Elaborating Teaching Materials for Baure: When Teachers Are Learners*

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Abstract
This paper presents the first steps in the elaboration of teaching materials in Baure, a language on the verge of extinction, spoken in Bolivian Amazonia. The Baure speakers are all elderly people and fully bilingual in the dominant language Spanish. In Bolivia, indigenous language teaching in schools is promoted, but unfortunately none of the Baure teachers is a native speaker, and no teaching materials are available. This paper discusses the process of developing the teaching materials for a moribund language. It pays special attention to the fact that the teachers are at the same time learners themselves, and to the inevitable loss of complexity of the language in the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Baure, endangered language, language revitalization, teaching materials, teaching the teacher
Introduction

Even though it is hard to give exact numbers, it is clear that many of the languages spoken in the world today are endangered to different degrees\(^1\) and will disappear in the next century\(^2\). Over the past decades, along with the growing attention for indigenous populations and their cultural heritage, language revitalization programs have appeared all over the world. In Bolivia, over the past two decades, the value of indigenous identities increased and revitalization of indigenous languages is encouraged. Baure is one of the 36 indigenous languages that are officially recognized in the constitution\(^3\) and an educational reform of 2009 promotes bilingual education in Spanish and the local indigenous language. Despite the relatively good institutional support and overwhelming communal support that the Baure language receives, they encounter difficulties in applying the educational reform. The Bolivian government does develop teaching materials in the local languages to a limited extent, but not for all languages. In the case of Baure, no materials have been developed so far, nor did the teachers receive help in developing their own materials. Unfortunately none of the teachers is a native Baure speaker, and none of the speakers is a qualified school teacher. Nevertheless, in the elementary schools, several language revival projects have been initiated. The teachers, even though they do not speak the language themselves, stimulate the children to learn some basic vocabulary and give them assignments for which they need to elicit language data from the elderly that do speak the language. In order to offer proper language classes in Baure, however, they need materials that are designed especially for this purpose and take into account that teachers do not speak the language and are in fact learners themselves.

Since 2008, the DoBeS project *The Documentation of Baure: A language of the Bolivian Amazonia* has been carried out by a research team of the University of Leipzig. Although the focus of the project lies on language documentation, it has tried to make the collected materials available to the community and to assist the community in their initiatives for language revitalization. This paper presents the materials that were produced for the Baure community, with a focus on the course book that was designed for language teaching in schools. In section 2

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the Baure language and speech community are introduced. After that, in section 3, an overview of the materials produced for the speech community is given. Section 4 discusses one of the materials in particular, the course book. It highlights the implications for developing the teaching materials for a moribund language on the one hand, and the effects on the loss of complexity of the language on the other.

**Baure Language and Speech Community**

**Baure Language**

Baure belongs to the Arawakan language family, which is one of the major language families in South America⁴. It once spanned from the Carib islands down to the north of Argentina and Paraguay, but unfortunately many of the Arawakan languages have already disappeared, and many others are seriously endangered. Baure belongs to the southern branch of the Arawakan language family and is closely related to the Moxo languages (Ignaciano and Trinitario), Terêna and to Paunaka, only mentioning the ones still alive (Figure 1).

![Figure 1: The South Arawakan branch](image)

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The Baure language group consists of three different varieties named after the place where they are spoken; Baure, Carmelito, and Joaquiniano. Historically, it is clear that the languages of the three towns are related, since El Carmen and San Joaquín were missions originally founded by people from Baures\textsuperscript{6}. However, in the literature, Joaquiniano is sometimes regarded as a Moxo dialect\textsuperscript{7} or as a separate Arawakan language\textsuperscript{8}. In a recent study Danielsen\textsuperscript{9} argues that despite substantial differences between Joaquiniano and the other varieties, it should be subsumed under the Baure languages when the typological features of other Arawakan languages are taken into consideration.

Baure is a polysynthetic, agglutinating language and is mainly suffixing\textsuperscript{10}. Even though word order is relatively free in Baure, a preference for Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) is observed. The verbal morphology is most complex and shows a number of different valence affecting, aspectual, and modal affixes. On verbal predicates the subject is marked with a personal proclitic and the object is marked by a personal enclitic on transitive verbs. On non-verbal predicates the subject is marked by a personal enclitic, thus in the slot for object marking on transitive verbs\textsuperscript{11}. There is no case marking to distinguish the roles of the arguments of the verb. Furthermore, Baure distinguishes between alienable and inalienable nouns. Typical inalienably possessed nouns are kinship terms and body parts. The possessor is always marked by a personal proclitic. The order in possessive constructions with a nominal possessor is possessed-possessor. Baure has a rich classifier system, with more than 30 classifiers\textsuperscript{12}. Classifiers are found in numerals, in nominal and adjectival compounds, incorporated into verbs, and in a number of cases these constructions are lexicalized. A subset of the classifiers is also used in locative constructions, as

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\textsuperscript{6} Erland Nordenskiöld, \textit{Indianer und Weisse in Nordostbolivien}. German translation of \textit{Indianer och Hvita in Nordöstra Bolivia} (Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder, 1922 [1911]), 115.


\textsuperscript{9} Danielsen and Terhart, “Paunaka”.


\textsuperscript{12} See also Lena Terhart, “Klassifikatoren im Baure” (MA thesis, Free University of Berlin, 2009).
will be seen below. Baure has only one general locative marker and does not use adpositions in locative constructions\textsuperscript{13}.

**Baure Speech Community**

Baure is an indigenous language spoken in the Bolivian lowlands in the department Beni, close to the border with Brazil (Figure 2). The main town where Baure is spoken is Baures. It was the first to be founded, in 1708 at the riverbanks of the Río Negro, at the site of a pre-Colombian settlement. It was founded by a group of Jesuit missionaries, led by Lorenzo Legarda and quickly grew into a settlement with around 1000 inhabitants. Shortly after the foundation of Baures, the town of San Joaquín was founded, only approximately 20 kilometers east of Baures, at the banks of the Río San Joaquín. It was founded in 1709 by Miguel Sánchez, one of the missionaries that were part of the group that founded Baures. However, at this site the mission was frequently attacked by Portuguese slave hunters coming from the Brazilian side, and also, the people suffered from several epidemics. Therefore, the mission was relocated in 1796 westwards and established at its current location on the riverbanks of the Río Machupo, approximately 200 kilometers northwest from Baures, crossing two major rivers. In the case of El Carmen, the town was truly a new foundation and not a result of missionary actions in the first place. In 1792 the word was out in Baures that there was a group of unknown and not yet converted Indians living up the Río Blanco. This was a group of Chapacura that most probably had come from the Chiquitanía in the south. The then governor Zamora decided to organize an expedition in order to enslave the Indians and convert them to Christianity. In 1794 the missionary town of El Carmen was founded. Due to plagues, the town was relocated twice and established at its current location in 1881. Although the precise location of the former towns of El Carmen is not known, the resettlement was not as drastic as in the case of San Joaquín\textsuperscript{14}.

All three towns were *reducciones*, in which people from various ethnic groups lived together and different ethnic groups were involved in the case of Baures, El Carmen and San Joaquín. For Baures, it is reported by one of the first missionaries working there that confessions

\textsuperscript{13} See also Femmy Admiraal, “Baure Motion Events: Exploring the Grammatical Resources”, *Proceedings of the Coloquio Internacional Amazonicas III: Fonología y Sintaxis* (Bogotá, forthcoming).

\textsuperscript{14} Alcides d’Orbigny, *Descripción Geográfica, Histórica y Estadística de Bolivia (1841–1869)* (París: Librería de los Señores Gide y Compañía, 1845).
were taken in Moxo, Guarayo, Baure, Ticomero, Peroro and Spanish\textsuperscript{15}. El Carmen was originally founded with 314 people from Baures and around 200 Chapacura. Later, in 1830, d’Orbigny reported a more diverse constitution of the town, including the now extinct Muchojeones\textsuperscript{16}. The original town of San Joaquín at the riverbanks of the Río San Joaquín was founded with people from Baures, but after its relocation, people of other ethnic groups were resettled there as well. Szabo\textsuperscript{17} mentions the Itonama as the main group, but it is known that there were also Moxo, Movima, Cayuvava, and Moré living in the region\textsuperscript{18}. Despite the diverse ethnic population, in all three towns, Baure was chosen as the lingua franca. The Jesuit priests learned this language and used it in daily communication with the indigenous population and in mass.

Figure 2: Map of Bolivia showing the location of Baures, El Carmen and San Joaquín\textsuperscript{19}.

\begin{itemize}
\item Gilmar Vidal Céspedes and Swintha Danielsen, \textit{El Carmen del Iténez: Monografía de un Pueblo Beniano} (Santa Cruz: APCOB), 8-17.
\item d’Orbigny, \textit{Descripción de Bolivia}, 267.
\item Szabó, \textit{Pueblo Indígena Baure}, 355.
\item Swintha Danielsen, \textit{El idioma de los Joaquinianos} (Booklet of the Baure Project, 2010), 4.
\end{itemize}
Baure is a critically endangered language\textsuperscript{20} and the speakers of Baure, all elderly people, are fully bilingual in Spanish, the dominant language in the region. According to a census carried out by the project *The Documentation of Baure* in 2009 in the town of Baures and its surrounding communities, 56 people claim to have some knowledge of the language. This number is based on the self-assessment and only 17 people indicated that they speak either very well or perfectly. The competence of the 39 speakers that also regard themselves as Baure speakers ranges from semi-speaker capacity to only a few phrases. The number of Carmelito speakers is even lower, with only four speakers left. Joaquiniano only counts with semi-speakers, which are children of the speakers of Joaquiniano who do remember a bit about the language, but never spoke the language actively themselves. Today, the Baure language is scarcely used in daily life. Although a few speakers do speak Baure to each other in conversations, most often there are other people present and Spanish is spoken instead. The Baure language is usually referred to as *dialecto*, ‘dialect’, even though people realize that it is unrelated to Spanish. The term ‘dialect’ indicates its inferior status in comparison with the dominant language and is a common way to refer to indigenous languages in Bolivia.

Transmission of the language from one generation to the other has been interrupted for several decades. Although there are few reliable sources on the use of the Baure language, it is clear that from the missionary period throughout the rubber boom (early 20\textsuperscript{th} century), Baure was actively spoken in town. Even people who came from other parts of the country or foreigners and settled in the towns learned the local language and passed it on to their children. Some of today’s speakers are descendents of migrants, but nevertheless learned the language as a first language. Until well into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century the Baure language was still transmitted from one generation to the next and several thousand speakers were reported in 1967 (Table 1).

Table 1: Decline in the number of Baure speakers in the 20th century.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1967(^{21})</th>
<th>1967(^{22})</th>
<th>2003(^{23})</th>
<th>2009(^{24})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baure</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmelito</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joaquiniano</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>3000-4000</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, in the 50’s and 60’s the political climate in Bolivia was extremely hostile to indigenous languages and in schools, for example, it was prohibited to speak local languages. In those days, today’s speakers were adolescents and young adults who started forming their families and stopped speaking Baure to their children. By that time, most of the population was already bilingual in Baure and Spanish and the latter gained popularity. Spanish took over more and more of the domains in which formerly Baure was spoken, such as communication within families and among peer groups. As a result, the language was no longer transmitted to the speakers’ children, even though they did learn some of the language through the communication of their grandparents and/or parents among themselves. Obviously, this also meant a breach in transmission to even younger generations, and today the Baure language is only spoken by a few dozen elderly.

**Baure Teaching and Learning Package**

In the course of the project *The Documentation of Baure*, several materials have been produced for the community. The materials are aimed at different target groups and by now, the whole Baure population has access to different types of materials. This will hopefully enhance their knowledge of the language and help them preserve this part of their cultural heritage.

In 2010, the storybook *Chinepinev - Cuentos de los Baures* was published and distributed throughout the Baure community. A total number of 700 books were produced and officially presented to the community in 2010. A large amount of books were given to the schools and the educational institutions in the community.

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\(^{22}\) Harold Key and Mary R. Key, *Bolivian Indian Tribes: Classification, Bibliography and Map of Present Language Distribution* (Norman: Summer Institute of Linguistics of the University of Oklahoma, 1967), 127.

\(^{23}\) INE, *Características Sociodemográficas de la Población Indígena* (La Paz, 2003).

\(^{24}\) Census carried out by the DoBeS project *The Documentation of Baure*. 
rest was distributed over the whole community, with the aim of one book per family. The storybook entails a collection of stories, songs and personal narratives in Baure and translated to Spanish. The stories have been recorded with the speakers, and were usually told in different versions from which we deduced one coherent version. The songs generally stem from the period of the rubber boom, and relate, for example, about lost loved ones. The personal narratives include short stories about how the fiesta used to be, or how life is in the rainy season. Throughout the book, all texts are translated to Spanish as literally as possible. All sentences are numbered in the Baure text, and a sentence by sentence Spanish translation is provided. Even though this sometimes results in an unusual text in Spanish, the goal was to stay as close as possible to the Baure way of story telling.

Furthermore, a digital Baure language course is under development. The digital language course is primarily aimed at adolescents and other community members that have access to computer facilities and know how to operate a computer. Currently, there is one computer centre facilitated by the local government, but this is a general development and more and more computers are seen in town. At this point, the course is mainly a vocabulary trainer. In the menu, the user can choose a topic and then either learn the vocabulary from a word list, or practice vocabulary by means of a multiple choice exercise. It also includes a part with basic phrases, of which audio fragments are included and the user can play these fragments, per topic. It is intended to make available a grammar description and to elaborate various games as well. The digital Baure language course is available online\(^{25}\) and an offline version was distributed in 2010.

Currently, a bilingual memory game has been elaborated and is in the production process. It is aimed mainly at the (younger) children, even pre-school and kindergarten. It is very easily accessible, for Baure speakers as well as for non-speakers, for (illiterate) adults as well as for (pre-school) children. It provides a means for adults and children to learn a few Baure words, with or without language instructions, in a playful manner. The game consists of 35 sets of matching cards and each set has a common drawing made by the children in Baures. In each set, one card contains the Baure word and one card contains the Spanish word. For example the card on the right (Figure 3) contains the Spanish word *monte* for the woods, and matches the card containing the Baure word *kakiwok*.

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Finally, a Baure course book is developed for teaching the Baure language in primary school. It is a basic introduction to the Baure language, and consists of a course book and a teacher’s manual. In the following section the contents of both books are discussed and the difficulties in the elaboration of teaching materials to be used by teachers who are learners themselves are highlighted.

When Teachers Are Learners

**Baure Course Book and Teacher’s Manual**

As mentioned before, the teachers who are teaching the Baure language in the schools are actually learners themselves. This has been taken into account in the design of the course book *Shi vikarow to vekori - Libro de enseñanza del idioma baure*. It is therefore assumed that neither the teachers, nor the students have any knowledge of the language, and the course book is designed for second language learning. Furthermore, audio materials are indispensable, especially because the course book will be used in the next decades, when even less speakers of the language are available to be consulted on pronunciation. Finally, the materials need to fit the Bolivian curriculum and have to be compatible with Bolivian teaching methods. They need to be introduced properly to the teachers in order to enable and encourage them to work with the materials. Furthermore, there were a number of practical restrictions. First of all, in order to be able to print as many copies as possible with limited funding, the production costs were kept as low as possible without affecting the quality of the work too much. In order to find the best balance in this respect, it was decided to print the book in black and white. All people involved
did their work voluntarily, and the most efficient layout was chosen. Since only one edition is produced, all exercises were designed in a way that the students can write down the answers in a separate notebook, and the books can be reused several times.

The course book contains 11 chapters, of which 2 are repasos, ‘examinations’, where the topics of the previous chapters are repeated in a series of exercises. Each chapter is subdivided in a primer paso, ‘first step’, where the basics of a certain topic are introduced, followed by un paso más, ‘one step further’, in which the topic is further elaborated. At the end of the book, a thematic vocabulary list is included.

Throughout the course book, the story of the frog and lizard is taken as a central theme. It is a story about two friends, a frog and a lizard, that help each other in building their houses. The story is presented in Spanish in the first chapter and in the following chapters parts of the story in Baure are used in exercises. By the end of the book, the whole story has been presented in Baure, and it is printed once again as a whole.

Furthermore, the frog and the lizard appear throughout the book in different exercises. The characters guide the students in the learning process, for example in learning body part terminology or by pointing out irregularities in the grammar. The grammar topics that are introduced in the course book are very basic and include only the pronouns, nouns, verbs and numbers. The vocabulary that is used in the book covers the kinship terms, body part terminology, food, animals, the natural surroundings (sky, mountain, lake, etcetera), and vocabulary used in daily life in and around the house, such as domestic utensils.

The teachers’ manual is subdivided into two parts. The first part is related to the course book. For each chapter, it contains the answers to the exercises and additional explanations.
where necessary, and a number of suggestions on how the teachers can develop additional exercises for the topics treated in the particular chapter. Finally, for each chapter, three homework suggestions are given and presented in such a way that the teachers can either photocopy the exercises or have the children copy them in their notebook.

The second part of the teachers’ manual contains a more elaborate description of the Baure grammar, which the teachers can consult for more details on the topics treated in the course book. Even though this is quite complex and linguistic, the grammar is explained in a way understandable to laymen. Linguistic terminology has been simplified and throughout the grammar description there are references to other relevant sections in order to give the teachers a good overview. Finally, the teachers’ manual includes the audio CD, on which the audio fragments for the exercises are recorded, as well as the songs and the story of the frog and lizard in Baure.

In the design of the course book, research on language learning and teaching strategies and criteria for teaching materials are taken into account\(^{26}\). The tasks that are given to the students are clearly formulated and elaborate on vocabulary and grammar topics that the students are already familiar with from previous chapters. All examples, exercises and pictures are attuned to daily life situations familiar to the children in order to keep the tasks accessible for them. For each chapter a content theme is chosen and the vocabulary is taken mainly from one of the topics that are subdivided in the thematic vocabulary list. Before a certain grammatical topic is introduced, the students are given an exercise on the basis of which they deduce the grammatical rules themselves. Within the chapters the tasks are sequenced from least complex to most complex. A balance is sought between exercises oriented towards speaking, writing, listening or reading skills, while individual tasks are alternated with group activities. By providing a detailed description of the grammar and suggestions for elaborating more exercises in the teachers’ manual, the teachers can use the course book as a basis from which they can expand the materials themselves. The result is a course that can be adapted to the level of the

students and the progress of their language learning. Even though the book tries to accommodate the teachers as much as possible, the materials are quite demanding for them.

**Teaching the Teachers**

Teacher training is an essential part of teaching endangered languages and it has been claimed that inadequate teacher training is one of the main causes for the failure of teaching programs for endangered languages\(^{27}\). Teacher training is particularly challenging when the teachers don’t speak the endangered language themselves. For practical reasons (lack of time and money) it is not possible to design a full fledged teachers training program for Baure. Even though a workshop will be organized in which the materials are introduced to the teachers, most of the teacher training is necessarily done in the book itself. Furthermore, two local teachers have already taken a course in linguistics and shown a special interest in the Baure language. They are encouraged to continue their studies, and take the lead in the language teaching program.

Since none of the teachers are native Baure speakers, it is necessary that they are one step ahead of the children and need to learn a bit about the language before they can teach the children. Throughout the book the teachers are assisted in their learning and teaching as much as possible. For example, in an exercise on kinship terminology, the students are asked to fill in the blanks, indicating how to say ‘my mother, my father’ etcetera in the Baure language. In the teachers’ manual, not only are the answers to the exercise listed, but also an explanation on Baure kinship terminology is included. In Baure, a person refers to his or her siblings of the same sex as oneself, with the word *nipiri*, ‘my brother/sister’, whereas siblings of the other sex than oneself are referred to with distinct words (*net*, ‘my sister’, and *ni’aiy*, ‘my brother’, for men and women respectively)\(^{28}\). In other words, not only the Baure language is taught, but also the underlying concepts are clarified to the teachers in order to understand the language better.

As the course book is a basic introduction to the Baure language, only a limited part of the grammar is presented to the students. In order to keep the subject material comprehensible, in some cases the language is presented in a simplified form. In these cases the teachers are referred to the relevant sections in the grammar where a particular topic is discussed. They are expected

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\(^{28}\) Note that Baure kinship terms are inalienably possessed. The examples here are formed with the possessive marker for 1st person singular: *ni*-. 
to study the language in more detail by themselves and encouraged to discuss the language with the speakers and learn from them.

Simplification of the Language

Despite the careful explanations on underlying concepts and the elaborate grammar description, it is very likely that some of the complexity of the Baure language will be lost in the teaching and learning process. The Baure language is structurally quite different from Spanish, the first language of the teachers and students of Baure. These are characteristics that are not very exotic from a typological perspective, nor rare from an Arawakan perspective, but they may raise difficulties for monolingual Spanish speakers with no background in linguistics. Simplification of the language on different levels is also observed with younger speakers and semi-speakers. Since the course book is a basic introduction it only presents the basics of the grammar and more complex topics cannot be covered. Below, several characteristics of Baure will be discussed and how the course book deals with these issues.

First of all, Baure is polysynthetic and has a very rich verbal morphology. This may lead to quite complex verbal structures, with up to 15 morphemes as in example (1).

(1)  Nborimbekinopashapir=nish.
     ni=pori-mbe-ko-ino-pa-sha=pi=ro=nish
     1SG=sew-CLF:flat-ABS-BEN-INTL-IRR=2SG=3SGm=EXCL
     “Well, when I am going to mend it for you.”

The central part of a complex verb is the verb root, in this case -pori. In (1) the verb root gets voiced after the nasal ‘n’ in the personal proclitic, resulting in -bori. The personal clitics appear in different slots on the verb. The personal proclitic ni= refers to the subject of the phrase, where as the personal enclitics =pi and =ro refer to the indirect and direct object respectively. There are very few ditransitive verbs in Baure, and in this case it is the valency changing benefactive suffix that makes it possible to mark two objects on the verb. After the verb root a series of verbal suffixes can be attached, which all slightly modify the meaning of the verb root, and together

they provide the meaning of the verb phrase. The Baure verb has different levels of affixation and there are restrictions on the affixation, the order in which the suffixes appear and the combinability of different morphemes. Immediately after the verb root follow the root affixes, which together with the verb root form the verb stem. In this example the only root affix is the classifier -mbe, which is incorporated and indicates that the object belongs to the -mbe class, which are objects that are flat, such as paper, the roof of a house, a butterfly, etcetera. The verb stem (-porimbe-) is followed by the stem suffixes, which is in this case only the absolutive -ko. The verb stem and stem suffixes together form the verb base (-porimbeko-). Then the verb base is followed by base suffixes, in this case the benefactive -ino, the intentional -pa and the irrealis -sha. Finally, a clausal enclitic can be suffixed to the whole verb phrase, in this case -nish, exclamative, for emphasis.

In the course book, first the basic verb structure is introduced. It is pointed out that the verb root is the central part, and it is shown where the subject and object are marked on the verb root. Only later, the most frequent verbal suffixes are presented. Nevertheless, it was necessary to include some more complex forms in the first few chapters in order to keep the tasks appealing. In the first chapters the complex forms were presented as formulaic forms and not decomposed into verb roots and affixes. For one particular morpheme it is chosen not to represent it separately. The absolute morpheme -ko is frequently attached to the verb root to indicate that possible other participants are involved, although the verb is not necessarily transitive. Throughout the course book these verb stems are given as a whole, as if the absolute morpheme were part of the verb root. In the grammar part of the teachers’ manual most of the other verbal morphology is explained, including the absolute morpheme. Due to the complexity of the Baure verb structure not all details can be discussed. The ultimate goal is that the teachers and students learn that the verb consists of many different morphemes that together make up the meaning of the complex verb, and they should be able to identify the verb root as the central part.

A second example of a complex structure of the Baure language is the use of classifiers. In example (1), one of the uses of the classifier namely -mbe was already shown. All Baure

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31 Danielsen, Baure, 241.
nouns can be assigned to a certain class, and each class is referred to with a distinct classifier. Baure has more than 30 classifiers, which are found in nominal and adjectival compounds and incorporated into verbs. One type of compounds in which the classifiers are used is in numerals, as shown in the examples in (2) and (3).

(2a) *Ponosh jir.*
po-no-sh  jir
one-CLF:general-one man
“One man.”

(2b) *Apin jir.*
api-no  jir
two-CLF:general man
“Two men.”

(2c) *Mbon jir.*
mbo-no  jir
three-CLF:general man
“Three men.”

(3a) *Popish kiwor.*
po-pi-sh  kiwor
one-CLF:long&thin-one snake
“One snake.”

(3b) *Apipi kiwor.*
api-pi  kiwor
two-CLF:long&thin snake
“Two snakes.”

(3c) *Mbopi kiwor.*
mbo-pi  kiwor
three-CLF:long&thin snake
“Three snakes.”

Baure has one general classifier, -no, which is used for example for referring to people, and the classifier -pi is used for long and thin objects (or animals). Comparing the examples in (2) and (3), it is clear that the numerals for counting objects from the -no class are different from the numerals for counting objects from the -pi class. The system of classifiers is also quite complex, and it is not always clear to which class a certain noun belongs. Also, the general classifier -no, can be used to refer to anything, and is for example also applied to new things introduced to the society, such as airplanes. Older speakers indicate that it is proper Baure to use the more specific classifier, but it is observed that younger (less fluent speakers, semi-speakers) more often use the general classifier32.

In the course book, only the 7 most frequent classifiers are introduced and only their use in numerals is discussed. The other classifiers are mentioned in the grammar part of the teachers’ manual. In the grammar the other uses of the classifiers, such as incorporated in verbs is treated

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32 Danielsen and Terhart, “Including Semi-Speakers”.
as well. However, it is very likely that the tendency to overuse the general classifier will spread under the teachers and students.

As a final example, two alternative locative constructions are presented. In Baure there are two ways to express a topological relationship, which are shown in (4a) and (4b).

(4a) Paripoewani-ye.  
   pari-poewani-ye  
   house-next.to-LOC  
   “Next to the house.”

(4b) Ropoewani-ye to pari.  
   ro=poewani-ye    to    pari  
   3SGm=next.to-LOC  ART  house  
   “Next to the house.”

The first one in (4a) is a compound, formed by the Ground\textsuperscript{33} object ‘house’ with respect to which the Figure is located, followed by a locative noun stem -poewani, ‘next.to’, and the general locative morpheme -ye. The second possibility is presented in (4b) and consists of a complex noun phrase formed by a locative noun stem marked with a personal prefix and the general locative suffix, and a nominal phrase referring to the Ground. The latter construction resembles a prepositional phrase in Spanish. Even though in Baure a construction like the one presented in (4b) is not a prepositional phrase, but rather a subtype of a possessive construction, it results to be more transparent for Spanish speaking learners. In the course book, as it is a basic course book, only the general locative marker is introduced, and the locative noun stems that are used to specify a certain topological relations are only explained in the grammar description of the teachers’ manual.

All these three examples show how the language will probably be simplified and lose its complexities in the learning process. In part these are tendencies already observed in the speech of semi-speakers. Over the next decades, in which more and more speakers will decease, these simplifications are expected to become more and more prominent.

\textsuperscript{33} The Figure is the object that is localized (or undergoes the motion), with respect to a reference object, the Ground. See also Leonard Talmy, \textit{Toward a Cognitive Semantics. Volume II: Typology and Process in Concept Structuring} (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000) on Figure and Ground.
Conclusion

The Baure language is on the verge of extinction and there are only a few dozen speakers left. However, in Bolivia the value of indigenous identities increased in the last decades and preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages is promoted. Meanwhile, several teaching materials have been developed for Baure, aiming at different target groups.

Since 2009, the Baure language is taught in the local schools. However, none of the Baure teachers is a native speaker, and none of the speakers is a qualified school teacher. The course book Shi vikarow to vekori - Libro de enseñanza del idioma baure takes this into account and tries to present the language as extensively as possible under the condition that it is still understandable for a second language learner without any previous knowledge of the language. As the teachers are learners themselves and the course book only introduces the basics of the language, this inevitably contributes to a loss of complexity of the language in the teaching and learning process.

Finally, one can ask the question whether these efforts will actually save the Baure language. Even though spectacular language revival processes such as Hebrew, Cornish and Miama are known, in most cases the effect is much smaller. The Baure people are quite optimistic and convinced that the language can be saved once it is taught in school. However, given the extreme state of endangerment of the language, it is very likely that the Baure language will never again be an actively spoken language. It entirely lacks a domain in which to use the language, and due to the fact that all Baure learners have Spanish as a first language, it would be difficult to regain a domain. As pointed out by Hinton, the main goal of a revitalization program may not be the reintroduction of the language as the primary language of interaction. In the elaboration of the course book, the pursued goal is far more modest: the teaching materials will serve as a remembrance of a part of the Baure cultural heritage and impede that the language disappears completely. Considering the fact that up to a few years ago there was very little to no interest in preserving the language, the program has been successful when this goal is achieved.

35 Hinton, Sleeping Languages, 417.
Abbreviations

ABS = absolute morpheme
ART = article
BEN = benefactive
CLF = classifier
EXCL = exclamative
INTL = intentional
IRR = irrealis
LOC = locative
m = masculine
SG = singular

References


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