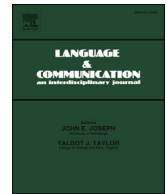


Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

## Language &amp; Communication

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/langcom](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/langcom)

# Contrasting linguistic ecologies: Indigenous and colonially mediated language contact in northwest Amazonia

Patience Epps

Dept. of Linguistics, University of Texas at Austin, 305 E. 23rd Street STOP B5100, Austin, TX 78712, USA

## ARTICLE INFO

Article history:  
Available online xxx

Keywords:  
Multilingualism  
Amazonia  
Linguistic ecology  
Linguistic exogamy  
Maintenance  
Shift

## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the dynamics of multilingualism and the linguistic outcomes of contact involving indigenous languages in the northwest Amazonian Vaupés region. Despite points of continuity, a significant contrast exists between the processes and products of multilingual interaction among indigenous groups and that involving colonial entities. While indigenous interactions have tended to involve language maintenance, grammatical diffusion, and limited lexical borrowing, contact between indigenous and European languages has tended toward more code-switching, lexical borrowing, and large-scale language shift. These findings illustrate that attention to differing linguistic ecologies, with their associated social and cultural dynamics, is crucial to understanding the mechanisms and outcomes of language contact, and that we must be cautious in projecting the patterns of one context upon another.

© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Historical accounts of interaction and exchange involving indigenous peoples of the Americas have tended to emphasize their engagement with colonial and post-colonial entities, and studies of contact in indigenous languages have focused largely on the effects of European languages. Such effects are of course both relatively easy to identify and relevant to concerns of language endangerment and political and economic marginalization. Nevertheless, our understanding of contact histories must recognize that colonial contexts have specific social and cultural dynamics relating to social hierarchy and power, conceptions of identity, etc., and that these may contrast significantly to those that pertain (or pertained) in indigenous societal contexts, which are characterized in many cases by small-scale, relatively egalitarian social dynamics. Such differences in cultural and linguistic ecologies (see [Haugen, 1972](#); [Mühlhäusler, 1996](#); [Calvet, 2006](#); [Mufwene, 2001](#)) are highly relevant in shaping processes of language contact and their outcomes ([Silverstein, 1979, 1998](#)). While speakers direct their linguistic behavior to reflect the social groups with which they wish to be identified or distinguished ([Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985](#)), they do so according to variable social and cultural conceptions of how the social *group* is understood in relation to others, the degree to which the individual can manipulate his/her group affiliations, and the role of language in this process.

The Vaupés region of the northwest Amazon provides an intriguing context for exploring such differing ecologies and their linguistic outcomes. Within the traditional framework, the region hosts a complex multilingual system involving, on the one hand, relatively egalitarian groups engaging in linguistic exogamy, with accompanying multilingual practices; and, on the

<sup>1</sup> E-mail address: [pattieepps@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:pattieepps@austin.utexas.edu).

<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations: ANIM Animate; ASSERT Assertive; DECL Declarative; DEM Demonstrative; FLR 'Filler' suffix; FUT Future; LOC Locative; OBJ Object; PST Past; PL Plural; POSS Possessive; REL Relative; REM Remote; REP Reportive; SEQ Sequential; SG Singular; VIS Visual; PERV Perfective.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2018.04.010>

0271-5309/© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

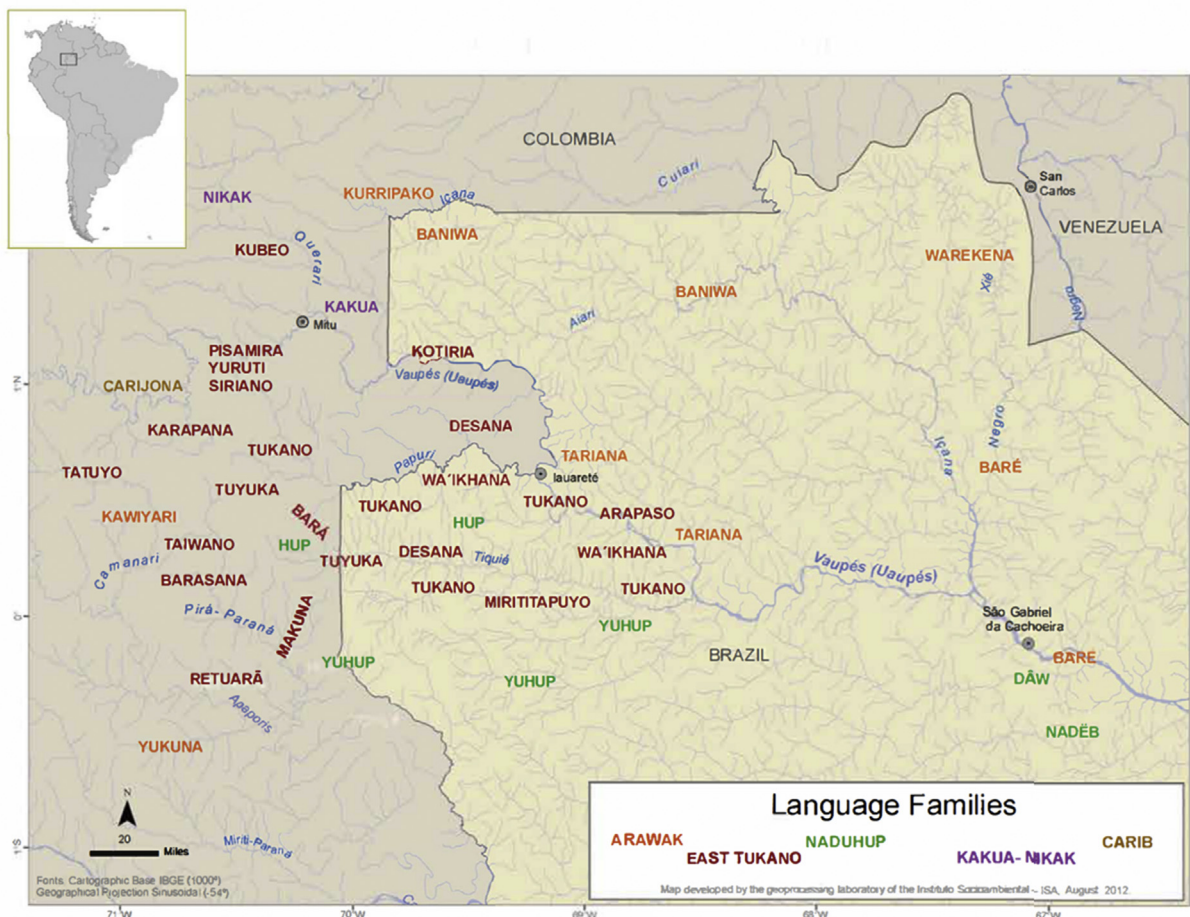
Please cite this article in press as: Epps, P., Contrasting linguistic ecologies: Indigenous and colonially mediated language contact in northwest Amazonia, *Language & Communication* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2018.04.010>

other, socially imbalanced ‘forest’ and ‘river’ groups engaged in intensive interaction and trade, with unreciprocated bilingualism on the part of the forest peoples in the river peoples’ language(s). Both contexts are characterized by language maintenance, relatively low lexical borrowing, and grammatical convergence. In contrast, the ongoing engagement with the national society, especially in urban centers within the region, is characterized by the development of lingua francas, extensive language shift, and lowered constraints on language mixing, including higher levels of lexical borrowing.

This paper explores the dynamics of these contexts in detail. While points of continuity are evident, there are significant differences in the multilingual practices and outcomes between the more indigenous contexts and the colonially mediated ones. These contrasts are particularly noteworthy in light of the social imbalance that pertains in both cases, most notably between the forest and river people in the Vaupés indigenous context. A wider lens suggests that a similar contrast between indigenous and colonially mediated ecologies and outcomes is also more broadly relevant in Amazonia. These cases demonstrate that the dynamics of contemporary contact observed in indigenous and colonial/national (or colonially-mediated) contexts cannot be uncritically assumed to model the dynamics that pertained among indigenous languages and their speakers in the past.

## 2. Indigenous multilingualism in the Vaupés

Within the Vaupés river basin, itself a part of the wider Upper Rio Negro region (see [Map 1](#)), groups associated with distinct languages, subsistence practices, and ethnic identities regularly interact in what has been characterized as a ‘regional system’ ([Sorensen, 1967](#); [Aikhenvald, 2002](#); [Stenzel, 2005](#); [Epps and Stenzel, 2013](#)). Four distinct language families are well represented within the region, plus the relative newcomers Nheengatú (a Tupi-Guaranian language spread by priests in the colonial era), Portuguese, and Spanish, while still other languages exist on the margins. Within the Vaupés, the East Tukanoan and Arawakan groups occupy the riverine zones and rely predominantly on manioc agriculture and fishing, while the Naduhupan and Kakua-Nukakan ‘forest peoples’ (formerly known as ‘Makú’; see [Epps and Bolaños, 2017](#)) occupy the interfluvial zones and have traditionally maintained a hunting and gathering focus.



**Map 1.** The upper Rio Negro region.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/11004548>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/11004548>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)