstrated to be related to any other family (see Costenla-Umaña and Margery-Peña 1991: 139–40; Aguirre Licht 1999a). Various attempts at grouping Choco languages with Chibchan or Chibchan-Paezan (Greenberg 1987: 106–22; Ruhlen 1987; repeated in Migliazza and Campbell 1988: 183) and Carib (Loewen 1963a: 244) have not been substantiated.

The first attempts at documenting the Choco languages go back to the diary of Father Joseph Palacios de la Vega, the head of the mission at San Cipriano on the San Jorge river around 1787. A brief analysis of this and other sources and a detailed bibliography were published by Loewen (1963a), who also completed a grammar of the Sambú dialect of Embera (1958). The Embera languages are now quite well documented. Recently, three grammars of Embera languages have been produced: Harms (1994) of Embera Saija; Mortensen (1999) of two Northern Embera varieties; and Aguirre Licht (1998, 1999a) of Embera Chamí. The bulk of recent research has been undertaken under the auspices of Centro Colombiano de Estudios de Lenguas Aborígenes (Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá). A useful overview of the sociolinguistic situation of the Choco languages is in Pardo Rojas (1997) and Mejía Fonnegra (2000a, 2000b). A major study of the phonology of Embera languages is in Llerena Villalobos (1995a) which contains both synchronic and comparative descriptions.

Apart from a short description by Loewen (1954), there is no comprehensive grammar of Waunana (see Mejia Fonnegra 1995, 2000b). Materials include papers by Binder (1977), and Binder and Binder (1974), based on varieties spoken in Panama, and work by Mejia Fonnegra, based on Colombian varieties. The most up-to-date summary of Waunana grammar is Mejia Fonnegra (2000b), which also contains a history of studies of the language.

5 Landaburu (1999: vol. iv) presents a variety of 19th- and early 20th-century sources on Embera languages (including a large anonymous grammar of Katío).
Choco languages are not in danger of immediate disappearance. All the languages are still being learnt by children. According to Pardo Rojas (1997), most Choco-speaking peoples maintain their traditional lifestyle and their languages. However, the lexical knowledge of people under 70 appears somewhat impoverished, with a large number of Spanish loans; younger people tend to simplify the case and number marking systems. Among the Waunana, the only monolinguals are children under 7 and elderly women. It appears that, with the expansion of Spanish-based schools, this is rapidly changing (Mejía Fonnegra 2000b: 85). With increasing bilingualism in Spanish, the language is under threat. It is, however, a positive sign that cultural and language workshops continue to be organized by linguists and anthropologists (under the auspices of Universidad de Los Andes: see, for instance, Mejía Fonnegra’s 1995 discussion of a successful language and culture workshop conducted among the Waunana).

10.2.2. Barbacoan Family

The Barbacoan languages are spoken, by and large, in the Pacific region of Ecuador and the adjacent area of southern Colombia (mostly the Municipio of Ricaurte). Guambiano and Totoró are spoken in the Andes in the department of Cauca, Colombia. The family consists of five languages divided into two major groups (Curnow and Liddicoat 1998; Curnow 1998; see Adelaar 2004: 392–4 for a broader approach): North Barbacoan consisting of Guambiano and Totoró, on the one hand, and Awa Pit (Cuaquiuer), on the other hand; and South Barbacoan formed by Cha’palaachi (Chachi, Cayapa) and Tsafiki (or Colorado). See Figure 10.1. The earliest classification of Barbacoan languages is by Brinton (1891: 194–9); for an updated history of classification and language studies see Curnow (2002b, 1998).6

Cha’palaachi is spoken by about 3,000–5,000 people (Stark 1985: 162) in Esmeraldas province, in the north-west area of Ecuador. Most are monolingual (with only 20 per cent of the population bilingual in Spanish: Stark 1985: 162). Tsafiki is spoken by about 1,000–1,800 people (Grimes 2000; Stark 1985: 160) in the western lowlands of Ecuador. In the 1970s, about 50 per cent of the Tsafiki (who call themselves the Tsachi people) were bilingual in Spanish. A partial grammar of Tsafiki is in Dickinson (2002). At

6 The lists of Barbacoan languages given by Campbell (1997: 174) and Migliazza and Campbell (1988: 182) are incomplete: Guambiano-Totoró and Cha’palaachi have been omitted.
present, Tsafi ki and Cha’palaachi appear to be relatively healthy. However, in view of their small numbers and the current political situation in Ecuador, they are threatened.

Estimates for Guambiano vary from 8,000–9,000 (Adelaar 1991: 66) to 18,000 (Huber and Reed 1992: p. xiv), while Totoró is spoken by just a few people (Pabon Triana 1995b) and is now close to extinction. While Guambiano appears to be relatively healthy, Totoró is endangered. Pabón Triana (1995b) reports a high degree of bilingualism, negative attitudes towards the language, and a high degree of language loss. Efforts are being directed towards cultural and linguistic revival of Totoró. The estimated number of Awa Pit (Cuaiquer) in Colombia is around 20,000, and in Ecuador 1,000 (Tim Curnow, p.c.). Grammatical descriptions are available for Awa Pit (Calvache Dueñas 1989; Obando Ordóñez 1992; Curnow 1997, the latter based on work with obsolescent speakers in Colombia). Awa Pit is endangered, with the majority of people monolingual in Spanish and no evidence in favour of any monolingualism in Awa Pit (Curnow 1997: 18–20; also see Mejía Fonnegra 2000a: 57 on the high degree of acculturation among the Awa Pit in Colombia).

Attempts to group Barbacoan languages with either Chibcha or Paez have proved unsatisfactory (see discussion in Curnow 1997, 1998; Landaburu 1993; Curnow and Liddicoat 1998, pace Campbell 1997: 173).

### 10.2.3. Extinct Languages

Little is known about most of the extinct languages in the coastal area. The most important language on the Pacific coast before the Inca conquest was Mochica, or Yunga, spoken along the north-east coast of contemporary Peru. On the basis of toponyms, some scholars believe that Mochica extended southwards as far as northern Chile and Argentina (see discussion by Stark 1972: 119). Quingnam (also known as Chimú, or Yunga) was spoken around the present-day city of Trujillo, and possibly as far south as Lima. Hardly anything is known about this language, apart from a few place-names.

Quingnam-Chimú was the major language of the Chimú culture, a major pre-Incan civilization (known for its distinctive pottery) (also see

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7 According to Rivet (1941: 3), the number of the Guambiano in the 1930s was 5,623, while Totoró was spoken by about 1,200 people. According to him, the two were mutually intelligible with each other and with a third dialect, Polindara (then spoken by 695 people).

8 The name Yunka or Yunga is of Quechua origin; in Quechua, yunka means “jungle” (Harrington 1945: 24).
Harrington 1945). The Chimú capital Chan Chan was located in the Moche valley near the modern city of Trujillo, about 500 km north of Lima (hence the confusion of Quingnam-Chimú and Mochica). The Chimú empire state is believed to have begun to take shape in the first half of the fourteenth century. The major expansion of the state occurred under Ñancen Pinco (whose reign began in 1370). The Chimú were conquered by the Incas in 1465–70. They passed their social stratification, as well as technological achievements such as irrigation and road engineering, on to the Incas. The Mochica language was originally spoken in Eten and Monsefú near Chiclayo, up until the 1940s (when Huber collected a word list published in 1953). A few speakers of the Eten variety survived until the 1960s (Stark 1972; also mentioned by Loukotka 1968: 261). Two traditional grammars of this language are Carrera (1644), and Middendorf (1892), who complements Carrera. Both grammars describe the variety of Eten. Also see discussion in Adelaar (2004: 319–50).

Other extinct languages on the Pacific coast of north-eastern Ecuador include Sechura and Tallan or Atalán (with dialects Colán and Catacaos). According to Tovar and Tovar (1984: 170), at least the dialect of Atalán was spoken until the end of the nineteenth century. The materials for these languages are limited to short word lists, insufficient for postulating any linguistic relationships, other than striking similarities between Sechura and Atalán. Schmidt (1926: 214) attempted to put together Mochica-Yunga and what he called Tallan (subsuming Sechura, Colán, and Catacaos). This relationship remains purely conjectural (just like Mason’s 1950: 195–6 hypothetical Yunga-Puruhã family consisting of Yunga, Puruhã-Cañari, and Atalán). The question of the wider genetic relationships of Yunga remains open. Various scholars have tried to link it with Chibcha, and with Barbacoan, without, however, much success. Stark (1972) detected typological similarities between Yunga, Maya, and Uru-Chipaya. The few lexical and morphological look-alikes she listed are mainly monosyllabic and are likely to be coincidental.

There may have been more extinct languages in the Pacific coastal area. A short vocabulary of Yurumangui, once spoken on Yurumangui River in the

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9 Carrera was born in the area of Trujillo and may have been a native speaker of the language (Stark 1972).
10 According to Loukotka (1968: 261–2), the Chimú family consisted of two subgroups: Southern (including Chimú, Eten, and Mochica) and Northern (including Puruhã, Cañari, Huancavilca, of which only four words are known, and Manabita or Manta, with only a few patronyms surviving).
11 The alternative term Yurimangui was erroneously used by Loukotka 1968, and then repeated by Kaufman (1994).
Department of Valle de Cauca, was collected by Father Christoval Romero in 1768 (see Ortiz 1946, on other sources for this language). On the basis of it, Rivet (1942) attempted to establish a genetic relationship between Yurumangui and the putative Hokan group. However, the materials are too scanty for any positive statement. Loukotka (1968: 259–60) groups together Yurumangui with a number of languages in the same area (Timba, Lili, Yolo, Jamundi, and Puscajaje), on which there is no information at all. Extinct languages on the Ecuadorian coast include Esmeralda, with some materials put together by Seler (1902), and Caraque, on which we know nothing (see Loukotka 1968: 133–4; Tovar and Tovar 1984: 185; Adelaar 2004).

10.2.4. Quechua and Aymara

The Andean area is dominated by Quechua and Aymara. Quechua, with over seven million speakers, is spoken in the Andean highlands of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia (Hornberger and King 2001; Grimes 2000; Adelaar 1991; Cerrón-Palomino 1987); while Aymara, with over two million speakers, is spoken around Lake Titicaca and from Lake Titicaca towards the Pacific (Grimes 2000). The question of whether Quechua and Aymara are related or not remains open (see Campbell 1995; Adelaar 2004: 168–315). The Quechua dialects spoken on the Pacific coast included varieties known as Quechua IIb, extinct since the seventeenth century (Adelaar 1992, 2004). Quechua dialects I come close to the Pacific coast in the areas of Cajambo and Yauyos (Willem Adelaar, p.c.). Quechua is a well-documented language (see Adelaar 1991, 1992, 2004; Campbell 1997; Cerrón-Palomino 1987, for an overview of Quechua studies which go back over 400 years). It was legally recognized as an official language of Peru under Velasco Alvarado’s presidency in the 1970s. In its turn, Ecuador “saw the rise of a powerful national political organization in the early 1980s” (Hornberger and King 2001: 190, and further discussion in Hornberger 2000). There is nevertheless little doubt that with the encroaching dominance of Spanish, and the gradual spread of bilingualism, the language is under threat. As Hornberger and King (2001: 167) put it, “the Quechua language and Quechua speakers generally remain powerless and marginalised within their national contexts. Quechua continues to be strongly linked with the rural, uneducated and poor, while Spanish remains the primary language of national and international communication, literacy and education, and professional and academic success.” King’s (1999) investigation of the status of Quechua in the Ecuadorian Andes revealed patterns of
slow but steady decline of Quechua: even remote and isolated Quechua-speaking communities in highland Saraguro, Ecuador, can no longer be considered bilingual. Quechua is still used at certain traditional community events and as a means of communication between elders, but “Spanish has made in-roads into seemingly every speech situation” (King 1999: 25). The hope for the future of the language—so far uncertain, given the extent of cultural, sociolinguistic, and geographic differentiation of Quechua varieties—lies perhaps in the establishment of regional international institutions, like the Andean Program in Bilingual Intercultural Education (Programa de Formación en Educación Bilingüe para los Países Andinos, PROEIB-Andes), a Master’s programme sponsored by a five-nation consortium with coordination between Ministries of Education, universities, and indigenous organizations spanning Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, established at the University of San Simón, Cochabamba, Bolivia (Hornberger and King 2001: 188–9). The maintenance of Quechua is being enhanced by its growing role in the media (Luykx 2001).

10.3. Typological Features of the Languages of the Pacific Coast

10.3.1. Amazonian versus Andine Linguistic Types

Two broad linguistic types have been recognized in South America: Amazonian and Andine. Amazonia can be recognized as a linguistic area in terms of a number of features which are shared by all (or most) languages in the area.12 A comparison between the typological characteristics of the Amazonian linguistic area in Lowland South America with those of the Andean linguistic area in the adjacent mountains, which comprises the Quechua and Aymara families, shows that these Andean languages are clearly different. A few representative features of Lowland Amazonian languages are summarized in the first column of Table 10.1, with Andine features in the second column. Other features, exceptions to pan-Amazonian tendencies, and regional areal characteristics are discussed in Dixon and Aikhenvald (1999). There is no sharp boundary between the Andean and Amazonian linguistic areas—they tend to flow into each other. (For instance, Andean features such as lack of prefixes and an accusative technique for marking

12 Whether Quechua and Aymara belong to the same linguistic type as other languages spoken outside the Amazonian Lowlands (such as Mapuche, Leko, Cholón and Uru-Chipaya) is an open question.
Table 10.1. Lowland Amazonian and Andean languages: a comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lowland Amazonian</th>
<th>Andean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(a)</em> The majority of languages are polysynthetic and head marking agglutinating</td>
<td>Andean languages are synthetic, and combine head and dependent marking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with little fusion.</td>
<td>basically agglutinating with some fusion (subject, object, and tense</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suffixes to the verb may be fused).</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(b)</em> Typically one liquid phoneme, which is frequently a flap; usually more</td>
<td>Two or three liquids; fricatives rather than affricates; and a three-vowel</td>
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<tr>
<td>affricates than fricatives. The high unrounded central vowel i is frequent. A</td>
<td>system i, a, and u, with no contrastive nasalization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>typical Amazonian vowel system has five members: i, e, a, i, u/o. There is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>typically contrastive nasalization of vowels.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(c)</em> Many languages have extensive classifier and/or gender systems. Gender</td>
<td>No genders or classifiers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assignment is often semantically transparent, and is not overtly marked on the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>head noun.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(d)</em> There are few oblique cases (often a locative and an instrumental/comitative),</td>
<td>Extensive set of core and oblique case markers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>but hardly any core cases.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(e)</em> Just one core argument is typically cross-referenced on the verb. There</td>
<td>Two core arguments are marked on the verb.</td>
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<tr>
<td>may be different bound pronominal paradigms depending on which core argument is</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>being cross-referenced in each particular instance.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(f)</em> The rules for which core argument is cross-referenced can be complex</td>
<td>Fully nominative/accusative systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(relating to the meaning of the verb, clause type, etc.) often giving rise to a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“split-ergative” system. Fully accusative systems of marking for predicate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arguments are rarely encountered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(g)</em> Most (although not all) languages have prefixes; there are typically fewer</td>
<td>No prefixes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prefix than suffix positions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(h)</em> There is generally only a small class of lexical numbers.</td>
<td>Full set of lexical numbers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10.3.2. Pacific Coast Languages

A brief look at the language families of the Pacific coast shows that, typologically, they differ from both Amazonian and Andean profiles. Most languages have rich consonantal and vocalic systems, and no tones; a few have contrastive vowel nasalization. Mochica was mostly dependent marking with a high degree of synthesis. Choco and Barbacoan languages are synthetic with head and dependent-marking properties. All are agglutinating.

10.3.2.1. Phonology

The phonology of Choco languages is very complex: there is typically a series of three stops (voiceless aspirated, voiceless unaspirated, and voiced lax, as in Waunana and Saija), or voiceless plain (with elements of aspiration), voiced tense, and voiced implosive, as in the northern dialects of Embera), besides two affricates, and two vibrants (a trill and an alveolar sonorant). Embera languages have six vowels (i, e, W, a, u, o); Waunana also has an open back vowel γ. Every vowel has a nasal counterpart (some authors consider nasalization a prosodic feature of the word or of a larger unit: Aguirre Licht 1999a: 20; Adelaar 2004: 56–61). Stress is not distinctive.

Barbacoan languages typically have five or four vowels (cf. Moore 1962 and papers in Elson 1962; and Curnow and Liddicoat 1998). Awa Pit is unusual in distinguishing voiced and voiceless vowels, while Cha’palaachi appears to have phonemic vowel length and Tsafiki has phonemic nasal vowels. The consonantal system contains voiced and voiceless stops, up to four fricatives (φ, s, h, f), and one affricate, ts (see Curnow and Liddicoat 1998: 401, for a summary of reconstructed phonemes).

Mochica had complicated phonology, with a six-vowel system reminiscent of the “Amazonian” type (i, u, e, o, a, and central i or a) with phonemic long vowels, a series of seven fricatives (labial, dental, alveopalatal, palatal, and velar, and two lateral), three affricates (dental, alveopalatal, and palatal), distinctive dental and alveopalatal nasals, laterals and vibrants, and a velar nasal (Stark 1972: 120; a somewhat different analysis of Carrera and Middendorf is given by Tovar and Tovar 1984: 168–9; also see Adelaar 2004: 321–8). It appears that the language had contrastive stress.
10.3.2.2. Morphological Profile

Choco languages are exclusively suffixing, similar to Andean languages, while some Barbacoan languages have suffixes and prefixes (as apparently did Yurumanguí: Rivet 1942). Mochica was suffixing, with a few proclitics sometimes analysed as prefixes (e.g. Harrington 1945).

Unlike Quechua, all Choco languages are morphologically ergative, with nominative-accusative features in cross-referencing. The ergative case (Northern Embera -pa, Chamí -ba, Waunana -au/ua) marks the subject of a transitive verb (A), and also instrument (in all languages), reason, and cause in Northern Embera, Epena Pedee, and Chamí (Mortensen 1999: 47–9; Aguirre Licht 1999a: 88–90; Harms 1994: 65), and ablative in Northern Embera. The emphatic ergative case marker cannot occur together with the ergative case on nouns. In contrast, it can be added to the ergative marker on personal pronouns. Absolutive case marking is fourfold, depending on the status of the noun referent in discourse. If the noun referent is non-activated, there is zero marking. Special suffixes mark an S/O participant which is non-focal, in introductory focus, or as given information. There is no participant cross-referencing on the verb except for plural marking, which indicates the number of S/A. Unlike Embera languages, Waunana has subject cross-referencing on the verb (on a nominative-accusative principle: Mejía Fonnegra 2000b: 91), with different sets for present and non-present tenses. Singular masculine suffixes distinguish first person versus non-first person forms, while feminine and plural do not distinguish person. This unusual first/non-first person marking in Waunana is reminiscent of some Tucanoan languages in Amazonia (see Aikhenvald 2002).

Other nominal cases include dative, allative, locative, benefactive, prolative, and associative. Chami, Epena Pedee, and Waunana (Mejía Fonnegra 2000b: 89–90; Aguirre Licht 1999a: 91) have a special ablative marker (formally distinct from ergative). In Chami, this can occur together with locative in one word (also see Harms 1994: 76). Waunana has just dative/allative, associative, ablative, locative, and genitive/partitive. In Northern Embera (Mortensen 1999: 51), the locative in combination with a personal pronoun marks possession (e.g. ači-de “they-LOC” “theirs, their own”), and the resulting combination may take markers of syntactic function, a pattern similar to that discussed by Dixon (2002: 147–52) for Australian languages, but hitherto unattested in South America.

Barbacoan languages are predominantly suffixing (a few prefixes are found in Cha’palaachi and Tsafiki). All are nominative-accusative. In Awa Pit, Cha’palaachi, and Tsafiki the accusative and the locative are marked
with the same morpheme (which is reminiscent of the polysemy found for Quechua -\textit{ta} “accusative; locative/goal”: Adelaar 1992).

Nominative-accusative marking is also shared by Mochica, which had pronominal cross-referencing on the verb, on a nominative-accusative basis (with suffixes cross-referencing subject). It also had a genitive and an instrumental case, alongside a rich variety of verbal derivations including a causative and several passives.

10.3.2.3. Evidentiality Systems

Evidentiality systems with four terms in some Barbacoan languages and in Northern Embera are richer than three-term systems in Quechua, and are reminiscent of multiple evidentials in Amazonia (see Aikhenvald and Dixon 1998). Consider the four-way evidentiality distinction in Tsafi ki (Dickinson 2000: 407–9). If an event was “directly” witnessed, the verb is morphologically unmarked, as in (1). Evidentials are in bold.

(1) Manuel ano fi-\textit{e}
Manuel food eat-\text{\textsc{visual}}+\text{\textsc{declarative}}

“Manuel ate” (the speaker saw him)

If information was obtained by inference from direct physical evidence, (2) would be used.

(2) Manuel ano fi-\textit{nu-e}
Manuel food eat-\text{\textsc{inferred-declarative}}

“Manuel ate” (the speaker sees the dirty dishes)

A nominalization followed by the verb class marker is employed if the inference is made on the basis of general knowledge and assumption.

(3) Manuel ano fi-\textit{n-ki-e}
Manuel food eat-\text{\textsc{n-verb.class:do-declarative}}^{13}

“Manuel ate” (he always eats at eight o’clock and it’s now nine o’clock)

The reported evidential—marked with the suffix -\textit{ti}—indicates that the information was obtained from someone else. In (4), the reported speech specifies the source of information the “reporter” had: the report was based on inference from physical evidence. Typologically this is highly unusual (Aikhenvald 2004).

\textsuperscript{13} ACC - accusative; FEM - feminine; INTER - interrogative; MASC - masculine; NEG - negation; NOM - nominalizer; PL - plural.
“He said/they say Manuel has eaten (they didn’t see him, but they have direct physical evidence, e.g. dirty dishes)”

The reported evidential can be repeated several times, to indicate up to three sources “between the speaker and the original event”, another unusual feature of Tsafiki. There are two repetitions in:

(5) tsachi-=la jo-la-jo-ti-e ti-e
    person-PL be-PL-verb.class.be-reported- say-declarative declarative

“They say he said they were people”

Guambiano (Vásquez de Ruíz 1992; Triviño Garzon 1992, 1994) also appears to have grammatical evidentials; this, however, requires further study. Among Choco languages, Northern Embera varieties distinguish visual, conjectural, quotative, and reported evidentials (Mortensen 1999: 86–7), while Saija (Epena Pedee) appears to have just a reported evidential (Harms 1994: 117, 177).

10.3.2.4. Noun Categorization Devices and Person Marking

Most Choco languages have no genders or classifiers. Aguirre Licht (1999a: 74) points out the existence of animate and inanimate forms of the existential verb in Embera-Chamí; nouns can take suffixes with such meanings as “liquid”, “flat surface”, “internal organs” (pp. 75–6), which are reminiscent of noun classifiers. Of the Barbacoan languages, Tsafiki has classifiers used with adjectives (Dickinson, p.c.; Curnow and Liddicoat 1998: 387), while Cha’palaachi has numeral classifiers. Mochica had several numeral classifiers (including one for humans and animals, one for fruit and vegetables, and one for other inanimate objects). These features are only somewhat reminiscent of Amazonian languages. Just like most Amazonian languages, Choco and Barbacoan have only a small class of lexical numbers (up to four or five). In contrast, Mochica has a full set of numbers in a decimal system (Harrington 1945: 29).

A cross-linguistically rare salient feature of Barbacoan languages is the conjunct-disjunct person marking system (found in a few Tibeto-Burman languages).14 In these languages statements which contain a first person

14 This is also known as locutor/non-locutor person-marking system.
participant are marked differently from those which do not. In questions
the second person is marked in the same way as the first person in state-
ments. Consider the following examples from Tsafiki, a Barbacoan language
spoken by the Tsachi (Dickinson 2000) which has two construction types.
One, shown in (6), appears with first person in statements and indicates
“conjunct” marking. A summary of Barbacoan person marking is found in
Curnow (2002b).

(6) tse Tsachi jo-\textit{yo-e}
1.FEM Tsachi be-\textit{CONJUNCT-DECLARATIVE}
“I am a Tsachi”

The other one occurs in all other contexts and indicates “disjunct” marking:

(7) ya/nu Tsachi jo-\emptyset-e
3rd/2nd Tsachi be-\textit{DISJUNCT-DECLARATIVE}
“He/you are a Tsachi”

In questions, the conjunct marking indicates second person:

(8) nu seke tera ki-\textit{yo-n?}
you good dance do-\textit{CONJUNCT-INTER}
“Did you dance well?”

Disjunct and conjunct forms contrast in meaning if used with a “wrong”
person. When disjunct forms are used with first person in statements, they
may indicate that the speaker did something unintentionally, without being
in control. In (9), the pig was killed intentionally, and the speaker uses con-
junct marking.

(9) la kuchi=ka tote-\textit{yo-e}
1MASC pig=ACC kill-\textit{CONJUNCT-DECLARATIVE}
“I killed the pig” (intentionally)

In (10), disjunct marking is used: the speaker did not mean to kill the pig.

(10) la kuchi=ka tote-\textit{i-e}
1MASC pig=ACC kill-\textit{DISJUNCT-DECLARATIVE}
“I killed the pig” (unintentionally)

Disjunct forms with first person may indicate a speaker’s surprise, that is,
they have mirative overtones: (11) is a simple statement of a fact; as expected,
conjunct marking is used (Dickinson 2000: 388).
If the speaker suddenly discovers to his surprise he has some money which he did not think he had, the disjunct marker would be used:

(12) kala ta-i-e
    money have-disjunct-declarative
    “I have money!” (what a surprise!)

Conjunct markers can in turn be used with third person subject. This implies that the speaker is a knowing participant. Such constructions are used to refer to something the speaker knows first hand: in (13) the conjunct marker indicates that the speaker is a knowledgeable member of the group (despite the fact that the sentence contains a third person subject):

(13) amana tsachi=la fi-tu-min=la jo-yo-e
    now Tsachi=pl eat-NEG-NOM=pl be-conjunct-declarative
    “Nowadays, we, the Tsachi, do not eat snakes” (lit. the Tsachi do not eat snakes)

Person marking in this and other conjunct/disjunct systems code the degree of congruence of the information with the speaker’s general knowledge, and thus is indirectly connected with the way of obtaining information. The conjunct marking—especially when used with the third person—has an overtone of information integrated into the person’s knowledge. The disjunct marking when used with the first person produces the effect of unintentional action, surprise, or irony. That is, in a conjunct-disjunct system, the choice of person marking acquires an additional connotation related to information source.

In summary, even a brief comparison with typical features of Amazonian and Andean languages shows that, in spite of a seemingly low degree of genetic diversity, the languages of the Pacific coast are typologically very diverse. There is hardly any recognizable “Pacific coast of South America” language type. Rather, each language family and individual languages of the Pacific coast exhibit unusual characteristics. This underlines the desirability of their maintenance and urgent documentation.
10.4. Summary

There is no doubt that most indigenous languages of the Pacific coast are either endangered, like Awa Pit, or threatened. In spite of high numbers of speakers, even Quechua is a threatened language, quickly moving towards becoming endangered. Among the numerous factors which have contributed to this imminent language loss are the lack of juridical and political statuses for the vernacular languages (Triana y Antorveza 1997: 118–19), and the expansion of Spanish via socioeconomic pressures and the official education system. The current situation in Colombia appears to be now changing due to the activities of local Colombian linguists, and especially of the CCELA (Centro Colombiano de Estudios de Lenguas Aborigenes, created in 1988 at the University of Los Andes), strengthened by its international collaboration with CNRS in France (Pineda Camacho 1997: 166–70). An important change in attitude towards the indigenous population was reflected in the 1991 Constitution which now acknowledges and protects “the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian nation” (Art. 7), in contrast to the previous constitution (Pineda Camacho 1997: 158–9; 170–1). This will no doubt enhance the preservation of the remaining linguistic diversity and the unusual languages of the Pacific side of South America. There is now hope for language maintenance and revitalization.

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La costa pacífica de Sudamérica


En resumen, la costa pacífica de Sudamérica ha sido objeto de diversos estudios lingüísticos que han sido realizados para comprender mejor las lenguas aborígenes de Colombia, sus características y su uso. Estos estudios han sido realizados por diversos investigadores y han permitido un mejor entendimiento de estas lenguas, lo que es de gran importancia para preservar y promover su uso y preservación.


