

To plural mark or not to plural mark: The Torricelli family approach

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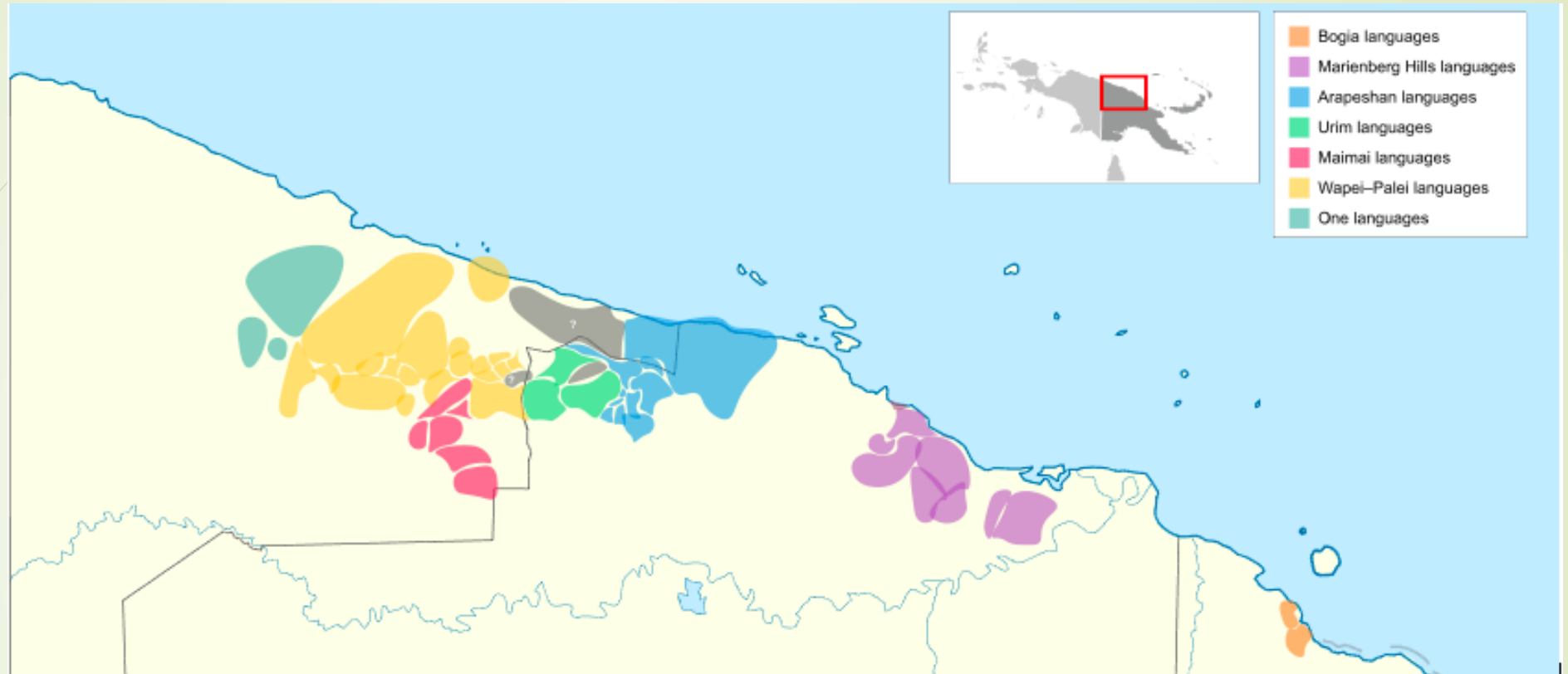
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Torricelli family

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Torricelli family

- ▶ Number of languages varies by classification (Eberhard et al., 2021; Foley, 2018; Hammarström et al., 2020; Laycock, 1975)
- ▶ Most languages are un- or under-documented and described (Hammarström & Nordhoff, 2012)
 - ▶ ≈1000 languages of Melanesia documented with a word list or less
 - ▶ over 60% of non-Austronesian languages are undocumented
- ▶ Survey includes 17 Torricelli languages

Torricelli family

Language	Sub-group	Sources of language data
Abu'	Arapeshan	Nekitel (1985)
Au	Wapei	Scorza (1973a, 1973b, 1974, 1976, 1980, 1985, 1992)
Bukiyip	Arapeshan	Fortune (1942) and Dobrin (1999, 2012)
Buna	Marienberg	Foley (2018)
Gnau	Wapei	own field notes
Kamasau	Marienberg	Sanders and Sanders (1980, 1994)
Kombio	Kombio	Henry (1992) and Farr (n.d.)
Molmo One	West Wapei	Crowther (2001), Donohue (2001), and Foley (2018)
Mufian	Arapeshan	Alungum, Conrad, and Lukas (1978)
Ningil	Wapei	Manning and Saggars (1977)
Olo	Wapei	McGregor and McGregor (1982) and Staley (1994, 1995, 2007)
Srenge	Palei	personal communication with Lea Brown
Urat	Urat	Barnes (1989) and Arminen et al. (2017)
Urim	Urim	Hemmilä and Luoma (1987) and Wood (2012, 2017)
Walman	Palei	personal communication with Matthew Dryer and Lea Brown
Yeri	Palei	Wilson (2017)
Yil	Wapei	own field notes

Number

Nominal number

- ▶ Quantities of entities
 - ▶ singular 'dog'
 - ▶ plural 'dogs'

Verbal number

- ▶ aka Pluractionality
- ▶ Quantity of events:
 - ▶ multiple times
 - ▶ multiple locations
 - ▶ multiple participants

Nominal number

Meaning

- general number/transnumeral (Corbett 2000)
- singular
- plural
- dual
- trial
- paucal, etc.

Expression

- Kinds of nominals which specify number
- Morphological coding of number meanings

Animacy Hierarchy

1st person > 2nd person > 3rd person > kin > human > animate > inanimate

(based on Corbett (2000, p. 55) from Smith-Stark (1974, p.665))



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Question

Do Torricelli languages code Number as attested cross-linguistically?

Number coding cross-linguistically

- ▶ Vast majority of languages grammatically code number within the noun phrase [NP] (Dryer 2013)
 - ▶ Number morphology predominantly found on the noun itself
 - ▶ About one-quarter of languages indicate plurality elsewhere in the NP
 - ▶ One-tenth of languages lack number coding within the NP
 - Includes:
 - ▶ Those where plurality is coded within NP for a handful of words
 - ▶ Those which code number only with agreement marked on verbs

Number coding cross-linguistically

- ▶ When it comes to Number coding on full nouns (Haspelmath 2013)
 - ▶ Languages may not code number on nouns
 - ▶ Some languages may optionally code number
 - ▶ Languages may code number expression depending on animacy

Number coding parameters

- Inflection:
Does number inflection occur on nouns?
- Obligatoriness:
Is coding of nominal number optional or obligatory?
- Animacy:
Does animacy determine which nouns allow number distinction?

Interaction of parameters

- ▶ Six attested possibilities and three unattested ones (Haspelmath 2013)
- ▶ Restrictions are based on either edge case of the Animacy Hierarchy:
 - ▶ person nouns vs other nouns
 - ▶ inanimate nouns vs other nouns

Attested possibilities (Haspelmath 2013)

Person	Animate	Inanimate
black	black	black
black	black	grey
black	white	white
white	white	white
grey	grey	grey
grey	white	white

key:

- black = obligatory marking
- grey = optional marking
- white = obligatory not marking

Unattested possibilities (Haspelmath 2013)

Person	Animate	Inanimate

key:

- black = obligatory marking
- grey = optional marking
- white = obligatory not marking

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Torricelli language data

Summaries and selected examples

Urat

[Urt-1]

hro' gunguru w-at pe, ngam m-arpe
 pig grunt 3SG.F-come CONJ 1SG 1-hold

'A (hunted) pig grunted, came towards me and I held it.'

(sourced from Arminen et al., 2017, p. 53)

[Urt-2]

hro' lalme luku tahar susungurh jah hwate
 pig all DIST get.up rush.ahead 23PL;descend mountain

'All those pigs rushed down the mountain'

(sourced from Arminen et al., 2017, p. 152)

[Urt-3]

lenge miye y-a y-asakar y-ongombe lenge hro'-ɲororo
 PL man 23PL-go 23PL-hunt.with.dog 23PL-hit/kill PL pig-cassowary

'Men will hunt with a dog to kill wild game.'

(sourced from Arminen et al., 2017, p. 9)

Abu'

[Ab-1]

aleman
man.I.SG

n-a-n-i

I.SG-DEM-I.SG-DD

a-n-a

DEM-I.SG-PD

ate-n-a

one-I.SG-EV

ubah-i-n-e-r-i

big-EV-I.SG-EV-EC-DD

alial-i-n-e-r-i

dark-EV-I.SG-EV-EC-DD

'The one very big dark man' OR 'The man is very big and dark.'

(sourced from Nekitel, 1985, p. 95)

Olo

[Olo-1]

era stone.PL p-epei PL-DEM.PROX p-ile 3PL/stand
 'Why are these stones standing here?'

p-iti 3PL-PRP p-olomen 3PL-how/why
 (sourced from Staley, 1994, p. 74)

[Olo-2]

ki oli one-ye ma ki
 1SG SUP bad.SG.F-EMP IRR 1SG
 'I'm too old, how could I get a husband?'

k-aite 1SG-buy;3SG.M munge husband k-olomen 1SG-how/why
 (sourced from Staley, 1994, p. xiv)

Olo

Table 1: Sample number marking strategies on Olo nouns (based on Staley (2007) writing about Somoro Olo)

Strategy		SG	PL	
Suffixation	-elem 'PL'	fairingo	fairing-elem	millipede
	-m 'PL'	mingi	mingi-m	ear
	-n(e) 'SG' & -m 'PL'	wase-ne	wase-m	wild boar
	-m 'SG' & -pe or -s 'PL'	pa-m	pa-pe	wound
Reduplication		soni	soni-ni	shadow
C alternation		eti	esi	hand
V alternation	height	mere	meri	betelnut
	backness	fine	funo	amaranth
	height & backness	pale	palu	liver
Multiple	V alternation + suffix	opili	opuluwongou	part of breadfruit tree
Suppletion		morou	siye	wild animal
Invariant		tifa	tifa	banana

Molmo One

[One-1]

mala
child
'short child(ren)'

plola
short

← general/singular

(sourced from (221a) of Foley, 2018, p. 335)

[One-2]

meli
child-PL
'short children'

plolu
short-PL

← plural

(sourced from (221b) of Foley, 2018, p. 335)

Yeri

[Yri-1]

nol-mi
bird-PL

∅-o
3PL-COP.R

henei-gil
red-PL

w-ei=lope-i
REL-PL=big-PL

wia-m
two-M

yot-u-i
DEM-MDIST-PL

pine-i
wing-PL

w-ei=de-i
REL-PL=3-PL

ki
already

∅-gobi
3PL-bend.in.half.R

'Those two big red birds, their wings are broken.'

(sourced from (6.30) in Wilson, 2017, p. 304)

Yeri

[Yri-2]

te-∅ w-o<ne>wil
 3-SG.F 3SG.F-take.R<SG.M>
 'She took two fish.'

nanu-la
 fish-SG

wia-m
 two-M

(sourced from (5.77) in Wilson, 2017, p. 241)

[Yri-3]

paki n-nole-wa-i
 PART 2SG-dislike.R-AUG-PL
 'You don't want the fish and such.'

nanu-bia
 fish-PL

lolewa
 thing

yot-u-∅
 DEM-MDIST-SG.F

(sourced from (5.75) in Wilson, 2017, p. 241)

AU

[Au-1]

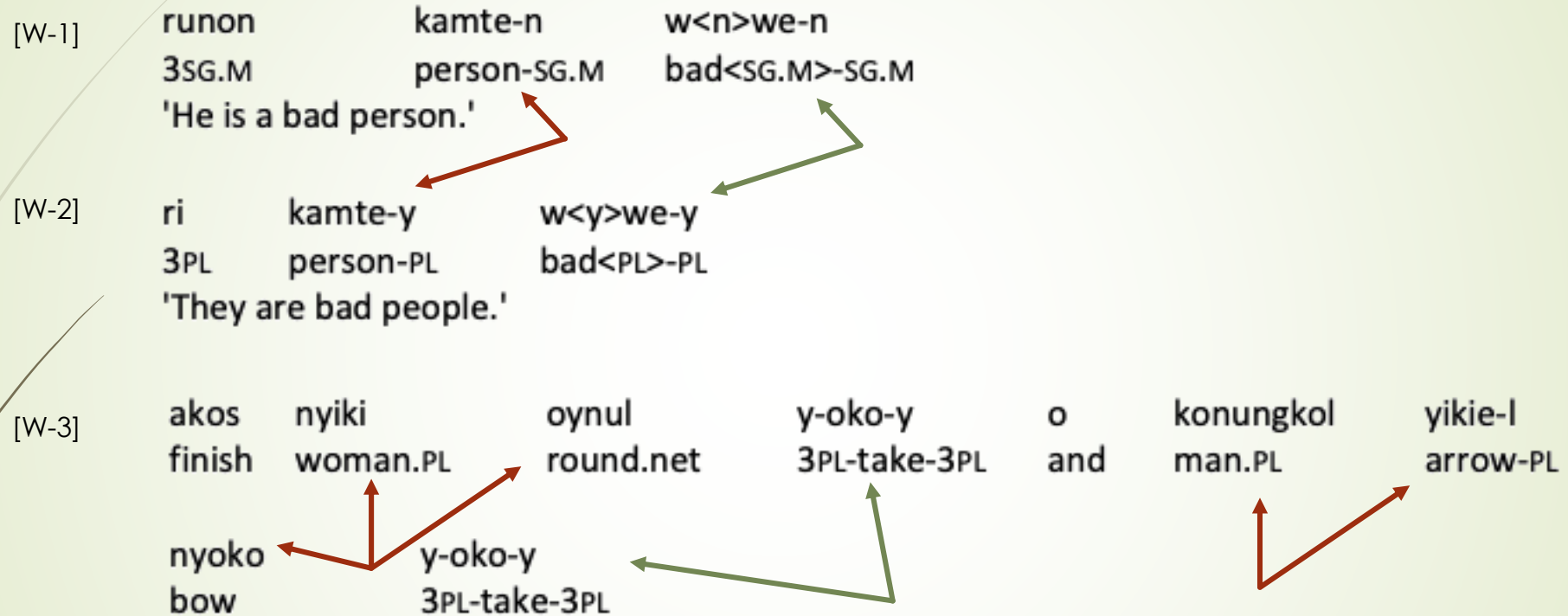
ko ti h-eit wininii k-eit nein
 hey 2SG 2SG-get flying.squirrel 3SG.MN-at LOC.Q
 'Hey, where did you get that flying squirrel?'
 (Scorza, 1973b, p. 173)

[Au-2]

w-an w-ir yinu m-ire hire
 3SG.F-come 3SG.F-see egg 3PL.N-3SG.F.POSS 3SG.F
 w-at<p>api-im k-eimun k-enep nikerek n-ai
 3SG.F-talk.about<CONT>-3PL.N 3SG.M-who 3SG.M-hit child.PL 3PL.MF-1SG.POSS
 'She came and saw her eggs and incessantly talked about them, "Who killed my children?"
 (Scorza, 1973b, p. 188)

Walman

>>> Walman data courtesy of Matthew Dryer (pers. comm.)



'When they were finished, the women took their round fishnets and the men took their bows and arrows.'

Walman

Person	Animate	Inanimate

Results

Do Torricelli languages code Number as attested cross-linguistically?

Number expression in Torricelli NPs

Table 3: Comparison of number marking in NPs in the Torricelli family and WALs chapter 33 sample

Number in noun phrases	Torricelli family only	WALS chapter 33 (Dryer 2013)
Plural indicated on noun	10 (59%)	717 (67%)
Plural not indicated on noun	6 (35%)	251 (24%)
No plural	1 (6%)	98 (9%)

Number expression in Torricelli NPs

Table 2: Number marking within Torricelli noun phrases

Language	Nouns	Adjectives	Demonstratives	Plural word
Abu'	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Au	Some	Yes	Yes	N/A
Bukiyip	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Buna	Some	Yes	Unknown	N/A
Gnau	Yes	Yes	Unknown	N/A
Kamasau	No	No	Yes	N/A
Kombio	No	Optional	No	Optional
Molmo One	Optional	Optional	Unknown	N/A
Mufian	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Ningil	Yes	Yes	Unknown	N/A
Olo	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Srengge	No	No	No	N/A
Urat	No	No	No	Optional
Urim	No	No	No	Optional
Walman	Some	Some	Some	N/A
Yeri	Optional	Yes	Some	N/A
Yil	Yes	Yes	Unknown	N/A

Number coding parameters revisited

- Inflection:

Does number inflection occur on nouns?

- Obligatoriness:

Is coding of nominal number optional or obligatory?

- Restriction:

Does a language determine which codings fall under a set of distinctions?

Number expression on Torricelli nouns

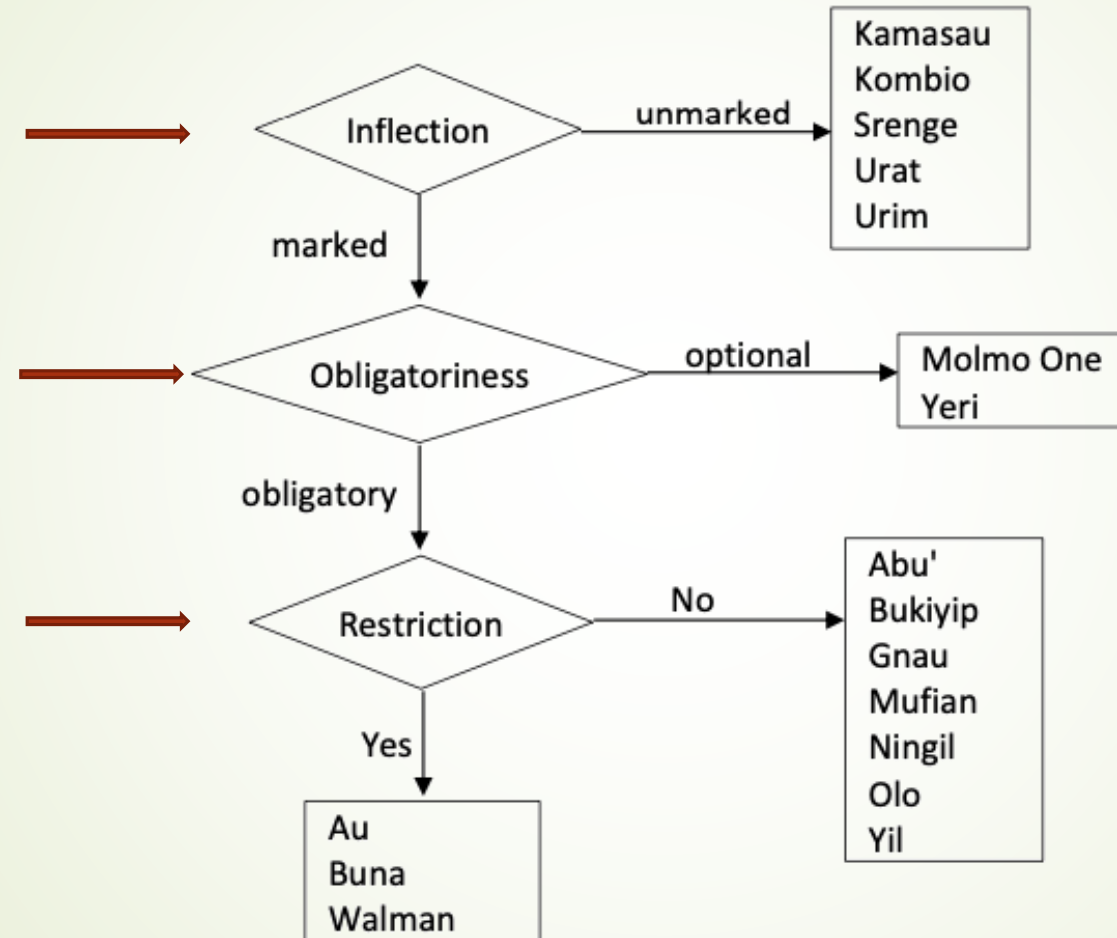


Figure 1: Grouping Torricelli languages by the number coding parameters

Conclusion

- ▶ Torricelli family appears cross-linguistically unremarkable when it comes to coding nominal number in noun phrases
- ▶ A binary split bottom region of the Animacy Hierarchy does not account for how all surveyed Torricelli languages code number on nouns
- ▶ Caveat --- Most Torricelli languages are un- or under-described



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Thank you!

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