

Inheritance and contact in the Arawakan classifier system(s)

South America is home to 27% of the world's language families, yet areal features shared between these languages make it an exciting region for understanding how diversity develops (Aikhenvald, 2012; Van Gijn et al., 2022). In the Amazonian Basin, classifiers are an areal feature, ranging from prototypical numeral classifiers (Derbyshire & Payne, 1990; Krasnoukhova, 2012), to rarer types such as possessive classifiers (Krasnoukhova, 2012; Seifart, 2010). Some languages also display classifiers on multiple hosts, referred to as *multiple classifier systems* (Aikhenvald, 2000), *multifunctional classifiers* (Krasnoukhova, 2012), and *multi-loci classifiers* (Dunn & Rose, forthcoming). Of particular interest, the Arawakan language family is the largest and most widespread in South America, having once consisted of around 80 languages that formed a trade network spanning the Amazonian basin, from the foothills of the Andes and into the Caribbean (Eriksen, 2011; Eriksen & Danielsen, 2014; Hornborg, 2005; Santos-Granero, 2002). The Arawakan languages have classifiers in multiple grammatical environments and with multiple grammatical functions.

Examples (1–3) highlight some of the diversity between the Arawakan classifier systems. In (1), *-na* refers to the tree's vertical orientation, and is repeated with the verb, article, and noun. In (2), *-ki~gi* is used once per phrase, but can appear with a numeral, verb, adjective, or noun. (3) shows a classifier in the language's only available position, the numeral. The Arawakan languages vary in number of classifier forms (ranging from less than ten to over 100), the appearance and use of particular loci, and whether a system is present at all. This diversity raises questions of how the systems developed; it has previously been argued that the Arawakan classifier systems in different regions arose independently of each other (Aikhenvald, 1994, 2019).

I will argue that the underlying semantics and shared morphosyntactic loci point to a core system with its origins in Proto-Arawakan. This is based on my MA thesis (Dunn, 2022), in which I reviewed secondary data from 11 Arawakan languages, one from each branch of the family, considering the morphosyntactic locus and function, the semantics underlying the systems, and possible cognates. I will show that the languages share a core system which uses the numeral, modifier, nominal, and verbal loci, and use classifiers which primarily refer to the physical properties of the referent. I will also present forms which can be reconstructed to Proto-Arawakan, building on the work of Payne (1991).

This research forms the basis of my PhD research, and I will also discuss the questions going forward. I will argue that to best understand the development of the Arawakan classifier systems we must understand them as systems shaped both by inheritance, with their beginning in Proto-Arawakan, and by contact, leading to diversification in their development. Given the importance of the Arawakan languages in Amazonia's trade networks, understanding the roles of both inheritance and contact is vital to developing a fuller picture of the Arawakan languages, and how they shaped and were shaped by the languages around them.

(1) Tariana (Arawakan, adapted from Aikhenvald, 2003, p. 107)¹

Pa-thi *dhema-na* *diha* *ha-na* *heku-na.*
IMP-eye burns-CLF ART this-CLF tree-CLF
'This tree is the one that burns one's eyes.'

(2) Nanti (Arawakan, from Michael, 2008, p. 332)

- a. *Pite<ki>ti*
two<CLF:seed>two
'two (e.g. beads)'
- b. *i=p-a-gi-t-i=na*
3M.S=give-EP-CLF:seed-EP-REAL=10
'He gave me (e.g. a bead)'
- c. *kiraha<ki>ri*
red<CLF:seed>red
'red (e.g. beads)'
- d. *chobaNkiri-ki*
job's.tears.plant-CLF:seed
'Job's Tears (*Coix lacryma-jobi*) seed'

(3) Yukuna (Arawakan, from Lemus Serrano, 2020, p. 58)

Pajlúwa(-hila) mená
one-CLF:long cropland
'one cropland'

¹ Abbreviations: ART article, CLF classifier, IMP impersonal, M masculine, S singular, EP epenthetic, REAL realis, O object, 3 third person

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