NOTES ON LINGUISTICS
No.13 (January 1980)

C O N T E N T S

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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS

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EDITORIAL

A new administration often takes for granted what his predecessor worked hard to achieve. I'll probably never fully appreciate the extent to which the delights of the International Linguistic Coordinator's job are due to Karl Franklin's efforts. But I do recognize and appreciate his starting Notes on Linguistics and building it up over the last three years to the useful publication it is today.

Much of what's in this number, in fact, we owe to Karl's efforts. As for previous numbers, we plan to continue to provide our readers with news on important publications, conferences, and other events in linguistics, as well as articles on a variety of topics, often with very clear application to the practice of linguistics in the field.

But the value of future numbers will depend mostly on what you, the readers, submit. So keep these good articles and news items coming in. And if you've got a specific reaction to something in Notes - some supporting evidence, counterexamples, or whatever, let's hear from you. Let's hear from you, too, if there's some particular topic you'd like covered.

George L. Huttar
for the Editorial Staff

DERBYSHIRE'S DISSERTATION INAUGURATES NEW SERIES

"With the publication of Hixkaryana by Desmond C. Derbyshire, we are pleased to inaugurate Lingua Descriptive Studies. The principal aim of the series is to provide descriptions of languages arranged according to a uniform framework, so that information on individual languages will be readily available to linguists working empirically on language universals. The inclusion of Hixkaryana as the first volume in the series is thus particularly apt: one of the areas of greatest interest recently within language universals has been word-order typology. Derbyshire's account of Hixkaryana presents, for the first time, a detailed description of a language where the usual word order is unequivocally Object-Verb-Subject, and should therefore be of major importance within the field of word-order typology.

"Future volumes in the series, which will appear at four-monthly intervals, include Abkhaz, Cairene Arabic, Chukchee, Kannada, Kobon, Luiseno, Tamil, Lummi, Imbabura Quechua, and Scots Gaelic."

(quoted from introduction to 1st volume)

KUDOS

Congratulations to John Watters for his Fulbright Fellowship which was granted for dissertation research in Cameroon. John is working on his PhD in linguistics at UCLA.

THE SEMANTIC VALUE OF THE -A' AND THE -I' NOUN PLURALS IN CAKCHIQUEL*

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In the Mayan language Cakchiquel[1], there are two ways to form the noun plural: with the suffix -a or -i'. Students of Cakchiquel have used different approaches to explain the use of these plural suffixes, but they are incongruent and never reveal the basic semantic meaning.

The first approach has been to say that the distribution is arbitrary and that there is no real reason why one noun will take the -a' suffix and another the -i'. Carlos Rosales, for example, in his 1748 grammar of Cakchiquel says "There is no general rule for knowing which nouns have plurals and which do not, nor has one been found to date.... and what should be said is that general rules cannot be given, just some specific ones, and they are very few,.... and to avoid this inconvenience and the confusion that there is in this matter, I will list here all the nouns that I have found...."[2] He then lists all the nominal plurals known to him without giving any explanation for the distribution of the -a' and the -i' suffixes.

A second type of approach has been to say that the distribution is linguistically or phonologically conditioned. Various 18th century grammarians give explanations based on linguistic context, saying that nouns ending in this or that consonant or vowel form the plural with this or that vowel. Such an explanation holds true in some cases. For example, all singular derived nouns that end with the suffix -el without exception add the -a' suffix when pluralized:[3]

¢'ib'anela'	writers
tixonela'	teachers
tixošela'	learners
k'ayinela'	venders
samaxela'	workers
e¢'anela'	players
nimalašela'	older brothers
čaq'lašela'	younger brothers
q'exelonela'	visitors
taqonela'	messengers
karunela'	fishermen
awačpočela'	neighbors
karnela'	sheep
q'ab'arela'	drunkards
kamisanela'	killers
šib'inela'	ghosts
lab'axinela'	diviners

On the surface, it appears that there is some phonological or linguistic conditioning, but there are many contrary examples: ax-xačol (harvester) takes the -a' suffix (ax-xačola'), while apostol (apostle) takes the -i' (apostoli'). Likewise, ax-q'ix (soothsayer) takes the -a' (ax-q'ixa'), while t'ox (deaf)

takes the -i' (t'oxi'). A more in-depth look at the situation will show that it is semantically conditioned.

Robert Blair recognizes the problem in his Cakchiquel basic course and also gives a list of noun plurals, but offers no formal explanation. He says "Many nouns that refer to persons take a plural suffix which, depending on the noun, may be either a' or i'." (Cakchiquel basic course, Robert W. Blair, Volume II, 1969, p.28) He groups the nouns categorically. He groups all the l-final words, for example, and shows that they take the -a' suffix. He also groups the consonant-final singulars, although he offers no explanation why ax-q'ix takes the -a' suffix when pluralized and q'opox takes the -i', given the fact that they both end with the consonant x. He also groups all the borrowed words together and shows that they take the -i' suffix, but again, offers no reasons why.

Not only is an explanation based on word classes superficial and unrevealing, but it is simply not adequate to cover all occurrences of noun plurals. Furthermore, such an approach totally disregards the semantic content of the lexical items themselves.

A comprehensive explanation can be given to describe the distribution of these two plural suffixes. In this paper, I will present the linguistic data I have collected, showing the reason the given suffix was used in each case. The data will be analyzed and explained using the theory of markedness, which permits a deeper explanation of the distribution of these two plural suffixes.

The notion of markedness implies that a hierarchical relationship exists between the two poles of the opposition -a' vs. -i': -a' is the unmarked, or general plural marker, and its oppositional counterpart, -i', is the more specific form. The marked suffix -i' carries with it an additional unit of specific information in contrast to the unmarked suffix -a', which remains neutral, uncommited, and indeterminant. Linda Waugh, in her book Roman Jakobson's science of language, (Peter de Ridder Press: Lisse, 1976, p. 95), gives an example of an oppostion with the words "at" and "in" and shows how "at" is the unmarked term:

> If the speaker uses "at" and not "in" for the sentence "they are at the house", "at" potentially can include situations where the persons involved are inside or outside the house (or both). But it can also be the case that the speaker simply doesn't know whether "they" are inside or outside; or the speaker may be deliberately non-committal; or the speaker may not care; or their position "vis-à-vis" the inside of the house may be irrelevant; or etc. All of these are possible....

The more specific sentence "they are in the house" gives us additional information about the positions of the persons involved. In this sentence, "in" is more marked than "at". Note that both "at" and "in" can occur in this sentence, and when they do, the semantic content is altered.

We observe from a phonological point of view that the vowel a is less complex than the vowel i. (Roman Jakobson, "Why 'Mama' and 'Papa'?", Selected Writings II, Mouton: The Hague, Paris, 1971, pp. 538-545.) We should not be

surprised, therefore, to see an iconic relationship between semantic and phonological complexity: -a' is both semantically and phonologically simpler, whereas -i' is both semantically and phonologically more complex. (Roman Jakobson, "Quest for the essence of language", Selected writings II, Mouton:The Hague, Paris, 1971, pp. 345-359.)

In this opposition, both the -a' and the -i' share the notion of plurality, but the -i' also suggests something non-normal. The -i' is more specific and often signals something that is outside the accepted norm. It is used in more specialized cases and has a more restricted usage than the -a'. The -a', being the unmarked, simply makes no comment as to the semantic makeup of the noun.[4]

Consider the following nouns that usually take the -a' plural suffix:

ači'a'	men
k'axola'	young men
alab'oma'	young men
me¢'a'	lovers
ak'uala'	children
b'eyoma'	rich people
č'umila'	stars
ab'axa'	rocks
axawa'	owners
ax-yuq'a'	shepherds
ax-¢'iba'	writers
ax-tixa'	teachers
ax-biša'	singers
ax-šula'	flutists
ax-q'oxoma'	musicians
ax-xač'ola'	harvesters
ax-q'ixa'	soothsayers
¢'ikina'	birds
č'oka'	crows
šika'	hawks

There is also a rather large group of nouns which take the -i' plural suffix. The -i' indicates plurality as does the -a', but also gives additional semantic information about the noun. Being the more marked of the two suffixes, the -i' often signals some deviation from the norm, something that is abnormal, undesireable, or vague. Consider the following nouns which usually take the -i' suffix:[5]

Physically abnormal

moyi'	blind
t'oxi'	deaf
moši'	crazy
yawa'i'	sick
kaminaqi'	dead
uli'	landslides

Socially abnormal

malkani'	widows
meb'a'i'	orphans
ax-maki'	sinners
mosi'	white people
ax-ʒayi'	devils
ula'i'	guests who require special preparation
winaqi'	unknown people as to name, sex
išoqi'	women
štani'	girls
q'opoxi'	maidens

Linguistically abnormal

espanoli'	Spaniards
santo'i'	saints
kwači'	twins
anima'i'	souls
moso'i'	workers
diosi'	gods
angeli'	angels
obispo'i'	bishops
profeta'i'	prophets
apostoli'	apostles
Tumi'	the Tums (family name)
Teleguario'i'	the Teleguarios (family name)

Animals

čikopi'	animals
kumaʒi'	snakes
soʒ'i'	bats
kari'	fish
b'ayi'	gophers
č'oyi'	mice
umuli'	rabbits
mama'i'	roosters
omi'	spiders
b'alma'i'	tigers
coxi'	lions
pari'	skunks
sak'i'	crickets, grasshoppers
amolo'i'	flies

The first category above describes people and things which are physically abnormal. A blind person certainly falls outside the norm in the Cakchiquel society. Because being blind is different and more marked, the word for blind is forced to take the -i' plural suffix, as is the word for deaf, crazy, sick and dead. Uli' (landslides), being an abnormal and unexpected feature of the landscape, also takes on the -i' plural suffix.

In the second category, widows, orphans, sinners, white people, devils, and guests who require special preparation are all by their nature socially abnormal in the Cakchiquel society and are forced to take the -i' plural. Winaqi' (people) is also marked.[6]

From a linguistic point of view, females are more marked in Cakchiquel, as is the case in English and Spanish. The masculine is used when referring generally to a group of people. When the feminine word is used, it has a more specialized or marked meaning. For example, we speak of "mankind", not "womankind". We would also say "Every person ate his dinner", not "Every person ate her dinner", unless we were speaking specifically about a group of women. In Spanish, "los padres", even though masculine, refers to both parents, the father and the mother. "Las madres", on the other hand, can only refer to mothers, and usually cannot be generalized to mean fathers as well. The masculine term is the more general. It may refer to both men and women, while the feminine term can only refer to women. Because the masculine is the more general or unmarked, we would expect it to take the -a', and we would also expect the feminine-related words to take the more marked -i' suffix. Such is the case in Cakchiquel.

The category of linguistically abnormal words are all borrowed words, and as such, they assume the -i' suffix because by their very nature they are odd or foreign to the Cakchiquel language system. Sensing this oddity, the Cakchiquel speaker will assign the -i' suffix to these words. The plural of Spanish surnames is also formed with the -i' suffix. The surnames Tum and Teleguario, for example, are Tumi' (the Tums) and Teleguario'i' (the Teleguarios).

Animals other than birds tend to take the -i' plural suffix, while birds take the unmarked -a' suffix. Further research is necessary to determine the semantic implications this has.

It is not always the case, however, that a noun must take either the -a' or the -i'. These suffixes are productive; some words can take either suffix, depending on the context.

Consider the minimal pair Patzuma' and Patzumi'. A native from the town of Patzum will tell you he is one of the Patzuma' (natives of Patzum), however, someone from another town will refer to the inhabitants of Patzum as Patzumi', and those from his own town will be the only a' to him. Someone from Coban 7, for example, would refer to the inhabitants of his town as Cobana', and the inhabitants of Patzum as Patzumi'. The difference between Patzuma' and Patzumi', then, is one of point of view, the Patzuma' being the familiar choice and the Patzumi' showing a foreign, more marked semantic value.

Summary

The distribution of the Cakchiquel plural suffixes -a' and -i' can be adequately explained using the theory of markedness. The -a' is the unmarked suffix. It is usually the simplest form, and generally makes no comment about the semantic nature of the noun. The -i' is the marked suffix. It is usually more complex and more specific, being used in more specialized cases than the -a' and carrying more semantic information. It often signals something unexpected, unwanted, abnormal, or vague.

Beyond this, the -a' and the -i' are productive suffixes. They often can both be used on a given noun, depending on the semantic information the speaker wishes to communicate.

The usefulness of an explanation of this type extends beyond a rule for why the plural of man is ači'a' instead of ači'i'. Besides being able to better explain the language, it may reveal many useful language universals. A deeper search into the semantic nature of language forms provides for a better understanding of both language and languages.

FOOTNOTES

[1]This discussion may be generalized to other Quichean Languages, but this paper is restricted to examples from Cakchiquel.
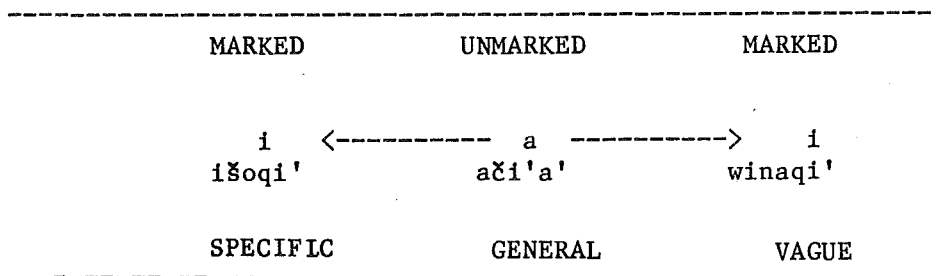
[2]Rosales says "Para saber cuales son los nombres que tienen plural o cuales carecen de él, no hay regla general ni hasta hoy se halla.... y lo que debe decirse es, no poder darse reglas generales, sino algunas particulares que hay, que son bien pocas,... y para evitar ese inconveniente y la confusión que hay en esa materia, pondré aquí todos los nombres que he podido alcanzar...." (Gramatica del idioma cachiquel, R.P. Fr. Carlos J. Rosales?, 1748, Guatemala, C.A., pp.13-15.)

[3]Although the precise semantic value of the -el suffix has not been determined, I hypothesize that its semantic content precludes the use of the k-i' and requires the -a'. This reasoning is similar to that used by Roman Jakobson in explaining why the Greek verb éramai takes the genitive case while the verb philéo takes the accusative case. (Roman Jakobson, Morfologečeskie nabljudenija nad slavjanskim skoneniem, Selected Writings II, Mouton: The Hague, Paris, 1971, pp. 127-158. My reference was Rodney Sangster's English translation of this article.)

[4]This opposition between the unmarked a and the marked i shows up in further nominal and adjectival forms as well, which is the subject of a future paper and will not be discussed here.

[5]There are two occurances of noun plurals that I would predict should take the -i' suffix, but do not: eleq'oma' (thieves) and utiwa' (wolves). This requires further research.

[6]Winaqi' (people) is very vague. It gives no information about the people. Either the speaker doesn't know anything about the people, or since he is speaking of a heterogeneous group he can't be more specific than just to say "people". He can't comment on so much as thir names, sex, race, or origin. If he knew them, he could be more specific and use ači'a' (men), išoqi' (women), mosi' (white people), etc. But since he doesn't know anything about them, or because of the nature of the group, he can't be any more specific, he is confined to say winaqi'. This distinguishes the group as being odd or different from the norm, thus making it more marked. Any extreme from the norm, whether towards the specific or the vague, is marked with the suffix -i'.

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-----------------------------------------------------------------
            MARKED          UNMARKED          MARKED


             i    <----------- a -----------> i
           išoqi'           ači'a'            winaqi'


           SPECIFIC         GENERAL           VAGUE
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[7]Although the town of Coban is not located in Cakchiquel country, I use it in this example because it is attested. I elicited these data while working with a Cakchiquel speaker in the Coban area.