A Typological Overview of the Seri Language

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This paper presents a concise overview of some typological characteristics of Seri, a language isolate spoken in northwestern Mexico.[1] Glosses are given word by word only when indicated by precise alignment; otherwise they are given phrase by phrase.[2] References to various more detailed descriptive works on Seri are not indicated in the text itself; one may consult the references at the end since the titles clearly indicate the content. The data are cited in the practical orthography (see §5 for details on the sounds).

1. Syntactic typology

Seri is generally head-final. This fact is reflected in various ways in the grammar as shown below and summarized in Table 1.[3]

	Table 1: Head-final characteristics of Seri	
1.	Dependent Clause, <u>Main Clause</u>	Adverbial clause precedes main clause.
2.	Complement <u>Verb</u>	Complement NP precedes verb.
3.	Complement <u>Postposition</u>	Complement NP precedes postposition.
4.	Clause <u>Conjunction</u>	Subordinate clause precedes subordinating conjunction.
5.	Lexical Verb, <u>Auxiliary</u>	Lexical verb precedes auxiliary verb.
6.	Noun Phrase, <u>Noun</u>	Possessor noun phrase precedes possessed noun.
7.	Material <u>Noun</u>	Noun indicating material precedes head noun.
8.	Noun Phrase, <u>Pronoun</u>	NP precedes pronoun in partitive expression.
9.	Adverb <u>Verb</u>	Adverb precedes verb.
10.	Nominal <u>Determiner</u>	Determiner is phrase-final.

First, main clauses typically follow dependent clauses (except purpose clauses).

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(1)   Dependent   Main
        Caay cap yeen cap ipocáat x,   anxö ma saai haa hi.
        (if) the horse swings its head   it will injure you
        'That horse is going to injure you if it swings its head.' (DS2005, *ccaat*)

Second, a complement (noun phrase or clause) precedes the verb to which it is related.

(2)   Complement   Verb
        yeen cap   ipocáat x,
        its face   (if) it swings it
        '… if it swings its head, …' (DS2005, *ccaat*)

(3)   Complement   Verb
        Hant miisaquim   ihmíimzo.
        your sweeping the floor   I want it
        'I want you to sweep the floor.' (DS2005, *quisaquim*)

(4)   Subject   Complement   Verb
        Siip cop   iionam quij   iyáaihjö.
        the young man   his/her hat   s/he painted it red
        'The young man painted his hat red.' (DS2005, *caaihjö*)

The preceding example is also an appropriate example to illustrate the basic SOV order of constituents in the clause; the subject precedes the complement of the verb.
     Third, a complement noun phrase precedes a postposition.[4]

(5)   Complement   Postposition
        Hast   ano   ctam
        San Esteban Island   in/from   man
        'San Esteban Island man' (more literally, 'man in/from the mountain') (DS2005)

The preceding example also illustrates the rather rare case in Seri of a PP complement modifying a noun; as expected, the PP precedes the noun that it modifies.
     Fourth, a clause precedes a conjunction to which it is related as its complement.

 (6)   Complement   Conjunction
        Taapl   xox,   ihyóohit.
        it was cold   although   I ate it
        'Although it was cold, I ate it.' (DS2005, *xox*)

     Fifth, a lexical verb precedes an auxiliary verb (although auxiliary verbs are not at all similar to those of Indo-European auxiliaries).

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[4] This claim is complicated by other factors. Postpositions and their complements are commonly not contiguous; the complement may occur early in the sentence, but the postposition must occur very close to the verb.

(7)   Verb   Auxiliary
        Siifp   ca   teme.
        will arrive   s/he says
        'S/he says that s/he will arrive.' (DS2005, *ca*)

Sixth, a possessor noun phrase precedes the possessed noun.

(8)   Possessor   Possessed
        [cocázni com   ]   ilít   quij
          the rattlesnake   its head   the
        'the rattlesnake's head …' (DS2005, *cactim*)

Seventh, a nominal which indicates the material from which an item is made precedes the head noun.

(9)   Material   Noun
        hast   hax
        stone   arrow point
        'stone arrow point' (DS2005, *hax*)

Eighth, a noun phrase (actually, a determiner phrase) precedes a pronoun to form a partitive phrase.

(10)   NP   Pronoun
        [seaatoj tanticat]   pac
          the goats   some
        some of the goats (DS2005, *pac*)

Ninth, an adverb precedes a verb.[5]

(11)   Adverb   Verb
        Miizj   ihmiya.
        well   I know it
        'I know it well.'   (DS2005, *miizj*)

Tenth, a determiner is phrase-final.[6]

(12)   Noun   Determiner
        caay   cap
        horse   the
        'the horse' (DS2005, *ccaat*)

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[5] This is true for the most robust adverbs. There are, in fact, a few adverbs which follow the verb.

[6] The facts therefore support the head-final typology if the Determiner is taken as a head, as in the DP hypothesis (Abney 1987).

Seri is a pro-drop language. Pronominal participants of a clause are typically expressed only through the agreement morphology on the verb, whether finite or non-finite (with the exception noted below),[7] although an independent pronoun[8] may occasionally occur for emphasis.

(13)   Iyáaihjö.
        'S/he painted it red.' (DS2005, *caaihjö*)

(14)   Hehe an   z   ano   mota,   toc   cömiiha   iti,
        desert area a   from   s/he came   there his/her coming   on

        haa   motat,   itcaiilam ma,
        there   they came   they were shooting him/her

        tooxquim,   tooxquim,   toc   cömoma.
        s/he was shooting   s/he was shooting there   s/he came

        'He was coming from the desert, (and) while he was coming there, they were coming, they were shooting him, he was shooting, he was shooting, he was coming there.' (Hipocampo 9)

(15)   Comcáii   quih   him iházt   ixóomzo …
        woman   the   to.tattoo.me   s/he.wanted.it
        'The woman wanted to tattoo me, …' (DS2005, *quizt*)

(16)   He   hin yomáxpx.
        1st pronoun   s/he wasn't mad at me
        'S/he wasn't mad at me.' (DS2005, *caafin*)

(17)   ¡Ihpóocta!
        'Look at me!' (DS2005, *hpo-*)

Imperative verbs do not take normal subject person inflection; they are inflected in the imperative mood.

(18)   ¡Ox   cmah!   c- (Imperative), m- (Negative)
         thus   don't do it!
        'Don't do that!'

The subjects of atmospheric verbs are also non-overt.

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[7] The agreement morphology for objects is written in the practical orthography as a separate word; but the evidence is clear that these morphemes in question are prefixes.

[8] The independent pronouns do not indicate number or case. The pronoun *he*, for example, can be used to refer to first person singular or plural, regardless of grammatical role in the clause.

(19) Pomápca,   hax tama.[9]
      it will not rain   I hope
      'I hope it doesn't rain.' (DS2005, *capca*)

Pronouns are required in one situation: to express the subject of an independent clause which does not have a finite verb. The predicate is either a noun phrase without a verb, or it is a nominalized verb. And demonstrative forms are commonly used in lieu of true third person pronouns.

(20) Demonstrative   Predicate NP
      Tiix   ctam immátiscal   iha.
      that.one   man who is not a braggart   Decl
      'He isn't a braggart.' (DS2005, *cmatiscal*)

(21) Pronoun   Nominalized Verb
      He   Hezitmísoj   quij   ano   moca   ha.
      I/we   Hermosillo   the   from it   one who comes   Decl
      'I have come from Hermosillo.' (DS2005, *ano*)

(22) Pronoun   Nominalized Verb
      He   María quih yaaco quih   halx   ano   siifp ca   ha.
      I/we   Maria's house   a bit   in it   one who will arrive   Decl
      'I am going to visit María's house for a moment.' (DS2005, *caafp*)

Relative clauses (always nominalized) often appear to follow the head in Seri, but virtually all of the examples could be analyzed as head-internal relative clauses, and the rare case (such as (25) and (26)) must be so analyzed. Therefore the following examples are bracketed as if they were head-internal relatives. The head nouns are underlined. (Definite articles are often used inside the noun phrase as a kind of linking device, I believe, somewhat similar to *Ezafeh*, as seen in these examples and many others.)

(23) [<u>ctam</u>   canóaa   hoyáat   quexl]   quih
        man   boat   ours   the one who bought it   the
      'the man who bought our boat'

(24) [<u>ziix</u>   quih   hapáhit   quih   cacáaixaj]
        thing   the   what is eaten   the   what gives strength
      'something to eat that gives strength'   (DS2005, *cacáaixaj*)

(25) [<u>haaco</u>   caacoj   cazíim   cmaa quiih]   zo
        house   what is big   what is beautiful   what is new   a
      'a big new beautiful house'   (DS2005, *caháacot*)

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[9] This is not easily translated literally.

(26)   [María   quih   <u>trooqui</u>   eexl   ]   quij
        María   the   vehicle   what s/he bought   the
        'the vehicle that María bought'

(27)   [cocsar   tanticat   <u>canóaa</u>   heeque   an   iihca]   com
          Mexicans   the   boat   small   in it   where they   the
                                                                                       were
        'the small boat that the non-Indian Mexicans were traveling in'
        (DS2005, *cocpémetx*)

Yes-no questions require either a verb inflected in an interrogative mood, or the question
morpheme *ya* (written as a suffix in the practical orthography) after the nominal predicate (which
may be a nominalized verb). They are otherwise not distinguished syntactically from statements.
A question is not well-formed solely using intonation.

(28)   ¿Hax quih iiqui   tpam?
          with water   is it swallowed?   t- (Interrogative Mood)
        'Is it swallowed with water?' (DS2005, *iiqui*)

(29)   ¿Me   siitax   queeya?
          you   one who will go   Aux-Interr   -ya (Interrogative)
        'Are you going to go?' (DS2005, *me*)

(30)   ¿Hastya?
        'Is it a stone?'   -ya (Interrogative)

(31)   ¿Ctam   tiix   hatéiictim zo   ctaaiya?
          man   that one   a piece of cloth   one who wears a kilt – Interrogative
        'Does that man wear a kilt?' (DS2005, *ctaai*)

A content question also requires a verb in the interrogative mood or the question morpheme *ya*.
The interrogative pronoun or adverb most commonly occurs in preverbal position, although it
also sometimes appears in (roughly) sentence-initial position.

(32)   Canóaa com   ¿quíih   yaaiya?
          the boat   who(se)?   what s/he made – Interrogative
        'Who made the boat?' (DS2005, *caai*)

(33)   Isolca quih   ¿zó   cyaxiya?
       the beings   how?   one who measures – Interrogative
       'How many people were there?' (DS2005, *isolca*)

(34)   ¿Zímjöc   mizáah   cötafp?
        when?   your day   does it arrive to it?
       'When was your birthday?' (DS2005, *izáah*)

2. Construction typology

This sections presents information about a variety of constructions which occur in the language. See also §4 for other constructions which are intimately linked to certain verb forms.
     Seri has a passive construction which is the cross-linguistically common type in which the agent cannot be overtly expressed. The patient is the surface subject of the verb (which has passive morphology).

(35)   Ihpyopázt.   p- (Passive)
       'I was tattooed.'

It also has a passive construction of a much more unusual type: an impersonal passive of transitive verbs. The patient is not the surface subject of the verb, although the verb still has passive morphology. The patient looks like a direct object, although it arguably is not.

(36)   Hizi yopázitim.
       'We were tattooed.' (More literally, 'It was tattooed us.')

A special construction is used when the main verb is a number predicate indicating the number of times the action expressed in the complement clause occurred. The complement clause is nominalized, but the number verb is also inflected for the same person as the subject of the complement clause.

(37)   [Haptco miimalim quih]   inyaháatxo.
       your already looking at it   you … many times
       'You have already looked at it many times.' (DS2005, *caháatxo*)

Two verbs (*quimzo* 'want' and *quiya* 'know (how)') may take complement "clauses." The complement clauses are always either infinitival or "nominalized," never finite.

(38)   Comcáii quih   [him iházt]   ixóomzo …
        the woman   to tattoo me   s/he wanted it
       'The woman wanted to tattoo me, …' (DS2005, *quizt*)

(39) Hant miisaquim   ihmíimzo.
     your sweeping the floor   I want it
     'I want you to sweep the floor.'   (DS2005, *quisaquim*)

(40) [Icóos]   itá   teete, …
       to sing   s/he knows it   s/he says
     'S/he knows how to sing, s/he says …'   (DS2005, *cazáac*)

The verb *quixi* 'finish' is simply juxtaposed to a clause whose verb is in dependent clause morphology and whose subject is coreferential with its subject.

(41) Iscám   com   itáacöim   itáxi, …
     his/her reed boat   the   s/he readied it   s/he finished it
     'S/he finished readying her/his reed boat, …' (DS2005, *caacöim*)

Reflexive clauses are transitive clauses with an inflected reflexive pronoun that is 'one's being or body'.

(42) Zaaj z an   hisoj   ihyísxö.
     in a cave   myself   I hid it
     'I hid in a cave.' (DS2005, *isoj, quiisxö*)

Reciprocal clauses are transitive clauses with the adverb *pti* and a verb that has some characteristics of singularity as well as plurality. The stem *-azitim* in the following example is the singular subject, multiple action form; compare *-azt* (singular subject, simple action), *-azto* (plural subject, simple action), and *-azitam* (plural subject, multiple action).[10]

(43) Pti   iyóozitim.
     each other   s/he tattooed him/her
     'They tattooed each other.' (DS2005, *pti*)

Seri utilizes switch-reference marking on dependent clauses. The morphemes *ta* and *ma* follow dependent future and dependent past clauses (respectively) to indicate that the subject of one clause is not coreferential with the subject of the next clause. There is no overt marking of coreferentiality. The key point of Farrell, Marlett and Perlmutter (1991) was to show that the notion of subject relevant to this construction is not the common one.

(44) Moosni hatíin pac ihpamótjö,   ihpáatj ta,   hasíiitoj aha.
     I will tenderize some dry turtle meat   I will pound it   we will eat it
     'I am going to tenderize this dry sea turtle meat by pounding it, and we will eat it.'
     (DS2005, *caatj*)

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10 The transitivity of the construction is not provable from the simple examples, but there are ways to make this evident.

(45)   Sahmées caacöl pac he tamlajc ma,   ano hmeemjöc.
        they brought me some oranges   I peeled them
        'They brought me some oranges, (and) I peeled them.' (DS2005, *queemoz*)

(46)   He hptahahásaquim ma x,   ihxoquéepe.
        my hair is combed   I like it
        'I like it when my hair is combed.' (DS2005, *ah-*)

In the preceding example, the subject marking on both clauses is first person singular. (The first verb is the passive form of a transitive verb -*ahásaquim* meaning 'comb the hair of someone', which is the causative form of the intransitive lexical reflexive verb –*asaquim* 'comb one's own hair'. Part of the reason for which different subject marking occurs in the first clause is the fact that the underlying subject (Agent) of the first clause is not coreferential with the underlying subject (Experiencer) of the second clause.

3. Morphological typology

In some key ways, Seri is a head-marking language (Nichols 1986). In the clause, the verb (as head) carries person and number marking for the subject and direct object, and person marking for indirect object. The nominals (as dependents) are not marked for case at all. This is shown in the following example.

(47)   Head
        Heexoj   zo   mpaai,   m- (2s Subject)
        torch   a   (if) you make it
                            Head
        itáaij iizc tintica compáapjö ta x, …   co- (3 Ind. Obj.)
        beach   the   (if) you light it with it   m- (2s Subject)
        'If you make a torch and light up the beach with it, ….' (DS2005, *caapjö*)

In the possessed noun phrase, the possessed item (as head) carries person agreement with the possessor (as dependent), which is not marked for case.

(48)   Head
        [cocázni com   ]   ilít   quij   i- (3 Possessor)
          the rattlesnake   its head   the
        'the rattlesnake's head …' (DS2005, *cactim*)

Postpositional phrases have inflected postpositions as their head; their complements are not marked for case.

(49)   Head
        ¡Miizj hoocta!   miti   hpsozám xo tax.   mi- (2 Possessor)
         be careful!   on you   I will step
        'Be careful, because I might step on you.' (DS2005, *cozám*)

(50) Complement   Head
      hant z   iti   i- (3 Possessor)
      a place   on it/him/her
      'somewhere' (DS2005, *caap*)

(51)   Head
      Ihptáalim,   hamt   ihtahójöz,   iti   hpyiij
      I was playing   dirt   I mounded it   on it/him/her   I sat
      'When I was playing, I made a hill in the sand and sat on it.' (DS2005, *cahójöz*)

In other ways, Seri is a dependent-marking language. Subordinate clauses are clearly marked as such by special morphology, both in relativized clauses (nominalizations) and in adverbial clauses (non-final morphology and switch-reference marking).

(52) Dependent
      Caay cap yeen cap ipocáat x,   po- (Dependent Future)
      (if) the horse swings its head
      Main
      anxö ma saai haa hi.   si- (Independent Future)
      it will injure you
      'That horse is going to injure you if it swings its head.' (DS2005, *ccaat*)

(53)   Dependent   Dependent
        ... haa   motat,   itcaiilam ma,
                   t- (Dependent Past) t- (Dependent Past), ma (Different Subject)
          there   they came   they were shooting him/her
        '… they were coming, they were shooting him, …' (Hipocampo 9)

   Inflectional noun morphology is relatively simple. The prefixes which may occur on inalienable nouns are possessor prefixes and the absolutive (i.e., lack of possessor). There are no diminutive or augmentative forms.

(54)   mi-lít   ha-lít
        2.Possessor-head   Absolutive-head
        'your head'   'head'
        (DS2005, *ilít*)   (DS2005, *halít*)

Suffixes which occur on nouns, along with stem modification, indicate plurality.

(55)   hast   hasatoj
        'stone'   'stones'   (DS2005, *hast*)

(56)   atcz   atcal   atcalcoj
        'her younger   'her younger   'their younger   (DS2005, *atcz*)
        sister'   sisters'   sisters'

Many nominal expressions derive transparently from verbs (through prefixation) and are in common, everyday use. Some examples are:

(57)   ziix icácötim
        'blanket (thing that one covers up with)' (DS2005)
(58)   ziix hacx tiij coos
        'radio (thing that, sitting somewhere, sings)' (DS2005)
(59)   icamátj
        'fever (that with which one is hot)' (DS2005)

Verbs are morphologically complex. Almost all of the inflectional and derivational morphemes are prefixes. These include the following (an incomplete list):

(60)   Tense/Mood
        Imperative
        Person Agreement (Subject, Direct Object, Indirect Object)
        Nominalizers (Subject, Object, Action/Oblique)
        Negation
        Passive
        Unspecified Object
        Causative

The most important true suffixes show number in some way (a complicated topic also discussed below) — either number of the subject (a kind of agreement), or number of the action (simple, repetitive, iterative).[11]

(61)   -aasj
        'extend (something) to dry out, singular subject' (DS2005, *caasj*)
        -aasalim
        'extend (something) to dry out repeatedly or iteratively, singular subject'
        -atóoslcoj
        'extend (something) to dry out, plural subject'
        -atóosalam
        'extend (something) to dry out repeatedly or iteratively, plural subject'

Verbs may be derived from inalienable nouns by adding the prefix *i-*; the result is a verb that means something like 'have X'.

(62)   -taamt   -i-taamt
        'sandal, shoe'   'have sandals, shoes'
        (DS2005, *itáamt*)   (DS2005, *quitáamt*)

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[11] As can be seen by the morpheme *-tóo-*, infix morphology is also sometimes involved in pluralization. Another suffix, *-ot*, not infrequently occurs in causative verb formation, but it is not productive and it is not clear what its function is.

(63)   -tcmajéem   -i-tcmajéem
        'younger sister's husband'   'have as brother-in-law'
        (DS2005, atcmajéem)   (DS2005, *quitcmajéem*)

Other derived verb forms are described in the section below on the lexicon.

It is obvious from the above that the Seri language is synthetic rather than isolating. An intransitive verb has more than 110 different forms, and a transitive verb more than 220. Morphemes are relatively easy to segment, although there are significant exceptions, and so the language would be categorized as quite agglutinative but also fusional in some cases. The verb for sing (*-oos*) is an example that illustrates these facts; it is a typical intransitive verb that begins with *o*. A few forms are listed below. Only simply morpheme breaks are indicated.

(64)   c-oos   (one prefix)   'the one who sings'
        i-m-óos   (two prefixes)   'the one who does not sing'
        c-oos-tim   (one prefix, one suffix)   'the one who sings repetitively'
        as   (one prefix)   'Sing!'
        c-m-oos   (two prefixes)   'Don't sing!'
        ihp-s-óos aha   (two prefixes)   'I will sing.'
        ihp-sc-m-oos aha   (three prefixes   'I will not sing.'
        y-as   (one prefix)[12]   'S/he sang.'
        ihp-y-ás   (two prefixes)   'I sang.'
        yo-m-óos   (two prefixes)   'S/he didn't sing.'
        y-as   (two prefixes)[13]   'his/her singing / song'
        ih-y-as   (two prefixes)   'my singing / song'
        i-c-óos   (two prefixes)   'one's song'
        ic-óos   (one prefix)   'to sing'

A significant fact about Seri morphology is the way in which suppletive allomorphs of various morphemes are conditioned by (superficial) transitivity of the clause. Intransitive clauses (those without a superficial direct object, including passive clauses) are sharply distinguished from transitive clauses (those with such a direct object). Some examples of the kind of allomorphy conditioned in this way include the following:

(65)   Intransitive   Transitive
        First person singular subject agreement   hp-   h-
        Infinitive   ica-   iha- (plus Ablaut)
        Imperative (before o)   (Ablaut)   h-
        First person singular restrictive   caa-   aa-
        Nonfuture action/oblique nominalizer   y-   h-
        (before o, oo, or aa)

There is no noun incorporation of the type where noun roots combine with standard verb roots.

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[12] Subject agreement for third person subject is the absence of overt agreement for other persons.

[13] Third person possessor is overtly marked but it is deleted phonologically before *y*.

4. Lexicon

The Seri language has a rich lexicon; it is notable that it has not incorporated very many loan-words. The latter is due primarily to the long isolation from Spanish-speaking communities and mutual hostility between the two cultures for a long period of time.

The major word classes are verbs and nouns. Postpositions are inflected (as shown above) and look like nouns; some have singular and plural forms: *hiihax* 'with me', *miihax* 'with you' (sg.), *hiicot* 'with us'. Adjectives are not an important class of word in Seri (see below). Most quantifiers, including numbers, are intransitive verbs. Determiners are richly represented. The singular indefinite article, *zo*, is presumably related to the word for 'one', *tazo*. The definite articles have developed from subject nominalized verb forms of positional and motion verbs. Common determiners with their stereotypical uses are:

(66)   Determiner
        zo   'a'
        pac   'some' (with count nouns or mass nouns)
        cop   'the' (standing, singular)
        quij   'the' (seated, singular)
        com   'the' (lying down, singular)
        quih   'the' (flexible; also phrase-internally for linking items,
                        singular; also a kind of default article)
        timoca   'the' (approaching, singular)
        tintica   'the' (going away, singular)
        tamocat   'the' (approaching, plural)
        tanticat   'the' (going away, plural)
        coi   'the' (general plural)

As in some other languages of the Americas, the verbs include facets of meaning in them that makes them difficult to translate with simple glosses. In Seri, these are meanings embedded in the roots themselves, not in some prefix that is added to a basic root. For example: *caazi* and *cahéectim* 'transport, carry'; *quiip* 'transport on the head', *quiiztim* 'transport on hip', *quicséenpx* and *casóompx* 'transport long thing under the arm', *cooi* 'transport in one trip', *csanj* 'transport person on one's back', *cahásquim* 'transport in boat or car', *quixop* 'transport with pole over the shoulder', *cacáaix* 'transport with pole', *quizni* 'transport using a handle', *quizcápxla* 'transport under arm'.

A noun class system is developing in the language, although at this point its origin is still quite transparent in most cases (relating to physical orientation). This noun class system is indicated by the choice of definite article. The word *zaah* means 'sun' and 'day'; the meanings are distinguished by the article. Whereas the noun meaning 'sun' takes the article *quij* as expected for a spherical object, the noun meaning 'day' takes the article *cop* because this has become the standard article for abstractions of various sorts.

(67)   zaah   quij   'the sun' (DS2005)

(68)   zaah   cop   'the day' (DS2005)

Adjectives are rare in Seri and it could be argued that they are morphologically-deficient verbs. The vast majority of descriptive predicates in the language are no different from intransitive predicates which are active verbs. The examples which follow are therefore not adjectives modifying nouns but rather relative clauses, identical to those presented earlier.[14]

(69)   cmaam   caaspoj   cop
                    c- (Subject Nominalizer)
       woman   the one who writes   the
       'the woman who is writing'

(70)   cmaam   cacösxaj   cop
                    c- (Subject Nominalizer)
       woman   the one who is tall   the
       'the woman who is tall, the tall woman'

(71)   cmaam   imáaspoj   cop
                    i- (Subject Nominalizer in
                    negative clauses), m- (Negative)
       woman   the one who does not write   the
       'the woman who is not writing'

(72)   cmaam   imácösxaj   cop
                    i- (Subject Nominalizer in
                    negative clauses), m- (Negative)
       woman   the one who is not tall   the
       'the woman who is not tall'

Many transitive verbs have intransitive counterparts in which the patient is not expressed in the clause.

(73)   -cazit   -o-cázit
       'x take y away forcibly'   'x take away forcibly'
       (DS2005, *ccazit*)   (DS2005, *cocázit*)

(74)   -izi   -eezi
       'x defeat y'   'x defeat'
       (DS2005, *quiizi*)   (DS2005, *queezi*)

Causative verbs may be derived from simple verbs by adding one of the causative prefix (typically *a-*, *ac-*, or *ah-*).[15]

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[14] The same is true for numbers; they are intransitive verbs.

[15] Sometimes there is a bit more complexity involved.

(75) -apca   (impersonal)   -ac-aapca   (intransitive)
      'rain'   'y cause to rain'
      (DS2005, *capca*)   (DS2005, *cacáapca*)

(76) -pasi   (intransitive)   -a-pasi   (transitive)
      'x have wrinkles'   'y cause x to have wrinkles'
                                              (x is direct object)
      (DS2005, *cpasi*)   (DS2005, *capási*)

(77) -panim   (intransitive)   -a-panomot   (transitive)
      'x wash (own) hair'   'y wash x's hair'
                                              (x is direct object)
      (DS2005, *cpanim*)   (DS2005, *capánomot*)

(78) -aainim   (transitive)   -a-ainim[16]   (ditransitive)
      'x be mixed with y'   'z cause x to be
                                              mixed with y'
                                              (x is indirect object)
      (DS2005, *quiinim*)   (DS2005, *caainim*)

There is another kind of derived verb with virtually the same morphology as causatives; the meaning is to help someone do the action.

(79) -cazlil   (transitive)   -a-cazatol   (transitive)
      'x mash y with teeth'   'z help x to mash y with teeth'
                                              (x is direct object)
      (DS2005, *ccazlil*)   (DS2005, *cacázatol*)

And yet another kind of derived verb takes similar morphological trappings as causatives and yet is even more distinct from those. The derived verb permits the expression of an experiencer (as subject).

(80) -acat   (intransitive)   -ac-aacat   (transitive)
      'x be bitter or salty'   'y find x bitter or salty'
                                              (y is subject; x is direct
                                              object)
      (DS2005, *cacat*)   (DS2005, *cacáacat*)

Seri does not have complementizers nor does it have relative pronouns. It also does not have any negative words per se; negation is only marked on the verb (by a prefix).

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[16] The basic verb and the causative form are not identical in the way they conjugate, despite their similar presentation here.

(81) …   cmiique   zo   ma sconsácj   aha.
             person   a   s/he will not carry you on hip   Aux-Decl
      '… nobody is going to carry you.' (DS2005, *csacj*)

(82) Ziix   z   imitáaicol   iha.
      thing   a   it does not compare with it   Decl
      'Nothing compares with it.' (DS2005, *quitái*)

Simple demonstrative pronouns are either close (*hipíix* 'this one', *hizáax* 'these') or farther away (*tiix* 'that one', *taax* 'those'.) The complex demonstratives display a three-way distinction: proximal, medial and distal. These are formed by combining a locative expression with an article; as a result, they are rather numerous. A few examples: *hipcom* 'this (lying close)', *hipquij* 'this (sitting close)', *hizcoi* 'these (close)', *ticop* 'that (standing at a distance), *himcop* 'that (standing at a greater distance)'.

    A clear morphological distinction exists between common nouns, kinship terms, and other inalienably possessed nouns. Only the latter two classes generally can have morphological indicators of possessors; in fact, they must have some possessor indicated or else have the absolutive prefix mentioned earlier: *hipot* 'my calf', *mipot* 'your calf', *ilít* 'his/her calf', *hapot* 'calf (of leg)'; *hita* 'my mother', *mata* 'your mother', *ata* 'his/her mother', *hapéte* 'mother'. These examples also indicate a morphological difference between kinship terms and other inalienably possessed nouns: kinship terms take a different set of possessive prefixes in second and third person (*ma-* for second person rather than *mi-* which occurs for second person possessor generally) as well as a different absolutive prefix.

    The kinship terminology for Seri is perhaps one of the most extensive sets attested in the world, having more than fifty primary terms. Relevant parameters include the sex of ego as well as the age and sex of the referent. Therefore, for example, nine terms exist for 'sibling', as shown in the following table. Similar patterns exist for other relationships.

(83)	Male		Female	
	Younger	Older	Younger	Older
Female ego	aacaz	amáac	atcz	azáac
	'her younger brother'	'her older brother' (now archaic)	'her younger sister'	'her older sister'
		axíiha		
		'his or her older brother'		
Male ego	azcz	anyáac	acóome	apáac
	'his younger brother'	'his older brother'	'his younger sister'	'his older sister'

    Seri does not have the kind of dynamic sound symbolism described for the neighboring Yuman languages (Langdon 1971), nor does it include a high degree of imitative words, although some vocabulary is obviously iconic. The vowels in the roots for 'large' and 'small' are open and close, respectively: *–aacoj* 'large', *–isil* 'small'. Certain roots relating to sounds

include *–pop* 'pat', *–oof* 'blow (making "f " sound)', *–oots* 'sizzle (making "s" sound)', *–anoj* 'roar (like the sea), buzz (like bee)', *–apláctim* 'make slapping sound by hitting water or chewing loudly', *–axax* 'make a low or raspy or hollow sound', *–ifáhzx* 'make a short sobbing sound to indicate unhappiness', *–iifz* 'make snapping noise', *–iipcö* 'make thumping, pounding or muffled sound', *–iisc* 'make soft sound like when dragging foot on the ground', *–iixaz* 'make clacking or clinking sound', *–iixöp* 'make crunching sound; roar like ocean when the wind is blowing'. (Most of these are the intransitive stems, cited in the singular punctiliar form; the iterative or plural forms are slightly different, of course, as are the causative forms.)

A striking characteristic of the Seri lexicon is the dynamic, creative, uncontrived and self-sufficient way in which it expands to include new items. The lexicalized phrases are not a new thing in the language as they reflect a well-established pattern that has been used in the past to replace lexical items which have become taboo. Some examples: *eenm an iquíijim* 'mirror' (literally, metal in which one can see), *eenm an iquíijim ziix cöimahnáxz* 'glass, windshield' (more literally, 'mirror on which something has not been painted'), *ziix iitax* 'motor' ('thing with which it goes'), *itj iixquim* 'his/her belt' ('what s/he puts around his/her waist'), *ziix iitax itj iixquim* 'belt (of motor)', *ziix iitax iyas* 'battery (of car)' (literally, 'motor's liver').

5. Phonological typology

The phonological inventory of Seri is not particularly complex. It has four vowels, phono-logically operating on a front-back and high-low system. Although it has a short-long vowel contrast, it does not have any of the laryngeal modifications typical of many other languages in Mexico. It is not tonal and does not have phonemic nasalized vowels.[17]

(84)   Vowel inventory

        i /i/   ii /ii/   o /o/   oo /oo/
        e /ɛ/   ee /ɛɛ/   a /ɑ/   aa /ɑɑ/

The consonants include eleven obstruents (all voiceless) and six sonorants (all voiced, except for the glottal stop, of course). The glottal stop is a significant consonant in the language and patterns phonotactically with the sonorants.

(85)   Obstruent inventory

Stops	p	t			c, qu	cö		
	/p/	/t/			/k/	/kʷ/		
Fricatives	f	s	l	z	j	jö	x	xö
	/ɸ/	/s/	/ɬ/	/ʃ/	/x/	/xʷ/	/χ/	/χʷ/

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[17] Moser and Moser (1965) posited nasalized vowels, but the error in analysis was corrected about ten years later. Thus Seri should be removed from the sample cited in Ruhlen (1978).

(86)   Sonorant inventory
            Nasals   m   n

                                   /m/   /n/
            Non-nasal   l   r   y   h
            Resonants[18]   /l/   /ɾ/   /j/   /ʔ/

    The greatest complexity in the phonology of Seri is the syllable structure; the language
permits (and frequently uses) syllables with two consonants in the onset, two or three vowels in
the nucleus (one of them shorter and higher than the others), and two or three consonants in the
coda. A few examples:

    (87)   ptcamn   [ptkɑmn]   'lobster'   (DS2005, *ptcamn*)
    (88)   tpanzx   [tpɑnʃχ]   'did s/he run?'   (DS2005, *cpanzx*)
    (89)   atcz   [ɑtkʃ]   'her younger sister'   (DS2005, *atcz*)
    (90)   itáaptxö   [iˈtɑɑptχʷ]   'did s/he/it go through it?'   (DS2005, *caaptxö*)
    (91)   coopxöt   [koopχʷt]   'that which is loose'   (DS2005, *coopxöt*)

    Stress most commonly occurs on the first vowel of the root of a word, although in nouns
there are numerous exceptions, probably due to compounding. While it is not always easy
(perhaps never easy) to determine the exact underlying form of a root (because of the complexity
involved with pluralization, as noted above), it is not difficult to identify the first vowel of the
root.

    (92)   Ihpyopánzx.   'I ran.'   (Stem: *-panzx*)
    (93)   Yopáncolxca.   'They ran repeatedly.'   (Stem: *-pancolxca*)
    (94)   hapáh   'what is put'   (Stem: *-ah*)
    (95)   hapáhtoj   'what are put'   (Stem: *-ah-toj*)

Primary stress occurs on the last constituent of a compound.

    (96a)   ziix cola hapáh   'thing that is put up high' (DS2005, *ziix cola hapáh*)
    (96b)   ziix cola hapáh   'flag' (pronounced somewhat faster than the phrase and
                                          with only one primary stress, at the end) (DS2005, *ziix
                                          cola hapáh*)
    (96c)   zixcolahapáh   'kite' (pronounced somewhat faster than the previous word
                                          and with no secondary stress at all) (DS2005,
                                          zixcolahapáh)

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[18] The lateral approximant is a very rare phoneme in Seri; the tap occurs only in loanwords.

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