A TALE OF TWO LANGUAGES: INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND IDEOLOGIES IN AN URBAN CONTEXT

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Abstract:

This paper examines the implications of political and ideological formulations about language, Indigenous identity, and territory for school-based language programs. I consider two case studies from the city of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Amazonas, where, despite a majority Indigenous population, multiple Indigenous languages spoken, and three Indigenous 'co-official' languages, language teaching in schools remains limited, both in form and quantity. I contrast the use and discourses about these two languages, one official (Nheengatú) and one non-official (Kotiria) to illustrate the central challenges surrounding Indigenous language revitalization movements in urban areas.

Keywords: Language ideology, language revitalization, language policy, urban Indigenous identity

Resumo:

Este artigo examina as implicações de formulações políticas e ideológicas acerca de língua/linguagem, identidade indígena e território para programas linguísticos escolares. Considero dois estudos de caso no contexto da cidade de São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Amazonas, onde, apesar de uma população indígena majoritária, da diversidade de línguas faladas e de três línguas indígenas 'co-oficiais', o ensino de línguas nas escolas continua limitado, tanto em formas como em quantidade. Comparo, contrastivamente, o uso e o discurso sobre duas línguas, uma official (Nheengatú) e uma não-oficial (Kotiria) para ilustrar os desafios mais importantes que dizem respeito aos movimentos de revitalização de línguas indígenas em áreas urbanas.

Palavras-chave: Ideologia linguística, revitalização linguística, política linguística, identidade indígena urbana

Introduction

Within the Indigenous political movement in Brazil, the demarcation of land and the right to specialized educational programs have been interconnected aspects of the central fight for material and cultural sustainability. The 1988 constitution brought about a fundamental change in relationship between Indigenous people and the state, and a new legal configuration of Indigeneity as a permanent category of identity rather than a transitional stage of development akin to adolescence (e.g. Ramos 1998; Graham 2002; Maybury-Lewis 2002). This shift has profound implications that are still being addressed, including in the area of Indigenous education; where historically schools have been sites in which Indigenous people were explicitly taught to become 'civilized' (in other words, no longer Indigenous), the possibility now exists to conceive of being educated while retaining not only Indigenous identity, but also language and cultural practice (López and Sichra 2008; Rockwell and Gomes 2009). The process of re-orienting state structures in light of this change has been slow and remains ongoing almost 30 years later, but pressure by Indigenous political organizations and allies has led to the formal demarcation of federally-protected Indigenous territories throughout much of legal Amazonia (Chernela 2006). Within these territories, it is understood that Indigenous cultures are to be allowed and even supported, including through the establishment of schools that are based in the transmission of Indigenous practices and that use, as much as possible, Indigenous languages (Weigel 2003; Akkari 2012; Cabalzar 2012). At the same time, questions about Indigenous identity and rights have also emerged outside of these territories. The movement away from overt assimilationist policies has allowed for the re-acknowledgment and awakening of Indigenous identities that have been long hidden from view in the Northeast and Southeast of the country (Warren 2001), and further, Indigenous people often migrate in to urban areas in pursuit of education, wage employment, access to health care, or as a result of climate change that threatens traditional livelihoods (Campbell 2015). In this context of changing and contested notions of Indigenous identity and territoriality, I will examine the complex structural and ideological conditions informing education for Indigenous people in the urban setting of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Amazonas.

The main goals of Indigenous activism in Brazil fall into two main categories – the right to land on which to maintain their livelihoods, and the right to cultural autonomy and sustainability. The intertwining of these dual activist goals, however, circumvents an important question about how they relate to one another, and specifically, the extent to which the latter is predicated on the former. In other words, is the right to cultural difference associated with *individual identity*, or is it afforded to *communities* living in a particular place (Garcia 2012)? To what extent do Indigenous people living outside of demarcated territories, particularly in urban centres, have the right to education that supports their languages and cultures? In this paper, I will specifically consider how these debates can be seen in relation to efforts to revitalize and promote Indigenous languages. Language revitalization activism and scholarship has emerged as a vital concern among both minority communities and academic linguistics over the last few decades, as the threat of language loss has been recognized as a global problem (Hale et al. 1992; Nettle and Romaine 2000). While a number of terms exist to refer to efforts to respond to this threat by strengthening these languages, I use "revitalization" to best capture a range of activities that can be applied to languages in diverse sociolinguistic conditions, facing

different types and levels of threat to their continued existence. Revitalization activities therefore range from the attempt to produce strong descriptions of languages with very few remaining fluent speakers and develop teaching resources for future learners, to the granting of official status to Indigenous languages that are relatively widely spoken, but remain marginalized in contrast to colonial national languages (for example, Māori in New Zealand, or Quechua and Aymara in Peru). While there are obviously major differences between large Indigenous languages with hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of speakers and tiny languages with only a dozen elderly speakers remaining, the concept of language revitalization applies to any case where planning effort is exerted to return these languages to use in a full range of contexts, by an increasing number of speakers (Fishman 2001; Hinton 2001). In addition, improving the prospects for continued use and even growth of Indigenous and minority languages are also based in efforts to raise the status of the almost invariably marginalized groups that speak them (Dorian 1998). Language revitalization movements are therefore based in an ideological framework that serves not only to teach these languages, but also to act as one line of attack in a broader struggle against symbolic violence and oppression.

These efforts, at some point, almost always include the implementation of school-based language teaching programs, whether that means simply classes in the language or full-fledged immersion schooling; studying the politically charged and complex processes at work in these educational settings, then, becomes an important way of examining the challenges facing revitalization advocates. Schools, to be sure, are always important sites for analysis of how linguistic and cultural socialization is taking place. It is not coincidental that, in many conversations about how Indigenous and minority children are shifting toward the use of the dominant language, schools loom large as a figure of assimilation (McCarty 1998; Luciano 2012). The question of whether it is possible to use schools to reverse this trend is a contested one (May 1999; 2008; Hornberger 2008). As the example discussed in this paper illustrates, with the caveat that schools cannot *singlehandedly* address the problem of language loss and cultural revitalization, their undeniable power as institutes not only of social reproduction, but also as loci for creating and reinforcing symbolic capital means that they almost inevitably have to play some role in most language revitalization initiatives (McCarty 2008).

Context: Language and Culture in the Northwest Amazon

In this paper, I will discuss the relationship between Indigenous language revitalization efforts and schooling in the small city of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Amazonas. This town constitutes an ideal site for examining these issues because it is home to the largest concentration of Indigenous people in all of Brazil (IBGE 2017). The town acts as the seat of a municipality of large geographical span, encompassing the Upper Rio Negro region and extending to the borders with Colombia and Venezuela, in which 95% of the population is Indigenous. Although the proportion drops somewhat in the urban area, where almost all of the region's non-Indigenous migrants from other parts of Brazil make their homes, approximately 80-85% of the city identifies as Indigenous (ibid). In addition, the cultural importance of language to the Indigenous groups of the Rio Negro basin creates a heightened set of stakes for discussions and actions related to language revitalization in this part of the Amazon. São Gabriel sits just downriver from the mouths of the Uaupés (Vaupes) and Içana rivers, the

traditional homelands of several groups of Tukanoan, Arawakan, and Nadahup peoples. Tukanoans are well known in anthropological and linguistic literature for their practice of linguistic exogamy, which uses language to define descent group membership, and according to which all people must marry someone from outside of their patrilineally determined language group (Jackson 1983). This practice has been understood to produce multilingual households as well as extraordinarily high levels of individual multilingualism as children are exposed, minimally, to the languages of each of their parents; the long-term stability of a high level of linguistic diversity among a fairly small population (approximately 50,000 in the Uaupés basin, in both Colombia and Brazil) is attributable to the centrality of language to the definition of identity and the organization of society in Tukanoan cultures (Sorensen 1967; Bruno 2010).

In addition to several Tukanoan languages, the municipality of São Gabriel is home to speakers of Arawakan languages (Baniwa, Kurripako, Tariana, and Warekena), Nadahup languages (Nadeb, Hupdah, Dâw and Yehupdeh), Yanomami, and the Tupi language Nheengatú, which was introduced to the region by Jesuit missionaries in the mid-17th century and has since come to be claimed as a mother tongue by a large number of Indigenous people of the region (da Cruz 2011). The status of this last language as 'Indigenous' remains contested, a point that will inform some of the discussion of educational policies and practices in São Gabriel, but that I discuss in more detail elsewhere (Shulist 2016a). While all of the Indigenous languages of the region can be considered endangered, and at risk of being replaced by Portuguese and/or Spanish, levels of vitality vary substantially among them. Baniwa, for example, has several thousand speakers in both Brazil and Venezuela, and levels of intergenerational transmission are high (Aikhenvald 2003a). Kotiria (Wanano), while having considerably fewer speakers (approximately 1500), remains the language of communication within its traditional territories along the Upper Uaupes on both sides of the Colombian/Brazilian border (Stenzel 2013). Tariana, by contrast, has been almost completely replaced by Tukano, and with less than 100 relatively elderly speakers remaining, is at very high risk of disappearing in the near future (Aikhenvald 2003b).

The demographic dominance of Indigenous people, and the centrality of language to their cultures and identities, means that the maintenance of linguistic diversity is a prominent topic of political discussion in the city. One example of these efforts is the local level language policy, established in late 2001, declaring three of the largest Indigenous languages of the region – Tukano, Baniwa, and Nheengatú – co-official alongside the national language of Portuguese (Oliveira and Almeida 2007). The motivations for and implications of this policy are complex, especially since it is widely understood to have remained "on paper" as the majority of its terms have not been put into practice by the municipal government (Sarges 2013; Shulist 2013). This policy does, however, inform the discourses and practices about the appropriate use of Indigenous languages in city schools in important ways. During my ethnographic research (2011-2012, with an additional short visit in 2014), the only Indigenous language with a curricular presence was Nheengatú, and even that was extremely minimal – one hour per week for students attending municipal schools up until 5th grade (5a serie), after which the second language requirement shifted to English or Spanish. In state, federal, and private schools, no Indigenous languages were taught at that time.

In the urban area of São Gabriel, educational settings for the revitalization of Indigenous languages include more obvious challenges than they do opportunities. At the same time, education and schools were by far the most frequently identified and targeted sites for the implementation of language revitalization. Almost every time I described the focal questions of my research – how Indigenous languages were being supported, or could be better supported, in the urban area – I was directed to talk to educators, educational administrators, education-based activists, or teachers' organizations. In my ethnographic research, then, I conducted participant observation in several different sites focusing specifically on education, including not only schools, but also the municipal and state departments of education, the department of education within the political NGO Federação das Organizações Indígenas do Rio Negro (FOIRN), and a group of Kotiria teachers whose goals included the establishment of a Kotiria-medium school in the urban area. In this paper, I will discuss how people discuss and advocate, in different ways, for the inclusion or strengthening of educational programs relating to two differently situated languages spoken in the city. First, I will outline how Nheengatú, one of the three municipal co-official languages, has come to be the only Indigenous language used in schools. Here, I consider how the historical introduction of this Tupi language to the region has affected its role in the city, and further, analyze how the very minimal presence of Nheengatú classes in the city's schools relates to attitudes and processes about Indigeneity, "civilization", modernity, and urbanity. Second, I will analyze the goals and motivations of the Kotiria teachers' group, and consider their discourses and practical efforts to support their language through the establishment of a school in the city. Despite the fact that this group has been advocating for and organizing around this goal since the early 2000s, the legal, institutional, and financial challenges inherent in building a new type of school have prevented them from making more than minimal progress towards it. The group nonetheless remains committed to the school in particular as their central goal, rather than considering alternative or additional programs for revitalization of their language in the city. I argue that, in both cases, language ideologies, and underlying ideological conflicts, rather than overt political disagreement with or opposition to the project of Indigenous language revitalization, create the most significant barriers to these efforts. Further, these two different examples from the same social environment provide a useful case study for understanding the challenges of implementing language revitalization programs in urban areas, and especially of using schools to do so.

Background: Language ideologies, clarification, and revitalization

Language ideology is a central conceptual tool within linguistic anthropology that attempts to account for differing perspectives on what language is and how it relates to other social and cultural formulations. Irvine (1989:255) defines it as "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests". Studying language ideologies, then, involves identifying beliefs and social concerns that often lie beneath the surface of linguistic forms and practices, and recognizing that, at their core, beliefs about language are never *only* about language (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994:55). Contexts of language endangerment and revitalization have proven to be rich sites for the examination of language ideologies, not least because the extreme power imbalance created with colonial contact that has initiated the current trajectory toward global language endangerment throws these ideologies "into high relief" (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994:56).

That basic observation has borne fruit as scholarship on language revitalization frequently addresses the role that language ideologies play in determining the conditions of endangerment (Granadillo and Orcutt-Gachiri 2011), in shaping the possibilities for language documentation and revitalization (Meek 2011; Nevins 2013; Debenport 2015), and in reconfiguring the communities in which these languages are or were once spoken (Avineri and Kroskrity 2014; Shulist 2016a; Davis 2016). A central theme of all of this work is the recognition that both endangerment and revitalization are profoundly political processes that must be understood in relation to locally specific meanings associated with language and languages. While they are influenced by globally circulating "discourses of endangerment" (Heller and Duchêne 2007), these discourses take hold in particular ways in different social contexts.

Language ideologies provide useful tools, then, not only for understanding these localized experiences of language endangerment, but also the nature of the political and social barriers to revitalization efforts. In analyzing their experiences working for more than two decades on efforts to revitalize Alaskan Native languages, Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer (1998) suggest that the absence of "prior ideological clarification" had a serious impact on the efficacy of the programs they implemented. They observe that despite widespread vocal support for language revitalization, behaviours and social practices often worked against those interests and toward language loss, and that ideological clarification would have allowed discovery of these contradictions that required some type of resolution in order to move the languages forward. Paul Kroskrity (2009) expands on this observation and provides the concept of "ideological clarification" with additional methodological and theoretical grounding in order to make it a useful one for application to revitalization efforts. He describes the process as one designed to identify "issues of language ideological contestation… that can negatively impact community efforts to successfully engage in language maintenance and renewal" (73). These contentious beliefs may emerge as a result of pre-existing local ideologies or as a consequence of the introduction of colonial language ideologies. The achievement of clarification occurs after identifying these challenges, bringing them into conscious discussion, and, ultimately, working to resolve the differences among them, or, at least to "foster a tolerable level of disagreement that would not inhibit language renewal activities" (73).

São Gabriel is a town in which multiple intersecting language ideologies are present. This complexity emerges both as a result of the many different Indigenous peoples present and because of differences based on language(s) spoken, multilingualism vs. monolingualism, the positions of various state agencies, and distinctions between those born in the city and those who have migrated more recently from rural areas. Ideological clarification in this context is both necessary and extraordinarily difficult to accomplish, even if the process is narrowed to focus on just one of the many languages spoken there. In this paper, I illustrate the ideological disjunctures (Meek 2011) that characterize the two situations discussed here. These disjunctures hinge primarily on ideological frameworks that associate Indigeneity with rurality and tradition, and that establish a binary opposition with urbanity, modernity, and progress. Each of the cases offers different, but overlapping, insights for attempts to create an education policy that can be effectively used to promote increased use of Indigenous languages in the urban area.

Symbolic Presence and Civilized Indigeneity: The Case of Nheengatú

Given the high proportion of Indigenous people in São Gabriel, as well as the municipal language policy that officially recognizes three Indigenous languages, the most striking aspect of Indigenous language-in-education policies is their near complete absence from the classroom. Not only is Nheengatú alone in being offered as a curricular topic, but even that is only used in municipally-funded elementary schools – meaning a total of two schools out of ten, and only up to the fifth grade. In this section, I will consider how this policy is explained, justified, and understood by various actors. In their commentary on how the policy came about, what it means to have Nheengatú in these schools, and what can or should be done to improve upon the current situation, underlying ideological positions that ultimately weaken language revitalization efforts become apparent.

The use of Nheengatú in schools in the urban area is predicated on two interrelated goals – first, increasing the transmission of and exposure to the language itself, and second, valorizing the language and its speakers by incorporating it into a public educational context. While the first goal is given primacy by a number of advocates and teachers, nearly everyone involved (including administrators, teachers, parents, and even students), recognizes that the amount of time spent learning Nheengatú in the classroom is woefully insufficient to allow students to gain any significant degree of proficiency in the language. A contradiction emerges, however, in that despite their stated intent, few of the people who advocate for improvement on the existing policy argue that more time should be spent on Nheengatú language instruction. Most argued that the next steps in the development of São Gabriel's language-in-education policy should be the implementation of language classes in the other two co-official languages, allowing parents to choose which of them their child should attend. Nheengatú language teachers themselves highlighted the lack of support they received for preparing and teaching these classes, noting that they were not trained in second language pedagogy and that they had to develop their own teaching materials, but this problem is framed primarily as a labour issue, rather than a challenge to revitalization. In other words, these teachers' (clearly justified) complaints were about the imbalance in workload resulting from being assigned to teach Nheengatú classes in contrast to other teaching roles, not about the limited level of linguistic competence achieved by their students. These teachers have developed an informal support network through which they share teaching materials, address anxieties about their approach to teaching the language, and strategize to ensure that they were able to retain their jobs in upcoming years. Many of these teachers are hired on one year contracts, teach at multiple schools during morning, afternoon, or evening sessions, and may also be taking courses to upgrade their credentials. These conditions of personal financial insecurity, ongoing uncertainty, and challenging work requirements make it very difficult for teachers to prioritize considerations about the language itself, as their immediate economic needs are too pressing.

Further, while school administrators may verbally acknowledge support for Nheengatú language teaching, and Indigenous languages more generally, their actions demonstrate that the quality of these classes or learning experiences of their students is very low on their list of competing priorities. In interviews and informal conversations, I asked municipal administrative officials, principals and pedagogical coordinators about these classes, and they revealed that they were not a significant

concern. For example, in discussing staffing decisions, both principals and teachers recognized that these positions were often used as an opportunity to extend a favour to a friend or family member who was in need of employment, as long as they happened to be a speaker of the language. In one case, such a position was given to a woman with only passive knowledge of Nheengatú. Pedagogical coordinators stated that they did not have time to worry about supporting these classes by providing or supporting the creation of teaching materials, and that they weren't even sure what to suggest to a new teacher as to how to approach this task. Continuity of instruction from year to year was rarely sought. Almost all of the people in these positions during my fieldwork were themselves Indigenous, and most were members of the Baré ethnic group, within which Nheengatú is the primary Indigenous language (Shulist 2016a).

While these teaching and educational planning practices suggest a lack of real concern for language revitalization, the actual acquisition of the language is not the only goal of these classes. In fact, many understand the primary significance of the classes to be a matter of *symbolic valorization*, not only of Nheegatú itself, but of Indigenous languages and the associated cultures more generally. Their presence in the high status, "civilized" environment of formal schooling has great power in this regard. This idea is contested by many language advocates (both Indigenous and outsider) who believe that transmission of the language should be paramount, but it is brought forward openly and directly by some teachers and administrators. For example, one administrator at the municipal preschool, herself a Baré woman, told me that the purpose of having the languages in schools was to show "that we have a real language, that it is worth teaching". These goals emerge in direct contrast to the historical importance of schools as a place in which Indigenous languages and Indigeneity were explicitly denigrated. This history includes both the mission-run *internatos*¸ which were, in many cases, characterized by the formal use of punishment and shaming tactics in response to the use of Indigenous languages (Cabalzar 2012), as well as more informal, but equally effective, tactics of language suppression used in schools in the city throughout the 1970s, 80s, and into the 90s. Being heard to speak Indigenous languages, for example, would lead to both classmates and teachers asking if the student was "an Indian" or "a savage". The inclusion of Nheengatú classes, then, is relevant not only because schools constitute high status social environments, but also because it speaks back against this history – not only is it *acceptable* to communicate using an Indigenous language, but it is *valued* as a curricular subject. This reversal symbolically affirms its relevance as a form of knowledge, rather than a state of ignorance.

This affirmation, however, is not without its complex underlying costs. As Perley (2011)) notes for school-based Indigenous language learning in a Canadian context, bringing Indigenous languages into the classroom entails, on some level, a process of rendering them controllable – in other words, rather than eradicating reliance on a binary between "civilized" and "savage", this effort recategorizes certain forms of Indigeneity on the "civilized" side. Rendering the predominantly oral languages into writing is a central part of the process that Perley refers to as "domestication" – gaining control over the language by bringing it into public view and under public control, and thereby ultimately removing it from its use as a language of Indigenous home life (Perley, 2011:64). In São Gabriel, this process of domestication applies to Indigeneity as a whole, and its practices can be seen in several aspects of

language in education policy. First, the selection of only one Indigenous language from among the many works not only to simplify Indigeneity, but also to transform a multifaceted, multilingual set of identities into one that better matches the Eurocentric "one culture: one language" ideology (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Heller 2007). Second, the choice of Nheengatú to serve this purpose is far from neutral. As a result of both its colonial origins in the region and its status as a lingua franca for several centuries, the degree to which this language truly counts as "Indigenous" is unclear and contested (cf. Fleming 2010; Shulist 2016a for extensive discussion of this contestation). Historically, while Tukanoan, Arawakan, and other unquestionably Indigenous languages were explicitly prohibited in public institutions (including informal uses in schools), Nheengatú was tolerated in certain spaces. In addition, many of its speakers once identified with the label of *caboclo*, emphasizing their history of mixing with non-Indigenous settlers, adapting cultural practices to better fit in to non-Indigenous Brazilian society, and distancing themselves from the stigmatized "Indigenous" label (Maia 2009). The transition towards identifying as Baré, and reclaiming their Indigenous identity, has been a complex one, especially as the state's perception of "acculturation" and what it means continues to shift (Shulist 2016b). Baré leaders have done considerable work to push back against essentialistic attitudes that reaffirm old perceptions that they no longer "count" as Indigenous as a result of their adaptation, but despite these efforts, both the Baré label and the Nheengatú language remain ambiguously situated in a semiotic space between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds. Baré educators themselves invoke images of civilization and domestication in discussing language, education, and aspirations for the city. In interviews, several such people, especially women in their 50s or older, emphasized that they were only willing to support the inclusion of Indigenous languages in their schools if it would not compromise the overall "quality" of their students' education (with the level of quality seen as directly measurable through Brazil's standardized testing system). The idea of "quality" was also linked to concepts like "civilization" and "cleanliness", as for example, one principal who rejected the idea of including additional Indigenous languages for study in favour of a priority of proving to people that "this is not a city full of dirty Indians, of savages".

This principal's statement also demonstrates a pattern in which schools in the city orient themselves toward an external (non-Indigenous) gaze in determining how they should provide education to the city's (predominantly Indigenous) population. Within discussions about how and whether to include Indigenous languages in educational curricula, educators, parents, and Indigenous leaders alike express concern about ensuring that students – particularly non-Indigenous children of military personnel – will not be unduly challenged by Indigenous language requirements. Nheengatú is often considered to be "easier" to learn for monolingual Portuguese speakers, both because of its grammatical structures and the frequency of borrowed words from Portuguese. This point becomes important for quelling the objections of temporarily stationed military parents, who already fear that the schools in this remote, poorly funded Amazonian municipality will not adequately prepare their children for entrance to prestigious and competitive Brazilian universities. The pedagogical focus, then, is on the needs of these students, who are not only a numerical minority, but also presumed to be using education to further their goals outside of the region itself. The minimal inclusion of Indigeneity and Indigenous languages in the urban schools is directly connected to this focal point, as is the selection of Nheengatú, which is viewed as a more accessible language than Tukano, Baniwa, or any of the non-official languages of the area.

The language-in-education policy at work in the urban area of São Gabriel, then, is one that is built on a framework of non-Indigenous pedagogies, while carving out very specific – and very limited – spaces for the inclusion of Indigeneity. Both the *amount* and the *form* of Indigenous language teaching, particularly the selection of Nheengatú as the one Indigenous language with curricular presence, are tempered by dominant ideologies about the (lack of) value of Indigenous languages within a modern city of mobile people. While it is widely recognized that the current framework for teaching Nheengatú is insufficient to allow anyone to actually learn the language, language acquisition is not, ultimately, the goal of these programs. Rather, they serve primarily to "valorize" Indigenous languages and Indigeneity through a mechanism that domesticates the languages and presents a form of Indigenous identity that is most easily accessible to outsiders. The role of Nheengatú language classes therefore becomes a matter of "civilizing" and modernizing *Indigeneity* rather than endeavoring to Indigenize modernity (Andersen and Peters 2013). The pattern is reversed in the case of Kotiria speakers looking to create a Kotiria-medium school in the city; the ideological barriers they face, however, are just as significant.

"I Don't Have Time to Teach My Children Kotiria": The Case of AIPOK

Kotiria (Wanano) is one of the Eastern Tukanoan languages whose speakers have traditionally participated fully in language group-based exogamy. While the total number of speakers is relatively small – approximately 1500 in Brazil and Colombia – within several remote rural communities along the Upper Uaupes, it remains the language of everyday communication and is still being transmitted to children (Stenzel 2013). Many Kotiria people have migrated out of these communities, however, and now make their homes in larger centres along the Uaupes, such as Iauaratê, where access to goods, education, health care, and wage employment options improve; an informal survey also counts approximately 35 Kotiria families who have moved to São Gabriel. Within these contexts, shift away from the use of Kotiria as a medium of daily communication within the home occurs very quickly, such that the second generation of children who are born in the city are very likely to be monolingual Portuguese speakers (Stenzel 2013; Shulist 2013). The long-term viability of the Kotiria language, then, depends on two parallel projects – efforts to quell the exodus out of the Upper Uaupes communities in which it remains strong, and efforts to strengthen its use and transmission in larger centres, including São Gabriel.

The organization discussed here was formed in order to address the latter need. The Associação Indígena do Povo Kotiria (AIPOK) was formally established in 2012, though the group had been informally working together for many years before that. Its membership is open to all Kotiria people, but the core organizers are a group of mainly urban-dwelling teachers who have united around the goal of creating a Kotiria medium school in Sao Gabriel. The idea originated in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when educational training programs attended by a few of the group's leaders led them to recognize the implications and probability of language loss, as well as the significance of the right to language and specialized Indigenous education. AIPOK's official charter outlines its broad aim of providing support for the preservation and promotion of the Kotiria language and culture, without specifying how or where, but because most of the organization's executive and active members live in

the city and work as teachers, advocating for the urban school has remained the central focus of their efforts. This ambitious goal has persisted despite the fact that they have had little success, as any time they have garnered the attention of a politician willing to entertain the idea, nothing material has come of their conversations or promises. At the same time, despite their stated overall goal to maintain their culture and ensure their children can learn their language, language shift has continued unabated in their own homes, and the children of even the most committed AIPOK members are all monolingual Portuguese speakers. Their parents lament this state of affairs and use it in their arguments about why a school is needed – without it, they say, they "don't have time to teach them" the language.

This group therefore frames language revitalization has *needing* to occur within a formal educational setting, which presents a particularly vexing challenge in light of the political and ideological structures present in the municipality of São Gabriel. As discussed above with respect to Nheengatú, support for the inclusion of Indigenous languages in urban schools is already minimal, and discussions of how to expand it focus only on adding classes in the other two official Indigenous languages. Neither classes in non-official languages nor the type of bilingual-bicultural education model the Kotiria teachers advocate are options that have any political traction. The Kotiria population in the city is also quite small, which means both that they have limited pull with politicians as a voting bloc, and that the total student body would be miniscule in contrast to the several hundred students attending other urban schools. Nonetheless, the members of AIPOK believe that this school is the only means by which they will be able to achieve their goals. On the one hand, this reflects the pragmatic limitations that characterize their lives. As teachers, they spend the bulk of their time away from their children, and their children spend much of their time in school; making both their own work environment and their children's school environment a site for learning about the Kotiria language and culture is therefore a response to this reality. In addition, just as Nheengatú language classes are affected by precarious employment structures, Kotiria teachers also live based on short-term contracts, and constant anxiety about where they will be employed in the following school year. This economic uncertainty informs their view of why a school is necessary, as the differentiated education programs available in the rural territories require teachers that speak the relevant local languages. This policy, they note, ultimately harms speakers of smaller, non-official languages, as there are several schools and communities seeking Tukano speakers, but only a few where Kotiria speakers are needed. While they situate their argument within the discourse of language rights (May 2003; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000), one of their motives is to ensure that they, as Kotiria teachers, would gain reliable, long-term employment. The importance of being able to meet their basic needs leads to a near-exclusive focus on the effort to create a school, and several of the group members have little interest in engaging with other strategies for language revitalization that might act as preliminary steps in the implementation of a successful educational program.

Opposition to the creation of an urban Kotiria school, however, comes not only from non-Kotiria politicians and leaders, but also from rural Kotiria people. These people approach the maintenance of the Kotiria language and culture by focusing on efforts to keep young people living in the communities, where intergenerational transmission remains strong. The establishment of a Kotiria school in Caruru-Cachoeira (Oliveira, Trindade, and Stenzel 2012) has helped to limit out-migration,

but factors like climate change, limited access to electricity, market goods, and health care, and lack of wage employment opportunities continue to push some people out of these communities. As a result, some Kotiria leaders fear that if a school were established in the city, they would lose the one thing they have that makes people want to stay there rather than moving to São Gabriel – a strong language and cultural presence. The urban Kotiria face a double marginalization, then, in that they do not possess the kind of Indigeneity that urban leaders want to promote or preserve, but their urbanity means they are seen as a threat by other members of their own ethnolinguistic group.

An additional component of these teachers' feeling that they are unable to transmit the language in the absence of a school comes from ideologies about linguistic knowledge. Like other Tukanoan groups, the Kotiria conceive of language and linguistic knowledge as a holistic package, which makes it very difficult for them to imagine how one could be a partial speaker, for example. These ideas are rooted in language-based kinship and marriage systems, which require a strict policing of the boundaries between languages and make the possibility of pronunciation or grammatical errors both highly salient and strongly discouraged (Aikhenvald 2003a; Chernela 2013). As specific phonemic contrasts work to index differentiation between groups, mistakes in pronunciation, which might lead to confusion about which code is being used, can be very problematic. This socialization process has complex implications for revitalization, as many people who claim only passive knowledge of various languages may have a wide range of actual linguistic abilities, but lack confidence in their ability to speak them error-free. I rarely met anyone in São Gabriel who described their linguistic abilities in partial terms – they could either speak the language, understand but not speak, or not know the language at all. In examining possible means of revitalizing Kotiria through acquisition planning, I also came to realize that Kotiria speakers had no way of describing an adult learner of his or her own language. The Kotiria make a semantic distinction between linguistic ability based on ethnic identification, as one is said to speak his or her own language, but *imitate* the languages of other ethnic groups. While this *imitation* could be learned, when I asked Kotiria teachers which of the words they might use to describe someone learning to *speak*, the situation struck them as impossible and therefore indescribable. This conceptualization further solidifies the need for a school, as children are the only legitimate targets of language teaching.

These ideologies have also had an impact on the perception of writing and literacy as they relate to conceptualizations of what it means to know a language. As a result of school-based educational structures, along with documentary linguistic practices that form the backbone of revitalization efforts, and the particular relationship that Indigenous peoples of this region have to stories and texts (Fleming 2009; Hugh-Jones 2010), Kotiria speakers now discuss literacy as a part of this holistic package of linguistic knowledge. Members of AIPOK regularly expressed that their goal was to have their children know the language *completely*, meaning to speak, read, and write. This ideological framing also emerged after I spent some time trying to learn a few words and phrases in Kotiria. As I listened, I would transcribe what speakers were saying to me, and because of my training as a linguist, I was usually quite successful in writing the words down accurately. On different occasions, several Kotiria speakers responded to this ability by equating my (extremely limited) knowledge of the language to their oral fluency, because I could write but not speak, while they could speak but not

write. The school, then, truly becomes the only possible site for language acquisition, because of its centrality to the establishment, definition, and transmission of literacy. In this context, the notion that these teachers "don't have time" to teach their children the language makes sense. Formal education has introduced a shift in thinking about language teaching and learning that has a particularly powerful impact in a context where people are reluctant to use the language in the absence of what they consider to be full knowledge. As the Kotiria case reveals, then, the emphasis on school-based revitalization programming for urban-dwelling Indigenous peoples, it also creates fundamental transformations to the relationship that people have to their languages and linguistic knowledge.

Conclusion

These two contrasting situations of language-in-education policy and advocacy help to illustrate the ideological and political complexity of schools as a site for Indigenous language revitalization, especially in an urban area. While the creation of a system of differentiated schools in Indigenous territories has undoubtedly been a major victory in the struggle for the recognition of Indigenous rights and support of Indigenous languages (Cabalzar 2012), the legal framework through which they have been created is not without its limitations. The status of Indigenous people living in urban areas is a contentious question not only in Brazil, but all over the world (Gagné 2013; Peters and Andersen 2013; Alexiades and Peluso 2015); debates about schooling make manifest many of these points of contention. Schools serve not only as vehicles for the socialization of children and youth, but also as quintessential public institutions. In other words, they work not only to produce certain types of citizens, but also to define the public space (Gal and Woolard 2001; Page and Thomas 1994; Hill 1998). The form that schools take in a given place is therefore a question about the identity of the place itself as well as of the people in it. In São Gabriel, this concern revolves around what it means to be "the most Indigenous city in Brazil", and the continued ideological formulation of Indigenous identities as inherently incompatible with urban modernity. On the one hand, this results in efforts to shape Indigenous inclusion in particular ways, and to define a relatively limited amount of public space in which that Indigeneity can be expressed. The product of these efforts can be seen in the ways that different actors explain the selection of Nheengatú as the only language taught in the city's schools, as well as the limited amount of time, support, and attention it is given.

At the same time, many of the people involved in both of these language-in-education efforts situate their actions in terms of advocacy for the languages themselves, and requires us to consider the implications of that framework for understanding Indigenous education. The situation of AIPOK in particular exemplifies how discourses of endangerment (Heller and Duchêne 2007) fail to capture the actual experiences of individual language speakers or potential learners. The focus on revitalizing or maintaining the *language* itself implies that, as long as the language is sustainable *somewhere*, for *some* people, the risk is being appropriately mitigated. The nature of risk and the potential for loss is defined based on universalizing concepts and discursive tropes, including those that Hill (2002) and Errington (2003) cogently expose in their work. For example, Hill's analysis of revitalization advocacy reveals the common use of concepts like "universal ownership", in which languages must be preserved in order to fight against the possibility of losing knowledge that is of potential value to science, or to

humanity as a whole. The availability of resources supporting the use and continued transmission of Kotiria in the rural territories is sufficient to satisfy outsiders that this risk is being addressed. For the Kotiria inhabitants of São Gabriel, however, this outcome is insufficient because their sense of what is at risk and what matters about language loss is fundamentally different. AIPOK members, especially in their formal meetings, repeatedly reiterated to me that their "principal concern" was the fact that their children were being raised without knowledge of the language, and therefore, without knowledge of who they are as Kotiria people. "Universal valorization", and a language revitalization framework that focuses on sustaining the language as an abstract entity detached from individual speakers, cannot help to meet that need. This distinction has material consequences – funding agencies for language revitalization assess the merits of various projects based on a specific understanding of what types of risk matter and must be urgently addressed, and there is no room to describe the deep sense of loss that is expressed by these people in considering what is happening to their children. Despite their commitment and involvement to language documentation and revitalization, then, this group of people has found themselves not only without support for their projects, but without access to discourses that they could use to generate that support. Both their own complicated ideological positions and the ideological positions of revitalization advocates in general leave them in limbo, a state that has, for the last 15 years, led directly to language shift toward Portuguese.

These two distinct stories run parallel to one another in demonstrating the multifaceted challenges to implementation of school-based language revitalization programs in an urban area, even one in which Indigenous people dominate demographically. Both ideologies and political structures limit the opportunities for Indigenous language education in the city, while at the same time, informing practices that focus on schools as the most significant sites for these endeavors. As each of the stories shows, there are a multiplicity of interests at play in discussions of Indigenous language education in São Gabriel, and language revitalization is only one of them. Moving forward with either educational reform or language revitalization strategies, a process of ideological clarification constitutes a necessary step. As it stands, despite the growing proportion of Indigenous people living in cities, discussing the possibility of language revitalization in these spaces remains a peripheral concern among language advocates; in order to develop effective strategies for these cases, we must examine the ways in which Indigenous language education in urban schools has a fundamentally different meaning from the same program in rural Indigenous territories. While it may be possible to continue to promote the growth of Indigenous languages without attention to urban settings, a substantial proportion of speakers, learners, and potential learners will be left out of the conversation as we do, and ultimately weakens these efforts.

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