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Talking about language endangerment and Indigenous languages in the classroom: Some <u>dos</u> and <u>don'ts</u> I have learned through fieldwork in the Brazilian Amazon

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Abstract. How we discuss the phenomenon of language endangerment can have unexpected consequences. In this paper, I offer five recommendations as to how we should and should not talk about endangered languages in our classrooms. My discussion of these recommendations draws extensively upon my experience conducting field research on Tuparí, an Indigenous Amazonian language spoken in the Brazilian state of Rondônia.

Keywords. language endangerment; Indigenous languages; Amazonian languages; language-in-society

1. Introduction. There is ample literature on language endangerment written for a general audience and appropriate for undergraduates who do not have much or even any background in linguistics (Nettle & Romaine 2000; Abley 2003; Harrison 2007; Thomason 2015). This literature is intended to make people "care" about endangered languages the way they care about other social ills of the modern era, particularly climate destruction. Indeed, reading Nettle & Romaine (2000) – which repeatedly highlights the parallels between the loss of linguistic diversity and the loss of ecological diversity – was what led me to decide to become a linguist who researches endangered languages.

From a pedagogical standpoint, then, it is not a challenge to find engaging readings that help students to think about these issues. The problem is that this literature is full of contradictions – or, at the very least, of unsettling imbalances. Linguists have professional and intellectual reasons to want to see endangered languages documented, described and analyzed, but these reasons

are distinct from, and sometimes even at odds with, those held by the communities where endangered languages are or have been spoken.

What is more, the metaphors we use to talk about language endangerment, especially regarding Indigenous languages, can be offensive and even dehumanizing to speakers and communities. We need to be vigilant about the metaphors we employ: while they can help alert the public to the cause of endangered languages and can help us to secure grant funding, they can also have unforeseen impacts on people on the ground.

I am by no means the first non-Native researcher to call attention to the issues surrounding metaphors of endangerment; the critiques offered by Hill (2002), for instance, are just as insightful today as they were 22 years ago. But these issues have lately been at the forefront of my mind because of pedagogical concerns. At the time of this writing (May 2024), I have just finished teaching a new undergraduate course, entitled "Indigenous languages: their past, present, and future", at Syracuse University. This course, which is cross-listed between Syracuse's Linguistics Studies Program and the program in Native American and Indigenous Studies, has no prerequisites; everything has to be built from the ground up. The course offers students an introductory level survey of the linguistic diversity of the languages of the Americas and then dives into various sociohistorical topics, including present-day vitality, writing systems, revitalization initiatives, and reclamation projects that make use of archival materials. The lectures and readings do not go into too much technical detail concerning the structural properties of Native American languages. Although these properties excite linguistics, discussing them would have required the students to have more background in linguistics than I could assume.

An interesting challenge for me as the course head is that my own fieldwork experience, which I describe at greater length below, has taken place in a part of the Brazilian Amazon where the arrival of non-Indigenous settlers/colonists is a recent phenomenon and where shift from Indigenous languages to Portuguese has occurred within living memory. This contrasts starkly with the experience of the Native American students enrolled in my class, most of whom come from the Iroquoian-speaking peoples who comprise the Haudenosaunee Confederacy: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca. (See Mithun & DeCaire 2024 on Iroquoian languages.) The Haudenosaunee have been in contact with speakers of European languages for centuries now and as a result have been subjected to extreme pressure to shift to English; that pressure has included violent disappropriation of language via residential schools (Burich 2016). There is much discussion in my classroom about the differences between the North American and South American cases, and I try to pay due attention to those differences by assigning readings that look at language endangerment, revitalization, and reclamation on both continents.

A recurring theme in this course are the ways that we talk about Indigenous languages and their vitality. What does it mean for a language to be "endangered" and then to "die" or "go extinct"? Why are so many non-Indigenous researchers comfortable with the metaphor of a "dying language" or "dead language", and why is there so much resistance against this metaphor from Native community members and Native scholars (Perley 2012; Davis 2017; Leonard 2023)? These are questions that I encourage my students to consider, and I have elected to share some of my own thoughts here in the hope that they may be useful for other linguists and teachers.

Please be mindful of the fact that the ideas explored in this essay are a work-in-progress. I am still learning about how to translate my professional expertise as a non-Indigenous researcher specializing in Amazonian languages for students whose lived reality is distinct from that of my speaker-consultants in Brazil. Figuring out how to talk about these issues in a way that is both

accessible for my students at Syracuse and true to my own experience in Amazonia is more complex than I had anticipated.

2. My fieldwork. I begin by offering some background on the Tuparí, an Indigenous people who reside in the Brazilian state of Rondônia, with special focus on the vitality of their language. According to detailed survey data gathered in 2017 by my colleagues at the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi, approximately 400 people fluently speak the Tuparí language (which belongs to the Tuparían branch of the Tupían family). While it can be useful and informative to provide this kind of speaker count, and while I have particular confidence in the accuracy of the linguistic survey carried out by the Museu Goeldi, I argue in section 4 that we must teach students to be skeptical of such numbers.

2.1. THE LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY OF RONDÔNIA. Rondônia sits in the southwestern Amazon Basin (Figure 1). It borders the states of Acre to the west, Amazonas to the north, and Mato Grosso to the east; to the immediate south lies Bolivia. At 237,754 km^2, it is 95% of the size of the state of São Paulo – but with only 1,581,196 residents, it has less than 4% of São Paulo's population.[1] It is the sole state in all of Brazil to bear the name of an individual: the explorer Candido Rondon, who founded the country's Indian Protection Service and worked at length to reform his nation's attitude towards Indigenous peoples. To what degree he succeeded in that reform effort is a topic of debate (Hemming 2003; Rohter 2023).
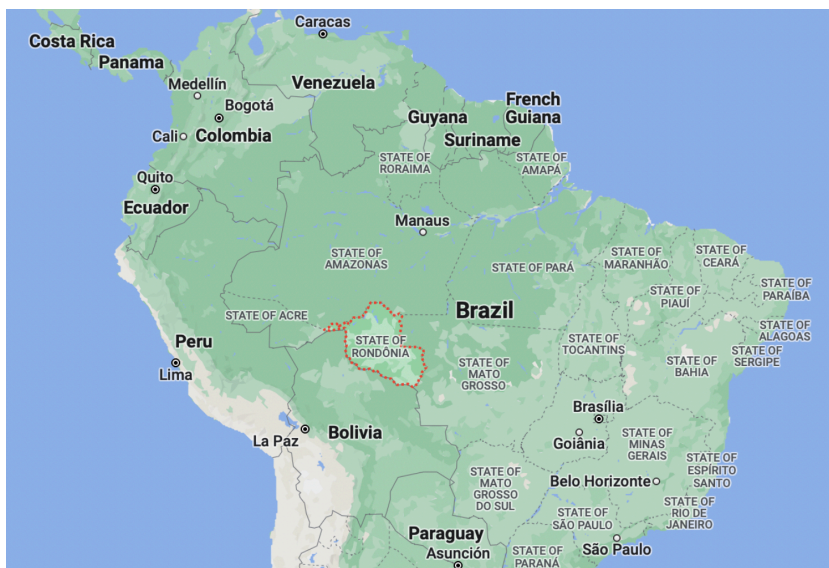
Figure 4. The state of Rondônia, located in the southwestern Amazon Basin

Rondônia is a hotspot of linguistic diversity. Consider the Tupían family, to which Tuparí belongs. Five centuries ago, when Europeans first arrived in South America, languages of the Tupían family's Tupí-Guaraní branch were spoken over an enormous geographic expanse – including much of the Amazon River proper and much of the continent's Atlantic coast. But while the Tupí-Guaraní-speaking populations expanded far and wide (Eriksen & Galucio 2014), most Tupían-speaking peoples have remained in a relatively small region – one that coincides neatly with the modern state of Rondônia. In fact, multiple branches of the Tupían family are spoken

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[1] Figures are from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics: https://www.ibge.gov.br/.

only in this state: Tuparían, Arikém, and Ramarama-Puruborá. And except for the Zoró language, spoken right next to Rondônia, in the state of Mato Grosso, all of the languages of the Tupían family's Mondé branch are *rondoniense*.[2] There are also languages of the Tupían family's most geographically dispersed branch – Tupí-Guaraní – spoken in Rondônia. The geographic concentration of so many genealogically distant Tupían languages has led to the conclusion that Rondônia is the likely homeland of the Tupían-speaking peoples (Vander Velden 2010; Rodrigues & Cabral 2012; see also the contributions to Dietrich & Drude 2015).

Many non-Tupían languages are also spoken in this region. These include the Macro-Jê languages Arikapú and Djeoromitxí, which form their own branch within Macro-Jê (Ribeiro & van der Voort 2010; Nikulin 2020); various Chapakuran languages (Birchall to appear); and a surprisingly high number of isolates which, despite certain shared features deriving from long-term contact, show no indication of an genealogical connection to one another (van der Voort 2005). There are also several other isolates located on the other side of the Rio Guaporé (in Spanish: Río Iténez), which divides Rondônia from Bolivia. Crevels & van der Voort (2008) propose that this region forms a linguistic area (*Sprachbund*); see Muysken et al. (2015) for follow-up.

2.2. THE TUPARÍ AND THEIR LANGUAGE. The Tuparí people reside on two federally demarcated and multiethnic Indigenous territories (in Portuguese: *terras indígenas*) in the southernmost part of Rondônia (Figure 2). Their language continues to be used on the eastern of these two reserves, the Terra Indígena Rio Branco, whereas it is moribund on the Terra Indígena Rio Guaporé.

Figure 2. The two federally-demarcated Indigenous territories where the Tuparí live

The region corresponding to the current Terra Indígena Rio Branco has always been multiethnic and multilingual (van der Voort 2023). Although the Tuparí are the largest ethnic group on the Terra Indígena Rio Branco, there are significant populations of Makurap, Arikapú, Kampé, Kanoê and Aruá as well, and intermarriage is common. Until the second half of the 20th century, the multilingualism of the Rio Branco region was egalitarian and symmetric. Makurap

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[2] Adelaar & Brijnen (2014) discuss unpublished wordlists collected by the Austrian explorer Johann Natterer in the 1820s and 1830s. Two of the 72 (!) languages for which Natterer collected data belong to the Mondé branch of Tupían. These two Mondé languages appear to have been spoken towards the Amazon River proper – farther north than the borders of modern Rondônia. That Natterer managed to collect data from Mondé speakers near the Amazon proper means that at least one of the Tupían branches now spoken only in Rondônia must have once had a broader geographic distribution.

(also of the Tuparían branch of the Tupían family) served as an interethnic lingua franca, and members of the different ethnic groups regularly learned one another's languages. Today, however, egalitarian Indigenous multilingualism has by and large given way to an asymmetric bilingualism between Portuguese and Tuparí. Tuparí is the only Indigenous language that continues to be acquired by children as an L1 on the Rio Branco; the other languages that used to be spoken on the Rio Branco are now spoken there only by the elderly, if at all. This applies to Makurap as well, which is taught in some schools on the Rio Branco but which to the best of my knowledge has no young speakers there.

A smaller population of ethnic Tuparí reside on the Terra Indígena Rio Guaporé, located farther west. The Tuparí who reside there were part of a massive government-led displacement (van der Voort 2023 goes so far as to use the word "deportation") from the Rio Branco region. This displacement/deportation had the effect of dividing up the various Rio Branco ethnic groups in unequal ways. For instance, virtually all the Djeoromitxí went to the Guaporé, leaving behind just a few individuals on the Rio Branco. Makurap, the former lingua franca of the Rio Branco region, has no fluent young speakers on the Rio Branco today, but Ana Vilacy Galucio (p.c.) reports that she has been able to work with fluent speakers as young as 30 on the Rio Guaporé. There are also asymmetric/passive bilinguals of Makurap in their 20s there. So the transmission of the language must have continued until relatively recently on the Rio Guaporé. The Makurap and Tuparí languages, then, have gone down different paths since the displacement/deportation of Rio Branco residents to the Rio Guapore. Whereas Makurap has continued to enjoy some degree of vitality on the Guaporé, Tuparí has not been transmitted there for several generations now. On the other hand, Tuparí has remained much more vital on the Rio Branco than Makurap has. It continues to be used in a set of villages on the Rio Branco; it is in these villages that I have carried out the bulk of my field research.

2.3. ONGOING CHANGES TO THE VITALITY OF THE TUPARÍ LANGUAGE. Despite the fact that children continue to acquire Tuparí as their first language in multiple villages on the Rio Branco, and despite the fact that usage of Tuparí remains robust in many (but not all) households in those villages, the language is definitively endangered. The overall speaker count (400) remains low and there are many ethnic Tuparí who do not command the language, a point to which I return in section 7. What is more, there is extensive pressure from non-Indigenous Brazilian society to shift to Portuguese. The sources of this pressure – in particular, schools and churches – will not surprise anyone who has spent time in Indigenous communities in the Americas. The recent arrival of reliable electricity and internet access on the Rio Branco has further altered the already precarious balance between Tuparí and Portuguese. Children, adolescents, and adults all spend time on their smartphones, and the content they receive is invariably in Portuguese. While speakers do send voice messages in Tuparí to one another (and to me), all "public" communication is in Portuguese. For instance, when a Tuparí speaker wishes a Tuparí-speaking friend or cousin a happy birthday on an Instagram story, they will do so using *tarupa ema'ẽ* 'the white man's language' rather than Tuparí.

In 2022, during my most recent in-person visit to Rondônia, I paid close attention to the linguistic behavior of young children who receive Tuparí input in their homes. I observed that many of those children switch to Portuguese when playing with one another. This change is almost certainly a result of increased exposure to the internet and to non-Indigenous Brazilian society in general. That Tuparí-speaking children are opting for Portuguese during their playtime bodes poorly for the language's long-term vitality.

2.4. SUMMARY. Rondônia is characterized by a large number of Indigenous languages belonging to several distinct families as well as isolates that continue to defy genealogical classification. For a linguist like myself, this region is paradisiacal: one could spend an entire lifetime studying the languages of Rondônia and still barely scratch the surface of the region's stupendous diversity. At the same time, all those who work with the Native peoples and languages of Rondônia must confront the sad reality that cultural and linguistic change is occurring at far too rapid a pace for scholars and activists to even pretend to keep up.

Having described the linguistic situation of southern Rondônia, I now provide some concrete recommendations for how we ought to talk about language endangerment in the classroom, particularly where Indigenous languages are concerned.

3. <u>Don't</u> teach your students an overly restrictive conception of "speaker". In late 2023, I attended a conference on Indigenous languages of Latin America where I had the chance to speak with various Indigenous researchers from Mexico and Guatemala. Two Mayan researchers who'd made the trip to the United States from Chiapas asked me about my research; when I shared that Tuparí has approximately 400 L1 speakers, they were stunned. "So few?!" they asked. Those researchers' native languages, Tzotzil and Tzeltal, have speaker populations about 1000 times larger than the population of Tuparí speakers – in other words, three orders of magnitude. I hastened to add that compared to the other peoples that are Native to southern Rondônia, the Tuparí have fared quite well in linguistic terms. "Unlike the neighboring languages," I explained, "Tuparí continues to be learned by children and to be used in the home." From a local perspective, Tuparí is one of Rondônia's "healthier" languages – despite the accelerating shift to Portuguese.

The look of surprise on the faces of the two Mayan speakers is something that I have gotten used to over the years: whenever I talk about my research into the Tuparí language, folks are astonished by the small speaker base. Explaining the historical circumstances (principally disease) that have led to a contraction in the total number of Tuparí speakers, and discussing the various present-day social and economic pressures that encourage shift to Portuguese, is a key part of the outreach that I do as a fieldworker and Amazonianist. It is also a key part of how I have managed to secure financial support for my research. To get grants to work on an endangered language, you have to talk about the urgency of documentation and revitalization initiatives. And providing speaker counts, together with information on intergenerational transmission (or the lack thereof), is the most effective way we have to emphasize that urgency.

But to count speakers implies that we know how to identify speakers in the first place – itself a non-trivial issue. As I was trained primarily (but not exclusively) in the generative framework, my first instinct is to look at how formal linguists define speakerhood. Consider the classic definition offered by Chomsky (2015 [1965]: 1): "Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly."[3] This definition is very useful for the purpose of delineating what it is that formal theories are attempting to model. But it must be emphasized that it cannot be an ethnographic norm. The "ideal speaker-listener" is a theory-derived idealization. In the real world linguists must work with real speakers. No real speakers will hail from a speech-community that is "completely homogenous", just as no real speakers will "perfectly" know a language according to some platonic ideal of perfection. It is crucial that we not misinterpret the kind of ideal

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[3] Newmeyer (2005: 162) calls this "perhaps the most famous (some would say 'notorious') passage in any of Chomsky's writings."

competence that generative grammar seeks to describe and explain as some kind of norm against which actual speakers, embedded in actual communities, ought to be measured.

An unavoidable but still regrettable consequence of Chomsky's definition is that certain classes of speakers and certain kinds of knowledge will fall outside of the formal linguist's purview. A careful consideration of this consequence is provided by McCloskey (2003), who talks with nuance about the different classes of people who can be categorized as speakers of Modern Irish. This is a language whose community of native speakers has shrunk considerably over the past few centuries. McCloskey's own research investigates the intricacies of Irish grammar as evidenced by the acceptability judgments of L1 speakers, and this means that those who have learned the language as an L2 will not have the kind of native intuitions that he aims to model. This holds true even for the large numbers of speakers who have acquired fluent ability in the language's new urban koine through schooling rather than in the home:

> The view I have taken and continue to take, is that, *for the purposes of the kinds of questions that generative grammar tries to answer*, the study of the modern urban varieties is methodologically too fraught. If the principal aim of the enterprise is to clarify what it means to have full native ability in a language, then it is just not clear to me how much light the new Irishes can shed on that question. This is the right conclusion in scientific terms, I think, but it's easy to see how it can be misconstrued (if that is the right way of putting it) as exclusionary and élitist. (McCloskey 2003: 2; my emphasis)

I have emphasized the PP "for the purposes of the kinds of questions that generative grammar tries to answer" in this quote because of its intellectual honesty. As McCloskey observes, it is the nature of the generative research program that ends up restricting what kind of speakers a linguist operating within that program will choose to work with. He is careful not to denigrate the speakers that have acquired the "new" urban Irish through school; rather, their linguistic competence and ability is simply different from that which he seeks to investigate. Not better, not worse. Just different.

McCloskey's considerate view of the speakers of New Irish brings me to my first piece of advice: do not teach your students an overly restrictive conception of who a "speaker" is. Inculcating our students with an exclusively Chomskyan understanding of what knowing a language means – and therefore of who qualifies as a speaker – is likely to prove disastrous in any discussion of Indigenous languages. If we as teachers impart a view of speakerhood that demands anything close to the "ideal speaker-listener" that Chomsky envisioned in *Aspects*, we will end up trivializing all of the gains that have been made in language revitalization efforts. And these gains are hardly trivial. What is more, in practice different L1 speakers have distinct strengths, and these distinct strengths can all contribute to projects that aim to produce something approaching comprehensive description and analysis.

Let me provide an example. As I have learned over the last decade, fluent speakers of Tuparí have different fortes tied to their age, gender, level of schooling, and exposure to Portuguese. Each speaker I have worked with is unique, and ultimately all have contributed to my research. Some speakers are especially talented at recounting traditional myths or legends. These speakers tend to be much older, with greatly varying levels of ability in Portuguese; some of them grew up in the communal *maloca* 'longhouse', which was abandoned around 1950 due to epidemics (Caspar 1956, 1975). These older speakers are generally happy to help me improve my conversational skills but are by and large unable to provide acceptability judgments. So while they correct errors that I make, it can be tricky for me to figure out the exact nature of those

errors – morphological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic. Eliciting a full paradigm from these speakers is not feasible. On the other hand, there are many speakers in their 20s through 50s who provide me with confident, consistent judgments about both morphosyntactic well-formedness and semantic-pragmatic appropriateness. I have not had much luck recording stories from speakers who are younger than 40; they tend to defer to their elders for this task, even when I express interest in recording personal narratives rather than traditional myths. Also, younger speakers tend to make use of many more Portuguese loanwords – though as discussed in Singerman (in preparation), these loanwords are morphosyntactically Nativized in a variety of ways.

None of what I have written here is likely to surprise other fieldworkers who have carried out research in Indigenous communities where at least some language transmission continues through the present. Nor, I imagine, will the following observation: the speech of young Tuparí is often spoken of as corrupted or incomplete. Sometimes parents and grandparents pick on structural "errors" in young people's speech. One such "error" that I have heard multiple adult speakers criticize concerns a change in the morphology of the near future tense: what used to be a suffix on the lexical verb has been reanalyzed as a prefix on the following auxiliary, and this reanalysis impacts the placement of second position particles (Singerman 2018a: 204–209). But surely the most easy-to-criticize aspect of young speakers' speech are the Portuguese loanwords that have entered semantic domains associated with Indigenous life and society. One such domain: the names of the flora and fauna of the region. In 2022, I heard one mother refer to her teenage daughter as *ho'oet tarupa kuret* 'this white child sitting here' after the girl had trouble recalling the Tuparí (rather than Portuguese) names for primate species found in the forest in Rondônia.

Although I understand community members' anxieties over changes in Tuparí due to contact with Portuguese, from my own standpoint as a morphosyntactician and fieldworker I cannot help but view these younger Tuparí as outstanding speakers. Their speech maintains all of the tense, evidentiality, and mood categories that are found in the speech of older generations, including the obligatory witnessed/non-witnessed evidential contrast (Singerman 2019). Their speech also exhibits all of the head-final (and decidedly non-Portuguese) characteristics of Tuparí syntax, including strictly object-verb VPs, postverbal auxiliaries and internally headed relative clauses (Singerman 2021). As a descriptivist rather than prescriptivist, I continue to learn a great deal about the heart of Tuparí grammar from these young speakers. Even those utterances that borrow multiple lexical roots from Portuguese teach me about how the language is adapting and developing in real time. An overly restrictive view of who the "true" speakers are would close me off to all of this.

4. <u>Do</u> teach your students to distrust decontextualized speaker counts. In the previous section, I argued that when we talk to our students about endangered languages, it is incumbent upon us to teach them that the concept of "speaker" can and will be defined in different ways. There is variation in speakerhood between communities and, importantly, within communities; how we count speakers is a political issue as much as a linguistic one. But if who qualifies as a speaker is subject to this degree of variation, then that means that any count of speakers will require qualification: the question "how many speakers does language X have?" cannot be answered without detailed information about the nature and distribution of linguistic knowledge within the X community. A speaker count which at first feels objective must be qualified in ways that are community-specific and, therefore, subjective. (Incisive critique of enumeration of languages and speakers in the endangerment literature is made by Hill 2002: 127–128, a work to

which I return in section 5, below. See also Muehlmann 2012 for fascinating discussion of enumeration among the Cucapá/Cocopah people.)

Census data concerning language proficiency are often untrustworthy because of politicization. Grenoble (2003: Ch. 1) discusses how Soviet censuses show surprisingly large swings in the speaker bases of minority languages. These swings are far too great to reflect actual changes in the speaker populations. Rather, Grenoble shows that the concept of *rodnoi iazyk* 'native language' was defined differently by the census-takers for different censuses: it could refer to the language of the home; in the case of interethnic couples, to either the language of the mother or the language of the father; to the language that the respondent is ethnically connected to, whether or not the respondent actually speaks it; and so on. In periods of greater governmental repression of minorities, fewer members of those minorities felt safe enough to identify themselves to census-takers as speakers of languages other than Russian. Conversely, more people claimed to be speakers of minority languages on the census when political repression eased (see Grenoble & Bulatova 2017). So none of the census data concerning language can be taken at face value; everything requires contextualization and interpretation.

I must stress that I do not consider the act of counting speakers to be unimportant. Indeed, my own work with the Tuparí has been greatly enhanced by the linguistic surveys and censuses that colleagues of mine have carried out. In particular, my colleagues from the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi have carried out a detailed linguistic census in Rondônia, as part of an initiative supported by Brazil's National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute (Galucio et al. 2018; Drude et al. 2023). The information gathered and analyzed through this initiative is crucial for various stakeholders in Rondônia-centered documentation and revitalization projects, including both community-external researchers and Indigenous teachers and community leaders. The reliability of this information is due to the fact that the researchers from the Museu Goeldi went far beyond a simple dichotomy of speaker versus non-speaker by recognizing various degrees of ability, including asymmetric bilingualism with Portuguese, and by incorporating information on multilingualism. In other words, the census data are ethnographically contextualized – and it is that contextualization that ensures their reliability.

Of course, limitations of time and resources mean that carrying out this kind of nuanced linguistic survey will not be possible in many places where endangered languages are (or were) spoken. But we should nonetheless remind our students that speaker counts which lack accompanying ethnographic information are at best easily misinterpreted and at worst not trustworthy.

Note that if I am correct with regard to this pedagogical point – if it truly is important for our students to develop a sense of skepticism about decontextualized speaker counts – then that skepticism will necessarily carry over to foundational literature on language endangerment. This literature collates many counts, of speakers and languages both, so as to inspire action. Here I am thinking in particular of Krauss (1992), entitled "The world's languages in crisis", which is often credited for forcing linguists to acknowledge what language endangerment and language "death" will mean for our discipline, but comparable comments apply to Nettle & Romaine (2000) and Harrison (2007), among other works. Krauss's contribution to the famous collection published in *Language* (Hale et al. 1992) presents dizzying figures that collectively testify to the world's linguistic homogenization. It is hard not to agree with Krauss (1992: 10) that thorough research into and comprehensive documentation of endangered languages must be a top priority, "lest linguistics go down in history as the only science that presided obliviously over the disappearance of 90% of the very field to which it is dedicated." Earlier (Krauss 1992: 8), he warns that linguists run the risk of being "cursed by future generations for Neronically fiddling while Rome burned."

In section 1, I shared that my own choice to become a linguist was inspired by literature like Nettle & Romaine (2000), which uses numbers to drive home the urgency of language endangerment – just as Krauss does. I in no way mean to denigrate these writings, which serve an important role in communicating about our field to the public. Rather, I simply emphasize that we should encourage our students to read this literature the way *all* literature deserves to be read: critically. And this critical reading becomes particularly important where speaker counts are concerned. Indeed, Krauss himself states that these numbers have as much rhetorical value as literal (which is to say, numerical) value: "Except for the case of Eyak, which I can personally confirm, many of the statistics, large and small, in this article are but reports or estimates; I trust it will be obvious that *any imprecision in the present figures should in no way detract from the basic point of their shocking significance*" (Krauss 1992: 4, fn. 1; my emphasis). Our students must be made aware that speaker counts are generally imprecise and that this imprecision can be exploited for rhetorical effect.

5. <u>Don't</u> reduce the importance of Indigenous languages to "what they can teach us", where "us" = linguists. Writing a decade after Krauss and the other contributors to Hale et al. (1992), Hill (2002) critiques several themes that linguists draw upon when attempting to convince the broader public of the importance of endangered languages. Though all of these themes are useful rhetorically, they have unintentional consequences and can be incompatible with Indigenous communities' own philosophies and language ideologies. For reasons of space, I focus here on just one of those themes, that of Universal Ownership. Hill rightfully points out that the idea that endangered languages "belong to all of us", with the result that their extinctions are "losses for all of us", will not sit well with communities that have suffered through conquest and colonization. Inviting the reader to consider the perspective of communities outside of the academy, she writes:

> [I]t may make little to sense to say that a language "belongs" to someone who has no intention of learning it, has never heard it, and has never known any of its speakers. It is illogical in many communities to say that a language belongs to someone who has no tie to the language by virtue of those mediating qualities that often yield a claim on a language in the indigenous world, such as territory of birth or links of kinship. Thus a statement that an endangered language belongs to everybody rather than specifically to its speakers and their relatives and neighbors can easily be heard not as an expression of a universal human value, *but as a threat to expropriate a resource*. (Hill 2002: 122, my emphasis, and with "indigenous" uncapitalized in the original)

The theme of Universal Ownership lies at the heart of Harrison (2007), a book that frames language endangerment and extinction as a collective loss for humanity (as opposed to, say, a set of distinct community-specific losses). Section 6 provides more discussion of Harrison's book; see also the critical review of that book by Nevins & Singerman (2011).

Endangered languages spoken by Indigenous communities do have "scientific value" according to the internal logic of the field of linguistics, as Hill (2002: 121–123) herself acknowledges. Linguists require accurate and detailed information on as diverse a sample of languages as possible so as to map out the full range of linguistic variation – whether in pursuit of Universal Grammar, à la Chomsky, or conditions on recurring kinds of diachronic pathways, per much work in functionalism and grammaticalization theory. But I maintain that there is a crucial difference between *identifying* this kind of scientific value in endangered languages and *reducing* the importance of endangered languages to the "lessons" that they offer for academic pursuits.

Let me give a specific example from my own research into Tuparí. This language draws a strict distinction between [+NOMINAL] and [+VERBAL] roots; category-changing affixes (denominal verbalizers and deverbal nominalizers) are ubiquitous. There is no phonologically null category-changing (i.e., no zero conversion). The principle negator morpheme in Tuparí is the [+NOMINAL] suffix -ʔom. If one wishes to negate a verb, it has to be nominalized first; this process of nominalization is obligatory given -ʔom's restriction to [+NOMINAL] bases. And since tense and evidentiality are [+VERBAL] categories in Tuparí, a deverbal nominalization negated with -ʔom must be reverbalized in order to bear tense or evidential morphology. The result is an elegant system of back-and-forth derivational category-changing. This system was first described and analyzed in Singerman (2018b); a more extensive analysis will be offered in Singerman (in preparation), which explores the consequences of Tuparí for the recursion debate (Hauser et al. 2002; Everett 2005, 2009; Nevins et al. 2009a,b; Maia et al. 2019, among others).

I sincerely believe that the details of Tuparí grammar are of deep importance for linguistics. The language actively contributes to the crosslinguistic typology of negation systems: Tuparí negation behaves in ways not known from other languages, and it forces us to reconsider several of the assumptions underlying typological work like Miestamo (2005, 2017). And as Singerman (in preparation) aims to show, Tuparí grammar has the potential to reshape how scholars understand the distribution and behavior of recursion in Native Amazonian languages. However, it would be a mistake to say that these and other benefits to theory and typology are *why* the Tuparí language has value or worth. The Tuparí language is valuable because of its importance to the Tuparí people; it helps to make possible their long-term survival. Indigenous peoples in Brazil are under severe pressure to shift to Portuguese and to adopt the national culture. In the face of these ever-growing pressures, the continued existence of the Tuparí people as a distinct ethnic group – with their own traditions, their own history, and their own language – strikes me as nothing short of miraculous. *This*, in the end, is why the Tuparí language has value and is why I feel so profoundly honored to be able to document it. To reduce this language to what it can teach the field of linguistics would in my view be to miss the forest for the trees.

6. Don't equate endangered languages with endangered species. The literature is full of comparisons between linguistic loss and ecological loss. Krauss (1992), for instance, draws explicit parallels between the endangerment of languages and the endangerment of species:

> Surely, just as the extinction of any animal species diminishes our world, so does the extinction of any language. Surely we linguists know, and the general public can sense, that any language is a supreme achievement of a uniquely human collective genius, as divine and endless a mystery as a living organism. Should we mourn the loss of Eyak or Ubykh any less than the loss of the panda or California condor? (Krauss 1992: 8)

For Krauss, the crucial contrast is between (a) the intensity with which biologists and conservationists react to species endangerment, including their extensive public outreach on the issue, and (b) the relative apathy of professional linguists before the prospect of mass language extinction. Nettle & Romaine (2000) offer another take on the connection between linguistic and biological endangerment: they argue that endangered languages are disappearing in the same geographic zones where endangered species are going extinct. For Nettle & Romaine, then, the loss of linguistic diversity and the loss of biological diversity track one another – as is to be expected if they in fact derive from the same underlying causes.

A more radical interpretation of the biology-linguistics connection is provided by Harrison (2007), who devotes considerable energy to describing the ways that endangered languages

spoken by Indigenous populations can encode detailed information about the natural world. The loss of these languages thus entails the simultaneous loss of all the environmental information (largely lexical) that they contain. But understanding that environmental information, Harrison argues, is of paramount importance to arrest biological extinction and climate change more generally. It's not just that linguistic endangerment and biological endangerment track one another, as Nettle & Romaine claim; according to Harrison, the former will in fact exacerbate the real-world consequences of the latter. This is the most extreme position I am familiar with in the literature. It attempts to make outsiders care about endangered languages by tying it to broader concern about impending climate apocalypse.

I first read all this literature long before stepping foot in Amazonia, a region undergoing rapid and likely irreversible ecological upheaval. The Terra Indígena Rio Branco, like other *terras indígenas*, enjoys a degree of governmental protection; the forest on the Rio Branco reserve is intact other than the villages and the roads that connect them to one another. But extensive deforestation surrounds the Terra Indígena Rio Branco. As shown by the distribution of light green and brown in Figure 3, the forest to the west, north, and northeast of the reserve has already been torn down for farms and cattle ranches. It is difficult for me to describe just how disorienting this deforestation is. Whenever I leave the Terra Indígena Rio Branco to travel to the nearby town of Alta Floresta D'Oeste, I am stunned by the sudden disappearance of the forest: the transition is as sharp as the map in Figure 3 makes it look. My Tuparí-speaking friends are aware of these changes (how could they not be?), and discussion of climate instability is unavoidable.
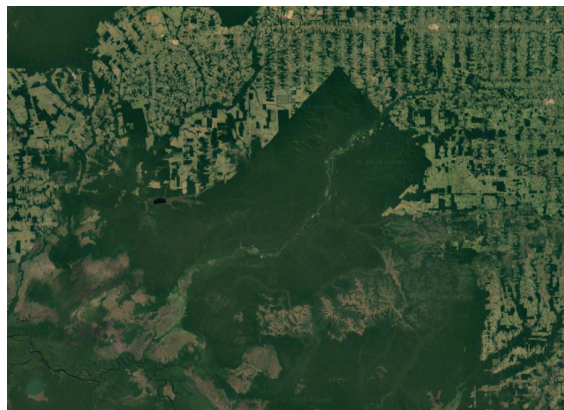

Figure 3. There is extensive deforestation to the west, north, and northeast of the Terra Indígena Rio Branco

But despite witnessing the horrible impact of deforestation in the Amazon Basin, I remain uncomfortable with many of the ways that the literature likens biological endangerment and linguistic endangerment to one another. In particular, I must oppose any equating of speakers – who are human beings capable of making decisions about what parts, if any, of their cultures and languages they wish to teach to their children – with animals or plants. I am in full agreement on this point with England (2002) (who was herself expressing agreement with Hill 2002):

> The biological analogy – that language diversity is like biological diversity and that the disappearance of languages is like the disappearance of species – is, first of all, wrong. Language diversity is not like biological diversity, because specific languages are learned behaviors rather than genetically endowed and biologically inherited characteristics, and therefore their means of transmission, and thus the conditions that result in

their loss, are completely different… *While the biological analogy has been successful in mobilizing a public that is already aware of issues in biological diversity that need attention, it has at the same time had a negative effect on communities of speakers who object to being analogously linked to plants and insects and lower-order animals.* (England 2002: 142; my emphasis)

Likening humans to "plants and insects and lower-order animals" has the rhetorical effect of reducing speakers' agency. (See Mufwene 2002, a skeptical review of Nettle & Romaine 2000, for more discussion of how linguists can often underestimate this agency.) Even if we are well intentioned, by equating endangered languages with endangered species we end up belittling the speakers of those languages and playing down the difficult choices that they face.

And these choices are difficult indeed. The parents I know from the Terra Indígena Rio Branco are very much aware of the conflicting forces surrounding language use. Some ethnic Tuparí have decided to teach Portuguese to their children because of the advantages that this will provide regarding education and employment. Others opt to continue using and teaching the Tuparí language because of its central role in marking Tuparí identity – a role that becomes even more salient when one bears in mind that all of the other Indigenous ethnicities who live on the Rio Branco have shifted. (More about this in section 7.) Over the last two decades, a large portion – I would estimate at least two thirds – of the Rio Branco's population has converted to Evangelical Christianity. This Christianization process has led to much more usage of Portuguese even in traditionally Tuparí-speaking households. Portuguese appears to be viewed as the proper language for worship: on many occasions I have seen L1 speakers of Tuparí, including speakers who only ever use Tuparí when talking to their children and kin, switch to Portuguese for prayer.

I wish we lived in a world in which the speakers of Brazil's Indigenous languages received as much respect as speakers of Portuguese do and in which Indigenous peoples had total freedom to continue to develop their own cultural practices, including their spiritual traditions. This, however, is not the world we inhabit. I have learned that it is not my place to tell someone that they must or must not continue to speak their ancestral language, just as surely as it would not be my place to tell someone that they must or must not practice Christianity. While I do work to support the Tuparí community through the development of pedagogical materials, my scientific stance remains that of a descriptive rather than prescriptive linguist, and this means that at the end of the day I cannot tell speakers how to feel about their language vs. Portuguese. Whether and in what way they carry the Tuparí language forward is *their* choice to make, not mine.

Let me summarize the point of this section. I believe that the Tuparí people have agency; I see this in the choices that parents make regarding their children's upbringing. Because of this agency I must consider the endangerment of the Tuparí language to be qualitatively distinct from the endangerment of Rondônia's plant and animal species – even as I acknowledge that both endangerments have historically come about due to non-Indigenous intrusion/invasion /colonization.

7. <u>Do</u> encourage your students to distinguish between linguistic classifications and cultural ones. The first reading we discussed in my new course this semester was Franz Boas's famous Introduction to the *Handbook of American Indian languages*, the publication of which marked a new scholarly era for our field (Stocking 1974). I assigned my students the first 10 pages of the Introduction, asking them to pay close attention to how Boas argues that linguistic classifications (of the sort developed in the 19th century for the Indo-European family) will not map directly

onto cultural classifications, nor onto classifications that examine "anatomical form" or other biological/physiological markers:

> If it were true that anatomical form, language, and culture are all closely associated, and that each subdivision of mankind is characterized by a certain bodily form, a certain culture, and a certain language, which can never become separate, we might expect that the results of the various investigations would show better agreement. If, on the other hand, the various phenomena … are not closely associated, then we may naturally expect such contradictions and lack of agreement as are actually found. (Boas 1996 [1911]: 3–4)

The lack of straightforward correspondence between linguistic and cultural classifications forces us to revisit the essentialist idea that language and culture are identifiable or immutable properties through space and time. Languages change and cultures change, but not always in parallel ways – nor at equal rates. Hence the assumption "that a certain definite people whose members have always been related by blood must have been the carriers of [their current] language throughout history" and the assumption "that a certain cultural type must always have belonged to this people … are purely arbitrary ones and not in accord with the observed facts" (Boas 1966 [1911]: 7).

I have found that discussing the many-to-many relationships between religious affiliation and language practices can drive home the importance of Boas's point. During our discussion of the *Handbook*'s Introduction, I asked my students what the major languages of Islam are – where "major" can be understood in terms of literary importance, cultural impact, sheer number of speakers, and so on. We arrived at the following list: Arabic (including Quranic, Modern Standard, and the various national "dialects"), Persian, Turkish, and Indonesian. I then pointed out that these all belong to different families. Arabic is Semitic; Persian is Indo-European; Turkish is Turkic; and Indonesian is Austronesian. If we were capable of tracing each of these languages back in time, we would thus arrive at distinct places: the Pontic-Caspian steppe for Indo-European and therefore Persian (Chang et al. 2015), the island of Formosa for Austronesian and therefore Indonesian (Blust 2024), and so on. It is of course the case that Arabic has provided much religious vocabulary to the other languages of Islamic civilization, but this does not mean that Persian, Turkish, or Indonesian have become Semitic languages. You can practice Islam without speaking Arabic as your L1; this is in fact the case for hundreds of millions of Muslims. And you can also have Arabic as your L1 without practicing Islam, as demonstrated by the existence of Arabic varieties particular to non-Muslim minority populations (see Khan 2016; Bar-Moshe 2019, and references therein for Judeo-Arabic).

All of this brings me back to the Rio Branco and to the rapid changes that have taken place there over the past 75 years. Section 3 discussed the multiethnic nature of the Rio Branco region, which was until recently characterized by a great deal of egalitarian multilingualism between the Tuparí and their neighbors. Importantly, ethnicity in this region is defined PATRILINEALLY: you are Tuparí only if your father is Tuparí, and he is Tuparí only if his father was Tuparí, and so on. This patrilineality is strict and is spoken about as wholly natural. While residents of the Terra Indígena Rio Branco are often close to their maternal relatives, it is their father's lineage that determines ethnic affiliation. Consider Kabatoá, a great-great-grandmother who is one of the oldest living Tuparí and who has taught me a great deal about her language. She met the ethnographer Franz Caspar in the 1940s; she is mentioned by name in his work, in which her photograph also appears (Caspar 1956). Her father was the Tuparí Chief Waitó, while her mother was of the Aruá

ethnic group.[4] One time, during a conversation with some younger Tuparí, I casually mentioned that Kabatoá's mother was Aruá. One of the young women expressed great surprise: she had no idea that Kabatoá, who is her mother's mother, is herself the daughter of an Aruá woman. But since this young woman's father is Tuparí, the fact that her maternal lineage is Aruá has no impact on her own ethnicity. Like her father, she is Tuparí.

Strictly patrilineal ethnic affiliation gives rise to problems regarding the children of interethnic marriages, which are common on the Rio Branco. Many Tuparí women have married men from the Makurap, Arikapú, and Kampé ethnicities. The children of these marriages self-identify and are identified by others as belonging to their father's ethnic group. On multiple occasions, I have asked someone *Tupari nẽ ʔen?* 'Are you Tuparí?', only to be informed *Nerõʔom, Tupariʔom ʔon, Arikapu ʔon, osie nã tuparit!* 'No, I am not Tuparí; I am Arikapú; it is my mother who is Tuparí!'[5] Now, the Arikapú and Kampé languages have no full speakers remaining on the Rio Branco,[6] and Makurap has not been fully acquired by children there for at least one generation and possibly two. This leads to a discrepancy between ethnic identity and linguistic knowledge. I have listened to many members of the Makurap, Arikapú, and Kampé peoples lament the fact that they do not speak their ethnic language; I have even heard them describe their situation with the Portuguese *Eu não sei a minha língua* 'I do not know my language.' However, most of these same people speak Tuparí (the language of their mothers). Those ethnic Makurap, Arikapú and Kampé who have grown up in majority-Tuparí villages are often better at Tuparí than at Portuguese. But since it is patrilineality that determines ethnicity, knowing how to speak your *mother*'s language does not count as knowing how to speak *your* language.

In short, all logically possible combinations of linguistic competence and ethnic identity are now attested on the Terra Indígena Rio Branco. There are ethnic Tuparí with full command of Tuparí, and there are non-Tuparí who do not speak Tuparí at all; these can be thought of as the "default" cases, since they involve an iconic mapping between Tuparí ethnicity and knowledge of the Tuparí language, on the one hand, and between non-Tuparí ethnicity and ignorance of the Tuparí language, on the other. But there are also many ethnic Tuparí who are asymmetric bilinguals (understanding the Tuparí spoken around them but responding only in Portuguese), as well as ethnic Tuparí who are effectively monolingual in Portuguese. And there are quite a few ethnic Makurap, Arikapú, and Kampé who speak Tuparí as their L1. There are even some children of non-Indigenous men (*branco* 'white' in Portuguese; *tarupa*, originally meaning 'spirit' or 'demon', in Tuparí) who know Tuparí. These children are a different sort of mismatch altogether: as the progeny of White men who married Tuparí women, they are considered by some other

[4] The Aruá language, now down to just a handful of elderly speakers, belongs to the Tupían family's Mondé branch.
[5] Caspar (1956: 220–221) reports that the nephew of the Tuparí chief Waitó responded in the negative to the very same question: *Tupari nẽ ʔen* 'Are you Tuparí?' According to Caspar, "Tuparí" was just one of several different clan names that were still utilized during his fieldwork (which took place in the late 1940s). Today the name Tuparí has generalized to the entire population; the clan names that Caspar mentions are to the best of my knowledge no longer used and may only be known by the eldest members of the population. This conversation between Caspar and Chief Waitó's nephew serves to remind us that languages, peoples, and their names are not static over the course of time.
[6] Downriver, there lives an elderly Tuparí woman who played with Arikapú-speaking friends in the Arikapú *maloca* 'longhouse' as a child and who learned the language from them. I spoke with her once about the Arikapú language and she happily recalled names of some plants and animals. I do not think she is a fluent speaker, however, and even if she is, she has not had opportunity to use the language in many, many decades.

residents of the Rio Branco as not genuinely Indigenous – even though some of them speak more of the Tuparí language than some "full-blooded" Tuparí do.[7]

Any approach that naively assumes a clean correlation between language and culture will fail to account for the fact that many residents of the Terra Indígena Rio Branco belong to a given Indigenous ethnic group but do not have fluent command of that group's traditional language. I have discussed this case with my students during several class sessions, stressing how the number of language-ethnicity mismatches or incongruencies in the Brazilian Amazon is growing as shift to Portuguese advances. Also, many of the students in my course at Syracuse are themselves of mixed background. My impression is that they are genuinely interested in learning about the ways that different societies conceptualize the distinction between ethnic identity and linguistic ability, and about the kind of on-the-ground consequences that follow from those conceptualizations. It is for this reason that I assigned Boas's Introduction to the *Handbook* at the beginning of the semester. Despite being well over a century old, it raises questions of crucial importance today.

8. Political ramifications of mismatches between linguistic knowledge ("what language do you speak?") and cultural/ethnic affiliation ("what group do you belong to?"). The previous section discussed some of the ways that a Rio Branco resident's linguistic knowledge can fail to match up with that same resident's cultural/ethnic affiliation. I now turn to the political ramifications of this mismatch.

Brazil is a country where indigeneity is a legal category. Land rights for Indigenous Brazilians are enshrined in the 1988 Constitution (Carvalho 2000; Moog Rodrigues 2002), a document which brought to an end – at least officially – the repressive practices of the country's military dictatorship. Because being Indigenous is a legal category that is guaranteed certain benefits, including access to land and natural resources, in Brazilian discourse there is much policing of who does and does not qualify as Indigenous. And because land designated by the federal government as Indigenous is protected against development, the powerful agricultural lobby, the mining industry, and rural landowners are all invested in keeping the *terras indígenas* as small in size and as few in number as possible. Indigenous people are therefore forced to constantly assert and defend their indigeneity; it is key to their rights. As Brazilian society considers knowledge of the language of one's own ethnic group as a key criterion for indigeneity, the kind of ethnicity-language mismatch discussed above can become an actual threat to the protection of those rights.

To put it slightly differently: just as knowing how to speak a Native language can serve as a proof (Portuguese *comprovante*) of one's Indigeneity in Brazil, knowing only Portuguese can serve to undermine one's claim of Indigeneity.

Let me return to one of the concrete examples from the Rio Branco. The Arikapú are almost all Tuparí-speaking as a result of multiple generations of marriage between ethnically Arikapú men and ethnically Tuparí women. But they are registered with the FUNAI – the Fundação Nacional do Índio, the government agency traditionally responsible for Indigenous affairs – as

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[7] I know one resident of the Rio Branco who constitutes a counterexample to what I have described here. She was born to a Tuparí mother (now deceased) and a mixed father, the son of a Tuparí woman and a non-Indigenous man. Since her father's father was not Indigenous, on a strict application of the principle of patrilineal ethnic affiliation, she would not qualify as Indigenous, either. And yet she is recognized by conservative members of the community as fully Tuparí. I suspect that this is due to the fact that she was raised downriver, in a geographically isolated and more traditional village, and that she speaks fluent Tuparí. Portuguese is her L2, not her L1. If she had been raised in a Portuguese-dominant village or were to live a less clearly Indigenous lifestyle, she might be identified by others as White or mixed.

"just" Arikapú, in keeping with the tradition of patrilineal ethnicity.[8] There are no fluent speakers of Arikapú on the Rio Branco today, and just one elderly speaker remaining on the Rio Guaporé (see footnote 6). This state of extreme language endangerment means that the ethnic Arikapú are in an unenviable position. Identified as Arikapú according to Indigenous tradition and also on official documents, they are a people whose language is preserved in a dictionary (Arikapú et al. 2010) but is otherwise obsolescent. Sooner or later, a covetous rancher or mining company will dispute their Indigenous status in court so as to seize their land. The lack of a living Arikapú language will be presented as evidence that the Arikapú ethnic group does not deserve legal protection.

Some interethnic couples on the Terra Indígena Rio Branco have spoken with me about the decision to register their children with FUNAI as *bi*-ethnic. I am not sure if this option was legally unavailable before, or if it was technically available but nonetheless avoided because of the tradition of patrilineally defined ethnicity. In either case, the move toward bi-ethnic registration with FUNAI is a change. I have counseled friends to take advantage of this option if they can, since in the long run it could help protect their children's legal status: if a child is registered as both Makurap and Tuparí – the former on their father's side, the latter on their mother's – then they may have the opportunity to use their knowledge of the Tuparí language as proof of their legal indigeneity, despite not knowing any Makurap.

The political reality of Brazil has taught me the importance of paying attention to the discursive choices that linguists and other language activists make. If we argue for too tight of a language-culture connection, if we argue that the extinction of an endangered language means the loss of all or even just most of the cultural knowledge associated with that language (Woodbury 1993), then we provide rhetorical ammunition for anti-Indigenous political movements. As I have seen in Brazil, there are many actors waiting in the wings to exploit *terras indígenas* for profit, and one of the most effective talking points that those actors have is the claim that Indigenous peoples who have shifted to Portuguese no longer qualify as Indigenous. This, of course, is a case of blaming the victim: Brazilian society tells the country's Native peoples that speaking Portuguese will bring them economic and educational and social advancement, and then revokes their Indigeneity once they shift.[9] The way that we talk about these issues can have genuine political ramifications for the speakers and communities we work with.

9. Conclusion. In this paper, I have put forward five recommendations about how we ought to talk about endangered languages in our classrooms. Three of these have been framed as negatives: "Don't teach your students an overly restrictive conception of 'speaker'" (section 3), "Don't reduce the importance of Indigenous languages to 'what they can teach us,' where 'us' = linguists" (section 5), and "Don't equate endangered languages with endangered species" (section 6). The other two have been framed as positives: "Do teach your students to distrust decontextualized speaker counts" (section 4) and "Do encourage your students to distinguish between linguistic classifications and cultural ones" (section 7). Finally, in section 8, I discussed

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[8] President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was sworn in January 1, 2023, and under his government the name of FUNAI has been officially changed from *Fundação Nacional do Índio* 'National Indian Foundation' to *Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas* 'National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples'. President Lula has also created a new Ministry of Indigenous Peoples. His appointees to head both FUNAI and this new Ministry are Indigenous women.

[9] I thank the late Michael Silverstein for having brought my attention to victim-blaming in discourse surrounding language shift.

how discourse that equates language shift with cultural "death" can be repurposed by anti-Indigenous actors who seek to deprive Native peoples of their legal rights, including land rights.

I strive to implement these recommendations in my own rhetoric, though I recognize that it can be tempting to disregard them in favor of "sexier" language – especially when we are applying for grants or attempting to generate awareness outside of the academy. I further recognize that these recommendations will not work in all classrooms, just as they will not be true to the experience of all linguists who carry out field research in Indigenous communities. But they reflect my best understanding of the challenges that the Tuparí people face today – challenges which are always on my mind, whether I am working with speakers in person on the Rio Branco or teaching students in Syracuse.

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