

Singlish Damn Power Sia¹

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Born and raised in Singapore to a working-class family, one cannot help but pick up on the colloquial language that is spoken in day-to-day life. Like the country it originates from, Singlish is multicultural. Born out of Bazaar Malay, Singlish comprises a mixture of the official languages of Singapore and their dialects. Due to the origins of the language, Singlish is extremely complex with unique morphological and phonological traits.

Sorry, My Singaporean Accent Too Strong Issit?²

With Singlish being an oral language, learning it would require one to pay extra attention to the phonology of the language. There are certainly a lot of unique phonological features in Singlish, especially when compared to British English. Notably, “the interdental fricatives tend to be realized as [t,d] when pre-vocalic and as [f] when at the end of the word” (Wee 267). This way of speaking leads to words like *three* and *tree* being homophones (Deterding 13). Singaporeans tend to alternate between [f] and [t] in words that end with a [θ] sound like *filth* when pronouncing the root word, *filth* is pronounced: [filf], however, when pronouncing the adjective *filthy*, it is pronounced [fi'lti] (Wee 267).

Known to be amongst the fastest and most efficient speakers, Singaporeans apply different methods to increase the speed at which they communicate. The first of which is simply disregarding the length of vowels within speech. This causes words like *pool* and *pull*, as well as *beat* and *bit* to become homophones. However, it is worth noting that many Singaporeans actually recognize and can mimic vowel length differences (Wee 268). Another method Singaporeans employ to quicken their speech is the simplification of consonant clusters. This has led to the pronunciation of words like *government* as [gʌ'mən] instead of [gʌ'vəmənt], this process is especially apparent with words that end with consonant clusters. In the onset, Singlish allows for a maximum of three consonants. However, when it comes to coda, Singlish generally has an upper limit of 2 to 3 consonants. This leads to words like “texts” being pronounced as [tɛ'ks] and glimpsed as [gɫi'mps/gɫi'mst] (Wee 269).

Perhaps the most common way Singaporeans speed up their speech is by deleting consonants. It is important to recognize the conditions under which this process occurs i.e. the kinds of consonants that get deleted and the context in which they take place. In Singlish, only consonants that are preceded by nasal consonants are removed, and consonants are not deleted in

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¹[sɪŋ'liʃ dæ'm paw'ə stia'] The Power of Singlish

²[sɔ'li maj' siŋ'gəpəlɪən ɛ'sən tu' 'stɔŋ i'zit] I'm sorry was my Singaporean accent too strong?



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<u>Fall 2023</u>		
LING-2002/ANTH-2402/ENGL-2805 Morphology	11:30 - 12:45 Tu/Th	I. Roksandic
LING-2103-001/ANTH-2404-001 Languages of the World	13:00 - 14:15 Tu/Th	I. Roksandic
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LING-2301-770/FREN-2202-770 Phonetics (lab required)	2:30 – 3:45 M/W	L. Rodriguez
CLAS-2850-001 Classical Roots of Medical Terminology	8:30 – 9:20 Tu/Th	TBA
PSYC-2620-001 Psycholinguistics	1:00 – 2:15 Tu/Th	A. Desroches
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<u>Winter 2024</u>		
LING-2001-001/ANTH-2401-001/ENGL-2803/001 Phonetics & Phonology	18:00 - 21:00 W	TBA
LING-2003-052/ANTH-2403-052/ENL-2802-052 Syntax	9:30 - 10:20 MWF	TBA
LING-2004/ANTH-2405/ENGL-2806 Semantics	13:30 - 14:20 MWF	TBA
LING-2401-001/GERM-2202-001 German Phonetics	12:30-1:20 M/W/F	K. Lovrien-Meuwese
CLAS-2850-002 Classical Roots of Medical Terminology	14:30 - 15:45 MW	TBA
CRS-2252-001 Conflict & Communication (ONLINE)	11:30 - 12:45 TuTh	J. Arnold
LING-3105-781/DEV-3300-781 Speech & Language Disorders (ONLINE)	17:30 - 20:30 Tu	A. Friedman
PSYC-3480-001 Interpersonal Communications	16:00 - 17:15 TuTh	TBA

*Courses Subject to Change



Singapore skyline (public domain)

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situations of fricatives and affricatives (Wee 270).

Whilst this process of constant deletion also occurs with words derived by the suffix *-ed*, it is important to note that consonant deletions of this sort do not occur when the stops are no longer in the final position through derivation like adding the affix *-ing* (Wee 271).

This One is Come from Where One?³

Because of how Singlish as a language was created, a large portion of its lexemes come from borrowing; “incorporating Chinese dialect (particularly Hokkien) and Malay lexical and grammatical elements. Due to the correlation between how often a language is borrowed from and the population of said language speakers, most of the discourse particles found in Singlish are mainly borrowed from Cantonese and Hokkien (Ler 35). Singapore has about 10 particles of varying origins, they include lah [lɑː], ah [ɑː], what [wɑːd], hah [hɑː], lor [lɔːɪ], hor [hɔːɪ], nah [nɑː], leh [leː], ma [mɑː], and meh [meː] (Ler 36).

As mentioned, Singaporeans have a tendency to speak incredibly efficiently. Apart from the phonological methods mentioned prior, Singaporeans also make use of clipping and initialism to quicken their speech. No-

[dɪˈs wɑːn ɪˈz kɑːm fɪˈɑːm wəː wɑːn] Where did this come from?

[jɔːɪ ŋˈlən spɪˈk ʌntjuː sɔː ɪˈtʌs fɔː wɑːd] What are you speaking in such proper and sophisticated English for?

tably, Singaporeans clip words like air-conditioner into air-con (Deterding 76-77). Furthermore, Singaporeans make extensive use of initialization, for instance calling the flats built by the Housing and Development Board, HDB [hejˈtʃdɪˈbiː]. It is also worthwhile to note that much of the initialism that occurs in Singapore is used in both day-to-day conversations and official governments (Deterding 78).

Your England Speak Until so Atas For What?⁴

Throughout the years, there have been many debates regarding Singlish as a language and its existence in the official capacity. To many Singaporeans, Singlish represents unity, a language that connects the four predominant races together. To a government that was determined to make something out of the young country of Singapore, Singlish would do nothing but hinder Singapore’s growth. During the National Day Speech of 1999 made by former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, Mr. Goh made clear that Gurmit Singh, a talented actor who played the character of Phua Chu Kang, a Singlish-speaking contractor, was not doing a service for Singaporeans who saw themselves represented on television. Evidently, Mr. Goh’s remarks went a long way as the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) was created the next year. Whilst the SGEM now states that they acknowledge the existence of Singlish and that there is a difference between Singlish, English, and broken English, it did not start out that way.

To better understand Singlish grammar, one will hopefully also understand why Singlish is so important to the Singaporean identity. As briefly mentioned prior, lexemes are not the only thing Singlish borrows, Singlish also draws “from Sinitic languages such as Hokkien, Mandarin-Chinese and Cantonese, as well as languages such as English, Malay, and Tamil” when it comes to grammar (Tan 87). Many of the grammatical elements that Singlish borrows from are Chinese. For instance, “the aspect marker already substitutes readily for the aspect marker --le in Chinese, in marking the completive aspect where English would use either the perfect or the past tense” (Ziegeler 30). To illustrate, I see the movie already [aj' si' də' mu'vi əlej'di'], the use of already is used to indicate past tense. Further, “past tense is not being used to mark past time reference, but perfectivity, either lexical or grammatical, according to the speaker’s needs, and that the patterns follow those of the substrate languages, notably the Chinese dialects” (Ziegeler 31).

Singlish also comprises several different specific ways of sentence construction. To start, Lionel Wee, an expert linguist in Singlish talks about what he calls the Don’t Know construction. The Don’t Know construction expresses ignorance. To illustrate, the sentence The Laksa don’t know nice or not [di's la'ksa do'no naj's ə'nəd] means that no one really knows whether or not the laksa tastes good. It is also helpful to note that this construction can appear in a variety of ways, not always with the words don’t know either. The main feature of the Don’t Know construction is a phrase or word that implies ignorance.

In a way, Singlish is a rebel language. Singlish is a language that, through morphological analysis and the understanding of the origins of its unique morphological traits and phonological phenomenon, also explains why Singlish is what many Singaporeans consider such a sign of unity. Despite the government's attempts to erase Singlish as a language, and encourage only the use of “Queen’s English”, Singlish is very much still alive. To end, in the words of a certain fictional contractor, the best you can find in Singapore, JB (Johor Bahru) and some say Batam, when it comes to Singlish “don’t play play”⁵.

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⁵ [do'n pre' pre'] Don't mess around.

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Gardens by the Bay, Singapore (public domain)

The Beginning of Human Language: Hominid Language & Communication

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Hominid language is an interesting yet difficult topic to study due to the rapidly fading quality of spoken language. As the sounds expressed by an individual can only be heard at the moment it is produced, there is no material evidence that proves hominids used language through a vocal channel. Due to this, we must rely on other means of evidence for language and communication used by extinct human species such as Neanderthals and *Homo erectus*. Common proxies that are used to study the emergence and evolution of hominid spoken language include examining material evidence displaying cognitive thinking and its correlation to forming language, anatomical changes throughout human evolution such as the shift to bipedalism and the lowering of the larynx, and the presence or mutation of specific genes that contribute to using language, such as the FOXP2 gene.

The emergence of human language can be argued to have occurred in *Homo erectus* based on examining stone tool designs as a method for measuring cognitive thinking (Hillert, 2015). Though *Homo erectus* likely did not use a fully-fledged language with syntax and grammatical properties, it can be argued that this species used a protolanguage based on the advancing designs of stone tools as well as the distances they travelled when exchanging resources with other groups (Hillert, 2015; Marwick, 2003). It is commonly believed that Neanderthals used language similarly to modern humans, which is largely based upon their externalization of symbolic thinking. The images found in cave art created by Neanderthals are believed to represent objects in the world around them, showing the ability to receive and reproduce messages. Cave art may then be argued to act as a paralanguage using symbols, or as a method to support the spoken language that Neanderthals may have used (Miyagawa *et al.*, 2018). As *Homo sapiens* are modern humans, they are believed to have used a fully-fledged language at their emergence (Marwick, 2003; Tattersall, 2018).

Anatomical changes throughout human evolution also have been used to support studies researching the emergence of human language. The shift to bipedalism and the lowering of the larynx, among other anatomical changes, have allowed the vocal tract to evolve into the shape it is in modern humans. As hom-

inids are bipedal, it is argued that their hands may have been used to create communication signs after the cessation of using them for locomotion (Gentilucci & Corballis, 2006). Additionally, the shift to bipedalism in hominids has also allowed for the lowering of the larynx, which can be studied in correlation with other vocal tract fossils to gain a better understanding of how these changes allowed for the emergence of speech (Benninger *et al.*, 2022). In addition to anatomical changes, gene mutations in the brain throughout evolution have been argued to contribute to the emergence of human language in hominids. One of the most common genes discussed in this topic is the FOXP2 gene, which contributes to the ability to produce speech. Neanderthals possess the FOXP2 gene like modern humans, which further supports the argument that Neanderthals used language in a similar way to modern humans (Johansson, 2015).

One debate that is prevalent in the topic of human language emergence is whether the use of spoken language occurred gradually or spontaneously. As emphasized prior, it is difficult to study hominid language due to the lack of material remains that directly present it. Due to this, scholars have critiqued studies on both perspectives of the debate, for example, arguing that evidence showing cognitive ability cannot act as a proxy for studying the emergence of human language and that genetic mutation must be the main source of evidence (Tattersall, 2018). With this argument, it is believed that the emergence of language occurred spontaneously in *Homo sapiens* after a sudden mutation of genes (Tattersall, 2018). However, the other perspective of the debate shows scholars arguing that the combination of gene mutations and cognitive abilities likely created a gradual evolution in language use in hominids (Hillert, 2015). This debate shows that researching the emergence and evolution of language in hominids is an important topic to study, as learning the answer to this would allow for a better understanding of the way in which human language came to be today. Additionally, researching this topic further would allow us to learn which proxies are best suited to study human language emergence, which presents opportunities for future research.

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Butler, R. S. (2022). Are there differences in the cranial base of humans and apes? *Journal of Voice*.

Benninger *et al.* explore the theory that changes to the basicranium in Plio-Pleistocene hominids contributed to human language emergence by lowering the larynx. Midline skull base angles and pharynx muscle attachment measurements of modern humans to those of apes and hominids are compared, with modern humans presenting more acute angles than hominids and apes. The authors address that this study can not prove that basicranium changes lowered the larynx without studying soft-tissue structures, however, this study promotes that correlations between multiple vocal tract changes should be studied to gather a better understanding of how these changes occurred.

Gentilucci, M., & Corballis, M. C. (2006). From manual gesture to speech: a gradual transition. *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, 30 (7), 949–960.

Gentilucci and Corballis discuss the idea that the vocal-auditory channel of spoken language may have evolved from a manuo-visual system. This theory is supported in the following ways: iconic gestures have evolved into arbitrary symbols, the evolution to bipedalism in primates has allowed for hands to be used for gesturing, and that mirror neurons in the brain have evolved in primates to allow for one individual to replicate another's movement. It is then argued that with the evolution of vocal tract anatomy and the FOXP2 gene, there was a gradual shift from gesturing to vocalization in later human ancestors.

Hillert, D. G. (2015). On the evolving biology of language. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6.

Hillert critiques the theory that human language occurred after a spontaneous mutation in *Homo Sapiens* and instead argues that human language resulted from multiple mutations over the span of 4 million years. The mutations of genes ARHGAP11B and SRGAP2 beginning in the genus *Pan* are discussed, as well as the increase of cognitive skills in *Homo erectus* throughout the shift from Oldowan to Acheulean tools. This paper provides an overview of human language evolution and ultimately argues that *Homo erectus* likely used a pre-modern language and that Neanderthals

and Denisovans used language in a similar way to modern humans.

Johansson, S. (2015). Language abilities in neanderthals. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 1(1), 311–332.

Johansson reviews the language abilities of Neanderthals through the lens of speech organ fossils, genetics, and cognitive abilities. The author argues that language can be present without speech, as language may be presented in signs, but that speech must consist of discrete units creating sentences. Arguing this, Johansson states that speech organ fossils neither prove nor disprove Neanderthals using language, but that genetics and cognitive abilities show evidence for language through the appearance of the FOXP2 gene and symbolism, respectively. This paper presents a basis for how to structure further studies regarding Neanderthal language and the different proxies for researching it.

Marwick, B. (2003). Pleistocene exchange networks as evidence for the evolution of language. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 13, 67–81.

Marwick examines hominid resource exchange distances to study their communication systems and how they evolved. It is argued that Pliocene hominids did not use language based on small travel distances for resource exchange, and instead communicated using sounds and signs similar to chimpanzees. As non-modern hominids displayed increasing travel distances, Marwick argues that they were capable of using a protolanguage to negotiate in exchanges. As modern *Homo Sapiens* had the largest exchange distances, this correlates with a more developed language as well as increased symbolic thinking capacities. This paper displays the gradual emergence and evolution of human language through hominids.

Miyagawa, S., Lesure, C., & Nóbrega, V. A. (2018). Cross-modality information transfer: a hypothesis about the relationship among prehistoric cave paintings, symbolic thinking, and the emergence of language. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 115–115.

Miyagawa *et al.* discuss the use of cave art and archaeoacoustics as a possible beginning to the development of language in Neanderthal popu-

lations. The authors describe cave art and stone etching to be an externalization of symbolic thought by Neanderthals, which is argued to be a form of communication through signs. Additionally, cave art was commonly found in areas of caves that have significant acoustic properties, meaning that there may be a correlation between the symbols and vocalizations. This study examines the auditory-visual channel of communication within caves to better understand how human language began and evolved.

Raghanti, M. A., Edler, M. K., Stephenson, A. R., Munger, E. L., Jacobs, B., Hof, P. R., Sherwood, C. C., Holloway, R. L., & Lovejoy, C. O. (2018). A neurochemical hypothesis for the origin of hominids. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(6), 1116.

Raghanti *et al.* argue that the basal ganglia significantly contributed to the emergence of language in early hominids. The striatum of the basal ganglia contributes to social behaviour, and the supposed increase of 5HT, DA, ACh, and NPY chemical concentrations within this structure through hominid evolution can be correlated with the emergence of language. Though it is unclear exactly when the emer-

gence of language occurred, it is suggested that the chemical changes would have catalyzed the emergence of language in the genus *Homo*. This study presents a proxy that can be further studied on the topic of human language evolution.

Tattersall, I. (2018). Language origins: an evolutionary framework. *Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy*, 37(2), 289–296.

Tattersall critiques traditional proxies for studying hominid language and argues that language emerged instantaneously in *Homo Sapiens*. It is argued that the emergence of language cannot be supported by the cognitive abilities reflected in hominid stone tools as this is not correlated with the ability to receive and understand messages, and that Paleolithic artifacts are not indicative of the symbolically-thinking mind as these artifacts cannot be proven to be symbolic, but that cave art can be. This study reveals a less common perspective on the emergence of human language, which encourages researchers to seek out new proxies to study this topic.

Imitative Definitions of Onomatopoeia

Chelsea Mei-Lai Rohatensky, English Major

Introduction

It is normal for the definition of an academic term to differ from how it is understood in common parlance, but the word ‘onomatopoeia’ presents an especially curious case. Although the word sounds pretentious, many contemporary linguists consider onomatopoeia to be obsolete as an academic term (Moor 307). This essay introduces how linguists have used the term in the past and reviews three recent papers that reimagine frameworks of onomatopoeia to better suit the sensibilities of modern academics.

Background

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines onomatopoeia as “the formation of a word from a sound associated with the thing or action being named; the formation of

words imitative of sounds. Occasionally: the fact or quality of being onomatopoeic” (“onomatopoeia, n” 1a). This general definition emphasizes onomatopoeia as a derivational process rather than the word formed in such a manner. The onomatopoeic inventory varies across languages. For example, a frog makes *ribbits* or *croaks* in English but will *kvak*, *brekeke* or *krk* in Slovak (Körtvélyessy 548).

Thomas Wilson is credited as the first person to use ‘onomatopoeia’ in an English rhetorical text, borrowing the word from Latin. Wilson used the word to refer to a broad range of creative language devices, including eponyms, idioms, zero-derivation and interjections (Moor 309-310). Onomatopoeia as the word used today was forged under the heat of debates through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whereby philosophers proposed and then ultimately re-

jected the idea that mimetic sound symbolism was the root of all language (Moor 313-314). With the decline in interest around the aforementioned ‘bow wow theory of language,’ onomatopoeic words lost relevance in the field. It was structuralists that pushed the study of iconic words into obscurity, asserting that even the most iconic words still maintained a significant degree of arbitrariness (Moor 318). Post-structuralists have taken a renewed interest in onomatopoeia, but typically refer to the subject with different terms that are often framework-specific. Moor suggests that this impulse away from ‘onomatopoeia’ stems from when the term was so efficiently scandalized by thinkers such as Max Müller (318).

These new terms include words such as ideophone, specific adverb, *Lautbilder*, echoism and *mot expressif* (Akita and Dingemanse 2). As more languages are documented and new mimetics are identified, these frameworks are being built upon. Onomatopoeic systems are shown to vary in sophistication. For instance, Japanese’s extensive mimetic system imitates inner emotional states as well as animals and objects. Interesting work is being done in sign language linguistics, where findings from onomatopoeic studies are being compared to studies in visual-iconic derivation and vice-versa (Lillo-Marín and Gajewski 388).

Onomatopoeia as a Unit

This section introduces a comparison of two recent attempts to define an onomatopoeic unit.

Körtvélyessy (2020) invents a definition through a comparative analysis between Slovak and English onomatopoeia. Their paper defines onomatopoeia against four other types of sound symbolism. Corporeal sound symbolism refers to changing a word’s timbre or grapheme presentation to express some internal state. Conventional sound symbolism links certain phoneme clusters to certain meanings, such as *gl-* of *glitter*, *glow*, and *gleam*. Synesthetic sound symbolism has the peculiarity of representing phenomena that is not sound related, such as movement or duration. Defined negatively towards these three former categories, onomatopoeia is when a word imitates the acoustic reality of some extralinguistic experience (510). Körtvélyessy acknowledges that conventional sound symbolism and onomatopoeia are occasionally difficult to differentiate, but maintains that only onomatopoeia demonstrates “full-word” as opposed to “partial” iconicity (511). In the author’s view, to utter onomatopoeia is to

perform an imitative speech act consisting of an interjection (515). Words that are derived from these imitative interjections are no longer considered onomatopoeia themselves. Therefore *to meow* is not considered an onomatopoeic word while *meow* is considered one (516).

In the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, Akita and Dingemanse (2019) outline the ideophonic unit as a more comprehensive and crosslinguistic framework for what was once seen as mere appendages of the onomatopoeia concept (3). The authors pursue a line of thought opposite to Körtvélyessy as they create a larger ‘parent’ category instead of restricting the scope of study. The chapter defines ideophones as “marked words that depict sensory imagery” (3). Sensory imagery encompasses mimetics imitative of sound, movement, visual patterns and psychological states (12). The words are marked because ideophones are often distinct on a phonological level and may even disregard a language’s native phonotactics. An example of this would be the phoneme /p/ in Japanese which is present only in ideophones such as *pikapika* (‘shining brightly’) and *petapeta* (‘slapping’). Similarly, ideophones in Hausa are consonant-final even though most other words in the language are vowel-final (4). The authors, concurring with Körtvélyessy, also state that pure mimetic words must be distinguished from words that are subsequently derived from them. In many languages with rich ideophonological systems such as Japanese, a common phenomenon is deideophonization. When new words are derived from ideophones that do not conform to the language’s typical phonotactics, the new word is modulated to adhere to the basic phonology (6-7). The authors also speculate that unique syntactic capabilities are offered to ideophones (14). From these properties, Akita and Dingemanse view the ideophone as a prototype category similar to major classifications such as the verb with distinctive syntactic and phonological capabilities (5).

While Körtvélyessy (2020) and Akita and Dingemanse (2019) disagree on what scope of inquiry is ultimately most useful, both studies consider onomatopoeia to first have a pure interjectory form from which additional words can be derived. Other attempts at defining onomatopoeia, aligning with the spirit of the Oxford definition, investigate onomatopoeia as a derivational process that applies across a wide range of different words.

Onomatopoeia as Process

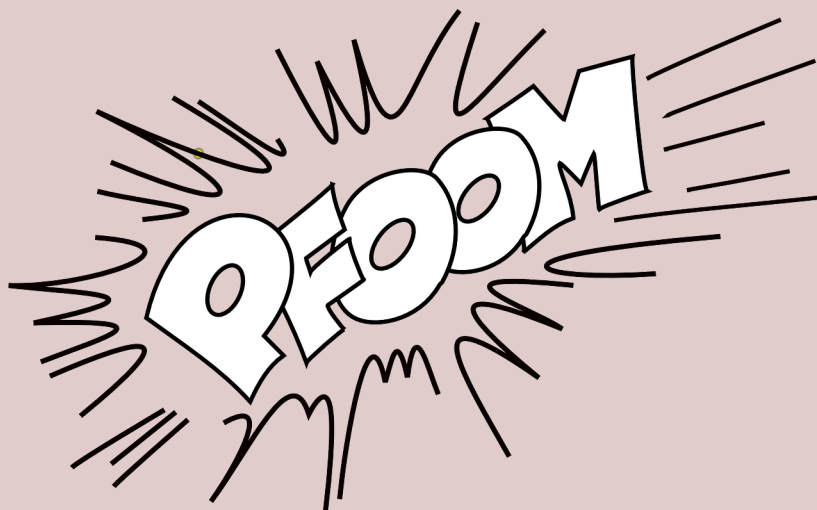
Sasamoto and Jackson (2016) consider how onomatopoeia works on the level of signification and examine it as a potentially extralinguistic process. For these authors, onomatopoeia works by gesturing towards a relevant connotation via sound association, like how one may gesture with one's hands (42). This is opposed to a lexical word which would have a direct relationship from signifier to signified. This reframing is important for the authors as it explains how novel onomatopoeic utterances may be understood (39). All onomatopoeia may be ranked on a scale of lexicality. Novel onomatopoeia such as English *hjckrrrh*, coined by Lewis Carroll for *Alice in Wonderland*, has no lexical precedent and thus relies entirely on gesture in order to be decoded (44). Meanwhile lexicalized onomatopoeia such as English *chuckle* or Japanese *odoroku* (surprised) is still more gestural than a typical prosaic word, though the process of lexicalization has dramatically reduced the amount that the word must rely on gesture to be understood (44-45). Onomatopoeia is thus modeled as a spectrum rather than a tangible unit. Asserting that "onomatopoeia is productive," Sakamoto and Jackson conclude that their findings may have additional relevance for frameworks that model relationships between verbal and non-verbal communication (36).

Conclusion

Through Körtvélyessy (2020), Akita and Dingemans (2019), and Sasamoto and Jackson (2016), this paper has offered a survey of onomatopoeia scholarship from three different viewpoints and demonstrated that 'onomatopoeia' does not exist as a strict morphological category, but as an undulating site of new linguistic reimaginings.

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Onomatopoeia "Pfoom" (public domain)

The Endangerment of the Tariana Language

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On the Vaupés River, on the north-west side of Brazilian Amazonia, the Tariana tribe live in a few small villages, speaking the language of Tariana which belongs to the Arawak language family, the only Arawak language in the vicinity (Aikhenvald, 2013). In this region, there has been an intensive loss of language as a result of various factors, leading to negative outcomes for the Tariana, both in terms of the language as well as the valuation of said language (Aikhenvald, 2013). As Aikhenvald (2013) points out, these outcomes impact several parts of Tariana society: their ancestral and societal expectations, one's value in society, as well as societal hierarchies. This paper aims to break down the endangerment of the Tariana language and what led to this problem, the types of linguistic influence and change, the impact on the Tariana's societal expectations, as well as what is being done to save and revive this Arawakan language.

Linguistic diversity is not new to the territory of Amazonian languages, with this region being renowned for its multilingualism (Aikhenvald, 2014). As languages in this area developed and thrived, they were subject to the influence of other languages in the region, with factors like grammar, vocabulary, and even pronunciation being impacted (Aikhenvald, 1996; 2014). Most languages seen in this region have some sort of overlap, whether it be from the simple act of borrowing or through intensive contact, however the degree to which languages overlap vary (Aikhenvald, 2014). This overlap depends on the relationships between the languages and the people who speak them, as well as the extent of multilingualism in communities and societal expectations in relation to their languages (Aikhenvald, 2014). Following the criteria for language influence proposed by Tsitsipis, if instead of genetically related groups, neighbouring communities share similar patterns of grammar/morphology in the language, it is probably as a result of contact between the communities (Aikhenvald, 2014). Aikhenvald identifies the processes by which fundamental changes in language can occur, with further analysis and interpretation, as well as an adoption of grammar being key (Aikhenvald, 1996). As a result of a language having intense contact with another, especially when it comes to a larger speaking population having language influence on a smaller speaking pop-



Portrait of an indigenous chief of the Uaupés River by [Décio Villares](#) (c. 1882) (public domain)

ulation, the “smaller” language group usually adopts the “larger” or dominant language’s patterns, as well as increasing the similarities that were already present in said language (Aikhenvald, 1996; 2014). These similarities extend to forms and meanings adopted by the endangered language, from the dominant language, recurring at higher rates (Aikhenvald, 2014). As time goes on, these languages that are in contact become more and more similar, with Aikhenvald (1996) explaining that these similarities can lead to a

convergence of said languages, with the grammar, semantics, and isomorphisms practically experiencing a full replication. This is what has been witnessed between the Tariana and Tukanoan languages.

The Vaupés river basin is an important headwater of the Rio Negro, which itself is an offshoot of the Amazon river, and this is where we find a large multilingual language continuum (Aikhenvald, 2013; 2014). The Vaupés river basin inhabits regions of Colombia and Brazil, with language groups in these areas sharing in the bounty of several languages. East Tukanoan, Arawak, and Maku, belonging to three genetically independent groups, are spoken in the river basin (Aikhenvald, 2013). However, while these groups are not genetically linked to our knowledge, we do see a shared societal characteristic that is denoted by the language being spoken (not including the Maku). This multi-linguistic region of the Amazon follows the mechanism of linguistic exogamy, leading to an obligation towards multilingualism (Aikhenvald, 1996; 2013; 2014). Linguistic exogamy is a societal mechanism to increase genetic variation; to prevent the marrying of someone to whom one could be related (Aikhenvald, 1996; 2013; 2014). In this particular version of exogamy, one cannot marry someone who speaks the same language as them, and rather must marry someone who speaks a different language (Aikhenvald, 1996; 2013; 2014). As a result of this rule, one inherits their patrilineal language, the language of their father and uses the language as a means of identification (Aikhenvald, 1996; 2013; 2014). A Tariana elder named Leonardo Brito explains this mechanism as not marrying one's sister, as when someone speaks the same language as another, they are considered brothers (Aikhenvald, 2013). A common saying, in reference to linguistic exogamy, shared by the Tariana and the Tukanoan people, deems the action of marrying into the same language as "what dogs do" (Aikhenvald, 2014). Speakers of Tariana, as well as East Tukanoan languages (including Tukano, Wanano, Desano, Barasano, and several others) all take part in this societal mechanism, however the criteria for marrying outside of one's language is not necessarily cut and dry, with there being some language groups who marry into specific language speaking communities, while avoiding others (Aikhenvald, 2013). All groups have strict societal criteria for which groups they do or do not marry (Aikhenvald, 2013). For an example, Tukano and Barasano speaking people do not marry each other, while the Desano, Tariana, and Wanano groups also avoid marrying into each others communities (Aikhenvald, 2013). These

limitations are set for several reasons, as seen in the case of the Tariana, where the Desano are regarded as their younger brothers (Aikhenvald, 2013).

The Tariana possess a stratified social hierarchy, where the people are separated into several clans (Aikhenvald, 2014). The origins of the clans deemed to be higher ranking in the hierarchy are linked to an area in the Wapui Rapids, located on the Aiary river, and following the pattern of language loss, these higher up groups are said to have lost their language in or around the beginning of the 20th century (Aikhenvald, 2014). In our present day and age, there is said to be only 3000 ethnic Tariana left, with only a few speaking the Tariana language (Aikhenvald, 2014).

At one point in history, the Tariana language was in fact a diverse continuum, and could be compared to the diversity of East Tukanoan languages (Aikhenvald, 1996). However, as a result of intense areal influence, among other factors, the diversity of the language has fallen. In particular, in the Tariana language, there are two separate dialects which have been greatly impacted by East Tukanoan languages: Wamiarikune Tariana and Kumandene Tariana (Aikhenvald, 2014). In the middle Vaupés region, the Wamiarikune Tariana reside in Santa Rosa, Periquitos, as well as Iauaretê, where only a small number of people actually speak Tariana, using Tukano as their everyday social language (Aikhenvald, 2014). This usage of Tukano has resulted in their Tariana language being inundated by Tukano calques or loan translations (Aikhenvald, 2014). On the other hand, the Kumandene Tariana, who once resided in the area of Iauaretê, near the Iauari River, located just off the Vaupés river basin, speak a language that has been impacted by Baniwa, an associated language (Aikhenvald, 2014). This is a result of areal influence, as around 2 generations ago, the Kumandene Tariana migrated to an area where they reside with speakers of the Baniwa (Aikhenvald, 2014). When comparing the two dialects together, as well as other Arawak languages that are closely related, one is able to distinguish the impact of the areal influence that East Tukanoan languages have had (Aikhenvald, 2014).

The Brazilian region of the Vaupés has specifically seen linguistic influence as a result of cultural erosion and destruction, particularly at the hands of the Salesian missionaries, as well as the rubber trade leading to contact with non-Indigenous peoples (Aikhenvald, 2013). As mentioned above, language transmission was decided by patrilineal descent, however, this transmission was severely impacted by the above mentioned factors (Bradley & Bradley, 2002;

Aikhenvald, 2013). In the 1920's, with the arrival of the Salesian missionaries, came the impending destruction of tribal, cultural, and language values and traditions (Bradley & Bradley, 2002; Aikhenvald, 2013). The missionaries appointed their task to be the civilizing of the Indigenous populations, facilitated by forced schooling in boarding schools and the erasure of all other indigenous languages except one, Tukano (Bradley & Bradley, 2002; Aikhenvald, 2013). Multilingualism was deemed to be unmoral and uncivilized, a habit derived from paganism in their eyes, therefore their mission to civilize the Indigenous communities was heavily influenced by the goal of monolingualism (Bradley & Bradley, 2002; Aikhenvald, 2013). As the Tukano language was the popular majority spoken language in the Vaupés region, particularly the Brazilian side, it was chosen as the main language by the Salesians (Bradley & Bradley, 2002; Aikhenvald, 2013). Schooling was not the only method of civilization of course, as forced resettlement and the change of family culture was also employed (Bradley & Bradley, 2002; Aikhenvald, 2013). To be able to control the Indigenous communities better, the Salesians would forcefully move the Indigenous people closer to mission centres, and their long-standing traditions for their families that included long-houses with several communities were switched with the nuclear family, a western-style approach to family life (Bradley & Bradley, 2002; Aikhenvald, 2013). The patrilineal flow of language was also stifled with the men being sent off to work in the industries of gold-mining or the collection of rubber, all but cutting off completely the children's contact and familiarity to their fathers language (Bradley & Bradley, 2002; Aikhenvald, 2013). At present, the Tukano language is rapidly gaining ground as the lingua franca in the Brazilian Vaupés. (Aikhenvald, 1996; 2013). As Tukano spread and grew as a result of the missionaries actions, Tariana was at a disadvantage, leading to its decline, that is now all the more apparent (Bradley & Bradley, 2002; Aikhenvald, 2013). The main problem with this spread of Tukano, besides the blatant erasure and racism that empowered the Salesian's actions, is the weakening of ethnic groups and their languages, a clear symbol of their identification and pride (Bradley & Bradley, 2002; Aikhenvald, 2013).

As mentioned above, it is Tukano that has been found to heavily influence Tariana. As a result of their longstanding areal influence and as a result of the missionaries, the establishment of similar lexical and grammatical structures have been seen between the two languages (Aikhenvald, 1996). To un-

derstand the key language differences, a table produced by Aikhenvald (1996) comparing Proto-Tukanoan and Proto-Arawakan breaks this down: core cases are seen in Proto-Tukanoan but not in Proto-Arawakan; Proto-Tukanoan uses suffixes while Proto-Arawakan uses a combination of mostly suffixes but prefixes as well; Proto-Arawakan uses active/stative voice while Proto-Tukanoan makes use of nominative/accusative. While the emphasis of the areal and contact influence has been centred on Tukanoan to Tariana, there are influences going in the other direction as well. The influences on Tariana from East Tukanoan has been divided into two categories by Aikhenvald (1996): East Tukanoan developing new categories that are not present in Arawakan, and enduring categories that have been reimagined in Arawakan in congruence with Tukanoan. It is important to note that while there is overwhelming Tukanoan influence, the large bulk of forms within Tariana are Arawakan; it is the forms meanings and their categories concerning grammar that are in large part Tukanoan (Aikhenvald, 2013). An example of this influence is noted by the following: non subject case marking is seen in East Tukanoan languages, a typologically abnormal system, where names and personal pronouns are marked obligatorily, and while this is usually not seen in Arawakan languages, this is not the case for Tariana. Tariana employs the use of a case marker in reference to non subject topical and specific referents (Aikhenvald, 1996). The case marker in East Tukanoan “-re” functions in the same way as the Tariana case marker “-naku/nuku” (Aikhenvald, 1996). Another similarity between the two languages consists of locative markers: while East Tukanoan languages only employ one locative case for direction, location, and temporal marking, Arawakan languages usually have several locative case markers, however, this is not the case for Tariana (Aikhenvald, 1996). Tariana makes use of the East Tukanoan template, using one locative case marker to distinguish direction, as well as temporal factors (Aikhenvald, 1996).

The impact that areal influence has had on Tariana, by East Tukanoan languages majorly, is significant, especially when unpacking the Tariana's once strict laws on language borrowing. Tariana communities looked upon one's ability to speak Tariana properly and accurately with the utmost importance, and with the influence that Tukanoan has had on the language, present-day ethnic Tariana people have had to forgo their ancestral principles (Aikhenvald, 2013). This is a common cultural trait within the Vaupés area, as language mixing is overall viewed poorly, and

the using of morphemes from languages other than one's own is frowned upon (Aikhenvald, 1996; 2013; 2014). As a result of many Tariana speaking adopted languages, like Tukanoan languages and even Portuguese, they would be deemed incompetent by their own tribes language values (Aikhenvald, 2013). In Tariana, there is a term that describes this cultural taboo: "Tariana nañamura" meaning "they speak by mixing", pointing out people using detectable lexical or grammatical loan words (Aikhenvald, 2013). Their value in the tribe is questioned, with people saying they are "me da-peni" or "good for nothing" (Aikhenvald, 2013).

While the endangerment of the Tariana language is a prevalent and worrying problem, not all is lost. To help revitalize and maintain the language, the

Association of the Tariana of the Middle Vaupés was established in 2000 (Aikhenvald, 2013). The founder of the association, Jovino Brito, is not only a fluent speaker of Tariana, but is also proficient in Tariana lore, and their healing traditions (Aikhenvald, 2013). Along with the establishment of the association, came the founding of a school devoted to the teaching of Tariana in 2005, "Enu irine idakini", or in English, "The grandchildren of the blood of Thunder" (Aikhenvald, 2013). Santa Rosa's youngest speaker, the schools founder, Rafael Brito, is proficient in the language, as well as its two teachers: another Santa Rosan, Emilio Brito, and Edivaldo Muniz, who is from Periquitos (Aikhenvald, 2013). While the school teaches all the same subjects as are offered in other schools, they have also integrated two hour's

Linguistic description of Guaraní-Kaiowá Language

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Considering the American native languages in South America, we see that there are approximately 11.2 million speakers (Lyovin 2017). However, not enough studies were carried out about them, and their genetic classification is poorly understood. In Brazil, the largest South American, the estimative is of 150 - 160 Indigenous languages, subdivided into some 19 linguistic families (Nikulín and Carvalho 256).

One of the larger language family in South America is the Tupian language family (Galucio 2015), consisting of 40 to 45 languages, "classified into ten branches: Arikém, Awetí, Jurúna, Mawé, Mondé, Mundurukú, Puruborá, Ramaráma, Tuparí, and Tupí-Guaraní" (230).

There is not a definite agreement about the phylogenetic classification of the South American languages and families (Galucio et al 2015). Many researchers divide Tupí-Guaraní languages into two big groups: "Tupí in eastern Brazil and Guaraní in Paraguay and Argentina" (Britannica Encyclopedia, Tupí-Guaraní Languages). This would be just a very generalization about the Tupí-Guaraní languages, and Walker et al (2012) demonstrate a general Tupí Language Family phylogenetics, where Tupí-Guaraní Language Branch is the major branch of the Tupian Family.

Guaraní is one of the official languages of Par-

aguay. Nevertheless, different indigenous ethnical groups speak Guaraní in different ways (Almeida and Mura 2003). For example, three major indigenous ethnical groups (the Ñandeva, the Kaiowa and the Mbya) speak a dialectal Guaraní language, known as Kaiowá, or Guaraní-Kaiowá, and sometimes only called Guaraní (Almeida and Mura 2003) (Souza 2017). These ethnical groups are found in Argentine, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Guaraní-Kaiowá people in Brazil are mainly located in the central-west region, near the border with Paraguay (Ramires and Vicente 2018). Guaraní-Kaiowá language (or just Guaraní/just Kaiowá) is spoken by Guaraní people in many regions - there are 85 officially recognized Guaraní areas in Brazil (Almeida and Mura 2003). However, as these Indigenous groups have a cultural trait for constantly walking from different regions (called *oguata*), not as nomads, but for visiting, celebrations and movings, it is difficult for demographic researchers to know their precise numbers. Some approximate calculations estimate 51,000 Guaraní speakers living mainly in Mato Grosso do Sul (central-west Brazilian region) – probably near 31,000 would be Kaiowa ethnicity, 13,000 would be Ñandeva ethnicity, and approximately 7,000 Mbya ethnicity. These three main Guaraní speaker groups are sometimes known as Guaraní (Guaraní-Nandeva people) and Kaiowá (Guaraní-Kaiowa people) (Tavares 2015

26). According to Cardoso (2008 01), Kaiowá (also written as “Caiuá, Kaiwá, Kaajova or Kaiová”) is a variation of *kaagwa*, meaning “inhabitants of the forest/the woods”.

Tavares presents some examples of comparisons between Guaraní-Kaiowá language and others from Tupian Language Family, where similarities in structures and vocabularies are quite common (Tavares 2015 52, with our free translation from Portuguese to English):

The word “stone” in different languages in Tupian Language Family:

itá (Mbya Language); *itã* (Taiprapé Language); *itá* (Parintintín Language); *Takúru* (Wayampí Language); *itá* (General Language from Negro River); *ita* (Guaraní Language / Guaraní-Kaiowá Language)
“fire”: *tatá* (Mbya Language); *tãtã* (Taiprapé Language); *tatá* (Parintintín Language); *Táta* (Wayampí Language); *tatá* (General Language from Negro River); *tata* (Guaraní Language / Guaraní-Kaiowá Language)

Taking the Guaraní-Kaiowá Phonology into consideration, Dietrich (2018) highlights that, generally speaking, nasal sounds are very important and quite common in Tupian languages, and a “nasal harmony”

or also called “nasal assimilation”, or “regressive nasalization” is remarkable in all Tupian language branches. Dietrich (2018) also points out that “the occurrence of a high central vowel /i/, a glottal stop /ʔ/, and final consonants, especially plosives in coda position” is a common feature for Tupian languages phonology. Moreover, the “absence or change of nasality is an important distinctive feature” (Dietrich 1990: 18).

The Guaraní language has a “vigorous” system for nasalization sounds, where nasality “spreads in both directions, not stopping until another stressed syllable is encountered ... Nasality even spreads anticipatorily from voiced oral stops, which in Guaraní are prenasalized” (Lyovin 2017 362). The author presents some examples, quoting Walker 1998 (230, qtd. in Lyovin 362):

[ʔĩnã, kãrãkú] /ija, kãra'ku/ meaning: ‘is hot-headed’
[rõ^hbowa'ta] /ro-^hbo- wa'ta/ meaning: ‘I made you walk.’

On phonology for the Guaraní-Kaiowá language, Cardoso (2008), quoting Kiparsky (1985, qtd. in Cardoso 222) and Rivas (1974) explain details of the lexical phonology for this language:

- all voiced segments – stops, voiced continuum, and



Guarani-Kaiowá initiation ceremony (public domain)

vowels – have an oral and nasal variant defined by the spreading of the nasal feature;

- voiceless stops are always oral and are transparent to nasal harmony;
- voiced stops are inherently nasal and are pre-nasalized when an accented [-nasal] vowel occurs to its right;
- accented [+ nasal] vowels spread nasality in both directions (bidirectional);
- there are two nasal autosegment spreading rules – a rule of Deep Scattering and another Surface Scattering (Cardoso 2008 222-223).

On vowel phonemes, Cardoso (2008 242) highlights that Kaiowá (Guarani) language has binary features [± nasal]. These are the vowels for the specific language: /a /, / e /, / i /, / i /, / o /, / u / and also / ã /, / ê /, / î /, / î /, / õ /, / ù /.

On consonant phonemes, Cardoso (2008) explains that the bilabial phoneme / p /, the alveolate one / t /, the velate one / k /, the lip-velate / kw /, and the glottal phoneme /ʔ/ only occur in syllable formation/attack and they are "transparent to the scattering of nasality from vowel segments" (243).

An important feature in the Guarani-Kaiowá Morphology, is that there are not definite or indefinite articles (Ramires and Vicente 2018 60). The authors

explain that sometimes this sort of language is called “neutral” or “ambiguous”, due to its “indefiniteness” feature. In addition, as the basic form for nouns has not an inflectional mark in this language, the speaker can decide about expressing singular or plural ideas, depending on the conversational context. This is the reason why some researches would consider Guarani-Kaiowá language a “neutral” or “ambiguous” language for representing singular or plural. Here is an example (Ramires and Vicente 2018 60) (our free translation from Portuguese to English language):

Che a-hecha kuatia haipyre yvy-pe.
 = To see a written paper (written by someone) on the floor.

This sentence could have many meanings:

- ‘I saw a book on the floor.’
- ‘I saw the book on the floor.’
- ‘I saw books on the floor.’
- ‘I saw the books on the floor.’

Inflection in Guarani-Kaiowá language can "easily be identified, once it happens at the peripheral/ external parts of the words, and it is often applied to a specific word class" (Carvalho 2018 18). Inflectional morphemes must be used when they are needed in a word or sentence. Then, morphological inflection in Kaiowá language occurs in the following situation:



Tariana Dance in Rio Negro region (public domain)

- personal prefixes connected to verbs;
- relational prefixes connected to dependent nouns, verbs or postpositions;
- casual suffixes connected to nouns;
- negative suffixes, "which do inflections for verbs and nouns according to the sentence predicates" (Carvalho 2018 18).

Nevertheless, morphological derivation is not so common in Guaraní-Kaiowá language, and its usage is "controlled by the speaker". Carvalho (2018 18-21) emphasizes that there are cases where specific expressions or other structures can be usage in lieu of derivational morphemes. Carvalho presents three ways of morphological derivation in this language: internal derivation, for having new structures keeping the same word class from the original one; external derivation, where there are new structures but changing the word class from the original one; and mixed derivation, having both possibilities. Examples:

i-porã-kwe (beautiful+ *-kwe-(n)guer* derivational morpheme for 'retrospective state of existing') = what had been beautiful.

o-mombo-a-kwe (throw+ *-a-* morpheme for changing verbs for nouns + *-kwe-(n)guer* derivational morpheme for 'retrospective state of existing') = what had been thrown.

porã-ty (beautiful + *-ty* derivational morpheme for 'place') = place where there is beauty; very beautiful place.

Some postposition structures in Guaraní-Kaiowá are the following (Carvalho 2018 23): *-gwi*, *-xugwi* for 'ablative'; *-upé*, *-pé*, *-xupe* for 'dative' case; *-upi* for 'perlative'; *-pype* for 'inessive'; *-gwy* for 'below'; *-ári* for 'above'; *-ndiwe* for 'company'; *-ehe* for 'related to' or 'under'; *-ire* for 'after'.

The 'prospective morpheme' *-rã* can be connected to nouns and to noun structures from previous predicates by the *-a* morpheme. This prospective morpheme brings a type of future, once it is "something that is projected to do/happen/exist" (Carvalho 2018 28). Examples:

oga-rã = house + prospective *-rã* = what will be house
t-ape-rã = path + prospective *-rã* = what will be path
i-túvy o-heko mbo 'e h-ape-rã = father + to be in movement + teach + path + prospective *-rã* = father taught the path for living.

Many Tupian Family Languages use the morpheme *-i* for the formation of negation (Dietrich 1990 68). For Carvalho (2018 24), negative inflection form occurs with the morpheme *-i* being attached to verbs, nouns and predicate nucleus.

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Thoughts on Language

The magic of the tongue is the most dangerous of all spells. (E. G. Bulwer-Lytton)

Language is an organism. To digest it one must be, paradoxically, swallowed up by it. (Shemarya Levin)

When I cannot see words curling like rings of smoke round me I am in darkness, I am nothing. (Virginia Woolf)

Language is a finding-place, not a hiding-place. (Jeanette Winterson)

Personally I think that grammar is a way to attain beauty. (Muriel Barbery)

Language has no legs but runs over thousands of miles. (Korean proverb)

Language is the main instrument of man's refusal to accept the world as it is. (George Steiner)

Man was given the gift of language in order to be able to hide his thoughts. (Talleyrand)

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world. (Ludwig Wittgenstein)

Language is a poor bull's-eye lantern wherewith to show off the vast cathedral of the world. (R. L. Stevenson)

Language is man's deadliest weapon. (Arthur Koestler)

Language is half-art, half-instinct. (Charles Darwin)

Language is a city to the building of which every human being brought a stone. (R. W. Emerson)

Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. (Martin Heidegger)

The unconscious is structured like a language. (Jacques Lacan)



Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1526-1569), *The Tower of Babel*

