

Is the Cuzco Quechua plural marker *-kuna* optional?

Liliana Sánchez (University of Illinois, Chicago)

Janett Vengoa (Independent Researcher)

Abstract

Previous work on Cuzco Quechua has claimed that the suffix *-kuna* is an optional plural marker (Faller 2007). We present evidence against this. By looking at inanimate and animate nouns, in subject and in object position we find that nouns marked with *-kuna* denote more than a simple plurality of individuals. They may refer to a group with different types of objects in it, or multiple groups of different types, or a combination of the two. We suggest that *-kuna* represents a sorting mechanism for items within a group. We base this on the interpretive possibilities available to inanimate nouns with *-kuna*, where the picture is relatively clear. We present the facts for animate nouns, showing that the claim for optionality does not hold (it is needed at times for plural reference). How the sorting mechanism applies in the animate domain is work in progress.