

Panel 2: Indigenous Multilingualism in Lowland South America

Organizers, Chairs, and Discussants:

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Session 1: Friday, June 25, 10:00am to 12:00pm

Session 2: Friday, June 25, 12:30pm to 2:30pm

Session 3: Monday, June 28, 10:00am to 12:00pm

*all times are EDT/UTC -4

Abstract:

Recent years have seen a growing attention to multilingualism in small-scale social settings, and a recognition that the dynamics and outcomes of multilingual interaction in these contexts may vary significantly from those observed in more urban or globalized contexts. Lowland South America offers a rich set of vantage points on these questions, particularly through interactive indigenous ‘regional systems’ like the Vaupés, Xingu, and other areas where multiple languages have thrived alongside each other for generations, with interaction shaped by practices such as linguistic exogamy, multilingual song repertoires and ceremonial registers, exchange networks, etc. However, our understanding of these dynamics remains limited, even as they are eroded by new linguistic ecologies imposed by the national society. This panel brings together scholars working in historically multilingual regions of indigenous Amazonia, whose collective experience and scope of interest spans temporal and geographic perspectives. Questions of interest include: In what ways are the dynamics of small-scale multilingualism similar and different across lowland South America? How do linguistic ideologies guide language choice, and how are these grounded in cultural perceptions regarding proper behavior and social alignments? How do actual and self-reported (prescriptive) practices align or differ? What relationships pertain among different languages, lects, and registers? How have practices changed over time? What are the mechanisms of grammatical diffusion and convergence, and how do these relate to shared discourse norms, strategies for keeping languages separate, and other factors? How do the differences between indigenous and non-indigenous multilingual ecologies relate to the acceleration of language endangerment today?

Multilingüismo Indígena en las Tierras Bajas de Sudamérica

El multilingüismo en contextos sociales de pequeña escala ha recibido una atención creciente en los últimos años, demostrando que las dinámicas y los resultados de la interacción multilingüe propios de estos contextos pueden variar significativamente de los observados en contextos más urbanos o globalizados. Las tierras bajas de América del Sur ofrecen un rico conjunto de posiciones estratégicas para estudiar estos temas, particularmente a través de ‘sistemas de interacción regionales’ indígenas como el Vaupés, el Xingu y otras áreas donde varios idiomas han prosperado uno al lado del otro durante generaciones, con interacciones determinadas por prácticas como la exogamia lingüística, repertorios de canciones y registros ceremoniales multilingües, redes de intercambio, etc. Sin embargo, lo que sabemos sobre estas dinámicas sigue siendo limitado, al mismo tiempo que estas se erosionan debido a las nuevas ecologías lingüísticas impuestas por la sociedad nacional. Este panel reúne a académicos que trabajan en

regiones históricamente multilingües de la Amazonía indígena y cuya experiencia colectiva y áreas de estudio abarcan múltiples perspectivas temporales y geográficas. Los temas de interés incluyen: ¿En qué se diferencian y en qué se parecen las dinámicas del multilingüismo de pequeña escala en las tierras bajas de América del Sur? ¿Cómo guían las ideologías lingüísticas la selección del idioma, y cómo estas se basan en las percepciones culturales sobre comportamiento adecuado y posicionamientos sociales? ¿Cómo coinciden o difieren las prácticas (prescriptivas) reales y auto-reportadas? ¿Qué relaciones existen entre los diferentes idiomas, lectos y registros? ¿Cómo han cambiado estas prácticas con el tiempo? ¿Cuáles son los mecanismos de difusión y convergencia gramatical y cómo se relacionan estos con normas del discurso compartidas, estrategias para mantener las lenguas separadas y otros factores? ¿Cómo se relacionan las diferencias entre las ecologías multilingües indígenas y no indígenas con la aceleración del peligro de desaparición que corren estas lenguas en la actualidad?

Multilinguismo Indígena nas Terras Baixas da América do Sul

Nos últimos anos, testemunhamos o crescimento da atenção ao multilinguismo em contextos sociais de pequena escala e o reconhecimento de que a dinâmica e os resultados da interação multilíngue nestes contextos podem divergir significativamente daqueles observados em contextos mais urbanos ou globalizados. As terras baixas da América do Sul oferecem uma diversidade de pontos de vista sobre essas questões, particularmente por meio de "sistemas regionais" indígenas interativos, como Uaupés, Alto Xingu e outras áreas onde várias línguas prosperaram lado a lado por gerações, com interação moldada por práticas como a exogamia linguística, repertórios musicais e registros cerimoniais multilíngues, redes de troca etc. No entanto, nossa compreensão dessas dinâmicas permanece limitada, ao mesmo tempo em que elas têm sido corroídas por novas ecologias linguísticas impostas pela sociedade nacional. Este painel reúne estudiosos que trabalham em regiões historicamente multilíngues da Amazônia indígena, cuja experiência coletiva e escopos de interesse abrangem perspectivas temporais e geográficas. As questões de interesse incluem: De que forma a dinâmica do multilinguismo de pequena escala é semelhante e diferente nas terras baixas da América do Sul? Como as ideologias linguísticas guiam a escolha da língua e como elas se baseiam nas percepções culturais acerca do comportamento adequado e dos alinhamentos sociais? Como as práticas reais e autorrelatadas (prescritivas) se alinham ou diferem? Que relações existem entre diferentes idiomas, letos e registros? Como as práticas mudaram com o tempo? Quais são os mecanismos de difusão e de convergência gramatical, e como eles se relacionam com as normas de discurso compartilhadas, estratégias para manter as línguas separadas e outros fatores? Como as diferenças entre as ecologias multilíngues indígenas e não indígenas se relacionam com a aceleração dos processos que ameaçam as línguas indígenas hoje em dia?

Presentations:

Session 1: Ideology and Practice: Vaupés and Xingu

Friday, June 25, 10:00am to 12:00pm

Stephen Hugh-Jones, University of Cambridge

What viewing language as a substance might tell us about Vaupés multilingualism

Our understanding of Vaupés multilingualism is sometimes clouded by reliance on outdated kinship theory in which pre-existing descent groups 'own' reified 'languages' that serve as 'emblems' or 'badges' to which people owe 'loyalty'. An alternative is to view language as a kind of substance that is constitutive of the individuals and groups involved. But what kind of substance? To answer this question requires shifting attention from a diversity of languages to a diversity of -lects, including shamanic spells and flute music. This opens the way to examining the relation between speech, breath, semen and soul, and to viewing language, music and tobacco smoke as devices that give added substance to breath. In the Vaupés context, in its role as a substance constitutive of persons, language is something that is smeared on the body, trapped in the ears and eaten through the mouth.

Elsa Gomez Imbert, Institut Français d'Etudes Andines

We cannot marry because we speak the same language: the Amazonian version of Romeo and Juliet

Since the 1970s, the Eastern Tukanoan groups living in Colombia and Brazil have been known for generalized multilingualism resulting from their practice of linguistic exogamy (Sorensen 1967; Jackson 1972, 1974, 1983; Hugh-Jones 1979). These groups are patrilineal, patrilocal and, we could say, 'patrilingual'. In a nuclear family, husband and wife must belong to different patrilineal groups and, therefore, express their affiliation through the exclusive use of their father's language, in spite of the fact that children spend their childhood with women and learn their mother's language first. Several issues concerning the languages involved will be examined. The belief that the father's language is the expression of an individual's essence, reflected in the use of the verb 'speak' to refer to the father's language but 'imitate' for the other languages, including the mother's - as do the most traditional groups (Pira-parana river, Colombia). Intensive language contact between groups involved in preferential alliance relationships favors linguistic variation and linguistic acculturation - as in the Barasana and Edúuria case, with 'languages' sharing the same grammar, differing mainly by their tonal system (Gomez-Imbert 1999). Or an extreme situation, observed in Brazil, where the father's identity language is abandoned in favor of the Tukano language. The marriage of lovers sharing patrilinearity and 'patrilinguality' is forbidden, incestuous. But the issue is not as dramatic as in Shakespeare's drama: the couple chooses exile.

Kristine Stenzel, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (co-author)

Nicholas Williams, University of Potsdam (co-author)

Taking an interactional approach to multilingualism: insights from the Vaupés

The Vaupés region is recognized as one of Amazonia's better-known examples of small-scale societal multilingualism, with individuals commonly described as proficient in multiple

indigenous and colonial/national languages. Continuing investigation of Vaupes society, however, is revealing a great deal of internal diversity that includes nuanced dynamics involving how individuals from different ethno-linguistic groups use languages as they navigate diverse social contexts. Analyses of language ideology among Tukanoan groups credits the notion of “loyalty” to one’s father’s language as a force shaping broadly purported linguistic practices, including frequent simultaneous or “receptive” exchanges, curtailed lexical borrowing, and generally restrained displays of multilingual prowess. Nevertheless, little is known about the actual use of multiple languages in people’s daily lives, a gap our work seeks to address through investigation of a large corpus of video recordings of informal, everyday interactions among members of Kotiria and Wa’ikhana (East Tukano) communities. We highlight contrasts between what people say they do (or don’t do, or shouldn’t do), focusing primarily on cases of code-switching and accommodation, both long presumed to be either unattested or highly dispreferred language behaviors. We provide empirical evidence for a wider range of multilingual practices than previously claimed for the Vaupés, demonstrating the everyday accomplishment of multilingualism in social interaction.

Bruna Franchetto, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro

The Upper Xingu as a multilingual and multiethnic regional system

The Upper Xingu is one of two well-known regional multilingual and multiethnic systems in Lowland South America, with ten indigenous groups from three linguistic families: Arawak, Carib and Tupi, and one isolate. Archaeological evidence points to Arawak groups as the likely first inhabitants of the region, with Carib and Tupi groups arriving later. Xingu peoples share crucial cultural elements, even if each group shows relevant specificities. Local groups have a “monolingual and purist ideology”, an ideal of local group endogamy, though people typically marry within their own village and, if marrying outside, prefer spouses who speak genetically related languages. However, every village exhibits some small-scale multilingualism, as different dialectal varieties of a language are likely to be spoken in houses where spouses come from different villages within a closely related linguistic group. Inter-ethnic marriages create alliances and further potentialize multilingualism within a village. The Yawalapiti villages are an exception to this general profile, being multilingual microcosms of the regional linguistic diversity, resulting from specific historical processes. Multilingualism characterizes genres of ritual communication. The Upper Xingu multilingual system reproduces itself through a balance between two opposing forces. On one hand, differences are carefully maintained, as diacritics marking distinctions between local groups. The lack of an indigenous lingua franca is another defining characteristic of this system, though today Portuguese increasingly serves this function. On the other hand, the “mixed” and the “puristic” perspectives are always at stake. Viewing Xingu peoples as linguistically and culturally homogenous limits our understanding of regional complexity.

Christopher Ball, University of Notre Dame

Monoglot “Standard” in Lowland South America: Political Organization, Subjectivity, and Monolingual Ideologies

This paper explores the cultural and linguistic conditions under which members of the monolingual Wauja (Xingu Arawak) linguistic community integrate into the multilingual speech community of the Upper Xingu. The analysis highlights the role of monolingual ideology in the context of a decentralized multilingual social system. I ask what specific pressures exist among the Wauja as an avowedly traditionalist group to police “correct” forms of Wauja language. How does the history of Wauja incorporation of speakers of related Arawak languages such as Kutanapu (Kustenu) such that families are said and claim to have Kutanapu accented Wauja even now? How does the role of standardized schooling in the Wauja language, alongside Portuguese, in local schools affect language attitudes? Speaking Wauja “incorrectly” solicits replies of “wekeho malun,” meaning that one is a ‘bad owner’ of the language. How do local regimes of ownership and possession contribute to monolingual multilingualism in the community? Analysis suggests that non-capitalist and decentralized monolingual language ideologies ground society in the concept of the monolingual subject.

Session 2: Multilingualism in Northern Amazonia through Time and Space

Friday, June 25, 12:30pm to 2:30pm

Katherine Bolaños, Universidad de los Andes

Tracing multilingual and multicultural dynamics through shared song repertoires: a look at the Vaupés

Dynamics of social contact and its impact on cultural practices and the structure of the languages spoken in the Vaupés area have been the focus of interest for many scholars (e.g., Jackson 1983, Sorensen 1963, Gomez-Imbert 1997, and others more recently like Stenzel 2005, Epps 2008, 2013, Hildebrandt et. al 2017, among others). Some authors have also proposed a history of contact that might trace back to Arawakan speaking group(s) with a dominant cultural presence in the region (e.g., Ericksen 2011). These dynamics of contact in multilingual and multicultural regions have also shown to have shaped other fields of the socio-cultural cosmos, such as the musical repertoire, that might serve as evidence to support hypotheses regarding population dynamics through the exploration of migration paths and sociolinguistic features. In this paper and based on musical and linguistic data, and through the exploration of musical repertoire collected through work with speakers of 5 different languages from 3 distinct language families in the Colombian Vaupés, we want to present some hypotheses on contact dynamics between Arawakan and non-Arawakan speaking groups in the Vaupés area, as a means to support the argument in which Arawakan speaking groups had a socio-cultural dominant status that allowed for the permeation of Arawakan linguistic structures into non-Arawakan languages.

Renato Athias, Núcleo de Estudos e Pesquisas sobre Etnicidade / Universidade Federal de Pernambuco

The notion of “masaãï” in the narratives of creation Hupd’äh

Traditionally, the Hupd'äh people of the Nadahup linguistic family, from the interfluvial region of the Papuri and Tiquié River, from the Uaupés river basin, even though their traditional territories are well demarcated, are closely related to their neighbors, people from the Tukano linguistic family, of the Northwest Amazon with which maintain a secular and a very specific model of exchanges, within a multilingual context that is very characteristic throughout this wide region. This presentation seeks to discourse ethnographic and sociolinguistic elements to broaden the debate on loans and the use of words that exactly reflect this peculiar model of exchanges, a characteristic that identifies them as peoples, at the same time distinct and similar, when seeking to understand more the linguistic and semantic ethnological context of words that are widely used in the Hupd'äh language. This presentation explores the notion of "Masaãï", from two narratives of the creation of two hupd'äh clans, the possibilities of understanding social and linguistic relations in this peculiar ethnographic context.

Thiago Chacon, Universidade de Brasília (lead presenter)

Luis Cayón, Universidade de Brasília, (co-author)

Language, Exogamy and Ethnicity in the Upper Rio Negro

In this paper we explore how notions such as language and dialect boundaries, social exogamous units, (e.g. clans and phratries), and ethnic markers (such as having a common mythical ancestor, emergence from the same sacred place, sharing the same set of personal names, etc.) organize the multilingual societies in the Upper Rio Negro. We show that the expected alignment of language boundary, exogamous group and ethnic group is in fact quite unusual. The clans are the only social unit where one finds a direct correlation among language, patrilineages and ethnic markers. Any other more complex social structure, involving the aggregation of clans into larger ethnic groups or marriage alliances with other clans, will have important variations in the alignment of language, exogamy and ethnicity. While language is not necessary or sufficient to demarcate exogenous groups (despite its important role in the ideology of linguistic exogamy), it is an important marker of ethnic identities. Given that language is one among other possible ethnic markers, there is also miss-alignments between language boundaries and ethnic identities. In our talk, we will analyze these alignments and discuss how they represent a spectrum of possible behaviors of inter-ethnic and multilingual interactions in Amazonia.

Jorge Emilio Rosés Labrada, University of Alberta

Indigenous multilingualism in the Orinoco-Guiana region through the lens of Sáliban

While the Vaupés, the Xingu and the Caquetá-Putumayo regions in Lowland South America have traditionally been—and remain today—highly multilingual, multilingualism in the Guianas and adjacent Orinoco regions is limited today primarily to the Southeastern Guiana region and to cases of bilingualism/trilingualism (e.g., Carlin (2007) for Mawayana-Waiwai(-Trio) and Rosés Labrada et al. (2018) for Arutani-Shirián-(Sapé)). However, the areal distribution of certain grammatical patterns suggests that multilingualism in the Orinoco-Guiana region must, at one

point in time, have been much more extensive. In this presentation, I consider the evidence for multilingualism in what is often called the Orinoco Regional Interdependence System (or SIRO as is known in Spanish; see Arvelo-Jimenez et al. (1989) and Arvelo-Jimenez and Biord Castillo (1994)) through the lens of the Sáliban languages (namely, Sáliba, Piaroa and Mako) and their speakers. Specifically, I show that Sáliban speakers were part of a highly multilingual complex that joined, primarily through trade, different watersheds in the Upper Amazon through study of written explorer and missionary accounts and Piaroa folklore and oral history. For instance, Piaroa elder J.M. Ochoa reports that the Maypure (extinct Arawak group), Mapoyo (Cariban), and Atures (extinct reportedly-Sáliban group) all spoke Piaroa. Similarly, the “Tree of All Fruits” story suggests that the Yabarana (Cariban) and other now-extinct groups of the Manapiare River valley were also Piaroa speakers. This presentation thus sheds light on historical multilingualism in the border region between the Orinoco and the Guianas, and highlights the importance of ethnohistory in understanding Lowland South America multilingualism.

Session 3: Changing Patterns of Multilingualism

Monday, June 28, 10:00am to 12:00pm

Adam Roth Singerman, National Endowment for the Humanities

Indigenous multilingualism on the Rio Branco Reserve of Rondônia: Past and Present

The Rio Branco region, in the Brazilian state of Rondônia, is home to a diverse group of indigenous peoples. According to ethnographic accounts from the mid-twentieth century, multilingualism was the norm on the Rio Branco, with Makurap (of the Tupían family) serving as a pan-ethnic lingua franca. This ethnographic description is corroborated by the fact that elders on the Rio Branco today conserve knowledge of Native languages that no longer enjoy intergenerational transmission. This talk has three goals: (1) To synthesize past ethnographic accounts with the present-day facts in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of the older system of indigenous multilingualism on the Rio Branco. What social practices facilitated the extensive multilingualism that used to predominate there? (2) To describe the present linguistic scenario, where only one indigenous language (Tuparí) remains vital and where the former system of Native multilingualism has given way to Tuparí-Portuguese bilingualism and, increasingly, Portuguese monolingualism. How can we explain the fact that of all the local languages, only Tuparí continues to be acquired by children? What other changes correlate with the present-day predominance of Portuguese in the region? (3) To explain how the relatively rapid changes in indigenous language vitality on the Rio Branco affect contemporary documentation initiatives. How can we accurately describe the Tuparí linguistic system given that older speakers learned the language in a massively multilingual context with minimal Portuguese influence, whereas many of the younger speakers are effectively bilingual in Portuguese (and, in some cases, are Portuguese-dominant)?

Gustavo Godoy, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (lead presenter)

Kristina Balykova, University of Texas at Austin (co-author)

Multiethnic Pantanal and its decay

Historically, the Pantanal wetlands were inhabited by several ethnicities, which pertained to different linguistic groups, such as Bororoan, Arawakan, Tupian, Guaikuruan, Zamucoan and Macro-Jean, alongside some non-classified languages. The area was a point of confluence of different people, which also circulated in other major South American areas. The Pantanal was surrounded and pervaded by trade networks, described in the earliest accounts written by colonizers. Portuguese and Spanish invaders undermined the basis of this pre-Columbian linguistic ecology, as all the indigenous groups were affected by the colonial struggle for indigenous labour power and territorial domination. Several local groups were totally extinguished or assimilated. One aim of our study is to understand the patterns of contact between Pantanal indigenous groups in the past. For that purpose, we will look for shared features in material culture, social structures, mythologies, languages, and other domains. Another aim is to describe the colonization policies in the Pantanal region and to understand how exactly they contributed to the disintegration of the local multicultural landscape.

Hein van der Voort, Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi

Multilingual regions in Southwestern Amazonia

The southwestern Amazon region, on the headwaters of the Madeira River, is a region of impressive genealogical linguistic diversity, counting up to 10 linguistic isolates and seven language families. It is a region with some of the earliest attestations of plant domestication for food, such as peanut, peach palm and manioc. In spite of the lack of serious natural barriers, the region is vast and its indigenous populations used to belong to several different culture areas. Although certain striking similarities between the different languages can be attributed to areal diffusion, the region does not represent a single clearly definable linguistic area. It is likely that some subregions contain traces of small-scale multilingualism. Unfortunately, outside ‘Western’ cultural, demographic and economic interference has thoroughly changed the original situation. In my contribution, I will present evidence for small-scale multilingualism in the southwestern Amazon, attempting to reconstruct a picture of two specific multilingual regions, and I will discuss how the remainders of traditional multilingualism have co-determined the current situation in southern Rondônia, Brazil.

Roberto Zariquiey, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (lead presenter)

Adriano Ingunza, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (co-author)

Pilar Valenzuela, Chapman University (co-author)

Language death and language contact between genetically-related languages: teasing apart the causes of abrupt change in Iskonawa (Pano, Peru)

Iskonawa is an obsolescing Pano language with only five native speakers. The speakers of Iskonawa have been in intense contact with Shipibo-Konibo, a genetically-related language for more than fifty years. Shipibo-Konibo is the prevailing language in the communities where the Iskonawa speakers and their descendants currently live (Zariquiey 2015, 2017). Thus, Iskonawa is involved in a sociolinguistic situation in which language loss interplays with contact with a genetically-related and fairly typologically similar language (Epps 2013). Iskonawa exhibits intensive borrowing from Shipibo-Konibo, manifested as unusual patterns of variation and variability (Ingunza 2020). At the same time, Iskonawa differs from Shipibo-Konibo in showing a list of grammatical features that are unusual from a Pano perspective: extended ambitransitivity, simple switch-reference, erosion of transitivity harmony, weak word-class distinctions, and body-part noun incorporation into the verb, among others (Zariquiey, submitted). In this talk, we argue that, differently from what has previously stated in the literature, in Iskonawa it is possible to tease apart the effects of language obsolescence from those of language contact (see the discussion in O'Shannesy 2011). Unusual patterns of variability are directly linked to a high ratio of Shipibo lexical and grammatical loanwords into Iskonawa and are thus related to contact effects. In turn, the abrupt structural changes that Iskonawa has undergone fit some of the processes that are often attributed to obsolescing languages in the literature: overgeneralization of structural categories; morphological and syntactic reduction; and preference for analytic constructions (Palosaari and Campbell 2011). Such changes are not linked to contact and indeed make Iskonawa a non-prototypical Pano language.