

EXPERIENCE REPORT

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LINGUISTIC DOCUMENTATION TO THE **STRENGTHENING** **OF THE IKPENG LANGUAGE** AT SCHOOL



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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we present the activities and products developed during the Ikpeng language documentation project that contributed to the strengthening of the teaching of mother language of this indigenous society at the school, a space in which the use and teaching of the Portuguese language predominates. The Ikpeng linguistic documentation process was set within the Projeto de Documentação de Línguas Indígenas (PRODOCLIN), promoted by Museu do Índio/FUNAI, in partnership with UNESCO, during the period from 2009 to 2012. Among the main contributions of the documentation project are a sociolinguistic analysis, the creation of a lexical database, the elaboration of a descriptive grammar of the Ikpeng language, the publication of a monolingual book of traditional narratives and training courses in linguistics for indigenous teachers. The products resulting from the documentation were developed based on the demands of the school context of the Ikpeng society, to preserve

and value the language and ancestral memories of this indigenous society. The Ikpeng language is spoken by the eponymous people, who live in the Parque Indígena do Xingu – MT.

RESUMO

Neste artigo, apresentamos as atividades e os produtos desenvolvidos durante o projeto de documentação da língua Ikpeng que contribuíram para o fortalecimento do ensino da língua materna desta sociedade indígena no ambiente escolar, espaço em que predomina o uso e o ensino da língua portuguesa. O processo de documentação linguística Ikpeng foi ambientado no seio do Projeto de Documentação de Línguas Indígenas (PRODOCLIN), promovido pelo Museu do Índio/FUNAI, em parceria com a UNESCO, durante o período de 2009 a 2012. Dentre as principais contribuições do projeto de documentação da língua Ikpeng estão o levantamento de um diagnóstico sociolinguístico, a criação de uma base de dados lexicais, a elaboração de uma gramática descritiva da língua Ikpeng, a publicação de um livro monolíngue de narrativas tradicionais e cursos de formação em linguística para os professores das escolas indígenas. Os produtos resultantes da documentação foram desenvolvidos com base e a partir de demandas particulares do contexto escolar da sociedade Ikpeng, numa tentativa de preservar e valorizar a língua e as memórias ancestrais próprias desta comunidade. A língua Ikpeng é falada pelo povo homônimo, que vive no Parque Indígena do Xingu – MT.

LAY SUMMARY

This article presents, in general terms, the Ikpeng language documentation project and the main results obtained with it that brought contributions to teaching the language at school. Among these results, we can highlight: the survey of a sociolinguistic analysis, the creation of a lexical database, the elaboration of a descriptive grammar of the Ikpeng language, the publication of a monolingual book of traditional narratives and training courses in linguistics for teachers in indigenous schools.

KEYWORDS

Linguistic Documentation; Ikpeng Language; Indigenous School Education.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Documentação Linguística; Língua Ikpeng; Educação Escolar Indígena.

INTRODUCTION¹

Depending on the criterion used to recognize a language, a very variable number of languages spoken around the globe can be reached. The Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, from UNESCO, estimates 6,000 languages and points out that 43% of them, that is, almost 2,500 languages cataloged around the world are threatened with extinction. Most of the population speaking these languages consists of indigenous peoples, who have watched the exponential decimation of their languages at a frenetic pace.

With the disappearance of a language, all the knowledge produced in it is also lost, in addition to the conception of the world that it conveyed and an important part of the ethnic identity of the people who lived it.

With the aim of raising awareness of the importance and urgent need to preserve, revitalize, and promote the indigenous languages spoken in all parts of the world, the United Nations General Assembly established 2019 as the "International Year of Indigenous Languages". As a result of this action, through Resolution ARES/74/135, the same Assembly proclaimed the period between 2022 and 2032 as the "International Decade of Indigenous Languages", to draw the attention of the world community to the critical situation of many languages of indigenous peoples and to mobilize interested parties, as well as resources aimed at their preservation, revitalization, and promotion.

Regrettably, as stated by Moore et al., (2008), the situation of indigenous languages in Brazil is representative of the world scenario, as Brazil is one of the countries that, although multilingual – with about 170 indigenous languages – is on the list of places where minoritized languages are seriously threatened with extinction, due to the almost complete lack of public policies on the part of the various governmental spheres (municipal, state or federal) aimed at safeguarding these languages. Contrary to this and going against the grain of Brazilian history, where indigenous people had been conquering, with great difficulty, basic rights, such as access to differentiated school education by indigenous peoples, we have seen, in recent Brazilian history, a policy of genocide against indigenous peoples and consequently the extermination and/or devaluation of everything that concerns it.

We know that the relationship between the indigenous people and the school is as old as the history of Brazil itself and has gone through several phases over these five centuries, ranging from the imposition of models that aimed at religious conversion, political domination, cultural homogenization, assimilation into national society to – more recently – educational models claimed by the indigenous

¹ This article is an English version of the already published work, whose reference is as follows: CHAGAS, Angela F. A. A documentação da língua Ikpeng e sua contribuição para o ensino da língua no ambiente escolar. *Revista Brasileira de Línguas Indígenas*, v. 2, p. 23-38, 2022.

people themselves that aim at valuing and strengthening their ethnic identities, making the presence of the school within indigenous lands acquire a new meaning for its users and starting to guarantee access to general knowledge, without denying the cultural and identity particularities of a certain people, practicing, among other things, interculturality and bi- or multilingualism.

However, many actions or initiatives aimed at the school education of Brazilian indigenous populations (such as the elaboration and implementation of educational projects, publication of didactic material, etc.) have been carried out in the background and isolated manner by organized groups of the civil society, universities, individual researchers, NGOs, or the communities themselves that try to seek alternatives for a differentiated school education. Currently, indigenous schools have been a space used by various communities not only to learn about the knowledge of the “white people”, but also to rescue, value and preserve various aspects of their traditional culture, including their languages.

In this article, we will descriptively present the Ikpeng indigenous language documentation project and its contributions to the teaching and strengthening of this language in the school environment, a space in which the use and teaching of the Portuguese language predominates.

The Ikpeng people, also known in linguistic and anthropological literature as Txikão, are made up of approximately five hundred people who live in six villages, all located in the northernmost part of the state of Mato Grosso. They are: Moygu and Arayo villages, close to the Pavuru Indigenous Post, on the banks of the Xingu River; Rawo, Paranoa and Kurure villages, on the banks of the Ronuro River; and village and Tupara, on the banks of the eponymous river.

The language spoken by the Ikpeng is genetically related to the others of the “Arara Group” (cf. Girard, 1971; Menget, 1977; Kaufman, 1994; Gildea, 2012), which together with Bakairi form the Pekodian Branch (cf. Meira; Franchetto; 2005) of the Carib language family.

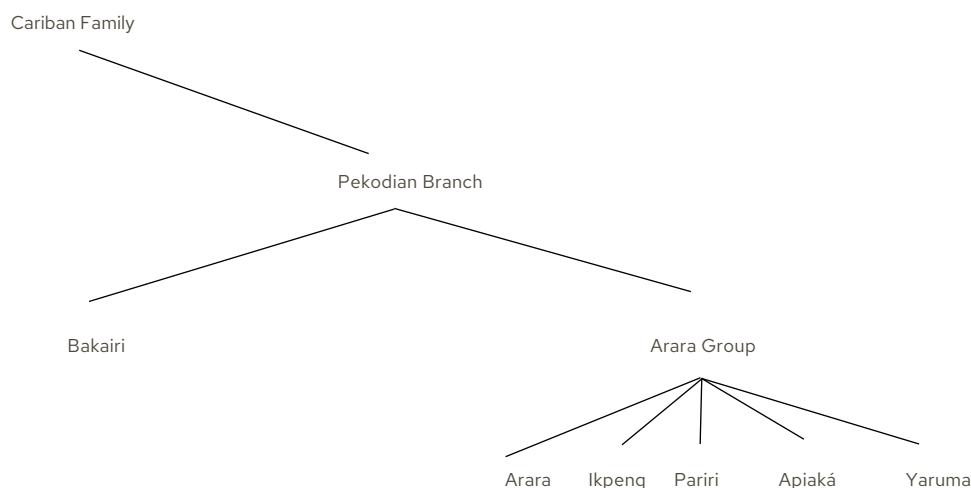


Figure 1. Ikpeng language in Cariban Family. Source: Gildea (2012).

1. SCHOOL EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE TEACHING: PROMISES AND PRACTICES

All Ikpeng still acquire the group's ancestral language as their mother language. However, a large part of the community's population, mainly male, is also fluent in Portuguese. According to Moore et al (2008) "the main factor that determines the future of a language is its transmission to the subsequent generation". The level of intergenerational transmission of the Ikpeng language remains high, thanks to the sociolinguistic situation of most women who, because they have less contact with Portuguese speakers than men, remain monolingual in Ikpeng. Despite this, children of both sexes have become bilingual at an earlier age, acquiring Portuguese as a second language in childhood.

Despite growing bilingualism, the practice of Ikpeng surpasses that of Portuguese in almost all social contexts, except for situations of interaction with speakers of other languages (in which they use Portuguese as a contact language) and the school environment (in which, depending on the content to be taught, with more specific technical language, the transmission of knowledge occurs almost exclusively in Portuguese).

Currently, the Ikpeng community has three schools: Escola Indígena Central Ikpeng "Amure", which serves students from the Moygu and Arayo villages, being the school with the largest number of students within the Parque Indígena do Xingu (PIX); Escola Indígena Municipal "Nova Ubiratã", which serves the Tupara village; and the Escola Indígena Municipal "Paranatinga", located in Rawo village. The two municipal schools offer complete primary education, and the state school also offers secondary education.

As mentioned before, one of the rights that indigenous peoples obtained in relation to formal education was the guarantee, by law, of the use and appreciation of their mother tongues in the school environment, based on bilingual and intercultural teaching, strengthened, among other actions, by due access to the appropriate didactic material for this purpose.

According to article 32 of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education - LDBEN:

Art. 32 - Regular elementary education will be taught in Portuguese, ensuring indigenous communities the use of their mother languages and their own learning processes (Brasil. Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional, LDB. 9394/1996. Article 32, paragraph 3).²

The same document, in its article 78, further states that:

2 Translated from original: Art. 32 - O ensino fundamental regular será ministrado em língua portuguesa, assegurada às comunidades indígenas a utilização de suas línguas maternas e processos próprios de aprendizagem (Brasil. Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional, LDB. 9394/1996. Artigo 32, §3º).

Art. 78 - The Federal Education System, with the collaboration of federal agencies for the promotion of culture and assistance to indigenous peoples, will develop integrated teaching and research programs to offer bilingual and intercultural school education to indigenous peoples, with the following objectives:

I - provide the indigenous, their communities and peoples with the recovery of their historical memories; the reaffirmation of their ethnic identities; the appreciation of their languages and sciences.

II - to guarantee to the indigenous, their communities and peoples, access to information, technical and scientific knowledge of the national society and other indigenous and non-indigenous societies. (Brasil. Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, LDB. 9394/1996. Article 78).³

The strengthening of the languages of the original peoples, as well as the elaboration of specific didactic material for this purpose are provided for in paragraph 2 of article 79 of the LDBEN, as can be read below:

Art. 79 - The Union will provide technical and financial support to education systems in providing intercultural education to indigenous communities, developing integrated teaching and research programs.

§ 1º- The programs will be planned with an audience of indigenous communities.

§ 2º- The programs referred to in this article, included in the National Education Plans, will have the following objectives:

- strengthen the socio-cultural practices and mother language of each indigenous community;
- maintain training programs for specialized personnel, aimed at school education in indigenous communities;
- develop specific curricula and programs, including cultural content corresponding to the respective communities;
- Systematically prepare and publish specific and differentiated didactic material. (Brasil. Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, LDB. 9394/1996. Article 79, §2.).⁴

3 Translated from the original: Art. 78 - O Sistema de Ensino da União, com a colaboração das agências federais de fomento à cultura e de assistência aos índios, desenvolverá programas integrados de ensino e pesquisas, para oferta de Educação escolar bilíngüe e intercultural aos povos indígenas, com os seguintes objetivos:

I - proporcionar aos índios, suas comunidades e povos, a recuperação de suas memórias históricas; a reafirmação de suas identidades étnicas; a valorização de suas línguas e ciências.

II - garantir aos índios, suas comunidades e povos, o acesso às informações, conhecimentos técnicos e científicos da sociedade nacional e demais sociedades indígenas e não-índias. (Brasil. Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional, LDB. 9394/1996. Artigo 78).

4 Translated from the original: Art. 79 - A União apoiará técnica e financeiramente os sistemas de ensino no provimento da educação intercultural às comunidades indígenas, desenvolvendo programas integrados de ensino e pesquisa.

§ 1º- Os programas serão planejados com audiência das comunidades indígenas.

§ 2º- Os programas a que se refere este artigo, incluídos nos Planos Nacionais de Educação, terão os seguintes objetivos:

- fortalecer as práticas sócio-culturais e a língua materna de cada comunidade indígena;
- manter programas de formação de pessoal especializado, destinado à educação escolar nas comunidades indígenas;
- desenvolver currículos e programas específicos, neles incluindo os conteúdos culturais correspondentes às respectivas comunidades;
- elaborar e publicar sistematicamente material didático específico e diferenciado. (Brasil. Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional, LDB. 9394/1996. Artigo 79, §2º).

Despite these legally guaranteed rights, as stated in the text of the National Curriculum Reference for Indigenous Schools (RCNEI): “at the government level, initiatives that guarantee a quality school that meets the interests and rights of indigenous peoples in their specificity are still rare. against non-indigenous and in their internal diversity (linguistic, cultural, and historical).” (Brasil. RCNEI, 1999, p. 6)

In indigenous Ikpeng schools, the ten teachers (all indigenous, nine of them Ikpeng) try to guarantee the children's bilingual literacy. However, the students and teachers themselves report that children are much more fluent in reading and writing in Portuguese than in Ikpeng. According to the sociolinguistic questionnaire applied to the residents of Aldeia Moygu, 69.9% of the people interviewed (out of a total of 216) declared themselves to be literate. Of this number, 48.3% appeared as knowing how to read only in Ikpeng, another 41.1% said they could read only in Portuguese and less than 10% answered that they could read both in Ikpeng and in Portuguese. As for writing ability, 29.8% of respondents said they did not know how to write in any language, 10.6% responded that they knew how to write only in Ikpeng, while 25.8% responded that they had mastery of writing only in Portuguese and only 33, 8% said they knew how to write in Ikpeng and Portuguese (cf. Chagas, 2017). These data show that only about half of the Ikpeng population who declared themselves literate have reading and writing fluency in their mother language. The results are even more critical when the entire population is considered, that is, when illiterate people are also included in these data.

All of this is a result both of the abundance and ease of access to teaching materials – and of other natures – available in Portuguese, as well as of the scarcity of materials both in and about the Ikpeng language. One of the main complaints on the part of teachers in Ikpeng schools in relation to teaching their mother language is the lack of textbooks that help them in the formal teaching of the language, as well as other types of texts written in Ikpeng that allow for training and consequently the increase of fluency in the reading of this language by the students.

Another difficulty reported by teachers about teaching the Ikpeng language in schools was their own training, which, as it is not specific to the language area, lacks knowledge of both language teaching methodologies and linguistic knowledge to help them understand metalinguistically the structural characteristics of their language in order to transfer this knowledge in a didactic way to the students.

Not only the Ikpeng teachers, but the wider community, considers the teaching of the mother language in the school environment to be very important, as they consider that this practice contributes both to the appreciation and maintenance not only of their language, but also of other languages. aspects of their culture. For them, the teaching and use of the Ikpeng language in this environment can help to reinforce the transmission of traditional knowledge of the people, their cosmologies, the cultivation of gardens, types of vegetation and their specific uses, songs, games, and parties, just to mention some examples.

Despite the wishes and efforts of the Ikpeng community to guarantee the formal teaching of their language at school, through bilingual education and the policy for the use and appreciation of native languages, we see that – although guaranteed by law – these practices have not actually been implemented. materialized in the Ikpeng indigenous schools. In this sense, the Brazilian State fails to enable indigenous peoples to have access to the differentiated education that was promised to them by the State itself.

2. LINGUISTIC DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

Two of the main causes for the extinction of languages are: the political repression of peoples who speak minoritized languages and the pressure exerted by the majority languages. The disappearance of a language constitutes a great loss for the native community, since language is the main means of transmission of culture and traditional thoughts, in addition to being an important part of ethnic identity (Moore et al., 2008).

For a long time, the most common way to document a language was to write its grammar. Currently, more modern methods are being increasingly used. This is the audiovisual recording of samples of that language, which consists of recording different textual genres produced by the people of the target language, such as ceremonial speeches, songs, historical narratives, procedural texts, spontaneous dialogues, etc. The great merit of a linguistic documentation project is the use of records to attempt to preserve or revitalize the language, depending on the situation. Among the various existing linguistic revitalization and maintenance methods, literacy in the mother language is one that brings positive impacts on the relationship that people establish with the language, increasing its prestige within the community. The linguistic attitudes of speakers reflect the social meaning of the language and tell us something about how they value their language. Thus, ensuring that the native language has a high social status within a group tends to delay its replacement process by another.

Between 2009 and 2012, the Ikpeng language was the object of a linguistic documentation project, coordinated by Angela Chagas, within the scope of the Projeto de Documentação de Línguas Indígenas (PRODOCLIN), carried out by the Museu do Índio/FUNAI, in partnership with UNESCO, when it was possible to record 33 hours of audiovisual recording, covering varied themes, such as: traditional festivals, fishing, construction of traditional houses, interviews, experience reports, songs, monologues, procedural texts and traditional narratives. Among the results obtained with the project, we highlight below those that made some contribution to the teaching of the Ikpeng language in the school context.

During this period, 21 narratives were recorded – referring to cosmogonic, eschatological, duration and transformation myths – always indicated by the community (according to their own

criteria, such as level of importance or the degree of remembering/forgetting that the people had about them). The community also always nominated the “best” teller for each story.

All these texts have already gone through the process of orthographic transcription and free translation into Portuguese – both activities carried out with the help of members of the Ikpeng community. The Transcriber program was used for the transcription activity and the Word text editor was used for translation, as it easily allows the insertion of notes/comments on the text worked on. Most of the notes made are of a cultural nature and, in most cases, are essential to understanding the translation of a given phrase or lexical item present in the narrative.

A relevant result that can be mentioned is the *sociolinguistic analysis* carried out at the beginning of the project, which aimed to describe the social condition of the languages spoken by the people, mainly Ikpeng and Portuguese. This type of action is extremely important among indigenous communities because it not only diagnoses problems related to the dynamics of the language(s) present within the community, but also, and more fundamentally, points out solutions that solve or, at least, minimize the problems encountered. In the specific case of the Ikpeng people, the sociolinguistic analysis showed that despite the children being literate in Ikpeng and Portuguese, throughout their school career, they ended up developing more reading and writing fluency in the Portuguese language, in part, because of the scarcity of reading material in the native language, which gave rise to the idea of creating a book of monolingual narratives, which we will talk about in more detail below.

The project also resulted in a *lexical database*, with translations into Portuguese, which was a first attempt to organize the lexicon of the Ikpeng language by semantic field and which aimed to contribute, among other things, to the process of consolidating the orthographic writing of this people. This Ikpeng–Portuguese glossary currently has 1,500 lexical entries, which contain brief grammatical notes (in Portuguese) about the terms and examples of use in the Ikpeng language, normally taken from real speech situations. By considering community members, as the target audience of the glossary, there is no phonetic/phonological information in the entries, since all Ikpeng are speakers of the group's ancestral language.

Two other important products resulting from the linguistic documentation project were a *descriptive grammar of the Ikpeng language* (titled “Gramática Descritiva da Língua Ikpeng” – unpublished)⁵, which brings together systematic information about the mother language of this indigenous group; and a *monolingual book of traditional narratives “Wonkinom Miran”* (Chagas, Angela; Costa; Ingrid, 2014) resulting both from a demand from the community for something to read in the native language, and from the special attention that traditional narratives received within

5 While waiting for the material to be published, indigenous teachers use it in a PDF version at school.

the project, as the Ikpeng community has always considered it very important to record this part of the people's collective memory which, according to older people, is considered less and less importance by younger people, who know very little about this cultural heritage.

3. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LINGUISTIC DOCUMENTATION TO TEACHING OF THE IKPENG LANGUAGE IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Although none of the materials resulting from the linguistic documentation project are specifically didactic in nature, they were all incorporated into the school environment and contributed in some way to the teaching of the Ikpeng language in schools. In this section, we will comment in more detail on the preparation process and the use of the book of traditional narratives and the descriptive grammar of the Ikpeng language, in addition to dealing with another action carried out during the linguistic documentation project, which consisted of offering language courses linguistics training for teachers in indigenous schools.

3.1. TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES BOOK: "WONKINOM MĪRAN"

As already mentioned, the idea of producing a book with traditional narratives arose from the reduced interest by the younger generation and in response to the Ikpeng's demand for materials that could help indigenous teachers in the process of teaching reading and writing in their mother language.

There was a lot of discussion before reaching the final format of the book, as about the language in which the narratives would be written, as well as about how many and which narratives would be part of the text collection.

It was decided, together with the community members, to create a monolingual book, with the writing of the narratives only in the native language. This collective decision put into practice the policy of valuing the native language and the knowledge produced in it, as well as contributing to assisting teachers and students in the dialogical process of teaching-learning the written form of the Ikpeng language. The concern with presenting a bilingual version of the narratives was that, in this case, the students would probably choose to read in the language in which they were most fluent, in this case, as already mentioned, Portuguese.

The Ikpeng community also chose the narratives that would be part of the book, they are: *Marurī Murangmon* (Story of White Men and Indigenous People), *Okoloy Miran* (Story of Honey), *Puron Miran* (Story of the Frog), *Pirom Miran* (Story of the Arrow) and *Wayman Miran* (Story of the Jabuti).

Still during the documentation project, the narratives selected to integrate the book were illustrated by students from the Ikpeng Central School – “Amure”, during drawing workshops, coordinated by the artist Ingrid Costa, who was also part of the linguistic documentation project team.

The drawings depict the most important scenes or episodes of each narrative. The illustration of the material by the Ikpeng themselves meant that the community had greater involvement in the process of creating the book and contributed to the people experiencing a new type of relationship with traditional narratives, which were now carried out not only through orality and writing, but also through images.

Thus, the book of traditional Ikpeng narratives, titled *Wonkinom Miran* (History of Beings), published in 2014, by the Museu do Índio, organized by Angela Chagas and Ingrid L. Costa.

Since its reception by the community, the book has been widely used in the three Ikpeng schools, in different grades, and supported different activities in the classroom, such as understanding and producing written texts. The images below, from a high school class at Escola Amure, show students reading narratives in an Ikpeng language class.

3.2. DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR OF THE IKPENG LANGUAGE

Another product of the documentation project that deserves to be commented more prominently is the Descriptive Grammar of the Ikpeng Language which, although not published, has been used in digital format by teachers at Ikpeng schools for almost 10 years.

The purpose of this grammar was to bring together the main information about the structure of the Ikpeng language, in a clear and objective way, with a minimum of metalanguage so that its content became accessible to teachers in schools in the community. The proposal is that based on this grammar, teachers could prepare their classes about the language, as well as the activities corresponding to a given content.

The grammar, written in Portuguese, was elaborated by the project coordinator, Angela Chagas, based on data collected in the field during the documentation project and on previously published works about Ikpeng language, such as those by Emmerich (1980), Campetela (1997) and Pachêco (1997, 2001). Grammar is made up of four chapters that deal with the main aspects of the language: (i) **Phonology**: presents the vowel and consonant inventory and the main phonological processes of this language; (ii) **Morphology**: describes the main morphosyntactic characteristics of the word classes existing in the language (noun, verb, adverbs, pronouns, postpositions, particles and ideophones); (iii) **Syntax**: provides information about the types and order of clause constituents, and (iv) **Lexicon**: consists of lists of words from different semantic fields, such as: kinship terms; body parts (human and non-human); names of vegetables and animals; colors; and new items in the culture.

3.3. LINGUISTICS TRAINING FOR INDIGENOUS TEACHERS

According to the Referencial Curricular Nacional para as Escolas Indígenas (RCNEI) – National Curricular Reference for Indigenous Schools –, for indigenous formal education to be successful in its specificities and to be in fact adapted to the cultural particularities of indigenous populations, it is essential that working teachers belong to the communities involved in the process of schooling and that these subjects have due access to professional training courses specially designed to deal with indigenous pedagogies in all their plurality.

From this perspective, the training of indigenous teachers must presuppose a differentiated curriculum that allows them to meet the guidelines of the indigenous school in which they will work (RCNEI, 1999, p. 15-16). To achieve this, it is essential that these teachers receive the following:

- training to develop specific curricula and teaching programs for indigenous schools;
- training for the production of teaching-scientific material;
- training to use first and second language teaching methodologies;
- sociolinguistic training that leads them to understand the historical processes of linguistic loss and change;
- specific training in linguistics that contributes to the establishment or reformulation of orthographic systems of their traditional languages.

Due to all these specificities, the RCNEI states that “the training of indigenous teachers requires the participation of specialists with training, experience and sensitivity to work on aspects specific to indigenous education, including professionals in the areas of linguistics and anthropology” (idem, p. 16)⁶.

Being aware of the need for specific training in Linguistics on the part of indigenous teachers, a situation they themselves have reported countless times; and aware of the contribution we could make to the training of these teachers, we proposed to teach a Basic Training course in Linguistics throughout the documentation project, which took place in four modules (Phonetics and Phonology, Morphology, Syntax and Sociolinguistics) and presented some fundamental concepts of General Linguistics, based on data from the Ikpeng language.

The initiative was another contribution of the linguistic documentation project to the Ikpeng community, since participants (teachers from indigenous schools) could use the knowledge acquired in the course to assist their classroom practices, as well as to reflect on phenomena of their mother

6 Translated from original: “a capacitação do professor indígena requer a participação de especialistas com formação, experiência e sensibilidade para trabalhar aspectos próprios da educação indígena, incluindo profissionais das áreas de linguística e antropologia”.

language, being able to discuss and find solutions to issues related to teaching some grammatical features of Ikpeng, which they found difficult to teach.

The **Phonetics and Phonology** module, specifically, helped teachers reflect on the arbitrary relationship that exists between the sound(s) and the letters that represent them, leading them to better understand or even question some aspects of their spelling system.

From this module emerged the “Orthography Revision Workshop”, held in August 2011, in village Moygu, whose main objective was to review points considered problematic by teachers and students of the Ikpeng Central School – “Amure”, regarding the teaching-learning of written form of their language. In this workshop, issues such as: implications of having the same grapheme to represent two different sounds and the opposite – different graphemes to represent the same sound in an allophonic situation; digraphs; syllabic separation; resyllabification; phonological accent and graphic accent, etc.

This workshop was extremely important for teachers, who often reported that they were unable to answer questions from students themselves in the literacy process. During this workshop, we were able to observe that most of the doubts that Ikpeng teachers had regarding their spelling were a result of the comparison they made with written Portuguese. For example, the presence of certain graphemes (such as: <c> and <f>) and graphic accentuation that exists in Portuguese, but not in Ikpeng.

In the **Morphology** module, alongside fundamental concepts, the word classes of the Ikpeng language and their main inflectional and derivational characteristics were presented.

In the **Syntax** module, teachers were acquainted with different types of sentences, their organization into phrases and the mechanisms used to constitute them.

The **Sociolinguistics** module brought information and reflections on the social conception of language, uses and attitudes of speakers, linguistic variation and change and the influence of social aspects on the structure of languages.

In this sense, the Linguistics Training courses contributed showing teachers that different languages have, in addition to similarities, also particularities that make them unique, but not inferior to each other and that the same goes for the variations internal to each language. In other words, that speakers of the same language can use it and express themselves through it in different ways and that this does not mean that the user does not know how to speak correctly or speak their mother language well – an assessment that the Ikpeng made about the speech of the younger people compared to the speech of older people.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Paradoxically, the description and extermination of Brazilian indigenous languages has been carried out since the times of the “Companhia de Jesus”, in Brazil. Unfortunately, extinction reached much

more significant numbers than documentation and description, which have only recently been carried out in a more serious and systematic way in Brazil. The demand for initiatives of this nature has grown in recent years from indigenous peoples, as the first positive results have appeared. However, to meet the demands of indigenous societies, it is fundamental and essential to invest in research in this area, which focuses on the development and/or application of documentation techniques and methods appropriate to the diverse realities of Brazilian indigenous peoples, as well as the training of human resources. with appropriate training to develop the necessary actions to meet demands, without disregarding the participation of members of the communities involved.

Linguistic documentation is important not only for the record of endangered languages, but also and mainly for the exercise of safeguarding, strengthening, and revitalizing them.

In this article, we present the activities and products of the Ikpeng language documentation project that contributed to strengthening the teaching of the group's mother language in the school environment. Among them, we highlight: *a sociolinguistic analysis, a lexical database, a descriptive grammar of the Ikpeng language, a monolingual book of traditional narratives and linguistics training courses for teachers in indigenous schools.*

As already mentioned, although the products presented are not specifically configured as teaching materials, they were developed and based on particular demands of the school context of Ikpeng society, in an attempt to preserve and value the language and ancestral memories typical of this indigenous society, contributing to the delay of cultural degradation to which all indigenous peoples in Brazil, regrettably, are subject.

With the case exemplified in the present study, we hope to ratify the importance of linguistic documentation work, as a basic action that can enable the development of other activities that guarantee the vitality of indigenous languages.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

STATEMENT OF DATA AVAILABILITY

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data was created or analyzed in this study.

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