A Grammatical Description of Shiwiar

Shiwiar is a language spoken by around 1,200 people in the Amazonian lowlands of eastern Ecuador and northern Peru. It belongs to the Chicham (Jivaroan) language family. This work is the first grammatical description of the language, and it is based on a 30-hour audio-visual corpus of natural speech, collected over 12 months of fieldwork between 2011 and 2016 in the Pastaza province of Ecuador.

The first half of the volume deals primarily with the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this work. Special emphasis is given to the value of using natural language data for linguistic analysis, and the importance of committing to a high standard of transparency and resolvability with regards to the data. To set the scene, the Shiwiar language is placed within its broader typological, areal and sociocultural context, with special attention to the role of multilingualism and language contact in the region.

In the second half of the book, an analysis of Shiwiar phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and information structure is presented. Some of the most salient and typologically interesting phenomena described include the high degree of phonetic and phonological variability in the speech community, a rare type of differential object marking, a rich paradigm of pronominal indexing on the verb, and the extensive use of clause chains as a discursive and clause combining device. This book not only provides an analysis of the major linguistic structures in Shiwiar, but it also engages with the areal and typological literature to shed light on their diachronic development.