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## Mayangna, A Sumu Language: Its Variants and Its Status within Misumalpan\*

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### 0. Introduction. General Remarks.

Mayangna is the language spoken by the Sumu communities in the northeast regions of Nicaragua (RAAN - Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte) and Honduras (along Río Patuca). It belongs to the Misumalpan family, which also includes Ulwa and Miskitu. Although no two sources agree, there seem to be around 10,000 Mayangna people in Nicaragua, and some 1,000 in Honduras (see section 3 for details).

In recent years, there has been a debate about the name of the language and the people. Because the word *Sumu* had been used in a pejorative way by members of other groups in Nicaragua, the alternative *Mayangna* (lit., the 1st person plural inclusive pronoun 'we') began to be used instead. More recently, however, a group of Sumu people has tried to regain back the word *Sumu*, so now both words (*Mayangna* and *Sumu*) are being used. In this paper, we will be using the term *Mayangna* to refer to the language, which includes all the variants that use 'mayangna' as the form for the 1st person plural inclusive pronoun; we will, though, keep the term *Sumu* to refer to a larger group of languages, which includes Ulwa and excludes Miskitu [see, again, section 3 for a discussion on this issue].

This paper shows the results of a survey of the different dialectal variants existing within Mayangna nowadays. Such a survey was requested by several members of these variants in the hopes of clarifying the linguistic situation and, in this way, of having a better basis for a more rational implementation of the educational bilingual programs.

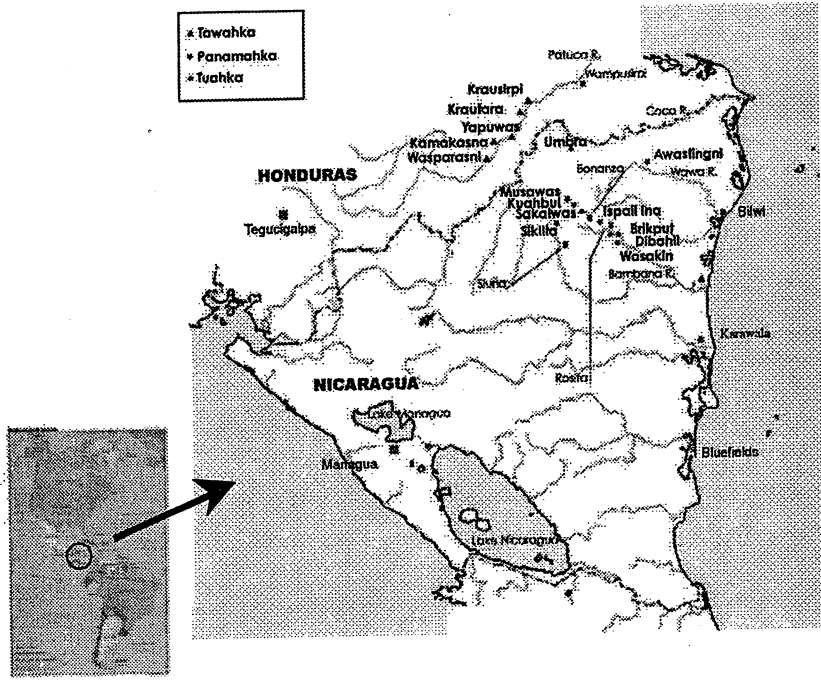
This paper is organized as follows. Section 1 presents the socio-historic background, especially in what concerns the role of the bilingual programs in the development of work on the Mayangna language. Section 2 presents the more relevant grammatical features (primarily in the morphology and, to a lesser extent, in the lexicon) that distinguish the

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\* This paper wouldn't exist, hadn't it been for the work of the Mayangna and other linguists who have contributed in the past. The authors want to especially remember: Melba McLean from Awastingni; Edwin Cisneros, Gloria Fenly, Aquilino Meléndez, Stringham Montiel, and Cristina Poveda from Wasakin; Pascasio López, Eloy Frank and Juan Pikitle from PEBI-Rosita; Bacilio Ordóñez, Daniel Salinas and Lorenzo Tinglas from Krausiripi/Krautara; Tom Green who worked with the Ulwa for many years; Danilo Salamanca, who worked on Miskitu; and Mike Dickey who, apart from his work on Miskitu, also worked on the 1995 field expedition for the Tuahka variant.

Mayangna variants. Three different groups have self-identified as such: the Panamahka, the majority group in Nicaragua; the Tuahka,<sup>1</sup> a minority group in Nicaragua, concentrated around the community of Wasakin; and, finally, the Tawahka, who inhabit the areas along Río Patuca in Honduras. Section 3 discusses the 'family' relations among the members of the Misumalpan group (with a focus on their syntactic characteristics), and its relation to the bigger picture of indigenous languages in America. Finally, section 4 offers some ideas for further discussion within the debate on the implementation of bilingual programs, currently under way.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1. Map of the Mayangna Communities in Nicaragua/Honduras



<sup>1</sup>Although the spelling 'Twahka' had been used in the past, the members of the community seem to have decided to adopt the *-ua-* spelling for this falling diphthong, leaving 'Tuahka' as the final spelling.

<sup>2</sup>In principle, and although this is a question always in debate, 'bilingual programs' in the context of Nicaragua and Honduras are not remedial programs. They acknowledge the basic right of communities to get an education in their own language and to preserve their culture. Thus, Mayangna, their first language, is used as the vehicle of communication in the classroom and the dominant language (Spanish, in the case of these two countries) is introduced as a 'second' language (although in most cases, it is the third or fourth language).

## 1. The socio-historic background: the bilingual programs.

In this section we will briefly present the socio-historic background that revolved around the creation of bilingual programs in both Nicaragua and Honduras, which in a way ignited the need to clarify the linguistic situation of the different Sumu/Mayangna groups.

### 1.1. Nicaragua.

In the 1980's, official bilingual education programs were established on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (cf. Gurdíán and Salamanca, 1991, for detailed discussion of this project and its historical and sociopolitical contexts). In the course of this process, some indigenous groups were left out, for one reason or another, and in one way or another. Implementation of bilingual programs for speakers of Miskitu could proceed in a relatively straightforward manner, since linguistic variation among them is minor. In the case of the communities referred to by the name "Sumu", however, implementation is not so straightforward (cf. Norwood, 1993). The Sumu bilingual education program, officially the Sumu Bilingual-Intercultural Education Program (Programa de Educación Bilingüe-Intercultural, hereinafter PEBI) was developed in Panamahka, the majority variant of Mayangna, and, quite reasonably, is located in the Northern Autonomous Atlantic Region (Región Autónoma Atlántico Norte, RAAN). Two issues, however, arise with this situation. First, there is a major linguistic division separating Northern Sumu (Mayangna) and Southern Sumu (Ulwa); these are distinct, though closely related languages. Second, Northern Sumu, or Mayangna, exhibits some internal variability, distinguishing the majority variant, Panamahka, from at least one minority variant, called Tuahka by its speakers. We will address these two points subsequently.

Through no particular fault of the Ministry of Education, or anyone else, the PEBI-Sumu arrangement (using Panamahka as the vehicle of communication) is completely inappropriate for the Southern Sumu, or Ulwa, who live in the town of Karawala in the Southern Autonomous Atlantic Region (Región Autónoma Atlántico Sur, RAAS). The Ulwa language is too different from Mayangna to permit the use of the northern materials in Karawala; besides, the school-age children of Karawala are predominantly Miskitu-speaking and function perfectly well in the Miskitu bilingual program available to them there (see Green 1996a). Nonetheless, Ulwa speakers requested an Ulwa language program, along the lines of the very impressive Rama language program (Craig, 1987, 1992). The Ulwa community, seeing its language in danger, hoped to document it and, if possible, revitalize it in the younger generation (cf. Hale, 1991; Green, 1996b). A language committee was created in Karawala, under the Ulwa acronym UYUTMUBAL (from Ulwah Yulka Tunak Muihka Balna, approximately, Custodians of the Ulwa Language), and work on the language has been underway since 1988—a dictionary will soon be finished, to be followed by a grammar, and a number of small publications have been produced for use in Karawala. A separate [bilingual] program seemed appropriate for Ulwa, for the reasons given.

Internal linguistic variability within Northern Sumu (Mayangna) also proved to be a challenge to the initial setup of PEBI. Members of the Tuahka community have been expressing their concern about their particular form of Mayangna not receiving an adequate attention in the materials developed by PEBI. The existing grammars and dictionaries are representative of Panamahka (Norwood, 1988/1997; von Houwald, 1980; McLean, 1996), and the educational materials so-far produced (grades 1st through 4th) are also in Panamahka.

Since the inception of bilingual education in Mayangna, representatives of Tuahka-speaking constituencies have expressed concern over this state of affairs. The issue was expressed so forcefully in the context of a 1994 bilingual education workshop in Sina, RAAN, that the linguists involved agreed that a response must be made. The first action to be taken was a Tuahka language workshop held in Rosita-RAAN January 1995, in cooperation with two institutions responsible for education and research in the Mayangna

region, namely: PEBI-Sumu (Programa de Educación Bilingüe Intercultural), the National Program for Intercultural Bilingual Education, and CIDCA (Centro de Investigaciones de la Costa Atlántica), the Research Center for the Atlantic Coast. For the purposes of this workshop, three teams were formed, each consisting of a linguist and a Tuhka-speaking teacher or language-expert, for the documentation of three linguistic domains in Tuhka (syntax, morphology and the lexicon). The Tuhka team was integrated by Edwin Cisneros, Cristina Poveda and Aquilino Meléndez; additional assistance was provided by Pascasio López, Eloy Frank (PEBI-Sumu) and Melba McLean (CIDCA).<sup>3</sup>

This meeting was the seed for subsequent meetings, now sponsored by PEBI and URACCAN (Universidad de la Región Autónoma de la Costa Caribe de Nicaragua), the University of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. The group was joined by Stringham Montiel and Gloria Fenly, and most recently by Alberto Dolores, Modesta Dolores, Neddy Ismael and José C. Meléndez. The group decided, in their July 1998 meeting, to adopt the name TUYUWAYABA (*Tuhka Yuln Wal Yakwa Balna*, or Group for the Research and Rescue of the Tuhka Language). Since that first meeting, the emphasis has been on the (linguistic) training of the members of the team. The group has begun to revise educational materials and to prepare data for a Tuhka Vocabulary.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.2. Honduras.

In the mid '90s, the Honduran government began preparatory work to implement bilingual programs for the ethnic groups in its territory. Although the main focus was on the larger Miskitu and Garifuna populations, an effort was made to include all the groups, among them the Sumu-Tawahka. As part of that effort, and since very little was known about the characteristics of the variant spoken by the Tawahka,<sup>5</sup> an initial investigation was conducted in February 1995, with the help of Daniel Salinas and Bacilio Ordóñez, with a follow up in August 1996 with the help of Lorenzo Tinglas. A preliminary vocabulary was produced with materials collected by L. Tinglas, who had been trained to collect and prepare morphological data, and a group of Tawahka teachers. Educational materials were in preparation (including 1st grade books, a grammar and a dictionary), but as of now we ignore whether they were ever implemented by the Secretaría de Educación Pública.<sup>6</sup> Although basic parts of the grammar were then documented, much more study is needed for Tawahka. What follows is the basic data on grammar that could be examined.

Contacts between the Nicaraguan and the Honduran groups have been attempted in several occasions; however to our knowledge no regular relation unfortunately exists to this date, although sporadic meetings do occur.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Grammatical variation in the Mayangna subfamily.

In this section, we will look into the grammatical features that characterize the Mayangna language and, more concretely, we will focus on those points that distinguish one variant from the other. Most recent works have dealt with the majority variant Panamahka. Such is the case of von Houwald's (1980) dictionary, Susan Norwood's

<sup>3</sup> The linguists involved were the authors and Mike Dickey.

<sup>4</sup> Funding for the project is at this point coming from small grants from Linguists for Nicaragua, the Northern Ireland Tuhka Language Support Group, the Foundation for Endangered Languages and URACCAN.

<sup>5</sup> Apart from the work of Conzemius (1932) and Lehman (1920), a few vocabularies and grammatical notes existed such as Martínez-Landero's 1980 work and other older ones mentioned in Herranz (1996).

<sup>6</sup> A relatively recent newspaper article in the English newspaper *Honduras This Week* (Feb. 23, 1998) mentions the presentation of a 'writing system' for the Tawahka language, among the educational activities under way.

<sup>7</sup> As was the case in January 2000, when a representation of the Tawahka Federation (FITH) participated in the *I Simposio de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe para Pueblos Sumu-Mayangna*, celebrated in Rosita, RAAN (Nicaragua), under the auspices of URACCAN University.

grammar (finished in 1988 but not published until 1997) and various other works that have appeared in *Wani*, the regular publication for Eastern Nicaragua, (e.g., Norwood, 1987, 1988, 1993). Those works can be consulted for issues not treated here. Tough we have the very valuable early work by Lehman (1920) and Conzemius (1929) and some limited vocabularies or grammatical notes by missionaries (see Herranz 1996: 401ff), no systematic grammatical description existed for present day Tuahka and Tawahka.<sup>8</sup>

This section is divided into two subsections: (a brief) one for the lexicon and another one for morphology. No major phonological variation has as of yet been detected across variants.<sup>9</sup> As will become apparent, the lexicon shows little difference among the variants; thus, looking at vocabulary items to establish the potential differences between the variants would, obviously, provide a very skewed view on the issue. Their syntax, as far as we have been able to determine, proves to be the same in what concerns the basic structures of the language; the syntax of Mayangna together with the other Misumalpan languages have undergone what some call a process of merger, which will be addressed in section 3.<sup>10</sup> Morphology, on the other hand, is the part of the grammar where more interesting contrasts can be observed. Contrasts in the morphological systems will, thus, provide the best comparison basis for the three variants of Mayangna.

### 2.1. The Lexicon.

If we were to look at basic vocabulary from the lexicons of the three Mayangna variants, we would definitely find very few points of contrast. As a sample, we have collected a few terms referring to body parts in the following table (the forms appear in the 'absolute form', without any inflectional morphology):

Table 1. Body part terms

<i>English</i>	<i>Panamahka</i>	<i>Tawahka</i>	<i>Tuahka</i>
<i>head</i>	tun	tun	tun
<i>hair</i>	bas	bas	bas
<i>tongue</i>	tû	tû	tû
<i>mouth</i>	tapas	tapas	tapas
<i>lip</i>	kungmak	kungmak	kungmak
<i>tooth</i>	an	an	an
<i>nose</i>	nangtak	nangtak	nangtak
<i>ear</i>	tap	tap	tap
<i>elbow</i>	siringmak	siringmak	siringmak
<i>hand</i>	ting	ting	ting
<i>thigh</i>	barahmak	barahmak	yakaimak
<i>rib</i>	sulu	sulu	sulu
<i>chest</i>	pala	pala	pala
<i>stomach, intestines</i>	bâ	bâ	bâ

<sup>8</sup> It is not clear that the referent of these denominations is the same today as it was for Conzemius and Lehman. What Conzemius describes as Bawihka has a striking resemblance to nowadays Tuahka, unlike his description of Twahka, which he identifies with the groups on either side of the border between Nicaragua and Honduras and whose language could easily be nowadays Tawahka. What Lehman identifies as Tauaxca could be our Mayangna (a label that he also acknowledges); Panamahka is listed as belonging, among many others, to Tauaxca. None of his grammatical descriptions would correspond to what we have observed for nowadays Tuahka.

<sup>9</sup> For a description of the phonological system of Mayangna, see Norwood (1997), the most notable phonological feature of the language being the existence of a voiceless series for nasals and liquids.

<sup>10</sup> See Norwood 1997 for a general overview of the syntactic properties of Mayangna

<i>knee</i>	kalasmak	kalasmak	<b>pangtak</b>
<i>shoulder, arm</i>	salah	salah	<b>pahpah</b>
<i>ankle</i>	burimak	burimak	<b>burmak</b>
<i>calf</i>	kalba	silaba	<b>kalsuma</b>

As can be observed, most of the terms coincide (contrasting terms are in bold). The few terms that are not cognate are provided by the Tuahka variant. Thus, Panamahka and Tawahka seem to show minimal differences between them. The same situation arises from a very coarse comparison of basic kinship terms, and of verbs denoting basic activities.

Table 2. Kinship Terms

English	Panamahka	Tawahka	Tuahka
<i>woman</i>	yal	yal	<b>wána</b>
<i>hombre</i>	al	al	al
<i>child</i>	walabis	walabis	<b>mĩmbin</b>
<i>mother</i>	<b>itangh, nanangh</b>	nanangh	nana
<i>father</i>	pápangh	papang	papa
<i>grandmother</i>	átangh	títih	titi
<i>grandfather</i>	kókungh	kukungh	kókungh

Table 3. Basic Activities

English	Panamahka	Tawahka	Tuahka
<i>eat</i>	kasnin	<b>uknin</b>	kasnin
<i>sow</i>	dahnin	dahnin	dahnin
<i>cut</i>	daknin	daknin	daknin
<i>cut down (trees)</i>	pihnin	pihnin	pihnin
<i>build</i>	paknin	paknin	paknin
<i>fly</i>	balhnin	balhnin	<b>yakpuihnin, pupumnin</b>
<i>swim</i>	waihnin	waihnin	<b>kurnin</b>
<i>speak</i>	yulnin	yulnin	yulnin

It must be noted that in many cases where there is a lexical contrast, as in *uknin/kasnin* 'to eat', the alternant may be used in the other dialects with a slight semantic change: *uknin* exists in both Panamahka and Tuahka, but in the sense of 'to devour'; the basic verb meaning 'to eat' is *kasnin*. A similar situation arises with *waihnin/kurnin*: in Tuahka *waihnin* exists in the sense of 'to row with a paddle'. Similarly, *balhnin* is used in Tuahka in the sense of 'to blow (the wind)'.

It may be the case that names of tools and instruments will provide more variability (cf., for instance, *kí* 'axel' in Panamahka and Tawahka, but *ásah* in Tuahka). Fauna and flora can too be a good domain for comparison. Names of herbs, plants and trees, as well as animals may also prove a good source for a comparative study. A good comparative study of these lexical areas requires a very careful control over the identity of the referents. Several databases are currently being built (e.g., *Proyecto Tuahka* and *Proyecto Panamahka*) and the material they will offer will hopefully contribute to further lexical studies.

As we pointed out, however, the comparison of lexical items in the three variants of Mayangna does not provide an accurate measure of the differences among them.

2.2. Morphology

The area of grammar where the variants of Mayangna contrast most significantly is the area of inflectional morphology. This section will be devoted to it. We will successively consider inflectional paradigms in the nominal domain (2.2.1), in the adjectival domain (2.2.2) and, finally, in the verbal domain (2.2.3).

The unit that seems to be underlyingly responsible for the phenomena described in this section, as well as for stress patterns in the language, is the prosodic foot. Similarly to what is pointed out by McCarthy and Prince (1990:227ff) for Ulwa (Southern Sumu), citing previous work by Hale and Lacayo (1988), Northern Sumu or Mayangna also takes the iambic prosodic foot (left to right) as its morphologic base. An iambic foot is a prosodic unit formed by two moras (or weight units), the second one of which is the prominent one. Thus, such foot can be realized (in Mayangna) either as a single (initial) heavy syllable ([F<sub>1</sub> σ<sub>H</sub>]) or as two syllables, the first one of which is light while the second one may be light or heavy ([F<sub>1</sub> σ<sub>L</sub>σ<sub>L/H</sub>]). This structure will circumscribe the location of inflectional elements across categories in Mayangna: the possessive and construct state morphology in nouns, as well as the reduplication base for 3pl in Adjectives and Verbs.

2.2.1. Nominal Morphology.

The inflectional system for nouns in Mayangna concerns not gender and/or number but person. The person inflectional morpheme reflects the possessor of the head noun; see for instance the example in (1):

- (1) a.            ũ            'house'
- b. (yang) ũki        'my house'<sup>11</sup>

The inflectional paradigm that arises, thus, is the possessive paradigm. The following is the Panamahka nominal paradigm, which includes 7 person morphemes (distinguishing between 1pl inclusive and 1pl exclusive):

(2) Possessive Paradigm

		<u>Panamahka</u>	
		sg	pl
1.	ũki	'my house'	ũkina    'our house'
2.	ũma	'your house'	ũmana   'your house'
3.	ũni	'her,his house'	ũnina    'their house'
1-incl	mã ũki 'our house'		

The following is an example of a possessive in Panamahka:

- (3) Sũl as (yang) ũki kau kãna.
- dog a    C. house.3s in entered
- 'A dog entered into my house'

<sup>11</sup>The optional presence of an overt personal pronoun like *yang* 'I' reminds us of the distribution of overt subject pronouns in *pro-drop* languages: it is absent in the default case, but present in the case of emphatic or contrastive use.



The form corresponding to third person must also be used when the nominal is preceded by a determiner (but not when the determiner follows; cf. (4)a-c) or when a bare nominal is interpreted as definite or contextually given (5).

- (4) a. kidi ūni 'this/the house'  
       this/the house.CS  
       b. ū-Ø kidi 'the house'  
           house the  
       c. ū-Ø as 'a house'  
           house a.INDEF

- (5) a. Sŭl as ūni kau kâna.  
       dog a house.3s in entered  
       'A dog entered into the house (we're talking about)'  
       b. Yang sana as talnayang. Walakibis sanani pâwa îna.  
           I deer a.INDEF see.PST1s child.1s deer.CS shoot.PROX3 kill.PST3s  
       'I saw a deer. My son shot the deer and killed it.'

For this reason, it has also been called the Construct State (see Heath, 1927; Hale, 1991b; Norwood 1997). The Construct State is also used when a relative clause precedes the head noun (this being an alternative form of the relative construction), as in (6).

- (6) yang paknayang ūni kidi  
       I build.PST1s house.CS the  
       'the house that I built'

As we mentioned before, the specific location of the affix is determined by the prosodic structure of the word: it appears after the first foot. Given that the prosodic foot is an iamb (left-to-right), the possessive affix will appear after the first syllable if it is heavy (long vowel, diphthong or [C]VC), and it will appear after the second if the first is light:

- |     |                                 |                       |  |
|-----|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| (7) | a. CV_, CVV_, CVC_              | b. CVCV(V/C)_         |  |
|     | i. ū 'house' -> ūni             | i. pala 'chest' ->    |  |
|     | palani                          |                       |  |
|     | ii. pai 'sweet potato' -> paini | ii. wayau 'smoke' ->  |  |
|     | wayauni                         |                       |  |
|     | iii. kal 'foot' -> kalni        | iii. mukus 'cloud' -> |  |
|     | mukusni                         |                       |  |

It follows from this that the affix will surface as an infix if the word is longer than one syllable (in the case of the structures in (7)a.), or longer than two syllables (in the case of the structures in (7)b.):

- |     |                               |                           |             |
|-----|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| (8) | a. CV_, CVV_, CVC_            | b. CVCV(V/C)_             |             |
|     | i. sŭpai 'spider' -> sŭnipai  | i. wakisa 'banano' ->     | wakinisa    |
|     | ii. waiku 'month' -> wainiku  | ii. wayauli 'rainbow' ->  | wayaunili   |
|     | iii. pukta 'night' -> puknita | iii. siringmak 'elbow' -> | siringnimak |

In this section, we will be concerned with two issues: (i) the morphological variation in the shape of the morpheme itself across Mayangna dialectal variants; and (ii) any potential allomorphic variation within one given variant.

With respect to the first issue (the shape of the morpheme), there definitely exists some variation across variants. The following table illustrates such differences:

(9) The possessive paradigm.

	<u>Tuahka</u>		<u>Panamahka</u>		<u>Tawahka</u>	
û 'house'	sg	pl	sg	pl	sg	pl
'my/our house'	ûk	ûkana	ûki	ûkina	ûk	ûkina
'your house'	ûm	ûmana	ûma	ûmana	ûma	ûmana
'his/their house'	ûn	ûnana	ûni	ûnina	ûn	ûnina
'our [incl] house'	mâ ûk		mâ ûki		mâ ûk	

A first look at the preceding table reveals an initial and interesting contrast: Tuahka and Tawahka, in contrast with Panamahka, present a singular paradigm with what looks like a vocalic 'reduction,' reflected in the 'loss' of the final vowel (compare Pa. ûki with Tu./Ta. ûk; Pa. ûma with Tu./Ta. ûm; and Pa. ûni with Tu./Ta. ûn).

In the plural, on the other hand, Panamahka and Tawahka pair together, contrasting with Tuahka: in Tuahka a vocalic change is observed (assuming that Panamahka represents the original vocalism, as seems reasonable in view of the fact that Ulwa shows the same vocalism in these forms). Compare Tu. *-kana, -mana, -nana*, with Panamahka/Tawahka *-kina, -mana, -nina*.

It seems, then, that Tuahka and Panamahka contrast maximally, with Tawahka sharing the singular forms of Tuahka (as described above) and the plural forms of Panamahka.

However, Tuahka (and partially Tawahka) offers something more than Panamahka. A closer look at the Tuahka data reveals a more interesting situation: the possessive/construct state paradigms offers 3 allomorphs, namely *-k, -ka, -ki* (1sg); *-m, -ma* (2sg); *-n, -na, -ni* (3sg). A fourth, more restricted allomorph will also be discussed. Tawahka lacks the forms *-ka, -na*, the patterns of which converge with those of *-ki, -ni*. We will use the alternation in 3sg to illustrate the distribution of the allomorphs.

The allomorph *-n (-k, -m)* appears in environments where the affix can syllabify with the preceding material. This is allowed when *-n* is affixed to syllables ending in a vowel, or in consonants *-h* or *-l* (we have no significant data attesting syllables ending in *-r*)<sup>12</sup>. Here are some examples:

(10)	a. V + n	b. -l + n	c. -h + n
i.	kîpala 'axe' -> kînpala	i. kal 'foot' -> kaln	i. wah 'rope' -> wanh
ii.	waiku 'month' -> wainku	ii. yalmis 'naranja' -> yalnmis	ii. kauhmak 'sand' -> kaunhmal
iii.	malai 'yuca' -> malain	iii. asal 'shame' -> asaln	iii. kawaih 'paddle' -> kawainh

<sup>12</sup>We only have one case, *wayar 'wire'*, which gives *wayarni* contrary to what we would expect if liquids were to pattern together. However, regular adjectives that end in the suffix *-ni* in Panamahka, regularly end in *-n* in Tuahka; in these cases, *-n* does syllabify with a preceding *-r* (see *itirn* 'rough'). Nasals pattern together with the rest of consonants, and so do voiceless liquids: *sirhsis-sirhnasis* 'grass'. On the allomorph *-na-*, see below.

A small detail must be noted concerning the pattern in (10)c.: *-h* in coda position will provoke a devoicing of the nasals<sup>13</sup> for 2nd and 3rd person morphemes (*-m*, *-n*), and will disappear from the surface form in the 1st person morpheme. However, in the plural, where the morpheme-initial *-k\_\_* will become the onset for the next syllable, the syllable-final *-h* remains:

- (11) (a) *wah* 'liana, hammock'
- |        |         |           |         |
|--------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Tuahka |         | Panamahka |         |
| wak    | wahkana | wahki     | wahkina |
| wamh   | wahmana | wahma     | wahmana |
| wanh   | wahnana | wahni     | wahnina |
| mâ     | wak     | mâ        | wahki   |

The allomorph *-na-* (*-ka-*) appears word-internally when the morpheme cannot syllabify with the preceding syllable:<sup>14</sup>

- (12)
- |                   |    |           |
|-------------------|----|-----------|
| pamka 'tapir'     | -> | pamnaka   |
| pangtak 'knee'    | -> | pangnatak |
| ukmik 'armadillo' | -> | uknamik   |
| arakbus 'gun'     | -> | araknabus |

Finally, the allomorph *-ni* appears in word-final position, whenever syllabification with the preceding syllable is impossible:<sup>15</sup>

- (13)
- |                  |    |         |
|------------------|----|---------|
| kulat 'scorpion' | -> | kulatni |
| sinak 'beans'    | -> | sinakni |
| ting 'hand'      | -> | tingni  |
| bip 'beef'       | -> | bipni   |

Let us now address one final allomorph whose use can be confined to a very restricted kind of nouns: those monosyllables of the form (C)VC. In those cases, the *-n* allomorph is used and the original vowel is copied before it; as a consequence, there is re-syllabification:

- (14) (C)V<sub>α</sub>C + *-n*   -> (C)V<sub>α</sub>CV<sub>α</sub>n   -> (C)V<sub>α</sub>]σ CV<sub>α</sub>n]σ

The most frequent cases involve the vowel *a*, but cases with *u* and *i* are also attested:<sup>16,17</sup>

- (15)
- |             |    |                    |              |    |       |            |    |       |
|-------------|----|--------------------|--------------|----|-------|------------|----|-------|
| tap 'ear'   | -> | tapan              | ut 'stomach' | -> | utun  | sip 'year' | -> | sipin |
| was 'water' | -> | wasan              | tun 'head'   | -> | tunun |            |    |       |
| bas 'hair'  | -> | basan              |              |    |       |            |    |       |
| pan 'tree'  | -> | panan              |              |    |       |            |    |       |
| an 'tooth'  | -> | anan <sup>18</sup> |              |    |       |            |    |       |

<sup>13</sup>Mayangna has a whole voiceless series for nasals and liquids (spelled respectively as *nh*, *mh*, *ngh* and *lh*, *rh*).

<sup>14</sup>In fact, if (word-internally) the preceding syllable ends in vowel, *-h* or *-l*, two choices seem to be possible, namely *n* or *-na*. Thus, we find both *barahnamak* and *baranhmak* for *barahmak* Tu. 'bone', Ta. 'leg'.

<sup>15</sup>In cases where the allomorph *-n* appears word-finally, the alternative with *-ni* is possible when emphasis is added to the word. Conversely, some speakers of Panamahka can accept the *-n* alternative (or at least, they do not reject it as utterly ungrammatical), whereas other Panamahka speakers strongly reject it.

<sup>16</sup>The vocalic system of Mayangna consists of those three vowels: *a*, *i*, *u*.

<sup>17</sup>One potential exception to the monosyllabic condition may be *asna* 'clothing' which forms *asanan*.

Tawahka patterns like Tuahka, except for the *-na* allomorph which it lacks; instead the *-ni* allomorph is used (thus having *pamnika* instead of *pamnaka*).

### 2.2.2. Adjectival Morphology.

Mayangna adjectives inflect for Number. The Number morpheme (plural) is realized as a partial reduplication and, once again, the base for this reduplication is the prosodic foot (iamb): the reduplicant is the most prominent part of the foot, that is, the rightmost one. In a [F<sub>1</sub>CV<sub>1</sub>CV<sub>2</sub>] type of foot, this means that CV<sub>2</sub> will reduplicate:

(16) salani 'fat' -> salalani

In fact, only the CV can reduplicate. If the second syllable is of the CVC type, the coda C is not included in the reduplication:

(17) parasni 'strong' -> pararasni

If the first syllable is long and, thus, constitutes a foot by itself, the reduplicant will be that first syllable; the reduplicated syllable, though, will be short (see Norwood 1997). The cases in (18) exemplify the different types of initial long syllables:<sup>19</sup>

(18) a. CV sâni 'black' -> sasâni  
 b. CVV naini 'long' -> nanaini  
 c. CVC pihni 'white' -> pipihni

If the reduplicant begins with a vowel, an epenthetic *h* is inserted:

(19) a. ingni 'light' -> ihingni  
 b. anna 'angry' -> ahanna

A second point to be discussed here is any possible cross-dialectal variation. Neither of the three dialects differ in the location of the reduplicate material, as is the case in the nominal realm. A very widespread suffix for adjectives is *-ni*. It is in the shape of this suffix that we find variation across dialects. In this case, Tawahka and Panamahka pattern together, while Tuahka presents what appears to be a 'reduction' of the suffix with the shape *-n*:

(20) a. pauni 'red' Panamahka, Tawahka  
 b. paun Tuahka

<sup>18</sup>Some of those are in fact 'irregular' forms in Panamahka: *anan(i)*, *tunan(i)* (note the epenthetic vowel *a* instead of *u*).

<sup>19</sup>Norwood (1997) reports some reduplications that might be a counterexample to our claim. She mentions the case of *paura* 'pink, purple' which reduplicates as *paurara*, when we would expect *papaura*. Even more surprising is the case of *wayakani* 'ugly' which reduplicates as *wayakakani*. A possible explanation may lie on the compound status of the words involved. Both *paura* and *wayakani* are compounds (*pau* is the same root that appears in *pauni* 'red', which reduplicates as expected into *papauni*) and it could be the case that the second part of the compound is available for inflectional morphology (as is the case in English, too). However, this sort of explanation would not be able to account for *siknis* 'sick', a loan from English, which reduplicates as *sikninis* (unless, of course, the word had been reanalyzed as complex).

In fact, this phenomenon follows exactly the same pattern as the one described for the nominal morphology in the previous section. The morpheme *-n* appears when it can syllabify with the previous syllable. This happens in a CV or CVV syllable and with CVC when coda C is a (voiced)<sup>20</sup> liquid or *-h*.<sup>21</sup>

- (21)
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| a. s <span>ân</span> 'black', sal <span>an</span> 'fat' | CV  |
| b. paun 'red', nain 'long'                              | CVV |
| c. tapain 'bitter', titim 'rough'                       | CVC |
| paranh 'short' aunh 'delicious'                         |     |

2.2.3. Verbal Morphology.

The Mayangna verb inflects for Tense and Person.<sup>22</sup> Norwood (1997) classifies the Mayangna verb in four classes, according to their thematic base. She also discusses the peculiarities of two irregular verbs, *kainin* 'to come' and *kiunin* 'to go.' In this section we will present the basic facts of the verbal paradigm and discuss the crossdialectal variation with respect to: (1) Person agreement; (2) the marking of the Future; and (3) root variations in the irregular verbs.

1. Mayangna has 7 different Person markers, including a 1pl inclusive form (also referred to as "12") and a 1pl exclusive form. The person morphemes are manifested by suffixes attached after the Tense morphemes, except in the case of 3pl which is marked by reduplication. We will, first, present an overview of the general paradigm and its crossdialectal variations and, subsequently, we will focus on the reduplication pattern of 3pl.

1a. The table in (22) below presents a general overview of the Person Agreement markers for simple tenses in Mayangna. In this occasion too, Panamahka and Tawahka pattern together and it is Tuahka the dialect that offers variation.

- (22) *yulnin*, 'to speak' - Present Tense

	<u>Tuahka</u>	<u>Panamahka / Tawahka</u>	
1s (yang)	yul <span>taing</span> / yul <span>ting</span>	yul <span>tayang</span>	o
2s (man)	yul <span>tam</span>	yul <span>taman</span>	o
3s (witin[g]) <sup>23</sup>	yul <span>wi</span>	yul <span>wi</span>	
1inc (m <span>ây</span> ang)	yul <span>tamayang</span>	yul <span>tamayang</span>	
1p (yangna)	yul <span>taingna</span> / yul <span>tingna</span>	yul <span>tayangna</span>	o
2p (manna)	yul <span>tamana</span>	yul <span>tamana</span>	
3p (witin[g]na)	yul <span>yulwi</span>	yul <span>yulwi</span>	

The contrast between Tuahka, on the one hand, and Panamahka/Tawahka, on the other, lies on 1sg and 2sg, and on 1pl exclusive. In those cases, as in the phenomena observed previously, Tuahka seems to present a 'reduction' of the morphological material in

<sup>20</sup>Remember that Mayangna has a series of voiceless liquids and nasals.

<sup>21</sup>In fact, what happens in the context of a preceding *-h* is that it devoicizes the nasal in the suffix.

<sup>22</sup>Mayangna has also a complex system of Subject Obviation. See Hale (1991)a. and Norwood (1997) for an overview.

<sup>23</sup>Both Tawahka and Panamahka have a velar nasal for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (singular and plural) pronoun, while Tuahka presents a dorso-alveolar nasal.

contrast. So, if Panamahka/Tawahka have *yultayang*, Tuahka contracts the person marker into the verbal thematic base producing *yultaing* or further contraction into *yulning*.<sup>24</sup>

The same phenomenon can be observed in the Simple Past:<sup>25</sup>

## (23) Past

1s	(yang)	yulnaing / yulning	yulnayang	0
2s	(man)	yulnam	yulnaman	0
3s	(witin[g])	yulna	yulna	
1inc	(mayang)	yulnamayang	yulnamayang	0
1p	(yangna)	yulnaingna / yulningna	yulnayangna	
2p	(manna)	yulnamana	yulnamana	
3p	(witin[g]na)	yuyulna	yuyulna	

In the first person, singular and plural exclusive, the sequence [aya] is reduced to [ai] or [i], although some Tuahka speakers also use the unreduced form, identical to the Panamahka (which we assume on comparative grounds to be the conservative form). In the second singular, the person marker is reduced from *-man* to *-m*; and again, some speakers use the unreduced form.

Norwood (1997) claims that the person markers for 1st and 2nd (both singular and plural) in Panamahka are in fact clitics and not verbal suffixes. The basis for that lies on the fact that those morphemes also appear with adjectival roots in predicational contexts:

- (24) (yang) parasni yang.  
PRON:1sg strong 1sg 'I am strong'

When adjectival predicates are negated, they appear attached to the negation (attached itself to an auxiliary form). In regular verbal forms, negation is an affix attached to the verbal thematic base, followed by the person marker:

- (25) a. (yang) parasni awas yang.  
PRON:1sg strong NEG:1sg 'I am not strong'
- b. (yang) dŋ muihni kastas yang.  
PRON:1sg meat eat:NEG:1sg 'I don't eat meat'

Furthermore, notice the relative order of the 3rd person marker *-wi* (considered an affix by Norwood), in contrast with 1st and 2nd clitics, with respect to the negative affix. The morpheme *-w(i)* precedes the negative affix, while 1st and 2nd *-yang*, *-man* follow it:

- (26) a. (witing) dŋ muihni kaswas ki  
PRON:3sg meat eat:3sg:NEG PTC '(s)he doesn't eat'
- b. (man) dŋ muihni kastas man  
PRON:2sg meat eat:NEG:2sg 'You don't eat meat'

<sup>24</sup> Both alternatives seem freely available, as does the full form. As mentioned before, full forms are accepted by some Tuahka speakers, maybe as an option in contrastive or emphatic contexts, maybe as a result of bidialectalism.

<sup>25</sup>The particle *dai* can also be added to the Simple Present to obtain an Imperfect Past, as well as to the Simple Past (forming something similar to a Pluperfect).

Thus, it seems that 1st and 2nd person markers do not select for a specific category to be attached to, which is a characteristic of affixes but not of clitics. Such is Norwood's argument.<sup>26</sup> Even though this may be plausible for Panamahka/Tawahka, the Tuahka data seem to indicate a further development in this variant, since it is not typical of clitics to interact phonologically so intricately with the base they adjoin to. This said, however, one must note that the full forms must be used with non-verbal predicates (adjectives, nominals and stative verbs, as well as auxiliary forms):

- (27) a. (yang) nain yang [Tuahka]  
 PRON:1sg tall:A 1s 'I am tall'  
 b. (yang) wana yang  
 PRON:1sg woman:N 1s 'I am a woman'  
 c. (yang) kasnin sip yang  
 PRON:1sg eat:V.inf can 1s 'I can eat'

In all these cases, negation surfaces attached to a 'dummy' base<sup>27</sup> (as opposed to the root of the predicate itself; cf. (26)), and third person singular appears with the self-standing form *ki* (instead of the suffix *-(w)i*; cf. (22)):

- (28) a. (yang) nain awas yang [Tuahka]  
 PRON:1sg tall:A NEG 1s 'I am not tall'  
 b. (yang) wana awas yang  
 PRON:1sg woman:N NEG 1s 'I am not a woman'  
 c. (yang) kasnin sip awas yang  
 PRON:1sg eat:V.inf can NEG 1s 'I cannot eat'
- (29) a. (witin) nain ki [Tuahka]  
 PRON:3sg tall:A PTC 'She/he is tall'  
 b. (witin) wana ki  
 PRON:3sg woman:N PTC 'She is a woman'  
 c. (witin) kasnin sip ki  
 PRON:3sg eat:V.inf can PTC 'She/he can eat'

Thus, although the contrasts in (22) and (23) seem to suggest a change in the nature of the Person markers in Tuahka, such change may just be restricted to verbal roots.

1b. As we mentioned before, the formation of the third person plural is obtained by reduplication from the third singular:

- (30) yulwi '(s)he speaks' -> yuyulwi 'they speak'

The pattern of verbal reduplication is the same as the one described for adjectival reduplication. It is based on the prosodic foot (iamb) and, thus, if the first foot is formed

<sup>26</sup>In fact, she doesn't allude to the adjectival attachment, but only mentions the fact that these markers have a secondary accent, always come after all other verbal morphemes (which is also true of person affixes) and attach to auxiliaries. See Norwood (1997:34, fn1.). It seems to us that the adjectival attachment is a somewhat more compelling argument.

<sup>27</sup>Negation in these cases can also appear in its 'reduced' form *awas yang*.

by an initial long syllable (in any of its 3 possible manifestations), it will constitute the base of reduplication (see (31)1.) and if the initial foot is formed by two syllables, the reduplicant will be the CV of the second one, as in the examples in (31)2.

- (31) 1. First foot is first syllable:  
 a. CV:           bīwi '(s)he sews'           bībīwi<sup>28</sup> 'they sew'  
 [Panamahka]  
 b. CVV           buiwi '(s)he shakes'           bubuiwi 'they shake'  
 c. CVC           kaswi '(s)he eats'           kakaswi 'they eat'
2. First foot is two first syllables:  
 a. CVCV       dakāwi '(s)he hears'           dakakāwi 'they hear'  
 b. CVCVC     barakwi '(s)he grows'           bararakwi 'they grow'

As expected, in the cases where the reduplicant is of the form CVC, the coda C is not reduplicated (see (31)1c and (31)2b). Furthermore, if the reduplicant syllable has no onset, there will appear an epenthetic *-h* between the two vowels:

- (32)           arkwi '(s)he snores'           aharkwi 'they snore'

An interesting property of this system is that it targets the original verbal root, no matter how it may have been morphologically modified. This can be seen in two different areas: compound verbs and prefixal verbs from verb classes II and IV.

Compound verbs are formed of two roots; their meaning is, generally speaking, opaque, though at times it may look more transparent. Examples can be *yul-talnin* 'leer' (lit. 'speak/word-see'), and *yul-baunin* 'talk-to' (lit. 'speak/word-throw'). The first part of the compound is invisible for reduplication purposes; what counts is the structure of the second element. Thus, the reduplication patterns are as in (33):

- (33)           yul talwi '(s)he reads'           ->   yul tatalwi 'they read'  
           yul baunin '(s)he talks (to)'   ->   yul babauwi 'they talk (to)'

If the first part of the compound were relevant for reduplication, we would expect, given that the first syllable *yul* is long, that it would act as the reduplicant base, producing something like *\*yuyultalwi* or *\*yuyulbauwi*, which are impossible.

Verb classes II and IV are characterized by the presence of a prefix *k* or *yak* in third person (both singular and plural). This suffix does not appear in the rest of the person paradigm:

- (34)           alangwayang       'I go to bed'  
           kalangwi       '(s)he goes to bed'

This prefix also is external to the reduplication system. Consider the pattern for *yakmaldinin* 'to hide':

- (35)           a. yakmaldi '(s)he hides'   b. yakmamaldi 'they hide'   c. \*yayakmaldi

Notice that if the prefix counted, the expected form would be (given the length of *yak*) the ungrammatical *yayakmaldi*.

However, if the root begins with a vowel, as in the case of *yakisdinin* 'to play', instead of inserting an epenthetic *-h-* (as in (32)), the preceding *k* gets to be borrowed:

<sup>28</sup>As in the adjectival reduplication, if the first vowel is long, the reduplicated vowel will be short.



- (36) a. *yakisdi* '(s)he plays'    b. *yakikisdi* 'they play'    c. \**yakihisdi*

The same happens with *k*-prefixed verbs:

- (37) a. *kâmi* '(s)he sleeps'    b. *kakâmi* 'they sleep'    c. \**kahâmi*

2. From a comparative point of view, the future is perhaps one of the most striking features in the Tuahka verbal system. The future paradigm in (38) shows the sequence *-ra-* in the first and second persons, singular and plural. These elements are lacking in the corresponding Panamahka forms:

- (38) Future *yamin* 'to do'
- |                    |          |                    |                     |
|--------------------|----------|--------------------|---------------------|
| <i>yamraki</i>     | [Tuahka] | <i>yamki</i>       | [Panamahka/Tawahka] |
| <i>yamram</i>      |          | <i>yamma</i>       |                     |
| <i>yamwarang</i>   |          | <i>yamwarang</i>   |                     |
| <i>yamdarang</i>   |          | <i>yamdarang</i>   |                     |
| <i>yamnaraki</i>   |          | <i>yamtanaki</i>   |                     |
| <i>yamnaram</i>    |          | <i>yamtanama</i>   |                     |
| <i>yayamwarang</i> |          | <i>yayamwarang</i> |                     |

Although the origins of this *-ra-* in the first and second person are obscure, the appearance of this element there may be due to an extension by analogy from the 3<sup>rd</sup> person morpheme *-warang*. We know that the third person forms are of considerable antiquity in the Sumu languages, as they appear in Ulwa as well. The latter language also has *-ra-* in the first and second person, but there it belongs to a historically coherent and consistent tradition of future tense morphology.<sup>29</sup> In Mayangna, however, only the third person continues this protosystem. The Mayangna first and second persons appear to be innovations built upon an original nominal base (the inflections *-ki* and *-ma*, 1st and 2nd, belong to the nominal system, not the verbal system; see also the plural marker *-na-*, which is also nominal in nature). The Tuahka future appears to be an additional innovation, extending the *-ra-* element to all persons, while retaining the nominal residue of the earlier Mayangna innovation in those persons.

3. Verbs in *-wa-* and irregular roots. Norwood (1997) identifies Class II verbs as those that attach the marker *-wa-* after the root (for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person), and take a prefix *yak-/k-* in 3<sup>rd</sup> person. The *-wa-* marker appears both in Present tense and in Past tense. However, in Tuahka this marker is lost in the *-n* based tenses (the Past and the inflected infinitive). *Kalangnin* 'to lie down' is an example of this type:

- |                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (39) Panamahka / Tawahka         | Tuahka                           |
| <i>alangwanayang</i>             | <i>alangning /alangnaing</i>     |
| <i>alangwanaman</i>              | <i>alangnam</i>                  |
| <i>kalangna</i>                  | <i>kalangna</i>                  |
| <i>mâ alangwana / mâ alangna</i> | <i>mâ alangnamayang</i>          |
| <i>alangwanayangna</i>           | <i>alangningna /alangnaingna</i> |
| <i>alangwanamana</i>             | <i>alangnamana</i>               |
| <i>kalalangna</i>                | <i>kalalangna</i>                |

<sup>29</sup> The paradigm in Ulwa is 1. *-r-ing*, 2. *-r-am*, 3. *-r-ang* (e.g., *yul-ta-ring*, *yul-ta-ram*, *yul-ta-rang* 'I will speak, ...')

Two of the irregular verbs that Norwood identifies for Mayangna, *kainin* 'to come' and *kiunin* 'to go' are Class II verbs. Both of them are *k*-prefixed verbs (i.e., 3<sup>rd</sup> person shows an initial *k*-, while the other person markers do not). The paradigm for Present tense in Tuahka shows the expected *-wa-* marker and offers the usual 'reduction' for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person markers. Below is the paradigm for *kiunin*:

(40)	Panamahka / Tawahka	Tuahka
	yawayang	yawaing / -wing
	yawaman	yawam
	kiwi	kiwi
	mâwi	mâ awi
	yawayangna	yawaingna / -wingna
	yawamana	yawamana
	uhuiwi / uiwi	wiwi

The Past, however, shows an interesting contrast. While *kainin* has in Tuahka the regular absence of the *-wa-* marker (see (41)), *kiunin* presents a further reduction of its root into *yau-* (from *yawa-*), as can be observed in (42).<sup>30</sup>

(41)	Panamahka / Tawahka	Tuahka
	aiwanayang	aining / ainaing
	aiwanaman	ainam
	kaina	kaina
	mâ aiwana / mâ aina	mâ ainamayang
	aiwanayangna	ainingna / ainaingna
	aiwanamana	ainamana
	ahaina / aina	aina

(42)	Panamahka / Tawahka	Tuahka
	yawanayang	yauning / yaunaing
	yawanaman	yaunam
	kiuna	kiuna
	mawana	mawana
	yawanayangna	yauningna / yaunaingna
	yawanamana	yaunamana
	uina	uina

The same root reduction takes place in the Future, which also presents the Tuahka *-ra-* innovation:

(43)	Panamahka / Tawahka	Tuahka
	yawaki	yauraki
	yawama	yauram(a)
	kiwarang	kiwarang
	mâwarang	mâwarang
	yawanaki	yaunarak
	yawanama	yaunaram(a)
	uhuiwarang	wiwarang

<sup>30</sup> With *kiunin* it is not totally clear whether *-wa-* is a thematic marker or part of the verbal root: it may be possible that the root is *iu-* with different syllabic restructuring of those elements as onset or nucleus, and additional insertion of epenthetic vowels.

In the case of *kainin*, though, the Future behaves as expected: no loss of the *-wa-*marker (following the Present tense pattern) and the usual *-ra-* (so, Pa/Ta *aiwaki* vs Tu *aiwaraki*).

### 3. The Misumalpan family.

The Misumalpan languages of Nicaragua and Honduras form a small and well-defined family whose name, devised by Mason (1939, 1940), incorporates the initial syllables from the names of three of its members, i.e., Miskitu, Sumu, and Matagalpa. The unity of the family was established by the extraordinarily prolific Lehmann (1920), who also assembled in his work most of the Misumalpan linguistic data available in his time. To our knowledge, the first serious comparative work seeking to reconstruct aspects of the putative proto-language is that of Constenla Umaña (1987).

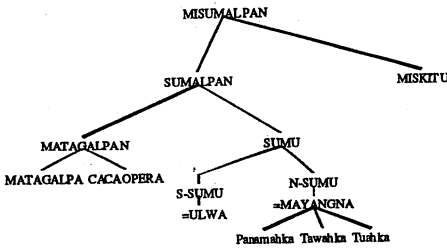
Misumalpan predominates among the indigenous languages remaining in present-day Nicaragua, the only other indigenous Nicaraguan language being Rama, of Chibchan affiliation, with approximately two dozen speakers remaining (Craig, 1985). Misumalpan is comparatively widespread in the region, with representatives both in Nicaragua and in Honduras. Nevertheless, it is a small family. The languages still spoken go under the names Miskitu and Sumu, the former having by far the most speakers, with estimates ranging from 70,000 to 90,000, of whom some 17,000 are in Honduras (see CIDCA, 1985). Miskitu is clearly the indigenous *lingua franca* of the Autonomous Atlantic Regions of Nicaragua.

Sumu, has a much smaller number of speakers, by comparison, though it is still strong in some areas. According to Constenla Umaña [n.d.], it is said to have between 6,000 and 8,000 speakers, some 2,000 of whom live in Honduras; however, Rivas (1993) mentions the figure of some 14,000 (citing a CEPAD report that assigns 12,600 to Nicaragua, and Herlihy (1991) for 704 in Honduras). A Harvard University 1995 census (cited by Herranz 1996) estimates the Honduran population around 850-1,000, while the census by the Federación Indígena Tawahka de Honduras (cited by Lara Pinto 1997) offers a figure of 945.

But these Sumu figures just given represent the estimate for what we refer to as Northern Sumu (cf. Heath, 1950), or Mayangna. Southern Sumu, or Ulwa, which we take to be a separate though closely related language, is confined today to the town of Karawala, near the mouth of the Río Grande de Matagalpa. The population of Karawala is approximately 950, and the majority is ethnically Ulwa. Linguistically, however, the town is effectively Miskitu, with an unknown number of people—probably not more than 400 or so—still able to speak Ulwa (see Hale, 1991b for further comments in this regard).

The western branch of Misumalpan, called Matagalpan following Brinton (1895), comprises the extinct Matagalpa and Cacaopera. These are closely and obviously related, and they were recognized as such by Brinton, who was appropriately cautious in his assessment of linguistic relationships. We believe that this entity forms a subfamily with Sumu (in agreement with Lehmann's intuition in this regard), and we refer to that grouping as Sumalpan. We believe that this entity excludes Miskitu, an isolate within the larger Misumalpan family. Our assumptions concerning the relationships within the family as a whole are embodied in the following diagram:

(44)



The Northern and Southern branches of Sumu, like the two forms of Matagalpan, are very closely related. However, there are a number of systematic morphosyntactic differences between them whose cumulative effect is substantial enough to impede easy mutual intelligibility. A learning period of some months would be required in order for a Northern Sumu (Mayangna) speaker to acquire a reasonable command of Southern Sumu (Ulwa). The reverse is true as well, though many Southern Sumu speakers are incidentally also speakers of some variety of Northern Sumu. In addition to the *systematic* differences between the two branches of Sumu, there are also *random* lexical differences. Of a sample of a hundred basic vocabulary items, Northern and Southern Sumu share between 61 and 71 percent, depending on whether judgments of cognation are, respectively, conservative or liberal (Hale and Lacayo, 1988; but see Constenla, 1987, for a higher estimate). In any event, we are inclined to say that Ulwa and its northern relatives are different languages, though closely related. By contrast, the division indicated within Northern Sumu (Mayangna) is of quite a different nature. Tuhaka, Tawahka and Panamahka are clearly sister dialects of a single language, a fact which was recognized by the first travelers who took an interest in such matters, not to mention sophisticated investigators like Lehmann (1920) and Conzemius (1929).<sup>31</sup>

Internal relations within the Misumalpan family are reasonably secure, though the precise nature of the genetic relation of Miskitu to Sumu is still a matter of investigation, as it is obscured somewhat by the existence in Miskitu of a large body of (Northern) Sumu loans, many of an intimate nature; and substantial back-borrowing from Miskitu into Sumu in the modern period also clouds the picture, though to a lesser extent. Furthermore, the syntactic structures of the present-day Misumalpan languages exhibit the characteristics of grammatical "merger", not uncommon in well defined "linguistic areas" (cf. Campbell, *et al.*, 1986; Hale 1997b; see also section 3.2) and, particularly, in regions of extensive bilingualism. This circumstance renders syntax of little use here in the effort to establish a Miskitu-Sumu genetic connection. Nonetheless, once the effects of relatively recent historical processes are identified and set aside, deeply seated aspects of Miskitu morphology can be brought forth in support of the linguistic family posited by Lehmann and his successors.

Although Misumalpan is in geographic proximity to two Chibchan languages, Paya (Pech) to the north and Rama to the south, it is not obviously related to them. Chibchan is, however, the external connection generally accepted for the Misumalpan languages, which are held to belong to a larger linguistic entity termed Macro-Chibchan by Mason (1939)—see also Holt (1975) and Campbell (1979) for discussion and references. If

<sup>31</sup> But see footnote 7 earlier.

Misumalpan is in fact related genetically to Chibchan, the relation may be too distant to establish. Certainly, it cannot be established on the basis of shared lexicon, in our opinion, and the evidence from morphology is weak as well (see Craig and Hale, 1992, for a study of one putative morphological etymology).

### 3.1. The sociolinguistics of Misumalpan.

For many years, the modern Misumalpan languages have been spoken in a situation of intense bilingualism, or even multilingualism. While there are monolingual speakers of Misumalpan, to be sure, there are large areas in Eastern Nicaragua where no one who speaks a Misumalpan language is monolingual. Of course, it is not surprising to learn that many, perhaps most, speakers of Miskitu, say, also speak either Spanish or English, the two Indo-European languages of the Atlantic Coast. But what is especially relevant here is that many, perhaps most, people who speak Sumu (Northern or Southern) also speak Miskitu, another Misumalpan language. As Susan Norwood (1993) has pointed out, a person's position in the Eastern Nicaraguan ethno-economic hierarchy determines the number of languages he or she speaks—the farther down you are in the hierarchy, the more languages you speak; in general, people learn the languages which are higher in the hierarchy, not those that are lower. Thus, people whose first language is Sumu tend to know more languages than other people do, and their first "second" language is normally Miskitu. Norwood reports the following predominant linguistic associations on the Atlantic Coast:

- (45) Population and Language associations (I):  
 Mestizos ..... Spanish  
 Creoles..... English, Spanish  
 Miskitus ..... Miskitu, English, Spanish  
 Sumus ..... Sumu, Miskitu, Spanish

If we now distinguish Panamahka from Tuahka, the associations appear as follows:

- (46) Population and Language associations (II):  
 Mestizos ..... Spanish  
 Creoles..... English, Spanish  
 Miskitus ..... Miskitu, English, Spanish  
 Panamahka ..... Panamahka, Miskitu, Spanish  
 Tuahka..... Tuahka, Panamahka, Miskitu, Spanish

The Tuahka in the north are not unlike the Ulwa of Karawala in the south, many of whom speak English and are likewise quadrilingual, speaking Spanish, English, Ulwa, and Miskitu. In fact, there are a few Mayangna speakers in Karawala as well. These people refer to themselves as Tuahka but generally acknowledge that they are linguistically Panamahka—some of them are quintilingual, speaking Spanish, English, Ulwa, Miskitu, and Mayangna (Panamahka alias Tuahka).

While the observed linguistic capabilities of members of most Sumu communities can be understood in terms of the social and economic circumstances on the Atlantic Coast of today, as just suggested, it is evident to us that Sumu-Miskitu bilingualism itself is a matter of considerable historical depth and complexity. Most importantly for our purposes here, long-term bilingualism is part and parcel of a linguistic development which has resulted in a degree of structural isomorphism which permits us to say, setting certain details aside, that the three modern Misumalpan languages "share the same grammar".

## 3.2. Grammatical features of the Misumalpan languages.

Consider the following simple sentence, in which the three lines are respectively Miskitu (MI), Northern Sumu or Mayangna (MA), and Southern Sumu or Ulwa (UL):

- |      |      |        |         |       |      |     |               |
|------|------|--------|---------|-------|------|-----|---------------|
| (47) | [MI] | Witin  | raks    | wal   | sula | kum | ik-an.        |
|      | [MA] | Witing | arakbus | kau   | sana | as  | î-na.         |
|      | [UL] | Alas   | arakbus | karak | sana | as  | î-ida.        |
|      |      | he     | gun     | with  | deer | one | kill:PAST.3sg |
- 'He killed a deer with a gun.'

These Misumalpan sentences exemplify a number of things immediately, including the general head-final phrase structure of the languages—the verb is final in the clause, the instrumental phrase is P-final, as expected, and the indefinite determiner *kum/as* is final in the DP. The definite determiner is also phrase-final,<sup>32</sup> as illustrated in (48) below, an example which incidentally presents an apparent exception to the general head-final character of Misumalpan phrase structure, namely in the post-nominal placement of attributive adjectival modifiers:<sup>33</sup>

- |      |      |      |       |      |                |
|------|------|------|-------|------|----------------|
| (48) | [MI] | Sula | tara  | ba   | ai-kaik-an.    |
|      | [MA] | Sana | nuhni | kidi | yâ tal-na.     |
|      | [UL] | Sana | sikka | ya   | yâ tal-da.     |
|      |      | deer | big   | the  | me see:PAST.3g |
- 'The big deer saw me.'

It has been shown, however, that this is not exceptional within the head-final grammar of Misumalpan. The N+A structure exemplified in (21) is a reduced relative clause and the adjective is in its expected clause-final position, i.e., predicate position (Green 1992, on Miskitu, though the analysis extends to the Sumu languages as well). In fact, this modificational structure is supremely consistent with the general principles of phrase structure in the family, in as much as it follows straightforwardly from the structure of the relative clause.

The Misumalpan relative clause is "internally headed", like that of Lakhota (Williamson 1987) or Navajo (Platero 1974, 1982). In surface form, the relative is simply a clause functioning as the complement of the definite determiner (cf. Kayne's 1994 analysis of relative clauses), as can be seen in (49) below:

- |      |      |        |                 |              |              |           |              |
|------|------|--------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| (49) | [MI] | [[Yang | <u>sula kum</u> | kaik-ri]     | ba]          | plap-an.  |              |
|      | [MA] | [[Yang | <u>sana as</u>  | tal-na-yang] | kidi]        | k-îra-na. |              |
|      | [UL] | [[Yang | <u>sana as</u>  | tal-ikda]    | ya]          | î-ida.    |              |
|      |      | I      | deer            | one          | see:PAST.1sg | the       | run:PAST.3sg |
- 'The deer which I saw ran (away).'

The relative NP argument, i.e., *the deer* in this example, is *internal* to the clause. This is the only overt representative of the semantic "head". It appears in the position which the

<sup>32</sup> However, when these elements, *kidi(ka)* and *adi(ka)*, are used as deictic, they appear prenominaly and trigger the Construct State on the noun; see below.

<sup>33</sup> The exception to this are adjectives (if indeed they are adjectives) designating ethnic affiliation, which appear prenominaly (e.g., *Tuahka wawana* 'Tuahka women').

argument would occupy within the clause under ordinary circumstances, in object position in the case at hand. Thus, since adjectives function as predicates, their final position in N+A modificational constructions follows from the analysis according to which these are relative clauses.

While these examples serve to illustrate certain shared structures of the family, it is the extent to which the structures *match* which has held our attention for some time. In the case of the Sumu languages, this is perhaps expected, being due no doubt to their close relationship.

In the case of Miskitu, however, it must be explained in other terms. Although Miskitu and the Sumu languages are probably related, at something like the "family" or "stock" level, the relationship is not a particularly close one. One cannot simply look at lists of vocabulary items to decide the nature of the relationship—far too much borrowing has gone on. Even such normally reliable items as the pronouns are of no use here, as the entire set of Miskitu personal pronouns has almost certainly been borrowed from Sumu. We can even be relatively sure that Northern Sumu, as opposed to Southern Sumu, was the source of the pronouns—and of the bulk of the other Sumu-derived items in modern Miskitu. The situation is further complicated by the fact that modern Miskitu is now the source of hundreds of borrowings into Northern Sumu, including items which were originally Sumu to begin with. When all of the borrowed items are removed from consideration, what remains is a form of Miskitu which is quite different from Sumu. Very little vocabulary remains in common, and the evidence for a genetic relationship between the two is found almost exclusively in shared morphology. The evidence includes the construct state and possessive morphology in the nominal system (found not only in Sumu and Miskitu, but in Matagalpa as well) and a number of rather specific details of verbal inflection. The evidence is certainly strong enough to support a genetic relationship, but it is not a close relationship, we repeat.

In view of the foregoing, we feel compelled to attribute much of the structural isomorphism within contemporary Misumalpan, as represented by Miskitu and Sumu, to contact and intensive bilingualism over a long period. To attribute all of it to common ancestry would severely strain credulity, in our judgment.

The parallels which are revealed by the examples we have seen so far are primarily in the realm of phrase structure—phrases are consistently head-final in the family as a whole; and all of the languages employ the internally headed relative clause, though all have an externally-headed alternative as well. The examples also exemplify the fact that all members of the family have subject agreement expressed morphologically in association with the clause-final inflectional apparatus which also marks tense; and all three languages have object markers proclitic to the verb.

Modern Misumalpan structural isomorphism extends to two grammatical subsystems which have assumed particularly important roles in the languages, to an extent which encourages us to say that they are now "hallmarks" of the family. They are not unheard of elsewhere, of course, but their presence within Misumalpan is especially prominent and pervasive. One of these grammatical features has been mentioned in passing—it is the so-called construct state. This is the form which a noun assumes under specific grammatical conditions, one of which is illustrated in the following Misumalpan nominal construction:

- (50) [MI] naha waitni-ka  
 [MA] ádika al-ni  
 [UL] áka al-ka  
 this man:CNSTR

In general, when a noun is preceded by another element within a larger nominal construction which it heads, the noun appears in the construct—as here, where the noun is preceded by a demonstrative. The construct is also used in the possessive construction, in the right-headed relative clause construction, and autonomously (i.e., without pronominal accompaniment) where the nominal is referentially dependent on prior discourse (see section 2.2.1, for some examples in Mayangna). The grammatical principles governing the use of the construct are identical in the three languages.

The second prominent feature in Misumalpan is the extensive use of clause sequencing constructions involving the system of subject obviation commonly known by the term switch-reference (cf. Jacobsen, 1967; Finer, 1985a,b). Misumalpan is not alone in the Americas in its use of switch-reference morphology, of course, but switch-reference is nevertheless a notable and extraordinarily important feature of the family, being used there in simple clause chaining (cf. Langacker, 1985; Craig and Hale, 1992), in one kind of complementation (cf. Kang, 1987; Hale, 1991a.), in the serial verb construction (cf. Hale, 1991a.; Hale, 1992; Salamanca, 1988), and in the causative (cf. Avilés *et al.*, 1987; Hale, 1989; Li, 1991). While there are morphological differences among the Misumalpan languages, the grammar and use of switch-reference is the same in all. The following sentences illustrate clause chaining:

- (51) [MI] Waitna ba plap-i kauhw-an.  
 [MA] Al kidi k-ir-i buk-na.  
 [UL] Al ya ir-i wauhd-ida.  
 man the run:PROX.3 fall:PAST.3sg

'The man ran and fell.'

- (52) [MI] Yang waitna ba kaik-ri kauhw-an.  
 [MA] Yang al kidi tal-ing buk-na.  
 [UL] Yang al ya tal-ing wauhd-ida.  
 I man the see:OBV.1 fall:PAST.3sg

'I saw the man and he fell.'

The head-final character of Misumalpan is reflected here not only in the verb-final order internal to the individual clauses but also in the relative ordering of the dependent and matrix inflectional morphologies and, consequently, of the clauses themselves—these latter are related structurally in approximately the manner in which a conditional is related to a main clause, with the inflection of the second commanding that of the first (as in the corresponding structure in West Greenlandic Inuit; see Bittner 1994). The inflections glossed PROX(imate) and OBV(iative) are morphological portmanteaus representing *tense* and *obviation*. They are dependent in that both of the grammatical categories they realize are interpreted (partly or wholly, depending on the particular form) in relation to the inflection of the matrix verb. The tense of the dependent verb is bound to that of the matrix. And the obviation (or switch-reference) category, which determines in part the referential possibilities of the subject, is likewise interpreted in relation to the matrix clause. The subject of the PROX clause is necessarily coreferential with the subject of the matrix, while the subject of the OBV clause is necessarily distinct from that of the matrix.

These observations are expected and quite ordinary for a switch-reference system, given the typological position and general typological consistency of Misumalpan. But the use of the switch-reference construction in expressing the causative gives rise to a circumstance which is far from ordinary. An example of the causative is given in (53), whose surface form is essentially identical to that of (52), a typical obviative clause-chaining construction.



(53)	[MI]	Yang	waitna	ba	yab-ri	kauhw-an.
	[MA]	Yang	al	kidi	yamt-ing	buk-na.
	[UL]	Yang	al	ya	ât-ing	wauhd-ida.
		I	man	the	cause:OBV.1	fall:PAST.3

'I made the man fall.'

The arrangement of clauses expresses an *iconic* feature, commonly observed in clause sequencing constructions cross-linguistically, according to which the "cause" precedes the "effect". But this fact, together with the typologically expected ordering of the dependent clause before the matrix clause results in a causative construction which is strikingly different from the causative as it is known elsewhere. In complete reversal of the usual situation, the Misumalpan languages have the "cause" predicate morphologically and syntactically *subordinate* to the "effect" predicate. It is as if one said, in Misumalpan, "when I did (something to) the man, he fell".

And if this were all there was to the matter, there would be nothing much to say about it—it would simply be the case that Misumalpan does not really *use* the canonical causative construction to express these ideas. But that is *not* all there is to it. For certain syntactic parameters (e.g., control and the imperative), it is possible to show that in (53), but not in (52), the subject of the *first* clause is the subject of the construction as a whole, as expected in a *conventional* causative construction. So far, this remains a true contradiction, and its proper documentation, and analysis, is of some interest theoretically (see Hale 1989, 1997; Avilés, Hale and Salamanca 1987).

### 3.3. The three variants of Mayangna within Misumalpan.

It is clear from simple inspection of the examples to come that both Tawahka and Tuahka belong to the Sumu sub-family of Misumalpan—i.e., they are obviously a form of Sumu. And it is clear also that they belong to Northern Sumu, or Mayangna, rather than Southern Sumu, or Ulwa. They are allied with its fellow northern variant Panamahka in respect to the rather spectacular "person shift", or "Mayangna Shibboleth", according to which Northern Sumu third person morphology corresponds to Ulwa first person inclusive morphology, replacing the original Misumalpan construct and third person morphology which now exists only vestigially in Mayangna (e.g., in the *-k-* of the first person possessive and preverb inflections). Consider the material in (54):

#### (54) The Construct

	<u>Ulwa</u>	<u>Tawahka</u>	<u>Tuahka</u>	
<u>Panamahka</u>				
3sg:				
'hand'	ting-ka	ting-ni	ting-ni	ting-ni
'house'	û-ka	û-n	û-n	û-ni
'vulture'	kus-ka-ma	kus-ni-ma	kus-na-ma	kus-ni-ma
incl:				
'hand'	ting-ni	mâ ting-ki	mâ ting-ki	mâ ting-ki
'house'	û-ni	mâ û-k	mâ û-k	mâ û-ki
'vulture'	kus-ni-ma	mâ kus-ki-ma	mâ kus-ka-ma	mâ kus-ki-ma

This illustrates the effect of the Northern Sumu person shift in nominal morphology. The Proto-Misumalpan construct suffix/infix *\*-ka-* survives in Southern Sumu (Ulwa), as well as in the non-Sumu branches of Misumalpan (Miskitu and Matagalpa-Cacaopera). In Northern Sumu (Mayangna), however, it is replaced by the suffix *\*-ni-*, modified by subsequent phonological developments in Tuahka and partially in Tawahka. This element

corresponds straightforwardly to modern Southern Sumu *-ni* 'first person inclusive', and it is quite possibly an impersonal in its original form, given that it is sometimes so used in modern Ulwa. The person shift is not limited to nominal morphology. It is also reflected distinctively in the morphologies of intransitive (55) and transitive (56) verbs:

## (55) Intransitive Verbs.

	Ulwa	Tawahka	Tuahka	Panamahka
3sg:				
'play'	isdai	yak-isdi	yak-isdi	yak-isdi
'pass, get up'	lâwai	yak-lâwi	yak-lâwi	yak-lâwi
'run'	îrai	k-îri	k-îri	k-îri
1incl:				
'play'	yak-isdai	mâ isdi	mâ isdi	mâ isdi
'pass, get up'	yak-lâwai	mâ lâwi	mâ lâwi	mâ lâwi
'run'	yak-îrai	mâ îri	mâ îri	mâ îri

## (56) Transitive Verbs.

	Ulwa	Tawahka	Tuahka	Panamahka
3sg:				
'strike'	bautai	bauwi	bauwi	bauwi
'kill'	îtai	îwi	îwi	îwi
'make'	yamtai	yamwi	yamwi	yamwi
1incl:				
'strike'	bauwai	baudi	baudi	baudi
'kill'	îwai	îdi	îdi	îdi
'make'	yamwai	yamdi	yamdi	yamdi

The same pattern of correspondence is to be observed here as in (54). Mayangna third person morphology corresponds to Ulwa first person inclusive morphology. Thus, the Mayangna third person intransitive prefix *yak-/k-* corresponds to the Ulwa first inclusive prefix *yak-*. And the Mayangna third person transitive thematic consonant *-w-* corresponds to the Ulwa thematic *-w-* of the first person inclusive. The system actually includes a fourth correspondence not set out here—the thematic *-d-* of the Mayangna first inclusive transitive corresponds to a third person thematic *-d-* in Ulwa transitives (hence Ulwa 3rd plural *baudai*, *îdai*, *yamdai*).

## 3.4. Miskitu and Sumu crossinfluences.

Let us now consider briefly the possibility of a special historical connection between Tuahka and Miskitu, the indigenous *lingua franca* of the region.

In the seventeenth century, Miskitu communities had a military and economic advantage over the inland groups which eventually came to be known as Sumu, permitting them not only to expand into Sumu territory but also to absorb large numbers of Sumu speaking individuals into the Miskitu community. We do not know the details of this process, but we do know that it had an enormous effect on the Miskitu language, which borrowed heavily from Sumu in that period. While both Sumu and Miskitu are Misumalpan sub-families, and their phonologies are very similar, it is often quite clear which modern Miskitu elements are of Sumu origin. Adjectives, for example, are inflected in the construct in Sumu, but not in Miskitu. Thus, the following comparisons show us not only that Miskitu borrowed adjectives from Sumu, but also that they were borrowed from Mayangna, not from Ulwa, which retains the original form (*-ka*) of the construct inflection:

(57)	<u>Miskitu</u>	<u>Tuahka</u>	<u>Tawahka/Panamahka</u>	<u>Ulwa</u>
	yam-ni 'good'	yam-ni	yam-ni	yam-ka
	pau-ni 'red'	pau-n	pau-ni	pau-ka
	pih-ni 'white'	pih-n <sup>34</sup>	pih-ni	pih-ka
	sang-ni 'green'	sang-ni	sang-ni	sang-ka
	pam-ni 'narrow'	pam-ni	pam-ni	pam-ka
	auh-ni 'delicious'	auh-n	auh-ni	auh-ka

The Mayangna construct inflection *-ni* plays no role in Miskitu, apart from its function in adjectives. The regular construct in Miskitu has several forms, the most prominent of which is a straightforward continuation of Misumalpan *\*-ka*. It should be said, however, that Miskitu assimilated the entire Sumu complex of forms based on these adjectives, so the hyphenation given in (57) is real synchronically for Miskitu, just as it is for the Sumu languages.

It is not unusual, of course, for languages to borrow canonical lexical items of this sort. But Miskitu also acquired its stock of independent pronouns from Sumu as well. And here again, it is evident from the third person form that the source is Northern Sumu (Mayangna), not Southern Sumu (Ulwa):

(58)	<u>Miskitu</u>	<u>Tuahka</u>	<u>Tawahka/Panamahka</u>	<u>Ulwa</u>	
	yang	yang	yang	yang	'1st'
	man	man	man	man	'2nd'
	witin	witin	witing	alas	'3rd'

It is possibly significant that the Sumu-derived Miskitu third person pronoun shares with its Tuahka counterpart the detail that the final nasal is apico-dental, rather than the dorso-velar characteristic of Panamahka and Tawahka. According to some authorities (e.g., Helms, 1971), the Tuahka communities would have been among those living closest to the location most often suggested as the early 17th century homeland of the Miskitu, i.e., Cape Gracias a Dios and the closely surrounding area at the mouth of the Coco (Wangks) River between present-day Honduras and Nicaragua. However, the Panamahka and extinct Bawihka Sumu were also in that region, and it is known that the last mentioned took the brunt of the earliest Miskitu expansion (see map in Helms 1971:17, for the progressive expansion of Miskitu and corresponding retreat of Sumu, both Northern and Southern). Bawihka, on the basis of evidence which survives (see, for instance, Conzemius 1929),<sup>35</sup> is quite obviously Northern Sumu—it is as likely a source as any for borrowings into Miskitu. But it is simply not yet possible to determine, with certainty, which variant of Northern Sumu contributed the most to the lexicon of modern Miskitu. It is clear, however, that the major source is in fact Northern Sumu, despite the existence of a few identifiable Southern loans (like Miskitu *snapuka*, from Southern Sumu *sana pauka* 'red deer, dwarf deer', with the tell-tale construct inflection *-ka*).

<sup>34</sup> In this case (as for *auh-n*) we have chosen a morphological spelling. The regular spelling is *pinh* and *auh*.

<sup>35</sup> See footnote 7.

It is our impression, based on the lexical and grammatical research done to this point, that Tuahka shares more elements with Miskitu than Panamahka (and possibly Tawahka) does. But this is almost certainly *not* due to early contact. Rather, the extensive reverse influence of Miskitu upon Sumu, a process of nearly two centuries' duration, has evidently had a greater effect on Tuahka than on Panamahka, for whatever reason.

Another feature which Misumalpan shares with many other multilingual societies is a special kind of "lexical integrity", or avoidance of borrowing. In general there is an attempt on the part of Sumu speakers to avoid the appearance of having an excessive number of Miskitu loans in their speech. This avoidance behavior is extreme in the case of some Ulwa speakers, who will even reject Miskitu words which were originally Sumu, as long as they are felt to be Miskitu. However, it must be said that Tuahka contains more Miskitu elements than the other Sumu variants do, including items like the Miskitu ablative postposition *wina*, which seems completely to have replaced the general Sumu *kaupak*. And in general, the Tuahka lexicon so-far obtained is unapologetically full of Miskitu loans. This is possibly a result of the fact that Miskitu was the primary language used in working on the lexicon. If the language of elicitation biased the material in favor of Miskitu loans, that in itself is interesting, as the use of the same language in doing lexical work on Ulwa had, if anything, the opposite effect—that of ensuring *resistance* to the admission of Miskitu loans into the material.

Finally, there is one Tuahka morphosyntactic feature which, so far as we can tell, it shares with Miskitu, in opposition to Panamahka, although it is as yet poorly documented. This is the use of a tense distinction in the obviative, or "different subject" (DS) member in the switch-reference system:

(59)	MI:	Yang	bangbang	kum	kaik-ri	plap-an.
	Tu:	Yang	tibamh	as	tal-ning	k-îra-na.
	Pa:	Yang	tibamh	as	tal-ing	k-îra-na.
		I	rabbit	INDEF	see:OBV.1	3:run:PST.3sg
		'Upon my seeing a rabbit, it ran.'				

(60)	MI:	Yang	bangbang	kum	kaik-rika	plap-bia.
	Tu:	Yang	tibamh	as	tal-ing	k-îra-rang.
	Pa:	Yang	tibamh	as	tal-ing	k-îra-rang.
		I	rabbit	INDEF	see:OBV.1	3:run:FUT.3sg
		'Upon my seeing a rabbit, it will run.'				

Although in the majority of recorded instances, Tuahka followed the Panamahka pattern, it occasionally distinguished the Past from the non-Past, as here. The form *tal-ning* in (59) is the regular first person Past tense form (also pronounced *tal-nayang* ~ *tal-naing*) found in independent matrix clauses. The following exemplifies the third person, with *-na* in place of the "formal" obviative *-wak* (cf. the Panamahka form given):

(61)	MI:	Waitla	ra	bal-an	dyara	yâb-ri.
	Tu:	Û-k	yak	k-ai-na	đi	kal-â-nayang.
	Pa:	Û-ki	yak	k-ai-wak	đi	kal-â-nayang.
		house.1s	to	3:come:DS.3	thing	3s:give:PST.1s
		'He came to my house and I gave him something.'				

In Miskitu, in partial but not complete correspondence with this, the non-future obviative is built upon the Past tense—in fact, it is identical to the common Past tense in that language. If these facts represent a further “special relation” between Tuahka and Miskitu, it is a tenuous and highly abstract one. The correlation is not perfect, since the Tuahka opposition, so far as we can tell, is Past/non-Past, while the Miskitu opposition is future/non-future, hence:

(62)	M:	Yang	bangbang	kum	kaik-ri	plap-isa.
	T:	Yang	tibamh	as	tal-ing	k-îr-i.
	P:	Yang	tibamh	as	tal-ing	k-îr-i.
		I	rabbit	INDEF	see:DS.1	3s:run:PRS.3

‘Upon my seeing a rabbit, it runs.’

#### 4. Conclusions.

In this paper we have examined the properties of the three linguistic variants associated with Mayangna, and the relation of Mayangna with the other Misumalpan languages still existing. Based on the grammatical evidence we examined, we can conclude that Tuahka is a variant of the Mayangna language (Northern Sumu) closely related to Panamahka, the majority variant, but still an entity of its own. Of the three Mayangna variants identified up to now, Panamahka and Tawahka are considerably close, while Tuahka manifests the more divergence. While differences in the lexicon exist, the most prominent area of difference is the morphological domain. If Panamahka, Tawahka and Tuahka are clearly variants of the same language (Mayangna, or Northern Sumu), Ulwa is clearly a different language (as argued by Hale 1991), though both Ulwa and Mayangna can be considered part of the general branch Sumu (Ulwa being Southern Sumu and Mayangna Northern Sumu). Both the Ulwa and Mayangna peoples are ethnically Sumu, however their languages are separate different languages, even though they maintain a closer relationship between them than they do with Miskitu. Miskitu remains the farthest relative in the family tree, a relation not easily established given the mutual borrowings through out the last three centuries and the existing situation of grammatical merger.

One of the reasons for conducting this study was, apart from the intrinsic linguistic value it may have, to provide a tool for the decision-making process within the Bilingual Programs in Nicaragua. There was a need (expressed, among others, by members of the indigenous communities involved) to obtain a linguistic, independent measure of just ‘how different’ the Sumu ‘languages/dialects’ were, and where they stood in relation to Miskitu. Do Ulwas, who are considered Sumu, speak the same as the other Sumu? Do the Tuahka really speak something different than the Panamahka? How much of Miskitu is in Sumu (and viceversa!)? This paper is an attempt at providing some answers to these questions, with the understanding that, as one would expect, one of the conclusions that can be established is that some lines cannot be easily drawn.

It has consistently been pointed out that the distinction between a language and a dialect is a blurry one, that there is a continuum and that most times using a label or another depends more on socio-political factors than on linguistic factors. An example that is often adduced is the contrast between the situation in Scandinavia and in Italy: the differences between the Scandinavian ‘languages’ are smaller than the differences between the Italian ‘dialects’; however, the former are called languages and the latter dialects. The same holds for the Chinese ‘dialects’. Some have even suggested that a ‘language’ is the ‘dialect’ with an army and a navy. In the context of Nicaragua, being able to establish whether one is dealing with a ‘language’ or with a ‘dialect’ was at the root of the decision about which group merited an independent Bilingual Program to be implemented in its primary school

system. This has vast repercussions, ranging from the creation of their own textbooks, and the decisions on the cultural contents to be included in them, to the training of their own teachers.

Several considerations have to be taken into account when deciding on the particular implementation of a type of bilingual education, and it is probably not the linguist's role to take such decisions, but just to provide the relevant linguistic information. In the last years (1997-2000), several attempts have been made at a compromise solution, from developing bi-dialectal children's dictionaries, to introducing culturally relevant stories in the curriculum, or to produce independent teaching materials in Tuahka. Several linguistic teams are working in this direction: TUYUWAYABA (The Group for the Research of the Tuahka Language), The Mayangna Women's Linguist Team and The Indigenous Mayangna Linguistic Team, all in Nicaragua. The goal is to respect the cultural identity of minority groups while at the same time integrating it within a model that reflects the unity of the Sumu group.

The situation of the Ulwa is quite different, though. First, because the language itself is quite different and second, because the sociolinguistic situation is quite another one, as well. Ulwa is not being spoken by children of school age; so, a program based on second language learning would be necessary.

In sum, in this paper we have intended to provide data and ideas that can be both useful for the linguist's work, and relevant for the situation in which indigenous communities find themselves nowadays.

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