Language Awareness and Correct Speech among the Tariana of Northwest Amazonia

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Abstract. This article discusses the way "correct" and "incorrect" language uses are rationalized by Tariana speakers in the linguistic area of the Vaupés River basin in Brazil. This area is known for its institutionalized multilingualism due to linguistic exogamy operating between the Tariana and speakers of a number of languages belonging to the East Tucano subgroup of Tucano family. There is a strong constraint against language mixing in Tariana. This constraint operates predominantly against loan forms and items that contain Tucano-like sounds. A few morphosyntactic constructions calqued from East Tucano languages are also identified as "incorrect" Tariana. An additional mechanism, which helps determine what is "correct" and what is not, is constant reference to the way in which representatives of older generations speak.

1. Introduction. In most parts of the world, people are aware of how they speak, and are able to judge their speech as "correct" or "incorrect," or "better" or "worse" (see Bloomfield's classic [1927] paper, and also Woolard and Schieffelin [1994:64]). The ways in which linguistic "correctness" and "incorrectness" are rationalized relate to current doctrines concerning power and value associated with a language. In their value judgments about language, speakers—consciously or not—select certain dimensions of languages, and background others. This rationalization is related to the structure and function of languages (see discussion in Hill [2000] and Silverstein [1985]), and can have an effect on these as the result of conscious or unconscious language planning. A study of mechanisms of language awareness can be especially instructive in the case of multilingual communities with strict rules of codeswitching and established constraint against "language mixing." A study of this kind would potentially contribute to our knowledge of local language ideologies understood as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein 1979:193; cf. Woolard and Schieffelin 1994).1

In this article, I discuss language awareness among the traditionally multilingual speakers of Tariana, an Arawak language spoken in the Vaupés area in Brazil.2 This area is known for its language group exogamy (operating between the speakers of Tariana and of languages belonging to the East Tucano subgroup—mostly Tucano, but also Piratapuya, Wanano, and Desano), and for institutionalized multilingualism—language being the badge of identity for each
group. Language "descent" is patrilineal: one identifies with one's father's language and group. The principles of linguistically exogamous marriage are the ones formulated by Jackson (1974:62) for Barasano, another East Tucano group in the Colombian Vaupés area: "My brothers are those who share a language with me" and "we don't marry our sisters." Marrying someone from the same language group is looked upon as akin to incest. This results in a situation of stable multilingualism. Presently Tucano is gaining ground as a dominant lingua franca of the area, resulting in the endangerment of most other indigenous languages in the Brazilian Vaupés area; consequently multilingualism is no longer egalitarian in Haudricourt's (1961) sense.³

In section 2, I look at the ways in which the languages of the Vaupés area are kept apart and discuss aspects of language awareness regulating the constraint against "foreign elements." Language awareness helps determine what is "correct" and what is "incorrect," and is instrumental in identifying "correct" or "proper" speakers as against less competent ones; this is the focus of section 3. Conclusions are given in section 4.

2. Language awareness

2.1. Constraint against borrowings. Multilingualism in the Vaupés area is maintained through a strong constraint against language mixing, mostly viewed in terms of inserting lexical or grammatical morphemes of East Tucano origin into one's speech ("code mixing"). Those who violate the principle that languages should be kept strictly apart and who employ lexical and grammatical loans are ridiculed as incompetent and sloppy (the Tariana term for these sloppy speakers is na-nam-u-ra na-sape 'they mix they speak'). "Codeswitching" and "code mixing" are allowed only in direct speech complements and in the speech of animals and evil spirits, in storytelling and everyday interaction. (As far as I can judge, codeswitching used to be avoided in highly formulaic ritual interaction, e.g., during the Cigar-Smoking ritual; see Aikhenvald [forthcoming a: chap. 25]. Hardly anyone knows how to conduct formulaic ritual speeches nowadays.) Using elements of other languages—Baniwa, an Arawak language spoken on the outskirts of the Vaupés area (closely related to Tariana but not mutually intelligible and not at all influenced by languages from East Tucano group), or Portuguese—is not so strongly condemned, though it does have unpleasant connotations (described in some detail in Aikhenvald [forthcoming b]). We return to this issue in section 2.2.4.

The long-term interaction between East Tucano languages and the Tariana dialect continuum has resulted in rampant diffusion of patterns and calquing of categories—which include classifiers, tense-evidentiality, number marking, and even pronominal cross-referencing. There is a strong areal convergence of patterns, rather than of forms, without, however, the emergence of anything like an "identical" grammar (Aikhenvald 1996, 1999a). In this way, the Vaupés area
differs from other multilingual communities where lexical borrowings ("direct" diffusion in Heath's [1978] sense) occur alongside diffusion of patterns ("indirect diffusion" [Heath 1978]), such as the Dravidian-Indic diffusional area described by Gumperz and Wilson (1971), or multilingual Jewish communities (Weinreich 1953). One can argue for some similarity between constraints against borrowings in the Vaupés area and the restrictions on borrowings in Arizona Tewa (Kroskrity 1992, 1993, 1998; Silverstein 1998). However, the maintenance of Tewa purism is thought to be derived—at least to certain extent—from strong theocratic institutions and from employing ritual linguistic forms as models for other domains (see also Woolard and Schieffelin 1994:64); there are no such models at work in the Vaupés area. (Also see Hill and Hill 1980.)

What has been said so far appears to agree fully with Silverstein's (e.g., 1979, 1981) idea of cognitive "limits of awareness," whereby "relatively presupposing" (more referential and "continuously segmentable") linguistic items are more likely to be the object of close scrutiny and conscious monitoring than, for instance, syntactic patterns or prosodic phenomena. The mechanisms controlling possible influx of loans into Tariana, however, go beyond simply "lexical"—or "morphemic"—awareness. The way in which these mechanisms operate also allows us to explain how some East Tucano lexical and grammatical items managed to make their way into Tariana.

2.2. Types of language awareness. Language awareness of Tariana speakers relates to most levels of linguistic structure. We distinguish lexical or morphemic awareness, whereby speakers are able to identify foreign morphemes (section 2.2.1); phonological awareness, whereby speakers identify as foreign any elements that contain sounds attributed to another language (section 2.2.2); and morphosyntactic awareness, whereby loan constructions are identified (section 2.2.3). At the same time, speakers are aware of generational differences and model their speech on that of the "older generation"; I call this "generational awareness" (section 2.2.4).

2.2.1. Morphemic awareness. Lexical or morphemic awareness, whereby speakers are able to distinguish borrowed lexicon and borrowed grammatical morphemes, creates strong resistance to the borrowing of forms. The use of lexical items (including interjections) and grammatical morphemes identifiable as East Tucano is equally condemned and ridiculed. Gustavo spontaneously produced (1), with a Tucano lexical item (in boldface), and was shamed for it by giggles from older speakers. After he had left, Maye commented on Gustavo's lack of proficiency in Tariana.

(1) wa-yarue-nuku⁶ ayū pi-sape-ka
  1PL-language-TOP.NON.A/S be.good 2SG-speak-REC.P.VIS
  'You speak our language well.'
When Juvena produced a Tucano interjection *ben*a 'Wow!' (reaction to something unexpected) in (2), in the middle of telling a story in Tariana, this provoked merciless mirth.

(2) ne-na di-su-wa diha ma:t*site* b*n*a!
then-REM.P.VIS 3SGNP-lie he bad+NCL:ANIM wow
'Then (there) he (the tapir) lay, the naughty one. Wow! (I said).'

Example (3), with a grammatical morpheme *-ba* ‘obvious’, of Tucano origin (Tucano *baa*), spoken by Emi, provoked a similar reaction.

(3) nu-we-ri-yana dheya-mha-de-ka
1SG-younger.sibling-MASC-PEJ 3SGNP+answer-FUT-OBJVIOUS
'My naughty younger brother will obviously answer (me).'

A bound morpheme identifiable as Tucano is condemned even if it occurs with a root or a suffix of Tariana origin. This is the case with two adverbs. One is *mak*a-*tu*li*na* ‘again’, which consists of a Tariana dummy adjective root *mak*a, a loan morpheme *tu*li (found in Tucano *op*a-*tu*ri* ‘again’, where *op*a is a Tucano dummy root), and Tariana *-i*n*a ‘adverbializer’. The other one is *mak*a-*yuli ‘in a curved way’, which consists of the Tariana dummy root *mak*a- and *-yuli ‘curved’, from Tucano *yuri ‘curved’. Those who employed these adverbs were said to “mix their language with Tucano.”

East Tucano influence on Tariana often involves grammatical accommodation: morphosyntactic “deployment of a native morpheme on the model of the syntactic function of a phonetically similar morpheme in the diffusing language” (i.e., the language that is the source of diffusion) (Watkins 2001:58). The existing East Tucano–Tariana look-alikes that share grammatical functions tend to be regarded as tokens of language mixing. For instance, Tucano and other East Tucano languages use -*ya* as a marker of imperative. Tariana has a phonologically similar morpheme -*ya* ‘emphatic’ that can be used on imperative verbs, among other contexts. Similarly, Tucano has a marker -*ri* used for commands with a tinge of a warning (e.g., “make sure you don’t fall”). Tariana has a relativizer -*ri* with a wide variety of functions that is also used in commands with a similar meaning. These usages are avoided as being indicative of language mixing and are considered “incorrect” Tariana.

2.2.2. Phonological awareness. Another mechanism at work by which Tariana speakers identify possible tokens of language mixing is phonological awareness. That is, any morpheme that sounds East Tucano-like tends to be discarded as “foreign.”

One such example results from phonological simplification. The polite imperative marker in Tariana is -*nha*, used exclusively with second person.
Some Tariana speakers tend to pronounce aspirated nasals (absent from East Tucano languages and found in the Arawak languages of the region) as simple nasals. Tucano has a first-person plural imperative marker -ra (Ramirez 1997: 146), pronounced as - na if there is a nasal consonant in the root. Those speakers who pronounce Tariana polite imperative -nha as -na are accused of mixing it up with the Tucano -ra/-na ‘first-person plural imperative’—regardless of the fact that the Tariana polite second-person imperative and the Tucano first person imperative have a totally different morphological distribution.

Another example is the treatment of the high central vowel i. Unlike East Tucano languages, where the high central vowel i is quite frequent, in Tariana this vowel occurs in just two morphemes. One is onomatopoeic ihmeni ‘shout iiih!’—condemned as “Tucano,” in spite of the fact that none of the Tariana speakers was able to point to anything similar to this root in any East Tucano language; they simply said “it just does not sound right.” The other morpheme is -pi, a nominal augmentative enclitic with emphatic overtones, as in hema-pi (tapir-AUG) ‘a really big tapir’. Those who use the enclitic -pi are accused of using a borrowed form. A similar-sounding morpheme is indeed found in some East Tucano languages, for instance, Desano -pi ‘contrastive’ (its Tucano correspondent is pe’e) and Tucano -pi ‘locative’ (used on locative and temporal constituents [Ramirez 1997:218–22]). No morpheme of the form -pi has an augmentative meaning in any East Tucano language—but, due to its “Tucano” shape, it is regarded as “foreign” by Tariana speakers. Interestingly, Baniwa (an Arawak language closely related to Tariana) has an augmentative with a shape -pu or -pi (in free variation).9

One of the reasons why the speakers of Santa Rosa Tariana disapprove of the Tariana of Periquitos lies in the existence of a number of lexical accommodations, whereby Tariana words sound more similar to their counterparts in an East Tucano language. Since the preferential marriage partners of the Periquitos Tariana are the Wanano, the source of lexical accommodation is mostly Wanano. For instance, the Periquitos correspondent of the Santa Rosa wasā is wahsā ‘come on, let’s go’, influenced by Wanano bahsā ‘let’s go!’ Similarly, the Periquitos word for ‘O.K.’ is hai, just like the Wanano hai, and different from Santa Rosa haw and Baniwa haw. Younger speakers of the Periquitos dialect tend to pronounce word-final a as short i; consequently, they are said to speak “like the Tucano.”

Lexical tokens, and even sounds, can be treated as emblematic by in-group members of a speech community (see discussion in Ross 2001). Foreign sounds can be recognized as “anti-emblematic” by members of an out-group; this is the case of i identified as a part of “Tucano accent” in Tariana. In particular, the treatment of -pi (which is not a loan) indicates the strength of phonological awareness as a factor in identifying tokens of language mixing (see section 2.2.4 below).
2.2.3. Morphosyntactic awareness. As noted above, the long-term interaction between Tariana and East Tucano languages has resulted in a strong areal convergence of patterns rather than of forms. Numerous categories have developed in Tariana under areal pressure from East Tucano languages. The great majority of these are accepted as “correct” Tariana. There are, however, three types of morphosyntactic structures that involve an areal influence from East Tucano and are considered “incorrect” Tariana: analytic marking of kinship possession, verb compounding, and clause sequencing.

Analytic marking of kinship possession. Two kinship nouns, ha-do (parent-FEM) ‘mother’ and -ha-niri (parent-MASC) ‘father’ are obligatorily possessed (i.e., take possessive prefixes) in traditional “good” Tariana (as well as in the closely related Baniwa, and in other Arawak languages of the area [Aikhenvald 1999a]): nu-ha-do is ‘my mother’ and nu-ha-niri is ‘my father’. Some speakers (see section 3.2) mark possession through juxtaposition of the possessor and the possessee, as in nuha hado (I parent-FEM) ‘my mother’ and nuha ha-niri (I parent-MASC) ‘my father’. This is a calque of the East Tucano pattern; compare Tucano yi’i pa-co (I parent-FEM) ‘my mother’ and yi’i pa-ci (I parent-MASC) ‘my father’.

Verb compounding. Tariana has productive verb serialization—shared with other Arawak languages of the area—and incipient verb compounding. East Tucano languages have productive verb compounding (Aikhenvald 2000). In a number of cases, less-traditional speakers of Tariana use verb compounding while more-traditional ones prefer verb serialization. Younger people would say di-ni-sita (3SG.NF-do-FINISH) ‘he has finished doing (something)’, and older people would correct this to di-ni di-sita (3SG.NF-do 3SG.NF-finish) ‘he has finished doing (something)’ (lit., ‘he did he finished’).

Clause sequencing. In traditional Tariana, the main mechanism for putting two clauses together is adding an enclitic -ka ‘subordinator’ onto the predicate of one of the clauses; in Tucano the same result is achieved with a nominalization. Young speakers nominalize the predicate of a subordinate clause, as does Juvi in (4), while older speakers—like Candi in (5)—use the subordinating enclitic.

(4) nese dihpani-ri di-na nhepa na-niha-niki then 3SG.NF+work-NOM 3SG.NF-OBJ 3PL+get 3SG.NF-eat-COMPL
‘While he was working, they took him and ate him up.’ (lit., ‘Him working . . .’)

(5) nese dihpani-ka di-na nhepa na-niha-niki then 3SG.NF+work-SUB 3SG.NF-OBJ 3PL+get 3SG.NF-eat-COMPL
‘While he was working, they took him and ate him up.’

Table 1 contains a summary of areally diffused and inherited patterns and their evaluations. Speakers who use analytic marking for kinship possession,
verb compounding, and nominalizations instead of subordinators in clause sequencing, as described above, are treated as not fully competent and reliable, but are not immediately accused of “mixing languages,” whereas that accusation is made of those who produce (1)–(3).

Table 1. Areally Diffused Patterns and Morphosyntactic Awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INHERITED ARAWAK STRUCTURES IN TARIANA</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
<th>PATTERNS DIFFUSED FROM EAST TUCANO LANGUAGES</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>possession marked with prefixes</td>
<td>correct</td>
<td>possession marked with juxtaposition of terms</td>
<td>incorrect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serial verbs</td>
<td>correct</td>
<td>verb compounding</td>
<td>incorrect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clause sequencing marked with subordinator -ka</td>
<td>correct</td>
<td>clause sequencing marked with a nominalization</td>
<td>incorrect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When I asked Maye, one of the Tariana language authorities, what makes the constructions in the third column of table 1 incorrect, he first said, “This does not sound quite right, our fathers used to say it differently” (see section 2.2.4), and then added: “This is almost like Tucano.” This is an example of an insightful native speaker linguist explaining a linguistic notion of areal diffusion of patterns without having access to technical terminology (similar instances of “naive” linguistic explanations are found in Dixon [1992]). There are reasons to believe (cf. Aikhenvald 2000) that these structures have been calqued from East Tucano patterns only recently. Older patterns of areal diffusion have been fully incorporated into Tariana and are now not recognized as foreign (see examples in Aikhenvald [1996]).

Morphosyntactic features can be emblematic of linguistic identity. Chappell (2001) shows how the Taiwanese variety of Mandarin underwent massive calquing of patterns from Southern Min, a “minority” language in Taiwan, rather than from the officially dominant Mandarin, probably because Southern Min, and not Mandarin, is “emblematic of current loyalties,” thus serving as “a badge of being Taiwanese” (p. 353). Enfield (2001) mentions that syntactic constructions such as patterns of syntactic causatives can be recognizable as markers of identity. This is very similar to the antiemblematic rejection of at least some recent “foreign” patterns by the Tariana.

2.2.4. Generational awareness: “This is how our grandfathers spoke.” The speech of the older generation of the Tariana speakers differs in a number of ways from the way the language is spoken by younger people. The forms attributed to the older generation are considered correct, good Tariana. A sample of these differences is given in table 2. (Forms in the first column of table 1 are also the ones attributed to “older” generation.)
Table 2. Generational Differences between Tariana Speakers: A Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLDER GENERATION</th>
<th>YOUNGER GENERATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>diphthong ai, as in haiku ‘wood’, haikuna ‘tree’</td>
<td>ai &gt; e, as in heku ‘wood’,hekuna ‘tree’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sequence -wa, as in -keñwa ‘start’, yakolekwa ‘door’</td>
<td>wa &gt; a, as in -keña ‘start’, yakoleka ‘door’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no vowel assimilation in enclitics, e.g., -naku ‘present visual’, -naku ‘topical nonsubject’</td>
<td>vowel assimilation in enclitics, e.g., -naka ‘present visual’, -nuku ‘topical nonsubject’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possessive form of ‘hair’ contains classifier -hipita for ‘land’</td>
<td>possessive form of ‘hair’ contains no marker -re, e.g., nu-tfa (1SG-hair) ‘my hair’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The argument “this is how our grandparents speak (or spoke)” may override the principles of language awareness discussed in sections 2.2.1–2.2.3. Tariana does have a limited number of loans—at least a dozen fully nativized bound verb roots and a few verbal enclitics. The verbs typically contain a thematic suffix -ta. Loans from Tucano include Tariana -besi-ta ‘choose’; Tucano besê; Tariana -bue-ta ‘smoke, blow (of wind)’, Tucano buê; Tariana -bole-ta ‘defeather; husk’, Tucano bure; Tariana -ba-ta ‘swing’, Tucano bahâ; Tariana -dole-ta ‘carry on one’s shoulders’, Tucano durê; Tariana -tôrê-ta ‘roll (leaf, or clay)’, Tucano tôrê; Tariana -yota ‘suspend, swing (e.g., a bag on one’s shoulder)’, Tucano yoô; Tariana -pusita ‘squat’, Tucano pu’sâ ‘squat’. The verbal enclitics are Tariana -bohta ‘conditional, potential’, from Tucano boo ‘potential marker’ plus the Tariana thematic suffix -ta, and Tariana pisi, an enclitic describing a stretching movement, from Tucano pisi. None of these are recognized as borrowings, since all of them are known to have been used not only by living representatives of the older generation, but also by the grandfathers and other ancestors of the present-day Tariana.

Generational awareness may override phonological awareness. In section 2.2.2, we noted that -pi ‘augmentative’ is generally condemned as a token of language mixing, since this morpheme contains the high central vowel recognized as “Tucano.” Older speakers, Candi and Ame (the oldest living speaker of the language), have recently started using it. As a result, their Tariana-speaking children have started saying that the augmentative -pi must be all right after all, since the elders (haniri-pe ‘generation of our fathers’) appear to use it so freely.

An additional mechanism of identifying “correct” Tariana may be at work. One day, Ze, a trained teacher instrumental in the creation of the Tariana school project, declared that the morpheme -bala, a verbal enclitic meaning ‘everywhere’ (as in di-ruku-i-bala [3SG.NF-go.down-CAUS-EVERYWHERE] ‘he
that mother. This threw (it) everywhere') may not be “proper” Tariana; he had a suspicion that this could be a Piratapuya word he had learned from his Piratapuya-speaking mother. The strong argument in favor of -bala produced by its defenders was that this morpheme is freely used by the elders Candi and Ame, and was also used by Candi’s late father. The decisive factor, however, came from a different quarter. When Roni, a Tariana speaker of the Kumandene dialect, arrived in the village and spontaneously used -bala, this confirmed that -bala was “true Tariana” after all. The next day, Ze “remembered” that his maternal grandmother was a bona fide Tariana, and that his mother must have learned -bala from her. The form -bala was reestablished in its rights.

This pan-Tariana solidarity works as an additional criterion in deciding what is “correct” and what is “incorrect,” but only if corroborated by “what our grandfathers say.” Note that the Tariana spoken by “mothers” is highly suspicious, since, in the type of language exogamy practiced in the Vaupés area, mothers identify with a different language and thus have no authority in their judgments about a language that is not “their own.” This attitude often goes against the actual facts. For instance, Candi’s wife, a Piratapuya herself, displayed a higher degree of Tariana lexical and cultural knowledge than her younger children Juvi and Ze, and often prompted them with words they did not know. Juvena’s mother, a Wanano, is a better speaker of Tariana than both her sons, Juvena and Ave (the latter is at most a semispeaker; see section 3.2).

Generational awareness, with its strong preference for “the old ways” of speech, has some similarities to what Hill (1998) describes as “discourse of nostalgia” for the bilingual communities around the Malinche volcano in central Mexico. But, unlike speakers of Nahuatl, speakers of Tariana do not contrast the linguistic purity of long ago with the language mixing of today; rather, they strive to be as close as possible to the “long ago” ideal in their language monitoring.

It could be argued that the degree of purism among the Tariana is exacerbated by the fact that the language is endangered. The Santa Rosa dialect is indeed not spoken by children. The adult speakers of the language are, nonetheless, loyal to the language etiquette of the area and do their best to speak Tariana to their father and his generation. However, the same purism and control of language mixing was observed among the Tariana of Periquitos where children do speak the language, and also among speakers of East Tucano languages in the area. This suggests that puristic tendencies are better viewed as part of the Vaupés linguistic ideology (“sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” [Silverstein 1979:193; cf. Woolard and Schieffelin 1994]) rather than an artifact of a dying-language situation.

The only constraint on generational awareness is the speakers’ awareness of individual variation in lexicon, pronunciation, or morphosyntax within each generation. The late father of Candi (the grandfather of Ze, Juvi, and Maye)
used to pronounce the clitic -sō ‘obvious information’ as -su. He also had a number of idiosyncratic, slightly unusual expressions. One of them is wa-whida wa-de-naka who (1PL-head 1PL-have-PRESENT. VISUAL) ‘we have our own head’, in the meaning of ‘we can decide for ourselves’. The verb for ‘have’ in Tariana is normally not used with body parts and other inalienably possessed items, and modern speakers are aware of this rule. When speakers repeat this slightly irregular expression, they always add the phrase wawheri yarupe-nuku ‘in our grandfather’s language’. Ame, the oldest current speaker of Tariana, regularly pronounces the enclitic for ‘immediate action’ as -suda and not as -sida, as everyone else does. And Maye, a highly proficient and competent speaker, applies vowel assimilation not only to enclitics (see table 2), but also to suffixes: -kade ‘negative’ comes out as -kede (e.g., mhema-kede (NEG+hear-NEG) instead of mhema-kade ‘he does not hear’). Using -kede instead of -kade is known as Maye yarupe ‘Maye’s thing, Maye’s way of speech’, and -suda instead of -sida is ‘Ame’s way’. That is, generational awareness operates in terms of a “critical mass” of speakers using a particular form.

Variants used by individuals get criticized when their origin is identifiable. These peculiarities of speech fall under one of the stereotypes discussed in Aikhenvald (forthcoming b)—those who mix dialects of Tariana are scornfully referred to as people who “cannot speak properly.” For example, Ame uses the form -ki:te rather than Tariana of Santa Rosa -kalite for ‘speak’. Since this form is reminiscent of the the form -kite ‘speak’ used in Tariana of Periquitos, in this instance Ame is scorned for committing the sin of dialect mixing.

Two Tariana elders, Yuse Paiphe and Dika, along with their children (see section 3.2), use just one marker of reported evidentiality, -pida, due to the influence of Baniwa, a closely related (but not mutually intelligible) language that also has just one marker. This usage is considered a deficiency in their language—though Yuse Paiphe is considered a reasonably competent speaker. All other speakers distinguish three reported evidentiality terms: present (-pida), recent past (-pida-ka), and remote past (-pida-na).

Generational awareness also results in a certain reluctance to use innovations—even if these cannot be identified as calques from an East Tucano language. One such innovation is the loss of the prefix i- ‘indefinite person’ in possessive constructions with an overt possessor; while traditional speakers would say di-whida (3SG.NF-head) ‘his head’ vs. ne:ri i-whida (deer INDF-head) ‘deer’s head’, more innovative ones say di-whida (3SG.NF-head) ‘his head’ and ne:ri di-whida (deer 3SG.NF-head) ‘deer’s head’, lit., ‘deer his-head’ (cf. Aikhenvald 1999a). But this innovation is frowned upon by traditional speakers.

In summary, a strong constraint against mixing languages among the Tariana is realized in terms of awareness of foreign morphemes (free or bound), of foreign sounds (even if these sounds are found in native morphemes) and of some foreign constructions. Generational awareness, whereby the way “our ancestors” used to speak” is rationalized as the correct one, allows loan
constructions and a certain number of loanwords to be established in the language. "Pan-Tariana" solidarity works as a mechanism of language purism only insofar as it confirms what is already there in the old people's speech.

The constraint against language mixing works against elements from East Tucano languages, but not so much against elements from Portuguese. When one speaks Tariana, the insertion of a certain amount of Portuguese is allowed (for instance, if there is no term for an object or for an action in the Tariana language). But, as I have shown elsewhere (Aikhenvald forthcoming b), using Portuguese beyond necessity has negative connotations: those who do it "want to be better" than others, and are criticized for this.

3. "Correct" and "incorrect" Tariana. With the above in mind, we can now look at what properties of Tariana are rationalized as "good" and "bad," or "correct" and "incorrect," and how the proficiencies of individual speakers are evaluated by this small community. In section 3.1, I discuss types of linguistic knowledge valued by the Tariana-speaking community. In section 3.2, I briefly outline the language proficiency and the status of some speakers, in the spirit of Bloomfield's (1927) linguistic profiles of his Menomini consultants.

3.1. Linguistic knowledge among the Tariana. Tariana used to be spoken by a large number of people in numerous settlements along the Vaupés River. The clans of Tariana were placed in a strict hierarchy (according to their order of appearance stated in the creation myth [Brüzzi 1977:102-3; Aikhenvald 1999a, 1999b]), and each spoke 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 in favor of Tucano. As a result, Tariana is actively spoken by only about 100 people, from two subtribes of the lowest-ranking group, Wamiarikune. It is spoken in two villages—Santa Rosa and Periquitos, and by a few adult people (of the Kumandene, a middle-ranking sub-tribe) in Santa Terezinha. Santa Rosa is located about five hours up the Vaupés River from the nearest mission, Iauareté—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 twenty-seven years old). In Periquitos, Tariana is spoken by some children. Many of the Tariana who no longer speak their language possess a good lexical knowledge (especially of terms for fauna and flora, and sometimes even kinship terms); however, they cannot maintain a conversation or produce a coherent story. These people—whose passive knowledge is substantial and some of whom could be considered semispeakers—are ridiculed as nepitaneta-mia (3PL+ name+CAUS-ONLY) 'those who cannot speak and can only call names'. None of my consultants are semispeakers in the sense of Dorian (1981:107) or Schmidt (1985); all of them are fully proficient in the variety they speak.

Thus, lexical knowledge per se is not very much appreciated; those Tariana
who cannot speak the Tariana language are considered pitiful languageless beings who have to speak a "borrowed language" (na-sawayã na-sape 'they borrow they speak'). What is appreciated is the ability to maintain a conversation in Tariana without language mixing and to tell a long coherent story, especially a culturally significant one such as a story of the wanderings of Tariana ancestors, or any version of the origin myth. A competent speaker is also expected to have a clear pronunciation (e.g., no or little post-tonic vowel reduction and careful pronunciation of aspirated consonants), to speak "like our grandfathers did," and to avoid innovative Tucano calques as much as possible (see section 2.2.4). The more the speaker conforms to these rules regulating language awareness, the more respect he or she gets in the community.

3.2. Linguistic profiles of some Tariana speakers. In this section, I briefly outline the language proficiency of some speakers and their status in the community.¹³

Candi (over seventy years of age) is considered the model of a traditional speaker of Tariana. To my knowledge, he is the only person among the Tariana never to violate the rules for language choice. Though perfectly fluent in Tucano and in a number of other East Tucano languages—Piratapuya, Wanano, Desano—he never uses Tucano when speaking to his children, his younger brother Leo or his classificatory brothers, addressing them in Tariana and demanding the same from them. He is a gifted storyteller, and has a vast knowledge of Tariana place names, culture, and lore. His language is archaic in all respects. For instance, besides the forms in the first column in tables 1 and 2, he employs an archaic set of proximate demonstratives. He also has some shamanic knowledge, and enjoys great respect in the community. His advice is sought on every kind of topic.

His younger brother Leo, in his early fifties, is a fine and knowledgeable storyteller (however, he admits to knowing less than Candi). He speaks Tariana and Tucano intermittently to his two sons, and just Tucano to his daughters and his wife. He uses some archaic forms (e.g., -naku and not -nuku for topical nonsubject marker; see table 2) and is careful about not mixing languages; just occasionally he employs a compound verb structure rather than a serial verb construction (table 1). He can cure some sicknesses, but his shamanic capacities are not as powerful as Candi's. He is considered next best after Candi.

Ame (over eighty years of age) is the oldest living speaker of Tariana. He speaks just Tucano with his wife and with most of his children. Most of the forms he uses are archaic, and he has good cultural knowledge. However, recently—probably due to illness—he has become forgetful and relaxed about his speech habits, since he has been observed to insert Tucano kinship terms into his Tariana, and so has been generally proclaimed to be "not all there any more."
Yuse Paiphe and Dika are both in their seventies. Yuse Paiphe speaks Tariana to his sons and Tucano to his daughters-in-law; his grandchildren are the only children in Santa Rosa to understand some Tariana. He has some cultural knowledge, and is considered reasonably competent. Some of the forms he uses are archaic; he says -naku and not -nuku for 'topical nonsubject'. But his Tariana is looked upon as somewhat faulty. His pronunciation is blurred, in that he reduces most unstressed vowels. He is said to have grown up among Baniwa speakers, and consequently has never completely learned how to use the evidential system; he consistently uses present reported enclitic -pida, instead of the remote past and recent past reported enclitics. As a result, respect for him is dwindling.

Dika is a speaker of middling ability, and his cultural knowledge is limited. He speaks Tariana and Tucano to his children; but his Tariana is known to be hard to understand and frequently ungrammatical. He uses a reduced system of evidentials and often lapses into younger people's forms (see tables 1 and 2). Moreover, he is known to insert a Tucano morpheme now and again; for this reason, he is constantly made fun of and called médite 'useless'. He does not have much authority, but is liked by everyone because of his generous and easy-going character.

The children of Candi, Yuse Paiphe, and Dika, speak Tariana with their father's generation and just Tucano with their children. Ame's children know little if any Tariana. His eldest daughter Perfi has some lexical knowledge of Tariana and can maintain a very simple conversation; she is the nearest equivalent to a semispeaker I encountered in the area.

Maye, Candi's eldest son, is the best Tariana language expert of his generation. He has good lexical and cultural knowledge; his pronunciation is very clear and his speech is morphologically complex. He only occasionally uses younger speakers' forms (see tables 1 and 2), and always uses the prefix i- in possessive constructions. He is perhaps the most respected representative of his generation. Maye is just a year younger than his uncle Leo, but, since Leo is a representative of older generation, Leo has more authority.

Candi's eldest daughter, Oli, is a fluent speaker with a comprehensive knowledge of the traditional kinship system, for which she is respected. She speaks a typical younger speaker's Tariana, marking possession with juxtaposition of terms, applying vowel assimilation in enclitics, and hardly ever using the person marker i-. Often, a Tucano morpheme (e.g., -ba 'obvious' or -ta 'emphatic') will creep into her Tariana. What she says gets corrected by Maye, Leo, and Candi; behind her back she is called Yasenisado 'Tucano woman'.

Her younger brother Gara is a good and witty storyteller; however, his Tariana is full of Tucano calques and ungrammaticalities (he is the only person to insert an object NP between the two components of a serial verb). He is the object of envy (not so much of respect) for being the only Tariana speaker successful in the white man's world (he is in charge of a local hospital), and, for
this reason, he is not overtly ridiculed. His speech is condescendingly referred to as Gara yarupe ‘Gara’s thing’.

His younger sibling Juvi does not have great cultural knowledge, but he is constantly trying to learn from Candi; his aspirations are to become the political leader of the Tariana people. He is a good storyteller, and tries to speak traditional Tariana, but often lapses into younger people’s language, with Tucano calques and the coordinating technique illustrated in (4). His hypercorrections are referred to as “Juvi’s thing.” Juvi is the only person to speak the regional variety of Portuguese whenever possible, and this speech behavior is frowned upon as inappropriate. He is said to be appreciated more by white people than by his fellow villagers.

Candi’s youngest son, Ze, is a trained schoolteacher, and is very fluent in younger people’s Tariana. Since he does not have much knowledge of traditional life and practices, he constantly relies on Candi and Leo. He is desperately trying to make his speech as archaic as possible, and is the greatest partisan of the correct Tariana language spoken “the way our fathers speak it.” He is not a language authority, but his effort to become one is appreciated by the community.

Candi’s youngest daughter Lurde can understand Tariana but is “too shy” to speak it; this is a source of chagrin to Candi and to his other children.

All the children of Yuse Paiphe are fluent in younger people’s Tariana. Only one of them, Nu, is considered “reasonable”; he has a clearer pronunciation than others. Nu’s elder brothers, Saba and Kiri, reduce their vowels and do not aspirate their consonants. Their stories are full of Tucano calques. None of them employ the person marker i-. In addition, they use a reduced set of evidentials—this contributes to their reputation as “deficient speakers.” They are respected for being good providers, reliable, and generous, but their lack of language competence is constantly commented upon. The four daughters of Yuse, all married to Tucano men, complain of getting rusty in their Tariana. Just like Oli, they are frowned upon as “Tucano women.”

Dika’s elder son Emi is acclaimed as one of the best storytellers in the village; he is fluent and witty. Emi has a considerable knowledge of the local flora and fauna, but his cultural knowledge is considered insufficient. His Tariana is said to “be influenced by Baniwa”; just like his father, he uses a reduced set of evidentials. Like the speakers of the Periquitos dialect (see below), he distinguishes a general animate numeral classifier (e.g., pa-ite ‘one [animate]’) from a general inanimate one (e.g., pa-ita ‘one [inanimate manmade object]’), unlike the mainstream speakers of the Santa Rosa dialect who use the general inanimate form to cover both animates and inanimate manmade objects (pa-ita ‘one [animate; manmade object]’). His younger brother Raimu is a fluent speaker, but does not feel confident enough to tell a full story in Tariana. Both Raimu and Emi employ younger people’s forms, and occasionally insert Tucano morphemes, as in example (3). Just as with Saba and Kiri, their inability to
“speak correctly” is constantly lamented by other members of the community.

Juvena had been thought by everyone not to speak any Tariana at all. His father Jum (Ame’s younger brother) had died when his children were little, and their mother—a Wanano fluent in Tariana—brought them up all by herself. However, a couple of weeks after I had arrived, Juvena volunteered to tell a story in Tariana, and did it in a fluent younger speakers’ variety, to the surprised appreciation of all the others. His lexical knowledge is good, but he often inserts Tucano morphemes and is hardly considered an expert (cf. example (2)). His elder brother Ave, a respected man and the deputy-chief of the village, can understand Tariana and has considerable lexical knowledge. He is able to maintain a very simple conversation, and is very shy about his competence. (He could probably be considered a semispeaker, similar to Perfi.)

All of the people discussed above are from the village of Santa Rosa. The majority of the population of Periquitos (about forty people), including small children and women, are fluent in Tariana. The three elders of the community, all in their mid-fifties, make it a point to speak nothing but Tariana with their children, as do their children to the grandchildren. These elders appear to have less cultural knowledge than Candi, Leo, and Yuse Paiphe; for instance, they had difficulty remembering the name of their grandfather and even some of their own sacred names, and have incorporated a few morphemes of Tucano origin, or Tucano look-alikes—unacceptable for the speakers of Santa Rosa—into their language (such as -ba ‘obvious’, makatulina ‘again’, and makayuli ‘in a curved way’; see section 2.2.2). Younger speakers are shamed for mixing their language with Tucano; recall the reaction to (1), uttered by Gustavo (in his teens). The young generation appears to be much more language-conscious than their peers among the Santa Rosa Tariana, who do not speak the language. They are most eager to maintain the language in their homes and to create their own program of language teaching. The Periquitos Tariana are envied by the Santa Rosa Tariana for their persistence in language maintenance, even at the cost of some language mixing.

As far as I could judge, a person’s status in the village is composed of several components. It is important to be a general handyman (wayerite), a good hunter and a good fisherman (huisite), and a fair and a reliable person (matfaite). But being proficient in the Tariana language and speaking correct Tariana is considered one of the greatest assets. For instance, Ave is an authority for most practical matters, but is pitied for “having lost his language.” And it is “regrettable” that Yuse Paiphe’s son Kiri—the elected chief of the village who enjoys great respect for other things—is a somewhat deficient speaker. This reflects a growing gap between traditional ideals and practices, on the one hand, and the encroaching reality whereby Tariana is becoming more and more endangered and less and less used, on the other. This is a dangerous turn of events for people’s self-esteem in a society where one identifies with one’s father’s language.
4. Conclusions: being a “true” Tariana. The way the concepts of “correct” and “incorrect” language are rationalized among the multilingual Tariana speakers in the Vaupés area relate to the strong constraint against language mixing, or inserting bits of other languages—especially those from East Tucano subgroup—into one’s Tariana. This ban operates predominantly in terms of loan forms (morphemic awareness) and items that have Tucano-like sounds (phonological awareness). A few morphosyntactic constructions—calqued from East Tucano languages—are also identified as “incorrect” Tariana. This goes against a popular perception of native speakers being conscious just of their lexicon and not of their grammar, and adds to our knowledge about the conceptualization of language in indigenous societies.

An additional mechanism that helps to determine what is “correct” and what is not is constant reference to the way in which representatives of older generations speak (called here “generational awareness”). Since speakers are conscious of individual variation, some old people are considered as “better models of . . . speech than others” (Bloomfield 1927:156). One’s status in the community depends heavily on how the requirements imposed by the four types of language awareness are fulfilled. In other words, judgments about “correct” and “incorrect” Tariana are based on a comprehensive view of this language that goes beyond simple discourse of nostalgia. In a society where the language one inherits from one’s father is the main mark of identity, it is natural that only those who are the most articulate and proficient speakers should be called “true Tariana.”

Notes

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Abbreviations. The following abbreviations are used: 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; AUG = augmentative; CAUS = causative; COMPL = completive; f, FEM = feminine; FUT = future; MASC = masculine; nf = nonfeminine; NCL:ANIM = noun class animate; NOM = nominalizer; OBJ = object case; PEJ = pejorative; PL = plural; REM.P.VIS = remote past visual; SG = singular; SUB = subordinator.

1. The notion of “correct” is reminiscent of Bourdieu’s (1991) “symbolic domination,” typically associated with standardized national languages. At present, however, none of the indigenous languages of the Vaupés area can be considered standardized. The discussion in this article implies the existence of the domination of one form of speech over others even in the absence of a written form. The issue of domination deserves further crosslinguistically based study.

2. Tariana is spoken by about 100 people in two villages, Santa Rosa and Periquitos, on the upper Vaupés River, and by a few elders in the village of Santa Terezinha, on the middle Vaupés River. The dialects are mutually intelligible (the difference between them
is similar to that between American English and British English); however, speakers are conscious of the existing differences, and dialect mixing is frowned upon. I have been working on Tariana since 1991, with over 90 percent of the speakers of Santa Rosa dialect, and with over 70 percent of those from Periquitos. My consultants are referred to here by their nicknames.

The data analyzed here are almost exclusively based on my own linguistic and ethnographic fieldwork. The only available description of Tariana ethnography is Aikhenvald (1999b). I have also relied on ethnographic information from other scholars who have worked on various East-Tucanoan groups of the Vaupés area, such as Bruzzi (1977), Chernela (1993), C. Hugh-Jones (1979), S. Hugh-Jones (1979), and Jackson (1974, 1983).

3. The principles of marriage are slightly more complex than what I have described here (see the discussion in Aikhenvald [forthcoming b]). Opinions vary as to the age of this multilingualism. For example, Jackson (1983:83) believes that its origins are recent; however, this view requires further proof. In their discourse about languages, the Vaupés Indians treat the indigenous languages spoken by possible marriage partners as equal—with a constant aside that “the Tucano language is trying to impose itself.”

4. Cognitive limits of awareness represent at most tendencies. As pointed out by an anonymous referee, their applicability depends on sociocultural and historical situation of speakers. Testing this applicability in the situation of the Vaupés Indians is the purpose of this article.

5. The language awareness of Tariana speakers was studied throughout my fieldwork (1991–2000), based on observations of people’s behavior and their evaluation of other people’s linguistic behavior, and, to a lesser extent, their self-reports.

6. Examples of Tariana and Baniwa are given in phonemic transcription. Tariana phonology is described in Aikhenvald (forthcoming a: chap. 2); Baniwa transcription is based on Aikhenvald (1995). Examples from Tucano are given in the existing practical orthography following Ramirez (1997). This is why a similar sound—a flap r—is written as r for Tariana and as r for Tucano.

7. Watkins (2001) provides an illustration of the extension of the native morpheme -sk- in Ionic Greek to mark iterative imperfective under the influence of a morpheme with the same shape in Hittite and Luvian.

8. The most frequently used imperatives in Tariana are: simple (unmarked); proximate (do here); distal (do there); postponed (do some time later); detrimental (do to your own detriment); by proxy (order on someone else’s behalf); conative precautive (please try and do); cohortative (let’s do); polite suggestion (please do)—the latter marked with -nha. See Aikhenvald (forthcoming a: chap. 16).

9. Tariana also has an emphatic augmentative -pu used with predicates.

10. This attitude created an opposition against including younger people’s variants into the dictionary and teaching materials of Tariana, during our joint work on the practical grammar of Tariana and on the dictionary. As mentioned above, generational awareness plays a role in language planning, an important part of the Tariana education project (in operation since 1999).

11. In Tariana, the same word is used for both ‘ancestors’ and ‘grandparents’.

12. As noted by Sorensen back in 1967, the Vaupés Indians have very high standards for fluency rating. They are also afraid of making mistakes in a language in which they are not fully proficient and of being ridiculed for it. For this reason, semispeakers hardly ever venture to open their mouth (those who do understand Tariana answer in Tucano or in Portuguese).

13. The language proficiency of Tariana speakers was assessed in two independent ways. Firstly, during my stay in the village of Santa Rosa in June–July 1999 I compiled a list of the Santa Rosa Tariana with the help of Maye, Juvi, Ze, Leo, and others, and
wrote down their evaluation of each person's proficiency. (These data, for whose publication speakers' permission was obtained, are in the appendix to Aikhenvald forthcoming c). Secondly, during my stays in the field in 1999 and 2000, I observed the verbal behavior of each speaker within their family as well as evaluated their proficiency level through participant-observation and by getting them to talk to me in Tariana. The two kinds of assessment yielded very similar results.

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