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THEORETICAL ESSAY

A SOCIOPHILOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF THE FORMATION AND **EVOLUTION OF THE TERM LÍNGUA GERAL**, WITH EMPHASIS ON AMAZONIA

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ABSTRACT

This article critically reevaluates the role of structural change in the development of the concept of *Língua Geral,* as proposed in Rodrigues (1986,1996, 2010; see also Edelweiss, 1947, 1969; Dietrich, 2014). In Rodrigues's model, two languages, *Língua Geral Paulista* and *Língua Geral Amazônica,* emerged from the Tupi and Tupinambá languages spoken by bi- or multilingual *Mamelucos* (Luso-Amerindian mestizos) over the 17th and 18th centuries. However, a socio-philological analysis (Wright, 1982, 1991, 1994, 2002) applied to a broad sample of Luso-Brazilian colonial sources, reveals that contemporaries neither attributed a characteristic variety of *Língua Geral* to the *Mamelucos* nor classified *Língua Geral* diatopically. Moreover, in 18th c. Amazonia, the linguistically non-Tupi-Guarani *Tapuia* peoples, rather than the *Mamelucos*, were explicitly identified as agents of linguistic change (Daniel, 2004 [1757-1776]); however, no new name emerged. Thus, although language contact and shift undeniably occurred and undoubtedly contributed to structural change, the *Mamelucos'* central role in the formation of the *Língua Geral* cannot be sustained. We also analyse the theory that the *Língua Geral* was a creole language, which several researchers have focused on, e.g., Argolo (2011a/b, 2012a/b, 2016); Lee (2005), Oliveira; Zanoli; Modolo (2019), which appears to arise from Rodrigues's proposals, despite his rejection of the hypothesis. We show that there is no evidence for a widespread, stable pidgin phase in *Língua Geral.* Moreover, the diachronic structural divergences earlier authors commented on are

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exaggerated by the comparison of the two diachronic extremes, i.e., 16th /17th century varieties with 19th century ones. However, the inclusion of 18th century data smooths the diachronic developments. We therefore develop a revised trajectory for the concept of *Língua Geral* in which we propose that perceived changes in function rather than observed structural divergence were responsible the shift from using *Língua Brasílica* in 17th century Jesuit publications to *Língua Geral* in the 18th century. Our research highlights the need for a re-assessment of the term *Língua Geral*, and, in particular, the anachronistic *Ausbau* of periodizations and varieties on the basis of later perceived structural *Abstand* (Kloss, 1967, 1976, 1978) that do not correspond to contemporary usage.

RESUMO

Este artigo é uma reavaliação crítica do papel da mudança estrutural no surgimento do conceito de língua geral, como propõe Rodrigues (1986,1996, 2010; ver também Edelweiss, 1947, 1969; Dietrich, 2014). No modelo de Rodrigues, duas línguas gerais, a paulista e geral amazônica surgiram das línguas tupi e tupinambá faladas por mamelucos (mestiços euro-ameríndios) entre os séculos XVI a XVIII, devido ao bi- ou multilinguismo desse grupo. Foi a identificação dessas variedades inovadores que estimulou a aplicação do nome 'língua geral' a elas. No entanto, uma análise sociofilológica (Wright, 1982, 1991, 1994, 2002) que foi aplicada a uma ampla amostra de fontes primárias luso-brasileiras do período colonial, revela que contemporâneos não atribuíam uma variedade característica da língua geral aos mamelucos, tal como eles não identificavam variedades diatópicas na língua geral. Além disso, na Amazônia setecentista, foi os povos *tapuia*, linguisticamente não tupi-guarani, e não os mamelucos, que foram identificados explicitamente como os agentes das mudanças estruturais detectadas (Daniel, 2004 [1757-1776]). No entanto, nenhum novo nome surgiu. Portanto, embora tanto o contato linguístico ocorreu, tal como a substituição de outras línguas indígenas pela língua geral, e os dois fenômenos contribuíram para com a mudança estrutural, a hipótese de Rodrigues acerca do papel central dos mamelucos na formação da língua geral não se sustenta. Também analisamos a teoria de que a língua geral foi uma língua crioula, que vários pesquisadores já propuseram, p. ex., Argolo (2011a/b, 2012a/b, 2016); Lee (2005), Oliveira; Zanoli; Modolo (2019), e que parece surgir a partir das ideias de Rodrigues, embora ele rejeite essa hipótese. Mostramos que não existem evidências a favor da existência de uma fase pidgin da língua geral que

fosse estável e amplamente difundida. Além disso, as divergências estruturais diacrônicas que os autores anteriores comentaram são exageradas por resultar da comparação de dois extremos diacrônicos, ou seja, variedades dos séculos XVI/XVII com as do século XIX. No entanto, quando incluímos dados do século XVIII, a evolução diacrônica suaviza. Por isso, propomos uma trajetória diacrônico revisado do conceito língua geral em que sustentamos que foi a percepção de mudanças funcionais antes que a identificação de divergências estruturais que conduziu a substituição de *língua brasílica*, nas publicações dos jesuítas no século dezessete por *língua geral* no século dezoito. Esta pesquisa realce a necessidade de reavaliar o uso do termo *língua geral* no contexto brasileiro e destaca os anacronismos que ocorreram no *Ausbau* das periodizações e variedades na base de *Abstand* estrutural (Kloss, 1967, 1976, 1978) que foi identificado posteriormente por pesquisadores modernos e que não correspondiam aos usos contemporâneos.

KEYWORDS
Língua Geral; Old Tupi; Tupinambá; Nheengatu; Sociophilology.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE
Língua Geral; Tupi Antigo; Tupinambá; Nheengatu; Sociofilologia.

INTRODUCTION

This article investigates the development of naming patterns for the so-called *Língua Geral* (general language, i.e., lingua franca), a Tupi-Guarani language spoken very extensively in Portugal's South American colonies. An Amazonian variety of the *Língua Geral* – nowadays mostly called *Nheengatu* (good language/speech) – is still spoken natively today along the Rio Negro in Brazil and Venezuela, and residually in Colombia. Nheengatu is also being revitalised as a heritage language in several Amazonian communities.

We focus on the most recent and most widely known periodisations that linguists and historians have proposed for the transition between the use of the terms *Língua Brasílica* and *Língua Geral.* In particular, we focus on Rodrigues (1986, 1996), Lee (2005), and Argolo (2011, 2012, 2016), all of which heavily emphasises ethno-racial contact and hybridization as the main catalyst for structural linguistic changes that are claimed to have, in turn, stimulated the invention of new names.

We argue that, although much structural diversity existed and was occasionally commented on, such *Abstand* ([structural] distance) (Kloss, 1978, 1967, 1976[1]; see also Goebl, 1989; Bossong, 2008, p. 25-28) was not the basis for the changes in nomenclature that modern researchers have identified, especially the shift from *Língua Brasílica* (Brazilian language), in the 17th century to *Língua Geral* in the 18th century in Jesuit publications (Edelweiss,1969; Lee, 2005, 2014; Rodrigues, 1984/5, 1986, 1996, 2010; Dietrich, 2010; Argolo, 2011a/b, 2012a/b, 2016; Vieira; Zanoli; Módolo, 2019).

Instead, developing Finbow (2022), we sustain that the evidence indicates that (at least) non-indigenous people between the 16th and 18th centuries saw the language called both 'the' *Língua Brasílica* and *Língua Geral* as essentially elements in a single language complex, in spite of extensive diatopic variation. Rather than the conscious perception of structural differences, the name shifted primarily from perceived changes in the language's function between the 17th and 18th centuries. Thus, the idea that the terms *Língua Brasílica* and *Língua Geral* refer to "different languages" or to different diachronic phases of the same language is the result of modern *Ausbau* (elaboration) (Kloss, 1967,

1 In the light of the National Socialist ideology that taints Kloss's contributions to the study of linguistic minorities, multilingualism, and sociolinguistic policy more generally (see, e.g., Costa (2022), Hutton (1999), Wiley (2002)), we stress that the concept of structural distance (*Abstand*) we adopt assumes no correlations whatsoever with extralinguistic categories, such as race or ethnicity, unlike Kloss's original application of the term. In fact, we demonstrate that in the context of Portuguese South America in the 17th and 18th centuries, diatopic variation, racial categories, and notions of mixture were irrelevant in defining both the concept of *Língua Geral* and delimiting the groups that were classified as speaking it. Moreover, the definitions proposed by other researchers on the basis of structural evolution imagined as arising from social and cultural hybridisation are shown to be anachronistic elaborations (*Ausbau*) that fail to grasp the semantic fuzziness that characterised the original inclusivity.

1976, 1978)[2] and therefore, anachronistic. We propose that the best modern equivalent for the expression *Língua Geral* as it was initially employed by the missionaries in the 17th century is the equally problematic term *macrolanguage*, used by Ethnologue. Subsequently, in the 18th century, *lingua franca* is a more appropriate translation, for reasons we shall develop below.

To analyse the linguistic consciousness of Portuguese America's colonies regarding *Língua Brasílica* and *Língua Geral*, we draw on sociophilological frameworks, developed to understand how the conceptual distinction we make today between Latin and Romance arose in the early Middle Ages (section 2). In section 3, we justify our preference for 'Old Tupi' rather than 'Tupinambá' as the generic name for the largest indigenous linguistic bloc on the eastern coast of what is today Brazil. In section 4, we present the different names used between the 16th and the 18th centuries by contemporaries in their linguistic publications and the hypotheses drawn previously from these data. Section 5 deals with the kinds of structural differences between diatopic varieties of Old Tupi that were recorded in the 16th and 17th centuries and in section 6, we present the contemporary evaluations of such differences. Section 7 presents the evidence that contemporary commentators perceived only one 'general language', spoken along most of the coast and far up the Amazon River. In section 8, we show that, in the case of the Amazonian missions, there is no evidence that the bi- or multilingual *Mamelucos* (Euro-Amerindian mestizos) were responsible for fostering structural changes that resulted in people perceiving what they spoke as belonging to a "different language" to the older phases they encountered and choosing a new name for the innovative variety. This leads onto a discussion in section 9 of the likelihood of pidginization and/or creolization having occurred in Amazonian Old Tupi and the problems with earlier interpretations of structural changes that have been used as evidence for this hypothesis. Section 10 contains our general conclusions.

2 *Ausbau,* meaning 'construction' or 'elaboration' in German, typically refers to the development of "different languages" emerging from within a dialect continuum in which contiguous varieties are usually mutually intelligible. A standard is produced based on one socioculturally dominant variety or on an amalgam of varieties which highlights certain contrasts with other neighbouring varieties, such that these are then classed as distinct languages. Classic examples of *Ausbau* languages are Hindi (Devnagari script and Sanskrit loanwords) and Urdu (Perso-Arabic script and borrowings), Dutch (a national standard) and Low German (unstandardized varieties), Swedish, Norwegian and Danish (three national standards; Norwegian also contrasts Bokmål and Nynorsk), Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, Montenegrin initially (Latin versus Cyrillic script nowadays, national standards), Macedonian and Bulgarian (distinct national norms), Moldavian and Romanian (two distinct national norms), Farsi, Dari and Tadjik (Perso-Arabic versus Cyrillic script, Iranian, Afghan or Tadjk nationality and norms).

1. SOCIOPHILOLOGY

Sociophilology is essentially the diachronic investigation of linguistic metalanguage, especially nomenclatures, (Herman, 1996; Krefeld, 2020, p. 30; Wright, 1996, p. 31-44, 277-287; 2002a, p. vii). By bringing the insights of sociolinguistics into Romance historical linguistics and philology, Wright transformed the understanding of emergence of the Romance languages. He convincingly shows the insufficiencies in the classic models' explanation for the emergence of 'Romance' as a metalinguistic category distinct from the traditional denominations 'Roman' and 'Latin' as the result of natural, gradual, structural evolution that produced ever greater *Abstand* between vernacular Latin and an artificially maintained, hyper-archaic variety (Wright, 1982, p. i–ii, 1994: 27-28, 2003, p. 676-677; see also Finbow, 2011, 2012). Instead, Wright demonstrates the impact of conscious interventions in formal written style in the form of a novel spelling pronunciation and insistence on profoundly archaic lexis and grammar. These stylistic innovations occurred over during the 8th and 9th century Carolingian reforms in the Frankish Empire, gradually replacing the local norms. This novel Carolingian or Mediaeval Latin was introduced into the Christian Iberian kingdoms over the 12th century during the Gregorian reforms (Wright, 1976, 1982, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000a/b, 2002), substituting the older, autochthonous, Visigothic or Toledan norm. Thus, the distinction we make between Latin and the (Romance) vernaculars as distinct languages is a case of *Ausbau,* which evolved fairly gradually from the Carolingian period and not consolidated until almost a century after the respective ecclesiastical reforms in each region*,* as the artificially induced *Abstand* with the regional vernaculars impeded vertical communication, i.e., the act of reading aloud to an audience (Banniard, 1992, 2013). The evidence from traditional Roman vertical communication practices, e.g., no instructions given to readers to change lexis or syntax as they read but simply to enunciate clearly or to writers other than to avoid grand literary flourishes, implies that the illiterate could understand reading aloud in traditional written styles before the reforms, despite numerous archaisms, but struggled to understand the reformed variety subsequently (Wright, 1994, p. 3, 126-27, 1999, p. 506-07, see also Banniard, 1992). Consequently, sermons in the vernacular were permitted. However, as the vernacular no longer possessed any written form, since the traditional spellings now had reformed pronunciations, clerics used the novel, direct grapho-phonemic correspondences of reformed spelling as models for spellings that represented vernacular phonology. The term Romance < *romanice* (Romanly, i.e., vernacularly) referred to this new modality of vernacular writing while Latin < *latine* (Latinly > formally, properly) became restricted to the non-natively acquired, ecclesiastical norm (Wright, 1982, 1996, 2002; see also Müller, 1963). In time, the existence of these two written norms for increasingly mutually incomprehensible varieties in each Late Latin/Early Romance-speaking community gradually altered peoples' linguistic consciousness (Wright, 1991, 1993, 2003, 2008; Woolard; Geneovese, 2007; Tejedo-Herrero, 2009). As the literate came to see the written modalities as two separate languages rather than the formal and the vernacular written varieties of

the same language, this vision was transmitted downwards to the rest of society (Wright, 2002, p. 262-273; Lloyd, 1996c, Jensen, 1996).

By applying sociophilology to the emergence and development of the concept of LG and other associated terms, e.g., *Língua Brasílica*, Tupi, Tupinambá, Old Tupi, etc., we can demonstrate that, just as Wright showed that Latin and Romance were not distinguished before the Carolingian and Gregorian Reforms, in the 16th and 17th centuries, those who wrote about language did not see the *Língua Brasílica* as a different language from the *Língua Geral*. Instead, they appear to have considered that the former encompassed the latter, along with many other Tupi-Guarani varieties that today are thought of as separate language. In addition, we show that what has been referred to as *Tupi* and *Lingua Geral Paulista* (LGP) were not conceived of as different languages to *Tupinambá* and *Língua Geral Amazônica* (LGA), as proposed by Rodrigues (1986, 1996, 2010). We also are able to show that a semantic shift did occur in the concept of *Língua Geral* in the 18th century, as the nature of its use and the predominant groups who spoke it altered, but not for the reasons that Rodrigues identifies.

2. A NOTE ON NOMENCLATURE

We do not employ 'Tupinambá' as a generic term for the language of the largest coastal polities, as has been typical of anthropologists since Alfred Métraux and Florestan Fernandes, and linguists, following Aryon Rodrigues[3]. Instead, following Navarro (2008), we call the Tupi-Guarani linguistic and cultural complex of the Atlantic coast 'Old Tupi' (PT *Tupi Antigo*). Our preference for *Old Tupi* as a generic is four-fold and builds from clues in contemporary European texts that describe their perceptions and also reports of indigenous sociocultural and linguistic practices. Additionally, we take modern indigenous perspectives into account.

First, contemporary Europeans, e.g., Anchieta (1596), Cardim (1584), and Soares de Souza (1587), state that only one main language existed along the coast. It is not clear if they were influenced in this view by indigenous attitudes or not, because no records exist that can confirm if the Potiguara, for instance, conceived of what they spoke as a different language what the other indigenous polities spoke or merely a variety of the same language. Only the contrast with the *Tapuia* (non-Old Tupi speaker) seems to be a clear a case of Europeans borrowing an indigenous category. However, it is not evident what the term *Tapuia* is opposed to. Perhaps it was *Tupi*, used generically

3 See, e.g., Métraux (1948, p. 95, 96-98, 128), see also Métraux (1928, 1979), Fernandes, (1948), Rodrigues (1958, 1958/59, 1984/1985, 1986, 1996).

(see below), but given widespread Amerindian attitudes the equate 'otherness' with 'non-humanness' (Santos-Granero, 2009), another possibility is *abá* (person, human), which is shared by very many Tupi-Guarani languages. Such a broad *tapuia/abá* contrast could conceivably favour the idea that a single language was perceived as being spoken across political divisions.

Secondly, Anchieta's use of *Tupi* in the poem *Na aldeia de Guaraparim* (ll. 183-189) shows that term could be used generically in the Jesuit variety, despite also referring to the dialect spoken by the inhabitants of the captaincy of São Vicente (Navarro, 2008, p. 11-12, see also Edelweiss, 1969, p. 69-108; Rodrigues, 1984/5c Rodrigues; Cabral, 2002).

Thirdly, only a subset of historical speakers unambiguously identified themselves as Tupinambá (Navarro, 2008, p. 11, see also Edelweiss, 1969, p. 69-111).

Finally, the modern descendants of non-Tupinambá OT-speaking peoples such as the Potiguara and Tupiniquim dislike Tupinambá being employed as an umbrella term for the linguistic and cultural tradition they identify with (José Romildo Araújo Guyraakanga Potiguara, p.c., Tiago Matheus Kaûẽ Tupinakyîa, p.c.), preferring *Tupi* with a qualifying gentilic, e.g., *Tupi potiguara nhe'enga kuapa* (Araújo et al., 2024).

On the other hand, in the case of the *Estado do Maranhão*[4], Portugal's Amazonian colony, founded in the 17th century, in our opinion, it is appropriate to employ 'Tupinambá' because that was the endonym of the largest polity the Portuguese initially encountered around the island of São Luís and along the coast westwards. These Tupinambá had migrated from the northeastern coast, as the Jesuit Manoel related in 1616, soon after the Portuguese conquered the region (Gomes, 1904, p. 329; see also Hemming, 1995, p. 213). This migration probably occurred sometime after 1535, as the Portuguese occupation intensified in the hereditary captaincy of Pernambuco.

Thus, within Old Tupi, we subdivide Tupinamba geographically into 'Maranhão' Tupinambá to distinguish this group from the 'Bahian' Tupinambá, spoken in the middle of the eastern seaboard, and from the *Tamoio* Tupinambá, spoken between the Guanabara Bay (Rio de Janeiro State) and Ubatuba (São Paulo State). However, we should not assume that the Maranhão Tupinambá were the

4 The *Estado do Brasil* was established in 1548 by King João III of Portugal to centralise the administration of the unsuccessful hereditary captaincies granted by the Crown to private individuals from 1534, which were placed under the *Governador Geral* based in the first colonial capital, *São Salvador da Bahia de Todos os Santos*, around the midway point on the coast. Thus, in 1616, Gomes was not in 'Brazil' but in the recently conquered and as yet uncolonized 'Maranhão'. The *Estado do Maranhão* was separated from the *Estado do Brasil* in 1621. The successive titles of the administrative units are the 'Captaincy of Maranhão' (1621-1654), the 'State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará' (1654-1751), the 'State of Grão-Pará and Maranhão' (1751-1772/74), the 'State of Grão-Pará and Rio Negro' (1774-1823) and the 'State of Maranhão and Piauí' (1774-1811), the 'Provinces of Grão-Pará', containing the 'Captaincy São José do Rio Negro' (1823-1832) and 'State of Maranhão' and 'State of Piauí' (1811-1850), the 'Province of Grão-Pará', which contained the 'Upper Amazon district' (*comarca* do *Alto Amazonas*) (1832-1850). The 'Provinces' of Pará, Amazonas, Maranhão, and Piauí (1850-1889) received their modern title of 'state' on the proclamation of the Republic in 1889.

sole contributors of Old Tupi/Tupi-Guarani material to the colony's variety of what became known as the *Língua Geral*. Very many Tupi-Guarani-speaking peoples were incorporated into Amazonian colonial society. As early as 1616, Gomes records that there were *Língua Geral*-speaking *Tapuias* in Maranhão. He is probably describing non-Old Tupi Tupi-Guarani-speakers, who were very numerous on the southern shore of the lower Amazon. Bettendorf (2010 [1698]) lists, amongst others, *Guajajara, Juruna, Curuba, Tocantim, Naimiguara, Usaguara, Pacajá, Nambiquara, Coatinga, Guauara, Poquiguara, Guaiapi, Taconhapé,* and *Aruaqui*, whose names have clear Old Tupi etymologies.

3. THE TEXTUAL RECORD

In Brazil, the largest indigenous language was initially called *Lingua Brasílica* in the Jesuits' early publications. The Jesuit norm was mostly based on the varieties spoken between Rio de Janeiro and Bahia, which Rodrigues calls 'Tupinambá', although Anchieta first learned OT in the south, in São Vicente and São Paulo, which Rodrigues calls 'Tupi'. Anchieta later moved to Bahia and finally to Espírito Santo, where several other Jesuit linguists were already working (Edelweiss, 1969). However, the nomenclature changes in texts written between the 16th and the 18th century (Ávila, 2021; Ayrosa, 1950, p. 9-16; Barros; Monserrat, 2015, pp. 239-40; Dietrich, 2014, p. 596-8; Edelweiss, 1969, p. 138-165; Rodrigues, 1985, p. 96).

'The language most spoken on the coast of Brazil'	
Arte da língua mais falada na costa do Brasil	Anchieta (1595)

Língua brasílica (Brazilian language)	
Arte na língua Brasílica	Figueira (1621 [1686])
Catecismo brasílico	Araujo (1618 [1687])
Compêndio da doutrina cristã...	Bettendorf (1687)
Vocabulário na Língua Brasílica	Anon. (1622) Nimuendaju (1938); Navarro, (2013)
Doutrina e perguntas dos mistérios principais de nossa Santa Fé na Língua Brasílica	Anon. (1757) British Library, ms. 223 França (1859); Ayrosa (1950)
Diálogo da Doutrina Cristã pela Língua brasílica	Anon. (1757) British Library, ms. 223 França (1859); Ayrosa (1950)
Diálogo da Doutrina Cristã pela Língua Brasílica, composto pelo M. R. P. Marcos Antônio (1757)	'Marcos Antônio' (1757) British Library, ms. 223 França (1859); Ayrosa (1950)
Compêndio da Doutrina Cristã que se manda ensinar com preceito, Ano de 1740	Anon. (1750s) British Library, ms. 223 França (1859); Ayrosa (1950)
Diccionario da Lingua Brazilica	Anon. (1750s) Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra, ms. 94

Língua Geral (general language, lingua franca)	
Dicionário Português - Língua Geral e Língua Geral - Português.	Anon., 1756 Trier, *Staatsbibliothek* 1136/2048
Doutrina christãa em lingoa geral dos Indios do Estado do Brasil e Maranhão, composta pelo padre P. Philippe Bettendorf, traduzida em lingoa geral e irregular, e vulgar uzada nesses tempos	Anon., 1750s Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra, s.d. (175-)
Diccionario da Lingua Geral do Brasil	Anon., 1771
Gramática da Língua Geral do Brazil com hum Diccionario dos vocabulos mais uzuaes para a inteligencia da dita Lingua	Anon., undated. Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra, ms. 69
Caderno da língua[5]	João de Arronches (1739) Ayrosa (1935)
Prosódia. Dicionário da língua falada por índios do Brasil	Anon., 1750s Academia de Ciências Lisboa, ms. 569
Vocabulario da lingua. Brazil	Anselm Eckhart (1757/59) Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, cod. 3143 Dietrich (2024)
Specimen da lingua brasilica vulgaris[6]	Anselm Eckhart (1778), Eckhart (1994)

Brasiliano (Brazilian)	
Dicionario Portuguez-Brasiliano e Brasiliano-Portuguez	Onofre, 1751. *Dicionário* (1896); Prazeres, (1891)

Rodrigues (1986, p. 96, 1996, p. 5, 8) claims that these data indicate that the term *Língua Geral* emerged in the 16th century and that initially the adjective *geral* referred to the geographical extent of a language. Specifically in Amazonia, *Língua Geral* was also used, according to Rodrigues (1986, 1996), to refer to other Tupi-Guarani languages that were structurally similar to what the Jesuits initially referred to as *Língua Brasílica,* the Tupi-Guarani language of the coast. However, after new varieties arose from contact with Portuguese amongst the emergent *Mameluco* class of European-Amerindian mestizos, the expression *Língua Geral* came to refer to those novel varieties in the 17th and 18th centuries (Rodrigues, 1996, p. 6, see also Argolo, 2016, p. 90-93), substituting the term *Língua Brasílica* and no longer emphasizing the language's geographical extension.

Additionally, Rodrigues (1986, p. 102, 1996) divides *Língua Geral* into 'São Paulo' or 'Southern' (*paulista*, *meridional*), descending from the 'Tupi' spoken on the coastal plain of São Vicente and the interior plateau of São Paulo, and 'Amazonian' or 'Northern' (*amazônica, septentrional*). In Rodrigues's view, the latter variety, which became better known as *Nheengatu* from the end of the 19th century, evolved from 'Tupinambá', i.e., the varieties spoken along the Atlantic coast from the present-day state of Rio de Janeiro to around the state-line between modern Ceará and Paraiba and in Maranhão and Grão-Pará. Rodrigues claims no *Língua Geral* developed from Bahian Tupinambá in the central coastal region between Rio de Janeiro in the south and Ceará in the north because the Amerindian population was rapidly either killed, driven away, or died in epidemics. As a

5 The adjective *geral* (general) is probably understood here.

6 The Latin adjective *vulgaris* suggests Portuguese *geral*, i.e., 'vulgar', 'popular'.

result, few *Mamelucos* were born and enslaved Africans and their descendants with Europeans soon became the dominant demographic segment[7].

Rodrigues (1986) and Rodrigues (1996) model essentially reworks the proposal in Edelweiss (1969, p. 44-45, 111, 123-158, 158-204). Edelweiss affirms that what he calls (pre-contact) 'Tupi' was codified by the Jesuits to create the *Língua Brasílica* (1500-1700). This variety then suffered structural changes because of linguistic and racial mixture to become what Edelweiss calls 'Brazilian' (*Brasiliano*), 'Middle Tupi' (*Tupi médio*) or *Língua Geral* (1700-1800), before turning into Nheengatu (1800–present). In the pre-contact phase, Rodrigues separates 'Tupi' (southern) from 'Tupinambá' (northern), as we have seen, and attributes the crucial structural changes to *Mameluco* multilingualism. In both Edelweiss's and Rodrigues's models, the emergence of new names follows speakers' perceiving structural change.

Argolo (2011b, 2012a, 2016) essentially follows Rodrigues (1986, 1996) but claims that a Tupinambá-based *Língua Geral* did exist in the south of Bahia, because 18th century documents mention 'Indians' who speak 'the Língua Geral'. Unlike Rodrigues, Argolo also adds language shift and creolization to the mix in the case of Amazonian *Língua Geral*. Lee (2005) also mentions pidginization and creolization, claiming that a new, 'vulgar' language emerged from the *Língua Brasílica* because of non-Tupi-Guarani speaking indigenous peoples were forced to learn it in the missions. Oliveira, Zilles and Modolo (2019) claim 'Tupinambá' began as a pidgin, which evolved into a creole they call the '*Língua Geral do Brasil*'. As we shall see, these classifications are all founded on modern perceptions of *Abstand* that were not stressed in contemporary accounts before the mid-18th century.

4. ABSTAND IN OLD TUPI, LÍNGUA BRASÍLICA AND LÍNGUA GERAL

Rodrigues' identification of Tupi and Tupinambá as distinct dialects or languages (see also Dietrich, 2010) arises from Anchieta's statement that lexical roots in the region south of Rio de Janeiro did not exhibit final consonants that existed in northern varieties (Anchieta, 2014 [1596], p. 1, see also Edelweiss, 1969, p. 76 ff.; Rodrigues, 1958/59, 1985, 1986, 1996, 2010), e.g.:

7 For an alternative analyses, see Argolo (2011a/b, 2012a/b, 2016) and Finbow (2022). Additionally, the term *Língua Geral* has also been applied to the *Língua Geral d'El Mina* 'Elmina lingua franca' based on West African FonGbe languages that was spoken across the Minas Gerais goldfields in the 17th and 18th centuries. In modern times, *Língua Geral* has been employed to refer to a Guarani variety spoken in São Paulo and restructured Portuguese varieties influenced by African and Amerindian languages (Argolo, 2016, p. 11, see also Mattos e Silva, 2004, p. 78), however, the last two examples have no correlate in colonial documentation.

(1a) *apâb* ~ *apâ* /a-ˈpa(β)/ (first-person singular subject, active class + terminate)

(1b) *acêm* ~ *acẽ* /a-ˈsẽ(m)/ (first-person singular subject, active class + leave)

(1c) *apên* ~ *apẽ* /a-ˈpẽ(n)/ (first-person singular subject, active class + be crooked)

(1d) *aiûr* ~ *aiú* /a-ˈju(r)/ (first-person singular subject, active class + come)

Such consonantal apocope was almost certainly a wider southern areal phenomenon for Montoya (2011 [1639], p. 163; see also Navarro, 2013, p. 102, 160) records synchronic alternation of apocopated and unapocopated allomorphs in old Guarani, e.g.:

(2a) *(h)endu(v)-* /(h)-eˈnu(β)/ (hear sth.), NB OT *(s)endub* /(s-)eˈnuβ/ 3.p-hear

(2b) *a(r)* /a(r)/ (take, seize sth.), NB OT *(t)ar* /ˈ(t-)ar/.

In São Paulo Old Tupi, as in Old Guarani, suffixed lexical roots retained the final consonants, e.g., *Ubatuba* /uʔuʊa-ˈtɨʊ-a/ arrow-abundant-ref (abundant arrow [cane]), *Itatiba* /iˌta-ˈtɨʊ-a/ stone-abundant-REF (abundant stones) (toponyms, São Paulo State). However, all modern Guarani varieties have reanalysed their lexical roots as possessing only open syllables, e.g., *(Tekoa) Itaty* /iˌta-ˈtɨ/ stone-abound (abundant stones, Morro dos Cavalos, Palhoça, Santa Catarina State), which would be (*Tekosaba) Itatyba* in Old Tupi, i.e., /t-eko-ˈsaʊ-a ita-ˈtɨʊ-a/ R3-be-CIRC.NMZR.REF stone-abound-REF. On the other hand, Nheengatu (NHG), the descendant of Maranhão Tupinambá, generally retains final consonants through fossilising the Old Tupi (OT) referential suffix /-a/ or vocalic paragoge, e.g.:

(3a) OT *taba* /ˈtaʊ-a/ (village-REF) > NHG *tawa* /ˈta.wa/,

(3b) OT *ygara* /ɨˈar-a/ (canoe-REF) > NHG *igara* /iˈga.ra/'canoe',

(3c) OT *pa'i* /paˈʔi/ (Oh my father! voc.) ~ PT *pai* /ˈpai/ (father) > NHG *paia* /ˈpa.ja/ (*ibid.)*, cf., PT *mãe* /ˈmãi/ (mother) > NHG, *manha* /ˈmã.ja/ (*ibid*.)

(3d) OT *sem* /ˈsem/ (leave) > NHG *sému* /ˈse.mu/

(3e) OT *syk* /ˈsɨk/ (arrive, approach_ > NHG *sika* /ˈsi.ka/.

Northern Old Tupi used <*-i*> (/-j/) on consonant-final roots and <*-û*> (/-w/) followed vowel-final roots on both stative and active verbs to express the 'circumstantial indicative' or 'indicative II', which marks subordination with a third-person subject when non-arguments undergo topic-focus

(Vieira, 2014; Navarro, 2008, p. 191; Rodrigues, 2010b, p. 25, 38, 41). Southern varieties marked this construction with /-j/ and /-w/ on active verbs but stative verbs employed /-(r)amo/[8].

A further difference that has been suggested in the *Língua Geral* phases is in the articulation of the high, central, unrounded vowel /ɨ/. In the Rio Negro *Língua Geral*, the Arawak substrate caused this vowel to merge with /i/ (or occasionally /u/), e.g., NHG *pisirũ* /pisiˈrũ/ (help) < OT *pysyrõ* /pɨsɨˈrõ/. In the south, it has been suggested that /ɨ/ merged with /u/. For example, Martius (1867, II, p. 190-122) records *putúnami* (become night/dark, PT *enoitecer;* GER *Nacht werden*) < OT /pɨˈtun-eme, pɨˈtũ-reme/ night-at$_{temp}$ (at night[time], in the night[time]). Similar examples for 'at night' occur in Nheengatu (*pituna ramé*), Nhandewa Guarani (*pyntũ ramõ*), Mbyá Guarani *(pytũ ramõ*), and Paraguayan Guarani (*pyhare ramo*).

Another set of examples from Martius is *oçuca* and *açuc* < OT /o-, a-ˈsɨk(a)/ 3.a-, 1sg.a-reach (suffice, PT *bastar*; GER *genügen*, also come close to, arrive (at)).

However, clear evidence of /ɨ/ > /u/ as a systematic process is scanty, as northern varieties also exhibited /puˈtũ(n)/ for "night". In toponyms, the Old Tupi morpheme *tyb* /tɨʊ/ (abound), appears written *-tiba, -tiva, -ndiba, -ndiva* and *-tuba, -tuva, -nduba, -nduva* in the north and the south[9].

Thus, structural differences certainly did exist between two broad diatopic blocs of Old Tupi. However, it is unclear how such (fairly minor) structural divergence was conceptualised by contemporary speakers, both native and non-native, which will be investigated in the following section.

8 Thus, stative verbs' Indicative II was formally identical to the enclitic translative postposition ("as", "like") and the gerund for stative verbs. In Tupi-Guarani linguistics, 'gerund' is a traditional label for a construction that expresses focus/rheme/comment, referencing events with the same subject as the main predicate (topic/theme).

9 The alternation between <t> and <nd> reflects the perception of Tupi-Guarani nasal harmony in the phoneme /t/: [t] / [-nasal] + __, [nᵈ] / [+nasal] + __. The alternation of <v> and <b> is the result of the uncertainty in representing the OT bilabial fricative or approximant ([β] ~ [ʊ]) in the Portuguese orthography of the time, in which <b> manages to capture the bilabial feature but lacks the continuance, as Portuguese /b/ is a phonetically a stop, [b], and <v> registers the continuant articulation but loses the bilabiality, as Portuguese /v/ is phonetically labiodental [v]. Examples of the geographical extent of these variants can be seen in *Catanduva* /kaʔa-ãtã-ˈtɨʊ-a/ (abundant hardwood) (Minas Gerais State), *Curitiba* /kuri-ˈtɨʊ-a/ (abundant araucaria pines) (Paraná State), *Itatiba* /ita-ˈtɨʊ-a/ "abundant stones" (São Paulo State), *Ubatuba* /uʔuʊa-ˈtɨʊ-a/ (abundant arrow [cane]) (São Paulo State), *Taquarenduva* /takʷar-ẽʔẽ-ˈtiʊ-a/ (abundant sugarcane) (São Paulo State), *Comandatuba* /komana-ˈtiβ-a/ (abundant beans) (Bahia State), *Aratuba* /ara-ˈtɨʊ-a/ (abundant macaws) (Bahia and Ceará States), *Jiribatuba* /jara-ɨβa-ˈtiβ-a/ (abundant *jerivá* (*syagrus romanzoffiana*) palms) (Bahia State), *Ibicuituba* /iβi-kuʔi-ˈtɨʊ-a/ (abundant sand) (Maranhão State).

The loss of the glottal stop between identical vowels is most likely due to a transference into Portuguese, which has no glottal consonants. The identical unstressed hiatic vowels then merge, e.g., /kaˈʔa/ > /kaˈa/ > /ka/, /u.ʔuˈʊa/ > /u.uˈba/ > /uˈba/. The change [a] > [i] in /jara-ɨʊa-ˈtɨʊ-a/ > /ʒɨriba'tuba/ *Jiribatuba* is a more extreme variant of that seen in /jara-ɨˈʊa/ > /ʒeriˈv,ba/ *jerivá ~ jeribá*, the two commonest reflexes of this loanword in Portuguese. The vowel [ɨ] is absent in Brazilian Portuguese and is very frequently rendered as [i], especially in diphthongs. The second /a/ is elided: [ˌja.ra-ɨˈʊa] > *[ʒa.ɾ(a)iˈba] >*[ʒa.ɾiˈba]. Next, the first /a/ raises to [e] under the influence of the following palatal vowel and preceding palatal fricative. Pretonic /e/ in Brazilian Portuguese very frequently is raised to [ɪ], cf. *menino* /meˈni.no/ (boy) → [mɪˈnĩ.nʊ], which pushes [ʒe.ɾiˈba] to [ʒi.ɾiˈba].

5. CONTEMPORARY PERCEPTIONS OF LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN OLD TUPI

Sadly, no contemporary testimony exists of any OT-speaking people's opinions about any linguistic similarities or differences they detected. However, the fundamental distinction that was recorded as having been made between themselves and the *Tapuia*, i.e., peoples considered non-Old Tupi by culture and/or language (Cardim, 2009 [1584], p. 205-206), Tupi-Guarani-speaking or otherwise, would suggest that Old Tupi-speakers perhaps perceived themselves rather like the Germanic and Hellenic peoples in ancient Europe did, i.e., as a broad cultural and linguistic bloc whose members opposed themselves to other cultures on the basis of certain shared characteristics, despite sociocultural and linguistic diversity, and even internecine warfare, between in-group polities.

Contemporary reports by Europeans demonstrate that the diatopic variation they detected was not interpreted by them in terms of different languages amongst the main peoples on the coast. Anchieta (1989 [1584], p. 59) separates the Carijó (a Guaranian people) from the speakers of the 'language most spoken on the coast of Brazil' but mentions no regional subdivisions beyond the reference to consonantal apocope discussed above. This is despite his having lived with the Tupi in São Paulo and São Vicente for many years, amongst the Tamoio and Bahian Tupinambá, as well as the Tupiniquim in the captaincy of Espírito Santo. His writings exhibit both southern and northern features (Navarro, 2008, p. 13). Cardim (2009 [1584], p. 101) states flatly that the ten coastal OT peoples, i.e., Tupi, Tupiniquim, Tamoio, Temiminó, Marakajá, Tupinambá, Tupinaé, Caeté, Tobajara, and Potiguara, all speak the same language. For Soares de Souza (2010 [1587], p. 406), the linguistic differences between the Tupinaé and the Bahian Tupinambá were comparable to the differences between the Portuguese of Coimbra and of the Beira region, i.e., mutually comprehensible diatopic varieties.

We agree with Rodrigues (1986, 1996) that *Língua Brasílica* is the term first used in the titles of grammars and catechisms of OT. However, *Língua Brasílica* was not limited to Old Tupi or even Tupi-Guarani; it referred to *any* Brazilian indigenous language. For example, in the interior of the Northeast, where there were few (if any) Old Tupi speakers historically, catechesis was carried out in two closely related *Kariri* or *Kiriri* languages (< OT *kyrirĩ* "be silent") known today as *Kipeá* (Mamiani, 1698, 1699) and *Dzubucuá* (Nantes, 1709, 1896; Queiroz, 2008, 2012)[10]. Mamiani's catechism and

[10] These languages have been traditionally classified as belonging to the Macro-Jê family, e.g., Mason (1950), Rodrigues (1999, 2019), but more recent comparative work has cast serious doubt on this (Ribeiro, 2011; Nikulin, 2021).

grammar refer to the language as 'the *Língua Brasílica* of the Kiriri nation'[11], demonstrating the original use of the term *Lingua Brasílica*.

In 1605, Pero Rodrigues, Jesuit Provincial of Brazil from 1594 to 1603, recorded that 'This language is the general (one), beginning above the Maranhão [i.e., Amazon] River... as far as Paraguay'[12] (Edelweiss, 1947, p. 29, Rodrigues, 1996, p. 7). Once again, Guarani seems to have been excluded from the *Lingua Geral* of the Portuguese conquests, perhaps because at the time it was located mainly beyond the Tordesillas Meridian in what was nominally Castilian territory. Shortly afterwards, the Jesuit Manoel Gomes wrote from Maranhão in 1616 that, 'There are many *Tapuias* [i.e., non-Old Tupi peoples] of many nations, of which fourteen speak the Tupinambá lingua franca, which is almost universal [*comum*] in Brazil' (Gomes, 1904 [1616], p. 334; Santos, 2011, p. 10)[13]. Gomes, and later Antônio Vieira, compare the Guajajara people with the Guaranian Carijó, showing that structural parallels were noted between the speech of non-Old Tupi Tupi-Guarani-speaking peoples in the *Estado do Maranhão* and the main language of the *Estado do Brasil*.

Note that Pero Rodrigues, and Manoel Gomes use *Língua Geral* even before the Jesuits had published anything with *Língua Brasílica* in the title. This proves that at that time (17th c.) the Jesuits already thought of the largest *Língua Brasílica* (indigenous language), as a *Língua Geral,* i.e., a geographically extensive language or dialect continuum, as Rodrigues (1986, 1996) proposes was the term's original meaning, despite the Jesuits using *Língua Brasílica* in the titles of their 17th century publications. Geographical or demographic size was the primary criterion for selecting a language to be a diocese's administrative lingua franca according to the practices developed over the mid-16th century in Spain's American conquests (Madureira, 1977; Zavala, 1977; Ramos Pérez, 1986; Altman, 2003; Alfaro Lagorio, 2003; Pérez Puente, 2009; Dietrich, 2014).

It is possible that increased institutional contacts during the Iberian Union (1580-1640) may have spread the Spanish model of colonial linguistics amongst the Jesuits sent to Brazil with the University of Salamanca as a major centre of diffusion (Finbow, 2022; Barros, 2023, p.c.), for the term appears later in the Portuguese sphere. Like the indigenous *lenguas generales* of the Spanish Empire, the norm developed by the Jesuits was from the outset a hybrid, being a formalised description of several Old Tupi diatopic varieties (Edelweiss, 1969, p. 73-79, Altman, 2003; Alfaro Lagorio, 2003). The greater usage of Bahian Tupinambá features from the central region of the coast was probably because these were thought to be intelligible on the broadest scale, again, as Spanish missionaries did (Alfaro Lagorio, 2003; Edelweiss, 1969, p. 72-79). This is the

11 *Catecismo da doutrina christãa da língua brasílica da nação Kiriri...* (Catechism of Christian Doctrine of the Brazilian language of the Kiriri Nation), *Arte de grammatica da língua brasílica da naçam Kiriri* (Art of Grammar of the Brazilian language of the Kiriri Nation).

12 ... ***esta lingoa he a jeral*** *comesando arriba do rio Maranhão e correndo por todo o distrito da Coroa de Portugal atee o Paraguay.*

13 *"Ha muitos tapuyas de muitas nações, das quaes quatorze fallão a língua geral dos Tupynambás, que é quase commum no Brazil".*

systematization published by Figueira in 1621, which became the main teaching grammar, in conjunction with Araújo's catechism of 1618, and the *Vocabulário na Língua Brasílica*, also from 1621.

Despite there being a very large region between central Maranhão and the easternmost part of the northeast coast that was inhabited by many linguistically non-Tupi-Guarani peoples, and where no Old Tupi speakers are recorded, as well as several regions on the Atlantic coast where Old Tupi peoples were not predominant, the missionaries appear to have envisaged the linguistic situation in the lower Amazon as essentially a continuation of the situation they knew in the *Estado do Brasil* (Freire, 2011, p. 43). Their perception was justified, for the Maranhão Tupinambá and the Tobajara of the Ibiapaba hills in modern Ceará State were recent incomers who had fled from the eastern coast a few generations previously.

A modern definition that might be applied interestingly to *Língua Geral* as employed initially by the missionaries is *macrolanguage*, which is defined by ISO 636-3[14] as '... closely related individual languages that are deemed in some usage contexts to be a single language' (Ethnologue, 2009). The basic criterion for a macrolanguage is a close phylogenetic relationship, which is true of the habit of applying *Língua Geral* as a synonym for what would nowadays be called 'Tupi-Guarani'. Additionally, there is frequently a classical standard which speakers of several closely related individual languages understand, or which is at least known to be the source of those individual languages, e.g., Arabic, which is divided into many modern spoken varieties which exist alongside a common standard (Modern Standard Arabic) and also the classical Quranic norm. In the case of *Língua Geral*, this would be the Jesuit norm, although it was not the source of the other varieties but a later addition, rather as Standard German or Italian emerged from regional diversity. Secondly, a macrolanguage can have a long-lasting and deep-rooted linguistic identity amongst the spoken varieties that have undergone separate developments because of sociopolitical factors, e.g., Serbo-Croat as a macrolanguage comprising the individual Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian languages. This aspect can be applied readily to the different coastal Old Tupi varieties with their opposition to the peoples they called *Tapuia*, *Kariri* or *Nheengaíba*. Thirdly, a macrolanguage may comprise several closely related languages which the specialist literature often treats as either a genealogical unit of individual languages or which may be subsumed into one "language" for other reasons, e.g., political or ethnic criteria, e.g., *Rajasthani* being used as the macrolanguage category of several Indo-Iranian languages such as Bagri, Gade, Lohar, Hadothi, Malvi and Wagdi (https://www.ethnologue.com/language/raj/). This is similar to the missionaries' practice of calling all the Tupi-Guarani-speaking peoples in Maranhão, Grão-Pará and the *Estado do Brasil* 'Língua Geral [-speaking] Indians' (*índios de Língua Geral*), despite each having its own individual identity and apparently not being seen as abá/tupi by OT-speakers.

14 International Organisation for Standardisation (2023).

Even the criticisms of the category macrolanguage make it appropriate to apply to *Língua Geral*. For example, the inconsistency of the application by SIL on *Ethnologue* and the lack of a unifying definition to distinguish dialects, dialect clusters, and languages. No agreement or uniformity exists in the overarching linguistic standards in terms of linguistic criteria for identifying when one should retain non-linguistically determined divisions and when one should ignore them. Thus, any classification could very easily lead to problematic results and provoke controversy. This is precisely the same kind of difficulties as the concept of *Língua Geral* has posed to linguists and historians, which is why 'macrolanguage' is such an appropriate modern correlate to this colonial exonym.

6. CONCEPTUALLY, ONLY ONE *LÍNGUA GERAL*

Aryon Rodrigues (1986, 1996, 2010) argues that there were two Old Tupi-based *Línguas Gerais*, southern/Paulista and northern/Amazonian, which arose from two kinds of Old Tupi that he calls respectively 'Tupi' and 'Tupinambá'. However, this proposal does not take into account Antônio Vieira's attempts in the 1650s and 1660s to recruit fluent or native *Lingua Geral*-speaking *Paulistas* to work as *línguas* (interpreters) in Amazonia because these Paulistas were much more successful at converting indigenous peoples, presumably because of their superior linguistic abilities in contrast with the European missionaries (Barros, 2003, 2010, see also Barros, 1994/5, 1986, 1996). This strongly suggests that contemporaries did not see southern varieties of *Língua Geral* as a distinct language from what was spoken in the early Amazonian missions, despite the existence of some structural differences, as we have seen.

Gomes' reference to *Lingua Geral*-speaking *Tapuias* in Maranhão in conjunction with a reference to the Guajajara probably means that he was referring to the non-Old Tupi Tupi-Guarani-speakers, who were very numerous on the southern shore of the lower Amazon. The Jesuits classified these peoples as *índios de língua geral* (Tupi-Guarani-speaking Indians), despite their diverse ethnic affiliations[15], as illustrated by the list of ethnonyms in Johann Philipp Bettendorf's *Crônica da missão dos padres da Companhia de Jesus na Província de Maranhão* (Bettendorf, 2010 [1698]).

Because the groups mentioned by Gomes and Bettendorf were still unmissionized and had had little, if any, contact with the colonists, it is highly unlikely that they already knew *Mameluco*

15 The Guajajara are conspicuously non-OT speaking to this day. Indeed, none of the Tupi-Guarani languages spoken today in the Brazilian states of Pará and Maranhão, e.g., Guajá, Zo'é, Anambé, Xingu Asuriní, Tocantins Asuriní (Suruí), Tapirapé, Araweté, Avá Canoeiro, Apiaká, Kayabi, etc., belong to the same branch as OT in any phylogenetic classification of Tupi-Guarani, e.g., Rodrigues (1985), Jensen (1999, p. 126, 130-132), Rodrigues; Cabral (2002), Galúcio et al. (2015), Michael et al. (2015), Mello; Kneip (2017).

Maranhão Tupinambá or the Jesuit norm. These two contexts – *Mamelucos* and missions – are the two key sources of the changes responsible for creating the semantic shift in concept of *Língua Geral* according to the hypotheses advanced by Rodrigues and Argolo, respectively. Thus, in the 17th c. Amazon, the expression *Língua Geral* was definitely not identified with the speech of the *Mamelucos* and other racial, ethnic, or structural factors did not define it. Instead, as Finbow argues (2022, p. 82-85), '*Lingua Geral*' still seems to encompass any Tupi-Guarani language that permitted communication with the missionaries and the East-coast Old Tupi-speaking settlers and their slaves and allies, as Rodrigues claimed in 1986, i.e., the primary sense of '*Lingua Geral*' continues to be 'macrolanguage'.

Indeed, as we shall discuss below, given the diversity of Tupi-Guarani-speaking peoples that were brought as slaves and allies to Belém and São Luís from 1616 and the very large groups of mainly Tupi-Guarani-speaking peoples 'descended' into the missions as catechumen labourers from 1650 onwards, a Tupi-Guarani-koine, with Maranhão Tupinambá as the major contributing variety would have been the most likely outcome (Finbow, 2022; Noll, 1999, 2008; see also Barros, 2003; Mufwene, 2003, 2008).

7. TAPUIAS, NOT MAMELUCOS

Rodrigues uses '*Mameluco*' as a synonym of 'mestizo' in the modern Brazilian manner. However, this is an anachronism, for *Mameluco* in 16th and 17th-century Brazil meant someone born outside official matrimony whose mother was classed as an 'Indian' and whose father was legally 'white' and publicly recognised his offspring. This meaning dropped out of circulation in the 18th century (Monteiro, 1994, p. 166-167). Such paternal recognition guaranteed certain freedoms that were unavailable to unrecognised illegitimate offspring, who were simply called *bastardos* (bastards). Thus, on the one hand, the *Mamelucos*' (limited) social privileges probably did allow greater access to Portuguese and therefore did favour bilingualism, as Rodrigues (1996) claims, which, as many have claimed, can be an important factor in stimulating language change (Aboh, 2015; Mufwene, 2003, 2008). On the other hand, Rodrigues's indiscriminate use of *Mameluco* hides the fact that it was not employed in the same way in the past. Moreover, no contemporary sources identify the *Mamelucos* as speaking a characteristic variety.

In Maranhão, as we have seen, Gomes writes of *Tapuias*, not *Mamelucos*, speaking the 'Tupinambá *Língua Geral*' in the year of the Portuguese conquest, far too early for there to have been significant mixing of Europeans and Amerindians. Thus, with the exception of Rodrigues (1996, p. 5) and Cardeira (2006), most treatments of LG, especially in Amazonia, identify the incorporation of non-Tupi-Guarani-speaking *Tapuias* into the mission villages on a massive scale as the main

catalyst for structural change[16]. These hypotheses see the *Tapuias'* acquisition of the Jesuit norm and/or vernacular Maranhão Tupinambá as an auxiliary language in an unstructured manner as what "converts" *Língua Brasílica* into *Língua Geral* and then causes the *Língua Geral* to undergo further change and "evolve into" *Nheengatu*. Thus, the idea that the term *Língua Geral* underwent a semantic shift in the 18th century as a means to refer to the speech of the *Mameluco* class which was subsequently generalised is not borne out.

What is certain is that *Língua Geral* could be acquired via two routes in the Amazonian missions from the 1650s: formal rote catechesis by the missionaries in the codified variety and immersion in the vernacular through cohabitation with speakers (Rosa, 1990; Barros, 2015, §37-40).

> *[...] catecismo acabado se sentavão todos a ouvir uma pregação ou exhortação, a qual se fazia na lingoa geral dos índios como também o catecismo, e orações eram compostas na mesma língua, e a dita exortação se acomodava sempre ao Evangelho*[17].
> *Resposta aos capítulos que deu contra os religiosos da Companhia em 1662 o procurador do Maranhão, Jorge de São Paio* (cit. Barros; Borges; Meira, 1996, p. 195)

The *Resposta aos capítulos* shows that *Língua Geral* refers to not only the language of catechesis – which we can be confident was the Jesuit written norm, given it would have been Araújo's *Catecismo brasílico* of 1618 – but also to the language of the sermon.

Barros, Borges and Meira (1996) cite this as evidence for the use of 'LB', i.e., the Jesuit norm, regardless of the linguistic affiliation of a mission's inhabitants. However, the *Resposta aos capítulos* is from 1662, when the missions were still predominantly inhabited by OT and other Tupi-Guarani speakers, for the Portuguese were essentially only active below Gurupá at the mouth of the Xingu in the first decades of the colony (Saragoça, 2000), where Tupi-Guarani-speaking peoples were in the majority[18]. Given the structural proximity of Tupi-Guarani languages, catechesis in the codified variety is unlikely to have been problematic. Indeed, we see considerable continuity in writing between the 16th and 17th centuries. For example, Bettendorf's *Compêndio* (1687) diverges very little from Araújo's catechism (1618) (Edelweiss, 1969; Monserrat, 2003; Monserrat; Barros; Motta, 2010; Monserrat; Barros, 2015; Ávila, 2021; see also Rodrigues; Cabral, 2010).

16 Such authors include, e.g., Câmara Jr. (1978 [1972], p. 28)[16], Freire (2008, 2011), Houaiss (1985), Noll (1991), Teyssier (2007, p. 96), see also, Argolo, (2016), Lee, (2005, 2014), Monserrat; Barros (2015), Reich (2003), Schmidt-Riese (2003).

17 '[When] Catechesis [is] over, everyone sits down to hear a sermon or exhortation, which was done in the lingua franca of the Indians as also the catechism and prayers were composed in the same language and said exhortation was aways based on the Gospel'.

18 In the large initial 'descents' into the early Amazonian missions, Bettendorf records Karajá (a Macro-Jê language), and '*joanes ou sacacas, aruãs, mapuases, mamaianazes, pauxis e bocas'* (Bettendorf, p. 105), that is to say, the so-called *Nheengaíba* (bad speech/language) peoples, also called *línguas travadas* (trapped/jammed tongues) in Portuguese, a linguistically unidentified confederation from Marajó Island.

Around 1660-70, however, epidemics began and intensified over the rest of the century and into the following one, decimating the original inhabitants of the missions and households (Hemming, 1987; Finbow, 2022, p. 96-67). From the final quarter of the 17th century, the missionaries and slavers pushed beyond the Tapajós river into the middle Amazon, where Tupi-Guarani languages were largely absent. These factors combined to cause major demographic restructuring in the Amazonian colony and this would have had an impact on language.

Leite (1943, t. IV, p. 139) calculates that in 1696 the mission population was around 11,000 and in 1730 it had risen to 21,000. Raiol (1900, p. 192) estimated that the mission population in 1720 wase just under 55,000, with a further 20,000 '*Mamelucos* and slaves' (see also Freire, 2011, p. 68; Hemming, 1995, p. 421; Finbow, 2022, p. 97, 2023a).

Another major territorial expansion occurred in the 1730s, after the Manao War (1728-1730), which saw missionaries and slavers bring very large numbers of non-Tupi-Guarani-speaking indigenous peoples, especially speakers of Arawak languages from the middle and upper Rio Negro, into the LG-speaking colonial centres on the lower Amazon. These Arawak-speaking second language learners might possibly have initiated certain structural changes still detectable in differences that exist between early- and late-19th century Nheengatu, such as post-verbal object pronouns, although later influence from vernacular Brazilian Portuguese was probably much stronger (Finbow, 2022, p. 98, 2023a). The result of these events led to next phase in the meaning of *Língua Geral,* documented by Bluteau in his *Vocabulário portuguêz e latino* (1712-28) and in Daniel's *Tesouro descoberto no máximo Rio Amazonas* (1757-76).

Bluteau built on Jesuit descriptions of LG. He contrasts *Línguas Gerais*, 'spread by conquest, religion and commerce', and *Línguas Particulares* (specific languages), spoken by 'isolated, barbarous nations' (Barros, 2015). Moreover, the speakers of *Língua Geral* in the Amazon, according to Bluteau, are the *Tapuia*. This shows that in the 18th century, *Língua Geral* is not thought of as a geographically extensive macrolanguage but rather as a supra-ethnic lingua franca used as an auxiliary language by many peoples.

Evidently, this change from communities of predominantly native speakers using either their own Tupi-Guarani vernacular and/or an emerging Old Tupi/Tupi-Guarani koine, to a society containing very large numbers of non-native speakers is very likely to have had structural repercussions. Given the parallels between Portuguese Amazonia and societies in which pidgin and creole languages arose as adults acquired the primary vehicle of communication of their environment (many of which were also part of the Portugal's colonial empire), the idea has spread that that *Língua Geral* should be understood as a creole language, which is what the following sections analyse.

8. WAS LÍNGUA GERAL A CREOLE?

Clear proof that vernacular *Língua Geral* had evolved structurally comes indirectly from Daniel (2004 [1757-76] and directly from examples in the manuals written by the *tapuiatinga* ('white *Tapuia'*) missionaries, i.e., the northern and central European Jesuits, in the mid-18th century (Dietrich, 2014; Monserrat, 2003; Monserrat; Barros, 2015). Note that none of these sources mention *Mamelucos*. Instead, Daniel explicitly identifies the *Tapuia* as the group that 'corrupted' the 'true' 'Tupinambá' LG, which he equates with the 'Art', i.e, Figueira's 1621/1687 grammar. Nevertheless, Daniel also says that the 'corrupt' LG is spoken 'in all the Portuguese missions of the Amazon' and that few speak the 'true' 'LG of the Tupinambá' 'in its native purity and vigour' because the 'first and true Tupinambá are already almost entirely extinguished' (Daniel, 2004 [1757-76], v. 2, p. 365, see also Finbow, 2022; Monserrat, 2003; Dietrich, 2014).

Daniel's statement that the *Tapuias'* speech 'seems another, different language' to that the missionaries studied (2004, p. 365) and that the missionaries' codified variety was incomprehensible to them, has been used to suggest that pidginization and/or creolization has occurred in the missions, giving rise to a "new" language, e.g, Lee (2005, 2010, 2014), Argolo (2011a, 2012b, 2016), Oliveira; Zanoli; Modolo (2019)[19], Castro (1991), Dietrich (2014). Dietrich, in particular develops Freire and Rosa (2003), Argolo (2011b) and Leite (2013), but he retains the emphasis on the mestizo class from Rodrigues (1996). He also discusses some structural changes (2014, p. 613-617).

Yet, Daniel is not contrasting the speech of the missionized *Tapuia* with the vernacular of other segments of the colony. His testimony reveals that even in old missions established in the mid-1600s with Maranhão Tupinambá and other native Tupi-Guarani-speakers the vernacular is not like the missionaries' 'Art'. This suggests that 18th century Portuguese Amazonia should be seen as a diglossic society (Lee, 2005; Finbow, 2022, see also Ferguson, 1959; Fishman, 1967, 2002; Haas, 1982; Kaye, 1970, 1972,) because the tiny contingent of missionaries sought to uphold and preserve their traditional codified variety, which had to be acquired through formal instruction, for it was not acquired as a first language by any indigenous group (if it ever had been), while in day-to-day life everyone used the contemporary vernacular, which had undergone structural changes.

Daniel never exemplifies the kind of structural changes he is mentions. Thus, his testimony cannot be understood uncritically as evidence for creolization arising from a pidgin. We concur with the proponents of creolization that a great deal of structural change certainly would be expected to arise in the context of 150 to 200 years of widespread unstructured, adult second-language learning

19 For the severe problems with the proposal in Vieira, Zanoli and Modolo (2019), i.e., *Tupinambá* (pidgin) > *Língua Brasílica* (expanded pidgin) > *Língua geral do Brasil* (creole), and the problems with Argolo"s 'mesolectal creole' (2016, p. 48; see also Argolo, 2011, 2012b), Finbow (2022, 2023a).

accompanied by language shift. Nevertheless, there is no evidence for a widespread stable pidgin variety of *Lingua Geral* in the Amazon at any period.

As Finbow (2022, p. 87-90, 2023b) has shown regarding Argolo's (2011, 2012, 2016) and Oliveira, Zanoli and Modolo's (2019), attempts to identify structural features to prove the creolisation of *Lingua Brasílica* "into" *Língua Geral Amazônica* suffer from a lack of knowledge of Tupi-Guarani languages and of Old Tupi in particular. For example, Lee (2005, p. 217-220) compares hypothetical sentences in *Língua Brasílica*, i.e., the Jesuit norm, with their equivalents in the 'Vulgar' language that she envisages emerging from it. However, her first example sentence – *Na eresendúipe?* – actually means 'Don't/Can't you hear it?', not 'Don't/Can't you hear me?'. The correct sentence in OT is *Nda xe rendu(b)ipe îepé?* Her second sentence, *Ixé nde nheenga*, literally means 'I am your speech/words' in OT and modern Nheengatu, not 'I am speaking to you'[20]. This misinterpretation shows that Lee's analysis of the structural changes between different diachronic phases of Old Tupi/*Língua Geral* cannot be relied on and create a more extreme picture of structural change than actually happened because she does not use any material from the 18th century or early 19th century.

A further issue is that, like Rodrigues (1986, p. 104-109; 1996, p. 4-5) and Argolo (2016), Lee compares later 19th c. and modern Nheengatu to 'classic' Jesuit Old Tupi. The Nheengatu spoken in the later 18th and early 19th century did not exhibit the same object-marking strategies (Finbow, 2023a). Thus, the correct comparison between her two sentences across three diachronic phases of LG (16th-17th centuries, 18th century-1850, 1850-20th century) is

4a) 'Aren't you listening to me?', 'Can't you hear me?'[21]

i) 'OT' (1550-1750)	*Nda-xe-r-endub-i*		*=pe*	*îepé*
	NEG>1SG.P-R1-hear<NEG		=Q	2SG.AG
ii) 'Old NHG' (1750-1850)	*Niti[u]=será*	*se-*	*r-endu*	*indé*
	NEG=POL.Q	1SG.P-	R1-hear	2SG
iii) Mod. NHG (1850–)	*Ti=será*	*re-/pe-*	*sendu*	*ixé*
	NEG=POL.Q	2SG.A-	hear	1SG.P

20 In OT, 'I speak to you' is *(ixé) anhe'eng endébe /*(i'se) a-je'ʔeŋ e'ne=pe/ (1SG) 1SG.A-vocalise 2SG=to.
To add the progressive/continuous aspect requires the one of the positional auxiliaries in the 'gerund' (same-subject subordinate), i.e., */wi-/ + /'ʔam-a/ ~ /-ju\p-a/ ~ /-ten-a/ ~ /-tekó-(a)bo/ ~ /-ku\p-a/*
1SG.A.GRD stand-GRD ~ lie\GRD-GRD ~ -sit-GRD ~ -exist/move-GRD ~ go\GRD-GRD

21 GLOSSES: = clitic morpheme boundary, – bound morpheme boundary, >... < circumfix morpheme boundaries, 1 first person, 2 second person, 3 third person, AG agent, A active intransitive conjugation class, GRD "gerund" (same-subject, subordinate clause), Q interrogative, NEG negation, P patient, POL polar, PROG progressive aspect, RT root, SG singular, PL plural.

4b) 'I am speaking to you.'

i) 'OT' (1550-1750)	*(ixé) a-nhe'eng endé=be* (1SG) 1SG.A-speak 2SG=to
	gûi- 'am-a / -îup-a / -ten-a / -tekó-bo 1SG.A.GRD-stand-GRD /-lie-GRD /-sit-GRD /-move-GRD
ii) 'Old NHG' (1750-1850)	*(ixé) a-nheẽ indéu a-iku* (1SG) 1SG.A-speak 2SG=to 1SG.A-be
iii) Mod. NHG (1850-)	*(ixé) a-nheẽ a-iku indé arã[ma].* (1SG) 1SG.A-speak 1SG.A-be 2SG to

In (4a), despite the substitution of the special form for '1st person patient and 2nd person agent' '*epé* /je'pe/ for singular and *peîepé* /peje'pe/ for plural' by the generic second-person free personal pronouns *ine* ~ *indé* /i'ne/ and *penhé* /pe'je/ respectively, LG retains the classic Tupi-Guarani person hierarchy with prefixes for the patient argument, as in Modern Paraguayan Guarani: *Nde cherendu* /ne se-r-e'nu/ 'you.SG 1SG.inact-possm-listen' (you listen to me) (Estigarribia, 2020, p. 139), i.e., analogical levelling has occurred across the paradigms.

In (4b), even though four physical orientation auxiliary 'gerunds' (/-jup-/ 'horizontal extension', /-ʔam-/ 'vertical extension', /-en-/ 'without extension', /-kup-/ 'in motion') have not survived, the 'be/exist' root continues to express continuous aspect, i.e.,OT /-e'ko-/ + /-aβo/ → /-e'ko-βo/ > Mod. NHG *-iku* /-i'ku/. The auxiliary verb has lost the characteristicot same-subject subordinate-clause suffixes on intransitive active roots, i.e., /-a/ on consonant-final roots and /-aβo/ on vowel-final roots (Navarro, 2008, p.159-161, 172-173). The special intransitive active class number and person same-subject prefixes, i.e., /wi(t)-/ (1st singular, /e-/ 2nd singular) (2008, p. 161, 176-179) have suffered analogical levelling by the standard 1st and 2nd person active class subject prefixes, i.e., /a-/ and /(e)re-/. This has caused them to fall in line with the rest of the active class gerund personal prefixes, which are identical to those of the indicative mood, i.e., /ja-/ (1st person plural inclusive), /oro-/ (1st person plural exclusive), /pe-/ (2nd person plural), and /o-/ (3rd person subject-focus) (Finbow; O'Neill, 2022). This is also attested in Paraguayan Guarani, although the root that survived was 'sit', 'unextended' (OT V.RT /-in/ (sit) →GRD /-en-a/), rather than 'be/in motion'. It became the progressive aspect particle *hína*, e.g., *rehai hína* /re-h-ai hina/ 2sg.a-3p-write prog (you are writing) (Estigarribia, 2020, p. 164).

Thus, later 18th century or early 19th century examples from 'Old Nheengatu' phase of *Língua Geral* smooth the transition between Old Tupi and modern Nheengatu. The changes and the structural parallels between the three diachronic '*Língua Geral*' varieties are typical examples of language change in general and in line with tendencies observable in Paraguayan Guarani, the other Tupi-Guarani language in long-term close contact with Ibero-Romance, which is not claimed to have undergone

creolisation. Therefore, it is is far less probable that unstructured, adult acquisition of koineised Amazonian Old Tupi followed by language shift created a pidgin that was subsequently creolised.

9. FROM MACROLANGUAGE TO LINGUA FRANCA

Lingua Geral's lingua franca status should not be understood to mean that it was always or predominantly spoken non-natively, as is implied by accounts such as Lee (2005), Argolo (2011, 2012, 2016), Oliveira, Zanoli and Modolo (2019), which emphasize the demographic imbalance between native and non-native speakers as the catalyst for structural pidginization and subsequent creolisation when children begin to learn the pidgin as a mother tongue. Vernacular *Lingua Geral* would have certainly exhibited a very wide array of synchronic individual and collective linguistic competences. There would have been the "pidginised" speech of recent arrivals and infrequent users, both enslaved and free, Amerindian and European, at one extreme but, simultaneously, at the other, fluent non-native speakers and native speakers of the contemporary vernacular varieties whose ancestors had been Maranhão Tupinambá or speakers of other Tupi-Guarani languages, even if they no longer identified with those names. However, increased integration of indigenous communities into the colonial system would always favour ever-greater second-language fluency, followed by bilingualism that would mostly end in language shift and native-speaker competence in the contemporary vernacular *Língua Geral*. This is because, despite the impact of epidemic disease and chronic mistreatment, there were always fluent or native speakers of *Língua Geral* known as *Tapejara* ('guides', lit., 'path owner', 'path master') available for *Tapuias* or *Barés* ('newbies', PT *novatos*) recently brought down out the interior to model their speech (Daniel, 1757-76, vol. II, p. 258, see also Barros, Monserrat and Prudente, 2013, Barros, 2015, §39-40)[22]. This, rather than catechesis, was the primary way in which *Lingua Geral* was transmitted in the missions in the 18th century, and this is what caused the functional change in the use of *Língua Geral*.

In Portugal's South American colonies in the 17th century, structural differences within the *Língua Geral* were primarily diatopic, within Tupi-Guarani languages, which were spoken natively by the indigenous populations and their descendants born from unions with Europeans. This changed with the largely forcible incorporation of innumerable non-Old Tupi and non-Tupi-Guarani-speaking peoples into the colonial system in Maranhão and Grão-Pará from the final quarter of the 17th century. The missionaries' decision not to catechise each indigenous people in their native tongue according

22 Note how the *Tapejara/Baré* contrast in the 18th century Amazon mirrors the *ladinho/boçal* (seasoned and newcomer slaves) categories applied to African plantation slaves elsewhere (Mufwene, 2003, p. 10, 40, 48, 51, 53, 63, 76, 92, 155).

to the Jesuit ideal, but use the missionaries' codified variety for catechesis, except for preparing adult *Tapuias* for baptism or to administer extreme unction, when abbreviated versions of the catechism in the local language could be used[23] (Barros, 2015, §28-30), such as the 'Questions on Christian Doctrine in the Manaus Language put into or taken from the *Língua Geral*'[24] (Joyce, 1951).

Bluteau and Daniel's mid-18th century descriptions emphasize diamesic and diaphasic differences that are primarily the result of the diastratic limitation of the Jesuit norm to the missionary class at that time who were the only group writing and reading frequently in the formal norm. Thus, another of Kloss's technical terms could be applied to the Jesuit variety of LG, namely, *Dachsprache* (lit., 'roof-language'), i.e., a norm that overarches varieties in a continuum. Such norms are typically deliberately elaborated, i.e., the result of *Ausbau*, e.g. standard 'High' German or standard Italian (Kloss, 1967; Muljačić, 1989, p. 256 ff.; Krefeld, 2020). In the 18th century, Daniel shows us that the Jesuit norm is treated as a prescriptive standard by the missionaries, who regarded the *Tapuias'* vernacular usage as improper but necessary for everyday communication.

Bluteau's usage also shows that a semantic shift had occurred in the term *Língua Geral* between the 17th and the 18th century. Daniel shows that the term *Língua Geral* is still used to refer to the language of catechesis, but it no longer identifies a geographically extensive indigenous linguistic bloc of native speakers. Vernacular *Lingua Geral* is thought of as a supra-ethnic lingua franca employed in 'war, religion and trade' alongside the missionized indigenous communities' native languages, which Bluteau classifies as 'specific languages' (*línguas particulares*) spoken by 'barbarians' and 'savages' who live 'in the Interior', 'without hospitality or commerce' or 'in obstinate war' (1721, t. VIII, p. 139).

Ultimately, the semantic shift detected in *Língua Geral* from 'macrolanguage' to 'lingua franca' also passed to the term *Tapuia*. From 'non-Old Tupi Amerindian' it came to mean the 'detribalised' and 're-cultured' *Língua Geral/Nheengatu*-speaking indigenous or mestizo Amazonians of the 19th century (Freire, 2011, Barros, 2015). In this way, Hartt (1938 [1875], ex. 684, 686, 687) registered *Tapuia nheenga* (*Tapuia* language/speech) as a synonym for *Nheenga katu* (good language) in the 1870s. Evidence that this semantic shift was already occurring during the 18th century comes from Bluteau. In the entry for '*Tapuya'* (1716, t. V, p. 140), he repeats the classic definitions from the 17th century such as Simão de Vasconcelos (1595-1671) (Barros, 2015, §15), which characterise the *Tapuia* as a 'generic nation'[25] of warlike, non-Christian savages that speak a plethora of languages. On the other hand, in the entry for 'language', where he develops fourteen categories of 'parent

23 *Regulamento das aldeias indígenas do Maranhão e Grão-Pará* [1658-1661], de Antônio Vieira (Beozzo, 1983, p. 199).

24 *Preguntas da Doutrina Christãa pela Lingoa Manoa, vertidas ou tiradas da Língua geral.*

25 That is to say, *Tapuia* is essentially a 'wastebasket' category in which all indigenous peoples not classified as 'tame' LG-speaking Indians are lumped, irrespective of their linguistic and sociocultural affiliations.

and general languages' (*línguas matrizes e gerais)* and 'specific languages'[26] (*línguas particulares*) (1716, t. V, p. 138), Bluteau states that the *Tapuia* are the speakers of the *Língua Geral* 'which occupies most of Brazil', (1716, t. V, p. 139).

However, it is important to stress that starting with speakers of the Old Tupi varieties in the *Estado do Brasil* and the Maranhão Tupinambá in the North, throughout the koineization of Old Tupi that arose from cohabitation, slaving, and missionization, there ran an unbroken chain of intergenerational transmission within the oldest Amazonian colonial communities until their shift into Portuguese. The proportion of *Tapuia* or *Baré* learners to native speakers and fluent speakers (*Tapeiara*) certainly rose very markedly over time (Leite, 1943, t. IV, p. 139, Argolo, 2016; Finbow, 2022, 2023a; Freire, 2011; Hemming, 1987, 1995; Lee, 2005) and such a major demographic imbalance would have favoured restructuring in the direction of non-native variants (Mufwene, 2003). This is evident in 19th century attestations of *Língua Geral/Nheengatu*, e.g., Hartt (1875), Couto de Magalhães (1876).

Interestingly, the kinds of structural changes that can be adduced, p. ex., loss of flexional paradigms[27], are more akin to what is seen in vernacular Brazilian Portuguese, which is the closest corollary in the *Estado do Brasil* to the '*Tapuia*-filtered' *Língua Geral* in Maranhão and Grão-Pará (Finbow, 2022, p. 102).

10. CONCLUSIONS

Approaching *Língua Geral* sociophilologically reveals the problems of defining historical periodization and categorizations between languages/varieties in terms of structural differences. As Wright argues, sociolinguistics has shown that structural changes are usually gradual, and competing variants can coexist for very long periods. Moreover, there is no guarantee that modern perceptions of diversity correspond to those of the past (Finbow, 2010, 2012, 2022). The modern proposals regarding the emergence of the concept of *Língua Geral* that we have examined here are not backed up by solid evidence about contemporary usage and therefore have unfortunately fallen into anachronism or other kinds of misrepresentation.

26 'Languages, although they may appear innumerable, can all be reduced to two [kinds], that is to say parent and general languages, which have extended themselves very much, and are used among many different nations as a result of conquest, religion [and] commerce, which introduced them; and specific languages or particular to one people, which are as a result are less widespread'. (*As linguas ainda que pareção innumeraveis, todas se podem reduzir a duas, a saber, linguas matrizes, & géraes, que se estendèrão muito, & saõ usadas entre muitas nações diversas, em razão das Conquistas, Religião, commercio, que as introduzio; & linguas particulares, ou proprias de alguma nação, que por consequencia saõ menos dilatadas*).

In the case of *Língua Brasílica* and *Língua Geral*, modern researchers have attempted to apply these labels to divisions identified on the basis of the different kinds of *Abstand* detected in texts. However, in making such proposals, the categories they have used have become reified, such that many people today believe that '*Língua Brasílica'* was an actual linguistic entity with a certain set of structural characteristics that endured for a certain amount of time before being replaced by other features which constituted another entity, namely, '*Língua Geral*', which was divided into two varieties, the Paulista and the Amazonian. Those who think that way then ask themselves what it was that 'changed LB into LG', rather than looking at '*Lingua Brasílica'* and '*Língua Geral'* as labels which were applied in different ways in different times. However, we have shown in this paper that structural distance was not important to the naming practices employed amongst at least the non-indigenous inhabitants of Portugal's South American domains between the 16th, and 18th centuries. Any indigenous language qualified for the name *Língua Brasílica* and diverse Tupi-Guarani languages fell under the umbrella-term *Língua Geral*, including the Jesuit norm which was called 'the' *Língua Brasílica* because it was the largest of the indgenous languages they had encountered. Consequently, the role of sociocultural mixing and, especially in the Brazilian context, racial mixing, which has been emphasized repeatedly as the driving force behind the structural changes that catalysed the use of new names has been vastly overstated.

Rodrigues (1996, p. 6) claims that earlier 20th century writers had wrongly classified *Língua Geral* as either the same language spoken by the pre-colonial indigenous Tupi/ Tupinambá peoples or a new language created, moulded or 'tamed' by the Jesuits out of the pre-colonial language(s), or a pidgin/creole that arose from contact between diverse indigenous peoples and Europeans (see also Argolo, 2011a, 2012b, 2016; Lee, 2005, 2014). However, the technical definition Rodrigues seeks to reserve for the term *Língua Geral* as the language of the *Mameluco* class is every bit as 'unfounded linguistically and historically' (Rodrigues, 1996, p. 6) as the definitions that he criticises. In fact, it seems likely that his proposals regarding the *Mamelucos*' role as multilingual innovators in the 'emergence' of the two varieties of *Língua Geral* that he identified was precisely what stimulated others to investigate the pidgin and creole hypothesis!

In the case of 'the language most spoken on the coast of Brazil' and its relatives and descendants, it is evident that contemporary commentators on matters of language do not regard the plurilingual *Mameluco* class as responsible for generating structural changes that caused the literate classes to consider that the name *Língua Brasílica* was inappropriate and therefore start to apply the term *Língua Geral* in a novel way to refer to the *Mameluco's* speech. Thus, Rodrigues's idea of employing *Língua Geral* to refer specifically to the *Mameluco* variety of Old Tupi is deeply unconvincing. An additional complication is there are no known historical records of *Mameluco* speech, so even if one were to accept Rodrigues' proposals, we would know nothing about the kinds of structural changes they introduced because those that are discussed in the literature come from varieties that are too far apart chronologically for it to be safe to attribute them to the *Mamelucos*.

Where Rodrigues does find considerable documentary support is in *Língua Geral* being used to refer to other Tupi-Guarani languages besides Old Tupi, i.e., as a macro-linguistic category. We see this clearly in the writings of Pero Rodrigues, Manuel Gomes, Antônio Vieira and João Felipe Bettendorf in the 17th century. In this regard, Wright's concept of 'complex monolingualism' (1982, p. xi, 1993d: 207-8) is potentially useful. In the Late Latin/Early Romance context, this meant that speech and writing constituted a single conceptual unit for Early Medieval Romanophone peoples, despite wide structural divergences (*Abstand*) between diatopic, diachronic, diaphasic and diamesic modalities. Late Latin complex monolingualism mirrors how the concept of '*Língua Geral* Indians' operated for the missionaries in Amazonia the second half of the 17th century. Socioculturally diverse peoples were grouped together based on the proximity of their speech to that of the Jesuits' norm.

A further point that Rodrigues identified was the semantic shift in the term *Língua Geral* in the 18th century. However, he proposed that the shift was from the initial kind of usage that we have classified as 'Tupi-Guarani macrolanguage' to a more specific reference to the *Mameluco* variety. As we have shown above, it is highly unlikely that the Mamelucos were responsible for this semantic shift. The change in meaning that can be identified in the Amazon was recorded by Bluteau and by Daniel and points to the novel meaning for *Língua Geral* being 'supra-ethnic lingua franca', which many spoke natively, often alongside other indigenous languages. While structural change did occur, especially paradigm levelling, this was not beyond what would be expected from a situation in which large numbers of non-native speakers were acquiring and using the language in an unstructured manner. The way that Portuguese colonial society was structured gave considerable autonomy to unfree individuals to circulate, such that there were always ample opportunities to gain ever greater linguistic competence through regular contact with native and fluent speakers (Finbow, 2022, p. 86, 97-100). This is why no evidence can be found for the existence of a stable pidgin in the missions or colonists' households. Thus, it is hard to see 18th century *Língua Geral* as a 'new' language produced by classical creolization processes as Argolo, Lee, and Oliveira, Zanoli and Modolo have claimed. Despite considerable paradigm levelling, a growth in analytic structures, and some innovations, there remains a very clear structural continuity between the older and the more recent phases of what was called '*Língua Geral*' in Portuguese between the 17th and the 19th centuries.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no competing interests.

STATEMENT OF DATA AVAILABILITY

The author confirms that the data, codes and materials supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

AI USAGE STATEMENT

The author declares that no AI tools were used in the creation of this manuscript or in any part of the work reported.

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