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**A description of Naso verbal art**

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**A description of Naso verbal art**

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## **Dedication**

For bud.

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## **Abstract**

### **A description of Naso verbal art**

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This dissertation is an analytic description of aspects of Naso speech play and verbal art. It employs intersecting methodologies of language documentation and description, ethnography, and speaker intuitions. Naso is a Chibchan language spoken in Panama by approximately 500 fluent individuals, and its speakers are shifting to primary use of the Spanish language at an accelerated pace. Speech play and verbal art are used by Nasos in ways that index their social identities and relationships with life forms and political structures, as well as how they interpret the vitality of their language and culture.

Linguistic strategies used in speech play and verbal art include cross-linguistically common processes such as high pitch, vowel lengthening, and use of creaky voice and other voice qualities. They also include typologically unique strategies such as the distortion of sibilant consonants, vowel lowering, and idiomatic tags which set up humorous frames of interaction, such as one in which interlocutors are addressed in the third person. The more complex strategies of verbal art build from speech play, and include common resources such as anecdotes, myths, and song. The unique genres of Naso verbal art include *tjlōkwo rong* ‘profound words’, which formally resemble the parallel poetic couplet *difrasismos* widespread across the greater geographical region of Mesoamerica.



I show how these specific speech play and verbal art strategies are employed in social exercises of the imagination and creativity surrounding two themes of Naso life: recreation, and nostalgia. Analysis of specific texts in context reveals that Naso speakers index their complex identities, including their indigeneity, through ‘profound words’ embedded in nostalgic rumination, and they index their agility, wit, and self-teasing traits in humorous or recreational interactions. The nostalgic function of ‘profound words’ is analyzed as working through principles of ambiguity and vagueness—mechanisms which explain cases of verbal art that younger generations identify productively.

This dissertation directly portrays native speaker intuitions of verbal art through quoted monologues that guide the preface of each chapter. Besides being informed by creative Naso individuals as well as prevalent Naso socio-cultural views, the dissertation takes areal-comparative and typological perspectives, demonstrating the theoretical contribution of speech play and verbal art more broadly to linguistics and the humanistic study of society.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 GOALS OF THE DISSERTATION

*“to understand the motivating phenomena of language love, language hate, language curiosity,  
and delight in language(s)”*

-John Leavitt, *Linguistic Relativities* (pg. 210)

A broad, overarching theme of this dissertation is this: the ways that people feel and interpret the significant parts of their language. In order to contribute to this theme on a small scale, I focus on the type of language and knowledge that Nasos pay attention to, get excited about, and think is valuable for documentation and preservation. Where I think I can, I try to explain motivations. While in the dissertation I point out the particularities of Naso<sup>1</sup> language patterns, I am also committed to showing how they are patterns of human creativity and thought that anyone can relate on a humanistic level, or otherwise learn to understand through re-alignment of perspectives. They are not restricted to “Naso”<sup>2</sup> idiosyncrasy.

One goal of a descriptive analysis of a language’s verbal art may naturally include a thorough *listing* of the speech play and verbal art objects themselves, especially for verbal art genres that are endangered or language-particular. However, I choose not to do so for several reasons. While the Naso verbal art genre *tjlōkwo rong* ‘profound words’ could easily be interpreted by an outside linguist as a highly endangered form of verbal art and thus a priority for detailed dictionary-style exposition in terms of forms and meanings, this is not one of the major goals of this dissertation. This is because Naso sensitivities include the weariness of outsiders objectifying

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<sup>1</sup> Naso is a Chibchan language spoken in Panama by about 500 fluent adults, and semi-fluent total of an estimated 1,000 people.

<sup>2</sup> I use scarequotes to call attention to the complexity of human identities, human relationships with language(s), and language *use* itself in what I recognize as a need for (socio)linguistics to come closer to the fields of ethnography and activist agendas.

and exploiting Naso resources. I interpret the act of listing profound words as objectification and exploitation, so I avoid this in the dissertation.

Another prominent Naso sensitivity and ideology is pride in ancestral language and culture and desire to be recognized humanely by the outside world, which tends to either exoticize or marginalize them. For this reason, in the dissertation I include lengthy English translations of direct monologic and dialogic Naso texts so that the reader may get a feel for both the content and self-representations that the speakers are sharing, in the spirit of how Anthony Webster describes the Navajo theme of leaving matters open to ambiguity and interpretation. These quotations come from a language recording setting where speakers are aware that the public platform is one way to reach the outside world.

As the disclaimer goes, all material in the dissertation is filtered through my own words, interpretations, and experiences with particular people at particular times (between 2011 - 2018).

Below, I delineate two main goals of this dissertation.

### **1.1.1 Document and describe Naso speech play and verbal art resources**

Chapter 4 includes a broad description of the available linguistic resources or strategies that Naso speakers manipulate to create speech play and verbal art. It outlines particular idiomatic patterns such as lexical frames that signal humor, common cross-linguistic features amenable to speech play and verbal art such as ideophones and voicing qualities, as well as pervasive patterns of verbal art, such as parallelism in *tjldkwo rong* ‘profound words’.

### **1.1.2 Describe how speech play and verbal art gets used in context**

One major goal of the dissertation is to describe the context in which speech play and verbal art get used in daily conversation and interaction. Chapters 5 and 6 provide analysis of the speech play and verbal art resources in the context of *vitality* (everyday humorous interactions) and *nostalgia* (imaginative rumination about ancestral speech), respectively. However, these are not fixed unitary themes, but are mutually interrelated and overlap in the use of the resources

introduced in Chapter 4. For example, it will become apparent that the verbal art genre such as *tjlōkwo rong* ‘profound words’, which is ideologically understood most centrally as an obscure and sacred ancestral code, can be used in a playful and humorous manner.

I conclude in Chapter 7 by comparing the features and contexts of Naso speech play and verbal art to the context of the larger geographical area including nearby Chibchan languages as well as the greater Mesoamerican area. Furthermore, I show how this description contributes to an understanding of speech play and verbal art more broadly to linguistics and the humanistic study of society.

In order to achieve these three goals above, I first lay out some general background on Naso life and language (Chapter 2) as well as basic linguistic background on Naso (Chapter 3).

## **1.2 METHODOLOGY AND DATA**

The methods I use in the analyses of this dissertation include a discourse-centered approach, participant observation, elicitation interviews, interpretation of Naso-produced documentation and literature, conversational interviews about speaker intuitions, as well as typological-comparative analysis of the Naso patterns within the broader geographical context and linguistic theory.

The data I sample in this dissertation cohere by several principles. They feature a wide range of speakers, from young to elderly, semi-fluent to fluent. I do this in order to represent the reality of the Naso population. Additionally, the data cover a range of events and situations, such as background conversation during (transcription) work, on-stage conversations (Liya, Emerita, and myself), Naso-internal conversations (between the Verbal Art team) and pointed interviews and elicitation (Daniel Villagra and myself). Throughout each of these I pay attention to the ways speakers discuss humorous and nostalgic themes, and especially how they use speech play and verbal art resources in order to achieve these moods. Additionally, I cover a range of conversations where the participants have different relationships to each other, for example between close friends (Emerita, Liya, and myself), between nuclear families (Enoc, Adela, and Yoselin; Celestina and

her two daughters), between work groups (Verbal Art team; technicians), and in a clear interviewee - interviewer set up (Daniel Villagra and myself).

### **1.2.1 Discourse-centered approach**

One methodology in the dissertation is an integration of analysis of Naso language, discourse, and culture, in following the “discourse-centered approach” developed by Joel Sherzer (1987; 1990), and the situated description of what is termed *speech play and verbal art* (Sherzer 2002; Epps, Webster, and Woodbury 2017). While the texts in this dissertation foreground speech play and verbal art, they do so by also taking into account the **content** of discussion, and tying it into the broader socio-economic-political context of Naso life. I situate this dissertation in a broad definition of sociolinguistics (Childs, Good, and Alice 2014) which views the study of language in context as incorporating methods and perspectives from linguistic anthropology and other intersecting disciplines.

### **1.2.2 Participant observation**

Through fieldwork and participation in Naso life since 2010, I have gained insight into how Nasos use language, including speech play and verbal art linguistic resources, and how this compares to their *ideologies* and *intuitions* of language manipulation in everyday playful and nostalgic activities.

One surprising finding of participant observation is that although Nasos commonly assert that profound words are rarely used in everyday conversation, I have attested some conventional exceptions. However, these exceptions lack ancestral connotations and have everyday meanings. Some examples include the everyday profound-like words *aga yaga* ‘useless’, *sore bore* ‘however’, *owa yawa* ‘very bad’, and *jekong kecong* ‘in the future’. As Nasos observe and I confirm, elders still sometimes use profound words in everyday speech, usually with the intention of scolding or suggesting words of wisdom to children and young adults.

Next, I outline three different stages of data collection, in chronological order, which begins with elicitation-based interviews of verbal art, followed by Naso-produced documentation and literature, followed by conversational interviews about speaker intuitions of speech play and verbal art. Each of these provide a unique perspective about the forms, meanings, and use of Naso SPVA.

### **1.2.3 Elicitation interviews**

In my first wave of documentation and description, I interviewed several Naso speakers about their perspectives on the verbal art genre profound words, among gathering various other recordings. These earliest interviews (2011 - 2015) centered on the goal of eliciting phonetic data of a large number and variety of profound words, across a number of elderly speakers. A second goal was to obtain precise definitions and examples of each profound word in discourse context. This stage resulted in the collection of data on respected Naso elders and specialists: Antonio Sánchez, Gilberto Gamarra, Rosa Gamarra, Hector Torres, Ernestina Bonilla, Ester Berchi, Gilma Berchi, and Ernesto Bonilla. They include roughly fifteen hours of data.

These methods yielded data on speech play and verbal art that was ideal for certain types of analyses. One is precise phonetic data on profound words, spoken by a variety of speakers and with a significant number of high-quality phonetic tokens. Another is a variety of unique profound words, upwards of 250, with phonological and lexico-grammatical analyses about how they work and are structured. A third is a broad but shallow socio-cultural context about how each of these profound words are used in context.

### **1.2.4 Naso-produced documentation agendas and literature (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia)**

The second wave of documentation and description was part of the documentation project ‘Documentation of a Naso Cultural Encyclopedia’ sponsored by the Endangered Language Documentation Programme of SOAS, University of London, from 2015 - 2018. The methodology during this period consisted of Naso speakers documenting their own language and culture, and

writing a Cultural Encyclopedia—this encyclopedia contains five volumes on different topics: Mythology and Cosmology, Traditional Songs, Verbal Art, Artisanry, and Botany, published online through IngramSpark and printed for Naso community use only. One main goal the participants had with the encyclopedia project was to document nostalgic, ancestral parts of their language and culture. The Verbal Art documentation team consisted of three technicians (King Reynaldo Alexis Santana, Miriam Aguilar, and Daniel Villagra) and five experts (Valentin Santana, Enrique Santana, Hermelinda Torres, Ernesto Bonilla, and Flores Bonilla) as members. The team used a more thorough methodology than I had in the previous phase. They discussed few profound words but in very deep and semantically rich detail, with thick associations between profound words and specific sociocultural contexts. The team also documented a wide range of anecdotal jokes as well as proverbs. The volume on Verbal Art that they wrote for the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia includes three sections divided into the following: profound words, jokes, and proverbs.

Their methods yielded particularly rich conversational data about profound words (approximately six hours, transcribed and translated) between multiple participants, where the team gathered to discuss the topic of verbal art in five different team meetings. Furthermore, the content of the conversations provided extensive background on nostalgic and sociocultural complexity of profound words. The encyclopedia volume that the team technicians produced as such is an original work of literary excellence and uniqueness, and stands as a novel genre of its own. The team itself is tremendously proud of the political, educational, descriptive, and cultural significance of the body of knowledge they have produced. I quote their introduction to their manuscript below in Naso<sup>3</sup> and Spanish, followed by my own translation into English:

“<sup>1</sup>Kjibokwo ëregoshko tjïökwoyo rong bishïya onmo e sorë Ìërwa jek döni jã, woyo jea bi pjeoyogarë pjilë e kjïshko, eerishko ga shji tjïë bey ame. <sup>2</sup>Tjawa dwïlasga töno wotjïling

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<sup>3</sup> Across the dissertation, unless Naso data is placed within slashes //, then conventional Naso orthography is used, as in this text. Orthographic conventions correspond to IPA symbols (/) in the following ways: /a/:<a>, /e/:<e>, /i/:<ë>, /o/:<ö>, /l/:<Ĭ>, /k<sup>h</sup>/:<kj>, /p<sup>h</sup>/:<pj>, /t<sup>h</sup>/:<tj>, /s<sup>h</sup>/:<sj>, /ʃ<sup>h</sup>/:<shj>, /j/:<y>, /h/:<j>, /f/:<sh>, /z/:<ll>, /tʃ/:<ch>, /ŋ/:<ng>, /r/:<r>. Lengthened vowels /V:/ are represented as <VV>. All other orthographic symbols match their IPA symbols.

këgong tjlōkwo ëre kjīshko ega pakyo shāryērwa bek wlo eni kjīshko tjawa öör jong borwa kjokëga shwoshko tjlōkwo wlëk dëy wlo ega wlikëy wlo eni kjī ga tjawa dbo kjrono pak ëre shārye wlo. <sup>3</sup>Shji nasoga bi pak li, bi tjlōkwo tjlwō ara dbur shōylōr dike, e dë e sök iyado, woydërwa ga tak pjir ber buk kjibokwogo bi pjeyoga tek llono ga poshrëya, neya, ega wlike wlo llëbo ëre bi sdëkwo bishīya shji uunkong naso tjër ybi diso i. <sup>4</sup>Llë woydërwa bi pjeyoga äär poyong wlo, shdär wlo, bangkjrëba shji tjwlo ara miydëk obarë äär kjok kjwang jikong wlo, eni kjīshko ga tjawa pak shāryono tjlōkwo rong ëre. <sup>5</sup>Tjlōkwo kjok kjwang jiko e tjlōkwo rong shāryoklo bek e tjok eyga bishīya eni bebi e shāryak pjir ga e tjlōkwo kwara llë loklo. <sup>6</sup>Tjawa weno shko ga tjawa weno borwa tjlōkwo ere le eyga ley jek kwara ga tōy uunkong ga e tjlōkwo kwara. <sup>7</sup>Tjlōkwo ëre shji kjlosgwe shji ie ber bi sdëkwo tjwlo ara. <sup>8</sup>Bi tjlë ëre wen tek wotjlik roy dwayo ëre bi rokoklo e no llë wleni ga e shji löng së layde, pak shāryērwa löng ëre woydërwa ga äär ber pjlu uun pjeyo Nasoga kong. <sup>9</sup>Tjlōkwo tororwa ëre woydërwa ga kjägrokëy jek këgong ney, eni ga shji tjwlo ara. <sup>10</sup>Tjawa wo pjlu pak ëre shāryorwa kjīshko woydërwa ga ber jūshko dö llëme rokërwa pjeyoga tek llono kong, pjilupga, bi pjllollgwega, pjeyga uunkong kong pjāy wopjir llëme pjāy drön bi sdëkwo ëre kjīshko. <sup>11</sup>Bi sdëkwo ëre jer llëm shji tön pak shārye iyado shko ga bi tjlōkwo ëre dbur shōylōr dik iara Sbörë beno bi kong. <sup>12</sup>Tjawa wo pjlu borwa pīga tjlōkwo rong löng kong, tjawa wlokrara ba ushko kjīy tjawa kjimtara kjibokwo ëre shārye ber buk wlo, pjāy llëm ga pak ëre pjitung llëme.

<sup>1</sup>En este documento a continuación que iremos detallando están recopiladas las palabras gramaticales, nativas, auténticas y legítimas que el Pueblo Naso han ido olvidando hasta llegar a hablar en la actualidad el naso básico. <sup>2</sup>Nosotros un grupo de jóvenes con una visión progresiva e minuciosa hemos ido a nuestros abuelos con el objetivo de rescatar, conservar y proteger estas palabras, por lo que con gran esfuerzo y dedicación hemos logrado parte de esta meta. <sup>3</sup>Nuestro deber como indígena Naso es llevar a cabo este gran tesoro que es nuestra lengua, para que quede por escrito mediante documentaciones, para que las futuras generaciones puedan valorar, guardar y proteger nuestra identidad y el patrimonio tradicional y cultural del Pueblo Naso Tjër ybi di. <sup>4</sup>Lo que deseamos es que este pueblo surja y pueda alcanzar auge y expansión para que podamos tener respeto, valor y reconocimiento tanto a nivel nacional como internacional, este ha sido uno de los motivos por los que hemos llegado a trabajar este tema de arte verbal. <sup>5</sup>Así como en las diferentes lenguas del mundo, poseemos un léxico, fonemas y morfemas que nos dan como resultado un significado a las palabras. <sup>6</sup>También existen los verbos, todos los elementos que componen una oración, una frase y un párrafo. <sup>7</sup>Este idioma nos convierte en un pueblo que tiene identidad y legitimidad. <sup>8</sup>El lenguaje es el resultado del pensamiento, es el timbre que nos hace como ser humano que nos hace ver que estamos vivos, queremos que este sentir sea para todos en el Pueblo Naso. <sup>9</sup>Por estas palabras escritas deseamos que sigamos recopilando e investigando más sobre nuestra lengua y cultura y así valemos más. <sup>10</sup>Estamos orgullosos por lograr una parte de este gran trabajo ya que esto debe continuar, le exhortamos a las futuras generaciones al igual que a las autoridades tradicionales, la comunidad y pueblo en general que no desmayen que sigan luchando por nuestra idiosincrasia. <sup>11</sup>Nuestra cultura no se pierde si estamos unidos, la lengua es nuestra joya preciosa que nuestro creador nos ha dado. <sup>12</sup>Como punto final agradecemos a nuestros maestros y especialistas que nos recibieron en sus hogares y nos brindaron el apoyo para que este documento fuera una realidad, sin ustedes nada de esto fuera posible.”



*<sup>1</sup>In the following document we will be detailing the documented profound words, native, authentic, and legitimate words that the Naso people have been forgetting up to the current state of the basic language. <sup>2</sup>With our progressive and precise vision, us, a group of young adults, have gone to our elders with the intention of rescuing, conserving and protecting these words, and because of this dedicated effort we have achieved part of this goal. <sup>3</sup>Our duty as indigenous Nasos is to bring worth to this great treasure which is our language, so that it will remain written through documents, so that future generations may value, guard, and protect our identity and the traditional and cultural heritage of the Naso Tjër ybi di people. <sup>4</sup>We hope that this tribe may excel and reach prestige and expansion so that we can be respected, valued, and recognized at a national and also international level, this has been one of the motives for which we have come to work on the topic of verbal art. <sup>5</sup>Just as in the different languages of the world, we also have words, phonemes, and morphemes that give meaning to words. <sup>6</sup>There also exist verbs, all of the elements that compose a sentence, phrase, and paragraphs. <sup>7</sup>This language transforms us into a tribe which has identity and legitimacy. <sup>8</sup>Language is the result of thought, it is the bell that calls to our humanity and brings us to life, we want this feeling to reach every Naso person. <sup>9</sup>We want for these words to continue being documented and investigated about our language and culture so that we are worth more. <sup>10</sup>We are proud of having accomplished part of this great duty since it must continue, we encourage future generations, traditional leaders, the community, and the tribe in general to not sleep and continue to fight for our culture. <sup>11</sup>Our culture will not decay is we are united, language is our precious jewel that our creator has given us. <sup>12</sup>As a closing remark we thank our teachers and specialists that welcomed us to their houses and offered their support so that this document could become a reality, without you all this wouldn't have been possible.*

- Miriam Aguilar, Reynaldo Alexis Santana, and Daniel Villagra

The analysis of speaker-produced texts, especially literature and poetry, is a method advocated for by Franz Boas, and is echoed through the fields of anthropology and linguistics today. His excerpt (Boas 1917) below is quoted from Woodbury (2011):

“The problems treated in a linguistic journal must include also the literary forms of native production. Indian oratory has long been famous, but the number of recorded speeches from which we can judge their oratorical devices is exceedingly small. There is no doubt whatever that definite stylistic forms exist that are utilized to impress the hearer; but we do not know what they are. As yet, nobody has attempted a careful analysis of the style of narrative art as practiced by the various tribes. The crudeness of most records presents a serious obstacle for this study, which, however, should be taken up seriously. We can study the general structure of the narrative, the style of composition, of motives, their character and sequence; but the formal stylistic devices for obtaining effects are not so easily determined.”

This present dissertation project does not examine the logic and formal stylistic devices in the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, however, this is an agenda for future research that will most likely grow out of this dissertation.

### **1.2.5 Conversational interviews about speaker intuitions**

The third wave of documentation and description, which began in December 2017, consisted of conversational interviews where I asked Nasos about their intuitions about speech play and verbal art. These discussions focused on aesthetic appreciation of the Naso language, including intuitions about sonically attractive sounds, ideophones, anecdotal jokes, unfortunate but life-affirming situations, trickster jokes, interpretations of multilingual interactions, and individual interpretations of what counts as profound words. I held these discussions between a couple of interlocutors at a time so that conversations would be more diverse and dynamic. The following people participated: Emerita Sánchez, Liya Villagra, Daniel Villagra, Carlos Magno Torres, Enoc Sánchez, Adela Torres, and Yoselin Sánchez.

The methodology of this third wave provided fresh interpretations about how speech play and verbal art strategies sound, feel, and gain meaning in context. This wave provides much of the data I analyze in Chapters 5 and 6.

### **1.2.6 Comparative areal and historical research**

References are made throughout the dissertation on how speech play and verbal art of Naso compare to that of other languages in the geographical area, as documented by Joel Sherzer (for Kuna), Laura Cervantes (for Bribri), and Adolfo Constenla Umaña (for Cabécar, Bribri, and Maleku). A brief discussion of contact effects between these languages and others is provided in Chapter 7.

### 1.3 THEORIZATION OF SPEECH PLAY AND VERBAL ART

Traditions and methods in linguistics, anthropology, and philosophy interpret, in different ways, human creativity and poetic language, which I refer to in this dissertation as speech play and verbal art following the intellectual lineage of Joel Sherzer.

#### 1.3.1 Structuralist and formalist approaches

Philosophic approaches to analyzing speech play and verbal art categories take a top-down methodology and start with an *a priori* category such as “jokes” “puns” or “irony”. These have been largely influential theoretical frameworks. For example, linguists Attardo and Raskin (1991) taxonomize the logical mechanisms by which jokes function. Structuralist approaches, such as the influential work of Roman Jakobson (1960) have shown how attention to the form of messages make repetition and parallelism prevalent features of poetic and rhetorical language. Generative metrical approaches, in response to Jakobson, develop the linguistic theory of poetry from an operational perspective, such as the widely cited work of Paul Kiparsky since the 1970s (Kiparsky 1973, 1977, 1979), Hanson and Kiparsky (1996). Fabb and Halle (2008) similarly deepen the formal and generative theoretic linguistic approaches to poetics.

Other traditions, such as early ethnopoetic work within anthropology, follow a structuralist analysis of poetic recurrences in terms of linguistic systems such as of pauses (Tedlock 1983), intonation, and structural parallelism (Hymes 1981). Some in this discipline focus on language-specific genres that align with particular taxonomies and practices, such as work by Gossen (1971) and Sherzer (1983). As referred to earlier, Joel Sherzer, in through his work on Kuna (1987) and in collaboration with Greg Urban (1986) and Anthony Woodbury (1987), further develops an approach to study speech play and verbal art with socio-cultural and discourse context.

Other frameworks that theorize resources used in the creation of speech play and verbal art includes Paul Friedrich’s discussions of what he elaborates as *tropes* (1991), or poetic patterns including image, mood, operational reorganizations, contiguity, and metaphor. For Friedrich, resources of verbal art are broad and mutually overlapping in complex ways, a concept which he

calls *polytropy*. This framework is useful because it allows for the recognition that language use is complex, inconsistent, and emergent in the natural world, where creative resources are intertwined. Friedrich uniquely approaches speech play and verbal art with attention to individual and humanistic creativity, and discusses how particular poets manipulate resources in certain ways.

### **1.3.2 Language documentation**

The rising wave of language documentation and description in the 1990s saw a push towards community collaborative documentation projects and perspectives (Hale et al. 1992; Wilkins 1992), some which prioritized the training of native speakers or ethical revitalization approaches. This, along with the increase in technology and more funding opportunities for language documentation along with the rise of digital archives as well as pressure from indigenously organized political activism led to more theorization and coherence of documentation projects; see (Woodbury 2011) for discussion along these lines. On the same track, Anthony Woodbury suggests that language documentation within the context of language endangerment and loss provides a specific situation where community engagement tends towards interest in preservation of the ancestral code motivated by nostalgia (2011), and calls for projects that center on encyclopedic-type description of cultural knowledge. The Naso documentation project that backgrounds this dissertation context directly responds to Woodbury's suggestion and shows how an encyclopedia project directly contributes to a better understanding of speaker intuitions and perspectives on speech play and verbal art.

The tradition of speech play and verbal art description at UT Austin includes ethnographically-informed dissertations that address of the use of language and discourse types in specific discourse contexts. These include dissertations by Maria Garcia on Ixhil (2012), Simeon Floyd on Cha'palaa (2012), Christine Beier on Nanti (2010), Lev Michael on Nanti (2008), Anthony Webster on Navajo (2004), Kerry Hull on Chorti (2003), and Laura Cervantes on Bribri (2001). Most recently, Hilaria Cruz, a native speaker of Chatino, provided a thorough description of Chatino oratory and verbal art (2014).

Anthony Webster has innovated this line of work with a prolific commitment to research on speech play and verbal art of Navajo (2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015), as well as developed several important theoretical concepts on speech play and verbal art including the notion of “intimate grammars” (2015). The concept of *intimate grammars* involves the emotional connections or “felt attachments” that individuals form with particular grammars or styles of speaking, which are used in order to index part of their own identities.

Most recently to date, Pattie Epps, Anthony Webster, and Anthony Woodbury at UT Austin have collaborated (2017; forthcoming) on refining the tradition and methodology of analyzing speech play and verbal art in the context of language documentation projects.

The present dissertation follows this intellectual lineage through descriptive analysis and anthropological insight by delving into the contemporary ways in which individuals use language in context and index their own identities through it in an effort to understand the world.

### **1.3.3 Present contributions**

In this dissertation I follow Epps, Webster, and Woodbury’s (2017) call to document speech play and verbal art, and I add to it two perspectives: (1) a focus on the creative individual and their novel use of language in ordinary everyday contexts, and (2) attention to how speakers index Naso and other identities throughout them.

## **1.4 MAJOR FINDINGS**

### **1.4.1 Naso resources of speech play and verbal art**

Linguistic strategies used in speech play and verbal art include cross-linguistically common processes such as high pitch, vowel lengthening, and use of creaky voice and other voice qualities. They also include typologically unique strategies such as the distortion of sibilant consonants, vowel lowering, and idiomatic tags which set up humorous frames of interaction, such as one in

which interlocutors are addressed in the third person. The more complex strategies of verbal art build from speech play, and include common resources such as anecdotes, myths, and song. The unique genres of Naso verbal art include *tjlōkwo rong* ‘profound words’, which formally resemble the parallel poetic couplet *difrasismos* (Garibay 1964) widespread across the greater geographical region of Mesoamerica. See section 6.3 for detailed elaboration on profound words.

#### **1.4.2 How SPVA strategies are interpreted in context**

I show how these specific speech play and verbal art strategies are employed in social exercises of the imagination and creativity surrounding two themes of Naso life: vitality, and nostalgia. Analysis of specific texts in context reveals that Naso speakers index their complex identities, including their indigeneity, through profound words embedded in nostalgic rumination, and they index their agility, wit, and self-teasing traits in humorous or playful interactions. The nostalgic function of profound words is analyzed as working through principles of ambiguity, vagueness, and synonymy, where these mechanisms explain cases of verbal art that younger generations identify productively (see section 6.5.4).

#### **1.4.3 Interplay between grammar and speech play and verbal art (SPVA)**

Woodbury (1998) coins the term *interwovenness* to refer to interplay of how affective morphemes evoke affective interpretations, and vice versa, how some linguistic patterns are interpreted as affective, even if they accidentally contain certain sounds or incidentally overlap in certain forms. The interplay in Naso between verbal art and grammar is complex and mutually influencing:

- (1) Speech play and verbal art (SPVA) draws from grammar, and manipulates variable features in novel ways which carry social significance

(2) Features of SPVA *leak* into the everyday grammar or are conventionalized; ordinary parts of language which accidentally *pattern* as SPVA are metapragmatically *interpreted* as SPVA

#### **1.4.4 Geographical context and areal influence**

Contact with other languages in the geographical region have led to the spreading of expressive features found in speech play and verbal art. Naso shows structural and lexical similarities to Kuna, Bribri, and Cabécar *difrasismos*. Second, there is possible historical contact from Nahuatl *difrasismos* due to semantic similarities in prestigious domains (Christian religion, politics, and spirituality). Third, there are possible contact effects from English Creole: word-final sibilants, ideophones as a pervasive strategy in general, and ejectives /p'/ and /tʃ'/. The effect of language contact on Naso speech play and verbal art forms will also be taken up in future research.

## Chapter 2: Naso life and language

### 2.1 NASO GEOGRAPHY AND POPULATION

The Naso territory is known locally to Nasos by the autonym Naso Tjër Di or Naso Tjër Ybi Di (literally, *Tjër* ‘grandmother shaman’, *ybi* ‘*sukia*<sup>4</sup>, *di* ‘river’). Naso people live in the basin of the Teribe and San San Rivers in the Panamanian province<sup>5</sup> of Bocas del Toro. The territory’s unofficial northern limits are Costa Rica and the Sixaola River, to the west and south it is delimited by the International Park La Amistad and the Bosque Palo Seco protected rainforest, and to the east its limits are the Caribbean coastal towns that include Almirante, Changuinola, and Guabito. Nasos often refer to how their traditional limits of their land were much different; they used to occupy a larger space through the coastal region and islands of Bocas del Toro before the Spaniards arrived, at which point they fled up into the mountains.

In *Figure 1* below, the twelve Teribe communities which have an elementary school are represented by yellow dots, along the Teribe and San san Rivers. As shown in the scale, the inhabited Teribe territory today covers an area less than ten miles in diameter. In *Figure 2*, the location of the Teribe territory, indicated by the blue star, is placed within its Central American context.

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of *ybi* or *sukia* in Spanish arises throughout the dissertation. Across Central America, the term *sukia* refers to the equivalent of a shaman or medicine man or woman. The social role of the *sukia* is intimately linked with traditional knowledge and authority.

<sup>5</sup> The Panamanian division of the nation includes, in top-down order, the following, where the particular locations of Naso people are given in parentheses: *provincias* ‘provinces’ (Bocas del toro), *distrito* ‘district’ (Bocas del Toro), *corregimiento* ‘subdivision’ (Teribe).



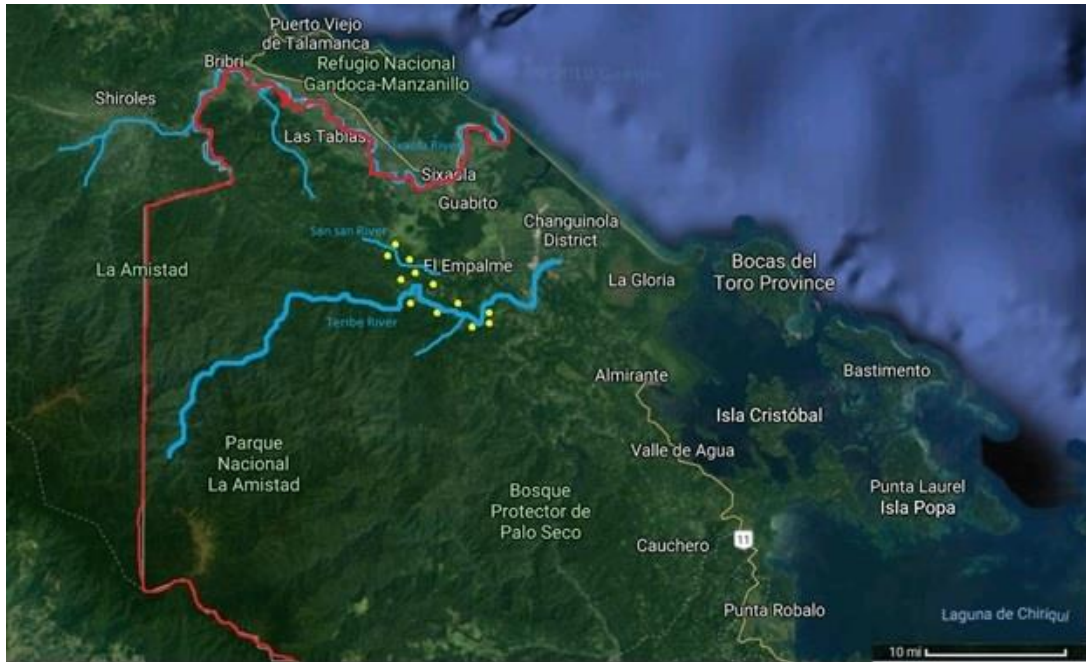


Figure 1. Map. Teribe communities and local ecology.

Today, in year 2018, I estimate about 70% of people who identify as Naso live outside of the Teribe territory. This number has risen drastically from what I estimate was about 10% in year 2000. In year 2000, the Nasos who lived outside of the Teribe territory mostly occupied squatted land just outside of the Teribe territory in El Empalme and Guabito showed in the map above. The main reason for moving out of the Teribe Territory *then* used to be to continue public education past elementary school. Today, more Nasos have migrated to Panama, where I estimate about 30% of the migrant Nasos (30% of all Nasos living outside of Teribe territory), mostly young adults, have moved for better work opportunities, since there are very few work opportunities accessible to Nasos in Bocas del Toro.

## CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



Produced by the Cartographic Research Lab  
University of Alabama

Figure 2. Map. Teribe Territory in Central American and Caribbean context. *Produced by the Cartographic Research Lab, University of Alabama.*

## 2.2 NASO SOCIETY, POLITICS, AND GOVERNANCE

The Naso political system is a complex mixed system, largely due to the combination of distinct power systems: the traditional Naso monarchy, and the integration of Panamanian political governance through the recent (1990) establishment of the Teribe territory as a *corregimiento* ‘subdivision’ of Changuinola city.

The traditional Naso monarchy consists of a mixed monarch-democratic system, where the Santana family carries the line of kings or queens, but because there are many different family units with the Santana last name, they postulate several candidates for the entire Naso population to select among by a democratic popular vote. In the history of the Naso monarchy, there has been one queen, and the rest have been kings. While the king receives no income, he is recognized by

Nasos as the traditional and political leader who makes all the important social, economic, and political decisions that affect Nasos. He is also recognized nationally and internationally as the head of the Naso people.

The Naso territory consists of several important landmarks and places of human dwellings, where traditionally, different clans occupy different areas of land. Since the Panamanian government began to build schools in the 1970's across the territory, certain places gained a higher profile in terms of social benefits such as scholarships, food aid, latrine compounds, and educational workshops and organizations provided by the Panamanian government. Since then Nasos have become more incorporated into the Panamanian governmental structure, at its climactic decision in year 1990 when then King Cesar Santana signed off on the admittance of the Teribe Territory as a *corregimiento* 'subdivision' of the Changuinola city district, which created a government position of a Naso *representante* similar to a mayor that reports to the Panamanian political structure. The representative receives a high salary paid by the Panamanian government.

## **2.3 LANGUAGE SHIFT AND ENDANGERMENT**

Of an approximate population of 5,000 people who ethnically identify as Naso, I estimate about 1,000 of these have some command of Naso, where about half of these are semi-fluent to varying degrees along with Spanish entrenchment, and the other half are fluent in Naso alongside either balanced bilingualism or Naso dominance. The vast majority of children of Naso parents do not speak Naso.

### **2.3.1 Language contact**

Besides contact with Spanish since Conquest began, Nasos have also been in contact with several other peoples who speak different languages. The longest standing contact is perhaps with populations who speak other Chibchan languages such as Bribri, Cabécar, and Ngäbere, and live nearby (Gabb 1875). The relationship with the Bribri and Cabécar especially is marked by a history

of territorial and political warfare that is said to have taken place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was quite a bit of contact with Mískitu people from Nicaragua who had allied with the British and begun political warfare against the Spanish over indigenous territories across southern Central America including the Naso area (Helms 1983). In the last two hundred years there was a large and rapid migration of English Creole speakers from Caribbean islands, mainly Jamaica, to work on the Panamanian canal and on banana plantations in Bocas del Toro (Marquardt 2001). The variety of English Creole in Bocas del Toro has since undergone changes and is known as Guari Guari by locals, and its speakers have also been in contact with Naso speakers. Although the landscape in the area is abundant with linguistic diversity and indigenous people for the most part speak Spanish, multilingualism in other indigenous languages is not a common feature among individuals. I speculate that this may be related to the historical political tension between different groups and the drive to maintain ethnic identity and independence.

*Figure 3* below illustrates the social groups which are currently in contact with Nasos. These include the Ngäbe (who speak Ngäbere), Buglé (Buglere), Bribri (Bribri), Cabécar (Cabécar), Térraba or Broran (extinct), Boruca (extinct), Latinos (Spanish), and Guari Guari (English Creole).

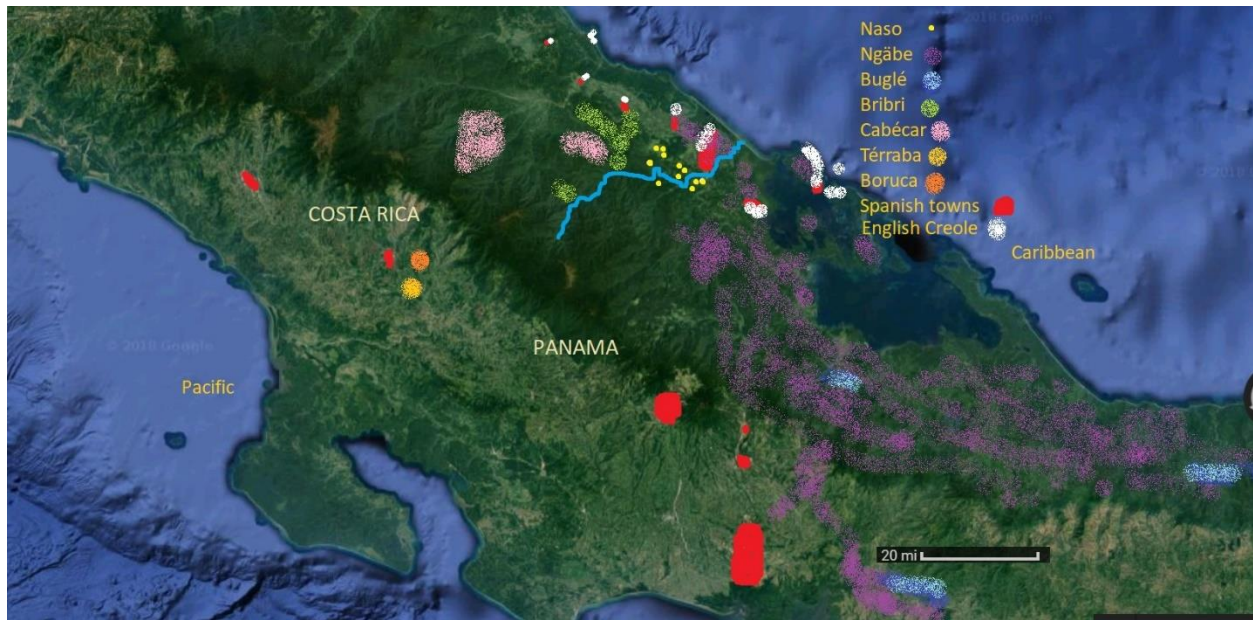


Figure 3. Map. Teribe Territory and social context.

### 2.3.2 Mixing with non-Nasos

In the Naso territory, Nasos are aware of linguistic diversity in the bordering area and it is a prominent subject of conversation. In most close proximity is the ethnic Ngäbe group, who has infringed on Naso territory and are seen as a great threat since they are the largest indigenous population in Panama and they have been intermarrying with Nasos. In Bocas del Toro, Ngäbes are the majority social population and have most socio-economic and educational opportunities, which they win instead of Nasos, which further perpetuates the marginalization and resentment of Nasos towards Ngäbes. Older Nasos have a strict ideology of prioritizing language purism and cultural purism by not mixing with other ethnic groups, and cite the cases of inter-marriage between other ethnic groups as detrimental to the vitality of their language and culture. In Guabito, a town in the Bocas del Toro province outside of the Naso territory, there are more cases of Nasos intermarrying with Ngäbe, Bribri, Afro-Caribbeans, and Latinos, but it is still on a whole not seen positively by Nasos.

Naso and Ngäbere are not mutually intelligible, and have about as much similarity as English and German share. Nasos have picked up a few basic Ngäbere words, the most common of these include *ñantore* ‘hello’, *ñagare* ‘no’, *brare* ‘man’, *meri bonuare* ‘pretty woman’. Nasos and Ngäbes at one time had interaction in the banana plantations, but very few, if any, Nasos have continued working there. When Nasos and Ngäbes intermarry, they end up speaking Spanish to each other, and their children grow up with Spanish as their first language. Nasos stereotypically see Ngäbes as very different and almost non-human in their culture because they claim some Ngäbes practice polygamy within households where men have several wives, and because women often have many kids and give them away (often around ten or more). Also they are said to eat some animals that Nasos don’t eat, such as some toads, squirrels, and monkeys. Nasos imitate the Ngäbere language by calling attention to the nasal onsets [ŋ] or [ɲ], which are very common word initially in Ngäbere and prohibited in Naso.

Some Nasos have intermarried with Bribris and gone to live in Bribri territory, mostly in Yorkin, Costa Rica. In those cases, Nasos also end up communicating mostly in Spanish, and their kids may learn some Bribri but mostly Spanish. Bribri culture is more similar to Naso culture, so Nasos see them as peers and it is not necessarily a stigma to marry them, perhaps because there are no current conflicts over land or other political conflicts. Rather, they have been uniting to gain political power. However, there was a long documented history of war between Nasos and Bribris, stories which Nasos still tell today, because Bribris exterminated the last Naso *sukias*. Nasos fear and respect Bribris for this reason today. Because Nasos today have little contact with Bribri speakers, the majority are not aware of many words in the Bribri language. Nasos do not know enough about Bribri to imitate the language except point out some sounds that they find pleasing (see discussion in Chapter 4 on *Sibilants* in 4.2.3).

There are also a few Afro-Caribbeans who have married into Naso families. The history between Nasos and the Afro-Caribbean population is more recent than that with other indigenous populations. The stories of Nasos encounters with them are mostly limited to interactions where Afro-Caribbeans came into the Naso territory looking to barter Naso livestock such as pigs or

chicken for outside basic tools and materials, around one hundred years ago. There are a few ‘regulars’ who would come into the territory such as Kjokkë Lincon, and most of the stories Nasos tell hilariously depict the culture clash between Nasos and Afro-Caribbeans, which are so different and they hardly understand each other. Most stories stem from lack of communication, or Nasos playing tricks on Afro-Caribbeans, much like the trickster tales in their canon. Afro-Caribbeans are known to Nasos for being extremely expressive with their body language and words, and this can be seen in the Naso borrowing of *cha’* or *cho’*, a common expression of disbelief or disapproval common in the vernacular Caribbean Spanish. There are many other borrowings from English Creole into Naso that are not recognized as borrowings but it is apparent they are, such as *sop-sho* ‘soap-MASS’ *janker* ‘handkerchief’, *petiko* ‘petticoat’, *trer* ‘thread’, which were probably borrowed from trade between Nasos and Afro-Caribbeans within the past hundred years. Afro-Caribbeans have populated the Caribbean coast since their arrival, and Nasos who go to the coast to trade find themselves amid a large population of blacks, a very different color skin than themselves, and this is a source of anxiety for Nasos and one motivation to create jokes. A common Naso allusion today about when an individual goes to sell something on the island or for a short trip is for Nasos to make a joking reference to how they might end up trapped or isolated among this foreign skin tone, or among whites as well.

### **2.3.3 Naso language endangerment**

Most likely due to intense contact with Spanish, Naso exhibits loss of paradigmatic complexity in several of its linguistic sub-systems, for example, its positional verb paradigm, its numeral classifier paradigm, its phonological inventory, and serial verb constructions. Additionally, form-dependent expressions (Woodbury 1998) such as the verbal art genre *tjlōkwo rong* ‘profound words’, is a genre whose endangerment Nasos are highly aware of and unhappy about. Form-dependent expressions are patterns of the language that speakers constitute to be verbal art, where they see a link between the formal constitution of the expression and the poetic

message that it conveys. Another linguistic feature that is threatened are Naso ideophones, most likely because of Western socio-educational perspectives that view these as childish (see Nuckolls (2003)) and unacceptable forms of literacy (see Webster (2014)).

Perhaps in reaction and response to shift and reduction of Naso linguistic systems, the Spanish language is a resource of new material that bilingual Nasos manipulate for creative purposes, especially for humorous ends, as is described in detail in Chapter 5 on Recreation.

#### **2.4 DISTRIBUTED VARIETAL KNOWLEDGE**

I use the term “distributed varietal knowledge” to refer to the Naso worldview that different life forms are aware of different types of knowledge and have different ways of expressing it through linguistic variation. This concept is used to explain and account for the tolerance of the abnormally high amount of free variation in verbal art forms such as ideophones and profound words. Diversity and variation of life forms includes differences between human clans, animal and plant species, and other natural microecologies. In Naso worldview, species diversity, including dialectal or clan-based variability, is democratically accepted as part of natural ecological variation, but they think through different perspectives and epistemologies. Crucially, life species are usually alluded to in *pairs*, where two similar species, perhaps which co-exist, are used side by side as one single but complex concept. Species pairing is one of the most common types of lexical content in ‘profound words’, as illustrated in the subsections that follow directly.

The importance of ecological variation has been noted in other rainforest and jungle-like areas, particularly in the Amazon, but in different ways. While for the Naso different species metaphorically inhabit different planes and worlds, in the Amazon there seems to be more interaction between planes. Janis Nuckolls (2010) describes how Pastaza Quichua speakers align with animals and other non-human life forms which live in Amazonian Ecuador. Pattie Epps discusses how Hup people ritualistically name the variation in rivers and creeks in spiritual rites as a metaphorical way to indicate that transformative changes or processes are occurring (Soares and Epps, forthcoming). Martin Kohlberger (forthcoming) reports how the Shiwiari, when going



hunting, avoid the names of the species they are hunting and use alternative names so that the animals may not find out, suggesting that they recognize human language.

The concept of distributed varietal knowledge is intimately linked with the concept of “distributed knowledge”, which refers to the phenomenon of knowledge being aggregated across individuals, where each person or species has unique knowledge that is considered to be particular to them.

#### **2.4.1 Cosmological planes**

As Reinaldo González describes in the Mythology volume of the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Naso cosmology includes eight different hierarchically related layers of spiritual planes, each inhabited by different life forms including plants, animals, and different types of spirits, where these planes mirror the complexity of the local physical ecosystems or habitats (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 255).

The logical principle is that specific animals and related species are endogenous to a specific physical place. The cultural importance of this view is reflected in the large amount of ‘profound words’ that refer to specific place names, such as mountainous dwellings *dlupso kjropso* ‘THE DWELLING OF GIANTS’, or creeks *pjrodi semdi* ‘THE RIVER HABITAT OF QUETZAL SPECIES’. The human plane is referred to with the profound word which extends across many variations including *kjokyo diyo* or *kjok e di e* or *kjokga long diga long* ‘HOMELAND’. One spiritual plane of non-human but human-like spirits is called *pjang urwa yo urwa* ‘IN BETWEEN CLOUDS AND EARTHQUAKES’.

#### **2.4.2 Human clans**

The overwhelming majority of Nasos acknowledge that their clan system and membership is of central societal importance, and they can name around fifteen different Naso clans, each with different labor specialties, physical characteristics, and linguistic practices. Although today the traditional Naso clan system has disintegrated and reduced to extended families, the nostalgia and

identity of clan membership remains strong, even if the majority of Nasos are not aware of which clan they belong to. Nasos describe human clans democratically as different species, where differences are widely accepted and not imagined as existing hierarchically—each clan is known for particular traits, and these characterizations are acknowledged and not a reason for bias or discrimination. Some clan names are formally characteristic of profound words, found fixed in songs, such as *naliong keliongso* ‘PEOPLE FROM NALIONG AND KELIONG’ and *kjoliiong diliongso* ‘PEOPLE FROM KJOLIIONG AND DILIONG’. The ideology of distributed varietal knowledge in Naso clans is presumed to be a main reason for accepting variation between the linguistic variables and speech patterns of different social groups, because people refer to the ideology as explicatory of linguistic variation.

The characteristics that Nasos describe in Naso clans include speech practices, and these are very insightful because they lay out the way that Nasos stereotype the way that they use language; these coincidentally align with particular speech play and verbal art strategies and the way they get used. As seen above, they also align with ‘profound words’ that characterize people. There are several stereotypes of how Naso clans characteristically use language, some of these include: clans which are reserved (Shonuso), clans which gossip (Kjorbaso), and clans which are verbally skilled and good at holding conversation (Magroso).

In joking conversations, Nasos often comment that whenever a person has an individual personality that fits into one of these categories, they are referred to as belonging to the clan associated with each—which overrides one’s familial clan. For example, if one’s family group is known to be associated with a particular clan, as is often the case, and an individual exhibits language practices of another clan, then they are said to belong to the other clan. Outsiders that adhere to a Naso-like linguistic practice are likewise jokingly labelled as belonging to that particular clan.

### 2.4.3 Personality traits

Some common and recurrent personalities and characteristics of people are found in profound words, they include those who are *jyōsho shmisho* ‘LAZY’, *ae mae* ‘HOPELESS’, *llbi ka shru ka* ‘DUMB’, *tbla plublu* ‘OLD’, *dwlasga mibga* ‘YOUNG’, *worye karye* ‘IN LOVE’, *llang jik sro jik* ‘FILTHY’, *woreso kareso* ‘BEAUTIFUL’ or *asde drusde* ‘DARN FOREIGNERS’. These align with the theme of distributed varietal knowledge in that they show how there are different types of individuals that can also be classified by personality or other attributive characteristics.

### 2.4.4 Non-human living species

In addition to variation of life forms at the level of cosmological planes or of human characteristics, Nasos also regularly notice the variety of plant, animal, and mineral life forms and how they are manipulated and noticed by humans. Many of these species are referred to in profound words, such as *apsi yapsi* ‘INSECTS’, *kjwesi shgwłōsi* ‘RATS’, *kjlōwa sriwa* ‘the beauty of cricket songs’, and *sklāgwo kugwo* ‘bird species that can be hunted’. The term *dbuglo lōglo* ‘endearment term for men’ literally refers to palm tree species.

## 2.5 LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

Nasos have several ideologies surrounding their language, and unsurprisingly, some of these are contradictory. Some include language purism and anti-mixing, which does not align with the acceptance of language variation and diversity, the latter of which is an ancestral and valued characteristic of their language as discussed above. Another important language ideology is commodification of language as a tool that brings power through knowledge. These three common ideologies are discussed below.

### 2.5.1 Language variation

The Naso ideology of language variation goes along with the concept of distributed varietal knowledge mentioned previously. One type of language variation are sociolinguistic variables that exist between different clan, such as a variable pattern of regressive nasalization, a split in the /tk/ phoneme into either /t/ vs /k/ in initial position, and a difference in vowel spaces. Even random and individual phonetic tendencies are interpreted as coming from an ancestral or clan influence.

Nasos often mention and joke about how their ancestors were very different from present-day Nasos in that they were more diverse and knowledgeable about the world and species around them. One related point of explanation is that in Naso myths (known as *historia* or *cuentos* in Chapter 4), Naso ancestors are imagined as humans that interacted more intimately with non-human life forms such as spirits and animals, which resulted in different cognitive beliefs, behaviors, and linguistic abilities. In contemporary naso thought, this made Naso ancestors both more powerful but also more intellectually diverse from the Nasos today.

Nasos associate variation in language with variation in thought. They frequently use the phrase *nasoga woyotlik oblë oblë* ‘Nasos think differently (among themselves)’, in order to mean that each person has their own thoughts, and there is little unification among individuals. For example, as Daniel Villagra explains in an interview, Nasos are not like the Kuna and other ethnic groups such as the Ngäbe who have been able to unite among themselves and fight for their rights. Unlike those groups, Nasos are just beginning to unite in political thoughts that will bring them to reach accords in order to fight for their rights.

### 2.5.2 Language purism/no mixing

It is common for a society to hold the more conservative forms of language with greater respect, often where formulaic forms are of utmost importance (Hill 1992). A Naso ideology of linguistic purism contributes a negative view towards language mixing and code-switching. However, the younger generation that have been mixing more with outsiders have shifted perspectives and are not as ideologically opposed to mixing as the older generations were. Nasos

code-switch regularly, and if this is called into attention it becomes a source of momentary embarrassment, which is most likely due to traumatic memories of public shaming by Spanish teachers in primary school when they spoke their maternal language. Code switching or even the use of ideophones in Spanish is also cause of embarrassment (and, see an example in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.2 on Longino, the code-switching fisherman). Nevertheless, like other verbal art of Naso, ideophones emerge in conversation when speakers use them animatedly to index social alignments.

Maintainance of linguistic and cultural purism is important to Nasos for political reasons: they currently do not have the same territorial rights that the other indigenous groups in Panama have, and since they are a smaller minority, they feel threatened and a need to maintain their unique identity.

### **2.5.3 Language commodification/stealing/wars**

One common way in which Nasos view their language is as a tool or commodity that brings power. This commodification of language can be traced back to their historical stories of inter-ethnic wars with other Chibchan tribes including Bribri and Cabécar groups from the 1800's. Nasos discuss how in guerilla warfare they would capture Cabécar or Bribri children as slaves with the intention of learning their language as a tool to learn the secrets and cosmological powers of non-Naso sukias. The practice of taking children as slaves to learn their languages and verbal art is widespread in the region, and also reported for Bribri in Cervantes (2001). The cosequences are evident in the lexicon of songs across languages. For example, Adolfo Constenla Umaña (1996) documented that Bribri has a song called the Sorbong 'Mole (animal) dance' which consists of Naso lexicon, and the Bribri practice it without knowing what it means. Although the Naso no longer sing or dance the Sorbong song, they are aware of the cultural significance of the *sorbong*. Songs and verbal art such as myths or profound words are powerful and dangerous, so much that they were motive for keeping non-Nasos within the home as informants. The danger and power of

verbal art has also been noticed in several lines of research (Keane 1997, Kroskrity 1992), as well as the secrecy with which certain codes of speech have been guarded (Debenport 2015).

In Naso popular view, each language is powerful, and while some may have more prestige than others (Spanish, English), it is beneficial to know different languages, even Ngäbere and Bribri, because they bring the advantage of more knowledge. This is similar to the concept of the motive for learning diverse languages described for multilingual Western Africa (Di Carlo & Good, 2017)— desire for new modes of information. However, in Central America this concept does not contribute to multilingualism, perhaps because of strong identity between language and ethnic identity tied in with history of inter-ethnic strife. Again, borrowing occurs across verbal art genres such as song and diphthastic profound words in Central America, and see more detailed discussion in Chapter 7. In the Amazon, lexical borrowing is also particularly associated with verbal art forms and not ordinary lexicon (Beier et al. 2002; Chang and Michael 2014; Epps 2005; 2013).

The value of language and its commodification is one of the reasons that language documentation and description work across Central America is fraught with political pushback. Besides the overshadowing history of political inequality in the area between indigenous and White Spanish groups, where the latter continue to exploit and usurp indigenous land and natural resources, *language* has been seen as a natural resource, even before Conquest. One Naso view is of their language as an objectifiable possession. The word *tjlōkwo* ‘language, word’, is derived from the verb *tjlē* ‘to speak’, and what used to be an obligatory possessive marker /-kwo/ that marks body parts and other inalienable possessions like *sdekwo* ‘culture’, in addition to language. In the Naso documentation project, my collaborators preferred that I pay them by the *word* rather than by the *hour*, even if it was not to their benefit, which further shows the commodification of their language.

One further point that contributes to the economic value of information is the current educational practice in the region of Bocas del Toro, where schoolchildren are sent to investigate information, but since libraries are few and inaccessible, most of the population of students go to

the internet café to pay the employees to find the information and print it out for them. This widespread practice has contributed to the notion that knowledge and information is something that can be bought and sold in a transactional scheme. One individual in the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia project has sold information from the work they produced, when non-Naso students came to their house asking for written information on the topic they had written about.

## **2.6 STYLES OF SPEAKING**

In the following, I use ethnography and impressions from how Naso speakers characterize their own language in order to categorize different styles of speaking. Some of these generalized styles that people call attention to include *wēlē* ‘clear, precise’, and *lldök* ‘disorganized’. Additionally, I discuss clan-particular styles of speaking, as well as an ancestral register of speech.

### **2.6.1 Indirect, monologic, relaxed**

One Naso speaking style, used commonly in conversation and in political reunions, is a lengthy, relaxed monologue. Nasos contrast this style with the way that Latinos speak, which, as Nicanor Villagra once told me, is direct and to the point, much like eagles with sharp and accurate eyesight, Latinos are strategic and purposeful in their words.

### **2.6.2 *Wēlē* ‘clear, precise’**

*Wēlē* ‘clear, precise’, is a style of speech attributed to the sharp style associated with agile Latinos who negotiate deals. It is also attributed to skilled Naso elders who use their words in concise and powerful ways. For example, certain grandmothers who are known for having a skillful way of talking are said to talk *clearly*.

### 2.6.3 *Lldök* ‘disorganized’

*Lldök* ‘scattered’, is an incompetent style that characterizes discourse that changes between several different topics without staying on one track. According to Nasos, foreigners, such as Spanish and English native speakers, more commonly change discourse topics in shorter periods of time in comparison to Naso speakers. Below is a quote in (1) that Daniel Villagra used at the end of a conversation where I had interviewed him and talked about several different topics, to refer to the haphazard organization of the discourse.

- (1) *shi la-no lldök le tjabga-rë*  
1PL talk-PFV disorganized say ancestor-ERG  
‘as our ancestors said, we talked in a disorganized way’

The more preferred Naso speaking style is to stay on one or few closely related discourse topics.

### 2.6.4 Clan-particular styles

Nasos often comment that each clan has a different style of speaking, as mentioned previously: clans which are reserved (Shönuso), clans which gossip (Kjorbaso), and clans which are verbally skilled and good at holding conversation (Magroso).

### 2.6.5 *Tjlökwo shkëso* ‘nighttime speech’

Unlike the complex ritual genres that have been documented for Kuna (Sherzer 1983, 1990) and Bribri (Cervantes 2001), which both have traditions of shamans or medicine men also known as *sukias* who use ritual language, Naso does not maintain this tradition. However, Nasos widely acknowledge that they used to have *ybi* ‘*sukias*’ who practiced a ritual style called *tjlökwo shkëso* ‘nighttime speech’. According to elders’ recollections, this would occur at in a special house, where the *sukia* would converse with spirits at night. Some elders say they would use a special lexicon and profound words, and others say they would chant melodically, but they do not recall the melody. In any case, commonfolk were not able to understand this language, because



spiritually, it took place on a different cosmological plane, strictly between the *ybi* and spirits. According to Naso history, the last practicing Naso *ybi* was murdered by the Bribri over one hundred years ago.

## 2.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I outlined some Naso social practices and ideologies surrounding the use of their language. I showed how Nasos have an ideology of language purism and aversion towards language mixing, but how verbal art provides a place where borrowing from other languages can occur, which will be elaborated on in the chapters to follow. Within (or despite) the ideology of linguistic purism, Nasos respect and value the linguistic and cultural diversity of each Naso clan, and of each human language—and use them to gain intellectual knowledge and power.

Naso profound words allude to the ecological, intellectual, and cultural wisdom inherent in the forms themselves. I argue that this wisdom is partly associated with linguistic diversity. Ideologies surrounding Naso speech play and verbal art show the predominant value of linguistic diversity and variation.

In other societies, the use of different languages can attribute more power to the speaker using them, through obfuscation. Malinowski (1935) explains the power of obscurity in poetic forms through the “coefficient of weirdness”, which is correlated with a complex socio-cultural system. We see this in the scientific and political terminology that English borrowed from French and Latin as well. Although Naso profound words are used in everyday situations by any speaker, they carry an underlying tone of obscure knowledge of other life forms, whether they be human or non-human.

The following chapter (Chapter 3) on ‘Naso linguistics’ introduces the regular linguistic processes of Naso, and Chapter 4 ‘Speech play and verbal art resources’ shows how the linguistics of speech play and verbal art strategies distort the regular grammatical patterns of ordinary Naso language as a means to create hyperdiversity that engenders the saliency and meaningful effectiveness of speech play and verbal art.

## Chapter 3: Naso linguistics

The following is basic background on topics in Naso linguistics that will be useful for understanding the speech play and verbal art strategies discussed in Chapter 4.

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Naso language, also known by the exonym Teribe (ISO 639-3: tfr), has been described in a sketch grammar written by Juan Diego Quesada (2000), as well as by linguists from the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Koontz 1977, Schatz-Koontz 1986) and New Tribes missionaries (Oakes 2001). Naso is a Chibchan language spoken fluently by about 500 people, and semi-fluently by about 500 more people. It belongs to the Isthmic subgroup of Chibchan, where the subgroup includes Térraba, Boruca, Bribri, Cabécar, Ngäbere, Buglere, Kuna, Dorasque, and Chánguena. The tree below in Figure 4 summarizes Adolfo Constenla Umaña's conclusions (1981, 2008) about the family's membership and subgrouping.

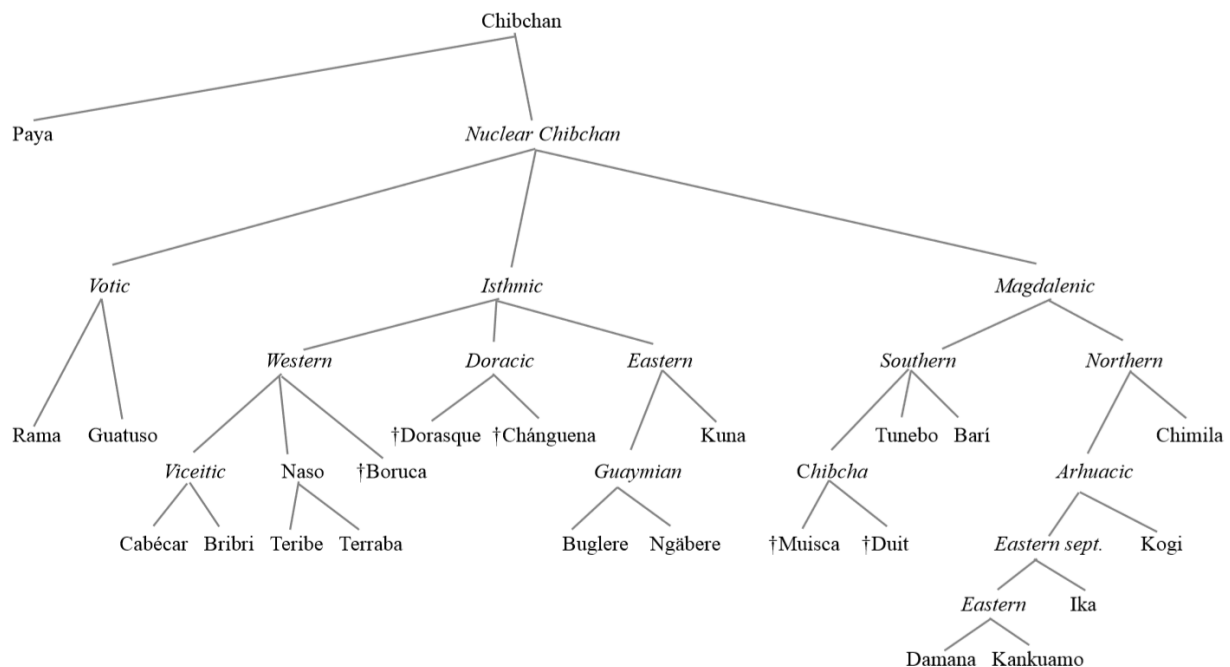


Figure 4. Chibchan language family

### 3.2 TYPOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Typologically salient features of the Naso language include a complex phonology including onset clusters up to four segments long, regressive vowel harmony, and a marginally distinctive use of tone. Naso has strict SV order in intransitive clauses, and mainly OVS order for transitive constructions, though I characterize it as an ergative case-marking system. Naso syntax is best characterized as agglutinating and synthetic, and it exhibits extensive zero strategy in phrasal and clausal coordination. Concerning its verb phrase, Naso is notable for its system of positional verb paradigm, egocentric motion verb paradigm, and also serial verb constructions. Concerning its noun phrase, Naso is notable for its system of numeral classifiers as well as prevalent strategy of quantifier float. Due to contact with Spanish, many of these linguistic subsystems have been shifting radically to accommodate to Spanish structures.

### 3.3 PHONOLOGY

The phonological system of Naso is in flux, most likely due to heavy accommodation to Spanish. While there are gradient phonetic differences in accommodation to Spanish phonology between speakers depending on age, I distinguish between what I call a *conservative* Naso phonology and an *innovative* Naso phonology in this description. The former represents language of older speakers, usually those over twenty-five years of age. The latter represents language of younger speakers, usually those under twenty years of age. There is a sociolinguistic reason to distinguish between a conservative and innovative phonology, and it is based on language purism. Conservative language has prestige, and speech of younger speakers is seen as lacking in prestige. Speakers often call attention to the particular differences in phonemes in the innovative speech as lacking in prestige. All else being equal, the older the speaker, the more conservative and valuable

the speech. Features of conservative speech include the following, where (2a) and (2b) are phonological differences, and (2c-e) are phonetic differences.

(2) a. Preservation of glide onsets

**[ybi]** (vs. [bi]) ‘sukia’

**[ygak]** (vs. [gak]) ‘tamale’

b. Preservation of complex consonant clusters

**[ʃgwor]** (vs. [ʃwor]) ‘traditional gathering house’

c. Heavy nasalization of nasal vowels

d. Heavy aspiration of aspirated consonants

e. Longer, more pronounced voicoid transitions between consonant clusters

**[dʰboŋ]** (vs. [dboŋ]) ‘tiger’

### 3.3.1 Consonants

There are 27 Naso consonants: /p/, /t/, /k/, /ʔ/, /b/, /d/, /g/, /p<sup>h</sup>/, /t<sup>h</sup>/, /k<sup>h</sup>/, /s/, /ʃ/, /h/, /z/, /ʒ/, /s<sup>h</sup>/, /ʃ<sup>h</sup>/, /t̃s/, /t̃ʃ/, /d̃z/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /r/, /l/, /w/, and /j/. In the conservative consonantal system of Naso, stops and fricatives contrast in voicing as well as aspiration. These Naso consonants are shown in *Table 1* below.

		<b>Bilabial</b>	<b>Dento- alveolar</b>	<b>Alveo-palatal</b>	<b>Palatal</b>	<b>Velar</b>	<b>Glottal</b>
<b>Stop</b>	voiceless	p	t			k	ʔ
	voiced	b	d			g	
	aspirated	p <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>			k <sup>h</sup>	
<b>Fricative</b>	voiceless		s	ʃ			h
	voiced		z	ʒ			
	aspirated		s <sup>h</sup>	ʃ <sup>h</sup>			
<b>Affricate</b>	voiceless		tʃ	tʃ			
	voiced			(dʒ)			
<b>Nasal</b>		m	n			ŋ	
<b>Trill</b>			r				
<b>Lateral flap</b>			l				
<b>Glide</b>		w			j		

Table 1. Conservative Naso consonants

### 3.3.1.1 Stops

In word-initial position, non-glottalic Naso stops have a three-way contrast between plain voiceless stops, plain voiced stops, and aspirated voiceless stops. In word-medial position there appears<sup>6</sup> to be a contrast between voiced and plain voiceless stops, and in word-final position there is a neutralization to plain voiceless stops, as shown in (3).

(3) *word-initial position*: voiced, voiceless, and aspirated stops

*word-medial position*: voiced and voiceless stops

*word-final position*: voiceless stops only

In fast speech, voiced bilabial and velar stops are optionally realized as fricatives in intervocalic position, as in examples (4a-b) show.

(4) a. /k<sup>h</sup>obe/ [k<sup>h</sup>obe] ~ [k<sup>h</sup>oβe]

b. /kaga/ [kaga] ~ [kaya] ‘chief’

<sup>6</sup> There is a reduced frequency of underlying voiceless stops in word-medial position; most of these appear to be historically complex forms where the morpheme begins with a voiceless stop or ends in a voiceless stop (see /u-ko/ ‘to the house’; /ʃup-a/ ‘palm fruit’).

According to Constenla (1981), Chibchan \*d became /r/, except in word-initial position where it conserved /d/. This explains why there are no intervocalic /d/ or [ð] in Naso.

Voiceless stops are realized as voiced stops intervocalically, as shown in examples (5a-c) below.

- (5) a. /p<sup>h</sup>it-e/ [p<sup>h</sup>ide] ‘finish-STAT’  
 b. /wlɛ̃p-e/ [wlɛ̃be] ‘calm-STAT’  
 c. /hek-e/ [hege] ‘go-STAT’

### 3.3.1.1.1 Bilabials: /p<sup>h</sup>/ [p<sup>h</sup>], /p/ [p] ~ [b], /b/ [b]

The distribution of bilabials in a phonological word is shown below in (6).

- |     |                                 |     |                            |     |                    |
|-----|---------------------------------|-----|----------------------------|-----|--------------------|
| (6) | /p <sup>h</sup> /               | vs. | /p/                        | vs. | /b/                |
|     | /p <sup>h</sup> ɪ/ ‘to stick’   |     | /pɪ/ ‘to sleep’            |     | /bɪ/ ‘dance (n.)’  |
|     | /p <sup>h</sup> ɔk/ ‘two’       |     | /pɔk/ ‘IDEO:hitting sound’ |     | /bɔk/ ‘piece; eye’ |
|     | /p <sup>h</sup> ir/ ‘to finish’ |     | /pɪŋ/ ‘to teach’           |     | /bɪŋ/ ‘plantain’   |
|     |                                 |     | /ʃupa/ ‘palm fruit’        |     | /oba/ ‘people’     |
|     |                                 |     | /ɪp/ ‘corn’                |     |                    |

### 3.3.1.1.2 Alveolars: /d/ [d] ~ [r], /t/ [t] ~ [d] ~ [r], /t<sup>h</sup>/ [t<sup>h</sup>]

Voiceless alveolar stops are realized as [r] before voiced consonants, e.g. /p<sup>h</sup>it-ga/ [p<sup>h</sup>irga] ‘finish-COND’. Below in (7) the distribution of alveolars in a phonological word is show.

- |     |                                |     |                       |     |                          |
|-----|--------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|--------------------------|
| (7) | /t <sup>h</sup> /              | vs. | /t/                   | vs. | /d/                      |
|     | /t <sup>h</sup> ɪ/ ‘cornfield’ |     | /tɪ/ ‘to sing’        |     | /dɪ/ ‘to care after’     |
|     | /t <sup>h</sup> ɔk/ ‘to have’  |     | /tok-ton/ ‘leave-PFV’ |     | /dɔk/ ‘to sit on top of’ |
|     | /t <sup>h</sup> a/ ‘1SG’       |     | /ta/ ‘cough’          |     | /-da/ ‘QM’               |
|     |                                |     | /wit/ ‘smooth’        |     |                          |

Across complex morphemes within words, one prevalent allophone of /d/ is [r], where there is flapping of the voiced alveolar stop following a vowel due to lenition, as in the rule /d/ → [r] / V\_. This can be seen in the contrasting examples below in (8a-b) and (9a-b).

- (8) a. /mekɪ-di/ [mekɪ-**r**ɪ] ‘mother-ERG’ (lit. ‘by the mother’)  
 b. /dgur-di/ [dgur-**d**ɪ] ‘snake-ERG’ (lit. ‘by the snake’)

- (9) a. /sok-de/ [sok-**de**] ‘POSIT:sit-QM’ (lit. ‘is he/she there?’)  
 b. /ɔto-de/ [ɔto-**re**] ‘went-QM’ (lit. ‘did he/she go?’)

This rule only applies within words and not across words, not even in fast speech as can be seen in the preservation of /d/ in the example below in (10).

- (10) /p<sup>h</sup>a dik/ [p<sup>h</sup>a **d**ik] \*[p<sup>h</sup>a rik] ‘like you’

There are several words which vary at the end of the word between between [t] and [r]. I analyze these as underlying /t/, where [r] is an allophone which appears word-finally. The reason I choose underlying /t/ is from evidence from pronouns, where I analyze that reduced pronominal forms are derived from full pronouns, as illustrated below in (11):

- (11) [-**t**] ~ [-**r**] ‘1SG’            /**t**h<sup>a</sup>/ ‘1SG’  
       [-**rwa**] ‘1PL.EXCL’            /**t**h<sup>a</sup>awa/ ‘1PL.EXCL’  
       [-**p**] ‘2SG’                    /**p**h<sup>a</sup>/ ‘2SG’

### 3.3.1.1.3 Velars: /k<sup>h</sup>/ [k], /k/ [k] ~ [g], /g/ [g]

- |      |                                   |     |                         |     |                    |
|------|-----------------------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|--------------------|
| (12) | /k <sup>h</sup> /                 | vs. | /k/                     | vs. | /g/                |
|      | /k <sup>h</sup> ɪ/ ‘to put aside’ |     | /kɪ/ ‘unripe’           |     | /gɪŋ/ ‘stone slab’ |
|      | /k <sup>h</sup> ok/ ‘time, space’ |     | /koko/ ‘outside’        |     | /gok/ ‘calabash’   |
|      | /k <sup>h</sup> ak/ ‘seven’       |     | /kagoŋ/ ‘grandchildren’ |     |                    |
|      | /ʔu-ko/ ‘to the house’            |     | /ʔugo/ ‘leaf sp.’       |     |                    |
|      |                                   |     | /pak/ ‘work’            |     |                    |

It is possible /g/ is not a phoneme that contrasts in word-medial position. The only examples found show evidence of morphological complexity, as in /ugo/ ‘leaf sp.’, which appears to be derived from /u/ ‘house’ /go/ ‘leaf’, where /ugo/ is a type of palm leaf specifically used to cover the roof of a house.

### 3.3.1.1.4 Glottal /ʔ/ [ʔ]

One way in which my analysis of the conservative Naso phonological system differs from the accounts in Quesada (2000) and Oakes (2000) is in my analysis of the glottal stop phoneme /ʔ/.

Historical evidence from the Proto-Chibchan form for ‘house’, \*hu (Constenla 1981), provides evidence that in Naso the glottal fricative became a stop in word-initial position (\*h > ʔ / #\_). This fact may or may not account for all of the glottal stops in word-initial position, because it is the case that every Naso form which begins with a vowel is either preceded by a glottal or a lengthened realization of the same vowel. In other words, the onset position is always filled by a non-syllabic segment, such that there is no Naso syllable which begins with a pure V.

The glottal [ʔ] has a restricted distribution. It is only found in word initial position: before vowels that are not lengthened, and before the highly sonorous consonants /w/, /j/, and /l/. The glottal [ʔ] may be analyzed as a consonantal segment /ʔ/ as in Analysis #1 in Table 2 below, whereas the alternative Analysis #2 is to analyze six diphthongs, seven long vowels, and a short vowel /ə/ (or alternatively for the latter, no phonemic distinction between some minimal pairs). Analysis #1 is much more simple, and the one I take. I account for the phonetically long vowels, such as those in [ʔe.ri] ‘today’, [ʔa] ‘fermented drink’, and [ʔur] ‘went’ in the table below, by explaining that this extra length is a phonetic process that applies to vowels in word-initial position which are not preceded by a consonant; my analysis is that an onset is a required phonotactic constraint of Naso. The syllabic vowel in each of these cases is extended to the leftwards onset slot, and while the vowel quality is preserved, its syllabicity is not.



	<i>Analysis #1</i>	<i>Analysis #2</i>
[ʔie] ‘to drink’	/ʔye/	/ie/
[ye] ‘to hit, to put’	/ye/	/ye/
[ʔue] ‘to eat’	/ʔwe/	/ue/
[we] ‘to bathe’	/we/	/we/
[ʔe.ri] ‘today’	/eri/	/eeri/
[ʔe.ni] ‘like so’	/ʔeni/	/eni/
[ʔa] ‘devil’	/ʔa/	/a/
[aa] ‘fermented drink’	/a/	/aa/
[ʔuɾ] ‘went’	/ʔuɾ/	/uɾ/
[ʔlu] ‘chickenpox’	/ʔlu/	/ə.lu/ or /lu/
[lu] ‘palma chonta tree’	/lu/	/lu/
[ʔu.lu] ‘sometimes’	/ʔu.lu/	/ʔu.lu/
[ʔluɾ] ‘to spill’	/ʔluɾ/	/ə.luɾ/ or /luɾ/
[lu] ‘year’	/lu/	/lu/

Table 2. Gottal stop phoneme analysis (#1)

In Naso orthography, speakers have not been used to writing a glottal stop; instead they prefer representing vowel-initial words (phonetic long vowels) as a geminate of the vowel, while words that begin with a glottal stop are represented as beginning with the vowel.

### 3.3.1.2 *Fricatives*

Like stops, non-glottalic fricatives in Naso distinguish voicing and aspiration in word-initial position, but it seems these are not distinguished in any other distribution. However, due to (historically) morphologically complex forms, there are some forms which show voiceless and

voiced contrast in word-medial and word-final distribution (see /wo-soŋ/ ‘liver-poor’ vs. /uo-zoŋ/ ‘eat-IMPER’, and /k<sup>h</sup>us/ ‘angel’ vs. /k<sup>h</sup>u-z/ ‘listen-IMPER’).

While aspirated stops have been analyzed for Naso, aspirated sibilant fricatives /s<sup>h</sup>/ and /ʃ<sup>h</sup>/ have not. My argument for these two phonemes is that they fit into the more general changes in the language that led to aspirated segments (Bermúdez, forthcoming). Several minimal distinctions have been analyzed by SIL linguists as tone distinctions, such as the high tone /ʃik/ ‘sangre de toro bird’ versus the low tone /ʃik/ ‘to pull’. However, in my analysis these are aspirated /ʃ<sup>h</sup>ik/ ‘sangre de toro bird’, which contrasts with the unaspirated /ʃik/ ‘to pull’. This analysis is cleaner than positing tone on a handful of lexicon.

In light of the lack of a current analysis of aspirated aspirated fricatives /s<sup>h</sup>/ and /ʃ<sup>h</sup>/ in the Naso language, I provide several examples of minimal pairs below which I analyze as alveolar and palatal fricatives contrasting in aspiration, which also contrast with the voiced set of fricatives.

### 3.3.1.2.1 Alveolar /s<sup>h</sup>/ [s], /s/ [s], /z/ [z]

(13)	/s <sup>h</sup> /	vs.	/s/	vs.	/z/
	/s <sup>h</sup> ɪŋ/ ‘meat’		/sɪŋ/ ‘to feed; late’		/zeŋ/ ‘cold’
	/s <sup>h</sup> er/ ‘to turn off’		/se-r/ sew-1SG.A		/zɪ-r/ ‘cut.1SG.A’
	/s <sup>h</sup> ik/ ‘careful’		/sikwo/ fish species’		
	/s <sup>h</sup> ek/ ‘IDEO:dodge’		/sek/ ‘to sew; almost’		
	/s <sup>h</sup> ɔ/ ‘horn’		/sɔk/ ‘posit:sit’		
	/s <sup>h</sup> oŋ/ ‘crooked’		/soŋ/ ‘lonely, poor’		/zoŋ/ ‘beard’
	/s <sup>h</sup> ɔ/ ‘cow horn’		/so/ ‘tapir’		/zok/ ‘body hair’
	/s <sup>h</sup> ã/ ‘wing’		/sã/ ‘black snake’		/zaŋ/ ‘to deplete’
	/s <sup>h</sup> ro/ ‘sugar cane’		/sro/ ‘urine’		/zron/ ‘to run’
			/wo-soŋ/ ‘liver-poor’		/ʔwo-zoŋ/ ‘eat-IMPER.’
			/k <sup>h</sup> us/ ‘angel’		/k <sup>h</sup> u-z/ ‘listen-IMPER’

### 3.3.1.2.2 Palatal /ʃ<sup>h</sup>/ [ʃ<sup>h</sup>], /ʃ/ [ʃ], /ʒ/ [ʒ]

(14)	/ʃ <sup>h</sup> /	vs.	/ʃ/	vs.	/ʒ/
	/ʃ <sup>h</sup> ik/ ‘to pull’		/ʃik/ ‘sangre de toro bird’		/ʒik/ ‘a fork (road, tree, river)’
	/ʃ <sup>h</sup> we/ ‘to get up’		/ʃwe-ʃwe/ ‘beige’		
	/ʃ <sup>h</sup> ak/ ‘to grab’		/ʃuk/ ‘to suck’		
			/paŋ-ʃo/ ‘clouds’		/kwonʒo/ ‘where?’
			/po-ʃarye/ ‘to get ready’		/wo-ʒen/ ‘to wake up’
			/k <sup>h</sup> iʃ/ ‘IDEO:bird sound’		

### 3.3.1.2.3 Glottal /h/ [h]

The glottal fricative phoneme /h/ is found in word-initial and word-medial position, but not word-finally. The examples below shows it contrasts with the glottal stop.

- |      |                     |            |                |
|------|---------------------|------------|----------------|
| (15) | <b>/h/</b>          | <b>vs.</b> | <b>/ʔ/</b>     |
|      | /hik/ ‘around’      |            | /ʔik/ ‘manioc’ |
|      | /hũ/ ‘here’         |            | /ʔu/ ‘house’   |
|      | /kohon/ ‘to get up’ |            | /ʔon/ ‘animal’ |

### 3.3.1.3 Affricates

Naso distinguishes between voiced /dʒ/ and voiceless /tʃ/ affricates in word-initial position only. There is no voiced counterpart to the /ts/ affricate.

#### 3.3.1.3.1 Dento-alveolar /ts/ [tʃ] ~ [tʃ]

The alveolar affricate /ts/ <ts> is an extremely rare sound that appears in very few words including /tsira/ [tsira] ~ [tʃira] ‘small’ and /<sup>w</sup>lets/ [wlets] ‘IDEO sound of something ripping’. It is quite possible that this is not a phoneme and instead is a complex consonantal sequence of /t/ + /s/. Evidence for analyzing /ts/ as a phoneme come from Constenla’s (1981) reconstruction of the phoneme \*<sup>w</sup>ts/, and the Bribri form /tsid/ ‘small’ which appears to be related to Naso /tsira/ ‘small’.

#### 3.3.1.3.2 Alveopalatal /tʃ/ [tʃ], (/dʒ/ [dʒ])

- |      |                |            |                                  |
|------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------|
| (16) | <b>/tʃ/</b>    | <b>vs.</b> | <b>/dʒ/</b>                      |
|      | /tʃu/ ‘breast’ |            | /dʒorkin/ Yorkin (name of river) |
|      | /kotʃi/ ‘pig’  |            |                                  |

The alveopalatal affricate /tʃ/ <ch> is a very rare sound in the conventional Naso lexicon. Juan Diego Quesada (2000) argues that it is undergoing incipient phonologization. I agree, and add that it is an iconically salient sound in the language exploited for expressive lexical function including nicknames (Chere, Chago, Chita, Chuku, Chiria), interjections (*cha*<sup>7</sup> [tʃaʔ] ‘depreciative’), genitalia slang (*chimpi* [tʃimpi] ‘penis’, and *chu* [tʃu] ‘breast’), and ideophones (*chak chak* [tʃak

<sup>7</sup> Presumably borrowed from the depreciative Jamaican English Creole interjection *cho*.

[tʃak] ‘sound of frog jumping’; *chāk chāk* [tʃāk tʃāk] ‘sound of chicken clucking’; *chuw* [tʃuw] ‘sound of falling into water’). Otherwise, the use of /tʃ/ is limited to a few loanwords (*John crow*<sup>8</sup> [dʒān kro] ‘turkey vulture’) > Naso *chā* [tʃā] ‘turkey’; *kochi*<sup>9</sup> ‘pig’ > Naso *kōchi* [kotʃi] ‘pig’), and two particular and unproductive cases of palatalization before /i/ that are allophonic variants (/itie/ [itie] ~ [itʃie] ‘to send’; /tsira/ [tsira] ~ [tʃira] ‘little’). These last examples of palatalization are unproductive, as they do not affect other alveolar obstruents preceding /i/, such as /ʃiti/ [ʃiti] ~ \*[ʃitʃi] ‘dog’.

It appears that /tʃ/ was borrowed into Naso through contact with English Creole through contact with Jamaicans, and, through contact with Spanish. The alveopalatal affricate is not reconstructed to Proto-Chibchan (Constenla 1981, 2008).

The voiced counterpart of the alveopalatal affricate, /dʒ/ is even more rare than the voiceless /tʃ/, and is only found in loanwords such as the Bribri placename *Yorkin* [dʒorkin], a Bribri river, and *yaktangkwo* [dʒaktankwo] ‘square banana’, from the English Creole square banana species. Unlike voiceless /tʃ/, voiced /dʒ/ is not found in expressive forms, and is limited to very few native Naso words including /dʒét dʒét/ [dʒétʃét] ‘shiny’ and /dʒankwa/ ‘June bug’, the latter which may be a loan word from English Creole. The phoneme /dʒ/ also appears to be a loan phoneme, most likely from contact with English Creole. I indicate the liminal status of /dʒ/ by placing it in parenthesis in the consonant inventory table (Table 1).

### 3.3.1.4 Nasals

Nasals contrast between bilabial, alveolar and velar place of articulation. While /m/ and /n/ are not restricted in their distribution, /ŋ/ only appears in word-final position.

(17)	/m/	vs.	/n/	vs.	/ŋ/
	/mẽk/ ‘coconut’		/nẽk/ ‘to toast’		
	/mekɪ/ ‘mother’		/nekkwo/ ‘nose’		
	/bam/ ‘first’		/an/ ‘to rot’		/baŋ/ ‘hurt’

<sup>8</sup> Vernacular Jamaican term for ‘vulture’.

<sup>9</sup> American indigenous vernacular form.

/oma/ ‘stranger’	/wen/ ‘to be born’	/wiŋ/ ‘light’
/k <sup>h</sup> um/ ‘how much?’	/u:ne/ ‘all’	
	/kun/ ‘to grow’	/k <sup>h</sup> uŋ/ ‘lice’

#### 3.3.1.4.1 Bilabial /m/ [m]

The is only one allophone of the bilabial nasal, [m].

#### 3.3.1.4.2 Alveolar /n/ [n]

There is only one allophone of the alveolar nasal, [n].

#### 3.3.1.4.3 Velar /ŋ/ [ŋ]

There is only one allophone of the alveolar nasal, [ŋ].

#### 3.3.1.4.4 Palatal [ɲ] (not phonemic)

There is a controversy in the literature with regard to the phonemic status of the palatal nasal [ɲ], where both Oakes (2000) and Quesada (2000) argue it is a phoneme of Naso. I argue it is [j̃], an allomorph of /j/ that surfaces whenever it is contiguous to a nasalized vowel.

In previous literature, the analysis of words such as those below in (18) have been proposed as providing evidence for underlying /ɲ/.

(18)	[ɲõtso] ~ [j̃õtso]	‘good’
	[pĩɲãko]	‘culantro’
	[ʃuɲo]	‘rain’

My analysis of the above () are the phonemic forms below in (19).

(19)	/jon-so/ [j̃õt.so]	‘good-NOM’
	/pĩ-jako/ [pĩjãko]	‘culantro’ (lit. plant species-edible)
	/ʃun-jo/ [ʃunjo]	‘rain-LIQUID’

My solution of the forms below is that a palatal glide /j/ is nasalized [j̃] when it either precedes (in (20)) or follows (in (21)) a nasalized vowel.

- (20) /jã/ [jã] ~ [jã̃] ‘picture’  
 /ja/ [ja] ‘vomit’  
 /jõ/ [jõ] ~ [jõ̃] ‘smoke’  
 /jo/ [jo] ‘earthquake’  
 /hjõ/ [hjõ] ~ [hjõ̃] ‘lie’  
 /je/ [je] ‘hit’  
 /jẽ/ [jẽ] ~ [jẽ̃] ‘DEM.ADV’  
 /ʔu-j-ĩk/ [ʔũjĩk] ‘visit’ (lit. ‘house-LOC-see’)
- (21) /ʔĩk-ja/ [ʔĩja] ‘saw.IFV’  
 /sĩ-jo-ʃtu/ [sĩõʃtu] ‘to pray’ (lit. ‘bead-ABST-count’)

Nasal vowels are very common in Naso, and as a result, the palatal glide has a high chance of becoming palatalized. This frequency is augmented by a morpho-phonological rule where the velar nasal /ŋ/ and the palatal consonant /j/ clash and must not be contiguous; this situation arises frequently because verb roots commonly end with /ŋ/ and combine with the verb inflection /-ja/, the perfective marker. The result of the combination is that the nasal consonant is deleted, and the nasalization segment spreads left and right to adjacent vowels and through glides. In older speakers, the nasalization spreads through glides to other vowels (e.g. [pĩjã̃] below in (22a)), and in younger speakers the nasalization is less thorough (e.g., [pĩja] in (22a)). Because nasalization of the palatal consonant /j/ is conditioned in the examples below in (22a-b), I do not analyze it as an underlying consonant /j̃/.

- (22) a. /piŋ-ja/ [pĩja] ~ [pĩjã̃] ‘taught him/her/them’  
 b. /huŋ-ja/ [hõja] ~ [hõjã̃] ‘sharpened it’

The mere presence of a nasal consonant does not trigger left and rightward nasalization if the consonant remains intact and is not deleted, as in the examples below in (23).

- (23) /mja/ [mja] ‘three’  
 /jmo/ [jmo] ‘jealousy’  
 /joŋ/ [joŋ] ‘house floor’  
 /fun-jo/ [funjo] ‘rain-LIQ’  
 /lan-jo/ [lanjo] ‘converse-ABST’ (lit. ‘story’)

### 3.3.1.5 *Trill*

#### 3.3.1.5.1 Alveolar /r/ [r] ~ [r]

This phoneme occurs word-initially, word-medially, and word-finally. It surfaces as /r/ intervocally and word-finally, as shown in (25a-b).

(24) /roŋ/ [roŋ] ‘deep’

(25) a. /ʔara/ [ʔara] ‘a lot’

b. /k<sup>h</sup>ɪr/ [k<sup>h</sup>ɪr] ‘to die’

Some adult-age speakers who did not acquire the alveolar trill consistently use the voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ in its place.

### 3.3.1.6 *Flap*

#### 3.3.1.6.1 Alveolar /l/ [l] ~ [l] ~ [r]

This phoneme is a retroflex lateral flap [l] that is articulated by flapping widely, from the top of the palate to the alveolar ridge. It occurs in word-initial and word-medial distribution, but is not found word-finally. The allophone [l] consistently surfaces intervocally, as in the forms /dba.la/ [dba.la] ‘star’ and [p<sup>h</sup>o.la] ‘far’.

One minority clan of speakers, noticeably to other clans, produces /l/ with more of an apical than a lateral release, and sociolinguistically this is interpreted as an [r] allophone variant. However, /r/ and /l/ contrast word-initially and word-medially, as shown in (26-27) below.

(26) a. /rik/ ‘to tie’

b. /lik/ ‘to cook’

(27) a. /ʔo.lʊ/ ‘sometimes’

b. /ʔi.roŋ/ ‘back’

### 3.3.1.7 *Glides*

#### 3.3.1.7.1 Labio-velar /w/ [w]

This phoneme occurs word-initially, word-medially, and word-finally.

### 3.3.1.7.2 Palatal /j/ [j]

This phoneme occurs word-initially, word-medially, and word-finally.

Contrasts between the trill, flap, and glides are shown below in (28).

(28)	/ɺ/	vs.	/r/	vs.	/w/	vs.	/j/
	/loŋ-gwo/ ‘cocoon’		/roŋ/ ‘profound’		/woŋ/ ‘iguana’		/joŋ/ ‘wood floor’
	/ɺi/ ‘say.3SG’		/ri/ ‘IDEO:fire’		/wi/ ‘to bathe’		/ji/ ‘put’
	/ʔoɺo/ ‘sometimes’		/ʔara/ ‘a lot’		/ʔawa/ ‘baby’		/ʔaja/ ‘devil’
			/her/ ‘go.down’		/dew/ ‘down’		/de-j/ ‘care-1PL.INC.A’

### 3.3.1.8 *Double articulated consonants*

One highly controversial issue of the Isthmic subgroup of Chibchan is whether to posit the phonemicization of double articulated consonants, as the result of the deletion of a non-final vowel in unstressed position that happened across Isthmic (Constenla 1981). This vowel reduction led to the unique contiguity of several consonant sequences. Many of these sequences, if analyzed as double articulated consonants, would be typologically rare segments. For Bribri, Natasha Chevrier (2017) has argued how this process has led to the phonologization of several double articulated segments including /t̪k/ and /ts/. In Naso there are several unique consonant clusters in onset position including /db/, /dg/, /pk/, /tk/, /wɺ/, /ts/, /sk/, /jk/. These could be analyzed as double articulated phonemes. The tradeoff in analysis is determines whether there is simplicity in the phonemic inventory or in the phonotactic inventory. If no coarticulated consonants are posited for Naso, there is a maximum complex onset cluster template of four consonants. For this reason, Oakes (2000) posits the existence of just one double articulated phoneme, /<sup>w</sup>ɺ/, which reduces the maximum phonotactic inventory from four to three consonants in onset position, because of the token /jk<sup>w</sup>ɺi/ [jk<sup>w</sup>ɺi] ‘rodent’ (as opposed to /jk<sup>w</sup>ɺi/). Quesada (2000) does not argue for any double articulated consonants in Naso.



I take a conservative approach and do not posit any double articulated phonemes in the present inventory of Naso phonemes other than the affricates /t͡s/ and /t͡ʃ/ discussed previously. I analyze a complex phonotactic system which allows up to four consonant clusters in onset position.

### 3.3.1.9 *Innovative consonant inventory*

As mentioned previously, the Naso phonemic system is not very stable, and younger speakers show a different, shifting pattern of phonemes, where most of the changes can be explained by a realignment due to influence from a Spanish phonemic system. Whether or not this innovative system and the individual moving parts are stable or short-term transitions to be lost in the near future depends on indeterminable socio-linguistic factors, as is the case in language change and especially with endangered languages. Of course, some changes are older than others, which results in a continuum in the state of the phonemic system for any given individual, depending on age, which innovative changes they may or may not have.

#### 3.3.1.9.1 [j̃] > /ɲ/

Younger speakers, approximately those under forty years of age, have reanalyzed the allophone [j̃], an allophone of /j/ that either precedes or follows a nasal vowel, as a phoneme /ɲ/. Evidence for this reanalysis comes from the way speakers write and describe the sound, as a phoneme comparable to the Spanish <ñ> which they write as such, for example, in the word <ñotso> ‘good’, which comes from /jon-so/ ‘good-NOM’ and is pronounced [j̃õtso] ~ [ɲõtso]. This has resulted in the augmentation of the nasal consonants inventory from three to four segments.

#### 3.3.1.9.2 /t͡s/ > /t͡ʃ/

Speakers that are under approximately sixty years old have shifted from using the dentoalveolar /t͡s/ to the alveopalatal /t͡ʃ/. For example, they consistently produce /t͡ʃira/ over /tsira/ ‘small’. The /t͡ʃ/ phoneme is not reconstructed for Naso or other Proto-Isthmic languages, and it

appears to be phonemicized from a palatalization of /tʃ/ before /i/ (where \*tʃ is reconstructed for Proto-Chibchan (Constenla 1981)). Influence from Spanish, as mentioned previously, is assumed to play a role in the phonemicization of /tʃ/.

### 3.3.1.9.3 /C<sup>h</sup>/ > /C/

One sociolinguistically prominent change includes the across-the-board desaspiration of aspirated consonants, which results in the complete loss of distinction between aspirated and unaspirated voiceless consonants in word-initial position. This has resulted in a large number of homophones in the speech of younger Nasos, those under approximately twenty years of age. Curiously, in reaction to this change in the speech of younger Nasos, some tradition-upholding adults overcorrect and do the opposite, where they merge aspirated obstruents and plain voiceless counterparts to aspirated obstruents to signal indigenous Naso identity, where aspiration indexes authenticity.

### 3.3.1.9.4 /ʒ/ > /ʃ/; /z/ > /s/

Another feature of the speech of younger Naso adults, those under approximately twenty years of age, is the common use of /ʃ/ in place of /ʒ/, which is so prevalent that these speakers even use orthographic <sh> in place of <ll>. My explanation of this realignment is the related observation that these speakers use of /s/ in place of /z/, so that a four-system contrast which distinguishes voicing loses the voiced /z/ and /ʒ/, most likely because the contrast is not present in Latin American Spanish.

The innovative changes are represented in Table 3 below, a consonantal system which several younger speakers already possess, where the shaded italicized phonemes are the conservative Naso consonants which are not present in the innovative system. The bolded phonemes, /p/ and /l/, are present in the innovative inventory but not in the conservative inventory.

		<b>Bilabial</b>	<b>Dento- alveolar</b>	<b>Alveo-palatal</b>	<b>Palatal</b>	<b>Velar</b>	<b>Glottal</b>
<b>Stop</b>	voiceless	p	t			k	ʔ
	voiced	b	d			g	
	aspirated	<i>p<sup>h</sup></i>	<i>t<sup>h</sup></i>			<i>k<sup>h</sup></i>	
<b>Fricative</b>	voiceless		s	ʃ			h
	voiced		z	ʒ (~dʒ, ~ʒ)			
	aspirated		<i>s<sup>h</sup></i>	<i>ʃ<sup>h</sup></i>			
<b>Affricate</b>		<i>tʃ</i>	<i>tʃ</i>				
<b>Nasal</b>		m	n		ɲ	ŋ	
<b>Trill</b>			r				
<b>Lateral flap</b>			ɺ				
<b>Glide</b>		w			j		

Table 3. Innovative Naso consonant inventory

### 3.3.2 Vowels

I analyze fourteen vowels for Naso, where nasalization is phonemic. There are eight oral vowels and six nasal vowels – the counterparts of all but the high open oral vowels. Phonetically, these fourteen vowels appear lengthened in word-initial position, such as the following oral vowels below in (29).

- (29) [aa.jaŋ] /ajaŋ/ ‘evil tree spirit’  
 [qar] /ar/ ‘to arrive’  
 [ɛe.ga] /ega/ ‘why’  
 [ɪr.re] /ire/ ‘far’  
 [iɪŋ] /iŋ/ ‘tickle (n.)’  
 [qo.hoŋ] /ohoŋ/ ‘open’  
 [ɔɔr] /or/ ‘went and came back’

[ɥu.fɪ] /ufɪ/ ‘evil female spirit’

I analyze these as underlying short vowels which are realized as long due to an obligatory onset constraint which results in a process of leftward, non-syllabic vowel lengthening. In addition, I analyze what Quesada (2000) and Oakes (2000) analyze as short initial vowels as forms which begin in a glottal stop, for example, I analyze [ʔu] ‘house’ as /ʔu/ rather than /u/, and I analyze [ʔak] ‘stone’ as /ʔak/ rather than /ak/. This analysis is preferable because it conserves the glottal consonant, which appears to have been inherited from Proto-Chibchan \*h, which I attribute from historic evidence (Constenla 1981), such as the reconstruction of \*hu ‘house’ and \*haki ‘stone’. In my analysis, Proto-Chibchan \*h>ʔ in Naso.

### 3.3.2.1 *Oral vowels*

The eight oral vowels are /i/, /ɪ/, /ɛ/, /u/, /ʊ/, /ɔ/, /a/, and /ɑ/, as illustrated in Table 4.

	<b>Front</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Back</b>
<b>Close</b>	i		u
<b>Near-close</b>	ɪ		ʊ
<b>Open mid</b>	ɛ		ɔ
<b>Open</b>		a	ɑ

Table 4. Conservative Naso oral vowels

When a short vowel is the initial segment of a prosodic domain, there is obligatory length that spreads before it. This is not analyzed as phonemic length. The oral vowels are all found in initial, medial, and final position, as shown in (30-37) below.

3.3.2.1.1 /i/ [i] ~ [i]

- (30) a. /ir/ [ir] ‘anger’  
b. /bip/ [bip] ‘howler monkey’  
c. /bi/ [bi] ‘1PL.incl.’

3.3.2.1.2 /ɪ/ [ɪ] ~ [ɪ]

- (31) a. /ɪs/ [ɪs] ‘unit of measuring distance between plots of land’  
b. /kɪs/ [kɪs] ‘large’  
c. /wɪ/ [wɪ] ‘to bathe’

3.3.2.1.3 /ɛ/ [ɛ] ~ [ɛ]

- (32) a. /ɛga/ [ɛga] ‘why’  
b. /hɛk/ [hɛk] ‘to go’  
c. /lɛ/ [lɛ] ‘to say’

3.3.2.1.4 /a/ [a] ~ [a]

- (33) a. /aŋ/ [aŋ] ‘IDEO:sound of wind’  
b. /dar/ [dar] ‘to break’  
c. /wa/ [wa] ‘child’

3.3.2.1.5 /a/ [a] ~ [qa]

- (34) a. /ar/ [qar] ‘to arrive’  
b. /daw/ ‘long ago’  
c. /la/ ‘sand’

3.3.2.1.6 /u/ [u] ~ [yu]

- (35) a. /un/ [yun] ‘everyone’  
b. /pɬuk/ [pɬuk] ‘wind’  
c. /ɬu/ [ɬu] ‘year’

3.3.2.1.7 /ʊ/ [ʊ] ~ [yʊ]

- (36) a. /ʊr/ [yʊr] ‘went and came back’  
b. /sʊk/ [sʊk] ‘POSIT:sit’  
c. /ɬʊ/ [ɬʊ] ‘*palma chonta* species’

3.3.2.1.8 /o/ [o] ~ [qo]

- (37) a. /ohoŋ/ [qohoŋ] ‘open’  
b. /mok/ [mok] ‘month’  
c. /to/ [to] ‘go’

Orthographically, speakers prefer to represent the vowel as a long vowel if it has no onset, and if it has a glottal onset, speakers represent the word as beginning with the vowel.

### 3.3.2.2 *Nasal vowels*

The nasal vowels contain the counterparts of all the oral vowels except for the near-close vowels. These nasal vowels include /ĩ/, /ẽ/, /ũ/, /õ/, /ã/, and /ã̃/, displayed in Table 5 below.

	Front	Central	Back
<b>Close</b>	ĩ		ũ
<b>Open mid</b>	ẽ		õ
<b>Open</b>		ã	ã

Table 5. Conservative Naso nasal vowels

### 3.3.2.2.1 /ĩ/ [ĩĩ] ~ [ĩ]

This phoneme appears in medial and final position, as shown in (38). I have not found evidence of it in initial position.

- (38) a. /hĩk/ [hĩk] ‘around’  
 b. /kĩ/ [kĩ] ‘greed’

### 3.3.2.2.2 /ẽ/ [ẽẽ] ~ [ẽ]

This phoneme appears in medial and final position, as shown in (39). I have not found evidence of it in initial position.

- (39) a. /t<sup>h</sup>wlẽk/ [t<sup>h</sup>wlẽk] ‘to buy’  
 b. /p<sup>h</sup>lẽ/ [p<sup>h</sup>lẽ] ‘sweet’

### 3.3.2.2.3 /ũ/ [ũũ] ~ [ũ]

This phoneme appears in initial, medial, and final position, as shown in (40).

- (40) a. /ũguk/ [ũũguk] ‘IDEO:sound of tiger’  
 b. /lũrkɪ/ [lũrkɪ] ‘to steal’  
 c. /hũ/ [hũ] ‘this’

#### 3.3.2.2.4 /š/ [ʃ̃š̃] ~ [š̃]

This phoneme appears in medial and final position, as shown in (41). I have not found evidence of it in initial position.

- (41) a. /kw̃ɔr/ [kw̃ɔr] ‘medium’  
b. /l̃ɔ/ [l̃ɔ] ‘smell’

#### 3.3.2.2.5 /ã/ [ã̃ã] ~ [ã]

This phoneme appears in initial, medial, and final position, as shown in (42).

- (42) a. /ãŋ/ [ã̃ãŋ] ‘IDEO:sound of flying head spirit’  
b. /drãga/ [drã̃ga] ‘orange species’  
c. /lã/ [lã̃] ‘vulture’

#### 3.3.2.2.6 /ã̃/ [ã̃ã̃] ~ [ã̃]

I have only found evidence of this phoneme in word-final position, as shown in (43).

- (43) /tã̃/ [tã̃] ‘soft part of baby’s head’

The fact that compared to the oral vowels there are a reduced number and distribution of nasal vowels suggests that there might have been a historical motivation and innovation of the nasal vowels, especially considering that nasal vowels are not reconstructed to Proto-Chibchan (Constenla Umaña 1981, 2008).

### 3.3.2.3 *Minimal pairs - Vowels*

The following are minimal pairs as evidence for the phonemic status of vowels in *Table 3*. Oral vowels contrast with each other, as shown in the minimal pairs below, where back vowels contrast with each other in (44), and non-back vowels contrast with each other in (45).



- (44) /u/ vs. /o/ vs. /o/ vs. /a/  
 /ku/ ‘hear.3’ /kʊ/ ‘IDEO:crushing’ /ko/ ‘name’ /ka/ ‘cacao’
- (45) /i/ vs. /i/ vs. /ɛ/ vs. /a/  
 /di/ ‘water’ /di/ ‘to care for’ /-dɛ/ ‘QM’ /-da/ ‘CONTR’

Nasals contrast with each other, as shown in (46-48).

- (46) /ã/ vs. /ã̃/  
 /tã/ ‘ideo:sound of hitting’ /tã̃/ ‘soft part of baby’s head’
- (47) /ũ/ vs. /õ/  
 /lũ/ ‘to steal’ /lõ/ ‘smell’
- (48) /ẽ/ vs. /ĩ/  
 /sẽ/ ‘bird species’ /sĩ/ ‘black’

Oral vowels contrast with nasal vowels, as shown in (49-54).

- (49) /ã/ vs. /a/  
 /wãp/ ‘palm species’ /wapga/ ‘children’
- (50) /ã̃/ vs. /a/  
 /tã̃/ ‘soft part of baby’s head’ /ta/ ‘a cold’
- (51) /ĩ/ vs. /i/  
 /ʔĩk/ ‘to see’ /ʔik/ ‘manioc’
- (52) /ẽ/ vs. /ɛ/  
 /wẽ/ ‘the next day’ /wɛ/ ‘to bathe’
- (53) /õ/ vs. /o/  
 /ʃgw.lõ/ ‘white-bellied rat’ /ʃgw.o/ ‘vine or tree seed’
- (54) /ũ/ vs. /u/  
 /lũ/ ‘to steal’ /lu/ ‘year’

### 3.3.2.4 Innovative vowel inventory

In the speech of younger Nasos, due to accommodation to Spanish, /ɪ/ and /ɛ/ have merged to /e/; /ʊ/ and /ɔ/ have merged to /o/; and /ɑ/ and /a/ have merged to /a/. Furthermore, in the speech of younger Nasos, there is no contrast in nasalization, and vowels in initial position are not subject to leftward lengthening. The younger Nasos' innovative vowel system is displayed in Table 6 below.

	<b>Front</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Back</b>
<b>Close</b>	i		u
<b>Mid</b>	e		o
<b>Open</b>		a	

Table 6. Innovative Naso vowel inventory.

### 3.3.3 Prosody

#### 3.3.3.1 Stress

Stress is realized in Naso through pitch and intensity. Stress placement is variable in Naso lexical forms, and there are minimal contrasts distinguished by stress such as (55) below.

- (55) /'kwara/ 'gave it'  
/kwa'ra/ 'one (ROUND class)'

##### 3.3.3.1.1 Disyllabic words

The following words in (56) have invariable final prominence. Some of these are monomorphemic, as in (31a), and others dimorphemic, as in (56b).

- (56) a. /do.'mɛr/ 'man'  
 /wa.'lɪ/ 'woman'  
 /ʔob.'lɪ/ 'other'  
 /daŋ.'ka/ 'evil spirit'  
 /ʃun.'jo/ 'rain'  
 /gur.'gwo/ 'bat'
- b. /ɪp-'kwo/ 'corn seed'  
 /ʔe-'ni/ 'that's it'  
 /boŋ-'hã/ 'tomorrow'

The following words have invariable initial prominence; those in (57a) are roots, and those in (57b) are inflected nouns and verbs.

- (57) a. /'ɛ.ri/ 'today'  
 /'ʔã.s.ka/ 'in place'  
 /'kwo.ta/ 'skin'  
 /'dɔ.buŋ/ 'hawk'  
 /'kwon.ʒo/ 'where?'  
 /'ɔ.ka/ 'snake spirit'  
 /'a.jaŋ/ 'monkey spirit'
- b. /'sɔk-.klo/ 'chair'  
 /'hɛk-.klo/ 'car'  
 /'un-.koŋ/ 'everyone'  
 /'jbi-.bga/ '*sukias*'  
 /'wa-.pga/ 'children'  
 /'gom-.jo/ 'then'  
 /'sjõ-.ʃti/ 'to pray'  
 /'ir-.tkɛ/ 'to get mad'  
 /'ʔĩ-.zoŋ/ 'look-IMPER'  
 /'wo-.no/ 'bathe-PFV'  
 /'sɔ-.no/ 'took'  
 /'ɔ-.toŋ/ 'went'

Several forms, including the following below in (58), receive equal prominence on initial **and** final syllables. I suggest it may be related to the fact that all of these examples are adjectives, where stress or pitch prominence is related to expressivity.

- (58) /'srɛ.'zrɛn/ 'red'  
 /'diŋ.'diŋ/ 'blue'  
 /'ʃõy.'lor/ 'yellow'  
 /'p<sup>h</sup>o.'la/ 'far'  
 /'zrãp.'zrã/ 'curly'  
 /'kɪs.'baŋ/ 'big'  
 /'k<sup>h</sup>o.'jo/ 'like'  
 /'si.'ra/ 'little'

There are some words where stress distinguishes what can be described as a more specific referent as opposed to a more abstract referent, shown in (59a-b) below. In these cases, the form with initial stress often precedes nother descriptor so that it modifies it syntactically. However, the forms may also be used in isolation and contribute the same sort of distinction.

- (59) a. /'k<sup>h</sup>o.nɛ/ 'where?' (specific the referent is expected to be in a limited number of places)  
 b. /k<sup>h</sup>o.'nɛ/ 'where?' (abstract the location of the referent is completely unknown)

In a sentence, the first form in (59a) can be used as below in (60), which could be said in a few situations. One is as a directive towards a child, as though admonishing the child not to go anywhere. It could also be used in a specific situation with a limited number of possibilities, such as if the interlocutors are on a path and it forks, and one person asks the other which path they are taking.

- (60) /'p<sup>h</sup>a to 'k<sup>h</sup>onɛ/ 'where are you going?' (specific)

The second sentence below in (61) with final stress in /k<sup>h</sup>o.'nɛ/ can be used to ask a person the question when they look like they are about to leave on a trip or to an event that the speaker has no knowledge about. It is mostly used by people who are not very close, where there is more emotional distance between them. Also, it is characteristically used by elders in a way that signals politeness.

(61) /p<sup>h</sup>a to k<sup>h</sup>o'nɛ/ ‘where are you going?’ (abstract)

Other forms have variable stress that follow the generalization of a more specific or a more abstract referent; these include the following forms below in (62).

- (62) a. /k<sup>h</sup>wo.bi/ ~ /k<sup>h</sup>wo.'bi/ ‘how many?’ (specific vs. abstract)  
 b. /k<sup>h</sup>ok-jo/ ~ /k<sup>h</sup>ok-'jo/ ‘land’ (specific vs. abstract)  
 c. /t<sup>h</sup>ɪ.jo/ ~ /t<sup>h</sup>ɪ.'jo ‘clan’ (specific vs. abstract)  
 d. /'no.pga/ ~ /no.'pga/ ‘people’ (specific vs. abstract)  
 e. /'e.pga/ ~ /e.'pga/ ‘3PL’ (specific vs. abstract)

This data could also possibly be described as an intonational pattern.

### 3.3.3.1.2 Trisyllabic words

In trisyllabic words, stress is also unpredictable and it can either fall on the initial syllable (63), on the second syllable (64), or on the final syllable (65). When a nominalizing morpheme attaches to a stem in (63), the two morphemes clash so that only one may receive stress. However, as we will see in the data in the following section on tone, forms that have tone do permit contiguous stressed syllables.

(63) /'par.ka.ga/ ‘workers’ V→N  
 parkɪ-ga  
 work-PL

/w.li.ka.ga/ ‘defenders’ V→N  
 w.li.kɪ-ga  
 defend-PL

/'dw.lom.nek.ga/ ‘doctors’ V→N  
 dw.lom.nek-ga  
 to cure-PL

(64) /'ʃmī.'yā.-kwo/ ‘banana species’  
 /'kwo.'zir.-wa/ ‘dear child’  
 /'wa.'le.-ga/ ‘women’  
 /'po.-'ʃdu.-ya/ ‘to reprimand’

- /'ĩ.'yã.do/                    'always'  
 (65) /k<sup>h</sup>ag.ro. 'ki/                'to ask'

In summary, Naso forms have unpredictable stress, where stress is distinctive and thus phonemic.

### 3.3.3.2 *Tone*

In Naso, the tone-bearing unit is the syllable. There is at least one tone that is marked, which is high tone ( ´ ), and low tone is unmarked. Evidence from adjectives described further along, will show that adjectives in specific distinguish intensity through tone as well. Naso appears to have shifted from a tonal system to a stress-based system (Oakes 2000), and while tone is reconstructed to Proto-Chibchan (Constenla 1981), the only Isthmic Chibchan languages which have been analyzed to conserve tone are Bribri and Cabécar, and even so, tone plays a marginal role in the distinction of their lexicon. In Naso, the role of tone is even more marginal and there are even fewer examples of minimal pairs. Minimal pairs include the following below in (66-70).

- (66) /k<sup>h</sup>éǵi/ 'old'  
       /k<sup>h</sup>egɪ/ 'father-in-law'  
 (67) /tók/ 'EXIST'  
       /tok/ 'COM'  
 (68) /síŋ/ 'late, evening'  
       /sɪŋ/ 'meat'  
 (69) /k<sup>h</sup>ók/ 'god'  
       /k<sup>h</sup>ok/ 'earth, time'  
 (70) /p<sup>h</sup>lú/ 'good'  
       /p<sup>h</sup>lu/ 'king'

Other evidence for positing contrastive tone in Naso is the fact that there are pitch patterns that are non-culminative at the level of the morpheme, as hinted in (66) above. However, this is restricted to the class of adjectives. It appears that tone distinguishes intensity in adjectives, as

shown in (71a-b). While regular adjectives receive high tone, intensity of the adjective receives extra high tone. I analyze this as an expressive, iconic feature, and not one that suggests a phonemic high tone.

- (71) a. [sré:zrén] ‘red’  
           [srě:zrě́n] ‘pure red’
- b. [w.líw.lí] ‘dirty’  
           [w.líw.lí́] ‘very dirty’

High tone is also induced leftward through the stative morpheme /-e/. The following are analyzed as adjectives derived from (derived) verbs, where the stem in each example is verbalized with the light verb /-tke/ ‘to do’ (in (72a-b)) or the past tense marker /-no/ (in (72c)). These examples function as an uninterruptable unit where high tone spreads throughout because of the stative marker /-e/ that attaches to the end. Alternatively, the forms below in () could be analyzed as simply marking primary stress prominence on each syllable of the stem.

- (72) a. /'shín. 'mó. 'tkó. 'nó. e/ ‘died-STAT’                    (/shinmo/ ‘deceased person’)
- b. /'né. 'lõ 'tkó. 'nó. e/ ‘drunk-STAT’                    (/ne-lõ/ ‘nose’ – smell (verb))
- c. /'wó.'ló.'nó. e/ ‘died-STAT’                            (/wo-lon/ ‘liver’ – fall (verb))

In contrast with the examples above, when the stative attaches to the subclass of adjectives which distinguish intensity through pitch, it causes the adjective to lose tone, as shown in the contrast in (a-b) below in (73-74).

- (73) a. *shwong*            *sré:zrén*  
           clothes            red  
           ‘the red clothes’
- b. *shwong*            *srezren-é*  
           clothes            red –STAT  
           ‘the clothes are red’

- (74) a. *shwong*      *wliwli*  
 clothes            dirty  
 ‘the dirty clothes’
- b. *shwong*      *wliwli-é*  
 clothes            dirty-STAT  
 ‘the clothes are dirty’

I explain the different representations and effects of the stative morpheme /-e/ by stating that two contiguous morphemes may not have high tone, and when this happens the morpheme with higher tone becomes low.

### 3.3.4 Syllable structure, phonotactics

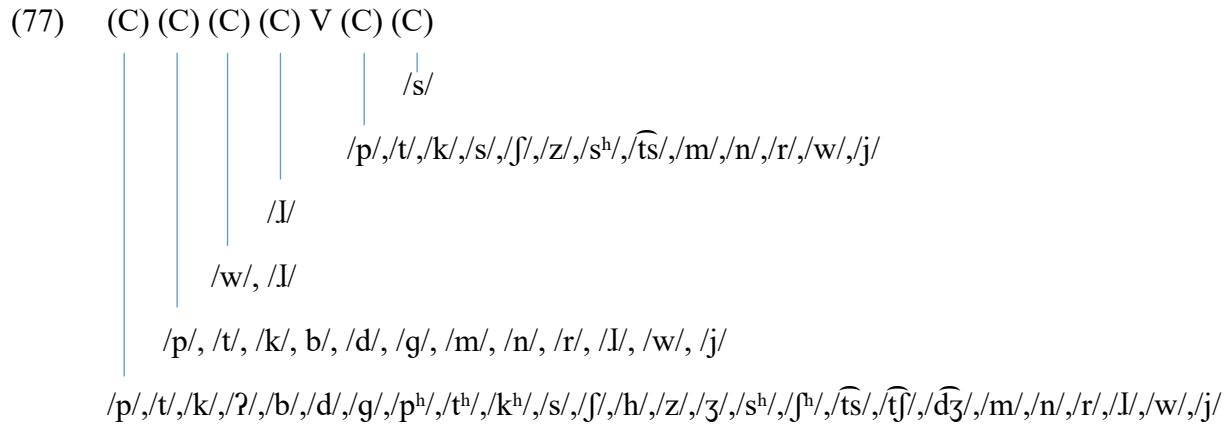
#### 3.3.4.1 Syllable templates

The syllable templates of Naso include the following open templates in (75), and closed templates in (76). While there are a large number of approximants, only vowels are syllable nuclei in Naso.

- (75) V            /a/      ‘fermented drink’  
 CV            /to/      ‘go’  
 CCV           /k<sup>h</sup>lo/   ‘CL:long’  
 CCCV        /skwẽ/   ‘crazy’  
 CCCCVC     /jkwli/   ‘agouti’
- (76) VC            /ar/      ‘to arrive’  
 CVC            /hik/      ‘to walk’  
 CCVC          /dɔŋ/      ‘tiger’  
 CCCVC        /jglik/    ‘to step on’  
 CCCCVC       /jgwliẽk/ ‘messy-haired’

The following diagram in (77) below shows the possible consonants in each position of a syllable template.





However, not all combinations above are possible; the possible and common combinations will be explained further in the sections to come (3.3.4.2 - 3.3.4.6).

### 3.3.4.2 Restriction against homorganic glide + vowel

There is a restriction against an onset which is homorganic with the place of a following vowel, such that the following word-initial combinations in (78a-b) are not found.

- (78) a. \*/wu/  
 b. \*/ji/

### 3.3.4.3 Simple onsets

Most consonants can occur as simple onsets, the only exception is /ŋ/.

### 3.3.4.4 Complex onsets

Naso allows for quite a bit of complexity in onset clusters, permitting up to four segments. Complex onset clusters may either consist of the C1 being either a stop, fricative, or approximant, but not a nasal.

### 3.3.4.4.1 When C1=stop

Stop consonants can precede other stops or approximants, but they cannot precede fricatives or nasals.

*C<sub>stop</sub>C<sub>stop</sub>*

In a complex onset sequence of stops, the C1 may only be a bilabial or alveolar stop, but I have not found evidence of a velar or glottal stop. The C2 may be a bilabial, or velar stop, but I have not found evidence of an alveolar or glottal stop. Onset clusters of stops must agree in voicing and must not be homorganic. Clusters of aspirated stops are not permitted. The voiced stop clusters /db/ and /dg/ are the most productive, some examples are in (79-80). The voiceless stop clusters /tk/ and /pk/ are extremely rare, where I have only found the ones in (81-82). While speakers tend to pronounce the stop sequences fully in (79-80), they tend to reduce /pk/ to [k] and /tk/ to [k].

- (79) /**db**/  
/dbur/ 'money'  
/dbuk/ 'to fly'  
/dboŋ/ 'tiger'  
/dba.la/ 'star'

- (80) /**dg**/  
/dgur/ 'snake'  
/dgũ/ 'head'  
/dgow/ 'round container shape'  
/dgi/ 'to plant'

- (81) /**pk**/  
/pkɪŋ/ [pkɪŋ] ~ [kɪŋ] 'four'

- (82) /**tk**/  
/tkɪ/ [tkɪ] ~ [kɪ] 'to do'

Unlike the case for stop clusters  $C_{stop}C_{stop}$ , stop+approximant clusters do not need to agree in voicing, as can be seen when comparing (83) with (85) and (84) with (86), where voiced or voiceless stops may combine with approximants. Stop consonants can combine with approximants (liquids and glides) more productively than  $C_{stop}C_{stop}$  clusters. The most common stop+approximant onset cluster involves a voiceless, aspirated stop, as in (83-84). The clusters \*/p<sup>h</sup>j/ and \*/p<sup>h</sup>w/ are unattested, the latter perhaps because of a restriction against contiguous labial segments.

Voiceless aspirated consonants are the only stops which can precede two other consonants (approximants), as shown in (84) and (86).

- |      |                        |                          |
|------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| (83) | /p <sup>h</sup> ɬak/   | ‘tail’                   |
|      | /p <sup>h</sup> ro/    | ‘quetzal’                |
|      | /t <sup>h</sup> ɬɛ̃/   | ‘to talk’                |
|      | /t <sup>h</sup> riko/  | ‘in between’             |
|      | /t <sup>h</sup> wɛ/    | ‘to come’                |
|      | /t <sup>h</sup> ji/    | ‘to drop off’            |
|      | /k <sup>h</sup> ɬun/   | ‘to cry out (of animal)’ |
|      | /k <sup>h</sup> rɛ/    | ‘to take’                |
|      | /k <sup>h</sup> wɛ/    | ‘that’                   |
|      | /k <sup>h</sup> jo/    | ‘oil’                    |
| (84) | /t <sup>h</sup> wɬɛ̃k/ | ‘to buy’                 |
|      | /t <sup>h</sup> wɬɔ̃/  | ‘value’                  |
|      | /k <sup>h</sup> wɬi/   | ‘just now’               |

An initial voiced unaspirated stop is less common, as shown in examples (85-86) below, where the clusters \*/gɬ/ and \*/gw/ are unattested at the beginning of a phonological domain.

- (85) /b.ɬo.ɬaŋ/ ‘Térraba dialect’  
 /brik/ ‘to leave’  
 /d.ɬo/ ‘sun’  
 /dre/ ‘foot’  
 /dwi/ ‘manati’  
 /djɛ/ ‘scorpion’  
 /kwom.g.ɬa/ ‘horse’  
 /ta.g.ɬen/ ‘new’  
 /lu.gwo/ ‘year’
- (86) /dw.ɬo/ ‘medicine’

A complex onset involving a voiceless unaspirated stop as the C1 is the most rare complex onset cluster, and may be explained by historical change such as apheresis. However, they still occur, and up to two consonants may follow these, as seen in the C2 and C3 approximants in (87-88) below. The clusters \*/pw/ and \*/kj/ are unattested.

- (87) /pjak/ ‘deceased father’  
 /trak/ ‘little’  
 /ba.tle/<sup>10</sup> ‘bottle’  
 /tjɪ/ ‘to climb’  
 /kri/ ‘to boast’  
 /k.ɬuŋ/ ‘dirt’  
 /kwɛ/ ~ /twe/ ‘to give’  
 /ʔ.ɬo/ ‘chickenpox’  
 /ʔwɛ/ ‘to eat’  
 /ʔjɛ/ ‘to drink’
- (88) /kw.ɬɛ-ra/ ‘bored’  
 /ʔw.ɬar/ ‘to sit’

#### 3.3.4.4.2 When C1=fricative

Continuant consonants can combine with stops, approximants, or nasals, and show a different patterning from stop consonants.

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<sup>10</sup> English loanword *bottle*

Fricatives can combine with either voiced or voiceless stops. When fricatives combine with voiced stops, the fricative may surface with the voiced counterpart, e.g. [s] ~ [z]; [ʃ] ~ [ʒ], as shown in (89). In other words, the preceding fricative assimilates in voicing to a following voiced stop. However, when the fricative combines with an underlying voiceless stop, it always surfaces as voiceless, as in (90). The distinction between voiced and voiceless fricatives is neutralized when they cluster with voiced stops. I will posit that they are underlyingly voiceless fricatives because the voiced fricative is explained as occurring whenever preceding a voiced stop. For an analysis that explains why voiceless obstruents are commonly aspirated before voiced stops, see Bermúdez (2017) and Bermúdez (*in process*).

(89) a.	/s <sup>h</sup> bi/	[s <sup>h</sup> bi] ~ [zbi]	‘pot’
	/s <sup>h</sup> dε/	[s <sup>h</sup> dε] ~ [zdε]	‘culture’
	/s <sup>h</sup> gε/	[s <sup>h</sup> gε] ~ [zgε]	‘get used to’
	/ʃ <sup>h</sup> bi/	[ʃ <sup>h</sup> bi] ~ [ʒbi]	‘dumb’
	/ʃ <sup>h</sup> dun/	[ʃ <sup>h</sup> dun] ~ [ʒdun]	‘castigate’
	/ʃ <sup>h</sup> gawε/	[ʃ <sup>h</sup> gawε] ~ [ʒgawε]	‘to frighten’
b.	/ʃ <sup>h</sup> gwɪk/	[ʃ <sup>h</sup> ɪk] ~ [ʒgwɪk]	‘to straighten’
	/ʃ <sup>h</sup> gɪak/	[ʃ <sup>h</sup> gɪak] ~ [ʒglak]	‘slippery’
(90) a.	/stɛk/	[stɛk] *[ztɛk]	‘spotless’
	/skok/	[skok] *[zkok]	‘to cut’
	/ʃpok/	[ʃpok] *[ʒpok]	‘to hit’
	/ʃpan/	[ʃpan] *[ʒpan]	‘fermented’
	/ʃti/	[ʃti] *[ʒti]	‘to count’
	/ʃten/	[ʃten] *[ʒten]	‘to cough’
	/ʃkɛŋ/	[ʃkɛŋ] *[ʒkɛŋ]	‘five’
	/ʃkɪ/	[ʃkɪ] *[ʒkɪ]	‘late’
b.	/ʃkwɪ/	[ʃkwɪ] *[ʒkwɪ]	‘to peel’
	/skwɛ̃/	[skwɛ̃] *[zkwɛ̃]	‘crazy’
	/ʃkɪk/	[ʃkɪk] *[ʒkɪk]	‘thorns’
	/ʃkwɪɪ/	[ʃkwɪɪ] *[ʒkwɪɪ]	‘agouti’

As shown in (89b) and (90b) above, a fricative can precede up to three other consonants in a complex onset cluster.

*C<sub>fricative</sub>C<sub>approximant</sub>*

When they cluster with liquid approximants /l/ or /r/, fricatives that distinguish voicing (e.g. /s/ vs. /z/; /ʃ/ vs. /ʒ/) preserve this distinction, as shown in the contrasting forms in (91) and (92).

- |      |                       |   |                  |
|------|-----------------------|---|------------------|
| (91) | /s <sup>h</sup> ɬar/  | [s <sup>h</sup> ɬar] ~ [sɬar] * [zɬar]    | ‘to cry’         |
|      | /s <sup>h</sup> ɬoŋ/  | [s <sup>h</sup> ɬoŋ] ~ [sɬoŋ] * [zɬoŋ]    | ‘fox’; ‘to stop’ |
|      | /s <sup>h</sup> ro/   | [s <sup>h</sup> ro] ~ [sro] * [zro]       | ‘sugarcane’      |
|      | /ʃ <sup>h</sup> rɛ/   | [ʃ <sup>h</sup> rɛ] ~ [ʃrɛ] * [ʒrɛ]       | ‘to come’        |
|      | /ʃ <sup>h</sup> ruw/  | [ʃ <sup>h</sup> ruw] ~ [ʃruw] * [ʒruw]    | ‘white’          |
|      | /ʃ <sup>h</sup> ɬotɛ/ | [ʃ <sup>h</sup> ɬotɛ] ~ [ʃɬotɛ] * [ʒɬotɛ] | ‘chayote’        |
|      | /hɬɔ̃/                | [hɬɔ̃]                                    | ‘truth’          |
|      | /s <sup>h</sup> wɛ/   | [s <sup>h</sup> wɛ] ~ [swɛ]               | ‘plant sp.’      |
|      | /s <sup>h</sup> jo/   | [s <sup>h</sup> jo] ~ [sjo]               | ‘to pray’        |
|      | /ʃ <sup>h</sup> wɬɛ/  | [ʃ <sup>h</sup> wɬɛ] ~ [ʃwɬɛ]             | ‘tree criollo’   |
| (92) | /zron/                | [zron] * [sron]                           | ‘to run’         |
|      | /zrɔk/                | [zrɔk] * [srɔk]                           | ‘to kill’        |
|      | /zɬoŋ/                | [zɬoŋ] * [sɬoŋ]                           | ‘beside’         |
|      | /ʒruk/                | [ʒruk] * [ʃruk]                           | ‘to squeeze’     |
|      | /ʒrinyɛ/              | [ʒrinyɛ] * [ʃrinyɛ]                       | ‘to slip’        |

*C<sub>fricative</sub>C<sub>nasal</sub>*

Unlike stops, fricatives is found in combination with nasals, but only with /m/. The glottal fricative patterns differently; it is found to combine with /n/ but no other nasals.

- |      |        |               |
|------|--------|---------------|
| (93) | /ʃmi/  | ‘lazy’        |
|      | /ʃmet/ | ‘shiny’       |
|      | /smo/  | ‘cold’        |
|      | /smɛr/ | ‘careless’    |
|      | /smak/ | ‘IDEO:sticky’ |
|      | /hnek/ | ‘to hide’     |

### 3.3.4.4.3 When C1=approximant

It appears that the palatal glide /j/ use to be a common C1 in a C1C2 cluster, and could combine with voiced stops, approximants, and nasals. However, this syllable structure is no longer required, where most adult speakers reduce it by deleting the initial /j/ in these words, as shown in (94).

Liquid approximants /r/and /l/ do not combine with other consonants.

(94)	/jbi/	[jbi] ~ [bi]	‘sukia’
	/jboryɛ/	[jboryɛ] ~ [boryɛ]	‘to mourn’
	/jbo/	[jbo] ~ [bo]	‘pond’
	/jgir/	[jgir] ~ [gir]	‘tree species’
	/jgok/	[jgok] ~ [gok]	‘calabash’
	/jɬok/	[jɬok] ~ [ɬok]	‘to spear’
	/jrote/	[jrote] ~ [rote]	‘to inform’
	/jron/	[jron] ~ [ron]	‘turkey species’
	/jro/	[jro] ~ [ro]	‘inside’
	/jwɛ/	[jwɛ] ~ [wɛ]	‘to weave’
	/jmo/	[jmo] ~ [mo]	‘jealous’
	/jno/	[jno] ~ [no]	‘person’

The labiovelar glide /w/ does not pattern the same as the /j/; it is only found in clusters preceding /l/, both in onset position (in (95)) and other positions (in (96)) which may be evidence that /wɫ/ is a single, coarticulated phoneme. Also, it is never optionally deleted. Furthermore, /w/ does not combine with any other approximant, stop, or nasal consonant.

(95)	/wɫikɫ/	‘to defend’
	/wɫin/	‘Bribri person’
	/wɫɛ/	‘DEM.NONVIS’
	/wɫɛk/	‘to find’
	/wɫar/	‘to sit’
	/wɫo/	‘for’

As shown below in (96), the /wɫ/ cluster also commonly follows another onset.

- (96) /t<sup>h</sup>w.lɛ̃k/ ‘to buy’  
 /t<sup>h</sup>w.lõ/ ‘value’  
 /dw.lo/ ‘medicine’

### 3.3.4.5 *Simple codas*

The consonants which commonly occur as a simple coda are /p/, /t/, /k/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /r/, /w/, and /j/. It is very common for ideophones to end in a voiceless sibilant /s/ or /ʃ/, but otherwise these are uncommon codas. I have only found the sibilant /s/ in one case /k<sup>h</sup>us/ ‘angel’ and in words ending with the imperative marker /-s/.

### 3.3.4.6 *Complex codas*

Naso does not allow for complex codas, except in ideophones, where these are permitted as in (97) below.

- (97) *w.lets* ‘IDEO:sound of something getting loose’

## 3.3.5 (Morpho)-phonological processes

### 3.3.5.1 *Regressive vowel harmony*

Verb stems which end in a final vowel are subject to ablaut when inflectional or derivational suffixes apply, resulting in a process of regressive vowel harmony where the final stem vowel changes to match the vowel of the inflectional or derivational morpheme, as illustrated below in (98-99).

- |         |  |                        |
|---------|--|------------------------|
| (98) a. | /ʔwɪ-klo/<br>eat-NOM<br>‘eating utensil’               | [ʔwɔklo]               |
| b.      | /t <sup>h</sup> lɛ̃-kwɔ/<br>to speak-NOM<br>‘language’ | [t <sup>h</sup> lõkwɔ] |
| c.      | /wɪ-nɔ/<br>to bathe-PFV<br>‘bathed’                    | [wɔnɔ]                 |



- (99) a. /k<sup>h</sup>imti-ga/                    [k<sup>h</sup>imtaga]  
           to help-AGENT  
           ‘helper’
- b. /ʔji-r-a/                        [ʔjara]  
           to drink-PFV-3  
           ‘drank’

If the inflectional morpheme only consists of a vowel, then the combination of V+V is such that the first V (the final stem vowel) is deleted, as in the example below in (100).

- (100) /k<sup>h</sup>imti-e/                    [k<sup>h</sup>imte]  
           help-3.A  
           ‘(he) helps’

This process does not affect verb classes which do not end in a final vowel, as shown in the data below in (101).

- (101) a. /dbuk-r-a/                    [dbura] \*[dbara]  
           throw-PFV-3.A  
           ‘threw’
- b. /sok-ga/                        [soga] \*[saga]  
           take-AGENT  
           ‘taker’
- c. /Jan-no/                        [Jano] \*[lono]  
           converse-PFV  
           ‘talked’

Not all inflectional and derivational morphemes have an effect of regressive vowel harmony; some of these include the plural morpheme /-ga/ as well as the stative morpheme /-e/, as shown respectively in (102a) and (102b) below:

- (102) a. /waɫi-ga/                    [waɫi-ga] \*[waɫa-ga]  
           woman-PL  
           ‘women’

b. /ʒɪ-e/	[ʒɪ-e] *[ʒe-e]
what-STAT	
‘what it is’	

### 3.3.5.2 *Leftward vowel lengthening*

As mentioned in previous discussions, there are several forms which appear to have a word-initial lengthened vowel, such as the forms [j̥iɾ] ‘anger’, [ɛ̃ɛ.ri] ‘today’, and [ɔ̃ɔ.hoŋ] ‘open’. Phonetically, these consist of a sequence of weak, non-syllabic vowel followed by a syllabic realization of the same vowel ([V̥V]). I argue that these forms are due to a phonological process of leftward vowel lengthening in word-initial position. As mentioned in the discussion of the glottal stop, this occurs when the onset position is empty, because the phonological system requires the onset position to be filled. I argue that these are underlying short, regular vowels /V/, and, that vowels in initial position that do not show phonetic length are in fact preceded by a glottal stop consonant in every case (/ʔV/). Orthographically, Nasos prefer to represent the vowels that show leftward lengthening in onset position as VV, and vowels which begin with glottal stop as V with no symbol for the glottal.

### 3.4 MORPHOSYNTAX

In this section I briefly outline the parts of speech including open and closed classes, the constituent order of the clause, and the inflectional categories for nouns and verbs. Naso orthography is used in the examples<sup>11</sup>.

#### 3.4.1 Syntactic categories

##### 3.4.1.1 *Open classes*

###### 3.4.1.1.1 Nouns

All nouns may be counted, and in quantitative clauses all nouns obligatorily take one of seven numeral classifiers. If a number is not specified and several objects are listed, all nouns obligatorily take the enumerative /-dɛ/ ~ /-rɛ/ suffix. Naso nouns may function as the subject or object of a phrase, or they may function as the predicate as well.

The Naso class of nouns can be subdivided into HUMAN and NON-HUMAN, where the human class of nouns (which includes kinship, race, and other social terms) can take the plural marker /-(p)ga/, whereas the NON-HUMAN class cannot. Other restrictions apply to nouns, such as whether or not they can take a markers for MASS /-sho/, ABSTRACT /-yo/, and AGENT /-ga/.

Nouns marked for ergative case in transitive constructions, with the /-dɪ/ ~ /-rɪ/ marker. The contrasting examples below in (103-104) show the use of these two case markers. The ERGiative marker appears to be cognate with the ergative case marker in Ngäbere, Bribri, and Cabécar. Quesada (2010) elaborates on the inverse function of /-dɪ/ ~ /-rɪ/. I discuss the function of the case markers in Section 3.4.2.4, and on constituent order further ahead in Section 3.4.3.

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<sup>11</sup> /p/ <p>, /t/ <t>, /k/ <k>, /ʔ/ <∅>, /b/ <b>, /d/ <d>, /g/ <g>, /pʰ/ <pj>, /tʰ/ <tj>, /kʰ/ <kj>, /s/ <s>, /ʃ/ <sh>, /h/ <j>, /z/ <z>, /ʒ/ <ll>, /sʰ/ <sj>, /fʰ/ <shj>, /ts/ <ts>, /tʃ/ <ch>, /dʒ/ <dz>, /m/ <m>, /n/ <n>, /ŋ/ <ng>, /r/ <r>, /l/ <ĭ>, /w/ <w>, /j/ <y>, /i/ <i>, /i/ <ë>, /ɛ/ <e>, /u/ <u>, /ʊ/ <ö>, /ɔ/ <o>, /a/ <a>, /ɑ/ <ä>, /ĩ/ <î>, /ẽ/ <ê>, /ü/ <û>, /õ/ <õ>, /ã/ <ã>, and /ã/ <ã̃>.

(103) *Juan Maria sö-no*  
 Juan Maria take-PFV  
 ‘Juan took Maria.’

(104) *Maria sö-r-a Juan-dë*  
 Maria take-PFV-3.A Juan-ERG  
 ‘Juan took Maria’; ‘Maria was taken by Juan.’

### 3.4.1.1.2 Verbs

Naso verbs are distinguished from nouns in several ways through unique morphology. Naso verbs may be morphologically specified for tense, aspect, mood, and voice. I elaborate on these in the section on inflectional categories further along.

Verbs can function as predicates as in (105) below. Naso stems can stack derivational morphology such that a stem may change grammatical categories several times as in the example below where  $V > N > V > N$ , through an ABSTRACT marker /-jo/, a light verb /-tki/ meaning ‘to do’, and an AGENT nominalizer /-ga/. Verb inflection is unique from noun derivation in that the former co-occurs with regressive vowel harmony and the latter does not. The phonological form of the verb, specifically the final syllable, determines the way it will be inflected through aspect, as will be shown in the Section on aspect in 3.4.2.1.

(105) *oba birko-no*  
 people dance-PFV  
 ‘people danced’

(106)	/bi/	[bi]	‘to dance’	(V)
	/bi-jo/	[bijɔ]	‘a dance’	(N)
	/bi-jo-tki/	[bijoki]	‘to perform a dance’	(V)
	/bi-jo-tki-ga/	[bijokaga]	‘dancers’	(N)

In the following subsections I show how transitive, intransitive, resultative, positional, and motion verbs each exhibit different morphological properties.

## Transitive vs. intransitive verbs

Transitive and intransitive verbs can also be distinguished morphologically, where the perfective tense is expressed for intransitive verbs as /-no/, and for transitive verbs as /-ro-/, as shown in the contrast between (107-108). What may or may not be a transitive construction is shown in (109), which has two full NPs, but which may be interpreted as an incorporation strategy, and is marked with /-no/. Another analysis could be that the perfective /-ro/ is in fact an inverse marker, however, see the discussion in section 3.4.3 on Word order.

- (107) *tja wo-no* intransitive  
1SG bathe-PFV  
'I bathed'
- (108) *di yo-ro-p* transitive  
water drink-PFV-2.A  
'you drank water'
- (109) *dbong kjörkö wo-no*  
tiger chicken ate-PFV  
'the tiger ate the chicken'

## Positional verbs

Positional verbs show no inflection; they are used to indicate configurational position of a referent or referents. There are eight positionals as listed in (110), although the types of nouns which co-occur with each are restricted, for example, there are different positional forms used to distinguish the standing position of a human as opposed to the standing position of an object. The three categorizations of referents are human, animal, and object, where sometimes they overlap.

- (110) /sok/ 'POSIT:sit (human)'; 'POSIT:stand (animal)'  
/buk/ 'POSIT:lie (human, animal)'  
/loŋ/ 'POSIT:PL (human)'  
/faŋ/ 'POSIT:stand (human)'  
/hoŋ/ 'POSIT:stand (object)'  
/p<sup>h</sup>aŋ/ 'POSIT:hang (object; animal)'  
/lok/ 'POSIT:PL.hang (object)'  
/t<sup>h</sup>eŋ/ 'POSIT:PL (object; animal)'; 'POSIT:PL.lie (human)'

Positional verbs can syntactically modify the main verb; in a pre-verbal position it functions as a present progressive as in (112), and in a post-verbal position it does not have this function, as in (113-114).

- (111) *bor*            *kjokë*            *pë-e*  
 IPOSS            grandfather        sleep-STAT  
 ‘my grandfather is asleep’
- (112) *bor*            *kjokë*            [*buk*            *pë*]  
 IPOSS            grandfather        POSIT:lie        sleep  
 ‘my grandfather is sleeping’
- (113) \**bor*            *kjokë*            [*pë*        *buk*]  
 IPOSS            grandfather        sleep        POSIT:lie
- (114) *bor*            *kjokë*            [*pë*        *buk*]-*e*  
 IPOSS            grandfather        sleep        POSIT:lie-STAT  
 ‘my grandfather is lying down asleep’

#### Motion verbs

Motion verbs are a subclass of resultative verbs: while they can be specified for the /-to/ ~ /-tong/ distinction as well, they can furthermore be specified for an aspectual /-o/ ~ /-ong/ distinction which functions as what I call a future progressive and present progressive, respectively.

Motion verbs include the following below in (115), which show further morphology where /-r/ contributes a downward motion, /-m/ contributes an upward motion, and /-k/ contributes a level motion. /te-/ is a motion towards the speaker, and /je-/ is a motion away from the speaker.

- (115) *tek*        ‘come forward’  
*ter*        ‘come down’  
*tem*        ‘come up’  
*jek*        ‘go forward’  
*jer*        ‘go down’  
*jem*        ‘go up’

The examples below in (116-117) show how these motion verbs categorize for a future progressive and present progressive, respectively. The present progressive is different from the prospective used on main verbs, although the semantics overlap.

(116) *Antonio*        *tem-o*  
 Antonio        come-FUT.PRG  
 ‘Antonio will be coming’

(117) *Antonio*        *tem-ong*  
 Antonio        come-PRES.PROG  
 ‘Antonio is coming (right now)’

### 3.4.1.1.3 Adjectives

Naso has an extensive number of adjectives that describe physical properties of objects, much more than adjectives in any other category in Table 7 below. However, I have not found adjectives denoting position, human propensity, or speed. Position is indicated with verbs. Human propensity is indicated through periphrastic clauses such as ‘does well’ rather than a single term such as ‘nice’, or ‘knows a lot’ rather than ‘smart’. Speed is indicated through adverbs *maling* ‘fast’ and *wor* ‘slow’, which occupy the post-verbal position.

DIMENSION	COLOR	AGE	VALUE	POSITION	PHYSICAL PROPERTY	HUMAN PROPENSITY	SPEED
<i>kesbang</i> ‘large’	<i>sĩ</i> ‘black’	<i>mite</i> ‘young’	<i>pjlu</i> ‘good’		<i>kang</i> ‘hard’		
	<i>shoĩlõr</i> ‘yellow’		<i>owa</i> ‘bad’		<i>wir</i> ‘smooth’		

Table 7. Adjectives and descriptive categories

The adjectives in the table above occupy a post-nominal position, as examples (118a-d) show below.

(118) a. *domer*        *kěsbang*        *i-no-r*  
 man        big        see-PFV-1.A  
 ‘I saw a large man’

- b. *domer*      *kjlo*      *sĩ*    *i-no-r*  
 man            CL:long      black    see-PFV-1.A  
 ‘I saw a black man’
- c. *domer*      *mite*      *i-no-r*  
 man            young      see-PFV-1A  
 ‘I saw a young man’
- d. *kjok*        *wit*      *i-no-r*  
 earth          smooth    see-PFV-1A  
 ‘I saw smooth earth’

A very common strategy for adjective formation includes adding the quantifier /ara/ ‘a lot; very much’ to a noun, as in (119a-b) below.

- (119) a. *tja*    *pjli*    *ara*  
 1SG    hunger very much  
 ‘I am (very) hungry’
- b. *pja*    *kĩ*    *ara*  
 2SG    envy    very much  
 ‘you are (very) jealous’

The descriptive class of adjectives in Naso function as attributive modifiers of nouns as in example (120) below.

- (120) *walë*      *kjang*      *i-no-r*  
 woman      **strong**      see-PFV-1.A  
 ‘I saw the strong woman’

If an adjective is in a predicative position, it will be marked by the stative form /-e/, as shown below in (121). Adjectives are not specified for temporary or permanent attribution, they are understood to be temporary attributes unless modified by a nominalizer. Only nouns may be used as predicates without a stative or copula.

- (121) *walë*      *kjang-e*  
 woman      **strong-STAT**  
 ‘The woman is strong’



Adjectives display the morphological property of specifying intensity or degree with grammaticalized pitch, where high pitch indicates a higher degree, such that the quality of the pitch is variable and iconically motivated. For example, below in (122) the pitch distinguishes intensity of the visual pattern adjective ‘dirty’.

- (122) *shwong*            *wǎiwǎi/ wǎiwǎi/ wǎiwǎi*            *i-no*  
 clothes            **dirty/ very dirty/ extremely dirty**    see-PFV  
 ‘he saw the dirty/very dirty/extremely dirty clothes’

#### Visual patterns

Naso has an extensive number of adjectives that designate visual patterns, which include visual textures and color terms. These are morphologically distinct from basic adjectives and overlap with numerals in being obligatorily specified by a classifier, as in (123a-d) below.

- (123) a. *dbong*            *ko*            *tjangtjang*            *i-no-r*  
 tiger            CLF:soft            spotted            see-PFV-1.A  
 ‘I saw a spotted tiger’
- b. *kagzong*            *ko*            *zrābzrā*            *i-no-r*  
 hair            CLF:soft            curly            see-PFV-1.A  
 ‘I saw curly hair’
- c. *domer*            *kjlo*            *pľublung*            *i-no-r*  
 man            CLF:long            white            see-PFV-1.A  
 ‘I saw a white man’
- d. *jek*    *ber*    *sök*    *kjlak*    *kjwo*    *kěsong*    *wĕ*            *ĭe*    *tjľabgagarĕ*    *eni*  
 go    stay    POSIT:sit    frog    CLF:round    green    PRO.nonvisible    say    ancestors    so  
 ‘and she became a green frog, say the ancestors’

#### 3.4.1.1.4 Adverbs

Naso has a small set of adverbs that modify verbs and occur in the post-verbal position. These include *wor* ‘slowly’ and *maling* ‘quickly’. Adverbs do not appear to have any special morphology, as shown in (124).

- (124) *tja jək maḷing*  
 1SG walk quickly  
 ‘I walk quickly’

Most adverbial semantics, such as temporal manner, are expressed through clitics that attach to the verb. These include /=yẽ/ ‘adverbial proximal discourse’, and /=lũ/ ‘adverbial proximal time’. The latter appears to derive from the independent adverb /luna/ ‘earlier’. An example of the discourse particle is given below in (125).

- (125) *epga tjëyo obĭë ĩë-r=yẽ opshi-no ĩok jek dikar*  
 3PL clan different say-1SG=ADV.PROX.DISC leave-PFV PL go other.side  
 ‘they are the different clan that I mentioned previously, they left to the other side’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal Art volume, pg. 138)

### 3.4.1.2 Closed classes

#### 3.4.1.2.1 Quantifiers

Naso quantifiers can be categorized into two types. One type can be classified with a classifier form, these include /-ara/ ‘many’, /-ũbu/ ‘some’ (in (126)), and /-bi/ ‘how many?’.

- (126) *bomkwo shi-r-a kw-öbö*  
 fish pull-PFV-1A CL:ROUND-some  
 ‘he fished some fish’

The second type may not be specified with a classifier, these include /unkoŋ/ ‘all’, /dlu/ ‘much’, /k<sup>h</sup>oŋ k<sup>h</sup>oŋ/ ‘some people’ as in (127), and /k<sup>h</sup>one k<sup>h</sup>one/ ‘some people/things’ as in (128).

- (127) *kjong kjong tjeng këm u roshko ba sëng*  
 some.people POSIT:be close house inside 3 feed  
 ‘some people were inside the house to feed them’

- (128) *kjone kjone om sha-no ga era eni*  
 some.people PRO.REFL grab-PFV COMP just like.so  
 ‘some people just grabbed it’

### 3.4.1.2.2 Numeral classifiers

Numeral classifiers are obligatory when specifying quantifiers, or adjectives which describe visual patterns. They include the following forms below in (129). Notice how several classifiers distinguish number of referents.

- (129) /k<sup>h</sup>wo/ ‘CLF:round’  
 /ko/ ‘CLF:flexible’  
 /k<sup>h</sup>wəŋ/ ‘CLF:flat’  
 /k<sup>h</sup>lo/ ‘CLF:long’      /do/ ‘CLF:long’ (dual)      /doglo/ ‘CLF:long’ (trial+)  
 /p<sup>h</sup>lo/ ‘CLF:abstract’      /p<sup>h</sup>loglo/ ‘CLF:abstract’ (trial+)  
 /k<sup>h</sup>riŋ/ ‘CLF:type’      /k<sup>h</sup>ringwo/ ‘CLF:plots’ (trial+)

The table below (Table 8) exemplifies how some nouns are categorized for classifiers.

	ROUND	LONG/ HUMAN	FLEXIBLE	ABSTRACT	FLAT	TYPE
classifier	<i>kwo</i>	<i>kjlo / do</i>	<i>ko</i>	<i>pjlo</i>	<i>kjwang</i>	<i>kjring</i>
examples	seed, moon, monkey, minute, book	person, tree, dog, month, banana leaf	cloth, small leaf, hair, feather	river, snake, year, event, path	wood, machete, a handful of water drunk from the river	idea, reason, language, culture, species

Table 8. Classification of Naso nouns.

Below in (130-132) are some examples of how the numeral classifiers are used in clauses.

- (130) *kjok ro sī ro-shko, shkëso-pga, sëya e ara, kjring oblë oblë e*  
 time in dark in-LOC night.spirit-PL spirit DEM many CLF:type different DEM  
 ‘at night there are many nightspirits and siprits, of all different kinds’

- (131) *tjļë ga pjł-ara ga domer tjwe shäng kjł-ara*  
 talk COMP CLF:abstract-one CONN man come POSIT:stand CLF:long-one  
 ‘...said that once there was a man who was coming...’

- (132) *wl̥n-a ga shur-yo shi-r-a dibl̥o kjwo mya*  
 find-3A COMP resin-LIQ pull-PFV-3A calabash CLF:round three  
 ‘they found it and filled three calabashes of resin oil’

As shown in the examples above, the classifier is morphologically bound if the numeral is one, and free if it classifies anything other than the numeral one.

### 3.4.1.2.3 Conjunctions

Naso conjunctions include /ega/ ‘and’, /geniyo/ ‘but’, /miga/ ‘however’, /ga/ ‘REL’, and /da/ ‘CONTR’. These can be characterized as postpositional; examples follow below in (133-135).

- (133) *woyde ga sböng ega swl̥e tjeng pjö-j̥k tjw̥l̥ö-tjok*  
 want COMP bow and arrow POSIT:PL two-all worth-COM  
 ‘the bow and arrow should be together so that it works’
- (134) *eeri ga shji löng geniyo bong eye be-no drete*  
 today COMP 1PL.INCL POSIT:PL.human but tomorrow someone remain-PFV none  
 ‘today we are here, but tomorrow no one will be left’
- (135) *n̥l̥o be löng ara kjoyo miga ll̥em kjok̥e-ga pjök era*  
 drunk remain POSIT:PL.human many seem however not grandfather-PL two only  
 ‘it seemed as though there were many drunk people, however it was just two grandfathers’

The conjunction /ga/ functions as a subordinating relativizer, as shown in the example below in (136).

- (136) *woyd̥-rwa ga ber pj̥lu owa ll̥em ba=kong*  
 want-1PL.EXCL REL remain good bad not 3=DAT  
 ‘we want for it to be of use to them’

There is a contrastive particle /da/ ~ /ra/, where /da/ occurs after a consonant and /ra/ after a vowel. This is used when one clause is contrasted with another, as in the example in (137).

- (137) *oma bok kjwara jem-l̥e=kong no, b̥y jer-l̥e-kong da dgur*  
 person piece one go.up-side=DAT person half go.down-side-DAT CONTR snake  
 ‘the person was half human on top, but on the bottom was half snake’

## 3.4.2 Grammatical categories

### 3.4.2.1 Aspect

#### 3.4.2.1.1 Perfective /-no/ ~ /-r(o)-/ ~ /-(t)ong/

Naso has a perfective aspect; in intransitive verbs the form is /-no/, and in transitive verbs the form is /-ro-/<sup>12</sup>. The perfective marker is suffixed to the infinitive form of the verb, and the verb is subject to vowel harmony which applies regressively. Below are some examples of the use of perfective aspect for each of these verb types; in (138) the verb is intransitive, and in (139-140) the examples are transitive. For motion verbs, the equivalent of the perfective form form is /-(t)ong/, as shown in (141-142). However, some non-motion verbs also take this form, such as ‘finish’ and ‘escape’ as seen in (142).

(138) Intransitive verb

*kjinggo lö-no töy ga ba doyo soko kur eeje zë dröng-go*  
palm.leaf fall-PFV down CONN 3 stem joint length big cut machete-COM  
‘when the leaf falls/has fallen to the ground we cut the stem at the joint with a machete’  
(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 180)

(139) Transitive verb

*pja owa pja jyögo ga llëye roko-ro-t kës Ìi sö-ro-p uun llëme*  
2SG bad 2SG lie-COM CONN thing ask-PFV-1SG.A big TOP bring-PFV-2SG.A all NEG  
‘you are bad, you are a liar, you didn’t bring back everything I asked you for’  
(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal Art volume, pg. 56)

(140) Transitive verb

*Sorë wlosho sö-no kjwa-r-a ba-kong*  
Sorë lunch carry-PFV give-PFV-3.A 3-DAT  
‘Sorë had brought lunch and shared it with him’  
(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 184)

(141) Motion verb

*tja jem öör-ong kjokshko tja jëk-tong dbar shkëng*  
1SG go.up go.and.come.back-COMPL Palenque 1SG walk-PFV day five  
‘I went up to Palenque, I walked about five days’  
(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal Art volume, pg. 257)

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<sup>12</sup> Alternatively, if the analysis is taken that Naso has inverse marking, the /-ro-/ marker could be analyzed as the inverse marker.

(142) Motion verb

*shji zrö-r-a lök pji-tong beno löng kjlöbö era*  
 1PL.INCL kill-PFV-3A PL finish-COMPL stay-PFV PRF few only

*shji tök-tong öö-tong löng kjokshko*  
 1PL escape-COMPL go.and.come-COMPL PRF homeland

‘they killed us all off, only a few of us remained, we fled and went up to our homeland’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia Prologue, xviii)

As shown in examples (139-140) above, there is person marking on the transitive verbs; in the third person person marker /-a/, this causes the perfective form /-ro/ to surface as /-r/ because the two contiguous vowels clash, so the first vowel in the sequence is deleted.

### 3.4.2.1.2 Imperfective /Ø/

The perfective aspect contrasts with the imperfective aspect. The imperfective morpheme is null and suffixes to the infinitive form of the verb. Below in (143-144) are examples of the imperfective aspect on intransitive (‘sleep’) and transitive (‘wrap’, ‘eat’, ‘teach’) verbs.

(143) *shkë ga pe kjorkoy-roy poglö pjrî-ya kjomo ga*  
 night CONN **sleep.IFV.3** branch-inside hammock **wrap.IFV-3A** up CONN

*pë pjang e ro-shko*  
 sleep POSIT:hang DEM inside-LOC

‘at night he **would sleep** in a tree branch and **tie** the hammock up and sleep inside it’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal Art volume, pg. 70)

(144) *pjlözong lik jong kjwe wë-r or-go ga äe*  
 fern.plant cook POSIT:stand DEM.prox **eat.IFV-1SG.A** hand-COM CONN INABIL

‘I can’t **eat** the fern that’s cooking over there with my hand’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal Art volume, pg. 257)

(145) *e pin-wa borwa wapga=kong dwla e jer llëm wlo*  
 DEM **teach.IFV-1PL.EXCL.A** 1PL.DAT child-PL=DAT seed DEM lose neg for

‘we teach that to our children so that we don’t lose the practice’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 118)

As is explained in the section on person marking in 3.4.2.6, the person markers show allomorphy depending on the phonological form of the verb, and at time fuse with the verb stem as seen in the examples just mentioned above.

### 3.4.2.1.3 Perfect /-k/

The perfect aspect is marked with /-(a)k/s shown below in (146-150); it is used to report an extended state, regardless of whether the event is set in the past, present, or future. The perfect /-(a)k/ calls attention to the fact that the verb has taken place within the event of the clause. This aspect does not take person marking other than a third person impersonal marker of subject. Otherwise, there can be a full periphrastic NP subject that occurs post-verbally.

- (146) *e llëbo ga shärya-k jek jong mäling e pjir owa*  
 STAT thing REL do-PRF go PROG fast DEM finish bad  
 ‘things that **are done** hastily turn out badly’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 107)

- (147) *bi dbopdo=kjing e llëbo ya-k be-no kwing ara*  
 IPOSS.INCL shoulder=on.top REL thing put-PRF remain-PFV heavy a.lot  
 ‘[don’t forget that]...a heavy burden **is/was placed** on our shoulders’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Prologue, pg. xx)

- (148) *jyâta-k pjir ga ey jeklä ga zë dröngsho-go*  
 draw-PRF finish COND there forward CONN cut machete-COM  
 ‘when it is finished **being drawn**, then you can cut it with a knife’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 66)

- (149) *kjok zeng=shko pjü ba=kong, barwa-k kjilgwo llëye llëm*  
 land cool=LOC good 3.DAT=DAT bother-PRF vine things NEG  
 ‘the cool land is good for it; it **isn’t bothered** by other vine species’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 164)

- (150) *e jar jek lüna, llëbo lä-k joywa-klo pjü wleni*  
 STAT laugh go earlier thing say-PRF tease-NOM good seem  
 ‘it is to have been laughing for a while, it **is said** of something that can be laughed about’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 171)

The perfect can only take the third person marker that cross-references the agent; this form is /-a/. Notice how when the perfect marker /-k/ is voiced to [-g] in intervocalic position below in

(151). Alternatively, the /-a/ could also be analyzed as a passive marker, as the combination /-ka/ ([-ga]) always results in a reading of a third person subject.

(151) *e shärya-g-a Tjër-dë ya-g-a kjokdë ba=kong pjäy mär ber ëre jũ-go*  
 DEM make-PRF-3A Tjër-SUBJ put-PRF-3A God-SUBJ 3=DAT 2PL care stay this here-COM  
 ‘[the plants] **were made** by Tjër and **given** by God to her, you all should take care of yourselves with them’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Botany volume, pg. 58)

#### 3.4.2.1.4 Progressive /-do/

The morpheme /-do/ functions as a progressive marker; it combines with the perfect marker /-(a)k/ to signal that the verb is or has been taking place within a bound event, as shown in examples (152-154) below.

(152) *kjokë Ìi jer shäng kjor Ìi kjing bebi tö-g-do bebi*  
 grandfather TOP go.down POSIT:stand tree TOP on.top also **flee-PRF-PROG** also  
 ‘the grandfather climbed down the branch, he was also **fleeing/ had been fleeing**’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 260)

(153) *ĩ-ya jem yõtso ga Chere Ìi sö-k-do*  
 see-PFV go.up good CONN Chere TOP **POSIT:sit-PROG**  
 ‘he looked up carefully and saw that it was Chere **sitting there/had been sitting** there’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 184)

(154) *miga dbong wĭengĭa Ìi je-k-do ba irgo*  
 however tiger male TOP **go-PRF-PROG** 3 behind  
 ‘but it was a male tiger that **was chasing him/ had been chasing** him!’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 196)

#### 3.4.2.2 Mood

In Naso, there are grammaticalized finality, ability, sudden, desiderative, imperative, and prospective mood distinctions. These morphemes occupy the same slot as aspect when in suffix form.



### 3.4.2.2.1 Finality or desperation /-rgu-/

The morpheme /-rgu/ contributes what I call a ‘finality’ or ‘desperation’ aspect; it functions to indicate that an action is being done within a limited span of time, where the agent acts out of a sense of pressure. A couple of examples follow in (156-157).

- (156) *walë worye woyde shko ga jyãglo shärya-rg-a sök*  
 woman enamour want when CONN mask **make-FIN-3A** POSIT:sit  
*walë li kjoyoe ya-rga shäng irbo bang-go walë jek-shko*  
 woman TOP like **put-FIN-3A** POSIT:stand path along-COM woman walk-LOC  
*ĩ-ya wlo shaya era ga worya-rg-a ba tjok*  
 see-3A for grab-3A just CONN **enamour-FIN-3A** 3 COM  
 ‘when [a man] wants to enamour a woman he makes a mask that looks like the woman and puts it on the path along which she walks so that when she sees it she will take it and fall in love with him’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 50)

- (157) *kwa-rg-a ba sogo kong maľing-e era kjrik li tjľe ba kong ga*  
**give-FIN-3A** 3 owner DAT fast-STAT so Thunder TOP tell 3 DAT CONN  
 ‘he gave it back to its owner at once, and the Thunder told him...’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 46)

### 3.4.2.2.2 Ability /-go-/

The ‘ability’ aspect is used to indicate that the agent of the action is physically capable of the action; this aspect is restricted to the verbs /ik/ ‘to see’ and /kuk/ ‘to hear’. Examples are given below in (158-159).

- (158) *no tēm löng dew kjwe ĩ-go-r yōtso llēme*  
 people come.up POSIT:PL down DEM.prox **see-ABIL-1SG** good neg  
*pja jek kēgong eni ra ĩ-go-r wēľe*  
 2SG go further so CONTR **see-ABIL-1SG** clearly  
 ‘I can’t see those people who are coming up from down there; but if you get a little bit closer then I can see them clearly’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal Art volume, pg. 343)

- (159) *pja tek llëno-ro ðe-ya, ðy llëme ðe-ba*  
 2SG come for.what -QM.RHET say-IFV see NEG tell-3A  
*bopkong ga ku-go-p llëm-de llëro*  
 2SG.DAT-DAT CONN hear-ABIL-2SG neg-QM what-QM.RHET  
 ‘what did you come here for? If they told you not to come see me then why couldn’t you listen?’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 252)

### 3.4.2.2.3 Sudden /-kzo/

The sudden aspect is used whenever an action is taken very quickly; in contrast to the finality aspect, in the sudden aspect the agent does not act out of a sense of desperation but the action is still undertaken quickly. Examples are given below in (160-161).

- (160) *sböng shi-kz-a swlë-yo tar ga kju kjëng bang*  
 bow pull-SUDD-3A arrow-ABST loose CONN alligator throat on  
 ‘they pull back the bow and the arrow hits the alligator’s throat’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 264)

- (161) *shji llëbo ðo-kzo buk jekdo llëme*  
 1PL.INCL thing say-SUDD POSIT:sit at.once NEG  
 ‘we shouldn’t say things right away’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal Art volume, pg. 100)

### 3.4.2.2.4 Desiderative /-ywo/

The desiderative aspect is used when the verb is a desired activity of the agent, as in examples (162-163) below.

- (162) *pjitong shko ga ber wolësova sö-yw-a pjang era*  
 finish LOC CONN stay pretty take-DESID-3A POSIT:hang just  
 ‘when it [necklace] is finished it looks beautiful, one will want to take it put on’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 188)

- (163) *zrung era wogwo sho wo-ywo-r-e*  
 partridge DEM-CONTR liver meat eat-DESID-1SG-STAT  
 ‘but I would love to eat partridge meat’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 42)

### 3.4.2.2.5 Optative /-yde/

The morpheme /-ydi/ <-ydë> is an optative mood which functions to describe a situation in which the subject of the verb is attempting, intending, or approximating the action of the verb. It always functions such that an action is hoped to take place, but in fact it is never accomplished within the delimitation of the clause. It is not a prospective marker because it is not necessarily certain that the event will occur. The form of this morpheme, when attached to verb roots that end in a nasal consonant, surfaces as /-ti/ <-të>. Examples of the optative aspect are given below in (164-169).

- (164) *shwong kwoshkwak lök kjwe dan-të yötso llëme lök shglëk obi*  
 clothes wash PL DEM.prox **dry-OPT** good neg POSIT:be humid still  
 ‘those clothes that have been washed there haven’t dried well yet, they are still humid’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 312)
- (165) *tjlökwö ëre diwa kowa-ydë tjlapga-ga-rë*  
 word this creek **call-OPT** ancestor-PL-ERG  
 ‘this word is how our ancestors use to call a creek that...’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 153)
- (166) *ga shja-kz-a orgo kjok ro sñ-ro-y zrung kä sha-ydë*  
 CONN grab-SUDD-3A hand-COM time in dark-in-LOC partridge head grab-OPT  
*lä-r-a miga shwlapgur kägä*  
 say-PFV-3A but serpent head  
 ‘he reached with his hand in the darkness to grab the head of the partridge he thought, but it was the head of a serpent’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 86)
- (167) *e tjlung lä-ydë no kjer la-ydë*  
 DEM bad.omen say-OPT person die say-OPT  
 ‘it meant a bad omen, it meant that someone was going to die’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 176)
- (168) *e siwaga tjlökwö lä-ydë ega ba äyo shta-ydë bebi*  
 DEM Latino-PL word say-OPT and 3 curse count-OPT also  
 ‘it refers to Latino people, and it is a way to curse at them’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 155)

- (169) *e sho ak kjweni kjwo pjlungbo-wa dioryo wleni-yo*  
 DEM mass rock like size white-DIM soft like-ABST  
*wlě-ydē Tjër dlup-yo*  
 search-OPT Tjër mountain-ABST  
 ‘it was like a rock, sort of white color, they would look for the soft ones in Tjër’s  
 mountain’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Botany volume, pg. 62)

#### 3.4.2.2.6 Interrogative /-de/; /-do/

There are two interrogative morphemes in Naso used to ask yes/no questions, while open-ended questions are distinguished through intonation. The basic form to ask a yes/no question that one does not know the answer to is /-de/ (after a consonant), or /-re/ (after a vowel). The way to ask a ‘rhetorical’ question, or one which the speaker knows the answer to, is with the morpheme /-de/ ~ /-ro/. The difference is illustrated below in (170-171).

- (170) *e boptu-ro-p llēm-do*  
 DEM puncture-PFV-2SG.A neg-QM.RHET  
 ‘you punctured [the boat], right?’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 76)

- (171) *e boptu-ro-p llēm-de*  
 DEM puncture-PFV-2SG.A neg-QM  
 ‘did you not puncture [the boat]?’

#### 3.4.2.2.7 Imperative /-z/ ~ /-zo/ ~ /-zoŋ/

The imperative function has several markers depending on whether it occurs at the end of a clause or not. The brackets in the examples below delineate clause boundaries. The form /-z/ appears in clause-medial position when it is followed by another descriptor, as in (172-173). The forms /-zo/ and /-zoŋ/ appear in clause final position, as in (174-175). The difference between these last two is not clear and speakers disagree about whether there is a distinction. It appears there may be a difference in intensity or duration of command where /-zoŋ/ is more intense than /-zo/, but more research is needed.

- (172) *Darío* [*kji* *äre* **sha-z** *bor* *kong*] [*sö-z* *jek* *äär* *kēm*]  
 Darío rope DEM-ENUM **grab-IMP** 1SG.DAT DAT **carry-IMP** go arrive close  
 ‘Darío, take this rope for me and leave it over there’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal Art volume, pg. 322)
- (173) **sha-z-ĩa** *ļe-ya* **zrö-z-ĩa** *ļeya* *ybi-rë* *tjlabga-ga* *kong* *eni*  
**grab-IMP-3DAT** say-3A **kill-IMP-3DAT** say-3A sukia-ERG adult-PL DAT so  
 ‘grab it, he said, and kill it, said the sukia to the elders’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 84)
- (174) [*botjeya* **sha-zo**] *ļe* *ba-kong* *kwa-ra* *ba-kong* *ga*  
 1SG.POSS **grab-IMP** say 3-DAT give-PFV 3-DAT CONN  
*shaya* *ga* *pjë* *llëme* *ļe*  
 grab-3A CONN stick neg say  
 ‘take mine, he said, and he gave it to him and...’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 46)
- (175) *pjäy bokkwo* **roshwĩ-zong** *ļe* *ga* *shji* *sö-ra* *shrono lõng* *bi* *kjok-shko*  
 2PL eye **open-IMP** say CONN 1PL.INCL take-PFV come POSIT:PL 1PL.POSS land-LOC  
 ‘he said “open your eyes” and he brought us here to our land’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 40)

### 3.4.2.3 Evidentiality

#### 3.4.2.3.1 Hearsay /le/

Naso only distinguishes one evidential, a hearsay particle /le/ ‘it is said; they say’ that is most likely derived from the verb /le/ ‘to say’. It is most common as a narrative device, where it occurs as a clause-final marker that signals the clause has been said to have occurred but the speaker does not have first-hand epistemic knowledge. Below in (176-177) are some examples of how the hearsay evidential is used. It is often followed by the particle *eni* ‘so’.

- (176) *epga* *e* *bërkë* *bi* *tjok* **ļe**  
 3PL PRO dance 1PL.INCL.DAT COM **say**  
*shji* *shrë-ya* *pjir-e* **ļe** *eni*  
 1PL.INCL celebrate-3A finish-STAT **say** so  
 ‘it is said that they used to dance with us, it is said that they used to celebrate us’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 18)

- (177) *sëya owa e kje ga shji dö-ya iröng obi ïe eni*  
 spirit bad PRO take.apart CONN 1PL.INCL loose back again say so  
 ‘they exorcise the bad spirits out of us and bring us back, they say’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 40)

#### 3.4.2.4 Ergative case

There is much debate about how to analyze the /-rɪ/ <rë> ~ /-dɪ/ <dë> marker of Naso, and whether it is associated with ergativity (Constenla 2007), an inverse function (Quesada 2000, 2010) or a passive function (Koontz 1977). The fact is that it always marks the subject of a transitive clause. However, this is restricted to OVS word order, but I also argue OVS is a basic word order of Naso in the section on word order in 3.4.3 ahead.

The argument for the inverse case (Quesada 2000) is that the marker always occurs in a right-dislocated slot (OVS order) and is subject to the animacy hierarchy where a non-speech act participant acts on a speech act participant. However, it is very common for the first person to be marked with the morpheme /-rë/, and in fact, it never appears unmarked in a transitive clause, as shown below in (178-179).

- (178) *bä li inge krë ara tjlë kwe lö-ga tja-rë le*  
 brother-in-law TOP CONN prideful a.lot say 3SG hunt-PFC-3 1SG-ERG say  
 ‘the brother-in-law was very ostentatious, he said “I will hunt it”’  
 (Celestina Bonilla, the story of the brother-in-law)
- (179) \**tja kwe lök*  
 1SG 3SG hunt  
 (‘I (will) hunt it’)

The marker /-rë/ is also found on pronominal markers on the verb, as in the following below:

- (180) *zrö-ro-t-rë*  
 kill-PFV-1SG.A-ERG  
 ‘I killed him’

While word order is restricted to OVS for pronominal forms and requires marking of the verb, non-speech act participants may not bear case marking in SOV order, as shown below in (190). However, the first clause below in (190) is rare compared to the second in (191). Furthermore, it

seems that (190) functions like an incorporation strategy: the perfective form /-no/ is used, which is the form used in intransitive constructions (whereas /-ro/ is used for true transitive constructions). This is evidence that SOV is not an unmarked order but there it undergoes some type of operation, so in that way it is not more basic than OVS order. It is not clear that Naso can be said to have a basic word order.

(190) *Maria Juan shpo-no*  
 Maria Juan hit-PFV  
 ‘Maria hit Juan’

(191) *Juan shpo-ra Maria-rë*  
 Juan hit-PFV-3A Maria-ERG  
 ‘Juan was hit by Maria’

### 3.4.2.5 Number

#### 3.4.2.5.1 Plural marking /-(p)ga/

The plural marker /-ga/ categorizes nouns that are human, or children of animals, and a few animals including monkeys. Some nouns have the plural marker form /-pga/ instead, these are limited to a few nouns including the following in (192):

(192)	/wa/	‘child’	/wappga/	‘children’
	/jbi/	‘sukia’	/jbipga/	‘sukias’
	/p <sup>h</sup> lu/	‘king’	/p <sup>h</sup> lupga/	‘kings’
	/no/	‘person’	/nopga/	‘people’

It may be possible that the form /p/ in the examples above is cognate with the Bribri plural marker /-pa/, or alternatively, was borrowed from Bribri for these forms. I think it may have been a historic strategy of expressing plurality in Naso, as we see it lexicalized in some words such as /<sup>th</sup>lapga/ ‘person’, which is compared with its current plural form /<sup>th</sup>lapga-ga/ ‘people’.

The example in (193) shows that show the plural form is obligatory when classifying human or children of more than one number.

- (193) *eyga kju wa-pga/\*wa pjök li ÿya tjäpgarë ku-no ïök kësbang*  
 so alligator child-PL two TOP see-3A person grow-PFV PL big  
 ‘the man saw that the alligator’s young had grown big’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 266)

### 3.4.2.6 Person

Naso pronouns make an inclusive/exclusive distinction, as shown in (194). It appears that most plural forms below are historically derived from singular forms.

- |       |                    |       |                      |            |
|-------|--------------------|-------|----------------------|------------|
| (194) | /t <sup>h</sup> a/ | ‘1SG’ | /t <sup>h</sup> awa/ | ‘1PL.EXCL’ |
|       |                    |       | /ji/                 | ‘1PL.INCL’ |
|       | /p <sup>h</sup> a/ | ‘2SG’ | /p <sup>h</sup> äy/  | ‘2PL’      |
|       | /e/                | ‘3SG’ | /ebga/               | ‘3PL’      |

Person marking on transitive verbs derives *A* markers as shown below in (195) from these independent pronominal forms, where the third person marker is irregular and does not distinguish number and has allophonic variants that depend on the phonological form of the verb stem. The first person singular form /-t/ surfaces as [r] in coda position.

- |       |      |         |        |              |
|-------|------|---------|--------|--------------|
| (195) | /-t/ | ‘1SG.A’ | /-twa/ | ‘1PL.EXCL.A’ |
|       |      |         | /-y/   | ‘1PL.INCL.A’ |
|       | /-p/ | ‘2SG.A’ | /-mi/  | ‘2PL.A’      |
|       | /-a/ | ‘3.A’   |        |              |

Object pronouns, usually in the dative case, include the following in (196). The same forms are also used in possessive constructions.

- |       |       |               |         |                    |
|-------|-------|---------------|---------|--------------------|
| (196) | /bor/ | ‘1SG.PRO.DAT’ | /borwa/ | ‘1PL.EXCL.PRO.DAT’ |
|       |       |               | /bi/    | ‘1PL.INCL.PRO.DAT’ |
|       | /bop/ | ‘2SG.PRO.DAT’ | /bomi/  | ‘2PL.PRO.DAT’      |
|       | /ba/  | ‘3.PRO.DAT’   |         |                    |

Examples of these pronouns in the dative include the following below in (197-198).

- (197) *bop data shtagwo lik pjlu-e*  
 2SG.PRO.DAT father beans cook good-STAT  
 ‘your father cooks beans well’



- (198) *tja shro-no bop/ \*pja ïk*  
 1SG come-PFV 2SG.PRO.DAT/\*2SG see  
 ‘I came to see you’

There is also a reflexive pronoun /om/ ‘PRO.REFL’ and a reciprocal pronoun /enj/ ‘PRO.RECIP’, shown below in (199) and (200), respectively.

- (199) *tja om i-no jyãglo-go*  
 1SG PRO.REFL see-PFV picture-COM  
 ‘I saw myself in the picture’

- (200) *tjawa eng i-no irbo-bang*  
 1PL.EXCL PRO.RECIP see-PFV path-along  
 ‘we saw each other along the path’

Demonstrative pronouns include /kwe/ ‘this one’, /e/ ‘that one.VISIBLE’, and /wle/ ‘that one.NONVISIBLE’, as shown in (201).

- (201) *kjor kwe/e/wle kesbang-e*  
 tree this/that.VISIBLE/that.NONVISIBLE big-STAT  
 ‘this/that.VISIBLE/that.NONVISIBLE tree is big’

Other pronominal forms include the respected pronoun for /oma/ ‘PRO.RESP’ for an unknown respected person as in (202). Interrogative pro-forms include /ɪ/ ‘who?’ and /ʒɪ/ ‘what?’.

- (202) *oma kjłoshta-k löng pjir kjĩshko*  
 PRO.RESP bless-PRF POSIT:PL finish because  
 ‘because they have been blessed already’

### 3.4.3 Word order

As with many other languages, there are problems determining the basic word order of Naso. In intransitive clauses, the order is SV. For transitive clauses, if we rely on frequency, the most common word order of Naso is (O)V-s (S) as shown in (201-202). Here the –s is affixed on

the transitive verb, and (S) is obligatorily marked with *-dë ~ -rë*<sup>13</sup>, which I argue is the ergative. This is the only acceptable word order for free pronominal subject and object, as shown in (201), and the most common order for two full subjects, as shown in (202). OVS order may be related to the object being the topic of the clause.

(201) O                    V-s                    (S)  
*pja*                    *kimtë-r*                    *tja-rë*  
 2SG                    help.IFV-1SG.A    1SG-ERG  
 ‘I help you.’

(202) O                    V-s                    (S)  
*Marco*                    *shpo-r-a*                    *Juan-dë*  
 Doni                    hit-PFV-3.A                    Juan-ERG  
 ‘Doni was hit by Juan.’

On the other hand, in SOV order with two full NPs, the verb appears with intransitive marking, as shown in (c) where the verb takes the perfective marker */-no/*, the intransitive form (in contrast, */-ro-/* is the transitive form). This can be compared to the intransitive verb and perfective marker */-no/* in (204). SOV order is not unusual where the object is less animate than the subject on the ANIMACY HIERARCHY SCALE, as in (203) where an animal is less animate than a person, or as in (205) where one human has more animacy than another human due to the fact that the former is hitting the latter. SOV is also the order of noun incorporation constructions as shown in (206); these two functions appear to be related.

(203) S                    O                    V  
*kwe*                    *shwling*                    *i-no*  
 3SG                    deer                    see-PFV  
 ‘He/she saw (a) deer’

(204) S                    V  
*Juan po-no*  
 Juan    sleep-PFV  
 ‘Juan slept’

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<sup>13</sup> Where *-dë* occurs after a consonant and *-rë* occurs after a vowel

(205) S O V  
*Juan Maria i-no*  
 Juan Marco see-PFV  
 ‘Juan saw Maria’

(206) S V  
*Juan dli-li-no*  
 Juan food-cook-PFV  
 ‘Juan cooked’

In further support of the claim that SOV order is a step away from a nominalization strategy is the common use of the stative marker /-e/ at the end of such constructions. Here, as in (207) below, the subject Juan is in a state of having seen Maria. Speakers explain this as if he is in a trance because he has seen Maria for the first time. Crucially, the stative reading is most common in intransitive constructions.

(207) S O V  
*Juan Maria i-no-e*  
 Juan Marco see-PFV-STAT  
 ‘Juan is in a state of having seen Maria’

The stative morpheme and reading cannot occur in the OVS construction; see (208) below.

(208) \**Maria* *ĩ-ya-e* *Juan-dë*  
 Maria see-PFV-STAT Juan-ERG

However, Naso patterns with SOV languages in that it is postpositional, as shown in (209), and it has genitive-noun order, as shown in (210).

(209) *shpo-r-a* *kjillgwo* *tjok*  
 hit-PFV-3 vine with  
 NP Po  
 ‘[he] hit [him] with a vine’

(210) *Ricardo* *kjyong*  
 Ricardo boat  
 G N  
 ‘Ricardo’s boat’

Furthermore, Naso has N-Adj order (see (211)), N-article order (see (212)), and V-Adv order (see (213)).

(211) *kjibokwo*      *srezren*  
 book                  red  
 ‘the red book’

(212) *domer*            *kjwe*  
 man                    that  
 ‘that man’

(213) *jek*      *wore*  
 go      slow  
 ‘to go slowly’

### 3.4.4 Clause structure

In this section I discuss the internal structure of different types of clauses including nonverbal predicates and verbal predicates.

#### 3.4.4.1 *Nonverbal predicates*

Non-verbal predicates exemplified below include an adjectival predicate in (214a), a nominal predicate in (215), and a locative predicate in (216a). A copula /-e/ is obligatorily added to the adjective to form an adjectival predicate, as in (214a) below. Otherwise, the construction is not predicative, as shown in (214b). Elsewhere, the /e/ functions as a third person pronominal form, or as a stative aspect on verbs. A copula is not necessary in nominal predicates, as illustrated in (215). Locative predicates are obligatorily formed with positional verbs that have been grammaticalized as copulas, as in (216a) where the positional form *sök* ‘to sit’ functions as a copula, where the semantic encoding of the sitting position is semi-bleached. Otherwise, without a (positional) copula, the construction is not a predicate, as shown in (216b).

(214) a. *bor*                  *shiti*    *klo*    *nyet-e*                                  adjectival predicate  
 1SG.POSS          dog          color    black-COP  
 ‘my dog is black’

b. *bor shiti klo nyet*  
 1SG.POSS dog color black  
 ('my black dog...')

(215) *kwe no* nominal predicate  
 DEM person  
 'that is a person'

(216) a. *domer sök u-shko* locative predicate  
 man COP house-LOC  
 'a/the man is at home'

b. *domer u-shko*  
 man house-LOC  
 ('a/the man at home...')

Existential clauses are formed with the morpheme /t<sup>h</sup>ok/ 'to have', which is suffixed to the predicate as shown in (217) below.

(217) *domer u-shko tjok*  
 man house-LOC be  
 'there is a man in the house'

### 3.4.4.2 Verbal predicates

Intransitive predicates in Naso take a single argument, and transitive predicates take two arguments. Adjuncts are marked with postpositions such as the locative =*shko* in (219), while the object is unmarked. The subject of the transitive clause in (218) is marked with the ergative, unlike the subject of the intransitive clause.

(218) *səngna wa-ra bor shiti-rë* transitive clause  
 meat eat-PFV 1POSS dog-ERG  
 'my dog ate the meat'

(219) *bor shiti buk pë tö=shko* intransitive clause  
 1SG.POSS dog PROG sleep down=LOC  
 'my dog is sleeping downstairs'

### 3.4.5 Stem formation

Naso words can consist of several bound morphemes, and is best described as synthetic. Its morphemes typically consist of one grammatical meaning, such that it is mostly agglutinating, although a small number of morphemes display a plurality of functions that arise through grammaticalization. The internal structure of the verb and noun are shown respectively in (220) and (221) below, and the examples that follow stretch best-case scenarios of maximum inflection. A Naso word commonly tends to have around two to three morphemes.

(220) a. **VERB-TENSE/ASPECT/MODALITY=PERSON-NUMBER=POSTPOSITION=MODALITY**

b. *wa-r-a=lok=shko=ga*  
 eat-PFV-3=PL=LOC=CONN  
 ‘when they had eaten it...’

(221) a. **NOUN-ORGN-{PL/CL/MASS/LIQUID/ABSTR}-DIM-ENUM=POSTPOSITION**

b. *kjoling-so-ga-wa-re=shko*  
 Kjoliong-ORGN-PL-DIM-ENUM=LOC  
 ‘at the place of those dear people from Kjoliong’

#### 3.4.5.1 Derivational morphology

##### 3.4.5.1.1 Enumerative /-de/ ~ /-re/

The morpheme /-de/ (or /-re/, after a vowel) is a clitic marks noun phrases in order to enumerate them in a list among several nouns, or in isolation which functions to isolate the noun, similar to a function of individuating it. Below are examples of the first strategy in (222), and the second in (223).

(222) *wĩ-ŷ*                      *jongya*            *jong*    *kjone*    *ga*            *ey*                      *guëng*            *bang-go*  
 search-1PL.INCL    go                      PROG    where    CONN    there-LOC    slab                      on-COM  
***ak =bang-go=re***                      ***dipkwo =kjing-go=re***                      ***kjok =sorgo=re***  
**rock=on-COM=ENUM**                      **bend=on.top-COM=ENUM**                      **land=side=ENUM**  
 ‘wherever we look for it, it’s there; on the rock slabs, on the rocks, on the river bend, along the side of the land...’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 142)

- (223) *dli mok ere sok jengibre=re*  
 food condiment DEM appear **ginger=ENUM**  
 ‘this condiment is like ginger’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 240)

#### 3.4.5.1.2 Mass /-sho/

This morpheme derives nouns that are related to a meaning of ‘mass’, semantically specified by the material of the stem. An example follows in (224).

- (224) *kjlo-sho ere e wen kjlung-sho=kjing*  
**foliage-MASS** this PRO grow **soil-MASS=on.top**  
 ‘this plant grows on the soil’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Botany volume, pg. 100)

#### 3.4.5.1.3 Abstract /-yo/

The abstract morpheme /-jo/ specifies for nouns that are not particular, or in other words, nouns that are not associated with a specific referent and applies in general or referents of the type indicated by the stem. It can be suffixed to nouns (‘master’, ‘day’) or verbs (‘to sing’) to derive nouns, as seen below in (225).

- (225) *Naso-ga kōnkowo dbu-ga tjang-yo tēkwo... wen tjwe dōrō tē-yo*  
 Naso-PL spear throw-INV **master-ABST** song appear come approximate **sing-ABST**  
 ... *jek ěnkjwē nas-oga oblē tjok dbar-yo=shko*  
 go fight Naso-PL different COM **day-ABST=time**  
 ‘this is the song about how Naso masters used to fight with spears...it’s a song about when that time would come...the day when they would fight with other tribes’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 174)

#### 3.4.5.1.4 Diminutive /-wa/

The diminutive marker /-wa/ attaches to nouns or adjectives, as shown in (226) below.

- (226) *eyga sōglā chira-wa mekē ĩi shro-no so=y*  
 so cow small-DIM mother TOP come-PFV close=LOC  
 ‘so then the baby cow’s mother came close’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal Art volume, pg. 76)

### 3.4.5.1.5 Agent /-ga/

The /-ga/ morpheme, when suffixed to a verb or noun, can derive nouns that categorize for actors or agents that perform the verb in an occupational manner. It is homophonous with the inverse /-ga/, which functions as a third person that acts on another third person; it appears that its agent function is related to this. An example is given below in (227).

- (227) *epga ia-ra Kʒok-dë bi da-ga bi wlika-ga...*  
 they put-PFV God-ERG 1PL.INCL.DAT care-AG 1PL.INCL.DAT defend-AG  
 ‘they were placed by God to care for us and to defend us’;  
 ‘they were placed by God as our caretakers and our defenders’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 28)

### 3.4.5.2 Noun incorporation

Noun incorporation works by conjoining OV constructions morphologically as a single unit. Evidence that they function as one unit is that while in syntactically separate O V constructions, each the O and the V receive primary stress, as in (228a), but in noun incorporated O-V constructions only the O receives stress, as illustrated in (228b) below. In (228b), ‘food’ is always indefinite, whereas in (228a), ‘meat’ can be modified.

- (228)a. *'tja (kõchi) 'sëngna 'li-no 'pjir-e* (no incorporation)  
 1SG (pig) meat cook-PFV finish-STAT  
 ‘I’m done cooking the (pig) meat’
- b. *'tja 'dli-li-no 'pjir-e* noun incorporation  
 1SG food-cook-PFV finish-STAT  
 ‘I’m done cooking’

Some profound words are incorporations, such as the following in (229) in which *po-shkwe* and *wo-shkwe* are incorporation constructions.

- (229) *po-shkwe wo-shkwe* profound word  
 body-wash liver-wash  
 ‘TO WASH EVERYTHING’



### 3.4.5.3 Noun compounding

Noun compounding is another common strategy found in the language as well as in profound words. There are two types of compounding: hypotactic and paratactic. A hypotactic constructions has a stress pattern of a single word and restrictive semantics, as in the example below in (230).

- (230) /k<sup>h</sup>orkwaŋ/  
wood-piece  
'a flat slab of wood'

A paratactic construction has a stress pattern of a two words, as in (231).

- (231) /kwozir-ga    'piŋ-ga/  
child-PL        teach-AGENT  
'school teacher'

Some profound words are in a paratactic compounding relation, as in the following below in (232), where *kjwak pjluyo* is the king of a specific bird species, and *ding pjluyo* is as well.

- (232) /k<sup>h</sup>wak        'p<sup>h</sup>lu-jo        'ding    'p<sup>h</sup>lu-jo/  
bird.species    king-ABST    blue    king-ABST  
'KING OF KASANGA BIRDS'

## 3.5 COMPLEX CONSTRUCTIONS

### 3.5.1 NP structure

The structure of the NP is illustrated in the schema in (233). The Naso noun in the NP immediately follows a possessive pronoun and precedes the adjectives and demonstrative. In the case of a heavy NP, such as one with a numeral classifier, there is rightward shifting or postposition after the verb, as is illustrated in (234) where the verb 'see' interrupts a heavy NP.

- (233) [PRO NOUN Adj DEM TOP...(VP)...CL NUM]NP

- (234) *bop*    *kwozir-ga*    *wolëso*    *wle*            *ĩ-no-r*            *doglo*            *mya*  
2.POSS    child-PL        beautiful    DEM.NONVIS    see-PFV-1SG.A    CL:HUMAN.PL    three  
'I saw those three beautiful children of yours'

### 3.5.2 Serial verb constructions

SVCs in Naso are asymmetric, and minimally involve one ‘event’ verb or motion verb plus either one positional verb or motion verb, but they may be longer, as illustrated in (235). The parameters defined by Aikhenvald (2006) for classification of serial verb constructions (SVCs) include: composition (symmetric vs. asymmetric), contiguity (vs. non-contiguity), wordhood (whether verbs in SVCs also function independently), and marking (single vs. concordant). These parameters will be discussed in the following.

(235) EVENT/MOT/POSIT + EVENT/MOT/POSIT + ({POSIT/MOT} + {POSIT/MOT})

These asymmetrical SVCs are typologically prototypical in that semantically they can express aspectual meanings such as perfective (in (236)), perfect (in (237)), progressive (in (238)) and habitual (in (239)), as well as secondary concept serialization (in (240)).

(236)

			[V <sub>motion</sub>	V <sub>motion</sub> ]	
<i>bor</i>	<i>leng</i>		<b>[to</b>	<b>jek]</b>	<i>diga</i>
1SG.POSS	younger.sister		go	go.straight	river
‘my younger sister went to the river’					

(237)

			[V <sub>motion</sub>	V <sub>motion</sub> ]	
<i>bor</i>	<i>leng</i>		<b>[jek</b>	<b>to]</b>	<i>diga</i>
1SG.POSS	younger.sister		go.straight	go	river
‘my younger sister has gone to the river’					

(238)

	[V <sub>positional</sub>	V <sub>event</sub> ]	
<i>tja</i>	<b>[shäng</b>	<b>opping]</b>	
1SG	PROG	learn	
‘I am learning’			

(239)

				[V <sub>event</sub> V <sub>positional</sub> ]		
<i>kä</i>	<i>jong</i>	<i>sör</i>	<i>le</i>	<b>[wen</b>	<b>shä(ng)]</b>	<i>shkë</i>
head	POSIT:hang	oval	say	<b>appear</b>	<b>HAB</b>	night
‘they say he has an oval head and appears at night’						

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 173)

(240)			[V <sub>motion</sub>	V <sub>event</sub> ]	
	<i>domer</i>	<i>nelo</i>	<b>[jek]</b>	<b>tě]</b>	<i>obi</i>
	man	drunk	go	sing	again
	‘the drunk man started to sing again’				

The aspectual function of the positionals in the SVCs is typical grammaticalization path of asymmetrical SVCs, and the habitual reading in (239) reflects the phonological erosion of the positional in this function. Another typologically common grammaticalization path of the minor verbs is into directionals, shown in examples (241a-b):

(241) a.			[V <sub>motion</sub>	V <sub>motion</sub> ]	
	<i>tjawa</i>	<b>[jem</b>	<b>jer-ong]</b>		<i>dlup</i>
	1SG.PL.EXCL	go.up	go.down-PFV		mountain
	‘we went up to the mountain’				
b.			[V <sub>motion</sub>	V <sub>motion</sub> ]	
	<i>tjawa</i>	<b>[jek</b>	<b>jer-ong]</b>		<i>diga</i>
	1PL.EXCL	go.straight	go.down-PFV		river
	‘we went down to the river’				

Naso SVCs are contiguous, where no SVC-external constituents may be inserted within the serial verb chain. If verbs are discontinuous with another particle intervening, they will be interpreted as separate events, which makes them not part of a single-event which is the definition of a SVC. Below in (242), two events are interpreted coordinated by the connective *ga*.

(242)		[V <sub>event</sub> ]		[V <sub>motion</sub>	V <sub>motion</sub>	V <sub>event</sub> ]
	<i>domer</i>	<b>[opshi-no]</b>	<i>ga</i>	<b>[to</b>	<b>jek</b>	<b>parkě]</b>
	man	exit-PFV	CONN	go	go.straight	work
	‘the man exited and went to work’					

Wordhood distinguishes whether SVCs are independent, or compounded in the serial verb chain. As can be seen by the glossed SVCs up to this point, Naso verb chains consist of independent grammatical words, which may form separate predicates on their own, as is shown in (243a-d).

- (243) a. [V<sub>event</sub> V<sub>motion</sub> V<sub>positional</sub>]  
*kjlosho* [***dbu-no*** ***jek*** ***pjang***]  
 trash throw-PFV go.straight POSIT:hang  
 ‘(someone) threw trash’
- b. *kjlosho dbu-no*  
 trash throw-PFV  
 ‘(someone) threw trash’
- c. *kjlosho jek-e*  
 trash go-STAT  
 ‘trash went/goes’
- d. *kjlosho pjang-e*  
 trash POS:hang-STAT  
 ‘trash is hanging’; ‘trash exists’

However, as is noted in Aikhenvald (2006:39), multi-word SVCs are ambiguous as to whether some of the minor words are grammaticalized, as was argued above for the habitual in (239). This is why, for example, the positional *pjang* ‘hang’ gives a more faithful reading when stands alone in (243d) than when it is in the SVC of (243a).

SVCs, which are single events, are crucially distinguished from multiple event structures (non SVCs) by the fact that in the former, aspectual categories may only be marked once on a single verb of the SVC, while in the latter there is concordant parking of aspect on every verb. This is shown in contrasting (244), which is an SVC, with (245-246), which are not SVCs.

- (244) [V<sub>event</sub> V<sub>motion</sub>]  
*e* [***ku-no*** ***jek/\*jek-ong***] *llögong* *llögong-e*  
 DEM grow-PFV go further further-STAT  
 ‘it grows to be more and more’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 16)

- (245) [V<sub>motion</sub> V<sub>motion</sub>]  
*eyga* [***jek-ong*** ***äär-ong***] *Shur* *dbo*  
 CONN.then go-PFV arrive-PFV Shur headwater  
 ‘from there to the headwaters of Shur’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 14)

- (246) [Vevent                    Vevent                    Vevent]  
*Tutu* [*shja-kz-a*            *poyong-z-a*            *dbu-kz-a*]            *buk*            *pjök*            *era*  
 Tutu grab-SUDD-3.A turn.over-SUDD-3.A throw-SUDD-3.A POSIT:lie IDEO only  
 ‘he grabbed Tutu, turned him around, and just threw him down’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Mythology volume, pg. 66)

It could be analyzed that (244) does not concord in aspect because they are different classes of verbs, whereas (245) and (246) do concord because they are the same class of verbs. However, in examples above such as (241a-b), SVCs with corresponding verb classes need not concord in aspect.

Typically, asymmetric SVCs have limited productivity, where not all major verbs may belong in SVCs. It is not certain at this point whether all major Naso verbs may be serialized, although it is my intuition that they can be, even verbs like ‘drink’ and ‘eat’ (in (247)), which are known exceptions to serialization in asymmetric languages (Mupun: Frajzyngier 1993: 232).

- (247) *wawa* *jek*            *yë*            *obi*  
 baby go eat again  
 ‘the baby started to eat again’

Naso has a prototypical asymmetric SVC constructions. It shows incipient grammaticalization of the positional verbs through use in SVC constructions, which have given rise to aspectual functions. Because motion verbs and positional verbs are prone to grammaticalization in serialization, there is not a clear argument against subordination of these minor verbs. Perhaps because the most common strategy for subordination is the gap strategy (as in (248), where the relative clause is bracketed), in SVCs as we have seen from negative evidence in examples above, also there is no subordinate marking of positionals or motion verbs to event verbs.

- (248) *kwozir-wa*            [*dbong i-no*]            *wopji-tong*  
 child-DIM tiger see-PFV faint-PFV  
 ‘the child who saw the tiger fainted’

In order to express a sequential event out of (248) above, the clause in (249) below would need to be used.

- (249) *kwozir-wa dbong i-no ga wopji-tong*  
 child-DIM tiger see-PFV CONN faint-PFV  
 ‘the child saw the tiger and fainted’

The evidence for subordination of motion verbs and positionals in SVCs is prosodic and orthographic; speakers phonologically reduce the positional and motion verb in SVCs, and may write them as suffixed or prefixed to the main verb. However, the degree to which motion and positional verbs are becoming subordinate is in process, and currently they seem to characterize SVCs because they can also be used independently, as in (243c-d). In general, for this reason asymmetric SVCs are less prototypically SVCs than symmetric ones, since the latter clearly shows fewer tendencies towards subordination between serialized verbs.

There is evidence that an NP can interrupt the main verb and the positional verb that follows it, as shown in (250), but it is unclear at this moment how to explain this and whether it can be classified as verb serialization.

- (250) *llēbo ēre uun jū miyde ega woyo tjlīya bi kjokē-ga-rē*  
 thing this all here know and think 1PL.INCL.DAT grandparent-PL-ERG  
*drete ēre-go ga miyde tjlāpga-rē sōk drete*  
 complete this-COM CONN know older-ERG HAB complete  
 ‘[the animals] knew all of these things so our ancestors would think about it thoroughly and know it all’

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 106)

This discussion shows how verbs are serialized through asyndesis. The following section shows how asyndesis is also a common strategy in coordination.

### 3.5.3 Coordination

Naso has an analytic tendency towards asyndesis in coordination and possession. The following examples show how VPs (in (251)), AdvPs (in (252)), and NPs (in (253)) are coordinated.

(251) VP coordination:

*të ïge [të Kjok Shrila ïe]<sub>VP</sub> [të Sonmekwo ïe]<sub>VP</sub> [të Dłupso ïe]<sub>VP</sub> [të Dbong Uso*  
Sing um sing Mermaid say sing Crab say sing Mountain say sing Tiger House  
*ïe]<sub>VP</sub> [të Shkłikso ïe]<sub>VP</sub> [të ïge Länso ïe]<sub>VP</sub> të eni tjwe-jong träk llëme*  
say sing Shkłikso say sing um Lanso say sing so come-POSIT:hang little NEG  
'they sang um, they sang the Mermaid they say, they sang the Crab they say, they sang  
the Mountain they say, they sang the Tiger House they say, they sang Shkłikso they say,  
they sang Lanso they say, they sang like that, they would come in large numbers'

(252) AdvP coordination

*të jek [zröya lõk sorë]<sub>AdvP</sub> [son-tkë sorë]<sub>AdvP</sub> [brik sorë]<sub>AdvP</sub> e kjłoshtë lõk drete*  
sing go kill DIST how poor-CAUS how leave how DEM count DIST nothing  
'they would sing about how they'd go off killing, how they'd become vulnerable, how  
they'd leave; they would imagine it all'

(253) NP coordination

*pjõla-e oba soy shwoy llëme [kjur llë]<sub>NP</sub> [kjisho llë]<sub>NP</sub> [sënwa tjok llë]<sub>NP</sub> tjrëko*  
far-STAT people close place NEG trees THING vine THING bird with THING among  
'far away from the nearby houses, among tree things, vine things, with bird things'

The noun phrase coordination above in (253) is a common strategy by which profound words are juxtaposed, without the use of a syndeton.

### 3.5.4 Frame tags

I call 'frame tags' particular constructions, somewhat fixed and idiomatic, that are used in verbal art to signal specific moods, such as humor. While I don't attempt to theorize on the typological existence of 'frame tags' cross-linguistically, in this section I introduce their distribution and syntax. These typically occur in a syntactically postposed position as an adjunctive clause, either at the beginning or the end of a complex construction.

One construction, *loz bakong* 'tell him/her', is used to signal a humorous interaction. The example below in (254) shows how it occurs outside of the main clause.

- (254) *tia bor mekë tjlě naso mae [lo-z ba-kong]*  
 aunt 1SG.POSS mother speak Naso INABIL say-IMPER 3-DAT  
 ‘‘Aunt, my mother doesn’t speak Naso’’, **tell her**  
 (Emerita Sánchez, April 23, 2018, Whatsapp)

This complex construction, a main clause followed by a frame tag, works to straddle different perspectives or evidential systems through syntactic juxtaposition. In (254) above, the speaker takes the perspective of her baby nephew, as is marked within quotations, and then switches back to her own perspective, bolded. Otherwise, in a non-frame tag construction, the same meaning could be given from the speaker’s perspective only, and this would involve syntax that includes a morpheme that marks coordination, *ga*. For example, consider the following below in (255), which maintains the same topic as the construction above in (254):

- (255) *lo-z ba-kong ga bop mekë tjlě naso mae*  
 say-IMPER 3-DAT CONN 2.POSS mother speak Naso INABIL  
 ‘tell her that your mother doesn’t speak Naso’

However, not all frame tags have a unique syntax that goes along with their heightened verbally artistic function. For example, another humorous frame tag construction is marked by *sore* ‘how’. Here, *sore* also occurs at the end of a predicative clause like with the previous frame tag. However, its syntax is not unique from a construction in which *sore* functions merely as a question word. For example, compare the following two examples below, where in (256) a humorous frame tag is indexed, and in (257) it is simply a regular, non-humorous construction.

- (256) *pja popjlu-r-a Daniel-dě sore*  
 2SG hug-PFV-3A Daniel-ERG **how**  
 ‘how did Daniel hug you?’; ‘how was it that Daniel hugged you?’
- (257) *Juan e kjimta-r-a Luis-dě sore*  
 Juan PRO help-PFV-3A Luis-ERG how  
 ‘How did Luis help Juan?’

There is no syntactic difference between the humorous use of the frame tag and the commonplace interrogative function of the *sore* ‘how’. The humorous function is interpreted through common prior knowledge only.



Another frame tag that works differently is one that includes the evidential particle *le*, a hearsay particle that also has the meaning ‘to say’, inflected for third person. An example follows in (258).

- (258) *Shuntri e diwa sēya to shāng s̄lontkē w̄lo ĩe eni*  
 Shuntri PRO creek spirit go POSIT:stand court for say so  
 ‘Shuntri was a creek spirit that would go around courting [people], they say’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Songs volume, pg. 50)

In a non-frame tag use, the construction would have the following syntax in (259), where in this case the main clause would be subordinated with a relativizing function of the connector *ga*.

- (259) *tjlē ga Shuntri e diwa sēya to shāng s̄lontkē w̄lo*  
 talk REL Shuntri PRO creek spirit go POSIT:stand court for  
 ‘they say that Shuntri was a creek spirit that would go around courting [people]’

In conclusion, frame tags at times are marked syntactically in the unusual pattern of juxtaposition of clauses, instead of using the more common strategy in the grammar of subordination through a relative or connective particle.

### 3.6 SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIABLES

Naso has two sociolinguistic variables that distinguish clan membership<sup>14</sup>: nasalization and /t/ ~ /k/.

#### 3.6.1 Nasal harmony vs. non-nasal spread

In a few families, regressive nasal harmony spreads across consonants and affects stops. Below in (260), nasalization spreads leftward across fricatives and glides in both variants, and it

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<sup>14</sup> Further investigation is needed in order to determine what the clan boundaries are; although Nasos attribute linguistic differences to clans, it is unclear who belongs to which clans. Sociolinguistic variables appear to be more along extended families line or geographical areas.

nasalizes bilabial stops but also a glottal stop to a bilabial nasal /m/. No other nasals have been reported for this process, it seems the harmony only results in a change in stops to the bilabial /m/.

- (260) a. /bĩ-ŋĩ-jã/ ‘mine’:                    [bĩŋĩjã] ~        **[mĩŋĩjã]**  
           b. /pĩjako/ ‘culantro’:                [pĩjako] ~        **[mĩjako]**  
           c. /ʔjã/ ‘golofa ant species’:        [ʔjã]     ~        **[mjã]**

In Chapter 6 in the Case study on *Hypervariation*, one of the speakers uses nasal harmony in the form *ma ãya* ‘theirs’ rather than non-nasalized variant *ba ãya*. ‘theirs, which is related to the for in (260a).

### 3.6.2 /t/ ~ /k/

The clan variant /t/ vs /k/ occurs only in words which historically derive from the /tk̃/ phoneme, which split into /t/ or /k/ in word initial position depending on clan affiliation. Otherwise, there was already /t/ and /k/ in the Naso language in word-initial position, so the majority of words across the two clans are pronounced similar with /t/ or /k/, while only the few words reconstructed as beginning with \*tk̃ are pronounced differently. The history of the sound change in \*tk̃ is illustrated below in (261).

- (261) Proto-Chibchan: \*dṼkV > Proto-Isthmic \*tk̃ > Naso / tk̃/ → [t]~[k]/#\_

Elsewhere, such as in word-medial position, the /tk̃/ either remains [tk] in older speakers, of gets reduced to [k] in younger speakers, as in /s.lomtke/ [s.lomtke] ~ [s.lomke] ‘to court’ or /bijotke/ [bijotke] ~ [bijoke] ‘to dance’. The few tokens which reconstruct to \*tk̃ include the following words, which vary between clans (262), where one clan produces /tjɔŋ/ and /twe/, and the other uses /kjɔŋ/ and /kwe/.

- (262) Naso: \*tkjɔŋ → /tjɔŋ/ ~ /kjɔŋ/ ‘boat’  
               \*tkwe → /twe/ ~ /kwe/ ‘to give’

A case study in Chapter 5 on Vitality will show how the /t/ variant gets overextended to words that historically reconstruct to \*k in onset position.

### **3.7 CONCLUSIONS AND FORESIGHTS**

In the upcoming chapters, I will refer to several linguistic patterns that will turn out to be important to the creation of speech play and verbal art, such as some of the following. Tone and reduplication are patterns exploited in ideophones and adjectives, and their sonic saliency contributes to the way speakers interpret them to be unique Naso patterns. Sibilant phonemes are distorted in ideophones from their ordinary distribution; this process makes them salient and amenable to aesthetic value. Naso profound words exploit nominalizing derivational morphology and adds these suffixes redundantly in order to create obscurity, a function of the verbal art genre *tjlökwo rong* ‘profound words’. Naso uses coordination of its major constituents, and this strategy is pervasive and exploited in profound words; it creates equivalence between the two profound word constituents A and B.

## Chapter 4: Speech play and verbal art resources

In this chapter I introduce the lexico-grammatical strategies Nasos use in creating speech play and verbal art. I take a wide angle perspective in order to show the broad diversity of resources available to Nasos. This chapter lays out a structural, primarily decontextualized description of the resources, in order to provide material for comparative or typological work on speech play and verbal art in the future. The subsequent chapters on Nostalgia (Chapter 5) and Vitality (Chapter 6) provide description of the use of some of the strategies and their social functions that are introduced in this chapter.

### 4.1 APPROACH

My approach in describing speech play and verbal art resources is partly inspired from Edward Sapir's 1921 book *Language* where he points to the way languages change and restructure—my take in this is *to follow the life of a language* in linguistic description. This means that in the case that a language is endangered or undergoing shift, it is important to document not only the fixed verbal art genres used by elders or interpreted as ancestral because of ideological prescriptivism, but also to follow how those categories change and get adapted productively by younger speakers, who are usually bilingual or dominant in a national language. The way that these categories are adapted across languages is an interesting new direction to take speech play and verbal art research because it takes seriously the way in which speakers use their whole linguistic repertoires, which often includes creative patterns of code-switching (see Webster 2010b for Navlish (Navajo and Spanish)). Anthony Woodbury's (1998) call "to document and compare the use of both the old and the new language in order to gauge processes of transfer (or non-transfer)", and Salikoko Mufwene's (2017) theorization of language endangerment and loss, similarly call to focus more attention to the vitality of language in situations of shift and multilingualism.

Another part of my approach to describing Naso speech play and verbal art is driven by speaker intuitions, and my analysis is bottom-up. I describe the salient strategies that Nasos use and interpret as speech play and verbal art in socially and culturally *Naso* ways. In other words, I attempt to describe the local Naso categories that are salient from their perspective. Some of these strategies Nasos are highly aware of and describe with heavy exegesis through prefacing or explanation, such as songs, mythical stories, anecdotal experiences, proverbs, and the local Naso category of ‘profound words’. Other strategies are pervasive but are not subject to as much explanatory interpretation and in a way fall under the radar in terms of whether people feel the need to explain how they “work” (unless the individual is particularly artistic or metalinguistically aware); these strategies include humor, frame tags, and aesthetically and socially indexical sounds.

I will describe these categories of speech play and verbal art starting from the most particular strategies “resources” to the most pervasive genres “local genres”, because the more particular ‘under the radar’ strategies make their way into some of the more local categories of verbal art such as ‘profound words’, narrative, and song. As is recognized by Paul Friedrich in his explanation of *polytropy* (1991), many of these resources overlap and interact simultaneously.

## **4.2 RESOURCES FOR SPEECH PLAY AND VERBAL ART**

The section below includes description of resources of speech play and verbal art, including: sonic patterns, ideophones, distorted sibilants, frame tags, parallelism, and local categories: anecdotes, proverbs, histories, song, and *tjłokwo rong* ‘profound words’.

### **4.2.1 Sonic patterns**

In the following I describe the sonic patterns that Nasos call attention to or find affective. These, along with the next sections on ideophones, and sibilants, are related to or can be analyzed as imagistic tropes (Friedrich 1991) in that they work iconically by resonating with perceptual reality or senses as in *qualia* (Peirce 1884); these are sounds that *resonate* (Webster 2014) through other parts of Naso verbal art including songs, literature, and jokes.

#### 4.2.1.1 *Voice quality*

Like all humans and their innate ability of categorization and ability to make fine distinctions, Nasos are acutely aware of the differences in the voices of different people. Some of these voicing qualities are discussed openly, and others I have observed people use consistently for particular effects: creaky voice, breathy voice, pharyngeal voicing, lax voicing, and other clan-based particular styles.

##### 4.2.1.1.1 Creaky voice

Creaky voice is frequently used by elders, and mostly likely exclusively by those who identify as women. Nasos are very aware of creaky voice as a sociolinguistic variable, and associate it with endearing elderly women. This voicing often aligns with high pitch and lengthened vowels, and can be used to function expressively across speech genres. In addition, this voice is often accompanied by other expressive features such as illustrative gestures and intentional eye contact. Below in Figure 5 – Figure 6 are spectrograms of a couple of ideophones with creaky phonation, as produced by Celestina Bonilla, an elderly woman in her late 80's.

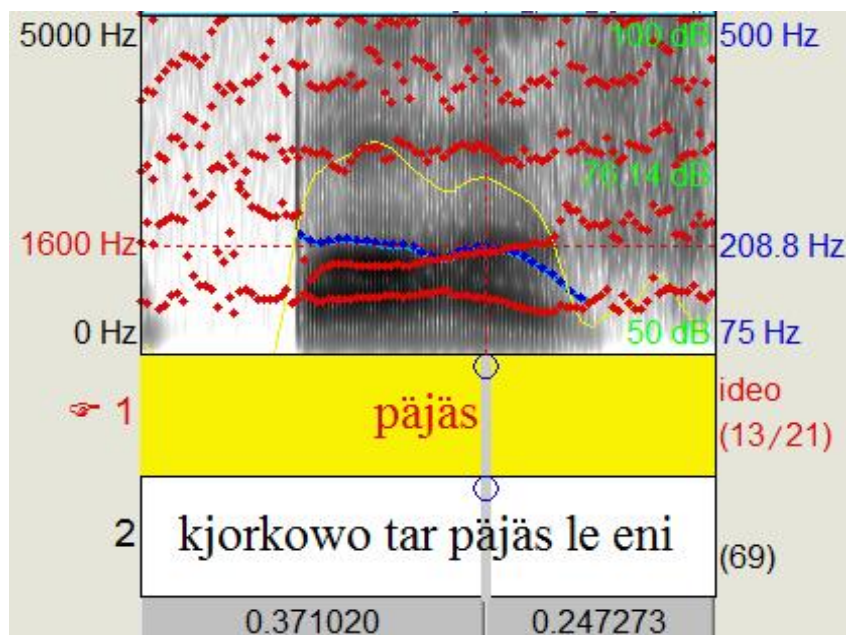


Figure 5. Creaky voice in ideophone *päjäs* ‘to break’

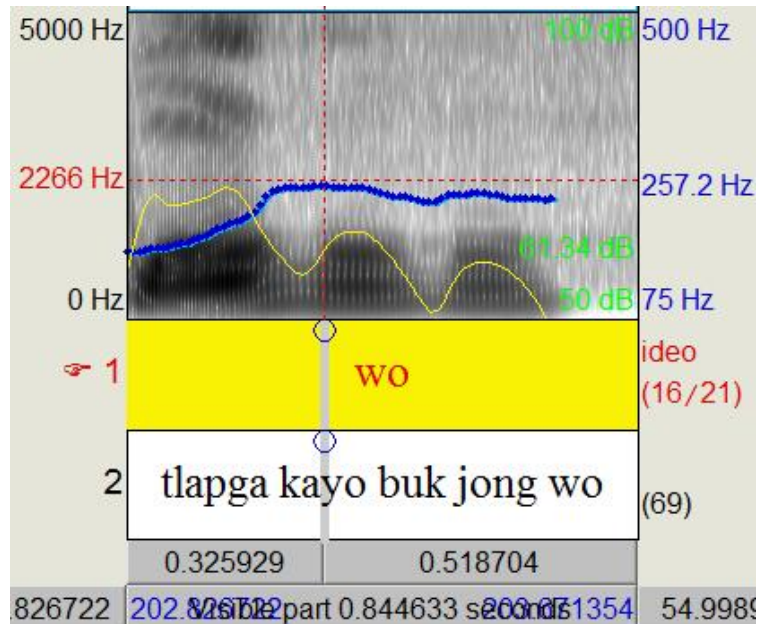


Figure 6. Creaky voice in ideophone *wo* ‘to waver’

#### 4.2.1.1.2 Breathy voice

Breathy voice is used across age groups and genders. I interpret that it indexes a sort of politeness and level-headedness, because when people use it they seem emotionally detached from the content they are speaking in a way that seems to place the spoken content on a more objective and matter-of-factual plane. In this voice, people use a serious or grave tone, and they tend not to make eye contact. This voice is used for example when discussing ‘profound words’ or other ancestral knowledge. Daniel Villagra also uses it throughout my interview with him, as he is talking about himself in a selfless, polite, amicable manner.

#### 4.2.1.1.3 Pharyngeal voicing

I call pharyngeal voicing one style of speech associated with one particular Naso individual. This individual is often subject to teasing by others because of the way they speak,

where their voicing is most resonant in the pharyngeal cavity. This voicing style is imitated by others in entertaining conversation and humorous interactions, and is accompanied by intentional eye contact and imitative gesticulation.

#### 4.2.1.1.4 Vowel laxing and lowering

When people are conversing in a humorous style or register, they use a lax voicing style; by this I mean the vowels are more lax and lower, especially noticeable in the front /ε/ vowel which lowers to the lax [æ], and /o/ which lowers to [ɑ].

#### 4.2.1.2 *Clarity*

Clarity refers to logical as well as sonic clarity, and is sometimes associated with breathy voice. Rosa Gamarra discusses how beautiful Naso speech, such as that used by elders, makes use of very clear, brief, and soft sounds. She likens these sounds to the smooth sound of large quantities of dry corn grains falling into a sack, and likens it to the /ʃ/ sound (see an excerpt of her explanation in the section on *Sibilants* in this chapter).

Miriam Aguilar also attests that the most beautiful sounding Naso speech is that spoken by elders, and she offers as an example the sound of the deceased Antisira Calixto, who spoke softly, clearly, and slowly. Miriam says that a skilled orator is one who is understood clearly by everyone, and that they speak concisely and lovingly.

Based on my observations, this style of clarity appears to be opposed to the way that Nasos describe a more ordinary style of speech, which is particularly indirect, descriptive, monologic, and lengthy; where, if given a chance, individuals may talk at length for up to an hour on a topic of their choice without expecting back-and-forth dialogue with an interlocutor. As described previously, this is similar to the ways in which Nasos converse in political meetings: in a roundabout, indirect, thorough manner.



#### **4.2.1.3 *Lengthening***

Emerita Sánchez discusses how she finds the speech of elders aesthetically pleasing because it features lengthened vowels clause-finally. Vowel lengthening seems to be a common feature of expressive language cross-linguistically.

#### **4.2.1.4 *High pitch***

High pitch is a lexical feature that carries expressive power, and in Naso, often correlates with vowel lengthening and lexical repetition. Like vowel lengthening, high pitch seems to be a common feature of expressive language cross-linguistically.

#### **4.2.1.5 *Whole word reduplication***

Whole word reduplication is also used in order to show expressive function. Ordinary words are often repeated in several iterations also, where the intensity or volume decreases with each iteration in a mechanism that fades away slowly rather than stops short after a couple of iterations. Reduplication is a productive process of ideophones, and adjectives and adverbs can also be productively reduplicated. The process is conventionalized in derived adjectives.

### **4.2.2 Ideophones**

Naso ideophones have properties of ideophones of other languages around the world: they add unusual sounds and phonotactics to inventory (Diffloth 1976, Mithun 1982, Childs 1988, Beck 2008, Matisoff 1994, Newman 2001, Van Gijn 2010, Dingemanse 2012), their reduplication aligns with iconic repetition or DISTRIBUTIVE function, (Samarin 1965, Dingemanse 2012), they are widely diffusible to other word classes (Samarin 1965), they avoid negation, question formation, and inflection, are introduced by a light verb (Zwicky & Pullum 1987), depict sensory impressions of epistemic knowledge, (Nuckolls 2016, Childs 1988), and have relative sound symbolic meanings (Hinton, Nichols, and Ohala 1994, Nuckolls 1999).

Additionally, like other languages of the Americas (Nuckolls 2016), they depict sensory impressions in complex combinations of the following: sound, movement, impact, vision, touch, and intellect. These senses interact to create epistemic knowledge in the interpreter, condensed in to ideophonic forms, such as those below in (263):

- (263) /riri/ 'IDEO:wind, thunder, or big fire, '  
 /p<sup>h</sup>uk p<sup>h</sup>uk/ 'IDEO:planting seeds or fruit falling'  
 /t<sup>h</sup>ast<sup>h</sup>as/ 'IDEO:cutting something like banana slices'  
 /zɾɔw zɾɔw/ 'IDEO:a person running'  
 /ʃij ʃij/ 'IDEO:something shiny, like the sun, gold, or fire igniting'  
 /k<sup>h</sup>ɪʃ k<sup>h</sup>ɪʃ/ 'IDEO:*k<sup>h</sup>ishkway* bird's premonition'  
 /klalala/ 'IDEO:serpent, boat, or arrow passing fast through foliage'  
 /ʒgɛk ʒgɛk/ 'IDEO:disheveled'  
 /i:ŋ i:ŋ/ 'IDEO:movement of raining softly, or lice moving through hair'  
 /tʃäk tʃäk/ 'IDEO:broody hen (nesting)'

#### 4.2.2.1 Phonology

Across languages, ideophones are a place where otherwise rare or non-existent phonemes or phonotactic patterns are found. This is also the case for Naso, where the phonology of ideophones appears to be skewed in several ways described below.

##### 4.2.2.1.1 Phonotactics

Codas are distorted in ideophones, where there are less nasals and more sibilants than in ordinary lexicon, as shown below in (264), where parentheses mean that a phoneme may be used in coda position but that it is extremely rare.

- (264) Ordinary codas: /k, r, ŋ, w, j, p, (s), **m, n**/  
 Ideophone codas: /k, (r), ŋ, w, j, (p), **s, ʃ, ts**/

The phoneme /ts/ is not common in the synchronic system of Naso, but is reconstructed to Proto-Isthmic (Constenla 1981, 2008). In Naso it is restricted to word-initial positions such as *tsira* 'little'. However, in ideophones it is found word-finally in two examples shown in (265) below.

- (265) *rets* ‘IDEO:sound of ripping’  
*wlets* ‘IDEO:sound of loosening’

Another noticeably deviant distribution in ideophones is the voiceless alveolar sibilant fricative /s/, which is markedly frequent word-finally in ideophones, as illustrated in (266). More generally in Naso, /s/ occurs with low frequency word-finally.

- (266) *pjäs* ‘IDEO:sound of cracking’  
*tas* ‘IDEO:sound of cutting’  
*tātātās* ‘IDEO:manner a baby eats’  
*res* ‘IDEO:sound of cutting with scissors’  
*jös* ‘IDEO:sound to make a dog leave’  
*kres* ‘IDEO:sound of opening something’  
*las* ‘IDEO:sound of walking on leaves’

Ideophones tend to have sibilants in word-final position. If there is a correlation between the use of ideophones and the desire to make sounds expressively salient, then it is not surprising that ideophones make frequent use of sibilants. It is known that sibilants have an intense frequency and are exploited for expressive use—consider English *psst* for abruptly eliciting attention, or *pshh*, for expressing disbelief, or *shh* for requesting silence. The [s] has the highest concentration of energy high in the spectrum, which can reach up to 10,000Hz, and [ʃ] follows behind, averaging around 5,000Hz.

#### 4.2.2.1.2 High pitch

Ideophones often are accompanied by a notable high level pitch or high falling pitch. This does not significantly affect the pitch of bordering words, and instead is concentrated on the ideophone, making it salient in context.

#### 4.2.2.1.3 Lengthening

Naso ideophones that do not have whole word reduplication are often drawn out for several seconds longer than the duration of surrounding words in the speech context. This is another way

of contrasting them from other lexicon. While vowel length is not contrastive in Naso, Naso ideophones often have a fixed longer duration. As explained in the Phonology section in Chapter 3, speakers psychologically associate a word which has no onset as one which begins with a vowel, and a word that phonemically begins with a vowel as a word beginning in a lengthened vowel. This is represented in the orthography. In this way, speakers interpret a minimal pair which is distinguished solely by vowel lengthening, below in (267).

- (267) *äng*                    ‘IDEO: sound of pulling bundles of leaves, sound of leaves on trees’  
*ääng*                    ‘IDEO: sound of rain, sound of spirits when they walk’

Naso ideophones also display a higher frequency of vowels in initial position, with no onset, as illustrated in the examples of ideophones in (268).

- (268) *ääs*                    ‘IDEO:sound of tearing something like paper’  
*iing*                    ‘IDEO:sound of light rain, drizzle’  
*iish*                    ‘IDEO:sound of something frying in oil’  
*öö*                    ‘IDEO:sound of someone calling out to another’  
*ööng*                    ‘IDEO:sound of wind; sound of water passing’  
*öös*                    ‘IDEO:sound made by white-faced monkey’  
*uuli*                    ‘IDEO:sound of black monkey’  
*uu uu*                    ‘IDEO:sound of *uushi* spirit’  
*uus uus*                    ‘IDEO:sound of eating quickly’

In the regular lexicon it is rare to find a word without an onset, save for a few examples including the following below in (269) in phonological notation, where they are phonetically long initial vowels. Notice that about half are names of mythical creatures.

- (269) /*osla*/ ‘evil half-man spirit’  
  /*oka*/ ‘evil snake spirit’  
  /*ajaj*/ ‘evil monkey spirit’  
  /*ufi*/ ‘evil female spirit’  
  /*ir*/ ‘anger’  
  /*or*/ ‘went and came back’  
  /*ar*/ ‘arrived’  
  /*eri*/ ‘today’  
  /*era*/ ‘so’

#### 4.2.2.1.4 Whole word reduplication

Many ideophones reduplicate the whole word, where the syllable is copied from left to right, usually in iterations of two or three. Unlike reduplication of words in other lexical classes, ideophones uniquely copy the entire word, and the reduplicants are not subject to phonological processes such as voicing which occurs in adjectives and nouns which are reduplicated. When an ideophone is reduplicated, it functions as an iterative or repeated action. Compare below in (270) and (271):

- (270) *wojon-gz-a*                                    ***pjök***  
turn.over-SUDD-3.A                            IDEO:sound of a punch  
‘abruptly turned him over *pjök*’
- (271) *yo-gz-a*                                    *jerong*                                    ***pjök pjök pjök***  
beat-SUDD.3INV                            go.down                                    IDEO:sound of punches  
‘abruptly beat him down over and over *pjök pjök pjök*’

The phonological patterns of ideophones show that not only do ideophones violate otherwise regular sound rules of the language, but they also follow unique sound rules not found in other lexical categories.

#### 4.2.2.2 Syntax

Ideophones are morphologically distinct from nouns, adjectives, and verbs because they resist nominal and inflectional morphology found productively in those word classes. In fact, ideophones are unique in that they never inflect for any sort of external affix. However, they are optionally subject to affixation of the identity of the root, which is a sort of iconic inflectional process that creates imitative repetition of the depiction itself.

Syntactically, ideophones occupy a post-verbal position, like adverbs do, as shown in (272-273).

- (272) *doyo*      *chirawa*      *jem*      *buk*      *kjweni*      ***za-kz-a***                                    ***tjas***  
branch      small                    go.up      PFC      so                                    **cut-SUDD-3.A**                                    **IDEO:cut**  
*sr̥ya*                                    *e=shko*                                    *ba*                                    *bokkwo=shko*

bounce-IFV    there-LOC    3    eye=LOC  
 ‘they cut the small branch that was there and it bounced into his eye’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 339)

(273) *Blöölang*        *poska-kz-a*        *wora*  
 Terraba            **push-SUDD-3.A**        **lightly**  
 ‘he pushed the Terraba lightly...’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 93)

However, unlike ideophones, adverbs are able to take inflectional morphology, in particular, the stative morpheme /-e/, as shown in (274).

(274) *tjawa*    *jem*    *löng*    *wora-e*    *löng*    *llē*    *shärye*    *ĩnwa*        *wlō*  
 1PL.EXCL go.up PFC **slowly-STAT** POSIT:PL what do see-1PL.EXCL.A for  
 ‘we were going up slowly in order to see what they were doing’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 342)

It is typologically common for ideophones to be licensed by light verbs (Childs 1988). Naso ideophones are sometimes preceded by a dummy light verb (also classified as motion verbs) *jek* ‘go’ or *to* ‘went’, as in (275), or a positional verb such as *jong* ‘POSIT:stand.upright’, as in (276).

(275) *klara*    *jek*    *rish*        *keting*        *kwe*  
 one go IDEO:fall unconscious DEM  
 ‘One of them fell down unconscious.’

(276) *boy*    *äär*    *ga*    *jong*        *lilili*  
 wife arrive CONN POSIT:stand.upright IDEO:sound of dripping  
 ‘The wife arrived and [her clothes] were dripping.’

Also, as hinted above in (272-273), ideophones often appear with the SUDDEN morpheme /-kz-/.

#### 4.2.2.3 Use

Ideophones may be used conventionally, where they encode manner on a verb, as in the example below in (277) which makes use of the common ideophone *tas* which accompanies cutting actions. The close relationship between certain verbs and the ideophones they take is

discussed in depth in Nuckolls (2001).

- (277) *shäryë-rwa bämgo ga kjor-yo zë-rwa bok-ļë tas*  
do-1PL.EXCL first CONN tree-ABST cut-1PL.EXCL piece-side IDEO  
'first we cut a piece of a trunk *tas*'

In speech play, ideophones are often used in the punchline of a joke, as in (278) below, where the humorous climax of a joke is where children realize the grandmother accidentally put a snake in her basket instead of a vine.

- (278) *kjōng pjang kā jong wik wik kjyorkwo jong pʰus pʰus*  
snake POSIT:hang head POSIT:stand IDEO:bobbing tongue POSIT:stand IDEO:slithering  
'the snake was hanging with its head *bobbing* and tongue *slithering*'

Emerita Sánchez discusses in an interview in December of 2017 how ideophones can only be used to describe the senses of the speaker-- they cannot be used to interpret epistemological information of another participant. They are closely related to first-person interpretation and knowledge. Unlike Naso speakers, Pastaza Quichua speakers, as explained by Janis Nuckolls, align (2004, 2010) with other life forms through use of ideophones. However, as shown below, an ideophone can be used for the first person in (279), but not for a second person, or third person.

- (279) *tja tem shäng irbo bang tja po shing shing*  
1SG come.up POSIT:stand path along 1SG skin IDEO:trembling  
'I was coming up the road and my skin started trembling'

Emerita explains that if the speaker is feeling the skin of another person and they feel it trembling, only then can they make a statement such as in (280), perhaps because the sensation is directly shared.

- (280) *pja po shing shing*  
2SG skin IDEO:trembling  
'your skin is trembling!'

However, contrast the example below in (281). Emerita explains that while the ideophonic form cannot be used to interpret information about another person or animal's perspective unless the experience is shared, a derived form of the ideophone may be used, as in the following, where she can describe what she sees as the trembling state of a dog through verbal inflection. In other words suggested by Tony Woodbury, there is a built-in evidential value in the use of ideophones.

- (281) *shiti shi-no buk-e*  
 dog tremble-PFV POSIT:lie-STAT  
 'the dog is trembling'

#### 4.2.2.4 *Sound symbolism in consonants*

Naso ideophones categorically make use of sound symbolic associations in coda position: RUSTLING for sibilants, RESONANT for /w/, METALLIC for /V<sub>[+front]</sub>ŋ#/, and PUNCTUAL for /k/. I define these categories by interpreting the members of the categories and giving an approximation of a concept which captures all of them broadly.

I define the RUSTLING association as one which refers to sounds that involve material that is not sonorant or resonant; such materials include animal-based and plant-based material that is pliable, such as leaves, paper, grains, and meat. I define the RESONANT association as one which involves material that is not metallic, but that is involved in a high-power impact, either due to the weight of the object or the force with which a human agent moves it. Resonant ideophones can always be reduplicated. The PUNCTUAL association is similar to the RESONANT one in that it involves the same sort of non-metallic materials, however, the PUNCTUAL ideophones tend to consist of a single, non-reduplicated form. I define the METALLIC association as one limited to metal material or mineral material such as rocks, where the ideophones refer to an impact between such objects.



Most ideophones which end in either of these sounds will contribute the symbolic meanings associated with them. These sounds are stretched beyond their referential grammatical function and interwoven with sonic symbolism. The following examples are given in non-iterative form. Any of the ideophones may be reduplicated with non-structure preservation, where each iteration contributes a meaning of either DISTRIBUTIVE function, intensity, or continuous repetition.

Below in (282), sibilants in coda position contribute a RUSTLING meaning. These sounds are likened to the crumpling up of paper or other actions that involve high-pitched noises.

(282) RUSTLING /s#/, /ʃ#/, /ts#/

- /kwǎis/ ‘IDEO:sound of something ripping something’
- /lǎs/ ‘IDEO:sound of walking on dried leaves; plastic bag’
- /rɛs/ ‘IDEO:sound of mouse eating rice’
- /á:s/ ‘IDEO:to tear something like paper or fabric or meat’
- /tʰás/ ‘IDEO:sound of cutting up something small like banana’
- /pʰús/ ‘IDEO:sound of chicken sizzling in fryer’
- /kʰlǎs/ ‘IDEO:sound of eating chicken bones’
- /i:ʃ/ ‘IDEO: sound of drink being fermented’
- /ríʃ/ ‘IDEO:sound of someone falling on the ground’
- /wǎets/ ‘IDEO:sound of something getting loose like rope’
- /pas/ ‘IDEO:sound of fruit shell cracking open’
- /pʰas/ ‘IDEO:sound of branches breaking’
- /ras/ ‘IDEO:sound of dry leaves or something toasted’
- /tʃas/ ‘IDEO:sound of washing clothes quietly; the sound of leafcutter ants mouths’

Ideophones which end in a glide /w/ have a RESONANT symbolism as in those below in (283), where often these sounds describe the way that wood sounds when it is hit, or the way other resonant objects sound when they hit a deep, resonant surface.

(283) RESONANT /w#/

- /kʰów/ ‘IDEO:sound of a crash; sound of cutting wood with axe’
- /klów/ ‘IDEO:sound of wood beam hitting another’
- /pʰáw/ ‘IDEO:sound of slapping clothes when washing’
- /pʰów/ ‘IDEO:sound of a large rifle firing’
- /zrów/ ‘IDEO:something jumping along’

Ideophones which end in a rhyme of a high front vowel and a nasal /ŋ/ coda as in those below in (284) have a symbolism of METALLIC objects, often produced between two metallic objects.

(284) METALLIC /V<sub>[+front]</sub>ŋ#/  
/t<sup>h</sup>iŋ/ ‘IDEO:sound of shotgun’  
/k<sup>h</sup>liŋ/ ‘IDEO:sound of machete hitting rock’  
/tiŋ/ ‘IDEO:sound of hitting metal with metal’  
/t<sup>h</sup>iŋ/ ‘IDEO:sound of machete hitting pot’

Another sound symbolic coda consonant is /k/ below in (285), which is used categorically as the sound of a PUNCTUAL (non-resonant) impact. Janis Nuckolls reports for Pastaza Quechua (Nuckolls 2001) a salient and widespread punctual meaning for the word /tak/, which also ends in the same coda /k/, which suggests it may be a typologically common sound symbolic relation.

(285) PUNCTUAL /k#/  
/k<sup>h</sup>uk/ ‘IDEO:sound of feet stomping’  
/t<sup>h</sup>ok/ ‘IDEO:sound of water dripping’  
/sak/ ‘IDEO:sound of agitated coughing’  
/p<sup>h</sup>uk/ ‘IDEO:planting seeds or fruit falling’  
/sok/ ‘IDEO:to hide oneself while sneaking around’

This concludes the sound symbolism in ideophone codas; it explains all but the /y/ consonant that occurs commonly in coda position, for which I have yet to uncover a sound symbolic association.

#### 4.2.2.5 *Sound symbolism in vowels*

Vowels in ideophones also show sound symbolic associations, especially magnitude sound symbolism that is common across ideophones in the world’s languages (Sapir 1929). The data in Naso ideophones below in (286) shows that semantically related ideophones may differ in only the root vowel, which contributes a contrastive difference in size of the action or object. Notice

that the vowels which correspond to largeness or smallness differ in each case, and that the relevant difference is *relative* in each case, which will be explained further below.

- |          |   |             |
|----------|---|-------------|
| (286) a. | /p <sup>h</sup> ɔw p <sup>h</sup> ɔw/ ‘IDEO:sound of a large firearm or thunder’                    | ɔ, larger   |
|          | /p <sup>h</sup> aw p <sup>h</sup> aw/ ‘IDEO:sound of fire cracking or clapping or slapping clothes’ | ɑ, smaller  |
| b.       | /ɔŋ/ ‘IDEO:sound of lots of rain falling’   | ɔ, larger   |
|          | /aŋ/ ‘IDEO:sound of leaves or large plastic bag’  | ɑ, medium   |
|          | /iŋ/ ‘IDEO:sound of drizzling rain or lice walking on head’   | i, smaller  |
| c.       | /ras ras/ ‘IDEO:sound of grabbing large dry leaves or plastic bags’                                 | ɑ, larger   |
|          | /rɛs rɛs/ ‘IDEO:sound of mouse eating rice or squirrel eating coconut’                              | ɛ, smaller  |
| d.       | /t <sup>h</sup> ɪŋ t <sup>h</sup> ɪŋ/ ‘IDEO:sound of hitting pot with machete’                      | ɪ, larger   |
|          | /t <sup>h</sup> iŋ t <sup>h</sup> iŋ/ ‘IDEO:fine sound of hitting pot or a bell’                    | i, smaller  |
| e.       | /k <sup>h</sup> ɔs k <sup>h</sup> ɔs/ ‘IDEO:sound of dog eating large bones’                        | ɔ, larger   |
|          | /k <sup>h</sup> ɪs k <sup>h</sup> ɪs/ ‘IDEO:sound of eating chicken bones’                          | ɑ, smaller  |
|          | /k <sup>h</sup> ɪs k <sup>h</sup> ɪs/ ‘IDEO:sound of eating quickly’                                | u, smaller? |

Each points of comparison in the data above shows two general trends: mid vowels are largest, and back vowels are largest, as shown in the implicational hierarchy below in (287):

- (287) a.        LARGENESS: *height*  
                   back **mid** V >> back **low** V >> back **high** V
- b.                LARGENESS: *backness*  
                   **back** V >> **central** V >> **front** V

Thus, ideophone sound symbolism follows universal patterns of back non-high vowels being largest (Hinton et al 2006). However, these trends are relative to which vowel an ideophone has, so that there are relative different sizes in (286d) between /t<sup>h</sup>ɪŋ t<sup>h</sup>ɪŋ/ ‘sound of hitting pot with machete’ and /t<sup>h</sup>iŋ t<sup>h</sup>iŋ/ ‘fine sound of hitting pot or a bell’. There is a difference in magnitude, where sound of the first ideophone is larger than the second, which is slightly finer. Notably, the vowel of the larger variant /t<sup>h</sup>ɪŋ t<sup>h</sup>ɪŋ/ is neither a back nor a mid vowel. This is because it adheres first to language-specific consonant sound symbolism as described above in (284); the two

ideophones in (286d) are crucially METALLIC sounds: the sound of hitting metal, which, as explained earlier, require a high and front vowel before a velar nasal (/V<sub>[+high, +front]</sub>ŋ#/).

#### 4.2.2.6 Ideophones: other phonemic reductions

The phonological patterns of ideophones discussed in the previous sections show that ideophones display a highly stretched, constrained, and symbolic sound system. They are stretched in that they exploit phonemes that otherwise are restricted in distribution in new ways, and they are constrained in that they have specific ways for forming reduplication and using high pitch. Other ways that ideophones behave aberrantly in terms of Naso phonology are that they reduce distinctions that are otherwise contrastive in the language as described in Chapter 3. Some of these phonemic distinctions of the ordinary phonological system that are reduced in ideophones include nasalization, approximants, aspiration, and obstruents in coda position. Some of these reductions are illustrated below in (288-291). I find no iconic or social motivation for the presence or absence of nasalization, or the choice between approximants /l/ ~/r/. However, speakers have the intuition that aspiration, in examples (290a-c), distinguishes force of the ideophone and action in an iconic way where more aspiration correlates with greater force. The option of obstruents in coda position as shown in (291a-c) also seems to correlate with lesser or greater iconic meaning of the respective sound symbolism: RESONANT for /w#/ (and perhaps /ŋ#/ as well), and RUSTLING for /s#/. More research is needed to understand the motivation for such variation, as it is widely variable within and between speakers.

- (288) Nasalization  
 a. /V/ ~ /Ṽ/                    /ta/ ~ /tã/ ‘IDEO:hitting’
- (289) Approximants  
 a. /l/ ~/r/                        /las/ ~ /ras/ ‘IDEO:sound of dry leaves’
- (290) Aspiration  
 a. /t<sup>h</sup>/ ~ /t/                    /t<sup>h</sup>a/ ~ /ta/ ‘IDEO:hitting’  
 b. /k<sup>h</sup>/ ~ /k/                    /k<sup>h</sup>ɔw/ ~ /kɔw/ ‘IDEO:cutting wood’  
 c. /p<sup>h</sup>/ ~ /p/                    /p<sup>h</sup>as/ ~ /pas/ ‘IDEO:sound of breaking’

(291) Obstruents in coda position

- a.  $\emptyset \sim /w\#/ \quad /p^h\text{ʊ}/ \sim /p^h\text{ʊ}w/$  ‘IDEO:sound of firearm’
- b.  $\emptyset \sim /ŋ\#/ \quad /j\text{ɔ}/ \sim /j\text{ɔ}ŋ/$  ‘IDEO:sound of earthquake’
- c.  $\emptyset \sim /s\#/ \quad /p^h\text{a}/ \sim /p^h\text{a}s/$  ‘IDEO:sound of something cracking’

The alternation of these otherwise phonemic distinctions further show that the phonological system of ideophones in Naso neutralizes the arbitrary function of phonemes, however, at the same time, these phonemes are *stretched* in their expressive and iconic potential. The following chapter (Chapter 5, Recreation) will show how the aberrant phonotactics of ideophones align with language-based meaning created through social play in specific contexts.

### 4.2.3 Sibilants /s/, /ʃ/ and /z/

#### 4.2.3.1 Aesthetics

In word-initial position, the sibilants /s/, /ʃ/ and /z/ are appreciated for aesthetic value, where diverse speakers note the pleasure and delight they evoke. They are aesthetically salient not only in the Naso language, but also in Bribri, Spanish, and English.

As mentioned earlier, Rosa Gamarra explains how /ʃ/ from the word *shlat* is a ‘correct’, ‘perfect’ and ‘clear’ sound of Spanish, similar to the sound of corn grains falling into a sack, as she comments in the excerpt below in (292).

- (292) siwaga e yara sbörë bakong  
Spanish is a God-given language

tjlë ga siwaga e tjlökwö lok *shlat*  
‘they say that the Spanish language is *correct*’

ëpkwö wleni...  
‘like corn...’

tjlë ga siwaga tjläno lok ga *shlat*  
‘they say that when the Spanish talk it is *correct*’

significa algo bien algo perfecto tjlä woleso  
‘it means something good something perfect, they talk beautifully’

tjlē wolesowa tjlē ga *shlat*  
'they speak beautifully, they speak *correct*'

tjlē ga ěpkwo wleni pja ěp miyde llēmdo  
'they talk like corn, you know corn right?'

ěp e twoz dlu ga kwo ka taz uune  
'when you gather a lot of corn, and thresh all the corn'

yož tjeng dlo shko enido ga  
'and you put it all in the sun for a long time'

shaz jer jūni loz jer sakwo roy ga  
'then you grab it like this and you let it fall into the sack,'

lon ga suena sore kuzong *shhh*  
'when it falls, pay attention to how it sounds, *shhh*'

kēm wolesowa  
'that's beautiful'

siwaga tjlēno ga *shlat*  
'Latinos talk *correct*'

oma ba tjlōkwo ba ĩya tjlē lok wolesowa  
'their language is spoken beautifully'

Rosa associates the /ʃ/ sound of the Spanish language with “correctness”, “perfection”, and “beauty”. Her hands gesture the way that *shlat* has meaning; in the Figure 5 below, with a straight hand. I interpret that her straight hand perhaps points straight up, alluding to a type of God-given language, as she describes in the first line of this excerpt.



Figure 7. Rosa Gamarra gesturing the ideophone *shlat* ‘perfect’

In a different excerpt below (293), Emerita Sánchez (E), Liya Villagra (L), and the author (N) discuss how /ʒ/ and /f/ are “pretty and attractive” sounds of Bribri and Naso.

- (293) E:      eso sí me gusta  
          ‘I like that’
- E:      mira lo que yo aprendí  
          ‘look what I learned’
- E:      como *miʃka* o *f* o *f* algo así, *ʒwi*  
          ‘like *miʃka* or *f, f*, something like that, *ʒwi*’
- E:      son letras bonitas  
          ‘they are pretty sounds’
- N:      cuáles son las letras bonitas para ti  
          ‘what are pretty sounds to you?’
- L:      bor kong ga *f*  
          ‘to me, *f*’
- E:      *ʒwi miʃka f*  
          ‘*ʒwi, miʃka, f*’

E: es un sonido como *plai plai plai* li e es así como que algo que ellos lo llevan  
'it's a sound like *plai plai plai*, it's like something that characterizes them'

E: no sé a mi me gusta me gusta como que me atrae  
'I don't know, I like it, I like it, like, it attracts me!'

In (294) below, Liya Villagra discusses how another sibilant, /s/, is a pretty sound of Naso that is similar to the prestigious /s/ of English, like /ʃ/ as well.

(294) L: bishiya llême bishiya e kuya tjlê borwa toy pues  
'not our [language], ours sounds like, well ours'

L: äär borwa kong pues ingles wleni *sek*  
'well according to us, it's almost comparable to English'

L: kuzong *sek* es casi como ingles wleni  
'listen, *sek*, it's almost like English'

L: *frono* que es casi...  
'*frono* it's almost...'

These excerpts motivate the analysis that speakers find sibilants aesthetically pleasing sounds, not only in Naso but also in other languages.

#### 4.2.3.2 Phonaesthemes of light/movement: /#ʃ/, /#z/

The idea that in the general lexicon sibilants are aesthetically pleasing sounds appears to be related to another phenomenon of sibilants found specifically in ideophones; in the Naso ideophone lexicon, most ideophones that begin with an alveopalatal sibilant categorically have a meaning related to light or movement. This provides evidence that the alveopalatal sibilants function as phonaesthemes that contribute a meaning of LIGHT or MOVEMENT, as exemplified by the examples below in (295).

(295) /ʃmét 'ʃmét/ 'IDEO:shiny; when a person is moving/vibrating'  
/ʃij 'ʃij/ 'IDEO:a flash of light'  
/ʃrík 'ʃrík/ 'IDEO:striped, many colors, fried, bright'



/'ʒér 'ʒér/	‘IDEO:quick movement or shiny reflection, bright, lightening’
/'ʒár 'ʒár/	‘IDEO:twitching movement of body, lightening’
/'ʒéj/	‘IDEO:beautiful, shiny, well-dressed’
/'ʒéŋ/	‘IDEO:sunny’

Notably however, it appears that the alveolar sibilant /s/ does not contribute this meaning in (296).

(296) /sín sín sín/	‘IDEO:song of cricket’
/síŋ síŋ síŋ/	‘IDEO:symptoms of a female’
/sík sík/	‘IDEO:can’t breathe’
/sék sék/	‘IDEO:sound of a snake’

In English poetry, sibilants have been shown to symbolize different meanings (Hrushovski 1980) including silence, rustling, uncertainty, and sadness. Sibilants are notably the sounds which have the highest concentration of energy high in the spectrum, which make them physically very salient.

That Naso sibilants are symbolic of aesthetic beauty is typologically interesting, and may be explained by social context. For Nasos, Bribri and English languages, relative to the Naso language, have more prestige associated with them. Bribri and English have sibilants, unlike other Chibchan languages in the area with less prestige (Ngäbere). Additionally, Naso seems to have uniquely changed sibilants historically from Proto-Isthmic according to Constenla (1981), as in his proposed sound changes below in (297), where the change in the sibilant from \*s > ʃ represents a lowered pitch energy concentration.

(297) *s > ʃ	
*g > ʒ (c.f. *g > d̄ʒ (Bribri, Cabécar, Boruca))	

#### 4.2.4 Frame tags

In conversation and in narratives, speakers often rely on ‘contextualization cues’ (Gumperz 1982) that consist of syntactically fixed lexical constructions that indicate the speaker is cuing a particular frame or routine type of discourse. I use the term *frame tag* as a blend from work in

conversational analysis (Lakoff 1973) as well as frame analysis (Goffman 1974) to describe fixed idiomatic phrases that instantiate a conversation of speech play or verbal art. In literature on conversational analysis and discourse analysis of speech such as women's speech (Lakoff 1973), it is noted that women use more hedges and tag questions than men, and these features index their gender identity as women. In frame analysis literature (Goffman 1974), special activities such as play and dreams follow certain structural patterns. The description of what I refer to as *frame tags* below are a valuable tool to understanding how humor is created through the strategy of juxtaposition of particular tags. Juxtaposition of discourse frames or routines has been theorized in pragmatic literature on humor (Attardo 1994).

#### **4.2.4.1 *Loz bakong* 'tell him/her'**

One common frame tag used in daily interaction is in the event where two people are talking, and a third person not directly involved in the conversation but within the audible space of both provides a prompt. The tag *loz bakong* 'tell him/her' is composed of the verb *le* 'to say', which is also a hearsay evidential, and the morpheme *-z*, is an imperative aspect marker, which is followed by *ba* '3' and *=kong*, the dative marker. The humor-inducing prompt is given to one of the two participants to be aimed at the other participant. But crucially, it is said loud enough for both participants to hear. A short pithy statement usually precedes the tag *loz bakong* 'tell him/her'. The remark is often humorous or amusing in some way, where it responds directly to the immediate discourse at hand. Often the non-speech act participant utters this while directly looking at the person they intend for it to be aimed.

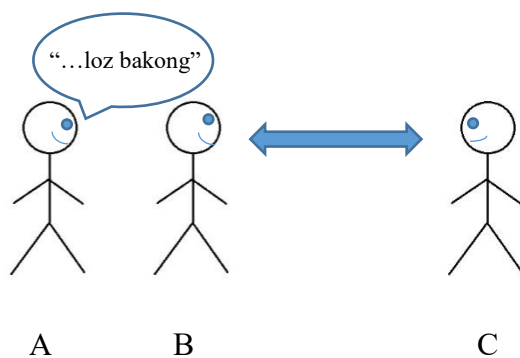


Figure 8. Frame tag *loz bakong*

This sort of construction is unique in the effect that it has: while it is uttered as though treating the addressee as a third person, it functions as a direct remark to the addressee, where the intermediate interlocutor is not expected to repeat the prompt. As an example, in the illustration above in Figure 6, persons B and C are having a conversation, and person A remarks loudly enough for both B and C to hear, but because of physical proximity it is understood that person A is talking to person B as they say “...tell him/her”. In response, all parties laugh at the remark, or the turn is expected to be taken up by person C, but person B is not expected to utter the remark or respond directly to it.

As shown in (298) below, this frame tag can be used to speak for babies who have not yet developed language; this practice seems to be more common across cultures. In English, the effect tends to be a serious tone, perhaps thinking in interpreting what a baby might be thinking, but in Naso the action tends to be humorous. I interpret the effect in Naso is humorous because in Naso it is less acceptable to imagine what another person or being is experiencing (this is referenced again in Chapter 5 where Enrique Santana hilariously imagines what a chicken is thinking). For example, Emerita Sánchez, directly after sending me an electronic photo of her holding her baby nephew who cannot speak, talks through the phone to me on April 23, 2018 with the following, switching between the baby’s perspective and her own, in a humorous effect, laughing expressively all throughout:

- (298) *pja in sök loz bakong chichi* “I’m watching you”, tell her, baby  
*tia bor mekë tjlē naso mae loz bakong* “Aunt, my mother doesn’t speak Naso”, tell her  
*tja tjlē naso opping naso loz bakong* “I’m learning to speak Naso”, tell her  
 [laughing throughout]

When speaking Spanish, Nasos carry over this frame tag by calquing it into *dile* ‘tell him/her’. In English, we use something similar “(did you) tell him/her about the time...”, except in English it functions with the same relations in perspective and turn-taking as ordinary conversation.

This frame tag is an indirect way for an outside participant to participate in others’ conversation. Nasos characterize their own way of speaking, as compared to conversations of Latinos, as being more roundabout and indirect, and my observations confirm this tendency. Rather than directly approach a person with a particularly teasing or presumptuous remark, Nasos will say it indirectly, either through this construction if they assume all participants can laugh about it, or otherwise, through gossip.

#### 4.2.4.2 *Sore* ‘how was that?’

This tag functions to elicit a performance or narrative of a past humorous event. It invariably sets a humorous tone. It is structured as a question-answer format, where the person who begins the frame creates a question of what they want elaborated as an anecdote in response. For example, below in (299), speaker A cues speaker B of a particular past event they want retold.

- (299) Speaker A: *pja popjlu-r-a Daniel-dë sore*  
 2SG hug-PFV-3A Daniel-ERG **how**  
 ‘how was it that Daniel hugged you?’

<humorous mood is set>

- Speaker B: *pjlara ga tja äär shäng Siey...*  
 once when 1SG arrive PFC Siey  
 ‘one time when I had come back to Sieykjing...’

This construction “...*sore*” ‘...how?’ occurs directly between the turn taking of two speech act participants A and B, where sometimes there are other non-speech act participants present listening to the conversation. The frame tag content consists of speaker A giving a prompt that briefly summarizes a particular event, in the case above, about one time when Speaker B was hugged in a humorous way, that is known to both immediate participants. This is followed by *sore* ‘how?’, which functions similarly to the English “remember the time when...”, except that in the Naso formulation speaker A tells this to speaker B in order to elicit a retelling of the story or humorous event by speaker B. The event usually involves an embarrassing or unfortunate situation that person B would prefer to forget, and it functions as person A teasing person B.

Whereas the frame tag previously discussed ...*loz bakong* is in reference to the immediate discourse context, the frame tag *sore?* often occurs completely out of the blue as a manner of creating an entertaining atmosphere and poking fun at someone. The same frame tag is calqued into Spanish by Nasos, through the use of ‘¿cómo...?’, ‘how?’. More detailed examples of the use of this frame tag are given in Chapter 6, in the case study on *Entextualization* in 6.5.2.

#### **4.2.4.3 *Tlabga dena* ‘our ancestors’**

The frame tag occurs commonly in narrative discourse.

#### **4.2.4.4 *E lanyo* ‘that’s the story; this is the story’**

The frame tag *e lanyo*, from *e*, a resumptive pronoun, and *lanyo*, from *lan* ‘to converse’, and the abstract marker *-yo*, signals that the speaker is about to tell a story, or has just finished telling a story. It is a way to mark the context as a monologic, narrative discourse. The example below in (300) occurs at the beginning of a discourse when a speaker is about to tell a story about how their ancestors used to look for pig teeth.

- (300) *tj̄lapga d̄ena shri kowo wļ̄ēk sorē e ļ̄an-yo*  
 elder before wild.hog tooth search how PRO story-ABST  
 ‘this is the story of how our ancestors used to look for the teeth of wild hogs’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Artisanry volume, pg. 258)

Otherwise, the ending “...*e lanyo*” is used humorously in everyday speech after concluding a conversation about something regular and not of historical importance. This is a humorous strategy because it uses a frame in a different context, which in juxtaposition heightens the regular conversation to historical importance, which is humorous.

#### 4.2.4.5 (*Ēng*) *le (eni)* ‘(yes, that’s what) they say’

In this frame tag, *ēng* is an affirmative ‘yes’, *le* is commonly used independently as a hearsay evidential marker, and *eni* means ‘like so’. The phrase is used in narratives when a person makes reference to something that occurred that they know about through hearsay, but that they do not have first-hand epistemic knowledge about. This construction is not found in other sorts of discourse such as descriptive or expository language. For example, throughout the entire Naso Cultural Encyclopedia it is only found within embedded narratives, such as in the story below in (301) about a creek-dwelling spirit.

- (301) *Shuntri e diwa s̄eya to shāng sļontkē wļo ļē eni*  
 Shuntri PRO creek spirit go POSIT:stand court for say so  
 ‘Shuntri was a creek spirit that would go around courting [people], they say’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Songs volume, pg. 50)

The tag occurs at the end of clauses in narratives, where usually it is reduced to simply the hearsay particle *le*.

#### 4.2.5 Parallelism

Parallelism is a common strategy across the Americas as well as in other parts of the world including Southeast Asia (Fox 1988) and the Caucasus (Southern 2005). It involves repetition of linguistic patterns at various levels, for example, phonological, lexical, or syntactic repetition. Difrasism, a calque from Spanish *difrasismo*, is a strategy by which a poetic couplet is made of

parallel, repeated forms, and is semantically associated with a metaphoric meaning. The term *difrasismo* was first used by Ángel María Garibay (1964) to describe poetic couplets used in ritual Nahuatl texts, such as *in atl in tepetl* ‘city’ (*literally*: the water the mountain).

Difrasismo is structurally akin to the strategy in Germanic languages known as kenning, as in the Old Norse kenning *svarraði sárgymir*, literally ‘wound-sea’, meaning ‘blood’, from the poem *Hákonarmál* written by Eyvindr Skillir. This strategy is particularly common in the Naso lexicon, and these forms are associated with the verbal art genre known as *tjlökwo rong* ‘profound words’, bracketed below in (302-303).

(302) *no kjwe ra [tjĭě-sho kĭ-sho] kjwe jek jong*  
 person DEM CONTR talk-MASS jealous-MASS DEM go HAB  
*ĩyado kjweni ga kjwě-ba dörö-e*  
 always like.so CONN hit-3.O approximate-STAT  
 ‘that person is a big gossiper, if they continue like that they they are going to get beat up’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 202)

(303) *kjwozir-ga pjăy kjing bi tjĕtĕ [ũta ũta] pjăy löng tjĕkso*  
 child-PL 2PL quiet 1PL.INCL.POSS grandmother abcess? 2PL POSIT:PL still  
 ‘children, be quiet, out grandmother has passed away, be still’  
 (Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 202)

Unlike other Mesoamerican languages with difrasismos, such as Chatino (Cruz 2014) which cannot join two parallel words without additional parallel morphosyntax, Naso also has the option, in some profound words, to pattern like Germanic languages and join words such as *luk mek* ‘hardwood trees’ (literally, ‘cedar tree’, ‘coconut tree’) directly together, where the demonstrative /e/ is optional in *luk e mek e* ‘hardwood trees’. The example above in (303) also shows no derivational morphology is necessary on the profound word ‘to pass away’.

#### 4.3 LOCAL NASO GENRES OF SPEECH PLAY AND VERBAL ART

In this section I describe Naso genres of speech play and verbal art that require heavy exegesis to a non-Naso reader in order to come to understand how they are interpreted. These include *lanyo* ‘histories’, *chiste* ‘jokes’ or *cuentos* ‘anecdotes’, *refranes* or proverbs, *tjĕyo* ‘song’, and *tjlökwo rong* ‘profound words’. This taxonomy is based on my observation of how people

describe Naso genres of verbal art; people are particularly attentive to the following genres, and discuss them at length in conversation as well as in the *Naso Cultural Encyclopedia* volumes, where they are heavily cross-referenced across different topics of discussion. In other words, these categories are contextualized in a multiplicity of situations, they appear all throughout daily interaction and epistemology. For example, in the Artisanry volume, when the authors describe a particular type of wood used for building houses, they also tell a particular *chiste* anecdote which is self-contained, and they label it as such. Likewise, discussion of ‘profound words’ is not limited to formal discussions of mythology, but they are also discussed in a humorous light in the Verbal Art volume of the encyclopedia. The particular genres names listed above are stable ways of referring to particular types of linguistic practices, and people consistently use the patterns described in the following for each.

#### 4.3.1 *Lanyo, historia or conversa* ‘past histories’

“Tlabga dena...

...eng le eni”

“*our ancestors...*

*...yes, that’s what they say”*

Narratives that are roughly fixed in content and structure are referred to with the Naso *lanyo* or the Spanish *historia* ‘history’ or *conversa* ‘conversation’. They describe spiritual-like, mythical ways of life or events that are understood to have actually taken place in the past to Naso ancestors. Some of the most common *lanyo* include spiritual or cosmological myths of Naso life and important characters. For example, they include *lanyo* about the grandmother goddess Tjër Di, the Serpent deity Ööka, famous Naso warriors such as Lökës or Tutu Dlo, or lamentable characters such as Shunsri who committed suicide. Nasos generally believe that these *lanyo* are real, though this strongly depends on level of education, where people less indoctrinated into Spanish education



believe more in these histories, and people with more exposure to public education sometimes stop believing in them. These *lanyo* are closely related to cultural practices, traditions, and conventional wisdom often found in proverbs.

*Lanyo* have several recurrent structural patterns including parallelism of events, and importance of the number 4 for objects and people, and the numbers 7 to 8 for time (often thousands of years, or spiritual planes). This pattern is common across Chibchan myths, where four days and eight times are recurrent numbers. Across the Americas there are different patterns of repeating stanzas, in pairs, threes, fours, or fives (Hymes 1977).

In Naso *lanyo*, non-human beings such as giants, animals, and spirits often have a voice and speak fixed phrases; even if the story is told in Spanish, the fixed phrases are quotatively preserved in Naso.

Another structural feature of Naso *lanyo* is their framing by the introductory words *tjlabga dena* ‘our ancestors...’ and the conclusory *le eni* ‘...so they say’, or something to a similar effect, similar to the English “once upon a time..”. The evidential hearsay particle *le* ‘say’ is always present throughout, which can be analyzed as a strategy that distances the speaker from first-hand knowledge of the event and pushes it back into an abstract place and time—into ancestral history. This evidential particle is not used in telling *cuENTOS* ‘stories’, discussed below.

Nasos often talk about how they no longer tell narrative *lanyo* like they used to. The traditional way of telling these was in the evening.

#### **4.3.2 *Chiste* ‘humorous telling’ or *cuENTO* ‘anecdote, (trickster) tale’**

Nasos use the Spanish *chiste* or *cuENTOS* in order to refer to fables, second-hand humorous stories, or anecdotes based on personal experiences. There is a difference between historical myths or ancestral ways of life described in the previous section and *chistes cuENTOS* ‘stories’. Historical myths are subject to more complex structure that occurs with narrative forms, whereas *cuENTOS* are typically shorter in length and have a more free form resembling anecdotal tellings. However, both go back to a time where animals could talk and there was little distinction between animals,

humans, and spirits. *Cuentos* include stories that resemble the “trickster tales” or fables that are common across the Americas (Hyde 1997). The similarity between abstract trickster tales and anecdotal stories is that both involve a plot that makes fun of one of the participants in the event. The generalization is that *cuentos* involve a humorous and good-natured outlook on an unfortunate event. Naso *cuentos* are told for entertainment between Nasos or also to outsiders. In them, Nasos index their indigenous identity and personality traits, especially wit and a self-teasing attitude. Below is a classic *chiste* of the agouti, which is hilarious to Nasos.

*Shkwlë e shäryara Sbörë kësbang llëm owa kjing ïe, tjlïna Sbörë öng kjlïshkoso oblë oblë tjok llëbo rokara Sbörë öng kjlïshkoso tjeng uun ïi kong, llëye rokër bomi kong ïi ëye om söno uun ga e iër ber kësbang oblë kjinmo ëye omsöno llëme shkwlë ra llëye rokara Sbörë ïi söra uunkong Sbö kong, Sbö tjlëno shkwlë kong ga “pja iër ber sök kësbang oblë kjinmo ga bop pjëyoga zröp drete pja owa pja jyögo ga llëye rokorot kës ïi sörop uune, eni kjïy ga pja iër ber sök chirawa öng kjlïshkoso oblë oblë tjeng ïi dorkoe”, eni kjing ga eeri ga shkwlë chirawa wle e kjing.*

‘God didn’t make the agouti very big because it is bad. God went to all the animals in the forest and told them all that if they brought back everything that God asked them too, he would make them appear bigger in size than the rest of the animals. While no animal brought back what God asked, the agouti brought back everything. God told the agouti “if I make you bigger than the rest of the animals, you will kill all of your family, you are bad, you are a liar, I asked you for too much and you brought back everything, because of this I will make you smaller than the rest of the animals of the forest”. Because of this, today the agouti is small in size.

The joke above plays on the Naso classic sensibility to be conservative in their interactions with the land and with resources. It is common knowledge and practice to talk about how it is necessary to sustain the resources in the environment, otherwise their resources will come to an end. The joke plays on the tone-deafness of the agouti, who is not sensible to the social standards in place. It is humorous because typically it is the case that the agouti is the one tricking other life forms by convincing them to do things that lead the agouti into a position to take advantage of them. But in this story, it is the agouti who is tricked by God, so the script is reversed. While the agouti literally

follows God's orders, the agouti himself is tricked because God plays the voice of social justice, where there are repercussions for not obeying the societal practice of conserving their resources.

### 4.3.3 *Refranes* or *dichos* 'proverbs'

Proverb:

“Kwokwirgwo tjwe sök tē u bokshto kjok sī obi ga ēbo kjer dōrōe mite wīeniyo eni ga sēng lēko  
ga e no tjlāblāe.

Cuando el gabilancillo llega en una casa a cantar por la mañana es porque alguien joven se va a morir y si llega por la tarde es alguien mayor.”

*When the hawk comes to visit a house singing in the morning, someone young will die, and if it comes in the evening, someone old will die.*

Explanation:

“Sēnwa kjone ga e bi shjgawaga dēna bi kjokēga kong ga kwokwirgwo kjwe ba kong lōk ga e tjlungkaga, e no shinmokono lāga ey ga lū pjlobi llē bakoe, llēbo ēre ūun jū miyde ega woyo tjlīya bi kjokēgarē drete ērego ga miyde tjlāpagarē sök drete.

Algunas aves sirven de alerta para nuestros abuelos, el gabilancillo es de mal agüero, comunica que alguien ha muerto, hasta indica qué edad tiene la persona, todas estas señales son analizadas con exactitud por los ancestros esa es la manera de darse cuenta de los sucesos.”

*Some birds serve as warnings to our elders, the hawk foretells a bad omen, it communicates that someone has died, it even indicates the age of the person, all of these signs are analyzed with exactness by our ancestors and that is how we are notified of the news.*

-Miriam Aguilar, *Verbal Art Volume, Naso Cultural Encyclopedia*

Nasos have short proverb-like messages that they refer to with the Spanish *refranes* 'proverbs' or *dichos* 'sayings', such as the one above. They describe these in the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, in the following words, in Naso and Spanish, followed by my English translation:

“Borwa kong ga llēbo kjlōyso e pjļue ega kjone ga sēnwa ega ōng kjwepga kjwe borwa tjlāpagaga kong ga e ba llēbo rotaga, llē pogo owa ega pjļu, epga ommyide löng bāmgo

eni kjīshko ga kjwe borwa yorkaga miydērwa ego ga tjawa poshārye. Kjone ga e borwa wapga poshdungklo ſon maſing llēm wlo ega bi kong omgo bakoe. Eerishko ga llēbo owa trāk llēme llēbo shārye eni wlo llēm ga lērwa tjawa pina lok tek jong sorē ga jek jong eni bakoe.”

“Para nosotros los animales del monte son buenos algunos son aves y otros son animales, para los ancestros ellos son alarmas, ya sean buenas o malas, son los que se dan cuenta más antes que nosotros los humanos y así nos preparamos es por eso que se le considera nuestros amigos. Algunos de estas frases sirven para aconsejar a nuestros hijos para que no caigan en un error, también sirve para nosotros mismos. Actualmente la maldad ha aumentado y para que no ocurra algo desastroso se lo decimos así como nuestros padres nos lo enseñaron eso es lo que seguimos inculcando siempre.”

*For us, undomesticated animals are good, some of these are birds, and others are other animals, for our ancestors they are warnings, either good or bad, they are the ones who know news before us humans and that’s how we prepare ourselves and because of that they are considered our friends. Some of these phrases are used to counsel our children so that they don’t succumb to mistakes, and they are useful for ourselves. Currently evil is on the rise and so that something disastrous doesn’t occur, we use these phrases like our parents taught us and we continue to cultivate the messages.*

The description of the genre in the above quotation indicates that the proverbial messages come from undomesticated animals, which know cosmological information indirectly available to humans. Several of the proverbs documented by Nasos, roughly 25%, support this description, and refer to the intentional calls or behaviors of specific animals such as monkeys, bird species, dogs, lizards, frogs species, chickens, toads, ants, and chameleons, from which Nasos draw wisdom. However, domesticated animals such as dogs and chickens, as well as inanimate objects such as rocks and shells, and other natural signs such as the sun, water, and smoke, also provide meaningful symbolism for about 25% of the proverbs. Besides that, roughly 50% of the remaining proverbs are generalizations of characteristics of human nature, societal norms, conventional wisdom, or cultural beliefs and rituals surrounding traditional practices such as hunting or puberty.

The content of these proverbs are often related to knowledge Nasos commonly refer to as *seta* ‘customs’, which includes culture-specific customs and beliefs. However, everyday

conversation and discussion of *seta* is often longer and not immediately premonitional or proverbial as the function of the short forms that are documented in the Encyclopedia.

Joel Sherzer suggests (2002) that proverbs have a bipartite form. This generalization holds of the Naso proverbs in the form of what I call the SETUP and the INFERENCE, where the SETUP is the situation, context, or setting which provides the background under which an interpretive INFERENCE may be made. However, a proverb may vary in the relationship between the SETUP and the INFERENCE. One common strategy is for the INFERENCE to be a clear, directly explained result of the SETUP, such that in the event of a SETUP, the INFERENCE is an entailment. This provides a transparent interpretation or symbolism suggested by the SETUP. These sorts of proverbs are highly premonitional, and dependent on interpretation of signs in the environment. Examples of this kind are in Table 9 below.

**Proverb and explanation**

“Dlō e shunyo dlōyo”  
*“This sun is rain sun”*

Shunyo shrē pjang ara ga wop tjok ga dlō wen pjang shiy era ga kjwe shunyo dlōyo shrē iyado layde.

*When it is raining hard and suddenly the sun comes out very hot, this indicates the sun won't keep shining but it will keep raining.*

“Kjlāk ko kjlōrga kjlun ga lū shko dbaryo kjīy”  
*“When the kjlōrga toad sings it means we are in a new year”*

Kjlāk pjeyoga obi e kjlun shko ga e lū dōrō layde ego ga bi kjokēga lū tjalēn e dōrō miyde lok eni.

*There are some species of toads that sing with the change of seasons, this way the ancestors find out that it is a new season and the beginning of a new year.*

Shji bi em le llēme shigo sing pjē  
*“We can't talk about our mother-in-law because we will get ulcers”*

Llēbo owa e shāryako llēme e tjwe bi kong owa dōnishko e eni wlo llēm ga shji wlōya bi datagarē shji ēng bangkjre wlo oba oblē tjok ega ependo bakoe.

*Bad habits bring bad consequences and as a warning so that these don't occur, our parents would advise us to respect others as well as our family.*

**Setup**

A certain type of sun (the kind that briefly appears when it has been raining hard)

The call of a toad

Talking bad about one's mother-in-law

**Inference**

Indicates that it is a false sun that means more rain will be coming

Indicates a new season

Creates skin ulcers

Table 9. Proverbs: setup and inference

However, in many of the proverbs the INFERENCE points to an opaque cultural reference in the form of an implicature outside of itself. While the speaker understands the implicature, it is not always the case that the listener does, because knowledge of the implicature depends on cultural knowledge and logic mostly held by elders and not younger adults and children. Unlike the previous type of proverbs, these proverbs consist of *seta* ‘ritual’ of hunting or puberty rites. In the proverbs below in Table 10 written in the Encyclopedia, the authors often provide explanation of what the interpretation ought to be in the form of a footnote or in the description, since it is an inference that the reader or listener might not know.

**Proverb and explanation**

“Ë to bömkwo lök ga shji këbing kwiya ue llëme”  
*“he who goes fishing shouldn’t eat ripe banana”*

Ë jek bömkwo lök ga këbing kwiya uara ga löya shko ga bömkwo jek tjas era eni ga ë bömkwo löya llëme.  
*He who has eaten ripe banana and goes fishing, when he is about to throw the hook hits the fish, but the meat disintegrates and it is not possible to fish very much.*

Kjwozirga e bokzong zaga tjäpagarë  
*“Children’s hair should only be cut by elders’*

Borwa kong kjwozirga ma jã bokzong ze lök e jã ga zaga tjäpaga paksogorë, eni ga äär kësbang shko ga pak sogo ega shmi llëme.  
*For us, when children are still young, their hair should be cut by a hard working elder, so that when they grow old they will be hard working and not lazy.*

Sëng kjloyso e ue lök zrektë ba löga e tjïya  
*“Wild meat should be eaten carefully otherwise it may ruin the hunter”*

No wlo pjlu ga e dë lök araë llëm ga sirawa dö ga tjin e eni wlo ga kjoglo to jek sëng iak tjeng kjone li kjinggo, llëm ga uara shko kjone sëng dyo kwono beno kjone ga to jek ba kjinggo ga tjino. Domer e tjin jekdo buk llëme, äär dbaryo llë löya woydë ame shmi jong era llëm ga löya ga pjë llëme.  
*In order to care for people, we must be careful otherwise they will be ruined such as when an adolescent girl walks around the hunted meat of a young hunter or eats the meat, or if she walks over the thrown-about clothes of the young hunter, the hunter will be ruined. The effect doesn’t occur immediately but after a few days, and the hunter loses interest, or otherwise has no luck hunting.*

**Setting/ Inference**

**situation**

Going fishing  
 Don’t eat bananas (bananas make one weak)

Cutting children’s hair  
 Should only be cut by elders (so that the child grows to be a hard worker)

Freshly hunted meat  
 Should be eaten carefully otherwise it may ruin the hunter (because young women ruin the hunter’s luck)

Table 10. Proverbs: situation/setup and cultural inference

In everyday life, proverbial forms arise in the event of scolding, usually performed by elders and told to young adults or children. They are also used metalinguistically to index one’s knowledge of ancestral wisdom.

#### 4.3.4 *Tëyo* ‘song’

“*Tja të Lökës teyo*”

“I’m going to sing the song of Lökës”

-Hector Torres

Many of the traditional Naso *tëyo* ‘songs’ are homages to animals, animals which are said to have taught Nasos how to sing and dance the particular songs. Other songs are celebratory, and others are individual laments to tragedy. According to my documentation, the canon of traditional Naso songs includes: *Shunsri* ‘The Woman Who Committed Suicide’, *Yginkë döröshko* ‘Preparation for Battle’, *Mar bong* ‘The Young Fisherman’ *Pjrëshkwong* ‘The Vulture’, *Yayga* ‘The Monkey’, *Dlÿpso* ‘A Historic Mountain’, *Kjojong* ‘The Green Frog’, *Sonmekwo* ‘The Marine Crab’, *Llu* ‘The Orphan’, *Kjok Shrila* ‘The Mermaid’, *Srung* ‘The Partridge’, *Kjlö* ‘The Siamese’, *Sö* ‘The Tapir’, *Twlörkaga* ‘The Debtor’, and *Ööka* ‘The Serpent Deity’. I have gathered these from the most respected Naso singer, Hector Torres. Hector is the son of the renowned Naso *tjangyo*, or wiseman, the deceased Julio Torres Morales, and inherited his knowledge. The authors of the Songs volume in the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, who were guided by Hector Torres, also document and describe these songs in their book.

Songs are bracketed by a contextualization cue such as “*tja të Lökës teyo*” “I am going to sing the song of Lökës”, where the speaker signals that they are about to sing. Either before or after the song, the narrator gives exegesis on the historical context, usually in the form of a story, about the character or situation about which he or she is singing. This part is very important, as it grounds the song in a historical and moral background.

Traditional Naso songs are chanted alongside the playing of bamboo woodwinds, and are danced to with rhythmic footsteps. Nasos perform songs to tourists along with specific dances to each songs, in a group formation with men, women, and children, with their traditional clothing. In times of instability or celebration, often in context of a political victory, they may also dance



and sing. Several Naso artists create novel songs in Naso, sometimes for their use in church settings, but other times in popular settings as well.

#### 4.3.5 *Tjlōkwo rong* ‘profound words’

*Tjlōkwo rong* ‘profound words’ are a verbal art genre, a lexical class that include concisely packed parallelism in the form *difrasismo*-like poetic couplets. *Tjlōkwo* means ‘words’ or ‘language’, but it can also mean ‘idea’ or ‘concept’. *Rong* means ‘profound’, as in a physically deep space into the earth, such as of a deep pond, but it can also be used to refer to a long amount of time in the past. They translate the category into Spanish as *palabras profundas* ‘deep/profound words’ or *palabras gramaticales* ‘grammatical words’, where the term *grammatical* explains how they are not clear concrete nominal meanings but have an abstract meaning.

The category *tjlōkwo rong* also includes idioms, particularly idioms that were used by their grandparents but that have been replaced by other lexicon. Instead of the term idiom, the term fixed archaism or archaic phrase might be better suited. Profound words are described at length in Chapter 6 on Nostalgia, where they play a role in the intellectual activity of ruminating on an ancestral past.

## 4.4 CONCLUSIONS

There may be other resources of speech play and verbal art not described in this chapter; as the Verbal Art team describes in their volume of the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, there is more for them to investigate: “*many anecdotes could be told but it would take more time*” (pg. 52). The Naso resources and genres described in this chapter are similar to those of other languages (ideophones, voicing qualities, reduplication, parallelism, songs, stories, anecdotes, proverbs, myths), but also unique in several ways, especially in the distorted use of sibilants for aesthetic purposes, and the use of the verbal art category profound words. The following two chapters will show how these resources are used in specific contexts. Below is an introduction to Chapters 5 and 6.

## *Introduction to Chapters 5 and 6*

In the next two chapters I highlight two faces of Naso people in which language use indexes pervasive social and cultural themes that are particularly recurrent and characteristic in Naso daily life. These are *vitality* and *nostalgia*. There are many other themes and characteristics of Naso life that I could describe, such as those that surround labor, religion, and politics. However, I have asked most questions and participated most in activities of nostalgia and vitality, so I have more knowledge about them to discuss.

In Chapter 4, I laid out the broad, widespread, conventional, recognizable, and moveable components of speech play and verbal art. In the following chapters, I show how those particular strategies of speech play and verbal art are used in context, and how they attain meaning. I focus on particular cases which speakers react to strongly or have strong intuitions about. While these follow the conventional patterns as in the resources described in Chapter 4, I highlight how they are creatively innovated and adapted to particular discursive and social contexts.

Several theoretical perspectives inform the types of analyses made about the textual case studies in the following chapters. For Paul Friedrich, *mood* is the master trope which aligns all others together (1991). It is reasonable to say that the next two chapters are self-contained and cohere by mood, specifically the playful and nostalgic moods. The concept of *entextualization* is also strewn throughout the following two chapters, where it is taken from Bauman and Briggs (1990) to mean the act of taking a piece of text beyond its immediate discourse context, and stretching it into another context to make it salient. Finally, Joel Sherzer's discourse-centered approach (1983, 1990) to analyzing Kuna speech play and verbal art in its socio-cultural context is recognizable throughout the themes discussed and the extended texts.

## Chapter 5: Vitality

“¡Los Naso sí inventan!”

*“Nasos sure love to make things up!”*

*-Nasos say of each other*

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I show how speech play and verbal art resources or strategies, as well as their juxtapositions, get implemented in everyday interactions and activities of vitality, relaxation, and playful interaction. After one spends a great deal of time<sup>15</sup> interacting casually in Naso settings, it will become apparent that a great deal of the time, conversations involve humor. The Kuna of Panama have also been described as having a strong sense of humor and penchant for play (Sherzer 1983, 1990). One possible generalization is that humor is an outstanding, salient characteristic of indigenous groups in Panama. However, I do not find this statement to be entirely true. One explanation I attribute to the salient amount of humor and playful activity in Joel Sherzer’s work as well as in this present dissertation may be due to a methodology of ethnography which is curious about the way that speakers use speech play and verbal art. In other words, the position of an outsider as being open to humorous interactions in everyday life is prone to being attune (and also bombarded!) with a human reality and the place of joking. Along with this, my observation is that humor is underreported in linguistics, in part due to an overrepresentation of elicitation methods based on propositional content. One of my views and goals with this chapter is merely to bring daily interactions of Naso vitality into language documentation and description. However, the

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<sup>15</sup> Otherwise, Nasos are characteristically reserved when interacting with non-Nasos until they develop relationships of trust with them. It has taken me years to feel like Nasos are able to joke around with me. It is unclear whether their sense of humor only comes out when they grow to know people and feel comfortable *in general*, or whether this is related to the political history of foreigners oppressing Nasos, which leads them to feel threatened and unsafe in the presence of foreigners. (I assume the latter.) See discussion in the case study in this chapter on *Daniel Villagra joking throughout a transcription session* to see how humor is created to relieve tension in political imbalances of power.

other part of the argument that merits attention is what I view as the place of Afro-Caribbean influence in the lowland area of Panama. Based on my observations with other indigenous groups across Central America, the groups I have seen as playing most with vitality or humor are the Afro-Caribbean population, the Kuna, and the Naso. However, I may be biased because I have spent more time with the Naso, and there is more description of the Kuna. The suggestion that Afro-Caribbeans have had an effect on the humor of the indigenous populations is not absurd, in fact, it is one I espouse, but it requires further investigation and data, some of which I analyze in the conclusion in Chapter 7.

Play and joking activities, and in general non-referential functions of communication, provide valuable information about the grammatical structure of a language. In addition to work in linguistic anthropology (Paugh 2005, Minks 2013), this has been useful in more formal approaches to linguistics. Some of these types of language and functions include expletives (Potts 2007), honorifics (Harada 1976), echo forms (Nevins & Vaux 2003), narrative (Woodbury 1987, Rumsey 2001), humor (Attardo 1991), ritual genres (Hale 1992), depreciatives (Sapir 1915), and secret languages (Yip 1982). The theoretical importance of linguistic analysis of this type of data is argued for in Vaux (2011).

In this chapter I use a situated interpretation of joking as a social speech activity, in following (Hymes 1972, Gumperz 1982, Sherzer 1987) and the assumptions and theories involved in communicative competence and interactional sociolinguistics, as well as in formal poetics (Jakobson 1960, Kiparsky 1973, Fabb and Halle 2008). Some of the playful or humorous case studies explored in this chapter will make use of concepts such as footing (Goffman 1979), where individual speakers align with or imitate different perspectives or identities to make ideological statements and references of Naso and other identities. In a semantic and pragmatic analysis of humor, Attardo (1991, 2001) describes how humor works through a juxtaposition of different frames. Joel Sherzer (2002) similarly shows how in jokes around the world, situational contexts are juxtaposed. The case studies below all make use of juxtaposition in one way or another, usually signaling perspectives on social identities and relations.

## 5.2 MOOD: NASO VITALITY

I use the mood “humor” interchangeably with “vitality” to describe the mood of Naso playful activities, particularly humorous and trickster situations. This is the overarching mood that Daniel Villagra, a popular artist and jokster, describes the way of a humorous, good-natured attitude and outlook on life. It is related to, for example, characteristic Naso resilience, solidarity, and defensiveness in the face of obstacles, tension, hardship, or adrenaline.

While Nasos do not have a tradition of literary poets or novelists, they do have a prevailing tradition of wisemen and wisewomen, entertainers, and artists that animate their daily lives. My interpretation is that of Naso art is a canon of common everyday vitality or positive attitude. The frequently used phrase “Nasos sure love to make things up!” both illustrates and sums up a large part of how Nasos view their identity and use their language. Nasos take a lot of pride in their creative abilities, and often repeat this phrase throughout daily interactions, in a summarizing way after discussing amusing incidents or accounts of what other people say. The principle of creative invention is a major part of Naso life and how they view their interaction with the changing world around them—the shifting participation in Latino lifestyle. In other words, they have adapted their sense of humor in use of the Spanish language and its social resonances. The tone of this phrase “Nasos sure love to make things up!” takes a light-hearted, slightly self-teasing, unpretentious, accepting, mundane attitude, so that it falls out of the pervasive Naso mood of the same nature, which confronts life, hardships, and misunderstandings in this way.

Miriam Aguilar discusses this Naso outlook in her introduction to the Verbal Art volume of the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, below in Naso and Spanish, followed by my English translation:

“<sup>1</sup>Bor kjokshko borwa wapga pinwa llëbo shji jar wlo bakoe e pjlu bi kong le lok li e sharyak ega jlöe e kjupa dwayo ega borwa kong e lerwa ba kong lok. <sup>2</sup>E dbaryo lako e ushko borwa data ega meke tjok, beshko, pjeyoga oblä oblä tjok, yorkaga eyga kjone ga dbaryo pjlu shko; e sharyak wop sir nopga pjok tjok iyado eyga kjone no trak llëme bakoe, ler bomi kong sira li nasoga un llëbo lako joyweba wlo li llëme kjone kjone era laga ba tjeyorë epga un e tjlerbo ega llë löke llëme eni e llë pogo kong.

<sup>3</sup>Shji jar wlo ɥun ɛre to sharyono jõe kjone e weno bi dbaryo kjone tek dãmärshko eni ga e laga borwa kjokëgarë ega i omgo llëm ga laga ba datagarë. Llëbo shji jar wlo ɛre e træk llëme geniyo ga dbaryo woydë ara eni kjishko ga lërwa bomi kong pjeyoga ɥunkong llëbo wo pjlu ega shji jar wlo ega pjlu bi kong e woydë ga sharyey jek iyado bi sdëkwo li ega iy dbar kjwobigo li e, wlyë shto oblë llëme sharyey wlo shji ba sharyaga onmo...

<sup>1</sup>En nuestro territorio también se inculca a nuestros hijos el buen humor que sirve de relajación, son vivencias reales que han pasado por lo que se considera importante relatar.

<sup>2</sup>Los momentos de que se narran se realizan en el hogar, en los bailes, en las reuniones familiares, entre amistades y en ocasiones especiales; la mayoría de las veces entre dos o más personas, cabe destacar que no todos los de la población Naso tienen el don del buen humor eso se debe a los clanes que se destacan en su mayoría por su forma incontrolable de hablar, hiperactivos en su actitud.

<sup>3</sup>La mayoría de los chistes son reales vividas ya sean de esta época u ocurridas anteriormente, son narrados por los abuelos ya sean vividas por ellos mismos o si no contados por sus padres. Son muchas las anécdotas que se podrían hacer pero requiere de tiempo, por eso les decimos a la futuras generaciones que la jocosidad lo gracioso y lo divertido hay que seguir cultivando porque es parte de la cultura y de la vida diaria, no tenemos que buscar en otra parte para inspirar somos autores legítimos de nuestras propias vivencias..."

(Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, Verbal art volume, pg. 52)

*<sup>1</sup>In our territory we also cultivate in our children a sense of humor or good attitude that serves as relaxation, these are real anecdotes that have happened, which is why it is useful to talk about them. <sup>2</sup>The moments that are described in the following take place in the home, in parties, in family get-togethers, between friends, and in special occasions; the majority of times they happen between two or more people, it is important to note that not all Nasos have the gift of a positive attitude and that is due to clan differences where those who are good-humored have an incontrollable, hyperactive way of talking.*

*<sup>3</sup>The majority of jokes are real anecdotes whether or not they are from this age or from a previous generation, they are narrated by our elders whether or not they experienced them themselves or whether their parents told them. Many anecdotes could be told but it would take more time, because of this we tell our future generations that it is important to continue cultivating the humorous, funny, and delightful characteristics because it is part of our culture and daily life, we don't have to look to the outside in order to find inspiration, we are legitimate authors of our own experiences...*

The jokes that Miriam and her collaborators continue to describe in the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia volume on Verbal Art include real-life anecdotes that she suggests in this introduction.

### 5.2.1 Dyamism, vitality, and creativity

“it’s good to be sociable and dynamic, so, things that grab my attention are the details of moments that one discovers, every day has something new, and they are everyday things that make me aware, so I remember them and take them into account and then analyze them, and then I build off of them, and those moments that come up again help me to look back on other ideas that I have, always seeing the positive part, the part that can be innovated, that helps me create many things...I love adventure, adventures become anecdotes and they fill up my lively repertoire...for example river rafting and moments of danger and tension, adrenaline I love! those are the details that inspire me and they are useful for many things that I invent, my experiences...something else that inspires me is history, I like to talk with elders, we interchange experiences, and I build new ideas and make interpretations, in order to feed my natural ability that is extroverted and dynamic”

-Daniel Villagra



Figure 9. “*tja sēpsēe!*” “I’m agile!”, Daniel Villagra, December 18, 2017. El Silencio, Bocas del Toro, Panama.

At age 36, Daniel Villagra is the most community-involved, charismatic, and popular individual in the Naso territory that I know. He is an artist of several trades, a leader, and a craftsman. He is called on by Nasos to direct public activities, and continuously looks for opportunities to participate in events. A few things I know about him since I met him in 2011 include that he: is always the invited MC narrator during football games, the MC during Mother's and Father's Day celebrations, the Speaker of the school's *Padres de Familia* (Parents' Association), he occasionally gives sermon in the Adventist church, he creates and illustrates banners and murals, he plays the guitar, composes novel songs in Naso and Spanish and sings during celebrations, builds caskets and digs graves when someone passes away, creates large pieces of furniture from wood that he cuts down, constructs houses, is involved in activities when foreigners come with projects, was invited to spend two years of his life living in San Blas and learned Kuna, participated with the New Tribes missionaries on the Bible and is one of the few Nasos fluent in English, drew all of the drawings in the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia, was a technician on the Verbal Art team, was recently a part of the production crew for the Spanish-American film "En Busca del Indios Conejos"<sup>16</sup>, has been invited to talk on a Latino radio program in Changuinola, and is currently running for *representante* position of the Teribe corregimiento this year (2018) with the progressive Partido Libre, where he has a large base of Naso supporters.

Below in (304), in an interview in December 2017, Daniel describes his artistic process, inspiration, and motivation in creating dynamic situations and his curious ability for making people feel good.

(304) "the dynamic aspect of creativity, innovation, that spirit, that positive attitude, I learned from, I inherited from my mother and father they have been like that since I was little they always told me that whenever someone is working one needs to take the initiative

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.programaibermedia.com/proyectos/en-busca-del-indio-conejo/> . See trailer.



to collaborate, to support, and be part of the team effort  
and that has led me to learn and have great opportunities to get close to people  
because that's where you learn  
that talent that I have  
is the ability to receive and capture  
those messages that are out there  
so what I always have in my mind  
is that I have to discover something new  
my challenge and goal is that today, today I have to discover something new!  
so that is one of the things that has supported and strengthened me  
to be creative to innovate because  
one discovers new fountains of energy, so that is inherited  
that's what I learned from my mother and my father  
and that has helped me up to today  
so what happens is that when you are in communication, interconnected with other  
people  
that, so, they tell anecdotes and all of those things in life that have happened to them  
so I collect those stories and I store them  
so that helps me keep people happy  
and always be conversing and interchanging, interacting with other people  
that makes me happy  
like, that makes me *happy*  
so, being happy, it's just that, there's no other way to express it!"

There are several points of information that Daniel hints at that are related to the Naso flavor of creative innovation and inspiration. First, Daniel alludes to the notion that his positive outlook and personality are inherited from his parents; this is a very Naso-like concept, where, as mentioned previously in Chapter 2, Section 2.6.4, Naso clan and kinship relations influence the type of language style that a person may have. Certain clans such as the Magroso are skilled speakers, and effectively, Daniel is a Magroso by way of his father's lineage.

Daniel also points out that he is inspired by everyday situations and common anecdotes. Other people's anecdotes and real life stories are the experiences that he uses to build humor. Earlier in the introduction quoted, the excerpt written by Miriam Aguilar for the Verbal Art volume similarly discusses how Naso jokes are taken from real anecdotes and stories that occurred in individual Nasos' experiences.

Third, Daniel insinuates that much of his knowledge comes from interacting with different types of people; in Naso ideology, different people have their unique specialties and practices, and when Daniel repeats that he draws knowledge from interaction and communication with others, he refers to the idea that any individual is a source of alternative epistemology and experience. This is part of his secret—his creativity grows out of the variability of knowledge he has accumulated through interpreting different people’s experiences. This relates to the discussion on distributed varietal knowledge in Chapter 2: the theme of variability in life forms (including people) is the basis of the inspiration that gives rise to new thoughts and creative forms.

Daniel’s humor extends beyond the confines of the Naso language; he creates humor also in Spanish, English, Kuna, and in bilingual situations with Naso. His artistic genius affects Nasos and non-Nasos alike, which suggests that his abilities tap into humanistic and universal sensibilities.

### **5.2.2 Resilience and self-overcoming**

Nasos often tell anecdotes about their resilience and overcoming challenging situations in humorous ways where they make light of terrible experiences. They follow the common knowledge principle that humor is tragedy plus time.

In my interview from above, Daniel continues to describe how Nasos are very brave and determined. For example, they do not fear weather conditions; if they are determined to go hunting or fishing or wash clothes or on a trip up the mountains, they will do it no matter what. If the conditions are bad, Nasos enjoy the challenge and make a humorous adventure out of it. My observations and participation in community life confirms this.

One example Daniel discusses in the interview is about the time he was sent back home on a plane from his prolonged stay in San Blas, Kuna Yala, to Changuinola, Panama. He takes the wrong plane and ends up in Panama City, where there police officers search him and hold him for 24 hours because they don’t understand what a Naso was doing in San Blas for such a long time.

Daniel was confused and just wanted to get home to his family, but the officers didn't even know who Nasos were or where they lived. Now, Daniel tells the terrifying and uncomfortable story in a humorous light to allow others to laugh at his hardship. He concludes by saying *el reto es siempre salir adelante, darle, darle* "the challenge is always to move forward, to keep going, keep going".

This next story Daniel explains as a way to overcome fears and obstacles. He was waiting in INALI, a government institute which gives out benefits to indigenous people, on one paycheck day. There were hundreds of other people waiting in line, and Daniel noticed how people were losing patience and were getting restless, they had been there since 6AM in the morning and it was already into the afternoon, and people were hungry, carrying children, and with needs that they couldn't take care of because they were waiting all day. The Latino directors repeatedly made the announcement, in a harsh tone, that people needed to be more patient and tolerant. Daniel started making jokes, saying that he vowed to be the last person who received benefits, and would occupy the very last place in line, showing *tolerancia* 'tolerance'. He stayed true to his word, and each person who received money and left greeted him with a smile. He was the last one out, at 10PM that night. After that day, strangers on the street, and even Latino authorities, recognize and greet him on the street, calling him Tolerancia, which makes Daniel happy. He tells this story as one which shows how he has the ability and interest in making difficult and painful situations entertaining.

Throughout the interview, Daniel discusses his gift for turning painful and difficult times into opportune moments of bonding and accepting our common humanity. My observation of his interactions with people and situations stand by his evaluation.

### **5.2.3 Defensiveness and solidarity**

In the same interview, Daniel discusses how Naso politics is governed traditionally by a King, and Nasos see that this is a unique and valuable difference that distinguishes them from other ethnic groups in the area and proudly calls attention to their identity. The Naso King lineage is

notable for their levelheaded way of talking and manner attributed to the Shönuso clan, which is calm and not belligerent.

Nasos enjoy having meetings to discuss collaborative opportunities for work, they are very participatory and get together for hours to tirelessly contemplate the motives behind each meeting called. However, whenever foreigners come into the territory in order to find workers to do work for them, Nasos become defensive and have differences of opinion. Other meetings such as changes in political positions are situations which bring disagreements. The human tendency to unite against a common threat is unsurprisingly a characteristic of Nasos as well. The possibility of economic opportunity or of personal benefit, also unsurprisingly, brings divisions in community politics.

Moments of tension such as difficult meetings are relieved by humorous interactions, and not just by Daniel. Daniel alludes to this through a Verbal Art Team meeting, where there is a moment of silence, and Enrique Santana eases the awkward silence by calling to attention a moment of humor in a community meeting. He calls attention to a chicken who was standing around the meeting place. Enrique asked Daniel the question “what do you think the chicken is thinking?”, and Daniel said he didn’t dare interpret chicken thoughts. Enrique responded with one word “crickets”, which was hilarious to the Nasos in the meeting, perhaps because so much time had passed in the meeting that they were all hungry and were thinking of food. This example goes to show the characteristic of Nasos to never lose their sense of humor or solidarity, even in times of unease or boredom.

#### **5.2.4 Trickster behavior**

Nasos who are family or close friends like to bother each other and trick each other to provoke annoyance. For example, in our interview, Daniel cites the anecdote of a couple of brothers who were cutting palm leaves for the roof at midday. Typically, these leaves are rolled up

into large bundles and carried on their backs back to their homes. This time, one brother put a big rock inside the bulk of leaves one of them had to carry to bother him.

The *loz bakong* ‘tell him’ frame tag as well as the *sore* ‘how?’ frame tag introduced in Chapter 4 are resources used to poke fun at others in a trickster sort of behavior. Trickster tales are common across the Americas (Hyde 1997).

### 5.3 CASE STUDIES

The following cases provide examples of particular situations or contexts that represent the Naso mood of vitality, or vitality. Nasos use speech play and verbal art to index their agility, wit, and self-teasing traits in humorous or playful interactions.

I show how speech play and verbal art resources discussed in Chapter 4 apply to the specific contexts in the excerpts of situations below. The case studies showcase a peek into the diversity of situations where relaxation and playful activities make use of linguistic strategies aforementioned. The first bundle of excerpts come from an interview between Emerita Sánchez, Liya Villagra, and myself. The second batch come from everyday conversation during a transcription session between Daniel Villagra, Adela Torres, Yoselin Sánchez, Isai Gonzalez, Hormelio Santana, and myself.

#### 5.3.1 INTERVIEW WITH EMERITA SÁNCHEZ AND LIYA VILLAGRA

These first set of excerpts from the conversation below show how three women index their own social identities and align with others like them, in contrast to other social identities. They make use of frame tags, vowel laxing or lowering, ideophones, sound symbolism, and various types of **juxtaposition** at different levels (phonology, lexicon, and pragmatic context).

This two-and-half hour conversational interview took place between myself and my friends Emerita Sánchez and Liya Villagra on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, in Emerita’s house in Guabito, Panama. All of the speakers are around the same age, and Liya and Emerita both spent their childhood in the Naso community of Sieykjing, but had recently moved to the Panamanian border town Guabito for work. At the time of the recording, Emerita had recently finished working at a

local corner market, and Liya was working at a restaurant. I tell them that my intention with recording the conversation is to hear more Naso jokes, and in exchange I pay them for their participation. As any natural conversation between us, the discussion varies between different acts including description of particular humorous tellings, asides detailing contextual and cultural information that I may not understand, personal anecdotes that vary in topicality, meta-commentary about the recording situation and other nearby activities, and other personal information. We use both Naso and Spanish in our conversations and codeswitch easily. Most of the original topics are begun by Liya or Emerita in Naso, and along the way I ask for clarification and translation into Spanish. This recording is unique because although I have known Liya and Emerita since the beginning of my work in Panama in 2010, this was the first time I had ever collaborated with them in research activities or recorded them. In their excitement, they cleaned up the recording setting nicely and put on traditional clothing for an aesthetic that pridefully indexes Naso identity.

### 5.3.1.1 *A sociolinguistic joke /t/ vs /k/*

The first case study below in (304) is a retelling of a joke told by a five-year-old that is particularly amusing to Emerita Sánchez and Liya Villagra. Emerita Sánchez sets up the event she remembers taking part in about twenty years ago, when Amalex Sánchez, now 25, was five years old. Then she continues to repeat the punchline of the joke several times as she finds it humorous, and Liya does as well, as they are explaining it to me.

- (304) “We were making up just anything,  
and Amalex, he was young,  
“*mishkwo ter sök llöm*—”  
He spoke like that—  
“*mishkwo ter sök llöm torrea pjono pjang twang ee*”<sup>17</sup>  
He didn’t know how to talk

---

<sup>17</sup> /miʃkwo tɛr            sök    ʒom    torea p<sup>h</sup>ono p<sup>h</sup>aŋ    twaŋ e/  
cat    come.down    PROG above    belt    wear    PROG width big

It's that he didn't know how to talk  
 But he wanted to tell his joke right  
 He said that the cat came down from there he says  
 With a really thick belt he says  
 But the WAY he said it  
 "mishkwo ter sök llöm" he says  
 He said that the cat came from there  
 With a really thick belt  
 "twang, twang ee" he says  
 Since he didn't know how to talk he said *twang ee*  
 Instead of what?  
 Instead of *kwang e*, "twang e"  
 We fell over laughing  
 No one could help it  
 Because among all of us we told whichever joke right  
 But his was funnier!  
 And he was the youngest!  
 What an invention!  
 And the WAY he said it!  
 "mishkwo ter sök llöm torrea pono pjang twang ee"  
 We were done!  
 We fell over laughing"

In this joke, the punchline is that the boy makes a speech error and uses the phoneme /t/ instead of /k/ in the words *twang* and *torrea* which should be *kwang* 'width' and *korrea* 'belt', respectively.

This phoneme /t/ happens to be a sociolinguistic variable that indexes clan membership, as opposed to the /k/ phoneme, which indexes membership to a different clan (see discussion of *Sociolinguistic variables* in Chapter 3). While Amalex belongs to the clan which uses the /t/ variant, he overextends the use of this variant to words *kwang* and *korrea*, which are words which historically do not contain the environment where the clan variants should arise, and rather /k/ is the only possible phoneme.

The clan variant /t/ vs /k/ occurs only in words which historically derive from the /tk/ phoneme, which split into /t/ or /k/ in word initial position depending on clan affiliation. Otherwise, there was already /t/ and /k/ in the Naso language in word-initial position, so the majority of words across the two clans are pronounced similar with /t/ or /k/, while only the few words reconstructed

as beginning with \* $\widehat{tk}$  are pronounced differently. The words *kwang* and *korrea* both reconstruct to *kwang* and *korrea*, and notably, the second is a borrowing from Spanish. No regular adult from the /t/-using clan would ever use the /t/ phoneme for either of these words, so the joke lies in the fact that the five-year old boy overextends his clan variant /t/ incorrectly. The history of the Naso sound change in \* $\widehat{tk}$  is illustrated below in (305).

(305) Proto-Chibchan: \*dVkV > Proto-Isthmic \* $\widehat{tk}$  > Naso / $\widehat{tk}$ / → [t]~[k]/#\_ ; [k] elsewhere

The few tokens which reconstruct to \* $\widehat{tk}$  and in the present-day differ between clans include the following words:

(306) Naso: \*tkyoŋ → /tyoŋ/ ~ /kyoŋ/ ‘boat’  
 \*tkwe → /twe/ ~ /kwe/ ‘to give’

Table 11 below shows how the two clans differ in a few tokens, where crucially, both of them ordinarily produce *kwang* in (f) and *korrea* in (g) in the same way, without a /t/ variant.

<i>example</i>	<i>gloss</i>	“Coronal” /t/ clan	“Velar” /k/ clan
a.	* $\widehat{tk}$ yoŋ ‘boat’	/tyoŋ/	/kyoŋ/
b.	* $\widehat{tk}$ we ‘to give’	/twe/	/kwe/
c.	/ta/ ‘flu’	/ta/	/ta/
d.	/ti/ ‘to sing’	/ti/	/ti/
e.	/ki/ ‘bitter’	/ki/	/ki/
f.	Spanish /korea/ ‘belt’	/korea/ *[torea]	/korea/ *[torea]
g.	/kwaŋ/ ‘CLF:long and wide’	/kwaŋ/ *[twaŋ]	/kwaŋ/ *[twaŋ]

Table 11. Two Naso clans and their sociolinguistic variables /t/ and /k/

This joke told by five-year-old Amalex is a type of accidental humor. It is made possible by the arrangement of forms of the Naso language, where it works because it is possible to produce, as Amalex accidentally did, a /t/ in initial position, however he did not get the rule completely correct as he overextended it to too many words. The situation plays on the sensibilities of Emerita and Liya to interpret social meaning, the clan variant, which the boy misplaces. The explain that



it is funny because Amalex does not know how to talk, and that the way he talks is funny. But more precisely, what is funny are the particular phonemes that he juxtaposes in socially significant ways that index his clan relationship at such a young age. This example shows that humor, specifically, speech play, is accidentally created by Ema and Liya drawing from metalinguistic awareness of the social variables of Naso grammar, which are accidentally violated.

Additionally, this joke shows how humorous tellings usually make use of vowel lowering. In this example, Emerita pronounces front mid vowels /e/ as /æ/.

### **5.3.1.2 Code-switching fisherman**

The following is another example of how ideophones are used as a speech play strategy that is particularly effective in code-switching situations. Again, the mechanism of juxtaposition is at play, where Naso ideophones are placed in Spanish context, which causes humor.

The following excerpt comes after discussion about Emerita and Liya's experiences fishing, particularly how different species of fish have different eating behaviors, which affects how one manipulates the line when fishing in Naso territory. In this excerpt, Emerita talks about a story she heard about Longino Berchi, a man who in all his seriousness, when talking with non-Naso people, tries to show off his fishing abilities as well as his Spanish speaking abilities. He explains the way he cautiously feels for the movement of the fish when it is biting the line on the hook, and his dexterity in immediately pulling the fish out from the water. In the image below, Emerita (*left*) illustrates the way in which Longino feels the movements of the fish.



Figure 10. Emerita Sánchez pulling out a fish from the water, imitating Longino the fisherman

The text below in (307) is a transcription of the excerpt followed by my English translation in (308). The division by lines follows my own intuitions of pausing and I do not suggest a rigid adherence to the structure. Similarly, I break up groups of lines separated in (10, 21, 30, and 38) in order to highlight my intuitions about the metapragmatic components of the event as well as code-switching.

(307) Transcription

- 1 yo he escuchado un chiste de un pescador dice Longino Berchi dice
- 2 que él se creía como que él hablaba—
- 3 es que los Naso antes no sabían hablar español
- 4 nosotros—yo puedo comprar—
- 5 cuando yo fui a la escuela el maestro hablaba español
- 6 pobrecitos nosotros nos regañaba porque no entendíamos
- 7 no era porque teníamos falta de conocimiento sino que
- 8 hablábamos un idioma y de ahí volver a hablar español para nosotros era muy difícil
- 9 solo nosotros entendíamos
- 10
- 11 entonces el chiste el cuento porque nadie lo vio
- 12 dice que el Señor Longino le gustaba pescar

13 iba allá afuera y dice  
 14 “yo se pescar, yo voy allá y saco mi lombriz  
 15 tiro mi pescado—digo mi anzuelo y siento que el pescado lo está mordiendo  
 16 se está moviendo *kjiuk kjiuk* y yo lo saco *shwap* nada más” <<laughter>>  
 17 él dice que allá donde está dice se mueve el pescado  
 18 digamos él dice todo el procedimiento de sacar un pescado  
 19 y dice que él lo jala dice,  
 20 “yo lo jalo--el pescado lo jalo *shwap* nada más sale el pescado” <<laughter>>  
 21  
 22 ah kjoke sök kjlara ko Longino Berchi  
 23 bomkwo shik owa llëme  
 24 oppino tjlë siwa sira  
 25 ega ler pjllollgwër naso  
 26 ööto sök bomkwo shiya ga kuya ga  
 27 shiya *kjiuk kjiuk* uagza shikza shikza *shwap*  
 28 Longino bomkwo shiya sore llë e kuya sök drete  
 29 lër pjllollgwër naso siwa <<laughter>>  
 30  
 31 “yo lo jalo—el pescado lo come *kjikjikji* yo lo jalo *shwap* nada más” le <<laughter>>  
 32 digamos que lo dice en naso la mitad en naso y la mitad siwa y lo dice--  
 33 “Yo lo sé sacar, el pescado come *kjikjikji*  
 34 yo lo jalo *shwap* nada más” <<laughter>>  
 35 él se creía q hablaba español y él lo decía  
 36 según él según él estaba hablando español  
 37 y era mitad español mitad naso  
 38  
 39 así contaba  
 40 y nos tocaba reir el pescador Longino Berchi  
 41 así dicen pero no se sabe si era así o no sé es un chiste

(308) English Translation:

1 I have heard a joke about a fisherman they say Longino Berchi they say  
 2 that he pridefully thought he spoke—  
 3 it’s that before, Nasos didn’t know how to speak Spanish  
 4 we—I can buy—  
 5 when I went to school the teacher spoke Spanish  
 6 poor us he would scold us because we didn’t understand  
 7 it wasn’t because we weren’t intelligent but  
 8 we spoke a language, and from there to switch to Spanish was very difficult for us  
 9 we only understood  
 10  
 11 the joke goes, well, the story goes, because no one saw it  
 12 they say that Señor Longino liked to fish  
 13 he would go out there and say  
 14 “I know how to fish, I go there and take out the earthworm

15 I throw my fish—I mean my hook and I feel the fish biting  
16 it's moving *kjiuk kjiuk* and I just pull it out *shwap*" <<laughter>>  
17 he says over there where the fish is moving,  
18 like, he says the whole process of how to catch a fish  
19 he says he pulls it,  
20 "I pull it—the fish I just pull it *shwap* and out comes the fish <<laughter>>  
21  
22 oh there was a man called Longino Berchi  
23 he was a really good fisherman  
24 he learned how to speak a little bit of Spanish  
25 so I'm going to translate this into Naso  
26 he went fishing and heard the fish  
27 and pulled it out *kjiuk kjiuk* and suddenly ate it suddenly pulled it out *shwap*  
28 Longino gave every single detail about how to listen for the fish and pull it out  
29 so now I'll translate it from Naso to Spanish <<laughter>>  
30  
31 "I pull it—the fish bites it *kjikji kjikji* and I just pull it out *shwap*" he says <<laughter>>  
32 so he says it in Naso half in Naso and half in Spanish and he says—  
33 "I know how to catch it, the fish bites *kjikjikji*  
34 and I just pull it out *shwap*" <<laughter>>  
35 he pridefully thought he was speaking Spanish and he said  
36 according to him he was speaking Spanish  
37 but it was half Spanish and half Naso  
38  
39 that's Longino Berchi's story  
40 so we laugh about the fisherman Longino Berchi  
41 that's what they say but it isn't known if it happened or if it was a joke

In this excerpt, the interaction between translations, code-switching, ideophones, variations, quotative speech, and laughter work together to show how humor is created. In the conversations leading up to this particular moment, I had been asking Emerita and Liya to give a Spanish translation of the Naso jokes. Generally, the initial Naso version elicited most laughter from the participants, and when it was retold in Spanish it still produced humor, but more smiles than laughs. But in this particular joke the order is reversed and multiplied in several iterations. Emerita first tells the joke in Spanish in (11-20) which induces laughter. Then she remembers that the frame has been to translate the joke, so she switches into Naso and retells the same joke in (22-29), but when she finishes the joke in Spanish she laughs in (29) because she realizes she had translated it into Naso, though the frame in the previous discussions had been to translate from Naso into Spanish. So then she re-translates the Naso translation back into Spanish in (31-37), where she repeats the punchline twice for humorous intensification, each time producing more laughter.

Below we can compare the five instances in which Emerita performs the punchline of the joke – four times with Naso-Spanish codeswitching (lines 16, 20, 31, and 33-34), and once a Naso-only rendition (line 27).

- (line 16) “se está moviendo *kjiuk kjiuk* y yo lo saco *shwap* nada más” <<laughter>>  
 “it’s moving *kjiuk kjiuk* and I just pull it out *shwap*” <<laughter>>
- (line 20) “Yo lo jalo—el pescado lo jalo *shwap* nada más sale el pescado”  
 <<laughter>>  
 “I pull it—the fish I just pull it *shwap* and out comes the fish”  
 <<laughter>>
- (line 27)** *shiya kjiuk kjiuk uagza shikza shikza shwap*<sup>18</sup>  
 pulled it out *kjiuk kjiuk* and suddenly ate it suddenly pulled it out *shwap*
- (line 31) “Yo lo jalo—el pescado lo come *kjikjikji* yo lo jalo *shwap* nada más” le  
 <<laughter>>  
 “I pull it—the fish bites it *kjikji kjikji* and I just pull it out *shwap*” he says  
 <<laughter>>

---

<sup>18</sup> /ʃi-ya k<sup>h</sup>yuk k<sup>h</sup>yuk ʔwa-kz-a ʃi-kz-a ʃi-kz-a ʃwap/  
 pull-IFV IDEO:sound of moving eat-SUDD-3.A pull-SUDD-3.A pull-SUDD-3.A IDEO:sound of whipping out

(lines 33-34) “Yo lo sé sacar, el pescado come *kjikjikji*  
yo lo jalo *shwap* nada más” <<laughter>>  
“I know how to catch it, the fish bites *kjikjikji*  
and I just pull it out *shwap*” <<laughter>>

Notably, the Naso-Spanish versions all produce intense laughter from the three participants. In comparison, the Naso-only version produces grins but not a comparative measure of delight. Based on what Nasos report, the effectiveness of the joke can be measured by intensity of laughter. We can notice the distinct linguistic variables that correlate with effective punch lines. Besides the distinction in number of languages used (bilingual codeswitching vs. Naso-only), the Naso-Spanish punch lines also make use of quotative speech in first person whereas the Naso-only punch line does not. Use of first person functions to create alignment between the protagonist of the joke and the performer of the joke. Emerita’s code-switching in renditions of the joke is conscious, and arguably humorous in (29) because it relates to the crux of the joke, which is the protagonist’s code-switching. Another way in which the humor of the Naso-only rendition may be compromised is the mismatch of the first verb that goes with the ideophone *kjiuk kjiuk*, which should be something like ‘move’, ‘eat’ or ‘bite’ rather than the verb ‘pull’ she anticipates from the second half of the punch line.

A good deal of Naso humor, including some discussed before this in the conversation, refers to Nasos leaving the territory and making a fool of themselves when assimilating themselves to or impress outsiders. One such character is Chiria, a Naso woman who left the Naso territory to the Island of Bocas nearby to live among Spanish and Afro-Creole Guari Guari speakers and behaved in foolish ways due to lack of familiarity with appropriate Spanish social norms. People reference Chiria in everyday speech when Nasos align with Spanish social customs.

What makes this joke “work” is that Longino is telling it in *what he thinks* is Spanish. This behavior is humorous because it plays into the Naso feeling that they do not speak Spanish “correctly”. In this excerpt, Emerita and Liya laugh at Longino in identification with this Naso sentiment. They identify with what it means (to them) to be Naso. Humans seem everywhere to

laugh at things with which we can identify and this signals affection towards the individual being mocked.

Code-switching among Naso speakers is common to varying degrees depending on one's entrenchment in either Naso and Spanish. However, when a speaker's code-switching is called into attention, it usually has the effect of eliciting shame on the part of the code-switcher. This is because although language shift from Naso to Spanish is common across the Naso population, the old ideology of language purism continues to be perpetuated by some who view mixing between non-Naso races and languages as unfavorable. Further along in the present conversation, Liya and Emerita hint at how this view is racist but regardless, they keep having relationships with non-Nasos, and continue to code-switch between Naso and Spanish. This joke lightens the preoccupation of anticipating shame when code-switching, or in Naso-like terminology, shows a good sense of humor about socio-cultural mistakes that Nasos make.

The two actions, the biting or moving of the fish, and the pulling out of the fish, are accompanied by descriptive ideophones that reinforce the manner of the verbs. Emerita indicates that the nimble, little-by-little movement of the biting action is referenced by *kjiuk kjiuk*, and the that sudden whip in pulling the fish out from the water is described with *shwap*. In the conversation following the excerpt above, I ask Emerita and Liya to give examples of the same ideophones in other contexts and with different verbs, a strategy used by Janis Nuckolls (2014, 2016). Liya jumps to offer the movement of a dugout canoe as it is being dragged from the place of its construction in the mountains down to the river. Because it is very heavy and it takes many people to move it, it is moved slowly, little by little, and takes at least an entire day, and sometimes a few days, to complete the journey. This little by little movement sounds *kjiuk kjiuk*, like that of the fish making small biting movements. It is notable that the ideophone that accompanies the 'biting' or 'moving' verb varies in form in Emerita's production: *kjiuk kjiuk* and *kjikjikji*.

The variation in ideophones, as with other forms of verbal art (Bermúdez, forthcoming) has a generous margin of difference when compared to ordinary speech forms. I suggest that the large amount of variation in Naso verbal art is related to the practice of lexical and structural

borrowing from contact languages such as Bribri, Spanish, English, Guari Guari, and Mískitu due to their prestige. Borrowing of features through verbal art is a sort of disguise. In Naso, knowledge of multiple languages indexes linguistic superiority through obfuscation and avoidance of the opposing linguistic ideology of language purism. This process of borrowing that occurs “under-the radar” harkens back to the same strategy in the Amazon where linguistic exogamy practices are related to a taboo of language mixing, though mixing occurs in covert ways through borrowing of verbal art (Epps 2013).

Nasos are conscious of the fact that ideophones don’t translate into Spanish. I have heard some Nasos talk negatively about how these sounds seem “silly” or “inaccurate” in context of the way that they learn about Spanish language rules and formalizations in the public education system. During the Naso Documentation Project, my collaborators laughed in discomfort when I said they should include the Naso ideophone forms in the Spanish translations. In this excerpt, ideophones are used humorously in juxtaposition with a Spanish context, and shine in the spotlight of the punchline.

### **5.3.1.3 *The correct way to wash clothes: chas vs pjāw***

Where in the previous example meaningful juxtaposition is created accidentally, in this example it is created normatively, where two different ideophones contrast in appropriateness, which is indexed by their sound symbolism, where, as discussed earlier, word-final sibilants like /s/ indicate a controlled, RUSTLING meaning, and word-final /w/ indicate a RESONANT meaning.

This next excerpt in (309-310) occurs after Emerita and Liya finish explaining the sounds of some ideophones from the previous excerpt about the fisherman. I ask if there are other sounds that are salient to them like these. Liya immediately offers an ideophone, *chas chas*, which she says, indexes another humorous story, “Rafa’s story”. In the following, Liya discusses the ideophone *chas chas* ‘the sound of washing clothes without making a lot of noise by gathering it



and creating friction with a rock, associated with a sitting position and demure demeanor’ in opposition to the ideophone *pjäw pjäw* ‘the sound of washing clothes by slapping the clothes on the rock in a loud manner, in a standing position’.

(309) Transcription:

- 1 Natalia: y otras palabras así como sonidos como *kji*—  
2 Liya: *chas chas* le  
3 Liya: *chas chas* li e Rafa cuento  
4 Liya: ige Kjokkë Bonilla le vive äär sök Kjësi shwolëko Ũta miydëp de  
5 Natalia: aja  
6 Liya: bueno e data ga tjlë ga e irpjäya Levito Torresdë  
7 Liya: abuelita ya era abuelita ya pero el abuelo estaba pasando la andropausia yo creo que es  
8 Liya: esa edad entonces le celaba mucho a la abuelita  
9 Liya: la abuelita song sök toksa kjerroshko  
10 Liya: Kjokkë Levito estaba haciendo prueba de kowe lok snem prueba de mosquito...  
11 Liya: y la abuela se quedaba sola...  
12 Liya: y Levito se iba por lado Sieykjing a ver quién andaba con fiebre y eso...  
13 Liya: y el abuelo celaba a la abuela con Levito  
14 Liya: dice que él iba terminando trabajando salía de aquí a Kjësi  
15 Liya: jem shäng wor ba boy doshaya domer oblë tjok...  
16 Liya: kuya ga ba abuela shäng shwong kwoshkwe diga  
17 Liya: shwong shpoya *pjäw pjäw*  
18 Liya: Nasoga kong ga walë shwong shpok *pjäw pjäw* kwe shpoya e domer rokaydë  
19 <<laughter>>  
20 Liya: Nasoga kjone e om le eni  
21 Natalia: sore?  
22  
23 Liya: kuzong, tja ööto sök shwong kwoshkwe diwa diwa porque eeri ga pluma  
24 Liya: pero antes la mujer se iba al río a sonar la—porrear  
25 Liya: entonces si sonaba mucho los maridos se ponían celosos  
26 Liya: porque dice que eso es para que los hombres escuchen que aquí yo estoy venga  
27 <<laughter>>  
28 Liya: según Nasogaga eni walëga shwong shpok trak llëm ga domer rokaydë...  
29 Liya: Nasoga tiempo diwa llë lejos de la casa entonces  
30 Liya: domerga jongya pakshko kloy llë kjone ga karye wora walë li shangde e ÿya  
31 Liya: e kjing ga woyde ba lanmarë ga shwong shpok llëme  
32 Liya: kwoshkwe eni [gestures] sharye akkwo kjinggo  
33  
34 Emerita: ãã—*kjiuk*—  
35 Liya: *chas chas* le eni  
36  
37 Liya: Rafa tjlë ga bor kong ga ba tjëtë shwong kwoshkwe ga  
38 Liya: ba Levito jem shäng omneno shäng kloy le eni

39 Liya: ga tjetë sök dew diwa Levito tjok le eni  
 40 Liya: tjetë sök shwong kwoshkwe *chaschaschas* le  
 41 Liya: miga oma shwong—para que kuya ba lanmalirë llëm wlo ga  
 42 Liya: shwong shpok llëm sino que kwoshkwe sök dyöya sök akkwo kjinggo jüni ga  
 43 Liya: pjluk pero *chas chas chas* le eni era <<laughter>>  
 44 Liya: ba sonido de ba ropa <<laughter>>...  
 45 Liya: tjetë sök ba Levito tjok sök shwong kwoshkwono ga *chas chas chas* le asi <<laughter>>  
 46 Liya: Rafa li inventando  
 47 Liya: joywër äe

(310) English translation:

1 Natalia: And other words like that like sounds like *kji*—  
 2 Liya: *chas chas* they say  
 3 Liya: *chas chas* is Rafa's story  
 4 Liya: so Mr. Bonilla they say, who lives almost up in Kjësi, do you know Ûta?  
 5 Natalia: yeah  
 6 Liya: well, his father said that he was jealous of Levito Torres  
 7 Liya: the grandmother was old, but the grandfather was going through male menopause  
 8 Liya: that age, so he was really possessive of the grandmother [his wife]  
 9 Liya: the grandmother, poor her, she would just stay alone in her room  
 10 Liya: so Mr. Levito was running tests of what do you call it, mosquitoes...  
 11 Liya: and the grandmother would stay home alone...  
 12 Liya: and Levito would go over to Sieykjing to see who had fever and such...  
 13 Liya: and the grandfather was jealous of his wife and Levito  
 14 Liya: they said he [grandfather] would finish working here and walk to Kjësi  
 15 Liya: he would go slowly in order to try to catch his wife with another man...  
 16 Liya: he heard that his wife was standing washing clothes by the river  
 17 Liya: she was hitting the clothes *pjãw pjãw*  
 18 Liya: to Nasos, when women hit the clothes *pjãw pjãw* we are hitting it in order to attract men  
 19 <<laughter>>  
 20 Liya: that's what some Nasos say  
 21 Natalia: what?  
 22  
 23 Liya: listen, if I go wash clothes by the river, by the river because today we have faucets  
 24 Liya: but before women would go to the river to sound—to slap [clothes]  
 25 Liya: so if it made a lot of noise their husbands would get jealous  
 26 Liya: because they say that they do that so that men can hear them here I am come here  
 27 <<laughter>>  
 28 Liya: that's what Nasos say that if women slap their clothes a lot they are calling men...  
 29 Liya: in the time of the Nasos the rivers were far away from their house so  
 30 Liya: men would go work in the mountains and sneak around to look for women  
 31 Liya: because of that their husbands wouldn't like for them to slap their clothes  
 32 Liya: they would have to wash it like this [gestures] on top of rocks  
 33  
 34 Emerita: ohh— *kjiuk*—

35 Liya: *chas chas* he says  
36  
37 Liya: Rafa told me, he says that his grandma was washing clothes and  
38 Liya: her Levito had come up and was hiding in the forest they say  
39 Liya: so his grandmother was down by the creek with Levito they say  
40 Liya: the grandmother was sitting washing clothes *chaschaschas* they say  
41 Liya: but the woman—her clothes—so that her husband wouldn't hear  
42 Liya: didn't slap the clothes but pressed it sitting down over a rock like this  
43 Liya: it only sounded softly *chas chas chas* they say that's all <<laughter>>  
44 Liya: the sound of her clothes <<laughter>>...  
45 Liya: she was with her Levito so she washed her clothes *chas chas chas* they say <<laughter>>  
46 Liya: that Rafa, making it all up  
47 Liya: I laughed about that a lot

Liya calls this “Rafa’s *story*” in line (3), which functions to suggest it is invented and not real in nature, which she reinforces in (46) by saying Rafa invented it. However, it is still a humorous telling of a story. Stories like these are common; Nasos often make up stories about people they know and stretch the truth, like “benign fabrications” (Goffman 1974), by relating it other truths that are known. In this case, Liya starts talking about Levito, who people know and remember well, because he was a non-Naso government official who would come into the Naso territory regularly to inspect people for cases of dengue fever and monitor mosquito larvae growth in water. There are other well-known cases of outsiders like this who would often pass through the Naso territory for business or government work, such as Kjokkë Linkan, an Afro-Creole man who would come to the Naso territory to buy meat but gained the reputation of creating humorous situations and bearing the brunt of many anecdotal jokes because of the lack of sufficient language comprehension between Naso and Guari Guari. Kjokkë is the term of respect given to any male non-Naso outsider who comes into contact with Nasos, whether for business, tourism, or romance. It is also used for Naso elderly men. The equivalent term for women in the same relationship is Tjëtë.

In this recording, Liya introduces Kjokkë Bonilla in (4-17) as a distrustful elderly man undergoing a decline in virility who notices that the outsider Kjokkë Levito does his mosquito testing work inside Naso homes, where the women are, and while the men are away working their farms. He is suspicious of his wife and takes steps to catch her in the act, and manages to *hear* her slapping her clothes while washing by the river. At this point, the first burst of laughter emerges between Emerita and Liya who know what is socially indicated, that his wife is being unfaithful. But I don’t understand, so Liya explains the social context in (23-32).

Liya suggests how the ideophone socially indexes inappropriate spousal behavior because it is associated with women calling out for men to look for them by letting them know the creek where they are located, which is far from their home, and possibly, far from social eyes that enforce proper behavior.

Then Emerita takes the floor to perform the punchline at the appropriate time (33), but she misspeaks and instead utters the ideophone punchline from the previous joke—*kjiuk kjiuk*. Liya interrupts her to utter the correct ideophone in this case—*chas chas*, which sonically contrasts with *pjäuw pjäuw* because the former is a more controlled, quiet motion of the hands grabbing the bundle of clothes and lightly rubbing it on a rock sitting in front of the grandmother in the story. Like a slip of the tongue, Emerita’s mistake creates a resemblance in the shape, scope, and movement between the sounds *chas chas* and *kjiuk kjiuk*, and perhaps that the opposition between both pairs [*kjiukkjiuk – fwap*] and [*chas chas – pjaw pjaw*] in a sonic, iconic diagram (Hiraga 1994). The contrast between the two ideophones juxtaposes the two very different meanings and causes humor by seducing to listener to the larger context of social norms surrounding women’s behavior. This part of the story (37-47) is where “Rafa’s joke” is indexed, and each line ends with *le* ‘it is said’, or in this case ‘he says’, to refer to Rafa’s speech. By contrast, the discussion leading up to it in (1-36) does not make use of this marker.

While the sounds in /tʃastʃas/ and /p<sup>h</sup>awp<sup>h</sup>aw/ differ in more than one way, they suggest that some of the sounds are more salient than others and create an opposition in meaning. In particular, the sibilant /s/ in /tʃastʃas/ evokes a RUSTLING sound, whereas the sonorant /w/ in /p<sup>h</sup>awp<sup>h</sup>aw/ evokes a RESONANT one, as was described in Chapter 4 on sound symbolism in ideophone consonants. The sound symbolic opposition between RUSTLING and RESONANT are exemplified by their juxtaposition in this excerpt. Besides contrasting in salient and indexical sounds and convoking other semiotic oppositions in sounds, these ideophones also differ by occupying different verbal complexes.

The ideophones *pjäuw pjäuw* and *chas chas* appear alongside different verbs and positional verbs that have very different meanings. Compare lines (16-17) with lines (40 and 42) below.

(lines 16 - 17):

<i>ku-ya</i>	<i>ga</i>	<i>ba</i>	<i>abuela</i>	<b><i>shäng</i></b>	<i>shwong</i>	<i>kwoshkwe</i>	<i>diga</i>
listen-3	CONN	3POSS	grandmother	POSIT:stand	clothes	wash	river
‘he heard that his wife was standing washing clothes by the river’							

*shwong* *shpo-ya* **pjäw pjäw**  
 clothes hit-3 IDEO:slapping sound  
 ‘she was hitting the clothes *pjäw pjäw*’

(lines 40 and 42)

tjëtë **sök** *shwong kwoshkwe chaschaschas* le  
 grandmother POSIT:sit clothes wash IDEO quiet movement sound say  
 ‘the grandmother was sitting washing clothes *chaschaschas* they say’

*shwong* *shpok llëm* *sino* *que* *kwoshkwe* **sök** /  
 clothes hit NEG but that wash POSIT:sit  
**dyō-ya** **sök** *akkwo kjing-go jūni* *ga*  
 shrivel.3 POSIT:sit rock on.top-COM this CONN  
 ‘didn’t slap the clothes but pressed it sitting down over a rock like this [gestures]<sup>19</sup>’

In line (17), Liya settles on the verb *shpok* ‘to hit’ to accompany the RESONANT ideophone *pjäw pjäw*, which contrasts with the verb *dyōya* ‘to shrivel’, which she uses to describe the RUSTLING ideophone *chaschaschas*. The verb *shpok* ‘to hit’ is most commonly used to describe people hitting each other, while the verb *dyong* which I gloss here as ‘to shrivel’ is usually used to describe when people put food products out in the sun to dry, such as cacao beans, banana slices, seeds to make crafts, or corn, or, when animal meat is smoked atop a fire for days. I gloss this as ‘to shrivel’ because the verb refers to the process that the object undergoes, where the water is dried up by the sun or smoke and its shape contorts. Here, Liya is using the verb in a novel way to refer to the same process of drying out water, but by folding in the clothes, pressing it against the rock, rather than slapping it.

Along with the selection of different verbs is the selection of different positionals to accompany the verb. To accompany the slapping, hitting motion *pjäw pjäw*, Liya uses the positional *shäng* ‘standing’, which is the most agentive of the seven Naso positionals that are obligatory in progressive readings (Bermúdez, 2013). By comparison, *sök* ‘sitting’ is one of more passive positionals, only surpassed by *buk* ‘lying’. When I have asked Nasos to describe the

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<sup>19</sup>Liya gestures with her hands in a position of grabbing something about the size of a mass of a one large clothes item, and squeezes them in the air in several repetitions.

positional verbs in terms of associated actions, they link the verb *shāng* with actions that involve what they call work, which typically refers to work on the farms such as clearing the land with a machete, cutting down trees, or harvesting food. These are typically activities that are associated with men, whereas women spend more time doing work at home such as tend to their children, cook, and hang clothes to dry; and as suggested in the story, if they leave the house alone, to wash clothes. Women also do work in a sitting position such as make crafts to sell to tourists, and nurse their small children.

The Kuna's creative manipulation of positionals for humorous effect has been described by Joel Sherzer (1990, 1995, 2002), and are not geographically far away or in terms of their linguistic family relations. Across Chibchan languages, certain actions tend to have certain positionals associated with them, where the 'hanging' position goes with the verb 'to run', and the 'sitting' position goes with the verb 'to eat'. When a person selects a non-typical positional to describe an action, it causes humor. However, the verb 'to wash' is an action where the body's position varies depending on the height of the surface of the washing rock and whether there is a comfortable place to sit, which is preferable. See the image below, where some Naso women in the community of Sieyllik are washing clothes. In this case, there is no comfortable sitting place for the woman in the top left corner to sit, yet at this moment, the action she is performing indicates a more passive manner which could be described with the ideophone *chas chas*.



Figure 11. Naso women washing clothes in Teribe River.

In this story, ideophones again are at the punchline of the humor, alongside the manipulation of the accompanying verb and positional. The contrast between the two ideophones, *chas chas* and *pjäw pjäw*, indexes the two very different meanings and explains the larger context of social norms surrounding women's behavior.



### 5.3.1.4 Code-switching in court

After the previous excerpt, Emerita shares that she has another story about perhaps the same the characters from before, in the following transcription in (311) followed by my English translation in (312).

(311) Transcription:

1   tjëtë chiste kwara obi  
2   tjlë ga inge  
3   kjokkë sök kjlara ymo ara le eni  
4   kjokkë sök Kësi le  
5   tjlë ga oma be sök toksa de ba lanmarë chira llëm  
6   engkwono tjëtë kwlerae le eni kjwlerae engkwe ame rayer e le eni...  
7   ina ga rotara ba lanmarë ba plollgwega kong  
8   äär eshko ga  
9   oma tjëtë öoto ya tja ber sök ba tjok ame rayer e  
10  pjây oto le ba plollgwega le ba kong  
11  eeri ga tja tek sök bor boy kwe roke  
12  ëng ga tjlë ga tja raye shäng bor lanmarë  
13  bor boy kwe to shäng oblë tok...  
14  tjëtë tjlë ga llëme tja jek toksa...  
15  pjây engkwe llë kjing le bakong pja de ara  
16  to shäng Levito tjok lea bakong <<laughter>>  
17  tjëtë tjlë ba kong ga llëme tja to shäng ba tok llëme  
18  tja sök Levito tjok llëme...<<laughter>>  
19  pjây engkwe e kjing era le ba plollgwega  
20  ëng  
21  eeri shko ga walë e iara—  
22  ba plollgwega tjlë ba kong ga...  
23  eni ra pjây to pjujïk tjok llëm pjay engkwe llë kjing llëm roy le ba kong  
24  kjokkë sök kjojono tjlë ba plollgwega kong ga  
25  “tja wo pjlü bop tjok  
26  walë e iara domerdë tek Eden dwayo walë e beno domer kong domer e beno walë kong”  
27  tjëtë sök oma song po shakza ju shikza *päk* era  
28  <<laughter>>  
29  toe lea söra toe  
30  ba boy li söra toe ba tjok le  
31  päk le yë e ba sonido de pegar

(312) English translation:

1   there’s another joke about the grandmother  
2   as it is said  
3   there was a man who was very jealous they say

4 the man lived in Kjësi  
5 it is said his woman would just stay at home her husband wouldn't let her out of his sight  
6 they fought the wife was sick of it she said she was leaving him so no more fighting they say...  
7 so the husband saw this and he took her to court to the judge  
8 when they arrived there  
9 the woman got there and said that's it I'm done with him I'm leaving him  
10 what's going on the judge asked them  
11 today I'm coming to sue my wife  
12 yes she said he's leaving me  
13 my wife is seeing another man...  
14 the woman said no I'm alone...  
15 why are you fighting said the judge you are too controlling of her  
16 she's seeing Levito he told [the judge] <<laughter>>  
17 the woman told him no I'm not seeing him  
18 I'm not seeing Levito...<<laughter>>  
19 is that all you two are fighting about the judge said  
20 yes  
21 "today women were left—"  
22 the judge told them...  
23 if that's all then don't go on getting separated you have nothing to fight about was his resolution  
24 the man stood up and told the judge  
25 "thank you  
26 women were placed on earth from Eden and woman belongs to man and man belongs to women"  
27 the woman, poor her, he grabbed her body and pulled it [smack on the forehead] *päk*  
28 <<laughter>>  
29 they say he took her away  
30 he took his wife and took her with him they say  
31 the *päk* that I said that's the sound of smacking

Emerita begins by saying that this is another story about the grandmother. She has a very jealous husband who suspects infidelity between her and Levito so he makes an appointment and takes her to court. It is up for interpretation whether this story is about the same protagonists as the previous story, but the fact that the same people (the grandmother, the jealous husband, and Levito) and place (the community of Kjësi) are interweaved from the previous joke are a cause of humor in intertextualization evident in the laughing in line (16).

As was mentioned earlier, a common theme that provokes humor is when Nasos leave their Naso territory to the Spanish-dominant society in search for validation but end up looking foolish. In this story, the husband and wife have made a legal appointment in the nearest non-Naso local court, to which they travel from Kjësi, a community in the Naso territory. They are there to dispute the husband's suspicion of his wife's infidelity. The court judge trivializes the couple's appointment with him, and says that there is no problem at all, it seems like a petty matter of he-said she-said. In Naso society, it is very common for people to go to the *Corregiduría*, the local penal system instituted in Panama since the time of Spanish conquest, in order to resolve all sorts of legal disputes between people, including family disputes. It is overseen by a *Corregidor*, a judge-like figure who has administrative and judicial decision-making power. The photo below shows the local *Corregiduría* office in Guabito, Panama.



Figure 12. *Corregiduría* office in Guabito, Panama

In line (23), the judge grants his formal resolution in official language: they have no reason to be fighting and should not separate. The husband, who I assume is dumbfounded at this legal logic, acts quickly and responds by feigning equal authority in (25-26): “thank you women were placed on earth from Eden and woman belongs to man and man belongs to women”. This is hilarious to Liya and Emerita as they continue to repeat the punchline in different variations such as *este amor viene desde el Eden* ‘this love was sent from Eden’. I suggest the humor comes from several socio-political juxtapositions that work together. First is the fact that the man invokes religious language and logic, as keyed by the biblical place name ‘Eden’. This is funny because they are in a judiciary system and instead of using legal logic he is using religious logic. Second, he is presumably experienced with the religious language of Spanish pastors and preachers who come into the Naso territory<sup>20</sup>, and he associates this language with the language of outside world, and in an effort to assimilate to the language of the Spanish, copies this style of authoritative language and feels more powerful because of it. It is transgressive in the classic Bakhtinian sense

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<sup>20</sup>Adventist missionaries came to the Naso territory since the 1930’s and have been the most popular religion that Nasos adhere to ever since. There are several Nasos who preach in their Adventist churches using the same language heard from non-Naso pastors.

(1984), and is a model example of Nasos acting foolish in the outside world by attempting to impress non-Nasos with their use of Spanish.

Emerita indexes her empathetic alignment with the woman in her choice of words in (27) ‘the woman, poor her’, when her husband takes ‘her body’, brands it with a kiss of closure, and takes her away. We hear no more of the agentivity of the woman. In other conversations I have with Liya and especially Emerita we talk about our personal experiences with men. One recurring theme is our disapproval of the way in which some men behave in manipulative ways by treating women as commodities and exhibit controlling behavior in a self-serving way. In line (27), the man grabs the woman’s body, implicitly against her will, and acts upon her. But in this story it is not a cause of outrage but of humor, which is created from a church predication register that the man adopts, as well as the ideophone sound *päk* of the ironic kiss that he gives the woman in (31), which is met with laughter from the Emerita, Liya, and myself. My own interpretation of the sound of /pak/ is that, due to the lack of aspiration of the /p<sup>h</sup>/, which is common in word-initial position, feels emotionless and cold-hearted. Liya’s interpretation of another action that has the same sound *päk* is the sound of a cow pooping, and all three of us laugh at her example, perhaps because like the kiss, we have repulsive feelings towards it. In this excerpt, all three of us are aligning with the sentiment of the woman in this unfortunate and embarrassing situation.

#### *Tying up the conversation*

This conversation shows the emergent humor that is created through the a variety of indexical relationships to social norms, sound symbolism, semiotic oppositions of ideophones, code-switching, and diverse registers between Naso and Spanish, as well as intertextual reference between different places in this conversation as well as to other conversations. Thematic topics of Naso life come out of the analysis of these three excerpts. The language shift and endangerment that we see as scientists from the outside is explained by the Naso-identifying feeling of powerlessness in comparison of prestige in the Spanish-Panamanian political, religious, and linguistic systems. Emerita and Liya also reference the role of women in society in the context of

controlling relationships. As can be said perhaps universally, humor is a tool that Nasos use to set off the tensions of inequality and engage in playful conversation. Ideophones in conversation resolve otherwise unresolvable tensions. The Naso language is in a process of language shift, and Nasos are very aware of this. Juxtaposition of code-switchings and socially powerful registers acts as a reminder of the ironic clash between Naso and Spanish societies, and tension is relieved by the side-by-side placement of idealized Naso backwardness and idealized Spanish power, reminding us of their relationship of inequality. Additionally, the conversation takes place between three women who interpret the discourse resonances as an alignment with processual solidarity (Hosemann 2013).

### **5.3.2 Daniel Villagra joking throughout a transcription session**

These next case studies show how Nasos interact and react to the presence of Daniel Villagra, a natural entertainer. His presence tests and inspires others to participate in humorous interaction, through frame tags, and various types of juxtapositions including epistemologies and social identities. Throughout the conversation Daniel shows how he weaves particular themes recurrently in order to build up humor.

This recording takes place June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016, in Guabito, where technicians who form the Verbal art and Songs teams get together in Miriam's house in order to use electricity to transcribe some meetings, where I oversee their work and help in case they have problems using the ELAN program software. Throughout the two-hour recording, Daniel Villagra animates the event, taking themes across discourse and tying them in together, thus effectively illustrating the manner by which he explains he creates humor in the introductory section in this chapter on Naso Mood. The participants are picture in the following Figure 11.



Figure 13. Transcription session. *From left to right:* Yoselin Sánchez, Isaí González, Natalia Bermúdez, Hormelio Santana, Adela Torres, and Daniel Villagra.

### 5.3.2.1 *What's on a chicken's mind?, revisited*

The transcription session takes place a couple of days after the Verbal Art team, which includes Isaí and Daniel, have recorded their first team meeting. Isaí recalls a funny episode that had occurred during their first team meeting, where he induced the elders to laugh. Enrique Santana, an elder in the team meeting, asked Daniel to pay attention to a chicken that was standing still in the area. Enrique asked Daniel what he thought the chicken was thinking, and when Daniel said he didn't know how to answer, Enrique replied "crickets!". Both men fell over laughing, and Daniel repeats this joke as an example of a man who can read the mind of a chicken.

This joke is typical Naso humor, and it works because Nasos are keenly aware of alternative epistemologies of different types of life forms. They are also actively seeking out opportunities to observe the behavior of animals—often they will capture and not kill a wild animal just to keep it as a temporary pet and observe it. Other life forms hold different knowledge that humans are incapable of understanding, and they live in alternate cosmological orders, one of eight different spiritual layers either deep into the earth, or above into the atmosphere—a metaphor for the different local ecosystems, which makes use of religious syncretism with Christian metaphors of

Heaven and Hell. That the elder Enrique was able to read the chicken's mind is humorous because it juxtaposes and extends Enrique's knowledge to the perspective of the chicken.

In the present recording, Isaí provokes Daniel out of the blue in order to create an entertaining distraction, the story about the chicken; Isaí says the following in (313), which is immediately responded to by Daniel.

(313) Isaí: kjorkö llë woyotjlin

*What was the chicken thinking?*

Daniel: sekwa era

*Only about crickets!*

No further discussion takes place about the topic in the immediate discourse context, but it provides a moment of relief from the transcription work. It uses the question-answer strategy described in Chapter 4 most ERGious with the frame tag *sore*, where an anecdote is hinted at in form of the question in order to elicit a response, which Daniel offers immediately. This establishes a shared moment of humorous intimacy.

About one hour later, Daniel refers to the same experience, within the context of transcribing a word that he finds funny because the elder, Enrique Santana, uses Naso stress intonation in speaking the Spanish word *salsa* 'sauce', where he pronounces it with heavy aspiration. I annotate *salsa* below as SJALsa in order to represent the way Daniel imitates it in (314), where <j> represents heavy aspiration, and capitalization represents intensity.

(314)

1 Daniel: SJALsa he says

2 Daniel: it's Naso *tjlōkwo rong*

3 [everyone laughs]

4 Isaí: what is it?



5 Daniel: SJALsa he says, it must be a profound word  
6 [laughter]  
7 Daniel: I don't know what it means, SJALsa he says  
8 Isaí: What does it mean?  
9 Daniel: SJALsa he says, it's a profound word  
10 Isaí: What was the chicken thinking?  
11 Daniel: there's a man who reads the mind of chickens  
12 Daniel: For the first time in history, he can read the mind of a chicken  
13 Daniel: I was in the meeting and  
14 Daniel: I was in the meeting and there was a chicken like this laying there thinking  
15 Daniel: And a man asks me what is that chicken thinking  
16 Daniel: And he tells me me "crickets"  
17 [everyone laughs]  
18 Daniel: Whoa! That man reads the mind of chicken! Crickets, whoa!  
19 Daniel: He says put a cricket in front of its face and you'll see  
20 Daniel: It will *affect* its eyesight!  
21 [everyone laughs]  
22 Daniel: He reads chicken minds, Enrique Santana, reads chicken minds  
23 [laughter]

The excerpt begins with Daniel making a teasing joke about how the elder's pronunciation of *salsa* 'sauce' as SJALsa must be a 'profound word', because it uses Naso prosody—intensity and aspiration—rather than Spanish prosody of an unaspirated /s/. Notably, each time Daniel says SJALsa he follows it with the evidential *le* 'he says'—this functions as a quotative marker that places the word on a non-personal plane, attributing it to another person, but in this example, also to a past time where this word belongs to the ancestral canon of 'profound words'.

Isaí challenges Daniel in line (8) where he uses a frame tag that elicits a response in the form of a question “what does it mean”—here Isaí wants Daniel to repeat the funny punchline, his interpretation of the pronunciation as a ‘profound word’, and Daniel obeys in his response in (9). Then Isaí plays off of the response again by recalling a previous frame tag hook ‘what was the chicken thinking?’ in (10), to which Daniel again responds to immediately in (11) with the punchline, that there is a man who reads the mind of a chicken, and then continues to elaborate on the latter personal anecdote. This excerpt again ends by creating humor out of the fact that a man claims he can understand the perspective of a chicken.

The challenging request by Isaí in lines (8) and (10) seem to follow similar principles as that of verbal dueling, a more complex and elaborate practice of back-and-forth language play common across the world (Dundes et al. 1970; Kockman 1983; Sherzer 1993).

### **5.3.2.2 Dëngdëngwa ‘one who walks stiffly’**

At 7 minutes into the recording, there is a problem with the computer software program ELAN that Daniel Villagra is working on, where some words were lost. Daniel (in white, with his back turned to the camera) calls me (in black, standing) over and I look over his computer to troubleshoot and find out what the problem is, as illustrated in the image below. Below in Figure 12, I point to the manner in which I am standing, which Daniel imitates in the image after the one immediately below.



Figure 14. A stance that sets up a joking frame.

A few seconds later, Daniel stands up and says in (315):

(315) Daniel: let's...let's stand for a moment

Natalia: to stretch?

Daniel: no! to stand elegantly

Natalia: *dëngdëngwa*

[everyone laughs]

Daniel: yes, let's stand *dëngdëngwa*

Daniel: what do you guys think of that word? No, seriously?

This point of the text in (110) above is illustrated in the image below.



Figure 15. Daniel's imitation of the author's pose.

Here in Figure 13, Daniel is imitating the typical White and Latina pose I use, which indexes power and authority. His imitation of me eases the tension of power imbalance of the situation, where I am the boss and they are the workers. The others laugh because tension is relieved, and I laugh along with them. Isaí, the technician in red, comments that we should pose for the camera, acknowledging the strange recording situation which places them all on stage. I then make a point of repositioning the camera, and then Daniel and I proceed to pose for the camera, as is illustrated below in Figure 14.



Figure 16. Daniel and the author posing for the camera.

My allusion and Daniel’s uptake of my nickname *dëngdëngwa* ‘one who walks stiffly’ is an example of use of speech play. Naso ideophones are widely diffusible across word classes. They can derive verbs, adverbs, and adjectives, however, they do not ordinarily derive nouns. For example, the following words below share lexical roots, /ʒɛɾ/ in (316), and /lu/ in (317). None of the roots can derive nouns.

- |       |   |                             |
|-------|---|-----------------------------|
| (316) | /ʒɛɾ 'ʒɛɾ/ ‘IDEO:quick or shiny reflection’<br>/ʒɛɾʃɛt/ ‘quickly’<br>/ʒɛɾ-hɔŋ/ ‘is lightning’ | ideophone<br>adverb<br>verb |
| (317) | /lu 'lu/ ‘IDEO:sound of bubbling; sound of a vulture’<br>/lublu/ ‘blubbery’                   | ideophone<br>adjective      |

However, in creative and humorous use, ideophones can be nominalized, as is evidenced by the innovative nickname *dëngdëngwa* /dɪŋdɪŋwa/, which derives a noun from an ideophone, as shown below in (318-319).

- (318) dɪŋ dɪŋ  
 IDEO:firm and robot.like  
 ‘IDEO:hurried and stiff’

- (319) *dɪŋ dɪŋ* -wa  
IDEO:firm and robot.like -DIM  
'one who walks hurriedly and stiff'

Daniel had given me this nickname a few months prior to describe the way I walk, which provokes hilarious laughter whenever a Naso hears it. He had explained to me the meaning of the nickname means 'an elegant and quick gait', though someone else has told me her interpretation is more along the lines of 'a firm and strong step', which I imagine is a euphemism for a robotic connotation, which is most likely associated with my city Latina power stance, whereas comparatively, the stance and gait of the Naso population is notably relaxed and smooth.

This speech play makes use of derivational morphology, in specific, the diminutive nominalizer *-wa*, which simultaneously creates a proper name through an endearment form, but uses that endearment term on a brash root. The derivational suffix is stretched beyond its ordinary distribution and attachment regulations, and violates these rules effectively in order to create humor. Thus, this case also works through the function of juxtaposition, where the diminutive suffix is placed in a novel context, which is surprising to Nasos, but semantically comprehensible, thus it works as a joke. The use of affective diminutive forms in nicknames is common across languages and among fieldworkers, another example is one given to Tony Woodbury 'poor/dear one' (Woodbury 1998).

The laughter that Daniel elicits from his audience in two excerpts of this recording transcription background conversation show that his comedy works because he plays on the indexing of different social identities. In particular, he juxtaposes my Latina identity with their Naso identity in order to ease tension between the differences in the underlying power between White and Indigenous identities. Daniel's ability to create effective humor and relaxed atmosphere in times of hard work, in this case, difficult transcription work, is appreciated by all the participants. At the end of the recording, Hormelio Santana, who is in red and white striped shirt in the images above, says, "tomorrow there's not going to be joy since you won't be here Daniel".

## 5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The Naso-particular formal speech play and verbal art strategies that are used in these various joking situations include sound symbolism of consonants, the frame tags of question-answer form, the evidential frame tag *le* ‘says’, and vowel lowering from /ɛ/ to [æ]. These are illustrated in Table 12.

<i>Naso SPVA strategy</i>	<i>example</i>
Sound symbolism of consonants	<i>chas</i> vs. <i>pjaw</i>
Frame tag question-answer	Isaí: What does it mean? Daniel: SJALsa he says, it’s a profound word  Isaí: What was the chicken thinking? Daniel: there’s a man who reads the mind of chickens...
evidential frame tag <i>le</i> ‘says’	SJALsa he says
vowel lowering from /ɛ/ to /æ/	<i>dbong ter sök</i> > <i>dbong tær sök</i>

Table 12. Speech play and verbal art strategies in playful context

Additionally, a general, perhaps universal strategy of general juxtaposition accounts for much of the humor, as is shown in the table (Table 13) below.

<i>Domain of juxtaposition</i>	<i>Example</i>
Clan variables	/t/ vs. /k/
Language	Naso vs. Spanish (fisherman)
Sound symbolism	/s#/ vs. /w#/
Discourse register	state court discourse vs. religious discourse

Life form characteristics and epistemologies	Naso vs. Latino Human vs. chicken Naso vs. evil spirit
Word classes	Ideophone vs. noun

Table 13. Contextual juxtaposition in speech play and verbal art

The humorous conversations in the conversation with Emerita and Liya show that humor is created through the juxtaposition of social relations, in particular, between different clan variants, in code-switching between the Naso and Spanish language, in normative behaviors of women, and in juxtapositions of Spanish institutions (church vs. state).

Likewise, the humor created in the transcription session with Daniel and other technicians, Daniel juxtaposes different social relations, in specific, the different power relations and social characteristics between Nasos and Latinos, as well as the different epistemologies between humans, animals (chicken), and spirits (*uushi*).

The discussions involved portray and reference Naso life in different settings and between different people: in Latino cities (Longino the fisherman), at work (washing clothes), in everyday joke-telling settings (the 5-year-old boy), in court (the de-divorcing couple), in conversation with elders, in conversation with peers, and in conversation with foreigners.

The analysis of more of these sorts of humorous contexts will be necessary for more robust theorization about how particular conversations relate to Naso vitality in general and more broadly.



## Chapter 6: Nostalgia

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I show how speech play and verbal art resources described in Chapter 4 get implemented in activities that involve nostalgic rumination about an ancestral past. Unsurprisingly, Nasos essentialize their Naso identity in a historical past where elders today are the most authentic Nasos because they are more in touch with traditional practices of their ancestors. In this chapter I show what it means to Nasos to have Naso identity, through the eyes of elders, middle-aged adults, and also younger teenagers. The way younger Nasos view nostalgic language shows the life and flexibility of authentic concepts and lexicon, and shows how interpretation takes place in different ways according to different experiences. This approach also aligns with current trends in sociolinguistics to “[not only] explain how some speakers come to be valorized as ‘authentic’, [but also] focus from the language users who confirm our expectations to those who unsettle them—that is, the so-called inauthentic speakers” (Bucholtz 2003).

As has been a central focus and method in theorization of documentary linguistics since the 1990s (see Hale et al. 1992), a good documentation project is one that involves speakers’ and communities’ agendas into the documentary goals. It is often the case that in endangered language communities, speakers are aware and nostalgic or unhappy about the loss of ancestral knowledge (see case study on Yupik agendas (Woodbury 2003)). The mood of nostalgia is a driving force that has determined what each of the Naso teams have chosen to document in the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia project. Although my original agenda in the Naso territory also began with personal interests in nostalgic forms of language and linguistic work, I do not believe they have determined what the Naso teams have decided to document as traditional, ancestral knowledge in the Cultural Encyclopedia. Each chapter that they write is with the traditional life on center stage. Furthermore, each of their team meetings were conducted in a way that placed the elderly speaker into focus for the information, where the younger technicians were studying the knowledge the elders bestowed

on them. It is clear that for Nasos who I have gotten to know during the past decade, a recurrent general interest that I have not seen anyone negate is the value of Naso identity and tradition, even if they see no economic value, it is a general theme of interest and certainly a priority for documentation.

Despite the fact that the nostalgic appreciation of the lexico-grammatical code here is *about* traditional practices, this chapter will show how speakers discuss these themes in a *contemporary, emergent way*, such that the dichotomy in typology between documentation of an emergent code vs. documentation of ancestral communicative practices (see Woodbury 2011) is stripped away and brought together in particular, everyday uses that I illustrate in the case studies of this chapter.

## **6.2 MOOD: NASO NOSTALGIA**

In this chapter I talk about the social function and life of nostalgia within daily life and conversations. As was shown in the previous chapter, Nasos display vivacious dexterity and a self-assured manner when performing language as a political or playful tool. However, they appear overcome with defenselessness, uncertainty, reticence, and humility when the topic turns to *tjlōkwo rong* ‘profound words’, the genre of verbal art that essentializes “traditional” Naso language, and one looming sign that the vitality of the Naso language is waning. Whereas in playful interactions Nasos look each other in the eye and push each other’s limits, in discussions of nostalgia they look away from each other, off into the distance, aligning with the mental exercise of imagining and receding into a time before the present.

Nasos who maintain a great deal of pride in their traditional heritage show preoccupation that ancestral customs and knowledge have moved to the periphery of everyday life, fear that their identity is fading away into the distant past, and curiosity about the ingenuity and knowledge of their ancestors. In December 2016, Naso King Reynaldo Alexis Santana started off the first Verbal Art Team meeting by posing this rhetorical question to the elders Enrique Santana and Valentin Santana, the latter a former King, and the former the father of Alexis:

(117) “I am King  
and I am worried we aren’t speaking Naso anymore  
so we are writing a book  
we are looking for profound words because we speak Naso and Spanish mixed together  
do you think we are losing our language?”

Alexis alludes to the fear of their changing ancestral language, fear that they cannot control this change, and that they are attempting to counteract it with the documentation of the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia.

To be clear, these feelings are echoed by common people, whether or not they affiliate with the King or have a political agenda. It is a sentiment that everyone who identifies as Naso is aware of, the old and young, fluent and semi-fluent, jungle-dwelling and city-dwelling. Across messages Nasos express about *tjldkwo rong* ‘profound words’, which are discussed in the following sections, it is shown that these words encompass themes of language endangerment, shift, and loss; memory, imagination, and nostalgia; and the value of ecologic and linguistic diversity and knowledge.

Nostalgia is deeply entwined with the ideological perception of Naso language endangerment and shift to Spanish. The use of profound words indexes one’s link to ancestral knowledge and identity. These words are not authoritative but they provide evidence for one’s closeness to an indigenous Naso identity.

The three main patterns that I have observed Nasos commonly identify as changing are: (1) a change in spirituality from Naso cosmology to Christian Adventism brought by the Spanish, (2) a change from societal and ecological diversity towards standardization and the disappearing of local knowledge, and (3) language purism to language mixing. These changes can all be generalized as patterns of nostalgia, where Nasos ideologize the past as a time and place where certain aspects of life were better. In particular, they often cite a better quality of life and food practices, where they ate healthier food such as plants, which made their ancestors stronger and live longer. They also discuss how they used to be more in touch with their indigenous identity, which is a value that they have trouble claiming and performing due to a decay of traditional linguistic and cultural practices. To be clear, another contradictory ideology is that standards of life today are better because of more accessible health care, consistent salaries, and food resources.

### 6.2.1 How did Nasos use to speak?

“How did our ancestors used to speak” is a very common question that introduces the topic in conversation and gets the ball rolling. This is an effective way to get description of what indexes nostalgic *mood* and *practice*.

One common response to answer the question, especially when it is a tourist or young child who asks, is to **perform** a story or give **exegesis** about traditional customs. One of the most typical stories performed is that of the Snake God, Ööka. Some common domains for giving exegesis of traditional knowledge include clan structure, cosmological deities, traditional puberty rituals, cleansing rituals, food and its preparation, the character of Nasos, historical figures, place names, numbers.

Another strategy to respond to the question is to perform a traditional dance. However, this is in the hands of very few people who have learned how to dance from their ancestors; the vast majority of families do not know how to dance. When I first started working there, two main families knew (out of about 30 extended families); now there are a few more families who have learned from watching and developed their own dance interpretations.

Another strategy of answering the question “how did our ancestors used to speak?” is to reference the sonic characteristics of the language used by elderly speakers. Some of these characteristics include the sentence-final lengthening of vowels; and the ‘smooth’, ‘soft’, and ‘clear’ quality of segments.

Another strategy is to point out the lexical patterns of speech that differ from everyday speech today, and sometimes speakers characterize this lexicon as ‘profound words’. This can include idiomatic words or expressions, homophones, and also poetic couplets like *difrasismos*.

## 6.3 USE AND MEANINGS OF PROFOUND WORDS

### 6.3.1 Individual perspectives

In the spirit of Nasos who recognize that a single individual, like a single clan, can only know an infinitesimal amount of specialized type of information that he/she is restricted to by virtue of his or her experiences, I reconstruct and interpret profound words through the few descriptions I have been able to glean from a variety of people, from a selection of different conversations since 2011. Below, I describe on the surface some unique insights that each encounter has contributed to my integral understanding of how profound words sound and feel, how they are used, and what they can mean to each individual. I give a brief biographical background about each individual, which I assume colors their own knowledge and interpretations.

#### 6.3.1.1 *Antonio Sánchez*

Antonio Sánchez could be considered *the* Naso intellectual, because of his extensive knowledge in areas such as botany, language, traditional life skills including living, hunting, and food preparation, and many other domains. He is in his late 50s, has never been married, and claims no children. He is a very curious person who has dedicated his life to the pursuit of knowledge. His father had a Bribri father and Naso mother, and his mother was Naso. He is very much valued by society because of his intellect, although sometimes his knowledge of the Naso language is dismissed because he has some Bribri blood, which makes him mixed. He is marked by the experience of apprenticeship under who many consider the last Naso *tjang* or wiseman Julio Torres Morales. In the late 1990s an NGO<sup>21</sup> came with a project to support him in teaching a few Nasos including Antonio about medicinal plants. During this apprenticeship Antonio learned more than just about plants but other traditional knowledge. Now, he often spends long weeks far into the mountains in the homes of relatives working or studying without coming down to participate in community life. He has notebooks and notebooks of organized notes about several topics including

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<sup>21</sup>The results were an internationally published article in the pharmaceutical literature on local botanical plants.

botany and Naso words. His notes are much like organized and detailed taxonomies about a certain topic, for example, he has written thorough lists of the traditional Naso clans, medicinal plants, and words that begin with the letter *z*. Nasos refer tourists who come in search of botanical information to him, and King Alexis Santana recommended him to teach in the bilingual education program. He has become more and more reclusive and mistrustful of politics and foreigners over the years because he has not gained the economic power he believes his knowledge should award him.

Antonio was one of the first people I met on my first field trip, he was concerned about status of the Naso language and wanted tools with which to improve the orthography and education of Naso. Throughout the first years he taught me much about traditional Naso culture, and was the first one to tell me about Naso profound words. He would spend hours talking about these words and explaining them to me. I didn't understand much Naso at first, so he would translate the words into Spanish for me. All of the Naso words he described as profound words were in the form of *difrasismos*. Antonio was a remarkably lucid consultant in that he explained profound words one after another relatively quickly. He taught me these words with utmost seriousness, respect, and precision. However, I don't remember him giving much context about these words in terms of long narratives or myths that explained them, perhaps because I didn't know much about context, or because of the way I was asking. The conversations about these words treated them like objects to be listed. Perhaps it is partly because Antonio is a structural and analytic genius that he is most attuned to the formal uniqueness of *difrasismos* and highlights them as profound words without mentioning other types of examples such as idioms that others include in the class of profound words.

### 6.3.1.2 *Hector Torres*

“krina obi basde chisde asde drōsde le e pjāy tjan  
borwa kong nasoga e bi mosgo e bi zrōga e bi pjeyo llēme bi sreng llēme”

*“another one is basde chisde asde drōsde they say, that’s you guys,  
to us Nasos, it’s our enemies, it’s our killers, it’s not our family, not our blood”*

Hector Torres’s father was the late great Julio Torres Morales, who passed away in 2009 but lived in Hector’s home the last years of his life. Hector became more interested in his father’s knowledge after he saw how the NGO came to support him, and after there was another project that came to document his father’s knowledge of myth and narrative. Hector hadn’t taken part in these two projects, but after his father passed away, he felt responsibility to carry on in his footsteps and practice traditional Naso dances and songs. He has written and rewritten many songs, often in slightly different versions, as he tried to remember exactly how his father used to sing them. Today, he is considered the most respected performer of traditional song and dance. They say his voice sounds identical to that of his late father. Around the same time I was working with Antonio I began to ask Hector what he knew of profound words. The way he worked was a bit different from the way Antonio worked. He didn’t give as many examples as Antonio, but the examples that he did give were deeply embedded in traditional songs and stories. It seemed to be a tremendous cognitive load for Hector to recall a word and explain it in its narrative context. There was much cultural depth in his explanations, and it was difficult for me to follow his logic because of this; sometimes he would start by telling a myth and/or song and incorporate profound words in context. Profound words were inter-related in semantic associations. He also included fixed expressions, such as older forms of greetings, as examples of profound words. Also, he explained valuable cultural terms or practices that are no longer practiced in present society, like the ritual term for mating and the traditional term for a king’s wood staff.

### 6.3.1.3 *Celestina Bonilla*

*Natalia:* apso yapso e llë  
*Celestina:* bi shīya ga aga yaga lëy le bi lëy eni  
*Celestina:* pja dlilino shang aga yaga kesong obire kwire eni  
*Celestina:* era shāriorope  
*Celestina:* aga yasko li e  
*Celestina:* shi tjlë owa  
*Gilma:* pja tjlë āpsogo le bakong  
*Celestina:* pja tjlë öötong jūgo  
*Celestina:* pja jatong öötong apgo dice  
<all laugh>  
*Celestina:* ëng eni Natalia e lanyo woyde jong

*Natalia:* what is *apso yapso*?  
*Celestina:* ours is *aga yaga* that's the way we say it  
*Celestina:* if you cooked *aga yaga* then it's either still raw or cooked  
*Celestina:* but you did it  
*Celestina:* *aga yasko* is that  
*Celestina:* when we talk badly  
*Gilma:* when you talk with your jaw tell him  
*Celestina:* you talked all the way up to here  
*Celestina:* your laugh reached all the way up to your jaw they say  
<all laugh>  
*Celestina:* yes Natalia *e lanyo* you wanted

Celestina Bonilla is a funny, opinionated, elderly grandmother with a lot of energy and creativity. She is called *tia* 'aunt' by all, regardless of blood relation. People love and respect her greatly. Antonio regularly consults her for traditional knowledge. Many of the profound words she would offer were ones that she would use to compare to me in a humorous way, perhaps functioning as parables to me. Rather than trying to explain them to be deeply, she would often give an explanation in a few words, and upon seeing that I did not understand, find it hilarious, laugh, and give up on explaining further. Most profound words that she shared were *difrasismos*, and a tiny minority were fixed expressions or onomatopoeic expressions.



#### 6.3.1.4 Ernesto Bonilla

“tjlēsho kjīsho  
tjlēsho ra no tjlē ara wleniyo  
oba tjlē ara wleniyo  
kjīsho li e loklo  
oba tjlē ara jek löng kēm  
oba tjlē arayo tok  
pja tjlē ara ga pjlu dey ëng oba tjlökwo arae tjlökwo shik ara arae  
eni layde  
tjlēshore pja ĩge tjlē ara ga pjlu pja jek kjone pogo shko pja tjlē  
pja ööto kjone pogogo sontkeba tjlē owa llēm bankrëp llēm llē eni layde”

“tjlēsho kjīsho  
tjlēsho is a person who talks a lot  
its people who talk alot  
kjīsho means that  
people who talk a lot and go around places  
there are people who can talk a lot  
if you talk a lot it's good right those people who can talk a lot and converse about a lot  
that's what it means  
tjlēsho, it means if you can talk a lot it's a good because you can wherever you want and talk  
it means you can go wherever and stay there because you are a good converser and you don't  
fear anything”

Ernesto Bonilla is a kind, soft spoken, reclusive unmarried man in his 60s whose land is in a village where he lives by himself, but he comes down to visit the homes of relatives in more populated villages regularly. His mother was the sister of Julio Torres Morales, and besides knowing how to sing well, she was said to have much ancestral wisdom. Ernesto was happy to be helpful and cooperative in sharing his knowledge of profound words, he would mostly offer *difrasismos* with short explanations, and also included idiomatic cultural terms as profound words, such as the many types of Naso gold, and the names of Naso clans.

### 6.3.1.5 Gilberto Gamarra

“Carolina wlo tjlë eni tjlë ga ïge ebga e tjlökwo go ïge  
tjlökwo kwo pjök kwo mya e woyde lok llëme le  
sino que le kwaraso  
geniyo ga tjawa tjlë ba kong ga kwëp llong

borwa tjlökwo e kop eni  
tjawa tjlökwo lëp kwaraso ga lërwa pjök  
pjök pjök pjök pjök eni ïzong tegong këgong këgongshko  
eni lërwa bakong  
ebga om tē eni llëme  
ebga llë wlo ga pjlollgwëga  
ber pjaraso llëm ga le eni ga ae  
yara kjokde ga beno borwa kong eni  
ëng  
yara beno sore ga lëy ëngkong oblë shi wlo ga ae  
tjlabga tjlë ga  
tjlabga tjlë ga aaya  
aaya e tjlë ga kowe lok  
dörbong le  
krina e tjlökwo jong e obi ga ko ïge  
dirbong  
e aaya shkëso  
e aaya e jek shkë  
kowe dörbong dirbong”

*for Carolina, she said like this, she said for them, words,  
they didn't like words to be in pairs or trios  
they just wanted one word  
but we told her, what's the point?  
Our language has that many words  
In our language, what you say once, we say twice  
two two two two like that you see, it goes way back  
that's what we told her  
but they don't write like that  
for them, when you translate it,  
if it doesn't come out to just one then you can't say it  
but it was given to God to us like that  
yes  
so that's the way it was given to us and we say it, we can't say it differently  
our ancestors said  
our ancestors said that evil spirits  
they would call evil spirits  
dörbong they say  
another word that is the same is called  
dirbong*

*it's an evil nighttime spirit  
a spirit that walks in the night  
we call it dörbong dirbong*

Gilberto Gamarra is a cheerful, patient, generous grandfather who mostly stays to himself, and was the first willing to let me record him with audio and video in 2011. His older brother Antonio Gamarra was the main informant to SIL linguists since the 70s and they developed a strong friendship. Over the years Gilberto has shared several examples of profound words that were difrasismos, as well as fixed expressions which were just as important. One thing that always stuck is the way he talked about his late father Felipe Gamarra. He says his father was an artist. For example, if there was a visitor in the house who had spent some hours there, upon the visitor leaving, Felipe would imitate the visitor so precisely that it would cause satisfactory laughter. He had the ability to imitate nature. But Gilberto makes a distinction between that type of art and the art of profound words. Other examples he has given of profound words are fixed expressions that his elders would use that are no longer common today. Another one of Gilbert's observations that has stuck with me was one time when he was trying to explain that it does not seem unusual that the Naso language has concepts that are constructed with two words which mean the same thing. He explained that it was wrong of the SIL missionaries, when they were gathering lexicon and their definitions for a dictionary, to only focus on terms that were composed of a single word, and that they did not include concepts that were made up of more than one word. Gilberto expressed that he thought this was wrong because not only Naso but other local languages like Guari Guari and Ngäbere and even English have terms that are made up of two words, such as the word Guari Guari which itself is made up of two words, and in the English *bye bye*. He was happy to talk about *difrasismos* because they represented a part of Naso language that had not been considered by the missionaries. He seems to be against the strict idea of one-to-one form to meaning correspondence.

### 6.3.1.6 Rosa Gamarra

llang sik sro sik e  
tjlabga kong ga le eni  
llang sik sro sik e  
tjlökwo e naso tjlabgaga tjlë pjök pjök e  
tjlapgaga tek borwa tjlabgaga tek omgo borwa toï borwa tjër borwa kjökkë borwa tjëtë  
ega e bamgo pjlor kalëkong mas mas anmoyo tjlabga e tjlë lok pjök  
llëbo uun ga le pjök  
dbur llë ga e le pjök  
tjlökwo le pjök  
entonces llang sik sro sik  
e tjlë ga kjwozirga go shko llang jūga  
sro bebi  
tjlabgaga tjlë ga le pjök  
tjlë ga pjây ïge ka llëm llëme pjây mitewa migbowa obi pjây lanma kre woyde  
pjây këri llëm obi  
këri le tjlabgagarë le li tjlökwo keru e  
oba öötong ya këgëe öötong ba ïge edad ya para llë ga bo ga ya está de cosecha lëy wleni  
tjlë ga koshemi pjây äär kërige llëme pjây mitewa obi ga pjây lanma kre woyde ega  
pjây woydemi ga to löng llang sik sro sikde le li  
pjây to teng mitewa ya ga pjây wapga tjok ya pjây löng swlo pjây wapga pjlara pjây wapga pjök  
wapga mya  
pjây löng bomi wapga e llami jekong sore jekong  
pjây to teng songno sro sik llang sik  
era bomi shwong li goshiko srogo llang eni le  
sro sik llang sik  
lanyo tjlökwoyo e kjishko

llang sik sro sik is  
*our ancestors would say that*  
llang sik sro sik is  
*it's a Naso word, our ancestors would talk by two, two*  
*our ancestors from way back, our own grandparents, grandfathers, grandmothers,*  
*because before, on the other side, way, way back, our ancestors talked in twos*  
*they would talk in pairs for everything*  
*for money they would talk in pairs*  
*they would say words in pairs*  
so, llang sik sro sik  
*they say that young children defecate on themselves*  
*urinate also*  
*our ancestors would say it in pairs*  
*they would say, "don't you have any sense? you are still young, and you want a husband?*  
*you aren't ripe for that"*  
këri as our our ancestros said the word këri  
*it's when people are mature, when they are at a ripe age to procreate*  
*so they would say "wait, you aren't ripe yet, you are still young, why do you want a husband?"*

*do you want to go around with feces and excrement?”, they would say  
 “you are still young and already you want to be pregnant and have one child, two children,  
 three children?  
 you’ll be with children that are defecating everywhere  
 poor you, you are going around sro sik llang sik  
 and on your clothes you have feces and urine” they say  
 sro sik llang sik  
 they say those words that conversation for that reason*

Rosa Gamarra is a daughter of Gilberto Gamarra who lives with her father. She is very friendly, outgoing, and expressive. Rosa has a different point of view from others I have consulted. As a daughter of knowledgeable parents, her view is that they would often use profound words to function as words of caution or reprimand.

### **6.3.1.7 Yoselin Sánchez**

*tjlōkwo rong es como decir palabras así este difícil  
 o cosas como se llama este o decir algunas palabras que tu no puedes pronunciar  
 como algunas palabras que dice mi abuelo  
 que yo no entiendo qué es lo que está diciendo*

*profound words are like words that are difficult  
 like, how can I explain, it’s like saying words you can’t pronounce  
 like some words that my grandfather says,  
 that I don’t understand what he’s saying*

Yoselin is a seventeen-year-old who is more dominant in Spanish than Naso, and is a granddaughter of Hector Torres. Her insights show that young people also have productive intuitions and imaginations about profound words. She likewise has a similar concept of the meaning of profound words as elders do—they are words which are rarely used, and are attributed to ancestral speech. However, the examples she cites are words that are common in the everyday speech of adults, such as the common word for house, or tapir for example. This shows that the lexical class of profound words varies between speakers and depends on each person’s use of the Naso language and the words which they do not commonly use. Yoselin, who is learning English

in a private school, also explains that English has several profound words, by virtue of the fact that they are obscure and hard to understand, like Naso profound words.

Although I initially thought there was a positive correlation between older age and knowledge of profound words, since their ancestral association is highlighted, Yoselin shows this is not the case, because she shows very strong intuitions about what profound words are and what they mean to her. And effectively, there are plenty of elderly and older Nasos who say they don't have knowledge of profound words, even though they are otherwise completely fluent in the referential language and have many other types of cultural skills and knowledge.

### 6.3.1.8 *Enoc Sánchez*

Tjlökwo rong e llë lër como que este tjlabga le yë tjlëno ga pja sök na ga pja tjlë ga  
bop tjlokwo rong lëp li ga tjawa om miyde llëm  
Tjawa beno sorë llë kjagrokëy ëngkong ga kjagrokëy llë lara eni ga  
E om miyde llëm  
Porque tjawa beno löng e llë le miydëp llëm kupke jã  
Porque pja kojono shäng pja karga sök bop tjlökwo rong lëp yë  
pja bet shäng eni  
pero entonces borwa toy lërwa ga tjawa ya pja om miydëy kjwöbö  
pero oba twe oblë ga e ommiyde llëm  
kjagrokëy bopkong e llë layde le  
porque tjlökwo ëre e om le  
español dik ga siwaga ya miyde tjan pja omle eni  
dena rong li naso ï ingles le e  
por lo menos pja ra om miyde pero ya pja oppino kjwöböso ya  
siwaga twe shto oblë ga naso leba kuga llëm  
bor parte boteya e tjlökwo rong e lëy wlo ga e om miydë wleni ga laga erë

*What are profound words? I say that that, how ancestors talk, or if you are talking here  
you are using your profound words and we aren't going to know what they are  
We are going to be like what? Asking ourselves what did she say, wondering  
It's what we don't understand ourselves  
Because we are totally lost, we don't understand, or we just learned it now  
Because you grow up and you are used to something, your own profound words  
so you're lost  
so our language, what we say, well, you already know a few words  
but other foreigners don't understand them  
we ask, you're like, what are they saying?  
because they speak that language themselves  
it's like Spanish, the Panamanians, you already know, how they speak*

*like before, profound words like Naso and English, you know at least you know those languages because you have learned some but other Spanish people who come here, if you talk in Naso to them they don't understand in my view, the only people who understand profound words are the speakers themselves*

Enoc Sánchez works in construction and sells handicrafts made out of wood. He is an agile, engaged, and lively converser. His understanding of profound words, as shown in the quote above, shows that profound words are not limited to the Naso language. While he agrees that they are words that are not understood, this generalization broadly applies to different ages and people of different linguistic backgrounds. The very fact that people speak different languages means that they will have ‘profound words’ in their repertoire that others do not understand.

### **6.3.1.9 Verbal art team technicians**

In January 2016, Alexis Santana, Miriam Aguilar, and Daniel Villagra signed to be the technicians on the Verbal Art team on the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia project. Each of them are in their late 30s-40s, and each are well-versed language experts in different ways. As detailed earlier in Chapter 5, Daniel Villagra is considered to be one of the most popular Naso entertainers and artists. Miriam Aguilar, as far as I know, is the only Naso to date who has pursued an education in Spanish literature and linguistics at the University of Panamá in Changuinola. She has taken Spanish literature classes and even classes in phonetics and syntax. She is well respected for her educational achievements by Nasos, and is currently married to the present Naso King, Alexis Santana, who is proud to talk about her intelligence. Miriam is also a granddaughter of Celestina Bonilla, and for this reason was excited to work on the Verbal Art team and to go through recordings I had made of her grandmother. King Alexis Santana, besides being a skilled political orator, is a gifted joke-teller, and he enjoys making people laugh daily.

When Alexis, Miriam, and Daniel began their research on profound words for their chapter in the encyclopedia, they knew their methods needed to be different from those of the other groups. Rather than relying on the mentorship of one or two Naso experts, they needed to consult as many

elders as they could. This was because they said that there is no one person who knows all of the profound words or all of Naso culture, instead, every individual has a bit of knowledge to contribute. In each team meeting session they strove to include two elders who could compare and fill in each other's gaps of knowledge when needed. They also developed intuitive methods with which to elicit profound words in context. Rather than directly asking elders to list these words—as I had done in previous recordings they had seen—they asked open-ended questions about traditional practices or rituals, such as the care of a girl undergoing puberty, or the purification rituals surrounding an ancestor's visit to the ancestral Goddess. From these meetings the technicians wrote down and extracted the words which belonged to the class of profound words and put them in the chapter. In their investigation and interviews of elders, they covered a thorough ground of cultural areas. They also consulted the experts of the other teams of Artisanry, Botany, and Songs. As the experts of those teams confirmed, there were several profound words in those other cultural specialties.

Alexis thought it would be a great idea to write down a lexicon of all the words in the Naso language, like a dictionary. I think this format contributed to greater creativity of the technicians. For example, it is true that most of the entries of profound words they wrote in the Verbal Art volume are difrasisms, fixed idioms, and cultural terms. However, many others are examples that I had never heard from my consultants, such as loan words that are clearly from other languages. This is a unique strategy because the far more common strategy in borrowing is calquing. More striking was that they also included words which were formally related with slight differences in meaning, such as verbs which exhibited ablaut because of inflections. Other technicians, upon reading the entries that they had included in their chapter, disagreed that these latter words belonged to the category of profound words, as maintained a more conservative generalization that profound words are necessarily tied to traditional culture. The Verbal Art team pushed the word-entry format and elaborated much on the examples that they chose to include, which are beautifully vivid, detailed, and representative of everyday Naso life and culture.



### 6.3.1.10 *Summary of individual perspectives*

What does it mean to know *tjlōkwo rong*? It seems to be the one of the parts of the Naso language which has most variation in terms of speaker competence. And it doesn't seem to be dependent on fluency in Naso, to a certain extent. It seems that in order to be proficient in the category one needs a bit of cultural knowledge, creativity, and imagination.

Collectively, these individuals show that their competence of profound words includes *difrasismos*, fixed expressions, and cultural terms that are outdated in present-day Naso society. But several individuals who claim not to know profound words also contribute insight by virtue of how they describe their lack of this knowledge. For example, Hector Torres' son once explained to me that he did not know what profound words are, because it depended on what the person using them was using them *for*; in other words, each speaker manipulates the words to give them a unique coloring in a way that only they can understand entirely. In this way, it seems that for Hector's son, using profound words is a skill much like any other Naso craft like weaving baskets, carving a boat, or sewing clothing. It takes knowledge, practice, and interest, and not just anyone is proficient. It is unlike the referential type of Naso language, which is accessible to any Naso speaker, instead, these profound words are words adapted and brought to life through an individual's imagination.

### 6.3.2 Lexico-semantic structural definition

People refer to the language associated with ancestral tradition with the Naso term *tjlōkwo rong*, and the Spanish equivalent *palabras profundas* or *palabras gramaticales*. In English I gloss these as 'profound words', but a free translation 'profound or obscure words, language, or knowledge' is more accurate. Here, *tjlōkwo* is a nominalization of the verb *tjlē* 'to talk', where – *kwo* is a ROUND classifier which often forms inalienable nouns. The word *tjlōkwo* can refer to any of the following: word, language, speech, abstract concept, knowledge, or practice. The word *rong* is an adjective that means 'deep', and it is often used to describe the depths of the night or the depth of a dark pond. In is an attributive property that describes the obscurity, ambiguity,

complexity, and incomprehensibility of the referent, in this case, language. The concept of obscurity is especially important in the explanation of how speakers choose to interpret and categorize lexicon into the profound words category.

In Naso, profound words can be traditional idioms (e.g. *ees kwarago* ‘a measurement from here to another farmland’), doublets (e.g. *ku-wa dbong-wa* ‘a clan of young men’ (*literally*, alligators-DIM tigers-DIM)), or ancestral terms that are no longer common (e.g. *tjënma* ‘a variety of corn seed no longer found’). They say that English also has profound words – these include words that have multiple, seemingly unrelated meanings, or grammatical patterns unfamiliar to Nasos.

Because profound words are densely found in fixed songs and stories, outsiders might be tempted to think that profound words are a delimited set of expressions, of fixed words or authoritative evaluations which restrict the potential and productivity of the class. However, it is crucial to note the enormous variability not only in the *form* of profound words (much more than regular phonetic variation), but also in their interpreted meaning and entextualization. Because of this, it is impossible to quantify or count the number of profound words as a class, as we could do for other closed categories such as function words, or even estimate for nouns or verbs. The number of items in an individual’s repertoire of profound words depends on more than knowledge of their use, but also on a foundational knowledge, or distributed varietal knowledge, of life.

To talk about ‘profound words’ is a complex exercise in imagination and creation, where memories of traditional stories and songs are interwoven with personal experience and the voices of elders, as well as with the evocative sounds of the words themselves, and also a notion of “unordinary speech” as distinct from “ordinary speech”.

### **6.3.3 Humanistic definition**

What is *tjlökwo rong*? As can be interpreted from the individual perspectives quoted earlier, the short answer is, it depends on who you ask. It is similar to asking the question to English

speakers in United States: what is poetry? You may get a variety of responses that range from an honest or ambiguous ‘I don’t know’, or a functional reference to its producers such as ‘poetry is anything that poets write’, while others may give a definition based on formal parameters such as ‘a haiku, or English pentameter’, and yet others an ethical and humanistic evaluation such as W.H. Auden in “the primary function of poetry, as of all the arts, is to make us more aware of ourselves and the world around us”. Yet others might even challenge the very definition of poetry by offering representations that they *feel* poetically for themselves, whether or not it is even addressed or performed towards the public world outside of their own sensibilities. And we can’t forget a political or rhetorical effect some poets or activists use as a vehicle for social change.

Such is also the case with Naso profound words. When I ask the question “what is *tjłokwo rong?*”, many Nasos may lightly or heavily say “I don’t know”, others might remark “profound words are words that our ancestors used”, others may give examples of formally diphthastic pairs, and a humble elder may contribute powerful hints such as “people who knew how to use profound words illuminated the very essence of a person”. Another individual may create examples that other evaluators do not consider to be profound words at all.

But it is no surprise that poetry in English, or Spanish, are not the same as profound words in Naso. Nasos are not expected to compare Spanish *poesia* with Naso profound words. In Naso communities, the concept of *poesia* is very restricted, it mostly is understood as the poems that schoolchildren are made to write to their mothers on Mother’s Day, with verses such as “*mamita eres bonita como una flor*”. Here I am reminded of the words of Joel Sherzer in “no Kuna has ever won the Nobel Peace prize, and none ever will”. But the least we can do in the description of a language’s verbal art is to give voice and recognition to the different ontologies of poetry that humans have created around the world. It is becoming more of a possibility that literary works of art produced by indigenous people could one day enter the internationally recognized canon of art, which is slowly showing signs of diversifying, as evidenced by the most recent Pulitzer Prize awardee (in April of 2018), the African American hip hop artist Kendrick Lamar.

One goal of the present chapter is to account for the variety of competences of Nasos of profound words. I do not think there is an ideal speaker model who uses profound words, but in this chapter I work to illuminate the characteristic Naso principles which are exploited for poetic effect. The very fact that there are a plurality of ways in which profound words have meaning, coherence as a class, and are used in an individual's repertoire suggests that they are a category very much alive and productive in the language. Profound words are changing, they have movement and variability, and people think through them. They are a tool of the imagination.

#### **6.3.4 Current social use**

Based on my observations and conversations with Nasos, Nasos use nostalgic mood:

1. To scold younger generations about how they are not doing things right
2. To link Naso identity to *value*
3. To perform indigenous identity and wisdom to foreigners

These generalizations make the nostalgic mood in Naso not so much different as we would expect of other societies. Older speakers in a given society typically are resistant to change due to conservatism (Dorian 1994). Linguistic purity is common because when people notice language mixing they think it takes away from originality or tradition. Finally, foreigners and tourists are usually interested in the 'old' and ancient parts of indigenous languages, perhaps because they are interested in their own "historical past".

But there is one more use of nostalgic language in Naso which I think is more unique than common across societies. This is the extent to which ecological, cosmological, and linguistic diversity is signaled, where I use the common term diversity to stand for the concept I discuss as distributed varietal knowledge in Chapter 2. On the surface, it may look like this is the opposite of the ideology of language purity. However, it is distinct. Diversity is linked to the ideology that signals that there is a nostalgia for the time where Nasos were more numerous in numbers, and

their clans were more distinct and specialized and society was different from now where clans have intermarried. So the fourth use of the nostalgic mood is to allude to the diversity which they tend to say is no longer productive.

#### 4. Allude to the diversity of a bygone era

In summary, a large part of the ideology of ‘profound words’ is that they are **words that are no longer common, but were once more common, and today hold more importance**. In foreshadowing of the case studies to come, what may be common for one generation may be uncommon for the next.

### 6.3.5 Everyday use of profound words

While all Nasos agree and insist that profound words are rarely used in the present, or more accurately, not used at all in the present, it is possible to see words that resemble the formal properties of profound words, and are used in everyday life. Some of these words include *jekong kegong* ‘in the future’, *owa yawa* ‘very ugly’, *sore bore* ‘however’, and *aga yaga* ‘incompetently’. In other words, these profound words are conventionalized, they leak into the everyday usage of language. However, they are **not** interpreted as profound words because they are semantically decomposable, and, they do not index an ancestral semantics since the concepts have a general flavor. This shows that the feeling of obscurity is central to profound words. Some examples of conventionalized profound words are given below in (320-321).

(320) *eni kjīshko ga eeri ga jeg-ong kegong eeri ga pjang-e...*  
 so because-LOC CONN today CONN go-PFV further today CONN POSIT:hang-STAT  
 ‘because of that today will continue into the future, today is still alive’

(321) *domer ter shäng kjl-ara owa yawa kjapkwo drete*  
 man come.down POSIT:stand CL.long-one bad ? lip none  
 ‘a man came along with a horrible physique, with no lips’

These examples show that profound words must be metalinguistically and semantically opaque in order to be pragmatically obscure and 'count' as profound words. One younger speaker, Carlos Magno Torres, explains exactly this point – he says that a word is 'profound' only if it is semantically obscure to him. Due to this, he judges the forms in (320-321) above as not profound.

## 6.4 LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF PROFOUND WORDS

In this section I analyze how profound words that are formed like *difrasismos* go beyond the minimal requirements of parallelism and distort grammar. I suggest the distortion is related to the function and meaning of profound words. While profound words may also include idioms and rare lexicon, I focus on explaining the *difrasismos* because they have particular constraints not found in other parts of the language.

### 6.4.1 The grammar of profound words

“bagöng shagong le li  
bagöng li bisabuelo  
kwe ba bagöng, kwe ba shagöng li ba tjërga  
bagöng shagöng  
tjlapga tjlëso le yë  
llë lara jong ga  
kjawara kuya ga e kowe ga buk da buk e  
kjwe bop bagöng shagöng le ïgopde le tjlapga”

*bagöng shagong*, this they say  
*bagöng* is grandparent  
that’s his *bagöng*, that’s his *shagöng*, the latter is the grandchild  
*bagöng shagong*  
the way the ancestros talked  
what they would say  
they would hear one and call it then the same, the same  
that’s your *bagöng shagöng* they say, did you see?, say the ancestros

-Celestina Bonilla

The production and comprehension of profound words is different from the production and comprehension of ordinary, non-profound words, where the profound words follow processes such as stretching, violating, and constraining the grammar beyond regular language activity.

The intuition for generating profound words is different from creating other phrases. My analysis explains why the production and comprehension consistently takes significantly longer in on-line processing than that of non-profound words. In the future it would be useful to conduct experimental or psycholinguistics experiments to test whether the statistics follow this intuition.

In production of *difrasismo* profound words, first, two words are selected from the lexical entries in the mental lexicon. As mentioned in Chapter 3 on Naso linguistics, Naso is an isolating language and has relatively strict delimitations of words, so selection of words is not too difficult. What is difficult is determining *which* words to select. The words that are selected must have an underlying socio-cultural semantic link, such as those which are diagrammed in the following section on the semantico-cultural network of diphrastric profound words.

Second, those two words which are selected are manipulated phrasally through identical grammatical adornment so that they share properties with each other. This is the manipulation that renders them psychologically identical in the minds of speakers, which has the intention of *seducing* the interpreter into meaningful convergences or “convoking” (see Webster 2015).

The formal properties of profound words confirm this bi-partite process is likely, as can be evidenced by the unviolated general tendencies described below in (323) and formalized in the scheme in (322), which include a constrained constituent prosodic pattern, lexical pattern, rhyme, and stress patterns. The ordinary lexicon does not adhere to the phonological constraints to which profound words adhere.

(322) Profound words scheme:

<i>Constituent</i>	A		B	
<i>Lexical pattern</i>	FOCUS	FRAME	FOCUS	FRAME
<i>Prosodic pattern</i>	σ	σ	σ	σ
<i>Rhyme</i>	a	x	b	x
<i>Stress</i>	x	.	x	.
	[['ku-wa]		['dbɔŋ-wa]]	
	alligator-DIM		tiger-DIM	
	‘CLAN OF WARRIOR MEN’			

The different constraints adhered to that are diagrammed in (322) above can be explained in the following in (323).



(323) Constraints on ‘profound words’:

<i>Constituent:</i>	Minimum two, maximum three with no intervening particle
<i>Lexical pattern:</i>	The FRAME is the repeating material that defines the whole construction, while the FOCUS is the alternating and contrasting material occurring in a repeating syntagmatic slot defined by the FRAME.
<i>Prosodic pattern:</i>	(identity constraint) both constituents must have the same number of syllables
<i>Rhyme:</i>	(identity constraint) overlapping sounds or natural classes in A and B
<i>Stress:</i>	(identity constraint) overlapping stress in A and B

The **constituency** constraint refers to the generalization that in profound words, there must be at least two *distinct* (non-compoundable) constituents A and B. Approximately 98% of profound words are composed of two words as in (324), and 2% are composed of three words as in (325). Profound words that are not diphrastic include idioms, and they do not follow any of the other constraints on profound words either.

(324)

A	B
[[dbur-ε]	[na-ε]]
silver-DEM	gold-DEM
‘MONEY’	

(325)

A	B	C
[[p.lu-ʃkə]	[wə-ʃku]	[ka-ʃkə]]
heart-LOC	liver-LOC	head-LOC
‘EVERYWHERE’		

An explanation for the tendency to reduce profound words to two rather than to one, three, or four constituents is most likely aesthetic<sup>22</sup>. Alternatively, it may be explained by a cognitive process, where memory is better for shorter forms, and because parallelism occurs across constituents, the most economic profound word is composed of two words.

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<sup>22</sup> As suggested by Tony Woodbury.

The constraint *lexical pattern* has to do with the pattern of *difrasismos* theorized by Cruz (2014) for Chatino, where a difrasismo consists of a FOCUS particle, which is a unique variable lexical root, the A and B in my notation, and a FRAME, which is a recurrent lexical variable, the x in my notation. No external constituent that is not a FOCUS or FRAME particle may intervene in profound word difrasismos. Tony Woodbury notices that Mesoamerican difrasismos, such as those found in Chatino, tend to have longer FRAMES that can be more extemporaneous, and identifies Naso difrasismos as “boiled down” from the widespread Mesoamerican pattern, in noticing that they follow many more constraints at different levels.

The vast majority of profound words consist of the rhyme in the form a-x b-x, where the FOCUS immediately precedes the FRAME in each constituent, as in the canonical example below in (326).

- (326)
- |                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| A                | B           |
| a    x           | b    x      |
|                  |             |
| [['sim-ga]       | ['dbɔŋ-ga]] |
| older.brother-PL | tiger-PL    |
| ‘MALE FAMILY’    |             |

However, there are alternate orderings. The following show some different ways in which the scheme of Naso profound words can vary. In particular, notice how in (327) there is no -x component, in (328) there are -x components longer than one morpheme, and in (329) the FRAME comes before the FOCUS. While there are many examples of patterns such as (327), (328-329) are extremely rare.

- (327)
- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| A       | B       |
| a-∅     | b-∅     |
|         |         |
| [['luk] | ['mɛk]] |
| cedar   | coconut |
| ‘WOOD’  |         |

(328)

A		B
a x x x		b x x x
[['kʰɔk-ga 'sɛ-'rɛ]		['di-ga 'sɛ-'rɛ]]
land-CONN late-NOM		water-CONN late-NOM
‘TIME BETWEEN EVENING AND MIDNIGHT’		

(329)

A		B
x x a x		x x b x
[['dluŋ-ga 'trɛk-'lɪ]		['dluŋ-ga 'ʃkɔk-'lɪ]]
salt-CONN between-side		salt-CONN break-side
‘ISLAND’		

The data in (327) is a problematic pattern because there is no overt parallelism. However, the next section on *Parallel equivalences* will show how there is covert parallelism in such forms.

The **identity** constraints refer to the parallel equivalences between the A and B words, which repeat at several different levels including constituent length (number of syllables), stress, and *rhyme*.

## 6.4.2 Syntax

### 6.4.2.1 Distribution

Naso diphrastic profound words usually distribute as noun phrase constituents, as shown in examples (331-337). As described in Chapter 3 on Naso linguistics, the Naso noun phrase order of constituents is the following in (330), where the ellipsis indicates it may be interrupted by a verb complex.

(330) [PRO NOUN Adj DEM TOP...(VP)...CL NUM]<sub>NP</sub>

In (331) below, the profound word in bold *ɔʋs.la fɪns.la* ‘SERPENT SPIRIT’ functions as the possessed noun of a possessor *ba* ‘third person’.

(331) ba [ɔ-s.la] [fɪn-s.la] li su-r-a ja-r-a sɔk di triko  
 3 snake-? ? TOP take-PFV-3 put-PFV-3 POS.sit water between  
 ‘(they) took their SERPENT and put it in the water’ [tfr004, 83min]

In (332-333) below, the profound words *irjo sw.lenjo* ‘FERMENTED DRINKS’ and *k<sup>h</sup>ogo digo* ‘HEART OF PALM’ function as the main noun complement to the verb phrase.

(332) [ʔi-rjo sw.len-jo] la-jdɪ e la-jdɪ ku-zoŋ heaŋ  
**yucca-liquid** **?-liquid** say-OPT DEM say-OPT listen-IMPER *heang*  
 ‘they say FERMENTED DRINKS they say, listen, heang’ (Yginkë Döröshko)

(333) k<sup>h</sup>orga inge roj di ʒɪ kojo ɪŋ kowɪ eni [k<sup>h</sup>o-go di-go]  
 leaf well inside-LOC water thing seems yes call so **tree-COM** **water-COM**  
 ‘it seems like a leaf that has water inside it they call it HEART OF PALM’ [tfr004, 37m35s]

In (334) below, the profound word *laga jaga* ‘GOSSIPERS’ functions as a nominal predicate.

(334) *ella decia* [la-ga] [ja-ga] oba obɪ-rɪ *pero* p<sup>h</sup>äy-dɪ ʒime  
 she said **say-AGENT** **?-AGENT** people other but 2PL-ERG NEG  
 ‘she would say “others can be GOSSIPERS, but not you” [tfr006, 54m14s]

Rarely, profound words may also distribute like adverbs, as in (335), or as adjectives, as in (336).

(335) *tja* *ëp* *dgo-no* [ä-ga] *yü-ga* *geniyo* *ga* *pjitong-e*  
 1SG corn plant-PFV **FRUST-NOM** **?-NOM** but CONN finish-STAT  
 ‘I planted corn HAPHAZARDLY, but it’s done’

(336) *bor* *meke* *öör* *shwong* *tjwļēn* [bayo kjlöyo] *oblē* *oblē-e*  
 IPOSS mother went clothes buy **color** ? different-STAT  
 ‘My mother went to buy clothes of different colors and designs.’

Profound words may take some inflectional morphology including the ergative case marking, and when they do, the derivation occurs at the right edge of the entire profound word, and not at the end of each A and B constituent. This shows that syntactically, the profound word functions as a single syntactic element. For example, below in (337a), the ergative marker *-rē* attaches to the end of the entire profound word form [*dlup-so kjrop-so*], as shown in (337a) and not to each [*dlup-so*] and [*kjrop-so*] individually, as in (337b).

(337)a. *lanyoke ga tjlapga wa-r-a [dlup-so kjrop-so]-rë le eni*  
 converse CONN man eaten-PFV-3A **mountain-ORGN** **ridge-ORGN-ERG** say so  
 ‘they say a MOUNTAIN SPIRIT ate the man’

b. \**lanyoke ga tjlapga wa-r-a [dlup-so]-rë [kjrop-so]-rë le eni*  
 converse CONN man eaten-PFV-3A **mountain-ORGN-ERG** **ridge-ORGN-ERG** say so

#### 6.4.2.2 Clause combination

The productive and ordinary clause combination strategies in the language, coordination and compounding, are generally restricted in profound words, which makes use of both strategies but in a more confined sense.

As discussed in Chapter 3 on Naso linguistics, Naso clauses often combine through asyndesis. This is similar to the way in which Naso profound word constituents A and B combine, through the strategy of coordination, which is apparent because A and B constituents are not hierarchically ordered. However, unlike in the ordinary coordination strategy, profound words cannot take an optional syndetic coordinator. For example, the clause below in (338a) is acceptable, but the clause in (338b) with the syndetic coordinator *ega* ‘and’ is ungrammatical.

(338)a. *yo-lu llgwle-nu =shko ga tjlapga kjwozirga kä shi-ya kun këgong wlo*  
 earthquake-? thunder-?=time CONN man children head pull-3.IMPF grow more PURP  
 ‘when there is an EARTHQUAKE, elders pull children’s heads so they grow taller’

b. \**yo-lu ega llgwle-nu shko ga tjlapga kjwozirga kä shi-ya kun këgong wlo*  
 earthquake-? **and** thunder-? time CONN man children head pull-3.IMPF grow more PURP

#### 6.4.2.3 NP Constituency

Profound words do not entirely adhere to ordinary noun compounding strategies either. Most of the time, speakers are able to switch the order in profound words and create no difference in meaning, as in *kaling dluling* ‘WOMAN’S LONG HEAR OF HAIR’, interchangeable with *dluling kaling* ‘WOMAN’S LONG HEAR OF HAIR’. This provides more evidence that profound words are not like compounds, because compounds are in a hierarchical and restrictive relationship between

constituents, whereas this is not the case in profound words. Furthermore, derivational morphology within subconstituents (a-x) and (b-x) show that whereas ordinary N-N constituents are head-final, in profound words they are *semantically* head-initial. For example, below, the profound word in (339) takes the semantic meaning of the initial noun, whereas in ordinary compounds in (340a-b), the semantic meaning comes from the final noun. This violation is explained by the semantic equality relation between A and B, which takes precedence and stretches the syntactic structure of the profound word.

- (339) [[wole-so] [kare-so]] (N + N) **profound word**  
 [pretty-ORGN] [so.so-ORGN]  
 ‘PRETTY (noun)’
- (340) a. /'kwozɪr-ga 'pɪŋga/ (N + N) non-profound word  
 child-PL **teacher** (>piŋ ‘to teach’ + ga ‘ACTOR’)  
 ‘school teacher’
- b. /'dli 'lik-ga/ (N + N) non-profound word  
 food **cook**-ACTOR  
 ‘chef’

Furthermore, unlike compounds, derivational morphology in profound words is superstructure preserving as shown in (341), where the lexical level pattern is preserved and the external sandhi process is resisted so that non-structure preserving postlexical flapping does not occur<sup>23</sup>. In compounds there is structure preservation, as shown in (342). Structure preservation occurs *within* A and B constituents, but *not across* them. The phonological rule discussed in Chapter 3, flapping of stops in intervocalic position (/d/ → /ɾ/ /V\_V) occurs across morpheme boundaries within the A constituent in (341), but not across A and B constituents, (as demonstrated in 342b).

- (341) A B  
 /dwlas-**de** ʃwe-**re**/
- (342)a. A B  
 /k<sup>h</sup>ok-de **di**-re/

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<sup>23</sup> Thanks to Tony Woodbury for this contribution.

- b.        A        B  
 /k<sup>h</sup>ok-de \*ri-re/

A and B constituents must remain semantically separate, and it appears that they do not follow rules of structure preservation between constituents because the morpho-phonological rules follow their semantic relationship.

### 6.4.3 Parallel equivalences

The pair of constituents in profound words use rhyme or other prosodic equivalences such as a repeated syllable structure in order to create perceived semantic equivalence between the concepts of each lexical word.

#### 6.4.3.1 Syntactic recurrence

The most clear level of repetition is at the syntactic level, where profound words overlap in derivational morphology, the –x component of each constituent A and B. My explanation of this repetition is that profound words exploit derivation (-x) and its recurrence to create semantic obscurity. The –x is usually occupied by nominalizing derivational suffixes, which turns roots into nouns if they are not already nominal. Below in (343) are the common derivational morphemes that attach to roots in profound word constructions.

(343) *Productive nominalizing suffixes* (V, N, Adv, Adj > N)

ACTOR	/-ga/	
CLASSIFIER	/-kwo/~/-ko/~/-klo/	< <i>kwo</i> ‘seed’, <i>ko</i> ‘leaf’, Proto-Isthmic * <i>kdo</i> ‘tree’
ORIGIN	/-so/	< <i>so</i> ‘appearance’
DIMINUTIVE	/-wa/	< <i>wa</i> ‘child’
ABSTRACT	/-yo/	
ENUMERATIVE	/-de/ ~ /-re/	
MASS	/-fo/	< <i>fo</i> ‘meat’
STATE	/-e/	< <i>e</i> ‘that’

These derivational morphemes are interchangeable without changing the meaning of profound words, as can be observed in the semantically equivalent variations below in (344).

(344)	/kjok-x earth-x	di-x/ water-x	‘HOMELAND’
	kjok-yo	di-yo	‘HOMELAND’
	kjok-e	di-e	‘HOMELAND’
	kjok-de	di-re	‘HOMELAND’
	kjok-shko	di-shko	‘HOMELAND’
	kjok-ga löng	di-ga löng	‘HOMELAND’

Otherwise, the derivational repetition is not semantically meaningful, but it is exploited in keeping with the principle of poetic repetitions, where parallelism functions to create greater cohesion and a poetic function, or in other words, the “poeticization of grammar” (Sherzer 1990).

#### 6.4.3.2 *Phonotactic equivalence*

The previous section shows how profound words exploit overt lexico-grammatical repetition to create a poetic effect. However, there is quite a large percentage (~15%) of the diphrastric profound words which do not make use of overt lexical repetition. I argue that these data can also be analyzed as exhibiting prosodic repetition, at the level of phonotactic equivalence or rhyme. The data referred to is illustrated below in (345), where I analyze the repeating –x slot as empty.

- (345) PWs with empty ‘x’ slot (a-∅ b-∅)
- a. [[‘a:-∅][‘ka-∅]]
  - b. [[‘luk-∅][‘mek-∅]]
  - c. [[‘p<sup>h</sup>u-∅][‘jɔŋ-∅]]
  - d. [[‘zbu-∅][‘dlɔ-∅]]
  - e. [[‘fki-∅][‘sɪŋ-∅]]
  - f. [[‘wi-∅][‘kwi-∅]]
  - g. [[‘p<sup>h</sup>ɪj-∅][‘jaj-∅]]
  - h. [[‘jbu-∅][‘soŋ-∅]]
  - i. [[‘dbur-∅][‘na-∅]]
  - j. [[‘duk-∅][‘ran-∅]]

It is apparent that several of the A and B constituents in (345a-j) above overlap in syllable structure. For example, a CVC equivalence is shown in (345b, g, and j), a CCV equivalence is in



(345d). Thus, there are four matches out of ten tokens, which are randomly selected. In Chapter 3, eleven different syllable templates are described, so the probability of matching four out of ten times is likely to be significant, but further statistical analysis is required. The match in phonotactic constraints is one way in which a parallel equivalence is created between A and B constituents.

Furthermore, there is overlap in natural classes in several of the examples in (345a-j) above, which are bolded. For example, there is an overlap in coronals (345i,j), sibilants (345e), and *round, back vowels* (345c,d). As was shown previously in Chapter 4 on speech play and verbal art resources, the natural classes of sibilants (Section 4.2.3) and round back vowels (Section 4.2.2.5) are symbolically significant, which may have to do with their recurrence in the profound words above. However, again, it should be determined whether this equivalence is significant statistically or whether it could be due to chance.

### 6.4.3.3 Rhyme

There is a general tendency in profound words to match the two constituents A and B from the end towards the front, where it is most likely that the coda will match, and sometimes the nucleus as well, and yet less common for the onset of the final syllable to match. In general terms, at times rhyme can be characterized as slant rhyme, at other times as assonance, and other times as simply alliterative matching of the final coda. The following estimates of rhyming statistics in (346) come from a sample of 207 profound words. They measure the phonological overlap in the FOCUS (A and B) root constituents, without the –x suffix.

- (346) Onset: (45%) A and B roots share phonological similarities in onsets  
(mostly stop and sibilant similarity)
- Nucleus: (47%) A and B roots share phonological similarities in their nucleus  
(mostly [+back] and [+round])
- Coda (66%) A and B roots share phonological similarities in their coda  
(including those which end in no coda)

Taking into account the –x morpheme on a-x b-x diphrastic profound words, 82% of the derivational morphology of the two profound word constituents have *identical* derivational components. 11% have lexicalized derivational and thus it cannot be determinable whether there was a historical derivational morpheme that was equivalent in both constituents.

Some profound words work by the use of slant rhyme instead of direct derivational equivalences. These are exemplified below. Their morpho-phonological alternations can be explained based on matching the underlying grammatical category rather than the specified category in the surface agreement, a phenomenon well described by Kiparsky (1968, 1972).

- |       |    |                   |                  |                          |   |                   |
|-------|----|-------------------|------------------|--------------------------|---|-------------------|
| (347) | a. | pəŋ- <b>gwə</b>   | joŋ- <b>g.lə</b> | /-gwə/ ‘CL:ROUND’        | ~ | /-g.lə/ ‘CL.LONG’ |
|       | b. | sə- <b>kʊ</b>     | fwlð- <b>gwə</b> | /-kʊ/ ‘CL.SOFT’          | ~ | /-gwə/ ‘CL:ROUND’ |
|       | c. | dbuk- <b>k.lə</b> | lɔ- <b>g.lə</b>  | /-k.lə/ ‘CL.LONG’        | ~ | /-g.lə/ ‘CL.LONG’ |
|       | d. | u- <b>həŋ</b>     | kʰo- <b>ləŋ</b>  | /-həŋ/ ‘POSIT:STAND.OBJ’ | ~ | /-ləŋ/ ‘POSIT:PL’ |
|       | e. | kʰək- <b>de</b>   | di- <b>re</b>    | /-de/ ‘ENUM’             | ~ | /-re/ ‘ENUM’      |

The function of phonological similarity or rhyme, like phonotactic equivalence, is to create semantic identity between each profound word constituent A and B. This property is at tension with the property of hypervariance, described in the following section, which is related to the problem in phonology of contrastiveness and efficiency.

#### 6.4.4 Phonemic hypervariation

Naso profound words have a lot of phonological and morphological variation, so much that it can be called *hypervariation*. Hypervariation is a common feature of play languages (see Vaux 2011).

One type of hypervariation occurs in phoneme segments which are otherwise contrastive, but in profound words they vary without a change in meaning. This variation is found within single speakers, across speakers, and across situations. It does not appear to be semantically motivated, and thus can be called free hypervariation. The alternations can be generalized as free variation between phonological natural classes such as obstruents (/k/ ~ /s/ ~ /p/ in (348)), vowels (/e/ ~ /i/ in (349) and /õ/ ~ /u/ ~ /o/ in (350)), and liquids (/r/ ~ /l/ in (350)).

(348) /k/ ~ /s/ ~ /p/

- a. [i-rjo           kwle-rjo] ~ [i-rjo           swle-jo]  
 yuca-liquid calabash-liquid yuca-liquid calabash-liquid  
 ‘FERMENTED DRINKS’
- b. [mak-soŋ       jap-soŋ] ~ [mak-soŋ       jak-soŋ]  
 INABIL-poor ?-poor INABIL-poor ?-poor  
 ‘USELESS’

(349) /e/ ~ /i/

- [kjok-se       bop-se] ~ [kjok-si       bop-si]  
 knee-?       ?-? knee-?       ?-?  
 ‘TIRED FEET’

(350) /r/ ~ /l/; /õ/ ~ /u/ ~ /o/

- [asde   drõsde] ~ [asde   dlosde] ~ [asde   dlusde]  
 ?       ?       ?       ?       ?       ?  
 ‘FOREIGNERS’

This phonological variation above in the profound words in (349-350) overlaps with the natural class categories which are found to be in free variation in ideophones (approximants, vowels), described in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2.6). The function of phonemic variation seems to be to frustrate directness of meaning, where profound words are used creatively. One effect of obscuring profound word roots may be to create a greater distance in time and space between semantic reference and the speaker, who lives in the present and is not attached to the ancestral life.

#### 6.4.5 Semantico-cultural network of diphrastic profound words

Profound words that use the strategy of diphrastic parallelism describe the social, cultural, linguistic, and ecological characteristics and diversity in local life – where life forms include human, flora, fauna, and landscape. They *name* and *represent* the *conditions* and *patterns* of diversity in life to which Nasos attend. For example, they name the different Naso clans, non-Naso races, animal species and their characteristics, plant species, evil spirits, mythical place names and

characters, human characteristics, cultural rituals and the delimitations of time and space. The recurrent semantic themes show that Naso cosmology is built from the local ecology of living forms and their material and immaterial dwellings. I interpret profound words as overlapping in particular cultural domains of traditional practices and knowledge.

In the semantic network diagrammed below, I map the general cultural domains that are signified with the profound words. Each line represents whenever a lexical constituent of a profound word is used in more than one cultural domain. The line represents the link between how that word gets used in multiple cultural domains, and interprets those domains as being related by virtue of sharing lexical content. In each cultural domain box below I include in parentheses some illustrative examples. The network analysis is partly inspired by Fox's semantic analysis of Austronesian double words (1971, 2014).

For example, I interpret the word *kjokyo diyo* 'homeland, birthplace', as a profound word that culturally categorizes into **Naso dwelling place names** in the diagram below. In that profound word is the root *di* 'water', a root which also occurs in other profound words; some of these profound words include *kjolong diliong* 'clans from Kjolong and Dilong', which I categorize as belonging to **Naso clans**, as well as *pjlu di sēng di* 'creeks where *pjlu* and *sēng* bird species live', the latter which I categorize as **Ecosystem kingdom**. The cultural domains that are bolded are a product of my own interpretation based on analysis of 'profound words' within the cultural and traditional knowledge I have gathered from everyday life, myths, and Nasos' own interpretations. However, I recognize that they are taxonomic and most likely distorted by my own way of understanding the semantic relationships between Naso concepts. However, I think they are still useful because they show how Naso-particular concepts, such as clans, cardinal directions, and different life forms are intricately linked within a cultural sphere.

Furthermore, if we interpret the chart in Figure 16 below, it may be the case that the cultural domains boxed below that have the most lines linked to them have most cultural weight or saliency. For example, it can be noticed that the domain **Naso clans** has most lines, (10), where **Rituals** follows closely behind at 8. This would confirm my observations that clans and rituals are two

traditional domains that are highly integrated into Naso ideologies about their culture and language, as alluded to throughout the chapters. However, the number of lines could also be due to the way I have taxonomized the data. Future work on the semantico-cultural network will include a more precise way of illustrating number of examples of linkages between different domains, for example, through darker lines.

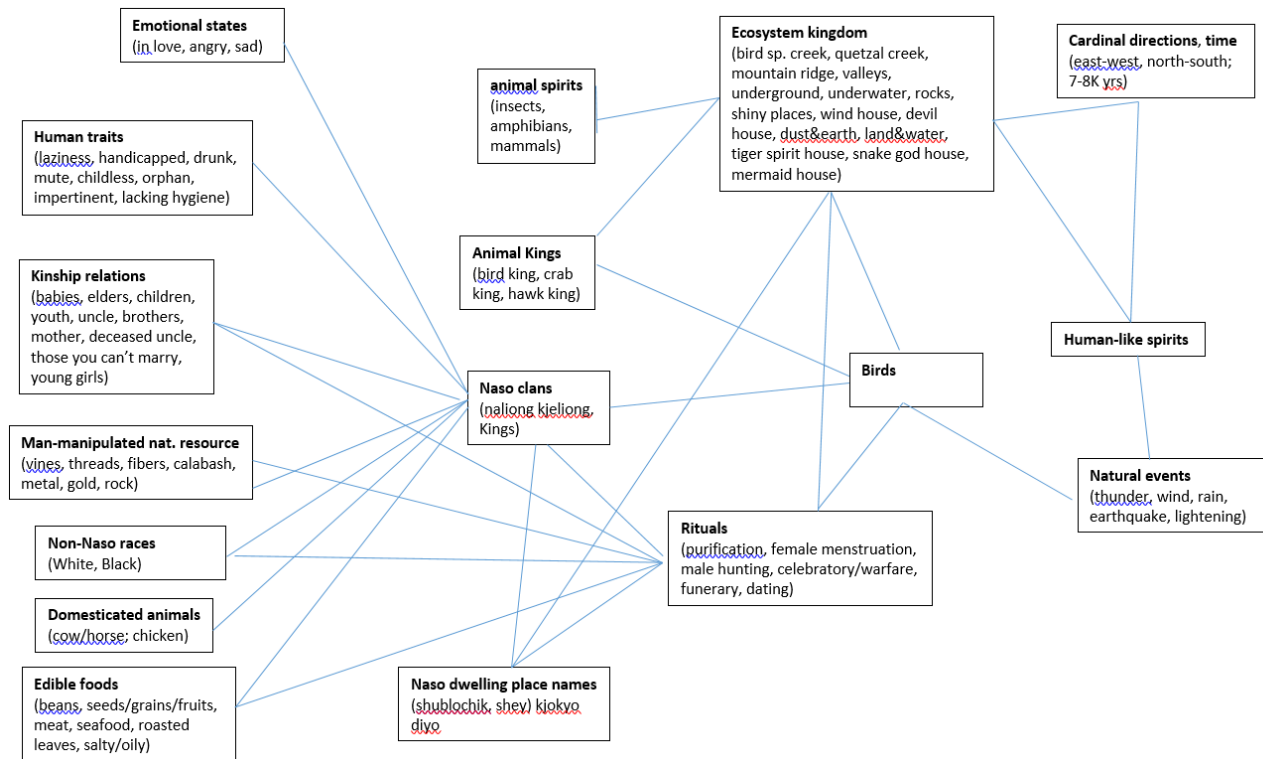


Figure 17. Semantico-cultural network of profound words

I have laid out the boxed cultural domains such that they proceed in an order from outer-most to inner-most, where the more basic components of profound words are at the outer borders, and the most complex and interrelated cultural concepts are near the center because they have most linkages. There is a difference between the concepts I placed on the left edge and the concepts I placed on the right edge. On the left edge I place the cultural domains (**Emotional states, Human traits, Kinship relations, Man-manipulated natural resources, Non-Naso races, Domesticated animals, Edible foods**) which I understand as the basic traits of the natural world

such as people and other living forms such as plants or animals. At the right edge I place the non-human life forms and forces that are agentive (**Cardinal directions and time, Human-like spirits, Natural events**). The more complex domains are placed in the center of the network, these include other spiritual planes, such as ecosystems and the beings that inhabit them; here it is important to recall that cosmologically, Naso spirituality includes eight different planes of existence in a hierarchy of spirits in various directions of complexity that imitate the complex chains of ecosystems and the particular species that rule them (kings) in local nooks of the natural environment.

## **6.5 CASE STUDIES OF PROFOUND WORDS**

The following case studies are taken from a variety of discussions between Nasos including work teams (the Verbal Art team), nuclear families (an elderly mother and her two adult daughters; a couple and their teenage daughter) as well as their literary products (Verbal Art volume of the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia).

### **6.5.1 Pace of nostalgic conversation**

The following case study shows the natural flow of discussion about nostalgia, and the pace and depth at which people talk about profound words. The data analyzed in this section is the broad transcript of the first team meeting of the Verbal Art team, on February 26, 2016.

The Verbal Art team's task was to elicit *tjłōkwo rong* 'profound words'. They did so in a very broad way. Their team meetings were between 3-4 technicians and 1-2 elders. There were five meetings in total, each at least one hour long. The meetings were not strictly structured in terms of content; the technicians led the discussions by asking questions about particular words or concepts that they had heard and felt to be verbal art, and the elders answered their questions and also volunteered related concepts.

In some ways, this recording event is the least dependent on the one-hour structure of the elicitation frame. In the meetings after this first one, the participants become more comfortable in

adhering to the one-hour frame. In other words, they are less aware and anxious of the passing of time in this first meeting.



Figure 18. Verbal Art team meeting #1. *From left to right:* Miriam Aguilar, Alexis Santana, Enrique Santana, Valentin Santana, Daniel Villagra, and Isaí Gonzalez.

In my analysis of this recording, I take a wide angle in order to mimic the strategy of the technicians in directing the conversation, and I highlight the places in the discussion where the participants interpret particular lexicon as profound words. Below in Table 14, the profound words are bracketed ([ ]), and the respective timepoints are shaded in gray. The way I know that the annotated words are profound words is because the participants call attention to the message, form, and content of the particular words or concepts. Furthermore, Miriam Aguilar, on the left, can be seen taking notes of the profound words. Additionally, the technicians' profound words were written into their chapter on Verbal Art in the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Rough Description/Content</b>	<b>General Topic</b>	<b>Speaker(s)</b>
(Part I) 0m8s	today we are here to talk about verbal art	metacommentary	Daniel
3m46s	I am king and worried we aren't speaking Naso anymore	language endangerment and shift	Alexis
8m4s	yes we are losing Naso	language endangerment and shift	Valentin
9m8s	so what can we do about this?	language endangerment and shift	Alexis
10m30s	we have to teach Naso to our kids	language endangerment and shift	Valentin
9m52s	we have had this on our mind for a while but lack resources; foreigners tell us we should value are language but there are some words that are hard for us because they are in English like [rakun] [shəng aa]	language endangerment and shift	Daniel
11m4s	[rakun] [shəng aa]	language endangerment and shift	Valentin; Daniel; Miriam
11m36s	that's why today we are recording the information, we are writing the book to preserve profound words	language endangerment and shift	Daniel
12m58s	why is the community named San San Dludi?	landmarks, place names	Daniel
13m28s	a female evil spirit called Dlu	landmarks, place names	Valentin
14m38	we used to live in different areas of the mountain, what were our clans there like?	ecological diversity	Alexis
16m	Naso birthplaces in Palenque	ecological diversity	Valentin; Enrique
17m4s	why did Nasos come down from Palenque to Siey?	purism -> mixing	Alexis
20m	disease; clans; birthplace	purism -> mixing	Valentin; Enrique
23m32s	what is [kjokwa]?	kinship terms	Daniel
24m	uncle	kinship terms	Valentin
24m04s	how do you say father-in-law?	kinship terms	Alexis
24m10s	kege	kinship terms	Valentin
24m12s	[kége] vs [kege]	kinship terms	Enrique
24m50s	what about profound words?; [zringko kjwesa]; [kjorko kjrira]	animal species	Alexis

Table 14. Broad annotation of Verbal Art Meeting #1



25m30s	[kochi shiti]; [sengna]; animal names	animal species	Enrique
26m46s	before we used to name things as we saw them; we heard the way it sounded	animal species	Enrique
27m	names for types of chicken; [sengwo]; [srigla]	animal species	Alexis
27m22s	[bor srigla na]	animal species	Daniel
27m30s	[dbur na]; [dburwa nawa]	money	Valentin
28m0s	<i>lonche</i> [wlok]; [wloksho]	food	Alexis
29m02s	[popgue taywe] ‘to fold, to wrap’	food	Daniel, Enrique
29m30s	[le kupde]; [le wle kupde]	greetings	Daniel; Valentin, Enrique; Alexis
30m26s	[tje tje kjole] ‘wait’	greetings	Daniel
30m56s	verbal art is lost	language endangerment and shift	Enrique, Daniel
31m42s	in Palenque there are round rocks; is it a cemetery or place where ancestors used to fight?	landmarks, wars	Daniel; Valentin; Alexis
33m40s	why do you have arrows in your house?; what did you used to hunt? At what time?; how did you cook fish?	weapons	Alexis; Enrique
37m	why did our ancestors have such long lives?	ancestral longevity	Alexis
30m	food; diet	diet	Enrique, Valentin
38m50	Palenque place names	landmarks, place names	Alexis
39m30s	why they are named so	landmarks, place names	Valentin
40m54s	[klung sbi] ‘clay pots’	food utensils	Daniel, Valentin
43m06s	a lot is being lost, I first knew Naso then learned Spanish	language endangerment and shift	Alexis
45m	our ancestors only spoke Naso	language endangerment and shift	Alexis
44m31s	bienaventurado, bienvenido	Joke	Alexis

Table 14, *continued*

(Part II) 0m23s	our language was left by God so we should appreciate it	language endangerment and shift	Daniel
1m20s	[lebosey] who said that	greetings	Daniel
3m	where is Kwagoso?	landmarks, place names	Daniel
3m30s	some know verbal art but are egoistic about knowledge, some songs were lost	language endangerment and shift	Alexis
5m30s	how did our ancestors say 'gallon'	food utensils	Alexis
5m52s	[diblu] [sgo]	food utensils	Enrique
6m9s	what were the name of utensils? [kapwa pjlerwa]	food utensils	Alexis
7m30s	what were houses made of; Bribri [uswle]	construction	Alexis
8m50s	[shlargwo] [shlon] [kjepkwo] house post; clothes	construction	Enrique
10m18s	how did they cook?	food practices	Alexis; Enrique
11m50s	how did they bathe without soap?	cleanliness	Alexis; Enrique
13m11s	we are pulling our words	language endangerment and shift; metacommentary	Alexis; Enrique
14m33s	how did we used to work without machetes?	work	Alexis; Enrique
15m11s	how did ancestors used to cure themselves; what is sukia; kjus; shkeso; talk with human spirits	cleanliness, medicine	Alexis; Enrique
19m22s	what do you think of the work we are doing?	metacommentary	Daniel
21m	our language has worth	language ideology	Valentin
24m30s	It's hard to maintain language; grandfather; nostalgia; Wlopso	language ideology	Alexis
25m52	Bocas was Naso land	language ideology	Alexis
27m16	[shjik] vs [shik] ('bird' vs. 'tree')	life species	Enrique
28m0s	compare proselytization to teaching Naso	language ideology	Alexis
29m	Miriam studied a lot and has education; they say we are dumb but we are smart we have this idea to teach Naso; our language is important; its hard work to keep Naso; this book project is important; we have to unite together	language ideology	Alexis
34m8s	[sore bore] 'however but we will do it'	Joke	Daniel
34m56s	we can fix how we talk, make it better, we are just starting to talk and work this out	Metacommentary	Daniel, Valentin
35m30s	joke Mogwo he is called that because he is small	Joke	Daniel

Table 14, *continued*

According to my semantic interpretation, the profound words are discussed around cultural topics of Naso identity including language endangerment and shift, kinship terms, animal species, money, food, greetings, food utensils, construction, and life species. These are some of the common topics that are discussed in a nostalgic mood.

The pace of the conversation is observed to move in a very thorough way, where each topic is developed for several minutes and moves seamlessly to the next. The technicians take a very contextualized approach to documenting *tjlōkwo rong* ‘profound words’ which shows how important context is over formal features.

### **6.5.2 Entextualizing profound words within festivity**

Profound words acquire meaning through the exegesis surrounding their context of use, and while most of the time their nostalgia is discussed in a serious and detached mood, there are people who have the ability to liven the mood. Because profound words crucially are no longer used, the speaker must imagine a context based on mythological and traditional knowledge in his or her experience that bring them to life. It “takes a village” to do this patchwork; it is a collective effort of imagination of all participants who creatively construct their ancestral identity. A speaker can draw on a variety of sources in this creative exercise.

This case study shows how profound words are actualized in context of festive celebration. In the following, exegesis, jokes, personal experience, and mythological history entextualize various profound words that have to do with corn drinks and drinking ceremonies. The conversation takes place in 2016 in the house of Valentin Santana, where the Verbal Art Team has met for the second time to discuss verbal art as part of the Naso Encyclopedia documentation project. They have begun discussing the various types of daily housework and labor that their ancestors used to practice.

At approximately five minutes into the recording, Valentin starts discussing how their ancestors used to take their daughters to the field to plant corn, harvest corn, and grind corn. The

excerpt below in (351) spans approximately six minutes. In the image below, at 5 minutes and 31 seconds, Enrique shows Daniel how ancestors used to grind corn, holding his hands around an imaginary large rock and moving it side to side to grind the imaginary corn.



Figure 19. Verbal Art Team meeting #2. *From left to right:* Enrique Santana, Valentin Santana, Daniel Villagra, Reynaldo Alexis Santana, Miriam Aguilar, and Isaí González.

(351)

- 1 Valentin: when their daughters were old enough they would take them to work  
 2 to plant corn, harvest corn, grind corn, when they brought it home  
 3 they would thresh the corn, they would then take it and grind it with a rock, yes,  
 4 Daniel: as the ancestors would say *akue* (eat corn)  
 5 Valentin: they would say *akwe* (grind corn)  
 6 Daniel: they would say *akue* (eat corn)  
 7 Valentin: *akwe* (grind corn) <<laughs>>  
 8 Enrique: not *akue* (eat corn), but *akwe* (grind corn)  
 9 Daniel: *akwe* (grind corn), *akwe* (grind corn), *akwe* (grind corn)  
 10 Enrique: to grind  
 11 Daniel: how many different species of corn did our ancestors have?  
 12 Valentin: Naso corn, you know *tjangtjangwa* (the spotted ones)? that's Naso, our ancestors  
 13 used to have *srenbo* (red corn) but today the Panamanians don't have it  
 14 Enrique: the ancestors would call it *tjenma*, it was *srenbowa srenbowa* (red, red)  
 15 Enrique: *tjenma*  
 16 Daniel: *tjenma*  
 17 Enrique: and they would say *soybo*  
 18 Daniel: *soy* what?  
 19 Enrique: *soybo* they say  
 20 Daniel: *soybo*  
 21 Enrique: some are spotted, they say the spotted ones are Naso, Panamanians have some but  
 22 they aren't red  
 23 Daniel: did you ever used to plant them? <<jokes>>

24 Enrique: yes we used to plant them  
 25 Daniel: really? how is that work done? <<jokes>>  
 26 Valentin: <<laughs>>  
 27 Enrique: we used to hull corn, and then plant it, once you were finished clearing the land  
 28 you would warn me so that I could burn it  
 29 Daniel: about how many days would it take?  
 30 Enrique: in about four months it would be ready to harvest  
 31 Daniel: <<sighs in satisfaction of imagining the taste of the corn>>  
 32 Valentin: <<snickers>>  
 33 Enrique: that is if it's left for at least three months, then it is ready to grind, its ready to be  
 34 our corn drink  
 35 Valentin: the *tjenma* is ready for harvest, tell him <<jokes>>  
 36 Daniel: do you drink freshly fermented corn? <<jokes>>  
 37 Enrique: yes  
 38 Daniel: and hard chicha? <<jokes>>  
 39 Enrique: I also cook it and eat it  
 40 Daniel: if you drink hard chicha what does it do to you? <<jokes>>  
 41 Valentin: <<snickers>>  
 42 Enrique: we get happy and we aren't hungry anymore  
 43 Daniel: you let out a good yelp <<laughs>>  
 44 Valentin: (laughing) you get really drunk and make lots of noise, tell him  
 45 Enrique: then you hang out like that for a while  
 46 Daniel: (laughing) and after you realize it you keep working more than necessary  
 47 Enrique: more and more, too much  
 48 Valentin: <<laughs>>  
 49 Daniel: that's how our ancestors used to get work done, they don't forget that part about  
 50 how to consume the drink  
 51 Valentin: we lived off of *tjenma*, tell him  
 52 Enrique: they, you make food and invite people and then the practice continues  
 53 Alexis: dad, what is *broransho*?  
 54 Enrique: *broransho*  
 55 Alexis: the Broran that they say, how do they make it?  
 56 Enrique: they put the corn, they wrap it around, fresh corn, they cook it, grind it and wrap it  
 57 in leaves and in little pieces of dough, and then our ancestors would conserve that  
 58 dough for a month, two months, or even three months, and when its all eaten,  
 59 then you start to grow some more, you then grind it, and mix it in with the corn  
 60 you have drying atop the fire smoke, so dry that it seems useless  
 61 Alexis: dry?  
 62 Enrique: yes, dry, so then you mix it and cook it and that's it, it's called *ookosho*, what was  
 63 it that you called it?  
 64 Daniel: *broransho*  
 65 Enrique: you make the chicha with that dough  
 66 Alexis: it would be really strong so that when the ancestors would drink it they would get  
 67 drunk  
 68 Valentin: drunk they say, really strong  
 69 Enrique: yeah, that's how they make it, today no one makes dough from fresh corn, just  
 70 some people, no one follows that practice

71 Valentin: It appears that no one practices that, no one  
72 Miriam: in that time what else would they make to eat what else did they do with the corn?  
73 Enrique: what else? palm fruit also, they would make chicha from palm fruit too, they  
74 would mix it with the corn, with sweet plantain,  
75 Valentin: <<snickers>>  
76 Alexis: with corn dough <<jokes>>  
77 Enrique: with palm fruit dough, that's the *Broran* dough and it is cooked and mixed and  
78 that's how Panamanians make their beer in their factories, they drink it in one  
79 gulp, it's really good  
80 Valentin: <<snickers>>  
81 Alexis: so our ancestors would make chicha in what sort of recipients?  
82 Enrique: *sgo*, traditional recipients like *larkwo*, I tried to look for *larkwo* but I couldn't find  
83 any, *larkwo*  
84 Daniel: *larkwo*  
85 Enrique: ***laryo sgoryo***  
86 Daniel: *sgoryo*  
87 Enrique: *sgoryo* is a calabash like a pot, like a clay pot, very large, if you drink out of there  
88 you will get very drunk,  
89 Valentin: <<snickers>>  
90 Enrique: no one has pots like those anymore, no one makes clay pots anymore, no one  
91 know how to make them, before, our ancestors used to make them a lot, poor us  
92 today, no one can get to make them, it would be better to make them ourselves  
93 Daniel: do you remember at what point in time you stopped drinking?  
94 Enrique: a long, long time ago, in the times of Tjër, in the times of my grandmother, since  
95 then no one practices that  
96 Daniel: what's your grandmother's name?  
97 Enrique: Cecilia  
98 Daniel: Cecilia  
99 Enrique: Cecilia Gamarra my grandma's grandma, that's the time we are talking about  
100 when they would make these pots, they would say make them like this and that,  
101 said our ancestors, you know how I was talking yesterday about the creek where  
102 the water comes out red? well in those days the earth was red and they would mix  
103 it to make pots, they would mix it a lot, yeah, that's how our ancestors used to  
104 talk, it's ours, we came out of that, that's what our ancestors used to say  
105 Alexis: it is true, as they say, that the good things have been lost

This conversation makes use of several strategies of speech play and verbal art, including question-answer frame tag *loz bakong* ‘tell him/her’. In lines (8-52), the main dialogue is between Daniel and Enrique, who are going back and forth about how the ancestors used to plant and harvest corn. It is a humorous and light-hearted exchange, and Valentin, who is sitting between them both, interjects at several points ...*loz bakong* ‘tell him...’ to his brother Enrique, and it functions as a direct comment to Daniel which further supports the humorous frame.

The profound words in the conversation are actively brought from an ancestral realm into immediate life by Daniel. He pushes Enrique in line (23) to recall and imagine how as a young boy he used to plant ancestral varieties of Naso corn. This is humorous because it suggests that Enrique was alive in the ancestral ages, and while he goes along with the joke, it is understood that he most likely did not really plant these ancestral varieties, but he imagines how he might have. Here, the line between imagination and reality are blurred. In line (36) Daniel pushes Enrique further and asks him to imagine the times he might have drunken fermented corn drinks, which is most likely real. Then, in lines (43-52) they allude to the present-day practice of drinking fermented corn drink *chicha* while working the land in groups of men, which is a common practice and again draws the speakers into the reality of ancestral practices. In (53) Alexis introduces a new profound word term into the topic, a type of corn that the Broran (Terraba) used to cultivate, and they recall and imagine what that was like. Eventually they recall profound words for the containers in which fermented drinks were ancestrally made for celebratory events, such as the profound word *laryo sgoryo* ‘gourds with fermented drinks’ in line (85).

In conclusion, the content in this excerpt shows how profound words are imagined in a distant reality from the present moment. Daniel plays on this notion by bringing the



interlocutors into the frame of the distant past, which causes humor. It is yet another example of juxtaposition (the present vs. the past) which creates humor.

### 6.5.3 Hypervariation: Celestina, Ester, and Gilma

“Tjlabga dena tjlē oblē oblēe!”

“our ancestors used to talk differently!”

-Celestina Bonilla

The following excerpt illustrates the tension in diphrastic profound words between **hypervariation** and **formal reduction**. Hypervariation, as explained in the previous section on *Linguistic features of profound words*, refers to the fact that within individuals and also across individuals, there is a significantly higher difference in lexical-phonological form of profound words that is not as high in more ordinary lexicon, and this variation is widely accepted. Formal reduction refers to the lexico-grammatical constraints of profound words, which are parallel couplets with high amount of restriction in phonological form including intonation, stress, number of syllables, and lexical repetition. The tension between hypervariation and reduction is a more general tension of phonology, where *contrastiveness* and *economy* play out, or also similarly, in poetics, with *expansion* and *condensation* (Friedrich 1986). However, in Naso profound words this tension increases exponentially, as shown in the data below.

The following excerpt comes from an elicitation meeting interview I led with Celestina Bonilla and her daughters Ester Berchi and Gilma Berchi. About 45 minutes into the discussion I elicited the word *apsē yapsē* ‘useless’ and asked them to pronounce it and explain what it meant.

In ordinary speech, the terms /aga/ ‘useless’ and /maga/ ‘unable’ are productive, where /a/ is a commonly used frustrative and /ma/ is a commonly used inability marker. The /-ga/ is a nominalizer. However, other uses of these markers with other derivational morphology (other than /-ga/), such as *apsë yapsë*, are not productive. The data below in (352a and 353a) show productive uses of *aga* and *maga*, and (352b and 353b) show how other derivational endings which are permitted in the subsequent conversation are not permitted in a referential clause.

(352)a. *tja di-b-ze ga a-ga*  
 1SG river-INF-cross CONN **FRUST-AGENT**  
 ‘I can’t cross the river’ (something is in the way)

b. *tja di-b-ze ga (\*aksi /\*apsoŋ /\*ap/ko /\*asko/\*apsko)*  
 1SG river-INF-cross CONN **FRUST-spirit FRUST-poor FRUST-LOC ? ?**

(353)a. *tja di-b-ze ma-ga*  
 1SG river-INF-cross **INABIL-AGENT**  
 ‘I don’t know how to cross the river’ (can’t swim)

b. *tja di-b-ze (\*maksøŋ)*  
 1SG river-INF-cross ?



Figure 20. From left to right: Natalia Bermúdez (bottom left, off-camera), Gilma Berchi, Celestina Bonilla, and Ester Berchi, at line (38-39).

In the interview conversation, the three women in the image above, Celestina (C), Ester (E), and Gilma (G), interviewed by myself (N), invent other profound word forms that they imagine their ancestors used in addition to *apsë yapsë* ‘useless’ to mean the same thing. They laugh throughout their production of the variant forms of profound words below in (354), which are bolded and placed within brackets. I translate the text into English in (355).

- 1 (354) N: [apsë japsë]  
2 G: abzë ah apsë ega yapsë sëya llë kjoyo  
3 E: [apsë yapsë]re lëy ëngkong urreiso loydë yapsire  
4 C: lëy ëngkong pjlu anmoyo llëm pero le ber urreiso eni  
5 tegong kegong ga eni era ore yale pero eni  
6 lëy [aga yaga] lëy ä wle lëy berong  
7 E: [apsi yapsi]  
8 [...]  
9 E: [apsong yapsong]  
10 C: [apshko yapshko] li shko  
11 E: shi tjlë jong llaw pogo kuya eni  
12 C: ëng bojong llaw pogo jeke  
13 N: [apso yapso] e llë?  
14 E: shi tjlë jong  
15 G: conversa shi lanto  
16 C: aja shi lano e ega shi lano e [apsho yapso]re miydey llëm  
17 <<laughter>>  
18 N: sore  
19 C: shi tjlë wle shi tjlë jong loroy pjlu li  
20 E: shi tjlë jong [aga yaga] le wle  
21 C: [aga yaga]  
22 N: [aga yaga]  
23 G: [aga yaga]  
24 C: [apsko yapsko] oma ma ñya gom le jong tjabga dena tjlökwo oblë  
25 G: [apsë yapsë]  
26 E: tjlëno jong [aksong yaksong] ya [maksong yapsong ...yaksong]  
27 G: [aga yaga]  
28 <<laughter>>  
29 C: [aga yaga] aa ee pja tjlë jong [aga yaga]  
30 <<laughter>>  
31 G: [aga yaga] vamos a decir que  
32 conversamos no se si escribimos aquí y pongo otro...  
33 E: brinca aquí ahí otro día esta hablando otro día dice eni loklo  
34 G: ...de ahí ni sé que yo escribí bueno yo escribí pues  
35 E: mal  
36 G: [aga yaga] li e  
37 C: [aga yaga] eshko yaga  
38 E: [aga yaga]  
39 <<laughter>>  
40 N: [owa yawa]  
41 C: oma ma ñya [apshko yapshko]  
42 E: [owa yawa] bebi  
43 G: [owa yawa] asi mismo

44 E: [apso yapso]  
45 G: tja [owa yawa] bebi  
46 E: [makso yaksong] bebi  
47 <<laughter>>  
48 N: [maksong yaksong]  
49 C: llë lorot [akso yakso]  
50 E: [akso yakso] [aga yaga] [aza yaza] bebi  
51 <<laughter>>  
52 E: tjlë celowa [aga yaga] ponga [aga yaga] ahi  
53 G: [aga yaga]  
54 C: baïya [apsko yapsko] oma tjlapga dena palabra rong ronge  
55 N: [maksong yaksong]  
56 E: es el mismo  
57 C: tjlabga dena tjlë oblë

1 (355) N: [apsë japsë]  
 2 G: abzë oh apsë and yapsë spirit something like that  
 3 E: [apsë yapsë] we say it among ourselves to mean something half done  
 4 C: we say it ourselves to mean its not done correctly but turns out just ok  
 5 way before it used to be like that, maybe it was like that  
 6 we say [aga yaga] a lot among ourselves  
 7 E: [apsi yapsi]  
 8 [...]  
 9 E: [apsong yapsong]  
 10 C: in the place of [apshko yapshko]  
 11 E: when we talk all over the place it sounds like that  
 12 C: yes all strewn about  
 13 N: what is [apso yapso]?  
 14 E: it's what we are talking about  
 15 G: what we are saying  
 16 C: yeah, if we talk if we talk like [apsho yapso] we don't know anything  
 17 <<laughter>>  
 18 N: what?  
 19 C: like we are talking, like I said, we said it right  
 20 E: like this we talk [aga yaga]  
 21 C: [aga yaga]  
 22 N: [aga yaga]  
 23 G: [aga yaga]  
 24 C: [apsko yapsko] those people talked kind of like that, our ancestors  
 25 G: [apsë yapsë]  
 26 E: they talked like [aksong yaksong] um.. [maksong yapsong ...yaksong]  
 27 G: [aga yaga]  
 28 <<laughter>>  
 29 C: [aga yaga] ahh yeahh you are talking [aga yaga]  
 30 <<laughter>>  
 31 G: [aga yaga] let's say  
 32 we talk or write here like this and then I write something else...  
 33 E: it jumps from here and another day you are saying something else it means  
 34 G: ...from there I don't even know what I wrote, well I wrote something  
 35 E: badly  
 36 G: that's [aga yaga]  
 37 C: [aga yaga] then yaga  
 38 E: [aga yaga]  
 39 <<laughter>>  
 40 N: [owa yawa]  
 41 C: the ancestor's way is [apshko yapshko]  
 42 E: [owa yawa] also  
 43 G: [owa yawa] just like that

44 E: [apso yapso]  
45 G: I'm [owa yawa] too  
46 E: [makso yaksong] too  
47 <<laughter>>  
48 N: [maksong yaksong]  
49 C: what was it [akso yakso]  
50 E: [akso yakso] [aga yaga] [aza yaza] too  
51 <<laughter>>  
52 E: celowa, say [aga yaga] put [aga yaga] there  
53 G: [aga yaga]  
54 C: theirs is [apsko yapsko] those ancestors had profound, profound words  
55 N: [maksong yaksong]  
56 E: it's the same thing  
57 C: our ancestors talked differently

The women explain throughout (in lines 5, 24, 26, 41, 45, 46, 49, 50, 54) that their ancestors used to talk differently than the way they talk today; they used to have more variation and more ways of saying things. They chuckle in amused amazement about how different all of the profound word variations above are, surprised at what they can come up with.

I argue that this hypervariation in the conversation plays on the concept of ancestral distributed varietal knowledge, indexing the creativity and bygone past of linguistic variation the ancestors inhabited, as well as the fact that today, Nasos are unable to understand what they were saying. I interpret that the more variation they attribute to their ancestors' speech, the more opaque their meanings and reality become. The women manipulate the derivational morphology as well as the prosodic equivalences to obscure the shape and clarity of the root morpheme, which functions to distort its meaning. Each bolded profound word in the conversation above is reproduced below in (356), where /a/ is a 'FRUSTRATIVE' marker, /ma/ is an 'INABILITY' marker, and /ya/ otherwise productively means 'vomit', but across the board speakers report that the meaning in this context is not related to 'vomit'.

(356)a.	<i>a-ga</i>	<i>ya-ga</i>	<i>-ga</i>	'AGENT'
	<i>a-za</i>	<i>ya-za</i>	<i>*za</i>	
b.	<i>a-p-së</i>	<i>ya-p-së</i>	<i>së</i>	'alive'
	<i>a-p-song</i>	<i>ya-p-song</i>	<i>song</i>	'poor'
	<i>a-p-shko</i>	<i>ya-p-shko</i>	<i>-shko</i>	'LOC'
	<i>a-p-sho</i>	<i>ya-p-so</i>	<i>-sho</i>	'MASS'
	<i>a-p-so</i>	<i>ya-p-so</i>	<i>-so</i>	'ORGN'
	<i>a-p-sko</i>	<i>ya-p-sko</i>	<i>*sko</i>	
	<i>a-p-si</i>	<i>ya-p-si</i>	<i>*si</i>	
c.	<i>a-k-so</i>	<i>ya-k-so</i>	<i>-so</i>	'ORGN'
	<i>a-k-song</i>	<i>ya-k-song</i>	<i>song</i>	'poor'



- d. *ma-k-so*      *ya-k-song*      -*so*      ‘ORGN’; song ‘poor’
- e. *owa*      *yawa*      (lexicalized)<sup>24</sup>

Examples in (356a) follow the template below in (357a), and those in (356b), (357b), in (356c), (357c), in (357d), (357d), and in (356e), (357e).

- (357) a. /a-x      ya-x/  
 b. /a-p-x      ya-p-x/  
 c. /a-k-x      ya-k-x/  
 d. /ma-k-x      ya-k-x/  
 e. lexicalized; (originally \*o-x ya-x (?))

There is one case in line (54), [ma-k-song ya-p-song], which appears to mix templates from (b) and (d), which shows that there can be variation in derivational morphemes within a profound word, where they do not necessarily need to repeat in form exactly. However, this is already accounted for in the discussion of *Rhyme* in the section *Linguistic features of profound words* earlier.

The seemingly diverse templates in (357a-e) can be explained as deriving from a single one in free variation. In (b), /-p-/, appears to be a relic morpheme which is lexicalized when a root takes on a derivational suffix. As explained earlier in *Phonemic hypervariation* in the section earlier, the phonemes /k/ ~ /s/ ~ /p/ may vary freely in profound words, which accounts for the variation in templates (357a-c). The /ma-/ ‘INABIL’ in (357d) which varies from the previous templates is explained as being synonymous with /a-/ ‘FRUSTR’. The last example in (357e) is one which the author suggested in line (40), which appears to be

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<sup>24</sup> Where *owa* is a non-decomposable and very productive form meaning ‘bad’, and *yawa* is a lexicalized form that only occurs after *owa*, where together, *owa yawa* means ‘disgusting or terrible’.

semantically related and which the other participants accept, although it is not clear if it is semantically as close as the others.

The derivational suffixes (-x) are optional and not functionally meaningful in (357a-e), so they are syntactically redundant. Their repeated use functions as poetic recurrence and as such is meaningful as the “poeticization of grammar” (Sherzer 1990).

#### **6.5.4 Profound words for the young**

In the following excerpt, our definition of profound words does not change from what the previous conversations between elders and the Verbal Art team have taught us; our generalization is still that it is language which is not commonly spoken. But in this case, the interpreter has changed. In this excerpt, she is Yoselin, Sánchez, a seventeen-year-old woman, and here she is being interviewed by myself alongside her two parents Adela Torres and Enoc Sánchez, on December 17<sup>th</sup>, of 2017. We are sitting in their plot of land in the new region of squatted land called Nueva Generación, mixed of Nasos and Ngäbes in Guabito, Bocas del Toro, Panama. The three of them had worked on the Songs Team of the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia project with the elder songs expert Hector Torres, the father of Adela Torres. The vague topic of conversation I suggest is profound words and the information they had learned and written about in the Songs Volume of the encyclopedia. While Enoc, the father, does most of the talking, I ask Yoselin to translate into Spanish what her father discusses. Yoselin is bilingual in Naso and Spanish but is dominant in Spanish. She grew up in the Naso community of Dluy, but in 2017 the entire family migrated to Guabito so that Yoselin could continue high school education, where one of her courses is English.

Before, in helping out with her English homework, Yoselin had told me that English is very profound, it has many profound words. When I asked her to elaborate, between her and her father they said that English has many words which look like they might be simple, but when you get into their meanings they have several meanings or are different, and on top of that they are very difficult to remember. In the present interview below in (157) (and translated into English in (158)), Yoselin elaborates on this concept.



Figure 21. Yoselin Sánchez describing profound words.

(358) N: una vez me dijiste que el inglés es como *tjlōkwo rong*, por qué?

Y: *tjlōkwo rong* es como decir palabras así este difícil  
o cosas como se llama este o decir algunas palabras que tu no puedes pronunciar  
como algunas palabras que dice mi abuelo  
que yo no entiendo qué es lo que está diciendo  
y así es como el inglés a veces me pasa que preguntan y así de una vez  
y no sé tengo que estar pensaaando que qué es, qué es  
entonces yo digo que es así el inglés  
que es como tú lo aprendes ahorita y ya después se te olvida ya  
si tú no lo practicas

...

por ejemplo ahora que ya estamos viviendo aca afuera  
Si estuviéramos viviéndolo allá con mi abuelo ya juntos con ellos así sí  
Entendieramos mas porque ya vivimos ahí juntos entonces mi abuelo nos enseña  
Así esta palabra es así así  
Porque hay ciertas palabras que conoce uno nosotros no sabemos  
Esto es así dice lo dice en idioma en naso y no sabemos lo que dijo  
Entonces a veces tengo que preguntar qué significa porque no lo hemos  
escuchado  
Porque nos vinimos para aca afuera ya no estamos con él  
Entonces si estuviéramos viviendo ahí como están mis otros primos ahí  
Ya nosotros sabemos lo que dice mi abuelo porque ya ellos están juntos ahí  
Entonces ya entienden lo que dice mi abuelo  
Pero nosotros ya estamos por acá afuera y muy poco vamos allá  
Y así como que se nos van perdiendo las palabras  
Ya se nos están olvidando los que algunas palabras ciertas palabras que dice

(359) N: one time you told me that English is like profound words, why?

Y: profound words are like words that are difficult  
like, how can I explain, it's like saying words you can't pronounce  
like some words that my grandfather says,  
that I don't understand what he's saying  
it's like English, sometimes it happens that they ask me suddenly about it  
and I don't know, I have to think about it, about what it is, what it means  
so I say English is like that  
it's like you might learn some words at one point but later you forget them  
if you don't practice it

...

for example, now that we are living out here,  
if we were still living with my grandfather, with them then yeah  
we would understand more because living with my grandfather he would teach us  
like this word means that, and so on  
because there are certain words that he knows that we don't  
he says this is like this, in Naso, and we don't know what he's talking about  
so sometimes I have to ask what it means because we didn't hear it  
since we came out here now we aren't with him  
so if we were still there living with him like my other cousins there  
then we would know what my grandfather says because they are together there  
so they understand what my grandfather says  
but us, we are now out here and we don't go there very often  
and that's how we start losing words  
we are beginning to forget some words certain words he says

Yoselin's discussion tells that profound words are words that she no longer understands. She explains this is a result of the present situation where they have moved away from the Naso territory and it has led to a lack of practice and interaction with her grandfather, who had been the person who knows how to use profound words and taught them what they meant. This is similarly in line with elders' discussions of how profound words are no longer *used*.

The interpretations of profound words by young people tell us how the content of the category can change. Yoselin recognizes some words that are not profound in Naso such as *shi toe* 'let's go', which is common in the speech of even semi-speakers. However, she also recognizes a word such as *ushko* 'at home' as profound, depending on whether or not a person knows it. This confirms that the category of profound words is vastly different between individuals, and depends on one's experiences and conversations with others, where the more variety of people you are exposed to, the more profound words you may know.

Adela further contributes to the discussion by explaining that some words are more profound than others; for example, some words they don't even know how to say, and these are the most profound for Adela. For example, she doesn't know how to say, such as novel objects of technology such as a binder. The regular strategy for naming loan words is calquing through the use of Naso words and derivational morphology, usually classifiers, such as in the following in (360a-c).

- (360)a. *jek-klo*  
 go-CLF:long  
 ‘car’
- b. *tjlē-klo*  
 talk-CLF:long  
 ‘telephone’
- c. *drong-sho*  
 metal-MASS  
 ‘computer’

Adela’s insight shows is that, contrary to popular description of profound words, not only *ancestral* objects and concepts are profound, but *neologisms* can be as well. This apparent contradiction can be explained by the fact that neologisms are obscure because they aren’t well-established in the common lexical repertoire of speakers. However, the following case will show how not all people may agree that words which have no ancestral connotation are profound.

### 6.5.5 Novel interpretation of grammar as profound words

This section shows how certain individuals contribute novel interpretations of profound words which are controversial for other speakers, which provides evidence that the category of profound words is fluid and variable, and most importantly, *productive* in the language. For most Nasos, profound words are simply anchored in a past, unknown, ancestral world. However, as we saw in the previous case, some may interpret neologisms as profound. In the present case, profound words are interpreted as words which follow the constraints of the linguistic features described in the previous section on *Linguistic features of profound words*, especially the formal poetic constraints *prosodic length* and *parallelism* (or identity).

The data comes from the Verbal Art volume of the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia authored by Miriam Aguilar, Daniel Villagra, and Reynaldo Alexis Santana, the technicians on the Verbal Art team on the Naso documentation project introduced in earlier examples. These authors spent a lot of time consulting and deciding on which profound words to include in the encyclopedia, and came up with some examples that other technicians on different teams did not agree were profound words at all. These data include the examples below in (361-362). Notably, some data follow the patterns of containing an empty –x slot with significant parallel equivalences in rhyme and phonotactics, as in examples (361a-c). Other data add to these equivalences identity in morphosyntactic recurrence, as in (362a-c).

*Empty –b slot:*

- (361)a. /dlar/ ‘break’  
       /taɾ/ ‘broken’
- b. /kɫak/ ‘to grind (corn, cacao)’  
           /k<sup>h</sup>ɫak/ ‘toad’  
           /kɫak/ ‘kingfisher’
- c. /fɛk/ ‘a lot of work’  
           /fɛ:/ ‘at risk’

*Identical ‘x’ rhyme*

- (362)a. /tok-təŋ/ ‘broken’  
       /tok-təŋ/ ‘escaped’
- b. /sar-ʃgwɔ/ ‘vine species<sub>1</sub>’  
           /ʃü-ʃgwɔ/ ‘vine species<sub>2</sub>’
- c. /hək-ɫɪ/ ‘from here to there’  
           /tək-ɫɪ/ ‘from there to here’

Notably, each of the examples below show two words, but not occurring side by side. This is because when the technicians talk about them and notice them, they do not produce them side by side, but rather refer to them in comparison, for example, they say the first word, its sound, and what it means, and then the second word, how it sounds, and what it means. In other words, they discuss the two words as having the same semantic relationship as profound words, but not as functioning as one syntactic unit. This is mirrored in the Verbal Art volume, where they write each entry separately but contiguously, as shown below in (363). The order of these entries is crucially ordered, where the rearrangement of the entries would result in a loss of meaning. This is one of the reasons that the Cultural Encyclopedia is not ordered by an abstract principle such as alphabetical order, but is faithful to the functional and semantically associative order in which the authors wrote it.



(363) Verbal Art Volume excerpt:

**Kjwong:** “conga”

Traducción libre:

E wen pjögłoroy korga dbu kjoyo kun sok kësbang e ba korga e u kong.  
*Crecen en las montaña las hojas son parecidas a la del acla crecen alto, las hojas son para techo.*

Ejemplo:

“Bor data u jong kjwara ugo kjwong eeri ga ľuyo sak pjök jong owa llēm obi, kjwong e dgako llēm ga pjir, woyde ga dëy.”

*“Mi papá tiene una casa y las hojas son de conga hoy tiene veinte años está buena la casa, hay que sembrar la conga si no se acaba, hay que cuidarla.”*

**Pong:** “pita”

Traducción libre:

E pong ľokło e nana włeni e korga kur eeje, e woydëy kji wło e shiy wło ga shäryëy jünji ba kjłoga e sho ioya eyga ba roshko e kji e shiya pjir ga llëbo shärye ego.

*Se refiere a la pita es una planta con hojas largas, sirve para extraer hilo fino, para sacar esto se hace el siguiente procedimiento: se machaca la hoja hasta sacar el hilo que está dentro de ella y esto se usa para cocer.*

Ejemplo:

“Shji to dlup kjwozirga kji shik, pong e ĩn öör shäng ga pjłu tjän, pjây jem sör bor kjimte wło tja ba zë eyga pjây ba sho ioga ega ba kji shik.”

*“Nos vamos a la loma muchachos a sacar hilos, fui a verlo y está bueno, los voy a llevar para que me ayuden, yo corto y ustedes la machucan y sacan el hilo.”*

Notably, the entries *kwong* and *pong* share rhyme in the vowel and also in the coda. Also, they happen to be semantically related, where both are types leaves of trees or plants with which Nasos construct objects. Although the unitary construction [*kwong pong*] is not offered by the Verbal Art technicians, their side by side placement indicates that there is a resemblance created *between* both of them, and I confirm this based on my observations and conversations with Nasos who explain such novel profound words which are not necessarily related to ancestral concepts.

The seductive relationship that the Verbal Art technicians interpret from kwong and pong show that their formal constraints and recurrences, although accidental, are read as incidental. In other words, this can be explained with the principle of *resonance* (Woodbury 1998), where form elicits an affective reading, just as an affective meaning elicits certain patterns.

The next section is a relational analysis, which will explain in more detail how such examples of apparent homonyms or near homonyms, as well as neologisms and puns, are creatively interpreted as profound words.

## 6.6 RELATIONAL ANALYSIS OF PROFOUND WORDS

### 6.6.1 The intuition

I analyze and explain that profound words abide by a principle which I call “relational”. This principle can explain **ambiguity**, **vagueness**, or **synonymy**. I use the term *relational* to mean that meaning is created between two different forms and not between one form and one meaning. It calls into question the principle of *biuniqueness* (Dressler 1985), arbitrariness, and the one-to-one relationship between form and meaning. Relational strategies include what I call **vagueness**, where overlapping phonological forms co-occur with with related meanings, **ambiguity**, where phonologically overlapping forms may have multiple or distinct meanings, and **synonymy**, where phonologically distinct forms have related meanings. To quote Tuggy (1993):

“The difference between ambiguity and vagueness is a matter of whether two or more meanings associated with a given phonological form are distinct (ambiguous), or united as nondistinguished subcases of a single, more general meaning (vague)”

Each of these three strategies, vagueness, ambiguity, and synonymy, account for different patterns of profound words: puns and homophones, difrasisms, or idioms, respectively, as shown below in (364). Alternatively, arbitrary language or relationships between words have distinct forms and distinct meanings.

(364) *Ambiguity*: phonologically related forms, distinct meanings (puns, homophones)

*Vagueness*: phonologically related forms, related meanings (difrasismos)

*Synonymy*: phonologically distinct forms, related meanings (idioms)

(*Arbitrary lg.*: phonologically distinct forms, distinct meanings)

Langacker (1987) distinguishes ambiguity and vagueness at opposite ends of a spectrum, where polysemy lies in between. In my analysis of Naso, different strategies of speech play and verbal art can be explained by having different intersections of form and meaning. In contrast, in “ordinary” language, forms are said to be arbitrary and not overlap in significant felt ways, and the meanings between such different forms are not expected to overlap either.

### 6.6.2 Formalization

The relational analysis of vagueness, ambiguity, and synonymy can be formalized as shown in the tables below. This is useful because it shows the speech play and verbal art resources that arise from the manipulation of *form* and *meaning* overlapping. Below in Tables 11-14, two different lexical forms Word 1 and Word 2, which may or may not be etymologically related, are compared in whether they overlap in form and/or meaning.

The first table below (Table 15) shows the way ordinary arbitrary, non-profound word language behaves—no overlap in form or in meaning. One example of words that do not have a significantly salient relation are *tja* ‘1SG’ and *dlung* ‘salt’.

e.g. <i>tja</i> ‘1sg’ and <i>dlung</i> ‘salt’	Word 1 and Word 2
Form overlap	No
Meaning overlap	No

Table 15. Arbitrary language

However, when there is an overlap in either form or meaning or both, the interpretation is that the related words are profound words. The possible combinations and the types of patterns it explains are below in Tables 16-18.

Table 16 below represents the overlap in both forms and their meanings characteristic of polysemy-vagueness including ‘regular’ profound words, as well as other strategies in the Naso language such as reduplication and iterative ideophones, and also *Interpreted profound words* such as the one described under *Vagueness*.

e.g. original PWs; reduplication; iterative ideophones; adjective and interpreted profound words	Word 1 and Word 2
Form overlap	Yes
Meaning overlap	Yes

Table 16. Polysemy-vagueness

Table 17 below represents the overlap of meaning but not form characteristic of synonyms across planes such as idioms and dialect variables.

e.g. ancestral <b>idioms</b> ; <b>dialect</b> variables	Word 1 and Word 2
Form overlap	No
Meaning overlap	Yes

Table 17. Synonyms across planes

The table below (Table 18) represents ambiguity, where there is an overlap in form but not meaning, characteristic of interlingual puns and homophony.

e.g. <b>interlingual puns</b> ; <b>homophony</b>	Word 1 and Word 2
Form overlap	Yes
Meaning overlap	No

Table 18. Ambiguity

### 6.6.3 Ambiguity

(phonologically related forms, distinct meanings; *homophony*, *puns*)

“pay attention—these two words sound the same!, but, they actually mean different things—how curious is the Naso language!”

-Alexis Santana

The Naso language has many homophones because of neutralization of distinctions, some of which are recently due to sound changes and shift in the phonological system to accommodate to the Spanish phonological system, such as loss of tone, nasalized vowels, aspirated obstruents, long vowels, and other significant vowel spaces. Another reason for

homophony includes a historical change which deleted non-final syllables in unstressed positions, which resulted in the monosyllabification of disyllables and thus more cases of homophony. See Chapter 3 on *Naso linguistics* for more discussion of the phonological system of the Naso language and its sound changes.

To Nasos, the fact that two words may sound the same is peculiar, odd, and causes rumination: why would two words that sound the same mean different things? Nasos confront and resolve the uncomfortable reality of homophony with several different explanations that are not necessarily mutually exclusive, where I have heard each of the following views expressed.

One way is that they may believe that there must be an underlying distinction between the homophones or near homophones and so perceive a difference that they articulate usually as a difference in pitch or intensity.

Another tendency is to believe that historically and ancestrally the words must have sounded different, because their ancestors had more variation. They may explain that no one makes a distinction in the words today, and explain it as yet another example of how language is becoming more simple because of contact influences from mixing with other languages.

Others may be seduced by their iconicity into thinking that the two homophones must in reality be one and the same word that accidentally is able to have slightly but insignificantly different meanings. The surprise polysemy is interpreted as meaning that the two senses are equivalent in ancestrally meaningful ways, which, as Tony Woodbury points out, is also a feature of folk etymology. In this vein, homophones overlap with the way that profound words are interpreted.

Another strategy is to create humor out of the coincidental juxtaposition. Here, they are interpreted as puns; it is funny that they sound the same and clearly mean very different things.

### 6.6.3.1 *Homophony*

Examples of homophones and near homophones which have been referred to as profound words include those below in (365) and (366), respectively. Near homophones are often lexically distinctive only due to differences in inflectional morphology, which notably occurs at the right edge like derivational morphology in more agreed-upon profound words described in earlier sections. To be clear, the homophones in (365a-c) are variable, where elderly speakers sometimes pronounce each with distinctive variation in tone or intonation, however adult and younger speakers produce them as homophones, although sometimes they attempt to pronounce them distinctly, although most of the time they interchange the meaning which shows that the differences are not consistent and are sometimes switched. Historically, it seems we can say that each of the homophones in (365a-c) were once minimal pairs, but a more accurate synchronic description is that they are indistinguishable to speakers, and thus in Labov's (1971) and Yu's (2007) sense, are near mergers.

(365) Naso near mergers

- a. *shik* 'sangre de toro bird species'  
*shik* 'to pull'
- b. *kege* 'uncle'  
*kege* 'old'
- c. *tjëtë iyök* 'the grandmother's candle' (possessive relation)  
*tjëtë iyök* 'the grandmother is on fire' (predicative relation)

What I call near homophones in (366a-b) are words which are clearly minimal pairs and phonologically distinct, though to speakers they overlap in rhyme in ways significant enough to be considered profound words.

(366) Naso near homophones

- a. *tlun* ‘bad omen’  
*klun* ‘to cry out’
- b. *dbo* ‘force, strength’  
*dba* ‘daytime’

Cross-linguistically, homophones are exploited in poetry and song for poetic effect, where they are better known as double entendres.

#### 6.6.3.2 *Interlingual puns*

While the words which function as homophones above are usually explained and interpreted in a serious, detached, nostalgic mood, the interlingual puns are humorous when Nasos make connection between their phonological similarity and semantic distinctiveness. Examples of interlingual puns are given below in (367).

(367) Interlingual puns

- a. Carolina ‘brand of pinto beans sold in the store’  
Carolina ‘name of an SIL missionary’
- b. Maggi ‘brand of chicken broth powder’  
Maggi ‘name of Canadian tourist’

The examples above are hilarious to Nasos, who delight in the fact that a person’s name can be the same as the name of a food that can be bought in a store.



#### 6.6.4 Vagueness

(phonologically related forms, related meanings; *profound words*)

“What does *dburwa* mean?  
Gold.  
What about *nawa*?  
The same thing.”

-Daniel Villagra and Valentin Santana

*Vagueness* describes the process of interpretation of profound words, where the fact that they sound similar and overlap in prosodic equivalences leads both profound word constituents A and B to be interpreted as the same meaning. Even when usually one of the constituents is semantically opaque, as is shown in the opaque form *nawa* in the quotation above, where *dbur-wa* means ‘gold-DIM’, and *nawa* is a lexicalized form that is not used commonly today except in this profound word construction *dburwa nawa* ‘GOLD’.

In many examples such as this one, the B constituent has no meaning but is said to mean the same as the A constituent, as in the further examples below in (368-369). It seems to hold that the iconic function of *equivalence* in constituents is valued over their referential function, so the second word will be equivalent as the first, by virtue of overlapping lexicogrammatical form.

(368) p.lu e foŋ e  
king DEM ? DEM  
‘THE KING’S COUNCIL’

(369) sikwa skankwa  
fireflies ?  
‘FIREFLIES THAT CARRY SPIRITS OF DECEASED’

The logic that profound words with lexico-grammatical recurrences are interpreted as semantically equivalent harkens back to the notion of *resonance* (Woodbury 1998). In a similar line of thought, *diagrammatic iconicity* (Haiman 1980), which is a structural resemblance between two signs which do not resemble the referent but resemble each other, co-occurs with a resemblance in meaning. Speakers are seduced by the recurrent form into feeling that they must be semantically related.

#### 6.6.4.1 *(Regular) profound words*

Likewise, in profound words where the B constituent is semantically decomposable, it has a similar meaning to that of the A constituent as discussed in the section of literary tropes (e.g. synonymy, metonymy), as is shown in the data below. The composed meaning is not more semantically influenced by either A and B but by both of them equally.

- (370) *kjwesi*            *shgwlosi*  
mouse                rat  
‘RODENT SPIRITS’
- (371) *ka*    *ling*    *dlu*                *ling*  
head   long   crown.of.head long  
‘MESSY-HAIRED WOMAN’

#### 6.6.4.2 *Interpreted profound words*

Vagueness also explains data discussed in the previous case study *Novel interpretation of grammar as profound words* (see Section 6.5.5) as interpreted by technicians on the Verbal Art team.

To give another example of vagueness from different speakers, Reinaldo González and Hormelio Santana from the Mythology team interpret related meanings between phonologically overlapping forms that follow in (372), which they call profound words. In conversation, they have pointed out to me these are noticeably similar phonologically, and that this must be evidence that they are historically related in meaning. Below, the four meanings including *songwoybo* are related based on one myth they all appear in, the myth of the Serpent spirit Ööka.

(372) Excerpt from the Mythology Volume of the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia

**Songwoybo:** Laguna de la serpiente Ööka, en la cabecera del río Dikës. Esta palabra etimológicamente se origina de tres palabras:

*Lagoon of the serpent Ööka, located in the headwaters of the Teribe River. This word etymologically originates from three words:*

**Songwo:** Frijol negro originario de Dwas.

*Black bean that originates in Dwas.*

**Shwlonggwo:** Semillas de uyama que le fue dado a la suegra de Ööka después que su hija fue convertida en serpiente. Estos dos niños eran un regalo que le dio Ööka, en reemplazo de su hija, que la abuela debía cuidar con mucha precaución ya que los niños le gustaban el agua, mas al descuidarse estos volvieron otra vez a su padre el rey de las serpientes quien los convierte nuevamente en su apariencia original.

*Pumpkin seeds that were given to Ööka's mother-in-law after her daughter was converted to a serpent. The two children were a gift that Ööka gave her, as a replacement for her daughter, that the grandmother was to take care of with much caution since the children liked water, but after being careless they returned to their father, the king of the serpents, who converts them back to their original appearance.*

**Zonggwo:** Barbas de la serpiente Ööka, con la cual engaña a los Naso, convirtiéndolo en una guacamaya roja para atraerlos y luego caer en la trampa para comérselo.

*Beards of the serpent Ööka, with which he tricks Nasos by converting [the beards] into a scarlet macaw in order to attract them so they fall into the trap so he can eat them.*

Reinaldo explains that the name of the Serpent spirit's home lagoon, Songwoybo, is historically derived from three words with mythologically related semantics: *songwo*, 'special bean', *shwlonggwo* 'pumpkin seeds', and *zonggwo* 'serpent beard'. These three meanings are related in a semantic network through the particular Serpent spirit myth, which is the most long, complex, and salient myth that indexes Naso cosmology. In terms of linguistic etymology, it is apparent that the term Songwoybo can be explained as a compound of *songwo* 'black bean' and *ybo* 'lagoon', but the interpreted relation with the other two terms *shwlonggwo* and *zonggwo* are what give depth to the complex network of profound word meaning.

Besides their semantic interrelation, they also clearly overlap phonologically and morphologically in several ways: all four terms begin with sibilants, share multiple nuclear mid back vowels /o/ to the exclusion of other vowels, contain a medial velar nasal /ŋ/, and contain the derivational ROUND classifier formative /gwo/. This accident appears incidental to the technicians, which highlight this as something of especial salience and meaning.

### 6.6.5 Synonymy

(phonologically distinct forms, related meanings; *idioms across planes*)

“Look! Today we use the English word *racun*, but we used to use the Naso word *shëng aa*<sup>25</sup>, based on the characteristics of the object itself, words used to be based on the way they *sounded* or *looked*”

-Enrique Santana

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<sup>25</sup> literally, 'wide paws' for 'raccoon'

Synonymous forms which Nasos categorize as verbal art are words that overlap in meaning but have distinct forms, where one of the forms is used in the present-day, and the other form is associated with ancestral, outdated use. In plain terms, they are fixed idioms that are no longer productive, and Nasos also include them into the category of profound words. These forms are unique from regular synonyms which have similar meanings because they are imagined as semantically overlapping on different time planes, and for this reason I call them synonyms across planes. The interpreter must establish an ancestral association in one of the forms in relation to the other form.

In the quote above, Enrique Santana explains that ancestrally, Nasos used to describe objects the way they *sounded* or *looked*. Here, Enrique alludes to the feeling that there used to be more Naso-like words created through novel formation that have been replaced by borrowings from English or Spanish. Enrique makes an iconic argument that language used to be more sensorially similar to the natural world. I argue that in his logic, the non-iconic language that exists today can be explained as resulting in types of idioms which create variation in linguistic forms.

Other forms which follow the same process are dialect variables such as the clan variables /t/ and /k/ (see discussion of *Sociolinguistic variables* in Chapter 3 on Naso linguistics), which make use of distinct forms but these forms share similarities in meaning. As with idioms, dialect variables are associated with a particular social index, but across the present-day variation rather than across a historical setting.

The fact that Nasos find language change and variation impressive relates to their ideology that their ancestors used to have more diversity in their language, and is at odds with their ideology of language purism.

### 6.5.5.1 Idioms

Some examples of idioms across time include the following below, where the first term in a pair, (a), is the term associated as an ancestral idiom, when compared to the form used in the present day, below it in (b).

(373) a. *zringko kjwesa*  
fox ?  
'fox'

b. *zringko*  
'fox'

(374) a. *kjörkö* *kjrira*<sup>26</sup>  
chicken ancestral term for chicken  
'chicken'

b. *kjörkö*  
'chicken'

(375) a. *ak wë*  
rock bathe  
'to grind corn'

b. *klak*  
'to grind corn'

(376) a. *shëng aa*  
paw open  
'raccoon'

b. *rakun*<sup>27</sup>  
'raccoon'

(377) a. *tjënma* *soybo*  
ancestral corn species<sub>1</sub> ancestral corn species<sub>2</sub>  
'ancestral corn species'

b. *ëp*

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<sup>26</sup> Also, *kjrira* is the Terraba term for chicken.

<sup>27</sup> English loanword.

‘present day corn species’

In each of these examples that people have offered, they call attention to both the ancestral form, which is the term given in each above (a’s), and also the current term above (b’s). Notably, in examples (373-374), the ancestral bi-word construction makes use of a diphrastric resource where both terms are semantically related. In (375-376), the ancestral terms are descriptive of the action in a periphrastic strategy, which is replaced in the present day with what appears to be neologism in (375) and borrowing in (376). In (377), the idioms for the words for ancestral corn are simply not species that are found today.

## 6.7 CONCLUSIONS

The Naso category of profound words is uniquely distinct from arbitrary or ordinary words in that there is an *interpretation* of significant overlap between either form, and/or meaning. A formal or semantic criterion is not in itself enough to define a profound word—individuals may associate an overlap in form or meaning in different ways, it takes an act of creative imagination to see profound words. This explains why many people claim that they do not know any profound words, and several profound words are controversial, though many are salient because of mythical relationship or fixed idiomatic meanings.

Naso speakers index their complex identities such as indigeneity through the use and discussion of ‘profound words’ in nostalgic rumination and imagination of their ancestral past.

## Chapter 7: Conclusions and future directions

“¿En conclusión Naty?”

“En conclusión tja Naso llëme”

*“In conclusion Naty?”*

*“In conclusion I’m not Naso”*

<laughter>

*-Hormelio Santana and the author<sup>28</sup>*

### 7.1 MAJOR FINDINGS

The goals of this dissertation were to present and describe Naso verbal art, the contexts in which these forms are realized, and how they index social, economic, and political stances. Effectively, this dissertation provides the first documentation and description of Naso verbal art. It is the first to document and describe the verbal art genre *tjlðkwo rong* ‘profound words’, which have been observed previously for neighboring languages such as Kuna, Bribri, and Cabécar, but not for Naso. It also is the first to describe other strategies, including the question-answer frame as a joking strategy (as in the quotation above), proverbs, the humorous use of ideophones, sound symbolism, aesthetically pleasing sibilants, and homophony and near homophony.

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<sup>28</sup> Hormelio Santana is a technician on the Song team of the Naso Documentation Project fluent in Spanish and Naso but dominant in Spanish. When reviewing his ELAN transcriptions, he would ask me how to write something in Naso, to which I would respond with a lengthy explanation and end with a hedge-like “but I don’t know, I’m not Naso”. Hormelio often, out of the blue, elicits the Naso-like joke frame or tag “so, in conclusion?” to get me to respond “In conclusion, I’m not Naso”.



The remaining question is that of **explanation**: *how* did Naso speech play and verbal art come to have the specific forms and resources it does? Specifically, were they independently innovated in Naso, or were they borrowed from structural patterns in the linguistic area? How common are the specific strategies around the world, typologically, and are there any that can be attributed to Naso-only comprehension? At several points, the dissertation alludes to verbal art structures in other Chibchan languages such as Bribri and Cabecar that mirror Naso profound words. Adolfo Constenla calls these *difrasismos* in his book (1996) on comparative poetics of Costa Rica, using the same term used in literature on Mesoamerica (Garibay 1964; León Portilla 1985) to refer to poetic couplets that share phonological overlap and create a third, non-compositional meaning.

In the following I entertain some possible avenues of language contact in the Intermediate Area (Constenla Umaña 1991) that may be taken up for future research on the socio-historical context of verbal art in the area.

## 7.2 LANGUAGE CONTACT

The question of whether languages innovate or borrow certain structures is a major one in linguistics. It appears that there are enough cases of parallelism, and specifically, *difrasismo*-like poetic couplets, in geographically distinct parts of the world such as Mesoamerica (Garibay 1964), Southeast Asia (Fox 1988), and the Caucasus (Southern 2005) to say it is a typologically common strategy that languages innovate independently. However, research on language contact (Thomason & Kaufman 1992; Winford 2003) has shown that all sorts of parts of language can be borrowed, including expressives features across Africa (Samarin 1970, Childs 1994), the Amazon (Seki 1999; Epps 2016), the Balkans (Joseph 2017), and the Caucasus (Southern 2005).

An extension of this dissertation project would entail how neighboring languages, especially Ngäbere, Spanish, and English Creole use speech play and verbal art, and whether they make use of similar strategies described here for Naso and what the relationships are between the use of each of these languages.

In the subsections below, I outline some patterns of how Naso verbal art are comparable to that of other languages, particularly Nahuatl, English Creole, and other Chibchan languages, and how these similarities might be due to contact.

### **7.2.1 Nahuatl influence**

There appears to be evidence Naso profound words were affected by language contact with Nahuatl. Sea-faring Nahuatl-speaking Pipil merchants regularly traded with indigenous groups of Central America in the 16th century (Fowler 1981). Nahuatl was a lingua franca in across Central America where Aztecs extracted tributes from vassal states; for this reason it most likely had prestige over other indigenous languages in the area. Nasos imported Aztec deities into their animist belief system, including the Quetzalcoatl and details surrounding its myth. Compare the forms of the Nahuatl ‘snake’ with the Naso ‘Snake deity’ below in (177a) and (177b), respectively.

- |       |    |         |          |               |
|-------|----|---------|----------|---------------|
| (378) | a. | Nahuatl | /koa-tl/ | ‘snake’       |
|       | b. | Naso    | /o:ka/   | ‘Snake deity’ |

The Naso form above can be explained by metathesis of /o/ and /k/, since Naso has a restriction against contiguous vowels. Below in Table 19, I show different ways in which Naso forms overlap with Nahuatl structure.

	<b>Naso</b>	<b>Nahuatl</b>	<b>Type</b>
(1)	<i>woyo-jer</i> liver-leave 'forget'	<i>el-kawa</i> stomach/chest-leave 'forget' (Campbell 1986)	noun incorporation
(2)	<i>shwlim-dgur</i> deer-snake 'boa'	boa=deer snake (Campbell 1986)	calque
(3)	<i>dong-ku</i> squirrel-joint 'rainbow'	rainbow=snake/cougar/squirrel/ weasel (Campbell 1986)	calque
(4)	[ku-wa        dbong-wa] alligator-DIM tiger-DIM [dobung    wlebung] eagle        hawk 'strong clans of warriors'	[ <i>in tiquahuauhtli in ocelotl</i> ] the eagle        the tiger 'warriors' (Bright 1990)	difrasismo (WARFARE)
(5)	[kjok-yo    di-yo] land-ABST    water-ABST 'homeland'	[ <i>in atl        in tepetl</i> ] the water    the mountain 'city' (Bright 1990)	difrasismo (POLITICS)
(6)	[ybo    jong    klo        jong] voice    be    mountain    be 'an artist's way of expression'	[ <i>in xochitl        in cuicatl</i> ] the flower        the song 'creative, artistic, activity' (Bright 1990)	difrasismo (ART)
(7)	[sbö    e        dlo    e] god    DEM    sun    DEM 'Christian God'	[ <i>in tloque    in nahuaque</i> ] the close    the near 'the Omnipresent One, God' (Bright 1990)	difrasismo (RELIGION)

Table 19. Semantic overlap in *difrasismos* and other features in Naso and Nahuatl

Judging from the semantic themes of the *difrasismos* (warfare, politics, art, and religion) that are shared between Naso and Nahuatl, it seems likely that the structural form of Naso profound words was likely to have been borrowed from Nahuatl due to its prestige.

My hypothesis is that Nasos who used *difrasismos* or profound words had higher status in society and that they used specialized lexicon to show knowledge of other-worldly concepts. This social function is maintained today – profound words index knowledge and power that wise elders have which common people do not.

### 7.2.2 English Creole influence

It is likely that expressive forms including pervasive use of ideophones, ejectives in interjections, and even some profound word forms can be attributed to contact with English Creole and a substrate of African languages. African languages are known for their rich use of ideophones and expressives (Childs 1994), as are English Creole dialects (Winer 2009). In the 1700s, a Mískitu-Zambu group allied with the British to conquer lands that were under Spanish rule to the south of Nicaragua. They traveled as far south as Panama waging war on indigenous groups including the Naso according to Naso histories. It appears that some profound words make use of English Creole words, such as *cup* and *plate* in (379), and *boss* and *chief* in (380). Nasos use *kapwa pjlerwa* to refer to special eating utensils used by sukias and spirits, and they use *basde chisde* to refer to non-Naso foreigners. The fact that the words ‘boss’ and ‘chief’ are used to refer to foreigners clearly shows Mískitu influence, because Mískitu were appointed as bosses and chiefs, as well as Kings, by British rule and political influences. I speculate that Mískitus carried these titles into Naso territory when they presented themselves, and the term stuck in Naso to refer to any foreigner.

(379) [*kap-wa*      *pjler-wa*]  
CUP-DIM      PLATE-DIM  
‘special utensils of shamans/spirits/authorities’

(380) [*bas-de*      *chis-de*]  
BOSS-ENUM      CHIEF-ENUM  
‘foreigners’

Another piece of data that appears to be due to influences from English Creole or African languages are the ejective sounds [tʃ̥] and [pʰ], in the following examples in (381-

382), where the Naso forms below are identical to the forms and semantics of English Creole forms.

(381) Naso and Panamanian English Creole [tʃ̃a] ‘interjection of annoyance’

(382) Naso and Panamanian English Creole [pʻi] ‘interjection of disbelief’

In Bocas del Toro Panamanian Spanish, these interjections have also been borrowed, but most monolingual Spanish speakers produce them without the ejectives, as shown in (383-384) below.

(383) Spanish [tʃo] ‘interjection of annoyance’

(384) Spanish [pitʃi] ‘interjection of disbelief’

Finally, it is possible that the common use of ideophones in Naso humor is related to contact with Afro-Caribbeans and who also make pervasive use of ideophones in English Creole.

### **7.2.3 Chibchan influence (*Bribri, Cabecar, Kuna*)**

According to Naso history and also Bribri and Cabecar myths, there was a tumultuous time of inter-tribal warfare from the 1800s to the early 1900s, where groups would fight over resources and land. They captured each other’s children as slaves and to extract knowledge of language, rituals, myths, songs, and cultural information. Cervantes (2003) and Constenla (1996, 2006) report Naso lexicon in Bribri songs (Sorbong, Dulé). Some Bribri and Cabécar lexicon I have found in Naso songs include the following in (385-386).

(385) *kayö pintu* >Bribri *kayö* ‘improvisor of songs’  
 ‘spirit of the Vulture who taught songs to Nasos’

(386) *diyo yro berber diyo yro lley* >Cabécar *berber* ‘rose-colored’  
 ‘different-colored waters’

Perhaps the most striking lexical similarity in Naso profound words and Kuna ritual speech which I have found to date is the Kuna term *ikarkana*, which refers to ritual or archaic texts (Sherzer 1983). The form *ikar* means ‘way’ or ‘path’, in this context in a metaphorical way where ‘path’ refers to a ritual transformation or curing rite. In Kuna, *-kana*, which Joel Sherzer explains is the plural marker, appears to be a formative descended from Proto-Chibchan \*kada ‘stick’ (Isthmic ‘CL:long’), where Kuna underwent the sound change \*d>n (Constenla 1981). In Kuna it appears to be lexicalized on some nouns, where the formative seems to contribute a meaning of ‘human’, most likely following to overlap in the LONG classifier to the HUMAN classifier in some Chibchan languages (Bermúdez 2016). One example of this formative in another term is *ibelelekana* ‘cultural heroes’ (Penland n.d.). The form *ikarkana* is similar to the profound word form in Naso /*irku k<sup>h</sup>lorku*/, which is explained by Hector Torres as being ‘physical path on which a person is going and confronts a spirit or person’. The overlap in form and meaning in the Kuna and Naso forms does not seem to be attributable to accident. It is noted that Nasos have lost traditions of medicine men and ritual speech, but this profound word seems to hold more knowledge than what Hector can recall. Below in (387-388), the Kuna and Naso forms are illustrated side by side.

(387) /*ikar-kana*/ Kuna  
 path-?  
 ‘ritual texts’

(388) /*irku k<sup>h</sup>lorku*/ Naso  
 ?-? ?-?  
 ‘physical path on which a person encounters a spirit’

I can speculate on the lexicalized Naso forms by comparing with with productive Naso words. In Naso, /irbo/ is a common term that refers to ‘path’, such as a path that leads from one’s house to the river, or up the mountains. Based on knowledge of Naso word formation and pervasive lexicalization of suffixes, I can confidently speculate that the form /ir/, or perhaps simply /i/ contributes the meaning of ‘road’ and the /-bo/, or /-rbo/ is a lexicalized formative. In the profound word then, /irku/ can be segmented into /ir-ku/, where /-ku/ or /-rku/ is speculated to be yet another formative, which is repeated in the second form of the difrasismo, /k<sup>h</sup>.lor<sup>r</sup>ku/. If the formative repeats, then the segmentation of this second word could be /k<sup>h</sup>.lor-ku/ or /k<sup>h</sup>.lo-rku/. While /k<sup>h</sup>.lor/ is not a root in the present-day Naso language, /k<sup>h</sup>.lo/ is common; it is a LONG classifier. Semantically, it seems natural that the profound word for ‘path’ would involve a word related to the meaning of ‘LONG’, where paths are long shapes. Furthermore, Naso /k<sup>h</sup>.lo/ and Kuna /kana/ are cognate forms, as Naso /i(r)/ and Kuna /i(kar)/ seem to be, where Kuna /ikar/ itself appears to also have lexicalized /kar/, the LONG classifier (short) form. Thus, it is likely that the forms in (-) are cognate. Or, perhaps they were borrowed across the two languages. In any case, their overlapping meaning and form provides evidence that ritual language permeated through contact between Nasos and Kunas.

In the ritual lexicon of different Kuna resigsters, it is clear that there is some Naso lexicon as well. For example, the everyday Kuna word for woman is *ome*, but in the language of the stick doll it is *walepunkwa* (Sherzer 1983:26), where *walē* is the Naso word for ‘woman’. The everyday Kuna word for hammock is *kachi*, but in language of the wood doll it is *ipebo-kachi-pilli* (Sherzer 1983:27), where in Naso ‘hammock’ is *ibē*.

Difrasismos have been documented across Chibchan languages, for Bribri (Constenla 1996, Cervantes 2003), Cabécar (Constenla 1996), and Kuna (Sherzer 1983).

In each of these languages, the forms similarly follow a FOCUS–FRAME FOCUS–FRAME template. See examples below in (389-391), where the repeating frame is bolded.

(389) **sekibö**        **ölibö**  
purple.corn    colored.corn  
'CORN'

(390) **tësabarala**    **kusabarala**                          Bribri  
?                         ?  
'WITH THE BASE, WITH THE DRUM'

(391) sankwali        **nele**                 yolina **nele**                          Kuna  
pepper                ?                         ?                         ?  
'RED SANKWA PEPPER'

More comparative research on Chibchan difrasismos and ritual language is needed in order to determine the extent and direction of borrowing across these languages. The relationship between northern Mesoamerican and Lower Central American verbal art is also needed. Compared to Mesoamerican difrasismos, Chibchan difrasismos are notably shorter and more compact with more parallelism on different levels besides structural parallelism.

### **7.3. OTHER DIRECTIONS**

#### **7.3.1 Theorization of speech play and verbal art**

Another goal is to develop the theoretical contributions of the Naso case to the speech play and verbal art framework. This line of work would include a more rigorous approach to analyzing Naso strategies, especially parallelism, ideophony, and reduplication patterns, which could especially contribute to theorization of phonological processes. This might develop a framework that uses some of the same methods in this project, which are the use of speaker-directed documentation products, which provide insight into the



categories and ideologies of speech play and verbal art. The framework is one way to uncover speaker intuitions, where a goal would be to determine to what extent speakers and languages vary in the particular strategies that are used, especially those which I call RELATIONAL strategies in non-arbitrary, iconic language. Additionally, more theorization could be included on additional moods other than vitality and nostalgia discussed in this dissertation.

Additionally, this might include theorization about the interplay between grammar and speech play and verbal art, and expand on how speech play and verbal art relates to grammar more generally by either stretching, constraining, or reducing grammatical systems, and also how the expressive resources themselves feed back into the life of the grammar and everyday conversation. This line of investigation shows promise for comparative, typological research, where the point of comparison could be **which systems** across languages are most likely to be manipulated in the creation of speech play and verbal art, and how the answer might relate to the **overall grammatical architecture** of the specific language in question.

### 7.3.3 Typological comparison of diphrasism

Further research that might draw out of this dissertation research would compare the type of parallelism found in Naso profound words with Mesoamerica *difrasismos* and other traditions of poetic coupleting around the world.

One basic observation of how Naso profound words compare similarly to Mesoamerican *difrasismos* is that both Chatino (Oto-Manguean, Mexico) for example (Cruz 2014), and Naso can elaborate a text by adding more lines that vary in the FOCUS, or in other words, by the syntagmatic relation (Jakobson 1960). See the example below from

Bright (1990) for how Nahuatl elaborates parallel *difrasismos* on a syntagmatic axis by repeating difrasismos along the text lines.

(10)	[	<i>in i-amox</i> the his-book <i>in i-tlacuilol,</i> the his-writing	900	His book,	
				His writing,	
	[	<i>in ilhuicac-tlatolli</i> the heaven-word <i>in teo-tlatolli.</i> the god-word	901	the word of heaven,	
				the divine word.	

Figure 22. Excerpt from Bright (1990).

It was shown in Chapter 6 on the case study of *Hypervariation* that Nasos may call attention to variation *not* on the syntagmatic axis which adds new words or phrases linearly as in Nahuatl or Chatino, but on the paradigmatic axis where variations of a profound word recur by varying the FRAME, which is unusual. The derivational morphology is manipulated rather than the open noun or verb slots. Speakers create these novel variations based on free association, similarly to the process of how Chatino orators syntagmatically add more lines that vary in the FOCUS. Naso speakers do this as well, but only up to *three* variations (see *Linguistic features of profound words*, Section 6.4 of Chapter 6).

#### 7.4 FINAL REMARKS

The documentation that contributed to this dissertation is innovative in several ways. It goes beyond the standard contemporary practice of language documentation that aims to document several genres or discourse styles in order to uncover the range of grammatical constructions. My approach is different, where I expand on Joel Sherzer's view that it is important to take seriously the parts of **language in and of itself** that speakers

find important to document through their own intuitions and organization. I add to this that specific, emergent, and one-time-only particular case studies or examples that individuals provide are very much to be the material of speech play and verbal art, beyond the “local categories” often referred to in the literature which tend to describe formalized events that may occur in a more routine or expected manner. Throughout the dissertation I call attention to the former, emergent instances of humor or nostalgia that arise in everyday life and are discussed in a conversational tone—this also happens to be a unifying tone of much of the content of the Naso Cultural Encyclopedia from which most of the examples in this dissertation are drawn from.

With a focus on an “encyclopedic” project favored by Nasos over other topics (e.g. a grammar or dictionary project), the project participants felt freedom to document and describe the parts of language and culture they felt most invested in. This led to a very successful documentation project that, through rigorous effort by all thirty participants involved, led to the production of a five-volume Naso Cultural Encyclopedia told through a plurality of perspectives, which cross-reference each other in a multitude of individual ways. The unifying idea of an encyclopedia united the different authors to discuss in universal ways the importance of their particular findings, all which contributed to a better understanding of the general overarching themes of Naso speech play and verbal art. In more direct words, the Encyclopedia is a great work of verbal art, one which I would not hesitate to suggest that all Nasos recognize the value of, and, which I believe is one of the greatest literary and intellectual products to ever come out of a documentation project. The documentation project responds in a new and more community-centered way to the good documentarian idea that a corpus should be representative and comprehensive. With an encyclopedia at the focus of a documentation project, the authors get to define what it means to be comprehensive by deciding what they document. The result is not only a

comprehensiveness on the authors' terms but also a rich range of grammatical and lexical attributes of the language.

The project and the methodology that Nasos developed informed the way this dissertation evolved, where I explain the relationship between the grammar of the Naso language and the forms that speakers produce and innovate. It is a step beyond structural and functional description of linguistic categories: it calls attention to the fact that individual speakers are the agents and interpreters of their own words and the words of others, very much in the spirit of contemporary linguistic anthropology, but also with a drive to push theoretical linguistics to explain why expressive language is **what individual speakers say it is**, and how it stands in relation to the grammar of the language in specific and general ways.

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