

6 **Language endangerment in South America: a programmatic approach**

COLETTE GRINEVALD

Université Lumière-Lyon

1 **Introduction**

I will approach the task of talking of language endangerment in the context of South America from two angles. The first one is a geographic and linguistic approach that aims at providing an overview of the situation of the indigenous languages of the region, without encyclopedic ambition but with an eye toward the big picture for those unfamiliar with the specifics of that continent. The second one is a strategic approach that aims at sketching a possible agenda for the linguistic profession in the face of the endangerment situation of South American indigenous languages, taking into account some of the sociopolitical and academic developments of the region in recent times.

2 **The indigenous languages of South America**

By South America, I mean the continental part of Latin America south of Panama.¹ For the purpose of this overview I have collated information from some of the most reliable sources on the region, which I have amplified with notes from my recent personal exploration of the situation in countries such as Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Bolivia, and with generous comments from South American specialists.²

This chapter has benefited greatly from generous comments by South American language specialists gathered at the International Conference on "The indigenous languages of Amazonia in science and society" (March, 1996) in Belem, Brazil. I would like to thank in particular Aryon Rodrigues, Wilem Adelaar, Luis Enrique Lopez, Mauricio Gnerre, and Francisco Queixalos for their careful reading of the manuscript and generous comments and corrections. All remaining inaccuracies and errors of judgment are mine to be accountable for.

1 Although the Caribbean islands are usually included in South America, they will not be considered here since all their Arawakan and Cariban languages are now extinct. The chapter will not consider either the Creoles and immigrant languages of South America.

2 My experience includes personal contact with the Centro Colombiano de Lenguas Aborígenes of Bogotá, Colombia, the Museu Goeldi of Belem, Brazil, the Vernacular Language Program of the Museum of Anthropology of the Central Bank of

Adelaar (1991) is the most comprehensive work on the situation of endangerment of the South American indigenous languages. It provides a thorough countrywide treatment based on sources available up to 1988. For the most updated work on the classification, location, and population estimates of the South American languages, the best reference is T. Kaufman (1990, 1994). There are also collections such as Pottier (1983), and Klein and Stark (1985); as well as recent surveys such as Moore (1990), Moore and Storto (1994) and Rodrigues (1986) for Brazil; Cole, Hermon and Martin (1994) for the Andes; and Albó (1995) for Bolivia.

2.1 *Some basic facts and figures*

By basic facts and figures, I mean the number of indigenous languages still spoken today and their genetic affiliation, as well as the regional linguistic situations in which they are found. The presentation is admittedly biased toward a national-boundary approach, in part because that is how most of the available information is presented. In addition, it would eventually be the approach one would have to take if one were to consider doing fieldwork on any of these languages. From a strictly linguistic point of view, it would be preferable to ignore political boundaries since a significant number of languages are spread across borders. This is true both of the major indigenous languages of South America (Quechua across five countries, Aymara three, Guaraní three, and Mapuche two), and of the smaller Amazonian languages whose surviving speakers tend to be found in the border areas of the nine countries of the Amazon basin.³

2.2 *Number of languages involved*

As expected, no exact figures are available on the number of indigenous languages in South America; much work remains to be done in some regions to assess accurately the existence and status of some of the reported languages. All figures given below are necessarily approximative,

Ecuador in Guayaquil, and being hired recently as a consultant for the Educational Reform of Bolivia to prepare documentation on the Amazonian languages of the country. I have also been working in recent years at the University of Oregon with Latin American students from Argentina (Pilaga), Peru (Shipibo), Ecuador (Quechua and Ecuadorian Spanish), and Brazil (Nheengatu and Apurina).

3 See Grenand and Grenand 1993:95 for a map of the largest zones of indigenous settlements today in Amazonia. The issue of border languages was one of the most debated during the recent Belem conference on Amazonian languages which gathered representatives of all nine countries involved.

Table 6.1 Number of South American languages by country

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Number per country</i>
Brazil	170
Colombia, Peru	60
Bolivia, Venezuela	35
Ecuador, Argentina, Paraguay and Guyana	12
Chile, French Guyana, Surinam	6
Uruguay	0

although it is easy to state with relative certainty an order of magnitude. In terms of the number of languages identified and recognized today by each one of the South American countries, the situations vary from the one of Brazil, which has by far the highest number of indigenous languages (170), to that of Chile which has many fewer (6), to the extreme of Uruguay with none today. Table 6.1 offers an overview of distribution of indigenous languages by country.⁴

The number of languages is not related to the proportion of Indian population per country. There the situations vary from countries with high proportions (Indians constitute the majority of the population in the Central Andean countries) to countries where geographically and politically very marginalized Indian populations represent a small percentage of the total population, such as Argentina. The situation of languages spread across borders also means that the same linguistic group can be a large minority in one country and a much smaller one in another, as is the case of Aymara, for instance, which numbers between 2 and 2.5 million speakers between Peru and Bolivia but only 30,000 in Chile.

To put it in world context, the total number of South American indigenous languages is in the range of over 400 languages. This is not very

4 This is meant to give a range of number of languages spoken in each country for comparative purposes. Assessing the exact number of languages is no easier for South America than for any other part of the world, with the issue of what is considered a language versus a dialect (e.g. Quechua

is usually treated as one language, although linguistically it is a complex of several languages) and the lack of documentation of some of the languages (especially the heart of Amazonia which is still in places a linguistic black box).

high for a whole continent when compared to some other parts of the world, such as India, or the Australia-Indonesia-Oceania complex, but larger than the rest of the Americas combined.⁵

2.3 *Genetic variety*

There are two interesting facts about the genetic relations of South American languages: their extreme genetic variety and the high number of isolates. As pointed out by Adelaar (1991:45), South America represents "a situation of unsurpassed genetic variety," only comparable to the linguistic variety of New Guinea.⁶ T. Kaufman (1990, 1994) recognizes 118 families. Linguistic diversity in South America correlates partly to the ruggedness of the terrain; for instance, the 13 minority languages of western Paraguay belong to 5 different families, and the 30 languages of the Amazonian region of Bolivia belong to 15 different families (including 6 isolates).⁷

5 Consider the official count of 1,683 "mother tongues" in India of which 850 are in daily use (figures given by Matisoff 1991:205); the numbers of languages given by Dixon (1991:229) are 250 for Australia, 550 for Indonesia, 160 for the Philippines, 760 for Papua New Guinea, and 260 for the Pacific Islands. The figures for the Americas are 95 languages for Mexico and Central America (Garza Cuarón and Lastra 1991:120), a high figure of 213 for the United States, Alaska, and Canada (from Chafe 1962), which included then 51 languages with 1-10 speakers which are probably extinct by now (Zepeda and Hill 1991:136).

6 Kaufman's 118 families do not exactly correspond to Louktaka's 117 (Adelaar 1991:46). For a critique of Greenberg's (1987) claim that all South American languages are ultimately related, see Campbell (1988).

Kaufman (1994) introduces new terminology for linguistic units that may become a guideline for future handling of the languages and language families of South America. "The terms used to name groups of communities speaking genetically related forms of speech are ranked in decreasing order of inclusiveness: phylum (or superstock), stock, family, branch (or division), group, subgroup, language complex, language areas, language, virtual language, emergent language,

dialect area (or division), or group, dialect, variety." Language complex "refers to a geographically continuous zone that contains linguistic diversity greater than found within a single language (between 1,000 and 1,500 years) but where internal linguistic boundaries similar to those that separate clearly discrete languages are lacking ([e.g.] Gallo-Romance: Catalan, Provençal, Franco-Provençal, French...). The divisions of a language complex are 'virtual languages'. Language area refers to a situation where there is a good amount of internal diversity (600-900 years), clear-cut linguistic division or boundaries, but a good deal of mutual intelligibility within the whole area. The components of a language area are 'emergent languages'." In addition, one of the challenges of accounting for the languages of Latin America is "that speakers of different dialects of what is obviously the same language (to a linguist) often consider themselves to be ethnically distinct" (1994:31).

7 South America is, with Papua New Guinea, the poorest documented part of the world, and has not seen yet the kind of "fairly systematic efforts [that] were launched in Papua New Guinea in the early 1960s" (Kaufman 1994:46). This is not to say that recent efforts have not been set in motion in South America, as discussed in section 5.

Behind the fact of this extreme genetic variety lies another interesting fact: a very large number of the languages in South America (70 of the 118 language families) are considered isolates, genetic units of one language. The highest concentration of such languages is found in northeastern Brazil, where the 10 languages of the region are all listed by Kaufman as isolates (1994:51). The question remains open, of course, as to whether some of those languages have remained unclassified for lack of data and might not come to fall into some classification as better documentation becomes available.⁸

2.4 *Large and small minority languages*

As a general rule, the indigenous languages of South America are being dominated and pushed out of existence by the official Indo-European languages which were the languages of the conquest and colonization of the continent: Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, and Dutch. It is striking, however, that there is a handful of indigenous languages with large speaker populations, by far the largest of the Americas: Quechua, Aymara, Guarani, and Mapudungu.

QUECHUA has more speakers than any indigenous language of the Americas. Estimates of Quechua speakers vary, from a high of 12 million (Kaufman 1994:64) to 8–8.5 million (Parker 1969; Cerrón-Palomino 1987; Adelaar 1991), the major populations being distributed as follows:

Ecuador	2 m
Peru	4.5 m
Bolivia	1.5 m

Large numbers of previously unknown languages have been discovered in this century. Kaufman mentions about 50 new groups having been contacted since last century, with their language identified (1994:51). Moore and Storto (1994:1) cite the examples of a new Tupi-Guarani language discovered in 1987 and a language called Kujubim being discovered in 1991 by researchers of the Museu Goeldi of Belem. Grenand and Grenand (1993:109–114) list 52 groups of Amazonia that have not had contacts yet with outsiders, 10 of which are of unknown linguistic affiliations, although most of which are likely to speak yet undescribed variants of languages that have been at least identified.

New linguistic families have been identified as well, as shown in the changes in the figures given by Loukotka: 77 families in the 1934 publication, but 117 in the 1968 one.

8 The extreme linguistic diversity of South American indigenous languages, especially those of the Amazonian region at the foot of the Andes, was the theme of Adelaar's plenary session of the Belem conference already mentioned. He compared it to the linguistic situation in California and the northwest of the United States, and speculated on the possible scenarios that would account for such diversity, such as a very early settlement in the region, by very slow migrations.

Notably, Quechua was the lingua franca of the Inka colonization, and later continued expanding as the lingua franca of Christianization in colonial times.⁹ The spread of the Quechua language has led to the disappearance of all but very few of the original languages of the Andean region.

Quechua is actually a cover term for a number of languages. Kaufman claims, in purely linguistic terms, that Quechua represents 17 different constituent "emergent" languages (languages with 3–5 centuries of diversification). In terms of internal diversification, then, the Quechuan linguistic unit is comparable to the language complex of Romance languages.¹⁰

A measure of the importance of Quechua is that it is the South American indigenous language most frequently taught as a second language in the various contexts of universities, religious missions, and development programs.¹¹ More for its symbolic value maybe than its real impact, it is also worth mentioning the creation of an Academy of the Quechua Language in Peru in 1953, whose proclaimed activities include teaching Quechua to non-Quechua speakers, publishing books and journals in Quechua and sponsoring annual competitions of literary works (Hornberger 1989:76). In its efforts at emulating its model, the Royal Academy of the Spanish language, the Quechua academy is of a rather different nature from that of the recently created Academy of Mayan languages of Guatemala, or the Basque Academy of Spain and may not be set up in a way which will have significant impact on the future maintenance of the language.

Also representative of the importance of Quechua is that the language was declared one of the official languages of Peru, the country with most

9 See Mannheim 1985a, for instance for a discussion of those two stages of language spread of Quechua.

10 The established tradition of Quechuan linguistics recognizes two branches: Quechua 1 (also called Quechua B) which includes the languages of Central Peru, and Quechua 11 (or Quechua A) which includes the dialects of Cuzco (the general Inka language) in southern Peru, the varieties of Quechua in Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina, as well as the varieties spoken much to the north, in Ecuador. The language is called Quichua for the varieties spoken in Ecuador, Argentina and parts of Peru. The naming of Quechua 1 and 11 is from

Torero 1964, and that of Quechua A and B from Parker 1963 (in Stark 1985:444).

11 It is taught in regular courses at the Instituto Pastoral Andina in Sicuani (Cuzco, Peru), at the language institute of the Maryknoll order in Cochabamba (Bolivia), in several universities of Peru and Bolivia (e.g. in majors such as nursing, medicine, agronomy, veterinary studies), as well as at various US universities (e.g. Cornell, Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Minnesota) and European universities (e.g. Bonn, Hamburg, Berlin, Liverpool, Saint Andrews, London). Teaching materials include a computerized course at Cornell and multimedia in CD-ROM at Liverpool (Luis Enrique Lopez p.c.).

speakers, in 1975.¹² When officialization occurred, the policy was not to give preference to one of the many dialects in existence, but to recognize at least six of the principal dialectal variations and to give them equal status. However, only one official alphabet of Quechua was established, one with which all of the six dialects could be written (Adelaar 1991:77; Lopez p.c.).

Finally, in recent decades Quechua has been the object of major bilingual education experiments, some of which turned into regular school programs in three of the Andean countries in which it is spoken.¹³ Language planning involving Quechua has included efforts at standardizing the language in all three countries where it is spoken.

AYMARA has 2 million speakers, the majority of whom live in Bolivia. Its homeland is the Collao altiplano, around Lake Titicaca which extends into the three countries of Bolivia, Peru, and Chile. There are 350,000 speakers in Peru and 25,000 in Chile (Briggs 1985:546). Aymara also functioned and still functions as a lingua franca and has been the object of standardization and bilingual education programs, as well as of teacher-training university programs in both Bolivia and Chile.

The claim has been that, unlike Quechua, Aymara exhibits relative regularity and little diversification which does not impede mutual intelligibility, as described in Briggs (1985, 1993 [based on her 1976 Ph.D. dissertation]). One factor in the modern homogeneity of the language may be attributed to the impact of the radio programs in that language (on the air since the 1950s on Radio San Gabriel de la Paz) that reach out to speakers of a very large area. However, more recent studies of more divergent dialects are pointing to more language diversity than originally claimed (Lopez p.c.).

MAPUDUNGU is the name of the language of the Mapuche people (Araucanians) and is often cited in the literature under the names of

¹² Discussions of the officialization of Quechua in the other countries have included concerns about declaring the language official before enough language planning had been done and before there existed some infrastructure to implement the functioning of the language as official. Efforts have been aimed at groundwork to prepare for the officialization (Haboud p.c.).

¹³ In Peru it started with the Ayacucho bilingual education experiment in the 1960s, followed in the 1970s by the Puno and Cuzco experiments, leading

in the 1980s to a department-wide implementation in rural Quechua-speaking communities of southern Peru (Hornberger 1989). Ecuador was the site of the pilot program for Latin America and the Caribbean started in 1982 (Haboud 1995). Other bilingual education projects (Proyecto Educativo Rural 1, 11) took place in Bolivia in the 1970s. See Amadio and Lopez 1993 for a comprehensive bibliography of Bilingual Intercultural Education in Latin America.

Araucanian or Mapuche (*mapuche* means "earth people" and *mapudungu* "earth language"). The language is spoken principally in Chile where it may have between 200 and 500,000 speakers distributed across some 2,000 small reservations. Mapudungu may have up to a million speakers, including 300,000 in Santiago de Chile alone, according to Chilean sources (Lopez p.c.). The whole ethnic group is presently very politically mobilized, fighting for its land rights and the maintenance and development of its language. There are also Mapudungu speakers in the southwest of Argentina who have emigrated from Chile in recent times. Mapudungu is said to have great linguistic uniformity (Croese 1985:786), although Huilliche in the south is said to exhibit more variation (Adelaar p.c.).

GUARANI represents a unique case in the whole of the Americas in that the majority of its 3 million speakers, who live in the country of Paraguay, are *mestizo* (Spanish-speaking) rather than indigenous people. There are at least five Guaraní languages which are spoken in Paraguay, Bolivia, Argentina, and Brazil.

Paraguayan Guaraní, which had long been recognized as a national language (i.e. the language of the majority of the population of the nation) was recognized as an official language of that country in 1992. The new Paraguayan Constitution of 1994 confirms its official status and endorses new educational legislation which includes bilingual education (Guaraní-Spanish) for the Spanish-speaking population. This standardized Paraguayan Guaraní of an urban and non-indigenous population bears the mark of being the language of bilinguals. It exhibits heavy relexification (Rubin 1985:428 calculates 28–54 percent of Spanish loanwords in its vocabulary) and is also said to have been expurgated of religious and cultural vocabulary that still remains in the indigenous vernaculars (Adelaar 1991:74). This Paraguayan type of Guaraní is also spoken in northeastern Argentina.

The other Guaraní languages consist of the varieties spoken as native languages by largely rural indigenous populations in the eastern parts of Paraguay, the southwest of Brazil and the southeastern part of Bolivia.¹⁴ In Bolivia, where Guaraní is spoken by about 50,000 people,

¹⁴ Rodrigues (p.c.) identifies at least the following four Guaraní languages: (a) Mbyá in SE Paraguay, NE Argentina and S Brazil; (b) Nhandeva in Brazil, or Chiripá in E Paraguay and S Brazil; (c) Kayvá in

Brazil, or Pau in E Paraguay and SW Brazil; (d) Bolivian Guaraní, with its dialects: Chiriguano, Izocéño and Tapieté (also spoken in NE Paraguay and N Argentina).

community-based efforts have been under way in the last decade to standardize the local variety and to have it officially recognized (Gustafson 1995; Lopez 1997).

The existence in South America of large minority languages such as Quechua, Aymara, Mapudungu, and Guarani is to be put in contrast with the fact that the largest indigenous language of the United States–Canada–Alaska combined is Navajo, with 140,000 speakers (Broadwell 1995). Only one other language of the Americas has beyond a million speakers: Nahuatl of Mexico, with 1.4 million. Two other Amerindian languages rise above the 500,000 speaker mark; both Mayan languages, Yucatec (Mexico) and Quiche (Guatemala).

Rather more like other indigenous American languages are the abundant small minority languages, most of which are spoken by populations in the thousands or hundreds. Consider for example the language situation of Brazil (Rodrigues 1985b; Moore 1990; Moore and Storto 1994). On one hand the whole country has only around 150,000 speakers of indigenous languages, which is a very small number for the vast expanse of territory, but on the other hand it has 170 languages, a relatively high language density. (Grenoble and Whaley, this volume, discuss the impact of language density on language endangerment.) Although this means on average a thousand speakers per language, the reality is a range from 18,000 for Tikuna to those with almost no speakers left.¹⁵

Although this presentation opposes large and small indigenous languages, the issues involved in the maintenance and development of both types of languages to be considered later may well be only a matter

¹⁵ Consider for instance the Carib family where one language has 15,000 speakers (Makushi), and the others have the following populations of speakers:

Waiwai	922	Kalapalo	191
Ingarikó	459	Apalaí	135
Bakarií	409	Wayana	125
Atroari	350	Txikáo	107
Hixkaryana	308	Nahukwá	83
Warikaryana	300	Arara do Pará	72
Tirió	264	Matipú	40
Kuikuru	221	Amapá	37
Taulipáng	220	Waimiri	no data
Mayongóng	200		(Adelaar 1991:60)
Kaxuyana	198		

of different magnitude and urgency. All indigenous languages of South America must be considered when assessing levels of vitality and endangerment, since the large number of speakers of some of them today is in fact no guarantee that they are not becoming endangered.

3 Types of situations: regional patterns

Depending on the proportion of the Indian population, and the number and type of indigenous languages, the following patterns of linguistic situations can be found in South America.

Colombia and Venezuela have small indigenous populations, although a significant number of languages, and, in contrast to the southern Andean countries, no indigenous language larger than Paez in the south, with 60 to 80,000 speakers. Colombia is characterized by its great variety of indigenous habitats and indigenous languages. Indigenous populations are found in the north and south of the Andean highlands, the two coastal regions (Caribbean and Pacific), the *llano* (the lowland that is not Amazonian) and the Amazonian region. The country has an interesting situation of multilingualism (documented by Sorensen 1985) due to a high degree of mixing and intermarriage among the eastern Tukano and Arawak people of the Vaupes region shared by south Colombia and northwest Brazil.

Venezuela's indigenous languages are found in the eastern and western edges of the country. The majority of the languages of the Amazonian part of the country spill across the borders of Brazil and Colombia.¹⁶

The three Andean countries of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, constitute the region of the continent with the highest concentration and highest proportion of Indian population. That population is unevenly distributed between large highland Quechua–Aymara populations and small but very varied Amazonian lowland populations. The whole region is characterized by two factors. One is the phenomenon of the spread of Quechua over a vast geographic expanse, causing over time the loss of many local

¹⁶ Grenand and Grenand (1993:96–98) give 19 languages for the Amazonian region of Venezuela, of which 4 are shared with Colombia (Sikuani/Guajibó, Piapoko, Piaroa, and Puinave), 6 are shared at least with Brazil (Akawayo, Bariwa, Bare, Karib, Pemon, and Yanomami), and one with both (Kuripako).

languages. The other is the intensive language planning for Quechua and Aymara, the two major languages of the area, that has taken place in the last two decades (reviewed in Moya 1987; Chiodi 1990; and Amadio and Lopez 1993).

In Ecuador the majority of the Quichua population lives in the highlands which are also the area where major Spanish-speaking urban centers are found, including the capital, Quito. Pre-Inkaic languages have survived only in the lowlands of the country, on the coast to the west, and in the Amazon region to the east where Quichua is still spreading. Noteworthy is the high level of organization of the Shuars in that region.

Peru has the largest Quechua-speaking population of the three countries, with 4 million, and a well-documented history of language policy and language planning dealing with this language (Cerrón-Palomino 1989; and Mannheim 1984, 1985b). The population pattern of Peru is unlike that of Ecuador in that the Quechua population was traditionally concentrated in the southern highlands while the *mestizo* population is concentrated in the coastal lowland.¹⁷ Peru also has the largest indigenous population in the lowlands of South America, with an estimated 300,000 indigenous people from about 45 ethnic groups in the Amazonian region.

Bolivia has two of the largest indigenous languages of the Americas living side by side – Quechua and Aymara, for which it is now the main homeland. A characteristic of the Quechua of southern Bolivia up until the 1952 revolution was its being spoken by many strata of the society, including *mestizo* families in contact with their Quechua-speaking workers (Stark 1985:533–540). But unlike the situation of Guarani in Paraguay, the *mestizo* population is no longer learning the language today. Bolivia also has some of the very few surviving pre-Inkaic indigenous languages of the Andean highlands. One is the Chipaya-Uru complex, of which Uru had been reported extinct although a language revitalization project is presently underway by the community.¹⁸ The other, Machaj Juyai, is a language

17. There is no coastal indigenous population left. The last died by the middle of this century (Adelaar 1991:77). But the effect of the violence of the Shining Path has been massive migration of highland Quechua people towards Lima, which is said to have at least 500,000 Quechua speakers today (Lopez p.c.).

18. The Chipaya-Uru people have actually shifted to the Aymara language for primary language, not Quechua. The Chipaya language is better preserved than the Uru one, which has only two native and fluent speakers left (a brother-sister team, 85 and 87 years old). The Uru community calls its ethnic language Uchhumataqu.

of an interesting sociolinguistic and linguistic nature. It is the professional secret language of Callahuaya herb doctors north of Lake Titicaca. It is known to have survived as a men's language of mixed linguistic nature: lexical roots from the extinct Pukina language and affixes from Quechua (Adelaar 1991:56; Stark 1985:529).

The languages of the Bolivian Amazonian lowland, which were among the least documented of the Amazonian basin, are now receiving attention following the proclamation of the 1994 Constitution, which acknowledges the multilingual and pluricultural nature of Bolivia. An extensive educational reform has been set in motion, which includes plans for bilingual education programs for those previously ignored languages.¹⁹ Let it be noted here that in Bolivia the indigenous languages are being referred to as *lenguas originarias*.

Brazil is a world by itself, an immense open space where large areas, mostly in the east, have no indigenous populations left. It is within the borders of Brazil that the largest part of the Amazon basin lies. There live 150,000 speakers of indigenous languages in small communities representing the major South American language families and stocks such as Tupi-Guarani, Macro-gê, Carib and Arawakan. Of the 170 languages of Brazil, 36 have fewer than 100 speakers, of which 14 have fewer than 50 speakers. (Rodrigues 1985b:406). The new Constitution of 1988 included in its chapter on education the right of the indigenous people to be taught in their native languages as well as in Portuguese.

Chile and Argentina, the countries of the Southern Cone, are the most Europeanized countries, countries in which the native population has been largely decimated. Chile still has a large population of Mapuche Indians in the south, in what is now a very reduced territory compared to

19. The author is presently coordinating a documentation project for these languages, as linguistic consultant for the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs and the Ministry of Education (UNSTP), with the assistance of Pilar Valenzuela and Alejandra Vidal from the University of Oregon. In a first phase in the fall of 1995, the writing systems for ten of the twenty-nine languages of the region were revised and teams of native speakers began training to become the language specialists for the future bilingual education programs. In the second phase

in the summer of 1996, an additional ten alphabets were attended to and the first course in linguistics was offered. A five-year plan for training language specialists and coordinating the linguistic documentation of these languages is underway. The project is funded by DANIDA of Denmark (Ministry of Ethnic Affairs), the World Bank (Ministry of Education), the Harvard Institute for International Development through UDAPSO of Bolivia, and UNICEF.

the original land they occupied. There is a pocket of Aymara speakers in the north, and very threatened or extinct languages in the south (Adelaar 1991:64). Argentina still has thirteen small linguistic communities which are scattered at the edges of the country. Due to their geographic location, they are hard to reach and are, therefore, understudied.²⁰

Paraguay constitutes a unique situation in which an originally indigenous language has acquired the status of an official language and is spoken by more than 90 percent of the population of the country. Rubin (1968, 1985) describes Paraguay as a case of a Guaraní-speaking country with a high level of bilingualism in Spanish. The striking fact of a standardized variety of "Paraguayan Guaraní" being spoken by a large *mestizo* population has a great impact on the vitality of the language, as will be discussed in section 5.2. below. The original indigenous varieties of Guaraní are still spoken by a small population in the southeastern edge of the country, where other small indigenous languages still remain.

Surinam, Guyana, and French Guyana have been colonized by non-Romance language speaking countries: Surinam is Dutch-speaking, Guyana English-speaking, and French Guyana French-speaking. All three countries have low proportions of indigenous populations, from 3–7 percent, and a majority of languages lying across national borders. Of the 6 languages of French Guyana for instance, only one is contained entirely within the borders, the Tupi language Emerillon, with 200 speakers.

This presentation has briefly considered indigenous settlements in South America on a countrywide basis. The major features discussed were the proportion of the Indian population to the general population, and the nature of the languages as larger linguistic minorities which, to a certain extent, determine the identity of a country. For example, the Andean countries are known for the presence of large Quechua and Aymara populations, whereas other countries are known for the multiplicity of small linguistic communities whose existence is only beginning to receive official recognition.

20 The languages of Argentina include Quechua dialects in the northwest, 3 languages related to Paraguayan Guaraní together with languages of 3 other families in the Gran Chaco in the northeast,

Mapudungu speakers from Chile in the Southwest, and extinct or near extinct languages in the south (Adelaar 1991:55–56).

4 Language death and language endangerment in South America

Beyond the facts and figures presented above lie the same tales of death and endangerment that prevail in all of the Americas. The number of ethnic and linguistic groups that became extinct during the colonial period is estimated to be in the hundreds, and the endangerment of the surviving languages, whether large or small, is an ongoing concern.

4.1 Three types of language death

The relatively low number of indigenous languages spoken in South America today is due to various situations of language death. Many cases of language death came during the period of colonization through a drastic decimation of the indigenous population, particularly in eastern Brazil and Argentina. For instance, estimates are that the greater Amazonian region had about 6.8 million people in the sixteenth century, and only about 700,000 by 1992 (Grenand and Grenand 1993:94). This loss of language by loss of the people is unfortunately still a factor, as physical violence against indigenous people of South America continues.²¹

A second factor that has caused language loss is the spread of *lingua francas*, in particular in the Andean countries of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, where Quechua principally, but Aymara too, have erased practically all the local indigenous languages. The practice of forced displacement of local populations by the colonizing indigenous powers turned out to be quite effective to achieve the aim of ethnic and linguistic mixing and language replacement. The adoption of Quechua by speakers of smaller

21 See for instance various accounts from Colombia, such as the cases of relatively recent massacres mentioned in several of the papers from the 1994 CCELA symposium on language revitalization efforts (Pabón Triana 1995), or the mention of the decimation of the Andoke people which went from a population of 10,000 in 1908 to 100 bilingual individuals as a consequence of the atrocities that accompanied the exploitation of wild rubber earlier in the century (Landaburu 1979).

Grenand and Grenand (1993:109–1100) mention recent massacres of at least three groups that had remained out of contact (Mamainde, Marima, Miqueleno). Other recent cases include the threats

to the survival of the Yanomami people of Brazil, and the indigenous casualties of the border wars of 1982 and 1995 between Peru and Ecuador, where indigenous people of the same ethnic groups, some of them relatives, were made to fight each other on both sides of the border. Needing to be mentioned also is the state of violence created by the confrontation between the Shining Path and the army as well as the local populations which prevailed in much of the indigenous highlands of Peru in the last decade, paralyzing most of the government educational and economic development programs and creating a massive exodus of the indigenous population.

minority languages is still going on. A case in point is the reported shift of Zaparo to Quechua by the Zaparo population of the western lowland of Ecuador: of the 20,000 speakers of Zaparo that are claimed to have existed 135 years ago (Stark 1985:184) only 7 speakers of Zaparo were left in the early 1980s (or maybe still 24 speakers, Gnerre p.c.).²²

There have also been shifts from one indigenous language to another, not considered lingua franca. This is the case for instance in Bolivia where some of the communities of Guaraní and Chiquitano speakers today are descendants of local populations which adopted those relatively more dominant languages (Lopez p.c.; Rodrigues p.c.).

The third factor contributing to the loss of indigenous languages is the phenomenon of shift to the major European colonizing languages that has taken place in the midst of the steady increase in urbanization of the rural population of South America. The massive urban shift is affecting the vitality of even the larger indigenous languages such as Quechua, a general matter of concern in all Quechua-speaking countries.²³ Urbanization is accompanied by the process known as *mestizaje* (abandonment of indigenous traits to assimilate to the dominant *mestizo* culture), a process which is accelerated by interracial mixing and the unrelenting pressure of socio-economic discrimination.²⁴

In terms of overall language extinction the figures are high for some of the larger families of South America: of the 65 members of the Arawakan family, 31 are extinct today; of the 43 languages of the Cariban family, 19 are extinct; of the 24 members of the Chibchan family, 6 are extinct (including the Chibcha language itself). Similarly the rates of extinction are drastic in many areas. For example, in Ecuador, only 12 of the 30 languages known to have been spoken at the time of the Conquest have survived into this century (Klein and Stark 1985:5).

22 Other cases of lingua francas in South America include Tupi, the lingua franca of Brazil of the colonial time, also referred to as *Lingua Geral*, Nheengatu or Ienkatu (Adelaar 1991:59). Nheengatu has only 3,000 speakers today and has been characterized as a possible creolized language (Moore, Facundes, and Pires 1991). Tukano in central NW Amazon also functions today as a local lingua franca in a situation of high level of multilingualism (Sorensen 1985:142).

23 Consider for instance the figures of the recent urbanization trend of Ecuador: from 20% in 1950 to 60% in 1995 and a projected 70% in 2000, or the fact that there are more than a half million Quechua in Lima (Peru) alone, and 300,000 Mapuche in Santiago (Chile).

24 While one speaks of *mestizo* Spanish-speaking culture, the term is *caboclo* for the Portuguese-speaking culture (Rodrigues p.c.).

4.2 Vitality of the large indigenous languages

Although the large indigenous languages of South America would seem relatively safe from the point of view of the sheer number of speakers, their maintenance into the future is not necessarily assured. The situation of Quechua and Guaraní will be considered below; they are the two largest and best documented indigenous languages, both in terms of linguistic documentation and documentation of language-planning efforts (including corpus and status planning).

The situation of Quechua varies with the regions. Evidence has been gathered to show that it is vulnerable in some regions to a language shift to Spanish that could endanger it earlier than expected. One such region is Central Peru, where the local varieties of Quechua are said to be at the verge of a shift phenomenon (Adelaar 1991:50-51). Similarly, a recent extensive sociolinguistic survey of Quichua speakers in Ecuador reveals a trend toward language shift (Haboud 1991, 1995). In the survey, there were telling differences between two types of measurements taken, one being the linguistic preference (Quichua, Spanish, both) expressed by native speakers of Quichua to the interviewers, and the other being the actual use observed by the fieldworkers, themselves native speakers of Quichua.²⁵ Even when native Quichua speakers expressed a strong preference for Quichua, they were observed to use more Spanish than they acknowledged.

The trend toward bilingualism and declining use of the Quechua/Quichua language in these areas could portend a relatively sudden shift to Spanish in the next generations. This would constitute another instance of the phenomenon of "language tip" – a rapid shift to the dominant language after a long period of gestation not recognized by the speaker population itself (see the discussion in Dorian 1986).

The bilingual education projects which started in the 1960s have not appeared to temper the shift from Quechua/Quichua to Spanish, amply demonstrating what is already well known about such programs: corpus planning (standardization of orthography, lexicon, and grammar, production of pedagogical materials) without status planning (creation of opportunities for public and official use of the language in all spheres of political

25 One of the characteristics of this sociolinguistic survey is that it was carried out by trained Quichua native speakers, an example of collaborative

fieldwork framework of the type discussed in sections 5 and 6 below (Haboud 1994).

and economic life) will not ensure the maintenance of a language. The decline in the vitality of the language is linked to the pervasive negative socioeconomic incentives and the rampant social discrimination that the native speakers of indigenous languages have to endure.²⁶

The overall vulnerability of a large language such as Quechua, at least in some areas, is not unlike the situation of the majority indigenous languages of Guatemala, as discussed by England (this volume). The situation of Guarani on the other hand appears to be very different.

Guarani is probably the healthiest indigenous language of the Americas, particularly in its Paraguayan variety. Its vitality is due to several factors – in great part to the sheer bulk of the speaker population (3.5 million speakers representing over 90 percent of the population), but just as importantly to the status it enjoys, which is one of prestige and strong language loyalty. Indeed, it represents a case of an indigenous language which has been appropriated as a symbol of ethnic identity by a non-indigenous *mestizo* population. Speaking Guarani is what makes Paraguay – a small landlocked country with a history of isolation and extensive *mestizaje* – different from any other South American country. The kind of prestige and language loyalty Guarani enjoys leads to its use in public life by presidential candidates in their electoral campaigns on one hand, while being the intimate language of songs, love, and poetry (Rubin 1968).

4.3 *Vitality of small indigenous languages*

It is a fact that most of the small indigenous languages are endangered, even those that have survived so far in enough isolation to maintain vitality.²⁷ These last vital linguistic communities are likely targets of swift shifts, as it does not take long for a language to become threatened once encroachment from the dominant culture and language starts, through road-building and the introduction of electricity (hence television). Various types

²⁶ In defense of bilingual education, one must recognize that if it can be made to function also as status planning, it can also generate new linguistic needs and language awareness that spurn dynamics of language revitalization. This has been the case with Bolivian Guarani, for instance, as documented in Lopez 1995, as well as in Ecuador, and Peru (Puno and Alto Napo in the Amazonian region) (Lopez p.c.).

²⁷ Traditionally, indigenous lowland communities were small to maximize survival in the ecological conditions of their environment. Historical studies show that it is improbable that ethnic groups of less than 500 existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see Grenand and Grenand 1993:100).

Table 6.2 Number of Brazilian languages by population of speakers

<i>Number of speakers</i>	<i>Number of languages</i>
> 10,000	4
5,001–10,000	4
3,001–5,000	4
2,001–3,000	8
1,001–2,000	6
601–1,000	12
401–600	18
201–400	29
101–200	31
1–100	50

of sedentarization programs for otherwise nomadic populations, including religious and schooling pressures, also generally contribute to a shift towards the dominant language.

One way to look at endangerment is to consider the figures of speakers. The detailed account of the speaker populations of the languages of Brazil given in Rodrigues (1993) shows the vulnerability of the languages of those populations in simple numerical terms (table 6.2).²⁸ Not indicated by these numbers is the fact that there exist cases of populations that are small but where the whole population speaks the language, including all the children. Such is the case of Daw of the Maku family for instance, where all 70–80 members are speakers (Aikhenvald p.c.). In a sense those languages are not presently endangered, to the extent that the survival of the whole ethnic group is not immediately endangered, but there is no guarantee for the future, as circumstances can change quickly.

Dwindling speaker populations are to be put in contrast with an overall trend of increase of indigenous populations. Figures for the Amazonian

²⁸ Another source of figures for the indigenous languages of South America is Wise (1994), although the figures look inflated. For Brazil she gives for instance 247 languages, while Rodrigues

gives 170, for Colombia 99 languages when Landaburu (1979) gives 60, and for Bolivia 46 languages, when the figure handled these days in the country is 32.

region show that 87 percent of the ethnic groups have increased in population since 1970 and only 6 percent are suffering demographic decline (Grenand and Grenand 1993:105). Language loss is therefore mostly a matter of shift of language loyalty.

What is noteworthy is how such widespread situation of language endangerment is being perceived today by many communities and what this means in terms of linguistic fieldwork and interaction between linguists and communities. Many communities are indeed interested in the revitalization/maintenance of their language and expect to interact with linguists interested in the documentation of their language. See section 5.3 on the nature of work on endangered languages.

The mobilization of the indigenous people of South America in defense of their threatened languages, from the largest to the smallest linguistic communities, would appear to be a trait of the recent history of the Americas. In Latin America in general, and very certainly in South America, the last decades have been a time of extensive indigenous organizing which acquired a special momentum around the time of the 1992 quinquennial commemoration of the arrival of the Spaniards in the continent. While Spain was celebrating the so-called "discovery" of America, the indigenous communities organized multi-ethnic encounters at a continental level and orchestrated successive declarations of indigenous rights. Such declarations always included as a high priority the maintenance, protection, and development of their native languages, just after the securing of land, and the demands were primarily for changes in the educational system, away from a system of monolingual education in the dominant language. Local indigenous organizations have intensified their networking at a national and international level, articulating demands that are now recognized in the International Labor Organization Decree 169 and the declaration by the United Nations of this being the decade of the indigenous people.²⁹

The issue of the revitalization and maintenance of the smaller languages is a relatively new challenge for both the speakers' communities and the linguistic profession. There is no simple or obvious answer, as the strictly linguistic issue is embedded in the much larger challenge of the

29 A World Conference on Linguistic Rights was held in Barcelona, Spain, in June, 1996 during which

a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights was proclaimed by representatives of all the continents.

survival of viable indigenous communities as such (principally a matter of securing enough of a land base and self-determination for the communities). So far little collective wisdom has been shared within the community of linguists, although linguists are being confronted with such challenges in the field at an increasing rate. Much remains to be done at the conceptualizing as well as the strategic and practical level. Bridging the gap between academic linguistics and community wants and efforts is surely one of the major challenges of the linguistic profession as it faces the situation of endangered languages at the turn of the new century. Sections 5 and 6 below are an attempt at addressing some of these conceptualizing and strategizing needs, more specifically the issue of preparing linguistically trained manpower to deal with the situation of the widespread endangerment of South American languages.

5 The linguistic study of the indigenous languages of South America

While the previous section offered an overview of the situation of indigenous languages of South America for readers unfamiliar with this region of the world, the goal of this section is to assess the present situation in terms of linguistic work being done or to be done, with the idea that, besides Guarani, all indigenous languages of South America can be considered at some point of endangerment. This assessment is offered from the point of view of a foreign linguist working in the region, and is addressed primarily to fellow foreign linguists with little familiarity with the region. This section will consider what linguistic work needs doing, what has been done and is being done by foreign missionaries and by nationals at local institutions. It will conclude with some food for thought offered primarily to foreign linguists eventually interested in becoming involved in work on the languages of the region.

5.1 *An overview of the linguistic work needing to be done*

As of today relatively few languages remain completely undocumented, but comprehensive language documentation is still an exception. No attempt will be made here to set priorities between the different kinds of linguistic research that are needed, and no specific recommendations will be given on which languages or language families represent the most

urgent situations to be considered. Such information is partly supplied by Adelaar (1991) in an explicit way and is partly retrievable from the major publications mentioned at the beginning of this paper, particularly Pottier (1983), Klein and Stark (1985), Rodrigues (1985b), T. Kaufman (1990, 1994), and Moore and Storto (1994).

Specific needs include an exact inventory of languages, modern grammar documentation, basic documentation for comparative purposes, substratum research, archival work, and applied linguistics (for educational linguistics and revitalization projects, at least). Exactly how many languages there are and how many speakers they have, particularly in the black hole of the Amazon, is still not known. One of the major problems in this area is that languages have been given different names, and we still need to sort through names of people and names for dialects and languages. In terms of grammatical descriptions, there is some documentation on most languages of South America, but there are very few comprehensive grammatical studies set within modern linguistic frameworks and useful to the field of general linguistics (although some existing grammars can provide models for what can be done).³⁰

The issue of so many languages being considered as isolates may be the product of linguists missing clues due to a lack of information. Basic documentation of languages is needed in general to complete the classification schemas proposed and to study the actual history of those families. An example of a linguistic project addressing this need is the Kariban comparative project of the Museu Goeldi of Belem. This project aims at providing linguistic descriptions of Kariban languages done by affiliates of the Museu (including Brazilian graduate students in training) with the ultimate goal of studying family-wide processes of grammaticalization and rechecking classification proposals.³¹

30 See for instance the grammars of Yagua (D. Payne 1985; T. Payne 1985; Payne and Payne 1990), Sikuani (Queixalós 1995) or Andoke (Landaburu 1979).

31 This is a National Science Foundation funded project (S. Gildea from Rice University as P.I.). This project represents a model of collaborative research project in which a foreign linguist is working closely with a local institution and

contributing directly to the training of local Brazilian linguists. See section 5.3 below for more detail and section 5.4 for a discussion of such collaborative research project design.

Other work of a comparative nature includes the work of Rodrigues on the Tupi-Guarani languages and the work of Aikhenvald on Arawakan languages (Aikhenvald 1995, 1996).

In order to retrieve some information on the extinct languages of South American, particularly those of the highlands that were lost due to the spread of the lingua francas of the area several approaches can be taken. As advocated by Adelaar, who himself did such work (Adelaar 1988), a thorough study of the toponymy of the highlands may yield some information on extinct languages of the region. An additional source of information on substratum languages is the study of the local varieties of Spanish and Portuguese (a reality with which fieldworkers must reckon as they seek to establish a working language with the native speakers of their field projects!).

For the purpose of historical linguistic studies, much work could still be done on archival material, both in the archives of Spain and the local ones, although access to local materials is not always easy due to lack of funding to establish and maintain archives in South America and to the complexities of local politics.³²

The gaps are serious too in the area of applied linguistics, as native speakers' communities become actively involved in language-maintenance and revitalization projects. The needs include in particular applied linguistics aimed at educational programs, from bilingual education with the indigenous languages as first or second language to general literacy programs for the communities. Development of the languages to facilitate the translation of the new constitutions and new legislation concerning the welfare of the indigenous populations are also needed.

5.2 *Missionary documentation of South American indigenous languages*

Although South America may still stand as one of the most under-documented parts of the world at this point in time, systematic efforts have been orchestrated at different times by different entities to remedy this situation.

There exists an important documentation of the major languages from the time of the colonization produced by catholic missionaries from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They include, *inter alia*, grammars for Tupi (1595), Quechua (1560), Aymara (1603), Chibcha (1619, extinct today), and Guarani (1620), some of which are considered to be admirably

32 Such is the case of the materials from Jijón y Camafío in Ecuador (Haboud p.c.).

accurate considering the times (Adelaar 1991:47).³³ This colonial documentation is an important resource which is still available for a modern review of its contents and which provides invaluable information from a historical perspective.

In the last several decades, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) has been the major source of linguistic documentation of the South American indigenous languages, in particular the documentation of the smaller lowland languages. The only South American countries in which SIL has not established any presence are Paraguay and Venezuela, and they are officially no longer in Bolivia or Colombia.

SIL linguists have therefore produced the vast majority of the publications on South American languages. The quantity and usefulness of the linguistic documentation available for any one language attended to by SIL missionaries varies greatly depending on the linguistic sophistication of the individual missionaries involved. Professional linguists from SIL such as D. Derbyshire, D. Everett, David Payne, Doris Payne, and Thomas Payne, for instance, have been important contributors to the linguistic documentation of the lowland Amazonian languages, with some of their more theoretically oriented work having an impact on the field of linguistics at large.³⁴

The vast majority of SIL members, however, are missionaries whose primary interest is evangelization work and whose fieldwork goal in terms of language work is the translation of the Bible.³⁵ For this work they train native speakers in translation work. Many of the missions also promote literacy programs in native languages aimed primarily at being able to read the translations of the Bible. They often run in addition their own bilingual education programs at the elementary level, for which they train local bilingual teachers. All languages on which SIL missionaries have worked will have at least publications of educational material produced for these

33 See Adelaar (1991:47) and his bibliography for exact references for the colonial documentation mentioned here.

34 See for instance the contribution of SIL linguists to the National Science Foundation and National Endowment for the Humanities sponsored Working Conference on Amazonian Languages that took place at the University of Oregon in 1988 and the publication which resulted from it (D. Payne 1990).

35 SIL is associated with Wycliffe Bible Translators. The focus on Bible translation work as a goal probably accounts for the fact that the SIL twenty- or thirty-year presence has not resulted in the training of professional native or national linguists, one of the main complaints leveled against the organization by South American academics.

literacy programs; many have in addition more or less sophisticated grammatical sketches and word lists or dictionaries.³⁶

Although SIL missionaries are the most numerous and the better known of the linguistic profession because of their extensive publications, smaller missions are also working with indigenous languages and occasionally contributing to the description of the languages. For instance, in the Amazon region of Bolivia, which SIL left more than ten years ago, the team of linguists working on the standardization of the alphabets of nine Amazonian languages in the fall of 1995 encountered a Catholic mission running a Guarayu language program, a Franciscan priest who had just written a grammar of Chiquitano (Besiro), a North American New Tribes mission running a Tsimane' (Chimane) bilingual education program, a Swiss mission a Bia Yë (Yuqui) program, and a Swedish mission a Weenhayek (Mataco) program.

5.3 *Institutionalized linguistic work on indigenous languages in South America*

The longest tradition of work on indigenous languages in South America is that of the study of the Andean languages, Quechua and Aymara. The Chair of Quechua studies at the University of San Marcos, Lima, dates back more than four hundred years, for instance. The first generations of South American Andean linguists began to appear in the mid-1960s, among them native speakers of those languages. The University of San Marcos has been offering an undergraduate linguistics degree (*licenciatura*) in Andean, Amazonian and Spanish linguistics for thirty years, and a master's degree in the same for over fifteen years now.³⁷

36 SIL members are trained at SIL "summer institutes of linguistics" (literally) and receive linguistic mentoring in the field from SIL linguists stationed in each country. Much of the linguistic descriptive work available has been cast into a structuralist framework which was popular at the time of SIL's major expansion. One may consider unfortunate also the centralized decision in some countries to cast all grammars in a particular framework, such as the tagmemic framework developed by SIL linguists. This is the case of the two volumes of Bolivian grammars (Matteson

1965), the usefulness of which in strictly descriptive terms is severely reduced, the information being extremely tedious to retrieve and the data on which the analysis was done largely unavailable. 37 The original degree program was partly funded by the Ford Foundation as part of a plan of Linguistic Development (Plan de Fomento Lingüístico), which also sponsored the experimental educational projects of Ayacucho and one of the first sociolinguistic surveys of the Quechua world (Lopez p.c.).

Various training programs with emphasis on the study of indigenous languages of South America have been developing in the last decades, in Colombia and Brazil in particular. For example, the Centro Colombiano de Estudios en Lenguas Aborígenes (CCELA) was founded in 1987 and is associated with the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá.³⁸ Its goal is to train linguists of Colombian origin, including native speakers of Colombian languages, and to prepare them to do a comprehensive study of both languages and linguistic communities, within a framework of collaboration with linguistic community efforts. The Center has established several series of publications: grammatical descriptions, dictionaries, and publications of conference proceedings.³⁹

The first graduating class of 1987 was working on sixteen languages. By the third graduating class of 1995, graduates of the program were working on thirty-nine languages of Colombia (including coastal Creole). A total of twelve indigenous native speakers have graduated from the program, all with a monograph on their language. As of today, two-thirds of the graduates of the program are employed in linguistics.⁴⁰

Another country offering advanced training programs for the study of indigenous languages is Brazil. The conditions for the study of indigenous languages changed drastically in Brazil in 1987, after a coalition of all the institutions where indigenous languages were being researched or taught submitted a research and action program to CNPq, the national research outfit.⁴¹ Although the program was not actually funded, its definition of priorities and lines of action opened the doors of CNPq for linguistic projects concerning indigenous languages.

38 Teaching team and funds have been provided by the French Centre National de Recherche Scientifique.

39 The publications to date include eight descriptive grammars (*descripciones*), one Dictionary and three conference proceedings, the most recent and most relevant here being Pabón Triana (1995) mentioned earlier. The quality of the grammatical descriptions is uneven, as could be expected of such an effort, and has concentrated on basic descriptions of grammar and phonology, with so far no discourse or pragmatics work. A data base to

include all information gathered by the members of the program is being set up (Landaburu p.c.).

40 Information from Jon Landaburu, director of CCELA (p.c.). The National University in Bogotá has a master's degree in Indigenous linguistics and has had three promotions too, but very few have actually graduated.

41 The program is called PPCLIB: Programa de Pesquisa Científica das Línguas Indígenas Brasileiras. All information on Brazil is from Rodrigues, Moore and Franchetto p.c.

Three other institutions are worth mentioning for their focus on indigenous languages. The first two are departments of linguistics, the third a research institute with no university affiliation. UNICAMP (Universidade Estadual de Campinas) has the longest record of training students for field-work on indigenous languages since its start in 1977. It has awarded so far twenty-seven master's degrees and ten Ph.D.s.⁴² The linguistics program at UnB (Universidade de Brasília) has been offering a master's degree in indigenous linguistics since 1988 and so far has graduated thirteen students.⁴³

The linguistics branch of the Museu Goeldi of Belem is the most recent institution to enter into the study of indigenous languages. It is a Brazilian federal research institute with a focus on the languages of the Amazon. It provides research opportunities to local and foreign linguists, and training and assistance in gaining entrance to graduate schools to a limited number of selected students, many of whom are from Amazonia. The goal is to increase the number of highly qualified Ph.D.s in Brazil, preferably people of the region, who will have the appropriate field skills and theoretical background to carry out the needed descriptive and practical assistance work in the Brazilian Amazon.⁴⁴ A number of these students are studying abroad and many of them are already involved in literacy and language revitalization projects.⁴⁵ The staff of the Linguistics Division is partly foreign and partly Brazilian, as is the funding.

While the programs considered so far emphasize university-level linguistic research, several important programs are addressing the linguistic needs of the native communities themselves. The program in Puno (Peru) started in 1985 and offers training in Andean linguistics and education at two levels: a two-year master's degree with thesis and a one-year diploma of secondary specialization for teachers already working within the bilingual education system which is more oriented towards pedagogical issues.

42 It hosts the Documentation project of the languages of the Indigenous Park of Xingu, coordinated by Lucy Seki.

43 This is the home institution of Aryon Rodrigues.

44 They plan a comprehensive audio-/video-documentation program for the indigenous languages and an expansion of the training program,

which may be extended to students of other Amazonian countries.

45 By the academic year 1995-96 Museu Goeldi linguistics graduate students will be found at UC-Santa Barbara, the University of Oregon, Rice University, the University of Chicago, MIT and the University of Paris and soon the first Ph.D. graduate will return to train the next generation.

The training program for bilingual teachers of the Peruvian Amazon region located in Iquitos was started in 1988 and deals presently with ten languages. It includes a linguistics component in which native speakers study their own languages under the supervision of professional linguists. Other teacher-training programs for indigenous people include the programs in Quichua applied linguistics of the University of Cuenca (Ecuador), the Bolivian normal school of Camiri for Guaraní speakers (with another one projected for Tumichucua for other Amazonian languages of the region).

The most recent efforts at developing local linguistic resources are efforts at sharing manpower regionally, to combat the state focus of established institutions and respond more directly to the actual needs of the population of speakers involved. Two instances of such efforts can be mentioned. One is centered on the highlands: it is a new Andean program, a regional training center established in Cochabamba (Bolivia) for Quechua, Aymara, and Guaraní speakers with the goal of providing the manpower for the educational reforms underway in those languages in Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Columbia, and Ecuador.⁴⁶ The other is the creation of a network of parties involved with the study, maintenance, and development of the languages of the Amazonian basin. It began following an international gathering of representatives of native-speaker communities and of institutions as well as individual academics from all the nine countries of the Amazon.⁴⁷

5.4 *Food for thought for foreign linguists*

The existing work being carried out presently in South America through local institutions was presented first to put the role of foreign linguists in South America in perspective. The point to be made is that foreign linguists interested in contributing to the linguistic work that remains to be done on South American indigenous languages would do well to take stock of what is happening in South America and reflect on the kinds of relations they might establish in the region. Fieldwork relations are simply not what they used to be when most of present-day practicing linguists were in training or beginning their careers, at least. The dynamics are

⁴⁶ This new program will combine documentation, archiving, teacher training and research. It is funded by the German government (GTZ) (Lopez, director, p.c.).

⁴⁷ See the recently started Bulletin LINDA (Línguas Indígenas da Amazônia), to be produced at the Museu Goeldi in Belem, Brazil for its first two years.

shifting at this point in time, and it is useful to make some aspects of that shift explicit.

The reality is that there are very strong feelings South American academic and linguistic circles about the necessity to develop linguistics done by Latin Americans, and to establish the institutional base that is needed for it. There is a widespread sentiment that foreign linguists who help these efforts, in a genuine and effective way, are very welcome, while others who continue to function on an individual(istic) basis, mostly concerned with furthering their own career in foreign universities, are not so.

To accept the fact that South American linguistics should be carried out as much as possible by South Americans has in fact deep implications for the way we conduct our business and the way we basically conceive of our role as linguists.⁴⁸ The reality of South American academic life is that, due to the absence of doctoral programs in linguistics in South America until recently, most prominent linguists from South America have been trained abroad, in the United States and in Europe, and are therefore familiar with the teaching and research facilities that exist there. When they return to their country, they are faced with difficult professional conditions. The general lack of resources for research on indigenous languages is prevalent in local state universities and has hampered the development of local linguistic manpower. Academics in South America lack the resources available to outside linguists, such as library resources, research funding, capacity to offer advanced training to graduate students, or to provide graduates with employment.

In addition, the linguists established in South America who work on indigenous languages (both native South Americans and foreign linguists) and have received training abroad, tend to find themselves in a minority in the linguistic profession of their own country. This is because whatever linguistics has developed recently in South America has been more along the lines of formal linguistics focused on the major colonial languages

⁴⁸ The original spoken version of this paper delivered at the Dartmouth conference was blunt, in the way one can get away with saying things one is not as comfortable putting down in writing for publication, but I think it is worth tucking away in a footnote for people to see and reflect on what I actually said. The message was, in plain language:

"Beware of gringo imperialism," i.e. beware of the multiple ways it is easy for us foreign-based linguists to plan research projects, obtain funding for them, and carry them out from our home-base institutions without regard for local needs or potential collaboration.

or applied linguistics focused on the acquisition of English as a foreign language.⁴⁹

It derives from all of the above that our South American colleagues are expecting from us collaborative work which will contribute to the strengthening of indigenous linguistics locally. Examples of such collaborative work are the programs of CCELA in Bogota (with French support) and the Museu Goeldi in Belem (with US and French support) mentioned earlier.⁵⁰ Professional collaboration with South American counterparts includes contributing to the training of local manpower, which has to happen at two levels. One is training the future linguists of South America to become the academic manpower at local universities and research centers. While most of them will be non-indigenous nationals in the majority, means should also be found whenever possible to provide the opportunity to native speakers of indigenous languages to become the linguists of their languages.

The other training effort must happen at a more local level and address the needs of the native speakers who are or will be the bilingual school teachers and other local linguistic resources for the communities. This second line of work and training has not been an integral part of traditional academic research projects of the first world. It is however a pre-occupation and priority of most linguistic field-research projects of local institutions, where interest in indigenous cultures and languages in general, and the discipline of linguistics in particular, are conceived within the broader context of concern for the survival and empowerment of the indigenous communities. This is the framework within which the CCELA center of Colombia and the Museu Goeldi of Belem, Brazil, function.

In the case of South America, there is in addition another delicate issue to be faced by any linguistic fieldworker, which is that of the presence of SIL missionary linguists in most countries. It is part of the reality of South America that in the local world of linguistics, affiliation or non-affiliation with SIL is always a variable to be factored in, whether one wants to think about it or not. One needs to know that such affiliation matters in

49 Consider for instance the popularity and predominance of formal linguistics of the Chomskian variety in Brazil today, or the fact that the only Ph.D. in linguistics of Bolivia is a linguist trained in the Government and Binding Theory tradition

with no connection to the issue of documenting the indigenous languages of the country.

50 An earlier program was the one for Aymara founded by Mary Hartman in La Paz.

some circles and that, as a foreign linguist, one is primarily defined as being or not being associated with SIL.⁵¹ Therefore some of the major tenets of US culture and academic life are likely to be seriously challenged in the field in South America where academic work is divorced neither from "politics" nor from "religion."

Strengthening local research efforts on indigenous languages will therefore mean refraining from involvement in projects proposed by non-local groups and institutions, which all too often become influenced by the requirements and interests of a foreign-based academic community.⁵² Indeed, much would need to be reconsidered in the way we foreign academics conduct our business in general if we profess to be concerned with the fate of endangered indigenous languages, in South America or anywhere else in the world for that matter.

6 General issues about linguistic work on endangered languages

The focus so far has been on the specifics of the situation of endangered indigenous languages of South America, with a consideration of the attitudes of local indigenous populations towards their languages, as well as the interest of South American academics, leading to a reflection of the implications of such interests for how to conceive of the role of foreign linguists in the region. But the issues raised reach much beyond South America. In this section, and by way of conclusion, I would like to consider some of the wider implications for the linguistic profession as it is practiced today in the United States or Europe for those of us concerned with the situation of endangered languages. As a senior linguist engaged in the business

51 This is another reality of South America. The risk in the field of being taken for a CIA agent varies with the countries and the particular times and circumstances, but the burden of proof will always be on any "gringo" linguist to prove that he or she is not a member of the CIA, if that is the case and if that matters to the individual. Whereas US academia tends to blur the interconnection of academia and politics and to ignore for the most part the ideological underpinnings of its enterprise, Latin American academia does not separate academia and politics. As I stated earlier, this is a reality check, of the kind that is very important to

do if one contemplates working in or sending a student to work in South America.

52 From my twenty-five years experience in US academia, I realize that what I am saying here goes against some of the most cherished values of its culture, such as a cultivated inclination for individualistic enterprise, a deeply ingrained devotion to a certain sense of freedom, and a strong pull towards insulating academia and the research enterprise from its sociopolitical context. This needs to be said if we are truly to contemplate the situation of endangered languages in South America in its actual context.

of fieldwork on endangered languages, I would like to offer three lines of thought to help see our way through the enormity of the task ahead of us.

There is no doubt that what I am about to say has been shaped by my experience in Latin America, although I would assume that much of it is generally relevant to the situation in any part of the world.⁵³ I will develop three points: first how the business of endangered languages is the business of the whole profession; second what some of the specifics of doing fieldwork on endangered languages are; and third what those specifics mean in terms of preparation and training of future fieldworkers.

6.1 *Concern of the whole profession*

As concern over the fate of endangered languages has been growing steadily in the last few years, catching media attention and being brought to the attention of the whole profession as well as the general public, there is no way to escape wondering what we linguists can/should do about endangered languages. There is a need, as Fishman stated appropriately, to "intellectualize" the field, to make it a legitimate concern of the academic profession of linguists.⁵⁴

One issue worth clarifying is how the business of endangered languages, whether in Latin America or somewhere else, is the business of the whole profession, not just the responsibility of or limited to the interests of, the fieldworkers. The fact is, the whole linguistic profession can help the situation with endangered languages.⁵⁵

There are multiple ways of confronting the situation, and linguists can all do what they are best at: we need descriptive linguists, historical linguists, sociolinguists, psycholinguists, and theoreticians with a taste for data. The work involved includes desk/archive work, fieldwork, training of fieldworkers, professional support for the work in the form of grant reviews, hiring decisions, promotion and tenure decisions, and other forms

53 Contents of this sections were first presented at the 1992 International Congress of linguistics in Quebec (Craig 1993) and the first Endangered Language symposium of the LSA (Craig 1995; Craig and Hale 1995).

54 I will not argue here for why linguists and the world at large should be concerned with the fate of endangered languages, convinced as I am, as Fishman (1991) points out, that it is a question not

really amenable to rational thinking, and more a matter of ideology than many want to admit, and in any case beyond the scope of this chapter.

55 I am aware that this attitude is not as widespread attitude as it could be, in spite of the Linguistic Society of America declarations and the activities of the Committee on Endangered Languages it sponsors.

of reward decisions. And I would add to these tasks one specifically linked to the issue of training national and local linguists: it is the issue of admissions, and the mentoring and training of those future linguists once admitted. In these times when the concept of affirmative action is being attacked, it needs saying that the enterprise of training national linguists at North American or European centers to return to their country and work on the local endangered languages requires a commitment to some form of affirmative action. And as it can be a serious burden on the faculty sponsoring such students, acknowledgement of that work by the community of linguists would be a form of support.

6.2 *Understanding the nature of work on endangered languages*

Some of the characteristics of fieldwork on endangered languages which are rarely made explicit, but are part of the experience of fieldworkers engaged in that line of work, will be considered here.⁵⁶ They include linguistic and sociolinguistic characteristics of such languages; the need to deal with the indigenous communities and their needs; and the potential dissonance between the demands of the field and the demands of an academic career.

The strictly linguistic issue is that of the challenge of describing decaying languages. There are the frustrations and limitations of working with the only speakers available, with little choice in the matter, and the added difficulty of dealing with the very complex attitudes speakers have toward those languages, often based on their own linguistic insecurities. The work is often emotionally stressful, and the bewilderment of the linguist trained in a tradition that only considers the description of vital languages with healthy native speakers is great. Fieldwork on unwritten and non-standardized languages is no easy task, but the twist of the language being in a state of decay is an added layer of challenge. For one thing, the standard field method of direct elicitation becomes particularly impracticable; if it is already a dangerous method of data gathering that needs great care and control in normal field situations, it becomes often useless in the case of work with semi-speakers typical of situations of endangered languages.

For the documentation of endangered languages, one must also take into account in all seriousness and great detail the sociolinguistic

56 See Craig (1997) for a survey of the research and fieldwork issues linked to language obsolescence.

dimensions of the situation, when graduate training and professional specialization emphasize a narrow focus on grammatical description. And independent of the variations of a sociolinguistic origin, one must deal with a frustrating situation of pervasive speaker variation due to incomplete learning and lack of reinforcement of norms which has been eloquently described by Dorian (1993b).

In addition to these linguistic issues is the fact that it is more and more common for the linguistic community involved to place some demands on the linguist to meet some of their needs. One way to think about this issue is to consider the evolution of the concept of fieldwork framework over the last decades and to be conscious of which framework one espouses. For this exercise, I find the approach to the concept of fieldwork frameworks developed in Cameron *et al.* (1993) helpful. Moving away from the traditional "ethical" fieldwork framework that has prevailed in academia – which Cameron *et al.* characterize as work *on* the language and for the sake of science – and rethinking the "advocate" framework of the late sixties and seventies – which they label as work *on* the language and *for* the people, we need to situate ourselves within the type of negotiated and collaborative fieldwork framework that is becoming the dominant one in the field, in South America at least, and which consists of a multidimensional framework of work *on* a language, *for* its speakers and *with* its speakers.⁵⁷ Although the ultimate goal would be to promote work *on* the language *by* the speakers, such a goal is generally unobtainable in a situation of extreme endangerment.

If one espouses an empowering framework of fieldwork that acknowledges the needs of the speakers' community, one is immediately challenged to types of work that one is unprepared for and feels little competence for. The point is to realize that there is no division of labor in the field, that the linguists, with their formal education are the main – supposedly expert – resource for whatever project is wanted, from literacy programs to bilingual education programs, to revitalization programs, to translation of legal texts.

A third critical aspect of work on endangered languages is that it aggravates the dissonance that generally develops between the values

57 For an account of a salvage linguistics/language revitalization project in this framework see the case of Rama described in Craig 1992a, 1992b.

and goals of academia and the values and goals encountered in the field situation. What are still most valued in the profession are theoretical pronouncements that will advance our understanding of the nature of language, with one of the measures of one's contribution to the field being publications. This goal is easier to meet when the data are abundant, verifiable and quantifiable, as with work on official/healthy/vital languages, which typically have a written tradition. But the reality of work on endangered languages is that old and last speakers are often hard to find, and hard to work with; that the data collected from them seem inconsistent and come in a trickle; that the enterprise is time consuming and can be expensive. These may not be safe situations for producing a doctoral dissertation, or publications to secure tenure, except in unusual circumstances (of previous documentation, of available and sophisticated speakers). So, of particular concern to me is the liability such work represents for the career of graduate students and junior faculty, unless the profession as a whole understands the difficulty of the work and appreciates the accomplishments for what they are.

6.3 *Appropriate training*

There are those who believe that the best training for fieldworkers is still the sink-and-swim approach, although this is certainly not the attitude of other disciplines which rely on fieldwork, such as anthropology or sociology.

The fact is that we can hardly afford to send the wrong people, unprepared people, into the sensitive and complex situations that most of these endangered language situations are. There are linguistic fieldwork issues to handle, and there are also much larger ethical/sociopolitical issues that make sheer survival of a research project a difficult endeavor.

We must rethink the issue of the training of fieldworkers beyond our traditional field-methods courses. Linguistic elicitation in the field with unsophisticated speakers carries little resemblance to the usual situation of field-methods course taught on campuses with fairly acculturated "informant" speakers. For one thing, there will always be the difficulty of handling the working language. On campus the burden is more on the linguistic consultant to adjust to the language of the linguist, but the situation changes drastically in the field. Difficulties with the working language common to native speaker and linguist, the lack of formal education of the native

speaker, and the nature of the different relations speakers of languages with oral and written traditions hold toward their language make the kind of direct elicitation practiced in standard field methods courses a gambling game. One must rely on textual material, which is time consuming and itself a challenge to gather, if much safer as a source of data. But what if none of the last speakers is a "story teller," and no coherent texts can be gathered?

The technicalities of linguistic elicitation methodologies must be supplemented with a component of ethical/sociopolitical contextualization of the enterprise of fieldwork. Although there are no available fieldwork recipes, each situation being a unique configuration of circumstances and personalities that need to be handled on a case-by-case approach, we need to sensitize fieldworkers to the major components of the situations they are likely to walk into.

As already mentioned on several occasions, the fieldworkers may well be asked to respond to some of the needs of community linguistics, for example, the need for programs in language revitalization and in language maintenance, either through official bilingual educational projects or on a more ad hoc basis. Therefore it would seem judicious to include as part of the training for work on endangered languages the areas of applied linguistics which may be of some use. It is true that, for this, a curriculum still needs to be designed, as established programs of applied linguistics are not equipped to deal with the specific challenges of such populations. But the need is there, and some intellectualizing needs to happen at the university level, particularly within departments of linguistics that sponsor work on endangered languages. Language-revitalization projects need to be recognized as a special area of second-language acquisition and second-language teaching. It is not enough for "straight" linguists to think that such projects are the domain of educators and applied linguists; on one hand, manpower is much too scarce, and the reality is that the linguist is a one-person orchestra in the field. On the other hand, the linguists could be the ones most able to comprehend the linguistic situation of endangered languages.

There have been encouraging signs in recent years that the concern for endangered languages is becoming a shared concern within the profession of linguists. The above thoughts are just meant to point to some of the challenges we face as we try to understand better what the enterprise of

work on endangered languages means. Hopefully they also make it clear that there is no discussion of work on endangered languages without taking into consideration the perceived needs of the communities of speakers involved. This calls for a reassessment of the kind of fieldwork framework one works within, a reassessment which challenges some of the basic premises of first-world academic circles. For those of us already involved in negotiated collaborative linguistic-documentation and language-revitalization projects with speakers of endangered languages, the intellectual as well as human rewards are real. It is only hoped that the profession sees it for the opportunity it is and the responsibility it means, at the dawn of the century beyond which little may be left of these endangered languages for ever.