CHAPTER 2

A Grammar Sketch of Paraguayan Guarani

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1 Introduction

This volume begins with a grammar sketch of Guarani. Although many varieties or dialects of Guarani exist, I focus here on the most widely spoken variety: Modern Paraguayan Guarani (henceforth, Guarani).1 A necessary caveat is that many complexities of Guarani are only skimmed here. I cannot provide a reference work for all Guarani postpositions or possible predicate TAM markers, for example. My goal is rather to give a general overview of the language to facilitate the work of the reader engaging in subsequent chapters of this volume. In addition, I will strive to identify areas of uncertainty in the analysis of Guarani, in order to hopefully guide future research on this important South American indigenous language.

In some respects, the most complete reference work on Guarani is still Gregores and Suárez (1967). Most contemporary reference works on Guarani are based largely on it. The largest part of the examples and discussion in this chapter come from the grammars of Guarania (2008), Krivoshein de Canese and Acosta Alcaraz (2007) (abbreviated henceforth as KdC&AA 2007), and Zarratea (2002). The works of Tonhauser (2006, inter alia) and Velázquez-Castillo (2004, inter alia) were extensively consulted as well. Other examples were found in my own unpublished fieldwork or created by myself. Finally, another important reference used throughout this sketch for a more contemporary view of Guarani typology is Dryer and Haspelmath (2013).2

Presentation of linguistic examples in this chapter follows the Leipzig conventions for interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glosses, with some important additions I clarify next.3 Most importantly perhaps, one should note first that the orthography of Guarani is often at odds with a morphemization based

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1 This should not be construed as a claim that this is the only Guarani variety found in Paraguay. Zarratea (2002), for example, recognizes six other varieties, sometimes called ‘tribal’ or ‘indigenous’: paí-tavyterã (endonym; also called by the exogenous terms kaiwa or kaiowá), chiripa or katuete, mbya, ache-guajaki, ñandeva or tapyete, guarájo or chiriguana/o.

2 Some aspects of the organization of this sketch have been influenced by Payne (2010).

strictly on linguistic criteria. Because of this, I have chosen to render examples on the first line exactly as found in a corpus or reference, italicized. The second line contains the (re-)morphemicized examples. (Occasionally, the first line may be omitted if the relationship of the morphemization to the orthography is clear.) If the example contains Spanish words, I signal these in boldface on the first line. I have assigned free or bound status to each glossed morpheme after comparing the prescriptive grammars of Bianchetti (1944), Guarania (2008), Krivoshein de Canese (1983), Krivoshein de Canese and Alcaraz (2007), Lustig (2005), and Zarratea (2002), and the linguistic studies by Gregores and Suárez (1967), Tonhauser (2006), and Velázquez-Castillo (1996, 2002a, 2004).

I follow Velázquez-Castillo (2004) and attach all postpositions to their bases, regardless of their standard orthography. I will gloss these postpositions generally by an equivalent English word, since their semantic and grammatical functional marking contribution to the clause has not been studied in detail (but see Gynan, Chapter 3). The only postpositions that I will gloss by a case label are =pe/=me and =re(he), both locative markers. I consider person markers used for participant cross-reference or possessives to be prefixes and I attach them to the base, except when they are used as free personal pronouns in the presence of another cross-referencing prefix. I gloss markers with sentential scope (e.g., interrogatives, emphatics) as second position clitics (Velázquez-Castillo, p.c., March 2014). More specific details about this decision for these and other morphemes are given in this chapter in the corresponding sections and also in Estigarribia (Chapter 10). Finally, I use the plus sign (+) to mark compounding processes (including noun incorporation), and the plus-minus sign (±) for morphological analyses that are possibly opaque synchronically. A table of abbreviations not in the Leipzig standard list is given at the end of the chapter.

1.1 General Data on Guarani

Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig 2015) gives Guarani the ISO 639–3 code ‘gug’ and recognizes the endonym avañe’e, ‘language of men’ (ava ‘man’, ñe’e ‘language’). Guarani belongs to the Tupí-Guaraní family of the Tupian stock, which according to Fabre (1998) comprises 62 different languages. These South-American languages extend from approximately 4° latitude in the North to 30° latitude in the South (Gregores & Suárez 1967). Other families in this stock include Arikém, Mondé, Puruborá, Ramaráma, Tuparí (in the Western branch), and Awetí, Jurúina, Mawé, Mundurukú (in the Eastern branch that includes Tupí-Guaraní; Rodrigues & Cabral 2012: 496–499). Most of them are spoken in