

**Title:** Garifuna attributive possession in comparative perspective

**Category:** Oral

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In this paper, I outline the strategies for expressing attributive possession in Garifuna, an Arawakan language. Furthermore, by comparing the Garifuna data to other languages I will highlight some (areally) unusual features of the Garifuna system. The data underlying the research presented here come from fieldwork currently being carried out by the author in Garifuna communities of Northern Honduras, Central America.

Attributive possession in Garifuna makes a distinction between alienable and inalienable possessed items, the latter being restricted to kinship terms and body parts. Furthermore, some nouns take different classifiers, here referred to as *relational classifiers* following Lichtenberk (1983) depending on the use for which they are intended by the possessor: either, "X's Y for eating", "X's Y (meat) for eating", "X's Y for drinking", "X's Y for keeping as a pet" or "X's Y (for general possession)". Relational classification is widely attested in Oceanic Languages (Lichtenberk 1985:106) but it is a rare feature in The Americas, even within Arawakan, and is possibly borrowed from Cariban (Aikhenvald 2013:46).

According to Grinevald (2000:81) the Amerindian relational classifiers are emergent, i.e. less grammaticalized than the Oceanic ones, because the choice of relational classifier depends on discourse context rather than being fixed in the grammar. However, since Grinevald offers no documentation for this claim, I will compare Oceanic, Cariban and Garifuna examples. In (1-2) there seems to be no difference between the way relational classifiers are used in Bau and Garifuna respectively.

(1) Garifuna (my field notes)

'n-eygã            'faluma  
1SG.POSS-CLF   coconut  
'my coconut (to eat)'

nu-'niye           'faluma  
1SG.POSS-CLF   coconut  
'my coconut (to drink)'

'n-ani              'faluma  
1SG.POSS-CLF   coconut  
'my coconut (to dispose of as I please)'

(2) Bau (Oceanic, Austronesian; (Pawley 1973:168)

na           ke-na            maqo  
ART        POSS-his       mango  
'his mango for eating (i.e. green mango)'

na           me-na            maqo  
ART        POSS-his       mango  
'his mango for sucking (i.e. ripe, juicy mango)'

na           no-na            maqo  
ART        POSS-his       mango  
'his mango (as property, e.g., which he is selling)'

Fijian, another Oceanic language, has relational classifiers for food and drink which are only used if these items are intended by the possessor to be consumed immediately; in other contexts a classifier for general possession is used (Dixon 1989:136); thus, Fijian also seems to work in essentially the same way as Garifuna.

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