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Comparing Rural Multilingualism in Lowland South America and Western Africa

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Abstract. This article explores and compares multilingualism in small-scale societies of Western Africa and Lowland South America. All are characterized by complex and extensive multilingual practices and regional exchange systems established before the onset of globalization and its varying impacts. Through overviews of the general historical and organizational features of regions, vignette case studies, and a discussion of transformative processes affecting them, we show that small-scale multilingual societies present challenges to existing theorization of language as well as approaches to language description and documentation. We aim to bring these societies and issues to the fore, promoting discussion among a broader audience.

1. Introduction. Lowland South America¹ and Western Africa² are among the world's oldest multilingual settings. In both contexts, multilingualism predates European expansion and has been shaped by social interaction at local and regional levels. Yet the ties that bind the two settings together go back to the birth of globalization, when Portuguese travellers, after creating the blueprint for transatlantic travel, commerce, settlement, and slave trade on the shores of the Upper Guinea Coast, then turned an avaricious gaze toward South America. Both similarities in early colonial experiences and differences in postcolonial regional developments warrant in-depth comparative study, and this article offers an initial contribution toward this goal.

Dramatic cultural and linguistic transformations occurring in the trans-Atlantic space from the fifteenth century onwards reshaped precolonial multilingualism, which now survives in rural settings within modern nation states with postcolonial language policies. Indeed, rural multilingualism grounded in intense social connections on a small scale (Evans 2010), forming “societies of intimates” (Trudgill 2011) and resulting in areas of high linguistic diversity, is a global norm, being still widespread in Africa, Asia, Melanesia, and South America (see Lüpke [2016b] for an overview). Yet, small-scale multilingualism is strikingly underrepresented in sociolinguistics, descriptive and typological linguistics, education, and multilingualism research.³ The lack of awareness of this still prevalent, but threatened, type of multilingualism reflects both theoretical biases in linguistics and problematic views of non-Western rural societies. These

are often cast as loose conglomerations of isolated monolingual groups “in contact” with other homogeneously conceived neighboring groups, rather than being recognized as forming internally heterogeneous societies shaped by different language ideologies and patterns of multilingual interaction.

A new epistemological focus on “translanguaging” (García and Wei 2014)—fluid and dynamic linguistic practice—in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics has been instrumental in questioning the notion of languages as discrete entities, depicting them rather as ideological constructs that people deploy (in the form of language labels) for diverse social and interactional purposes. In contrast, linguistic description and documentation remains largely confined to a paradigm focused on “languages” and on the reification of fluid and variable language use into essentialist and imaginary standard registers of these “languages” (Cysouw and Good 2013), leaving linguistic ecologies and language use within them on the sidelines.

A regrettable consequence of this disciplinary segregation and rural-urban dichotomy is that multilingualism is almost exclusively researched in urban and national or international settings where it is seen as a recently introduced phenomenon expanding under globalization, whereas rural language configurations are described and imagined as monolingual and threatened by multilingualism. In fact, the case is just the opposite. Longstanding rural, small-scale, endogenous multilingualism is globally threatened by linguistic policies and attitudes in the nation states in which small-scale multilingual societies find themselves nested after colonization. Linguistic diversity has been brutally eradicated wherever settlement colonies were formed, a somber testament to the homogenizing forces of European expansion that promote ethnic nationalism and deny the existence of internally diverse settings. The areas we discuss remain multilingual and with some precolonial exchange systems still intact because they are situated at the margins of globalization. They provide precious insight into the sociocultural and linguistic organization of small-scale societies and how these are transformed by interactions at a larger scale. They also present challenges to conceptualizations of language and existing frameworks of linguistic description and documentation.

We aim to bring these societies and related theoretical issues to the attention of a broader audience while simultaneously shedding light on the transformative processes they have undergone. We offer characterizations of the diverse and long-standing multilingual constellations in Western Africa and Lowland South America that not only draw attention to their internal diversity and the need for interdisciplinary approaches to describing them, but also constitute an initial comparative perspective. These overviews help broaden the empirical basis informing the new multilingual turn in sociolinguistics, and contribute to the recognition of such societies as language ecologies (Haugen 1972; Mufwene 2001; Vaughan and Singer 2018), loci for phenomena and processes that language documentation should also seek to capture (Di Carlo 2016; Lüpke 2016b). Both major subsections also contain vignettelike case

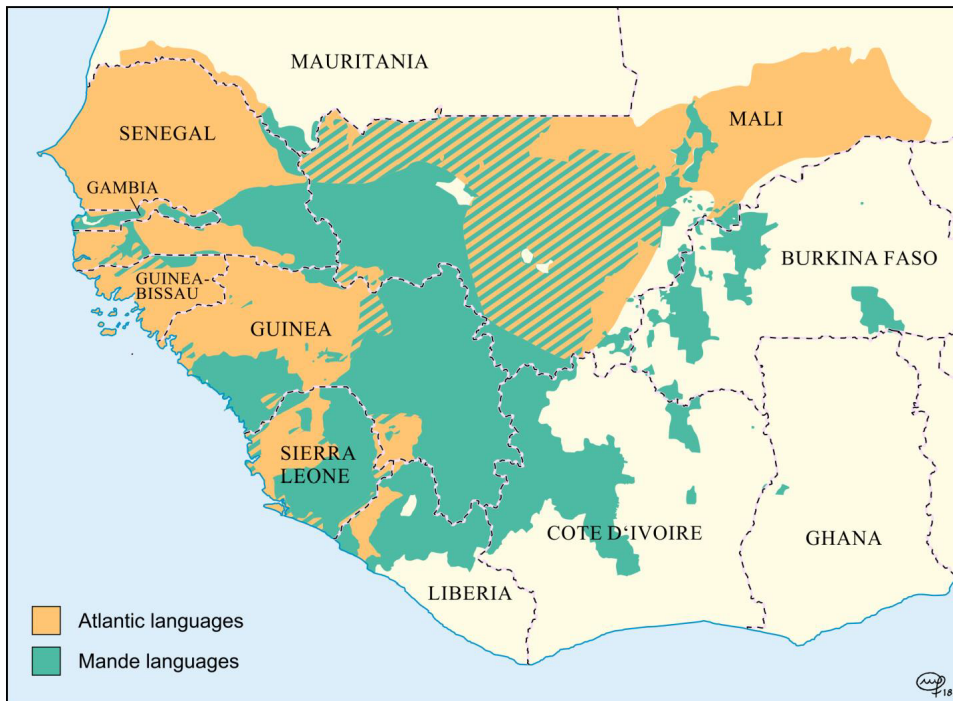
studies with more fine-grained insight into the architecture of these constellations.

We begin in Western Africa (section 2), discussing the Atlantic and Mande spaces and the dynamics linking them; two vignettes focus on the repertoires and practices of speakers in the Jóola areas of the Lower Casamance. Our discussion of Lowland South America (section 3) begins with two well-known regional multilingual systems, the Upper Rio Negro in the Northwest Amazon and the Upper Xingu in Southern Amazonia. We then consider multilingual constellations in the Northeast Amazon, spanning parts of Brazil, Venezuela, Guyana, Surinam, and French Guiana and in the Brazil-Bolivia borderlands of the Southwest Amazon; the rise of *lingua francas* in the wake of colonial transformations is also discussed, focusing on Tukano, Nheengatú, and Kheúól, Brazil's only creole language. Concluding the Amazon section, two vignettes discuss notions of authenticity, speakerhood and knowledge transmission among Tuyuka baya singers and the mismatch between ideologies of language separation and attested language mixing in the Vaupés. Though our treatment is expansive, no exhaustiveness is attempted (or indeed possible) in sections 2 and 3; our intention is instead to bring some of the significant characteristics of situations and speakers to the fore and provide context for our discussion of how scholars have conceptualized multilingualism in these settings (section 4) before making recommendations for future research in section 5.

2. The Atlantic and Mande spaces of Western Africa. Map 1 below shows the location of the Atlantic and Mande spaces under discussion here, partly coinciding with the notional home bases of major languages of these two families. The remainder of the section problematizes this type of representation for the multilingual societies and individuals inhabiting these spaces, but also draws on the reasons to retain a conceptual distinction between them.

Western Africa is characterized by intense trade and other networks spanning and transcending the entire zone, and thus cannot be partitioned into discrete spaces; nevertheless, it is useful to conceptualize the region as belonging to two (idealized) spheres.⁴ The distinctive climatic and topographic conditions of the northern and eastern savannah regions (Brooks 1993), here referred to as the Mande space, resulted in the formation of centralized states; in contrast, decentralized polities prevailed in the Atlantic space and find reflection in high linguistic diversity until today. The region is located at the meeting point of three different Indo-European colonial languages: French, English, and Portuguese. While Iberian, Dutch, English, and French traders were active on the Atlantic shores from the fifteenth century onwards, colonies were created in the wake of the 1884–85 Berlin Conference, which sealed the partition of the African continent into colonial territories. Large swathes of the Atlantic and Mande spaces became part of French colonial West Africa; Britain retained a small foothold in the Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau remained under Portuguese rule. Independence from the colonial powers came in the 1960s and 1970s, but none of

the newly independent countries had been the kind of settlement colony that Brazil was. The colonial languages remained the official languages of the post-colonial nation states, though they play a minor role in everyday communication in both spaces and are mostly integrated into so-called unmarked codeswitching (Myers-Scotton 1993; Gafaranga and Torras 2016). Languages of wider communication have developed, some initially spreading through colonial administrative networks (Wolof and Bambara), others becoming indexes of anticolonial liberation struggles (Kriol). With very few local exceptions, the school systems adopt official languages. However, these are not part of most children’s linguistic repertoires when they begin school and are not formally taught at school, despite being the medium of education. Thus, classrooms end up serving as vectors for languages of wider communication until children have picked up a limited proficiency in the official languages. Given their limited role in local small-scale linguistic ecologies, colonial languages are ignored in sections 2.1 and 2.2 so that longstanding and continuing societal communication patterns can be brought to the fore.



Map 1. The Atlantic and Mande families, roughly corresponding to the idealized Atlantic and Mande spaces.

2.1. The Atlantic space. The area denoted as the Atlantic space is characterized by a sunken coastline, with mangrove swamps crisscrossed by tidal rivers and creeks reaching far inland. Additionally, most of the area is or was situated

south of the tsetse fly border, a notional border moving in line with climatic conditions below which horses cannot be kept because of a high incidence of tsetse flies causing sleeping sickness. These factors entail that the area has never been suited to the formation of larger states and was out of reach to conquest by horse warriors; it remains host to many small-scale societies. Localized settlement patterns go hand in hand with great linguistic diversity, an example being the Lower Casamance, one of its most linguistically diverse spaces. The Lower Casamance covers 7,352 sq km, roughly three times the size of Luxembourg, and hosts thirty or more languages and lects belonging to two different branches of the contested Atlantic family (Pozdniakov and Segerer forthcoming), in addition to Mandinka (a language of the Mande family, whose place within the Niger-Congo phylum is disputed, as is that of Atlantic [Dimmendaal 2008]), and a Portuguese-based creole. As is typical for African frontier societies (Kopytoff 1987), precolonial Atlantic groups were not constituted on an ethnic premise but were comprised mainly of patrilineal and virilocal lineages.⁵ In the absence of a central political organization, political units were wards, villages, and in some cases larger polities of up to a dozen villages (Brooks 1993; Bühnen 1994; Baum 1999; Schloss 1988). Larger polities were and are often called kingdoms, with kings having the social roles described for sacred chiefs (Kopytoff 1987). Named languages are connected to locations as territorial languages (Blommaert 2010), often associated with the remembered (male) founder, and serving to socially index this affiliation. Thus, within the logic of “patrimonial language ideology” (Lüpke 2018), “landlords” (Brooks 1993; Jansen 2016)—i.e., people identifying as the descendants of the founder—live alongside “strangers”—i.e., clients still associated with different remembered points of origin of which they were the landlords. In-married women and fostered children (and formerly, slaves and captives) from outside the patrimonial language area are likewise excluded or subsumed under the identity of the male head of the family. Yet memory is changeable and places are continually contested. For instance, settled strangers may redefine a space as not belonging to their landlords but as having been previously empty, and declare themselves the new autochthones (Lüpke [2021] describes this ongoing process in a Baïnouk village).

The actual composition of settlements is often heterogeneous and dynamic (see section 2.5). Great linguistic diversity is found especially in village-based language ecologies, where small languages are present at every level, beginning in the household and ward. In contrast, multilingualism patterns are slightly reduced within larger polities, where larger languages associated with the polity emerged that often also served, or still serve, as *lingua francas*.

The political construct of firstcomer-newcomer or landlord-stranger dialectics, sophisticated practices for the hosting of clients and visitors, and the circulation of both women and children are widespread throughout West Africa (see Brooks 1993; Jansen 2015, 2016), but are particularly significant in the

Atlantic space. Although this area was deeply transformed by the transatlantic slave trade (Rodney 1969, 1970; Baum 1999; Hawthorne 2003, 2010; Green 2012), central traits of social organization predate the arrival of Iberian traders in the late fifteenth century. Constraints imposed by topographic and climatic factors, alongside the existence of a Mandinka trade network from the thirteenth century onwards (itself building on earlier precursors), created a template for managing exchanges on both local and regional planes, a model later extended to relationships with other outsiders. Travellers' accounts beginning in the late fifteenth century stress the region's enormous linguistic diversity, allowing us to conclude that it predates colonization. Reportedly, people were able to understand each other's languages, from which most historians conclude close genetic relatedness (e.g., Green 2012 on Bāñounk [Gujaher] and Kassanga). Some codes in the area are indeed closely related and form a continuum of lects. Language clusters can be internally diverse and languages very distant from each other, despite being regarded as closely genetically related (e.g., the Jóola cluster, with only 40–50 percent shared basic lexicon or the sister languages Bāñounk and Kassanga, sharing 33 percent of their basic lexicon according to Wilson [2007]). The only explanation for widespread understanding is thus not mutual intelligibility but multilingualism, exactly what we find today (Lüpke forthcoming) and can plausibly extrapolate to the past. Hair's (1967) comparison of Portuguese travellers' accounts with present-day locations and ethnonyms and glossonyms of groups shows an astonishing continuity of settlement patterns that aligns with this observation. Some groups have shrunk; a few new ethnic formations, most notably the Jóola, have been created since the nineteenth century and have recognizably superseded older recorded groups now ethnically reimagined in the wake of French colonization and modern nation-state formation (Lüpke 2016a; Thomson 2011). Nevertheless, the makeup of local populations still exhibits great overall stability. Linguistic diversity has thus remained similar at the macrolevel, with the most important shifts occurring through changes of affiliation, migration, and reimagination of ethnolinguistic identity at the micro-level (see also Wright 1985).

The growing exploitation and violence of the transatlantic slave trade had contrasting effects on cultural and linguistic organization in Western Africa. Green (2012) describes the area as the birthplace of creolization, because it was there (and within the Atlantic space in Upper Guinea) that the first few hundred Portuguese engaged in trade and exchange settled. These so-called *lançados* brought the creole (often called Kriol or Kriolu) forged in the trading posts and slave depots of Cabo Verde with them to the African mainland, where it became the social signifier of a broker elite (Mark 2002). Many patterns of cultural and religious life are widely, though patchily, shared throughout the region, and all crosscut social categories such as ethnolinguistic groups (Teixeira da Mota 1954; Boulègue 1968, 1987; Mark 1985, 1992, 1994; Bühnen 1994; Baum 1999). Yet, for the most part, rather than replacing local languages in rural areas, the creole

has been added to existing complex multilingual repertoires, being the patrimonial language of Creole settlements, becoming an additional language of identity for many Bainounk and Kassanga, and employed as a *lingua franca* in urban centers in Guinea-Bissau (Intumbo, Inverno, and Holm 2013).

Cultural convergence thus stands in stark contrast to linguistic divergence. The maintenance of linguistic diversity and multilingualism is motivated by the need to index plural identities that foster creation of flexible alliances. Increased in the context of the slave trade, such multiple identities allow situational indexing of closeness (if an alliance is desired) or distance (if “Others” were pawned, captured, or sold as slaves). Today, we still observe that, depending on the requirements of the moment, situated identities can be performed through different semiotic tools, language being among the most important. The need to draw on multiple indexes has kept regional multilingualism alive, be it through repertoires spanning typologically and genealogically distinct languages or through the upholding of minimal, emblematic contrasts between closely related lects. Regional festivals strengthen this system of unity in difference by enhancing federal⁶ small-scale multilingualism and maintaining familiarity with particular multilingual constellations (Cobbinah 2019).

2.2. The Mande space. The fringes of the Atlantic space overlap with the Mande space, conceptualized here with its center to the east and north of the Atlantic space. The climatic characteristics and flat, accessible spaces of this Sahelian savannah were more conducive to the establishment of larger polities and hence became the heartland of a succession of more centralized, though still fragmented states. Among these, the Kaabu Kingdom, existing through the mid-nineteenth century (Giesing and Vydrine 2007; Giesing and Creissels 2017), is noteworthy for extending Mali influence westwards to Upper Guinea. The zone’s most prominent state formation is the Mali Empire, founded by the mythical Sundiata Keita (ca.1217–ca.1255), a heterogeneous polity comprising changing allies and territories (Jansen 1996, 2015). Through its political expansions, Mandinka and closely related languages of the Manding cluster of Western Mande became established as *lingua francas* as early as the second half of the thirteenth century. Profiles of Mande states found, for instance, in Ibn Battuta’s accounts of fourteenth century Mali are dominated by images of powerful empires gathering extreme wealth and subjugating a vast zone. In reality, few states, including Kaabu, exerted much influence over the entirety of their territories, governing more through loose clientelism than via direct control, and gradually fizzling out at their unbounded fringes (Wright 1985). Some violent military expeditions, most importantly the Mane invasions⁷ of the 1540s–1560s (Green 2012), did occur and had disastrous effects on smaller groups in Upper Guinea. However, most imperial narratives fail to portray the historical reality of gradual, multidirectional (and reversible!) assimilation as opposed to massive migration and conquest, underplaying the subtle influences of diasporic Muslim Mande traders who proselytized instead of forcing conversion to Islam, and the

continuous oscillation between resistance and adaptation, described by Giesing (1994) for the Balanta case. Mande traders were among the first Muslims in West Africa, basing their trade networks on religious affinities, as did the Portuguese network that superseded them (exploiting the bonds between Sephardic Jews and New Christians; see Mark and Horta 2013). Mandinka traders' and religious scholars' influence spread existing Fula and Wolof Arabic-based writing traditions (so-called Ajami) to other groups in the Atlantic space, where they were used for local and regional historiography, genealogical notes, religious purposes, Islamic magic, and personal literacies. Though such writing systems were employed mainly in larger languages, they were also occasionally used for smaller languages (see McLaughlin [forthcoming] for an overview). Thus, Ajami writing reached the periphery of the Mande sphere and is still attested, e.g., among the Balanta (Giesing and Costa-Dias 2007; Giesing and Vydrine 2007; Giesing and Creissels 2017), mainly for exographic writing (Lüpke 2011) in Mandinka, but occasionally featuring words associated with Balanta.

Contrasting with the localized multilingualism patterns of the Atlantic space, at the core of the Mande space, we find plural identities in stratified societies whose diversity is ordered through status groups or "castes" of nobles, endogamous artisans (among them bards, blacksmiths, woodworkers, and leather workers), and slaves (Camara 1976; Tamari 1991, 1997; Giesing 2000). Allegedly, Sundiata Keita initiated status groups to create social cohesion in his heterogeneous empire composed of Mande-speaking peoples and speakers of the Atlantic language cluster Fula, spread laterally across Africa by nomadic pastoralists and specialized artisans. Status groups had equivalences in most societies within the various Mande states, and were related to an important system of joking relationships. Links of irreverence and social inversion allowed joking partners to violate rules of conduct holding elsewhere, for instance by insulting each other or reversing hierarchical relationships, such links helping to create intimacy and allegiance among status groups otherwise kept apart. Joking relationships connect lineages with particular social roles across entire territories, independent of other facets of identity. Ethnically imagined joking relationships also exist in Atlantic societies, for example the *cimbuhai* practiced in the Bainounk Gujaher area, but not to the extent found in the socially stratified Mande societies. Although the first anthropologists to work with joking relationships presented them as fixed systems (Mauss 1928; Radcliffe-Brown 1940), they are situationally created (Canut and Smith 2006) and thus functionally resemble the dynamic and fluidly performed multilingualism of the Atlantic space. Members of Mande (and by extension, similar Western African) societies report linguistic repertoires that are considerably smaller than those of their Atlantic counterparts, yet multilingualism is equally widespread. Social networks in diverse neighborhoods and wards mean that children are exposed to, and acquire, at least snippets of other languages (Cissé forthcoming), although the art and pride of multilingualism is not cultivated as much as in some

Atlantic societies (e.g., among Baïnounk groups, see Cobbinah 2019; Lüpke 2021; Quint forthcoming).

2.3. Dialectic dynamics linking the Atlantic and Mande spaces. The Atlantic and Mande spheres, while not discrete entities, stand in a dialectic relationship with each other and become meaningful spaces when contrasted. This holds for the dichotomy between decentralized frontier groups vs. centralized states at the political level, this being the sole parameter differentiating two types of geopolitical spaces out of what would otherwise be a large array of internally disparate units. As for linguistic classification, the claim that Atlantic languages constitute a single language family was, from the start, a geographically motivated attempt to make the language groups coextensive with the geographical spheres introduced here (Koelle 1854). They were moreover defined negatively, as being the typological opposite of Mande languages, rather than by features of internal genealogical relatedness: while Mande languages are isolating, Atlantic languages are agglutinative; Mande languages do not have the complex noun class systems and initial consonant mutation characteristic of many Atlantic languages; the majority of Mande languages are tonal, a feature of only some Atlantic languages. Internally, both groups are rather diverse and pose problems for genealogical classification (although more so in the case of Atlantic; see Childs forthcoming; Lüpke 2020; Pozdniakov and Segerer forthcoming). This is undoubtedly due to prolonged multilingualism and ensuing deep and multidimensional language contact in both groups, though mitigated through homogenization in larger Mande political formations. In historical memory and cultural representation, a dichotomy between ancestor-worshipping Atlantic autochthones and Muslim conquerors creates contrasting stereotypes. Across the Atlantic world (e.g., in Baïnounk Gubëeher [Alexander Cobbinah p.c. 2016], Jóola Kujireray [Rachel Watson p.c. 2016], and Balanta from the area of Mansoa), the word Mandinka is synonymous with Islam, most likely related to nineteenth-century incursions of Mandinka Muslims supposedly from Pakao (Cornelia Giesing p.c. 2017). In fact, these lines are blurred and constantly shifting. It is therefore crucial to look at the collective memories and language ideologies underlying insiders' and outsiders' stereotypes. While they offer important access to sociopolitically (and for researchers, epistemologically) motivated perspectives, they must be connected to real encounters, speech contexts, and situated language use to reveal the dynamics driving and changing multilingualism in Western Africa. Only such perspectives can do justice to the complex and fluid core social relationships that make them "systems" in Luhmann's sense (see section 4.1) and that motivate the continuing existence of multilingualism in these settings. Two case studies from the Casamance area of the Atlantic space illustrate striking facets characterizing lects or languages (as imaginary reified codes): first, the maintenance of minimal contrasts associated with different languages because of the social meaning they confer (section 2.4), and second, the fluid nature of repertoires, spanning not only closely related

lects that are distinguished by only a few emblematic features, but also including languages that are only remotely, or not genealogically related at all (section 2.5).

2.4. Vignette: multilingualism as the maintenance of minimal differences—Jóola languages. Jóola is a cluster of around fifteen languages (depending on how divisions are drawn) spoken in Gambia, southern Senegal, and northern Guinea-Bissau, and belonging to the Bak branch of the Atlantic family (Pozdniakov and Segerer forthcoming). All named Jóola languages are associated with an ideological home base—a village or group of villages (Lüpke 2018), either in patrimonial or ancestral fashion—and some are also used as languages of wider communication, with differing degrees of reach. This multilingual situation presents an intriguing dialectic. On the one hand, genetic relatedness between the languages results in varying levels of lexical and grammatical similarity that contact effects might be expected to further consolidate. On the other, ideologies surrounding ethnolinguistic identity, alongside the need to form flexible alliances, require the maintenance of many small languages (Lüpke 2016a).

For Jóola languages, differences are partly maintained through the preservation of salient contrasts, which in many cases may become iconic or emblematic of a given aspect of sociolinguistic identity (Irvine and Gal 2000; Silverstein 2003; see Watson [2018, 2019] for a detailed discussion). This is illustrated neatly in traditional Jóola greeting formulas, which involve the question-response pair “[Is there] peace?” “Peace only.” While the word for ‘peace’, *kasumay*, is cognate in all Jóola languages,⁸ the second item, ‘only’, varies, as in (1)–(3) below.⁹

- (1) *kasumay bare*
- (2) *kasumay keb*
- (3) *kasumay lamba*

The form in (1) is associated with Jóola languages with home bases located mainly south of the river Casamance (Lower Casamance), (2) with languages located north of the river, and (3) with those located even further to the northwest. These are meaningful subareas in terms of ethnolinguistic, cultural, and religious identities within the Jóola space. The three terms also display the fact that convergence and divergence in Jóola languages operate on different scales. The term *kasumay* ‘peace’ is an iconic signal of pan-Casamançais Jóola identity, while the differential terms for ‘only’ allow the indexing of regional differences within this space. This observation is further corroborated by the greeting formula in Bainounk Guñaamolo settlements (north of the river, but directly adjacent to the southern zone), *bo-sum-o bare* (CL *ba*-peace-DEF only), containing a cognate of the root *sum* and the *bare* term for ‘only’ that is typical for this area.

Zooming in further, we also find levels of distinction maintained within these subareas. For example, (4) and (5) are the prototypical responses associated with two Jóola languages of Lower Casamance, Banjal and Kujireray, whose home bases are adjacent to each other.

(4) *kasumay bare*

(5) *gëssumay bare*

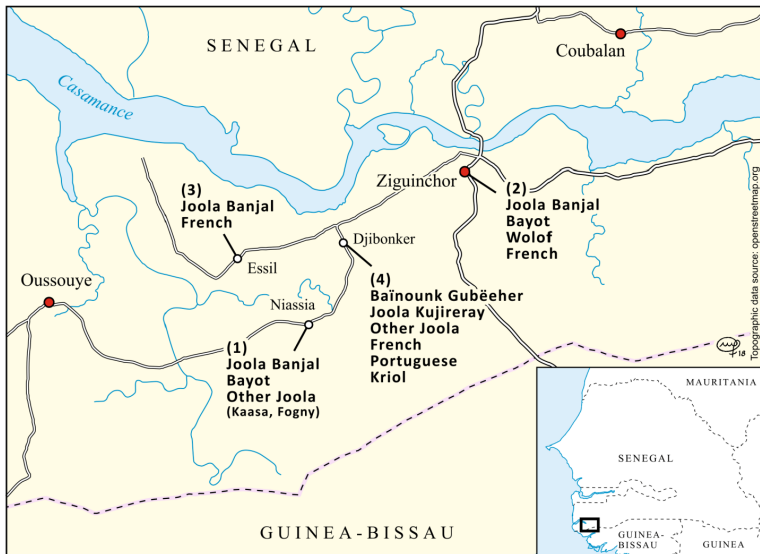
Although both use the form *bare* ‘only’, distinction is maintained in the voice contrast of the word-initial velars (*k* vs. *g*) in the first part of the greeting. This contrast (holding for all velar stops) allows speakers to index distinct identities, despite similarities in many other aspects of their languages and sociocultural environment.

Such small but salient contrasts are an essential part of the Jóola language group ecology, and indeed, to a significant degree, speakers have conscious awareness of them and can use them in complex combinations to index multifaceted social meaning. These linguistic features operate at different levels of the geographical and social scale, and are interpreted, by definition, in opposition to other features, meaning that their deployment in multilingual discourse is to a large degree contingent on the particular constellation of speakers, repertoires, relationships, and locations in which that discourse takes place.

2.5. Vignette: multilingualism shaped by trajectories—linguistic repertoires in Casamance. The Lower Casamance region of southern Senegal is characterized by extremely high levels of linguistic diversity and complex patterns of multilingualism at the individual and societal levels. Despite ideologies linking places with languages (see section 2.1 above), villages are not linguistically homogeneous. Indeed, the maintenance of many small languages, combined with high levels of mobility and wide and dense social networks, leads to rich, diverse, and vital linguistic ecologies. Multilingualism is the norm, and linguistic adaptability is a point of pride (Cobbinah 2010:178; Juillard 2010:56), with individuals routinely counting upwards of six languages in their repertoires. This section profiles a multilingual man from the region to illustrate how such a repertoire may be built.

GS, a man in his thirties, moved between several villages and groups of villages associated with particular languages: Djibonker (Jibëeher in Gubëeher), with the patrimonial language Baïnounk Gubëeher (Gubëeher literally means ‘language of Jibëeher’); Essyl (Essil), associated with Jóola Banjal/Eegimaa at the level of the polity and with Gusilay (lit., ‘the language of Essyl’) at the local level; and Niassia, associated with the Kagere variety of the Bayot cluster. He additionally spent time in the regional capital Ziguinchor and the town of São Domingos across the border in Guinea-Bissau. All of these are shown in map 2 below.

Born to a father from Djibonker and a mother from Essyl, GS spent his early years in the village of Niassia (1 in map 2) brought up primarily by his mother, who spoke Jóola Banjal (the language of her home village, Essyl) to him and his siblings. Niassia, located on a main road and close to the Guinea-Bissau border, is rather cosmopolitan and linguistically heterogeneous; in socializing with other children and residents, GS became familiar with several varieties of Jóola as well as Bayot. At the age of seven, he moved to the regional capital Ziguinchor (2 in map 2), where Wolof was the lingua franca used by children from diverse backgrounds, although GS continued to speak Jóola Banjal with his siblings. His host family happened to be Bayot speakers from Niassia, and he developed his skills in this language, while he also began formal instruction in French in school.



Map 2. GS's places of residence, with languages used.

GS moved again at nine, this time to his mother's home village of Essyl (3 in map 2), where Jóola Banjal is seen as the ancestral language. Linguistic heterogeneity is less pronounced in this more remote village, and GS reports speaking largely Jóola Banjal there, though he continued to learn French at school. At thirteen, GS moved to the village of Djibonker (4 in map 2) to live full-time at his father's house. Here, he expanded his proficiency in Djibonker's patrimonial language, Bâïnouk Gubêeher, the main language (alongside French) he used to converse with his father and other senior members of the family and community. However, theirs was a particularly large and heterogeneous household that welcomed incomers from diverse backgrounds, necessitating increased use of Wolof as a lingua franca. In addition, GS learned Jóola Kujireray, the language spoken in the neighboring village (and very close to Jóola Banjal; see section 2.4 above) and continued to be exposed to other Jóola languages used as small-scale

lingua francas. At school, GS learned Portuguese, and while hosting palm wine tappers from Guinea-Bissau, he added Kriol (Creole) to his repertoire.

GS’s repertoire comprises closely related and only minimally differentiated lects (Jóola Kujireray and Jóola Banjal, but also Bayot Kageere, a not-so-close relative, all from the Bak branch of Atlantic). It includes Bâïnouŋk Gubêeher, located in the Northern branch of Atlantic, and thus of considerable genealogical distance, and Wolof, also from the Northern branch, but with only ca. 13 percent of cognacy with Bâïnouŋk languages (not internally differentiated in correspondence sets for these languages provided by Sapir [1971]). Finally, it also contains two Romance languages, French and Portuguese (the only ones acquired in formal settings), and Kriol (Creole). While this linguistic biography is highly personal in its detail, in general type it is quite typical for the region. This case study illustrates the normality of acquiring different languages throughout one’s life, and how the resulting repertoire is contingent on one’s personal trajectory.

3. Lowland South America. Map 3 shows the location of the four main Amazonian settings discussed in this section.



Map 3. The Northeast Amazon, Northwest Amazon, Southwest Amazon, and Upper Xingu areas of Lowland South America.

3.1. The Northwest Amazon. The Upper Rio Negro region in the Brazil-Colombia borderlands of northwest Amazon is home to some two dozen ethnolinguistic groups belonging to the Arawak, East Tukano, Naduhup, and Kakua-Nikak language families. It emerged into the spotlight in the mid-twentieth century through Goldman's ethnographic studies of the Kubeo, where he noted that "[local] Indian cosmopolitanism is traditionally multilingual" (1979:19 [originally published in 1963]), a feature Sorensen then placed front and center in his now classic description of the subregional Vaupés sociolinguistic system as one in which systematic "[community] multilingualism and polylingualism in the individual" were the (completely typical, expected, and unsurprising) cultural norm (1967:671).

Many people have pondered the development and long-term maintenance of this system. Studies by Jackson (1974, 1976, 1983), Brüzzi (1977), Christine Hugh-Jones (1979), Stephen Hugh-Jones (1979), Århem (1981), Chernela (1989, 1993), and Cabalzar (2000, 2013) offer a regional profile with a circumscribed set of foundational pillars. These include a vital link between language and social identity, established via patrilineal ethnic affiliation (with language as an associated feature); exogamous marriage norms, preferred Dravidian-style cross-cousin unions, and mandated virilocal residence; geographically constrained networks of trade, matrimony, and other alliance-building mechanisms; and, accompanying all these, an overarching essentialist language ideology that preserves diversity by ostensibly controlling linguistic practice (Gomez-Imbert 1996, 1999; Aikhenvald 2002, 2003; Chernela 2013). In its presumed canonical and historically stable form, the system produces highly diversified but balanced networks of contact that have ethnolinguistic diversity as both necessary input and predictable output, a dialectic process that reinforces, rather than threatens, the use and maintenance of multiple languages (Chacon and Cayón 2013: 15–16).

However, these "foundational pillars" reflect a somewhat idealized perspective slanted toward the East Tukano groups within the Vaupés subregion and not generalizable to all populations. The Kubeo, Makuna, Letuama/Retuarã, and Tanimuka, for example, practice social, but not necessarily linguistic, exogamy, suggesting that marriage norms and ethnicity are not strictly linked to language even among East Tukano peoples (Århem 1981; Cayón 2013; Chacon 2013; Chacon and Cayón 2013; Eraso 2015). Moreover, research on Arawak, Naduhup (formerly identified as "Makú" and Nadahup), and Kákua-Nikak groups (Silverwood-Cope 1990; Pozzobon 1991; Aikhenvald 1999; Cabrera Becerra, Franky Calvo, and Mahecha Rubio 1999; Epps 2008, 2009a; Bolaños 2016), alongside studies of Nheengatú and its spread beginning in the eighteenth century (Bessa Freire 2004; Cruz 2011; section 3.5 below) demonstrate the integration of non-Tukanoan groups into broader networks through other (primarily nonmatrimonial) types of exchange and a shared material and ritual culture base (Galvão 1960; Hill 1996; Neves 2001; Epps and Stenzel 2013; Epps

2020). The language use patterns of the non-Tukanoan peoples often contrast with the inter-Tukanoan model. For instance, monolingualism or unidirectional (rather than reciprocal) bilingualism are the norm in sociolinguistic relations involving riverine and hunter-gatherer groups and there is evidence of long term unilateral (from Tukanoan to Naduhup) dissemination of grammatical features (Epps 2007, 2018; Epps and Bolaños 2017), whereas more recent scenarios involving indigenous and national languages are marked by diglossia, dominance, and shift (Aikhenvald 2002; Stenzel 2005; Stenzel and Williams 2021).

New research is heeding Århem's call to consider the "explicit distinction[s] between ideals and actual behavior" in this multilingual context (1981:20). This prompts us, for example, to suspend the assumption of a strict, literal language-identity link as we consider not only historical evidence of entire clans assimilating into other ethnolinguistic groups (Goldman 1979), but also more recent reallocation of language or group associations from the *de facto* to the symbolic sphere among groups currently in the throes of language shift (Stenzel 2005).

Language-identity definitions are clearly fluid and nuanced (Shulist 2016) and are reflected in varied and complex patterns of language use in multilingual scenarios (e.g., Stenzel and Khoo 2016; Silva 2020; Stenzel and Williams 2021; and section 3.7). State-of-the-art documentation of everyday language use allows for more fine-grained and empirically based analyses, and by deploying new resources and loosening our grip on long-held expectations, we begin to encounter a variety of answers to the question of what it means to be multilingual within the Upper Rio Negro system.

3.2. The Southern Amazon (Upper Xingu). The Upper Xingu in southern Amazonia houses a second multiethnic and multilingual system formed by ten peoples from three linguistic families: Arawak (Mehinaku, Wauja, Yawalapiti), Carib (Kuikuro, Kalapalo, Matipu, Nahukua, and Angaguhütü) and Tupi (Kamayurá, Aweti) and one isolate (Trumai). Archaeological evidence points to Arawak groups as the likely first inhabitants of the region, with Carib and Tupi groups arriving later (Heckenberger 2005; Franchetto 2011; Fausto, Franchetto, and Heckenberger 2008). Nevertheless, most creation myths and ritual practices reflect an ideal Arawak-Carib composition of the system, with Tupi-speaking groups still considered recently pacified and newly formed Xinguans. Xingu peoples share a common mythology, kinship system, rituals, sociospatial patterning, and, importantly, ethical, moral, and aesthetic values. Villages contain a circle of houses built around a large central ritual plaza with a small house used exclusively to store ritual paraphernalia and as a place where men gather for meetings and collective preparation for feasts.

Xinguans employ Iroquois kinship terminologies (cf. Trautmann and Barnes 1998) that distinguish between parallel and cross kin, use a separate set of kinship terms for affines, and classify the children of opposite-sex cross-cousins as ideal spouses. Reflecting these distinctions, marriage between relatively distant

cross-cousins is preferred but not mandatory (Guerreiro 2011). There is no explicit ideal of local group endogamy, though people typically marry within their own village and, if marrying outside, prefer spouses who speak genetically related languages. Thus, language family subsystems linked by kinship ties are formed and express themselves in patterns of exchange, visitations, political alliances, and ritual organization. Every village exhibits some small-scale multilingualism, as different dialectal varieties of a language are likely to be spoken in houses where spouses come from different villages within a closely related linguistic group. Brother-sister exchange marriages (Basso 1973, 1984) are also common; these frequently occur in interethnic marriages and may aid creation of new alliances with nonkin. Such marriages tend to be repeated over generations, and when they involve speakers of different languages, make possible the further amplification of multilingualism within a village.

Local groups have a monolingual ideology despite ever-present and varying degrees of multilingualism. In some villages, only dialects of a single language are spoken. In others, several languages are used in almost every house but remain within the household confines, overt multilingualism being eschewed in public contexts. In a Kalapalo village, for example, a Kamayurá-speaking woman will speak Kamayurá at home but will speak only Kalapalo (learned from her husband) when conversing with neighbors.

The Yawalapiti (Southern Arawak) villages are a surprising exception to this general profile, representing multilingual microcosms of the regional linguistic diversity within the same local group. After their dispersion and near extinction in the late 1940s, the Yawalapiti, together with their affines and with aid from the Villas Boas brothers (leaders of the Roncador-Xingu Expedition), rebuilt a village for themselves, forming a “mixed” (see Mehinaku 2010) and multilingual group that played an important role in mediating between the Upper Xingu and representatives of the national society (Viveiros de Castro 1977:10). Despite growth of the original village, Amakapuku (and more recent establishment of three additional villages), the number of Yawalapiti speakers declined steadily, from twenty-eight in the 1950s to five—all over 60 years old—at the end of 2016 (Moore 2006; Carvalho 2016). Today, Yawalapiti is the language least spoken by the 262 inhabitants of the Yawalapiti villages, composed primarily of in-marrying non-Yawalapiti speakers who use other Xinguan languages, such as Kuikuro, Kamayurá, Kalapalo, and Mehinaku.

Thus, it is not strict language use, but the criterion of village residence, a broader unit of everyday sociability, that establishes all residents of Yawalapiti villages as “Yawalapiti” (Viveiros de Castro 1977). Still, identity distinctions are somewhat fluid. Taking an individual’s parents’ group memberships into consideration derives subdistinctions on a cline, e.g., one may be a “true” or a “little” Yawalapiti, “true” or a “little” Kuikuro. In the Yawalapiti village, a Kuikuro may be considered Kuikuro in certain contexts and Yawalapiti in others, whereas in other Upper Xingu villages, “to speak” and “to have” a language

impose the respective obligations of speaking only in one's own language and knowing another language without being able to speak it (in public).

Contrastingly, intervillage encounters are characterized by required public, and highly valued, expressions of multilingualism. All interethnic encounters are mediated by hereditary chiefs who greet each other with elaborate ceremonial discourses, resulting in ritualized multilingual dialogues (Franchetto 1993, 2000; Basso 2009; Guerreiro 2015). Rituals are moreover structured according to extensive musical repertoires that frequently mix different languages in a set of songs or even within a single song (Menezes Bastos 1978, 2013; Mehinaku 2010). Thus, though ideologies of linguistic endogamy, "purism," or both generally prevail among Xinguan groups, different languages coexist in specific domains, with multilingualism particularly prominent in ritual communication.

The Upper Xingu multilingual system continues to reproduce itself and survives through a delicate and dynamic balance between two opposing forces. On the one hand, differences are carefully maintained, with language or dialect serving as one of the main diacritics marking distinctions between autonomous local groups, be they partners or antagonists within the intertribal network of exchanges and relations. This helps explain resistance to lexical borrowing, which is less frequent than expected in a context of intense and centuries-long contact between linguistically distinct communities. Indeed, borrowings are rare even in the sphere of terms related to shared core rituals, cosmology, and social organization; the most crucial concepts are translated into each individual language. The lack of an indigenous lingua franca is another defining characteristic of this system, though today, Portuguese increasingly serves this function (Franchetto 2011).

On the other hand, indigenous researcher Mutua Mehinaku notes that viewing Xingu peoples as linguistically homogeneous within each village and culturally homogeneous within the confines of the Upper Xingu system limits our understanding of regional complexity. Beyond the astonishing ritual multilingualism of the Xingu, interethnic marriages produce (for the most part) passive bilingual or multilingual individuals and promote the circulation of linguistic and cultural elements that enrich the knowledge and forms of expression of each local group (cf. Mehinaku and Franchetto 2015). The "mixed" and the "true, puristic" perspectives are always at stake.

3.3. The Northeast Amazon. The wide geographical area encompassing eastern and southeastern Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and the Brazilian states of Roraima, Amapá, and northeastern Pará, is politically fragmented but has been defined as a region united by complex networks of multiethnic and multilingual interactions dating from ancient times (Gallois 2005; Cruz, Hulsman, and Gomes Oliveira 2014; Melatti 2017). Though Carib languages predominate, the linguistic mosaic includes Arawak and Tupi-Guarani languages, the small Yanomami family, and isolates Warao, Arutani

(Uruak, Awake), Sapé, and Mako. The region's colonial history threw an additional five European languages—English, Portuguese, Spanish, French, and Dutch—into the mix and contributed to the development of creoles, such as Sranantongo, Saramaccan, Guyanese English Creole, and Kheuól. Following Yakpo and Muysken's description of the region as "a chain of interacting and intersecting communities, which have very diverse and complex relations among themselves" (2017:3), we look at two focal zones: the regional multilingualism of the Upper Trombetas and Mapuera, and the Uaçá—birthplace of Kheuól.

The Trombetas River is a northern tributary of the Amazon. Its upper courses and own tributary, the Mapuera, flow through northwestern Pará, a region inhabited by speakers of Mawayana (Arawak) and at least seven Carib languages and dialects (Waiwai, Tunayana-Katwena, Xerew, Hixkaryana, Katxuyana, Txikyana, Kahyana). Approximately 3,500 people, now occupying fifty-two villages in three Indigenous Lands, to a large extent share a common mythology, rituals, kinship systems with Dravidian terminologies, and aesthetic and ethical values. Their network of exchange and kinship relations extends to other villages in the states of Amazonas, Roraima, and Amapá, and in the neighboring countries of Guyana and Suriname (for relevant ethnographic, linguistic, and historical data, see Fock 1963; Hawkins 1988; Howard 2001; Caixeta de Queiroz 2008; Porro 2008; Girardi 2011; Alcântara e Silva 2015; Valentino 2019a, 2019b).

Regional festive gatherings, including sports tournaments, political assemblies, and religious conferences, take place year-round and are enthusiastically promoted, their linguistic diversity highlighted through public presentation of songs, translation of formal speeches, and even multilingual welcome banners, such as that seen in figure 1 below. In daily life, multilingualism is evident in short-wave radio communications and in the use of mobile phones to record and share songs, many of which becoming regional "hits," circulating via pendrives, memory cards, and Bluetooth in places lacking telephone or internet services.



Figure 1. Welcome banner for the Third General Assembly of Carib Peoples in the Northern Corridor, written in Katxuyana, Hixkaryana, Portuguese, Tiriyó and Waiwai. July 2016, Trombetas River. Photo by Denise Fajardo (published with permission).

People known as “Waiwai” live in fifteen villages on the Mapuera River. Locally, however, ethnic definitions are not stable, and people employ a variety of referential collective names in a fluid dynamic of identification: Xerew, Pixkaryana, Mawayana, Katwena, Tunayana, Cikiyana, Minpoyana, Parukwoto, Caruma, Wapixana, Karapawyana, and Xowyana, among others. These names mark positions in a broad field of political relations and reflect criteria including kinship, birthplace and residence, migratory routes, marriage, alliances, and the language and dialects spoken or understood by the person and family elders. Nevertheless, the Mapuera villages form a homogeneous speech community dominated by the Waiwai language, partly due to Protestant missionary activities over the past century, involving population agglomeration, literacy work, and Bible translation.

On the Upper Trombetas and its tributaries, the Cachorro and Turuni, there are currently fourteen villages with a combined population of approximately five hundred, who do not identify themselves by a single comprehensive ethnonym nor form a homogeneous speech community. Each village is founded on close kinship ties that result in more stable ethnic designations than are found in most Mapuera communities. Bilingualism or multilingualism are the norm, with villages composed of speakers of Katxuyana, Kahyana, Hixkaryana, Tunayana-Katwena, and Waiwai. However, Protestant and Catholic missionary activities have tipped the linguistic balance of power in favor of Tiriyo as the dominant local indigenous language, and widespread fluency in Portuguese has given the Katxuyana and Kahyana, on the Cachorro and Trombetas Rivers, political prominence in relations with the State, with regional nonindigenous organizations, and within the national Indigenous movement, compared to their Tunayana neighbors living on the Upper Trombetas and Turuni.

3.4. The Southwest Amazon. Formed by the headwaters of the Madeira River and covering parts of the lowlands of northern Bolivia and southwestern Brazil, the Southwest Amazon is a region of extraordinary linguistic diversity. In an area roughly the size of Germany, fifty typologically and genetically diverse indigenous languages—some ten isolates and representatives of the Nambikwara, Chapacura, Takana (Pano), Jabutí (Macro-Ge), and Arawak families and of five of the seven Tupi subfamilies—are spoken (cf. Rodrigues 1964; Adelaar 2008; Crevels and van der Voort 2008; Ribeiro and van der Voort 2010; Eriksen and Galucio 2014). Features of material culture indicate long-term contact and development of several southwest Amazonian cultural areas: the Moxos or Moxo-Chiquito cultural complex on the Bolivian side of the Guaporé (or Iténez) River (Lévi-Strauss 1948; Denevan 1966; Crevels 2002), and the Guaporé, the Marico, and the Tapajós-Madeira cultural complexes on the Brazilian side (Lévi-Strauss 1948; Galvão 1960; Maldí 1991). The Guaporé River may have represented a geographical barrier between the markedly different

Moxos and Guaporé cultural areas, but there is archaeological and historical evidence that it did not completely impede exchange.

Southwestern Amazonian languages exhibit some shared lexical and grammatical traits that also likely spread through contact, but do not indicate a clearly delineated linguistic area. Rather, as observed for cultural areas, there are several partially overlapping linguistic subareas (for further discussion, see Crevels and van der Voort 2008 and Muysken et al. 2015). Most of the regional languages are now highly endangered, and with only a handful of speakers, ten are on the verge of extinction.

Yet just a century ago, indigenous peoples of the southern part of the Brazilian state of Rondônia still lived in separate villages forming multiethnic, multilingual constellations. Within specific river basins, widespread interethnic marriages and frequent contact fed localized multilingualism among individuals from neighboring villages. Change rushed in with the early twentieth-century rubber boom, when land concessions were established in the Corumbiara, Pimenta Bueno, and Branco River regions, and Indians were contracted to work the rubber groves. In the name of improving their lives, the Brazilian government's Indian Protection Service (SPI) began to systematically remove what they deemed to be "superfluous" indigenous groups from concession lands in the 1930s. Over the following three decades, hundreds of Indians were sent to the Ricardo Franco indigenous post in the remote western Bolivia border region (Vasconcelos 1939), where they had no means of subsistence and where diseases easily spread. After World War II, the rubber trade collapsed and in the 1960s, rubber concession lands were redistributed and sold by the Brazilian National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). Local indigenous groups were left to fend for themselves until the 1980s, when, in an attempt to alleviate the situation, the new National Indian Foundation (Fundação Nacional do Índio [FUNAI], successor of the SPI) undertook creation of several Indigenous Lands (Terras Indígenas, T.I.),¹⁰ gathering together remnants of the earlier regional populations.

The Ricardo Franco post is now part of the Rio Guaporé Indigenous Land, which presents the most dramatic multiethnic situation in Rondônia. It is home to members of eleven indigenous peoples: the Arikapu and Djeoromitxi (Macro-Ge family, Jabuti branch), Makurap, Tupari, Wayoró (Tupi family, Tupari branch), Salamã, Aruá (Tupian family, Mondé branch), Kanoé and Aikanã (isolates), Cojubim and Wari' (Chapacura family). Most of these peoples' languages are in the process of extinction, and individual multilingualism (involving indigenous languages) is mainly found among the elderly, whereas the younger generations are rapidly shifting to Portuguese.

Other Indigenous Lands replicate the pattern of "minorities within minorities." For example, in the T.I. Tubarão-Latundê (established in 1983), Aikanã (isolate) is spoken as a community language by some 250 people (in a dominant ethnic population of around four hundred). There are also some two dozen

Latundê (a Northern Nambikwara language), of whom seventeen still speak the language. This previously unknown group was contacted by the Aikanã in the mid-1970s (Reesink 2012). A few Latundê, alongside one Salamã woman, currently live among the Aikanã, though most continue to live apart in the Latundê settlement. The other minority group are the Kwaza (isolate), with a population of fifty, half of whom are speakers (van der Voort 2004, 2016). Currently, of the three populations, only the older Kwaza tend to be multilingual, speaking both Kwaza and Aikanã in addition to Portuguese, while the younger generation speak either Aikanã or Kwaza.

As with groups throughout the region, the history of the Kwaza includes division, dispersion, and decimation by epidemic diseases. Fragmentation of the group is evidenced by the family ties between the T.I. Tubarão-Latundê and the small T.I. Rio São Pedro (established in 2000 in the original Kwaza homeland). The Kwaza language had probably disappeared in the region in the 1960s, and the remaining Portuguese-speaking Kwaza family was working alongside Brazilians in rubber extraction. Powerful ranchers bought out the Brazilians in the mid-1990s, but the Kwaza refused to leave. Their young men all married Aikanã women from one family from the T.I. Tubarão-Latundê, making Aikanã the only indigenous language spoken in T.I. Rio São Pedro—by all the children and their mothers, but not by their Portuguese-speaking but ethnically Kwaza fathers. The situation changed in 2008, when some Kwaza-speaking families from the T.I. Tubarão-Latundê moved to the São Pedro Lands. This worsened the ethnic identity crisis and embarrassed the local Portuguese-speaking Kwaza: their former language is now spoken on their Indigenous Land by persons who immigrated from elsewhere. Kwaza constitutes a case of language survival beyond survival of a clear speech community, likely as a “focussed” (in the sense of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller [1985]) marker of group identity emerging in the wake of upheaval from the outside world.

Finally, turning to the T.I. Rio Branco, we likewise find a majority population, the Tupari (Tupi family, Tupari branch), with some three hundred speakers, and minorities of Aruá (Tupi family, Mondé branch), Makurap, Wayoro, Kampé or Mekens (Tupi family, Tupari branch), Djeoromitxí and Arikapu (Macro-Ge family, Jabuti branch), and Kanoé (isolate), most of which have now more than a handful of speakers. Though Makurap may once have functioned as *lingua franca* (Snethlage 2016), it is now known as a second language only by elderly Tupari and Aruá, and Portuguese is the *lingua franca*. Thus, the Southwestern Amazonian pattern of loss of community, territorial belonging, language, and identity marches on.

3.5. Colonial transformations: the spread of *lingua francas* and creoles. The expansion of *lingua francas* has deeply affected language use within egalitarian, small-scale, multilingual systems as well as among populations caught up in rapidly changing urban environments. Two of these languages, Nheengatú and Kheúól, can be traced to the early colonial period, but

have had radically different fates: while Nheengatú, together with Tukano, a language rising to lingua franca status at the beginning of the twentieth century, are holding steady in the northwest Amazon, Kheuól is receding.

In the Brazilian city of São Gabriel da Cachoeira (whose population of nearly twenty thousand makes it the largest urban center in northwestern Amazonia), the language pie is carved into some two dozen slices (Stenzel and Cabalzar 2012), the three largest corresponding to Portuguese, Tukano, and Nheengatú. The latter two are indigenous languages that have spread widely as lingua francas in the Upper Rio Negro region.¹¹

Nheengatú's lineage dates to early colonial times. It is the modern variety of the Língua Geral Amazônica (itself developed from Tupinambá, a Tupi-Guarani language spoken along much of the Brazilian coastline at the onset of European contact), which became the most widespread lingua franca in the Amazon Basin during the colonial period (Bessa Freire 2004; Cruz 2011). Nheengatú arrived in the Upper Rio Negro region in the mid-eighteenth century with expanding colonial raids to capture indigenous people from the Vaupés, Içana, and upper Rio Negro Rivers as slave labor in piassava¹² and rubber production (Oliveira, Pozzobon, and Meira 1994; Meira 2018). Nheengatú became the common language among captured slaves, and those who eventually returned to their homes upriver carried it back. Nheengatú took hold and expanded over the next two centuries as the primary language in subregions occupied by Arawak populations: the Baniwa on the lower Içana, Warekena on the Xié, and Baré along the Upper Rio Negro and in São Gabriel itself.

Entrenched in the urban environment, Nheengatú continued to be used as a diglossic high variety by indigenous people, eventually spreading to indigenous peoples living on the periphery. An interesting case is that of the Dâw, a small, formerly seminomadic Naduhup group who settled on the opposite shore of the Rio Negro after being nearly driven to extinction through alcoholism and labor in a highly exploitative debt-peonage system (Lasmar 2000). Dâw was and is still the first language of people in the village. However, living near indigenous speakers of Nheengatú and nonindigenous speakers of Portuguese drew the Dâw into a system of diglossic and unidirectional bilingualism that has shifted over several generations. Those now around sixty and older are more likely to have gained competence in Nheengatú, while its use is negligible among the younger generations, for whom Portuguese is now the clearly dominant second language (Storto et al. 2017).

To the west in the Vaupés Basin, in the first decade of the twentieth century, the explorer Koch-Grünberg (2005 [1909]) noted expanded Tukano use among ethnic groups, such as the Tariana (Arawak), who had up until then maintained use of their own "paternal" languages. Such a shift cannot be attributed to intermarriage with Tukano-speaking peoples, given that exogamous unions were the traditional norm within a system that preserved all the participating languages (see section 3.1). Rather, shift was spurred by a century and a half of disruption

in regional social organization; devastating depopulation from epidemics, slave raids, and forced labor (Wright 2005) all contributed to eventual tipping of the scales in favor of Tukano (Stenzel 2005). Its promotion in missionary boarding schools further reinforced its rise as a *lingua franca* in the twentieth century (Aikhenvald 2002).

As *lingua francas*, Nheengatú and Tukano currently enjoy a new sociopolitical status as, alongside Baniwa (with some five thousand speakers in Brazil on the Içana and Aiarí Rivers),¹³ they became “co-official” languages in the municipality of São Gabriel da Cachoeira in December, 2002 (Municipal Law number 145, cf. Oliveira 2015). This legislation—the first of its kind in Brazil—made it incumbent on the municipal government to offer basic public services both in oral and written form in the three co-official languages, and to create institutional campaigns strengthening their recognition and use in local schools and the media. The nearly twenty years since co-officialization was signed into law have indeed seen increased public funding for language-instruction training programs, and a resurgence of pride in indigenous identity is partially attributed to greater visibility of Tukano, Baniwa, and Nheengatú in the urban education scenario. However, full implementation of the law’s mandate is still forthcoming, and efforts so far have not been altogether uncontroversial.

One of the sticking points is that though officially municipal in scope, the legislation’s main arena of action has been the city of São Gabriel itself. For example, although the law recognizes use of the full range of indigenous languages in formal education in rural villages within the municipality, it makes no specific provisions to support efforts to strengthen any of the nonofficial languages. Many view this as both a slight and a threat to maintenance of the languages of minority groups, an excuse to leave their requests for highly salient needs such as didactic materials development and teacher preparation unattended. Shulist (2013, 2016) moreover argues that traditional indigenous language-identity relations are undergoing broad redefinition in the urban context, where the diminished status of nonofficial languages, among other factors, leads to ideological shift heavily favoring use of Portuguese, even above use of the co-official indigenous languages.

Kheuól (or Patuá) is a French-based creole language spoken by the Galibi-Marworno, Karipuna, and Palikur from the Uaçá Indigenous Land, located in the Oiapoque municipality on the border between French Guiana and the Brazilian state of Amapá. It has been the regional *lingua franca* there since the sixteenth century, and is markedly different from Guianese Creole, principally in terms of phonetic and phonological features influenced by twentieth-century contact with Portuguese.

Kheuól is now the identity language of the Galibi-Marworno and the Karipuna peoples (Alleyne and Ferreira 2007). The Galibi-Marworno are the descendants of Carib, Arawak, and various nonindigenous peoples who still spoke French, Carib, and Arawak languages when, in the early twentieth century,

they were gathered by the Brazilian government into a single village and became known as *mun Uaçá* ‘Uaçá people’ (Nimuendajú 1926). Thus began coconstruction of a new ethnic and linguistic identity (Gallois and Grupioni 2003), though the “Ancient Galibi” language persists in shamanic contexts (Macial and Charles 2012). Formation of the Karipuna, while equally hybrid, includes a more distinct nonindigenous component, since Saramaccans, Asians, Arabs, and Brazilians have intermixed with the natives of the region since the nineteenth century (Tassinari 2003). Their mestizo origins were a long-used justification for denying the Karipuna the status of “indigenous people”; rather, they were dubbed “Brazilians of the Curipi,” the river whose banks they inhabited (Tassinari 2003).

In contrast, the Palikur are Parikwaki (Arawak) speakers, who have been historically resistant to colonists, despite contact since the sixteenth century (Capiberibe 2009). Palikur adults speak Kheuól as a second or third language, alongside Portuguese, to facilitate exchange with other Uaçá peoples (Silva 2016). Their history of resistance and preservation of their indigenous language stands in contrast to the way Galibi-Marworno and Karipuna identities were constructed, the latter having been more open to alliances with nonindigenous outsiders (Vidal 1999).

Nowadays, increasing use of Portuguese is interrupting transmission of Kheuól among the Karipuna and Galibi-Marworno, with many younger Palikur completely abandoning it (Silva 2016). Though the degree of Kheuól linguistic vitality is unknown, intergenerational disruption appears to be greater overall among the Karipuna, closer to the center of Oiapoque. Recent revitalization actions promoted by indigenous teachers of Uaçá, in partnership with researchers from the Federal University of Amapá (Campetela et al. 2017), aim to place Kheuól of Uaçá on the linguistic map as the sole, and now highly endangered, creole language spoken in Brazil (Alleyne and Ferreira 2007).

3.6. Vignette: negotiating knowledge and multilingualism in the trajectories of Tuyuka *baya* singers. All ethnic groups in the Upper Rio Negro recognize the cultural role of the *baya*, a ritual specialist who masters a set of ceremonial chants, dances, and genealogical narratives, structured in hierarchical and complementary fields of knowledge (C. Hugh-Jones 1979:135). We turn now to the life trajectories of a group of five Tuyuka (East Tukano) *baya* as an example of the tensions between ideal and de facto patterns of multilingualism and ethnic identity construction in a highly dynamic sociocultural environment. How a *baya*’s ritual language is learned and transmitted, its semantic content, and its social functionality take our perspective of everyday language interactions to a larger, more encompassing level of socialization; here myth, territorial knowledge, *baya* ritual language, and everyday language use are interlinked by the same principle of patrilineal ideology and a complex network of multiethnic, multilingual, and affinal relations.

The Tuyuka people have a complex history of migration within the Upper Rio Negro region. Oral histories recount their forced removal from the upper Vaupés by the Kubeo and Koripako and initial relocation to the upper Papurí River, where they became allies of the Tatuyo. Some six generations ago (in the mid-nineteenth century), they migrated again, to the headwaters of the Tiquié River. The new matrimonial and ritual partnerships they created with the Tukano, Bará, and Makuna led to a redefinition of the local linguistic ecology within a new, albeit discontinuous, region of Tuyuka agnatic and linguistic predominance (Cabalzar 2008:164).

All five *baya* singers—Mandu Lima, Pedro Lima, Casimiro Lima, Guilherme Tenorio, and Higino Tenorio¹⁴—are members of the *Ophaya*, the highest-ranked sibs in Tuyuka hierarchical structure. Within the *Ophaya*, the de facto elder brothers, their sons, and their grandsons form the higher-ranked sublines and enjoy greater prerogatives as *baya*. Such is the case of brothers Guilherme and Higino in relation to the three classificatorily younger, but de facto elder singers; indeed, Mandu, Pedro and Casimiro's fathers were actual blood brothers, but classificatory younger brothers to the Tenorios' father. When they were children, a severe shamanic conflict led Mandu, Pedro, and Casimiro's families to move downriver from their traditional territory on the Colombian Tiquié to the outskirts of the larger (and predominantly Tukano) village of Pari-Cachoeira (in Brazil), where they lived for more than twenty years. Then, in the late 1950s, another revenge conflict took the lives of both Casimiro's and Mandu's fathers, prompting Casimiro, Pedro, and his father to return to their former territory in Colombia (Cabalzar 2008). Casimiro then married and began to take an interest in chants and blessings, while Mandu remained in Pari-Cachoeira, worked in gold mining in the 1980s, and then moved to São Gabriel da Cachoeira (where Casimiro also lived out his final years, passing away in 2005).

All members of the *Ophaya* sib are *baya* specialists responsible for safeguarding and transmitting ritual knowledge among themselves. However, the trajectories of these five *baya* included periods of living apart or growing up among people from other groups, where the legitimacy of their knowledge as *Ophaya* singers and dancers was under constant scrutiny. For example, though all five were considered prestigious singers, always employing Tuyuka or a regional ancestral language in rituals, Casimiro's knowledge was sometimes belittled because, as an orphan, he had learned from his father-in-law and uncles (ethnic Tukanos) rather than from his own (Tuyuka) father or brothers. Likewise, when criticized for having traveled and learned from different sources, Mandu stated that "none of us singers have stopped traveling through different regions, none of us have stood still in our ancestor's places." He recalled that even though he had grown up in (Tukano dominant) Pari-Cachoeira, he had nevertheless always been among important bearers of traditional Tuyuka knowledge "who told me all the songs and blessings, and I grew up listening to them." Similarly, when labeled less wise than his elder brothers, Pedro replied:

“As smoked food eaters nowadays, shouldn’t all we *Ophaya* singers—not only me—be considered a bit less powerful than before?” By “smoked food eaters,” Pedro is alluding to the present-day relaxation of food restrictions and ritual fasting essential to mastering ritual practices, diminished rigor in this respect implying equally diminished mastery (Lasmar 2005; Rezende 2007; Cabalzar 2010).

The ritual language and narrative repertoires of these Tukuya *Ophaya baya* result from complex histories in an equally complex sociolinguistic setting. Their individual trajectories led them to acquire knowledge from various sources, including elders from their own and other Tuyuka sibs, as well as from neighboring Makuna elders or Tukano father-in-laws. Far from constituting a simple reflection of descent relations within their own sibs, their repertoires were gleaned from open forms of ritual language that essentially mirror the intricate ethnic relations and complex trajectories of individuals throughout the Upper Rio Negro. In this sense, theirs are not atypical cases of knowledge acquisition, but examples of how a projected (“pure”) ideal of circulation of agnatic knowledge plays out in real life for people whose trajectories reflect a more dynamic reality. We can moreover draw a parallel from their experiences to the dynamics of everyday language use, as shown in the next section. As people migrate (in groups or as individuals, e.g., all married women, who relocate to their husbands’ villages), languages also circulate within new territories (cf. Cabalzar [2012] for local views on diverse multilingual ecologies), each language contributing to reorganizing the multilingual dynamics in public, private, or ritual uses and renegotiating coexistence alongside other local languages in the new environment.

3.7. Vignette: “noncriminal” code-mixing in the Vaupés. Much of the literature on Upper Rio Negro language contact and multilingualism indicates that code-mixing (i.e., the use of two or more languages within a sentence) is highly constrained by ideologies that promote loyalty to one’s patriline and hierarchization of languages within individual multilingual repertoires (Chernela 2013). Aikhenvald (2002:95) refers to code-switching and language mixing among the Tariana (Arawak) as a “crime,” and Chernela reports that among Kotiria speakers, such practices are “regarded as ‘speaking in pieces’ and [are] ridiculed” (2013:213). Although there are acceptable contexts for switching between languages, including direct quotation and in the narrative discourse of spirits and animals (Gomez-Imbert 1991; Aikhenvald 2003:190; Epps 2009b: 998), within the Upper Rio Negro region, a “strong cultural condemnation of language mixing” is seen to generally curtail its occurrence (Epps and Stenzel 2013:36; Epps 2016).

Nevertheless, recent work in San José de Viña, a mixed Desano-Siriano (East Tukano) community, shows that code-mixing overtly occurs in many

everyday multilingual interactions (Silva 2020). Although speakers generally equate speaking a language “well” with a conscious choice to avoid language mixing, the ideals of linguistic conduct (what speakers say they do) are often at odds with what occurs in naturalistic interactions. Examples from a variety of settings, such as a game-playing session in which example (6) was produced, are common. The speaker was a Desano man addressing two other participants (one Desano and one Siriano), and the utterance contains elements of both languages, in addition to Spanish.

- (6) [i-*pu-re* *yuhu* *ãrã-bu*]_{Desano} [*gahi*]_{Siriano}-[*kolor*]_{Spanish}
 this-CONTR-REF one be-PFV other-color
 [i-*ãrã-bu=ta*]_{Siriano}
 be-PFV=EMPH

‘Over here is one; (and there) is another color.’ (Silva 2020:145)

Code-mixing also occurred in a conversation between a Tukano mother and her Desano daughter while demonstrating how to make manioc flour. Prior to the exchange in (7a)–(7b), the daughter had been conversing with her Desano brother (recording the conversation) in Desano and with her mother in Tukano. However, she then used Desano to ask her mother the question in (7a), and received the reply in (7b), with elements in Desano and Tukano. Interestingly, since the Desano portion of (7b) is the mother’s exemplification of what the daughter should say, this switch likely demonstrates one of the “permitted” contexts of code-mixing—quotation of another person’s speech—as mentioned above.

- (7a) *nõ’pa* *ã’rĩ-kuri* *yu’-pu?*_{Desano}
 how say-INTERR 1SG-SR
 ‘How should I say?’ (Silva 2020:142)

- (7b) [*ãrĩy* *i-go* *i-a*]_{Desano} [*nia-to-ta*]_{Tukano}
 manioc.bread do-3SG do-ASSER say-ANAPH-EMPH
 ‘(You) say: “(I’m) making manioc bread.”’ (Silva 2020:142)

Silva notes that such linguistic behavior is not only frequent, but that when asked about it, participants (or witnesses) of these interactions neither disapproved or condemned the code-mixing that took place, characterizing it as “a normal thing” within the community (2020:151).

Equally tolerant attitudes and additional examples of everyday interactions replete with code-switching of various types are found among speakers of Kotiria and Wa’ikhana (cf. Stenzel and Williams 2021). As new empirical data attesting flexibility in multilingual practices and attitudes comes to light, research turns to questions related not only to how mixing occurs, but to why people mix languages, and why and when they do not mix. We recognize that language has

social functions as a marker of solidarity or in-group identity (cf. Gardner-Chloros 2009) and that accommodative shifts may be spurred by contextual motivations, including convenience, politeness, or facilitating communication (Jackson 1974; Sorensen 1967; Gomez-Imbert 1996; Aikhenvald 2001, 2002; Epps 2018). It now behooves researchers to further explore the complexities of multilingual practices, including what switches accomplish for speakers at more nuanced microinteractional levels.

4. Conceptualizing multilingualism. Sections 2 and 3 present regional and local constellations, focusing on individuals, groups, and the societies in which they participate (projecting viewpoints that emerge from the available research); section 3 also highlights some of the transformative processes induced by settlement colonialism in Brazil. The present section inverts perspectives by discussing how multilingualism at the individual and social levels can be and have been epistemologically and theoretically framed, what the consequences of these different vantage points are, and how selective data and approaches constrain analyses and characterizations.

4.1. Areas, systems, and networks. “Areas” and “systems” are concepts explored in the comparative linguistic anthropological literature to analyze how social and linguistic patterns match up in multilingual (and multiethnic) settings. A linguistic area, as generally defined, presupposes diffusion, or “horizontal transfer,” of linguistic traits among three or more languages in a geographically cohesive area (Campbell 2017). It is usually assumed that the languages involved are not genetically related, or are only distantly related (Aikhenvald 2012); some linguists, moreover, argue that an areal trait should never be found in genetically related languages outside the area (Emeneau 1956). The assumption that the languages will not be closely related is what distinguishes linguistic areas from dialect areas, in which diffusion occurs among varieties of the same language or between very close sister languages.

In this sense, linguistic areas presume language boundaries that are overcome by bilingualism or multilingualism at the individual and social levels. In some areas, there may be languages that are socially dominant or more frequent in discourse, and these are more commonly the source (rather than the target) for transfer of linguistic traits. In other areas, relationships are described as multilateral and egalitarian. Investigating how individuals learn, use, and identify with different languages is crucial to understanding both specific processes of borrowing and broader patterns of interactions between languages, families, and subareas, a point that has received little attention in the literature on linguistic areas. Additionally, genealogical classifications are often contested in small-scale multilingual settings (see section 2.1), and the distinction between genealogical and areally diffused traits has been subject to growing criticism (Kalyan, François, and Hammarström 2019).

Not only is it difficult to disentangle inheritance and contact, but there is also no consensus on how much borrowing is necessary to constitute a linguistic area. All linguistic areas have been defined based on structural borrowings, i.e., borrowing of grammatical morphemes or more abstract grammatical and semantic patterns (Aikhenvald 2002; Campbell 2017). Yet, it is debated whether all languages within a linguistic area must display shared traits due to contact or whether one could identify traits with more restricted distributions across subsets of languages. Linguists have differentiated “weak” from “strong” linguistic areas based on heuristics including relative antiquity, the number of languages and families involved, the range and complexity of borrowings and their distribution across languages, and the degree of individual bilingualism or multilingualism. Linguistic diffusion across different areas or within a larger, and often more discontinuous, region also contributes to blurring the boundaries (Payne 1990; Aikhenvald 2012; Campbell 2017).

Diffusion of structural traits within a linguistic area or other multilingual configuration requires both considerable time and intense social relations, which is why linguistic and cultural areas often overlap (Galvão 1960). Campbell (2017) and Muysken and O’Connor (2014), however, argue that cultural areas form more quickly and possibly by means other than linguistic contact. Thus, they may not result in diffusion of linguistic traits, while the inverse (language contact without cultural exchange) does not hold.

This distinction may shed some light on an important contrast between the Upper Rio Negro and Upper Xingu contexts of Lowland South America, in that the Upper Xingu can be considered a cultural, but not a linguistic area,¹⁵ while the Upper Rio Negro is both. These two regions moreover contrast with the Southwest Amazon, whose complex mosaic of language families, linguistic sub-areas, and multilingual subregions also contains (at least) two important cultural areas, on the Brazilian and Bolivian sides of the Guaporé (Iténez) River. For the West African settings (section 2), clustering of many genetically related languages in the Mande space, coexistence of genetically related lects and unrelated languages, and problematic classification of these languages all testify to the ontological difficulties of stipulating particular requirements of genetic non-relatedness as criteria for identifying linguistic areas within spaces of cultural diffusion.

For these reasons, focusing on types of “areas” can only take us so far; investigating multilingualism in both local and broad social perspectives requires expanding our conceptual scope. One alternative looks at diffusion of linguistic traits more generally, holding that the “individual historical events of diffusion” (Campbell 2017:19) should matter more than post-hoc attempts to organize conglomerations of borrowings geographically. This shift in focus from linguistic areas to “areal linguistics” looks for spatial or social patterns inferable from the distribution of linguistic traits across different languages within a particular setting (cf. Dahl 2001; Muysken 2008; Campbell 2017).

Another potentially insightful perspective on multilingual settings comes from Luhmann's (1997, 2006) general theory of systems, in which a system is defined by the difference it continually produces, through self-organized operational structures and components, in relation to a particular environment. This notion may be useful for understanding at least some multiethnic and multilingual contexts that conceive of and reproduce themselves as distinct from their surroundings while, at the same time, continuously creating and preserving internal ethnic and linguistic diversity.

The peoples of the Upper Xingu, for example, consider themselves "true people," set apart from their close neighbors ('wild Indians' or 'enemies', *ngikogo*, in the Upper Xingu Carib Language spoken by the Kalapalo, Kuikuro, Matipu, Nahukua, and Angaguhütü) by a fundamental difference—true people do not make war among themselves and do not hunt land animals (Basso 1973; Gregor 1977, 1990; Viveiros de Castro 1977; Franchetto 1986). This difference permeates all aspects of Xingu life; production of the body, everyday ethics, and ritual life all carefully recreate this contrast. In Luhmann's sense, these "other" peoples constitute the environment from which the Upper Xingu system differentiates itself, creating both its component political units (e.g., local groups and peoples) and their sustaining relations. The Ikpeng and the Kîsêdjê, for example, are part of a broader geographic network that maintains diverse kinds of relationships with Upper Xingu peoples; however, the Xingu proper still consider these neighboring groups to be others from whom they stand apart. Even when engaged in ritual relationships with such others, it is by means of Upper Xinguan rituals, rarely the other way around.

Similarly, the Upper Rio Negro system is grounded in the association of groups to territories and mythical places of emergence, creating different senses of "in-ness" at various scales (S. Hugh-Jones 1979; Goldman 1979; Andrello 2016). This symbolism frames most shared operations of the system, such as marriage norms, residence patterns, knowledge and productive specialization, ritual activities, etc. (as noted in section 3.1). Viewed in this light, though Upper Rio Negro peoples maintain relationships with the Yanomami (to the east) through a broader multiethnic and multilingual network, the latter group could hardly be described as a component member of the Upper Rio Negro system.

While Lowland South America figures prominently in theorization of linguistic areas or systems, research on such theorization for Western Africa is scant. This zone has been described as part of the sub-Saharan fragmentation belt (Dalby 1970), the Macro Sudan belt (Güldemann 2008), or, in phonological terms, the Sudanic diffusion zone (Clements and Rialland 2008) stretching roughly from the Upper Guinea Coast to the Ethiopian escarpment. Yet, this postulated linguistic area is internally very heterogeneous, and the small set of features¹⁶ used to define it are distributed so unevenly that only its diversity sets it apart from surrounding, linguistically less fragmented areas. The studies that address multilingualism (i.e., the social or individual practices of

language use, rather than language contact viewed as the interaction of lexicogrammatical codes) in Western Africa have been largely conducted within frameworks focusing on language pairs (see Lüpke and Watson [2020] for an overview). For Western Africa, landlord-stranger dialectics (Brooks 1993) create associations of places, and indirectly of some of their inhabitants, with languages. More interdisciplinary research inspired by structures of small-scale societies in Amazonia may shed light on whether the Atlantic incarnation of this system, with linguistic differences of a larger scale, is systematically different from settlement and cohabitation patterns in the Mande sphere, where linguistic differences are of a smaller scale, and where social distinctions expressed in endogamous status groups and joking relationships are more widespread and crosscut linguistic and ethnic borders.

In addition to systems theory, our understanding of multilingual settings may be informed by other models: wave theory may help explain how linguistic traits diffuse, the idea of networks may capture how components of different systems are connected, and the geographical distribution of peoples may clearly influence how a system distinguishes itself from its environment and how different systems interact. The complex settings presented in this article demonstrate the importance of taking an entire constellation of concepts into consideration when describing multiethnic and multilingual contexts, since they can bring to the fore different issues and scales of analysis. Such an endeavor also requires combining contact research with studies of dynamic, synchronic multilingual societies.

4.2. Speech communities, communities of practice, social networks, and language contexts. The situations considered here call into question the notion of a homogeneous “speech community” coextensive with a “language community” (Silverstein 2015). Therefore, in this section we draw on the centrality of particular communities of practice to comprehend multilingualism and variation in highly variegated social networks and speech situations.

Following Gumperz (1962) and Hymes (1972), we understand a speech community as a group of speakers sharing rules for structural and social aspects of speech. Although widely abandoned by sociolinguists, this theoretical concept persists in descriptive and documentary linguistics and has enjoyed a renaissance within endangered language research. Most study of small languages adopts this perspective, such that multilingualism and language contact are only investigated in terms of their influence on the target language, or contact-induced influences between languages of neighboring communities. Lüpke (2016a) and Goodchild (2016) discuss the impact of this viewpoint on researchers’ expectations for finding monolingual speech, and on research participants, who may eliminate or selectively edit forms, genres and registers that do not conform to the sought-after monolingual standard (unless language contact is the explicit interest). While this outlook does not necessarily lead to an “ancestral code” ideology that views all change as threatening, impure, and recent

(Woodbury 2011), maintaining language or code as the focus of research is not ideal for uncovering the dynamics of language use and their motivations in heterogeneous places. Attuned to this limitation, Himmelmann advocates for extending language documentation to “the linguistic practices found in a given speech community” (1998:165), thus opening it to include multilingual interaction (see also Gullberg 2012). In Silverstein’s (2015) words, we must differentiate between language and speech community and study language use in the latter, often located at the intersection of the denotational codes that create imaginary language communities. Given the sheer scale of such endeavors in intensely multilingual settings, documentation of this nature is seldom realized,¹⁷ and resulting data remains challenging to analyze even in large collaborative projects sampling multilingual practices. To give an example of the potential scale of such an undertaking, the Crossroads project¹⁸ investigating rural multilingualism in three neighboring villages in southern Senegal has collected around one hundred hours of speech in which twenty named languages have been identified so far.

Acknowledging the heterogeneity of linguistic practice in any setting, even if within the confines of one named language, much sociolinguistic and multilingualism research implicitly or explicitly focuses on a category that has superseded the notion of speech community in sociolinguistics, namely, that of “community of practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; Wenger 1999; Eckert 2000). Such communities—groups of people constituted by a shared social practice that often involves learning, for instance participating in a choir, becoming a Tuyuka *baya* master (section 3.6), attending the same school, or jointly taking part in an initiation ceremony—are taken as the object of research.¹⁹ For rural Western Africa, such research has, for example, explored the multilingual socialization of children in child-caregiver interactions (Cissé forthcoming), and language ideologies, repertoires, and practices in families and villages (Goodchild 2019; Weidl 2019; Goodchild and Weidl 2018). What has emerged from these investigations is that even in contexts perceived as being homogeneous (e.g., households or villages identifying themselves as monolingual at the level of language ideology), multilingualism is omnipresent through the presence of caregivers, visitors, and family members speaking other languages. Likewise, even settings apparently associated with clear and diglossic language policies (such as schools, where only the languages of colonial provenance are officially authorized) are spaces in which other languages, particularly lingua francas, flourish (Juffermans and Abdelhay 2016). These findings mirror those of rural social networks studies (Beyer 2010; Beyer and Schreiber 2013) conducted in Burkina Faso, which show that speech patterns transcend bounded codes and are shaped by the multilingual networks in which speakers participate. Research into participants’ repertoires and the factors through which they are changed and adapted is of prime importance for a real appraisal

of linguistic interaction, as also emerges from the Senegalese and Amazonian case studies on trajectories in sections 2.5 and 3.7.

Language contexts, i.e., situations that impose (or not) constraints on parts of participants' repertoires are another prime area of inquiry. Many speech situations in the Atlantic space can be seen as multilingual by default, in that the speech event participants draw on all or most of their linguistic resources in "translanguaging" (García and Wei 2014) or "noncriminal" code-mixing fashion (see section 3.7). Other situations require a multiple language mode, i.e., the use of one language with one (set of) interlocutors and use of a different one with others, based on nonoverlapping or only partly overlapping repertoires. Monolingual situations (akin to domain specialization) can occur, for instance, in ritual contexts requiring use of the patrimonial language. However, in many settings, strictly monolingual situations are rare, and those requiring adaptive multilingualism constitute the unmarked case. Diglossic contexts requiring monolingual and standard forms of colonial languages are often more limited than the prestige of these languages suggests. Despite official status at the level of the nation-state, their use depends on intricate local factors, including the presence of other languages of wider communication. Initial research reveals that these different discourse-pragmatic contexts yield qualitatively and quantitatively different patterns of code interaction or transcendence of bounded codes (see Cobbinah et al. [2016] for detailed discussion and examples). Amazonian multilingual settings appear less attuned to code separation than the well-documented language ideologies suggest, as soon as actual language use is taken into consideration (see Stenzel and Khoo 2016; Stenzel and Williams 2021; and section 3.7 above). Both West African and Amazonian settings exhibit forms of federal multilingualism, in addition to widespread local multilingualism. Digging deeper into the fabrics of multilingual interaction, combining studies of communities of practice as loci of conventionalized communication, fine-grained research on the networks and trajectories of individuals, and contexts associated with different code interaction styles emerges as a focal point for future research.

5. Conclusion and outlook. In this article, we have examined multilingual societies deeply affected by Western expansion from the fifteenth century onwards, yet in systematically different ways depending on whether they were subjected to settlement or were treated as exploitation colonies and on whether they were located at the center or at the periphery of settlement colonies. As a settlement colony, Brazilian multilingual settings were affected to a much larger extent than West African settings, despite colonial upheavals inflicted there as well. In both settings, however, colonial expansion did not increase multilingualism; rather, existing small-scale multilingual societies have fallen victim to colonial or postcolonial violence, literally and metaphorically, through massacres, deportation, and enslavement, as well as through imposed colonial

and postcolonial language policies. In both world regions, we see the linguistic effects of early globalization in the emergence of creoles (Kriol on the Atlantic coast of West Africa, Kheúol in Lowland South America), and the spread of languages of wider communication (e.g., Nheengatú, Tukano, Bambara, and Wolof) through colonial activities, including boarding schools. However, the roles of languages associated with colonial expansion were not uniform and changed according to sociopolitical circumstances. Originally the language of intermediaries in the slave trade, Upper Guinea Coast Kriol became the language of anticolonial struggles in Guinea-Bissau and an important identity language for many inhabitants of the wider area. Likewise, in its early stages, Nheengatú was seen as a “white people’s language.” However, by the end of the twentieth century, during which Salesian missionaries repressed use of Tukano, Nheengatú, and other languages in the Upper Rio Negro, Nheengatú was reassessed as an “indigenous language” and came to be associated with the movement for land demarcation led by the Federation of Indigenous Associations of the Rio Negro (FOIRN). This change in indexical value testifies to the impossibility of attaching absolute values of indigenous vs. colonial to languages and to the need to analyze their situated values through time.

The integration of the languages of the colonial and postcolonial states—French, English, and Portuguese in Western Africa and Portuguese in Brazil—came later and is a phenomenon of unequal distribution also producing locally very different effects. Similar observations hold for the status of small languages. In situations where far-reaching transformations of local language ecologies resulted in new, more essentialist imaginations of language and literal language-identity links, as in the Northwest Amazon (see sections 3.1 and 3.5), contexts of diglossia have arisen not only between indigenous and colonial languages, but also within smaller and larger indigenous languages. In fact, selective strengthening of some indigenous languages can have the paradoxical effect of further minoritizing others, creating minorities within minorities. Globalization can thus no longer be expected to have uniform consequences for linguistic diversity, and this finding warrants new research paradigms on language vitality (Mufwene 2017; Di Carlo and Good 2017; Lüpke 2017) informed by detailed knowledge of language ecologies and their dynamics through history.

Capturing these historical changes and their ramification is even more important because Lowland South America and Western African settings were not timeless and unchanging prior to the arrival of the first Europeans. Reconfigurations, mobilities, exchanges, and trajectories are threads running through most accounts presented here, as are discrepancies between language ideologies that conceptualize languages as fixed and mutually exclusive and more fluid and adaptive language use. There is a widespread dialectic of upholding distinctiveness at the rhetorical level and transcending it in praxis, compounded with the common presence of plural modes of being. This warrants both drastic rethinking of precolonial rural societies and recasting basic linguistic research

as capturing language ecologies that go far beyond the usual object of description, a lexicogrammatical code. The case studies united here show that we can only understand how language (as the abstraction made by speakers and linguists) is shaped by looking at the social interactional contexts in which it is used; and if these are dynamic multilingual configurations, we should pay much more attention to them. Such research, as argued here, needs to be holistic and transdisciplinary. It moreover needs to be conducted urgently, before the constellations that have shaped language evolution and change, not only in our two geographic areas but throughout the world, have been altered beyond recognition by the forces of late globalization. Because they radically diminish the realm of the local and draw small-scale societies into larger, homogenized spheres of interaction, they do not create “superdiversity” there, but rather eradicate it wherever they take hold.

Notes

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Abbreviations. The following abbreviations are used: 3 = third person; ANAPH = anaphoric; ASSER = assertion; CL = classifier; CONTR = contrary; DEF = definite marker; EMPH = emphasis; INTERR = interrogative; PFV = perfective; REF = referential; SG = singular; SR = switch reference.

1. “Lowland” South America in strict geographic terms encompasses the entire non-Andean region of northern South America, including both the Amazon and Orinoco Basins and covering parts of Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Suriname, and the Guianas. The denomination derives from the six-volume *Handbook of South American Indians*, edited by Julian Steward (1946–1950), in which Steward developed the (later much criticized) notion of a dominant and relatively homogeneous Tropical Forest cultural “type.” Nowadays, “Lowland South America” denotes a macro-region with some common ethnographic and theoretical aspects despite its great social, cultural, and linguistic diversity.

2. Following Brooks (1993) and Green (2012), the term “Western Africa” designates a geographic area comprising Senegambia (delineated by the Senegal and Gambia Rivers), Upper Guinea, stretching from the Gambia River southwards to present-day Sierra Leone and Liberia, including Guinea-Bissau, and the Cabo Verde archipelago off the shores of present-day Senegal. Additionally, the term here also includes the adjacent areas corresponding to parts of present-day Mali and Guinea. In terms of social organization and linguistic and cultural traits, this zone can be differentiated into partly overlapping but contrasting Atlantic and Mande spaces.

3. For Africa, the only systematic investigations of rural multilingualism focus on two settings: southern Senegal, the area also discussed here, and northwestern Cameroon. For overviews of rural and endogenous multilingualism in Africa, see Di Carlo (2018) and Good, Di Carlo, and Ojong (2019).

4. The goal of this section is not to provide a comprehensive historical overview of the vast expanse of Western Africa, but to bring to the fore those elements of history and society central to understanding patterns of multilingualism.

5. Matrilineality is also attested in parts of the area, for instance among the Sua on the Bijagos islands (Henry 1994), and as part of a bilineal pattern among the Biafada, Pepel, and Mandinka (Giesing 2006; Giesing and Vydrine 2007; Jansen 2016), as well as the Serer (Dupire 1988; Dupire et al. 1974).

6. In the sense of a federation of polities, or of language ecologies, that have alliances and regularly shared ceremonies and exchanges.

7. The Mane warriors were a group identifying as Mande but attracting diverse followers to their army that waged wars on the Upper Guinea Coast in the fifteenth century (Green 2012:236–40).

8. The word is subject to phonetic variation throughout the region, which is not treated here. The orthographical item is intended as a generic representation, not reflecting phonetic reality.

9. This is not an exhaustive list of such greeting formulae in Jóola languages; still further variation is observed at a more fine-grained level. These three formulae were chosen because they are associated with more-or-less geographically contiguous language home bases and thus illustrate the different levels of scale on which sociolinguistic indexation may operate.

10. Most of Brazil's indigenous population lives in Terras Indígenas, which are federal, nonprivately owned territories officially reserved for use and habitation by indigenous peoples, a right guaranteed by the 1988 Brazilian Constitution. Nevertheless, the identification and demarcation of Terras Indígenas can take decades and is often impeded by the personal interests of politicians in cahoots with powerful ranching and mineral lobbies.

11. Within the greater region, there are an estimated ten thousand speakers of Tukano—four thousand in Brazil and six thousand in Colombia (Cabalzar and Ricardo 2006)—and some eight thousand speakers of Nheengatú—six thousand in Brazil and two thousand in Venezuela (Moseley 2010).

12. The Amazonian palm tree *Leopoldinia piassaba*, whose fiber is widely used for roofing, rope, brooms, and baskets.

13. The total ethnic Baniwa population in Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela numbers over seventeen thousand (<https://pib.socioambiental.org/en>).

14. Sadly, in June 2020, this much respected and beloved indigenous leader passed away from COVID-19. Several of the coauthors of the Amazonian sections knew him well, both as a *baya* master and as a key partner in the movement to adopt Tuyuka as a language of instruction in primary education throughout the Tuyuka region, and deeply mourn his passing. The pandemic still rages among Amazonian peoples as we register these words. We wish to pay homage to its hundreds of victims among indigenous populations and express our collective grief over the enormous loss of knowledge, as well as cultural and linguistic human diversity, their lives represent.

15. Seki (1999) proposed a status of “incipient linguistic area,” but there is still no consensus as to an identifiable set of shared features supporting this hypothesis (see Franchetto and Gomez-Imbert 2003).

16. Güldemann (2008) uses logophoricity, labial-velars, labial flap consonants, advanced tongue root vowel harmony, subject-auxiliary-object-verb-X constituent order, and verb-object-negation ordering as defining characteristics of the area, but he himself concedes that Atlantic languages display ambiguous behavior in relation to the distribution of these features.

17. But see Seifart et al. (2009) and Stenzel and Williams (2021) for multilingual documentation projects.

18. See <www.soascrossroads.org> for details.

19. Most research on communities of practice focuses on urban settings, even in Senegal, e.g., schools and neighborhoods (Dreyfus and Juillard 2004), towns and cities (Juillard 1995, 2010; Ndecky 2011; Swigart 1994), urban families (Nunez 2015), and markets (Calvet 1993); for neighboring Gambia, a variety of urban settings have been considered (Haust 1995).

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