

Noun

There is no category of gender in Comanche.

In citation form, Comanche nouns appear with the absolutive suffix *-bi*: *toya.bi* ‘mountain’. This suffix is discarded when the noun is inflected in any way. There are primary and compound nouns: e.g. *kuhtsu* ‘cow’; *numu.kuhtsu* ‘buffalo’, i.e. ‘Comanche-people (*numu*) cow’. Many compounds are formed with suffixes, e.g. the diminutive/endearament suffix *-htsi*: *tuibi.htsi* ‘brave’, ‘young man’.

The prefix *na* marks an intrinsic relationship between components in a compound:

na’buku.waa’ ‘automobile’
(*puku* ‘horse’, *waa* ‘horn sound’) $p > b$ after V or V'

Nouns formed from the imperfective verbal participle in *-tu* express a durative or permanent quality of the referent: RA give the following examples:

oha’ahnaka.tu ‘one with yellow (*oha*) underarms (*ahna-*)’, i.e. coyote,
-ka- ‘having’
oha.h.poko.pi ‘yellow berries (*poko*)’ + generic marker, i.e. ‘carrot’.

The perfective participial marker is *-Hpuh > pu*. Nouns formed with this suffix express a completed state of affairs, the completed result of action:

tekwa.pu ‘that which has been spoken’ (*tekwa.ru* ‘to speak’), i.e. ‘word’
na.boopu ‘that which has been drawn’ (stem *-poo-* ‘to write’), i.e. ‘picture’

NOMINAL INFLECTION

The citation marker *-bi* was mentioned above. It may also take the form *-pi*, e.g. after nouns of colour: *oha.pi* ‘yellow’.

NUMBER

Comanche nouns may be singular, dual, or plural. However, for non-human referents, number is normally unmarked.

kahni ‘house’ – dual *kahni nuhu* – pl. *kahni nuu*

These endings are not invariable. Thus, the *-nuu* ending is reduced to *u* in (polysyllabic) compounds and derivatory nouns:

oha’ahnakatu.**u** ‘coyotes’

DECLENSION

Three cases – accusative, genitive, vocative – are marked. Formation of the vocative is unpredictable.

Accusative: the accusative marker is *-i* or *-a*. *-a* appears, for example, after finals in glottal stop: *kwasinaboo* ‘snake’, acc. *kwasinaboo***a**. Elsewhere, a low final vowel coalesces with *-i* to give *-e*: *puku* ‘horse’, acc. *puke*. Nouns in *-u* change this vowel to *-i* in the accusative: *oha’ahnakatu* ‘coyote’, acc. *oha’ahnakati*.

Nouns ending in labial + *i* make an accusative in *-hta*: *puhihwi* ‘money’, acc. *puhihwihta*. Dual and plural accusative is in *-i* + anticipatory vowel harmony: *nuhu* > *nihi* (dual): *numunununu* ‘Comanches’, acc. *numunii*.

Genitive: possessor precedes possessed, and, if singular, may be marked by *-a* or *-θ*: *oha’ahnakatatu.n.a* *kwasi* ‘coyote’s tail’, where the *-n-* is historically present, though dropped in the modern language. The dual genitive marker is *-u*, the plural *-θ*.

COMPOUNDING

There are many examples of simple juxtaposition: AB = C.

- tuboo.kahni ‘schoolhouse’ (‘writing house’)
- tuboo.tahni ‘postman’ (‘writing deliver’)
- puhihwi.kahni ‘bank’ (‘money house’)
- puhihwi.paraiboo ‘banker’ (‘money boss’)

Adjective

Adjectives in Comanche are simple or derived; the latter frequently occur with the aspectual markers *-tu/ru*, *-pu*. Cf. *te’tu* ‘small’, *pu htu* ‘heavy’, *nasaapu* ‘boiled’ (‘having reached the state of boiling’). The adjective precedes the noun, and is reduplicated for plural: *pia* ‘big’: *pibia niwunu’nunu* ‘those (pl. marker *nunu*) who talk (stem *niwunu*) big’, i.e. ‘a Comanche band’.

The numeral *sumu* ‘one’ has a reduplicated form meaning ‘some’: the plural *nunu* is added: *susumu’nunu numunununu* ‘some Comanches’.

DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVE

These precede the noun. Two relative degrees are distinguished for each of the three categories: proximate, distal, and dispersed. Thus, the proximate series has two sub-divisions, *i-* for close at hand, *ma-* for somewhat farther away. Similarly, the distal category has *o-* and *u-*. The common marker for the category of dispersed objects is *e-*. The *i-*, *ma-*, *o-*, and *u-* markers also function as 3rd p. pronominal stems. The imperfective participial *-tu/ru* may follow the demonstrative stems: *i.tu.u* 'these' (relatively close to hand proximate plural).

The demonstrative adjectives take accusative and genitive inflections. An *s-* prefix (not possible in the *ma-* series) indicates that the topic now marked by the demonstrative has already been introduced, and is known to the listener.

Some examples:

s.i.t.u.u 'of these': the proximate plural referent is known to the listener; *ma.hka* 'this/that', acc. (*-hka* is an acc. form which occurs only in the demonstrative series);

s.u.h.ru 'of those two': dual, non-immediate, distal referent known to the listener.

PERSONAL PRONOUN

The 1st p. stem is *nu*'; dual and plural forms distinguish inclusive/exclusive: e.g. *nu.kwu*, 1st p. dual exclusive; *nu.nu*, 1st p. plural exclusive. The 2nd p. singular base is *u.nu*; with dual and plural forms. 3rd p.: the demonstrative stems (see above) + glottal stop: *i'*, *ma'*, etc. Cf. Mark 1.11: *nu Rua' unu, nu kataka.na* 'thou (*unu*) art my (*nu*) my son (*tua*' > *rua*') my beloved (*kataka.na*)'.

The personal pronouns have accusative and genitive forms. A specimen row follows: 1st p. (base *nu*') genitive forms:

sing.: *nu* dual exclusive: *nu.hu*; plural exclusive: *nu.tu*.

The first person exclusive plural genitive is the name used by the Comanches for themselves: 'of us/ours...'. The word has already been given above in the Comanche term for buffalo: 'our cow'. Similar usages are: *nu.tu ruבורaru* 'our born-ones', i.e. the present generation of Comanches; *nu.tu naru* 'our shoe' = moccasin; *nu.tu.naitu* 'to live as a Comanche'.

The postposition *matu* 'up to, onto' follows genitive forms to express a dative: cf.

- Mark 2.18 me u.matu niwunu (quot. *me*) 'they say to him'
 1.17 me uhru.matu yuhkwı (quot. *me*) 'he said to the two' (dual)
 2.19 me uruu.matu yuhkwı (quot. *me*) 'he said to them' (pl.)
 9.13 me mumu.matu (quot. *me*) 'I say to you'
 yukwıtı

The postposition *matu* coalesces with the proximate demonstrative *ma* to form *maatı*: an example from Robinson and Armagost: *sıtıu kwasinaboo' maatı tunehtsunı*, 'this snake ran up to him'.

INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS AND MARKERS

Who? is expressed by *hakarı*: Mark 3.33:

- hakarı.se' nu via' tuasu nu rami'nuu*
 'who is my mother, or my brethren?'
 (*se'* is a contrast or concessive? marker; *pia* 'mother' > *via*, after vowel;
tıasu conjunction 'and'; *tami* 'younger brother' > *rami* after vowel)
hinalhini 'what?'; *hakaniiku* 'how?'

The usual interrogative marker for a yes/no situation is *-ha* (example from Robinson and Armagost):

- nu kahni.ha tsaa.yu* 'is my house good?'
 (*kahni* 'house'; *tsaa* 'good'; *yu* is a verbalizing formant)

Verb

The Comanche verb has a citation form (normally in *-ru* for low-vowel stems, in *-tu* for high: cf. *tekwarı* 'to speak'; *miarı* 'to go'; *wekwiıtı* 'to enter') and a valency form, which does not occur in isolation, but always with affixes or other valencies, e.g. in compounds. Stems may vary for number, with reference to the *subject* of an intransitive, to the *object* of a transitive verb.

- tıyaaıtı* 'to die' (singular sbj.)
kooıtı 'to die' (dual/plural sbj.)

Robinson and Armagost give the following good example from Canonge's *Comanche Texts*:

- soobe'su nunu su.nih.ku puhıtoo'a ruku.wasu.'e.tu.u*
 'long ago, we killed turkeys for food in that way'

where puhitoo' 'turkey' is not marked for plurality (-a is the accusative inflection); that 'turkeys' are meant, however, emerges from the verb stem, which would have been *tukku.hpehka* had only one turkey been killed (*tukku* > *rukku*, following vowel).

Like many other languages of America (cf. Haida and Kwakiutl) Comanche uses affixes to specify the means by which, and the manner in which, an action is carried out. Thus, the prefix *ku-* indicates action with the head, *ku(h)-* with the teeth, *suu(h)-* with the feet: *situ.ku.se'* u *suuh.po'tse.nu* 'he/she kicked it' (Robinson and Armagost). Direction of motion is indicated by suffixes: *-ki* for motion towards, *-kwa* for motion away from something or someone.

The Comanche verb is marked for aspect, not for tense. The following aspects are distinguished: inceptive, stative, perfective, durative, progressive, repetitive. Certain aspect markers are themselves verbs; e.g. the inceptive marker *-pitu* is, or at least recapitulates, the verb *pi(i)tu* 'to arrive'. Cf. Mark 4.37:

suruku'se' kuhtaa nue.hu.piitu
 'and then it began to blow hard'
 (*kuhtaanuetu* 'to blow hard, be stormy')

It will be seen that *pitu* is affixed to the citation form of the verb; the perfective markers *-ma* and *'i* are also added to the citation form, though a second inceptive marker, *tuki*, takes the valency form. Cf. *urii puni'i* (perfective) he saw them (*pinitu* 'to see'). The repetitive marker is 'e added to the citation form.

The reflexive/passive marker is *na-*; e.g. *puni.tu* 'to look': *na.buni* 'to look at oneself'.

The affix *-nu* functions as a narrative past marker. Cf. Mark 3.19:
wihnuse' suruu kahniku wekwinu 'and they went into a house'
 (*wihnu* + *se'* 'then, however...', *suruu* 'they' (distal), *kahni* 'house', *-ku* postposition 'into', *wekwiitu* 'to go')

NEGATION

The marker is *kee* or *ke*. Negated sentences tend to be imperfective as regards aspect. There is a prohibitive marker: *keta'*: *keta' turuhkaaruu* 'do not steal' (Mark 10.19).

ke is prefixed to stems in a privative capacity: *ke.tokwe* 'not right' *ke.bayumukitu* 'not moving'.

Adverb

Certain locational and directional adverbs are formed by adding the formants *kV*, *bV*, *hV* to a demonstrative stem, proximate or distal, where V harmonizes with the root vowel of the demonstrative.

Postpositions

Comanche has a plentiful supply of these, e.g. *-hilti* 'in, at', *-kaba* 'among', *-kuhpa* 'inside', *-kahtu* 'into', *-miihtsi* 'near', *-tu* 'from, out of': e.g. *narumu.kahutu* 'into (the) town'; *paa.h.ku.tu* 'from out of the water' (Mark 1.10). In concatenations of postpositions, the simple forms, such as those given above, take precedence over others, with intensifiers like *-taka* or *-tuku* in final position.

Word order and syntax

Robinson and Armagost give SV for principal intransitive, SOV for principal transitive clauses, where S is in the nominative. E.g. Mark 9.13:

me nu' mʉmʉmatu yʉkwitʉ 'I (thus) say to you'

but note such sentences in the Robinson and Armagost dictionary as:

sarii.a (O) hipʉkatʉ (V) nu (S in genitive) 'I own the dog'

ʉ (O acc.) nimai(h)katʉ (V) u' (S nom.) 'he is calling you' (Mark 10.49)

SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

(a) Relative: both S and O (if present) are in the genitive. Here, Robinson and Armagost give the following excellent example:

nu buhiwi.hta nu' narohuma.ku nu rʉki.'ih.a/watsi.ku'

'I lost my money/that I had put in a can'

(*nu buhiwi.hta* 'my money', acc. in *-hta*; *nu'* 1st p. nom.; *narohuma.ku* 'into' (*-ku*) 'the/a can'; *nu* 1st p. sing. in genitive as S of relative clause; *rʉki* < *tukaru* (sing. stem) 'to put'; *'ih* marks accomplished action; *watsitu* 'to lose'; *ku* causative marker; *'i* marks accomplished action)

(b) Complementary (adverbial): here, both S and O (if present) are in the accusative.

In both (a) and (b) duplication of pronominal forms may result. Again, Robinson and Armagost provide a good example:

urii urii maka.hka.ku.se' 'when they (S) had fed them (O)'

with both S and O in the accusative. The meaning is clear, however, as the infix *-hta-* is a marker denoting subject switch.

The declarative particle *tša'* follows the subject:

tenahpə tša' aruka'a naayarə

'the man (*tenahpə*) is trailing the deer (acc.)'