

Traditional culture, ethnic stereotypes and globalisation in the Tariana discourse

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1. Introduction

Globalisation in its conventional usage refers to present-day movements in economy, encompassing global market links, worldwide communications and multinational corporations. The impact of globalisation is inevitably reflected in everyday life and language. The influence of globalisation on indigenous groups in Amazonia goes through a number of interrelated channels. The values and notions associated with the previously non-existent market economy are gradually incorporated into discourse. This introduction of realities inevitably associated with White people's life promotes the intrusion of elements from global languages (as defined within the context of a particular place). Within the context of Brazil, the global languages are Portuguese and, to a lesser extent, English. These intrusive languages influence the lexicon, the grammar and the organisation of discourse in the minority languages.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of the newly emerging market economy on the discourse of an indigenous people of northwest Amazonia (Brazil), the Tariana. We also show the emergent changes in ethnic stereotypes and cultural values resulting from the spread of the economic influence of the dominant mainstream Brazilian society, as reflected in the Tariana narratives.

2. Background

The multilingual area of the Vaupés basin — spanning Colombia and Brazil in central northwest Amazonia — has fascinated linguists and anthropologists since it was first described by Sorensen, and then by Jackson.¹ This area is known for its language group exogamy and institutionalised multilingualism. One has to marry a person belonging to a different language group. Marrying someone who belongs to the same language group is considered akin to incest and referred to as ‘this is what dogs do’ (an expression employed in all the indigenous languages of the Vaupés). An Indian’s ‘main’ language is the language of their patrilineage, and is a badge of identity for each person.² There is a strong cultural inhibition against mixing languages, viewed in terms of lexical loans and code-switches.

Languages traditionally spoken in the Brazilian Vaupés belong to three genetically unrelated families: East Tucanoan, Arawak and Makú. Only East Tucanoan and Arawak people enter into the marriage network. The Makú people, the putative autochthonous inhabitants of the area, are considered inferior.³ The East Tucanoan languages spoken in the area (Tucano, Piratapuya, Wanano and Desano) are closely related (just like Romance languages). Nowadays Tucano, traditionally the majority language, is gradually gaining ground as the lingua franca of the area.

Tariana, the main Arawak language in the multilingual Brazilian Vaupés, was once a dialect continuum spoken by over 1500 people in various settlements along the Vaupés river and its tributaries. The Tariana clans used to form a strict hierarchy (according to their order of appearance as stated in the creation myth.⁴ Each group would speak a different variety of the language. As the Catholic missions and white influence expanded, the groups highest up

in the hierarchy abandoned the Tariana language (adopting the Tucano language instead). As a result, Tariana is actively spoken by only about 100 people.⁵ These belong to two subtribes of the lowest-ranking group Wamiarikune, and live in two villages: Santa Rosa and Periquitos. Santa Rosa is located about five hours up the Vaupés river from the nearest mission, Iauaretê — where the bulk of high-ranking Tucano-speaking Tariana live and where some of the Santa Rosa Tariana have moved recently. In Santa Rosa, only adults speak Tariana (the youngest speaker is 29). In Periquitos, Tariana is spoken by some children.

Another North Arawak language spoken on tributaries of the Upper Rio Negro on the outskirts of the Vaupés area is Baniwa of Içana (between 3000-4000 speakers), closely related to Tariana, but not mutually intelligible with it.⁶

The main consequence of the recent spread of the Tucano language in the Brazilian Vaupés is the gradual undermining of the one-to-one identification between language and indigenous group: many Indians and their children whose fathers' language was Tariana now speak only Tucano (with which they have no patrilineal 'right' to identify).⁷ However, ethnic Tariana still identify themselves with their father's language. The Tucano and Tucano-speaking 'upper class' Tariana are numerically the largest and politically most important group; this threatens what we conceive of as erstwhile 'egalitarian' multilingualism and language diversity.⁸ In the Brazilian Vaupés most languages other than Tucano have become endangered. The discrepancy between the number of people who belong to a tribe and those who actually speak the language is particularly marked in the case of Tariana. Those who 'lost' their father's language are referred to as 'those who speak a borrowed language' and therefore have nothing to identify with (Tariana *na-sawayã na-sape* lit. 'they borrow they speak'). They are treated with a mixture of pity, contempt and envy (since quite a few of them have managed to achieve a coveted economic status). For those who still speak Tariana this

language has a particular value as a mark of linguistic solidarity, characteristic of linguistic minorities all over the world.⁹

3. Language etiquette and ethnic stereotypes

According to the language ‘etiquette’ of the Vaupés area, one is supposed to speak the language one identifies with — that is, one’s father’s language — to one’s siblings, father and all his relatives, and mother’s language to one’s mother and her relatives. Most speakers of Tariana follow this pattern: they speak Tariana to their father and his classificatory brothers, and East Tucanoan languages (Piratapuya, Tucano and Wanano¹⁰) to their mother and her generation. However, the 20 to 40 year olds tend to speak Tucano among themselves and to their children, saying that ‘this is easier’ and that ‘otherwise women won’t understand’. As a consequence, their children can at most understand some Tariana, but few can speak it (see below, on the differences between the two Tariana-speaking villages).

The ethnic stereotypes associated with different indigenous groups in the area of the Vaupés are determined by language ideologies.¹¹ Language ideologies are defined as ‘sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalisation or justification of perceived language structure and use’.¹² Code-switching (that is, use of more than one language within one stretch of discourse) in the Tariana-speaking community reflects these beliefs and the ethnic stereotypes which accompany them. It is allowed under restricted circumstances — these include direct quotes and the speech of animals and evil spirits. Outside these it bears the overtones of an indirect index¹³ of undesirable qualities of a person who does not stick to their language identity and tries to become someone else. Using Tariana (especially ‘correct’ Tariana) is the best mark of solidarity within a community. Unlawful use of Tucano and other East Tucanoan languages characterises the speaker as sloppy and incompetent, in the eyes of

the community and by themselves (this is why speakers usually do not admit to having produced a code-switch). Overusing Tucano or any other East Tucanoan language is looked upon as a linguistic violation. Using Baniwa or Içana words while speaking Tariana characterises one as slightly foolish but basically friendly. In contrast, mixing elements of the few surviving Tariana dialects is almost as bad and as dangerous as using Tucanoan languages in inappropriate circumstances. The choice of language in everyday communication is thus determined by two factors: firstly, by traditional language etiquette and politeness, and secondly, by an association between language and status. We will now discuss the image of White people as they appear in the Tariana stories and how this has been affected by the spread of a market economy.

4. Common attitudes to the ‘White man’s language’

The relationship between Tariana and the ‘White man’s language’¹⁴ is complex. The ‘White people’ — the economically dominant group — are identified with access to economic prosperity and, nowadays, also to education (even the term for ‘boss’ in Tariana, *yalanata*, is derived from the term for ‘White man’, or ‘non-Indian’, *yalana*). That is, the White man’s language is a symbol of status associated with desirable assets which imply changing the quality of one’s life.¹⁵ At the same time, long-term interaction with the White people (stereotyped as the ‘patron-peon’ relationship¹⁶) succeeded in creating a feeling of inferiority, dependency and hate towards the White people among Indians. Consequently, it resulted in stereotyping White people (especially men) as possessing undesirable qualities of greedy arrogant go-getters. These features are assigned to those who ‘overuse’ a White man’s language while speaking Tariana, and thus are perceived as trying to gain access to economic advantages of the ‘White man’s world’. These people are condemned as ‘wanting to be better than us’. Along similar lines, Hugh-Jones, in his analysis of the role of White people in the

cosmology of the Barasano and other Indian groups in the Colombian Vaupés, stresses a tendency to emphasise ‘the Indians’ moral superiority’ over the greedy, uncontrolled and non-sharing White people. This tendency emerges in indigenous narratives.¹⁷

Two additional circumstances contribute to the negative image of White people. Firstly, the highly feared mythical ‘snake people’, or ‘fish-people’ (*kuphe-ne*), are conceived of as ‘White’. Secondly, the White people’s ways of life go against one basic assumption of the Vaupés area — that of language-based exogamy. White people do not marry according to their partner’s language affiliation, and in this way are no better than the Makú (the putative autochthonous inhabitants of the Vaupés area considered inferior to the Arawak and East-Tucanoans) in that they marry each other ‘like dogs’. Vaupés Indians who breach the marriage rules are said to ‘want to be like White people’.

The attitude to overusing Portuguese and ‘showing off’ one’s proficiency in this language tends to be mostly negative. Those who do so get ridiculed, albeit behind their back: they are nicknamed ‘White people’ who ‘have no language at all’. One of the old speakers of Tariana, Bati, who spent most of his life working in Brazil and Colombia away from his native Santa Rosa, often greets his Tariana-speaking relatives with Portuguese *bom dia* ‘good morning’ — instead of Tariana *kawhi-tha phia?* (be.awake-PAST.INFR.INTER you) ‘are you awake?’ — and often inserts Portuguese *pois é* (literally, so is) ‘that’s it’ (functionally similar to ‘this is how things are’), or Spanish *bueno* (good) into his Tariana. His prestige in the Tariana-speaking community is relatively low; behind his back he is referred to as *Pois é*. In Tariana narratives, ‘nice’ White people often speak Tariana, and nasty ones employ Portuguese expressions, whose function is to convey a negative image of a greedy ‘patron’. Américo Brito’s life story illustrates this: the greedy patron who is not going to pay would say *pois é* ‘this is it, then’ in Portuguese, while the same patron trying to be nice would say *diwesewya* ‘this is it, then’. Similarly, a particularly nasty lady was consistently referred to in

Tariana conversations as *Dona* (Lady) in Portuguese. This ‘mock Portuguese’¹⁸ is inserted into Tariana functions as a semiotic index employed to reproduce a negative stereotype of a ‘White person’ (which could be a man or a woman) and of an Indian who wants to be ‘like a hated White person’ showing off their superiority. This is strikingly similar to the indirect indexical functions of ‘mock Spanish’ in American English with its negative connotations.¹⁹

This section has focussed on the beliefs prevalent until very recently, and still held by some people. The changing role of, and attitudes to Portuguese in the modern Vaupés society are addressed in the next section.

5. The changing role of Portuguese in the modern Vaupés society

Portuguese, the national language of Brazil, is acquiring an increasingly important role in the Vaupés area, as the language of schooling and written communication, the language of power, and the language of intergroup communication. Not unexpectedly, this has resulted in changes to its status among the Indians.

Most Tariana speakers have a good command of Portuguese. Portuguese words are regularly employed when talking about matters relating to ‘the White man’s’ environment; this covers schools, church services, sports and games and hospital and commercial activities.²⁰ Most people between the ages of 20 and 50 are at least functionally literate in Portuguese, thanks to the obligatory schooling imposed by the Salesians (most Indians of the Vaupés region are practicing Catholics). Recently, literacy in Tucano has been introduced. It is acknowledged by the vast majority as ‘too complicated’ and is hardly ever used (except in some church materials distributed by the mission centre and in the notices and prayers on the mission walls produced by Salesians). As a result, all written communication between literate Indians is in Portuguese. Radio communication is also in Portuguese. Many Tariana who live in Iauaretê, the mission centre of the Brazilian Vaupés, have access to national television

programs — all in Portuguese. Recently, a telephone has been installed. Again, Portuguese is the preferred language. This indicates the existence of ‘a functional differentiation’ of existing languages, known as diglossia.²¹ To what extent this diglossia is stable remains to be seen.²²

Recently, with the rise of indigenous and other non-governmental organisations in the Vaupés area, Portuguese has become the language of power: to succeed in life, one needs to be able to compose projects in Portuguese. Being articulate in White man’s language adds to one’s economic power and hence stature in the community. Gara, one of the Tariana speakers (about 40), is very proficient in Portuguese; he occupies an important post in the local hospital and is a successful trader. His Tariana is full of Tucano calques and ungrammaticalities.²³ Behind his back, his speech is condescendingly referred to as ‘Gara’s thing’ (*Gara yarupe*), but he is never overtly ridiculed, and nowadays is even treated with a certain amount of respect (coupled with envy) for being the only Tariana speaker fully successful in the ‘White man’s’ world.

Portuguese is indeed often used as a means of imposing one’s authority among the Tariana and also among East Tucanoan speakers. Laura, the Tucano-speaking daughter of Olívia Brito, a full speaker of Tariana, is a nun, and considers it her obligation to tell other (Tucano-speaking) girls what to do and what not to do. She prefers to lecture them in Portuguese — saying that if you do it in their own language, they have no respect. A similar use of English by Spanish immigrants in the US was described by Gumperz.²⁴ This is markedly different from the idea of ‘respect’ in other indigenous cultures — for instance, Mexicano (to name just one) — where the use of Spanish has the opposite connotations, implying a ‘lack’ of respect.²⁵

In addition, younger people tend to use Portuguese as a symbol of ‘status’ — it implies being more civilised and more progressive; in contrast, speaking an indigenous language is viewed as a sign of ‘backwardness’. This was reflected in a satirical play

presented at the feast of the opening of a new cultural venue in Iauaretê (in June 2000). The play featured bad boys who despised their indigenous relatives, going round drinking store-bought alcohol, swearing and smoking pot. While they were bad boys, they were shown speaking regional Portuguese; but once they became good boys again, they were shown speaking an indigenous language (Tucano).

For several independent reasons, the role of Portuguese as the language of intergroup communication is growing. Firstly, it is the only means of communication with Brazilians who are coming to the region in greater and greater numbers; these include representatives of aid organisations, nurses, doctors and, importantly, military contingents. (The Brazilian Vaupés is a strongly militarised area due to the constant threat of Colombian guerillas nearby.) Portuguese is more and more often used between Indians as a spontaneous means of communication. A partial explanation for such ‘success’ of Portuguese could lie in resistance to Tucano dominance (this could also be one of the reasons for partial acceptance of loans from Portuguese). With the increase of Portuguese spoken in the Brazilian Vaupés by all sections of the population, it begins to be conceptualised as a ‘global’ language — similar to the way English is conceptualised as a language with no identity mark attached to it in other parts of the world.²⁶ On the other hand, Tucano is associated with those who have a Tucano identity. Those Tariana (as well as other Indians in the Brazilian Vaupés, such as the Piratapuya, Wanano, Desano, Siriano, Arapaso and Miriti-tapuya) — who speak only Tucano are at risk of losing their identity (primarily associated with their language affinity) to a dominant, but formerly equal, peer. Choosing Portuguese has more ‘neutral’ connotations (and also implies the possibility of acquiring economic advantages).

Just one aspect of the use of Portuguese by Tariana speakers appears to be a source of pity. Younger people use Portuguese kinship terms as terms of address to those of their own generation: such terms include *mana* ‘sister’ and *mano* ‘brother’, when speaking Tariana and

when speaking Tucano. They also use Colloquial Portuguese *titio* ‘uncle’ and *titia* ‘aunt’ to address their uncles, aunts and in-laws, presumably, due to their limited knowledge of the complexities of the traditional kinship system. Their exposure to the world of the ‘White people’ (that is, regional Brazilians) entails cultural changes that have led to by the disintegration of traditional kinship structures, relations and obligations.

Portuguese is compulsory in the ‘White man’s environment’; this covers school life, community meetings where hospitals and other problems are discussed, and also meetings of indigenous organisations. Outside this environment, there are a number of circumstances where the occasional use of Portuguese in Tariana speech is neither condemned nor ridiculed. If the Tariana language simply lacks a term for a particular object or for an action, a word from ‘White man’s language’ can be employed without provoking any adverse reaction — such words include *dinheiro* ‘money’ (as in example (4) below), *espada* ‘sword’, *rei* ‘king’, *sapato* ‘shoe’, *paletto* ‘coat’ and *pesa* ‘piece; spare part’. Among verbs for which there is no Tariana equivalent are ‘lose’ (a game) and ‘win’. Traditional games in the Vaupés area were not competitive;²⁷ the introduction of competition in games is a very recent phenomenon.²⁸

The encroachment of the national language thus has consequences for indigenous narratives. Firstly, the sheer number of Portuguese words increases (as compared to earlier documented stages of the language) predominantly in those narratives which describe the realities of the ‘White man’s’ world, or simply life and work under the ‘White bosses’. The insertion of Portuguese words by a Tariana speaker is determined by the situation. The function of these words is to fill in a lexical ‘gap’ — introducing terms for clothing, winning and losing. The following excerpt from the life story of the oldest living speaker of Tariana, Américo Brito, contains quite a few Portuguese insertions. Even small numbers — for which Tariana equivalents are easily available — are in Portuguese (underlined).²⁹

- (1) cinco ke:ri-pe kida uni di-amia di-a-na
 five month-PL ready water 3sgnf-flood 3sgnf-go-REM.P.VIS
- iri wa-pala-kasu wa:-na wa-pala-na iri-nuku
 sap 1pl-put-INT 1pl+go-REM.P.VIS 1pl-put-REM.P.VIS sap-TOP.NON.A/S
- dois tonelada o quatro tonelada-seri wheta wa:-na wha
 two:masc ton or four ton-SING 1pl+take 1pl+go-REM.P.VIS we
- ‘Five months (later) it was finished, the water flooded, we were to put the sap down, we put the sap down, two or four tons we put down.’

The traditional Tariana culture — with its lack of a market economy — involved little counting. One to four are one-word numbers; five is a complicated form: the word for ‘hand’ accompanied by a numeral classifier and a plural marker; and numbers from 6 to 20 involve even more complex noun phrases consisting of several grammatical words and a numeral classifier, e.g. *peme-kapi pa:-na dyanata-na* (one+SIDE+INDF-HAND one-CL:VERT 3sgnf+follow-CL:VERT) ‘six; lit. the side of one hand and one which follows’. It is easier to say *cinco* in Portuguese than to use elaborate Tariana constructions. Larger numerals do not exist; and Portuguese equivalents are freely used. However, to count money and units of weight, one uses Portuguese, e.g. *três real ka-weni-ka* (three real REL-cost-REC.P.VIS) ‘It costs three real (Brazilian currency)’ (and see *dois tonelada* ‘two tons’ in (1) above). This is markedly different from other cultures.³⁰

The language of Tariana narratives shows more and more influence from Portuguese via loan translations. One such area is the overuse of interrogative pronouns. Traditional speakers hardly ever use interrogative pronouns in oblique questions (other techniques are used instead), while younger people do so freely.³¹ Another instance of the use of

interrogative pronouns calqued from Portuguese is ‘cleft’ constructions, similar to English ‘it is you who...’ The following sentence, said by a younger Tariana (highly proficient in Portuguese), is ungrammatical for a traditional speaker.

- (2) phia kwaka pehpani ai-nuku
 you what 2sg+work here-TOP.NON.A/S
 ‘You are the one who works here.’

Word order in sentences is often calqued. This is most obvious in translations from Portuguese, in particular, popular songs. During a Workshop on Tariana literacy conducted by myself together with the Tariana in June 2000, Rafa translated a popular Brazilian song into Tariana. The lines *Porque parou? Parou porque?* ‘Why did you stop? Did you stop why?’ came out as *kweka pi-matara pi-matara kweka* (why 2sg-stop 2sg-stop why) ‘why did you stop, did you stop why?’ Portuguese has a reasonably free constituent order, and it is acceptable to put an interrogative at the end. Constituent order in Tariana is also quite free — but not in questions, where the interrogative word always occupies first position. *Pi-matara kweka* is ungrammatical in Tariana — it is simply a literal translation from Portuguese. (Rafa’s father Leo — who was present at the course — noticed the oddity of this phrase; when his son said that ‘this is what it says in White man’s language’, his response was ‘this is the White man’s language, anyway’). To create a new word in Tariana, younger and innovative speakers simply translate them from Portuguese. One such calque is *pa-wha-nipa* ‘money bank’, literally, ‘a place to sit’ — by analogy to Portuguese *banco* ‘bench (to sit on)’ which also means ‘bank’. Other examples are *-ña* ‘hit; type’, cf. Portuguese *bater* ‘type’ (as in *bater no computador* ‘type on computer’, lit. hit on computer); *-wha* ‘fall’, as in ‘accent falls’ (Portuguese *acento cai*), and so on.

Calquing goes beyond a word, or even a sentence. The whole structure of a narrative can be affected. Younger speakers — e.g. Graciliano — start their stories with *pa:-kada ma<a-kada* (one-CL:DAY good,beautiful-CL:DAY) ‘one beautiful day’, replicating a typical beginning of a fairy story in Portuguese *um belo dia* ‘one beautiful day’. These calques are absent from the speech of more traditional speakers.

As a result of the influence of Portuguese, Tariana is developing a special stylistic register which is typologically close to Indo-European languages. This register is available only to those who have access to education, that is, a few economically privileged and relatively young people. This development is strikingly similar to the tendencies towards creating a ‘global’ Europeanised register in many parts of the world — which includes Thai, Chinese, and many others.³² To understand this ‘Europeanised register’, one needs to know Portuguese; that is, older people whose proficiency in the national language is not so high are automatically excluded. This also entails a gradual change of attitude towards the ‘White man’s’ language. While still associated with the negative image of aggressive invaders, it is becoming a symbol of coveted economic power and access to education and various assets. The ‘Europeanised’ register of Tariana, accessible to few people, thus has positive rather than negative overtones. The next section offers further evidence in favour of such changes of attitudes to the ‘White man’s’ values.

6. ‘White people’ in the Origin myth

The contact with White people in the Brazilian Vaupés goes back to the late eighteenth century; it is thus not surprising that White people have been integrated in Origin myths of various indigenous groups, albeit in different ways. As Hugh-Jones puts it, ‘for the Vaupés Indians, and presumably for many other tribal societies too, myth and history are not mutually incompatible but co-exist as two separate and complementary models of representing the

past.³³ These Origin myths reflect the role and status of White people and especially the ways in which they manage to accumulate their money and possessions (viewed as their powerful attributes).

Numerous origin myths told by the Vaupés peoples and by the Baniwa speaking groups in the neighbouring Içana basin present White people as having equality with the indigenous groups. In many versions, as people were created, the Creator kept calling different groups one by one to come out of a hole at the Ipanoré rapids (the order in which different groups were called relates to their tribal hierarchies). The White people emerged together with the rest. According to the Ipeka-tapuya (Baniwa of Içana) version (narrated in Urubucuará/Ipanoré³⁴), the White people came out first, bathed in the water and acquired their light coloured skin (making the waters of the Vaupés river black), and all their advantages with it. According to another Baniwa version, the White people, as soon as they came out, bathed in a pond full of gold powder; this accounts for their light coloured hair and their riches.

According to a version told by Siuci and Hohôdene,³⁵ the Creator (Baniwa *Ñapirikuri*, lit. the one of the bone) offered the first Indians and the first White people a shotgun. The Indians were afraid,³⁶ or they couldn't use it;³⁷ while the White men could shoot well. As a result of this knowledge, as Cornelio et al. put it, 'the White man has a shotgun, and with this has everything, he knows all and everything. This is why the White people have all the things. If our ancestors could shoot, everything would have been theirs',³⁸ and 'this is why Indians were left behind'.³⁹ The savvy with which the original White people could handle one of their most powerful attributes, the gun, accounts for their economic supremacy. Similar versions are told by various groups in the Colombian part of the Vaupés.⁴⁰

The traditional origin myths of the Tariana did not have White people in them;⁴¹ the various Tariana groups emerged, following a hierarchical order, out of the blood of Thunder.

The story I recorded in 1994 does have White people in it. This version is rather different from the Siuci and the Hohôdene myths. The Female Creator (whose image is widespread in the Vaupés area) makes all the people emerge from water; the White people arrive later, and it is a White man who shows everyone else a valued item, whose nature is not explicitly stated; the narrator (Cândido Brito) pointed out that it could have been a piece of clothing or a coin. The White man knew what the object was, while the Indians did not recognise it. The Creator approved of this. As a result, Indians stayed as they were, with their Indian languages. The White people acquired White people's language (*yalana-ku*). No further economic advantages or riches are mentioned. The relevant portion of this text is given in (3).

- (3)
- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| diha-pua-nuku | | na-miñã | na-wa | na:-sina |
| ART-CL:RIVER-TOP.NON.A/S | | 2pl-appear | 3pl-enter | 3pl+go-REM.P.INFR |
| naha taria | na:-nipe | di-pumi-se | naha | yalana alia-sina |
| they Tariana | 3pl+go-NOM | 3sgnf-after-LOC | they | White EXIST-REM.P.INFR |
| na-miñã | na-nu | nema | na:-sina | naha |
| 3pl-appear | 3pl-come | 3pl+stand | 3pl+go-REM.P.INFR | they |
| kwana-hna | hi-nuku | | na-yeka | na:-sina |
| who-PRES.VIS.INTER | DEM-TOP.NON.A/S | | 3pl-know | 3pl+go-REM.P.INFR |
| diha yalana | di-sata-sina | | dhima | |
| he White.man | 3pl-ask-REM.P.INFR | | 3sgnf+hear | |
| waha wa-hwe-ri | diha-naku | | ma-yeka-de-sina | |
| we | 1pl-grandparent-MASC | he-TOP.NON.A/S | NEG-know-NEG-REM.P.INFR | |
| na-wa-nipe-nuku | | diha | yalana i-thanina | |
| 3pl-mark/count-NOM-TOP.NON.A/S | | he | White INDF-beginning | |
| di-yeka-sina | diha-naka | hiña | di-a-sina | |

3sgnf-know-REM.P.INFR	he-PRES.VIS	here.it.is	3sgnf-say-REM.P.INFR
di-ka	di-ahni	haw	du-a-sina
3sgnf-see	3sgnf-know	alright	3sgf-say-REM.P.INFR
diwesewya-nuku	hya-ka-mhade	i-dia-niki	du-a-sina
then-TOP.NON.A/S	2pl-DECL-FUT	2pl-stay-COMPL	3sgnf-say-REM.P.INFR
nekana	hi	yalana-ku	naha na-yarupe
3pl+chief	DEM	White.man-in.language	they 3pl-language
du-dia-sina	na-na	wa-na	yeposana-nuku
3sgf-return-REM.P.INFR	3pl-OBJ	1pl-OBJ	Indian-TOP.NON.A/S
thuime	sawa-pe-nuku	hi	puaya-sina
all	group-PL-TOP.NON.A/S	DEM:ANIM	different-REM.P.INFR
wa-na	di-dia	wa:ku	
1pl-OBJ	3sgnf-become	1pl+speak	

‘They (our ancestors) appeared in this waterfall, the ones (who were) to become the Tariana, after the White people were there, they appeared and stayed. "Who knows this?" they asked, the White man asked, our grandparent (i.e. ancestor) did not know what he meant. The ancestor of the White man knew, "this is what it is", he said, he recognised (what the object was). "All right’, she (the Woman Creator) said, "then you will stay as you are", she gave the White man’s language to them; as for us Indians, all the groups, all our languages became different.’

A somewhat different story was recorded from the same speaker in 1999. This version, given in (4), is much closer to the Baniwa one, and yet still rather different. White people are opposed to Indians on the whole as two distinct groups (this is very unusual in the Vaupés context). The Creator shows the Indians a coin (note the use of the Portuguese word

for money, *dinheiro* (underlined); this word, with a classifier for round things, refers to a coin), and asks him how much the coin is worth. He did not know, and this is why ‘we, Indians, will never have any money’. In contrast, when the Creator makes the original White man count how much the coin is worth, he does it well, saying: ‘The coin is worth this much’. As a result, the White people have become as they are, with lots of money, unlike the miserable Indians, who ‘couldn’t think’ (which is the Tariana way of saying ‘stupid’) and thus will have to keep suffering.

- (4) hi nawiki-sina walikasu-naku
 DEM:ANIM people-REM.P.INFR in.the.beginning-TOP.NON.A/S
- ñama-sawa-sina wha yeposana-sawa
 two-CL:GROUP-REM.P.INFR we Indian-CL:GROUP
- yalana-sawa alia-sina.
 White.people-CL:GROUP EXIST-REM.P.INFR
- di-yeda na-miña-sina yalána
 3sgnf-downstream 3pl-emerge-REM.P.INFR White.people
- di-yekwe-se wha yeposana wa-miña-sina
 3sgnf-upstream-LOC we Indians 1pl-emerge-REM.P.INFR
- ‘There were people, at the beginning there were two groups, there were us Indians (and) White people, White people emerged downstream, we Indians emerged upstream’
- ...
- ne-sina du-sata dhuma, hi yeposeri
 then-REM.P.INFR 3sgf-greet 3sgf+hear DEM:ANIM Indian+SING
- dinheiro-kwema pa:-kwema du-sueta-sina

money-CL:ROUND one-CL:ROUND 3sgf-stay+CAUS-REM.P.INFR

ne-nuku, dinheiro pa:-kwema

then-TOP.NON.A/S money one-CL:ROUND

di-sueta-sina

3sgf-stay+CAUS-REM.P.INFR

‘Then she (the Woman Creator) asked the Indian, she put down one coin there, she put down one coin’.

diha yeposeri-nuku duha du-sata-sina dhuma

ART Indian+SING-TOP.NON.A/S she 3sgf-greet-REM.P.INFR 3sgf+hear

du-keñua, hi kayda-nha kaweni

3sgf-start DEM:ANIM how.much-PRES.VIS.INTER cost

du-a-sina, dihya ma-yekade-sina

3sgf-say-REM.P.INFR he NEG-know-REM.P.INFR

hiku wa:-karu-pena-nuku wha yeposana,

like.this 1pl+become-PURP-FUT.NOM-TOP.NON.A/S we Indians

dinheiro sede-karu-pena-nuku, alia-sina

money NEG.EXIST-PURP-FUT.NOM-TOP.NON.A/S EXIST-REM.P.INFR

‘She started asking the Indian, "How much is this worth?" she said, he didn’t know, this is how we were to be, we Indians (to be) moneyless, this is how it was.’

diha yalana i-thani alia-sina-pita diha-misini

ART White.man INDF-origin be-REM.P.INFR-AGAIN he-TOO

thuya alia-sina, du-na-sina du:ra du-wa,

all be-REM.P.INFR 3sgnf-OBJ-REM.P.INFR 3sgf+order 3sgf-count

diha pawali-sina dhipa-niki,
 he right-REM.P.INFR 3sgnf+get-COMPL

kayda-naka kaweni ha-kwema di-a-sina
 this.much-PRES.VIS cost DEM-CL:ROUND 3sgnf-say-REM.P.INFR

‘The ancestor of the White man was there too, all (the people) were there, she ordered them to count, he got it right, he said: "This coin is worth this much".’

ihya yalana i-uka du-a-sina,
 you.pl White.man 2pl-arrive 3sgf-say-REM.P.INFR

hiku yalana i-dia-kasu kanapada dinheiro
 this. way White.man 2pl-become-INT much money

i-de-kasu i-uka i-dia-sina ihya
 2pl-have-INT 2pl-arrive 2pl-become-REM.P.INFR you.pl

ne-sina wha wa-ma<ika yeposana
 then-REM.P.INFR we 1pl-transform Indians

ma-nihta-de-pu-nhina wha yeposana
 NEG-think-NEG-AUG-ANT+REM.P.VIS we Indians

ma-yeka-de-nhina apalese hiku wa-rena-kasu
 NEG-know-NEG-ANT+REM.P.VIS altogether like.this 1pl-feel/suffer-INT

“You are to become White people”, she said, “this way you are to become White people, you are to have a lot of money”, then we turned into Indians, we did not think, we Indians had no thinking altogether. We are to suffer this way.’

The White presence and the degree of development of the market economy in Iauaretê (the mission centre of the Vaupés area) grew remarkably towards the end of the 1990s. Indians — like Cândido — who live in Iauaretê depend more and more on their purchasing capacity; consequently, money has become the central coveted asset. The culturally significant Origin myth reflects this. Once again, White people emerge as savvy and smart — these inherent properties account for their economic supremacy in the market situation. In neither of Cândido's narratives is there any sign of a negative attitude towards the go-getter White people — rather, there is an overtone of admiration for their inherent knowledgeability and success. In contrast, Indians are viewed as inherently miserable 'have-nots'. As Hugh-Jones puts it, 'such myths concern the recognition, interpretation and acceptance of White domination and by placing it at the beginning of time they present it as something inevitable and beyond human influence'.⁴²

7. Summary

The intrusion of a market economy (globalisation in the Brazilian context) has had a tangible impact on the everyday life of the Tariana community in northwest Amazonia, and is inevitably affecting their language patterns. Language can hardly ever be independent of its environment, or culture. Newly introduced realities penetrate most facets of life, influencing important and emblematic mythological stories. A comparison of several versions of the Origin myth as told by the Tariana and by representatives of other groups of the area who speak closely related languages shows the introduction of new values: myths now emphasise the fact that White people attained their supremacy by knowing, since time immemorial, the worth of money.

The rampant intrusion of a market economy and globalisation has affected language and the organisation of discourse in other ways, firstly and foremostly by creating a new,

Europeanised, register heavily influenced by Portuguese and mastered by just a privileged few. This has resulted in a drastic sociolinguistic differentiation within the indigenous communities. And, as a consequence, the attitude to the ‘White man’ is changing: from the image of a greedy and nasty ‘go-getter’ to something everyone would like to be if they could.

What are the purely linguistic consequences of these processes? It is well known that the overwhelming majority of circa 150 indigenous languages still spoken in Brazil are not being learnt by children and may not survive the next generation. Tariana is one of these: one dialect is still spoken by about 50 people, of all ages, while the youngest speaker of the other dialect has just turned 29. Whether this language will survive the next couple of generations is uncertain. However, it is fairly obvious that if the language is to survive in the present environment, it is quite likely to absorb elements of the ‘global’ linguistic type conforming more and more to the Europeanised register which is now emerging. This will definitely affect the linguistic diversity of the area, a diversity linguists cherish. But will this be beneficial or detrimental to language survival? In his seminal paper on signs of ‘health’ and ‘death’ in a language Eric Hamp suggested that if a minority language is to survive next to a larger dominant language, it has to allow a certain amount of loans, that is, words and constructions.⁴³ A certain degree of linguistic — and cultural — conformism and absorption of new elements, rather than downright purism, may possibly help the language survive as a viable means of communication for a few more years or even generations.

8. Postscript: English in the Vaupés

English⁴⁴ is gradually making its way into northwest Amazonia through music on the radio, occasional appearances of English-speaking missionaries, and of sought-after duty-free goods sold in Manaus (the capital of the Brazilian state of Amazonas) and in São Gabriel da

Cachoeira (the capital of the municipality of the Upper Rio Negro, within the state of Amazonas, where the Vaupés region belongs administratively).

Knowledge of English among the Vaupés Indians is minimal. However, there is a trend to try and introduce some elements of English, so far just into the Portuguese spoken in the Vaupés. The Cultural Centre in the area of Iauaretê — where most of the Britos live — is called ‘Big [English] Som [sound: Portuguese] Centro [centre: Portuguese] Recreativo [recreational: Portuguese]’, literally, ‘Big Sound Recreational Centre’. Not only does this name contain a word from English. In addition, the word order is mixed: *Big Som* is English-like, while *Centro Recreativo* is Portuguese. In ‘normal’ Portuguese, it would be ‘Centro do Som Grande’. And a local group which plays American-style pop-music is called ‘Grupo [group: Portuguese] show [English]’ (‘Show group’). Here the word order is Portuguese.

The knowledge of English is slowly but inevitably expanding. Recently, the Vaupés Indians have become aware of computers (there are a few of them in the head-quarters of the local indigenous organisations, in the Salesian mission and in the school in Iauaretê). Computing terms — overwhelmingly English loans — are penetrating everyday Portuguese, and also get used by Indians.

English is assigned unreserved prestige. Its indexical value is associated with many desirable qualities: an easy-going attitude to life, endless feasts, useful appliances — everything a capitalist paradise could offer. Knowledge of English is a highly coveted and desirable asset. This positive attitude towards English — which is becoming more and more important — is promoting the gradual changes in attitudes towards the White people’s language. I suggest that, in due course, this will play a role in further promoting ‘Europeanised’ registers of the Vaupés languages (if they manage to survive at all).

¹ A. P. Sorensen Jr., ‘Multilingualism in the Northwest Amazon’, *American Anthropologist*, 69, 1967, pp. 670-84 (reprinted in J. B. Pride and J. Holmes (eds), *Sociolinguistics*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Modern Linguistics Readings, 1972, pp. 78-93); J. E. Jackson, ‘Language identity of the Colombian Vaupés Indians’, in R. Bauman and J. Sherzer (eds), *Explorations in the ethnography of speaking*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974, pp. 50-64.

² J. E. Jackson, *Fish people*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 165.

³ Alexandra Y Aikhenvald, *Tariana texts and cultural context*, Munich, Lincom Europa, 1999; ‘Areal diffusion and language contact in the Içana-Vaupés basin, North West Amazonia’, in R. M. W. Dixon and A. Y. Aikhenvald (eds), *The Amazonian languages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp.385-415; Jackson, ‘Language identity’.

⁴ See Alconçílio Alves da Silva Brüzzi, *A civilização indígena do Vaupes*, Roma, Las, 1977, pp. 102-3; Aikhenvald, *Tariana Texts*, p. 26.

⁵ I have been working on Tariana since 1991, with over 90% of the speakers of Santa Rosa dialect, and with over 70% of those from Periquitos. My corpus consists of over 150 texts (over 1000 pages), and also records of conversations and dictionary materials. About one-fifth of the collected texts comes from traditional speakers (see below, and note 6). Examples from Tariana are given in a simplified orthography.

⁶ Aikhenvald, *Tariana Texts*.

⁷ For further details see A. Y. Aikhenvald, ‘Language awareness and correct speech among the Tariana of northwest Amazonia’, *Anthropological Linguistics*, 44, 2002, pp. 411-30. The process of language shift among the Tariana must have started as early as the beginning of twentieth century (A. Y. Aikhenvald, *Language Contact in Amazonia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002). The Tucano language has been recently declared one of the three

official languages of the area of Upper Rio Negro in Brazil (alongside Baniwa and Língua Geral). The consequences of this are yet to be seen.

⁸ In the sense of André G. Haudricourt, 'Richesse en phonèmes et richesse en locuteurs', *L'Homme*, 1, 1961, pp. 5-10; and J. Hill and K. C. Hill 'Mixed grammar, purist grammar, and language attitudes in Modern Nahuatl', *Language in Society*, 9, 1980, pp. 321-48.

⁹ Cf., among others, K. A. Woolard, *Double talk. Bilingualism and the politics of ethnicity in Catalonia*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1989.

¹⁰ There are instances of marriage between the Tariana and the Baniwa. Desano are considered younger siblings of the Tariana and are thus not 'eligible' as marriage partners.

¹¹ See further details in A. Y. Aikhenvald, 'Multilingualism and ethnic stereotypes: the Tariana of northwest Amazonia', *Language in Society*, forthcoming. Language awareness among the Tariana is discussed in Aikhenvald, 'Language awareness'.

¹² Michael Silverstein, 'Language structure and linguistic ideology', in R. Clyne, W. Hanks, C. Hofbauer (eds), *The elements: Parasession on linguistic units and levels*, Chicago, Chicago Linguistic Society, 1979, pp. 193-247.

¹³ In the sense of E. Ochs, 'Indexicality and socialization', in James W. Stigler, Richard A. Shweder and Gilbert Herdt (eds), *Cultural psychology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 287-308.

¹⁴ The term 'White man's language', or 'White man's thing', is a literal translation of the Tariana term *yalana yarupe* (White.man thing) consistently used to refer to the dominant Portuguese (Brazil); it is also used to refer to other languages spoken by White people, e.g. French (but not English which is called *ingles yarupe* (English thing), *americano yarupe*, or *gringu yarupe*; the words *inglês*, *americano* and *gringo* are of Portuguese origin; Spanish is referred to as *colombianu yarupe* (Colombian's thing). Most of my consultants have had some

experience of working in Colombia and Venezuela, and speak at least some Spanish, but hardly ever use it in the Brazilian context.

¹⁵ See Woolard, *Double Talk*, p. 89 on the multifaceted notion of ‘status’.

¹⁶ See Márcio Meira, ‘O Tempo dos Patrões. Extrativismo da piaçava entre os índios do Rio Xié (Alto Rio Negro)’, MA Thesis, Unicamp, Campinas, SP.1993; and J. Hemming, *Amazon frontier. The defeat of the Brazilian Indians*, London, Macmillan,1987

¹⁷ See p. 146 of S. O. Hugh-Jones, ‘The gun and the bow’, *L’Homme*, 106-107, XXVIII, 1988, pp. 138-55.

¹⁸ The term ‘Mock Portuguese’ was coined on the basis of Jane Hill’s (1995) discussion of Mock Spanish in the USA; the term Mock Spanish goes back to Pike (1945).

¹⁹ Jane Hill, ‘Mock Spanish: A site for the indexical reproduction of racism in American English’, in *Language and Culture*, Symposium 2, (<http://www.language-culture.org/colloquia/symposia/hill-jane/>), 1995.

²⁰ On the expansion of Western-style football in the Vaupés environment and the competitive spirit that goes with it, see Jefferson Jurema Silva, ‘O Universo mítico ritual do povo Tukano. Análise Centrada nas Atividades Lúdicas’, Ph.D. diss., Faculdade de ciências do desporto e de educação física, Universidade de Porto, 1999.

²¹ See C. A. Ferguson, ‘Diglossia’, in Dell Hymes (ed.) *Language in culture and society*, New York, Harper International, 1964, pp. 429-39; H. Schiffrin ‘Diglossia as a sociolinguistic situation’, in F. Coulmas (ed.) *The handbook of sociolinguistics*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1998, pp. 205-16.

²² Aikhenvald, *Language Contact*, p. 275.

²³ See Aikhenvald, ‘Language awareness’.

²⁴ J. J. Gumperz, ‘The socio-linguistic significance of conversational code-switching’, *Working Papers of Language behavior Research laboratory*, 16, 1976, pp. 1-45.

²⁵ See Jane Hill ‘“Today there is no respect”: nostalgia, “respect” and oppositional discourse in Mexicano (Nahuatl) language ideology’, in Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard and Paul V. Kroskrity (eds), *Language ideologies: practice and theory*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp.68-86.

²⁶ See J. Fishman, ‘Sociolinguistics’, in F. Coulmas (ed.), *Handbook of language and ethnic identity*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 152-63.

²⁷ See Brüzzi, *A civilização indígena*.

²⁸ As stated by Dixon, R. M. W. *The Rise and fall of languages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 113; also see Silva ‘O Universo mítico ritual’, for an insightful analysis of competition in the Vaupés area.

²⁹ Abbreviations used throughout this paper are: 1 - first person; 2 - second person; 3 - third person; ANIM - animate; ANT - anterior; ART - article; AUG - augmentative; CAUS - causative; CL - classifier; COMPL - completive; DECL - declarative; DEM - demonstrative; EXIST - existential; f - feminine; FUT - future; FUT.NOM - nominal future; INDF - indefinite person; INFR - inferred; INT - intentional; INTER - interrogative; LOC - locative; masc, MASC - masculine; NEG - negative; nf - nonfeminine; NOM - nominalisation; OBJ - object; pl, PL - plural; PRES - present; PURP - purposive; REM.P.INFR - remote past inferred; REM.P.VIS - remote past visual; sg - singular; SING - singulative; TOP.NON.A/S - topical nonsubject; VIS - visual.

³⁰ See, for instance, the discussion of the Mexicanos’ attitude to numbers, and other examples, in Hill and Hill, ‘Mixed grammar’, p. 337.

³¹ Traditional speakers belong to older generation; their language retains a number of archaic features characteristic of other Arawak languages in the area. The evaluation of speakers’ proficiency was conducted in collaboration with the Tariana (see Aikhenvald 2002a and Appendix 5 in Aikhenvald 2002b).

³² See Barry J. Blake, 'Global trends in language', *Linguistics*, 39, 2001, pp. 1009-28.

³³ Hugh-Jones, 'The gun', p. 141.

³⁴ A. da Silva Brüzzi, *Crenças e lendas do Uaupes*, Cayambe-Ecuador, Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1994, pp. 67-8.

³⁵ Brüzzi, *Crenças e lendas do Uaupes*, p. 68; José M. Cornelio et al. (narrators), *Waferinaipe ianheke. A sabedoria dos nossos antepassados. Histórias dos Hohodene e dos Walipere-dakenai do rio Aiari*, São Gabriel da Cachoeira, ACIRA/FOIRN, 1999, p. 92; Marcília Fontes Rodrigues, p.c. (recorded in 1991).

³⁶ Brüzzi, *Crenças*, p. 68.

³⁷ Cornelio et al., *Waferinaipe ianheke*, p. 92; Marcília Fontes Rodrigues, p.c.

³⁸ Cornelio et al., *Waferinaipe ianheke*, p. 92.

³⁹ Marcília Fontes Rodrigues, p.c.

⁴⁰ See Hugh-Jones, 'The gun', pp. 143-5, for a composite version, involving the acquisition of a gun by White people as opposed to the bow acquired by Indians.

⁴¹ Brüzzi, *Crenças*, p. 69.

⁴² Hugh-Jones, 'The gun', p. 146.

⁴³ E. Hamp, 'On signs of health and death', in Nancy Dorian (ed.), *Investigating obsolescence. Studies in language contraction and death*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 197-210.

⁴⁴ See P. Bruthiaux, P. 'Predicting challenges to English as a global language in the 21st century'. *Language Problems And Language Planning* 26: 133-55, 2002 on how and why English is likely to maintain its world-wide dominance as a global language.