

IDEOPHONES AND EVIDENTIALS IN KARO (TUPI)

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In this presentation I describe two grammatical systems of Karo, the ideophone and evidential systems.

Karo is a Tupian language spoken by approximately 150 Indians in the eastern side of the Rondonia State, Brazil. It is classified as an isolate language within its branch, called Ramarama (Gabas 2000) – Tupi has 10 different branches, with different number of languages in each branch (Rodrigues 1964).

In my presentation I give a full description of Karo ideophones and evidentials in the light of the available typology for both systems. Basically, I focus on the typology of Voeltz & Killian-Hatz (2001) for ideophones, and of Chafe and Nichols (1986) and Aikhenvald (2004), for evidentials. Whenever descriptions of ideophone and evidential systems in related Tupian languages are available, their features will be compared to those of Karo, as an attempt to line up resemblances and shared features for future historical research.

As for ideophones, I first show that Karo has a class of words which, based on their prototypical phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic characteristics, must be regarded as forming a class separate from regular nouns, verbs, adjectives, particles, conjunctions and adverbs. This class I call ‘ideophones’. All structural features of the class will be given and fully exemplified. In addition, I demonstrate that a typological examination of Karo ideophones indicates that they are best analyzed within the approach used to describe ideophones in African languages – the grammatical class approach – as opposed to the ‘iconic or sound symbolic’ approach, found in Asian languages (Kulemeke 1995).

For the class of evidentials, I demonstrate that Karo has an intricate set of 10 (maybe 11) non-obligatory particles which can be classified as a system of evidentiality, considered in its ‘broad’ and ‘narrow’ sense (Chafe and Nichols 1986). Basically, I present their formal and semantic features, as well as their function of categorizing both the source and the reliability of information. Evidentials in Karo are then compared to evidential systems of other related Tupian languages, especially Tupi-Guarani. The identification of shared features and common complexities lead us to suppose that evidentials, as a grammatical system, could have existed in Proto-Tupi.

References

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