

# Language contact and change: The case of Muruiñoiz from northwest Amazonia

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This study shows the evidence of bi-directional transfer resulting from bilingualism, but with analysis of the effect of Spanish on Murui, a Witotoan language spoken by about 1,000 people in the Colombian and Peruvian regions of northwest Amazonia. The current sociolinguistic situation of the Murui is characterized by a rapidly progressing language shift towards Spanish. The language shift is an obvious consequence of the process of cultural interaction with the dominant cultures of Colombia and Peru over the course of the last centuries. Today, with many traditional norms and values lost, young children are brought up solely in Spanish and the knowledge of the language of their parents and grandparents is quite limited. Only some of them acquire the language through interaction later in their life, usually as young teens and young adults. Murui elders frequently complain that the speech of younger generations is ‘impoverished’ and ‘incorrect’. This paper is a first attempt at a comparison between the features of ‘traditional’ Murui language (as spoken by the elders) and ‘innovative’ Murui (as spoken by the younger people). It identifies contact-induced change on phonological, morphological, and lexical level under the impact of Spanish. Special attention is given to negation, possession, and markers of comparative constructions, as well as Murui lexicon.

**KEYWORDS:** Amazonian languages, Witotoan languages, Murui language, Spanish, language loss, borrowing, structural changes.

## 1. Introduction

Murui (known to its speakers as Bue) is a member of the Witotoan language family, one of the smaller language families in northwest Amazonia. Murui, together with M̄ika, M̄in̄ika, and N̄ipode forms a dialect continuum known as either ‘Witoto’ (Wojtylak 2020a) or more recently as ‘Murui-Muina’ (Agga Calderón ‘Kaziya Buinaima’, Wojtylak & Echeverri 2019; Echeverri, Fagua Rincón & Wojtylak *forthcoming*). Murui is spoken by about 1,000 people living in southern Colombia (Putumayo, Caraparaná, and Igaraparaná Rivers) and in northern parts of Peru (Ampiyacu and Napo Rivers) (OIMA 2008; Wojtylak 2020a). M̄in̄ika has about the same number of speakers as Murui; the population of both M̄ika and N̄ipode is estimated at about one hundred people in total (Fagua Rincón 2015).

This paper focuses on Muruiñoiz, a Spanish-Murui mixed language, used by younger generations of the Murui. After a brief introduction outlining the

current sociolinguistic situation of Murui in §2 below, §3 will focus on the typological profile of the language and discuss its most salient features. §4 outlines the converging patterns in Muruiñoz that is found in the areas of phonology (§4.1), morphology (§4.2), syntax (§4.3), lexicon (§4.4), and discourse organization (including code-switching) (§4.5). The last section (§5) offers a short summary.

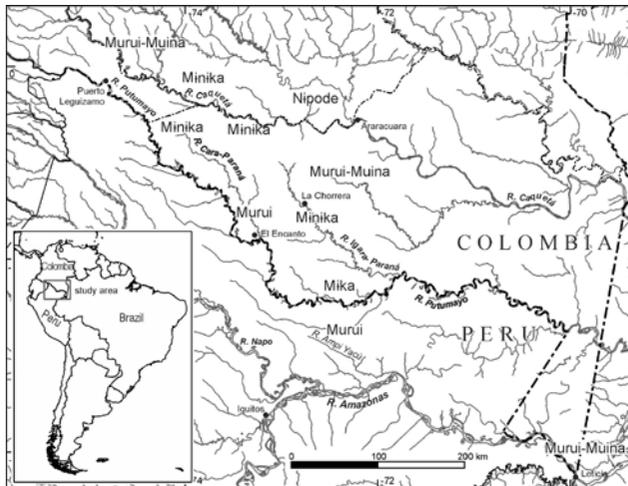
## *2. Sociolinguistic situation*

The contact between the ‘Westerners’ and the indigenous peoples of northwest Amazonia, although relatively short-timed, has had huge impact on the native populations, their languages, and their traditional way of life. The Murui-Muina people were contacted in the second half on the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the first instance by travelers, and later on, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by missionaries, non-indigenous settlers, and rubber barons. The continuous process of cultural interaction with the dominant cultures of Colombia and Peru has left its mark. It is a result of forceful resettlements of indigenous peoples in the years of the Amazonian Rubber Boom (1879-1913), followed by the brutality of ‘acculturation’, including the introduction of education and instruction in the Catholic faith in boarding schools, and the now frequent practice of mixed marriages (where wives are not required to learn their husband’s languages). As in many other places in the Amazon, the decades of strong prejudice against speaking native languages and practicing traditional customs triggered a gradual loss of linguistic and cultural identities. Today, young Murui-Muina have adopted the Western lifestyle. They frequently abandon their ancestral lands in search of ‘a better life’ in larger villages and cities in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. The sociolinguistic situation of the Murui-Muina is thus characterized by a rapidly progressing language shift towards Spanish which has become the language of everyday life. There are no monolingual speakers of any of the Murui-Muina dialects in Colombia anymore; in Peru, the situation appears to be similar (Lewis, Simons & Fennig 2016). My first-hand field experience over the last ten years in various Murui-Muina villages in Colombia has been illustrative of the fact that the majority of young adults under 25 years old do not speak their ancestral language. Murui elders frequently complain that the speech of those younger generations who are fluent in Murui is often ‘impoverished’ and ‘incorrect’.

The presence of missionaries in the Caquetá-Putumayo region over the last century has had detrimental effects on the indigenous attitude towards their native tongues (among which also Murui); even today, they

view themselves as ‘inferior’ to those of the ‘outside, Western’ world. There is evidence that Catholic Capuchins were present in the Putumayo and Caquetá area already in the 1890s (Davis 1996; Echeverri 1997); the first orphanage, founded by Capuchin Father Estanislao de Les Corts, was established in La Chorrera in 1933 (Map 1) (Echeverri 1997). In the 1940s, the orphanage became a boarding school, and it is now one of the oldest established boarding schools in this part of the Amazon Basin (Echeverri 1997: 87). Many of today’s Murui-Muina elders were brought up monolingually between the 1940s and 1960s and attended the school where they were forced to learn Spanish. At those times, speaking indigenous languages was forbidden and heavily punished (Bonilla 1972).

The Constitutions of both Colombia and Peru declare that the Murui-Muina people have a right to bilingual education provided in Spanish and in the native language spoken in a given territory.<sup>1</sup> In reality, it is Spanish that is always preferred in educational contexts. Although no official information is available about bilingual teaching programs used at indigenous schools, it is estimated that the great majority of those who speak Murui-Muina are literate in Spanish (95 percent are between 20 and 40 years old) but only about one percent of them can read and write in Murui-Muina (Lewis, Simons & Fennig 2016). According to my own fieldwork experience at communal schools in Colombia (La Chorrera and San Rafael), bilingual education is almost non-existent, as it essentially comes down to repeating aloud after a Murui teacher (a fluent speaker of the language) basic greetings and names for animals and artifacts (Wojtylak 2020: 32).<sup>2</sup>



**Map 1.** The location of the Murui-Muina peoples in northwest Amazonia.

3. Typological profile of Murui

Murui has a relatively simple system of six vowels and sixteen consonants. The consonantal phonemes include six stops: /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, and /g/; four fricatives: /ɸ/, /β/, /h/, and /θ/; two affricates: /c/ and /ʒ/; three nasals: /n/, /ɲ/, and /m/; and a flap /ɾ/ (see Wojtylak 2020a,b for details). The voiceless labio-labial stop /p/ is a marginally occurring phoneme in Murui. The vowel inventory is similar to other languages from northwest Amazonia. All the vowels – /i/, /ε/, /a/, /ɔ/, /u/, and /i/ – have long counterparts that are restricted to word-initial syllables only. Murui consonants are shown in Table 1.

	LABIO -LABIAL	APICO -DENTAL	APICO -ALVEOLAR	LAMINO -PALATAL	DORSO -VELAR	GLOTTAL
Voiceless stop	p /p/		t /t/		k /k/	
Voiced stop	b /b/		d /d/		g /g/	
Voiceless fricative	f /ɸ/	z /θ/				j /h/
Voiced fricative	v /β/					
Voiceless affricate				ch /c/		
Voiced affricate				y /ʒ/		
Nasal	m /m/		n /n/	ɲ /ɲ/		
Flap			r /ɾ/			

**Table 1.** Murui consonants (with orthographic conventions).

In terms of language structure, Murui is nominative-accusative with head marking and some elements of dependent marking. The language is largely agglutinating with some fusion and predominantly suffixing. Grammatical relations are expressed through cross-referencing on the verb (with one cross-referencing position, the subject S/A), as illustrated in (1), and a system of case marking (topical subject S/A, topical non-S/A subject, dative/locative, ablative, instrumental, translative, privative), as in (2). A case marker goes onto the last constituent of an NP.

- (1) *ini-di-omiko?*<sub>PRED</sub>  
 sleep-LK-2DU.M  
 Are you (two males) sleeping?’

- (2) [*bai-e*                    *jaiga-bi-na*]<sub>NP:O</sub>                    *jiro-d-e = ta*<sub>PRED</sub>  
 that.FSH-CLF:G    cahuana-CLF:SUBSTANCE.THICK-N.S/A.TOP    drink-LK-3 = REP  
 ‘He drank the cahuana drink (it is said).’

The typical clause structure is predicate final (SV/AOV) but the ordering of the constituents can be subject to change; as in other languages from this part of the Amazon, it is not unusual for S and O arguments to be postposed and follow the predicate.

Murui has three open word classes: nouns, verbs, and adjectives; Spanish nouns and verbs are easily borrowed. There are ten closed word classes: adverbs, quantifiers/intensifiers, pronouns, demonstratives, interrogative words, number words, connectives, adpositions, interjections. There is also a small closed class of adjectives, including *aiyo-* ‘big’ and *komo* ‘new’. Murui word classes share numerous properties among each other: in addition to sharing some verbal morphology (Wojtylak 2020a), many members of the open and closed word classes can head intransitive predicates, cf. (1-2) above (where the verbs *ini-* ‘sleep’ and *jiro-* ‘drink’ head transitive and intransitive predicate) with (3) below (where the question word *buu* ‘who’ heads intransitive predicates).

- (3) *buu-di-omiko?*<sub>PRED</sub>  
 Q<sub>1</sub>-LK-2DU.M  
 ‘Who are you (two males)?’

Only verbs can head transitive predicates. Functions of Murui open word classes are contrasted in Table 2.

FUNCTIONS	NOUN	VERB	ADJECTIVE
HEAD INTRANSITIVE PREDICATE	yes	yes	yes*
HEAD TRANSITIVE PREDICATE	no	yes	no
VERBAL MORPHOLOGY	no	yes	yes
MODIFIER TO VERB	no	no	yes
HEAD OF NP	yes	no	yes*
MODIFIER TO NOUN IN NP	yes	no*	yes
NOMINAL MORPHOLOGY	yes	no*	yes

(\* possible if derived)

**Table 2.** Functions of Witoto Murui open word classes.

Murui has a rich system of verbal morphology. The verbal category of tense is manifested as a binary opposition between non-future and future. The array of aspect markers is quite extensive and covers the following categories: phase of activity (terminative), temporal extent (reiterative, durative), degree (high intensity), frequency (semelfactive), composition

(remote habitual, customary, general habitual), and manner (rapid action, body movement). The language has one evidential (reported) and two epistemic enclitics occurring in the same slot of the verb. Epistemic modality (the ‘unconfirmed’ and ‘confirmed certainty’) markers cover speaker’s degree of confidence in utterance, willingness to vouch for information, and the ‘attitude’ towards the information (Wojtylak 2018b). Some of the Tense-Aspect-Mood-Evidentiality markers are illustrated in (4). Murui root and affixes appear frequently in the order shown in Scheme 1.

- (4) *joko-ri-zai-aka-ñe-i-ti-kue = di*  
wash-DUR-ANDTV-DES-NEG-FUT-LK-1SG = CERT  
‘I will not want to go washing.’

**Scheme 1.** The structure of Murui verb.

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| Root     | 1. Root  |
| Suffixes | 2. Aspect  |
|          | high intensity (root reduplication)                              |
|          | 3. Thematic syllable, miscellaneous affixes (verbal classifiers) |
|          | 4. Body movement <i>-da</i>                                      |
|          | 5. Aspect system   |
|          | terminative <i>-bi</i>   |
|          | durative <i>-ri</i>  |
|          | reiterative <i>-oi</i>   |
|          | semelfactive <i>-no</i>  |
|          | inceptive <i>-kai</i>  |
|          | manner <i>-rui</i>   |
|          | 6. Valency increasing markers                                    |
|          | causative <i>-ta</i>   |
|          | double causative <i>-tata</i>                                    |
|          | causative (encouragement) <i>-do</i>                             |
|          | 7. Emphatic <i>-i</i>  |
|          | 8. Desiderative <i>-aka</i>                                      |
|          | 9. System of directional markers                                 |
|          | andative <i>-ai</i>  |
|          | ventive <i>-aibi</i>   |
|          | 10. Aspect system  |
|          | remote habitual <i>-vui/-zoi</i>                                 |
|          | customary <i>-fi</i>   |
|          | general habitual <i>-kabi</i>                                    |
|          | 11. Attributive markers  |
|          | positive <i>-re</i>  |
|          | negative <i>-ni</i>  |
|          | 12. Negation <i>-ñe</i>  |
|          | 13. Prohibitive <i>-no</i>                                       |
|          | 14. Tense  |



A large multiple classifier system which consists of over 120 bound morphemes of various semantics (including feminine/masculine distinction, as well as size, form, interiority, and quantification) is perhaps one of the most salient features of Murui nominal morphology (Wojtylak 2016). Murui classifiers can occur in various morphosyntactic environments; in addition to nouns, we find classifiers on closed word classes (such as demonstratives, pronouns, and interrogative and number words) as well as on verbs and adjectives in nominalizing functions (Wojtylak 2018c). There are two types of nouns, bound and free. While bound nouns are obligatorily followed by classifiers, free nouns can either occur on their own, or be further followed by classifiers. The classifiers have often a singularizing function in the language (Echeverri, Fagua Rincón & Wojtylak *forthcoming*).

Murui adjectives from the open word class share grammatical categories with verbs and nouns (cf. Table 2 above). They can take either verbal or nominal morphology; this is shown in (6-7). Those adjectives that head intransitive predicates are illustrated in (6a-b) (cf. (6c)); those occurring with nominal morphology (cf. nominalizations) are shown in (7a-b) (cf. (7c) below). The semantic difference between an adjective used as a head of an intransitive predicate or as a head of an NP lies in its reading, which can be either ‘temporal’, as in (6a-b), or ‘timeless’, as in (7a-b).<sup>3</sup> (6c) and (7c) contrast verbs and nouns with adjectives and nominalizations.

- (6) a. *nai-no*<sub>NP:S</sub>                      *eo*    *jea-re-d-e*<sub>PRD</sub>  
 ANA-CLF:PLACE    very    dirty-ATT-LK-3  
 ‘That place is very dirty (lit. has a property of being very dirty).’
- b. [*ebi-re-d-e*<sub>PRD</sub>    *ri-ñō*]<sub>NP</sub>  
 nice-ATT-LK-3    woman-CLF:DR.F  
 ‘pretty (lit. has a property of being pretty) woman’
- c. Cf. verb:  
*nai-mie*<sub>s</sub>                      *maka-re-d-e*<sub>PRD</sub>  
 ANA-CLF.PR.M    walk-ATT-LK-3  
 ‘He can walk.’
- (7) a. *bi-ki*<sub>NP:VCS</sub>                      *eo*    *jea-ki*<sub>VCC</sub>  
 this.CTS-CLF:ROUND    very    dirty-CLF:ROUND  
 ‘This fruit is very dirty (lit. this fruit – very dirty (fruit)).’
- b. *ebi-ñaiño*<sub>NP</sub>  
 nice-CLF:PR.F  
 ‘pretty (female)’
- c. Cf. noun:  
 [*ñeki-ki*                      *i-ji*]<sub>NP</sub>  
 chambira-CLF:ROUND INDEF-CLF:WATERY  
 ‘liquid of *chambira* fruit’

In addition to sharing properties with verbs and nouns, Murui adjectives have a number of features on their own, including the obligatory occurrence of the attributive markers *-re* and *-ni*. Those markers also occur on verbs and nouns but have other (abilitative and possessive) meanings, different from those in (6a-b) above; cf. *jiko-ni-di-kue* (dog-NEG.ATT-LK-1SG) ‘I don’t have a dog’. For more details on the grammatical system of the language see the reference grammar of Murui (Wojtylak 2020a).

I now turn to discussing grammatical and lexical differences between Murui spoken by elders and Murui used by younger generations of speakers.

#### 4. Language change

The speech of Murui elders (referred henceforth as ‘Traditional Murui’, or simply ‘TM’) and younger speakers (‘Innovative Murui’, ‘IM’)<sup>4</sup> illustrates a language change on phonological (§4.1), morphological (§4.2), syntactic (§4.3), and lexical (§4.4) levels. There are also some differences in discourse organization, which involves code-switching (§4.5), absent in TM. Innovative Murui speakers are frequently called ‘sloppy’ by the elders and their speech is called ‘Muruiñoꝝ’ by the speakers (a portmanteau coined by blending *Murui* and *Español*; the presence of the final *z* is unclear).

##### 4.1 Phonology

Muruiñoꝝ is characterized by the appearance of a loan phoneme from Colombian Spanish that slowly replaces an existing phoneme in TM (cf. Table 1 in section 1): the TM voiceless apico-dental fricative [θ] is pronounced as the voiceless apico-alveolar [s], e.g. TM [raiθe] > IM *raize* [raise] ‘well’. Other Spanish phonemes, such as [l] (cf. Table 1), are pronounced only in words that have not been adapted into Murui (either IM or TM), e.g. *Kolombia* ‘Colombia’, never \**Koro(m)bia*. IM further shows lack of the phonological process of vowel assimilation, which is common in TR; this is illustrated in (8):

- (8) TM *o* + V > *uV*, if V is *a* or *e*  
 IM no alternation of this sort: *o* + V > *oV*

e.g.

<i>jifano</i> - ‘play’	+	- <i>a</i> (E.NMLZ)	>	TM <i>jifanua</i> ‘burning’, IM <i>jifanoa</i>
<i>jofo</i> ‘house’	+	- <i>e</i> (CLF:G)	>	TM <i>jofue</i> ‘housing’, IM <i>jofoe</i>

In TM, Spanish loan words are phonologically adapted and pre-

serve the CV syllable pattern; in IM, this is not the case, e.g. TM *Imae* [i.ma.e] > IM *Ismael* [is.ma.el] ‘Ismael’. This includes loan words that contain two consonants in the syllable onset, e.g. Spanish *escopeta* ‘gun’ and *grabadora* ‘recorder’ are simplified to CV patterns in TM, i.e. *kobeda*, *gabadora* in TM, but not in IM (see Table 4 in 4.4). In addition, Spanish loan nouns have word-initial stress pattern in TM (cf. Wojtylak 2020b); in IM, Spanish loan words retain their Spanish stress pattern, e.g. TM ‘*koputadora* > IM *komputa’dora*.

#### 4.2 Morphology

I focus here on three salient morphological changes which occur in negative, possessive, and comparative constructions in IM. Other characteristics of IM, which I do not discuss in this paper, include reduced use of verbal suffixes (e.g. remote past *-zoi/-vui*), verbal classifiers (Wojtylak 2019), and the overgeneralization of the collective number *-niai*.<sup>5</sup>

##### 4.2.1 Negation

In TM, negation of predicates is expressed in two different ways: with the standard negative marker *-ñe* (slot 12 in the verb structure in Scheme 1 in §3) and with the negative attributive *-ni* ‘lack of attribution (ability, on verbs; property, on adjectives; possession, on nouns)’ (depending on the word class they occur with, the attributive markers have different semantics). The negative attributive suffix *-ni* is mutually exclusive with the positive attributive *-re* ‘presence of attribution (ability, property, possession)’; the suffixes *-ni* and *-re* occur in the same slot in the verb structure (slot 11). Examples of positive clauses and their negated counterparts are given below. (9b) illustrates negation by means of the general negator *-ñe*; (10b) is an example of negation by means of the negative attributive (as the negative suffix occurs on the verb, the meaning is ‘lack of ability’).

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>(9) a. <i>ii-di-kue</i><sub>PRED</sub><br/>swim-LK-1SG<br/>‘I swim’</p>  | <p>b. <i>ii-ñe-di-kue</i><sub>PRED</sub><br/>swim-NEG-LK-1SG<br/>‘I don’t swim’</p>                                  |
| <p>(10) a. <i>ii-re-di-kue</i><sub>PRED</sub><br/>swim-ATT-LK-1SG<br/>‘I can swim’<br/>(e.g. I am healthy enough to swim)</p> | <p>b. <i>ii-ni-di-kue</i><sub>PRED</sub><br/>swim-NEG.ATT-LK-1SG<br/>‘I can’t swim’<br/>(e.g. because I am sick)</p> |

While in TM, the attributive suffixes cannot co-occur with the general negator *-ñe*, IM speakers often negate the positive attributive *-re* with the standard negative marker *-ñe*, yielding constructions such as those in (11-14). (The TM equivalents are given between parentheses).

- (11) a. IM *moko-re-ñe-d-e*<sub>PRED</sub> (green-ATT-NEG-LK-3) ‘(it’s) not green’  
 (cf. TM *moko-ni-d-e*<sub>PRED</sub> green-NEG.ATT-LK-3 ‘(it’s) not green’)  
 b. IM *gui-re-ñe-it-ikue*<sub>PRED</sub> (eat-ATT-NEG-FUT.LK-1SG) ‘I won’t be able to eat’  
 (cf. TM *gui-ni-ti-o!*<sub>PRED</sub> eat-NEG.ATT-LK-2SG ‘You are not able to eat!’)
- (12) IM *nia zefui-re-ñe?*<sub>PRED</sub>  
 still dry-ATT-NEG  
 ‘Isn’t it dry already? (it’s probably dry)’  
 (cf. TM *zefui-ni* dry-NEG.ATT)
- (13) IM *nia terefono-re-ñe-di-kue*<sub>PRED</sub> *uku-be* *i-ñe-d-e = za*<sub>PRED</sub>  
 still phone<sub>SP</sub>-ATT-NEG-LK-1SG money-CLF:LEAF exist-NEG-LK-3 = UNCERT  
 ‘I don’t have a phone yet (lit. I don’t possess a phone); there isn’t money (for it).’  
 (cf. TM *terefono-ni-di-kue* phone<sub>SP</sub>-NEG.ATT-LK-1SG)
- (14) IM *uru-e-re-ñe-di-kue*<sub>PRED</sub>  
 child-CLF:G-ATT-NEG-LK-1SG  
 ‘I don’t have a child (lit. I don’t possess a child).’  
 (cf. TM *uru-e-ni-di-kue* child-CLF:G-NEG.ATT-LK-1SG)

#### 4.2.2 Possession

Another domain in which TM differs from Muruiñoz is possession. Traditionally, in the Murui culture, concepts that are considered ‘communal’ cannot not be possessed by individuals. For instance, *iyi* ‘jungle garden’ conventionally belongs to entire clans. With the progressive acculturation of younger Murui, the previously ‘unpossessable’ items can now be owned by an individual, or a group of individuals. As nowadays many of the young people have their own jungle gardens, which are not shared with other members of their family, possessive NPs such as *kue iyi* ‘my jungle garden’ or, more often, *koko iyi* ‘our (dual, as a couple) jungle garden’ are used. This is instead of the traditional (communal) *kai iyi* ‘our (plural) jungle garden’. This leads to a strong disapproval of Murui elders who comment that “not only do younger Murui speak broken words” but that they also “have lost their culture”.

IM possessive constructions also show changes on the morphosyntactic level. In TM, all personal pronouns (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> person) can function as possessive markers, as illustrated in (15) from TM:

- (15) [*kai<sub>R</sub> komima-fo<sub>D</sub>*]<sub>S</sub> [*San José ari-fe*]<sub>LOC</sub> *i-t-e*<sub>PRED</sub>  
 1PL person.CLF:DR.M-CLF:CAV San\_José<sub>SP</sub> uphill-CLF:SIDE exist-LK-3  
 ‘Our Hole of Humanity (lit. hole of the people) is located north of San José.’

In TM, pronouns marked with genitive *-ie* cannot function as modifiers within an NP; they can however head intransitive predicates. An example from TM is given in (16):

- (16) [oo<sub>R</sub> ifo-gi<sub>b</sub>]<sub>NP</sub> oo-ie-d-e<sub>PRED</sub>  
 2SG head-CLF:OVAL.BIGGER 2SG-GEN-LK-3  
 ‘That (peccary’s) head is yours!’

This is not the case in IM. Pronouns followed by genitive suffix can be used as modifying elements within an NP. Such usage has overtones of being angry and annoyed, as shown in (17) from IM;<sup>6</sup> cf. (16) above:

- (17) [oo-ie ifo-gi]<sub>s</sub> maraiñe-d-e!<sub>PRED</sub>  
 2SG-GEN head-CLF:OVAL.BIGGER good.ATT.NEG-LK-3  
 ‘Your head is not good!’ (a young man shouting at his brother)

### 4.2.3 Comparison

Another change characteristic of Muruiñoiz can be found in comparative constructions. TM has comparative monoclausal constructions like the one illustrated in (18), with the standard of comparison being followed by the standard marker (cf. Dixon 2012: 343-375):

- (18) COMPAREE PARAMETER STANDARD STANDARD-MARKER  
 José<sub>s</sub> uaiki-ma<sub>PRED</sub> [Karo baai-fe-mo]<sub>OBLIQUE</sub>  
 José<sub>SP</sub> aged-CLF:DR.M Carlos<sub>SP</sub> THERE-CLF:SIDE-LOC  
 ‘José is older than Carlos (lit. José is an aged (man), ahead of Carlos).’

The Murui standard marker (which is an adverb) can have various forms; in addition to *baaifemo* ‘more (lit. ahead, on the side over there)’, there is also *foofemo* ‘less, slimmer (lit. on the inside)’, *aafemo* ‘higher (lit. on the side above)’, *anafemo* ‘lower (lit. on the down side)’, and *jinofermo* ‘wider (lit. on the outside)’ (Wojtylak 2018a). Those markers are used depending on the kind of comparative relation between the comparee and the standard, which can be either on the horizontal axis, i.e. flat, as in (18) above, or the vertical one, i.e. top to bottom, as in (19) below. For instance, when referring to entities located in space expressing the meaning of ‘Y smaller/lower than X’ speakers of TM use the standard marker *anafemo* ‘lower’:

- (19) COMPAREE PARAMETER STANDARD STANDARD-MARKER  
 kue<sub>s</sub> ia-ñaiño-di-kue<sub>PRED</sub> [Sandriela ana-fe-mo]<sub>OBLIQUE</sub>  
 1SG short-CLF:PR.F-LK-1SG Sandriela<sub>SP</sub> below-CLF:SIDE-LOC  
 ‘I am shorter than Sandriela (lit. I am short, Sandriela on the down side).’

When expressing comparative meanings, speakers of IM rarely use the array of the standard markers available in TM. They usually employ *baaifemo* for both ‘more’ and ‘less’, as illustrated in (20); cf. (19)

above. One rarely hears *foofemo* (that is sometimes also used by IM speakers when expressing the meaning ‘less’).

- (20) COMPAREE P-MARK PARAMETER STANDARD STANDARD-MARKER  
*kue<sub>s</sub>* *eo* *aare-ñaiño-dī-kue<sub>PRED</sub>* [*nai-maki* *baai-fe-mo*]<sub>OBLIQUE</sub>  
 1SG very long-CLF:PR.F-LK-1SG ANA-CLF:PR.GR.AN there-CLF:SIDE-LOC  
 ‘I am taller than them (lit. I am very long, ahead of them).’  
 (cf. *aafemo* in TM)

TM has further no ‘dedicated’ superlative construction; superlative readings are highly contextual and involve either the use of the intensifier *eo* ‘very’, as in (21):

- (21) *nai-mie<sub>VCS</sub>* *eo* *aiyo-mie<sub>VCC</sub>*  
 ANA-CLF:PR.M very big-CLF:PR.M  
 ‘He is a very big (man);’ or ‘He is the biggest (man).’

IM has a construction with superlative meanings, which is not used in TM. It involves a noun that indicates a set of referents, marked by (plural or collective) number followed by the ablative marker, as in (22):

- (22) [*bi-e* *uru-iai-mona*]<sub>OBLIQUE</sub> *da-za<sub>s</sub>* *gui-aka-ñe-d-e<sub>PRED</sub>*  
 this.CTS-CLF:G child-CLF:G.PL-ABL one-CLF:IMMATURE eat-DES-NEG-LK-3  
 ‘Of/From all these children, one doesn’t want to eat.’

Syntactically, such constructions resemble the structure of the Spanish superlative constructions, where one referent is set against a group of referents. Compare the Spanish construction in (23) ‘the oldest grandfather (out of) everybody’ with the IM illustrated in (22) above ‘from/of all these children’.

- (23) [*el abuelo más viejo de todos*] *no quiere comer*  
 the<sub>SP</sub> grandfather<sub>SP</sub> more<sub>SP</sub> old<sub>SP</sub> of<sub>SP</sub> everybody<sub>SP</sub> no<sub>SP</sub> wants<sub>SP</sub> eat<sub>SP</sub>  
 ‘The oldest elder (out of everybody) does not want to eat.’

### 4.3 Syntax

Another area that shows evidence of transfer resulting from bilingualism are the IM coordinators and discourse markers, some of which are not present in TM. A comparative list of TM and IM coordinators and discourse markers is given in Table 3.

	TRADITIONAL MURUI	INNOVATIVE MURUI
conjunctive (extraclausal)	–	<i>i</i> (Spanish <i>y</i> )
adversative	<i>ia(di)</i>	<i>pero</i> (Spanish <i>pero</i> )
disjunctive	–	<i>oo</i> (Spanish <i>o</i> )
so-clause	<i>ie, mei</i>	–
	–	<i>entonses</i> (Spanish <i>entonces</i> )

**Table 3.** Coordinators and discourse markers in TM and IM as pronounced by Murui speakers.

The conjunctive coordinator *i* ‘and’, a borrowing of Spanish *y*, has no equivalent in TM (in TM, sentences are either juxtaposed, or preceded by the connector-linker *ie* that can be translated as ‘and’ and has no equivalent in Spanish). An example is given in (24):

- (24) *i* *ati-ñe-domoi?*<sub>PRED</sub> *pero* *yiki-zi*<sub>E</sub> *izoi-d-e*<sub>PRED</sub> *gui-ñe-domoi?*<sub>PRED</sub>  
 and<sub>SP</sub> bring-NEG-LK.2PL but<sub>SP</sub> fish-CLF:MEAT similar-LK-3 eat-NEG-LK.2PL  
 ‘And you didn’t bring [the food with you?]. But... you didn’t eat anything like fish meat?’

The coordinator *pero* ‘but’ with adversative meanings is illustrated in (25-26). The TM adversative coordinator has somewhat ‘broader’ semantics; *iadi* means ‘but, although, though’.

- (25) *riai = dibene* *mare* *iadi* *pero* *abi* *uiñua* *dibene*  
 nonWitoto.PL = AT.HERE good.ATT but but<sub>SP</sub> body know.E.NMLZ AT.HERE  
*mare*  
 good.ATT  
 ‘The side of the white people is good but one has to know how to behave oneself.’

- (26) *pero* *i-kino*<sub>O</sub> *yo-t-e*<sub>PRED</sub> *bu-mie?*<sub>A</sub>  
 but<sub>SP</sub> INDEF-CLF:NEWS tell-LK-3 Q<sub>1</sub>-CLF:PR.M  
 ‘What is the name of the man telling the story?’

The IM disjunction *oo* (from Spanish *o* ‘or’) is freely used by young speakers in the context of alternative questions, such as the one illustrated in (27). IM speakers also use *oo* to coordinate noun phrases, as in (28):

- (27) *(nai-maki)*<sub>S</sub> *iraizi-d-e*<sub>PRED</sub> *oo* *iraizi-ñe-d-e?*<sub>PRED</sub>  
 ANA-CLF:PR.GR.AN celebrate-LK-3 or<sub>SP</sub> celebrate-NEG-LK-3  
 ‘Did they celebrate (lit. did they celebrate or they didn’t celebrate)?’

- (28) *Nofiko-mo* *oo* *Erai-mo* *i-ya?*  
 LaChorrera-LOC or<sub>SP</sub> ELEncanto-LOC exist-E.NMLZ  
 ‘Does (he) live in La Chorrera or El Encanto?’

TM has a similar disjunctive construction which involves two juxtaposed polar questions, of which the second is always negated, as in (29). There is no coordinator.

- (29) *nai-mie<sub>s</sub>*                      *bi-t-e<sub>PRE</sub>*                      *bi-ñe-d-e?<sub>PRE</sub>*  
 ANA-CLF:DR.M                      come-LK-3                      come-NEG-LK-3  
 ‘Did he come?’

Another construction borrowed from Spanish is the IM *so*-clause. TM has no equivalent of the Spanish discourse marker *entonces* ‘thus, so, then’, with specific semantics of ‘for that reason’. Rather, TM has a connector-linker *ie* ‘and’ (cf. (24) above). In (30), IM *entonses* is used as a continuation of the speaker’s turn establishing a cause-result link between the two ideas, ‘having no choice but coexisting with white people’ and ‘beginning to live like white people’.

- (30) *da-je-mo*                      *ñui-di-kai<sub>PRE</sub>*                      *entonses*                      *riai*  
 one-CLF:G-LOC                      fall\_into-LK-1PL                      so/then<sub>SP</sub>                      nonWitoto.PL  
*di-be-ji-do*                                      *mei kai eo*                      *ua*                      *jaai-oi-kai-di-kai<sub>PRE</sub>*  
 side-CLF:LEAF-CLF:WATERY-INS                      SO                      1PL                      very                      really                      go-REIT-INCP-LK-1PL  
 ‘We were put into this [situation of co-existing in the world of the white people].  
 So/then we started following (lit. going by) the ways of the non-indigenous people.’

#### 4.4 Lexicon

Muruiñoꝝ has numerous Spanish loans (mostly nouns, less frequently verbs), which often fill in lexical gaps. Such loan words are typically adapted phonologically in IM, e.g. TM *epejo* > IM *epejo* ‘mirror’ (cf. Spanish *espejo*) (§4.1). Borrowed nouns can easily take nominal morphology (commonly plural and collective number marking) in both TM and IM, e.g. *tieda-iai* (store<sub>SP</sub>-PL) ‘stores’ (cf. Spanish *tienda* ‘store’). Spanish words are easily identified as foreign by TM and IM speakers (cf. §4.5). A sample of frequently borrowed Spanish words is given in Table 4. Note that some of the Spanish loan words have not been adapted into either TR or IM, e.g. *baile* ‘dance ritual’ (containing the Spanish /l/, not present in TM, cf. Table 1 in section 3).

The choice of lexicon in IM is characterized by overgeneralizations which result from having less knowledge of traditional concepts. For instance, *ira-re-d-e* (sick-ATT-LK-3) ‘be sick’ is used for all types of sickness, even when ‘more’ specific names exist in TR.

WORD CLASS	SPANISH LOAN WORDS			MURUI NATIVE EQUIVALENTS	
	IM	TR	MEANING		
NOUNS	'kamara	'kamara	'camera'	<i>jore-ño o-ra</i> (picture-CLF:DR.F.PL take-CLF:NEUT) 'take pictures-thing'	
	<i>a'vion</i>	'avio	'airplane'	<i>fee-ya</i> (fly-CLF:CRAFT); -ya is a borrowed truncated noun originating in Spanish <i>lancha</i> 'craft'	
	<i>sol'dado</i>	'sodado	'soldier'	<i>jobai-mie</i> (burn-CLF:PR.M) 'warrior'	
	'baile	'baile	'dance ritual'	<i>ra-fue</i> (thing-CLF:STORY)	
	<i>ma'loca</i>	'maroka	'maloca'	<i>anane-ko</i> (maloca-CLF:COVER)	
	'misa	'miza	'mass'	no	
	'mesa	'meza	'table'	no	
	<i>komputa'dora</i>	'koputadora	'computer'	no	
	<i>selu'lar</i>	'zerura	'mobile phone'	no	
	<i>re'loj</i>	'rero	'watch'	no	
	<i>i'glesia</i>	'igresia	'church'	no	
	<i>mo'tor</i>	'motori	'motor'	no	
	<i>esco'peta</i>	'kobeda	'shotgun'	no	
	<i>lin'terna</i>	'riterina	'torch'	no	
	<i>se'mana</i>	'semana	'week'	no	
		days of the week			<i>moo-rui</i> (father-CLF:DAY) 'Day of the Father, Sunday' (calque)
		expressions of time			native forms relate to the position of the sun
VERBS	<i>gra'bar</i>	'gaba	'record'	<i>o(te)</i> 'take' can be used	
	<i>mane'jar</i>	'maneja	'operate'	no	
OTHER	number words			from 'five' onwards; sometimes also 'three, four, five'	

**Table 4.** A sample of frequently borrowed Spanish words into IM and TR.

#### 4.5 Discourse organization and code-switching

Traditionally, the Caquetá-Putumayo region in northwest Amazonia had less inhibition against code-switching and code-mixing as the ones

known among the neighboring groups of the Vaupés to the north (Aikhenvald 2002: 187) or in other regions in South America (see Ciucci 2020 on the Chaco). To a certain extent, multilingualism was the norm in the Caquetá-Putumayo area (Gasché 2009). Unlike TM speakers, today's speakers of IM freely alternate Spanish and Murui in a single conversation. The use of Spanish in IM is often determined by the situation. One of the functions of code-switching in Murui is to signal person shift. (31) is an example of introducing direct speech. (In the examples, Spanish is given in deitalicized script).

- (31) *imáginate!*    *nai-ñaiño<sub>s</sub>*    *bi-t-e = di!*<sub>PRED</sub>    *beno-mo<sub>LOC</sub>*    *ji!*  
 imagine<sub>SP</sub>    ANA-CLF:PR.F    come-LK-3 = CERT    here.CLF:SP.PLACE-LOC    yes  
 “regalame aros” *naiño<sub>s</sub>*    *yua*<sub>PRED</sub>  
 give\_me<sub>SP</sub>    rice<sub>SP</sub>    CLF:PR.F    tell.E.NMLZ  
 ‘[In Spanish:] Imagine! She came! Here, yes! [Spanish:] ‘Give me rice!’, she said.’

Frequently, by using code-switching, the speaker draws the hearer's attention to a situation, and often indicates that the speaker and the hearer share the same information (or at least a great part of it), as illustrated in examples (32-34):

- (32) [*mei kome-ki<sub>s</sub>*    *yo-i-a = di*<sub>PRED</sub>    *mei i-maki<sub>s</sub>*  
 so    heart-CLF:ROUND    tell-EMPH-E.NMLZ = CERT    so    INDEF-CLF:PR.GR.AN  
*jaai-oi-kai-a = di*<sub>PRED</sub>    *mei jaait-e*<sub>PRED</sub>    *kue = mei...*    no...    digamos...  
 go-REIT-INCP-E.NMLZ = CERT    so    go.FUT.LK-3    1SG = so    no<sub>SP</sub>    we\_say<sub>SP</sub>  
 no    puedo    como    detener = los    sabe?  
 no<sub>SP</sub>    I\_can<sub>SP</sub>    how<sub>SP</sub>    stop<sub>SP</sub> = them<sub>SP</sub>    you\_know<sub>SP</sub>  
 ‘(When) the hearts (of the children) tell them, they will keep going, I... [In Spanish]  
 No... Let's say... No, I cannot stop them, you know?’

- (33) *jmm...*    *naiio-na*    *toda la noche*    *maka-di-kai!*<sub>PRED</sub>  
 INTERJ    night-N.S/A.TOP    all<sub>SP</sub>    the<sub>SP</sub>    night<sub>SP</sub>    walk-LK-1PL  
 ‘Hmm... At night. We walked the entire night!’

- (34) *jaie = di*    *tenía*    *ua*    [kinse    años]    *nia*  
 PAST = S/A.TOP    had<sub>SP</sub>    really    fifteen<sub>SP</sub>    years<sub>SP</sub>    STILL  
 ‘Long ago. I was fifteen back then (lit. still).’

In IM, it is common to use repetitions of the same material throughout the clauses, as shown in (35), as well as focus, pause, and discourse markers (which are much more common than in TM), as illustrated by the intensifier *ua* in (36). This also includes Spanish *este* ‘this’ as in (37) which is commonly used as a filler to give time to the speaker while they get their thoughts together.

- (35) uno aprende<sub>PRE</sub> jaka fuueo-t-e<sub>PRE</sub> uno aprende<sub>PRE</sub> [naga  
one<sub>SP</sub> learns<sub>SP</sub> always learn<sub>SP</sub>-LK-3 one<sub>SP</sub> learns<sub>SP</sub> EACH  
raa-na]O kio-d-e<sub>PRE</sub> [naga raa-na]<sub>O</sub> fuueo-t-e<sub>PRE</sub>  
thing-N.S/A.TOP see-LK-3 EACH thing-N.S/A.TOP learn-LK-3  
‘One learns. (One) learns. One learns all kinds of things, one sees and learns all they see.’
- (36) ie baai-fe-mona<sub>ABL</sub> bi-rui ua ua ana-mo  
CONN THERE-CLF:SIDE-ABL this.CTS-CLF:DAY really really below-LOC  
ua due-re ua jaai-di-kai<sub>PRE</sub>  
really poor-ATT really go-LK-1PL  
‘And from there (i.e. because of this), nowadays, really, really, we really continue living (lit. going) really unsatisfactorily (lit. poorly).’
- (37) bi-rui-ai-na = mei kio-kana jaai-di-kai<sub>PRE</sub> mei  
this.CTS-CLF:DAY.PL-N.S/A.TOP = so see-OVERLAP go-LK-1PL so  
ria-ma bi-ya-mona... este... bi-e mei ua  
nonWitoto-CLF:DR.M come-E.NMLZ-ABL this<sub>SP</sub> this.CTS-CLF:G so really  
komputadora maneja-ja kai-mona ua... este ua komo-kino  
computer<sub>SP</sub> operate<sub>SP</sub>-E.NMLZ 1PL-ABL really this<sub>SP</sub> really new-CLF:NEWS  
‘Nowadays, since the arrival of the white man (into our territory), we learn (lit. go) by looking... This... working on a computer, as for us... This is a new thing.’

IM is also characterized by the frequent use of interjections, which are less commonly occurring elements than in TM. This is illustrated in (38), with the Spanish negative word *no*. There is no word for ‘no’ in TM; to negate clauses, predicates are followed by the standard negative *-ñe* (§4.2.1). Note that *jü* ‘yes’ is always used for affirmations in IM; Spanish *sí* ‘yes’ is not borrowed.

- (38) no! da-je<sub>O</sub> ñee graba-jai-di-maki<sub>PRE</sub>  
no<sub>SP</sub> one-CLF:G FILLER record<sub>SP</sub>-ANDTV-LK-3PL  
‘No! They only... went to record it.’

IM also presents clauses full of ellipsis whose exact meanings are understood from the situational context.<sup>7</sup> This is shown in (39); note that the postposition *jira* ‘because of’ is not used.

- (39) i mei riai dibejido jiai foo-d-e<sub>PRE</sub> mei uku-be...  
and<sub>SP</sub> so nonWitoto.PL AT.CLF:SIDE.WATER-INS also differ-LK-3 so money-CLF:LEAF  
‘Where the white people live (lit. on the side of the white men), the situation is different. So (because of) the money...’

## 5. Summary

The long-term unbalanced influence of the dominant Spanish on Murui, a Witotoan language from northwest Amazonia, has progressively allowed Murui to borrow many lexical items and undergo a number of

phonological changes, including the replacement of the voiceless apico-dental fricative [θ] with a loan phoneme, the voiceless apico-alveolar [s]. Murui also presents contact-reduced grammatical reduction (or loss; in some cases, also addition) on the morphological and syntactic level, especially visible in negative, possessive, and comparative constructions. Code-switching has become a norm among young Murui, who today speak Muruiñoꝝ (Innovative Murui) rather than Traditional Murui. In Table 5, I summarize those contact-induced changes in Muruiñoꝝ which I discussed in this paper.

LEVELS OF ANALYSIS		TRADITIONAL MURUI	MURUIÑOꝝ – INNOVATIVE MURUI	CHARACTER OF CHANGE
Phonology (§4.1)		voiceless apico-dental fricative [θ]	adoption of the apico-alveolar voiceless fricative [s] into the system replacing the voiceless apico-dental fricative [θ]	On-going
Morphology (§4.2)	Negation (§4.2.1)	by means of the negative attributive	by means of negating the positive attributive (the negative attributive is on the way out)	On-going
	Possession (§4.2.2)	certain nouns cannot be possessed by individuals	almost all nouns can be possessed	Completed
		pronouns marked by the genitive cannot be used as modifiers within an NP	pronouns marked by the genitive can be used as modifiers within an NP	On-going
	Comparison (§4.2.3)	different types of standard marker	overgeneralization of standard marker, reduction of its use	Almost completed
		superlative strategies only	'new' superlative construction	On-going
Syntax (§4.3)		some native coordinators	coordinators borrowed from Spanish	On-going

Lexicon (§4.4)	phonologically adapted loan words from Spanish	Spanish loan words	On-going
Discourse organization and code-switching (§4.5)	–	code-switching (attention, direct speech)	On-going
	less frequent use or repetitions, focus, and discourse markers	very frequent repetitions of the same material; focus, pause, discourse markers, and interjections; ungrammatical clauses	On-going

**Table 5.** Contact-induced changes in Murui.

*Abbreviations*

1 = 1<sup>st</sup> person; 2 = 2<sup>nd</sup> person; 3 = 3<sup>rd</sup> person; A = subject of transitive verb; ABL = ablative; AN = animate; ANA = anaphoric; ANDTV = andative; AT = postposition ‘at’; ATT = attributive; CAV = cavity (classifier); CERT = certainty; CLF = classifier; COLL = collective; CONN = connective; CTS = close to speaker; DES = desiderative; DR = derivational; DU = dual; DUR = durative; E (in gloss) = event nominalizer; E = oblique core argument; EMPH = emphatic; F = feminine; FSH = far from speaker and hearer; FUT = future; G = generic (classifier); GEN = genitive; GR = group; HAB = habitual; IM = Innovative Murui; INCP = inceptive; INDEF = indefinite; INS = instrumental; INTERJ = interjection; KIN = kinship (plural); LK = linker; LOC = locative; M = masculine; N.S/A = non-S/A subject; NEG = negative; NEUT = neutral (classifier); NMLZ = nominalizer; NP = noun phrase; NSP = non-specific; O = object of transitive verb; **OVERLAP** = overlap; pl = plural; PLACE = place; PR = pronominal; PRED = predicate; Q<sub>1</sub> = question word *bu-*; S = subject of intransitive verb; SG = singular; SP = specific; <sub>sp</sub> = Spanish; TM = Traditional Murui; TOP = topical; UNCERT = uncertainty; V = vowel, verb; VCS = verbless clause subject.

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup> The Colombian Education Law 115 of 1994 (El Estado Colombiano 1991) and the Law 28044 of 29 July 2003 in Peru (El Estado Peruano 1993).

<sup>2</sup> The data presented in this paper was gathered via language immersion method (Dixon 2010) with about 15 young Murui speakers between 2013 and 2016 in the Colombian villages of San Rafael, Tercera India, and (some) in La Chorrera.

<sup>3</sup> The distinction between a temporal and a permanent property is expressed by a number of language world-wide, such as Kamayura (Tupi-Guarani, Seki 2000); see also Bertinetto, Ciucci & Farina (2019).

<sup>4</sup> I hereby follow the approach of Alexandra Aikhenvald, who makes a similar distinction for Tariana, and distinguishes ‘Innovative’ and ‘Traditional’ Tariana, see Aikhenvald (e.g. 2002, 2003, 2018, *forthcoming*).

<sup>5</sup> In TM, kinship nouns have a ‘dedicated’ kin plural marking *-ti̯ai̯*, i.e. *moo-ti̯ai̯*

(father-KIN.PL) ‘fathers’. In IM, instead of *-tiaí*, the collective *-niaí* is applied to all kinship terms, e.g. *moo-niaí* (father-COLL) ‘fathers (collectively)’.

<sup>6</sup> This is an interesting example, in which language change results in the complexification rather than simplification.

<sup>7</sup> In many cases, the omission of grammatical elements does not appear to be related to the lack of knowledge of the TM equivalent. Rather, IM speakers leave them out for solidarity when the intended meaning is understood from the context, as in example (39).

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